

Official fuel consumption figures for the Audi RS 4 Avant in mpg (l/100km): Urban 19.3 (14.6), Extra Urban 33.2 (8.5), at £4,000, 20" 5 V-spoke design polished titanium alloy wheels at £1,350 and matt aluminium styling pack at £480.





the the the



The new 444bhp Audi RS 4 Avant



Official government fuel consumption figures in mpg (litres per 100km) for new A-Class range: urban 33.6 (8.4) - 62.8 (4.5), extra urban 55.4 (5.1) - 85.6 (3.3), combined Parktronic at £690.00 and metallic paint at £570.00 (on-the-road price includes VAT, delivery, 12 months' Road Fund Licence, number plates, new vehicle registration fee and fuel). Some combinations of features/options may not be



44.1 (6.4) = 74.3 (3.8) CO₂ emissions: 148-98 g/km. Model shown is an A180 CDI BlueEFFICIENCY AMG Sport (manual) at £25,725.00 on-the-road including optional Night Package at £995.00, Active Park Assist with available. Please contact your Mercedes-Benz Retailer for availability. Price correct at time of going to print.



'Throughout this period of evolution and improvement, I promise that evo will continue to champion the Thrill of Driving'



WELCOME TO THE REVISED and refreshed **evo**. In this issue we're rolling out the first of a number of improvements to the magazine over the coming months that will bring you even closer to the Thrill of Driving.

As many of you will know, in the past two years **evo** has successfully applied its benchmark road tests, drive stories and features to exciting new media platforms. We were one of the first magazines to embrace the tablet device and

we continue to win awards for our interactive edition. Not only that, but our dedication to video has allowed us to bring the sights and sounds of the world's best cars direct to your computer - and increasingly your internet-enabled TVs. As I write, evo's YouTube channel (evoTV) has attracted 29 million views and our website, evo.co.uk, continues to expand, with a lively and knowledgeable community and key road tests at its heart. Worldwide, evo has 14 licensed editions.

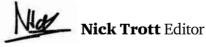
For those who continue to enjoy the joys of ink on paper, you'll be pleased to know that the magazine remains at the centre of the evo universe. We've looked closely at the design and content of evo, and this refreshed and clean layout, conceived by new art director Rob Gould, is at the heart of the improvements, with fuller features, more indulgent images and more room on pages for extended and in-depth copy. Elsewhere, road tests will be more comprehensive, features more luxurious and our long-term Fast Fleet section expanded (and that's not just because Harry has bought another Lamborghini...). As well as all that, iconic cars and used performance legends will become a much bigger part of the mag.

To top it off, I'm proud to announce that three-time Indy 500 winner, helpless petrolhead and Scottish racing hero Dario Franchitti joins evo this month as a columnist and US correspondent.

It seems extraordinary to think that **evo** is still a teenager in the world of motoring magazines, but in our short life we've become extremely well-travelled and well-respected for our integrity, quality and professionalism. In this issue alone we've visited Brazil, Japan, Peru, Sweden and Texas to bring you stories unique to evo. Regular readers will be pleased to know that we haven't abandoned the good old B660 either - sometimes the best roads are on your doorstep...

Throughout this period of evolution and improvement, I promise that evo will continue to champion the Thrill of Driving. There's nothing that gets closer to the feeling of liberation, of joy and of adventure than the right drive on the right road in the right car. Sometimes you seek it out, and sometimes it just happens. Whatever, we're here to share it with you, and we hope you'll share it with us too. Feel free to email me at nickt@evo.co.uk or contact me via Twitter (@evoNickTrott).

From me and the whole evo team, thanks for reading, enjoy the issue and I look forward to seeing you out on the open road.





Across the evo universe this month

CARS **FOR SALE**

evo's new website for buying and selling cars - forsale.evo. co.uk - is the place to spot a performance

MERCHANDISE

Head to evo.co.uk/ shop to take advantage of some great deals on books, DVDs, clothing, trackdays and more

iPAD FDITION

evo's interactive version won Best Motoring Title at the Digital Magazine Awards. See more at evo.co.uk/ipad

JOIN THE COMMUNITY

Air your views and share your experiences with on the forum at evo.co.uk/forum

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Iconic features of fast cars under the microscope. First up, Porsche's ducktail



Remember, if your local newsagent doesn't stock **evo**, just ask them to order it for you

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Raclar





Stuttgart breaks new ground with the entry-level CLA

News, new metal, investigations, interviews, technology and more...

2014 Corvette Stingray

Under the skin

Inside this month's most exciting new car

Seventh-generation version of American muscle legend revealed. Right-hand-drive version planned too

Words: Mike Duff

AMERICAN CARMAKERS have always known how to put on the glitz. And the unveiling of the

new Chevrolet Corvette, to the sort of pounding rock soundtrack that normally accompanies professional wrestling, was definitely the standout debut at this year's Detroit motor show in January.

But US manufacturers have a reputation for being better at delivering the sizzle than the steak. Over 60 years and six generations, the Corvette has rarely won out against European opposition. We

until we get behind the wheel, of course, but plans to produce a righthand-drive version for the first time mean that this 'Vette could find a level of popularity in the UK that none of its predecessors have managed.

Internet speculation that this Corvette would carry a mid-mounted engine has predictably proved to be wide of the mark. This is definitely evolution rather than revolution, with the familiar combination of a frontmounted pushrod V8, a transaxle gearbox next to the rear axle and transverse leaf springs.

Corvettes are never slow, and





HYBRID NSX GOES ON

Petrol-electric Honda coupe is previewed at Detroit motor show



RAPIDE GETS POWER

New Aston Martin engine means 550bhp for fastback model



.BUT FACES FAST AUDI OPPOSITION

RS7 expected to upset apple cart with a 0-62 time under 4sec



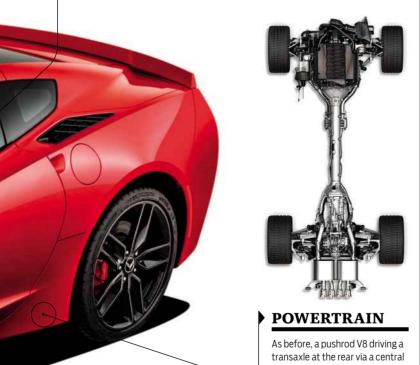
THE COST OF **RUNNING A GRAND PRIX**

Why huge fees make hosting Formula 1 a pricey affair



INTERIOR

Definitely the classiest cabin ever fitted to a Corvette, built around the massive transmission tunnel of the backbone chassis. Central screen will be standard



torque tube, with suspension by transverse leaf springs



CHASSIS

Switching from steel to aluminium has saved 45kg and increased structural strength. Lift-out roof panels make this Corvette a targa; a full cabrio will follow powerful engine mean that, even in its most basic form, the new car will dispatch the 0-60mph dash in under 4sec. Final engine details and a weight haven't been released, but GM promises at least 450bhp and 450lb ft from the 6.2-litre engine, with a kerb weight set to be under 1400kg. Quicker versions, like the current Z06 and ZR1, are a certainty to follow later. Chevrolet has also marked the switch to the new generation by bringing back the 'Stingray' name last used in the 1970s.

The styling is likely to split opinion, with a radical new look that seems to draw from most of the sports car



1963 Stingray

The second-gen Corvette was one of the fastest cars on the planet when launched



1990 ZR-1

Lotus-tuned version of the C4 'Vette had 375bhp - more than its rival, the Ferrari 348



2009 ZR1

'Blue Devil' C7 had a supercharged V8 producing 638bhp. Capable of 205mph world. The new headlights are very Ferrari F12, while the side-on view (and the new small rear 'quarter window') owes plenty to the Nissan GT-R. The back end is distinctive. with squared-off tail lights and four central exhaust pipes, but the overall effect is of too much going on at once. Some of the exterior plastics look and feel cheap too, especially the rear light surrounds and air outlets on the front wings.

On first impressions, the interior quality has been improved, with many functions controlled by a new central touchscreen, and the dashboard dominated by a vast rev counter. Optional sports seats will be offered for the first time – good news for anyone who has struggled for support in previous Corvettes.

Technically, the biggest change is the switch to an aluminium underbody that is 45kg lighter and 57 per cent stiffer than the steel frame of the old car. As before, most of the bodywork is made from glassfibre, but now with carbonfibre for the bonnet and pop-out roof panels, saving another 17kg over the previous C6. Insiders' claims that the car will be under 1400kg give it a better powerto-weight ratio than a basic Porsche 911. It's slightly longer and wider than the last Corvette, although its overall length of 4495mm is just 4mm longer than a '991' Porsche 911. As before. the Corvette is a strict two-seater, although with decent boot space under the opening rear hatch.

Power comes from a heavily re-engineered version of the familiar all-alloy 'small block' 6.2-litre V8, now with both direct injection and variable timing. Intake and exhaust valve locations have been reversed, while the cylinder heads have smaller combustion chambers and revised intake ports which, along with dished piston crowns, help improve fuel-air combustion and allow for a high 11.5:1 compression ratio. Cylinder deactivation is standard, reducing the engine to an in-line four under

Radar



Above: guartet of exhaust pipes dominates the rear of the seventh-generation Corvette

light use to save fuel, and a dry-sump lubrication system is part of the optional 'Z51' performance package. Buyers will be able to choose between either a six-speed auto or a seven-speed manual gearbox, with the seventh gear on the fourth plane, above reverse. This features what GM claims is automatic 'rev matching' on downshifts and, unusually, upshifts.

The suspension design is pretty much unchanged. The Corvette has unequal length wishbones at all four corners, with transverse leaf springs linking the left and right lower arms. It's a unique, if idiosyncratic, system that Chevrolet's engineers claim reduces both unsprung weight and makes packaging the suspension easier while also giving some anti-roll effect. The 'Z51' package also brings closer gearbox ratios for the manual 'box, an electronically controlled LSD and bigger 345mm diameter front brake discs (versus the standard 320mm). Steering has switched to electric assistance, with a motor powering the rack via a belt, and adaptive dampers will be an option with the Z51 pack as well.

GM has indicated that it plans to bring the Corvette to Europe as an official import. Chief engineer Tadge Juechter told journalists in Detroit that the company is planning an RHD version, although this won't hit the road before 2015. The base version will cost around \$50,000 in the States (just £31,000 at current rates). We'll probably pay around £50k when it gets here - but that will still make it almost unbeatable in the bang-perbuck stakes.

Also for the money

Mercedes C63 AMG

Probably the closest Euro rival on performance – 457bhp and 0-62 in 4.5sec



Lotus Exige S

Lightweight Brit has similar straight-line pace, despite giving away 100bhp



Porsche Cavman S

Expected to be the benchmark c£50k coupe. . We'll find out when we drive it next month



evo comment

THE CORVETTE HAS ALWAYS DEFIED GM's attempts to have it taken seriously outside America. Of course, GM didn't really need exports – US buyers seemed happy despite the Corvette's dynamic shortcomings.

But sales numbers of late have fallen off dramatically, from 40,000 in 2007 to barely 10,000 last year. If the Corvette is to survive beyond its seventh generation it will need export success. RHD will help, but to succeed in the UK this Corvette will have to deliver a far better driving experience than its predecessors. MD

Mercedes unveils first front-wheeldrive saloon

Aero-efficient CLA revealed in Detroit. Set for March launch in the UK. it could be sub-£25k...

Words: Mike Duff

THE FACT MERCEDES is so keen to boast that the new CLA enjoys the best drag numbers

of any production car in the world - just Cd 0.23 - should tell you two things. Firstly, and most obviously, that it's very aerodynamically efficient. But secondly, that Mercedes is less eager to talk about the rest of the mechanical package, and the fact that this is the company's very first front-wheeldrive saloon.

The CLA, which was launched at the Detroit motor show, is basically a rebodied version of the recently launched A-class. It uses the same platform, engines and transmissions. The design is clearly inspired by that of the larger CLS – Merc describes it as being a 'four door coupe' like its bigger sister – and the styling actually works pretty well when seen in the metal.

Only the uncomfortably long front

overhang, and the distance between the top of the front wheelarch and the bonnet line, gives away the fact that it's got a transverse engine at the front. The CLA is actually 40mm longer than the current C-class, although its wheelbase is 60mm shorter. The interior is well finished and, although space in the back is predictably tight, there's a decentsized boot.

Only four-cylinder engines will be offered, marking another first for a Mercedes saloon. The entry-level CLA180 gets a 120bhp 1.6-litre turbo, with the CLA200 getting a 154bhp version of the same engine. The CLA250 gets a 2-litre turbo with 208bhp and a seven-speed twinclutch gearbox as standard. Two diesels will be offered from launch, a 134bhp 1.8-litre C200CDI and a 168bhp 2.2-litre C220CDI.

So far, so sensible - but the excitement arrives shortly afterwards in the form of a





'Excitement will arrive shortly afterwards in the form of a CLA45 AMG'

Above: front-wheel drive CLA breaks new ground. Below: interior is typical Merc black and silver; front overhang is a concern CLA45 AMG version, which will use the same combination of a turbocharged 2-litre petrol engine and part-time four-wheel drive that will feature in the forthcoming A45 AMG. That means power of around 350bhp and enough performance to make it the only model in the range that will run up against Merc's customary 155mph electronic speed limiter (the CLA 250 will manage 149mph, and there's been no mention of 0-62mph times yet). The CLA is part of Mercedes'

breadth through the introduction of a tranche of new models. Using A-class architecture means it will be cheaper to produce than the company's other saloons and would therefore be more likely to appeal to buyers in cash-strapped markets.

strategy to expand the brand's

Pricing details haven't been released yet, but we anticipate it undercutting the £25,915 base price of the entry-level C180 by a decent margin when it goes on sale in March.







E-class update

New E63 AMG 'S' has 577bhp. 0-62 in 3.6sec

Words: Mike Duff

MERCEDES has given the E-class range a gentle refresh, including the arrival of a new 'S' version of the E63 AMG model.

The 'S' incorporates most of the mechanical tweaks of the former optional performance pack, meaning a 577bhp version of Merc's twin-turbocharged 5.5-litre V8 (the standard AMG's output rises to 549bhp) plus an electronically controlled limited-slip diff. The 0-62mph time for the S is a frankly astonishing 3.6sec, 0.6sec better than the old performance pack.

Top speed remains electronically limited to 186mph, and fuel and CO2 numbers are unchanged. It will be on sale in March.



Inside the new NSX...

Acura-branded concept gives taste of things to come. Race version also a possibility

Words: Mike Duff

DETROIT GAVE US
another concept of the
forthcoming Honda
NSX sports car.

We'd been told before the show that this was just another styling exercise – the car is still at least two years away – so it was a pleasant surprise to find that it boasted what seemed to be a production-ready interior, without the sort of silly distractions that motor show concepts tend to get. Finished in a very 1980s shade of red, the cabin looked good up close. Indeed, the Honda seemed ready to drive off the stand and onto the streets of Detroit.

But we're not supposed to say Honda, of course. Officially this is

the Acura NSX, bearing the name of the company's posh sub-brand and being developed in North America. But in terms of design and – above all – engineering, this is definitely a Honda product.

There are no new details on the powertrain. As we've previously reported, the NSX will get a petrol-electric drivetrain (somewhat clumsily dubbed 'Super Handling All Wheel Drive') which will combine a V6 petrol engine driving the rear wheels and two electric motors

powering the front, enabling torque vectoring at all four corners of the car. It's effectively a reversal of the system used by the Americanmarket Acura MDX, which has a 306bhp 3.6-litre V6 at the front and a single electric motor at the back.

The lack of new details means that we're still some way off being able to put performance numbers onto the new NSX. Even if it sticks with the MDX's power output it should still be

decently rapid – with the instant torque of the twin electric motors helping to deliver acceleration on demand. But it's not hard to imagine that a company with Honda's engineering pedigree will be keen to lift the NSX's performance into a higher league with a more powerful engine. Type-R anyone?

Honda president Takanobu Ito told journalists at Detroit that the car will be on sale worldwide 'within the next three years' – welcome confirmation that it will indeed be coming to the UK. He also hinted that the car could take Honda back to international racing: 'This is a car that is up to the performance of racing and, while this car is for our customers, you might see it racing as well.'

Bentley scraps plans for diesels

Lightweight 'GT3' road car may also be under threat words: Mike Duff

BENTLEY HAS REVERSED ITS PLANS to develop diesel models.

In 2011 former boss Wolfgang Dürheimer told **evo** that he saw 'strong potential' in a diesel-engined model, but Dürheimer has left to head up product development at Audi, and Bentley's new CEO Wolfgang Schreiber told **evo** that diesels were now unlikely: 'It is not easy to see [diesel] in our cars; in Europe it would be great to have a diesel engine but that is only about 30 per cent of our sales. Luxury customers are not quite there yet and you've also got to consider plug-in hybrids. With a hybrid the fuel consumption would drop – I don't know if it would make sense to

think of a diesel in our cars.'

It would appear that Schreiber is also reassessing the concept of lightweight Bentleys also championed by Dürheimer: 'It would be wrong, in my view, just to think in this sporty direction,' explained Schreiber. 'If you see our cars today, they perform very well because of their power

level, their torque level and the effortless acceleration they have. Our customers don't complain about the weight of our cars, they just demand that they are fast enough.' With the GT3 race car under development (see p92) and a desire from insiders to build a road version, it'll be interesting to see how this plays out.



OYSTER PERPETUAL COSMOGRAPH DAYTONA



Rapide is remodelled

Aston Martin's fastback gets revised 550bhp engine and styling tweaks. 0-62mph dips below 5sec





A

ALMOST ALL OF Aston Martin's line-up has been refreshed or replaced lately, and

after three years on sale the Rapide is catching up with its stablemates by getting a thorough update. It's gained a new name too – from now on it will be called the Rapide S.

It becomes Aston's most powerful saloon ever, the outgoing Rapide's 5.9-litre V12 replaced with a version of the new 'AM11' V12. While this engine has the same capacity, it possesses 550bhp, representing an 80bhp hike.

A new cylinder block, heads, intake system and stainless steel exhaust create a freer-revving unit, and while peak torque climbs marginally, from 443 to 457lb ft, there's said to be a notable increase in low-rev pull.

Performance is subtly improved, with the 0-62mph claim dropping from 5.2sec to 4.9, while top speed climbs 2mph to 190. Fuel economy and CO2 emissions are also a tad better at 19.9mpg and 332g/km respectively, but those worried about their road tax bill still need not apply.

The new engine sits 19mm lower in

the Rapide S's body, improving agility, while torsional rigidity is upped too. The stability control has been revised (mainly to handle that 17 per cent power increase) while updated adaptive damping technology – so capable in the new DB9 – offers Normal, Sport and Track modes.

Most notable to many, though, will be the Rapide S's new look. While it fits with Aston's approach of slow massaging of model styling and avoids a bold redesign, the new front grille (the construction of which keeps the Rapide within stringent pedestrian safety regulations) gives the saloon a more aggressive jaw than its DB9 sibling. Inside, there are new trim options and improvements to noise insulation.

We expect the price to rise little over the current car's £149,995. That places the five-door Aston (it has a hatchback, after all) at the very top of the fastback tree. One of the performance car market's quickest growing sectors, there's never been as much choice if you want a saloon that sacrifices space for style. We've summarised the class best below.

\oplus

Rise of the fastback



Mercedes CLS

CLS pioneered the melding of saloon sensibilites with coupe style in '04. New CLS63 AMG S has 577bhp, cracks 62mph in 3.6sec



Audi A7 Sportback

Launched in 2010, the A7 is not just a fat A5 Sportback, it's the sharpest-looking non-R8 Audi. 414bhp S7 and new RS7 (below) star

IN RS 7001



Volkswagen CC

Launched in 2008 as a Passat CC, the VW lost its repmobile nametag and gained a facelift in 2012. The class bargain, starting at £24k



BMW 6-series Gran Coupe

BMW played catch-up with its German rivals, the 6-series GC arriving in 2012. 552bhp M6 version hits 62mph in 4.2sec, costs £97k



Porsche Panamera

Four years after launch in 2009, the lumpy Panamera continues to divide. Nine models, from 43mpg diesel to 542bhp, £124k Turbo S



Mercedes CLA

Baby CLS made its public debut this month (full story on p12) and is effectively an A-class saloon, 330bhp CLA45 AMG version likely



Audi A5 Sportback

Five-door version of a two-door relation of the four-door A4, the A5 Sportback is niche-filling gone mad. Debuted in '07. S5 has 328bhp



BMW 4-series Gran Coupe

F30 3-series range will grow considerably in the coming years. First up a practical 3-series GT, next stop an Audi A5 Sportback rival

RS7 launched

With 552bhp to deliver to all four wheels, new Audi could be a fastback game-changer

Words: Stephen Dobie

UNVEILED AT THE DETROIT motor show, the new Audi RS7 becomes one of the most potent fastbacks on sale. It'll be sold in lieu of an RS6 saloon and shares its drivetrain with the RS6 Avant: a 552bhp, 516lb ft 4-litre twin-turbo V8 with quattro all-wheel drive. Maximum torque is on tap between 1750 and 5500rpm, giving the RS7 supercar-troubling mid-range and a 3.9sec 0-62mph time.

The limited top speed varies between 155, 174 and 189mph, depending on options, while an eight-speed Tiptronic gearbox is fitted as the slicker S-tronic simply can't take the torque. Torque vectoring and Audi's Sport Differential are standard, as is adaptive air suspension, though a steel sprung set-up is optional.

Sales start this summer, with an £84k price tag expected. The new CLS63 and M6 Gran Coupe launch in 2013, too: an epic, 1681bhp group test awaits...

When she came nome vas well chuffed." Mark and his pride and joy, reunited by TRACKER. When Mark's wheels went AWOL he was sick as a parrot. But it wasn't long before he was over the moon, thanks to Tracker. That's because 95%* of stolen cars fitted with Tracker are returned to their owners and 86% of these are recovered within 24hrs. Tracker works on cars of all shapes and sizes, old and new, and every police force in the UK uses it. Unlike other devices, its unique technology can locate your car anywhere, even if it's hidden in a garage or shipping container. And if it moves when it shouldn't, you'll get a call letting you know. Trusted by tens of thousands of car lovers for nearly 20 years, only Tracker does all this. Call **0845 604 6013** to buy direct or locate your nearest dealer. www.tracker.co.uk

TRACKER...

So you want to host a Grand Prix?

Staging one of the world's biggest sporting and social events doesn't come cheap...

Words: Christian Svlt



ARRANGING A Formula 1 race hardly sounds like the most difficult thing to do,

but there is much more to it than meets the eye. Like pretty much everything in F1, what you need most is a lot of money.

F1 is famous for the huge amount of money that flows through it. The top drivers are on annual salaries of £25m and 2012's winning team, Red Bull, spent over £170m on its title campaign. However, the race organisers are some of the sport's most cashstrapped participants. Unlike the hosts of most other major sports, F1 race organisers generally don't get to keep any of the income from trackside advertising or corporate hospitality, nor do they get a share of the revenue from the broadcasting of the race on TV.

All this money flows to the sport's rights-holder, the F1 Group, which is run by 82-year-old billionaire Bernie Ecclestone. The race organisers' sole source of income is ticket sales, but this typically barely covers the hosting fee. Most organisers are then pushed into loss by the costs of running the race, and this is where governments step in.

In emerging markets, such as India and South Korea, governments gladly cover the shortfall in the organisers' budgets because the races put them on the global sporting map. Hosting a Grand Prix also boosts tourism by promoting the country on TV; in 2011 F1 had 515million TV viewers, making it the world's mostwatched annual sport.

It has made the F1 calendar slots highly sought after by any country looking to make a name for itself. This bidding war has driven up the average hosting fee from £11.6m per race in 2006 to £17m in 2011. Most race contracts also stipulate that the fee increases by ten per

'THE RACE ORGANISERS' SOLE SOURCE OF INCOME IS THROUGH TICKET SALES'

cent annually, so there is a constant need to raise ticket prices.

This has priced many countries out of the running for a race, particularly in Europe where tourism is already strong enough so F1 is not needed to boost it. In 2010 governments invested an estimated total of £258m in F1's races, which is around as much as is made by ticket sales. On average, ticket sales comprise £14m of the £17m income for a permanent circuit and £19m of the

£20m brought in by a race on city streets. With hugely popular races such as Singapore and Australia amongst them, street circuits get higher attendances than races at permanent venues; Grands Prix in Bahrain and China are now famed for their empty grandstands.

Race costs differ widely between permanent circuits and street races with the latter being much more costly to organise, at £53m including hosting fee compared to the £28.5m of a permanent track. This is down to the cost of portable pit buildings, safety fencing, barriers and grandstands, among other ancillary costs.

In contrast, designing a circuit from scratch gives the organiser complete creative flexibility, which can make all the difference when it comes to attracting interest in the race. However, it's hugely expensive; the cost of building a typical 3.5-mile track with all the construction work required on such a huge site can be as much as £200m. But some governments are so desperate to host an F1 race that not only do they cover the budget shortfall, they fund track construction too. Otherwise, rich private backers are needed.

So unless you have got some very rich friends or a hotline to the prime minister, your dream of hosting a Grand Prix will remain just that. ■

RXC wows Autosport showgoers

Radical's new coupe amongst highlights at the NEC



RADICAL'S JAW-DROPPING NEW RXC coupe was among the star cars on display at this year's Autosport International show at Birmingham's NEC in January.

The 380bhp road-legal racer (news of which was revealed in **evo** 179) will retail for £89,500 plus VAT, and the first examples are set to hit the track soon. Le Mans legend Andy Wallace is playing a pivotal role in the development of the car, and is to help Radical conduct over 6000 miles of warm-weather testing at the Spring Mountain circuit in Nevada over the coming weeks.

In single-seater racing, the talk of the show was the launch of the new Formula 4 car by Jonathan Palmer's MotorSport Vision firm. The new one-make series is intended to bring down the cost of entry-level single-seater racing for aspiring F1 stars, with a full grid of 24 cars having already been sold to teams. The 185bhp Ford Duratec-powered cars are due to line up on the grid for the season opener at Silverstone at the end of April.

Among the road car highlights on show at the NEC, Noble aired its bare carbon-bodied M600 CarbonSport in public for the first time, while Nissan tuning expert Litchfield showed off its GT-R LM1000, which will produce 1000bhp when development is complete. Find out more on these cars at evo.co.uk.

Meanwhile, Queen frontman Freddie Mercury's Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow was sold to an anonymous buyer in Russia for £74,000 at the show's Coys historic auction − smashing its pre-sale estimate of £9-11k.

■





HOW ALIVE ARE YOU?







YEP, IT'S ANOTHER NEW

version of the Lamborghini Gallardo, a car that celebrates its tenth birthday this year. In those ten years the 'baby'

Lambo has established itself as a seriously quick junior supercar, with mid-life changes to its engine nearly half a decade ago helping it to maintain that reputation.

When the Gallardo was launched it was

powered by a 493bhp 5-litre V10, but today's car features a direct-injection 552bhp 5.2-litre V10. The arrival of this heavily revised power unit in 2008 (in the first LP560-4) transformed the Gallardo, and by a far greater extent than the bare numbers might indicate. The six-speed 'e-gear' automated manual gearbox also got a major revamp at the same time, enabling it to swap cogs far quicker than the ponderous original version could.

The only fly in the ointment for Lambo's junior supercar is that its rivals have also evolved, and while at launch the Gallardo easily had the firepower to see off, say, the 394bhp Ferrari 360, today it faces much stiffer competition in the shape of the 562bhp 458 Italia, not to mention the 616bhp McLaren 12C.

So what has Lamborghini done to the Gallardo to help it compete with these new rivals? It has tweaked the design of the bumpers.



Crazy. Perhaps a drive will reveal if there's more to this updated car than is apparent from a scan of the press release...

Spending a few days driving a new Lamborghini in the middle of January is good fun. While just about every other Lambo in Britain is parked up under cover for the winter months, I'm out there piling on the miles and getting our test car's brilliant white paintwork (called Bianco Monocerus and a chunky £1020

Above: spot the difference... Revised bumpers are one of the few clues that this is the 2013 Gallardo

This month

LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO LP560-4

 ■ 552BHP ■ 0-62MPH IN 3.7SEC
 ■ REVISED STYLING ■ SAME 5.2 V10 ■ £164,444



■ 0-60MPH IN 4.8SEC ■ £27.995

BMW 330D

■ THE BEST NEW 3-SERIES YET?



ARIEL ATOM 3.5



RANGE ROVER SDV8



■ 215BHP POWER UPGRADE ASS 9 NI HAMUS-U THE £1367 CONVERSION COST



The test team

With 127 years of road testing experience between them, this is evo's crack driving and writing squad (and yes, looks can be deceiving...)



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Has been driving, owning and writing about performance cars for nearly 20 vears. Co-founded evo in 1998



NICK TROTT

Editor

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MIKE DUFF Motoring editor

Has held road test editor position on a variety of motoring mags. 16 years' experience in road testing



HENRY CATCHPOLE Features editor

Full-time evo tester for eight years and occasional rally driver. Always first to volunteer for extreme drives



JETHRO BOVINGDON

Contributing editor

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RICHARD MEADEN Contributing editor

Road tester for 20 years, class winner at Nürburgring 24 Hours and Pikes Peak, Bonneville record holder.



DAVID VIVIAN Contributing road tester

First road test? A Chevette HS2300 for Motor. In 1978. Has a healthy contempt for pulled punches



option) horribly grubby in the process. And the nice surprise is discovering that this latest Gallardo is a very different device to its two closest rivals and is also rather charming in a number of ways.

For a start, the fundamental exterior design still looks as striking as it did in 2003. There's a sharpness to it that's very Lamborghini, like someone attacked the styling buck with a knife. I love the way the mirrors jut out from the bodywork and then edge forward to give the perfect view. The new 19in 'Apollo' polished wheels look great too (OK, so it's not just the bumpers that have changed) and there's more good news in that the glass engine cover is now standard. It all comes together to give the 2013 Gallardo a look of serious intent.

Swing the door open (my one issue with the Gallardo has always been its conventional doors) and the stylish theme continues inside. On this press car, the ergonomically shaped steering wheel is covered in black suede and, unlike in a Ferrari, there's not a button or switch to be found on it. It harks back to a time when steering wheels were there solely to allow the driver to direct the car, rather than being a place to scatter countless other functions on, which can't help but get in the way of the simple act of *driving*.

There's no starter button either, because this Lamborghini starts via a conventional key, and when you turn it, the predictable blare erupts from just behind your head. This V10 engine suits the Gallardo's character perfectly; Lamborghinis have always been about excess and while rivals make do with V8s, the Gallardo carries an extra pair of cylinders. I love that.

If you've not driven a Gallardo before, then selecting reverse can be embarrassing because the reverse button sits all on its own, just by your right knee, and if you don't know where to look, you may not be going anywhere. Weird, but I'm sure Lamborghini had its reasons. Rather more simply, a flick on the right-hand paddle selects

first and we're away. The first thing I notice is that I'm having to put more effort into the steering than I really want to; it's as if there's some stiction in the rack getting in the way of the information flow coming back through the rim. It also doesn't seem to self-centre as quickly as I'd like: a Ferrari 458's steering feels way lighter by comparison.

I don't like the gearchange paddles either. They're much too small for column-mounted items (around a quarter of the size of the ones fitted to the 458 or Aventador) and make changing gear a real struggle, particularly when you've got some lock on. The amount of offset in the pedals (thanks to the front wheelarch eating into the footwell) is plain silly too and I'm soon using my left foot to brake to save my right ankle the pain of stretching over. The brake pedal could be better too, feeling soggy underfoot and making smooth progress harder to achieve in regular driving than it should be.

Oh dear: the charms of the Gallardo aren't

'I love the looks and the rampant engine, but it's starting to feel its age'

Below: Although it still looks modern, the ten-year old Gallardo's stats (right) struggle to keep pace with younger rivals

Specification	
Engine	V10, 5204cc
CO2	325g/km
Power	552bhp @ 8000rpm
Torque	398lb ft @ 6500rpm
0-62mph	3.7sec (claimed)
Top speed	202mph (claimed)
Basic price	£164 444











really winning me over. The car is feeling a bit old and awkward to be honest, which is not what I was hoping for. Still, the heated seats are bringing some welcome warmth to my backside and the side bolsters are gripping me well too.

I exercise the engine more and with a red line of 8500rpm, there are plenty of revs to use too. As I soon discover, there's serious performance on offer from 4000rpm upwards and then real punch from 6500rpm. This is a properly quick car once you light it up, even quicker than I was expecting, and useable too thanks to that clever four-wheel-drive system that's finding plenty of grip on these greasy winter roads.

There's a stiffness to the chassis set-up that seems appropriate, with not a creak or groan to be heard from the body. It feels like it's designed to be driven in attack mode at all times. If you want even more speed then you can select Sport mode to stiffen up the dampers, quicken the gearchange and sharpen the throttle response, but on British B-roads it all gets a bit too fidgety after a while. For real hardcore fans, though,

there's a Corsa button that further loosens the ESP and punches the gearchanges through with a ferocity that'll make you wince.

As the end of my time with the 2013 Gallardo approaches, I realise that I like it more than I'd initially expected. I love the looks, the performance and the rampant engine, but there's no doubting that it's starting to feel its age in important areas. Lamborghini knows this and that's why it plans to scale back production during 2013 (UK dealer allocation is just a third of what it was last year), ready for the launch of its replacement sometime next year.

But the Gallardo still has its fans and I can completely understand why. It's a serious piece of kit and it's easy to fall for its charms. There's also a feeling of toughness about it that I'm sure is down to Audi's rigorous test procedures. That's not something you could say of Lamborghinis in the past.

And those sexy new bumpers? They make no difference to how the car drives at all... ■

Harry Metcalfe (@harrym_evo)*

Rating

+ Still a missile from A to B

■ Starting to show its age

evo rating: ★★★☆

Above (from left): steering wheel is refreshingly switchand button-free; glass engine cover is now standard; 19in wheels are a new design



IPAD EXTRAS

Check out the iPad edition of **evo** for more pics of the Gallardo LP560-4
Search for 'evo interactive'



Test location: Surrey Hills, UK GPS: 51.19173, -0.44703

Caterham 7 Supersport R

New Supersport model gets track-biased suspension and a 180bhp 2-litre engine to create the best road-and-track Seven yet **Photography:** Dean Smith



THERE WAS A MOMENT on the A2 while returning the Caterham Supersport R to its Dartford base when I muttered to myself: 'enough'.

The knuckles of my right hand glistened with a coating of misty rain entering through the gap between the upper corner of the rudimentary windscreen, the old-school hood and the flappy, pop stud-fastened door. The hot/cold heater was roasting my left knee while leaving my glistening right paw to shiver. And if fellow

drivers were wondering why this latest, vibrant yellow, R-rated iteration of 'the world's most popular racing car' was sulking along in the middle lane at 68mph, they probably didn't appreciate that it was the car's 'sweet spot': the speed at which you could hear yourself think.

After a mostly rainy week of living with the Supersport R, during which the hood hardly ever came off, the negative thoughts were ganging up on me again and clouding the memory of a glorious, pitch-perfect, top-down blast in the Surrey Hills a few days earlier.

Specification	
Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc
CO2	n/a
Power	180bhp @ 7300rpm
Torque	143lb ft @ 6100rpm
0-60mph	4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	130mph (claimed)
Basic price	£27,995 (factory built)



Below, from left: super-slim composite race seats; 2.0 Duratec puts out 40bhp more than the non-R Supersport's 1.6 Sigma; large-diameter trackday silencer is an option







But then something else happened. Nearing the top of the long incline near the Bluewater shopping mall, I decided to ease into the outside lane to gently overtake a line of cars slowed by the hill. Almost immediately, and seemingly from nowhere, the Caterham's rear-view mirror was filled with black Mercedes E-class of indeterminate (but presumably ample) power, headlights ablaze, LEDs giving luminous support. Oh joy.

I steadied our pace at an indicated 73mph, waited for a few seconds, selected fourth gear, and floored it. What ensued was nothing more than a party trick for the Supersport R, of course. But it was a good one. Impossible rush and soaring revs. Warp speed and back in the blink of an eye. By the time the Mercedes driver had pressed his car's throttle to the floor, the transmission had decided which gear to select and full attack mode had been resumed, the Caterham was 200 metres down the road.

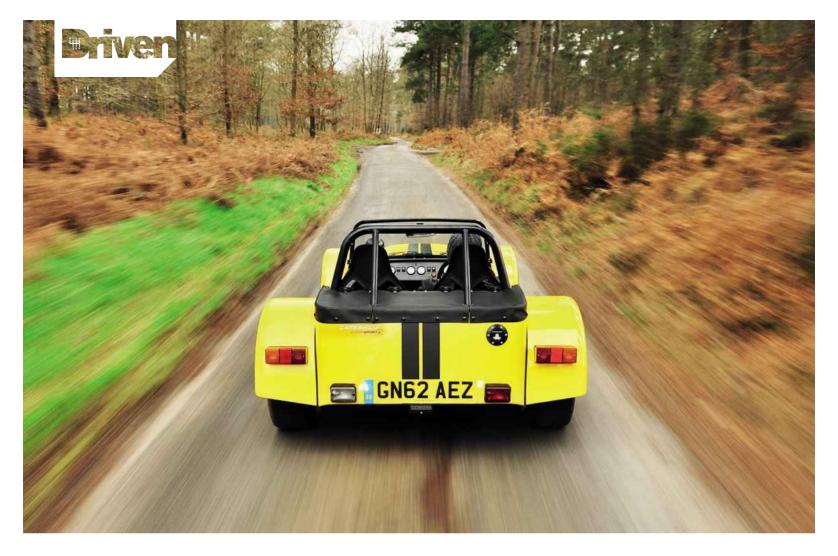
'Between 70 and 110mph the E63 AMG never had a prayer...'

Back in fifth at 68mph on the lightest of throttles, the black Merc blew past so furiously that I barely had time to notice that it was an E63 AMG, but that only made the moment all the sweeter, the travails of spending a few days with one of the most impractical cars on the planet wiped out by simple arithmetic. E63: eight cylinders, 5.5 litres, two turbos, 518bhp, 1840kg, 286bhp per ton. Supersport R: four cylinders, 2.0 litres, no turbos, 180bhp, 535kg, 342bhp per ton. Between 70 and 110mph? The muscle-bound Teuton never had a prayer.

Even in fifth, the outcome would have

been much the same. Substitute the regular Supersport's 140bhp 1.6-litre Sigma engine for the altogether heavier-fisted 180bhp 2-litre Duratec unit in a car that weighs barely more than a large sack of spuds and you're granted so much instant thump from modest revs that the first three gears are all but redundant. And that quoted 4.8sec 0-60mph time, although decently brisk by normal standards, is misleading, too. Off-the-line traction isn't a Caterham forte when it's wearing the R's small-diameter wheels shod with Avons that are just 175mm wide on the back. Roll-on pace, however, is every bit as epic as you might suppose with a power-to-weight ratio virtually identical to that of a Porsche 911 Turbo S. On the Caterham spectrum, the R feels more like a slightly slugged R500 than a pumped-up Supersport: potent enough to supersize thrills on the road and shoot down vastly more powerful machinery on track.

So is the 'R' just a Supersport with bigger



'The punchy, flexible engine makes the stupendous performance feel more accessible'

plums? Yes and no. As an effective replacement for the R300, you get a few cherry-picked components, including the dampers, from Caterham's racier offerings. Otherwise, it's the usual thoughtfully optimised Supersport fare, but with that flexible yet revvy Duratec lump under the bonnet, maybe one step closer to being the Goldilocks Caterham: just right. It gets the usual adjustable double-wishbone suspension up front and de Dion arrangement at the rear, an aggressive limited-slip diff, a full harness, snug composite sports seats and shift lights that illuminate at 7500rpm.

You get all that matters, and no more, when all you want to do is drive. And then, with clear skies, the hood and doors discarded, harness done up tight and a tarmac playground that isn't too bumpy, there's nothing quite like a ballsy Caterham. Is the Supersport R's ride more supple than an R400 or R500's? Is the transition from mild understeer to catch-it-if-you-can oversteer more progressive? Possibly. But such distinctions are largely irrelevant. The way a Caterham rides has more to do with

keeping your bum informed about the road surface than isolating you from it. And if you think you're a bit of a 'hand' when it comes to drifting, the Supersport R will gladly deliver the unvarnished verdict. There isn't much lock to play with, so if you do let the brawny motor kick the tail wide, you'd better be fast and accurate with the correction. It's easy to overdo it.

No, this is a Caterham that ticks all the usual boxes, good and bad. What sets it apart is a punchy, flexible engine that makes the stupendous performance feel more progressive and accessible. It straddles the line between road and track more comfortably, perhaps, than any Seven before it.

David Vivian

Rating

- Pulverising pace without the frenzy
- Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable

evo rating: ★★★★

The 7 story so far...

THE VERY first Seven was, of course, a Lotus. Its tuned 1172cc Ford side-valve engine developed just 40bhp and 58lb ft of torque. It had a top speed of 76mph and took over 17 seconds to accelerate to 60mph, which, back in 1957, was considered pretty nippy. But that was hardly the point. Colin Chapman didn't create the Seven to deliver heartstopping acceleration. He did it to express an idea. Adding power makes you faster on the straights. Subtracting weight makes you faster everywhere. This was the clarity of thought embodied in the bare bones of the Lotus Seven and it has informed the design of every Seven since.

In 1973 Caterham acquired the right to the Seven name, but it wasn't until the late '90s that the modern Seven really began to take shape, starting with the splendidly manic 1997 Superlight R, powered by a 190bhp 1.8-litre K-series HPD engine. In 1999 a 138bhp 1.6 K-series Superlight provided an additional entry point, supplementing the live-axled 1.4 and 1.6 Classics and the more sophisticated de Dion-equipped Roadsport models.

Extending Caterham's market reach, the wider-bodied SV models were launched in 2001, allowing those too large to fit into a regular Seven to enjoy the experience for the first time. Shortly after came the R500, R400 and R300 and, in 2004, the strategically updated CSR series of cars with 2.0 Duratec and 2.3-litre Cosworth engines.



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Above: 330d M Sport is impressively quick for a diesel, but lacks a little in the steering department. Below: eight-speed automatic 'box can also be operated with paddle-shift

F

FOR PEOPLE LIKE US,

BMW's diesel-powered 3-series has long been the acceptable face of oil-burning and this new F30-generation 330d M Sport

is no exception. With a 3-litre single-turbo straight-six developing 254bhp and 413lb ft, it's a seriously muscular machine. Limited to 155mph and capable of hitting 62mph in 5.6sec, it promises to combine E46 M3 performance with 58mpg economy. Is it too good to be true?

First impressions are wholly encouraging. This new 3-series is a big car, but the benefit of this relentless upsizing is a spacious interior and a gargantuan boot. A Touring version would surely be the perfect family wagon. Thankfully it disguises its bulk well with taut damping, direct steering and a satisfying sense of agility.

The 330d M Sport only comes with an eight-speed automatic transmission, which you can leave to do its own thing or bat up and down through its gears via a pair of paddle-shifters. As we found in the excellent M135i, it's a livewire of a transmission and it brings the 330d to life when set in one of its more aggressive modes. There's an urgency to the delivery that's startling for a diesel, and if you're in Sport Plus it even lets you run to the engine's soft limiter. But that's not to say it won't mooch along effortlessly in 'D': with all that torque it has plenty of shove from minimal revs.



Like most modern cars, the fuel consumption figures are optimistic. BMW claims a combined 58mpg and a range of 722 miles from the 57-litre tank, but if our real-world experience is anything to go by, you can expect mid-40s and a practical range of 500 miles. But given the performance, refinement and character on offer, it's hardly a disappointment.

Chassis-wise there's much to like too. The ride is firm enough to feel like it deserves the M Sport badge, but remains supple enough to be a pleasure on less-than-smooth roads. It turns in keenly and enjoys rapid direction changes. The brakes have a firm pedal, smooth response and plenty of stopping power.

Criticisms are few and far between. The sheer number of gears can feel a bit overwhelming sometimes. There's certainly novelty value to the experience, but I have a sneaking suspicion having to swap so many cogs might get on

Specification

Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 2993cc, turbodiesel
CO2	129g/km
Power	254bhp @ 4000rpm
Torque	413lb ft @ 2000-2750rpm
0-62mph	5.6sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£36,280
	/

my nerves over a longer period of time. The steering is worthy of a gripe too, or rather its artificial weighting and general lack of feel. You can ramp up or calm down its rate of response via the choice of driving dynamics modes from Eco Plus to Sport Plus, but the steering itself feels as if all the feedback is being filtered out.

Overall, the 330d M Sport is a very fine car. Loaded with equipment and blessed with undiesel-like performance, it's very desirable. At a little over £36,000, we like. ■

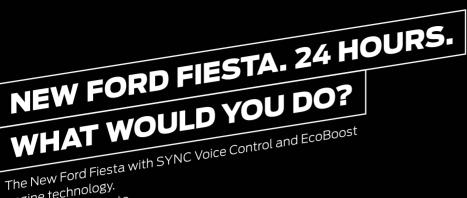
Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Rating

Great engine, fine handling, good value

■ Steering confuses weight with feel

evo rating: ★★★★



engine technology. ford.co.uk/newfiesta



Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (I/100km) for the Ford Fiesta range: urban 33.6-74.3 (8.4-3.8), extra urban 62.8-91.1 (4.5-3.1), combined 47.9-85.6 (5.9-3.3). Official CO2 emissions 138-87g/km. SYNC standard on Zetec S, Titanium and Titanium X. Optional extra on Style and Zetec. Not available on Studio. EcoBoost engine is available on all models except Studio and Style.

Go Further



Test location: Chitterne, Wiltshire, UK GPS: 51.19393, -2.01635

Ariel Atom 3.5

Somerset's finest gets a raft of upgrades, but has its unique power to scare and excite similarly increased?

Photography: Dean Smith



TRYING TO FIND A DRY

stretch of tarmac in early January feels like a forlorn search. But the Atom needs dry for the full effect. I tried

earlier: third gear, dual carriageway, straight line, dryish surface. But 'ish' didn't cut it and as soon as the revs climbed, the Ariel lit up its rear tyres like an F1 car straying onto a wet kerb.

This is Atom version three point five. Ariel



couldn't call it Atom 4 because a whole new integer only appears when the engine changes, but nevertheless there has been a raft of small upgrades. Most of the chassis changes are things that Ariel learnt while building the wild V8 model, with new suspension pick-up points and bracing around the engine all helping to make the chassis stiffer. The 3.5 also gets the carbon-surrounded digital dash from the V8, which looks very smart, and the nose panel has

been subtly changed with a crease now running down the middle. The big one-piece seats have also been made a little stiffer, although I still feel the driver's chair flexing during the day.

Perhaps the most obvious update is the lights. Instead of the large, bug-eyed headlamps that used to sit back up towards the wing mirrors and do a fantastic job of illuminating the footwells (but not the road ahead), the 3.5 gets two neat rows of three bulbs further down

Specification	
Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, supercharger
CO2	n/a
Power	310bhp @ 8400rpm
Torque	169lb ft @ 7200rpm
0-60mph	2.7sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (claimed)
Basic price	£38,000







its nose. The supercharged engine also gets a bit more power, but given the 3's already eyewatering ability in that department, it seems like the most incidental of the upgrades.

You can't help but spend your first few minutes in an Atom glancing down and marvelling at the unhindered view of the steering rack and the nearside-front wheel bobbling over bumps. Any comparisons you might be tempted to draw with a kit car are banished as soon as you see the quality of everything on display too, symbolised by the fantastically neat welds on the chassis.

The handling takes a while to get used to and it feels fairly wild and intimidating to start with. There's a quick, darty reaction to every input of the large steering wheel, and then understeer in corners as the light nose struggles to bite. You're nervous of getting on the accelerator pedal (which is now much better positioned) and unleashing the screaming supercharger, because with all the weight on the rear axle your

brain tells you that you'll either exacerbate the understeer if the rear tyres hook up or snap into terminal oversteer if they don't. It's not intuitive like a Seven. But stick with it and the Atom is much more driveable than you first imagine and once you learn to work with the 911-like weight distribution and be brave with the throttle, it's incredibly rewarding.

The tarmac looks better ahead. Straight, empty, and as dry as we can hope for. This is photographer Dean Smith's first-ever passenger ride in an Atom (I'm only giving him a lift back to his car parked up the road) but I want him to come away with the same indelible impression of unhinged banshee craziness that bewildered me when I first rode in one. Third... no, let's change down to second gear. Try not to grip the wheel too tightly, then give it everything. Lift, flick the tiny gearlever into third and back on the power. Repeat for fourth and then fifth, then relax. It's over in seconds: a lightweight, inertia-

free, fresh-air blur of acceleration that even the wildest of supercars struggle to match. It's a hit of sheer madness and I love it.

I glance across and see that Dean's lost his hat but gained a grin almost Jokeresque in its proportions, no doubt pulled wider by a combination of hurricane-force January slipstream and fear. We turn round (the 3.5's still got a rubbish turning circle) and head back up the road, eventually spying Dean's furry excuse for headwear lying like limp roadkill in the middle of the tarmac. No need to get out of course, just reach through the chassis and scoop it up. All part of the theatre.

The 3.5 might not look or feel wildly different to the 3, but to be honest it looked and felt plenty wild enough already. What the changes do is just subtly improve the Atom in areas where it was needed and keep it feeling as fresh as the day it first landed.

Henry Catchpole (@HenryCatchpole)



Rating

4 As mad as ever

You might lose your hat

evo rating: ★★★★★

Clockwise from top left: view of front wheels from the driving seat is unrivalled; pedal positions have been improved; suspension pick-up points are stronger.

Left: straight-line performance is mind-boggling



Specification	on
Engine	V8, 4367cc, turbodiesel
CO2	229g/km
Power	334bhp @ 3500rpm
Torque	516lb ft @ 1750-3000rpm
0-60mph	6.5sec (claimed)
Top speed	135mph (claimed)
Rasic nrice	£94 695



PEOPLE HAVE LIKENED

Range Rovers to Bentleys for as long as I can remember. Originally this was done to insult the crude underpinnings

of various old-school Bentleys, but in recent years it's been done to highlight the strides Land Rover has made in civilising its biggest beast.

But now it looks like Solihull's product planners have taken the joke seriously. The new Rangie moves effortlessly into the sixfigure bit of the market previously the exclusive preserve of the poshest brands - this SDV8 Autobiography costs £102,640 after a moderate options workout. But the new Range Rover also feels like it's been dynamically inspired by Bentley's more recent offerings. Meanwhile, Bentley's own controversial SUV is still two years away - Land Rover has got here first.

The new Range Rover seemed big when Harry drove it in Morocco (evo 177), but in the UK it feels massive when asked to deal with tight gaps and urban manoeuvring. After

five days I still hadn't found a parking space it didn't overhang by at least a foot. Fortunately it's easy to drive and to park, thanks to the high driving position and a battery of beeping aids. But you're rarely unaware of just how vast it is.

