



Mazda to unveil a small SUV in Geneva

Word is **Mazda** will debut a brand new subcompact SUV at the 2019 Geneva Motor Show, which opens March 7. The Japan-based maker hasn't released a name or any details, aside from the teaser shot above with unusual U-shaped headlights... but speculation is the vehicle would be a replacement for the subcompact **CX-3**. It also could be a new version of the next model up, the coupe-like compact crossover **CX-4**, which debuted at the Beijing Motor Show in 2016 and is only sold in China. Even if it's something else altogether, the assumption is it will ride on Mazda's new Skyactive-Vehicle architecture, and most likely conform to the maker's Kodo design language.



Bugatti's big bucks birthday edition

The company's very name has become shorthand for uber-expensive performance vehicles, but for the 110th anniversary of its founding, **Bugatti** is releasing a special, uber-limited edition based on its **Chiron Sport**. The company — founded by an Italian, based in France, owned by Germans — will attempt to take their current supercar over the top with the **110 ans Bugatti**. Even more carbon-fiber body work and lightweight wheels will shave 40 pounds off the original's weight. Upgraded exhaust, 10 percent stiffer springs, revised steering and rear differential will add to the performance. But the regular ol' Chiron's quad-turbocharged 8.0L W-16 engine remains the same at its paltry 1,479 horsepower, spanning 0 to 60 in less than 2.4 seconds. No one's sure of the top speed; there's a factory-installed limiter on the throttle because there are no production tires that can take speeds over 261 mph. The anniversary edition's French roots (Ettore Bugatti set up shop in Molsheim, France, in 1909) will be represented in a tri-color embellishment on its rear wing, exterior mirrors, fuel cap and seats, all set against a Blue Steel paint job. The brake calipers and wheel center caps are painted French Racing Blue. Only 20 will be built, and the price is expected to start at \$4 million.



Cali clamps down on loud cars

California Assembly Bill 1824 went into effect last month, toughening the Golden State's crackdown on excessively loud vehicles.

Though it doesn't add any new restrictions, it now makes it mandatory for police to issue immediate tickets to offenders.

California Vehicle Code 27150 mandates that all vehicles be equipped with a muffler system adequate to keep noise under a certain level. In the case of passenger vehicles, that's 95 decibels, about the same as a lawn mower or food blender at three feet away. Most cars don't exceed 75 dB. In New York, the statutes state engine noise not be louder than 15 dB over than ambient sound in which the vehicle is being driven.

California Vehicle Code 27151 prevents any aftermarket muffler modification that violates 27150. But rather than issue a "fix it" summons anymore, Assembly Bill 1824 mandates instant fines of up to \$1,000.



The new Ram 1500 will feature a special multi-function tailgate.

Ram amps up its tailgate

The pickup truck wars have now added another front. Rivals competed for luxury, horsepower, off-road ability... and now it's down to the tailgate.

Hot on the heels of **GMC's** introduction of the Multipro tailgate on the **2019 Sierra** and the **Honda Ridgeline's** drop-or-swing tailgate, we hear that **Ram** will now add a multifunction back door with a center section that drops down to become steps or a ramp for loading.

The tailgate — which will be offered on all **Ram** models for \$995 — has a vertical 60/40 split that lowers down in its entirety like a traditional panel, or it can be opened on each side like a barn door. Ram claims it has a 2,000-pound load rating.

TEST DRIVE

2019 Cadillac XTS

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Expansion joints are noted rather than felt. It's a very trip worthy vehicle.

The interior has a suitably upscale look and feel, with real wood trim accent-

apps. And, if all that accessing taps out your phone's battery, the standard equipment charging pad for wireless devices gets a power boost for 2019. CUE — Cadillac User Experience — is the interface to access many features (navigation, audio, phone) via 8-inch touchscreen. A secondary set of virtual switchgear for HVAC and sound system lie just below. The reaction time for the touch sensitive controls varies.

The sliding controls for sound system volume and HVAC fan speed are frustratingly slow to react and inexact to operate. And they won't take input from a winter gloved hand. Auxiliary controls on the steering wheel are a better option for adjusting volume and channels, but there's no secondary switchgear for fan

To me, the best bet for XTS is a Luxury trim model with AWD.

ing the leather upholstery. Interior fit and finish is impressive. The onboard infotainment system is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, for those wishing to access their smartphone



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this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

D'ella Cadillac Buick GMC, Inc.
93 Quaker Rd., Queensbury, NY 12804
518-793-3871 www.dellacars.com

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



speed. CUE remains the weak link in an otherwise nicely appointed cabin.

XTS seats adults comfortably in both rows. The trunk is long and large; the 18 cubic feet of capacity will hold a lot of luggage. XTS has the normal, ¾ rear blind spots found on all sedans.

Blind spot monitoring is useful for alerting you to what you can't see. It's standard on the top three trim levels, optional on Luxury trim (via the Driver Awareness Package) and surprisingly, not available at all on the base XTS.

To me, the best bet for XTS is a Luxury trim model with AWD. This combination yields a winter friendly car, with the traditional luxury cars bases covered (room,

comfort), and a handful of popular options (navigation system, heated steering wheel and front/rear seats, memory seat settings, front parking sensors).

Add the aforementioned Driver Awareness Package (\$1,700), and you'll also have a usable package of Driver Assist Technology (blind spot monitoring, rear cross-traffic alert, bird's-eye view camera system, lane departure warning, safety alert driver's seat and forward collision alert with low speed emergency braking).

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.