

INTERIORS AT THE LOS ANGELES AUTO SHOW 2022

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T: +33 (0)1 55 60 18 25 · F: +33 (0)1 55 60 18 39 · DrivingVisionNews.com



About the author

Daniel Stern, DVN-Interior's editor and North American correspondent, is based in Vancouver, Canada.

Introduction

The Los Angeles auto show this year was full of surprises right from the start, almost all of them good ones. Some marques were absent, but that list was short, and massively outshone by the much longer list of established and new marques present and on display. It took up two big halls, and felt much like a show from the beforetimes. And that's just the show itself; the cars themselves, especially their interiors, brought a spectacular diversity of design and configuration. Clearly, the interior is a hot spot, probably the primary main one, for design and style innovation. That stands to reason; exterior design is heavily constrained by aerodynamic and regulatory considerations. Of course there are also design constraints inside the car, mostly to do with safety and utility. But those are rather more flexible strictures than the exterior ilk of aerodynamics and pedestrian protection, and the vehicles on display in LA showed that interior designers are stretching their imaginations in new directions.

There's a push-pull dynamic at work here: the role of the automobile is changing, as are the ways people use it and the experience we expect from it. Meanwhile, new materials, technologies, and techniques are expanding the range of the possible—and, crucially, the affordable and the feasible. At the same time, traditional elements are still acquitting themselves well; despite the demand for display-type virtual instrument panels and touchscreen controls, there's evidently still a role for physical gauges, knobs, buttons, dials, and (saints preserve us!) even the occasional lever or two. Pushbutton shifting is coming on strong, but there's also all manner of sticks and dials and knobs to do the job. Seats and headrests have perhaps never been quite so various as they are now, and we marvelled at the colorful departure (at last!) from years and years of nothing but black-grey-beige upholstery and trim. Lighting is an integral interior design element for function and decoration. Dashboards range from proudly upright to expansively horizontal. There's even some fun whimsy in HVAC air registers. At the other end of the variety scale, almost the whole of the industry seems to have pounced on an astoundingly uniform steering wheel design.

Now...come and walk the show with us!

Charge '67

Charge Cars, a UK-based specialty automaker, presented an EV they call the '67. In exterior and interior design, it hews closely to the 1967 Ford Mustang fastback. There are even vintage-style triangular vent windows ahead of the main glass! The instrument cluster is about the same size and shape as the old Ford item, though the new Charge item is a display screen rather than a collection of physical gauges—and there's a big vertical touchpad sort of pasted onto the middle of the Charge's dashboard.

The dashboard pad, too, colours within the lines of the old Mustang. These high-back power-adjustable bucket seats and 3-point safety belts and power windows couldn't be had from Ford in 1967, and neither could that gloriously flat floor which makes ample space for feet and knees. The steering wheel is round, of course, and there doesn't appear to be anything boring about it.

One thing that recalls pre-1965 Chrysler products rather than an old Ford: the car's power transmission is controlled not by a shift stick, but by **pushbuttons**.



Chevrolet BlazEr

That unusually-placed uppercase 'E' in the name is there to signify electric motive power, after many decades of combustion-engined Blazers. The display car had neon-red seats and trim, with black accent striping. There's a small, thick-rimmed round steering wheel, and a wide control-and-display screen array along with some **good old physical controls**.

The HVAC air outlets are delightfully retro-futuristic, sculpted chrome things evoking the atomic-age jet engine themes of the late 1950s and early 1960s. A rolltop storage compartment in the center console looks quite handy.





Chevrolet Bolt EUV

The new Bolt's interior looks like a comfortable, engaging place to spend time, and its multilayered dashboard mixes horizontal and vertical planes to good effect. It's refreshing to see a dashboard top that's not a 3-mile-deep expanse of plastic; the dash depth appears to have been deliberately constrained, with good results for apparent human-usable space inside the car. The steering wheel rim has prominent grip lumps at the 10:00 and 2:00 positions, and if flattened from about 5:00 to 7:00 for maximum legroom.



Chevrolet Equinox

There's a small rectangular display in the instrument panel, but most of the space is occupied by actual, real, dial-and-needle instruments—is that even allowed any more? Various trim levels come with different upholstery; the photos here show a sporty trim with smooth-panelled seats and racy red accent stitching also applied to the steering wheel, and a more restrained trim which deletes the red stitching but adds an appealing herringbone pattern to the seat panels. The head restraints appear to be frontally coplanar with the seatback—a blessed relief to those who feel uncomfortably contorted by other designs that force the head forward.





Chevrolet Silverado (EV)

The electric Silverado is deliberately design-differentiated from the combustion-engine model. The interior of the electric truck shown here has a multiplanar, multi-layer dashboard design with a freestanding instrument display panel forward of the small, thick-rimmed steering wheel. There are physical pushbuttons arrayed on the portion of the dashboard that juts aftward within the driver's easy reach, and a central touchpad for HVAC, infotainment, and other functions. Red accent stripes abound in the seats and near the air outlets. The head restraints appear to be the shove-the-head-forward-whether-you-like-it-or-not type, though not so prominently so as some designs.



Chevrolet Silverado (combustion)

Well, this is certainly different to the electric truck! Many of the same elements are present—the broad display screen for the instruments; the central touchpad; the small-diameter/thick-rimmed steering wheel, and some physical controls to the left of the steering column—but they're shaped, sized, and placed differently, in a different kind of dashboard. The central display sits below what looks like a grab handle-topped storage bin. The big, blocky bucket seats look comfortable, with unobtrusive head restraints.



Chevrolet Suburban

Here again, familiar elements but with this model's own arrangement. There's a deep-set instrument panel display, a horizontal central touchpad, and knobs and push-buttons for the driver to actually-for-real grip. The center console is extra-broad, as are the bucket seats. And take a look at those super-wide headrests, just a bit proud of coplanar with the seatback's front surface.





Chevrolet Trailblazer

This looks like a nice space to be a driver in. The dashboard screens and gauges are configured similarly to those in the Equinox. A subdued orange swoosh on the door panel breaks up the otherwise endless sea of greys—given the terrific bright red in the electric Blazer, might we hope to see a return to colorful interior trims one day...soon?



Chevrolet Trax

Nothing quite so outspoken here as in the electric Blazer, but there are hints of that kind of adventuresome design: the round, sculpted-chrome HVAC air outlets, the bright yellow seat trim piping. The dashboard design is Chevrolet-familial, with landscape-format instrument display and central touchscreen. Again we marvel at the practicality of this substantially-vertical dashboard. A light-colored headliner brightens up the place, and the headrests look as though straddling the line between in and out of the way.





Chrysler Pacifica

Wow, just look at those inviting, warm-tan seats! Colors like this were popular in the 1970s, and their reappearance is a welcome change from nonstop greys and beiges. There's a recessed instrument panel display ahead of the round, medium-diameter/medium-rim-thickness steering wheel, and a landscape-format central touch-screen with a deck of physical controls below it. The tan color carries over to the central chunk of the door panel, and of course to the rear seats.



Dodge Hornet GLH

The last time Chrysler used the GLH moniker, it was on a heavily turbocharged, seriously-fast-for-the-time version of their Omni econohatch in the 1980s; unofficially it stood for 'goes like hell'. This new Hornet model's interior looks to be configured along similar lines of thought. The instrument cluster has a racetrack-shaped perimeter; the dotty pattern on the seat cushions augment the '80s nostalgia, and there's red stitching and striping on the armrest and dashboard. The dash also contains big five-sided air outlets. It's an automatic, but the design of the shift stick makes one glance down to count the pedals.





