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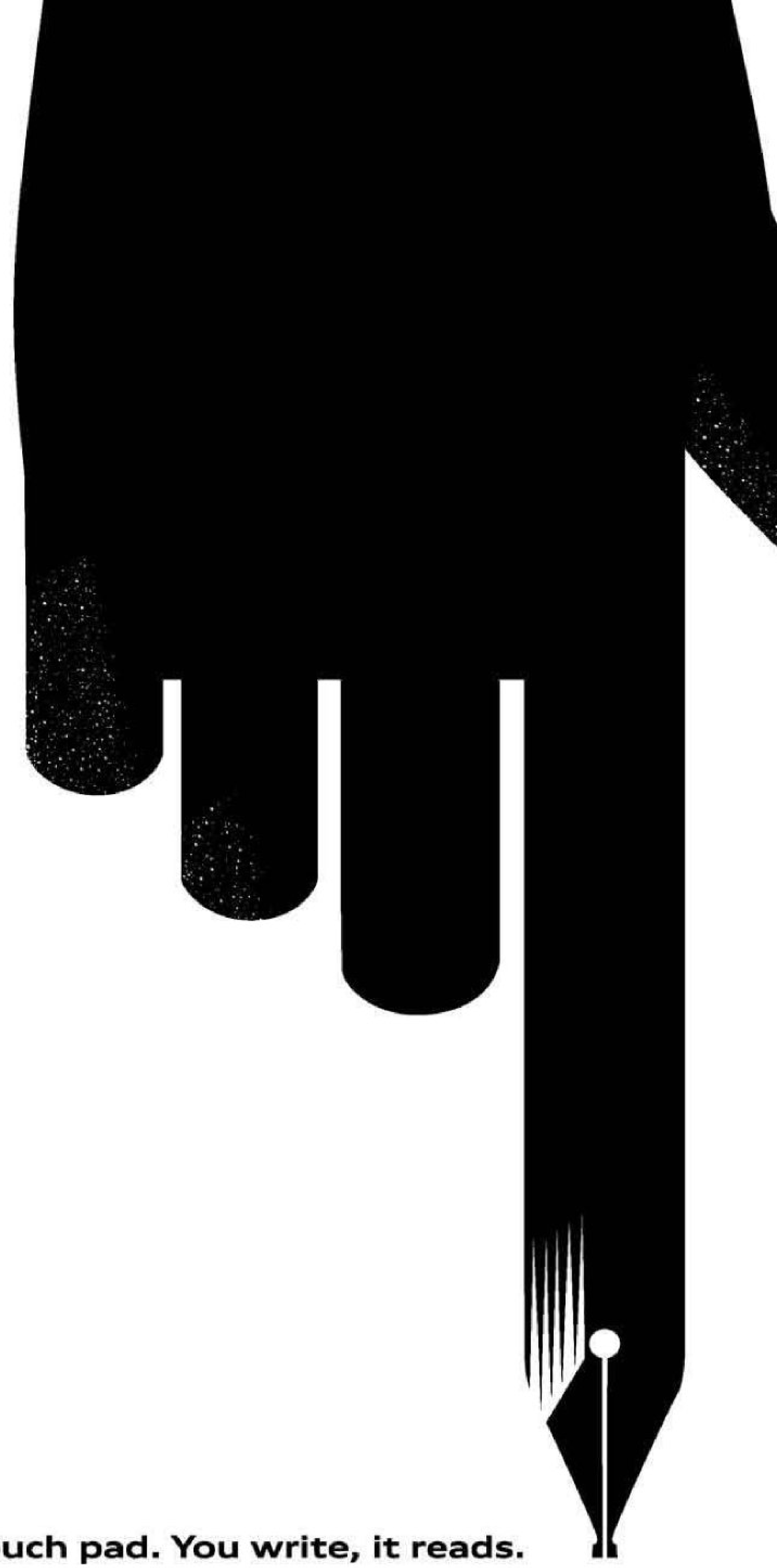

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ED SPEAK

What makes a supercar? Not so long ago it was something rear-wheel-drive, something named after an animal that would kill you, something that was as easy to manoeuvre as a supertanker and as juicy, dirty and obvious too.

It would have 12 cylinders, doors that cleaved the air in any direction but outward and offset pedals that required a secondary ankle to operate. But above all, what made a supercar was its ability to make children and grown men delight at its very existence – a vehicle that inspires.

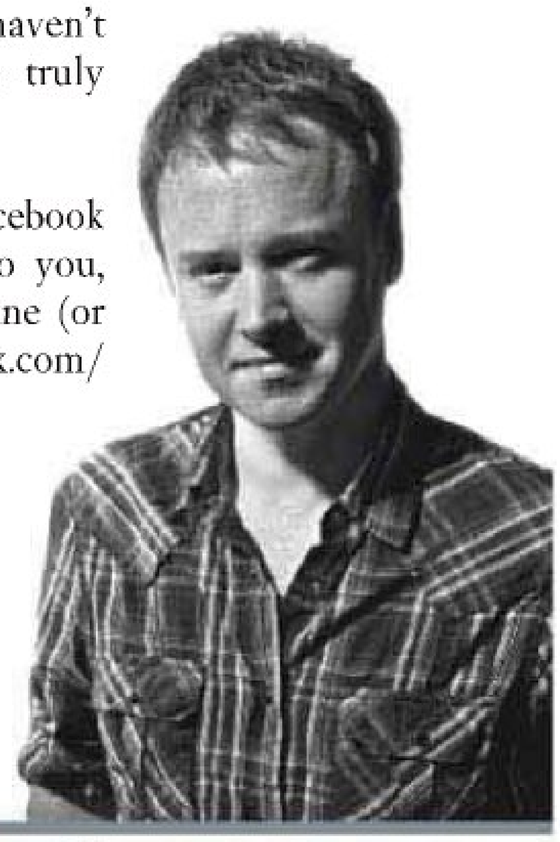
Jaguar's recent announcement that the C-X75 concept will make production, and in just two years to boot, has been met with universal praise. But the car's extraordinary spec, tech, data and styling – and the fact that it'll be co-developed with a bona fide F1 team (Williams) – threaten to overshadow the very thing that makes it a supercar: the ability to elicit an emotional response that in turn provokes a life-changing reaction or decision: to become an engineer; to make enough money to afford one; to want to design them, to build them, to race them – or in my case to dedicate my life to writing about cars so that I may, on occasion, experience the absolute privilege of actually driving them.

I was thinking about this as the news filtered through – hoping that Jaguar would recognise this and, at the very minimum, acknowledge that the C-X75 won't ever be a true supercar unless it becomes a truly inspirational machine. Then it came. Echoing a sentiment already expressed by Jaguar Land Rover CEO Dr Ralf Speth, Williams CEO Alex Burns said, 'We hope that this project will inspire young people to consider technical career choices.' Then, as the news sank in, Burns added that Williams will work the project into its various education initiatives and approximately 100 jobs will be created at the various partners involved – the majority in the UK, where the car will be designed and built.

They've got to be the best jobs in the world, haven't they? Engineering, designing, building, testing this truly remarkable vehicle?

In other news, we're really pushing Twitter and Facebook as a way of getting **evo**-related information over to you, so if you haven't signed up, search for @evomagazine (or @evonicktrott) on Twitter and visit www.facebook.com/evomagazine. I look forward to hearing from you.

Nick Trott, Editor



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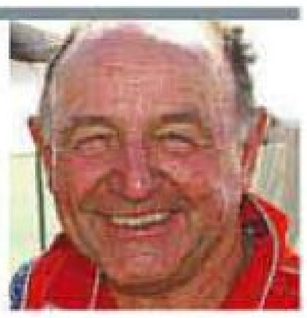
HERO OF THE MONTH

ROD MILLEN

■ There are many good reasons for Rod Millen – Pikes Peak legend and crowd-pleasing regular at the Goodwood Festival of Speed – to be our Hero of the Month, but none better than the driveway to his newly built home in New Zealand. More than a mile long and designed with the specific intention of being used as a hillclimb course for him and his buddies, the stretch of tarmac leading to Leadfoot Ranch is all our dreams come true. Millen celebrated his 60th birthday with an invite-only shindig called the Leadfoot Festival, which he hopes to repeat. You can take a look behind the scenes on page 30.



NEXT ISSUE

JAGUAR XKR-S

Jaguar's quickest cat since the XJ220 gets a workout along the famous Mille Miglia route. Is it the finest high-performance Jag yet?

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ULTIMATE GT3

RS 4.0 GETS A 493BHP 4-LITRE ENGINE, REVISED SUSPENSION AND

Five years ago, Porsche launched the 997 GT3. In 2007 it spawned an RS version, with an identical 409bhp from its 3.6-litre motor. The UK press RS was Viper Green, and several of us here at **evo** can remember seriously considering stealing it because it was just so addictive, so fast. It is therefore hard to comprehend that, just four years later, Porsche has revealed a 997 RS with a 4-litre engine offering 493bhp and 339lb ft of torque.

Keen mathematicians will have already crunched the 123bhp per litre specific capacity figure – a staggering effort for a car that can be sold in most markets, including the US.

The gestation has been bumpy, though. Not on the engineering side – the small team that builds these cars is completely separate from the one that looks after the regular 911, even the Turbo, and they had a very clear idea what they wanted to achieve from day one: a run-out special to celebrate the 997 'GT' cars, specifically a GT3 RS with a 4-litre motor.

Sadly, the info was leaked early in the project, and with the GT3 being one of the most socially networked vehicles on the planet, the speculation soon got out of control. There was talk of a full RSR-bodied machine for the road, but that was never possible, or the intention. Project boss Andreas Preuninger has found the process difficult, but not to the degree that he can't employ an excellent vehicular simile to describe the anguish: 'The rumour machine spools up like a turbo without a wastegate.'

In many ways, this is just an engine exercise. Think of the RS 4.0 as an RS 3.8 with an extra 200cc. But of course that doesn't take into account what has been learned since the 3.8-litre 'Gen 2' 997 RS was launched at the end of 2009, and also from last year's GT2 RS. So, best think of the RS 4.0 as an engine job, also incorporating everything Porsche has learned about the GT3 since 2006. Given the car's ability to steamroller eCoty, that's an enticing prospect.

First, that motor. The 'Metzger' flat-six was at its limit of bore running

Above: interior has no shortage of 'RS 4.0' logos; roof lining is red Alcantara. Right: red air filters and carbon cover liven up the engine bay; 3996cc flat-six produces 493bhp at 8250rpm and 339lb ft at 5750rpm

 Pictures: Chris Rutter

New graphics help distinguish the 4.0 from earlier RSs. White or black are the only paint options, while the wheels can be finished in white, metallic silver or black

RS REVEALED

AERODYNAMIC TWEAKS. **CHRIS HARRIS** HAS THE FULL STORY

at 3.8 litres, so the trusty old unit has been stroked from 76.4mm to 80.4mm. But the increased capacity would only have yielded around 470bhp and Preuninger admits that the team became slightly fixated on achieving a notional 500 PS (493bhp), and that required more than extra cubes. So a new crank was fitted – straight from the GT3 R and RSR race cars. It even shares the same part number. This is perhaps the single coolest piece of automotive information you will hear in 2011, so we'll repeat it for you: the GT3 RS 4.0 shares its crank with the car that won the GT2 category at Le Mans last year.

In addition, the titanium conrods have been modified, there's a new intake manifold, different heads, a new airbox, reinforced cam-adjusters and a tougher chain-tensioner, while a pair of gorgeous red air filters encased in carbon trim greets you when you open the engine lid. With a new engine map, the RS 4.0 hit the 493bhp target – a 49bhp increase over the 3.8 RS, with an extra 22lb ft of torque.

Other than a stronger clutch, the transmission is unchanged. Hopefully this will encourage every forum expert who insisted they knew the car would be PDK-only to crawl back into their shell. As any fool knows, Metzger and PDK are like Baileys and lime.

The basic chassis is very similar to the 3.8's, but developing the GT2 RS taught the team a thing or two and they've added some of that thinking to the new car. Preuninger insists that this

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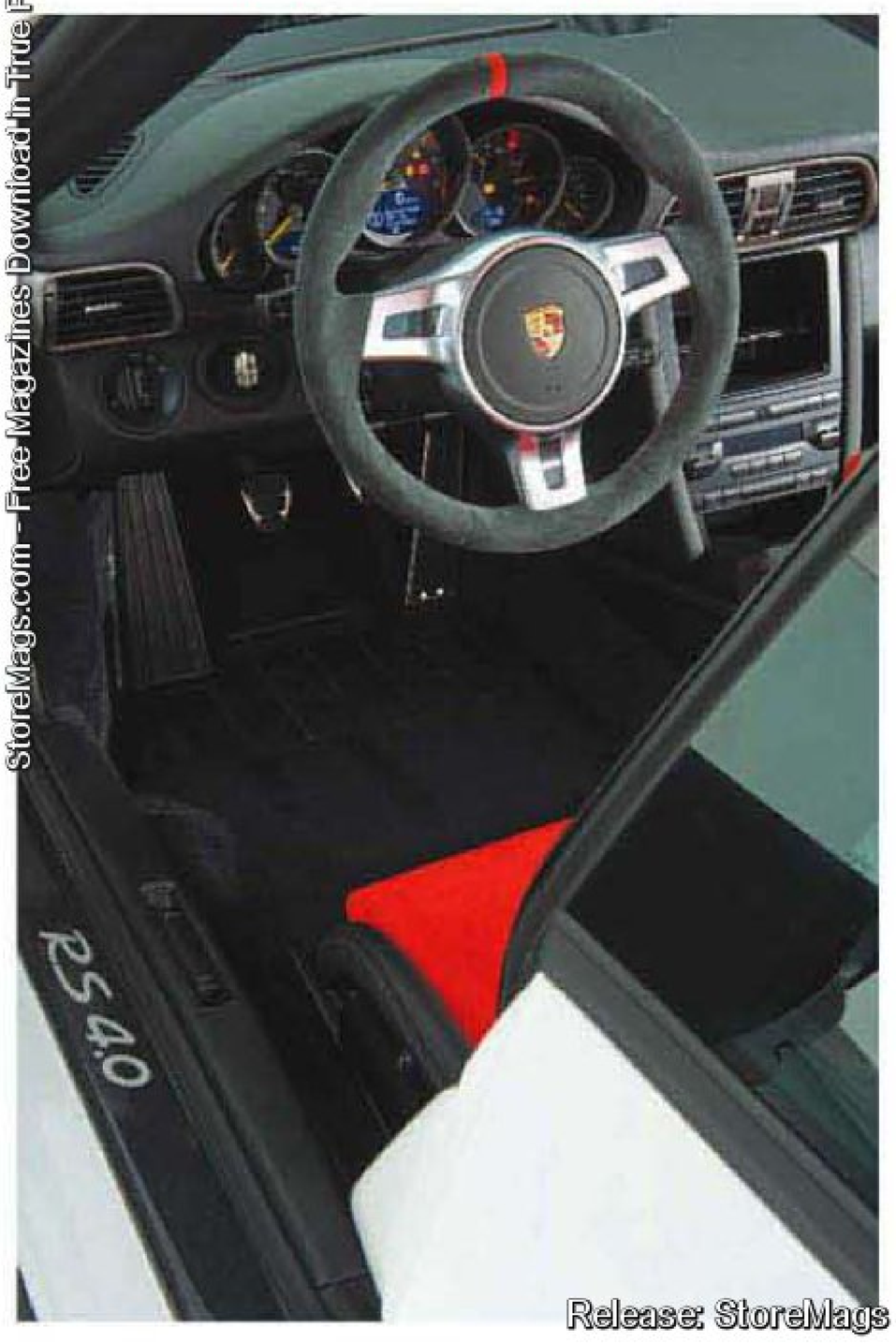
Above: front bumper has gained small winglets for extra downforce; rear wing (right) has been revised too. Below left: steering wheel is an improvement over those in earlier 997 RSs. Below right: centre-locking wheels remain; red calipers denote standard brake set-up, optional carbon-ceramics get yellow ones. Bottom right: luggage cover is carbonfibre, unpainted on its underside



is primarily a street car, but one also designed to be used on track, and that a fully rose-jointed suspension would be too noisy. So, like the GT2 RS, the lower rear arms use uniball joints, but there's still some rubber in the uppers; the result is claimed to be greater precision, but not to the detriment of NVH. The car has different spring and damper rates, and camber and toe settings to either the 3.8 or the GT2 RS. The locking differential is the same, as are the wheel and tyre sizes.

Understandably, Porsche has thrown pretty much every special, lightweight part at this run-out model. The pricey, carbonfibre front wings are there, as is the bonnet panel. They're painted body colour because it's lighter than lacquer. The rear side windows are Perspex, as is the rear screen. These parts drop the weight from 1370kg to 1360kg.

Inside, it's virtually identical to the 3.8, with the same obsessive need to remind the occupants of the swept capacity of the car they are riding in: seats, kick-plates, rev-counter, fag lighter, you name it, it's probably got '4.0' stamped on it. The only change is the steering wheel. Gone is that ghastly plastic-faced thing from the 3.8 and in comes a de-paddled version of the PDK wheel from the regular 911. It looks and feels better, but you'd still have hoped for something a bit more, how can we put it, *race car.*

Aerodynamically, the car now has carbon dive planes on the front bumper, which add enough downforce to make it necessary to run the rear wing with more rake. The aerofoil itself is the same as on the 3.8, but the endplates are larger, giving better stability above 150mph. It does carry more drag, though, so the top speed of 193mph is the same as the 3.8's, even though the car is now 1.3sec quicker from rest to 124mph (11.9sec) and a tenth quicker to 62mph (3.9sec). Porsche claims 7min 27sec around the Nordschleife, which is brisk enough to be irrelevant to most owners.

There will only be 600 of these cars, and each of the few that reaches the UK will cost £128,466. In many ways the RS 4.0 is a celebration of everything that we love in a car: lightweight, driver-focused, manually operated. But there's a suspicion that this might be a swansong – a glorious elegy for a type of car that might not exist in the future. If that's the case, liquidate the pension and place your order immediately.

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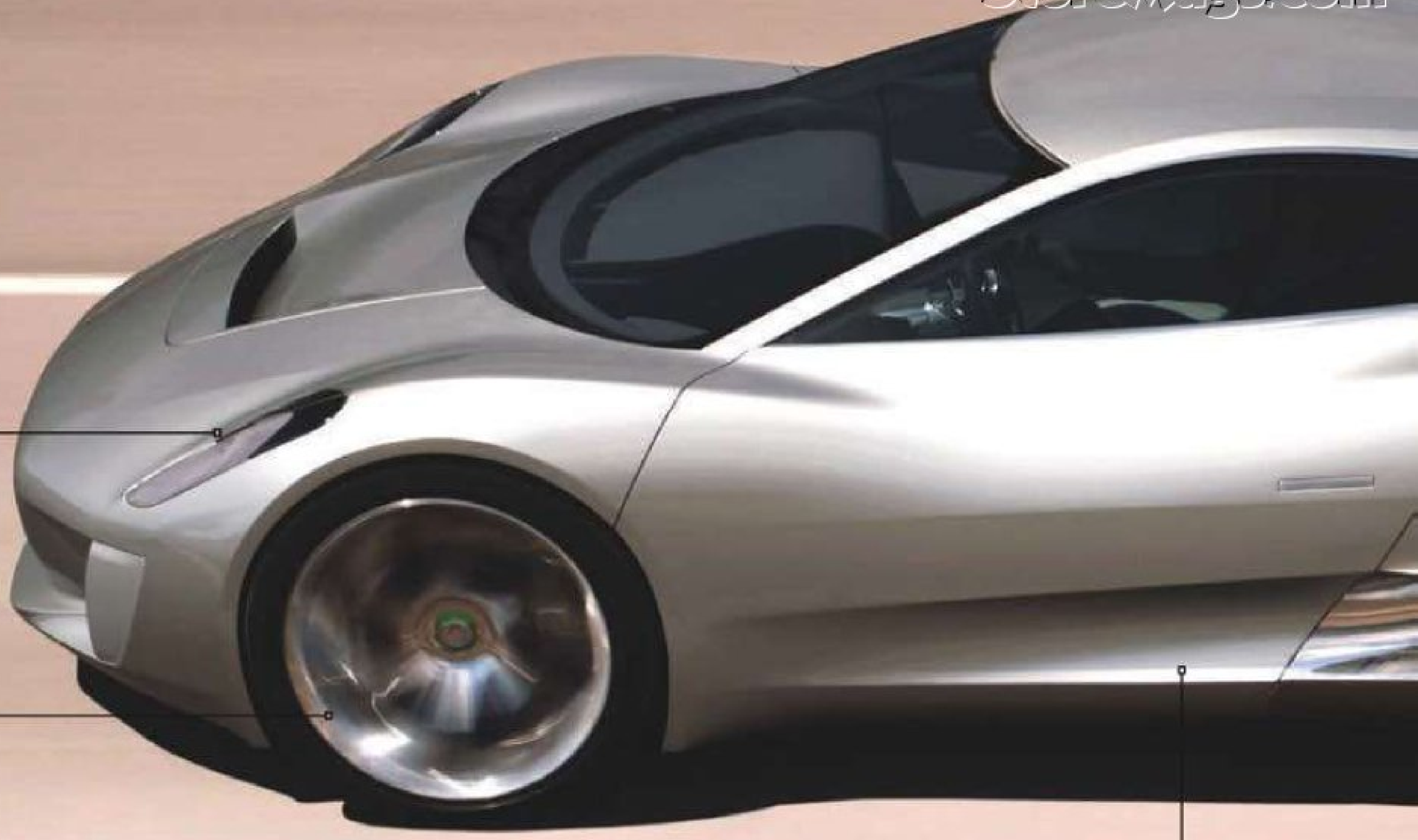

JAG C-X75 IS GO!

JAGUAR SUPERCAR CONCEPT TO MAKE PRODUCTION REALITY. 0-100MPH IN 6 SECONDS, £700,000 AND HYBRID TECHNOLOGY

Jaguar's extraordinary C-X75 Paris motor show concept car is to become a production reality in just two years.

The hybrid supercar will be developed with Williams Grand Prix Engineering, use a version of a next-generation F1 engine and out-Veyron the Veyron.

0-100mph will be achieved in around 6sec, a minimum horsepower figure of 700bhp is predicted, and just 250 will be made. Not only that, sources close to evo have revealed that an open version will follow, as will a race car. There's even talk of an extreme version with over 1000bhp.

The only bad news is that the production C-X75 won't use the micro jet turbines seen on the original concept. Despite continuing to develop the turbines with Bladon Jets, the technology is likely to remain unproven for some years to come. However, Jaguar parent company Tata has taken a significant stake in Bladon, and evo has learned that Jaguar hasn't ruled out a limited production turbine version of the C-X75 in the future.

So, what drives the C-X75? At the official launch, Jaguar would only let on that the large chunk of its (hybrid) power would come from a 'state-of-the-art, small-capacity, highly boosted internal combustion engine' – or in other words the same configuration that will be adopted by F1 teams in 2013. evo understands that this type of engine – a 1.6-litre, four-cylinder turbo – is already delivering huge horsepower on the test-bench, but Adrian Hallmark, Jaguar's brand director, told evo that making it 'road-friendly' is the challenge. For starters, the race engine idles at 4000rpm…

Williams is currently using Cosworth F1 engines, but neither company would reveal the source of the Jaguar's powerplant.

evo spoke to leading motorsport engineer Pat Symonds, who believes that the C-X75 may use parallel hybrid technology similar to that proposed for the new 2013 F1 engine type – which is where Williams' expertise really comes into play. Having developed both

ZAGATO ASTON REVEALED

FAMOUS COLLABORATION RE-ESTABLISHED AS ASTON MARTIN TEAMS UP WITH ZAGATO AGAIN. CAR TO RACE AT NÜRBURGRING WITH **EVO** WRITER DRIVING!

One of the most evocative partnerships in motoring has been renewed with an exciting project that sees Aston Martin and Zagato building a new car to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its most famous co-creation, the DB4 GT Zagato.

Called Vantage Zagato, it is based on the underpinnings of the V12 Vantage. Computer-generated images reveal the new car features Zagato's iconic signature 'double-bubble' roof, oversize grille and voluptuous rear wheelarches, along with an extensive aerodynamics package.

Meddling with the Vantage's much-admired styling is sure to divide opinion, and as Zagato has never shied away from controversy, the new car is certain to be a dramatic evolution.

Perhaps the most surprising news

Left: Zagato's take on the DB4 GT of the 1960s saw it fitted with a lighter and more aerodynamic body – perfect for racing

flywheel and battery hybrid (or KERS) systems, Williams is considered one of the leading experts in the technology.

'2013 F1 engines are true parallel hybrids,' explains Symonds. 'In other words, power can come from the internal combustion engine, the electric motor or a combination of the two. The F1 petrol engine will produce around 600bhp. The electric motor will add approximately 150bhp to this.' It is worth noting that these figures are not dissimilar to those quoted by Jaguar insiders for the C-X75…

evo has also learned that an 'e-turbo' system is being investigated by Jaguar and Williams. 'An e-turbo is a turbocharger that has a motor/generator attached to it, so it is not only used to provide compressed charge air to the engine but can also generate electricity to add to the battery charging capabilities,' says Symonds. 'This further increases the hybrid powertrain's ability to harvest wasted energy, thereby increasing efficiency. In reverse, the turbo motor can be driven electrically to make turbo lag all but nonexistent.'

Williams CEO Alex Burns confirmed to evo that the C-X75 will also use an F1-style 'KERS control system' – and thus presumably a 'power boost' button similar to that already used in F1. Whispers from inside Jaguar suggest total power output from all three motors plus the 'boost' could exceed 1000bhp – perfect for a more extreme version. C-X75-R perhaps?

'The project is testament to the changes in Formula 1 regulations,' explained Burns, 'in particular the introduction of KERS, that were designed to make the sport more "relevant", the thinking being that F1 teams would devote resources to technologies that could have application outside F1 and in areas that reduce CO2 emissions.' Jaguar has targeted 99g/km for the C-X75.

Hallmark is extremely bullish about this project and reassured evo that the C-X75 would not experience the troubled gestation of Jaguar's last supercar, the XJ220. 'Jaguar is the owner of this,' he said, 'unlike the XJ220, which was a TWR project. It's very different this time.' He then added, tantalisingly, that Jaguar wouldn't disappoint with the C-X75: 'Whatever we deliver will be better than we've said, or we won't do it.'

ANALYSIS

This is an extraordinarily ambitious project, with a short development cycle and a number of tricky engineering challenges ahead. Perhaps the biggest challenge is to make it feel and drive not just like a supercar should, but like a Jaguar. For all its tech, owners will still expect refinement, luxury and a sizzling soundtrack. Nothing else will do. **NT**

is Aston's decision to race the Vantage Zagato at the Nürburgring Nordschleife just one week after its May 21 debut at the Villa d'Este concours in Italy. A two-car entry will then contest the N24 race at the end of June and evo's Richard Meaden is amongst the driver line-up.

Aston says a production road car depends upon customer demand, but enthusiasts and collectors are sure to be clamouring for the car to be built. No pricing or performance details have been revealed, but we expect a very limited run to commence in 2012. Just 19 of the original DB4 GT Zagatos were built. Some raced and all still exist. Current value? A cool £5m.

Rendering of the Vantage Zagato reveals how it will feature the large grille and double-bubble roof typical of the Italian styling house

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CHARGE OF THE EV BRIGADE

ELECTRIC VEHICLES ARE COMING THICK AND FAST, FROM BIG MANUFACTURERS AND MINNOWS ALIKE. **BY JOHN SIMISTER**

It's been a month of much activity on the electric car front. We've tried the Vauxhall Ampera in near-production form, Renault's Twizy as a running prototype – and perhaps most intriguingly a British-built electric coupé (right) whose top version has four-wheel drive, will travel 200 miles on one charge, reach 150mph and hit 60mph in four seconds. Too good to be true?

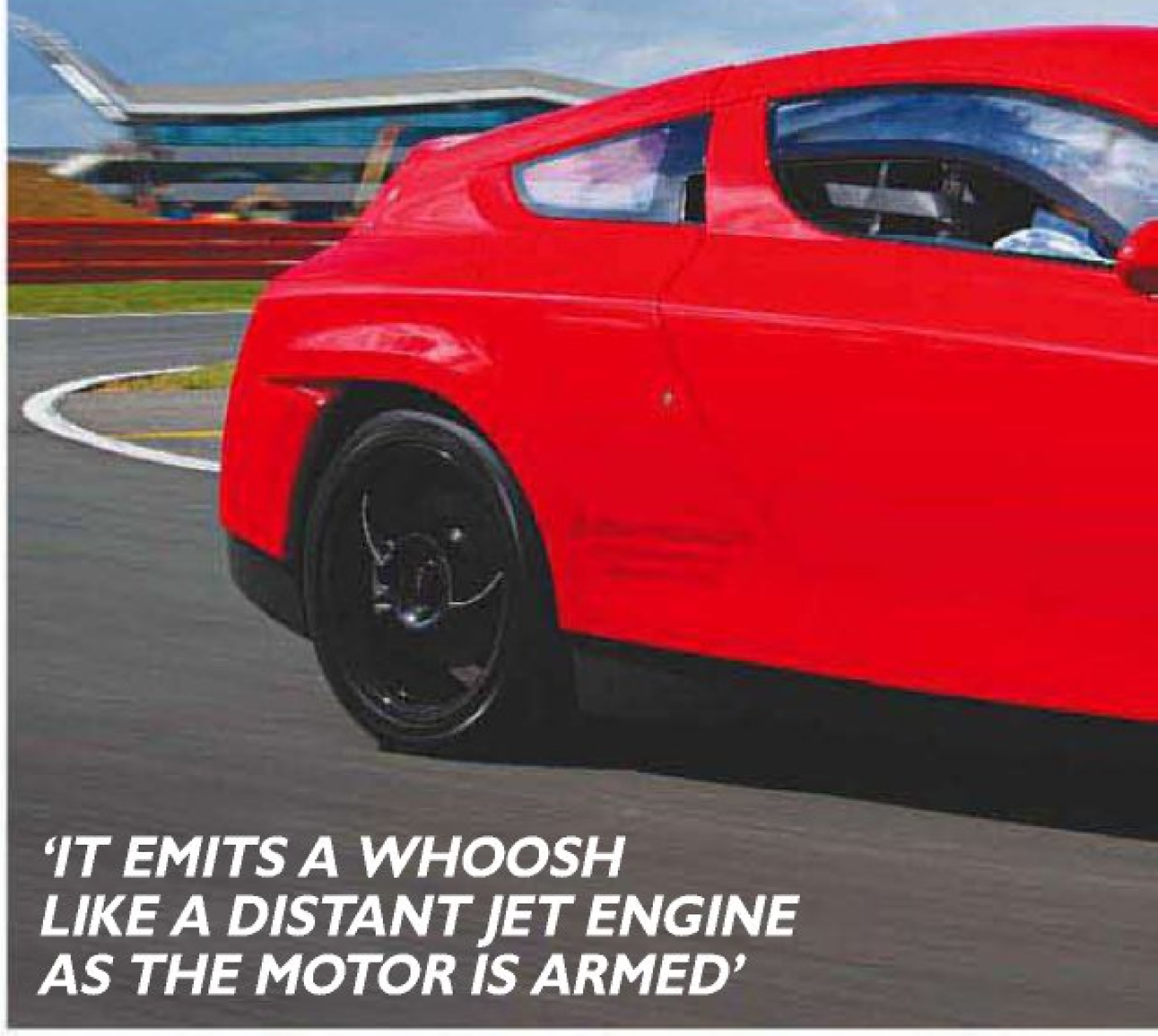
DELTA MOTORSPORT E-4

We'll have to wait a while to put the 150mph claims to the test, given that the Delta E-4 Sport exists only on a computer's hard drive. There is, however, an Eco version in full composite flesh, which we have just tried on Silverstone's Stowe circuit. In fact there are five of them, built by Silverstone-based Delta Motorsport, whose CV includes, among other things, building the entire grid of Grand Prix Masters cars a while ago.

The Delta E-4, so called because it can accommodate four people within its diminutive form, has a carbonfibre structure, a small frontal area and dramatic butterfly doors. It's powered by a pair of Oxford YASA electric motors, each developing up to 134bhp and 553lb ft of torque and controlled independently to allow torque vectoring. They are fed by a slim, underfloor battery pack made up of 3168 lithium-ion cells with a 32kWh total capacity.

The whole car weighs 975kg, is calculated to have a 140-mile range, will reach 116mph and pass 60mph after 6.5 seconds. For comparison, the Sport version would weigh 1250kg, would have 4752 battery cells and two more identical motors. Either way, the chassis and crash structure weigh just 85kg.

'Only five people have driven it so far,' says managing director Simon Dowson, 'and two of them are us.' His business partner is technical director Nick Carpenter. 'The battery pack takes several charge and discharge cycles to settle out,' he says, 'so the range is 110 to 120 miles at the moment. It improves each time.'



'IT EMITS A WHOOSH LIKE A DISTANT JET ENGINE AS THE MOTOR IS ARMED'

RENAULT TWIZY

Here's the electric car in the technology's most comfortable form, as a miniature city car with two seats in tandem and a 20bhp, rear-mounted motor. Officially it does 47mph; in reality it does a bit more than that judging by our laps of the Mortefontaine test track outside Paris. Charging the battery pack takes 3.5 hours, with a range of between 34 and 72 miles your reward depending on right-foot weight. Pricing will be from £6690 plus £40 a month to lease the battery pack, with sales from December.

Under its plastic skin, the Twizy is like a tiny racing car. It even has Chapman strut rear suspension. Driving it is a hoot, with strong go-kart tendencies and terrific feedback. Will it take off as trendy, low-cost urban transport or even rural runaround? The chances are high, we'd say.

VAUXHALL AMPERA

This is the range-extender electric family car, available at a Vauxhall dealer near you for £28,995 (including £5K Government subsidy) from next January. And it's the future according to General Motors, which sees no point in pure electric cars beyond very local use. That's why the Ampera also has a 1.4-litre petrol engine, which fires up to charge the battery once the overnight domestic-mains top-up has run out.

The Ampera's pair of electric motors, one of which also functions as the generator, produce up to 151bhp. The engine produces 85bhp, yet full pace is available even when the battery pack appears empty. That's because it isn't; there's always a reserve, enough to ensure the Ampera can be driven at full chat up the Gotthard Pass, which was used to calibrate it. Is it really a hybrid? It's a moot point, but the only time the engine is connected to the front wheels is when it's running and the Ampera is

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Driving the E-4 is ultra-easy, in typical electric fashion, but entertaining too. It emits a whoosh like a distant jet engine as the motor is armed, and accelerates away with a vigour which makes the claimed 0-60mph time plausible. There's a central touch-screen display for every possible parameter, operating like a collection of smartphone apps, and a light-footed response from the small steering wheel.

The Delta stays almost flat in the corners, brakes progressively despite the regenerative element, and feels pretty nimble. The Ford Fiesta-sourced electric power steering self-centres poorly in this application, though, and feels glutinous.

But it's early days. Delta hasn't the funds to put the fully Type Approvable E-4 into production, having used up grants from the East Midlands Development Association and the Technology Strategy Board, the latter keen to see viable electric demonstrator vehicles, which Delta has achieved. So it's looking for investment partners or maybe a friendly car-maker. The E-4 would sell at around £60-70K if hundreds were made a year, much less if made at the rate of 15-20,000 a year which the construction technology is designed to allow.

Above: Delta reveals its four-seat interior, and gets a quick recharge. The bodywork is carbonfibre

travelling at speed, at which point it's also driving the generator en route.

Apart from being heavy, the Ampera works well. It's hardly an intimate physical bond between driver and machine but it's not a bad electronic copy, especially in responsive Sport mode. This is the future for mainstream cars – but if cars can be kept much lighter than they are now, maybe the pure electric car will also have a viable future beyond the city limits. Delta Motorsport certainly hopes so.

Welcome to the future. Ampera goes on sale at your local Vauxhall dealer from next January

BRIEFS

CARRERA GTS GOES FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE

Porsche has just released specs and photos of yet more 997 derivatives. The Carrera 4 GTS is an all-wheel-drive version of the Carrera GTS we were smitten by in issue 152, with the same 402bhp 3.8-litre flat-six out back, a set of 19in RS Spyder alloys, and flourishes of black trim inside and out. Prices start at £83,145 for the coupe and £90,024 for the cabrio (above) – rises of around £5000 over the rwd GTS.

NEW CIRCUIT

Blyton Park is Britain's newest circuit. The facility, near Gainsborough, Lincs, opened at the start of May, its 1.5 miles of fresh asphalt ready for trackdays and testing as well as location video and photography. It's been eight years and half a million pounds in the planning, with the circuit's design a joint effort between our very own John Barker and ex-Touring Car ace Eugene O'Brien. For booking details and more info, visit www.blytonpark.co.uk

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

The Golf GTI is 35, but rather than gorging on cake, it's sharpened up to celebrate. The Edition 35's 2-litre turbo produces 232bhp, up 25bhp on standard, while there's a new set of 18in 'Watkins Glen' alloy wheels and a more aggressive front bumper. It will be unveiled at June's GTI meet at Worthersee, Austria. Sales begin later in the year, with a £2K price rise to around £27,000 expected.

GRRR

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carsalesbase.com

www.peugeot.co.uk

PEUGEOT
MOTION & EMOTION

Combined 38.6–53.2 (7.3–5.3) and CO_2 168–139 (g/km). Model shown is an RCZ Sport available for £21,665 plus £649.99 for the Feline quad exhaust fully fitted.

fiorelegs.com

JAPAN TSUNAMI: THE AFTERMATH

HOW THE DISASTER HAS AFFECTED THE GLOBAL CAR INDUSTRY. **BY PETER NUNN**

The devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11, and which in turn triggered the ongoing Fukushima nuclear crisis, have slipped off the front pages of late, so much so that you might think things are now getting back to normal and the crisis has passed.

Far from it. While the nuclear situation has stabilised, thank heavens, the plant continues to leak radiation, Japan still has a major humanitarian crisis on its hands and the full effects of the disaster on the Japanese – and the global – car industry have yet to play out.

In the immediate aftermath of the quake, car production in Japan effectively shut down. For an industry powerhouse like Japan, that was an eye-widening and unprecedented trauma all in itself. Sales and exports virtually collapsed and profits have also taken a major hit.

Japan's already weak market was down 35.1 per cent in March, then fell another 47.3 per cent in April. While production lines are largely up and running again now, plants are only operating at some 40-60 per cent capacity due to the limited supply of parts, and the Toyotas and Hondas of this world tell us that it won't be until October-December that they're fully up to speed again.

The big issue right now is with the suppliers. While none of the big car plants in Japan was damaged by the quake, a big network of component suppliers in the Tohoku area was affected. One such is Renesas, an outfit few had heard of before March 11 but which turns out to have 30 per cent of the global market for the microcontrollers that are found in the electronic brains of every modern car.

With Renesas out of action, it wasn't just the Japanese car makers that suddenly found they didn't have enough parts to make complete cars. GM, Fiat, Ford and Peugeot soon reported problems as well, illustrating how deeply entwined the global supply of parts has now become. Renesas has now said it will partly restart production in June.

'IT SHOWS HOW DEEPLY ENTWINED THE GLOBAL SUPPLY OF PARTS IS'

So far the industry has been able to move cars already in the pipeline and use current stocks of parts for manufacturing, but that could change this summer when inventories run out and the full effect of Japan's slow-down really starts to be felt. The fact that Japan is also facing power shortages, due to the nation's electricity-generating capacity being reduced by the quake, could compromise the situation further. So don't be surprised if you have to wait a little longer for that new car you have on order.

The crisis has already seen Mazda slide into the red, and with Toyota's sales and production tanking, this could see a resurgent (and recently bankrupt) GM retake the global number one spot for the year. How the world turns…

The crisis, meantime, has underlined the resourcefulness and determination of the Japanese car giants. The quake badly damaged Honda's Tochigi R&D centre, but the company moved swiftly to relocate engineers so that work could pick up again literally within weeks. Nissan's engine factory in Iwaki was also badly hit but was made operational again within a month.

Contrary to rumours, the plants that make the GT-R and its V6 twin-turbo engine weren't seriously affected. They're back on line now, but again the production level is low.

However, the situation in Japan remains tense. There's a national energy-saving campaign now in place and continuing fears over radiation: in the air, in food and water and also on exported cars. Petrol prices have shot up and even Super GT, Japan's answer to the DTM, has cut back on race distances to show that it's doing its bit to conserve resources.

But keep in mind this is a disaster that has left tens of thousands dead, wiped whole communities off the map and brought scenes of destruction that are going to take years and billions of pounds to clear up. That puts talk of lost production and profits into some kind of perspective.

Car production and exports continue in Japan, but at a reduced rate. Above: Renesas is one of many component suppliers currently out of action

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TECH ANALYSIS

TITANIUM EXHAUSTS EXPLAINED

WHAT ARE THEIR ADVANTAGES? HOW ARE THEY MADE? AND WHY ARE THEY SO EXPENSIVE? **STEPHEN DOBIE** FINDS OUT

Q: What's so special about titanium exhausts?

A: Titanium provides high strength and heat resistance while achieving the car industry's current holy grail: low weight. Exhausts made of the stuff have become increasingly popular aftermarket options, despite their current high price. They're set for more widespread standard fitment in mainstream performance cars, too, as demand increases and material costs fall as a result.

Q: How long has titanium been used in the industry?

A: Titanium exhausts for cars are a relatively new thing, championed by Slovenian exhaust manufacturer Akrapovic. Highly regarded for the quality and technology of its motorcycle exhausts, it produced the titanium OEM system for the Porsche 911 GT2 back in 2007 and has launched a range of aftermarket exhausts since, for everything from the Clio 200 to the Ferrari 458, the system for which is pictured above. Titanium has been used in the aerospace and military industries for much longer, though: the Lockheed 'Blackbird' SR-71 used the material extensively in its structure.

Q: So what are the main advantages of using titanium?

A: It doesn't suffer thermal expansion as much as other materials, so parts are at their ideal working shape and size more of the time, meaning bodywork and other components can be designed closer to and more accurately around them. That's useful when you're fitting an exhaust snugly alongside a 523bhp engine at the back of a Porsche.

Replacing a standard stainless steel exhaust with a full titanium set-up can save upwards of 20kg – Akrapovic's best-seller, for the E90 BMW M3, nearly halves the weight of the car's exhaust system. This brings obvious benefits for performance and economy, but the effect of losing this weight at the back of a car can also improve its handling. evo's own Chris Harris has made the swap on his 911 GT3 and it's become a more fluent and agile car. Power and torque gains exist, but are typically only a couple of per cent.

BTB Exhausts, a British-based company that makes titanium exhausts for rallying, keeps exhaust wall thicknesses high (to prevent damage from rough ground) while achieving weight loss thanks to titanium's high strength-to-weight ratio.

Q: And the disadvantages?

A: Expense. While titanium is one of the world's more abundant materials, a lot of energy is required to extract the raw material for manufacturing. While stainless steel has an industry cost of around three euros per kilo, titanium can cost 30 to 50 euros.

Also, pure titanium doesn't quite boast the heat resistance required for hard performance-car usage, so it needs to be bonded with materials such as aluminium, copper and niobium to make different alloys with varied properties, and these exclusive materials need ordering up to 18 months ahead of schedule.

That's why you have to pay over £4000 for that M3 exhaust…

Due to stringent EU regulations for both noise and emissions, both of which need to stay incredibly close (and sometimes identical) to stock manufacturer parts, some full titanium exhaust systems are sold without road-use homologation – the choice of using them day-to-day lies with you, the customer. And as Harris has found, the extra noise freed by a titanium system may be tuneful, but it can also be blooming loud.

Q: So how is a system made?

A: Akrapovic's development process takes around five months. The company borrows a road car, uses 3D scanning technology to create a computer model of the space available underneath, then sets about designing an exhaust system to fit. There's prototyping and testing of different configurations via a rolling road, before jigs and tooling are designed for manufacturing.

The high heat resistance of those titanium alloys makes them trickier to work with than alternative materials, as they are harder to bend and mould. It means having to work with high temperatures and demanding procedures for those eye-catching but complex pipe shapes.

Q: Are there motorsport applications?

A: Titanium exhausts have been on world championship-winning motorbikes for years, and Jorge Lorenzo's 2011 MotoGP Yamaha boasts an Akrapovic system, as does the Manthey 911 GT3 that's a front-runner in the Nürburgring 24 hours.

The material's thermal resistance can't quite cut it in F1 yet, though its usage isn't just limited to exhausts. Titanium could cut the weight of a roll-cage by 40 per cent, if the FIA authorises its use, while it can halve the weight of a turbine housing. With turbos appearing in F1 from 2013, so could titanium.

Titanium is a challenging – and therefore expensive – material to work with

 Pictures: Akrapovic

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A POSTCARD FROM... LEADFOOT

RICHARD MEADEN ON THE EXCLUSIVE HILLCLIMB EVENT HELD ON THE DRIVEWAY OF A PIKES PEAK LEGEND

If you're a lunch-break student of YouTube, then the chances are you'll have seen footage of Pikes Peak maestro Rod Millen manhandling his outrageously powerful Toyota to the summit of the world's greatest hillclimb. You'll probably also have watched him wrestle the same psychotic machine up Lord March's driveway in one of the all-time great runs at the Goodwood Festival of Speed.

Millen is a man with high-octane fuel in his veins. He's also a hugely successful engineer and businessman. So when he decided to buy his dream property in Hahei, on the idyllic coast of New Zealand's North Island, his purchasing criteria was rather specific: it had to have enough land and rugged enough topography to build the mother of all driveways, which he and his buddies could then use as a hillclimb course. And so Leadfoot Ranch was born.

Like all the best projects, the Leadfoot is a labour of love. It's taken Millen three years to complete the mile-long driveway, which in part takes inspiration from sections of Pikes Peak. There was added pressure on Millen to complete the course by April 2011: his 60th birthday, which he celebrated in fine style with his family and buddies by holding the inaugural Leadfoot Festival.

Guests at the invite-only event included Rod's sons Ryan and Rhys, and Pikes Peak veterans Jeff Zwart and Paul Dallenbach. Twenty-four cars took part, including Rod's fire-breathing Celica Pikes Peak car, a Ford GT40 and 'my' old Pikes Peak open-wheeler. Despite saying, 'Leadfoot's not a racing event, it's an exhibition of cool old cars and cool old folks!' Millen proceeded to whup everyone's ass by setting fastest time of the day. No wonder he proclaimed it the perfect birthday.

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'IT'S TAKEN MILLEN THREE YEARS TO COMPLETE HIS DRIVEWAY, WHICH TAKES INSPIRATION FROM SECTIONS OF PIKES PEAK'

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1. Speed limits are strictly enforced at Leadfoot Ranch. **2.** Millen Snr drifts his Toyota Tundra stadium truck. **3.** Paul Dallenbach storms the Leadfoot course in the ex-Dickie Meaden Pikes Peak open-wheeler. **4.** Rod Millen (right) with sons Rhys (left) and Ryan. **5.** Jeff Zwart's Porsche 914/6. **6.** Rod and friends in rare non-sideways pose. **7.** Rod's best mate Richard Kelsey hustling his RX-7. **8.** Leadfoot paddock makes an evocative sight at night. **9.** S1 Quattro not all it seems: it's based on a 500bhp Impreza! **10.** Birthday Boy at the wheel of his legendary Celica Pikes Peak car

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NOVICE TRACKDAYS FIND WINNING FORMULA

EVO READER STEVE AUSTIN WAS THE LUCKY WINNER OF A NOVICE TRACKDAY WITH CLUB MSV. **PETER TOMALIN** WENT ALONG WITH HIM TO THE BEDFORD AUTODROME TO SEE HOW HE GOT ON

I'll never forget my own first time on a circuit. It was at Silverstone and I don't mind admitting to being totally spooked. The acres of tarmac felt like a completely alien environment, even though I'd been watching motorsport for years and driving for almost as long. As I approached each corner, I had little idea where to position my car, no real understanding of the racing line. Inevitably, a few corners in, and with bravado getting the better of me, I overcooked it and span. Mercifully there was nothing to hit, and I was able to cruise back to the pits with only mild bruising to my ego.

If only Club MSV had been around, I might have found the learning curve a lot less steep – and a lot more enjoyable. I'm here at the Bedford Autodrome on a sunny Good Friday with **evo** reader Steve Austin (no, not that one), the winner of our recent competiton to win a place on one of MSV's popular novice trackdays. Steve, from Cambridge, has been on only two trackdays before, so he's the perfect candidate for one of these beginner days. As he parks his Porsche 944 in the sunshine and we join the short queue for signing-on, it already feels like it's going to be a good day.

After signing on, it's straight into the briefing, where chief instructor Phil Ellis welcomes us to the Autodrome and runs through the essentials – the racing line (helpfully signposted on the circuit itself with a system of cones), the overtaking rules (only on the straights, and only on the left) and the flag signals (slow right down for a yellow, and if you get a black you're in trouble). The 40-odd drivers listen intently, then it's back out to the cars and we're led in convoy onto the GT Circuit, all 4.2 miles of it.

Crucially, the first few laps are behind one of the course cars, so every driver gets a feel for the racing line and a chance to gradually build up speed. Then it's into the pits, helmets on, a few deep breaths and back onto the circuit on our own. I'm lucky in that I've driven Bedford a few times before, so I jump in alongside Steve to give him a few pointers (it's well worth booking a session with one of MSV's own instructors, most of them experienced racers and all of them extraordinarily patient and encouraging). There are cones at the edges of the track to signal the turn-in and clipping point for each corner, and as speed builds so the lines begin to make more sense. Steve soon finds he can carry more speed than he thought through the faster turns – but needs to brake harder before the slower corners to avoid ploughing straight on.

When we pull back into the pits after 20 minutes, he's buzzing. 'What a great circuit, and I love the fact that there's so much run-off so you're unlikely to hit anything. The whole thing seems to be very well organised too. I think I'm going to have to have some work on the 944's suspension though – it's OK on the road, but round here it feels a bit soggy…' After a 15-minute breather, he's back out again.

The idea of novice days is to allow beginners to take part without the pressure of being surrounded by more experienced drivers. If you've done more than a couple of trackdays, you're not allowed on. Similarly, no race cars or slick tyres are allowed. And it works really well. Everyone seems to be enjoying themselves and visibly growing in confidence and smoothness. Just before lunch I catch up with Steve, who's still beaming. 'I'm starting to string the corners together better now,' he says, 'though I did have one moment. I went into one of the slower corners too fast and used some of that lovely run-off area…' Looks like we've got another trackday convert.

