

# BACK TO THE FUTURE

Three generations of Skoda vRS plus a bucketful of Petes magic potion equals enough horsepower to time travel. **Ouseph Chacko** pops a few brave pills.

PHOTOGRAPHY ASHLEY BAXTER





5 am on a four-lane highway leading out of Kochi. I assume the occasional flashes of light in the sky are the signs of an approaching storm, but Shibin, my passenger, disagrees. He tells me that we are a bit over the speed limit and those flashes are the speed cameras going off. Shit! That’s what surplus power does – it makes the car run smooth and easy. It makes it run deceptively fast on small throttle inputs. There is no storm or a Marty McFly in a DeLorean approaching – we are the storm.

Now, a decade ago, if you sent so much power to the front axle, you would need to pay attention. You would be fighting an armful of torque steer and enter into a wrestling match with the steering wheel every time the turbo lit up. But not so in this 2018 car. In this Generation III vRS, which Pete says is putting out more than 324hp, big speed is natural – the car gets there without me having to concentrate hard. In here, rather than sweating bullets, I’m chatting with Shibin as I unwittingly rack up a few more fines.

A little later, Peter Chacko tells me that all the Gen III vRS needs to get the 2.0-litre engine to do a number switcheroo (233hp to 324hp) is a Stage 2 remap, which is quite astonishing. It means these new engines are strong enough to take the beating without needing internal reinforcement. The older vRSes here need serious hardware upgrades to get to similar numbers.

The driving experience of the Gen III is similarly uncomplicated. You slip into the superb bucket seats, snap on the seatbelts, slide the gear lever into ‘D’, and it is warp speed, Scotty. There is no sweat involved in getting a quick 0-100kph time out of the car either. There is no lag, no need to perfectly time clutch-and-wrist action – the DSG will sort out lightning quick, perfectly executed gear changes every time. The launch control and standard XDS limited slip differential will sort out traction issues and slingshot you down the road with absolutely no

### ROUGH ROAD PACKAGE



THE WHITE GENERATION III vRS is actually the sensible 324hp car. Mathew Joshua’s car has an identical setup to the blue Octy, but with one crucial difference – the B6 suspension hasn’t been lowered 30mm like on the blue car. This means you don’t have to constantly worry about scraping the chin. You also don’t have to listen to the tyres rubbing against the wheel arches when you corner really hard (the blue car did that). An even more practical 324hp car, if you will.



Gen III gets Launch Control, makes it the easiest one to get consistent times out of; its DSG box is lightning quick; gets limited slip diff as standard and is the best at putting power down through hard corners.



Gen 1’s six-speed manual with the quickshifter demands the most skill from the driver.

drama. Seriously, there is no thinking involved to drive this car fast. At this point, I’d like to break into the story with a confession. The acceleration times we recorded for the Gen III vRS is actually of the white car (see box). It had the better Michelin Pilot Sport 4 tyres that helped it grip off the line better. The blue car’s Pirelli P7 Cinturatos weren’t hooking up off the line as cleanly and resulted in 0.2sec slower times.

Look at the times and you will see that a stock



Tarox brakes on the Gen I have a strong bite but they tend to fade after hard use.

vRS will have no trouble keeping up with Pete’s vRS (most likely because the surface we tested on wasn’t the grippiest). After 80kph though, the remapped car takes its first gulp of Redbull. At 100kph, there is a 0.65sec gap and at 120kph, that widens to nearly a second. At 140kph, Pete’s car is 1.5sec ahead, and from then on, the stock vRS simply turns pink with embarrassment. More than the sheer speed and the effortlessness of it all, what blows me away is how easy it all is. Modern suspension setup and

wheel geometry have mostly cured violent torque steer and this car’s Bilstein B6 suspension makes sure all this power stays on the road without the need for teeth-rattling suspension stiffness. It turns well, easily puts down whatever power your stupid right foot feeds it, and when you do push it, the safety net comes in and gently nudges you away from danger. It does so without being overly intrusive and makes you look like you know what you’re doing; that, for me, is what makes this car so good.

