



Media Information

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120 Years of LCV production: Opel Combo & Co. continue rich tradition

- Today: Opel Combo Cargo is “International Van of the Year 2019“
- Pioneering years: First LCV version of Opel Patentmotorwagen in 1899
- Modern times: New mobility with “System Darracq“, 4 PS and Blitz delivery van
- Economic miracle: Famous Schnelllieferwagen from Olympia to Rekord
- Recent past: High-roof estates started with the Kadett Combo in 1985

Rüsselsheim. Opel continues to keep a clear focus on light commercial vehicles today, as it has in the past. Currently a major model offensive is underway: the high-roof Opel Combo is completely new and has won the prestigious “International Van of the Year 2019“ title in its Combo Cargo van version, while its passenger car sibling Opel Combo Life was voted “Best Buy Car of Europe 2019“ by the international AUTOBEST jury. The third generation of the Opel Vivaro, which will also be available in a purely battery-electric version next year, is also new in the portfolio. Last but not least, the new Opel Movano will be at dealers this summer – with first-class safety, full connectivity and top variability.

The LCV model offensive is already making an impact: Opel sold almost 33,000 light commercial vehicles (LCV) worldwide in the first quarter of 2019, 35 per cent more than in Q1 of last year. The market share for new registrations in Europe (E30) thus climbed by 0.6 percentage points to 4.7 per cent. In its PACE! plan, Opel has set itself the target of increasing its sales of light commercial vehicles by 25 per cent by 2020. “We are growing across the board in the LCV business. All our models are in higher demand than last year, and we have increased our market share almost everywhere in Europe“, says Xavier Duchemin, Managing Director Sales, Aftersales and Marketing.

Combo, Vivaro and Movano carry on the rich tradition of a long and successful history of Opel commercial vehicles. It all began with the “Patentmotorwagen“ 120 years ago in Rüsselsheim.



The Pioneering Years: the “Koloss” (giant) from Rüsselsheim

Motor cargo vehicles, company cars, delivery vans – new terms for a new era. With the advent of the automobile at the end of the 19th century, the focus of development was also on the new vehicles’ load capacity and the durability of their engines. All of a sudden, the well-being and muscle power of horses no longer had to be taken into account during transport. Instead of hay from the feed trade, the automobile pioneers bought petrol in the pharmacy. After all, the invention of the petrol station was still a long way off when the Opel brothers built the first motor vehicles in Rüsselsheim in 1899. Straight away in its premiere year, the “**Opel Patent MotorwagenSystem Lutzmann**” formed the basis for “a giant of a motor freight car built by the local company Adam Opel for a large wine business“. This quote from the local *Main-Spitze* newspaper on July 2, 1899 is the only proof of the first Opel delivery van. What was then called a “giant” would be a very light commercial vehicle today – compared to the current 40-tonne giants. The first photo of an Opel LCV thus dates from 1901 and shows the Lutzmann in its version as a luggage car with closed body – 5 hp strong and around 20 km/h fast.

Modern times: carriages become trucks

The cargo pioneers were quickly followed by practical delivery vans: with the “**System Darracq**” (from 1902), Opel already showed the layout of the front engine, gearbox, propeller shaft and rear-wheel drive that is still used today. On this basis, closed delivery and eye-catching advertising vans were produced until the 1920s – mostly as single units to customer specifications. In 1924, Opel was the first German manufacturer to start assembly line production – modern times that were characterised by the 4 hp models from Rüsselsheim. Between May 1924 and June 1931, a total of 119,484 units of the legendary “Laubfrosch” (Tree Frog) were produced. Perhaps the first truly light commercial vehicle according to modern concepts was then the Opel “Dienstwagen” (company car) in 1931. The panel van with cargo capacity of 500 kilogrammes became a huge success in its class with a market share of 80 per cent. Opel built 22,000 units of the 23 hp “Dienstwagen”. The crowning glory of pre-war developments was the **Opel Blitz “Eintonner”** from 1934 – either as a platform or panel van. The small Blitz already featured a straight-six engine that would become typical of Opel’s legendary LCV model portfolio.



The Economic Miracle: the Opel “Schnelllieferwagen” (Express Delivery Van) era

The golden rule for business people is to supply customers as quickly as possible. This is exactly what was made possible by the **Opel Olympia** as early as 1950 and the **Olympia Rekord “Schnelllieferwagen”** from 1953. Thanks to their load capacity, reliability and comfortable passenger cabins, the express delivery vans – together with the **Opel Blitz** of the 1950s – became automotive “hits” during the years of the economic miracle. At the same time, the Olympia Rekord established the foundation for the success story of Opel's variable caravan models (Car and Van). For the 1950s, the modern and very elegant lines of the all-steel bodywork were representative, functional and effective advertising all at the same time. The large load capacity was also impressive, including a payload of up to 515 kilogrammes.

