

MANUFACTURING AFFLUENT DRIVERS WANTED

VW's luxurious new factory is pure *Fahrvergnügen*.

GLASS WALLS, FLOORS OF tiled wood—you wouldn't dream of parking a car here, let alone building one. And yet, this is the unique manufacturing plant in Dresden, Germany, where Volkswagen will build its new luxury line, the Phaeton, later this spring.

The glass is soundproof, and there are 296,000 square feet of it wrapped around the L-shaped building. Customers can watch the assembly of their cars on special monitors. Conveyor belts are nowhere to be found. Instead, the chassis are mounted on a "slat belt," powered by motors that use an electromagnetic field to pull the units forward. Workers dress in white overalls, reminiscent of a Silicon Valley clean room.

The aptly named Transparent Factory is also part showroom and part theme park. There's a



restaurant and an event area where visitors can try their luck in drive simulators. There's even a test track—partially underground—that includes a car wash and gas station, where technicians can give finished cars a final check, readying them for the road.

Volkswagen has come a long way since it was first formed in the 1930s to build cars for common folk. The Phaeton is definitely not your father's Beetle: With a 6.0-liter W12 engine, it is expected to sell for as much as \$90,000.—HARALD FRANZEN

BEETLES BE DAMNED:

At VW's new Transparent Factory, 800 workers will build up to 150 luxury Phaetons (far left) each day.