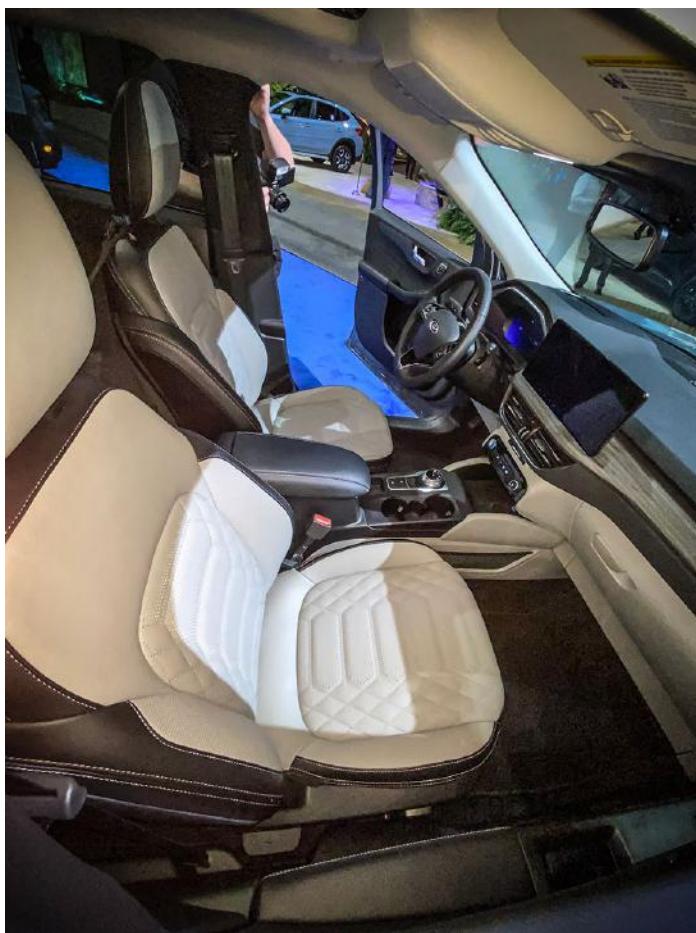
Fiat 500 Kartell

Hey, now here's an exuberant interior design. The instrument panel is surrounded by a rendition of diamond-plate metal, coordinating with the matte-aluminum hub on the flat-bottom steering wheel. More matte-metal finish is sprinkled around the steering column, and—neat!—on the outer seat bottom and back trim. And check out that cool upholstery material running from the head restraints down through the middle of the chair-back and cushion!



Ford Bronco

It looks as if the Bronco and the Dodge Hornet might've attended the same finishing school: black interior with sporty red stitching and accents...red dotty pattern on the seat cushions. But they're two very different vehicles. The Bronco has the now-customary instrument cluster display screen ahead of an asymmetrically-rimmed, red-stitched steering wheel. There's a great big panoramic sunroof, and huggy tall-backed bucket seats. The recessed HVAC air outlet is an unusual touch.



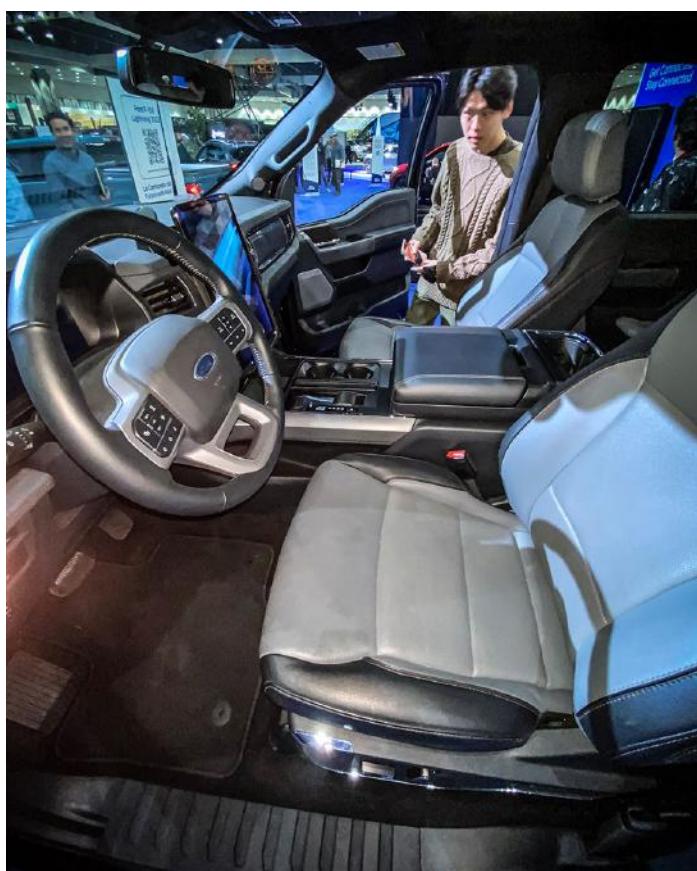
Ford Escape

Classic black-and-white: bright white seats with a diamonds-and-hexoblongs pattern set off by black surrounds and white stitchlines. There's a round-knob gear selector, a round steering wheel, and a pair of horizontal displays—the central one a touchpad above a pair of HVAC air outlets. White lower dashboard and roof lining contributes to an open feeling inside the car.



Ford Expedition

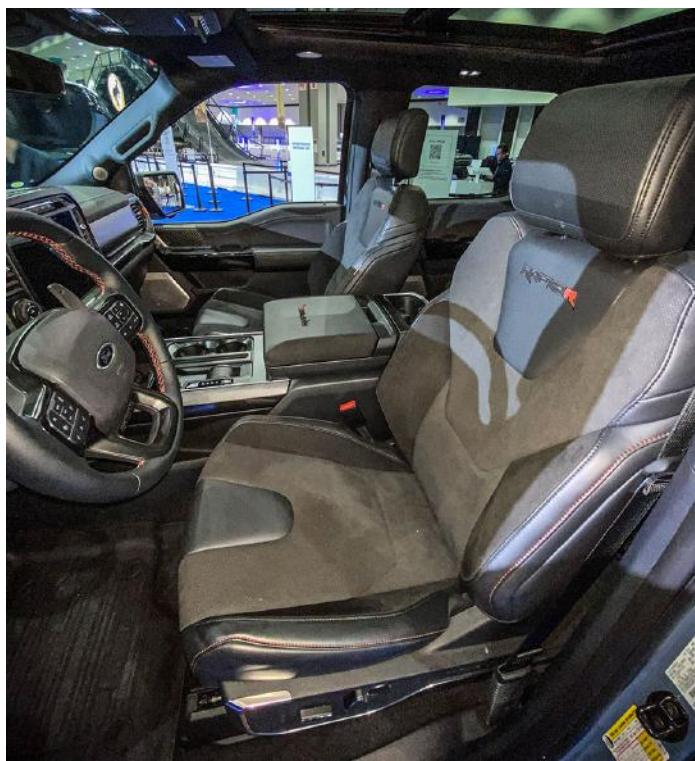
Here's Ford's take on a design brief similar to that of the competing Chevrolet Suburban. The broad seats are finished in a pattern of gray stone striations amidst a sea of charcoal greys. The headrests appear to be fore-and-aft adjustable, and check out that super-sized center console/armrest. Real gauges flank a driver's display, and there's a smallish horizontal touchscreen in the middle of the dashboard.



