

A mid-engine model might be an affordable supercar. Or just a more expensive Corvette.



A mid-engine Corvette?

Rumors have been circulating for some time that Chevrolet would be switching the **Corvette** over to a **mid-engine platform** from the current front-engine layout. A mid-engine car puts the engine behind the cabin, but ahead of the rear wheels. We can now confirm the scuttlebutt is true and that the 2018 North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Mich., will serve as the launching pad for the most radically different 'Vette ever.

Initially, the current 6.2-liter V-8 will be used, but other variations will probably follow suit. Another major change will be a base price reaching the \$80,000 mark, which would be an increase the current low-\$50,000 range. That's a hefty bump, but still a bargain compared to similar mid-engine supercars. Don't despair, though. Given that any Corvette's normal shelf life is close to a decade before significant changes are made, we think the current front-engine design will be sold in tandem with the new mid-engine model until 2022 or beyond.



THUMBS UP (HOPEFULLY)! Guangzhou executives introduced the GAC Group's **GS4 crossover** at last January's Detroit Auto Show, which they'd like to introduce to the North American Market. They'll be back again next year with even more models, at a higher-profile area of the Cobo Center venue.

China tries again

Aside from self-driving cars, are Americans ready to buy Chinese cars? Not just the American-badged vehicles made in China, but a car from a Chinese-owned maker?

Guangzhou, the China-based automaker, seems to think so, and is determined to crack the North American market. A major player at home, **GAC**, as it's called, displayed a couple of models at January's Detroit auto show in Michigan.

However, we have discovered that the company plans on returning next year in full force with a fresh lineup of models that it wants to sell in North America.

Since Guangzhou already builds Jeep Renegades and Grand Cherokees in China for Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, we see the possibility of a stronger alliance between the two companies that could eventually culminate in a range of small and fuel-efficient models sporting Dodge, Chrysler and even Jeep badges.



Takata profits

It's become the thing to do, second only to seeing "Hamilton." Did you get your airbags replaced yet?

Japan-based Takata — the apparently quite prolific third-party maker of faulty airbag inflators for the global auto industry — states that it incurred a \$120 million deficit for the fiscal year that ended March 31, 2016.

The loss stems, of course, from a massive recall of more than 50 million faulty inflators (to date) that, when activated, could cause injury or even death. Prior to the recall, Takata had predicted a net profit of \$46 million.

These peach-colored pages recommend calling your dealer today. Most automakers are covering the replacements cost-free. Also visit the NHTSA's website at www.safercar.gov for complete info.

TEST DRIVE

2016 Ford Mustang GT

Continued from page 1

a number of GT buyers are expected to visit their local drag strip on track days, these cars also get Electronic Line-Lock (so you can heat up the tires before your run, for maximum grip).

Stick shift cars are further equipped with Launch Control, to promote smoother starts at the strip.

Part of the appeal of a good muscle car stems from the sound it produces. That's mechanical sound, principally, and the GT has arguably the best stock exhaust sound in its class. And when you'd rather hear music than motor, the Shaker audio system option is worth considering. Offered as part of a \$1,795 package (which also includes blind spot and cross traffic alerts, seat and mirror memory and some cabin lighting tweaks), Shaker is a strong (390 watt), bass-biased, 12-speaker setup that's tailor made for a classic rock library.

Sounds aside, the inside highlights of the GT include an exceptionally comfort-

able set of standard bucket seats (think twice before opting for the Recaro's). The driving position is now easier to custom fit, owing to the telescoping steering wheel. Rear seats are of the +2 variety. Like Camaro, leg room vanishes in back if the front occupants are at all tall. Rear visibility in the Ford is better than the Chevy, but in both cars, blind spot monitoring is a recommended option. Trunk capacity is 13.5 cu. ft. in Mustang, 9.1 in Camaro and 16.2 in Challenger. Rear seat room is similarly much larger in Challenger than either of the other two. But as the numbers suggest, while historically linked, this generation of Challenger is an overall larger car than either of the other two pony car veterans.

The new SYNC 3 infotainment interface replaces MyFord Touch on Premium level cars. My first impression is that it's a clear upgrade over the former arrangement. The layout is cleaner, and it allows the pinch/swipe moves common to smartphones.



TEST DRIVE
this vehicle at this preferred dealership:

ORANGE FORD
799 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12206
518-489-5414 | www.orangemotors.com



This is the first generation of Mustangs to enjoy independent rear suspension across the board. While the former, solid axle setup found favor with the drag racers, IRS is an obvious improvement for everyone else.

Taking a mid-corner bump at speed is much less eventful now than it used to be. I found the handling/ride quality balance in the GT to be fine for most users. Stiffer suspension options are available, but adding grip is likely to extract payback in terms of comfort.

Mustang — particularly in its V-8 form — shares its main limitations with its traditional rivals, Camaro and Challeng-

er, as well as any rear-wheel-drive sports cars. Unless we have another winter like last year (we can hope, but don't bet the farm), the cars will have to sit out, if not winter, at least any snowy/slushy days.

Accept the tradeoff of a shortened season and, in return, you can enjoy a fun and uniquely American car type — the pony car.

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 170 calendars. Read Dan's recent reviews online anytime at Timesunion.com/vehiclereviews.

VW pays for cheat

After being caught in an emissions cheating scandal, **Volkswagen** has agreed to pay \$14.7 billion and buy back cars from owners at pre-scandal prices, the U.S. Department of Justice announced this week.

The part of the settlement geared toward consumers is estimated at \$10 billion, which makes an average payment of \$5,000 per vehicle for the 500,000 American owners affected. The rest includes \$2.7 billion to the EPA and a \$2 billion investment in zero-emissions cars. New York state itself will reap some \$147 million.

The affected cars are the 2009-2015 VW TDI diesel models of the Jetta, Passat, Golf and Beetle, as well as the TDI Audi A3.

VW's punishment has just begun, though, and the saga will continue to play out at local levels. Said New York attorney general Eric Schneiderman: "[W]e will seek the imposition of additional penalties in amounts sufficient to ensure that Volkswagen and any other car manufacturer complies with the standards required of them."



The new Chrysler Pacifica minivan is rumored to be getting Google's self-driving software.

FCA ogles Google

One of the hottest news items on the automotive front concerns a cooperative arrangement between **Fiat Chrysler Automobiles** and **Google**. The latter has invested big-time bucks in autonomous (self-driving) systems, which is something that FCA could certainly put to good use.

The second part of the rumor has the new **2017 Chrysler Pacifica** minivan becoming the recipient of Google's **self-driving software**. That would seem to make sense since the Pacifica's passenger capacity makes it an ideal vehicle for ferrying people to and from schools, offices, sports events and other urban activities where congested roads are the norm.

FCA boss Sergio Marchionne has promised to reveal more details regarding a possible joint venture with Google by the end of the year.

