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# MOTORMONTHLY

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# Agent Orange

BMW blows away the cobwebs away with Z4 concept

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# MOTORMONTHLY

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# High roller

Rolls-Royce gives the silent treatment to all-new Phantom VIII



By TUNG NGUYEN

**R**OLLS-ROYCE has ripped the covers off its eighth-generation ultra-luxurious Phantom four door, which is expected to land in Australian showrooms in late 2017 with

“pricing in excess of \$1 million”, according to a spokesperson.

Although specific pricing has yet to be revealed, as well as customisation, options and accessories likely to swell the cost, the new-generation Phantom will wear a considerably

higher pricetag than its predecessor, which kicks off at \$855,000 driveaway for the standard-wheelbase Phantom and \$990,000 for the extended-wheelbase version.

However, the Phantom VIII sits on a new all-aluminium spaceframe

architecture which makes the new luxury cruiser about 30 per cent more rigid than the spaceframe platform of its predecessor, as well as being lighter and quicker to produce in standard- and extended-wheelbase forms.

Making its debut in the new

Phantom, the Architecture of Luxury – as the new platform is called – was built from the ground up to be scalable and will also underpin all of Rolls-Royce’s future models including the brand’s first SUV offering, the Cullinan.



Rolls-Royce is claiming its new Phantom is the most silent car in the world thanks to around 130kg of sound insulation and 6mm thick two-layer glazing all around, as well as a beefier floor and bulkhead to eliminate unwanted noise intrusion.

High sound-absorption materials are also used throughout the

headliner, doors and boot, while Rolls says specially developed tyres that “feature a specific foam layer placed inside ... to wipe out tyre cavity noise and reduce over tyre noise by 9db” are wrapped around 22-inch wheels.

To reduce unwanted bodyroll, the Phantom’s double wishbone front and five-link rear set-up is underpinned

by air suspension and a new chassis control system with a Magic Carpet Ride function that “makes millions of calculations every second as it continuously varies the electronically controlled shock absorber adjustment system – reacting to body and wheel acceleration, steering inputs and camera information”.

A front-facing stereo camera system integrated into the windscreen also reads the road ahead to pre-emptively adjust suspension settings, while the addition of four-wheel steering also contributes to a smoother ride.

According to Rolls-Royce, the new Phantom is 10 per cent quieter than the model it replaces while travelling

at 100km/h – a speed it only needs 5.4 seconds to accelerate to from a standstill thanks to a new twin-turbo 6.75-litre V12 petrol engine.

In keeping with the Phantom’s ultra-luxurious credentials, Rolls has tuned the new engine to deliver maximum torque of 900Nm at just 1700rpm to keep engine noise to a minimum.



The engine also produces peak power of 420kW at 6000rpm and is teamed to a ZF eight-speed automatic transmission to return a combined fuel consumption average of 13.9 litres per 100km and emit 319g/km of CO<sub>2</sub>.

From the outside, the new Phantom features evolutionary styling with a square front-end

gradually softening into a tapered derriere with few visible body panel seams, giving “the appearance of being hewn from a solid block of aluminium”, according to Rolls.

However, the front Pantheon grille is raised higher than its predecessor, as is the iconic Spirit of Ecstasy, and, for the first time, the grille is integrated

into the bodywork and flanked by high-tech headlights with laser light technology that can illuminate the road up to 600 metres ahead.

The new Phantom also retains its nameplate’s signature short-front and long-rear overhangs, as well as the prominent shoulder kink that now finishes mid-way through

the rear doors.

Polished stainless steel is used to highlight the windscreen, door windows and door handles – the latter of which are used to open the suicide doors which can be softly closed with the touch of a sensor.

Inside the Phantom, high-gloss surfaces and soft-touch materials

characterise the interior with metal used across the air vents and switchgear.

Not content to offer just front seats with a heating function, Rolls-Royce has also included heating facilities across the Phantom’s two rear seats, front and rear armrests, centre armrests aft and fore, and lower C-pillar.

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A sweeping wood panel highlight on the back of the new front seats is designed to evoke the classic Eames Lounge chair of the 1950s, according to Rolls, which also hide picnic tables and theatre monitors for the rear passengers – both controlled electronically.

The rear centre console also hides a cooler, drinks cabinet, champagne flutes, whisky glasses and decanter, while the brand also offers a myriad of customisation options, including material, colour and pattern choices for the inside.

According to the brand, “when in need of space to reflect on issues of importance or simply lost in thought, ones imagination is inspired by the largest Starlight Headliner ever

seen in a Rolls-Royce.”

