



Already a great sporty car on a budget, the **Hyundai Veloster's** about to get a more powerful engine.

Euro cars: All EV by 2015

Dutch Bank ING predicts that all new cars sold in Europe will be electric by 2035. This prediction is even more aggressive than last week's commitment from France to banning new gas-powered car sales by 2040, and the U.K. National Grid's expectation that 90 percent of all new cars in Britain will be electric by 2050, but the end result is the same. The driver here is the falling cost of batteries lower vehicle prices through mass production. The ING also predicts that European makers will lose out to U.S. and Asian makers' head start in battery research and manufacturing.



BMW i3 electric

A hotter Veloster on the roster

We're hearing that the next version of **Hyundai's** unique three-door **Vesoster** hatchback coupe will be available with a lot more power for the 2018 model year. In fact, the optional turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder could make as much as 295 horsepower, far above the 201 horses produced by the optional 1.6-liter four-cylinder in the current Veloster. You can also expect that the seven-speed automated manual transmission (with paddle shifters) mated to the 1.6 will migrate to the new 2.0. On top of that, Hyundai will reportedly streamline the both the exterior looks and upgrade the cabin, possibly to placate those who criticized its dearth of rear seat foot- and headroom. Also expect an all-new, top of the line multimedia infotainment system with driver assist and 8-inch screen. The more potent Veloster will likely be part of Hyundai's new N performance line, a brand that will eventually spread to other models.



CEO Tim Cook announced that Apple's autonomous vehicle program is back on track.

Apple's back to self-driving

An interview given to Bloomberg Television by **Apple** CEO Tim Cook suggests — nay, screams — that the tech giant's self-driving vehicle program is back on. After laying off hundreds of engineers and software designers from its secretive Titan project last year, Cook said Apple is now "focusing on autonomous systems. It's a core technology that we view as very important."

Apple might have been spurred on by other manufacturers' gains in autonomous vehicles. At least a half dozen companies are now beta testing self-driving cars in the field. Waymo has recently partnered with Fiat Chrysler and ride-hailing service Lyft to develop a self-driving car. Uber has been testing them on real streets (illegally or otherwise) for some time now. To that end, Apple has invested \$1 billion (chump change to them) in Didi Chuxing, China's largest ride-hailing service.

But rabid fans of Apple products might want to put a brake on their excitement; it's still unclear whether the company will actually be manufacturing its own car or simply developing the autonomous technology behind another maker's vehicles.



Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson posted this photo of himself and his "Rampage" co-star Naomi Harris with a suspicious-looking Bronco.

New Bronco rampage?

If you're sitting through the upcoming action movie "Rampage" starring **Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson**, you'll be forgiven for noting the appearance of a new-fangled looking Ford SUV with a familiar name plate on the grille. Johnson posted a still from the movie on Instagram, because — as a star of the "Fast and Furious" franchise — he's not going to overlook that either.

The vehicle is actually a **Ford Bronco concept** unveiled at the 2004 Detroit Auto Show that, like too many concepts, never saw the light of production. But Ford has announced it will be putting out an **all-new Bronco** for 2020, though it, as Ford said, that 2004 concept "does not represent the future Bronco beyond sharing the iconic Bronco name." And what a name it is, so much so that Ford global operations head Joe Hinrichs crowed that the upcoming Bronco will be "true to its heritage," and recognizable as a Bronco. Not confirmed yet is whether it will two- or four-door.

As for product placement and cross-marketing, Johnson is a pitchman for Ford's service centers and was tapped by the manufacturer to unveil the updated Mustang at this year's Detroit Auto Show in January. The "Rampage" movie, expected for 2018, is based on the 1980s video game of the same name.

This Bronco concept was shown back in 2004. The last Bronco rolled off the line in 1996.



TEST DRIVE

2017 Honda Civic Si

Continued from page 3

Si is manual transmission only, and a sweet stick it is. The transmission's gearing is well spaced to support the engine's broad power band, and the shifter for the six-speed has a crisp, short throw. If you like to shift, you'll like this powertrain. And if you haven't had much three-pedal experience, fear not.

If F.O.R. isn't a classified medical condition, it should be. Fear Of Rollback occurs when the driver of a manual transmission car stops at a light or an intersection, and said stopping point is on an incline.

The anxiety comes from knowing that you've got to time the release of the brake and clutch pedals such that you move forward, lest you roll backward, into the car sitting (too closely) behind you.

There are workarounds for this malady, and they've been around, for longer than you'd think (Studebaker's "Hill Holder" option dates back at least 80 years). Honda's variation is called Hill Start Assist. It engages with a button on the console, and holds the car in place until

you release the clutch pedal. Not level? No worries.

Si enhancements include model-specific chassis tuning, a helical, limited slip differential and an adaptive damper system. Switching the Drive mode selector from Normal to Sport remaps the shift points, tightens the steering and stiffens the suspension settings; all just enough to be noticeable. Ride quality is firm, but comfortably so.

Overall, the Si sedan is nicely balanced: Powertrain and chassis are on the same page, and the result is an agile car that's fun to drive. It also doesn't drink much. EPA estimates for fuel economy are 28/38/32 (I averaged 29).

The monospec build means no access to the suite of safety related gear known as Honda Sensing; a curious omission. The sound system features 450 watts and 10-speakers, with AM/FM/Sirius XM/HD Radio and Pandora capability. For a standard equipment tune machine, it's very solid. Atop the center stack, a 7-inch display touchscreen is your access point



TEST DRIVE this vehicle at this preferred dealership:

MOHAWK HONDA
1780 Freemans Bridge Rd., Scotia, NY 12302
518-370-4911 www.mohawkhonda.com

for the car's infotainment system. It's a mixed bag. The plus is Android Auto and Apple CarPlay compatibility.

The minus is clunky functionality. Volume controls are imprecise; virtual buttons are slow to respond. The 7-inch Driver Information Interface can be programmed to display performance related data, for those days when you hit the track or run an autocross.

Honda's LaneWatch blind spot monitoring system only provides information about what's behind you on the right side. It would be twice as useful if it covered both sides. The sole aid to left side rear visibility on the Civic we drove last year was a convex outer section of the outside rearview mirror, but that feature was

absent from this Si.

Aside from the snappy shifter, the best feature of the Si interior is likely the front sport seats. They're contoured to support, they're heated, and they're bolstered to keep your butt where it ought to be during spirited driving.

If you're going to take your bro's along with you, the Si sedan is a better fit than the coupe. There's 2.3 inches more headroom in back, and 1.5 inches more rear legroom in the four doors, and it'll fit six footers front and back.

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.

