European luxury makers trim platforms

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The European luxury brands are developing new architectures that will underpin replacements for today’s models and allow faster development of new ones.

BMW is whittling its architectures to two — 35up for big vehicles and UKL for smaller front-wheel-drive models. BMW CEO Norbert Reithofer has said that in the coming years, this platform will yield 1 million BMWs and Minis annually.

The new fwd models will include a 1-series entry compact sedan that will be sold in the United States and do battle with the Audi A3 and Mercedes-Benz CLA.

The UKL will underpin all Mini models. Mini was the first to use it, in the redesigned Cooper hatchback that went on sale this year. At the upper end, BMW will produce the large X7 crossover with seven seats at its Spartanburg, S.C., factory. It’s due in 2017 or 2018 and will be designed for the United States.

Jaguar is focusing its development budget on compacts using a new flexible aluminum architecture and the F-Type sports cars.

The first new compact for Jaguar is the XE, due in the United States in 2016. A crossover will follow, and perhaps a coupe and a wagon. These models are essential for Jaguar’s growth.

Land Rover also is poised for growth with a new family of Discovery SUVs that debut next year. Land Rover hasn’t said how many models the Discovery range eventually will have.

Mercedes-Benz vehicles will use four architectures, down from nine five years ago. It will launch 30 new or redesigned vehicles by 2020 — the year Mercedes has targeted to overtake BMW and Audi in worldwide sales.

Mercedes-Benz has expanded its U.S. factory to make the 2015 C-class sedan. The MLC coupelike crossover also will be produced at the Alabama plant, and it will go on sale in 2015.

Daimler AG and the Renault-Nissan Alliance will spend 1 billion euros ($1.36 billion) on a new factory in Mexico, starting in 2017. It will produce 300,000 jointly developed compact cars annually for Mercedes and Infiniti. The compact Mercedes models are expected in 2018 and likely will replace the CLA fwd compact, the new GLA crossover and produce new variants, such as a coupe or convertible.

Volvo hopes to turn around its sales slump with redesigned vehicles that will use its new modular Scalable Platform Architecture. The first new model will be the redesigned XC90 crossover debuting in the United States in early 2015.

WHAT DO THE TERMS MEAN?

■ Freshen: Minor changes to interior and exterior, such as new grille, fascia, front and rear lights or seat surfaces.

■ Re-engineering: Significant engineering changes, such as revised powertrain, chassis, suspension, center stack or interior. Often includes some new sheet metal.

■ Redesign: New platform, powertrain, interior and sheet metal. Engine and transmission could be carried over.

■ New: A nameplate added to the lineup.

PART 3: BMW | MERCEDES-BENZ | VOLVO | JAGUAR LAND ROVER