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The tall periscope could be used to increase the flow of cooling air to the VW engine, or the base could be adapted to mount a Formula-1 style rear wing (also available from the manufacturers). The Albar "S" buggy used twin round rear lamp units.
(Author photo)



The Albar "S" was developed from the design of the long wheelbase GP buggy in order to meet strict European vehicle legislation. The low front spoiler, wide side panels, and periscope on the rear deck were very dramatic styling features.



Confirming its status as a buggy for road use only, the Albar "S" could be fitted with an all-enclosing glassfiber gull-wing hardtop and full interior heating system. Driver comfort could be further improved by adding the luxurious interior trim and seating options available from the accessory catalog.



The Albar "ES," with unitary bodyshell laminated in flame-retardant resin, and traditional alloy windshield frame, was a cheaper kit option. The design had noticeably lower sides to the body waistline, but still fitted the stock VW floorpan. The kit was also made in Britain, though few were sold.



Above: The Imp, seen here at the Orange County International Raceway in 1968, was a capable off-roader. EMPI Sprintstar wheels and wide tires complemented the overall look of the buggy with its iridescent metalflake finish. (Courtesy Bob McClurg)

EMPI (Engineered Motor Products Inc.) was already a successful VW aftermarket parts supplier when it entered the fiberglass dune buggy market. Its neat Imp buggy, with clamshell fenders and swept-down sides, was a milestone in original US buggy design. (Courtesy Bob McClurg)



EMPI advertising was as good as the products themselves. The 1970 Imp had new side panels, a full-length engine cover, a revised front hood, and a more secure snap-in rear seat.



On the off-road track at Orange Raceway, the Imp regularly competed against others, such as the Burro and the Peppertree Automotive buggy. EMPI's tuning products for the VW engine added to the Imp's competitiveness in such events. (Courtesy Bob McClurg)



Following a showing at the Frankfurt Motor Show, the Imp was marketed under licence in Germany. The modified design, though, with its lower and more rounded fenders, never had the sophistication of the original. Nevertheless, the occupants of this Imp, shown on the front cover of the sales brochure, seem to be enjoying themselves.

FF BUGGY UK

From the ashes of former buggy manufacturer and fiberglass producer, Fiber-Fab, came a new company: FF Kit Cars and Conversions Ltd. Run by industrial model maker Tim Cooksey, the company gave the whole UK buggy scene a much needed shot in the arm with the introduction of the FF Buggy in 1983.

Beginning life in Britain, courtesy of a set of imported American Balboa buggy moulds, the FF buggy was enhanced by the addition of a new "snub-nosed" front hood and sculpted side panels. The new hood was a neat one-piece unit with integral dashboard, to which the flat alloy windshield frame bolted directly. This unitary design made construction simpler for the customer and speeded manufacture.

Based on a Beetle floorpan shortened by 15in, the FF kit looked much more like a traditional-style buggy than did the Rat, the company's previous offering. Distinctive features of the kit included the neatly recessed petrol tank filler cap in the front hood, and the central instrument housing on the dashboard. At the rear, a softtop rain lip ran around the top edge of the bodyshell and down the rear wing section before blending into the body. The flat rear light sections, either side

The FF buggy was directly sired from US Balboa company's Lido design, and arrived in Britain courtesy of an imported set of moulds. The styling was altered by designing a more traditional front hood and sculpted side panels. The original front hood was later used on FF's Rat buggy. (Courtesy Peter Coxhead)

of the engine access opening, allowed the VW Polo's rear light units to fit perfectly (when turned upside down and swapped left to right).

The buggy's side panels were an optional styling accessory that complemented the sweeping sides and high rear end, and emphasised the angled stance of the car. By filling the cavernous gap between the wheels, and also forming wheelarches, the side elevation of the buggy was greatly improved. As a result, the short wheelbase FF kit was perfectly proportioned and looked attractive, even with the softtop up in the typical British weather. Side screens did a fair job of preventing water getting to the inside of the car.

