



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**. Then again, it could also be the 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. No getting off with a warning. 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 state, the statutes dictate that 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.



Is this the car that will save Aston Martin? Last year, the DB11 saw sell-out demand.

Stock "Skyfall" for Aston Martin

Shares of **Aston Martin** sunk more than percent this week, and the 105-year-old iconic British automaker has lost 42 percent of its worth since it went public in an October, 2018 IPO. The luxury performance marque is known as the favorite brand of **007 James Bond**, its most memorable model being the DB5 piloted by Sean Connery in 1964's "Goldfinger." (Or for you kids, the DB5 Daniel Craig drove in 2012's "Skyfall.") The stock market recoiled as Aston Martin posted before-tax losses of more than \$98 million, having last been profitable in 2017, during which the Warwickshire, England-based company sold 5,117 vehicles. Among its problems are disappointing sales of its halo **Lagonda**, an uncertain prospect of selling its hand-crafted vehicles in the European Union after Brexit and last year's pricey pay-out to execs and shareholders. On the plus side, sales of **Rapide** and **Vanquish** models were up 26 percent last year, while the **DB11** experienced sell-out demand.

TEST DRIVE

2019 Lexus UX 200

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slower and more inexact than conventional controls. The multimedia system is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Amazon Alexa, though not Android Auto. A 4GB WiFi hotspot is offered on a one

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year complimentary basis. The system can connect up to five devices. The UX 200 is available in base, Luxury and F sport trims. It's offered with two engines, and your choice of same dictates whether you'll have FWD or AWD. The gas-powered motor is a 2.0-liter inline four-cylinder, rated at 169 horsepower @ 6,600 rpm, and 151 lb.-ft. of torque @

4,800 rpm. It's linked to a Continuously Variable Transmission and only available with front-wheel-drive. The alternative is a 2.0L Atkinson cycle hybrid four-cylinder, with front and rear electric motors, a CVT and 181 total system horsepower. Stepping up to the hybrid adds \$2,000 to the bottom line. It also includes all-wheel-drive. The AWD is driven by the rear electric motor. It distributes power front and back to optimize traction in wet or dry conditions, and operates at speeds up to 43 mph. The EPA's fuel economy estimates for the UX 200 are 29/37/33 (gas, FWD), and 41/38/39 (hybrid, AWD). Lexus quotes 0-60 mph estimates of 8.6 seconds for the gas powered UX and 8.9 for the hybrid. That's a couple of seconds slower than the quickest members of this segment, but in practice, it's enough for all routine driving. Highway on-ramp merges and passing require planning. Three Drive



The 2019 Lexus UX 200's upscale interior features two-tone upholstery rather than monotonous. A console-mounted touchpad is the primary means of accessing many system controls, like climate, audio, navigation and general system settings.

modes can be chosen. Eco dampens throttle response in search of max mpg's. Sport raises the engine revs (and noise) but doesn't add appreciably to performance. Normal is where most people will want to be, most of the time. With its small footprint, the UX 200 feels nimble going down the road, and ride quality seems good for the breed, though F Sport models (which I have not driven) may be slightly harder riding. These models get stiffer springs and bushings than the other UX 200 trims, though not the adaptive suspension dampers that Euro spec versions of the Lexus have. Lexus Safety System+ 2.0 is standard on all models. Included among these features: pre-collision system with pedestrian detection (daytime and low light) and bicyclist detection (daytime), dynamic radar cruise control, lane departure assist with steering assist, lane tracing assist, road sign assist and automatic high

beams. Other popular safety technology items are available optionally, such as parking support alert and braking. The UX 200 slides into the Lexus crossover/SUV line beneath the NX, RX, GX and LX. The newcomer's price starts at \$32,000 (base model, FWD) and range to \$39,200 (Luxury AWD). In addition to many, worthy challengers already established in the marketplace, the UX finds stiff competition right in its own showroom. The base price of the next-up Lexus (the NX — \$36,385 FWD/\$37,785 AWD) overlaps the top end of the UX 200 range. Those who can swing the added price will sacrifice some mpg's but gain considerably more utility and performance.



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.