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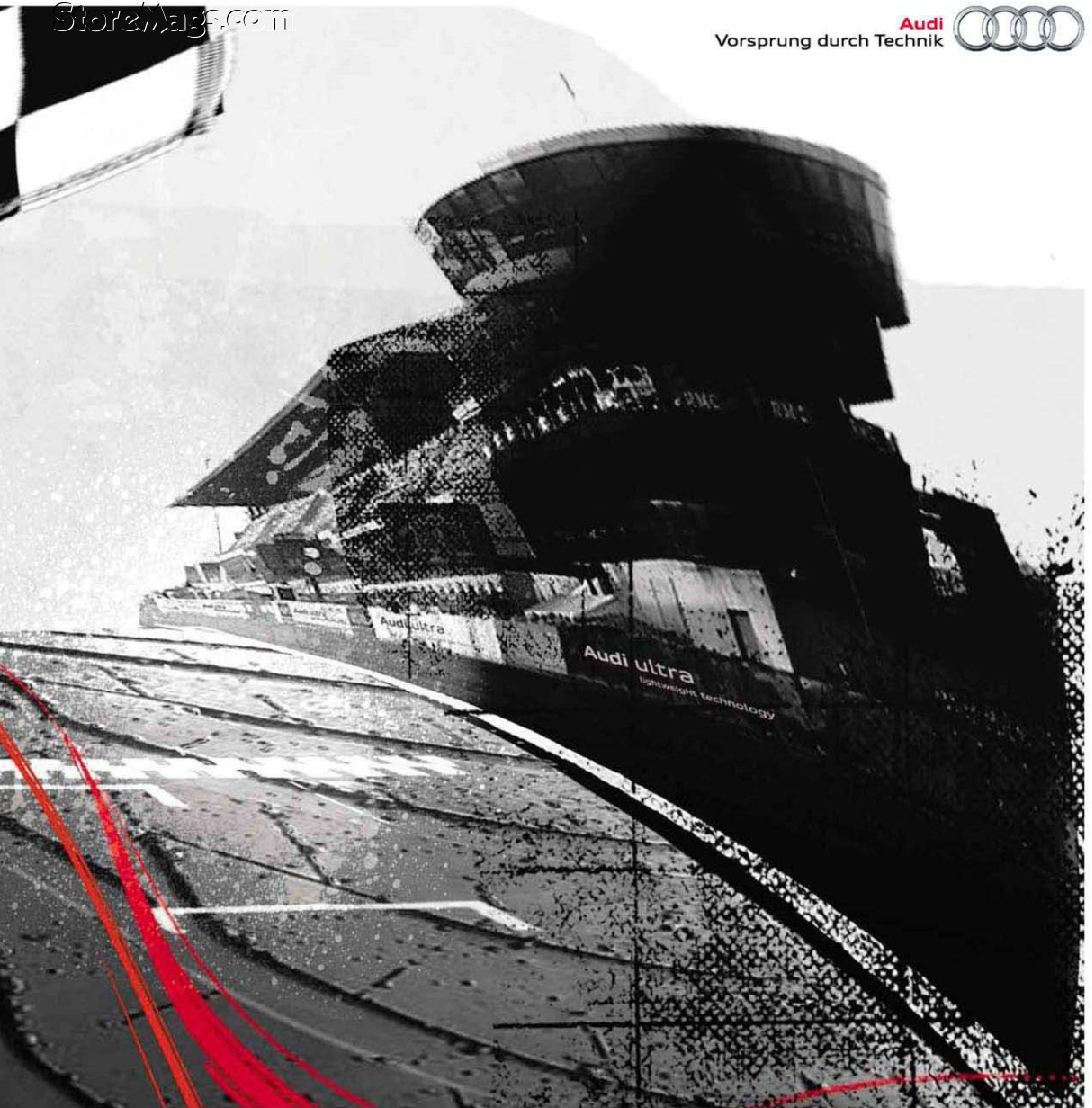
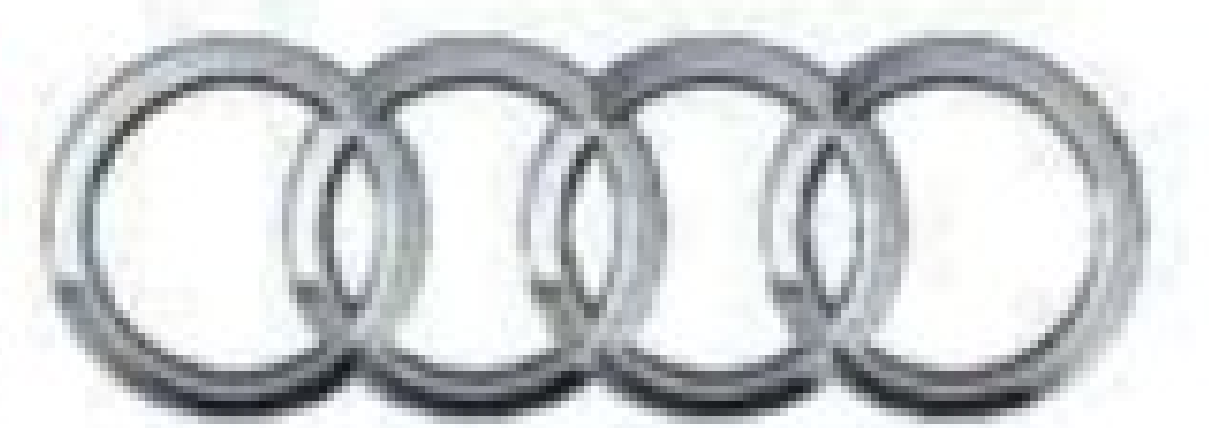
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## ED SPEAK

Without doubt, this has been one of the most important months for not only **evo** but the performance car itself. Never has a sports car come along that so comprehensively rewrites the rules for what a performance car is and what it can achieve for the money. The McLaren MP4-12C is an extraordinarily capable machine. It offers near-Veyron levels of pace with GT-R levels of authority in any-weather, cross-country conditions. And as absurd as it sounds for a car that costs as much as a decent house, I find the McLaren's technology/£ ratio remarkable.

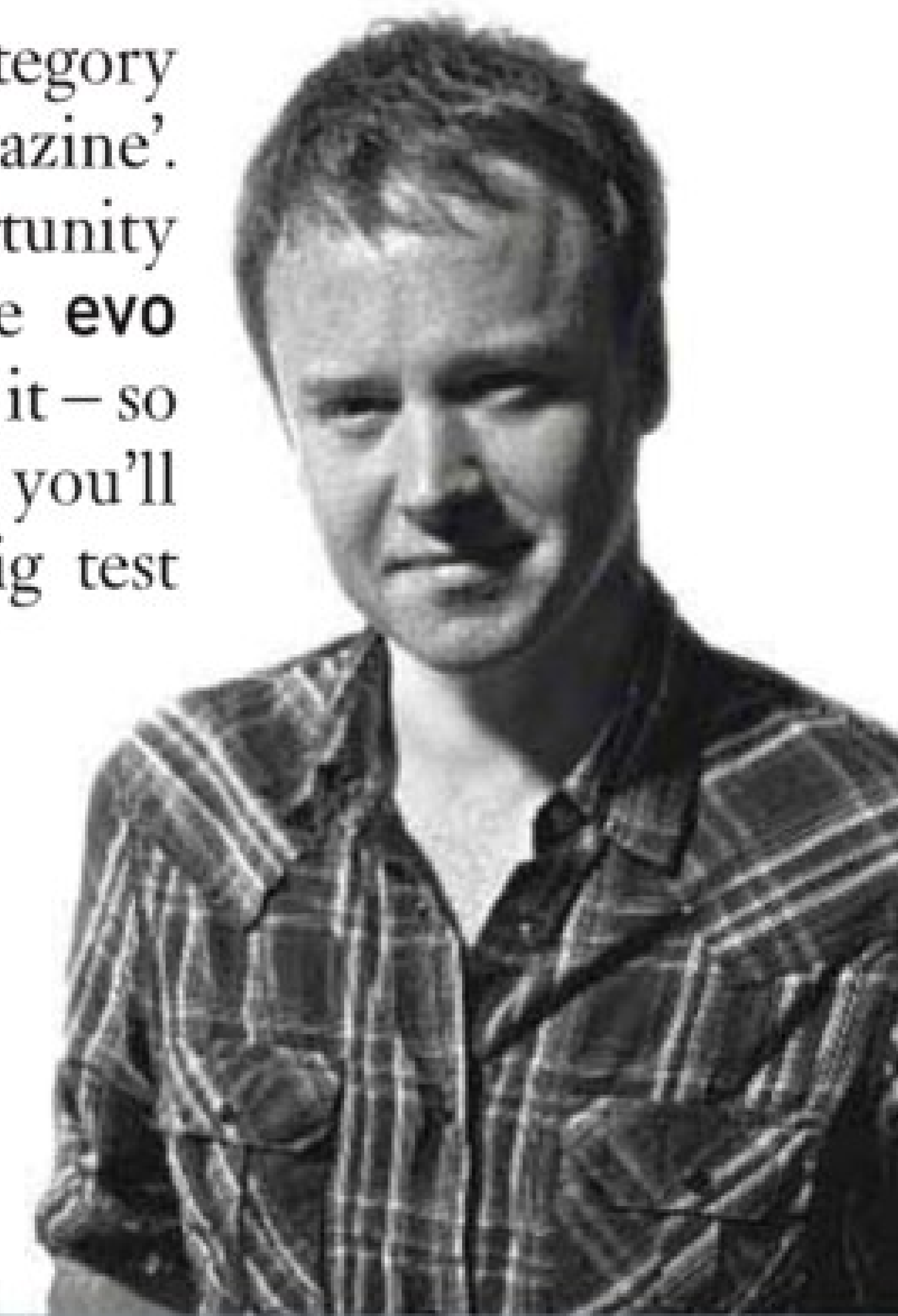
For **evo**, this has been one of our greatest challenges – to deliver a compelling and thorough dissection of this car. To convey its significance in the market, its ultimate driving ability, its performance against key rivals and – most importantly – to understand and describe the methods it employs to elicit emotional response. Simply put, never has it been more important for **evo** to adhere rigidly to our mantra of 'The Thrill of Driving' than this month. The result is fascinating, but I'll break **evo** tradition and not reveal it here...

