



## A new Camaro that's street illegal

These days, about the only place where the Chevrolet Camaro, Ford Mustang and Dodge Challenger compete head-to-head is on the drag strip. Chevrolet in particular takes drag racing seriously with very limited number of what's called the **COPO (Central Office Production Order) Camaro**. Though Chevy says there are some 5,000 interested buyers, only 69 of these non-street-legal factory-built models will be available, with most going to professional race teams.

The COPO Camaros can be had with one of three engines, all mated to three-speed automatic transmissions. According to Chevy, the supercharged 5.7 has an NHRA rating of 580 horsepower. It is capable of quarter-mile times in the 8.5-second range at a speed of 162 mph. It runs in the Factory Stock Showdown class at 3,550 pounds. The 7.0-liter has an NHRA horsepower rating of 470 and it can put up 9.2-second quarter-mile times at 150 mph. The 6.2's NHRA rating is 410 horsepower and it hits a 9.7-second quarter-mile time at 145 mph. Additional racing equipment includes special suspensions, heavy-duty rear axles, light-weight brakes, steering racks and fuel delivery. COPO prices range from about \$90,000 to \$110,000.



Not quite a Pink Floyd show, but this special version of the Audi R8 will come with laser-beam headlights that project about twice as far as LED headlights.

## Lighting the way with lasers

When it comes to headlights, what was once unimaginable is about to become reality. These peach-colored pages hear that a special **Audi R8 V10 Plus Exclusive Edition** (limited to 25 examples) will use lasers for high beams, while LEDs will be used for low beams. Along with lower energy consumption, the laser beams can project nearly an eighth of a mile (about 650 yards), which is double the range of LEDs.

As with most new technologies, laser headlights are likely to join a range of active-safety technologies first introduced to high-end vehicles (in this case a \$230,000 sports car).

Eventually, laser headlights will trickle down to less-expensive vehicles as mass production/higher volumes makes them more affordable.

### TEST DRIVE

## 2017 Volvo S60 T5

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mostly, I suspect, to the larger, 19-inch tire/rim combo in the Sport package). But, it's comfortably short of a hard ride, and fun to drive on a twisty road.

One former rap on the S60 had to do with driveline packaging. If you wanted the company's newest engines, you couldn't get them with all-wheel drive. The decks are now cleared of the former (and older) five- and six-cylinder motors, and AWD can be had across the board in the series. Volvo's Haldex AWD system channels as much as 50 percent of available engine torque to the rear wheels as needed, to enhance traction.

My test week included a typical, winter blend of clear roads, snowy roads and icy roads. Nothing really helps on ice, and no help is needed on dry pavement. But for any snowy/sloppy days, all-wheel drive always makes it noticeably easier to get around.

This is year seven of Generation two for S60. While the cabin shows some signs of age relative to fresher competitors, there's a Scandinavian simplicity to the design that contrasts nicely to others in this class.

One thing that never grows old is the Volvo front seat: comfort and support worthy of the longest road trip. Many functions are controlled by a huddle of buttons parked center stage on the center stack. Nestled in their midst is the Volvo Mode Man. You adjust the HVAC air flow by poking the appropriate section (head, torso, legs) of this pictogram, whose profile looks like most of us felt, after a long holiday season of hitting the cookies and egg nog. Just above this button cluster, a 7-inch display screen is used to access Volvo's Sensus infotainment system.

Front leg room is on par with rivals like the 3-series, C-class or Acura TLX, but rear seat leg room lags all of the foregoing. The



## VW shoulders the Atlas

We found it curious that VW decided to unveil a new wagon just weeks ahead of the Los Angeles Auto Show that takes place each year in late November. The seven-passenger **Atlas** slots between the compact Tiguan and more luxurious five-passenger Touareg. It's possible that the Wolfsburg, Germany-based automaker wanted to split from the rest of the new-car launches taking place in L.A. show to underscore how important the Atlas is to the company's fortunes in North America. It sorely needs a bright spot in the wake of the diesel-emissions scandal that continues to plague the company (the V-6 TDI engines are now involved). Given its bold looks and turbocharged gasoline I-4 and non-turbo V-6 choices, the Atlas should prove popular as buyers of mid-size sedans continues to gravitate to wagons.



2018 Volkswagen Atlas



First aluminum, now hybrid? How far can Ford push the conservative F-150 fan? Pretty far, when it will offer more torque and a built-in mobile generator for job sites.

## Hybrid Mustang, F-150?

During last Tuesday's press conference at the Flat Rock Assembly Plant in Michigan, **Ford** President and CEO Mark Fields laid out the details for the Blue Oval's big electric push, including such shockers as a hybrid F-150 and electric Mustang.

Ford will be adding 13 new electric vehicles to its stable within the next five years, including hybrids, plug-in hybrids, EVs and an autonomous hybrid.

The **Mustang Hybrid** will have similar power to a petrol V-8, but with more torque (and most likely more weight from the battery as well). Set to debut in 2020, it will be built at the Flat Rock plant alongside its gas-powered sibling.

Meanwhile, over at the Dearborn plant, the **F-150 Hybrid** will be designed to function as a mobile generator for job sites. (Some will note General Motors tried this with its failed hybrid Chevy Silverado and GMC Sierra; it produced only around 700 eAssist trucks for the 2016 model year.)

Best guess is the hybrid Mustang and F-150 will share a powertrain and use an automatic transmission with electric motor inside.

Other vehicles in the pipeline include a small **crossover SUV electric** with 300-mile range (to be built at Flat Rock), two **Police Interceptor hybrids** to be built in Chicago and Ford's **Level 4 autonomous hybrid** that Fields said would arrive in 2021. Ford will also be deploying a small test fleet of around 20 Transit Connect Hybrid taxis to be testing in New York and other major U.S. cities.

The overall push is part of a \$4.5 billion investment in electric vehicles, and Fields announced that Ford will invest \$700 million to expand the Flat Rock facility and create some 700 jobs.



**MAN IN THE MIDDLE.** Notable about the 2017 S60 is the comfort and support of the front seat. Function controls are huddled in a center stack which features Volvo's Mode Man, a pictogram that allows drivers to adjust HVAC airflow to various locations by pressing the corresponding part of the figure.

S60's rear foot well space isn't welcoming to big feet, and six footers won't fit comfortably in back if front seat passengers are at full push-back. The exceptions are the two, longer wheelbase models.

Both the T5 Inscription and Inscription Platinum benefit from a 3-inch wheelbase stretch vs. the standard model, and the dividend is 36.9 inches of rear seat legroom, which is class leading. Trunk capacity (12 cubic feet on all models) trails C-class (12.6), 3-series (13) and TLX (13.2). Rear seats split and fold and include a seat pass-through portal.

The back seat head rests flip forward when not in use with the touch of a dashboard button, improving the driver's straight back view. The Blind Spot Information System has your back on rear visibility issues. It's included in the Vision package, along with Rear Park Assist, Cross-Traffic Alert, among other features. Beyond the traditional glove box, in-

side storage options run small. The covered center console bin and door pockets are undersized. A 12-speaker, 650 watt harmon-kardon sound system provides a fine sound track while you figure out where you're going with the navigation system that it's bundled with.

All S60s share Volvo's full complement of safety equipment, with standard staples like City Safety (low speed accident avoidance) and options like adaptive cruise control, lane keeping control, driver alert control, pedestrian and cyclist detection with auto brake and collision warning with auto-brake.

The S60 earned top marks (5 stars) in government testing for front, side and overall crash protection.

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.