

BMW revives big car cred

The Germany-based automaker excels in most luxury-vehicle segments, with one possible exception. Sales of the big **7-series** sedan lag those of many competitors, and year-to-date numbers are down significantly from 2017. To address this situation,



2019 BMW 7-Series

sources confirm that an updated 7 series is in the works for a 2020-model-year launch. There will be mostly new sheetmetal fronted by a larger and more upright grille to help distinguish it from the similar-looking 5-series sedan. The 7's interior will also get plushier leather seats and more of the latest safety and autonomous (self-driving) technologies. Expect existing turbocharged V-8 and V-12 powerplants, plus a plug-in gasoline-electric hybrid model, to carry over.

Ford's luxury truck will be powered by the Raptor's beefy motor.



F-150 Limited gets Raptor engine

The market for luxury pickups is booming these days, along with the premium prices being charged for them. Given all that, we're not surprised that Ford will make available the twin-turbocharged V-6 from the off-road Raptor model in the **F-150 Limited SuperCrew** luxury four-door for 2019. That engine was originally introduced in the 2017 Raptor and makes 450-horsepower and 510 pound-feet of torque; compare that to the 2018 Limited's 375 horsepower and 470 pound-feet of torque. Of course the F-150 Limited SuperCrew won't have the Raptor's off-road-capable suspension, underbody protection and knobby 31-inch tires. Instead, the Limited gets the full-on luxury treatment, including dual sunroofs, ventilated two-tone leather seats, suede-like headliner and genuine wood trim. Unique trim pieces and 22-inch wheels will also be standard. The Raptor engine adds a layer of performance on the luxury upgrades given to the F-150 Limited for last year's refresh. There's no firm word as to pricing, but something close to \$70,000 seems likely.



Tariffs mean more expensive car parts, which means more profit for car thieves.

Will Trump's tariffs on imports increase car theft?

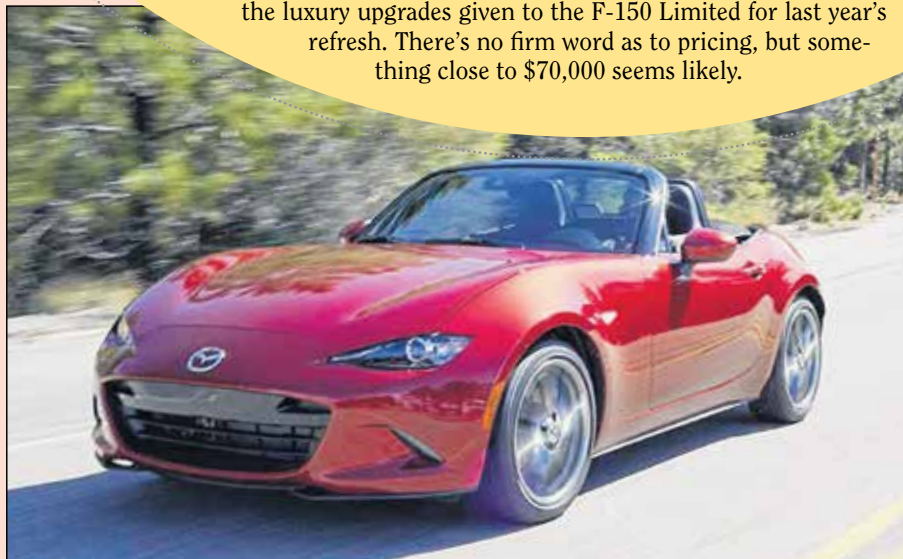
On May 23, President Donald Trump indicated he might deem auto imports a national security threat and impose tariffs of up to 25 percent on both foreign-made autos and parts. While some experts have begun speculating how such a move might boost the domestic industry, or cost American carbuyers billions, there's another interest group it might affect.

Car thieves.

Imports comprise some 60 percent of auto parts used in the U.S. — for both domestic and international models. If those tariffed auto parts become more expensive and harder to obtain, that car in your driveway will become even more attractive to those who steal vehicles, most of which wind up at “chop shops” which then distribute those hot parts into the supply network.

Auto thefts have already increased nearly 12 percent over the last three years, with a six percent jump in 2016 alone. The National Insurance Crime Bureau states that the value of the individual parts on an operable vehicle often add up to more than entire value of the intact vehicle itself. As for the desirability of stolen parts, larger items such as wheels, tires and tailgates are especially in demand.