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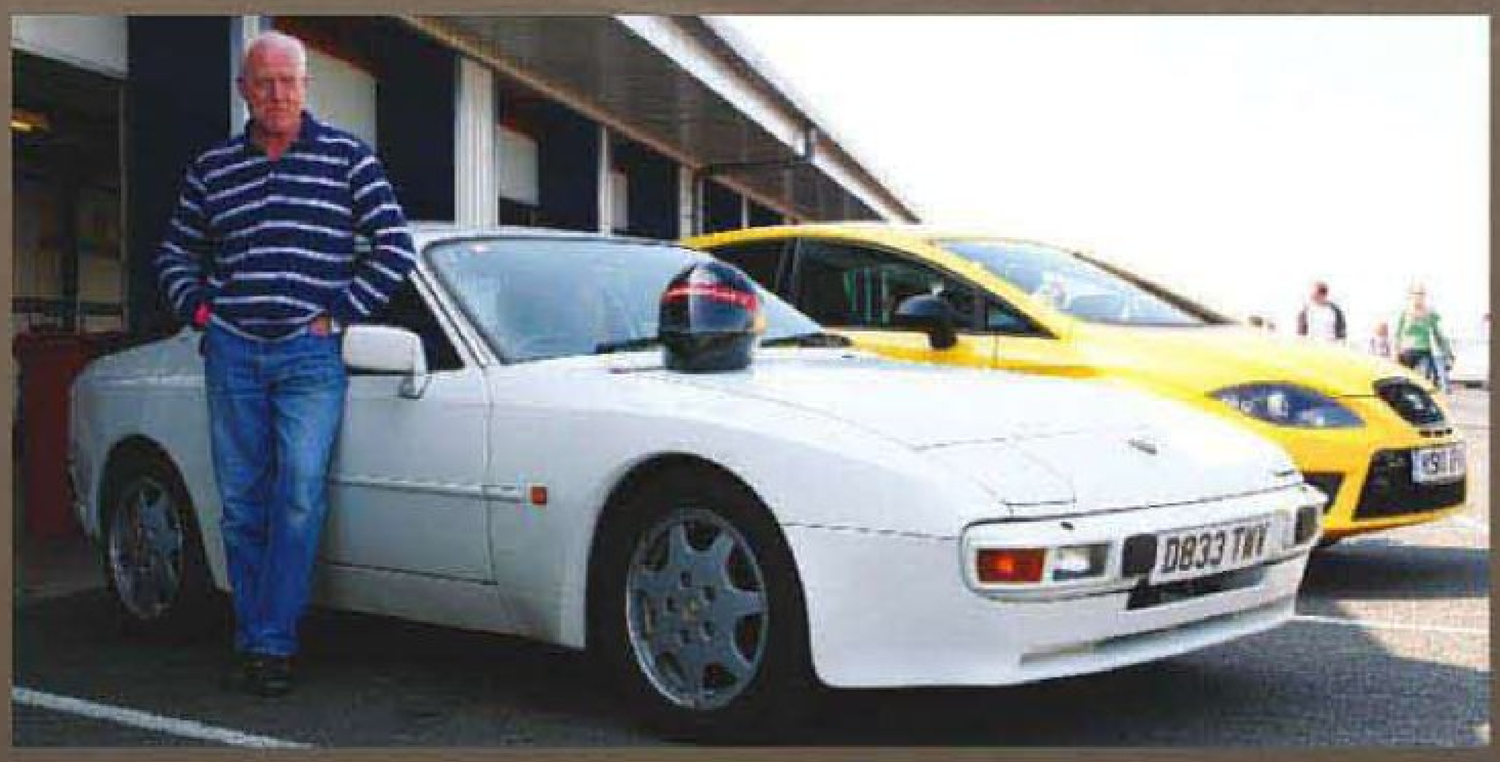

Above: our competition winner, Steve Austin, with his Porsche 944 at Bedford. Left: out on the GT Circuit, learning his lines

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EVO ESSENTIALS

FROM A ROBOTIC LAWNMOWER TO STEVE McQUEEN'S JACKET. IT CAN ONLY BE EVO ESSENTIALS…

Arcade Tables Stealth

Price: c£2000

From: www.arcadetables.com.au

Tables with built-in video games were all the rage in pubs back in the '80s, and creatively named Australian firm Arcade Tables has been recreating those classic pieces of furniture for a decade. Now it's added this futuristic design to its range. Available in three colours – black, white and red – the 'Stealth' incorporates a hi-def LCD screen and comes with 60 games pre-installed

Gearbox Gifts mouse

Price: £34.99

From: www.gearboxgifts.com

Fancy driving a mouse with a difference? Gearbox Gifts has a whole range for you to choose from, including the Mini Cooper S pictured here. It's wireless, optical and you can even switch the lights on (presumably for when you're working late). We've got five to give away! Head to competitions.evo.co.uk

Husqvarna Automower

Price: from £1099.99

From: www.husqvarna.com/uk

Summer is here. Yay! But that means the garden constantly needs your attention. Boo. Fortunately Husqvarna has a time-saving solution in the form of its range of robotic lawnmowers. They're fully weatherproof and can handle rough terrain and steep gradients; the Solar Hybrid model (pictured) is even partly powered by the sun. So now you can nip out for a drive while your Automower does the hard work

Le Mans 24 Hours: The Official History 1970-1979

Price: £45

From: www.haynes.co.uk

This second book in a decade-by-decade series is topped and tailed by Porsche victories. It begins with the marque's debut win in the iconic 917 and ends with a triumph in the fire-breathing 935 K3, but it comprehensively covers every other make and model too. It's packed with photographs and stats, but it's the stories behind the races that really fascinate

TAG Heuer Grand Prix jacket

Price: £200

From: www.tagheuer.com

Want to feel like Steve McQueen in the film *Le Mans*? Usefully, TAG Heuer offers this recreation of the white fabric jacket sported by McQueen in said movie. Now all you need is the 917 to go with it…

One for the Massa market

SPECIAL EDITION OF FELIPE MASSA CHRONOGRAPH CELEBRATES CIRCUIT TIE-IN. BY SIMON DE BURTON

Richard Mille RM011FM Yas Marina

Price: Sfr115,000 (c£78,000)
From: Yas Marina Circuit (yasmarinacircuit.com)

Maverick watch-maker Richard Mille has taken motorsport by storm. As well as being the main sponsor of Classic Le Mans, he also backs the GP de Pau Historique, the Mont Ventoux hill climb and Ferrari F1 test driver Jules Bianchi. Perhaps his best-known association is with F1 star Felipe Massa, who not only wears a Richard Mille watch but has had various special editions named after him – an example of which was on his wrist during his 170mph crash in qualifying for the '09 Hungarian GP. The fact the watch survived without missing a beat is testament to Mille's approach of adopting race-car technology to make his creations as tough as possible. This new version of the RM011 Felipe Massa flyback chronograph celebrates the fact that Richard Mille is now an official partner of Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina track. Just ten will be available.

Chopard Rosso Corsa

Price: £5560
From: www.chopard.com

If you like cars and watches, you might think Karl-Friedrich Scheufele has the world's best job – along with his sister, Caroline, he's co-president of Chopard, the watch and jewellery brand well known for its celebrity links and for sponsoring major historic car events such as the Mille Miglia, with which it has been associated since 1988. Each year, the firm produces a new design of Mille Miglia wristwatch as well as some interesting variations on the theme, such as the limited edition sets from a few years back which comprised five Mille Miglia watches with dials finished in the 'racing colours' of different countries and presented in a miniature tool box. The colour theme is now being revisited in the Rosso Corsa, a special version of the 44mm Mille Miglia GT XL chronograph that has a titanium case and a red varnished dial with matching red strap stitching. The model is limited to 1000 pieces, but rumour has it that further variants in BRG, 'Speed Yellow' (for Belgium) and 'Vintage Blue' (for France) may be in the pipeline.

Jean-Mairet & Gillman Chronograph Alexandre

Price: £6500
From: www.jean-mairetgillman.com

Here's a watch brand you might not have heard of. Founder Cesar Jean-Mairet is related to the famous Bovet watchmaking family and started sketching watch designs when he was still a schoolboy before setting up his own brand in 1999 aged 43. There are various models in the small range but the most appropriate drivers' watch is the Chronograph Alexandre, which approaches the conundrum of chronograph sub-dial design in an unusual and interesting way. Instead of the usual small counters, it has a large, 45-minute counter in the centre, while seconds are read from a revolving disc visible through an aperture below 12 o'clock.

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Petrolhead

Richard Porter

Mrs Porter is on the lookout for a new car. The only problem is, it seems she's been quietly devouring Richard's car magazines

There are certain things in life which only men seem to be interested in. Whistling, for example, or shouting 'Waaaaaay' when someone they recognise walks into a room. And to this list we might also add 'reading **evo**' since the last piece of research conducted about this magazine concluded that 99 per cent of its readers were male.

Except I can't help thinking this is actually – no pun intended – a load of bollocks. Unlike other predominantly blokeish interests such as trains or owning lots of tools even though you can't and don't use them properly, cars are not just a man thing. Lots of women I know are interested in cars, even if it's not in the faintly obsessive manner that men display and which is also the reason only men become weirdly fixated with owning records on the original label. Or why girls can watch a film and at the end of it think, 'I enjoyed that enormously but now I must go and do something else' whilst men are consumed with a need to sit through another 15 hours of DVD extras that give a vague insight into how they shot that sequence with the exploding tram.

For this same reason, men buy a car mag because they want to know things about engines and upper wishbones in finer detail. But once that magazine is in the house, your wife or girlfriend is at liberty to thumb through it whenever the mood takes her, just as men might find themselves idly flicking through a copy of *Cosmopolitan* or *Marie Claire* or any other magazine that considers itself to have a predominantly female readership.

The difference is that men usually only look through a women's magazine because there might be some boobs in it. Chaps, I warn you now that when your partner casually flips the pages of a car mag, they are paying attention.

I know this because some time ago, possibly whilst under the influence of a quantity of wine, I rashly promised to buy my wife a car. What I had in mind was something small and reliable and – given that most of her driving history is in the US and British insurers use any excuse up to and including prevailing wind conditions to load premiums – something cheap to insure. A six-year-old Toyota Yaris or something like that. Apparently what Mrs P had in mind was rather more like a brand new Fiat 500 TwinAir.

'MEN USUALLY ONLY LOOK THROUGH A WOMEN'S MAG BECAUSE THERE MIGHT BE SOME BOOBS IN IT'

Then Renault came along with that limited run Twingo Bizu which, at just £6500 for a brand new car from the company that builds the Clio Cup, was so compelling it even made it into the pages of this magazine. Your wife or girlfriend might have noticed, even if you didn't. Mrs Porter was certainly intrigued by the Bizu, daft name aside. She started asking questions about warranties and safety ratings. Things that I'm damn sure she's been picking up from discarded car mags. My God, maybe she's been pulling them out of the recycling bin when I'm not around.

The warranty is good on the Twingo, I said, and Renault has a decent safety reputation. Perhaps it did make more sense to buy a new car. Yes, she said, but what's the depreciation like? Depreciation? Since when's she known or cared about depreci-bloody-ation?

I said as much to a mate over a swift drink on a sunny afternoon last month, shortly before we were joined by a friend called Hannah. I'm thinking of buying a new car, I said idly. Maybe a Twingo or something small like that, perhaps a Ford Ka. 'Oh God no, not the Ka,' she replied, 'The Twingo's okay but what about a Toyota iQ?'

Sweet Jesus, where was she getting this from? Can you, as a chap, name any of the designers that might appear in the pages of *Elle*? Are you even a man? Are there any men reading this? I'm starting to suspect that blokes don't read car magazines at all, perhaps because we're all too busy thinking about sheds or looking up footage of aircraft accidents on the internet. You know, actual things that only men seem to be interested in.

Illustrations Simon Cooper

stopcock.com

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RX Series MY 11 prices start from £44,530. The RX 450h Lifestyle accessory pack is available on all RX 450h SE-I derivatives, and the SE-L and SE-L Premier derivatives. Model shown is RX 450h SE-I priced at £49,514 including Lifestyle accessory pack at £499 (including cost of fitting) and metallic paint. The panoramic roof is available on the RX 450h SE-I grade only. Prices correct at time of going to print and include VAT, delivery, number plates, full tank of fuel, one year's road fund licence and £55 first registration fee. Car shown may not be exact to UK specification. Certain components within the Lexus Hybrid Drive system have a five-year or 60,000 mile warranty, whichever comes first. *The RX 450h can travel up to 20mph for a distance of 1 mile without emissions at point of driving – this can be exceeded, dependent on conditions.

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). CO_2 emissions combined 145 g/km.

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The Insider

Harry Metcalfe

The Shanghai motor show showed that the Chinese car industry is ready to take over the world – but not with the sort of cars we'd like to drive

When I last visited the vast Shanghai motor show two years ago, I came away amazed by the sheer number of weirdly named Chinese manufacturers exhibiting, most of which I never knew even existed. To make matters worse, the halls were stuffed full of poorly engineered cars that were so bad I was sure I would never hear of most them ever again. To be honest, it all seemed a bit of a joke.

Well, the mocking period is over. At this year's show those same, strange Chinese car brands were there again but this time the cars on display were much more serious. Okay, they weren't the most exciting bunch of cars I've ever clapped eyes on, but for that huge sector of the global car market that I call the 'white goods' division, they were absolutely perfect. These are the sort of cars created for that bloke you get trapped with at parties and from who it's impossible to escape until he's explained in minute detail that all he wants from a car is it to take him from A to B and how much better his 'Kion Dullsville' (with a ten-year warranty) is than his last car. Arrrrh! Thing is, he's typical of the vast majority of the world's car buying public.

And of course the same holds true for typical Chinese car buyers too. All they really want in a car is good interior space, a decent number of seats (the Chinese won't buy two-seater cars as it's deemed to be selfish) and excellent build quality (engine power seems almost irrelevant). The quality thing hasn't exactly been a great Chinese speciality up until now but it's definitely getting better and the difference compared with 2009 was so great it was actually a little bit frightening. I even spotted a Pininfarina representative on the Brilliance stand – the Italian styling house has been signed up to design its next generation of cars.

Hybrids, seven-speed CVT gearboxes, plug-in hybrids and Euro-5 engines were all present and all at remarkable prices. If you want an idea what crazy value today's Chinese cars offer, consider the humble Jas A-Class. A four-door

'THESE CARS ARE LIKE WHITE GOODS, CREATED FOR THAT BLOKE YOU GET TRAPPED WITH AT PARTIES'

Toyota Aygo look-a-like with electric power steering, electric windows and a funky, modern interior. Here in the UK, an Aygo of similar spec to the Jas lists at £9750 but Chinese buyers can buy a new Jas A-Class for £3750.

None of this would really matter here in the West if domestic demand in China (estimated to be 20million cars a year by 2015) was going to suck up most of what is going to get produced over the coming years. But talk to Geely, Great Wall, Brilliance and Jas and you soon discover that Chinese manufacturers have very ambitious plans to export cars to every corner of the globe in the very near future. The lady at Geely told me they would be selling two million cars a year by 2015 (that's up from 415,000 in 2010) and it was a near identical story whichever stand I happened to visit.

My party bore might be smiling but which of today's manufacturers are going to be the most affected by this Chinese car invasion? Well, with the Japanese industry already hit by the earthquake (see Planet Evo), I reckon it's going to be Toyota, Honda and Nissan, in that order (interestingly, premium brands like Land Rover and Jaguar have far less to fear as this is an area of the market the Chinese know others do better. Well, for the moment anyway).

Toyota recently released a statement saying its production won't get back to normal until the end of 2011. The effect this will have on its balance sheet will be way worse than the recession of 2008-9. Thanks to the recent strength of the Yen, Japanese cars have also been getting more expensive in their main export markets. To a certain extent, the same can be said of German brands.

All of which could create the perfect conditions for these fledging Chinese car manufacturers, with pots of government money to dip into, no legacy overheads (like pension provisions and inefficient factories), numerous local component suppliers (so no problem with parts supply), a willingness to grow and a plentiful workforce. They are sure to grab the opportunity with both hands.

When Chinese cars do finally arrive in our showrooms, the gulf in pricing will be massive. If I were sitting in the boardroom of Toyota, Honda or Nissan right now, I'd be feeling pretty scared.

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Crossed Up

Chris Harris

Loving cars is, whether we like it or not, all about loving numbers. Harris explains how a mis-spent childhood absorbing car data eventually paid off

Seven hundred and twenty two kilograms. Say it to yourself a few times. That's good. Now look at the numerical presentation of that number: 722kg. I keep looking at that figure and smiling. If there's a number equivalent of onomatopoeia then this figure has it, because it represents the kerb weight of a car that can seat four adults. As a collection of digits, it somehow just *looks* lightweight.

Perhaps that's just because anything with only three digits automatically triggers an internal 'oooh, that's light' recognition in a car-nerd's head. Normal people wouldn't see it this way – they'd just see some numbers describing a vehicle. But a key diagnosis of auto-obsession is a knack of instantly spotting significance in numbers that would mean nothing to the majority of the population.

Many of them are indelibly printed in my mind, just as they are in yours. This process began back in January 1982 when my father left me in a car as he went to run an errand but, realising I would need something to distract me from dismantling the dashboard or eating the fag lighter, he popped into a newsagent and bought a copy of *What Car?*

I set about memorising the data section with an expertise completely at odds with my academic reports. For this six-year-old, numbers in the context of a mathematics lesson were just illegible squiggles on a page with no meaningful influence on everyday life. However, in the context of a Ferrari 365 GTB/4, the number 12.6 described, in seconds, the car's ability to accelerate from zero to one hundred miles per hour, and from the moment it first entered my head, I just knew it was a number of great significance and one I would never forget.

Numbers are inextricably linked with cars; in fact they might be the only unifying aspect running through the multifarious layers of weirdness that make up the wider car-universe. The Allegro-fancier cannot adequately announce his knowledge of the quartic steering wheel to the assembled masses of the Chepstow Show without being able to present, from memory, production numbers and, of course, how would the Nürburgring hero be able to furnish his tales of derring-do without a specific (mostly fictional) Bridge-to-Gantry lap time? Cars are machines; machines are wrought through engineering; engineering is the material representation of sums. Everything is numbers. Loving cars is, whether we like it or not, loving numbers.

'I SET ABOUT MEMORISING THE DATA WITH AN EXPERTISE AT ODDS WITH MY ACADEMIC REPORTS'

For me it's the raw data either presented by a stationary machine or during performance tests that still holds the greatest appeal. To be able to eventually use the store of seemingly useless information gathered from car mags in my professional life was rather gratifying: if only I'd taken the opportunity to go back and tell Mr Scott that having *Autocar*'s XJ220 road test on my lap (0-100mph in 7.9sec) had turned out to be far more useful than his listening comprehension.

Perhaps the greatest joy of this job has been discovering what those numbers actually feel like from inside the machine. The first time I ran from rest to 100mph in under 11 seconds was on a work experience stint in 1996, in the passenger seat of something called a Hennessey Viper Venom. It was indescribably noisy, violent and exciting. But it was also more than 4 seconds slower over the same increment than a McLaren F1, leading to another fascinating discovery: the exponential nature of these numbers. The difference between a car that accelerates from rest to 100mph in 9 seconds, and one that does it in 8 is far, far greater than the numerical statement would suggest.

This leads to an ever-changing performance framework that exists in my head. For every class of car there are benchmark numbers that define it as good, bad or average. Example: super-saloon in May 2011? Has to be rest-to-a-ton in under 10sec. In 2000, that figure was 12sec.

As for the McLaren, the *Autocar* road test numbers will remain in my head long after I have forgotten my childrens' names: 0-200mph in 28sec; 1138kg. As a thirty-something-car-numbers-obsessive, the day that test was published in May 1994 remains one of the definitive moments in my life. A sad admission for most people, but nothing less than the truth in this case.

Seven hundred and twenty two kg. That's the kerb-weight of a Citroën AX GT. I've just bought one. It is roughly half the weight of a modern hatch, and several hundred kilos lighter than a 2011 supermini. When I had one years ago I weighed it on the road test scales – 724kg. **evo**, the thrill of numbers.

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DRIVEN

- **MERCEDES** C63 AMG COUPE **P46**
- **LOTUS** ELISE CLUB RACER **P50**
- **VAUXHALL** CORSA VXR **P52**
- **VAUXHALL** CORSA SRi **P52**
- **VAUXHALL** INSIGNIA VXR **P54**
- **SAAB** 9-5 SPORTWAGON **P54**
- **CAMARO** CONVERTIBLE **P56**
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MERCEDES-BENZ C63 AMG COUPE

■ NEW COUPE VERSION OF C63 ■ 6.2-LITRE V8 ■ 451BHP
■ 186MPH POTENTIAL ■ MERCEDES' ANSWER TO M3 COUPE

Much like a stubborn old person set in their ways, AMG is an organisation that knows what it likes and likes what it knows. It defines a recipe and sticks to it. Accordingly, it will come as no surprise to learn that its latest machine, the C63 Coupe, uses a 6.2-litre normally aspirated V8 – effectively the same engine that has powered classes C, E, CLS, S, CL, ML, SL and, for a few worrying minutes, R.

There is now a move towards turbocharging in Affalterbach, but the double-blower 5.5-litre V8 won't fit in the C-class, so the C63 Coupe gets the same naturally aspirated 451bhp motor as fitted to the recently revised saloon and estate versions.

Identifying the differences between coupe and saloon doesn't take long. Aside from the bulgy bonnet (not as funky as the old one to these eyes), all the body panels on the coupe are new, but thereafter pretty much everything is identical: the motor, the MCT (Multi Clutch Technology) gearbox, the dashboard, even the spring and damper settings.

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 6208cc **CO2** 280g/km
Power 451bhp @ 6800rpm **Torque** 442lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-62mph 4.5sec (claimed) **Top speed** 186mph (optional, limited)
Price £56,665 **On sale** July

Left: steering wheel is borrowed from the CLS63 AMG; rotary control on the centre console enables the driver to switch between C, S, S+ and M transmission modes, or select 'race start' for launch control mode; gearchanges in S+ and M modes take just 100 milliseconds

'IT'S A MIGHTY IMPRESSIVE MACHINE, THE C63 COUPE, MILES

Above: standard 18in wheels make for a good ride but look small on the coupe body (see right); 19-inchers are available on the options list

But then there's considerable merit in being cloned from a C63 saloon – it remains one of the most exciting cars on sale, because it links the disciplines of M3-rival *and* mini-Mopar weapon in a way nothing else can quite manage. The coupe does the same thing, with two fewer doors.

Given that BMW M and AMG have shared market space for decades, it is perhaps surprising to note that the introduction of the C63 Coupe marks the first time that Mercedes has had a direct competitor to the core M product, the BMW M3 coupe.

Removing two doors and lowering the roofline 44mm has both improved the C63's rigidity and lowered its centre of gravity. There are no specific figures for the changes, but the revised C of G alone must make quite a difference.

Does the coupe immediately feel different to the saloon? Nope. A little keener to change direction perhaps, but otherwise it's business as usual. The V8 spits into life with alarming sharpness, settles after a few minutes' static-emissions ECU tomfoolery and then gently sways in the engine bay. The cabin is revised C-class, which is very good news if you liked the old one because the architecture is the same but the finish is a little better and the computer readout in the centre of the speedometer is now a TFT effort, which makes the old dot-matrix thingy look ancient.

The coupe gets its own seats, which are slightly less bolstered than the formidable and, it has to be said, class-leading equivalents found in the saloon. The rear gets two individual chairs, just like the larger E-class coupe.

In terms of straight-line performance, the C63 has little to fear from either the M3 or Audi's RS5. With 451bhp and 442lb ft of torque, it swats numbers between 100 and 150mph with ludicrous ease, and does so with unique character and noise. As luck would have it, as we join the Autobahn just south of Stuttgart, a V10 Audi S8 engages us – it has to be said unwisely. He is left looking very silly.

Our test car is running the standard 18in wheels, which do look a little apologetic against the great, unbroken expanse of rear side panel, but the car does strike an excellent blend of comfort and roll resistance like this. Also fitted here is the optional locking differential, which, to anyone interested in driving their C63 Coupe with any vigour, should be the first tick on the options list.

This is the first time I've driven a C63 variant with AMG's unique MCT automatic – and it turns out to be every bit as good as I'd expected. This seven-speed gearbox is a celebration of curious engineering. Just as the world went nuts for double-clutch transmissions, AMG developed its own solution that, on paper, looks crude and slow by comparison (it's essentially an auto 'box with the torque converter replaced by a wet start-off clutch). On the road, it's really excellent, combining genuine auto feel with the possibility of whip-crack speedy manual shifts using the steering-wheel paddles.

Mercedes is on a roll with its steering racks right now, and this car makes both the RS5 and M3 seem deficient for feel and driver-confidence. The only downside is that the trendy flat-bottomed wheel is now flat-topped

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Left: V8 is a 6.2-litre, despite what the badge says (see opposite page); 451bhp is the standard output, but an optional 'AMG Performance Package' increases this to 480bhp, reducing the 0-62mph time by 0.1sec to 4.4sec; carbonfibre boot spoiler is an option

too, which means it is technically quartic. Allegro AMG anyone?

Bump absorption is good, the car is set to be a natural understeerer, as you'd expect, but switch the stability control off and you have a machine of unrivalled balance in its class, simply because its combination of torque, two-wheel drive and uncorrupted steering out-smarts the others. It is hard to stress how far AMG has come in recent years as a maker of cars that provide pleasure in the most basic areas of driving: steering, ride and throttle response. It beats BMW M and Audi RS in all departments.

But this is not a great looking car to my eyes. It's lacking muscle at the rear end, which is odd given the lower roof, but the flourish of quad pipes and that lumpy bonnet go some way to offsetting the ordinary shape. It also should be noted that this low-key presentation makes the C63 Coupe something of a sleeper, hence the S8 thinking he was hard enough.

AMG will add 29bhp (taking the total to 480) and up the speed limiter to 186mph at extra cost, both of which would complement the test car's LSD and carbon boot spoiler. But with it already having the legs of its arch rivals, is there really much point? Rear passenger room is generous, as snapper Stuart Collins found as he shot video of the dashboard at an indicated 182mph on the way back to the airport.

So it's a mighty impressive machine, the C63 AMG Coupe, miles more engaging than an RS5 and faster than an M3. In fact it bows to only one rival: the C63 saloon – which, to me, is better looking, more practical and only fractionally less capable on a twisty road. But whichever way you look at it, the C-AMG line-up is pretty formidable.

Chris Harris

evo RATING ★★★★½

+ Speed, ability, feedback, noise
– Saloon looks better

MORE ENGAGING THAN AN RS5, FASTER THAN AN M3'

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LOTUS ELISE CLUB RACER

- STRIPPED-OUT ELISE
- 24KG WEIGHT LOSS
- 'SPORT' MODE FOR STABILITY CONTROL

Over the years there has been a gradual push by Lotus to try to make the Elise appeal to Porsche and Mercedes owners. It's seemed like there has always been a belief at Hethel that with a bit of carpet here and an iPod connection there, the masses might be persuaded out of their SLKs and Boxsters and into Elises. Once posted through the slot between roof and sill, sublime handling would make up for the lack of any other little luxuries. Thousands would be converted.

Noble intentions, and I'm sure that a few people were persuaded by the addition of a cup holder. But I also know that most of us initially fell in love with an Elise bereft of carpets and airbags. We adored the original precisely because it was sparse and devoid of anything not associated with driving. Which is why everyone in the **evo** office was excited when a new, Sky Blue Elise Club Racer scrunched across the gravel of the car park.

SPECIFICATION

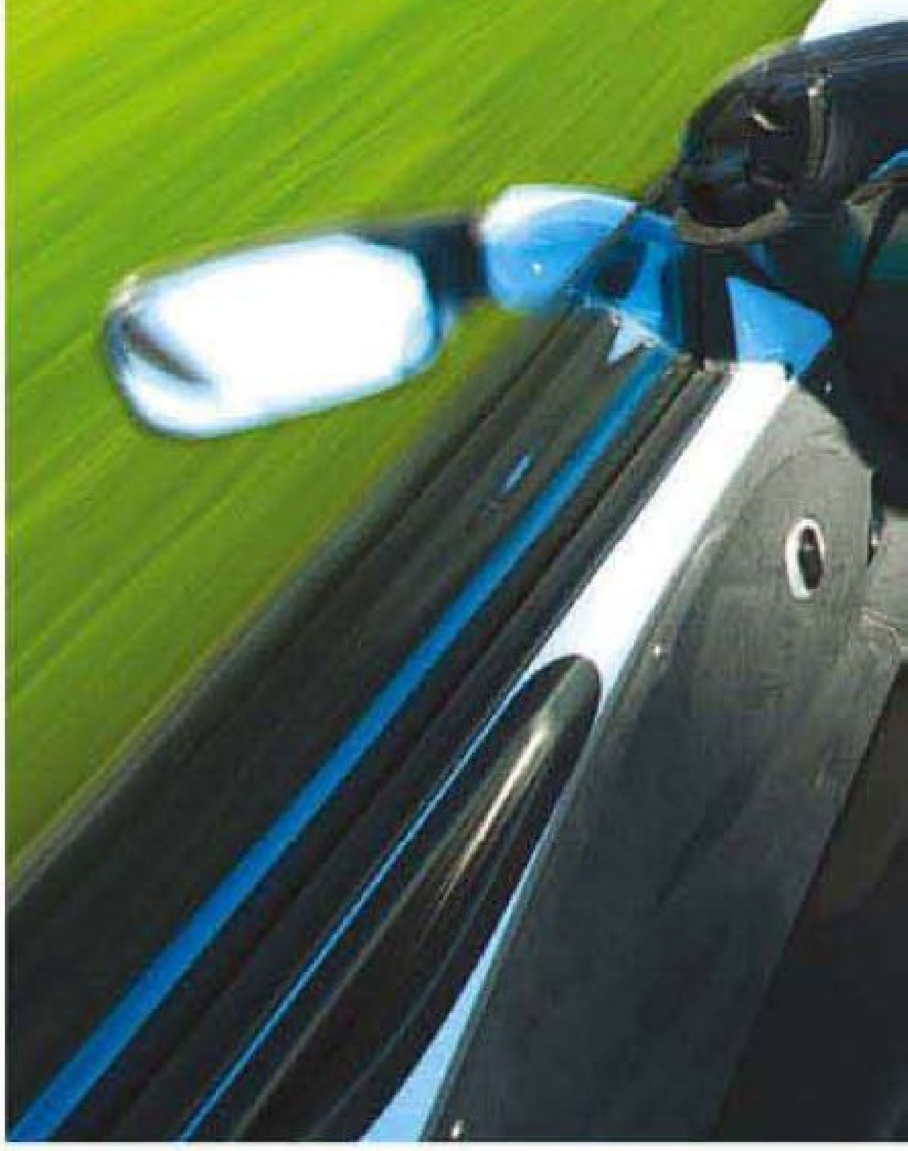
Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc **CO2** 149g/km
Power 134bhp @ 6800rpm **Torque** 118lb ft @ 4400rpm
0-60mph 6.5sec (claimed) **Top speed** 127mph (claimed)
Price £27,500 **On sale** Now

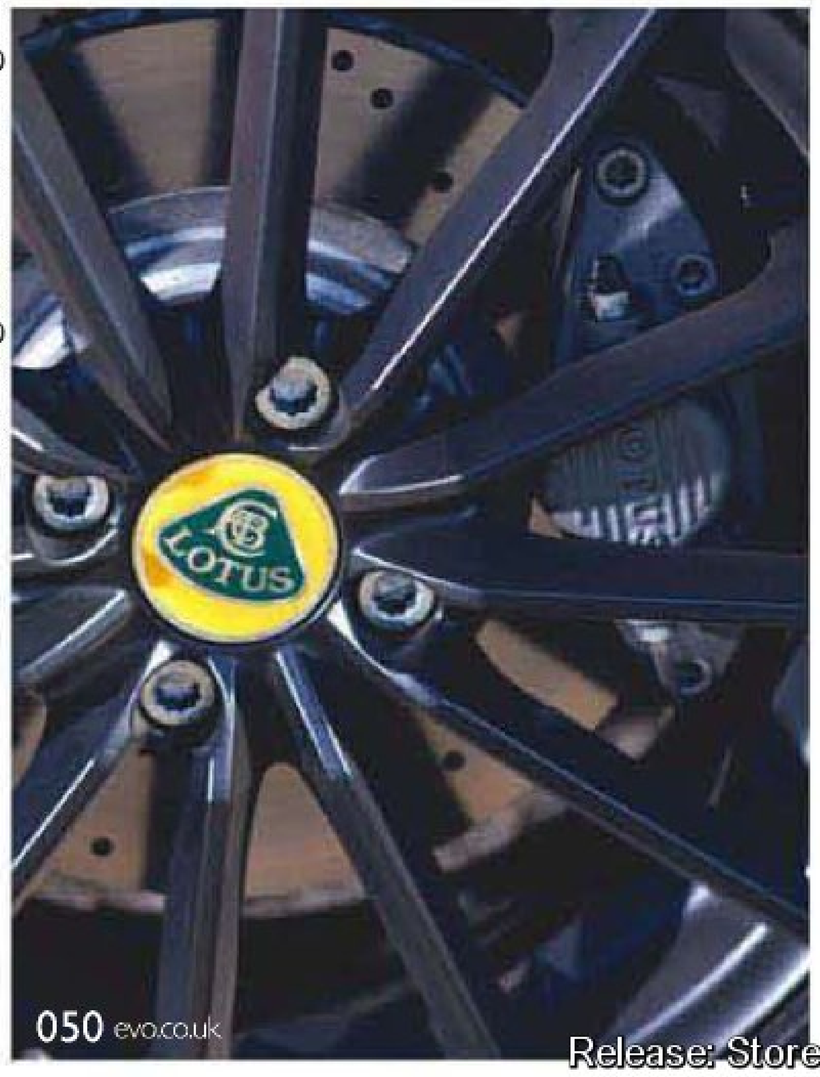
The CR is the Elise pared-back and pitched at the purist (and the puritan, I suppose). The weight savings are not huge – just 24kg – and some series 1 owners will say that a kerb weight of 852kg is still at least 100kg too much for any Elise, let alone a stripped-out version. The smaller battery is probably the single largest weight saving, but the removal of the radio, central locking, air-conditioning, noise insulation, carpets and most of the seat padding are what you notice. Lotus claims 6.5sec for the 0-60mph dash – the same as for the regular Elise – but the changes have a much greater effect than mere numbers can convey.

The hollow, empty-bathtub sound as you rest your heels on a bare sheet of aluminium and the ability to look around the cockpit at the structural joins in the chassis makes you feel a part of the car before you've even turned the key. The 'Racer' part of its name is wholly appropriate because it has exactly that empty feeling that you find in a car prepped for a grid. Nothing distracts your mind from the primary purpose of the Elise, which remains at its heart a very single-minded driving tool.

There are actually a few more grams that I would shave from the Elise CR – I'd take off all the padding from the seats. A bare GRP seat can be perfectly comfortable and the sparse padding on the Club Racer's seats just seems to add pad where it isn't wanted.

The engine is unchanged from the standard





Top right: interior is stripped of all luxuries. Right: Sport button is new and relaxes the ESP. Left: 12-spoke wheels have a black finish; Sky Blue paint is one of six available colours

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'IT'S GREAT FUN WORKING HARD TO MAINTAIN YOUR MOMENTUM AND KEEP THE ENGINE SPINNING'

car, so you get 134bhp and 118lb ft from the Toyota 1.6, as well as 45mpg. It's not an engine that makes you want to short-shift through the gears. Instead you hang on to all the revs available and enjoy the almost K-series timbre to the exhaust note. Driven thus there is ample pace for sprinting down a B-road and also great fun to be had from snatching late downchanges and working hard to maintain your momentum and keep the engine spinning.

Then again, despite the engine advocating speed maintenance, it's the CR's brakes that put the single biggest grin on my face. I've never been the last of the late brakers, especially on the road, but the Club Racer is utterly addictive in the way it wipes off speed. It's as you press the ball of your foot hard onto the middle pedal that you really sense the lightness of this Elise. You can press harder and harder and you never get that feeling of the discs struggling and the pads softening under the strain of lumbering inertia. Instead, there are simply wonderful amounts of positive G and an unerring, confidence-inspiring stability.

The chassis gets an adjustable front anti-roll bar in place of the usual fixed item and there is also a Sport setting for the Lotus stability and traction control, which allows more freedom to explore slip angles before it steps in. Fundamentally, though, the CR is just the same bewitching mix of grip and ride and sublime steering that the standard Elise is.

Finally, there is the price: £27,500 is, I think, a little steep for a basic Elise, but unlike some manufacturers who charge more for giving you less, the CR's price does at least represent a £600 saving over a standard Elise. So, all in all, there's a lot to like about not a lot.

Henry Catchpole

evo RATING ★★★★★

+ All the usual Elise traits, with a touch more focus
− A bit pricey

Pictures: Adam Duckworth

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VAUXHALL CORSA VXR NURBURGRING EDITION

■ POWER UP TO 202BHP ■ REVISED SUSPENSION
■ LIMITED-SLIP DIFFERENTIAL ■ IMPROVED BRAKES

Yes, the use of the world's most celebrated racetrack in the name seems a little crass, but there's a lot more to this car than a bandwagon badge and a stiff price tag. This Corsa VXR's 1.6-litre turbo motor runs 1.2bar boost as part of a remap that takes power to 202bhp with the additional help of a reduced-back-pressure exhaust.

That's not all. The chassis features expensive Bilstein monotube inverted dampers, a ride height drop (20mm front, 15mm rear) and stiffer, progressive-rate springs. There's also a mechanical limited-slip differential. Meanwhile, Brembo has improved the brakes, providing discs with better ventilation and four-pot front calipers that each weigh 1.25kg less than the regular items. The new 18in wheels are lighter too, even though they're half an inch wider. Superb half-leather Recaros are standard, along with plenty of other kit, including a front splitter.

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo **CO2** 178g/km
Power 202bhp @ 5750rpm **Torque** 206lb ft @ 2250-5500rpm
0-60mph 6.5sec (claimed) **Top speed** 143mph (claimed)
Price £22,295 **On sale** Now

It's a feisty thing, the 206lb ft from just 2250rpm squirting it forward with negligible lag. But it's the traction that amazes: it'll take full boost in second gear out of a tight corner without any wastage of torque, and you almost have to wind lock off when you accelerate hard in faster corners and discover yet more grip.

The steering lacks weight on lock to reassure, but it responds rapidly away from the straight-ahead and it's undeniably accurate. The brakes are effective, although not beyond wilting given plenty of abuse, and the chassis is keen to change direction – almost up on tip-toes at speed. On this initial circuit-based introduction, there appears to be much more damping sophistication than in the standard VXR.

Of course, how it fares on the road is the real test, as will be a comparison against the Renaultsport Clio, but the fact that it's a serious contender at all says a lot, even at around two grand more than a similar-spec Clio 200.

Adam Towler

Above: new exhaust has twin tailpipes. Left: Recaro seats (these are the optional full-leather items) get Ring logos

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ Well chosen package of improvements
− You'll pay for it

VAUXHALL CORSA SRI 1.7 CDTI

■ VXR-BEATING TORQUE
■ £30 ANNUAL ROAD TAX

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1686cc, turbo **CO2** 118g/km
Power 128bhp @ 4000rpm **Torque** 221lb ft @ 2000-2500rpm
0-60mph 8.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 124mph (claimed)
Price £17,390 **On sale** Now

A 200bhp Corsa is all well and good, but the VXR to the left neither sips fuel nor whispers out CO2. So what about a car that offers most of its fun but with much lower running costs?

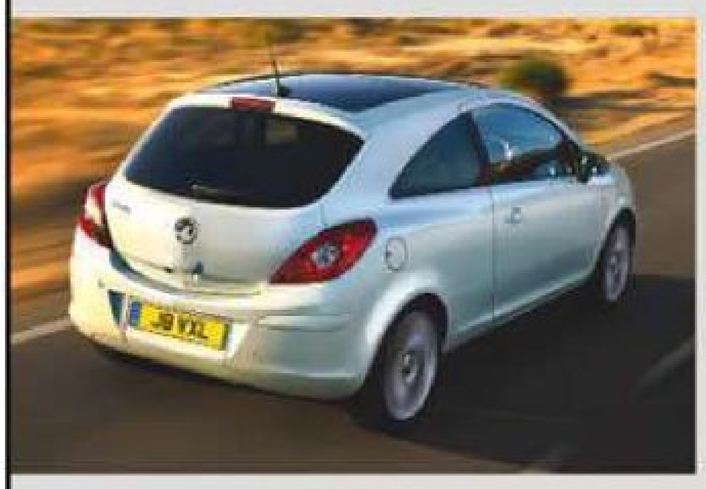
Meet the Corsa SRi, another beneficiary of the range's recent facelift, and available with either a 1.4-litre petrol engine or, as tested here, a 1.7-litre CDTi diesel.

SRi spec means sports suspension, a subtle body kit, aluminium pedals and 17in alloys, yet the CDTi badge provides some performance credentials too: its 128bhp is adequate in a small, 1.2-ton hatchback, while torque is a VXR-topping 221lb ft, served up from just 2000rpm, so the car always boasts surprising amounts of shove. Stirring its sharp six-speed gearbox is a joy, too.

The ride and handling are perhaps most impressive, though. 'Sports suspension' is a term that can conjure up images of jarring, uncomfortable progress, yet the SRi is supple and composed on rutted roads and has better body control than the accepted dynamic class leaders, the Mini and Fiesta. The steering is light but precise.

While ultimately not as quick or rorty as a VXR, the SRi is nearly as much fun, and with a claimed 62.8mpg and £30 annual road tax, far easier on the pocket.

Stephen Dobie



Above: SRi body-kit is understated; sliding glass sunroof is a £650 option. Left: cabin gets 'sports instruments' and leather wheel

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ Near-VXR entertainment…
− …with CDTi running costs

 Pictures: Vauxhall

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VAUXHALL INSIGNIA VXR UNLIMITED

- NOW RUNS TO 170MPH
- £250 OPTIONAL EXTRA

There may be fighting talk of a Lotus Carlton-threatening top speed, but don't get yourself too excited: the only thing different about this VXR with the 'Unlimited' option box ticked is the deletion of some software code in the ECU. There is no increase in boost, and neither are there any trick aero parts out of the back door of Rüsselsheim. Sorry.

What it does mean is that an Insignia VXR in the saloon or hatchback body style will top out at 170mph (165mph for the 'Sports Tourer') instead of nudging into the standard 155mph restraint. The only caveat is that it has to be a car fitted with a manual gearbox; the recently introduced auto won't quite make it.

You can spot an Unlimited from the blue Brembo logos on its brake calipers, and the 'Unlimited' labelled tacho and altered speedometer. Otherwise, it's identical.

Unfortunately, due to a combination of wandering traffic and two-lane-only autobahn, I can't tell you what that final 15mph feels like. What I can tell you is that while the VXR surges up to 140mph with authority, after that progress becomes more sedate. By then the V6 – comically boomy at idle – loses its voice with those high revs and is no match for the wind noise whipping around the A-pillars. Your grip on the steering wheel starts to tighten, your eyes squint for the merest suggestion of a wobble from that artic on the horizon and you wish that the VXR would find another 50bhp and get on with it.

It's a comfortable, well-rounded car, but it never quite feels as exciting as 321bhp should, and its smooth demeanour seems at odds with the VXR brand and aggressive body kit. Still, I don't doubt that given enough space the big Vauxhall will reach that magic figure.

In Europe the Unlimited is a stand-alone model, but in the UK it's just an option, albeit at a reasonable cost of £250 to those planning high-speed motoring, German style.

Adam Towler

Above: blue Brembo logos are only clue to Unlimited spec – unless you happen to be overtaken by an Insignia while doing 155mph…

Above: chassis is unchanged, so the Insignia VXR is its usual able and likeable self away from the autobahn

SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 2792cc, turbo **CO2** 249g/km
Power 321bhp @ 5250rpm **Torque** 321lb ft @ 5250rpm
0-60mph 5.6sec (claimed) **Top speed** 170mph (claimed)
Price £33,730 **On sale** Now

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ It's nice to have the option
− But will you ever use it?

SAAB 9-5

- REVISED SUSPENSION
- NEW ESTATE OPTION

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo **CO2** 194g/km
Power 217bhp @ 5300rpm **Torque** 258lb ft @ 2500-4000rpm
0-62mph 7.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 150mph (claimed)
Price c£30,000 (est) **On sale** September

Two news points here. First, the rather good-looking Saab 9-5 saloon is now joined by a similarly handsome estate. It's a properly roomy car and has a clever 'U-rail' system on the boot floor in which can slide various extendable arms to create luggage-locating corrals of myriad shapes and sizes.

More interesting are the chassis revisions right across the 9-5 range that are coincident with the SportWagon's arrival. The old Sport suspension option with 18in wheels had a miserable ride, harsh and fidgety and hopeless for British roads. Luckily the Comfort version was pretty good.

All 9-5s now have new, softer springs, plus re-rated dampers with reduced 'stiction'. There are new front top mounts, and now all except the lowest-power versions (1.6T and 2.0 TiD) get 'HiPer strut' front suspension and H-arm rear suspension. The HiPer strut uses a separate, steerable hub carrier, which moves the steering axis outwards, reducing torque steer – much as a Renaultsport Mégane or Focus RS do.

Above: SportWagon is new addition to the 9-5 range. Left: U-rail system ensures loads of all shapes and sizes can be secured

We tried three revised 9-5s: a simple 2.0 TiD with 18s and Comfort calibration, a more powerful diesel with adaptive dampers, and a smooth and lusty 217bhp turbo petrol with passive Sport dampers.

This was the one; its steering was crisp, progressive and natural, its ride supple but controlled. This is how a 9-5 should be, even on 18-inchers. It's the engineers' favourite, and it's mine.

John Simister

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ The 9-5 comes good at last
− But not in every version, yet

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Fuel consumption figures for the Civic Ti in mpg (l/100km): Urban 38.7 (7.3), Extra Urban 56.5 (5.0), Combined 47.9 (5.9). CO_2 emissions: 135 g/km. Model and specification shown is Civic 1.4 Ti Manual in Premium White Pearl, at £15,995 price including 1 year's road fund licence, based on 2011/12 Governm

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CHEVROLET CAMARO CONVERTIBLE

- PONY CAR LOSES ROOF
- AVAILABLE AS V6 OR V8

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 6162cc **CO2** n/a
Power 426bhp @ 5900rpm **Torque** 420lb ft @ 4600rpm
0-60mph 4.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (claimed)
Price c£22,500 (in the US) **On sale** Now, in the US

The current Camaro went on sale in the US in early 2009 as a coupe, so it was only a matter of time before a convertible appeared. The resultant ragtop is now hitting showrooms in LT (3.6-litre V6) and SS (6.2-litre V8) guises. Like the coupe, it is based on Holden architecture and has the same dramatic looks that hint knowingly at the 1969 Camaro. The styling is cool, but the cabin materials are decidedly cheap.

The power-operated cloth top that furls in about 18 seconds addresses one of the coupe's biggest flaws, namely its atrocious visibility. Roof up, though, the top apes the coupe's sleek roofline, giant blind spots included. Despite the car's size – 4.8 metres long and 1.92 metres wide – the boot isn't very big and the rear seats are cramped for grown-ups.

Chevrolet claims the Camaro ragtop has better torsional stiffness than a BMW 3-series convertible, allowing the engineers to retain the coupe's suspension tuning. Of course, extra structural braces mean extra weight, and the V8 convertible is a portly 1891kg with the six-speed automatic gearbox.

We tried both the LT and SS version, the latter unfortunately fitted with said auto. While a self-shifter is more in keeping with a convertible's mission, it also means that the car comes with the 400bhp L99 engine instead of the brawnier LS3 that produces 426bhp.

Both V6 and V8 make a nice sound, the latter's burble contrasting with the more strident tone of the former. The V8, of course, motivates the Camaro rather more impressively, reaching 60mph from rest in 4.9sec, 0.2sec slower than the coupe. The auto 'box adds another tenth to this and proves truculent in max-attack manual mode. The V6 runs the 0 to 60mph dash in 6.2sec.

Above: roof is electrically operated. Right: cabin is identical to the coupe's; looks good but feels built to a price

The car rides in a supple, controlled fashion, some achievement considering its 20in wheels. At the Harris Hill Road track near Austin, Texas, the Camaro surprised with decent body control, solid grip and a lack of scuttle-shake and vibrations. The V8 tends to understeer at the limit – it's possible to boot the tail out in tight second-gear corners, just for giggles – and the quick steering is a touch lifeless. The V6 feels lighter on its feet and less prone to wash, but lacks the V8's punch out of the corners and the reassuring pedal feel of larger discs and four-piston Brembo calipers.

The convertibles cost around £3500 more than their coupe counterparts in the US, but are still tremendous value: the base V6 starts below £18K, rising to just over £24K for the top-line V8. As a grey import to the UK you can expect to pay considerably more.

Mark Gillies

evo RATING ★★★☆☆

+ Fast; keeps coupe's looks and swagger
– Cheap interior plastics, small boot

VW GOLF CABRIOLET

- SOFT-TOP RETURNS
- 207BHP TURBO 2-LITRE
- NO MANUAL GEARBOX

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo **CO2** 175g/km
Power 207bhp @ 5300-6200rpm **Torque** 207lb ft @ 1700-5200rpm
0-62mph 7.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 146mph (claimed)
Price c£26,000 (est) **On sale** September

Nine years ago, the Golf convertible vanished. Then it came back, as a spanking new coupe-cabriolet, in 2006. Except that it was called Eos and, to Volkswagen if not to us, it was nothing at all like an open Golf. Oh no.

The Eos has just had a facelift but, to emphasise its non-Golfness, there is now a brand new Golf Cabriolet too. It's cheaper than an Eos, shorter, wedgier in profile, much perter of bottom and has a proper soft-top. The roof opens in an impressive 9.5sec and you can be driving at up to 18mph while it happens.

Volkswagen's engineers say this is the stiffest open-car structure of the entire VW group, and it's true that the new Golf feels extremely rigid, with no shudders at all. This makes the driving experience pleasingly precise, and much fun can be had in the 207bhp 2.0 TSI (DSG-only) version, which has something of a sports-car mien despite its four proper seats. The 158bhp TSI 1.4 should also be entertaining.

Hood-up it's a snug coupe with hardly any wind noise and a good view through the wide rear window. Like the original, the new open Golf is built at the Karmann factory (now VW-owned). Unlike the original, which felt wobbly despite its rollover bar, the new one is a proper driving machine. Which we weren't quite expecting.

John Simister

Soft-top folds into a smaller space than the Eos's hard-top, allowing a truncated tail

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ How a Golf convertible should be
– Except it's too expensive

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CITROËN DS4

■ 'DS' DERIVATIVE OF C4
■ 197BHP 1.6 FROM RCZ

Left: interior has a premium feel. Above: hidden rear door handles are supposed to make you think 'coupe'

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo **CO2** 149g/km
Power 197bhp @ 5500-6800rpm **Torque** 203lb ft @ 1700-4500rpm
0-62mph 7.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 146mph (claimed)
Price c£24,000 (est) **On sale** June

It's a crossover. A hatchback/coupe/SUV-without-the-U based on the C4 hatchback, but with a quicker steering ratio, a higher vantage point, some plush trim options and rear-door windows that won't open because there's nowhere for the glass to go.

The DS4 also has a dramatic look that somehow manages to appear butch and fluent at the same time, the tightly drawn fastback tail and minimal rear overhang suggestive of potential driving fun. And it has underskin components that use simple principles honed to uncommon effectiveness. Suspension is by struts up front, a torsion beam behind; you might assume a more complex 'multi-link' rear end would do a better job, but drive the DS4 and you'd wonder just how.

The 158bhp, 2-litre turbodiesel is as you would expect: capable but not the catalyst for a quick excursion to the back-roads just for the hell of it. Too laid-back, too nose-heavy. The engine to have is the 197bhp, 1.6-litre turbo petrol, as recently encountered in the Peugeot RCZ. Thus powered, the DS4 is rapid enough to be a lot more entertaining than I expected, with an easy rush of overtaking torque, smooth revvability and a crisply deep, if artificially generated, induction note. The six-speed gearbox has a smooth, neat shift too.

The entertainment comes as much from the chassis dynamics as the engine. 'Deft' is the best word; the steering, hydraulically assisted (albeit with an electric pump) instead of by anaesthetising electric motor, is quick, precise, focused, credible; the front wheels bite hard into bends, the rears can be edged out just enough to be useful if you throttle-off. Roll angles are low yet the ride is quite supple, thanks to brilliant damping. And the high seating position, with the view it gives, helps you make the most of this ability, so the DS4 is an excellent real-world ground-coverer.

There's a panoramic windscreen, the finish is plush bar the odd bit of hope-you-don't-notice hardness, the top-spec link-pattern leather is lovely. Did Citroën deliberately make the C4 worse than it needed to be so the DS4 could shine? It's hard to imagine otherwise.

