

Digital dash creates cool interior

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A colleague posted pictures on social media recently of simple times, when cars had a manual gearbox and the idea of climate control was a group of sliders that adjusted the air temperature.



VW Passat interior

Today things are very different. Having spoken to a number of international car designers and executives recently, it is clear the pace of change is accelerating. No doubt the car that was featured in my colleague's pictures had dials for instrumentation. Many cars still do – simple, clear dials that have a needle for the revs and speed and possibly an electronic indication of the fuel level or engine temperature.

Then Audi introduced its virtual cockpit and everything changed. The idea of a digital dash is not new: Aston Martin had it on its Lagonda in the 1980s, although it looked more like the displays from an old Texas Instruments calculator (remember those?). Toyota also had a digital display in its Cressida. Then everything went analogue again.

I bring all this up because the other day I was at one of the big mining companies and the scientist I was meeting walked me out to my car, our long-term Volkswagen Passat. He took one look at the digital instrumentation and was seriously impressed. I am still impressed with it. Gone are the days of bland dials that might be lit up by some blue lighting. Today the once humble and underrated Passat is a technology leader compared to many rivals.

Audi calls it the virtual cockpit, but VW is a little more straightforward, calling it the digital info display. It enables you to have your navigation dominating the display in front of you while the speedo and rev counter are reduced in size. You can display your infotainment options, change the style theme, access your trip computer info and scroll through your phone book. The Passat has never been so cool.

Of course, the digital display is an option, but as I have said before, you have to have it, whether you are in a VW or an Audi. Mercedes might have had it first in the modern era in its S Class, but VW and Audi have perfected it. The days of analogue instrumentation are numbered.

While I am on the subject of things that look cool in the Passat, I also noticed the other day that it has a frameless rearview mirror. It is a bizarre discovery because unlike that numpty who has not noticed you behind them on the highway, I use my rearview mirror all the time.

Then suddenly I realised that instead of this big, bulky mirror, the designers have incorporated something cool and elegant.

I have said it before but I'll say it again, VW's designers really thought about everything and put some serious effort into the latest-generation Passat.

Now where have they fitted the Nespresso machine?

Source: Business Day

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