Not a bad month for a newbie to start at **evo** then! Mike Duff has joined us as our new motoring editor in charge of, among other things, [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk), various digital projects and the 'front end' of the mag, including news. You'll like Mike – he's helplessly in love with the automobile, hugely knowledgeable and a well-respected and experienced motoring journalist.

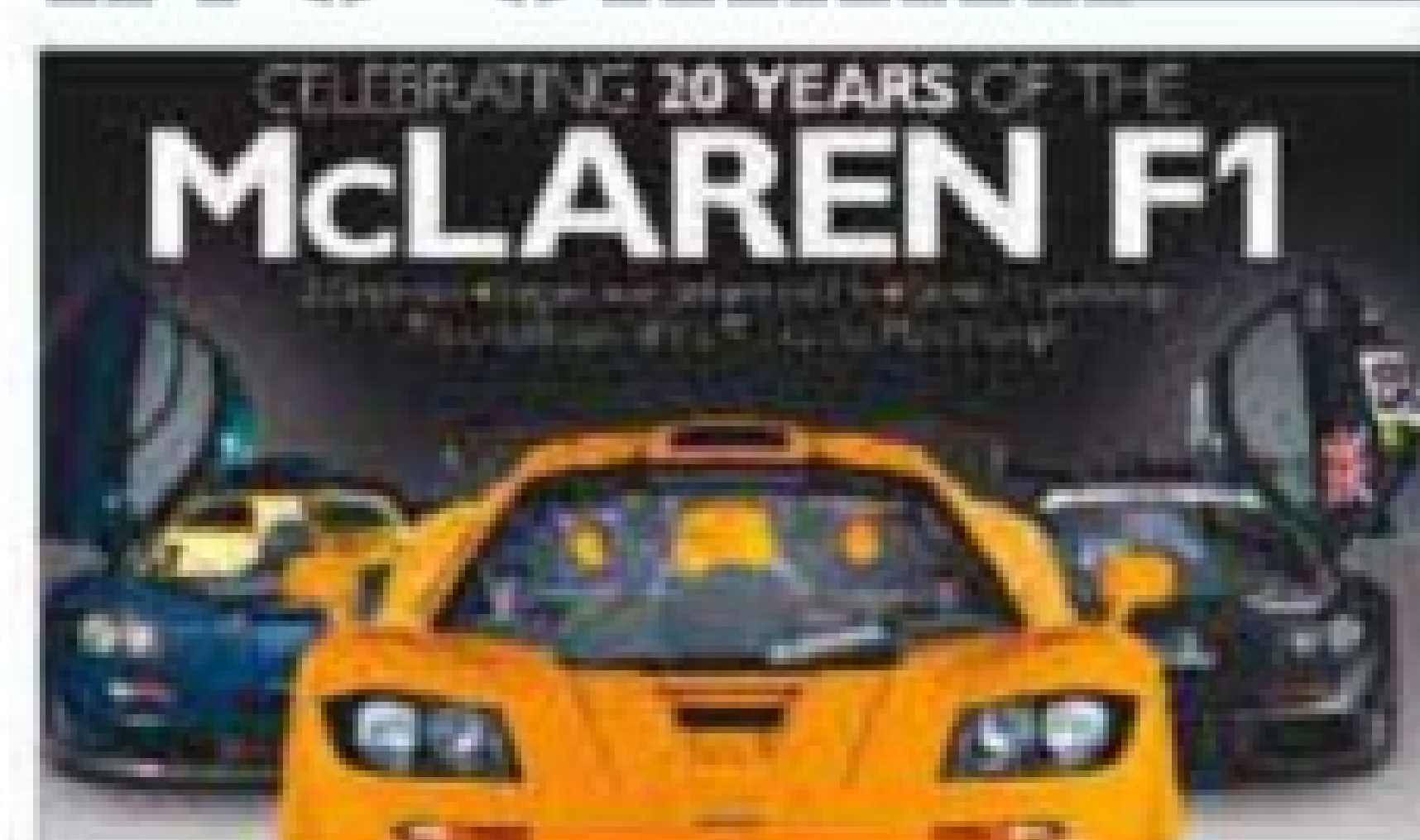
In other news, we're launching a new forum category at [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk) this month simply titled 'evo magazine'. We feel it is important that you have an opportunity to discuss features in the magazine with those **evo** writers, photographers and designers who created it – so log-on and fire some questions at us. I'll imagine you'll have some comments to make regarding the big test this month...



Nick Trott, Editor



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## HERO OF THE MONTH

## CHRIS PORRITT

Aston Martin's One-77 programme manager hasn't got a bad job. He recently steered said car at over 220mph at Nardo and spends a fair amount of time at the Ring testing and racing various Astons. For the past few years he's been an essential part of Aston Martin's Nürburgring 24-hour campaign, in which **evo** is again taking part this year (see [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk)). But what makes him this month's hero is the spirit and verve with which he goes about his job. He takes nothing for granted, works extraordinary hours (he spent three days solid at Aston preparing the Zagato for its Ring debut last month) and takes the definition of 'mucking in' to another level. Great bloke.





# NEXT ISSUE



# RECORD BREAKER!

evo heads to the Isle of Man to witness Subaru's extraordinary attempt on the TT course road-car lap record



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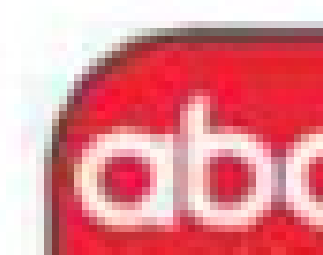
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PLANETEVO  
NEWS

# TARGET: 200MPH... IN

WITH ITS 2-LITRE ENGINE TUNED TO 600BHP, THIS OCTAVIA IS SET TO BECOME THE FASTEST SKODA EVER – WITH EVO'S RICHARD MEADEN BEHIND THE WHEEL



**H**ere's one that would have an old-school comedian scratching his head. Have you heard the one about the Skoda with 600bhp, a top speed of somewhere over 186mph – and no rear brakes? You'll need to add some imagination, but the ordinary-looking red Octavia vRS you see here is in the process of being transformed into a fully fledged speed record challenger – and our very own Richard Meaden will be the man driving it on the Bonneville Salt Flats.

Once its transformation is complete – and the appropriately fast-looking livery you see in the rendering has been applied – the Octavia will be heading to the States to take part in the legendary Speed Week this August, with the stated aim of becoming the fastest car ever to wear a Skoda badge.

The speed run is being done to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Skoda's vRS performance sub-brand, with the Octavia undergoing a total transformation at the hands of VW Group's mechanics in Milton Keynes with the team led by sometime superbike racer Ricky Elder.

'The car was brand new – it had just eight miles on the clock,' says Elder. 'We started off by completely gutting it and then sent it along to Safety Devices to have a specially designed roll-cage fitted. It's massive, it's unbelievable. A track car can dissipate energy by running through a gravel trap or hitting a tyre wall, but if it all goes wrong at 200mph on the Flats there's nothing to hit – the energy in the car has to be absorbed by it hitting the floor and rolling. You can crash for 1000 yards, easy.'

Unlike conventional racers, speed record cars don't need to save weight – in fact the Octavia might actually need some extra ballast.

'The problem is that driving on salt is like driving on water,' explains Elder. 'If you're too light the car will basically aquaplane... The stock car is 1875kg and stripping the interior has probably saved 250kg, but the cage will put us back even and we're going to make provision to bolt weight into the car, probably with two posts to hold bench-press weights.'

