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British open

Aston Martin's DB11 Volante rag-top hits Australian shores in 2018

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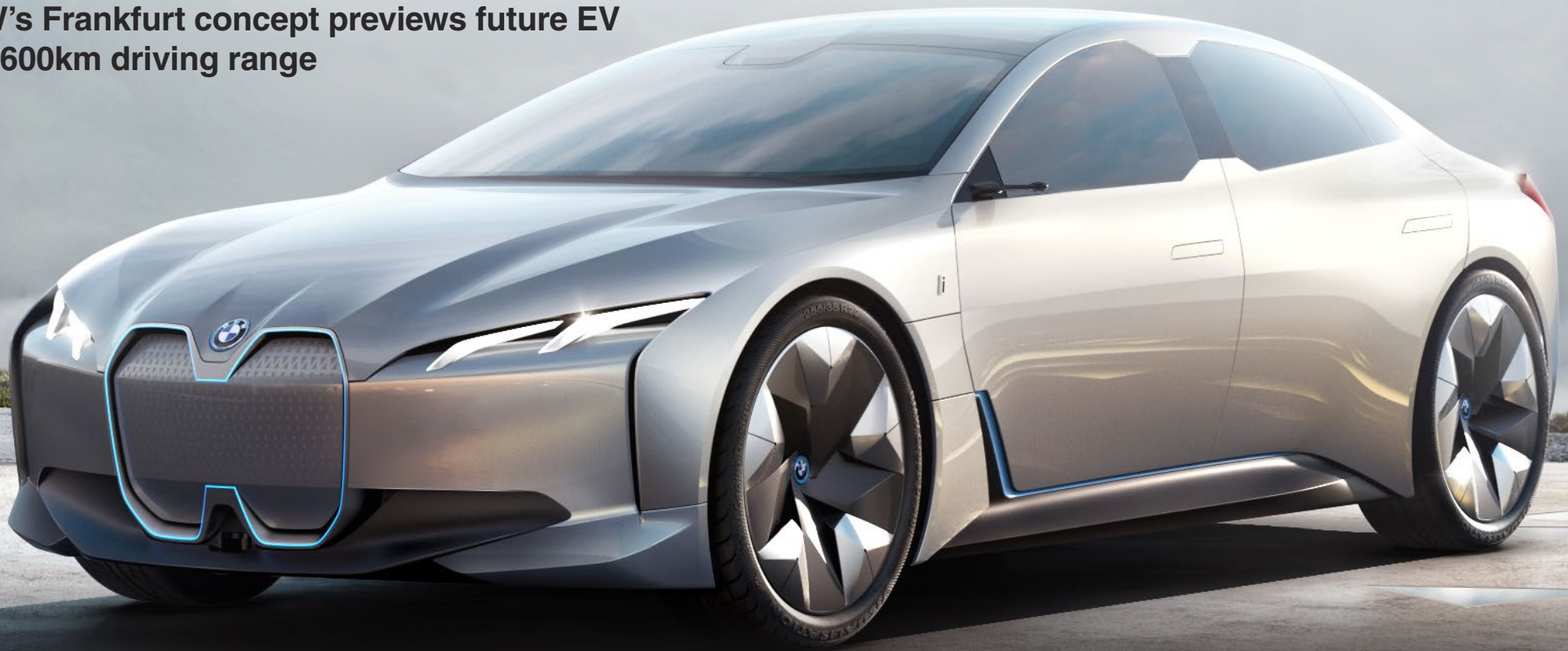
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i for an i

BMW's Frankfurt concept previews future EV with 600km driving range



By TIM NICHOLSON

BMW has previewed the next chapter in its electrified vehicle rollout with the 'i Vision Dynamics' concept that will soon take the form of a fully electric production model positioned between the i3 and i8.

The showroom-ready version of the concept, which is widely rumoured to adopt the 'i5' moniker, is scheduled to hit Australian

dealerships early in the next decade.