### TOO MUCH WHEELSPIN! ABORT! ABORT! ABORT!

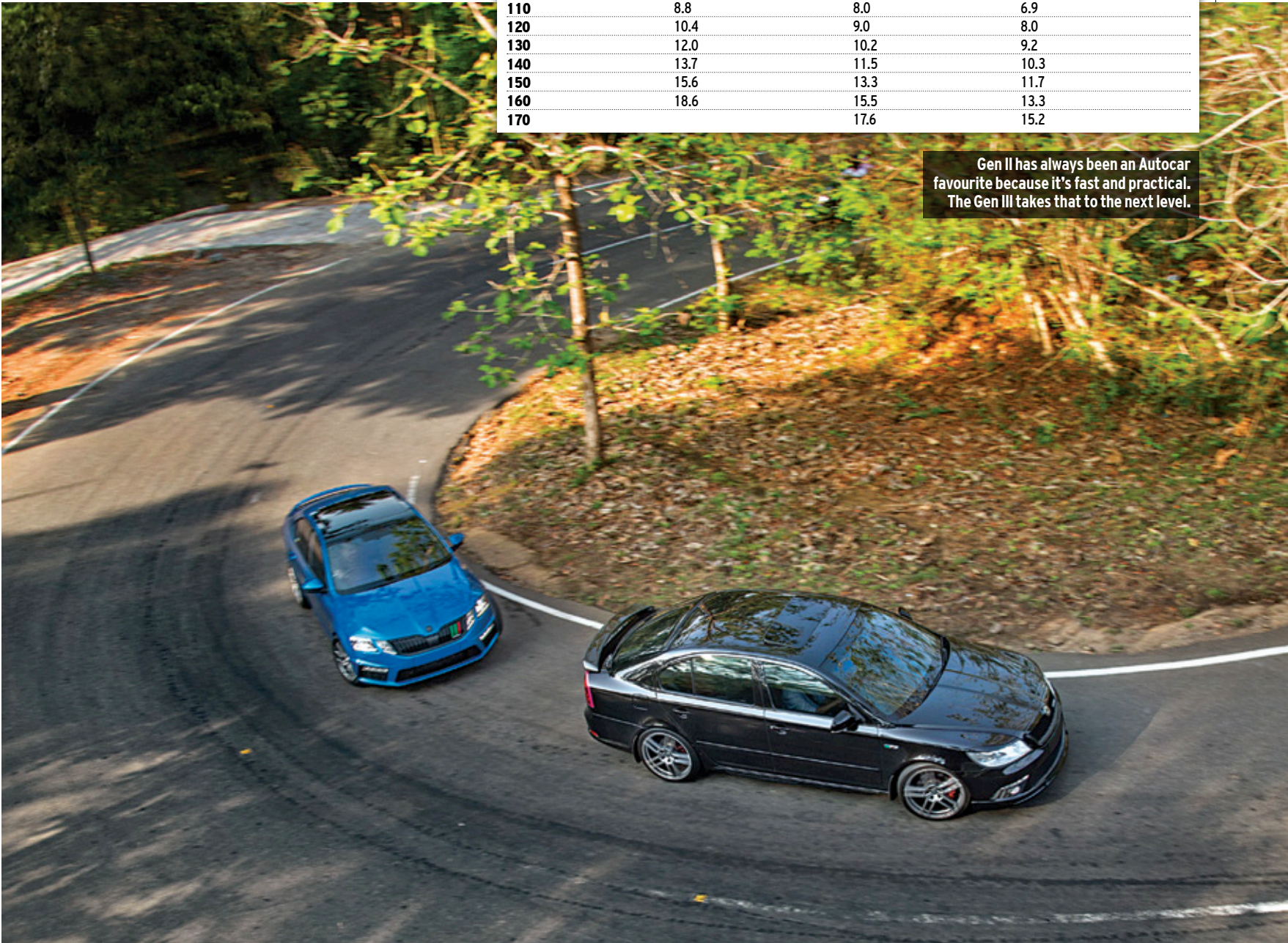
You need a bit more skill to get the best out of the Laura vRS. It has a manual gearbox and that means you actually have to work to get the best times out of it. Pete’s says it has more than 300hp and to get it to that figure (up from the stock car’s 182.5hp), it needs a Stage 3 remap and a turbo upgrade. To get the best times out of it, I need to hold the clutch just below the biting point, hold revs at around 3,500rpm and get off the clutch while fuelling a thin line between bogging down and wheel-spinning away

precious milliseconds. The 1.8-litre motor is as sweet as I remember it, but this one gets to its redline waaaaay faster. Snap into second, a bit of wheelspin, and it is already at the redline again. Grab third and that is when the tyres hook up and the Laura lifts its skirt, finds proper traction and runs. Everything about the run is fun – that sweet gearshift encourages you to bang it in, the steering has good heft, and with the upgraded

suspension, that little bit of slop I remember in the stock Laura vRS is gone. This one even shrugs off the mild bumps of uneven tarmac we hit as we cross 150kph. Again, the raw performance numbers are similar to the stock vRS until around 70kph. Then, the Pete’s car starts sucking in the horizon much faster. There’s 1.5sec of air between the →

	Generation I Octavia vRS mods	Generation II Laura vRS mods	Generation III Octavia vRS mods
PERFORMANCE	Acceleration (from rest)	Acceleration (from rest)	Acceleration (from rest)
Kph	Sec	Sec	Sec
10	0.1	0.4	0.5
20	1.2	1.1	1.1
30	2.0	1.7	1.6
40	2.6	2.3	2.2
50	3.2	2.9	2.8
60	3.9	3.8	3.4
70	5.0	4.5	4.0
80	5.8	5.1	4.6
90	6.7	5.8	5.3
100	7.6	6.6	6.0
110	8.8	8.0	6.9
120	10.4	9.0	8.0
130	12.0	10.2	9.2
140	13.7	11.5	10.3
150	15.6	13.3	11.7
160	18.6	15.5	13.3
170		17.6	15.2

Gen II has always been an Autocar favourite because it’s fast and practical. The Gen III takes that to the next level.





