

AUTOMOTIVE

Automakers share future mobility visions in Frankfurt

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Lamborghini's Sin FKP 37. Image courtesy of Lamborghini

By SARAH JONES

Electrification is emerging as a top trend among luxury automakers at this year's IAA in Frankfurt, Germany, as marques seek to offer sustainable solutions to drivers.

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Battery-powered cars are extending to even supercars, as Lamborghini introduces its first hybrid at the show. Along with electric vehicles, concepts and models revealed at the IAA imagine a future of driving that is experiential and immersive.

"This year's debuts at Frankfurt were notable because they still all focused on the act of driving itself rather than make bold predictions for the arrival of autonomous vehicles," said David Undercoffler, editor in chief of [Autolist](#), San Francisco.

"Land Rover's new Defender is a perfect example of this," he said. "A nameplate with heaps of built-in consumer appeal, this new model fills a hole in Land Rover's lineup that has little competition on the market and appeals to consumers' insatiable appetite for all things SUV. Thus, it should do very well globally.

"Other driving-focused reveals included the Audi RS6 Avant and RS7, the Ferrari F8 Tributo and 812 Superfast, BMW's Concept 4 a preview of the 4 Series coupes."

Electrified approach

Audi is revealing a new electric concept off-roading vehicle at Frankfurt. Dubbed the AI:Trail quattro, the four-seater vehicle is designed to help riders explore nature.

The car's windows stretch down to the ground, enabling better sight lines during an excursion. Letting passengers get away from technology, the car favors outdoor views as entertainment, with the concept foregoing big screens for streaming or watching content.



Audi's AI:Trail concept. Image courtesy of Audi

This concept is the fourth in a series of futuristic Audi models, all of which will be showcased together at the IAA. The AI:Trail joins the airplane-inspired Aicon autonomous sedan, homey AI:Me and AI:Race sports car.

Mercedes' EQS concept also puts a focus on sustainability with an electric saloon, which takes interior design inspiration from yachts.

Mercedes' EQS

Among the cars BMW is showcasing at Frankfurt is the i Hydrogen Next, which is the automaker's take on emissions-free driving, with new fuel-cell technology.

Lamborghini is honoring the memory of late former Volkswagen chairman Ferdinand Pich with a new model named after him. The Sin FKP 37 is the first hybrid super sports car from the marque and will be Lamborghini's first electrified production vehicle.

All of the 63 Sin FKP 37 cars have already been purchased, and owners will be able to put their own bespoke touches on their vehicles.

Lamborghini's Sin FKP 37

Indicative of the electrification wave's extension to supercars, Automobili Pininfarina has inked a partnership with Bosch Engineering and Benteler to establish a high-performance electric vehicle platform. The collaboration, announced on Sept. 10 ahead of the show, aims to bring electrification to more luxury vehicles.

Outside of electric models, the IAA also saw the launch of the second generation Audi RS 7. The twin turbo V8-powered five-seat car is designed to encompass the feeling of driving in a grand tourer with the sportiness of a coup.

The BMW Concept 4 coup modernizes some of the brand's signatures, including its kidney grille.

BMW's Concept 4

BMW's Vision M Next is also making its first auto show appearance at Frankfurt, as part of the automaker's showcase centered on "future driving pleasure." Through its BMW Vision M Next concept, first revealed in June, the marque aims to introduce new innovations for its high-performance vehicles without sacrificing the thrill in the driver's seat ([see story](#)).

Other BMW models making their debut at Frankfurt include the X6 sports coupe and the third generation 1 Series. The automaker is in the midst of its biggest historic model push, which led to record first half sales this year.

Sustainability push

Rather than focus on autonomy, automakers are using Frankfurt as a platform to bring electrification to more models.

British automaker Land Rover has unveiled its redesigned Defender along with a campaign touting its adventurous use of technology.

After months of anticipation, the new Defender was revealed on Sept. 10 at the Frankfurt Motor Show. The updated off-roading model encapsulates the Land Rover brand by bringing together exploration and forward-thinking technology.

Even the new Defender has been given a sustainable makeover. In addition to traditional combustion engines, advanced mild-hybrid and plug-in electric engines are also available for the Defender ([see story](#)).

At Frankfurt, German automaker Porsche is also showcasing its first fully electric vehicle, with a focus on eco-friendly driving that extends beyond the engine.

The Porsche Taycan will be the first Porsche with an option for leather-free interiors, as consumers increasingly seek out alternatives to animal-derived materials. The car, which debuted earlier this month, also incorporates recycled materials, furthering the sustainable positioning of the Taycan ([see story](#)).

"It's become clear that self-driving cars are still many years away, as automakers and companies centered around autonomy continue to encounter significant hurdles, be they regulatory, technical or ethical," Mr. Undercoffler said. "Emission and efficiency standards, however, are real and immediate. So automakers must continue their march toward electrification, no matter the type or cost of their vehicles.

"This is why you saw VW launch its ID3 compact EV, which is built on a dedicated EV platform that will underpin numerous affordable, mass-market EVs that it will sell globally," he said. "And at the same time, even ultra-high-end brands like Lamborghini are no longer immune to the necessity to electrify, hence the Sin. Hyundai, Mercedes-Benz, VW and Jaguar also teased future EVs with concept models."

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