Mechanically the Octavia has been transformed with coil-over dampers, 23in wheels and high-speed tyres, and the lowest possible ride height.

The door mirrors and roof aerial have





Far left: car started out as a regular Octavia vRS. Bottom left: 2-litre engine was removed for its 550bhp-plus makeover. Above: massive roll-cage will help keep Meaden safe. Left: pedals have been moved back in the cockpit. Below: how the finished car should look

# A SKODA OCTAVIA

been binned to improve aerodynamics. Inside, all trim has been removed, the all-metal drag racing seat is set a foot further back than normal and the pedals and steering column have been moved – all to ensure Meaden sits under the protection of the main hoop of the cage.

‘When Dickie’s strapped in wearing his “Michelin Man” suit – an SFI 20 approved race suit, the highest standard there is – he’s barely going

to be able to move, so everything has to be within reach,’ explains Elder.

It’s under the bonnet that things get really interesting. The Octavia’s standard 2-litre TSI engine has been transformed by Race Developments in Gloucester with a lightened and balanced crank and a gas-flowed cylinder head. The ECU has been tweaked by Revo Technik and the standard turbo has been replaced with a monstrous Garrett

G-05, featuring a 65mm billet-cut compressor wheel.

‘The size of the turbo means it probably won’t start spooling until 4500rpm,’ says Elder. ‘Because it’s a “twin blade” it’s effectively got two compressor blades sat on top of each

other. In theory you get twice as much air onto twice as many blades as a stock turbo. The engine will rev to around 7800rpm, with peak power between 7300 and 7600rpm.’

How much power? We don’t know yet – as we closed for press, the

**‘AT 200MPH YOU CAN CRASH FOR 1000 YARDS, EASY...’**







new engine hadn't been on the test bench. But the engineering team are confident of getting between 550bhp and 600bhp. Perhaps surprisingly, considering the projected outputs, the transmission is almost standard. And until Dickie pops his first brave pill, we don't know how fast it will go either, although the gearing gives a clear indication of its potential.

'We worked out that with the stock transmission 7700rpm would be 178mph,' says Elder. 'That's not enough, so we've taken the gearbox from an Octavia GreenLine, the high-economy diesel, and now it works out perfectly – 7700rpm is 201mph. Other than that, apart from

a limited-slip diff, it's standard.'

There's just one thing the Octavia will be lacking, and that's rear brakes. The team are planning to remove them to improve aerodynamics. Stopping will be down to the front brakes and a drag-racing-spec parachute, capable of generating 3G of retardation.

Once finished and shaken-down in the UK, the car will be shipped to America by container in time for Speed Week. You'll be able to read the full story in evo – and find out just how fast Dickie manages to go – later this year.

Follow the story at [www.evo.co.uk](http://www.evo.co.uk)

### WHY IS DICKIE DOING THIS?

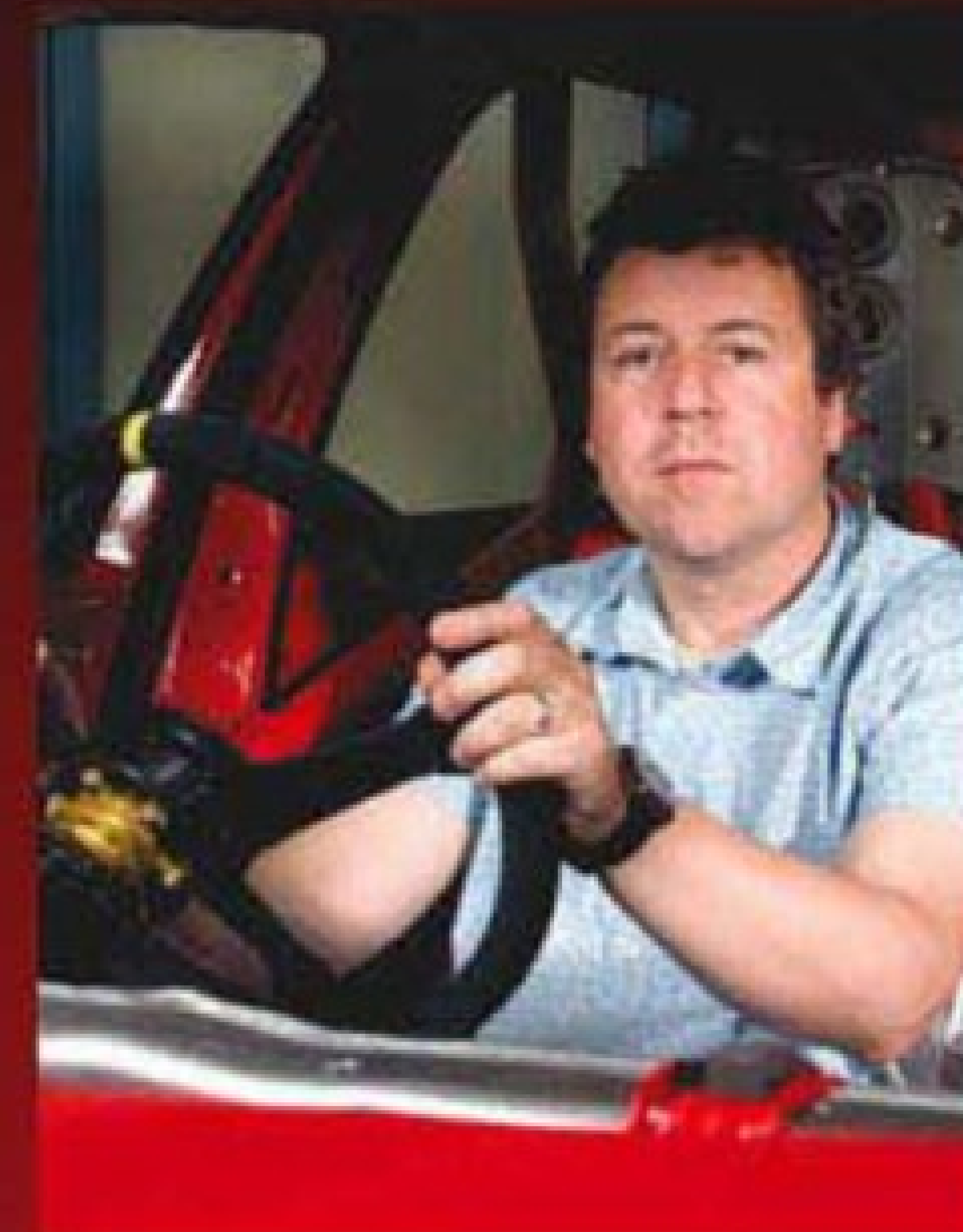
**G**oing to Bonneville Speed Week is something I've always dreamed of doing, so to get involved with Skoda's project is really exciting.

No, I'll grant you, an Octavia vRS isn't the most obvious choice for the Salt Flats, but I think the challenge of making a car go much faster than it should do is true to the Bonneville ethos.

The guys at Revo Technik have been working very hard on the engine build and mapping, and we're hoping to see the 2-litre TFSI engine develop as much as 600bhp. That's a lot to ask from a motor that still has many production components, but the team at Revo is confident it's strong enough to take the boost.

As ever, time has been a big factor in the build of the car. Fortunately we've had lots of support and advice from the Southern California Timing Association, who are the governing body for Speed Week.

