



• 2014 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray



• Ford Atlas concept



• Cadillac ELR



• 2014 Audi R8 V8

NAIAS concepts and premieres

We didn't make it to the North American International Auto Show in Detroit this January. Almost. But with it moved a week later, conflicting with the auctions right here at home, we cancelled. That doesn't keep us from presenting some of the highlights:

- The **2014 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray**—Corvette's seventh generation, a.k.a. C7—was without question one of the most anticipated debuts at the Detroit show. With a fierce grille opening, sculpted and vented sides, rectilinear taillamps and a new interpretation of its quad tailpipes, America's own supercar takes a step toward Transformers style and continues to prove it does not shy away from comparisons with Italian supercars. The convertible version was saved for a Chicago reveal.

- The new **2014 Mercedes-Benz CLA** brings the highly influential four-door coupe format of the CLS to a smaller and more affordable size. What makes it a four-door coupe (a term that still spurs debate among some purists) is not just its curved and sloping roofline, but its frameless doors. For a photo, plus information about an upcoming 4MATIC all-wheel-drive version of the CLA, see our Auto News Update on page 12. The all-new 2014 CLA250 arrives in US dealerships this fall, with the 4MATIC version following next spring.

- The **Acura NSX concept** had appeared at the LA Auto Show in November and was shown in Detroit as well. Fans eagerly await an indication of when the mid-engined supercar will go into production and how close it may remain to this concept. Honda calls it "a glimpse at one potential direction for the next-generation NSX."

- Finally everyone can understand the hot-selling Ford Transit Connect's cumbersome name, which comes from it being a logistical feeder, in many field applications, to



the larger **Ford Transit** van in Europe, where both have been on sale for years. Ironically, big truck king Ford brought us the little Transit Connect first, while Nissan, originally known for small trucks, brought us their bigger van first and now is filling out the US lineup with their smaller one (see Chicago show info in this issue). The 2014 Ford Transit comes in high roof (shown at right) and low roof versions, and in panel or window versions. Expect to see plenty of all versions on the road soon.

- The new **MINI Paceman** represents yet another example of this company creating a concept car for the show circuit and then finding it irresistible to put into production. Well, why not. We haven't spent any time riding in the back seat (nor have we visited Home Depot with this as our rig), but we like the styling of its sloped roof, and we're delighted to note that it will be available as an all-wheel-driver. See more info and a photo of the JCW version in Auto News Update on page 13.

- The **2014 Kia Cadenza** represents not only the hot-selling Korean automaker's move into the premium segment in the US, but also their most technologically advanced vehicle to date. Equipment (standard and optional) will include such things as advanced smart cruise control, blind spot detection and lane-departure warning, all things that were the domain of top-dollar luxury models just a couple of years ago. The Cadenza arrives at dealers in the second quarter of this year, with pricing to be announced closer to that time.



• Acura NSX concept



• 2014 Ford Transit High Roof



• Kia Cadenza

- For a look at where Ford's F-Series pickup styling and engineering may be headed, look no farther than the stunning **Ford Atlas concept**. In fact, the more we look at this, the more likely it seems that it will show up on our roads pretty faithful to this design study. We hope so. Besides good looks, the Atlas has a number of breakthrough features. The cargo box integrates tie-downs with the box walls and floor, introduces 110-volt outlets to the bed, and handles loads with an integrated roof rack system and extendable ramps. The interior has lightweight seats for more legroom and "floating" glove-friendly instrument pods. Next-gen EcoBoost® engines introduce auto start-stop—but not while towing. And towing is made easier with dynamic hitch assist for hooking up. Aerodynamic fuel economy elements include active grille shutters, active wheel shutters, drop-down front air dam and power retracting running boards.

- The **2014 Cadillac ELR** extended-range electric car enters production fundamentally unchanged from its original concept car form—which is one of the most striking show cars we've seen for years, even though it was first revealed some four years ago. As a luxury car that incorporates the technologies that have made Chevrolet Volt owners the most loyal of any, we expect this to be a winning combination.

- The **2014 Audi R8** will be available with three different engines: a 5.2-liter V10 with 525 hp, another "V10 Plus" with 550 hp, and now a 4.2-liter V8 with a more humble but still impressive 430 hp. The new R8 sports a newly developed seven-speed S tronic® transmission that helps knock another 0.3 seconds off the 0-to-60 time on an R8 V10 Plus, now hitting 3.3 seconds for that and a top speed of 196 mph. It has also had about 100 pounds knocked off via carbon fiber side blades, front splitter, rear diffuser, spoiler, a smaller fuel tank, manual seats and ceramic brakes. The car will be recognizable by new LED headlights, a hexagonal grille, new mir-

rors and big new round tailpipes. The V8 model hits 60 in 4.2 seconds and has a top speed of 186 mph.

- While Ford's Atlas concept shows great promise, the competition is already on its way to the dealer showroom. The new **2014 GMC Sierra** lineup includes new front-hinged rear doors on extended cab models, for better access in tight spots and no need to disturb the front row. Crew cabs will have a choice of two bed lengths (5'8 and 6'6), regular cabs also two (6'6 or 8'0) and extended cabs just one size (6'6). Interiors and instrumentation are significantly upgraded, and there will be three EcoTec3 engines: a 4.3L V6, and 5.3L and 6.2L V8s.

- The tendency for car models to grow in size (along with price, complexity and features) is nothing new. As BMW's 3 Series has grown, approaching the size of the 5 Series a decade or two earlier, the company has decided to redesignate the former 3 Series coupe as a new Series: enter the **BMW 4 Series Coupe concept**. Contrast this move with Mercedes-Benz, who has been consolidating some designations (e.g. the E-Class Coupe replacing the CLK). Or with Audi, who has introduced an A5 between the A4 and A6, and an A7 between the A7 and A8, as new lineups. But for BMW, the coupe—and then the convertible about the same time—will for now vacate the 3 Series space. Henceforth, a 3 Series will be a sedan and a 4 Series will be a coupe or convertible.

- The **Volkswagen CrossBlue concept** introduces an anticipated new generation of SUVs, with the seven-passenger capacity of a minivan, combined with the efficiency of a plug-in hybrid system comprising a TDI clean diesel, two electric motors, a dual-clutch transmission and "propshaft by wire," an all-electric all-wheel-drive system that coordinates front and rear electric motors. Volkswagen estimates this will all add up to a rating of some 89 MPGe (fuel economy equivalent). Operating in pure diesel mode, expect 35 MPG, still good for a seven-passenger SUV. The CrossBlue can also run in zero emissions mode as a pure electric. ■