

# Robb Report

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## LUXURY PREVIEW

**14** **FOR 2014** EXTRAORDINARY DEBUTS FROM  
BMW | BACCARAT | CESSNA | RITZ-CARLTON  
ERMEGILDO ZEGNA & MORE



THE NEW  
94 MPG  
BMW i8

JANUARY 2014



A CURTCO MEDIA PUBLICATION

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PLUS | **WINNER REVEALED**

OUR ANNUAL CULINARY MASTERS COMPETITION  
CROWNS THE WORLD'S NEXT SUPER-CHEF



Robb Report

# Private PREVIEW

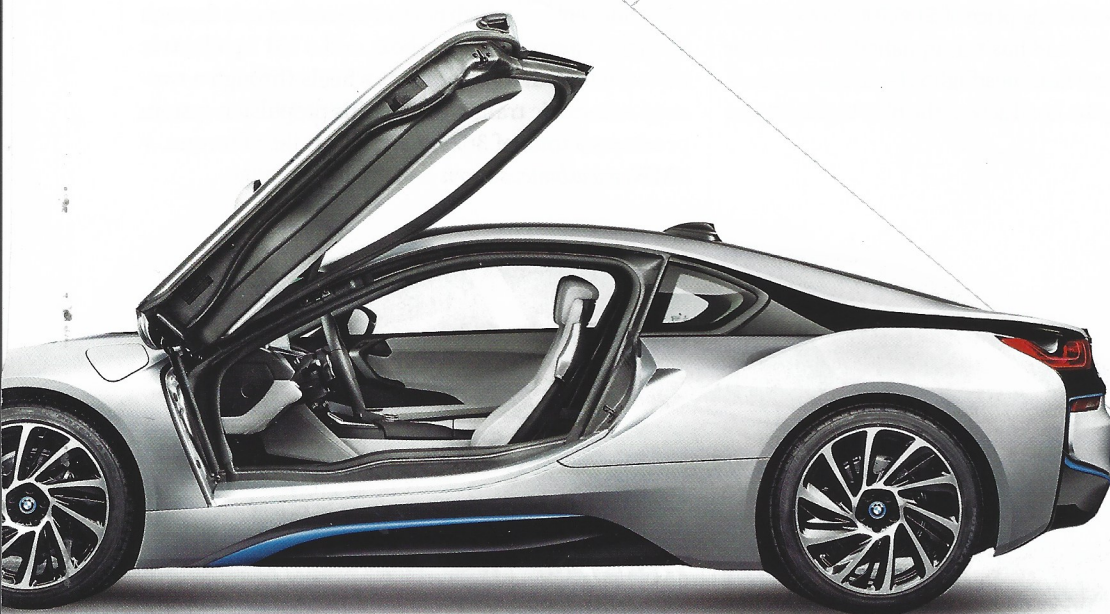
2014



## OVERLY AMBITIOUS NEW YEAR'S

resolutions are all too often broken. But in the luxury world, at least, 2014 will see several bold promises from years past come to fruition. Take for example BMW's forthcoming i8 plug-in hybrid, which the German carmaker introduced as the futuristic Vision EfficientDynamics concept in 2009. The production version of this sleek sports car is scheduled to hit U.S.

showrooms this spring, with a fuel economy of 94 mpg and a zero-to-60-mph time of 4.4 seconds. Other high points of the coming year include the opening of Baccarat's first hotel and the completion of a megayacht marina in Barcelona. Much-anticipated machines range from the new Cessna Citation X, which will be the world's fastest civilian aircraft, to a sporty submersible from Hawkes Ocean Technologies. Dubbed the Black Hawk, the \$1.35 million sub will be capable of previously impossible underwater "hydrobatics," demonstrating that rules, like resolutions, are sometimes made to be broken. »



**"[Its] design flourishes accurately indicate that the i8, while remarkably fuel efficient, is a high-performance vehicle."** —PAGE 82



# Eighth Wonder

**J**UST AS *I* FOLLOWS *H* in the alphabet, BMW's *i* cars are the company's alternative-fuel successors to the *H* car, the short-lived Hydrogen 7 that was introduced in 2007. Given that the initial *i* cars, at least, will be powered by electricity or a combination of gas and electricity, which generally and perhaps accurately are perceived as more benign than hydrogen, the new models should enjoy greater success than the Hydrogen 7 did.

