



LUXURY. PERFORMANCE. STYLE.

Published on 09/15/2005

Report from Frankfurt: An Industry in Upheaval

By Nick Kurczewski
ForbesAutos.com

FRANKFURT – The 61st Frankfurt International Motor Show featured a disparate mix of Teutonic sport cars, hybrid sport utilities and a head-spinning array of global partnerships. The only thing hotter than the stifling temperatures inside the show halls were rampant corporate rumors and maneuvers.



DaimlerChrysler announced that it wants to build minivans for Volkswagen while BMW, General Motors and DaimlerChrysler joined forces to develop gas-electric hybrid technology in an effort to wrest some market share from dominant Toyota. Along with the latest outlandish boutique super cars — names like Tramonto and Fenomenon — a triumvirate of Chinese car manufacturers debuted vehicles verging on four-wheeled paperweights, some with images of brake discs painted – yes, painted – onto their drum brakes.

One of the overarching themes this year seemed to be that no automaker is immune to the growing pains that have seized the industry as nascent technology promises to alter motoring for good, national economies continue to meld into a global one and oil markets maintain their upheaval. Take BMW, a company that is on a roll of successful launches and profits: It seemed to hedge by trying to cover as many bases as possible, unveiling a sports car, a hybrid SUV and new variants of mainstream four-door sedans and wagons. Meanwhile, exotic-car maker Maserati announced a new entry-level vehicle that will undercut current models by \$12,000 to \$18,000.

Between the fanfare of press conferences and the glint of bright lights on sheet metal, it became apparent that consumer's increasing thirst for seemingly opposed ideals of higher performance and greater fuel efficiency has companies scrambling for new technologies, partnerships and market niches.

Below is a list of significant new high-end and high-performance vehicles that promise to impact the market.

Audi Q7

Borrowing the platform shared by Volkswagen's Touareg and Porsche's Cayenne, the Audi Q7 sport utility manages to offer more interior room than either while weighing hundreds of pounds less. And judging from

first impressions, the Q7 is far more attractive than the ungainly Cayenne. Audi is overdue for a sport utility vehicle in its lineup and the Q7 will fill this slot in summer 2006. Capable of hauling up to seven passengers, the rear-most seats are best used by children. Engines will include a 280-horsepower 3.2-liter V6, or 350 hp 4.2-liter V8 and maybe even a V10. This latter model could cannibalize sales of the Cayenne and Touareg as much as it might win over buyers considering a BMW X5 or M-Class Mercedes. A hybrid-powered Q7 employing the V8 with an electric motor also rolled onto the Audi stand, though nothing concrete was mentioned regarding production. Standard equipment for the Q7 includes a six-speed Tiptronic gearbox with manual shift mode, parking assist with a rear-mounted camera, hill descent control, an air suspension and all-wheel drive. Despite the off-road addenda, Audi says that the Q7 is biased more toward on-road behavior than the Cayenne or Touareg.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

Bentley Azure

Bentley's elegant new top-of-the-line convertible brings back the Azure model name after a four-year absence. Positive response to its concept Arnage Drophead Coupe shown at the Los Angeles auto show earlier this year prompted Bentley to expedite development of the Azure with a target sale date of Spring 2006. It features a twin-turbocharged, 6.75-liter V8 making 450 hp and an especially impressive 645 lb.-ft. of torque. The convertible's hydraulic, three-layer, insulated fabric top deploys and retracts in about 30 seconds. Under-floor cross-braces improve body stiffness compromised by removing the roof. The Azure's interior promises to be fully customizable like the rest of Bentley's lineup. The company hasn't yet confirmed prices, or even how many Azures it will build per year.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

BMW X3 Hybrid and Z4 Coupe concept

The Efficient Dynamics X3 does not have the sex appeal and seductive silhouette of BMW's Z4 coupe concept car, which also debuted at the show. However, the technology underpinning this compact SUV is likely to have far greater impact than another Bavarian sports car. Utilizing high-performance capacitor technology that BMW calls Syncaps, the system is similar to other gas-electric hybrid setups in that an electric motor is sandwiched by the engine and transmission. The Syncaps themselves are small enough to be placed in the door sills, thereby side-stepping the need for large-scale retooling of the vehicle platform. The Syncaps produce enormous — though brief — bursts of torque, ideal for city driving or a quick pass on the highway. Recharged via regenerative braking, the system sounds good in theory and fits in well with BMW's sporty image where low 0-60 mph times are next to godliness. No word yet on how close this technology is to making it off the show stand and into showrooms. However, a joint effort announced between BMW, DaimlerChrysler and General Motors to develop hybrid technology — possibly in an attempt to side-step Toyota's numerous patents — makes future hybrid BMWs more likely.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