For my part, the driving is going to be a real adventure. Salt is a



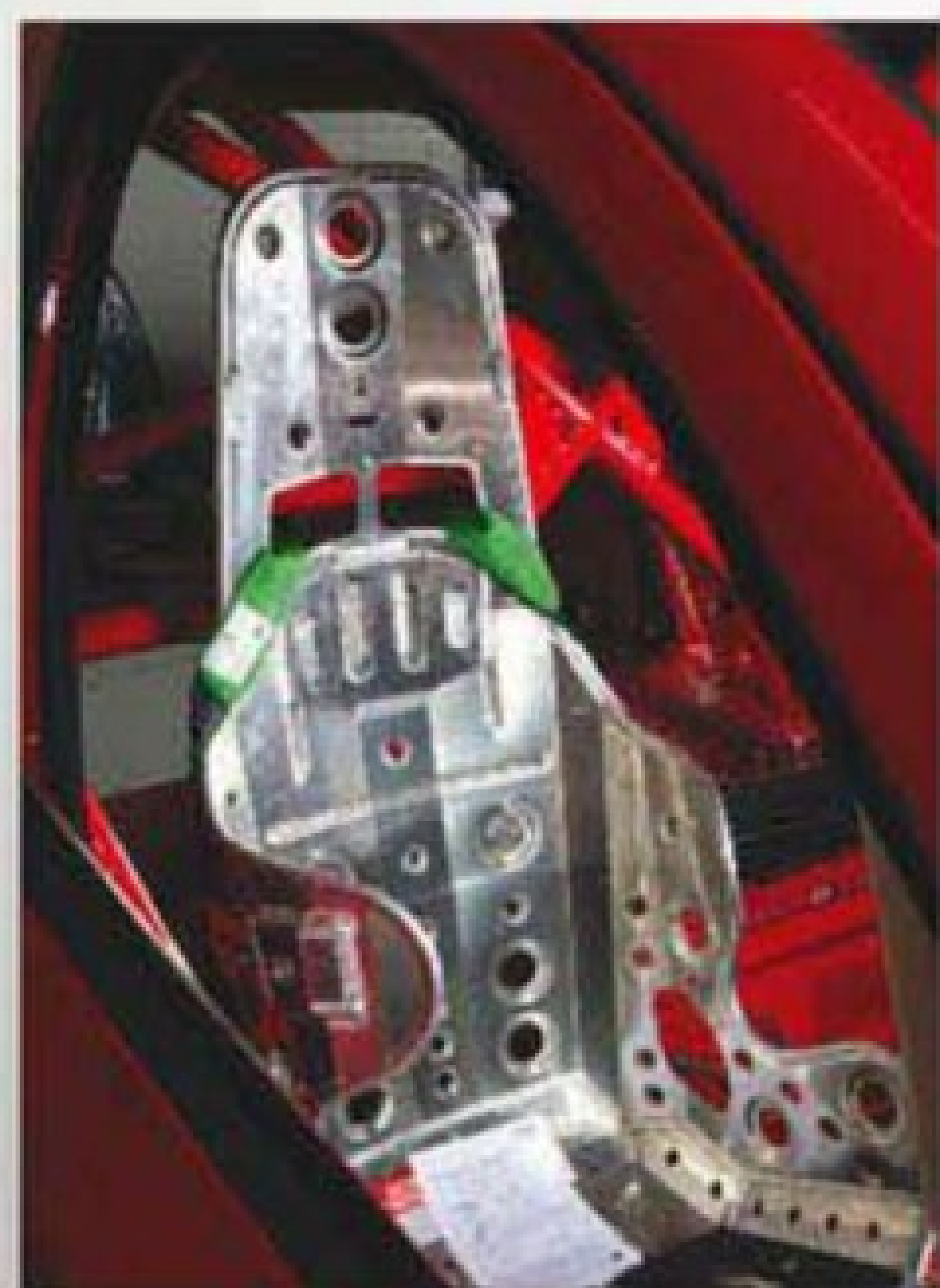
unique, slippery and completely alien surface on which to drive, so I'll have a lot to learn. Maintaining traction is the major challenge, and the key to hitting a big speed. To be honest, I've no idea what it'll feel like powering across the Salt Flats, nor how fast the Octavia will go. The dream is definitely to achieve 200mph, but so long as I can get the most from what we have I'll feel like I've done my bit.

August can't come soon enough!

**'THE DRIVING IS GOING TO BE A REAL ADVENTURE'**

### SEAT

The metal Kirkey race seat has been chosen for safety reasons – it's capable of withstanding the sort of forces that would cause a composite seat to shatter.



### WEIGHT SAVING

To create the speed record car, a brand new Octavia vRS has been comprehensively stripped, with around 250kg of seats, trim, carpets and electrics binned.



Left: it may look more or less like a regular Octavia, but the modifications required for the high-speed run are numerous



### TYRES

The massive Goodyear Eagle tyres are basically the same spec that get fitted to the front wheels of dragsters. Their 23in diameter reduces rotational speed and they're inflated to 60psi.



### PARACHUTE

The Simpson racing parachute is identical to what you'd find stopping a top fuel dragster. It features both a drone and a main 'chute and will have to be carefully repacked between runs.





# TOPLESS GERMANS REVEALED

FIRST PICTURES OF AUDI R8 GT AND MERCEDES SLS AMG IN DROP-TOP FORM; BOTH DUE IN UK BEFORE END OF YEAR



It must be summer – Audi and Mercedes have both revealed roadster versions of their flagship models, although neither will be landing in the UK before the autumn.

The R8 GT Spyder follows on from last year's stripped-and-ripped GT coupe, and delivers the same script. It uses carbonfibre panels and lightweight seats to save some 85kg over the standard V10 Spyder – although at 1640kg it's still 155kg heavier than the Lamborghini Gallardo Performante it shares its core architecture with.

As in the GT coupe, the 5.2-litre V10 engine has been boosted from 518bhp to 552bhp, here translating into what Audi claims is a 3.8sec 0-62mph time and a 197mph top speed. A six-

speed R-tronic automated manual transmission is standard. A regular manual is not an option.

Mercedes has also released details for the forthcoming roadster version of the SLS. The open-top loses the coupe's trademark gullwing doors, but some clever engineering means that, despite body reinforcement and the mechanism that operates the folding fabric hood, it's only 40kg heavier than its coupe sister.

Power comes from the same 563bhp 6.2-litre V8, with drive delivered rearwards by a seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox. The claimed 0-62mph time is 3.8sec with a top speed north of 180mph. Mercedes has also been careful to keep the SLS's grand touring credentials intact, with the conversion



losing just three litres of boot capacity compared with the coupe.

Official UK prices haven't been released for either yet, but you'll definitely need deep pockets. The R8 GT Spyder is set to retail for 207,800 euros before taxes in Germany – suggesting a price in Blighty of about

£200,000. Sales begin in October and, as with the coupe, only 333 cars will be produced – all left-hand drive – with around 30 coming to the UK.

The SLS Roadster will make its debut at the Frankfurt show, with British sales starting in November – and don't expect much change from £180,000.

## POLESTAR POSSIBLE

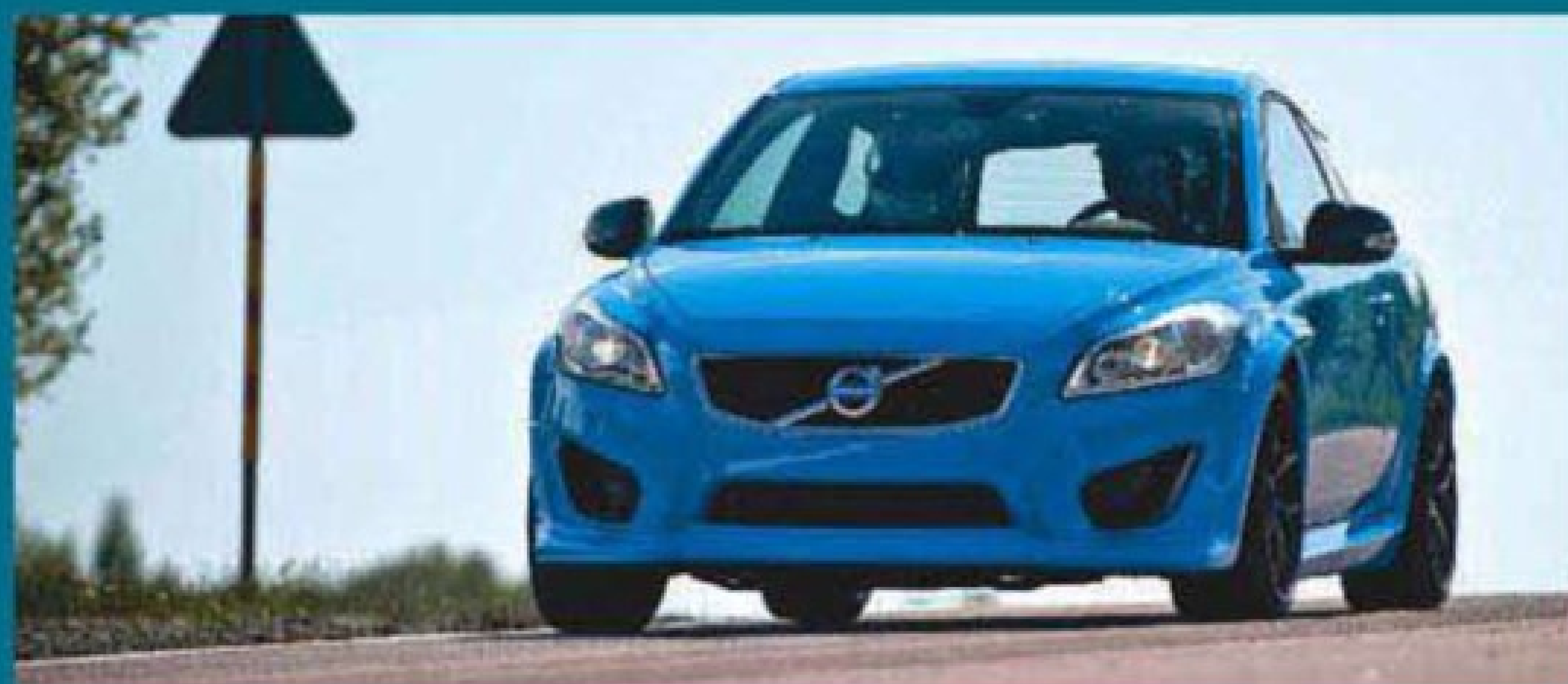
### VOLVO CONSIDERING LIMITED RUN OF 400BHP, FOUR-WHEEL-DRIVE C30 FOR UK

No official announcement has been made, but evo has learned that Volvo is giving serious consideration to bringing a production version of last year's C30 Performance Car Concept to the UK.