← two by 100kph, 4.2sec by 140kph and by 170kph, Pete’s vRS is in the next district (read that as 7.6sec quicker). That’s nuts whichever way you look at it!

Before current owner Aswin Reghu bought it, it used to belong to Peter, and so, it has everything thrown at it. The Bilstein B16 suspension with H&R anti-roll bars helps it corner hard and allows it to ballerina over tricky surfaces and through corners without feeling too stiff; that’s what makes it usable. The only thing you have to learn is how to feed in power. Too much throttle mid-corner and the unloaded inside wheel will try and spin that power away before stability control kicks in and chops that power. What this means is that you need to drive it smooth to get it to give you its best. Unlike the new Octavia which is devastatingly quick all the time and will cover up for you when you overcook it, you need to up your game a bit to drive this car fast. You need to learn its nuances and it is the work that you put in to earn your reward that makes this car more involving and, perhaps, a bit more thrilling to drive than the new one.

THE OLD BEAST

You know Rajpaul Thomas’s Generation I Octavia vRS is a tough old beast the minute you hear it. Your ears pick up the Milltek exhaust from a mile away and it is a sound peppered with loud hisses and whistles from the Forge blow-off valve. It then appears out of the darkness looking very sinister and very venomous. Painted in Rajpaul’s own shade of black (yes, he has his own shade of black) and with a splitter hanging millimetres off the deck, this first-generation Octavia has pages and pages of mods thrown into it to get it to the 300-plus horsepower it is now making. It certainly isn’t the friendly everyday boosted car that the other two are. Rajpaul has even thrown out the rear seats for ermmm... Pete’s sake!

His car is low, loud, stiff and grumbles at you if you don’t quickly grow the requisite chest hair you need to drive it fast. The SPEC triple-plate clutch makes it incredibly tricky to get a clean start off the line. Even with a 6,000rpm dump, the car bogs down momentarily before blaring down the road. The short-shifter needs measured but firm inputs to get it to shift quickly and the whole car buzzes like it is alive; it is no slouch. After that initial bog at clutch dump, it’ll rev out and you have to quickly grab second where again there is some lag before the energy kicks in. Shift to third and that’s where the party begins. Third is a looooong gear – the noise, the tingling in your spine, the turbo spooling violence; it is



“ Gen II and III throw 300+hp punches with velvet-lined gloves. Gen I just throws Mike Tyson at you, and you better be prepared when it does. ”



The older the car, the more skill you need to drive it, especially when there’s more than 300hp going to the front wheels.



Peter Chacko says that 300hp in the Gen III is just a remap and an air filter/exhaust swap away, while the older cars need serious upgrades to get to the same numbers.

MOD LIST

GEN I OCTAVIA vRS

- Pete’s Performance Remap
- JBS04 Turbo stage 3
- ECS Lightweight Pulleys
- ECS Fuel Filter
- Hitachi Ignition Coil Pack
- Evo Heat Shield
- Carbonio Cold Air-Intake
- 3.0-inch Air Mass Meter
- 310cc Injectors
- 4Bar Fuel Pump
- 4Bar Fuel Regulator
- Forge 007P Diverter Valve
- Forge Turbo Intake Pipe
- Forge Front Mount Intercooler
- JBS Cast Manifold
- Milltek 3.0-inch Exhaust System
- ABD Racing Intake Manifold

- Neu Speed Short-Shifter
- Wavetrac Differential
- SPEC Triple-Plate Clutch
- H&R Sport Cup Kit Suspension
- H&R Upgraded Anti Roll Bars Front and Rear
- H&R Strut Braces
- H&R ‘Triple C’ Camber Adjustment Bolts
- All round Powerflex Polyurethane Bushes
- VF Engineering Lower Pendulum Engine Mount
- VF Engineering Transmission Side Mount
- VF Engineering Engine Side Mount

GEN II LAURA vRS

- Pete’s Custom Remap - Stage 3
- JBS Hybrid turbo upgrade

- Bilstein B16 iRC electronic control suspension
- Tarox 6-pot kit in front and uprated G88 rotors at the rear
- H&R ARBs at the front and back
- Milltek full exhaust including decated downpipe
- Carbonio stage 2 intake system
- Uprated coil packs and sparks
- Braille lithium-ion heavy-duty battery

GEN 3 OCTAVIA vRS

- Pete’s Custom Remap - Stage 2+
- Milltek full exhaust including decat downpipe
- Forge full intake system including intake pipe and turbo muffler delete
- Bilstein B6 with H&R springs