In the early 1960s the ideal partner for craftsmen was the **Opel Rekord P2**. “Fast delivery van in new shape – at your service” was the promise of the Rekord P2, which it kept with large loading space, low operating costs and proverbial reliability. The P2's repertoire included two powerful and extremely robust engines with 1.5 litre displacement and 50 hp, as well as 1.7 litre displacement and 55 hp. An innovative three-speed semi-automatic gearbox called “Olymat” was also available. Between 1960 and 1963, 32,026 of the express delivery vans were built in Rüsselsheim.

The 1966 **Opel Rekord C Caravan** finally ignited the big estate boom. Externally, the Caravan captivated with its “Coke bottle design” shape below the windows. When it came to comfort, the five-link rear axle ensured very pleasant driving behaviour. The progressive Rekord C was also available as a pure delivery van.

Raise the roof: the Combo era began in the 1980s

In the 1980s, Opel realised that the concept of a car with a high roof but compact exterior dimensions was also ideal for the needs of families and outdoor-fans: the **Kadett Combo** was born in 1985. This first Combo differed from its van sibling by an approximately 25 cm higher loading space. The partition wall behind the seats was an example of the fact that



flexibility was already a top priority with the Kadett Combo: it could be fitted with an optional net or even a door so that the loading length extended to the windscreen.

In 1993, the **Combo** was introduced as a separate model line. The front of the Combo B was practically identical to the Corsa, complemented by an extended wheelbase and a high, box-shaped load compartment with a volume of more than 3,100 litres.

A true “family Combo” was launched in 2001 with the **Combo Tour**. This variant of the Combo C came with practical stowage nets, pockets in the doors and features such as integrated cup holders. Based on the Tour, Opel even developed a sporty prototype for racing fans: the **Combo “Eau Rouge”**, its name a reference to the famous combination of curves on the racetrack in Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium, was powered by the Corsa GSi engine. While the “Eau Rouge” was an eye-catcher at the 2002 Paris Motor Show, the Combo Tramp, with sump-guard and 20 millimetres higher ground clearance, ensured on and off-road driving fun from 2005.

Starting in 2012, **Combo D** customers were the first to be able to choose between two vehicle lengths. The Combo was initially available as a five-seater with a short or long wheelbase, in normal and high roof versions, with standard sliding doors and an estate tailgate or double-wing rear doors.

Everyday heroes in top shape: the new Opel Combo Life and Combo Cargo

The fifth generation of the compact, multifunctional Opel Combo was launched in 2018. The innovative newcomer is available both as a passenger car – **Combo Life** – and as a light commercial vehicle – **Combo Cargo** – in many variants. Both are available as standard M (4.40 metres) or XL long versions (4.75 metres). The family van comes as a five or seven-seater with plenty of space for up to 2,693 litres of luggage. The panel van offers up to 4.4 m³ of cargo space, room for two euro pallets and can carry a payload of up to 1,000 kilogrammes. This extraordinary flexibility is made possible by the completely new architecture on which the Combo Cargo is based and by sophisticated packaging. In addition, the LCV version will also be available as a crew cab and with a roof flap in the future.



Thanks to a new development approach, the fifth Combo generation offers an unrivalled wealth of innovative technologies and assistance systems in both the passenger car and LCV versions. It was developed from the outset according to passenger car standards and not as a commercial vehicle, as is normally the case, before being equipped with additional features for family use. The new Combo generation thus achieves by far the highest level of comfort and technology in the segment. Numerous driver assistance and safety systems from Automatic Cruise Control to Forward Collision Alert with Automatic Emergency Braking and Pedestrian Detection, Driver Drowsiness Alert, Blind Spot Alert and a Head-up Display increase safety for the family in the Combo Life as well as for passengers in the Combo Cargo. In addition, the IntelliGrip adaptive traction control system with five modes ensures that the Combo Cargo always has a firm grip – regardless of whether drivers want to leave paved roads in their leisure time or have to cope with muddy, sandy or snow-covered construction sites.

About Opel

Opel is one of the largest European car manufacturers and was founded by Adam Opel in Rüsselsheim, Germany, in 1862. The company started building automobiles in 1899. Opel has been part of the [Groupe PSA](#) since August 2017. Together with its British sister brand Vauxhall, the company is represented in more than 60 countries around the globe selling over one million vehicles in 2018. Opel is currently implementing its electrification strategy to secure sustainable success and ensure that the future mobility demands of customers are met. By 2024, all European passenger car models will offer an electric variant. This strategy is part of the company plan [PACE!](#) with which Opel aims to become sustainably profitable, global and electric.

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