John Simister

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ More entertaining than you'd ever expect
− UK doesn't get leather dash option. Shame

MINI COOPER SD

■ DIESEL COOPER S ■ 2-LITRE TURBO ENGINE ■ 65.7MPG

A 'performance diesel with the Cooper S reputation'. That's how Mini describes its new Cooper SD, but can it really match its petrol equivalent for fun and thrills?

The 2-litre turbodiesel (from the BMW 118d) is the biggest engine ever shoehorned into a Mini. It's 31bhp and 26lb ft healthier than the Cooper D's 1.6, and the SD is certainly brisker in a straight line, but it seems to run out of puff just a little too quickly.

With 225lb ft, it boasts the highest torque figure of any Mini, but it's available only from 1750 to 2700rpm. The petrol Cooper S has a lower torque figure (177lb ft), but it's available over a wider and more useful rev-range.

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1995cc, turbodiesel **CO2** 114g/km
Power 141bhp @ 4000rpm **Torque** 225lb ft @ 1750-2700rpm
0-62mph 8.1sec (claimed) **Top speed** 134mph
Price £18,750 **On sale** Now

With its tactile controls, slick gearchange, firm, sporty chassis and meaty steering, the SD is still uniquely 'Mini' to drive – and it's adequately quick too if you're happy to flick up and down the gears to remain in the torque. The economy figures are also impressive – 65.7mpg and 114g/km – but overall it's not quite as sparkling as the petrol Cooper S. So if you want a diesel Mini go for the standard Cooper D (it's as much fun to drive and over £2500 cheaper). And if you really want a sporty Mini, the petrol Cooper S is still the one.

Stephen Dobie

SD looks and handles like an S, but engine disappoints

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ A quicker diesel Mini
− But no Cooper S alternative

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"STUPENDOUS EXPLOITABLE PERFORMANCE"
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DMS 335I
"AS QUICK AS AN M3 ON THE ROAD"
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"IT FEELS LIKE THE LOVE CHILD OF AN SL65 AND A PORSCHE GT2" EVO OCT '10

DMS 135I
"THE STANDARD CAR IS GREAT BUT DMS HAVE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL"
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"THIS CAR IS STUPENDOUSLY FAST"
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DMS RS6 V10
"THICK LOW END TORQUE MORPHS INTO OHMIGOD TOP-END"
EVO MARCH '09

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

PORSCHE:

997 TURBO/ S 3.8 INC PDK » 611 BHP
997 TURBO 3.6 » 625+ BHP
997 GT2 RS » 670+ BHP
996 TURBO / GT2 » 600+ BHP
997 CARRERA S PDK » 400+ BHP
997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP
997 CARRERA » 348 BHP
997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
997 GT3 » UP TO 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
CAYENNE DIESEL » 300+ BHP

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SL65 AMG » 650 BHP & DE-LIMIT
AMG 55 KOMPRESSOR » 580+ BHP
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RE-MAP & LOWER ABC SUSPENSION
CL600 BI-TURBO » 580+ BHP
S500 2008 » 411+BHP
SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP & DE-LIMIT
SLK 350 » 328 BHP
SLK 200K » 205+ BHP
C220 CDI (W204) » 210 BHP
280/300 CDI V6 » 257 BHP
320 CDI V6 » 274 BHP
350 CDI V6 » 312 BHP
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BMW:

M5 V10 » 548+ BHP 205 MPH
X5M / X6M » 618 BHP
M3 E90/92 » 445 BHP & DE-LIMIT
M3 E46 » 370 BHP & DE-LIMIT
F10 520D » 221 BHP
F10 530D » 296 BHP
F10 535D » 358 BHP
335I/135I/ X6 » 370+ BHP & DE-LIMIT
123D » 252 BHP
330D E90 » 296+ BHP
320D E90 » 209 BHP
330D E46 » 260+ BHP
730D » 290+ BHP
X5 4.0D / 740D » 358 BHP
X5 3.0D » 278 BHP
X6 X50I 4.4 » 500+BHP
535D / 335D / X5 SD » 334 BHP

EXOTIC & MISC:

FERRARI CALIFORNIA » 487 BHP
FERRARI 599 » 647 BHP
FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP
GALLARDO » 546 BHP
GALLARDO LP560 » 600+ BHP
MURCIELAGO LP640 » 707 BHP
MASERATI GRANTURISMO » 438 BHP
MASERATI QUATTROPORTE » 438 BHP
GRANTURISMO S / MC » 479+ BHP
AUDI RS6 V10 » 680+BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI R8 V10 » 592+ BHP
AUDI B7 RS4/ R8 » 439 BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI Q7/A8 4.2 TDI » 387 BHP
AUDI (ALL MODELS) 30TDI » 298 BHP
AUDI S3 / GOLF R » 317+ BHP
RANGE ROVER 4.4 TDV8 » 385BHP
RANGE ROVER 3.6 TDV8 » 338 BHP
R ROVER SPORT 3.0D » 295 BHP
R ROVER SPORT 2.7D » 240 BHP
BENTLEY CGT / F-SPUR » 620 BHP
GT SPEED / SUPERSPORT » 680+ BHP

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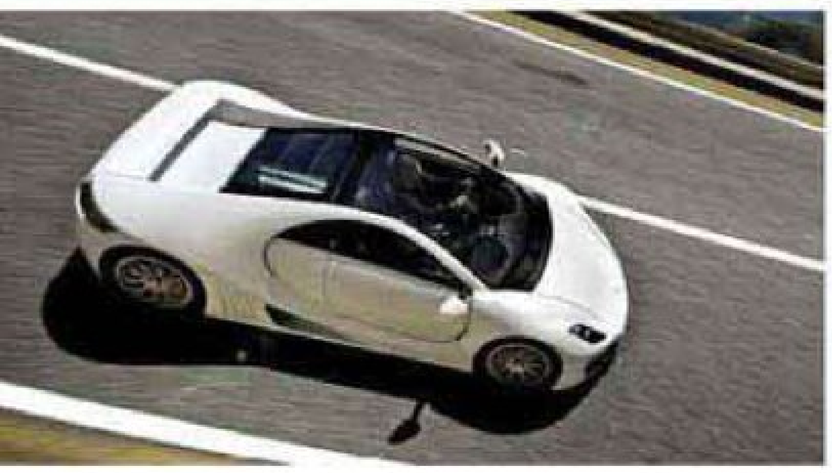

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Letter of the Month

The Noblest of modern supercars

What a terrific issue last month: turbo heaven. The highlight for me was the big guns – GT2 RS, F40, XJ220 and Noble. A fantastic read. I could almost hear the wastegates chuntering.

It occurred to me, whilst reading, that the Noble M600 is probably the supercar of the year. There may be no stability control or clever electronic trickery, but that's exactly why it's a better car than a 458 or an MP4-12C. It's a car for people who can actually drive. If you think of it that way, there's very little to touch it (unless you can afford the F40).

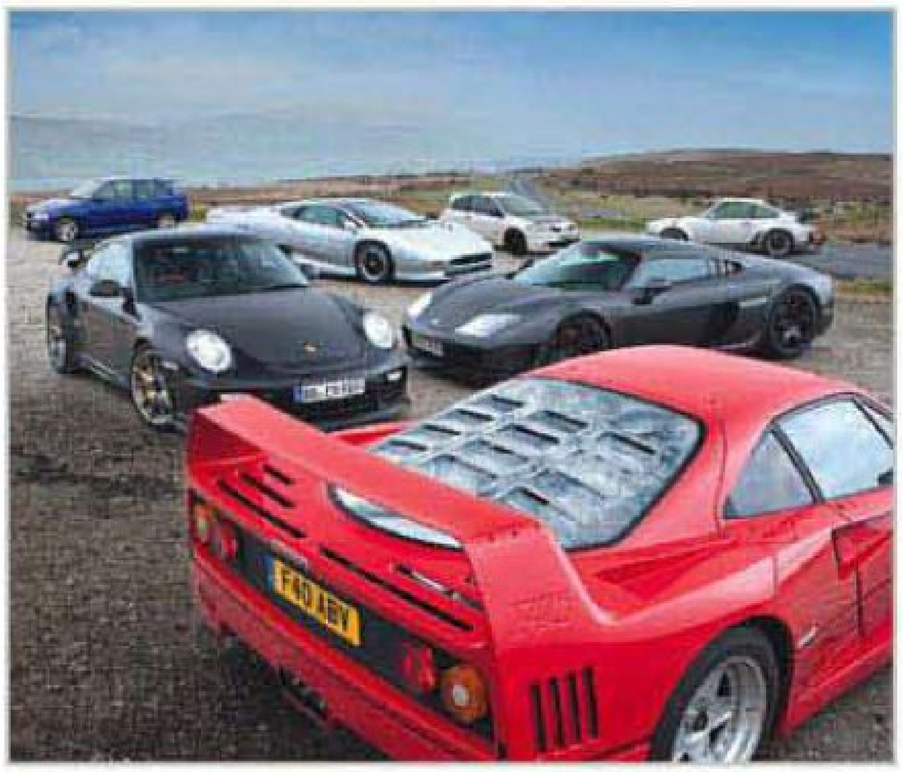
'The Noble is for people who can drive'

Imagine if the Noble had been made in the mid '90s – no one would have criticised it for having few driver aids, they would have been too busy swooning at the performance figures.

Some might say 'that's progress' and to an extent I agree with them. However, in virtually any other market you can think of, from sporting equipment to electronics, there are products designed for professionals/experts and products designed for novices/casual use. Why should supercars be any different? This is your professional, expert driver's supercar.

I wish I were: 1) rich enough to buy one and 2) skilled enough not to kill myself if I did. Though neither is the case, the world is better off for cars like this.

Niall McMahon



Last month's evo was turbo heaven for Niall McMahon, and he was particularly enamoured with the Noble M600

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Leading from the rear

Shame on you evo! In giving Stephen Taylor letter of the month (issue 157), you help further perpetuate the myth that any rear-wheel-drive car is automatically a better steer than any front-driver. I am willing to concede his first point: front-wheel drive is wrong-wheel drive, but only as long as we can also agree that a Porsche 911 is wrong-engine-positioned, a Nissan GT-R is wrong-aspirated and a BMW M5 is wrong-number-of-seat-ed.

Front-wheel drive, like engine position, turbocharging or size of car, is of course chosen for reasons of cost-effectiveness and/or packaging, but this compromise need not define the driving experience in a negative way. A good drivers' car is so because engineers have worked with the package to create excellent dynamics and tactility. The Porsche 911 is a great example: the engine has always been in the 'wrong' place, but look at its unequalled eCoty-winning record.

I'm not saying that the 'perfect' sports car should be anything other than RWD, but to imply that every RWD car is 'simply better' than every FWD car, and to refer to the latter as 'merely an appliance to get from A to B' as Stephen Taylor does? Nonsense.

Chris Spooner, Guisborough

A dab of derv

Poor Stephen Taylor. Choosing a 116d over a Clio Trophy is possibly the daftest thing I have ever heard. I have regular drives in both and would have to say clearly Mr Taylor has not driven a Trophy if he prefers a chugging, underpowered rear-driver to a smile-a-second front-drive hot hatch.

I'm amused by the thought of Mr Taylor making Alonso-style inputs on his way to work in the 116d. Unfortunately a dab of oppo is not even on the options list of a 116d…

There is no point in making a long argument over FWD or RWD; a car is either a joy to drive or a spud.

James Mansfield, Worcester

You're all wrong!

Yes, front-wheel drive *is* wrong, but so is rear-wheel drive. I'm sorry chaps, but the simple fact is, the future is all-wheel drive. BMW recently acknowledged that 80 per cent of 1-series buyers neither know nor care which end is driving. All the 3-series owners I know are more concerned with their monthly tax bill than oversteer on roundabouts.

I drive a 316bhp Impreza WR1 and I am fairly certain it will run rings around most 2WD cars in the real world, where it rains often and the roads are bumpy and slippery. Granted, it doesn't offer the delicate feedback of my MX-5 (mk1 of course), but then I've never spun the Impreza 180 degrees either. Yes, I can enjoy sideways moments on roundabouts thanks to the wonders of DCCD, plus it doesn't get stuck in snow like my aunt's 120d. The only downsides are 18mpg and being frowned at by company car drivers in 2.0 'sporty' diesels, usually as I hoon off towards the horizon.

The Subaru offers me more thrills than a similar front- or rear-drive car simply by combining the benefits of both and allowing me to enjoy the performance safely. So be told, motoring world, AWD is the way forward for those of us who like to drive quickly in a strange place BMW drivers rarely visit – the real world!

Steven Kimberley

Steven Kimberley reckons his Impreza WR1 is a better real-world prospect than most front- or rear-drive cars ('You're all wrong!')

Rumbled

Can I respectfully suggest that Stephen Taylor's letter of the month in evo 157 was a bit on the silly side? I can only conclude that you published it to keep the 'wrong-wheel drive' controversy running.

Simon Bartlett

Tuscan memories

Harry Metcalfe's end-of-term goodbye to his Rolex Blue TVR Griffith (156) took me back to 1998, when I had the privilege of racing in the TVR Tuscan Championship. With 450bhp from the AJP8 flat-crank V8s and just 850kg of Blackpool fibreglass to haul around, those Tuscans were loud, fast and not a little wayward. I remember lifting both inside wheels through Dingle Dell on the GP circuit at Brands and the things

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were devastatingly fast around the old Castle Combe, before it was neutered by the addition of two chicanes.

Arguably, the late '90s were the championship's heyday. Bobby Verdon-Roe and Jamie Campbell-Walter were my team-mates at Colin Blower Motorsport, and Peter Wheeler would make the occasional guest appearance on the grid.

But what of Rolex Blue? Well obviously this came from Rolex, but was inspired by my great friend, Greg Hollamby, whose Oyster Perpetual Motion had a deep purple face. We tried to get the Pantone number from Rolex, but unsurprisingly this remained a well-guarded secret. So the boys at the TVR factory did their best to match the colour of Greg's watch. Our race car was duly sprayed 'Rolex Blue' and the colour was soon added to the official TVR colour charts. Lovely!

Jeremy Rollason

Focusing on the thrill

Steve Kimberley's 'Van Mail' letter (evo 157) reminded me of a recent trip to the Isle of Skye for a holiday. Due to a recently acquired Labrador, it was decided the two-seater had to remain in the garage and, with a sigh and a regretful glance at the dog, we took my wife's diesel Focus; a particularly rattly 03-plate example.

I needn't have despaired. Once we made it past Fort William, and the caravans and Nissan people-carriers thinned out, the humble carriage started to win me over, rising to the challenge of being driven by a lead-footed hooligan amazingly well, gamely squealing its tyres and occasionally lurching into very entertaining oversteer on the magnificent A87, surely one of the best roads in the world.

Later I had the epiphany that owning an evo-worthy performance car is a very fine (if expensive) luxury, but the thrill of driving can only really be found on a clear stretch of satisfying asphalt, and really any old nail will do.

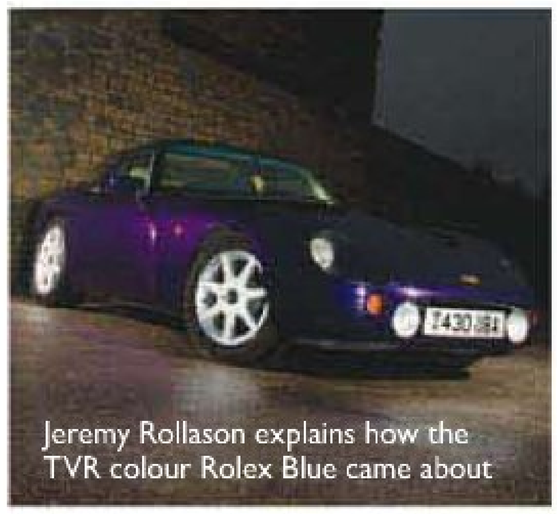
My wife complains that the Focus still doesn't feel 'right' and the dog won't get back in a car, but these are small prices to pay for a truly memorable drive.

Alexander Firmin

Lukewarm hatch

I read with some interest the letter from Andrew Fearon (157) relating to the evo review of the Audi RS3 (156). I found his letter somewhat frustrating and rather condescending.

I would like to think, were I lucky enough to have the finances to run an



Jeremy Rollason explains how the TVR colour Rolex Blue came about

RS3 (for the wife of course; maybe occasionally for me, but only if I have to, you understand…), a BMW M3, a 355 GTS, a 458 and an Audi Q7 (it's just a people-carrier, not an oversized status symbol), that I would still appreciate the thrill of driving.

Mr Fearon says the RS3 is 'for getting from A to B in comfort, at speed and within a quality environment'. That is exactly what the evo review said: a great interior, high-quality feel, but basically designed for people who want speed but don't really want to be bothered. The 'thrill of driving' is absent, which is why the car received a lukewarm review.

David Oliver

An Aston too far?

I was disheartened to read in evo 156 that the 'new' Aston Martin Virage sits squarely in the middle of both the DB9 and the DBS, both in terms of power and price. If I were spending such large amounts of money on a car, I would need to be sure it was the best car the company could produce, not the easiest for the marketing department to position within the model range.

While Aston has fashioned various models from the DB9 platform, these have all had their own agenda. The Rapide is, for example, different enough from the DB9 to justify its existence. Sadly, the Virage shows no such difference. It is simply a wholly unnecessary bridge between the DB9 and DBS. I would go as far as to say the Cygnet is a more credible addition to the range. This could at least be seen as a response to the question of how to reduce fleet emissions. The Virage seems to be a response to a question nobody asked.

Joe Fahy

Time travel for the BTCC?

Just read through issue 157, and wondered how I can get to the BTCC events advertised on page 111. Since it's for the 2009 calendar, I have a few bets I'd like to make…

Paul J A Soave

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From the forums: Renault Twizy - the future?

Renault's Twizy has divided opinion at evo.co.uk

UKpete?: Rear-engined, rear-wheel drive and almost half the weight of an original Mini. The new Renault Twizy should be a blast to drive, even if the maximum power of 20bhp doesn't exactly sound like the stuff of a petrolhead's (or should that be lithium-ionhead's) dreams.

So in this age of ever increasing fuel, tax, and insurance costs, is the Twizy the first example of a new breed of 'green' car that will be bought for driving enjoyment while also being relatively cheap to buy and run?

Alex8: No, no and no. Even if you are a student, you could get a fun and frugal ride for less than a couple of grand. I just don't get electric/hybrid sh1tboxes. They promise so much yet in reality provide so little.

OllieInGear: For all of Renault's hard work, it'll fall into the same category as the BMW C1 – one of those brilliant urban transport solutions which everyone applauds and says is the future, then ignores because they'd rather have a proper car instead.

Rich B: In the real world, people need/can only afford one car that can pop to the shops, do the commute *and* drive to Aunt Doris's house 150 miles away at the drop of a hat without planning recharge stopovers. Who wants to spend £7K to save using 50p's worth of petrol in their 'proper car'.

Jay: evo actually gave this 4 stars!

Barry: It's the Thrill of Driving, not the Thrill of Pub Figures… They like the Smart Roadster too and that is slower than evolution…

Marv: Barry is correct. It may look pretty crap and be woefully underpowered, but if it's fun to drive, it's fun to drive.

Rich B: Would be great fun going past this in London for 8 months of the year with no windows…

Or dressing as a North Sea fisherman to get in your *car* to drive to work…

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GREAT

The Lamborghini Aventador isn't just a Murciélago replacement. It's completely new.

WHITE?

But is it the landmark supercar that Lamborghini needs it to be? ***Harry Metcalfe*** *finds out*

Pictures James Lipman

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Designing a new car completely from scratch is pretty rare these days because a) it's so ruddy expensive to achieve and b) it's a damn sight easier and cheaper to pluck tasty components from the internal parts catalogue, mix them up into a new recipe and then launch the new model in a blaze of PR.

The trouble for Lamborghini was that option b) was never going to be possible for the Murciélago's replacement, as that car's chassis, engine and running gear were all well past their sell-by date. Most of the mechanicals dated back to the prehistoric days when CO2 was something that was only discussed in school classrooms and crash safety was down to the driver not crashing. To make life even more difficult, VW HQ had demanded that Lamborghini's new flagship model had to be a world-beating 'super sports car', and the only way Lamborghini could achieve this was to bin everything that had gone before and start designing with a clean sheet of paper. The only sacrosanct areas were a mid-engined V12 layout, four-wheel-drive transmission and scissor doors, as these were deemed to be at the core of Lamborghini's DNA.

The end result is the Aventador LP700-4 you see here, claimed by Lambo CEO Stephan Winkelmann to represent a jump of two generations in development terms. If that's true, then this could be the most significant new Lamborghini since the beautiful but flawed Miura morphed into the crazed but defining Countach way back in 1971.

As we arrive at today's drive venue, the Autodromo di Vallelunga, just north of Rome, we're met by a fabulous sight. Beneath the glaring Mediterranean sun, 12 Aventadors are neatly lined up for our entertainment. It's a special moment. I've been a huge fan of the LP700-4's styling ever since the first pictures of it arrived at evo's offices back in February. It's a proper, poster-quality design. So seeing this many of them together, all at once, is simply mesmerising. Dramatic, aggressive yet purposeful and instantly recognisable as a Lamborghini, the only criticism you could possibly make is that there's perhaps a little too much Reventón about the nose, but, hey, if you're going to copy a previous design, that's a pretty good place to start. I particularly like the way the roof isn't a flat expanse of bodywork but has two, almost Zagato-style bulges running along its length to provide greater space inside the cockpit without making the rest of the roof unnecessarily high.

Opening the Aventador's scissor doors remains a fabulous piece of traditional Lamborghini theatre, but here there's an extra twist, because rather than rising straight upwards (as they do on the Murciélago and Countach), the door now swings slightly outwards as it rises. This has allowed the design team to create a frameless window, which seals itself as you close the door.

Left: doors swing outwards as they open. Bottom left: driver can choose to display speed or revs in the centre dial. Below: brakes are carbon-ceramic; fronts are 400mm in diameter

'This could be the most significant new Lamborghini

The interior is all-new too, but again it's still very Lamborghini. Well, apart from the relationship between the driver's seat, pedals and steering wheel, which has finally been designed for humans not lucky enough to be equipped with offset legs. With plenty of manual adjustment for the wheel and optional electric adjustment for the seat, getting a good driving position is now easy.

Directly ahead of the driver is the new TFT LCD display, which can be switched between having a central tacho and digital speedo, or vice versa, at the push of a button. It works really well. It's also nice to be able to report that, unlike Ferrari, Lamborghini has resisted the temptation to load up the steering wheel with a myriad of buttons, so the indicators are still operated by a standard column stalk, as are the wipers (and long may that continue).

Behind the wheel are the column-mounted paddles for the patented ISR (independent shifting rod) automated manual gearbox – the

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since the Miura morphed into the Countach in 1971'

only gearbox that will be offered. The buttons for reverse and for switching between manual and auto modes live on the central tunnel. A little higher up is the selector for the three drive modes – Strada, Sport and Corsa – together with a bright red metallic flap, under which hides the starter button. And as we're here, it would be rude not to…

Flick up the scarlet lid, press the button, and the dash lights up as the car's electronic systems spring into life. Next the starter motor whirs and, with an excessive flare of revs, the 6.5-litre, 690bhp V12 bursts into life. As the revs settle, release the electronic handbrake, prod the 'M' button to put the gearbox into manual (emissions regulations mean it always starts off in auto mode) and pull the right-hand paddle to select first gear.

We're away, and immediately I'm struck by the lightness of the steering compared with previous V12 Lambos; it's not quite Ferrari-light, but it's not far off. The engine feels very civilised too, while the ride from the pushrod-based suspension is relatively firm but not excessively so. I burble down the pitlane and wait for my turn to head out on track.

Now, I know I should be looking forward to this, but I have to admit my nerves are jangling somewhat. Turning up at a trackday in any V12 Lamborghini is a bit like rocking up to a party in fancy dress and then discovering it isn't actually a fancy-dress party after all. Not only are you about to make a spectacle of yourself, you also need to be absolutely on top of your game if you want to come back home with your pride intact. Fortunately there's little time to dwell on all of this; the light turns to green and we're off.

I've selected Sport mode initially, which speeds up the gearchange, increases the weight of the electro-hydraulic steering and, according to chief test driver Giorgio Sanna, adds more 'fun' to the chassis set-up by introducing more rear bias to the drivetrain. And the dampers? They remain unchanged, as they are conventional (albeit inboard-mounted) units rather than the adaptive 'magnetic' items favoured by the likes of Ferrari and Porsche.

Despite being in Sport mode, as I flick up through the seven-speed single-clutch 'box the gearchanges don't feel quite as quick as I was expecting. They're quick enough, but

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‘What hasn’t changed is the fabulous engine noise. You know there’s a seriously potent V12 just behind your head’

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they don't have that slick-shifting quality you get with the very best dual-clutch gearboxes (Ferrari's in particular).

As the speed builds, I'm struck by how the new engine delivers its power in an utterly linear way. There are no dips or hollows in the torque curve, nor is there any sudden jump in power as the revs build to a crescendo and the 8500rpm limit approaches. That makes it unlike previous Lamborghini V12 engines, which often had a final flurry of power as you approached the red line. What hasn't changed is the fabulous engine noise, always letting you know there's a seriously potent V12 just behind your head. Keep the accelerator pinned and the engine snarls in such a way that you're left in no doubt that it really means business. This is a monumentally quick car, as shown by the claimed 2.9sec 0-62mph dash, 10.5sec quarter-mile time (exactly the same as we recorded for the Veyron) and 217mph top speed, but the delivery is never intimidating, while the sonic onslaught remains utterly addictive.

Yet even this mighty engine might not be this car's star turn. The more I drive the Aventador, the more I'm amazed by the way it behaves on track. Big V12 Lamborghinis have always been properly scary devices to extract the maximum from around a circuit – one minute everything is seemingly under control, the next you've been bitten so hard your world doesn't stop spinning until the sun goes down – yet this Aventador seems to be lapping it up, if you'll excuse the pun. The brakes are super-strong too (400mm carbon-ceramic discs with six-piston calipers up front, 380mm with four-pots at the rear), while the pedal feel is also a revelation in terms of progression compared with other recent Lamborghinis, but it's the chassis balance that could just be the Aventador's greatest asset.

Lamborghini makes great play of the fact the new V12 sits around 70mm lower in the chassis than the one in the Murciélago. That's partly because it's dry-sumped and also because it's a

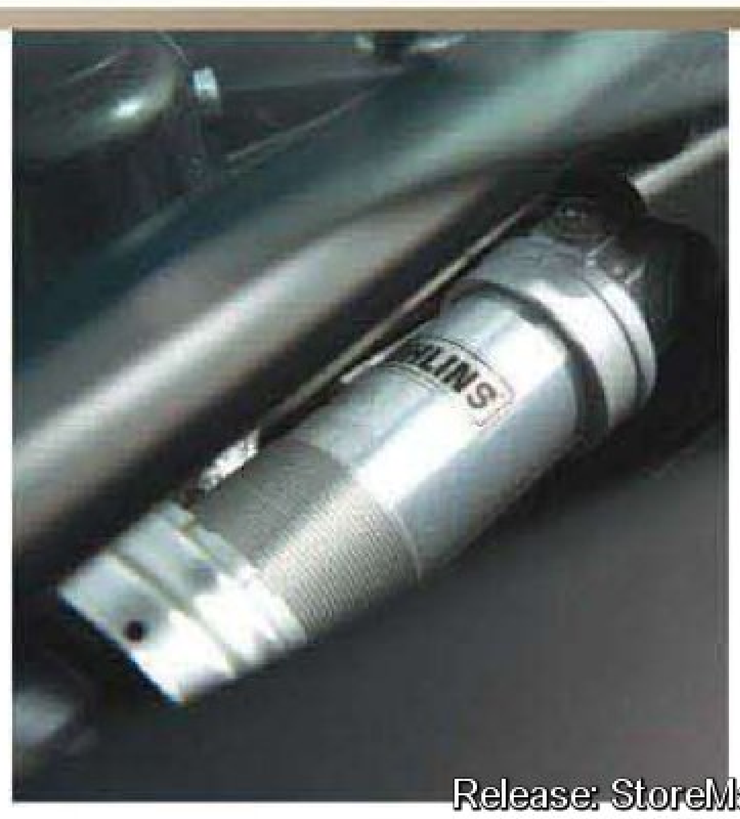
Below left: dampers are non-adaptive items. Below middle: V12 is a completely new design and puts out 690bhp – 29bhp more than the SV Murciélago's engine. Below right: start button lives under a red cover in the centre console

‘This is a monumentally quick car – 0-62mph in 2.9sec – but it’s never intimidating’

slightly shorter engine than the old Bizzarrini design. Seventy millimetres may not sound like much, but it makes a crucial difference to the way this car behaves. Combine this with the new carbon monocoque (which weighs only 147kg and is an astonishing 150 per cent stiffer than the steel lattice frame used in the Murciélago), significantly wider front and rear tracks, a 90kg lighter kerb weight, larger diameter wheels (here fitted with superb but optional Pirelli P Zero Corsa tyres) and new race-bred suspension, and it’s not hard to see why this car feels so utterly different to any V12 Lamborghini before.

It’s not long before I find myself becoming increasingly frustrated by the pace of the wrung-out Gallardo Superleggera I’m meant to be following. I’m in Corsa mode now, as the ESP seemed surprisingly intrusive in Sport, never really letting the car flow near its limit. Now the Aventador feels much more neutral when pushed hard, yet still ‘loose’ enough to allow some movement when braking late towards an apex. Traction on the way out of corners is simply devastating, as you’d expect from the new-generation 4WD drivetrain, while the steering is weightier but gives enough feel for you to know precisely where you are in terms of grip.

The real shock comes the first time you



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SEE THE LAMBO ON HD VIDEO AT EVO.CO.UK

‘It’s monstrously quick, handles better than any Lamborghini before and looks absolutely stunning’

Left: panels are aluminium and carbonfibre, though you won't find any bare carbonfibre as Lambo's new Resin Transfer Moulding process doesn't give a particularly attractive finish. Above: the rear spoiler rises automatically at speed

change gear in Corsa mode. It's guaranteed to make you utter a rude expletive, such is the violence of the change at full chat. It might only last 50 milliseconds but it leaves an indelible impression. I struggle to believe Lamborghini when it claims these changes don't do any damage to the gearbox.

I LEAVE VALLELUNGA astonished by how good the Aventador feels. Never has a big Lamborghini been such fun to punt at the limit, nor has one stood up so well to the pounding these cars have had today. Okay, the ISR gearbox doesn't have the sophistication of the best of today's DCTs, but I'll happily accept that for the 80kg weight saving and smaller packaging requirements compared with an equivalent dual-clutcher.

If I do have a gripe with the Aventador, it's with those three operating modes, and in particular the seismic gap between Sport and Corsa. To make it perfect, I wish there was a way of speeding up the gearchange in Sport and calming it down in Corsa. It would also be good if the ESP allowed the driver a bit more leeway, particularly in Sport. However, a proviso I should mention here is that the cars I drove all had P Zero Corsa tyres fitted and, as we discovered on Nick Mason's Enzo a couple of issues ago, these do seem to have an incredibly friendly window at the outer edge of adhesion, so maybe the Aventador would feel different again on the standard P Zeros.

Despite these minor grumbles, I can't help but conclude that the Aventador is going to be a game-changer for Lamborghini. It's monstrously quick, handles better than any Lambo before and looks absolutely stunning. Added to that, it's refined, beautifully built and, for what it offers, represents remarkable value for money at £247,000. No wonder there's already an 18-month waiting list.

If Ferrari was rattled by the McLaren MP4-12C's arrival, then Lord knows what they must be feeling at Maranello now the Lamborghini Aventador has appeared too. It's not only the 599's replacement that the Aventador is going to be gunning for; I reckon the Enzo's successor is going to feel the heat too.

So, is the Lamborghini Aventador the best super sports car of the moment? Do you know something, I think it probably is.

SPECIFICATION

Engine V12, 6498cc
Location Mid, longitudinal
Power 690bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque 509lb ft @ 5500rpm
CO2 398g/km
Transmission Seven-speed ISR automated manual gearbox, four-wheel drive, ESP
Front suspension Double wishbones, inboard coil springs and dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, inboard coil springs and dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs, 400mm front, 380mm rear, ABS
Wheels 19in front, 20in rear
Tyres 255/35 R19 front, 335/30 ZR20 rear, Pirelli P Zero
Weight (kerb) 1575kg
Power-to-weight 445bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 217mph (claimed)
Basic price £247,000

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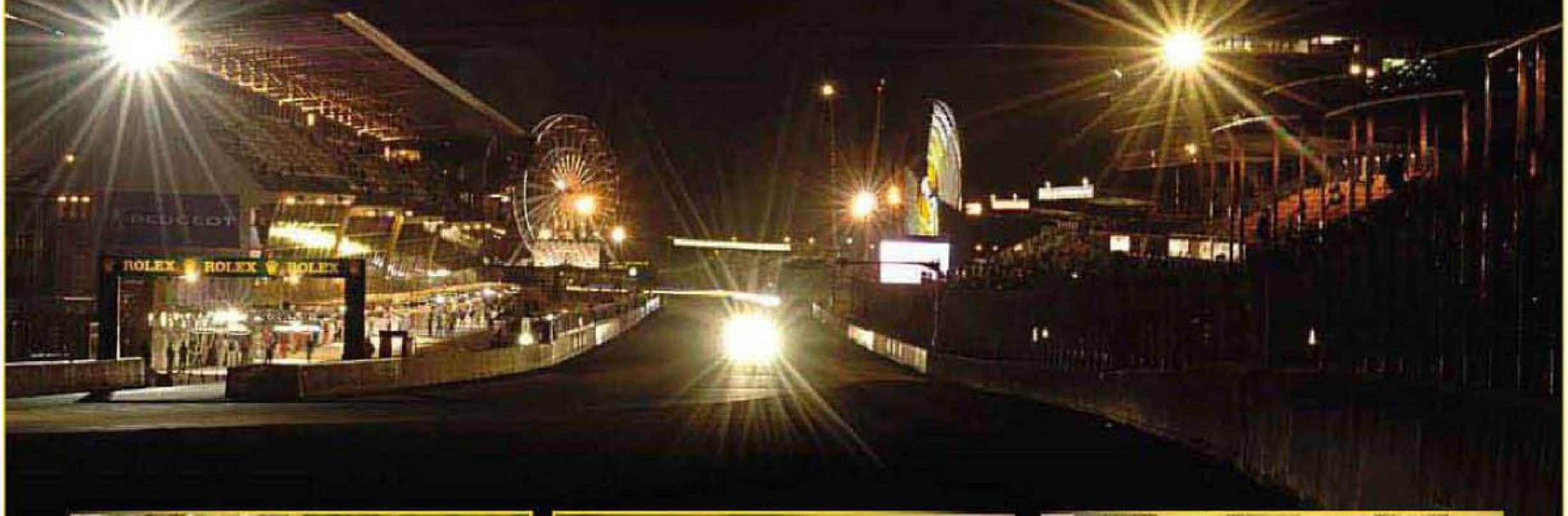

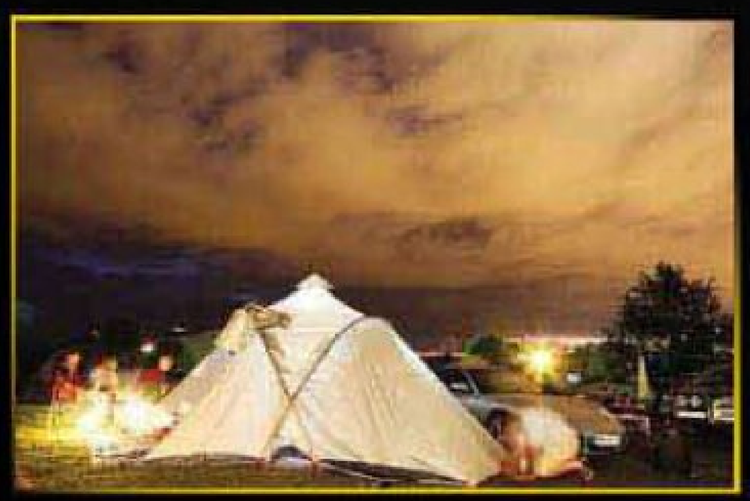

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Landmark Lambos

A new Lamborghini supercar has always been an event. ***Ian Fraser*** *recalls early encounters with the Countach, and* ***John Barker*** *remembers first drives in the Diablo and Murciélago*

Countach (above) caused a sensation in the early 1970s. Diablo only got good when it went 4wd in VT form (left). Murciélago (above right) was an instant classic

COUNTACH, 1974

When Lamborghini first rolled out the Miura, was anyone thinking about the day after tomorrow? Just how do you replace an icon before it becomes one? From the moment the covers were lifted at the Geneva Salon the clock was ticking. But the shambolic nature of the supercar industry and its dire finances had turned the future opaque.

At Bertone, however, they had already been eyeballing the day after tomorrow. By the late '60s, rumours of a new Lamborghini were rife: nothing remained secret in Modena in those days. In the Palace Hotel bar, our favourite conduit into the supercar business, the Miura had triggered a hunger for more of the radically new, and we heard that Nuccio Bertone was already making a prototype. Certainly my young sons, hi-jacked from a family holiday in Italy in the spring of 1971, had no doubts of its desirability when chief test engineer Bob Wallace wheeled the prototype onto the factory forecourt. There was a future after all, and its name was Countach.

The prototype, a bit rough and ready yet pure, was a going concern, powered by the 4-litre V12 and the ingenuity of a highly motivated team. And at CAR we were also highly motivated and aching to drive it. Going for a blast through the countryside with a works driver wasn't the real deal so we resorted to pester-power – childish, I know, but a famously effective tool. Then in the summer of 1974, Wallace, tired of our pestering, tossed Douglas Blain and I the keys to a green Countach, the ninth car built, and pointed to the hills.

It was monumentally fast, more sporting than GT with that howling V12 so close behind, everything chunky and robust, and so assured, as if it had been machined from the solid. And with the Countach's longitudinal mechanical layout, the Miura's edgy handling genes hadn't been transferred. New standards of ride and handling had been set, more fighter-jet than executive-jet, ready to eat the miles. Which it did and has been doing ever since. **IF**

Left: a Fraser family holiday to Italy in spring 1971 was diverted via the Lamborghini factory, where the Countach prototype was wheeled out

> 'There was a future after all, and its name was Countach'

DIABLO, 1990

Dynamically, the Diablo was very much 'old school' when it appeared back in 1990, in the sense that the body and chassis seemed to exist primarily so that you could take the awesome 5.7-litre V12 engine around to your mates and terrify them with its epic delivery. Well, that's how it seemed to me after three days grappling with it for *Performance Car*. By this time I was fed up with the extreme weight of the controls. The thigh-pumper clutch was a nightmare in traffic but the steering was worse; not only was it very heavy, it also had the worrying habit of settling onto lock and staying there, mid-corner.

Of course, all this was forgotten every time I walked up with the key in my hand, or raised a scissor door, or nailed the throttle. Marcello Gandini might have been miffed that Chrysler, new owners of Lamborghini, had softened the lines of his Countach successor, but it was plenty dramatic enough. And the literally spine-tingling sound of that 492bhp V12 getting its shoulder behind the aluminium-clad tubular spaceframe was enough to forgive it everything. Almost.

Trouble was, on the other side of the world Honda was about to launch the NSX, which showed that a mid-engined car could be as easy to handle as a hire car. In '93 Lamborghini launched the VT and the best thing about it wasn't the four-wheel drive but that it came with power-assisted steering. Suddenly you could enjoy driving to your mates to scare them with the V12. Things just got better from there, culminating with the first Lamborghini produced under the influence of Audi – the crisp-edged, minimally adorned 6.0 VT. **JB**

MURCIÉLAGO, 2001

With the Diablo 6.0 VT, new head of design Luc Donckerwolke had hinted at what he could do, but it was a stopgap model to keep us interested while the first Lamborghini created under Audi took shape. Could the Belgian pull off the big one? And could Audi? They needed to nail it because tiny Pagani was re-shaping expectations for the supercar with its Zonda.

Donckerwolke hit the bull's eye, so to speak. The Murciélago was clean and modern but unmistakably Lamborghini. It was even better in the metal than in photos; a fascinating sculpture, a shape with gravity and presence, as I discovered when I turned up for our first drive of it (**evo** 028). Quite how much I would learn from the chosen track was another matter because not only was the small circuit narrow and featureless, it was also wetted by drizzle. Technically, the Murciélago was evolutionary, not revolutionary. The VT's four-wheel drive was carried over with detail refinements, but the gearbox now had six ratios and was easier to use, and there was traction control to help contain the now 6.2-litre V12's 570bhp.

As ever, the V12 was a marvellous monster with a huge heart and wonderful voice but, crucially, it was now dry-sumped and mounted much lower. By the end of the day the track was dry, the traction control was off and the Murciélago had proved itself much more wieldy than any previous mid-engined Lambo. The bigger question had been answered, too: Lamborghini was safe in Audi's hands. **JB**

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NEW SKID ON THE BLOCK

BMW's 1-series M Coupe is here at last, and it's heading straight into battle with rivals from Porsche, Audi and Nissan. ***Richard Meaden*** *finds out if it's made of the right stuff*

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Pictures James Lipman & Chris Rutter

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So this is it, the time we find out whether BMW really has rekindled the old E30 M3 magic with the hotly anticipated 1-series M Coupe.

Waiting to put it through the wringer are three very different yet extremely capable adversaries: the lightweight, ultra-focused mid-engined Porsche Cayman R, the slick and potent all-wheel-drive Audi TT RS, and the honest-to-goodness Nissan 370Z, here being tested in box-fresh GT Edition specification for the very first time.

It's a compelling, disparate bunch: a quartet of coupes that encompasses normal aspiration and forced induction, front- and mid-engined layouts, rear-wheel drive and all-wheel drive. Amazingly, there's also a £26,000 difference between the cheapest and most expensive cars in the test: £35,000 as tested for the Nissan versus £61,000 for the Porsche. Throw in the mix of two-seat, 2+2 and full four-seat accommodation and it's clear the 300bhp-plus coupe sector has all the bases covered.

We converge on north Wales to find blue skies, warm temperatures and blissfully empty roads. I've made the 200-mile journey from **evo** HQ in the £40K BMW, and while the real driving is yet to begin, I'm already hugely encouraged by the new M-car.

It's a special moment the first time you get your hands on the 1M. It's a little bruiser of a coupe, clearly based on the slightly gawky 1-series yet endowed with a superhero-style physique. A spangly coat of Mr Universe orange further draws attention to the muscle definition; great for photos, but, er, a challenging shade for real life. On balance, though, the 1M's look is a big hit with us.

Plenty of things strike you about the baby M-car. Perhaps the most crucial of these is the fact it feels small. Like properly hot-hatch compact. Given that the current E92 M3 can feel too bulky on give-and-take roads, this downsizing is smart and welcome. The fat steering wheel, stubby gearlever and plumply supportive seats emphasise the 1M's sporting intent and give it a special air of expensive purpose. It's easy to get yourself comfortable and you soon feel plugged into the action.

The 335bhp twin-turbo straight-six starts with a pleasing growl and settles into a rumblelicious idle – good news given the fears that blowers would deny this new breed of M-car a memorable voice. The gearshift is short and snickety, the clutch light and smooth to engage. The throttle has a slightly contrived and non-linear feel whether you opt for regular or Sport mode: the former gives you a disproportionately late surge of acceleration towards the end of the throttle travel, the latter an early slug of response. Neither is disastrous, but they could be better.

The 1M doesn't have switchable dampers to play with, just an MDM (M Dynamic Mode) button to partially or fully disengage the stability/traction control system and an M button on the steering wheel to alter the accelerator response (unlike other M-cars, this button is non-programmable and doesn't alter any other aspects of the car's dynamic behaviour). The downside is that the 1M's damping feels busy and a little muscle-bound at low speed, but the upside is you're not forever toggling between modes. That said, it quickly becomes apparent that you need to slacken the stability control a notch, because in its default setting the little yellow light flashes more frequently than you might expect on anything but a smooth stretch of road.

There's no doubt this is in part due to the 1M's impressively potent engine. With an abundance of low and mid-range torque, it really shoves the little coupe down the road. An overboost function provides an extra 37lb ft for limited bursts, lifting peak torque to 369lb ft. That's serious grunt, especially in something this size, and it makes its presence

Below: TT RS's turbo five-cylinder and 1M's twin-turbo straight-six both produce 335bhp. Bottom: 370Z's V6 has 326bhp. Cayman's 325bhp flat-six is hidden in the middle of the car, so isn't pictured

'Waiting to put the BMW through the wringer are

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three very different yet extremely capable adversaries'

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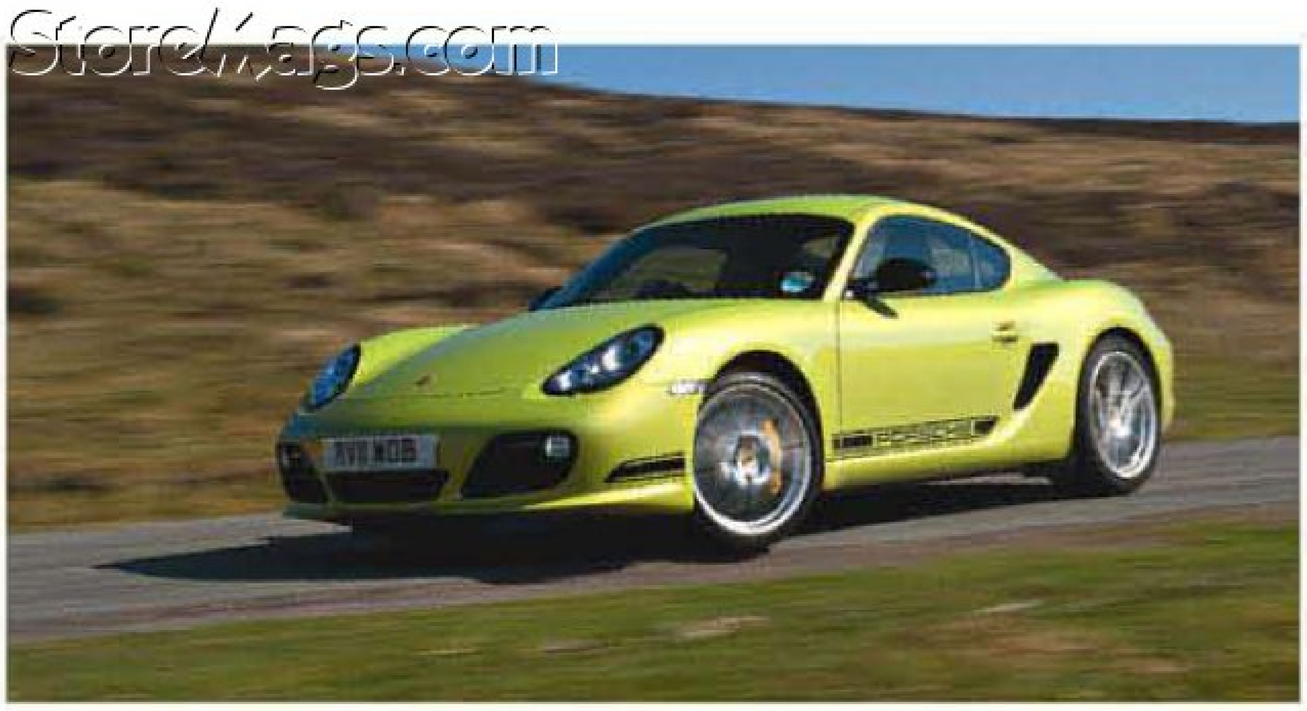


Left: Cayman R is playful in the corners, and more exploitable than a Cayman S. Right: capturing the Nissan on video – see the results and more action from this test at evo.co.uk. Far right: TT RS chases 370Z

THE FIRST 1 FROM M

M1 v 1M

The same single letter and the same single integer, just in different orders and separated by 30 years. The M1 and the 1M have startlingly similar dimensions, with the new car being just 21mm longer at 4380mm and the old car, bizarrely, being just 21mm wider at 1824mm. What's more, the power-to-weight ratios are separated by just 1bhp/ton – 216bhp/ton for the M1, 217 for the 1M – although it seems strange that what is now the bottom rung on the M-car ladder should trump the iconic supercar.

However, whilst it's possible to seek out order and parity amongst their numbers, it's obvious as soon as you park the two cars next to each other that they couldn't be more different. Bluff and pumped versus an angular sliver. You perch quite high in the 1-series but the M1's roof seems to be at waist height, so by the time you've dropped down onto the soft seat you're low enough to look a hedgehog in the eye.

Look around the cabin of the M1 and you'll see it's littered with fantastic period paraphernalia, like the Becker Mexico radio-cassette. Move a chunky switch from 'Aus' to 'Luft' and the headlights pop up from the nose of the bonnet – something that still makes me smile.

Your feet are skewed across toward the centre of the car and it's left and back for the dog-leg first of just five gears. The clutch begins engaging almost as soon as the pedal's off the carpet, but it doesn't fully mate until you're at the top of the travel. Despite a 0-60mph time only a second down on the modern coupe, the old supercar doesn't really feel in the same league as you accelerate down the first straight,

> 'Driving the M1 is like pouring deliciously thick custard'

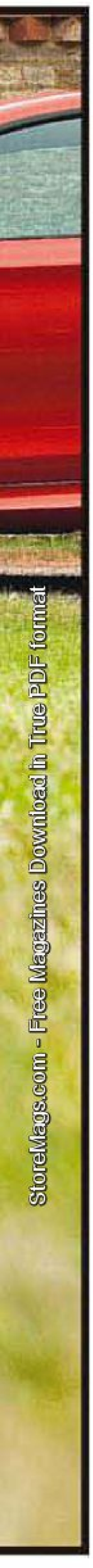
but nevertheless you pile on speed almost deceptively quickly.

Perhaps the biggest difference is in the demeanour of each car down a B-road. The new car, with its firm suspension, is always busy, bounding across the surface, reacting to bumps, turning in instantly then punching up the road with a brutal stab of torque. By comparison, driving the M1 is like pouring deliciously thick custard. It's weighty but oh so smooth, soaking up the surface in a totally relaxed manner, remaining fluid and gently mobile on its 55-profile P Zeros through the corners, then purring down the straights.

In direct comparison, 1M and M1 are like an automotive embodiment of youthful exuberance versus a more mature contentedness. Both, however, do their shared letter and number proud.

Henry Catchpole

Above and left: separated by 30 years and just 1bhp/ton. M1's 3.5-litre straight-six makes just 277bhp, but it also weighs substantially less (1303kg) than the 1M



felt good and early. Make no mistake, this is a quick road car.

Turbos might upset the M purists, and there's no doubt the twin-turbocharged straight-six doesn't have the high-rev effervescence of the old E46 M3 motor, nor the banzai top-end rush of the current E92's V8, but it makes the 1M a consummate overtaker. This muscular immediacy is addictive and enormously impressive, endowing the 1M with big-league pace and a huge margin of safety when dispatching slower traffic.

It's firmly damped – not harshly so, but truly no-nonsense – reluctant to allow vertical body movement, yet compliant in roll, so you get the impression of the 1M shouldering its way aggressively down the road. It generates oodles of grip at both ends and controls its weight well, so you can really roll up your sleeves and go to work. This makes for busy, physical progress that suits the 1M's looks and brawny, torque-biased delivery, but at times it leaves you wondering whether the Cayman R would be making more subtle, cerebral progress.

The M differential doesn't make itself felt when you're covering ground rapidly, but if the mood takes you to provoke the 1M in tighter corners you need your wits about you, for with so much grip to overcome and that wide-track/short-wheelbase combination, it's not the most progressive breakaway. That's the bad news. The good news is that if you're quick and measured with the corrective lock and committed with the throttle, it does what all good M-cars do: it slides.

