



The new Mazda CX-4 will be based on this **Koeru** concept car unveiled last year at the Frankfurt Auto Show, and will be more of car-shaped wagon than the typical tall wagon such as the CX-5 and CX-9.

A new Mazda that's not so square

We can confirm that the Japan-based automaker will unleash an all-new vehicle in time for the 2017 model year. The **CX-4**, as it will be called, will be based on the **Koeru** concept car that was put on display in 2015. However, unlike the smaller CX-3, CX-5 and all-new full-size CX-9, the CX-4 will be more of a tall four-door hatchback. The low roofline, sloping liftgate and rounded sheetmetal delivers plenty style, but likely sacrifices some stowage space, compared to the other square-back models in Mazda's stable. We also hear that Mazda's 184-horsepower 2.5-liter four-cylinder will get the call as the primary powerplant, which should make the CX-4 both punchy and thrifty. We also expect pricing to start in the mid-\$20,000 range.



This M-B SL 65 AMG is one of nearly 50 AMG models that will be available by the end of 2017.

Mercedes-Benz offers more AMG cars

There are currently 38 **Mercedes-Benz** cars for sale that wear the **AMG** label. That's a lot, but our sources are telling us that at least 10 more are on the way for the 2017 model year. In fact, there are now so many AMG variants that the company will soon test the market with dedicated stand-alone outlets that sell only AMG or Mercedes-AMG vehicles. The first store will open in Japan, but rumor has that one in Australia is in the planning stages. As for North America, existing dealers might soon be encouraged to create separate showroom space for the growing lineup of performance-oriented AMG vehicles.

Poorly 'Vetted photo

In these peach-colored pages' haste to pay tribute to the late Purple One's "Little Red Corvette," we misidentified the one last week as a 1962. Eagle-eyed readers (one who actually owned one) caught that it was actually a '58. For the record, here's an actual little red 1962 Corvette.



Make mine an Alpine

Being rally enthusiastse, we are positively giddy at the news that an all-new mid-engine **Renault Alpine** is nearing the production stage. He's even more excited upon hearing that the 2017 rally-inspired model might be crossing the pond to North America the near future.

The Renault brand hasn't been visible since the U.S.-built Alliance sedan was sold here in the 1980s as part of an arrangement with American Motors. This time around, thanks to Renault's controlling ownership in Nissan, the Alpine could wind up in Nissan showrooms.

There's no word on the Alpine's powerplant, but we suspect that, given the impressive performance numbers being bandied about, a turbocharged V6 is the most likely source.



Though Pontiac went extinct in 2008, you can still get a brand new Trans Am. Read on.

Brand new Bandit at 840hp

While we're dreaming about the impossible, how about a brand, spankin' new **Pontiac Trans Am** like Burt Reynolds drove in "Smokey and the Bandit"?

Even though the Trans Am model is long dead, and Pontiac itself has been out of business since 2008, this request is not as crazy as it sounds. **Trans Am Worldwide** is a company that converts fifth-generation Chevy Camaros into an approximation of what a modern Pontiac Trans Am might look like, complete with T-tops, honeycomb wheels and screaming eagle on the hood.

Oh, and also 840 horsepower.

The new **Bandit Trans Am tribute** is even endorsed by Burt, and bears his signature along with Bandit-branded logos and heaps of gold trim. It will go for \$115,000 and only 77 units will be produced — corresponding to the 1977 model year featured in the original movie. The Bandit Trans Am is powered by a supercharged LSX 454-cubic-inch (7.4-liter) V-8 crate engine that produces 840 hp and 790 lb-ft of torque, which are options offered on the standard Trans Am re-creations the company produces.

Oh, and back to the impossible. All 77 models have already been spoken for.



TEST DRIVE

2016 Hyundai Veloster

Continued from page 1

equipped with Active Sound Design, which amps up the volume of engine sounds into the cabin. Still, it's far from loud, even when spanked.

The B&M Sport Shifter capping the six-speed transmission has a short, crisp throws, though it sometimes needs convincing to get from fifth to sixth, rather than fifth to fourth. In terms of fuel economy, the 27 mpg that I recorded in mixed driving with the 1.6L turbo is one below the EPA combined estimate (25/33/28).

Underpinning the Rally Edition is a chassis that is — as mentioned earlier — a step more sporting than the other Veloster models. The car feels agile and steering is very direct. Veloster, in Rally trim, rides firmly. I didn't get the impression of it being overly stiff, but while the southern route of my road test was long, it was short on choppy pavement. If you're thinking about the Rally and

concerned about ride quality, put some less than perfect roads beneath the tires in your test drive. A stretch of rough road will quickly give you a seat of the pants sense of whether the ride/handling balance is right for you.

Veloster's compact, angular form creates rear vision compromises. The straight back view is impeded by the small rear backlight, and the car's roofline creates wide, 3/4 rear blind spots. While the standard, rear view camera helps in backup mode (and rear parking sensors are available), tech workarounds which this car could really use (like a blind spot detection system and rear cross-traffic alert), aren't available on any trim level.

Inside cues to the car's Rally Edition status are found in leather wrapped bucket seats with blue accents, and embroidered floor mats. The front bucket seats are comfortably supportive. Veloster's small footprint dictates that rear seat legroom will be erased by any taller-than-



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average front passengers. Unusually, Veloster has two doors on the right side and one on the left. This preserves the cool, coupe look on the left, while the right rear door aids in getting people or stuff in and out of the back on the curbside. And, those back seat-backs split and fold flat to increase the cargo capacity of the rear hold from 15.5 cu. ft. to 34.7 cu. ft. That's not class leading, but it's big enough to be useful. I fit a pair of large roll-boards and a couple of carry-on size bags in back with only mild shoe-horning, and that was with mild shoe left intact.

Controls are within easy reach. The multimedia touchscreen is large (7½ inches) and legible. My test vehicle wasn't equipped with the available navigation

system, so I can't comment on its utility. The Dimension premium audio system has ample power (450 watts, 8 speakers, subwoofer) to fill the small cabin with sound. The head unit has AM/FM/CD/MP3/satellite radio capability. The dash is all hard plastics, but the faux carbon fiber trim at least breaks things up visually.

Veloster's Rally Edition will be a limited edition. The company says that the planned production run will not exceed 1,200 units.

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.

