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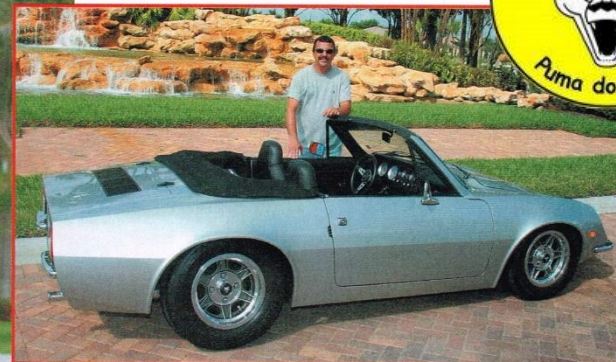
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**ON THE COVER:** On a recent trip to SoCal for the VW Classic, Langley, B.C. Canada's Erin Scott was seen cruising the streets of Fullerton in her "DivaLiane" '55. Photo by R.K. Smith. **INSETS:** Bob Crosey's "Jersey Deluxe" 1967 21-Window is a homemade classic, photo by Crosey, From Temecula, CA, Ron Parker's wild buggy is powered by a 2276 turbo engine. Photo by Bruce Simurda.





ABOVE, Miguel Girasol is mighty proud of his '78 Puma ... the Cat! RIGHT, Miguel, his brother Milton and friend Rodrigo, built this well-detailed 1914cc engine fitted with dual Weber 44 IDF carbs. Puma "flat-top" fan housing was powder-coated candy blue. LEFT, Puma factory alloy wheels measure 14x6 and 14x7, with front 185/65/14 and rear 205/70/14 tires.



## THE CAT FROM BRAZIL

**Built as a production car, and once offered as a kit, this one came from Brazil and now lives in Florida**

BY DEAN KIRSTEN

It was in the mid-seventies that we first began to see the Puma here in the United States, thanks to Bob Tomlinson of CB Performance and Dick Adams. In fact, our founding Publisher, Jim Wright, purchased a brand new 1975 Puma convertible from Tomlinson way back, when these cool cars were being imported as a "kit car". Now, what needs to be said is that the Puma was built in Brazil as a production car and not as a do-it-yourself project. And while the only way you could import one into the U.S. was to disassemble it and bring it into the coun-







Under the hood we find a fiberglass compartment filled with a Puma alloy wheel and space-saver tire. Type 1 gas tank protected with a vinyl cover, brake master cylinder reservoir, and windshield washer bottle. ABOVE, massive stereo speaker box now takes up room where the rear seat used to be. This system really pounds out the tunes — top up, or top down.

try in boxes, which is what CB Performance and others once did, they were never designed to be home-built. During that time, many Pumas came into the country on wood pallets, minus engine, transaxle and front suspension. The wheels were placed inside, but everything else was wired, plumbed, and ready to drive. You simply added your own VW parts, mounted four tires, added a battery and fuel and you were ripping down the highway! But after a few years, the DOT decided that these were not a kit car, and shut the door on any further imports of this great looking car.

For those who grew up in Brazil, such as Miguel Girasol, seeing a Puma on the streets of Sao Paulo was nothing out of the ordinary. But their impression was so strong that, back in 2000, he purchased a used 1978 convertible for \$4,300. As he was on track to immigrate to the U.S., bringing this car with him was not so easy. He had to wait until it was at least 25 years old before he

could ship it to Copper City, Florida, where he now lives. So, during the time between 2000 and 2003 (the 25 year mark), Miguel and his brother, Milton, began to restore the car from top to bottom. Since the Puma body is fiberglass, rust was certainly not an issue, although the floorpan is still steel! Repainting the body was basically straightforward, with no bodywork required, and most of the labor put in by Ceara's Body Works of Ipiranga, Sao Paulo, was getting the body ready for a new coat of paint. And for this go-round, it was a GM Silver Metallic, using PPG GM/85 Code 066, with a clear coat on top. There's something so right about a Puma convertible in silver, fitted with factory Puma 6- and 7-inch alloy wheels.

This is a pan car, as the original floorpan came from VW of Brazil back in 1978 and was delivered to the Puma factory for use with their own custom body. It, like the body, has a VIN, and is nearly identical to

what we all use under our classic sedans. For Miguel's Puma, the stock floorpan received a fresh layer of black powdercoating, along with lowering the front (ball-joint) suspension with dual adjusters and fitted with KYB shocks and front disc brakes. The rear suspension is swingaxle, fitted with a short axle 4.37 box, stock forward gears and drum brakes. To lower the rear, Miguel relocked the spring plates slightly, to drop the tail section down to match the front end. Michelin tire sizes also plays into the Puma's rake, as 185/65/14s are used up front, and 205/70/14s are found on back.

During the '70s, most Pumas were fitted with a mildly tuned 1600cc (with dual one-barrel carbs). But for Miguel, that engine got pushed aside and replaced with a fresh 1914cc, built by his brother Milton and friend Rodrigo while the car was still in Brazil. Inside, the team installed a counter-weighted crank, Engle 110 cam, and 041 dual port heads fitted with 40mm and 35.5mm valves. Compression is rather high at 10.0:1 (built for Brazil's high alcohol fuel content), ignition uses a Bosch 009 with MSD coil and Taylor 8mm wires. For induction, Miguel used a pair of 44mm IDF Webers sitting on top of CB manifolds,



## THE CAT FROM BRAZIL



TOP, incredible styling is one of the Puma's strong points — and wearing slick silver metallic paint makes it that much better! When was the last time you saw a lowered Puma? ABOVE, battery is stored inside the engine compartment, much like a Karmann Ghia. Miguel uses an Optima "Red Top" battery fitted with a billet Summit bracket.

while the exhaust is a Kadron brand tuned system that was ceramic coated for looks and protection against the elements.

