



Project X: Meet The Volkswagen SP2!

In an era when Brazil was barred from automotive imports, the local Volkswagen subsidiary started a project known as Project X to introduce a new model. Mid America Motorworks takes a look at the life of the Volkswagen SP, from special project to reputation as sheep in wolf's clothing.

Project X

In the 1970s, the Brazilian automotive market was closed to imports. This left Volkswagen enthusiasts to choose the retired Karmann Ghia as their sports car of choice, or go with Puma, Santa Matilde or Miura to fill the void. The CEO of the VW Brazil subsidiary (who would later become CEO of the entire company), Rudolf Leiding, hired designer Marcio Piancastelli to transform the Volkswagen Variant into a stylish sports car. The result was the sleek Volkswagen SP, or Sao Paulo.



The Volkswagen SP2 soon followed and made a prototype debut in 1971. The car wasn't available to the public until the following year and received lots of positive attention. The sophisticated styling made the SP2 an instant hit, with a long front overhang and quad headlights. A rounded rear fastback featured gills designed to let the Air Cooled engine breathe. The engine bay was accessible by a glass hatch and concealed by a carpet panel.

The two-seater included a generous amount of luggage space in the cargo area, with 1970s-era vinyl bucket seats and a wood-like plastic dash full of instruments. There was no doubt on the automotive scene that the SP2 was a looker. Performance though was a different story. fenders with an extra cuff. It included the torsion bar suspension and front fenders used on Standard Beetles, bringing the Standard's power to the Super's looks.



All Show, No Go

The VW SP was the initial sports car design. However, due to an engine that only produced 65hp, it was quickly replaced by the SP2. The 1600cc engine was upgraded to with a 1700cc, but still only produced 75hp. Period tests put the SP2's 0-to-60 time somewhere around 16 seconds, a far cry from the speed intended with sports cars of the time.

While the SP2 lacked speed, ride quality for a low-production sport coupe was incredible. Expert overall construction and full frames around the door glass make the SP2 solid, even over cobblestone roads.

As other options presented themselves that were lighter and faster, the SP2 had a short lifespan. Production topped out in 1976 at 10,205 cars. Thanks to its smooth looks, it has become a collector's dream, with a white SP2 on display at the Volkswagen Museum.

[Graphics From Jalopnik Article](#)