A team from Polestar, the Swedish racing and tuning company that built the concept, recently visited Britain to discuss the model with Volvo dealers. According to our source the meeting was told that a production

version would keep both the concept's four-wheel-drive powertrain and output of around 400bhp. Power will come from a highly tuned version of Volvo's familiar 2.5-litre 'T5' turbocharged petrol motor – the same engine that powered the recent Focus RS. If it delivers on those numbers, the C30 would represent a serious challenge to the recently launched Audi RS3.

It's by no means guaranteed the car will come here, though. Our source



also told us that some of those in the meeting raised serious doubts about the suggested £50,000 price point – £10K more than the 335bhp Audi – leaving dealers fearing they'll struggle to find buyers for even the 30

right-hand-drive examples Polestar is proposing to make.

'If the car was to come here it would have to fit into a broader performance strategy,' a Volvo spokesman told us.





# SESTO ELEMENTO FOR PRODUCTION?

## DEVELOPMENT OF LAMBORGHINI CONCEPT CONTINUES; LIMITED RUN OF 20 CARS POSSIBLE

**L**amborghini is on the verge of deciding whether to put its recent Sesto Elemento motor show concept into extremely limited production.

evo has learned that senior managers in Sant'Agata are keen to give the green light to a production run of just 20 cars based on the stunning carbonfibre concept shown at last year's Paris show. And if the Sesto Elemento (which translates as 'Sixth Element' in Italian) does go ahead, it's set to be even more expensive than the last limited-run Lambo, the Reventón, with each car costing around 2million euros (£1.75m).

Despite the stratospheric price tag, Lamborghini insiders have confirmed that there are no plans to homologate the Sesto Elemento for road use. 'Even if we do decide to make the car, it will never be road-legal,' a well-placed source told us. So owners would be limited to using the car on track, although this would enable it to avoid punitive taxes charged on road cars imported into some markets.

As shown at Paris, the baby supercar has an ultra-lightweight body made almost entirely from carbonfibre, reducing its kerb weight to less than 1000kg compared with the 1410kg of the Gallardo LP560-4 with which it shares its 562bhp V10 engine and

four-wheel-drive system. A company insider who has driven the concept described the performance as 'ballistic' and Lamborghini says the lack of mass means it can outspurt a Veyron from zero to 62mph, with a claimed time of just 2.5sec. All the weight and performance targets would stand for the production version. 'If it's not below 1000kg then it's not the Sesto Elemento any more,' our source said.

Although the decision to build the car has yet to be made, Lamborghini's

**'IT WOULD BE MORE EXPENSIVE THAN THE REVENTÓN'**

engineers have continued development behind the scenes, encouraged by the determination of VW Group boss Martin Winterkorn that Lamborghini should become the group's 'centre of excellence' for carbonfibre.

The company has already been tasked with finding carbon solutions for cars across all of VW's brands. The Sesto Elemento concept featured both carbonfibre suspension components and driveshafts, meaning a production version could become the perfect advertisement for the company's expertise with the material.

**Michael Taylor**

Sesto Elemento's all-carbon body wowed crowds at the 2010 Paris show; car weighs less than 1000kg



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# PRIUS SPORTS COUPE IN THE PIPELINE

## SPORTY TOYOTA DUE IN 2014, WITH REAR DRIVE AND NEW PLUG-IN HYBRID SYSTEM

**T**he Prius family is growing fast. The new Prius MPV, the Prius Alpha ('Prius v' in the US and Prius Plus in Europe) has just landed in Japanese showrooms, and now Toyota is working on the first genuinely sporty Prius, the Prius Sports Coupe.

On the left is a visualisation of how the Sports Coupe could look when it debuts in late 2014 – the same year the next-generation Prius will surface.

Over the past two years we've caught rumours of estate, convertible and even SUV Prius variants, but





# CATERHAM FUTURE

TEAM LOTUS OWNERSHIP SPELLS NEW MODELS AND F1 INPUT

Following on from the purchase of the sports car maker by Team Lotus, Caterham boss Ansar Ali (right) has been telling *evo* what the move means for both companies.

Ali is quick to dispel the rumour that Team Lotus's Tony Fernandez bought Caterham to give a strategic advantage in his ongoing legal battle with Group Lotus over the rights to use the iconic name in F1.

'It was the other way around,' he says. 'I needed to find a partner, a co-investor to take the business forwards. I did a bit of homework on Tony Fernandez and, based on what I heard, it seemed like it was worth a phone call. The rest, as they say, is history.'

Ali says that the deal will give Caterham both financial stability and the funding necessary to develop new models – but he insists that the iconic Seven will remain at the heart of the company's line-up: 'Definitely, unequivocally. For me the Seven is absolutely core to our business, but now we can push the product envelope, staying true to what I believe are our core values.'

It's too early for any concrete plans about future models, although Ali hints that he's keen to develop a car that will work in parts of the world where heat or humidity limit the appeal of the Seven.

So, to reverse the question, what does Team Lotus get out of the deal?

'Tony's always wanted to be involved in the car business,' says Ali. 'It's no secret he had aspirations

will be announced shortly,' says Ali. 'All of a sudden the Caterham brand and the name Caterham will have a global audience, something that's always been a challenge for us.'

If Team Lotus ultimately loses the battle to use its name in F1 then the Caterham brand could be called in as a replacement. But even without that, Ali is confident that Caterham will have a direct involvement in

## 'SUDDENLY THE CATERHAM NAME WILL HAVE A GLOBAL AUDIENCE'



for Lotus because he believes in the philosophy of keeping it light, keeping it simple – the attributes Caterham also has from the providence of Colin Chapman and the Seven. Let's say the synergies were obvious.'

And where does Caterham fit into Fernandez's wider interests, including the F1 team?

'It will be providing the marketing platform in association with both the GP2 and Formula 1 teams, and that

the team's F1 activities. 'The details are still to be finalised,' he says, 'and we'll be making some formal announcements in due course.'

There's another thing Ali's confident of – that he'll continue to lead Caterham: 'This is very personal for me. I'm very much the head of this company and I'm looking forward to going forwards with it.'

■ [Read the full interview at evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk)

Below: links with Formula 1 should benefit Caterham, says company MD Ansar Ali (above)



the one that has really piqued our interest is the Prius Sports Coupe project. Apparently there has been a strong push from the US market for a sportier model.

A Toyota insider told us that with development of the Lexus LFA supercar scaling down and R&D funds and personnel being re-routed to future hybrid sports-car projects, we can expect to see a proliferation of more-fun hybrid cars over the next three to five years. It seems that Toyota CEO Akio Toyoda – a rev-head would-be racer – is having

some influence on the company's car development programme.

One of the highlights of the Sports Coupe will be the option of a manual transmission that Toyota is developing for hybrids at the Higashi-Fuji proving ground. That gearbox will be bolted to the next generation Toyota Hybrid System (THS), a plug-in hybrid set-up that will be completely new and not inherited from the current Prius.

We also hear that the Sports Coupe will get a rear-wheel-drive platform from the Lexus GS and IS, and will combine the plug-in hybrid unit with

lightweight lithium-ion batteries that generate significantly more power than the current Prius's nickel-metal hydride items while maintaining class-leading mileage and CO2 emissions.

And this is just the beginning. Our source tells us that, come 2015, Toyota will create a unique Prius brand, from which we can expect all future hybrid models to come forth, as well as a rumoured hydrogen fuel-cell-powered saloon. And the flagship car for the new brand? The Prius Sports Coupe.

Peter Lyon

## BRIEFS



### ■ RAPIDE COMES HOME

Production of the Aston Martin Rapide is coming to the UK. It's currently the firm's only model built away from Gaydon, Rapides instead being put together by Magna Steyr in Graz, Austria. But from late 2012 production of the four-door will switch to Warwickshire, where it will be built alongside the DB9, DBS, Virage and Vantage. And with 240 people currently working on Rapides at Graz, it could mean an influx of new jobs at Gaydon.



### ■ FREE GT-R SERVICING

The Nissan GT-R's 'sensible supercar' credentials have been given a further boost. For a limited time, it comes with a free three-year servicing package if you buy your 911 Turbo-beater with Nissan's own finance plan. It's valid for up to 27,000 miles and covers parts, labour, oils and fluids, while three years' RAC breakdown cover is also included in the deal. If you've already bought your 2011 GT-R, then the package can be added for £499.