Miguel really went all out detailing this engine, as you can see from our photos. Aside from the candy blue powdercoated Puma fan housing, the alternator was chromed, as was the linkage cross-bar. Linkage arms were coated bright red, while the engine was highlighted with yellow Taylor wires and a red breather tower. Braided steel -8 lines were used throughout the car, and fuel is provided by a Holley electric pump found up front, under the fuel tank. Sitting alongside this stunning engine, Miguel fitted the battery tray with an Optima battery using a Summit billet bracket.

Moving inside, the interior was completely redone, using the original Puma seats as a starting point. Like most of the work done before, the interior was completed in Brazil before the car was exported. Credit for the outstanding workmanship must go out to Fran Cap of Ipiranga, Sao Paulo, who recovered the seats in black leather, and stitched a Puma likeness on both head rests. Carpeting is now black loop nylon, door panels are all black leather, and the convertible top was redone using German black canvas. Even the dash cover was redone using black leather, and within the dash panel we find a full set of custom VDO silver-faced gauges. There's a Pioneer DEH-4100 stereo system fitted under the dash, which is powered by a 400 watt system. And behind the two front seats, the back section now houses the sounds, which include a 12-inch subwoofer, Selenium


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## THE CAT FROM BRAZIL

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bass, and 6x9 Selenium Quaxical speakers. You'll find a pair of 6-inch Selenium speakers up front on the forward kick panels as well. Steering wheel is a Brazilian made leather affair, while the shifter is a shortened stocker, fitted with an official Puma leather shift knob.

Even though this is a 1978 convertible, the windows are power, as are the door locks — but you do have to get out of the car to put the top down! And now living in southern Florida, just outside of Ft. Lauderdale, owning a cool Puma convertible is the only way to fly! Once Miguel contacted Marshall Painter to tweak the carburetors and timing to run on Florida gas, it now runs like a top. Over the years, we have only showcased a few Pumas for whatever reason, but after spending the good part of a Saturday riding around in this one, we can now see that the Puma is an awesome member of the VW family. 

### ENGINE/1600cc TYPE 1

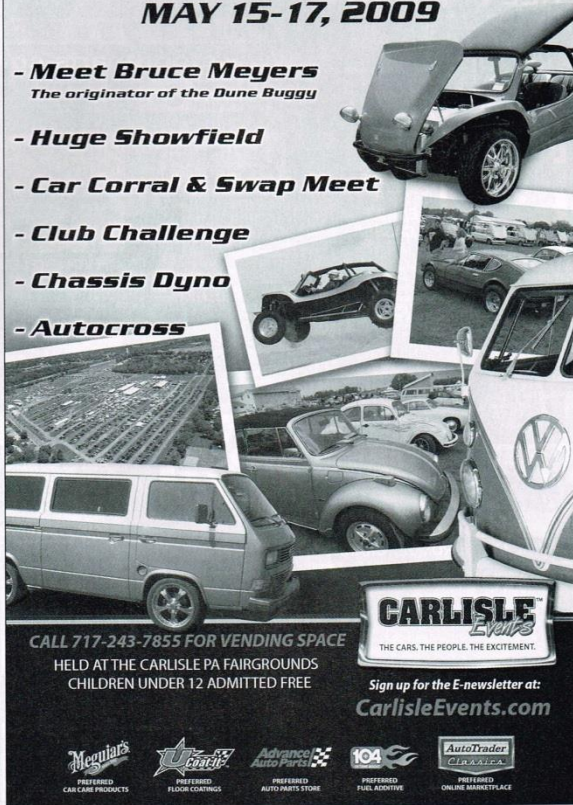
DISPLACEMENT/1914cc  
BUILDER/Milton Girasol and Rodrigo,  
Santo Paulo, Brazil  
CRANK/69mm, counterweighted,  
VW journals  
RODS/VW, balanced  
PISTONS & CYLINDERS/94mm Mahle  
RINGS/Mahle  
CAM/Engle W110, 284° duration,  
.430-inch lift, 108° centers  
OIL PUMP/Melling, 26mm  
OIL COOLER/VW doghouse  
OIL/Castrol GTX 40W  
HEADS/dual-port, 041 castings,  
dual springs  
VALVE SIZE & MAKE/40mm intakes,  
35.5mm exhaust  
COMPRESSION RATIO/10.0:1  
ROCKER ARMS/VW, 1.1:1  
PUSHRODS/Bugpack, 3/8-inch,  
IGNITION/Bosch 009, MSD Blaster SS  
coil, MSD external ballast resistor,  
Taylor 8mm wires  
CARBURETION/Weber 44 IDF,  
hex bar linkage  
INTAKE MANIFOLDS/CB Performance,  
Big Beef aluminum  
EXHAUST/Kadron header,  
ceramic coated  
CLUTCH/Sachs  
ESTIMATED HP/105hp  
OTHER MODS/powdercoated Puma  
fan housing, chromed alternator and  
tin, billet breather box, Scat pulley  
system, AN lines, red top Optima  
battery, Holley regulator

### TRANSAXLE/1978 TYPE 1 SWINGAXLE

BUILDER/OEM, VW of Brazil  
RING & PINION/4.37:1  
GEAR RATIOS/3.80 first, 2.06 second,  
1.32 third, 0.89 fourth  
SPECIAL MODS/paint detailed

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