Fortunately, the top-spec V8 diesel is well up to the task of motivating it. With 334bhp (and more importantly 516lb ft), the 2360kg Range Rover has a borderline startling turn of pace once the hammer is dropped. Floor the longtravel throttle and the Rangie clears its throat and surges forwards with a warbling induction roar. It's a sensation familiar to anyone who has experienced an old Bentley Arnage under similar provocation. There's a supercharged petrol V8 option set to sell in tiny numbers in the UK that's even quicker, but the SDV8 offers all the performance most buyers will ever need.

The chassis keeps up the good work: good refinement and bump insulation, accurate steering and - once you've got it turned in and pointing at an apex - a decent amount of grip and even a modicum of throttle adjustability. It's not a sports car in any way, and isn't even as sharp to drive as something like a BMW X5, but the fundamentals are all in place, and once you've dialled into the mass and momentum you can move it at a surprising pace, providing any passengers don't squeal too much.

It's impressive – and a reason to take pride in the continued success of British engineering. You might not like the rise of the luxury SUV, but this is definitely the one to beat.

Mike Duff





Top: SDV8 is easy to drive, but feels all its size. Above: interior is as luxurious as they come; leather wheel is festooned in buttons

Rating

■ Performance, comfort, good off-road

■ Size, price, slightly molten styling

evo rating: ★★★★☆



Above: K-Tec's seemingly modest power and torque upgrades make Clio quicker on corner exits. Below: Clio remains one of the most thrilling hot hatches to drive

Specification	
Engine	in-line 4-cyl, 1998co
CO2	n/a
Power	215bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque	175lb ft @ 5200rpm
0-60mph	6.6sec (estimated)
Top speed	145mph (estimated)
Conversion price	£1367 (fitted)



LAST MONTH, WE WAVED goodbye to the Clio 200 on streaming wet roads that might well have been made for this brilliantly executed hot hatch.

There were few other cars, you could see for miles even through the grey fug of hazy rain and the Cup chassis was mesmerising. And the Clio's manic 2-litre engine just added to the sharpness of the whole package. When you keep it snapping between 5500 and 7000rpm, it's a terrific motor and mirrors precisely the sheer focus of the car. It has an agility and alertness that no other hot hatch can replicate. The Clio Cup is one of those drive-before-you-die cars.

Sadly, away from the luxury of photo shoots on roads frequented only by sheep and the odd Land Rover, the 2-litre naturally aspirated F4R 830 engine can feel plain gutless. It's an engine that needs revs and that can turn overtaking



dawdling traffic or just making a bit of progress without advertising it by hitting the limiter a real chore. Which is where Renaultsport tuning expert K-Tec Racing comes in. It offers a tuning package for the Clio 197/200 that ups both peak power and torque, but crucially also beefs up the torque curve right through the rev range. So while 18bhp and 16lb ft for £1367 (including VAT and fitting) doesn't sound like the bargain of the century, it has a real and welcome effect on give-and-take roads.

The upgrade consists of a set of Cat Cam 402 billet steel camshafts (with a new OE Renault cambelt and a set of cam caps) and an ECU remap to take advantage of the new setup and also raise the rev limiter to 7500rpm. K-Tec claims figures of 215bhp at 7000rpm and 175lbft at 5200rpm, with over 200bhp available above 6150rpm. The package is covered by a 12-month/30,000-mile warranty.

On the road, the Clio isn't transformed, but there is a noticeable improvement in response in the mid-range and an even fiercer rush to the red line. Although it's not enough to make you attack corners in a gear higher than before, the K-Tec car just feels a bit keener to haul out of turns and it's even more addictive when really flying at the top end. The gutsier response (the reprogrammed ECU also tweaks the drive-bywire throttle) has no negative effects to speak of and traction remains excellent. Overall, it adds intensity to an already pretty rabid experience.

What the K-Tec upgrade can't do is turn the Clio into a Cooper S. It's still not the finest overtaking weapon you'll ever encounter and it still needs to be driven hard to get the best from it. However, that's part of the joy of the 197 or 200 and here it's usefully enhanced with a cleaner, more energetic response across the rev range. If you love your Clio, this would be a very nice little treat to lavish upon it.

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon) Visit k-tecracing.com for further details

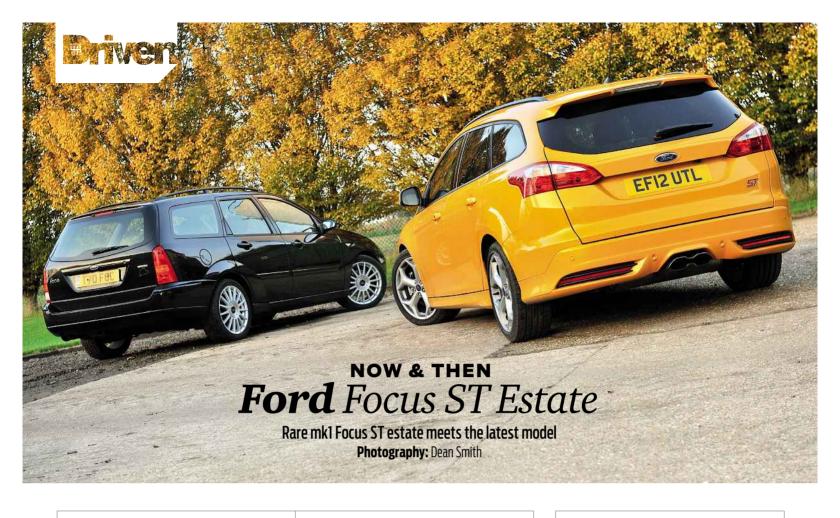
Rating

- Performance gains, smooth power delivery
- Don't expect any sudden miracles

evo rating: ****

LET THERE BE LIGHT...











Above: mk1 Focus sported Ford's so-called 'New Edge' styling, both inside and out

2013 FOCUS ST ESTATI





Above: new ST can be packed with tech inside and features a chiselled look at the front

Specifications

	- p	
	2003 FOCUS ST170	2013 FOCUS ST
Engine	4-cyl, 1988cc	4-cyl, 1999cc, turbo
CO2	218g/km	169g/km
Power	168bhp @ 7000rpm	247bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque	144lb ft @ 5500rpm	265lb ft @ 1750rpm
0-62mph	8.9sec (claimed)	6.5sec (claimed)
Top speed	133mph (claimed)	154mph (claimed)
Basic price	£17,350 (2004)	£23,095
evo rating	****	****

F

FIRST, A FULL DISCLOSURE.

I own the black mk1 Focus ST170 Estate pictured above – well, my missus does. We bought it three years ago for just under £4000,

with 50,000 miles on the clock. With our first child on the way, we wanted something practical and the idea of a mini-MPV/SUV horrified us. We spotted this car locally, and intrigued by the rarity (it's thought that fewer than 100 survive in the UK) and impressed with its spec and condition, we bought it immediately.

Today, with 80,000 miles now showing and another child in the back, we still own it. I thought we'd sell it sooner but it has been 100 per cent reliable, incredibly practical and, most importantly, fun. It's become one of the family. All the mk1 Focus positives shine through – the chassis composure, the direct steering and the damping – while the negatives are limited to the fact that it doesn't have ESP or ISOFIX (which does play on my mind). We manage a real-world

30mpg – similar to what you'll get in the new ST. The boot size is almost identical too, despite the newer car being 10cm longer.

Following the original, the ST Estate skipped a generation. The mk2 Focus ST (with the cracking five-cylinder turbo engine) did not get an estate version, but the latest model does. Fitted with a 2-litre four-cylinder turbo unit, the new Focus ST unsurprisingly outpaces the mk1. The latest model has nearly twice the torque of the original (265lb ft v 144lb ft) but loses some of the mk1's crisp throttle response.

The ST170 never feels anywhere near as punchy as the newer car, and you have to work the close-ratio six-speed gearbox hard to keep the variable-intake-valve-timing DOHC engine singing, but it's a pleasantly rewarding and interactive experience when you do. To extract the performance from the turbocharged car is a much simpler, and singular experience – you nail the gas, and it winds up and goes. All the way to 154mph if you're feeling illegal.

There's a thread of DNA running through both cars in their handling set-up and balance – each is exceptionally tidy, neutral, grippy and fun with a quick and responsive steering rack. As mentioned, the older car does without ESP; the newer car has this plus a force-feedback torquesteer compensator and a torque-vectoring brake-steer system. The older car, despite being 60kg lighter, surrenders to understeer sooner and more abruptly than the newer car, but the advanced systems on the later model can inspire laziness – you simply throw it at the corner and the car rescues any slip.

Fast estates have a cultish following as they allow you to make a purchase decision based on both head and heart. The new Focus ST Estate has an effortlessly punchy and practical vibe not dissimilar to an Audi RS4, while the older car is a bargain curio that has dated rather less than you'd imagine. I'd heartily recommend either. And no, ours isn't for sale.

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)



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An FIA road safety special is joined by a Mercedes racer and a tech-heavy Citizen

Words: Simon de Burton



Richard Mille G-Sensor RM-036 Jean Todt edition

Price: TBA **From:** richardmille.com

Richard Mille, the avant-garde watchmaker, historic race car driver and Le Mans Classic sponsor, has added a new string to his bow with the introduction of this driver's watch incorporating a mechanical G-force sensor. The titanium-cased watch, which features a scale denoting whether the G-level is safe or 'critical', will be limited to just 15 examples. The model honours FIA president Jean Todt and the FIA's 'Action for Road Safety' campaign. It won't be cheap, but the engineering on show is superb.



IWC Ingenieur Chronograph Racer

Price: £9250 From: iwc.com

The start of the new partnership between IWC and the Mercedes AMG Petronas F1 team is celebrated by the launch of this new version of IWC's legendary Ingenieur 'tool watch'. It's a chronograph which displays elapsed hours and minutes using two hands on a single totaliser positioned at 12 o'clock. There's a a tachymeter bezel for speed and distance calculations, too. The case back is engraved with an F1 car image and there's a choice of a fine-adjustment bracelet or a rubber and textile strap.



Citizen Eco-Drive **Proximity**

Price: £399 From: citizenwatch.co.uk

With its 60-minute chronograph and classic, perforated strap, Citizen's latest makes for a sportylooking drivers' watch. As well as offering a perpetual calendar, dual time zones and a 24-hour display, it can be synchronised to your iPhone 4S or 5. If you mislay the phone, it can be made to ring using the Bluetooth function on the watch, which also vibrates if the connection to the phone is broken. The watch also provides vibration alerts for calls and e-mails.



Watch tech

Chronographs are the driver's choice



MOST EVO readers will be familiar with the function of a basic chronograph. Probably the most popular 'complication' among petrolheads, chronographs feature indicators that can be stopped, started and reset at will - usually via a pair of push pieces - in order to record elapsed times without affecting the main timekeeping mechanism.

More exotic variations on the theme include 'flyback' models and 'split seconds' versions. As the name implies, the former allows an indicator (invariably a seconds hand) to be stopped, reset to zero and immediately re-started with just a single press of the button. The system was originally devised for pilots who relied on highly accurate timings for navigation, and it was Longines - who supplied Charles Lindbergh with the watch he wore for his recordbreaking non-stop flight from New York to Paris in 1927 - which patented the flyback mechanism around a decade later.

Split seconds or 'rattrapante' chronographs are even more exotic, featuring a pair of hands which can be set running simultaneously with a single push of the button. Pushing the same button again will stop one of the hands (enabling the first elapsed time to be recorded) and instantly reset and start it. A second push piece stops both hands and enables them to be reset to zero simultaneously.

Now & Then



and the chances are he'll be wearing a Richard Mille watch – he had one on when he was injured in his crash in Hungary in 2009. Mille has created several special editions in Massa's honour, including one with an allcrystal case and a £624,000 price tag.





Then: Patek Philippe Worn by: Count Felice Trossi

Trossi was the first president of Scuderia Ferrari and a successful racer in the 1930s. During the late 1920s, he commissioned a one-off, single-button chronograph which he sported over the top of his shirt cuff. Known as the 'Trossi Legenda', the watch was sold at auction in 2008 for £1.37million.



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Insider

by HARRY METCALFE



evo's editorial director says Jaguar needs to take a brave new direction to restore past glories



'JAGUAR'S C-X75 HYBRID SUPERCAR canned' read the headline after Jaguar's global brand director, Adrian Hallmark, delivered the bad news on the company's stillborn hypercar. I think Jaguar expected me to be mortified by

the announcement, but in reality I felt like punching the air and shouting hallelujah, because the last thing the world wants right now is an £850,000 Jaguar hypercar.

It wasn't like that at the beginning, though. When the C-X75 concept was first shown at the Paris motor show in 2010, I thought it was one of the best concept cars I'd ever seen: beautifully designed and pointing towards an exciting future by being powered by two tiny Bladon jet engines, which even made a modicum of sense

in engineering terms. It was one of Jaguar's finest moments, but then all the good work started to unravel a few months later when Jaguar announced it was going to put the C-X75 into production. But not with the twin jet engines: it was going to use a super- and turbocharged 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine instead. I was shocked. What were they thinking?

You know how Formula 1 aficionados gather in front of the telly for each race and become instant experts on how to drive an F1 car and win every Grand Prix? Well, I'm the same when it comes to running Jaguar and that's why I was so pleased when I first heard the C-X75 project was being canned, because it meant Jaguar had finally taken some brave pills and made the right call.

Jaguar has a history of not getting it right. Think back to the XJ220 debacle, when deposits were taken on a very different car to the one that was actually delivered. Then there was the X-type, which should have been ditched the moment the dreary exterior design arrived on the boardroom table. At around the same time, Jaguar decided diesel engines weren't for them, just as Europe went diesel crazy, and Jag has been playing catch-up ever since.

Those in charge at Jaguar have an aversion to stuffing diesels under the bonnets of the firm's cars for some reason, even though they've got some great diesel engines available. BMW has no such worries and the result is that 90 per cent of all 6-series (coupes and convertibles) sold in Europe are diesel-powered, while Jaguar's XK Coupe sells in tiny numbers with a 5-litre petrol V8 (naturally aspirated or supercharged) as the only engine choice. It's madness that is set to continue, because Jaguar remains confident that petrol power is the right strategy for its new F-type, when for company car drivers, low CO2 emissions are much more important today than the type of fuel the car consumes. That doesn't bode

well for European sales, and my other worry with the F-type is that, while Jaguar believes it's a 911 rival, its closest rival might well be the Jaguar XK. After all, no-one buys the XK for the rear seats, so to many casual observers the F-type is simply a new XK. Jaguar might have scored a major own goal with this one.

The brighter news is that Jaguar is hard at work developing a new 3-series rival because it believes that's where the big volumes lie. But is that true? Hasn't Jaguar been here before with the X-type? And does Jaguar really believe it can create a credible 3-series rival when a) the small BMW is impossibly talented and b) it dominates the most competitive class out there?

That's why I think Jaguar needs to seriously reconsider its future model strategy and look at what the customers of today

'Jaguar needs to seriously reconsider its future model strategy and look at what the customers of today really want'

really want. To find that out, you only have to check what tops the residuals chart, and right now that chart is dominated by 'soft' SUVs. What if the new small Jag was a slickly designed sporting SUV aimed directly at the ugly BMW X3, rather than being a 3-series rival? The X3 (and the Audi Q5 for that matter) are pretty average to drive, but buyers can't seem to get enough of them, and while the Evoque is selling well in this sector, it's handicapped by having to be a true off-roader to keep its Land Rover DNA intact. Sister brand Jaguar has no such worries, so it could make its sporting SUV far more road-biased and give the German players a bloody nose in the process.

Today's buyers want 'luxury performance' from premium cars and that's exactly what Jaguar could - and should - be delivering. It's already launched all-wheel-drive XJ and XF models (although bizarrely not in Europe, and even then it doesn't offer AWD on diesel variants) and the Jaguar design department is dripping with talent right now. So what's stopping it? It's those brave pills again. Come on Jaguar, get them downed and let's see what you can really do. ■

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evo's longest serving columnist comes clean about his addiction to snapping cars on the street



BEING A TOP GEAR PRESENTER IS strange. Not the bickering or the idiocy or the falling over with your trousers on fire; the really strange part of the job is that at any given moment there's a strong chance a complete stranger will be

sticking a cameraphone in your face.

I've worked with Compo, Cleggy and The Other One for ten years now and in that time this curious phenomenon has only got worse, firstly because mobile phones that take pictures have become the norm and secondly because everyone sees the TG three and mistakenly thinks they know them. In this respect they are almost uniquely cursed. If you saw Brad Pitt in the street you might whisper urgently to whoever you were with so that they too

were aware of the actor's presence, but you probably wouldn't approach him because, I'm guessing, you are not mates with Brad Pitt. You know that he's married to Angelina Jolie and you suspect that he comes home every night with a weary sense of trepidation in case she's adopted another child whilst he was at work. But that's about it and you've no real sense of what he might be like in real life because he's an actor and he spends his working life pretending to be someone else.

The Top Gear presenters, on the other hand, spend their working lives just being themselves. Moderately exaggerated versions of themselves, but themselves nonetheless. And that means people think they know

them and are, for example, perfectly at liberty to sidle up to Richard Hammond, shout 'Oi shorty!' and then shove the glinting gimlet of an iPhone camera into his face. Or, worse yet, do broadly the same thing but with an iPad, which, as any right-thinking person knows, is the single easiest way in the modern world to make yourself look like a grunting moron.

I'm curious to know what people do with these pictures afterwards. Do they have them framed and put on the mantelpiece? Do they add them to a deranged shrine featuring other mildly nonplussed-looking TV presenters whose personal space they've invaded? 'Yes! I've got the boring one off *Top Gear* trying to drink a cup of tea! I'll stick him next to my shot of Monty Don looking a bit narky in Debenhams...'

Maybe they just file these pictures away next to all the wobbly, unwatchable footage they've shot at concerts rather than, oh I don't know, just enjoying the sodding concert. Having a camera built into your mobile is generally a brilliant thing, especially if you have kids or a moderately amusing cat, but come on people. Sometimes you need to stop watching great moments in life unfold by staring cross-eved at the screen of a smartphone.

I was feeling quite high-minded about this until last week when I ordered a new mobile and decided to download all the pics off my old phone for safekeeping. There were a few of mates, several of my wife and, rather awkwardly, a great many more of my dog. These subjects were, however, rather dwarfed by the many dozens, nay hundreds, of pictures I'd taken of cars in the street. Oh God, I realised, I'm an inane amateur pap twat too.

I'd like to claim that my slew of phone snaps featured a glittering cavalcade of exotic treats - Wow! I forgot about that Miura! Who thought you'd see a 288 GTO driving through Stoke Newington! - but I'm afraid not. I did once see a Veyron parked on a lawn and an equally rare Citroën DS Decapotable in a ritzy

'I'd like to claim that my slew of phone snaps features a glittering cavalcade of exotic treats, but I'm afraid not'

part of London, but these are the shiny highlights in a sorry gallery of wheeled rogues and rusting detritus.

Ever wanted a hastily snapped shot of a VW Passat W8 estate parked on someone's drive? Step this way. Desperate to see several images of an even rarer Rover 75 V8 Tourer sitting on a street in North London? I'm your man. Extraordinarily keen to see an out-of-focus portrait of a Ferrari 400 slouching in someone's car port? I believe I can help. Although if you really want to see such a thing I believe you might also need help. I know I do. I don't even like the Ferrari 400 and yet because it's rare, because it's comically dreadful and because like everyone else I habitually carry around a device with a camera in it, I've taken a photo of it which then sat on my phone alongside all the many other hundreds and hundreds of pictures of Talbot Sambas, Toyota Seras, Fiat X1/9s and other pieces of street flotsam.

I hope I'm not alone in this rather strange and nerdish cameraphone affliction. And if it's any compensation, I can say with confidence that at least I never feel any compulsion whatsoever to take pictures of the *Top Gear* presenters.



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Ten Tenths

by TIFF NEEDELL



The ex-F1 driver and TV presenter has finally got back the car that launched his racing career

IT'S MY OWN FAULT OF COURSE. Dreaming about things that you want but you don't really need is never a good idea - especially when you put your dreams into writing! The idea had never really gone away since we parted

company almost 40 years ago, but I should never have filled my column in evo 174 with thoughts of what I wanted to do with the empty space in my garage...

I know the word 'unique' does have its meaning stretched a bit too far at times, but I'm fairly sure there has never been anyone else that has won a racing car in a magazine competition and then found themselves sitting on a Grand Prix grid some nine years later. So 'that' car has to be a pretty special car.

Having returned from the Austrian exile that I had sold it into so many decades ago, the Formula Ford Lotus 69F I'd won was happily nestled in the loving care of Classic Team Lotus, courtesy of its owner Dan Collins. He'd bought it over ten years ago, raced it a bit to get some experience and then promoted himself to an ex-Elio de Angelis Lotus 91 from 1982 to race in Historic Formula One.

My first contact with Dan was when I bumped into him while filming the Be A Grand Prix Driver TV series at Monza in 2003 and of course I couldn't resist asking him about the 69F. He didn't want to sell it then, but said he'd let me know when he did, and we sort of kept

in touch ever since. There was no pressure from either side – until I wrote that column six months ago...

The time had come and it had to be mine again. I went through the formality of taking a trip to Norfolk to visit the Classic Team Lotus base at Hethel, just across the road from the Lotus factory, to take a look at the car. Painted dark green with black wheels, it didn't look like 'my' car, but the chassis plate had all the right numbers on it and so did its Hewland gearbox, while the rest of it looked in far better condition than how I'd left it!

Surrounded by Lotus memorabilia and with photos of my inspirational hero Jim Clark adorning almost every wall, it turned into quite an emotional visit. There were cars being restored there that I'd watched racing as a kid and a couple of black and gold John Player Special F1 cars from the team's last great years.

I had visited this very building on a shopping trip back in 1971, just after I'd won the car and found it had been delivered without either seatbelts or wing mirrors - apparently they were optional extras! I'd taken a week off work as a trainee civil engineer to undertake a course at the Jim Russell Racing Drivers School just down the road at Snetterton, which was part of the prize, having towed the car up there behind my very rusty Morris 1000 Traveller... but that's another story.

I did the deal with Dan to get my car back the next day; there was little point in haggling over the price after he had kept the car for me for so long but - despite being considerably more than the £1500 I'd sold it for back in 1973 – his was a fair offer anyway and, in no time at all, the Lotus 69F was mine once again.

But now what do I do with it? Of course, the immediate task was to restore it to the colour scheme it had been in when I won it. After I cartwheeled the car into the Russell Corner banking at Snetterton in only its ninth race, I'd found a little sponsorship to help pay for the repairs. So the red and white Autosport colours

'I'm fairly sure no-one else has ever won a racing car in a magazine competition and then found themselves sitting on a Grand Prix grid nine years later'

> were swapped for a pale blue - which soon became purple when the money failed to materialise and the company name was replaced by 'Sponsor Needed'!

> The workshop at my brother Chris's Barwell Motorsport team was the perfect place to carry out the paint job. Not since the crash had it looked like this. Successfully re-liveried, it was surely the most beautiful car on exhibit at the Autosport International show this January...

> Of course, I'll have to race it at least one more time and, fortunately, the Historic Sports Car Club runs a hugely popular pre-1971 Classic Formula Ford Championship, which fits the bill perfectly. It can take me back in time to classic circuits like Thruxton, Cadwell Park and the Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit, that have mercifully changed little in their layouts over

> After that? Well, don't mention it to his mother, but karting son Harry will be 19 in a couple of years' time, the same age I was when I won it, so seeing him race the car would be something pretty special... cue the tears! ■





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DMS RS6 V10 "THICK LOW END TORQUE MORPHS INTO OHMIGOD TOP-END" EVO MARCH '09

DMS 335I "AS QUICK AS AN M3 ON THE ROAD" EVO MARCH '09

DMS 135I "THE STANDARD CAR IS GREAT BUT DMS HAVE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL" BMW CAR MAY '09

DMS 997 TURBO 3.6 "IT'S EPIC, HILARIOUS AND ADDICTIVE IN EVERY GEAR, YET DOCILE WHEN CRUISING" EVO SEPTEMBER '08

DMS SL55 AMG "THIS CAR IS STUPENDOUSLY FAST" PERFORMANCE CAR MAY '08

DMS 535D "LAUGH-OUT-LOUD FAST" EVO JUNE '05

DMS 330CD "NEW ECU MAKES CAR SO MUCH FASTER YOU SIMPLY HAVE TO HAVE IT!" AUTOCAR OCTOBER '04

DMS 996 TURBO "STUPENDOUS EXPLOITABLE PERFORMANCE" EVO AUGUST '04



PORSCHE:

997 TURBO/S 3.8 INC PDK » 611BHP
997 TURBO 3.6 » 625+ BHP
997 GT2 RS » 670+ BHP
996 TURBO/GT2 » 600+ BHP
997 CARRERA GTS » 439+ BHP
997 CARRERA S PDK » 400+ BHP
997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP
997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP
997 CARRERA » 348 BHP
997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
997 GT3 3.6 » 436 BHP
996 3.6 » 344 BHP
BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+ BHP
CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 » 578+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 » 600+ BHP

MERCEDES-BENZ:

SL65 BLACK SERIES » 720+ BHP & DE-LIMIT SL65 AMG » 680 BHP & DE-LIMIT SL65 AMG » 680 BHP & DE-LIMIT AMG 55 KOMPRESSOR » 600+ BHP C63 AMG » 530+ BHP & DE-LIMIT SL63 AMG » 560+ BHP & DE-LIMIT RE-MAP AND LOWER ABC SUSPENSION CL600 BI-TURBO » 580+ BHP S500 2008 » 411+ BHP SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP & DELIMIT SLK 350 » 328 BHP 200K » 205+BHP C220 CDI (W204) » 210 BHP 280 /300 CDI V6 » 257 BHP 320 CDI V6 » 274 BHP 350 CDI V6 » 312 BHP 420 /450 CDI V8 » 358 BHP 63AMG 5.5V8 TURBO » 600+ BHP & DE-LIMIT

BMW:

M5 V10 » 548+ BHP 205 MPH M3 E46 » 370 BHP & DE-LIMIT 1M » 400+BHP & DE-LIMIT F10 M5 » PLEASE CALL F10 535I » 370+ BHP F10 DIESEL MODELS » PLEASE CALL 335I/135I/ X6 » 378+ BHP & DE-LIMIT 123D » 252 BHP 330D E90 » 296+ BHP 325D E90 » 285 BHP 320D E90 » 209 BHP 330D E46 » 260+ BHP 730D » 290+ BHP X5 4.0D / 740D » 358 BHP X5 3.0D » 278 BHP X6 50I » 500+BHP 535D/335D » 344 BHP X5 SD » 344 BHP

EXOTIC & MISC:

FERRARI CALIFORNIA » 487 BHP FERRARI 599 » 660+ BHP FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP GALLARDO » 546 BHP LP560 » 608+ BHP LP640 » 707 BHP MURCIELAGO LP670SV » 715 BHP MASERATI GRANTURISMO/QPORT » 438 BHP GRANTURISMO S / MC » 479+ BHP AUDI RS6 V10 » 700+BHP & DE-LIMIT AUDI R8 V10 » 602+BHP AUDI B7 RS4/ R8 » 439 BHP & DE-LIMIT AUDI RS5 » 475 BHP & DE-LIMIT AUDI RS3/ TTRS » 405 BHP & DE-LIMIT AUDI Q7 /A8 4.2 TDI » 387 BHP AUDI (ALL MODELS) 3.0TDI » 298 BHP AUDI \$3 / GOLF R » 317 + BHP RANGE ROVER 3.6 TDV8 » 338 BHP R ROVER SPORT 3.0D INC2012 » 305 BHP R ROVER SPORT 2.7D » 240 BHP R ROVER EVOQUE DIESEL » 245 BHP R ROVER EVOQUE PETROL » 300+ BHP BENTLEY CGT / F-SPUR » 630 BHP BENTLEY GT SPEED » 680+ BHP BENTLEY SUPERSPORTS » 700+ BHP

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The professional racer and three-time Indianapolis 500 winner introduces himself to evo

IT'S GREAT TO BE ABLE TO WRITE MY first column for evo. Motoring magazines have been part of my life forever - they were all I read until about the age of ten. I devoured every word and remembered every statistic - much to

my schoolteacher's disgust. I found some old Top Trumps cards recently and they reminded me of the outrageous claims that were made - can you believe all the fabricated top speeds from the Italian manufacturers?!

I love road cars. If you look into my garage now and you looked at my bedroom wall back then, there's a strong correlation between the two. I had posters of Ferrari 328s and F40s, plus some oddities like Testarossas and Porsche Speedsters. I also went through a stage of having a schoolboy crush on the Porsche 959.

I was never that keen on the Lamborghini Countach, though. It was the poster-child of the generation but never did much for me. A good mate in Scotland has owned one for the best part of 20 years now but I was never that interested in it. Now I'd have one in a minute. I blame Harry Metcalfe: he's a bad influence on my life.

After a crammer course, I passed my test first time. I remember getting my licence and my dad saying, 'OK son, you've got your test – go and pick your sister up from London.' We lived near Edinburgh at the time...

My family trusted me as a young driver. My cousin Paul di Resta was always surrounded by interesting cars and his dad, my uncle Louis, had a trader policy and let me drive things like Porsche 928s and Sierra Cosworths. Imagine that as a 17-year-old! To me, that Cosworth was a rocketship.

Funnily enough, I wasn't interested in showing off or taking girls out in these cars – I just wanted to drive them, to feel what the cars were like, to experience them on the road. The roads where I grew up were really good for that - from Bathgate to Lanark and up to Falkirk. When I go back to Scotland, I remember them almost like a track – each apex, each bump in the road, each crest. Unfortunately I spend less time at home, but when I do I make sure I spend a good day or two out on the roads.

That first drive to London from Scotland was probably my firstever road trip - something I've had a deep love for ever since. The thing I enjoy more than anything is simply jumping in the car and driving for the hell of it. The same is true today and I'm lucky that where I live near Nashville, there are some really cracking roads just out the back door. My driving education took place on roads with undulations and tight corners, and roads up in the hills and forests. When I'm out driving now, I tend to gravitate towards

those types of road. They're the ones that do it for me.

However busy I have been with the racing, I've always had time for road cars and road driving. My first-ever road car was a Fiat Uno turbo, and I then progressed to a Golf mk2 GTI. When I went to Europe to race with Mercedes in DTM, I got a C36 AMG as a company car and I drove that everywhere. It was a really fun time exploring Europe in that car - I even got the chance to hit 200mph on the Autobahn in a Bugatti EB110!

Today I drive on the road as much as I can. Not so long ago my brother and I were in Scotland and thought that it would be fun to visit Allan McNish in Monaco. So we threw some bags in my F355 and just went. It was a fantastic trip. Oh, and I drove home from a race in Las Vegas last year. I didn't fancy the flight so I

'I drove home from a race in Las Vegas last year. I didn't fancy the flight so I got in the car and drove - all 1800 miles of it. Fantastic'

drove - all 1800 miles of it. Fantastic.

At the moment, I'm loving driving my old '73 911. The shell was stripped and dipped and strengthened, then a 993 RS motor was fitted and a few extra horsepower liberated. It's got around 330bhp now, a short-ratio 'box and weighs just 975kg. It absolutely flies – it's a car that communicates everything that's going on and you don't have to be going warp factor ten to have a good time in it. I absolutely adore that little thing. It's been down to Alabama - a 300-mile trip that I turned into a 400-mile trip and to Road Atlanta. You can imagine that driving from Atlanta to Nashville is a pretty straight shot, but I managed to find myself in South Carolina on the way home just by following all these great roads.

I'll tell you more about the 911 next month, and some thoughts on the relationship between road car technology and the thrill of driving. Do advances in damping, traction and stability control, torque vectoring or electric diffs make for better drivers' cars? Or you can fire me some column suggestions on Twitter. Remember, I'm a rookie at this after all! ■





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Inbox

What's stuck your pancake to the ceiling this month?



Disad-Vantage

I'm not sure that Mark Conlin is right in saying Aston Martin should follow Porsche and release a less expensive car in the Boxster segment (letters, 179). I think the problem is much deeper. The 'hand-made' heritage card Aston has consistently played means that it can't now build mass-produced cars – it would contradict what the brand has always represented.

I owned a 4.7 V8 Vantage - the 'baby' Aston you could drive every day. I loved the way it looked, but its electronics and satnav were dubious, the clutch was weird and its balance, steering and handling didn't inspire confidence. And servicing costs bordered on criminal. Beyond the smugness I felt sitting inside it, there wasn't much pleasure!

I sold mine after two years at half its original price. This is because they are overpriced to begin with and beyond the looks, they just aren't good enough to compete with bettervalue rivals that successfully exploit the latest technology.

Aston must make better-value cars, or its market will become a core of old loyals that will literally die off.

Simon Lawrence, Whitchurch

The star letter wins a Road Angel Gem safety camera & blackspot alert device worth £129.99



The Road Angel Gem automatically updates its safety camera database as you drive and allows users to share the locations of 'live' camera vans and changed speed limits.

ROAD ANGEL

Harry hammering

I've just read Harry Metcalfe's 'Insider' column on the taxman's revenue shortfall from motorists (evo 179). Can he be serious?

The article's logic is amazingly small-minded. Climate change is a greater existential threat than a recession and needs to be treated as such. Tax revenue comes from all areas of the economy and if tax from motorists falls, it will rise elsewhere (hopefully from multinationals).

Earlier in the same issue, you feature the BMW i8 and the revolution it embodies, but a few pages later Harry is attempting to defend the indefensible. By ending on the idea that he is 'doing his bit' by having a garage full of cars, Harry seems as out of touch as George Osborne.

Evolve or die, Mr Metcalfe! Oliver Grav

Doing a duty

Harry's column on the reduced takings from Vehicle Excise Duty was interesting. It also raises the question of whether the way VED is calculated should be rethought.

The present assumption that a car is more environmentally friendly because it produces less CO2 per kilometre is flawed, as it takes no consideration of how much it is driven. For example, I have a Jeep Cherokee 2.5 CRD and a BMW 325 for which I pay a combined VED of £540 per year, but as I only cover 3500 miles (5632km) a year in total, at around 250g/km, the total CO2 output is 1408kg. Compare that with a Citroën C1 (105g/km, £20 VED per year), which would produce 1696kg of CO2 if driven for 10,000 miles. How is this better for the environment?

It would be much fairer if VED was scrapped and put onto the price of

fuel, so that the more you use and the more pollution you cause, the more you pay. If it was worked out on an average family car like a 2006 Ford Focus 1.6 LX doing 10,000 miles a year, adding 15p per litre would result in paying the same as at present. It would be cheap and easy for the government to collect and it would be practically impossible to avoid paying it.

And if you have a fun car in the garage for the odd blast, you would only pay when you use it. I'm sure that Harry would find that useful...

Neil Hollington

Mito fanatic

evo 179 has just arrived - just the fillip after the Christmas festivities, full of straightforward and intoxicating road test reports of cars that I can only dream of sitting in, let alone driving or even owning. This is why I started subscribing to **evo** all those years ago.

Then having poured over such exotica, the icing on the cake: Harry has bought the very car I purchased a month ago, a white Mito 875 TwinAir Sportiva. It's not perfect (it's Italian and an Alfa) but it is cool, and whether you drive quickly or more leisurely, it will put a smile on your face.

Craig Watts

Delta memories

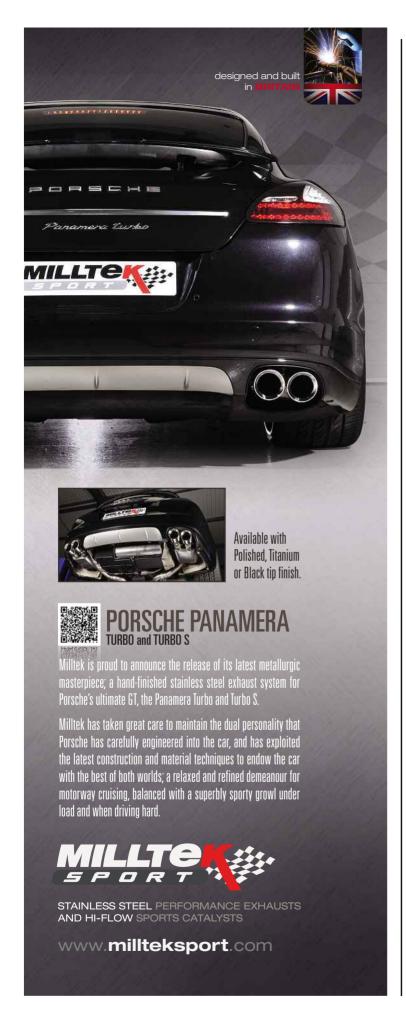
Here's a picture from my visit to Chivasso, Italy, in August 1994, where I rode in the Lancia Delta Integrale Evo 3 featured in evo 179. The two guys standing either side of the car are one of the Maggiora family (left) and Roberto, their test pilot, who drove the car with three passengers around the little test track flat out and apparently with no brake fade for most of the morning.

James McAllister





Above left: Harry's new Alfa Mito TwinAir is a hit with reader Craig Watts (see 'Mito fanatic'). Above right: James McAllister encountered the Integrale Evo 3 back in 1994







Above left: the downforce magic of the Caterham SP300R wowed Jonathan Davis. **Above right:** Maserati makes great cars, but Richard Jones struggles with the image

Status apathy

In his recent letter (evo 179), Bryan Selwood makes an excellent point about not comparing cars to white goods. However, I'm hoping other evo readers disagree with his 'status symbol' method of buying a car.

I have my M3 E92 because it's brilliant to drive, it puts an irremovable smile on my face and on the right day and the right road, it erases all troubles from my world. Not once during the purchase of said M3 did I consider what my neighbours might think of it or what it says about me, my financial position, my job, etc.

When the M4 is released, I will judge it on its merits and if they prove to be better than my current steed I may upgrade. If not, I will stick with the M3.

I work in an area of London where all manner of barely driven exotic status symbols line the streets, purely there as an exhibition of wealth, but the kerbed alloys and covering of dust on many of them show a distinct lack of enthusiasm from their owners. I suspect the owner of the battered 458 Italia I saw doesn't care as much about cars as I wish he did!

Will Puttergill

SP300R is a star

I share Peter Garforth's admiration for Caterham and its position at the forefront of British motorsport (letters, **evo** 179), but from there on our views diverge.

I've been privileged enough to drive the SP300R and it is a truly extraordinary car with little to match it. Contrary to what Peter suggests, Radicals are, in fact, in the same price bracket, while a load of exotic secondhand things that will spend most of their lives in pieces simply aren't relevant. I've driven many Caterhams, Radicals and supercars on tracks and raced a number of them. The SP300R is the best by a distance.

On the question of using the car, endurance racing is a possibility, even if Caterham never runs the one-make series. But ultimately, I found the sensation of the SP300R at 150mph under downforce through the curves of the Le Mans Bugatti circuit utterly addictive. Even if it never races, repeating experiences like that will be enough for me.

Caterham may well have to find a way of moving on from the Seven

eventually, and innovation like the SP300R shows just what the company is capable of.

Jonathan Davis

Maserati man

Jethro Bovingdon's intro to his great Maserati article (**evo** 178) brought back an unfortunate association I hold with the marque: that of old men with a penchant for gold chains, chest hair and permed mullets.

Whilst working at a global accountancy firm in the UK, one of the partners had a black Quattroporte with a caramel suede and mahogany interior. The old devil used it to transport unsuspecting (female) audit juniors to clients and attempted to seduce them whilst whisking them around in his 'caramel love machine'.

I just can't shift this association with Maseratis and this type of clientele and, as a result, I can't accept them as a young, modern man's car because of all the cheesy '80s and '90s overtones. Shame.

Richard Jones

Lack of emotion

I've just finished eCoty (**evo** 177) and found it completely subjective, biased and emotional. Brilliant! After all, I'm sure I'm not alone in applying exactly the same process to buying a car. I have a pretty good idea what I want and the trick is to construct a logical series of arguments that lead to the right result. For me, that's why the 12C would finish in a similarly lowly spot.

McLaren seems to have translated its obsessive quest for F1 perfection into this car. It's like that MP4/4 that won all but one of the F1 races in 1988: a car that laps as fast as possible without distracting the driver with any quirks, giving him spare capacity to concentrate on strategy or where to have dinner. But in a road car, I want to be part of the action. Even the styling is almost wilfully inoffensive.

I can't remember a single race of the '88 F1 season. But I do remember that famous duel between Gilles Villeneuve and René Arnoux at Dijon in 1979. That sums it up: I want to feel like Gilles Villeneuve and not, with the greatest respect, Alain Prost. McLaren deserves the greatest respect for its achievement, but you can't engineer an emotional response.

Tim Gosling



MATTCAMBS 'Who will buy a GT86?'

Reading through people's car plans for this year, I couldn't help noticing that the GT86 isn't on anyone's wish list. Is the M135i stealing sales with its appealing mix of practicality and performance for only £4k more? Are Toyota selling many at all?

MICK N

The first new car in years I'd consider buving, but with the seat in my driving position, the rear seats are redundant: no space whatsoever. That killed it instantly for me.

RICH B

If I was spending that sort of cash, then the M135 would totally take it. Less than 200bhp, sub-8sec to 60 and an ugly rear against over 300bhp, sub-5sec to 60 and an ugly front for the same money. It's a no-brainer.

DADDYDADBO

No. It is never going to be on my radar, even second-hand, when for similar money you can get faster and more enticing machinery.

FACEFIRST

The sort of money they're asking for what is a cheaply finished, lowishpower car with a coarse engine is simply too high for me, when a used 'proper' sports car could be had for

the same price and would have already taken its biggest depreciation hit. I've seen a few out and about though, so someone is buying them...

DR.(TBC) ALEX

It's too expensive but I guess the 135i is making a lot of cars expensive in comparison.

D7III G

I saw my first one on the road today. Must admit it didn't exactly set the pulse racing.

PHUTZ

How much is a second-hand Exige or Elise? Similar practicality but eleventy billion more awesomes. For that matter. how much is a new Elise?

MATT_82_S2

It will be another slightly overpriced Toyota flop, Look at the ST205 Celica in the 90s, the mk2 MR2 and the Supra - all good cars in isolation that weren't able to catch on due to their prices.



Thread of the month wins a Jorg Gray chronograph

The originator of the best **evo** forum thread wins a fabulous Jorg Gray chronograph. Jorg Gray has quickly become one of the world's most sought-after brands and is found in fine jewellery stores throughout the UK.

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TEXAS LONE STAR

by RICHARD MEADEN | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

Can a go-it-alone Texan carmaker really take on the hypercar establishment? We try the 1244bhp Hennessey Venom and find out





SO YOU THINK

you know the Hennessey Venom GT?

Plenty of people do, apparently. At least that's the impression you get if you delve through

forum posts or YouTube comments on the subject. Sift through the piles of cyber detritus and the collective 'expert' sentiment is that it's little more than a stretched Lotus Exige with a big Yank V8; a bastardised 'bitsa' that excels in a straight line, but sucks around corners. Isn't it amazing what you can learn from playing Forza Motorsport before your mum sends you to bed?

Call us old-fashioned, but at **evo** we prefer to actually drive a car before expressing an opinion. Frustratingly that's always been a problem with the Venom GT, for while Europe's pre-eminent hypercar makers Bugatti, Pagani, and Koenigsegg are but a short-haul flight away, and friendly owners of Veyrons, Huayras and Ageras are on **evo**'s office speed dial, Hennessey are based in Sealy, Texas, and there are currently only eight Venom GTs in existence.

So you can imagine our excitement when John Hennessey called to ask if we fancied witnessing the Venom GT make an attempt on the 0-300kph (0-186mph) Guinness World Record for street-legal production cars. When he added we could drive it on a smooth 1.6-mile military runway and then on quiet Texan country roads, we had three flights to Houston booked before he put down the phone.

The story of how the Venom GT came to be is brilliantly bold and refreshingly simple. Having spent the best part of 20 years making Chrysler Vipers go obscenely fast, culminating in a Veyron-trouncing test conducted by respected US magazine *Road & Track* in 2007, Hennessey got to thinking what could be achieved if he slotted his twin-turbo Viper powertrain into a truly light mid-engined platform. After joking he should put the motor in a Lotus Exige, one thing led to another and the in-house design team produced a rendering of what the car might look like. Hennessey liked what he saw. The itch was about to be scratched.

Six years later and with the help and investment of Hennessey's business partner Don Goldman, that dream is a reality. In that time the Chrysler V10 was dropped in favour of Hennessey's twin-turbo take on the lighter, more compact and ultimately more powerful 7-litre Chevy LS7 V8 small block. With the help of UK firm Delta Motorsport, Hennessey refined the design and aerodynamics of the





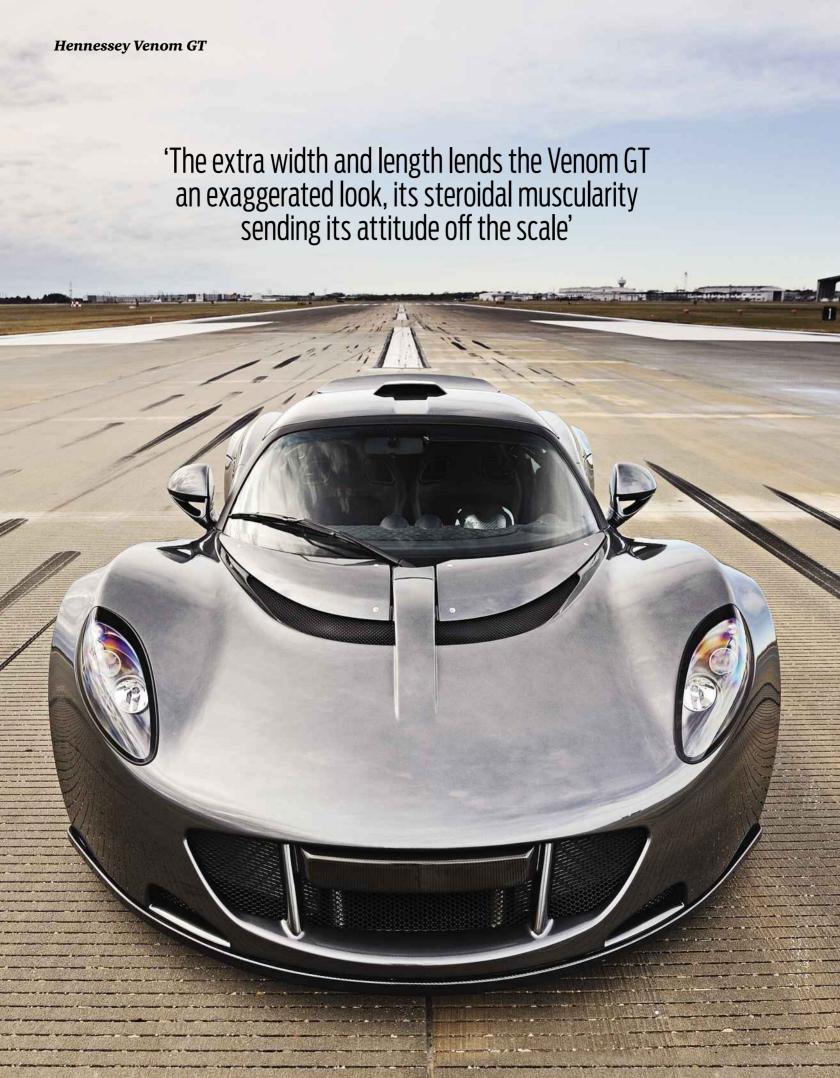




car, creating bespoke front and rear structures, suspension, brakes and carbonfibre bodywork.

When it comes to describing his unique take on the hypercar, Hennessey is modest and pragmatic. While taking his hat off (baseball cap, not a Stetson, in case you were wondering) to independent makers like Horacio Pagani and Christian von Koenigsegg, and paying healthy respect to Bugatti, Porsche and the VW Group's infinite resources, he's happy to go his own way. 'I'm a big believer in keeping things simple,' he says. 'We're not trying to reinvent the wheel, just make it turn a little faster.' That could just about be the understatement of the century.

When an order is placed, Hennessey buys a Lotus donor car, which is then shipped to Delta's base at Silverstone where they strip it back to a bare bonded aluminium tub. Essentially this means everything forward of the windscreen and aft of the rear bulkhead is Hennessey. The tub is then prepared to receive the new front and rear structures, along with





a roll-cage to increase rigidity and safety. The carbon bodywork is painted and then the whole package is flown to Texas where Hennessey installs the powertrain, brakes and suspension before shaking the car down, setting it up and delivering it to the customer. This process takes between six and eight months and the car costs \$1.2million (£750,000), plus local taxes.

The heart of the Venom GT is its engine. While it shares its 7-litre capacity with GM's LS7-series production motors, it is a bespoke build, with a strengthened block and custom internals. The turbo installation draws upon Hennessey's huge experience of extracting massive power from what were originally naturally aspirated engines. The results are staggering, with peaks of 1244bhp at 6500rpm and 1155lb ft at 4200rpm. Even more gobsmacking is Hennessey's assertion that the motor is good for a safe 2000bhp. All this power and torque hits the road via a standard(!) sixspeed manual gearbox and rear axle assembly taken from the Ford GT. Wow.

OUR FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE VENOM GT

is at Ellington Field. Formerly a military base used exclusively by NASA, it now accepts civil aircraft, but it remains at the heart of NASA's training activity, with pilots in the astronaut programme keeping up their flying hours in

Top: based on a Lotus Exige body, the Venom GT is stretched by 603mm to make room for the 7-litre V8 engine. Left: Ellington Field, a former Space Shuttle runway, is an apt record attempt venue

dart-like T38 jets. If Hennessey wanted a bit of the 'right stuff' to rub off on the Venom's record attempt, Ellington is just about perfect.

Two Venoms have been rolled out onto the runway: a steely grey coupe that will be used for the record runs and a black Spyder that's owned by Aerosmith frontman Steven Tyler. It's the latter car we'll be driving, both at Ellington and on roads close to Hennessey's Sealy HQ. For now though, all eyes are on the grey car. Perched on jacks, its Michelin Pilot Cup tyres wrapped in gently humming warmers and umbilical cords running back to laptops, it makes for a deeply impressive sight. The carbonfibre body is obviously closely related to the Exige, but the extra width and length lends the Venom GT an exaggerated look, its steroidal muscularity sending its attitude off the scale.

When it fires up, the whole airfield seems to fill with an unholy rumpus that's part dragster, part jet fighter. When test driver John Kiewicz blips the throttle, the note changes to a hard-asnails V8 holler, with sharp, urgent stabs of noise firing from the sawn-off exhaust stubs like sonic buckshot. It's as sensational a supercar

soundtrack as I've ever heard: not musical like a Carrera GT or exquisitely tortured like a Pagani 760RS or Aston Martin One-77, but meaty, malevolent and utterly unique.

Like most motorsport Guinness World Record attempts, this effort comprises hours of standing around punctuated by vivid bursts of intense action. The Hennessey crew spends plenty of time perfecting the traction control settings and boost management, using test launches up to 150mph to gauge traction before making further tweaks. When Kiewicz makes his first full pass, we're stood by the edge of the runway, roughly at the half-mile mark. The way the Venom GT leaps from the start, then apparently accelerates faster and faster with every gear is extraordinary. The percussive thwack as it comes by - already at more than 200mph - is enough to part your hair, then stand it on end as the Venom disappears in a haze of pulverised runway dust. It takes just a few more runs for the 0-300kph record to be in the bag, with a jaw-dropping, VBOX-measured, Guinness-verified two-way average of 13.6sec.

