

Silverado's redesign for 2019

We're looking forward to a significant redesign of Chevrolet's light-duty pickup that should break in early 2018 as a 2019 model. The automaker has worked hard to match or overtake the class-leading F-150, but Ford's aluminum-bodied hauler remains solidly in front. Among the expected changes is a new front-end design, a completely redesigned interior and, perhaps as an homage to the F-150, a number of aluminum body panels.



2018 Chevy Silverado 2500

All V-6 and V-8 powerplants are expected to have 10-speed automatic transmissions. There is also a strong possibility that the recently revealed 450-horsepower Silverado 1500 Performance Concept truck — a possible F-150-Raptor fighter — is also production-bound.

Ford has produced special Bullitt Mustangs before: This one is from 2008.



A new Bullitt Mustang ahead?

In the 1968 film "Bullitt," Steve McQueen piloted a Mustang GT fastback in and around San Francisco's roller coaster streets in what is considered one of, if not *the* best, movie chase scenes ever filmed. Since then, Bullitt has spawned several Mustang spinoffs badged with the same name and sporting the same Highland Green paint scheme. (The 2008 version is shown above.) With the big 40th anniversary upon us, sources are now claiming that a new Mustang Bullitt model is in the works and could be in Ford showrooms as soon as this coming spring. At this time, the Bullitt's performance specs aren't known, but that likely won't matter to fans of McQueen, the movie or the Mustang. Or even San Francisco streets.



The Mercedes-Benz G-Wagon's multifunction steering wheel with paddle shift switches is shared with the revised S-Class.

Meet the new G-wagon

There's something about classic (boxy) off-road vehicles that speaks to the heart. Mercedes-Benz's answer to the Land Rover and Jeep Wrangler is at the premium end of the scale (it MSRP's from \$123,600) but is no less revered by its financially comfortable clients.

Following decades of only minimal changes to the classic Geländewagen, an all-new 2019 G-Class will soon break cover. Although it seems certain that the body styling won't change a great deal, they believe that newer chassis and suspension components will make a big difference in reducing the G class's 5,700-pound weight.

The interior will be completely redesigned to include the latest digital components to rival the E- and S-class sedans. The current twin-turbocharged V-8 will likely carry over, but a twin-turbo V-6 is a possible starting-point engine.



Tesla's Autopilot function isn't a true autonomous feature, but it could save you money.

Insurance break for self-driving cars

One of the not-so-well publicized selling points of self-driving cars is that they'll make the roads safer, based on the precept that machines are less accident-prone than humans. Tesla claims its crash rates have fallen 40 percent for drivers who use its Autopilot feature, which can automatically switch lanes, match the car's speed to traffic and even be summoned by the driver from the garage.

Going with that, Direct Line, an insurance company in Great Britain is offering a five percent discount to owners of Tesla vehicles who use that semi-autonomous function. Root, a startup company here in the U.S., has also instituted a discount for drivers with autonomous vehicles.

For Direct Line's part, it's seeking to collect data to confirm that customers who drive such vehicles are involved in fewer collisions than customers in cars without self-driving technologies.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Alfa Romeo Giulia

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a shame in a sport sedan, the blow is softened by the eight-speed automatic. It's a smooth shifter from gear to gear, and very engaging in manumatic mode. A large part of the fun (literally) are the paddle shifters. Oversized and boomerang shaped, the brushed aluminum handles

Fine grip, responsive steering and an even weight distribution make for an agile, fun to drive car.

change cogs with satisfying click, and (in Dynamic mode) downshifts are accompanied by a rev-matching throttle blip. The downside to the supersized paddles is twofold. First, they sit directly in the path of the stalks for wipers and blinkers. And, if you're working through some serious corners, it's possible that your hands on the wheel won't always be in range of the paddles (hard to believe, when said

paddles require their own zip code). But as I said when last sampling them (in the Alfa Stelvio), if you like to shift it yourself — at least occasionally — the shared stalk space issue will be overlooked.

Sliding into the driver's seat, the crisp dash display is framed by a Ferrari-esque, flat-bottom steering wheel, with embedded on/off button. HVAC functions are accessed by a trio of dials and accompanying buttons mid-way up the center stack, and are easy to use.

One level up on the center stack is an 8.8-inch infotainment screen, part of a \$950 option package that also includes an AM/FM head unit, HD Bluetooth and a navigation system. You interact with the menus displayed on the screen using a knurled knob and buttons on the center console.

The system is about average in terms of ease of use and potential for driver distraction. Adding a "back" button would speed up command processing time, and the flat widescreen display is arguably less useful than one with more vertical area when viewing maps.

Just north of the system control knob



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is the shifter. Like all electronic, joystick shifters, I find it fussy and imprecise in use, and would prefer something more forthright, less finesse.

Color and trim choices can change the interior's look dramatically. Buyers can select something understated (black with trim choices) or opt for more brio (like red leather).

Size-wise, Giulia's front legroom is near the top of its segment, and average in back. A workable compromise can be reached where six-footers can fit in both rows, but only with a concession on pushback from the front. It also helps if you don't have big feet in back. Cargo capacity is about 13 cubic feet, which is mid pack. Aside from the covered center console, front cabin storage spots skew small.

Owing to its thick b and c-pillars, Giulia drivers should consider blind spot

monitoring a mandatory option. It's included (along with cross-path detection and auto-dimming outside mirrors) in the Driver Assistance Static package (\$650). If you want to double down on the onboard technology, the Driver Assist Dynamic Plus package (\$1,500) adds forward collision warning, adaptive cruise control with stop, lane departure warning, automatic high beams and an infrared windshield.

Android Auto and Apple CarPlay compatibility are a new addition to Giulia's standard equipment this year, welcomed by smartphone users. The harmon-kardon premium audio system is, at \$900, worthwhile, to the audiophile.

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.

