

Post and switch

Just got your license? Think twice about sharing on social media.

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X marks the spot

A slight rename is in store before Infiniti's new wagons hit showrooms.

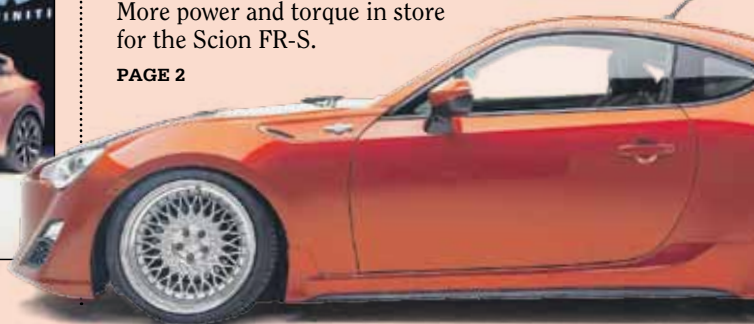
SEE INSIDE



Horsing around

More power and torque in store for the Scion FR-S.

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Reluctant wagon

Troubleshooting a hesitant engine with Car Talk.

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TEST DRIVE

Room at the Top

2016 Buick Cascada

DAN LYONS | text
Special to the Times Union

Convertible buyers, on the whole, are loyal to the breed, but not to brands. When it's time to trade-in, 40 percent buy another convertible, but two-thirds switch to another manufacturer.

For automakers, the takeaway is straight forward. In this low volume, high profile segment, every buyer is in play, every day. The latest addition to the U.S. open air car market is the 2016 Buick Cascada.

The new premium convertible — the brand's first in 25 years — is offered in two trim levels: base (MSRP \$33,990) and Premium (\$36,990).

Cascada's profile view shows a strong, low-to-high line, with steeply raked windshield and big, 20-inch

2016 Buick Cascada
MSRP: \$33,990 - \$36,990

rims. Up front, the wing-clad grille splits asymmetrical headlamps. Wraparound tail lamps are integrated into the trunk lid, giving the car a wide profile, when seen from behind.

The front-wheel-drive Cascada shares its Delta 2 compact car platform with the Buick Verano, and is related to similar Opel/Vauxhall models sold overseas. However, Buick points out that there are over 600 parts unique to Cascada, compared to its Euro relatives. The suspension is GM's MacPherson-based HiPer strut setup in front, with a Watts Z-link rear.

GM's StabiliTrack stability control system adds full-function traction control. My test drive course was short on curvy stretches, and smooth compared to our northeastern streets. Brief stretches of wrinkled road suggest that the car is nimble, with an appetite for spirited driving. And while final judgment on ride quality and cowl shake will be reserved until I can introduce the Buick Cascada to some good 'ol Albany potholes, I found Cascada to be long haul comfortable.

The sole powertrain pairs a 1.6-liter, four-cylinder engine with a six-speed automatic transmission. The turbo four makes 200 horsepower and 207 lb. ft. of torque. Buick says said engine will usher the Cascada from 0-60 in the mid 8-second range. For sake of comparison, that's about a second slower than the Audi A3 Cabriolet — one possible cross-shop candidate for the Buick.

The car feels faster than the stopwatch suggests.



THE NEW 2016 CASCADA is Buick's first convertible in 25 years. Though it shares a compact platform with the Buick Verano and is related to Opel/Vauxhall models sold globally, the premium Cascada has 600 parts unique to the car.

While not flat-out fast, it's comfortably quick enough. Especially so off the line, where it takes advantage of an over-boost mode that allows the engine's max torque level to rise to 221 lb. ft. for short durations. There's sufficient power to pass on tap, and the engine isn't noisy going about its business. EPA fuel economy estimates of 20 city, 27 highway compare with 24/35 for the A3 Cabrio.

Cascada's soft top contrasts with the trend in recent years towards retractable hard tops. Soft lids are lighter than hard ones, which benefits both curb weight and center of gravity. They take up less room when stored. And, a proper soft top has a more traditional, classy look and feel that wears well on premium cars. The Buick's top is multi-layered and well insulated (ther-

mally and acoustically), and feels snug and indifferent to the weather. Raising or lowering is one-button simple, with no latches to wrestle with. The process takes 17 seconds, and the top can also be dropped at speeds of up to 31 mph. The lid stows flush below deck, giving the car a smooth appearance. So stowed, trunk capacity drops from 13.4 cubic feet to 9.8 cubic feet. This compares with 9.9/7.1 in the A3 Cabrio.

The rear seatbacks fold flat, pushing the cargo capacity to 26.5 cubic feet of storage. So set, there's enough room to bring along a pair of golf bags if you wish, set north/south.

Like most modern convertibles, Cascada is well armed to combat wind flow. A small, see-through screen

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Fifty percent of all convertible sales are drawn from five states. Surprisingly, New York is one of them.

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