

New 911 drawing closer

The next generation of the automaker's halo sports car goes on sale next year as a 2020 model. The basic 911 Carrera will still use a 3.0-liter six-cylinder engine, but with output increased to 385 horsepower from the current 370. The Carrera S will run with 450 horsepower (up from 430), which is equal to the current GTS model. A seven-speed manual transmission remains, but the optional paddle-shift automatic receives one more gear for an even eight. Following the new Carrera's arrival will be the Carrera 4 and 4S and turbo coupes and convertibles, followed by the Targa 4, GTS and 911 Turbo range. For 2020 and beyond, all 911 models will come with Porsche's new wide-body design with bulging front and rear fenders. Prices haven't been announced, but most will be above \$100,000.



2020 Porsche 911 Carrera



Mexican Rams on the way

As the competition between pickup manufacturers picks up, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles is anticipating an increased demand, especially in its revamped **Ram 1500** full-size. But making all those Rams proved to be a ticklish problem, as some of them would have to be produced at FCA's plant in Saltillo, Mexico, and would have been hit with President Trump's tariffs on Mexican imports. Even so, another president — that would be FCA head Mike Manley — is revisiting FCA's decision in January to stop building Ram trucks south of the border. Now that the U.S. and Mexico have ironed out a trade agreement that imposes no ceilings on pickup shipments over the U.S./Mexican border, the new plan is that Saltillo and the plant in Warren, Michigan, will both be churning out Ram models. This will free up other FCA facilities to produce even more trucks to take a bit out of Ford's F series and/or General Motors' Chevy Silverado and its upscale cousin GMC Sierra, which had been FCA's goal all along. We say, the more trucks the better.



Forget crossovers: Honda's not giving up on you, 2019 Accord.

Honda sticking with sedans

There's been a tsunami-sized wave lately of automakers moving from four-door family sedans toward compact sport utility vehicles, i.e. crossovers. But Honda is apparently resisting that wave.

While recognizing the changing tastes of buyers, **Honda** believes it can maintain sedan growth by taking market share from competitors that are getting out of the category.

Ford, for example, is ending sales of the Fusion and the Taurus, which could create an opportunity for the Japan-based automaker to swoop in and fill any gap. As a result, you can expect more frequent updates to the **Accord** and **Civic** — with more trim levels — in addition to the company's utility offerings. Honda claims that both the Accord and Civic lead the rest of the midsize and compact categories, respectively. Including the small Honda fit, they represent annual sales in North America of more than 200,000 units.



2020 Honda Civic



Infiniti's Q60 Project Black S coupe has a turbocharged V-6 engine and three electric motors for a combined 563 horsepower.

Infiniti ratchets up performance

It's all too apparent that Nissan's luxury division plans on backing up its involvement in Formula One racing by improving the performance profile of at least one of the cars it sells to the public.

The proof lies in the recently revealed **Q60 Project Black S coupe**. The ominous-looking all-wheel-drive model uses a twin-turbocharged 400-horsepower V-6 along with a three electric motors to produce a combined 563 horsepower. Infiniti claims the concept car will hit 60 mph from rest in less than four seconds. That's quick, but not exactly record-breaking when a current Nissan GT-R is in the upper-2s.

The F-1-inspired coupe's body has several aerodynamic tricks, including the rear wing and front air dam. It's rumored that much of the Project Black S's content and styling will be optional for the 2020-model-year Q60.

TEST DRIVE

2019 Volvo S60

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quickness is matched by a surprising level of quietness. It is a taut handling car, slightly stiffer riding than the other S60 models.

Braking on the Polestar hybrids incorporates a regenerative component, and while stopping power was stout, brake pedal feel was consistently grabby. The Polestar models aren't aimed at topping

Wagon lovers take note: waiting in the wings from Volvo is a new version of the V60 wagon.

the performance of the Euro sport sedan segment so much as providing Volvo buyers with a higher performance option of their own. It's an eye-opener to drive. But, only a select few will own one — at least for now. The total production of 20

Polestar cars were offered via the Care by Volvo subscription plan, not outright sale, and all have been spoken for. Making the production of these special models *that* limited is a bit puzzling, though you have to think that market demand could dictate an increase in supply down the line.

The R-Design model is a full second behind Polestar from 0-60, but that still makes this a very quick car. The T6 engine offers a smooth range of power, and while it's more vocal under hard acceleration than the Polestar, that says more about the quietness of the latter than the loudness of the former. The car has a supple ride and handling will suit all but the hardest core few.

The Scandinavian-designed cabin is typically clean and understated, with good fit and finish. Dash and door panel materials present well, though soft touch points aren't particularly soft. Front seats are highly adjustable (10-way, power), comfortable and supportive. The dash is dominated by the center mounted,



The 2019 Volvo S60's Scandinavian-designed cabin is typically clean and understated, with good fit and finish and a vertically-oriented, 9-inch touchscreen.

vertically oriented, 9-inch touchscreen. Many onboard systems are accessed here, via the Sensus Connect system. The sheer number of features funneled through the interface is a lot to take in.

Once you learn the layout, though, the system is very capable. But, the process of getting to where you want to go often takes several steps. The Sensus system is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, making it easier to use your favorite apps.

Audiophiles will want to audition the optional Bowers & Wilkins sound system (15 speakers, 1,100 watts).

The 2019 S60 picks up 1.7 inches of rear seat legroom over its predecessor (now 35.2 inches), and six-footers can fit in back, with like size people in front. Trunk capacity is a usable, 15.6 cubic feet (including under floor storage). The split, rear seatbacks fold mostly flat, and contain a center pass-through. One more thing about the back row. When not in

use, the headrests for said seats can be flipped forward remotely, to instantly improve rear visibility.

The roster of safety technology — standard and optional — is extensive. On the S60, Volvo's City Safety collision avoidance technology is augmented by steer assist and brake support functions. Pilot Assist II — a hands-on-the-wheel, semi-autonomous driving system — is available optionally, as are Cross Traffic Alert with auto-braking, Park Assist Pilot, a bird's eye view camera, lane keeping aid, and blind spot monitoring with steering assist, among others.

The 2019 S60 is on sale now. Wagon lovers take note: waiting in the wings from Volvo is a new version of the V60 wagon, scheduled to appear next spring.

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.

