

Lexus NX gets facelift

In an attempt to keep up with redesigns of rivals Audi Q5 and new arrivals like the Mercedes-Benz GLC, Toyota's luxury brand is giving its NX compact crossover a more streamlined look and tweaks for better performance.

The **2018 Lexus NX** will get new front fascia and bumpers, a kick-activated rear

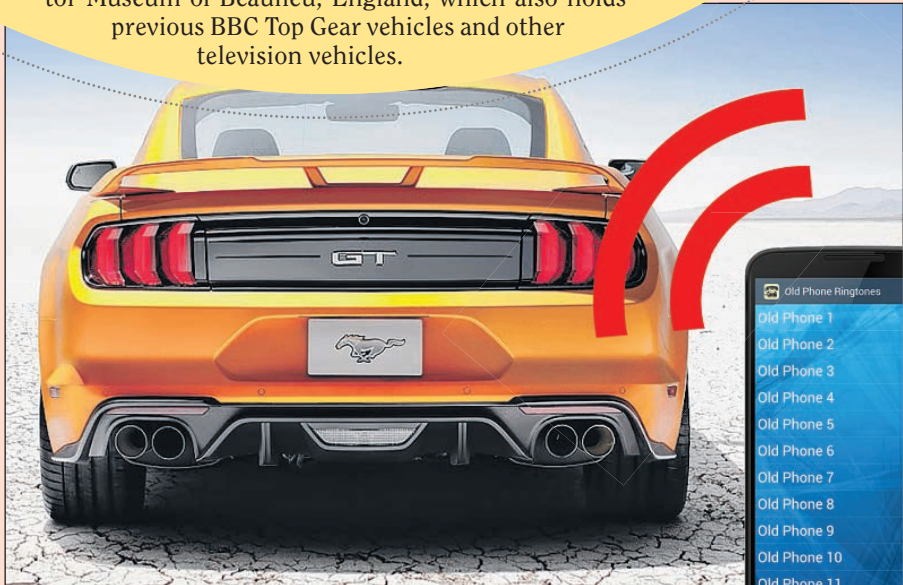
hatch opener, larger nav screen and upgraded suspension for a smoother ride. It will come with a 2.0L turbo or 2.5-liter hybrid, the latter making up 90 percent of U.S. sales. Lexus sells nearly 12,000 NXs a month worldwide, with 4,000 of them in the U.S.



2018 Lexus NX

A life-size Lego camper?

Ford is making its F-150s from aluminum, and its GT sportscar from carbon fiber. In the spirit of lightweight, alternative materials, we give you this: A **Caravan camper made entirely from Legos**. Billed as "the largest Caravan built with interlocking plastic bricks," this 12-foot long, retro-teardrop RV was constructed by a dozen different model makers from 215,518 Legos. It's got running water, lights and folding seats. It took more than a thousand man-hours over a two-month period to create, and weighs more than 2,600 lbs. After having scored its deserved place in the Guinness Book of World Records, the Lego camper moves on to a home at the National Motor Museum of Beaulieu, England, which also holds previous BBC Top Gear vehicles and other television vehicles.



Who's calling? It's the growl of the 2018 Mustang GT's exhaust.

Mustang GT ringtone

Tired of those generic ringtones on your cell phone? Ford has created a new one for you: The sound of a **2018 Ford Mustang GT's** exhaust.

Ford Performance engineers recorded the 5.0L V-8 engine exhaust sounds of the new Mustang GT, which has an active valve performance exhaust that lets users adjust the exhaust to their own preference. A new "Pony" button on the steering wheel allows drivers to toggle through four exhaust-note choices: Quiet, Normal, Sport and Track. The engine notes are also matched to the corresponding modes. Changing modes lets valves in the system modulate the engine sound based on careful tuning. And now, it's ready to let you know the local Ford dealership is calling.

The ringtone was recorded in Track mode, and captures the growl of the Mustang revving, then accelerating to the governed 155 mph. It will be available as a free download from social.ford.com.



Toyota unveiled its FT-4X crossover concept at the New York Auto Show.

