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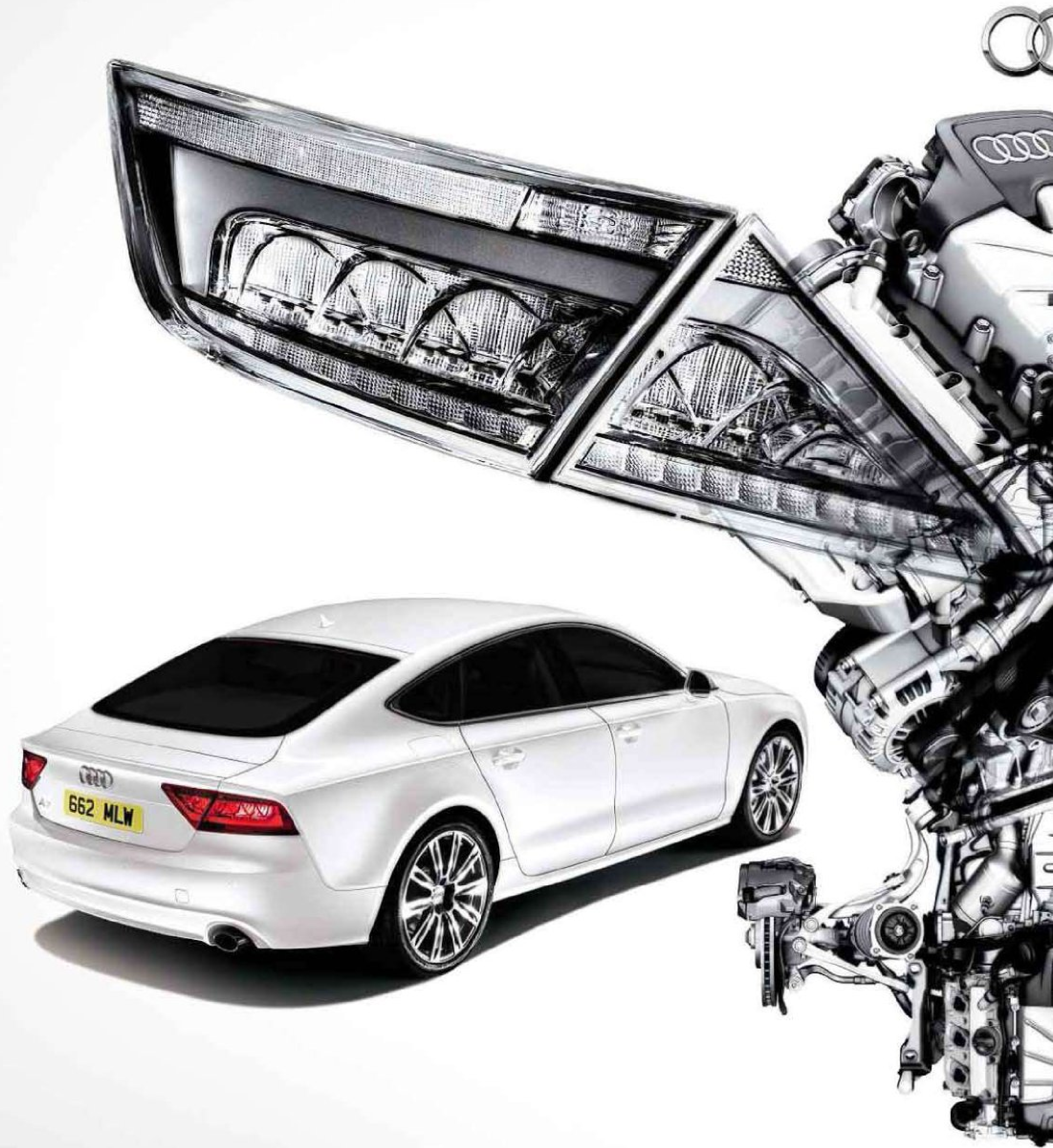
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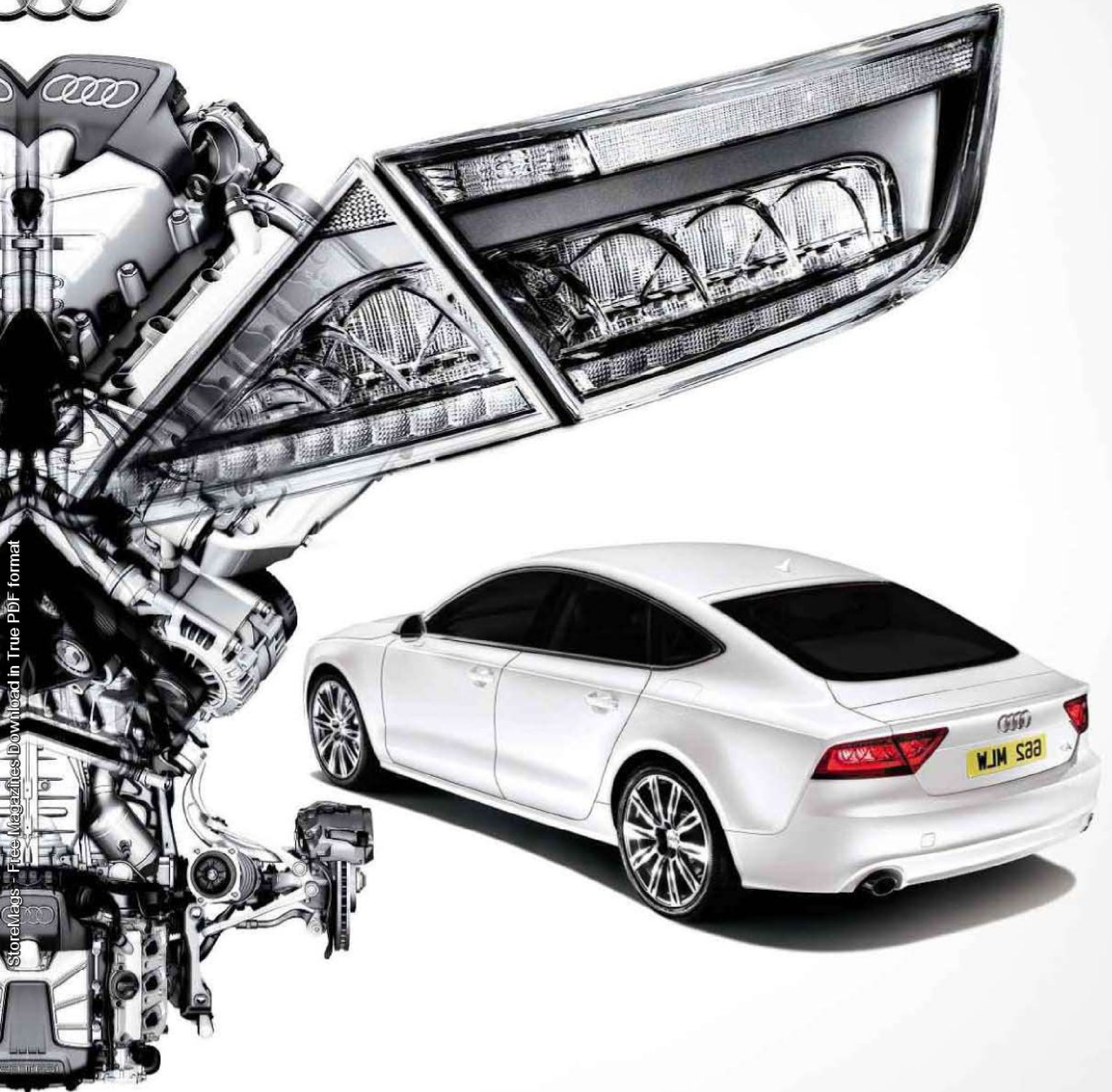
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THE SUBMARINER



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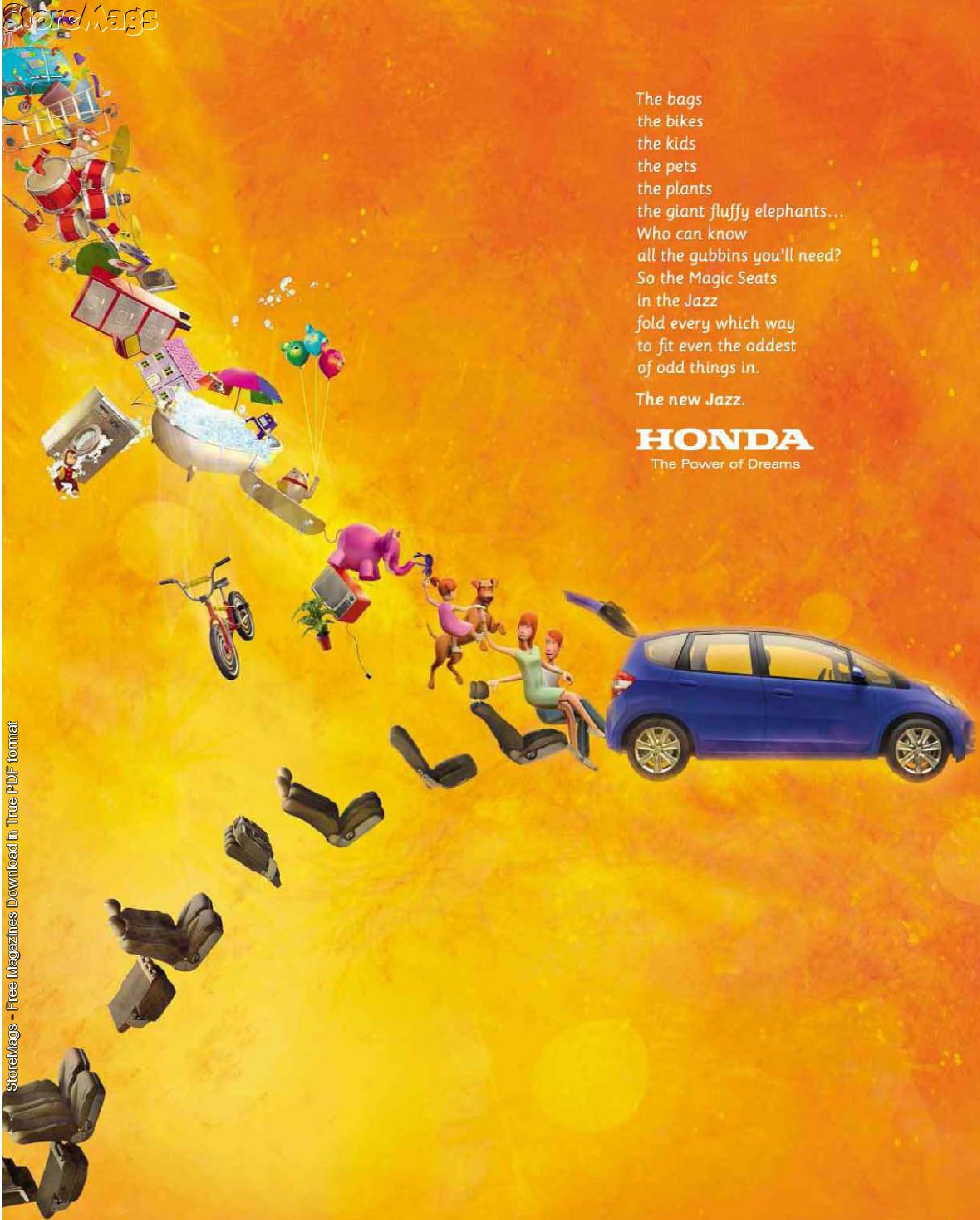
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ED SPEAK

Those of you who follow evo's Tweets (@evomagazine) will know that I recently broke my wrist. In an obvious attempt to extract some sympathy, I decided to Tweet a picture of the golf-ball that was slowly swelling on my wrist. The general consensus in Twitterland was 'ouch'.

It was a minor injury, caused by slipping on ice, but it meant major problems over Christmas – notably that with a whacking great cast on my arm I wouldn't be able to drive for several weeks. So my wife had to do all the driving over Christmas, and since then I've had to rely on lifts to work every morning. I've also got out of nappy-changing duties. Dang.

However, I'm almost thankful for the injury because not only do I feel like a better road tester for not having tested anything for a while, if you get my drift, but I've also come up with a pioneering new packaging solution for sports GT cars.

I'm a better road tester because having spent a lot of time as a passenger I have a greater appreciation of ride comfort, seating position and even build quality. Not being able to analyse steering feel, throttle response or ultimate grip has focused my attention on other things, like material quality, tactility and even differences in ride quality front to back.

Our Skoda Yeti long-termer, for instance, is a great car – but in the back the bench-like seat, low seat-back and perched seating position mean you're constantly fidgeting like a bodypopper with worms to get comfortable. However, unlike an Audi Q7 I also recently rode in, the Skoda's ride comfort in the rear was good. More of a shame, then, that its rear seats are so poor.

I also 'tested' a Renault Laguna GT Sport Tourer. Unlike the Yeti, this was a fine car to be chauffeured in. Plenty of leg-room, good view out, comfy seats reclined at a nice angle and smooth, but not too distant, ride. Wafting along in the Laguna, I began to daydream about a different kind of car. A car packaged around the idea of the driver sitting *behind* the passengers (let's face it, how often do you carry passengers?). A true realisation of the term 'back seat driver'.

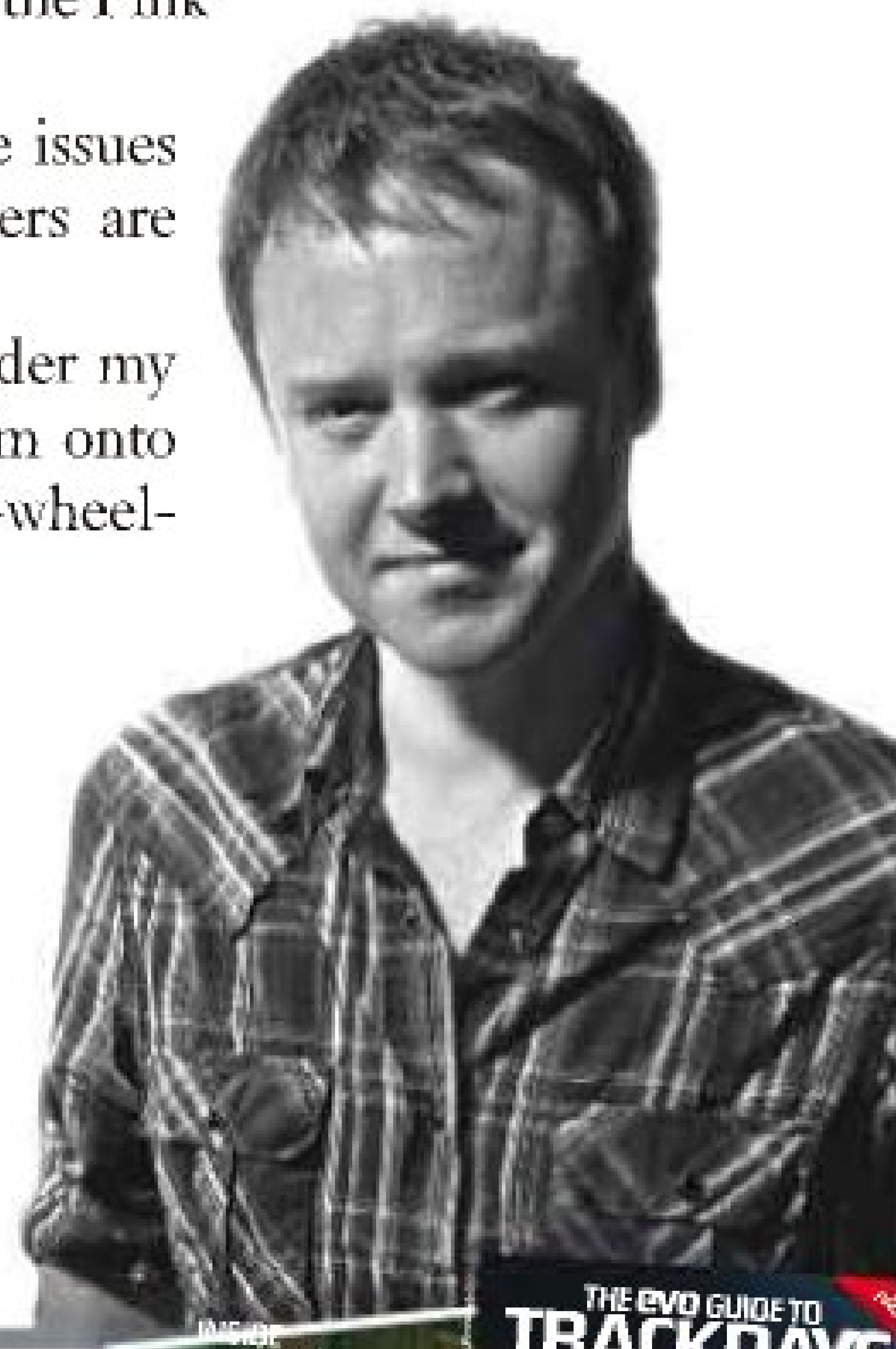
What I'm proposing is a four-seater GT with low-slung seating in the nose for three passengers, a raised driving position in the middle for the driver (flanked by luggage), and a rear-slung engine – a la Porsche 911. I admit there are a few issues with passenger safety requirements but I'm not talking about hanging a human in front of the front axle like the Pink Panther-mobile. Well, not much.

As you can tell, I've thought long and hard about all the issues here, including weight distribution. That or the painkillers are playing havoc with my mind.

If any budding car designers out there would like to render my idea, feel free to send them to eds@evo.co.uk. I reckon I'm onto something here. And you thought the new four-seat, four-wheel-drive Ferrari (p16) was radical...



Nick Trott, Editor



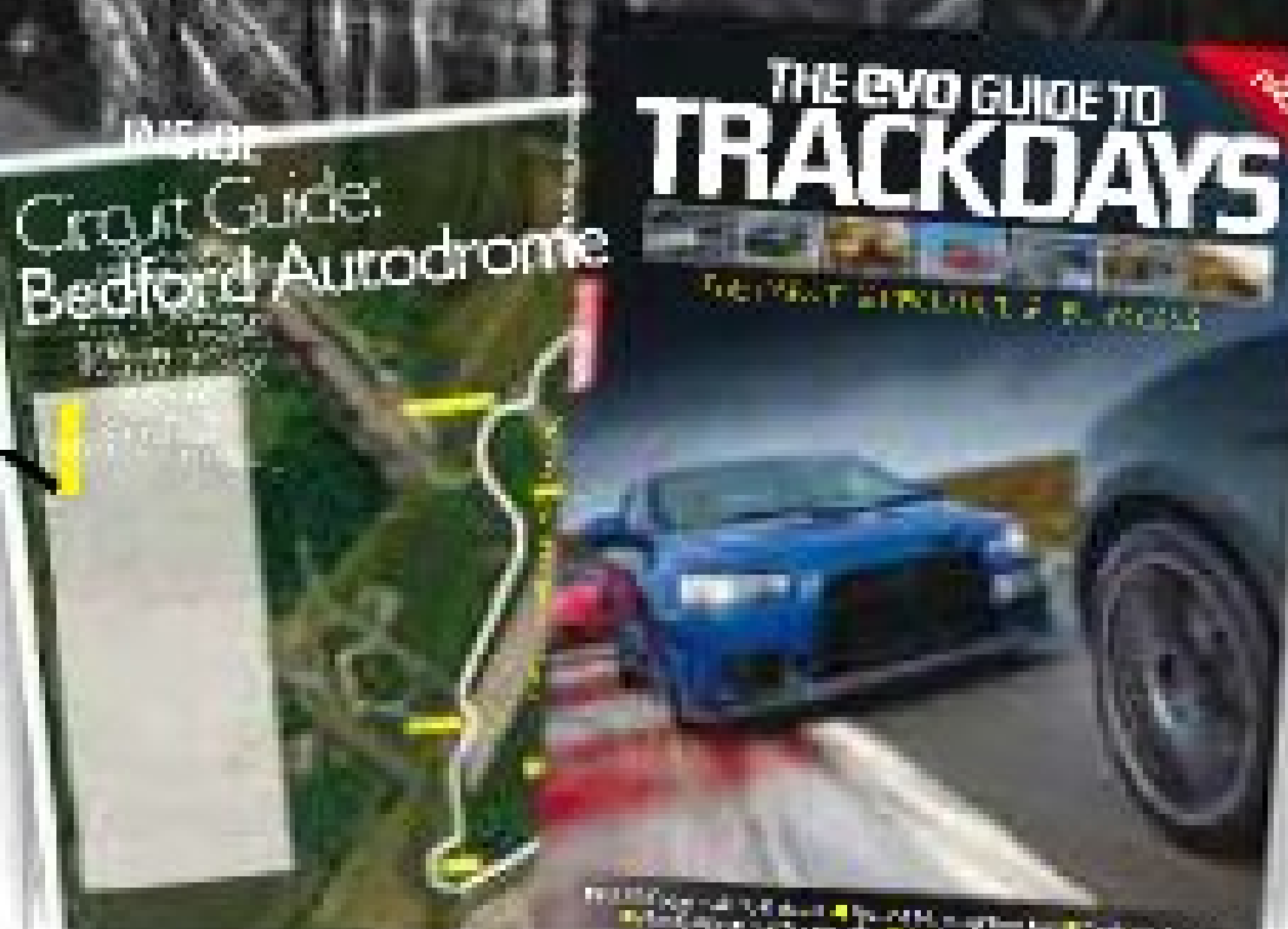
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VIDEOS ON EVO.CO.UK
■ Chris Harris reviews the hottest hatches of the moment: the Citroën DS3-R, Clio Cup, Mini Works, Corsa VXR and Polo GTI.



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HERO OF THE MONTH

VALENTINO BALBONI

■ What do you do when your Lamborghini breaks down late on a Friday night in Italy? Call the Vatican and ask the Pope to have a word with the big man upstairs? Amazingly, for evo's Harry Metcalfe it was as if divine intervention had actually occurred because former Lamborghini test driver Valentino Balboni, a man who knows a thing or two about the Countach, offered to help out. Balboni called a friend in the know and between them they fixed the car for Harry's epic trip home (p106). Grazie, Valentino.



NEXT ISSUE

WE DRIVE THE NEW McLAREN

The moment of truth for Britain's long-awaited, Ferrari-baiting supercar



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PORSCHE'S 757BHP HYBRID RACER

IT MAY COMPETE AT LE MANS, AND IT COULD
SPAWN A ROAD-GOING FERRARI 458 RIVAL.

HARRY METCALFE TAKES A CLOSER LOOK
AT THE 918 RSR – AND FINDS OUT ABOUT
PORSCHE'S FUTURE PLANS





SEE VIDEO OF
THE 918 RSR AT
EVO.CO.UK



'THE 3.4-LITRE V8 PRODUCES ITS PEAK POWER AT 10,300RPM

Porsche used the Detroit motor show in January to give the 918 hybrid supercar its second airing. Having first been shown at Geneva last year as a Spyder, here it appeared with a coupe body and racing makeover as the 918 RSR.

As you can read in our interviews with past and present Porsche R&D bosses that follow, the big news is that although this car is a hybrid, it could spawn a high-revving, naturally aspirated mid-engined supercar to sit above the 911 and go head-to-head with Ferrari's 458. And that's not all – further Porsche revelations include the possibility of four-cylinder engines and a PDK-equipped GT3.

As for the car you see here, think

of it as a cross between last year's Geneva show concept and the 911 GT3 R Hybrid that ran so well for so long at last year's Nürburgring 24hr race. Driving the rear wheels is a direct-injection 3.4-litre V8 derived from the RS Spyder LMP2 racing car and tuned to develop 555bhp at 10,300rpm, but added to that is a pair of electric motors on the front wheels that each contribute a further 101bhp, bringing the 918 RSR's total power output to 757bhp.

Unlike the 918 Spyder, the RSR doesn't store energy in a battery pack. Instead, and in common with the R Hybrid, energy is harvested under braking and stored in a flywheel spinning at up to 36,000rpm and mounted where you'd usually find the passenger seat. A button on the

steering wheel allows the driver to use the stored power in eight-second bursts. This is fed to the front wheels exclusively, and distributed between them as needed by a torque-vectoring function to maximise traction, speed and stability.

Presumably in homage to the original 917 race car of the early '70s, Porsche has also kitted out the RSR with a fan on the rear deck between the intakes, though it hasn't revealed if it actually serves any purpose.

The colour ('liquid metal chrome blue') is new, but it's hard to avoid the feeling that the overall scheme has been chosen to replicate the classic Gulf livery. The number 22 is important, too – it's shared with the 917 that won the 1971 Le Mans 24hrs having covered a record distance of



3315.21 miles – an achievement only bettered last year.

Boasting a carbonfibre reinforced monocoque and a racing sequential gearbox, the big question is whether the 918 RSR will actually race at all. Currently that looks unlikely, with most indications suggesting Porsche is using the car as a concept project to gauge feeling about a return to a major endurance racing programme sometime in the next few years.



'THE BIG QUESTION IS WHETHER THE 918 RSR WILL ACTUALLY RACE'



Right: flywheel resides in the cabin. Left: cameras act as mirrors. Below right: car bears names of regular Porsche racers Walter Röhrl and Marc Lieb

WILL PORSCHE BUILD A TRUE 458 RIVAL?

At the Detroit show, **evo** caught up with **Wolfgang Hatz**, Porsche's recently appointed new head of R&D, and asked him what he thought about building a non-hybrid, petrol-powered 918. Here's what he had to say.



■ 'It would be interesting but I have to ask for some time before looking at it, as we have a lot of interesting projects already. For me, a super-lightweight, non-hybrid 918 would be a really lovely car, and if you look at the price point of the special-edition 918 hybrid [below left, expected to cost around £425,000 when it goes on sale in 2013] and

the price of the top 911 Turbo [£133,553 for the Turbo S Cabriolet] then there is a big hole in our range.

'Therefore, there might be space for another Porsche product; that's all I can say on this.'

evo comment: We believe the 918 might just evolve into the Ferrari rival Porsche has desperately always wanted – a proper, lightweight, mid-engined production supercar – powered by a modified version of one of the V8 engines currently being developed for other Porsche models. Does this mean you will be seeing a Porsche 918 v Ferrari 458 v McLaren MP4-12C group test inside *evo* magazine one day? It's looking more and more likely by the day. Watch this space.



PORSCHE: THE FUTURE

Wolfgang Dürheimer has spent the last decade as Porsche's head of R&D and still oversees all VW group racing activities. Just before he took up his new post as CEO of Bentley and Bugatti, he told evo about the 918 RSR and other future Porsches

■ Four-cylinder engines

'We all like our flat-six unit, but we cannot neglect fuel efficiency, and using less energy is a criterion that counts towards our cars. It is our task to provide cars that will not drop performance – and might even increase performance a little – yet still take into account better fuel efficiency. And if this can be done with a four-cylinder application, then, even for a sports car, a four-cylinder engine is not a no-go, as long as the perception from the driver's seat, the sound and the feeling of acceleration and cornering remain excellent.'

evo comment: Given the recent efficiency improvements of the flat-six, we'd expect Porsche to lop two cylinders off it to create a flat-four of about 2.5 litres. The boxer layout would ensure distinct noise and power characteristics, while the reduced cylinder count would cut production costs.

■ A four-cylinder 911

evo comment: There was no word from Dürheimer on this, but we understand it's unlikely for the next-generation 911 (codenamed 991), which is expected to be unveiled at this year's Frankfurt show in September. It will be the 991's replacement, due in 2018, that may include a four-cylinder model.

■ Fast Audis with Porsche engines

'I think so, especially for the V8 side, but I can also see some applications for the Porsche flat-six and future flat-four engines across the VW group. I think it cannot hurt Audi to have a Porsche powerplant in its cars.'

evo: This goes hand-in-hand with Porsche's new responsibility for developing all sports models within the VW group. Where this leaves Audi's RS brand is unclear.

■ The next GT3 – and another GT2 RS

'We are preparing a new version of the engine we already have in serial application with the 911 [the direct-injection unit used by all current road-going 911s bar the GT2 and GT3], and the GT projects will get a very sporting application of this.' And the GT2 RS? 'Yes, we will do another, because the 911 chassis layout is so unique it can absorb a lot of power on the rear axle, and people who drove the GT2 RS really liked it. Of course, it needs a careful hand, but then dealing with over 600bhp is not for kids!'

evo: Don't expect the next GT2 RS to appear any earlier in the 991's model cycle than the current one did in the 997's. 2016 or 2017 seems like a safe bet. As for power, who knows, but around 700bhp is possible...

■ PDK for the GT3 and GT2

'For our street cars, PDK is the right solution, but for racing you only need performance, so a sequential change is better as it has less weight [around 25kg less] and there is no need for comfort. Our difficulty is that the GT cars are right in the middle of this sandwich, so the question is where should they go? If you ask me, a good way to go is PDK. We would have to accept the extra weight but you would gain being able to drive on the road better and still be very fast on the race track. Engineering needs to get

some weight out of our PDK system before we use it on our GT cars. This is the way to go.'

evo: From the horse's mouth: even the GT2 and GT3 aren't immune from the encroachment of dual-clutch transmissions.

■ A single-clutch, semi-auto gearbox, like that used on Lamborghini's Murciélago replacement, won't appear on a Porsche

evo: Dürheimer reckons this type of gearbox does not meet Porsche's comfort standards for use in its road cars. For an extreme sports car like the new Lamborghini, you can trade a bit of comfort because it's all about the performance. Seems Porsche is hooked on the PDK gearbox principle, even if it weighs more.

■ Porsche and Lamborghini sharing carbonfibre technology

'We have a very good understanding in technology-sharing activities within the VW group and everybody is looking at carbonfibre, showing applications and talking about the efficiency of process.'

■ The 918 Spyder – using components carried over from the Carrera GT

'The 918 is very different; the wheelbase is shorter, for example, but some parts from the GT were carried over, such as the suspension system. The dimensions inside the cockpit are the same, as we took the Carrera GT's monocoque as the starting point but then modified it to comply with today's crash regulations. On the production side, we will not be using the method used on the Carrera GT to layer up the carbon monocoque by hand as it's too time consuming.'

evo: The tub won't be as beautiful as the CGT's, but it'll be just as light. Expect it to use the same powdered and moulded technique Lamborghini demonstrated with the Sesto Elemento concept at Paris last year.

■ The 918 won't race... yet

'There is no decision to go racing with the 918 Spyder yet. When we developed the Carrera GT in 2002, it was solely a road car because we wanted to compete with the [Mercedes-McLaren] SLR and the Ferrari Enzo. We neglected to consider racing and after we launched the car a lot of people asked us what they had to do to make it a race car. The Carrera GT couldn't race as too many modifications were needed. With the 918 project, I reminded colleagues not to make the same mistake again. We needed to think about a racing application, so the 918 is being developed to be both a race and road car.'

evo: With Dürheimer in charge of all VW group racing activities, it's his call whether Audi or Porsche will represent the group at events like the Le Mans 24hrs.

■ A hybrid racing future

'The 918 RSR demonstrates that we see hybrid as a necessary step in endurance racing, ultimately allowing us the possibility of racing this car in LMP1'

evo: Dürheimer has already had an audience with FIA chief Jean Todt and the organisers of Le Mans, the ACO, to discuss the possibility of the 918 RSR being allowed to compete. Porsche is sticking to its guns with the hybrid race-car concept and hopes it will be accepted.

■ A row brewing over the cost of hybrid race cars

'Some car manufacturers are very concerned about the cost but we must make sure hybrid is not simply a box where you insert more and more dollars. One problem for us is the rule makers – they are not always good technicians, so they don't always understand innovation and therefore don't know how to deal with it. We need to explain it to them and let them see how it works. If something is better, then it needs to be the way forward. And then you could make a diesel hybrid...'





BMW'S NEW TURBO FOUR

241BHP 2-LITRE SPELLS THE END FOR NATURALLY ASPIRATED STRAIGHT-SIX

BMW is to build a performance four-cylinder engine for the first time in almost 20 years. The new unit, codenamed N20, incorporates direct fuel injection, twin-scroll turbocharging and variable valve timing and lift – none of which appeared on the 2.3- and 2.5-litre S14 four-cylinder fitted to the legendary E30 M3.

The new 1997cc engine will boast 241bhp at 5000rpm and 258lb ft of torque from just 1250rpm. It uses an all-aluminium crankcase and a 10:1 compression ratio, combined with a heavily oversquare architecture to generate a specific output of 120bhp per litre. Whether it will have the character of that old S14 engine remains to be seen.

What's not in doubt is that its arrival will signal the demise of one of *evo's* favourite engines, as the new turbo four will replace BMW's naturally aspirated straight-six.

The new 2-litre motor will make its UK debut in the Z4 this summer, where it will replace the existing 201bhp 2.5-litre straight-six. No performance figures have yet been claimed, but we'd expect a sub-6sec 0-62mph time, against the current car's claim of 6.6sec. It should also be more economical, with likely mpg and CO2 figures of around 38mpg and 175g/km,



**'THE 1997cc
ENGINE WILL
GENERATE
A SPECIFIC
OUTPUT OF
120BHP PER
LITRE'**

some 4mpg better and 24g/km lower than the existing six.

Where else will the N20 appear? While the 3-series is an obvious candidate, the current version is thought to be too far through its model cycle for BMW to bother investing in re-engineering. However, given that BMW's own research shows that buyers of entry-level petrol



S14 engine used in the E30 M3 (below) was BMW's last performance-biased four. Straight-six (below left) will be phased out

5-series don't expect to find a six-cylinder engine under the bonnet, you can expect an N20-powered 5-series to replace the 201bhp, 3-litre 523i in due course. We understand the flagship 254bhp 3-litre straight-six as fitted to the 528i and Z4 sDrive 30i will remain for the time being.

Of course, BMW isn't the only premium marque known to be working

on a turbo four. Porsche has confirmed it's looking into the possibility (see previous page) and Mercedes has admitted it's working on a twin-scroll-turbo four-cylinder for a forthcoming small AMG car, likely to be launched in two years' time. And if that's the case, how long will it be before everything goes full circle and we see a four-cylinder M-car again?

BECOME A RACING DRIVER WITH MSV

ENTER OUR COMPETITION TO WIN A RACE IN THE CLUB MSV TRACKDAY TROPHY

Evo has teamed up with MSV for a cracking competition to find a novice racing driver. The prize includes an entry into the Club MSV Trackday Trophy, plus training, an ARDS test to acquire a race licence, and registration fees.

The Club MSV Trackday Trophy was designed to provide trackday drivers with an easy way to get into racing. The atmosphere at the events is fun and relaxed, while entries are restricted to drivers who have

completed in six races or fewer. To reduce costs, each event takes place on a single day, with a 30-minute qualifying session and a 45-minute race.

evo's competition is open to those who have already participated in trackdays and have a reasonable knowledge of circuit driving. You'll be driving your own car and if it isn't race-ready you should be willing to convert it (roll cage, cut-off switch and fire extinguishers). You'll also need to be available on the dates offered.

The prize includes: a trackday with training at Snetterton on the brand new '300' circuit, including a full day on track in a car supplied by MSV and an ARDS test (Friday, March 4, RRP £439), a test day with instruction (RRP £500, date TBC), registration for the Trackday Trophy (RRP £75) and entry to a round of the Trackday Trophy (RRP £299, date and circuit TBC).

For full details, terms and conditions and to enter the competition, log on to evo.co.uk and click 'win'.



CLUB MSV
YOUR CAR. YOUR BIKE. OUR CIRCUITS.



FERRARI REVOLUTION!

IT'S THE MOST RADICAL FERRARI EVER. FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE, FOUR SEATS, A SHOOTING BRAKE BODY AND A DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE NAME – THE FF

Rumours suggested Ferrari was set to show the 612's replacement at the Geneva motor show in March, but little was known about what shape it might take. Now, ahead of schedule, we know – and we like what we see.

The new model is called simply FF, shorthand for 'Ferrari Four'. But it's not just the car's four seats that the name refers to – in a first for Ferrari, it also has four-wheel drive.

Given the way Porsche is approaching 4WD with its 918 RSR (petrol engine for the rear wheels, electric power for the fronts), you might have expected Ferrari to follow suit, especially after the 599 HY-KERS concept it showed at Geneva last year. But the FF doesn't use a hybrid powertrain; instead it gets all its power from a brand-new 6.2-litre naturally aspirated V12.

Before we get under the skin of this car, it's worth taking a closer look at the Pininfarina-designed exterior. To our eyes the profile has much in common with the BMW Z3 M Coupe (the design of the five-spoke alloys is similar, too), while the headlights have hints of the 458 Italia. Overall it looks taut, athletic and well balanced.

Packaged inside are four seats and a 450-litre load bay (800 litres with the rear seats folded flat) that apparently offer 'the best cabin space and boot capacity figures in its category, including four-door cars'. Ferrari hasn't revealed what it perceives as being the FF's rivals, but you'd have to assume its car has been benchmarked against the likes of the Aston Rapide, Maserati's GranTurismo and Bentley's Conti GT.

The 6262cc V12 features direct injection, which helps it develop a mighty 651bhp at 8000rpm and 503lb ft at 6000rpm. Both peaks are

'A TOP SPEED OF 208MPH IS CLAIMED, WITH 0-62MPH TAKING 3.7SEC'

higher than those achieved by the Enzo – proof, if it were needed, that this is a full-on supercar. The claimed performance figures back this up: top speed is said to be 208mph, with 0-62mph taking 3.7sec.

A dry weight of 1790kg (with a distribution split 47:53 front:rear) should mean the EU kerb weight will come in at around 1900kg, giving a power-to-weight ratio in the region of 350bhp per ton. The other figures worth pointing out are 18.3mpg and

360g/km, neither of which do Ferrari's claims to be improving emissions and efficiency many favours.

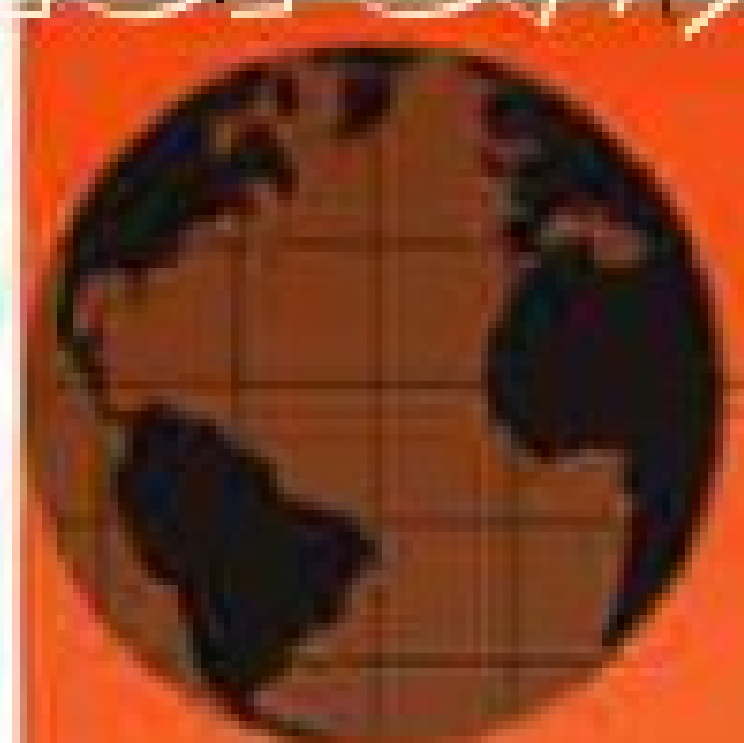
It can't help that the FF drives all four wheels, even if the firm claims its patented '4RM' system is 50 per cent lighter than most conventional 4WD systems. No more is known about how it works at the moment, although Ferrari has revealed that it is fully integrated with the electronics. Adaptive magnetorheological damping ('SCM3' in Ferrari-speak) and carbon-ceramic Brembo brakes also feature, and so, for the first time on a Ferrari V12, does a dual-clutch gearbox.

No official statement on pricing, but the word on the Ferrari grapevine is that the FF will cost no more than the outgoing 612, so around £220K.

Ferrari says the FF represents 'a decisive break with the past... not so much an evolution as a true revolution'. For once we have to agree with them.

FF's shooting brake body promises to offer 'extraordinary useability'. Looks have more than a hint of Z3 M Coupe, but we suspect the FF will have a touch more presence in the metal





ALL-NEW CATERHAM

300BHP SPORTS PROTOTYPE BUILT WITH LOLA; ONE-MAKE RACE SERIES PLANNED

There was much speculation about what Caterham's new car would be, but few people expected this. The SP/300R is the company's first mid-engined model.

It's a sports prototype-style car – hence the 'SP' in its name – designed and developed in collaboration with British race-car specialists Lola and powered by a mid-mounted, supercharged, 300bhp version of the 2-litre Ford Duratec in-line four. It will cost £72K, making it Caterham's most expensive car ever, and just 25 will be built in the first year, all destined for a UK-based one-make race series starting in 2012. Currently, there are no plans to produce road-going versions of the car.

'We thought long and hard about what sort of new car we should make, how we could complement the Seven road and race cars,' says Ansar Ali, MD of Caterham Cars. The decision? A car to give Seven racers another level to go to. 'We didn't set out to make the fastest sports prototype,' says Ali, 'we wanted something true to Caterham: affordable, reliable, exciting, accessible.'

Caterham started with a clean sheet just over a year ago, but it quickly realised that it needed a partner with the appropriate expertise. That's where British sports and single-seater race-car maker Lola Group came in.

The SP/300R's chassis is an aluminium tub, the bodywork is polyurethane and the suspension is double wishbones with pushrod-actuated dampers. Caterham has provided input in all areas, including adding subtle styling cues like a miniature version of the Seven's air intake in the nose. It also insisted that the bodywork be constructed from smaller panels rather than large clamshells, so that dismantling is a one-man job and repair is easier and cheaper.

The supercharged engine is a version of the established 2-litre Duratec unit, dry-sumped. This was selected over a tuned version of the recently announced turbocharged Ford EcoBoost engine for its more linear throttle response. However, Ali admits that the turbo engine could be fitted in the future. The Duratec is mated to a six-speed paddle-shift sequential Hewland transaxle. Performance of



WHY MAKE IT?

'Because the market is there,' explains Ansar Ali. 'The SP/300R provides a higher rung on the Caterham motorsport ladder for Seven enthusiasts to move up to. Also, although the circuit ability and pedigree of the Seven are recognised in many parts of the world, in some emerging markets with newly built F1 circuits, they aren't. Caterham's research says it will be much easier to sell affluent trackday enthusiasts a Caterham that looks like a race car, rather than one that merely goes and handles like one.'

0-60mph in around 2.5sec and a top speed of 170mph are claimed for the car, which has a target weight of 550kg.

Standard kit includes air jacks, a Stack/Momo digital dash, Schroth belts, AP Racing brakes, a fire extinguisher and an FIA-approved roll cage, all of which makes the SP/300R good value compared with rival products, claims Ali, adding that initially the only option will be paint.

'We've shown the car to most of the team principals in Caterham racing at a sneak preview and each one reckons they have a couple of customers who will be interested,' says Ali.

Production is slated to begin in September, in a new section of Caterham's Dartford factory.

'0-60MPH IN AROUND 2.5SEC AND 170MPH IS BEING CLAIMED'





Left: badge bears both the Lola and Caterham names. Below: lightweight polyurethane bodywork consists of seven panels for easier repair. Bottom: centre-lock wheels wear bespoke Cooper tyres



MUGEN ATOM

HONDA TUNER CREATES 275BHP TYPE-R ENGINE FOR LIMITED-EDITION ARIEL

Ariel has marked the Atom's tenth birthday with a new model. The Atom Mugen gets a tuned, blueprinted version of the 2-litre naturally aspirated Honda Type-R engine used by the regular 245bhp Atom.

Built at Mugen's Northampton European HQ, each engine takes seven days to build and develops 270bhp at 8600rpm and 188lb ft at 6000rpm, increases of 25bhp and 33lb ft. In the sub-600kg Atom that's enough to take the power-to-weight ratio from 498bhp/ton to 549bhp/ton, putting it ahead of a Bugatti Veyron (521bhp/ton) and resulting in a claimed 0-60mph sprint time of just 2.9sec.

Only ten Ariel Atom Mugens will be built, each with a special livery and a numbered plaque signed by the Mugen and Ariel technicians who worked on its build. 'We found that both

ourselves and Mugen had the same meticulous attention to detail in the build of our cars and their engines,' said Ariel director Simon Saunders. 'One Ariel technician makes a car; one Mugen technician builds an engine. The result is a truly hand-made car with a hand-made engine.'

The Atom Mugen will cost £49,740.

WHY MAKE IT?

'We were keen to stress the normally aspirated car as well as the [300bhp] supercharged car,' says Saunders. 'The nature of normally aspirated engines in terms of throttle response, torque and driveability is also very appealing to a lot of drivers, so tuning the standard 245 was a way to give a further power option.'

ROAD-LEGAL RADICAL

SR3 RACER GETS EURO TYPE APPROVAL

In other than the extraordinary 'art car' paint job, the SR3 SL looks like the trackday/raceday Radical SR3 that we've become very familiar with over the years, but this one is very different under the skin.

The SL (Street Legal) will be the first in the SR3 range to be sold primarily as a road car, and will have European Small Series Type Approval. Power comes from the next Focus ST's 2-litre turbo engine, but tuned to deliver 300bhp and with switchable maps to manage the torque, with Road, Wet and Race selections available.

This will be the archetypal racer for the road, weighing in at only 675kg and coming with underbody aerodynamics, a fly-by-wire throttle and a paddle-shift gearchange with auto-blipper. Prices will start at £81,300.



WHY MAKE IT?

'It's all due to the constant requests from our European distributors,' says Radical director Phil Abbott. 'They want a model that can be road-registered in their own country and to do that we have to go for European low-volume type approval, and also provide something that needs less maintenance than the race cars.'

COULD CATERHAM MAKE THE ELISE?

Caterham Cars has given 'serious consideration' to acquiring the tooling and rights to produce the Elise, should upwardly mobile Lotus consider selling them, says Caterham MD Ansar Ali. 'We recognise that there is a significant opportunity. It's certainly on our radar.'

The demise of the Elise would leave a big gap in the sports car market, and the mid-engined two-seater would complement the Dartford company's newly expanded portfolio. 'We wouldn't be compromising any of our values,' says Ali. 'It's a completely logical step for our business.'

The company would be well staffed to take it on, too. Ali was general manager at Lotus before taking on

the role of MD at Caterham when venture capitalists Corven acquired the business from the Nearn family in early 2005. There are a couple more ex-Lotus staff working at Dartford, too. 'I have colleagues here who were instrumental in the engineering and assembly of the mk1 Elise,' says Ali.

And there is, of course, a historical precedent: the Seven, the staple of Caterham's business, was originally a Lotus until Colin Chapman sold the rights to Graham Nearn in 1973. This time around, however, it's unlikely that Caterham will be the only bidder for a car which, if taken back to its mk1 basics, could be as relevant and exciting today as it was when it was launched back in 1996.



STINGER HITS UK

NEW DETECTOR WARNS OF GATSO, SPECS, RADAR AND LASER SPEED TRAPS

Some of you are no doubt delighted that central government funding has been withdrawn from the Safety Camera Partnerships here in the UK. However, whilst it has always been easy to spot the well signposted and fluorescent yellow Gatsos that they operate, the bigger threat to licences and wallets could well be a rise in the number of police-operated laser speed traps, and of course the ubiquitous SPECS average-speed cameras springing up on motorways.

In response to this, Stinger, the Dutch 'high-end speed-trap protection' manufacturer renowned throughout Europe, is starting to expand its sales into the UK market.

Ironically, radar detectors are now illegal in the Netherlands (unlike in the UK), but Stinger neatly sidesteps this issue by classifying its system as a 'car computer'. That is an accurate description too, because the Stinger DSI Computer can, for example, be used to log business versus personal mileage using its GPS abilities.

That same GPS can, of course, alert you to known safety camera locations and is particularly useful in SPECS camera zones, where it will display your average speed and even tell you how far you are in the measurement zone and how far it is to the end.

For traditional radar traps, the Stinger uses a unique 'phased array radar' or patch antenna – based on military fighter and anti-aircraft radar – and has over twice the range of even the best traditional radar detectors. This is combined with a state-of-the-art spectrum analyser that enables it to hugely reduce false alerts.

THE LAW AND DETECTORS

Using traditional radar detectors in the UK was viewed as being in contravention of the Wireless and Telegraphy Act of 1949, but a court ruling in January 1998 clarified that they are in fact legal. Since then several iterations of the Road Safety Bill have threatened to outlaw detectors, but so far, to our knowledge, they have not gone through.

Likewise, attempts have been made to ban laser jammers outright, but so far they are still legal to own, although their use could result in prosecution.

As for laser, the Stinger can be equipped with an optional laser alert system that can also be configured to raise a 'Laser Shield' to give an errant driver time to correct his or her speed and allow the speed camera to get a second reading – hopefully at a legal speed.

I tried out Stinger's company demonstrator BMW and can confirm that a) Holland does have a lot of speed cameras and b) the device does everything its maker claims.

Of course, such comprehensive protection doesn't come cheap, and all Stinger systems need to be professionally installed by an approved dealer. Basic systems start from £529 plus installation.

For more details on the Stinger DSI Computer visit www.stinger.co.uk and for a list of UK dealers head to www.celsiusice.co.uk

David Yu

WHAT MAKES A

OLLIE MARRIAGE LOOKS AT HOW TYRES ARE

We spend perhaps more time and effort developing winter tyres than summer tyres,' says Dr Andreas Topp, Continental's technical benchmark manager. Still think that winter tyres are the poor relation?

The recent harsh conditions have obviously persuaded some people of the benefits: this season UK motorists have bought three times more cold-weather tyres than last – although that's still only a little over one per cent of the 33million tyres sold each year in the UK. In Germany the proportion is about 40 per cent.

But why do winter tyres offer so much more grip in cold conditions? Is it the compound? The tread? The carcass? Is a winter tyre just an off-road tyre? And what exactly is a sipe?

The best place to start is with the compound. A typical summer tyre is designed to operate at higher temperatures than we typically 'enjoy' between November and March, so the materials it's made from harden when the mercury drops and fail to fully mould with the road surface. This reduces the contact patch and lessens grip. Simple stuff.

Analysing what materials have what effect in a tyre is much more complicated – and often a closely guarded secret. According to Dr Topp,

'the basic ingredients are about 35-40 per cent rubber – both natural and synthetic – 30 per cent silica, 15 per cent softening agents, and the rest is made up from reinforcements such as steel cord and belts, polyester, and up to ten chemical agents that do things such as protect from ageing. With a summer tyre you tend to have less natural rubber and more synthetic materials, but the actual carcass of the tyre really doesn't change.'

The tread is made up of two main components: the blocks and the small wavy cuts in them, known as sipes. 'The best way to think of them is that the blocks help traction in snow and the sipes are for ice,' explains Topp. The idea is that the large grooves fill with snow (see main image) because snow grips well on other snow. Meanwhile the sipes allow the rubber around them to deform under pressure, so the leading edges protrude

**'ON ICE,
THE MORE
BITING EDGES
YOU HAVE,
THE BETTER
THE GRIP'**





A WINTER TYRE?

DESIGNED & TAILORED FOR SNOW, ICE AND COLD TARMAC

WINTER v OFF-ROAD TYRES

■ There's a misconception that winter tyres and off-road tyres are the same thing, but actually the two are very different.

Off-road tyres have big chunky blocks, which are great for mud and rocks – and loose snow. However, the blocks tend to be stiff and the compound hard for off-road durability, both of which mean the tyre will struggle for grip on ice. But if sipes and softer compounds were fitted, stones could get in and cause cuts.

'An off-road tyre with more grooves than normal can earn an M+S [mud and snow] rating,' explains Goodyear Dunlop's James Bailey, 'but be aware that it doesn't have to have a winter compound to get this.'



Sipes cover the tread blocks (right) and have a complex 3D cut (above)

and bite into the surface – and on ice the more biting edges you have, the better the grip. However, if the sipes were cut straight down into the tyre, the flex would destabilise the structure and result in imprecise handling, so to prevent this a three-dimensional cut is used (see detail image) so the rubber locks together further into the tyre.

There are a couple more things worth clearing up. Chiefly thanks to more supple modern compounds, narrower tyres are only really more effective in loose snow. Similarly, modern material structures mean that winter tyres are no noisier than summer tyres, and they don't wear any faster, either. Oh, and if you think the winter tyre is a new phenomenon, think again: the first specific cold-weather tyre arrived in 1934.





VANTAGE UPGRADE

NEW VANTAGE S MODEL HAS V12 STYLING, UPRATED V8, SEVEN-SPEED GEARBOX AND REVISED CHASSIS

There's more to this car than you might think. Assuming, that is, that you're thinking this is an Aston Martin V8 Vantage that's been tweaked to look more like the V12. That's correct as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough.

This is the Vantage S. Due to be launched at the Geneva motor show in March as both coupe and Roadster, it's a new addition to the Vantage range and has a series of modifications that won't be offered on the standard car. These include more power, a new seven-speed gearbox, quicker steering, larger brakes, uprated stability control, a lighter kerb weight and, of course, a range of body mods.

The S doesn't get the extra bonnet vents of the V12 (that was judged a visual compliment too far), but the front and rear bumpers and the side sills are carried over, plus there are new 19in wheels, exclusive to the S, that are wider and wear bespoke Bridgestone rubber.

Under the bonnet, the 4.7-litre V8 produces an extra 10bhp and 15lb ft thanks to a revised air intake and optimised spark-plug electronics. The engine can now also recognise high-octane fuel and respond accordingly to liberate a few extra bhp. A new

silencer and bypass-valve map should ensure the V8 makes an even nicer noise than it already does.

Aston claims peaks of 430bhp at 7300rpm and 361lb ft at 5000rpm for the revised engine and presumably hopes the presence of a new sequential manual gearbox will draw a veil over the modest power gains. 'Sportshift II', as the system is called, is a significant development. It's not a double-clutch gearbox (that would have weighed an extra 50kg), but shifts are 20 per cent faster than with the old Sportshift paddle-operated transmission, there's an extra ratio, gearing is shorter for better sprinting and the weight of the gearbox has dropped 24kg. This accounts for the lion's share of the savings that see 30kg stripped off the standard V8 Vantage's kerb weight, the hard-top S coming in at 1600kg.

There's no word yet on what performance gains these changes will bring (the regular V8 Vantage takes 4.7sec to get to 60mph), but a more rewarding driving experience appears to have taken priority over extra speed. To this end, the steering has 2.6 turns between locks rather than 3, the diameter of the front brake discs is up 25mm to 380mm (yet each disc weighs 0.4kg less), and perhaps most significantly there are new rear spring

rates for the coupe, while both models have retuned dampers and bump-stops to improve traction and stability.

The S's DSC features an intermediate 'Track Mode' setting, while a Sport button gives a more aggressive throttle response, quickens gearchanges by 60milliseconds and opens the exhaust

bypass valves earlier.

'The result is a pure driver-focused package,' claims Ian Minards, Aston's product development director. Proof will come when deliveries of the £102,500 Vantage S coupe (Roadster prices will be announced in due course) start at the end of March.



Right: mk3 SLK's exterior comes with an SLS-style nose, but otherwise the changes over the old car aren't easy to spot. Above left: cabin design also mimics the SLS



3.5-litre V6-powered SLK350 with 302bhp. Hopefully an AMG version is in the pipeline to properly spice things up, but at launch the quickest SLK will be the V6, which will take 5.6sec to get from a standstill to 62mph.

All three engines come with stop/start and direct injection, while even

the 350 is capable of an official figure of 39.7mpg on the combined cycle.

There are three suspension choices: standard, Sport, with harder springs and dampers, or Dynamic Handling, with continuously adjustable dampers.

The new SLK goes on sale in June, with prices yet to be announced.

SLK PLAYS SAFE

SLS LOOKS AND GREENER ENGINES FOR MERCEDES' NEW BABY ROADSTER



Mercedes will officially unveil the third-generation version of its smallest roadster at the Geneva motor show

in March. Reaction to early press photographs suggests the reception may well be mixed. The new SLK uses the new nose style pioneered by the SLS (and more recently seen on the CLS), though that isn't enough to dispel the impression that Mercedes has played it safe.

But maybe that shouldn't come as a surprise. After 15 years of the SLK,

Mercedes knows the model's audience well, and has given them a car that won't alienate any of them. It does have some neat features too, chief amongst them 'Magic Sky Control' – a glass roof panel in the folding hard-top that changes from transparent to dark-tinted at the touch of a button. It's an option, of course, but one that is sure to tempt buyers.

Three engines will be available from launch: a pair of supercharged 1.8s with either 181bhp or 201bhp (badged the SLK200 and SLK250) and the



Vantage S



Main pic: body gains V12's skirts and bumpers. Above left: Roadster version also available. Above: seats bear 'Vantage S' script

'HOPEFULLY AN AMG VERSION IS IN THE PIPELINE'



BRIEFS



NEW LOTUS F1 CAR

Lotus used the Autosport show in January to pull the wraps off its new F1 car, complete with iconic black-and-gold colour scheme.

Lotus recently acquired a majority stake in Renault F1 Team, which has now been rebranded Lotus Renault GP, with Renault reduced to engine supplier and sponsor.

Confusingly, Team Lotus, which has no ties to the Norfolk firm, will continue to compete alongside in 2011.



400BHP FOCUS RS

Mountune showcased a further upgrade to the Ford Focus RS at the Autosport show. Named the MR400+ it's still a concept at the moment, but it features a revised turbo, larger bore exhaust downpipes, a sports catalyst, a cast inlet plenum and larger fuel injectors to guarantee over 400bhp.

Two suspension set-ups are also under development, along with a 370mm brake upgrade and further circuit-focused cooling modifications. Prices have yet to be announced.



AUDI E-TRON SPYDER

Audi didn't send its e-tron Spyder concept to either Autosport or the recent Detroit show. Instead it chose to highlight its technical aspects at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Like Porsche's 918 RSR, the e-tron uses an internal combustion engine to drive the rear wheels, with a pair of electric motors for the fronts. In the e-tron it's a 3-litre TDI (296bhp and 479lb ft) and two 43bhp motors, giving totals of 382bhp and 739lb ft. 0-60mph takes a claimed 4.4sec.

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A POSTCARD FROM: DAKAR 2011

VOLKSWAGEN'S DRIVERS RACE EACH OTHER FOR THE WIN
AFTER THE OPPOSITION FLOUNDERS IN SOUTH AMERICA

The Dakar rally might not have been anywhere near Senegal (or Paris for that matter) for three years now, but that hasn't made it any less spectacular. Starting in Buenos Aires on January 1, heading to the Pacific coast in northern Chile and then returning to the Atlantic again in Argentina, crossing the Pampas, the Atacama desert and the Andes (twice) along the way, it is an amazing way to start the motorsport year.

Volkswagen was back in force with its four teams of Race Touareg 3s and was the clear favourite to take another

win. The main competition came from Stephane Peterhansel's X-Raid BMW X3, but a spate of punctures saw him out of contention by the rest day: he eventually finished fourth, as he did in 2010. Robby Gordon's Hummer was popular but from early on was struggling mechanically and then blew an engine on a link stage. Meanwhile, the Mini Countryman of Guerlain Chicherit rather unfortunately exited the rally after a roll during a test session on the rest day.

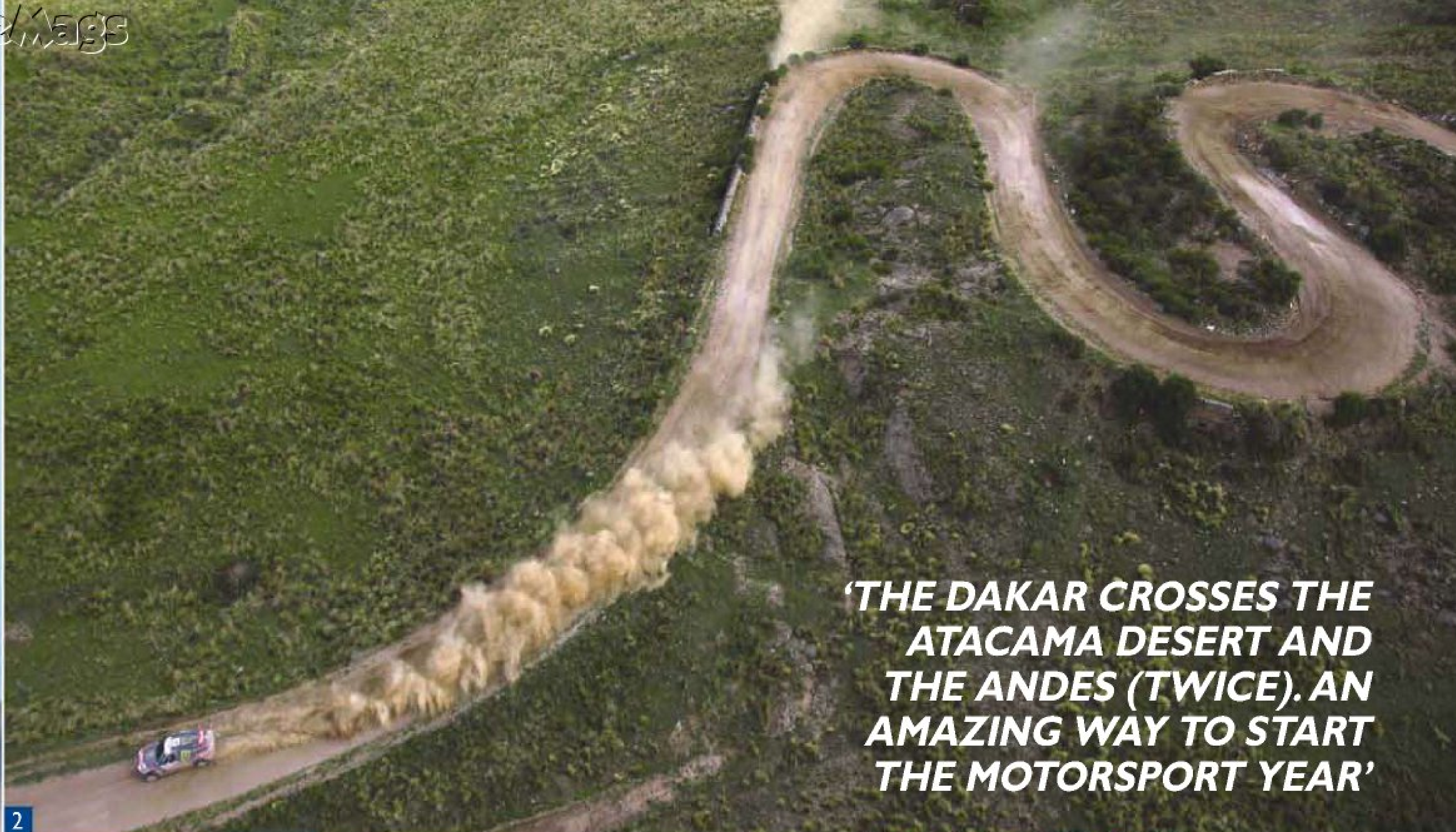
This left the VW crews to fight amongst themselves. Last year's winner,

Carlos Sainz, was the slim favourite but he was chased hard from the outset by last year's runner-up, WRC driver Nasser Al-Attiyah. It remained desperately close but the Spaniard first lost precious minutes in a dune and then broke his suspension on stage 11, leaving Al-Attiyah to take his maiden win.

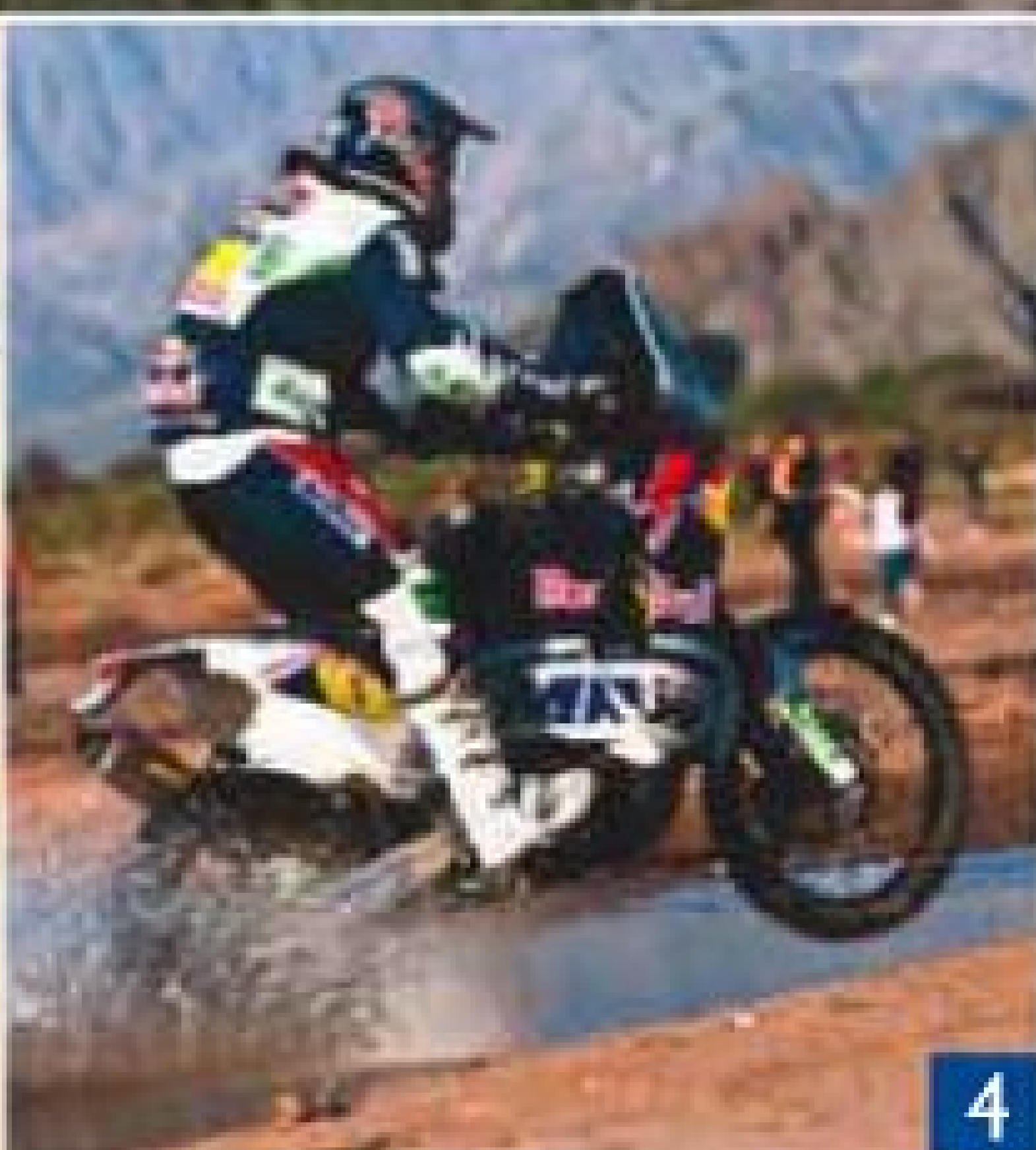
On the bikes, KTM rider Marc Coma took his third title, beating long-time rival Cyril Despres. The class for Quads (which look even scarier!) was won by Alejandro Patronelli, and Kamaz trucks once again dominated their class with Vladimir Chagin taking the win.