The only gripe we have with the 1M is its brakes. No, not because they're made of Bavarian chocolate – actually they're very good – but because they are over-assisted. This makes it unnecessarily tricky to apply smooth, progressive braking force, especially in conjunction with heel-and-toe pedal work, but also at low speed when you just want to brush the middle pedal. Yet this is a minor flaw in an otherwise exceptional car. The others will need to be at the top of their game to challenge it.

You don't need to be Stephen Hawking to deduce that the Cayman R will present a stern challenge. Much has been written about this pared-back Porsche, and while the choice of 'R' moniker has riled some (not least **evo**'s own Monkey Harris), there's no question that applying the Boxster Spyder weight reduction programme to the Cayman has yielded a car for the true connoisseur.

Our test car is as light as they come. Stripped of air-con and stereo and fitted with PCCB brakes, a six-speed stick-shift gearbox and the smaller, lighter battery, it comes in under 1300kg (the 1M tips the scales at 1570kg). Shame this car's spec, which also includes the sports exhaust and bi-xenon lights, comes with a heavyweight price tag – a faintly eye-watering £61,402, up from £51,728 basic.

Any lingering doubts that a 325bhp Cayman can be worth that amount of money evaporate in the time it takes you to accelerate through

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'The 1-series M has a unique character and a thoroughly up-for-it attitude'

The **evo** test team, including racing legend Andy Wallace, spent two days covering hundreds of miles on the best driving roads Wales has to offer to make sure there was no doubt about how the 1M rates against its coupe rivals. And they call it work…

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Interiors of Audi (top) and BMW (above) feel sporty and well appointed. Nissan (below) lacks their high quality ambience. Porsche's cabin (below right) is quite Spartan

the gears and carve through a series of corners. So many superlatives spring to mind it's hard to know where to start, but subtlety, poise, progression, cohesion, tactility, balance and exploitability should give you an idea of how special the Cayman R feels.

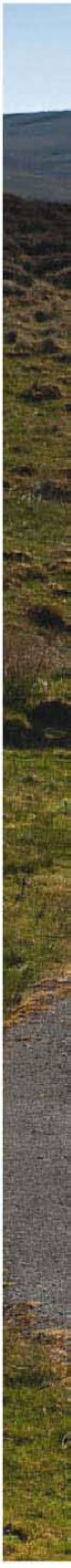
Fifty-five kilograms doesn't sound like much, but when it's removed from an already lithe car, the results feel magical. Little appears to faze the Cayman R, be it a savage mid-corner compression or a wicked series of direction changes. It just seems to cut and run with a disdainful lack of effort. The 3.4-litre flat-six has never felt the gruntiest of motors, but the weight-saving masks this to a degree, while an extra 9bhp helps out too. You still need to stir that gearstick and keep the revs singing to access the full R experience – and even then it doesn't match the 1M for accelerative urge – but if you make the effort, the Cayman is as quick as you ever need to go on the road. Soulful too.

Where it feels truly exceptional is in the way Porsche has matched the weight and response of the controls and balanced the relationship between power and grip. It's a masterpiece of dynamic marquetry – each distinct element so seamlessly integrated with the next that you simply can't see, or feel, the joins.

It's more expressive than a regular Cayman too, again thanks to the reduced weight, but also the standard-fit limited-slip differential. Because there's less inertia and momentum to fight and control, you can really attack corners and play with the balance. Switch off the PSM system (in truth you never need it in the dry) and you can really make the R dance, taking liberties on the way into corners by setting it up on the brakes. It's not oppressively grippy either, so it feels natural to have the Cayman sliding beneath you, the transition from grip to slip and back to grip brilliantly progressive.

Pity that embracing the R philosophy to the full leaves you with a cockpit with all the creature comforts of a monk's cell. If you're a hardy sort and only need two seats, you could live with an R on an everyday basis. However, the truth is it makes most sense as a second car or weekend toy, and you can buy some awfully good toys with a £60K budget.

At the opposite end of the price scale is the Nissan 370Z. Some of you might feel it's out of its depth in this company, but we've always held the Z (both 350 and 370 generation) in very high regard. And while it's true to say the newer car hasn't advanced the Z quite as far as perhaps it should, this new GT Edition, which introduces revised suspension settings



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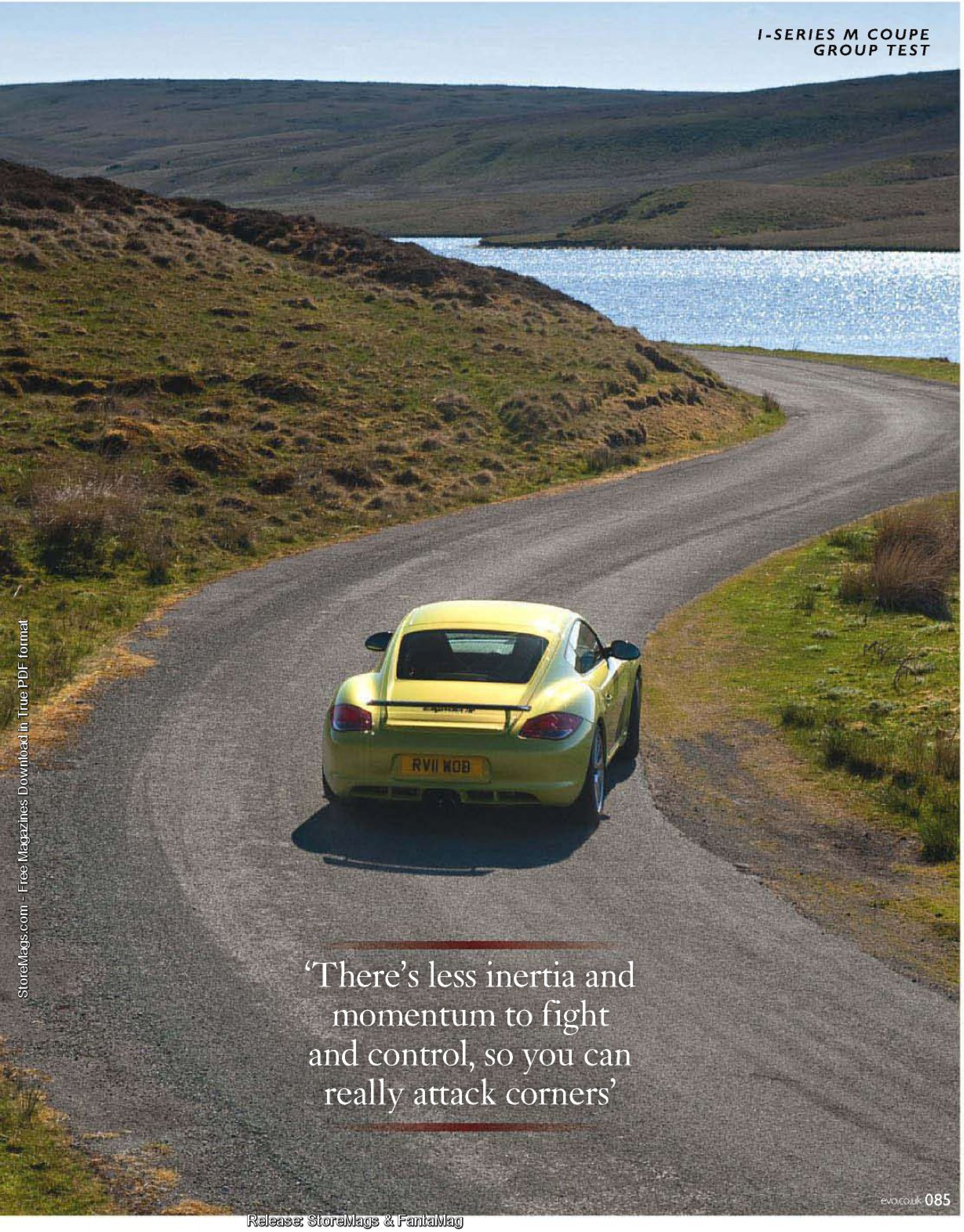

'There's less inertia and momentum to fight and control, so you can really attack corners'

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‘The 1M generates tremendous grip and traction, putting

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honed in the UK by engineers from Nissan Technical Centre Europe, gives us good reason to revisit the brawny Japanese coupe. As well as the revised suspension, the £35K GT Edition also bundles together a range of kit including darkened 19in alloys, side stripes, satnav and a rear parking camera.

It's made to a classic recipe, albeit from less expensive ingredients than the Germans. The naturally aspirated 3.7-litre V6 engine is a case in point. With 326bhp and 269lb ft of torque it's effective but less than enthusiastic beyond 6000rpm. It doesn't have the sweetness and appetite for revs, nor the kind of musical voice you want to savour. It gets the job done no question, but without the pedigree or class of the German power units.

Take a bow NTCE, for your work on the chassis has resulted in a car that's more fluid and settled than the original 370Z. Fast crests and compressions generate a bit of float, but the dampers soon take hold again. It's a much more comfortable and capable car as a result. There's plenty of mechanical grip, too, and immediate steering response, so the Z always feels agile.

There's a slight disconnect between the front-end response and the rear end's reaction – a momentary delay that's likely due to you being sat close to the rear axle. Long, quick corners are its forte as it settles nicely and stays nailed to your chosen trajectory. It's less satisfying on tight and twisty roads, but it's by no means undone by them.

The Z's throttle-blipper is genius. At first it feels wrong to barrel into a corner and not attempt to match engine and road speed with a roll of your right ankle from brake to throttle, but you soon trust it implicitly. Why no other manufacturer has done it is beyond me, for

Wheels, from top: Cayman R wears 19in Boxster Spyder alloys; TT RS has 18in rims as standard, although 19s are an option; 370Z's darkened 19in wheels are part of the GT Edition package; 1-series sports 19in Y-spoke items

extremely competent. The damping is pretty well-rounded – something we don't usually expect in a non-R8 Audi – but this is in part due to the test car's somewhat undernourished-looking 18in rims and optional magnetic dampers. They combine to help the ride and wheel control, but the modest rims kill the TT RS's on-road presence stone dead.

The shift action of the six-speed manual gearbox feels a bit stiff and notchy at low to medium speeds, but there's a sweet, tactile cohesion and consistency between steering and pedal efforts, so it's an easy car to drive accurately and smoothly at speed.

When you keep the car busy with direction changes, crests and bumps it's confidence-inspiring and reasonably entertaining. It's got plenty of turn-in response, with the balance to support rapid direction changes. The traction of all-wheel drive means you can really chuck it down the road, revelling in the grip and the five-cylinder engine's generous delivery (its 335bhp and 332lb ft peak figures are identical to the 1M's). However, as the roads begin to open out and the corners become quicker and more clearly sighted, the chassis is allowed to settle and it becomes more flat-footed with a resolutely nose-led balance and little in the way of throttle adjustability.

Of course it's still quick, but it requires little input from the driver so there's nothing to hook you in or hold your attention. It can also feel flustered by mid-corner compressions, falling into its bump-stops and generally feeling like its chassis is maxxed-out where the 1M and Cayman in particular hit their stride.

These roads have proved as exacting as ever, but now it's time to find out how the four perform on track. The West Circuit beckons…

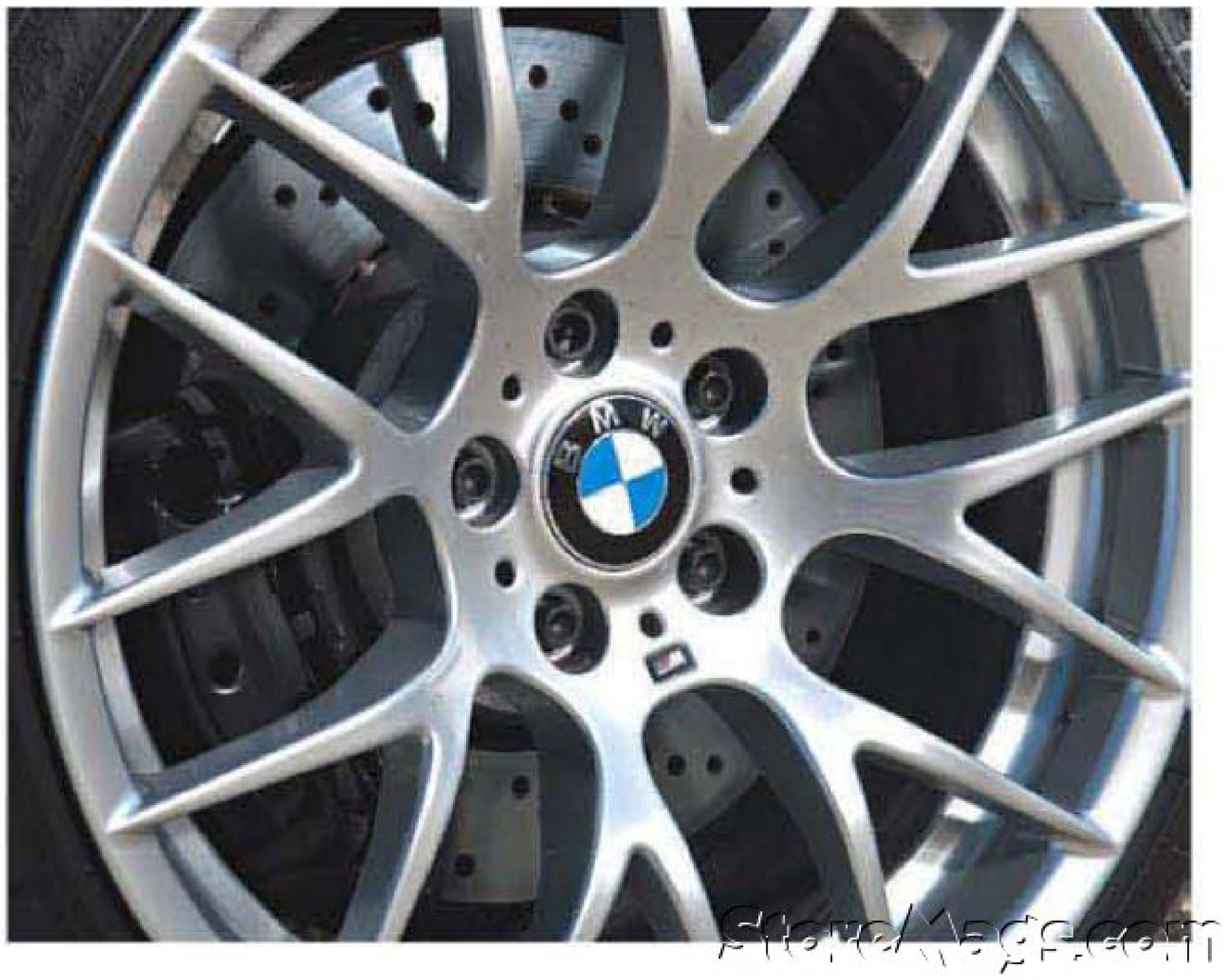
all its prodigious torque into the tarmac with little complaint'

it fuses the effortless control and excitement of a paddle-shift gearbox with the greater engagement of a manual.

You have to try surprisingly hard to make the Z oversteer on a dry road, and when you do the limited-slip diff is an unhappy device. Quick to hook up, it then bleeds traction away from mid-corner to corner exit, which makes it feel inconsistent and a bit of a party-pooper.

It's a big ask of the Z to trade punches in this company, but it shows genuine depth of ability and great resolve. You need to give yourself time to get on its wavelength, at which point you'll find it an entertaining car to hustle, transparent in its behaviour and unfailingly up for fast, enthusiastic progress. The Z has heart.

The £45,840 TT RS certainly does the numbers, but there's not what you'd call a rush for the key when it's time to drive to the next location. However, while it doesn't score highly in the anticipation stakes, it's quick and



ON TRACK

PRIOR to our session at the Bedford Autodrome, I think it's fair to say we knew the circuit would play into the hands of the Cayman R. Mid-engined, lightest of the bunch and sporting carbon-ceramic brakes, the bare-bones Porsche is in all probability the one car here that will be bought with trackday use pretty high up the purchaser's list of priorities.

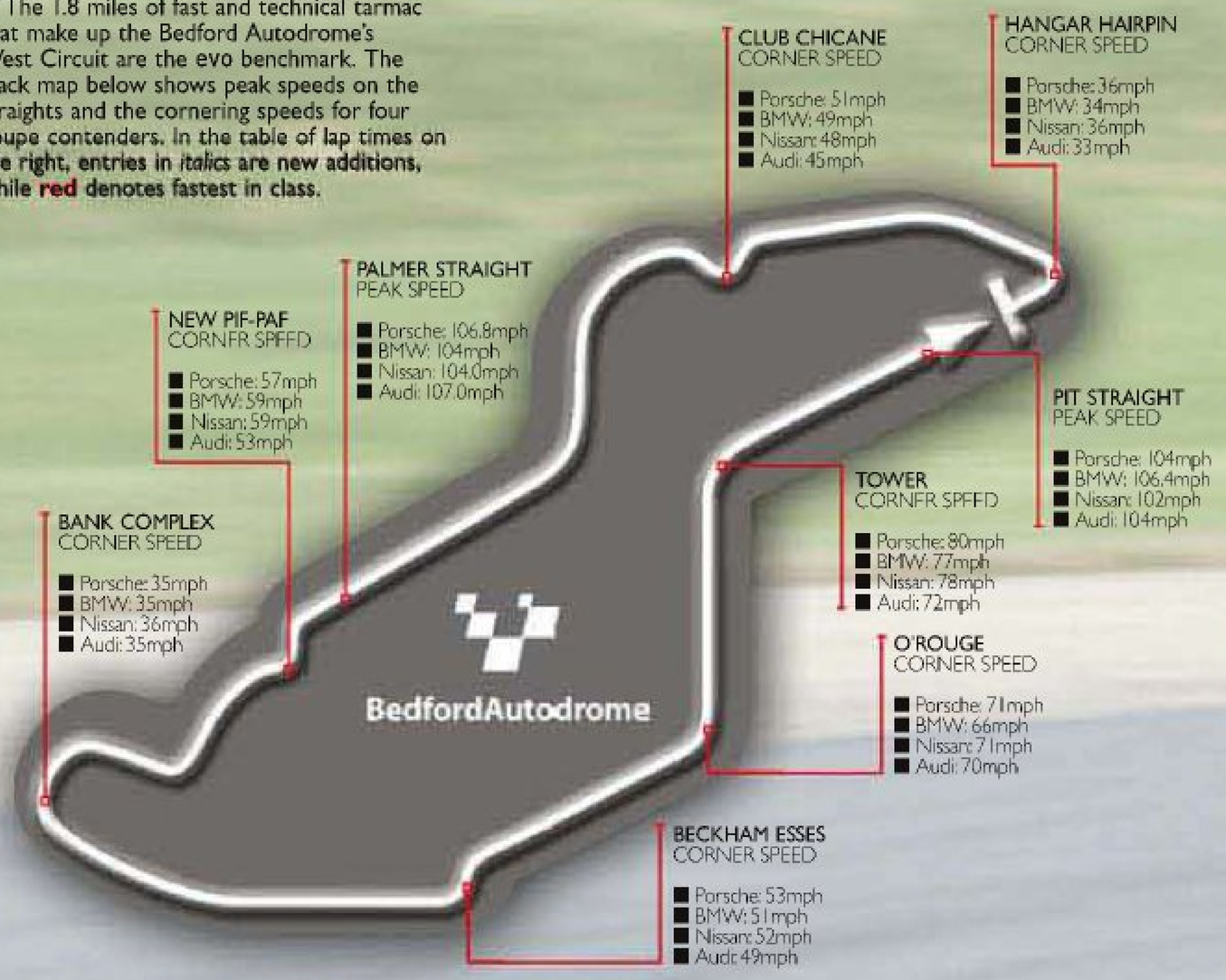
It starts lapping encouragingly, with plenty of poise, a quick and consistent gearshift and brilliant brakes. Sure you notice the flat-six's lack of outright grunt, but it's no hardship to work it to the red line. The R's lack of mass means it carries big speed into the heart of the corners, but it doesn't generate the levels of grip you might expect. At times there's significant turn-in oversteer, especially into corners you approach while braking deep and at a slight angle (namely any of the West Circuit's chicanes), which is fun but perhaps not what you expect.

High-speed corners reveal understeer, but you can play with the weight transfer on turn-in with a slight lift of the throttle to get things neutralised. Thanks to the R's weight savings, none of these handling traits is too snappy, and it's certainly effective – posting a 1.25.5 lap time – but consistently working at the limit of the tyres' grip does reveal a more expressive side to the Cayman R.

The 1M is a big surprise for different reasons. It generates tremendous grip and traction, putting all its prodigious, overboost-fattened torque into the tarmac with little complaint. Where the M diff could at times feel abrupt on the road, it works brilliantly on the track, giving the car a beautifully neutral balance, with the ability to be steered precisely on the throttle. Crucially, it still generates plenty of forward momentum, so you can let the 1M slide without it degenerating into a pointless drift challenge. The brakes – so often a cause for complaint on M-cars – have power and stamina too, making this an accomplished and entertaining trackday machine. It manages

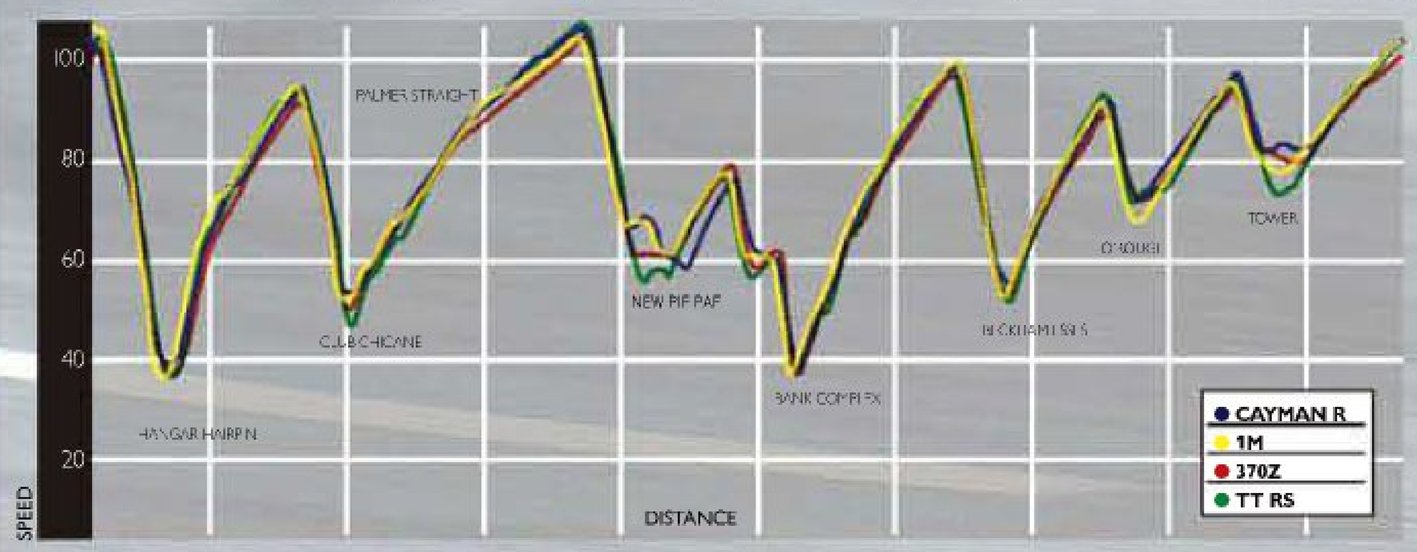
HOW FAST?

■ 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 four coupe contenders. In the table of lap times on the right, entries in *italics* are new additions, while **red** denotes fastest in class.



WHICH WAS FASTER?

CAYMAN 1.25.5 (106.8mph) **1M** 1.25.9 (106.4mph) **370Z** 1.27.1 (104.0mph) **TT RS** 1.27.3 (107.0mph)



▲ Cayman R and 1M traces (blue and yellow respectively) are closely matched, the Porsche having a very slight edge in the corners. 370Z (red) manages some impressive cornering speeds, but loses out under acceleration. TT RS (green) is plagued by understeer – notice the falter in the trace at Tower in particular

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
Porsche 997 GT2 RS	**1.19.9**	**122.3**
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
Porsche Cayman R	*1.25.5*	*106.8*
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1.25.9	108.8
BMW 1-series M Coupe	*1.25.9*	*106.4*
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 (19in wheels)	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
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)	**1.26.9**	**107.4**
Audi RS5	1.26.9	106.8
Lotus Evora	1.27.1	104.2
Nissan 370Z	*1.27.1*	*104.0*
Audi TT RS (18in wheels)	*1.27.3*	*107.0*
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
Subaru WRX STI	1.28.3	101.6
Jaguar XJ Supersport	1.28.4	106.6
TVR Griffith	1.28.5	101.4
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
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1.29.9	101.4
Nissan 350Z	1.30.0	101.4
Honda NSX	1.30.1	101.3
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	1.30.4	98.9
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	1.30.8	101.8
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	1.30.9	98.9
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	1.31.1	101.7

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Above, from left: Porsche's light weight and confidence-inspiring balance make for the fastest lap time; 370Z isn't a natural track car, but it puts in a respectable performance nonetheless; despite posting the slowest lap time, the TT achieves the highest peak speed (107mph). Below: 1M is second fastest around lap, thanks to huge grip and torque

a best lap just 0.4sec shy of the Cayman and, ironically, identical to the E92 M3, albeit on a different day with a different driver.

The 370Z isn't quite in the Cayman or 1M's league, but it still makes a decent fist of fast lapping. The 3.7-litre V6 doesn't possess the smoothness or willingness of the German trio's engines, so prolonged periods at high revs aren't as pleasurable, but the Z's front-engined, rear-drive layout is honest and effective. It pulls well out of slower corners and hangs on tenaciously through the faster curves, so you can really push it hard. A 1.27.1 lap is the proof.

Few of you will be surprised that the Audi would be our last choice of the four for trackday fun. As on the road, the five-cylinder engine is an absolute cracker, but the TT's Haldex-controlled all-wheel-drive system simply doesn't allow you to make enjoyable progress on track. This car's standard-fit 18in wheels and tyres don't help the cause at Bedford either. Late braking sees the TT RS reluctant to turn in, yet even when you do nail the braking point you can't get on the power as hard and early as you'd like because it washes resolutely into understeer when you do. The lap time of 1.27.3 is a second slower than we've previously recorded with a TT RS on 19s.

The Audi doesn't need to be a trackday hero, but it should – and could – be more fun.

Pictures: Chris Rutter

VERDICT

THAT this has been one of the most enjoyable group tests I can remember speaks volumes for the quality of the cars in the test. All are so different in concept and character, yet they've all proved close in terms of point-to-point pace, with each delivering memorable moments in the process.

Predictably it's the TT RS that's the first to fall. On paper it seems churlish to reject the Audi so readily. That terrific five-cylinder engine is as seductive as it is effective, hurling the TT down the road with an addictive blend of easy-going tractability and full-boost rage. There were also times when the TT's stability, traction, grip and pliancy shone brightly enough to question the doubts and disappointments felt on earlier drives. Trouble is, these moments were fleeting and relied upon a very specific type of road: one that relentlessly squirms, dips, crests and ducks and dives and generally keeps the chassis on its toes without challenging ultimate limits of grip. On such a road it feels alive, but on anything less it makes anodyne progress and feels rather less than inspiring. Perhaps the best way to describe the TT RS is to say it's a high-performance car, but not a sporting car; it does the job of going fast, but derives little joy from the process.

Clockwise from left: Cayman R's standard-equipment Alcantara and leather bucket seats; TT RS's supportive leather chairs; 370Z's cloth and leather items; 1-series M Coupe's big-bolstered all-leather seats

Next up is the Nissan. We've always enjoyed the big-hearted Zed and were fascinated to see what improvements the GT Edition's new Euro-spec suspension had made to an already appealing package. The answer is rather a lot. It now works with the road, rather than feeling like it's fighting it, and that means increased pace and an added sense of connection and cohesion. No, it doesn't compensate for the drivetrain's lack of class compared with the German trio, and while it can't quite match the on-road pace of the BMW in particular, the 370Z remains a rapid – if rather gruff – machine. At £35K, it's also a relative bargain in this company.

The BMW and Porsche were always going to be the stars of the test, but it would have taken a braver man than I to predict a winner before we began. The Cayman R has been widely – and rightly – praised for its commitment to mass reduction and subsequently brilliant handling. Truth be told we were all under its

'The 1-series M sets a new benchmark for only-

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SPECIFICATIONS

	BMW 1-SERIES M COUPE	PORSCHE CAYMAN R	NISSAN 370Z GT EDITION	AUDI TT RS
Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo	Flat-six, 3436cc	V6, 3696cc	In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo
Location	Front, longitudinal	Mid, longitudinal	Front, longitudinal	Front, transverse
Power	335bhp @ 5900rpm	325bhp @ 7400rpm	326bhp @ 7000rpm	335bhp @ 5400-6500rpm
Torque	369lb ft @ 1500-4500rpm	273lb ft @ 4750rpm	269lb ft @ 5200rpm	332lb ft @ 1600-5300rpm
CO2	224g/km	228g/km	248g/km	209g/km
Transmission	Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, DSC	Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, PSM	Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, ESP	Six-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel drive, electronic differential lock, ESP
Front suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, magnetic dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, arb	MacPherson struts, springs, dampers, arb	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, arb	Four-link, coil springs, mag. dampers, arb
Brakes	Ventilated and cross-drilled discs, 360mm front, 350mm rear, ABS, EBD, DBD, CBC	Vented and drilled carbon-ceramic discs (optional), 350mm fr and rear, ABS, EBD	Ventilated discs, 355mm front, 350mm rear, ABS, EBD, BA	Ventilated and cross-drilled discs, 370mm front, 310mm rear, ABS, HBA, EBD
Wheels	9 x 19in front, 10 x 19in rear	8.5 x 19in front, 10 x 19in rear	9 x 19in front, 10 x 19in rear	9 x 18in front and rear
Tyres	245/35 ZR19 front, 265/35 ZR19 rear	235/35 ZR19 front, 265/35 ZR19 rear	245/40 R19 front, 275/35 R19 rear	245/40 R19 front and rear
Weight (kerb)	1570kg	1295kg	1520kg	1450kg
Power-to-weight	217bhp/ton	255bhp/ton	218bhp/ton	235bhp/ton
0-62mph	4.9sec (claimed)	5.0sec (claimed)	5.4sec (claimed)	4.6sec (claimed
Top speed	155mph (limited)	175mph (claimed)	155mph (limited)	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£40,020	£51,728	£35,000	£45,840
Price as tested	£45,340	£61,402	£35,000	£52,945
evo RATING	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★☆

spell for the first day of the test, dazzled by its brilliance and mesmerised by its purity and fitness for purpose. As photographer Jamie Lipman said while shooting details: 'They can even paint it a hideous green and stick a stupid spoiler on the back and I still want one!'

However, the longer we spent with it and the more times we swapped to and from the 1M, the greater the admiration and affection we felt for the BMW. It's not that we fell out of love with the Cayman, far from it in fact. Indeed, our guest tester, sports car racer Andy Wallace, almost had a tear in his eye when he proclaimed it 'the best-handling road car I think I've ever driven'. Both Catchpole and I were with him on that, yet the charms of the 1M were proving impossible to resist.

No, it doesn't have the immaculate polish and homogenous tactility of the Porsche – the brakes are over-assisted at road speeds and it lacks the remarkable pliancy and supple body control of the Cayman – but it counters with scintillating overtaking ability, greater levels of mechanical grip and a handling balance that's almost as sweet. Emotionally the clincher is its unique character and thoroughly up-for-it attitude. Factor-in its four useable seats, on-track ability and a £16K price advantage in as-tested spec and it's clear the 1M sets a new benchmark for only-car, multi-purpose, real-life ability and desirability. It's been a long time coming, but we're delighted to say M's new baby is more than worth the wait.

car, multi-purpose, real-life ability and desirability'

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THE ENEMY WITHIN

*There's one rival the 1M hasn't squared up to yet – the one from BMW, the V8-engined M3. Can the newcomer possibly be better than its big brother? **Henry Catchpole** decides*

Pictures **Chris Rutter**

Spoiler alert! (And not of the aerodynamic sort.) If you haven't read the preceding group test, then please do so now or forever hold your peace… All sorted? Right, we like the 1-series M a lot. In fact we think it's fabulous, which is why it's just seen off cars like the Cayman R and TT RS. However, the sternest test is arguably still to come.

Dani Sordo has been an extremely talented driver in the WRC for the last four years, frequently standing on the podium and beating the men in Fords. Yet because he had one Monsieur Loeb as his team-mate, the Spaniard has effectively been driving in the shadows. Enter the BMW M3. The E92 coupe has been winning evo group tests ever since it was launched and you can easily pick up a decent second-hand one for around £40K, i.e. for the same money as a new 1-series M. So, if the 1M doesn't want to be branded as the Sordo to the M3's Loeb or 'the poor man's M3' or even Ralf Schumacher, then it needs to face up to the enemy within.

Having returned from Betws-y-Coed (three of us took the back-roads across north Wales, which was a truly brilliant drive until Andy Wallace announced in the middle of nowhere that he had three miles of fuel left and needed to pit immediately) and having completed the timed laps of the West Circuit, we're now on the familiar stomping ground of the Bedfordshire B-road network, which is better than it sounds. It's even sunny.

We should get the pub argument bit (where everything is based purely on figures and usually

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what Clarkson said) out of the way first. The E92 M3 has 414bhp compared with the 1M's 335bhp. Both top speeds are limited to 155mph, but the bigger car will hit 60mph in just 4.3sec (see evo 151) compared with a claimed 0-62mph time of 4.9sec for the smaller car. Two-nil so far to the M3 in our bar-room Top Trumps. Torque might not be as sexy as power, but nonetheless the 1M hits back with a best figure of 369lb ft against just 295lb ft from the M3. And, as inevitably as the power round went to the M3, the Weight Watchers medal goes to the 1M: 1570kg plays 1655kg. It's now even Stevens.

At this point a tie-breaker is needed. Lap times around the West Circuit would normally settle it but, as we've already discovered, the two cars are neck-and-neck there. It just so happens that I was in the passenger seat on both occasions when Barker and Meaden set the respective laps and I can confirm that not only were they both scintillating laps, but there was no foul play or excessive kerb-jumping with either car. Even the weather was comparable.

Objectively, then, the M3 and 1M appear to be inseparable. Subjectively we could start arguing about which one looks better, but down that path trouble lies and before you know it someone's threatening someone else with a bar stool and some horse brasses. One person's caricaturish delight is another's ugly steroidal mishap. They've both got four exhaust pipes, so we'll call that round a draw too. In which case it all boils down to what they're like to drive on the road, how the experiences differ and which we prefer. The short answer, and I'm aware that this might stop you reading the next 600 words, is that we'd take the 1M.

Now, the M3 fan club are probably already launching a stewards' inquiry, citing the added kudos of the Motorsport V8 over the series-production twin-turbo straight-six as reason enough for Three to beat One. But it's the way the two engines deliver their performance that is one of the crucial factors.

In the M3 your £40K buys a stratospheric powerband that's absolutely scintillating. Above 7000rpm you have access to throttle response that's sharper than a Malcolm Tucker monologue. The rest of the rev-range is good, but it's the upper echelons that give the thrills, allow you to get the rear tyres laterally mobile and put the real smile on your face. The only problem with this – and it's a concern that we have voiced in the past – is the frequency with which you can actually access this brilliance.

With the 1M your money buys a bulging torque curve that swells between 1500 and

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4500rpm. On the road, that portion of the rev-range is where you will spend the vast majority of your time, so your money's worth is just there, ready and waiting to be called upon whenever you want it.

If you're a gear too low in a corner in the M3 you're left a little frustrated. In the 1M you've seriously misjudged things if you're in a gear that's too low, because you could probably pick any one of three ratios per corner and still find yourself with bundles of torque. Add in the fact that you have 90 per cent of the M3's throttle response – and that the straight-six has just as much character to its exhaust note – and the 1M's powertrain becomes the real-world tool of choice.

Then there's the size. To sit in both cars is a remarkably similar experience: same switchgear, same ridiculously plump steering-wheel rim… but everything seems slightly closer in the 1M. The extremities all feel within reach and the sense that it's going to be easier to chuck down any given stretch of tarmac only increases as you head out into the lanes. With a shorter wheelbase, the 1M simply feels more wieldy, changing direction and threading itself between hedges and kerbs with more breathing room than its bigger brother. Admittedly the shorter wheelbase almost certainly contributes to the 1M's slightly choppier ride, but that doesn't detract or distract enough to make you wish you were in the M3.

The 1M's smaller footprint also means that, should you find an appropriate corner, going sideways takes up less of the road and is therefore something you're likely to indulge in a little more frequently. And while on the subject of oversteer, it's worth mentioning that the 1M's chassis feels the easier to control once it's travelling at an angle, too. Where the M3 can swing a long way out of shape alarmingly quickly once its rear tyres are lit, the 1M seems to settle satisfyingly with half a turn of opposite lock dialled in. It means you have more opportunity and more confidence to play.

We haven't suddenly decided the M3 is a bad car. Far from it. It is still an absolutely wonderful thing and the best in its class. It's just that the 1-series M is even better. It shares the same basic philosophy as the M3, but its performance is more accessible and slightly less intimidating. Amazingly, its size and the punch of its turbocharged powertrain not only make it ultimately fleeter of foot across the ground in the cut-and-thrust of fast road driving, they also makes it more playful at slower speeds. It's fantastic. Rosberg trumps Schumacher.

Many thanks to Angus Dawe of www.the-racing-line.co.uk for the loan of his M3

Right: the 1-series M Coupe's twin-turbo 3-litre straight-six may not have the standing of the M Division V8 found in the M3, but its performance levels and delivery are perfect for road driving, and it sounds great too. Don't for a moment think that we've stopped loving the bigger M-car, though

SPECIFICATIONS

BMW 1-SERIES M COUPE	BMW M3 COUPE
Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo	**Engine** V8, 3999cc
Power 335bhp @ 5900rpm	**Power** 414bhp @ 8300rpm
Torque 369lb ft @ 1500-4500rpm	**Torque** 295lb ft @ 3900rpm
Weight 1570kg	**Weight** 1655kg
0-62mph 4.9sec (claimed)	**0-62mph** 4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)	**Top speed** 155mph (claimed)
Price £40,020 (basic)	**Price** £40,000 (2008/09 car)

'The M3 is an absolutely wonderful thing. The 1M is even better'

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WHITE KNUCKLE RIDE

The new Agera R is the most powerful Koenigsegg to date, with a Veyron-topping 1100bhp. ***Chris Harris*** *summons up the courage to find out what it feels like at full chat*

Words **Chris Harris**

Pictures **David Shepherd**

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I have never before driven a Koenigsegg – nor, it might come as a surprise to note, have I ever wanted to. There has been the odd offer to go and do something for one of the magazines, but it just never happened. And I didn't care. This is worth noting because if I'd never driven a Pagani or a Carrera GT, I would have felt short-changed enough to go and do something about it. But in the case of Koenigsegg, I didn't mind remaining in the dark.

In fact until my good friend and amateur nutritionist Richard Meaden decided to spin one at some vast speed (evo 073), I had never really bothered to pay the company much attention. Koenigsegg seemed to me to embody the heady, nonsensical spirit of unobtanium. Every year or so another 'Egg would be hatched with a few more holes in the panel moulds than the one before it. The numbers were bigger, as was the reality gap you needed to leap in order to fathom who on earth would spend their money on such a car. To compound my feelings, I finally saw an early example in the flesh in 2009 and, when asked by the driver what I thought of the vehicle's build quality, I remember answering: 'Insulting.'

And that is the lengthy preamble to me publicly stating that I'd rather have swapped places with Meaden and written the 1-series group test this month. But since Dickie had fulfilled his rotative duty in 'Eggs, it was yours truly who found himself on a flight to Stavanger in Norway with what seemed to me the dubious honour of meeting the new Agera R. Marvellous.

Why is it that I don't care about Koenigsegg? I found myself asking that question again as the 737 twice went technical after take-off, bringing a glimmer of hope that I wouldn't have to drive a 1100bhp version of a car that, with 800bhp, had proved to be beyond the skill of Mr B Collins. Probably, I concluded, because even a dreamer like me needs some vestige of reality to get excited. I can do that about Pagani because I have driven the cars, understood how good they are and met the owners. But there was nothing tangible about Koenigsegg for me to grasp. As a slightly confused Bristolian once said to me: 'It's all just smoke and bollocks.'

I corrected him: 'You mean mirrors.'

'No, bollocks,' he insisted.

So I feel a bit of a fraud standing there as the blokes from Koenigsegg proudly introduce their latest creation – this time presented in rictus matt white and stored overnight in a local car dealership, where it has of course been afforded hero status. The salesmen crowd around it like Zeus himself has dropped by for a lingonberry juice, and the reasonable part of me wants to point out that the level of engineering integrity contained in the ordinary metal they flog probably exceeds anything this great flat-fish can offer. Not wishing to die at the hands of Norwegian performance-car extremists, I keep quiet and walk around it nodding positively, eyeing the exposed carbonfibre,

Below: Harris pretends to take an interest in the Agera R's luggage compartment (which has a generous 120-litre capacity) while the car is prepped for his drive

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‘If 1000bhp terrifies you in a Bugatti, what is it going to do to your bowels when fashioned by a few Swedes and with no front driveshafts?’

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‘The hammering V8 noise is swamped with a great swoosh of twin turbos and the car catapults forward’

Above: configurable instruments can be switched between Track and GT modes, giving priority to different information. Right: white leather is not compulsory, thankfully; roof panel can be removed. Bottom: interior majors on aluminium and exposed carbonfibre; all switchgear is unique to the Agera R

wondering if Andy Flower will sign another contract as England cricket coach…

‘Do you want it with the roof box on?’ asks one of the blokes. Andy Flower, with a roof box? Don’t be daft. Oh, the car – I’d forgotten that the Agera R’s special trick is to carry a pair of skis beyond 200mph. I ask to have it removed because I cannot ski and, to my eyes, it looks a little bit shit.

The throng follows the Agera R as it is extracted from the showroom and led outside like some great Victorian engineering folly destined for obscurity. They watch intently as I am inserted inside its crass white-leather cabin – dozens of eyes burrowing their jealousy into my head, when not one of them knows how readily I would hand them the key (a great lump of metal) and scarper. To my great surprise, the twin-turbocharged 5-litre V8 starts first time, idles obediently and, after I’ve flicked the paddle to select first gear, the Agera R leaves with as much dignity as any machine with a white leather dash could hope to retain.

I would be lying if I didn’t admit to fear playing a meaningful role in my apathy to today’s events. Like you, I love powerful motor cars and am willing to exploit them on public roads, but I also enjoy living, and the combination of an ’Egg offering a claimed 1100bhp and two-wheel drive has, perhaps unduly, influenced my frame of mind.

This conclusion has been reached with the benefit of experience. I have driven a Bugatti Veyron Super Sport, and I know what it feels like to emit over a thousand horsepower through four tyres. It feels completely wrong; quite at odds with what should be legal. It also feels uncontrollably rapid – even in the context

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of four driven wheels, a double-clutch gearbox and the very best code-writers from the VW ESP Academy. No other machine in history has better rationalised extreme horsepower into something useable, but if a grand's worth of ponies terrifies you in a Bug SS, what the hell is it going to do to your bowels when fashioned by a few Swedes, with no front driveshafts and no recourse to the IT geeks?

Furthermore, how will I possibly be able to tell you lot anything about it? There are many things I hate about the global motor-writing output, but the one that drives me to violence is the great 'there I was' supercar story in which the author clearly thought the thesaurus was an adequate substitute for actually driving the bloody car. I want to tell you what 1100bhp feels like, but I'm terrified at the prospect. Koenigsegg claims the Agera R will hit 62mph in 2.9sec and top 260mph. At least it isn't raining.

We mooch out of Stavanger in one of the odder convoys: me and 'tographer Shep in the Agera R and the support crew in a 5-series GT. The roads are littered with the remedial work required after another harsh winter. The cabin is a meeting place of mechanical noise, a great throng of gnashing, whooshing and thrumming where gearbox, motor and tyres each vie to penetrate your skull in the most irritating manner possible. But as we sit there in the noise emporium trying to decide which of the contestants will win the decibel battle, a single piece of objective feedback filters into my head. Or rather, my bottom. The ride comfort is exceptional. Not 'surprisingly good', but beautifully absorbent and calm. What a strange and gratifying discovery. What a contrast to the NVH wasps' nest surrounding it.

We peel away onto a better-surfaced road running alongside several lakes. The Agera feels vast, even on these fairly generous stretches, but you squeeze it between the few oncoming trucks and the guard-rail more confidently than you expected. The upshot is another discovery cloaked by the rest of the car: the steering has uncommon delicacy and has clearly been expertly tuned to the chassis. I am impressed.

But I cannot reach further into the car's personality, or its performance potential. Fear precludes it. The driving position doesn't hold any gremlins and the seat works for my stumpy trunk. In fact, allowing for the terrible view out of the rear-view mirror, there's not much intimidation inside the Agera R, but that doesn't matter when the uncharted behaviour of 1100bhp lurks in the few inches of throttle travel. Driving fast cars is extremely simple, but only if you know what they will do and how they will respond. If you do not have this information, you go somewhere wide and lacking immovable objects to discover it, then use the knowledge to shape your behaviour on the public highway. Never before have I been keener to help with photography – it delays the inevitable moment when the choice has to be made: full-throttle or the dictionary…

Curiosity isn't switchable though. So once the tracking shots are done, I go up and down the same stretch of road several times. It's wide and relatively smooth, it has the odd strange camber and crown and, much like those poor souls who clear salt-flats of errant stones before a world speed run, I want to know every single inch of it before even attempting to use full throttle. The reason being, I've just used what the rather excellent dashboard informs me is 50 per cent of the available performance and the effect was alarming. The hammering V8 noise, decidedly motorsport in its blare, was swamped with a great swoosh of turbos (1.4bar at full boost) and the car catapulted forward. There was immense lag too: an input, a pause, a spooling and then *jeeeeepers*, it just launched. Suppose 885lb ft will tend to do that in a 1435kg car.

Much like a child taking a dip in the North Sea, this unwillingness to fully commit to the task continues for a while. I convince myself that I'm pushing harder, but in reality I'm going up a gear then pushing the throttle a little further. And then I think, 'Oh, sod it,' and, in third gear, at an indicated 70mph, push the throttle as far as it will go. My senses record only increased turbo noise and then that telling sign of driver concern arrives: an unfortunate desire to add corrective lock, Bo Duke-style, when none is needed.

The hit is delicious in its intensity and effect. The Agera R is propelled at a rate very few people will ever experience, and after just a few fleeting seconds I hang the throttle and, for all my churlish mutterings, instantly feel privileged to have experienced the effects of eleven hundred horsepower through just two driven wheels. The car took it too: no traction control intervention (there's a fairly simple system), just the squirm of 345-section Michelins.

It couldn't do this without the assistance of its very brave chassis set-up. I have no idea what the spring-rates on the car are, but they must be comparable to those of a Mehari – pushing the front clam shut almost forces the suspension onto its lock-stops. The damping is sophisticated, though, and the car doesn't roll too much in turns. Of course, the other corollary of this suppleness is traction: the car squats and the prow rises in dramatic fashion, but it does hook up and scoot – except in second gear, where the power and torque are understandably too much to bear.

This is not a car to drive on high rpm. Most of the time I just click up through the Cima seven-speed 'box into fourth and then wait for the boost to arrive; between 3000 and 6000rpm it does all you could ever expect of a street car. This way the shove is more controllable. It becomes addictive and the car will cover ground at a rate the Norwegian authorities will find unacceptable.

So the Agera R is noisy, visually uncouth and preposterously expensive. At the same time it is beautifully constructed and in possession of a chassis that shows an understanding of how a car should behave on the road. It should also be noted that during a day of idling, waiting and endless three-point turns, it didn't throw a single wobble. That is extremely unusual for a car of this type.

The Agera R is likely to be about as fast and exciting as your body can handle. It is also a surprisingly polished product. In light of this, I'm sorry I didn't take the car more seriously. It turned out to be a far more rigorous engineering exercise than expected. But worth a million euros? On this topic, I refer you back to the Bristolian sage.

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 5000cc, twin-turbo
Location Mid, longitudinal
Power 1100bhp @ 6900rpm
Torque 885lb ft @ 4100rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox, rear-wheel drive, electronic differential, traction control
Front suspension Double wishbones, pushrod operated adjustable gas dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, pushrod operated adjustable gas dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs, 397mm front, 380mm rr, ABS
Wheels 9.5 x 19in front, 12.5 x 20in rear
Tyres 265/35 x 19 front, 345/30 x 20 rear, Michelin Pilot Super Sport
Weight (kerb) 1435kg
Power-to-weight 779bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 261mph+ (claimed)
Basic price £875,000
On sale Now

evo RATING ★★★★★

Below left: mid-mounted twin-turbo V8 produces 1100bhp on E85 or E100 biofuel; on 98-octane unleaded this drops to 1036bhp. Below: adaptive rear wing uses wind resistance, rather than hydraulics, to adjust its position. Bottom: brakes are carbon-ceramic

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'The Agera R is about as fast and exciting as your body can handle'

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SO WHICH CAR DO YOU TAKE ON TRACK NEXT?

THE RANGE ROVER EVOQUE

The new Evoque promises to be the most surprising drivers' car of 2011. HERE'S WHY...

Words **John Barker**
Pictures **Adam Duckworth**

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The engineers at Jaguar Land Rover set themselves some pretty tough targets for the Evoque, though none greater than that described by the strip of symbols just behind the gear selector. There you'll find a sort of motoring hieroglyphics, showing the various chassis modes for which the Evoque has been tuned, from general driving, to grass/gravel/snow, mud and ruts, and sand. You'd think that little lot would be enough but, if you go for the optional 'MagneRide' adaptive damping, there is a fifth, described as the 'dynamic' mode. This is the 'evo' setting if you like, promising tighter, crisper responses, principally through less roll and firmer, more responsive steering. But is it really possible to have a car that can go boulder-crawling in the Sahara *and* hold its own on a trackday at Silverstone?

The two objectives are far from mutually exclusive, engineering-wise, says Pete Davis, technical manager for Evoque dynamics. Suspension travel is over 200mm front and rear, which obviously helps off-road but is also useful on a favourite B-road, or the Nürburgring. 'Having such generous travel allows us to have nice, progressive spring rates and avoid upsetting non-linearities – undesirable changes in behaviour,' says Davis. A torsionally stiff bodyshell serves both demands well too, of course, as does the desire to 'tread lightly' off-road; the Evoque weighs getting on for 200kg less than the equivalent Freelander.

Right from the off, the Evoque was destined to be a more dynamic on-road vehicle than the Freelander and even the Range Rover Sport. Off-road it still had to perform better than its rivals, to uphold the company's reputation, but the reason the Evoque has bespoke aluminium suspension components rather than the Freelander's steel set-up is as much in pursuit of dynamic clarity and precision as weight-saving. Less rigid suspension parts would mean that stiffer suspension bushes would be required to achieve precise control of geometry and that would mean more noise and less refinement.

'Because it's a Range Rover it has to be comfortable and refined – that's part of the Range Rover DNA,' says chassis guru Mike Cross, who was central to the definition of what the Evoque should be, dynamically. 'However, because of the way it looks, and the fact that it will attract a younger, more urban audience, it also had to be fun and agile. The trick was keeping both in mind.' Competitor benchmarking – the process of evaluating rivals and defining where a new model should sit – was less conventional than with some cars. 'There were the obvious rivals such as the BMW X1 and the Freelander, which we included to ensure the Evoque was different, but also less obvious rivals too, including the Audi TT and Mini,' says Cross. It was the responsiveness of the Mini around town that helped create a mantra that the development team kept in mind: 'agile in an urban environment'.

The journey into uncharted territory was made more interesting by dint of Evoque being the first car from Jaguar Land Rover to feature electric power-assisted steering (EPAS) and also the first SUV in the world to be fitted with MagneRide 3. 'EPAS was a surprise to me,' says Cross. 'It took a while to get to grips with, but it offers greater tuning flexibility than a conventional hydraulic power steering system.'

