

New Lexus is in the 'Q'

Sources report that **Toyota's** luxury division will launch a new utility vehicle for the 2020 model year. Apparently called the **LQ**, the midsize model will be based on the California-designed **LF-1**

Limitless concept that broke cover at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Mich., in January. It was positioned as a four-passenger ultra-high-end vehicle, although the production model will accommodate up to five passengers. The LF-1 was also promoted as being able to accommodate plug-in hybrid, electric and hydrogen powerplants, and the first two are likely to be available for LQ buyers when production begins.



The Lexus LQ midsize... coming 2020?

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Outdoor enthusiasts and Gaia lovers rejoice: There'll soon be a plug-in version of the Crosstrek available.

A PHEV Subaru Crosstrek

The automaker Impreza-based **Crosstrek** wagon has proven immensely popular due to its effective all-wheel-drive and generous cargo capacity for its compact crossover size. What could be better for a nature-loving fanbase that enjoys the active, outdoor lifestyle? A hybrid, of course. While Subaru did release a hybrid Crosstrek a few years ago, it recently announced it will be readying a PHEV (Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle) model for the 2019 model year. Unlike the last version, the 2019 model will be a true plug-in with a pure electric mode, and will mate the Crosstrek's 152-hp four-cylinder engine with the 8.8-kWh battery system developed by Toyota for the Prius Prime. Also in the works is a new transmission, likely of the continuously variable variety. Lastly, the plug-in Crosstrek will get unique front-end styling to differentiate it from the non-hybrid relations. Subaru has said it expects the plug-in Crosstrek to hit showrooms toward the end of the year, but gave no details on pricing or mileage.



This 2018 Jeep Grand Cherokee Trackhawk goes from 0 to 60 in 3.5 seconds, making it the fastest SUV. Will Jeep introduce a Trackhawk version of its smaller Renegade?

Driverless shuttles debut in Detroit

The first commercial driverless shuttle service began this week in, appropriately, Detroit, Michigan. The fleet of five autonomous, six-seated vehicles is being operated by Ann Arbor-based startup May Mobility.

While the service is not yet open to the general public, the shuttles are ferrying employees of the real estate firm Bedrock to their company's various Detroit office locations, and is running continuously from 5 a.m. to midnight.

The vehicles are equipped with emergency controls for steering and braking, and are based on the Polaris Gems open runabouts used at some resorts and retirement communities. Michigan law requires driverless vehicles to be monitored. The shuttles currently have a human safety driver present, but May Mobility is looking to gain approval from the state for fully autonomous functioning.

In the future, the service is expected to be available to 5,000 Bedrock and Quicken workers in downtown Detroit, possibly expanding the use to higher-speed vehicles capable of traveling on highways.



The May Mobility self-driving shuttle is based on the Polaris Gem.

FCA's plans for the Jeep

Although perplexed at the lack of info forthcoming regarding Fiat Chrysler Automobile's strategy for the Chrysler, Dodge and Fiat brands, these peach-colored pages think the future looks bright for Jeep and Ram, currently the most valuable assets in the FCA global corporate stable.

For Jeep, there will be a redesigned **Renegade** for the 2019 model year, including new front and rear styling and a refreshed interior. Mechanically, it appears likely that a detuned version of the automaker's turbocharged four-cylinder engine found in the latest **Jeep Wrangler** will be part of a new **Renegade Trackhawk** model (and accompanying eight-speed automatic transmission).

Also in the planning stages is a new model that's even smaller than the Renegade, but as yet there's zero information.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Infiniti Q60

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Red Sport 400 models ride on 20-inch wheels shod with non-run flat tires. Ride quality manages a nice balance — not too soft, not too hard. Included in the Proactive package (\$2,850) is Direct Adaptive Steering. The feel though the steering wheel is somewhat detached, with little feedback for the driver.

This approach would seem more at home in a pure luxury car than one with sporting intentions, and it would behoove Q60 shoppers interested in such matters to try a model without the Proactive package, for comparison.

Two-door coupe buyers typically do so because they favor the styling, and they don't carry people in back on a regular basis. So, while I note that the rear seats are +2 size, and leg room is effectively erased by taller front passengers, this is

typical of the breed and not likely to put off anyone who is shopping the segment, because it's not a priority for them. Of greater impact is cargo capacity. Trunk volume is a smallish 8.7 cubic feet, with a relatively high lift over to negotiate. The rear seatbacks fold forward to expand your storage space, but doing so creates a two-level load floor.

The basic design of the front cabin is handsome, with a swoopy dash and a wide range of available trim. The center stack is dominated by two screens, the lower of which is ringed by supporting buttons. Luxury automobiles have a lot of bells and whistles, and there are as many designs for operating all that stuff as there are automakers. In terms of ease of use and distraction factors, the Q60's approach is average for the segment.

Surveying the option sheet, the Proas-



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sist package (\$2,250) includes many desirable tech features — blind spot and rear cross traffic alerts, backup collision intervention, a bird's-eye, Around View monitor with moving object detection, front and rear sonar, forward collision warning and emergency braking with pedestrian detection.

However, adding that package to this model requires that you first buy the Sensory package (\$2,250). Here you'll find a navigation system, infotainment features and traffic information, heated front seats, steering wheel and remote engine start. Prerequisite packages aren't unique to Infiniti, but they are disappointing, as is the lack of standard, heated seats in a car at this price point.

Styling is a strong point on Infiniti's

lone coupe offering. The sheet metal is a sleek blend of curves and angles, and looks every bit the part of a modern, sporting luxury car. And while the top-ranging, Red Sport 400 is a spirited entry, it swims in crowded waters.

The value picks for Q60 are found in the lower ranges, like the Luxe level. Here, a sunroof and upscale, 13-speaker Bose sound join the list of standard features. And you can opt out of the 208 h.p. four-cylinder in favor of a turbocharged, 300-horsepower V-6 (and better binders), for an additional \$2,200.

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.