1





'THE DAKAR CROSSSES THE ATACAMA DESERT AND THE ANDES (TWICE). AN AMAZING WAY TO START THE MOTORSPORT YEAR'



1. Race Touareg shrugs off a dune. 2. Aerial shot of X-Raid BMW X3 shows diversity of terrain. 3. Mini Countryman makes its motorsport debut. 4. Bike class winner, KTM rider Marc Coma. 5. Al-Attiyah celebrates. 6. X-Raid truck. 7. VW Red Bull truck. 8. X3 was blighted by punctures, while Countryman (9) rolled on a rest-day test





Zeal Optics Transcend GPS

Price: from **£257**

From: www.zealoptics.com

If you're going skiing this winter and want the coolest goggles on the slopes then look no further. Inside the visor of the Transcend GPS is an LCD display that can show, amongst other things, your location, speed and altitude, the temperature or a stopwatch. You can even connect the goggles to a computer later to download and analyse your data

EVO ESSENTIALS

PLANNING SOME FUN IN THE SNOW THIS WINTER?
HERE'S THE KIT YOU WON'T WANT TO BE WITHOUT



Porsche bobsleigh

Price: **£204** From: www.porsche.com/uk

Think the 911 GT2 RS is a bit safe and steady? For a lot less money you could get yourself a Porsche that will scare you silly – a skeleton bobsleigh. Weighing only 4kg, it apparently has excellent directional stability and good braking – although that rather depends who's on it. Comes with a carry case

ABS avalanche airbag

Price: from **£569**

From: www.abs-airbag.com

The idea behind this avalanche protection backpack is simple: if you get swept away you pull a parachute-style ripcord and gas canisters inflate the two airbags with 170 litres of air, the buoyancy helping lift you to the top of the moving avalanche and improving survival odds massively. Some models even come with wireless activation, so if you've been knocked unconscious, your friends can trigger your pack remotely



WINTER SPORT
SPECIAL



Ignite d3o hat

Price: from **£35**

From: www.ignitebeanies.com

Like the idea of extra protection on the slopes but don't want to go the whole hog and wear a helmet? You'll be needing one of Ignite's d3o beanies. They're lined with a hi-tech gel material that's normally soft and squidgy, but when hit contains molecules that lock together to spread the impact force and protect your noggin. Clever stuff

Wally skis

Price: **£1100-£1270**

From: www.wally.com

Wally is best known for its stunning carbonfibre powerboats (see website for images), but the Monaco-based firm has now turned its composites expertise to creating a range of skis. Only 500 pairs are available each season and they're claimed to be 30 per cent lighter than conventional skis. Our favourite model? The Freewally, obviously



**THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN SEXY CARS. WAIT
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Fuel consumption figures for the V60 in mpg (l/100km); Urban 40.9 (6.9) – 19.5 (14.5), Extra Urban 64.2 (4.4) – 38.7 (7.3), Combined 52.3 (5.4) – 28.5 (9.9), CO2 Emissions 237-142g/km.



PLANET evo

WATCH ESSENTIALS

BRM makes an Abarth!

FRENCH WATCHMAKER'S NEW MODEL FEATURES ITALIAN TUNER'S STYLING CUES. SIMON DE BURTON HAS THE DETAILS

BRM VI2-T-44-Abarth

Price: c£4150

From: www.brm-manufacture.com

If you're a fan of '60s GP racing, the initials BRM will probably make you think 'British Racing Motors', the F1 team for which Graham Hill was driving when he became World Champion in 1962. But BRM also stands for Bernard Richards Manufacture, the French watch brand established by car and motorcycle enthusiast Bernard Richards in 2002. His products, invariably large in size and low in volume, are squarely aimed at those who appreciate engineering – everything from the hands and the push-pieces to the bezel and the case is exquisitely milled, drilled, turned and polished. BRM watches are already popular among the F1 set, and now the car connection is further enhanced with the introduction of this limited-edition Abarth version of the VI2 model. The Abarth scorpion logo – inspired by founder Carlo Abarth's star sign – is engraved on the watch's crown and printed on its dial, while the 44mm case is made from lightweight titanium and attached by a black Nomex strap with red stitching that's meant to echo the colour of the instruments in Abarth-tuned cars. Just 49 examples will be made.



Ralph Lauren Sporting

Price: £8050

From: ralphlaurenwatches.com

US fashion icon Ralph Lauren moved into the watch game two years ago – but these are not 'fashion watches' in the usual sense of the word. A deal struck with luxury goods giant Richemont means that the movements found in RL watches are all top-quality items supplied by either Jaeger-LeCoultre, IWC or Piaget, while the cases, dials, etc. are commensurately well finished. The man himself has a car collection to die for and allegedly borrowed the design of this latest piece from the clock on the dashboard of his 1938 Bugatti Type 57SC Atlantic (value, if you're interested, \$40million-plus). Normally I'd balk at the idea of a wooden dial, but the elm surround on this seems to perfectly complement the deliciously retro markings. Beneath the veneer you'll find a simple but nicely finished IWC hand-wound movement with a 45-hour power reserve. The official unveiling of the watch took place at Geneva's Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie in late January, but it won't be available to buy until the summer. Start saving.

Christopher Ward C70 Brooklands

Price: £510

From: www.christopherward.co.uk

Christopher Ward established his eponymous watch business in 2005 with the aim of making decent quality watches affordable by cutting-out the middle man and selling direct to the public. Unsurprisingly, the business has proved rather successful and now the Berkshire-based firm offers more than 70 different models, all of which are Swiss-made. There are several car-derived watches in the range, the latest being the C70 Brooklands, which has a quartz chronograph movement independently certified by the Contrôle Officiel Suisse des Chronomètres. The 42mm steel case houses a BRG-coloured dial in homage to the Brooklands GP after which the watch is named and is complemented by a brown leather strap – with racy perforations, of course.





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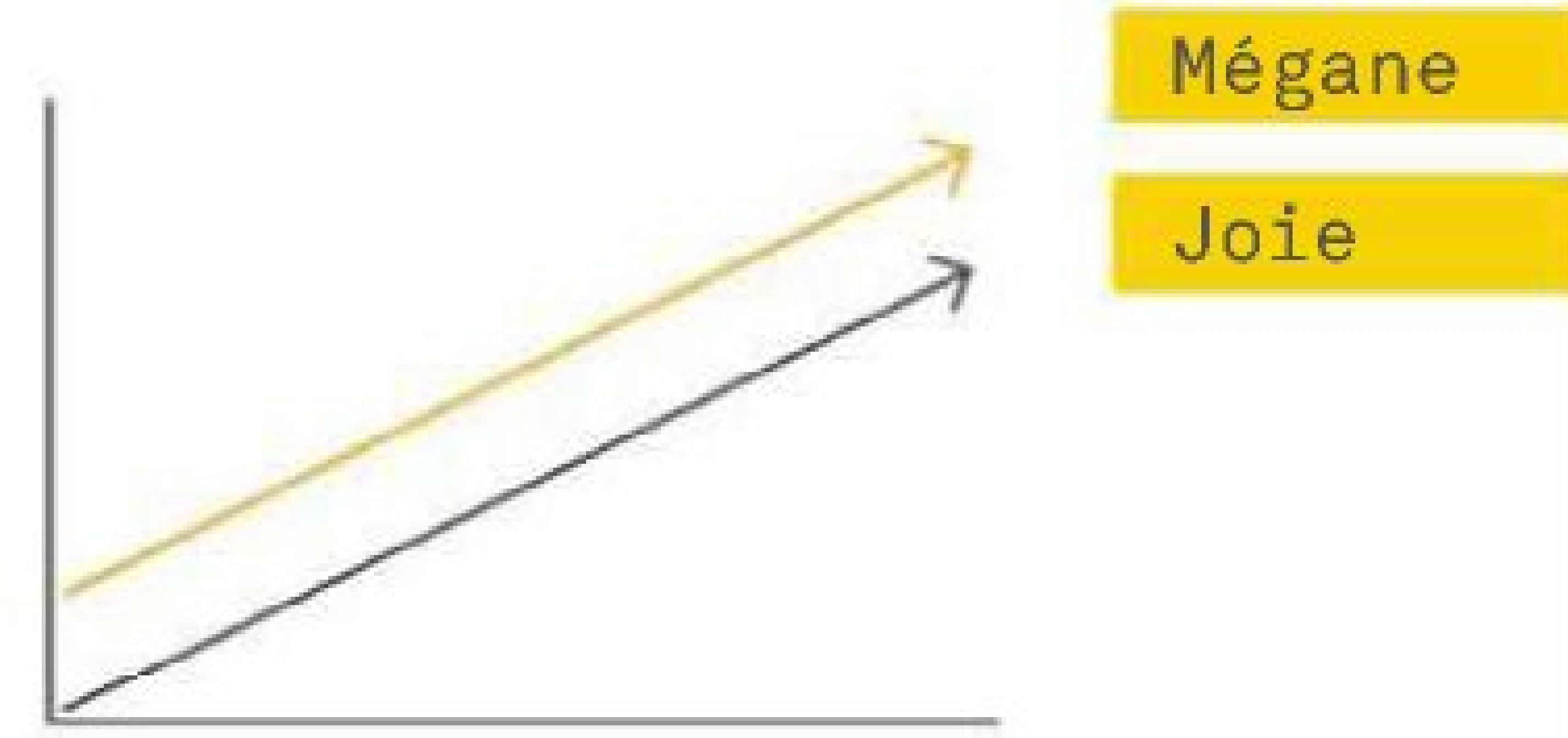
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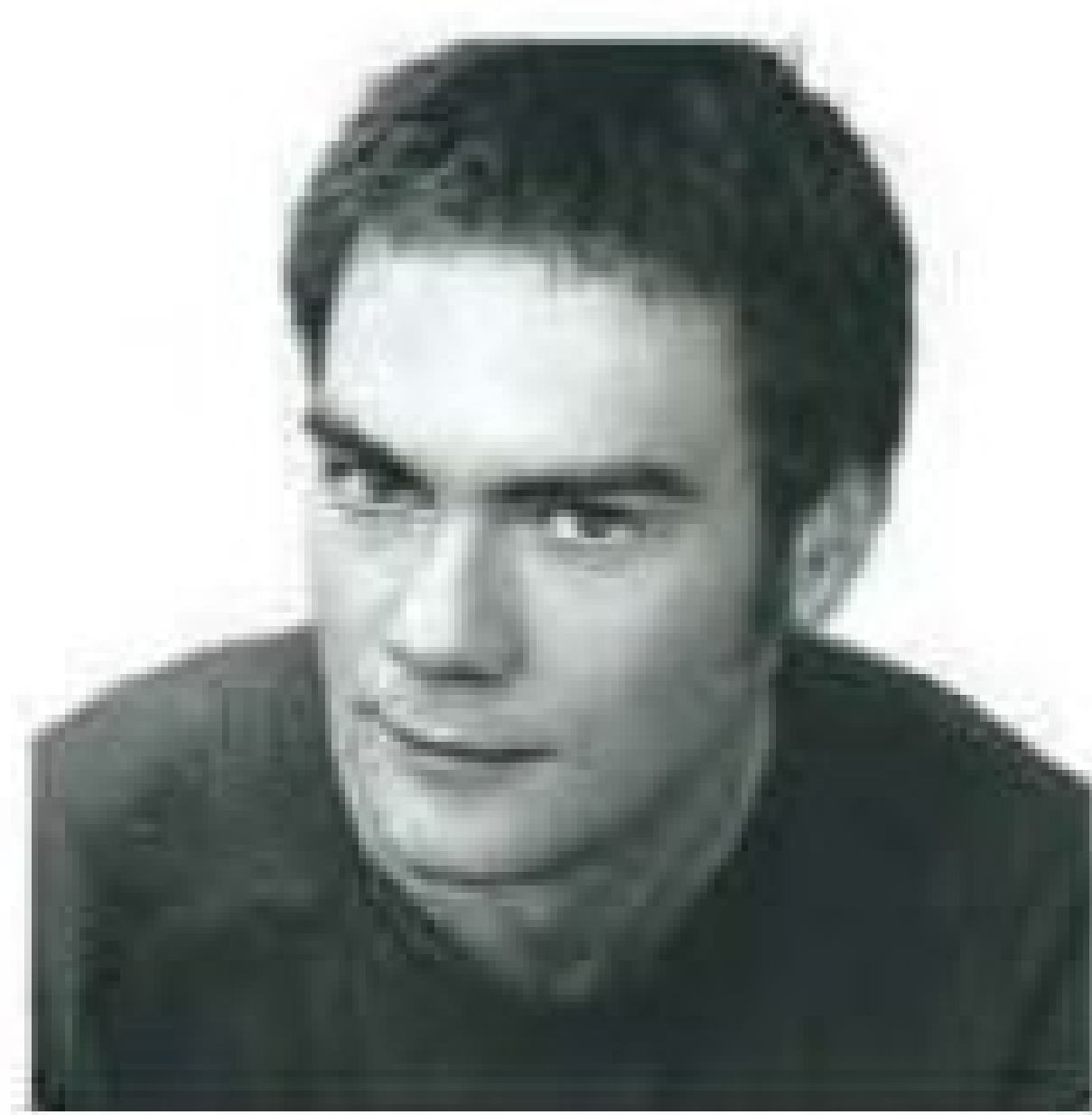
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DRIVE THE CHANGE





Petrolhead

Richard Porter

Whether it's a reality TV programme or a movie, Porter finds himself being constantly distracted by glimpses of ropery old cars

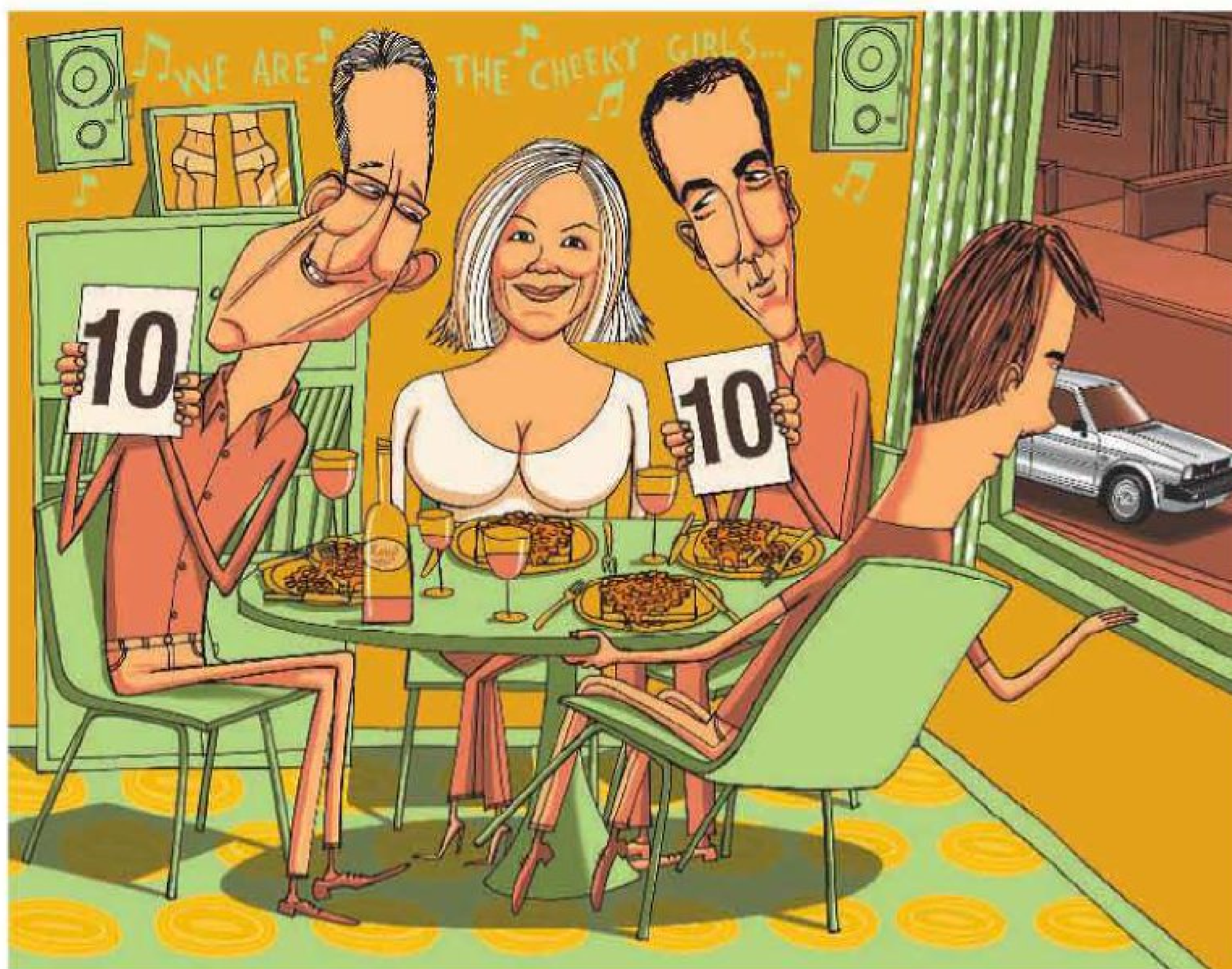
Are you familiar with perma-preggers TV property expert Sarah Beeny? I suspect you are. After all, research says over 90 per cent of *evo* readers are men and most

men have an interest in programmes fronted by Ms Beeny because, whether gestating a child or not, she undoubtedly has rather large breasts.

With that in mind, you may well have caught some of the recent series, *Beeny's Restoration Nightmare*, in which the titular host ignored her own sage advice and signed the deeds to a stately home of such unmanageable size and hopeless disrepair that it might as well have been called The Millstone. The cameras then followed her attempts to claw back some of this questionable investment by turning the crumbling pile into a wedding venue, none of which was even half as interesting as something I spotted halfway through the final episode. Amidst the building chaos and the ticking clock of a vital deadline, it was impossible to ignore a scene in which a harassed Beeny was briefly seen at the wheel of what appeared to be a mkIII Ford Granada.

'Crikey, I think that was a mkIII Ford Granada,' I was about to say to my wife before remembering that I don't want her to leave me. Fortunately just a few minutes later there was a clear exterior shot of Mr Beeny zooming down his driveway and yes, it was definitely a mkIII Granada. Better than that, it was fantastically shabby. Frankly, I was hoping the rest of the show would contain many more scenes involving the mkIII Granada and rather fewer sequences depicting some couple getting married, but the director of this programme clearly didn't share my interest in aerodynamic 1980s executive cars.

This, for me, is a constant problem. I find the cars in the back of shot a lot more interesting than the programme itself. Take the popular dining and social awkwardness-based TV show *Come Dine With Me*. If you've never seen it, I won't bore you with the details except to say that it involves



'OUTSIDE WAS A TRIUMPH ACCLAIM. WAS THIS OPIK'S CAR? AND IF SO, WHAT HAD MADE HIM CHOOSE IT?'

annoying idiots going to other people's houses for dinner and an argument, topped off with a snarky voiceover by a man who sounds like a talking kazoo.

Anyway, the other week they transmitted a celebrity version of the show featuring former MP and ongoing rhombus-faced buffoon Lembit Opik. For most viewers, the biggest revelation was discovering that life after politics has not been kind to the wonky divvy's domestic arrangements. Not unless he's always lived in what appears to be a very cheap student flat.

But the really interesting thing was a shot of the street outside, which clearly showed a silver Triumph Acclaim. Was this Opik's car? And, if so, what made him choose such a curious piece of Anglo-Japanese co-operation? Unfortunately the director denied us a close-up of the boxy

Triumphonda, preferring to cut straight to the spoon-chinned berk faffing about in his kitchen. I couldn't really enjoy the rest of the programme as a result. Mostly because I'd rather look at a Triumph Acclaim than watch four has-beens trying to give each other food poisoning. Instead the stubby little pretend-Triumph was simply another back-of-shot car that was more interesting than the TV show itself.

This happens in movies, too. Do you remember the awful, awful film *Sliding Doors*? Hang on, you're thinking, I don't remember *Sliding Doors* being that bad. Trust me, it was on the telly the other day and I can confirm that it is. Your mind is trying to blot out the pain and misery, in the same way it does with visits to IKEA. 'How bad can a trip to IKEA be?' you think to yourself. And the next thing you find

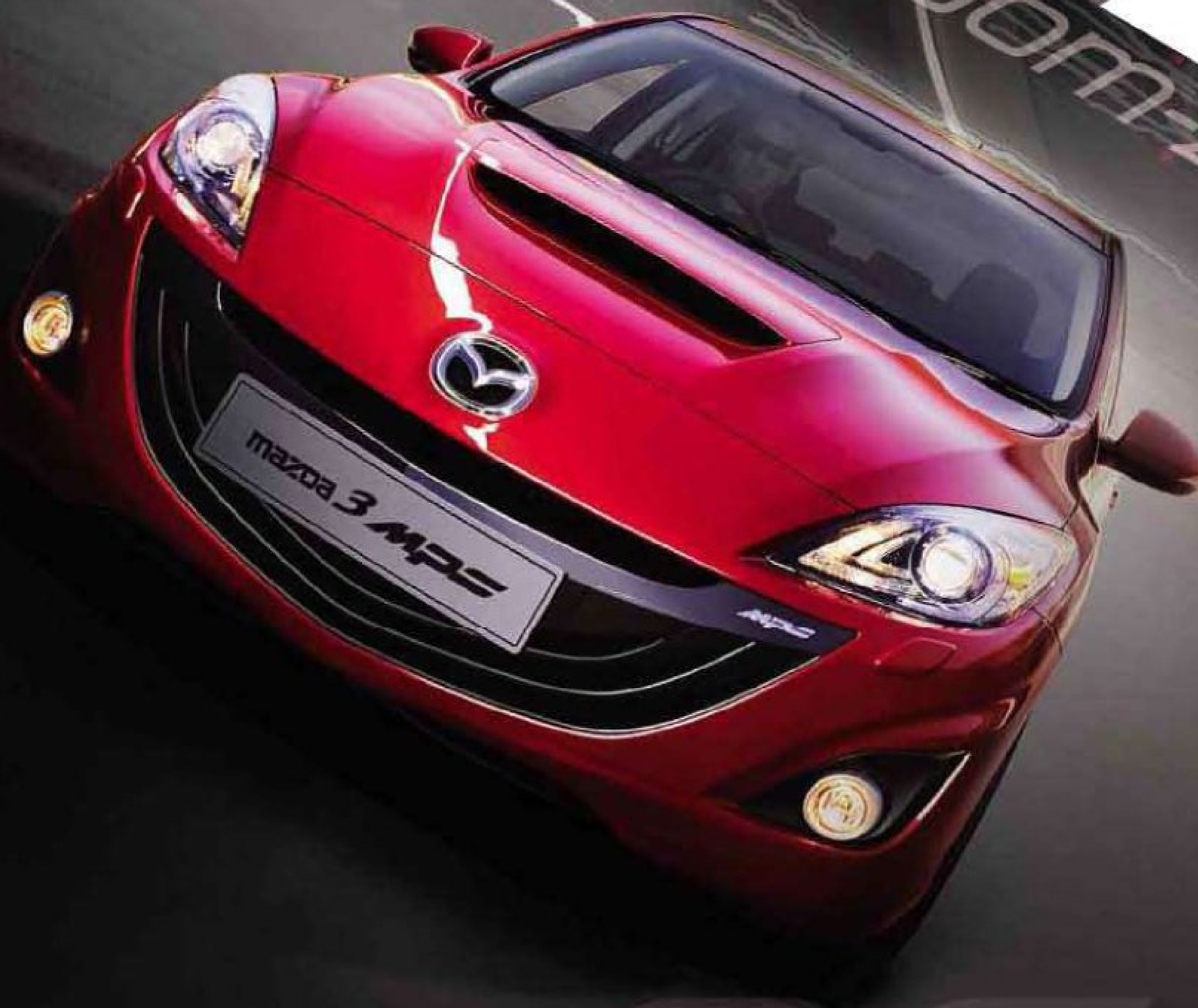
yourself standing in IKEA wondering if you could stab yourself to death with a small, unpainted pencil. *Sliding Doors* is as bad as that.

For the advanced car nerd, however, there's one small moment of interest. It comes during some street scene involving Gwyneth Paltrow simpering and John Hannah trying to make the dialogue less clunky by treating it to a good, hard bout of over-acting. And there in the back of shot is a green Austin Metro Advantage, which was a particularly odd special edition version with white alloy wheels.

Still not an especially interesting car, I grant you, but one I'd be happy to look at if the other option was the rest of *Sliding bloody Doors*. Although of course I'd be equally happy to watch a Triumph Acclaim or Sarah Beeny's shabby mkIII Granada.

Illustrations **Simon Cooper**

evo.co.uk 031



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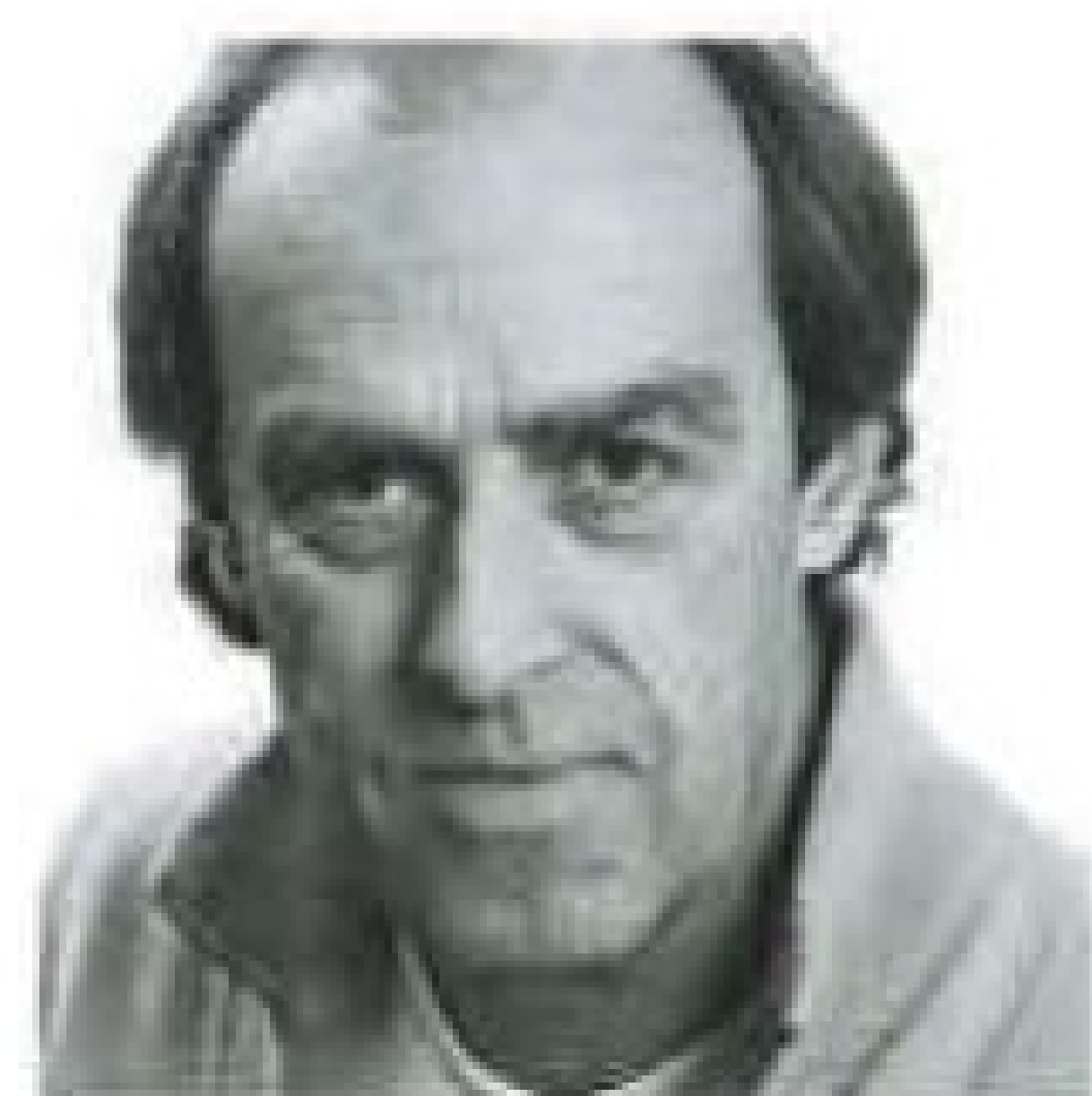
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	Power (ps)	Torque (Nm)	0-62 mph (seconds)
Mazda3 MPS	260	380	6.1
Ford Focus ST3	225	320	6.8
Honda Civic Type R GT	201	193	6.6
VW Golf GTi	210	280	6.9

**The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Mazda3 MPS:
Urban 21.4 (13.2), Extra Urban 37.7 (7.5), Combined 29.4 (9.6), CO₂ emissions (g/km) 224.**

Retail sales only. Subject to availability at participating MPS Specialist dealers only on vehicles registered between 4 January and 31 March 2011. Model shown: Mazda3 MPS. OTR price: £23,155. On the road price includes VAT, number plates, delivery, 12 months' road fund licence, 1st registration fee, 3 year or 60,000 mile warranty and 3 years' European Roadside Assistance. Test drives subject to applicant status and availability. Specification sheet taken from respective manufacturers' websites at 8 December 2010. Details correct at time of going to print.



The Insider

Harry Metcalfe

Do car buyers really take any notice of what motoring journalists write? Metcalfe uncovers alarming evidence that they might not



I've often wondered just whose opinion car buyers rely on most when choosing their next car. Is it expert opinion found in magazines like *evo*, or is it the word of what we might politely call 'less expert sources'?

It was a throwaway comment from a spokesperson for a German car manufacturer during a boozy pre-Christmas dinner that brought this into sharp focus. Even through the alcoholic haze, I knew this could be serious.

The spokesman suggested a disconnect between the type and spec of car the customer actually purchases and the version the motoring press rave about. The underlying subplot was the implication that some car journalists don't understand what the car buyer really wants.

The next day, I couldn't get this statement out of my head. I mean, the only real reason motoring journalists exist is to give potential buyers an unbiased view of what it's really like to drive or live with the latest Ford, Fiat, Ferrari or whatever. And, in theory, the more experienced the journalist, the more informed should be the report.

But if this German manufacturer was

'JOURNOS HATE SOFT-TOP 911s BUT PUNTERS LOVE THEM. PDK WAS DERIDED... NOBODY LISTENED'

noticing a widening gulf between what motoring journalists were awarding top marks to and what the paying customer was buying in the showroom, then you might well conclude that buyers don't really take a blind bit of notice of what us journalists are saying. So should we all be clearing our desks? I needed to do some digging to see if there was any truth in it.

First up: Audi. Its products have often been roundly criticised in the UK press for their ride quality, especially on any models fitted with the optional S-Line package (lower, stiffer road springs and bigger wheels). 'Ruins cruising comfort,' reads one report from the last 12 months. 'Makes smooth tarmac feel like concrete blocks,' says another. 'The ride quality was hellish,' concludes yet another tester. And do you know what? Over 60 per cent of Audis sold in the UK are ordered with 'S-Line' suspension.

To get around this constant criticism, Audi insists that any cars going on its press fleet aren't S-Lined (despite this being against customer preference)

just to stop journalists from constantly moaning on about it.

Porsche is another good example. Journos hate soft-top 911s; punters love them. And consider the much-derided (by UK journos) PDK gearbox introduced on the 911 back in 2008. We even made it our 'Disappointment of the Year', concluding: 'Avoid PDK because it will irritate the hell out of you.' Well, it seems Porsche 911 buyers love being irritated. In 2010, 80 per cent of new 911s came equipped with the PDK double-clutch gearbox.

But then new car buyers are shunning manual gearboxes in their droves, despite every motoring journo in the land endlessly pontificating about the added driver enjoyment to be had from a conventional manual over a 'flappy-paddle' gearbox. Well, real buyers seem to think otherwise and I predict we'll be reading the last rites to the conventional manual gearbox within the next couple of years, by which time it will appear as outdated as drum brakes.

There is another possibility though, and it's that buyers are choosing these

options not because they disagree with journalists' opinions per se, but because, right at the point of signing, the salesman pipes up with the 'you must have [insert S-Line, PDK, 22in wheels...] or you'll never be able to sell it' line?

I know this because it happened to me when I was spec'ing up my Maserati GranTurismo. My dealer gave me that outwardly smiling but inwardly 'you're mad' look when I refused to tick the box for the bigger wheels and electric seats (a combined £5000 extra). My reasoning was I was buying this Maserati for me, thanks very much, and I wasn't too fussed about the next owner.

I reckon there's a couple of conclusions to take from all of this. First, motoring journalists need to keep a closer eye on what's actually happening on the showroom floor, to see what buyers are spending their money on. And secondly, punters should buy the car they really want and not what the salesman wants them to buy. Follow that bit of advice from this particular motoring journo, and it might even save you some money. Very 2011.

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RX 450h MY 11 fuel consumption figures: urban 43.5 mpg (6.5 L/100km), extra-urban 47.1 mpg (6.0 L/100km), combined 44.8 mpg (6.3 L/100km). CO₂ emissions combined 145 g/km.



Crossed Up

Chris Harris

Why do car brands feel the need to constantly keep reinventing themselves? Harris, for one, finds it all very unsettling



It is a great comfort to me that the Audi RS5 is a poor conversationalist. Think of it as cheek flesh recovering from a dental anaesthetic: beginning to tingle and just accepting the vaguest of sensations, but ultimately still numb.

And why, as an outspoken critic of the RS5, do I draw comfort from yet another dull, fast Audi capable of remarkable all-weather speed feats? Not just because I'm in awe of any company who can take largely the same ingredients Nissan used for the GT-R and from them fashion one fifth of the driving pleasure. No, remarkable as that may be, I just like the fact that it fits with my perceptions of Audi as a purveyor of beautifully presented, astutely marketed and, R8 aside, heroically characterless machinery.

Perhaps, finally, I have found a definitive demarcation point between my professional and personal lives? The former part loved the previous B7 RS4 because it proved that Audi did actually *understand*; the latter found the process oddly unnerving because it just wasn't right that Audi should make a car that so brazenly shunned the core Ingolstadt virtues I'd grown up with – namely: shocking control weights, non-existent damping and supreme reliability.

'I FORMED ALL MY CORE BELIEFS ABOUT JAGUAR ON THE BASIS OF A RIDE IN AN XJ12 WHEN I WAS EIGHT'

As a car-nut, I don't like change. I like my brands to sit where I can see them; do what I expect of them. When Mercedes launched the original A-class, the journalist in me celebrated its unprecedented versatility and space efficiency. But me as a car junkie? I sought medical assistance. I mean, what next, an un-shit Skoda?

These core beliefs are the tenets on which our fascination with four-wheeled things are founded, and they tend to be formed early in life. On the basis of my first ride, aged eight, in a Jaguar XJ12 in 1983, I convinced myself from that day forward that Jaguar saloons should be lower than other cars, should smell of soft hide, the driver should smoke a pipe, they should have two fuel gauges and offer only the faintest suggestion that the wheels are in contact with the road. When this is your pre-programmed Jaguar asset list, and, 15 years later, your boss on the road test desk hands you the keys to the then-new 2.5-litre S-type, your brain somersaults in its protective fluid. What a spudder.

None of this would be a problem if brands felt they could remain where

they are, but being stationary is supposedly the ultimate auto-maker crime. Brands always have to be moving into new territories, finding new niches; going places. Porsche has to conquer the SUV market, Skoda has to build hot hatches, BMW isn't allowed to sit back and make dignified, logical, beautifully engineered saloon cars, it has to curl-out the X1. Why? Because some brand consultant once insisted that change was essential, which is ironic given that in the past decade Jaguar has had more 'positions' than Jenna Jameson and yet it still seems better defined in the mind of the consumer by Arthur Daley's XJ6 than its current model range.

Being a car-weirdo, it's the small details within this process that screw with me. For instance, the new BMW 5-series looks like a return to old-school Beemer values: slick styling, rear-drive, etc, but two things about it make me uneasy and they are so pathetically insignificant I can barely summon the courage to write them here. The first is, as with all modern BMWs, the lack of a drop-down tool-kit in the boot-lid. For me, this small detail is as BMW as Steve Soper nailing an E30

M3, and I hate its omission. The other is truly pathetic – the nomenclature. This is the first BMW to carry an internal designation beginning with F: it's the F10 5-series. Just to remind you all: Marmite is black, the sun sets in the west, BMWs all have E numbers, not F numbers. This is macro-change: snaffling a tool-kit and tweaking one letter seems like nothing, but it marks the beginning of the gradual erosion of values that matter and, curiously, those are sometimes not the most flattering aspects of a car.

Take Ferrari. Every time you get into one, you enjoy the little ritual of tweaking the driving position, but I have also always drawn comfort from the familiarity of three brazenly Fiat-derived objects: the patented flimsy column stalk, the pikey digital clock and the will-it-won't-it electric mirror adjustor. Objectively, they were shocking bits of trim, but they were homely – to me symbolic of the brand. The 458's trim is in a different league – the clock has been banished. The heater control damping on a 458 is too good; it's creepy.

Progress is fine, but can be unsettling. If the Mercedes single column stalk is ever replaced, I will pop an O-ring.

DRIVEN

- **MERCEDES CLS63 AMG** P36
- **AUDI RS3** P40
- **DMS PORSCHE 911 TURBO** P43
- **SUPERCHIPS GOLF TSI** P43
- **FORD FOCUS 1.6** P44
- **RENAULT MÉGANE GT** P46
- **AUDI A1 QUATTRO** P46
- **PEUGEOT 508** P47
- **PEEL P50** P48
- **HONDA JAZZ HYBRID** P48



MERCEDES CLS63 AMG

- NEW CLS GETS TWIN-TURBO V8 IN AMG FORM
- 549BHP AND £87K WITH 'PERFORMANCE PACK'



ust don't go near the Mexican border. It's terribly dangerous these days.' The words of my mother when she learned of the location for the CLS63 press launch, showing, I have to confess, a much better knowledge of where San Diego is than I had. This wasn't going to be just another car launch...

Her words are still ringing in my ears three weeks later as I glance out of the driver's side window of the CLS63 at the wild and scrubby hills abutting the road. Not more than half a mile away, snaking along the high contours, is the most enormous, angry-looking fence. I

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 546cc, twin turbo CO2 231g/km
 Power 549bhp @ 5750rpm Torque 590lb ft @ 2000-4500rpm
 0-62mph 4.3sec (claimed) Top speed 155mph (limited)
 Price £87,100 (with Performance Pack) On sale June 2011

say fence, but think more Berlin wall with added spikes. Seems Mother Catchpole wasn't over-stating it. In the pre-drive briefing, the Mercedes bods had informed us sternly that we must take our passports for the police checkpoints and that this would not be a good part of the route to start doing burnouts...

Sure enough, there seems to be a border cop loitering behind every rock as we meander



along what would otherwise be a pretty decent bit of road. The burnouts will have to wait...

We've also been advised that, should we be stopped, we're to take the key out of the ignition. The reason is that this new CLS has CO₂-reducing and mpg-improving stop/start technology. So imagine the scene. You pull to a halt as requested by the policeman. The engine stops in a very ecological way to keep emissions down. The cop starts asking lengthy questions about funny accents and where you're going. A few minutes into said conversation the car has had enough of running the air-con on just battery power, so starts up again. Cop thinks you're about to do a runner and pulls out his weapon. Tears before bedtime.

Of course, if you did want to do a runner, then I think you'd have a pretty good chance of getting away in the thsi new CLS63. With 518bhp and 516lb ft as standard – or 549bhp and 590lb ft with the optional Performance Pack, which increases maximum boost pressure from 1.0 to 1.3 bar – performance in a straight line is certainly sufficient to lose a 4x4 with twinkly lights on top. Mercedes claims 4.4sec to 62mph (4.3sec with the Performance Pack) and, although the top speed is limited to 155mph, you can raise that to 186mph if you purchase the optional Driver's Pack (which also gets you a place on a training course at the AMG driving academy).

The monstrous engine that is creating all these numbers is the new 5.5-litre twin-turbo

V8, which so far we've only seen in the heavier S and CL classes. It's a mighty thing and so linear in its delivery that if it didn't run into a rev-limiter at a relatively lowly 6400rpm then you'd almost think it was naturally aspirated. It burbles and rumbles and, just occasionally, when it's turning over in the foothills of its rev-range, it sounds like a big unsilenced Harley Davidson. In other words it's a proper AMG engine – and it makes the CLS feel like it could tow a 747 right up to take-off speed.

Of course, the border police might want to stop the CLS just to have a better look. The designers have, to my eyes, markedly improved the lines of the four-door coupe. I know many thought the old CLS was a very elegant car, but



Above: carbon pack costs extra, but extensive use of aluminium helps keep weight of standard car down to 1870kg. Below: 5.5-litre biturbo V8 is simply mighty



'YOU REACH THE END OF A ROAD IN AWE OF THE BRUTISH



Above: new model takes a number of styling cues from gullwing SLS, including inside (left) with flat-bottomed wheel. Below: chunky gearlever for excellent new auto





SPEED YOU'VE JUST CARRIED THROUGH THE CORNERS'

to me there was a bit too much of the upside-down banana to its profile, so that it looked like it might be as fast backwards as forwards. The new car has a much more aggressive bonnet and a more muscular rear, while still retaining its long-wheelbase elegance. The CLS63 also features LED headlights as standard and the 71 lamps certainly make it look distinctive in a rear-view mirror.

Inside, the new CLS has shades of the gullwing SLS. The flat-bottomed steering wheel (wrapped partly in Alcantara if you choose the Performance Pack), the lovely clear dials and the stubby gear selector with the crest of Affalterbach embossed in the top, all call to mind the SLS interior. The seats are enormously comfy and even massage your back very nicely, but they need a bit more lateral support in a car this fast...

Heading through the Laguna Mountains a little way north of the big scary fence, the CLS proves to be truly monumentally quick. There are three damper settings and the steering weights up progressively with each one, so much so that in the firmest setting you use your shoulders rather than just your wrists to work the wheel as you turn into a corner. The lateral grip the chassis generates is phenomenal, and through the miles of rock- and drop-lined bends the CLS is almost uncomfortably

fast as its ruthlessly controlled roll and utter composure see you pushing the lateral G (and your bravery) ever higher in search of some limits. The traction at the rear feels almost unimpeachable, too, so that you're really encouraged to use all the power on the exit of corners. When you've got 549bhp on tap, that is some achievement.

For me, there is almost too much grip – the CLS63 lacks the beautiful subtlety of adjustment that you can enjoy in the very best AMG cars (the SLS and C63), but you still get to the end of a road in awe of the brutish speed you've just carried through the corners and the iron-fisted composure of such a big car.

The optional carbon-ceramic brakes fitted to our 63 (denoted by the orange calipers) match the cornering and traction in terms of outright retardation, but, as with the SLS, I think the standard steel items give a fraction more feel. One aspect that is actually better than in the SLS is the gearbox. The (deep breath) AMG Speedshift MCT seven-speed sports transmission is an automatic but with a wet start-up clutch instead of a torque converter. It is still not the very snappiest 'box, but it is so much more responsive than AMG's dual-clutch transmission.

How much for all this AMG mightiness? Although the CLS63 is £80,605 in standard



trim, this can quickly rise with a few tempting options: The Performance Pack is £6495, the Ride Control performance suspension is £1495, a limited-slip diff is £2450, the Driver's Pack is £2760 and the carbon-ceramic brakes are a whopping £9300. All this would take a CLS63 AMG to a Porsche Panamera Turbo-rivalling £103,105, which is a lot, even for a car as deeply talented as the stylish new Mercedes.

Henry Catchpole

evo RATING



- Another impressive, insanely rapid Merc
- Impressive, insanely rapid Merc fatigue?



AUDI RS3

- LATEST RS FROM AUDI USES THE BRILLIANT FIVE-CYLINDER 335BHP ENGINE ■ FIVE-DOOR ONLY
- LIFTS THE HOT HATCH GENRE TO ANOTHER LEVEL

Caveat time. This isn't a full test of the new Audi RS3 – the press only got a very short drive at an Audi event in a very cold Quebec. However, it was a revealing one.

On first impressions this RS3 would appear to be a car of contradictions. It's a hot hatch without two of the genre's traditional features: three doors and a manual gearbox. Neither is available here, even as options.

Stefan Reil, head of quattro GmbH, told *evo* that a three-door was considered but would be heavier, less fuel-efficient and emit more CO2 than the TT RS, with which the RS3 shares its engine. So the TT RS is the RS3 three-door, at least as far as Audi is concerned.

evo.co.uk followers have already made their

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbocharged CO2 212g/km
 Power 335bhp @ 5400-6000rpm Torque 332lb ft @ 1600-5300rpm
 0-62mph 4.6sec (claimed) Top speed 155mph (limited)
 Price £39,900 On sale April 2011

feelings about this clear, but in the flesh the five-door body loses nothing in aesthetic value to a three-door. Its stance is solid, its wheels suitably cartoonish and its pumped-up styling nicely integrated into the 'Sportback' body. Carbon fetishists will enjoy the composite front wings, which have been fitted to accommodate the 22mm wider track.

As in the TT RS, the wonderful 2.5-litre direct-injection five-cylinder engine develops 335bhp and 332lb ft and does so with a truly nape-tingling soundtrack. The four-wheel-drive

Above and below left: five-door body looks smart with RS addenda. Above left: interior is of the high quality we've come to expect from Audi. Below right: five-cylinder turbo engine is a gem; S-tronic gearbox effective but uninviting

transmission and differentials are also identical to those in the TT RS, and the RS3 sprints to 62mph from rest in a claimed 4.6sec – just 0.3sec slower than the TT RS with the S-tronic paddle-shift 'box.

On the road, the package impresses. At 1575kg, the RS3 is too heavy – 100kg heavier than the S-tronic TT RS – but even four-up its weighty chassis is nullified by the fast-revving, responsive five-cylinder engine. In fact, I'm prepared to bet that one-up and with just a splash of fuel on board, the RS3 would actually sprint to 60mph in around 4sec.

Behind the standard 19in wheels are 370mm discs at the front, 310mm at the back. Braking performance is strong, and the over-servoed feel and difficulty in modulating the pedal that blighted early TT RSs seems to have disappeared. A longer test will confirm this.

As you would expect, grip levels are high, even in a wintry Quebec, and while understeer arrives first when the tyres surrender grip, power through it and the RS3 adopts a neutral





'I'M PREPARED TO BET THE RS3 WOULD ACTUALLY SPRINT TO 60MPH IN AROUND 4SEC'



stance. Like the TT RS, the steering responds accurately and with weight – but that's about it. Feedback doesn't really feature, but then neither does torque steer.

Part of the joy of driving the TT RS we ran here at **evo** for eight months was orchestrating the performance of that superb five-cylinder engine via the manual gearbox. It's an engine that encourages heel-and-toeing and precise, measured gearshifts. So yes, it is a disappointment that, effective as it is, the seven-speed S-tronic gearbox is the only transmission option on the RS3.

The reason? 'When we launched the TT RS with a manual there was immense demand for a double-clutch, which wasn't available initially,' explains Reil. 'When we introduced it there was an increase in orders. Combine this with the improved economy of the S-tronic and, well, it made sense to go with the double-clutch?'

As an ownership proposition, even at £39,900 the RS3 is compelling. The interior, build quality and ergonomics are first rate, and with

an on-sale period likely to be limited to 18 months, it'll be a rare sight too. It's a step above the Focus RS, Golf R and Renaultsport Mégane – but it's also £10,000+ more expensive.

If you can live without five doors, then BMW's forthcoming 1-series M Coupe should be considered – but then we'd also recommend trying a TT RS or a Porsche Cayman if it's a £45,000 coupe you require.

So, it's an ultra-premium hot hatch, a five-door that accelerates to 60mph as quickly as a 911, grips with the tenacity of a hungry leech and offers high-quality construction and materials. It's an intriguing car and, while we'll reserve judgment on ultimate driver involvement until we try one in the UK, on first impressions the RS3 is worthy of the badge.

Nick Trott

evo RATING ★★★★★

- Brilliant engine, practicality, acceleration
- No manual option, pricey



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UNLEASHING PERFORMANCE

PORSCHE:

997 TURBO » 625+BHP
996 TURBO / GT2 » 600+BHP
997 CARRERA S PDK » 400+BHP
997 CARRERA S » 376+BHP
997 CARRERA » 348 BHP
CAYENNE DIESEL » 292 BHP
997 GT3 UP » 436 BHP
996 3.6 » 344 BHP
BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+BHP
CAYMAN S » 342 BHP
CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 » 578+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 » 600+ BHP
PANAMERA TURBO » 600+BHP

MERCEDES-BENZ:

SL65 AMG » 650 BHP + DE-LIMIT
AMG 55 KOMPRESSOR » 580+BHP
ALL AMG MODELS FULL DE-LIMIT
C63 AMG » 530+BHP +DE-LIMIT
SL63 AMG » 560+BHP +DE-LIMIT
RE-MAP & LOWER ABC SUSPENSION
CL600 BI-TURBO » 580+ BHP
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GALLARDO » 546 BHP/ LP640 TO 700+
GALLARDO LP560 » 600+BHP
MASERATI GRANTURISMO
& QPORT » 438 BHP
AUDI RS6 V10 » 680+BHP +DE-LIMIT
AUDI B7 RS4/ R8 » 439 BHP + DE-LIMIT
AUDI Q7 4.2 TDI » 387 BHP
AUDI A5 30TDI » 298 BHP
AUDI R8 V10 » 592+BHP
RANGE ROVER TDV8 » 338 BHP
R ROVER SPORT 3.0D PLEASE CALL
R ROVER SPORT 2.7D » 240 BHP
BENTLEY CGT / F-SPUR » 620 BHP
BENTLEY GT SPEED » 670+ BHP

DMS 996 TURBO
"STUPENDOUS EXPLOITABLE
PERFORMANCE"
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"NEW ECU MAKES CAR SO
MUCH FASTER YOU SIMPLY HAVE
TO HAVE IT!"
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"LAUGH-OUT-LOUD FAST"
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EVO SEPTEMBER 2008

DMS RS6 V10
"THICK LOW END TORQUE MORPHS
INTO OHMIGOD TOP-END"
EVO MARCH 2009

DMS 335I
"AS QUICK AS AN M3 ON
THE ROAD"
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DMS 911 TURBO

■ ECU AND CAT UPGRADE ■ POWER UP 111 BHP TO 604 BHP ■ MORE VOCAL EXHAUST NOTE

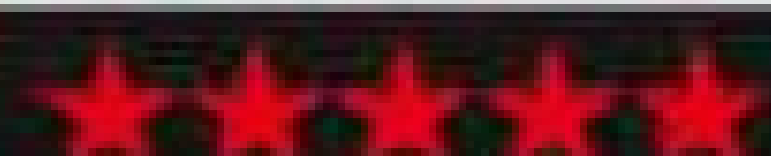
It's a busy afternoon on the A31 dual-carriageway in the New Forest and we're lurking at a junction, looking for a gap in the traffic. One presents itself. It's not huge, but it's plenty big enough for a 600bhp, all-wheel-drive, PDK-equipped Porsche.

We go. Not full throttle, but a hasty enough exit with half a turn of lock to be able to detect all four wheels earning their keep. As the steering straightens and first blurs into second, I chance a glance in the mirror, just in time to catch the fading glow of flashed headlights – the next car back signalling that he's seen me and is moving to the outside lane to help me out. The trouble is he's now 250 yards back and not gaining, so he looks a bit foolish in the overtaking lane.

It's a few seconds that encapsulate perfectly what the 911 Turbo is all about: speed, traction and ease. What DMS does is pop a cherry on the top. The upgraded ECU and exhaust fitted to this car add 111bhp and 111lb ft to the 3.8-litre flat-six's standard 493bhp and 479lb ft quoted outputs. Big gains; noticeable gains. I know what you're thinking – what must the upgrade do to the 523bhp, 516lb ft Turbo S? Nothing more – apart from spec and cosmetics, the only difference between Turbo and Turbo S is an engine management tweak, so this package takes both models to the same level.

The ECU upgrade on its own costs £2040 and ups the power to 578bhp. What holds it back is a build-up of exhaust back-pressure in the catalysis. For a further £1800, DMS will change the dense 600-cell cats for a motorsport-spec 200-cell pack ('cell' refers to the number of holes per square inch), allowing the gases to flow more freely.

EVO RATING



- Seamlessly enhances the Turbo's best assets
- Not much at all

SPECIFICATION

Engine Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo CO2 268g/km
Power 604bhp @ 6500rpm Torque 590lb ft @ 3800rpm
0-62mph 2.8sec (est) Top speed 193mph (claimed)
Conversion price £3840 On sale Now (www.dmsautomotive.com)



Upgrade can be felt, but visually you'll find no clues

Hey presto: 604bhp. The same stock casing is kept, so the modifications are invisible to the naked eye.

How different does it feel? Initially the mods are undetectable – and this is a good thing. The gearbox has no difficulty managing the power, the car moseys around effortlessly and refinement is only impeded by tyre noise and the firm ride. The first clue that all is not standard comes from the way this Turbo gets off the line – which is where we came in.

But the best way to appreciate this conversion is to pop it in a high gear and marvel at what happens as the turbos start to spool. A slight whistle is quickly joined by a smooth yet implacable push. Seventh gear (2000rpm at 75mph) is all you need on multi-laners and, even on lesser roads, lines of traffic are best picked off in fifth – go lower and the delivery is almost uncomfortably forceful, although the up-side is that the gruffer exhaust is more apparent above 5000rpm.

Does a 911 Turbo need this upgrade? Well, it brings a touch more noise and drama: two things that we've previously said the standard car is lacking. The extra power? Well, you can never have too much of that.

Ollie Marriage



SUPERCHIPS GOLF 1.4 TSI

■ 155 BHP ENGINE REMAP
■ STREET-SLEEPER LOOKS

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1390cc, turbocharged CO2 144g/km
Power 155bhp @ 6200rpm Torque 182lb ft @ 3200rpm
0-62mph 8.5sec (est) Top speed 135mph (est)
Conversion price £445 On sale Now (www.superchips.co.uk)

In this age of austerity, we need to get our kicks where we can, even if it means turning to cars we would otherwise overlook. One such car is Volkswagen's worthy 1.4 TSI Golf.

Buckingham-based remapping experts Superchips have focused their attention on this turbocharged 1.4-litre hatchback and yielded some impressive results. 'Before' and 'after' dyno runs using Superchips' own demo car show a power increase from 131bhp at 5000rpm (11bhp more than VW claims for the standard car) to 155bhp at 6200rpm, with peak torque rising from 158lb ft at 3700rpm to 182lb ft at 3200rpm.

Those are big gains that elevate the unassuming Golf's pace from brisk shopper to junior hot hatch. As always, it's the increased torque and not the headline power gain that you notice first and enjoy most frequently. There's a generous surge of linear acceleration and a smooth enthusiasm for revs. Still standard in every other respect, this demo car's damping is on the soft side of supple, but there's something perversely entertaining about hustling a regular car along at irregular speeds.

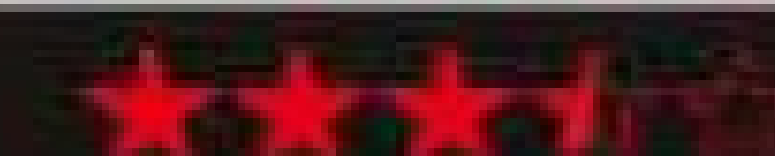
The frugal and practical Golf TSI may not be an obvious target for engine tuning, but the remap (£455 inc VAT and fitting) injects some fun into mix.

Richard Meaden



Remap gives 35bhp increase over VW's power claim

EVO RATING



- Useful and affordable power boost
- You might want a suspension upgrade too



FORD FOCUS ■ THIRD-GENERATION VERSION OF BIG-SELLING HATCH ■ 179BHP TURBO 1.6 ■ GADGET OPTIONS APLENTY

When you arrive at a launch event there is often a slightly unseemly scramble as journalists jostle their way to the keys for the most photogenic cars and then, fobs secured, get the hell away from the car park as quickly as possible before anyone can say otherwise. A full 15 minutes after I climbed into the new Focus, however, I still haven't moved an inch. Someone actually wanders over to see if I know where the handbrake is.

The reason I'm not going anywhere is the sheaf of papers I found on the driver's seat, detailing all the optional automated systems on the new Focus and how to use them. I'm sure I've driven a Mercedes S-class with fewer gadgets. This Ford's steering wheel has more buttons than the Ferrari 458's. Our heavily specced test car is equipped with, amongst other things, Lane Departure Warning and Lane Keeping Aid systems, a Low Speed Safety System (helps you to avoid crashing in town), Traffic Sign Recognition (displays the last speed limit sign you passed), Driver Alert (works out

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1596cc, turbo CO2 139g/km
 Power 179bhp @ 5700rpm Torque 199lb ft @ 1900-4000rpm
 0-62mph 7.9sec (claimed) Top speed 138mph (claimed)
 Price £19,745 On sale Now

how 'with it' you are and whether you should stop for some caffeine), Blind Spot Information, Adaptive Cruise Control, Auto High Beam headlights, Stop-Start and Active Park Assist (which will identify a big enough kerbside parking space as you drive past and then steer you into it).

The systems that I do manage to fathom, like sign recognition, work well, but it would take days to get to grips with them all, and obviously of more interest to us is how the Focus drives on a decent bit of road, such as the Col de Vence.

It is a physically much bigger car now and not a terribly dynamic- or good-looking one, if I'm honest, with all sorts of lines clashing, particularly at the rear. The cooking 1.6-litre petrol EcoBoost engine puts out very impressive numbers, however, with 179bhp at 5700rpm and 177lb ft from 1600 to 5000rpm, or 199lb ft on overboost between 1900 and 4000rpm. It's a smooth and punchy unit that is so responsive you really wouldn't know it's turbocharged. It even sounds quite good.

The six-speed manual gearbox is slick and accurate, the seating position hugely adjustable and the seats themselves supportive. But anyone hoping for the sort of incisive drivers' car that the mk1 Focus was will be disappointed, as this has a much softer feeling with the emphasis on ride rather than turn-in. There isn't even a button to turn the ESP off, although it is so nicely judged that this isn't a great loss.

The steering is very light, but it's also accurate so you can always feel how hard you're working



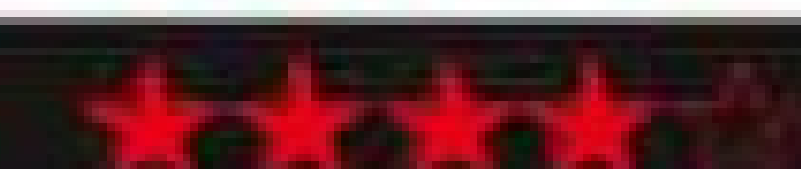
Above: cabin can be loaded with kit; steering wheel button-count rivals a Ferrari 458's. Left: turbo 1.6 offers strong performance

the front tyres, and there is a really nice balance to the chassis so, although you won't find any wild lift-off oversteer, you can adjust the car subtly in a way that makes it very easy and rewarding to flow through corners.

You can tell that the ride and handling team at Ford hasn't lost any of its skill. The Focus is genuinely enjoyable on the road up the Col, it's just that it has been set up to reflect a large car with more gadgets than Suzi Perry. Let's hope the same people use their skill to set up the new Focus ST to reflect a true hot hatch.

Henry Catchpole

EVO RATING



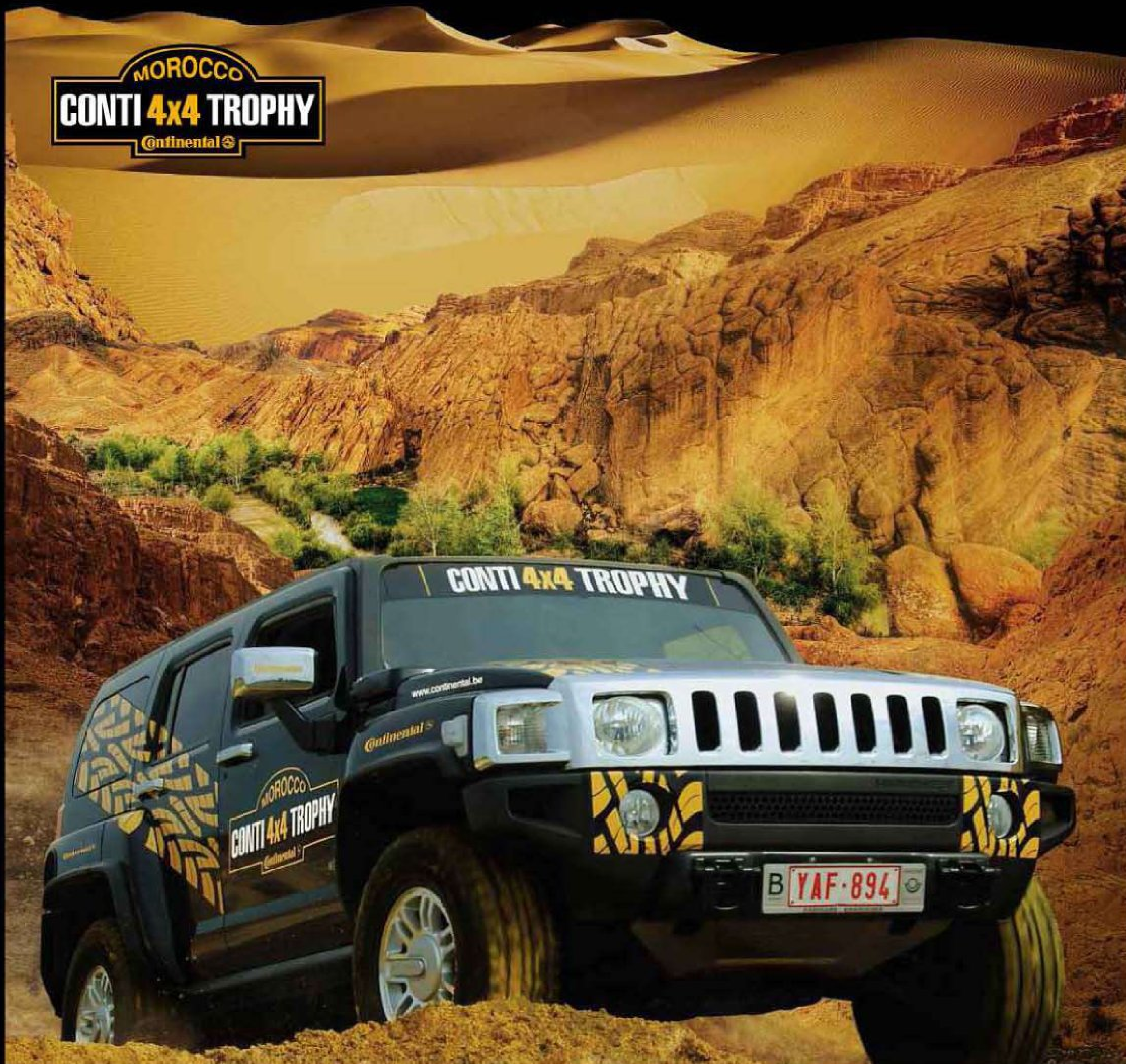
- Shows promise for the ST
- Which is the one we're waiting for



Bodywork is larger; high taillights have been abandoned

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RENAULT MEGANE GT

- 'WARM HATCH' VERSION OF COUPE MÉGANE
- 178BHP TURBO 2-LITRE
- 0-62MPH IN 7.8SEC

Those with longer memories will recall the minor cult that was the 'warm hatch'. In response to rising insurance and petrol costs in the early '90s, a raft of sub-hot hatches came along offering sporty styling and a background flavour of performance. We're talking Clio RSi, Citroën ZX Furio and Astra SRi.

In an economic climate not dissimilar to the early '90s, it's of little surprise that the warm hatch is back – say hello to the Renault Mégane Coupe GT TCe 180. The fact that Renaultsport has had a hand in its development – we're huge fans of both the RS Mégane and Clio – means there's reason to be optimistic about this car, too. It even looks



SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo CO2 178g/km
 Power 178bhp @ 5500rpm Torque 221lb ft @ 2250rpm
 0-62mph 7.8sec (claimed) Top speed 139mph (claimed)
 Price £21,320 On sale Now

good, individual and stylish, riding on its 18in, graphite-coloured 'Jetow' wheels.

Inside, Renaultsport-spec seats are fitted with specific GT cloth and there are aluminium pedals, a Renaultsport wheel and polished carbon trim. Climate, cruise, TomTom satnav, and a hands-free keycard are standard.

It seems odd that a funky-looking three-door hatch with 178bhp should be considered a warm hatch, but thanks to the phenomenon of upsizing that's what we've got here. With 0-62mph taking 7.8sec and a top speed nudging 140mph it's on the hotter side of warm, and

such is the amount of torque available at low rpm (221lb ft at 2250rpm), the GT makes a fine cruising and overtaking companion.

It steers with precision, but lacks a little of the weight and feedback of the full Renaultsport version, and it grips and contains body roll in a perfectly acceptable manner. The only unruliness comes from torque-steer, which is present under hard acceleration in the first three gears. The GT doesn't try too hard to impress, which makes you wonder if this is one of those cars that reveals its talents slowly during the ownership experience rather than on a short test drive at a dealer.

It's a likeable car, then, but it has one problem – its brilliant big brother. The full-on Renaultsport Mégane is a couple of grand dearer, but it is worth every extra penny.

Nick Trott



Renaultsport wheel and TomTom satnav are standard

AUDI A1 QUATTRO

- EARLY 'TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATOR' PREVIEWES HOT S1 MODEL
- STRONG PERFORMANCE AND GRIP

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1390cc, twin-charger CO2 n/a
 Power 178bhp @ 6200rpm Torque 184lb ft @ 2000rpm
 0-62mph 7.0sec (est) Top speed 140mph (est)
 Price c£23,000 (est) On sale Late 2012/early 2013 (S1)

The A1 quattro concept is a 'technology demonstrator', a precursor to a full-blown S1 model due to debut in a couple of years.

The A1's PQ25 platform – shared with the VW Polo among others – was never designed to accommodate all-wheel drive, but the

prototype we drove on a snowy track was remarkably tight and well resolved. The VW group's excellent 178bhp 1.4-litre turbo- and supercharged petrol engine mated to a manual gearbox provides the go, though we hear this engine is unlikely to power the S1. Expect a larger capacity four-cylinder with a single turbo for the production car.

