
125 years of Opel: From the tree frog to the Corsa

Von Walther Wuttke

100 years ago, an unassuming automobile rolled off the production lines in Rüsselsheim, with which Opel, then just 25 years on the market, ushered in a new automotive era in Germany. While most manufacturers were focusing on large and luxurious limousines and sports cars in the first year after inflation in Germany, the democratization of mobility began in Rüsselsheim. The two-seater was given the objective model designation Opel 4 PS, which, however, did not reflect its performance, but rather the tax division that was common at the time.

In fact, the Opel, powered by a 950 cubic centimeter four-cylinder engine, initially had twelve hp, which increased to 1.2 liters and 20 hp over the course of its production period. However, the small car, which was offered as a convertible, saloon and delivery van, was very similar to a French model, which also led to a plagiarism lawsuit that Opel won because the "4PS" was painted green in contrast to the yellow model.

The verdict enriched the German language at the time. The saying "The same in green" has its origins in the legal dispute with the French competitor Citroën. Opel was also the first German company to introduce assembly line production at the time, and the two-seater, later popularly known as the "Laubfrosch", is regarded as the first German automobile for the so-called little man. The original price of 4500 Rentenmark fell to 1800 Reichsmark by the end of production in 1931. Between 1924 and 1931, a total of more than 100,000 units were produced.

The "Laubfrosch" marked the beginning of a two-pronged model policy at Opel. In addition to the large saloons such as the Kapitän and Admiral, which were offered to high-earning customers in the 1930s, the Rüsselsheim-based company also supplied vehicles for less well-off customers. The Opel Olympia, presented in 1935 at the International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in Berlin, started with 2,500 Reichsmarks and was also the first German mass-produced car with a self-supporting body and a predetermined breaking point in the frame, which is regarded as the precursor of the crumple zone.

The tradition of affordable mobility continues today with the Corsa, the first Opel model with front-wheel drive to be produced since 1982 and a regular among the most successful small cars ever since. In Germany, it is the best-selling model in its segment.

Since the start of production in Zaragoza, Spain - later it was also produced in Eisenach until 2008 - more than 14 million units of the small car have been produced, which has grown significantly over the course of its production time. While the original Corsa measured just 3.62 meters, the current Corsa is 4.06 meters long and thanks to the wheelbase, which has grown to 2.54 meters, there is plenty of space inside. As the only representative of its class, the Corsa is available with gasoline and diesel engines, with hybrid drive and as a fully electric version. For fans of conventional drive systems, the power range extends from 75 hp (55 kW) to 136 hp (100 kW), which translates into maximum top speeds of 174 km/h to 210 km/h. The price list starts at 20,300 euros.

While the Laubfrosch was the brand's first small car, the Corsa is a pioneer in electromobility. The smallest model was the first of the brand's models to be allowed to plug in, and customers took to it. Currently, every fourth Corsa sold is electric. The basic version is powered by a 100 kW (136 hp) electric motor that accelerates the Corsa from zero to 100 km/h in 8.3 seconds. The energy is stored in a 50 kWh battery, which enables a range of 354 kilometers (according to WLTP). The GS Long Range variant (from €38,045) with 115 kW (154 PS) of power can travel 402 kilometers on a single charge. Both versions reach their top speed at 150 km/h. It takes half an hour to recharge the battery to 80 percent at a fast charger.

The latest addition to the model range is the hybrid version, in which a specially developed



1.2-liter turbo engine is combined with a 21 kW (28 PS) electric drive. The result is two power variants with 74 kW (100 hp) or 100 kW (136 hp). The hybrid Corsa uses 48-volt technology. "The introduction of the hybrid drive is a strategic decision to reduce CO2 emissions," explains a brand spokesperson.

Switching between the two drives is seamless, and the electric six-speed dual-clutch transmission always provides the right gear ratio. When the electric motor takes over propulsion, the speed display changes to blue. The electric drive achieves a share of well over 50 percent in the city. Opel promises a fuel consumption of 4.5 to 4.8 liters, which is also achievable in practice thanks to the efficient recuperation system. Top speed is reached at 188 km/h. The price list for the Corsa Hybrid starts at 26,100 euros for the 74 kW version. The GS is listed at 30,190 euros. (aum)

Images for article



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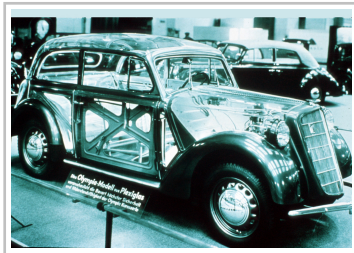


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