Data from the fastest run contains many more extraordinary figures (see p58). However, the fact that sticks in my mind is that from launch it continues to accelerate with increasing intensity until it reaches a peak of 1.4G at 112mph, which is when the minimally intrusive, hugely

Hennessey Venom GT









Time machine

We thought you might like to see some of the other figures achieved by the Venom GT during its Guinness World Record 0-300kph runs. Being rear-wheel drive, the Venom GT is traction-limited below 100mph compared to a Veyron, but once into three figures it murders the Bugatti and gives Koenigsegg's Agera R – the previous 0-300kph record holder – a bloody nose. It should be noted that these are the best one-way figures, not two-way averages as required by Guinness, but they are taken from genuine acceleration data validated by the geeks at VBOX. If you're struggling to put these numbers into context, a vanilla Veyron 16.4 takes around a whole mile to hit 204mph...

 0-60mph
 3.05sec

 0-100mph
 5.88sec

 0-150mph
 9.27sec

 0-200mph
 14.51sec

1/4 mile 10.29sec @ 158.830mph 1/2 mile 15.22sec @ 204.657mph

Top middle: John Hennessey co-ordinates the record attempt. **Top right:** Guinness officials in attendance. **Above:** Venom becomes a blur as it hits 200mph inside half a mile. **Below, from left:** a quick run for the cameras; warming the tyres; driver Jon Kiewicz (on the left) receives his record certificate; Meaden remakes *Top Gun*









effective traction control finally relinquishes its electronic hold and the ECUs finally deliver all 1244bhp and 1155lb ft with total conviction. From here it pulls with similar urgency up to and beyond 200mph. This thing scrambles Koenigseggs for breakfast, eats Veyrons for lunch and flosses with Pagani Huayras. And ominously, Hennessey has a 1500bhp Venom GT2 waiting in the wings...

The sun is dipping behind the hangars when my time comes to try the Venom. Having seen the violent and explosive pace of the record runs I'm more than a bit intimidated, but the snugly familiar confines of the re-trimmed Lotus cockpit bring some sense of reassurance. The clutch is heavy, but the gearbox is just as sweet as it was in the Ford GT, and the engine feels far more tractable than I was expecting. I don't want to light the thing up in first gear, so I pull away like there's a police car behind me, find second gear and then floor it.

What happens next is insane. In a little under a mile – my first-ever mile in the Venom GT – the speedo (accurate, as it happens) has torn past 200mph. I repeat the process a handful of times before John Hennessey flags me down. Quivering with adrenalin, I clamber out and talk gibberish to anyone who'll listen. And to think tomorrow we get to drive it on the road.

So the Venom GT's ballistics are gloriously, mind-bendingly absurd. With 1244bhp to propel 1244kg that's hardly a surprise. But without wishing to get all worthy on you, what we've flown 5500 miles to discover is whether it can deploy such rampant firepower with any degree of sophistication, and to see if it can convincingly string together the endless assortment of corners, crests, lumps and bumps that constitute the public highway. The watch might be the ultimate arbiter of outright performance, but the road is the only barometer of outright capability.

WHEN YOU STRAY OFF THE INTERSTATE

that passes Hennessey's workshop doors, you find near-deserted roads running through an apparently endless expanse of flat, scrubby grassland. The sheer size and steam-rollered topography of this gargantuan state means there's a distinct lack of European-style rough and tumble to the roads. For a moment I fear our questions will remain unanswered, but as promised, Hennessey's test route strays way off the beaten track and features fast sweeping curves, inviting esses and some 90-degree lefts and rights. It's not exactly the Modenese hills, but it's reassuring that Hennessey has brought us to the trickiest roads it knows.

Those encouraging first impressions formed at Ellington Field soon crystallise into a genuine sense that this is a very well-sorted car. The clutch is undeniably hefty, but the modest travel and surprisingly smooth take-up mean it's easy enough to master. The big V8 has keen throttle



Hennessey Venom GT

response, but as long as you're positive and reasonably sensitive you can pull away cleanly, and there's so much torque that low-speed manoeuvres can be done by nudging around at idle. Steady driving in first or second gear needs a careful right foot as you can induce a sequence of kangaroo hops if you're clumsy with your throttle inputs, but otherwise the Venom GT is tolerant and well-mannered.

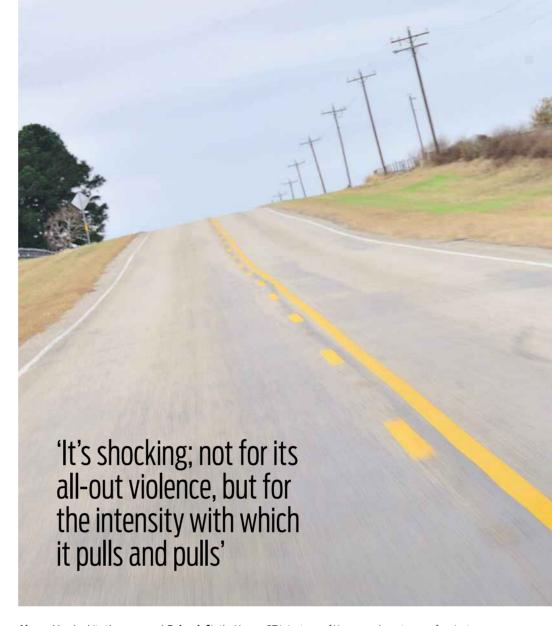
Like the clutch, the gearshift is sweet and positive. Things tend to happen pretty fast on full-boost so you don't want to have to think the lever home during rapid cross-gate shifts. It's got a longish throw, but has steadfast precision and consistency no matter how hard you're being battered by accelerative G. This Ricardo-built transmission is surely one of the best manual 'boxes ever made, not only for its shift quality, but for its ability to take as much as 2000bhp (see panel, p62) without complaint or need for internal strengthening.

The Brembo carbon-ceramic brakes – so strong and confidence inspiring when hauling down from 200mph+ at Ellington – have real finesse and a level of feel, progression and precise modulation that puts Lamborghini's binary stoppers to shame and rivals Porsche, Ferrari and Aston Martin for the best carbon-ceramic set-up. Whether you're brushing them or stomping on them they always seem to deliver just the right amount of braking effort.

True to Hennessey's 'keep things simple' mantra, the Venom GT's suspension shuns trick electronics and active damping in favour of passive dampers and coil springs. They give the Venom tight body control with a no-nonsense ride that's both firm and settled. Some of the busier surfaces on the route are pretty nasty, but the Venom's composure remains intact. Of course, with almost 1200lb ft of torque if you hit a sharp bump when you're fully on the power in a lower gear then the traction control makes the occasional spit and pop, but to be honest that's wholly reassuring!

There's true feel in the electric steering (take note, Porsche) so you can load the front end from the moment you turn in and – at fast road speeds, at least – have no qualms about the tail failing to keep up or match the front's resistance to roll. The steering retains a good deal of its Lotus DNA, especially in the measured way the Venom peels into corners. I'd be lying if I said I'd tried to provoke the Venom GT into any sort of slide but, honestly, cars like this aren't designed to be thrown around like an M3. Besides, 345-section rear rubber takes some un-sticking, even with an unholy amount of torque. That's not to say I wouldn't have a go if we ever drive the Venom on a racetrack...

Another thing worth mentioning is the Venom's size. Yes, it's longer and wider (especially at the rear) than an Exige, but it



Above: Meaden hits the open road. **Below left:** the Venom GT is just one of Hennessey's vast array of projects



feels much more wieldy than something like a Huayra. The fact the interior tricks your brain into thnking you're in a pocket-sized Lotus certainly helps, but there's no doubt the Venom is easier to thread along smaller roads and leaves you more room to play with on wider, smoother tarmac.

Consequently, when you drive the Venom GT not only do you feel confident and connected to the car, you're left free to concentrate on enjoying it and exploring its performance. At first you just tickle it along, revelling in the torque and the mighty soundtrack of this extraordinary twin-turbo, 7-litre, bespoke-



built V8. There's also a certain amount of trepidation at what this kind of power will feel like on the road in a mid-engined car on regular street tyres, but human nature being what it is, it's not too long before your right foot pushes a bit harder for a bit longer until those turbos wake up with a banshee wail.

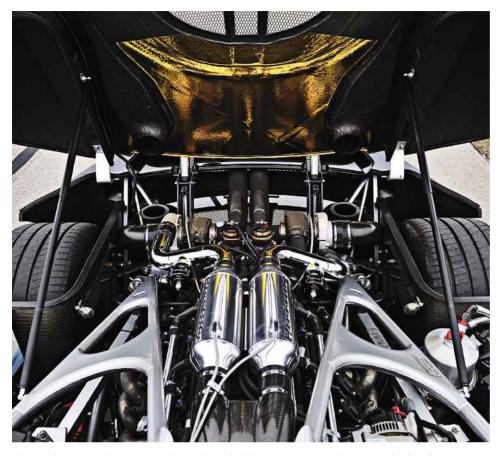
With an intermediate gear selected – let's say fourth at 60mph – the build-up of boost and resulting acceleration intensifies like the breath-squeezing embrace of a boa constrictor. Accelerative G-force squishes you into the seat as torque builds to that Himalayan peak of 1155lb ft at 4200rpm. It's shocking; not for its





all-out violence, but for the sustained intensity with which it pulls and pulls, ever harder, ever stronger. Peak power might win bar-room bragging rights, but this is exquisite proof that torque-to-weight will always be the thinking man's indicator of true on-road performance.

Still, once you've tasted the Venom GT's full-throttle through-the-gears acceleration, it expands your mind and opens a window to performance that no end of on-boost, in-gear roll-ons can replicate. When you scrunch up the courage to wind the Venom GT out through as many gears as you dare, the acceleration and sensation of speed is biblical. Samuel L Jackson spittle-flecked tirade in Pulp Fiction biblical. Trees, fences, road signs and even the vast Texan sky begin to form a blur as the traction control allows the 345-section rear tyres to rotate just faster than actual road speed in second and third gears. This is performance of an entirely different magnitude and intensity to any other hypercar. For the few seconds you can unleash it before running out of road (or nerve) it feels completely overwhelming.



Above: 7-litre twin-turbo V8 runs 1244bhp in the back of the Venom GT; it's said to be capable of a safe 2000bhp...







Above (from left): Precision Turbos blowers; wing aids crucial rear stability at high speeds; 20in rims all round

Hennessey's Texas Mile-eater

 $The \ Venom\ GT is\ capable\ of\ truly\ extraordinary\ performance, but\ there is\ something\ else\ lurking\ in\ Hennessey is\ Texan\ HQ\ that is\ therefore the performance of the pe$ even more gobsmacking. Known as 'The Camo Car' on account of its military-inspired livery, this weapons-grade Ford GT is the reigning king of the Texas Mile, a bi-annual standing-start one-mile shoot-out for some of the craziest cars in the USA

 $Running\ a\ Hennessey-built\ twin-turbo\ version\ of\ the\ Ford\ 5.4-litre\ V8, it\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ of\ 2000\ bhp\ at\ the\ flywheel, or\ produces\ in\ excess\ or\ produces\ or$ 1700bhp at the rear wheels. Traction limitations mean it can't put all that down without the aid of electronics until somewhere in the region of 170mph, but despite this it's still doing around 210mph by the

In March 2012, driver Sean Kennedy set a new record of 2577mph then hit 263.3mph in October, The Camo Car is expected to go even quicker this year.



As the speed subsides and sanity returns, adrenalin rushes through your system in a hot, roiling flush of fight-or-flight energy. And then you laugh: gusts of manic, heliumtinged hysteria that only come in the wake of experiencing something gloriously stupid. I've been lucky enough to feel that natural high in road cars, race cars and record-breaking cars, but nothing approaches the stimulant-like effects of the Venom GT's all-out performance. If gasoline is your drug of choice, this car's throttle is a syringe.

SO WHERE DOES IT FIT INTO THE

grand hypercar hierarchy? At the top of the tree, at least in terms of authenticated outright acceleration and estimated (and soon to be attempted) 270mph+ top speed. Incredible as it sounds, building a car that hits 186mph in 13.6sec is the easy bit. It's making a car go that fast yet possess the polish and finesse to work as a road car that takes time, commitment and a rare ability to sweat over the details.

 $No, the Venom\,GT\,doesn't\,have\,the\,refinement$ and accessibility of a Veyron, but for many people - myself included - that painstakingly engineered aloofness and disdain for hypercar theatrics is the Bug's biggest weakness. Styling is a subjective quality, and while I'll admit to having doubts about Hennessey's Marvel Comics makeover of the S2 Exige prior to our trip, there's no doubting its star quality and jawdropping presence when you see it close-up. As for the lack of pedigree, it's worth parking our in-built European snobbery and remembering Pagani uses an AMG Mercedes motor, while Koenigsegg's V8 still has traces of Ford DNA.

To my mind the Venom GT is in the mould of the Porsche Carrera GT and, in some respects, the McLaren F1. Its defiantly analogue approach makes it unique amongst its contemporaries, while its no-prisoners attitude ensures it will never be less than a challenge to master. If anything, the Hennessey's handling is a little more flattering and forgiving than either, though there's no doubt it'll bite if you take liberties. If you ask me, that's exactly how a supercar should be.

Of course we won't know for sure how well the Venom GT stacks up unless we drive it against cars like the Agera R, Huayra, Veyron Super Sport and One-77 on the same roads (and runway) on the same day. We're doing all we can to make that test a reality, but until then we politely suggest the hypercar establishment takes heed of this age-old warning: don't mess with Texas.



See the Venom GT in action online and in our interactive edition for iPad Search for 'evo interactive' or visit youtube.com/evotv

Specification

HENNESSEY VENOM GT

Engine V8, 7000cc, twin-turbo Power 1244bhp @ 6500rpm Torque 1155lb ft @ 4200rpm

Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, traction control

Front suspension Coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled carbonceramic discs, 380mm front and rear **Wheels** 9.5 x 20in front, 12.5 x 20in rear

Tyres 255/30 20 front, 345/30 20 rear

Weight (kerb) 1244kg Power-to-weight 1016bhp/ton

0-60mph 2.5sec (claimed)

Top speed 275mph (claimed)

Basic price £750,000 plus local taxes



ETTORE BUGATTI

ENZO FERRARI FERRUCCIO LAMBORGHINI FERDINAND PORSCHE

CHRISTIAN VON KOENIGSEGG

Why it's time to take the Swedish supercar builder seriously

by HARRY METCALFE

PHOTOGRAPHY by DAVE SMITH

AS WE DROP DOWN FROM THE

impressive Limhamn Bridge that links Denmark to Sweden, there's a gaggle of Swedish border police waiting for us. It's eight o'clock in the morning, minus two outside and there's a howling arctic wind hitting our left side that's strong enough to rock the car, so I can understand if the guard requesting me to stop isn't in the best of moods. I lower my window.

'Nationality?' he demands. 'UK,' I answer.

'Where are you travelling to?' he asks. 'Koenigsegg,' I say, before realising I should have said Ängelholm, Koenigsegg's home town. But my mistake seems to have lifted the tension and brings a smile to the border guard's face.

'Ah, are you going there to buy a car?' he asks. 'No, but I'm going to try one,' I reply.

'You're going to have a great day, then,' he chuckles and waves us through, completely forgetting to check our passports in the process.

That sums up just how far Koenigsegg has come over the past few years. Until recently you needed to be a proper petrolhead to know of the company's existence, but thanks to YouTube and the like, everyone now knows Koenigsegg, even grumpy Swedish border guards.

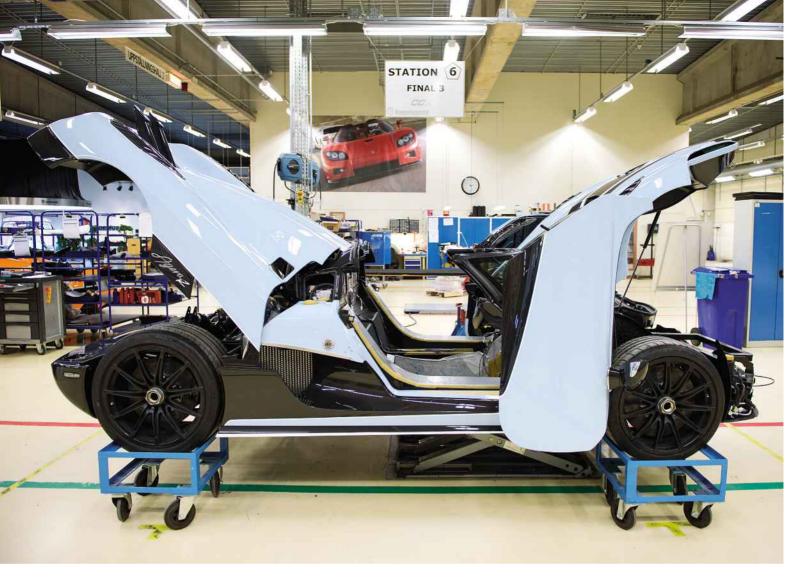
The purpose of my visit today is to discover just how far Koenigsegg has come by driving an example of its first car, a 2003, 655bhp CC8S, back-to-back with its latest, the 1140bhp

Agera R. But before that I want to find out more about where the company is heading next. As we arrive at the factory, Christian von Koenigsegg himself comes out to greet us and quickly ushers us inside to his warm office, where the questions can begin.

What is the hypercar market like today?

'Supercars are becoming increasingly more extreme and the market has grown more global. When we started selling the CC8S, the US was the world's biggest market. Now it has been replaced by China, which accounts for 40 per cent of our turnover. In the last few months it looks like the US is coming back.'







Above: Ageras in build in the Koenigsegg workshop. Left and below left: carbonfibre is used liberally to help save weight. Right: Koenigseggbranded brake caliper. Below: prepping a rear clamshell. Opposite page, from top: Koenigsegg makes its own circuitry; prototype 'free valve' head; Chinese customer's new Agera R; the 'keys' for the cars being driven today







Koenigsegg CC8S v Agera R

Has Chinese demand changed your cars in any way?

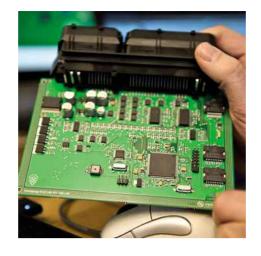
'Yes, they are becoming more flamboyant. The Chinese like the engineering and love the way they can customise our cars to their own taste. They use their cars differently to Europeans, though. They tend to drive in town a lot and then take them to the racetrack. Our dealer in China organises seven trackdays a year and the customers all bring their cars.'

What do you think about the new hybrid supercars, like the Porsche 918?

'I don't particularly like the philosophy, which is basically to have everything at the expense of complexity and weight. With our 'free valve' technology [computer-controlled pneumatic valves, so no camshafts and infinitely variable cam timing] we are developing a better solution, which we are calling Pneubrid, or Airbrid.

'Rather than producing electricity through brake regeneration, our technology allows us to turn the engine into an air pump under braking. This air pressurises a 40-litre carbonfibre air tank at up to 20bar. We then release this air for extra performance by either adding boost to the engine or by powering the car in the city without using any fuel [by using the engine as an air pump in reverse]. This size of tank is enough to power the car for up to two kilometres.

'I really like Airbrid because air is free and doesn't wear out, making it a much better solution than using heavy batteries.'





How far away are you from using this technology in your cars?

'I don't see any point in implementing it for the next two to three years, but we are working with a bus company and they will use it first.'

Will it lead you to downsize your engines?

'I don't think so because customers are always asking for more power! Free valve allows us to introduce cylinder shut-off in the future too, so we will downsize that way.'

Are you still sticking to your 'evolution, not revolution' philosophy?

'Yes, we will continue to hone and advance our existing car because this is a much better method than throwing it all away and starting from scratch.'

How about pricing?

'The Agera costs \$1.2million [c£750k], rising to \$1.45million [c£900k, both plus local taxes] for the Agera R and we intend to keep production at around 12-14 cars a year.'

What about second-hand cars?

'To help residuals [which are only really bad in the UK] I have introduced a factory certification scheme with a two-year factory warranty for pre-owned cars we sell direct from the factory. This is proving very successful and you will be driving one of these cars today, the CC8S.'

And now for the drive...

Keen to get behind the wheel, we decide to break off and move over to the main production facility housed in another building, just a short walk away. As we step through the factory door we find several Ageras in-build on the production line. Next to them is the matt silver development Agera and a vivid orange CCXR, which looks spectacular, but everything is being shaded by the Agera R pouting under the spotlight in the handover area.

Resplendent in vivid purple metallic paintwork with lashings of gold and sitting on carbon wheels (standard on the Agera R), the real shock comes when you pop the door open, because all the interior fittings have been finished in 24-carat gold. That the car's owner resides in China comes as no surprise but the fact he's kindly given me permission to drive his new £1.2million baby before he's even seen it certainly does.

Mechanics are busy applying bits of protective tape to any vulnerable areas of bodywork before we venture out onto the local roads. I've asked Christian von Koenigsegg to take us to some of his favourite roads, so he is going to lead the way in a lovely 2003 (righthand-drive) example of the very first version

'RESPLENDENT IN VIVID PURPLE METALLIC, ALL THE INTERIOR FITTINGS HAVE BEEN FINISHED IN 24-CARAT GOLD...'





of the Koenigsegg, the CC8S. The border guard was right: this has all the makings of a truly great day.

To open any Koenigsegg's door you press a button hidden away in the air scoop and, as you do, an internal solenoid clicks, the window lowers and the trademark 'dihedral synchrohelix' door tumbles open. It's a great party trick, but the next stage of cabin entry isn't quite so elegant because trying to clamber my rickety frame over the fat sill and through the smallish hole left by the open door is tricky. It's not as bad as squeezing into a Lotus Exige, but if you're over six feet tall then it demands a certain degree of dexterity and forward planning.

Once you're in, though, everything is fine. There's plenty of space to stretch out your legs and headroom isn't a problem either, and thanks to the myriad of adjustments available (pedals, steering wheel and seats are all fully adjustable and tailored to the original owner's exact requirements before collection) I've soon got a near-perfect driving position sorted.

You wake the engine by applying the brakes and pressing the starter button in the middle of the centre console. The twin-turbo 5-litre V8 rumbles into life in an instant and fills the workshop with the sound of rampant energy.

All the 'Eggs



CC8S 2002-2004

Koenigsegg's first production model. Powered by a 4.7-litre all-aluminium V8 with a single supercharger. Just six examples were built. Dry weight: 1175kg. 0-200kph (124mph): 10.2sec



CCR 2004-2005

With the 4.7-litre V8 now twin-supercharged, peak power rose to 806bhp and the CCR went on to beat the McLaren F1's Guinness-verified speed record when it clocked 241mph at Nardo in February 2005.

14 made. Dry weight: 1180kg. 0-200kph: 9.4sec



CCX 2006-2010

This was radically different to the two previous versions of the Koenigsegg because it was designed from the outset to comply with global safety and environmental regulations. This meant it required a higher bonnet line and greater overhangs to help it pass all the various crash tests. Although the all-aluminium, 806bhp twin-supercharged V8 engine stayed at 4.7 litres, it was a completely new design with much better cooling and tuning potential. 29 made. Dry weight: 1280kg. 0-200kph: 9.8sec



CCXR 2007-2010

The CCXR followed in 2007 and this version was able to use E85 ethanol fuel, which boosted peak power to an outrageous 1018bhp, making this easily the fastest Koenigsegg at the time. 25 made. Dry weight: 1280kg, 0-200kph: 8.9sec



AGERA 2011-

The Agera has a 5-litre version of the V8, with twin turbos replacing the superchargers. Power is up to 960bhp (1140bhp in the R). Dry weight: 1330kg. 0-200kph: 8.0sec (7.5sec for the R)



Above: CC8S looks almost understated next to the Agera R (and not just because of the the latter's paint job!), with more simple lines and less aggressive-looking aero. **Right:** family DNA can be felt on the road

The dash display springs into life at the same time. Revs are shown as a semi-circular blue ribbon running around the outside of the speedo dial, while in the middle there's a digital readout of your speed and the gear selected in the seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox. A flick of the right-hand paddle hiding behind the tiny steering wheel brings first gear into play and I gently ease the car off its display plinth and out to where Christian is waiting in the CC8S.

Parked side by side, it's astonishing how different the CC8S looks to the Agera R. Ten years of development separates these two Koenigseggs and, boy, does it show. When the CC8S was born in 2002, one of the main goals was to have a good top speed, so a huge amount of development work took place in Volvo's wind tunnel to reduce drag as much as possible. In the end, they got it down to Cd 0.297, which is remarkably low for this type of car.

In 2004 Koenigsegg instigated a major redesign of the car in order to meet the latest global passenger crash regulations. A new engine was also needed to meet Euro V emissions standards, as the existing 4.7-litre V8 couldn't be made to work. The result was the launch of the CCX in 2006, which marked a major turning point for Koenigsegg because this car could be sold in the US. Powered by an all-new alloy 4.7-litre twin-supercharged V8, the car's styling was quite different with a much higher nose profile and greater overhangs than the first-gen CC8S and CCR models – something that I hadn't really picked up on until now.

Christian jumps back into the CC8S and I follow in the Agera R. The early car looks great from behind; there's a complex aluminium web cradling the gearbox that you only notice when you're sat as low as I am in the Agera. I love the wraparound windscreen of the car I'm driving too. It's like viewing the world in widescreen, although it's not so clever when you get to a roundabout because the chunky A-pillar and exterior mirror combine to give you a serious

blind spot that you could hide a double-decker bus in. The view through the postcard-sized rear window isn't too special either, giving you a good look at the top of the rear spoiler and a glimpse of what might be following you.

Still, this side of a Veyron they won't be behind you for very long because this is a monumentally quick car. As we're running on regular 95 RON fuel today, the in-house twinturbo 5-litre V8 behind me is kicking out a mere 960bhp and 811lb ft of torque (rather than the headline-grabbing 1140bhp and 885lb ft on E85 ethanol) but that's plenty of horsepower to be getting on with thank you very much, especially in a car that weighs just 1330kg dry.

When the opportunity arises to really get those twin-turbos spinning and the revs start to spool round the dial, the performance is insane (0-200mph is dispatched in 17.68sec, as verified by the Guinness Book of Records), while the soundtrack is a hard-edged V8 howl. But what's surprising is that all this monstrous power feels pretty manageable too. The engine is bolted directly to the rear of the carbon passenger cell, yet there are no nasty vibrations coming through (unlike in a Ferrari F50). The result is that the cabin is a busy place to be but not in a harsh way, and the wealth of information coming from the engine, steering and chassis makes you feel like you're right at the mechanical heart of the car and better able to read what's going on around you than you can be in more 'insulated' cars.

Another surprise is the ride quality. Before arriving in Sweden, I'd been running around in a Lamborghini Gallardo (see Driven), and compared to that car on country roads, the Agera R feels like a flipping limo. There's something very clever going on here in the suspension department and while I know legendary chassis guru Loris Bicocchi has been a regular consultant to Koenigsegg for many years, for a car running fixed dampers, the ride quality is exemplary. The new all-carbon wheels



Koenigsegg CC8S v Agera R







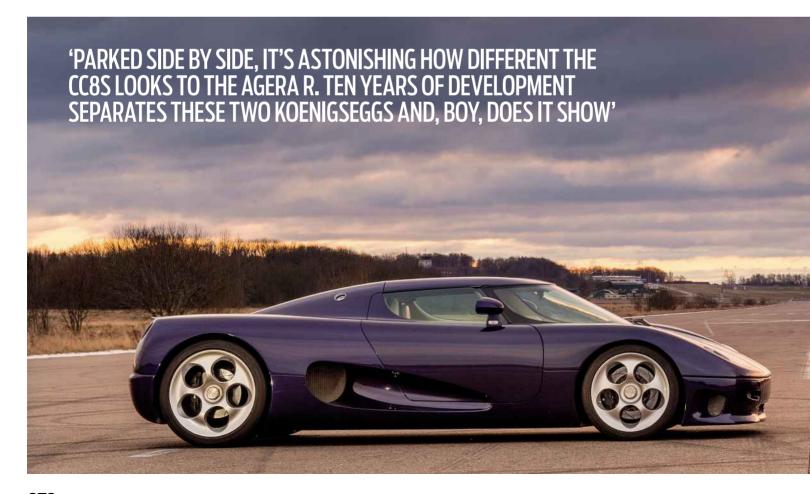
Above left: interior is the biggest clue to the age of the CC8S. **Above middle:** supercharged 4.7-litre V8 puts out 655bhp – an impressive figure today, but even more impressive back in 2002. **Above right:** wheels have centre-locking nuts and are 18in in diameter at the front, 20in at the rear; rears are 12.5 inches wide

(weighing just 5.9kg at the front and 6.5kg at the rear) and needle-bearing bushes throughout the suspension must play a significant part in making this possible, but brilliant ride quality is the last thing I was expecting to discover in such an extreme car as this Agera R.

The Agera has a unique seven-speed Cima dual-clutch transmission and it seems to be pretty well-sorted too, allowing the car to pull away without any dramas and slotting gears home as quickly as you'd hope. Yes, there's a bit of a thump on full-bore upchanges but

that's more to do with the fact there's so much torque to handle, rather than any deficiency in the gearbox department. Describing this 'box as a twin-clutcher is a slight misnomer, though. Technically that's correct but there's only one (dry) clutch handling the power between the engine and the gearbox; the other clutch is a (much smaller, wet) clutch-brake inside the gearbox that engages on upshifts to slow the input shaft. This helps to speed up the gearchange by allowing the selected gears to synchro quicker. All good geeky stuff.

We've been driving along a brilliantly flowing road through a forest for a while now when, out of nowhere, a lake appears. Christian indicates to pull over as it's time to swap cars. After the Agera, the CC8S seems incredibly airy. Christian explains nearly everything is different on the older car; the windscreen is taller for starters, even though the roofline is two inches lower than on the Agera. The door flips open and, inside, the seats are clearly far more raked. Settling down into the driver's seat feels almost the same as sitting in a reclined









Above left: Agera R has weight-saving carbonfibre wheels (19in front, 20in rear). Above middle: twin-turbo 5-litre V8 produces 1140bhp when running on E85; note the extra damper unit joining the left and right suspension - this allows lower damping rates to be used, thus improving ride comfort. Above right: gold-plating optional

deckchair - much like in a Lamborghini Countach - but it was deliberately designed this way to enable that extra-low roofline (just 42 inches off the ground). As a result, the CC8S instantly feels more 'racy'.

The simple Stack instrument display reinforces that race-car feel but it's the ugly single radio slot and the speaker grilles on the extremities of the dash that give away this was Koenigsegg's first go at cabin design. Still, at least there's an aluminium gearlever - which controls a six-speed sequential gearbox -

sprouting up from the centre of the car for you to play with. But first, you have to know your way around Koenigsegg's bizarre telephone dial in the centre console in order to start the engine. Pressing the buttons at six o'clock and five o'clock at the same time powers up the ignition system, then pressing the six o'clock and seven o'clock buttons together engages the starter. All very strange but it works, and the 655bhp 4.7-litre V8 (boosted by a single beltdriven, centrifugal supercharger) comes to life.

As soon as it does, there's that same connected

feel filtering through the cabin. The throttle is super sensitive and it's a struggle to pull away smoothly, but once on the move it all starts to flow quite nicely. The ride quality is still there but the steering weighting is very different: it's super sensitive either side of straight-ahead and reminds me of TVRs of old. Christian later tells me they had to soften it off in the CCX because it was too quick to handle at very high speeds.

The other big difference is the way the engine delivers its performance. In the Agera R there is good torque available at any revs and a nuclear



Koenigsegg CC8S v Agera R







Left: Agera's wiper rests in an upright position to help minimise drag. **Top:** glass roof gives the CC8S an airy feel. **Above:** Agera's instrument binnacle; note the rev counter running around the speedo

explosion of the stuff from 4500rpm onwards, but in the CC8S it builds gradually in a much more linear fashion. It's still pretty healthy, though, peaking at 553lb ft at 5000rpm, but that's a world away from the 885lb ft peak in the Agera R. The result is I'm using full throttle for way longer in between shifting through the gears with the cool-to-touch lever, which swings through a smaller arc than the extended looks lead you to expect.

I'm enjoying the older car more than I expected. Yes, it's a fair bit slower than the crazed Agera R but the chassis still feels nicely sorted and with a claimed standing quartermile of 10sec at 135mph, it doesn't exactly hang about. Weighing just 1175kg dry, it's a remarkable 155kg lighter than the Agera R. I'm glad to discover that the blind spot created by the A-pillar and the exterior mirror is much less of a problem too. Once I'm used to the slightly peculiar driving position, threading this car through the building traffic becomes a cinch.

We stop again and I grab the chance to drive the Agera R one last time. The way this car feels so together from the moment it fires up is impressive. It feels solidly built too, and apart from the poor visibility out of the side windows, it's a very easy car to jump into and drive away. Until, that is, you light the blue touchpaper, because from that moment on you need every nerve in your body to be set to fighter mode. Delivering close on 1000bhp through one pair of driven wheels is always going to be exciting, but combine it with a kerb weight some 515kg lighter than a Veyron and it's mind-blowing.

Christian has one last surprise for me. Just as I think we're heading down a back route to the factory, a deserted runway opens up before me. Well, it would be rude not to... Second, third, fourth are devoured whole as the Agera R digs in and goes for it. This much power is hopelessly addictive and even in a giant open space like this, it feels impossibly fast. Only when you brake do you start to realise just how quickly you're travelling. Anyone into superbikes will know the feeling where the speed builds so fast, you think the speedo must be telling porkies – until it becomes time to stop. Well, that's exactly what an Agera R feels like on re-heat.

IT'S BEEN AN INTRIGUING DAY. FIRST,

the CC8S has a charm of its own, more delicate in appearance and in the way it delivers its power but still formidably fast, if not quite as thoroughly sorted as the newer car. That's not to damn the CC8S; it's more to do with how far the Agera R has taken things. See through the bling on the car featured here and there's a remarkable supercar hiding underneath. Christian von Koenigsegg has always said his intention was to continually evolve his car, just as Porsche has done with the 911. It seems to be working. Drive these two cars back-to-back and, while the family genes shine through, the newer car feels far more modern.

I do wonder how the Agera R would fare up against the Pagani Huayra or a Bugatti Veyron. They're all supremely talented supercars but I reckon picking the winner would be much harder than you would expect. The Koenigsegg is quicker than the Pagani and could even match the mighty Bugatti. The Agera's engine is easier to modulate than those in the other two, but the Huayra counters by having a softer, friendlier edge to its handling balance. There's only one way to find out which is the best for sure, though. To be continued...





'I DO WONDER HOW THE AGERA R WOULD FARE UP AGAINST THE PAGANI HUAYRA OR A BUGATTI VEYRON...'

Specifications

KOENIGSEGG CC8S

Engine V8, 4700cc, supercharged Power 655bhp @ 6800rpm Torque 553lb ft @ 5000rpm Transmission Six-speed sequential manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar Brakes Ventilated discs, 340mm front, 315mm rear Wheels 9 x 18in front, 12.5 x 20in rear Tyres 255/40 ZR18 front, 335/30 ZR20 rear Weight (dry) 1175kg Power-to-weight (dry) 566bhp/ton 0-62mph sub-3.5sec (claimed) Top speed 240mph (claimed) Basic price £366,000 (2002) On sale 2002-2004

KOENIGSEGG AGERA R

Engine V8, 5000cc, twin-turbo Power 1140bhp @ 7100rpm Torque 885lb ft @ 2700-7300rpm Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, traction control Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar Rear suspension Double wishbone, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar Brakes Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, 397mm front, 380mm rear, ABS Wheels 9.5 x 19in front, 12.5 x 20in rear Tyres 265/35 ZR19 front, 345/30 ZR20 rear Weight (dry) 1330kg Power-to-weight (dry) 87lbhp/ton 0-62mph 2.9sec (claimed) Top speed 273mph (claimed) Basic price c£900,000 plus local taxes On sale Now

Bowler EXR S



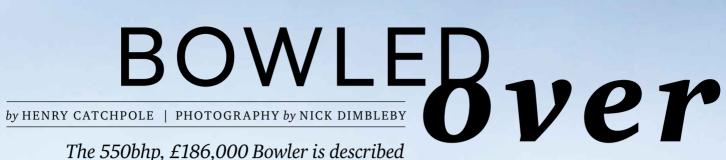
FLUMMOXED. That's what I am at the moment. I'm on a wave of euphoria, smiling from sideburn to sideburn and shaking slightly after driving the Bowler EXR S, but I'm also more lost than a Dakar driver in Africa as to how to define it. And my colleague Jethro Bovingdon isn't any help either; 'I'm bloody glad you're the one writing this,' is all

he can say when he clambers out from amongst the orange tubing and pats me on the shoulder comfortingly a little while later. This car is utterly unique and all I know is that if my six numbers came up then I'd absolutely definitely want one. But what for?

'We call it an all-terrain supercar,' offers Jon Chester from Bowler. And that's certainly as good a description and excuse for wanting one as any I can think of at the moment.

Let's start at the beginning. Bowler, based in Derbyshire, designs and builds vehicles to compete in rally raids and has been doing so since 1983. In the past we've had the Wildcat and the Nemesis, and currently there is the even more capable but slightly less imaginatively named EXR (without the S. We'll come to that in a minute). They are capable of crossing pretty





The 550bhp, £186,000 Bowler is described by its makers as an 'all-terrain supercar'. We find out if it lives up to its billing – and pitch it against two more conventional rivals www.evo.co.uk 075



first appearances, none of them started out in life as a Land or Range Rover. Yes, the engines can be found in the off-roaders from Coventry and you might be able to swap a steering wheel or wing mirror, but Bowler doesn't chip away at a standard road car to find the race car underneath. No, the hydroformed chassis and steel roll-cage of the EXR are unique and are covered in composite panels that merely happen to cleverly ape the shapes of a Range Rover, while at the same time coercing the air to flow where it is needed and allowing monster articulation in the wheelarches.

Now, that S. Bowler was quite happy just producing race cars, but some of its customers had other ideas and decided that they would like a road-going version of their race car. Something that they could take to Tesco (all right, more likely Waitrose) or pop down to Paris for the weekend in, without feeling the need to carry on to Senegal. And so, through sheer customer demand, the EXR S was born.

The 'S' is for supercharged, because without the need to conform to FIA regulations the road car gets the full-fat 550bhp, 461lb ft supercharged 5-litre V8 compared to the race car's naturally aspirated 300bhp, 429lb ft version. There is also no requirement for a full FIA roll-cage in the road car although this car's

owner has requested one nonetheless, along with full race bucket seats and harnesses. Other customers have specified slightly plusher leather seats, three-point belts and satnav. In the back you would normally find a 385-litre fuel cell, but without the need to do laps of the UK the EXR S now has a useful-looking load bay (probably making this the first supercar you could put a bike in). Bowler is also currently developing a two-plus-two version in case people want to use one for the school run.

Open the bonnet and you initially wonder where the engine has gone, until you spot it hiding at the back of the bay under the windscreen. The V8's front-mid-mounted position is almost more obvious when you climb up into either of the seats and spy its encroachment into the footwells. The suspension has been changed from competitionspec Donerre dampers (which are still an option) to more road-biased Bilsteins, which almost look like double-spring units when you first stick your head under the arches and see the enormous reservoirs. Once again, freed from pesky regulations, the Eibach springs have more travel than the race car's units - up 32mm to a whopping 282mm. Hanging off the end of these are 22in wheels, which sound horrifically rapper but don't look in the slightest bit out of

place, such is the voluminous size of the arches they sit in. Tyres are road-spec Coopers.

The view out might be about three feet higher than in an Enzo or Huayra, but the EXR S has definitely got that intimidating theatre of a supercar when you're sitting in it. There's plenty of beautiful carbonfibre too. Start the V8 via the button on the transmission tunnel and the big, empty interior fills with a deep, industrial roar, ramping up the supercar quotient a little further. When you set off down the road, however, it's almost disarmingly easy to drive initially, because the standard six-speed Range Rover automatic means you have nothing more difficult to do than press the throttle. The power-assisted steering is light and easy to twirl too, so despite the Bowler's butch appearance you don't have to be a Hercules to potter around town. And although it does feel wide, sleeping policemen have never felt so insignificant.

Urban manoeuvring is where the sanity begins and ends though, because as soon as you hit a national speed limit sign the performance becomes as wild as the car looks. Nail the throttle, the nose lifts, the engine roars and you charge at the horizon in a way that leaves you utterly flabbergasted. The EXR S has a claimed 0-62mph time of just 4.2 seconds. That, I know, probably sounds about as fantastical as a hippo



Above: customers can have the cabin trimmed for comfort or, as in this car, with a race-type feel. **Below right:** unlike the 5-litre V8 in the racing EXR, this one is supercharged















being able to run faster than Usain Bolt, but both are absolutely true. And then there are the corners...

I think it is fair to say that most people would be fairly shocked, possibly even alarmed, if they jumped into an EXR S and tried to drive it quickly through a set of bends. I was lucky enough to drive a Wildcat a few years ago, so had an inkling of what to expect, but even so it takes me quite a while to start getting my head around the utterly bonkers EXR S, and after my first fast run I find I'm shaking with what I suspect is a mixture of adrenalin and mild terror. I tell Bovingdon it's just the cold and blow into my hands by way of confirmation. I don't think he buys it. And to be fair, he admits to feeling completely at sea in the corners during the few miles he drives in the car and expresses a wish for somewhere with a smidge of run-off (like the Russian Steppe) to get to know it.

What makes the Bowler so alien to drive is the vast amount of suspension travel in the relatively short and square wheelbase. For a start it makes everything feel slightly aloof and soft as the car rolls and pitches more than you're used to. Secondly, if you try to drive it 'normally' then you'll simply get a lot of understeer. Turn in quickly and you get understeer. Get on the power aggressively on the way out of a corner and you'll get understeer. It feels about as vague yet crazy as a monster truck, or a rally car on gravel settings...

And therein lies the key; if you're going to get the best from a Bowler, if you're going to really enjoy it, then you need to drive it like you would a car on gravel. This means being confident and positive, getting the car set up early for a corner, trail braking, even backing it in a touch (something helped by a lot of rear brake bias on this car) so that you oversteer slightly before the apex and then drive through using the huge traction of the four-wheel drive (split 50:50). It sounds daft but it's honestly the way it wants to be driven if you want to travel quickly.

The trouble is that this isn't an easy way to drive, especially when you've got 1800kg of

metal moving around underneath you. And you can't realistically drive like this on the road any more than you can drift an M5 round every corner, so we've come to a beautiful private test track not far from Bowler's HQ. Unfortunately it's also a tightly twisting private test track with stone walls, random boulders and a man-made lake seemingly never more than a few perilous feet away and at times I wonder if it wouldn't have been less dangerous to stay on the wintry roads of Derbyshire. At least I know there won't be anything coming the other way out of the blinding low winter sun.

Curiously you need to be both quite cajoling to get the EXR S moving, yet quite subtle when judging and managing the grip, balance and weight transfer. It's a tricky knack to master if your birth certificate doesn't read C. Sainz, but it's also hugely rewarding and fun when you get it right on the occasional corner. The other thing you need to do is think a long way ahead. To that extent, Drew Bowler (a very quiet but extraordinarily nice man) likens it to driving



Left: the Bowler squares up to the Nissan GT-R, which has near-identical power, torque and weight figures, and the Cayenne GT-S, one of the best road-biased fast SUVs







a speedboat, because what you do now will likely be having implications some way down the line. By the same token, if you get it wrong then you need to have a lot of space to gather it all up because the towering suspension travel combined with serious momentum means that the EXR S doesn't react to inputs in the blink of an eye. If only there were a lot of space here.

After a while I think I've managed to tone everything down a few notches and get the Bowler to flow through corners in a slightly neater and less extrovert way that will work on the road, but it feels like you almost need to go big on a track and then knock it back to reach this stage. Curious.

And now the rivals...

When we were back the **evo** office (it's like the Batcave, but with fewer weapons and more coffee. Actually the Bowler would make rather a good car for cruising Gotham...) planning this feature we thought it would be an excellent idea to pitch a couple of cars against the Bowler to try and give it some context. So, first we've brought along what you might call a conventional fast 4x4, the Cayenne GTS, which is the most dynamically focused version of Porsche's SUV. Second we've brought along a GT-R. Such are the talents of the big Nissan that it seems to slot seamlessly into almost any group test that we might care to devise, and with four-wheel drive, 542bhp, 466lb ft and a kerb weight of 1740kg, it's too close on paper to the Bowler to be ignored.

But what look like excellent comparisons on a sheet of Xerox can suddenly seem very wide of the mark when you park them up in the real world. Having now driven the Bowler EXR S I know that neither of the other cars we've brought along is really in the same ballpark. They're extraordinary in their own right but way too conventional in this company. The Cayenne feels like a go-kart after the Bowler. That really isn't an exaggeration either. Its barrage of air-suspension, PASM, torque vectoring and self-levelling PDCC all mean that

it seems to corner completely flat and change direction like some sort of Mitsubishi Evo on steroids. It's quite impressive and I have to say that I love it. It jinks into corners and when you pick up the throttle you instantly feel the rear axle start to steer the GTS round. Above 4000rpm the naturally aspirated 414bhp 4.8-litre V8 sounds really, really good too, with a surprisingly loud and mellifluous gargle.

Start up the GT-R and it sounds more industrial and mechanically raw than the racebred EXR S, which is surprising. At low speeds the Nissan's twin-clutch gearbox clunks and thumps as it engages ratios, and the tightly wound diffs mean its wheels seem to claw at the surface of the road just like a barely concealed race car. It feels faster than the Bowler in a straight line, but not by much, and some of the deficit is down to the masking effect of the squat in the EXR S's suspension as it accelerates off the line.

What the GT-R and Cayenne both undoubtedly have are better gearboxes than



Above: Bowler is a completely different driving experience to the Cayenne; auto gearbox seems slightly out of place. **Below:** how the EXR S prefers to tackle corners...



the Bowler. The six-speed auto might make the EXR S easy to drive around town, but it seems slightly obstructive to swift progress when you're grappling with slides and corners (sadly the racer's six-speed Sadev sequential 'box can't be used as it can't cope with the supercharged engine's larger torque output). If I was being picky I'd actually like bigger paddles not attached to the steering wheel, as the Bowler requires quite a lot of lock in tighter corners and you can find yourself hunting for the correct paddle. The brilliant ZF eight-speed auto from the new Range Rover (as well as Bentleys and plenty of others) might be a good option, or you could do as one customer has and request a manual...

Of course, what the GT-R can't do is turn off the road, climb the verge, head through a gateway and take a shortcut across a quarry or through a forest. The Cayenne GTS could, but not in the carefree and blisteringly quick way that the EXR S can. It certainly couldn't fly off a lip like the one on the first page of this feature and survive. While the Bowler feels soft on road, it actually feels quite firm off road on its Bilsteins, but without changing the 22-inch wheels or the very un-knobbly tyres, the Bowler tackles the off-road course (conveniently over the hill from the tarmac track) with ease and pace. Yes, it's struggling for grip in the deepest sand and mud but it's on road tyres, and despite its firmness it tracks the ground very well over the bumpier, rockier sections. It feels much more balanced under power too. If we're honest this is where it feels at home.

'IT'S NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR A TRADITIONAL SUPERCAR, BUT IT DOES PUT A BIG TICK IN AN AWFUL LOT OF SUPERCAR BOXES'

The jump looks big enough to beach the Cayenne if it tried to even roll over it and launching nearly two tons of metal off it at speed on as-yet-untried dampers seems faintly stupid. I ask Drew Bowler if he wants to drive for the jump shot as he's got much more experience (and it's his car if it breaks!), but with a big grin he says he's given up doing that sort of thing these days and it's all mine...

I build up to it at first, but eventually I get decent, if slightly oversteery, traction out of the long muddy corner before and we fly off the ramp with more conviction. The landing's heavy, very heavy, particularly at the rear, and it's obvious that the EXR S would benefit from the set of hydraulic bump stops that Drew says will be added, but both the car and my spine are intact. What's more, we survive another three or four goes too, only just managing to brake before the trees and a sharp right turn each time. By the end, though, I'm not sure I wouldn't go the whole hog and spec the all-singing Donerre dampers if I had one, just so that I could be absolutely certain of crushing

everything in my path. It might sacrifice a touch more on-road ability (and I'm sure some might want to go more in the direction of the roadfocused Porsche instead) but I think it would be childishly worth it just to be able to get another few feet of air under the wheels.

As you might have gathered, I like the Bowler EXR S. A lot. It's not a substitute for a traditional supercar in a dream garage in any way (or a GT-R or a Cayenne GTS for that matter), and Bowler is refreshingly realistic enough to say that it sees this as a fifth or sixth car in someone's fleet. But nevertheless it does put a big tick in an awful lot of supercar boxes. There's the outlandish looks and pure showmanship of it for a start. As Jethro commented, 'How cool would it be to rock up to a smart London hotel in one of these covered in mud?' Then there's the blood-and-thunder soundtrack, which probably woke up anything hibernating within a 50-mile radius in Derbyshire and matches the brawny stance of the EXR S so perfectly.

The £186k price tag is sadly also suitably junior supercar. And finally there's the driving experience, which is made up of shocking straight-line performance and a cornering attitude that feels as high stakes as any hyperactive, twitchy 'ordinary' supercar you care to name. In short it is utterly unlike anything else you are likely to drive, which is reason enough to secure it a place in your fantasy garage. However, I have also worked out the precise occasion and purpose that I'd want one for: come the apocalypse, it's the car I'd pick for trying to outrun the chaos.

Specifications

NISSAN GT-R

Engine Power Torque Transmission

Front suspension

V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo 542bhp @ 6400rpm 466lb ft @ 3200-5800rpm Six-speed dual-clutch, fourwheel drive, rear limited-slip diff Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar Multi-link, coil springs, adjustable

Rear suspension

Brakes

dampers, anti-roll bar
Vented and drilled discs, 390mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD
9.5 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear
255/40 ZR20 fr, 285/35 ZR20 rear
1740kg

Wheels Tyres Weight (kerb) Power-to-weight 0-62mph Top speed

r-to-weight 316bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.0sec (claimed)
Top speed 196mph (claimed)
Basic price £74,450
On sale Now

Rating ***

PORSCHE CAYENNE GTS

V8. 4806cc 414bhp @ 6500rpm 380lb ft @ 3500rpm Eight-speed automatic, fourwheel drive, limited-slip diff Double wishbones, air springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar Multi-link, air springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar Ventilated discs, 360mm front, 330mm rear, ABS, EBD 9.5 x 20in front and rear 275/45 R20 front and rear 2085kg 202bhp/ton 5.7sec (claimed) 162mph (claimed) £67,147

Now

BOWLER EXR S

V8, 5000cc, supercharged 550bhp @ 6200rpm 461lb ft @ 2100-5400rpm Six-speed auto, four-wheel drive. E Control rear diff, transfer box Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar Ventilated discs, 360mm front, 340mm rear, ABS 10 x 22in front and rear 305/35 R22 front and rear 1800kg 310bhp/ton 4.2sec (claimed) 155mph (limited) £186,000 Now







Damn fine January of the last decade's greatest coupes can now be bought for as lit

Four of the last decade's greatest coupes can now be bought for as little as £15,000. A trip to mid-Wales determines which is the biggest bargain

by JETHRO BOVINGDON | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH





'THE TINY Z4 M COUPE IS A PENT-UP BALL OF ENERGY AND SOUNDS EXPENSIVE AND HARD-EDGED'

S

S O M E magazine features have an elephantine gestation period, arguments for and against bubbling over in endless editorial meetings fuelled by

biscuits and coffee. They can make the best, cleverest and most thought-provoking features too. Sometimes though, it's good not to overthink things. We always try to be informative and impart as much of the driving experience as possible, but we're not exactly saving lives. Sometimes it's best to just do what seems right.