### ■ ASTRA GTC UNVEILED

Vauxhall has the VW Scirocco firmly in its crosshairs with the new Astra GTC. It's essentially a three-door Astra with much more svelte and sporty styling than its five-door equivalent. There are four engine choices for now, with a 178bhp 1.6-litre turbo petrol the current performance pick and a 163bhp 2-litre the only diesel option. Prices kick off at £18,495. A circa-300bhp Astra VXR is due in 2012.





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# C63 'BLACK' WILL BE BEST HANDLING MERC

EMPHASIS ON CHASSIS DYNAMICS TO SPREAD ACROSS RANGE

**A** senior Mercedes exec has promised that next year's Black Series edition of the recently-launched C63 AMG Coupe will be the 'best handling car in the company's history'.

'The new handling philosophy – and that's what it is – has left an impression on all of us, but the [black series] will really cement it,' Mercedes' VP of project management, Phillip Schiemer, told *evo*.

The C63 AMG Coupe will be powered by the same high-

compression version of the 6.2-litre V8 that powered the CLK 63 AMG Black Series, meaning that the coupe should deliver storming straight-line pace as well. Anticipate a 0-62mph time of around 4.2sec coupled with a top speed held back by a 186mph limiter.

Visually, the Black Series will be distinguished by a deep front splitter and also a slightly wider track. Aggressively flared arches will cover 19-inch forged alloy wheels and carbon-ceramic brake discs.

But although the Black Series will

provide the star power for Merc's new emphasis on handling, the company is determined to spread the philosophy through the range. Both AMG and non-AMG versions of upcoming models will benefit from lessons learned in the development of the new coupe.

'Next year's SL will be a huge statement in handling from us,' Schiemer promised, 'and the A-class four-door coupe will be designed from the philosophy of handling from the C-class coupe, too.'

**Michael Taylor**



**'ANTICIPATE  
0-62MPH IN  
AROUND 4.2SEC'**

# MOST POWERFUL MÉGANE

NEW 'TROPHY' VERSION SEES POWER HIKE TO 265BHP WHILE PRICE RISES TO £27,820

**R**enault has announced an updated version of the RenaultSport Mégane, and another outing for its 'Trophy' badge. Although not pitched as a successor to the seminal previous-generation R26.R, engine upgrades do make the Trophy

the most powerful Mégane to date.

Changes over the standard car are limited. The Trophy features an extra 15bhp from its 2.0-litre turbocharged engine, taking the total to 265bhp. That trims just a tenth of a second from the official 0-62mph time – 6.0 seconds instead of 6.1 – and adds 2mph to the top speed,

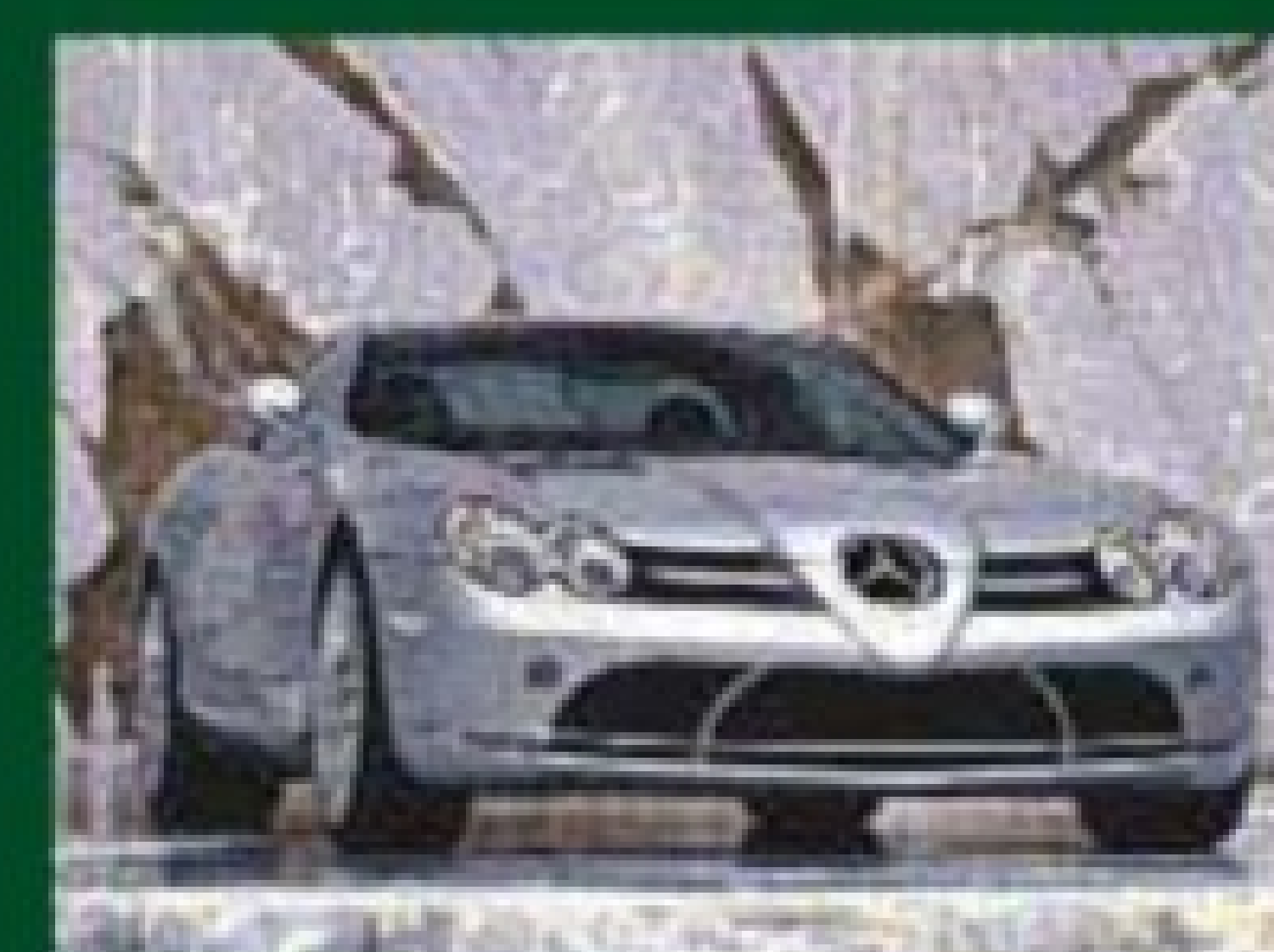
which rises to 158mph.

Only 500 of the Mégane Trophy will be produced, with just 50 of those destined for the UK. Standard equipment includes Recaro seats with yellow seatbelts and 19-inch black Speedline alloys with red detailing (reminiscent of those fitted to the Audi RS3) fitted with Bridgestone Potenza RS050A tyres.

Only two colours are available, both metallic – 'Liquid Yellow' or black. The Trophy costs £27,820, £600 more than a Mégane Cup 250 fitted with the Recaro package, and the price includes access to all RenaultSport's UK 2012 trackdays. Deliveries will start in late July.

