

This Nissan NP300 Navara (sold around the globe) might be the basis for a new Xterra SUV.

## Accord goes 6-less

If you're an Accord lover who's a bit leery of Honda retiring the V-6 option for its midsize sedan and replacing it with a new **turbocharged four-cylinder**, rest easy. The base and optional engines are smooth and potent enough to effectively propel the Accord. The larger turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder with 252 horsepower and 273 pound-feet of torque has the tough chore of replacing the smooth 3.5-liter V-6, but the four-cylinder actually has more torque. The only real downside is that the Accord coupe is now retired, but that's understandable since it constituted only about five percent of annual Accord sales.



The 2019 Honda Accord will lose its V-6 engine option, replacing it with a turbocharged four-cylinder.



## New Nissan Frontier... and Xterra, too?

Reports are that **Nissan** will have a surprise in store when the all-new mid-size **Frontier** pickup makes its long-overdue appearance for the 2019 model year. Expect it to have a fully redesigned exterior and interior (the last significant redesign for the model was in 2005) and will most probably look very similar to Nissan's **NP300 Navara** pickup (shown above) that's sold elsewhere around the world. Nissan has already confirmed the new Frontier will be built at its Canton, Mississippi manufacturing plant. The truck's body-on-frame chassis will also form the basis of a similarly sized **Xterra** sport utility vehicle that will follow a year or so later. The previous Xterra was retired after the 2016 model year and still has a small-but-devoted following among off-road-loving aficionados due to the truck's ruggedness and stout 261-horsepower V-6 engine. The Frontier will need it, because it's going to face considerable competition from the upcoming Ford Ranger and Jeep Scrambler (Wrangler pickup).



As a new flagship Mazda coupe, this Vision Coupe Concept could ultimately receive a rotary engine, if only to recharge the hybrid's batteries.

## More info on the return of Mazda's rotary engine

Some time ago, **Mazda** indicated its intention to bring back its famed pistonless powerplant made popular 50 years ago by the Japan-based manufacturer.

However, rather than serve as any vehicle's main power plant, sources believe that the rotary engine's next application will likely be as a range-extending generator (much like the gasoline engine in the Chevrolet Volt's system) that will charge up the battery pack of the production version of the recently revealed **2017 Vision Coupe Concept**. That is, until Mazda can figure out a way to improve the rotary's fuel economy while maintaining a respectable output in what will eventually be a flagship (read: expensive) sports car.

For the time being, an electric Mazda with an optional rotary range extender could arrive before the 2020 model year, with sport coupe arriving a year or two later as a plug-in hybrid.



Volkswagen CC



Lexus CT200h



Nissan Juke



Dodge SRT Viper

## Models going buh-bye soon

With the approach of every new model year, there are new vehicles for the public to feast on, and there are those that are canceled. The latter group includes the **Buick Verano** sedan, the **Chevrolet SS** sedan, the **Dodge SRT Viper**, the **Hyundai Azera** sedan, the **Infiniti QX70** utility vehicle, the **Jeep Patriot**, the **Lexus CT200h**, the **Mitsubishi Lancer** and the **MiEV**, the **Nissan Juke** and the **Volkswagen CC**.

### TEST DRIVE

## 2018 Kia Stinger

Continued from page 1

with some autocross laps and a sprinkling of impressively large, disturbingly random, freeway traffic jams. Whether slithering through the canyons or finessing an autocross, Stinger corners aggressively with ease — particularly in AWD trim. On the street, the car has a composed, refined feel to it, cushioning the passengers from bumps and bounces, while still communicating with the driver through the steering wheel. Although I've not yet

Stinger has the potential to be a game changer for Kia.

introduced the car to a good 'ol New York pothole, I don't get the impression that it would be phased by it. Ride quality was comfortable throughout. I drove the car mainly in Sport mode, but toggled over to Comfort for comparison. The difference in steering heft isn't readily apparent, though ride quality does seem slightly softer.

