

# Crystal ball visions

New models and future-think in LA by Joe Sage

The Los Angeles Auto Show holds a special place on our calendar. It is as significant as any of the biggest—Detroit, New York and the overseas shows. It is first on the calendar, and the industry has responded, with a lot of new product in time for LA. Best of all, it is right in our backyard, a 45-minute flight or six-hour drive away.

Reveals during a couple of evening events and two media days, before the show opens to the general public, gave us our first look at new vehicles and at concepts foretelling what comes after those. Here are some highlights, alphabetically.

The **AUDI** Prologue concept is both subtle and comprehensive in its styling evolutions. Immediately recognizable as an Audi, it pushes every detail in new directions—from a diamond-pattern grillework, to muscular shoulders, a yacht-like forward lean and 22-inch wheels—the first work by new Audi design chief Marc Lichte. The Audi Prologue is also a showpiece for a wide range of technologies, from a huge organic LED touch display, to its 605-hp, 40-MPG 4.0L mild hybrid system, dynamic all-wheel steering, matrix laser headlights, expanded use of aluminum, handle-free sensor-touch doors, full-width 3D taillights and integrated shift-by-wire lever. Also shown were the reborn 2016 Audi TT Roadster and TTS Coupe and a fuel cell A7 Sportback H-Tron quattro.

A new 2016 **CADILLAC** ATS-V—sedan or coupe—adds track-capable 445-hp twin-turbo power (the first ever in a V-Series) to the lightest-weight car in its luxury compact class, for a 3.9-second zero-to-60 time. With rev-matching 6-speed manual, or 8-speed paddle-shift automatic with launch control, you'll ride in high-performance seats on a 25-percent stiffer chassis and revised suspension, Brembo brakes, third-gen magnetic ride control and an available track aerodynamics downforce package. Production begins this spring.

One of our favorites at the show was total fantasy: the **CHEVROLET** Chaparral 2X Vision Gran Turismo concept—a full-size interpretation of the ultimate race car, inspired by track cars Chaparral Racing and Chevrolet partnered on over 45 years ago, developed for fans of PlayStation 3's Gran

Turismo 6 game. Fantasy, yes, but here for us in automotive flesh and blood. The download came online in late December, an update to a game that has sold over 72 million copies. The Chaparral 2X VGT is notable for its theoretical advanced 671-kW laser propulsion system, powered by a lithium-ion battery pack and an air-powered generator for a 900-hp rocket to 60 in 1.5 seconds and a 240-mph top speed—in the video game.

Maintaining its essential style, while enhancing its muscular stance and badge presence, the 2015 **CHRYSLER** 300 offers a Limited, 300S and 300C model range along the same lines as the Chrysler 200. The luxurious Chrysler 300C Platinum has quilted Nappa leather, hand-sanded wood, ultra-premium leather-wrapped instrument panel and console, platinum-chrome exterior details and 20-inch wheels. The sporty Chrysler 300S features blacked-out accents, 20-inch hyper black wheels, sculpted side sills, deck-lid spoiler, higher output 300-hp Pentastar V6, plus Sport mode and fast paddle-shifts. The Chrysler 300 Limited includes the most standard features in the 300's 60-year history, with 8-speed transmission, heated leather seating, voice-command Uconnect with 8.4-inch touchscreen, SiriusXM, full-color DID cluster and more—starting at \$31,395. Within a month of LA, we were off to Austin, Texas to drive the new Chrysler 300 lineup—see page 18 in this issue.

**FIAT** is on to something big. Not too big, of course, but bigger than the Fiat 500. Sexier than the Fiat 500L. And off-road capable. Based on the same chassis that will bring us the highly-anticipated Jeep® Renegade, the 2016 Fiat 500X combines DNA from the classic Cinquecento with big doses of performance, capability and third millennium style. The 500X will have a choice of 1.4L MultiAir turbo and 6-speed manual (160 hp, 184 lb-ft) or 2.4L Tigershark MultiAir2 (180 hp, 175 lb-ft), both with precise, fuel-economical nine-speed automatic and available in front- or all-wheel drive. As on the Jeep Cherokee, a disconnecting rear axle maximizes fuel economy when AWD is not needed. Auto, sport and traction plus modes cover varying driving conditions. This moves to an equally top spot on our anticipation list.



