

DESERTER PRESERVES REAR SEAT AREA



In the land of the bean and the cod, they sometimes do things differently. A case in point is the Deserter, a buggy which recently has gone into series production in the shops of a noted racing car maker. Deserter, pronounced with a short initial e and the accent on the first syllable, may have a vaguely familiar look but it has some important differences.

Chief among these is wheelbase. Rather than the almost universal shortening of the VW floorpan to 80 in., Deserter requires a 10.75 in. cut for a wheelbase of 84 in. The extra 4 in. are put to good use in the rear seat, providing a more comfortable seat and better foot-room than otherwise is the case. The cut in the pan, moreover, is located somewhat differently than is usual practice.

Alexander Dearborn, president of Dearborn Automobile Co. which markets the Deserter, tells about some of the other differences in the body itself, most relating to the specialized wheelbase. It is, of course, reinforced fiberglass which is molded in three sections: Body, hood,

and dashboard. It is produced for Dearborn by Autodynamics Corporation in Marblehead, Mass., and both share the same office address (2 Barnard St.).

The roomier rear seat additionally provides a stowage bin behind the seatback. Deserter, unlike many other buggies, extends its rear panel over and down around the VW engine for increased weather protection. A molded "bustle" which makes up the mid-section of this extension serves as the license plate mount.

Dearborn points out another thing about Deserter: Rear fenders are brought outward and down to cover the rear wheels more thoroughly. This, he admits, was made necessary to satisfy the whims of some motor vehicle registration officials in the East. It does limit the rear rubber to the less extreme tire sizes, however, though the fender width is sufficient to handle 7 in. rims.

At the front, Deserter bears a strong resemblance to the trend-setting Meyers Manx. Dearborn insists that that is merely a tribute to the Manx's unique design. Deserter still has differences, though a quick glance might not reveal them. The hood is 1.5 in. higher and the dashboard is 2 in. higher and wider, providing more room underneath for mounting the stock fuel tank. The higher dash top in turn raises the windshield height to improve forward vision, Dearborn says, when stock VW seats are installed.

Autodynamics' molds were made from clay plugs which its workers shaped themselves, according to Dearborn. Further, the molds had to be different to accommodate a floorpan that is somewhat wider because of the different cutting method, he adds.

Deserter kits come two ways. The basic kit containing the three body pieces only sells for \$498. A deluxe kit, adding another \$169 or so of extras to the basic pieces, costs \$635.00. The extras include safety glassed windshield assembly, headlights in either 6 or 12 volt, body brackets, battery bracket, fender welting, air cleaner, all fastenings

and the various instruction sheets necessary for construction.

A full list of optional accessories are available for the Deserter builder. Dearborn recommends 6 x 14 wheels for the front and 7 x 15 wheels on back. Those are available at \$23 and \$28, respectively, as are 15 in. wheels with 6 in. rims (\$24) or with 8 in. rims (\$28). When ordered with the deluxe kit, Goodyear Wide Boot, white stripe tires also are available at special prices in the D70-14, G70-14, or H70-15 sizes. Goodyear's smaller Terra-Tire in the 8.50-15 size also can be supplied by Dearborn.

The unpainted rollbar, built of 1.5 in. steel tubing, is a \$30 option. A tuned length extractor exhaust system sells for \$56. Bumpers, fan belt guard, skid plate, and a \$15 dual handbrake assembly are other optional extras. The rear seat is available for \$12 bare and ready to be padded, or fully upholstered in black for \$50. A black vinyl soft top kit with rear window and support bow runs \$60, while another \$65 will add the side curtains, the latter having Velcro fastenings and a zipper pocket. One other option, seldom seen on West Coast buggies, is a kit to keep the VW engine heater working during those cold New England winters. That's a \$16 extra.

Fully assembled, Deserter has an 8 in. ground clearance and stretches 132.5 in. overall. Dry weight at the curb is figured at 1150 lb., 150 lb. of which are the body and windshield.

Dearborn reports that production presently is running one kit per day, with plans being made to expand. A second model is about ready to be put into production also, he adds, though no indication is given as to when it will be on the market. Deserter kits are available directly from the factory at Marblehead, though dealers are being franchised in other parts of the country.

Deserter makes one other contribution to the fun-Fun-FUN side of buggies: Its five stock body colors carry such appropriate titles as "Pitch Black," "Debit Red," "Bowling Green" and "Yellow Pages." □