

Electric Dreams

Tomorrow's top-end luxury vehicles — from electric watercraft to hydrogen-powered hypercars — have a lot more to offer than speed.

by Jeremy Freed

The people who obsess over the world's most prestigious vehicles have long been preoccupied with one thing: speed. A new car or motorcycle could be beautiful, of course, but much of its caché was to be found under the hood. As petrol-powered, human-driven conveyances are succeeded by ultra-powerful electric ones with autonomous drive technology, a new conversation has begun. Electric motors are so vastly superior to combustion engines in terms of smooth, seamless power delivery that the question now becomes not just how fast a new vehicle is, but what other bragging rights it offers. Hyper-exclusivity, US\$2 million-plus price tags, dihedral doors, ultra-light materials and, of course, a raft of new smart technologies are all means by which designers are re-inventing the wheel and enticing the world's elite buyers.

◀ Maybach 6 Concept

With four electric motors producing over 700 horsepower, this luxury coupé has plenty of power, but its jaw-dropping aesthetics are what will really move you. Significantly longer and lower than an S-Class sedan, it blends styling cues from the golden era of motoring in the 1930s with sci-fi interior finishes and self-drive technology. In addition to its massive translucent 24in wheels, the 6 Concept features a yacht-like two-plus-two seater cabin done up in rose-gold accents, tufted white-leather seats and panoramic digital displays.

Rolls-Royce 103EX

Not content to merely furnish its customers with bespoke cigar humidors and exotic leather seats, Rolls-Royce designed its 103EX concept for a future in which almost everything about a vehicle can be made to measure. This stunning 6m-long two-seater features autonomous drive, side-hinged doors and a panoramic roof, but for Rolls-Royce this is only a starting point. From there, the dimensions, seating configuration and even exterior styling are adjustable to suit each buyer's specifications.



▲ **Pininfarina H2 Speed**

This legendary Italian maker may be known for its iconic automotive designs for Ferrari, Alfa Romeo and Peugeot, but since its takeover by Indian billionaire Anand Mahindra, it's stepping boldly into the electric era. The H2 Speed is a limited-edition supercar good for 0-60 in under four seconds, but its real draw is technological: this is the world's first hydrogen-powered supercar.

► **Aston Martin Valkyrie**

What makes this collaboration between the famed British carmaker and Red Bull so noteworthy (and desirable to the 150 lucky customers able to get their hands on a car) is its architecture. Thanks to liberal use of carbon fibre and other space-age materials, it weighs less than a Mazda MX-5. Add an engine good for 1,000 horsepower to that equation and you've got an irresistible package for the world's most serious collectors.



◀ **McLaren BP23**

Supercars are clearly meant for people who enjoy driving, but none so much as McLaren's hybrid-powered BP23, whose three-seat configuration puts the driver front and centre. Not only does it come with all of the prestige of the McLaren name, only 106 will be produced.

