

When Danish automobile designer and former Aston Martin employee Henrik Fisker established his own premium sports car company in California, Fisker Automotive, he was driven by the vision of a vehicle that would be superlative in terms of luxury and minimal in its impact on the environment.

Marrying these two elements in the one vehicle would solve the frustrating dilemma encountered by enviro-conscious lovers of luxury cars, who usually must compromise their love of comfort for their concern about the earth.

'But there is no reason you can't enjoy power, luxury and beauty, and show you are conscious about environmental issues,' argues Fisker. 'That is why we created Fisker Automotive.'

Joining forces with energy engineering firm Quantum Technologies, Fisker saw the development of a technology that would see his dream realised in the form of the Fisker Karma, a world-first luxury plug-in hybrid that has the power and beauty of the most premium of sports cars, and the carbon footprint of the cleanest of vehicles.

A dream to drive

Utilising a hybrid system known as Q-Drive, developed exclusively for Fisker Automotive by Quantum Technologies, the Fisker Karma means luxury car drivers no longer have to choose between green and gorgeous. The Q-Drive combines power with efficiency and low emissions. It comprises two 201bhp electric motors powered by an advanced lithium-ion battery pack, and a 260bhp turbocharged 2.0-litre Ecotec direct injection petrol engine. A generator charges the electric motors to provide extended range capabilities. The design allows the car to travel up to 80km on electricity, and up to a further 500km using petrol.

The Karma offers two driving modes: one for pleasure and one for peace of mind. The first is Stealth – for quiet, luxurious energy-saving driving, and the second is Sport – for fast, exhilarating driving, where the gasoline generator is engaged.

'It is fast, powerful, agile, comfortable and quiet, with about the same horsepower as a BMW 750i, but more torque than the \$1.1 million Bugatti Veyron,' says Fisker. 'The Karma offers the best of both pure electric and pure gasoline power. There is nothing comparable on the market at the moment.'

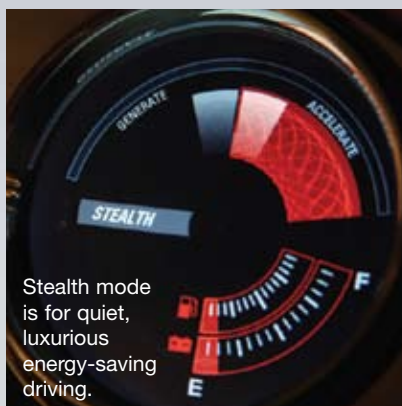
Unrivalled sustainability

No part of the Fisker Karma has been overlooked in creating a truly earth-friendly and sumptuous vehicle. It features low-energy LED tail lamps and indicators, a regenerative brake energy system, and a continuously formed solar-panelled roof (the world's largest), which also acts as a self-contained climate control system to keep the car cool. Nearly all materials used in the construction can be recycled, from the glass and steel components to the 22-inch aluminium wheels and tyres.

Most interior materials are also reusable, and owners can choose from three trim levels, including EcoChic, which utilises bamboo viscose – a soft and luxurious animal-free leather alternative – and wood sourced from fallen trees for the trim. Such green elements integrate seamlessly with high-end features, including satellite navigation, a passenger DVD entertainment system and state-of-the-art push-button controls.

'The Fisker Karma is a full-size, full-featured luxury automobile that can achieve 100mpg. It is the most radically proportioned four-door sports sedan in the world, regardless of power train or price, and is designed to be beautiful and dramatic in appearance,' says Fisker.

The car's low, wide stance and raised front fenders make a bold and stylish statement, too, upending aesthetic expectations of the 'green' automobile. The starting price is \$87,900, and production is scheduled to begin before the end of the year, with deliveries planned for summer 2010. And for those taken by the Fisker Karma, but loyal to convertible models, the top-down Fisker Karma Sunset is scheduled for 2011. Whatever your preference, this is certainly one car decision where you won't have to compromise. ■



Stealth mode is for quiet, luxurious energy-saving driving.

Jodie McLeod unearths a luxury plug-in hybrid car that makes environmental sense without compromising comfort.

GOOD CARMA



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