While BMW has not revealed too many details about the four-door Gran Coupe concept's powertrain, the German car-maker has confirmed it will have a 600km range, a top speed of more than 200km/h and a 0-100km/h sprint time of 4.0 seconds, rivalling many sports cars.

BMW Group Australia chief executive Marc Werner told GoAuto in Frankfurt last month

that the production version of the sleek concept would "certainly" be offered Down Under and that its long range would ensure it appeals to Australian consumers.

"This is a very exciting vehicle and it is not only the future because it is very, very close to being introduced," Mr Werner said on the BMW stand in Frankfurt.

"BMW is talking about the beginning of the

next decade to launch that car. It is not only a very inspiring design, but another spearhead as far as electric mobility is concerned – and the 500-600km range, that is definitely a step in the right direction from a customer perspective.

"We can't wait to bring it to Australia."

While Mr Werner said electric mobility was not yet "a volume game", he added that the production version of the concept would hold



BMW
vision dynamics

broader appeal than the two current i models – the i3 compact hatch and the i8 sports car.

“What is more important (than volume) is to have an offer for each and every customer. The i3 is certainly an urban commuter, it serves that purpose, the i8 is probably a

niche vehicle,” he said.

“Now thinking about this ‘Vision’ that we saw ... it will appeal to a broader audience and thereby deliver potentially also more volume. But at end of the day it is not really a volume game because it is a new technology, and as we

learned it will take time until the customer fully embraces the technology.”

The latest concept is a styling evolution of last year’s Vision Next 100 concept and introduces some new design elements, notably a new take on BMW’s trademark kidney grille.

Given it is an EV, the grille no longer needs to function as an air intake for the engine compartment and BMW says the new one-piece unit acts as “declarations of technological knowhow”, while the sensors housed underneath hint at the higher autonomous-

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driving capability to be built into the vehicle.

The concept has short overhangs, a flowing roofline and a long wheelbase, and the LED light treatment at the front reflects the brand's familiar quad-headlight design but with a new signature made up of two freestanding light elements.

From the side view, the i Vision Dynamics concept has an almost symmetrical front and rear window design that BMW says ensures all passengers have a good view out, which will become more important in the future because of autonomous driving.

The familiar L-shaped tail-lights feature at the back and a full-length glass surface runs from the front to the back of the vehicle.

In terms of the likely production name, BMW head of product management (BMW

i, e-mobility) Dirk Arnold was dismissive of the speculated i5 moniker when pressed on whether he thought the name was a good fit.

"It's between three and eight, but it doesn't have to have an i plus a number name," he told Australian journalists at the show.

The production-ready car's most obvious rival is the Tesla Model S, but it could also compete with the likes of the forthcoming Porsche Mission E.

As GoAuto has reported, BMW announced last month it will offer 25 electrified vehicles in its line-up by 2025, with 12 of those being full-electric vehicles.

Other electrified vehicles on the BMW Group stand at Frankfurt included the updated i3 and the new sporty i3s variant, the Mini E and the plug-in hybrid X7 SUV concept. **MM**

Western front

Aston Martin reveals drop-top DB11 Volante with Mercedes-AMG-sourced V8



By TIM NICHOLSON

ASTON Martin has lifted the lid on the drop-top Volante version of its DB11 Coupe that will hit Australian showrooms in the second quarter of 2018.

Australian pricing and specification will be confirmed at a later date, but expect the

convertible Aston to attract a premium over the DB11 V8 Coupe that starts from \$368,000 plus on-road costs.

The British car-maker says the Volante is a series production model with a limited allocation for the Australian market, but it is unclear how many will be offered to local buyers.

So far the only powertrain option for the DB11 Volante is the Mercedes-AMG-sourced 4.0-litre biturbo V8 that pumps out 375kW at 6000rpm and 675Nm from 2000-5000rpm, driving the rear wheels via an eight-speed automatic transmission.

Aston Martin told GoAuto in a statement

that the 5.2-litre/447kW/700Nm V12 found under the bonnet of some Coupe variants would not be offered with the Volante.

