

A new Lexus subcompact could be bound for North America

It's no secret that Toyota's premium division has plans for a new UX utility wagon (smaller than the compact NX) for the European market, but not here. Growing demand for such vehicles on this continent is causing Toyota to re-think those plans. The automaker's U.S. and Canadian dealer groups are also pushing for the UX, which would help them compete against the BMW X1, Audi Q3 and Infiniti QX30. Pending approval, the UX could go on sale in North America by mid-2019 as a 2020 model.



Lexus UX utility wagon concept

Volkswagen's 2016 T-Cross Breeze concept will serve as the basis for the T-Cross small SUV, but without the ragtop.



VW readies a new crossover

It seems that an increasing number of automakers have new small-and-tall wagon entries, or are about to join the fray of the popular segment. This group includes Volkswagen with a vehicle currently called the T-Cross, which was first teased as the T-Cross Breeze concept in 2016. (That model, displayed at the Geneva Auto Show, was a soft-top convertible). Word is this little five-passenger model (slotting in below the Tiguan) will be similar in size to the Hyundai Kona and Toyota C-HR. It's expected that this year's Geneva show (March 8-18) will serve as the unveiling venue for the T-Cross. It's also expected that the 150-horsepower turbocharged 1.4-liter four-cylinder engine (currently installed in the VW Jetta sedan) will be a T-Cross staple. Look for it to hit European markets this year, with an American arrival date to follow. Front- and all-wheel-drive versions will be available, but don't hold your breath for a ragtop version just yet.



The 2019 Chevrolet Silverado gains a first-ever power tailgate option.

Truck wars in Detroit

The North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in Detroit, Mich., last month was notable for many emerging trends, including the increased competition in the pickup category. Here's some that have become benchmarks in the heated-up pickup wars between the big three.

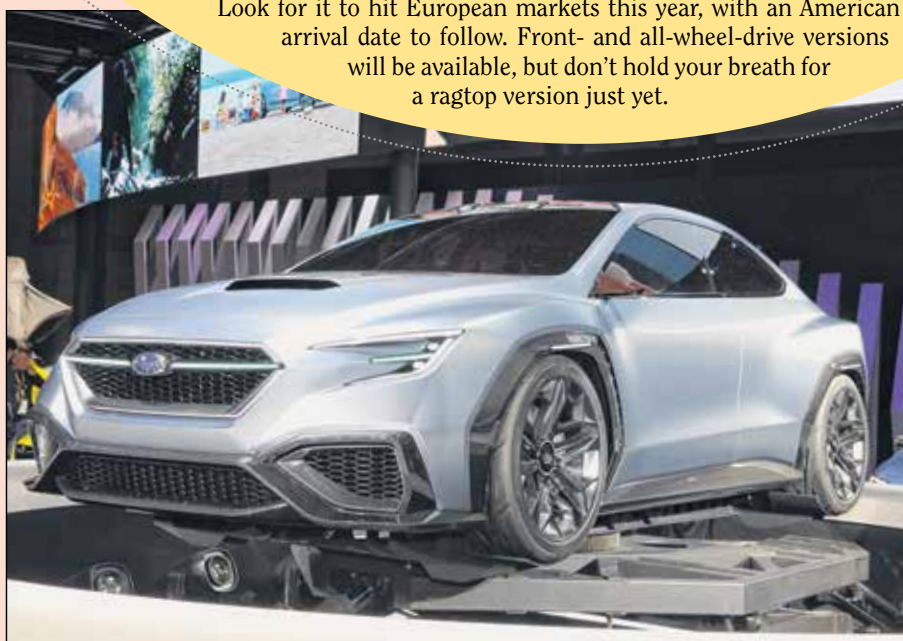
The all-new and larger **2019 Chevrolet Silverado** sports bolder looks and reduced weight (by up to 450 pounds, says Chevrolet). Along with a first-ever power tailgate option, Silverado will also make available a 3.0-liter six-cylinder turbo-diesel engine, but the company remains mum on the output and fuel economy.

Over at the Fiat Chrysler Automobiles display, the big news was the **2019 Ram** pickup that has a bold yet more attractive front clip, increased towing and hauling capacities and more power for the 3.6-liter V-6 and 5.7-liter V-8 engines.

As well, Ford revealed the next-generation **2019 Ranger** midsize truck that runs with a turbocharged 2.3-liter four-cylinder engine.



The 2019 Ford Ranger comes with a turbocharged four-cylinder.



Will Subaru allow the design of the Viziv concept to shine through in the next WRX STI?

Subaru pumps up performance

Many times before, Subaru has produced excellent design studies/concepts, only for them to be disappointingly watered down when they hit production. We think that the **Subaru Viziv Performance STI Concept** revealed at the Tokyo Auto Show last month is an absolutely stunning design, but will Subaru learn the lesson of past follies?

The Viziv has an aggressive front end and side cladding, plus a rear wing that appears more integrated with the rest of the body, and not simply bolted on as was the case with previous WRX STI models.

There's no powertrain info, but earlier rumors have raised the possibility of a hybrid system as a way of increasing power and reducing fuel consumption. Expect it to launch for the 2020 model year.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Infiniti QX30

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get somewhere, AWD makes things a lot easier. AWD versions of the QX30 are offered for \$1,800 (Luxury) a \$2,400 (Premium) over their FWD counterparts. Spread out over the life of a car loan, the cost of AWD is more digestible.

The all-wheel-drive system operates in front-drive status normally, but can channel up to 50 percent of available power to the rear wheels as needed. And when snow is not an issue, the QX30 feels agile. Its footprint is such that it's easy to squeeze into tight spots. Infiniti added model specific tuning for the suspension; ride quality is firm but comfortable. AWD versions sit 1.2-inches higher than their FWD counterparts. It likely wouldn't make much difference in drivability, but taller ride height is often one of the things that people like about crossovers,

so even a modest increase may be appreciated.

The collection of useful features found in the Technology Package argue strongly for inclusion in the QX30. The car's wide roof pillars and small backlight make for limited rear visibility, so blind spot monitoring is recommended. Lane departure warning and forward emergency braking are good insurance policies; intelligent cruise control is useful on long trips when traffic congestion is variable.

High beam assist is a nice indulgence (but gimme those 1950s dash-top ray guns) and intelligent park assist along with the 360 degree top down monitor ("Around View") make backing and parking a whoole lot simpler. All are include in the \$2,200 package.

The QX30 is a subcompact, and the interior dimensions follow suit. Adults fit



As expected of a luxury car, the 2018 Infiniti QX30's interior has an appropriately upscale look and feel, and the cabin is quiet even at cruising speed.

easily in front, but the taller they are, the less leg room remains for those in back. Those row two seats are Sunday School upright, by the way, and fold to a mostly flat floor when required for more cargo (though you may have to move the front seats up first, so the back seat headrests will clear).

This Infiniti sits low, so it's easy to transfer stuff into the cargo bay. Stowage capacity is smallish — 19.2-34 cubic-feet, depending on how the seats are configured. The interior's fit and finish

have a suitably upscale look and feel, and it's a quiet cabin at cruising speed. Smartphone owners will note that the infotainment systems are not compatible with Android Auto or Apple CarPlay.

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.



» Don't miss next week's Test Drive: **2018 Nissan Pathfinder**

