

Scion C-HR
htachback
concept



A Buick of Regal bearing

These peach-colored pages managed a quick peek at a camouflaged replacement for the current mid-size **Buick Regal** sedan that will go on sale in about a year's time as a 2018 model. We've also heard that the car will reside on the same platform as the 2016 Chevrolet Malibu, although the Regal's body will be a bit larger in keeping with its premium content (and pricing).

It will also resemble the one-size-larger 2017 Buick LaCrosse that's due out this year. Exact powerplant is hard to come by, but a turbocharged four-cylinder and non-turbo V6 are likely, as is a Chevrolet Volt-based plug-in hybrid system that's available in the Malibu.

Globally, it will also be badged as an Opel, and sold in Australia and New Zealand as a replacement for the deleted Holden Commodore.

The C-HR will be a Toyota

We don't need to speculate any longer; we now have the scoop on the finalized version of the all-new **C-HR htachback** that was to have sported a **Scion** badge (before **Toyota** announced it was killing off the brand). The shapely C-HR is headed for production as Toyota intends to capitalize on a market that's heading away from small cars and into small wagons. The sporty coupe-ish looking model (the rear doors are well hidden) will be a bit smaller than the Toyota RAV-4 and will be available with a gasoline four-cylinder or available gas-electric hybrid powertrain that will be the one to get for its fuel efficiency and performance. Visually the C-HR isn't as wild-looking as the concept version, yet it's still pretty radical by

Toyota standards. The floating-look rear roof pillar borrows liberally from the Toyota's 2017 Lexus RX 350 and 450h.



The U.S. Government has apparently "asked" Volkswagen to build electric cars at its plant in Tennessee. That could include the Europe-only electric Up! pictured here.

VW's emissions penance; build e-vehicles in the United States

These usually unflappable auto pages were left gob smacked over this bit of news. Apparently as part of a settlement over **Volkswagen** rigging millions of its diesel engines to cheat on emissions tests, federal authorities have asked the company to build electric models at the automaker's plant in Chattanooga, Tenn. This would likely involve the compact **Up!** that's currently sold in Europe (a second-generation version launches later this year).

Of course, this measure would in no way exonerate VW from paying what will likely be a substantial fine, not to mention whatever recompense it will eventually offer owners of diesel Vee Dubs. After several months, these folks are still waiting for a fix for their Golfs and Jettas, leading us to speculate that a cash settlement and/or buy-back program could be in the offing.



To give the Power Wagon a tougher image and more capability, there's a lift kit, different grille and comes as a 2500 series (three-quarter ton)

Power (Wagon) to the people

The Ram (né Dodge) **Power Wagon** began life as a military-spec, off-road-capable four-wheel-drive truck. However, over the ensuing decades, it has evolved into little more than a special-equipment designation.

We now hear that, for the 2017 model year, the Power Wagon will get its own distinctive grille that's similar to the one used by the light-duty Ram Rebel. The Power Wagon will be available only as a 2500 Series (three-quarter ton) four-door Crew Cab body. The big pickup will come equipped with Bilstein-brand shocks and a two-inch lift kit that provides a maximum 14.3 inches of ground clearance.

In addition, the front and rear sway bars can be disconnected (electronically) for added suspension travel over extremely rough terrain. A 6.4-liter V8 with 410 horsepower and 429 pound-feet of torque will remain as the Power Wagon's sole engine choice.

TEST DRIVE

2016 VW Jetta 1.4T SE

Continued from page 3
model. With no extras and an \$820 destination charge, it had an as-tested price of \$23,145.

It's a nice package, bundling upgraded infotainment and tech capability with leatherette upholstery, heated seats, a moon roof, rearview camera and special rims. Sliding inside the 1.4T SE, the first takeaways are these: it's big, and it's basic.

Big, in that you can (just) sneak a pair of six footers in back, with like-size folks up front.

That's rare in the compact class. Make that extra-large, when it comes to the trunk. The 15.7 cubic feet of cargo capacity is more like a midsize than a compact. Basic, in that lower trim level models are

heavier on the hard plastics than upper trims.

Coupled with the monotone color scheme (only the upper trim levels can be had with two-tone trim colors and soft touch materials), it tugs downward on the cabin's visual appeal.

Regardless of trim level, controls are happily, functionally straight forward, minimizing confusion and driver distraction.

Jetta's dash design benefits from the introduction of new infotainment systems for 2016. The touchscreen interface (5 inches on S, 6.3 inches on other models) has improved graphics and upgraded connectivity features.

The system supports Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and MirrorLink systems.



The 2016 Volkswagen Jetta's trunk offers up 15.7 cubic feet, closer in cargo capacity to a midsize than a compact.

Owners can select apps from their smartphones, directly from the MIB head unit. MIB II is also the foundation for the latest generation of VW's Car-Net connected vehicle services — a subscription-based collection of features including remote vehicle access, emergency assistance, enhanced navigation and security features.

While the new, base engine is the headliner for this year's Jetta, other 2016 upgrades are sprinkled across the various trim levels. For example, GLI models get styling updates fore and aft. And the Driver Assist Package (optional on SEL) collects a handful of safety and convenience technologies: adaptive cruise control, forward collision warning, autonomous emergency braking and blind spot monitoring with rear traffic alert.

Jetta has fine road manners. Steering is nicely weighted, yet comfortably

boosted for close quarters maneuvers. Ride quality is smooth with the SE's 16-inch wheels. VW swapped out the former torsion beam rear axle for a fully independent rear suspension in 2014. Mid-corner bumps are no longer eventful, and overall ride quality appears to have benefitted as well.

And, while my test drive week (and this winter) have been largely snowless, Jetta's combination of front wheel drive, traction control and stability control remains a good, basic tool kit for combating a more typical Northeast winter.

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.