The buggy was also noteworthy for the excellent quality of the fiberglass work. This was further enhanced by the option of metalflake finishes, popular during the first buggy boom and the early days of customising in the 1960s. Despite the practical problems, around 75% of all FF buggies had this type of finish (which said something for owner priority). The buggy's good looks and ease of construction ensured it was well received by an attentive British motoring press, and road test articles duly appeared in maga-



Two long wheelbase FF buggies were used in the UK TV series "Challenge Anneka" and were built by Sussex-based company Stevespeed. Blue gelcoat finishes and painted yellow star graphics made them instantly recognisable. (Courtesy *Volksworld*)

FIBER JET ENOS US & INDY "500"

Amongst buggy designs that have appeared under different names and been produced by different manufacturers is one that originated as the Lido by Balboa Buggies in California. It soon reappeared as the El Lobo, then the La Tigre, and also in Britain as the FF Buggy. A similar design, called the Enos "500," has also appeared in the Fiber Jet catalog over many years. The main reasons for the enduring popularity of the buggy are ease of construction, good looks, and the fact that the styling has never dated.

The Enos "500" was designed for the traditional shortened VW floorpan, and took the classic Manx style a stage further towards the round fenderline of the equally desirable EMPI Imp. At the front, the clamshell-type fenders swept back and down to form a wide sill, over which the driver and passenger could easily slide into their seats. Rising up again, the body formed a wider rear wheelarch that ended in a flattened area at the back for the rear light clusters and the centrally mounted licence plate (with twin licence plate lamps on each side of the plate). The rear lights were often the compact units from a Ford Mustang.

The front hood was not dissimilar to that of the company's other buggy, the Cobra. Raked forward, and with a central "V"-shaped styling ridge, the nose ended in a recessed flat area that conveniently housed the licence plate. Round, or small rectangular, headlamp units could be fitted, and frontal appearance could also be changed by the addition of a small front spoiler, mounted below the lower edge of the front hood. The all-in-one front hood and dashboard unit had mounts at each side to fit the polished alloy windscreen frame, and windshield wiper mountings in front of the glass. The dashboard was a shaped affair, with room for full instrumentation on the driver's side, and a recessed area and grab-handle for the passenger.

As a mounting point for those wishing to fit a softtop, or the optional vinyl-finish fiberglass hardtop, there was a raised lip around the top edge of the rear part of the bodyshell, which also helped to keep water out of the vehicle. Builders also had the option of fitting the Fiber Jet running board-styled side panels, or the more enclosing pod-type panels.

To keep the design alive and fresh, an update of the kit was offered in 1989. Named the Indy Enos "500," the

Data Panel

Dates of Production: Enos "500" : 1976 - Date
Indy : 1989 - Date

Numbers Built: 1500 (approx.)

Export Markets: None

Wheelbase: 80in

Identification Tips: Enos "500" had classic Balboa buggy looks, with sloped front hood, abruptly truncated for the licence plate mount. The Indy version added wide racing-style side panels with dummy filler caps, and a Porsche-style rear wing.

new buggy added features to the original design to give an Indianapolis race look, belying its less exotic VW Beetle base. Although the bodyshell and front hood were the same mouldings, the look of the buggy was changed by the addition of extra wide side pods and a Porsche-style rear wing, similar to that on the turbo 911s. The pods themselves could be fitted with dummy filler caps on their top edge, for the Indy look, but could house large capacity fuel tanks behind the fascias to give extended driving range. The company demonstrator also had a set of louvres added to the pods, though these were strictly non-functional.

Available in solid or metalflake colors, the Indy Enos "500" has brought one of the longest surviving US buggy designs up to date and looks like it has lots of life left in it yet.



An original Lido buggy at Bug-In #11, with flamed pearl paint, BRM wheels on the back and wire wheels at the front. Flyweight buggies like this Jim Dutchers Speed Shop car were formidable drag race competitors. The Lido design was copied many times, and the more modern Enos "500" by Fiber Jet owes its curvaceous lines to this original.
(Courtesy John Lazenby)