

Hot Hybrid

Tomorrow's technology today.

BY KRYSTYNA LAGOWSKI

For Volkswagen, the challenge is clear - develop fuel-efficient cars without sacrificing driveability. And that's exactly what they've done with the Jetta turbocharged hybrid, launched last December in Canada.

"It performs like a hybrid in terms of fuel efficiency, and performs like a sports car in terms of driving enjoyment," says Thomas Tetzlaff, Manager, Public Relations, Volkswagen Canada. "It's thrifty, but acceleration is unmatched. It has a big trunk, big back seat - every month, we're selling more and more of them."

Tetzlaff points out that the Jetta turbocharged hybrid's enhanced performance make it attractive to fleets, where drivers may perceive a hybrid as underpowered. "We feel there's a complete lack of resistance on behalf of the driver," he says. "This hybrid drives like a Jetta, and is equipped with many of the extras of our sportier models." For example, it features independent suspension, shock and strut tuning, and a seven speed transmission.

"Forget the fact that it's a hybrid," emphasizes Tetzlaff. "We want this to be a

great driving car regardless of whether it's a hybrid or not."

Pushing forward

The Jetta turbocharged hybrid has a 1.4 litre turbocharged, direct injected four cylinder engine with an onboard electric motor. It provides 4.2 litres/100 km on the highway, and 4.5 litres/100 km in the city.

"Volkswagen is pushing forward with hybrid technology, and we're keen supporters of plug-in hybrid technology," notes Tetzlaff. "That's where we're heading in the next few years."

It's part of their ongoing strategy called "intelligent downsizing." "We're re-evaluating our cars, their needs and the needs of the customer, and finding new ways to make cars more efficient without sacrificing driveability," says Tetzlaff. "We're pushing very hard on the fuel-efficiency front in the next five years."

While consumers are clamouring for vehicles that are bigger, wider and more comfortable, the plan is to prioritize sustainability. "If we can make cars lighter



2013 Jetta turbo charged hybrid

and more fuel-efficient, our long-term footprint will be diminished," says Tetzlaff. "Oil is not infinite. There will be new propulsion sources in the future."

Mach 18

As part of a program called "Mach 18," the Volkswagen Group is also investing \$5 billion USD over the next three years in North America alone. They are building new factories and developments such as their 100th worldwide production facility in Silao, Mexico, which just opened in January 2013. "It's an engine plant with a capacity of about 330,000 engines, and it will be supporting our production facilities in Puebla, Mexico and Chattanooga, Tennessee," describes Tetzlaff. "The plant produces two litre engines and will soon be producing a 1.8 turbo litre turbocharged engine as well."

The new generation of engine is powerful, but at the same time, smaller in displacement and lighter, which decreases vehicle weight. But since it's a turbocharged four cylinder, the engine is also more efficient.

Volkswagen's strategy also includes the internal combustion engine. "We're doing what we can to maximize efficiency



Limited production XL1 diesel electric hybrid

PHOTO: GM