



Alfa Romeo Tonale

Alfa's new small SUV hits the sweet spot

It's exciting to hear that an all-new model is on the way from Fiat Chrysler's Italy-based division. Based on a recently displayed concept, the **Alfa Romeo Tonale** (named for a mountain pass in Italy) is similar in style to the brand's Stelvio tall wagon, but is quite a bit smaller in size (think BMW X1 or Audi Q3). A turbocharged four-cylinder will be the primary powerplant, but the Tonale will also be available with a plug-in hybrid system. Although both front- and all-wheel-drive variants will be built, it's probable that AWD will be standard. Look for it early next year.

Ford is planning to arm the Raptor with the V-8 from the upcoming Mustang Shelby GT500.



Is Ford readying a super Raptor?

At least that's what sources are saying about the **SVT Raptor**, Ford's off-road version of the F-150. Concerned that Fiat Chrysler's upcoming **Ram Rebel TRX** pickup (which will use the nearly 700-horsepower supercharged Hellcat V-8 engine) will steal some of the Raptor's thunder, Ford will up the stakes by replacing the current 450-horsepower twin-turbocharged V-6 with a supercharged 700-plus horsepower V-8 that was originally developed for the upcoming Mustang Shelby GT500. It's also expected that the modified Raptor's engine will employ a 10-speed automatic transmission (the GT500 will use a seven-speed automated manual unit). Ford's extra-potent pickup should arrive sometime next year. If you can't wait, or if that's not enough, keep in mind Shelby American makes a high-performance Raptor, called the **Shelby Raptor**. And for off-roaders, Hennessey Special Vehicles offers an SUV version of called the **Hennessey VelociRaptor SUV**. With the Raptor's current base price of \$54,450, the V-8 version might retail somewhere over \$70,000.



Aston Martin Lagonda says its new Lagonda electric vehicle will stay true to the Vision concept (below) that was first shown in 2018.

Aston Martin's Lagonda electric is on track for a 2021 launch

This new luxury ride will be propelled by twin electric motors (one for each axle), making it the company's first electric car. Aston Martin Lagonda (the full name of the Aston Martin company) states that the **Lagonda** will retain the design character of the Vision concept model that was debuted in 2018.

Also promised is leading-edge autonomous-driving capabilities along with over-the-top luxury content. Exact performance details, such as electric range, are expected to be revealed later this year.



Aston Martin Vision concept



It's rumored that a new Acura model, inspired by this Precision concept, will replace the current top-of-the-line RLX sedan.

Is Acura christening a new flagship?

No one is surprised over rumors that Honda's premium division will replace the flagship **RLX** sedan. That full-size passenger car never caught on with buyers seeking style/status.

According to sources, the RLX replacement will be based on the **Acura Precision concept** that was first viewed in 2016. Rumor also has it that the to-be-named replacement will be revealed this August at the annual Concours d'Elegance classic-car event in Pebble Beach, Calif.

There's no info on a name or the powertrain(s) to be used, but you can bet that Acura's current all-wheel-drive hybrid system (similar to that installed in the NSX sports car) will be either standard or optional. The sedan is expected to go on sale in early 2020 as a 2021 model.

TEST DRIVE

2019 Ford Fusion Energi

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slot pass-through (more like wide, mail slot), the rear seatbacks don't fold down. It makes for a small trunk, with limited options for holding a big box from a big box store.

Energi's dashboard display is programmable. Several of the options give the

Energi's dashboard "Energy leaves" give drivers feedback on their fuel frugality.

driver feedback on their fuel frugality. My favorite choice is "Energy Leaves," which depicts the efficiency of your driving style as leaves on a vine. Smooth driving is rewarded by new growth. A heavy shoe is met with leaf loss. It's a nice way of en-

couraging efficient driving, and yes, it's also fun to occasionally defoliate the dash display, too. Fusion added a rotary shifter as of the 2017 model year.

Here as found elsewhere, knurled knobs are the best alternative to the traditional lever style shifter that I've seen. They're intuitive, non-distracting and a whole lot more functional than some of the different-for-different's-sake designs I've seen elsewhere. Most HVAC controls are found in buttons at mid-dash level. The rest are absorbed into the 8-inch touchscreen above.

The division of functions slows the operation of doing simple tasks (like changing the air flow distribution), and more so, because the reaction time of the touchscreen isn't especially quick. On the plus side, the SYNC 3 system is compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, if you want to use your favorite phone apps.

The 2019 Fusion incorporates Ford Co-Pilot 360 — a bundle of driver assist



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TEST DRIVE this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

DEPAULA FORD
799 Central Ave, Albany, NY 12206
(518) 336-0979 www.depaulaford.com

JACK BYRNE FORD
1003 Hudson River Rd., Mechanicville, NY 12118
(518) 664-9841 jackbyrneford.dealerconnection.com



technologies — as standard equipment. Included are: blind spot information with cross traffic alert, rear backup camera, automatic emergency braking with pedestrian detection, lane keep assist, pre-collision assist, automatic high beam headlights.

We're seeing more and more manufacturers roll out their own takes on standard, safety bundles. I like the fact that — at least in this model — Ford's roster of standards includes blind spot monitoring and rear cross traffic alert — two every day, safety staples. Another layer of features — adaptive cruise control, voice activated navigation, Sirius XM Traffic/Travel link

— is available optionally (and standard on Titanium, Sport, and Hybrids).

As noted above, Fusion Energi runs about \$35,000. However, Fusion Hybrid starts at \$27,555, and only rises as high as Energi if fully loaded. For that reason, Fusion's HEV is a better value pick than the PHEV.

Either way, buyers may be able to offset some of their purchase price through federal and state income tax credits.

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.