

Volvo opens shop in America; no diesel engines, though

Tied in with its plan to add electric versions of all its models starting in 2020, **Volvo** will stop selling diesel-powered vehicles by that time. Although this won't seriously impact North American sales, abandoning diesel-powered cars in Europe constitutes a major shift. The Sweden-based/Chinese-owned automaker's longer-term goal is to sell only electric automobiles by 2030.



Volvo S60: Soon to be made in the USA

In other news, last month Volvo opened its first production facility in North America since 1963. That's the year Volvo began assembling cars in Canada (until 1998). The South Carolina plant will turn out Volvo S60 sedans, but will also start assembling the V90 luxury utility vehicle in 2021.



This modernized version of the Humvee from Mil-Spec Automotive will have aluminum body panels, 500 horsepower and 1,000 pound-feet of torque.

A Humvee comeback?

Hey, even bell bottoms staged a semi-revival. In the same vein of stylistic excess — not to mention the stolen valor of piloting a military vehicle to pick up a cold six of Mountain Brew at the corner Stewart's Shop — the Hummer is staging a comeback of sorts.

Mind you, General Motors has long since shed its commercial Hummer division after its 2009 bankruptcy. Even the U.S. military is in the process of phasing out the actual High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle.

Even so, a number of niche makers have occasionally popped up to provide alternatives to nostalgic, deep-pocketed would-be G.I. Joes.

The latest is Michigan-based **Mil-Spec Automotive**, whose H1 reissue (the H2, for you kids too young to remember, was the more commercial-friendly SUV-sized version grafted onto a Chevy Tahoe platform, while the H3 was even smaller still on a Colorado pickup frame) offers a visual clone of the original AM General Humvee, but with numerous improvements.

The updated model's body trades its traditional steel for aerospace-grade aluminum. The interior leans in the luxury direction, while the Duramax 6.6L LBZ Turbocharged Diesel V8 produces 500 horsepower and 1,000 pound-feet of torque. That's a significant increase over even the original's 300 horses and 520 pound-feet. Base price will be in the \$220,000 range.

Steep, yes. But there is demand out there. Last year, former General Motors exec Bob Lutz's VLF company unveiled an H1 clone packing a Corvette ZR1 engine. And in 2013, AM General itself offered kits for \$60,000 that included everything but the powertrain. Proving that it's hard to keep a good military vehicle down. Even if it's mission is picking up a gallon of milk at Stewart's.



Maserati debuts Levante GTS

We've previously reported on **Maserati** reviving the GTS label, which designated its highest performing vehicles. Now it looks like the **Levante** will be getting the GTS designation. Maserati's popular sport ute is normally powered by a V6, but the **Levante GTS** boasts the 3.8L V8 — designed and built by Ferrari in Maranello, Italy — from the Quadrifoglio. That's also the same twin-turbo engine as the Levante Trofeo that debuted last January during the New York Auto Show. Though the 550-hp GTS has 40 less horses than the Trofeo, its price tag is expected to be \$50,000 less than the Trofeo's \$170k MSRP. The Levante GTS was revealed to the press last month in Pontiac, Michigan, and demonstrated in a performance setting a few weekends ago at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in England. An apt venue, since the Levante GTS has a top speed of 181 mph. Other features include special black-trimmed grill and 22-inch wheels, a full leather interior package with carbon fiber that even includes carbon fiber paddle shifters. It will hit showrooms this fall.



Ford's Europe-only Mondeo wagon may be the template for the new Fusion.

Fusion may be re-Activated

While it appears that Ford will be discontinuing the **Fusion** midsize over the next couple years as the company moves past sedans, the name might linger on.

According to *Bloomberg* reports, Ford is considering using the badge for an upcoming crossover-sized wagon. With added all-wheel-drive, more ground clearance and newer body cladding, this vehicle would be similar to the **Subaru Outback** and **Buick Regal TourX**, possibly even modeled after the Fusion-based **Mondeo** wagon available only in Europe. (It won't be the first time the name's been recycled for a crossover-type vehicle; Ford used the Fusion badge for a B-segment MPV based on the subcompact Fiesta, and sold it in Europe from 2001-12.)

This would align with Ford's plans for its Focus compact, which is being re-envisioned as a hatchback (read: crossover) with the name **Focus Active**. Rumors are that the midsize Outback-fighter will bear the name Fusion Active. So Ford's strategy isn't actually to kill off all sedans, but rebrand them as more popular crossovers.

You say you like your Fusion the way it is, though? Don't worry: Refreshed for the 2019 model year, it's expected to remain in production through 2020.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Cadillac ATS-V Coupe

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with rear-wheel-drive. This is the traditional setup for performance cars, and there's no arguing with the car's performance. However, as with any RWD enthusiast car, if you live where we live, you're going to need to park it during winter's worst.

Muscular good looks and fine driving dynamics make the ATS-V a worthy competitor in the luxury sport compact segment.

The coupe's cabin presents nicely overall; the mix of materials and lighting look suitably upscale. CUE — the Cadillac User Experience — is the car's infotainment portal, used to access many features (navigation, audio, phone) via 8-inch

touchscreen and surrounding controls. A secondary set of switchgear for HVAC and sound system lies just below.

These are touch-sensitive controls, navigated by swipes and pokes, like a smartphone. The touch screen's reaction time varies, as do adjustments to the lower bank of controls. The erratic response is frustrating and potentially distracting to the driver. Auxiliary controls (steering wheel and voice) provide a partial workaround.

The latest version of the system is now compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, and includes an OnStar based Wi-Fi hotspot, improved connectivity and related apps. The updates make the system better, but better isn't the same as good. The inconsistent response of CUE controls remains the weak link in an otherwise nicely appointed interior.

While I'm frequently regarded as a fathead, I've never been accused of being broad of beam. If you have, it's worth noting that the optional Recaros are more



TEST DRIVE
this vehicle at this preferred dealership:

D'ELLA CADILLAC BUICK GMC, INC.
293 Quaker Rd., Queensbury, NY 12804
518-793-3871 www.dellacars.com

OTTO CADILLAC
1730 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12205
518-869-5000 www.ottocars.com

accommodating of different body types than some other sport seats. They're pricey (\$2,300) but recommended for their supportive fit.

If those up front are tall, the room in back runs short. This is basically +2 seating space, suitable for kids or a bag or briefcase. Coupe buyers routinely trade rear room for style, though, so this typically isn't an issue (if it was, they'd buy a four-door).

Trunk capacity is on the small side at 10.4 cubic feet. Wide roof pillars hinder rear ¾ visibility. Blind zone alert (with lane change warning) is offered as part of the Safety and Security package (\$1,800).

Among the other features included in this 18-item bundle are a head-up display, rain-sensing wipers, lane keep assist, lane change warning, forward collision alert, rear cross traffic alert and automatic high/low beam adjustment.

Muscular good looks and fine driving dynamics make the ATS-V coupe and sedan worthy competitors in the luxury sport compact segment.

A regular contributor to the Times Mason for more than 25 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 180 calendars.

