

Volvo Cars ready for quick expansion of digital radio in Europe and Sweden

Volvo Cars' latest infotainment system, Volvo Sensus, encompasses a complete offer designed for the digital generation's car buyers.

The system can include features such as digital TV, digital radio, a USB port and the possibility of streaming music via Bluetooth.

Volvo was the first carmaker to offer HD radio on its entire model range in the USA, and the company is now also ready for an expansion of digital radio in Europe.

"We design our cars around the modern human being's needs and priorities. A firm focus on digital technology is a natural part of our latest intuitive, ergonomically designed driver's environment," says Peder Fast responsible for product planning Infotainment & Connectivity at Volvo Car Corporation. He adds:

"We will work hard to retain our lead in this area. We're going to reveal more new products in the near future."

Music via Bluetooth streaming in all models

Volvo is the only manufacturer to offer streaming of audio files from portable units via Bluetooth on all eleven models in it's the Model Year 2012 range.

The company was also the first to fit digital radio and USB ports as standard in all its models on the US market – a pioneering feat that has given Volvo a prominent place in advertising for digital radio throughout the USA.

"We decided to adapt and integrate the new technology into our existing audio module instead of developing a separate tuner. This saved time, space and money. The integrated solution meant we could quickly offer the technology as standard," explains Joakim Alfredsson, development manager for Infotainment at Volvo Cars.

Neatly integrated USB port

The USB port was developed together with the digital radio. Here the car owner can hook up a USB drive with MP3 files or an iPod. Track selection is handled via the car's audio controls in the centre stack and steering wheel. The USB port is integrated into the armrest compartment between the front seats, concealed and protected yet at the same time easily accessible to everyone in the car.

"Our philosophy is to link together home electronics and the car in a neat and safe way, without the customer needing to have gadgets and loose cables trailing all over the car's interior," says Joakim Alfredsson.

In Europe digital radio is still an option in Volvo's models, primarily because the digital radio has uneven coverage. The demand is substantial in Great Britain, Norway, Denmark and Germany, while Sweden has only implemented trial broadcasting in Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö and a few other places.

"Volvo leads the way with this technology but we need long-term, comprehensive plans for expansion of digital radio to offer it as a standard feature. A global standard would of course be best, but a lot of progress could also be made with a Europe-wide standard," says Sofia Skold, responsible for digital tuners at Volvo Cars.

Volvo Sensus – ergonomic high-tech

Volvo Sensus, the new infotainment system, is integrated into the new centre stack that debuted in the Volvo S60, V60 and XC60 in 2010. In spring 2011, the Volvo V70, XC70 and S80 get the same upgrade.

The new infotainment system makes it easy and convenient to use and tailor the car's high-tech functions to suit each driver's personal wishes.

The information is presented in a five-inch colour screen in the upper part of the centre stack. The screen is fitted high up to make it easy for the driver to keep his or her eyes safely on the road.

If the customer chooses one of the audio systems with multimedia, the system is upgraded with a larger seven-inch screen that can also display information and images from the navigation system, phone, reversing camera, panorama camera, DVD player, digital TV and so on.

Volvo is one of the few manufacturers to make it possible to operate all functions via buttons in the steering wheel. Quick-access buttons are also placed immediately below the colour screen.

“Volvo Sensus does not distract the driver from what is happening on the road. The idea is that the technology should be so intuitive to use that people can find their way around the menus without even needing to look in the instruction manual,” says Peder Fast.

Fine-tuned audio experience of world class

The audio experience is also of world class. The most advanced system, Premium Sound, has a Class D digital 5x130W amplifier, subwoofer, Dolby Digital in combination with Dolby Pro Logic II Surround, the latest MultEQ from Audyssey Laboratories and 10 speakers.

Audyssey Laboratories’ market-leading MultEQ technology eliminates the distortion that is caused by the car interior’s special acoustics. The result is crisper and clearer sound for everyone in the car.

In addition to Premium Sound, which is combined with a seven-inch screen, there are three other audio systems. All have been individually tailored for the various models by Volvo Cars’ in-house experts.

Premium Sound can play DVDs and CDs with music in MP3, AAC or WMA format as well as AVI and Video Div-X. The system also includes Bluetooth (A2DP).

Furthermore, it is possible to connect other equipment such as a portable MP3 player, an iPod (from Generation 3), iPod Touch or iPhone. From the High Performance Multimedia system upwards, the USB port can also handle Video Div-X.