It was key to delivering the dynamic feel the team was looking for, though when they started working with ZF three years ago there was some concern. 'I'd seen reports of EPAS in the press and comment was never hugely complimentary,' says Dave Pook, technical specialist in steering and handling. The case for it is strong – it reduces CO2 and saves a little weight as well as offering greater tailoring of steering responses

'Right from the off, the Evoque was destined to be more dynamic on-road than the Range Rover Sport'

Above: bi-xenons are optional. Right: just below the selector for the auto gearbox are the buttons for the various chassis modes

Above: sportiest engine at launch will be this 237bhp turbo petrol unit, though it will be available only with a six-speed auto. The turbo diesels (149 and 187bhp) will have a manual gearbox option. Below: Evoque gets a version of the Freelander's permanent four-wheel drive, with a Haldex diff in the rear axle. Suspension arms are largely unique to the Evoque and fashioned in aluminium for greater precision

Above: top models get MagneRide continuously adjustable dampers as standard – a first on an off-roader. The damper fluid contains metallic elements – applying an electric field changes the viscosity

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for various scenarios – but the major challenge was to get good feel from it.

'Working against you are friction and inertia in the electric motor system,' says Pook. 'Steering feel has to come back through them so we played with the hardware, the motor belt and gears, to reduce friction.' The ZF software controlling the motor came under close scrutiny too. Pook won't reveal exactly what he and his team discovered but says that they delved into parts of the programming not normally tinkered with. Tricks to make the steering feel more natural include over-speeding the motor to compensate for its inertia and also refining the way it finds its self-centre point, engineering-in a very subtle over-shoot and ensuring that there's no 'notch' when steering away from the straight-ahead. Having been wary at the start of the project, Pook is now a big fan of the system: 'I want to fit EPAS to everything now,' he laughs.

I had a short drive in the Evoque last month and wasn't sure what I'd find. Threading a car down a quick, winding road tells you a lot about its steering but arguably not as much as at low speed, which is where your confidence in it is grounded. Driving the Evoque out of the car park at Gaydon to the entrance to the test tracks, I was surprised and impressed by the natural feel it has. So I wasn't surprised to learn that although development of the Evoque has taken the team to Dubai, Sweden and Germany, a huge number of number of miles were racked up on the roads of Warwickshire and other favourites in the Midlands.

The standard 'passive' chassis set-up delivers all the competence demanded by the Range Rover engineers over wildly different terrains. The optional MagneRide adjustable dampers simply extend its capability, particularly at the top end, by allowing more tuning of its responses; the damper fluid contains metallically soft elements and by applying a magnetic field its effective viscosity, and therefore the firmness of the damping, can be changed.

For an SUV, the Evoque is surprisingly direct and wieldy, and never more so than in its dynamic mode. 'Steering weight is increased,' says Davis, 'but this can lead to the sensation that the car isn't as responsive. To counteract this, the rear dampers respond to cornering first, helping to tuck the front end into the corner and maintaining the agile feel.' The firmness of each damper changes constantly. 'In dynamic mode all the sensitivities change,' says Davis. 'The car tries to understand what you will do next.'

As with the steering, the objective was a 'natural' feel; the damping should enhance the driveability and competence but not draw attention to itself. On the evidence of hustling a 237bhp petrol turbo Evoque prototype along some of the tight and demanding roads that vein the Gaydon proving ground, it works. It's still quite a chunky car at 1760kg and there is roll

'It's still quite a chunky car at 1760kg, but the chassis' poise and accuracy is better than it has any right to be'

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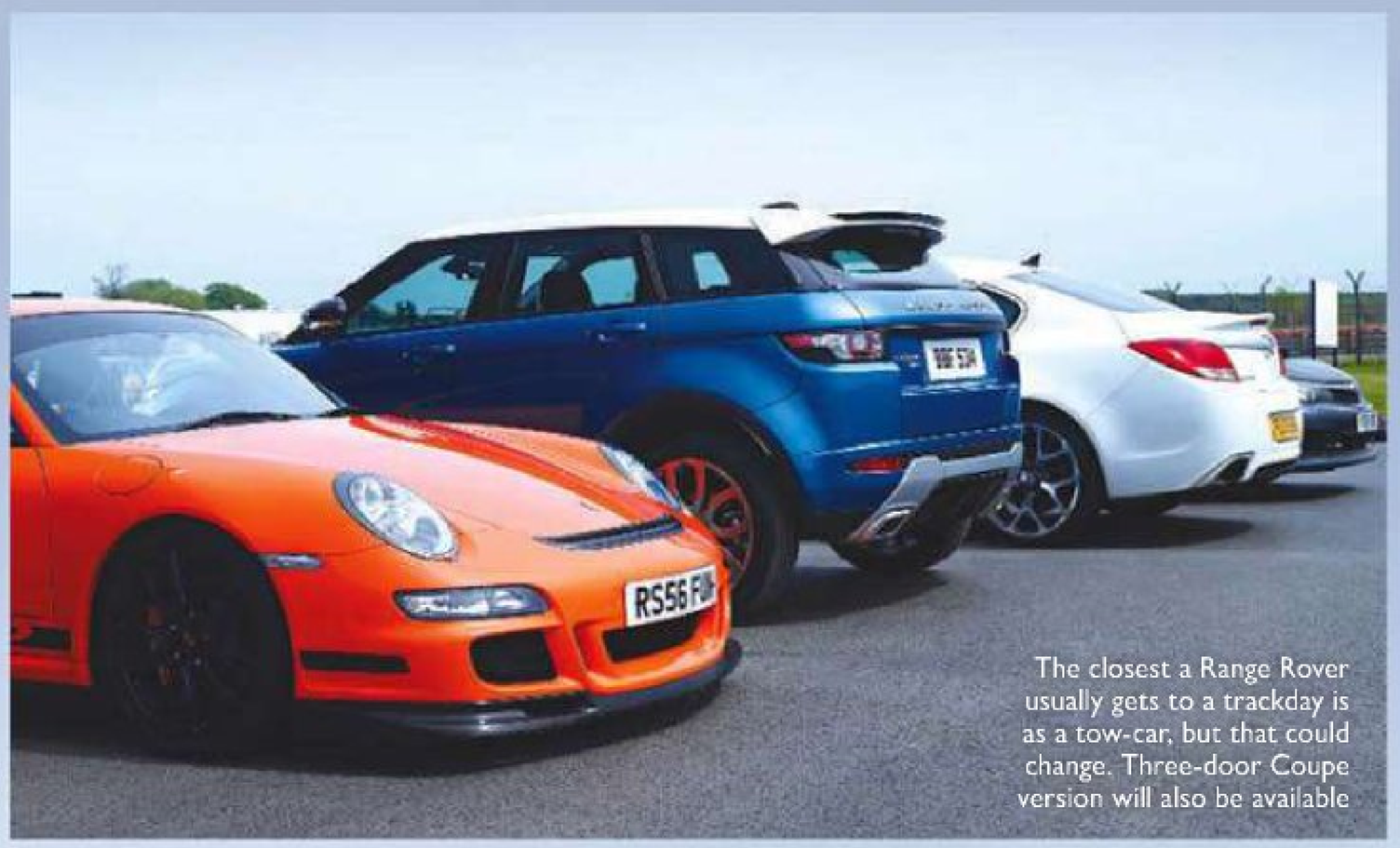
and pitch, yet the poise and accuracy is better than it has any right to be. Oh, and the traction is pretty good, as you'd expect! It's clearly from the same gene-pool as the Range Rover Sport but with greatly scaled-down masses and therefore up-scaled agility.

I only got a brief drive and was goading it a bit to see how it behaved. Riding with the regular test drivers, seeing how smoothly they conduct it and the speed they carry, it appears the limiting factor is the power, which is quite something, especially considering the multi-tasking pattern and construction of the Continental CrossContact tyres. 'You get to the end of a lap at the Ring and have to remind yourself you could drive straight to Sweden and the tyres would be at home in the snow,' says Pook.

Is the Evoque a trackday toy, then? We won't know for sure until we get more time in it, but the signs are that it won't embarrass itself. This is one sorted, willing, biddable little SUV.



The closest a Range Rover usually gets to a trackday is as a tow-car, but that could change. Three-door Coupe version will also be available

Many thanks to Circuit Days for allowing us to join their Silverstone trackday. www.circuit-days.co.uk

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cylinder turbo petrol
Location Front, transverse
Capacity 1999cc
Power 237bhp @ n/a rpm
Torque 251lb ft @ n/a rpm
Transmission Permanent four-wheel drive with Haldex rear axle differential, six-speed automatic gearbox
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs with MagneRide adaptive dampers (optional), anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Multi-link with MagneRide adaptive dampers (optional), anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated discs front, solid discs rear
Wheels 19in diameter alloys
Tyres 245/45 19R front and rear, Conti CrossContacts
Weight (kerb) 1760kg
Power-to-weight 135bhp/ton
0-60mph 7.1sec (claimed)
Top speed 136mph (claimed)
Basic price £38,995 (Si4 2.0L)
On sale September

evo RATING ★★★★☆

Words John Barker
Pictures Chris Rutter

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TVR's BACK!

Well, sort of. ***John Barker*** *rolls back the years in a reborn Sagaris with 450bhp and a five-year warranty – and unearths the truth about TVR's much-rumoured comeback*

The motoring world is a poorer place without TVR. Blatting along some Warwickshire lanes on a sunny afternoon, there are few cars I'd rather be in than this Sagaris. There's something refreshingly honest about it, a jagged rawness and depth of character that contrasts with the pebble-smooth blandness of many current cars. It's a feast for the senses, tactile and aural, and the experience is lent extra piquancy by the lack of anti-lock brakes and air bags. There's no doubt that you're more engaged, more alert without them, and when traction and stability control are down to you.

TVR always maintained that its cars were for serious drivers and pooh-poohed such aids, though their lack also offered a handy cost saving and a development short-cut, too. Thing was, it wasn't the only corner that was cut. The TVR-designed-and-built Speed Six engines like the one in the front of this Sagaris gained a reputation for poor reliability, mostly centered on problems with the top of the engine. Soft cam finger followers and elastic valves were the prime culprits.

The amount of slack TVR was cut by owners was greater than that enjoyed by any other car maker and showed just how much goodwill there was towards the company, how much everyone wanted it to succeed and appreciated its unique, traditional approach to making sports cars. However, that goodwill was wearing thin by the time the young Russian, Nikolai Smolenski, took over in 2004, and engine problems were among the quality issues he was tackling before TVR went belly-up in late 2006.

For me, the risk of engine failure is probably the biggest reason I wouldn't consider owning a Speed Six or AJP8-engined TVR. That's why driving this Sagaris is a strangely altered experience – I have absolute confidence in the straight-six growling away aristocratically in front of me because it comes with a five-year, unlimited-mileage warranty. Such peace of mind makes the whole experience that much more enjoyable. Oh, and that's before I mention that it's a massively upgraded Speed Six engine too, a 4.5-litre version of the original 4-litre, developing 450bhp.

It's the work of TVR Power, the Coventry-based engine-building subsidiary sold off by TVR five years ago. TVR Power has become a very tidy little business working on all aspects of TVRs and is currently acquiring the body moulds and jigs for a range of TVRs, from Griffith to Sagaris, so that it can rebuild existing cars to as-new or better-than-new standards (see interview, overleaf). It can even fit them with Corvette engines. If not quite a full TVR comeback, it's the next best thing.

The company's first Speed Six upgrade was a 4.3 with 425bhp, of which 90 have been sold, complete with warranty. Since introducing the 4.5 at the start of the year it has sold 14,

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Above: bonnet vent opens to help cool newly upgraded 4.5-litre Speed Six engine. Right: subtle enhancements include tinted perspex for spoiler. Below: button to switch between engine maps for 95 or 97 octane fuel

'There's a jagged rawness and depth of character that contrasts with the blandness of many current cars'

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and there's a 5.0 on the way that will, in the words of boss Dom Trickett, deliver 'a bit more power but a whole lot more torque'.

There's no great secret, no complex work involved making the Speed Six engine reliable enough to give it a confidence-inspiring warranty. 'It was so close to being right already,' says Trickett. Quality inlet and exhaust valves, better surface finishes, notably for the finger followers, and new 'cold cast' camshafts do the trick, he says. A stock 3.6 or 4-litre Speed Six rebuilt by TVR Power costs £5400 and gets a three-year unlimited mileage warranty. A 4-litre converted to 4.3 spec with a new long-throw crank costs £8400, and the new 4.5-litre version in the nose of this sexy black demonstrator costs £10,800. 'We don't offer "blue-printed" engines,' says Trickett, 'because that's what we build as a matter of course.' The firm also rebuilds AJP8 engines, and Rover V8s, too.

The 4.5 Speed Six has the same billet crank as the 4.3, plus a re-sleeved, bigger-bore block, new short-skirt pistons and new, shorter rods – the gudgeon pin in the piston is lowered to help the engine rev more freely. There are bigger injectors for a better spray pattern and, naturally, there's a new ECU. The engine has been 12 months in development, on the dyno and in the car. 'We don't leave development to the customer,' says Trickett. Externally, there's nothing to distinguish this engine from the original 4-litre and it runs the standard exhaust system so the noise is no greater. It's a bit smoother, though, and there's a button on the centre console allowing you to choose between 95 and 97 octane fuel.

As you'll have spotted, there are a few other upgrades to this car, notably the airy 19in, five-spoke alloys and bigger front discs

Right: upgraded 450bhp 4.5-litre straight-six engine in all its glory. Above: other upgrades include bigger discs and calipers and these cool-looking five-spoke alloys

'The engine has been 12 months in development, on the dyno and in the car'

THE 'NEW' TVRs

You might not be able to buy a new TVR but how about a good-as-new TVR? With the approval of Nikolai Smolenski, Coventry-based TVR Power is in the process of acquiring body moulds and chassis jigs and is offering a comprehensive refurbishment service – including the option of Chevrolet LS V8 power. A number of Wheeler-era cars, from Griffith to Sagaris, can benefit from the service, says TVR Power boss Dom Trickett, pictured left. 'The original car will be stripped, given a new chassis, new suspension, brakes upgraded, body resprayed if required, and fitted with a choice of engines, from the Rover V8, to the Speed Six, to the AJP8 to the Chevrolet LS3 V8.' The cars will be built under licence from TVR and come with an unlimited mileage warranty (five years for the upgraded TVR Power engines; three years for everything else). Expect a totally refurbished model to cost around £50,000.

'Customer demand will drive the business,' says Trickett, who has been a TVR man for 20 years, initially on the shop floor. In the last five years he has built TVR Power into a profitable

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business and throughout has stayed in touch with Smolenski. 'The moulds for the bodies and the chassis jigs for all the models are around, mostly in Germany, and we're gathering them all back in at the moment. TVR Power will be taking on exclusive parts distribution for TVR, too,' continues Trickett, who anticipates appointing a small number of dealers around the UK if the business takes off.

The first completely 'remanufactured' TVR, an LS3-powered Tuscan 2, is currently in build and should be complete in a few weeks. And the customer for this first car? No less than Smolenski himself. One reason for offering the LS3 V8 is that there aren't enough parts available to productionise the Speed Six engine. 'I'm not happy, I'm out-and-out British,' says Trickett, 'but the LS3's a flexible unit and it does mean we could sell them into other markets outside the UK because they'll have all the emissions compliance required.'

'I'm doing it because I want TVR back,' he says. 'I could retire tomorrow but I'm passionate about TVR. No other car company has done what TVR has done. I've been pushing Nik constantly. If I hadn't, I think he'd have thrown in the towel long ago.' At the moment Smolenski has no appetite for building a new TVR, says Trickett. 'Building a brand new car for £70-80K is difficult for a number of reasons: logistics, emissions. This way, TVR Power will get the ball rolling and answer the question: is it worth TVR coming back?' He hopes it is: 'We're rebuilding TVR, slowly, so that in five years there will be something for a consortium of backers to come in and buy, to put TVR back into production.'

TVR REMASTERS

GRIFFITH

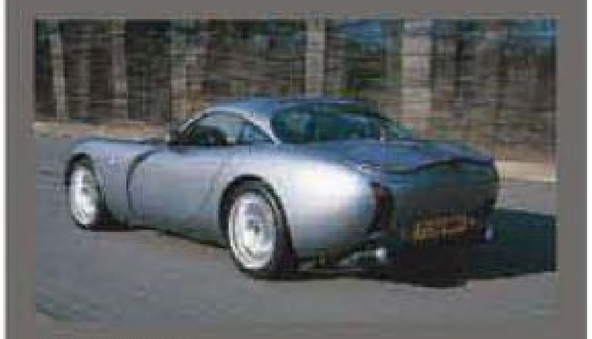
The Griffith put TVR firmly on the map in the early 1990s and prices are hardening, but a lot of early cars are now mechanically tired and many more have suffered serious corrosion to their steel chassis. An obvious candidate for the TVR Power refurbishment programme.

CERBERA

The Cerbera coupe was the car that ushered in TVR's own range of straight-six and V8 engines, the early versions of which were plagued with reliability issues. A prime candidate for one of TVR Power's upgraded Speed Six units, or better still, the cultured and bombproof Chevy LS3 V8.

CHIMAERA

Essentially a Griffith with added refinement and practicality, the Chimaera sold in big numbers and is relatively affordable right now. Unlikely to have tens of thousands spent on it, but as with the Griff, could be adapted to take any of TVR Power's engine options, including the Speed Six.



TUSCAN

Along with the Sagaris, the Tuscan could have the greatest potential for 'remaking', says TVR Power. The Tuscan was the car that introduced TVR to an American audience through the movie *Swordfish*, so the option of the emissions-compliant LS3 engine looks particularly attractive.

and Hi-Spec calipers, plus light tints for the side windows, light lenses and the Perspex rear spoiler standing proud on the short rear deck. The amount of attention the car gets is of genuine supercar proportions. Inside, it feels properly exotic, too, with dramatic, sweeping dashboard lines, bespoke aluminium switchgear and a low-slung, racer-ish driving position. It wears its miles well, this demonstrator, the neat leather looking good for its 64,000 miles and the chassis feeling taut and precise.

And, yes, it really goes. It feels like the standard engine plus 15 per cent everywhere; there's a stack of grunt right from tickover that builds in a remarkably linear way into a torque-swollen mid-range. It's sweeter in feel and sound, less mechanically busy than the standard engine, but by the time the tacho is at 4000 or 5000rpm you want to extend your right leg and feel the long-travel, floor-hinged throttle pedal hit the stop because you sense that it builds to something a bit special. And it does. It's not an especially top-end-ballistic engine but it's a real thrill to feel and hear this heavy-hitting, very British straight-six spin the tacho needle right around the near naked rev-counter face to over 7000rpm. Five leggy ratios and a hefty shift lend the experience a natural, appealing punctuation, and the way the Sagaris keeps on keeping-on well into three figures confirms its big-power status as emphatically as the wheelspin in third gear on bumpy roads.

True, the tyres on this car have given their best and the suspension doesn't have the range of composure of some quality sports cars but you know where you are with it, through the lucid, beefy steering and the seat of your pants. This is a handsome, honest and – now – reassuringly potent British sports car. Yes, TVR, we miss you. If they'd rolled off the line like this, you might still be here, terrorising the faint-hearted and entertaining the true enthusiast. If Dom Trickett gets his way, that could yet come to pass again…

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'The amount of attention the car gets is of genuine supercar proportions'

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line six-cylinder, 4526cc
Power 450bhp @ 6600rpm
Torque 349lb ft @ 5300rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual gearbox, lsd, rwd
Suspension Double wishbones, coil over gas dampers and anti-roll bar front and rear
Brakes Grooved and ventilated discs, 375mm
Wheels 8.5x19in front, 10x19in rear, aluminium alloy
Tyres 235/35 18 front, 265/30 19 rear, Yokohama Advans
Weight (kerb) 1100kg
Power-to-weight 415bhp/ton
0-60mph 3.6sec (est)
Top speed 180mph+ (est)
Engine upgrade cost £10,800

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Top: Sagaris was one of the most dramatic cars on the road when it was launched back in 2005 and it still turns heads like few others. Above: exhaust is the standard item. Left: interior is still a riot of curves

WHAT NIKOLAI DID NEXT

Ever since the factory in Blackpool closed over four years ago, there have been plenty of stories about how TVR is coming back. First it was with some Americans, then Italian styling house and car maker Bertone and latterly the German firm Gullwing. However, speaking from Austria, Nikolai Smolenski (right) says he doesn't see TVR getting back in the business of building blood-and-thunder sports cars again any time soon.

'The legislation for emissions and so forth is too difficult,' says Smolenski, 'I don't want to spend any more money building cars.' If he did, he says, it would be much like the roadster that was for a time being developed by Gullwing, with Chevrolet LS V8 power, but negotiations on that have ended, he says. There *will* be TVR-branded new product,

though, just not of the type you might expect.

One of Smolenski's interests is a project to create independent power sources for agriculture in remote locations, running on sustainable energy. The German firm developing the electric motor technology associated with this will also supply the components for a fully electric TVR Sagaris that Smolenski is currently designing with the help of a Vienna university. 'We are at the theoretical stage, looking at what power we need for a car capable of 150mph and a range of 250 miles,' he says, adding that he hopes to have a running car by September.

He is happy to licence TVR Power to refresh older cars. 'We have all the jigs and moulds, they're in pretty good condition, and TVR Power has all the facilities to refurbish cars,' he says. There is the capability to refurbish every model from Chimaera to Sagaris, he says, and the use of the LS3 V8 gets his backing. He also reveals that TVR was looking at using Chevrolet power before the firm closed in late 2006, but that the LS engine at that time wasn't suitable. The Nissan 350Z V6 was also considered but rejected for not being powerful enough.

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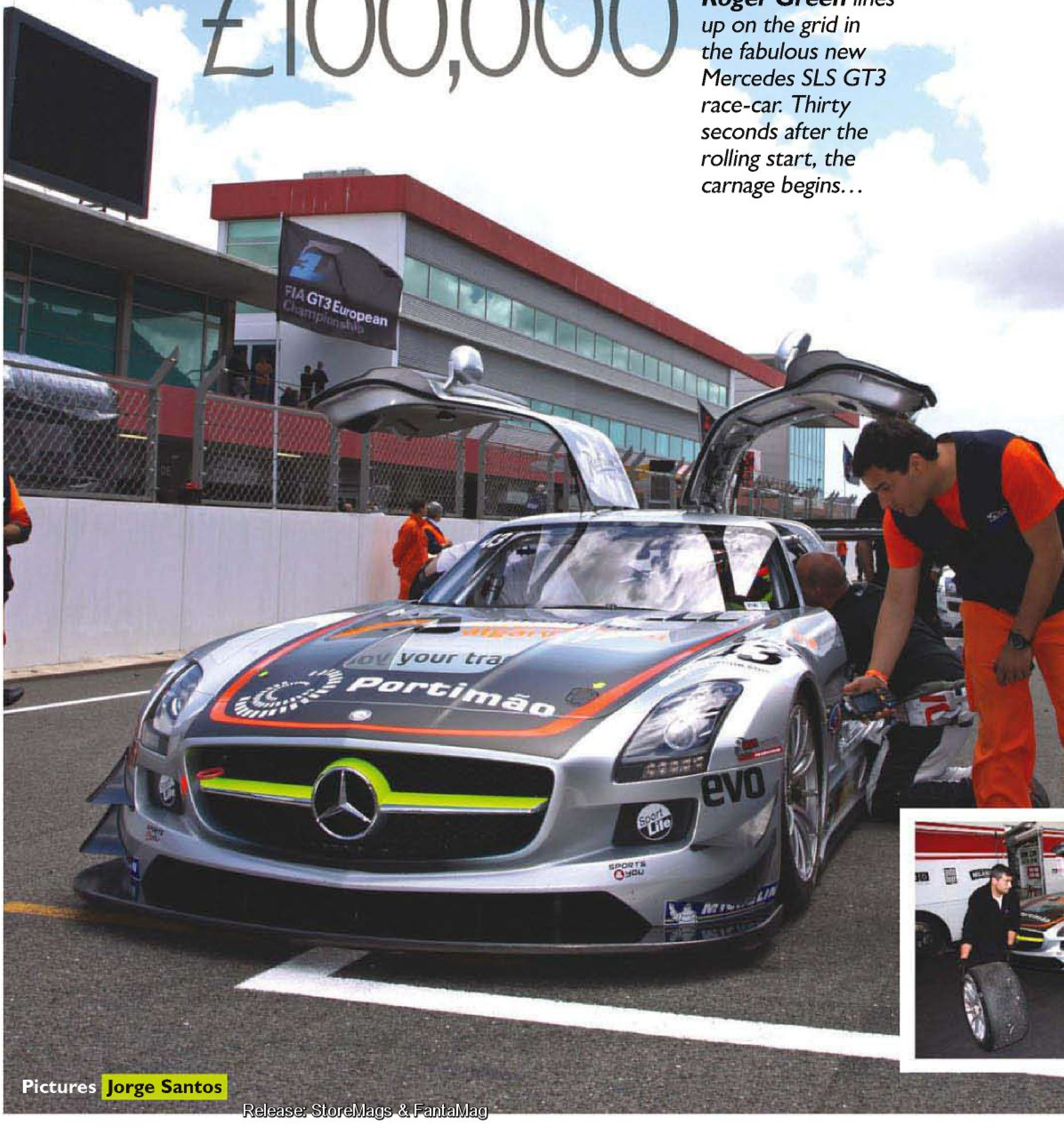
ONE RACE 3 CORNERS £100,000

***Roger Green** lines up on the grid in the fabulous new Mercedes SLS GT3 race-car. Thirty seconds after the rolling start, the carnage begins…*



Pictures **Jorge Santos**

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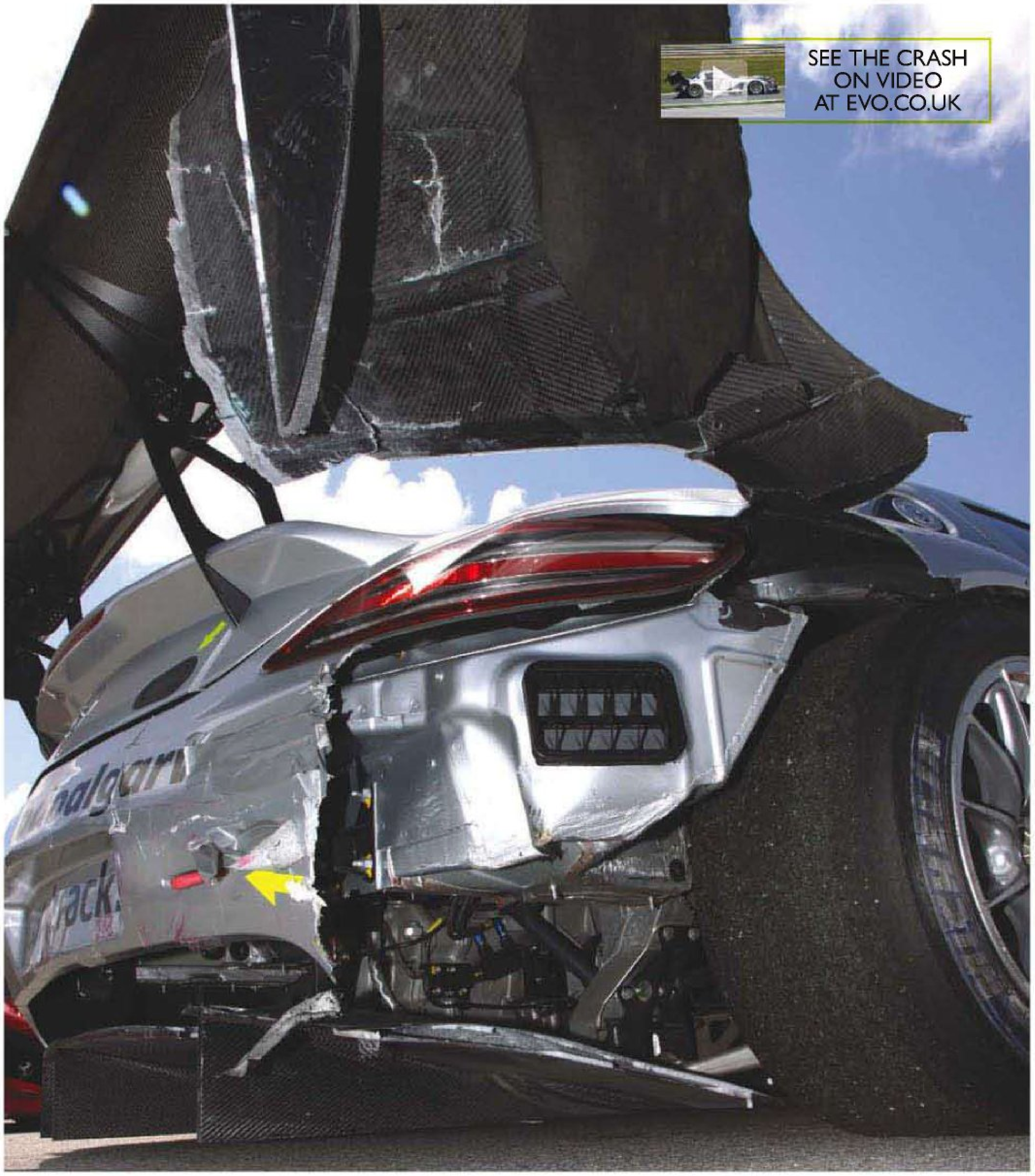

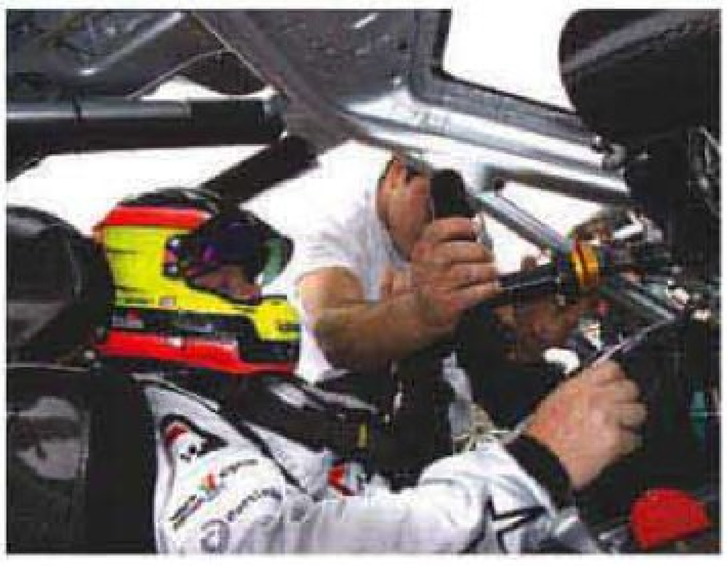

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Left: Roger Green and, above, the £350,000 SLS GT3 at the superb new Portimao circuit. Huge diffuser and flat floor suck it to the tarmac

'It's shown live all around Europe.

The view through the upright windscreen is of nothing but a deep blue Portuguese sky, shot through with a golden bolt of late spring sunshine. I need to see more than this, but the combination of an almost cartoonishly long bonnet and a floor-mounted, all-enveloping race seat means that the race track vanishes from your sight-line every time the AMG SLS GT3 traverses a crest – and at the Portimao circuit in the Algarve this happens a lot.

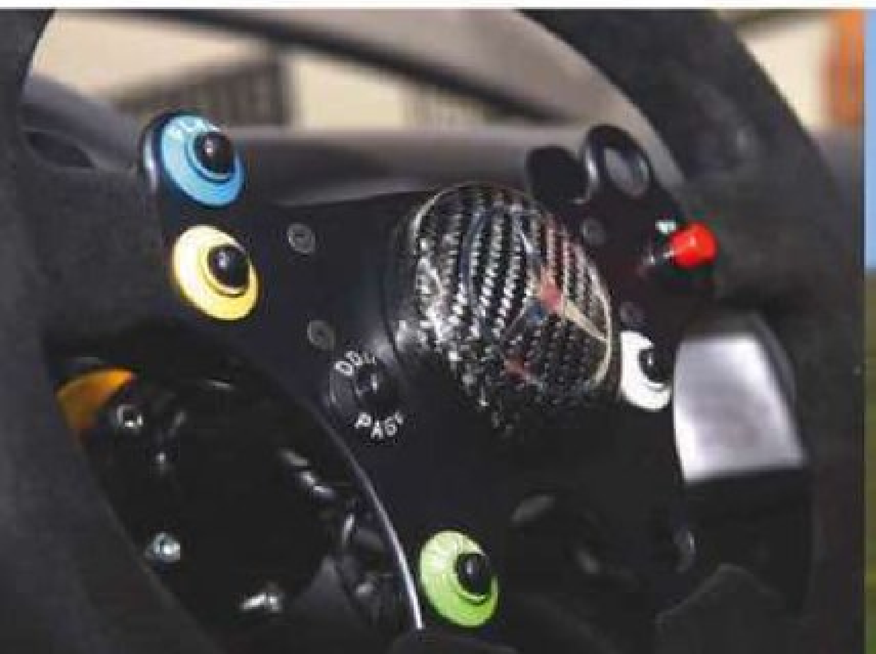
Then the track falls away, the massive snout dips down and the scenery alters instantly and completely. Now I'm barely six feet from the round tail-lights of a Ford GT, to its left an Audi R8, massive rear wing mounted way up in the air. Ahead and behind are more SLS race-cars, a brace of equally new Ferrari 458s, a couple of muscular, omnipresent 911s, a rakish Gallardo and a clutch of the most dramatically flared BMW Z4s I've ever seen. Twenty-eight cars full of pent-up tension and energy edge side-by-side towards the start line; the pace car prepares to dive into the pitlane and I'm right in the middle of it all.

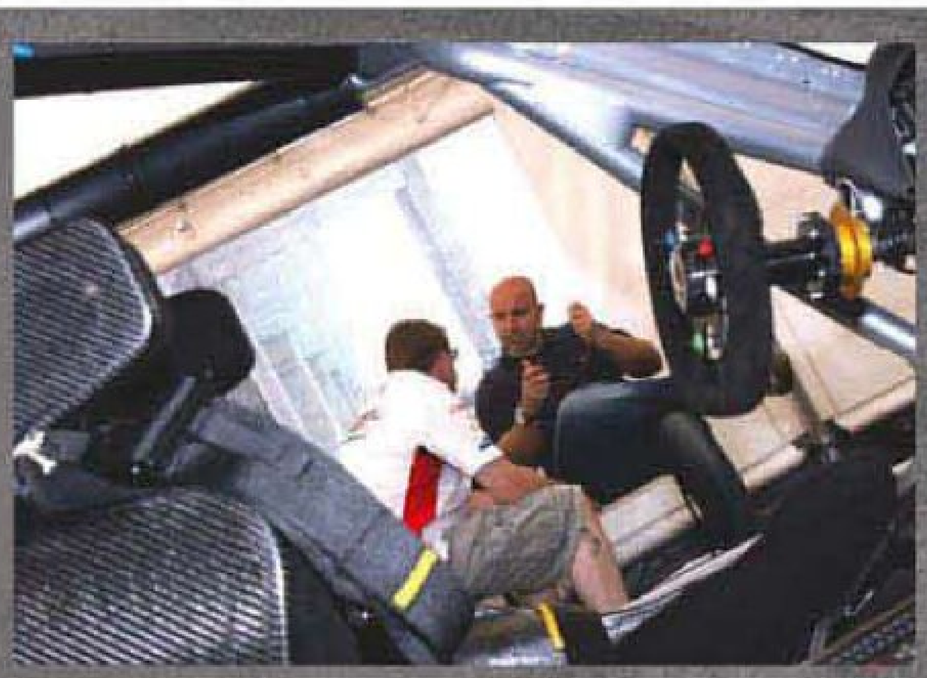
This, then, is no ordinary **evo** track test. We're about to take the rolling start of the opening round of the 2011 FIA European Championship, the highest level of racing I've ever taken part in. The challenge is about as intense and serious as it gets, which is why my body is alive with adrenalin, every sense on alert. My eyes are fixed on the lights, ready for the flick to green, but I'm simultaneously able to absorb everything going on in the far reaches of my peripheral vision – the surging 458 on my left, the white SLS edging closer in the rear view mirror. After not qualifying as well as I'd hoped, I need a good start, but I also need to keep it clean. This is a two-driver race, and as my team-mate is the man who has put all of this together, it'd be bad form not to bring the car back in one piece…

I'VE RACED WITH PAULO PINHEIRO before. We won a Portugese GT race here in a GT4 M3, a result that meant more to Paulo than it arguably would to anyone else, for this track was his idea, his design and he spent eight years securing the funding to build it. The week that we won, AMG were on site putting development miles on the SLS and Paulo spent more time talking about the Merc than the M3. You couldn't blame him for becoming instantly fanatical about the extraordinary sight and sounds of the SLS – or spending the next six months working on a way to race one.

We were both on hand to witness 'our' car arrive, and after all the hard work behind the scenes my normally effusive chum went visibly pale and very quiet as this huge race-car was disgorged onto the transporter's tail-lift. That was the moment the scale of the task we were taking on hit us squarely between

Below left: switches on steering wheel operate everything from the pit-lane speed limiter to the team radio. Below right: now, that's a wing





Left: V8 restricted to 520bhp and dry-sumped so it can sit lower and slightly further back. Above, Green with Paulo Pinheiro, co-driver and circuit owner

I really don't want to balls this up'

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the eyes. The SLS GT3 is 50mm wider and comprehensively wilder than the already huge and distinctive road car, and to keep the weight down all the enlarged, vented and distended bodywork panels are crafted from finest carbonfibre.

It isn't for show. The reworked SLS generates very high levels of downforce; the ground-hugging front splitter cleaves the air and in combination with a completely flat floor and full-width rear diffuser, it sucks the SLS to the track in the high-speed turns like a Dyson vacuum cleaner. Front dive planes and a giant rear wing press the slicks yet harder into the tarmac, while a huge nose vent aids cooling and others feed air to the brakes and limited-slip diff. As an exercise in air management nothing has been omitted and it creates a car of bewildering theatre.

Further adding to our disquiet was the entry list. This is no field full of gentleman racers enjoying a bit of friendly weekend rivalry; it's full of guys with long and impressive CVs, and the vast majority of them appear to still be under 25 years old. You know this is big time when you turn on the TV – the action is shown live all around Europe and the commentary team includes a former winner of the British Grand Prix. I used to watch John Watson winning races for McLaren and now he'll be describing our every move to millions. I really don't want to balls this up.

You may not be able to see the car's extremities, but as discovered in the two one-hour practice sessions, you are always aware of what each corner is doing. Through the slow corners you have to work the front tyres hard, braking very late right into the apex to force them to hook up rather than understeering wide. The brakes themselves are mighty and remarkably consistent but require a monumental shove to activate: drive one of these on a regular basis and I'm sure you'd end up with one leg so pumped you'd only be able to walk in circles. The paddleshift gearbox is a thing of razor-sharp brilliance and you can effectively pre-book your downshifts – if you're in a braking zone where you'll drop from fourth to second, pull the left paddle twice as you stamp on the pedal and the car will give you those downshifts as soon as the revs have fallen to the correct level.

It's very neat and allows you to focus on getting back on the throttle and stirring the massive torque from the bellowing, crackling 6.2-litre V8. Running through a barely silenced Akrapovic side-exit exhaust, it provides a soundscape of delicious thunder. In fact it's so good I removed some of the sound deadening from the inside of my helmet. It's effectively the same motor found in the road car, but with the volume up to 11 and a dry sump to ensure high g-load lubrication and to allow the engine itself to be fitted further back and lower in the chassis. It actually has a little

Below left: the heat of battle, with Ford GT and massively flared BMW Z4 dicing with R8s and SLSs. Below: on-board telemetry shows lap times and splits

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Left: SLS prone to oversteer when the tyres have gone off, leaving its mark on the circuit. Above: air restrictor, complete with its FIA seal, limits power to 520bhp

less power than the road car's 563bhp thanks to the addition of an air restrictor under the FIA's 'balance of performance' regulations to equalise all cars in the championship.

It's a system that appears to work well. I qualify in 20th place with a time I know would have improved with more testing and fresh tyres (our tyre supplier failed to deliver our full quota), but even so I'm still only 1.5 seconds off a place in the top five. The grid is incredibly tight from the front to the back, so getting a good start is absolutely crucial.

THE LIGHTS FLASH TO GREEN, 28 throttles are buried into bulkheads and the race is on. Almost immediately there's confusion ahead: some cars slow briefly, some swerve, all are jostling for space. I keep my foot hard in, find a gap alongside the pit wall and, kicking up the dust, blast past no fewer than nine cars on the run to turn one!

The field becomes even more condensed as the brake lights illuminate. I'm tucked neatly behind the rear wing of a 911, hugging the inside line to prevent any lunges from the angry-looking pack behind. The second turn is nothing more than a kink but the third corner is one of the tightest on the lap, taken in first gear, and just as I begin to steer into it I receive a massive thump from the Ferrari 458 behind. It hits me hard enough to smash the rear bodywork and the diffuser and push me into the Porsche, breaking my front splitter and sending me sideways. I somehow gather it up without spinning as a number of cars I'd earlier passed retake me around the outside.

That includes the 458 that brazenly used me for extra braking. Now its damaged bonnet flies up into the air before smashing into my windscreen. It feels like I'm under attack and it's not over yet. The next corner is a left over a crest and the moment I turn in I'm hit on the left rear wheel, this time by an Audi R8. I can't catch this one and we both spin out. As I prepare to get going again I see the R8 rolling back across the track just before it smashes into the side of the SLS! I can't believe it. In two corners I've been hit four times.

I get going, and remarkably the car feels okay. Both the Ferrari and Audi are out on the spot, but I head to the pits for the team to check things over, fearing bits of recently pristine AMG bodywork smashed to pieces and hanging off every corner. They are. Carbonfibre is splintered on just about every panel, the front splitter is crushed, the rear diffuser is broken, and a sill and door heavily dented (the repair bill was later totted up to over £100,000). But unbelievably the car is mechanically still A1. The thing must be built with the integrity of a tank. When I get back on track I'm able to lap as fast as I did in free practice! What's more, I can hand the car over to Paulo to bring it home. Or maybe not. Just a couple of laps from the end he suffers a puncture after running over debris from a busted-up Aston Martin. At least there's a second race the following day...

Paulo starts this one, but due to our tyre situation we have to use worn rubber, so this is likely to be even tougher. He runs well, handing the car to me during a safety car period right on the halfway point. 'The tyres are finished!' he shouts as I clamber in. Oh joy.

As the race restarts, I watch dumbfounded as the Z4 in front of me literally pushes a Ford GT off the track. I pass both, but then on the next lap on the very same corner the very same driver does it to me, braking my rear bodywork yet again. The same Z4 had actually finished third in the previous race, so you'd think he'd be above this. In fact he would have been able to drive past easily within a lap or two as my tyres turn to goo. For the last part of the race those overused Michelins are so tired it's like driving on slicks in the wet, and we come home in a disappointing 19th place.

Brilliant car, fantastic championship, but the weekend ultimately left us disappointed. The driving level in terms of lap-times is high, and, although only briefly, we did mix it with the best. Paulo and I were never more than a tenth apart in our times but due to circumstances beyond our control (it was later discovered our tyres were also an inferior spec) we weren't able to give it our best shot or show what we could really do. That, as they say, is motorsport, but after all the preparation and such a big build-up it was frustrating. Maybe we'll have to do it again to find out for sure, but we've a bent car that needs fixing first.

'I find a gap alongside the pit wall and blast past no fewer than nine cars on the run to turn one!'

SLS GT3 VERSUS SLS ROAD CAR

The racer is an easier proposition on track than the car it's based on, but then it probably should be, for getting around a track is the GT3's sole purpose in life. Both cars are constantly sliding in the turns – whether it's oversteer or understeer, neither is ever settled, busily reacting to every steering, throttle and brake input from the driver and demanding both commitment and accuracy in return.

Despite all those demands, the race-car is hugely rewarding, and once you find a balance that suits your style it all hooks up and comes together beautifully. It's more consistent than the road machine, it gives more feedback and in slow corners is far easier to slide.

Extracting a lap time from the road car can feel like a battle between you and the laws of physics, and the relative imprecision produces the odd unintentionally exciting moment too, though it's far less demanding physically. In the GT3 the cornering and braking forces exerted on the driver are significantly higher. Fortunately it does have a very good air-con system – crucial when racing in southern Portugal! **RG**

Main pic, above left: start of race 1. Green's on the left, tucked up behind the 911. Just behind is the Ferrari 458 that will later destroy itself against the SLS's backside. Above: sequence of pics shows how the 458 used Green as a brake into turn three. The Ferrari's race was over, but the Merc soldiered on (far left)

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Fast Fleet

The Citroën DS3 has gone, and we've a farewell report on Simon George's Aston DBS too. Meanwhile, the Scooby has gained a big wing, the Clio Williams has been in bits, and the Audi RS5 has revealed a previously hidden talent

END-OF-TERM

I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that the DS3 was eagerly awaited by everyone in the motoring world. With a glowing initial review back in issue 141, the evo office was certainly intrigued, and I was chuffed to bits when I learned that I would be running our long-termer.

Looking exactly like the example that earned a four-and-a-half star rating when we tested the new Citroën against its key rivals in issue 142, our DS3 1.6 THP DSport certainly caught the eye. It also looked good value, especially compared with an equivalent Mini. At £17,460 (£15,900 before options), it came with all sorts of goodies, including the 'MyWay City Signature' pack (£1100), which added satnav, Bluetooth, rear parking sensors and automatic wipers.

I found the auto wipers slightly flawed, as to turn them off you had to push the stalk upward to 'intermittent' then back down to 'off', which wasn't especially intuitive. However, connecting your mobile to the Bluetooth was very straightforward, and the parking sensors were handy, as the DS3 isn't as small as you might think. That explains why there was plenty of legroom in the back and a generous load space with the rear seats down – it accepted four tyres with ease, for example.

For me, the black alloys and roof looked sweet with the Sport Yellow paint (£410), but the colour-matched Alcantara seats were perhaps a step too far and were tricky to clean too. It's worth noting that similarly specced used DS3s seem to be holding their values well, which is good news if you're buying new.

So it looked the part and was reasonably priced, but I soon started to wonder if there was a reason why the DS3 was more affordable than

CITROËN DS3 1.6 DSPORT

Date acquired	August 2010
Duaration of test	7 months
Total test mileage	11,194
Average mpg	39.2
Costs	£556.96 (four tyres), £2 (fuse for screenwash)
Purchase price	£17,460
Trade-in value	£14,995
Depreciation	£2465

Right and above: DS3 looked great. Above right: auto wiper controls were frustrating

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Turbo engine was one of the DSport's highlights; load space was ample and useful

a Mini. It certainly didn't seem like much money had been spent on the gearchange, which had a curiously disjointed feel (although I did get used to it), and the longer I lived with the DS3, the more I realised what the extra outlay for a Mini buys you: exceptional build quality.

The controls on the Citroën's dashboard and around the steering column didn't have the same weight and solid feel as a Mini's, the dashboard developed creaking noises before the car had covered 10,000 miles, and the seats seemed disappointingly unsupportive. Various bits of bodywork would also happily bend with the push of a thumb, although this is increasingly the norm with modern cars.

No complaints about the engine, though. It took a bit of getting used to the long gearing, but the 154bhp turbocharged unit had a brilliantly smooth, linear delivery with a nice amount of low-down torque (the peak of 177lb ft arrived at just 1400rpm). From a standing start a touch of torque-steer was evident in the lower gears, bringing a suitably sporty feel to proceedings, and although the turbo's effect wasn't as pronounced as I'd have liked, when it introduced itself, the car surged forward as rapidly as you'd ever realistically need.

After a few weeks my main concern was that the ride wasn't as accomplished as I had been led to believe from those early reviews. British tarmac being what it is probably didn't help, but this particular DS3 seemed to be more stiffly sprung and as a result didn't 'flow' as well across tricky tarmac. On the other hand, long drives on smooth motorways were a pleasure.

As the months passed, and the dreadful winter and the subsequent potholes arrived, my relationship with the car deteriorated. The

'I WAS CHUFFED TO BITS WHEN I LEARNED THAT I WOULD BE RUNNING EVO'S LONG-TERM DS3'

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Fast Fleet || LONG-TERM TESTS

Above: seats weren't particularly supportive. Left: cabin well equipped, but build quality left a little to be desired

thumpy ride was now obvious nearly everywhere I drove, while the wet and cold tarmac highlighted a sometimes surprising tendency to understeer and the flickering traction control light became a constant irritation (the TC couldn't be fully turned off, either).

I was lucky enough to drive the range-topping DS3 Racing while our DSport was with us and found that this car suffered from a similarly unforgiving ride. However, here it seemed a little more acceptable, because the R is supposed to be the full-fat hot-hatch DS3 – hence the 'Racing' title. It's still probably more at home on a trackday, though, and is bound to put your back to the test driven day-to-day on UK roads.

As well as numerous detail upgrades, including carbonfibre trim almost everywhere you look, the Racing's version of the 1.6-litre engine has 204bhp compared with the DSport's 154. However, I found the extra power wasn't overwhelmingly noticeable because the character of the car is largely the same: the gearing still feels long and the turbo still eases the power in softly. It's undoubtedly a more special package, but at £23,100 it's nearly £7000 more expensive than a basic 1.6 DSport, which is hard to justify. If only you could spec the Racing's snug seats in the DSport…

Towards the end of the DSport's time with us I decided to try to resolve the grip issues by fitting some different tyres. Little did I know that this would be the making of this long-termer. I opted to replace the original Bridgestone Potenzas with a set of Continental ContiSportContact 3s. These worked out to be £12 more expensive than a fresh set of Potenzas (£559.96 v £547.96 including fitting at Tyres Northampton). They were worth every penny, though, as the DS was transformed. Suddenly it relished corners and there was not a flicker from the ESP light. I fell in love with the DS3 all over again.

Without the tyre switch, the conclusion of this report might have been quite different, but I guess that's the beauty of our long-term tests. As it happened, those last few weeks of life with the DS3 on Conti rubber turned out to be the absolute making of this car. And once again, I don't think I'm exaggerating.

Adam Shorrock

Comparison with the £23K DS3 Racing left Shorrock convinced that the DSport was much better value

It's safe to say we have not bonded with our RS5 long-termer. We've been driving the car for five months, and its fidgety ride, dead steering and myriad of chassis settings (none of which really work for us) have disappointed. We've even changed the wheels from the optional 20-inchers to the standard 19s in the hope that it would add some dynamic polish – but it hasn't.

However, having grabbed the keys back from Harry for a month I'm beginning to find some positives among the negatives. Here's why…

It's Friday April 8, the date of evo's first trackday of the year. It's hot outside the office. Really hot. I jump in the RS5, boot full with mags, helmets and racing booties, and switch the AC to icy cool. My phone links to Bluetooth immediately and I tune the DAB to Planet Rock for some pre-trackday pump. The satnav guides me past a traffic jam, I arrive at the Bedford Autodrome, sign on, and head out on track. Five corners

AUDI RS5

Date acquired	December 2010
Total mileage	7772
Mileage this month	1197
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	18.6

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Top: RS5's on-track abilities came as a surprise. Above: DAB radio ensures there's a station for every mood. Right: 20in wheels have been swapped to 19s, but it still lacks polish

in, I'm seeing 145mph on the back straight and the RS5 is flying. Eight laps later, the ceramic brakes (a £6250 option) show no sign of fading, but my passenger is. I return to the pits and a marshal informs me that the discs are hot – 'like literally white hot'. He's right. They are glowing. My passenger? He has just vomited in his helmet and on the RS5's door. (It's official: Nick Trott makes people sick.)