“DB11 Volante is only available in V8 guise as we believe that the lighter V8 was the most appropriate engine to ensure DB11 Volante retained the same dynamic driving characteristics



as both coupe variants, despite the additional weight added by the roof mechanism.”

According to Aston, the 1870kg grand tourer is 26kg lighter and more rigid than the old DB9 Volante, and it can hit 100km/h from zero in 4.1 seconds – 0.1s slower than the Coupe – on the way to a 300km/h top speed.

The fabric roof of the Volante includes eight layers of acoustic and insulation materials and takes 14 seconds to lower and 16 seconds to raise up to 50km/h.

The new roof system has freed up an extra 20 per cent of cargo space in the boot compared with the DB9 Volante.

Aston says its “exhaustive” testing procedures pushed the roof mechanism to extremes, putting the roof through more than 100,000 cycles “in special weather chambers designed to simulate conditions in the world’s harshest environments”.

It was also tested in real-world conditions in

Death Valley and the Arctic Circle.

Buyers can opt for one of three roof colours, including ‘bordeaux red’, ‘black silver’ or ‘grey silver’, and the Volante comes with newly designed 20-inch forged alloy wheels.

The Volante features a limited slip differential, idle-stop, three-stage powertrain and chassis

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modes, independent double wishbone front and multi-link rear suspension, an Adaptive Damping System, ventilated disc brakes with six-piston callipers up front and four at the rear with a choice of black, red, yellow or grey paint.

Inside the four-seat DB11 Volante features new wood or carbon-fibre veneer panels on the seat backs, rear seat Isofix attachments and a heated steering wheel.

European specification includes full-grain leather interior, Alcantara headlining, 360-degree surround view cameras, sat-nav, infotainment with capacitive switching, an Aston Martin audio system, remote control

locking, boot release and roof operation, front and rear parking sensors and heated front seats.

“For many of our customers, indeed many generations of Aston Martin customer, the Volante has always offered something very special: a unique combination of elegant style, innate sporting ability and sensory engagement that lifts it above other open-top cars,” Aston Martin president and chief executive officer Andy Palmer said.

“The new DB11 Volante captures those qualities perfectly and promises the kind of pleasure and enjoyment that can only come from driving an open-top Aston Martin.” **MM**

Pace maker

Jag announces one-make eTrophy race series with hi-po i-Pace



By HAITHAM RAZAGUI

A HIGH-PERFORMANCE variant of Jaguar's all-electric i-Pace crossover is in the works, previewed by a surprise racecar version unveiled at the Frankfurt motor show last month.

Jaguar will establish the one-make eTrophy race series from next year to support the FIA

Formula E Championship, with up to 20 battery-powered i-Pace racers on the grid at 10 races around the world, piloted by the next generation of talent vying for a career step up to Formula E.

Speaking with GoAuto in Frankfurt, Jaguar design director Ian Callum confirmed he had played a part in the looks of the racing i-Pace and revealed that the short-notice project had

also served to set the scene for an already-planned performance variant for the road.

"When we were doing the original (i-Pace) we had no idea we'd be in this position," he said.

"We always wanted to do a performance version of the car anyway so that hints at perhaps what the performance version will look like – not entirely but it's got that feel about it."

The crowds assembled at Jaguar's Frankfurt show stand were expecting to see the production-ready i-Pace and were surprised when a turquoise racing version with huge rear wing emerged from behind the sheets.

But look beyond the racing livery and a couple of clues about the production i-Pace begin to emerge compared with the concept



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unveiled in Los Angeles last November.

Subtle differences include larger door mirrors, legislation-friendly multi-coloured tail-light clusters and Jaguar wording beneath the leaping cat badge on its bootlid. Meanwhile, the flush F-Type-style doorhandles look set to stay.

The eTrophy's deep front bumper and side skirts would not look out of place on a production performance variant and neither would the rear fascia if the aggressive diffuser was toned down a little.