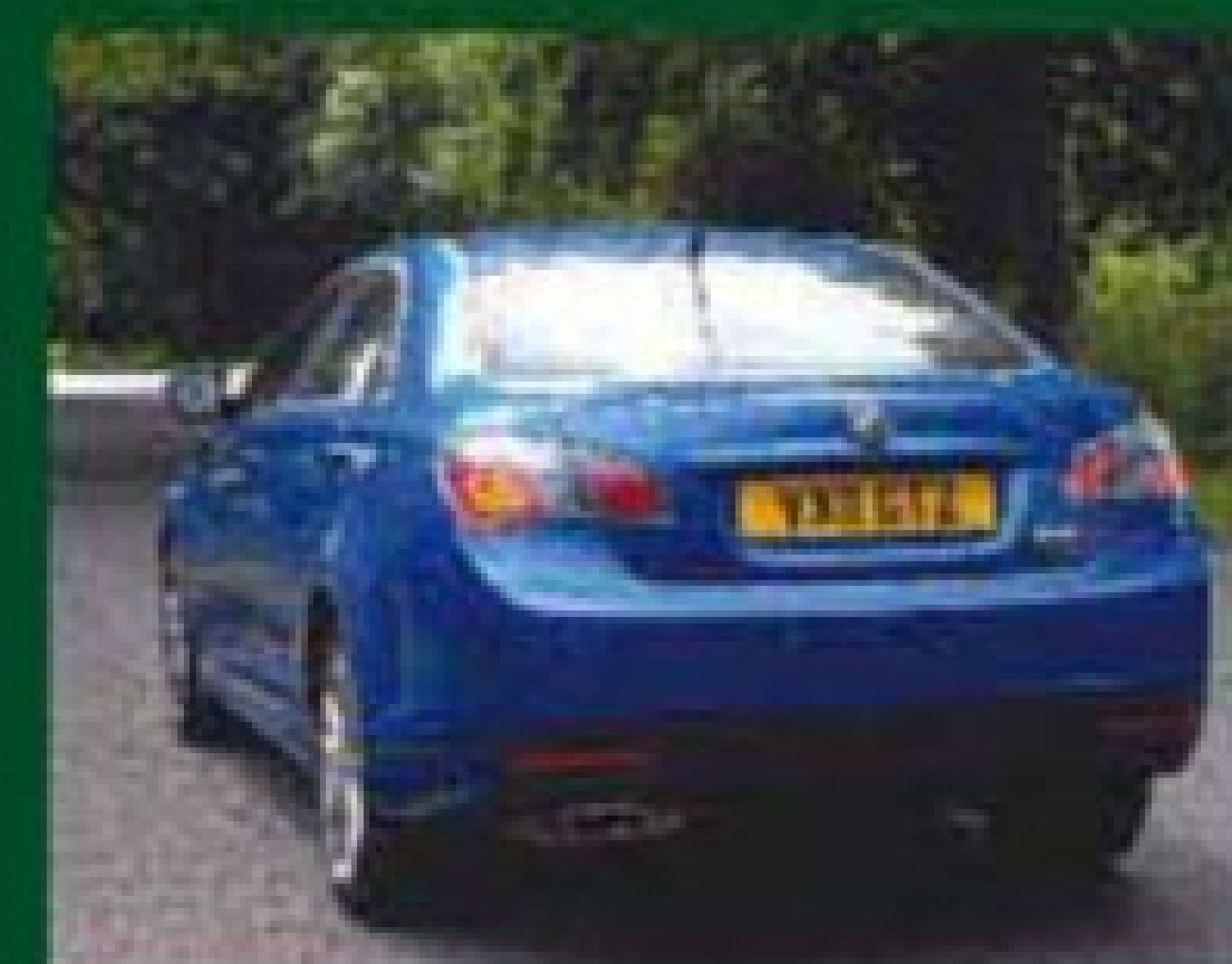


## BRIEFS



### GOING, GOING, GONE?

Wondering how many examples of your performance car are left registered on UK roads? Wonder no more. The exceptionally cool [www.howmanyleft.co.uk](http://www.howmanyleft.co.uk) splits car populations into road and SORN registrations over the past couple of years, so you can monitor how fast numbers are dwindling, or how many lucrative barn-finds there could be. More importantly, you can discover there are more McLaren SLRs in Britain than Renault Fuego Turbos...



### MG HEADS BACK TO THE 'FIFTIES

New-age MG has reached back into the brand's history to come up with the name for the new saloon version of the MG6. It's going to be called 'Magnette' – a badge last used in the mid-1960s. Mechanically identical to the hatchback, and also built in Longbridge from kits imported from China, the Magnette's USP is its vast boot. Prices range from £15,995 to £19,995.



### SO YOU THINK YOU'RE QUICK

Club MSV is launching a new type of trackday. Titled 'How Fast', it does exactly what it says on the tin. Not only that, *evo* is involved in the development of the trackday and you'll be hearing a lot more about it at [howfast.co.uk](http://howfast.co.uk) and [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk) very soon. See p98 for more details.



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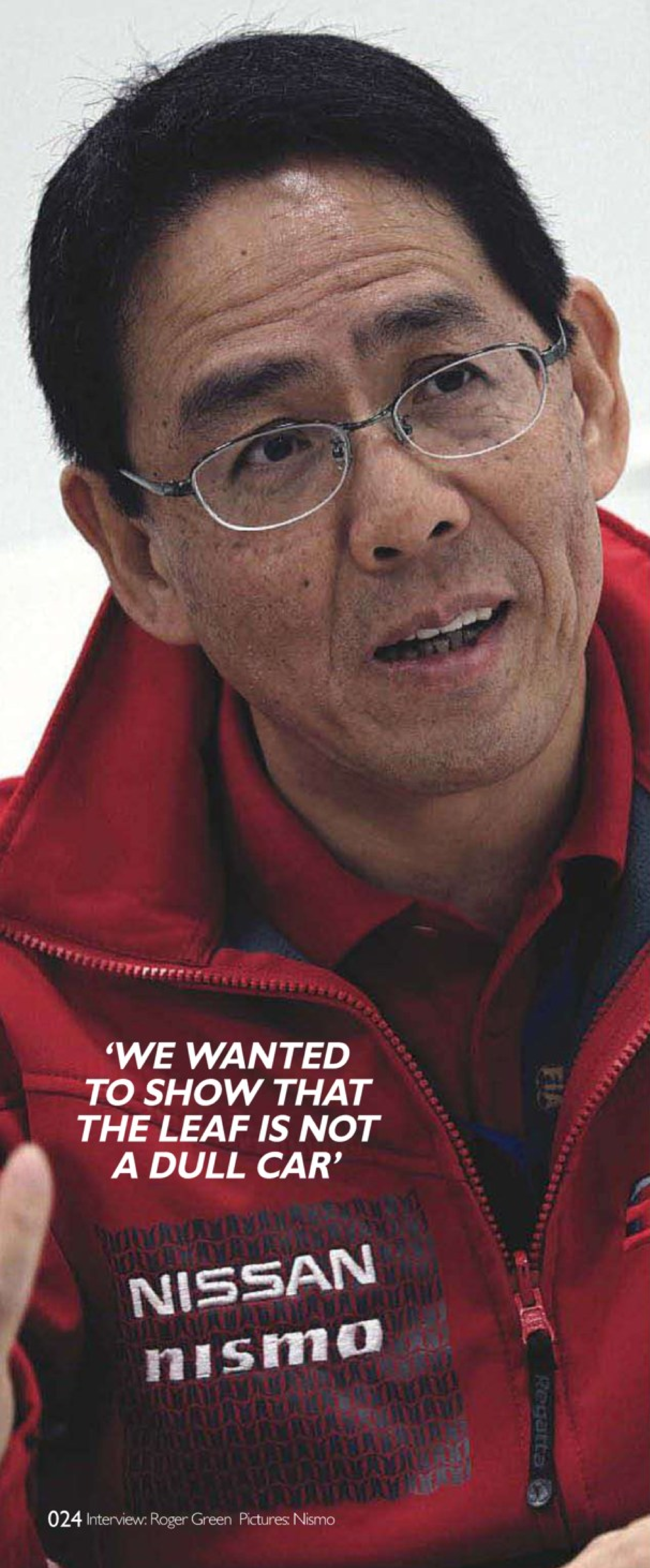


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**'WE WANTED TO SHOW THAT THE LEAF IS NOT A DULL CAR'**

**NISSAN  
nismo**

## AN INTERVIEW WITH... **SHOICHI MIYATANI**

THE HEAD OF NISMO ON ITS GT3-SPEC NISSAN GT-R AND RACING THE NISSAN LEAF

**I**t's a busy time for Nissan's motorsport division right now. Not only are its GT-Rs front runners in the GT1 World Championship, but it has also just announced a programme for customer GT3 GT-Rs in 2012 on top of working on a one-make series for carbonfibre-bodied Nissan Leaf racers. We spoke to Nismo president Shoichi Miyatani about how these varied projects are progressing.

**It was a risk choosing the inexperienced James Rumsey Group (under the umbrellas of Sumo Power and JRM) to run the Nismo GT-Rs in GT1, but the results have been impressive.**

Yes, we began working with them at the end of 2009 and they have proved that they can attract very good drivers, and although the teams are new they are full of vastly experienced personnel who are very good at setting up the cars and running them. We give them all the technical back-up they need and the relationship is working very well.

**You are one of the strongest supporters of GT1, but with shrinking grid sizes and no real strong manufacturer interest, changes are needed. What are your thoughts on the plans to introduce a class structure?**

I think it is something we can support. Bundling GT1, GT2, GT3 and GTE into one category to be recognised as a GT World Championship would be a good way forward. And it would not just be niche supercars, so that suits us perfectly. The racing should be very attractive.

**Is this the reason behind your move into GT3?**

No, it was not linked. We looked at the sheer size and growth of the GT3 markets around the world and realised that there was a good business case. It will improve the GT-R's popularity among race teams and this specification of car can be used all over the world, including Japan and the USA. We are not planning to enter a



race team anywhere ourselves, but we will provide strong engineering support to all the customers.

**The Nismo Leaf RC (Racing Competition, pictured above) will be performing demo runs at Le Mans and Goodwood. What are your plans for it after that?**

Firstly, we wanted to show that the Leaf is not a dull car, and building one as a racer will enhance its image. The next step is to use it for a one-make series, and it is not just the traditional circuit formats that we're looking at; we would like to see it racing in metropolitan areas and even indoors. The strength of this car is the instant torque, not the maximum speed, and with no emissions it fits naturally in a metropolitan environment.

**How difficult was it to develop an electric car into a racer?**

We had to firstly decide if no noise was okay for a race series, but we reckon it will be. Autonomy for the race duration was another issue. We decided that the cars must run for 20 minutes at racing speed, or a little longer if possible, while retaining the standard car's batteries, motor and inverter. Up ahead we may need to enhance the battery or motor to make the car faster, but making the car faster reduces the running time, which in turn means you have to put more batteries in the car, making it heavier, so it's a decision we will have to make.