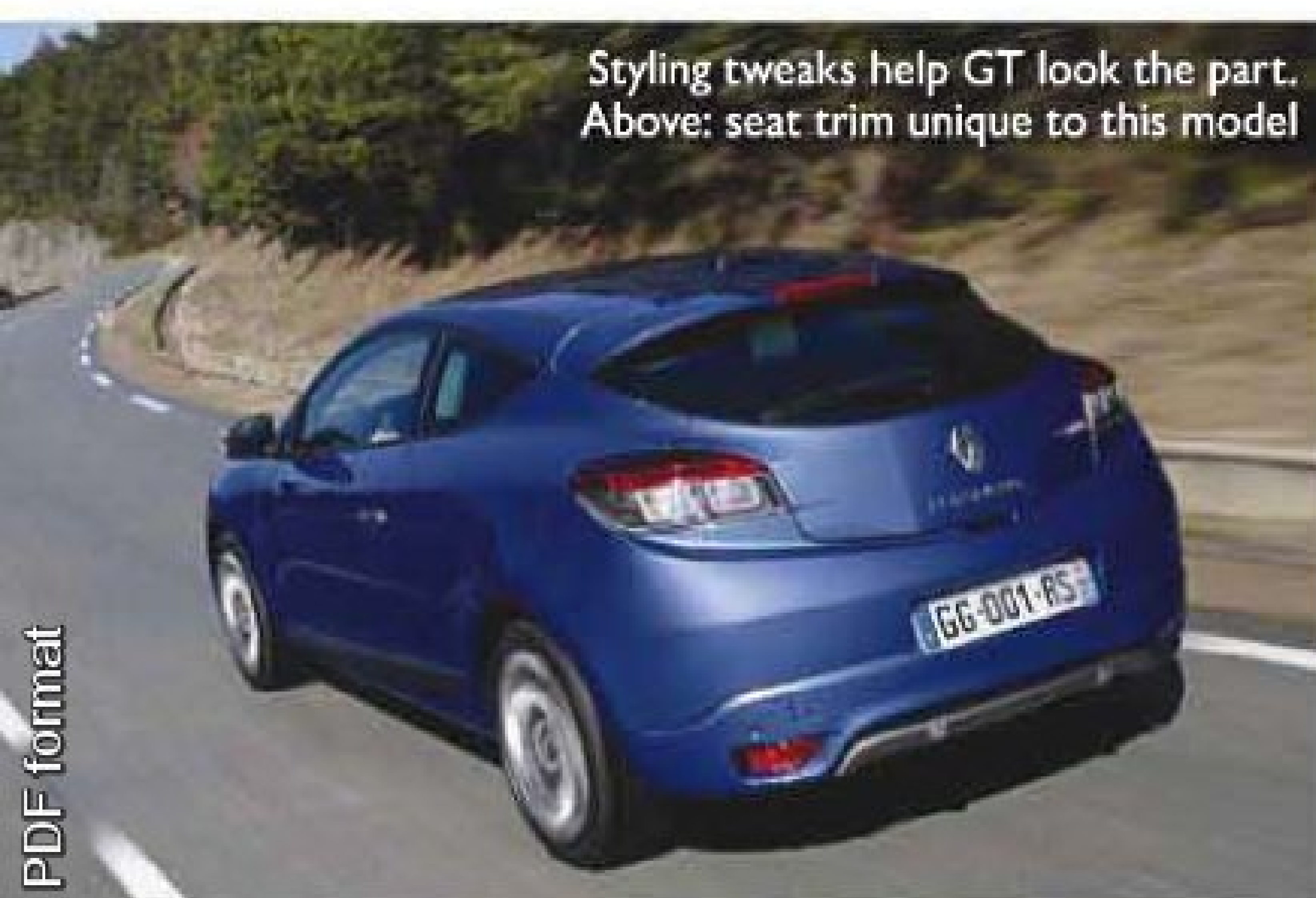
The four-wheel-drive system uses quattro tech similar to that on the A3 and TT, namely a hydraulic multi-plate clutch on the rear axle



that distributes power fore and aft. During our short drive it was clear that, in normal driving, power is mostly distributed fore. Combine this with the sprightly, responsive engine and a fast gearshift, and the A1 quattro feels like a



'RENAULTSPORT HAS HAD A HAND IN ITS DEVELOPMENT...'



Styling tweaks help GT look the part. Above: seat trim unique to this model

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- Rides and steers well
- Doesn't sparkle like the Renaultsport version

modern hot hatch. However, exceed available grip, ignore the warning signals delivered to you by understeer and power through, and it gracefully recovers its composure and even drifts with barely any steering effort after the initial application of lock.

In slippery conditions, traction, stability, braking performance and balance proved exceptional. Fun too. But we worry that with sticky modern rubber and a surplus of 4WD traction, the S1 might be safe and grippy rather than a nimble, adjustable firecracker of a car. We hope to be proved wrong.

Nick Trott

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- Grip, balance and performance
- Two-year wait until you can buy it



PEUGEOT 508

■ GERMAN-RIVALLING BUILD ■ PROPER FRENCH DYNAMICS

SPECIFICATION (GT)

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2179cc, twin-turbodiesel CO2 150g/km
 Power 201bhp @ 3500rpm Torque 338lb ft @ 2000rpm
 0-62mph 8.2sec (claimed) Top speed 145mph (claimed)
 Price £28,750 On sale Now

It's that 'what is premium?' debate again. Not that anyone who really knows about cars genuinely believes that an Audi, say, is innately better than a Peugeot just because of the badge it wears. The new 508 proves the point perfectly.

There is a lot of quality in this car, visual and tactile. The cabin oozes sophistication; by comparison, those of obvious Mondeo and Insignia rivals are brash and slightly cheap. The switchgear is the equal of any premium German's.

The 508 looks quite imposing from the outside. It suffers the usual bulbous-nose, long-overhang trouble of most modern front-drivers, but blame crash-test legislation for that. Place this car next to a BMW or Audi and I guarantee you will detect no difference in detail tailoring.

But is the 508 a driving machine? Will it lift your soul? Family-size Peugeots – 405s and 406s – used to do that, thanks to their mix of longitudinal suspension compliance, lateral precision and terrific damping, but

around ten years ago Peugeot lost its dynamic direction. Souls were later searched, purpose was rediscovered. The RCZ and Citroën's DS3 are manifestations of a return to form. Those are sporting cars, the 508 is not. But...

The top model is called GT. It uses a form of 407-derived, double-wishbone front suspension intended to give the most precise, rewarding drive of the new range. It does, too; it steers precisely, albeit with a touch too much artificial weight at speed, and its hydraulic assistance lets you feel the grain of the road when leaning hard on it in a tight bend. One input and you're in, a light lift of the throttle and you're in harder. It interacts properly, and it moves with the precise, proportional suppleness of its best predecessors. Probably no rival this side of a good 3-series matches it for that.

Lower-spec 508s use front struts, and are a touch vaguer. One uses a 154bhp petrol turbo engine to good effect, but the top GT comes only with a 2.2-litre turbodiesel and a six-speed paddleshift auto. It's very torquey, very smooth and has 201bhp. Grand Tourer indeed.

John Simister

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- Peugeot gets the dynamics right again
- No manual shift for top GT model



Above: interior is a quality affair and a match for a BMW, Audi or Merc's. Right and top: same goes for the exterior, which is also finished to a high standard



DRIVEN: THE OUTSIDERS

FINDING THE THRILL OF DRIVING... IN UNLIKELY VEHICLES



PEEL P50

Walking from the train station on my way to drive the world's smallest car, I pass a house with a pastel-green BMW Isetta on the driveway. This rare bubble-car looks teeny. But on the way back to the station it will look enormous, like a wide-body stretched limo. The Peel P50 would fit inside it, like a pea in a whistle.

Created by the forward-thinking Cyril Cannell and put into production on the Isle of Man in the early '60s, the P50 and its sister car, the bubble-canopied Trident, have been given a new lease of life, thanks in part to the BBC programme *Dragons' Den*. Gary Hillman and Faizal Khan, the men behind the revived Peel Engineering Company, convinced James Caan to invest in the venture and some 30 re-manufactured Peels have so far been built.

In terms of construction and detailing the new P50 is very faithful to the original (the rarity of which means they now fetch around £100K) but it differs in one critical respect – it is now powered by an electric motor rather than a 49cc two-stroke DKW engine.

The P50 measures 1372mm long and 1041mm wide and looks comically small, like a cross between Mike from *Monsters, Inc* and an upturned yogurt carton. It has a castor-like wheel at each front corner and a



Tiny Peel can fit in parking spaces even a Smart would reject

solitary driven wheel under the rear. Open the single, wobbly door, hook your right leg around the steering column and flop into the simple seat. It's snug but not cramped for a 5ft 8in person like me. There are no instruments and just one small pedal on the flecked glassfibre floor, which is one of just three mouldings that create the monocoque. All-up, the P50 weighs less than 60kg, so two people can easily lift it.

All the switches and warning lights are in a panel to the right. A rocker switch selects forward or reverse. To go you simply squeeze the throttle, to brake you release it. Being electric, the initial torque and lack of mass makes the P50 feel brisk, though with a choice between 4mph and 8mph (V-max) via another rocker, that soon fades. Mind, the steering keeps your attention; it's a rudimentary affair and very sharp, so you have to be quite calm with it, especially as abrupt inputs at maximum speed can easily lift a front wheel, leading to some worrying 'hang time'.

Not surprisingly, you do feel vulnerable, and it's good to hear that the planned four-stroke model will have a lot more weight slung low to make it more stable. Novelty and uniqueness has its price, too: £12,500. Now that's scary.

John Barker



Cabin is as basic as they come, with bare glassfibre on show

- It's the world's smallest car
- 8mph



JAZZ HYBRID

Though it's been in the hybrid game for more than a decade now, Honda has yet to put the frighteners on the Toyota Prius to any major degree. Maybe now, with this new Jazz Hybrid, things are about to change.

It's not just that the Jazz Hybrid comes with some pretty tasty eco numbers – 62.8mpg and 104g/km to be precise. The way it drives and the way the technology and packaging come together also appeals. This is one of the best resolved hybrids out there; it has all the cabin space and convenience of the standard Jazz, while the hybrid side of things is smooth and seamless.

Essentially what we have here is the marriage of the latest Jazz shell with the Insight's 1.3-litre 'Integrated Motor Assist' hybrid system and CVT gearbox. On the move, the 87bhp petrol engine ties in well with the CVT and gets a discreet 14bhp boost from the electric motor when needed. The engine shuts down at rest and, as you drive, the flow meter on the dash gives a cool, multicoloured display of how the IMA system is working.

Throttle response is good and the Jazz Hybrid is reasonably quick, with strong brakes. Importantly, it rides and steers better than the largely lacklustre Insight, although it's fair to say a Fiesta would be more fun.

But CR-Z aside, this is the first Honda hybrid with some hint of driver appeal. Prices start at £15,995, which is keen in its class. Could be worth a look, then.

Peter Nunn



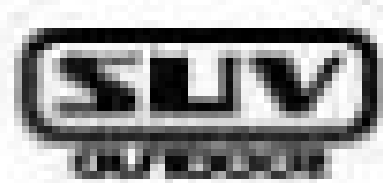
- It's an enjoyable hybrid
- It's still a jazz

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Letter of the Month

Quattro: a missed opportunity

I write as a long-term supporter of Audi, and in particular an admirer of the original Quattro. It was born of innovative thinking and pioneering engineering and left behind a legacy of motorsport success which few, if any cars since can rival.

The new Quattro, however, leaves me somewhat cold. It smacks of a marketing exercise designed to attract publicity rather than anything that

‘It could hardly be further removed from the spirit of the original’

moves automotive engineering in a forward direction. A true Quattro successor should be a game changer – it should be a car that explores hitherto unvisited territory, and with all the alternative fuel / energy recovery systems under development the scope is massive. Oh, and it should be raced or rallied, or both! Also, the new Quattro is likely to be a limited-run £100K+ car. I can't think of many other ways that this could be further removed from the spirit and ethos of the original Quattro.

Please Audi, put your energy into developing cars for the future, not unimaginative, backward-looking, inadequate tributes to a former great. The R8 shows that there is a place for risk and innovation at Audi. The Quattro deserves better than this.

Ben Hall

Limited-run, £100K-plus supercar isn't what Audi should be building, reckons Ben Hall



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An original Stratos (foreground) and the Stoschek recreation, which gets a big thumbs-up from Peter Garforth

Stratos: a fitting tribute

What a fantastic issue last month (Stratos and Quattro, *evo* 153)! The Stratos recreation is absolutely superb and in side profile is so close to the original it's hard to distinguish. Only the front lights jar, bringing to mind the Nissan 350Z – a decent enough car but not anything you would want to see if you owned the Stratos!

I'm not quite so impressed with the Audi. It bears little resemblance to the original and has that generic modern 'hot' Audi front end. Not a bad looking car, but it does seem to be just another modern Audi with nods to the past, and just a little soulless.

On the subject of the original Quattro – although I won't deny its influence on motorsport and

performance motoring on the whole, its rallying success pales when compared with that of the Stratos. In 1982 it was a revolutionary car, but in 1983 Lancia won the World Rally Championship with (my all-time favourite car) the 037, and though Audi came back in 1984 to trounce all comers, by 1985 it was all over and the Peugeot 205 T16 was king. A revolutionary idea, yes, but not really as successful as the legend would have you believe (compare it with the T16, Integrale or Impreza to really put it into perspective).

Peter Garforth

God backs CAMRO

In about 1995 I saw a Toyota Supra – big, white and very Japanese – being

drifted perfectly around a corner by the bus station on the Cheltenham inner ring road. It was so perfectly done it has stuck with me for over 15 years. Having read Chris Harris's Crossed Up column last month (153) I wonder why we don't see more people enjoying their rear-wheel-drive cars as God intended them – namely sideways! Sign me up for CAMRO (the Campaign for Real Oversteer) and please send me my bumper sticker to show my allegiance!

James Ayton, Northampton

Not-so-cheap thrills

Don't get me wrong – I have enjoyed reading David Yu's reports on modifying his purple beast. I too really like the 'Datsun' GT-R and may even look to replace my Porsche 996 Turbo with one when the time comes. However, 'sub-£60K' (his words in Fast Fleet, issue 153)? Exactly how much flaming cash has he spent on that thing?! Remaps, exhausts, wraps, injectors, uprated brakes, etc. etc. I would be surprised if he's burnt less than £20K on mods alone, making it more like an £80K+ 'Datsun'.

If he can afford to do this, fair play to him (I probably would too). However, he is hardly in a position to play the 'cheap supercar' card – it stopped

being one of those about 5 minutes after he drove it home! My 996 Turbo has a DMS remap running 550bhp and would doubtless also achieve 196mph on the Bruntingthorpe straight (for about £35K).

Which brings me to another point: the extent to which modifying a car may affect its *evo* rating. Take my daily driver – an import Honda Integra Type-R 'DC5'. In your Knowledge section you award this vehicle just four stars and state that it has 'lost a little of the DC2's magic'. Fair enough. My car, with an uprated exhaust manifold, cheap remap and some lowering springs, drives and performs superbly and I am confident it would now score higher. Total cost – peanuts (relatively speaking).

How about an article wherein you take a series of four-star, 'nearly' cars, spend a modest amount of money modifying them and addressing their handling, and then re-rate them afterwards?

Terrific magazine, incidentally.

Niall McMahon

Old cogs, new tricks

All the recent talk about manual gearboxes versus paddleshift and autos got me thinking about my own experiences. My very first car was

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evo mail



Fall-out from our RS5 group test in issue 151 continues (see 'How we choose our cars')

a piston-slapping, clapped-out 1951 Vauxhall Wyvern. It had a bench seat and a steering column-mounted three-speed manual transmission. Not exactly sporty, but for a virile 17-year-old male this layout possessed certain non automotive, but nevertheless attractive and romantic merits.

During the last 50 years I've been lucky enough to sample many types of transmissions – Chevy Hydromatic, Hurst four-on-the-floor, various overdrives, fluid flywheels and 'slush boxes'. Then there were the 'freewheel' transmissions which would go into neutral on the overrun to save fuel, and the 'pre-select' box where you'd choose your next gear in advance, then depress a pedal to select it.

I love Porsches and have owned three over the years but undoubtedly the worst transmission invented was the 'shift and wait' Tiptronic, whose confusing controls set back paddle-shifting development at least a decade.

I've also owned at least half a dozen Benzes, but who at Mercedes AG believed shifting a lever left or right would feel natural and intuitive in their 'shift 3 seconds before you need to' automatic manual transmissions.

In my experience the best everyday transmission today is in my Jaguar XF. Mated to the 5-litre torque-laden V8, it does it all, snapping lightning-quick upshifts and rev-blipped downshifts or tootling along in auto mode, perfectly camouflaging its potential from the mother-in-law riding shotgun, and returning great mileage.

For fun runs, however, my F430 Spider is my all-time favourite. When slowing down in traffic for a sharp turn with a suddenly open road ahead, a tug with the fingertips of the left hand will drop a cog quicker than a person could get a foot near the clutch pedal and with a 'bap bap' that still sends chills up and down my spine.

It's ironic that after more than 100 years and billions of developmental cash, the quest for perfection still remains just out of mainstream reach.

Brian D Long, California

Chain reaction

Thought you might be amused by the picture I took after driving to the local in my Mégane. The funniest thing was the amazement of everyone in the pub that I got up the 30degree climb in a foot and a half of powder. Chains are awesome!

James Bushell



It took more than a little snow to stop James Bushell making it to the pub...

How we choose our cars

I smiled at the indignant letters from Mr Hildred and Mr Little (issue 152) who each have an RS5 on order and couldn't help thinking that they were taking *evo* a bit too seriously. The mag is great entertainment and a thoroughly good read, but do people really use it as a buying guide? Sublime steering feel on the Evo Triangle may get your reviewers' juices flowing, but I'm willing to bet that 99 per cent of purchases are based on mundane practicalities or the image we would like to project. When I bought a car last year, here is how my choice went...

Two kids means four seats so no V8 Vantage (despite its stunning beauty), Cayman, 370Z and a bunch of others. I will be keeping it for a while, so an Alfa

is out, along with anything French. It will spend considerably longer on the M4 than in the Welsh mountains, so something comfortable and pleasant to be inside on a long run. Everyday reliability means no 'classics'.

Then we get onto image. As I don't see myself in a Ralliart woolly hat or STI jacket, the Impreza and Evo are off the list. At the other end of the scale and in real life (not motoring journalism world), it is rare to see a 911 driver that doesn't look a bit of a tosser; another off the list. I am pretentious enough not to be willing to have a blue oval on the bonnet or to be seen in a VXR8. And I still feel that I am young, so there remain doubts over Mercedes and Jaguar. Youthful but too mature for a hot hatch. It has to be stylish (so no Bangle cars) without being poncey; suitably upwardly mobile without being flash. It needs grunt without drinking the devil's fuel.

You guys can tell me that I am missing out on some great cars, but I think that this is how these decisions are really made. Tell me I'm wrong!

...and the car I bought? Well, it got three and a half stars and a lukewarm response from you guys, but it does it for me. So my message to Messrs Hildred & Little is don't take it too seriously, and enjoy your new toy. Look on the bright side, at least you ordered it in grey, because you know what white says about you...

Jez Smith

P.S. If you haven't guessed, it's an S5.

That new Lotus position

The mission statement of a car maker. The very definition of the kind of cars the company wants to make. Colin Chapman was very clear: 'simplify, then add lightness'. Looking at the current challenges of the car industry regarding increasing efficiency, I would even call it visionary.

Now contrast current Lotus boss Dany Bahar's vision for being profitable by producing 'beautiful, environmentally relevant, credible sports cars that are honest and authentic'.

Beautiful? I don't think any sports car maker sets out to make an ugly car. Environmentally relevant? Do they want to be the best or just comply with regulations?

Credible? They've already achieved that with a 120bhp Elise with a Toyota engine. So as long as there's no 50bhp Lotus Cygnet, it should be OK, I guess. But 'honest' and 'authentic'? If I were working for Lotus, I wouldn't have a clue what to make of that.

Why move away from the existing Lotus philosophy, which is well known, recognised and makes them different from other brands? In short, it makes them unique. Just think about how many car brands would kill to be in this position.

Of course I am looking forward to what Lotus will do in the future but I can't help thinking that what is needed most would be to 'simplify' Mr Bahar's vision of Lotus itself.

Michiel Fleerackers

Weight a minute...

Can everyone please stop complaining about Lotus making heavier cars. What do you think the Esprit twin-turbo V8 was?

Chris Kitson, Newcastle

Naming and shaming

I, along with many other readers I'm sure, would like to pass on my congratulations to your readers from The Netherlands who named their new son after their favourite publication, namely **evo** (evo-mail, 153).

In fact I'd also like to pass on the congratulations of my wife, Helen, and our two children, Beautiful Homes and Razzle.

Euan Gibson, St Abbs, Scotland



New Lotus Eterne rather at odds with Chapman philosophy ('New Lotus position')

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From the forums: Cheap but still 'evo'

206 GTI gets thumbs-down from *evo* forumists, unlike superb Octavia vRS (below)

Hoyleyboyley: Doing some garage re-jigging this year to resolve running costs (Scoob costs a fortune and MX-5 isn't practical to use) and free up some dosh, also potentially tick off some cars I'd like to run for a wee bit. I think I need a practical car, but naturally don't want to go for an 'LX' type model – I still want to enjoy driving. Budget about £2K, with reasonable maintenance costs. Possibles include Octavia vRS, Mondeo ST, E36 328i, Pug 206 GTI. Talk to me people!!

JL: I can't help but feel taking a punt on a Fiat Coupe 20VT would be an OK idea.

Unzippy: Hoyley already took a punt on a Coupe. It was a bad idea.

Jobbo: Octavia vRS – I was swinging this direction before I got my 330i. The pick of the mkIV Golf-based vehicles I think.

Zedleg: Avoid the 206 GTI – it's where Peugeot started going wrong. A



306 Rallye or GTI-6 is a better option.

Nathan: Clio 172. They're not as fragile as people make out. Excellent performance vs running costs ratio.

Delphi: I'm biased having owned one, but an Octavia vRS will do everything you need and has easy tuning potential should you wish to go down that road. Incredibly practical, too.

Toon-10: I'd be careful on what your perception of 'cheaper costs' is. I bought a cheap 2.5 V6 Mondeo a long time ago as I needed a big practical car but also wanted a bit of pace.

OK, not the most *evo* choice but it was cheap and fitted the bill at the time. Every few months things would break/need doing to it, and I ended up spending mega-bucks.

By contrast, I was a bit put off by the 2.4 Accord as I *thought* it would be more expensive to service and run. In over two years absolutely nothing has gone wrong with it!

Carlos: My missus's WRX is as cheap as 200+bhp comes, nothing breaks, 20k+ out of tyres and it does 30mpg on a run and 20mpg when ram-raiding. Considering the practicality, performance and costs, it's a pretty good car. I am all for change for change's sake, but trying to justify it on cost is going to end in tears.

JORG GRAY JG

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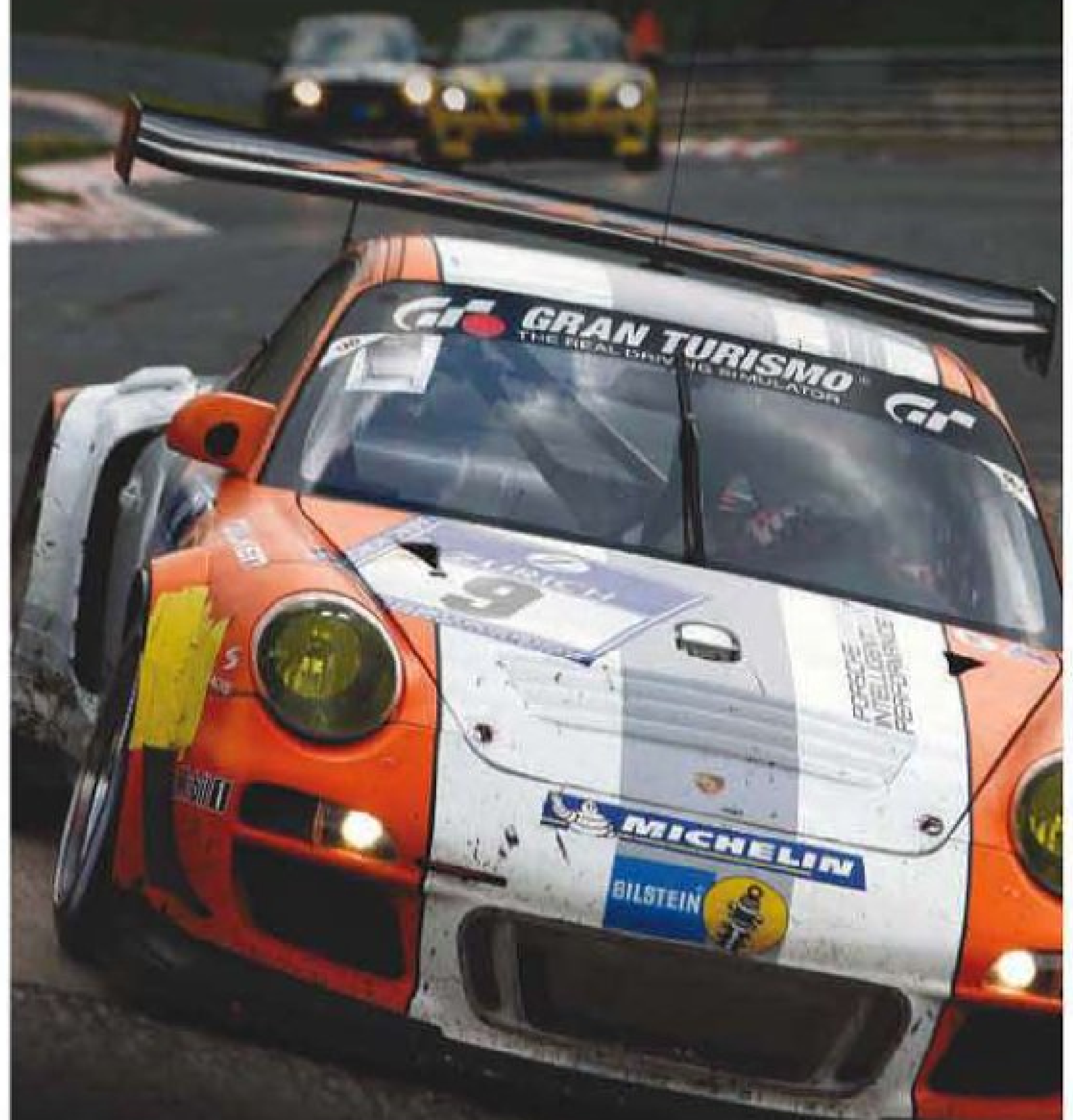
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BRITAIN'S STILL GOT TALENT

AS THE WINNER OF EVO'S 2009 CAR OF THE YEAR, THE LOTUS EVORA NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION HERE. NOW THE NEW SUPERCHARGED EVORA S RAISES THE GAME FURTHER STILL...

As a reader of evo magazine, you'll appreciate great sports cars. You'll also appreciate that the Lotus Evora is one of them, after winning evo's 2009 Performance Car of the Year - the most hotly contested competition of cars that best capture the thrill of driving. Its elegant body clothes an advanced, bonded aluminium chassis which delivers incredible rigidity - two and a half times that of the Lotus Elise. To illustrate the point, Matt Becker, Lotus' Chief Engineer claims that hanging a 2700 kg weight from the front of the chassis would only result in one single degree of bend. So, what could be better than giving the acclaimed, mid-mounted V6 engine more power still to take advantage of this astonishing platform?

Enter the Evora S. Like its sibling, the S is about placing the driver at the centre of the action - and what action - only with a supercharger raising your heart rate to an

addictive level of beats per minute. Power climbs from 276bhp to 345bhp, torque jumps by 35lb ft to 295lb ft and performance steps up the scale from serious to sensational. The new Evora S can accelerate from standstill to 60mph in just 4.6 seconds, and the top speed jumps a full 10mph, to 172mph. Best of all, the supercharger enriches the driving experience with a broad helping of added punch throughout the V6 engine's rev range - not just at the top end.

All the power in the world would be nothing without control. A good job then that Lotus Engineering and the talented people behind it are masters at making a sports car feel like an extension of the driver. The new Evora S features bespoke suspension bushes, a thicker rear anti-roll bar, retuned damping and revised steering, which match the added bite of the engine with an even more direct feel than the Evora and further control at the race track. For added control, Lotus' DPM (Dynamic

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LOTUS MOTORSPORT

Lotus Renault GP. The Lotus Type I25. Lotus Evora GT4. Lotus Cup, Indycar, GP2, GP3, GT2. Okay, you get the picture. Lotus is a name that is synonymous with motorsport and 2011 will see the British sports car brand compete in more formula racing than ever before. Race fans around the world will be watching Lotus Renault GP closely in this season's Formula One championship, the new car easily identifiable with its gold-on-black colour scheme that evokes the classic liveried cars that Ayrton Senna drove in the mid '80s. Meanwhile the Evora GT4 Endurance has seen Nigel Mansell's son's, Greg and Leo, post an impressive 3rd in class at the 24 Hours of Dubai race. Follow all 2011 Lotus motorsport at lotuscars.com/motorsport.



Performance Management) stability control system comes as standard on the new Evora S. Featuring two settings - standard and sport - the latter allows the driver to push the tyres closer to the limit of their adhesion without fear of overstepping the mark. Switch it off and the perfectly poised handling and detailed feedback from the seat and steering let you take it further still... Should you prefer to cruise, then an elegantly crafted cabin cossets the driver with luxurious leather hide, neatly detailed aluminium switchgear, sports seats and a perfectly arranged driving position. So the Evora S is just as capable of touring to the Alps as it is tearing up them. Try it for yourself, register for a test drive at evo.co.uk/lotusevora.

Above: Driver-focused - but more than sumptuous enough to tour to the Alps; Left: V6 + supercharger = 345bhp of fun; Right: Lotus Renault GP revs up for 2011 season



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Specification

Engine	V6 supercharged
Location	Mid rear, transverse
Displacement	3456cc
Bore x stroke	94 x 83mm
Max power	345bhp @ 7000rpm
Max torque	295lb ft @ 4500rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, rear wheel drive with electronic differential lock
Front suspension	Forged aluminium double wishbones, coil springs, gas dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Forged aluminium double wishbones, coil springs, gas dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Cross-drilled ventilated discs, 350mm front/322mm rear
Wheels	18 inch front, 19 inch rear, alloy
Tyres	Pirelli P-Zero; front 225/40 ZR18, rear 255/35 ZR19
Weight (kerb)	1437kg
Power-to-weight	240bhp/tonne
0-60mph	4.6 seconds
Top speed	172mph
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Next month, we share reader reviews as the extraordinary Lotus Evora is put to the test.

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How the new Pagani takes the supercar to the next level

Active suspension rises under braking to counter weight transfer

Carbon-ceramic brakes are kept at operating temperature by hot air feed

All the carbon weave flows in the same direction

Central tub is made from carbon-titanium



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PAGANI HUAYRA



Above left: even the desks at Pagani are carbonfibre. Above right: carbon weave options. Below: Metcalfe (left) takes a first look inside the Huayra with Horacio Pagani. Bottom: every part (this is a flywheel) is stamped with the Pagani logo



The wind of change is blowing through the supercar world, and its name is Huayra. Pagani's new supercar takes its appellation from the ancient Argentinean god of wind and, like the Zonda before it (also named after a wind), it's poised to set new benchmarks for the world's fastest and most exclusive road cars.

It's pronounced 'why-eera' (we have this on good authority from none other than Horacio Pagani himself), though the actual sound that escapes your lips might well be 'phwooar'. Because the first time you see the Huayra in the metal – or rather in the carbon, aluminium and titanium – I guarantee it'll bring out the small child in you. This is a supercar in the very best sense, dripping with advanced materials, packed with new technologies, powered by a sensationally powerful twin-turbo V12 engine, and clothed in bodywork of quite stunning proportions and exquisite detailing.

I'll let you in on a little secret. The Huayra was originally planned to appear almost two years ago, at the 2009 Geneva motor show. But when I visited the Pagani factory in December 2008, Horacio confided that he'd decided to delay the launch. With the world economy in turmoil, he said, it wasn't the right time to be unveiling a glitzy new supercar.

'Damn!' was my first reaction. I'd been close to the project for a while and we'd set a number of pages aside for the big reveal. But in fact the decision made perfect sense. For a start, it meant the car would be fully compliant with Euro 5 and LEV II (the equivalent US emissions regulation) right from launch. And since actual production wasn't due to start until 2010, customers wouldn't have to wait so long for their cars to arrive. Canny businessman, Mr Pagani.

Now wind the clock forward to December 2010 and I find myself at the Pagani factory once again, but this time there's a real buzz about the place. Apparently the Huayra test programme has been going spectacularly well,

the car proving to be even quicker and even more dynamically accomplished than they'd hoped. I've only been inside the factory for a few minutes but Horacio is just itching to show me his new baby in all its glory.

He ushers me into the inner workshop, where a finished Huayra is hiding under a fitted cover. Even like this, the proportions and stance look fantastic, the shape Zonda-like but much smoother and, from what I can tell, with no obvious spoilers to muddle the lines. Horacio and test driver Davide Testi each grab a front corner of the cover and begin to peel it back...

The jewel-like headlights appear first, then the exquisite teardrop mirrors, seemingly hanging in space from the slimmest stalks imaginable. So far so Zonda, but with each emerging panel the Huayra reveals itself to be a radically different design and very much its own thing.

The overall effect is less showy than some of the more recent Zondas. Subtler, classier. Every single aspect of the car is quite beautifully finished, be it the forged and polished wheels (different right-to-left so the spokes curve in the direction of the wheels' rotation on both sides of the car), the single titanium nut that clamps each wheel to its hub, the unique front and rear lights or the distinctive titanium quad exhaust tips poking from beneath the rear cover. Everywhere you look there's another gorgeous trinket to enjoy – the leather straps, carried over from the Zonda, that hold the front and rear covers to the central tub. The Cinque's titanium exhaust cans, just visible through the rear grille. So much to take in...

According to Horacio, the overall shape was inspired by an aircraft's wing and its fundamental 'rightness' in terms of design. That's why the nose section of the Huayra looks slightly odd at first. Instead of having a protruding front splitter, two large scoops channel air beneath the Huayra's prominent nose. At first glance, I'm not convinced this is a good idea. Surely these scoops will only lead to lift under the front axle, while the bluff front will increase drag. Horacio quickly organises

‘The Huayra’s stance looks fantastic, Zonda-like but much smoother and with no obvious spoilers to muddle the lines’



PAGANI HUAYRA



an air-line to be rigged up and instructs me to hold a scaled-down replica of the Huayra's front section a few millimetres above a workbench. As soon as the air blasts out, the front section is sucked downwards – not what I was expecting at all. But then, as Horacio says, air never does what you expect; it only does what it wants.

The lack of a conventional front air dam isn't the only surprise in the Huayra's front section, as just behind the leading edge of the nose, sitting flush with the surrounding bodywork, are two moveable flaps. These hold the key to the car's clean profile, as the Huayra sees the introduction of advanced active aerodynamics to the world of supercars. There are two similar flaps at the rear of the car and all four are controlled by a powerful ECU, which constantly monitors speed, yaw, lateral acceleration, steering angle and throttle position and then moves the flaps independently, according to whatever aero load is required.

If you've ever sat overlooking a wing on a plane then you'll have noticed that the flaps on the wing's trailing edge seem to have a life of their own, especially when you're coming in to land. Well, the flaps on the Huayra work in an identical way. When you're braking, the rear flaps will pop up to increase drag and act like an air brake. But it's when you're cornering that it all gets a little weird. Say you're going through a tightening left-hander. You might expect all the flaps to pop up to help increase overall downforce, but in fact only the inside flaps are raised as that's where the extra downforce is needed, to increase grip on the inside tyres and also to keep roll to a minimum. The way these



Cabin is packed with wonderful details, like the metal instrument dials (above) and 'floating' drive selector (right). Top: steering wheel incorporates controls for lights, indicators, wipers, etc. Below: new touchscreen interface

flaps work in practice won't become entirely clear until we actually drive the car later this year, but I love the fact that they have enabled the Huayra to have such a clean and uncluttered profile along with an excellent Cd figure of 0.3, rising to a maximum Cd of 0.5 when all four flaps are deployed.

There's one more trick to the aerodynamics. Adjustable-height front suspension allows the gap between car and road to be controlled by this new ECU, so under heavy braking, for example, the suspension is raised to counter the forward weight transfer.

The rear of the Huayra is also a much cleaner design than the Zonda. The rear track is 20mm narrower, while the wheelbase has been stretched by 70mm, giving the new car a much slimmer look than its predecessor. Just



'If you ever wondered if a mechanical object could be described as art, look no further'



THE TEST DRIVER



Davide Testi joined Pagani in 2000 at the tender age of 19 and worked with supercar chassis master Loris Biccocchi in the early days, but he had sole responsibility for the development of the Huayra, which until recently was known only by its code name, C9.

'Testing started in 2007 with "M1", which was the original C9 mule fitted with modified Zonda bodywork,' he says. 'Initially the problem was one of refinement. The AMG engine was too aggressive in its delivery because the C9 is so much lighter than an AMG Mercedes. The gearbox wasn't great either, being too clunky and unrefined.'

'We have now covered over one million kilometres in the C9 development cars and Mercedes have done a brilliant job on the engine, fitting smaller turbos, a revised ECU and different intercoolers, and now the engine is unbelievable! Throttle response is so much better. You don't think it's a turbo when you first drive it, but when the turbos are really working the acceleration feels extraordinary, like a Veyron. It is much, much quicker than a Zonda! The performance is incredible.'

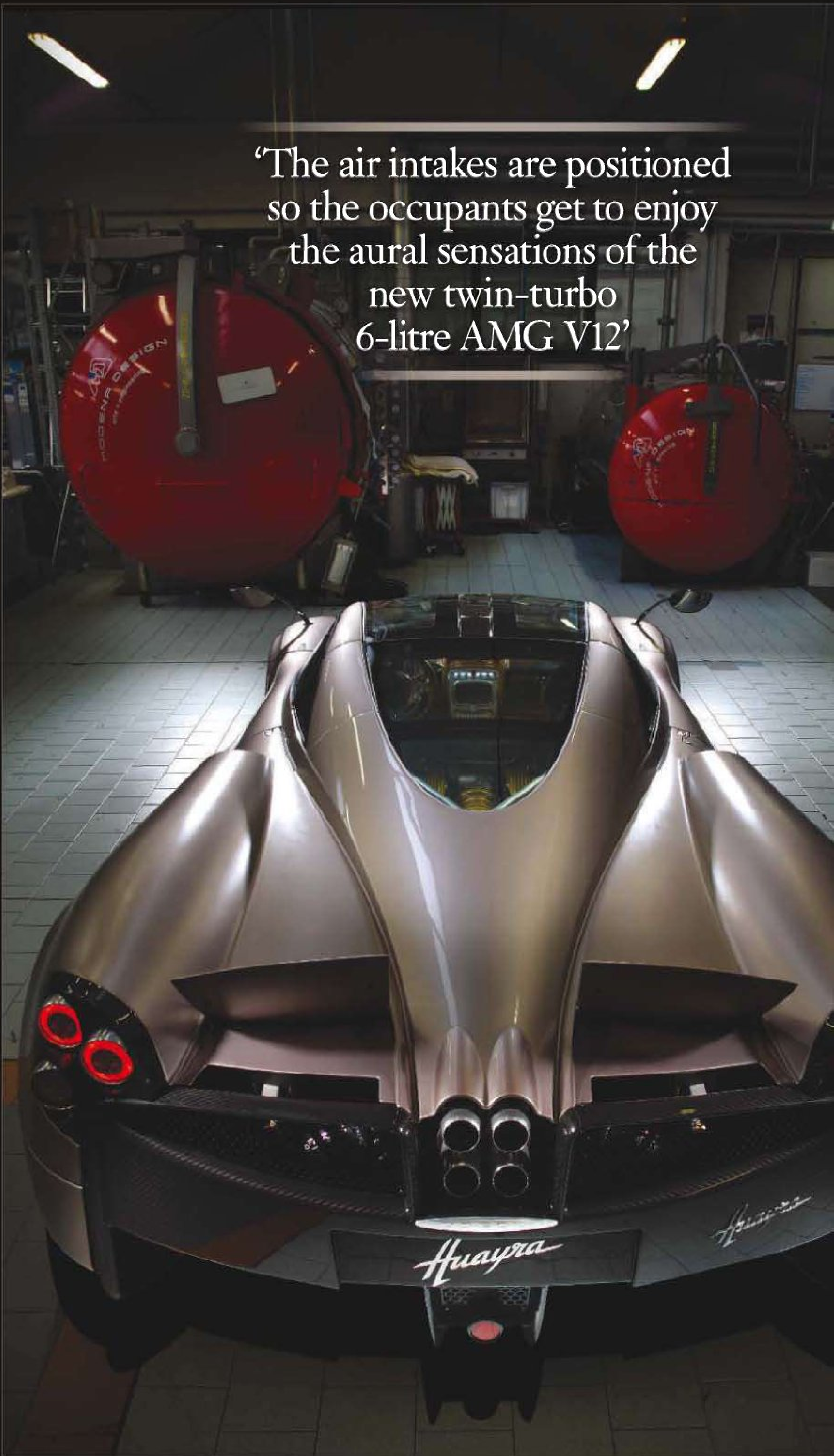
'The car is completely different to the Zonda. The chassis is much more friendly at the limits as the engine and gearbox are both lighter and shorter, as well as sitting lower in the chassis. The wheelbase is longer, too. Then the noise is very different, more induction than exhaust compared to the Zonda but still very exciting. You hear this hurricane when the turbos are working, then the wastegates when you come off the power.'

'The Huayra is an amazing car and I'm very proud of it.'

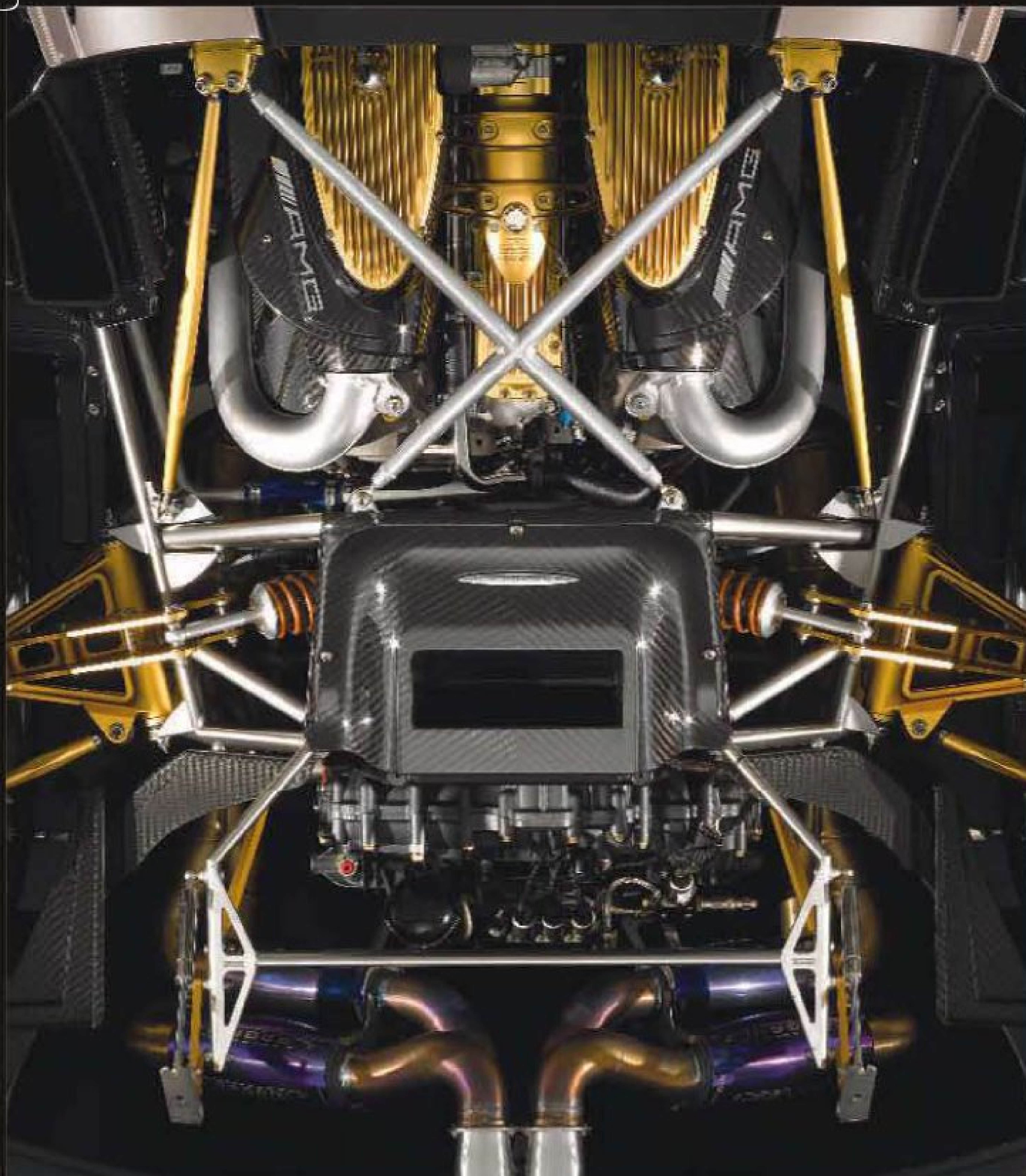
PAGANI HUAYRA



Top: Horacio talks aerodynamics. Right: rear view with flaps raised. Above: every bolt used on the car is titanium. Below: Xtrac gearbox is a transverse unit, offering better weight distribution



“The air intakes are positioned so the occupants get to enjoy the aural sensations of the new twin-turbo 6-litre AMG V12”



Above: the new twin-turbo 6-litre AMG V12 and, behind it, the titanium exhaust system, which weighs under 10kg

behind the doors are the two intakes for the mid-mounted engine, designed specifically so the occupants get to enjoy the aural sensations as the new twin-turbo 6-litre AMG V12 turns air and petrol into 700 thunderous horsepower. The engine is visible from outside the car via a window just behind the passenger cell, with the gold-coloured finned air intakes to the inlet manifold dominating the view, while other details glint in the background. What you probably won't notice is that surrounding this engine window is the air intake for the gearbox cooler that sits behind the engine.

From directly behind the car you can see how much taller the rear haunches are compared with the Zonda's, and how uncluttered your view to them is thanks to the absence of a fixed spoiler. The rear grille (there to help vent the engine compartment) is in the same Pagani-signature oval shape as on the Zonda R, while the rear venturi looks simpler than before but apparently delivers even greater downforce.

Go to take a peak inside the Huayra's cabin and initially you don't realise that the door is a gullwing design; when closed, it looks just like the conventionally opening door on a Zonda. Only when you pull on the catch do you twig that it doesn't pivot outwards but wants to rise vertically instead. As it does, it reveals probably the most spectacular interior you'll ever see.

It's hard to know where to start, as everything in here is new. The cockpit is bigger (70mm longer and 50mm wider to be exact) and although the seats look familiar, they are in fact an all-new design offering greater lateral support. But it's what sits between them that defines what this car is all about...

The owner's manual probably calls it the 'gear selector', but if you ever wondered if a mechanical object could be described as art, look no further. Suspended in mid-air, the lever pivots around a single rose-joint that is gripped between two horseshoe brackets mounted on the end of the central tunnel. Push or pull the lever and you can see it operating the chromed rods protruding from the tunnel below. Sadly, you'll only use this lever to select Drive, Reverse or Park – the Huayra comes exclusively with a seven-speed automated manual gearbox with paddles for manual shifting – but it's a thing of utter beauty nonetheless.

Just like the Ferrari 458, the Huayra gathers lots of minor controls on the steering wheel, including lights, wipers, indicators, even Pagani's version of the manettino switch, which alters both the electronic stability control and gearbox settings, allowing the driver to choose between Normal, Sport and Race modes (in Race the car will record lateral acceleration and lap times, as well as speed). One surprise is that the

THE SALES MANAGER



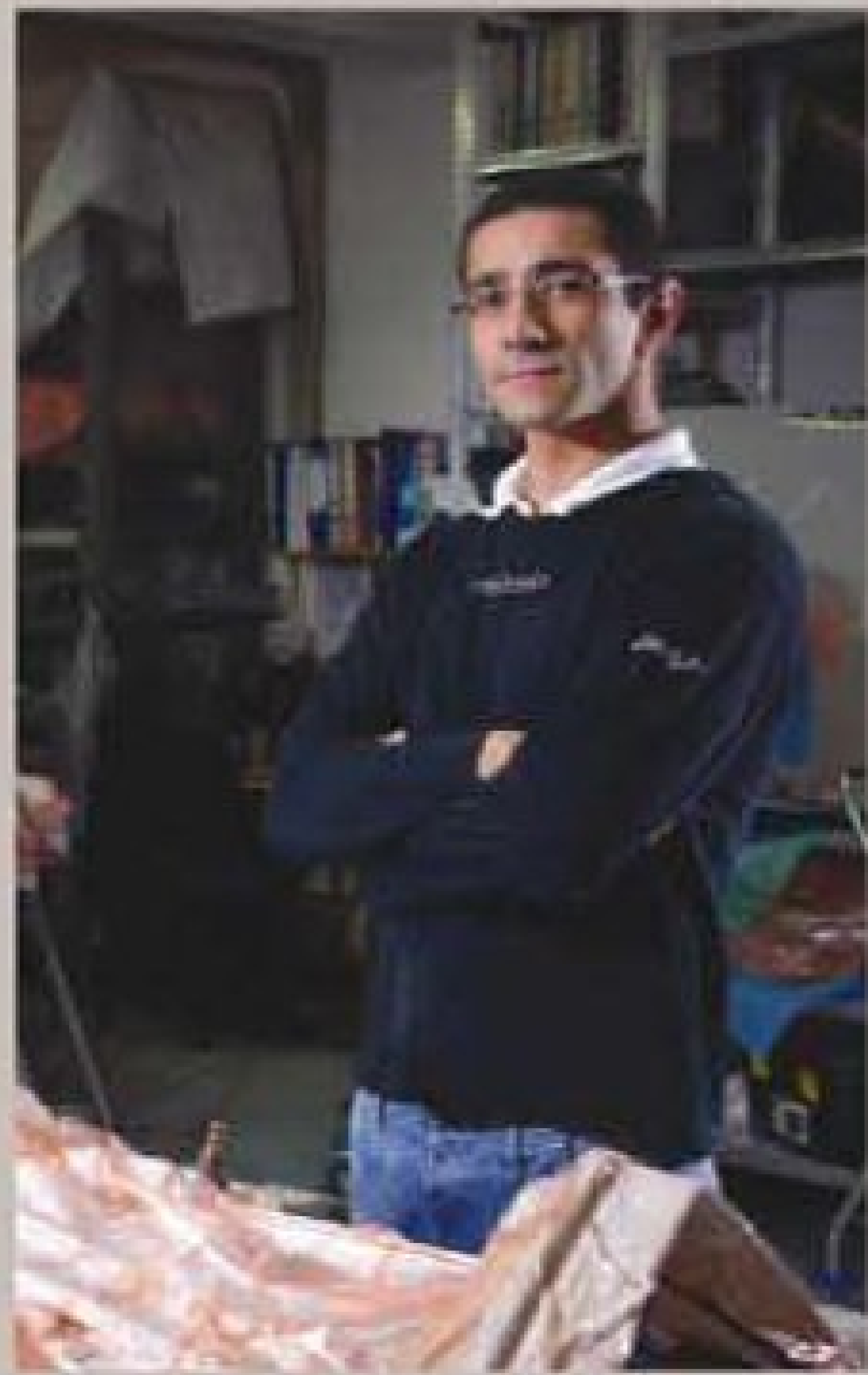
Alberto Giovanelli is the link between the customers and the factory. He is currently in the process of setting up new Pagani dealers around the globe, ready for the launch of the Huayra this spring.

Since he joined Pagani in 2005 the epicentre of sales has shifted east, away from Europe and towards the Middle East and Singapore, despite huge taxes in these regions. 'In Singapore a new owner has to pay 136 per cent tax on the price of the car,' Alberto explains. 'In China it's 100 per cent, Brazil 136 per cent and in Thailand it's 200 per cent! This doesn't apply to track cars, though, and that's why the Zonda R has been very good for us. Another important factor is that the Zonda has always been available in right-hand drive, unlike the Veyron, Enzo and Carrera GT. In certain regions you can only drive a right-hand-drive car on the road.'

Alberto expects that production of the Zonda will end this year. 'We have orders for a few more Zondas which have still to be built,' he says. 'Horacio will want to keep the very last Zonda and we are also looking to do something very special. Owners always want more power and we think 750bhp will be possible!'

So how many Huayra orders has Alberto received? 'We have refused to take deposits on the car until we announce the price but I have so many letters of serious intent. Buyers are desperate to send us a deposit but this isn't the Pagani way. I expect I will have at least 50 deposits sent to me when we announce the price during a private event for clients we will hold just before Geneva.'

THE HEAD OF CARBON



Roberto Malmusi has been in charge of the carbonfibre workshop at Pagani since 1996 and is the only man entrusted by Horacio to do the carbonfibre work on cars that will have unpainted, bare-carbon bodies.

Horacio insists that the carbon weave on every car is perfectly aligned when the various components come together. So where the rear clamshell meets a door or a sill, for example, you'll see the weave is at precisely the same angle, like you might find in a Savile Row suit.

I ask Roberto what is the trickiest part of the Huayra to make. 'The underside of the rear clamshell,' he replies. 'It takes me three days to lay out the carbonfibre and it's incredibly tricky to get it all to match up perfectly. I love doing it, though, as customers really notice the workmanship that goes into every Pagani.'

gearchange paddles are now mounted on the wheel itself, rather than on the column (as in the Cinque), after the development team decided they were easier to use in this position.

More evidence of the fanatical attention to detail that has gone into this car are the Huayra's instruments, the facias for which are not the normal printed plastic affairs but are hand-made for Pagani by a Swiss watch-face maker in metal, with the numerals and markings cut from the metal face itself. They take days to create and instead of costing the industry standard of around 4 euros, they come in at over 2500 euros a set!

The central console sports an LCD screen, which displays navigation, ventilation, audio and phone functions. Below this is a row of manual controls for the ventilation, and below those the slot where the new 'key' that Pagani has designed for the Huayra needs to be inserted. Shaped like the car itself and made from aluminium, not only is it a key, it also doubles

as a music storage device, so every time it's plugged into the car, all of your music stored within it becomes available. And no, there isn't a starter button in sight.

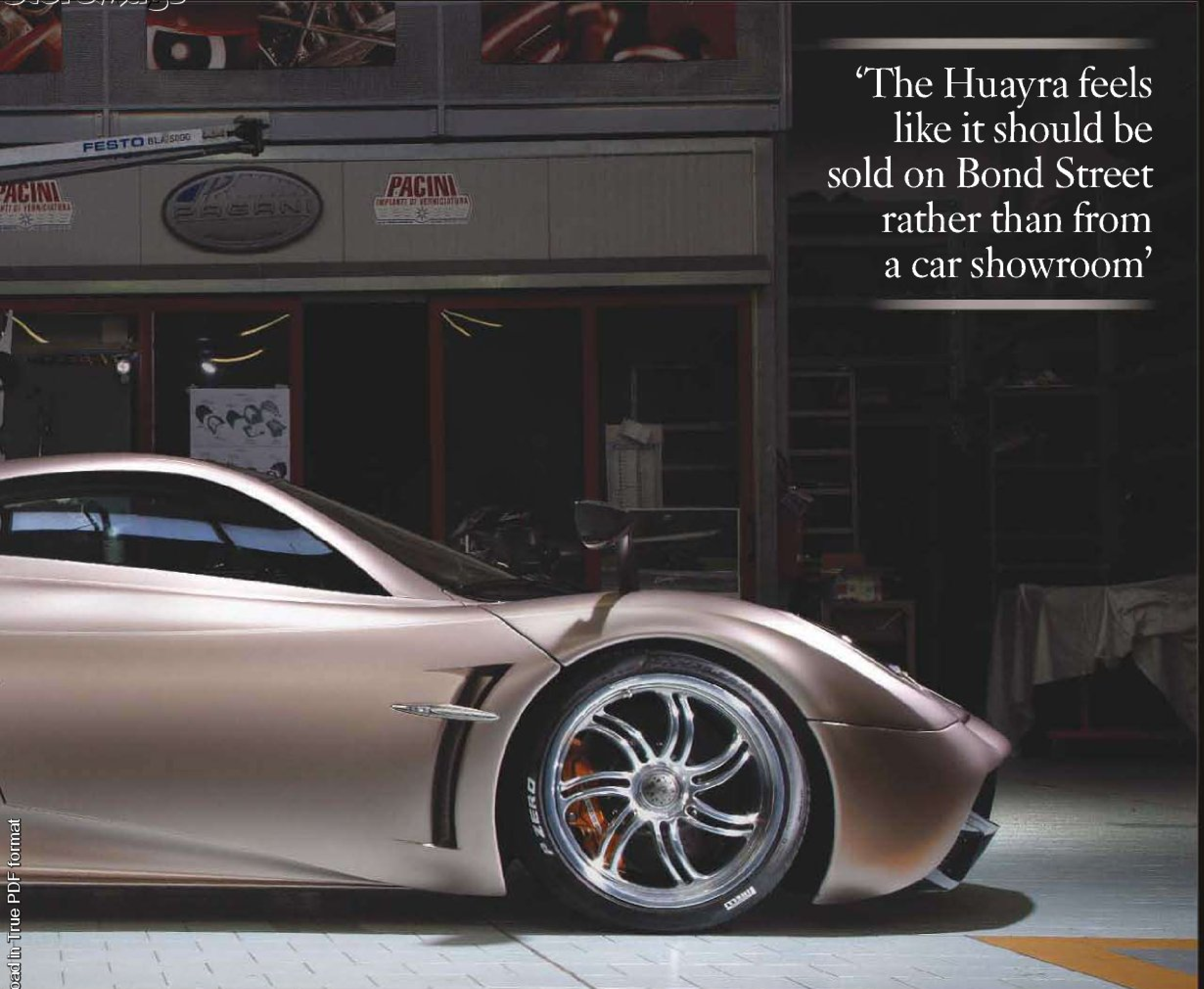
As you might expect, the finish inside the Huayra is amazing, especially when you consider that the car complies with all known safety regulations, including those in the US. That's why the steering wheel now has an airbag and the passenger seat comes equipped with a load sensor, so the two-stage passenger-side airbag can be deployed at the correct level. There are even Isofix child-seat mounting points on the passenger seat – that's because it's a legal requirement in certain countries. Even so, I can't see many Huayras being used for the school run...

Delve under the carbon bodywork and you'll discover even more engineering cleverness going on. For example, rather than venting the hot air that leaves the front-mounted radiator over the bodywork, Pagani has flowed the

majority of it into the front wheelarches. The thinking here is that it will keep the carbon-ceramic brake discs above ambient temperature and therefore the pad material doesn't have to be compromised for cold-disc performance as the discs are hardly ever stone-cold. There are also pipes that take air from the back of the air-to-water intercoolers on either side of the front section and direct it straight onto the discs. According to Horacio, this allows the discs to be kept at around 50 degrees C, which is the perfect temperature for the ceramics not to have any unwanted cold-braking performance characteristics.

The suspension front and rear is a double-wishbone arrangement, with near-horizontal dampers, and again it all looks utterly beautiful. Taken almost directly from the Zonda R, the components have been machined individually from solid pieces of aircraft-grade aluminium before being anodised in their final golden finish. The suspension is attached to incredibly strong





‘The Huayra feels like it should be sold on Bond Street rather than from a car showroom’

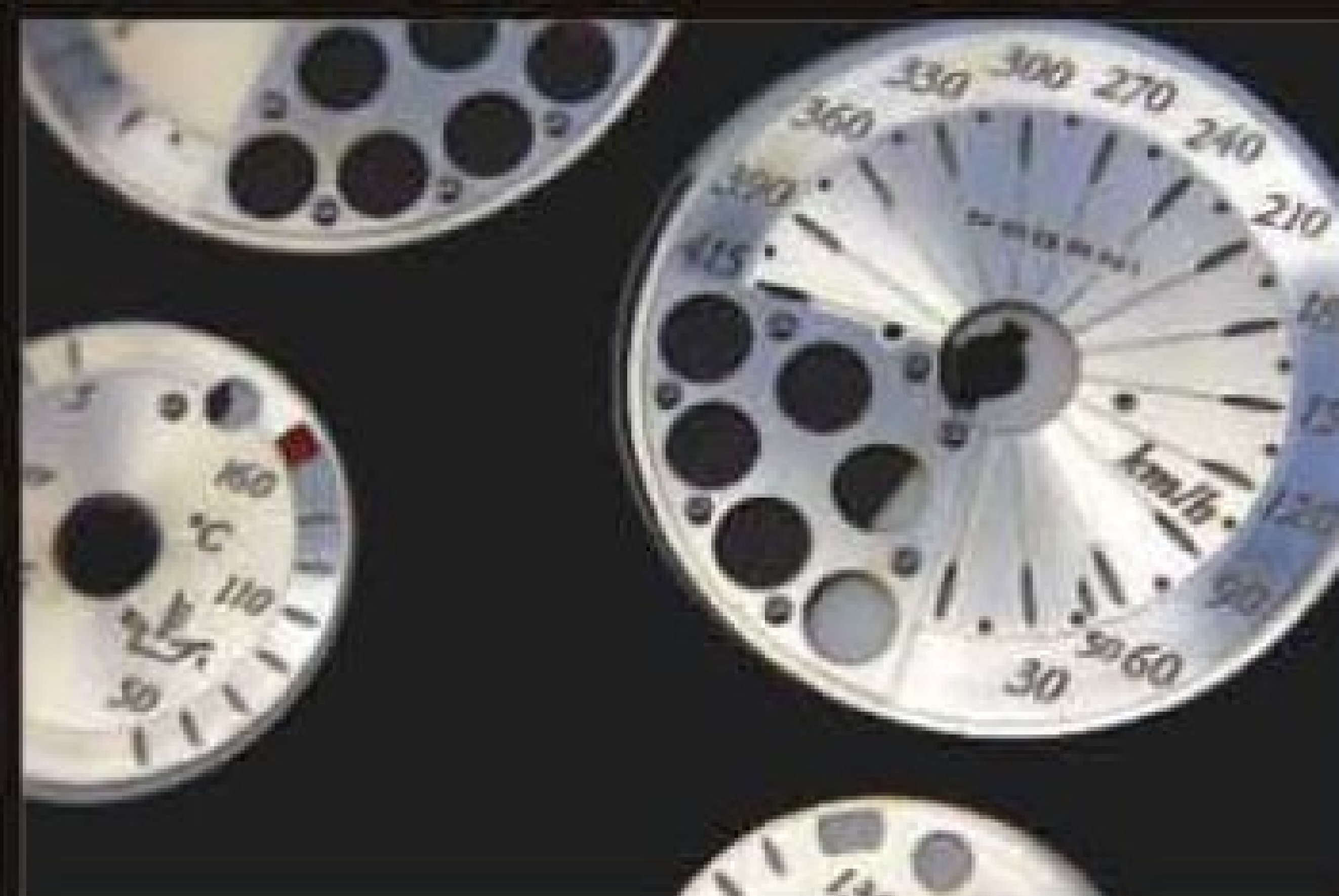
chrome-vanadium front and rear subframes, which in turn are bolted directly to the new carbon-titanium central tub. Pagani is rightly very proud of the inherent strength offered by this tub, which enables the Huayra to pass all of the current and impending crash tests around the world with flying colours.

The engine remains at the heart of a Pagani, though, and this new one certainly delivers. The twin-turbocharged, 5980cc AMG V12 is bespoke (it has its own Mercedes part number, M158) and produces over 700bhp at 5000rpm and 811lb ft at 3500rpm, yet it will be rated at below 310g/km of CO₂ on the combined cycle, a remarkable result for a 700bhp supercar (for comparison, the 562bhp V8-engined Ferrari 458 Italia comes in at 307g/km).

Combine this amount of horsepower with the new seven-speed Xtrac gearbox (bespoke to Pagani and said to be super-smooth-shifting) and the performance promises to be astonishing. At the time of my visit the final figuring had yet



Top: weight distribution is 44:56 front:rear; Pirelli tyres are unique to Huayra. Above: aluminium 'key' also stores your music files. Below: Swiss-made dials before fitting. Right: carbon weave aligns across components



PAGANI HUAYRA

to happen, but in initial tests the car has proved so fast in a straight line (235mph+) that there's talk of having to limit the top speed to avoid the need for the kind of incredibly expensive, bespoke tyres that Veyron owners have to put up with. Speaking of the Veyron, acceleration is expected to be a match for the 1000bhp hypercar thanks to the Huayra tipping the scales at around 1390kg with fluids – that's over 550kg lighter than the mighty Bugatti.

Horacio explains that to get the kerb weight this low took real determination from the outset, with every single component scrutinised before being used. That's why every fastener on the car is made of titanium and etched with a Pagani logo and a unique number that relates to an individual stress-test.

It's also why the Huayra was never going to be equipped with a fashionable dual-clutch transmission, as Pagani thought them too heavy to be worthy of consideration, as well as being uninvolved to use. Horacio explains that the slight acceleration advantage you might get with a DCT would be nullified by the extra weight, adding that the Huayra's single-clutch system has a maximum rating of 811lb ft while weighing 54kg less than the dual-clutch transmission in the Ferrari 458, which is only rated up to 442lb ft. Altogether, the engine/gearbox drivetrain in the Huayra weighs in at 395kg, some 25kg lighter than the Zonda's drivetrain, while the centre of mass is 40mm lower thanks to dry sump lubrication.

So much to take in... I reckon that what we're seeing with the Huayra, along with Aston's One-77, is the birth of a new genre of supercar, one that brings much more to the table than just the exceptional performance that is almost a given



Above: new seats offer better support than Zonda's. Below: mirrors look delicate, but carbon construction makes them strong. Right: front flaps in raised position. Below right: wheels have a single central nut





SEE AND HEAR
THE HUAYRA
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THE ALUMINIUM EXPERT



Maurizio Meschiari is Pagani's go-to man at Modena-based machining firm Aspa SRL. Aspa specialises in making very high quality aluminium components, mainly for use in aircraft and hydraulic motors. It began working with Pagani in 2005 and now 35 per cent of its work is for the supercar maker.

Maurizio explains that Aspa will be fabricating over 800 individual parts for the Huayra. These will include all the suspension components (Aspa already makes the suspension for the Cinque and Zonda R), the dash, badging and hinges, and the intakes for the engine. Basically, every single exquisitely finished aluminium component on the Huayra is made by Aspa.

'It feels like we're seeing the birth of a new genre of supercar, one that offers much more than just exceptional performance'

SPECIFICATION

Engine V12, 5980cc, twin-turbo
Location Mid, longitudinal
CO2 <310g/km
Power 700bhp+ @ 5000rpm
Torque 811lb ft @ 3500rpm
Transmission Seven-speed automated manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, ESP
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, active dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, active dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Vented and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs, ABS
Wheels 19in front, 20in rear
Tyres 255/35 ZR19 front, 335/30 ZR20 rear, Pirelli P Zero
Weight (kerb) 1350kg (dry)
Power-to-weight 512bhp/ton
0-60mph c3.2sec (est)
Top speed 235mph+ (claimed)
Basic price c£1,000,000 (est)
On sale Spring 2011

today. Unique features; bespoke components; fastidious detailing...

Of course, all this beautiful engineering doesn't come cheap. The final price of the Huayra has yet to be finalised, but there's talk of it being over 800,000 euros plus local taxes – call it a million pounds in the UK, give or take. Then consider that some even more expensive variants are likely to follow (Horacio is already talking openly about a Roadster version in a couple of years' time). Supercars were always expensive, but since the Veyron arrived a £1 million-plus price tag is not so unusual.