And this seems right. The crunch of gravel, the imposing silhouette of the Brynafon Hotel in Rhayader on a freezing night, and the shapes picked out by the ice blue lights of the Nissan 370Z. The smooth efficiency of a Porsche Cayman S, the coiled tension of a BMW Z4 M Coupe and, finally, the visual shock of a TVR Tuscan. It's been a long time, old friend, and I'm still not sure I'm quite man enough to get the best from you.

What do these cars have in common? Well, they all put driving fun ahead of practicality and you can pick up any one of them from around £15,000. Simple. It was suggested in a short editorial meeting, everyone nodded,

picked up a chocolate digestive and wandered out. So here we are.

We might not have realised it at the time, but this compelling bunch of cars pretty much covers all the coupe bases. If you're a cautious sort then the Nissan is perfect: you can pick up an '09 car with fewer than 20,000 miles covered for around £15k, the gruff VQ37VHR engine is as strong as an ox (although not those special oxen in Japan that are fed beer and massaged every day) and has excellent performance. If you want a brawny front-engine/rear-drive coupe in as pain-free a package as possible, look no further.

The tiny Z4 M Coupe is, you'd imagine, a more finely honed take on the same theme. It looks like a pent-up ball of energy and when its 3.2-litre straight-six catches with that sharp, trebly M Division resonance, it sounds expensive and hard-edged. You'll need to look for an older '06 Z4 M Coupe to hit our budget (the low-mileage example tested here is up for sale at Munich Legends for £18,500), but the risk/reward chart would seem to suggest that the Z4 M Coupe should be a more precise and fulfilling coupe than the brawny 370Z.

It seems odd to describe the familiar Porsche Cayman S as 'exotic'. You see them all the time, usually in a highly unexotic grey or



silver. However, the Cayman does have a light, mid-engined chassis with a fantastically low centre of gravity, helped by that 3.4-litre flat-six. Although you might not think it looks very adventurous, to drive the Cayman is to taste balance and accuracy that wouldn't shame a six-figure supercar. This 2006 Cayman S has covered around 57,000 miles and is currently for sale at Porsche specialist RPM for £17,950. Take a punt on a privately advertised car and an S is well within reach at our £15,000 budget. Incredible.

Of course, we need a wild card, and they don't come any wilder than the TVR Tuscan. It is a simple front-engine/rear-drive coupe, but the devil is in the detail. The detail like the 4-litre Speed Six engine with 360bhp and 310lb ft; the unfathomable interior, a riot of brass and



Above: Z4 M Coupe has the best interior and offers a great driving position too



Above: seven years after launch, the Cayman's cabin is starting to look dated



Above: large central rev counter dominates in 370Z; seat could be more comfy



Above: Tuscan's cabin is like no other, but ergonomics leave a lot to be desired





Above: Z4's 338bhp straight-six ranks amongst the best M Division engines



Z4 M buying advice

THE BMW is pretty robust. Check for cracked springs and listen for creaky (worn) rear anti-roll-bar bushes. Look for cracks to the strut braces near the top of the strut towers – it's the weld on the body that breaks, meaning an expensive repair. Head gaskets can fail at 100,000 miles or so and there have been cases of engine mount bolts shearing and the engine tilting out of position.

aluminium and leather; and a chassis set-up that suffers fools for about a millisecond before throwing them to the lions (or the hedge, or the dry stone wall). If the Z is a savings account and the Germans are sensible ISAs, then the Tuscan is sticking your life savings on black, standing back and watching the roulette wheel spin.

Our budget buys an early Tuscan with a fair few miles under its spider alloys, but that means that many potential issues should have been sorted out. We won't pretend it's a risk-free adventure, but it is an adventure. And with Tuscan prices strengthening, at least your starting pot of money won't diminish as quickly as with the others. In many ways it's a very sensible purchase. A solid gold future classic. Money in the bank... Who am I kidding? Nobody? Didn't think so. But when you hear that 4-litre straight-six whoop into life it's like a shot of pure oxygen to your system. It's the world's best and most persuasive casino.

THE ELAN VALLEY IN MID-WALES IS

drizzly and dank, but the TVR lifts everybody's mood. I'm not driving it, but just watching that elegantly flowing rear end shimmy on the choppy, muddy-brown surface is fascinating, and hearing the Speed Six engine bark and holler is pure theatre.

The 370Z can't compete, but this simple poverty-spec Nissan with standard 18in alloys is about as sweet as they come. It rides with more control than a GT-spec car running on the bigger 19s and at the places I can see the TVR skipping off-line or thwacking onto its bumpstops, the 370Z barely flinches. It still has that heavyweight feel that so characterises the Nissan coupe, but there's just a shade more fluidity, cleaner reactions to the steering and clearer feeling percolating back through it. And although the power-to-weight ratio says that the TVR should drop it within the space of a single gear, the Nissan hangs on gamely simply

because it feels relatively benign, and because it's easy to use most of its 326bhp even on these hellishly tight roads.

So it's useable and feels secure, but what about when you start to seek out the real highs? Well, it's a tricky car to pin down because the 370Z always feels like it's transitioning in and out of its comfort zone. Initially it feels shockingly muscular and loaded with character: the V6 gurgles and howls, the steering is weighty and full of detail and the chassis seems incredibly lucid. However, that old-fashioned character can become tiresome and as you speed up, the weighting of all the controls suddenly feels sludgy and reluctant. The engine is coarse between 4000 and 5500rpm, and although body control is generally pretty good, there's a noticeable lag as you ask the car to handle a rapid direction change.

So you go a bit faster still. It feels like it should fall away but instead the damping starts to really





Above: 370Z's gruff 326bhp V6 really comes alive at the top of the rev range



370Z buying advice

THERE'S not much to worry about here. The Nissan can suffer from a very juddery clutch and some were replaced under warranty. There are reports of noisy diffs (this actually affected our test car), and the paint chips very easily at the front, but overall the Z is about as hassle-free as a 326bhp performance car gets. If a TVR is your worst nightmare, this is the car for you.





Above: Cayman S's smooth-revving 3.4-litre flat-six is hidden out of view



Cayman buying advice

THE spectre of intermediary shaft (IMS) bearing failure hangs over early Caymans – Google it, then speak to an expert for the full and not-so-harrowing truth. However, it's a very rare issue. Look out for noisy water pumps, cracked coil springs, play in track rod ends and check the satnay works. A full geometry check is essential to make sure you're tasting a Cayman as Porsche intended.

work, you notice the excellent brake feel and the sheer balance of the thing is brilliant. Even the engine seems much keener if you persevere through to its cleaner and more energetic top end. Then, just as you're starting to really lean on the 370Z, its composure disappears. You want a decisive locking differential but instead you get messy wheelspin (it does have an LSD but it has a very mild locking effect), the steering kicks and squirms like it's running out of assistance under extreme load and the dampers finally admit defeat and the weight crashes down. It's a frustrating conclusion to an ever-changing dynamic package, especially when the basic balance is simply top drawer.

The Z4 M Coupe has you by the time you pull the door handle, which is set into the sharp crease that flows from the top of the front wing and arcs cleanly down the flanks before kicking up again over the rear wheels. It's a head-spinningly complicated little sculpture and packs a huge amount of visual punch. Drop down into the cabin and it feels even more special; the driving position is superb, legs bent just a little, and the steering wheel can be pulled in nice and tight. The bonnet rises up above the bottom of the windscreen and you sense very clearly that you're sitting behind a stonking great engine and just above the rear wheels. The interior has barely dated either, and even taking into account this car's scant 25,000 miles, the overall sense of quality and freshness is still remarkable. It feels literally brand new.

In fact, within about 100 yards I'm wondering why we weren't completely overwhelmed by the Z4 M Coupe when it arrived in 2006. It feels so special. The 338bhp 3.2-litre engine is supersmooth and revs with frenetic energy, but it has a complex, saw-toothed voice that imbues the car with a wicked edge. The suspension doesn't let you relax either, thumping and hunting into ruts and grooves. It has attitude and a lightness

and responsiveness not found in the 370Z.

So it wriggles and snaps for your attention and when you give the engine its head, the rear tyres fizz and then shudder against the traction control. You certainly never forget that you're in something with a fearsomely tight focus. However, after the initial euphoria wanes, some of the niggles that we must have felt back in 2006 start to leap out. The brakes, for example, are hideously over-servoed and you start to sense that the 'edginess' is all a bit contrived. That's reinforced if you select Sport mode, where you're greeted by an impossibly jumpy throttle response that makes you feel clumsy and unsettles the busy chassis with every jerk.

For all that, there is something deliciously appealing about the Z4 M Coupe. The ride is unforgiving at best and the Elan Valley is not the place for it to shine, but the combination of its tiny dimensions and the wonderful drivetrain really encourages you to get stuck





Above: Tuscan's 360bhp 4-litre six is the most powerful engine of the quartet



Tuscan buying advice

OF all our contenders the Tuscan deserves the most research. Ideally find a car with a full engine rebuild by the likes of TVR Power, check the chassis outriggers for corrosion and crash damage, go through every inch of carpet, ensure every switch works... or better still get the car inspected by an expert and then opt for TVR Power's unlimited mileage warranty at £750 per year.



'THE 370Z MAKES A STRONG AND VERY SENSIBLE CASE FOR ITSELF. BUT THESE CARS SHOULD PULL HEARTSTRINGS...'

Above: 370Z seems like the sensible choice in this company. **Right:** Tuscan needs quick and precise reactions when it starts to slide

in. And indeed it's a car you need to manhandle to really get the best from, pushing through the tramlining and putting up with the binary brakes to feel the simple pleasures of frontengine, rear-drive, a huge rev range to play with and a superbly decisive limited-slip differential. If only the damping had the polish of the sublime E46 M3 CS, and a little bit of understeer was dialled out, and the steering was a little more alive... It feels 10 per cent shy of its real potential and about the same amount away from being a real hero car.

If the Z4 M Coupe is a car with rough edges seemingly tacked onto its stubby shoulders, then the Cayman S has been polished and honed to smooth perfection. For some people, such dynamic completeness will be mistaken for dullness, and that's a view I have some sympathy with. I've always found the Cayman S just a little lacking in bite, a car with no secrets but also no great mysteries to slowly reveal themselves and be mastered. However, on these narrow and often cruelly bumpy roads it immediately elevates itself far above the Nissan and BMW. Henry Catchpole steps out of it looking slightly bemused. 'I expected the BMW to be pretty close,' he begins. 'It isn't.'

To be honest, things don't start brilliantly for the Porsche. You can make your own mind up about the exterior design, but what's beyond doubt is that the Porsche doesn't wear anything like as well as the Z4 M Coupe. The leather seems a little tired, the dash looks and









feels surprisingly cheap. It sounds like a petty criticism, but when you're buying a used car, the quality of the interior becomes a bigger factor, simply because you don't want to be reminded that your car is getting on a bit every time you drop into it.

But that's not enough to make you anything other than completely won over by the Cayman S as it glides and darts. It's creamy smooth yet so sharp that it seems to tap directly into your thought processes. This particular car doesn't have the optional PASM suspension but the fixed-rate set-up is wonderfully controlled and fluid. In damp conditions the Porsche oddly doesn't have the mechanical grip of the others here and you're often dealing with a little slip of understeer or a spike of oversteer, but there's just so much feel, and that breeds confidence. So while you might expect to be closer to the ragged edge in the front-engined machines, the reality is that it's the Cayman that provides more on-limit fun, and there's nothing ragged about it. It's a class act from its sweet-spinning 291bhp flat-six to its finely detailed chassis.

The world has kept spinning without TVRs emerging from a ramshackle collection of buildings in Blackpool but few would argue that it's not a less interesting place since the company's demise. Gary Judd is a diehard TVR nut with an immaculate Griffith 500, a lovingly maintained Cerbera 4.2 V8 and, as of a month or so ago, this 4-litre Tuscan. He's typical of many TVR fans – willing to overlook the odd gremlin (for example, his Cerbera has been 'perfectly reliable since the engine rebuild') in return for owning something unique and joyously, hopelessly bonkers. As he says: 'It's a real drivers' car. You need to be sharp.'

I vividly remember the smells of adhesives and leather, the view out over the rolling bonnet and the gorgeously tactile steering wheel. And that sense of bewilderment when you want to lower a window or open the door, the slippery but amazingly accurate floor-hinged pedals and the unmistakable feel and action of the five-speed gearbox. I even remember to select fifth before pulling back for reverse to avoid a nasty graunch. However, the smoothness of the Speed Six had faded in my mind, along with the almost unbreakable traction and the simply superb brake feel. In fact - and this might sound mad - the Tuscan feels amazingly trustworthy, even the super-fast steering not setting off the roll-oversteer reaction I remember.

The engine in particular is simply astounding, biting hard in the mid-range and then ripping up to the limiter with searing pace. You need to almost flatten your foot against the floor to feel its full fury, but it's worth the effort. The long throttle travel also doubles as an effective form of traction control, which is handy because, of course, there are no electronic safety nets.

On the tighter sections that weave and



meander across the Elan Valley I'm having a great time, rueing the woefully unsupportive seats and wishing for a slower and more feelsome steering rack, but happy to drive quickly into the turns and exit in search of the shift lights, even in the streaming wet. It takes real care to match the revs on downshifts, but I love that it makes you work for your rewards.

Having said that, the ride is pretty appalling and the Tuscan is the only car here that forces you to back off to almost walking pace on the roughest sections. (Frustratingly, when he gets home later Gary will discover that his car is on adjustable Nitron suspension that's dialled to its stiffest setting.)

Of course, the Tuscan hasn't suddenly turned

into some sort of pussycat and it's the faster sections of road that reveal its darker side. Here the speed of the steering can upset the balance and the car takes on attitude quickly, almost imperceptibly. You need to react, but that reaction has to be perfectly measured due, again, to that direct and unforgiving steering rack. In damp conditions you feel like you're on a knife edge and that the Tuscan could bite very hard with little or no warning. Perhaps backing off the dampers would reduce that spikiness but I suspect the inherent problem would always remain to a certain extent. It's not an indulgent sort of car, that's for sure. And if the Porsche's interior feels a little second-hand, the Tuscan's frankly feels homemade.



Above: the Cayman has an ideal blend of power and handling, so it's easy to drive it up to - and beyond - its limits

HAND ON HEART, I'D STRUGGLE TO

recommend a Tuscan to all but the most dedicated of TVR fans. It's a riotous car in looks and dynamics, and I really fell for the engine, but I wonder if it's just too demanding for most – both in terms of living with its foibles and enjoying its uncompromising chassis.

The BMW has most of the TVR's performance, looks terrific and even with its own spikiness it's a more predictable and consistent car to drive quickly. The 370Z makes a strong and very sensible case for itself, too. But these cars should pull heartstrings and somehow the 370Z doesn't quite hit the spot. I actually think a late model 350Z is a more cohesive and exciting package. Save yourself several thousand and get one of those instead if you want a brutish character with Japanese build quality.

Which leaves the Cayman S. I almost feel that I should be apologising that the Porsche is such a convincing winner in this test, but I'm not going to. It has the best chassis, the best steering, a superb engine... rarely is such quality available for such a reasonable price. Depreciation really can be a wonderful thing.

Thank you

This feature wouldn't have been possible without the support of BMW sales and service specialist Munich Legends (www.munichlegends.co.uk), Porsche sales and service specialist RPM (www.rpmtechnik.co.uk) and Gary Judd for lending us his TVR Tuscan.

Specifications

BMW Z4 M COUPE

Power Torque Transmission

Engine In-line 6-cvl. 3246cc 338bhp @ 7900rpm 296lb ft @ 4900rpm Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, M differential, DSC+ MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension

Brakes

Front suspension

MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar Ventilated and drilled discs, 345mm front, 328mm rear, ABS Wheels 8 x 18in front, 9 x 18in rear **Tyres** 225/45 ZR18 front, 255/40 ZR18 rear

Weight (kerb) 1424kg Power-to-weight 241bhp/ton

Price new £41,285 (2006) Rating ***

0-62mph 5.0sec (claimed) Top speed 155mph (limited)

NISSAN 370Z

V6.3696cc 326bhp @ 7000rpm 269lb ft @ 5200rpm Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, ESP Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar Ventilated and drilled discs, 320mm front, 308mm rear, ABS 8 x 18in front, 9 x 18in rear 225/50 R18 front, 245/45 R18 rear 1520kg 218bhp/ton 5.4sec (claimed)

£29,950 (2009) ****

155mph (limited)

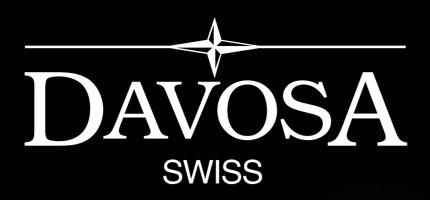
PORSCHE CAYMAN S

Flat-six, 3387cc 291bhp @ 6200rpm 251lb ft @ 4400rpm Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, PSM MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar Ventilated and drilled discs, 318mm front, 299mm rear, ABS 8 x 18in front, 9 x 18in rear 235/40 ZR18 front, 265/40 ZR18 rear 1350kg 219bhp/ton 5.4sec (claimed) 171mph (claimed) £44,080 (2006)

TVR TUSCAN SPEED SIX

In-line 6-cvl. 3996cc 360bhp @ 7000rpm 310lb ft @ 5250rpm Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar Ventilated and drilled discs, 304mm front, 282 mm rear 18in front and rear 235/40 ZR18 fr, 255/35 ZR18 rear 1100kg 332bhp/ton 4.4sec 180mph+ (claimed) £39,750 (2000)







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All stainless steel DLC black case, Swiss automatic movement, 20 ATM waterresistant, sapphire crystal, ceramic top ring, screw-down crown and back, safety buckle with diver extension. £ 598



WINGING IT?

How on earth is Bentley going to transform the two-ton Continental GT into a world-class racing car? Here's how...

by JETHRO BOVINGDON | PHOTOGRAPHY by JAMES LIPMAN





FOR A LITTLE WHILE IN SEPTEMBER 2012, BRITISH

manufacturers built a slice of our green and pleasant land in the centre of Paris. The Paris motor show was all about the Brits and specifically the new Jaguar F-type (still want that 911? Sorry, that's a motoring-journalist tic I've been trying to shake off but it just keeps on cropping up when a new Jaguar is launched) and the quite extraordinary McLaren P1. One car to reinvent Jaguar, the other to reinvent the supercar almost in its entirety. It was enough

to warm the cockles of an Englishman's heart. And in Paris! Oh, the sweet irony.

I wasn't in Paris for the unveilings, but I did monitor the whole event on Twitter and via an array of the biggest motoring websites. Don't groan at the back there: it beats walking around sizzling exhibition halls, not quite being able to see the whole of any one car. Furthermore, it was an Above: a decade after winning the Le Mans 24 Hours, Bentley is developing this Continental GT3 for the firm's long-awaited return to competition



illuminating exercise, because the coverage and conversation built up along lines dictated by the users who were disseminating and commenting on their favourite news nuggets. Initially, the pre-show buzz was all #F-type this and #P1 that, but then on the eve of the show, Bentley revealed a GT3 racer based on the Continental GT Speed. And then a funny thing happened – the conversation about pretty much anything else stopped stone dead and enthusiasts the world over were clamouring to see more pictures and hear more information about Bentley's huge endurance racer with the biggest wing this side of an Airbus A380.

It takes a very special racing car to steal a motor show and the Continental GT3 is that very special racing car. I mean, just look at it. Judging by the storm of approval on social media sites, it is already a people's champion, but of course it will ultimately be judged on its competitiveness and race results. **evo** will be following the GT3 project's progress from

'It's already a people's champion, but the Bentley will ultimately be judged on its race results'

concept to racing reality throughout 2013 in a series of features. To start with, I meet Brian Gush, Bentley's director of chassis, powertrain and motorsport, to talk about how the project is progressing and why he's confident that the Continental GT really can make an unlikely race winner...

Gush joined Bentley in 2000 and created the motorsport department that ultimately went on to win Le Mans with the beautiful Speed 8 prototype in 2003. 'Those three great years at Le Mans were exactly what the company needed to move on from the Arnage era to the Continental

GT,' he says. 'In fact the programme culminated in the original GT launch. Ten years later, we have the second-generation Continental GT and it feels like the right time to return to the track. Our customers want us involved in motorsport and we're petrolheads. Let's just say we didn't need to be asked twice...'

Once the decision was made to return to racing, it didn't take long to choose the GT3 route, despite the fact that the class is a very different proposition from the prototype racing Bentley was involved in previously. 'LMP1 was also considered, but it's a very big-budget affair these days and we have two members of the group [Audi and Porsche] in that already,' says Gush. 'The next logical step was to look at GT3 with a road car-based project, which really gets back to Bentley's roots anyway. In 1923, W.O. Bentley sent Frank Clement and John Duff off to the first Le Mans 24 Hours. They raced, drove back and then the development continued.'

It sounds like a marketing exercise from



Above: although show car has run at Anglesey, there's plenty to be done before the GT3's spec is finalised. **Below:** Brian Gush is the man leading the project; the Conti succeeds the Le Mans-winning Speed 8







heaven, then, but when the world is watching it doesn't matter how many 'Bentley Boy' analogies are drawn. Quite simply, the Conti GT needs to be competitive against McLaren 12Cs, Ferrari 458s, Aston V12 Vantages, SLS Mercs and Porsche 911s. So how will a four-wheeldrive, 2000kg+ luxury GT with its engine slung right over the front wheels be turned into a rearwheel-drive, 1300kg race car to take on much smaller and more aerodynamic mid-engined machines? Gush knows it's a big job but is also confident it can be done. 'The weight came out of the car quite easily,' he explains. 'The basic steel monocogue remains standard in GT3 and our road car weight really comes from safety systems, luxury and the four-wheel drive. Of course, we have carbonfibre quarter panels and door skins here, which help.'

In order to create a level playing field between as many as ten different makes of GT3 car, the FIA holds an annual group test of all eligible machines (known as the Balance of Performance Test). Motorsport's governing body then uses the results to adjust minimum weights and air restrictor sizes to even up the differences between cars. It reduces costs by removing the need to really push the development envelope.

'One of the real attractions of GT3 is that the regulations have performance windows that you need to get into, but there is also a real drive to create a balance of performance,' says Gush. Even so, it will still mean taking more than 1000kg out of the Bentley, which is some feat.

'We need to get the car below 1300kg to give us some headroom to allow for any balance of performance modifications required, and we'll do that,' Gush continues. 'And of course, our engines produce plenty of power and torque so that won't be an issue.'

Notice the fact that he says 'engines'. The car shown at Paris is officially called the 'Concept Racer' and is based around the new rangetopping Speed version of the 6-litre W12

GT3 for the road?



WE'VE already been hugely impressed by the new V8 Continental GT (see evo 178), and a lighter, more aggressive GT3-inspired road car is a mouth-watering proposition. We first brought you news of a lightweight Conti, along with a rendering of how it might look (above), back in 2011. But will it really happen?

'There seems to be a demand for an even higher-performance V8, which is interesting,' says Gush. 'From my point of view, if we're using the road car guys on this programme then we can develop a lightweight mindset – thinking about components in a motorsport way but developing them for road cars. There is space for a lightweight car, a performance variant that naturally follows.'

That's about as close to a 'yes' as you'll ever hear from a manufacturer about an as-yetunconfirmed model. So could they take it as far as adopting rear-wheel drive, like the GT3? 'It's still under discussion at this stage, yes,' says Gush, with refreshing honesty. It seems nothing is out of the question – only that the car remains true to Bentley's core qualities. Gush explains: 'It's hard to say how light we could make the car until the spec is decided - is it rear drive, for example. You can take an enormous amount of weight out, but the question is when does it stop being a Bentley? That's the key. Our customers love that planted, stable feel - so we couldn't ditch any of the safety equipment, the luxury feel to the car... it'll be a real balance

So it seems the wheels are well in motion for a lightweight and focused Continental GT V8. Rumours of a 500kg weight saving will depend on the decision to switch from four- to rear-wheel drive and the adoption of a high proportion of carbonfibre bodywork. One thing's for sure, it won't be cheap. But it could be the most unlikely performance hero of 2014.

VW versus the World (VW wins)

THE Bentley GT3 race car will join a wide array of other Volkswagen Group models already involved in competition. In fact the group's commitment to motorsport is quite breathtaking.

Perhaps most obvious is Audi's Le Mans prototype programme, which has now been dominant for over a decade. And next year its toughest competition could come from another VW Group marque: Porsche. Of course, Audi also supports the DTM series, and Porsche's GT3 and its derivatives are the best-selling racing cars in the world (nearly 2500 sold since '98).

VW's WRC effort is now in full swing and the smart money says its budget and the talent it has acquired, spearheaded by Sébastien Ogier, will dominate the series in short order. Skoda will support the rally effort with its Fabia S2000 in WRC 2 and the FIA European Rally Championship.

SEAT is represented in the WTCC, while Lamborghini has its own Super Trofeo one-make race series and Reiter Engineering GT3 Gallardos will compete against the new Continental GT3...

In fact the only glaring omissions are F1 and NASCAR. Rumours of a Dunkin' Donuts-sponsored Bugatti Galibier entry for the latter in 2014 are strongly denied.



Continental GT. However, logic suggests that the smaller, lighter and more fuel-efficient 4-litre V8 from the entry-level Conti (tipped by Bentley insiders in **evo** 176) would be a better fit with endurance racing in mind. 'Yes, the Concept has the W12 engine but we're still evaluating whether we'll go down the V8 or W12 route,' says Gush. 'Both engines have sufficient power and torque and, of course, fuel efficiency is a competitive factor that we must look at. At this stage no decision has been made.'

It seems difficult to believe that a GT3 race programme hoping to hit the track later this year still doesn't have a final engine specification in mind. We'd bet on the V8, moved back 400mm and down 150mm in the chassis in accordance with GT3 rules. Given the choice, any race engineer would choose a smaller, lighter engine if power isn't an issue, and with GT3 cars running 500-550bhp, the V8 will easily do the required numbers.

The bigger challenge, though, will be getting

'Logic suggests that the smaller, lighter 4-litre V8 from the entry-level Conti would be a better fit for endurance racing'

the correct aero balance. 'We're currently at the CFD [Computational Fluid Dynamics] stage and so we're working with the best outside specialists we can find. Of course, everything we can do to improve aero efficiency will also reduce the size of the wake [the GT could create quite a tow for other cars on the long straights at Le Mans and Spa], have an effect on tyre management and make the car easier to drive for "gentlemen drivers" – all key requirements. We don't want a car on a knife-edge.'

Bentley hasn't just gone for outside suppliers for the CFD work. The car will be developed

as a joint project between the new motorsport department at the factory in Crewe, and M-Sport, who are best known for running the works Ford WRC team from 1997 until the end of last year. It seems odd not to choose a partner with front-running endurance racing experience, but Gush is sure it's the right choice: 'They build the world's best rally cars - which are extremely complex and highly technical machines - so they have the expertise to do it. They're also a fresh partner in terms of track racing, and so we're building together. Of course, they have a great facility [at Cockermouth in Cumbria] and a great depth of manufacturing knowledge, too. Between Crewe and M-Sport we're almost completely self-sufficient.'

The programme isn't run with rigid demarcation between M-Sport and Crewe, though. Bentley's chief designer is down at M-Sport looking at suspension systems and its CAD experts are working with M-Sport, too. Many of the low-volume components



Above: stripping out the luxury interior covers a chunk of the expected 1000kg weight saving. **Left:** V8 engine would lighten the load on front wheels. **Below:** familiar Continental profile remains



will be produced by M-Sport but testing and prototyping is another shared responsibility, and interestingly, Bentley's road car workforce is deeply involved in the project, too. 'As we move through the programme we advertise internally for the expertise we need and people can step forward,' explains Gush. 'It's a great boost for the guys in the factory and they all love cars and racing, so it brings real passion to the project.'

There's still a huge amount of work to do before the Continental GT3 goes racing. The final design detail is still being set to determine technical partners for braking, transmission and various other components, but work has begun on the first development car. However, time is short because the car will roll out in the third quarter of 2013. Bentley won't yet commit to a debut date but all signs point to the Spa 24 Hours on July 27/28. The race fits the Q3 timetable, and unlike GT3-only races, full factory teams are permitted.

We can't wait to see and hear this thunderous Bentley mixing it with the established stars of GT3. It's a fascinating class and with Porsche, Ferrari, Mercedes, McLaren, Aston Martin, Nissan, BMW and now Bentley involved, it makes LMP1 look dull and poorly supported. But will the Bentley be trundling around at the back or fighting at the front? 'GT3 is a performance-balancing formula so we have to accept whatever restrictions are placed upon us,' says Gush. 'After that it's about team efficiency, strategy and optimising the car. But, of course, we want to be challenging for podiums in year one. That has to be the aim. We're not just doing this for fun.'



The Rivals



Audi R8 LMS Ultra

First launched in 2009 and revised twice since, the Audi R8 LMS has attracted more and more success, finishing first and second in 24-hour races at both the Nürburgring and Spa in 2012. The current 'Ultra' version costs £270k plus VAT.



Ferrari 458 Italia GT3

The successor of the hugely popular 430 GT3 stole the show upon its launch in 2011, winning the European GT3 Championship in its very first season. It's also taken class wins in America's Grand-Am series. Costs £305k plus VAT.



McLaren MP4-12C GT3

McLaren's first venture into sportscar racing since the Le Mans-winning F1 GTR is little more than a year old, but it came within a point of winning last year's F1A GT1 World Championship (run to GT3 rules). Costs £310k plus VAT.



Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT3

Winner of the FIA GT1 World Championship and the Dubai 24 Hours in 2012 – only its second year of competition. Huge 6.2-litre V8 engine is one of the biggest in international motorsport today. Priced at £275k plus VAT.



Porsche 911 GT3 R

The last 997-based version of one of GT racing's most successful cars is still going strong, although a 991 replacement is in development and expected to make its debut later this year. The 997 car costs £250k plus VAT.



Aston Martin V12 Vantage GT3

Enjoyed an incredibly successful first year of competition in 2012, winning races all over the world and finishing second in the Britcar 24 Hours at Silverstone. 5.9-litre V12 engine produces over 600bhp. Costs £252k plus VAT.





'CAN YOU SEND ME A PICTURE WHEN YOU GET THERE?' say the clipped, matter-of-fact Scottish tones of Allan McNish, over breakfast.

'Um, of course,' I say as I reach the soggy part of my sugary cereal. Why wouldn't I say yes? It's Allan McNish.

'It's just that Lucas [di Grassi] and I were arguing about whether you'd make it or not. And I bet him you wouldn't.' As ringing endorsements for a trip go, it's not great. 'And Tom [Kristensen] thinks you'll get arrested,' he adds, smiling.

I should point out that I don't normally eat breakfast with Le Mans winners (although admittedly Andy Wallace and I have occasionally clashed over the early morning toast rack on **evo** group tests), but it's the morning after the Brazilian round of the World Endurance Championship and McNish and Kristensen are staying in the same hotel as us in São Paulo. I should also admit that I wasn't exactly brimful of carefree enthusiasm about the drive ahead of us even before McNish's jolly breakfast chat.

In about an hour's time, photographer Dean Smith and I are due to begin a 500-mile drive south to a road that I'm hoping will be one of the most spectacular in the world. Most of the 500 miles should be fine, but it's the first part that's making me nervous. São Paulo, with its population of over 20million people, many of them living in slum-like favelas, is not the friendliest of places on earth – particularly if you're going to be drawing attention to yourself in a bright white Audi R8 Spyder V10, a car that costs the equivalent of about £250,000 over here.

On the flight over I had convinced myself that all the guidebooks were being cautious and overdramatic about the risks of driving through this vast city. They must be. I voiced this to Dean

The Brazilian Job

over in seat 37B, who then reminded me that it was here that some nasty fellows with machine guns attempted to hijack Jenson Button's car while he was on his way to the GP in 2010. By the following morning I'd just about brushed that off as an unfortunate isolated incident when our shuttle turned up to take us across the city to the circuit: a black, armoured A6 sporting thick, tinted glass.

Thankfully the transfer was machine gunfree and Dean and I spent a very enjoyable six hours watching Audi battle Toyota round Interlagos. One of the privileges of being a journalist is that you can sign your life away and then get a beige waistcoat in return. This then lets you access the parts of a race circuit that other waistcoats can't reach, and Dean and I made full use of ours. We watched a huge multicar pile-up on the first lap of the 911 support race. Then we wandered up and down the grid for the main event, marvelling at the uphill gradient, ogling intricate bits of carbonfibre, trying to determine the gender of the dancing 'girls' (seriously), and catching a glimpse of a huge pair of sunglasses, which turned out to be Emerson Fittipaldi.

We watched the rolling start from the end of the pitlane and then found the highest point we could on the grandstands so that we could see almost all of the circuit sprawled out in front of us with shabby tower blocks providing an incongruous backdrop. We then trekked out to the grubby far reaches of the circuit, which were rough enough to make Snetterton look like Yas Marina by comparison. And three hours later, when we'd done all that and got back to the pits, there was still half the race to run.

I love endurance racing. I like the big mixed grid of cars, from the recognisable shapes of the Ferrari 458s and Corvettes in the GT classes, to the alien-looking prototypes like the R18. I love having time to watch the different styles of different drivers in the same car. Standing near the Senna Esses at the end of the main straight, for example, you can see that McNish takes noticeably more kerb in his R18 than the other Audi drivers. This time, though, no amount of extra kerb was enough to hunt down the Toyota of Alex Wurz and Nicolas Lapierre and the Japanese team took the chequered flag in a straight fight against the Audis.

The Audi drivers were understandably

'Thankfully the transfer was machine gun-free and I spent six hours watching Audi battle Toyota'









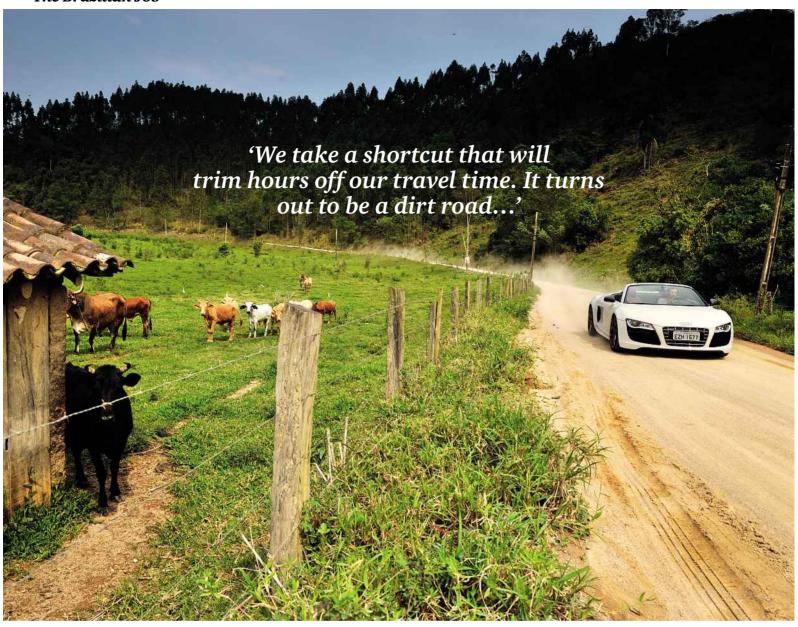






Top: Catchpole watches the race at Interlagos. Far left: R8 meets R18 in the pitlane. Left: no. 1 Audi of Fässler, Lotterer and Tréluyer finished second. Above: Audi took two spots on the podium

The Brazilian Job



disappointed in the press conference afterwards but they were also extremely gracious in defeat. They seemed glad to have some genuine competition, too. With the demise of Peugeot, endurance racing really needed Toyota to step up to the plate and challenge Audi, because wins are only really validated by having some worthy opposition. When an R18 took victory at the following race in Bahrain, I imagine it tasted even sweeter.

'YOU SHOULD GO AND SEE SENNA'S GRAVE

while you're here, too,' says McNish as we say goodbye in the lobby of the hotel while Dean and I wait for 'our' R8 (which di Grassi has been using all weekend) to turn up. 'And remember, that R8's not yours... so rag the arse off it!'

The R8 we'll be driving is equipped with standard passive dampers and the R-tronic single-clutch paddle-shift transmission. Sadly there's no armour plating visible. It doesn't have a satnav either, but it does arrive with Lothar, who will be our guide for the next few days driving a similarly bling S5 Cabriolet with most of Dean's camera equipment on board. Outside the hotel Lothar seems perfectly sane as he introduces himself in excellent English. He tells us that the speed limit is around 70mph and that he will drive at between 70 and 75mph. Very sensible. He seems mild-mannered. Reassuring even.

Two hours later I'm pretty certain I misjudged Lothar's sanity. Once in the car he seemed to discover his inner Tommi Mäkinen. Everything was taken at maximum attack. Through the city's back streets as we went towards the cemetery with Senna's grave he appeared to forget that there was anyone following him. If there was a gap in the traffic he would go for it like a ferret down a hole, never mind the fact that it was a gap made for half a car at best, let alone two. Indicators were used at the last possible moment if at all, and sometimes with a bewildering inconsistency with the actual change in direction. Once out of the city, dropping below 100mph suddenly seems to be a massive slur on his family.

This will continue for the next 500 miles. Every corner on one particular section of road that winds up over a mountain is taken like it is a part of Interlagos. There are duels with lorries (at vast closing speeds) and we'll use all of the two or three lanes available on any given road to maximise the angle of attack on each bend, the S5 leaning on every inch of its suspension travel through long, sweeping corners, bobbing and sliding on its bumpstops.

At normal speeds you wouldn't think the roads particularly interesting for driving, but at the sort of speeds we're going, they become a lot













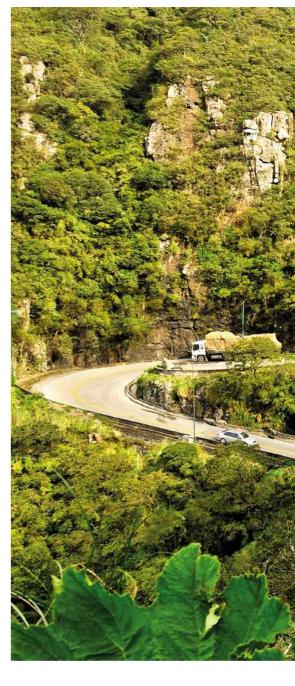


Below, right and far right: the R8 tackles the road Catchpole travelled all the way to Brazil to try – it was worth it. Bottom right: Senna's grave in São Paulo











more exciting. I clock 173mph at one point just trying to maintain visual contact with Lothar. To be honest it's absolutely hilarious watching this S5 being manhandled like it's on fire. It's just all so unexpected and I don't think I've ever laughed so much while trying to keep up with someone. Several times there are enormous bumps on the way into bends that unsettle the S5 horribly, but far from backing off, Lothar seems to relish these and uses the ensuing near accident to get the car set up with a decent angle of attack for the turn. We then watch in disbelief as the convertible's unloaded inside rear lays a long black line through the corner.

The 518bhp R8 obviously gives us a good chance of keeping up, but even so, at these sorts of speeds and loadings it's a full-time job and we're always bracing ourselves as we follow the bucking S5 over the bigger bumps, feeling the weight of the V10 just behind our shoulders

trying to break free.

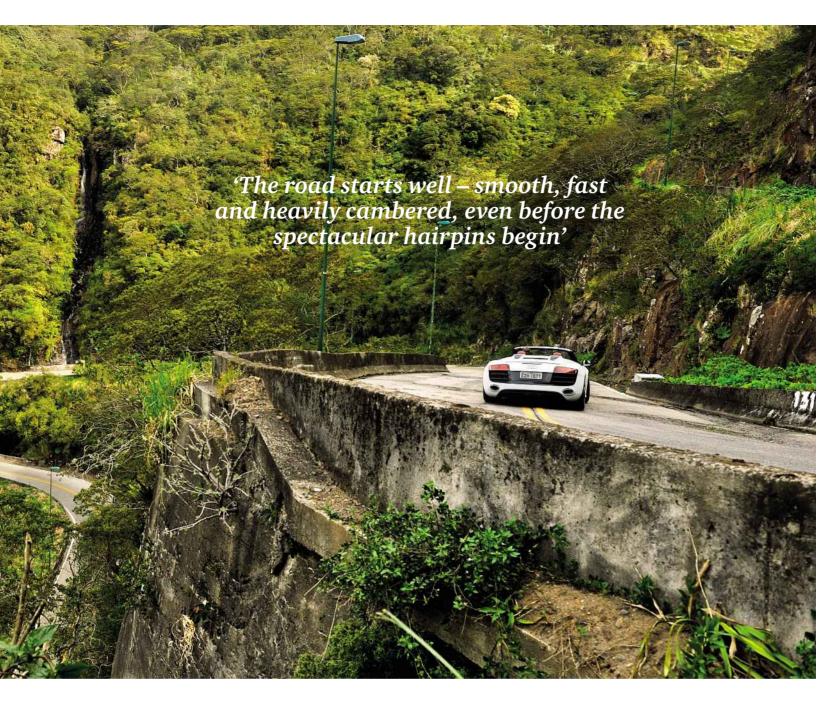
Ayrton Senna's final resting place is lovely, by the way. In a city like São Paulo, so stuffed to overflowing with buildings, noise and grimy concrete, the cemetery is a wonderfully green oasis of calm. The grave itself is under a tree and not ostentatious in the slightest – just a simple plaque in the grass like everyone else.

The moments of calm in our journey come when we hit traffic and the roof on the S5 goes down so that Lothar can have a smoke. Every fuel or food stop (where Lothar always seems to be related to someone) is accompanied by a recharging caffeine hit and some more information about the country we are travelling through, from its crippling taxes to the cosmopolitan nature of its population.

We are being taken on the scenic route south and the landscape is suitably extraordinary. The roads out of São Paulo, which is on a plateau about 1000m above sea level, were jaw-dropping for a start; after we'd passed the vast and foreboding favelas there were great carriageways suspended across valleys in staggering feats of engineering. Much of the scenery seems to be rainforest, but we also go out to vast, long beaches with palm trees, and any time we approach a city the road is flanked for miles beforehand by shabby housing, crowding alongside the road like a lifeline. It reminds me of India.

The roads are generally in pretty good nick, thankfully. However, as we get closer to our destination, Lothar says we are going to take a shortcut that will trim hours off our travel time. This turns out to be a dirt road... which is interesting. Up to this point I've thought about rallying most things, but never an R8 Spyder. At least we have quattro.

And then, finally, we begin to see signs for the



road that we've come all this way to drive: the SC-438 crossing the Serra do Rio do Rastro. I found out about it from a video of Rhys Millen driving here in his drift-spec Hyundai Genesis, and it should be fairly obvious from the first photograph of this feature why I instantly wanted to come here.

From way down in the valley it starts well smooth, fast and heavily cambered, even before the spectacular hairpins begin. It's wide enough too, which is important, and the road surface seems to be made of some kind of concrete pebbledash, which is quite slippery but hasn't descended into potholes.

Initially the R8 feels quite soft at the front end, with more roll and understeer than I was expecting in the early and middle parts of corners. But very soon you learn to adopt a quite exaggerated slow-in, fast-out technique, settling the nose, using the weight transfer

and then getting on the throttle early and aggressively for the exit. This gets the chassis up on its toes, driving hard through the turn and steering from the rear for all the world like a rear- rather than a four-wheel-drive car. It probably also helps that the rear tyres are not in the first flush of treaded youth... thank you Mr di Grassi.

At the top of the road, nearly six miles after the first hairpin appeared, there is a car park with two excitements. The first is a breathtaking view of the road snaking away below. With the crags upholstered in lush green vegetation (mostly a type of bamboo, with some mophead hydrangeas thrown in for good measure), the road stands out clearly, and on a good day you can apparently see the Atlantic sparkling in the distance. The second source of joy is the raccoons. They're a bit like exotic, friendly badgers, with long noses, hooped tails

and a permanently inquisitive look. They seem quite happy to mingle, especially if there's any food in the offing, and I think both Dean and I are rather besotted. Raccoons - they're the new meerkats. Trust me.

The weather up here can be really quite bad, and extremely changeable, so Dean and I set about getting as many photos in the bag as possible during the afternoon. There's not much traffic and it is remarkably well-sighted on the road, but you do need to watch out for the lorries taking wide lines through the tighter switchbacks. We shoot for nearly three hours and then suddenly, without any warning, the temperature drops from 35 degrees to about 5 in a matter of minutes as mist rolls down from above us, billowing over the edge like dry ice. It's eerie. We take a few more photos and then decide to retreat to the hotel, which is conveniently just at the top of the road.

The Brazilian Job







Above: raccoons aplenty. Below: both temperature and visibility drop rapidly as mist descends. Far right: the same road, illuminated at night to spectacular effect





DURING SUPPER DEAN AND I KEEP

looking out of the window like we're nervous, or expecting someone to arrive. What we're actually checking is to see if the swirling mist has lifted. Normally once the sun has sunk below the horizon Dean can pack his cameras away and get stuck into some sort of lethal Belgian beer ('Bohemia' seems to be the best beer out here). But not tonight. Yes, the road we have come to is spectacular in the day. The view of it snaking up the lush valley is up there with names like Stelvio and Ventoux for sheer tarmac theatre. But what sets it apart, what really makes it worth flying 6000 miles across the Atlantic for, is what happens at night.

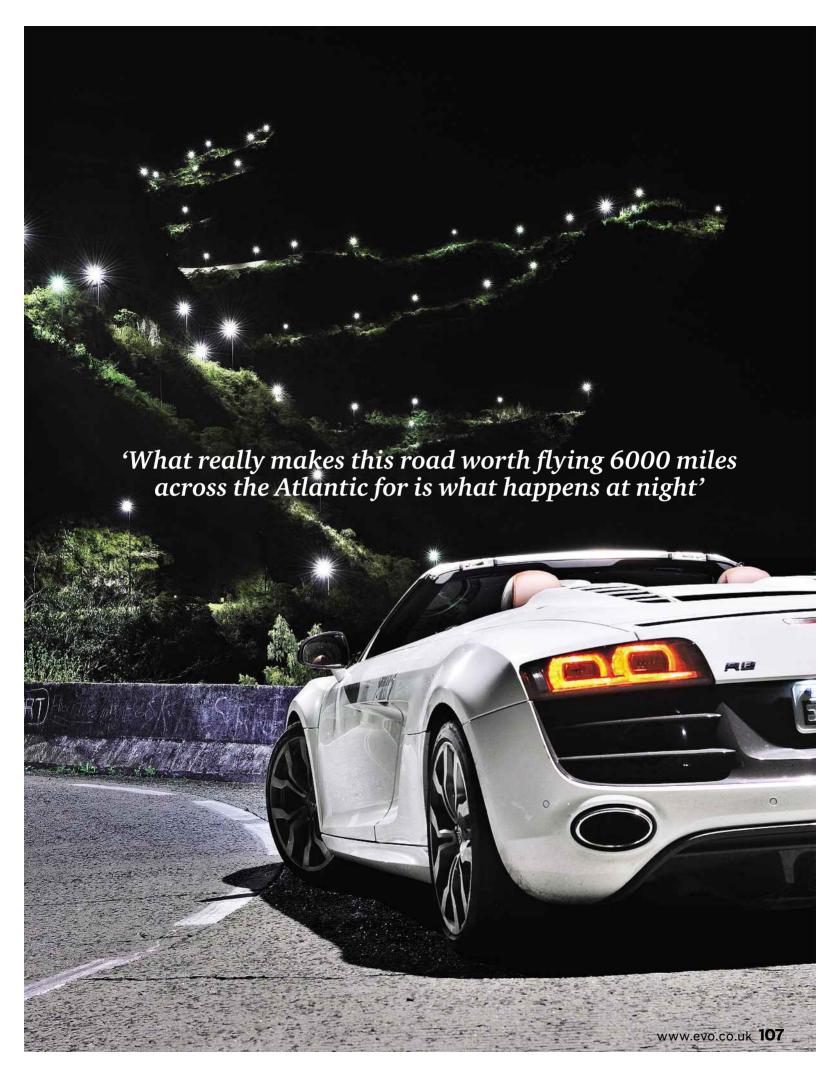
Eventually, at around 11pm, the ghostly mist has drifted off and the southern hemisphere stars are arranging themselves in the sky above. Dean and I are back in the R8. This high (we're at 1500m) and this far from civilisation on the Rio do Rastro plateau it is really dark on a moonless night, but the xenons are casting their icy blue light over the bumpy dirt track from the hotel. We pull into the empty car park that gave us the spectacular view over the road during the day and as we get out of the car to walk over to the cliff edge we can hear raccoons scuttling around in the undergrowth nearby. At least I hope they're raccoons.

And then there it is below us, a beautiful thin silver river of light suspended in the darkness, coiling back and forth before stretching out into the distance. Forget stairway to heaven: here we have a celestial highway. I'm still not quite sure why the local authorities for this part of Brazil decided to go to the trouble of putting street lighting on this remote piece of road, but the result is incredible - truly one of the most amazing sights I have ever had the privilege to see. After a while just trying to drink it all in,

I leave Dean to wrestle with the noises in the bushes (and take some photos), while I go off and see what the road is like to drive at night.

Having previously scoffed at the provision of heated seats in Brazil I'm now rather glad of them as the warmth radiates comfortingly through my layers of clothing. It's so effective that I have no qualms about putting the roof down. Surprisingly there's still the occasional bit of traffic on the road, although it's almost exclusively lorries labouring their way uphill.

