

A new supercar on the way?

Brabham Automotive, a long-revered name in Formula One auto racing, has been regularly teasing car lover's curiosity since mid-February with fuzzy images of what appears to be a high-end sports car. Unlike manufacturers of similar exotica from the likes of



All we've got of the **Brabham BT62** for now is taunting photos like this.

Koenigsegg, Pagani and Spyker, to name just a few, Brabham has a storied pedigree behind the name. The late Sir Jack Brabham was a three-time Grand Prix champion who built his own racecars, and son David is currently a successful sports car racer. He also heads up Brabham, a company that's launching the **BT62** supercar this spring. The newly formed England-based company is planning to build just 70 models with a starting price of one million British pounds, or US \$1.4 million.

The Rebel TRX Hellcat:

It was only a matter of time before the 707-hp Hellcat engine wound up in a truck.



Monster Ram's 707-hp Hellcat

It appears that Fiat Chrysler Automobiles' Ram truck division is concocting a special high-performance pickup that could be on the market for the 2019 model year. Given the popularity of the Dodge Challenger and Charger Hellcat (and Jeep Grand Cherokee Trackhawk) vehicles packing the supercharged 707-horsepower V-8, it seemed inevitable that FCA would choose to put that same engine in it's best-selling vehicle, the Ram 1500 pickup. Based on an concept (shown above) that debuted two years ago at the Texas State Fair, the upcoming **Rebel TRX Hellcat** is surely intended as a head-to-head off-road competitor to the Ford F-150 Raptor that currently runs with a 450-horsepower twin-turbocharged 3.5L V-6. Sources report that the Rebel TRX Hellcat will have two engine options: a 7.0L naturally aspirated V8 and the 6.2L turbocharged Hellcat.

It's not clear whether some of the concept's cooler features — bed-mounted spare tires, heavy-duty desert-ready suspension — will find their way into the final model, but the Rebel TRX Hellcat could be ready as a 2021 model.



Will the Jeep Grand Cherokee Trackhawk actually accrue in value?

Future collectibles...

Michigan-based classic car insurer Hagerty has announced its "Hot List" of top-10 new vehicles priced less than \$100,000 that it believes are destined to actually increase in value over the years.

Included is the 840-hp **Dodge Challenger Demon**, **Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 1LE**, **Honda Civic Type R**, **Jeep Grand Cherokee Trackhawk**, **Kia Stinger GT**, **Lexus LC 500** coupe and the **Subaru WRX STI Type RA**.

While these models are performance leaning vehicles you're not likely to see that often driving beside you on I-787, perhaps the biggest surprise is the not-so-rare 2018 Jeep Wrangler made the list.



Subaru WRX STI Type RA



Honda Civic Type R



Lexus LC 500



Kia Stinger GT Federation Edition



The Cobra Jet Mustang drag car will use a supercharged version of the 5.2-liter V-8 engine in the Mustang GT350.

Mustang Cobra Jet: What a drag

As an answer to Chevrolet's COPO Camaro dragster, an updated National Hot Rod Association (NHRA)-legal model that **Ford Mustang Cobra Jet** will be introduced this summer. Under the hood is a supercharged version of the same 526-horsepower 5.2-liter V-8 that sees service in the street-able Mustang Shelby GT350.

Although the actual Cobra Jet horsepower number remains elusive, Ford claims that the car's quarter-mile time in the low-eight-second range will easily beat the Dodge Demon's 9.6 seconds (the COPO Camaro's numbers depend on engine selection).

Expect to shell out about US \$100,000 to get your hands on one of 68 planned Cobra Jets to be built this year.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Lexus NX 300h

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The powertrain for hybrid models combines a 2.5-liter four-cylinder gas engine with an electric rear drive motor, channeled through a Continuously Variable Transmission. Combined system output is 194 horsepower. That'll get you to 60 mph from a standstill in 9.1 seconds. That compares with 7.0 in a gas powered AWD NX, and is relatively leisurely for a luxury leaning crossover, but the torque-heavy boost of the electric motor gives the NX hybrid a responsive feel off the line. Overall power is adequate for all normal driving maneuvers, though care must be taken when planning a highway pass. The interaction between

gas and electric power sources is smooth and seamless. Engine noise is noticeable when you're climbing a grade, as the CVT keeps the rpm's up under exertion. Aside from that, the Lexus cruises calmly, and it's completely quiet when you're just running on electric. Sourcing part of their power from electricity allows hybrids to be quite fuel efficient.

The EPA estimates that the NX 300h will return 33 mpg's city/30 highway/31 combined (AWD). My recent test drive (80/20 highway/city) netted 33 miles per gallon overall — a very nice number for a 4,180 lb. compact crossover. Maximum towing capacity is a modest 1,500 pounds (2,000 lb. in gas powered models).



The 2018 Lexus NX 300h's cabin has adult-sized room in both rows. Though the dash's touchpad screen has been improved, the infotainment system lacks compatibility with Android Auto or Apple CarPlay.

The NX has good-for-the-breed handling, and a smooth ride on smooth roads. My travels took place in Arizona, and part of that time was spent on dirt roads. Not hard core trails, more like bumpy unpaved roads — as far off-road as any crossover in this class might ever find itself. Ride quality suffered on rough sections, though I suspect that the effects were more pronounced on the optional, 18-inch wheels that I was rolling on, than they would be on the standard, 17s.

Regenerative braking forces the binders to do double duty. In addition to providing stopping power, they're also tasked with harvesting the energy used in that process so it can be recycled to fuel the electric motor. As a result of this

multitasking, hybrid vehicles often don't have great brake feel, and that's true here. The NX hybrid stops effectively, but the inconsistent pedal response makes it tricky to be smooth about it.

With its in-your-face face, and edgy lines, the NX 300 design is distinctively different from its competition and its fellow, Lexus SUV/Crossovers.

Bold styling always holds the potential to be polarizing, but it's a good gamble in this case, helping the well-rounded Lexus stand out in a field crowded with respected rivals.

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