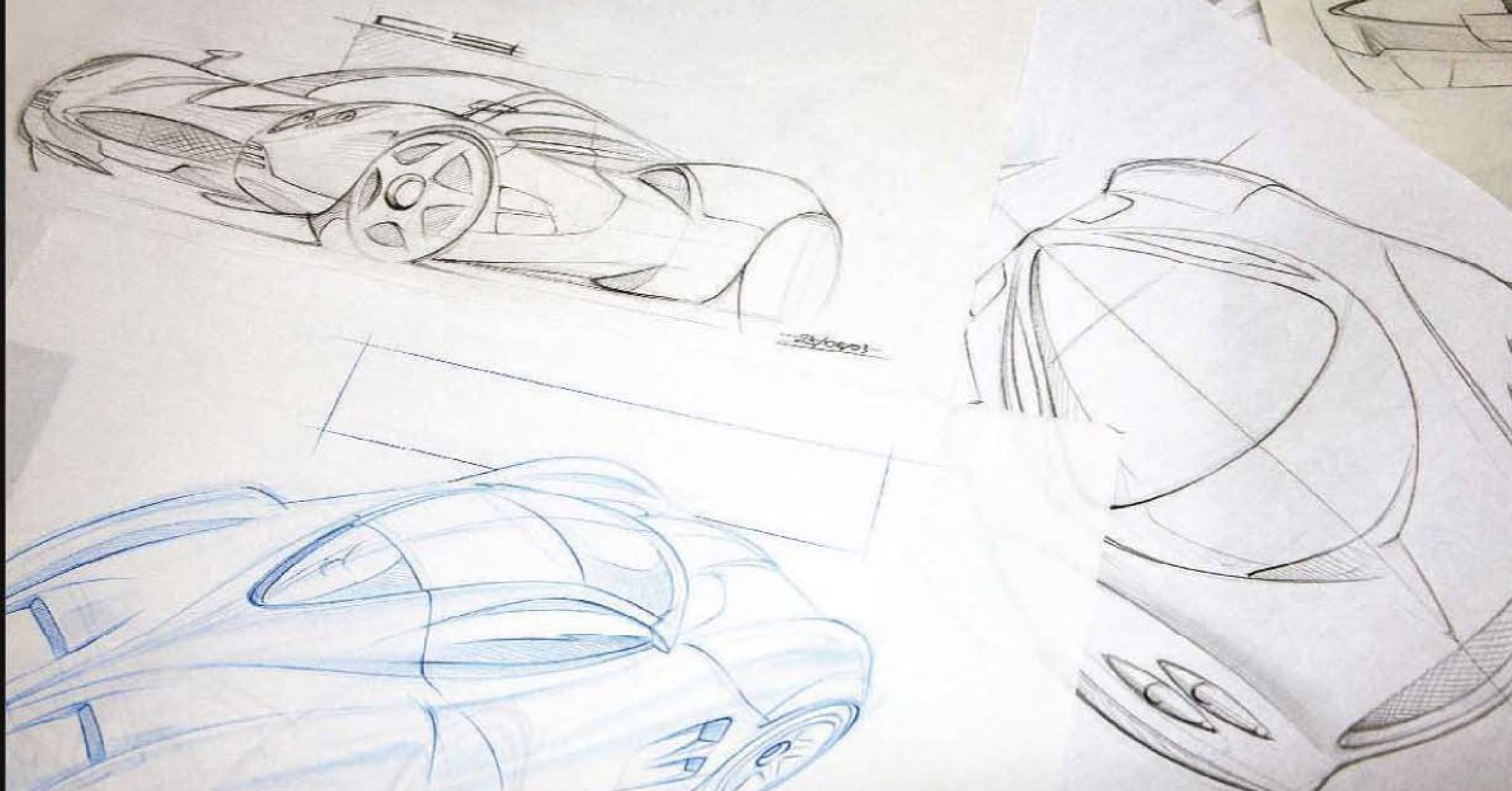
Is the Huayra going to be worth it? For people like us, that will come down to how it drives. My only reservation lies with the engine, and then only because the naturally aspirated 7.3-litre V12 in the Zonda, howling its way up to its 7000rpm limit, is one of the great wonders of the automotive world. Will the Huayra's

turbocharged unit have the same charisma?

With maximum power at 5000rpm and a red line at six, I'm not sure, but then I bet there's plenty of tuning potential and perhaps even an 'S' version waiting in the wings. We'll just have to wait and see.

Already I sense that there's more to enjoy here than with the Veyron. The Huayra has more soul somehow. Each component is machined by hand with absolute precision; it's as if Pagani was originally a watch manufacturer that turned its hand to supercars. The Huayra feels like it should be sold on Bond Street rather than from a car showroom. Yes, the price may be stratospherically high, but so is the quality of the construction. Horacio Pagani has a favourite saying from the great Leonardo da Vinci: 'la perfezione è fatta di dettagli'. Roughly translated, it means 'perfection is made by details'. That's the Huayra all over.

PAGANI HUAYRA



The Huayra, from sketch to show car

Work on Pagani's second supercar began over seven years ago. **Harry Metcalfe** runs through the development milestones

2003

First drawings of the new car, designated C9, are completed. Modelling begins, with eight scale models and two full-size models being made.

2005

Discussions with AMG about the most suitable engine to use. Mercedes is working on turbocharged units to meet upcoming environmental restrictions. Horacio believes it is crucial for his second supercar to stick with a V12, so an agreement is reached with AMG to develop a specific engine for the C9 project.

2007

First mule created, known internally as M1. Initial drives reveal that the power delivery of the turbocharged V12 is too violent – the reason is that the C9 weighs so much less than any Mercedes car. AMG starts to look at ways to smooth out the power delivery.

2008

An engineering team takes M1 and PT1 (the first 'proper' prototype C9) to South Africa for high-speed testing in ambient temperatures as

hot as 55 degrees C. Cold-weather testing in Sweden follows, where temperatures average around -20. After this, the cars head to the US for emissions testing.

2009

A second prototype, PT2, is created and fitted with the revised engine, with smaller turbos and new ECU. Work starts at Bosch's test centre in Boxberg, Germany, to develop the complex new central control for the ABS, ESP and traction control systems. A team is given over to the project, working closely with Pagani test driver Davide Testi. A third prototype, PT3, is assembled for crash testing.

2010

In March, M1 is destroyed in a crash on the B14 Autobahn near Stuttgart by one of the German development drivers. No other car is involved. PT4 is assembled. This prototype is the closest yet to production-spec and is the car you can see pictured on the previous pages. Construction of the first production car begins in December in preparation for its appearance at the Geneva motor show in March 2011.

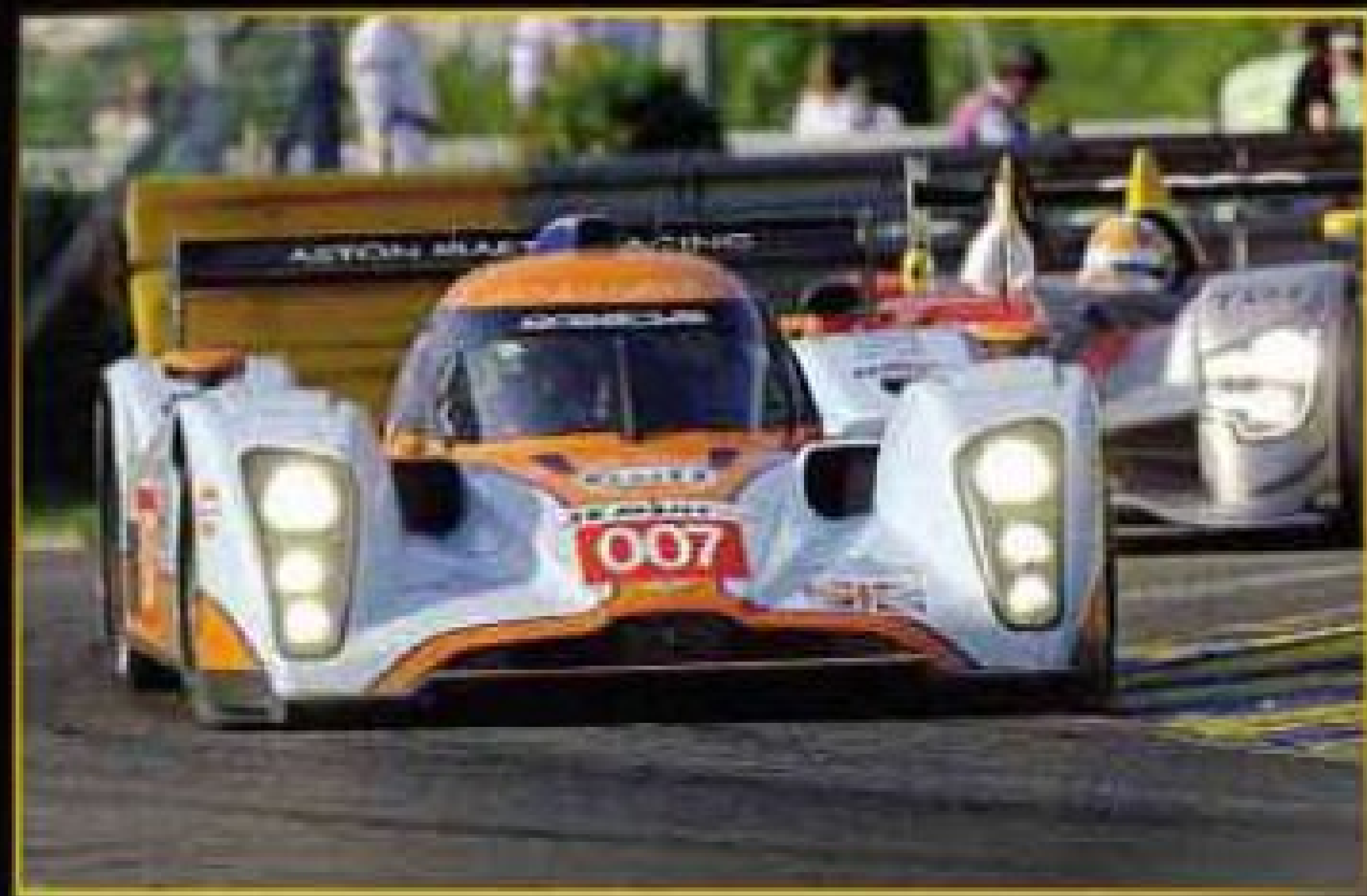


From top: early sketches; scale models; the first prototype, complete with disguise; Zonda-based mule cold-weather testing in Sweden; PT1 prototype in South Africa; M1 after Autobahn crash



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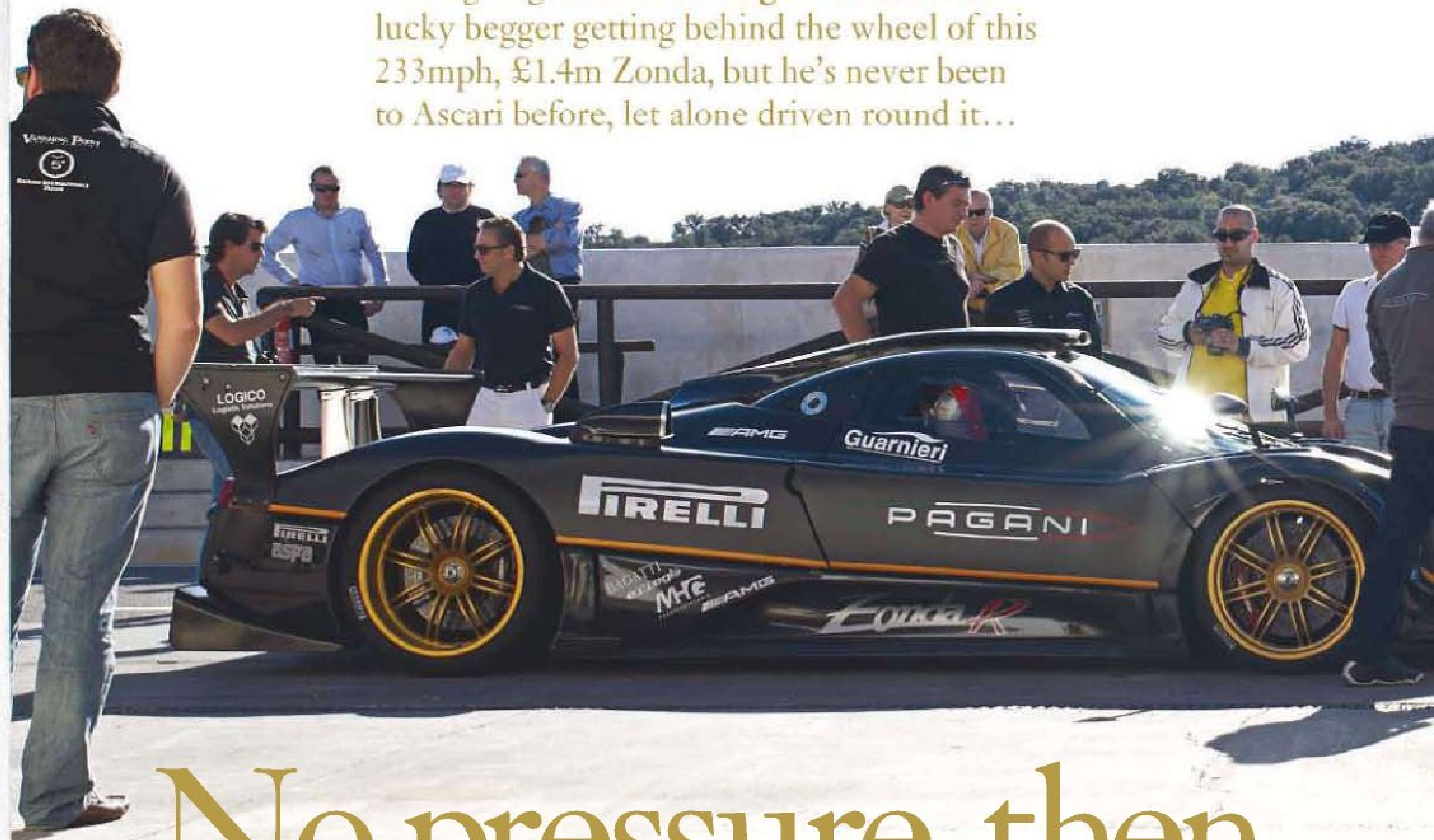
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This is the ultimate version of the Huayra's predecessor – the 739bhp track-only Zonda R. We were first to be granted access to this car when it was still in development. We were in the passenger seat when it lapped the *Top Gear* test track. We witnessed it set a record-breaking Nordschleife time of 6min 47sec. Now, at the Ascari Race Resort in southern Spain, we're going to drive it. **Roger Green** is the lucky begger getting behind the wheel of this 233mph, £1.4m Zonda, but he's never been to Ascari before, let alone driven round it...



No pressure, then...

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I've just discovered my new favourite thing: the astounding reach of third gear in the Zonda R. The corner onto the back straight at Ascari is a tight one, so tight that on a quick lap you'd take it

in second and ride out the flaring revs and the oversteer spike on the exit before pulling the right-hand paddle to upshift. But I'm not on a qualifying lap – the Zonda R isn't a race car – so I take this left in third gear and prepare myself for the low-rev lumpiness you often get with highly strung engines operating outside their torque comfort zone.

It doesn't happen. There's no stutter, no hesitation. Instead the 6-litre AMG V12 digs deep, gets guttural, and with the 12 individual throttle butterflies fully open, begins its velvety, sonorous and unbelievably rapid climb towards 8000rpm. The note hardens, its pitch rising to a frenzied yowl as the rev-counter needle arcs around the dial mounted in the centre of the steering wheel. It builds and builds with impeccable linearity. It sounds pure, expensive, and boy is it loud. It's completely unsilenced but, like an expensive hi-fi system, its volume is not uncomfortable. In fact the soundtrack is far wilder from the outside. Up close on a fly-past it's enough to make your inner ear itchy. But when you're within the maelstrom some

of the violence disappears, perhaps ebbing into the wake, lost in acceleration. In a 739bhp machine that tips the scales at just 1104kg, that acceleration is breathtaking whatever gear you're in.

Breathtaking but not brutal. Pagani may have moved away from the 7.3-litre engines for this ultimate expression of Zonda-ness (to make room for a dry sump and allow the V12 to be fitted further forward and lower) but the 6-litre unit retains the smooth flexibility that characterises the 'regular' versions, only with more intensity and intent. I love it – but right now I'm rapidly approaching the limiter, so I pull on that right-hand paddle once more. *Click!* The Xtrac six-speed automated sequential gearbox gives me the next ratio in 20 milliseconds – the blink of an eye.

And then I discover my *new* favourite thing: fourth gear. The acceleration feels equally ferocious, only now we're travelling at really big speeds. There's a kink. I lift but immediately realise I didn't need to and push the sculpted throttle pedal back to the carbon floor. Fifth now and, yes, the mind-scrambling charge continues. Once again, it's my new favourite thing. What a machine!

But that's not even half the story. The Zonda R is utterly exquisite in the bendy bits too. But we'll come to that in a minute. Let's pause for a moment and pore over the fanatical detail of a car so beautifully crafted you feel you ought to be wearing hand-made Italian shoes and soft velvet gloves to drive it. The first time you clap eyes on the R, it stops you in your tracks as your brain attempts to take it all in. Despite the fact that we're short on time, photographer Gus Gregory does nothing but stare for a full ten minutes before picking his cameras up without uttering a single word.

The carbonfibre body is a masterpiece, and there's just so much of it – it's 394mm longer and 50mm wider than the road-going Zondas, which look modest in its presence. Every panel is bespoke to the R. Only 15 of these cars will





‘The engine note hardens, its pitch rising to a frenzied yowl. It sounds pure, expensive, and boy is it loud’

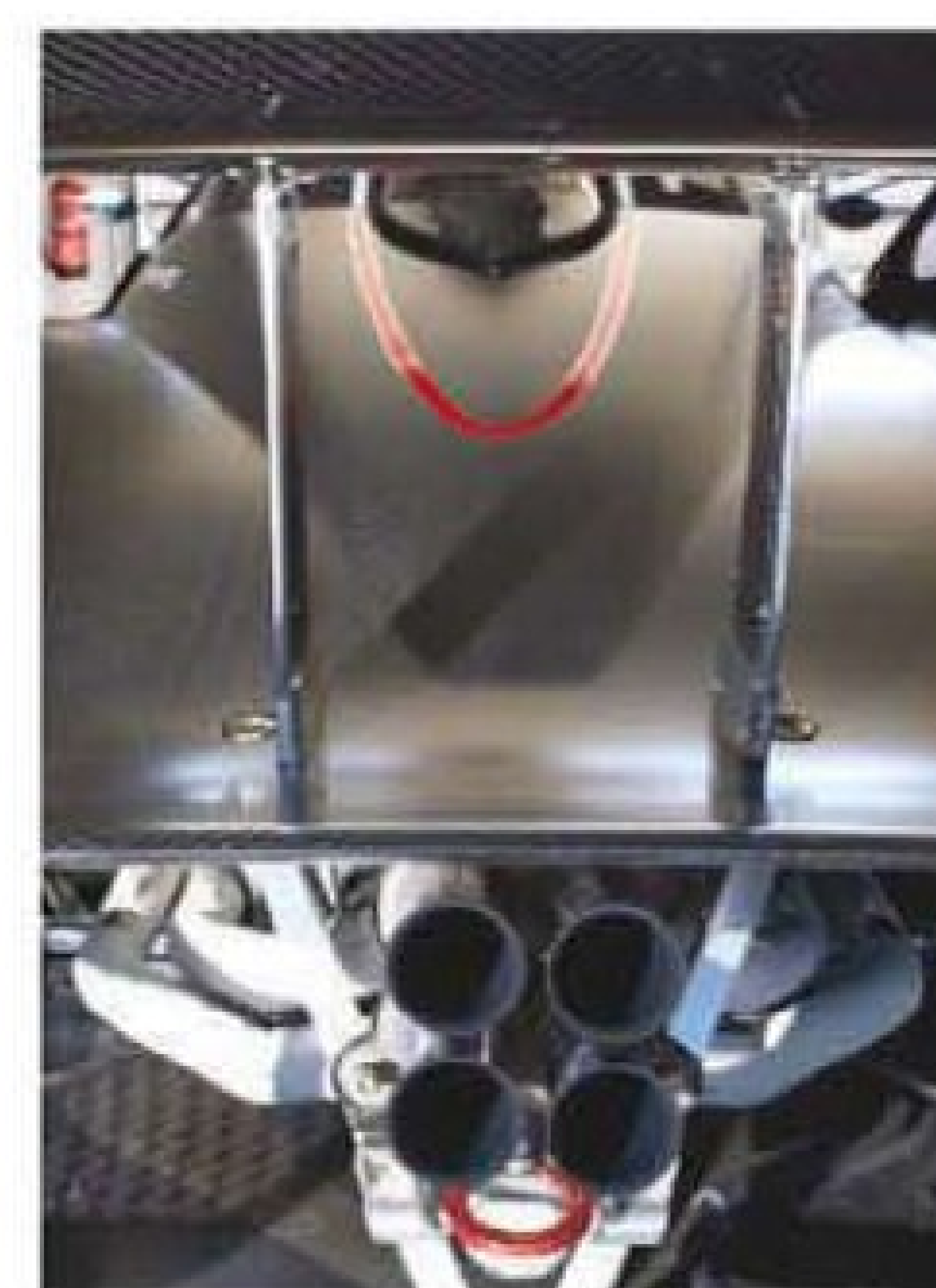


be made (13 have already found owners) and the obsessive detailing extends to every bolt, each of which is titanium and engraved with a recorded serial number. You don't notice them, though. Your eyes can't see past the R's sharper, hawk-like nose and the huge front splitter and rear wing, which combine to produce the kind of downforce levels many GT race-cars crave.

I could spend all day looking around it, but I have to suit-up for my promised ten laps. Did I mention that I've never been to Ascari before? I guess this is a pretty cool way to experience the 3.4-mile track for the first time...

The door has the weight of corrugated cardboard and it swings wide, which with an unobtrusive cage means dropping into the seat is no more difficult than in the road car. There's a harness to do up, and a Digitek telemetry display behind the new steering wheel instead of the usual dials (it's more legible too), but it's unmistakably a Zonda.

Pull back the right-hand gear paddle and it takes a little while for first gear to engage. You



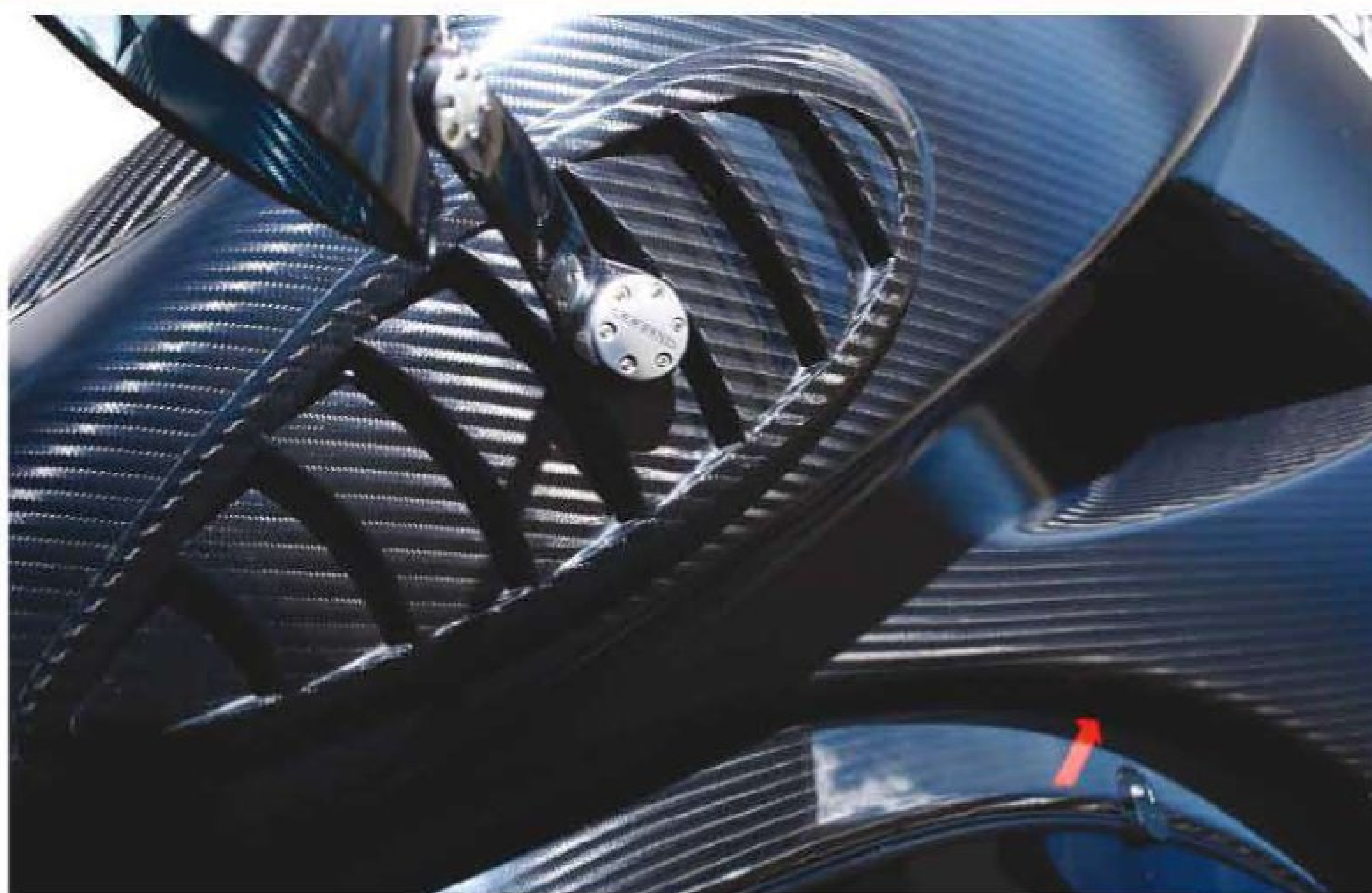
Top left: carbon-ceramic brakes are by Brembo. Far left: display behind the wheel has a rev bar to supplement the rev counter in the wheel centre. Left: bi-plane rear wing is adjustable. Above: trademark quad exhausts remain



can feel and hear straight-cut gears engaging. Once it's hit home you need to be positive with the throttle to move off smartly and allow the clutch to be engaged with minimal slip, but from then on the controls are all simple to use and meet with an instant response. My first couple of laps are exploratory, both because I haven't a clue where I'm going and because you don't – in theory at least – just jump in and give something this formidable the full beans.

A car with a power-to-weight figure of 702bhp per ton should not be this easy to drive. A Veyron Super Sport has a mere 655bhp per ton and that has four-wheel drive. This car should be evil, intimidating and threatening, like it's going to throw you off so hard you won't stop spinning until you reach Malaga. It shouldn't be supple, compliant and exploitable, but it is. Every input is met by an immediate, detailed and millimetrically accurate response, everything is perfectly weighted and the overall balance is cup-cake sweet. Every component is matched, every aspect of the R ramped up by an equal amount, so the power-to-grip ratio remains the same as the road car's and the Zonda's character is retained. It's just that you're working at a much more elevated level. I first drove a Zonda in 2001 and the sensation was one of an Elise with an extraordinary amount of power; it had the same intimacy and lightness of touch. This car retains that feel – an astounding achievement considering just how much more extreme the R is than those early Zondas.

Test driver Andrea Montermini (29 F1 starts to his name) later explains that they could have made the R more aggressive and ultimately even faster over a lap, but this car wasn't built to race and has instead been set up for gentleman drivers to enjoy. While I'm busy telling Andrea how well they've succeeded, Horacio Pagani walks up and joins in the exchange. With Montermini acting as an interpreter, he tells me that one of the requirements was that the R should still work on the road. That's quite a weird demand for a car that rides exclusively on massive Pirelli P Zero slicks and possesses no highway legality at all, but Horacio has apparently tested it himself. 'I went out at 4am,'



As on the road-going Zondas, the detailing is exquisite; note how the lines of the carbonfibre weave on the air vent align with those on the rest of the bodywork (above). Right: massive rear diffuser contributes to race-car-like levels of downforce

he says, laughing, 'and by the time the noise had woken the police, I was gone.'

This brings us onto the one big criticism that has always been levelled at the R – that it's pointless. It's not homologated for any race series; unless you're Horacio you can't realistically run it on the road, and it's way too loud for most trackdays. So what's it for?

Well, it's for running at the sort of exclusive trackdays they hold at circuits like Ascari. It's the ultimate incarnation of the Zonda. It's Horacio Pagani unleashed and unshackled by regulations.

If you're going to build the very best, why strangle creativity and expression by allowing yourself to be limited by bureaucratic rules? Why not just build it and to hell with the law-makers? What you see here is Pagani's car for customers demanding the absolute. They may not get to drive it often, but, on the rare days they do, they'll have a peerless automotive experience. As they say, you only live once...

SPECIFICATION

Engine V12, 5987cc
 Location Mid, longitudinal
 Power 739bhp @ 7500rpm
 Torque 524lb ft @ 5700rpm
 Transmission Six-speed automated sequential gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, 12-stage traction control system
 Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar
 Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar
 Brakes 380mm carbon-ceramic discs front and rear, 12-stage ABS
 Wheels 19in front, 20in rear
 Tyres 255/35 x 19 front, 335/30 x 19 rr, Pirelli P Zero slicks
 Weight (kerb) 1104kg
 Power-to-weight 702bhp/ton
 0-62mph 3.0sec (claimed)
 Top speed 233mph (claimed)
 Basic price c£1,456,000

EVO RATING ★★★★★

“The R is the ultimate incarnation of the Zonda. It’s Horacio Pagani unleashed and unshackled by regulations’



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SEE THE ZONDA R
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Does this man own the ultimate road-going Zonda?

*When 31-year-old Chicago-based software specialist David Heinemeier Hansson commissioned the one-off Zonda HH, he cherry-picked the very best parts from all the Zonda models that had gone before. **Roger Green** finds out what drove him*



‘We began talking about customising it a little bit, and then customising it a lot...’



So, how did you go about commissioning your own bespoke Zonda? Had you owned one before?

I've never had a Zonda before but it's always been my favourite supercar. I was hooked from the first time I read about it in *evo*. Then, when the Zonda F Roadster came out, that instantly became my dream car, but at that time I was certainly not in a position to buy one and I knew numbers were limited, so I wrote that off as a car I was never going to have.

Then this summer my wife and I went on a 6000-mile road trip all around Europe in my Gallardo that I had shipped over to London. One of the places on the visiting hit-list was the Pagani factory. We went there just as tourists and did the regular programme, and when I mentioned this to a friend he arranged for me to have the proper tour with Horacio.

So we went back the next day and Horacio told me they had one slot left for the Zonda F Roadster – the 25th car, which was going to be built for Horacio himself – but there might be a way it could be sold to me. So we began talking about customising it a little bit, and then customising it a lot, and before we knew it we were talking about a full custom car.

Were you not tempted to wait for the Huayra?

That was actually the car I went to see, as it will be fully legal in the USA, while the Zonda is not. However, the Zonda was the car I'd fallen in love with and the one I really wanted.

So how does your car differ from a regular F Roadster?

It's a combination of some of the bits of the F Roadster and the Cinque and bits we had designed, so it's just what I wanted.

What did you select and why?

I've wanted to have a Lamborghini in that blue metallic colour for a long time, so that bit was easy. Most cars Pagani builds today come with the paddleshift, but I wasn't too keen on this. This was partly because of the non-flattering *evo* review of the first system and partly because to me the Zonda is one of the last *mechanical* supercars. Everything that is going to come from now on will be computerised and if I'm going to get the ultimate mechanical supercar I should get it with a manual gearbox.

For the rest of the car I took the newest

technology: the carbon/titanium tub, the most powerful engine, ceramic exhaust and the Cinque diffuser. We worked over six weeks, sending ideas back and forth on the design. I wanted something that would still look good 30 years from now.

How long did the whole process take?

It was surprisingly short. We went there in July [2010] and it was just over four months from then to the point when we said 'let's go' to the car being delivered.

How did it feel clapping eyes on the finished car for the first time?

It was just amazing. We walked around just looking at it for a long time after it was unveiled at the dealership in Marbella, and when I finally got inside it was a very special feeling. And to me the most special thing is that it doesn't feel like a hand-built one-off. All the mystique and aura of a hand-built car is there but when you actually drive it, it feels as tight as any modern car would. There's no creaking, there's no slack to it, it just feels incredibly modern, and the sound alone is just incredible. It's probably the best-sounding engine I've heard fitted to anything – and so far I've been keeping it below 5000rpm while I'm running it in.

How is it to drive?

Surprisingly easy. The clutch is light and easy to modulate, the steering perfectly weighted and natural. Some supercars have a problem with going slow, but with this you can go as slow as you want. And the manual gearbox? That was an absolute delight. I drove it from Marbella up the Ronda road to Ascari and it was just so perfect.

What are your plans for the car?

It's going to stay in Europe because it's far too complicated and expensive to try and get it to the States. I can see myself keeping it for 50 years, enjoying it every time I fly over, and not just because it has my name on it, but because I think it's going to be the final car from this supercar era. It's the peak of a genre.



Above left: V12 is the 669bhp unit from the Cinque, but it's mated to a manual gearshift (above). Left: large rear diffuser and spoiler are also from the Cinque; car wears unique 'Zonda HH' badges

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Free motoring. A bold statement, but has there ever been a better time to buy a used performance car? A market destabilised by increasing fuel prices and an economy still suffering a hangover from the 2008 crash means bargains are to be had, deals to be done and the largest chunks of depreciation have already been suffered.

So what constitutes 'free motoring' for a year? When we studied the state of the market and spoke to traders, experts and marque-specific forum/register members, a trend soon emerged. The values of many of the best performance cars of the past 12 years have bottomed out, and if you buy wisely, maintain carefully and sell shrewdly, it's unlikely you'll

lose a penny in depreciation.

But what about running costs? Well, because of the number of variables involved, this is trickier to calculate, but we're confident there's a good chance the cars in the following pages will actually appreciate and negate any running costs.

And if you don't believe us, follow our advice and prove it for yourself – if nothing else you'll have a cracking motor on your drive and a year of brilliant motoring!

Of course there are always inherent risks in predicting the market, but what's crystal clear is that the cars on the following pages are not only compelling buys but also **evo** cars – machines with verve and spirit; the kind of cars to drive just for the hell of it. The kind of cars to own, cherish and enjoy adventures in.

Nick Trott

THE SMALL PRINT

The insurance quotes on the following pages are for a 35-year-old male, IT professional, full NCB, three points (SP30 speeding), living in Northamptonshire, car garaged. Figures supplied by www.theaa.com. Servicing costs supplied by independent specialists.



RENAULT CLIO 182

**WHAT IS IT?**

£ The car that cemented Renaultsport as a true drivers' brand, the Clio 182 took hot hatch performance and handling to another level. We timed one at 6.6sec from 0 to 60mph, which was seriously quick back in 2004.

The driving position is a bit shopping-car, but once you feel the grunty 180bhp 2-litre engine start hauling, you don't care. Sharp steering, tons of traction and a propensity to hike an inside rear wheel into the air define the 182 driving experience.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

£ Like many of the cars at the cheaper end of the scale, buy a good one, care for it and then after 12 months you'll have a car that'll sell quickly and won't depreciate a penny. Good, original Clio 182s will always be in demand but second-hand prices vary wildly, so shop around.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

£ 'Cracking to drive, but you already knew that,' says Chris Klinkert of Parva Prestige Cars. 'The difficulty for dealers is finding a nice one to retail because so many are modified or thrashed. They're expensive to prep and margins are quite tight. Look for worn diffs, shockers, gearbox synchros, and uneven tyre wear. The motor is strong.'

I OWN ONE

£ 'The Clio 182 is by far the most fun I have ever had on four wheels,' says Greg Wyllie. 'Adding a high-revving 2-litre engine to such a small car equals huge performance, while there's unrivalled handling and grip, especially on its original-spec Michelin Exalto tyres. I can't think of a better all-rounder for under £5K.'

OWNER'S TIP

£ 'You should check that the cambelt and auxilliary belt have been done – every five years or 60K miles is recommended – as this can set you back a good £500.'

YEARS: 2003-2005
PRICE: £3500-7000
INSURANCE: £599
TAX: £235
ANNUAL SERVICE: £109

TOYOTA MR2

WHAT IS IT?

£ The product of an after-hours 'Saturday Club', run by Toyota's keenest engineers, the last-generation Midship Runabout was an exercise in lightweight build and mid-engined agility. Championed internally by Toyota's big boss, Akio Toyoda, the MR2's polish and dynamism took everyone by surprise when it went on sale in 2000.

Bizarrely, when the MR2 was new most commentators obsessed about the fact it had almost zero luggage space, but that was missing the point entirely. The big news was that this 975kg, 138bhp sports car had all the handling delicacy of an Elise. Yes, it

“The big news was that this 975kg, 138bhp sports car had all the handling delicacy of an Elise”

could be tricky on the limit, but it had rare vivacity and bomb-proof build quality. Magic.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

£ Prices aren't getting any lower. Even decent 70,000-mile cars have bottomed out at £2500 – at which point well-cared-for examples will feel barely run-in. These MR2s are developing a

strong following too, not least because Toyota sadly chose not to replace the model when it killed off this generation of MR2 in 2006. Which means demand will only increase. Rightly so – this is a Japanese Elise.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

£ 'MR2s are good news mechanically,' says Chris Klinkert of Parva Prestige. 'The engines and gearboxes are strong while the cars tend not to be owned by hard drivers. They're very seasonal, though – they start selling in February and tail off in October, but during those months the MR2 is a good seller. Try and find one ASAP before the sun comes out.'

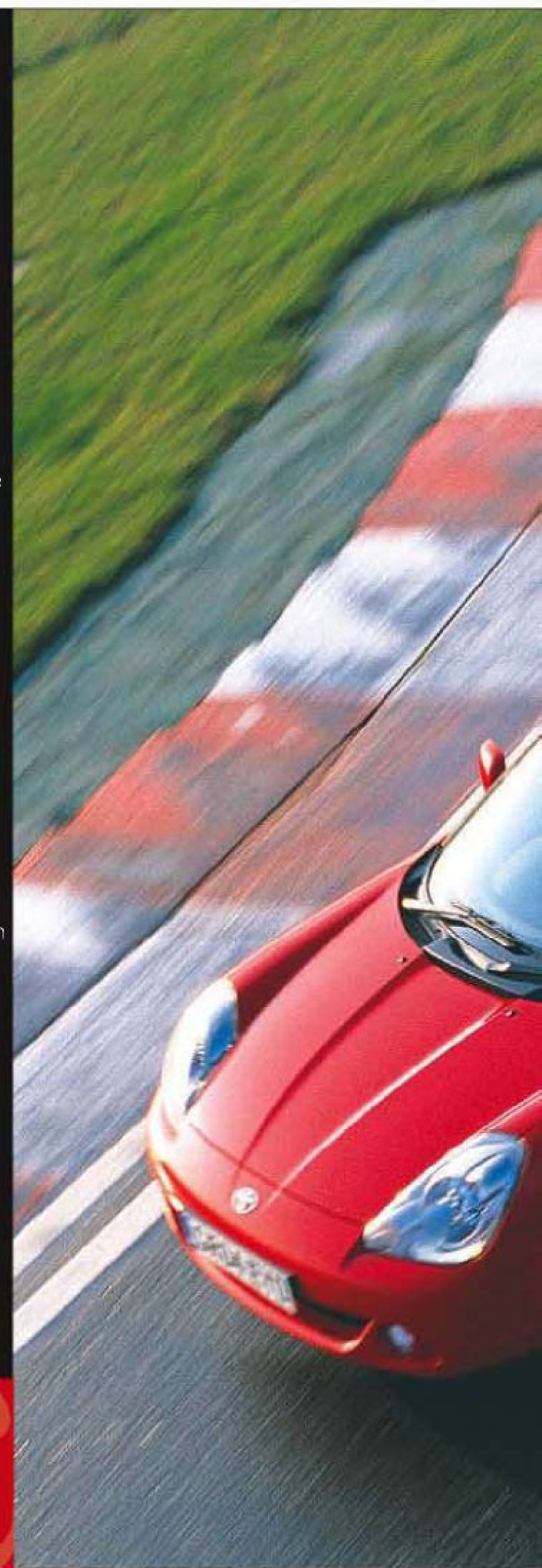
I OWN ONE

£ 'I bought it because I wanted an everyday runaround but was keen to retain the same mid-engine, rear-drive layout that makes my Lotus Elise so good,' says Ross Meigh. 'In truth, they are quite different cars, but the MR2 is nippy, easy to drive and almost boringly reliable while still being great fun to drive. It never misses a beat and I know I can rely on it, which is important when you have a ten-year-old car. It's very economical to run – a proper low-cost sports car.'

OWNER'S TIP

£ 'With older examples it's best to be picky about condition. Age and mileage are less important with a trusty Toyota, but the condition of MR2s can really vary and there are enough around to be choosy. The CO2 sensor is a common thing to go – indicated by a warning light on the dash – but it only costs around £50 to sort out.'

YEARS: 2000-2006
PRICE: £2000-7500
INSURANCE: £510
TAX: £200
ANNUAL SERVICE: £199



RENAULT MÉGANE 225 TROPHY





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VW LUPO GTI

WHAT IS IT?

£ Featuring the wind-cheating aerodynamic underbody and lightweight alloy panels from the 3L eco model, the little Lupo GTI was a trick hot hatch. Powered by a 1.6-litre, 125bhp engine, it was modestly potent, but weighing just 978kg it went very well.

When new we criticised the Lupo for its rather numb steering and a general lack of fizz compared with, say, a Peugeot 106 GTI. Now its rarity, quality, chunky looks and lightweight build make it uniquely desirable.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

£ Because if there was ever a used **evo** car of the moment – this is it. Defines austerity with its sub-tonne weight, boxy hatch shape and strong fuel economy, but zips along with verve and proper pace. Downsizing without feeling like you've down-valued. And it's rare too.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

£ 'Like a well-built 205 GTI. The magazines were a bit cold on it when it

was new, but it's a VW, so very tough mechanically, and it's very small and light, so it flies! Later six-speed is better; shame is, there's just not many about.' – Chris Klinkert, Parva Prestige Cars.

I OWN ONE

£ 'Loves the corners, and isn't too shabby in a straight line either, though with 125bhp it's never going to be blisteringly quick,' says Nick Francis. 'Build quality is in a different league to the equivalent French superminis, and, unlike Saxos and 106s, people with normal-sized feet can drive them!'

OWNER'S TIP

£ 'Get the six-speeder. Not only great for cruising but improves acceleration too. And remember, you'll pay more for parts than with a French hatch, so check it's been properly maintained. There's a great website at clublupo.co.uk'

YEARS: 2000-2006

PRICE: £3500-6500

INSURANCE: £499

TAX: £200

ANNUAL SERVICE: £79



WHAT IS IT?

£ In 2004 Renault was finding its feet. The Clio 172 was a proper charger, but the Mégane 225, uh, wasn't. Enter, in 2005, the limited-edition Trophy model. With settings that would become standard with the Cup chassis option later that year, it featured Brembo brakes, revised ESP, overhauled steering and re-rated springs and dampers.

This was much more like it. The aim was to reduce understeer and improve turn-in. It succeeded. The Trophy set the Mégane on the path to success.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

£ It's a hidden gem, with just 159 sold in the UK (and 500 worldwide). The Trophy is often overlooked in favour of the glitzier Cup, F1 Team and the bonkers R26.R models, but search out a good one for around £5000 and it'll stick like glue to its value.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

£ 'Just not as exciting as the little Clio,' says Chris Klinkert. 'The trouble with the Mégane isn't that the build quality

is iffy – because it is – or that it doesn't go well – because it does. It's that most people would rather have a Golf GTI. So they don't excite me as a retail car.'

I OWN ONE

£ 'I bought a 225 Trophy because it seemed the logical step up from my Clio 182,' says Greg Wyllie. 'I love it because it does everything – it's lightning quick and has awesome handling, fantastic looks, a well equipped interior and performance that will give any two-seater so-called "sports car" a run for its

money, my old 350Z included.'

OWNER'S TIP

£ 'Although it's cheap to purchase, upkeep is pricey: six months of road tax costs £140 and to replace the brake pads and specialist vented discs will set you back around £700.'

YEARS: 2005

PRICE: £5000-7000

INSURANCE: £630

TAX: £245

ANNUAL SERVICE: £109

MINI COOPER S WORKS (MK1)

**WHAT IS IT?**

It seems hard to believe that the Cooper S Works first appeared in 2003. Back then there was something quite exotic about the hotted-up 'CSW' version of the mk1 BMW Mini, not least because the tweaked supercharged 1.6-litre engine boasted a whopping 210bhp and 181lb ft torque – increases of 42bhp and 26lb ft respectively over the Cooper S model that it sat above in the range.

evo's own Richard Meaden ran an S Works as a long-termer – complete with optional 18in rims – and loved every mile he drove in it.

The Works is one of those infectious characters that eggs you on every time you drive it. The manic whine of the supercharger has a lot to do with it, as does the snap-crackle-and-pop exhaust. What really hooks you, though, is the big-hearted torque and the sheer chuckability. Small car, big fun.

'What hooks you is the big-hearted torque and sheer chuckability'

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

In many ways it's even more desirable than the lairy Works GP edition. Why? Because this, not the Works GP, is the last of the Minis that received input from John Cooper Garages. Leggy but tough

2003 cars fetch £5-6K, so there's plenty of fun to have here without fear of much depreciation.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

'It's a great car, but the margin is small on them because good ones are still expensive in the trade,' explains Chris Klinkert. 'Engine breather pipes can deteriorate and split, seat mechanisms can be a problem, but otherwise they're strong. They are bought and abused by people, but find a nice one and you'll be on to a good thing.'

I OWN ONE

'As soon as BMW launched the new Mini, I knew I had to have one,' says Natasha Burton. 'After buying my Cooper S Works I immediately added a zebra-print roof and wing mirrors to make it my own. I love the fact that you can personalise Minis so much – I've never seen another like mine!'

'I have now covered over 22,000 miles and I've found it both reliable and practical, small boot aside. It's great on my annual 1000-mile cruise to Le Mans and back, as well as being cracking around the back roads to Tesco.'

BUYING TIP

The front bumper is quite low, so check it hasn't been damaged by speed bumps or kerbs. Even if it looks OK, grab it and give it a firm shake to ensure it's still securely attached.

Brake pads and discs last around 25,000 miles but cost over £500 to fully replace, so check what condition they're in and negotiate the price down if they'll need refreshing soon.

YEARS: 2003-2006
PRICE: £5000-11,000
INSURANCE: £666
TAX: £245
ANNUAL SERVICE: £230

RENAULT CLIO V6 (PHASE 1)

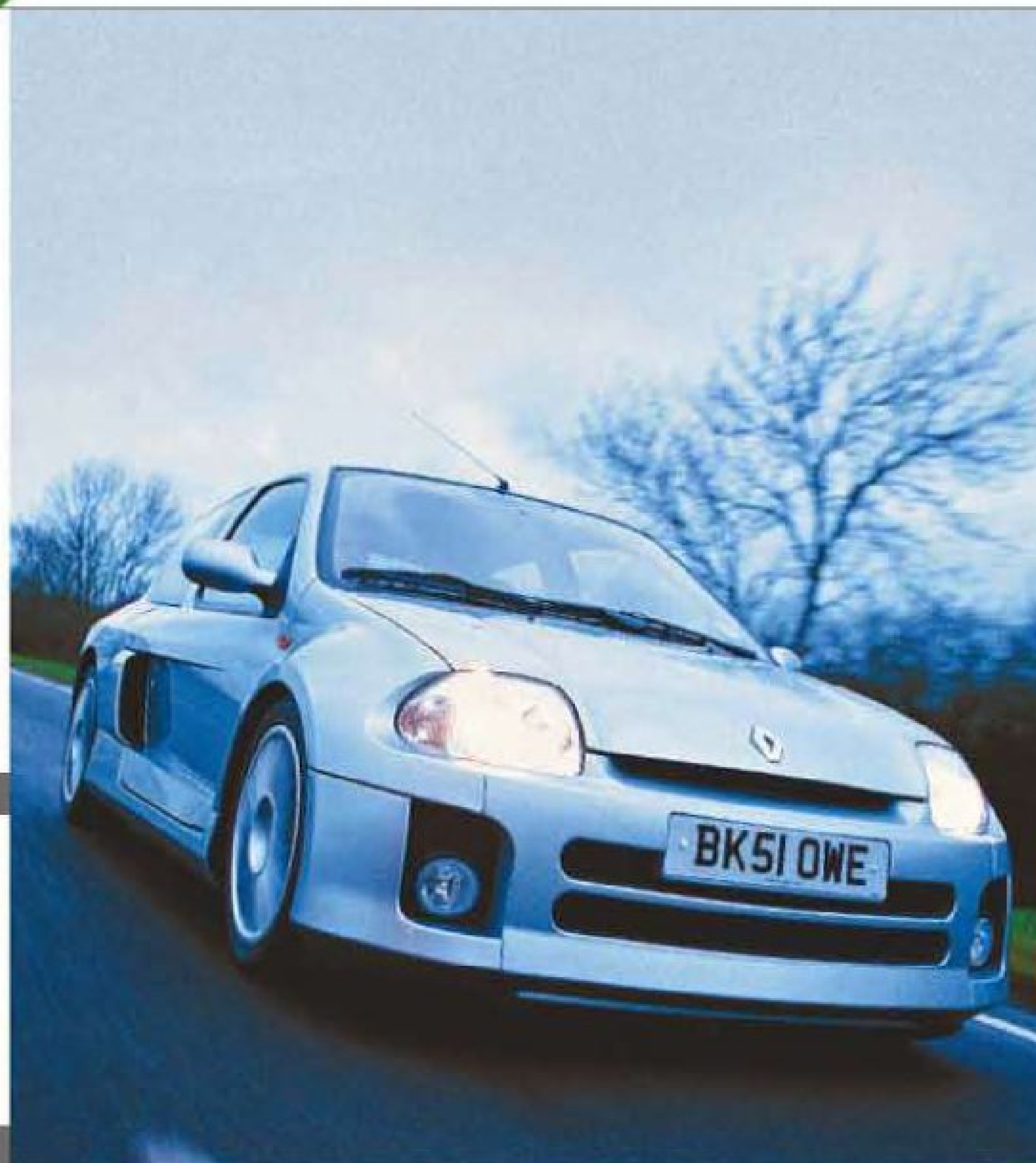
WHAT IS IT?

Launched to an incredulous motoring press in 1999, the phase 1 Clio V6 was a flawed but enormously likeable car. Its pocket supercar styling wasn't quite matched by the lazy 230bhp 3-litre V6, but it still blew us away. The phase 2 V6 is a better handler, but there's a morbid allure about the phase 1's 'widowmaker' reputation. Hugely collectable.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

It was the original Clio V6 – the fact that it wasn't quite as resolved dynamically as the later version doesn't matter. It has a strong following too.

'A flawed but enormously likeable car'



particularly on the excellent v6clio.net. Sub-50,000 milers for £8500 are the best bet, but to keep your annual costs down ensure the expensive belt service has been carried out.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

'The parts prices are astronomical. Bonnet clips for the plastic tray at the front are £50 each!' Klinkert cautions. 'But it's definitely a "good news" car. You can tell that because they're difficult

to buy for sensible money. Lots have been modified – best avoided – and many upgraded with the phase 2 rear subframe – very much appreciated.'

I OWN ONE

'As the original Clio V6, it's rawer and lighter than the 255 and at less than £10K there are very few other cars offering such a rewarding ownership experience,' says Duncan Powell. 'It attracts a lot of positive attention and,

while it's not that fast, the soundtrack is surely unrivalled for the money.'

BUYING TIP

Tyre life is short, especially at the rear – budget for a refresh every 7500 miles.

YEARS: 1999-2002
PRICE: £7500-11,000
INSURANCE: £690
TAX: £205 pre Mar '01, £245 after
ANNUAL SERVICE: £160

FORD FOCUS RS (MK1)

WHAT IS IT?

Nine years after it polarised the motoring press, the mk1 Focus RS remains an intriguing proposition – fast, agile, responsive and dripping with specialness. Yes, the Quaife diff can prove challenging on harsh cambers, more so in some examples than others, but the damping is supreme, the steering top-drawer and the styling perhaps the best of any hot hatch.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

It's the community of loyal Fast Ford followers that makes this a solid buy. And with each subsequent Focus slowly losing its dynamic, er, focus, the mk1 RS could be the best of them all, despite it having a modest-by-modern-standards 212bhp. With that ability and that following, for around £8000 it's simply brilliant value. How long before genuine collectors start sniffing around?

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

'It a very strong car with a strong motor,' says Chris Klinkert. 'You have to watch for clutch slip and, as you already know, it does torque-steer! There are lots of modded ones about and you have to be very careful with those. For retail, they're always better when they're in standard spec.'

I OWN ONE

'The RS is a very characterful hot hatch and the damping is spot on,' says John Kimmins. 'At 212bhp the power may not sound like much, but there's a lot of torque. Torque-steer isn't a problem in my car, though – it's quite placid and really nice out of corners and roundabouts.'

OWNER'S TIP

'Be extra vigilant for any accident damage. The front wings and rear quarter panels are unique to the RS, and replacements are no longer available from Ford.'

YEARS: 2002-2003
PRICE: £8000-11,000
INSURANCE: £599
TAX: £245
ANNUAL SERVICE: £200



FREE MOTORING

£8-10K

SUBARU IMPREZA P1

WHAT IS IT?

The ultimate iteration of the old-school Impreza. Honed by the people who took McRae and Burns to glory, it embodies all that was great about the WRC and the Scooby/Evo wars.

With 276bhp, the P1 may sound a bit outgunned in 2011, but its ability to deploy every last bhp on any road in any weather remains awesome.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

Arguably the best Scooby 'special' – and if you want proof of its appeal just look at the names involved in its development: Subaru Tecnica International (Subaru's racing department), Prodrive (who ran Subaru's WRC campaign) and stylist Peter Stevens (who designed the McLaren F1 and Subaru's WRC car). Just 1000 were built.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

'If you can find a non-thrashed, cherished car, they're great,' says Chris Klinkert. 'But most people bought P1s to thrash them! The engine isn't the strongest, the second-gear synchro can be weak, the clutch can be a problem and the diffs wear. Lots to check!'



I OWN ONE

'The main reason I've owned an Impreza P1 for nearly seven years is its superb handling,' says Dave Wright. 'It can be very forgiving when pushed and always puts a smile on my face. There are loads of like-minded enthusiasts and it feels like a real collectors' piece.'

OWNER'S TIP

'Check carefully that it's had regular oil changes – at least every 5000 miles, if not more frequently. It helps to upgrade the brakes, too, to either APs or Prodrive Alcons.'

YEARS: 2000-2001
PRICE: £8000-12,000
INSURANCE: £1115
TAX: £245
ANNUAL SERVICE: £215

RENAULT CLIO V6 (PHASE 2)

WHAT IS IT?

Ⓢ A longer wheelbase than the phase 1 (by 23mm) plus a 33mm wider front track means that the phase 2 Clio V6 delivers slightly more driver feedback and security than the first version of Renault's barmy mid-engined hatchback. Basically, it will still bite your head off, but it will warn you beforehand.

Fast, sonorous and deeply unique, the second-generation Clio V6 develops 255bhp (up from 230bhp) and delivers a driving experience unlike anything on the road. Brilliant.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

Ⓢ Not just a limited edition, but a truly special edition. Its price new (around £28,000) was barely half what the car cost to manufacture, yet tidy ones can now be had for as little as £13,500.

Good, original, undamaged cars are hard to find and will retain their value – collectors will be eyeing these soon.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

Ⓢ 'Much better to drive than the

phase 1 and more robust,' notes Chris Klinkert. 'The revised rear subframe is a good thing. Like the phase 1, they're good news. I just can't buy them cheap enough to make a decent profit!'

I OWN ONE

Ⓢ 'From the way the arches bulge to how low the car sits on its wheels, the V6 is just so different to any hot hatch, and there lies its appeal,' says Sam Carr. 'It breaks all the rules with a big V6 in the middle; it's utterly unique and is something that will be lusted after for many years to come.'

BUYING TIP

Ⓢ There was a recall to reprogram the engine injection computer. It's a two-hour job so you should check it has been carried out. If the gearbox makes crunching noises, avoid.

YEARS: 2003-2005

PRICE: £13,500-17,000

INSURANCE: £720

TAX: £245

ANNUAL SERVICE: £160



BMW Z4 M COUPE

WHAT IS IT?

Ⓢ Although somehow missing the bread-van charm of the earlier Z3 M Coupe, the Z4 M Coupe is still a motoring curio to cherish.

The more conventional, verging-on-classic coupe looks of BMW's second Z Coupe are certainly easier on the eye, even if they are less likely to stop passers-by in their tracks, but the cabin's a squeeze, and sitting almost over the back axle presents a few placement issues on the road: sometimes you feel the car pivots in response to steering inputs slightly oddly.

The Z4 M Coupe also lacks body rigidity and some body control, and has fast steering and a very mobile rear end, making it nervous at times. Leave the DSC on in the wet.

But the straight-six is delectable and, heck, this car is about charm, not technical excellence. In other words, a TVR Sagaris called Hermann.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

Ⓢ The engine. This was the last BMW to use the M Division's sublime straight-six S54 engine, the high-revving 338bhp screamer that will surely go down in history as one of the finest engines ever made. Values are boosted by rarity, and are unlikely to drop below £18,000 for another year.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

Ⓢ 'Mechanically very similar to the E46 M3, which is a very good thing,'

observes Chris Klinkert. 'Check for worn diffs and general signs of abuse. Reports of VANOS problems have been overplayed – as long as the car has been serviced properly there shouldn't be any trouble. The only problem for me is that I'd have an E46 M3 over one every day.'

I OWN ONE

Ⓢ 'I was loaned a Z4 M Roadster whilst my Z4 3.0si Coupe was in the body shop. After the first few miles, I knew that a Z4 M Coupe would be my next car,' recalls Caroline Broad. 'Almost a year into ownership, I'm still delighted with it. Its retro good looks make me grin whenever I look at it, I love its snappy responsiveness and it delivers power rapidly through all gears and feels locked to the road. It sounds amazing, too. It's reasonably practical as a day-to-day car – it's spacious enough, while mpg is respectable on motorway journeys and bearable when you're having fun with it.'

OWNER'S TIP

Ⓢ 'There are few downsides, but I'd be the first to admit that servicing costs are steep. I also feel I need to keep a valid warranty because if something does go wrong, it's not going to be cheap.'

YEARS: 2006-2008

PRICE: £18,000-21,000

INSURANCE: £1003

TAX: £435

ANNUAL SERVICE: £240

VW GOLF R32 (MK4)

WHAT IS IT?

Ⓢ The thinking man's hot hatch, VW's R32 combined the cast-iron image and desirability of a regular GTI with the prestige and effortless performance of a hearty, 237bhp V6 engine. All-wheel drive ensured it could put that potency into the road while a poised chassis set-up instilled confidence but fell a little short of inspiring. Premium in every respect, the R32 was a distinctive and characterful hot hatch beloved of badge snobs everywhere.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

Ⓢ This is an ultra-rare, fast VW with bags of kudos. Combine this with bulletproof mechanicals, a gloriously smooth and

vocal VR6 engine and an all-weather 4WD transmission and you have what is fast approaching a cult car that will always be in demand.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

Ⓢ 'A sought-after car,' is Chris Klinkert's opinion. 'Noisy rear diffs can cost £800 to fix, but the motor is bombproof. It's a cheap car to service, too, although it loves a drink'

I OWN ONE

Ⓢ 'The R32 has a special kind of character; from its noise to its oversized engine,' says Rizvan Hussain. 'It has a surprisingly raw nature, and sounds gorgeous. It all feels very bespoke inside, too. I think despite the mk4 Golf's age,

£10-20K
evo
CHOICE



£10-20K
evo
CHOICE



this car still has great street cred. It's rare and well respected by those in the know. It's not the cheapest thing to run, but as soon as you turn the key in the ignition, that suddenly doesn't matter. This is my second R32 – I'm a big fan.'

OWNER'S TIP

£ 'There was an official VW ECU update that should have been carried out, which rectifies a hesitation around 2500rpm. I also recommend annual servicing rather than the variable option, as it's better for the engine.'

YEARS: 2002-2004
PRICE: £6500-11,000
INSURANCE: £684
TAX: £245
ANNUAL SERVICE: £100

HONDA S2000



WHAT IS IT?

£ The S2000 has a fantastic spec (double-wishbone suspension, slippery diff, 2-litre 237bhp VTEC four, snickety six speeder, etc) but a driving experience that's less than the sum of its parts. The stiffer suspension on later (2008-on) cars results in a much more responsive rear end, tightening the whole dynamic package – even if that throws the numb steering into even sharper focus.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

£ For practical rather than performance reasons – Honda's reputation for quality and reliability will sustain values, as will reasonable maintenance costs.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

£ 'Lots of bent ones out there because the handling is, er, interesting in the wet, so choose carefully,' warns Klinkert. 'Engine and gearbox are very strong, but the rest of the package feels cheap. They can be bought cheap, though, and are often a high-margin car.'

I OWN ONE

£ 'It's a practical daily driver but seriously quick when you really make it

scream – the contrast is great,' says Ben Newham. 'The interior is fantastically focused with all controls literally at your fingertips, though of course the S2000 is really all about *that* engine...'

OWNER'S TIP

£ 'The engine is very oil-sensitive. Look for proof of regular oil changes and check the oil on the dipstick is golden. Geometry issues are also common, and keep an eye out for a wet boot, which is potentially difficult to sort.'

YEARS: 1999-2009
PRICE: £5000-17,500
INSURANCE: £1140
TAX: £245 pre Mar '06, £425 after
ANNUAL SERVICE: £250

LOTUS EXIGE

£20-25K
evo
 CHOICE



NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R (R34)

WHAT IS IT?

📌 The last of the Skyline-badged GT-Rs, the R34 was big and brutal in the finest Japanese hypercar tradition. Born to be tuned, few remain with the standard 276bhp, many having settled at the virtually default 400bhp.

That RB26 twin-turbo straight-six engine feels strong but leaden and the steering and transmission share the same tactile heft. The crazy-complex four-wheel-drive system makes for a unique handling balance and a few challenges along the way.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

📌 Because the *Gran Turismo* generation, now with pounds rather than lollypops

in their pockets, are really switching on to these incredible cars. They were made famous by the game but they're brilliant to drive in real life too. Add to this owners who cherish them and you have a supercar – and depreciation-slaying – Japanese legend.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

📌 'We all know they're an awesome car to drive,' says Chris Klinkert, 'but they're expensive to run. Basically, before buying one you have to check everything is working. Every electrical bit, every mechanical bit. They're a hard car to buy in the trade because owners believe they're worth all the money! The few official UK cars are particularly sought-after.'

I OWN ONE

📌 'I love the car because it looks amazing. Wherever I take it I get loads of attention,' says Toni Gladding. 'People film me on their mobiles and strike up conversations at petrol pumps. It feels much lighter and smaller than the big, heavy car it actually is. The turn-in is amazing and I love its agility.'

OWNER'S TIP

📌 'The big worry is corrosion. I've had mine re-undersealed at a cost of £480.'

YEARS: 1999-2002
PRICE: £23,000-25,000
INSURANCE: £2515
TAX: £205
ANNUAL SERVICE: £600



WHAT IS IT?

Both iterations of Hethel's miniature GT racer have loyal followings, and with good reason. The 192bhp, 780kg K-series-powered series 1 car (right) is rawer and more race-car like, the later 189bhp, 875kg Toyota-engined S2 just as manic but a little more liveable.

Sharper and more aggressive than the equivalent Elise, either generation of Exige makes a hardcore road car and a natural trackday weapon. Small and light, with humble running gear, they're easy on tyres and brakes and as quick as all but the most serious metal. With Lotus heading in a new direction, these skeletal little cars are the last of the line.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

The S1 Exige in particular has already started its inevitable climb in value and towards classic status. Just a year ago a good S1 Exige would have cost £17,000; today you're looking at around £20,000. There's a little more 'headroom', due to the car's rarity, sublime driving dynamics and mini Group C racer styling, but these cars are increasingly hard to find. So if you track one down, don't hesitate. There are a greater number of S2 Exiges on the market and values remain solid. Running costs are comparatively low, making a year in an Exige – any Exige – an unmissable experience.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

Talking with Lotus specialist Paul Matty Sportscars confirms the S1 is the one that has suddenly gained collector status: 'Supply has dried up as lots have gone abroad over the last 12 months, where people convert them for racing or just use them for trackdays. The S2 is



'It's a hardcore road car and a natural trackday weapon'

well worth a look, though. Values should come back again now production has ended. It's still a great car and, with the Touring Pack, very desirable.'

I OWN ONE

'Having owned an S2 Elise 111S, and used it every day for nearly three years, I finally got to the point where I was looking to change, and the Elise was so good that I knew I wanted Lotus's "next up"', says Tony Hetherington. 'I've now got an 06-plate Exige S in Aspen White with the Touring Pack and air-con. Its sheer speed and the momentum it can carry across country never fail to impress me, nor does the amount of

attention it gets! I regularly take the car on hoons around the country and I've even done big European trips in it.'

BUYING TIP

'If you can live without air-con then you can haggle hard, as these cars are notoriously hard to shift. The Exige is very reliable, but if it's been on track lots then the oil should have been refreshed between the 9000-mile intervals.'

YEARS: 2004-present (S2)

PRICE: £18,000-40,000

INSURANCE: £1098

TAX: £245

ANNUAL SERVICE: £160



FREE MOTORING

£20-25K**CATERHAM R400 (K-SERIES)****WHAT IS IT?**

Built from 2003-06 and featuring the trusty 1.8-litre Rover K-series engine, the Caterham R400 combines the agility and breathtaking handling of the R300 with hard-hitting 200bhp performance reminiscent of the wild R500, but not quite as highly-strung.

Though little more than a race car with number plates, when fitted with a windscreen, 'doors' and a hood, the R400 makes a surprisingly habitable road car. Buy one for Sunday blats, trackdays and hill climbing.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

It's the default minimalist sports car, and in R400 spec the definitive model. Buy now, as prices will increase come the trackday season. Once they're a couple of years old, depreciation on Sevens is glacial, while running costs are minimal, too – perhaps the definition of a 'free motoring' car.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

'Some will be like new, others heavily used,' says Klinkert 'so they should be priced accordingly. This is the most powerful, reliable K-series motor – R500s are more grenade-like – but they still need regular maintenance. An LSD is desirable.'

**I OWN ONE**

'Every journey's an event in an R400,' says Thomas Lyon, 'every bend a chance to test your ability and every straight an excuse to rev one of the greatest-sounding four-cylinder engines ever. It's a touch crazy but oh so rewarding.'

OWNER'S TIP

'Choose a car on 13in wheels for sweeter handling – the race cars are on them for a reason!'

YEARS: 2003-2006

PRICE: £21,000-25,000

INSURANCE: £1752

TAX: £245

ANNUAL SERVICE: £235

BMW M6



WHAT IS IT?

There's a feeling that the M6 never knew exactly what it wanted to be, and so potential buyers weren't sure what it was either. Up until its arrival in 2005, the 6-series had been your typical golf-club coupe, but here it was with genuinely hardcore underpinnings, specifically the 5-litre V10 and seven-speed sequential gearbox.

It may not have the finesse of a 911, but grip, ruthless body control and searing speed conjure up a suitably invigorating driving experience.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

It was by far the sexiest 6-series – think of it as a three-door M5 and it takes on an even greater allure. Price new (around £80K), makes it a rarity now – and prices have bottomed out at around £22,000. That's a huge amount of car (four seats, carbon roof, that V10 engine) for the money.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

Jason Barker at BMW specialist Birds says the first thing to check is whether it had the first oil service at 1200 miles. If it didn't, the warranty was invalidated. He also says they're much rarer than you might imagine, with around three times as many Aston V8 Vantages here in the UK, yet today an M6 is cheaper, even though it cost similar money to the Aston when new.