Ford F150 Lightning

Similar layout to the Expedition, but with different upholstery and trim materials, and a much bigger, vertical central touchpad with an inbuilt round knob. There's an interesting fold-flat shift lever, shown here in its stowed position to the left of the dual cupholders.





Ford Raptor

Blocks and chunks as far as the eye can see; thoughtfully-executed ones. The headrests don't look too spine-bending, and they're nice and wide—like the deep-sculpted seats themselves, with a suedelike main upholstery material. The enormous sunroof and the downswEEP to the front door beltline makes for an airy feel. There's another of Ford's cool fold-flat shift sticks, and (wait for it...) red accents amidst all the black, in the form of red steering wheel stitching and a red stroke at the left and right ends of the dashboard.



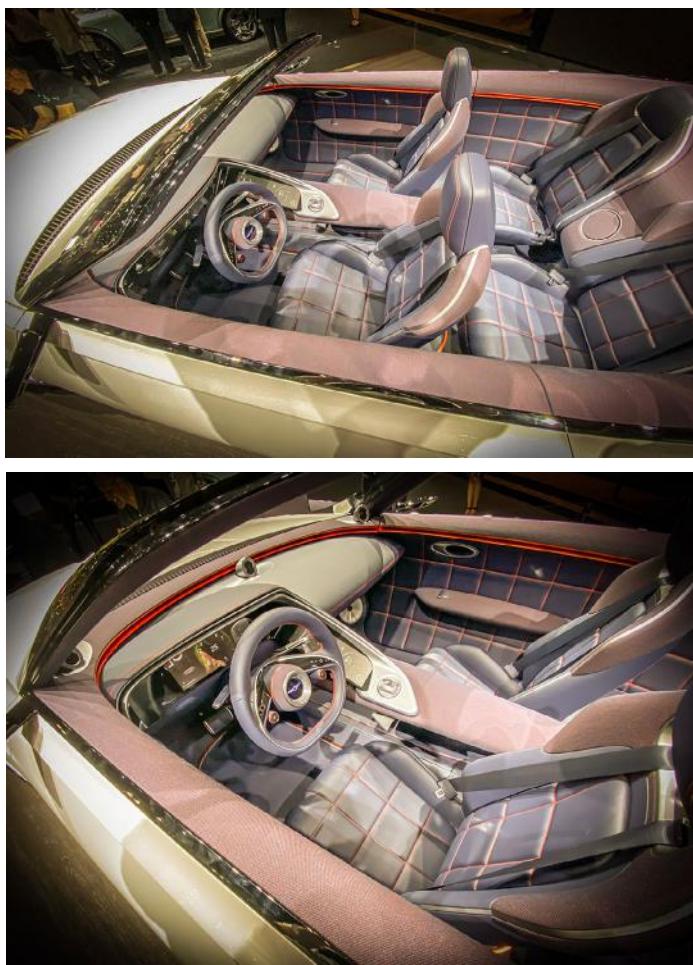
Genesis X coupé

Here's asymmetry, retromodernity, and driver-centric fresh design thought—all in wholesale quantities. The driver's seat is black with a tan seatbelt...the passenger seat is tan with a black belt. The long, straight, cylindrical steering column and square-tile door and seat upholstery pattern recall the 1950s and '60s, as does the jet-exhaust door handle; the through-floor pedal stems and bottom-hinged accelerator hark back decades further—cool! There's a curve-hooded, piano-black instrument display swooping up from a flying center console designed to provide for elbows without blocking the nearly-flat floor. The steering wheel hub, is that carbon-fiber? Or retro-chic wrapped rope? Perhaps a little of both.



Genesis X cabriolet

If the coupé isn't quite far-out enough for you, get a load of this open-top model. Mauve and dusty-rose upholstery done up in squares set off by orange piping—hot!





GMC Acadia

Pause and let your eyes and mind re-adapt for a moment after those twin funkatrone Genesis models, or else you won't be able to perceive this car's interior at all. Comfy-looking seats (including the headrests) are finished in what appears to be durable, grippy materials. Tasteful woodgrain accents—they've evolved quite a lot over the decades—on the door panels, dashboard, and center console help break up the grey ocean, as do matte-metal trim bands on the steering wheel spokes and around the central controls and display. That shiny chrome ring on the steering wheel hub, though, is surely a suncatcher. The instrument panel has physical gauges around a card-sized display.



GMC Terrain Denali

Understated elegance appears to be the theme here. This has the look and feel of vaultlike exclusion of exterior annoyances. The small, asymmetrically-rimmed steering wheel looks comfortable to hold, and the seats look comfortable without drawing attention to themselves. There's a central touchpad, of course, and a pair of big American cupholders. On the instrument panel, round real gauges flank a medium-sized display screen. There's what looks like a HUD carveout in the dashtop.





Honda HR-V

The driver sees a round physical gauge on the right, and an equally-round display screen on the left side of the instrument panel. These small-diameter, asymmetrical-fat-rimmed steering wheels appear to be a trend. The seats are covered with what looks like durable, livable material accented with jaunty stitch stripes. Take a look at the interesting hex-textured grille on the HVAC air outlet.



Hyundai Ioniq 6

A 'closed', straight-across dashboard serves as a footing for an extra-wide display screen spanning the driver's instrument panel and the central touchpad regions. One might be forgiven for thinking this kind of steering wheel has some kind of secret sauce that wins favor and makes many manufacturers specify it; whether or not that's how it works, it works—a more-or-less round wheel is better suited to the task than a yoke. This one has interesting asymmetry; its upper-left quadrant is thicker than any other. Deep thumb-grip carveouts look as though they all but enforce a 9-and-3 grip, which experts say is safer than yesterday's 10-and-2 convention. The seats look supportive and supple, though the head restraints appear to be the shove-your-head-forward variety. Window controls are on the center console.





