

## Toyota dials in the C-HR

To boost sales for Toyota's funky little hatchback, a number of changes to the **C-HR** are in the works for the 2019 model year, starting with a new base LE model that has less standard content and a lower base price. At the opposite end, a premium Limited trim level will



2018 Toyota C-HR

include leather seat coverings, ambient interior lighting, rain-sensing wipers and a better-quality sound system, which will also be part of the XLE and XLE Premium trims. The previously unavailable Apple CarPlay connectivity will be standard, but Android still remains off the list. Also still missing from the order sheet is all-wheel-drive, which most of the C-HR's competitors make available.



Now is your chance to own an Aston Martin DB5 like the one in the James Bond flick "Goldfinger," with spy options included.



## Get 007's car... and its gadgets

Genteel British automaker Aston Martin is planning to build 25 replicas of the iconic Silver Birch **1964 Aston Martin DB5** that actor Sean Connery drove as **James Bond** in the movie "Goldfinger." They will actually come with much of the famous gadgetry that was added by the British Secret Service to the cinematic original, including revolving license plates, built-in machine guns (non-functioning, of course) and a removable passenger-side roof panel (part of the original's ejector-seat system). Each car will cost \$3.5 million, and be made in the same factory as the original. The DB5s will come with a straight-six, 282-hp motor capable of 0 to 60 in 7.1 seconds, with a top speed of 145 mph. In addition to the 25 to be sold, four more will be made; three for the Bond film production company and one to be auctioned off for charity. Potential buyers note: These vehicles are not street legal because, obviously, *you* don't have a license to kill, and local authorities take a dim view of vehicles armed with machine guns. Deliveries are to begin in 2020.



The iconic Beetle (shown in modern and vintage versions) is going out of production.



So long, Focus Active, we hardly knew ye. Due to tariffs on Chinese-built vehicles, Ford will not sell the crossover hatch here in the states.

## More tariff casualties

Ford and Trump have been locking horns in the media this last week over the venerable automaker's decision not to sell the **2020 Focus Active** in the U.S., due to tariffs adding 25 percent to the vehicle's MSRP here. Expecting to sell only around 50,000 units of the compact crossover (Ford's competition to the Subaru Crosstrek) on these shores anyway, the maker up and located the plant that will manufacture it in China, putting Trump's tariff target squarely on the hatch's back. It will still be sold globally.

As an aside, this will mark the first time Ford has been without some form of Focus model in the U.S. market in nearly two decades. As far as the company's lineup of sedans go, the subcompact **Fiesta** ends its production in May of 2019, and the midsize **Fusion** is expected to be phased out soon after. That will leave the **Mustang** as the only real car with a true trunk in Ford's stable. It may be just fine with Ford, as the company has announced it intends to move from sedans to concentrate on more profitable SUVs and trucks anyway.

MEANWHILE, another victim of the trade wars might be the **Buick Envision**. General Motors could be forced to cancel U.S. sales of the Chinese-built tall wagon because tariffs would tack another \$8,000 on its starting price of \$32,000, making it financially unfeasible.

GM is currently seeking an exception to the tariff, but it may not be a big deal in the global perspective. Some 200,000 Envisions were sold in China last year, compared to about 41,000 in the United States. Buick sells more vehicles in the Chinese market than anywhere else in the world, though GM says Chinese-built vehicles only account for 1 percent of its sales.

The Envision is Buick's third most popular model, trailing only the **Enclave** and smaller **Encore** SUVs in sales through the first half of this year.

## Volkswagen ends the Beetle

Volkswagen officially announced last week that it would be ending production of the **Beetle** in 2020. The iconic vehicle has been in production for seven decades, and recently went through a style revamp to make it more appealing to male buyers.

Developed in Germany during the Nazi era, the "people's car" spread across the globe in the late 1940s, a symbol of no-frills utilitarian transportation. But the stylistic "bug" look led to its name (it was officially the Type 1), and it even became movie star Herbie in "The Love Bug" Disney films. The original Beetle ceased production in 1979 before being reborn as the New Beetle in 1998.

Like most automakers today, however, VW is moving away from sedans and toward SUVs and electrics. The redesigned 2012 Beetle sold some 29,000 units in its first year, but sales trailed off. VW sold 15,166 Mexican-made Beetles in the U.S. last year, down 3.2 percent. In all, more than 21 million Beetles were built in factories across the globe.

### TEST DRIVE

## 2018 Mazda6 Signature

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motor. This year, Mazda joins the masses, though in the 6, it's not a six. Sport and Touring models get a 2.5L four-cylinder

combined (automatic). Grand Touring, Reserve and Signature models get the new, step-up motor. The turbocharged, 2.5L four-cylinder checks in with 250 horsepower (premium fuel) and 310 lb.-ft. of torque.

The move to upgrade the engine as you climb the trim ladder is a smart one for this midsize Mazda.

As price goes up, so do expectations, so the move to upgrade the engine as you climb the trim ladder is a smart one for the midsize Mazda.

engine. It's rated at 187 horsepower and 186 lb.-ft. of torque. The engine employs cylinder deactivation for enhanced fuel economy and is estimated to return 26 miles per gallon city, 35 highway and 29

The 2.5L is very smooth and demonstrably quick — about 6 ½ seconds from 0-60 — if not as fast from 0-60 as many in this segment (Accord, Camry, Fusion, Malibu, Passat).



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Road handling and ride quality are top notch. Mazda has dialed in a nice balance of grip and comfort, without resorting to sport suspensions, or even driving modes (the Sport mode here is limited solely to powertrain, stretching out the shift points to maximize performance). G-Vectoring Control was added to all Mazda6 models as of last year.

It coordinates the throttle input, steering and suspension systems, to improve cornering response and require fewer

steering corrections. As I mentioned when first we drove a car so equipped, this is subtle science. Absent back to back track runs with and without the technology, you'd be hard pressed to notice the difference. The bottom line is a fun to drive car that's now easier to drive fast, around corners.

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.