I OWN ONE

'It cruises like a 7-series, yet attacks like a true supercar – it's the ultimate GT,' reckons Paul Baxter. 'I've used it as a daily runner, toured the Alps in it and taken it on track. It's a fantastic Q-car – most people don't look twice, but those that know, know.'

OWNER'S TIP

'The need for a full history is a given with any M-car, particularly to check that first run-in service was done.'

YEARS: 2005-2010
PRICE: £22,000-40,000
INSURANCE: £1272
TAX: £245 pre Mar '06, £435 after
ANNUAL SERVICE: £216

AUDI RS4 (V8)

WHAT IS IT?

The omens weren't great: a back-catalogue that contained more misses than hits, and a quattro drivetrain that forced the 4.2-litre V8 to be slung out ahead of the front axle, giving the RS4 the weight distribution of a mallet.

And yet it's the greatest Audi ever to wear the RS badge. More softly sprung than you might expect, the RS4 is supple yet accurate, blistering pace mated to a vocal V8. A wonderful everyday supersaloon. Or indeed estate.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

R8 aside, this is our favourite fast Audi. A significant car too – alongside

the TT it'll be perhaps the last Audi RS to be fitted with a manual gearbox. Useable, practical and rapid, resale will never be a problem, and it's fast becoming a cult car.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

Avants are very popular, according to BHP Cars, but stick to grey and black as brighter colours are hard to shift. The RS4 is sensitive to both mileage and the number of owners. An HPI check is wise to ensure the car hasn't been crashed, while a full dealer history is highly recommended too.

I OWN ONE

'I'm a big Mercedes fan, but I tried a

new Audi S5 and the grip was so good that I was hooked,' says Darren Gee. 'The RS4 was a great used alternative. I love it – the sound, the grip, the performance. I use it every day.'

OWNER'S TIP

'Road tax is a bit of a shocker at over £400 for later RS4s, but it's worth it. My car has also been through tyres and brake pads rather quickly, but then it has been on track twice.'

YEARS: 2006-2008
PRICE: £22,000-40,000
INSURANCE: £1104
TAX: £245 pre Mar '06, £435 after
ANNUAL SERVICE: £129



BMW M3 CSL

WHAT IS IT?

Even the latest M3's snarling V8 has to concede to the CSL's effervescent straight-six: it has perhaps the best intake noise of anything south of a Macca F1. For steering, composure, grip and raw speed there isn't much to touch a CSL. Yes, it was too costly when new and the brakes were a joke, but it was heavily modified over the standard M3 in many significant areas. And yes, the

SMG 'box feels lumpy, but right now the CSL is a bargain.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

Values are starting to climb, so this is another one to snap up soon. In every respect it's a quality car, with arguably the most desirable BMW badge, and it thoroughly deserves it. The new M3 GTS is over three times the price but barely any quicker or more involving. A sure-fire future classic.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

'A great choice,' says Klinkert. 'Check suspension bushes, gearbox software upgrades and rear subframe bushes – if the latter are worn, the car gets very tail-happy. Aftermarket AP brakes are desirable. Unlikely to drop below £20K, especially with the GTS being no faster'

I OWN ONE

'I bought the CSL for a number of reasons – very limited numbers, wanting to tick the rear-wheel-drive box, and I like my cars pretty raw, too,' says Paul Eggleton. 'The noise and performance really hit all the senses. Visually it's stunning, too, and while some people bemoan the SMG gearbox, I love it.'

OWNER'S TIP

'I know some people have had diff problems, especially after track use. Oh, and the battery is small to save weight, so if it's not going to be used often, hook it up to a trickle charger.'

YEARS: 2003-2004
PRICE: £24,000-32,000
INSURANCE: £1068
TAX: £245
ANNUAL SERVICE: £240



NOBLE M12 GTO-3R



£20-25K
evo
 CHOICE

WHAT IS IT?

Right from the start, an aura surrounded the Noble M12. And it had nothing to do with its cheap switchgear, bare cabin or retro '80s Group C racer visuals. No, what was immediately obvious was that the M12 had that sprinkling of chassis magic that marks out the true greats.

Think of it as a twin-turbo Lotus Exige. Alert, nuanced handling, with steering that dances in your hands and a mid-mounted Mondeo V6 boosted to 352bhp in 3R form. Not pretty, but a British classic.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

They were expensive when new (£40,000-50,000), which meant they were pricey for what was perceived as a toy. At £25K second-hand, however,

the value is much more aligned with its 'toy' status – affordable rather than an indulgence. At this money, the shabby interior can be ignored too – better to concentrate on the sublime steering

‘The M12 has that sprinkling of chassis magic that marks out the true greats’

and outrageous race-car performance. The M12's strong following and limited production means getting hold of one can be tricky. It's also perhaps the last of the reasonably priced Nobles, but the secret is out – values have been climbing in the last six months.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

The M12 is starting to get a real following from trackday enthusiasts now that values have settled around the £25K mark. Dealers watch out for ECU problems and handling issues, but as the chassis has plenty of scope for adjustment, correcting the latter is easy. Values are mileage-sensitive, as there are many low-mileage examples available.

I OWN ONE

'After selling my beloved Porsche 964, I wanted something equally challenging

to drive but with a bit more drama and a better road/track suspension compromise,' says Jay Bundhoo. 'I love the feeling of driving a pseudo Group C racer – the soundtrack, the fantastic ride and the alert steering. The car gets lots of positive attention and people are always pleased when I tell them that it's a British design.'

OWNER'S TIP

'For trackdays, the car should ideally have a limited-slip differential and a dry sump fitted. Some of the wiring is "delicate", too, but upgrades are available.'

YEARS: 2003-2006
PRICE: £25,000-32,000
INSURANCE: £1995
TAX: £245
ANNUAL SERVICE: £669



PORSCHE 911 TURBO S (1996)

£25-40K
evo
CHOICE

**WHAT IS IT?**

■ A sweeter-handling, more forgiving car than the later 997 Turbo and very, very rapid. Our own Chris Harris remembers aiming one through the downhill section of the Nürburgring Nordschleife towards Schwedenkreuz and wondering if it would take off – it was indicating 175mph.

Ultimately the Turbo S is a less involving drive than a GT3, but it's a far better street machine.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

■ Because it's another car that's easy to get in and out of, in trade-talk. The 450bhp S doesn't feel substantially faster than the regular 420bhp Turbo from the

driver's seat, but the 'S' badge on the engine cover adds kudos and will make it easier to sell. Few cars give the same kicks for the money, so get yours before the secret gets out.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

■ Mark at Malton Cars warns you need to look out for 'fake' Turbo S models as some owners try to pass off their lesser cars as the genuine article. A quick check of the chassis plate under the front lid will tell you if it's the genuine article and not just a non-S Turbo with the 450bhp X50 power upgrade and ceramic brakes.

The real thing is quite a rare car but still priced very well here in the UK as collectors (particularly in the Far East)

continue to chase the air-cooled cars. Those examples that do come up for sale are generally very well specced and quickly find buyers.

I OWN ONE

■ 'With appropriate age and BMI credentials I had a brief, uncomfortable affair with a Gallardo Spyder, but it wasn't worth the cost and inconvenience for performance some way short of my bike's,' says Kieron Howe. 'I convinced the kids that a Turbo S Cab is a viable four-seater – it isn't, it fits three at a push – and bought the first one I saw. 'On-boost performance is great, it's a comfortable car and the cabin's OK. I like the grip – an Elise-riddled airfield day was a hoot – and so far I've only been

left behind by the 2010 version. Oh, and I guess the four-wheel-drive must have helped a bit in the snow...'

OWNER'S TIP

■ 'They're ridiculously reliable but arrange a professional inspection – an Official Porsche Centre's 111-point check or one by an independent specialist. The more expensive inspection options include an analysis of engine use, though as mine's a Tiptronic I wasn't too worried about over-revving.'

YEARS: 2000-2005

PRICE: £30,000-40,000

INSURANCE: £1818

TAX: £245

ANNUAL SERVICE: £400

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT





'Few cars give the same kicks for the money'



WHAT IS IT?

Worlds collided when Volkswagen took control of Bentley. The Conti GT, launched in 2003, proved that we had nothing to worry about. Extensive VW influences (engine, drivetrain, switchgear) were hidden beneath swathes of leather and wood.

It's a proper Bentley to drive, too. Big and heavy, yes, but also surprisingly wieldy and manageable, and powered along by an entirely suitable 552bhp twin-turbo 6-litre W12. In many ways this was the car that saved the firm.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

Early Conti GTs aren't that different from later ones, so go for an early example that's already taken the biggest hit of depreciation. There are plenty to choose from, but be sure to pick a safe paint/trim combination with an eye on easy resale after a year.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

Marlow Cars reckons Conti GTs are ageing incredibly well: 'Put a private plate on one and most people couldn't tell if it

was an '04 car or an '08 car. Paint quality is extremely high so stone chipping is less of a problem. For under £50,000, there's nothing else like it.'

I OWN ONE

'This car satisfies the male instinct for brutish power and sophisticated stature,' says Keith Currington. 'It lives up to the Bentley heritage and fulfils a need in those who have the DNA of a real car enthusiast. Build quality is excellent and it meets all the requirements of a grand tourer without compromise.'

OWNER'S TIP

'No Bluetooth before 2007. The Mulliner Driving Specification package is worth looking out for, as it brings many attractive extras and makes a big difference to the look and value of the car. The Mulliner wheels are difficult to maintain in good order, though.'

YEARS: 2003-2010
PRICE: £33,000-40,000
INSURANCE: £2642
TAX: £245 pre Mar '06, £435 after
ANNUAL SERVICE: £620

FREE MOTORING

£25-40K

ARIEL ATOM SUPERCHARGED



WHAT IS IT?

The Atom was the first car to actively take on the Caterham Seven, and with a design so beguiling that Honda agreed to supply the engines.

The result is perhaps the most visceral, pulverising road car imaginable. There is nothing quite like a 300bhp supercharged Atom at full tilt; the traction, the power, the scream, the intensity.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

Ariel has never really expanded production, which means the car will always be a rarity, and after Jay Leno's stamp of approval and Clarkson's flappy-face video it'll always be part of performance-motoring lore. Honda mechanicals are strong too, and running costs low. A solid buy.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

Selling Ariel Atoms is a very seasonal pastime, according to the dealers we spoke to, with people only buying in the spring and summer. Prices have slipped slightly in 2010 but still remain in a tight

band around the £32-38K mark, with the 300bhp supercharged version being the easiest to sell. Conditions are always remarkably good as, by its very nature, this is a fair-weather car.

I OWN ONE

'I love the design and engineering purity,' says Graham Hastie, 'and the performance has to be experienced to be believed. It will go round a track faster than almost anything else and you can drive it home afterwards. You had better be prepared to be the centre of attention, though, because everyone stops and stares. It must be like going out with a supermodel!'

OWNER'S TIP

'Go for the 245bhp model. Unless you are coming from an F1 car, it will be more than quick enough. And you can always add a supercharger later.'

YEARS: 2008-present
PRICE: £30,000-40,000
INSURANCE: call specialist broker
TAX: £200
ANNUAL SERVICE: £175

MASERATI QUATTROPORTE

WHAT IS IT?

£ The definitive handsome, spacious, sporting saloon. The fifth-generation Quattroporte was first shown in 2003, and it's to Pininfarina's credit that it still looks as good today; an early car with a private plate could pass for nearly new. The surprise remains how sporty it feels for such a large car; it has fine steering and surprising agility and balance, thanks in part to a slightly tail-heavy weight distribution. The only turn-off is the old-tech 'DuoSelect' automated manual gearbox.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

£ Owners love them, and tend to keep them forever. Quattroportes inspire loyalty and have a strong following – which helps resale – but more than anything this is an effortlessly classy car and one that can be used every day. In fact, is there a better **evo** family car? Tremendous value in the mid £20Ks.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

£ Values have stabilised on the early cars, with most now in the mid to high £20Ks. Early QPs have aged incredibly well. Plenty of low-mileage examples out there.

I OWN ONE

£ 'I had an Italian itch that needed scratching,' says Craig Williams. 'I toyed with the idea of a Maserati GranSport, but when I drove the Quattroporte I loved the combination of family saloon car and screaming Italian GT. It handles well for such a large car, sounds fantastic and always gets very positive comments.'

BUYING TIP

£ The brakes can feel a little wooden, and it's important to change their fluid every year. A new headlight also costs a slightly scary £1400.



YEARS: 2004-2008
PRICE: £20,000-40,000
INSURANCE: £1327
TAX: £245 pre Mar '06, £435 after
ANNUAL SERVICE: £620

TVR SAGARIS

WHAT IS IT?

£ The 'hero' model of the T350 range, the Sagaris bristled with race-car detailing and was TVR's wildest-looking road car. It never did race and was actually one of the Blackpool firm's best road cars; the traditional tubular chassis with double wishbones was impressively refined, with sharp steering but more composure than previous models, though, as you'd expect, the vocal 406bhp straight-six offered classic rear-drive options. They really don't make them like this any more.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

£ Because there's a huge, huge TVR following and those disciples will always worship the mighty Sagaris, the last of the Wheeler-era TVRs. This was



the zenith of TVR too – wild styling, performance and interior craft. With over 400bhp, rear-wheel drive and no stability control, it is famously tricky to drive, but that simply adds to the appeal. Very few were made (approximately 200, with around ten of those being left-hand-drive) and with TVR production – and indeed the brand's future – in

hiatus and increasingly strict emissions/tax regulations, it's difficult to imagine another car quite like it again.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

£ The Sagaris's rarity means they don't often come up for sale. Jason at TVR specialist Str8six reckons at least 10 to 15 cars have been exported in the last 12 months and prices have firmed up as a result. He reckons the Sagaris is the most sorted of all TVRs but it's essential that servicing is carried out every 12 months or 6000 miles. Watch for cracked front splitters and body damage due to the low nose.

I OWN ONE

£ 'Why did I buy it? I Love the raucousness of a TVR – it's the latest in a long line for me – and I thought, why not? You never know what's around the corner,' says Lee Sinden. 'I tried a Ferrari 360 Spider, and it was boring by comparison!'

OWNER'S TIP

£ 'If the clutch action is very heavy, or clutch drag obstructs engagement of first or reverse at rest, budget for a new one. Also check the tappets have been adjusted regularly.'

'With 406bhp and no ESP, it is famously tricky to drive, but that just adds to the appeal'



YEARS: 2005-2007
PRICE: £38,000-42,000
INSURANCE: £1011
TAX: £435
ANNUAL SERVICE: £610

LOTUS 340R

WHAT IS IT?

£ Despite being a skeletal Elise without roof and doors, the 340R was never quite light enough to make the 340bhp-per-ton its name originally alluded to. Not that this mattered, because this concept car made real (in less than a year!) proved as fabulous to drive as it is to look at. Get the specially made Yokohama trackday tyres warm and it's fantastically grippy but still minutely responsive and adjustable. The best Elise derivative ever? Probably.

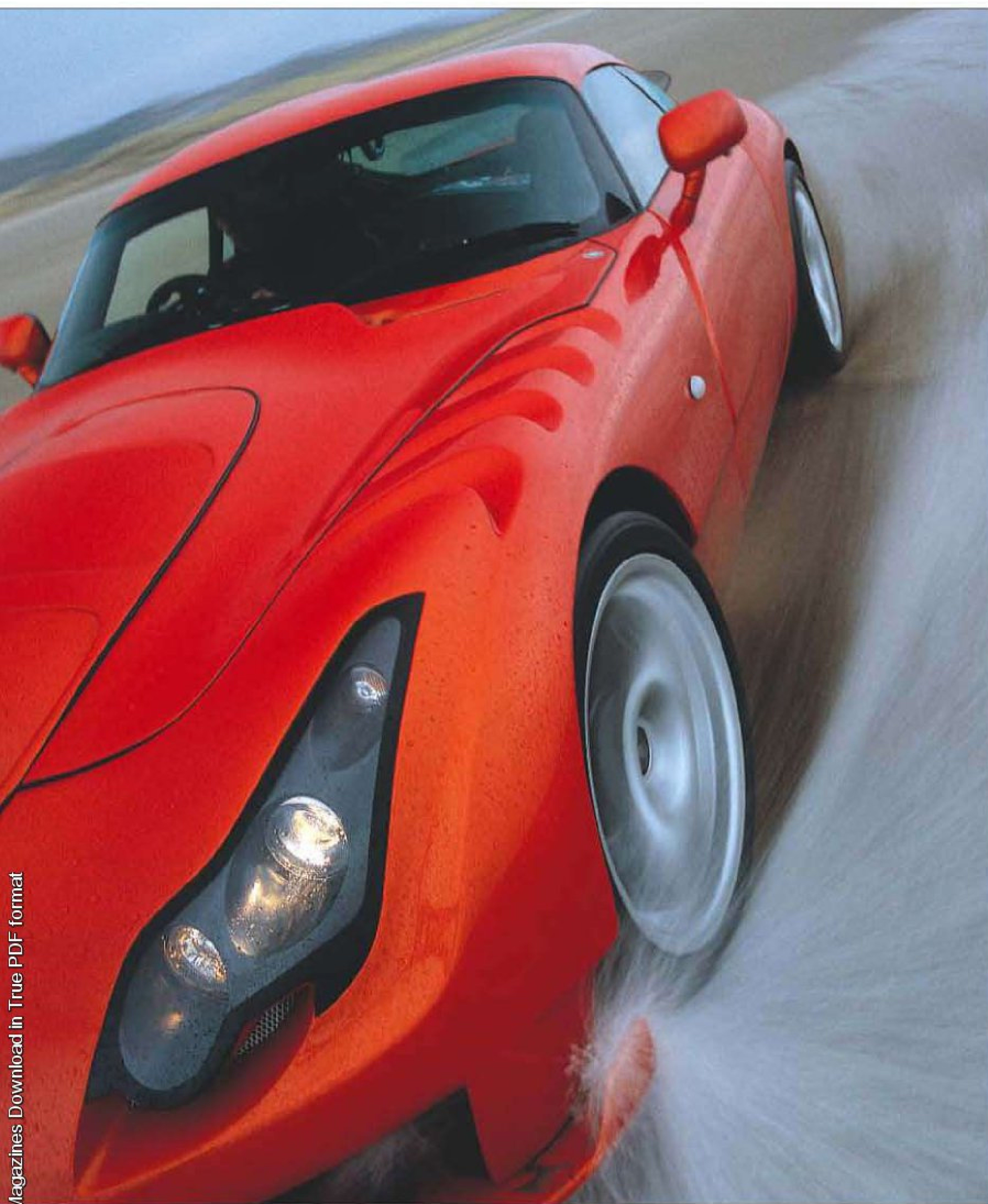
WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

£ Expensive when new (around £40,000 with options) but looks like a bargain now. Huge demand from the Japanese market and lots have been exported, so not many remain.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

£ Paul Matty again: 'The 340R never really caught on when it was launched, then trackday enthusiasts realised it was actually faster than an Exige and





they started buying, competing with the Japanese who were also sourcing cars from the UK. Values have plateaued for the moment, as 2-Eleven prices have dropped down so much, but the 340R is so rare and arguably better looking, so I expect it will always be more valuable.'

I OWN ONE

■ 'The 340R has the best elements of the Elise but all turned up a notch,' says Martin Leach. 'On road or track it's always an event to be enjoyed. Aurally

it's brutally mechanical and visually it's outrageous. Get one.'

OWNER'S TIP

■ 'Buy one with the original exhaust and catalytic converter or you'll never see another MOT certificate.'

YEARS: 1999
PRICE: £25,000-30,000
INSURANCE: £773
TAX: £205
ANNUAL SERVICE: £165

FREE MOTORING

£25-40K

PORSCHE 911 CARRERA (997)



WHAT IS IT?

■ A supremely capable, beautifully built and exceptionally developed sports car. They are also more practical than you would expect, with a useful boot and small rear seats. Early 997s are half a decade old but still class-standard.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

■ The 997 was a big improvement over the 996 and examples like an early 2005 Carrera 2 seem extraordinary value at around £26-28K. Choose wisely from the many cars out there and you won't lose a penny, even after a year and 6000 miles.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

■ Suffered a slight dip in prices at the back end of 2010, according to Porsche specialist RSJ Sports Cars, but demand is back again now that prices have settled. RSJ only stocks the 3.8 S model as the 3.6 version stays glued to the showroom floor – the reason is that the 3.8 S offers so much more for the current price differential of £4K, including the (essential) PASM suspension upgrade and 19in wheels. The Bose stereo upgrade is good for resale, as, bizarrely, is a sunroof.

I OWN ONE

■ 'The 997 is so refined and practical that I'd find it hard to choose any other sports car,' says Matt Vann. 'It's a seamless blend of soul, performance and practicality – nothing else comes close. Almost every car manufacturer has tried to emulate the success of the 911, but there's only one 911.'

OWNER'S TIP

■ 'Some first-generation 997s suffer IMS [intermediate shaft] problems, so check any warranty will cover this, because failure means a new engine.'

YEARS: 2004-2008
PRICE: £25,000-40,000
INSURANCE: £1871
TAX: £245 pre Mar '06, £435 after
ANNUAL SERVICE: £275

AUDI R8 V8

£40-60K
evo
 CHOICE



WHAT IS IT?

It was Audi's first mid-engined car but the all-aluminium R8 hit the ground running. We've since had the V10, but the original V8 lacks nothing; the 414bhp 4.2-litre V8 from the RS4 has terrific reach, sounds fantastic and gives the car all the pace it needs, the open-gate gearshift is sublime and the handling is a joy. The R8 beat the 911 Carrera on their first encounter, and although **evo** Car of the Year 2007 was dominated by the 911 GT3 RS and 430 Scuderia, the R8 finished third and was placed first by a couple of judges. It's still arguably the most rounded and perfect R8.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

A no-brainer this one. Decent, loved and well-maintained early V8s are sitting at around £55,000 – tremendous value for a genuine junior supercar. Prices may sink a little, but remember this is also

'At around £55K it's tremendous value for a junior supercar'

an Audi, which means supreme build quality, dealers throughout the UK and reasonable parts prices – all of which adds up to potential zero depreciation.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

With prices dropping under £60,000,

the R8 is an excellent buy today. Expect a manual to be around £2-3K cheaper than the R-tronic.

Marlow Cars has had a few V8 R8s pass through its showroom recently and rates them highly. It seems well-specced cars are particularly good news for buyers: 'We are seeing a few early models coming in with over £20,000 of options on the car, but second-hand buyers aren't interested in paying any sort of premium for all these extras, so new-car buyers were throwing money away by ticking all those boxes.'

Priced right, these cars fly off the forecourt as, rather like the Bentley Conti GT, they are another excellent, high-quality car. Which is why Marlow Cars expects R8s to remain an excellent used buy for some time to come.

I OWN ONE

'Why do I own an R8? Easy: it's simply one of the best-handling cars out there,'

says Andrew Elliott. 'There's not a lot to touch it at the moment. I love the look of it, too, and how eye-catching the styling still is. It's very fast and with the V8 just behind your ears, the noise is simply fantastic. The only thing that's going to stop me owning it is upgrading to the 5.2-litre V10-engined version – that's the next car on my wish list!'

OWNER'S TIP

'People say you should get one with the magnetic dampers, but unless you're going to be seriously attacking tracks in your R8, I don't think you'd ever really need them. The better options to look for when buying are the satnav, B&O stereo and parking sensors.'

YEARS: 2007-present
PRICE: £52,000-100,000
INSURANCE: £1327
TAX: £435
ANNUAL SERVICE: £412

ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE (4.3)



£40-60K
evo
CHOICE

WHAT IS IT?

£ The baby Aston oozes class and style – it truly is a compact version of the company's more expensive models, inside as well as out. The original 4.3-litre V8 engine is related to Jaguar's but sounds quite different, with a hollow howl from start-up, and with 380bhp the car is just about fast enough to keep up with that noise and the looks.

It handles sweetly, too, Aston's clever 'VH' aluminium architecture underpinning the rear-drive dynamics. It may be the bottom rung of the modern Aston ladder and there may be a lot of them out there, but that doesn't make the V8 Vantage any less appealing.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

£ 2005-06 models are trading at £38K or so, which makes it remarkable value for money. Prices are unlikely to drop

below this either, not least because Astons can take mileage better than Ferraris when it comes to selling. Be prepared to pay closer to £50K – and take a bigger risk on depreciation – for a Roadster.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

£ The main issue customers have when choosing between a DB9 and the V8 Vantage is the latter's rock-hard ride. The Vantage scores by being more plentiful and therefore cheaper. Dealers we spoke to say Aston paintwork isn't the greatest and is prone to chipping, but on the up-side they are proving mechanically robust.

I OWN ONE

£ 'The reason that I bought my V8 Vantage when I did was the combination of my boyhood dream and the fact that their resale values had dropped

to a point where I could actually afford one,' says Adam Byford. 'I have had my own Aston Martin for two years now and I still get a big buzz from driving it. Yes there are faster cars, yes there are more reliable cars, but there aren't many that make a better noise or look as good.'

OWNER'S TIP

£ 'I bought my car from a main dealer and have extended the Aston Martin Warranty. This is not cheap but it does provide some protection and peace of mind – it doesn't take a great deal to be wrong with the car for a large bill to be clocked up.'

YEARS: 2005-2008
PRICE: £38,000-56,000
INSURANCE: £2259
TAX: £245 pre Mar '06, £435 after
ANNUAL SERVICE: £1080

LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO (5.0)



WHAT IS IT?

£ Interior by Audi, engine by some Italian mentalist and a four-wheel-drive chassis that allows bonkers slip angles. The proper manual gearbox is a peach, the 500bhp V10 still feels rabidly fast and it's way more useable than a 360: good wheel travel allows it to deal with bumpy UK roads especially well.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

£ Because it's the most cost-effective way into new-era Lamborghini

ownership and at £60K they seem to have stopped depreciating. It's easy to drive too, which widens its useability and therefore appeal. But buy wisely – an abused clutch will cost £3000 to replace, and that will wipe out any potential appreciation.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

£ Clutches were the main bugbear with early Gallardos (on both manuals and e-gear), according to BHP Cars. Lamborghini introduced a stronger clutch and modified release bearing, so always ask when the last clutch was fitted and whether it included these new parts. Black or dark-coloured cars are hard to sell. Cars driven in the winter are bad news: check for corroding chassis and bubbling around the door vents. Later, '06 cars had useful updates and are worth searching out.

I OWN ONE

£ 'My personal taste has always leant towards Lambos,' says Mike Emerton. 'Though there are several cars that can match its straight-line performance, it's the way the Gallardo deploys its power that's the key. "Grip, grip and more grip" pretty much covers it. As supercars go, it's easy to drive, easy-ish to park and it's proved very reliable.'

OWNER'S TIP

£ 'The only real issue I've had was with the satnav. Putting in an Audi disc – the system is Audi sourced! – caused the entire entertainment system to crash.'

YEARS: 2003-2008
PRICE: £60,000-85,000
INSURANCE: £1190
TAX: £245 pre Mar '06, £435 after
ANNUAL SERVICE: £700

FREE MOTORING
£40-60K

FERRARI 360 MODENA

WHAT IS IT?

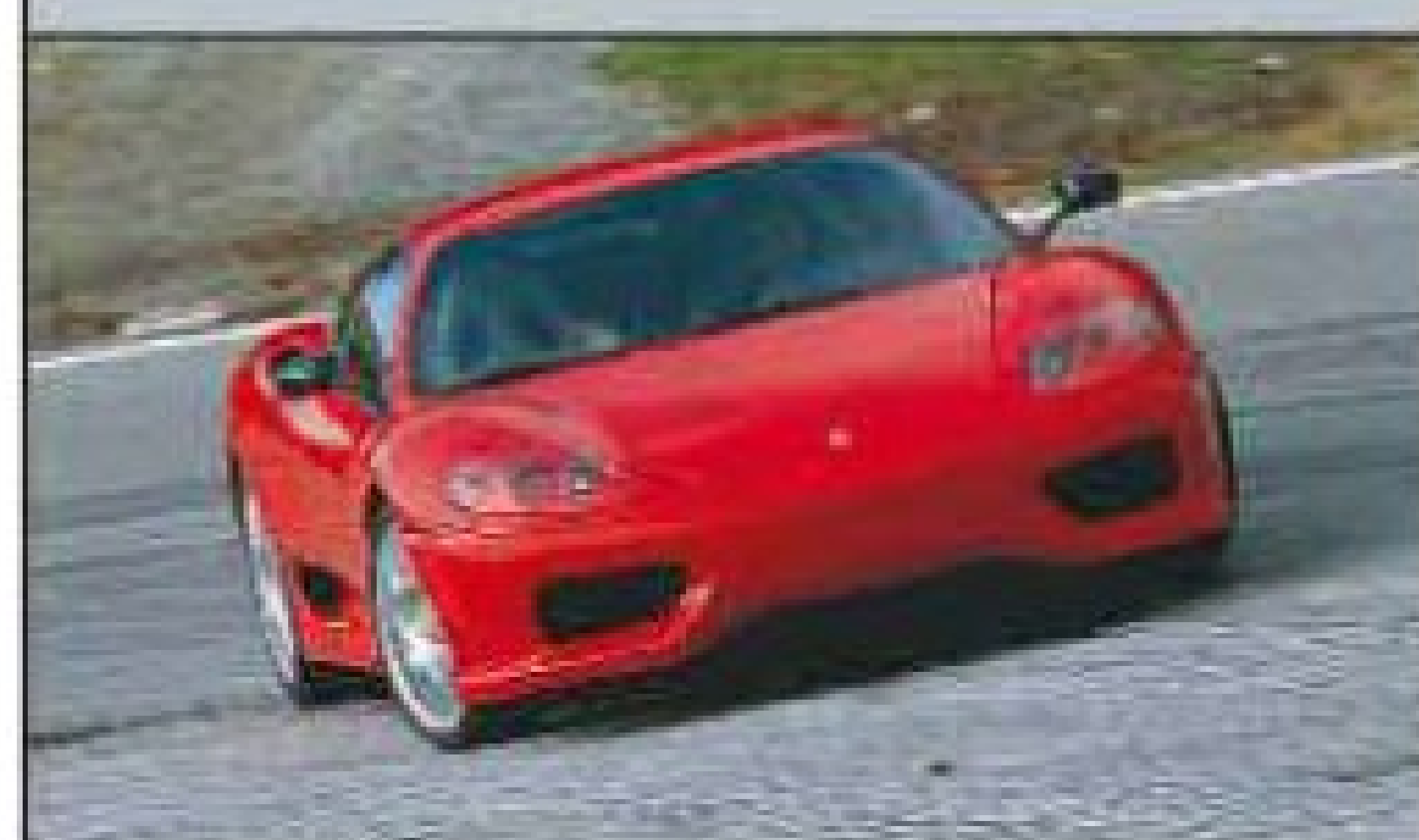
£ The first of the modern generation of Ferraris, the 360 introduced all-aluminium construction and the concept of setting out the packaging and aerodynamic strategies before getting down to the styling. Still, Pininfarina did a great job and the 360 bettered the F355 it replaced in every measurable way. Handling is superb, with crisp, neat responses, and the 400bhp V8 is a screamer. Classic.

WHY SHOULD IT RETAIN ITS VALUE?

£ Challenge Stradales are proving depreciation-resistant, but at around half the cost of the CS the standard car offers many of the same thrills. They're tough, too. Prices dipped at the beginning of 2009 and are in recovery now – buy one quick.

WHAT THE TRADE SAYS

£ According to Adrian Burke at Dick Lovett, any Ferrari 360 model they get in sells almost immediately. Colours other than red, silver or black are rare, though, and there are more Spiders than coupes. Cars with the manual gearbox are less common than those with the F1 gearbox but don't sell for any sort of premium.



I OWN ONE

£ 'The 360 is without doubt the best thing I have ever bought,' says Chris Ramsden. 'After two decades of 911s. I finally took the plunge and have never looked back. I think most people dream of owning one but are fearful of the running costs, but I'd say go for it.'

BUYING TIP

£ The brakes are excellent but they can squeal around town; it's nothing to worry about. Pads can wear quickly and need replacing after 12,000 miles.

YEARS: 1999-2004
PRICE: £38,000-68,000
INSURANCE: £1542
TAX: £205 pre Mar '01, £245 after
ANNUAL SERVICE: £620

FREE MOTORING:
THE TOP EIGHT

The best things



in life...

...are great cars you can effectively run for free. Our top eight *evo* choices come together for a group test with a difference – there really are no losers here. **Roger Green** reports



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FREE MOTORING: THE TOP EIGHT

Gloom. This appears to be the rather depressing theme of the discussion that's playing out on Radio 4 during my early-morning drive to Silverstone. Apparently the first few weeks of any new year are always the most miserable. The weather's bad, the post-Christmas bills have arrived, and what with the spending cuts and the rises in fuel costs and VAT, it's worse than ever this time round. Lord help us.

Peering through the windscreen, I can see their point about the weather. The wipers are having a proper workout, it's barely a degree or two above freezing and it looks horribly bleak and murky out there. The trees, long since stripped of their leaves, are being subjected to a whipping wind, the hedgerows are little more than a roadside collection of twigs, and the fields look muddy and waterlogged. It's as if nature itself is more than merely dormant, it looks totally fed up.

To make things worse, I've just paid so much for a tank of fuel, I'd expect to have it poured by a Savoy butler. Instead I got barely a grunt from the oik behind the counter who was more interested in sending texts than interacting with customers. Why is refueling always such an unpleasant experience?

And yet, despite all of this, I remain in a chipper mood as I roll into our meeting point, and for good reason. The cars assembled here are not only some of the greatest drivers' machines of the last decade, they also sit at the bottom of their depreciation curves. So you can buy one today, enjoy it thoroughly and, when you finally decide to sell it on, you'll get all your money back, and possibly a little bit more. Nothing dispels despondency like a great car that could actually earn you money...

We're not the only ones to have hit on the formula, of course. All of these cars are owned by **evo** readers and this bunch look rightly pleased with themselves. While they head to a nearby café to take shelter from the arctic blasts and pat each other on the back, I round up the keys, turn up my coat collar and head out to drive the cars.

In time-honoured **evo** style, I resist the urge to take the R8, Aston or Turbo S and start with the cheapest and least powerful car here. Dropping into the seat of an 82,000-mile Toyota MR2 produces the day's first surprise: this 2001 example has resisted the ravages of time exceptionally well. The interior looks barely worn and the simple dash layout hasn't dated either; the MR2 remains remarkably modern both inside and out.

There's more good news once you get going. I'd expected the chassis to shake and shimmy over the endless potholes – certainly more than it did back in the days when fuel cost 76p a litre. But this example still feels remarkably tight, while the 138bhp engine is as sweet as ever, and the close-gated gearbox zips through the cogs every bit as enthusiastically as I recall. The MR2 may not have a monstrous power output, but it remains vibrant, deft and entertaining, and its low mass and direct steering gives it great cornering poise. The



Above: supercharged 1.6-litre engine in Cooper S Works packs a beefy 210bhp. Mini puts it to good use



'Considering there's 210bhp coursing through the Mini's front





wheels, greasy roads are dispatched with remarkably little fuss'

steering suffers from a little vagueness around the dead-ahead, but as soon as you cut through that it slices directly to the heart of a corner. In fact on greasy roads it's arguably a little *too* pointy, for the tail often gets hung out as it tries to keep up. Not that this is an issue – there's plenty of feel, and the immediacy of the responses to throttle and steering angles means these small slides can be gathered up or ridden out with impunity. It's all terrific fun.

The first-generation Mini Cooper S Works is another car that packs sharp steering responses and a keen front end as valuable weapons in its armoury. The Mini doesn't have the attitude adjustability of, say, a Clio 182, but it does have both grip and composure, meaning that you can attack corners hard. Pile in, carrying big speeds, and the chassis just deals with it. Point

it in the direction you want it to go and it'll simply follow your bidding. Very impressive that, as is the level of traction, which allows you to pick up the throttle hard at the mid-point of the corner.

Considering there's 210bhp coursing through the front wheels, these greasy roads are dispatched with remarkably little fuss. There's minimal roll, the body and suspension remain taut, and the ride quality, while firm, retains enough suppleness not to be uncomfortable. It's an alert and feisty little car, the Works, but never an unruly one, for it feels fully in control of every situation that's thrown at it.

Part of the Mini's appeal, of course, is BMW's fit-and-finish fastidiousness. No other supermini would retain this level of integrity at this age and that must play a part in the rock-

solid residuals. You can buy with confidence, knowing it will keep delivering real owner satisfaction as well as driver enjoyment for years to come.

Same goes for a mk4 R32 Golf, particularly one that's been as lovingly cared for by its owner as Rizvan Hussain's example here. In fact it looks and feels much as it did when the model appeared back in 2002. The R32 was a return to form for VW's iconic Golf, after the GTI's reputation had been tarnished by the soft mk3 and the rubberised responses of the mk4. No, this wasn't a GTI, but it was a pointer for the way to get back on track, and it added a chunk more muscle. Figuratively this was no lightweight then, and you sense the physical mass of 1477kg as soon as you start driving, too. The 3189cc narrow-angle V6 serves up 237bhp

FREE MOTORING: THE TOP EIGHT



and an equal level of torque and it does so with a wonderfully clean throttle response and superb four-wheel drive traction.

It's no surprise that it feels so planted and dynamically robust – it sits some 20mm lower than the GTI from the same era and rolls on 18-inch rims. But although it feels solid and corners flat, the ride's not crashy and there's a surprising amount of fun to be had in the turns, too. Force the issue and the front tyres will eventually slip, but a swift lift of the throttle followed by a forceful reapplication of power

can then bring the rear into the action. And it's all accompanied by the crispest blare ever to emanate from a Golf's tailpipes.

Speaking of fizzing six-cylinder engines, the BMW Z4 M Coupe is next on my hit-list. In truth we never completely gelled with Bce-Em's riposte to Porsche's Cayman – it just wasn't quite as focused as we'd hoped and suffered from an unfortunate amount of understeer and a slightly choppy ride. But while it may not be quite as polished as the Porsche, there's still plenty to enjoy (in addition to the favourable financial outlook).

The 3.2-litre straight-six with its Vanos cam timing system is simultaneously smooth and hard-hitting. It packs a 338bhp punch and has the aggressive metallic *zing* enjoyed by the very best BMW units. In fact the Z4 M Coupe has an almost hot-rod feel: you sit quite a long way back, almost over the rear wheels, and you

quickly develop a driving style whereby you guide it through the turns and aim it down the next pulse-quickenng straight, savouring its inexorable acceleration as you snick up through the Getrag gearbox.

If there's one car here that lives for the twisty bits, it's the Series 2 Lotus Exige. Okay, if I was strictly adhering to driving these in order of power it should have come earlier, but in truth this is one of the fastest point-to-point machines of the lot and it's so different to anything else here it acts like a palette cleanser before I get onto the GTs.

Climbing into an Exige always requires limb dexterity and a re-adjustment of mindset, such is its purity of purpose. It doesn't attack a road, pounding it into submission; instead it flows with it, inhaling the undulations and sweeping through the turns with a lightness of touch that's simply awe-inspiring.





“The Exige doesn’t pound a road into submission; it flows with it, inhaling the undulations, sweeping through turns...”



Above: Z4 M Coupe couldn't quite match the Cayman in contemporary road tests, but it's got bags of character and a cracking straight-six motor. Left: S2 Exige is as quick as anything on give-and-take roads. MR2 (below, with engine pictured below left) is just terrific fun



You need commitment to buy one of these as a daily driver – the Exige doesn’t entertain any compromises that would hinder interaction and feel. On the other hand, no other car here comes close to the little Lotus in terms of accuracy and speed of response. The level of detail in the feedback through the steering and chassis is similarly unique in this group, from the subtle transfer of weight as you squeeze on the Toyota power to the delicacy in the way you deploy the brakes on these grimy roads. It does have flaws – the gearbox is a little loose and imprecise, while long journeys become a test of endurance – but in terms of purity of driving it really takes some beating.

The cockpit of an Aston Martin V8 Vantage couldn’t be more different to the stripped-out Lotus and it’s a fine place to be, the ambience one of cool elegance that’s a perfect match for the beautifully judged exterior lines. It’s a snug



FREE MOTORING: THE TOP EIGHT



cockpit – not exactly cramped, more shrunk-to-fit. Twist the key in the ignition, thumb the starter button and the peace is shattered by the 4.3-litre V8 clearing its throat. This engine loves to rev, cackle and snarl, and what it lacks in mid-range torque it more than makes up for in terms of top-end power, the peak of 380bhp arriving at 7000rpm.

The baby Aston's ride is firmer than you might imagine – you certainly feel all of the road's pockmarks, while tyre-roar is perhaps a little louder than you'd expect from a GT – but the upside is a real keenness to get stuck into a run across country. The rear is easy to slide and while it occasionally fumbles over mid-corner bumps, you can rein things in simply enough.

Meanwhile, the feelgood factor engendered by driving one of the most gorgeous machines ever created is hard to beat. And the fact that the privilege of doing so will cost you little if anything over the course of a year only adds to the feeling of wellbeing. It may not be the fastest choice in this price bracket (we'll get to that in a second), but when it comes to class, the Aston V8 Vantage has it in spades.

The first time you introduce throttle to carpet in a 996 Turbo S is one of those moments that will stay with you a very long time. It has 450bhp, so you know it's going to be rapid, and yet the way it compresses your spine into the seat is even more shocking than the force you'd braced yourself for. Nail it from a standstill and the twin turbos bolted to the 3.6-litre flat-six will be on full boost as you pass 60mph just 4.1 seconds later.

The Porsche's interior would feel workmanlike even if I hadn't just hopped out of the Aston, but clarity and a spot-on driving position are more important when traveling so incredibly fast. And this really is a supercar for all seasons, the four-wheel-drive system and the engine hung out in the tail giving it outstanding traction. Even on these roads it has the ability to rip into the tarmac and fire you forwards.

SPECIFICATIONS

	ENGINE	POWER	TORQUE	TOP SPEED (claimed)	0-60MPH	PRICE TODAY
ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE (2005)	V8, 4281cc	380bhp @ 7300rpm	302lb ft @ 5000rpm	175mph	5.2sec	£40,000
AUDI R8 (2007)	V8, 4163cc	414bhp @ 7800rpm	317lb ft @ 4500rpm	187mph	4.1sec	£56,000
BMW Z4 M COUPE (2006)	In-line 6-cyl, 3246cc	338bhp @ 7900rpm	269lb ft @ 4900rpm	155mph	5.0sec	£19,000
LOTUS EXIGE S2 (2006)	In-line 4-cyl, 1796cc	218bhp @ 7800rpm	158lb ft @ 5500rpm	148mph	4.5sec	£17,000
MINI COOPER S WORKS (2002)	In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, s'charger	210bhp @ 6950rpm	181lb ft @ 4500rpm	143mph	6.6sec	£6000
PORSCHE 996 TURBO S (2005)	Flat 6-cyl, 3600cc, biturbo	450bhp @ 5700rpm	457lb ft @ 3500-4400rpm	191mph	4.1sec	£35,000
TOYOTA MR2 (2001)	In-line 4-cyl, 1794cc	138bhp @ 6400rpm	125lb ft @ 4400rpm	130mph	7.2sec	£4000
VW GOLF R32 (MK4) (2002)	V6, 3189cc	237bhp @ 6250rpm	236bhp @ 2800rpm	154mph	6.4sec	£7000



'All of these cars are winners, but for me two stand out'



Far left: R8 doesn't have the ballistic speed of the Turbo S, but it looks and feels even more special – in fact only the Aston (above) evokes a similar desire. Audi's 4.2-litre V8 (left) may be overshadowed by the latest V10 but it's still a superb engine. Right: M Coupe buckets



The steering feel is typically Porsche and the S can outbrake anything, but its all-round every-day usability is equally impressive. This particular car is fitted with a Tiptronic gearbox, as were a large percentage of those sold in the UK, and although I'd prefer a manual, the self-shifter does make sense if you regularly drive in heavy traffic and crave the occasional – and massive – shot of adrenalin.

The gearbox debate is potentially equally divisive in the Audi R8, perhaps even more so because the automated manual fitted to our owner's car is far superior to the Porsche system, and yet if you go down this route you sacrifice the *schlick-clack* magic of the wonderful open-gate manual. To be honest you won't go wrong with either.

The R8 is arguably the only car here that can match the Aston for visual and tactile appeal, but it couldn't be more different. Inside it's light, airy, wide and low, but that's just the start. This might be the bottom rung of the R8 ladder, but its capabilities are as extraordinary as they are comprehensive. Traction, grip and stability are exceptional; the steering has all the precision you could wish for; the way it slices into turns is uncanny and the ride is perfectly judged. The R8 is slick, polished, engaging and

almost impossible to find fault with.

Normally at this stage of a group test we'd be naming winners and losers, but whether you judge them on financial sense or driving excellence, all of these cars are winners. For me, however, two stand out. The R8 remains as cool as the day it was first unveiled, and in terms of driver satisfaction loses nothing to the latest, V10-engined versions. They say the Audi R8 V10 is the thinking man's Lamborghini Gallardo. Well, if you've got the means, an early V8 like this is a no-brainer.

And if your means are more modest, it's hard not to warm to the little MR2. Not only is it a hoot to drive, but Toyota reliability and build quality shine through it: lightweight cars are supposed to get flaky over time but this one just doesn't. It's a pure and simple bargain – and the perfect cure for the winter blues.

You can buy two of these cars right now, as both the Turbo S and the Mini are for sale. For the sellers' contact details please email rogerg@evo.co.uk

And a big, big thank you for supplying the cars for this test goes to: Caroline Broad (Z4), Ross Meigh (MR2), Andy Byford (Aston), Rizvan Hussain (R32), Tom Chant (Exige), Natasha Burton (Mini) and Andy Elliot (Turbo S and R8)



The long way home

*A high-speed blast through northern Italy, an audience with Valentino Balboni and a 1200-mile drive home via the Route Napoleon in his Countach QV. Sounds incredible – but not everything went to plan for **Harry Metcalfe...***

COUNTACH DRIVE STORY

This is not a good start. I'm standing outside the Lamborghini factory in Sant'Agata on a dank Friday evening. Everyone else has gone home but I'm still hanging around, waiting for my long overdue Countach to arrive. It's hours late already, but just when I'm thinking all the planning is going to come to nothing, the unmistakable silhouette of a grubby Countach finally appears at the security gates. Keith Adams, from our sister magazine *Octane*, has driven my QV direct from the UK, with a few Alpine passes thrown in along the way. He's full of apologies. He also drops into the conversation that there have been some nasty noises emanating from around the alternator. Oh, and the charging light is now permanently lit on the dashboard.

This really isn't the time for the Countach to throw a hissy fit – tomorrow could very possibly be the biggest day of its 23-year life.

Firstly, we're here to join legendary test driver Valentino Balboni as he compares four versions of the Countach for an *Octane* cover story.

Secondly, we'll go out in my car together and find out the truth behind *Fast Lane* magazine's 1986 road test of the then-new Countach QV, when editor Peter Dron recorded the fastest ever figures for a Countach, hitting 100mph in 10sec and topping out at 195mph on roads near Sant'Agata. Finally, I'm to drive my car back to Blighty. It should be an epic few days, but right now it's all looking a bit shaky...

Fortunately, Valentino himself has just arrived and he's soon rummaging around the engine bay. Seconds later, he's wearing a very satisfied smile – he's already diagnosed the problem and is pleased to tell me it's going to be easy to sort. It turns out the alternator belt is knackered. Valentino is soon jabbering into his mobile, and before I know it he's organised for the QV to be despatched to his mate's workshop where it'll be repaired overnight. We're back on...



Day 1

The next morning, Valentino is waiting outside, ready to give us a lift to my now-mended QV. And if you need a perfect illustration of what makes Italy great, just check out the vehicle that Valentino is going to take us there in: a black LM002. Already I can sense this is going to be a good day.

The bill for the repair comes to 100 Euros. Minutes later, I find myself chasing Valentino in his LM002 for all I'm worth. He's giving the big 4x4 a proper hiding as we speed our way to *Octane's* photo location, a private runway in the middle of nowhere. Just before we get there, we hit the roughest stretch of tarmac I've ever encountered. Bizarrely, the LM002 seems to pick up even more speed at this point and I can see Valentino's passengers are being tossed into the roof lining as the LM002 bucks its way over the more vicious bumps. There's nothing for it but to back right off and watch them disappear into the distance. I'm in a bit of a panic as I've



'Nasty noises are emanating from around the alternator and the charging light is permanently lit on the dash'

no idea where I am, so I'm mighty relieved to spot the entrance to the airfield at the end of this hideous bit of tarmac. As I arrive, Valentino wanders over to tell me he was going as fast as he could over the last bit, so that I could see just how rough the tarmac was and slow down accordingly. Valentino's fuzzy logic takes some understanding at times...

Now we've arrived at the photo location, it's a chance to ask him what really happened on the *Fast Lane* test. Apparently the Countach they drove at 195mph was actually owned by F1 driver Pierluigi Martini and really was in standard spec. Well, almost. Valentino tells me that he asked for some extra gaskets to be fitted under the airbox lid, increasing the space above the carburettor intakes, which, on a good engine, could add a few more horsepower at the top end.

Martini's QV would have been quicker than most other QVs of the period anyway, as it didn't have the infamous rear wing fitted. Valentino explains that the last thing

a Countach actually needs is a rear spoiler, as the car's natural stance at speed is zero lift at the rear but some lift over the front axle. Therefore, a rear wing producing downforce would make lift even worse on the front axle. But as customers loved the looks of the crazy rear spoiler, they ended up angling the wing until it gave absolutely zero downforce, meaning the only thing it actually does on a Countach is add drag and slow the car down.

It turns out the wing was never even an official option on a Countach, as Lamborghini didn't have the funds to put it through the homologation process. Without homologation, Lamborghini could only fit one after the car had been 'sold' to the supplying dealer. So they got a small workshop across the road to manufacture and paint the wings in all the standard colours and when a customer ordered a Countach with a rear wing, an engineer used to arrive with one under his arm and proceed to fit it in the car park in front of the factory. Valentino reckons they could fit a wing in 8-10

Opposite page: if your Countach has some kind of alternator problem, who better to diagnose it than legendary Lambo test driver Valentino Balboni? Top right: Harry chats to the great man, and (above) gets him to sign the interior of his QV





'The light's starting to fade, and I need to make tracks for

minutes, using an electric drill to make the holes in the body. How times change.

I've often wondered if Lamborghini's own official performance claims were achieved with a standard Countach. 'We used every trick in the book!' Valentino readily admits, 'We did the performance testing at Nardo and we removed the mirrors and wiper blades, increased tyre pressures and even taped up every joint on the car! Everyone did this sort of thing at the time. Our goal was always to beat Ferrari and with the Countach QV we really beat them!'

The *Octane* shoot is over, Valentino has chosen his favourite Countach – it's the QV! – and the light's starting to fade. I really need to make tracks for tonight's destination, Cap Ferrat on the French Riviera some 275 miles away.

Now, I know this won't be one of those journeys where I'll jump out as fresh as when I started, but then the opportunity to drive a

Countach from the factory back to the UK via Route Napoleon is simply the stuff of dreams. I've not done a big journey in this car before but by the time I'm home tomorrow night I'll have covered 1200 miles – which is the same as the previous owner of this Countach managed in a whole year.

I say my goodbyes, fire up the Lambo's 5.2-litre V12, make my way to the A1 *autostrada* and point the Countach's chiselled snout in the direction of Milan.

This stretch of A1 between Milan and Bologna has recently become festooned with speed cameras and speeds have dropped massively compared with the old days, but very soon I'll be turning off towards Alessandria on the A21 and I know this is still camera-free. If I'm ever going to experience what a Countach QV must have felt like when it was new, then this is where to do it...





tonight's destination, Cap Ferrat, some 275 miles away'



Left: Metcalfe has been dreaming about doing a journey like this, in his own Countach, for as long as he can remember. Above: spectacular scenery, spectacular car

Twenty-five years ago, owning a Lamborghini in Italy was virtually a licence to speed. Unfortunately the speedo on my car broke on the way down here, so I've only got the rev-counter to go on for the journey back. I know that 4000rpm equates to 100mph and it's not long before the needle has crept a little further round the dial and is now regularly pointing towards the 5000rpm marker on this thankfully near-deserted *autostrada*. The lights lining the motorway are streaming past the windscreen so fast now that they form an almost a continuous ribbon of light.

There's much more of a meaningful growl filling the cabin as the V12 begins to work that bit harder, and for the next 20 miles or so I keep it like this. It all feels remarkably easy from behind the wheel, as if the car could keep it up all day, so after a while I can't resist the temptation to push even harder. Next thing I

know the needle is hovering over the 6000rpm mark and we're really flying now (I'll leave you to do the maths). Every now and then, a quick Mercedes or BMW tries its best to tag along for a few miles. I'm guessing the drivers just want a glimpse of a howling Countach spearing down the *autostrada*. They don't stay hooked up for long, eventually dropping back again into the inky blackness behind. I guess we must look like a ghost from the past – I mean, when was the last time you saw a Countach on the road, let alone one doing these sort of speeds?

The car seems to be lapping it up, too – stability is excellent and there's still plenty of performance in reserve, with some 1500 revs to go before the red paint begins. Only the oil temperature gauge shows that I'm making the V12 really work for a living – the needle has sprung into life, but it's only pointing half way round the dial so not a problem.

COUNTACH DRIVE STORY

I spend over an hour doing these silly speeds, but then the long descent towards Genoa begins and I never do get the opportunity to truly max the Countach. But hey, I don't care – I've still got the fun of the twisting, tunnel-festooned coastal *autostrada* to come...

Those tunnels on the next leg of the route prove hilarious, the howling exhausts ricocheting off the walls, the pops and flames on the over-run providing the encore. The next 80 miles or so are some of my favourite in Europe. There should be an extra charge for using this stretch of 'roader-coaster' – it's terrific fun in any car, let alone in a supercar icon like the Countach.

It's not long before I'm at the Monaco turn-off, perched high up on the rocky cliffs above this famous corner of the French Riviera. It's after midnight as I drop down for the final leg

towards Cap Ferrat and I wonder how long it is since a Countach made this trip. The last example dropped off the production line some 20 years ago, but I'd like to think there's a well-worn groove between Monaco and Sant'Agata, given how well-suited a Lamborghini is to the glitzy principality.

The roads are absolutely deserted, making it an easy run down to the coast for once, so it's not too long before I'm parking up for the night. As I retrieve my bags and swing the door closed for the final time today, a group of locals wanders by; they've no idea what the Countach actually is, but the styling alone is enough to stop them in their tracks, even at this hour. I can't blame them though; it does look pretty sensational under the twinkling streetlights, the four exhausts ping-ponging into the night air as they begin to cool.

Day 2

Day two dawns typically bright but there's no time to enjoy the sunrise today – there's still over 950 miles to cover before I'm home. I trickle into the early-morning traffic heading for Nice and soon pull in for yet another dose of Shell V-Power. This wakes me up quicker than any espresso ever could as it costs around £125 to brim-fill a Countach.

Proper supercar stuff, but worth every penny when I start to fire the QV down the legendary Route Napoleon as it threads its way through some spectacularly rocky alpine valleys on its way to Grenoble. To be honest, this road is hard work in the Countach, especially if you're pressing on a bit, but the sheer drama of piloting this thing makes all the effort worth it, especially with the windows cranked open to enjoy the V12's song echoing off the rocks.

'I'm having a ball on this challenging stretch of empty tarmac'

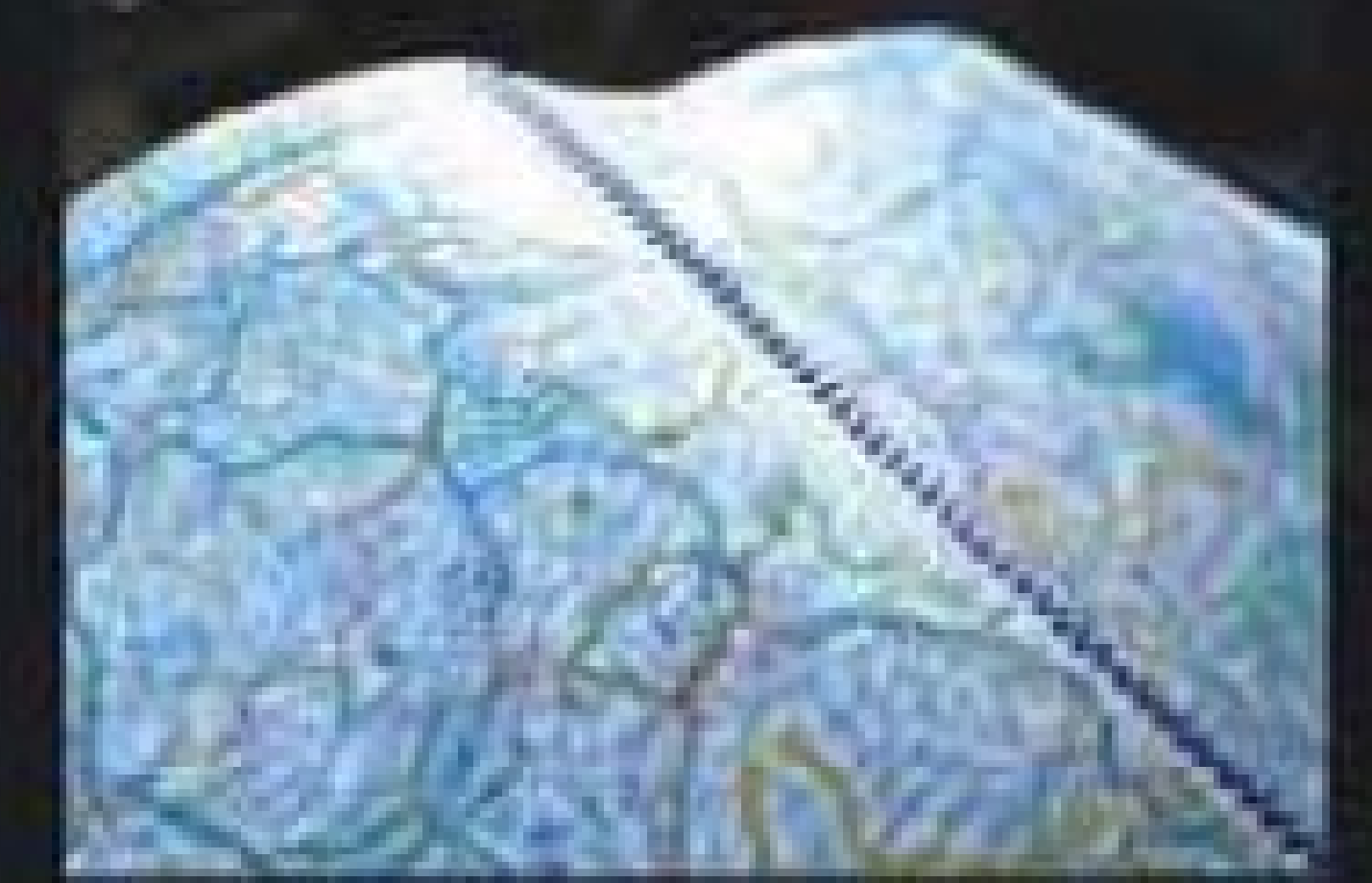


There's no chance to relax though – the steering never lightens up and demands you grip the wheel with both hands at all times. The new Hankook RS-2 front tyres grip really hard but do seem to increase the load at the wheel. At least the gearing works well up here, with third stretching all the way to 112mph before you need to pop it into fourth for the longer straights. I'm surprised I can't unstick the tail, but such is the grip generated by those huge rear tyres. You can feel the car pitching as you chuck it into a corner, but the QV never feels loose or disconcerting, even when pushed hard. In fact I'm having a ball on this challenging stretch of empty tarmac.

All too soon I find myself navigating my way around the Grenoble ring-road and dropping down towards Lyon for the final leg of this epic journey. Some 600 miles of *autoroute* still



Above: Countach proves more comfortable than you might imagine, but Metcalfe is still glad to have a stretch at each fuel stop, which comes round roughly every 280 miles



COUNTACH
DRIVE STORY

'It's just before one in the morning
when I finally arrive home.
I'm absolutely bushed, but elated too'



remain – not exactly fun, but I can marvel at the smoothness of French tarmac, especially compared with our crappy equivalent. The Lambo's seats are proving far more comfortable than I was expecting but I'm still ready for a stretch each time the reserve light begins winking at me after 280 miles or so. After a couple more wallet-wilting fill-ups, the Eurotunnel signs finally loom overhead. By the time I arrive at the terminal, there's not even time for a quick shop if I'm to catch the last train of the night back to the UK.

A few hours later, after a brain-numbing half-a-lap of the M25 and a cruise up the M40, I finally arrive home. It's just before one o'clock in the morning and I'm absolutely bushed, but elated too. Thirty hours and 1200 miles in a Lamborghini Countach is always going to

be memorable, but throw in a drive alongside Valentino Balboni, a 140-mile high-speed sprint across central Italy, followed by the surreal, twisting, tunnel/bridge roller-coaster connecting Genoa to Monaco and then top it all off with a 12-hour blast across France, via Route Napoleon, and I know I'm going to be talking about this journey for years.

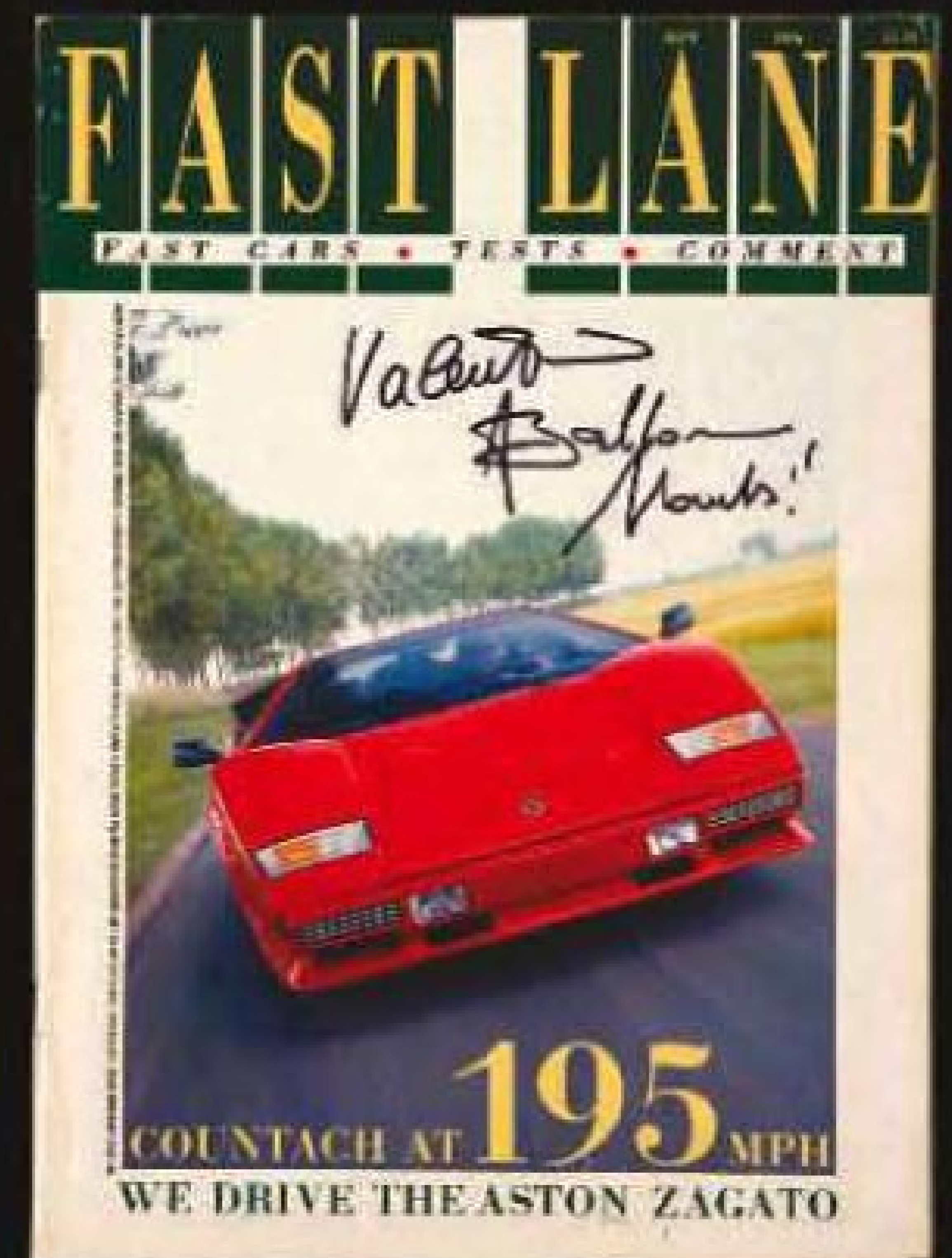
The Countach didn't miss a beat on the way back either. And this is what we all dream supercars are actually made for: proper transcontinental adventures, taking in some of the best roads this planet has to offer. Okay, I was shot by the end of it all, but what a journey – one I wouldn't have missed for all the world. It's taken 30-odd years to make the dream of owning a Countach a reality, but I now know it's been worth the wait.

THE FAST LANE TEST

Back in 1986, Peter Dron, editor of *Fast Lane*, was the man tasked with recording figures on the then-new Lamborghini Countach QV. Here is his account of that memorable day.

It was F1 driver Pierluigi Martini's car in which the top speed tests were done. We used an *autostrada* close to the factory and I can tell you that from the passenger seat, it did seem, er, very well tuned. On the other hand, Countach engines require quite a few miles before they deliver their best and Martini had certainly made sure his was well 'run in'! I heard afterwards he was seriously disappointed he had not scared the sh*t out of me!

The acceleration tests were done in a different car – with a Peiseler fifth wheel and electronic box, with Valentino Balboni doing the driving this time. We did



‘We did 0-140mph on public roads. Seriously crazy’

0-140mph (20.5sec) with the Peiseler on narrow public roads within about an hour of Sant'Agata, which I think in retrospect was seriously crazy. Valentino asked me if I wanted to have a go to see if I could beat his times. I told him that there was no point – he did four runs and I think there was not more than one tenth of a second difference between them for the 0-100mph times (average 10sec dead); and of course he did this sort of stuff every day. But I did drive the car quite a distance afterwards.

If you do try and max your car on an *autostrada*, please send me the address of your prison cell and I shall arrange deliveries of parcels of best Bolognese pasta and cases of proper Lambrusco.



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The next big thing?

Developed by Citroën's motorsport department, the new, 204bhp DS3 Racing should be as good as a hot hatch can get. **John Barker** finds out how it measures up against Mini JCW, Clio 200, Corsa VXR and new Polo GTI

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Pictures Max Earey

Forget the genuine carbon trim and Superdry-meets-fighter-jet graphics, initially it's the list price of the Citroën DS3 Racing that holds your attention. It costs over £23K, which makes it nearly £7K more expensive than the 154bhp DS3 DSport. Even if Loeb himself had fine-tuned the chassis and left his signature on the dashboard, that would be steep for a 204bhp front-drive hot hatch.

Right now, though, price is of little concern. Here in south Wales, low winter sunshine is illuminating a fabulous, undulating panorama and has turned the road that jaggedly dissects it into a glistening silver ribbon. This is prime hot hatch territory. The road has blind crests and plunging, tightening corners that demand respect for the centre line. For anything bigger than a Mondeo it's a tight fit, but there's just enough wriggle-room for a feisty little hatch to barrel along – provided it's decently sorted.

