

Ford has announced it will double production of its GT supercar to 1,000 models.

Ford GT: Now less exclusive?

As you might recall, the ultra-exclusive mid-engine **Ford GT** sports car was to end its run in late 2018 or early 2019 after 500 copies were made. The hype was heavy as potential buyers, of which there were thousands, had to apply to be considered. Ford has since added two more years of production. That would mean Ford and its partner on the project, Canada-based Multimatic, would build a grand total of at least 1,000 cars. Apparently buyers being granted first crack at GT ownership include those who had bought the previous Ford GT, which retailed at less than half the price of the current \$450,000 GT. Those Ford-approved buyers might be a little put off that such an exclusive car will now be, technically, half as exclusive. It could even hurt the resale value, but that likely doesn't matter to Ford since the company went to great lengths to weed out speculators from the buying process. Meanwhile, third-year production will be extended to the buyers on the current waiting list, while the application process will begin all over again for the fourth year.



Cadillac executive director of Cadillac Global Design Andrew Smith debuted the new Escala concept at Pebble beach in August. The hatchback-like design is a major departure for Caddie esthetics.

Cadillac's new design direction

The unveiling of the **Cadillac Escala** sedan at the recent Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance car show in California indicates significant change is in the works for General Motors' up-level brand, say informants.

Although the concept model is based on the just-arriving 2017 CT-6 flagship, overall length has been increased by six inches, while the distance between the front and rear wheels is up by five inches. The roofline also extends to the rearmost part of the car — much like the Audi A7 — but unlike most hatchbacks, only the glass portion lifts up to access the stowage area.

A twin-turbocharged 4.2-liter V-8 rests between the fenders, but Cadillac would likely add an electric powertrain based on what's in the Chevrolet Volt if, or when, the Escala makes it to the production stage.

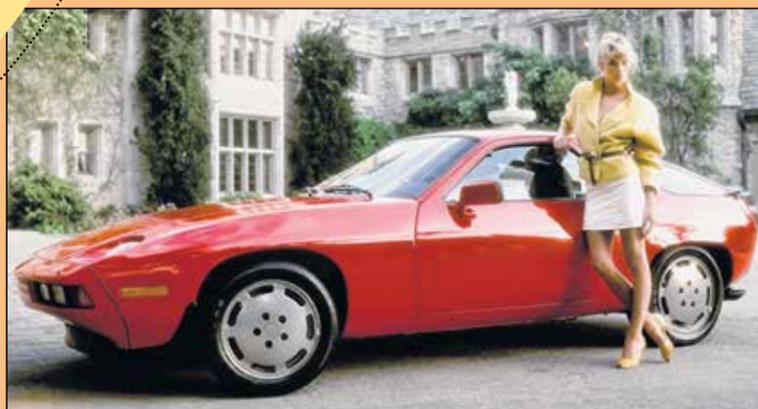


More tall VW wagons

According to our sources, along with a previously announced replacement for the compact **Tiguan** and a to-be-named seven-passenger model that are due for 2017, the next-generation Touareg five-passenger luxury utility vehicle is set to follow in early 2018. It will closely resemble VW's **GTE concept** vehicle. That car has a plug-in hybrid system that produces 375 horsepower, however initially the Touareg will be equipped with a turbocharged four-cylinder engine or an optional non-turbo V-6. An eight-speed automatic transmission will be standard across the line, as will all-wheel-drive. Not surprisingly, given the automakers current diesel-emissions-cheating woes, a turbo-diesel option won't be offered.



Volkswagen GTE concept



Didn't we all exercise bad judgement in the 1980s? Porsche's 928 was a particularly misguided stab at producing a decidedly un-Porsche luxury car with a front-mounted V8.

The '80s called: They want their 928 back

Rumors had been abounding in regards to Porsche's plans to develop a rear- or all-wheel-drive sports coupe with a front-engine, or possibly a coupe-like four-door that would be based on a shortened version of the 2017 Panamera platform.

Now work is that car — which would have evoked memories of the late **Porsche 928** — has been shelved, at least for the time being. Instead, Porsche will focus on developing a pure electric model.

The V8-powered 928 was available from 1977-'95, and intended as a luxury grand-touring sports cars. But during its production run it lived in the shadows of the 911 model. And with good reason, because Porsche had used the 911 to establish beyond a doubt that a lighter four-cylinder car could dust off any huge-engine land yacht on the track. With its back seat and front-mounted V8 engine, the 928 seemed like heresy. (It was Porsche's only production V8, and one of only seven front-engine models it has ever produced.)

Some, however, still pine over the 928. Others dismiss it as a German V8 Corvette. Still others vaguely recall it as the car in the 1983 movie "Risky Business," which at least introduced us to the more enduring Tom Cruise.

Porsche is a major manufacturer of fine performance vehicles, but aside from racers and high-end supercars — and before their recent spate of well-received sport utes (Cayenne, Macan) and four-doors (aforementioned Panamera) — its reputation mainly rests on the iconic 911. Its other deviations such as the 914 and 928 fared about as well as Guinness lager.

TEST DRIVE

2017 Ford Fusion SE Hybrid

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friendly, rotary gearshift selector is new this year.

Escape was the first Ford model to receive the company's latest infotainment

OVERALL, SYNC 3 IS AN IMPROVEMENT

OVER THE OUTGOING SYSTEM.

interface — Sync 3. That technology now migrates to Fusion, as an optional replacement for the MyFord Touch system. Sync 3 allows you to use the same pinch/swipe moves familiar to tablet and smartphone users to interact

with various systems. Also included is Siri EyesFree, which allows the driver to connect and control an iPhone while on the road.

Overall, Sync 3 is an improvement over the outgoing system, though here as with other, feature-laden infotainment systems, it still takes longer to get many tasks done than would conventional controls.

SE models like this one have a number of option packages for the taking. Among them are the Hybrid Luxury package (\$2,995), which includes leather upholstery, heated front seats with driver's side memory, remote engine start, heated mirrors and LED headlights, taillights and fog lights.

The Tech/SYNC 3 package (\$995) adds the new 8-inch touchscreen interface,



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an 11-speaker sound system and rear parking sensors. The Driver's Assist package (\$1,575) offers blind spot monitoring/cross traffic alert, a lane-keeping system, rain-sensing wipers, heated steering wheel, and automatic high beam control.

In times like these, when petrol prices remain relatively low, fine fuel economy doesn't have as much impact on car buying as it does when gas prices stink on ice. However, history tells us that change is inevitable, and in any event, the luxury of less stops at the gas station is the sort of thing that never really gets old. Then too, leaving less of an energy

footprint on the planet is worthwhile in any economic climate.

Ford's midsize hybrid is offered in four trim levels — S, SE, Titanium and Platinum — with prices ranging from \$25,185 - \$37,020. A plug-in hybrid model (Energi) is also available in three versions, ranging from an MSRP of \$31,120 - \$39,120.

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.