

# CONVERTIBLE PAN HALF REPLACEMENT MADE EASY

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PHOTOS BY HENRY Z. DE KUYPER

There is a myth instilled into the heads of most VW lovers that convertible pan halves (like all other convertible parts) are convertible only, not available, over priced and, therefore, out of reach of us mere mortals. Others believe that the pan halves have an extra support along the outer perimeter. Well, all of the above are false. The outer supports do exist, but they are on the lower rockers of the body, not on the pan halves. The truth is convert-

ible pan halves are the same as sedan pan sections except for one thing: the jack support. On a convertible, the jack support is part of the rocker and not welded to the pan like on a sedan.

I can already sense all the purists starting to write me nasty letters, but if you can find—and afford to spend lots of money and time—original, convertible-only pan sections, be my guest. I, on the other hand, contacted Wolfsburg West in Anaheim, Calif., and ordered up a set of pan halves for my '71 Convertible project car. Yes, it's that simple. Just order the sedan pan sec-

tions, and once you receive them simply remove the jack supports. Now, in my opinion, the only way to replace the pan sections is to remove the body from the pan. I've watched a guy install pan halves without body removal and it looks all right, but in the amount of time and effort he spent lying under the car, crouching, cutting, welding and burning, he could have just removed the body. If you don't have a lift to remove the body like I did, just call up four of your buddies; this produces the same result. For the average enthusiast this project should take a couple of days.

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Before any of the actual pan section replacing can begin, I needed to remove the body from the pan. I like to start from one end of the car and work toward the other end. Before you do anything, disconnect the battery; if you don't you could get a shock when you disconnect the alternator. Next, the fuel tank has to be removed by loosening the four fuel-tank bolts, and the fuel-sender cable and wire.



Remove the two bolts that hold the front of the body to the front suspension.



Now remove the steering coupler from the steering box (two bolts), then remove the brake lines from the brake reservoir to the master cylinder.



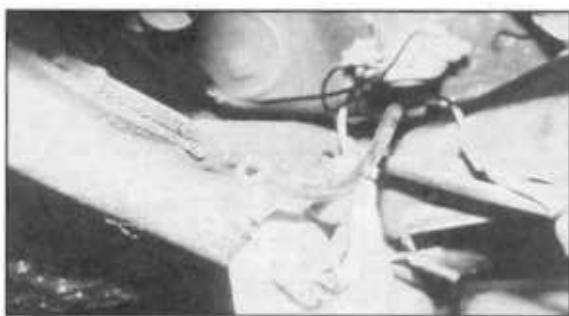
Remove the circlip or cotter pin which holds the speedo cable to the front left wheel, then pull the cable out from the backside of the spindle.



**5** From the bottom, remove the four front bulkhead bolts and remove all the body bolts from both sides. Before removing the body bolts you might want to spray WD-40™ or Liquid Wrench™ on the bolts to help loosen the rust.



**7** Under the rear seat you will find four pan bolts; remove them. The other two bolts are usually covered over with dirt or tar insulation so you may have to dig them out.



**8** Next, remove the breast tin and the coil wire (black), oil-pressure switch wire and the wires to the generator.

**6** Remove the rear wheels to access the rear body mounting bolts. These bolts have been exposed to the elements from day one, so they tend to break easily. While you're there remove all wires from the starter.



Now you can remove the body. If you don't have access to a lift and you have recruited some friends to help you remove the body, remove the seats and the shifter first.



**10** Here is the subject pan: rusted, tattered and awaiting restoration.



**11** Remove the pedal assembly and the metal brake line which runs from the master cylinder to the rear of the car.



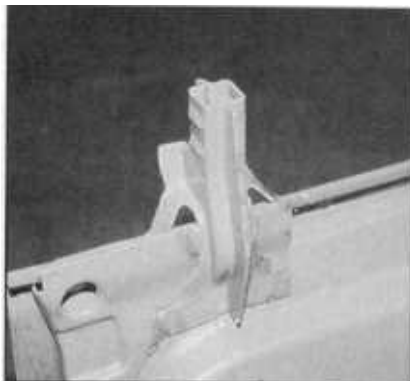
After the spot-welds have been removed, clean up the lip of the tunnel with a disc sander, creating a clean surface for welding.

**12** Next, remove the old floor sections. I took a sawzall and cut around the perimeter, removing the bulk of the floor section. Then with an air chisel I removed the remaining floor section, which is spot-welded.

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- 14** Take your new pan half and remove the jack support. These are heavily spot-welded to the floor, so take a spot-weld drill bit and drill out the spot welds. Be careful not to bend or rip up the new floorpan when removing this piece.



- 15** Next, take your disc sander and clean the paint off the lip of the floor pan (top and bottom). This ensures a clean area for a strong weld. Then place the floor section onto the pan.

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*Make sure that the bolt holes are aligned. Here I've taken a squared-off measurement from the old flooring and duplicated it on the new section.*



**17** *Clamp the pieces together and, when everything is aligned, tack weld it into place. Check the alignment once again and, if everything is good, proceed to tack weld every few inches around the floor section. Be sure to periodically check the fit and alignment. The VW factory ran a bead weld on the front outer bulkhead, as well as each corner and the inner rear where the flooring meets the center tunnel.*



*The torsion housing supports the outer rear pan, so I pre-drilled some holes through the floor, then welded them up. This will ensure a good weld penetration through the material.*



*With the welding finished it's time to seal the pieces. I used a silicone-based sealer and ran an even bead around the section on top and underneath.*



*A picture says it all. There's nothing like a new floor section.*

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*Before refitting the body, place a new pan seal down. The seal is held in place with little nails and if you didn't save the old pieces you can use carpet tacks. The new floor sections are not pre-drilled for these nails so I just duplicated the factory positions and drilled my own holes.*



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*Lastly, take a knife and cut holes in the seal for the pan bolts. Now you're almost home free. The only thing left is to mount the body to the pan. You will have to move the body around on the pan several times to get everything to align correctly. When reinstalling the bolts you must start from the rear of the car and work forward. The rear body bolts have no movement of adjustment, and therefore must be installed first. The front bulkhead bolts and the front body mounts are slotted and have room for adjustment. Install all the bolts, then tighten them down. This job may take a while but the end result is worth the effort.*