



The sedan version of the next Buick Regal will be based on this Australian Holden Commodore.



## Dodge: A return to NASCAR?

From comments made by Sergio Marchionne, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles head honcho, it would appear that the automaker is at least considering a return to NASCAR competition. The company has not participated in the series for the last seven years.



2013 NASCAR Dodge Charger Sprint Cup car

Economic constraints were the primary cause of Dodge's departure, but now with the automaker in relatively good financial health, Marchionne is on record as wanting to discuss a return to NASCAR "in short order."

## Big changes for Buick Regal

Our sources claim that the next-generation of Buick's mid-size model that's scheduled to arrive for the 2018 model year will be available in two formats. The sedan version of the **Buick Regal** will be based on the Australian **Holden Commodore** (above), but it won't be built in "Oz" since parent General Motors is ending all vehicle production there in 2017. Also slated to receive a Regal badge is an all-new wagon model that will be called the Opel Insignia in Europe. Apparently the official name here will be the **Regal Tourx**, which indicates that it will be equipped with standard all-wheel-drive and compete with the Audi A4 Allroad, Jaguar F-Pace and Subaru Outback wagons plus similar body styles from Mercedes-Benz and BMW.



2017 Porsche Boxster S: Attractive and ambitious

## What does your car say about you?

What do people think of you based on the car you drive?

That's what German researchers recently tried to find out. In a study, 160 participants were shown two photos: One of a man they were told just bought a **Porsche Boxster**, and another of a man said to have bought a **Ford Fiesta**. When questioned, they said the Porsche buyer was seen as more attractive, flirtier, more intelligent, more ambitious and of a higher status. The Fiesta buyer (the same guy) was seen as more friendly, loyal and agreeable.

The researchers sought not to discover whether an expensive car will get a man a date, but rather how men perceived other men by the car they drove. The study demonstrated that men viewed the Porsche driver more as a rival, and the Fiesta owner more as a friend.

The researchers hypothesized that men "show higher preferences and purchase intentions for a conspicuous luxury than for an inconspicuous non-luxury car" because they "expect to be attributed a higher social status when driving this luxury car than when driving the nonluxury car."

So if women dress to impress other women, men buy big-bucks sports cars to compete with other men. Duh. We could've saved the researchers a lot of time.

The study was published last December. Perhaps most telling was its title: "Luxury Car Spending as a Costly Signal in Male Intrasexual Competition." Costly, indeed. A 2017 Porsche 718 Boxster MS-RPs at \$57,000. You can hop into a new Fiesta for \$14,000. No competition there.



'17 Ford Fiesta: Friendly and loyal



The Maserati Alfieri concept at the 2014 Geneva Show. It's for real now, and it's electric.

## Electric Maserati on the way

Ferrari may have nixed the idea of an electric car, but Maserati is set to introduce its first electric-powered vehicle by 2020. The Italy-based luxury marque will build an EV version of its **Alfieri**, the two-seat concept it unveiled at the 2014 Geneva Motor Show. The gas version (likely a V-6) will go on sale in 2019, to be followed by the EV.

The Alfieri "is being designed as a competitor to the [Porsche] 911 but it will be a larger car," said Peter Denton, general manager of Maserati North Europe. "More the size of a Jaguar F-Type."

Sergio Marchione, CEO of Fiat Chrysler (which owns Maserati and recently sold its stake in Ferrari) has had an ambivalent relationship with electrified vehicles. As far as up-scale EV maker Tesla goes, Sergio admitted he didn't "know how to make that economic model work," but added that "there is nothing Tesla can do that we cannot also do."

### TEST DRIVE

## 2017 Challenger GT

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switched to full-off — drifted happily around corners on a track that was a mix of hard pack and shin-deep powder.

In sum, it's arrow-up for drivability on all surfaces, with the lone, potential downside of rough surface ride. The AWD hardware underpinning Challenger GT began life beneath the Charger's police pursuit sedan. This very stiff platform was retuned to meet the needs of Challenger, but it's still firm. Smooth roads mean a smooth ride, but rougher pavement (as found in backwoods Maine) makes things jittery.

Challenger's cabin had a full refresh in 2015, with upgraded technology and functionality. The dashboard is sectioned off by aluminum stamped bezels, and a bank of controls are angled toward the driver. The standard 8.4-inch Uconnect touchscreen is the interface for many onboard controls. It's large, legible, more user-friendly than most, and is Android

Auto and Apple CarPlay compatible. A media hub was added to the center console in the last interior re-do. It includes an SD card slot, USB outlet and auxiliary input jack.

The combination of thick c-pillars and fat headrests create big, ¾-rear blind spots in Challenger. Standard rear backup camera and rear parking assist have your back on routine, rearward maneuvers. Blind-spot monitoring and rear cross-traffic detection are included as part of the Driver Convenience Group. The \$1,095 bundle also adds rear parking sensors, HID bi-xenon headlights, power folding mirrors and a remote start system, and is recommended.

Two other items among the many options/packages struck me worthy of serious consideration. A navigation system can be incorporated into the Uconnect display for \$795. I found it better than average in terms of user friendliness and response time. Finally, the GT Interior



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](http://www.armoryauto.com)

**GOLDSTEIN CHRYSLER JEEP DODGE RAM**  
613 Loudon Rd., Latham, NY 12110  
518-785-4156 [www.goldsteinchryslerjeep.net](http://www.goldsteinchryslerjeep.net)

**LIA CHRYSLER JEEP DODGE RAM**  
2116 Central Ave., Schenectady, NY 12304  
518-579-3300 [www.liachryslerdodgejeep.com](http://www.liachryslerdodgejeep.com)



Package (\$995) imports a four bump, sport steering wheel, SRT-style bucket seats wrapped in leather and suede-like Alcantara and a suitable high performance sound system, with a 506 watt power amp and nine, Alpine speakers.

Challenger's trunk measures a hefty, 16.2 cubic feet, and the back seat is more usable for passengers than its pony car competitors Camaro and Mustang. However, ingress/ egress in back is best left to the limber. If you carry more than

one passenger on a regular basis and are willing to trade off some two door style, Challenger's running mate should be considered. Charger's trunk is slightly larger (16.5 cubic feet) and leg room in back is downright generous, at 40.1 inches.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 25 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 180 calendars.