

MotorWeek Transcripts

MotorNews ‘Chevrolet Volt Drive’

JESSICA SHEA CHOKSEY: Chevrolet’s Volt extended range electric vehicle is still more than a year away from production, but MotorWeek got the opportunity for an early test drive of this groundbreaking technology.

A Volt in wolf’s clothing may best describe this test mule we drove at GM’s Warren Technical Center. Hidden away in this Chevy Cruze (pronounced “Cruise”) sedan, but boldly advertised on the outside, is a nearly production ready version of the Volt’s 48-kilowatt Lithium-Ion battery pack and electric drive.

Charge it overnight, and the Volt will take you up to 40 miles on battery power alone. But unlike other pure electric cars, the Volt driver will not suffer from “range anxiety,” that’s because the range can be extended up to four hundred miles thanks to an onboard gasoline engine and generator. Don’t call the Volt a hybrid, though – the gas engine is only used to keep the batteries charged and never drives the wheels directly.

BOB LUTZ, GENERAL MOTORS: I think one of the things you’ll notice is that when you get to drive it is the tremendous feeling of acceleration and mid-range torque. I mean it’s almost like a 1960’s muscle car when you step into it mid-range you really feel this instance surge of acceleration which is very gratifying. It’s a pretty fast car. And it’s totally silent and all those features will be carried over into the production car.

CHOKSEY: Our half-hour behind the wheel revealed a car that is remarkably ordinary. The driving experience is not much different from a normal sedan, except for the lack of noise. Acceleration is brisk and smooth, with the kind of instant torque only an electric motor can provide.

GM worked hard to keep the Volt’s weight under control, so ride and handling is not compromised either. The gearless transmission provides two driving modes for sport and economy driving. In economy mode, the vehicle utilizes more regenerative braking when you lift off the throttle.

The Chevrolet Volt is expected to go on sale in November of 2010, for about \$40,000. Government clean vehicle initiatives could drop that price to about \$32,500. And GM expects the price to be reduced further as production grows. And that’s it for this week’s Motor News.