◀ **Lucid**

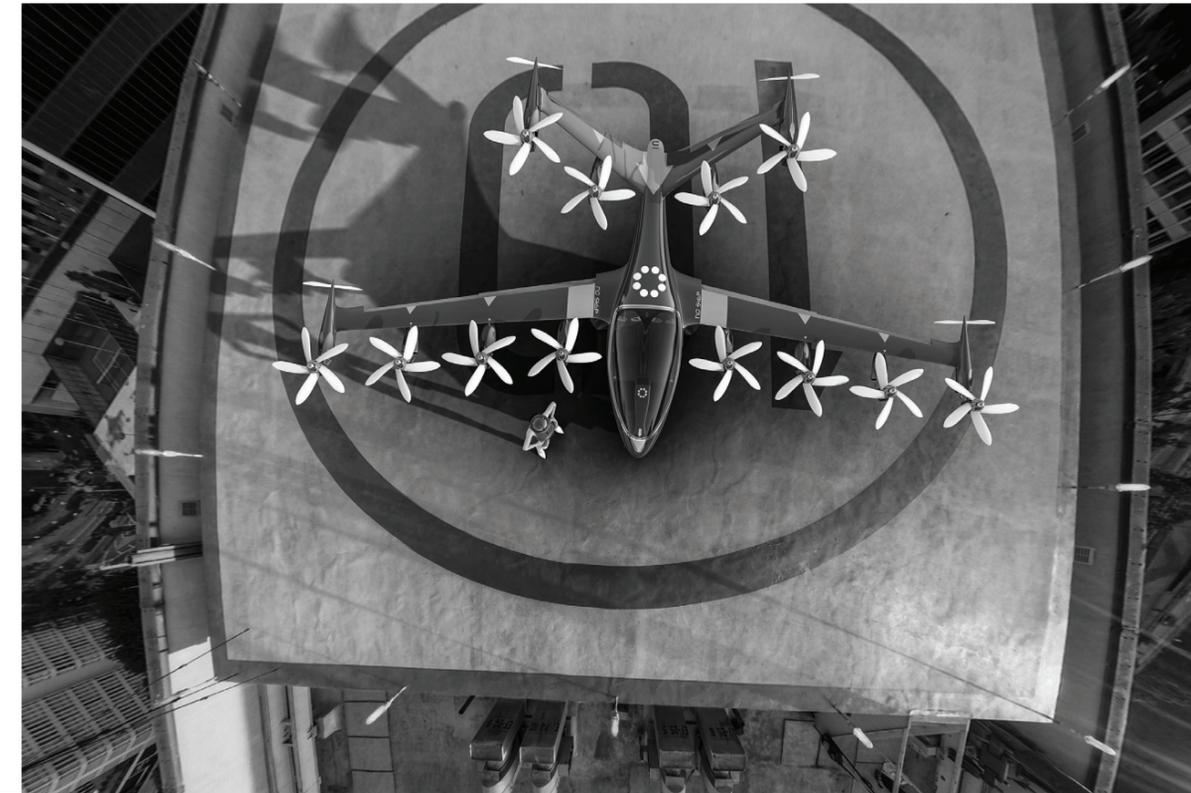
A key contender for a shot at Tesla's empire, this California-based start-up secured funding from Venrock, a venture capital firm founded by the late Laurance Rockefeller, to build its Air EV. With a claimed first-class aircraft seating experience for rear-seat passengers (including 55-degree reclining seats), an automatically tinting panoramic sunroof and fully autonomous driving capabilities, the Air could well become the future standard in electric luxury.



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▼ **Faraday Future FF 91**

While this company's FFZero1 electric supercar made headlines at the Consumer Electronics Show, the subsequent FF 91 luxury SUV is a more realistic picture of Faraday's future. With development funding from Chinese billionaire Jia Yueting, founder and CEO of LeEco, the FF 91 boasts a slew of high-tech features, including rear-wheel steering, a 289-mile range and facial-recognition technology in place of a conventional key. The company claims 64,000 reservations following the car's Las Vegas debut in January.



▲ **Joby S2**

While intercontinental capabilities and ultra-luxurious cabins currently define the world's top personal aircraft, this California-based aviation company founded by robotics entrepreneur JoeBen Bevirt promises something entirely new. Not only is the Joby S2 concept powered entirely by electricity, it can also take off and land vertically, drastically increasing its owners' destination options, and assuring an unforgettable entrance wherever it touches down.

Quadrofoil Q2S

This two-seater made a splash at the Dubai Boat Show thanks to its next-gen technology and styling. With its four-finned design, the limited-edition Quadrofoil Q2S appears to glide above the waves, making it the perfect vehicle for exploring tropical shores (or just turning heads at the yacht club). An added benefit of its electric motor is the ability to visit remote waterways otherwise off-limits to conventional, combustion-powered boats.

Harley-Davidson Project Livewire

Harleys have a reputation for being big, loud and fast. The company's e-bike, dubbed Project Livewire, is mid-sized and whisper-quiet. Set for production by 2021, the features of this electric motorcycle remain a closely guarded secret. One thing is for certain, however: the styling and caché of a Harley-Davidson, combined with the high-tech capabilities of an e-bike, make for an extremely enticing prospect. ◇