FT-X4: Rugged and retro

We all miss the Toyota FJ Cruiser, the retro throwback that recalled the Japanese manufacturer's legendary Land Cruiser. Though the FJ ended its production in 2014, at the recent New York International Auto Show, Toyota unveiled the **FT-4X concept**, short for "Future Toyota-Four-wheel-drive Crossover."

Designed by Toyota's Calt Design Research, in Newport Beach, California — which also penned the Concept-i shown off at this year's Consumer Electronic Show in Vegas — the four-door AWD FT-4X is designed more for urban-dwelling Millennials than the off-road market, yet something more capable than a RAV4. The Calt team claims Millennials are outdoors enthusiasts, but fail to plan ahead. And so the FT-4X comes loaded with versatile features like a roof rack with corner tie-downs, a multi-hatch, split rear door that swings open to function as a one-piece liftgate and a rear cargo floor that slides out to reveal more storage beneath.

The interior lights can be removed and used as flashlights, and the radio is removable, too. An ultra-compact sleeping bag from The North Face fits in a dedicated space between the front seats, functioning as an armrest when not in use. Even the dash flips up to reveal more storage.

"We focused on how a crossover vehicle can add fun and value to casual adventures both in and out of the city," said Calt President, Kevin Hunter, "thinking about how someone would use it, and what they would love to do with it."



TEST DRIVE

2017 Volvo S90 T6 AWD Inscription

Continued from page 3

ends of the tire size spectrum, and see which suits you.

The cars in this class have a wide variety of ride/handling personalities. The Volvo fits near the middle of the group — more luxury than sporty. While I've seen others comment on the heft of the power assisted steering, I confess to not sharing their concerns. In the Dynamic drive mode, steering feel is heavier than the default (Comfort) setting, but regardless of mode, you'd be hard pressed to call it heavy, and in any event, the Comfort mode softens the feel, if you feel the need to do so.

Pilot Assist — a semi-autonomous combination of lane keeping and adaptive cruise control — is standard on S90. While I find both systems too intrusive for full-time use, I like lane keeping as a backup plan, when you're at risk of drowsy driving. Ditto for cruise control,

for those occasions when you've been driving forever, and want to find out if your right leg will still actually bend. So, Volvo's semi-autonomous technology work fine for me — as an optional aid, with an on/off switch. Blind spot detection and cross traffic alert are available, and invaluable tools for the driver.

The interior draws high marks for style. The upholstery in my test car was done in Blonde (white) perforated Nappa leather which looks smashing. It would be a high risk color choice in a minivan or any vehicle frequented by small kids, but given the car's target market, I think it's a safe bet here. Liberal use of walnut trim on dash, door panels and center console add a touch of traditional class to what is otherwise a cabin with a Swedish modern look.

Sitting behind the wheel of a luxury car, the amount of gauges and switchgear can sometimes be daunting. And confus-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

ing, more to the point, so it's refreshing to see a dash display as uncluttered as this one. All but a few cabin systems are accessed by the Sensus Connect 9 inch touchscreen. Positioned dead center in the dash and oriented vertically, the display allows you to swipe and poke your way to the desired result, as you would with a smartphone or tablet. User friendliness is better than average for a touchscreen-based system, though the breed overall is slower than the conventional controls they've replaced, on a task for task basis.

Options are layered on via packages or individually. Among the latter: Bowers & Wilkins Premium sound system (fine sounding audio system with a premium (\$3,200) price), Head-up display (underwhelming graphics, for \$900), Eight spoke 20 inch alloy wheels (a sharp look but a firmer ride for \$800).

There's ample passenger space to hold adults in both rows without complaint.

Trunk capacity is 17.7 cubic feet; usably large, and shaped to swallow a lot of luggage. Smaller items have a harder go of it, as the stylish interior's one drawback seems to be a shortage of storage space. Spots are numerous but small, which only really hits home in the center console. This is the prime landing spot for all the things we carry in our pockets, and finding a home for said stuff is unduly challenging in S90.

All of the above are wrapped in an undeniably handsome package. Graybeards like me remember when Volvo models looked less like a shiny toy than the box that the toy came in. The new flagship proves that there's no reason why the latest in safety and technology can't also be very easy on the eyes.

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.