For those who prefer the driver's seat, tucked behind the steering wheel is the a newly designed 12.3-inch TFT colour display which incorporates driving information via three large dials surrounded by chrome rings.

A 7x3-inch head-up display is also visible for drivers, while a retractable infotainment display sits atop the centre stack to showcase satellite navigation and communications information.

New safety systems include Alertness Assistant, a four-camera system with panoramic view, night vision, adaptive cruise control, autonomous emergency braking, cross-traffic alert and lane departure warning. **MM**

# Red devil

Aston Martin sexes up Vanquish with Italian-designed Zagato models



By RON HAMMERTON

**A**STON Martin has confirmed it will expand its Vanquish Zagato range to a family of four with the addition of an open-top Speedster and long-roof Shooting Brake.

The two new variants – revealed in the flesh at the annual Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance in California earlier this month – will follow the existing Coupe and Volante convertible into production in England next year.

Australian availability and price is yet to be confirmed, but the Speedster is already sold out, with the global production run of just 28 cars set for delivery in 2018.

The Speedster is expected to be by far the most expensive of the

Vanquish Zagato variants, with Britain’s *Autocar* speculating that the UK price will be just short of £1 million (\$A1.6m) – almost double the price of the Zagato Coupe and Volante.

Aston says it will build 99

Shooting Brakes – the same volume as the Coupe and Volante – for a total run of 325. It also will begin production next year.

Although the Shooting Brake looks like a wagon, it has just two seats, like the other Vanquish Zagato variants.



Based on the Vanquish S and styled in partnership with Italian design house Zagato, the Shooting Brake and Speedster will share Aston's 441kW 6.0-litre V12 and eight-speed automatic transmission.

Aston says this drivetrain should shave about a tenth of a second from the standard Vanquish's 4.2-second dash from zero to 100km/h. That appears to be a smidgeon slower than the Zagato Coupe and Volante which cover the sprint in 3.5 and 3.9 seconds respectively.

Aston Martin chief creative officer Marek Reichman said Aston had created a Vanquish Zagato family to satisfy different customer preferences.

"Some prefer the purity of a Coupe, but others love the idea of something more extreme, like the Speedster," he said. "And yes, some of them have ordered one example of each. There's always an over-demand from our clients and patrons.

"We could easily fulfil demand for more cars than this, but we want Zagato to remain something very special. We're creating collectibles, future concours cars. With only 325 cars worldwide, divided between 99 Coupes, 99 Volantes, 28 Speedsters and 99 Shooting Brakes – they are still the rarest of the rare."

Aston has released just one image – a side profile - of the Shooting Brake which appears to be a direct rival to Ferrari's GTC4Lusso that was officially launched at last year's



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In Australia, the Lusso sells for \$503,888 plus on-road costs for the rear-wheel-drive 3.9 litre V8, stepping up to \$578,888 for the AWD 6.3-litre V12.

All Aston Vanquish Zagato variants get hand-crafted carbon-fibre panels to save weight. Each car is said to take 2000 man hours to complete at the Gaydon plant in Warwickshire.

The new Vanquish variants continue Aston's 60-year collaboration with Zagato, starting with the DB4 GT Zagato.

Like Porsche Speedsters of yore, the Vanquish Zagato Speedster has a pair of streamlined "speed hump" cowls behind the seat headrests, apparently representing

Zagato's signature double-bubble roof style. They appear to incorporate roll-over protection bars.

Aston says the roof is made of carbon-fibre, but does not say how it is removed or whether it travels within the car.

The Shooting Brake is described as "an individual and exceptionally practical GT".

The stretched double-bubble roof has glass inlays to let light flood into the cockpit. At the back, it finishes with a powered tailgate.

Aston says the "luxuriously trimmed" rear cabin area comes with a tailored luggage set.

The Shooting Brake's dash is fashioned from herringbone-pattern carbon-fibre and fitted with anodised bronze rotary controls. **MM**

# Future vision

Mercedes-Maybach goes boating with yacht-like Vision 6 Cabriolet



By DANIEL DEGASPERI

WITH a name as long as its stately body, the Vision Mercedes-Maybach 6 Cabriolet Concept has been unwrapped at this month's Monterey Car Week in California, quite literally as a folding-fabric version of last year's coupe concept.

All but exactly matching the 5700mm-long, 2100mm-wide and 1340mm-tall dimensions of the Vision Mercedes-Maybach 6 Concept shown last year at the annual car show on the exclusive shores of Pebble Beach south of San Francisco, the Cabriolet again aims to define the "ultimate in luxury of the future".