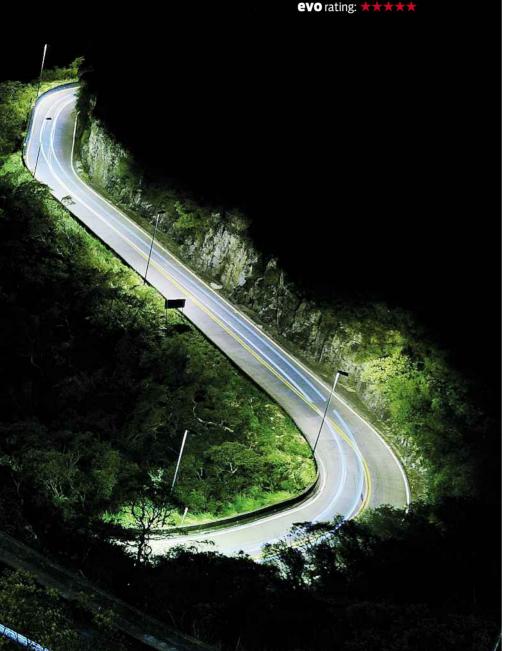
In some ways you would have thought that the road, being lit, would be little different to drive compared to in the daytime, but that couldn't be further from the truth. For a start, it seems to be endless at night. Just when I think that I must have run out of hairpins and be into the slightly straighter section, another set of switchbacks arrives. The whole descent seems to take twice as long as it did during the day.



Specification

AUDI R8 SPYDER V10

Engine V10. 5204cc **CO2** 349g/km Power 518bhp @ 8000rpm **Torque** 391lb ft @ 6500rpm Transmission Six-speed automated manual (optional), four-wheel drive, Electronic Diff Lock Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar Rear suspension Double wishbones. coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled discs, 365mm front, 356mm rear, ABS, EBD Wheels 8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 19in rear Tyres 235/35 ZR19 front, 295/30 ZR19 rear Weight (kerb) 1720kg Power-to-weight 306bhp/ton 0-62mph 4.1sec (claimed) **Top speed** 194mph (claimed) Basic price £117,710



It's worth it, though, because the view when I turn round and look back up is beautiful. In the daytime the green lampposts sprout from the shrubbery like metallic giraffes or horticultural periscopes, and several of them bear the scars of lumbering lorries that have leant against them while struggling to make the hairpins. But at night, viewed from the bottom of the valley, they simply form a daisy chain of stars strung up on a wall of darkness.

I switch off the V10, get out and stand there for a few minutes just looking and listening. It's wonderfully quiet, apart from the very distant rumble from a lorry and the occasional *tisshhh* from its air brakes. Perhaps it's because I grew up in the countryside, or perhaps it's a lack of imagination, but strangely I feel completely at ease and quite relaxed out here – a world away from the claustrophobic and intimidating streets of São Paulo two days ago.

My reverie is interrupted by a flipping humongous moth, which flutters out from the darkness and flaps rather too close to my face for comfort on its way towards the Audi's xenons, at which point I remember that Dean is probably being mugged by raccoons up in the car park. With the roof and windows down, the R8 seems to find added voice at night. In the same way that a normal person might consider releasing a solo album after singing in the shower, so the R8 seems to have had a couple of mufflers removed now that night has fallen. Perhaps it's the colder air, perhaps it's just that my hearing is heightened and compensating for my reduced sight, but the sound of the V10 as it bounces off the rock faces seems harder and angrier.

Having spent the afternoon sliding the R8 around the hairpins it seems perfectly natural to do the same as I climb back up now, but it's not always as easy at night. Getting the car sideways isn't a problem as there's even less friction between the tyres and the cold road surface. The tricky bit is gathering it all up, as your eyes can wander from the road at the crucial moment. Most of the time the streetlights bathe the way ahead in a warm glow, but some of the hairpins have been left in a little inky pool of darkness and so as the car takes a few degrees of attitude, your eyes are inclined to follow the much brighter illumination of the headlights, which is not ideal when they're pointing towards the inside of the corner. At least the drops are hidden from view.

Knowing that I'll probably never come here again in my life means I want to cling on to the experience and stay up all night long driving up and down. Sadly, at about 2am the fuel light blinks on and I know our fun is over. One last look at what is one of the most magical things I have ever seen and then we retreat through the darkness to bed. Yes, Allan, we did make it, and it was completely worth it. ■



by MIKE DUFF | PHOTOGRAPHY by MINI / LAND ROVER

Despite being one of the world's toughest motorsport events, the Dakar Rally's desert trails can be a great leveller. evo meets the 2013 event's Davids and Goliaths

SAND GETS EVERYWHERE AT THE DAKAR. IT'S A CONSTANT,

grainy presence in shoes, pockets, underpants, sandwiches and freshly opened cans of drink. It's even found its way into the keyboard of the ancient MacBook I'm typing this on, a computer that spent its time at the rally inside a sealed bag in a locked car. After a few days you find yourself, unwittingly, becoming a sand expert - able to recognise the difference between the golden grains of the coast and the coarse grey powder of the

desert proper. You even find yourself nodding knowledgeably when the drivers start complaining about soft conditions, even though they're describing 300ft dunes and you're thinking about getting bogged down in the parking area. Sand is the one thing that most obviously links the new, South American Dakar to the Saharan original.

Beyond the sand, and the questionable mental state of anyone who would sign up for the event, it's hard to find a grand unifying theme to the Dakar, other than the adventure and the danger. It's a cross-country 'rally raid' for off-roaders, two-wheel-drive buggies, motorbikes, trucks and now even quadbikes. It attracts big names and starry-eyed privateers, although it tends to be

won by seasoned veterans rather than new arrivals. Stéphane Peterhansel, the Frenchman who has claimed victory four times in a car and six times on a bike, is currently the man to beat.

What the modern Dakar doesn't do, of course, is go anywhere near the city it's named after. The original Paris-Dakar was basically a race across the Sahara, and although the route varied year-by-year, it usually ended in the Senegalese capital and so became known simply as 'the Dakar'. Unfortunately, the event was often disrupted by protests, robberies,

'IT'S HARD TO FIND A SINGLE THEME FOR THE DAKAR, OTHER THAN THE ADVENTURE AND THE DANGER'

Left: the funding, manpower and preparation that goes into the X-Raid Minis (top) dwarfs the resources of the Race2Recovery QT Wildcats (bottom)

kidnappings and sometimes outright attacks. The final African rally was in 2007 - in 2008 it was cancelled days before the start after a threat from militants in Mauritania backed by Al-Qaeda to target competitors. It switched to South America in 2009, running through the deserts of Chile, Argentina and Peru, and has been there ever since.

The first challenge on the Dakar is merely trying to keep track of the action. Put simply, it's best done with either a television or a helicopter. Most of the stages are just long tracts of desert, with competitors making their own way between checkpoints. Away from the start and finish, it's almost impossible to get close to the competition without risking death by dehydration. The heart of the event is the bivouac, the service area-cum-campsite that moves with the event day-by-day, where cars are repaired and crews eat and sleep.

Unsurprisingly, the X-Raid team's service area is the biggest in the bivouac. The German outfit is running five Minis and one BMW X3, and on the back of outright victory last year is again tipped for victory, with reigning champion Peterhansel and former winner Nani Roma in the lead cars. Boss Sven Quandt is a Dakar veteran of 20 years, as both a driver and more recently as team boss. He's a cousin of the BMW-owning Quandt family, but X-Raid functions as a separate concern. And on the Dakar, it's a huge operation - considerably bigger than a modern WRC team, with 110 drivers, mechanics and support staff working together to look after the cars, and two vast 'T4' support trucks lumbering after them that compete in a special lorry class but also provide technical support on-stage when it's needed. On top of that there are 12 more trucks, 11 service cars and two minibuses. What there aren't are any of the vast motorhomes or mirror-glassed hospitality units you'll find in a modern race paddock - just tents and canopies of various sizes. The team sleeps and eats under canvas, drivers alongside mechanics. It's a bullshit-free environment.

Up close, the Mini is a spectacular-looking thing. In size terms it's the furthest we've yet come from the Issigonis original - a Countryman silhouette that has been grafted onto a development of the same chassis that underpinned X-Raid's





previous X3 and X5 entries. Power comes from a twin-turbo BMW 3-litre diesel, which is limited to around 300bhp by a small restrictor plate. Being considered a near-production vehicle, the Mini's suspension travel is effectively limited, whereas the two-wheel-drive Baja-style buggies that rival it have several feet of axle movement. But the cleverest bit is the way the Mini effectively comes to pieces when it needs to, with space for tools and spares behind the carbonfibre sills, including replacement driveshafts and suspension mounts. The cockpit is pretty special, too - especially the multitude of screens and displays that sit in front of the co-driver. In the days before satnav the Dakar was a serious navigational challenge - Mark Thatcher, then the son of the prime minister, and two team-mates went missing for six days after getting lost on the 1982 rally. But now all vehicles are fitted with twin GPS systems and real-time telemetry, meaning both crews and race officials know where they are at all times. The support cars are GPS tracked too, with fines and penalties applied to competing cars for anybody who exceeds speed limits on the road section – even if it was a support car that committed the offence...

We visit on the second day of the rally, and the first long special stage, a loop that -

unusually – sees the field starting and finishing in the same place, the Peruvian town of Pisco. Normally the support crews have to rush once the cars have been sent away, just to get to the finish ahead of them, but instead they get the rare chance to take several quiet hours off, giving me a chance to grab some time with Sven Quandt himself, interrupted only by occasional progress reports crackling through the team radio: Peterhansel is enjoying a clear run in the lead,

with several crashes and breakdowns occurring behind him.

'It's definitely still the biggest challenge - this is the biggest adventure you can do on wheels,' says Quandt in a quiet voice. 'It's always unpredictable: you can have the best car and the best driver, but that doesn't mean you will win. You have to have good navigation, you have to have a car that's reliable and you have to be lucky. You can be in second position five minutes behind the leader, and if the guy in first finds a hole that's not in the roadbook then he's out and you've won.'

X-Raid's success and backing means it's the team that everybody wants to drive for, a position Quandt clearly relishes: 'Experience counts for more here than almost anywhere else. Novices can do okay, maybe even be quick, but if you go too fast here then you will crash. All of the successful drivers have been here before many times, they're in their thirties or even forties, they've learned to drive at the right pace, not to race for a stage victory or to take risks, but to know that it will come back to them.'

Only 100 yards or so from X-Raid's tented city, I find what could be described as the opposite end of the Dakar - and a team that's definitely lacking in the sort of experience that Quandt is talking about. Two former army trucks sit in the sand, with a neatly organised camp between them featuring the sort of awnings you'd see shielding cars from the elements at a clubman rally. There's also a tidy row of tents. For the first time since arriving in Peru, I'm hearing British accents.

This is Race2Recovery, the culmination of a programme to rehabilitate injured servicemen by participating in motorsport, and to raise money for Help for Heroes and Tedworth House, a Personnel Recovery and Assessment Centre in Wiltshire. The team has come here with four QT Wildcats, each crewed with at least one injured veteran. Three are navigated by amputees, and one is driven by Tony Harris, who lost a leg to a roadside bomb in Afghanistan.

'It all started about two years ago,' explains John Winskill, a former infantry major and the team's logistics guru. 'Tony Harris and Tom Neathway - who is a triple amputee - were in Headley Court recovering from their injuries and they met in the tea room. Both of them had a slightly unhealthy interest in motorsport

Above right: Race2Recovery boss John Winskill. Below: triple amputee and co-driver Tom Neathway is one of Race2Recovery's founders. Far top right: GPS system







'X-RAID'S SUCCESS MEANS IT'S THE TEAM THAT EVERYBODY WANTS TO DRIVE FOR'





This is my second Dakar. Back in 2004 Colin McRae entered in a Nissan truck (pictured below), driving alongside multiple winner Ari Vatanen, and triggering enough interest in the UK to get me dispatched to Senegal to cover the finish.

McRae was clearly out of his element at first, but he thrived on the new challenge and, although he finished down in 20th place, the bug had bitten. Sporting some spectacular sunburn at the end, he was also smiling – something we'd seen little of during the final years of his WRC career.

In 2005 he returned, posting several fastest stage times before crashing out. And, if he'd lived longer, he might well have been part of this story he signed for X-Raid just before his death and was due to drive for the team in the 2008 Dakar.

Mike Duff



and decided that they didn't really fancy any of the normal disabled sports. They chatted about racing and decided to enter some local rallies... and somehow that spawned the idea that we ought to go for the pinnacle of rally raid, the Dakar. And now, here we are.'

With 28 members at the rally, the team is barely a quarter of the size of X-Raid, despite running four cars. But the budget that brought them here is a far smaller fraction than even that: 'I don't know the exact figure,' Winskill admits, 'but it's not much. We've had some generous sponsorship, especially from Land Rover, UBS and Google, but it's fair to say that we're doing this on a pretty tight budget. The drivers and co-drivers have all had to pay to compete.'

The cars are all still out on the stage as we talk, the camp quiet as mechanics and support drivers - several of whom have also been injured in action - try to grab some much-needed rest. Martyn Williams is one of the support truck drivers and a serving Royal Marine, returning to the front line after surviving an explosion that seriously injured his foot in 2008. 'As soon as I heard about this I knew that I just had to come,' he enthused. 'It's just a brilliant adventure – a really positive thing to do for all of us, the drivers and the mechanics alike.'

The team's ambitions are modest. 'The aim is simple - to get to the finish,' says Winskill. 'It's like Cool Runnings. In that film you had people who'd never bobsleighed and then went ahead anyway. The Brits love an underdog and there's been a huge amount of interest in us as a team that's trying to prove something with very small resources. Even if we have to pick up one of the cars and carry it to the finish, then we will.'

He pauses, and then carries on, deadpan: 'Metaphorically, of course. They're very



'IT'S CLEAR THAT THE **MINIS HAVE** THE PACE TO STAY AT THE **SHARP END'**





Above: X-Raid team chief Sven Quandt; multiple spare tyres are a necessity on stages as long as 368 miles. Left: Nani Roma in his Minishaped contender



heavy.' It is a literally humbling experience.

Four hours later, everything has changed. At the X-Raid camp the cars have returned safely, mechanics working at a leisurely pace to check everything over as Peterhansel lies face-down on the physio's table, having the knots of the day's stage massaged out of him. He won the stage after two-time world rally champ Carlos Sainz's buggy suffered from a GPS problem, and even though an appeal by Sainz's Qatar team will return the Spaniard to the overall lead later that evening, it's clear that the Minis have the pace to stay at the sharp end.

But at Race2Recovery the awnings are still empty, and the team is clustered around the sole laptop computer and the two-way radio. All four cars are still on the stage, hours after they should have returned to service. One is stuck, one keeps overheating and one has a broken alternator. The T4 recovery truck has broken down too. It really does look as if the team's Dakar efforts are set to fail with the event barely begun. Morale is through the floor. I skulk at the back and try to keep out of everybody's way.

Unexpectedly, one of the Wildcats appears 40 minutes later, lights blazing as it emerges from the dark and rumbles under its canopy. It's the car driven by Ben Gott, one of R2R's civilians, and navigated by Mark Zambon, a former US Marine bomb disposal technician who lost both his legs in an explosion in 2011. Against all the odds, he's grinning as he manoeuvres himself past the roll-cage.

'Lots of sand, lots of dunes,' he says. 'Dune after dune after dune – lots of guys getting stuck and lots of guys crashing. This is going to be all the challenge I anticipated and so much more. So much more.'

He takes a long pull on his drinks bottle. 'You have to have fun, you have to remind yourself of that. It's beautiful out there in the desert, we're out here and we're racing the Dakar. It's the ultimate, man. The ultimate.'

ON JANUARY 9, THREE DAYS AFTER OUR INTERVIEW, THREE MEMBERS

of the Race2Recovery team, including John Winskill, were seriously injured in a crash with a taxi during a transit section. Two occupants of the taxi died, and the R2R members were transferred to hospital in Lima. Our condolences go to the relatives of those that died, and our best wishes go to all those injured for their recuperations.

As we closed for press, after ten days of the rally, only one of the R2R cars was still running, with Matt O'Hare and Philip Gillespie in last place of the 94 remaining cars, but gamely battling mechanical problems to get to the finish. After a strong early challenge, Carlos Sainz retired with engine problems on the sixth stage – and approaching the finish in the Chilean capital Santiago, Peterhansel was out in front.

Above: Carlos Sainz's Qatarbacked buggy ran strongly until its engine failed on stage six. Below: Race2Recovery crew found the going tough in the early stages











SO THIS IS WHAT DÉJÀ vu feels like. The blue and

white livery. The absurdly wide tyres. The crazy camber and pugnacious stance. I've never stood next

to this car in my life, yet it all looks so familiar, like I've driven it a thousand times. Actually I have driven this car a thousand times, but only in the virtual sense, courtesy of the PlayStation phenomenon that is Gran Turismo. Today, to my utter delight, I get to drive it for real.

To be honest I'm not sure who's more nervous of today's exercise: me, or the men from Nismo. Behind the friendly smiles and respectful bows, I can sense the unique tension that comes from placing an awful lot of trust - and perhaps the most significant slice of Nissan racing heritage in the hands of a foreign scribbler they've never met. A few days prior to the test drive, I'd been asked to supply a racing CV (Nismo has never let a journalist drive one of its historic racing cars before), so I gave them the whole nine yards. I don't think the stunning pair of pole positions and lights-to-flag wins at Cadwell Park in the 1997 Mighty Mini Challenge cut much ice, but more modest success at the Nürburgring, Pikes Peak and Bonneville Speed Week clearly did something to convince them I'm not a complete muppet. Phew.

You don't need to be a dedicated student of motorsport history to know the Skyline GT-R was a force to be reckoned with during the early 1990s. These were the days of Group A, when

a more grounded set of regulations restored some sanity after the madness of Group B. At the time it probably seemed a little tame, but the enduring genius of Group A is that although the touring cars and rally cars it spawned were highly modified, they were amplified versions of the homologated road cars you could buy, or at least aspire to buy. Consequently there was variety, innovation and scope for marques to go racing with genuine road-based cars. It also provided the impetus for a generation of talented engineers to geek-out on the details.

It was a win-win for racers and road drivers alike, for so long as there were sufficient showroom examples produced, pretty much anything went.

In the case of the R32 Skyline, that meant six cylinders, twin turbos, all-wheel drive with computer-controlled torque split and allwheel steer. Looking back, this was the racing equivalent of arriving at a knife fight with a machine gun, but there's no question it made for spectacular racing, both in Japan and abroad. In Europe the Group A R32 Skyline creamed





the opposition in the 1991 Spa 24 Hours, while in Australia the GT-Rs kicked seven shades out of the V8 Fords and Holdens and used E30 M3s as toothpicks with which to prize out the gristle left from chewing up RS500 Cosworths. Between them Nissan drivers Jim Richards and Mark Skaife won the 1990, 1991 and 1992 Group A championships (the forerunner to V8 Supercars), plus the '91 and '92 Bathurst 1000 races. Their exploits prompted the Australian press to come up with that immortal nickname for the GT-R: 'Godzilla'.

However, it was at home in Japan that the legend of the GT-R was strongest. In the All Japan Touring Car Championship the Group A R32 Skyline was literally unbeatable, winning 29 races from 29 starts across four seasons of total dominance. By 1993 such was the GT-R's superiority that the JTCC was all but a one-make series with no fewer than sixteen R32s slugging it out, but the spectacle still drew 94,500 fans to watch the final race at Fuji in October 1993 - the last-ever for the Group A monsters. During that all-conquering era, one GT-R above all others -

the Calsonic car – became little short of a deity, becoming champion in the first and last of those four epic seasons.

It's hard to think of another racing car that possesses such deep-rooted cultural significance in its homeland, yet also has cult status on a truly global scale. I certainly doubt there's a more iconic or significant competition car in Japan, nor a cooler or more intriguing machine for our generation of Western petrolheads. No wonder the boys from Nismo look a little edgy at letting me loose in it.

Our venue is Grandrive, a purpose-built test track located within the confines of a Nissan manufacturing plant in Yokosuka City, an hour or so from downtown Yokohama. It's a rather faceless place. Once beyond the security gates you drive through a seemingly endless warren of low-rise factory buildings before finally emerging into the open expanse of Grandrive itself. The track is much bigger than I expected, but it's very definitely a facility designed for modest road cars, not fire-snorting 650bhp GT-Rs. The track is two lanes wide and has markings like a typical public road, which make it look narrower. There's no run-off and plenty of barriers, but the good news is there's a generous straight and a very long corner that feeds onto it, plus a few chicanes, a couple of hairpins and a bit of gradient courtesy of an incongruous man-made hillock.

The Nismo crew scurry around the Calsonic GT-R like worker bees tending to the queen. A small man hefts down on a very long torque-

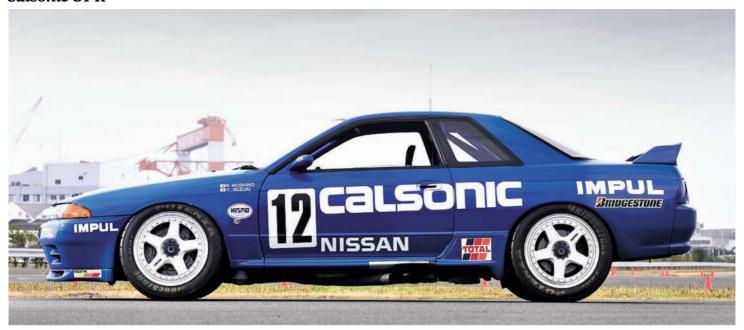
'I CERTAINLY DOUBT THERE'S A MORE **ICONIC OR SIGNIFICANT COMPETITION CAR ANYWHERE IN JAPAN'**





Top: Meaden rips through the GT-R's gears down the long Grandrive straight. Above: noise from side exhausts is tremendous. Left: technician tightens wheel nuts; wet tyres were used initially, then swapped for slicks

Calsonic GT-R



wrench pole, putting a few extra newton metres into the huge centre-lock wheels. While it's up on its built-in jacks, a second technician fires the car up and works gently up and down the gears, all four wheels spinning as the engine and transmission warm through with zero loading.

It's the perfect time to have a proper nose around the car and drink in all the details. The front and rear tracks are wider than standard, and the enormous 10in-wide rims are right on the Group A limit, being 2in wider than the road car's. Combined with the hefty negative camber angles - just over 5deg at the front and 3deg at the rear - it possesses a fantastic bodybuilder physique, one accentuated by the fact the bodywork and aerodynamics are standard. The metamorphosis from road GT-R to Group A monster meant every component was either made lighter, stronger or more potent, yet the essence of the road car was never lost.

The RB26 DETT straight-six engine is a brute, with every aspect of its cooling,

breathing and fuelling optimised within the Group A regulations. Engine internals and the block itself are also uprated. In its heyday power ranged anywhere between 550 and 650bhp depending on the year and the race. No one's saying what it's developing today, but something tells me this 1260kg car is not going to want for performance.

Some of the more arcane aspects of Group A regulations, such as the need for standard production door cards and dashboards, must have seemed a bit pedantic to the teams and engineers, but now they add to the charm and the relevance of the car. It looks and feels like the stripped-out road car it is, not a carbonclad caricature like today's Super GT and DTM cars. Motorsport's rule makers would do well to remember this.

NISMO CREW'S PRE-DRIVE rituals and the arrival of Katsumasa Chiyo, Nismo's Junior Team GT300 driver in the

Japanese Super GT series, add to the anticipation. Chiyo-san has been enlisted to shake Godzilla down before I drive it. I'm glad he's here, but he looks as apprehensive as I feel; unsurprising given he was only four years old when this car was in its prime and has spent all but one of his ten seasons in motorsport racing karts or Formula 3 cars.

I'm mildly disappointed to find the car on wet tyres. Yes, there are a few damp patches on track after some overnight rain, but it's a cool, breezy day so the tarmac will soon be dry, especially after Chiyo's warm-up laps. He's clearly under instructions to take things steady, keeping the revs down and carefully feeling his way through the five-speed dog 'box. Still, the sound is epic; a hard-edged, forced-induction holler spliced with a barely silenced straightsix howl that bounces off the slab sides of the distant factory buildings like thunder.

After a few laps, Chiyo returns to the makeshift paddock. Out he hops, up pop the air

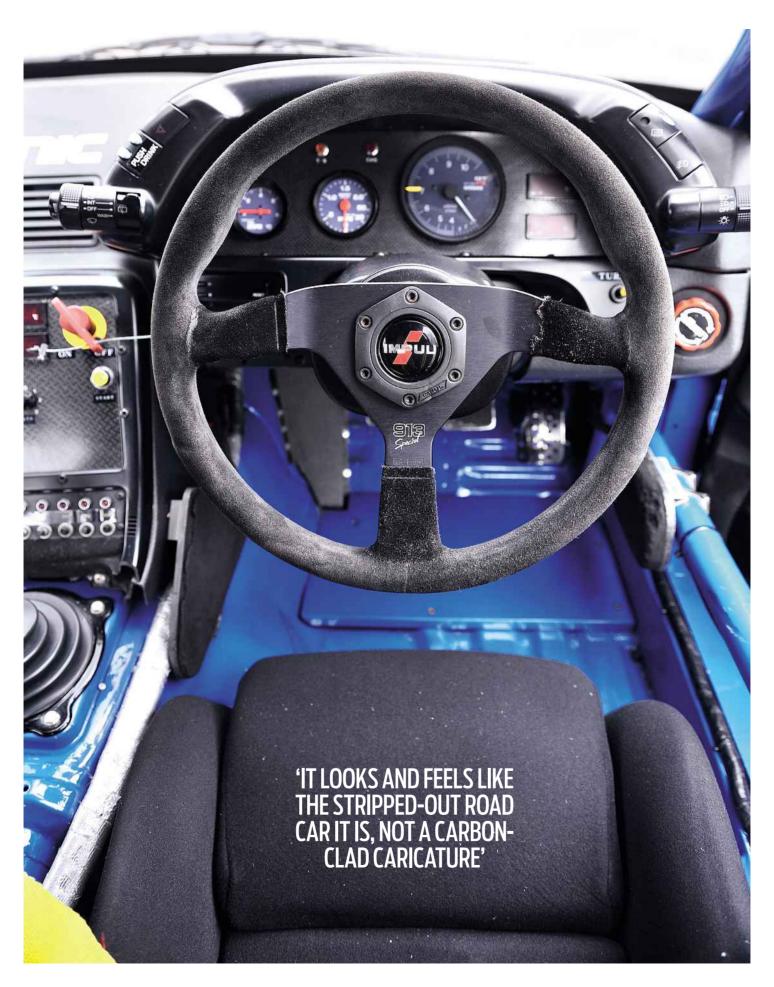




Top: sponsor Calsonic was (and still is) an automotive parts supplier. Left: fivespeed dog 'box is tricky to master. Above: Skyline badge. Right: heel-and-toe required







Calsonic GT-R



'THE NOISE FROM THE ENGINE AND THE TRANSMISSION IS TRULY MONSTROUS, FILLING THE CAR AND YOUR HEAD'





Above, from top: 2.6-litre straight-six could produce 650bhp; Kazuyoshi Hoshino won two All Japan Touring Car titles in the car; Nismo engineers are understandably nervous. Above right: inside wheels can pick up through bends



jacks, off come the wets and on go a set of slicks! I'm pleased, but I'm also instantly concerned about the prospect of feeling my way around a strange circuit in an unfamiliar car on cold rubber. That's often the way with these track tests, but it still adds an extra frisson of anxiety to an already pressure-laden drive. I have a quiet word with myself in the restroom before striding towards the GT-R and the assembled crowd of Nismo technicians and managers, who are all wearing their best please-don't-

As always, when the time comes, it's great to finally be strapped in. Helmet on, door closed, isolated from the rest of the world and with nerves steadily subsiding, there's just enough time to slowly breathe in the heady petrol fumes and intoxicating history of this magnificent car before I'm told to get going. With the ignition comes a cacophony of noise from the fuel pumps



and transmission coolers. Then the engine fires with a meaty, pulsing throb, followed by the industrial whine of the gearbox as I depress the weighty but not uncomfortably heavy clutch, pull left and back to find first gear and chunter out onto the track.

It's a joy to be in this car, not least because you sit high enough to see out of it, unlike today's race cars where the driver's eye-line is level with the top of the dashboard. As a result I'm not left wondering where to place the car on the track, which means I can immediately focus on enjoying myself and hopefully scratch the surface of what this fabulous car can do.

The gearshift is initially a little disconcerting, but only because it's unencumbered by synchromesh and slots between gears so fast and free that I'm not entirely sure which gear I've got until I let the clutch up. Thankfully, once I've got myself orientated and my left arm

has built a little muscle memory, the 'box is sensational, thriving on punchy inputs pushed home with increasing speed and confidence.

It needs to be a quick shifter too, for the way the GT-R devours each ratio is spectacular. The boost comes in a solid, intensifying rush that pins you in the seat and makes you laugh out loud, gear after gear after gear. There's seemingly no abatement in the GT-R's appetite for ratios and it pulls as hard in fifth as it does in third. With no wings to speak of, the R32 is free from downforce-induced drag. That apparently made the Group A GT-Rs a bit lively down the long Kemmel and Conrod straights at Spa and Bathurst respectively, where they could get a bit floaty as they nudged 190mph. It must have been a wild and wonderful ride.

The noise from the engine and transmission is all-pervading and truly monstrous, filling the car and your head with the most extraordinary bellow, punctuated by the fizz of those two furiously spinning turbos. I've been given a 7000rpm rev limit, which feels like plenty, but I suspect leaves plenty more to come. Just how much I'm unaware until back in the UK, when some additional research for this feature reveals that the Group A cars would regularly rev to 8500rpm in race trim...

The steering is power-assisted, as you'd expect with that much rubber cranked over with quite so much camber. It's light and darty, but calms a little and gains feel once the tyres have heat in them. Teams in Japan and Australia tried different ways of dialling-out understeer. The former played with the HICAS four-wheel steering and ATTESA E-TS torque controller as well as the suspension's camber and castor; the Gibson Motorsport team in Australia disabled the HICAS and worked on a suspension set-up more suited to rear-wheel drive, then optimised



the torque split via the ATTESA E-TS system for each circuit. Both found a sweet spot, but as they never raced each other, nobody knows which would have been quickest of all.

There's no question either car would take some getting used to on a full-blooded racetrack, for even at Grandrive with me at the wheel, the way the Calsonic car changes direction is pretty remarkable. It's stiff too, with very little roll and a propensity to get deflected by mid-corner bumps, as I discover once I begin to carry some proper speed through the exit of the long fourth-gear corner onto the start-finish straight. You can feel it winding itself up in the tighter corners, especially as you begin to feed the power in, and it even picks the inside wheels up at times. The revs flare momentarily when it does so, but then the car settles, hooks up and effs off down the next straight. It's this turn-in agility followed by the ability to put all its power down on the way out of corners that made the GT-R such a formidable weapon. A Group A Sierra RS500 was lighter and had 500-550bhp, but with rear-wheel drive it couldn't match the traction, especially over longer runs. To be fair to Ford, nothing else could.

That's not to say the R32 was an easy car to take to the limit, though. If you trawl YouTube for footage, it's clear these Group A GT-Rs took some holding on to, especially somewhere like Bathurst where they leapt, bounced and clawed their way over Mount Panorama. It looks brutal, and from where I'm sitting it feels brutal, even at the pace I dare to run at, but it's also a car that's transparent and simple to interpret. There's no mystery about what it does and you

don't need to be a pro to feel for where the limit might lie. Of course, feeling for it is one thing, finding it is another matter (and not something to be attempted in six laps of Grandrive), but at least it seems the R32 speaks our language, that of mechanical grip, not the daunting, alien cipher of downforce.

The brakes - big AP rotors with no ABS are massively powerful, but feelsome too, which is handy as every downshift needs some old-school heel-and-toe to match revs with road speed. Like the rest of the car it's a tremendously satisfying challenge, one that puts you in the heart of the action and keeps you there throughout the lap. Again, it's a totally different experience to a modern paddleshift touring car or GT car, which render your left foot redundant on upshifts and do all the blipping on downshifts. This is a car you have to drive with sympathy, accuracy and dexterity for every yard of every lap. As such it's a machine that rewards a more classical skill set and goes beyond the binary 21st century challenges of nailing braking points and maximising minimum corner speed.

There's something ironic about a car famed for its technology and hero status amongst virtual racers being such an analogue, organic experience to drive. Then again, GT-Rs are and have always been far more challenging and characterful than their 'computer game' stigma suggests. There were successful GT-R racers before and after the R32, but none epitomises all that's great about the breed and the brilliance of Japanese motorsport in general more vividly than this gnarly blue and white veteran.

'THIS IS A CAR YOU HAVE TO DRIVE WITH SYMPATHY, ACCURACY AND DEXTERITY, EVERY YARD OF EVERY LAP'

Specification

CALSONIC GT-R

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2568cc, twin-turbo

Power 650bhp @ 7600rpm

Torque 492lb ft @ 6000rpm

Transmission Five-speed manual, four-wheel drive with active torque split

Front suspension Multi-link, coil springs, fourway adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, fourway adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes AP Racing discs, 376mm front (six-piston calipers), 305mm rear (four-piston calipers)

Wheels 10 x 18in front and rear

Tyres 265/680 R18 Bridgestone slicks Weight (kerb) 1260kg

Power-to-weight 524bhp/ton 0-60mph 3.0sec (estimated)

Top speed 190mph (estimated)

evo rating: ★★★★★



IDEO

See the Calsonic Skyline GT-R in action online

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Nick Trott Editor, **evo**



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FORMULA1

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From Lamborghinis to, um, Escorts - evo's Fast Fleet is the biggest and most comprehensive long-term section in the business. This month...

LAMBORGHINI ESPADA

by Harry Metcalfe

Editorial director

This month: Metcalfe's latest acquisition meets a Ferrari FF

Did you know? 764 Miuras were built, compared to 1217 Espadas, making the latter Lambo's most successful model at that time



MERCEDES C63 AMG by Nick Trott

Editor

This month: The C63 gets a set of Dunlop winter tyres

Did you know? The C63's 6.2-litre V8 has nearly 80 more bhp than the Cosworth DFV F1 engine had in its original guise



RANGE ROVER EVOOUE by Mike Duff

Motoring editor

This month: The Evoque is substituted for a Merc GL over the Christmas break **Did you know?** The Evoque is just 10cm shorter than the original 'Classic' Range Rover



FORD ESCORT RS2000 by Henry Catchpole

Features editor

This month: Rally prep is continued with perspex windows installed Did you know? In Australia the RS2000 had a 2-litre Cortina engine instead of the Pinto. It was also available as a four-door



RENAULT TWINGO 133 by Ian Eveleigh

Production editor

This month: The little RS gets to grips with greasy roads
Did you know? The Renaultsport
Twingo's exhaust manifold is so complex its designers nicknamed it 'the pack of noodles'



VAUXHALL ASTRA VXR by Jethro Bovingdon

Contributing editor

This month: Bovingdon takes over the running of our hot Astra

Did you know? The mk2 Astra VXR has more torque than a Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale



AUDI RS4 AVANT by Dean Smith

Staff photographer

This month: Smith tries a courtesy RS4 on bigger wheels Did you know? The 'wavy' edges of the RS4's brake discs help to shave 3kg off the car's 1.8-ton mass



JAGUAR XKR-S by Richard Meaden

Contributing editor

This month: Winter rubber plus 542bhp equals fun

Did you know? The XKR-S has exactly the same power output as the legendary Jaguar XJ220 supercar



ALFA ROMEO GIULIETTA by Rob Gould

Art director

This month: 232bhp Italian Did you know? The Cloverleaf badge worn by fast Alfas is a nod to Alfa racer Ugo Sivocci, who used to carry a four-leaf clover for luck



NISSAN GT-R by David Yu

Contributor

This month: Stealthzilla gets a long-awaited power boost Did you know? The UK list price of the R35 GT-R has risen by nearly 40 per cent since its launch in April 2009, from £53,490 to £74,490



MAZDA MX-5 MK2 by Peter Tomalin

Contributing editor

This month: War is declared on Did vou know? There have so far been 36 MX-5 special editions. The Euphonic, of which Tomalin's is an example, was the 29th



NISSAN NAVARA by Sam Riley

Film-maker

This month: Riley identifies why Nissan's pickup is a popular choice Did you know? The Outlaw V6 diesel Navara can get to 62mph quicker than a Fiat Panda 100HP



FERRARI 458 ITALIA by Simon George

Contributor

This month: Massive potholes earn George's ire

Did you know? The 458 was the first mainstream Ferrari not to be offered with that famous chrome 'open-gate' manual gearshift



RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS by Stephen Dobie

Staff writer

This month: Classic hatch's nower steeering gives cause for concern Did you know? The Renault Clio Williams was a safety car at the 1996 Argentinian Grand Prix. It had a busy race, too!



FERRARI F50 by 'SSO'

Contributor



This month: Secret Sunercar Owner introduces his extensive garage Did vou know? Back in evo 064 (Feb 2004) we named the F50 as our favourite Ferrari supercar, beating the 288 GTO, F40 and even the Enzo



Also on the evo fleet: Alfa Romeo Mito, Lamborghini Countach, Lotus Elan, Range Rover, Maserati GranTurismo, BMW 1502, Mercedes 190E Cosworth, Peugeot 106 Rallye, BMW E30 '335i', Lamborghini Murciélago, Aston Martin DBS, Jaguar XJR-15, Ferrari 430 Scuderia. Coming soon: BMW M135i, Hyundai Veloster Turbo







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A sleek Italian five-door has arrived in the evo car park. Our new art director gives his first impressions

SO, HERE I AM SITTING
in the newest addition to the
evo fleet – the 232bhp, 251b ft
Alfa Giulietta Cloverleaf. The
Quadrifoglio Verde badges,

metal door-mirror casings, hidden rear door handles and the exotic-sounding labels on the gauges (*benzina*, *acqua*, *giri*...) are all playing their part in convincing me that, happily, I'm not sitting in another Golf or Astra clone.

But when I turn the ignition and listen to the quiet idle of the turbocharged 1742cc fourcylinder engine, I can't help but feel slightly... disappointed. After all, this is the model that

Driver's log

Date acquired December 2012 Total mileage 4023
Mileage this month 975 Costs this month £0
mpg this month 27.3

replaces the old 147 GTA and its fabulous-sounding 3.2-litre V6. But times are changing, and manufacturers are downsizing to satisfy increasingly stringent emissions legislation and provide more efficient engines.

Thankfully, first impressions are deceptive. This car boasts a top speed of 150mph and a 0-62mph time of 6.8sec – only half a second slower than the GTA – which isn't bad when

you consider the lack of cylinders. It also made me briefly wonder if there was a turbo under the bonnet at all, such is the low-down torque and flat, un-turbo-like pick-up. Above 3500rpm it gets even more interesting, but then the rev limiter kicks in just before 6000 to kill the fun. Frustrating to say the least...

The Cloverleaf costs £25,520 basic, and our car has metallic paint (£510), a Bose sound system (£820) and satnav (£1230), bringing the total to £28,080. The standard 18in alloys look great but can give the car a harsh ride, although this is only really noticeable on B-roads, where it's prone to getting a bit bangy and crashy.





Above: Giulietta's ride can seem a little harsh on rougher B-roads. **Below:** hidden door-handles at the rear; 18in rims carry sporty 225/40 tyres; six-speed manual gearbox can take the Cloverleaf to a 150mph top speed







'Who buys an Alfa Romeo to drive it sedately? Select Dynamic mode and the car's character changes massively'

The manual gearshift is OK, but not as slick or as quick as I'd hoped for, and a few times I've found myself not changing down for a corner in case I fluff the shift. It goes without saying that the pedals are offset in the usual Alfa fashion, which makes it difficult to rest your left foot on long journeys. But beyond those very slight criticisms, there are no major problems.

The Giulietta comes with Alfa's 'DNA' selector, allowing you to choose between Dynamic, Normal and All-Weather driving modes. In Normal it's quite nippy; not hugely fast, but nicely useable in everyday driving conditions. But who buys an Alfa Romeo to drive it sedately? Select Dynamic and the car's

character changes massively – far more than I was expecting, in fact. The exhaust note is more guttural, the throttle response sharper, the brakes more sensitive and the steering nicely weighted (the system has the motor on the rack instead of the column, which means less friction and inertia). The result is a much more natural steering feel, which I like. A lot. So once it's set to Dynamic, it tends to stay there.

The Giulietta wouldn't be an Alfa if it didn't come with dreadful fuel consumption figures, and this car fits the stereotype. In fact, it's ridiculously thirsty for a 1.7-litre petrol. The official combined average states 37.2mpg. Oh how I laughed when I found out that in the real world I was barely getting 25... Despite this, the prospect of driving like a granny with the cruise-control set at 55mph for my daily commutes is out of the question.

Encouragingly, I've found myself wanting to get back in the car at every available opportunity. The Giulietta is a grower, and I'm going to have a lot of fun driving it, which is, of course, what it's all about.

Rob Gould (@RobGould72)





Top: soft bags were squeezed in for ski trip. **Below:** white stuff was no match for Ferrari 4wd





YEP, I'VE JUST BOUGHT another Lamborghini; one with four seats, a howling V12 and the red line set at 8000rpm. It's a 1971

Espada S2, so it came with lovely magnesium wheels as standard and, on my £46,000 example, a full-length moon roof that was fitted sometime in the '70s. I love cars from this period because car designers back then were free to pen whatever they wanted, with no interfering legislation to rein in their imagination – as you can see from the 'bold' exterior styling of the Espada.

It arrived just before Christmas, just as our UK weather turned freakishly wet and horrid, which meant driving it was next to impossible. So it was handy that Ferrari had loaned me an FF for two weeks over Christmas so I could find out what this controversial new Ferrari is like to live with, having ordered one myself a few months back only to later cancel it.

The FF lists at a heady £227,107, but the car you see here comes in at £273,121 thanks to



options including 'Rosso Maranello' triple-layer paint (£11,040), 20in forged rims (£4608), semi-aniline leather for the seats, cabin, headlining and boot (£10,128) and a premium stereo and TV with rear screens (£7872). Eleven grand for paint is a lot, but seeing the FF sitting on the drive, I had to admit it looked stunning.

My first trip in the FF was a late-night dash across Oxfordshire and it didn't start well. Whoever decided it was a good idea to put the indicators, wiper and light controls on a cluttered steering wheel obviously hasn't tried operating them on twisty UK roads at night, or navigated a roundabout and then tried to indicate with half a turn of lock on. If the upsidedown indicators don't annoy, then trying to find the button to dip the headlights certainly will.

But some of my frustration melted away as I exercised the FF's 651bhp engine. How Ferrari created a V12 that's so docile at low revs but with such a rabid top end I don't know, but I'm very glad it did. The seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox does a good job in auto mode too.

The FF is a very different kind of Ferrari, a point rammed home when I decided to test its

Driver's log (Espada)

Date acquired December 2012 Total mileage 74.479 Mileage this month 220 Costs this month £0 mpg this month 11.8

four-wheel-drive system by taking it on a mild off-road excursion around the farm. Having flicked the manettino to 'Ice' the FF was gliding along sodden grass tracks as if it was the most normal thing in the world, only a lack of ground clearance stopping it going where only Land Rovers normally go.

After all the festive grub had been polished off, it was time to load up for the FF's ultimate challenge: a family ski trip to France. I'd banned hard bags to help packing but it was still a proper squeeze fitting in luggage for four people. With 750 miles to cover in a day, an early start was a given and once we arrived in France I was pleased to discover the FF had cruise control (called 'Pit Limit') – a great help at stopping you creeping up to car-confiscating speeds.

While the seats hold you in position nicely, 'numb bum' syndrome set in as the hours ticked by thanks to the lack of wriggle room on offer,

especially in the back, so my passengers were relieved to see our hotel up a snow-covered lane 12 hours later. The only other cars parked outside were 4x4s, all on snow tyres and some even sporting chains, but the FF on its Pirelli winters never once put a foot wrong, even when driving on what appeared to be sheet ice.

When we got back to the UK I was sad to see the FF go. It had surprised me with its everyday usability. I wasn't smitten with the FF when I drove it in the summer because I felt the 4wd system diluted the Ferrari experience, but having now driven one in the depths of winter, it starts to make sense. Yes, it's expensive, but then Ferraris have always cost a lot and at least you get a four-year mechanical warranty and seven years of free servicing on all new Ferraris these days (something you certainly don't get on a 42-year-old Espada), which takes some of the sting out of owning one.

Harry Metcalfe (@harrym_evo)



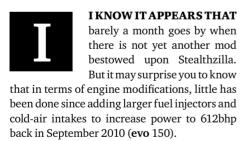
iPAD EXTRAS See more pictures of the FF and Espada in the iPad issue of evo





Nissan GT-R

On the back of extensive handling work, Stealthzilla has had its first power boost in over two years



The safe limit for the GT-R's IHI turbos is about 620bhp; push them any harder and the air they exhale becomes dangerously hot. So the next stage is to replace the turbos with larger ones that can produce more power whilst running within their efficiency range. Plenty of tuners offer them, but in the main they insist on bigger intercoolers, dump valves and inlet pipes to make the most of them. This bumps up the cost appreciably, but thankfully Litchfield spotted a gap in the market and created its Stage 4.5 turbos, which provide a big increase in power but don't overtax the standard intercooler.

Based around the standard turbos, but with larger, custom billet compressor wheels, Stage



Driver's log

Date acquired April 2009 Total mileage 28,323 Mileage this month 574 Costs this month £5946 (Stage 4.5 conversion) mpg this month 12.9

4.5 also requires performance downpipes and higher flow fuel pumps in addition to the exhaust system, bigger injectors and cold-air intakes Stealthzilla was already running. So as well as the turbos, the GT-R has acquired the necessary new fuel pumps, plus some beautiful Milltek cast stainless steel downpipes that were bolted to my existing Akrapovic titanium exhaust system. Iain Litchfield also swapped the remapping platform from Cobb to EcuTek, as he's been instrumental in developing EcuTek's ever-evolving GT-R tuning capabilities.

The whole job only took a couple of days and it was with some trepidation that I drove the 100mile route back from Litchfield's Tewkesbury base in freezing conditions. Low down the rev range there wasn't much difference, but at 3500rpm a snarling scream was unleashed from the new downpipes and a massive shove in the back built up that was sustained up to and beyond the 7k red line. That 'freefall' G-force that a tuned GT-R generates was multiplied, as was the feeling that the rate of acceleration actually increases as the next gear is engaged.

A week later, Iain and I reconvened at Surrey Rolling Road in Chobham for further tweaking of the map at the venue where all Stealthzilla's power measurements have taken place. So what did £5946 buy me? One astonishing run showed a scary 725bhp, but Iain dialled in a safer tune at 717.9bhp, some 105bhp more than the previous high. Worth it? You bet.

David Yu (@Auto_Journals)



Audi RS4 Avant

With our RS4 away having its suspension inspected, Dean has been trying another, subtly different RS4

whilest LXU is at the dealer being examined for a suspected suspension issue (see last month), Audi UK has very kindly arranged for another RS4 as a courtesy car. This one is specced in dark grey with privacy glass and a set of rather flashy 20in rotorstyle alloys. With the bigger wheels fitting the box 'arches more snugly it looks far more menacing and attrcts more attention out on the road than LXU does. That's not to say I'm not a fan of LXU's 'sleeper' appearance, but I don't think it looks worth the £62k price tag on the 19s and wearing silver paint.

Driving the two cars back to back has revealed a couple of interesting points about their characteristics. Firstly, the ride on the 20in wheels is noticeably firmer. Over poorly surfaced roads the car can feel quite unsettled and you seem to feel every small cranny in the surface through the chassis. The turn-in is keener on the 20s though, although this could be because the larger wheels are shod with Pirelli P Zeros rather than Toyo Proxes.

The other characteristic is that both cars share the same knocking noise from the front end – that same knocking noise that is the reason why LXU is at the dealer being stripped right now. Surely two brand new RS4s shouldn't have a knocking noise. **Dean Smith** (@evoDeanSmith)

Driver's log

Date acquired September 2012 Total mileage 5634
Mileage this month 0 Costs this month £0
mpg this month n/a



Vauxhall Astra VXR

The VXR has a new keeper – Jethro Bovingdon – and he's enjoying its wild ways

has left evo. That means many things have changed. The office is quieter, the average height of evo staffers has gone up by 8in and there's less Dire Straits floating through the air. His exit also meant the long-term Astra VXR sat vacant in the car park. I'm the immediate beneficiary of this and I'm not complaining one bit.

I recently stepped out of a VW Golf GTI Edition 35, which was a pretty enticing package but didn't really have the teeth that I look for in a hot hatch, and the quality wasn't as faultless as you'd hope and expect. The Astra has teeth. Sharp ones that jut out at unexpected angles. To say it's a volatile beast in the depths of a British winter is an understatement. The spec sheet says 276bhp and 295lb ft. Your forearms concur.

The cold conditions and rapidly thinning tyres bring out a wilder side to the VXR. The diff gives good traction but when it's finally overwhelmed the front quickly skates away from any apex, and the rear of the car is fearsomely keen to adopt a big angle if you trailbrake or dare to lift mid-corner. It seems to have gone from mild-mannered in the dry to complete madman in the wet. I rather like it. Now all I have to master is pulling away after the school run without lighting up the tyres with that flick-switch throttle...

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon)

Driver's log

Date acquired July 2012 Total mileage 10,549 Mileage this month 272 Costs this month £0 mpg this month 26.5



Ford Escort RS2000

Henry has resumed his efforts to get his Escort rally-ready by fitting safety rule-compliant windows

RIGHT AT THE TOP OF MY list of resolutions for 2012 was to get the Escort rallying in a forest. It's now at the top of my 2013 list.

Anyway, in order to get it ready for scrutineering, one of the things I needed to do was either put some shatter-proof film over the existing windows, or replace them entirely with Perspex ones. Even my slow-witted brain could see the benefits of plastic windows as they weigh about half that of the original glass ones, so I splashed out £359 and bought a kit from www.lexanwindows.com, complete with Clubman slider kits for the driver and passenger windows (which I intend to spend a lot of time looking through).

My friend Phil and I stood contemplating the original glass windows for some time before eventually asking one of the chaps in the workshop what to do. 'You just get a big flat-head screwdriver,' came the reply as I winced visibly, 'and then push the rubber seals down around the edge of the glass until you can pop it out. Be careful not to crack them though... worth a bit of money, they are.' It was surprisingly easy once we knew how and the seals were even in good enough nick to re-use for the Perspex.

At this rate of progress, the car will just about be ready by 2014. ■

Henry Catchpole (@Henry Catchpole)

Driver's log

Date acquired August 2011 Total mileage n/a Mileage this month 0 Costs this month £359 (Perspex windows) mpg this month n/a

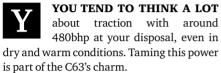


Mercedes C63 AMG Coupe

480bhp, rear-wheel drive, in winter? Nick's ready, thanks to Dunlop **Photography:** Dean Smith

Driver's log

Date acquired April 2011 Total mileage 17,515 Mileage this month 1561 Costs this month £3266.40 (see text) mpg this month 20.6



But winter conjures up traction issues you can't predict. Ice, black ice, slush, heavy rain. Often in the UK they arrive suddenly and when your car isn't ready. This year, I'm ready. This year a set of Dunlop Winter Sport 3D tyres provide the traction - 235/40 R18s on the front and rear, replacing 235/35 19s and 255/30 19s respectively.

Unlike some rivals, Mercedes does not offer a winter tyre programme (i.e. where the dealer swaps your wheels and tyres and stores the unused set until the weather improves), citing a lack of demand. However, if you were to request four alloys and tyres from Mercedes it would cost £3266.40. Yikes.

