

VWGA

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF VW

1950s AND 1960s



The story of Volkswagen in South Africa began with an icon: the VW Type 1, better known as the Beetle. Though the Beetle was first manufactured in Germany in 1938, the Uitenhage factory owned by SAMAD began building the “People’s Car” – yes, the car that Volkswagen was named for – on 31 August 1951. Almost 300 000 Beetles were built in South Africa by the time the last Beetle rolled off the line in 1979.

This was not the only icon of Volkswagen’s first decade in South Africa, however. In 1955, the plant began building the Type 2 – known by many other names, such as the Kombi, the Caracara, the Transporter or the Microbus. Production of this icon lasted all the way until 2002, meaning almost two-thirds of the Volkswagen story in South Africa included the Type 2.

Both these cars began production under the umbrella of SAMAD; however, in 1956 the controlling interest in SAMAD was bought by Volkswagenwerk in Germany, with a R1 million expansion programme announced at the same time. (This investment enabled the

production volume to be increased to 75 cars per day.)

The 100 000th Volkswagen built in Uitenhage came off the production line in November 1963 – shortly before all models built here were fitted with safety belts as standard equipment. Late in 1966, the decision is made to change the name of the company to Volkswagen of South Africa. The factory that had been building Volkswagens for 15 years would now exclusively build brands linked to the Volkswagen Group; in fact, production of Audi models would begin in 1968. This heralded a new chapter in the history of Volkswagen in South Africa.

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