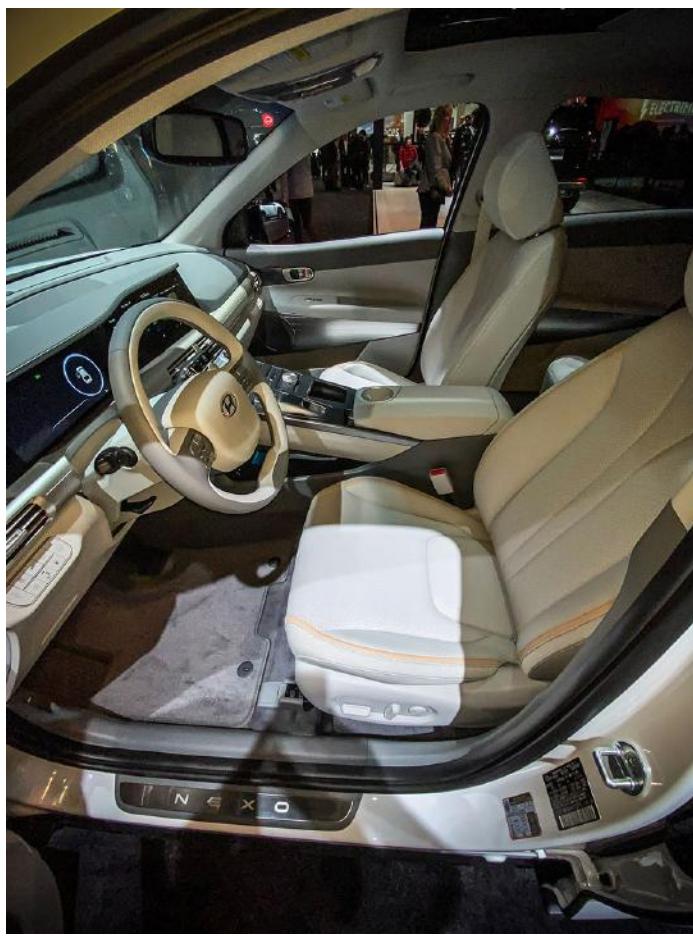
Hyundai Kona

Grey seats...grey dashboard and steering wheel...grey door panels...lighter-grey headliner. Everything's here—a horizontal instrument panel display and a central horizontal touchpad; a fun-size sunroof, head-forward head restraints—and the whole package looks serviceable enough, but take away the touchpad and put in physical gauges and a shift stick and this looks like it could be a design from a decade or two ago. Not necessarily a bad or unworthy design, just not a groundbreaking one. Those big round 8-segment HVAC air outlets are nifty, though!



Hyundai Nexo

Wow, what a contrast to the Kona. This couldn't possibly be mistaken for a design rooted in the past. There's a big, wide combination instrument panel and control touchpad running from close to the co-driver all the way to the left side of the dashboard. There's a horizontal deck of buttons below the leftmost HVAC air register, and a big horizontal deck of buttons spanning from below the central air registers aftward to the armrest. Cheery, light-colored seats look a trifle short in the cushion, but nevertheless attractive with an eye-catching stitch band. The two-color steering wheel is round and asymmetrical. Looks like plenty of footroom here.





Hyundai Palisade

The big Hyundai SUV has suitably big chairs, with what looks like good lumbar support. No colored stitching or accents, but there are three different texture patterns on the upholstery. The center console and armrest look suitably supersized to go with the rest of the vehicle. The steering wheel has those 9-and-3-enforcing cutouts, like the one on the Ioniq 6, and it has an unusual four spokes dividing the wheel into upper, lower, low-left, and low-right segments. There's an interesting multilayer arrangement to the IP, which is inset into the broad touchpad.

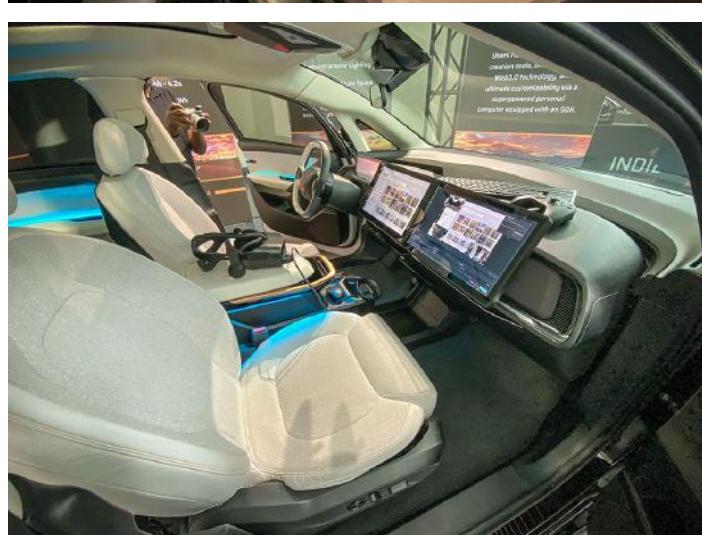
Shifting is by pushbuttons, P-R-N-D; **suddenly it's 1958!** Violet accent lightlines set off the HVAC register and dashboard line. Maybe they're color-changeable, but even if not, this violet looks terrific. The door handles look as though carved from aluminum, and streamlines run forward from them onto the dashboard and all the way to the edge of the touchpad.



Indi One

Well, this is certainly different. Two horizontal touch-screens dominate the dashboard, with a third, smaller screen for the driver's IP. There's a **squircular** steering wheel with two round (horn?) buttons, and the P-R-N-D pushbuttons are in the middle of the armrest.

Those screens can be put to use by passengers fed up with boring ol' scenery; they can play video games instead. There's lovely cyan light accenting the doors and center console.

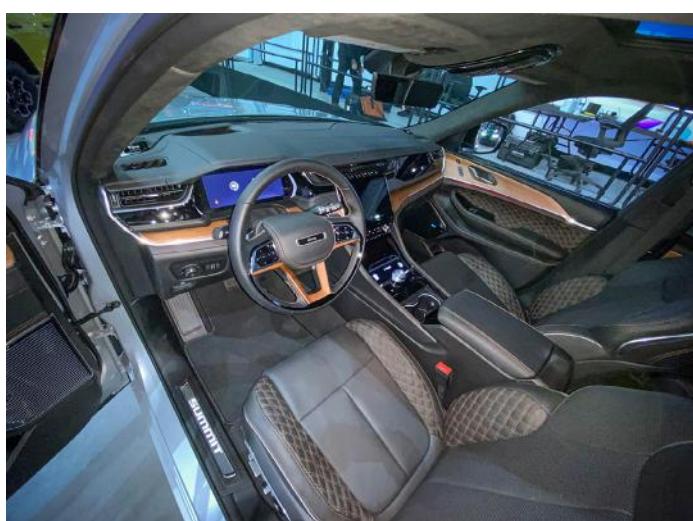


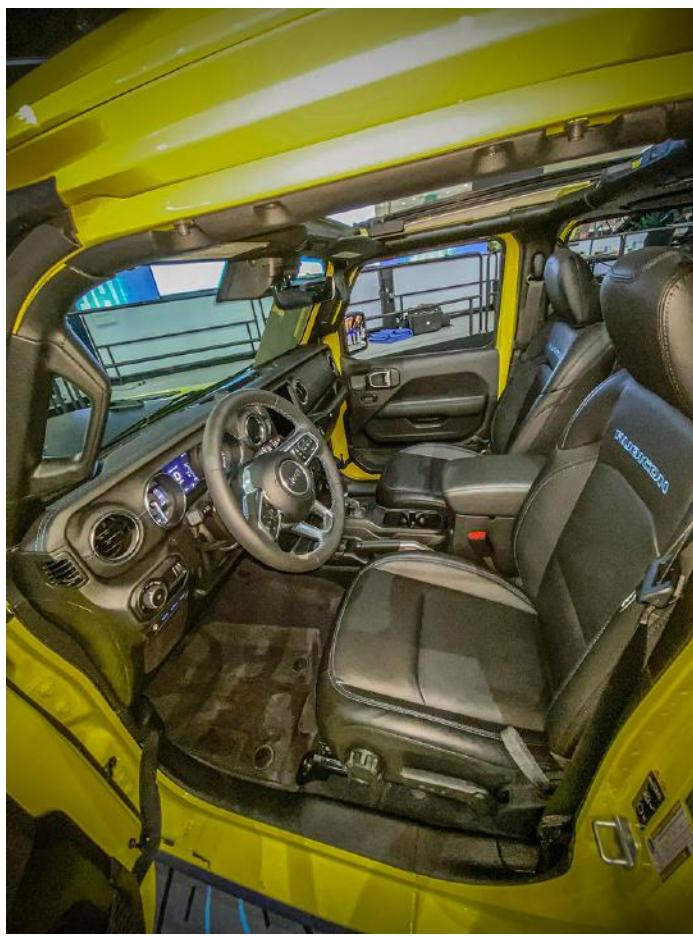
Jeep Grand Cherokee

Dashboard? It seems more apt to call it a drive deck, with its carved-wood trim and significant horizontal planarity. There's a well-hooded rectangular IP display for the driver, a tidily-integrated central touchpad, a knob here and a row of real pushbuttons there. There's a HUD-carveout atop the dash (or deck).

