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Porsche Panamera Sport Turismo Concept: A 'peaceful co-existence'

Lead

The Porsche Panamera Sport Turismo Concept was launched at this year's Paris Show. A few weeks on, we have taken the prototype for a drive in Los Angeles to see what it contributes to Porsche's model line-up.

Porsche's Chief Technology Officer Wolfgang Hatz left no room for confusion: "The Sport Turismo will not replace the Panamera as we know it. Rather, it will complement it." So it's not cannibalism, but a peaceful co-existence - one that should take shape within the next four years, although officially nothing is set in stone just yet.

"This is a trial project. We want to test the customer response for station wagons in tricky markets such as the USA and China," said Hatz. Initial reactions in Beverly Hills have been positive: "A film producer has already offered us an absurd amount of money for this prototype," designer Mitja Borkert chuckled. But the chic concept is not for sale at any price.





The increased interest is hardly surprising. On the road, it boasts lines that would leave its first-generation ancestor green with envy. And while we're talking green, the plug-in hybrid has an electric motor providing the equivalent of 94bhp - double that of the electric motor in the current Panamera Hybrid. The result is an electric-only range of just under 20 miles - admittedly only achieved with a restrained right foot. That's not so easy with the knowledge of the car's easily accessible 410bhp.





And when your self-restraint gives way, you certainly know about it. As the shooting brake springs forward, the sonorous burbling of the engine changes into a hearty six-cylinder concerto. The reason for this is the lack of an acoustic silencer, a feature likely to be adopted in a possible production version. Also to be carried forward is the impressive fuel economy of 80mpg. However, the installation of a supercharged V6 plus electric motor in Porsche's current hybrids resulted in patchy power delivery, so we hope the combination will be further developed come the Sport Turismo's showroom showdown.





It's not just forward propulsion that's been under consideration during the car's development; rearward vision has been re-thought, too. Eagle-eyed readers will have noticed the absence of side mirrors. They've been replaced by cameras which transmit images to screens located either side of the circular central display – apparently a feature requested by 'someone at the top'. But our initial experiences suggest this might not be one of Volkswagen patriarch Ferdinand Piëch's better decisions. Retraining your brain to instinctively look downwards rather than sideways during lane-changes seems strange and, without the customary blind-spot check, you never feel completely at ease. That said, concepts are all about pushing boundaries, and the swipes and taps required by today's centre-mounted touchscreens would have felt peculiar 10 or so years ago.





Whereas the interior looks to the future, the exterior uses the tried-and-tested Porsche formula. The strip connecting the rear lights is a nod to the 911 Carrera 4 (as a reminder that the Concept is 4wd), while the front end inherits the shark nose and bulging fenders of its predecessors. But, altogether, the design represents one of the freshest to come from Stuttgart in recent years.



It might share the Panamera saloon's wheelbase, but in its current form the Sport Turismo Concept sits two inches lower and six inches wider, giving it a much more balanced look. So it's prettier, more practical and will, we hope, be rid of the current Panamera Hybrid's dynamics gremlins. Given the sales success of that model, a production go-ahead seems inevitable.

Photos: Porsche

Gallery

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