



Counterfeit-parts companies busted at the SEMA show

Acting on a tip, U.S. federal marshals recently conducted a raid on the booths of a number of China-based companies that were showcasing their products at the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) show in Las Vegas, Nevada, last November. The companies are accused of displaying knock-offs of patented accessories made by OMIX-ADA of Georgia. That company makes aftermarket Jeep Wrangler products, including grilles, hood latches and light mount assemblies.



The 2016 SEMA show in Las Vegas

Ford unveils EcoSport CUV

If you're partial to the Ford Fiesta but would prefer something just a bit roomier (and more versatile for the weather in these parts), you're in luck. For the 2018 model year, the Blue Oval automaker will bring out the **EcoSport** compact utility vehicle in updated form (the vehicle is already on sale in Europe). Power will come from a 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine while a turbocharged three-cylinder will be available. With small utility models such as the Chevrolet Trax, Honda HR-V and others gaining popularity, the introduction of the EcoSport makes perfect sense. It also sports some helpful tech like Ford's BLIS (Blind Spot Information System), along with an 8-inch touchscreen infotainment system featuring Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. Also available is a 10-speaker premium sound system pumping out 675 watts. Less low-tech but no less helpful is a side-hinged rear hatch.



Civic Type R buyers will have no choice but to shift for themselves. Poor babies.

Type R roars closer to reality

We got an eyeful of what will be the most radical Honda Civic. Hitting the streets in 2017, the **Civic Type R**, which is based on the 2017 Civic hatchback, will come with a number of features that will be familiar to fans of the Subaru WRX STI and the recently retired Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution. They include an aggressive front clip, body side skirting and prominent rear spoiler.

In addition, the Type R's exhaust system will have three outlets that exit through a carbon-fiber rear diffuser. A turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder producing an estimated 300 horsepower will be linked to a six-speed manual transmission. That's right. Buyers with close to \$40,000 to spend for this extra-quick Civic will have to shift for themselves. Now look at the photo above and tell us: Is that any real sacrifice?



Chevy's new Bolt was named Car of the Year at the Detroit Auto Show this week. Here, GM North American president Alan Batey shows off the company's long-range electric vehicle.

Detroit Auto Show's best

The North American International Auto Show (aka, the Detroit Auto Show) is in full swing now in, of all places, Detroit, Michigan. While the show runs through Jan. 22, here's some of the highlights so far.

Of concepts, one of our favorites was Fiat Chrysler Automobile's display of the **Chrysler Portal concept**, an all-electric, self-driving-capable vehicle with a customizable interior that can fit up to six people. It is, as you can guess, geared for Millennials who want affordability, adaptability and technology.

The rub here is that this vehicle is aimed at young people with families who need that modular adaptability. Though concepts rarely make it to production as is, this may be a glimpse at the family minivan of the future.



Chrysler Portal concept

Back in the real world's present tense, the new **Chevy Bolt** electric car beat out contenders like the Genesis G90 and the Volvo S90 for the show's Car of the Year award. It's a pat on the back for the industry, as the Bolt is the first mass-produced, long-range (235 miles per battery charge) EV that starts around \$30,000 after tax credits.

In other honors, Chrysler's new **Pacifica minivan** was named Utility of the Year, and Honda's revived **Ridgeline pickup** took the prize for Truck of the Year. The awards are selected by a jury of automotive journalists from around the U.S. and Canada.

TEST DRIVE

2017 Audi A4 Sedan

Continued from page 3

In general, the A4's standard suspension tuning and steering feel lean slightly on the sporty side of normal for luxury sedans. While not inherently the corner carver that, say, the 3-Series is, the A4 is comfortably agile — a balance point that should suit most buyers just fine.

Drive Select — adjustable driving dynamics settings standard on all trims — allow you to tailor the ride/handling balance. Unlike many such systems, there's more at work here than simply shift point mapping. Comfort and Dynamic modes, for example, impart noticeably different feels. Adaptive damping suspension, a \$500 option on Prestige level cars, takes the Drive Select platform a step further.

And those still looking to scratch their performance itch can opt for the available (fixed) sport suspension (part of the \$750 Sport Package), or push all your chips in

and try the Sport Plus package on a stick shift model.

Historically, cars have shown their age by their interiors. In luxury leaning models, the amount of technology is now often the bellwether for cabin currency. The latest A4 fairly bristles with the latest infotainment and safety electronics as standard or optional equipment.

Particularly in top trim, Prestige models, the latest A4 shows off a handsome cabin, with a well-constructed look. While I don't especially like the fussiness of separate "P" and "R" buttons embedded in the gear shifter, the handle itself provides a fine, flat space to rest your hand while working the rotary controller — one of the access points for the revised, MMI operating system (available in two versions, according to trim).

Redundant controls for many functions are found on both the center console and



IN LUXURY MODELS, the amount of technology is now often the bellwether for cabin currency. The new Audi A4 bristles with the latest infotainment and safety electronics as standard or optional equipment. Particularly in the top Prestige trim, the interior boasts a handsome, well-constructed look.

the steering wheel; drivers choose the one most convenient. The overall layout and logic of the updated interface system mostly makes sense.

But, the sheer number of functions to access on a loaded luxury ride and the location/operation of the controls brings with it a long learning curve. The optional "virtual cockpit" and upgraded main display screen are visually impressive, functionally versatile — and potentially distracting.

Front seats are comfortably adjustable and trip-worthy. Back seat and trunk space are reminders that, while this is

a luxury car, it's a small luxury car. Six-footers sitting behind like-size people will find it a tight squeeze. Size is a function of class, and the A4's main competitors are in the same one. The Audi's rear seat leg room numbers (35.7 inches) are a little better than the 3-Series (35.1 inches) and the C-Class (35.2 inches). Cargo capacity (13 cubic feet) matches the BMW, and beats the 'Benz (12.6).

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 Ford Escape**

