



# Wrangler to wear aluminum?

Our latest intel suggests that the next-generation **2018 Jeep Wrangler** will stick with body-on-frame construction, but that the outer panels will be made of aluminum. Just how much aluminum remains to be confirmed, but the doors and hood will likely be made of the lightweight material. Still, rumors persist that the entire shell will also be aluminum to improve fuel economy. As for powertrains, a V-6 is probable, but the smaller 3.2-liter version that's optional in the Jeep Cherokee is possible, again to cut fuel consumption. That engine's 271 horsepower and 239 pound-feet of torque is 14 horses and 21 pound-feet of torque less than the current 3.6-liter V-6's output, but in a more svelte Wrangler the lower power rating might not be felt. Other scuttlebutt has the Wrangler running with a turbocharged four-cylinder and/or a turbo-diesel powerplant.



At the 2016 Paris auto show, Nissan showed off the Infiniti's QX Sport Inspiration concept, most notable for its production-ready, variable-compression-ratio four-cylinder engine (VC-T) that offers more fuel-efficiency and lower emissions. It will go into the next QX50 crossover in 2018.

# The next big thing in engines?

It's called HCCI (for **Homogenous Charge Compression Ignition**) and some are saying it might become the next Big Thing in gasoline powerplants. Without getting overly technical, HCCI works somewhat like a diesel engine it that it uses piston compression inside each cylinder to cause combustion instead using a spark plug to ignite the air-fuel mixture. The unique way in which the air-fuel mixture combusts reportedly results in lower combustion temperatures, which in turn leads to improved fuel efficiency and lower emissions. Nissan, which is currently working on engine development, is still fixing some of the bugs, but the future for this technology appears promising.



# Return of the ZR1

With most of the **Chevrolet Corvette** scuttlebutt these days revolving around future plans for the next-generation mid-engine model, there are still developments regarding the current 'Vette. Sources say that a brand new **ZR1** model is literally and figuratively on track for the 2018 model year. From what he hears it will be a no-holds-barred machine with as much as 700 horsepower produced by a supercharged 6.2-liter V-8. This time around, you'll be able to tell a ZR1 from the rest of the Corvette herd by its massive rear wing that appears inspired by the brand's GT racecars. The car will come with a unique set of wheels and extra-wide tires to help handle the engine's prodigious power.



The higher-performing ZR1 is in the works: Here's the concept at the Detroit Auto Show.



There's a chance that you'll be able to buy a replica of the Porsche 917 with a modern six-cylinder engine in it.

# Own a racing legend

We've got word that a British startup company called **Project 917** is planning to build copies of the legendary **Porsche 917**, one of the most famous racing models the German automaker ever produced. Various 917s were driven in competition from 1969 through 1971, racking up an impressive number of podium finishes. A couple of 917s were also featured in the racing movie "Le Mans" starring **Steve McQueen**. The project was started by a group of British automotive engineers and designers looking to get their younger counterparts involved in the industry. While highly speculative at this point, the track-only replicas will reportedly look exactly like the originals, except they will ride on a chassis and body from South Africa's Bailey Cars, a respected maker of re-created racers from the 1960s and 1970s. Instead of the original's 12-cylinder engine, power will be provided by a contemporary Porsche 3.6-liter flat-six, possibly turbocharged. Top speed should be nearing 180 mph, a lot less than the real racer's 220, but enough to nab you a few tickets on I-87. Like we said, it's highly speculative. But then again, at an estimated cost of around \$130,000, your chances of getting into one of these re-creations is a lot better than shelling out \$20 million at auction for an actual one.

## TEST DRIVE

# 2017 Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid

*Continued from page 1*  
in the third row, and the seats fold and stow below the floor in back when not needed. It's seating for two in the second row, with adjustable travel and a movable (and removable) center console. Cargo capacity is 32.3 cubic-feet behind the third row, 87.5 aft of the second row, and 140.5 behind row one. In the latter, full cargo mode, Chrysler says there's enough room to house 64 standard size sheets of plywood. The rub with that impressive stat is that it requires the second row seats to be removed first. In the hybrid, the battery packs reside in the space below deck that would otherwise house the folded second-row seats on the standard Pacifica. The hybrid's seats can be removed from the vehicle, but the process isn't as easy as with the stow n' go third row (or the second and third rows on standard Pacifica's). The "quad seats" each weigh 68 lbs. You release the seats (two, simple

steps), and pull them close to the doors, so you can get your legs into the lift. Whether or not this is an issue depends on who's doing the lifting, and how often you expect to be in max cargo mode. Two trim levels are offered: Premium and Platinum. Some of the standard features in the former: perforated leather seats (heated in front), remote start, power liftgate and the SafetyTec Group (ParkSense rear park assist with stop, Blind-spot Monitoring, and Rear Cross Path detection). The Uconnect infotainment system (with 8.4-inch touchscreen) is also included as is LED lighting, backup camera and passive entry on all doors. Among the highlights of the Platinum model's extra content are Nappa leather seats (vented, up front) heated wheel, a sound system upgrade, 3-D navigation system, hands-free sliding doors/liftgate and a rear seat entertainment system. Added safety technology, too: forward



**TEST DRIVE**  
this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

**ARMORY CHRYSLER DODGE JEEP RAM SRT FIAT**  
926 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12206  
518-641-7777    www.armoryauto.com

**GOLDSTEIN CHRYSLER JEEP DODGE RAM**  
613 Loudon Rd., Latham, NY 12110  
518-785-4156    www.goldsteinchryslerjeep.net

**LIA CHRYSLER JEEP DODGE RAM**  
2116 Central Ave., Schenectady, NY 12304  
518-579-3300    www.liachryslerdodgejeep.com

collision warning/intervention, adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning/intervention, 360-degree camera, parallel/perpendicular park assist. The option sheet includes a tri-pane panoramic moon roof, as well as an integrated vacuum cleaner and a 20-speaker, harmon/kardon sound system. Chrysler says that half of all minivan sales transactions fall between \$31,000-\$38,000. When you add in the delivery charge (\$1,095), and subtract the avail-

able, federal tax credit (\$7,500) from the Pacifica Hybrid's MSRP, the effective bottom line for the well-equipped minivans (\$35,590 Premium, \$38,590 Platinum), will place them right in the segment's sweet spot.

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.