



This ad from the Saturday Evening Post shows a 1947 Jeep pickup truck when it was still built by Willys-Overland.

Exciting plans for Jeep

The next-generation **Jeep Wrangler** that's due to arrive for calendar-year 2017 will be lighter and available with turbo-diesel and plug-in gasoline-electric hybrid options. These moves are part of parent Fiat Chrysler Automobiles' (FCA) plans to meet stricter U.S. fuel-economy standards that come into effect for 2025. Also in the works is a **Wrangler-based pickup truck** that harkens back to the Jeep versions made from 1947-'65. A Jeep Gladiator concept has been trotted out at auto shows before, but at the recent Detroit show, none other than FCA head Sergio Marchionne and Jeep CEO Mike Manley confirmed it will be built with some aluminum parts alongside the new Wrangler in Toledo, Ohio, with an expected 2017 arrival date.



Yes, making your own license plates is illegal

You can give western New Yorker Amanda Schweickert points for artistic license, literally. Schweickert, 28, was pulled over by Erie County Sheriffs deputies in Springville, NY — about 35 miles south of Buffalo — last week for a rather unusual license plate. It was homemade with yellow and blue paint to resemble (and we use the term loosely) an official New York state license plate. The Erie County Sheriff's Office posted pictures of the bogus plate on Facebook (even cops can't stay off it) with an official statement that borders on the laughably obvious, were they not pulling people over for violating it: "In case you are wondering, homemade cardboard license plates are NOT legal." How not legal? According to WKBW, the Sardinia, NY, woman — who was also driving a car with a suspended registration and no insurance — was charged with a felony count of possessing a forged instrument and a misdemeanor count of operating a vehicle with a suspended registration, as well as three vehicle and traffic offenses. She was held for \$400 bail.

Oops. My bad. First self-driving car accident?

Just two weeks after a *Time* magazine cover story suggested handing over the steering wheel to autonomous cars would be the price to pay for an accident-free roadway, Google reported that one of its autonomous vehicles (in this case, a self-driving Lexus RX450h) was to blame for hitting the side of a bus at low speed on Feb. 14. This is the first autonomous vehicle accident not attributable to human error. The Lexus AV was driving with a human co-pilot in Google's hometown of Mountain View, Ca., when it attempted to maneuver around sandbags in a wide lane at less than 2 mph. A municipal bus was approaching from the rear in that lane at about 15 mph when the two vehicles made contact. Both AV and human co-pilot thought the bus would allow the Lexus to pass. It didn't. Aside from damage to the AV, no injuries were reported. Google said it has reviewed the incident "and thousands of variations on it in our simulator in detail and made refinements to our software. From now on, our cars will more deeply understand that buses (and other large vehicles) are less likely to yield to us than other types of vehicles, and we hope to handle situations like this more gracefully in the future."



Google autonomous Lexus RX450h

TEST DRIVE

2016 Scion iM

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house is being a frugal, commuter car — not a sport hatch. It rides comfortably and feels reasonably agile. Its size makes it easy to park. Visibility is generally good to the front and sides. Less so in back, where the rear roofline and smallish backlight conspire for ¾ rear blind spots.

There are no monitoring systems offered, so drivers learn to mind their mirrors. Hatchbacks aim to be practical, offering more stowage space than similarly sized sedans. The iM's cargo capacity aft of the rear seats is 20.8 cubic feet. For comparison, that's more than the Mazda3; less than the Ford Focus and



SCION UPDATE:

Recently, Scion announced that the brand is transitioning back to Toyota. Effective August, 2016, three of the existing Scion models — iM, FR-S and iA — will be rebadged as Toyotas for the 2017 model year. The tC coupe will end production after a final series edition, and the C-HR concept vehicle will be badged as a Toyota when it reaches production. Service and repairs for all Scion models will continue to be handled at Toyota dealerships.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

The 2016 Scion iM's dash design is straight forward and controls are in easy reach, with a 7-inch touchscreen display and a host of technology features.

Volkswagen Golf. The lift-over height in back is low, so it's easy to pack. Rear seatbacks fold forward to a less than level load floor, and you may have to push the front seats up to allow the rear seatbacks to clear them on their way down. Tall passengers in front leave little room behind. Rear seat legroom measures 32.7 inches, which is a little less (.5 inches) than the Focus and a lot less (about 3 inches) than the Golf and Mazda3. The dash design is straight forward and controls are in easy reach. Cabin materials are of average quality, the front seats are comfortable and the overall level of content is high for the price

point. Standard equipment includes a 7-inch touchscreen display, AM/FM/HD/Aha head unit with six speakers, USB/auxiliary ports, voice recognition and Bluetooth wireless technology, remote keyless entry, automatic headlights, power mirrors, windows and door locks, automatic dual-zone climate control, and a leather trimmed, tilt and telescoping steering wheel, among other features.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 20 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 165 calendars. Read Dan's recent reviews online anytime at Timesunion.com/vehiclereviews.