

Nissan takes over Mitsubishi

With the purchase of 34 percent of **Mitsubishi Motors** for \$2.29 billion now officially completed, **Renault-Nissan** chairman **Carlos Ghosn** has now also become head of all three automakers (as well as AvtoVAZ of Russia), with a combined output of more than 10 million vehicles annually. Ghosn's mission will surely be to turn around the troubled Mitsubishi and help restore its market share.

Though nowhere near the VW scandal, Mitsubishi admitted earlier this year to faking mileage tests for its cars, but more damaging is the fact that the maker has seen its footprint in North America dwindle away in recent years. Ghosn and Mitsubishi CEO Osamu Masuko have their work cut out for them.



Renault-Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn



Drone technology and the Carr-E (right) are only two of the patents scored by Ford last year.

Don't say automakers are resting on their laurels just grinding out Model Ts. They're on the forefront of innovation generating thousands of patents each year.

Ford leads patents for automakers

According to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, **Ford Motor Co.** registered 1,442 patents this year so far, a 25 percent jump from 2015 to put it in the lead among major automakers in the U.S. (Toyota was granted 1,368, General Motors scored 1,131 and Honda got 1,011.) Counting patents awarded in other countries brings Ford's total to more than 3,100.

Vice President for Product Development Raj Nair says it's a result of Ford's push for autonomous driving technology. Engineers Tony Lockwood and Joe Stanek got a patent for an invention that equips **self-driving vehicles with drones** that venture out to map beyond what the car's sensors can read, information that can then be accessed through the infotainment system. Others patents aren't directly related to autonomous technology, but may find their way to helping drivers in the future. The **Ford eChair** — developed by engineers at Ford's Lommel proving grounds in Belgium, Gunther Cuypers, Robin Celis, and David Longin — is a lightweight, electric-powered wheelchair that can load itself into a car. German engineer Killian Vas scored a patent for the **Carr-E**, a Segway type device that can carry packages, heavy objects and even humans. The most hopeful part: Of the 5,500 Ford staffers who submitted invention disclosures, 2,200 were from first-time inventors.

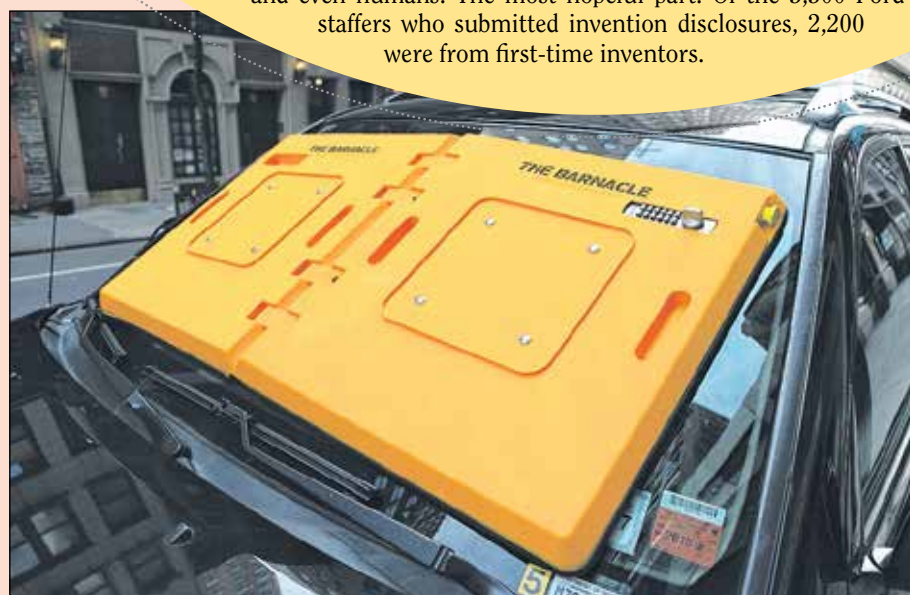


Honda is still finalizing the suspension tuning and power output of the upcoming performance-oriented Civic Type R.

Honda finishes up the Type R

Forget about what you might have seen in the flesh concerning the Honda **Civic Type R**. Our sources claim that the hot hatchback that was launched in Europe and Japan in 2015 is far from the version that will be arriving in North America by the third quarter of 2017.

Our Type R, which will be based on the current Civic that's built at Honda's plant in Canada, is still undergoing final evaluation, including the suspension tuning and final engine output. We interpret that to mean that the estimated 305 horsepower and 295 pound-feet of torque could actually be somewhat higher once the Type R goes on sale.



Meet the latest invention designed to ruin your (and your car's) day: The Barnacle.

Goodbye, Boot... Hello, Barnacle

Those steel clamps used by parking-enforcement employees to snare the tires of illegally parked cars could soon be a thing of the past. Instead of a **Boot** on your car's tire, you might now be facing the **Barnacle**, a bright yellow device that attaches to the offending vehicle's windshield using powerful suction cups. To release it, you must call the appropriate parking authority and arrange payment of outstanding fees/tickets/fines. At that point, you receive a special code that releases the device. Ah, progress.

To ladle on more humiliation, you must return the Barnacle to a drop-off location within a specific time period. Attempting to somehow drive away with the Barnacle attached (and your head sticking out the window) will cause an alarm to sound. The devices are attractive to municipalities because they're lighter, fold up to conserve space and are more safe because they don't require kneeling by the road to install.

TEST DRIVE

2017 Genesis G90

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pass-through; about average for the segment. The rear seats will accommodate two quite comfortably; three in a pinch. But no one will be volunteering for the middle section, which is best used as the landing spot for the fold-down, oversized, multifunction center console.

On Ultimate trim models, rear seats recline, and those power controls are found on the console, along with separate switchgear for climate and sound systems, the latter which (curiously) override the front controls (let the games begin!).

There's no entertainment system option, though there are a set of useably bright reading lights (decidedly old school and somehow reassuring). Leg room in back is adult sized: at 37.8 inches, it's more than Lexus (35.8 inches in the LS 460), but less than Lincoln (41.3 inches in the Continental) or Cadillac (40.6 inches in the CT6).

Shades can be powered up for the

backlight and rear windows to screen from the sun (or just the outside world). A pair of large, lighted, drop-down vanity mirrors allow for quick touchups when it's time to step out (But why? You look marvelous!).

Front row accommodations are suitably posh. Leather, wood trim and padded touch points are all here, and the number of possible power seat adjustments (22) demand that you commit them to the memory feature, lest you be forced to set them up again. The sheer number of bells and whistles on a full-on luxury car dictate a daunting number of controls. The Genesis dash/console layout is about mid-pack in terms of ease of use and potential distraction factor.

The G90 stretches almost 205 inches long, with a 124.4 inches wheelbase, and a suitably large turning radius (think K-turn, rather than U-turn). All of the standard, got-your-back electronic aids (360 degree and rear view cameras, blind



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spot monitoring, rear cross traffic alert, etc.) are here and especially handy in a car this size.

Ride quality is decidedly well cushioned; handling is stable and not sporty. Intelligent Drive Mode offers four selections, each with corresponding settings for transmission mapping, throttle response and suspension stiffness. The differences between them are subtle, at best.

It will be interesting to see how the market receives the new luxury seg-

ment arrival. Sometimes, a brand's effort to move upscale is met coolly (recall, for example, the VW Phaeton). But, a number of automakers have successfully spawned upscale divisions (Lexus, Acura, Infiniti...), so there's no shortage of business models for Hyundai to study as Genesis evolves.

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.



» Don't miss next week's Test Drive:

2017 Acura TLX 3.5L SH-AWD Advanced