The DS3 Racing isn't instantly reassuring. The surface is wet and the Citroën's steering feels light, the wheel tugging slightly in your hands as its front tyres scabble for traction exiting tighter turns. It feels like it's up on its toes, a little short of grip, and if it were offered right now, you'd sacrifice some of its ride quality for a bit more positivity.

But that would be too hasty because, a few challenging miles on, the car in the rear-view mirror isn't exactly harrying to get past, and that car is the Mini John Cooper Works. The JCW, acknowledged as one of the leading lights of the hot hatch class, shares the DS3-R's turbocharged 1.6-litre engine (208bhp in the Mini's case) and recorded exactly the same 0-60mph acceleration time at the Millbrook Proving Ground yesterday, so the Citroën is clearly getting some things right on the B4560.

Helping to highlight those things are the ubiquitous Mini and three other rivals, all of which cost less than the DS3-R. The JCW is £870 less expensive (although the extensive options list is *so* tempting), but we also have the 197bhp Renaultsport Clio 200, still our choice in this class and a bargain at £16,810 in 'Cup'



DS3-R faces stiff competition from the likes of the Mini JCW (above right) and the new Polo GTI (below). Raucous Corsa VXR (far right) shouldn't be discounted either



trim. Then there's the still-funky little Vauxhall Corsa VXR, which offers a frisky 189bhp for £18,625, and completing the test another new hot hatch, the Volkswagen Polo GTI.

In our view the Polo puts VAG's shared platform and 178bhp, 1.4-litre twin-charger engine to better use than either the Skoda Fabia or SEAT Ibiza, although it costs a chunk more than them at £18,790, or £19,410 in rather plain five-door trim, as here.

To a degree, you get what you pay for. Take a close look at the DS3-R and you see that its exterior is detailed in gorgeous, satin-finish carbonfibre, from its radiator grille, around its wheelarches and along its sills to the rear diffuser. Bright red Brembo brake calipers peep from behind the blade-like spars of the handsome, 18in, anthracite-coloured alloys, and the interior is a riot of details, textures and more graphics (the set is a £450 option)

“This is Citroën Racing’s first road car, and it should move the game on from the DS3 DSport”



Wheels, clockwise from top: DS3 Racing’s eye-catching 18-inchers; VXR’s optional 18s (17s are standard); Polo, Mini and Clio all wear 17-inch alloys as standard



that gives even the Mini’s cockpit a run for its money. It all sounds a bit much but somehow it hangs together without looking overblown.

Feels good, too. The Citroën Racing-designed bucket seats are surprisingly soft and generously proportioned but offer great support, while the reach- and rake-adjustable wheel ensures a sound driving position and feels lovely in your hands. Yet as soon as you get moving there’s a contradiction. The DS3-R is Citroën Racing’s first road car and should move the game on from the regular DS3 DSport. It sits a smidge lower and has wider tracks and bigger wheels and tyres, yet the absorbency and smoothness of the ride are what strike you first. Add in the steering’s lack of weight, the delicacy of the brake pedal and the rather ordinary sound from the tailpipes and you feel a little short-changed. Hardcore looks but a soft centre? We shall see...





‘The Clio devours this road, carrying speed and delivering great feel’



Interiors, clockwise from above left: Mini and DS3 are crammed with interesting touches; Clio's cabin is simple but effective; Polo's inside is typical VW fayre with trademark GTI tartan seats; VXR tries hard but feels a touch dated



WE WEREN'T EXPECTING to set any records when we met up at Millbrook, because it was lagging it down. First into the blocks was the Mini. Our test car must be the most subtle JCW you can specify, with stock wheels, dark green paint, a black roof and black mirror shells. The Mini's engine is rated at 208bhp and 206lb ft, a few points higher than the version in the Citroën, and on the wet asphalt it scurried off the line, traction control working to good effect, to record a respectable mid-7s for the 0-60 sprint. Traction off, we lowered that to 7.3sec, with 100 up in 17.2, both times that looked like they would be hard to beat.

The Corsa got close on 7.5sec to 60, despite the fact that its turbo 1.6 engine ran out of puff 500rpm shy of the 6500rpm red line, but by the time it had got to three figures it was over two seconds adrift. With traction control usefully





employed, the DS3-R slipped and gripped its way to 60mph to match the Corsa, and then, surprisingly, with traction off it got down to 7.3sec, equalling the Mini. At 100mph it was trailing by just 0.3sec.

The naturally aspirated Clio has the power but not the torque of its forced-induction rivals, but it's still a match for the JCW and DS3-R to 60mph, while in-gear from 30 to 100mph, wrung out and revs kept high, it's on the pace of the longer-gear Citroën.

Had there been a crowd, they might have left by the time we got to the Polo GTI, assuming they'd seen all the action, but that would have been a mistake. Although boasting the least power at 178bhp (and idling with an oddly offbeat, clattery note like it was a three-pot or had a loose exhaust manifold), the DSG-equipped Polo left the line with no slip, no

fuss and no driver input – save for keeping the throttle pinned – and flabbergasted us with 7.1sec to 60. Yes, it was a bit behind by 100mph, but the twin-clutch gearbox's shifts were swift and seamless and would have guaranteed the same time, every time.

If you're looking for a hatch that's the polar opposite of the Citroën, you've just found it. The DS3-R's interior is so plain and its looks so unadventurous in five-door form that you wonder how they get them to leave the showrooms. Go for silver, replace the Golf GTI-mimicking alloys with steelies, and you'd have the ultimate Q-car. Well, you would if it was a blast to drive, but it's hard to know what to make of the Polo on the rain-slick twists and turns of the B4560.

There's no question that it has more outright grip than the Citroën, and it feels usefully

lower slung too, which is encouraging. The seats offer good support and are trimmed in a grippy material too, and yet it doesn't feel very sporty. Partly this is because the DSG 'box (there's no manual option) introduces a lack of precision with its mushy throttle response and the way it allows the car to coast into the first downhill turn unless you drop it into 'S' or select gears manually via the lever or wheel-mounted paddles. The dynamics are an odd mix, too. It feels like an ordinary model that's been hotted up with shorter springs and bigger wheels and tyres; the ride feels firm at first but then a bit soft at speed, and although it finds lots of grip, the steering seems low-g geared and there's not much weight or feel through the slim wheel-rim.

'It's as if every part of it has been designed by a committee, right down to the dynamics,

DS3 RACING v CORSA VXR v MINI JCW v CLIO 200 v POLO GTI

which don't really marry up,' says features editor Henry Catchpole.

The Clio makes a stark contrast. It's a familiar shape, though it looks particularly good in white with black wheels and detailing that includes a black roof and darker rear glass. This isn't the entry-level Cup model but the regular, £17,810 version, with the higher level of standard kit that comes with it, fitted with the optional Cup chassis. It's also got the optional Recaro seats, which cost £970 (similar items are standard in the VXR Corsa), though even without them you'd recognise the quality of the chassis. The cockpit is not a patch on those of the Mini and Citroën but it's neat enough, with decent materials and a few sporty touches, such as the Ferrari-style yellow-faced tacho that red-lines at almost 8000rpm, and the fat-rimmed steering wheel.

You sit taller in the car than you might expect, but that's soon forgotten because the dynamics feel just-so within a few hundred yards. The weight and rate of the steering, the sweetness of the damping... you sense that this chassis will deliver, that the money in this car has been invested in what you can feel rather than what you can see.

And so it proves. The Clio devours this road, turning keenly, naturally, connected with the surface but not dictated to by it, and delivering great feel. It carries speed, grips tenaciously and hooks up early for the exit, all of which helps keep its naturally aspirated engine on the boil. Its mid-range torque is better than the original Clio 197's, and as long as you wring it out to 7500rpm – right until you hear the beep of the upshift prompt – the Clio has the performance to match the most potent here.

The Mini can maintain a similar pace, but it does so in a completely different manner. The JCW feels low-built, short-legged and roll-free, its ride firm and jiggly, and it finds terrific grip on this slick surface. It reacts sharply to big bumps, though, and there's one on a fall-away left-hander, where the cars are loaded up most,

that thumps right through the shell of the Mini and deflects it from its line. It's not worrying, though, because the JCW is almost kart-like and moves sideways all of a piece, four-square, before recovering grip quickly and cleanly. There's not a great deal of steering feel to work with, a situation not improved by a prod of the Sport button, which merely adds more weight and sharpens the throttle, and the brake response is rather abrupt and sensitive, so you make less fluid progress than in the Clio.

It's a good place to be, though. Even after the DS3-R the Mini's cabin feels dramatic, the huge central speedo the size of a dinner-plate dominating the dashboard and piano-black trim contrasting with the (optional) sage leather. The Mini sounds fruitier, more enthusiastic than the Citroën and feels sparkier, too, but, as we've already discovered, the DS3-R can match the pace of the JCW despite having what feels like a looser, more precarious hold on the wet surface.

The Citroën feels taller, softer and less grippy, but lots of bumps that trouble the Mini slip mildly beneath its wheels and you get terrific steering feel. You can sense the treadblocks of the front tyres slipping sideways on the surface, and you can modulate the throttle to maximise the torque passing through them at the exit or slur a line precisely wide by overloading them.

'The DS3 feels really grown up after the Mini and Clio, quite relaxing,' says Catchpole. 'The steering's too light, you've got to learn to trust the front end, and you need the other cars to



SEE THE DS3-R GROUP TEST VIDEO AT EVO.CO.UK



Engines, clockwise from left: DS3, VXR and Mini all have turbocharged 1.6-litre units, the VW has a twin-charged 1.4 and the Clio a naturally aspirated 2-litre





Left: DS3 Racing isn't as hardcore as its name suggests; hard-riding Mini and Clio both feel more extreme. Above and right: Citroën wears its DS logos loud and proud. Below: Polo feels aloof in the wet, but ups its game on dry tarmac



“The DS3 Racing feels grown up after the Mini and Clio – quite relaxing”

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**DS3 RACING v CORSA VXR v
MINI JCW v CLIO 200 v POLO GTI**
ACCELERATION

	DS3	MINI	CLIO	VXR	POLO
0-30	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.0
0-40	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.1
0-50	5.9	5.5	5.7	5.5	5.6
0-60	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.5	7.1
0-70	9.6	9.1	9.3	9.3	9.1
0-80	11.7	11.1	11.7	12.3	11.6
0-90	14.2	14.1	14.6	15.5	14.7
0-100	17.5	17.2	18.2	19.5	18.9
0-110	22.0	23.0	24.7	26.9	24.1
0-120	28.9	30.0	33.0	-	33.2

1/4 MILE

sec	15.8	15.6	15.7	15.9	15.6
speed	95.0mph	95.1mph	93.0mph	91.0mph	92.5mph

2ND GEAR

20-40	2.7	2.4	3.2	2.2
30-50	2.7	2.4	2.9	2.3
40-60	2.8	2.7	2.9	-

3RD GEAR

20-40	4.1	3.5	4.1	3.5
30-50	3.9	3.2	4.0	3.4
40-60	4.0	3.1	4.0	3.5
50-70	3.9	3.2	4.0	3.7
60-80	4.2	3.6	4.3	-
70-90	4.7	-	-	-
80-100	5.9	-	-	-

4TH GEAR (Polo GTI in auto mode)

20-40	6.4	5.1	5.8	5.7	2.1
30-50	5.1	4.1	5.2	4.6	2.6
40-60	5.4	4.2	5.4	5.9	3.0
50-70	5.4	4.5	5.6	5.3	3.5
60-80	5.7	4.6	5.6	5.6	4.5
70-90	6.0	5.1	5.9	5.9	5.6
80-100	6.7	5.8	5.9	6.9	7.3
90-110	9.3	7.3	-	-	9.4

5TH GEAR

30-50	7.7	5.6	7.2	6.2
40-60	6.9	5.3	6.8	5.9
50-70	7.4	6.1	7.3	6.7
60-80	8.3	6.7	8.0	7.6
70-90	9.1	7.4	8.5	8.4
80-100	9.8	8.5	9.2	9.4
90-110	11.5	10.0	10.7	10.9

6TH GEAR

30-50	12.3	7.5	10.4	8.9
40-60	10.7	6.7	9.4	7.6
50-70	10.6	7.4	9.3	8.1
60-80	11.1	8.7	10.5	9.6
70-90	12.2	10.0	12.5	12.0
80-100	-	11.9	12.7	14.3

BRAKING

100-0	4.9sec	4.7sec	4.8sec	5.1sec	4.5sec
distance	367ft	342ft	352ft	345ft	321ft

0-100-0

secs	23.5	23.9	24.3	25.5	25.1
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show your pace, but it's quite fun, involving.'

It's been a while since we've had a Corsa VXR on test and, considering a facelift is imminent, it still looks pretty tasty, even in more modern company. It appears to follow the same formula as the Clio, its cabin essentially neat enough, with sportiness imparted by a pair of deep-sided, torso-hugging Recaros and a chunky-rimmed wheel. You sit tall, as in the Renault, too, but in a narrower shell, and you can feel this in the Corsa's handling.

The first thing you notice, though, is how casually punchier its delivery is compared with the Clio's. It's shorter-geared than the Mini and Citroën, too, which puts its pace on a level footing with them, though you sense that there's a fraction more lag before it picks up. Dynamically, it seems fine in general driving. Catchpole had done most miles in it before we arrived in Wales and liked its slight rawness, which is entirely in keeping with the VXR ethos; a bit of scrabble under power, a slightly edgy feel to the rear.

That same rawness is less welcome here, though, and makes exploiting the performance a nervy affair. As Chris Harris observes, the Corsa and Clio have similar spring rates but the quality of their damping is poles apart; the VXR never settles with the road, its steering in particular always being distracted by some bump or camber. It also lacks feel, so you're not sure where you are on this wet road, meaning your right foot hovers where it's planted in the others.

THE ROADS HAVE dried out by mid-afternoon but this doesn't improve the enjoyment of the Corsa; you simply don't get the feel to work with, the sense that the car is planted and you can choose how much to lean on the grip. It's hard not to feel a bit frustrated on such a spectacular bit of road, though part of the problem is that you know there are other hatches that tackle it with much more confidence and make it fun, which is why it brings up the rear in this test. It's not bad but it could be better with some fine tuning.

The VXR beaten by the bland Polo? Well, yes. The VW's motor sounds odd and it seems as if everything about the car has been set to five on a scale of ten, but on asphalt finally dried by the weak sun, the Polo comes alive, still digging for grip but now with steering feel you can use and some adjustability. Catchpole is amazed: 'The chassis is transformed, and there's something appealingly old-school about it. I don't even mind the DSG...'

We were all hoping that the DS3 Racing would raise its game too, find more grip and meld more with this archetypal hot-hatch road. It didn't happen. It earns full marks for consistency, because it feels exactly the same as it does in the wet – oodles of steering feel but not much grip, and a sense that the supple ride is keeping the road at arms' length. But to live up to its looks (and price), it needs to be grippier, harder edged, more focused. 'A mechanical diff might give it more bite,' suggests Catchpole.

Performance table (left) shows Mini is the straight-line king. Gaps in the figures for the Polo are because DSG gearbox can't be held in gears, kicking down on full throttle

'The Clio has the depth of ability to keep the keenest driver satisfied'

SPECIFICATIONS

	CITROËN DS3 RACING	MINI JCW	RENAULT CLIO 200	VAUXHALL CORSA VXR	VW POLO GTI
Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo	In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc	In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo	In-line 4-cyl, 1390cc, twin-charger
Location	Front, transverse	Front, transverse	Front, transverse	Front, transverse	Front, transverse
Power	204bhp @ 6000rpm	208bhp @ 6000rpm	197bhp @ 7100rpm	189bhp @ 5850rpm	178bhp @ 6200rpm
Torque	203lb ft @ 2000-4500rpm	206lb ft @ 1850rpm	159lb ft @ 5400rpm	192lb ft @ 1980-5850rpm	184lb ft @ 2000-4000rpm
CO2	149g/km	165g/km	190g/km	172g/km	139g/km
Transmission	Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel-drive, ESP	Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel-drive, EDLC (Electronic Differential Lock Control), DTC, DSC	Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive, ESP	Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive, ESP	Seven-speed DCT gearbox, front-wheel drive, ESP
Front suspension	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	323mm ventilated front discs, 249mm solid rear discs, ABS, EBD	316mm ventilated front discs, 280mm solid rear discs, ABS, EBD, CBC, Brake Assist	312mm ventilated discs front, 300mm solid discs rear, ABS, EBD	308mm ventilated discs front, 264mm solid discs rear, ABS, EBD	288mm ventilated discs front, 232mm solid discs rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels	18in front and rear	7 x 17in front and rear	7.5 x 17in front and rear	18in front and rear (optional)	7 x 17in front and rear
Tyres	215/40 R18 front and rear, Bridgestone Potenza RE050A	205/45 R17 front and rear, Continental SportContact 3 SSR	215/45 R17 front and rear, Continental SportContact 3	225/35 R18 front and rear, Continental SportContact 2	215/40 R17 front and rear, Dunlop SP SportMaxx
Weight (kerb)	1240kg	1205kg	1204kg	1166kg	1184kg
Power-to-weight	167bhp/ton	175bhp/ton	166bhp/ton	165bhp/ton	153bhp/ton
Top speed	146mph (claimed)	148mph (claimed)	141mph (claimed)	140mph (claimed)	142mph (claimed)
Basic price	£23,100	£22,230	£17,810	£18,625	£18,790 (three-door)
Price as tested	£24,350 (inc. satnav, decals)	£28,015 (inc. satnav, Chili Pack, Harman Kardon hi-fi, leather)	£19,645 (inc. Cup chassis, Recaros, black roof)	£20,175 (inc. satnav, 18in wheels, parking sensors)	£20,250 (five-door, including satnav)
EVO RATING	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★☆

The Mini maintains its character, too, though with the speed it can now build up, the road feels even lumpier. It's still a bit short of steering feedback but it still feels all-of-a-piece over the bumps, so it's fun and effective in its own style. But it's not the most satisfying Mini, and it's not the best hot hatch either, because

that accolade still rests with the Clio.

'It's my winner because, climbing into it after every other car, you think, why aren't the others like this?' says staff writer Stephen Dobic. Quite. The trick, of course, is that it makes tackling a tricky road like this look easy – wet or dry – while involving and rewarding

you. It feels good just ambling but, like all great handling cars, it has a depth of ability to keep the keenest driver satisfied. Sure, it might not be quite as relaxing at a cruise or as fancy inside as some others here, but if that bothers you then maybe it's not a hot hatch you're looking for. It wins this test easily.



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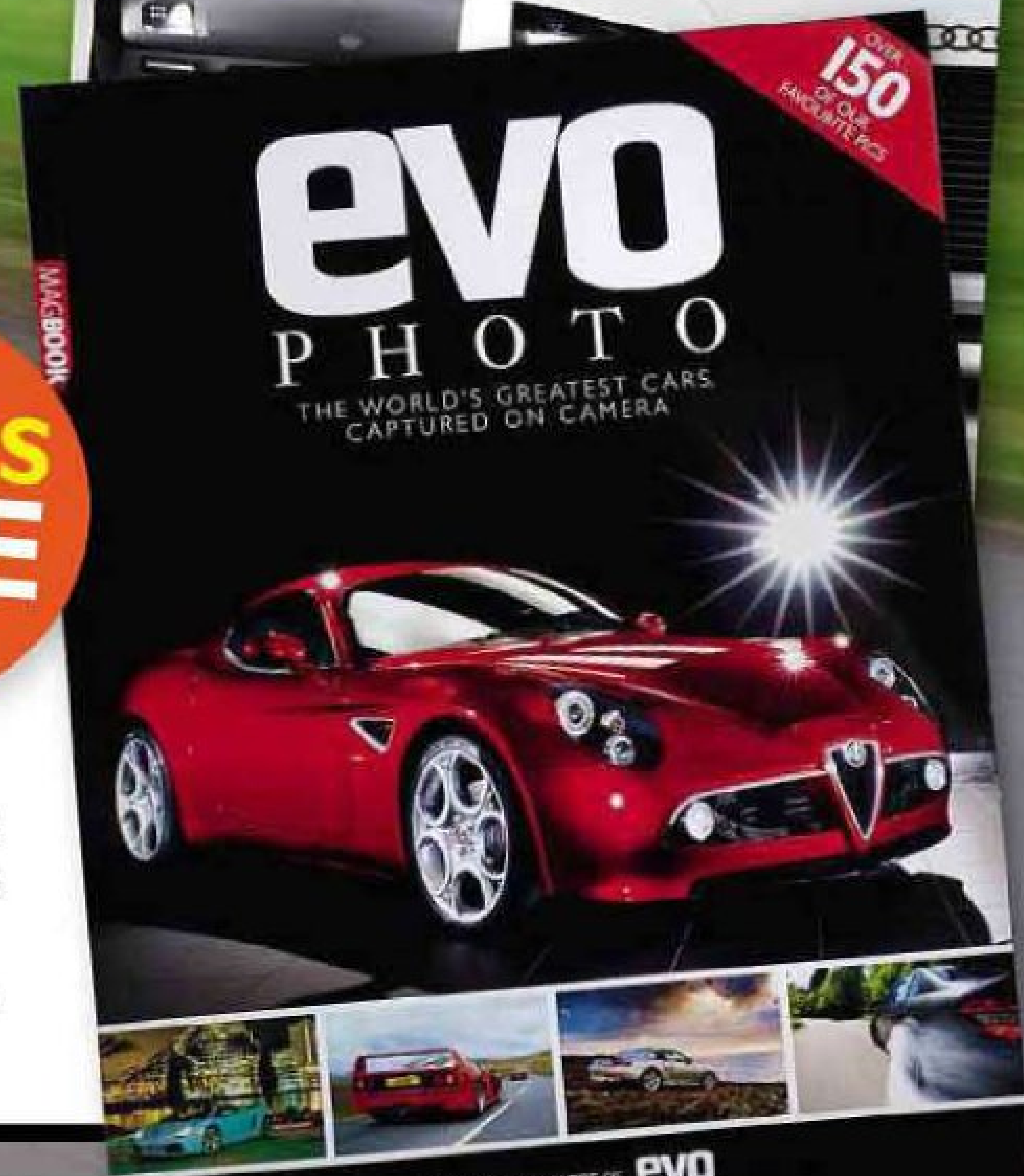
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Fast Fleet

||| LONG-TERM TESTS

Three coupes have joined the fleet this month: an Audi RS5, a Peugeot RCZ and a lightly used Porsche 997 GT3. Meanwhile, the Radical has been back on track, the Leon Cupra R has met its VW rival, and Purple Zilla is no longer purple



NEW ARRIVAL

In this job, you have to be prepared for the odd awkward conversation with a manufacturer when one of their cars gets a negative review. It's never a nice experience, but mostly the exchanges are civil and productive. On very rare occasions, a manufacturer will throw a fit, threaten to restrict access to cars and launches and even withdraw long-term test cars.

So what happened when *evo* carried out a comprehensive group test on the new Audi RS5, ranked it last against the BMW M3, Lexus IS-F and Mercedes C63 AMG and gave it a three-star rating (*evo* 151)? Banned from driving Audis? Dog poo in a burning bag on our doorstep?

Nope, Audi sent us an Audi RS5 and asked us to run it for six months. Aside from a letter detailing the spec of our car, the only other direct

'communication' we had was when one of the Audi UK press representatives gave every member of the *evo* team a can of oxygen and quipped, 'Perhaps this will help you think a little more clearly the next time you review one of our cars.' Confident or what?

'I'M EMBARKING ON A SIX-MONTH MISSION TO FIND THE MAGIC IN THE RS5'

So, oxygen inhaled, I've grabbed the keys to this Ibis White Audi RS5 and will embark on a six-month mission to find the magic in it. I estimate it'll rack up around 10,000 miles during the loan, and it'll inevitably find its way onto the continent at some point too.

My commute means I drive around 80 miles and spend two hours in a car every day, so I'm hoping the RS5 will be fast and comfortable on the boring A-road slog but will wake up when I hit my favourite B-road and provide a thrilling, engaging drive. I'm confident of the first, but Messrs Barker, Meaden and Catchpole, who contributed on the RS5 group test, doubt the Audi will achieve the second. We'll see.

So, what of 'my' RS5? Looking at the spec sheet, it's difficult not to be drawn to the price. It's also hard not to choke momentarily; perhaps blow a fine spray of tea over it. The basic OTR cost of the RS5 is £57,480 – comparable with its direct rivals from Mercedes, BMW and Lexus. However, this car comes in at £74,510 with options. £74,510! That's comparable with a Porsche 911 Carrera S or a Maserati GranTurismo...

This month: Audi RS5 Peugeot RCZ Porsche 997 GT3 Ford Fiesta Mountune Vauxhall Insignia VXR Nissan GT-R
Subaru WRX STI Infiniti G37S Coupe Radical Clubsport SEAT Leon Cupra R Honda Insight BMW M3 Jaguar XJR
Renault Mégane 250 Cup Mazda 3 MPS Renault Clio V6 Citroën DS3 Skoda Yeti Renault Clio Williams Audi TT RS

AUDI RS5

Date acquired	December 2010
Total mileage	1694
Mileage this month	401
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	21.8



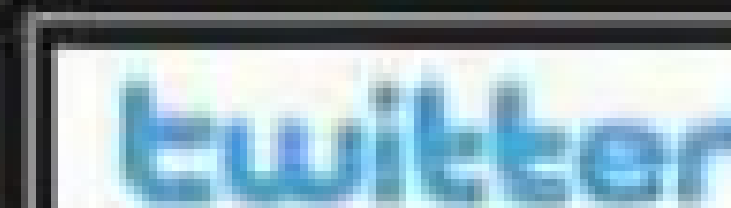
The options, all £17,030 of them, include embossed, manually adjustable bucket seats (£1380, plus £275 for the heating option), 20in titanium-look alloys (£1800), hill-hold (£65), garage door opener (£175), B&O DAB hi-fi sound package (£500), HDD satnav and cruise control (£1955), ceramic brakes (£6250 – yikes), dynamic steering (£710), rear window blind (£225), keyless entry (£495), auto-dimming rear-view mirror (£220), CD changer (£300), leather armrests (£250), parking system (£400) and mobile phone preparation (£375).

I needed a big hit of oxygen when I saw the price of one particular option. Get this: top speed restrictor increase to 174mph, £1480. So, that's a minor ECU tweak. For £1480. Absolutely insane. I wonder how many times I'll reach 174mph in the next six months?

Nick Trott



Above: our RS5's cabin is packed with optional kit, including satnav, an upgraded sound system and dynamic steering. Left: engine is a 444bhp 4.2-litre V8



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Fast Fleet

||| LONG-TERM TESTS

NEW ARRIVAL



'FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT IN THE COUPE MARKET AND THE RCZ GETS OFF TO A CRACKING START'

I can't remember the last time we had a new Peugeot on the Fast Fleet. The only Pugs we've run in recent memory are the old-school 306 and 106 Rallyes owned by Ollie Marriage and Dickie Meaden respectively. The reason? Well, shortly after the last of those light and nimble B-road warriors left the showroom, Peugeot lost its edge. Gone was the brilliant handling and steering that defined a hot hatch era. In its place came cars that were dull, stodgy and uninspiring. The flair, the magic, had apparently been lost.

Or perhaps not. The RCZ is the first sign of a rekindling of the old Peugeot spirit, the start of a fightback, and it's moved up a class to tackle that omnipotent mid-range coupe, the Audi TT. Handily, our sleek Pug has arrived a couple of weeks before the TT RS that I have been running leaves us, and while this particular pair are not direct rivals – the RS costs £45,810 compared with £25,595 for the RCZ, and there's quite a performance differential too – it'll be interesting to see how the build quality compares.

We didn't get to spec this RCZ

PEUGEOT RCZ GT THP200

Date acquired	December 2010
Total mileage	5501
Mileage this month	702
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	34.6

ourselves – it came straight off the press fleet, which is why it already has so many miles under its 19in 'Sortilege' alloys. But I don't think we'd have deviated much from the car we've been given, and on the plus side the tiresome running-in period has been taken care of. This is the range-topping GT THP200 model, which means it's fully loaded – heated leather, Bluetooth, big wheels, 340mm front brakes and an active rear spoiler are all included. The only financially chunky extra is the integrated satnav system that rises out of the top of the dash. It adds £1470 to the total.

First impressions count in the coupe market and the RCZ gets off to a cracking start for it has stunning looks – taut, expertly proportioned, polished, exotic even. Perhaps the 308 nose doesn't quite harmonise with the rest of the car's svelteness, but most



of the details have survived from the original concept car, like the double-bubble roof and the aluminium-covered arching rails that define the profile, and they more than make up for it. Catch sight of an RCZ from the rear three-quarter angle and you'd struggle to think of a sub-£60K car with more striking styling.

The 1598cc turbocharged engine delivers 197bhp and, while that might not be enough to set any land-speed records, it pulls cleanly right across

the range, kept on the boil by a six-speed gearbox that is short of throw and satisfying to use. The ride is well damped and the steering direct enough for the whole package to mesh together.

Over the coming months we'll get properly under the RCZ's skin and discover if this really is a return to form for Peugeot. A lot rests on this car's beautifully formed shoulders, but the early signs augur well.

Roger Green



Below: RCZ looks like nothing else on the road, although its nose (above) looks a little mismatched. Far left: cabin is well equipped. Above right: leather seats are heated

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Winter tyre shortage means M3 will have to get by on summer rubber (bottom)

BMW M3 COMPETITION

Date acquired	May 2010
Total mileage	16,057
Mileage this month	1032
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	21.9

If it snows, the M3 and I are going nowhere. The official BMW 'Winter Tyre Program' for the 414bhp V8 coupe is popular elsewhere in Europe and the upshot is that there's no stock of the approved Michelin winter tyre, and no word when there will be.

I investigated going 'off-piste' and finding rims and tyres from other sources, but the BMW GB press office said no, only approved and tested equipment can be fitted to their car. Seems to me a greater risk to have a £50K car on summer tyres than non-approved 18in rims and winter tyres, but that's how it is.

Reader Jonny Lutton wrote to say he'd sourced a set of original 18in rims for his M3 and a set of ContiWinterContact TS 810 Sports from the US, as even with shipping and VAT they cost less than buying them here in the UK. He said they

worked very well, and that in the summer he'd be able to use the rims for trackday tyres.

If I'm honest, I don't mind the cold, wet roads. They make the M3 more of a challenge more of the time, and give more opportunity to test the traction – and my opposite-lock reactions. Mind, our bit of the Midlands still hasn't had much snow at the time of writing and even with the exterior temperature gauge reading -8 degrees C, I've yet to encounter ice.

Does the matt-finish 'Frozen Grey' paint attract more road grime? Perhaps, though having seen nothing above freezing for a couple of weeks, the only car-washing I've been doing has been to locate the lights and number plates.

Annoyingly, the screen picked up a stone chip the other day. I remember someone telling me that there are more punctures in wet weather and I wonder if more gravel and stuff gets picked up when it's wet. A repair could be on the job-list at the first service, which the computer says is due just before 16,500 miles.

John Barker

'THE COLD, WET ROADS GIVE MORE OPPORTUNITY TO TEST THE M3'S TRACTION – AND MY REACTIONS'



Fast Fleet

||| LONG-TERM TESTS

Below: Harris found this Meteor Grey 997.1 GT3 at Porsche Centre Bristol. Resistance was futile



NEW ARRIVAL

As always, I was triggered into this purchase. The first nudge came from the departure of the 575 – much as I wanted to convince myself that I'd go without a toy for six months, that was never likely to happen. The second trigger came when I nipped in for a chat with Matthew Beard at Porsche Centre Bristol (I do this more than I care to admit, because the showroom always contains tasty gear) and saw an Aqua Blue GT3 RS for sale. Delivery miles, the perfect spec, and if memory serves it was £123,000. A lot of money. There was also a used first-generation 997 GT3 for £65,000.

This got me thinking. Stunning it may be, but is the new RS really worth twice a 20K-mile first-gen 997 GT3? Not sure. In my spare time, I began looking for cheap 997 GT3s.

The third trigger was racing. For several years I've raced a GT3 Cup at the Nürburgring, and have worked with a company called Exe-tc to develop a very special suspension system for the car. We always wanted to progress

PORSCHE 997 GT3

Date acquired	December 2010
Total mileage	24,000
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	n/a

'THE SPEC WAS MILES AWAY FROM WHAT I WANTED, BUT IT DROVE SO SWEETLY...'

that into a road-car package, and this seemed like the perfect opportunity.

The search wasn't especially fruitful to begin with. I wanted a Clubsport car, but they fetch stronger money, and I am mean. Porsche Bristol had a white car with carbon buckets and no satnav that was keenly priced, but sitting next to it was a Meteor Grey example that just looked so right. The first 997 GT3 I drove was Meteor – it looked great then and it still does now. The spec was miles away from what I wanted: no bucket seats, no ceramics, but with nav,



cruise control and – pause for breath – heated seats. On a GT3. But it drove so sweetly, I was snagged.

This Clubsport/non-Clubsport business needs a kick up the arse. Clubsport was (and is) a no-cost option. It offers bucket seats, a rear cage, electrical cut-outs and a fire extinguisher. There are no dynamic changes to the car at all. There is also no such thing as a 'comfort' GT3, as I found out when I referred to such a vehicle at Weissach the other week and several people were restrained

Below: heated seats weren't on the wish-list, so will be replaced with a pair of buckets (and a roll cage) in due course



from decking me. Yet because it's a non-Clubbie, this car was about £5K cheaper. For the difference, I'll buy some seats and bolt a cage in.

What did it cost? Well, because I'm going to play with the suspension the warranty would be invalid, so it was prepared to Porsche Approved standards, minus the aftercare package – and it was a smidge under £60K.

So, a GT3 to tweak slightly and, after nearly three years, I have another 911 in the garage.

Chris Harris

HARRY'S GARAGE ROUND-UP



Ten-year-old Honda Insight (left) meets its modern-day equivalent, the CR-Z (right). Harry knows which he prefers

'THE CR-Z IS BASICALLY AN INSIGHT MADE A BIT MORE SPORTY AND BROUGHT BANG UP TO DATE'

I can't remember another time when there was so much salt on the roads for such a long period. My poor Griff hasn't turned a wheel since it returned from having its new engine fitted nearly six weeks ago. The Clio Trophy hasn't moved, either, even though I purposely taxed it for the full 12 months this year so I could use it as a bit of light relief when my oh-so-sensible Honda Insight gets a bit too much.

Ah, the Insight. It had its annual service last week, but before it went in I realised I hadn't checked the oil recently (or was that ever?), so I thought I should have a look, just in case. That's how I discovered the bonnet was stuck shut – and nothing I could do would get it to open.

My embarrassment ended when, after a bit of jiggery-pokery (involving

long screwdrivers and an intimate knowledge of the catch mechanism), two technicians at Honda HQ managed to pop it open. I dived for the dipstick and was mightily relieved to see the oil was perfectly aligned with the maximum mark. Not bad going considering it was 12 months and 11,500 miles since it was last checked. That's Hondas for you...

While the Insight was away being fettled, Honda lent me a CR-Z to try for a few days. It's basically an Insight made a bit more sporty and brought bang up to date – even the view out of the back window looks identical, with the almost horizontal main rear screen and supplementary vertical one underneath.

The drivetrain is near identical too, but rather than a 67bhp 1.0-litre three-cylinder engine there's a 108bhp 1.5-litre four, and while the

electric motor on the Insight delivers 13.4bhp, the one on the CR-Z boasts 14bhp. At 1198kg, the new car is some 350kg heavier than the all-aluminium Insight, though, and that extra bulk results in both cars having similar power-to-weight ratios, meaning performance is closer than you'd expect. But the mpg potential is poles apart. I averaged 44mpg over 510 miles in my week with the CR-Z and, frankly, that's not good enough – the Insight averages around 70mpg under the same conditions.

I ended up thinking the CR-Z is one of those cars that is loaded with new technology but doesn't seem to gain anything from carrying all the extra hybrid clobber around. Even its CO2 figure of 117g/km doesn't seem that impressive. So it looks like I'll be sticking with my Insight. After all, it doesn't take any looking after...

Meanwhile I'm still debating what to do about getting the Zonda serviced. I could take it down to Mercedes World at Brooklands to get its AMG engine's fluids changed, but the idea of transporting it out to the factory over the next few weeks seems like a better one. It'll cost around £900 but a factory stamp in the maintenance book probably makes it worth the extra effort. The drive back is always fun too. Well, as long as the weather improves. It will, won't it?

Harry Metcalfe



RENAULT CLIO V6

Happy birthday FG55 XXL. It's been a year since I bought my Clio V6. I haven't travelled as many miles in it as I expected, but every one of the 4000 I have covered has been a joy. I cannot overstate just how refreshingly absurd this Clio is, either from a styling or a driving point of view. Plans for 2011 include a drive to the Le Mans 24-hour race in June. Can't wait!

Nick Trott

MAZDA 3 MPS

After last month's excitement there's not much to report on the Mazda 3 – it's only just come back from my local dealer after having the turbo problem sorted out. But after grappling with the Mazda's handling in the wet over the past few months it will be interesting to find out how it copes now that the roads are frequently covered in ice and snow...

Chris Rutter

RENAULT MÉGANE 250 CUP

The Mégane's feeling and sounding good with its new Remus exhaust, and as the East Midlands have been spared much of the snow I've been able to enjoy it to the full. Unfortunately the left-rear wheel has a scuff after I clipped a kerb in a supermarket car park. I swore. A lot. Grrrr.

Richard Meaden

AUDI TT RS

The TT's four-wheel-drive system is a boon when the roads turn white, even with tyres closing in on their wear indicators. Unfortunately for me the RS goes back soon. There will be a full end-of-term round-up next month, so if you own one, I'd be interested to hear your thoughts. Drop me a line at rogerg@evo.co.uk

Roger Green

fastfleet@evo.co.uk

Got one of the models featured on our fleet? We'd love to hear about your experiences.



Left: CR-Z's hybrid drivetrain offers over 40bhp more than the Insight. Above: fuel economy could be better, though

Fast Fleet

||| LONG-TERM TESTS

I think Jung would probably call it a case of synchronicity rather than coincidence, but whichever way you look at it, it was bloody strange that I should happen to park my latest-generation Subaru behind one of the first. I had gone to meet my friend Clive for a Sunday-morning cycle (with mountain bike on the WRX STI's back seats as I hadn't yet discovered that they were split/

fold...) and I bloomin' nearly parked on top of the thing, the STI's bonnet scoop all but eclipsing it.

I had no idea what the little yellow toy was until I'd walked round it and peered at the badges. To be honest I still didn't really know what a Subaru 360 was until I got home and stoked up the internet. Apparently the 360 was the first car produced by Fuji Heavy Industries, which is the parent

company of Subaru and it is almost exactly the same size as an original Fiat 500. It hit the streets of Tokyo in 1958, just a year after the 500 started running around Milan, and was the first of the famous Kei-class cars to have four wheels and room for four (four what, I don't know).

To gain entry into the Kei class it had to have an engine capacity of under 360cc, so the rear-mounted 356cc, air-cooled, two-cylinder, two-stroke unit fitted the bill nicely. It produced only 25bhp in standard trim but, from what I've read, the ones painted yellow, like this, were the sporty 'Young SS' models, which thumped out 36bhp thanks to twin carburettors and chromed pistons and valves. It was the STI of its day.

In other news, my obligatory snow story is up as a blog on evo.co.uk so I won't repeat it here, suffice to say that the Scooby is immensely capable

and lots of fun in the slushy white stuff, even without winter tyres. The lower grip has also clearly shown the differences between the centre diff settings: 'Auto -' puts more power to the rear and makes it more oversteery, which is great on dry tarmac but too unstable for the snow; 'Auto +' shuffles the power forward, which is too understeery on dry tarmac but pulls you along with the least fuss and greatest stability in arctic conditions; while the default 'Auto' setting strikes a nice balance between traction and playfulness down ski-run B-roads. Perfect.

Henry Catchpole

Our modern-day Subaru stumbled across a rarely spotted ancestor. Below: little 360 was the first car to wear the six-star badge

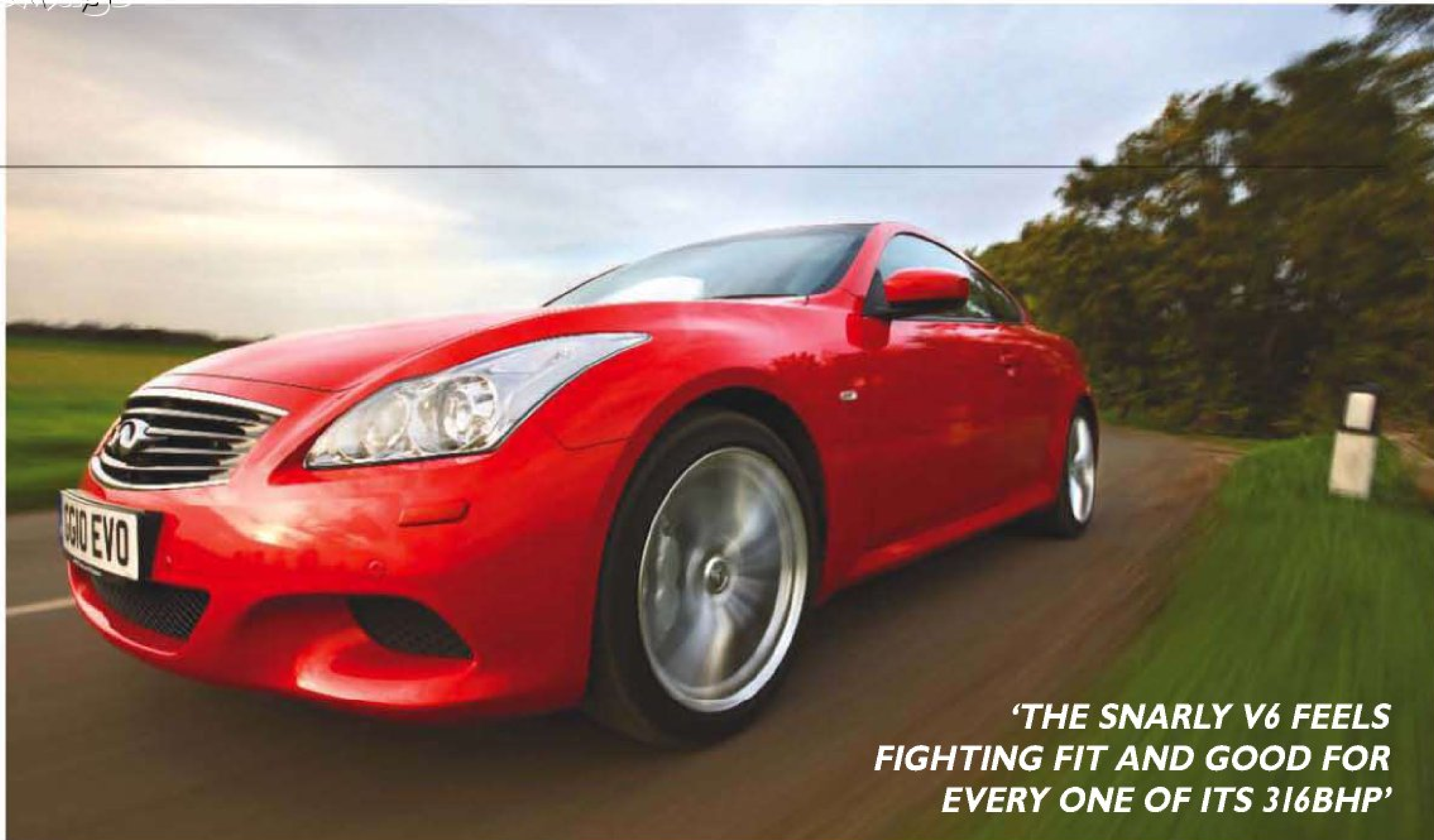


'I HAD NO IDEA WHAT THE LITTLE YELLOW TOY WAS UNTIL I PEERED AT THE BADGES'

SUBARU WRX STI

Date acquired	November 2010
Total mileage	6306
Mileage this month	1332
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	24.2





'THE SNARLY V6 FEELS FIGHTING FIT AND GOOD FOR EVERY ONE OF ITS 316BHP'

INFINITI G37S COUPE

Date acquired	July 2010
Total mileage	9846
Mileage this month	954
Costs this month	£360 (service)
mpg this month	24.0

With 9000 miles on the clock it was time for our G37's first service this month.

As there are just four Infiniti dealers up and running in the UK at present (another seven will open during 2011), this could have been inconvenient, yet it was actually anything but.

An appointment was made with the Infiniti Centre Birmingham and a couple of days later GG10 EVO was collected from the evo office, some 70 miles away in Northamptonshire. A courtesy car was left in its place (an EX30d, Infiniti's likeable mid-size SUV – visit evo.co.uk for a review) until the

following day when our Coupe was returned, service done, car valeted. It was as simple as that.

Ostensibly, the collection, delivery and loan car are free, a part of the 'VIP Service' that every Infiniti customer benefits from. However, the service did cost a rather startling £360, which seems pricey for an oil and filter change and a few checks, especially when you consider that the 9000-mile service on a Nissan 370Z – which uses the same 3.7-litre engine as the G37 –

can be had for around £125.

Service intervals of 9000 miles may seem a little short these days, too, but at least it meant GG10's engine didn't have the chance to get all sluggish and reluctant feeling. In fact, now it's nicely run in, the snarly V6 feels fighting fit and good for every one of its 316bhp. Its overtaking punch never ceases to impress, and the seven-speed automatic gearbox has really grown on me, to the point where I reckon we made the right choice specing

it instead of the manual. OK, so the computer-controlled auto's changes may not be as smooth as some systems' (Jaguar's spring to mind), but it's good at guessing what gear you want it to be in, while the column-mounted paddles are a pleasure to use – great size, shape and action – when you're feeling particularly sporty.

It's a winning formula, and probably explains why our Infiniti's monthly mpg figures continue to drop...

Ian Eveleigh



Far left: 3.7-litre V6 has become a real highlight of the G37S. Left: paddles for the seven-speed auto 'box are spot-on, even if the gearchanges themselves can be a bit jerky at times

After just over a year wearing its distinctive metallic purple vinyl wrap, the time had come for GO02 LLA to be restored to its original gunmetal grey.

The drive to the Bromley workshop of Creative FX (who fitted the wrap originally) was a tad more interesting than I'd expected, as the M25 was stationary due to an accident and my TomTom took me on a challenging alternate route that was covered in ice and snow. The conditions

NISSAN GT-R

Date acquired	April 2009
Total mileage	15,898
Mileage this month	100
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	15.5

defeated most of the cars and vans attempting these minor roads, but with the transmission in Snow mode the GT-R scaled the steepest inclines and at one point even forded through ten inches of water!

With the purple wrap removed, the GT-R's original colour can be seen once again; paint is in great condition having been spared a year's wear and tear



Three hours later (for a one-hour journey), Purple Zilla entered the workshop. After another couple of hours, when it re-emerged as Clark Kent Godzilla 2, it was clear that, as promised, the dual-layer wrap had

done a fantastic job of protecting the paintwork against the ravages of many trackdays and fast road trips.

Would I recommend a wrap having tried it for a year? Definitely.

David Yu

Fast Fleet

||| LONG-TERM TESTS

We've not exactly been racking up the miles in our Radical Clubsport in the six months that Nick Trott and I have owned it. One track evening at the Bedford Autodrome was all we managed before the 2010 season drew to a close, but we have more adventurous

plans lined up for 2011 that will involve racing, trackdays and maybe the odd hill climb or sprint too.

With that in mind, it made sense to drop our car off at the Radical factory for a spanner-check and spruce-up. A couple of tired uprights were replaced, as were the clutch springs, and the broken brake-bias adjuster was fixed too. Finally the car was given a baseline set-up – total cost £1340.

It was raining and barely a degree or two above zero when we arrived at Bedford for a shakedown to see what difference the modifications had made, and the only wet-weather tyres we had were well past their best, but with the pre-Christmas snow due to arrive at any moment, it was a case of now or never.

I love the feeling you get from dropping into the shrink-to-fit cockpit



RADICAL CLUBSPORT 1100

Date acquired	July 2010
Total mileage	n/a (no odometer)
Mileage this month	n/a
Costs this month	£1340 (see text)
mpg this month	n/a

Above: our only wet-weather tyres had been worn down on a drying circuit at an earlier trackday, but would have to suffice for this shakedown. Left: exhaust silencer broke loose during testing



'THE RADICAL HAS PLENTY OF STEERING LOCK, ALLOWING SLIDES OF QUITE RIDICULOUS ANGLES'

of a Radical, hearing the Kawasaki motor coming alive behind you with a furious burst of revs, and the *clunk* as you nudge the gearlever forwards to engage first. It's a proper little race car the Clubsport.

Unsurprisingly, the track was slippery, but even in such conditions you get so much feel and feedback you can place the car where you want and drive it as you please. Race cars

normally don't have a great deal of steering lock to play with, but this one does, allowing slides of quite ridiculous angles. Okay, you wouldn't want to be doing this in a race, but in a shakedown it helps get some heat into knackered tyres...

Things were just beginning to warm up nicely when the engine note changed to something a little louder. In fact it sounded like our engine had

been replaced by something from MotoGP. The silencer had come adrift and with no spare clips we had no choice but to pack the car away again as we had massively exceeded Bedford's noise limits.

Still, it was a worthwhile exercise, and after this brief taster we're now looking forward more than ever to a great year with the little Clubbie.

Roger Green



In my first report on our Cupra R I mentioned what great value it is compared with the equivalent Golf. If you want similar power in the VW hatch you'll need to go for the Golf R, and to get one of those in a spec close to our SEAT would cost you a whopping £10,000 more.

So I was feeling smug, but then last month we had a Golf R at Evo Towers for our 4x4 group test (issue 153). There was no escaping it – the two Rs would have to be compared.

Not being a Top Gun driver, I handed the Leon's key to our road test editor,

SEAT LEON CUPRA R

Date acquired	September 2010
Total mileage	7283
Mileage this month	657
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	27.0

wouldn't be as much fun if it was DSG, though. It just wouldn't.'

And compared with the Golf R? 'The Cupra R feels quicker,' reckoned JB, 'even though the front wheels over-speed all over the place in cold, greasy conditions. But the SEAT still makes high speed easily, as you discover if

best,' said John, 'but you can feel the front tyres finding the limit and slithering gently over it. The ride is OK, if a bit wooden over lumpy asphalt. The brakes are the worst bit, though, being grabby with an over-sensitive response – a problem compounded by odd pedal heights that make heel-and-toeing very difficult. And, leather sports seats aside, it's not a patch, interior quality-wise, on the Golf. But if it wasn't yellow the Cupra would make a good Q-car. I liked it a lot more than I was expecting.'

So I've gone from smug to overjoyed. Yes, there are a few niggles, but the Cupra has gained another fan.

I tried the Golf R for myself and liked it a lot. The interior design and materials are fabulous, and the brakes do have more feel. But would I swap? No. I find the Leon's shape more interesting and have yet to see another Cupra R on the road, and as John pointed out, the SEAT isn't lacking in the pace department. I know the Golf is a superior product, but I'd keep the Leon, and £10K in my back pocket.

Paul Lang

JAGUAR XJR

Date acquired	July 2010
Total mileage	33,948
Mileage this month	704
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	17.5

You've probably noticed that it's been rather snowy outside of late. So how do you drive an old XJR in the snow? Well, bear in mind it's got 370 supercharged horsepower, '90s-era traction control, and a set of Pirellis conspicuously at their best in warm, dry weather. You should also know that it's extremely hard to insure this car if you live in London, work in the media and park on the street – some places wanted over £4000 a year and, though I finally got it down to just under £800 with Sainsbury's of all people, I really don't want to lose my no-claims in an icy accident. So, how do you drive an old XJR in the snow? You don't.

Richard Porter

'THERE WAS NO ESCAPING IT – THE TWO Rs HAD TO BE COMPARED'

John Barker, to get his thoughts on the pair's dynamic aspects. The verdict?

'Feck, it's quick,' he said of the SEAT, 'in the way that modern turbo-petrols are, with a big push at the bottom and middle of the rev-range. But the surprise is that this gargly in-line four gets stronger the higher you rev it, in a naturally aspirated sort of way. It

you wring it out for four gears, and the traction and stability control systems are carefully set so that you can feel the grip levels – it gives you a surprising amount of slack leash before tugging things back in line. I quite like that, even though it feels like it could get a bit frisky on the brakes.'

Downsides? 'The steering isn't the

Fast Fleet

LONG-TERM TESTS



'TWO GENERATIONS OF FIERY FIESTA WERE WAITING TO WELCOME THEIR FRESH-FACED SIBLING'

Above: our Zetec S meets its forebears. Below: putting the old Fiestas to the test



I've not yet fallen for our Fiesta. It's a fine handler, yes, and it looks pretty cool, but our relationship has cooled somewhat since the fitment of Mountune's 138bhp power kit.

It has provided a welcome character boost, but one with an unsociably vocal exhaust as a by-product.

Perhaps a drive in some of the Fiesta's forebears would put things into context, I thought. Luckily, the chaps in charge of Ford's Heritage Collection were only too pleased to welcome the Mountune and me down to their unassuming Dagenham storage building that is home to everything from a Model T to a GT.

FORD FIESTA MOUNTUNE

Date acquired	May 2010
Total mileage	8622
Mileage this month	625
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	37.1

Two generations of fiery Fiesta were waiting to welcome their fresh-faced sibling: a red 1989 mk2 XR2 and a dark blue 1992 mk3 XR2i. Inevitably, both were dwarfed by the current-gen car, not least in their details – the oldest car's diddy 13in pepperpot alloys looked like castors beside our long-termers' 17s.

It's not just miniature wheels that make the XR2 endearing, though. From

As I write, Britain is in the icy grip of a proper old-fashioned winter – rime-covered hedgerows, robins perched on snowbound Boeings, etc – and I'm very happy, smug even, to be piloting a four-wheel-drive. The old front-drive Vectra VXR wouldn't have been half as much fun as this Insignia.

Four-wheel-drivers aren't all alike, of course. Some feel very much

VAUXHALL INSIGNIA VXR

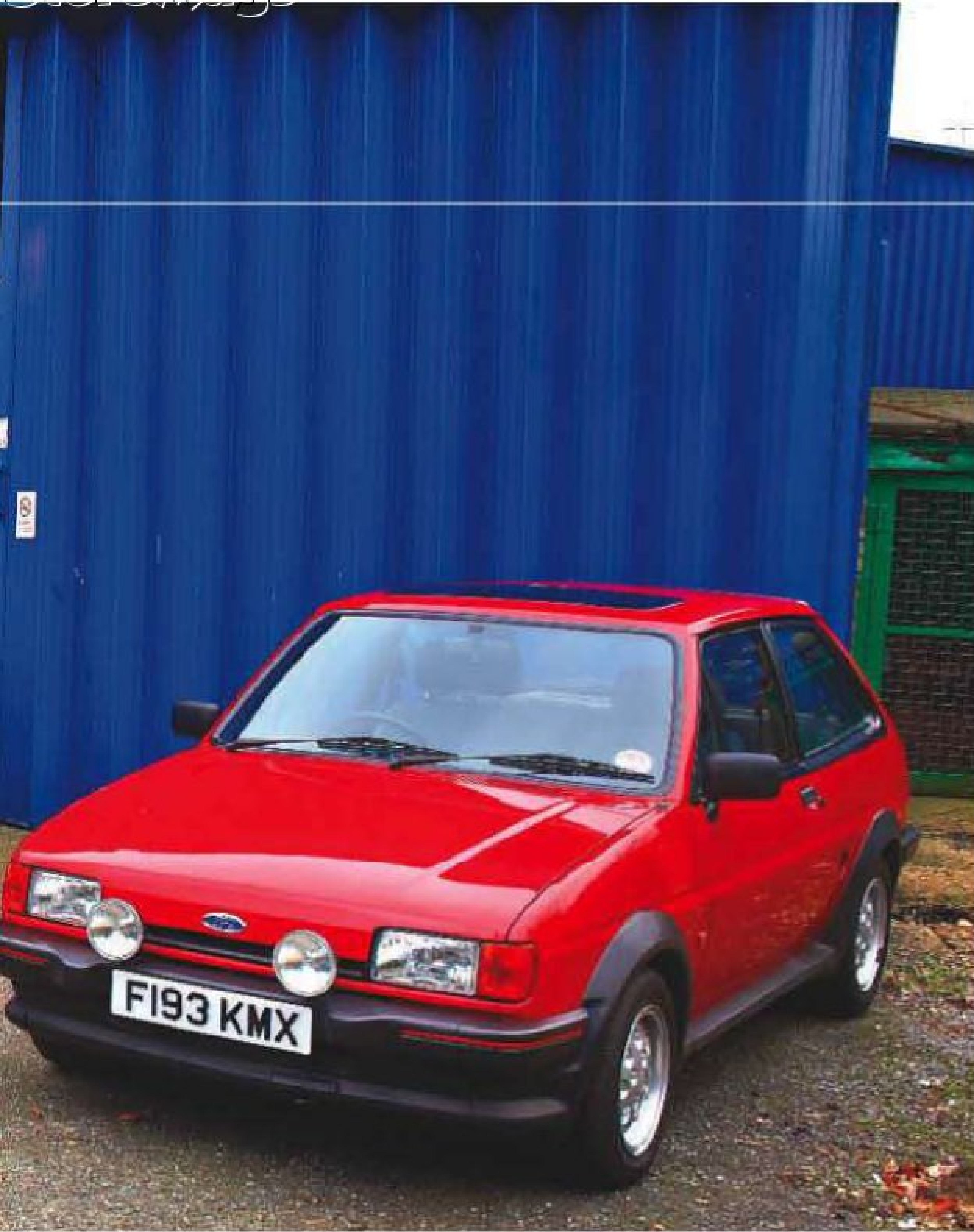
Date acquired	June 2010
Total mileage	15,071
Mileage this month	1373
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	23.9

like front-drivers (the Golf R in last month's group test is a good example), with the rears only getting involved when the fronts can no

'TYRE WEAR SUGGESTS THE INSIGNIA IS WORKING ALL FOUR CONTACT PATCHES TO GOOD EFFECT'

longer cope. Others, like our old Audi S4 Avant, are surprisingly rear-biased – you only have to show them a slippery junction or roundabout to get their tails wagging.

The Insignia is somewhere in between. It's not waggy like the Audi, but when the tyre tread depths were measured at the recent service, the rears were slightly more worn than the fronts, which suggests it's working



Top and below: modern Fiesta is built to a different scale to the '80s version. Above: XR2 is a real hoot to drive



behind the wheel it's so eager: a keen throttle and a bundle of low-down torque mixed with its welterweight body see you zip forward with real gusto, and steering that's laboriously heavy when manoeuvring soon lightens and tightens, with a rack sharper than many a modern sports hatch. While ultimately lacking in top-end power (its 1.6-litre CVH engine produces 96bhp at 6000rpm), it's got plenty of hot hatchback DNA and is impossible to resist slinging around.

Its XR2i successor is a different beast. It instantly feels more restrained, the 105bhp 1.8 Zeta engine more potent but fairly charisma-free. It's very linear in its delivery, yet too

polished to invite the childish behaviour its predecessor actively encourages. Heavier, less precise steering and a too-firm ride kill off real drivers' car credentials. There's still fun to be had, but it's a marked step backward compared with the car it replaced.

Contemporary road tests agree: the XR2 went down a storm, its jolting ride the only bugbear, whereas the XR2i received a lukewarm reception, being less fun than cheaper rivals (106 XSi, AX GTi) and outclassed by cars just north of its price point (Clio 16v, 205 1.9 GTI). It's the same position our Mountune seems to be in today...

Thing is, having driven the three Fiestas together, the two that feel

closest in philosophy are the oldest and newest, the XR2 and the Mountune. Both boast a rorty exhaust note, a slick gearchange, sharp steering and a busy but communicative ride. My best drive yet in the Zetec S was after stepping out of its '80s ancestor. It felt like a zippier, fresher XR2; same taut chassis and chuckability but with 50 per cent more go. With an enthusiastic right foot stoking up the raucous exhaust, I felt like a 17-year-old again.

On the right roads, in the right mood, it's hard to knock. But those moments are just proving too infrequent.

Stephen Dobie

■ Visit evo.co.uk for a full fast Ford gallery

all four contact patches to good effect – which is exactly how it feels.

In the snow, after an afternoon of intense experimentation, I have discovered that you need to throw lots of revs at it – rapidly followed by lots of steering lock – but, thus encouraged, the VXR will slide its ample and shapely tail like a good 'un. Happy new year.

Peter Tomalin



Four-wheel drive means the Insignia VXR is not only capable in the snow, but capable of being fun, too

CITROËN DS3 1.6 DSPORT

A hectic Christmas schedule meant a number of late nights for us here at Evo Towers. The upside to this was that the roads were nice and quiet for my 35-mile trip home, giving the DS3 a chance to gather momentum, which I've found really suits its personality. Once the car has warmed up it feels smooth, competent and super-brisk, especially on overtakes, which always makes me smile. However, the lack of cornering grip at the front end is a bit of a concern and makes me curious to try some different tyres. More on that soon...

Adam Shorrock

SKODA YETI 1.8 TSI

The Yeti is now running proudly on a set of cold-weather tyres. But not just any cold-weather tyre. Oh no. These revel in the name of Hankook Icebear, and that must surely mean they've got enough grip to cope with a Rocky Mountain winter. Or something like that. Now I just need an excuse to give my 'bears a workout.

Ollie Marriage

RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS

It's clearly the season for new tyres, and if you're wondering how the Williams is getting on with its new rubber, the answer is swimmingly. The Continental ContiPremiumContact2s were fitted with winter roads in mind on the recommendation of *evo* tyre tester Kim Adams, and grip is certainly more abundant when the going gets wet (or, indeed, icy). The ride's more compliant, too, and while comfy cruising is far from the Williams's *raison d'être*, it's now a friendlier long-distance partner than ever.

The tyres' talents make it an even greater shame that the Willy has not been driven a great deal of late. But then grit-smothered roads are far from appealing when your thus-far-unblemished wheelarches are notorious for corroding.

Stephen Dobie

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BUYING GUIDE

RENAULTSPORT CLIO 182 A truly great hot hatch from £3.5K

The Trophy is the really collectible one, but any Clio 182 serves up lashings of entertainment. We help you to find a good one

JUST LOOKING p147



CARS FOR SALE

We all love browsing the classifieds, but what are the cars like to drive? This month we try a Mégane R26 and a Porsche 968 Club Sport (above)

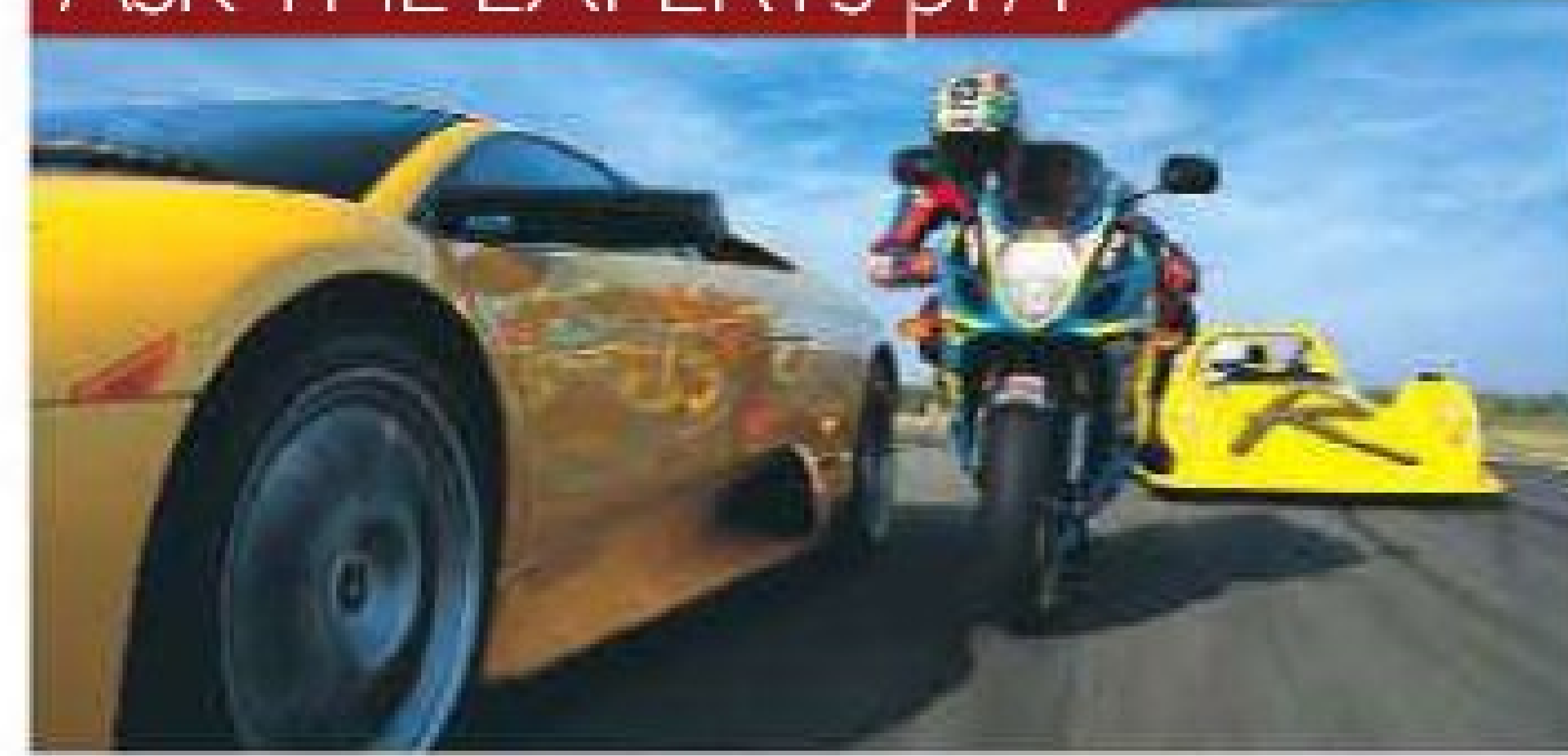
THE KNOWLEDGE p154



TRIED AND TESTED

Facts, figures and our verdict on every drivers' car. Plus the latest gadgets reviewed: this month a tiny video camera for recording your trackday heroics...

ASK THE EXPERTS p171



YOU ASK, WE ANSWER

What's quickest around a circuit, a supercar or a superbike? Our experts have the answer. Elsewhere they also explore the finer nuances of steering feel

R e n a u l t s p o r t

Clio 182

It's the last – and arguably the best – of the old-school hot hatches, especially in Cup and Trophy guises. It's also now something of a bargain...



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In some ways it's the perfect real-world petrolhead car. It's quick (0-62mph in 6.8sec), torquey, brilliantly chuckable, addictively interactive, cheap to run, able to carry four plus luggage... and you can pick one up for as little as £3500.

Sounds perfect already. What's more, even a high-miler will drive as it should provided it has been looked after properly. Best of all, though, is that the Renaultsport Clio 182 represents the last of the genuinely supermini-sized, genuinely hard-edged hot hatches. Cars with this degree of driving purity, this degree of truth to the spirit of the Renault 5 GT Turbo

and the Peugeot 205 GTI, just aren't made any more.

