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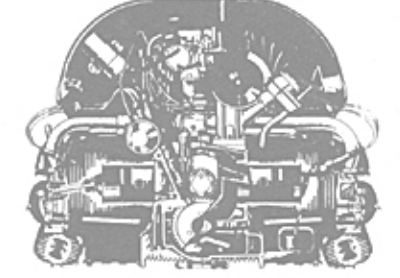
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Collectors CORNER

BY RICH KIMBALL

COLLECTIBLES FROM JAPAN

Recently, Masaaki Yamashita of the Boys Spirit Club in Japan contacted me. I know, I was a little perplexed by the name too, but they are a group of VW collectors in Osaka. Some of the "Americanized" names of shops and clubs in Japan seem to lose something in the translation. Anyway, Masaaki was looking for some VW Classic posters, and mentioned that his group had produced a series of special VW collector

Masaaki said the new 2004 plate would be released soon, although he couldn't say yet what the artwork will be. I think he wants it to be a surprise. The first five plates are all the artwork of Cool-A (Ken Onodera). He is a popular illustrator in the Japanese Volkswagen world.

All of the plates portray a group of air-cooled Volkswagens on display. The 1999 plate shows four VWs, a Type 3, bus, Ghia, and a Beetle up front. For 2000, there are four cars again, this time with a bus up front. In 2001, the theme was Fahrvergnügen, and seven Volkswagens surround Mr. Bubblehead. "Cool Breeze" entitles the 2002 edition, with Vee-Dubs surrounding some palm trees. Last year's plate was the "VW Treffen," portraying an imaginary car show.

Included with the plates was a set of five postcards. At first glance they might appear to be just another photo of a VW, but at second glance you recognize the tin models.

They are natural dioramas. Using a few miniature props and a long lens, the photographer has done a great job of making the tin models appear proportional with their background. My favorite card was one with suitcases on top of the Bandai tin Deluxe Microbus. After looking at it for awhile, it dawns on you that the one suitcase is about the same size as the cargo doors not exactly carry-on size.

I'm not sure if these postcards are available, but Masaaki says they still have a few plate sets.



At first glance they almost look real. However, I bet it would take a pretty big boy to hoist that somewhat large luggage onto the roof of that Bandai Microbus.

plates, and wondered if I had seen them. I said I hadn't, and after some negotiations, I sent him some posters and he sent me a couple sets of the plates.

The firm of TAJIMI made the seven-inch plates for the club. Only five hundred of each annual edition were produced, making for a very limited edition. They have a blue and white motif, reminding me of some of my wife's collector plates ... although I doubt I'll manage to get them approved for the dining room.

Evidently, they have been making these for six years now, because the five I got are dated 1999 through 2003, and

The club sells the plates for \$15 each, or \$75 a set (plus shipping). Masaaki's e-mail is <ee5m-ymst@asahi-net.or.jp>, if you want to drop him a line.



The first five plates are by artist Ken Onodera, famous in Japan as "Cool-A" for his VW cartoons and illustrations.