The wood trim flows around to the door trims. The seats have a posh double-stitched diamond pattern, and there's a light band highlighting the cupholders.

From another view angle, we see the rear of each front head restraint is carved out to accommodate a screen for the rear passenger, airplane-style.





Jeep Wrangler

This interior manages to look simultaneously hose-washable and comfortable (except perhaps for those shove-forward headrests). Lots of circles in the driver's view: circular HVAC registers, a circular light switch, a round steering wheel with a round hub, and round gauges in the instrument panel on either side of the display region. The sunroof and flat windshield give a safari effect.



Kia Carnival

Toasted-orange seats; headrests, armrest, and door trim accents make for a cheery interior without going crazy about it. There's a unitized extra-wide display/touchpad, with the driver's IP area shaded by a hoodbrow. It makes for a tidy, uncluttered dashboard, even with the pushbuttons. The wide center console contains four cupholders and a stubby traditional-type shift stick.



Kia EV6

Here's another of Kia's combination instrument panel/touchpad units, as in the carnival, and intriguing fluorescent-yellow pipes and stripes on the seats, with matching stitching on the (sing it again!) small, flat-bottomed, asymmetrically-rimmed steering wheel. There are extra-long-looking doorhandle levers, and an asymmetrical armrest pad. The seats are a tombstone type with metallic-rimmed cutouts below the upper headrest area—perhaps to give rear-seaters a glimpse of the view forward?

There's a prominent HUD carveout in the dashboard, and an interesting pattern to the air duct(?) grille nearest the camera; it looks like the honeycomb structure of a catalytic converter.



Kia Niro

These seats are nicely finished, with sturdy stitching and an attractive assemblage of upholstery panels. But the headrests are the shove-your-head-forward variety; good luck with any attempt at resting. The dashboard has an eyecatching asymmetrical shape, with a wide unitized display/touchscreen spanning most of its width. There's a nicely-designed row of pushbuttons, with their labels facing upward for easy reading and operation, to the left of the steering column. The steering wheel keeps with the formula: small diameter, asymmetrically-thick rim, and prominent thumb-carveouts.





Kia Seltos

Here's another wide, wide combination instrument panel and touchscreen, set at an up-angle on a multiplanar dashboard with substantial horizontal prominence—so much so that the HVAC air register closest to the camera here is very nearly floor-flat! There's a big multitude of buttons distributed on the (...small diameter, asymmetrically-thick-rimmed...) steering wheel spokes. A few on the dashboard, too, along with some blankoffs to remind the driver they didn't order all the options or they live where certain items—headlamp levelling, rear fog lamps, that kind of thing—aren't legally required and so aren't offered. Everything south of the door beltline is grey-grey-grey.



Kia Sorento

Lovely warm-cinnamon seats with posh diamond padding on the flanks and broad upper and lower central panels. Especially as toplit by the open sunroof they look inviting, except for the shove-forward headrests. Everything that can be said has already been said about the steering wheel.

The dashboard is an upright, prominently vertical design with great big bi-level HVAC registers and a partially-hooded, large-format display panel.





Kia Telluride

If not for the few dots of color inside the car—bright red seatbelt pushbutton and door reflector, small bits on the display panel—and the scenery outside the car, one could mistake this for a black-and-white photo. Everything but everything is grey. Aside from that, it looks like a comfortable place to spend time on a road trip or in a traffic jam. The seats are big and plush, the armrest is plenty wide enough to avoid elbow collisions, and the backsloped front surface of the headrests suggests at least the potential to get comfortable. As in the Sorento, buttons to the left of the steering column appear easy to read and use.



Lexus RX

Reds and oranges are in this year, as it seems—no objection, your honor! The red seating surfaces are echoed in the door trims and accent striping around the perimeter of the carpet mats. The seats overall look tremendously comfortable, including the headrests. The dashboard is prominently dominated by screens, and the front passenger's eyes don't have to traverse miles of dashtop surface to reach the windshield.

From this angle, we see the compound-curved surface to the driver's instrument panel, the large size of the central touchscreen, the rather tight cluster of buttons and controls to the left of the instrument panel, the HUD carveout, and another view of those sexy red seats.





Nissan Altima

Pretty conventional layout here, with a mostly-physical instrument panel, another of those steering wheels, and a regular ol' normal ol' shift stick—nothing the matter with that; it's the kind we wouldn't have to study, ponder, and read the instructions to figure out how to operate. The seats are compact but comfortable-looking, and their prominent stitchwork dilutes the grey abit. So does the metallic style line trailing from behind the door handle.



Nissan Frontier

Real gauges here, too, and a whole whack of buttons stacked on the steering wheel's blocky hub. The seats look a bit like racing items, only probably more comfortable, and they've got a colorful orange callout and stitching. There's a matching orange styleline around the perimeter of the armrest.



Nissan Pathfinder

Another make, another model, another pair of warm orangey-colored seats—and you'll get no complaint from us about it; they're fantastic! The seat bottom and back look thickly padded and have a sophisticated herringbone pattern to the upholstery, and that orange color runs in-board to the center console, up onto the dashboard, and wraps round to the upper door trims.

Here's a closer view of the driver's instrument panel. The tachometer (left) and speedometer (right) are virtually turned inward rather than facing straight—unconventional, interesting, and it looks like they're probably not difficult to read; maybe even easier than the regular kind. The variety of information clearly displayed here is most impressive, though it does rather dwarf the tiny, conventional telltales down in the corners.





Nissan Versa

The instrument cluster contains at least one actual round instrument, alongside a display screen shaped to fit the binnacle. The seats in a car of this segment could easily have been plain grey ones; kudos to Nissan for opting otherwise. These sunset-red upholstery accents, together with the fore-and-aft center stripes, make a cheery presentation. The color accent is picked up in the headrest and dashboard stitching. Outboard HVAC registers are the round type with completely-closeable flap louvres—this kind is known to work well. Aluminum accents in the door panels further brighten up the space.



Nissan Z

This setup could single-seatedly change the meaning of the phrase 'feeling blue'. They seem to suit a car like this in ways a grey or a black just wouldn't, and that goes as well for the blue wraparound at the forward end of the center console and in the door panels. The headrests are large, but they look well placed. Are bottom-hinged accelerator pedals really on the way back? It looks like they very well might be. The driver's instrument panel is configured to emulate round gauges, and is that...?

