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Volkswagen Golf Blue-E-Motion Won't Hit the Market Until 2013

Why the Golf blue-e-motion won't beat the Nissan Leaf to market.

AUGUST 2010 | BY JUERGEN ZOELLTER



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Fact: Electric vehicles are coming. Nissan will start selling its electric Leaf this fall (see below), BMW's Mini subsidiary has a small number of **Mini Es** running around California, and Mercedes-Benz has announced plans to lease its **electricSmart** to a select few. But Volkswagen's electric car, the Golf "blue-e-motion," isn't quite ready for prime time. Which is surprising, because the vehicle is so well executed that we are left wondering why it won't go into production immediately.

Volkswagen says it has been unable to secure an adequate supply of lithium-ion batteries to meet the anticipated high demand for the car, forcing it to look past the usual sources, Sanyo and Toshiba, to Chinese car- and battery-maker BYD.

The e-Golf driven here carries its 180 lithium-ion cells in 30 separate units—total energy content is 26.5 kWh. The batteries are stored underneath the luggage compartment and the rear seats, and in the center tunnel. Total battery weight is a claimed 690 pounds, but thanks to lightweight doors and parts, the car ends up being only 450 pounds heavier (VW claims a curb weight of 3400 pounds) than a regular **Golf TDI** with a DSG transmission. The batteries are charged through a plug connector behind the VW logo on the grille. VW claims a full charge will take fewer than eight hours using a 220-volt AC connection, or about 50 minutes using a higher-voltage DC source.

A double push of the ignition button starts the electric Golf. Shift into drive, and the motor accelerates smoothly, with the car obediently following the precise electric steering; the traction control even cuts in subtly as the car accelerates out of tight corners. The major component of the drivetrain is the 114-hp electric motor, which produces 199 pound-feet of torque.

There are three dynamic modes. In "Normal," the engine delivers 87 horsepower. To extend driving distances, switch to "Range +," which reduces output to 67. In that mode, VW promises a range of 93 miles; a real-world number of about 65 miles is more likely. In "Comfort +," the full 114 horsepower is available and should get the Golf from 0 to 62 mph in 11.8 seconds and to a top speed of 87 mph. VW probably doesn't call this max setting "Sport" because a top speed of 87 mph just doesn't qualify.

When the first electric Golf comes to market, likely in 2013, expect a price competitive with other EVs. That should translate to about \$30,000, before tax incentives. But it seems certain that no amount of tax breaks would make this electron-powered Golf more practical or useful to anyone who does any serious commuting. [View Photo Gallery](#)

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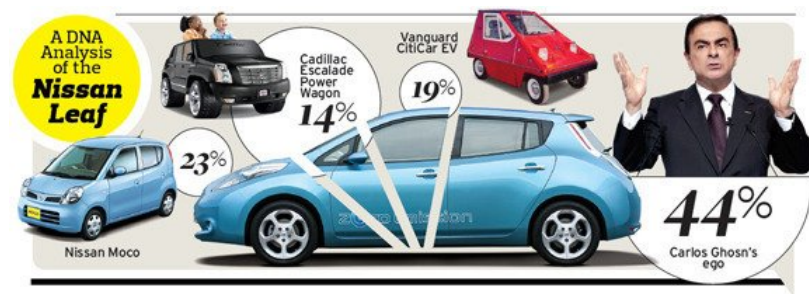


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