



# Super-trucker!

## SuperPro's suspension upgrades for the Amarok provide enhanced handling in addition to the attractions of its inherent rugged styling and practicality...

**THE AMAROK pickup has been another success story for Volkswagen; not a total game-changer in terms of dominating the commercial vehicles market, but carving itself a new niche at the premium end of the range, with annual sales reaching nearly 4,000 here in the UK alone.**

As you'll have read in the feature on the 2017 Amarok, previously in this issue, with the new 3.0 V6 TDI model Volkswagen is moving it even further upmarket as a premium pickup. It's equally desirable for both light business and private recreational use, but still fully capable of some heavy-weight hauling and fairly serious off-road use if the need, or desire, arises...

When any new model moves the market forwards, the previous generation gets a 'second wind' of interest as it transitions

into the affordable secondhand market and becomes more attractive to the average enthusiast as well as existing business buyers, and the purveyors of aftermarket accessories and upgrades welcome it with open arms.

In the case of the Amarok, the new 2017 model is essentially the same under the skin, certainly as far as most of the running gear is concerned, and so any upgrades developed for the original model will be equally applicable to both old and new. That's nothing but good news for an aftermarket suspension specialist like SuperPro, which has recently released a range of upgrades for the Amarok...

Somewhat conveniently, we also happened to know that Performance Driven, the independent servicing and tuning specialist in Taunton Somerset, was planning

to upgrade the suspension of one of their company vehicles, a 2013 Amarok Highline 2.0 TDI. With Performance Driven being based only about 10 miles away from SuperPro's HQ in Middlezoy, it was time to pack the camera gear, get up early and head west on the M3/A303.

Arriving bright and early at the workshops, the guys at Performance Driven had already made a good start by removing most of the original suspension and it was a perfect opportunity to examine the basic layout.

Just like the vehicle itself, with its modern powertrain and comfortable well-appointed cab up front and a farmyard-functional pickup bed and tailgate at back, the suspension set-up is a similar marriage of new and old tech. Up front, it has a double control arm (aka wishbone) set-up, with coil spring MacPherson struts and a hefty transverse anti-roll bar. Cleaned and polished up, it wouldn't look at all out of place on a high-performance saloon.

At the back, though, is a much more 'functional' set-up. OK, let's not beat about the bush – it's almost agricultural in its simplicity, the sort of rear suspension



you'd have found on a 'four wheels and a board' (Ford) back in the late Sixties/early Seventies. It's nothing more, nothing less, than a solid rear axle suspended below a pair of longitudinal leaf springs. My great-grandfather had a horse-drawn cart that had something very similar.

That's not to say that it doesn't do its job, though, and there are considerable practical and technical advantages in such a configuration – both in terms of its sheer ruggedness and the way it leaves plenty of depth and space for the rear load bay. If it weren't for the necessity for vertical dampers it could do away with the turrets in the load bay altogether.

So, plenty of room for improvement then, and SuperPro has come up with another co-ordinated package that upgrades the suspension of the Amarok with a full set of polyurethane bushes, as well as a pair of uprated and adjustable front and rear anti-roll bars.

Virtually all of the OEM rubber bushes on the original control arms are replaced with these superior SuperPro polyurethane bushes, which are claimed to offer a longer service life, greater precision and much more positive handling at speed.

Compared with the original equipment rubber bushes, the general advantages of polyurethane bushes are fairly well known by now, but let's just say that there are some wide variations in composition and performance – polyurethane bushes are not all created equal...



From first-hand experience, having used various different brands over the years, we can confirm that SuperPro's unique polyurethane formulation not only provides the firm control needed for improved handling but also offers more progression than some of its harsher rivals, with noise, vibration and harshness (NVH) levels kept very close to OEM standards.

Forget any stories you'll hear about polyurethane bushes being stiff and uncompromising; some are, but not these, and the only time we've heard of them squeaking is when they've not been installed

correctly, sometimes without even using the special grease supplied.

As well as the inherent material advantage, to help compensate for changes in suspension geometry, or to allow for chassis tuning adjustment, SuperPro has produced a double-offset bush for the rear of the lower control arm and an alignment correction bush for the inner bush of the upper control arm. Between them, they allow optimisation of the all-important alignment and they increase the caster for greater straight-line stability.