The RS5 is mighty on track. It doesn't allow minute adjustments – you have to carve a very positive and unwavering trajectory through each corner to extract the best from the quattro chassis – but it does allow for consistent and fast lappery. It's not as fun as an oversteery M3, but it is a challenge in its own right.

At the end of the evening, I fill the boot again, switch the DAB to Classic FM for some chill time and cruise-control myself home. The car feels fresh as a daisy and even the brake pedal resistance is no different. Aside from a small 'noise tested' sticker on the screen and a slight bobbling around the outside edges of the tyres (but not as much as expected), you'd never know it has just spent the past three hours being thrashed mercilessly. Mmm, impressive. Very impressive.

Nick Trott

Pictures: Chris Rutter / Adam Shorrock

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Left: DBS met up with the Hiller chopper that appeared in *Goldfinger*. Above: V12 sounded fantastic – especially with the valves in the exhaust forced to stay open at all revs. Below: suitably decorated at the 2010 Le Mans 24hrs. Right: interior has worn well – apart from the gearknob. Below right: DBS has taken circuit work in its stride; Sport mode improves track handling

END OF TERM

ASTON MARTIN DBS

Date acquired	January 2009
Duaration of test	28 months
Total test mileage	29,334
Average mpg	14.5
Costs	£2813 (servicing), £4130 (tyres), £3000 (brakes), including track use
Purchase price	£120,000
Trade-in value	£85,000
Depreciation	£35,000

It was a baptism of fire for the DBS when it arrived just over two years ago. Within a week, the big Aston was hurtling around a circuit – an exercise it would repeat many times – and with a substantial road mileage planned too, my expectations for reliability weren't high. But I couldn't have been more wrong. Not only has this near two-ton monster never let itself down, it just keeps coming back for more.

OK, so I do have *some* gripes. The satnav is over-complicated and, try as I might, I simply cannot find the weapons selection demonstrated in the recent Bond movies. The driver's window often refuses to drop a touch when you open the door, so it clunks when you shut it. The button to release the petrol filler cover is located in an awkward position under the dash, meaning a spot of inelegant fumbling around is required to find it. The lovely aluminium gearknob has suffered badly from wear and tear (and at almost £800 for a replacement it's less expensive to don driving gloves).

And, with hard use, the DBS likes regular oil top-ups, although not quite as many as, say, a Gallardo.

But this is all nitpicking, as there is a huge bucket-load of positives. The captivating roar from the V12 is as unashamedly British as an Avro Lancaster fly-past. Whip out the number 22 fuse and not only are you entertained above 4000rpm, which is when the valves in the exhaust normally open, but the riotous sounds are available beneath it too – a neat two fingers to the noise police.

The clutch has stood up extremely well to very heavy usage by the countless trackday experience drivers who have sampled HY08 EZH over the best part of 30,000 miles. The rule of thumb of fully depressing the left pedal and avoiding unnecessary slippage virtually guarantees a long life. Obvious, you may think, but the number of supercars I've seen at dealers getting new clutches at 5000 miles suggests otherwise.

The alternative suspension setting available by tapping the sport button

Sportscarsales.com

Storeklage.com

'NOT ONLY HAS THIS NEAR-TWO-TON MONSTER NEVER LET ITSELF DOWN, IT JUST KEEPS COMING BACK FOR MORE'

on the pretty aluminium console allows a firmer set-up, more suited to a circuit, although consequently this gives the tyres a harder time. In the last couple of years, HY08 has had six new rear boots for the road (at £1110) and four fronts at £520.

Regular readers may remember the self-inflicted disaster last year when failure to check pad-wear resulted in the silicone lining being taken off the ceramic discs, rendering them all but useless. Since new pads and a set of replacement ceramics came in north of five figures(!) it was decided that, since HY08 spent much of its time on track, we'd have a set of identical steel replacement discs and bells made up by Mode Performance of Silverstone. With pads to match, these came in at £3000, with the benefit that steels are much more durable under similar circumstances, even if they were a touch less sharp under heavy braking.

Servicing cost £2446.87 over the same period, with an additional £366 for three oil and filter changes – a sensible precaution for any V12 supercar. Apart from that HY08 has steered clear of the workshop.

The one essential ingredient of any supercar is head-turning looks, and my benchmark for a supercar's draw is the fuel station. After you've filled up, simply stand in the queue and watch the gazes of fellow motorists. The Aston never fails this test, and when you climb back in and fire the V12 into life, you get to watch everyone dive for cover. Marvellous.

So what does the future hold for HY08? Well, although it will no longer be making regular appearances in evo, I'll be hanging on to it. As the DBS is a model that's still in production, it will continue to delight trackday experience customers, and if past performance is anything to go by, for many more seasons too.

What will be replacing it in these hallowed pages? Let's just say its engine has fewer cylinders, is located at the opposite end of the car and comes from the land where the best espressos can be found…

Simon George

Pictures: Chris Rutter / Neil Watson / Simon George

Fast Fleet

A Bond film without an Aston, a blue postbox, a Major without Tiger Woods, an episode of *Top Gear* without racial stereotyping: they're all possible, but they just don't feel quite right. So now, finally, my WRX STI has got a big rear wing.

After my campaigning through these pages, the good people at Subaru have listened and decided to offer the big wing as an official upgrade. As a very nice gesture (and essentially to shut me up) Subaru also offered to fit the first one in the country to my car, so on a sunny Friday morning I warbled across to the outskirts of Birmingham.

You might have thought that fitting a bigger wing would simply be a case of unscrewing the old one and slotting in the replacement. Ten minutes, job done. But it's a bit more complicated than that. Because the new wing is heavier and exerts more force, you also need a new, reinforced boot lid and beefier torsion bars to stop it crashing down when it's open. It's also worth noting that the wings arrive in the UK unpainted, so you will need to let your dealer know what colour your WRX STI is and allow time for it to be Dulux matched. Anyway, I pulled my beloved Bianchi out of the boot (still so pleased that the STI has split-fold rear seats), took my life in my hands and went off for a pedal around West Bromwich whilst the wing was being fitted.

SUBARU WRX STI

Date acquired	November 2010
Total mileage	12,966
Mileage this month	1821
Costs this month	£945 (see text)
mpg this month	26.0

Three hours later, having done battle with only the aid of some Lycra and a small carbon bicycle pump, I returned to see BF60 FLZ looking like a proper Subaru. I've heard all of the 'picnic table', 'pram handle' and 'push bar' jokes but I think it looks absolutely brilliant. There were a couple of non-wing STIs lurking about the place and they looked naked next to it. The total cost is £945 including VAT and fitting, which seems pretty reasonable given the amount of new hardware involved.

The wing wasn't the only thing fitted to my car, however. You might have read about the power pack that Subaru UK has developed. It is just an ECU re-jig but it releases an extra 20bhp and 32lb ft, taking the STI's totals to 316bhp and 332lb ft. This also drops the 0-60mph time to a BMW M3-matching 4.9sec. It will be fitted for free to all STIs bought before the end of June or can be retro-fitted to existing cars.

The only visual difference with the power pack is a bright orange sticker inside the petrol flap telling me that 97 RON is now a requirement rather than a preference, but the differences when driving are thankfully a little more obvious. I'll report back in more detail next month, but suffice to say I'm

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Above: full service should have the Willy fighting fit for its Spa outing. Right: new heater matrix meant removing the dash

As the Clio's first ever track outing looms – at Spa-Francorchamps no less – co-owner Shorrock and I have been doing our best to ensure that it is ready for action. That's why this month the Williams has been down to Wimbledon-based Renault dealer R Sport, the specialists recommended by editor Trott after his Clio V6 visited them for a timing belt service last month.

The main task was replacing the heater matrix. Having struggled through the winter with no warm air blowing through the dashboard vents,

RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS

Date acquired	September 2010
Total mileage	85,531
Mileage this month	524
Costs this month	£889 (heater matrix, service)
mpg this month	35.3

petrolhead logic saw us hang on until an unseasonably warm April before getting a fix. It's a full dashboard-off job, and a bit too complex for us to feel like having a crack at ourselves – the bill for £589 is mostly labour.

R Sport also gave the car its first service under our stewardship, including a full complement of fluid, filter and plug changes, plus a new, rust-free coolant bottle to give the engine bay a shiny new lease of life. The cost? £300 in total, but the peace of mind that the basic ancillaries are fresh ensures that's good value.

Sticking a 17-year-old car in for a major service is sure to open up a can of worms, and more work is on the cards: the front top mounts and rear brake discs and pads all need replacing. And the parts can't be delivered in time for fitting before Spa…

Full story on the trip's thrills and (hopefully few) spills next time.

Stephen Dobie

Release: StoreMags & FantaMag

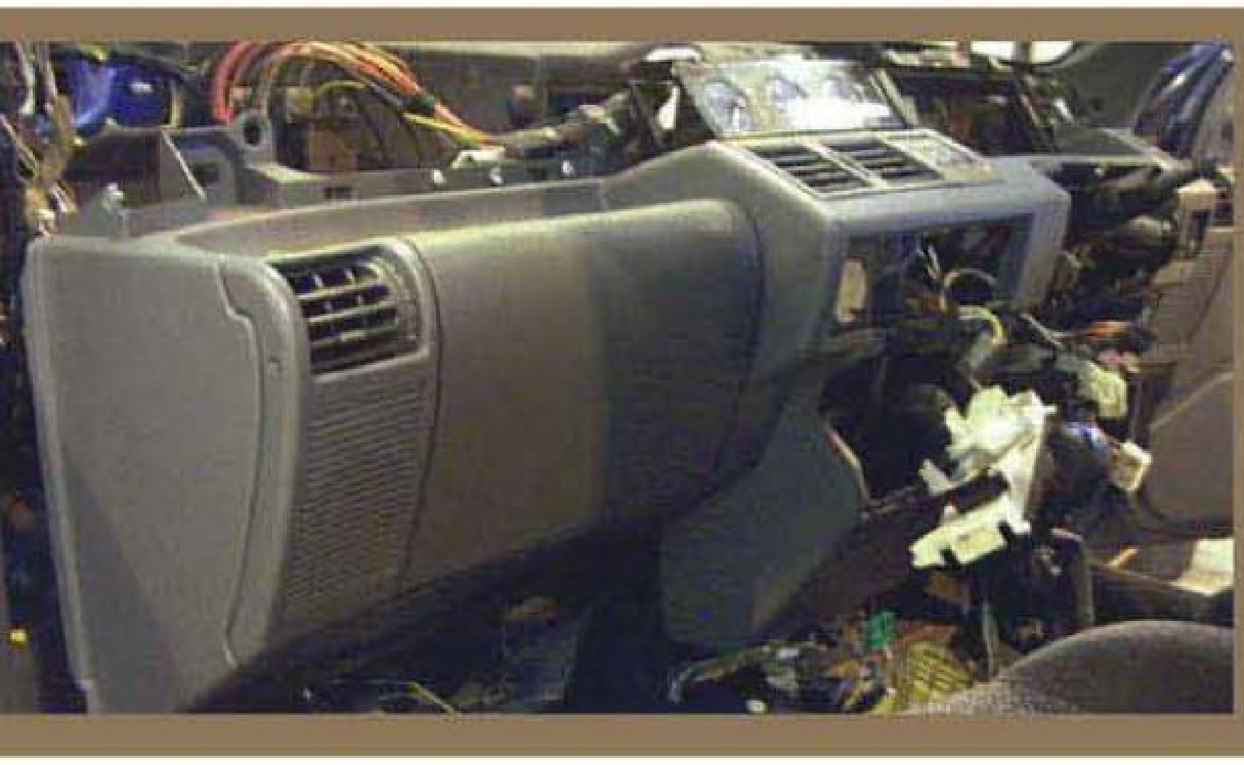
StoreMags.com

loving the WRX STI more than ever. Of course, the extra power would probably make even more difference if there weren't a dirty great wing on the back creating lots more drag…

Henry Catchpole

Left and top: the new wing, complete with stronger boot lid. Above: standard spoiler looks apologetic by comparison

'I'VE HEARD ALL THE "PICNIC TABLE" JOKES, BUT I THINK IT LOOKS ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT'



Yeti was put to work amongst a quartet of supercars for last month's cover story

I guess it's about time I introduced myself properly. My name is Sam Riley, and as evo's new full-time film-maker, I am here to fulfil your video needs.

evo is well known for its informative and entertaining words and beautiful photography, and I'm hoping to bring the same level of quality that the evo audience expects and deserves to the videos you'll find at evo.co.uk and in our iPad edition.

We won't be trying to be *Top Gear*, *Fifth Gear* or anything else being repeated on Dave. Put simply, we believe there is a real niche for motoring videos for true performance car enthusiasts, so that is exactly what we will be bringing you. That means you'll be seeing a lot more of Chris, Dickie, Harry, Henry, Roger and the rest of the team as we put you at the heart of the action in tests, track battles and races, report on the latest news from motor shows, share our experiences in our video diaries, and bring you all kinds of exclusives. Your feedback and ideas are welcome – feel free to email me at samr@evo.co.uk

Now, on to the Yeti. Another month has flown by and the Skoda continues to impress. I've been up and down the country on numerous different jobs, pushing the little 4x4 both on road and off, and apart from its not-so-attractive face, I really would struggle to say a bad word about it. It's quick off the mark, very comfortable at a motorway cruise and dares to go where other small crossovers fear to tread.

Take last month, for example. After topping up the Yeti's oil and water, photographer Matt Howell and I headed over to the Brecon Beacons for our recent turbo supercars group test. The Yeti served as our base for the entire shoot, as we managed to fit all our gear – including lights, tripods and a stepladder – in the back with ease. It was also our choice for tracking shots, as the load area is plenty big enough to climb into and easy to hang out of, while the ride managed to soak up all the nasty bumps of the Welsh roads and enable us to get some great photographs and video. What more could a videographer ask for?

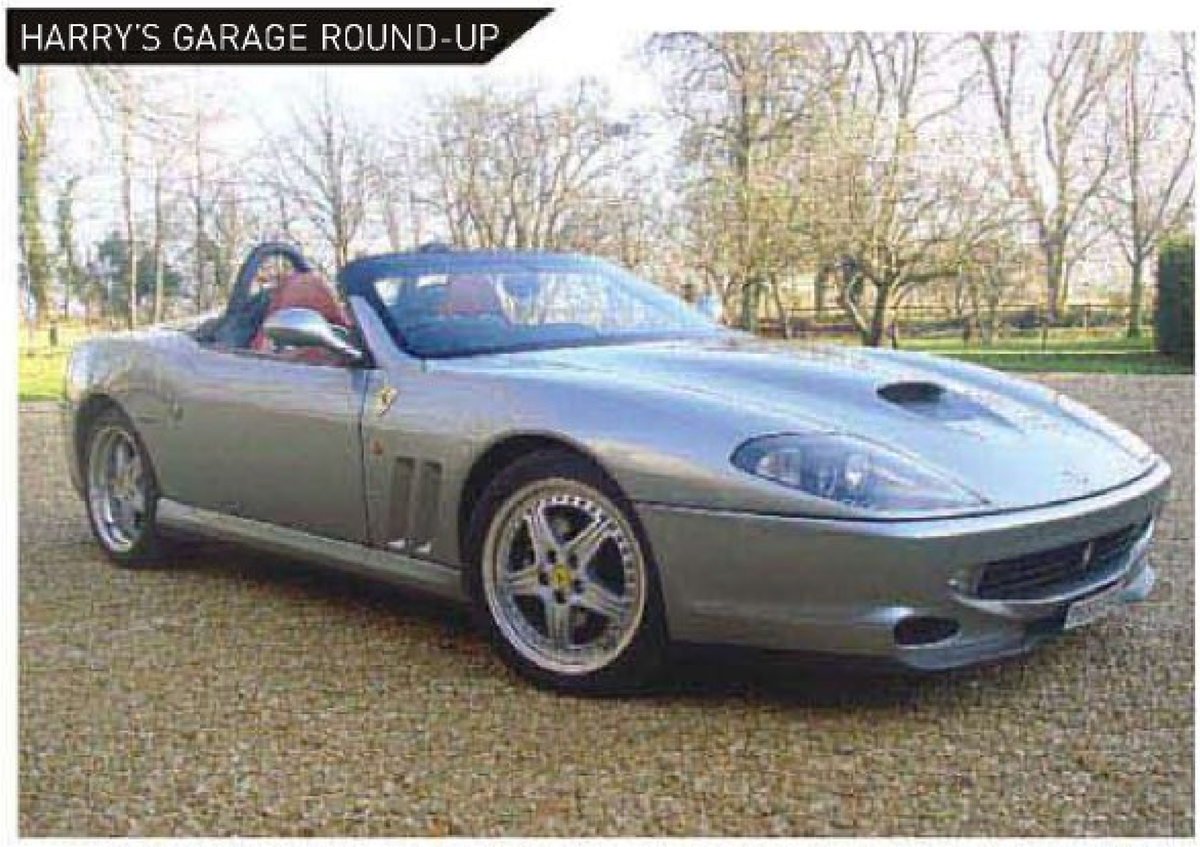
Sam Riley

SKODA YETI 1.8 TSI

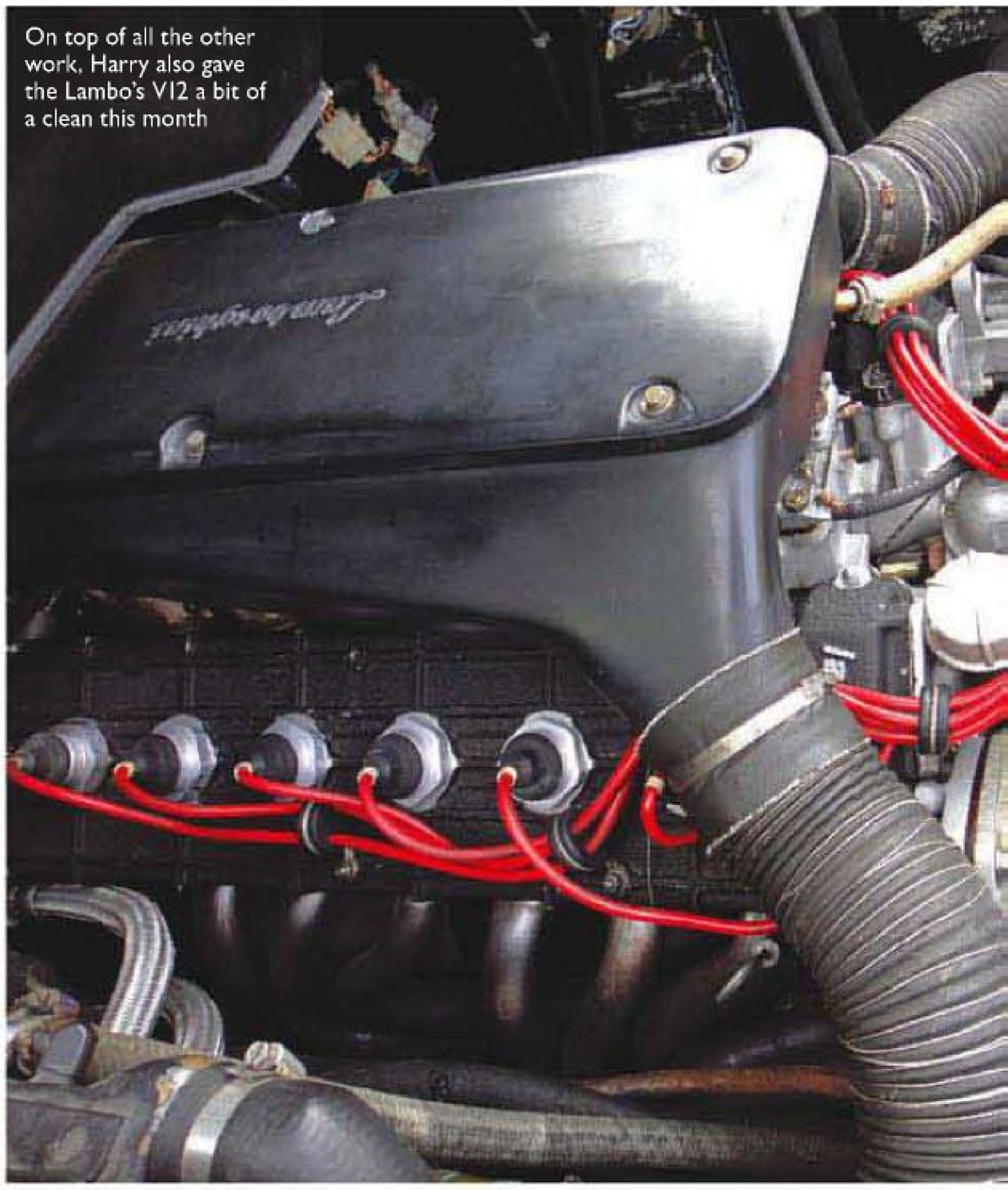
Date acquired	July 2010
Total mileage	21,951
Mileage this month	1801
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	27.1

Pictures: Chris Rutter, Sam Riley and Andrew Cochrane

HARRY'S GARAGE ROUND-UP



Above: 550 Barchetta is out for the summer and will be taking part in the Mille Miglia



On top of all the other work, Harry also gave the Lambo's V12 a bit of a clean this month

The beginning of April is like Christmas time in the Metcalfe garage, as it's when the 'glamour' cars get unwrapped and come out of their winter hibernation. Because I only tax the Zonda, 550 Barchetta, Clio Trophy, Lotus Elan and 340R for six months of the year, starting on April 1, I have to get everything MOT'd in time for this deadline. So one day in the last week of March, I book back-to-back MOT tests at the local garage, so they can all get sorted.

When the Countach's MOT was completed, I was surprised to get an 'advisory' pointing out worn rose-joints on the offside rear suspension. As I'd only had these replaced some 2500 miles ago, I didn't expect them to be worn out quite so soon, but when I spoke to classic Lamborghini specialist Mike Pullen of Carrera Sport in Sussex, he wasn't at all surprised.

LAMBO COUNTACH 5000 QV

Date acquired	September 2010
Total mileage	The speedo's broken!
Mileage this month	650
Costs this month	TBC
mpg this month	See above

It turns out I'd had standard rose-joints fitted (as supplied by Lamborghini) and these come with a nylon-cushioned joint which, if you drive a Countach in the way Valentino intended, wears incredibly quickly. Carrera Sport uses proper race-spec rose-joints instead, without the nylon cushioning, and they last much longer. The only downside is that they are a bit more expensive in the first place.

So I've sent the Countach down to Mike Pullen to have the worn rose-joints replaced and to get a service done on the car while it's there. He's going to lighten the throttle pedal too (by removing some of the carburettor springs) and reduce the amount of free travel in the brake pedal by adjusting the brake pedal rod.

I've also ordered some Pagid RS4-2 pads for the front brakes, which I'm hoping will dramatically improve the braking performance. I decided to do something about the brakes after taking E57 JAR on track recently at the first of this year's **evo** track evenings at the Bedford Autodrome. While the Countach has serious straight-line performance, the braking comes from another era. It's not a happy combination, especially on track. I'll report back on the results with the new pads. Oh, and I also need to take a look at the speedo, which has recently stopped working…

2011 is going to be a big year for the 550 Barchetta too, as I've had my entry on the Mille Miglia Ferrari Tribute accepted this year (each entry costs a chunky £5602!). The Ferrari Tribute ran for the first time in 2010 and allows any Ferrari not eligible for the historic re-run to still take part in this incredible road rally. The number of Ferraris

'WHILE THE COUNTACH HAS SERIOUS STRAIGHT-LINE PERFORMANCE, THE BRAKING COMES FROM ANOTHER ERA'

Below: Countach at a recent **evo** track evening. Right: being sent away for suspension work

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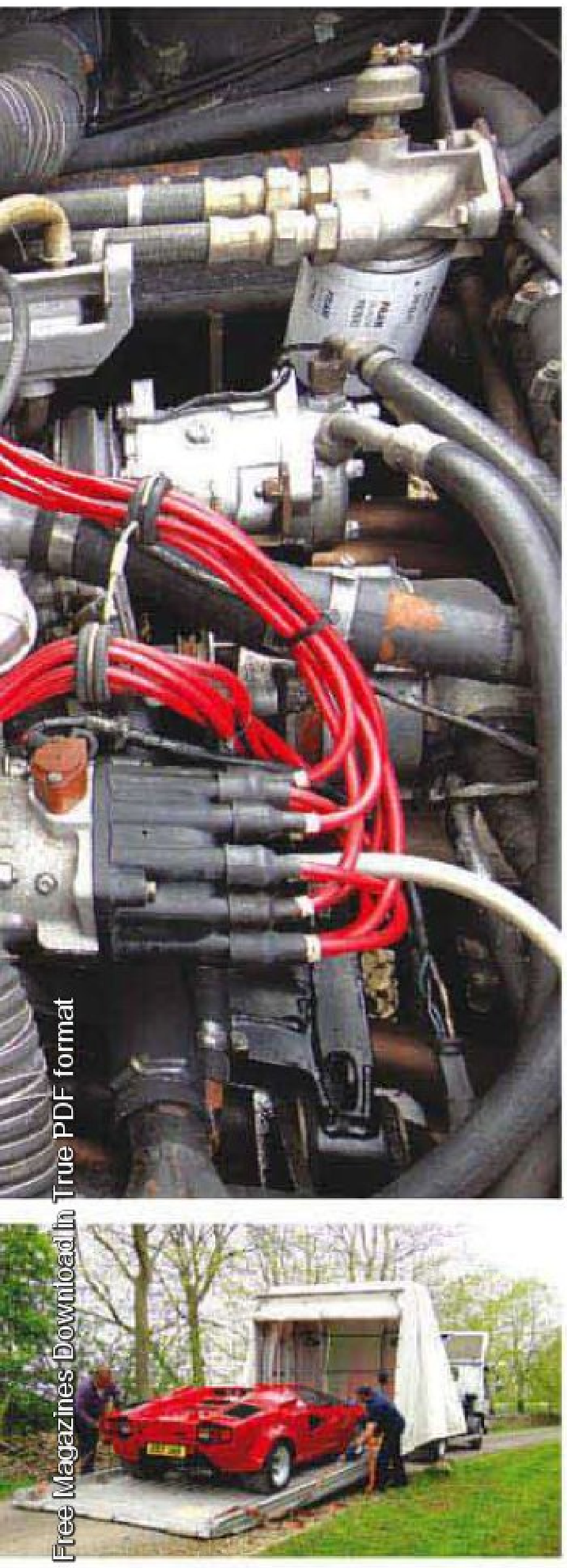


allowed in the Tribute is limited to 130 and, as I understand it, this year it was three times oversubscribed. Having a limited-run Ferrari (like the Barchetta) helps you gain an entry, so I'm expecting to see plenty of F40s, F50s and Enzos there too, as well as the odd 275 GTB and rare '60s California.

I need to get my car down to Brescia in northern Italy for the morning of May 12, ready for the start later that day. With over 500 cars entered in all and a wild 1000-mile route ahead of us, I reckon the Barchetta will be just about the perfect car to do it in, and I can't wait to get started.

Harry Metcalfe

RADICAL CLUBSPORT

Green briefly leads the pack at Donington in a borrowed Radical PR6

'RADICAL TOOK PITY ON US, SO I GOT TO RACE AT DONINGTON AFTER ALL!'

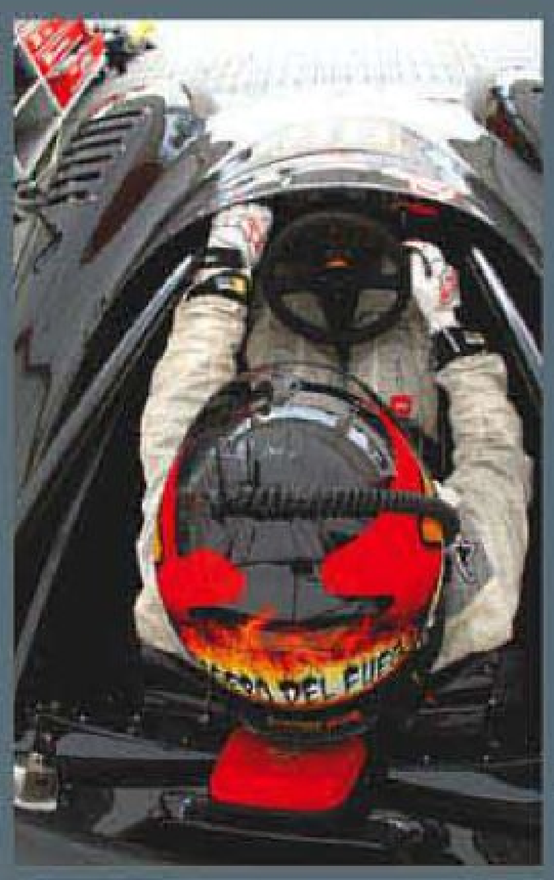
The opening round of the Radical Clubman Cup was supposed to be our debut race in the Clubsport that I bought with Nick last summer. The car had been fettled and a new wrap had been applied, so we were ready to go – we'd even sent off our entry form. And then the car was stolen and we've heard nothing about it since.

In normal circumstances that would probably have been the end of the story, but the guys at Radical took pity on us and offered up a secondhand PR6 for the weekend. I'd get to race at Donington after all!

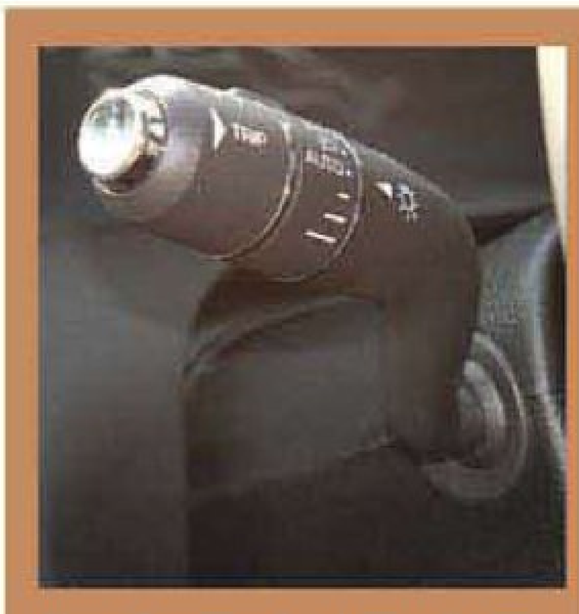
With 210bhp, bigger slicks and wings, the PR6 is faster than a Clubsport, so where I would have been fighting for a class win at the tail of the field, I could now run at the front and battle with the SR3s as well as my class rivals.

I used to compete in these in 2004, and it was great to be back. The racing is always incident-packed (as you can see from the video at evo.co.uk), and I had my moment of glory in race two, leading the entire 28-car field for a couple of laps. I couldn't quite hang on to it, though, coming home fifth overall in both races, but I had an absolute blast, and suppressing the urge to find the £20K being asked for this car is proving extremely difficult.

Roger Green



Above: Rog ready in the PR6. Above left: still no news on the stolen Clubsport



Above: Supersport's column stalks are too old-fashioned for Harris's liking

It's hushed, improbably fast and all-round excellent, but there are still a few niggles in the SS. Like the ancient column stalks that feel like they belong to a 420G. Or the ghastly hard plastic steering column surround. Or the rattle from the panoramic roof.

I mention these blemishes because someone asked me if the car really was a cut-price Panamera Turbo, and I had to say that dynamically it was. What separates them as objects is trim and build quality. The PanAm is a jewel, the XJ just misses out in those detail areas. Even so, it's a beautiful cabin – the seats are enormous and the massage function is nice and brutal on your lower back.

Fuel consumption has settled at around 20mpg. With a seven-speed 'box, this would improve…

Chris Harris

JAGUAR XJ SUPERSPORT

Date acquired	February 2011
Total mileage	6,700
Mileage this month	700
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	20.3

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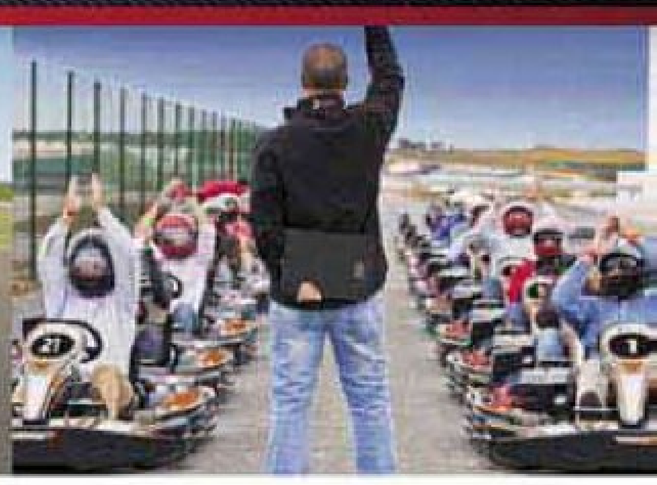

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PORSCHE 997 GT3

The Akrapovic exhaust is keeping children happy, and irritating a few adults. You can feel the 26kg weight saving, but I fear the noise is just too much. We might need to add some extra silencing – for the sake of mine and everyone else's ears. In the meantime, WHAT A NOISE!

Chris Harris

PEUGEOT 106 RALLYE

Like me, Chris Harris is a sucker for flimsy French hatchbacks, which explains his recent purchase of an early Citroën AX GT. He'll no doubt soon be challenging me to a duel involving lift-off oversteer and other ill-advised challenges. Watch this space (preferably from behind a solid object).

Richard Meaden

PEUGEOT RCZ GT THP200

The RCZ took something of a back seat this month due to the number of tests we had to cram into a short space of time with all those bank holidays around Easter. Still feels good getting back into it, though, which shows this really could be the long-awaited return to form for Peugeot.

Roger Green

MAZDA 3 MPS

A call to Northampton Motors had the MPS booked in for its 18,000-mile service the very next day. They promised a two-hour turnaround, and true to their word the car was being washed when I returned. In fact the service I received was excellent; the only downside was the £337 bill.

Chris Rutter

RENAULT CLIO V6

I love the Clio. I love its loopiness, its edgy handling, its dangerous image. However, I really am liking the prices of 996 GT2s at the moment – another car built seemingly for the sole purpose of hurting people. What shall I do? Comments to the usual address…

Nick Trott

fastfleet@evo.co.uk

Got one of the models featured on our fleet? We'd love to hear about your experiences.

VAUXHALL INSIGNIA VXR

Date acquired	June 2010
Total mileage	20,620
Mileage this month	1450
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	24.6

The wobble through the steering under braking that had become noticeable at around 18,000 miles finally forced me to book the Insignia in to our local Vauxhall dealer, York Ward & Rowlatt of Wellingborough. I suspected a warped disc, but it was worse than that. 'You've got two warped discs,' they phoned to tell me an hour after I'd dropped the car off. 'And the pads need replacing too. We've priced it up. It's going to cost £1800.'

'What? Both discs? Isn't this covered under the warranty?' 'Only if there's a material defect and if the mileage is under 18,500. There's no sign of any defect. And the car's done nearly 20,000 miles. It's just down to the way it's been driven. There are blue areas on the discs, indicating a lot of heat build-up…'

'But, but,' I blathered, 'the car's just been driven normally. The tyres lasted 15,000 miles and the pads only just need replacing at almost 20,000. That does not suggest a car that's been driven especially hard. And anyway, it's supposed to be a performance model…'

'I'm sorry Mr Tomalin, but it's not going to be covered. Would you like us to start work?' 'No I would not. Don't touch it. I'm going to take this up with Vauxhall. I am not at all happy.'

And with that I hung up. When I'd calmed down a bit, a couple of hours later, I rang back. They were nice as pie, said they understood my unhappiness and had lodged a case with Customer Care. So I called Customer Care to make my case and they listened patiently and promised to investigate and call me back. They didn't, so a couple of days later I called them again. There was nothing doing. I was going to have to pay up.

'I SUSPECTED A WARPED DISC, BUT IT WAS WORSE THAN THAT…'

At which stage I did something not entirely ethical but, given the magazine's limited budget, I hope understandable – I called the Vauxhall press office. A couple of hours later they called back with a breakthrough – apparently just a few days earlier a technical bulletin had been issued concerning the Insignia VXR's brakes. The lateral guides for the pads were prone to sticking if they weren't lubricated, causing heat build-up. Provided the mileage did not exceed 20,000, damaged discs (and pads) would be replaced.

And so the VXR went back to YW&R a few days later and had a brand spanking new pair of cross-drilled and ventilated discs and new pads fitted, all under warranty. Being a cynical old bastard, I suspected special treatment, but Vauxhall assures me that in the same circumstances they'd honour the warranty for any Insignia VXR owner. And I'm happy to report that the big blue bus is back to its very best – which is very good indeed.

Peter Tomalin

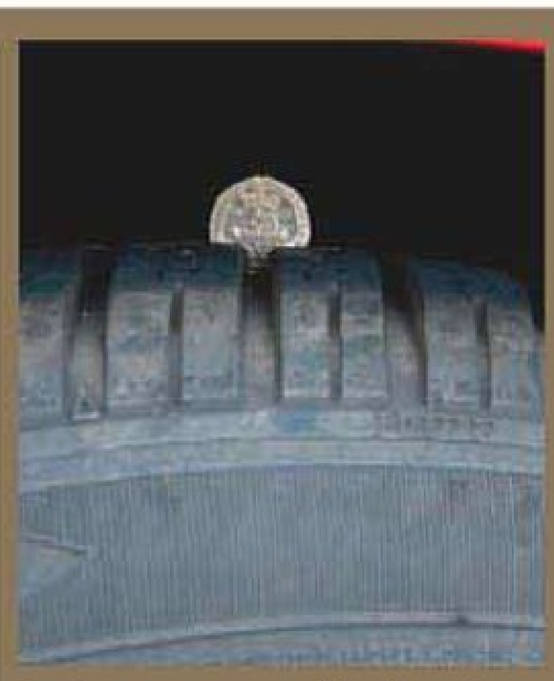
With temperatures creeping into double figures, it was time to refit the Infiniti's summer rubber. The Dunlop SP Winter Sport 3D tyres the G37S has worn since November were just the ticket on cold and/or wet roads. But, inevitably, on dry, warm tarmac they didn't feel so great, the rears *zizzing* softly every time I tried to pull away briskly, the handling lacking a degree of precision. So now the Infiniti is back on its Bridgestones and feeling much sharper for it.

This was the first time I've run cold-weather tyres and I now 'get' them completely. Their grip advantage means you can use more of your car's performance more of the time, and not have to tiptoe around so much. Also, as the rear Dunlops still had around 7mm of tread left after 8000-odd miles dealing with the Infiniti's 316bhp, it looks like a single set should last a good few winters, too. So would I fit winter tyres again? Absolutely.

Ian Eveleigh

INFINTI G37S COUPE

Date acquired	July 2010
Total mileage	16,429
Mileage this month	1227
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	24.5



Dunlop winter tyres still had lots of tread left after over 8000 miles of use

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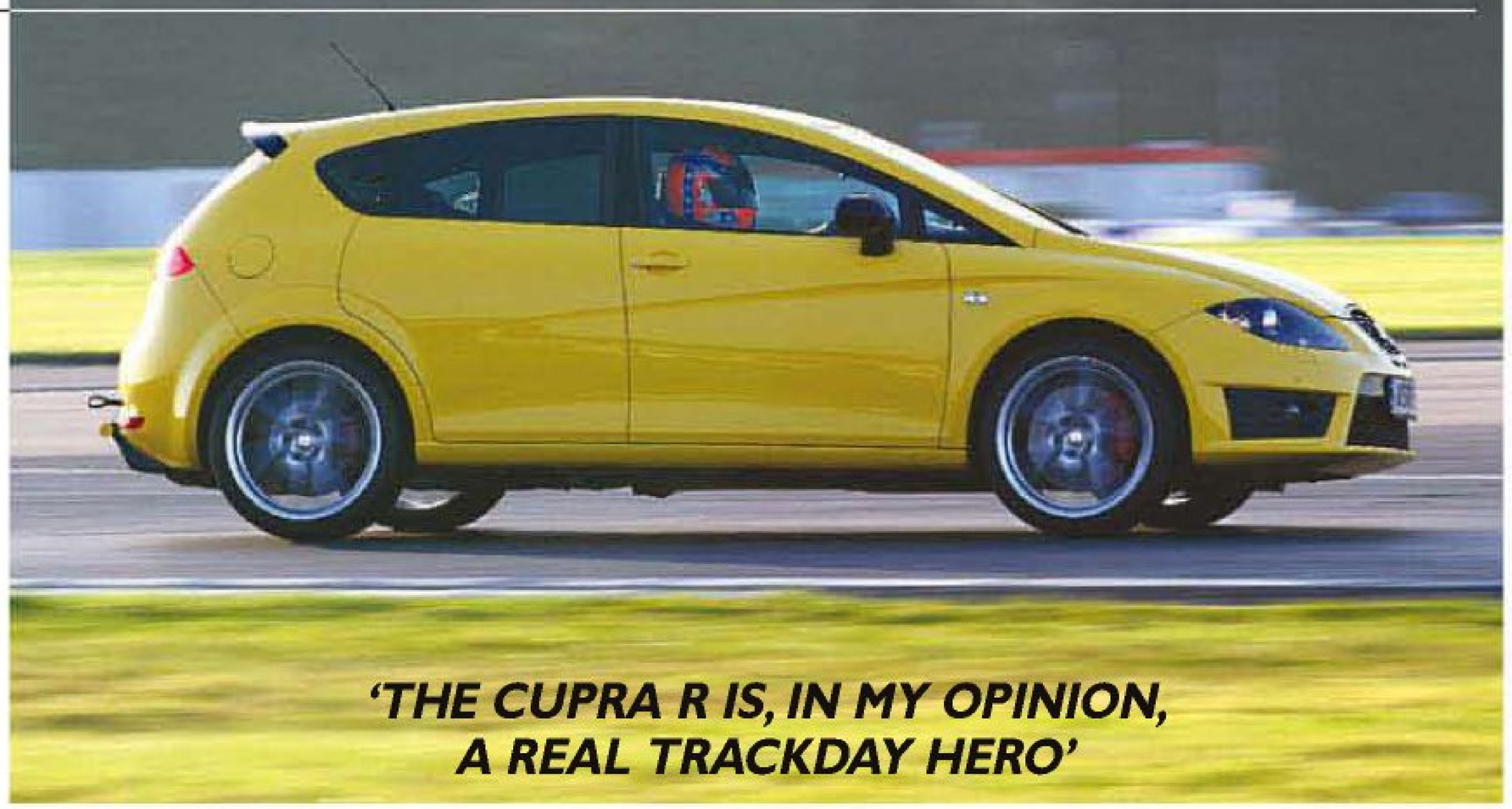
Fast Fleet



'THE CUPRA R IS, IN MY OPINION, A REAL TRACKDAY HERO'

RENAULT MÉGANE 250 CUP

Date acquired	April 2010
Total mileage	17,549
Mileage this month	1491
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	27.1

My year with the Mégane is nearly up, which breaks my heart as it continues to impress with its pace and poise. It's also a surprisingly good mile-eater, as I've discovered with a succession of early-morning airport runs. In fact it cruises so happily and quietly you really have to watch your speed.

It's practical too, with folding seats, rear parking sensors and iPod and Bluetooth connections. The interior quality remains better than any Renault before it in my experience and the paintwork has resisted stone chips admirably.

The RS and I attended the first evo trackday of the year this month. It was great to try the 18in Michelins and revel in their more expressive and adjustable handling characteristics. Unfortunately, and rather embarrassingly, this resulted in me getting black-flagged for 'drifting', but far from feeling contrite I took this as a glowing third-party endorsement of the Renault's abilities. It's a cracking car and I'll miss it badly.

Richard Meaden

I've been enjoying every aspect of the Leon so far and have sung its praises to anyone willing to listen, but when asked about its track credentials I couldn't comment… until now.

KS10 EFW was at the front of the queue as the lights at the end of the Bedford Autodrome pitlane turned green on the first evo trackday of 2011. With dry tarmac, fresh rubber, and 261bhp under my right foot, I knew the evening was going to be a lot of fun – and I wasn't wrong.

As soon as the tyres and engine were up to temperature, I started to build my speed and push the Cupra R as far as my experience and confidence would allow. Every lap the SEAT and I got quicker and quicker as I worked its grip harder through sweeping bends, maximised the turbo punch when exiting corners and began braking later than I at first thought possible.

The road testers always mention the

SEAT LEON CUPRA R

Date acquired	September 2010
Total mileage	11,796
Mileage this month	1211
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.6

Cupra's over-active brake servo, which, on the road, throws you forward with the merest brush of the brake pedal. But on track this characteristic really came into its own as I found myself stamping on the brakes later and later, confident that they would respond instantly and powerfully. They were particularly impressive at the end of the long straight, where they repeatedly hauled the Leon down from speeds in excess of 125mph without wilting.

The four corners that followed were interesting too, as the Cupra R's gearing and broad torque band meant I didn't have to change down a cog as I've had to in other long-termers.

As you'd expect, the hard ride that can sometimes be tiresome on the road wasn't an issue on a smooth track, and the new Michelin Pilot Super Sports provided ample grip, helping keep understeer in check.

By the end of the evening I'd used £60 of super unleaded, but it was worth every penny. I absolutely love this car on track – it's quick and confidence-inspiring, the seats hold you in place and it can embarrass many supposedly faster cars.

So now I can tell people that the Cupra R is, in my opinion, a real trackday hero. In fact it seems to be going from strength to strength in every respect. Is there nothing it can't do well? Well, yes actually. Hooking up my Apple iPhone has been a bit of a chore thus far with tangled leads and nowhere for it to sit. But flicking through the SEAT catalogue, I've found a nifty iPod dock that should make things a lot easier…

Paul Lang

Above: old XJ has just a single wiper, and Porter has found out the reason why

JAGUAR XJR

Date acquired	July 2010
Total mileage	36,035
Mileage this month	804
Costs this month	£11.49 (wiper blade)
mpg this month	18.6

Between fuel, insurance and servicing, the old XJR can be quite pricey to run. But there's one area in which it's 33 per cent cheaper to maintain than almost any other car: wiper blades. Like the 1980s XJ40 upon which it's based, my Jag has just one wiper and that means a new blade cost me £11.49 rather than £17.49 for the twin-pack. Result.

But why did the XJ40 have the single wiper? Screen too shallow for two arms swishing back and forth? Aborted plans for a Merc-style 'jumping' blade? I emailed a mate at Jag who revealed that it was neither. Turns out XJ40 chief engineer Jim Randle was a big Citroën fan and wanted his pet project to have the same novel 'car of the future' feeling that a single wiper bestowed on the CX et al. So thanks Jim. You've just saved me six quid.

Richard Porter

Pictures: Matty Graham / Chris Rutter / Richard Porter

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BUYING GUIDE

ABARTH 500 Hot supermini with retro looks for just £10K

Packing 133bhp – or more – the sporty version of Fiat's cheeky 500 is one of the most desirable small cars around

CARS FOR SALE

We all love browsing the classifieds, but what are the cars like to drive? This month we take an early Maserati Quattroporte Sport GT for a test drive

TRIED AND TESTED

Facts, figures and our verdict on every drivers' car. Plus the latest gadgets reviewed: this month a small video camera to capture your driving in full HD

YOU ASK, WE ANSWER

What's the difference between traction control and stability control? And why do some track drivers left-foot brake? Our experts have the answers

Abarth 500

The reborn fast 500 is reliable, holds its value well and is a hoot to drive. Here's what you need to know

Fiat Abarth 500. To a certain generation prone to misty-eyed, Castrol R-scented nostalgia, the instant mental image is of a tiny car with an exhaust note like an angry bee, scooting around Europe's racetracks in the 1960s. British Abarth fans would beat a path to Radbourne Racing in Wimbledon, where kits could be bought and cars converted. Happy days.

Today it's different. What you see on these pages is something else altogether. The reincarnated, xeroxed-up, modern-day 500 recreates and reinterprets the look of the original brilliantly, and of course it has been a huge success. That much was guaranteed as soon as the world saw the Trepiuno concept car that sired the whole 500 idea. 'Even my mother told me we had to make it,' said then-Fiat CEO Luca de Meo, 'so we did.'

The Abarth name, long kept in Fiat's deep freeze apart from occasional thaws on hot Stradas and warm Stilos, was the obvious tag for a hot 'new' 500. There hasn't been a real Abarth tuning company for many years, but there is nowadays a separate Abarth division within Fiat which handles the styling, the marketing and the engineering. It's all sufficiently corporate for Fiat not to have sought commercial relationships with specialists in past Abarths, instead selling today's Abarth-tuned models through a few chosen Fiat dealers.

But, with those scorpion badges and stripes, the intended aura is very clear.

Fiat actually sees Abarth as a separate brand, and the cars bear no Fiat badging. In these days of widespread turbocharging of small-capacity engines, extracting extra power is mainly down to electronic tweaking of boost pressures, with a freer-flowing exhaust to let the extra gases out. So the Abarth 500's 1.4-litre engine gets 133bhp instead of the standard T-jet unit's 118, but in the 500's case there's a bit more to it than that, because non-Abarths with petrol engines don't have turbos. The 118bhp T-jet is meant for bigger Fiats.

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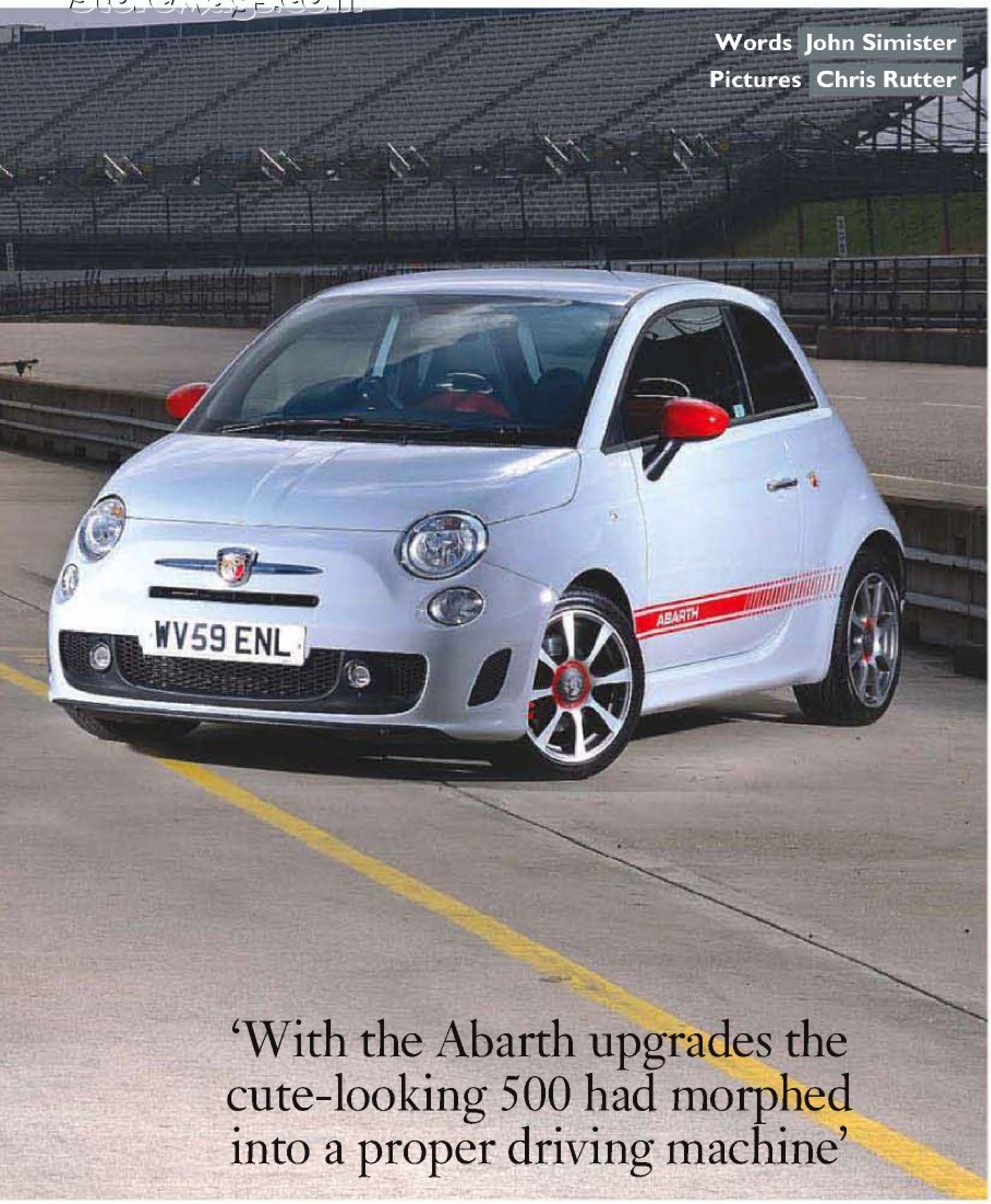
Words John Simister
Pictures Chris Rutter



‘With the Abarth upgrades the cute-looking 500 had morphed into a proper driving machine’

So the Abarth’s deeper nose with its broad air intake is designed to accommodate the intercooler, and there’s a deeper rear valance in similar style with a pair of fat tailpipes beneath. Inside, the seats are racier-looking with bigger bolsters, there’s a boost gauge in a dash-top pod, and the annoying change-up light within it becomes a rev-limit warning in Sport mode. This mode also sharpens the throttle response, firms the steering and adds 20lb ft of torque to the regular 132lb ft.