The first of BMW's *i* cars, the *i3*, is easier on the environment than it is on the eyes. The boxy little five-door, four-seat electric vehicle appears to have been designed with maximum mileage in mind and aesthetics as an afterthought. But the forthcoming *i8*, a 2+2 sports car, impresses with its looks alone. That it is a plug-in hybrid capable of achieving 94 mpg (according to European ratings) is just a bonus.

The *i8*, which evolved from the Vision EfficientDynamics concept of 2009, is scheduled to arrive in U.S. showrooms this spring, with a starting price of \$135,700. Not surprisingly, the production *i8* has relinquished the concept car's glass doors and laser headlights, but it has retained the scissor doors, the hood scoop, the blue highlights on



## The forthcoming *i8*, a 2+2 sports car, impresses with its looks alone.

the grille and beneath the doors, and the rear spoilers.

These design flourishes accurately indicate that the *i8*, while remarkably fuel efficient, is a high-performance vehicle. It may not beat fellow hybrids LaFerrari and the Porsche 918 off the blocks, but the *i8* can accelerate from zero to 60 mph in a reported 4.4 seconds. The car is equipped with an all-new 231 hp 1.5-liter turbocharged 3-cylinder engine, which powers the rear wheels through a 6-speed automatic gearbox, and a 131 hp electric motor, which drives the front wheels through a two-stage automatic transmission. This propulsion system produces a total of 362 hp and 420 ft lbs of torque. //

BMW, [www.bmwusa.com](http://www.bmwusa.com) —GARY WITZENBURG

The *i8*, which is scheduled to arrive in U.S. showrooms this spring, is capable of achieving 94 mpg. It also can accelerate from zero to 60 mph in 4.4 seconds.







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## High-End Voltage

**T**HE PLUG-IN ELR coupe, which will arrive in showrooms in January and is based on the Converj concept from 2009, is Cadillac's first electric model—and executives at Cadillac and General Motors have indicated that it will not be the flagship brand's last one. They are considering adding a larger and more luxurious model as a follow-up to the ELR, recognizing the growing demand among wealthy drivers for electric vehicles.

The ELR is classified as an extended-range electric vehicle because it has a gasoline-powered electric generator that kicks in once the battery pack powering the electric motor is depleted. The battery is good for 35 miles, but as a whole, the propulsion system provides a range of more than 300 miles, according to Cadillac. That is enough to eliminate what is known in the electric-vehicle industry as "range anxiety"—the fear of being stranded by a dead battery that makes many car buyers reluctant to purchase battery-electric vehicles (BEVs).

Such fear has not hurt the sales of the Tesla Model S, a

BEV that can travel as far as 300 miles on a single charge (and can cost more than \$100,000). General Motors has taken notice of Tesla's success and is said to be developing a BEV that will have a range of at least 200 miles and a price of about \$30,000. A Cadillac BEV eventually could emerge, because General Motors has indicated that it may use Cadillac-branded vehicles to compete directly against Tesla.

But first comes the ELR, which has a base price of about \$76,000. It displays the angular look that characterizes Cadillac's Art and Science design motif, though the lines have softened since the brand introduced the theme in 2002. The ELR bears no resemblance to the \$35,000 Chevrolet Volt, but it is built on the same platform. There is no shame in that: The Volt's performance earned accolades from a few judges at the 2012 *Robb Report* Car of the Year contest, where its competition included the Lamborghini Aventador, the Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster, and the Bentley Continental GTC.

The ELR delivers 295 ft lbs of torque instantly, and it offers four driving modes: Tour, Sport, Mountain, and Hold (which saves battery power for later). The car also has a full suite of driver-assist and safety features, a leather-lined interior, and an infotainment system controlled with an 8-inch LCD touchscreen. // **Cadillac**, [www.cadillac.com](http://www.cadillac.com) —G.W.

Because the Cadillac ELR has a gas-powered electric generator that kicks in when the battery pack runs out, drivers will not suffer "range anxiety."