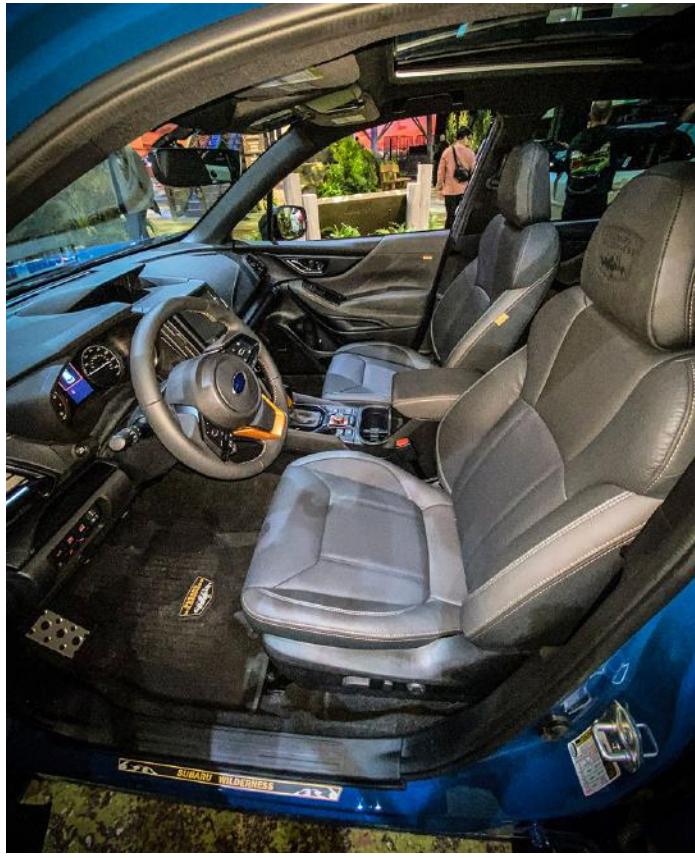
...It is! An actual, real handshift transmission—a critically-endangered species in the upper North American markets. From this angle we also see a trio of physical gauges perched atop the dashboard, and an amazingly asymmetrical steering wheel, not just in padding (though there is that) but it also looks eccentrically mounted to the column; we'd love to learn why this is better.





Ram

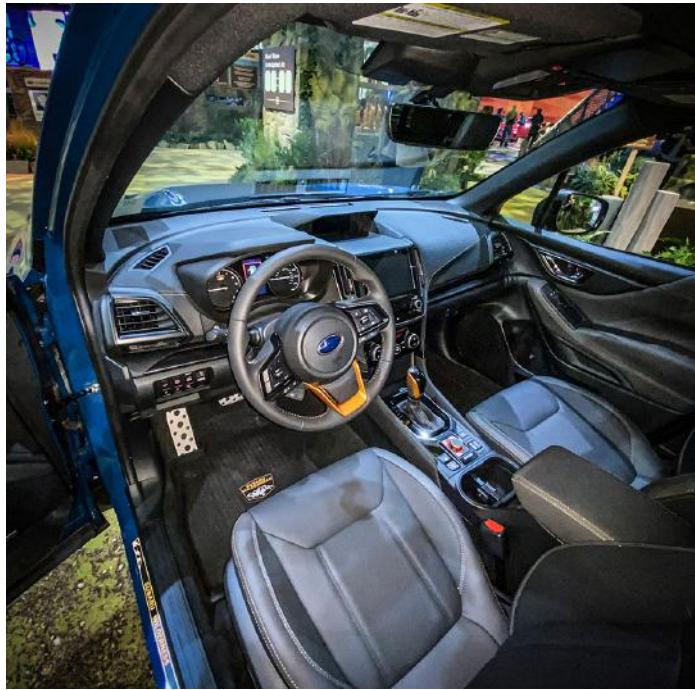
Bit of a dark vault, this; black-black-black. It could also be described as businesslike. That looks like a column-mounted gear selector (another endangered species), and a wide, stitch-hooded virtual instrument panel. The broad armrest appears to serve also as the lid of a sizeable storage compartment, and there's a big vertical touchscreen in the center of the dashboard.



Subaru Forester

These look like comfortable, durable accommodations, and while it doesn't look like you'd be able to stretch your neck rearward, neither does it look like you'd be forced to bend it forward. Everything's mostly grey, though a flash of color here and there keeps things from being monotonous. The drilled-aluminum footrest looks like it might've been cadged from the WRX parts bin.

From this angle we get a better view of the admirably thin A-pillars, the virtual instrument panel and central touchscreen, the big HVAC registers and the controls below the left one, as well as the complex lines and curves with which the dashboard flows down into the center console.





Subaru Legacy

Another set of comfy-and-durable Subaru seats. No color-flash here in the Legacy interior; instead, a woodtone panel and metallic surround bands keep things lively.

Numerous buttons on the steering wheel, and look at that tidily-integrated vertical center touchscreen. Looks like a pair of real round gauges in the instrument panel, and that's a grab-it-and-stir manumatic shift stick. The armrest looks a trifle narrow for two; watch for duelling elbows.



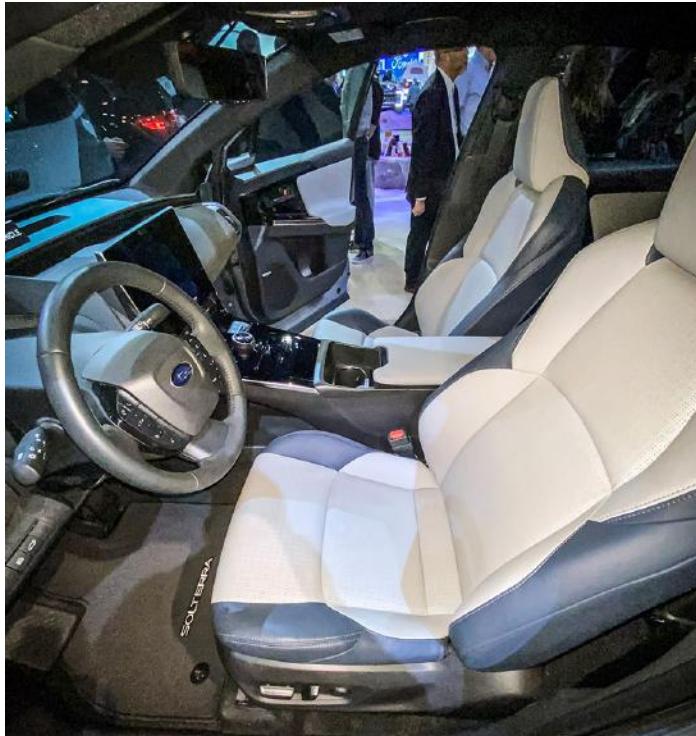
Subaru Solterra

Bright white and dusky blue—a fine combination, imbuing the Solterra's interior with a classy ambiance. The head restraints don't look obnoxious, and that looks like a nice, broad central armrest and storage cubby.

The steering wheel spokes seem to flow forward into the arms supporting the driver's instrument panel, located admirably high to minimize the driver's need to shift their gaze up and down. The central touchscreen and center console give the appearance of an open laptop, ready to get to work, and the big square bi-level HVAC register looks capable of great airflow.

Start-stop buttons are not new (though they're a problematic answer to a question we wonder if anyone ever actually asked), but this one's labelled POWER, with the universal on/off symbol. That makes a lot more sense than START and STOP, in the context of this EV. The shiny bezel around it, though, looks like it might be highly prone to fingerprints and scuffing, and the textured hard plastic surrounding the odo/trip button and IP illumination control looks a bit 1990s from this angle.