The red paintwork of the 2+2 hard-top has given way to a 'nautical blue metallic' two-seat drop-top cloaking what Mercedes-Maybach calls an art deco-influenced design focusing on curvature and sensual surfacing topped with chrome highlights.

Despite the prominence of the sizeable chrome grille and

supersized 24-inch alloy wheels, design themes such as "reduced technoid" and "sensual purity" aim to minimise further styling embellishments beyond those major aspects, with the wrap-around tail of the vehicle said to be influenced by the rear of a luxury yacht.

Compared with the coupe, the

Cabriolet adds a custom fabric roof with rose-gold threads, opening to white Nappa leather-clad quilted seats and an open-pore wood floor, with the aim of becoming a "360-degree open-air luxury lounge".

The cabin switchgear aims to combine traditional round gauges, a two-spoke steering wheel and an

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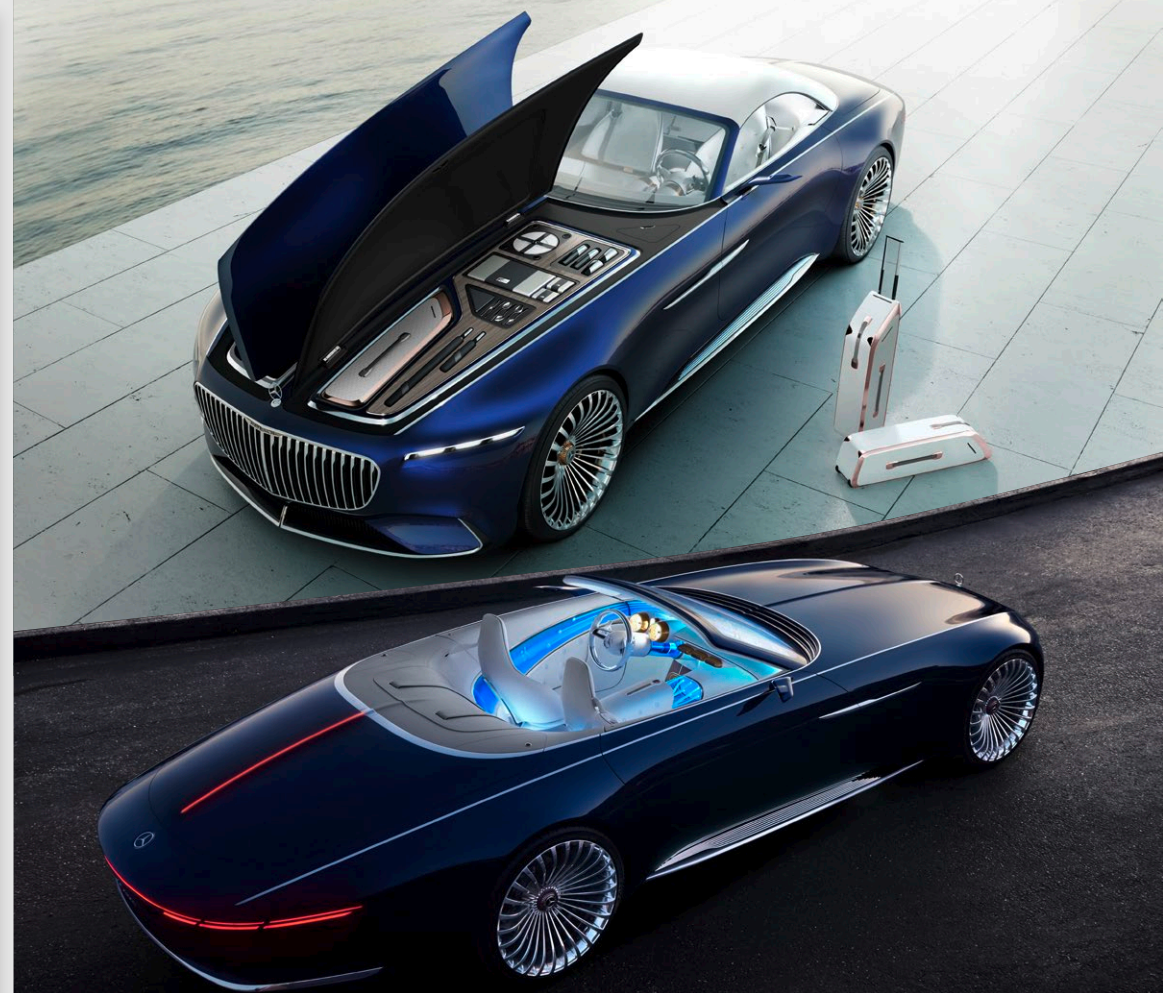
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aircraft-inspired trio of centre air vents, while twin head-up displays take care of infotainment and navigation functions.

