

Acura drops its shield

Our glimpse of the restyled **2017 Acura MDX** that will arrive later this year clearly indicates that Honda's premium division is finally moving away from the shield-style grille.

In its most extreme form, the prow-like nose first showed up on the 2007 MDX wagon, followed by the 2009 RL, TSX and TL sedans (the latter being the most extreme example).

The MDX's new schnoz will look similar to that of the **Precision concept** that was displayed at the recent 2016 North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Mich., and will be rolled out to other lineup members in due course. Also rumored are updates to the MDX's powertrain plus a few new luxury touches.



Acura is moving away from the “shield” grille shown on this 2014 MDX (left), to feature a more aggressive look similar to the Precision concept (right) unveiled at this year’s Detroit Auto Show.



Ford will build a diesel version of the **F-150** that will no doubt be more fuel efficient and stronger than the “EcoBoost” 3.5-liter gasoline V6.

Ford arrives at the diesel party

The Blue Oval automaker, we hear, will add a diesel version of the top-ranked aluminum-bodied **Ford F-150** for the 2017 model year. The powertrain will consist of a twin-turbocharged 3.0-liter V6 connected to a 10-speed automatic transmission. Currently, Ford's twin-turbo V6 “EcoBoost” gasoline engine is really no more fuel efficient than competing V8 engines from Chrysler and General Motors, but the upcoming diesel will help, while the additional torque will assist the towing and hauling capabilities. Full-size diesel competitors from Ram and Nissan are already in the marketplace, as is a mid-sized Chevrolet Colorado.



Volvo’s V90 wagon will arrive after the S90 sedan. Of course they share platforms and powertrains, topping out with a 410-horsepower plug-in hybrid model.

Volvo increases its wagon train

These peach-colored pages confirm that the Swedish automaker will launch the S90 flagship luxury sedan later this year followed by a wagon equivalent dubbed the V90. Although this style of body doesn’t normally sell as well as traditional trunk-equipped cars, Volvo has had more success than most brands going all the way back to the late 1960s. As with the S90, the V90 is expected to arrive with a choice of a 240-horsepower turbocharged four-cylinder engine, a unique 316-horsepower four-cylinder that’s both turbocharged and supercharged, and a plug-in hybrid model that makes 410 horsepower. The hybrid’s electric motor powers the rear wheels, exclusively. V90 pricing is expected to start in the \$50,000 range (\$2,000-\$3,000 more than the S90), with the plug-in variant adding close to \$15,000 more.

Is Sergio power hungry?

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) head **Sergio Marchionne** recently commented on **Ferrari** (a former FCA division) ever developing an all-electric luxury sports car.

His unequivocal response was that the concept was “almost obscene.”

He further stated that Ferrari buyers are hooked on the throaty sounds emanating from the exhaust pipes and they simply wouldn’t go for a nearly silent model. Marchionne also stated for the record that a self-driving Ferrari would definitely be a no-go.

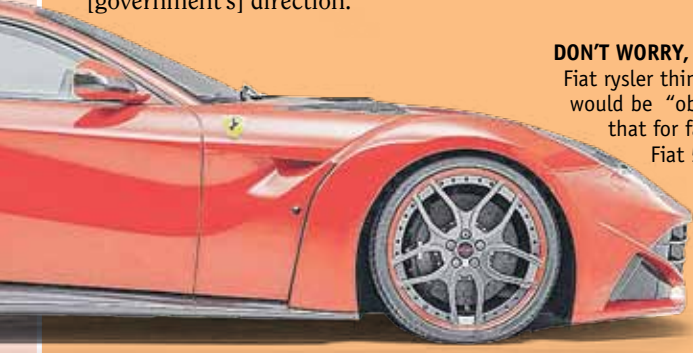
If we didn’t know better, we’d say that Signore Marchionne has a real love affair with internal combustion power. Or maybe his fiscal instincts are reacting to our own love of it.

As exhibit A, FCA announced recently it would halt production of the smaller **Dodge Dart** and **Chrysler 200**, freeing up factory space for higher-power (and higher profit margin) vehicles like the **Jeep Wrangler**, **Jeep Grand Cherokee** and **Ram 1500** pickup. That move might make more money, but it won’t help FCA meet government mileage standards.

So far, FCA’s moves in that direction include an 80 mpg hybrid version of the upcoming **Chrysler Pacifica** minivan (which will replace the outgoing Town & Country), partnering with other automakers for mid-sized vehicles (to replace the Dart and 200) and purchasing regulatory credits from e-makers like Tesla. All seemingly half-hearted efforts.

His dream solution? “A relaxation of the standards would be helpful,” came Marchionne’s unequivocal response, “but I don’t think we can change the [government’s] direction.”

DON'T WORRY, FERRARI FANS. Fiat rysler thinks an e-Ferrari would be “obscene.” Leave that for fans of the Fiat 500e.



Petro-powered Ferrari F12 N Largo finetuned by Novitec Rosso



Electric-powered Fiat 500e

TEST DRIVE

2016 Audi A3 Sedan 2.0T quattro S tronic

Continued from page 1

satisfyingly swift. And left in automatic mode, the it's smooth and quick from gear to gear.

Audi has sprinkled in some new standard features for A3 2.0. Most welcome of

makes its debut on the option sheet.

The A3 interior mirrors that of its fellow Audis. This particular car had an all-black cabin, which I find a little boring. But other colors/trimms are available, and the overall look and feel is handsome and well finished. The top level of the dash is punctuated by large, circular air vents.

The standard, power driver's seat is comfortably supportive, and the dash display is bright and legible. Front seats suit even the tall.

The main controls for HVAC functions are a trio of dials midway up the center stack. The interface for most other functions is via Audi's MMI operating system. A knurled knob and surrounding switches access most functions, with the functions displayed on a thin, 7-inch color screen that retracts flush with the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

The overall look and feel of the Audi A3's interior is handsome and well finished. HVAC functions are controlled by a trio of dials, while other functions are by other switches. A think 7-inch color display retracts flush with the dashboard surface.

these are the rearview camera and front/rear parking sensors. Heated mirrors and washer nozzles also join the list of base gear. An S line exterior styling package

dash top. I find the MMI to be about average in terms of user friendliness amongst the ranks of luxury car interfaces.

A3 is a compact premium sedan of considerable class, but it is after all a compact. Like others in this relatively new segment, the upscale appointments are offset by fallout from their footprints. Taller folks in front will effectively erase leg room in back. Trunk capacity measures a modest, 12.29 cu. ft. in FWD models; less (10.09) in quattro mod-

els, owing to the amount of real estate required for the AWD hardware.

Here as elsewhere in this class, if you want the luxury of more luggage space or roomier rear seat accommodations, you'll need to step up in size.

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.

