

AUTOMOTIVE

BMW teases iNext debut with tongue-in-cheek video series

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The iNext's exteriors are hidden in camouflage in "Chasing the iNext." Image: BMW

By ELLEN KELLEHER

German automaker **BMW** is sharing a behind-the-scenes look its iNext electric SUV with the release of a humorous six-part documentary series.

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Orchestrated by the Cologne filmmakers bilduntonfabrik, the "Chasing the iNext" series takes the viewer through various departments at the BMW Group. The films cover a range of topics from the electric SUV's hum to the influence of its designers to BMW's sustainability efforts in a bid to draw the curtain on its manufacturing process.

"These films bring new eyes to the brand and have proven to be very successful globally," said Lauren Fix, automotive expert at **The Car Coach**, Lancaster, NY.

A quest to see the iNext

BMW has managed to preserve the anonymity of the iNext's design during testing by covering the car in a camouflage coat. By episode six of the documentary, the audience is still waiting to see the finalized interior and details of the car and the only view available is still the camouflage version.

The final design of the new SUV, which was first announced in 2018, will make its formal debut on Nov. 11. It is set to go into production in 2021.

Each lasting under seven minutes in length, the six episodes are accompanied by music by composer Hans Zimmer. The featurettes are at times comical, playful, absurdist, entertaining and informative and serve to showcase the inner workings of the BMW Group.

The first episode opens with shots of Bavaria, the corporate home of BMW.

The film crew has been sent there to film a documentary about the "next visionary supercar that will bring comfort and power like no car has ever done." The mood among the crew is jovial as they get lost in BMW's headquarters in Munich.

The iNext SUV is set to go into production in 2021

Not holding back, the film's narrator compares the electric SUV to Tesla and hints that the U.S. automaker has inflated value since it has sold far fewer vehicles than BMW. The narrator also draws attention to fossil fuels and the environmental drawbacks of traditional combustion engines.

While the first episode provides context, the second episode focuses on the intricacy of the design process of the car.

In this short, the film crew compares the importance of BMW's design team to Apple's former chief design officer Jony Ive or the late legendary designer Karl Lagerfeld. Mr. Zimmer, who was also hired to help develop the sound of the iNext, appears in a cameo.

Designers at BMW are as important as designer Jony Ive was to Apple.

The crew's inability to spot an actual iNext is a running joke throughout the series and they note the secrecy of BMW's operations numerous times.

"How are we supposed to make a documentary if they keep hiding everything from us?" laughs the narrator.

The third episode casts a light on the engineers, described as "the secret stars of the automotive industry," who have helped in developing the iNext. The crew gets a bit closer to their goal of driving an iNext, and are allowed to test drive Lucy, BMW's prototype with an electric engine.

Next, the filmmakers gain access to what they describe as the secret vaults of the BMW Intelligence Agency.

A virtual reality model of the car is unveiled and discussions are staged about the car's artificial intelligence. The narrator posits that eventually each BMW will be connected to every other BMW on earth.

The fifth episode explores the iNext's environmental pedigree, with a glimpse of the discussions being held to honor BMW's commitments to embrace lower emissions, recycle and become sustainable. The crew also tests out the Fasi driving simulator.

The sixth and final episode shares "The Story of Actually Finding the Supercar."

"When we started this journey all we wanted to do was to see the iNext," says the narrator in a tongue-in-cheek manner. "No one has shown it to us."

The film crew gets a chance to test drive a camouflaged version of the iNext

After asking opinions of others at BMW on the type of animal the iNext most closely resembles, the crew decides that for them, the iNext is like a "shy deer that doesn't want to be seen." Finally, after a BMW executive takes them on a mysterious journey to a factory where the iNext sits in camouflage, the film crew gets their chance.

A tan tarpaulin is taken off of the vehicle and it sits on the floor, ready to be driven.

"If they want this camouflage thing in the car commercial, let's give it to them," the narrator jokes.

The crew then proceeds to drive the camouflaged car on roads passing through the Bavarian mountains. At the film's end, the scene changes abruptly to a dance party, populated by a number of the BMW executives who made cameos in the series.

The dancing continues until the narrator says, "I love the anarchistic approach, but let's not forget whose paying for this," and BMW's logo appears on a black screen.

Since its introduction of the BMWi3 in 2013, the German automaker has been slower to introduce electric models than peers such as Tesla. BMW Group's limited electric lineup includes the BMW iX3 electric SUV and the Mini Cooper SE Electric, which have both been criticized for lacking certain technological advances.

Electric competition

This year has been a big one for electric cars as more automakers try to go head to head with Tesla and the glitzier, the debut, the better it is for the brand.

Last month, for instance, German automaker Porsche kickstarted the roll-out of its all-electric Taycan in the Middle East with a light show on the Burj Khalifa in Dubai.

Taycan can be translated to "lively young horse." In addition to referencing the equine figure in Porsche's logo, the name intends to communicate the spirit of the car ([see story](#)).

Meanwhile, in a sign of its enthusiasm, just a few weeks ago Toyota Corp.'s Lexus recruited a pair of TED fellows to figure out how to keep human needs in focus as the Japanese automaker rushes to embrace autonomous driving.

To help automakers navigate the future, neuroscientist Greg Gage and artist Sarah Sandman, who are both TED senior fellows, devised artful ways to make autonomous cars responsive to people as Lexus looks to distinguish itself as an early adopter of electric cars and self-driving technology ([see story](#)).

Lastly, German automaker Audi also recently sought to distinguish itself as a leader in the increasingly crowded electric vehicle space through a short that shows how the sound of its e-tron GT was crafted.

The e-tron GT is part of Audi's drive to electrify one-third of its suite of new models by 2025 ([see story](#)).

"The market is growing ever slowly and BMW must be there to prove itself," Ms. Fix said. "Time will tell how the electric cars evolve and change as we add that in to the mix of propulsions available."

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