The Shelby name has bounced back and forth among Shelby, Ford and Mustang a few times. Here it lands solidly back with **FORD**. This Ford Shelby GT350 Mustang has its own 5.2L V8 with over 500 hp—the most ever in a naturally aspirated production Ford—and over 400 lb-ft of torque over a very broad curve. It bears Ford's first flat-plane crankshaft V8, engineering usually found in race cars or European exotics. (Rather than connecting rods at 90-degree intervals, pins are evenly spaced at 180-degree intervals, alternating cylinder banks and reducing exhaust pulse overlap.) Advanced materials, suspension technology, powerful brakes and aerodynamics combine to create a highly capable street-legal track car.

**HONDA** delves deeper into the crossover world, with the coupe-like HR-V subcompact crossover, combining sporty drive with spacious utility. Its global platform allows a center-mounted fuel tank and reconfigurable second-row "magic seat," for multiple seating and cargo modes, said to compete with some midsize SUVs. Concealed rear door handles enhance its coupe-like look and feel. A 1.8L 4-cylinder produces 138 hp and 127 lb-ft of torque, mated to either a CVT with shift logic or a 6-speed manual. The HR-V will be available in both FWD and AWD models.

**HYUNDAI** was saving its big reveals for the new year, while receiving numerous awards that were presented during the LA Auto Show, including five from the following automotive publications and groups: *ALG*; *Cars.com*/*USA Today*/*Motorweek*; *Edmunds.com*; *Popular Mechanics*; and The Hispanic Motor Press Association. Their spirits were high, capping off the festivities with a rocking private evening performance by Joan Jett & The Blackhearts at the historic Figueroa Hotel in downtown LA, for hundreds of show attendees.

**INFINITI** celebrated 25 years of first-ever technologies—the first with a backup camera, lane departure warning, steer-by-wire and many more—by revealing their Q80 Inspiration concept. Its four-door fastback styling is dramatic, but given Infiniti's production heritage and quickness to market, we would not be surprised to see elements of this on the roads sooner than later. Active and passive safety features abound in the show car, which is set up with a 3-liter twin-turbo V6 hybrid electric drivetrain powering all four wheels, delivering 560 hp and about 45 MPG.

The 2016 **JAGUAR** F-TYPE expands from six to 14 variants, with the rear-drive coupe and convertible with supercharged V6 now complemented by an F-



TYPE R coupe and convertible with supercharged V8, AWD and eight-speed transmission, bringing zero-to-60 time to just 3.9 seconds (with a top speed of 186 mph). The V6 models, meanwhile, receive an optional 6-speed manual. Performance in AWD models is boosted by new intelligent driveline dynamics. Jaguar also announced justDrive, a technology that integrates multiple smartphone apps into a single, voice-activated in-car system.

The hot-selling **KIA** Sorento midsize crossover SUV has had steady makeovers, always for the better... and better. Kia revealed the 2016 Sorento in LA—towing snowmobiles and perched atop faux glaciers—a vehicle we were destined to drive in the actual High Sierra just three weeks later, in plenty of the wet, white, real stuff. See page 14 for our writeup. There are five trim levels. Engines include a new 2.0L turbo four, a 3.3L V6 and an updated 2.4L normally aspirated four. Also on display were the Soul EV and Sedona multi-



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purpose vehicle, both introduced a couple of months earlier (see our Nov/Dec 2014 issue).

The 2015 **LAND ROVER** Discovery Sport brings the rest of the world's Freelander to our shores, with a variant of the Discovery name used elsewhere for our LR4. Most people have heard the Discovery name. Discovery Sport has a body combining high-strength steel and lightweight aluminum, a 240-hp 2.0L turbo, nine-speed automatic transmission and standard all-wheel drive. Its styling evokes the Ranger Rover Evoque and the layout provides optional seven-passenger seating in a "5+2" configuration. Land Rover also adds justDrive, integrating multiple smartphone apps into a single, voice-activated in-car system.