BMW says the Z4 Coupe is officially a concept car. Don't believe it. This hardtop variation of the Z4 convertible will compete with Porsche's new Cayman coupe and it's only a matter of time until the car is declared a production vehicle. A perpetual mob of admirers surrounding the car during press days at the show implies that this car could go far. Whereas the original and short-lived Z3 coupe had the proportions of a work boot, the Z4 has a balanced, creased and purposeful look, accentuated by the show car's exclusive matt-finish silver paint and contrasting dark finished 19-inch alloy wheels. The interior features a few flourishes that show cars are known for but which usually get scrapped for production. Attractive woven rattan-like material is used on door and seat inserts and soft suede covers large portions of the dash. Powered by a new 265-hp 3.0-liter inline six, BMW says that the Z4 Coupe is capable of hitting 60 mph times in 5.7 seconds. Expect even more when (not if) a fortified M version appears at future auto shows and, eventually, BMW showrooms.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

Daimler Super Eight

No, this is not Jaguar's tribute model to a chain of cheap motels. For decades Daimlers represented the upper-echelon of British motoring, even if they looked like Jaguar clones with a few unique styling cues here and there — most notably the fluted chrome grille. The Daimler Super Eight is a stretched version of the Jaguar's XJ sedan and represents the return of the Daimler badge after an eight-year absence. At 201 inches in length and with 39 inches of rear legroom, there is plenty of space for Super Eight owners to plot their next corporate takeover. A unique fluted grill, 18-inch alloy wheels and chrome mirrors are among the few visual clues that this is a Daimler and not a Jag. A super-charged 4.2-liter V8 hurtles the Super Eight to 60 miles per hour in just over five seconds. The interior is highly customizable, with TV, DVD and innumerable leather and wood combinations. Jaguar has been vague regarding price, but you can expect to pay well over \$100,000 for a Super Eight, that is, if Jaguar even offers the Daimler in the U.S. Jaguar's XJ Super V8 Portfolio is currently filling the role of king-cat for Jaguar USA. Whether the less flashy Daimler makes it to American shores remains to be seen, to say nothing of the fact that resurrecting this brand could confuse consumers who may not grasp that this isn't a DaimlerChrysler car.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

Ferrari F430 Challenge

The new F430 Challenge will anchor Ferrari's third Challenge racing series, which pits wealthy clients and amateur racers against one another in identical race cars. It will compete with its predecessor, the 360 Modena Challenge, in 2006 and completely replace it in 2007. The F430 Challenge looks like a stock F430 and has the same 490-hp V8 engine. Its sequential manual transmission uses technology found on Formula One Ferraris with gear ratios revised for track use. The F430 Challenge is intended to be driven exclusively on race tracks.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

Modifications compared to standard F430s include carbon-ceramic materials in the brake system, a revised suspension and custom 19-inch Pirelli racing slicks (tires with no tread) mounted on lightweight wheels with quick-change center locks. Stability control and traction control have been permanently disabled and a mechanical differential replaces the F430's electronic one. Electronic Brake-force Distribution has also been mechanized. The F430's sumptuous interior has been transformed into a serious racing cockpit with full safety harness and a steering wheel that releases out of the way to ease entry. Buttons on the steering wheel allow the driver to radio pit crew, set pit-lane speed and interface with the new color digital instrument panel. Components like a Lexan windshield, carbon-fiber intake plenum and special exhaust system reduce weight, bringing the total curb weight to 2,695 lbs., compared to 3,197 lbs. for the stock F430.

Ferrari launched its Challenge racing series in the mid-1990s using a modified F355 model. The goal was to synergize Ferrari's road and track prowess while creating a unique experience for clients. Company officials couch the racing series as "the new golf," where movers and shakers and industry moguls mingle.

Jaguar XK

Designer Ian Callum penned the sublime Aston Martin DB9 and based on that car alone he's firmly established in the annals of car-design history. After becoming Jaguar design director, he was charged with bringing the decade-old XK coupe into the 21st century. The result is a clean shape featuring a clever pop-up hood, which raises five centimeters when it senses the car will impact a pedestrian. This allows the car to meet stringent European safety standards while maintaining what Callum describes as "a very low, sleek Jaguar sports car profile."



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

The car is several hundred pounds lighter than the outgoing XK, thanks to extensive use of aluminum in the body. A 300-hp 4.2-liter V8 is standard, with a super-charged XKR soon to follow. A convertible will also be added mid-2006. A longer wheelbase frees up additional interior space compared to the notoriously cramped cabin of the outgoing model. Upholstered in leather and a choice of aluminum, maple

or walnut trim, the interior of the 2007 XK coupe will be as comfortable to sit in as it is too look at.

Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder

The white Gallardo Spyder convertible on the Lamborghini stand seemed a bit vintage Miami Vice for a car that, in more seductive hues, is undeniably a jaw-dropper. Not content to merely lop the top off of the two-year-old Gallardo model, Lamborghini tweaked the suspension, lowered the gear ratios for quicker acceleration and tuned the 5.0-liter V10 for even more horsepower — now 520 hp at 8,000 rpm. Equally impressive is the elegant convertible roof which, when lowered, disappears completely with no ugly humps or bumps to interrupt the Gallardo's taut lines. The powered top lower in about 20 seconds at the touch of a button and takes residence in the engine compartment. A “service function” button repositions the stowed top to allow engine access. Celeste Phoebe (light blue) and Verde Picus (green) are colors unique to the Spyder and have been added to Lamborghini's typically bold palate.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

Maserati Quattroporte Executive GT and Sport GT

Only two years after its debut at the 2003 Frankfurt auto show, Maserati released two new versions of the Quattroporte at this year's show. The Executive GT and Sport GT is aimed at clients looking for more luxury and exclusivity, while the Sport GT offers sportier handling. The Executive GT offers a wider array of leather, paint and trim customization. Wood veneer is worked into the steering wheel, faux suede covers the roof liner and rear passengers are treated to heated and cooled seats with folding rear trays in either wood or titanium. The Sport GT bypasses the optional technological and luxury goodies, and instead firms up the handling with a retuned Skyhook air suspension and 20-inch alloy wheels. Maserati says that new software for the paddle-operated sequential manual transmission improves shift time by 35 percent in the Sport GT. Carbon fiber and alloy accents on the dash, red stitching, and a sport steering wheel give the interior a performance feel. Also on Maserati's stand was the GranSport Spyder, the open-air version of the company's GranSport coupe. This, along with the Executive GT and Sport GT, should arrive by mid-2006 as 2007 models. Maserati head Karl-Heinz Kalbfell also announced that the company will introduce a model priced below the Quattroporte, Coupe and Spyder. No specifics were given, other than that it will be smaller and priced \$12,000 to \$18,000 less than current models.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

Mercedes Benz S-Class, ML63 AMG and Vision R63 AMG

Battered by recalls and sagging quality, Mercedes-Benz needs the new S-Class to reestablish its image as a leader in innovation and reliability. Unveiled by new Mercedes CEO Dieter Zetsche, who said the company's quality issues are a thing of the past, the S-Class is loaded with advanced technical features like brake assist (which senses objects in the road and applies brake pressure accordingly), proximity sensing cruise control, an air suspension, a night vision display and Mercedes' Active Body Control system. The new S-Class is the "jewel in the crown" of DaimlerChrysler, Zetsche said. Still, much of its newfangled technologies are advanced versions of similar items in current models that have proven unreliable and tarnished the brand. The S-Class' styling ushers in a new look for Mercedes, with swollen wheel arches and more angular head- and tail lamps. The spectrum of available engines ranges from entry-level V6s to a mighty V12. No exact word was given on which motors are destined for the U.S., but don't be surprised to see a fuel-efficient S-Class diesel in the near future. Set to go on sale in the U.S. in early 2006, the S-Class will officially be a 2007 model.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

Zetsche drove a red Jeep Wrangler on stage to kick off the press conference and symbolize his shift from head of Chrysler to Mercedes. The second generation of Mercedes' Alabama-built M-Class is an unlikely showcase for a new AMG-tuned 6.3-liter V8 engine that bowed at the show. The fact that the ML63 AMG shared the stand with an orange race car made it seem all the more exciting, or ridiculous, depending on your level of cynicism. The thunderous new AMG motor, with 510 hp and 465 lb.-ft. of torque, will eventually power other AMG-tuned Mercedes vehicles, including the brand new S-Class and

R-Class. An R-Class concept, called the R63 AMG, also debuted with the potent new hardware and will see production. Expect the ML63 AMG to go on sale in the second quarter of 2006 and a production-ready R63 AMG to debut at an auto show within that timeframe.

Mini Concept Frankfurt

BMW-owned Mini has been saying for some time that new models are on the way to complement the current two-door coupe and convertible. Here's the proof and it isn't pretty. Mini used a pooch to showcase the rear cargo space and utility of the tiny station wagon concept car. Hint to Mini: get the dog out of the trunk and teach it to lie across the front end and hide those bug-eye headlights. The front looks like a Mini with a botched face lift. Headlights are pulled too far back, front fenders too round and egg shaped. It looks much better aft of the collagen-filled front end. Inspired by the Mini Traveler wagon of the 1960s, the unimaginatively named Concept Frankfurt is longer, with a shrunken station wagon profile and twin vertically split rear doors with a glass hatch that extends into the roof. The super-charged four-cylinder from the Mini Cooper S is under the hood. Considering the extra weight of the longer body, it will likely be the standard engine for this Mini that has a good change of reaching production.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