A slimline, wrap-around display also comes complete with blue fibre-optics that help visualise the energy flow of this electric vehicle (EV).

As with the coupe, the Cabriolet features four electric motors fed by an underfloor flat battery pack, delivering 550kW of power to all four wheels and allowing the Vision Mercedes-Maybach 6 Cabriolet Concept to cover 0-100km/h in “under” 4.0 seconds, then on to a 250km/h top speed.

Fully charged, the powertrain can deliver a

claimed 500km driving range and, with fast-charge facilities on hand, Mercedes-Maybach claims 100km of range can be added to the ‘tank’ in just five minutes.

Mercedes-Maybach admits, however, that with the 6 Cabriolet Concept it is indeed a vision for “far into the future” and, according to Daimler AG chief design officer Gordon Wagener, “is the perfect embodiment of our design strategy”.

For now, Mercedes-Maybach has pointed to its 300-unit S-Class Cabriolet production model as a bridge to its next generation of ultra-luxury models. **MM**

# 4 Corners

BMW resurrects Z4 at Pebble Beach  
Concours d'Elegance



By TIM NICHOLSON

**B**MW has uncovered its Z4 roadster concept ahead of this month's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, previewing the design of the production-ready sportscar co-developed with Japanese car-maker Toyota.

The final production model will be revealed at some point in the next year, according to BMW, and GoAuto understands the road-ready roadster is expected to hit Australian showrooms in 2019.

BMW says the Z4 blends classic roadster design elements with the

company's latest design language.

The low-slung two-door drop-top features a long wheelbase, a compact rear end and short overhangs, but the bonnet is shorter than in previous BMW roadsters – think the last two Z4s, the original Z3 and the Z8 – to ensure the driver sits closer to the

centre of the car than before.

The wedge-shaped sportscar features a pair of domes that stretch out from the cabin directly behind the two differently coloured and covered seats, doubling as rollover bars.

Up front, the dramatic shark-like nose houses a wide kidney grille with

a mesh look instead of traditional BMW slats and higher-mounted headlights reminiscent of the iconic Z8 but with a vertical quad light look.

'Air breathers' behind the front wheelarches aid aerodynamics, while some creases and lines fold into one, making for a buffed exterior design.



At the rear, the Z4 has slimline L-shaped tail-lights, an integrated bootlid spoiler and a carbon-fibre diffuser, as well as beefy rear wheelarches.

The Z4 concept rides on bi-colour 20-inch double-spoke alloy wheels, while the body is finished in Energetic Orange matte paint.

BMW has not revealed any details about the roof, but overseas spy shots revealed that the production model will use a folding fabric roof much like the first-gen Z4.

The latest version appears to usher in fresh interior styling for BMW, with a new gear shifter not seen on any other recent BMW models, and a more modern dual-screen instrument cluster and infotainment system.

All in-car controls are grouped by function, pushing BMW's minimalist approach.

A head-up display is included.

The colour of the passenger side trim matches the exterior colour, while the driver's side is an all-black affair.

BMW Group Design senior vice-president Adrian van Hooydonk said the Z4 showed a new design direction for the car-maker.

"The BMW Concept Z4 is an all-out driving machine," he said. "Stripping the car back to the bare essentials allows the driver to experience all the ingredients of motoring pleasure with supreme directness. This is

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“The BMW Concept Z4 expresses the new BMW design language from all perspectives and in all details. From the dynamic-looking front to the striking flanks to the clean-cut tail end: a few lines and the subtle interplay between surfaces are enough to generate a sense of power and emotion.”

Powertrain details remain officially undisclosed, but a recently leaked internal BMW document reveals the production version will be offered with a pair of 2.0-litre turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engines and

one 3.0-litre turbo-petrol six-cylinder unit.

Toyota is yet to reveal its version of the sports car, but it is widely tipped to pop up at this year’s Tokyo motor show with Supra badges.

BMW discontinued the second-generation Z4 last year after it went on sale in 2009. It followed the first-gen model that was offered between 2003 and 2009.

While there are few direct rivals for the Z4, it could be pitched against the Porsche Boxster, the Mercedes-Benz SLC, Audi TT convertible and high-end versions of the Ford Mustang convertible. **MM**