The **LEXUS** LF-C2 concept is a 2+2 roadster design study intended to suggest impending evolutions in the brand's design language. They chose an open air sports car, with all the touches of a luxury Grand Touring concept, because of the brand's dual passions for driving and high-end creature comforts. Development originated in theoretical coupe form. The spindle grille remains, with a heavy emphasis on its lower portion. An impression of sharp edges is smoothed in most elements of its execution. As a roadster concept, the LF-C2 concept has no top covering the cabin.

**MAZDA** had two huge reveals in LA. One had seen the flash of paparazzi before: the fourth-generation 2016 Mazda MX-5 Miata. This has been the world's best-selling two-seat roadster, with over 930,000 globally, nearly 40 percent of those in the US. Following a three-city global debut in September, this was its US auto show debut. The spotlight was shared with the new Mazda CX-3 subcompact crossover, unwrapped here for the first time. The CX-5 compact utility was already a favorite with us, and Mazda's entry in the suddenly booming subcompact segment is a knockout, in both style and substance. Both were shown to a press group at an evening preview; the white CX-3 looked especially sharp at night, with its black C-pillar and "floating" roof. With SKYACTIV-G 2.0L engine and automatic transmission, the CX-3 will be available in both FWD and AWD, starting this summer. Mazda also showed updated models of the Mazda6 midsize sedan and CX-5 crossover.

Daimler's reborn Maybach marque made quite a splash when reintroduced in 2002 after a 60-year absence, but sales fell short, and as the global economy swooned, the brand was scrubbed. It is now reborn, with the advent of the **MERCEDES-MAYBACH** S600. This super sedan had its global reveal in Guanzhou, China and almost simulta-

neously at the LA show. At 214.6 inches in length, with a 132.5-inch wheelbase, the new Mercedes-Benz flagship of flagships is 8.1 inches longer than the S-Class Sedan, for larger rear passenger volume, where executive seats are standard. The world's quietest production sedan has a 523-hp 6.0L biturbo V12. Mercedes-Maybach is a sub-brand of Mercedes-Benz, in the same vein as Mercedes-AMG. The car arrives in April.

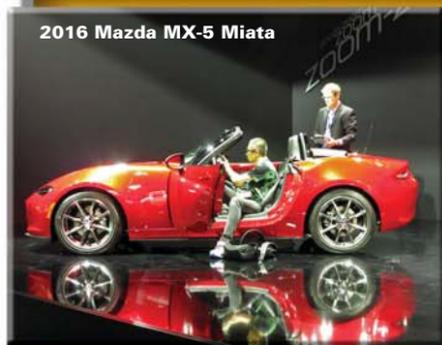
**MINI** continues to expand its lineup, even as a couple of models are discontinued. Coupe and Roadster are gone. Paceman may survive—we hope so—as its rough-road-capable four-door chassis-mate Countryman soldiers on. The sort-of-four-door Clubman (with concealed rear access doors) could go either way. In the face of all this, meet the new MINI Hardtop 4 Door, shown in Paris in September. Small is big, though MINI seems to keep making it bigger. This is the first four-door MINI built on a shared front-drive BMW global architecture and is powered by the same 3- and 4-cylinder twin-turbo engines as the MINI Hardtop 2 Door. The new 4 Door is priced \$1000 higher than the 2 Door. Also in the US for the first time was the hot MINI Superleggera Vision roadster concept shown in our pages one year ago.

Sales of **MITSUBISHI** in the US have grown dramatically over the past year, led by the Outlander Sport with over-25 percent year-to-year growth. The addition of the subcompact Mirage brought overall US sales up almost 30 percent—impressive figures from the Japanese brand a lot of people don't always think of first. In this enviable position, Mitsubishi brought the stunning Concept XR-PHEV to LA—a bold new body containing an efficient, high-performance plug-in-hybrid drivetrain. Typical for concepts, they say this "hints at the upcoming direction of US Mitsubishi cars." Given their sales momentum and recent smart hires in the US marketing department, it very well might.

