



The BMW i8 Spyder goes on sale next year as a 2019 model.

Cadillac's big XTS cruiser

Word has it that our favorite mode of transport when traveling to and from airports will be updated for the coming year.

The front-wheel-drive **XTS sedan's** lists of improvements begins with a new front- and rear-end design that mimics the nose and tail of the rear-wheel-drive CT6 sedan (both models can be had with AWD).



2017 Cadillac XTS

Also in line for updating is the base 304-horsepower 3.6-liter V-6, which will be bumped to 310 ponies. A nine-speed automatic transmission replaces the current six-speed, while XTS V-Sport's 410-horsepower twin-turbocharged 3.6-liter V-6 stays the course.

BMW aims big with the i8

BMW's competitor to the Acura NSX hybrid is one gorgeous number and we believe it will only be better looking once the **BMW i8 Spyder** (roadster) goes on sale in 2018 (as a 2019 model). A turbocharged 1.5-liter three-cylinder engine plus two electric motors propel the all-wheel-drive luxury sports car. Total system output is 362 horsepower with 420 pound-feet of torque, but BMW is expected to increase both numbers by improving battery and gas engine strength (to about 390 horsepower and 450 pound-feet). Modest body and interior updates will be likely. Pricing is expected to be in the \$160,000 range for the roadster, which is about \$15,000 more than the i8 coupe.



The Nineties called, they want their Hummers back: Here's the "new" Humvee C-Series being unveiled at the Shanghai Auto Show.

Lutz brings Hummers back

The HMMWV (High Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicle), better known as the Humvee, has been the indispensable workhorse of the U.S. military for years. But back in the day, General Motors' civilian **Hummer** version became shorthand for 1990s excess. The Great Recession of 2008 trimmed that back, and with carbuyers' tastes moving to smaller crossover SUVs, GM killed off the Hummer brand in 2010, unloading all remaining stock of the H1, H2 and H3 models.

Now, VLF Automotive — a company headed by former General Motors "car guy" honcho **Bob Lutz** (85-years-old, god bless him) — is producing what's called the **Humvee C-Series**. It's essentially a kit Humvee made by AM General. VLF then installs the powertrain and ships the finished product through an intermediary to China. (Its legal name is the Humvee C-Series, since GM still owns the Hummer brand.) Prices will range from \$60,000 to \$77,000 optioned up. Note that options are things like winches and tire inflation systems; this is *not* the luxury civilian Hummer of yore.

VLF also sells updated copies of the deceased Viper (as the 745-horse VLF Force 1), and markets the Destino, basically the defunct all-electric Fisker Karma now powered by a gas-chugging 6.2L V8 Corvette ZL1 engine. Subtlety is not their intent.



President Donald Trump's decision to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accord created a unanimous reaction among American car manufacturers.

Makers protest Paris pull-out

Despite the after-this-commercial-break tease, President Trump's ultimate decision to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accord to reduce greenhouse gases was no shock. But it did create shockwaves in the auto industry.

Predictably for the CEO of an all-electric manufacturer, **Tesla Motors** head **Elon Musk** promptly tweeted that "Climate change is real. Leaving Paris is not good for America or the world." Further, the head of SpaceX and Solar City announced he would be resigning from his seat on the President's Strategy and Policy Forum, comprised of 18 prominent business leaders. (Uber CEO Travis Kalanick also stepped down, just before he stepped down as Uber CEO.)

Less predictable were the reactions of other American automakers. **General Motors** stated that it "will not waver from our commitment to the environment and our position on climate change has not changed. International agreements aside, we remain committed to creating a better environment."

While Italian-controlled **Fiat Chrysler Automobiles** issued a more wishy-washy reaction, **Ford Motor Co.** brass reasserted that they "believe climate change is real, and remain deeply committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in our vehicles and our facilities." Ford took the occasion to reiterate its "commitment to sustainability," and less altruistically tout its baker's dozen of electric vehicles in the development pipeline.