Naturally, the dramatic rear wing and flared, vented front guards are almost certainly exclusive to the race-ready i-Pace.

"We had to get on with this quickly because we only did the deal a few months ago and they said you'd better do a racecar study quick, that goes around quickly," Mr Callum explained.

"So we got the (wind) tunnel, the CFDs (computational fluid dynamics), did the aero and worked it all out and that's what you've got today.

"It works well and it's a quick car, too."

The i-Pace eTrophy racecars will be built by Jaguar Land Rover's Special Vehicle Operations skunkworks based in the English county of Warwickshire.

Races will take place on the same weekends as Formula E, on the same city circuits including Hong Kong, Paris, Sao Paulo and New York.

A production reveal of the road-going i-Pace now looks increasingly likely to take place in November against the same LA show backdrop as the concept's unveiling 12 months earlier.

California's strong electric vehicle market has led to the LA show becoming something of a de-facto debut venue for alternative-fuel cars. **MM**

Deutsche drifter

Audi uncovers rear-wheel-drive, 397kW R8 V10 supercar



By TIM ROBSON

AUDI has previewed a new “made-for-purists” rear-wheel-drive version of its R8 two-door super-coupe and Spyder roadster at the Frankfurt motor show last month ahead of the limited-run models’ arrival in Australia early next year.

Known as the R8 V10 RWS (Rear Wheel Series), the super-twins will be limited to 999 examples worldwide in both coupe and convertible form – both powered by a naturally aspirated V10 engine producing 397kW and 540Nm.

Audi Australia corporate communications

manager Shaun Cleary told GoAuto in Frankfurt that a small number of examples are confirmed to touch down on Australian soil in the first quarter of 2018.

“The exclusive R8 V10 RWS will come to Australia in very limited numbers, and is expected to arrive around March,” he said.

Although local pricing is yet to be confirmed, the new R8 variant will go on sale in Europe for €140,000 (\$A208,585) from early next year.

At present, the Australian-spec R8 range kicks off from \$367,000 plus on-roads costs for the base 397kW V10 coupe, \$388,500



for the convertible version and tops out at \$403,000 for the fixed-roof 447kW V10 Plus.

The latter grade is responsible for 80 per cent of R8 sales in Australia, which total 34 to the end of August – down eight units on the

same period last year.

The new RWS coupe weighs 50kg less than its all-wheel-drive counterpart at 1509kg, while the Spyder sheds 40kg to tip the scales at 1680kg.

Despite the weight saving, the R8 rear-driver is no match for its all-paw V10 sibling, with the RWS taking two-tenths longer from zero to 100km/h at 3.7 seconds.

This deficit blows out further when

compared with the R8 V10 Plus, which claims a 0-100km/h sprint in 3.2s.

Audi estimates the R8 will use 12.4 litres of fuel per 100km on the combined economy cycle, down from 11.4L/100km for the all-

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wheel-drive version.

A matte-black grille and air apertures at the front and rear differentiate the RWS version visually from a regular V10, while the upper-side blade of the coupe is finished in gloss-black and the lower blade is matched to the vehicle's body colour.

Leather and Alcantara seats greet driver and passenger, with sports bucket seats an optional extra, while a build plate also adorns the dash.

A set of red roof decals are also available for the new coupe at an extra cost.

Audi Sport chief executive Stephan Winkelmann said in Frankfurt that “the R8

V10 RWS is made for purists”.

“With its mid-mounted V10 engine and rear-wheel drive, it successfully brings the driving concept of our R8 LMS racing car to the streets,” he said.

This is not the first version of a rear-drive V10-powered two-door to emerge from the Volkswagen Group – Lamborghini currently offers a 426kW V10-powered version of its Huracan in rear-wheel-drive form, while the previous-generation Gallardo was also available in two-wheel-drive configuration.

The RWS will be the second R8 product to be sold without a driven front axle, the other being the R8 e-tron from 2012. **MM**