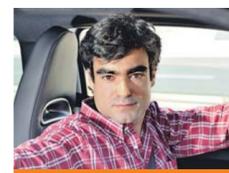


MOTORING



TRENDING

Guilherme Marques

TEST DRIVE || First ground-up pure electric Volvo is the same as any other Volvo these days. Cool.

IT'S good to be Volvo these days. The Swedish constructor was bought by Chinese giant Geely in 2010 and, whereas many announced that would be the end of Volvo as we knew it, in turn, new owners quickly understood what they had to do to make such an established, traditional player into a brand that could compete with the premium Germans – and, maybe, even win?

Geely gave Swedish engineers the resources they needed to create a whole new catalogue of cars and to structure the transition from fuel-powered cars into the electric era they believed was coming.

The result was – is – a case of study. Volvo is the trendiest name in the industry right now. Unlike BMW or Mercedes, seen as conservative choices for those seeking premium quality but unwilling to take any risks, a Volvo is a cool car with a discerning image.

I have not driven a Volvo in the last decade that I didn't like. Some I really enjoyed, like the XC60 or V60. And yes, they do feel quite different to any BMW or Mercedes.

I was, therefore, curious to drive the new C40. First, because it is Volvo's first model entirely developed as an EV; and second, to see if the Swedish engineers could distil this new-found,

feel-good Volvo factor into a car that runs on electrons instead of fuel.

The Volvo C40 Recharge Twin – to give it its full name – is also an attempt at a crossover-coupé kind of layout, premiered by the BMW X6 with much success back in 2007. Recharge because, well, you can recharge it; and Twin because it has a twin-motor system, which also means there is a simpler, less expensive C40 with just one motor propelling it.

As it stands, the C40 Recharge Twin has a dual-motor architecture with each one of them producing 204 horsepower – meaning the C40 has a total output of 408 electric ponies (!) and can get to 100km/h in 4.4 seconds (!!).

Moreover, it's a fuss-free experience. Just press the pedal on the right and off you go. There is a whoosh from the electric motors and suddenly all cars on the road seem like they are standing still. It's quite an enjoyable thing this acceleration potential provided by electricity, although it may wear out when the novelty wears out.

Anyway, the C40 is a very nice everyday companion if you can plug it in at home at the end of the day. It's not small, but it's not so big that you cannot take it to the supermarket carpark, visibility from the high-driving



position is good (even the small rear window didn't bother me much) and usability is excellent.

I really liked the calibration the engineers have given the chassis and suspension because the car feels quite soft – as it should. Body control is really rather good and there are some pleasurable rewards in tighter corners if you push it a bit harder than your brain is saying you should in such a car. Strong brakes also help.

There is not much information coming from the steering, but that is usually the way in EVs, so no harm, no foul. Seats are good, there is no leather to be found and the wool upholstery is definitely different, while fit, finish and materials are the same as you will find in the XC40 – up to the

“Another Volvo, another cool car. This one is an electric crossover with a coupé silhouette. Volvo could not have crammed any more trends in one vehicle if it tried.”

task, but this is no luxury product, remember.

One very nice touch is the way the translucent panels on the door cards and the dashboard light up at night. Easy to achieve and it does look spectacular.

This being a Volvo, there are also endless safety assistance systems. That is the thing about this car. It's a Volvo just like all the others, except this one goes about its business in silence. It's not some kind of breakthrough machine or a new era for the Swedish maker. It's their first standalone EV and it's a good one. New in technology, but familiar in everything else, for good or bad, however you see it.

The infotainment is Volvo's latest, you can access Apple Car Play and Android Auto and dance to the sound

of Harman Kardon's great sound system.

As for range, Volvo says the C40 Recharge Twin can do 451km per charge, but really 320 is more like it. Average consumption in perfect conditions would be around the 18kWh mark, but I could only manage a little over 22kWh. I did enjoy those 4.4 seconds for quite a few times, mind you. Anyway, with the charging infrastructure we have today, this is either: 1) a second car (like most EVs); 2) your only car, but you rent another vehicle for longer trips.

At a nudge over €60,000 (range starts at €48,000), this C40 is a car no one actually needs. And with €60,000 to choose from, the market is enormous. So, you buy the C40 because you want it and because you can. Two good reasons in my book.



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