Two facts to help set the scene: One, back in 2006 we ran our 'Best front-wheel-drive drivers' cars' story (issue 095). The then-new Clio 197, the first Renaultsport Clio with the bigger, bulkier, heavier Clio III body, didn't make the final cut but the then-obsolete 182 Trophy did. Two, one of the engineers responsible for Trophy development kept in his garage, as a point of reference, a 205 GTI 1.9. The idea was to make a modern version of that car's blend of attributes, with a bit more robustness but the same visceral buzz. It worked.

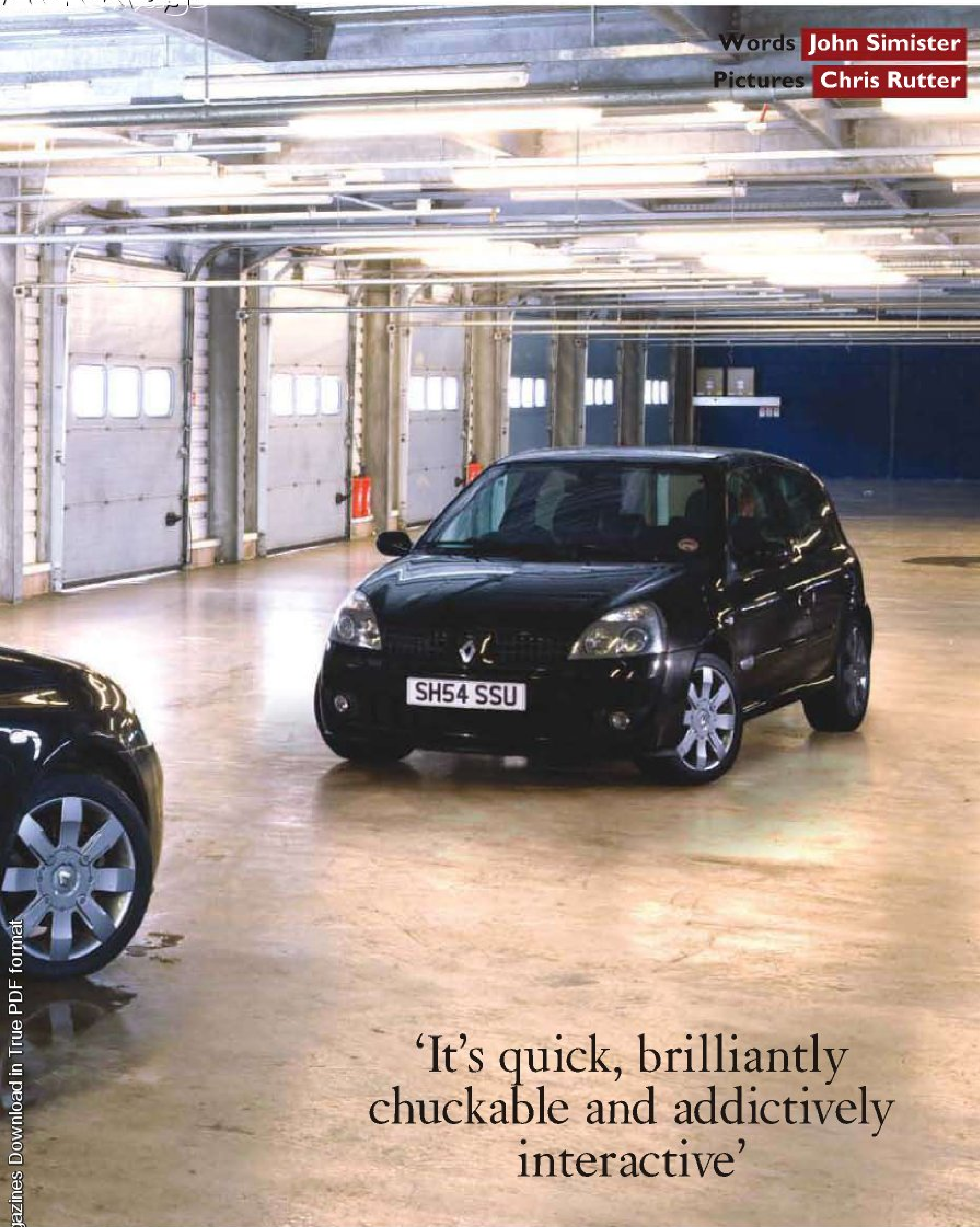
OK, so just 500 Trophys came to the UK from 2005 (none were sold in France, and just 25 in Switzerland of all places) and today it's the priciest version. But don't despair. Any 182 with 'Cup' somewhere in its identity will be nearly as entertaining, and most 182s on sale oblige.

The story began in 1999 with the Clio 172, a car which lacked the dynamic sparkle of the previous Clio in its hot 16V and Williams guises – not least because it used Renault's first torsion-beam rear suspension and the Renaultsport engineers hadn't quite got the hang of it. Various revisions sharpened its act, culminating in a

2001 facelift with the two-part front grille that stayed right through the rest of the Clio II's life.

In 2004, the 2-litre, Mecachrome-developed engine (not related to the F-series in the hot Clio 16V and Williams, incidentally) gained a power hike to 182PS, or 180bhp. Twin tailpipes were one obvious identifier, and as with the 172 there was a Cup dimension. Central to this was Cup suspension, 10mm lower, firmer and matched to Anthracite wheels, while there was also a Cup visual pack with a front splitter and a rear spoiler.

You could either buy a hardcore Clio 182 Cup with these enhancements and

Words **John Simister**Pictures **Chris Rutter**

‘It’s quick, brilliantly chuckable and addictively interactive’



a stripped-out cabin, or do as more buyers did and specify the Cup packs on the better-equipped regular 182 (as in the car pictured here). That gained you air-con and other luxuries, all worth having in a daily driver.

And the Trophy? Same engine, suspension lowered a little more, 11-spoke instead of eight-spoke wheels, Capsicum Red paint, a bigger tailgate spoiler from the Clio V6, racing Sachs dampers with thicker piston rods and remote reservoirs at the front, Trophy logos and a numbered plaque. The Trophy is the holy grail. But whichever 182 you go for, riotous entertainment will follow.

SPECIFICATION

(all Clio 182 variants)

- Engine 1998cc 4cyl, dohc, 16V
- Max power 180bhp @ 6500rpm
- Max torque 148lb ft @ 5250rpm
- Transmission Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive
- Tyres 205/45 R16
- Weight (kerb) 1090kg
- Power-to-weight 168bhp/ton
- 0-60mph 6.6sec
- Top speed 140mph
- Price when new £15,500 (Trophy, 2005)

PARTS PRICES

(Supplied by K-Tec Racing, Verwood, Dorset. Tyre prices from Black Circles. All prices include VAT at 20 per cent)

- Tyres £123.88 each (Michelin Pilot Sport 3, fitted)
- Brake pads (front set) £30.00
- Brake discs (front pair) £70.80
- Clutch, complete £166.80
- Oil filter £9.60
- Air filter £21.60
- Spark plugs set of 4 (platinum) £46.80
- Exhaust system, stainless from £358.80

SERVICING

- Servicing every 12,000 miles/12 months
- Minor service £130.80
- Medium service £238.80
- Major service £348.00
- Cambelt change £408.00

WHAT TO PAY

■ The cheapest Clio 182 we found, in blue with both Cup packs (suspension and bodykit) and 79K on the clock, was advertised at a curious £3288. It was a tempting prospect but approach such an apparent bargain with an open mind and an HPI check. The mileage needn't be a problem in itself but a thorough history would be reassuring.

Typically, Clio 182s fall between about £3500 and up to double that figure for a Trophy, which, in the long term, will be the one to hold its value the best.

IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



2004, 56,000 miles
Black Gold (a metallic black), Cup packs, FSH, two owners from new

£3995



2004, 51,500 miles
Racing Blue, both Cup packs, full Renault service history

£4795



2005, 54,000 miles
Trophy, FSH, 'dampers in excellent condition', number 410 of 500

£6280

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GRIGIO SILVER WITH LIGHT GREY LEATHER, 8000 MILES
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CHECKPOINTS

Many Clio 182s are maintained by enthusiastic specialists rather than main dealers nowadays. One such specialist is K-Tec Racing at Verwood, Dorset, which also develops and sells tuning parts for track and road use. K-Tec's Sean Martin is our guide here.

■ Engine

It's fundamentally a tough, long-lasting unit as long as it's serviced regularly, with a vital cambelt change at 72,000 miles or six years. It's a fiddly job because the engine's belt-end is so close to the inner wing, so the engine mounts have to be loosened to let the engine shift enough to create clearance.

One regular problem is a rattling inlet-cam timing variator, heard when the engine is warm and idling. Replacement is the only cure, best done at the same time as the cambelt. That might also be the time to fix a leak from what looks like the cam cover but is actually also the top half of the camshaft carrier. 'Renault uses a non-solidifying sealant,' says Sean, 'and the oil eats away at it. You have to take the camshafts out to fix it.'

Don't be put off if the steering wheel and gear lever knob look worn – they all wear quickly, so it's no real guide to mileage. Engine is much tougher



'Another typical leak spot is from the power steering switch at the bottom of the front of the engine – a £50-£60 job to replace. Don't worry about a lumpy idle, by the way – it's normal.'

■ Transmission

'If the second and third-gear synchros are worn, walk away because it's had abuse,' advises Sean. 'But don't worry if the gear lever moves around when you accelerate or decelerate. That's normal, because the stabiliser mount is very weak. We sell a stronger kit with a Polyflex bush. There's a very minor noise increase over a standard bush but it's a significant improvement over a worn one.'

The clutch is self-adjusting, so a high biting point most likely means a new clutch is needed.

■ Suspension, brakes

Cup cars have a wider front track with different hubs, wheel bearings and offset, although the lower wishbones are the same. All these components are durable – 'We've done only three trackrod ends in four years,' says Sean – and inexpensive.

The standard original-equipment dampers are also cheap, which is good news because they can lose their edge after as little as 24,000 miles. The special Sachs dampers on the Trophy are another matter: they are expensive and can suffer from corrosion of the piston rods but are otherwise durable and can be rebuilt. Their settings are locked at the factory but they can be unlocked when the dampers are refurbished, so they become adjustable.

The brakes should have a firm, almost race-car-like pedal.

■ Bodywork

Any Clio 182 is too new to have developed obvious bodywork rust, although Sean has noticed occasional signs developing in the roof seam between the centre and rear pillars. Otherwise, past accident damage and subsequent poor repairs are the only real worry. Check that the finish of seams and joints is the same on both sides of the car. If they differ, then a panel might have been replaced and there's potential for rust if the protection isn't up to standard.



I BOUGHT ONE



George Davis

George, 22 years old, from Market Harborough and the owner of the black 182

pictured here, is a bit of a Clio fan.

'I've had six Clios in the past three years including a 172 and a couple of 182s. This one has both Cup packs, with the Anthracite wheels and the double splitter on the front. I've had it four months and paid just £3500 for it.'

So what's the attraction? 'Partly it's the value for money they give. This one has cruise control, a Tracker, ESP, half-leather and Alcantara, automatic headlights and wipers, climate

'It's the way it drives – brilliant fun'

control... but mainly it's the way it drives and handles. It's brilliant fun.

'I've not really had any problems, apart from the thumbrests on the steering wheel melting away. Also, the twin exhaust on the 182 rusts quite quickly. It's cheap to run if you use a specialist – a cambelt change costs about £400 instead of the £600 or more that Renault charges.

'There's also lots of enthusiast support, lots of forums. Cliosport.net is the best one, I think.'

USEFUL CONTACTS

- www.k-tecracing.com (specialist)
- www.cliosport.net (forum)
- www.cliotrophy.co.uk (forum)
- www.clioforum.co.uk (forum)
- www.renaultownersclub.com (club)
- www.pistonheads.com (cars for sale)

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LOTUS ELISE S1

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Lotus Elise S

Registered in 2007 with just 13000 miles from new. 134bhp. In dazzling Solar Yellow with black leather interior including centre console and Probac seats. Exceptional car. £17,995



LOTUS ELISE S

09/09. One owner from new. 2,000 miles only with FSH. Condition is comparable to the 2,000 miles covered - stunning! Arctic Silver with black interior. Push button start, air bags, cup holder, radio, CD, central locking, electric windows. £19,750



LOTUS ELISE SPORTS TOURER

03/53 in Mica Blue with full sand leather interior. Electric windows, central locking, removable steering wheel. Previously supplied by PMSC. Excellent example. £12,995



LOTUS ELAN S2

Pacific Blue contrasting Magnolia leather with blue piping. Fastidiously maintained by previous owner. To include sports stainless exhaust, large brake conversion, etc. Excellent car for only... £8,950



LOTUS ELAN SE TURBO

1991. Just 38,000 miles from new. Excellent Pacific Blue paint with superb original hood. Lots of tasteful extras. Not the normal damp, smelly example. £8,995



LOTUS ELITE S2

If you are looking for an extremely well sorted, on the button race spec Elite, this is worth a look. As campaigned last year: MG box, LSD, HTP Papers. Well known car. Rare and desirable. £59,950



LOTUS EUROPA

The Ex HSCC Championship winning Europa! It was completely restored for the 2006 season by Banks to include new body and chassis. Recent Smithwatts al steel engine. Ready for action at a fraction of the build cost. £23,950



LOTUS ELAN SPRINT FHC

'One of the last' 1973/L Reg in Gold Leaf Livery. 43,000 miles in total from new! This Sprint has been owned by a well known figure in the Lotus fraternity since he purchased it from us in 1984. £ POA



LOTUS ELISE 111R TOURING

04/04. 24,000 Miles only and one owner from new. In Ardent Red with black interior. Blaupunkt Radio/Cd, central locking, electric windows. A lovely low mileage example. £16,500

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Just looking...

RENAULTSPORT MÉGANE R26

■ Price £12,999 ■ Year 2008 ■ Mileage 18,800

■ Vendor Maple Leaf Specialist Cars, Daventry, Northants (www.mapleleafgarage.co.uk)
 ■ Engine 1998cc, in-line 4-cyl, turbo ■ Max power c250bhp @ 5500rpm (see text)
 ■ Max torque c250lb ft @ 3000rpm ■ 0-60mph 6.0sec (est) ■ Top speed 150mph (est)

Renaultsport Mégane 230 F1 Team R26. It's a fantastically complex name for a car quite simple in concept: a big turbocharged engine in a practical front-drive hatchback body.

This R26 is hotter than the average though – its boost has been wound up to around 250bhp, and it feels very, very potent, especially at low revs. Using second gear results in amusing levels of wheelspin; shift up to third and there's surge to rival the current Ford Focus RS.

It's entertainingly brisk, and while the standard chassis feels a little overwhelmed by this car's extra power, the Mégane's famed point-to-point pace and fantastic grip (aided by the R26's standard limited-slip differential) are present and correct. The addition of a

little torque-steer when powering out of corners merely cranks up the level of driver involvement.

Everything looks and feels good, too. On the outside, solid white paint, graphite alloys and minimalist decals make for a great looking car; while inside everything is solid and equipment levels are high; keyless go, a Kenwood stereo upgrade and big leather Recaros are the highlights. There's the odd creak and rattle here and there, though nothing out of the ordinary.

A practical, quick and fun-to-drive all-rounder then. It is one of the pricier R26s currently on the market, but it's in desirable spec and condition and has covered fewer than 19,000 miles. None of them dull... **SD**



SUMMARY

EXTERIOR

Spot-on. All as-new and it looks great in white with minimal decals

INTERIOR

The odd squeak and creak, but cracking condition otherwise. Nice seats, too

MECHANICALS

Typically fine Renaultsport chassis is slightly corrupted by extra dose of power

SHOULD I BUY IT?

If you don't mind the odd modification, it's hugely tempting

● **FOR:** Low miles, great condition, highly entertaining and very quick

● **AGAINST:** Feeling a little dated, perhaps. Price slightly on the high side

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SHELBY COBRA 427 REPLICA by DAX, 2003 [03] Reg, 8,200 miles, Metallic Imperial Blue with Magnolia Leather Piped in Blue. Professionally built by DB Replicas in 2003, Brand New FORD 302" GT40 Engine Producing 350bhp, EDELBROCK Alloy Racing Heads, Roller Rockers, Holley 650cfm Carb, High Flow Water Pump, Mocal Oil Cooling System, Kenwood Fan, Braided Pipework, TREMEC T5 5 Speed Gearbox, Limited Slip Diff, McLeod 800 Performance Clutch, Polished Aluminium Engine Bay, Replica 17" HALIBRAND Split Rim Knock On Alloy Wheels, 4 into 1 Polished Alloy Side Pipes. Perfect Condition Throughout, A Truly Beautiful Example, **£29,999**



PORCHES 993 3.6 TARGA, 1996 [P] Reg, 107000 miles, Arena Red Met with Black Leather Sports Seats. Very Impressive Service History with much recent expenditure totalling over £8000. Air Conditioning, RS Front Splitter, 17" Alloys, 6 Speed Manual Gearbox, Electric Windows, PAS, Electric Mirrors, Remote Locking with Thatcham 1 Alarm, Tinted Glass, Alpine CD/i-Pod/Bluetooth Stereo, Stainless Steel Sports Exhaust, Front Fog Lights, Mint Condition, **£21,999**



AUDI TT 1.8T 180 COUPE, 2005 [05] Reg, 54000 miles, miles, Metallic Dolomite Grey with Full Black Leather, Misano Red 18" RS4 Alloys, Full Service History, Heated Seats, Digital Climate Control, AUDI Concert CD, i-Pod Lead, ESP & Traction Control, Electric Windows, Remote Locking, Electric Mirrors, Alarm, Rear Spoiler, Trip Computer, Tinted Glass, 12m MOT, 12m WARRANTY, Full Service, Immaculate Condition Throughout, **£9,999**



RENAULT MEGANE 2.0 T 16V Renaultsport 230 F1 Team R26, 2008 [08] Reg, 18,800 miles, Ultra White with Full Black Leather Recaro Seats. Full RENAULT Service History LUX Pack including: Digital Climate Control, Electric Heated & Folding Door Mirrors, Proximity Locking, Xenon Headlamps with Powerwash, 18" Anthracite Alloys, Cruise Control with Speed Limiter, Red BREMBO Brakes with Drilled Discs, Limited Slip Diff, ESP Traction & Stability Control, Understeer Control, CUP Chassis, Serious KENWOOD HiFi Upgrade with 600W Amp, 270bhp Upgrade, **£12,999**



HONDA S2000 GT CONVERTIBLE, 2002 [52] Reg, 46,500 miles, miles, Metallic Silverstone Silver with Black Leather. Full Service History with 5 Stamps, Air-Conditioning, Sports seats, Single CD HiFi System, Xenon Headlamps with Powerwashers, Tinted glass, ABS Brakes, Variable Power Steering, Front Centre Armrest, Alarm, Electric Adjustable Mirror, Leather Steering Wheel, 6sp Manual Gearbox, Multiple Airbags, Remote Central Locking, Push Button Start, Front electric windows, Unmarked Alloy Wheels, Electric Convertible Roof, Optional Removable Hardtop, 236bhp, 12m MOT, 12m WARRANTY, Immaculate Condition Throughout, **£8,999**



HONDA CIVIC 2.0 i-VTEC TYPE-R [A/C], 2004 [54] Reg, 67,000 miles, Nighthawk Black. Full HONDA Service History, 2 Private Owners, 17" Alloy Wheels, Air-Conditioning, Electric Heated Door Mirrors, Leather Steering Wheel, Rear Spoiler, ABS Brakes, Single CD HiFi System, Variable Power Steering, Adjustable Seat Height, Adjustable Steering Column, 6sp Manual Gearbox, Tinted glass, Immobiliser, Rear headrests, Sports seats, Alarm, PAS, Front electric windows, Drivers airbag, Passenger airbag. 12m MOT, 12m WARRANTY, Immaculate Condition Throughout, **£6,999**

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Simon Furlonger

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Ferrari Challenge Stradale £109,990

2004, 3,047 Miles, Rosso Corsa

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Ferrari 355 F1 Spider £44,990

1998, 22,720 Miles, Rosso Corsa

Rosso Corsa with Crema hide this 355 F1 Spider is one of only 139 example delivered in the UK. Ferrari's 6-speed F1 electro-hydraulic transmission, debuted on the F355, signalled a new era in drive train design and performance. Includes original tools, service book and tyre inflator.

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355 F1 Spider
1999, 10,200 miles
£54,990



612 Scaglietti
2004, 22,000 miles
£69,990



Diablo SV
1998, 12,000 miles
£79,990



328 GTS
1989, 7,967 miles
£49,990

Just looking...

PORSCHE 968 CLUB SPORT

- Price £11,495 ■ Year 1993 ■ Mileage 99,977
- Vendor Dove House Motor Co., Northants (www.dovehousecars.com, 07827 291992)
- Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2990cc ■ Max power 240bhp @ 6200rpm
- Max torque 225lb ft @ 4100rpm ■ 0-60mph 6.1sec ■ Top speed 149mph

Like its 924 and 944 forebears, the Porsche 968 was always seen as the poor relation to that well-known rear-engined model it was sold alongside, but if there is one front-engined Porsche that has gained the respect of even the most stubborn 911 die-hards, it's the 968 Club Sport.

Optimised for track use, with lowered suspension, larger wheels and an interior stripped of luxuries such as rear seats and electric windows, it soon gained a strong following amongst driving enthusiasts that continues to this day.

This example on sale at the Dove House Motor Company in Rushden, Northants, has clearly been cared for. Its exterior is extremely tidy for a 17-year-old car, the Speed Yellow paint on the body and wheels being almost entirely

blemish-free. Inside, the steering wheel and gearknob have been polished by use, but it's nothing you wouldn't expect on a car that's covered nearly 100,000 miles.

A test drive reveals a CS that feels fit for its age, the 240bhp 3-litre 'four' torquey and responsive, the six-speed gearshift precise, the ride taut but forgiving and the steering alive with feedback.

Dove House know this particular 968 well – they've sold it twice before. It comes with a full set of servicing stamps (it's now on its second service book!) and will be thoroughly checked over by the Porsche specialists in the company's new service centre before being sold. As Club Sports go, it's well priced, and with the trackday season fast approaching, it's a very appealing car. **IE**



SUMMARY

- **EXTERIOR**
Perfect colour for a Club Sport and in very good condition for its age
- **INTERIOR**
Simple and suitably businesslike. Evidence of use, but nothing out of the ordinary
- **MECHANICALS**
Drives well and comes with a reassuring set of stamps and receipts from specialists
- **SHOULD I BUY IT?**
If you're looking for a well-priced, useable Club Sport, this could be the one
- **FOR:** A great drivers' car that's unlikely to depreciate
- **AGAINST:** If you're not the type who flaps about age and mileage, very little

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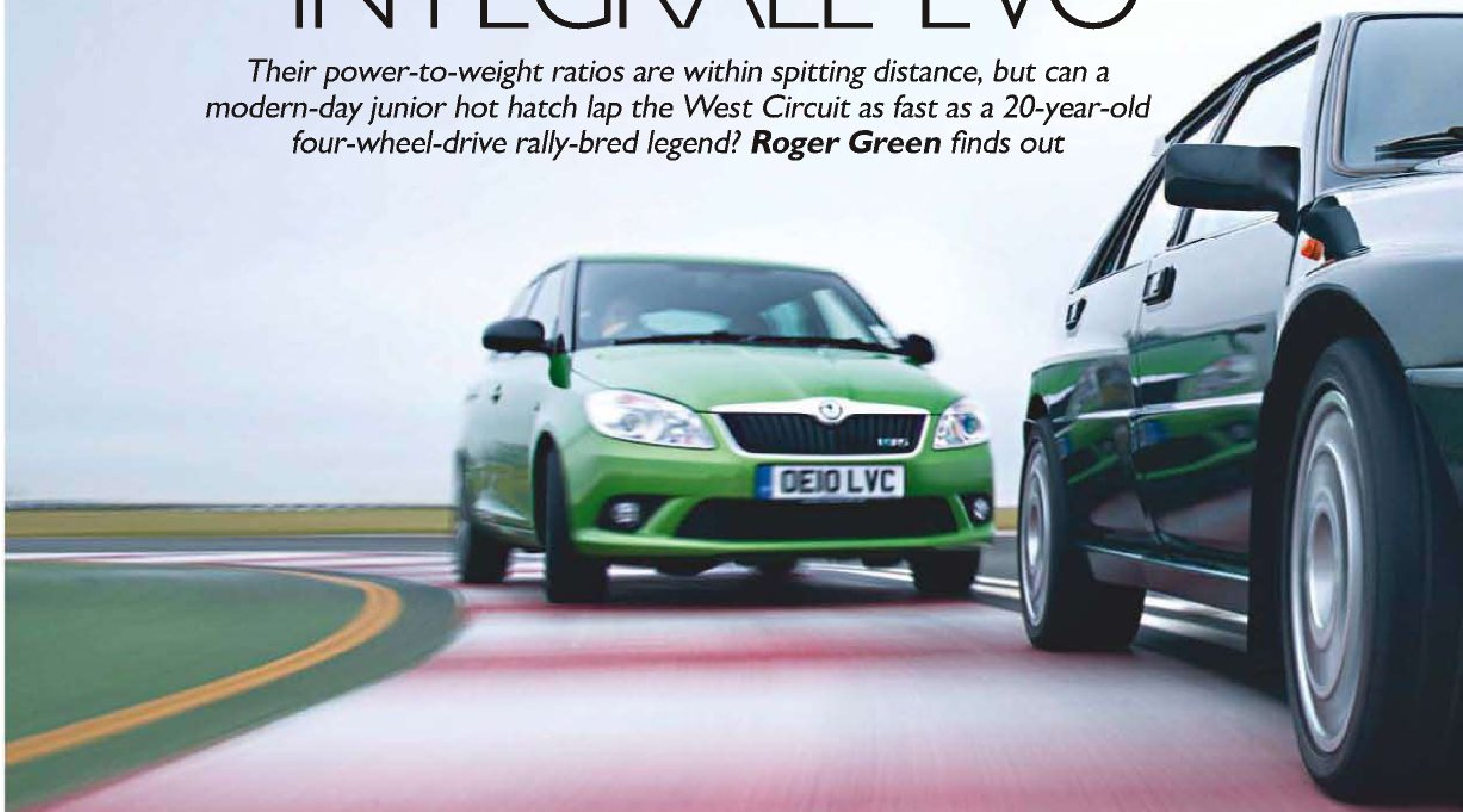
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SKODA FABIA vRS v LANCIA DELTA INTEGRALE EVO

*Their power-to-weight ratios are within spitting distance, but can a modern-day junior hot hatch lap the West Circuit as fast as a 20-year-old four-wheel-drive rally-bred legend? **Roger Green** finds out*



How times have changed. Two decades ago, Lancia was producing arguably the most desirable hot hatchback in the world. In fact the Delta Integrale Evo was so good it was more than just a hot hatch, it was the thinking man's Italian supercar, the point-to-point king of the B-road. It was cleaning up on the World Rally stage, too. But the Integrale was very much a high point for Lancia, a last hurrah even, for the company subsequently gave up on the UK market and hasn't sold a single car on these shores in the last 16 years.

By contrast Skoda was still a ridiculed manufacturer back then, building the misnomer that was the Rapid, with its full 61bhp. No one's laughing now, though. The latest Fabia vRS develops 178bhp from its turbocharged and supercharged 1390cc motor, and as it tips the scales at 1218kg, that's enough to endow it with a similar power-to-weight figure to

the heavier, 210bhp 'Gale (158bhp/ton for the Lancia, 148 for the Skoda). Which makes the £15,700 vRS something of a performance bargain, especially considering the Integrale's list price was over £23,000 in 1991.

On track, the performance of these two cars is likely to be very close – the Evo has a power advantage and the benefit of four-wheel drive, but the Fabia is 132kg lighter and has a seven-speed DSG gearbox that will not only keep the TSI engine right in its sweet spot, but will also claw back time on every upshift. Factor-in the modern brakes and you have a tussle that could come right down to the finishing line.

The Skoda's up first and, to be honest, the track isn't exactly in record-breaking condition. It's coated in a damp, greasy slime, and with the

temperature at three degrees it's unlikely to dry out any time soon. The Fabia shrugs this off impressively, finding a good level of traction and grip in the medium-speed turns and proving surprisingly and pleasingly resistant to the sort of terminal understeer that often blights this sort of car. The exits of the tighter turns require careful throttle modulation to prevent the Skoda's inside front tyre spinning up, but with a little patience and care it pulls surprisingly cleanly. And when you're back on full throttle there's no let-up, the gearbox seamlessly

SPECIFICATIONS

SKODA FABIA vRS	LANCIA DELTA INTEGRALE EVO
Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1390cc, twin-charger	Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1995cc, turbo
Power 178bhp @ 6200rpm	Power 210bhp @ 5750rpm
Torque 184lb ft @ 2000-4500rpm	Torque 215lb ft @ 3500rpm
Weight 1218kg	Weight 1350kg
0-62mph 7.3sec (claimed)	0-60mph 5.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 139mph (claimed)	Top speed 137mph (claimed)
Price £15,700	Price £23,145 (1991)



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supplying the next cog, the gear handover time negligible. You don't even need to flick a paddle, as it's more efficient to let the car do it for you at optimal revs.

The vRS's brakes are impressive, too. On the first lap I find I can shorten braking distances to less than I thought would be possible for a car in this class in these conditions, and the ABS only cuts in during the heaviest braking zone of the lot, the one for Hangar Hairpin. Shame that it automatically reactivates the traction control at the same time, as although the TC is actually well judged, you can still lap faster without it.

The Fabia's lap time of 1min 39sec isn't



quick in the big scheme of things, but then the conditions are accountable for a whole bunch of lost time, and it will still be a challenge for the old rally stager to match it.

Climb into the Evo and it immediately feels old and fragile, but special too. The steering wheel tilts away at an unusual angle but the driving position is good and the sculpted leather Recaro embraces you securely, although in an ideal world it would have a bit more support around the shoulders.

There's little action from the gruff 1995cc unit below 4000rpm, but above that the turbo snaps into life and gives you a slug of torque. The gearbox is sweet enough and shifts positively, each upchange amusingly accompanied by the early-'90s definition of tweeting.

Your initial observations are dominated by the steering, which has so much more feel than the Skoda's, and the ride, which transmits more road surface imperfections into the cabin. There's significantly more lean than the Skoda and in conditions like this that's a positive thing: the Evo tips into turns, which helps the tyres dig in and find yet more traction, allowing you to get on the power good and early. At first the nose edges wide, but stay on the juice and you sense the rear coming into play, balancing the

car out before nudging into very slight oversteer right on the exit.

The Evo has an epicyclic centre diff with a viscous coupling (torque is split 47:53 front:rear) and a Torsen rear differential, and you can feel that combination working to great effect through the quick corners at the end of the lap. Throw the car at a corner with a little aggression and the tail will wag, but it doesn't get you into the big-drift territory of, say, a Mitsubishi Evo. Instead, as the rears find grip the Lancia locks onto the apex and punches you through the turn. It's impressive today, so it's easy to understand the high regard in which the Evo was held 20 years ago. Even the brakes perform better than I had expected; there's a slightly spongy feel to the pedal, but you can modulate them right on the limit of grip, and they don't wilt with use either.

And so to the stopwatch. The Integrale posts 1min 37.7sec, knocking 1.3sec off the Skoda's time and proving that this old-timer can still show a whipper-snapper a trick or two. In the middle of summer on a warm, dry track the results might be different, but I like the scores just as they are. The coolest car wins.

Integrale wears the optional 17in Compomotive wheels (top); Fabia's 17s (above) are standard; both cars have impressive brakes. Lancia's squared-off dash (below) is fabulously dated; Skoda's cabin (bottom) is perfectly functional but lacks glamour

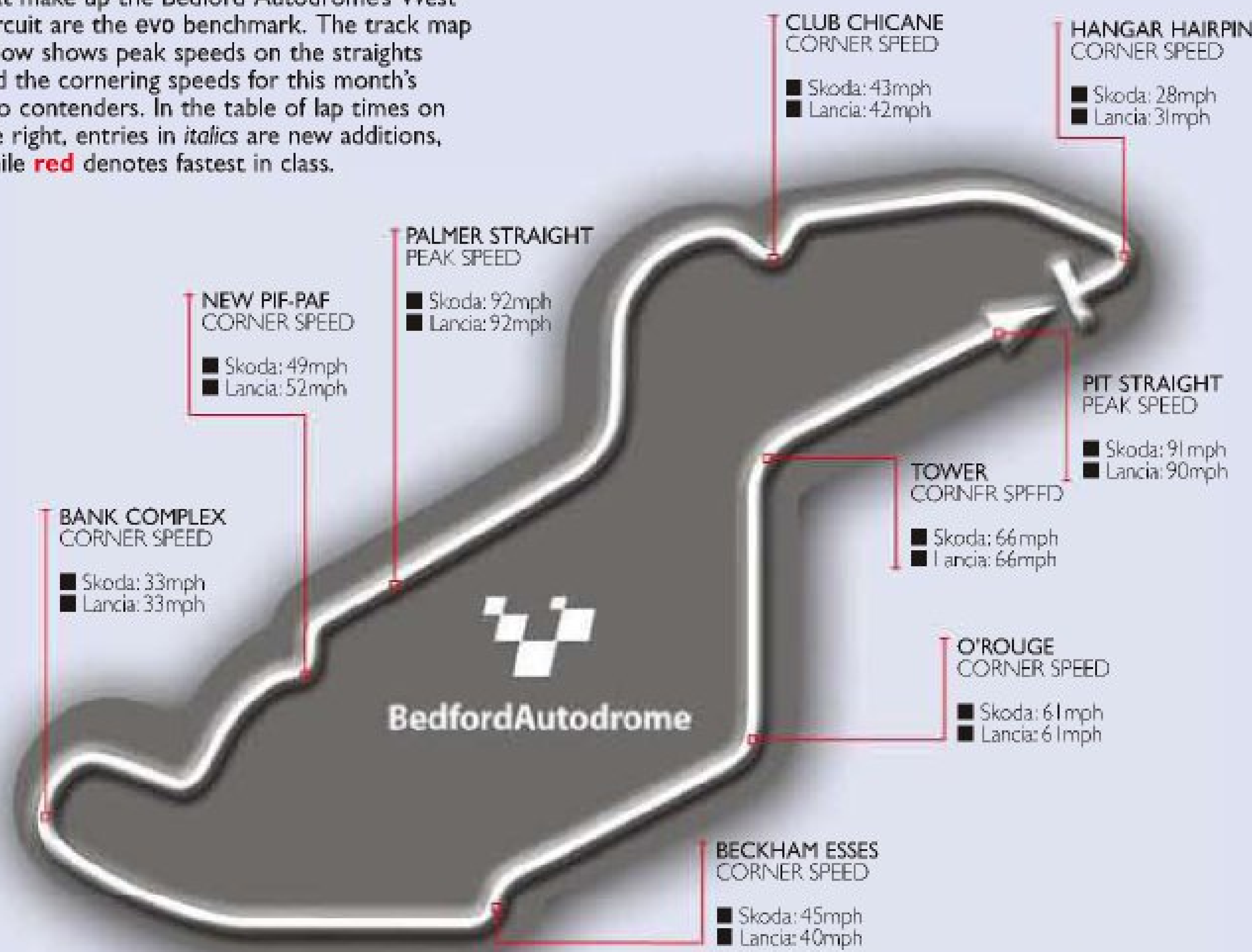
Integrale Evo's engine (above, red cam cover) boasts 210bhp – a big number for a turbocharged 2-litre four-cylinder in the early '90s – but old-school turbo lag gives away its age. vRS's 178bhp twin-charged 1.4 (above) is super-smooth by comparison

■ Integrale: 1.37.7 Fabia: 1.39.0



HOW FAST?

■ The 1.8 miles of fast and technical tarmac that make up the Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit are the evo benchmark. The track map below shows peak speeds on the straights and the cornering speeds for this month's two contenders. In the table of lap times on the right, entries in *italics* are new additions, while **red** denotes fastest in class.

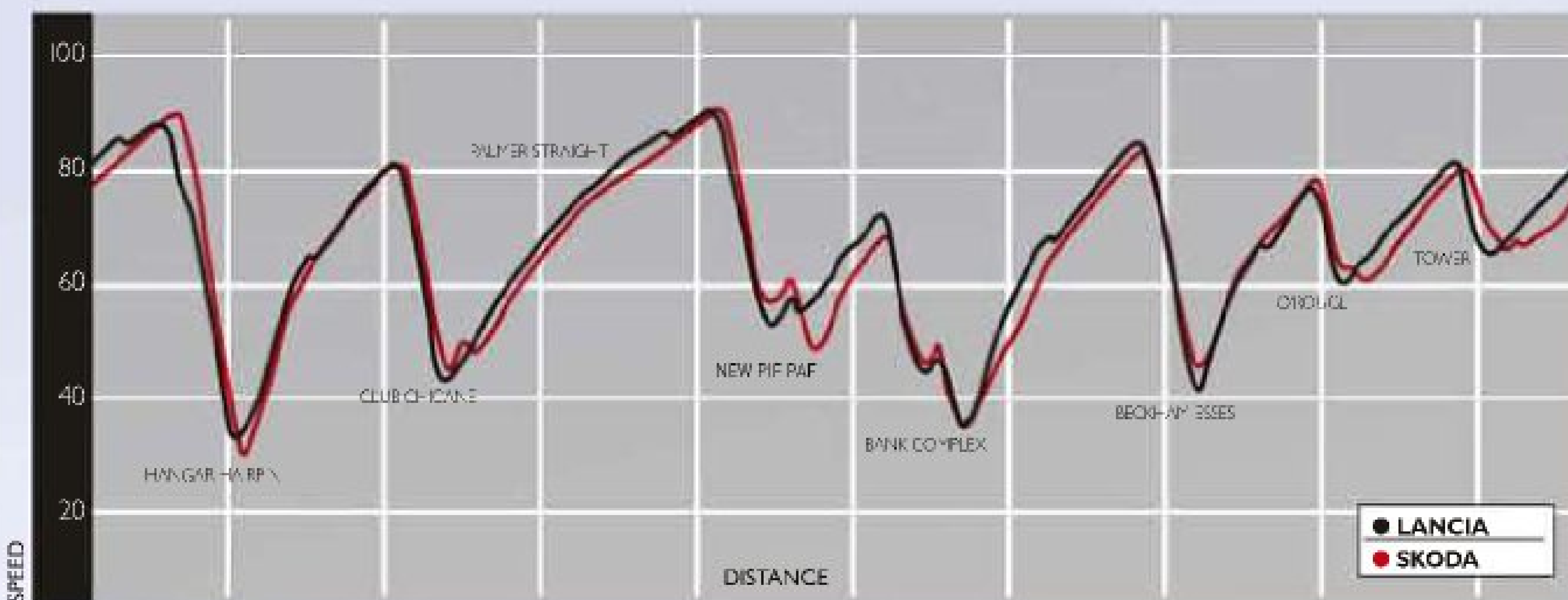


THE LEADERBOARD

	LAP TIME	PEAK
Radical SR8LM (fastest car)	1.13.6	127.8
Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)	1.14.8	130.9
Gumpert Apollo S	1.19.4	120.4
Caterham Levante V8	1.19.6	118.6
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	1.20.1	113.2
Caterham Superlight R500	1.20.2	115.7
Ferrari 458 Italia	1.20.3	117.0
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	1.21.3	121.1
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	1.21.5	113.6
KTM X-Bow (300bhp)	1.21.5	112.7
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	1.21.7	117.2
Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (fastest coupe)	1.21.9	116.8
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	1.22.5	119.1
Brooke Double R	1.22.5	113.2
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	1.22.9	116.7
Porsche Carrera GT	1.23.3	115.2
Porsche 997.2 GT3	1.23.3	114.5
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 Valentino Balboni	1.23.4	116.8
Porsche 997 GT2	1.23.5	115.1
Nissan GT-R	1.23.6	113.1
Porsche 997 Turbo	1.24.1	113.5
Lotus 340R (190bhp)	1.24.2	110.0
Caterham Superlight R300	1.24.3	101.5
Ferrari California	1.25.0	111.8
KTM X-Bow	1.25.0	105.0
Mercedes SL65 AMG Black	1.25.2	108.6
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1.25.9	108.8
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400 (fastest saloon)	1.25.9	107.5
Mitsubishi Evo X RS 360	1.26.1	106.6
BMW E90 M3 Saloon	1.26.2	108.2
Audi TT RS	1.26.3	107.2
Aston Martin DBS	1.26.4	109.5
Audi R8	1.26.5	112.0
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1.26.5	109.2
Jaguar XJ220	1.26.7	111.7
Audi RS5	1.26.9	106.8
Lotus Evora	1.27.1	104.2
Lotus Elise SC	1.27.7	104.6
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	1.27.8	106.1
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1.27.8	105.4
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R (fastest hot hatch)	1.27.8	103.3
Audi RS6 Avant (fastest estate)	1.27.9	111.0
Jaguar XFR	1.27.9	108.1
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen	1.28.0	104.4
Lexus IS-F	1.28.1	106.4
Porsche Boxster S	1.28.1	105.4
Jaguar XJ Supersport	1.28.4	106.6
TVR Griffith	1.28.5	101.4
Ford Shelby GT500	1.28.6	106.5
Nissan 370Z	1.28.7	103.7
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	1.28.8	106.3
Bentley Continental Supersports	1.29.2	105.8
BMW 335i Coupe	1.29.9	104.9
Nissan 350Z	1.30.0	101.4
Honda NSX	1.30.1	101.3
Subaru Impreza WRX STI	1.30.2	103.4
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	1.30.8	101.8
Lotus Carlton	1.31.2	102.7
Honda Civic Type-R Championship White	1.31.8	97.9
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	1.31.9	97.2
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	1.32.4	99.3
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	1.32.4	98.6
BMW E30 M3	1.33.3	94.0
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	1.33.4	96.1
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	1.34.0	96.5

WHICH WAS FASTER?

DELTA INTEGRALE lmin 37.7sec (peak 92.3mph) FABIA vRS lmin 39.0sec (peak 92.3mph)



▲ Time saved on upshifts by the Fabia's DSG gearbox can be seen in the smoothly rising red trace. Black trace shows how the Lancia's four-wheel drive gives it a traction advantage out of corners on the slippery surface; on a dry track the Skoda would close the gap. Note how both cars reach identical peak speeds

'It's easy to understand why the Integrale was held in such high regard'



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* New entries this month. STAR RATINGS: ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great 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
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SUPERMINIS/HOT HATCHES



OUR CHOICE Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup. After the mild disappointment of the Clio 197, Renaultsport has got the Clio back to its very best, producing 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 Ford Focus RS (right) is rabidly quick and totally involving, while VW's grown-up Golf GTI and Mini's mad JCW also appeal. Further down the ladder, the Fiat Panda 100HP, Renault Twingo 133 Cup and Suzuki Swift Sport are all evo favourites.



Abarth Punto Evo	149 F	£16,500	4/1368	161/5500	184/2250	1155kg	142	7.9	-	132	142	-	+ Attractive and fun - Needs the upcoming Esseesse power upgrade	★★★★
Abarth 500 Esseesse	129 R	£16,100	4/1368	158/5750	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.2	20.4	131	155	-	+ A properly fun, old-school hot hatch - Limited numbers being imported	★★★★
Alfa Romeo Mito 1.4 TB	132 D	£15,045	4/1368	153/5500	170/3000	1145kg	136	8.0	-	134	-	43.5	+ So close to being a modern-day Alfasud - But not close enough...	★★★★
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 F	£17,885	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	£19,495	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1290kg	134	7.8	-	135	134	48.7	+ Has the equivalent VW Golf covered - An Alfa for your head, not your heart	★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	£24,495	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2	+ Shows signs of deep talent... - but should be more exciting	★★★★
Alfa Romeo 147 2.0 Lusso	'01-'09	4/1970	150/6300	134/3800	1270kg	120	9.3	-	129	-	31.7	+ Fantastic looks, engine and handling - Build quality still lacking	★★★★	
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	053 F	'03-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0	15.5	153	-	23.3	+ Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★
Alfa Romeo 145 Cloverleaf	'95-'01	4/1970	150/6200	138/4900	1200kg	127	8.0	-	129	-	32.1	+ Fiery engine, individual appeal - Ape-like driving position	★★★★	
Audi A1 1.4 TFSI Sport	147 D	£15,670	4/1390	120/5000	147/1500	1125kg	108	8.9	-	126	122	53.3	+ Audi's Mini rival is an accomplished thing - But not a particularly fun one	★★★
Audi A3 2.0 TFSI		£21,865	4/1984	197/5100	206/1700	1295kg	155	7.0	-	148	164	39.8	+ Usual Audi strengths - Usual Audi weaknesses	★★★
Audi S3	106 R	£31,045	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.6	13.6	155	-	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★
BMW 118i SE		£20,790	4/1995	141/6000	140/4250	1365kg	107	8.7	-	130	143	46.3	+ Quality feel and delightful handling - You'll long for a straight-six	★★★★
BMW 120d SE	072 R	£22,670	4/1995	175/4000	258/1750	1440kg	124	7.5	-	142	125	58.9	+ Involving rear-drive chassis - Yet it's curiously difficult to oversteer	★★★★
BMW 123d M Sport (5dr)	122 R	£26,535	4/1995	201/4400	295/2000	1495kg	137	6.5	17.4	148	135	54.3	+ Economical and no slouch - Doesn't feel special enough	★★★★
BMW 130i M Sport (3dr)	106 R	'05-'10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.1	15.3	155	-	34.0	+ 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	-	31.7	+ Terrific engine, chassis, price - Looks a bit geeky	★★★★
Citroën C1/P'geot 107/Toy. Aygo	126 F	£8307*	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	103	61.4	+ Full of character and insurance-friendly - Insurance friendly power	★★★★
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	99	9.3	-	116	-	36.7	+ VTS poise, half the insurance group - Cramped pedals	★★★★
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 DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	£16,000	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	133	155	42.2	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★
* 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	£11,445	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	£13,795	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	-	+ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name	★★★★
Fiat Bravo 2.0 Sport Multijet		£18,950	4/1956	163/4000	265/1750	1360kg	122	8.2	-	134	139	53.3	+ Eager to please, and well made too - Petrol version should be even better	★★★★
Ford Ka 1.2 (Mk2)	126 F	£7995	4/1242	68/5500	75/3000	940kg	73	13.1	-	99	119	55.4	+ Better than a Fiat 500 - Lacks the old Ka's ultimate chuckability	★★★★
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	£13,995	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	47.9	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Grown up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 F	£16,150	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	-	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - ...if you're 12 years old	★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	020 R	'00-'02	4/1596	102/6000	107/4000	976kg	106	10.2	-	113	-	38.2	+ Better than you'd ever believe - No-one else will believe it	★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	'05-'08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★
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 ST	119 R	£22,895	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.7	16.8	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune	137 R	£23,595	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	5.8	14.3	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS	★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	139 R	£27,895	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	14.2	163	225	30.5	+ Huge performance, highly capable fwd chassis - It could be the last RS...	★★★★
Ford Focus RS500	152 F	£35,750	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	12.7	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than above - Pricy (and all sold!)	★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	053 R	'02-'03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	5.9	14.9	144	-	-	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	011 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	-	38.2	+ 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	+ Exclusivity - Expense. Standard Puma does it so well	★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R	102 R	£19,995	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 Mugen	144 F	£38,599	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	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not fitted to the standard car...	★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R	075 D	'01-'05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	16.9	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - Looks divide opinion, duff steering	★★★★
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 2 1.5 Sport	132 F	£12,980	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	49.6	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	★★★★
Mazda 3 MPS (Mk2)	137 R	£22,595	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 still iffy	★★★★
Mazda 3 MPS Aero Kit (Mk1)	106 R	'07-'09	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1410kg	184	6.1	14.3	155	-	29.1	+ Speed, grip, stability - Slightly strange steering, dull styling	★★★★
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		£13,120	4/1598	97/6000	113/3000	1135kg	87	10.5	-	116	127	52.3	+ Perfect power-to-grip ratio - HUGE speedo, slow car	★★★★
Mini Cooper	099 D	£14,475	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1140kg	112	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Still desirable - Steering has lost a little feel	★★★★
Mini Cooper S	149 F	£17,640	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1205kg	153	7.0	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Lacks old car's direct front end	★★★★

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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO ₂ g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Mini John Cooper Works	137 F	£21,875	4/1598	208/6000	206/1850	1205kg	175	6.5	-	148	165	40.9	+ Most exciting new Mini yet - Occasionally just a little too exciting
Mini Cooper S Clubman	110 D	£18,075	4/1598	172/5500	192/1700	1280kg	137	7.6	-	139	137	44.8	+ More rear space, load flexibility - Torque steer, looks are a matter of taste
Mini JCW Clubman	137 D	£22,825	4/1598	208/6000	207/2000	1280kg	165	6.8	-	148	167	40.4	+ Ride and handling more composed than the JCW hatch - It's no looker
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk2)	111 F	'07-'08	4/1598	189/6000	199/1750	1130kg	170	7.6	18.0	145	-	-	+ Cracking hot Mini, until the JCW - Expensive with option packs included
Mini Cooper S Works GP	144 F	'06	4/1598	218/7100	184/4600	1090kg	203	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'
Mini Cooper S (Mk1)	077 R	'02-'06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.8	19.9	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk1)	074 D	'03-'06	4/1598	210/6950	181/4500	1140kg	187	6.6	-	143	-	-	+ Even more power and pace than the 197bhp version - Even pricier, too
Mitsubishi Colt Ralliart	132 F	£12,849	4/1468	147/6000	155/3500	1060kg	141	7.4	-	131	161	40.9	+ Price, handling, performance - Its looks are a little odd
Mitsubishi Ralliart Sportback	121 D	£21,649	4/1998	237/6000	253/2550	1540kg	156	7.0	-	143	243	-	+ A taste of Evo at a keener price - Doesn't do what it says on the tin
Nissan Micra 160SR	084 R	'05-'08	4/1598	108/6000	112/4400	1024kg	107	9.8	-	114	-	42.8	+ Engaging chassis, spirited engine - Doesn't have 160bhp its name suggests
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	-	34.0	+ 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	9.3	-	118	-	35.6	+ 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	7.4	22.2	127	-	34.9	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age
Peugeot 207 GTI THP 175	105 F	'06-'09	4/1598	172/6000	195/1600	1325kg	132	7.1	-	137	-	39.2	+ Great engine - Sloppy controls and huge body smother the chassis
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	095 F	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.9	-	124	-	36.7	+ 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	7.2	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		'89-'92	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	985kg	134	8.3	-	124	-	28.2	+ 205 GTI in drag, cheap - Who wants a cheap drag queen?
Renault Twingo GT	108 F	£10,695	4/1149	99/5500	107/3000	980kg	102	9.8	-	117	132	47.9	+ French alternative to Panda 100HP - Panda's more fun
Renaultsport Twingo 133 Cup	132 F	£12,100	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1049kg	127	8.7	-	125	159	40.4	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Could handle extra 30bhp
Renault 5GT Turbo	123 F	'87-'91	4/1397	120/5750	122/3750	831kg	146	7.8	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Most have been thrashed
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	135 R	£16,710	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	141	190	34.4	+ The hot Clio is back to its best - Why the long face?
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	119 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	6.6	17.5	139	-	34.9	+ 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	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	095 F	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.6	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ Most fun you can have on three wheels - Just 500 were built
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.5	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	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Revised Clio V6 is a winner - Uninspired interior
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 F	'99-'02	6/2946	230/6000	221/3750	1335kg	175	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky
Renault Clio Williams	095 F	'93-'96	4/1988	150/6100	126/4500	981kg	155	7.6	20.8	121	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile like an Integrale
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	£23,160	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	195	33.6	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	125 F	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	5.8	15.1	147	-	-	+ 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
R'sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power
Renaultsport Mégane 225 Cup	087 F	'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	'05	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1355kg	166	6.7	17.3	147	-	32.1	+ Mega grip and traction - Steering needs a touch more feel
SEAT Ibiza FR	134 D	£15,827	4/1390	148/5800	162/1250	1167kg	129	7.7	-	130	146	44.8	+ Fun and frugal - You're forced to have the DSG automatic 'box
SEAT Ibiza FR TDI	144 F	£16,774	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	61.4	+ Even more fun and frugality - Almost as pricey as the Cupra
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	139 R	£17,188	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 Ibiza FR	066 D	'04-'08	4/1781	150/5500	162/2000	1154kg	132	8.4	-	134	-	38.8	+ Torquey and brisk - Devoid of soul
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	104 F	'04-'08	4/1781	178/5500	181/2000	1248kg	145	7.1	-	143	-	35.3	+ Well built, punchy engine - The 'warm' FR is a better bet
SEAT Leon FR	131 D	£20,099	4/1984	208/5300	206/1700	1334kg	158	7.2	-	145	170	35.8	+ As quick as a Golf GTI but £4K cheaper - Misses the VW's completeness
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	£21,708	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	£25,454	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	6.1	14.0	155	190	-	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches
SEAT Leon Cupra 20v T	020 R	'00-'06	4/1781	178/5500	173/5000	1322kg	137	7.7	-	142	-	33.2	+ Terrific value - Lacks sparkle of very best hatches
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	£15,700	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	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	130/4800	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	085 D	£19,380	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	180/5500	173/1950	1354kg	135	7.9	-	146	-	35.3	+ Remarkably fun and capable - Cabin quality
Smart Fortwo Brabus	110 D	£14,400	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	95	119	52.3	+ Telling people you drive a Brabus - Them realising it's not a 720bhp S-class
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	£32,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	155	243	26.9	+ Spec C suspension makes a better drive - No blue paint or gold wheels
Subaru Impreza STI CS400	146 R	£49,995	4/2457	395/5750	400/3950	1505kg	267	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ Cosworth kudos. Fastest hatch we've tested - Pricy. Lifeless steering
Subaru Impreza WRX5	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	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	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ A bit quicker than the STI... - ...but not better
Suzuki Swift Sport	132 F	£12,740	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1105kg	113	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback
Toyota iQ 1.33	129 D	£12,255	4/1329	97/6000	92/4000	930kg	106	11.8	-	106	113	58.9	+ Individual take on the city car - Toyota's Aygo more fun and much cheaper
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	104 F	£18,625	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	-	35.8	+ Looks snazzy, surprisingly refined - Odd clutch, lacks a little grit
Vauxhall Astra 1.6T SRI	138 D	£21,125	4/1598	178/5500	169/2200	1305kg	139	7.8	-	137	159	36.7	+ Cracking chassis - Looks dull, optional FlexRide suspension disappointing
Vauxhall Astra VXR	102 R	£22,875	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.7	16.7	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision
Vauxhall Astra VXR 888	127 D	£26,573	4/1998	295/4650	317/4250	1393kg	215	5.1	-	160	221	-	+ Crazy power, chassis copes admirably - Lacks exploitability of Mégane R26
VW Lupo GTI 6-spd	036 D	'00-'05	4/1598	125/6500	112/3000	978kg	128	8.3	-	127	-	38.2	+ Looks, performance, snappy gearshift - Lacks fizz of 106 GTI
VW Golf GTD (Mk6)	133 D	£23,645	4/1968	168/4200	258/1750	1329kg	128	8.1	-	138	134	50.4	+ Punchy performance and good economy - Not as much fun as the GTI
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	139 R	£24,295	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	149	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	£30,345	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.6	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	102 R	'05-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	6.7	17.9	145	-	-	+ Character and ability: the original GTI is back - Lacking firepower?
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	5.8	15.2	155	-	26.4	+ 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	6.4	16.3	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)		'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	1111kg	127	8.0	-	124	-	28.8	+ Arguably the best all-round Golf GTI ever - We'd be splitting hairs
VW Golf GTI (Mk1)	095 F	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	£21,405	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



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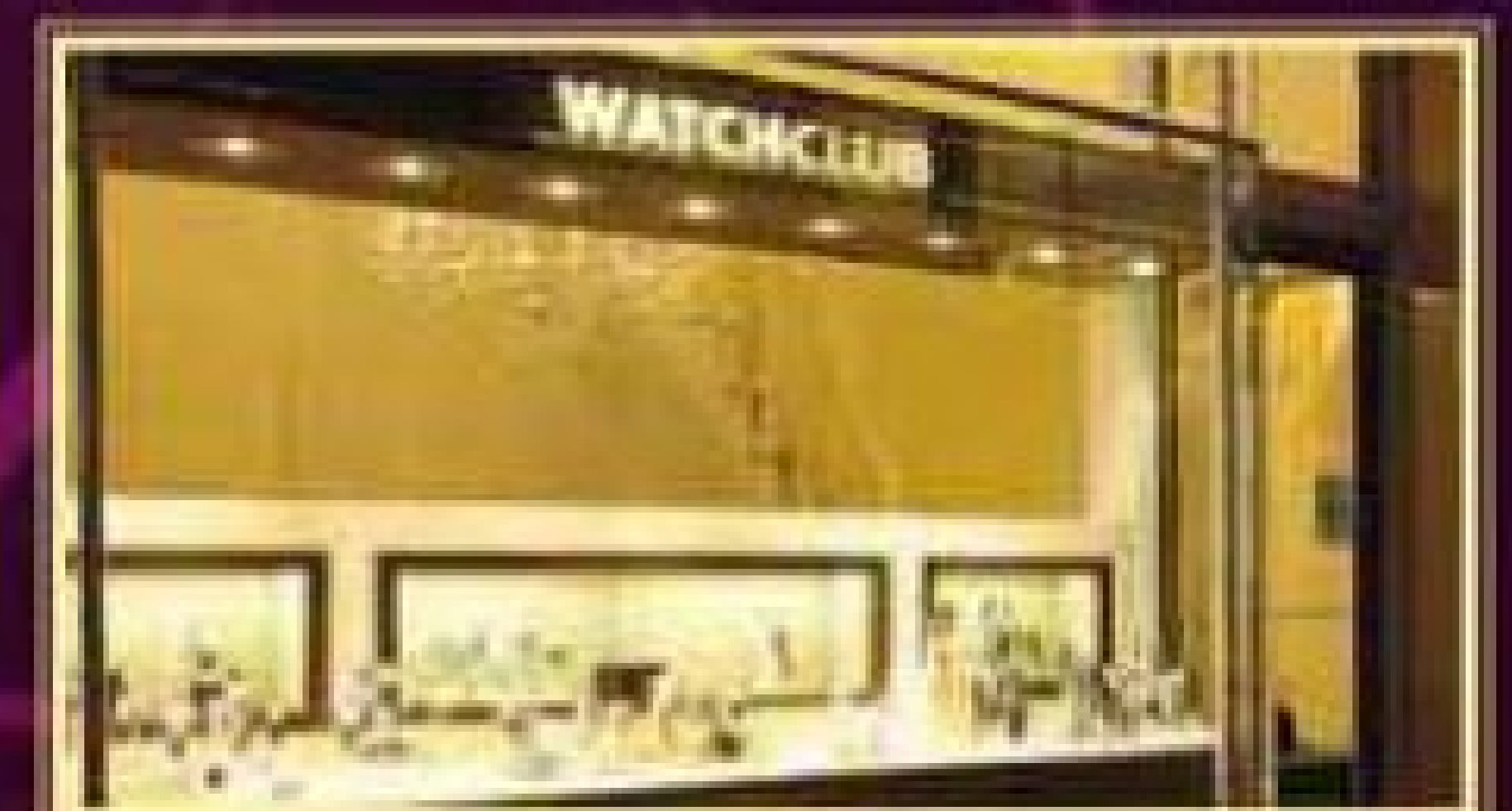


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SALOONS/ESTATES/4X4s



OUR CHOICE BMW M3. It's got two more doors than the coupe version but the M3 saloon costs around £1500 less. OK, it does without the carbon roof, but everything else that makes the two-door great is present and correct. What's not to like?

Best of the Rest: The Lexus IS-F is the M3's unnatural rival with a glorious high-revving V8 and playful rear-drive. Moving up a size, we heartily recommend the Jaguar XFR (right) with its supercharged V8, while the Mercedes C63 AMG is our fast estate choice.



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	
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		€30,950	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	€69,995	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	€97,950	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	£144,950	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	35.5	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★
Audi A4 3.2 FSI quattro S-line	111 D	€35,230	6/3197	261/6000	243/3000	1610kg	165	6.1	-	155	21.4	+ A good match for its German foes - An extra E2K buys an S4...	★★★★
Audi A4 3.0 quattro	032 R	'01-'04	6/2976	220/6300	221/3200	1505kg	146	6.7	-	151	26.9	+ V6 adds class - Jag X-type shows how good 4wd can be	★★★★
Audi S4 (Mk3)	134 F	€37,290	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1650kg	202	5.1	-	155	23.4	+ More fun than you'd believe possible - When's the new RS4 coming?	★★★★
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	088 F	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1600kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	+ A leap on for fast Audis, superb engine - Busy under braking	★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant	105 F	'07-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1710kg	246	4.6	-	155	20.6	+ More desirable than ever - Everyone thinking you're married with kids	★★★★
Audi RS4	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		'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	€60,290	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	29.9	+ 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	33.1	+ 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	33.3	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★
Audi RS6	052 R	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1840kg	245	4.8	11.6	155	19.3	+ Huge real-world performance - Inert steering	★★★★
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 S8	088 D	'06-'10	10/5204	444/7000	398/3500	1940kg	232	5.1	-	155	21.4	+ V10 engine, ceramic brakes, fantastic gearbox - Light steering	★★★★
Audi Q7 V12 TDI	124 D	£100,320	12/5934	493/3750	737/1750	2635kg	190	5.1	12.2	155	29.8	+ Undeniably quick, relatively economical - A tad ostentatious	★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	080 D	£133,200	12/5998	552/6100	479/1600	2475kg	226	4.9	-	195	39.6	+ Performance, wonderful interior - Have you seen petrol prices?	★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur Speed	141 F	£150,900	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2440kg	250	4.6	-	200	39.6	+ 600bhp, surprisingly fun handling - Could look a bit more like it goes	★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	145 D	£220,000	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2585kg	198	5.1	-	184	39.3	+ 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 EfficientDynamics	143 D	€27,245	4/1995	161/3250	280/1900	1420kg	115	8.0	-	142	10.9	+ A diesel close to its best - The Alpina D3 costs little extra	★★★★
BMW 330d SE	123 D	€31,775	6/2993	241/4000	384/1750	1610kg	150	6.1	-	155	15.2	+ More power, refinement and mpg - Electric power steering lets side down	★★★★
BMW 325i M Sport		€30,540	6/2996	215/6700	199/2400	1505kg	145	6.6	-	155	16.8	+ Stunning drivetrain, controlled chassis - Looks a bit steady	★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport	134 F	€36,045	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1610kg	190	5.6	-	155	19.6	+ As above, with added wallop - Still looks a bit steady	★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	€51,805	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1680kg	250	4.9	10.7	165	29.0	+ Every bit as good as the M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★
BMW 325i SE		'99-'05	6/2494	192/6000	181/3500	1485kg	131	7.1	-	149	-	+ Loses little to 330i - Steering not the best	★★★★
BMW 330i Sport	028 R	'99-'05	6/2979	231/5900	221/3500	1510kg	153	5.9	17.0	155	30.0	+ Clean, classy and confident - Too smooth for its own good?	★★★★
BMW 535i SE	141 D	€37,300	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1760kg	174	6.1	-	155	19.9	+ New 5-series impresses... - But only with all the chassis options ticked	★★★★
BMW M5 Touring (E60)	105 F	'07-'10	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1880kg	270	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	1855kg	276	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	400/6600	369/3800	1720kg	236	4.9	11.5	155	-	+ 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 handfuts in the wet	★★★★
BMW X5 xDrive 40d SE		€46,310	6/2993	302/4400	442/1500	2185kg	140	6.6	-	147	19.8	+ Handling, comfort, refinement - Looks like a big X3	★★★★
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	€56,045	8/4395	408/5500	442/1750	2190kg	186	5.4	-	155	29.2	+ Stunningly good to drive - Will you want to be seen arriving?	★★★★
BMW X6M	134 D	€80,220	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2380kg	234	4.7	-	171	32.5	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★
BMW 750i		€68,495	8/4395	401/5500	442/1750	2020kg	202	5.2	-	155	26.6	+ The ultimate drivers' limo - The back's a nicer place to be than the front	★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 F	€300,000	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	€57,718	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	36.5	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off	★★★★
Chrysler 300C SRT8	096 D	€43,995	8/6059	425/6000	420/4800	1965kg	220	4.9	-	168	33.7	+ 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 X		€24,295	4/1999	200/6000	221/1750	1581kg	128	7.9	-	144	17.9	+ 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		'90-'93	4/1993	220/6250	214/3500	1305kg	159	6.6	-	144	24.4	+ 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	-	+ Roadgoing Group A racecar - Don't shout about the power output!	★★★★
Holden HSV GTS S'charger	041 D	'02	8/5665	502/6050	457/5100	1799kg	283	4.5	-	180	-	+ Massive linear power, great chassis - Slow 'shift, cheap interior	★★★★
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 G37S		€34,470	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1709kg	188	5.8	-	155	24.8	+ Credible alternative to its German rivals - Lacks their looks and kudos	★★★★
Infiniti M37S	150 D	€39,650	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1765kg	182	6.2	-	155	23.5	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals	★★★★
Jaguar XF 3.0D S	145 D	€39,900	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1820kg	161	5.9	-	155	17.9	+ Best XF after the R - But we'd still have the R...	★★★★
Jaguar XF 5.0		€43,600	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1780kg	231	5.5	-	155	26.4	+ Ten grand cheaper than the XFR... - ...which is still the one we'd have	★★★★
Jaguar XFR	138 F	€64,400	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1891kg	270	4.8	10.2	155	29.2	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Looks too discreet?	★★★★
Jaguar XF SV8	116 F	'08-'09	8/4196	410/6250	413/3500	1842kg	226	5.1	-	155	22.4	+ Convincing driving experience - Overshadowed by XFR	★★★★
Jaguar S-type R	048 R	'02-'07	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1800kg	226	5.3	-	155	22.5	+ Fine dynamics belie olde worlde looks - Auto-only, and no iso	★★★★

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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO ₂ g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 diesel	148 D	£55,500	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1796kg	153	6.0	-	155	184	40.1	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the Supersport... ★★★★
Jaguar XJ Supersport	144 D	£91,000	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1892kg	270	4.7	-	155	289	23.4	+ Superb ride and handling, monster performance - Opinion-dividing looks ★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	054 R	'03-'09	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1665kg	244	5.0	-	155	-	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	£57,106	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.8	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a 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	£87,350	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	£94,300	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	17.9	+ 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 ★★★★★
Mazda 6 MPS	093 F	'06-'07	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1665kg	156	6.5	-	149	-	27.7	+ Agility, effective 4wd system, price - Inconsistent steering ★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5 16		'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	£53,475	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	4.4	9.7	160	312	21.1	+ Monsirous pace and extremely engaging - M3's just a little better... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz DR520	148 D	£62,920	8/6208	513/6800	479/5000	1730kg	301	4.1	-	187	-	-	+ C63 AMG goes feral - For an extra ten grand, though ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4 ★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	134 D	£71,900	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1840kg	286	4.5	-	155	295	-	+ Sounds good, drives very well - Not as lazily grunty as its rivals ★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	464/5200	1840kg	280	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brilliant 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	10.2	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting 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	£109,125	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2115kg	257	4.5	-	155	244	-	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	098 F	£159,320	12/5980	604/4750	737/2000	2260kg	272	4.4	-	155	334	19.5	+ God's own supersaloon - Unholy price and thirst ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	073 F	'04-'05	12/5980	603/6500	738/5950	2220kg	275	4.3	-	155	-	16.1	+ Eye-widening wailop - Wallet-shrivelling thirst ★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 F	£77,960	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 CLS55 AMG	092 F	'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1920kg	252	4.7	-	155	-	20.8	+ As above - You bang your head getting in ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	104 F	'07-'10	8/6208	503/6800	464/5200	1840kg	221	4.6	11.0	155	-	17.1	+ Goes like an SUV has no right to - Gordon Murray will hate you ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G55 AMG	092 F	£114,975	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	2550kg	190	5.2	-	130	-	-	+ Thuggishness, anti-style statement - It's a bit silly ★★★★
MG ZS 180	071 D	'01-'05	6/2497	175/6500	177/4000	1235kg	144	7.3	-	139	-	29.7	+ Sweet V6 engine, pace, tidy handling - Image ★★★★
MG ZT 260 V8	068 F	'03-'05	8/4601	256/5000	302/4000	1680kg	155	6.5	16.3	155	-	21.5	+ Lovely woolly V8, well-sorted rear-drive chassis - Thirst ★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300		£25,499	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1560kg	189	4.7	-	155	246	27.4	+ The Evo grows up - Perhaps just a little too sensible? ★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	£28,999	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	+ As above with twin-clutch transmission - As above, with paddles on ★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	£31,999	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX ★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	£35,999	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	230	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five speed gearbox?! ★★★★
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 far... - ...about 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 - Paints. 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	-	-	+ 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 Ed.	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	133 D	£73,827	8/4806	394/6500	369/3500	1770kg	226	5.6	-	177	293	26.2	+ Great cabin and typically fine Porsche chassis - Only a mother could love it ★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£97,358	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	286	23.2	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold ★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	144 D	£81,589	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	2170kg	231	4.7	-	173	270	24.6	+ Greener, faster, better - Odd rear styling, numb steering ★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	104 F	'06-'10	8/4806	494/6000	516/2250	2355kg	213	4.7	11.4	171	-	19.0	+ Appears to defy physics - Still cracks mirrors at 50 paces ★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 S'chgd	135 D	£64,995	8/5000	503/6000	461/2000	2590kg	200	5.9	-	140	348	18.9	+ Thumpingly fast and hugely comfortable - It's no Cayenne in the corners ★★★★
Range Rover V8 Supercharged	134 D	£83,895	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	£196,300	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2435kg	235	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ More sporting, more affordable Rolls-Royce - But it still costs £196,300 ★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 F	£279,300	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 ★★★★
Saab 9-5 2.8T XWD Aero	146 D	£38,585	6/2792	296/5500	295/2000	2065kg	146	6.9	-	155	244	26.6	+ Fine start to new Saab era - Steering and transmission could be better ★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	£32,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ The fast Subaru saloon is back - Blue paint and gold wheels aren't ★★★★★
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 WRX	087 F	'05-'07	4/2457	227/5600	236/3600	1410kg	163	5.4	-	143	-	27.4	+ 2.5 litres gives even greater thump - Slightly light steering ★★★★
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 Imp'za WRX STI PPP	073 F	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.2	12.9	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	11.1	160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the P1 - Lost its throbby flat-four voice ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WR1	067 R	'04-'05	4/1994	316/5800	310/4000	1470kg	218	5.3	13.1	155	-	-	+ Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 - Spec C is better ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 F	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza P1	067 F	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	011 F	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	5.0	14.1	143	-	-	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B	011 F	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.0	13.1	150	-	-	+ On paper, the ultimate - On the road, too uncompromising ★★★★
Subaru Forester STi*	087 F	'05-'08	4/2457	320/5800	330/3500	-	-	4.8	-	150+	-	-	+ Undercover fun, gutsy engine - Lacks ultimate edge of an Impreza ★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR	134 D	£32,315	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1810kg	180	5.6	-	155	249	24.7	+ Highly able and very likeable - It's a £32K 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	122 D	£35,275	8/6162	425/6000	405/4400	1831kg	236	4.9	-	155	-	18.6	+ Oversteer, price, oversteer, practicality - Suspension can get befuddled ★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 Supercharged	113 R	£42,095	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	£44,995	8/6162	564/6000	527/4000	1866kg	307	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ A tauter VXR8. Bonkers pace, brilliant noise - Gearchange still rubbish ★★★★★
VW Phaeton W12	046 D	£78,685	12/5998	4									

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SPORTS CARS/CONVERTIBLES



OUR CHOICE Porsche Boxster. OK, it's become a bit of a cliché and it's got all the visual tension of a bar of soap, but the Boxster's still a great drive and the latest version boasts fresher, more powerful engines. New Spyder iteration (left) is even more driver-focused.