Working, as always, as a well managed team, the Performance Driven crew of top man Simon Hayman, technician Chris Searle and eager apprentice Jake Parkman soon had the original suspension dismantled and a production line operation ensued, with the original rubber bushes being pressed out, the apertures wire-brushed and cleaned and the new SuperPro bushes installed.

Of course, the job is much easier with such full workshop facilities at hand, but the SuperPro bushes can also be installed using 'backyard' DIY techniques, either burning or cutting/chiselling/drilling out the original rubber bushes, before fashioning a puller from sockets and studding to draw the polyurethane bushes into place; even the jaws of a large vice or water-pump pliers will do, in some





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cases. Just be sure to check the correct orientation of the new bushes first, and make sure they are correctly greased.

This article isn't meant to be a step-by-step 'how-to' so we'll leave that to the combination of fitting instructions and a good workshop manual, plus common sense and initiative. Suffice it to say that the only awkwardness observed was when it came to re-fitting the leaf springs and inserting the front shackle bolts; the upper one is hidden completely from view, is difficult to reach and requires a lot of dexterity and the patience of a saint when it comes to fitting it!

With the new bushes all fitted and the main suspension components re-installed, time for the new SuperPro heavy-duty anti-

roll bars. The front bar, larger in diameter at 30 mm, is a simple substitution, but of course there is no rear anti-roll bar as standard on the Amarok. Instead, SuperPro has devised a fitting kit that uses U-shaped shackles that clamp on over the rear axle tubes and a couple of brackets that bolt to the inside of the rear chassis rails.

Some 24 mm in diameter, the SuperPro rear bar adds roll stiffness as well as additional 'triangulation' to the rear suspension arrangement, and both front and rear bars also provide a selection of positions – two at front and three at the rear – for the attachment of the drop links, to afford some degree of fine tuning due the slight variation in leverage.

With the installation completed, a final double-check and adjustment of the geometry and tracking, using Performance Driven's Supertracker alignment equipment, and it was time for a test drive. Here, though, we'll leave Simon Hayman to report because





## SPECIFICATION

### 2013 VW Amarok Highline 2.0 TDI

#### Body and trim

- Two-tone front bumper trim
- Side bars with steps
- Rear styling bars
- Roll and lock bed cover
- Tow bar
- Roof bars

#### Engine

- Revo Stage 1 ECU software upgrade to 208 PS / 328 lb.ft.
- Performance panel filter
- Milltek Sport cat-back exhaust with twin oval tailpipes

#### Suspension

- SuperPro rear leaf spring bush kit
- SuperPro front upper control arm bush kit
- SuperPro front lower control arm bush kit with caster increase
- SuperPro 30 mm 2-position front anti-roll bar
- SuperPro 24 mm 3-position rear anti-roll bar

#### Wheels and tyres

- 19-inch VW Cantera alloy wheels
- Vredestein Wintrac 4 Extreme 255/55 R19 111V XL

#### Infotainment

- Alpine X801D-U Advanced Navigation and 8-inch capacitive touchscreen.
- Alpine 6.6-inch component 2-way speakers (x4)

we didn't get a chance to drive the vehicle beforehand and our last major test-drive of the first generation Amarok had been quite some years ago. Simon Comments...

'My initial impressions of the Amarok when I drove it home for the first time was how different the steering was – it felt lighter than it had originally, due to the more responsive feel that comes from fitting the caster increase kit. The vehicle's ability to track straight under all road conditions, without the need to make constant adjustments to the steering, had also improved.

'The Amarok has always been a nice drive and better refined than most of the current 4x4/pickup models available, but with the SuperPro bushes it takes it to another level. There has been no increase in noise or vibration from fitting the bushes, which only reinforces the claims that the compound used by SuperPro has no ill effects in terms of comfort when using polyurethane bushes.

'There's less roll from the front and the rear anti-roll bar fitment has definitely

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reduced the body roll from the back when cornering, but without making it unforgiving, which in turn provides a more confident drive – especially at this time of year when road conditions are not at their best.

'Ultimately it would have been nice to have loaded the back of the vehicle to its maximum weight as I believe the rear anti-roll bar would then really come into its own. This will be a test in the spring, when some building materials will be required for some home DIY projects, so I will report back then.

'The other benefit with the SuperPro front and rear anti-roll bars is the ability to adjust the stiffness of the bars to suit an individual's requirements for load and handling.' 🇧🇪

## CONTACTS

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***'The ability to track straight under all road conditions has also improved..'***