Once you've started your Solterra—er, powered it on, here's where you set it in motion with a combination of turns, pushes, and separate-button taps. Well...perhaps. The electric parking brake is conveniently near the shifter. We still wonder about scuffs and fingerprints on that shiny bezel.



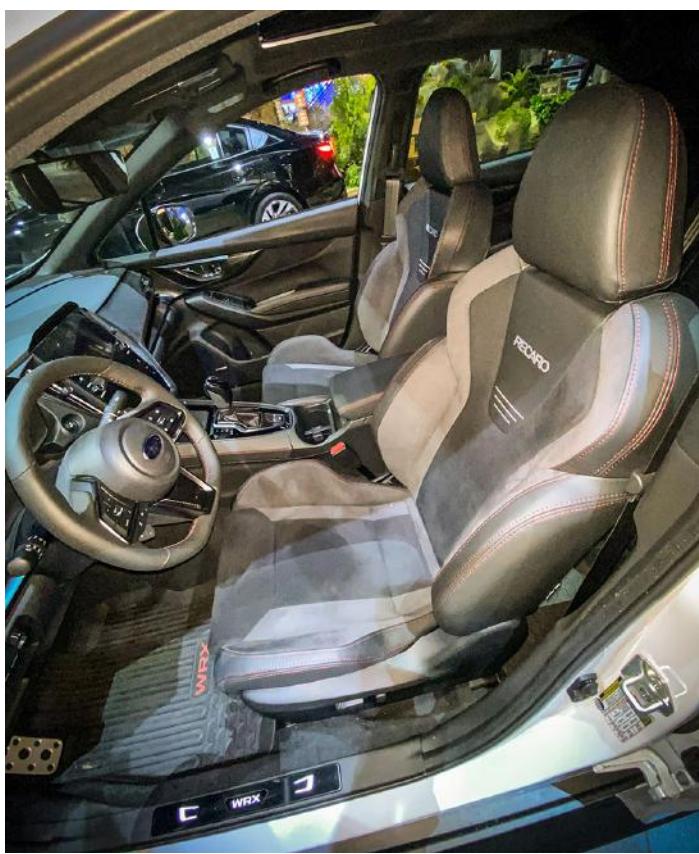
Subaru WRX

Two prominent name callouts that go together like raspberries and dark chocolate: WRX on the floormats and doorsill, and RECARO high and central on the seatback.

They look like suitably grippy seats, supportive in all axes to keep the driver and front passenger cupped despite mad lateral G-forces. The light and dark greys harmonize well with each other, set off as they are by red racing stitchwork, and the tall, thickly-padded headrests look positionally unobtrusive.

There's a pair of big round physical gauges—engine speed on the left; vehicle speed on the right—with a vertical card-shaped display in between. A prominent, portrait-format touchscreen with edge-stacked climate and hazard flasher buttons dominates the center of the extremely deep dashboard. No turn/tap/click gear selector here; it's an honest-to-goodness shift stick; in this car it appears to be a manumatic type: shift into Drive, or snick it back and left for stepwise selection up or down through the gears. Not much reachable room on that big expanse of dashboard for buttons, so they've migrated to the steering wheel's left and right spokes. As to the wheel itself, see above (and above that; and above that, and above that, and...). This one has red racing stitchwork like the seats, though.

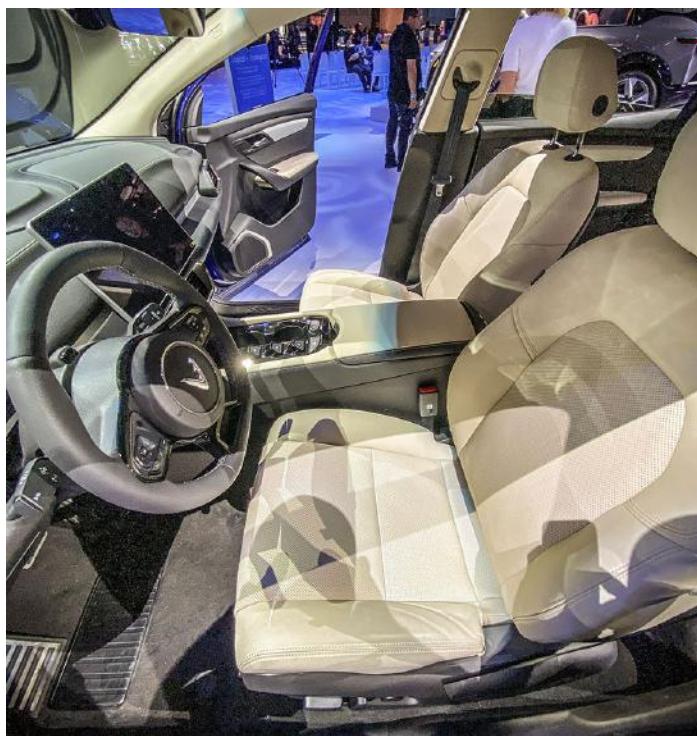
There's what looks like an exceptional amount of space here in the WRX's back seat. This probably isn't a Recaro product, but it's nicely trimmed and looks pleasant enough for a backbencher.





Vinfast VF6

The VF6 was locked, but glass is clear. We see the small round steering wheel with big central hub; flat-across dashboard with not-very-integral center touchscreen/IP; black-and-white upholstery and trim, and light-colored seat belts: we guess they'll probably go darker with dirt after a few years. There are admirably stowable rear headrests, so there's at least the hypothetical possibility of seeing out the back. The hyperaggressively-radiusued upper trailing corner of the front and upper leading corner of the rear doorframes are puzzling; one wants to hope they look less awkward from the interior view than from out here.



VinFast VF8

Everything looks tidily finished in the VF8's interior. Similar toneways; an off-white and an off-black, but with a more conservative arrangement than in the VF6. The dark-colored seatbelts will probably hold their appearance well over the years. The seats look broad and comfortable to sit on, though maybe not so laterally supportive as other designs; the headrests—glory be!—appear to have a big range of positional adjustment. Those big-radiusued door corners look a bit less goofy from inside.

Wow, that's an extra super deep dashboard! It's likely this way for reasons to do with overall vehicle packaging, but it still looks and feels like quite a big intrusion into the passenger space. As in the VF6, there's a central touchscreen/instrument panel that looks attached rather than integrated. The seats look a bit more supportive from this angle, and the smooth-top armrest looks usefully positioned. The steering wheel hub proudly bears Vinfast's logo in bright, shiny chrome—these always seem to catch the sun from any angle and beam it directly into the driver's eyes, ouch. No buttons on the big dashboard, but plenty of them on the steering wheel spokes. We might have been tempted to ask if there's any automaker not using steering wheels like this, but Elon Musk declared round wheels "boring" and went with a yoke widely slammed as ergonomically nightmarish, so there's that.

Pushbutton shifting. These look nicely designed and angled for easy reach and use. They're right ahead of the car's on-off button, which is flanked by the door lock switch and the hazard flasher switch...no sign of the parking brake switch, though; where's that? The cupholders, to be perfectly American about it, seem extremely small. Two USB ports tucked under the central HVAC registers aren't quite twins; one is purely for charging without linking into the car's infotainment system.