After last month's chummy face to face with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker — when's the last time Trump had a even a cordial meeting with a European leader — the president seemed less intent on taking the tariff route. Whether the initial suggestion was an ill-informed rant or a cagey negotiating bluff is yet to be seen. Either way, you might want to take the time to read through the fine print on your auto insurance now.



The Mazda MX-5 will get 26 more horsepower for the 2019 model year.

Coming soon: A speedier MX-5

Official word is that Mazda's two-seat roadster will get a power infusion for the 2019 model year. The **MX-5 Miata's** 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine will produce 181 horses and 151 pound-feet of torque, which is up from 155/148. To get nearly 20 percent more power, Mazda reduced the weight of the pistons and connecting rods, increased exhaust-manifold flow, put in higher-pressure fuel injectors and adjusted camshaft lift and valve size on both the intake and exhaust side. There are also minor tweaks to the MX-5's interior, plus new alloy-wheel designs.

Not on the list of adjustments: A turbocharged engine. We have to hand it to the plucky automaker for resisting the trend toward turbo, and even Mazda's avoidance of hybrids by instead engineering to wring every drop of conventional fossil fuel from the internal-combustion engine is kind of admirable, if possibly short-sighted.

The 2019 MX-5 is expected to debut later this summer.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Jaguar XF Sportbrake S

Continued from page 3

While the XF Sedan and Sportbrake are similar for size, they differ dramatically in dollars. The base MSRP for the Sedan is \$47,775, while the Sportbrake checks in at \$70,450. This is because, unlike its Euro versions, Sportbrake's stateside edition is offered solely in its top (S) trim level.

The lone drivetrain pairs a supercharged 3.0L V6 rated at 380 horsepower (@6,500 rpm) and 332 lb.-ft. of torque (@4,500 rpm), with an eight-speed automatic transmission. I last drove this engine in an F Pace S. The drivetrain is the same; the speed is nearly so; 0-60 in the Sportbrake is estimated to arrive in 5.3 seconds, while the F Pace S is said to take 5.1 to cover the same ground.

A greater difference can be measured with the ears. Where the 3.0L V6 in the F Pace S was robust and rowdy sounding, the same mill in Sportbrake is more of the strong and (kinda) silent type. In the F-Pace S, the rising and falling of rpm's is

given a running commentary by engine and exhaust noise, popping and burbling.

I like that sort of thing, but I can see where it would wear on many luxury buyers. The Sportbrake's more subdued soundtrack is therefore likely the right move for the marketplace. Power is distributed evenly by the eight-speed automatic transmission, with no noticeable lag points. Fuel economy is estimated at 18/25/21.

The combination of black leather upholstery and dark trim make the cabin look a little to sedate for me, but maybe not you, which is why a choice of interior colors and trims is offered.

Infotainment and standard system controls are better than average for the segment. The available 10-inch touchscreen system allows swipe/poke interaction, as with smartphone or tablet, as well as voice controls. The screen is wide and short, giving a panoramic perspective to navigation maps.

Tall, rear seat headrests and thick roof



The Jaguar XF Sportbrake S's interior is offered in sedate black leather, but other color options are available. The dash sports a panoramic 10-inch touchscreen, perfect for maps.

pillars conspire to hinder rear visibility. The option sheet offers tech work-arounds. The aptly named Driver Assistance Package (\$3,495) bundles blind spot assist with reverse traffic detection, adaptive cruise control and speed limiter, and all manner of parking assistance (surround camera system, semi-automated functions) for all manner of parking situations (parallel, perpendicular, exit).

Sportbrake is sufficiently large inside to seat adults in both rows without complaint. Available cargo space ranges from 31.7-69.7 cubic feet, depending on how you configure the rear seats. That compares favorably with its showroom mate, the F Pace SUV (33.5-63.5), as well as the competitors listed above.

And if that's not enough for your stuff, dealer-installed options like a roof storage box allow for up to 220 pounds of additional storage, mounted to the low profile roof rails. Sport-specific topside

carrying options are offered for skis, snowboards, bikes and watersports.

Sportbrake S is an appealing blend of class and capability. To me, it has more of the traditional Jaguar sense of agility and civility than does F Pace S, even with a more modest exhaust system.

I think the company does the car a disservice by only offering the top trim level in the U.S. While there is a segment here to compete with, there's also a larger market for sporty wagons in the mid-40,000 dollar range, including the BMW 330i Sports Wagon (\$45,000) and Audi A4 Allroad (\$44,500).

In that company, a Sportbrake — even a “decontented” version — would be a very attractive alternative.

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.

