



VOLKSWAGEN LUPO GTi

MODEL TESTED 1.6 GTi

LIST PRICE £12,995 **TOP SPEED** 120mph

30-70MPH 7.8sec **0-60MPH** 7.7sec

60-0MPH 2.8sec **MPG** 33.5

FOR Looks, image, feisty engine, brakes, build quality

AGAINST Firm ride, passenger and luggage space, price

THE NEW Volkswagen Lupo GTi has to answer the one question that's on the lips of every hot hatch enthusiast. Is it the car to put fire back into the belly of VW after its recent range of mediocre hot hatches?

On paper, the signs are good. It may wear a fresher face and tail than its older Seat Arosa sibling but the Lupo and baby Seat share the same platform and suspension. That means MacPherson struts at the front and a torsion beam at the rear. To cope with speeds no Lupo has hit before there are uprated springs and dampers, lowering the ride height by 20mm, and a 28mm wider front track to aid stability.

Power comes from the same 1598cc four-cylinder engine as found in the bigger Polo GTi. It musters a respectable 125bhp at 6500rpm and 112lb ft of torque at 3000rpm. Enough to give the

960kg Lupo a thumping 130bhp per tonne power-to-weight ratio.

Other mods include the aluminium bonnet, doors and wheel arches from the ultra-frugal Lupo 3L and a set of suitably chunky 15in alloys wearing wide 205/45 Dunlop SP Sport tyres. A chin spoiler embedded with mesh grilles plus a twin centre-exiting exhaust reinforce the Lupo's image as a pukka (albeit cute) hot hatch.

It can back it up on the test track too. The Lupo GTi will blast to 60mph in 7.7sec, half a second quicker than a Peugeot 106 GTi, while its 120mph top speed is only 2mph down on the 106. The VW can almost match the Peugeot from 30-70mph too, sprinting through the gears in 7.8sec, compared to 7.7sec for the 106.

And best of all, the Lupo just wants to entertain. It's all intense high revving fun, only



Styling inside and out screams GTi; 125bhp engine backs up the boasting

briefly interrupted by each short-throw gearchange. A powerful motor in a light body should equal great in-gear times, and the Lupo doesn't break the rule. From 50-70mph in top it's a full second faster than the 106, taking just 9.8sec.

Chances are you'll get sucked in by this addictive character, in which case you'll struggle to better 25mpg. Ease the pace and things improve; we averaged

33.5mpg – still not brilliant for something so small and light.

The brakes – 256mm ventilated front discs and 232mm solid rear discs – are backed up by anti-lock brakes, electronic brake distribution and stability control. Big equipment for a small hatch. It translates into an impressive 60-0mph stopping time of 2.8sec. Having said that, we did experience some fade during heavy testing