

AUTOMOTIVE

## Audi jumpstarts EV competition with e-tron reveal

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*The e-tron will hit the road in spring 2019. Image credit: Audi*

By SARAH RAMIREZ

German automaker Audi has unveiled its all-electric e-tron, making it the newest direct competitor to U.S. automaker Tesla and its EV fleet.

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The launch of Audi's first electric vehicle has been supported by a wide-ranging campaign that spotlights the e-tron's development and current capabilities. The popularity of Tesla's electric cars has made the U.S. a viable market for other luxury marques who have been creating their own EV offerings.

"This is the first time Audi has ever launched a pure electric, mass-market vehicle," said David Undercoffler, editor in chief of [Autolist](#), San Francisco. "The e-tron debut is part of a new wave of electric crossovers from mainstream luxury automakers.

"Many other brands have EV crossovers in the works and expected to launch in the coming years," he said.

Mr. Undercoffler is not affiliated with Audi, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. [Audi](#) was reached for comment.

### Electric debut

An all-electric sports utility vehicle, the e-tron made its world premiere on Sept. 17 in San Francisco. The event was also live-streamed across Audi's social media platforms.

Before the unveiling, Audi shared a teaser of the e-tron during the 70th Annual Emmy Awards telecast. Functioning as a "sneak peek," the advertisement's only complete views of the e-tron were from a far distance or obstructed by clouds of dust ([see story](#)).



*The e-tron is priced at \$74,800 and up. Image credit: Audi*

Audi has followed up the announcement with the release of multiple video campaigns.

The four-part "Trials" series presents brief dramatized looks at testing the e-tron's range, battery, all-wheel drive and connectivity. "Defined" offers a more in-depth look at the vehicle's development and design from the perspective of Audi team members.

*Audi is emphasizing innovation, technology and design in its campaign for the e-tron*

In "Manifesto," Audi acknowledges that the e-tron is not the first EV. Instead, the short goes in a more emotional direction with footage of pioneers such as Muhammad Ali and Amelia Earhart proclaiming that while they did not invent their craft, they mastered it implying Audi itself has changed electric car making with the release of the e-tron.

The e-tron has two electric motors and can charge up to 80 percent in 30 minutes. In addition to smartphone integration and voice control technology, the SUV has the Audi Virtual Cockpit Plus and driver assistance.

Reservations are now open for the e-tron, with deliveries expected to begin next spring.

### **EV competition revs up**

More details about the e-tron are forthcoming, but Audi is one of several automakers ready to pose a challenge to Tesla's dominance in the EV market.

In 2017, Tesla's Model X was named the most loved model of car based on a Strategic Vision survey. Its spot as the most loved car of the year overall shows that hybrids and electric cars are becoming increasingly popular among environmentally-conscious consumers for whom brand values and responsibility are an important part of their shopping habits ([see story](#)).

However, the U.S. automaker has also faced its share of negative press and ran into production issues earlier this year.

In the first quarter of 2018, Model 3 output increased fourfold, rising above 2,000 vehicles produced per week. However, this still missed Tesla's original goal of 5,000 Model 3 cars per week ([see story](#)).

It is unlikely that Audi and other long-established automakers will face similar issues as they ramp up EV production.

"Tesla will have to hope on the Model X's impressive range and the Tesla brand equity can withstand challenges from legacy automakers that have proven manufacturing abilities something Tesla lacks and a dedicated and established dealer and service network something else Tesla lacks," Mr. Undercoffler said.

British automaker Jaguar has also introduced its first all-electric vehicle, the I-Pace. Like the e-tron, the I-Pace is a SUV, reflecting luxury drivers' growing preference for sports utility vehicles over sedans.

One of Jaguar's many initiatives to promote the I-Pace is the new Go I-Pace mobile application which captures journey data to calculate potential cost savings for would-be drivers of the all-electric SUV ([see story](#)).

"The Model X is positioned slightly more upmarket than these upcoming luxury crossover EVs," Mr. Undercoffler said. "It's bigger, faster and more expensive.

"Tesla's next vehicle the smaller and hopefully more-affordable Model Y crossover realistically won't be in customer hands for at least another year or two," he said. "So Tesla will have to weather this storm for a while."

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