The Dunlops are proving unusual, if



driven a car on winter tyres before, the first thing you notice on dry or damp roads is an odd feeling of looseness. The softer compound and, in this case, the taller profile necessitated by the inch-smaller wheels contributes to this. The 20mm narrower rear tyres mean that the rear footprint is also considerably smaller now, resulting in urgent and frequent flashes of the TC light.

However, when the roads are wet, ultimate grip and braking performance are greatly improved. It'll be interesting to note how the tyres wear - and I'm finding that they are incredibly sensitive to pressures. A lowering of pressure, even a tiny fall, results in a greater feeling of squirm.

As I write this, England is bracing itself for a storm coming over from Siberia. That'll be a hell of a traction test. More next month. Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

competent companions. If you've never

Range Rover **Evoque**

Mini-SUV relegated to the garage for Duff's festive commute

Driver's log

Date acquired March 2012 Total mileage 15,666 Mileage this month 64 Costs this month £0 mpg this month 34.5

CHRISTMAS COMES BUT once a year - thank God. The logistical challenge of getting the extended family down to Cornwall for the turkey-and-crackers meant the appeal of the three-door Evoque faded in early December. Facing the prospect of making two trips or hiring a trailer for the in-laws - I wussed out and begged a seven-seat Mercedes GL for minibus duties. The Merc might not be able to muster much evoness, but the rising

floodwaters on the journey down made me very glad of its vastness and wading depth.

Back in the Evoque in the new year, the enforced absence gave me a chance to rediscover how different it feels to a big SUV. I think it's the best-handling of the current crop of soft-roaders, because it tries to feel grown-up rather than delivering the overfirm driving experience most manufacturers think buyers want. It's a classy little thing. ■ Mike Duff

'The Twingo very much allows the fun to continue in winter'



AH, WINTER. ALWAYS A good test of a performance car, I think. Is it still fun when the roads are greasy? Is it more fun? Or does it leave

you driving around on tiptoes, worried about paying an embarrassing visit to a nearby verge?

The Twingo, I'm pleased to report, very much allows the fun to continue. Its ContiSportContact 3 tyres (no winter rubber here!) bite impressively on damp tarmac, and standing water holds no fear either. The little Renault may have electric power steering rather than a more feelsome hydraulic set-up, but it's got a nice meaty weight to it that allows you to judge when you're reaching the front



Driver's log

Date acquired August 2012 Total mileage 7663
Mileage this month 1203 Costs this month £2 (wasted petrol) mpg this month 34.2

tyres' limits with relative ease. And even if you do push too hard and encounter understeer in the wet, it's very gentle – so gentle, in fact, that the ESP rarely intervenes.

What will awaken the stability systems is trail braking into a corner. The moment the back end threatens to go light on a wet road, the ABS will fire a warning shot or two. It's unusual to feel a system being quite so active, but I guess it's a by-product of the stiff Cup chassis. Given how alert and alive the 133 feels the rest of the



Above: Twingo's ContiSportContact3s cope admirably with wintry weather. **Left:** iffy fuel filler has led to the occasional spewing of petrol

time, it's a small price to pay, and ultimately it just encourages you to drive tidily, which in such conditions is perhaps no bad thing.

One unexpected but welcome benefit of the colder weather is that it seems to have alleviated a problem I was sometimes having when putting fuel in the car. At some pumps the nozzle would continually click off, even under the lightest of pressure on the trigger. That's no longer an issue. When the fuel wasn't being cut off, it would often do the opposite and *not* shut off when the tank reached full, causing fuel to spew out of the filler neck (right next to the potentially hot rear brake disc!) if you didn't ease off the pressure in anticipation. Needless to say, I haven't felt the need to test if this behaviour has changed with the weather...

But the best thing about the Twingo in winter? It looks good dirty. But then red cars usually do. With the UK's roads grimy for so much of the year, it makes me wonder why the current trend for white cars hasn't died yet. In Eveleigh





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GETTING A PROMOTION

is a great way to start the new year. In my case it was getting promoted to the magazine after a year of blogging on the

evo website. For those who have not read my blogs, I am a serial supercar buyer and have been a committed petrolhead for about 30 years now. Over those years I have owned more than a dozen Ferraris, several Jaguars, multiple Alfas, a Mosler, a Koenigsegg, a few Porsches and other assorted rubber-booted fossil-fuel-burning modes of transportation.

In terms of cars of particular interest in the garage, the line-up is currently a Ferrari F50, a Ferrari F40, a Ferrari 430 Scuderia and a Jaguar XJR-15. Of all the cars I have owned and driven to date, my favourite is the F50. It is just in a league apart from the rest. But that's not to take anything away from the other three, as they are all great cars that I thoroughly enjoy owning and driving too.

I have owned both the F40 and F50 for over half a decade now and they are long-term keepers. The Scuderia joined them last April

'Hustling the Scuderia across the Highlands was my 2012 driving highlight'

and has been absolutely brilliant. Hustling it across the Highlands of Scotland last May had to be my 2012 driving highlight.

The Jaguar XJR-15 has held a garage spot for two years now and looks like it also might become a keeper. It is a completely unique supercar as it's basically a road-legal Group C race car. Once you figure out that it needs to be driven like a racer and not a road car, it is a beautiful piece of engineering to spend an hour carving up the countryside in.

I do tend to add and subtract a couple of cars every year. In 2012 the Koenigsegg, a Ferrari 612 Scaglietti, an Audi A8 and a Mosler MT900S all left the garage. All but the Mosler have new owners now. The Mosler is a brilliant drivers' car and on a pure performance basis has to be the bargain of the supercar world, offering

Enzo-type performance for 911 money. The Koenigsegg was completely mad, completely reliable and great to own for a bit. Overall it was a positive experience, despite what my friends said before I bought it. The 612 was also a much better car than I expected; hugely capable and very comfortable, a truly great GT.

For 2013 the plan is to get the Mosler sold and replace it with a left-hand-drive 599 GTB or 599 GTO for use on the Continent. A second addition could follow over the summer as there are several very tempting supercars and hypercars coming out in 2013. I also have a couple of great road trips currently in late-stage planning. The first will likely involve taking the F40 home to Maranello via the Swiss Alps and the second is a return run to Scotland with the Scuderia. With a bit of luck, I might be able to fit a few trackdays in as well. The bag tanks in the F40 are due for replacement, though, which is a significant undertaking. Fortunately it only needs to be done once every ten years.

All in all, 2013 looks like it will be a very busy, fun year. Watch this space for updates.

 $\textbf{\textit{Secret Supercar Owner}} \ (@SupercarOwner)$







Top: the Secret Supercar Owner's current garage - and all of them get used. Above, from left: lesser-spotted XJR-15 dash; iconic high-rise F40 wing; F50's open-gate shift



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BEFORE I WENT FREELANCE last spring, my final manufacturer-supplied long-termer was a diesel Jaguar XF. It was great, but I hankered after an estate version to carry my army of dogs. Well, Jaguar finally got round to making one and I leapt at the chance to try it over Christmas. I'll do a proper write-up on evo.co.uk, but suffice to say it's desirable and thoroughly modern. It does the lugging bit well, feels drum-tight, steers and rides adroitly and looks stunning.

And then it was back to freelance reality. When I bought the MX-5, I'd wanted to replace the gearbox oil, but a steel plate covering the underside of the 'box was bolted to the inner chassis rails. The six bolts were so rusted on that they might as well have been welded into place. Oil, wire brushes, spanners, sockets,

Driver's log

Date acquired April 2012 Total mileage 111,531 Mileage this month 561 Costs this month £68 (gearbox oil change) mpg this month 32.5

bars, hammers and swearing were all deployed to free them – to absolutely no effect.

It's been playing on my mind since, and last month I admitted defeat and asked my local garage to tackle the bolts, Steve and Pete resorting to a blowtorch. They eventually came off without snapping any studs, and the gears are now swimming in fresh Castrol 75W-90. It hasn't, however, improved the notchy shift − especially from cold − so next job is to replace the oil in the turret and check the condition of the rubber boots around the shaft. ■

Peter Tomalin

Nissan Navara

Driver's log

Date acquired July 2012 Total mileage 11,026 Mileage this month 2002 Costs this month £0 mpg this month 27.4

DESPITE BEING A COMMON sight on the roads these days, I still get people approaching me at petrol stations, asking what the Navara is like to drive. It's quick, comfortable and practical, so I'm usually keen to sing its praises.

The Nissan does, however, have another appeal. Self-employed buyers can claim the VAT back on the Navara, it being classed as a working commercial vehicle, and customers



can also benefit from reduced company car tax. One of my good mates has just bought the same Outlaw model and so far he seems to love it. He opted for the 'Snugtop' frameless window back cab for his dogs, which keeps the load bay covered and gives the Navara a beefy SUV look. I'm not surprised he's pleased with getting a great all-round workhorse, but the VAT and tax benefits made it a no-brainer. **Sam Riley** (@samgriley)

Renault Clio Williams

Dobie gets back into the hot hatch swing of things, but finds the steering could be a bit slicker



when I've Been Lucky enough to sample the hardest-cored track cars, whatever I've driven home afterwards has always felt like a heaving, rolling blancmange, free of any feedback, for the first dozen miles.

To some extent, the opposite trait affects the Williams I co-own with senior designer Adam Shorrock. I spent my Christmas break in a VW Scirocco BlueMotion, a paragon of composed ride quality, effortless frugality and heated-seat comfort. After two weeks of that, the little Renault felt like a Radical.

The ride jolted, there was a cacophony of rattles and the clutch needed releasing nice and *slo-o-o-ow* to smooth gearchanges and avoid embarrassing stalls. But there was feedback galore...

I've got to admit, it was very uncouth for the first ten minutes. And twice I attempted to slot its shiny blue knob towards a mythical sixth gear. I soon pulled myself together, though, and its rasping soundtrack and wonderfully linear power won me over, feeling a world away from the 'Rocco's tracing paper-thin torque band.

The only sticking point – literally – was that the steering didn't feel as smooth or responsive as I recalled. It's always made a bit of a grinding noise during the first manoeuvre of a journey, too. An upgrade to some Slick 50 power steering fluid is my plan to fix that. ▼

Stephen Dobie (@evoStephenDobie)

Driver's log

Date acquired August 2010 Total mileage 92,476
Mileage this month 250 Costs this month £5.99
(power steering fluid) mpg this month n/a



Jaguar XKR-S Convertible

Meaden's discovered that winter tyres are a revelation when he's got 542bhp at his disposal...

SINCE THE HARSH WINTERS of 2009 and 2010, the subject of winter tyres has been bumped up the driver's agenda. Admittedly it's mainly by motoring journalists with tyre company PRs on the end of the phone offering free sets of grippy rubber, but there's still no doubt anything that avoids Britain being the laughing stock of Europe every time the mercury drops below zero has to be a good thing.

To be honest, I've never actively sought winter tyres for a car. The 520d I ran last year arrived on them and worked very well, but it wasn't exactly a performance fireball. But now I've got 542bhp and several tons of torque to manage via the Jag's overworked rear tyres. I'd noticed it was getting increasingly prickly as average temperatures dropped into single figures, and after a week of frost and ice, I decided enough was enough and did what any self-respecting journalist would do: I phoned Jaguar and asked for some winter tyres...

Part of me loathed the thought of the beefy R-S arriving back on smaller rims, so I was chuffed when it came back rollin' on the same graphite grev 20-inchers, wrapped in Pirelli Sottozeros. At more than £300 per corner they



don't come cheap, but the benefits - even on your average wet, chilly day - are worth it.

Now instead of fighting for traction, snapping sideways out of junctions and shoulder-barging into the DSC with uncomfortable regularity, the Jag has progression and stability. Yes, it still relies heavily on the DSC, but the system catches it sooner and more smoothly, so the transition from grip to slip and back is more consistent and less hairy. As a result it's a much nicer car to drive briskly in less than dry conditions.

The weather's been milder of late, but if winter does have a snowy or icy sting in its tail, the Jag now has a fighting chance of coping. Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Driver's log

Date acquired September 2012 Total mileage 5988 Mileage this month 1772 Costs this month See text mpg this month 18.2



Above: lairy behaviour is more manageable now the XKR-S is fitted with Pirelli Sottozero winter tyres (left)

Ferrari 458 Italia

Driver's log

Date acquired May 2011 Total mileage 31,994 Mileage this month 661 Costs this month £130 (wheel repair) mpg this month 16.0

THERE'S AN ADVERTISEMENT for one particularly fine watch manufacturer that states that you don't actually own its product, you merely look after it for the next generation. I've never been able to work out why, but I've always felt the same way about the 458 Italia. Maybe it's the feeling that Big Brother is constantly watching or that this supercar is about as technically perfect as they come, but it seems almost criminal to levy the slightest negative remark about it. Or maybe I'm being paranoid...

That said, there really isn't a supercar I'd



Above: buckled OZ rim caused by hefty pothole didn't improve George's frosty relations with his local council

prefer to be behind the wheel of through the winter months. The 458 inspires real confidence, for example, in the way it deals with a touch too much right foot in the wrong place. But I still can't shake off the feeling that it is almost Terminator-like in its delivery. It annihilates almost everything on the road yet I sometimes feel like I'm issuing instructions to an automaton devoid of emotion.

But the clever electronics couldn't save me from hitting a pothole with a loud crack the other week. Councils don't figure highly in my book at the best of times, preferring as they do to serve noise abatement orders (costing tens of thousands to defend) for running supercar driving experiences, rather than fixing bloody great holes in the road. The lovely OZ racing rims took the brunt of course, the nearside front rim bent particularly badly. Hey ho, it could have been worse, I suppose.

Simon George (@6gearexperience)

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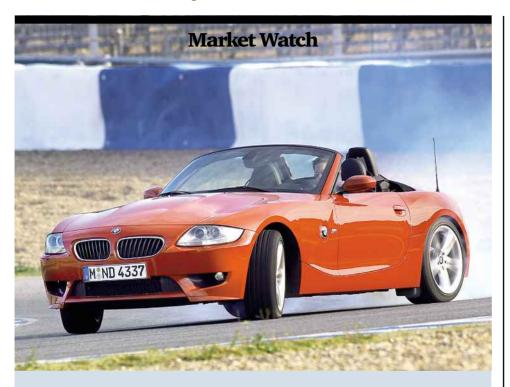


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Market Watch

Insights into the used-car market with Harry Metcalfe



TOP-DOWN VIEW

Spring is just around the corner, so now's the time to buy a convertible for some al fresco excitement this summer



Some car enthusiasts struggle with the notion of owning a convertible but I'm not one of them. Residuals tend to be

stronger, and because they are often a second car, and therefore an emotive purchase, they tend to be easier to sell on. February is a good time to browse through the classifieds too, so here's a selection of what caught my eye.

Kicking off with an imaginary £10,000 budget. I'd have a close look at the BMW Z4 3.0si Sport. I ran one of these for a year and loved the creamy 265bhp straight-six engine, fully automatic roof and all the toys. Up the budget to £12k and the hairy BMW Z4 M 3.2 becomes an option. Running costs are naturally higher but what a great soundtrack you get for your money; just watch the history, as these engines have a habit of letting go.

The Porsche Boxster is another obvious choice and there are plenty available. I prefer the Z4 personally but you can't argue that a £12.000, 2007 Boxster with the 240bhp 2.7-litre flat-six isn't a tempting proposition.

Another convertible bargain has to be the Porsche 996 Turbo Cabriolet, which can now be had for under £25,000. It won't appeal to everybody but it's still a 185mph, 420bhp convertible with bulletproof mechanicals. Or for something classier, what about the Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster? Prices start under £40k for a 4.3-litre, 380bhp, 2007 example, or £50k for the 4.7-litre, 420bhp version.

The only trouble is that £50,000 gets you a Ferrari Spider. Don't ignore the 348 Spider – really nice ones can be bagged for £30,000 - or

you can budget £40,000 and up for either a 355 or 360, or over £60,000 for a 430 Spider.

Let's just hope we get a better summer this year!

Harry Metcalfe Editorial director



Auction Watch

Classic race and rally gems will go under the hammer at Race Retro historic motorsport show

The annual Race Retro auction takes place at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire on February 23, and it's the place to be if you're looking for a classic competition car.

Although road cars are included, the emphasis of this sale has always been race and rally machinery, and this year's sale certainly won't disappoint. The big star of the sale is a 1969 Lola T70 Mk3 B, which was successfully raced early on in its life in various endurance events, eventually going on to appear in the Steve McQueen film Le Mans in 1971 – being used in the all-important crash scene. Rebuilt in the mid-1970s and again in 1998, the T70 was finally restored to its original Valvoline livery in 2004 and comes with a fully fledged letter of authenticity from Lola. Ahead of the sale, the estimate stands at £570-650,000.

Rally fans may be interested in an original Triumph TR7 V8 rally car. Painted in the original works colours, it evokes strong memories of British Leyland/Austin Rover legend Tony Pond, although this particular car was built by rally specialists Wessex Racing in 1976 for privateer David Lambton, who converted to Rover V8 power almost immediately. Laid up in 1982, the car was rebuilt in 2009 and now boasts a freshly overhauled 300bhp engine, close-ratio 'box and Quaife LSD. A turn-key rally car with genuine history, this Triumph offers something a little different for an estimated £40-48,000.

Ranging much higher on the 'legendary' scale is the rally-prepped 1973 Alpine A110, one of the most successful rally cars of its time. The best part is that this example was built in Spain, meaning it will command a lower premium. The estimate is £35-40,000 - a fair chunk less than you would pay for a Dieppe-built car. Matthew Hayward (@octaneMatthew)



Above: Triumph TR7 V8 rally car was left unused for 27 years, but goes under the hammer fully rebuilt



Above: this Alpine A110 rally machine from the 1970s is something of a bargain thanks to where it was built

Trader chat

lain Tyrrell, Cheshire Classic Cars Ltd cheshireclassiccars.co.uk



'We had a busy run up to Christmas, selling two Lamborghini Espadas for £46,000 and then £54,000, an immaculate Ford Escort Cosworth that had only covered 22,000 miles for £27,000 and a 24,000-mile Ferrari 550 for £55,000.

Front-engined Ferraris like the 550 and 575 had a very good year in 2012, as people came to realise what good value they represent at today's values. With older classics, it's

the well-restored iconic cars which are in particular demand: we sold an Aston DB4 GT for good money recently and I've traded several Daytonas for over £250,000 over the last couple of months.

Our current stock includes a rare manual Porsche 928 GT that's up for grabs for £12,995 and a mint, 23,000-mile reardrive Sierra Sapphire RS Cosworth for £15,995. Looking to the future, I expect front-engined V12 cars like the Espada and the 550 to continue to climb in value, making early examples of the Ferrari 599 look good value at under £100,000.





I have decided that it's time to treat myself to a two-seater open-top sports car for use at weekends and the occasional commute. As I only have a budget of £3k I am looking at either a Mazda MX-5 mk2 or a Toyota MR2 mk3. Hike the idea of the MR2 as they're rarer but I'm concerned about the lack of boot space. Which one is best, or are there any alternatives?

Malcolm Gulliver, Bromsgrove

Choosing between those two. I'd go for the MR2, but the lack of boot space is a serious issue if you plan on using it for touring. MX-5s are more plentiful but

their condition and the way they drive varies enormously, so check them out very carefully.

Alternatively, I had a good old trawl and found some other drop-tops within the £3k budget. The Ford StreetKa is rare but you can pick one up for £2500, and you can find late Alfa Spider 2.0 TS and leggy Honda S2000 or CR-X convertibles for around this money too. A tatty FWD Lotus Elan or a Mini Cooper convertible are other possibilities.

But whatever you buy, check it thoroughly for leaks, especially if the car is going to live outside, because there's nothing worse than a convertible that stinks of mouldy old socks...

Just looking

The pick of the classifieds this month

Nissan GT-R £38,995

The Supercar Rooms, Worcestershire www.thesupercarrooms.co.uk 01299 666116

Nissan GT-Rs below £40,000 aren't uncommon, but you'll struggle to find any as powerful as this one. A 2009 Black Edition with 30,000 miles to its name, this car – on sale at The Supercar Rooms – is in stealth-spec grey with the addition of a carbon-wrapped rear spoiler. The interior is black half-leather with red inserts, and it feels and looks as good as new.

Underneath, though, things are wilder, A



Milltek Y-Pipe, EcuTek remap and uprated air filters have helped take power from 478bhp to around 590, while it benefits from the 2012MY GT-R gearbox and launch control software upgrades. Despite a near 25 per cent increase in power, it's as tractable at low speeds as the standard car. Supercar pace for sports car money exactly what the GT-R is famous for.

Stephen Dobie (@evoStephenDobie)

BMW 1-series M Coupe £41.995

Hexagon Moderns, London www.hexagonmoderns.com 0208 444 1111

You probably don't need to be a regular evo reader to know we love the BMW 1M, and if you are, you'll have read our praise month upon month when we racked up 16,000 miles in one as a long-termer.

Why is it so good? It's fun yet quite challenging to drive fast, its twin-turbo engine is properly punchy and it just looks so pugnacious. Until it ceased production - a limited run of 450 right-hand-drive cars



making it to the UK - it was our favourite M-car on the market.

Hexagon's example is in moody black rather than signature metallic orange, and comes with a full service history and fewer than 3500 miles covered by its one owner from new. And like the scant few other 1Ms we found in the classifieds, it's held its value very well. In fact, it's priced over a grand higher than when new!

Fantasy garage: £50,000 challenge

This month, **evo** designer Will Beaumont had to find something with over 400bhp, an '80s coupe and a sub-1000kg car - all from the classifieds at forsale.evo.uk



Ferrari 456 GT £34,990

The 456 looks so simple and elegant in comparison to modern Ferraris. As this is only a fantasy garage, I'm glad I won't have to worry about the running costs!



Alfa Romeo GTV £3.950

Unfortunately this isn't a GTV6, but thanks to its revvv 2-litre twin-cam and twin side-draft carbs it'll only be the extra power I'll miss and not a fantastic noise too.



Lotus Elise 111S £10.950

To make sure nothing sensible or reliable crept into my fantasy garage, my final choice is a Lotus. I would have preferred a Lotus Cortina, but they're £50k on their own..

Market Watch International

Insights and highlights from the global sports car marketplace



LAMBOS GALORE

Despite numerous purchasing hurdles, Singapore has the highest concentration of Lambos on earth

It's the most expensive place to own a car on the planet (£70k for the Mk7 VW Golf, anyone?), but the appetite for luxury and performance cars in Singapore shows no signs of slowing down.

This is proved by the fact that the local Lamborghini importer is officially recognised as the world's number one dealer for the Sant'Agata marque. Per square mile, Singapore has the highest concentration of Lamborghinis on earth, with over 300 units serving 276 square miles as of last year. This is why Singapore was chosen for last November's world premiere of the Aventador Roadster by Lamborghini CEO Stephan Winkelmann.

In Singapore, the Aventador Roadster is listed at around S\$1.6million (c£810,600), roughly an 11 per cent premium over the coupe. Despite the eye-watering price tag, no fewer than eight local customers have already placed deposits for the roofless supercar.

Lambo's Modenese rival Ferrari is also enjoying similar success in Singapore; its official importer. Ital Auto, has reportedly received more than 30 orders for the S\$1.16 million (£587,000) F12 Berlinetta, which should fill delivery allocations well into 2014.

A perennial lack of land area is the main explanation for the many duties and other financial mechanisms placed on cars in order to limit congestion. The growth of new cars is managed by a system known as the Certificate of Entitlement (COE). In order for a car to be registered, it must be accompanied by a COE. which the owner bids for. Each COE allows the owner to keep his car on the road for ten years. after which the owner either bids for another certificate, exports it to another right-handdrive market or consigns it to the scrapyard.

The number of these certificates allocated is determined by the number of cars scrapped or deregistered each year. If fewer owners get rid of their cars, then fewer COEs are released the following year. COEs currently go for between S\$81.889 and S\$96.000 (c£41.500 and £48.600 respectively) depending on the engine size of the car - all cars falling into a 'small' or 'big' category depending on whether engine size is below or above 1600cc. But as more owners are keeping their cars longer because the new car prices are out of their reach, COE prices are escalating as fewer are becoming available

While the cost of the COE effectively doubles or triples prices of entry-level cars, a current 'big' price of S\$96k represents less than a 10

per cent hike in the price of a million dollar-plus Lamborghini, which is why folks here would rather spend their money on luxury cars than on runabouts.

Sheldon Trollope Editor, evo Singapore



The pick of the classifieds from around the world

Porsche 924 GTS

€80,000 (£66,500)

Freisinger Motorsport (Germany) www.freisinger-motorsport.de +49 721 554 926



The ultimate road-legal Porsche 924, only 59 GTSs were made, of which just 15 were Clubsports like this car.

Upgrades to this 1982 model included plastic wings. aluminium doors and bonnet, thinner glass, larger intercooler and fuel tank, revised suspension, a limitedslip differential and brakes from the 911 Turbo. A roll-cage and sports seats were fitted as standard.

Factory upgraded to 300bhp, this GTS has dry-sump lubrication, perspex side windows, Schroth harnesses and has travelled just 12,100 miles.

Don't discount the 924 - Derek Bell owns a GTS and rates it as one of the best road cars he's ever driven.

Dodge Viper CC GT2 €115.000 (£95.500) Art and Revs (Luxembourg)

www.artandrevs.com +352 661 700 777



Designed in the US, converted from GT3 to GT2 spec by the French (Oreca), raced by Italians (Racing Box), then sold to a Dutch team - this Viper is about as international as it gets. Just two were built – and at just €115,000, this one looks great value for what could be the mightiest trackday toy ever.

evo editor Nick Trott, who tested a Viper Competition Coupe at Donington, maintains that it was a friendly car to drive: 'Once the huge slicks had got up to temperature it was quite docile, despite the monstrous torque. And the noise it made was sensational – you got a full blast from the side-exit pipe. A really gnarly, angry noise.'

Sales, Service and Restoration. +44 (0)1244 529500



1972 Ferrari Daytona 365 GTB/4 Price: £325,000 | Mileage: 6,400

An exceptionally accurate Spyder conversion. Fully documented history from new, with only 6,400 miles recorded. Recently overhauled by marque specialists and now fully set-up by ourselves. Simply sensational to drive and in stunning condition throughout.



Completed 2008 The MPH Jaguar Price: £134,995 | Mileage: 2,456

Commissioned and built in 2008 as a one off project by one of the World's leading Jaguar specialists. Handfabricated alloy body, and chassis by Reynard. 300BHP 4.7 litre blueprinted XK engine. Seriously fast – offered for less than the replacement manufacture price.



1989 Ferrari Testarossa Price: £94,995 | Mileage: 626

This superb LHD example is finished in Rosso Corsa with light tan leather interior. Part of a private collection, maintained but not driven, for 21 years. It has covered a total of only 1006 km (626 miles) from new. Just as it left the factory.



1975 Bentley Corniche Convertible Price: £64,995 | Mileage: 76,000

An extremely elegant and rare car – one of only 77 genuine Bentley versions produced between 1970 and 1976. 76,000 miles from new with full history. Superb condition and supplied with special order tonneau.



1963 Porsche 356 Price: POA I Mileage: 64,000

This stunning matching numbers LHD 356 is the especially rare Super 90 high performance version. One Californian lady owner from new until 2007, and imported to the UK in 2011. Restored by ourselves in its original colour of ruby red with black interior. A great looking car which drives exceptionally well.



1987 Ford Sierra RS Cosworth Price: £23,995 | Mileage: 54,000

This stunning example is a multiple concours winner, most recently at Tatton Park 2012. It has covered only 54,000 miles from new, confirmed by the history file which includes previous MOTs and a fully stamped service book; original brochures and sales documentation.



1985 Arrows BMW Price: £89,950 | Mileage: N/A

Driven in period by Berger, Boutsen, Surer and Danner then restored and used by the factory and subsequent owners as a show car. Complete with a show engine (installed) and a freshly rebuilt correct BMW turbo engine which is ready to fit. In very good condition throughout. Complete with a small spares package.



1963 Merlyn MK4A Price: £87,000 | Mileage: N/A

Very competitive and stunning looking twin cam engined sports racer. Three Goodwood Revival appearances in recent years. Complete with full history and current HTP papers. Excellent spares availability.



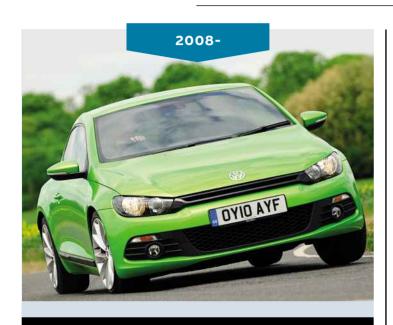
1972 Brabham BT38 Price: £65,000 | Mileage: N/A

Professionally maintained and completely rebuilt with no expense spared at a cost in excess of £40,000. Fresh Langford 2.0 alloy blocked BDG on carbs. Absolutely on the button and ready to race. Complete with an excellent spares package.



Buying Guide

Volkswagen Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI and R





CHECKPOINTS

Above: engines are proving reliable; interior should feel solid; check electrics on '08 and '09 cars in particular; inspect wheels for signs of impact damage

Overview

Quick, stylish, practical and reliable, the Scirocco makes perfect sense as a used buy

Words: Peter Tomalin

The first hint that VW was about to revive the Scirocco name, not seen on a new car since the early 1990s, came with the IROC concept at the 2006 Paris show ('iroc' from the middle four letters of Scirocco). IROC introduced the idea of a long-roofed, hatch-style coupe, the extended roofline giving it extra interior space and practicality compared with rivals. And in late 2008 it made it into production with only small visible changes.

Loosely based on the mk5 Golf GTI, it was longer, wider and almost 100mm lower, with a wider track front and rear, and retuned suspension. There are diesels and 'twin-charged' 1.4s, but we're focusing here on the 2-litre turbo petrol versions, and by far the most numerous is the regular GT 2.0 TSI. This had 197bhp at launch, rising to 207bhp from November 2009, and came with a six-speed manual gearbox, with the popular option of a six-speed DSG paddle-shifter.

Quicker still was the 261bhp R model, launched in January 2010. As well as the extra power, it had lowered and stiffened suspension, the XDS electronic diff, revised ACC (Active Chassis Control) damping and a whole raft of cosmetic enhancements (for the full spec and year-by-year changes go to sciroccocentral.co.uk/roccopedia). The R was genuinely rapid and, just like the GT, when you weren't in the mood it was a refined and comfortable mile-muncher too.

Almost five years on, both are proving well-built, and they're developing an enthusiastic following too, with two knowledgeable online communities. You'll be lucky to find any real bargains, but there's a good reason why the Scirocco holds its value. It's a damned good car.

What to look for

Engine

Our guide here is Chris Gaskell, technical advisor at SciroccoCentral.co.uk. The first thing to know is that you're actually looking at two different engines here – the R uses an earlier unit from the mk5 Golf GTI. The good news is neither has so far shown any major recurring faults.

The R unit is often tuned – 300bhp can be achieved with a simple remap – but that makes it even more critical to check the service history carefully. It's worth checking anyway – Chris notes that VW dealers often show postwarranty 'goodwill' if a car has a full Volkswagen history. (VW UK also offers extensions to the original three-year warranty.) The R engine has a cambelt, which needs changing at five years; the GT's cams are chain-driven.

Transmission

Both manual and DSG are proving robust, but the DSG does need its oil and filter replacing every 40,000 miles. Early GTs with DSG had a recall to address the transmission drive disabling, and early DSGs can also suffer a juddering clutch, due to wear in the Mechatronics controller. With the manual 'box, check that second engages easily and that the clutch is quiet in operation – some exhibit a 'mooing' sound! Tuning the engine to 300bhp+ can result in the standard clutch slipping, but generally it's long-lived.

Suspension, steering, brakes

Check the switchable suspension is working in all three modes, and visually check the dampers (particularly the rear) for oil leaks. Tyre wear should be even — any uneven wear points to badly set-up suspension, possibly accident damage. The electrically assisted steering is proving reliable, though occasionally noisy in low-speed manoeuvring. The front hubs can suffer damage through kerbing or driving over potholes, so examine both edges of the wheels for signs of impacts. The brakes are more than adequate for road use, but some owners uprate them for trackdays.

Body, interior, electrics

The Scirocco 3 is too new to have any serious corrosion issues, so if you do find rust it could point to poorly repaired crash damage. Cars built between August '08 and May '09 suffered from rear hatch strut mounts rusting, but these should have been replaced. Colour matching of the plastic bumpers and rear spoiler can be poor, particularly with Salsa Red and Candy White. Light units, both front and rear, can mist-up. Check all the electrics, particularly on 2008/2009 cars, which are more prone to the odd glitch.

What we said

Scirocco 2.0 TSI, Oct 2008



Above: Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI impressed in its first evo group test back in 2008

'IT FEELS properly well sorted from the word go, the low-slung driving position and wide track instantly reassuring, the 2-litre turbo engine and DSG gearbox snappy and alert. But what makes the biggest initial impression is the ride quality. The adaptive dampers have three modes - Comfort, Normal and Sport and they do exactly what they promise. In Sport the Scirocco is firm and feelsome, but has enough give not to be thrown around on rough roads.' (evo 122)

Scirocco R, eCoty 2009

'Smoothly rapid is what the Scirocco R does best. It rides so well... it doesn't even bother to tell you about the bumps the suspension is dealing with. You take clean lines through every corner, slicing the exact path you intend. It feels every bit as quick as the Focus RS, no doubt helped by the DSG 'box, which barely pauses for breath. It's a hugely impressive car... but it is also strangely unmemorable to drive. You use the huge grip (but don't go beyond it), extend the brilliantly punchy engine and travel very quickly.' (evo 138)



Above: the Viper Green paint first seen on the IROC concept made it to production



Above: 'R' model's body tweaks include a deeper, more aggressive front bumper

'I bought one' Lee Chung

1 ORDERED my Scirocco R in October 2009 through Vindis Bedford. At the time I was driving a mk5 Golf GTI. The car arrived in February 2010 and it's now done 34,000 miles.

The engine has been fantastic and trouble-free. It started to free up very nicely after about 5000 miles and its first trip to the Nürburgring! I've had no excess oil usage. It's had a remap and is currently producing 330bhp and 340lb ft. It's got a manual gearbox – still good after three years, with no play, though I did have the clutch upgraded.

The R's standard brakes are excellent for the road, though maybe slightly over-servoed at the top of the pedal. I've upgraded to an AP Racing four-piston set-up with 330mm discs - the standard brakes can start to fade with heavy track

work. I've also had my car lowered with H&R springs. Tyre wear has been good considering the power increase and the trackdays – it's currently on its third set.

The R's standard xenon headlights are excellent, though you do get flashed by drivers thinking you're on full beam. One negative is the frameless side windows, which freeze to the rubber seal in really cold weather.'

In the classifieds



2008 GT 2.0 TSI

- 41,700 miles Red
- ➡ Tinted glass ➡ Manual gearbox
- ACC, ESP, ASR, etc.
- www.bristolstreet.co.uk

£12.795



2009 GT 2.0 TSI

- 37.000 miles Red DSG
- Full leather trim
- Panoramic sunroof
- www.prestige-motorsdirect.co.uk

£13.940



2011 R

- 22,206 miles Candy White
- DSG 19in alloys
- Cloth seats ■ www.vindisgroup.com

£21.990



2011 R

- 7201 miles Polar Silver
- **■** DSG **■** 19in alloys
- Alcantara/leather trim ■ www.stratstone.com

£24.286

DATA

Specifications

2009 GT 2.0 TSI (R version in brackets)

- Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
- Max power 197bhp @ 5100rpm (261bhp @ 6000rpm)
- Max torque 206lb ft @ 1700-5000rpm (258lb ft @ 2500-5000rpm)
- Transmission Six-speed manual/ six-speed DSG optional
- **₩eight** 1298kg (1352kg)
- Power-to-weight 154bhp/ton (196bhp/ton)
- **0-60mph** 6.2sec (5.8sec)
- **Top speed** 145mph (155mph)
- **☐** Price when new £20,940 (£26,945)

Parts prices

(Parts prices for GT 2.0 TSI, prices from Vindis VW Cambridge. Tyre prices from blackcircles.com.
Prices include VAT but not fitting)

- **Tyres (each)** £138.59
- (Dunlop SP Sport Maxx RT)
- Front pads (set) £64.96
- ☐ Front discs (pair) £107.44 Front damper £169.56
- **Exhaust (cat-back)** £544.88
- **➡ Clutch** £263.83 (exchange)
- Oil filter £12.74
- Air filter £17.86
- **Set of spark plugs** £58.32

Servicing

(Prices for GT 2.0 TSI, from Vindis VW Cambridge, including VAT at 20 per cent)

■ Minor service

(12 months/10,000 miles) £149

■ Major service

(24 months/20,000 miles) £299

■ DSG transmission service (40.000 miles) £179

What to pay

£10k is the entry point for early, high-mileage GTs. There's a wide choice of average-milers from around £12k, rising to £14-15k for a low-mile '09 car or an average-miles 2010 example. The rarer R starts at £20k. Value-adding options include DSG, leather, parking sensors, and hi-fi/nav with voice control.

The rivals

Audi TT 2.0 TFSI

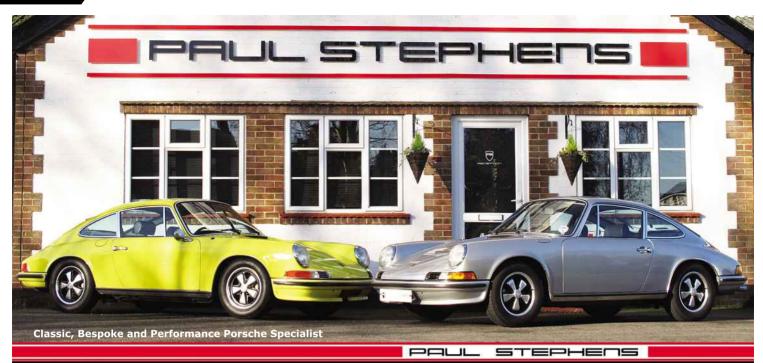
With a very similar mechanical package. the ubiquitous TT is the obvious perhaps too obvious - Scirocco rival.

Mazda RX-8

Rotary engine, rear drive and a really rather good chassis. A tempting proposition – if you can afford its thirst.

BMW 130i M Sport

Brilliant 261bhp straight-six makes this an appealing Scirocco R alternative.



1961 356B/1600 Cabriolet Black 1972 911 2.8 RSR Evocation Green 1972 911S 2.4 RHD Light Yellow 1973 911E RHD 2 owners Silver 1973 911E RHD Coupe Signal Yellow 1980 911 3.2 SC Lightweight Black 1986 911 3.2 Carrera Manual Low Mileage 1988 911 3.2 Supersport Black 1989 911 3.5 Supersport Turbo Red 1992 911 964 C2 Coupe Choice of 2 1992 911 964 C4 Targa Guards Red 1995 911 993 GT2 RHD Physical Car

1996 911 993 Targa Polar Silver 1998 911 993 Turbo Choice of 2



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11/61 ROLLS-ROYCE GHOST EWB Diamond Black with Seashell Hide. Rear Theatre Configuration. Individual Seats. Picnic Tables. Panorama Sunroof. 20" Alloys. TV Tuner. Huge Spec. 3,200 miles £192,950



08/58 ASTON MARTIN DBS Storm Black with Obsidian Black Semi Aniline Leather and Alcantara. Auto Dimming Rear View Mirror. Piano Black Facia. Contrast Silver Stitching. Satellite Navigation. Bluetooth. **£84,950**



NEW/62 AUDI RS4 AVANT QUATTRO Panther Black Crystal Effect with Black Leather and Rock Grey Piping. Sports Package. 20" Alloys. Panoramic Sunroof. Black Styling Pack. Sound Package. Sat Nav. Huge Spec. Delivery Mileage £69,950

10/60 BENTLEY SUPERSPORTS Granite Metallic with Black Hide/Alcantara with Linen Stitching and Piping. 4 Seat Option. Comfort Seats - electric. Vented Front Wings. Power Boot. Rear View Camera. 20" Smoked Steel Alloys. 1 Owner. UK Supplied. Immaculate Throughout. 11,000 Miles £94,950



12/12 FERRARI CALIFORNIA 30 Nero Daytona with Nero Leather. Handling Speciale Package. Carbon Fibre S/ Wheel and LED's. 20″ Diamond Finish Sport Wheels. Special Stitching In Grigio Chiaro. 1,980 Miles £154,950



98/S FERRARI 550 MARANELLO Blu Tour De France with Crema Leather. Leather Headlining. Electric Seats. CD Changer. Immaculate Condition Throughout. Please Phone For Full Details On This Fantastic Opportunity To Acquire This Low Mileage, Modern Day Classic. 9,000 miles £74,950



2011/11 MASERATI GRANCABRIO AUTO Blu Oceano with Avorio Hide and Navy Blu Stitching. 20" Trident Alloy Wheels. Titanium Painted Brake Calipers. Comfort Front Seats. Bose Premium Sound System. Front and Rear Parking Sensors. 11,300 miles



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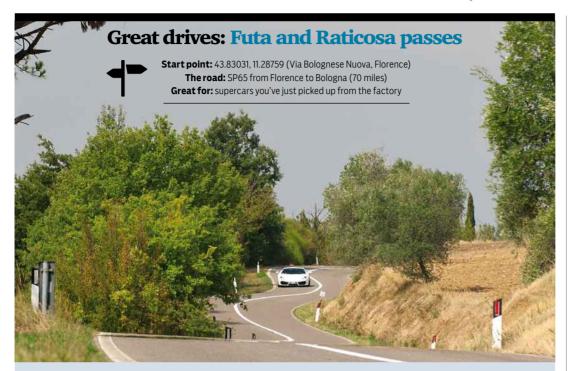
w.k-tecracing.com

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Trips & Travel

The best destinations to visit in your car



STIRLING MOSS AND Denis Jenkinson, faces covered in grime. are two-thirds of the way through their record-breaking 1955 Mille Miglia run. Their Mercedes 300 SLR, number 722, is showing the miles after a couple of minor mishaps but Moss

is still flat out. Jenks notices Stirling glancing at his watch as they begin the Passo della Futa early in the afternoon, and knowing that Moss wants to do the next section inside the hour, he rubs his hands with glee at the thought of seeing Moss in full flight. Stirling would later note in his diary that they in fact took 61 minutes to complete the section. He also recalls seeing Jenks' glee: 'I thought, "Kee-rist!" I'd just been flat-out for about six hours and here was this wonderful little nutcase, wanting to see me go harder still!

If you've never read Denis Jenkinson's account of the 1955 Mille Miglia, read it. It is possibly the greatest piece of motoring journalism ever and will undoubtedly inspire you to go to Italy if you've never been. The Futa and Raticosa passes are the only real stretches of the Mille Miglia that you can still drive as they were in 1955 and they are magnificent. The road, SP65, incessantly twists and turns north from Florence to Bologna, running across the Apennines from Tuscany to Emilia-Romagna and supercar country.

Moss didn't have much time to look at the views, but they are most definitely there; not craggily mountainous like the Alps or Dolomites, but beautiful nonetheless. Numerous evo photo shoots have been carried out on the Raticosa over the years, and also on the SP58, which spears off east at the Chalet Raticosa junction. Having a supercar to pilot over the passes is

undoubtedly preferred, but there are so many tight corners that anything will do. Last time I was there (in a Gallardo LP550-2, see evo 176) we followed a tired-looking '80s Fiat Panda for miles, being driven on its door handles and picking perfect lines. It looked like an absolute hoot.

> **Henry Catchpole** Features editor



The route



♀Start **♀** Finish

Starting from Florence, follow the SP65 north towards Bologna

Where to stay

I recommend Florence with all its wonderful Renaissance architecture. If you would prefer to be out of the hustle and bustle of the city then try Fiesole on the northern outskirts, which has stunning views of the city and its famous Duomo, particularly at sunset. If you're on a really tight budget then try the Villa Europa Camerata, which is a spectacular 15th-century hostel with double rooms from less than €30

Watch out for

As you're in the area, it would be rude not to go and visit the Lamborghini. Ferrari and Pagani factories. If you like motorbikes, the Ducati factory in Bologna also does tours four times each weekday, while the museum is still open on Saturdays. The spectacular Mugello circuit is at the other end of the route

Reader road trip

Runaway marriage

The story started at our home in Maidstone, Kent, for a trip that would first deliver us to Dalhousie Castle near Edinburgh - our wedding venue and base for a few days taking in the fantastic A68 on the way.

The big day arrived and we used our trusty Subaru Impreza WR1 as our wedding car (we did buy it partially for this purpose!). The next day we left for our adventure in the Highlands, moving on to Killin, and then making our way towards the stunning drive through Glen Coe on the A82.

We then stayed in Invergarry, a perfect



start to our trip up the amazing A87 and to Applecross, taking in the many castles and views on the way. The drive to Applecross Bay and the inn was amazing, with a view made even more stunning when we were joined by a gorgeous Aston Martin.

Moving on from Torridon the next day, we drove the A896 and A832 to Inverness and then started the long journey back down south. It was a wedding and honeymoon we will never, ever forget. Thank you Scotland, mother nature, Subaru and Prodrive!

Stephen & Lucie Mayo

Email vour road trip to: henryc@evo.co.uk

Events calendar

FEBRUARY

3 February

Vintage Sports Car Club Driving Tests, Brooklands

www.brooklandsmuseum.com

7-10 February Rally Sweden, Karlstad

www.rallysweden.com

9 February

Wyedean Forest Rally, Chepstow Racecourse

www.wyedeanrally.com

22-24 February

Race Retro, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire www.raceretro.com

24 February

Run What Ya Brung, Santa Pod www.rwvb.com

24 February

Daytona 500, Daytona International Speedway, Florida www.daytonainternationalspeedway.com











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KW Automotive UK Ltd Phone: 0845 021 2549 Email: info@raceroomuk.co.uk



Essentials

This month's best books, games, clothing, garage kit and tuning gear



evo Essentials Top 3: T-shirts

Aston Martin DB4 £17.24 redbubble.com



Aston's style icon. celebrated in this great t-shirt from Red Bubble. Good value too at just under £20.

Ford Sierra Cosworth

£16.00 petrolthreads.co.uk



Dominant racing car of the '80s, in the cult Texaco livery. What's not to like? Petrolthreads at its very best.

Tyrrell 1977 £35.00 gearboxgifts.com



Officially licensed by Ken Tyrrell's estate, this t-shirt comes with Ronnie Peterson sleeve detailing. Very retro, very cool.

Book

DBR9: The **Definitive History**

€450 www.tag-books.com

This huge 300-page coffeetable tome contains everything you could ever want to know about Aston Martin's hugely successful GT racer, which claimed two class victories at Le Mans. There are several transparent and translucent overlays to diagrams of areas of the car, as well as full results of every driver in every race contested by each of the 19 chassis produced. It's expensive, but it would form the centrepiece of any hardcore Aston fan's collection.

Book

Official Formula 1 Season Review 2012

£35 www.amazon.co.uk

2 The full story into the rollercoaster 2012 F1 season hit the shops before Christmas, but there are plenty of places online where you can now bag one for less than the £35 RRP. As well as stunning photography and in-depth results and data, there is a separate section for each of the 20 races, telling the round-by-round story of how Sebastian Vettel beat Fernando Alonso to a third world title.

Performance

Exhaust for Vauxhall Astra VXR

£627.73 www.amdtuning.com

AmD Tuning is putting plenty of emphasis on the Astra of late, having recently announced that it is preparing a racing model that will enter the British Touring Car Championship later this year. This exhaust system, developed jointly with Milltek, offers a 30bhp increase to boost the VXR model to 306bhp.

Tools

Ring RIL2900HV Inspection Lamp

£49.99 www.ringautomotive.co.uk

This specialist inspection lamp has been given a coat of hi-vis paint, in an effort to ensure it doesn't get lost or misplaced. The unit can give four hours of continuous use, and can be fully recharged in four hours using the docking station included.



Sound Engineering



With the finest selection of products, the largest catalogue and a decade of experience, Scuderia Systems can offer you a sports or replacement exhaust for every purpose - whether you want a remote-controlled performance exhaust for your Porsche 911 GT2 or you require a perfectly finished stock replacement exhaust to restore your Ferrari Dino, we will offer you the very best product to finish and perfect your car.











www.ScuderiaCarParts.com

Genuine OEM parts for Ferrari, Lamborghini and all other top marques without the dealer price tags! Full catalogue with parts diagrams.





Essentials

MODEL SPECIAL

This month's top six scale models



Lamborghini Aventador

£3245 Amalgam

The level of detail on this 1:8-scale model is almost obscene, as you'd expect at this price.

Pagani Huayra

£299.99 RRR

Limited to just 50 pieces, BBR has replicated the 2012 Geneva show car in stunning high-contrast

Lexus LFA Nürburgring

£139.99 Autoart

Bright orange with gorgeous carbon detailing, this model of the track-biased LFA Nürburgring really looks fantastic.

Lotus 25

£124.99 Spark

Jim Clark took the 1963 F1 World Championship thanks to the help of the revolutionary Lotus 25.

BMW M1

£59.99 Norev

BMW's first (and so far only) full-on supercar is well detailed by Norev in this 1:18-scale model.

Ferrari 250 GTO

£29.99 Brumm

Our cheapest model here, the legendary 250 GTO is the most expensive in real life (£25million).



Favourite model by Nick Trott

Porsche 935 Le Mans 1976 by Ebbro (c£40)

THIS 1:43 MARTINI 935 IS MY favourite because I met the boss of Ebbro, Makoto Kiya, on a trip to the Nuremberg toy fair in 2009 and he personally gave me this model.

