

Open letter to Karl-Thomas Neumann, OPEL Group CEO

Doctor Neumann,

In 2011, Opel introduced the first plug-in hybrid or extended-range electric vehicle on the European market : the Ampera, sister of the Chevrolet Volt. With its electric powertrain and its range extender, it was claimed « ahead of its competitors, if it had any». And it was true.

European journalists have confirmed the qualities of the Ampera by electing Car of the Year 2012. With over 20% market share, the Ampera was most sold plug-in car in 2012 (plug-in hybrid and pure electric combined). A remarkable performance that was pushed by the Dutch, German and Swiss markets.

The Ampera is also the Opel with the highest satisfaction rate. Reliability is very good, which is not common with innovative cars. Good qualities it would be easy to value.

The two next years were harder.

The arrival of competitors from Volvo, Mitsubishi and BMW have wronged Ampera's success, through the Ampera is still superior to these newcomers, by its electric range or its versatility. Especially as these manufacturers have at least a minimum of advertising around their car (billboards, press, radio), to which the Ampera was denied in most countries, and even in all countries from 2013. Even when the price tag has been significantly reduced in autumn 2013. And I do not even speak of the means used by VAG for its GTE / e-tron.

The Ampera is an unknown and invisible car and it is in my opinion the main reason for his lack of success after 2012. Owner of Ampera since 2011, it still happens in these days to regularly amaze people who had not idea that this car can exist, and asking me if it has just been released. It is not really surprising that people don't buy a car they don't suspect to exist.

As we see that on the other side of the Atlantic ocean Chevrolet is launching the second generation of Volt that corrects some defects of the first generation, with lower prices and a better efficiency, Opel slips towards abandoning the Ampera, vaguely speaking of a succession in electromobility. General Motors already has technical ingredients to continue the adventure rechargeable hybrid in Europe, and Opel has competent engineers. As is, the new Volt technically exceeds the best-seller of the moment, the Golf GTE: double electric range, better efficiency in hybrid mode, even the trunk is roomier.

Opel will launch its new Astra in Frankfurt, leaner and with innovations on accessories such as lighting, but without plug-in powertrain. After having been the plug-in hybrid locomotive in Europe, would Opel let the train pass?

Ampera owners of 2012 and 2013 Model Year will soon enter a renewal phase of their car and almost all don't consider replacing it with a non-plug-in car. Although they are few, these once enthusiastic customer will go directly to competition although Opel could have kept them and capture many others, while the population becomes aware that an electric car is viable, especially without Range Anxiety. The future will show that desert this market is a mistake.

I still hope we'll soon see the second generation of Voltec on our roads. And in an European-built car would be even better.

Regards,

Aurélien JUTANT

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