And that's the rub; the green they care about is money. These makers not only feel that alternative-fuel and hybrid vehicles are the future of the industry, but they also sell a lot (if not most) of their vehicles outside the U.S.

GM's CEO **Mary Barra**, however, will cling to her position on the Strategy and Policy Forum to provide her company "a seat at an important table to contribute to a constructive dialogue about key policy issues."

Those issues surely include convincing the president to loosen federal mileage standards for auto manufacturers. The Trump EPA has already ordered a review of those standards, set during the last months of the Obama administration.

TEST DRIVE

2017 Porsche 718 Boxster S

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number of great sports cars over the years. The songs those engines sang to me were undeniably a part of their charm. Since the Boxster first arrived in the 1997 model year, the tones of the flat-six have been appreciated by many.

The engine's characteristic honks and intake howls provided a steady soundtrack as you stretched the car out. With the departure of the six, Porsche has effectively changed the channel.

Changed, not unplugged. By amplifying the turbo four's mechanical sounds and piping them into the cabin (via firewall-mounted speaker), Porsche gives voice to the turbo four Boxster. (It even has an on/off switch). Part of the optional Sport Chrono package (\$1,920) is a selector with four different driving modes. Pick "Sport", and you mildly 'unmuffle' the exhaust, uncorking a stream of burbles and pops every time you back out of the throttle.

When you need to enter stealth mode, switch back to Normal or (ironically) Sport Plus, and sonic decorum is restored. The new soundtrack is entertaining, though less

so than the sounds of the former, flat-six for some of us. I think Porsche feels it's trade-off worth making. The 718's engine is faster and more efficient, and in any event, many/most prospective buyers haven't heard the former Boxster engine. You can't miss what you never knew.

Cowl shake is basically a non-issue, and ride quality is firm yet comfortable — even with the 20-inch rims and thin sidewall tires. The suspension — subject to constant tweaking by Porsche engineers over the year — is quite well sorted. With its mid-engine balance and supple chassis, even the standard model is exceptionally capable for touring or the occasional autocross or track day.

But if you fancy more, a quick scan of the options suggest a number of ways to raise the car's track game, such as PASM Sport Suspension (\$2,070) and Porsche Torque Vectoring (\$1,320). Electrically-assisted power steering was sniffed at by purists when introduced to the last generation cars. The latest iteration is now sniff proof. Sharing the same ratio as its big brother 911, the steering feels nicely



Switchgear is plentiful on the controls of the 2017 Porsche Boxster, but logical in its layout. New to the models is a 7-inch touchscreen and updated infotainment system.

weighted and properly boosted.

My test drive occurred in June, which rhymes with monsoon, and not for nothing this year. Nonetheless, I dropped the top at every opportunity. The power, convertible lid folds quickly and neatly atop itself. The process (up or down) takes about 10 seconds, and can be accomplished at speeds of up to 31 mph.

You sit low in Boxster (exiting gracefully is a barometer of your age), with the door sill at shoulder height. The dropped seating position and the between-the-headrests conspire to chase wind gusts away from the cabin. Rear visibility is somewhat limited, and considerably more so with the top up. Blind spot monitoring should therefore be considered a mandatory option.

The interior is handsome and well finished. Switchgear is plentiful, but logical in its layout. Like the 911, Boxster gets an updated version of Porsche's PCM infotainment system. An easy to navigate, 7-inch touchscreen is new, as is standard Wi-Fi

connectivity and Apple CarPlay compatibility (though not Android Auto).

Interior storage is sparse. When it's time to empty your pockets, the options are limited. Larger cargo benefits from a design novelty of mid-engine cars: front and rear trunks. The split is 5.3 cubic feet in the front (deep) bin, and an additional 4.4 in the (shallow) rear space. The collective capacity is good, by sports car standards. Golfers tell me that if you want to bring a full set of sticks with you, the only option is to have them ride shotgun.

Owing to the amount of desirable, a la carte items on the menu, Boxster's price can vary widely. But, be it a stock, standard model or a loaded S, this is a very appealing choice as a Grand Touring car, a weekend racer — or both.

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