Standard wheel size is 16in, with 17in optional. The lowered, recalibrated suspension caused alarm bells to ring in road-testers’ minds when it was announced, because even regular 500s had been pretty poor at coping with UK roads. But we needn’t have worried, because the Abarth turned out to have a much better ride than the regular car as well as tidier, keener handling, despite retaining an oddly ‘digital’ feel to the electric power steering. The cute-looking 500 had morphed into a proper driving machine.

You could attempt to make it more so with the Esseesse version, which involved an Abarth kit (£2500 at the 500’s March 2009 UK launch) fitted to the 500 after registration (up to a year after, in fact). This comprised a chip remap and freer-flowing air filter to give 158bhp and 170lb ft, along with the 17in wheels, cross-drilled brakes and lower, much stiffer suspension. There’s no doubt that an Esseesse goes well, with the claimed 0-62mph time falling from 7.9 to 7.4 seconds, but the ride quality on British back-roads is truly dreadful.

A better, and cheaper, bet is to get a tuning firm to do the power boost and either keep the standard suspension or fit a less unyielding ‘upgrade’. Nuova 500, for example, can uprate the engine to 170bhp for £295. Now that sounds a lot of fun.

SPECIFICATION

- **Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1368cc, turbo
- **Max power** 133bhp @ 5500rpm
- **Max torque** 152lb ft @ 3000rpm
- **Transmission** Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive
- **Tyres** 195/45 R16
- **Weight (kerb)** 1035kg
- **Power-to-weight** 131bhp/ton
- **0-62mph** 7.9sec (claimed)
- **Top speed** 128mph (claimed)
- **Price when new** £13,600 (2009)

PARTS PRICES

(Supplied by NJS Motor Vehicle Services. Tyre prices from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT at 20 per cent)

- **Tyres** £86.82 each (Pirelli P Zero Nero, fitted)
- **Brake pads (front set)** £78.12
- **Brake discs (front pair)** £149.18
- **Clutch kit** £199.46
- **Oil filter** £15.31
- **Air filter (non-Esseesse)** £26.38
- **Exhaust system, cat-back, OE** £545.20
- **Catalyst, OE** £964.13

SERVICING

(Prices supplied by NJS, using Fiat Selenia oil)

- **9000-mile oil-change service** £112.80
- **18,000-mile service** £270.00
- **36,000-mile service, including brake fluid, air filter and pollen filter** £330.00
- **Cambelt change** £218.40

WHAT TO PAY

Abarth 500s are always in demand. Low-mileage Esseesses with plentiful options are being offered at more than the £16,655 new list price, and very recent non-Esseesse cars also seem to be suffering near-zero depreciation.

You’ll be lucky to find any Abarth 500 under £10K, while at the other extreme there are zero-mile examples of the Abarth 695 Tributo Ferrari, with 178bhp and a double-clutch gearbox, at an astonishing £40,000. The list price for the 152 RHD cars was £29,600…

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£12,490

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£12,995

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CHECKPOINTS

The message we got from the specialists we talked to is that the Abarth 500 is a well-built, reliable, durable car. Fact. 'We've seen no real problems with Abarths at all,' says Neil Smith at Italian-car specialist NJS Motor Vehicle Services in Pershore, 'and they are very well built.' Nigel Bennett at tuning specialist Nuova 500 Shop in Leamington Spa concurs: 'The build quality is far above anything Fiat ever did before. We've had a 500 Cup car with a wide body which has done 140,000 miles in two years, and nothing has gone wrong with it.'

Engine

The engine is a development of the old Fiat FIRE engine, the first to be built automatically by robots, and the tough block has changed little. There appear to be no recurring problems with it and it demands little attention – official service intervals are a massive 18,000 miles. 'Most people specify an intermediate oil change at 9000, which we recommend,' says Smith. A little oil usage between changes is normal.

Tuning upgrades are popular; 'We've done 70 Abarths so far,' says Bennett, 'and because we don't have to worry about worldwide emissions standards like the manufacturers do, we can create a more linear torque delivery and make the engine less peaky.'

> 'It's well-built, reliable and durable'

Transmission

No problems here. The gearbox and driveshafts have proved durable in the Abarth's short life to date, and Nigel knows of only one 500 that's had a new clutch. And that was a diesel. A recent addition to the options list was a double-clutch transmission with paddleshifters.

Suspension, brakes

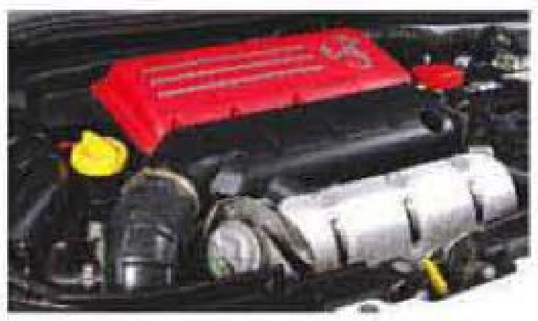
Again, the cars are too new to have shown up problems here, although NJS has replaced a few anti-roll-bar droplinks. Bushes, dampers and ball joints have so far proved trouble-free. The electric power steering is proving reliable, too.

Check which springs and dampers are fitted to a prospective purchase: standard, Esseesse kit or aftermarket tuning items.

Bodywork, interior, electrics

'We've seen a few niggly trim problems but nothing major,' says Bennett. 'The washer jets can fall to pieces and the outside door handles can work loose, but otherwise it's pretty robust.' It's worth checking that stripes and other body graphics are still firmly attached as they might be starting to peel off.

The Microsoft-based Blue&Me 'infotainment' system in early 500s wouldn't talk to iPods owing to internecine warfare in the computer industry, but this nonsense can be fixed with an adaptor. Later cars communicate as they should.



Above: turbo 1.4-litre engine is reliable. Left and right: interior seems sturdy too; iPod connection requires an adaptor on early cars

I BOUGHT ONE

Alex Gadd

Alex is British but lives in Holland, where he took delivery of his black Abarth 500 on New Year's Eve 2009. He kept it for 10 months, during which he covered 12,000 miles, including driving it to Rome and back via the Stelvio Pass and the south of France.

'Last summer I took my Abarth to G-Tech in Stuttgart for a chip upgrade and a titanium exhaust, which gave it 175bhp and 184lb ft. It became a giant-killer, a real cheeky chappie attracting the right sort of attention.

'The Blue&Me went on the blink and had to be replaced, and the Abarth stripes flaked off. The new ones were fine. Normal Fiat dealers aren't meant to touch Abarths, though. The standard dealer wouldn't even go near the Blue&Me even though it's the same as a normal 500's.

'It liked to eat front tyres – mine lasted only 10,000 miles – but the Torque Transfer Control [an electronic, understeer-inhibiting, virtual LSD] worked well. I used Sport mode all the time – why wouldn't you in an Abarth? – so it averaged only about 25mpg.

'It was reliable, it had no rattles, it held its value well and was easy to sell. We did an organised rally in Holland, competing against Ferraris and the like, and we won the whole thing…'

USEFUL CONTACTS

- **www.abarthcars.co.uk** *(official website)*
- **www.nuova500shop.com** *(tuning)*
- **www.njsalfaromeo.co.uk** *(parts and service)*
- **www.abarthforum.co.uk** *(Abarth forum)*
- **www.fiatforum.com/500** *(500 forum)*

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■ ***Max torque*** 333lb ft @ 4500rpm ■ ***0-62mph*** 5.2sec ■ ***Top speed*** 171mph

The Sport GT version of Maserati's four-door arrived in 2006, distinguished by vast, 20in seven-spoke alloys, smeared in the lowest of low-profile Pirelli rubber. Beneath the Pininfarina-penned lines was the same 4.2 V8 and six-speed paddle-shift transaxle gearbox, but the latter was quicker-shifting, while the Skyhook adaptive damping had also been tweaked and there was a more vocal exhaust.

This late 2006 example in Nero Carbonio (metallic black) looks terrific, and inside it's a classy blend of black leather with carbon trim in place of the standard car's wood veneer. The Ferrari-based V8 has a wonderfully throaty bark and there's a real sense of occasion about it. Performance is strong, the V8 thriving on revs, and even in Sport mode the chassis combines a decent ride with genuine agility for a big car.

The most controversial aspect of the early Quattroporte was always its 'Duoselect' automated manual gearbox. In Auto it's just awful, taking an age to change gear and not doing it particularly smoothly. In manual it's slightly quicker-shifting, and you can smooth the changes by easing off the throttle, but it's still pretty crude-feeling and ponderous.

After denying its faults at launch, Maserati finally capitulated and introduced a proper auto in 2007, but an equivalent car with the auto will always cost more. This one, with three previous owners and a full, dealer-stamped service history, looks good value at just under £30K. As ever, you pays your money... **PT**

SUMMARY

● ***EXTERIOR***
One or two scuffs on a couple of the alloys, but the body and chrome trim are immaculate

● ***INTERIOR***
Slight damage to the leather on the console in the rear; otherwise first-rate

● ***MECHANICALS***
Engine feels and sounds wonderfully fit. Gearbox sluggish, but they were all like that

● ***SHOULD I BUY IT?***
If you're prepared to use the paddles, you might just be able to put up with the gearbox

● ***FOR: It's a lot of very handsome and characterful Italian saloon for the money***
● ***AGAINST: Are you really sure you don't want to save up a bit more for a full auto?***

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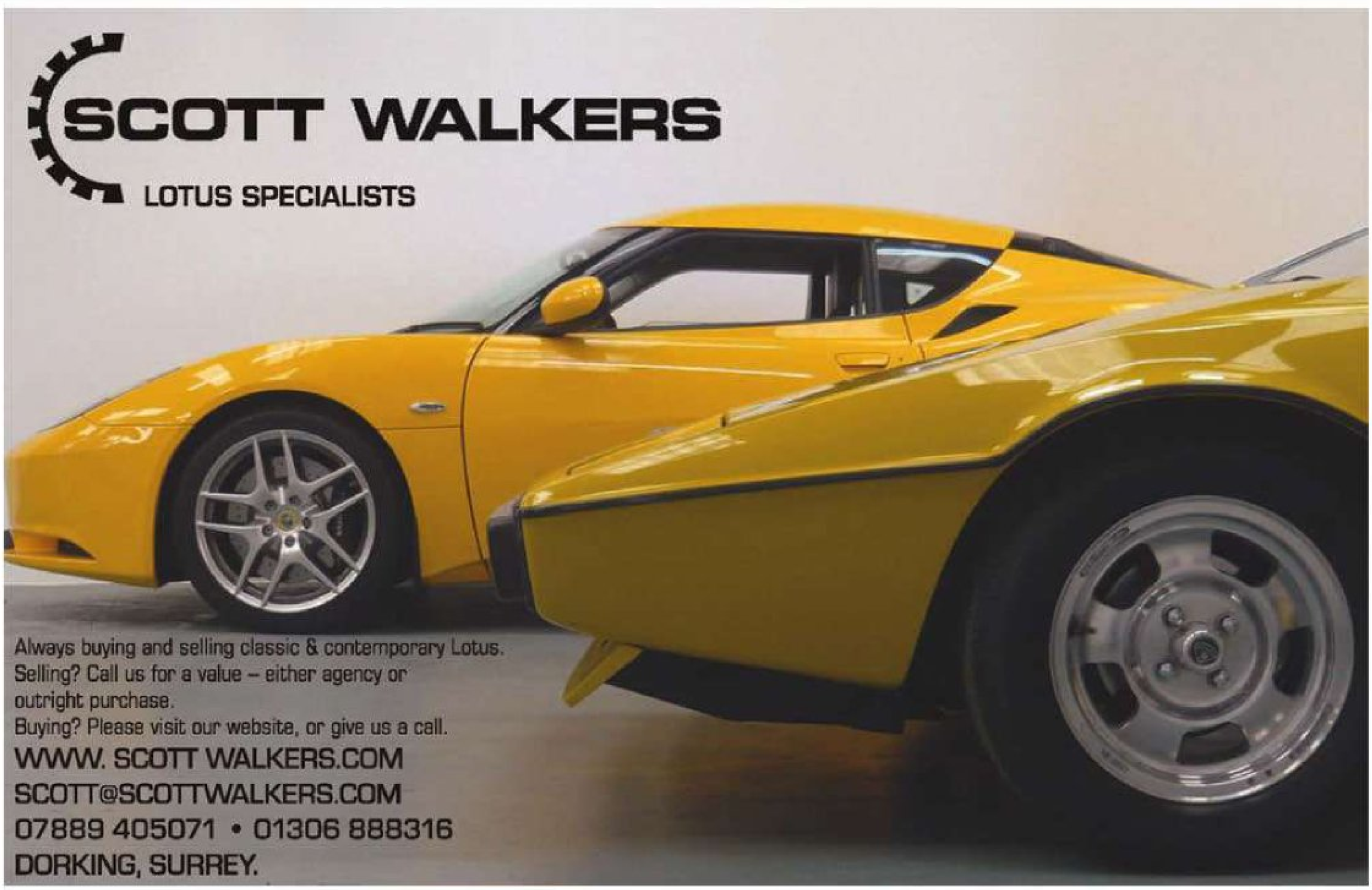

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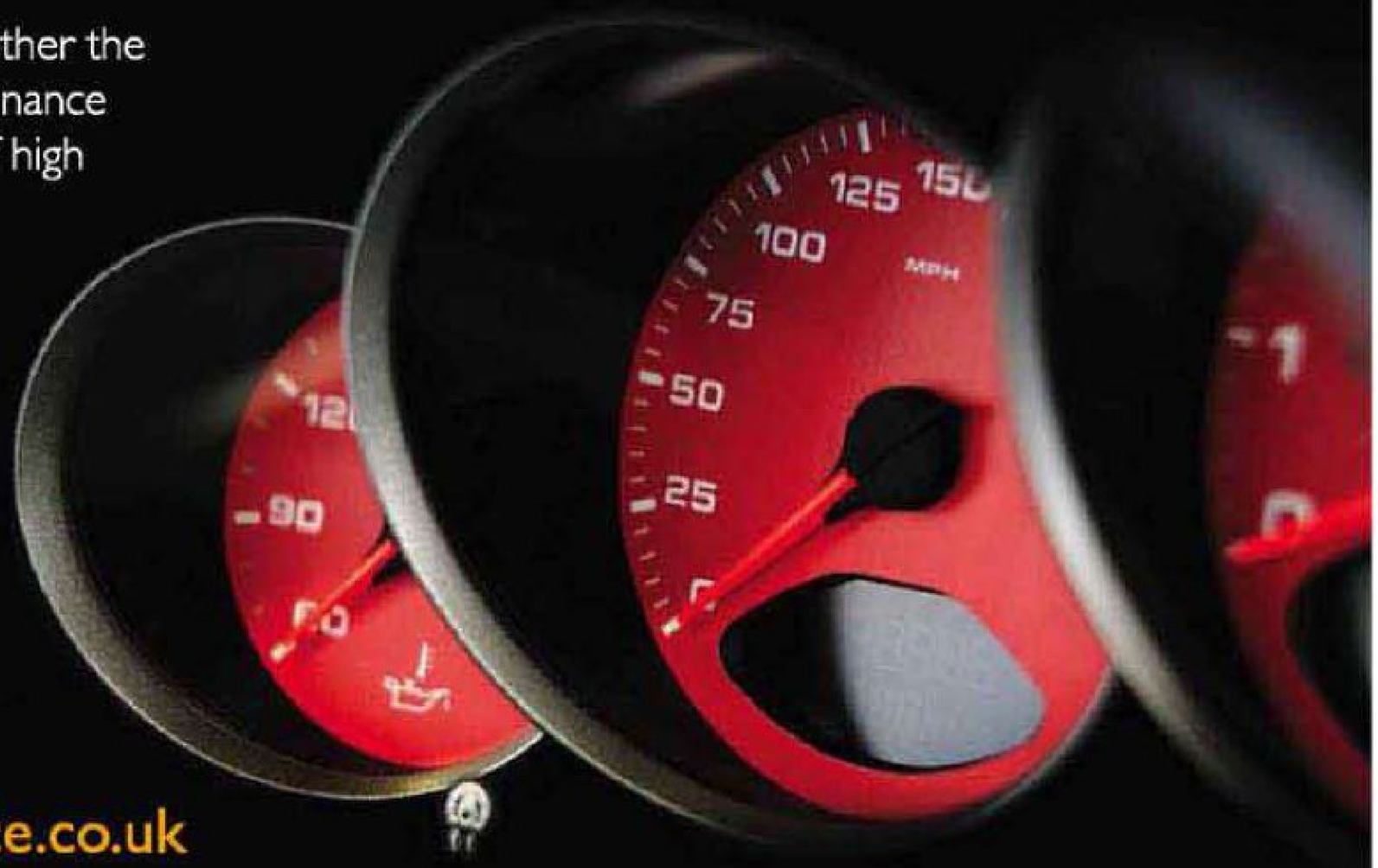

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PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS v CAYENNE TURBO

They've both got twin-turbo engines and share identical torque outputs, but can the super-SUV really hope to keep the fastest ever production Porsche within reach around Bedford's West Circuit? Over to **Roger Green**...

Okay, so predicting the winner of this track battle isn't going to take the combined analytical expertise of Adrian Newey and Ross Brawn. The twin-turbocharged GT2 RS is the most powerful 911 that Porsche has ever built, with 611bhp and a monstrous 516lb ft of torque, and as it tips the scales at just 1370kg, it'd be hard to argue that it's not the most exciting too. Or terrifying.

But then the thought of extracting a lap time from a 2170kg, near-500bhp SUV isn't particularly comforting either. Even though it's still massive, the Cayenne Turbo actually weighs some 185kg less than it used to thanks to the liberal use of aluminium, and apparently it returns a respectable 24.6mpg on the combined cycle. Somehow I don't expect we'll be getting anywhere close to that today.

It's breezy as our little-and-large convoy rolls into the Bedford Autodrome pitlane, but importantly it's also dry, with the temperature comfortably into double figures – vital given the GT2 RS is fitted with semi-slick Michelin Cup tyres. I drove this same car in the wet at Cadwell Park last year and it was more like an exercise in survival than an exploration of dynamic ability. To be honest, the first lap of the West Circuit feels almost as awkward. With no heat in the front tyres they refuse to turn. They also offer very little in the way of feel, and as soon as the boost arrives, the GT2 shoots off in the direction the nose is pointing, irrespective of the angle of the front wheels.

Three laps in and it's a completely different story. Turn in now has the clarity and accuracy of a GT3 RS, while the steering has the same perfectly weighted detail, but as the car ups its game, so must you, for the exquisite composure the normally aspirated car possesses is totally corrupted by the power that kicks in the moment the two turbos spool up. The rear

150 Pictures: Chris Rutter

SEE THE TWO PORSCHES' LAPS AT EVO.CO.UK

SPECIFICATIONS

PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS	PORSCHE CAYENNE TURBO
Engine Flat-six, 3600cc, twin-turbo	**Engine** Flat-six, 4806cc, twin-turbo
Power 611bhp @ 6500rpm	**Power** 493bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 516lb ft @ 2250-5500rpm	**Torque** 516lb ft @ 2250-4500rpm
Weight 1370kg	**Weight** 2170kg
0-62mph 3.5sec (claimed)	**0-62mph** 4.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 205mph (limited)	**Top speed** 172mph (claimed)
Price £171,468	**Price** £86,896

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GT2's flat-six (top) has 611bhp, Cayenne's V8 (above) 118bhp less, but it still feels seriously quick, even after the mega-911. Bottom: both cars have carbon-ceramic brakes – GT2's are standard, Cayenne's are optional; the RS also benefits from track-biased Michelin tyres

tyres may be sticky and wide, but they have a tricky job managing the torque, so armfuls of opposite lock are never far away. A long-legged six-speed gearbox that will allow the GT2 to hit 205mph adds to the demands, as many of the turns here catch you mid-gear, forcing you to choose a lower ratio and shift up before the exit, or go in a cog higher but off-boost.

The long, multi-transitional sequence of the Palmer Curves is a case in point. You steer hard through the first right with weight transfer from the braking phase still on the nose, then ease the car through the left, squeezing on the power and catching the slide as the turbos kick the tail. Short-shift to fourth before the corner arcs right, use all the road and nearly all the throttle travel as you reach the exit at 105mph, and try to catch your breath on the short 120mph blast towards Pif-Paf.

It's not easy, but it's such a delicious challenge that it becomes absorbingly addictive. You're always aware of the weight transfer, the loadings of each tyre, and you're then able to exploit all this in-depth feel to devastating effect. The resulting sub-80-second lap time puts it right up in the top echelons of the leaderboard. The only cars above it are track specials and the Gumpert Apollo, which itself is more racer than supercar, so this performance is deeply impressive. It also proves that you don't need a fancy paddleshift gearbox to go fast, and that it's hard to beat the challenge and rush you get from a big-bang turbo motor.

Speaking of which, there's another one waiting to be wound up. The Cayenne may be an unlikely trackday hero – it's certainly odd climbing up into the driver's seat – but the Turbo version comes packed with intent. Its engine also has a pair of turbos, this time strapped to a 4.8-litre V8 good for 493bhp and the same amount of thumping torque as the GT2 RS – 516lb ft. The fact that it still feels fast tells you all you need to know about its straight-line performance, and, like the GT2, it has carbon-ceramic brakes (although here they're a £5800 option). Thankfully they're mighty, hauling down the speed of this leviathan time after time with no fade. Eventually the pedal does begin to go a little squashy, as the brake fluid warms, and I later discover it was because the discs were glowing literally red hot!

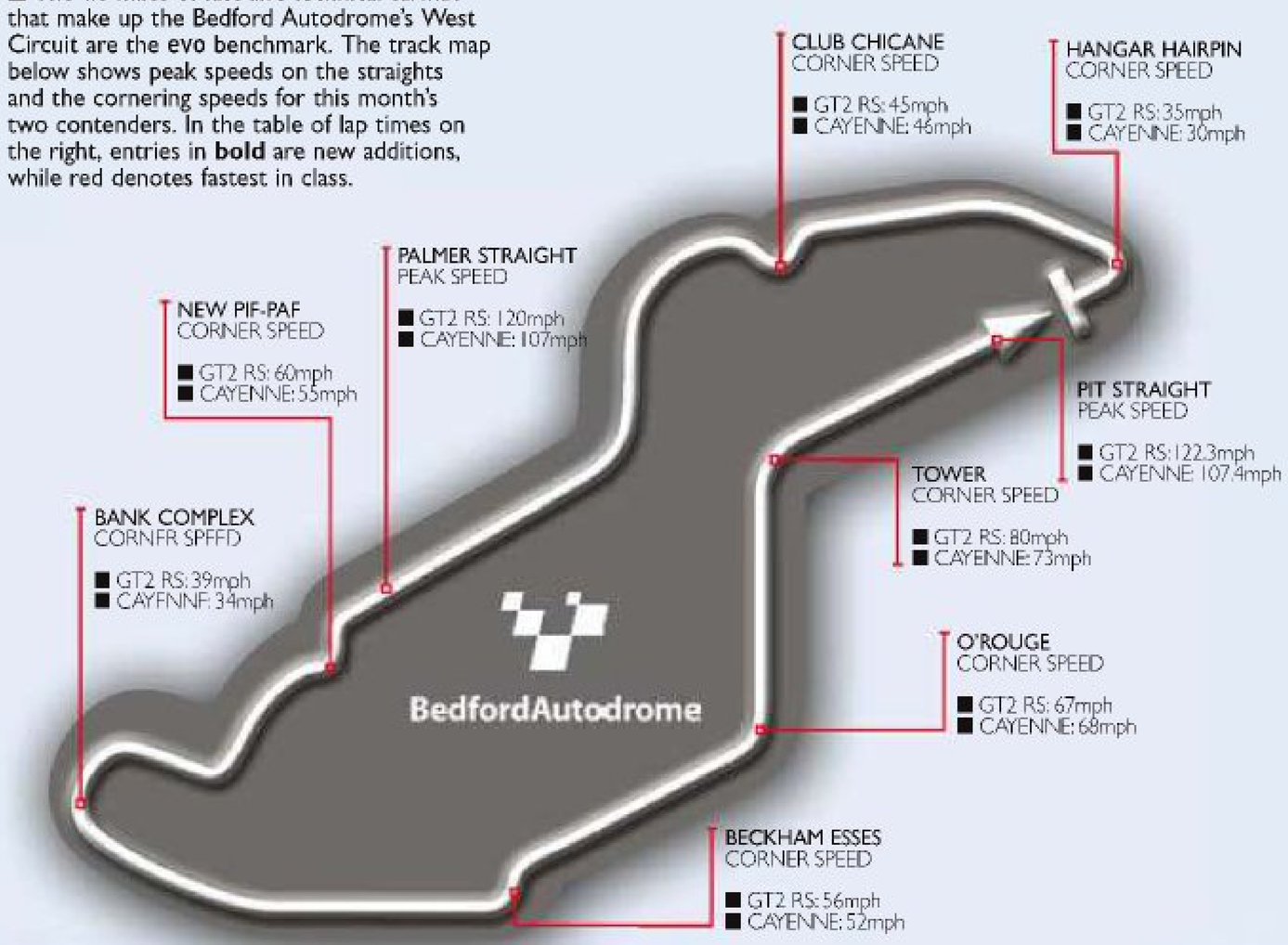
With the suspension set to Sport, the Cayenne remains remarkably flat, resisting both pitch and roll. In fact there's less sense of weight transfer than you get in the GT2. Of course, a big part of that is the overall reduction in feel, but the way it attacks the lap is remarkable for something so massive. It's more difficult to predict what it's about to do, but it never feels out of control, and hooking up a lap is both easier than I thought it might be and far less scary.

Our test car has the advantage of Dynamic Chassis Control (a £2421 active anti-roll system) and Torque Vectoring Plus (which increases steering response by braking the inside rear wheel and manipulating a variable torque split for the rear wheels, and costs a further £991). Together these systems rein in the potentially rampant momentum and find a barely credible level of exploitable grip.

It may be seven seconds slower than the GT2 RS, but the 1.26.9 the Cayenne achieves is incredibly fast for an SUV. In fact it's exactly the same time as an Audi RS5, just a couple of tenths slower than a Jaguar XJ220 and within half a second of a Panamera Turbo. Extraordinary barely covers it.

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 **bold** are new additions, while red denotes fastest in class.

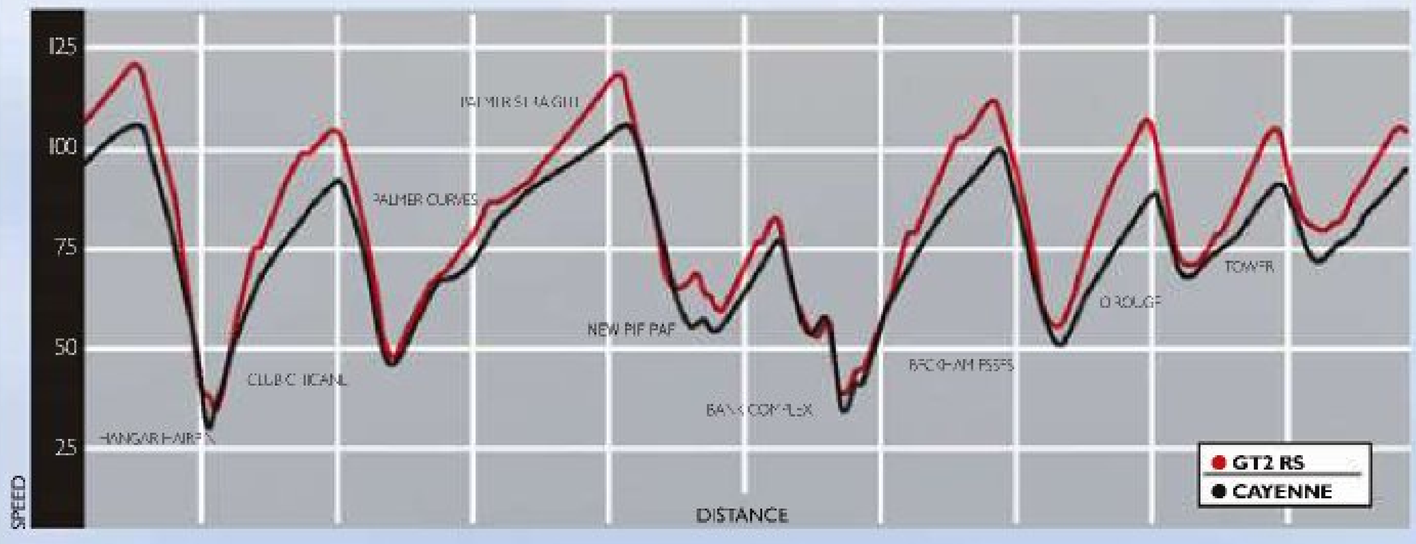


THE LEADERBOARD

	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
Porsche 997 GT2 RS	**1.19.9**	**122.3**
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
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)	**1.26.9**	**107.4**
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
Subaru WRX STI	1.28.3	101.6
Jaguar XJ Supersport	1.28.4	106.6
TVR Griffith	1.28.5	101.4
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
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1.29.9	101.4
Nissan 350Z	1.30.0	101.4
Honda NSX	1.30.1	101.3
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	1.30.4	98.9
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	1.30.8	101.8
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	1.30.9	98.9
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	1.31.1	101.7
Subaru Impreza RB5	1.31.4	96.9
Honda Civic Type-R Championship White	1.31.8	97.9
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	1.31.9	97.2

WHICH WAS FASTER?

GT2 RS 1min 19.9sec (peak 122.3mph) **CAYENNE TURBO** 1min 26.9sec (peak 107.4mph)



▲ Under normal circumstances, the Cayenne trace (black) would look impressive, but here it's somewhat overshadowed by the one for the phenomenally quick GT2 RS (red), which accelerates harder and achieves higher peak speeds. Note the closely matched braking phases, though, thanks to the carbon-ceramic brakes

'It's hard to beat the challenge and rush you get from a big-bang turbo motor'

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THE KNOWLEDGE

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* New entries this month. STAR RATINGS: ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car

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 Mégane 250 is the Clio's more mature but still thrilling big brother, while Mini's mad JCW still appeals, too. If you're on a tighter budget, the Fiat Panda 100HP, Renault Twingo 133 Cup and Suzuki Swift Sport (right) are all evo favourites.

	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	
Abarth Punto Evo	149 F	£16,667	4/1368	161/5500	184/2250	1155kg	142	7.9	-	132	142	-	+ Attractive and fun - Needs the upcoming Esseesse power upgrade	★★★★½
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	£16,745	4/1368	135/5250	152/1750	1145kg	120	8.2	-	129	-	51.4	+ So close to being a modern-day Alfasud - But not close enough...	★★★½
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 F	£18,365	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	★★★½
Alfa Romeo Giulietta 1.4 MultiAir	144 D	£20,000	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1290kg	134	7.8	-	135	134	48.7	+ Has the equivalant VW Golf covered - An Alfa for your head, not your heart	★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	£24,995	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2	+ Shows signs of deep talent... - ...but should be more exciting	★★★½
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*	★★★½
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*	*138/4000*	*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		£21,200	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	★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 F	£39,900	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	261	4.5	-	155	-	-	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above...	★★★★
BMW 118i SE		£21,280	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	★★★½
BMW 123d M Sport (5dr)	122 R	£27,170	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	£8485+	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*	★★★★½
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	£16,300	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*	★★★½
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 F	£11,005	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	★★★★½
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£14,095	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	★★★½
Fiat Bravo 2.0 Sport Multijet		£19,300	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	★★★½
Ford Ka 1.2 (Mk2)	126 F	£8545	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	★★★½
Ford Sportka SE	*084 R*	*'03-'08*	*4/1597*	*94/5500*	*100/4250*	*934kg*	*102*	*9.5*	-	*108*	-	*37.2*	*+ Big fun in a little package - Could handle even more power*	★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	£14,395	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	c£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 RS500	*152 F*	*'10-'11*	*5/2522*	*345/6000*	*339/2500*	*1467kg*	*239*	***5.6***	***12.7***	*165*	*225*	-	*+ More power and presence than above - Pricey (and all sold!)*	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	*139 R*	*'09-'11*	*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 ST Mountune	*137 R*	*'08-'11*	*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*	★★★★½
Ford Focus ST	*119 R*	*'05-'11*	*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 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	*157 F*	*'92-'96*	*4/1993*	*227/6250*	*224/3500*	*1304kg*	*176*	*5.8*	-	*143*	-	*24.5*	*+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Ultimate trophy for tea leaves*	★★★★
Ford Puma 1.7	*095 F*	*'97-'02*	*4/1679*	*123/6300*	*116/4500*	*1041kg*	*120*	***8.6***	***27.6***	*122*	-	*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 Mugen	*144 F*	*'09-'11*	*4/1998*	*237/8300*	*157/6250*	*1233kg*	*195*	*5.9*	-	*155*	-	-	*+ Fantastic on road and track - There'll only be 20, and it's a tad pricey...*	★★★★★
Honda Civic T-R C'ship White	*126 D*	*'09-'10*	*4/1998*	*198/7800*	*142/5600*	*1267kg*	*158*	*6.6*	-	*146*	-	*31.0*	*+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on standard car...*	★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R	*102 R*	*'07-'11*	*4/1998*	*198/7800*	*142/5600*	*1267kg*	*158*	***6.8***	***17.5***	*146*	*215*	*31.0*	*+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance*	★★★½
Honda Civic Type-R	*075 R*	*'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	£13,290	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	49.6	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	★★★½
Mazda 3 MPS (Mk2)	137 R	£23,155	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	★★★½
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*	★★★½
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*	★★★½
Mini One		£13,400	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	£14,780	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	£18,010	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	★★★★½

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EVERY PERFORMANCE CAR REVIEWED AND RATED

	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
Mini John Cooper Works	154 R	£22,320	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	£19,050	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	£23,290	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* ★★★★½
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* ★★★★½
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	£13,949	4/1468	147/6000	155/3500	1060kg	141	7.4	-	131	161	40.9	+ Price, handling, performance - Its looks are a little odd ★★★½
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 ★★½
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* ★★★½
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 308 GT THP 200	155 D	£22,445	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1412kg	142	7.6	-	140	159	-	+ RCZ engine in a practical body - Definitely a GT rather than a GTI, though ★★★½
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* ★★★★½
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?* ★★★★
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 ★★★★½
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	154 R	£16,810	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	*115 R*	*'07-'09*	*4/1998*	*194/7250*	*158/5550*	*1240kg*	*161*	*6.9*	-	*134*	-	*33.6*	*+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup* ★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182	*066 R*	*'04-'06*	*4/1998*	*180/6500*	*148/5250*	*1110kg*	*165*	***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* ★★★★★
Renault Mégane GT TCe 180	154 D	£20,825	4/1998	178/5500	222/2250	1320kg	137	7.7	-	139	178	36.7	+ Rides & steers well - Not much cheaper than car below, lacks its sparkle ★★★½
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	£23,650	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	**6.1**	**14.6**	156	195	33.6	+ Fantastic chassis... - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity ★★★★½
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	*157 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* ★★★★½
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	£15,670	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	£17,540	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	£17,020	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 ★★★½
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	£20,520	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	£22,160	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	£25,985	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 ★★★½
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	£16,260	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 ★★★½
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	*077 F*	*'04-'07*	*4/1896*	*130/4000*	*229/1900*	*1315kg*	*100*	*9.6*	-	*127*	-	*55.4*	*+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel* ★★★½
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	085 D	£20,145	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	£14,825	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	96	119	54.3	+ 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 ★★★★½
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 - Pricey. Lifeless steering ★★★½
Subaru Impreza WRXS	*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* ★★★½
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	£12,995	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1105kg	113	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback ★★★★½
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	£18,625	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared to rivals ★★★½
Vauxhall Astra 1.6T SRi	138 D	£21,570	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* ★★★½
VW Polo GTI	154 R	£18,790	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland ★★★½
VW Golf GTD (Mk6)	133 D	£24,395	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	£25,045	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	£31,095	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 ★★★★½
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	£21,945	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 ★★★½

evo ALL-TIME FASTEST SUPERCARS

THE TOP TEN OF SPEED – MINIMUM ENTRY REQUIREMENT 235MPH

Bugatti Veyron Super Sport 268mph

SSC Ultimate Aero 256mph

9ff GT9R 254mph

Bugatti Veyron 253mph

Koenigsegg CCXR 250mph

9ff GTurbo 1200 243mph

Koenigsegg CC8S 242mph

McLaren F1 240mph

Sportec SPR1 M 240mph

Ruf CTR3 235mph

Last year the 1183bhp Veyron Super Sport reclaimed the road car record for Bugatti with an extraordinary 267.856mph. Will it be beaten? SSC, the previous holder at 256mph, has uprated its Ultimate Aero TT to 1287bhp and reckons it'll top 270mph soon. Meanwhile Koenigsegg predicts that its new 1100bhp Agera R (as featured in this issue of **evo**) will hit an extraordinary 275mph. Time will tell...

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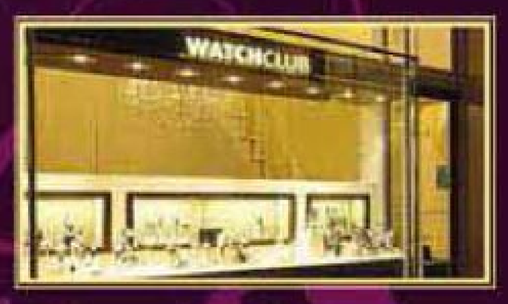

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SALOONS/ESTATES/4X4s

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 ★★★½
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 ★★★½
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* ★★★½
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* ★★★½
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	£149,995	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater ★★★½
Audi A4 3.2 FSI quattro S-line	111 D	£35,230	6/3197	261/6000	243/3000	1610kg	165	6.1	-	155	214	31.7	+ A good match for its German foes - An extra £2K buys an S4... ★★★½
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	234	29.1	+ 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* ★★★½
Audi RS4	*088 F*	*'06-'08*	*8/4163*	*414/7800*	*317/5500*	*1650kg*	*255*	***4.5***	***10.9***	*155*	-	-	+ *A leap on for fast Audis, superb engine* - *Busy under braking* ★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant	*105 F*	*'07-'08*	*8/4163*	*414/7800*	*317/5500*	*1710kg*	*246*	*4.6*	-	*155*	-	*20.6*	+ *414bhp at 7800rpm!* - *Everyone thinking you're married with kids* ★★★★★
Audi RS4	*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	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10 ★★★½
Audi RS6	*124 D*	*'08-'10*	*10/4991*	*572/6250*	*479/1500*	*1985kg*	*293*	*4.5*	-	*155*	*331*	*20.3*	+ *Looks and drives better than estate version* - *M5 still looks tempting* ★★★★½
Audi RS6 Avant	*116 F*	*'08-'10*	*10/4991*	*572/6250*	*479/1500*	*2025kg*	*287*	***4.3***	***9.7***	*155*	*333*	*20.2*	+ *The world's most powerful estate* - *Power isn't everything* ★★★★
Audi RS6	*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	298	25.0	+ Undeniably quick, relatively economical - A tad ostentatious ★★★½
Bentley Flying Spur	080 D	£133,200	12/5998	552/6100	479/1600	2475kg	226	4.9	-	195	396	17.0	+ 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	396	17.0	+ 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	393	-	+ 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* ★★★½
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	£27,900	4/1995	161/3250	280/1900	1420kg	115	8.0	-	142	109	68.9	+ A diesel close to its best - The Alpina D3 costs little extra ★★★½
BMW 330d SE	123 D	£32,540	6/2993	241/4000	384/1750	1610kg	150	6.1	-	155	152	49.6	+ More power, refinement and mpg - Electric power steering lets side down ★★★★
BMW 325i M Sport		£31,265	6/2996	215/6700	199/2400	1505kg	145	6.6	-	155	168	39.2	+ Stunning drivetrain, controlled chassis - Looks a bit steady ★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport	134 F	£36,900	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1610kg	190	5.6	-	155	196	31.0	+ As above, with added wallop - Still looks a bit steady ★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	£53,075	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1680kg	250	**4.9**	**10.7**	**165**	290	22.8	+ 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*	-	*31.4*	+ *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	£38,895	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1760kg	174	6.1	-	155	199	33.2	+ 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* ★★★★½
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 handfuls in the wet* ★★★★★
BMW X5 xDrive 40d SE		£47,420	6/2993	302/4400	442/1500	2185kg	140	6.6	-	147	198	37.7	+ Handling, comfort, refinement - Looks like a big X3 ★★★★
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	£57,380	8/4395	408/5500	442/1750	2190kg	186	5.4	-	155	292	22.6	+ Stunningly good to drive - Will you want to be seen arriving? ★★★★
BMW X6M	134 D	£82,140	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2380kg	234	4.7	-	171	325	-	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor ★★½
BMW 750i		£70,590	8/4395	401/5500	442/1750	2020kg	202	5.2	-	155	266	24.8	+ The ultimate drivers' limo - The back's a nicer place to be than the front ★★★½
Brabus Bullit	119 F	c£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	365	18.5	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off ★★★★
Chrysler 300C SRT8	*096 D*	*'06-'11*	*8/6059*	*425/6000*	*420/4800*	*1965kg*	*220*	*4.9*	-	*168*	*337*	*20.2*	+ *Looks, supple ride, composed chassis* - *Too much understeer, slow 'box* ★★★½
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* ★★★½
Ford Mondeo 2.0T Titanium X		£24,945	4/1999	200/6000	221/1750	1581kg	128	7.9	-	144	179	36.6	+ 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* ★★★½
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* ★★★★½
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* ★★★½
*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* ★★★★½
Infiniti G37S		£35,186	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1709kg	188	5.8	-	155	248	26.7	+ Credible alternative to its German rivals - Lacks their looks and kudos ★★★½
Infiniti M37S	150 D	£40,490	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1765kg	182	6.2	-	155	235	27.7	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals ★★★½
Jaguar XF 3.0D S	145 D	£39,900	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1820kg	161	5.9	-	155	179	42.0	+ Best XF after the R - But we'd still have the R... ★★★★
Jaguar XF 5.0		£52,900	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1780kg	231	5.5	-	155	264	25.4	+ 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	292	22.5	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Looks too discreet? ★★★★½
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* ★★★★½
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 lsd* ★★★★½

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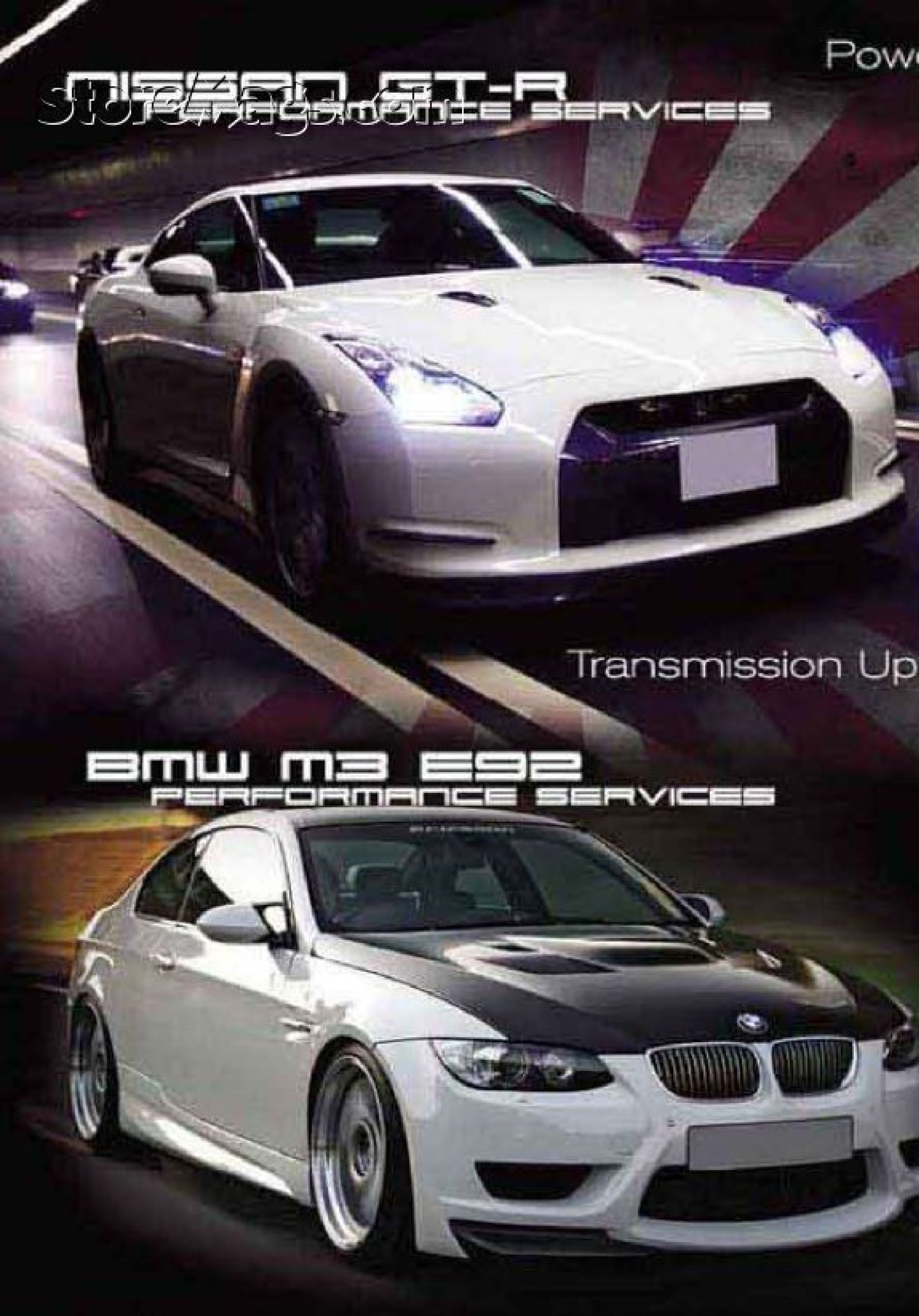

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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 diesel	148 D	£55,500	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1796kg	153	6.0	-	155	184	40.1	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as 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	★★★★½
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	£58,300	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	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
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*	★★★½
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	£54,600	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	**4.4**	**9.7**	**160**	312	21.1	+ Monstrous 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	£73,415	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 E63 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, cosseting ride - Speed limits*	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG		*'98-'02*	*8/5439*	*354/5500*	*390/3000*	*1642kg*	*219*	*5.5*	-	*155*	-	*23.0*	*+ Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills*	★★★½
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	£112,250	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2115kg	257	4.5	-	155	244	-	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	098 F	£163,580	12/5980	604/4750	737/2000	2260kg	272	4.4	-	155	334	19.5	+ God's own supersaloon - Unholy price and thirst	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	*073 F*	*'04-'05*	*12/5980*	*603/6500*	*738/5950*	*2220kg*	*275*	*4.3*	-	*155*	-	*16.1*	*+ Eye-widening wallop - Wallet-shrivelling thirst*	★★★½
Mercedes CLS63 AMG (Mk2)	154 D	£77,960	8/5461	549/5750	590/2000	1870kg	270	4.3	-	155	231	28.5	+ More power, less weight, more mpg - Pricey options	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	*099 F*	*'06-'11*	*8/6208*	*507/6100*	*464/2650*	*1905kg*	*270*	*4.5*	-	*155*	*345*	*19.5*	*+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	*104 F*	*'07-'10*	*8/6208*	*503/6800*	*464/5200*	*2310kg*	*221*	***4.6***	***11.0***	*155*	-	*17.1*	*+ Goes like an SUV has no right to - Gordon Murray will hate you*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz G55 AMG	092 F	£117,410	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	2550kg	190	5.2	-	130	-	-	+ Thuggishness, anti-style statement - It's a bit silly	★★★½
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*	★★★½
MG ZT 260 V8	*068 F*	*'03-'05*	*8/4601*	*256/5000*	*302/4000*	*1680kg*	*155*	***6.5***	***16.3***	*155*	-	*21.5*	*+ Lovely woofly V8, well-sorted rear-drive chassis - Thirst*	★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300		£29,699	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	£32,699	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	★★★½
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	£33,799	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	£36,799	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 - Points. Lots of*	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	*103 F*	*'05-'07*	*4/1997*	*366/6887*	*363/3200*	*1400kg*	*266*	*3.9*	-	*157*	-	-	*+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food*	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	*055 F*	*'03-'04*	*4/1997*	*276/6500*	*289/3500*	*1410kg*	*199*	*5.1*	-	*157*	-	-	*+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up*	★★★★½
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	*057 R*	*'03-'05*	*4/1997*	*305/6800*	*289/3500*	*1400kg*	*221*	*4.8*	-	*157*	-	*20.5*	*+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money*	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
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	£77,453	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	£102,909	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	★★★½
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	144 D	£84,972	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	2170kg	231	4.7	-	173	270	24.6	+ Greener, faster, better - Odd rear styling, numb steering	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
Range Rover Sport V8 S'chgd	135 D	£66,395	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	★★★½
Range Rover V8 Supercharged	134 D	£85,695	8/5000	503/6000	461/2000	2710kg	189	5.9	-	140	348	19.0	+ Fast, comfortable, luxurious - Big, heavy, thirsty	★★★½
Rolls-Royce Ghost	140 D	£200,500	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2435kg	235	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ More sporting, more affordable Rolls-Royce - But it still costs £196,300	★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 F	£285,200	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2550kg	181	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st Century - The roads are barely big enough	★★★★
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	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
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 tight 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?*	★★★★½
Subaru Imp'a 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*	★★★★½
*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*	★★★★½
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	£32,990	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 GTS	156 D	£49,500	8/6162	425/6000	406/4600	1831kg	236	4.9	-	155	324	18.6	+ Oversteery and characterful - It's very nearly M3 saloon money	★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 Supercharged	*113 R*	*'07-'11*	*8/5967*	*533/6000*	*568/4400*	*1831kg*	*296*	*4.5*	-	*180*	-	-	*+ The Lotus Carlton reinvented - Doesn't have polish of best Europeans*	★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	*148 F*	*'09*	*8/6162*	*564/6000*	*527/4000*	*1866kg*	*307*	***4.6***	***10.7***	*155*	-	-	*+ A tauter VXR8. Bonkers pace, brilliant noise - Gearchange still rubbish*	★★★★½
VW Phaeton W12	046 D	£81,235	12/5998	444/6050	413/2750	2240kg	201	6.1	-	155	348	19.5	+ Techno masterpiece that works - Seventy-eight grand for a VW!	★★★
VW Passat R36	*120 D*	*'08*	*6/3597*	*296/6600*	*258/2400*	*1689kg*	*178*	*5.6*	-	*155*	*227*	*26.9*	*+ On paper a poor man's RS4 - You'd rather have a secondhand RS4*	★★★½

evo TRACKDAY HEROES

FROM £16K HATCH TO £76K PSEUDO-RACER, THE TOP TRACK CARS

What you're looking for in a trackday car is added lightness, enough power to make things interesting, and a well-toned chassis with plenty of handling options. All of the following have these qualities in abundance.