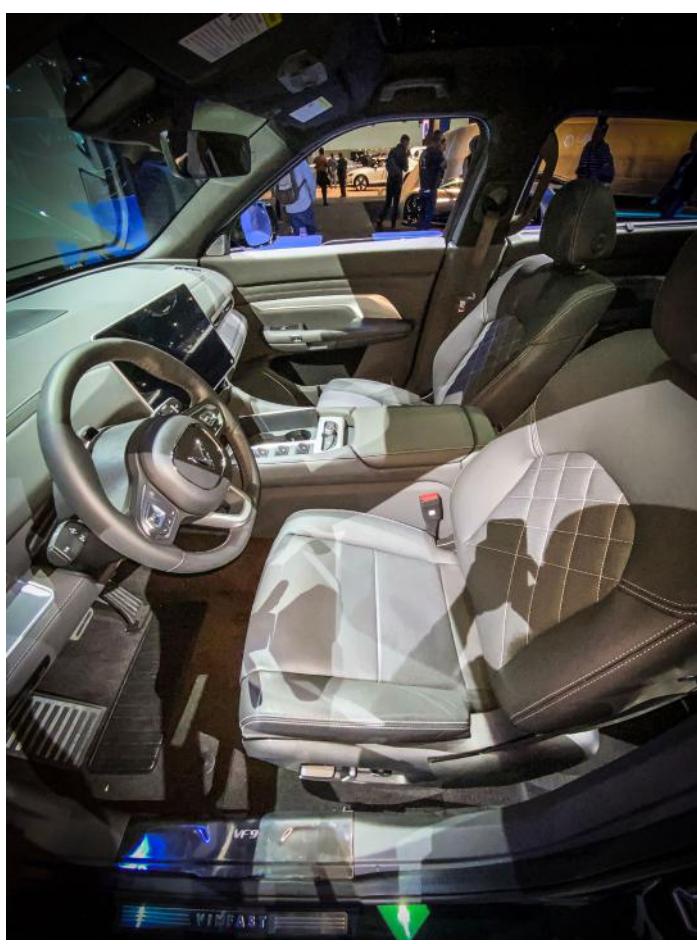


VinFast VF9

This third rendition of Vinfast's interior design philosophy blends the black and the white into a homogenous slate grey, though there's bright white stitchwork on the seat trim to break up the monotone. The seat bottom cushion looks to be a two-layer affair, reminiscent of Oldsmobile's pillowtop seats of the 1970s. There's prominent make-and-model branding in the dual bright metal sillplates.

The pushbutton shifter, power on-off, door lock/hazard switch, and cupholder assembly looks like the one in the VF8, though it's not quite the same; here there's a side-hinged cover to keep one's very short, very small cups hidden out of sight of car prowlers.

Here we see another dashboard designed in accord with the apparent VinFast formula: straight-across, ultra-deep, with central touchscreen hung in the middle. Lots of shiny chrome eye-spears on this instantiation of the steering-wheel-of-the-year.

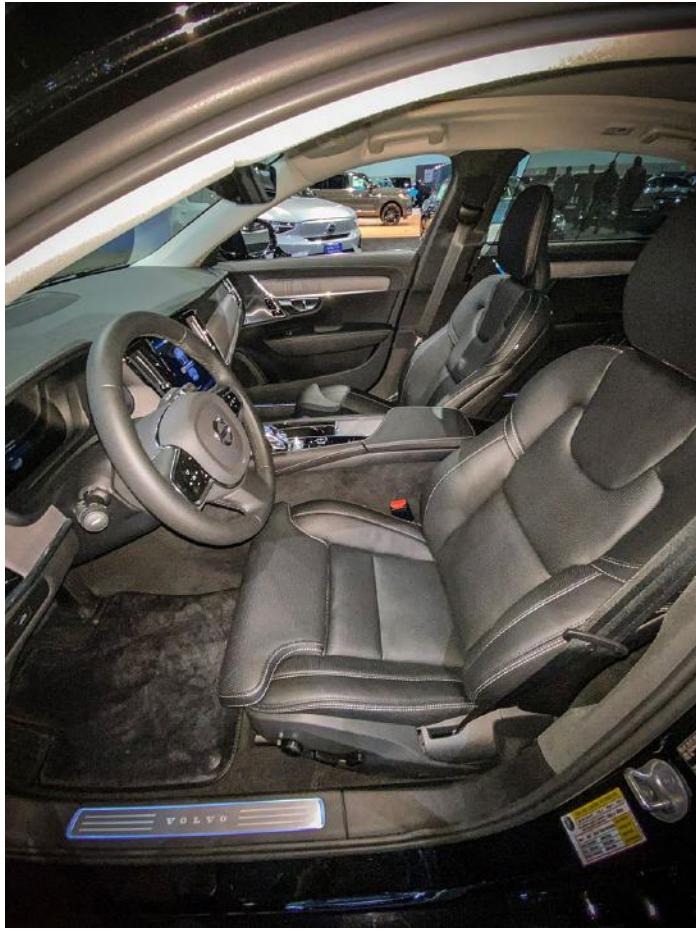


Volvo S90

Looks like a blue light perimeter to the VOLVO callout plate on the sill, but once you're inside everything's grey here up to the top of the doorframes, where an off-white headliner lightens things up a bit. Orthopedic and ergonomic rectitude of seats has been a Volvo point of pride for many decades, and these look to continue the tradition, though the headrests look like they might be forward-shovers.

Ah, from this angle we see things aren't as grey as they looked; matte-metal panels and chrome swooshes provide accents and texture. The driver gets a deeply-recessed virtual instrument panel with an antiglare visor overtop, and there's a nicely-integrated central touch-screen. The dashboard is medium-deep, with a prominent HUD-carveout just aft of the windshield. The driver also gets a sturdy place to rest their left foot.

The shifter is intriguing; it's a sculpted ice cube. Push it forward to go backward; pull it backward to go forward. It's places like this where longstanding HMI tradition supersedes fresh-look intuition: the front-to-back gear sequence has been R-N-D for so long that to reverse it would surely make problems. There's a separate Park button nestled just aft of the ice cube.





VW Golf GTI

Tall tombstone seats with red GTI callout and plaid upholstery are a modern rendition of features in the 1970s-'80s GTIs which propelled VW's reputation away from its formative Beetle years. Red accents and stripes sprinkled throughout keep the interior upbeat. There's a stubby shift stick and an actual, real clutch pedal. The small central touchpad meets up neatly with the instrument cluster, and the steering wheel is...another one of 'em.



VW ID.Buzz

Big, high chairs in off white and slate, with a complex geometric pattern and ID. callout in the central upholstery. There's a small standup instrument panel behind the by-now-thoroughly-familiar steering wheel, and a medium-sized landscape-format central touchpad. Looks like a sizeable cubby bin below the armrest between the seats. The display car was a Europe/rest-of-world model; it's possible interior details might differ on the American-spec car.



VW Taos

All shades of grey here, with a bit of strategically deployed white piping and textural variation to keep things from becoming soporific. There's a delightfully old-fashioned rotary-knob light switch on the dashboard—yes, please!—and a leather-booted shift stick in the center console. The seatbelt buckles are unusually tiny; it's amazing what they can miniaturize these days. There's a binned virtual instrument panel for the driver, and an integrated central touchscreen bedecked with buttons in the middle of the commendably-shallow dashboard, below a shelf-shaped area which looks like a handy place to put this and that.