Best of the Rest: The back-to-basics Lotus Elise is a joy, with sublime handling and just enough power, while the revamped Mazda MX-5 handles like it should again. For the ultimate road and track thrills, though, buy a Caterham R300 (right) or an Ariel Atom.



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO ₂ g/km	EC mpg	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	139 F	£174,000	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 V8 500	150 R	£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 ripple - ...like Clarkson's ★★★★★
Ariel Atom 2 275	068 D	'03-'08	4/1998	275/8400	192/7650	500kg	559	3.4	-	150	-	-	+ Supercharged engine is a scream - One for the brave ★★★★★
Ariel Atom 1	015 F	'99-'03	4/1796	125/5500	122/3000	476kg	256	5.6	18.0	115	-	-	+ Amazing styling, huge fun - As practical as a chocolate teapot ★★★★★
Aston V8 Vantage Roadster	130 F	£96,995	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 Vantage Roadster N420	152 D	£104,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Drives and sounds as good as it looks - Not as quick as its price suggests ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£131,445	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	389	17.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise ★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	£179,500	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feel-good car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight ★★★★★
Audi TT Roadster 1.8 TFSI		£25,310	4/1798	158/4500	184/1500	1285kg	125	7.4	-	139	152	43.5	+ Cheap entry into TT Roadster ownership - Lacks some of the coupe's rigidity ★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	£37,695	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.4	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question; not cheap either ★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	£47,790	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	221	29.7	+ Terrific engine... - ...is 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	£45,120	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	224	29.1	+ Gets the S4's trick new supercharged engine - Just a little bit dull ★★★★★
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 5.2 V10 quattro Spyder	152 F	£116,660	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1720kg	306	4.1	-	194	356	19.0	+ Looks and sounds sensational - It's the most expensive Audi ever ★★★★★
Bentley Conti GTC Speed	131 D	£156,800	12/5998	600/6000	590/1750	2485kg	245	4.5	-	200	396	17.0	+ A great convertible just got better - Optional carbon brakes a necessity ★★★★★
Bentley Conti Supersports	147 D	£182,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2395kg	263	3.9	-	202	388	-	+ Fast, capable and refined - Coupe does the Supersports thing better ★★★★★
Bentley Azure T	140 D	£250,400	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 23i (Mk2)	139 D	£29,695	6/2497	201/6400	184/2750	1480kg	138	6.6	-	151	199	33.2	+ The Z4 has grown up... - ...and got fat ★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i (Mk2)	130 D	£38,480	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1600kg	213	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	263/6600	232/2750	1385kg	194	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like ★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1485kg	231	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	1450kg	228	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better ★★★★★
BMW 335i SE Convertible	102 D	£40,720	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1810kg	169	5.8	-	155	205	29.7	+ Looks good, great to drive, fantastic engine - A bit shakey ★★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible (E93)	119 D	£57,285	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1885kg	223	5.3	-	155	269	21.9	+ M DCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge ★★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible	035 D	'01-'06	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1655kg	207	5.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ That engine - Gets the wobbles on British B-roads ★★★★★
BMW M6 Convertible	098 D	£92,175	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1930kg	264	4.8	-	155	352	19.2	+ Composure, grip, power, comfort - Steering lacks feel at low speed ★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 R	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	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	£16,300	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	£21,200	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 Roadsport SV 175	140 D	£28,300	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	£29,500	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	£33,600	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	£40,200	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	£42,900	4/2261	266/7500	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	-	-	+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette C6	083 D	£56,186	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1460kg	300	4.3	-	186	-	21.2	+ Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics ★★★★★
Elfin Clubman	108 F	£42,000	8/5665	329/5200	343/4400	900kg	371	4.1	-	160	-	-	+ Aussie V8-engined bathtub - Needs refining to release potential ★★★★★
Fiat Barchetta	061 D	'95-'05	4/1747	130/6300	117/4300	1060kg	125	8.7	-	124	-	33.2	+ Out-chics the MX-5, great fun and terrific value, too - LHD only ★★★★★
Ginetta G20		£15,995	4/1796	140/5800	101/3500	660kg	341	6.3	-	126	-	-	+ Classic looks, old-fashioned value - Vintage driving experience ★★★★★
Grinnall IV	081 F	£28,995	4/1781	350/6800	310/6100	680kg	522	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Monster power-to-weight ratio - Monsters aren't friendly ★★★★★
Honda S2000	118 D	'99-'09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better ★★★★★
IFR Aspid	126 D	£90,000	4/1997	398/8600	240/7800	740kg	451	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Imagine a Caterham crossed with a Zonda - It's a bit pricey ★★★★★
Jaguar XK 5.0		£69,900	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1696kg	227	5.3	-	155	264	25.2	+ Basic XK gets extra power... - ...but loses some of its GT refinement ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	130 F	£83,900	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	-	155	292	23.0	+ Gains Jag's fantastic new V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes ★★★★★
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 toupees everywhere ★★★★★
Jetstream SC250	125 D	£29,450	4/1998	247/5600	236/2400	700kg	358	4.0	-	160	-	38.0	+ The way it drives - The way it looks ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
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 S 1.6	144 D	£27,450	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	876kg	155	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ New 1.6-litre Elise is light and fantastic - Very slightly slower than 1.8 ★★★★★

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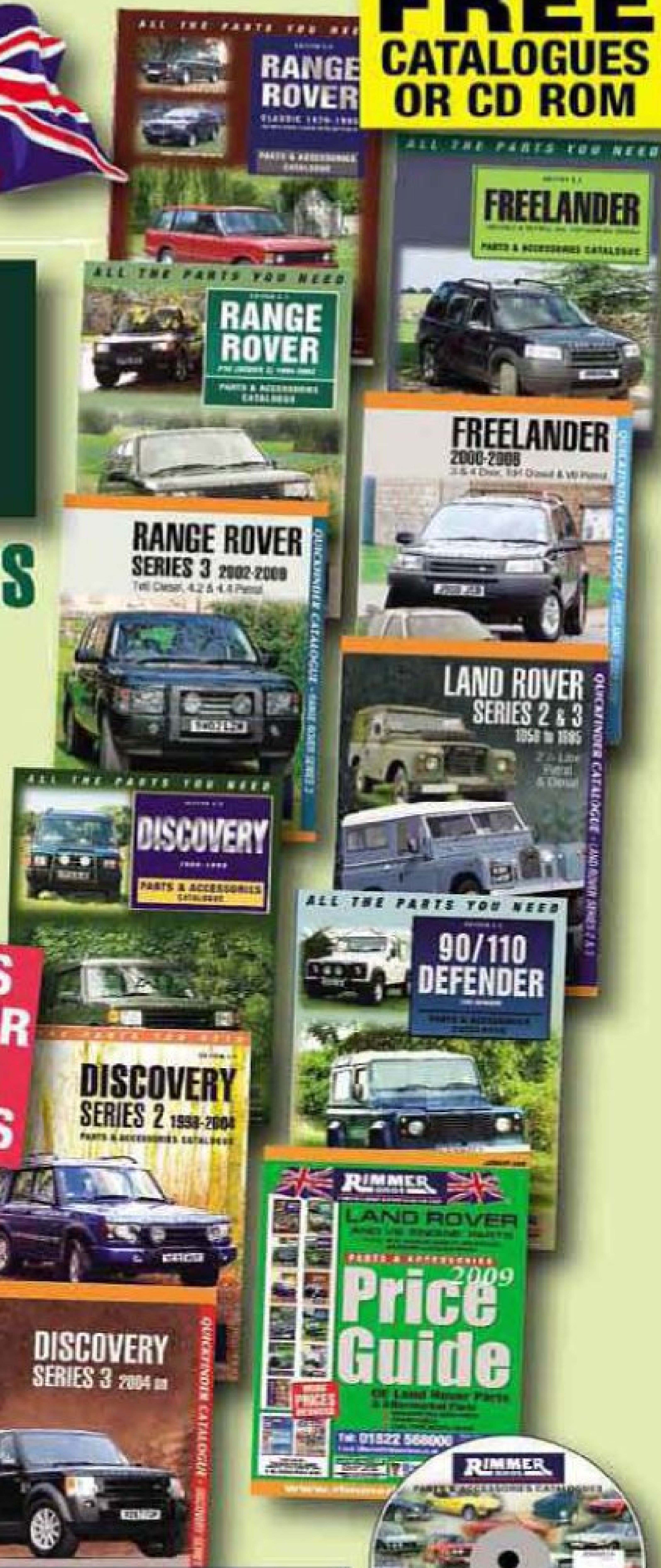
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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO ₂ g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Lotus Elise R	068 F	£31,450	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrilling Elise yet - Blaring engine note
Lotus Elise SC	131 F	£34,450	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 2-Eleven	126 F	£32,440	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricy once it's made road-legal
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	£40,945	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 F	£76,590	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 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	044 F	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricy
Lotus Elise S1	126 F	'96-'00	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?
Lotus 340R	126 F	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... - ...that 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 uninvolved
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	£98,200	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.3	-	176	354	18.5	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals
Maserati 4200 Spyder	055 F	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1720kg	229	4.9	-	177	-	15.2	+ Magnificent engine, decent chassis - Brutal turn-in
Mazda MX-5 1.8i SE		£17,500	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1155kg	109	9.9	-	121	167	40.4	+ Basic MX-5 offers ESP-less fun - But you'll probably want the 2.0's power
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech	138 F	£20,645	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1173kg	144	7.6	-	132	181	37.2	+ 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	-	-	+ 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	120 R	£38,260	6/3498	301/6500	266/4900	1485kg	206	5.5	13.5	155	227	29.1	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater
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		£79,965	8/5461	383/6000	391/2800	1910kg	204	5.4	-	155	272	24.4	+ Unflappable, gorgeous, beautifully engineered - Just a bit dull
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	£104,560	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1895kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.3	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG		£157,510	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2045kg	300	4.2	-	155	-	18.7	+ Humongous torque - Humongously expensive
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	070 F	'02-'07	8/5439	493/6100	516/2650	1955kg	256	4.6	10.2	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'07	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey
Mini Cooper S Convertible		£19,965	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1305kg	141	7.2	-	140	139	47.1	+ It's still a great driver's car - The image is far from masculine
Mini John Cooper Works Conv.	130 F	£24,275	4/1598	208/6000	206/1850	1305kg	162	6.9	-	146	169	39.8	+ A manlier Mini cabrio. As hardcore as the hatch... - ...which is still better
MG TF LE500		£16,399	4/1796	133/6750	122/5000	1185kg	114	8.4	-	127	185	35.8	+ It's not bad to drive - But it can't be recommended at this price
Morgan Roadster V6	073 D	£39,038	6/2967	202/6000	206/4900	950kg	216	4.9	-	134	225	28.8	+ Lusty V6, romantic atmosphere - Bygone dynamics
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 F	£126,900	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1190kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a 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	£30,445	6/3696	326/7000	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		'04-'09	6/3498	309/6600	264/4800	1600kg	196	5.8	-	155	-	24.8	+ Drives just like the coupe - But doesn't look as good
Porsche Boxster		£34,726	6/2893	252/6400	214/4400	1335kg	192	5.9	-	163	221	30.1	+ Still as impressive as ever - It's a typically Porsche facelift
Porsche Boxster S	128 F	£41,724	6/3436	306/6400	265/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	170	223	29.7	+ As above, but with more power - Lighter steering than before
Porsche Boxster Spyder	140 F	£45,603	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	-	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not practical
Porsche Boxster (Mk2)		'05-'09	6/2687	241/6500	201/4600	1305kg	188	6.0	-	160	-	29.4	+ Mk2 Boxster is even better than the Mk1 - Ubiquity?
Porsche Boxster S (Mk2)	101 D	'07-'09	6/3387	291/6250	251/4400	1355kg	218	5.3	-	169	-	27.2	+ Real drop-top alternative to a 911 - It ain't cheap
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	130 F	£80,343	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1510kg	256	4.9	-	188	242	27.4	+ Minimal compromise, max performance - Questionable image
Porsche 911 C4 Cabrio	122 D	£76,143	6/3614	341/6500	288/4400	1555kg	223	5.2	-	176	242	27.4	+ The usual - The usual image problems
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio	139 D	£113,467	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1645kg	305	3.8	-	194	275	24.1	+ Absurdly quick and capable drop-top - We'd still take the coupe
Porsche 911 Speedster	152 D	£144,100	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1540kg	265	4.4	-	189	242	27.0	+ Rarity, quality, head-turning styling - More collectors' than drivers' car
Porsche 911 C2 Cabrio (1996)		'05	6/3387	316/6800	273/4250	1386kg	232	5.0	-	174	-	25.4	+ Feels solid like the hard-top - What more do you want?
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (1996)	060 F	'03-'05	6/3596	414/6000	413/4600	1700kg	250	4.7	-	185	-	-	+ Faster than you'll ever need it to be - Just the image thing again
Radical SR4 Tracksport	070 F	£28,995	4/1500	250/9000	130/8000	462kg	550	3.5	-	160	-	-	+ 2004 Trackday Car of the Year - You may want a trailer
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
Rolls-Royce Phantom DHC	106 D	£325,500	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2620kg	176	5.6	-	149	377	18.0	+ Opulent throwback - Short of pace and perfection
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 T350T	067 D	'04-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.4	-	175+	-	-	+ Targa top roof, grunty engine - Lacks polish
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Griff 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 Megabus	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	£27,499	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	£16,950	4/1275	65/6000	72/3000	498kg	132	8.5	-	120	-	-	+ Old-school charm - Old-school power
Westfield XTR4	068 D	£33,995	4/1781	220/5500	184/5000	542kg	413	3.6	-	160	-	-	+ Mini-Le Mans racer - You wouldn't want to drive it there
Westfield SEIGHT	068 F	'92-'94	8/3900	270/6000	-	622kg	441	4.4	9.4	144	-	-	+ Snarling, fire-breathing V8, ferocious pace - Spits fuel at you
Wiesmann Roadster MF3	077 D	£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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COUPES/GTs



OUR CHOICE Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS. From its gloriously vocal flat-six to its race-car aero addenda, the latest RS is a machine optimised for the circuit, yet it also works extraordinarily well on the road. Simply intoxicating, and our 2010 Car of the Year.

Best of the Rest: Lotus's Evora (right) was our 2009 eCoty, offering Elise fun and tactility in a baby-supercar package. Nissan's GT-R (our 2008 eCoty) is supercar-quick, while Audi's R8s are sublime and BMW's M3 is mega, especially with the Competition Pack.



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO ₂ g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Alfa Romeo Brera 3.2 V6	120 F	£30,065	6/3195	256/6300	237/4500	1532kg	170	6.9	-	155	260	-	+ Brera made better for UK roads - Steering still lacking some feel ★★★★
Alfa Romeo GT 3.2 V6 Lusso	071 R	'04-'08	6/3179	240/6200	221/4800	1410kg	173	6.3	15.5	149	-	22.8	+ Gorgeous looks, strong performance - Unsettled ride ★★★★
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	120 F	£111,000	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold ★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo	108 F	£50,250	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	29.1	+ Alpina's M3 alternative - Too refined for some ★★★★
Artega GT	122 F	£64,860	6/3597	296/6600	258/2400	1100kg	273	4.9	-	170	-	-	+ Stunning looks, chassis up with the best - Interior design, price ★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage 4.7	120 F	£88,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ More power lifts Vantage to a new level - Ride is unremittingly firm ★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N420	147 F	£96,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1603kg	266	4.7	-	180	-	20.4	+ Aston's best V8 Vantage yet... - ...is by far the most expensive ★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage 4.3	109 F	'05-'08	8/4281	380/7300	302/5000	1630kg	237	5.2	12.0	175	-	-	+ Gorgeous, awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match 911 dynamically ★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N400	114 F	'07-'08	8/4281	400/7300	309/5000	1630kg	249	4.9	-	177	-	-	+ Brilliant limited edition Vantage - They should have built more like this ★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	146 D	£122,445	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1760kg	271	4.6	-	190	389	17.2	+ Ride & handling transformed for 2010 - Rapide doesn't cost much more ★★★★
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 ★★★★
Aston Martin DBS	142 F	£170,500	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary ★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI	150 D	£27,130	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1280kg	168	6.1	-	152	154	42.8	+ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game ★★★★
Audi TTS	119 D	£35,590	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	155	184	35.3	+ Usefully quicker TT; great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game ★★★★
Audi TT RS	135 R	£45,810	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	214	31.0	+ 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 quattro	105 D	£42,915	8/4163	349/7000	324/3500	1630kg	221	5.1	-	155	288	23.3	+ Fast, comfortable, beautifully built - Soft and a bit uninteresting ★★★★
Audi RS5	151 R	£58,685	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1725kg	261	4.3	10.6	155	-	-	+ Brilliant engine and accomplished chassis... - ...don't gel together ★★★★
Audi R8 4.2 V8 quattro	106 R	£86,885	8/4163	414/7800	317/4500	1560kg	270	4.1	9.9	187	332	20.3	+ Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price ★★★★
Audi R8 5.2 V10 quattro	146 R	£108,040	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	3.9	8.4	196	351	19.2	+ The fabulous R8 gets a supercar engine - Looks a lot like the V8 ★★★★
Audi R8 GT	151 D	£142,585	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	199	-	-	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted ★★★★
Audi Quattro 20V	019 F	'90-'91	5/2226	220/5900	228/1950	1329kg	146	6.2	18.2	143	-	19.1	+ Modern classic - Buy wisely to avoid big bills ★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£135,760	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2320kg	248	4.6	-	198	384	-	+ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst ★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	115 F	£144,440	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2350kg	259	4.3	-	202	396	17.0	+ Stupendous performance, fine dynamics - Weight, thirst... ★★★★
Bentley Conti Supersports	137 F	£170,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2200	2240kg	282	3.7	-	204	388	17.3	+ A thoroughly impressive car... - ...rather than a fun and involving one ★★★★
Bentley Brooklands	116 D	£241,600	8/6761	530/4000	774/3250	2655kg	203	5.0	-	184	465	14.5	+ More fun than it has any right to be - It's a bit thirsty ★★★★
BMW 135i M Sport	113 F	£30,675	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1560kg	197	5.3	-	155	198	30.7	+ Fast, fun, £20K cheaper than an M3 - Not as wild as we'd hoped ★★★★
BMW 330Ci	071 R	'00-'06	6/2979	231/5900	221/3500	1522kg	154	6.4	16.6	155	-	31.0	+ Not much slower than a contemporary M3 - Coupés should be bolder ★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport	095 D	£38,215	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1600kg	192	5.2	12.2	155	196	31.0	+ Eager engine, exploitable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling ★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	151 R	£53,275	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1655kg	254	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its talented new rivals - Priced very close to 911 territory ★★★★
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	150 F	£115,215	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	155	-	-	+ Highly exclusive, feels special - Highly priced, too. And it's no GT3 RS ★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	066 F	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1570kg	219	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	+ One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel ★★★★
BMW M3 CS (E46)	088 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1570kg	219	5.1	-	155	-	23.7	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car ★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	060 R	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	255	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	+ Stripped-down road-race M3 - Standard brakes barely adequate ★★★★
BMW M3 (E36)		'93-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	5.4	12.8	157	-	25.7	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original ★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	019 F	'86-'90	4/2302	220/6750	180/4750	1257kg	178	6.7	17.8	144	-	20.3	+ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only ★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si Coupe	107 R	'06-'09	6/2996	261/6600	232/2750	1395kg	190	5.6	-	155	-	31.7	+ The looks, the sounds, the way it goes - Fidgety chassis ★★★★
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1424kg	241	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	1450kg	228	5.1	-	155	-	25.0	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse ★★★★
BMW M6	106 R	£87,335	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1785kg	285	4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace ★★★★
Bristol Blenheim 3 'S'	038 D	£158,331	8/5900	n/a	410/3500	1787kg	-	5.4	-	155	-	21.7	+ Individualism - Anachronism ★★★
Chevrolet Camaro SS	148 F	£30,000	8/6162	420/5900	420/4600	1751kg	247	4.7	-	155	-	-	+ Looks like a Transformer made real - We'd prefer it in robot mode ★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette C6	116 D	£49,033	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1461kg	300	4.3	-	186	-	21.2	+ A Corvette with no apologies needed - Still left-hand drive only ★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06	099 F	£66,403	8/7011	505/6300	469/4800	1418kg	363	3.9	8.5	198	-	19.2	+ 8.5 to 100, brakes, price - Not quite the road-racer we expected ★★★★
Dodge Challenger *	122 D	£40,000	8/6059	425/6200	420/4800	1877kg	230	5.2	-	160+	-	-	+ Effortlessly cool... - ...if you live in Hazzard County ★★★★
Dodge SRT-10 Coupe	087 D	'06-'08	10/8277	500/5600	525/4200	1565kg	324	3.9	-	190	-	-	+ Awesome power, muscle-car looks - Cheap cabin, vague gearchange ★★★★
Fabio GT5350	132 F	£76,375	6/2967	350/6500	308/5400	1066kg	337	4.0	-	170+	-	-	+ Genuine Porsche 911 rival - Needs final fettle ★★★★
Ford Mustang GT *	148 F	£35,000	8/4951	412/6500	390/4250	1635kg	256	4.5	-	155	-	-	+ Compelling alternative to a Nissan 370Z - LHD and imports only ★★★★
Ford Shelby GT500 *	140 R	£47,000	8/5411	540/6000	510/4500	1780kg	308	4.6	-	155	-	-	+ Massive power never fails to entertain - Heavy, unsophisticated chassis ★★★★
Honda CR-Z GT	144 F	£19,999	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)	095 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) *	037 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	043 F	'90-'05	6/3179	270/7300	220/5300	1410kg	196	5.5	-	168	-	22.8	+ 'The useable supercar' - 270bhp sounds a bit weedy today ★★★★
Honda NSX-R *	051 F	'02-'03	6/3179	276/7100	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	168	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK ★★★★
Infiniti G37S Coupé	127 R	£35,890	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1706kg	188	5.8	13.8	155	248	26.7	+ Softer 370Z delivers sharp-driving swing at the Germans - Bland looks ★★★★
Jaguar XK 5.0	130 D	£63,900	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1660kg	232	5.2	-	155	264	25.2	+ Fine car for the likes of us - Jag buyers may not like the harder edge ★★★★
Jaguar XKR	129 D	£77,900	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1753kg	292	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home ★★★★
Jaguar XKR 75	150 F	£85,500	8/5000	523/6000	488/2500	1762kg	302	4.4	-	174	-	-	+ Fastest and most involving Jag - They're only making 75 of them ★★★★
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	105 F	£35,550	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Non-limited edition of the Exige 240R - Uninspiring soundtrack ★★★★

evo TRIED & TESTED

MUVI ATOM

Price: £79.99
From: www.firebox.com

Its makers claim that it's the world's smallest high-resolution camcorder, and measuring less than two inches high and just three-quarters of an inch wide, it's hard to imagine a camera being usefully smaller.

The Atom comes with various mounting clips and a 2GB micro SD card that can record up to 90 minutes of footage, which is twice as long as the rechargeable battery will last. It's a very easy device to use - you just switch it on and start recording - but on the flip side you can't see what you're shooting until

you've downloaded it onto a computer, so some experimentation is required before you can be certain you've got your angle and framing correct.

Although the Atom doesn't record in widescreen, movement is captured well enough, but like all cameras with very small lenses it performs best outside on a bright, sunny day. Bring it indoors and the quality drops markedly. However, it's ideal for recording onboard footage at a trackday as it's so small it can be mounted anywhere on the car or yourself - and as it costs about the same as a tank of super-unleaded, if you lose it your day won't be completely ruined.

Roger Green

Tiny Atom is ideal for recording in-car action at a trackday



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	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	£45,950	4/1796	256/8000	174/6000	890kg	293	4.0	-	152	199	31.1	+ Feels like a race car, yet works on the road - Costs the best part of £50K *****
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 240R	087 F	'05	4/1796	243/8000	174/7000	930kg	264	3.9	9.9	155	-	-	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Instantly sold out *****
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	£48,550	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	205	32.5	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricy options *****
Lotus Evora S	152 F	£57,550	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	239	-	+ 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	8/3506	350/6500	295/4250	1299kg	274	4.3	9.9	175	-	22.0	+ Designed for track work but brilliant on the road - Limited edition *****
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£80,450	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.5	12.7	177	330	19.7	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911 *****
Maserati GranTurismo S	120 F	£92,360	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1880kg	234	4.9	-	183	354	17.0	+ A genuinely sporty Maser - A bit heavier and pricier than we'd like *****
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 R3	122 R	£25,540	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+ Even sharper chassis than basic RX-8 - Same water-thin torque output *****
Mazda RX-8	071 R	'03-'08	2R/1308	228/8500	156/5500	1394kg	166	7.0	19.0	146	-	25.2	+ Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Dull-sounding engine *****
Mercedes-Benz E500 Coupe	132 D	£51,185	8/5461	382/6000	391/2800	1715kg	226	5.4	-	155	254	25.9	+ The usual V8 Merc strengths - Not overly exciting, no AMG version coming *****
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	£111,985	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2060kg	264	4.5	-	155	244	-	+ Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition *****
Mercedes-Benz CL65 AMG	115 F	£156,430	12/5980	603/4800	737/2000	2240kg	273	4.4	-	155	334	19.1	+ Unsurprisingly rapid on non-wiggly bits - Lacks charm, involvement *****
Mercedes-Benz CL65 AMG	069 F	'03-'06	12/5980	612/6500	738/5950	2155kg	289	4.4	-	186	-	-	+ If depreciation's done its work... - Steering slightly disappointing *****
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	131 F	£28,345	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1520kg	218	5.4	-	155	248	-	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer *****
Nissan 350Z (309bhp)	107 R	'07-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling *****
Nissan 350Z (296bhp)	094 F	'06-'07	6/3498	296/6400	260/4800	1525kg	197	5.8	-	155	-	24.8	+ Small power boost adds to Z's appeal - Slightly low-rent interior *****
Nissan 350Z (276bhp)	059 D	'03-'06	6/3498	276/6200	268/4800	1525kg	184	6.1	14.8	155	-	24.8	+ Original 350Z makes a great used buy - As above *****
Nissan 200SX		'94-'02	4/1998	197/6400	195/4800	1267kg	158	6.5	-	142	-	29.1	+ Fast, cheap and rwd - Looks, image *****
Nissan GT-R	152 F	£69,950	6/3799	520/6400	475/3200	1740kg	304	3.5	-	194	295	-	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year. Now even better - Pricier than before *****
Nissan GT-R Spec V	150 F	£124,950	6/3799	478/6400	447/3500	1680kg	289	3.4	-	193	295	-	+ Phenomenal brakes and handling - Not really worth the extra £55K *****
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	+ Proof that Jap hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply *****
Noble M400	089 F	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185	-	-	+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior *****
Noble M12 GTD-3R	070 F	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	+ The ability to humble exotica - Flawed driving position *****
Noble M12 GTD	023 R	'00-'03	6/2544	310/6000	320/3500	980kg	321	4.1	10.2	165	-	-	+ Gives GT3 drivers a fright - Styling could be more cohesive *****
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	143 D	£22,750	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1297kg	154	7.5	-	147	159	40.9	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting *****
Porsche Cayman	131 F	£37,261	6/2893	261/7200	221/4400	1330kg	199	5.8	-	165	221	30.1	+ Extra power, just as involving - Still lacks desirability of other Porsches *****
Porsche Cayman S	132 F	£45,449	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 S	097 F	'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 [1997.2]		£64,256	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 [1997.2]	121 F	£72,894	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 [1997.2]	152 D	£76,758	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 4S [1997.2]		£77,331	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1480kg	261	4.7	-	185	247	26.9	+ Huge grip, power and composure - The Carrera S is £4K cheaper *****
Porsche 911 GT3 [1997.2]	138 F	£85,564	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaces - Give us a minute... *****
Porsche 911 GT3 RS [1997.2]	152 F	£104,841	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ Our 2010 car of the year - Looks and noise are minutely OTT *****
Porsche 911 Sport Classic	140 F	£137,529	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1425kg	287	4.6	-	188	-	-	+ Curious concept that works well - GT2 price with Carrera S performance *****
Porsche 911 GT3 [1997.1]	103 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs *****
Porsche 911 GT3 RS [1997.1]	105 F	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3 *****
Porsche 911 GT3 [1996.2]	066 F	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	4.3	9.2	190	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Looks softer than previous GT3 *****
Porsche 911 GT3 RS [1996.2]	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply *****
Porsche 911 RS [1993]	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 911 GT3 [1996.1]	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 Carrera S [1997.1]	070 F	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	+ 'S' is like a junior GT3 - Tech overload? *****
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S [1996]	051 F	'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 [1996.3.4]	008 R	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	230	4.6	-	173	-	28.0	+ Beautifully polished 911 - Some like a bit of rough *****
Porsche 911 Carrera [1993]		'94-'97	6/3600	285/6100	251/5250	1372kg	211	5.2	-	168	-	25.0	+ More character than 996 - Harder work at speed *****
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 *****
Porsche 928 GTS		'92-'95	8/5396	350/5700	317/4250	1790kg	199	5.2	-	171	-	17.0	+ Big-hearted and beautiful - Be sure to buy a good one *****
Renault Alpine A610		'92-'96	6/2975	250/5750	258/2900	1420kg	179	5.4	13.8	160	-	21.0	+ Overlooked, bargain-price French 911. Try one - R5 interior *****
Superformance Daytona Coupe	149 D	£102,225	8/6162	437/5900	424/4600	1300kg	342	3.9	-	200+	-	-	+ Awesome engine, awesome looks - Damp roads equal moist palms *****
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 Typhon	102 F	'06	6/3996	400/7000	330/5250	1060kg	383	3.9	-	180+	-	-	+ Carbon body, exclusivity - Interesting damping, no supercharger *****
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3966	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	5.0	11.4	160+	-	-	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion *****
TVR Cerbera 4.5	014 F	'97-'04	8/4578	420/6750	380/5500	1100kg	368	3.9	-	180+	-	-	+ Genuine supercar pace - Integrity? *****
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	122 R	£23,615	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1298kg	162	6.9	-	149	172	38.2	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair *****
VW Scirocco R	138 F	£28,505	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1352kg	196	5.8	-	155	189	35.3	+ 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 MF4	117 D	£108,000	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1250kg	294	4.5	-	174	-	-	+ Old-school looks with new-school go - Big-school price *****
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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SUPERCARS



OUR CHOICE Ferrari 599 GTO. You can argue about the use of the Gran Turismo Omologato tag (one thing it isn't is an homologation car), but everything else about the GTO just feels so right, from its 661bhp V12 to its racecar-sharp chassis. A legend in the making.

Best of the Rest: The Veyron Super Sport is just awe-inspiring, though you'd have as much sheer fun in a Ferrari 458. We also love the soon-to-be-replaced Murciélago LP670-4 SV (right), Porsche's ballistic GT2 RS and the screaming Lexus LFA.



	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
911 GT9R	127 D	£450,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	£135,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	+ The best car that Aston Martin makes - Erm, a tad thirsty? ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S	110 F	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.9	10.1	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish SDC	035 F	'01-'05	12/5935	460/6500	400/5000	1835kg	255	4.9	10.2	190	-	-	+ Aston's genuine Ferrari rival - Needs Sports Dynamic Pack to shine ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage s/c	001 R	'93-'00	8/5340	550/6500	550/4000	1988kg	281	4.6	-	186	-	13.1	+ 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' ★★★★★
BMW M1		'78-'81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.8	-	161	-	-	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days ★★★★★
Bristol Fighter	146 R	£234,982	10/7990	525/5500	525/4200	1600kg	333	4.0	-	210	-	-	+ Unique, intriguing, goes like stink - Looks perhaps not for everyone ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	£925,000	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space? ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 F	£1.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	-	-	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous broly/roof thing ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 F	£2.0m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	-	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals ★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	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	-	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain ★★★★★
Ferrari California	143 F	£143,870	8/4287	453/7750	358/5000	1735kg	265	3.8	9.0	193	299	21.5	+ Despite the CC roof, it's a real Ferrari - We'd still take an F430 Spider ★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	152 F	£169,545	8/4499	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.4	-	202	307	21.2	+ An astounding achievement, looks fantastic - There'll never be a manual ★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 R	£207,620	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	15.8	+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob ★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano HGTE	146 R	£221,884	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	-	+ As above, with a bit more edge - Can be a little too edgy in the wet ★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	149 F	£299,300	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good ★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti F1	090 R	£217,775	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1840kg	294	4.3	9.8	199	470	13.8	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - Looks divide opinion ★★★★★
Ferrari F430	087 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1450kg	342	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	008 R	'99-'04	8/3586	400/8500	275/4750	1390kg	292	4.5	9.0	180+	-	-	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be ★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	-	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud ★★★★★
Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta	003 F	'97-'99	8/3496	375/8250	268/6000	1332kg	286	4.7	-	183	-	-	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding? ★★★★★
Ferrari 575M 'Fiorano'	050 D	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ 'Fiorano pack' makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard ★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	066 F	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	-	+ Everything - Nothing ★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	149 F	'02-'04	12/5998	650/7800	485/5500	1365kg	484	3.5	6.7	217+	-	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1 ★★★★★
Ferrari F50	064 F	'96-'97	12/4968	513/8000	347/6500	1229kg	424	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ The best drivers' Ferrari - Lines lack tension ★★★★★
Ferrari F40	064 F	'87-'92	8/2936	478/7000	425/4000	1100kg	441	3.7	-	201	-	-	+ 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? ★★★★★
Ferrari 512TR		'92-'94	12/4943	422/6750	362/5500	1517kg	291	4.8	-	195	-	16.0	+ Pick of the flat-12 Ferraris, incredible sound - It's a bit wide ★★★★★
Ford GT	087 F	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - JC had one. Reckoned it didn't handle... ★★★★★
Gumpert Apollo	110 F	£275,000	8/4163	690/6300	675/4000	1200kg	584	3.0	-	220+	-	-	+ Stupendous performance, 'Apollo' - High price, 'Gumpert' ★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	131 F	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	213	-	-	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - ...until McLaren built the F1 ★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCX	094 F	£500,000	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	3.9	7.7	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar ★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCR Edition	118 F	£1.5m	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ The world's fastest car. Probably - Spike power delivery ★★★★★
Koenigsegg CC85	061 F	'03-'06	8/4700	655/6800	553/5900	1175kg	566	3.3	-	242	-	-	+ Pretty darned quick - A tad intimidating ★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2	138 F	£166,784	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg	399	3.9	-	199	-	-	+ The mad rear-driven Lambo is back! - For a limited period only... ★★★★★
Lamborghini LP560-4 Spyder	130 F	£155,860	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1550kg	362	4.0	-	201	330	20.0	+ The sound of a V10 with no roof - A smidge less hardcore than the coupe ★★★★★
Lamborghini LP570-4 S'leggera	152 F	£174,840	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg	426	3.5	-	202	325	-	+ A reminder of how great the Gallardo is - LP560-4 does as good a job ★★★★★
Lambo LP570-4 Performante	153 D	£186,000	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1485kg	384	3.9	-	201	-	-	+ It's a Superleggera Spyder - ...that's not really super-light ★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 F	'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 G'ardo S'leggera	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 Murciélago LP640	093 F	£212,750	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg	385	3.3	-	211	-	21.3	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes ★★★★★
Lambo M'lago LP640 Roadster	101 D	£232,990	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1690kg	379	3.4	8.0	205	-	21.3	+ Open-top thrills come no bigger - The hood's a bad joke ★★★★★
Lambo M'lago LP670-4 SV	138 F	£270,038	12/6946	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg	429	3.2	7.3	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares ★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	'01-'06	12/6192	570/7500	479/5400	1650kg	351	4.0	-	205	-	-	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed ★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 F	'00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions ★★★★★
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 Countach QV		'88-'91	12/5167	455/7000	369/5200	1447kg	320	4.9	-	180	-	13.7	+ Still the definitive supercar - Visibility, pract - oh hell, who cares? ★★★★★
Lexus LFA	152 F	£336,000	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match ★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 R	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better ★★★★★
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 SL65 AMG Black	131 F	£250,000	12/5980	661/5400	737/2200	1876kg	358	4.0	8.1	199	-	-	+ Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers price ★★★★★
Mercedes SLS AMG	152 F	£157,500	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	4.1	8.4	197	308	-	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox ★★★★★
Mercedes 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 ★★★★★
Mercedes SLR 722 McLaren	103 D	'07	8/5439	641/6500	605/4000	1574kg	414	3.5	-	209	-	-	+ Monster presence, monster pace - Highly strung ★★★★★
Noble M600	138 F	£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1250kg	528	3.0	-	225	-	-	+ Noble's unbelievably good attack on the supercar class - It's a bit pricey ★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 F	£1.5m	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1400kg	485	3.4	-	217+	-	-	+ The best Zonda ever - The last Zonda ever (probably) ★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F Roadster CS	127 D	'06-'08	12/7291	641/6200	575/4000	1400kg	465	3.5	-	214	-	-	+ As light and stiff as the coupe - You'd better like carbonfibre ★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	082 F	'05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg	497	3.6	-	214	-	-	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Choose interior carefully ★★★★★
Pagani Zonda C12S	096 F	'01-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	197	-	-	+ Set a new supercar benchmark - Harry won't let us use his long-termer ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.2)	140 R	£105,927	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1570kg	319	3.2	7.3	193	272	24.8	+ The Turbo at the very top of its game - The GT3's cheaper... ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo S (997.2)	146 R	£123,263	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)	152 F	£164,107	6/3600	611/6500	516/2250	1370kg	453	3.5	-	205	284	-	+ More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm... ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.1)	094 F	'06-'09	6/3600	472/6000	457/1950	1585kg	303	4.0	8.7	193	-	22.1	+ Monster cornering ability - A bit woolly on its standard settings ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (996)	017 F	'00-'06	6/3600	420/6000	413/4600	1540kg	272	4.1	10.0	189	-	21.0	+ 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	-	19.4	+ Stupendous all-weather supercar - It doesn't rain enough ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (993)	003												



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Ask the experts

Every issue we put your questions to our panel of experts

TUNING & ENGINEERING

Q A fairly common criticism of cars in your tests is that their steering lacks weight or feel about the dead-ahead. But isn't that inevitable? When I turn the steering wheel, I'm making the front wheels twist the tyre sidewalls to make the tread point in a different direction to the one the car's going in, so I'd expect to feel resistance to the force I'm applying. But with the front wheels dead-ahead, the sidewalls aren't being twisted, so I wouldn't expect the same feeling that comes from applying even a small amount of lock – David Baverstock

A In one respect you are absolutely right: the reactive force generated in cornering is simply not present in the straight-ahead position. But there are still noticeable forces generated from changes in camber and undulations in the road surface under the tyre.

Customer demand for greater refinement has driven the industry to install greater isolation of the steering gear and suspension. Most cars have rubber couplings in the steering column, the steering rack is mounted on rubber isolators and the suspension links have large rubber bushes, so now these small forces are totally absorbed and the feeling is rather 'dead'.

Of course, it doesn't have to be this way and there are still a number of



Understanding how your car's steering responds can help if it lacks feel around the straight-ahead

performance cars engineered without this isolation, and it is usually possible to bring the feel back to most ordinary cars by using firmer bushes or solid mounts at the expense of a bit more noise and vibration – **RH**

Steering feel provides the driver with information about the connection between tyre and road – telegraphed messages to help you determine available grip and steer a precise course. As a car spends a large percentage of

its life with the steering straight-ahead or just off-centre, you might expect it to communicate wheel position and available grip irrespective of steering input, but as Ralph has explained, this is difficult to engineer while meeting the refinement expectations of many of today's car buyers.

This being the case, it can be helpful to assess your vehicle's steering. There are many criteria to consider, including: Is there a delay after you have made an input with the steering before your

vehicle responds, or is the response instant? Is the relationship between steering input and steering weight linear or does the steering weight up exponentially? Does the vehicle steer the radius you expected, or more or less than you expected? Does your steering self-centre easily or does it need some encouragement?

Evaluating your vehicle's steering characteristics in this way will enhance your ability to gauge what feel there is, aiding safety and speed – **CH**

THE EXPERTS



JOHN BARKER

– our road test editor has been road-testing and racing since the late

'80s and has driven every significant supercar and performance car since. Want to know which car to buy next? Barker's your man



RALPH HOSIER

– an engineer by profession, with stints at Ford, Bentley and Jaguar

among others, Hosier is passionate about all things automotive. He also campaigns a Triumph GT6 racer – with a V12 engine, naturally



ROGER GREEN

– experienced racer and trackday specialist Green answers all your

questions related to circuit driving. He's also our used car expert, so can tell you exactly what to look for when buying second-hand



COLIN HOAD

– having mastered his craft as a motor industry driver trainer, Hoad is now

chief instructor at CAT Driver Training (catdrivertraining.co.uk) and is ready to help you improve your performance driving skills

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Ask the experts

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TRACKDAYS

Q It's time you guys got down to answering that age-old pub argument about which is quicker around a track, a car or a bike. This topic did actually arise in my local boozier recently and other than everyone agreeing that the two-wheeled option would be faster down the straight bits, we couldn't conclude the argument satisfactorily. Put us out of our misery, please – Erik Gidney

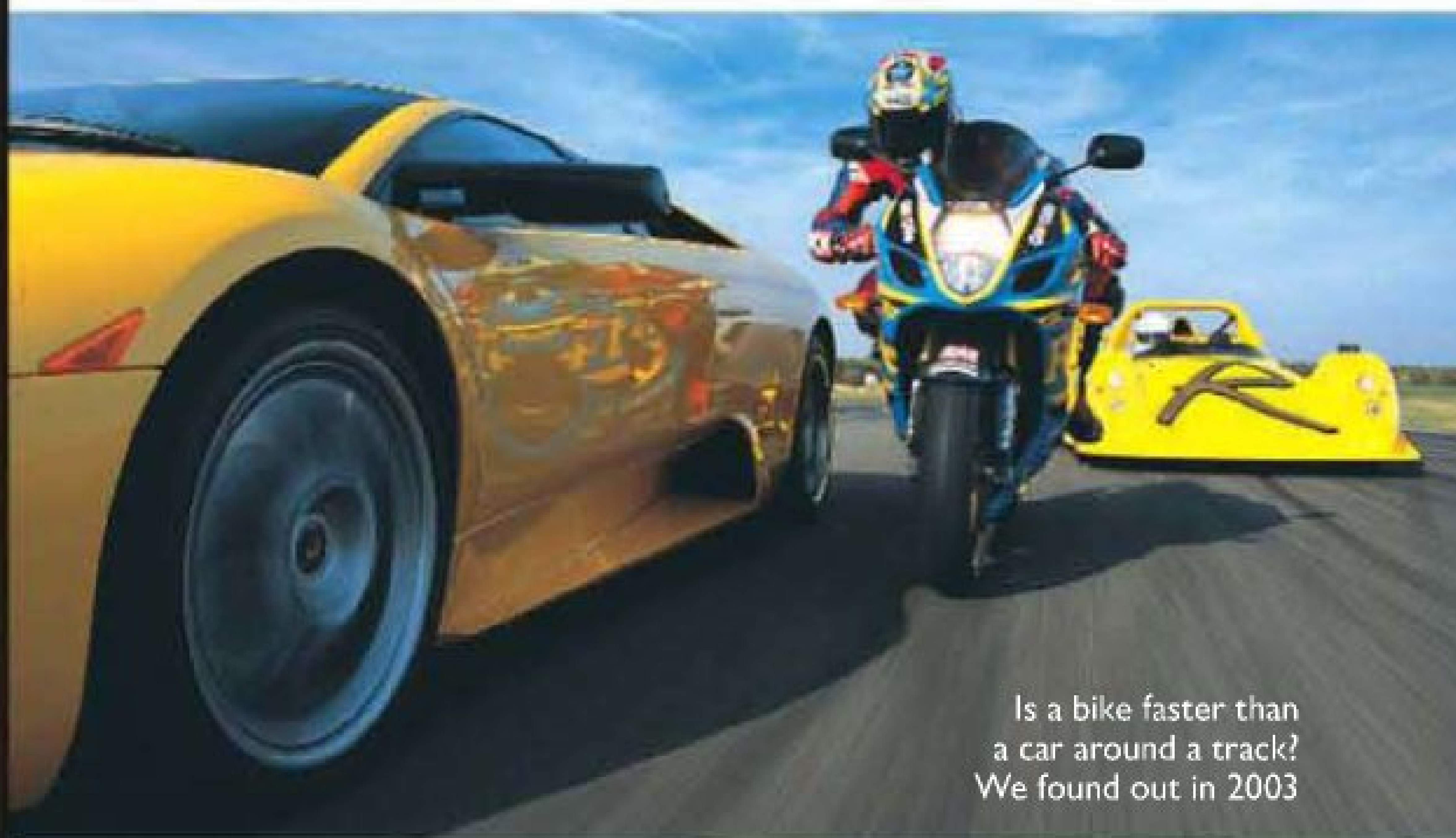
A Those who have been reading evo since 2003 will be well placed to answer this, as back in issue 062 we pitched a Suzuki GSX-R1000 against a Lambo Murciélago, an M3 CSL, a 911 GT3 and a Radical SR3 Tracksport. To complete the group we also included a Crescent GSX-R1000, a £23,000, 180bhp road-legal British Superbike replica. Former GP and World Superbike riders Niall Mackenzie and Aaron Slight performed the riding duties, while fearless Sportscar-racing ace Phil Bennett did the driving.

First we recorded standing-start times. The quickest car to 60mph was the Radical, which got there in 3.4sec,

but the regular GSX-R did it in 3.2, the Crescent in 2.9, and it just got worse for the cars after that. The 570bhp Lambo's 0-150mph time of 19.7sec was impressive, but the standard Suzuki took just 13.1sec to hit the same speed, while the Crescent had it nailed in 10.6sec. Wow!

The Silverstone National circuit was the venue for the main part of the battle, where the bendy bits would surely allow the cars to claw back some lost ground. The GT3 scored the best time of the closed cars with a 1min 10.9sec lap, but this was comfortably beaten by the standard Suzuki, which was almost two seconds faster. The road-legal Radical with its 252bhp Hayabusa engine bettered that with a time of 1min 5.6sec, but even that wasn't enough to defeat the Crescent bike, which was 0.2sec faster still.

So the bikes won. But that's not the whole story as the National loop has three long straights and few corners, and the more bends a circuit has – particularly slow ones – the more the advantage shifts towards four-wheelers. Only a rematch at the Nürburgring will truly settle things – RG



Is a bike faster than a car around a track? We found out in 2003

THE EXPERT



ROGER GREEN

– evo road tester, racer and used-car expert, Green will answer your questions on circuit work and buying used

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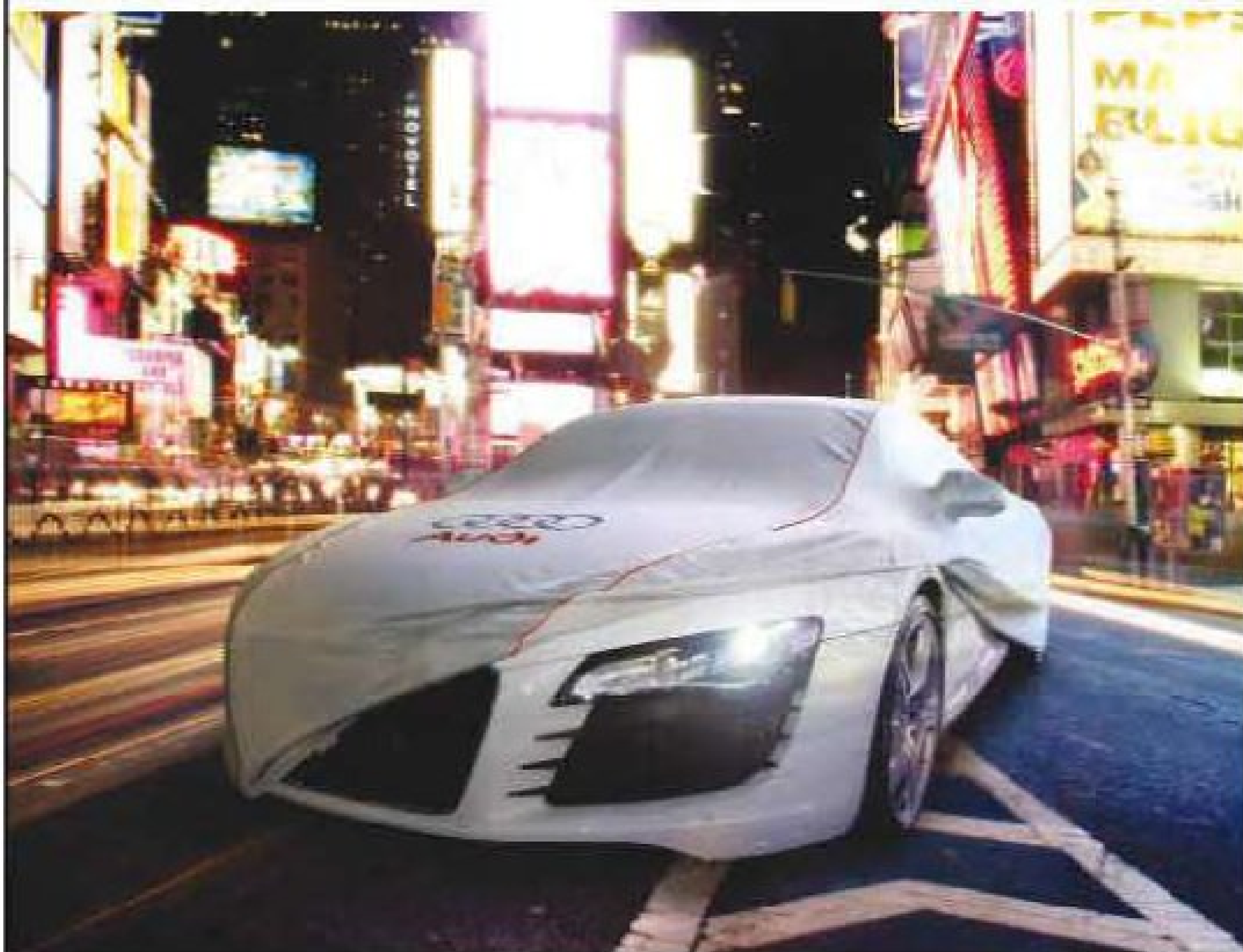
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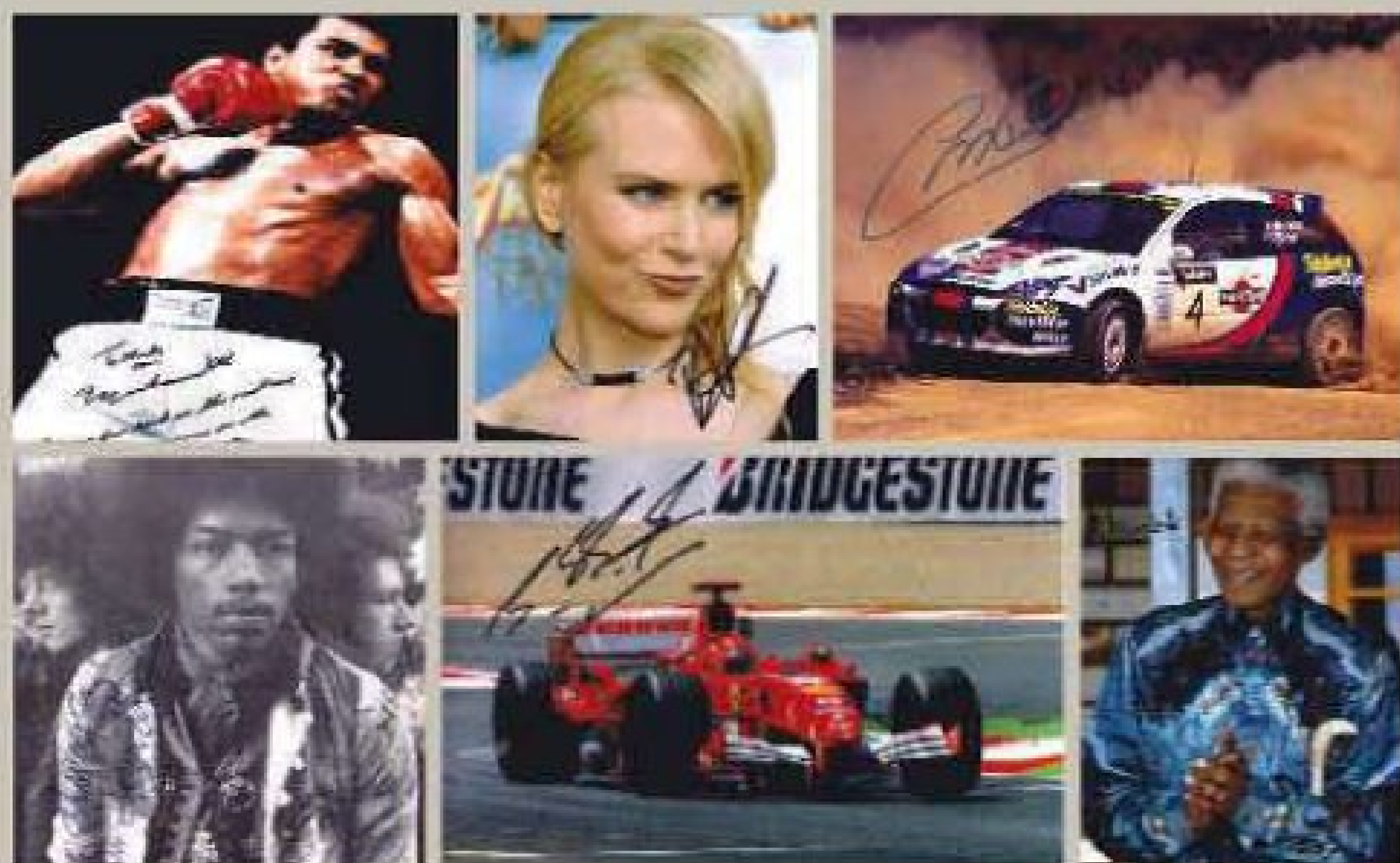
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TUNING & ENGINEERING

Q With a Caterham Supersport as the fun car, and a flagging family workhorse, we have just taken the decision to make the switch from petrol to (turbo)diesel, significantly motivated by fuel economy and tax – not very 'evo', I know!

Having now taken delivery of a second-hand Skoda Octavia 2.0 TDI PD, a friend suggested I might get it chipped to assist on the performance front (and indeed further improve the economy). I'm new to this and would be grateful for a few pointers. Should I look for a Skoda specialist in such matters, a local ECU firm or a national outfit, and what about the 'plug-in' options? – Paul Hedley

A Modern turbodiesels are a world apart from their slow and noisy ancestors, and the tuning potential is substantial. The VW Group 2-litre TDI PD unit makes 140bhp and 236lb ft as standard and you can get big improvements without engine mods.

For example, Superchips quotes gains of 37bhp and 55lb ft for £455 including installation and VAT.

Most chip tunes change the relationship between how hard you press the pedal and the amount of torque the engine produces, the ECU working out how much fuel and boost is needed. All the diagnostic and safety functions that protect your engine are still intact, which is a good thing. Some plug-in units work by confusing the signals to or from the ECU; this still works but the safety functions may be compromised.

Extra mid-range torque will allow you to change up earlier, which can help economy, but the chances are you will use the extra power and so the fuel economy will probably go down. Obviously this extra power can put more strain on other components, so make sure you keep up with maintenance.

For any particular model, the best way to find a reputable conversion is to visit the enthusiast forums for your chosen car and read about other people's experiences – RH

Turbodiesel Octavia good for 170bhp-plus with an ECU remap



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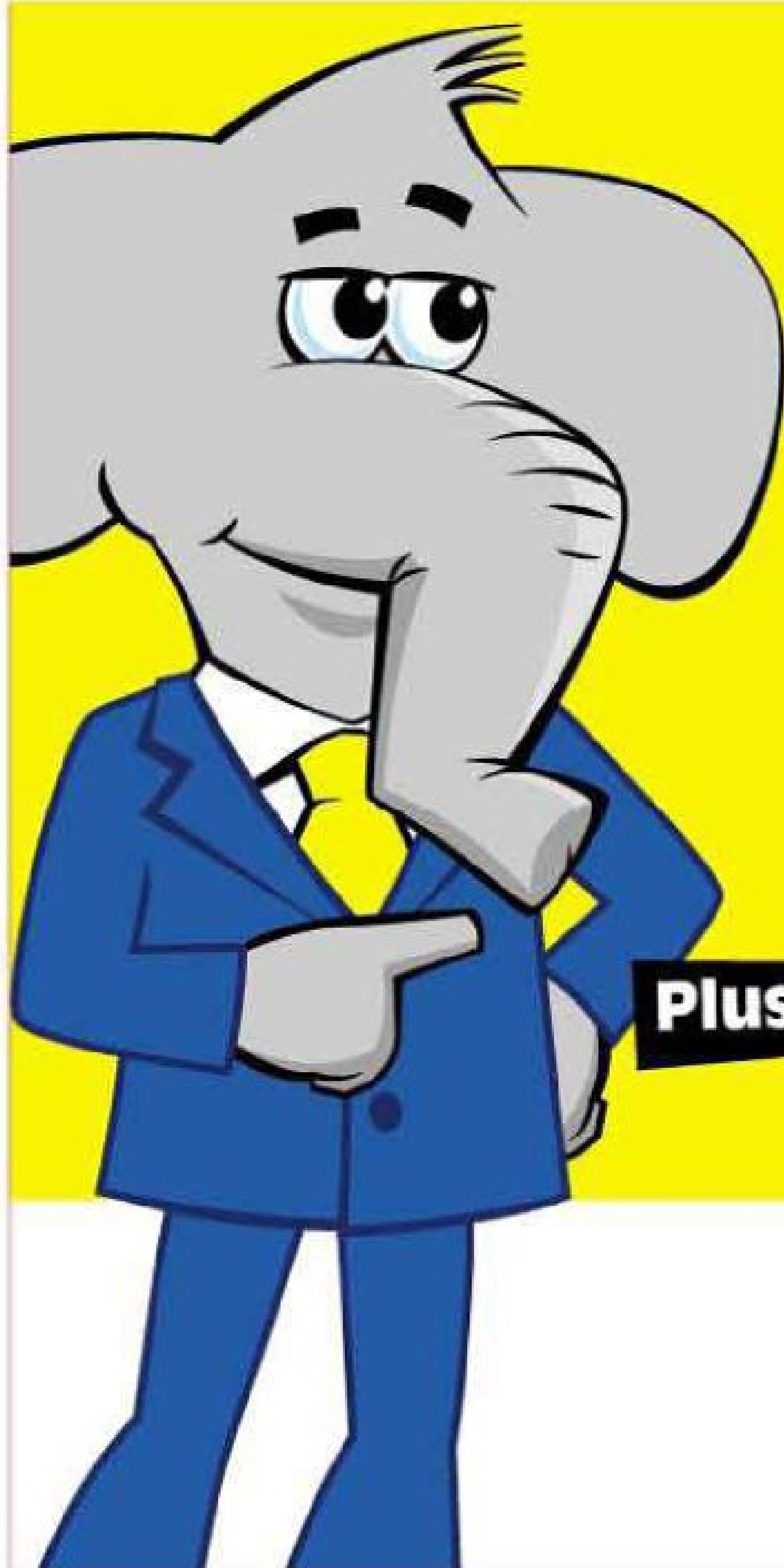
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ME & MY CAR

John Newey & his
MG SV-R

THE CAR DEALER WHO BOUGHT A RARE 380BHP MG WITH A FAMOUS FORMER KEEPER

When I was 21, I thought I wanted a TR6. I looked at several but nothing really caught my eye or fired up my enthusiasm.

Then I was offered an MGB Roadster. I immediately agreed a deal and fell in love with MG from that day on!

I've had a fascination with the lovely burbling sound of a V8 engine since I was a lad so, naturally, I was positively drooling when MG launched the X-Power SV and SV-R models in 2003. I dreamed of owning one, but at the time lacked the requisite £65,000 or more to buy such a machine.

Then, a couple of years later, came the sad demise of MG Rover. In late 2007 I noticed an online auction for an unregistered MG SV-R. At the time I was still dreaming, but I followed the auction avidly and after the sale thought, 'Oh well, maybe one day...'

In mid 2008, the company handling the sale of MG Sport's liquidated stock emailed me with details of another 20 SVs and SV-Rs. I studied the pictures of these gloriously aggressive cars and was

further tempted by the carbonfibre bodies and the rarity – only 56 RHD and 23 LHD cars were ever built. I preferred the look of the SV-R with its huge rear wing and red Brembo brakes, and liked the idea of owning a (more or less) hand-built Sean Hyland Motorsport 5-litre V8 packing 380bhp and 377lb ft – enough, I'm told, for a 4.9sec 0-60mph dash and a top speed that is limited to 175mph.

I made a cheeky offer that was

I remember driving home with a massive smile on my face, feeling like the cat that had finally got the cream

ignored – a good thing, because I still didn't have the money! But then I had some good fortune and a cash windfall, and suddenly my dream car was within reach. I arranged to visit Wyles Hardy (who was handling the sale of the cars) and viewed two SV-Rs: a Solar Red one with black leather trim and a Racing Green one with Umbrian Tan leather that looked familiar.

I came away still not quite sure whether to make the jump, but after the red car was sold I realised that it would be now or never and agreed on a very reasonable price. I collected my Racing Green MG SV-R at the end of October 2008 and remember driving home with a massive smile on my face, feeling like the cat that had finally got the cream.

It turned out that this was the car that MG had lent to Rowan Atkinson

to report on in **evo's** Fast Fleet. He collected it in person from Grovelly Lane at Longbridge, and reported on his likes and dislikes (mostly dislikes) in **evo** during 2005.

Since purchasing the car I've spent around £1500 on new tyres and sorting out a few minor scuffs, and I've also replaced three of the chrome wheel trims. Otherwise, everything

has held together very well and parts can be sourced fairly easily. The car has now covered 10,800 trouble-free miles (keep 'em crossed!) and sits on display in my showroom at Summit Garage (Dudley) Ltd. I use the car for publicity purposes – handy when you have an MG franchise! I also go to various car shows and won 'Best in Show – Pride of Ownership' at MG Silverstone International in 2009.

It's rare enough that I get asked all the usual questions, like: 'Mate, is that the car that Jeremy Clarkson banged his head on?' or 'What is it?' and even 'Sick car, man!' – whatever that means. I love driving it, though, and it performs as it should.

I don't think there's another car that I'd swap it for. Sure, it has its quirks, but show me a car that doesn't and I'll show you boredom! I feel like the custodian of something very special!

■ To see more pictures of John's SV-R visit www.evo.co.uk. And if you would like to be featured here with your car, e-mail rogerg@evo.co.uk

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Model shown is the SEAT Leon Cupra R 2.0 TSI 265PS with optional custom palette paint £560RRP and Bi-xenon headlights £760RRP. Price quoted is correct at time of going to print.

Official fuel consumption for the SEAT Leon Cupra R 2.0 TSI 265PS in mpg (litres per 100km); urban 26.4 (10.7) extra urban 42.8 (6.6) combined 34.9 (8.1) CO₂ emissions 190g/km.

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