That trip holds special memories as I also interviewed Shunsaku Tamiya, chairman of Tamiya, and thanked him

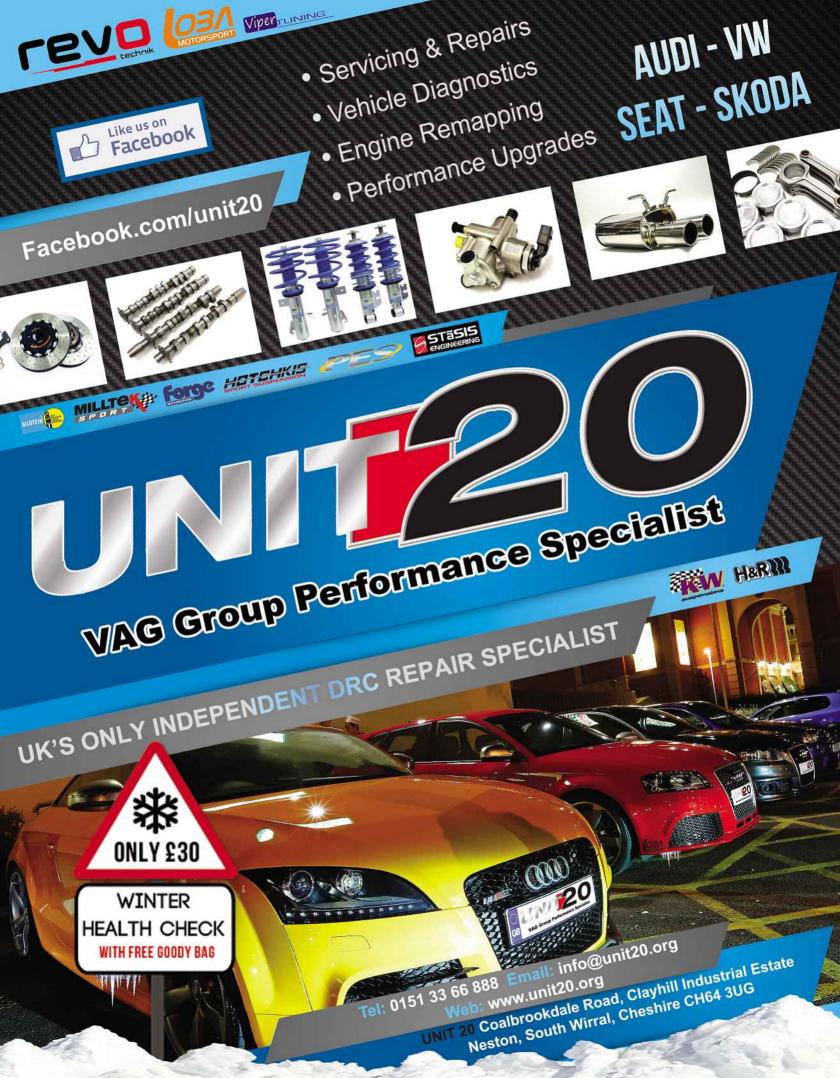
for the joy and education that his R/C cars gave me as a kid. Interestingly, Kiya was a protégé of Tamiya and both remain friends to this day.

Ebbro's models are superbly detailed and great value, plus its catalogue is packed with all sorts of stuff. I've also got a rare 1:43 Toyota 7 – a Can-Am type car built in 1968 and a curio I didn't know existed until I discovered it in the Ebbro catalogue. Take a look at www.ebbro.com or www.hobbyco.net for Tamiya.





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Database

enew entry this month. * = grey import. Entries in italics are for cars no longer on sale. Issue no. is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, F = Feature, R = Road test or group test). You can order back issues where still available – call 0844 844 0039. Price is on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. Weight is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. bhp/ton is the power-to-

Weight is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer: bhp/ton is the power-toweight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. O-60mph and O-100mph figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. CO2 g/km is the official EC figure and EC mpg is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent.

Ratings Thrill-free zone ★ Tepid ★★ Interesting ★★★ Seriously good ★★★★ A truly great car ★★★★

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-10 0mph	Maxmph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Abarth Punto Evo	149 F	£16,852	4/1368	161/5500	184/2250	1155kg	142	7.9	-	132	142	47.1	+ Attractive and fun - Needs the Esseesse power upgrade	****
Abarth 500 Esseesse	129 R	£17,207	4/1368	158/5750	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.2	20.4	131	155	43.5		****
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 F	£18,755	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1145kg	149	7.5	-	136	139	47.1	+ Great MultiAir engine, impressive ride - Not as feisty as we hoped	****
Alfa Romeo Giulietta 1.4 MultiAir	144 D	£20,505	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1290kg	134	7.8	-	135	134	48.7		****
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	£25,510	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2		****
Alfa Romeo 147 2.0 Lusso		'01-'09	4/1970	150/6300	134/3800	1270kg	120	9.3	-	129	-	31.7		****
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	053 F	'03-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0	15.5	153	-	23.3		****
Alfa Romeo 145 Cloverleaf	150 D	'95-'01	4/1970	150/6200 97/6000	138/4000	1200kg	127	8.0	-	129	- 116	32.1		****
Aston Martin Cygnet Audi A1 1.4 TFSI S Line	159 D	£30,995 £21,270	4/1329 4/1390	182/6200	92/4400 184/2000	920kg 1190kg	107	11.8	-	106	116 139	56.5 47.9	+ Necessary - Evil + Audi's Mini rival is an accomplished thing - But not a hugely fun one	***
Audi Al quattro	168 F	£41,020	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1300kg	198	5.6	-	152	- 139	41.9	+ Extreme AWD hatch, 253bhp - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	****
Audi S3	106 P	£31.065	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.6	13.6	155	198	33.2		****
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 F	£39,930	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	212	31.0	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above	****
BMW 125i M Sport	176 D	£26,070	4/1997	218/5000	228/1350	1420kg	156	6.4	-	155	154	42.8		****
BMW M135i	173 D	£29,995	6/2979	316/5800	332/1400	1425kg	225	5.0	-	155	188	35.3	The state of the s	****
BMW 123d M Sport	122 R	'07-'11	4/1995	201/4400	295/2000	1420kg	144	6.5	17.4	148	138	54.3		****
BMW 130i M Sport	106 R	'05-'10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.1	15.3	155	-		+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	****
BMW 325ti Compact	031 D	'01-'05	6/2494	189/6000	181/3500	1480kg	130	7.1	-	147	-		+ Terrific engine, chassis, price - Looks a bit geeky	****
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 F	£7995+	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	103	61.4		****
Citroën C2 GT	064 R	'04-'05	4/1587	108/5750	108/4000	1027kg	107	8.7	-	121	-	-	+ Appealing and affordable homologation special - Inert steering	****
Citroën Saxo VTR	013 R	'97-'03	4/1587	100/5700	100/3500	920kg	110	9.3	-	116	-	36.7	7. 0	****
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	'97-'03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	7.6	22.6	127		34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	****
Citroën DS31.6 THP	142 F	£16,800	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	133	155	42.2		****
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	£23,100	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	146	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - It's six grand more than a Clio Cup	****
Citroën Xsara VTS		'98-'04	4/1997	167/7000	142/4750	1190kg	143	8.0	-	137		33.6	+ Citroën's GTI-6 - Missing one gear and a bit of handling polish	***
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 F	'06-'11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	115	154	43.5	+ Most fun per pound on the market - Optional ESP can't be turned off	****
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£14,500	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	+ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name	***
Ford Sportka SE	084 R	'03-'08	4/1597	94/5500	100/4250	934kg	102	9.5	-	108	-	37.2	+ Big fun in a little package - Could handle even more power	****
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	£14,545	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7		****
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 F	c£16,000	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7		****
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	020 R	'00-'02	4/1596	102/6000	107/4000	976kg	106	10.2	-	113	-	38.2		****
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	'05-'08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	areat reens, according branch	***
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	'08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note	****
Ford Focus 1.6T Zetec S	165 D	£20,695	4/1596	179/5700	199/1900	1333kg	136	7.8	-	138	139	47.1	+ The fastest, keenest Mk3 Focus yet - The Mk1's sparkle is still absent, though	****
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	172 R	£21,995 '10-'11	4/1999	247/5500	265/1750	1362g	184	6.4		154	169 225	-	+ All-round cracking hot hatch. Good value, too - There's a bit of torque-steer	****
Ford Focus RS500 Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	152 F 139 R	10-11	5/2522 5/2522	345/6000 300/6500	339/2500 324/2300	1467kg 1467kg	239 208	5.6 5.9	12.7 14.2	165 163	225	20 5	+ More power and presence than above - Pricey (and all sold!) + Huge performance, highly capable fwd chassis - It could be the last RS	****
Ford Focus ST Mountune (Mk1)	137 R	'08-'11	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	5.8	14.2	155	223	30.3	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS	****
Ford Focus ST (Mk1)	119 R	'05-'10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.7	16.8	150	224		+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	****
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	053 R	'02-'03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	5.9	14.9	144	- 224	30.4	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	****
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 F	'92-'96	4/1993	227/6250	224/3500	1304kg	176	5.8	-	143	-	24.5	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Ultimate trophy for tea leaves	****
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	'97-'02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	8.6	27.6	122	-		+ Everything - Nothing. The 1.4 is worth a look too	****
Ford Racing Puma	016 F	'00-'01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.8	23.2	137	-	34.7		****
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen	144 F	'09-'11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	155	-	-	+ Fantastic on road and track - There'll only be 20, and it's a tad pricey	****
Honda Civic T-R C'ship White	126 D	'09-'10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	146	-	31.0		****
Honda Civic Type-R	102 R	'07-'11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.8	17.5	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	****
Honda Civic Type-R	075 R	'01-'05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	16.9	146	-	31.7		****
Lancia Delta Integrale	011 F	'88-'93	4/1995	210/5750	220/3500	1350kg	158	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	****
Mazda 21.5 Sport	132 F	£12,995	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	****
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	£23,395	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.3	14.5	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy	***
Mercedes-Benz A250 'by AMG'	173 D	£28,755	4/1991	208/5500	258/1200	1445kg	146	6.5	-	149	148	46.3		****
MG ZS 180	035 D	'01-'05	6/2497	175/6500	177/4000	1235kg	144	7.3	-	139	-	29.7	+ Well-sorted chassis, characterful engine - Image: looks like a 45	***
Mini One		£13,460	4/1598	97/6000	113/3000	1070kg	92	10.5	-	116	127	52.3		****
Mini Cooper	167 R	£14,900	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3		****
Mini Cooper S	149 F	£18,180	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	-	142	136	48.7		****
Mini Cooper SD	158 D	£18,870	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7		****
Mini John Cooper Works	154 R	£22,455	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1140kg	185	6.5	-	148	165	39.8		****
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe	164 R	£23,800	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1165kg	181	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	The second secon	****
Mini John Cooper Works GP	178 D	£28,790	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1140kg	192	6.3	10.0	150	165	39.8		****
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk2)	111 F	'07-'08	4/1598	189/6000	199/1750	1130kg	170	7.6	18.0	145	-	- 22.0	+ Cracking hot Mini, until the JCW - Expensive with option packs included	****
Mini Cooper S Works GP Mini Cooper S (Mk1)	144 F 077 R	'06 '02-'06	4/1598 4/1598	215/7100 168/6000	184/4600 155/4000	1090kg 1140kg	200 143	6.5 7.8	19.9	149 135	-	32.8 33.6		****
Mitsubishi Colt Ralliart	132 F	£14,229	4/1598	147/6000	155/4000	1060kg	143	7.4	19.9	135	161	40.9		****
WILSUDISHI CUIL RAIIIAI L	132 F	£14,229	4/ 1408	141/0000	100/0000	loookg	141	1.4		131	101	40.9	+ Price, handling, performance - Its looks are a little odd	****

A NEW YOU

We believe in celebrating individuality. So if you're looking for a hatchback that's a touch less predictable and a lot more 'you', the All-New Volvo V40, now available with 3 years' servicing for £300, could be the perfect choice to start your year.

PERSONAL CONTRACT PURCHASE REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE: V40 D2 ES

On the road price £19,995.00 \$259.00 \$

Fuel consumption for the All-New Volvo V40 range in mpg (I/100km): Urban 25.0 (11.3) – 70.6 (4.0), Extra Urban 47.1 (6.0) – 83.1 (3.4), Combined 35.8 (7.9) – 78.5 (3.6). CO₂ Emissions 185 – 94g/km.



Our Choice Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup. After the mild disappointment of the Clio 197, Renaultsport got the Clio back to its very best with the 200 Cup – a cracking small hot hatch more than capable of chasing down supercars on eCoty 2009 for a top five finish.



Best of the Rest The RS Mégane is the Clio's more mature but still

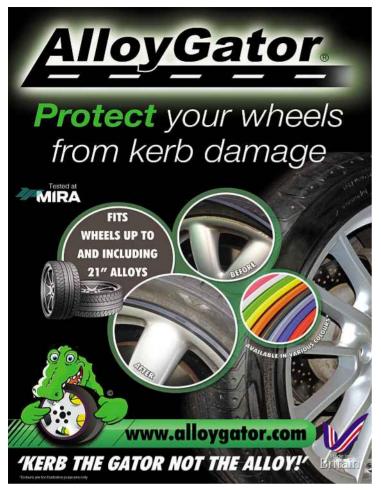
thrilling big brother, while the new Focus ST is great fun – and good value. If you're on a tighter budget, the Renaultsport Twingo 133 Cup and Suzuki's second-gen Swift Sport (left) are belters.

Thrill-free zone ★ Tepid ★★ Interesting ★★★ Seriously good ★★★★ A truly great car ★★★★★

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	php/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-10 0mph	Maxmph	CO2 g/km	ECmpg	evo rating	
Nissan Sunny GTi-R		'92-'93	4/1998	220/6400	197/4800	1269kg	176	6.1		134	_	25.1	+ Nissan's Escort Cossie - Make sure it's a good one	****
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)		'97-'98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	121	-		+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	****
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123		-	118	-		+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential	****
Peugeot 106 GTI 16v	034 R	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128		22.2	127	-	34.9		****
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	095 F	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145			124	-		+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	
Peugeot 306 GTI-6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139		20.1	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more	****
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	141	6.9	19.2	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTI-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours	****
Peugeot 309 GTI	0301	'89-'92	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	985kg	134			124	-	28.2		****
Renaultsport Twingo 133	175 R	£13.565	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.6	-	125	150		+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride	****
Renault 5GT Turbo	123 F	'87-'91	4/1397	120/5750	122/3750	831kg	146		-	120	-	28.4		****
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	154 R	£17,120	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	141	190	34.5		****
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	115 R	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	134	-	33.6	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup	****
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165		17.5	139	-		+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position	****
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	074 D	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168		-	139	-		+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery	****
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	095 F	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168		17.3	140	-	34.9		****
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171		17.7	138		-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	****
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	255/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182		-	153	-	23.0	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	****
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 F	'99-'02	6/2946		221/3750	1335kg	175		17.0	145	-		+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	****
Renault Clio Williams	095 F	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153		20.8	121	-	26.0		****
Renault Mégane GT TCe 180	154 D	£21,690	4/1998	178/5500	222/2250	1320kg	137	7.7	-	139	178	36.7	+ Rides & steers well - Not much cheaper than car below, lacks its sparkle	****
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	173 R	£24,825	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	-	158	190		+ More power than before; chassis still superb - Not a lot	****
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy	170 R	£27,820	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	-	158	190		+ Hot Mégane gets more power and fwd Ring record - A pricey upgrade	****
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	190		+ Fantastic chassispartially obscured by new-found maturity	****
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	157 F	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189		15.1	147	-	J4.4 -	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows	****
Renaultsport Mégane 230 R26	102 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	_	+ Best hot Mégane until the R26.R - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste	****
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	_	/35	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power	****
Renaultsport Mégane 225 Cup	087F	'05-'09	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1345kg	167	6.5	-	147	-	32.1	+ Good value and plentiful - You gotta like big backsides	****
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy	087 F	'0.5	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1355kg	166		17.3	147	-	32.1	+ Mega grip and traction - Steering needs a touch more feel	****
SEAT Ibiza FR 2.0 TDI	144 F	£16,340	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	60.1	+ More fun than the petrol FR, manual 'box option - Almost as pricey as the Cupra	****
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	139 R	£17,905	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1172kg	154	6.9	-	140	148	44.1	+ Funky (especially in Bocanegra trim), economical - The FR's a better drive	****
SEAT Leon FR+	163 D	£21,940	4/1984	208/5300	206/1700	1334kg	158		-	145	170	38.7	+ As quick as a Golf GTI 5dr but £4K cheaper - Misses the VW's completeness	****
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	£25,995	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193		14.0	155	190	34.9	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches	****
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175		-	153	190		+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R	****
SEAT Leon Cupra 20v T	020 R	'00-'06	4/1781	178/5500	173/5000	1322kg	137			142	190		+ Terrific value - Lacks sparkle of very best hatches	****
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	020 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164		-	150	-	32.1	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some	****
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	£16,915	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148			139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering	****
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 F	'04-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100		-	127	-	55.4		****
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 F	£20,330	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake callipers?	****
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk1)	032 D	'01-'05	4/1781	178/5500	173/1950	1354kg	135		-	146	-	35.3	+ Remarkably fun and capable - Cabin quality	****
Smart Fortwo Brabus	110 D	£15,000	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126			96	119	54.3		***
Subaru Impreza STI CS400	146 R	£49,995	4/2457	395/5750	400/3950	1505kg	267	4.6	10.7	155	-	34.3	+ Cosworth kudos. Fastest hatch we've tested - Pricey. Lifeless steering	****
Subaru Impreza WRXS	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180		10.7	130	270		+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted	****
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 F	'08-10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219			155	-		+ A bit quicker than the STI but not better	****
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 R	£13.499	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7		121	147	44.1	· .	****
Suzuki Swift Sport	132 R	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1043kg	121	8.9	-	124	165		+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback	
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	£18.900	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165		-	140	172	38.7		****
	164 R	£22,295	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250		176	6.5	-	143	178	30.1	3,1,4 4 3 6 6 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4	****
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring						1166kg		7.8			168	20.2	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But it's over £3K more expensive	****
Vauxhall Astra GTC 1.6T SRi	164 D	£20,215	4/1598	178/5500	169/2200	1393kg	130		-	137		39.2	+ Three-door Scirocco rival looks good, drives well - Pre-VXR petrol engines lack zing	****
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2) Vauxhall Astra VXR	173 R 102 R	£26,995	4/1998 4/1998	276/5500 237/5600	295/2500 236/2400	1475kg	190 173		16.7	155 152	189 221	20.7	+ Better than the car it replaces. Loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision	****
						1393kg							+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision	****
VW Up/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 F 036 D	£7630+ '00-'05	3/999 4/1598	59/5000 125/6500	70/3000 112/3000	854kg 978kg	70 128	14.1 8.3	-	99 127	105	62.8 <i>38.2</i>	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically soundbut predictably slow	****
VW Lupo GTI 6-spd														
VW Polo GTI	154 R	£18,935	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland	****
VW Golf GTD (Mk6)	133 D	£24,650	4/1968	168/4200	258/1750	1329kg	128	8.1	- 16.5	138	134	55.4		****
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	172 R	£25,650	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160		16.5	148	170 189		+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more	****
VW Golf GTI Edition 35	168 F	£27,560	4/1984	232/5500	221/2200	1318kg	179	6.5	-	154		34.9	+ The pick of the Golf hot hatch range - Nearly £28K before a single option	****
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	£31,435	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5		155	199	33.2		****
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	102 R	'05-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150		17.9	145	-	20 /	+ Character and ability: the original GTI is back - Lacking firepower?	****
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165		15.2	155			+ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI	****
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 F	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163		16.3	154	-	24.6		****
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	005.5	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	1111kg	127		-	124	-	28.8		****
VW Golf GTI (Mk1)	095 F	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	_	-	112	- 202		+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one	****
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto	***



Finance subject to status. At participating dealers on vehicles registered by 31st March 2013. At the end of the Personal Contract Purchase there are three options: (i) pay the GFV (Guaranteed Future Value/Optional Final Payment) to own the vehicle; (ii) part exchange the vehicle, where equity is available; or (iii) return the vehicle. Further charges may be made subject to the condition of the vehicle. Deposit shown is higher than the minimum required. A lower deposit will increase the monthly payment. Terms and conditions apply, 18s or over. Guarantee/Indemnity may be required. Volvo Car Credit RH1 1SR. The service offer is applicable to vehicles ordered before 31st March 2013. Services must be carried out at a Volvo Authorised Repairer. Retail offer only. Excludes fleet operators and business users. See volvocars.co.uk for full terms and conditions.









Our Choice

BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the new M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's a brutally fast car, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. It looks cool, too. The best big saloon is now even better.



Best of the RestMercedes' AMG department is on a roll right now: the 6.2-litre C63 is superb as either saloon or estate. likewise the newly turbo'd E63 (left), which is only narrowly shaded by the M5. Lexus's tail-happy IS-F remains a wonderfully alternative choice too.

Ratings Thrill-free zone ★ Tepid ★★ Interesting ★★★ Seriously good ★★★★ A truly great car ★★★★★

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2g/km	ECmpg	evo rating	
Alfa Romeo 156 GTA	045 F	'02-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1410kg	180	6.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ Noise, pace and individuality - Front-drive chassis can't keep up	***
Alpina D3		£31,650	4/1995	211/4000	332/2000	1495kg	143	6.9	-	152	-	52.3	+ Excellent chassis, turbodiesel oomph - Rather narrow powerband	***
Alpina B5 Biturbo	149 D	£75,045	8/4395	500/5500	516/3000	2040kg	265	4.7	-	191	-	-	+ Big performance and top-line luxury - Driver not really involved	***
Alpina B5 S	118 D	'07-'10	8/4398	523/5500	535/4750	1720kg	309	4.5	-	197	-	23.0	+ Quicker and more exclusive than the E60 M5 - Suspension has its limits	****
Alpina B7	134 D	£94,845	8/4395	507/5500	516/3000	2040kg	252	4.5	-	174	-	-	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled	****
Alpina B7	085 R	'05-'08	8/4398	500/5500	516/4250	1950kg	261	4.8	-	186	-	-	+ Alpina makes a mad, bad 7-series - Over-cautious traction control	***
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	£149,995	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	****
Audi A4 2.0 TFSI quattro		£29,170	4/1984	208/4300	258/1500	1535kg	138	6.4	-	153	159	41.5	+ A good match for its German foes - No longer any naturally aspirated options	***
Audi S4 (Mk3)	166 D	£38,665	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1685kg	198	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great powertrain, secure chassis - The new RS4 is here now	***
Audi S4 (Mk2)	073 D	'05-'08	8/4163	339/7000	302/3500	1700kg	206	5.4	-	155	-	-	+ Effortless V8, agile handling - Lacks ultimate finesse of class leaders	***
Audi RS4 Avant (Mk3)	173 D	£54,925	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.6	-	174	249	26.4	+ Looks, value, quality, noise, balance - Harsh ride, unnatural steering	***
Audi RS4 (Mk2)	088 F	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ A leap on for fast Audis, superb engine - Busy under braking	****
Audi RS4 Avant (Mk2)	105 F	'07-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1710kg	246	4.6	-	155	-	20.6	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! - Everyone thinking you're married with kids	****
Audi RS4 (Mk1)	024 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Lacks finesse. Bends wheel rims	***
Audi RS2	101 F	'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1		-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	***
Audi S6	091 D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	***
Audi RS6	124 D	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	-	155	331	20.3	+ Looks and drives better than estate version - M5 still looks tempting	***
Audi RS6 Avant	116 F	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	***
Audi RS6 Avant	052 R	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	***
Audi S7	171 D	£61,695	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	155	225	-	+ Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs £8000 more	***
Audi S8	164 D	£77.900	8/3993	513/5800	479/1700	1945kg	264	4.0	-	155	237	27.7	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still underwhelming to drive	***
Audi S8	088 D	'06-'10	10/5204	444/7000	398/3500	1913kg 1940kg	232	5.1	-	155	- 231	21.1	+ V10 engine, ceramic brakes, fantastic gearbox - Light steering	***

Audi Q7 V12 TDI	124 D	£100,370	12/5934	493/3750	737/1750	2635kg	190	5.1	12.2		298	25.0	+ Undeniably quick, relatively economical - A tad ostentatious	
Bentley Continental Flying Spur	080 D	£133,200	12/5998	552/6100	479/1600	2475kg	226	4.9	-	195	396	16.6	+ Performance, wonderful interior - Have you seen petrol prices?	***
Bentley Continental Flying Spur Speed	141 F	£150,900	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2440kg	250	4.6	-	200	396	16.6	+ 600bhp; surprisingly fun handling - Could look a bit more like it goes	***
Bentley Mulsanne	178F	£225,900	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2585kg	198	5.1	-	184	393	16.7	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	***
Bentley Arnage R	048 F	'02-'08	8/6750	400/4000	616/3250	2585kg	157	6.9	17.1	155	-	13.7	+ Twin-turbo thrust, limo-like ride - It's a bit heavy	***
Bentley Arnage T	096 D	'06-'08	8/6751	500/4200	737/3200	2585kg	196	5.2	-	179	-	14.5	+ Still able to impress - Something of an anachronism	***
BMW 320d	168 F	£28,080	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	120	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new Three is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy	****
BMW 328i	165 D	£29,060	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	***
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	10.7		290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the M3 coupe - No carbon roof	****
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 F	'11-'12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	180	295	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	****
BMW 335i M Sport	134 F	'05-'11	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1535kg	200	5.6	-	155	196	31.0	+ Stunning drivetrain, controlled chassis - Looks a bit steady	***
BMW 330i Sport	028 R	'99-'05	6/2979	231/5900	221/3500	1510kg	153	5.9	17.0		-	30.0	+ Clean, classy and confident - Too smooth for its own good?	***
BMW 528i	164 D	£33,610	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ Four-pot 528 is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	***
BMW 535i SE	141 D	£38,940	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1685kg	182	6.1	-	155	185	34.9	+ New 5-series impresses But only with all the chassis options ticked	***
BMW M5 (F10M)	165 R	£73,040	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	190	232	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	****
BMW M5 Touring (E60)	105 F	'07-'10	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1780kg	285	4.8	-	155	-	19.3	+ Brilliant at ten tenths - Feels slightly clumsy when pottering	****
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	10.4	155	-	19.6	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	****
BMW M5 (E39)	110 F	'99-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	4.9	11.5		-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking	***
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	'92-'96	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	***
BMW M5 (E28)	110 F	'86-'88	6/3453	286/6500	250/4500	1431kg	203	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Two handfuls in the wet	***
BMW X5 xDrive 40d SE		£47,440	6/2993	302/4400	442/1500	2110kg	145	6.6	-	147	198	37.7	+ Handling, comfort, refinement - Looks like a big X3	***
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	£57,880	8/4395	408/5500	442/1750	2190kg	186	5.4	-	155	292	22.6	+ Stunningly good to drive - Will you want to be seen arriving?	***
BMW X6M	134 D	£82,190	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	325	20.3	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	****
BMW 750i	174 D	£71,340	8/4395	449/5500	480/2000	2020kg	226	4.7	-	155	199	-	+ Well specced, impressively refined - Lags far behind the Mercedes S-class	***
Brabus Bullit	119 F	c£330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	***
Cadillac CTS-V	148 F	£72.381	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off	***
Chrysler 300C SRT8	096 D	'06- '11	8/6059	425/6000	420/4800	1965kg	220	4.9	-	168	337	20.2	+ Looks, supple ride, composed chassis - Too much understeer, slow 'box	***
Chrysler 300C 5.7 Hemi	088 D	'05-'08	8/5654	340/5000	387/4000	1910kg	180	6.2	15.1	155	-	23.3	+ Gangster chic - Ginsters suspension	***
Ford Mondeo 2.0T Titanium		£23.045	4/1999	200/6000	221/1750	1581kg	128	7.9	-	144	184	35.8	+ Terrific chassis, sweet engine - People will still want an Audi	***
Ford Mondeo ST220	043 D	'02-'07	6/2967	223/6150	204/4900	1550kg	146	6.8	-	151	-	27.7	+ Muscular engine, fine chassis - Hotted-up repmobile image	***
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4	343.0	'90-'93	4/1993	220/6250	214/3500	1305kg	159	6.6	-	144	-		+ Fast and furious - Try finding a straight one	***
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth		'86-'90	4/1993	204/6000	204/4500	1220kg	169	6.2	-	143	-	24.4	+ Roadgoing Group A racecar - Don't shout about the power output!	***
Honda Civic Type-R*	108 D	'07-'10	4/1998	222/8000	158/6100	1252kg	180	5.9	-	150			+ Screaming engine, razor-sharp chassis - Specialist import only	***
Honda Accord Type-R	012 R	'99-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image	****
Infiniti M37S	150 D	£40.625	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1765kg	182	6.2	17.4	155	235	27.7	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals	****
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Diesel S	145 D	£40,625 £41,855	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1/65kg 1695kg	162		-	155	159		+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals + Sweet handling plus diesel economy - But we'd still have the R	****
		1.41.800	0//99.3	2/1/4000	443/2000	IDYOKE	102	5.9	-	ככו	1.79	47.1	T Sweet Handing Dids diesereconomy - But we'd Shirhave the K	



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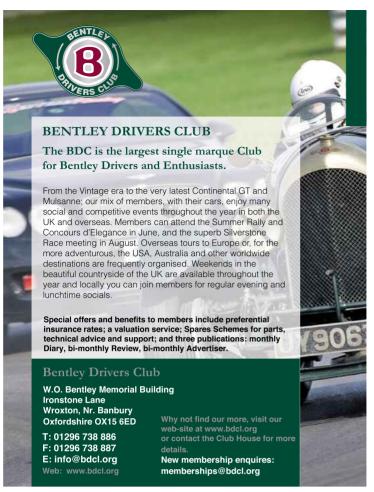
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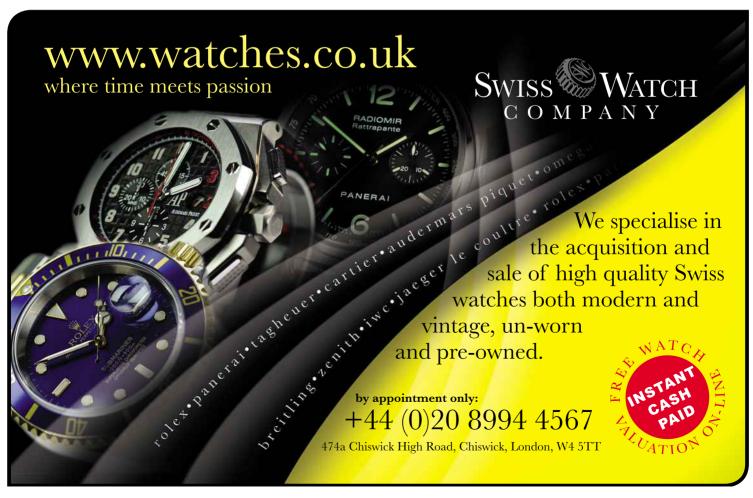
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Ratings

Thrill-free zone ★ Tepid ★★ Interesting ★★★ Seriously good ★★★★ A truly great car ★★★★

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Supercharged	178 D	£47,550	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1695kg	201	5.7	-	155	224	29.4	+ Fast, comfortable, refined - Bland engine, poor economy compared to diesel V6	***
Jaguar XFR	165 R	£65,380	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	10.2	155	270	24.4	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	****
Jaguar S-type R	048 R	'02-'07	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1800kg	226	5.3	-	155	167	22.5	+ Fine dynamics belie olde worlde looks - Auto-only, and no LSD	****
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 diesel Jaguar XJ Supersport	148 D 163 F	£56,260 £91,735	6/2993 8/5000	271/4000 503/6000	442/2000 461/2500	1700kg 1795kg	162 285	6.0 4.7	-	155 155	167 270	46.3	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the Supersport + Superb handling, monster performance - Opinion-dividing looks	****
Jaguar XJR	054 R	'03-'09	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1665kg	244	5.0	-	155	210	23.0	+ Genuine 7-series rival - 2007 facelift didn't help middle-aged image	****
Jaguar XJR 4.0	018 R	'00-'03	8/3996	370/6150	387/3000	1775kg	211	5.6	13.5	155	-	21.9	+ Matchless grace, extraordinary pace - Not much space	****
Lamborghini LM002	016 F	'86-'89	12/5167	450/6800	369/5200	2700kg	169	-	-	130	-	-	+ Craziest 4x4 ever, Countach V12 - Craziest 4x4 ever	****
Lexus IS-F	151 R	£58,350	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too	****
Lotus Carlton	035 F	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out	****
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	£87,400	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	+ Finally, a QP with more bhp - New grille a bit Hannibal Lecter	****
Maserati Q'porte Sport GTS	141 F	£94,350	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	18.0	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	****
Maserati Quattroporte	085 F	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	+ Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode	****
Maserati Q'porte Sport GTS	113 D	'07-'08	8/4244	396/7000	339/4250	1930kg	208	5.5	-	167	-	-	+ Best Quattroporte chassis so far - More power wouldn't go amiss	****
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5 16	151 D	'89-'92	4/2498	197/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	****
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	£56,545	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - M3's just a little better	****
Mercedes-Benz DR520 Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	148 D 088 R	'10-'11 '04-'08	8/6208 8/5439	513/6800 367/5250	479/5000 376/4000	1730kg 1635kg	301 228	4.1 5.2	-	187 155	-	23.7	+ C63 AMG goes feral - Just try finding one: only 20 were made + Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	****
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	165 R	£74,895	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1840kg	286	4.2	-	155	295	28.8	+ New turbo engine doesn't dilute E63 experience - Pricey options	****
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	464/5200	1840kg	280	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brill iant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	****
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8		155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cosseting ride - Speed limits	****
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG		'98-'02	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	1642kg	219	5.5	-	155	-	23.0	+ Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills	****
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	£112,890	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2115kg	257	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car	****
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	098 F	£164,230	12/5980	604/4750	737/2000	2260kg	272	4.4	-	155	334	19.8	+ God's own supersaloon - Unholy price and thirst	****
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 F	£81,800	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1870kg	281	4.4	-	155	231	28.5	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	****
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 F	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	****
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 R	£82,995	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - £85K buys a Boxster and an ML350	****
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£123,115	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.3	-	130	322	-	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	****
Mercedes-Benz G55 AMG	092 F	'04-'12	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	2550kg	190	5.2	-	130	378	17.8	+ Thuggishness, anti-style statement - It's a bit silly	****
MG ZT 260 V8	068 F	'03-'05	8/4601	256/5000	302/4000	1680kg	155	6.5	16.3	155	-	21.5	+ Lovely woofly V8, well-sorted rear-drive chassis - Thirst	****
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	£31,349	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be	***
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	£38,559 '08-'12	4/1998	354/6500 290/6500	363/3500 300/3500	1560kg	230	4.1	-	155 155	328	19.9 27.4	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!	****
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	'08-12	4/1998 4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1560kg 1590kg	189 207	4.7	-	155	246 256	-	+ The Evo grows up - Perhaps just a little too sensible? + Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	****
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	138 F	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ The best Evo X so farabout X grand too much when new	****
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 F	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	****
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	103 F	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	****
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	****
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	****
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder- You tell us	****
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed	****
Mitsubishi Evo VI RS Sprint	011 F	'99	4/1997	330/6500	323/3000	1255kg	267	4.5	11.8	145	-	-	+ Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo - A little uncompromising	****
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen Edition	128 F	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Still one of our favourite Evos. Exclusive, too - Import only	****
Porsche Panamera S	165 R	£78,221	8/4806	394/6500	369/3500	1770kg	226	5.6	-	177	293	22.6	+ Great cabin and typically fine Porsche chassis - Only a mother could love its looks	****
Porsche Panamera GTS	168 D	£90,409	8/4806	430/6700	383/3500	1920kg	228	4.4	-	179	251	26.4	+ Sharper chassis; more urgent and vocal V8 - A BMW M5 is £17K less	****
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£103,807	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	270	24.6	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold	***
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	£122,623	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	***
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2)	173 D	£67,147	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.6	-	162	251	26.4	+ Dynamically the best SUV on sale - At two tons, it's still no sports car	****
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	144 D	£86,896	8/4806	493/6000 494/6000	516/2250	2170kg	231	4.7	- 11 /	173 171	270	24.6 19.0	+ Greener, faster, better - Odd rear styling, numb steering + Appears to defy physics - Still cracks mirrors at 50 paces	****
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk1) Range Rover Evoque Si4	104 F 160 D	'06-'10 £39,995	8/4806 4/1999	237/6000	516/2250 251/1900	2355kg 1670kg	213 144	4.7 7.0	11.4	135	199	19.0	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only	****
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	135 D	£67,295	8/5000	503/6000	461/2000	2590kg	200	5.9	-	140	348	19.0	+ Thumpingly fast and hugely comfortable - It's no Cayenne in the corners	****
Range Rover SDV8	177 F	£78,095	8/4367	334/3500	517/1750	2360kg	144	6.5	-	140	229	32.5	+ Lighter, more capable, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert	****
Range Rover V8 Supercharged	134 D	'09-'12	8/5000	503/6000	461/2000	2710kg	189	5.9	-	140	348	19.0	+ Fast, comfortable, luxurious - Big, heavy, thirsty	****
Rolls-Royce Ghost	140 D	£200,500	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2435kg	235	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ More sporting, more affordable Rolls-Royce - But it still costs £200,500	****
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 F	£285,200	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2550kg	181	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st Century - The roads are barely big enough	****
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	£26,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon is back (now with £8K off) - Blue paint and gold wheels aren't	****
Subaru Impreza WRX STI S206 *	167 D	c£45,000	4/1994	316/6400	318/3200	1470kg	218	4.5	-	155	-	-	+ The best current Impreza - Japan only, and it's sold out there	****
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era	****
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	****
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C*	084 D	'05-'07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	+ Lighter, faster, fiercer - The need for self-restraint	****
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 F	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?	****
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP	073 F	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.2		148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet	****
Subaru STi Type RA Spec C *	067 F	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	4.3		160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the P1 - Lost its throbby flat-four voice	****
Subaru Impreza WR1 Subaru Impreza Turbo	067 R 011 F	'04-'05 '98-'00	4/1994 4/1994	316/5800 215/5600	310/4000 214/4000	1470kg	218 177	5.3 5.4	13.1 14.6	155 144	-	27.2	+ Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 - Spec C is better + Destined for classic status - Thirsty	****
Subaru Impreza Turbo Subaru Impreza P1	067 F	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1235kg 1283kg	219	4.9		150	-	25.0		****
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	007 F	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1283kg 1235kg	195	5.0	14.1	143	-	25.0	+ Orumate oid-snape impreza - Prices renect triis + Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers	****
Subaru Impreza 22B	011 F	'98-'99	4/1994	276/6000	265/3200	1233kg 1270kg	220	5.0		150	-	-	+ On paper, the ultimate - On the road, too uncompromising	****
Subaru Forester STi *	087 F	'05-'08	4/2457	320/5800	330/3500	1270Kg	-	4.8		150+	-	-	+ Undercover fun, gutsy engine - Lacks ultimate edge of an Impreza	****
Vauxhall Insignia VXR	163 F	£33,480	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1810kg	180	5.6	-	155	249	26.6	+ Highly able and very likeable - It's a £33K Vauxhall	****
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	161	-	27.4	+ Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride	****
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	160 F	£49,550	8/6162	425/6000	406/4600	1831kg	236	4.9	-	155	320	20.9	+ Oversteery and characterful. Available as a pick-up too! - Nearly M3 saloon money	***
Vauxhall VXR8 Supercharged	113 R	'07- '11	8/5967	533/6000	568/4400	1831kg	296	4.5	-	180	-	-	+ The Lotus Carlton reinvented - Doesn't have polish of best Europeans	****
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	148 F	'09	8/6162	564/6000	527/4000	1866kg	307	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ A tauter VXR8. Bonkers pace, brilliant noise - Gearchange still rubbish	****
Volvo S60 Polestar	179 D	£40,160	6/2953	324/5250	354/5250	1716kg	192	5.5	-	155	231	28.5	+ Capable of swift, smooth progress - Swift and smooth doesn't mean fun	***
VW Phaeton W12	046 D	'02-'11	12/5998	444/6050	413/2750	2240kg	201	6.1	-	155	348	19.5	+ Techno masterpiece that works - Seventy-eight grand for a VW!	****



Ford Focus RS mk2

Years 2009-2011 Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2521cc, turbo Power 300bhp @ 6500rpm Torque 324lb ft @ 2300-4500rpm **0-60mph** 5.9sec **Top speed** 163mph (claimed)



WHY WOULD YOU?

It's a hot hatch with the visual clout of \boldsymbol{a} Lamborghini. It backs up its looks with stonking performance too, with a heavily reworked version of the Focus ST's turbocharged 2.5-litre in-line five producing 300bhp.

WHAT TO PAY

Early cars with 40k miles start at £18k privately. A well-specced late car can touch £27k at a dealer.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

On early cars, ensure that the recall for the $\,$ $fuelling\,map\,has\,been\,carried\,out, otherwise$ there's a risk of backfires causing the plastic intake plenum to explode. Check the front tyres for excessive wear on their inner edges – a sign $\,$ of misaligned wheels and an unloved car. Rattling windows are tough to fix, so listen carefully on the test drive. (Full guide, evo 175.)



FOR THE DRIVE OF YOUR LIFE.

KW automotive UK Ltd Telephone: 0870 990 7536 Telefax: 0845 021 2548 eMail: info@KWautomotive.co.uk







Our Choice Audi R8 Spyder. The Spyder boasts supercar looks, presence and performance, yet you really could drive one every day. And while the V10-engined car makes the more spine-tingling noise, the lighter and even more agile V8 version gets our vote.



Best of the RestDespite its electrically assisted power steering, the mk3 Porsche Boxster is brilliant, while the Mazda MX-5 is best for budget rear-drive fun. For the ultimate thrills, choose a Caterham R300 or an Ariel Atom, though Morgan's 3 Wheeler (left) is a curious alternative.

Ratings Thrill-free zone ★ Tepid ★★ Interesting ★★★ Seriously good ★★★★ A truly great car ★★★★★

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Maxmph	CO2g/km	ЕСтр	evo rating	
AC MkVI GT	135 D	£93,500	8/6162	437/4800	431/4800	1000kg	444	3.9	-	162	-	-	+ Cobra charm with a modern twist - It's priced against some strong rivals	****
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 R	'09-'11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Good luck trying to buy one	****
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	£29,954	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty	****
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 F	£42,000	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	****
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 F	£55,000	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten being made	****
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 F	£146,699	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150K for an Atom	****
Ariel Atom 2 300 Supercharged	123 R	'03-'09	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	28.0	+ Makes your face ripplelike Clarkson's	****
Ariel Atom 1	015 F	'99-'03	4/1796	125/5500	122/3000	496kg	256	5.6	18.0	115	-	-	+ Amazing styling, huge fun - As practical as a chocolate teapot	****
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 F	£98,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Lacks real teeth	****
Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£110,700	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	****
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster Aston Martin DB9 Volante	175 F 150 D	£150,000 £138,150	12/5935 12/5935	510/6500 470/6000	420/5750 443/5000	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190 190	368	18.2	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	****
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	£190,812	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1815kg 1810kg	263 286	4.0	-	191	388	17.3	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise + A feelgood car pa r excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight	****
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	£37,715	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question; not cheap either	****
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	£47.820	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engineis the best thing about it	****
Audi TT Roadster (Mk1 225bhp)	016 R	'00-'06	4/1781	225/5900	206/2200	1395kg	164	6.9	20.0	150	-	30.4	+ Winner on the King's Road - Trails Boxster on the open road	****
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£45,895	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	+ Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull	****
4 Audi RS5 Cabriolet	179 D	£68,960	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1920kg	235	4.9	-	155	249	26.4	+ Pace, looks, interior, naturally aspirated V8 - Not the last word in fun or involvement	
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1845kg	228	4.9	-	155		-	+ That engine - Wibble wobble, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate	***
Audi R8 Spyder V8	161 R	£96,595	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	186	337	19.6	+ Dynamically outstanding, sounds terrific - V10 sounds even better	****
Audi R8 Spyder V10	152 F	£117,710	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1720kg	306	4.1	-	194	349	19.0	+ Looks and sounds sensational - It's the most expensive Audi ever	****
BAC Mono	176 R	£89,940	4/2261	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers	****
Bentley Continental GTC V8	168 F	£136,250	8/3933	500/6000	487/1700	2470kg	207	4.9	-	187	254	25.9	+ Still arguably the world's best topless GT - Still no sports car	****
Bentley Conti Supersports	147 D	£182,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2395kg	263	3.9	-	202	388	17.3	+ Fast, capable and refined - Coupe does the Supersports thing better	****
Bentley Conti GTC Speed	131 D	'09-'11	12/5998		590/1750	2485kg	245	4.5	-	200	396	17.0	+ A great convertible just got better - Optional carbon brakes a necessity	****
Bentley Azure T	140 D	'09-'11	8/6761	500/4200	738/1800	2695kg	188	5.2	-	179	465	14.5	+ Two-and-a-half-ton sunbed - Cheaper Conti GTC a much better drive	****
BMW Z4 sDrive 20i (Mk2)	164 D	£29,480	4/1997	181/4800	199/1250	1470kg	125	6.8	-	142	159	41.5	+ The Z4 has grown upand got fat	****
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i (Mk2)	130 D	£39,430	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ As above, with more power - Not as much fun as it used to be	****
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	'06-'09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	****
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091R	'06-'09	6/3246		269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	****
BMW M Roadster	002 F	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	****
BMW 335i SE Convertible	102 D	£41,710	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1735kg	177	5.8	-	155	205	32.1	+ Looks good, great to drive, fantastic engine - A bit shaky	****
BMW M3 Convertible (E93) BMW M3 Convertible	119 D 0.35 D	£58,785 '01-'06	8/3999 6/3246	414/8300 338/7900	295/3900 269/5000	1810kg	232 207	5.3	-	155 155	297	22.2 23.3	+ M DCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge	****
BMW M6 Convertible	035 D	'06-'10	10/4999		384/6100	1655kg 1930kg	264	4.8	-	155	352	19.2	+ That engine - Gets the wobbles on British B-roads + Composure, grip, power, comfort - Steering lacks feel at low speed	****
BMW Z8	026 R	'00-10	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	- 332	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	***** ***
Brooke 260 Double R	094 F	£34,995	4/2261	260/7500	200/6100	550kg	480	3.9	-	155+	-	-	+ Fast, dynamic, well built - No roof, looks not for everyone	****
Caterham 7 Classic	068 F	£16,650	4/1397	105/6000	95/5000	540kg	198	6.5	-	110	-	-	+ The Caterham experience starts here - It's pretty raw	****
Caterham 7 Roadsport 125	105 F	£21,650	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ New Ford-engined model is just great - Bigger drivers need SV model	****
Caterham 7 Supersport	165 F	£22,995	4/1595	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	+ One of the best Caterhams is less than £20Kif you build it yourself	****
Caterham 7 Roadsport SV 175	140 D	£28,850	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	555kg	321	4.8	-	138	-	-	+ The Caterham for everyday use, R300 engine - Loses intensity of R300	****
Caterham 7 Superlight R300	150 F	£30,000	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - Factory-built cars top £30K	****
Caterham 7 Superlight R400	105 F	£34,300	4/1999	210/7800	152/5750	525kg	406	3.8	-	140	-	-	+ R400 reborn with (lots of) Ford power - Slightly hesitant low-rev pick-up	****
Caterham 7 Superlight R500	123 R	£41,000	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	****
Caterham CSR 260 Superlight	094 F	£43,800	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	****
Caterham Levante	131 F	£115,000	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly	****
Caterham 7 R300	068 F	'02-'06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps	****
Caterham 7 R400	068 F	'03-'06	4/1796	200/7500	150/5750	490kg	415	3.9	-	140	-	-	+ Race-car with a number plate - Your missus will leave you	****
Caterham 7 R500	068 F	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ Fine for the Nürburgring - Hard work around the Bullring	****
Caterham 7 R500 Evolution	069 F	'04	4/1998	250/8000	190/4000	460kg	552	3.9	8.1	150	- 216	-	+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad	****
Chevrolet Corvette C6 Ferrari California	083 D 171 D	£56,186 £152,116	8/6162 8/4297	430/5900 483/7750	424/4600 372/5000	1460kg	300 290	4.3	-	186 193	316 299	21.2	+ Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics	****
Honda S2000	111 D	199-109	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1705kg	191	6.2	-	150	299	28.2	+ Revised with sharper performance and dynamics - We'd still take a 458 Spider	****
IFR Aspid		c£130,000	4/1997	398/8600	240/7800	<i>1260kg</i> 740kg	451	2.8	-	155	-	20.2	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better + Imagine a Caterham crossed with a Zonda - It's a bit pricey	****
Jaguar XK 5.0	1200	£71,430	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1621kg	238	5.3	-	155	264	25.2	+ Basic XK gets extra powerbut loses some of its GT refinement	****
Jaguar XKR	130 F	£84,930	8/5000		461/2500	1725kg	296	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Gains Jag's fantastic new V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	****
Jaguar XKR-S	167 F	£103,430	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It's also the most expensive in years	****
Jaguar XK	089 F	'06-'09	8/4196	294/6000	303/4100	1635kg	183	6.6	-	155	-	25.0	+ Every bit as good as the XK coupe - 294bhp still only just enough	****
Jaguar XKR		'06-'09	8/4196	414/6250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Overwrought detailing	****
Jaguar XKR	004 F	'97-'06	8/3996	370/6150	387/3600	1750kg	215	5.4	12.8	155	-	15.6	+ Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to toupes everywhere	****
KTM X-Bow	138 F	£49,482	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	790kg	305	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Mad looks; real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than we'd hoped	****
KTM X-Bow R	165 F	£64,850	4/1984	295/5500	295/3300	790kg	379	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	****
Light Car Company Rocket	104 F	£46,000	4/1002	143/10500	77/8500	406kg	358	4.4	-	145	-	35.0	+ Single-seater style, speed - Old Formula Fords cost £5K	****
Lotus Elise 1.6	144 D	£29,050	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	876kg	155	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ New 1.6 Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off	****
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	159 R	£28,450	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused Elise - A touch pricey for a stripped-out Elise	****
Lotus Elise S	172 R	£37,150	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.5	-	145	175	37.5	+ New supercharged Elise boasts epic grip and pace - £37K before (pricey) options	****
Lotus Elise R	068 F	'04-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrillsome Elise yet - Blaring engine note	****

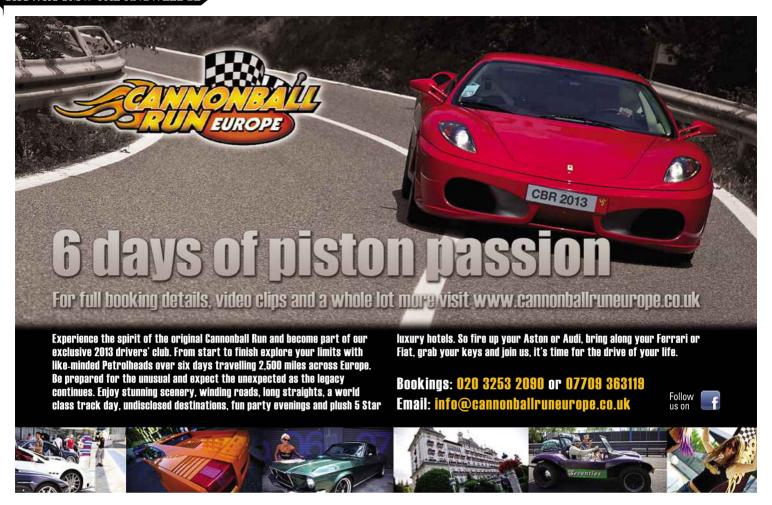
PAST master

Porsche 911 GT2 (996) Issue 030, April 2001

In 2001, the new 455bhp 911 GT2 was the fastest production Porsche ever. Richard Meaden tried it: 'A hundred kilos lighter than the Turbo, power up to a mindnumbing 455bhp, Porsche's revolutionary new ceramic brakes, a top speed of just under 200mph, and rear-wheel drive only. And there's no traction or stability control. Jeez.

