

Hyundai composes new Sonata

Reports indicate that the Korea-based automaker is planning an overhaul of its midsize sedan for the 2020 model year. Word has it that the next **Sonata** will be in part influenced by Hyundai's Le Fil Rouge concept model that was shown to the public this past spring at the 2018 Geneva (Switzerland) auto show. That car's extreme fastback shape and minimalist interior won't be used, but at least some of the design cues are expected to be part of the Sonata's new look. There's



Hyundai Le Fil Rouge concept

no official word on powerplant choices, but both non-turbo and turbocharged four-cylinder engines are likely to return, as well as a more advanced hybrid option. Given the drop-off in sedan sales for most automakers, competition for market share is becoming more intense, and the Sonata is right in the thick of it.

The Chevy Blazer returns, this time as a sleek and comfy crossover.



The Blazer's back

The return of the beloved Chevy Blazer was marked by its unveiling last month in Atlanta. Since Chevrolet retired the S10 Blazer in 2005, there's been constant calls for its return to the lineup, and that pressure was amped up after Ford announced it was resuscitating its classic Bronco ute. But rather than a rugged off-roader, the **2019 Chevrolet Blazer** is officially back, but this manifestation is — no surprise — a five-passenger crossover with a 2.5L inline four-cylinder with 193 h.p and 188 lb.-ft. of torque. For those disappointed by the emphasis on comfort over off-road capability, though, there's an optional 3.6L V-6 with 305 h.p. and 260 lb.-ft. of torque, with a 4,500 lb. towing capacity. Like the Ford Explorer and Nissan Pathfinder SUVs, the Blazer will also ditch its previous body-on-frame design for a unibody structure, which it will share with the GMC Acadia. Design-wise, the Blazer seems aimed more at Camaro sporty than off-road rugged (wide stance, tall hood, squinty headlights and high beltline). The 2019 Blazer will fill the gap in Chevy's lineup between the Equinox and three-row Traverse. Perhaps the most interesting aspect about the Blazer is that it will be built in Mexico, which might not sit too well with the tariff-loving POTUS.



This Range Rover Sport RVR set a record for the quickest mile on two wheels.

A record for a car on two wheels

Stunt-driver Terry Grant, driving a **Range Rover Sport RVR**, set a record for the quickest mile on two wheels at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in England last month. Grant accomplished the feat over a curvy and partially uphill stretch of pavement in a time of two minutes, 24.5 seconds. To carry the load, both grounded tires were overinflated to 90 p.s.i., or close to three times the normal amount.



This electric VW I.D. R charged up the 12.42-mile road to Pikes Peak and beat the previous record by 16.7 seconds.

by Romain Dumas. The electrified VW completed the 12.42-mile course in slightly less than eight minutes, beating the previous all-time record set in 2013 by 16.7 seconds.

And speaking of head-turning records, another was set this past June during a spectacularly quick run at the Pikes Peak International Hillclimb in Colorado.

More unusual was the car that did it: A 670-horsepower **Volkswagen I.D. R** electric racer driven



This 812 Superfast packs 12 cylinders, but could Ferrari be looking to downsize?

A future four-cylinder Ferrari?

Ferrari has apparently submitted a plan with the European Patent Office that hints it might be developing a new breed of four-cylinder gas engines with an electric turbochargers.

The patent design calls for a four-cylinder engine (situated behind the passenger compartment) assisted by an exhaust-driven turbine that spins a generator, which in turn spins a compressor to force air into the engine's intake manifold for added power.

It may also improve the sound. The faster-spinning compressor would make a higher-pitched exhaust note for the vehicle. It can also be adjusted at any engine speed for a more pleasing engine soundtrack, while leaving the engine's performance unaffected by the generator's speed. While some of Ferrari's most famous F-1 racers in the 1950s were powered by four cylinders, today that piston count would allow the Italian maker to meet today's stringent emission standards without turning full hybrid systems.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Audi Q7 3.0T quattro

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front/60 percent rear under normal conditions, adjusting to as much as 85 percent to the rear when needed.

Having just driven another Audi product, the logic of having separate "P" and "R" buttons embedded in the gear

shifter still escapes me. The handle has a flat head, though, and that's a convenient place to park your hand, when working the rotary controller to access the MMI operating system.

The infotainment system is versatile and visually interesting, thanks to the

12.3-inch virtual cockpit cluster and 8.3-inch center screen standard on my tester (and optional elsewhere). With a second week of working it, the MMI interface is more easily traversed, but I remain in favor of using the steering wheel mounted secondary controls where possible, to keep your eyes closer to the road and make look-aways shorter. And from the "How Far We've Come" files, the impressive detail in the Google Earth map display is a stark contrast to the cheesy, '80s video game graphics that used to be the norm for navigation systems.

Q7 is awash with available, driver assistance technology. Offered in trim levels and bundled into packages, there are "Assist" features for lane changes, collision avoidance, night vision, navigation, parking and traffic congestion, to name a few.

A big part of the popularity of crossovers has to do with their versatility. People and cargo capacity and the ease with



The 2018 Audi Q7's infotainment system is versatile and visually interesting, thanks to the 12.3-inch virtual cockpit cluster and 8.3-inch center screen, standard on the Prestige trim and optional on Premium and Premium Plus models.

which they are accommodated inside is what separates the choices. Q7 is a three-row, seven-passenger vehicle. Its front headroom is second only to the XC90, in the comparative set we've drawn, and in front leg room it ties with the GX460 for best. Row two is equally comfortable space for adults, and here the Audi is mid-pack on headroom (Lexus tops the list), but it tops this quartet in terms of second row legroom.

Third row space in the Q7 is suitable for children. The Q7 trails the Volvo in headroom and is ahead of only the Acura in last row legroom. Practically speaking, this row is suitable for kids, and it helps to have a childlike limberness to wiggle your way in and out of the way-back seats. Said seatbacks do fold flat forward. Cargo capacity in the Q7 is 15 cubic-feet behind the third row, 38 behind row two and 72 behind the front seats. The XC90

leads the pack in all three measures (16/42/86).

I'm not old enough to remember calling audio systems "hi-fi." When I was a young guy, they were called stereos, and I had my share that would make the walls quake, with a footprint that required its own zip code. These days, the sound systems that I find in high end cars are better than anything I've ever owned (and no threat to induce a hernia on moving day). The sound reproducing choices in Q7 include two Bang & Olufsen systems, ranging up to an impressive 23-speaker, 23-channel, 1,920 watt 5.1 surround system.

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.

