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Cavalcade of new models continues with M4 Convertible, two new MINIs



PHOTOS COURTESY BMW

Facelifted MINI Countryman (far left) debuted at Beijing along with the new Paceman (far right). M4 Convertible shown in New York arrives this summer.

THE BEIJING SHOW got the premiere of a flashy concept and the two MINIs above, but New York saw the debut of a BMW that promises to be the best of the lot. The all-new M4 Convertible arrives in U.S. showrooms this summer, joining the M4 Coupe and M3 Sedan with which it shares its powertrain and chassis. If you've been longing for a 425-hp hardtop convertible that weighs "just" 4,055 lbs.—yes, that's still heavy—but it's 90 lbs. lighter than the outgoing E93—the new M4 is your car. Its turbocharged six-cylinder engine can be paired with either a six-speed manual gearbox or a 7-speed M-Dual Clutch Transmission, the lat-

ter of which permits acceleration from 0-to-60 mph in just 4.2 seconds thanks to rapid shifting and optimized traction from the Active M Differential at the rear axle. Adaptive M suspension is optional, while an electro-mechanical steering system is standard.

The three-piece folding hardtop takes a mere 20 seconds to transform the car from coupe to convertible, and it can be operated at vehicle speeds of up to 1 mph.

The car's price had not been announced at press time, but it's certain to be somewhere north of the M4 coupe's \$64,200 sticker.

BMW Manufacturing to invest \$1 billion in Spartanburg, SC plant, adding 800 jobs and new X7

BMW's plant in Spartanburg, South Carolina is already a "center of competence" for X vehicles, manufacturing some 300,000 X3, X5 and X6 models per year. By 2016, that figure is set to expand by 50% to 450,000 vehicles as BMW invests \$1 billion in the facility and adds a new X7 model to production.

Few details were provided about the new model, though it will most certainly be larger than the current range-topping X5 and will likely feature a third row of permanent seating. More info was forthcoming about the plant expansion, which will create 800 new jobs to bring the total workforce at Spartanburg to 8,800. (The presence of BMW in South Carolina is said to support around 30,000 jobs both directly and indirectly, making it a vital economic force in the state.

"It will also make Spartanburg the largest plant in terms of production capacity in our global production network," said BMW AG CEO Norbert Reithofer, speaking at the plant in late March. Much of that production is destined for export—Spartanburg currently exports \$7.5 billion worth of cars annually, making it the largest vehicle exporter in the U.S. to markets excluding NAFTA. Some 70% of the plant's production is exported to markets around the world. Since production

began in 1994, the plant has built more than 2.6 million BMWs for customers worldwide, in ever-increasing numbers that currently see some 1,100 BMWs leave the factory on a daily basis.

Night Vision system in X5 gets Animal Detection

If you drive at night, you know that deer and other animals are an omnipresent hazard, but did you know that over 1.1 million car-deer accidents happen every year in the U.S. alone, causing some \$3.5 billion in property loss? Neither did we, but that's what Autoliv says drove it to incorporate Animal Detection technology into the Night Vision system it supplies to BMW now available as an option on the 2014 X5 SAV.

Autoliv says it spent several years developing and testing its Night Vision with Animal Detection system, and that it

wasn't as easy as you'd think. "Because animals are different shapes and sizes, the training process for detecting animals is complex. Thousands of video sequences were used to train the algorithms for reliable detection of deer, moose, horses, cows and wild boar. In many cases, dogs, cats and rabbits are also detected."

The system uses a far infrared camera mounted in the vehicle grille to detect people and animals at a distance of up to 100 meters. When one is detected, a visual warning is shown in the control display or head-up display, an acoustic signal is given and the brakes are primed to ensure the shortest possible stopping distance. It won't stop the car for you, of course, but at least you'll have ample warning the next time a doe or buck is grazing along the shoulder, ready to leap suicidally in front of your BMW.

All hail the power of the algorithm!

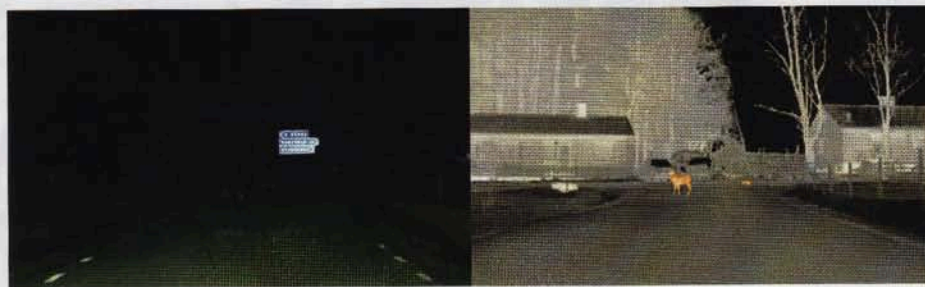


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