10 Renaultsport Clio
If you can't afford a new 200, any Renaultsport Clio will do; 182 Trophy or Williams are best of all

9 Lotus Elise
Sublime, though not as forgiving as an MX-5. Exige and 340R variants for the hardcore

8 Ariel Atom
The newer the example, the better they handle. Supercharged versions are bonkers-fast

7 BMW M3
Best are the original E30 and recent E46, especially CS or CSL

6 Radical SR4
Or any Radical really. The fastest car on any trackday

5 Mazda MX-5
Great fun for novices and experts alike. Perfect intro to the joys of rear-wheel drive

4 Megane R26.R
The GT3 RS of hot hatches, from its roll-cage to its plastic windows. Just brilliant

3 Porsche 911 GT3 RS
The latest 997 takes the RS to another level, but any GT3 is an inspirational drive

2 Caterham Superlight R300
We'd be happy with just about any Caterham, but if pressed we'd have one of these. More smiles per £ than anything else

1 Lotus Sport 2-Eleven GT4
Our track car of the year 2009, seeing off even the Caterham R300 and GT3 RS. Absurdly pricey at £76K but the ultimate track toy

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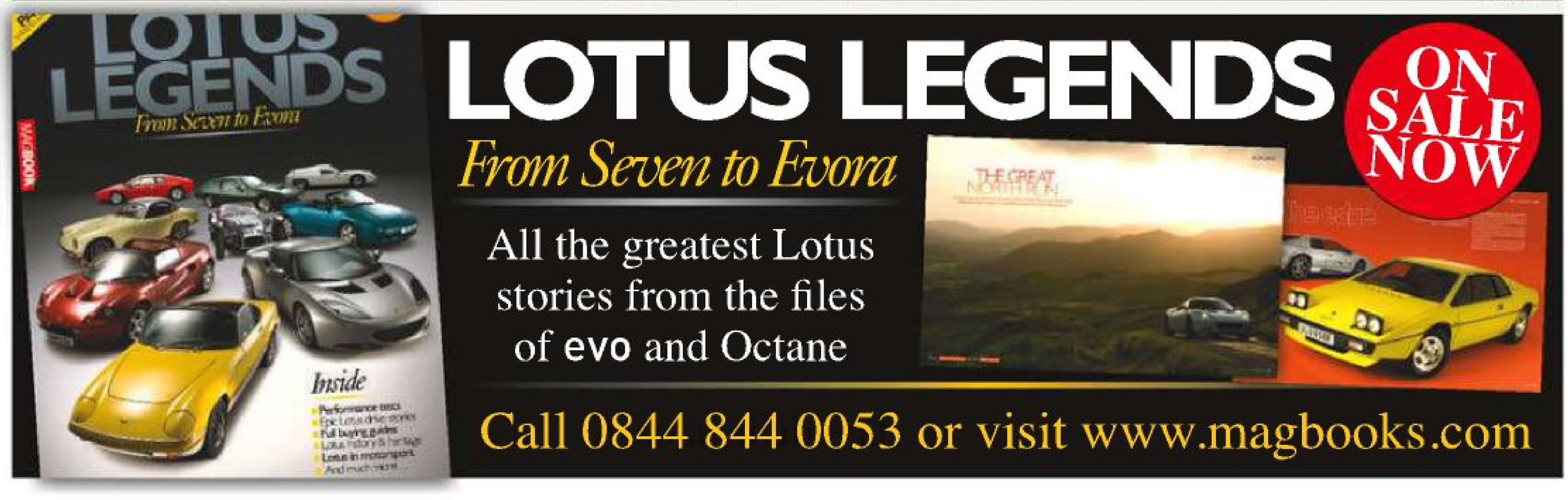
SPORTS CARS/CONVERTIBLES

OUR CHOICE Audi R8 Spyder. The Spyder boasts supercar looks, presence and performance, yet you really could drive one every day. And while the V10-engined car makes the more spine-tingling noise, the lighter and even more agile V8 version gets our vote.

Best of the Rest: The Elise is a joy, with just enough power, while the revamped MX-5 handles like it should again. The Porsche Boxster is getting on a bit, but still special. For the ultimate thrills, though, treat yourself to a Caterham R300 or an Ariel Atom (right).

	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
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 ★★★★½
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... ★★★★½
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 F	£42,000	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental ★★★★★
✸ Ariel Atom Mugen	157 D	£55,000	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten being made ★★★★★
Ariel Atom V8 500	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 1	*015 F*	*'99-'03*	*4/1796*	*125/5500*	*122/3000*	*496kg*	*256*	*5.6*	*18.0*	*115*	-	-	+ *Amazing styling, huge fun - As practical as a chocolate teapot* ★★★★
Aston V8 Vantage Roadster	130 F	£98,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Lacks real teeth ★★★★½
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	£134,240	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	389	17.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise ★★★★½
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	£185,152	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feelgood 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 ★★★★½
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* ★★★★½
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 Spyder V8	156 D	£95,545	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	186	337	-	+ Dynamically outstanding, sounds terrific - V10 sounds even better ★★★★★
Audi R8 Spyder V10	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 ★★★★½
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	£30,405	6/2497	201/6400	184/2750	1480kg	138	6.6	-	151	199	33.2	+ The Z4 has grown up... - ...and got fat ★★★½
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i (Mk2)	130 D	£39,400	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 ★★★½
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	*094 D*	*'06-'09*	*6/2996*	*265/6600*	*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* ★★★★½
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* ★★★½
BMW 335i SE Convertible	102 D	£41,680	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	£58,640	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*	*'06-'10*	*10/4999*	*500/7750*	*384/6100*	*1930kg*	*264*	*4.8*	-	*155*	*352*	*19.2*	+ *Composure, grip, power, comfort - Steering lacks feel at low speed* ★★★★½
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 ★★★½
Caterham 7 Classic	068 F	£16,650	4/1397	105/6000	95/5000	540kg	198	6.5	-	110	-	-	+ The Caterham experience starts here - It's pretty raw ★★★½
Caterham 7 Roadsport 125	105 F	£21,650	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ New Ford-engined model is just great - Bigger drivers need SV model ★★★★½
✸ Caterham 7 Supersport	157 D	£22,995	4/1595	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	+ One of the best Caterhams is less than £20K... - ...if you build it yourself ★★★★★
Caterham 7 Roadsport SV 175	140 D	£28,850	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	555kg	321	4.8	-	138	-	-	+ *The* Caterham for everyday use, R300 engine - Loses intensity of R300 ★★★★½
Caterham 7 Superlight R300	150 F	£30,000	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - Factory-built cars top £30K ★★★★★
Caterham 7 Superlight R400	105 F	£34,300	4/1999	210/7800	152/5750	525kg	406	3.8	-	140	-	-	+ R400 reborn with (lots of) Ford power - Slightly hesitant low-rev pick-up ★★★★
Caterham 7 Superlight R500	123 R	£41,000	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver ★★★★★
Caterham CSR 260 Superlight	094 F	£43,800	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	**3.8**	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays ★★★★½
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 ★★★★½
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* ★★★★½
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* ★★★★½
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 ★★★½
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* ★★★½
Ginetta G20		£15,995	4/1796	140/5800	101/3500	660kg	341	6.3	-	126	-	-	+ Classic looks, old-fashioned value - Vintage driving experience ★★★
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	c£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* ★★★★½
Jaguar XKR		*'06-'09*	*8/4196*	*414/6250*	*413/4000*	*1705kg*	*247*	*5.0*	-	*155*	-	-	+ *First Jag sports car for years - Overwrought detailing* ★★★★½
Jaguar XKR	*004 F*	*'97-'06*	*8/3996*	*370/6150*	*387/3600*	*1750kg*	*215*	***5.4***	***12.8***	*155*	-	*15.6*	+ *Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to toupes everywhere* ★★★★
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 ★★★★½
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	£28,100	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	876kg	155	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ New 1.6 Elise is light *and* fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off ★★★★★



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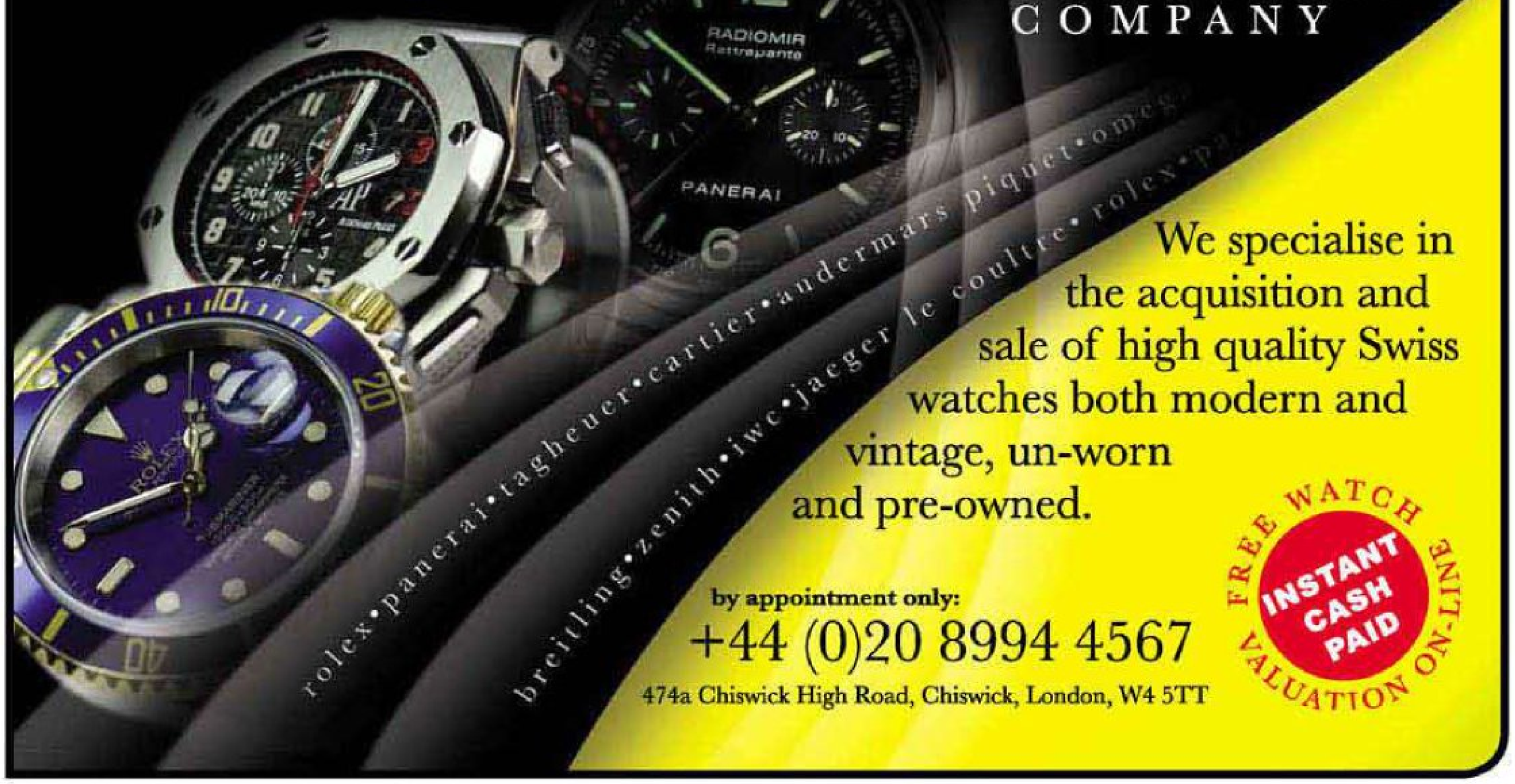

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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Lotus Elise R	068 F	£31,450	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	**5.6**	**13.9**	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrillsome Elise yet - Blaring 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	★★★★½
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 - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★½
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 - Pricey*	★★★★½
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 uninvolving*	★★★★
Lotus Elan Sprint	*126 F*	*'71-'73*	*4/1558*	*126/6500*	*113/5500*	*720kg*	*178*	*6.6*	-	*122*	-	-	*+ Sensational chassis, properly quick - Affording a mint one*	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,200	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	★★★★½
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		£17,975	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	£21,120	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1173kg	144	7.6	-	132	181	37.2	+ Handles brilliantly again - Less than macho image	★★★★½
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*	★★★½
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	£39,065	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	★★★½
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 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*	★★★½
Mercedes-Benz SL500		£81,655	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	£106,770	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 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*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG		*'08- '10*	*12/5980*	*604/4800*	*737/2000*	*2045kg*	*300*	*4.2*	-	*155*	-	*18.7*	*+ Humongous torque - Humongously expensive*	★★★★
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*	★★★★½
Mini Cooper S Convertible		£20,390	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	★★★★½
Mini John Cooper Works Conv.	130 F	£24,765	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	1180kg	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	£31,250	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		£36,572	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	£43,800	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	£47,843	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	£83,861	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1510kg	256	4.9	-	188	242	27.4	+ Minimal compromise, max performance - Questionable image	★★★★½
Porsche 911 C4 Cabrio	122 D	£79,572	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	£118,014	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	★★★★½
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 (996)		*'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 (996)	*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*	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
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	£332,400	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2620kg	176	5.6	-	149	377	18.0	+ Opulent throwback - Short of pace and perfection	★★½
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*	★★★½
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*	★★★★½
TVR T350T	*067 D*	*'04-'07*	*6/3605*	*350/7200*	*290/5500*	*1100kg*	*318*	*4.4*	-	*175+*	-	-	*+ Targa top roof, grunty engine - Lacks polish*	★★★★½
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?*	★★★★½
TVR Chimaera 5.0	*007 R*	*'93-'03*	*8/4988*	*320/5500*	*320/3750*	*1060kg*	*307*	*4.6*	-	*167*	-	*26.4*	*+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling 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*	★★★★½
TVR Griffith 500	*009 R*	*'93-'01*	*8/4988*	*320/5500*	*320/3750*	*1060kg*	*307*	***4.8***	***11.2***	*167*	-	*22.1*	*+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges*	★★★★½
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?*	★★★★½
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	*066 R*	*'03-'05*	*4/1998*	*197/5500*	*184/1950*	*930kg*	*215*	*4.7*	-	*151*	-	-	*+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability*	★★★★★
Westfield Megabusa	036 F	£24,450	4/1298	175/9800	102/9000	430kg	413	3.7	-	140	-	-	+ Bike-engined road-rocket - Not big on practicality...	★★★½
Westfield 1600 Sport Turbo	140 D	£24,999	4/1598	195/5850	170/2000	650kg	305	4.7	-	142	-	-	+ Very quick and composed - Expensive, and a little on the heavy side	★★★★
Westfield XI	*078 D*	*'04- '10*	*4/1275*	*65/6000*	*72/3000*	*498kg*	*132*	*8.5*	-	*120*	-	-	*+ Old-school charm - Old-school power*	★★★★½
Westfield XTR4	*068 D*	*'01- '10*	*4/1781*	*220/5500*	*184/5000*	*542kg*	*413*	*3.6*	-	*160*	-	-	*+ Mini-Le Mans racer - You wouldn't want to drive it there*	★★★★½
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	c£65,000	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1180kg	291	4.9	-	158	-	-	+ Engine, ride, build quality, exclusivity - Umm... '50s styling?	★★★★½

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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	CO2 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	c£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	£90,895	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	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	-	20.4	+ Aston's best V8 Vantage yet... - ...is one of the most expensive
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	156 D	£102,500	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	-	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only
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 DB9	146 D	£125,050	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 Virage	156 D	£150,000	12/5935	490/6500	420/5750	1785kg	279	4.6	-	186	-	-	+ DB9 gets DBS assertiveness - Slightly dated feel, seems heavy
Aston Martin DBS	142 F	£175,891	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	155 R	£27,130	4/1984	209/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	**6.3**	**15.7**	152	154	42.8	+ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game
Audi TTS	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	590/2000	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	£39,125	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	£54,545	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)	156 F	£117,630	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	193	295	-	+ 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*	*160/4750*	*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*	*'05-'10*	*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*
Chevrolet Camaro SS	148 F	c£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	c£40,000	8/6059	425/6200	420/4800	1877kg	230	5.2	-	160+	-	-	+ Effortlessly cool... - ...if you live in Hazzard County
Farbio GTS350	132 F	£76,375	6/2967	350/6500	308/5400	1066kg	337	4.0	-	170+	-	-	+ Genuine Porsche 911 rival - Needs final fettling
Ford Mustang GT *	148 F	c£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	c£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	£20,425	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	£36,636	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
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

evo TRIED & TESTED

GOPRO HD MOTORSPORTS HERO

Price: £299.99
Website: www.gopro.com

You've probably seen these little silver boxes strapped to various 'extreme sports' stars, the sort of people who spend most of their lives upside down, but we also use them a lot here on **evo**. The HD Hero is a video camera that can shoot in full high definition, yet is small and light enough to be attached to parts of cars that other cameras can't reach. The picture quality is fantastic and because it has a really wide-angle lens it's easy to set up, despite the lack of a screen, though you can now buy a screen as an option.

The actual camera is enclosed in a waterproof case and the 'Motorsports Pack' includes various sticky pads for mounting it to a crash helmet, plus an articulated sucker mount for attaching it to the body panels of cars. You can also buy a clamp for roll-cages, which is great if you're racing or rallying and want good on-board footage. Battery life is excellent (2.5 hours of constant recording) and it records to SD cards, which makes life easy. The only criticisms are that the sound quality from the camera isn't quite as good as the picture quality and the adjustment for the sucker mount is a bit fiddly. Otherwise it's just brilliant.

Henry Catchpole

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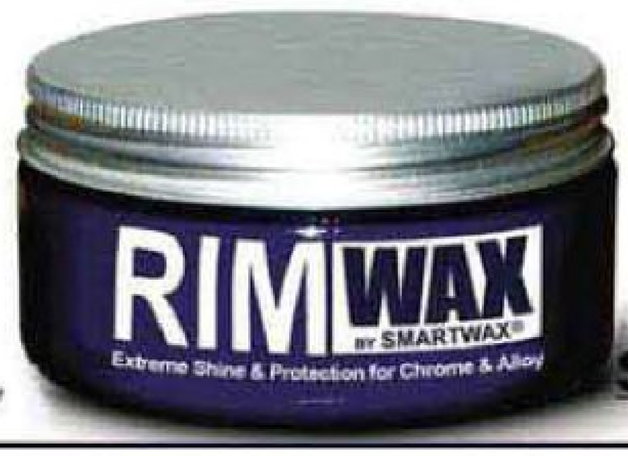

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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Lotus Exige (series 2)	*068 R*	*'04-'08*	*4/1796*	*189/7800*	*133/6800*	*875kg*	*219*	*4.9*	-	*147*	-	*32.1*	*+ Highly focused road 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	£49,600	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 - Pricey options	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	152 F	£58,800	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*	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
Maserati GT MC Stradale	155 D	£110,000	8/4691	444/7100	376/4750	1770kg	255	4.6	-	187	-	-	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - No rear seats	★★★★★
Maserati Coupe	*064 F*	*'03-'07*	*8/4244*	*390/7000*	*333/4500*	*1680kg*	*237*	*4.8*	-	*177*	-	*17.6*	*+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering*	★★★★
Maserati GranSport	*073 F*	*'04-'07*	*8/4244*	*400/7000*	*333/4500*	*1680kg*	*239*	*4.8*	-	*180*	-	-	*+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little*	★★★★½
Mazda RX-8 R3	122 R	£26,065	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	**6.5**	**16.4**	146	299	24.6	+ Even sharper chassis than basic RX-8 - Same wafer-thin torque output	★★★★½
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	£52,625	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	★★★½
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*	★★★★½
Mercedes-B 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*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	150 D	£115,620	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	£161,545	12/5980	603/4800	737/2000	2240kg	273	4.4	-	155	334	19.1	+ Unsurprisingly rapid on non-wiggly bits - Lacks charm, involvement	★★★½
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	★★★★½
Nissan 370Z	131 F	£29,150	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1520kg	218	5.4	-	155	248	-	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
Nissan 200SX		*'94-'02*	*4/1998*	*197/6400*	*195/4800*	*1267kg*	*158*	*6.5*	-	*142*	-	*29.1*	*+ Fast, cheap and rwd - Looks, image*	★★★½
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*	★★★★½
Noble M400	*089 F*	*'04-'06*	*6/2968*	*425/6500*	*390/5000*	*1060kg*	*407*	*3.5*	-	*185*	-	-	*+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweeks interior*	★★★★½
Noble M12 GTO-3R	*070 F*	*'03-'06*	*6/2968*	*352/6200*	*350/3500*	*1090kg*	*332*	*3.8*	-	*170*	-	-	*+ The ability to humble exotica - Flawed driving position*	★★★★
Noble M12 GTO	*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	155 R	£23,245	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	**7.3**	**18.1**	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 the desirability of other Porsches	★★★★½
Porsche Cayman S	132 F	£47,604	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too (even though it's the best Cayman yet)	★★★★½
Porsche Cayman R	156 D	£51,728	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	218	-	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	★★★★★
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...*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera (997.2)		£67,270	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	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 F	£76,172	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (997.2)	152 D	£78,371	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 (997.2)		£80,785	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	★★★★½
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	138 F	£89,785	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 (997.2)	152 F	£109,123	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ Our 2010 car of the year - Looks and noise are slightly OTT	★★★★★
Porsche 911 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 (997.1)	*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 (997.1)	*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 (996.2)	*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 (996.2)	*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 (993)	*036 R*	*'95*	*6/3746*	*300/6500*	*262/5400*	*1270kg*	*240*	*4.7*	*11.2*	*172*	-	-	*+ Barking engine note, gearchange - Not quite hardcore enough*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	*066 F*	*'99*	*6/3600*	*360/7200*	*273/5000*	*1350kg*	*271*	***4.5***	***10.3***	*187*	-	*21.9*	*+ Our Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	*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 (996)	*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 (996 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 (993)		*'94-'97*	*6/3600*	*285/6100*	*251/5250*	*1372kg*	*211*	*5.2*	-	*168*	-	*25.0*	*+ More character than 996 - Harder work at speed*	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
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'*	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
TVR Cerbera 4.5	*014 F*	*'97-'04*	*8/4578*	*420/6750*	*380/5500*	*1100kg*	*388*	*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	155 R	£24,450	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1373kg	153	**6.1**	**15.8**	149	172	38.2	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	★★★★
VW Scirocco R	138 F	£29,485	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*	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
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 race-car-sharp chassis. A legend in the making.

Best of the Rest: The Veyron Super Sport is awesome, though you'd have as much sheer fun in Ferrari's brilliant 458. We also love Porsche's GT2 RS and the screaming Lexus LFA, while the new McLaren MP4-12C (right) is staggeringly quick and capable.

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
9ff GT9R	127 D	c£450,000	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'*	★★★★½
BMW M1		*'78-'81*	*6/3500*	*277/6500*	*239/5000*	*1303kg*	*216*	*5.8*	-	*161*	-	-	*+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days*	★★★★½
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	c£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	c£1.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	-	-	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous brolly/roof thing	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 F	c£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*	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
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	★★★½
Ferrari California	143 F	£146,910	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	£173,132	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	£212,016	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	★★★★½
Ferrari 599 GTO	155 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 FF	157 D	£227,026	12/6262	642/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti F1	*090 R*	*'04-'11*	*12/5748*	*533/7250*	*434/5250*	*1840kg*	*294*	***4.3***	***9.8***	*199*	*470*	*13.8*	*+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above*	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	*087 F*	*'04-'10*	*8/4308*	*483/8500*	*343/5250*	*1450kg*	*342*	*4.0*	-	*196*	-	*18.6*	*+ 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*	-	*18.6*	*+ 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*	-	*15.7*	*+ 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+*	-	*17.0*	*+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be*	★★★★½
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*	-	*16.7*	*+ 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*	-	*12.3*	*+ 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	*157 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?*	★★★★★
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 perfomance, 'Apollo' - High price, 'Gumpert'	★★★★½
Jaguar XJ220	*157 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	c£500,000	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	**3.9**	**7.7**	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's *only* supercar	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCXR Edition	118 F	c£1.5m	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ The world's fastest car. Probably - Spikey power delivery	★★★★★
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	£162,240	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	★★★★½
Lamborghini LP570-4 S'leggera	152 F	£178,560	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	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
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*	★★★★
Lambo M'lago LP670-4 SV	*138 F*	*'09-'11*	*12/6946*	*661/8000*	*487/6500*	*1565kg*	*429*	***3.2***	***7.3***	*212*	-	-	*+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares*	★★★★★
Lambo M'lago LP640 Roadster	*101 D*	*'07-'11*	*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*	★★★★½
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	*093 F*	*'06-'11*	*12/6496*	*631/8000*	*487/6000*	*1665kg*	*385*	*3.3*	-	*211*	-	*21.3*	*+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes*	★★★★★
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*	★★★★½
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	*154 F*	*'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?*	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
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 MP4-12C	155 R	£168,500	8/3799	592/7000	442/3000	1434kg	419	3.1	-	205	-	-	+ Staggering performance, incredible dynamics - Conservative styling	★★★★★
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	£168,345	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	157 F	c£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 D	c£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 F*	*'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	£110,232	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	£125,864	6/3800	523/6250	516/2100	1570kg	339	**2.9**	**6.8**	196	268	-	+ As above, with more power - The GT3's even cheaper...	★★★★½
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2)	157 F	£171,468	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 F*	*'96-'99*	*6/3600*	*430/5700*	*398/4500*	*1290kg*	*339*	*3.9*	-	*184*	-	-	*+ Hairy-arsed homologation special - Harry won't buy one*	★★★★★
Porsche Carrera GT	*149 F*	*'04-'06*	*10/5733*	*604/8000*	*435/5750*	*1380kg*	*445*	***3.8***	***7.6***	*205*	-	-	*+ Probably the greatest modern supercar - Can bite*	★★★★★
Porsche 959	*149 F*	*'87-'90*	*6/2850*	*444/6500*	*369/5000*	*1450kg*	*311*	*3.7*	-	*197*	-	-	*+ Tech showcase, still a great drive - Limited choice of colours?*	★★★★★
Ruf Rt 12	097 F	c£155,000	6/3746	641/7000	641/3500	1530kg	426	3.3	-	219	-	-	+ Beautifully executed car with truly immense power - Needs care	★★★★★
Ruf CTR3	126 F	c£357,000	6/3746	691/7600	656/4000	1400kg	501	3.2	-	235	-	-	+ The best 911 that Porsche never made - But not the best looking...	★★★★★
Ruf CTR 'Yellow Bird'	*097 F*	*'87-'89*	*6/3366*	*469/5950*	*408/5100*	*1170kg*	*345*	*4.1*	-	*211*	-	-	*+ A true legend - We can't all drive like Stefan Roser*	★★★★★
Sportec SPR1 M	136 D	c£600,000	6/3600	846/8200	642/4800	1450kg	593	3.0	6.4	240+	-	-	+ A 911 Turbo that accelerates like Concorde - And costs almost as much	★★★★★
Spyker C8 Aileron	141 D	£191,000	8/4163	400/6800	354/3500	1425kg	285	4.5	-	187	-	-	+ Most convincing Spyker yet - Its rivals are quicker	★★★★½
Ultima GTR640	080 F	£68,000	8/6277	640/6500	560/4800	980kg	666	2.7	5.5	231	-	-	+ Awesomely rapid, and capable too - Race-car compromises	★★★★

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13.04.11	Oulton Park Long	17.08.11	Silverstone National
21.04.11	Snetterton 300	07.09.11	Oulton Park Long
26.04.11	Silverstone Arena GP (40 spaces)	15.09.11	Silverstone Int.
03.05.11	Nurburgring Nordschleife	21.09.11	Snetterton 300
01.06.11	Snetterton 300	26.07.11	Spa
08.06.11	Silverstone Int. (40 spaces)	04.10.11	Silverstone Arena GP (40 spaces)
29.06.11	Snetterton 300	17.10.11	Silverstone Arena GP (40 spaces) (Privilege)
05.07.11	Spa	29.10.11	Oulton Park Long
06.07.11	Brands Hatch GP	31.10.11	Silverstone Arena GP
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Ask the experts

Every issue we put your questions to our panel of experts

TUNING & ENGINEERING

Q Your turbocharged supercars group test in issue 157 has got me wondering about the differences between traction and stability control. You talk about the Noble M600 having traction control, but then mention the intimidation of using 600bhp-plus without stability control. How do the two systems differ? Traction control seems to be available in numerous early '90s performance cars. Does this mean it's quite a crude, old system? – Ted Haus

While traction control is helpful in a high-powered car, stability control provides further security

A The simple answer is that traction control helps you pull away and stability control helps you go round corners, but obviously it's a bit more complicated than that.

As more power is put through a tyre, more thrust is generated, but it also slips more too. Eventually a point is reached where the slip increases rapidly and the force transmitted to the tarmac reduces dramatically. This is when the tyre just lights up and you make very slow progress in clouds of tyre smoke, like a drag racer doing a burnout. On a dry road, a sports tyre might be transmitting the most force possible at about five per cent slip.

Traction control limits power at the wheel to a level that gives the maximum thrust, using a mixture of throttle control, ignition retard and braking. If a wheel accelerates far too fast then TC knows it is slipping and so reduces the power going to it. And yes, older systems were cruder and more aggressive in their power reduction.

Stability control takes things a step further by optimising tyre grip when cornering. Obviously, part of this is preventing wheelspin by using the traction control system, but it also helps the car turn by subtly applying the brakes on one side of the car. This applies a 'yaw moment' and pulls the car round, a bit like the way a tank steers but a lot more refined and with less clanking. This helps drivers who could otherwise get caught out by over or understeer, particularly when the corner turns out to be tighter or more slippery than expected, and it makes very high-powered cars driveable in everyday situations.

To achieve this, the DSC system uses data from G-force and wheel-speed sensors to work out where the car is going, whilst at the same time analysing signals from the pedals and steering wheel to work out in which direction the driver actually wanted to go.

Obviously there are limits to such systems, and going far too fast into a corner will still lead to the casualty department. There is only so much force a tyre can transmit – **RH**

THE EXPERTS

JOHN BARKER – our editor-at-large 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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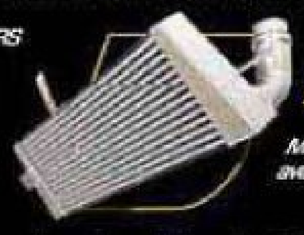

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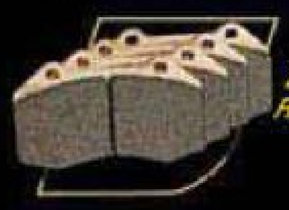

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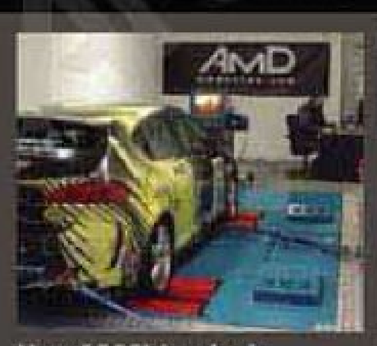

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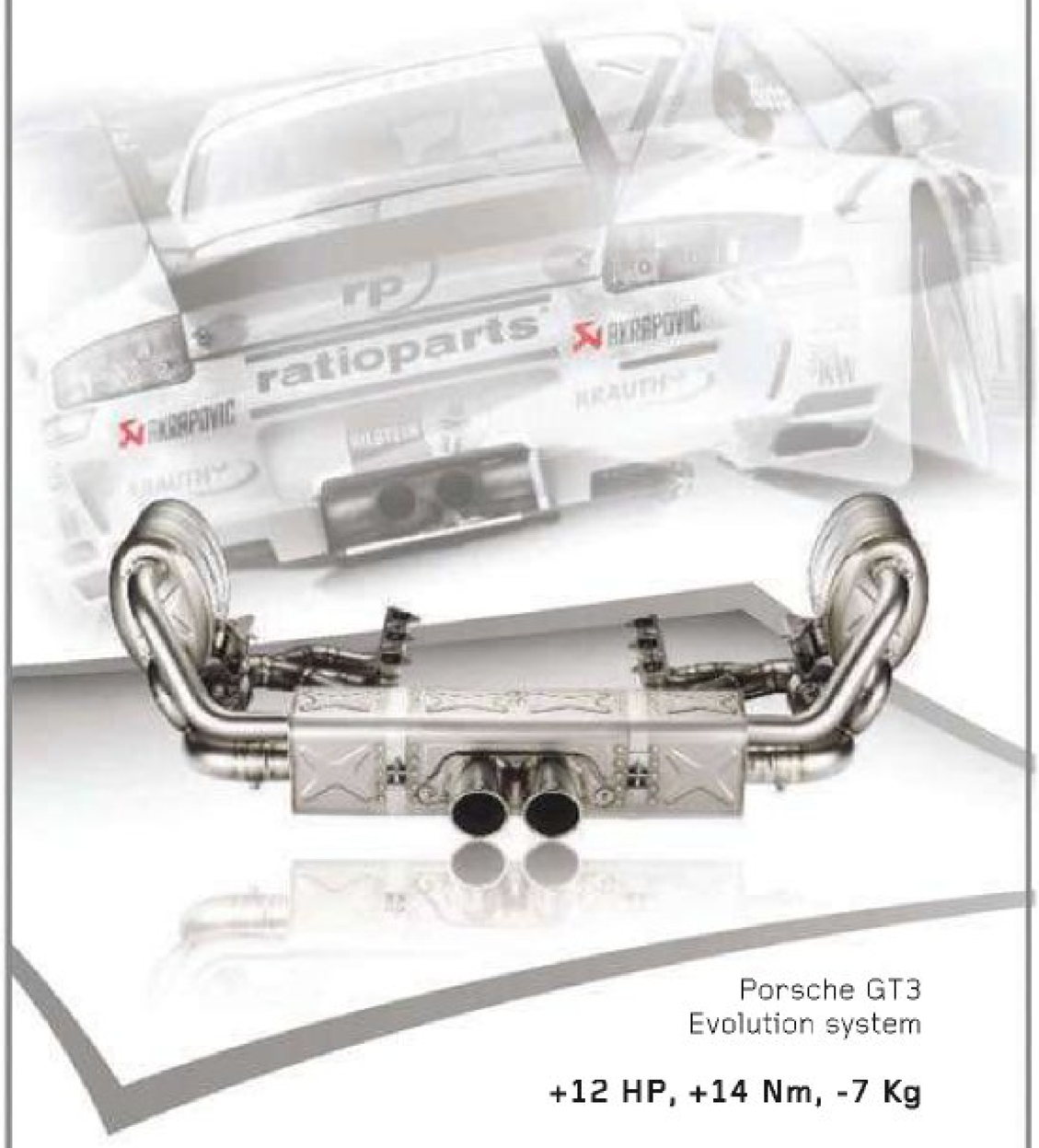

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Ask the experts

We answer your motoring questions

DRIVING TECHNIQUES

Q I've learnt the art of throttle control, heel and toeing, trail-braking and the general principles of car control. However, there is one relatively common technique for which I cannot see the benefits: left-foot braking. Why do some circuit drivers use this technique all the time, some vary from corner to corner, some just use it in the wet and some not at all? What are the advantages and drawbacks?
– John Odeny

A In most circuit cornering scenarios, reducing the time it takes to get from gas pedal to brake pedal will enhance the turn-in phase of a corner. Delay the process, and your vehicle may experience unnecessary weight transfer, promoting unwanted oversteer or understeer.

Left-foot braking ensures the transition from brake pedal to gas pedal is seamless, optimising turn-in speed, stability and lateral acceleration. It's a worthy technique for those well versed in the art of trail-braking and/or driving rear- or mid-engine cars, as it reduces the pendulum effect of all of that weight sitting behind you, and it's much easier to execute if your car is blessed with a paddleshift, as you won't have the clutch to worry about too.

Left-foot braking can also be used to adjust the direction of a car through a corner at the limit of grip. Apply a slight pressure on the brake pedal with your left foot while maintaining pressure on the gas pedal through a corner and the vehicle will tighten its cornering radius. You now have a means to adjust your line without the need to reduce speed or adjust your steering input – a useful tool for corners with a tightening radius, or to achieve subtle adjustments to cornering line at the end of a race on ailing tyres, or on a wet circuit.

Both rear- and front-wheel-drive configurations can benefit. View the technique as a way of teasing time and stability out of your vehicle. For trackdays it's a 'nice to do' technique and immensely satisfying when perfected; for racing it marginally reduces lap times. The downside is that it takes lots of practice to master and it's easy to have a big off if you get it wrong. Take care! – **CH**

Left-foot braking can improve a car's stability or adjust its cornering line

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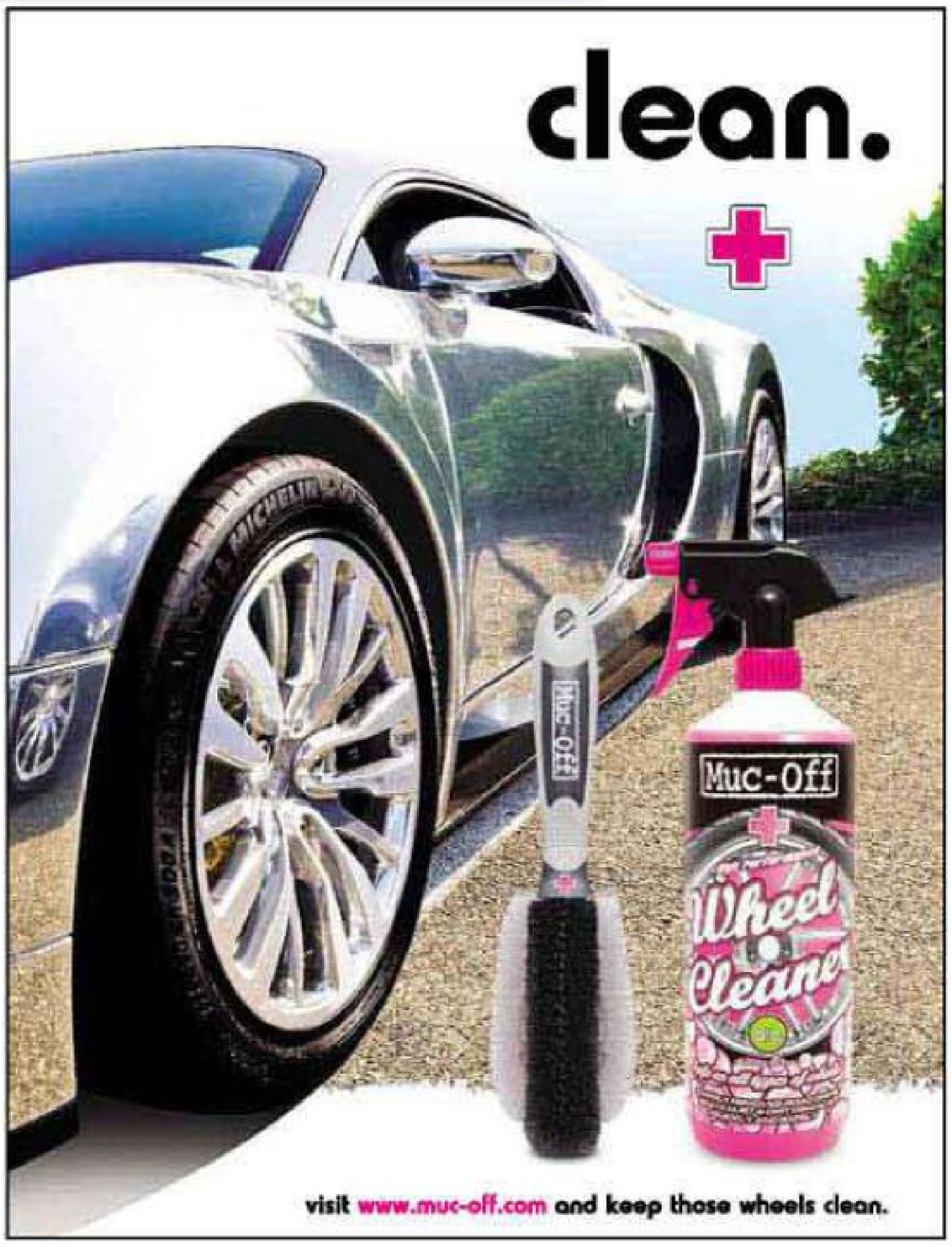

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It was Dan, a Dodo Juice forum member, who started signing off with 'the Juice, the whole Juice and nothing but the Juice'. I suppose for some, there really is no substitute. But who can blame him? We picked up 3 out of 4 Detailing World Awards in 2010. Hand made washes, polishes and waxes. From £7.95 to £119.95, available online.

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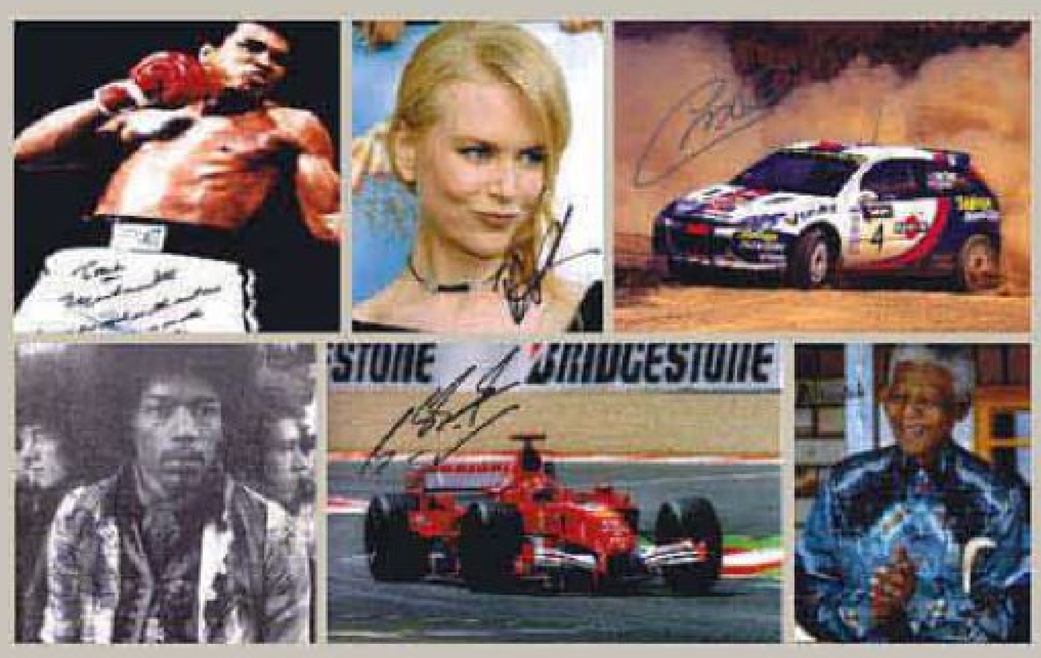

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Ask the experts

We answer your motoring questions

BUYING CARS

Q I own a low-mileage, limited edition 1994 Lancia Evo 2 and a 1988 Audi ur-Quattro. Unfortunately I am gradually losing the use of my legs (I find it especially hard to lift the left one) and this is making operating a clutch both tiring and difficult and ultimately dangerous!

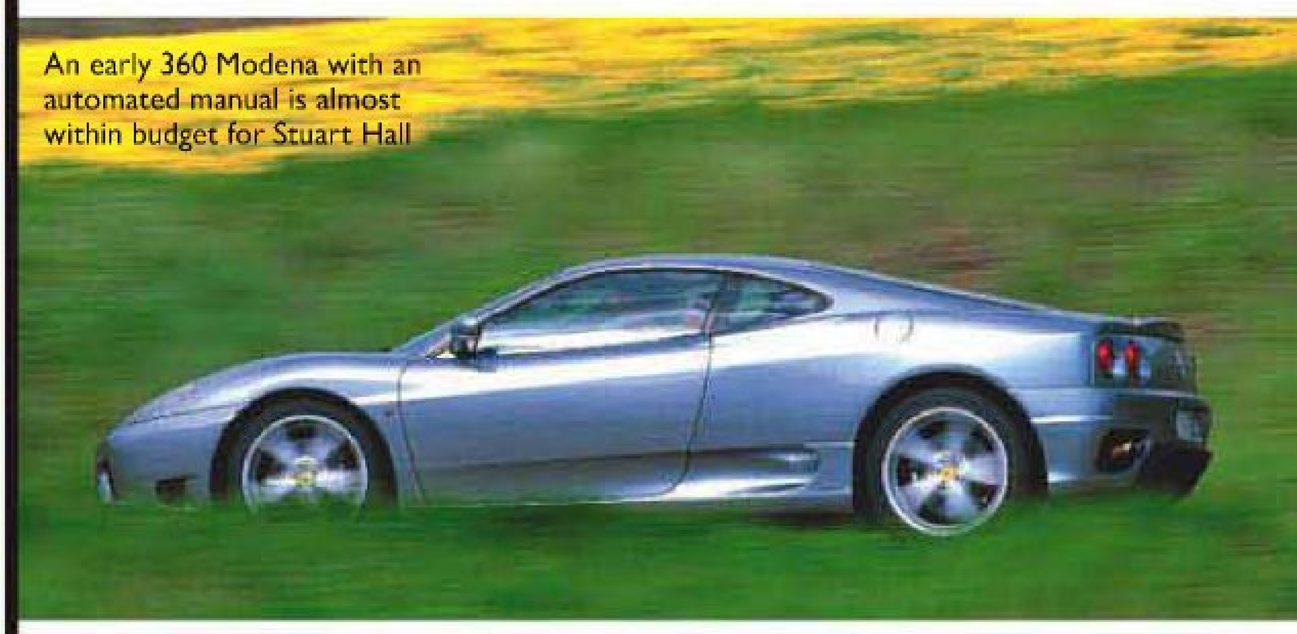
Semi-automatic clutch solutions for the disabled where a gearknob-mounted switch operates an actuator which in turn depresses the clutch seem clumsy and slow-working, not in character with either car. Is there any other system you could recommend?

Alternatively I'm considering selling both cars (with a combined value of around £30K) and buying an automatic Aston Martin DB7 Vantage, since I've reached the stage in my life where polishing and admiring the aesthetics of a car are becoming more important than how fast it goes around a corner! What do you think? – Stuart Hall

A The system you describe sounds like a rather crude add-on offering questionable shift quality, and you're right, it would be the wrong thing to fit to a classic like the Integrale or Quattro. Even if the system had some measure of tunability it's unlikely to be a thing of joy to use because even major car makers have struggled to make manual gearboxes with automated single-plate clutches work satisfactorily (BMW's first-generation SMG felt pretty clumsy).

In fact, the progress of the automated manual gearbox has been a long, bumpy road. The best was achieved by Ferrari with the F430 Scuderia. And having achieved near-perfection, they ditched the single-clutch automated manual for a twin-clutch transmission on the 458.

Today there are plenty of cars with properly developed twin-clutch automated manuals, if that's what you want. If your admiring/driving ratio is shifting, the DB7 Vantage looks very attractive, with that 6-litre V12 and conventional torque converter auto. It's not a cutting-edge auto but it matches the rest of the car. However, an early Ferrari 360 Modena with the F1 automated manual isn't far off your budget, and that's a lot sparkier. The problem with cars this sleek is that they're tricky to get in and out of, which might be a consideration for you. If it is, it might be worth considering the BMW M3 CSL – **JB**



An early 360 Modena with an automated manual is almost within budget for Stuart Hall

THE EXPERT

JOHN BARKER
– our editor-at-large started out with *Motor* in the late '80s and has driven every performance car since

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ROVER 25

THE BTCC DRIVER AND THE OLD HATCHBACK HE DRIVES WHEN HE'S NOT ON TRACK

'It's a good job I don't race in the BTCC for the glamour. There's no better way of keeping your feet firmly on the ground than driving home after a successful race meeting in a lightly scuffed, long-in-the-tooth Rover 25. I remember winning a round at Brands Hatch shortly after I'd got it, and back then I'd not had time to sort out its head gasket, so I found myself standing on the hard shoulder of the motorway topping it up with water in the pouring rain. Twice.

The list of cars I've owned is long and pretty dodgy. There was a period when I was running around in an LDV post van, I once had a tiny Bedford Rascal, and there was even a fully pimped Range Rover, but I'm quite glad that's not around any more.

All this automotive weirdness stems from the fact that the family business is an MOT and service centre, so if I need a new car all I do is wait until something comes in that fails the test and is too expensive to repair and then make the owner an offer.

This method of getting about explains the condition of the Rover. It cost me 50 quid and I drove it around for quite some while before fixing the troublesome head gasket, and I've actually got quite attached to the thing. It's got air, okay, not air-*conditioning*, but all the original hub caps are there, as is the traditional walnut interior, and it's got electric windows. It's even got heated wing mirrors, although I guess they don't count as they don't work, but the door handles do – now that I've added of a couple of cable ties.

> 'It's got a wheel wobble above 55mph and there's a flat spot on one of the tyres where I understeered into a kerb'

It picked up a fairly hefty dent in one of the doors pretty soon after I got it – it may have been on the way to that same Brands Hatch meeting – when I got T-boned by a van on a roundabout. And that's one of the advantages of a car like this – you don't need to waste money fixing it.

On the negative side, more than once it has nearly been towed away from the drivers' area of a race paddock for looking such a mess, but I think people are getting used to it now. I can see their point, I suppose. I'm not even sure what colour it is supposed to be and it's worth less than a single slick racing tyre.

It's very cheap to run, though, because it's been converted to accept LPG. When I was racing for Ford, the team's main sponsor fitted the conversion for free, so now I drive the Rover even more than I did before. It's covered 111,000 miles in total and more than 10,000 have been added this year as it's the cheapest way to get around – a recent round trip from my Surrey home to Edinburgh and back cost me just £115.

I once had it wound up to 135mph downhill, but to be honest I don't often drive it fast – it's got a bit of a wheel wobble that becomes quite serious above 55mph, and there's a flat spot on one of the tyres where I understeered into a kerb in the snow. But it gets me about and until it stops doing that I won't be looking for anything else.

We're giving away a Golf GTI this year, a road-legal replica of my race car [visit www.winmyvw.com to enter the competition], and until the winner is selected I could use that as my daily driver, but I don't think I will. I've no problem with the Rover, so we'll leave the Golf fresh for the prize winner. Although if they subsequently want to swap I'd certainly consider it.'

■ *To see more pictures of Tom's Rover, visit www.evo.co.uk. And if you would like to be featured here with your car, e-mail rogerg@evo.co.uk*

 Picture: Chris Rutter

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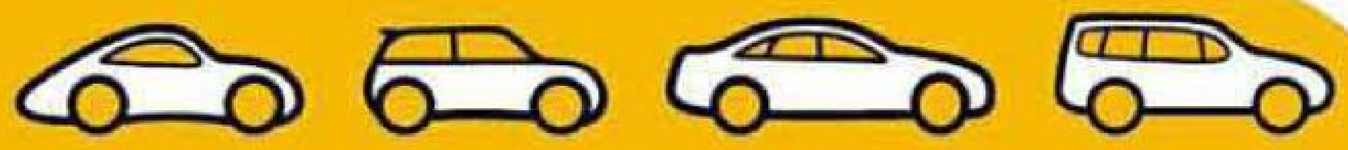

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