

DETROIT

NORTH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW

JANUARY 2018

The North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in Detroit—home region, of course, to America's Big Three—is the first of the new calendar year and second of the overall annual cycle, after Los Angeles (see our Jan/Feb issue). Most of the world's major manufacturers are represented at this huge show in Cobo Center downtown, and there are always a number of significant concepts and new model reveals at this show. Here are a few highlights, in alphabetical order:

- The all-new **2019 Audi A7** made its US debut at NAIAS. The four-door Sportback (or five-door) loses its drooping butt with a continuous light strip of 13 vertical segments joined together in the rear taillights, while reconciling dueling industry trends of overly convoluted body creases vs overly smooth body shells with one bold, straight crease. The new A7 has more interior space, notably for rear passengers, while showing a new subtle grille evolution, wider and lower.

- One year after its concept reveal in Detroit, the all-new **BMW X2** made its world debut—a low-slung AWD 2+2 sports activity coupe with the sturdier construction of an X model crossover. Its 2.0L TwinTurbo 4-cylinder turbo and 8-speed automatic deliver 228 hp and 258 lb-ft of torque, bringing the little ute-coupe to 0-60 mph in 6.3 seconds. The BMW X2 arrives at dealers this spring. Also debuted was the 2019 BMW i8 Coupe.

- The **2019 Ford Ranger** arrives later this year to tackle the burgeoning US midsize pickup market (sales up 83% since 2014). Based on an Australian global product, for North America it gets new styling, high-strength steel frame, a 2.3L EcoBoost four, the only 10-speed automatic in the segment, and driver-assist tech both on- and off-road. It will come in SuperCab and crew form in three trim levels, with appearance and off-road packages.

- Once one of the quirkiest little hybrids, Honda Insight is returning in mainstream form. The **Honda Insight Prototype** shows the premium 5-passenger compact (above Civic in the lineup), to be built in Indiana starting later this year with a gen-3 two-motor hybrid system, long wheelbase, 60/40 rear seats and a full trunk, available leather, 8" touchscreen, 7" info screen, Android/iPhone, system updates by WiFi and an anticipated 50-plus MPG.

- All-new **2019 Hyundai Veloster** and Veloster Turbo models, a collaborative effort between Seoul and the US design center in Irvine, feature stan-



• 2019 Audi A7



• 2019 BMW X2



• 2019 Ford Ranger



• Honda Insight Prototype



• 2019 Hyundai Veloster



• 2019 Kia Forte

dard multi-link rear suspension, a comprehensive exterior and interior redesign—still with distinctive two-plus-one doors—powertrain updates (with available 1.6L turbo), and updated infotainment and connectivity. Veloster is built in Ulsan, Korea and arrives here in second quarter 2018.

- We drove the **2019 Jeep Cherokee** introduced at NAIAS a couple of weeks later in Southern California—see our feature elsewhere in this issue.

- The **2019 Kia Forte** compact in its third gen evolves with long hood and short deck styling cues inspired by the new Stinger, and increased length for more legroom, headroom and cargo. It features Kia's first in-house designed-built Intelligent Variable Transmission (IVT), Smart Stream tech for an estimated 35 MPG combined, a standard 8" touchscreen, Android/iPhone, and advanced driver assistance. LX, S and EX trims will ultimately expand.

- The **Lexus LF-1 Limitless concept**, a flagship luxury crossover study by Caltex Design Research Inc in Southern California, fuses organic shapes of liquid metal with the sharp edges of a traditional Japanese sword, "fluid yet aggressive." Features include panoramic glass roof, distinctive split rear spoiler, digital side-view monitors and 4D nav. A production LF-1 could have fuel cell, hybrid, plug-in hybrid, gasoline or all-electric powertrain.

- It's always a challenge to update an icon. Maintaining an external appearance that has not significantly changed since 1979, the new **Mercedes-Benz G-Class** has new suspension, Dynamic Select driving modes, "G-Mode" and three 100% differential locks to enhance both ride comfort and agility, on- or off-road in any conditions. It goes on sale in late 2018. Also revealed at Detroit were new **Mercedes-AMG 53-series** versions of the CLS, E-Class Coupe and E-Class Cabriolet with a new 429-hp electrified 3.0L 6-cylinder engine.

- **MINI** revealed updated Hardtop 2-Door, Hard-



• Lexus LF-1 Limitless concept

top 4-Door and Convertible models with new design accents, updated drive technology, additional customization options and expanded MINI Connected digital services. LED headlights are joined by new LED taillights bearing a Union Jack flag design. New exteriors include Solaris Orange, Starlight Blue and Emerald Grey metallic paints, and Piano Black. Logos and wheels are also updated.

- The **2019 Ram 1500** has reduced weight by almost 225 pounds, with 98% high-strength steel in the frame also improving durability and rigidity for handling. Max payload increases to 2,300 pounds, and max tow to 12,750 pounds, while fuel economy benefits from a mild hybrid system on both 3.6L Pentastar V6 and 5.7L HEMI V8 engines. New styling also boosts aerodynamics. We'll be driving these soon, with a full writeup in the next issue.

- The fifth-gen **2019 Toyota Avalon**, designed and built in the US on a new TNGA K sedan platform with multi-link rear suspension and available Toyota-first adaptive variable suspension (AVS), has new V6 and hybrid powertrains with more power and higher fuel mileage. Standard Entune 3.0 has WiFi hotspot, wireless charging, smartwatch and Amazon Alexa connectivity and Apple Carplay. The new Avalon arrives in late spring.

- A new **2019 Volkswagen Jetta**, starting at \$18,545, is built on award-winning MQB architecture with a coupe-like profile, shorter overhangs and a new face. Its 1.4L TSI engine pairs with 6-speed manual or 8-speed automatic. The driver-centric interior moves to premium materials, with available heated-ventilated leather seats and 400w BeatsAudio. VW also unveiled a sporty VR6 2018 Passat GT, starting at \$29,090.

The Detroit show in January is followed by many domestic shows, notably the big Chicago show in February and New York International Auto Show in April. Key international shows in this timeframe include Geneva in March and Beijing in April-May. ■



• 2019 Mercedes-Benz G-Class



• New MINI Hardtop 2-Door



• 2019 Ram 1500 Limited



• 2019 Toyota Avalon



• 2019 Volkswagen Jetta