Porsche Cayman S

The Porsche Cayman S is the long-awaited coupe version of Porsche's mid-engine Boxster convertible and goes on sale January, 2006, with a 295-hp 3.4-liter horizontally opposed flat-six. This is the first of what will undoubtedly be several Cayman variants to come, with lower priced models coming within a year or two. Priced just shy of \$60,000 dollars, the Cayman S has the potential to beat Porsche's more expensive and more powerful 911 around a racetrack, thanks to superior balance. The Cayman slots between the 911 and the slightly less powerful and less expensive Boxster in Porsche's lineup. Interestingly, with front and rear luggage compartments, the Cayman has (in theory) more cargo room than a BMW 3 Series sedan. It will reach 60 mph in 5.1 seconds and top out at 171 mph.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

Saab 9-3 Sedan, Convertible and SportCombi ; Saab 9-5 Sedan and Wagon

Saab had a smorgasbord of new vehicles at the Frankfurt show. Most interesting is the handsome 9-3 SportCombi wagon, on sale in the U.S. October 2006 at a price well below \$30,000 for base models. The SportCombi, like all new 9-3 sedans and convertibles, is available with either a 210-hp turbo-charged four-cylinder, or a new 2.8-liter V6 generating 250 hp. This latter engine is reserved for higher-spec Aero models and it will be interesting to see whether Saab can muster driving dynamics in this front-wheel drive wagon to match competitors like the BMW 3-Series, Volvo V50 and Audi A4.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

Also on display was a freshened 9-5 sedan and wagon with revisions to the chassis, interior, and exterior. The bold new nose, with headlights surrounded by tiny grills, stood out the most. Available mid-2006, the updated 9-5 continues for two-to-three more years before an all-new replacement arrives.

Volkswagen Golf R32 and Eos

Announcing that your company is in crisis and that thousands of jobs are at stake is not the ideal way to debut a sport hatchback and all-new hardtop convertible. Nevertheless, Wolfgang Bernhard was never known for being shy while heading up Chrysler some years back and the same is true in his new role as chief executive of Volkswagen. Despite the dire warnings, VW's Frankfurt debuts did not have vultures circling overhead. With a 250-hp 3.2-liter V6 and all-wheel-drive, the Golf R32 is the most powerful Golf ever. A six-speed manual or six-speed sequential manual gearbox will be offered when the car goes on sale in Europe this fall. America has to wait until early 2006 for the Golf R32



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

Even bigger news was the Eos hardtop convertible that VW is slotting above the New Beetle convertible in terms of refinement and price. The Eos features a clever five-piece folding hardtop. A wide range of four-cylinder and V6 engines will be available in Europe, while U.S. engine specs are still under wraps. Expect the 3.2-liter V6 and VW's turbo-charged 2.0-liter four-cylinder to cross the Atlantic. Priced around \$31,000 at current exchange rates, the Eos arrives Stateside in May 2006 as a 2007 model.

Volvo C70

The outgoing Volvo C70 convertible had the structural integrity of a bowl of Jello. Over bumps it would wiggle, the steering would wobble, likely inciting owners to wonder why they didn't choose a BMW 3-Series, Audi A4 or Mercedes-Benz CLK convertible instead. The new C70, with its three-piece retractable hard-top should offer a far better driving experience. It has a chunky shape that is definitely not sexy, but attractive. The folding hardtop is a first for Volvo and its stiffer structure borrowed from the Volvo S40 sedan (which in turn is shared with the Mazda 3 and European Ford Focus) should endow this four-seater with a vastly quieter, smoother and sportier ride. Typical of safety-oriented Volvo, the car features an inflatable curtain airbag system mounted in the doors, which deploys upward and provides protection from rollovers and side impacts by staying rigid. On sale in the first half of 2006 as a 2007 model, U.S. versions will have a 218-hp turbo-charged five cylinder engine also found in Volvo's S40 and V50 models. Pricing is not finalized but expected to start around \$39,000.



[+ enlarge image](#) | [view slideshow >](#)

More 2005 Frankfurt Motorshow Coverage

- [Auto Show Preview: Luxury Car Bonanza](#)
- [Frankfurt's All About Hybrids](#)

Reported by Nick Kurczewski for *ForbesAutos.com*

Copyright 2005 ForbesAutos.com. All rights reserved. This material may not be republished or redistributed without permission.



LUXURY. PERFORMANCE. STYLE.

[Buy a Car](#) | [Reviews](#) | [Decision Guides](#) | [Photo Galleries](#) | [News](#) | [Advice](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)