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THE FUTURE IS ELECTRIC

High-End, High-Voltage Transport

By David Fluhrer



*Lucid Air positioned as Tesla-fighter. Photo Credit: Lucid Motors. **Opposite:** Porsche Mission E recovers with 15-minute charge. Photo credit: Porsche Cars North America, Inc. Tesla Model S holds world acceleration record. Photo credit: Tesla, Inc.*



WHEN VERMONTER THOMAS DAVENPORT PATENTED HIS ELECTRIC MOTOR IN 1837, HE COULD NEVER HAVE EXPECTED IT TO ONE DAY ROCKET HIS DESCENDANTS DOWN THE ROAD AT MORE THAN 200 MILES AN HOUR.

Yet that's one performance target for a new breed of all-electric or gas-electric hybrid luxury and sports cars expected to hit the market by the end of the decade. They're stylish, brash and, yes, still green when it comes to shrinking carbon emissions. But they also promise lightning acceleration, blistering speed and precise handling to shock their fossil-powered cousins. All of a sudden, going green is red-hot.

They're coming to fight the evils of climate change, but they stand out for their amazing torque that pins you back in your seat. Traditional gas-powered drivetrains need to spool up to highway speeds, while an electric motor makes the transformation



almost instantaneous and the acceleration, well, electrifying. "Electric drive is a double blessing," states Porsche. "It will enable Porsche to meet stricter fuel consumption and emission standards in the future. At the same time, it improves vehicle performance considerably."

With advancing battery technology, these rides aim to cruise 400 miles or more, and they'll be anything but nerdy. They promise 22nd century styling and every variety of automotive posh. They could make even the current, expanding crop of luxury hybrids and plug-in hybrids from leading carmakers look downright ancient by comparison.

While the luxury hybrid market grows, current pickings are still slim for high-end electrics. So all eyes are on Tesla, whose Model S sedan and Model X crossover cruise up to 315 miles and cost \$73,800 to \$138,800 before options and tax incentives. Motor Trend magazine goosed one Model S to 60 in 2.28 seconds, a world production car record. If that's not enough, founder Elon Musk promises an even more thrilling "next gen Roadster, which is a few years away."

BMW says that up to a quarter of its vehicles will be plug-in hybrid or all-electric by 2025. "The drivetrain mix will ultimately be decided by the customer," says spokesperson Rebecca Kiehne. Mercedes-Benz plans a dedicated electric lineup and has »



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Vision Mercedes-Maybach 6 coupe boasts 360-degree lounge interior. Left: Mercedes-Maybach previews ultra-luxury coupe concept. Photo credits: Mercedes-Benz USA.

emissions regulations and partially driven by performance possibilities.” Ferrari is reportedly going all-hybrid by 2019 but apparently shunning pure electrics.

At the fringes are names such as Faraday Future, Fisker, NIO and Rimac. One ambitious Tesla-fighter is Silicon Valley’s Lucid Motors, whose Lucid Air futuristic sedan due in 2019 will start at \$52,500 but reach six figures with the optional 1,000 horsepower and 400-mile range. “It’s taking the electric car—the car per se—to a whole new level,” says Peter Rawlinson, Lucid’s chief technical officer, as he touts the spacious “executive jet” interior. One cool feature: Lucid’s front headlight bar, with 9,700 micro-lenses that mimic the eyes of a fly.

As politicians squabble over environmental policy and the upstarts check their bank accounts, it’s hard to say exactly what the green car landscape will look like in a few years. Right now, automakers large and small remain optimistic. For them, the future is electric. **LL**

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previewed the Vision Mercedes-Maybach 6, an ultra-luxury coupe concept with a “360-degree lounge” interior and four electric motors pumping out 750 horsepower. Jaguar launches the electric I-PACE SUV late next year, and Porsche the 600-horsepower Mission E sedan, requiring only a 15-minute charge to recoup 80% of its 300-mile range.

For now, hypercar marques such as Bugatti, Ferrari, Lamborghini and McLaren are sticking with gas-electric hybrids that won’t bat an eyelash at 1,000 horsepower or more. “McLaren has announced that over 50% of the lineup will be hybrid by 2022,” says spokesman John Paolo Canton. “It is partially driven by