The AWD system pays traction dividends year-round, but its presence is a particular plus for drivers in Snowbelt states like ours, for the confidence it imparts in winter driving. AWD also removes an impediment for those who might otherwise pass on a seasonal, rear drive model, in favor of a four seasons car that can shrug it off, when the snowing gets tough.

A choice of two turbocharged engines are offered in Stinger. I spent most of my time in six cylinder powered models — rear- and all-wheel-drive — but also sampled the four. The 2.0L twin scroll turbo four is rated at 255 horsepower (@ 6,200rpm) and 260 lb.-ft. of torque (@ 1,400-4,000 rpm). Kia says the 2.0L can get from 0-60 in 5.9 seconds, and that's how it feels — comfortably quick. It's a good fit in this car, fast enough to be sporty, albeit a little less refined than the six. The 3.3-liter twin turbo V6 posts 365 horsepower (@ 6,000 rpm) and 376 lb.-ft. of torque (@ 1,350-4,500 rpm).

Fast it feels, and the numbers confirm it. The 3.3L makes 60 in 4.7 seconds (faster than the Porsche Panamera 6, according to Kia), with a top, track speed of 167 mph (governed). The six has the comfortable excess of power that we associate with premium cars, and provides a pleasantly growly soundtrack for your travels. The four could only be considered underpowered by comparison to the six.

Both engines are connected to an eight-speed automatic transmission. It's efficient left to its own devices, and can be engaged manually via paddle mounted shifters. In do-it-yourself mode, the pause between gear request and delivery isn't quite as quick as, say, Audi's DSG, but the "manumatic" option allows you to stick to a given gear and keep the engine on the boil, until you decide to move on.

I drove both a base model Stinger and the top-ranging GT2. While the content



TEST DRIVE this vehicle at this preferred dealership:

**DESTINATION KIA**  
760 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12206  
518-482-0500 [www.destinationkia.com](http://www.destinationkia.com)

obviously varies according to trim level, all models meet the requirements of the (GT) breed — comfortable, travel-worthy space for adults front and rear.

Cargo volume is a class-leading 23.3 cubic-feet — sufficient for weekend getaway luggage duty. Rear seatbacks split and fold flat when you need to carry long items. GT2 cars add to the front seat niceties with power lumbar for both driver and passenger, as well as power thigh support and side bolsters for the driver. Driver's seat bolsters keep you planted during spirited driving.

The front passenger may slide about a bit if the driver corners with gusto, as the side bolsters there are wider and nonadjustable. Straight back visibility is poor, owing to the shallow backlight. Mirrors and blind spot monitoring (standard on GT2, optional elsewhere) pick up the slack.

Interior fit and finish has a quality look and feel. All models have Android Auto and Apple CarPlay compatibility. GT 1 & 2 models double down with a satellite-based navigation system, along with an upgraded (8-inch) touchscreen for accessing the UVO infotainment system. Some of my test time was spent in the mountains and canyons and hence out of cell phone range, reaffirming the problem with

relying on cell-based navigation on your smartphone. No signal, no service. The UVO infotainment/telematics system is a straight forward interface. The available Harmon/Kardon sound system (15 speakers, 720 watts Clari-Fi music restoration and QuantumLogic surround (standard on GT1 & 2) is so good that you may have to reorganize your fiscal priorities to grab it (repeat after me — "There's nothing wrong with state schools, kids!").

The new Kia's MSRP starts at \$31,900 for a 2.0T (RWD) and \$37,100 for a 2.0T premium. Cars equipped with the 3.3T are designated as GT's and prices start at \$38,350 for a GT (RWD), \$43,250 for a GT1 (RWD) and \$49,200 for a GT2 (RWD). All-wheel-drive can be added to any model for an additional \$2,200. The estimated destination charge is \$900.

Stinger has the potential to be a game changer for Kia — getting people to rethink what the brand is about.

You know, for all the times we say it and don't mean it, sometimes change really can be good.

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.