**NISSAN** has pushed design and engineering envelopes for years, very successfully. A surprise hit of the last decade was their segment-tweaking Juke. In LA, they revealed the 2015 model, with minor adjustments to its looks and a generous boost to standard inclusions, with such things as keyless entry/start, rear camera, app-based NissanConnect, Bluetooth streaming audio and hands-free text assistant—all from its \$20,250 starting price. Shown at right is the 2015 Nissan Murano crossover, with its styling now a distinct generation beyond the original, after an interim restyle, and starting at \$29,560. They also announced that the Nissan e-NV200 all-electric van had just been named LCV of the Year in the UK.



Lexus LF-C2 concept



2016 Mazda MX-5 Miata



2016 Mazda CX-3



2016 Mercedes-Maybach S600



MINI Hardtop 4 Door

The 911 **PORSCHE** Carrera GTS falls between the 911 Carrera S and the 911 GT3, is available as coupe or convertible, is equipped with rear-wheel or all-wheel drive, and develops 430 hp. A Sport Chrono package and other performance features are standard. A new Cayenne GTS with sport air suspension and lowered ride height hits 440 hp. And the Panamera Turbo S Executive Exclusive Series—a special edition limited to 100 worldwide—takes the four-door Porsche another big step away from its sports coupe brethren.

The reveal of the **SCION** iM five-door compact hatchback concept came with an announcement that a production version of this, their first new model in some time—plus another new Scion—will be shown at the New York show in April. "We plan to bring three new products in three years," said Scion VP Doug Murtha. Scion targets the 18-34-year-old demographic—with mobile lifestyles, great independence but less disposable income—with a formula of fun and sensibility. The iM concept has a wide stance and low ride height, sculpted fascias, geometric grille inserts, deep air intakes, fog lights and 19-inch forged alloy wheels, all atop adjustable-height racing suspension. Scion anticipates a price under \$20,000.

**SUBARU** promoted its seventh annual "Share the Love" campaign. Through January 2, Subaru donated \$250 for each new Subaru sold or leased, to the customer's choice of four national charities—ASPCA, Make-A-Wish, Meals On Wheels or the National Park Foundation—or a dealer's pick of local charity. Subaru committed \$15 million to the program. Subaru was completing a 24 percent year-over-year increase for November, with individual records broken for Outback, Forester and WRX/STI, and Legacy almost doubling—a 97 percent jump in sales.

The **TOYOTA** Mirai is an all-electric midsize four-door fuel cell sedan. Its fuel cell stack combines hydrogen gas from onboard tanks with fresh oxygen to produce electricity that powers the vehicle. It takes about five minutes to refuel, has a range of up to 300 miles and emits only water vapor. The car arrives in California—where there is a growing fuel cell infrastructure—next fall.

The **VOLKSWAGEN** GTI Roadster Vision Gran Turismo was irresistible eye candy. Like the laser-powered Chevy Chaparral, this is a full-size build of a CGI game car, also for PlayStation3's Gran Turismo 6. It is theoretically powered by a 503-hp 3-liter twin-turbo V6, with 7-speed DSG dual-clutch automatic and 4MOTION all-wheel drive—



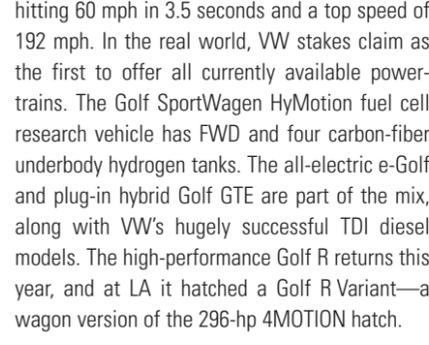
Mitsubishi Concept XR-PHEV



Porsche 911 Carrera GTS



Subaru "Share The Love" campaign



2015.5 Volvo V60 Cross Country



2015 Nissan Murano



Scion iM concept



Toyota Mirai



Volkswagen GTI Roadster Vision GT



2015.5 Volvo V60 Cross Country