It's a devastatingly fast car. The bald figures are eyeopening enough - 0-62mph in 4.1sec, 0-100 in 8.5 - but they don't do justice to the savage manor in which it hurls you down the road. Very few cars exert such gut-gripping accelerative G that you can feel all your bodily fluids surge towards your head. As a driver it makes your face fizz, but as a passenger you'll need the cast-iron innards of a fighter pilot to prevent your breakfast making a reappearance.'





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Ratings Thrill-free zone ★ Tepid ★★ Interesting ★★★ Seriously good ★★★★ A truly great car ★★★★

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Lotus Elise SC	131 F	'08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	****
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 F	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	****
Lotus Elise S2 111S	049 F	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	****
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	****
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 190 Lotus Elise S1	044 F 126 F	'03 '96-'00	4/1796 4/1796	190/7800 118/5500	128/5000 122/3000	710kg 731kg	272 164	4.7 6.1	12.1 18.5	135 126	-	39.4	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey + A modern classic - A tad impractical?	****
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	120 F	90-00	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	10.5	150	-	39.4	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	****
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 F	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	****
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	****
Lotus 340R	126 F	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racerthat looks like a dune buggy from Mars	****
Lotus Elan SE	095 F	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolving	** **
Lotus Elan Sprint	126 F	'71-'73	4/1558	126/6500	113/5500	720kg	178	6.6	-	122	-	-	+ Sensational chassis, properly quick - Affording a mint one	****
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,250	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.3	-	176	358	18.3	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	****
Maserati GranCabrio Sport Mazda MX-5 1.8i SE	161 D	£102,615 £17.990	8/4691 4/1798	444/7000 124/6500	376/4750 123/4500	1980kg 1155kg	228 109	5.1 9.9	-	177	377 167	19.5 39.8	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper + Basic MX-5 offers ESP-less fun - But you'll probably want the 2.0's power	****
Mazda MX-5 1.81 SE Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech	170 R	£17,990	4/1/98	158/7000	139/5000	1173kg	144	7.6	-	132	181	36.2	+ Handles brilliantly again - Less than macho image	****
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3 v1)	091 F	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1155kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	- 30.2	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s	****
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	****
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	****
Mercedes-Benz SLK350 Sport	161 R	£44,725	6/3498	302/6500	273/3500	1465kg	209	5.5	-	155	167	39.8	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater	****
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	171 D	£54,965	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1690kg	195	4.5	-	155	195	33.6	+ AMG SLK is quicker and more economical than ever - Should be sharper, though	****
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 F	'05-'09	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	****
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black	110 F	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted 7G-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	****
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	c£80,000		429/5250	516/1800	1800kg	242	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Wafty performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	****
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£112,000	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	****
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D 070 F	£106,820		518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	- 10.3	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	****
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	070 F	'02-'07 '04-''10	8/5439 12/5980	493/6100 604/4800	516/2650 737/2000	1955kg 2035kg	256 302	4.6 4.1	10.2	155 155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun + Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey	****
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 F	£176,895	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1735kg	330	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	****
Mini John Cooper Works Convertible	130 F	£24,850	4/1598	208/6000	206/1850	1230kg	172	6.9	-	146	169	38.7	+ A manlier Mini cabrio. As hardcore as the hatchwhich is still better	****
Morgan 3 Wheeler	177 R	£25,000	2/1990	80/5300	103/3250	525kg	155	6.0	-	115	-	-	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Unnatural brake feel; you'd better not be shy	****
Morgan Plus 8	171 R	£82,500	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	****
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 F	£126,900		362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and targa top - It's proper supercar money	★★★ ☆
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	'02-'08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	****
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 F	£32,050	6/3696		269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	155	262	25.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	****
Nissan 350Z Roadster	172 D	'04-'09 £37,589	6/3498	309/6600 261/6700	264/4800	1600kg 1310kg	196 202	5.8	-	155	192	24.8 34.5	+ Drives just like the coupe - But doesn't look as good	****
Porsche Boxster (Mk3) Porsche Boxster S (Mk3)	172 R 169 D	£45,384	6/2706	311/6700	206/4500 265/4500	1320kg	239	5.4	-	164 173	206	32.1	+ Goes & looks better; cleanest Boxster ever - Steering now electric to help cut CO2 + Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing new steering	****
Porsche Boxster (Mk2)	109 D	'05-'12	6/2893		214/4400	1335kg	192	5.9	-	163	221	30.0	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign	****
Porsche Boxster S (Mk2)	161 R	'05-'12	6/3436		265/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	170	223	29.7	+ As above, but with more power - Lighter steering than before	****
Porsche Boxster Spyder (Mk2)	140 F	10-12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	29.1	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not practical	****
Porsche Boxster (Mk1)	049 F	'99-'04	6/2687	228/6300	192/4700	1275kg	182	6.3	-	155	-	29.1	+ Still an impeccable sports car - Very little	****
Porsche Boxster S (Mk1)	070 F	'99-'04	6/3179	260/6200	228/4700	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	****
Porsche 911 Carrera S Cabrio (991)	171 R	£89,740	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.6	-	187	229	29.1	+ All-new open 911 drives just like the coupe - Which means the same artificial steering	****
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS Cabrio (997)	161 R	£85,249	6/3800		310/4200	1515kg	270	4.7	-	190	242	27.4	+ The best 911 drop-top you can buy - Lacks glamour of an R8 Spyder	****
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (997) Porsche 911 Speedster	139 D 152 D	£118,015	6/3800 6/3800	493/6000 402/7300	479/1950 310/4200	1645kg 1540kg	305 265	3.8	-	194 189	275 242	24.1 27.0	+ Absurdly quick and capable drop-top - We'd still take the coupe + Rarity, quality, head-turning styling - More collectors' than drivers' car	****
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (996)	060 F	'03-'05	6/3596	414/6000	413/4600	1700kg	250	4.4	-	185	- 242	-	+ Faster than you'll ever need it to be - Just the image thing again	****
Radical SR3 SL	174 F	£69,850	4/2000	300/6000	265/4000	795kg	383	3.0	-	161	-	-	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm	****
Radical SR8LM	138 F	£88,000	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal	****
Smart Roadster Brabus	067 D	'04-'07	3/698	101/5600	96/2500	895kg	115	9.8	-	121	-	54.3	+ Feisty engine, growly soundtrack - Slow paddleshift gearbox	****
Tesla Roadster	131 F	£87,945	AC motor	248/4500	273/0-4500	1283kg	196	5.0	14.3	120	-	-	+ If this is the future, it's going to be fun - Limited range, high price	****
Toniq-R Duratec	102 D	£23,500	4/1999	193/6500	174/4500	550kg	357	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Very good value, well built, and lots of fun too - No roof, no windscreen	★★★☆
Toyota MR2	078 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	****
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605		290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	****
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R 007 R	'05-'07 '93-'03	6/3996		315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	- 26 /	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	****
TVR Chimaera 5.0 TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4988 8/4280	320/5500 280/5500	320/3750 305/4000	1060kg 1060kg	307 268	4.6 4.8	11.2	167 148	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details + The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	****
TVR Griffith 500	000 F	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	****
Ultima GTR	017 R	£45,500	8/6300	534/5800	528/4800	990kg	548	3.9	8.2	204	-	-	+ Turns the M1 into the Mulsanne - You'll have to build it yourself	****
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	****
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	****
Westfield Megabusa	036 F	£24,450	4/1298	175/9800	102/9000	430kg	413	3.7	-	140	-	-	+ Bike-engined road-rocket - Not big on practicality	****
Westfield 1600 Sport Turbo	140 D	£26,500	4/1598	195/5850	170/2000	650kg	305	4.7	-	142	-	-	+ Very quick and composed - Expensive, and a little on the heavy side	★★★★ ☆
Westfield XI	078 D	'04- '10	4/1275	65/6000	72/3000	498kg	132	8.5	-	120	-	-	+ Old-school charm - Old-school power	****
Westfield XTR4	068 D	'01- '10	4/1781	220/5500	184/5000	542kg	413	3.6	-	160	-	-	+ Mini-Le Mans racer - You wouldn't want to drive it there	****
Wiesmann Roadster MF3	077 D	c£65,000	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1180kg	291	4.9		158	-	-	+ Engine, ride, build quality, exclusivity - Umm '50s styling?	****



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29 September

12/13 October

Oulton Park Oulton Park Brands Hatch Brands Hatch Brands Hatch Cadwell Park **Oulton Park Brands Hatch** Brands Hatch GP Cadwell Park **Brands Hatch Oulton Park** Snetterton 300 Brands Hatch Snetterton 300 Brands Hatch Indy/GP Brands Hatch GP Brands Hatch GP Brands Hatch GP Snetterton 300 **Oulton Park** Brands Hatch GP Cadwell Park Brands Hatch GP **Oulton Park** Snetterton 300 Snetterton 300 **Brands Hatch GP** 18/19/20 October Brands Hatch GP **Brands Hatch**

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Our Choice
Audi R8 V8. After a long time at the top (and currently lacking a hardcore GT3 variant), the Porsche 911 relinquishes its crown to the Audi R8: a car with more feel through its controls and arguably more desirability as a genuinely useable junior supercar.



Best of the Rest
The new supercharged V6 Lotus Exige S (left) is a proper road racer for £53K and our joint 2012 Car of the Year. The 991-gen 911 has lost a little character but gained true all the state of the St round ability, while the Nissan GT-R mixes practicality with supercar pace.

Ratings Thrill-free zone ★ Tepid ★★ Interesting ★★★ Seriously good ★★★★ A truly great car ★★★★★

	Car		Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/α	bhp/rpm	lb ft./rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100 mph	Maxmph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
	Alfa Romeo Brera 3.2 V6	1	120 F	'08-'11	6/3195	256/6300	237/4500	1532kg	170	6.9	-	155	260	-	+ Brera made better for UK roads - Steering lacking some feel	****
	Alfa Romeo GTV 3.0 V6	(010 F	'96-'06	6/2959	220/6300	199/5000	1406kg	159	6.5	-	150	-	24.1	+ Glorious V6 makes it a mini-Ferrari - So-so chassis	****
	Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	1.	120 F	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold	****
	Alpina B3 Biturbo		08 F	£50,745	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	29.1	+ Alpina's M3 alternative - Too refined for some	****
	Alpina B3 GT3		76 D	£66,950	6/2979	402/6000	398/4500	1535kg	266	4.4	-	186	224	-	+ Alpina's M3 GTS alternative - Auto gearbox frustrates when pressing on	****
	Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7)		69 D	£84,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ 2012 upgrades keep the V8 Vantage on song - Starting to feel a little dated, though	****
	Aston Martin V8 Vantage S		68 R	£102,500	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only	****
0	Aston Martin V12 Vantage Aston Martin V12 Zagato		46 R 79 D	£135,000 £396,000	12/5935 12/5935	510/6500 510/6500	420/5750 420/5750	1680kg 1680kg	308 308	4.4	9.7	190 190	388 388	17.3 17.3	+ The best series production car that Aston Martin makes - Erm, a tad thirsty?	****
	Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)		19 D 109 F	'05-'08	8/4281	380/7300	302/5000	1630kg	237	5.2	12.0	175	300	- 17.3	+ The looks, the noise, the way it drives - It's three times the price of a V12 Vantage + Gorgeous, awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match 911 dynamically	****
	Aston Martin DB9		78 F	£131,995	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	- 12.0	183	368	18.2	+ Better than the old DB9 in every respect - Automatic gearbox could be quicker	****
	Aston Martin DB9		46 D	10-12	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1760kg	271	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Ride & handling improved for 2010 model - Rapide makes 2+2 seating pointless	****
	Aston Martin DBS		42 F	£180,812	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary	****
	Aston Martin DB7 Vantage		010 R	'00-'05	12/5935	420/6000	400/5000	1770kg	241	4.9	11.2	185	-	18.6	+ DB7 with near-supercar pace - Handling lacks edge	****
	Audi TT 2.0 TFSI	1:	55 R	£27,140	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	6.3	15.7	152	154	42.8	+ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game	****
	Audi TTS	1	19 D	£35,605	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	155	184	35.8	+ Usefully quicker TT; great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game	****
	Audi TT RS		58 R	£45,840	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	209	31.4	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	****
	Audi TT Sport (Mk1)		081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	155	-	30.3	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering	****
	Audi S5	10	63 D	£42,790	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1675kg	199	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Supercharged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Pricey once you add options	****
•	Audi RS5			£59,150	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	245	4.5	-	155	246	26.9	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Still not as exciting as you'd hope	****
	Audi R8 V8		68 R	£87,935	8/4163	414/7800	317/4500	1560kg	270	4.1	9.9	187	332	19.9	+ Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price	****
	Audi R8 V10		46 R	£109,090	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	3.9	8.4	196	346	19.0	+ The fabulous R8 gets a supercar engine - Looks a lot like the V8	****
	Audi R8 V10 Plus Audi R8 GT		77 D 169 F	£124,675 '10-'12	10/5204 10/5204	542/8000 552/8000	398/6500 398/6500	1570kg 1520kg	351 369	3.8	-	198 199	346	19.0	+ More power and aggression, less weight - Firm ride may be too much for some	****
	Audi Quattro 20V		09 F 019 F	'90-'91	5/2226	220/5900	228/1950	1329kg	146	3.6 6.2	18.2	143	-	19.1	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted + Modern classic - Buy wisely to avoid big bills	****
	Bentley Continental GT V8		78 F	£123,850	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2295kg	221	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless	****
	Bentley Continental GT		52 D	£135,760	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2320kg	248	4.6	-	198	384	17.1	+ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst	****
	Bentley Continental GT Speed		77 D	£151,100	12/5998	616/6000	590/2000	2320kg	258	4.0	-	205	338	19.5	+ 205mph in utter comfort - Feels nose-heavy in slow corners	****
	Bentley Continental Supersports		137 F	£170,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2240kg	282	3.7	-	204	388	17.3	+ A thoroughly impressive carrather than a fun and involving one	****
	Bentley Continental GT Speed	i	115 F	'07-'11	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2350kg	259	4.3	-	202	396	17.0	+ Stupendous performance, fine dynamics - Weight, thirst	****
	BMW 135i M Sport	1	113 F	£32,150	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1455kg	211	5.3	-	155	198	33.2	+ Fast, fun, £20K cheaper than an M3 - Not as wild as we'd hoped	****
	BMW 1-series M Coupe		58 R	'11-'12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.8	-	155	224	-	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Could hinder BMW M3 sales	****
	BMW 335i M Sport		195 D	£39,145	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1525kg	201	5.2	12.2	155	196	33.6	+ Eager engine, exploitable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling	****
	BMW M3 (E92)		62 R	£54,720	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its talented new rivalsexcept the cheaper 1-series M	****
	BMW M3 GTS (E92)		171 R	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	193	295	-	+ Highly exclusive, most focused M-car ever - Good luck trying to find one	****
	BMW M3 (E46)		066 F	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7		****
	BMW M3 CS (E46)		088 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.0	155	-	23.7		****
	BMW M3 CSL (E46) BMW M3 (E36)		160 R 148 F	'03-'04 '93-'98	6/3246	355/7900 321/7400	273/4900 258/3250	1385kg 1460kg	260 223	5.3 5.4	12.0	155 157	-	25.7	+ Stripped-down road-race M3 - Standard brakes barely adequate + Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original	****
	BMW M3 (E30)		165 F	'86-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	17.8	147	-	20.3	+ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only	****
	BMW Z4 M Coupe		197F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0		155	-	23.3	+ A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in	****
	BMW M Coupe		005 R	'98-'03	6/3246	325/7400	258/3250	1375kg	240	5.1	-	155	-	25.0	+ Ouick and characterful - Lacks finesse	****
	BMW 640d		65 D	£62,080	6/2993	309/4400	465/1500	1790kg	175	5.5	-	155	144	51.4	+ Great engine and economy, excellent build - Numb steering, unsettled B-road ride	****
	BMW M6 (Mk2)	1	78 F	£93,820	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - There are more exotic badges at this money	****
	BMW M6 (Mk1)	1	06 R	'05-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace	****
	Chevrolet Camaro SS	1-	48 F	£35,025	8/6162	426/5900	420/4600	1769kg	245	5.1	-	155	329	20.0	+ Looks like a Transformer made real - We'd prefer it in robot mode	****
	Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 *		67 D	c£60,000	8/6162	580/6100	556/3800	1900kg	310	4.0	-	180	-	-	+ The most powerful Camaro yet - UK sales yet to be confirmed	★★★★ ☆
	Chevrolet Corvette C6		16 D	£49,033	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1461kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ A Corvette with no apologies needed - Still left-hand drive only	****
	Chevrolet Corvette Z06		99 F	£66,403	8/7011	505/6300	469/4800	1418kg	363	3.9	8.5	198	350	19.2	+ 8.5 to 100, brakes, price - Not quite the road-racer we expected	****
	Dodge Challenger *		22 D	c£40,000	8/6059	425/6200	420/4800	1877kg	230	5.2	-	160+	-	-	+ Effortlessly coolif you live in Hazzard County	****
	Ford Mustang Boss 302 *		62 R 78 F	c£45,000	8/4951 8/5812	444/7400	380/4500	1647kg	274	4.6	10.5	155 202	-	-	+ Looks great and has oodles of character - LHD only, far from dynamically perfect	****
	Ford Shelby GT500 * Ginetta G40 R		65 F	£29,950	4/1999	662/6500 175/6700	631/4000	1747kg 795kg	385 224	5.8	-	140	-	-	+ Huge performance for the money - Putting it to use takes nerve	****
	Ginetta G60		65 D	£68,000	6/3721	310/6500	288/4500	1080kg	292	4.9	-	165	-	-	+ A race-compliant sports car for the road - Feels too soft to be a hardcore track toy + Reborn Farbio GTS boasts great engine and good looks - The ride still needs work	****
	Honda CR-Z GT		44 F	£20,820	4/1497	122/6100	128/1500	1198kg	103	9.9		124	117	56.5	+ The first hybrid with sporting intent - No match for a good diesel hot hatch	****
	Honda Integra Type-R (DC2)		95 F	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some	****
	Honda Integra Type-R (DC5) *		7.37 F	'01-'06	4/1998	217/8000	152/7000	1250kg	176	7.1	16.7	140	-	-	+ Sharp looks, massive grip - Lost a little of the DC2's magic	****
	Honda NSX)43F	'90-'05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.5	-	168	-	22.8	+ 'The useable supercar' - 270bhp sounds a bit weedy today	****
	Honda NSX-R*		051F	'02-'03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	168	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK	****
	Hyundai Veloster Turbo		76 D	£21,995	4/1591	184/5500	195/1500	1313kg	142	8.2	-	133	157	40.9	+ The usual Hyundai value, with added fun - Styling might be too quirky for some	****
	Infiniti G37S Coupe	1	27 R	£38,247	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1706kg	188	5.8	13.8	155	246	26.9	+ Softer 370Z delivers sharp-driving swing at the Germans - Bland looks	****
	Jaguar XK 5.0		30 D	£65,430	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1585kg	244	5.2	-	155	264	25.2	+ Fine car for the likes of us - Jag buyers may not like the harder edge	****
	Jaguar XKR		68 R	£78,930	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home	****
	Jaguar XKR-S	10	68 R	£97,430	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1678kg	328	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ The most exciting XKR ever - It's nearly £100,000	****
	Jaguar XKR			'98-'06	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1735kg	234	5.2	-	155	-	22.9	+ Extra grunt of 4.2-litre motor - Lacks feedback	****
	Lotus Exige S (V6)		171 R	£53,850	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	4.0	-	170	236	- 22.2	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Doubts over Lotus's future	****
	Lotus Exige S	1	105 F	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	****



Nissan GT-R

Years 2008- Engine V6, 3799cc, turbo
Power 473bhp @ 6400rpm Torque 434lb ft
@ 3200-5200rpm 0-60mph 3.8sec
(claimed) Top speed 193mph (limited)



WHY WOULD YOU?

For its unprecedented arsenal of performance hardware. The only car seriously comparable in performance terms is the £100k 911 Turbo, but the GT-R is quicker around the Nordschleife – and cost just £56,795 new in 2008.

WHAT TO PAY

Imports start below £35k, UK cars at £35-40k. 2011 cars (which cost £67k new) are £50-55k.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Engines problems are very rare; even cars tuned to over 600bhp have proved reliable. One common fault is the 'bell-housing rattle', which can be sorted under warranty. Early gearboxes can have problems with the control solenoids, so check for quick, smooth changes on the test drive, as a new 'box is £16,000(!). (Full guide, evo 177.)

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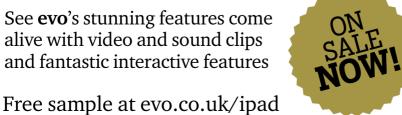
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Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Lotus Exige Cup 260	139 D	'10-'11	4/1796	256/8000	174/6000	890kg	293	4.0	-	152	199	31.1	+ Feels like a race car, yet works on the road - Pricey for a four-pot Exige	****
Lotus Exige (series 2)	068 R	'04-'08	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	875kg	219	4.9	-	147	-	32.1	+ Highly focused road and track tool - Lacks visual impact of S1	****
Lotus Exige (series 1)	067 D	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+ Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement	****
Lotus Evora	138 F	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options	****
Lotus Evora S	168 R	£61,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911	****
Lotus Europa SE	127 F	'08-'10	4/1998	222/5600	221/4000	995kg	227	4.9	-	146	-	28.8	+ More of a Lotus than before - Still overshadowed by the Exige and Evora	****
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	005 R	'99-'00 £82,190	8/3506	350/6500	295/4250	1299kg	274 216	4.3	9.9 12.7	175 177		<i>22.0</i> 19.8	+ Designed for track work but brilliant on the road - Limited edition	****
Maserati GranTurismo Maserati GranTurismo Sport	114 R 178 F	£90,750	8/4244 8/4691	399/7100 454/7000	339/4750 383/4750	1880kg 1880kg	245	5.5 4.8	12.1	185	330 331	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911 + The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth?	***** ****
Maserati GT MC Stradale	160 R	£110,045	8/4691	444/7100	376/4750	1770kg	255	4.6	-	187	337	19.6	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - No rear seats	****
Maserati Coupe	064 F	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering	****
Maserati GranSport	073 F	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little	****
Mazda RX-8	122 R	'03-'11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+ Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output	****
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	£57,165	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	+ Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better	****
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black	171 R	£98,765	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1710kg	303	4.1	-	186	286	-	+The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old	****
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement	****
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black	106 F	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party	****
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	150 D	£115,660	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2060kg	264	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition	****
Morgan AeroMax	097 D	£110,000	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Weird and utterly wonderful - They're all sold	****
Nissan 370Z	170 R	£29,950	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1520kg	218	5.4	12.0	155	248	26.7	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	****
Nissan 350Z Nissan GT-R (2012MY)	107 R 168 R	'03-'09 £74,450	6/3498 6/3799	<i>309/6800</i> 542/6400	264/4800 466/3200	1532kg 1740kg	<i>205</i> 316	5.5 2.8	13.0	155 199	275	24.1 24.0	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling + GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But over £20K more than its launch price	****
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 F	10-12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	194	279	23.5	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive	****
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 F	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	193	-	23.3	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year, now from just £35K - You won't see 20mpg often	****
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	009 R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Very firm ride	****
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	019 F	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0		****
Noble M400	089 F	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185	-	-	+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweeks interior	****
Noble M12 GTO-3R	070 F	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	+ The ability to humble exotica - Flawed driving position	****
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£23,595	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.3	18.1	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting	****
Porsche Cayman	131 F	£39,162	6/2893	261/7200	221/4400	1330kg	199	5.8	-	165	221	30.1	+ Extra power, just as involving - Still lacks the desirability of other Porsches	****
Porsche Cayman S	132 F	£47,604	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too (even though it's the best Cayman yet)	****
Porsche Cayman R	158 R	£51,728	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	29.1	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	****
Porsche Cayman S	097F	'06-'09	6/3387	291/6250	251/4400	1350kg	219	5.3	12.2	171	-	26.6	+ Pure and rewarding - If they'd just move the engine back a bit	****
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	168 R	£71,449	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1380kg	254	4.7	-	179	212	31.4	+ 911 becomes cleaner and cleverer - But some of its character's gone AWOL	****
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991) Porsche 911 Carrera 4 (991)	168 R 177 D	£81,242 £77,924	6/3800	394/7400 345/7400	324/5600 288/5600	1395kg 1430kg	287 245	4.4	-	188 177	224	29.7 30.4	+ As above, but with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility + A touch more engaging than 2wd 991 - Still stand-offish compared to 997	****
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991)	177 D	£87,959	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1445kg	277	4.5	-	185	234	28.5	+ The best 991-generation Carrera - Have we mentioned the steering feel?	****
Porsche 911 Carrera (997.2)	1191	'08-'11	6/3614	341/6500	288/4400	1415kg	245	4.9	-	180	225	29.4	+ Faster and greener than the mk1 997 - Lost a little of the 911 magic	****
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 F	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical	****
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (997.2)	152 D	711-'12	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1420kg	288	4.6	-	190	240	26.6	+ Fitting finale for the 997 generation - Absolutely nothing	****
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 F	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	+ evo Car of the Year 2004; like a junior GT3 - Tech overload?	****
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (996)	051F	'02-'05	6/3596	316/6800	273/4250	1470kg	218	5.1	-	174	-	-	+ Second best 996 only to the GT3 - Very little	****
Porsche 911 Carrera (996 3.4)	008 R	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	230	4.6	-	173	-	28.0	+ evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough	****
Porsche 911 Carrera (993)		'94-'97	6/3600	285/6100	251/5250	1372kg	211	5.2	-	168	-	25.0	+ More character than 996 - Harder work at speed	****
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	138 F	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute	****
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)	152 F	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ Our 2010 car of the year - Looks and noise are slightly OTT	****
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	164 F	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+ The ultimate modern 911, and our 2011 Car of the Year - Unforgiving on-road ride	****
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1) Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	103 R	'07-'09 '07-'09	6/3600	409/7600 409/7600	298/5500 298/5500	1395kg 1375kg	298	4.3	9.4	192 193	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs + evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3	****
	105 F 066 F	'07-'09	6/3600	375/7400	298/5500		302 272	4.2 4.3	9.2	193	-		+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant G13 + evo Car of the Year 2003 - Looks softer than previous GT3	****
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2) Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg 1330kg	286	4.3	9.2	190	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Looks softer than previous G13 + Track-biased version of above - Limited supply	****
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	066 F	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	+ Our Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough	****
Porsche 911 RS (993)	036 R	'95	6/3746	300/6500	262/5400	1270kg	240	4.7	11.2	172	-	-	+ Barking engine note, gearchange - Not quite hardcore enough	****
Porsche 968 Club Sport	019 F	'93-'95	4/2990	240/6200	225/4100	1335kg	183	6.1	15.7	149	-	-	+ One of the all-time greats - Lots have been driven very hard	****
Renault Alpine A610	0.5.	'92-'96	6/2975	250/5750	258/2900	1420kg	179	5.4	13.8	160	-	21.0		****
Subaru BRZ	170 R	£24,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1202kg	166	7.5	-	143	159	40.9	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised	****
Toyota GT86	174 R	£24,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	162	7.5	-	140	181	36.2	+ More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality	****
TVR T350C	057 R	'03-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.7	10.0	175	-	-	+ Looks, engine - Unsupportive seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish	****
TVR Sagaris	099 D	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic	****
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'	****
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	5.0	11.4	160+	-	-	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion	****
Vauxhall Monaro VXR 6.0	079 D	'05-'07	8/5967	398/6000	391/4400	1677kg	241	5.1	-	180+	-	-	+ Improved chassis and steering, 180mph - Looks a bit snouty	****
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	155 R	£24,705	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1373kg	153	6.1	15.8	149	172	38.2	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	****
VW Scirocco R	138 F	£29,745	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1352kg	196	5.8	-	155	189	34.9	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Looks very grown-up, too	****
VW Corrado VR6	095 F	'92-'96	6/2861	190/5800	180/4200	1237kg	156	6.2	-	143	-	29.5	+ One of the great all-rounders - A little nose-heavy	****
Wiesmann GT MF5	127 D	£150,000	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1380kg	368	3.9	-	193	-	-	+ Striking coupe mated to BMW M5's V10 - Steering a little light	****

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Our Choice
Ferrari 458 Italia. A huge step on from the F430 it replaced. The lack of a manual gearbox is a shame, but the scintillating 4.5-litre V8 and snappy seven-speed twin-clutch transmission result in a car that's markedly quicker than its V8 predecessors.



Best of the RestPagani's awesome Huayra (left) is our reigning joint Car of the Year. Ferrari's fastest-ever road car, the F12, could pip the mid-engined 458 when we try it in the UK, while the updated McLaren MP4-12C remains tantalisingly close to greatness.

Ratings Thrill-free zone ★ Tepid ★★ Interesting ★★★ Seriously good ★★★★ A truly great car ★★★★★

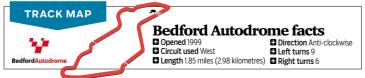
	Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
	9ff GT9R	127 D	c£450,000		1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights	****
	Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	176 R	£189,995	12/5935	565/6750	457/5500	1739kg	330	4.1	10.1	183	-	-	+ A much better car than the DBS it succeeds - Shame it looks little different, then	****
	Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1) Aston Martin Vantage s/c	110 F 001 R	'05-'07 '93-'00	12/5935 8/5340	520/7000 550/6500	425/5800 550/4000	1875kg 1988kg	282 281	4.9 4.6	10.1	200 186	-	13.1	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit + Two tons of well-hung British beef - Leaden gearbox	***** ****
	Aston Martin Vantage 600	131 F	'98	8/5340	600/6200	600/4400	2020kg	302	4.6	11.0	190	-	-	+ A proper, full-fat Aston Martin - Running costs will be equally 'proper'	****
0	Aston Martin One-77	179 F	'10-'12	12/7312	750/6000	553/7600	1740kg	438	3.7	-	220+	-	-	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made	****
	BMW M1	110 F	'78-'81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.8		161	-	-	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days	****
	Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	134 F 133 F	c£925,000 c£1.4m	16/7993 16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg 1990kg	521 510	2.8 2.6	5.8	253 253	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	****
	Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 F	c£2.0m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	-	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous brolly/roof thing + The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	****
	Bugatti EB110	078 F	'91-'95	12/3500		451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	****
	Caparo T1	138 F	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag	****
	Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	£106,605	8/6162	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	3.8	7.6	205	355		+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	****
	Ferrari 458 Italia Ferrari 458 Spider	159 R 164 D	£178,491 £198,936	8/4499 8/4499	562/9000 562/9000	398/6000 398/6000	1485kg 1530kg	384 373	3.2 3.3	6.8	202 198	307 275		+ An astounding achievement, looks fantastic - There'll never be a manual + A 458 that sounds and feels more organic - Er, 4mph slower?	****
	Ferrari F430	163 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	196	-		+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	****
	Ferrari F430 Spider	095 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1520kg	326	4.1	-	193	-		+ Berlinetta dynamics, 8000rpm with the roof down - Looks?	****
	Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-		+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	****
	Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F 068 R	'99-'04 '03-'04	8/3586 8/3586	394/8500 420/8500	275/4750 275/4750	1390kg 1280kg	288 333	4.5	9.0	183 186	-	17.0	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	****
	Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta	163 F	'97-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg	281	4.7	-	183	-		+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud + Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?	****
	Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	174 R	£239,736	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	211	-	-	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - We've yet to try it in the UK	****
	Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 R	'06-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415		+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob	****
	Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano HGTE	146 R	'10-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	-	+ As above, but with a bit more edge - Can be a little too edgy in the wet	****
	Ferrari 599 GTO Ferrari 575M 'Fiorano'	161 R 169 F	'11-'12 '02-'06	12/5999 12/5748	661/8250 508/7250	457/6500 434/5250	1605kg 1730kg	418 298	3.4 4.2	9.6	208 202	-	12 3	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good + 'Fiorano pack' makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	****
	Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 F	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1730kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing	****
	Ferrari FF	164 R	£227,107	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	208	360	15.4	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	****
	Ferrari 612 Scaglietti F1	090 R	'04-'11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1840kg	294	4.3	9.8	199	470		+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	****
	Ferrari Enzo	149 F	'02-'04	12/5998		485/5500	1365kg	484	3.5	6.7	217+	-	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1	****
	Ferrari F50 Ferrari F40	064 F 157 F	'96-'97 '87-'92	12/4968 8/2936	513/8500 478/7000	347/6500 425/4000	1229kg 1100kg	424	3.7 3.7	-	202 201	-	-	+ The best drivers' Ferrari - Lines lack tension + The shape that launched a thousand posters - Er	****
	Ferrari 288GTO	064 F	'84-'85	8/2855	400/7000	366/3800	1160kg	350	4.9	-	189	-	-	+ Painfully beautiful, rarer than the F40 - You are joking?	****
	Ford GT	087 R	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.7	-	205	-	-		****
	Gumpert Apollo	110 F	£275,000	8/4163	690/6300	675/4000	1200kg	584	3.0	-	220+	-	-	+ Stupendous perfomance, 'Apollo' - High price, 'Gumpert'	****
	Jaguar XJ220	157 F 094 F	'92-'94	6/3498 8/4700	542/7200 806/6900	475/4500	1470kg	<i>375</i> 694	3.7 3.9	7.7	<i>213</i> 241	-	-	+ Britain's greatest supercaruntil McLaren built the F1	****
	Koenigsegg CCX Koenigsegg CCXR Edition	118 F	c£500,000 c£1.5m	8/4800	1004/7000	678/5700 796/5600	1180kg 1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's <i>only</i> supercar + One of the world's fastest cars - Spikey power delivery	****
	Koenigsegg Agera R	158 F	£875,000	8/5000	1100/6900	885/4100	1435kg	779	2.8	-	261+	-	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's almost Veyron money	****
	Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2	176 F	£166,784	10/5204		398/6500	1380kg	399	3.9	-	199	-	-	+ The mad rear-driven Lambo is back! - Gallardo not feeling as fresh as the 458	****
	Lamborghini LP560-4 Spyder	130 F 152 F	£162,240 £178,560	10/5204		398/6500 398/6500	1550kg 1340kg	362	4.0 3.5	-	201	330 325		+ The sound of a V10 with no roof - A smidge less hardcore than the coupe	****
	Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera Lamborghini LP570-4 Performante	160 F	£186,000	10/5204		398/6500	1485kg	426 384	3.9	-	202	323	- 20.0	+ A reminder of how great the Gallardo is - LP560-4 does as good a job + It's a Superleggera Spyderthat's not actually that super-light	****
	Lamborghini Gallardo	094F	'06-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	4.3	9.4	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	****
	Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104 F	'07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg	373	3.8	-	196	-	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear	****
	Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4	164 R	£242,280	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.8	-	217	398		+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Erm expensive?	****
	Lamborghini Murciélago Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	089 D 093 F	'01-'06 '06-'11	12/6192 12/6496	570/7500 631/8000	479/5400 487/6000	1650kg 1665kg	351 385	4.0 3.3	-	205 211	-	- 21.3	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed + Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	****
	Lamborighini M'lago LP670-4 SV	138 F	'09-'11	12/6946		487/6500	1565kg	429	3.2	7.3	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	****
	Lamborghini Diablo GT	016 F	'99-'00	12/5992	575/7300	465/5500	1490kg	392	4.1	8.3	211	-	12.5	+ Briefly the world's fastest production car - They made only 80	****
	Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 F	'00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343		-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	****
	Lamborghini Countach QV	162 F	'88-'91	12/5167	455/7000 552/8700	369/5200	1447kg	320	4.9	-	180	-	13.7	+ Still the definitive supercar - Visibility, pract- oh hell, who cares?	****
	Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring Maserati MC12	161 R 079 R	£352,000 '04-'05	10/4805 12/5998	621/7500	354/6800 481/5500	1480kg 1445kg	379 437	3.7	-	202 205	-	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match + Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	*****
	McLaren MP4-12C	173 R	£176,000	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.1	-	207	279		+ Staggering performance, refinement - Lacks design flair	****
	McLaren 12C Spider	177 R	£195,000	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1474kg	425	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ No discernible dynamic compromises - Requires commitment to come alive	****
	McLaren F1	145 F	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	6.3	240+	-	19.0	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	****
	Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	131 F 159 R	'09-'10 £168,395	12/5980 8/6208	661/5400 563/6800	737/2200 479/4750	1876kg 1620kg	<i>358</i> 335	4.0	8.1 8.4	<i>199</i> 197	308	21.4	+ Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers £250K price + Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	***** ****
	Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	073 F	'04-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1618kg	387	3.7	-	208	-		+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	****
	Noble M600	178 F	c£200,000		650/6800	604/3800	11198kg	551	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Leicestershire's unbelievably good attack on the supercar class - It's a bit pricey	****
	Pagani Huayra	172 F	c£820,000		720/5800	737/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's	****
	Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 F	£1.5m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg	630	3.3	-	217+	-	-	+ The most extreme Zonda ever - The last Zonda ever (probably)	****
	Pagani Zonda C12S Pagani Zonda F	096 F 082 F	'01-'05 '05-'06	12/7291 12/7291	555/5900 602/6150	553/4050 575/4000	1250kg 1230kg	451 497	3.6 3.6	-	197 214	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 - Harry's sold his long-termer + Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Choose interior carefully	****
	Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	'09-'10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1400kg	485	3.4	-	217+	-	-	+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often	****
	Porsche 911 Turbo (997.2)	140 R	£110,232	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1570kg	319	3.2	7.3	193	272	24.4	+ The Turbo at the very top of its game - The GT3's cheaper	****
	Porsche 911 Turbo S (997.2)	159 R	£125,865	6/3800	523/6250	516/2100	1570kg	339	2.9	6.8	196	268		+ As above, with more power - The GT3's even cheaper	****
	Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2)	157 F	£171,468	6/3600	611/6500	516/2250	1370kg	453	3.5	- 0.7	205	284	- 221	+ More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm	****
	Porsche 911 Turbo (997.1) Porsche 911 Turbo (996)	094 F 017 F	'06-'09 '00-'06	6/3600 6/3600	472/6000 420/6000	457/1950 413/4600	1585kg 1540kg	303 272	4.0	8.7 10.0	193 189	-		+ Monster cornering ability - A bit woolly on its standard settings + evo Car of the year 2000; the 911 for all seasons - We can't find any reasons	****
	Porsche 911 GT2 (996)	072 F	'04-'06	6/3600	475/5700	457/3500	1420kg	339	4.0	-	198	-	-	+ Later revisions made it even more of a star - Care still required	****
	Porsche 911 Turbo (993)	066 F	'95-'98	6/3600	408/5750	398/4500	1502kg	276	4.3	9.2	180	-		+ Stupendous all-weather supercar - It doesn't rain enough	****
	Porsche 911 GT2 (993)	003F	'96-'99	6/3600	430/5700	398/4500	1290kg	339	3.9	-	184	-	-	+ Hairy-arsed homologation special - Harry won't buy one	****
	Porsche Carrera GT Porsche 959	149 F 149 F	'04-'06 '87-'90	10/5733 6/2850	604/8000 444/6500	435/5750 369/5000	1380kg 1450kg	445 311	3.8 3.7	7.6	205 197	-	-	+ Probably the greatest modern supercar - Can bite + Tech showcase, still a great drive - Limited choice of colours?	****
	Ruf Rt 12	097 F	c£155,000	6/3746	641/7000	641/3500	1530kg	426	3.7	-	219	-	-	+ Pearl Showcase, still a great drive - Limited choice of Colours? + Beautifully executed car with truly immense power - Needs care	****
	Ruf CTR3	126 F	c£357,000	6/3746	691/7600	656/4000	1400kg	501	3.2	-	235	-	-	+ The best 911 that Porsche never made - But not the best looking	****
	Ruf CTR 'Yellow Bird'	097F	'87-'89	6/3366	469/5950	408/5100	1170kg	345	4.1	-	211	-	-	+ A true legend - We can't all drive like Stefan Roser	****
	Sportec SPR1M	136 D	c£600,000		846/8200	642/4800	1450kg	593	3.0	6.4	240+	-	-	+ A 922 Turbo that accelerates like Concorde - And costs almost as much	****
	Spyker C8 Aileron Ultima GTR640	141 D 080 F	£191,000 £68,000	8/4163 8/6277	400/6800 640/6500	354/3500 560/4800	1425kg 980kg	285 666	4.5 2.7	5.5	187 231	-	-	+ Most convincing Spyker yet - Its rivals are quicker + Awesomely rapid, and capable too - Race-car compromises	***** ****
	Ordina d INO40	000 F	200,000	0/0211	340/0300	300/4000	Soorg	000	L.I	J.J	201			- Amesomely rapid, and capable too inace-cal compromises	AAKAK

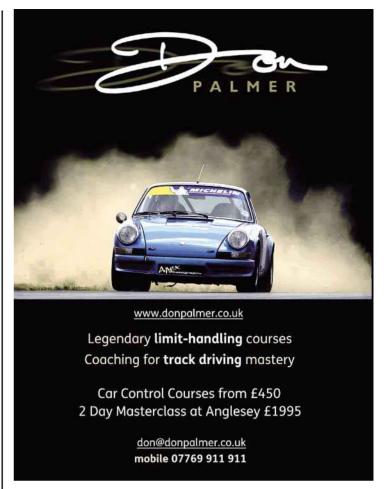


Track Times | Addition the month. Red denotes the car is the fastest in its class.

addition this month. Red

Can	Lap time	Peak mph	ssue no.	Conditions
Car	_	_	-	
Radical SR8LM (fastest car) Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)	1:13.6 1:14.8	127.8 130.9	138 131	Dry Dry
Ferrari 458 Italia	1:19.3	120.0	159	Dry
Gumpert Apollo S	1:19.4	120.4	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C (Corsa tyres)	1:19.6	121.2	159	Dry
Caterham Levante V8	1:19.6	118.6	131	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2 RS	1:19.9	122.3	158	Dry
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	1:20.1	113.2	138	Dry
Caterham Superlight R500	1:20.2	115.7	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C	1:20.6	120.9	159	Dry
Noble M600	1:20.8	121.8	159	Dry
Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0 (fastest coupe) Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	1:21.0 1:21.3	118.2 121.1	160 134	Dry Dry
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	1:21.5	113.6	119	Dry
KTM X-Bow (300bhp)	1:21.5	112.7	138	Dry
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	1:21.7	117.2	121	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (3.8)	1:21.9	116.8	150	Dry
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	1:22.5	119.1	122	Dry
Brooke Double R	1:22.5	113.2	119	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	1:22.9	116.7	143	Dry
Porsche Carrera GT	1:23.3	115.2	119	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3	1:23.3	114.5	138	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo S	1:23.5	117.5	146	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2 Nissan GT-R	1:23.5	115.1	119	Dry Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo	1:24.1	113.5	136	Damp
Lotus 340R (190bhp)	1:24.2	110.0	135	Darrip
Caterham Superlight R300	1:24.3	101.5	138	Dry
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	1:24.5	115.1	160	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	1:24.6	115.7	146	Dry
Porsche Boxster Spyder	1:24.7	107.7	167	Dry
Ferrari California	1:25.0	111.8	134	Dry
KTM X-Bow	1:25.0	105.0	123	Dry
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1:25.1	109.1	162	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	1:25.2	108.6	131	Dry
Audi RS5 Audi R8 Spyder V8	1:25.4	108.8	162 167	Dry Dry
Porsche Cayman R	1:25.5	106.8	158	Dry
BMW M5 (F10) (fastest saloon)	1:25.7	112.0	165	Dry
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1:25.8	110.9	146	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	1:25.9	107.5	138	Dry
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1:25.9	106.4	158	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X RS 360	1:26.1	106.6	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy (fastest hot hatch)	1:26.1	105.3	166	Dry
Audi TT RS	1:26.3	107.2	149	Dry
Aston Martin DBS	1:26.4	109.5	143	Dry
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1:26.5	109.2	137	Dry
Jaguar XJ220	1:26.7	111.7	131	Dry
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)	1:26.8 1:26.9	104.9 107.4	165 158	Dry Dry
Lotus Evora	1:27.1	104.2	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z	1:27.1	104.2	158	Dry
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen 2.2	1:27.2	102.6	166	Dry
Porsche Panamera S	1:27.3	102.4	165	Dry
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	1:27.7	111.0	162	Dry
Lotus Elise SC	1:27.7	104.6	131	Dry
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	1:27.8	106.1	131	Dry
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1:27.8	105.4	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:27.8	103.3	101	
Audi RS6 Avant (fastest estate)	1:27.9	111.0	121	Dry
Jaguar XFR Honda Civic Type-R Mugen 2.0	1:27.9	108.1 104.4	137 138	Dry Dry
Lexus IS-F	1:28.0	104.4	151	Dry
Porsche Boxster S	1:28.1	105.4	120	Dry
Subaru WRX STI	1:28.3	101.6	157	Dry
Jaguar XJ Supersport	1:28.4	106.6	147	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra R	1:28.7	102.4	162	Dry
Bentley Continental Supersports	1:29.2	105.8	149	Dry
Lotus Elise Club Racer	1:29.2	95.5	162	Dry
Maserati Quattroporte S	1:29.5	105.0	137	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1:29.9	101.4	156	Dry
Honda NSX	1:30.1	101.3	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z Roadster	1:30.3	100.1	173	Dry
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	1:30.4	98.9	155	Dry
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	1:30.8	101.8	131	Dry
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	1:31.4	100.9	174	Damp
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup Mercedes SLS Roadster	1:31.9	97.2	144	Dry
WELLEGES OF STRUCTURE	1:32.3	104.8	172	Wet















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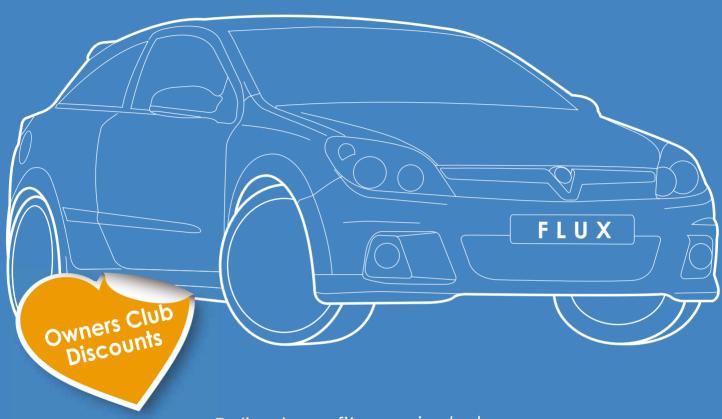
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Arto speed



Porsche 911 Carrera 2.7 RS ducktail

by DAVID VIVIAN | PHOTOGRAPHY by MICHAEL BAILIE

WHEN IT COMES TO MAKING A 'FIX' prompted by the demands of motorsport look like functional purity, no one can hold a candle to Porsche. The lightweight, race-homologated 2.7 RS of 1972 – the most desirable road-going 911 ever made - is the perfect exemplar because it introduced arguably the most elegant fix of all, the iconic 'ducktail' rear spoiler.

Today's Porsche engineers wouldn't deny that, from its inception in 1963 to the launch of the 2.7 RS nine years later, the 911 was something of an aerodynamic basket case. In seeking to emulate the impressively slippery drag coefficient of its predecessor, the 356 (which boasted a Cd of 0.36 in its original form), the early developers of the much faster 911 soon realised they had a real problem on their hands. Lift. The quicker the 911 became, the more acute the symptoms: poor straight-line running on the motorway, pronounced sensitivity to side winds and sudden lift-off oversteer in high-speed bends.

All of which helped forge the 911's early reputation for being 'tricky'. But it didn't help Porsche's cause when FIA rule changes in 1972 forced the factory to shift its track-based motor racing ambitions from the all-conquering 917 to the untried 911. Porsche needed to find a way to make the car stick to the

ground, and the swiftest model of the day, the 911S, was the obvious choice to be both the wind tunnel guinea pig and the basis for a new competition weapon and ultimate 911 road car.

The Cd of 0.381 was respectable enough but the lifting force figures (83kg front, 115.5kg rear at 143mph) were poor. Initial experiments informed by racing practice included making the shape of the tail flatter and terminating it with a nearly vertical panel. This was deemed too drastic even for the strippeddown, lightweight 2.7 RS, but the distillation of all the wind tunnel work was the deceptively simple ducktail. Not only did it prove extremely effective in balancing the front- and rear-end lift, it also reduced the overall drag of the RS. Used in conjunction with a special front air dam with a more prominent central part to house a large oil cooler for racing, the RS had a Cd of 0.397 and, at 152mph, generated just 35kg of front lift and 42kg of rear lift. Without the ducktail, the Cd increased to 0.409, front lift fell slightly to 32kg but rear lift rose dramatically to 245kg. The ducktail was even shaped to smooth the flow of air over the tail lights to combat dirt deposits.

In short, it worked. Later 911 wings were bigger and ever better at reducing lift, but none has ever looked quite as right as the ducktail.



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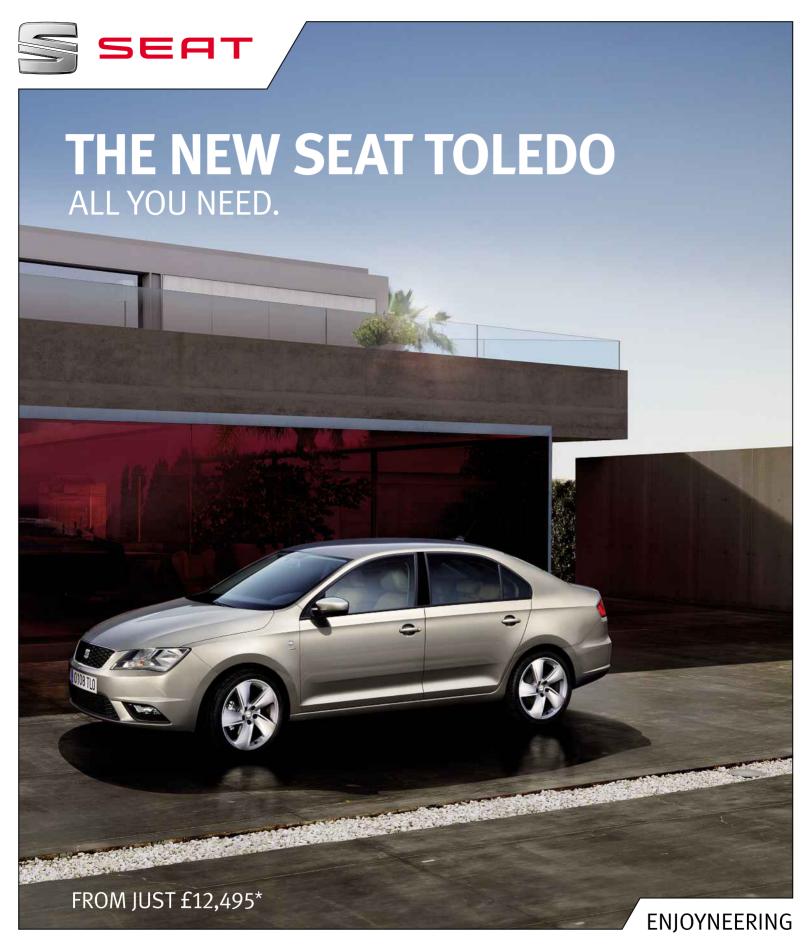
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