The normal production leaf weighs in at 1.6 tons, but this car is just 920kg. It has a carbon monocoque, and anything else that could be made in carbon has been. It's also rear-wheel drive to make it more entertaining. The test driver who races for us in GT500 in Japan told me that it's very good, and a lot of fun, which is exactly what we want.





## British GT Championship

On track for another epic season



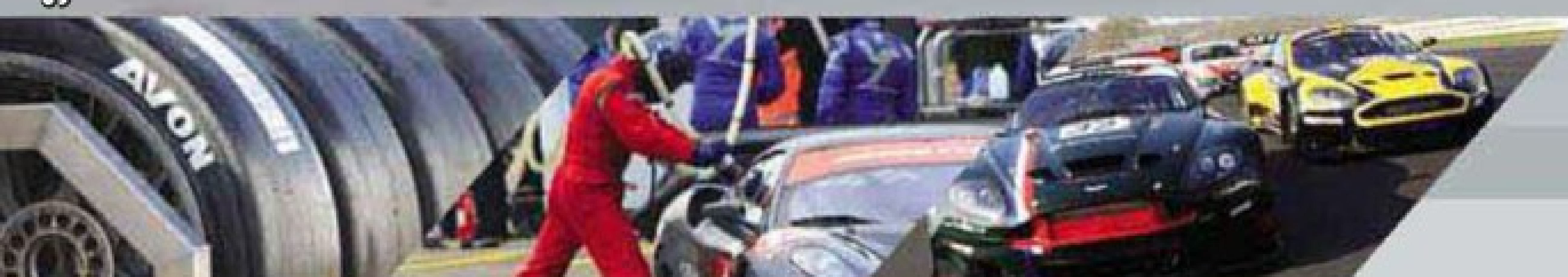
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# SYNTHETIC OIL EXPLAINED

MORE AND MORE CARS ARE USING FULLY SYNTHETIC OILS. JOHN BARKER FINDS OUT WHY, AND WHAT THEY ARE MADE OF

## What is a synthetic motor oil?

It's a lubricant made not from crude oil but from chemical compounds created artificially, or synthesised. 'Synthetic oils contain only the molecules that are useful to a lubricant,' explains Brian Utton, technical manager at Castrol Automotive. 'Mineral oil, because of its wide variation of source material – trees, animals, dinosaurs – contains a very wide variation of molecule sizes and types, and other constituents, including sulphur, waxes and aromatics, not all of which are helpful.'

## Why is it better than regular mineral oil?

Oil does a number of jobs inside an engine. Its primary role is to keep moving surfaces apart and avoid the heat, noise and wear that would be caused by the resulting friction. It also helps to keep the inside of the engine free from deposits and forms a seal between the piston rings and cylinder bore for good combustion.

A synthetic oil flows better from cold, for easier starting and quicker oiling, and is more stable at higher temperatures – it doesn't evaporate or burn as easily, making it especially effective in turbocharged engines. It also has a more stable viscosity over a wide temperature range.

## Why is it being used for an increasing number of engines?

It's another tool for reducing a car's CO2 emissions. Synthetics are thinner and so offer less resistance from cold, create less drag inside the engine and take less energy to pump.

## Are there different types of synthetics?

There are five groups of oils used to make engine lubricants. These are called 'base stocks'. Groups I and II are essentially cleaned-up crude oil, the other three meet the chemical definition of a synthetic. Group III is made up of highly processed, hydrocracked mineral oils with low levels of undesirable constituents. Not everyone in the oil industry believes Group III oils should be classed as synthetics.

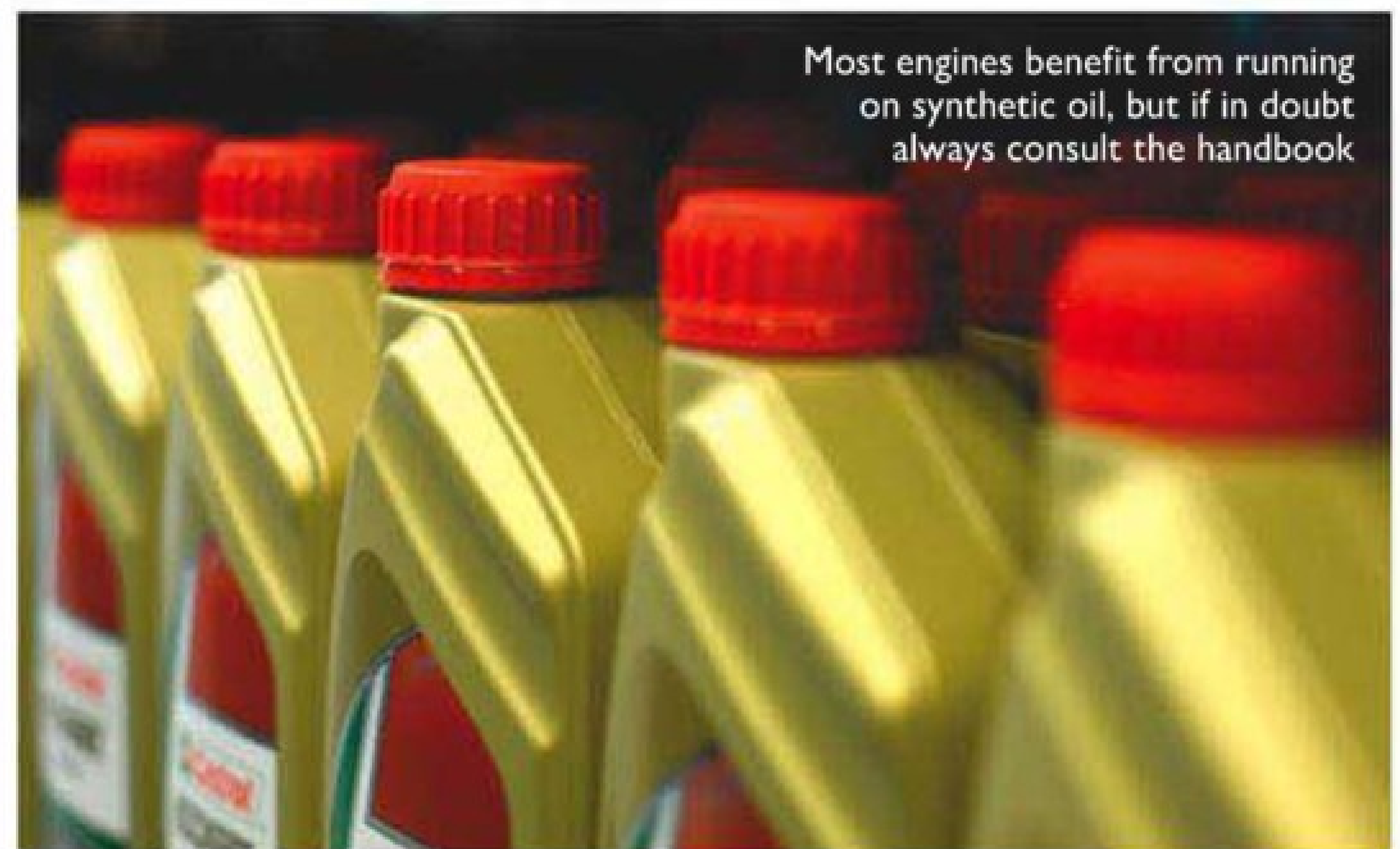
Group IV and V oils are man-made chemical compounds. Group IV are polyalphaolefins (PAO), created by taking the ethylene gas from crude oil, then refining and polymerising it to form larger molecules. Group V oils are synthesised from various chemicals and include esters, which are formed by reacting an acid with an alcohol. The first synthetics, developed in the 1940s, and the first commercially available synthetic, produced by Chevron in the mid-'60s, were of this last type.

## What else is in engine oil?

There are generally around a dozen ingredients. Around 80-90 per cent of engine oil is base stock, the rest being the additive packs that enhance the ability of the oil and do various jobs, such as keeping the engine clean, neutralising acids and holding combustion particles in suspension.

## What are semi-synthetics?

Not, as their name might suggest, a blend of half synthetic, half mineral oil. Generally, these are up to 30 per



Most engines benefit from running on synthetic oil, but if in doubt always consult the handbook

## 'SYNTHETIC OILS ARE ANOTHER TOOL FOR REDUCING CO2 EMISSIONS'

cent synthetic, but semi-synthetics can also be mineral oil enhanced with Group III oils and additive packs. 'It is the performance level of the oil that is important, not the synthetic content or type,' says Utton. 'You should always look at the specifications first when choosing an oil for your vehicle.'

## How about running-in using mineral oil?

Synthetics can be too good at their job and inhibit the running-in process.

In particular, piston rings need to bed into the bores to ensure a good seal for combustion, but modern engine materials and building techniques mean that synthetic oils can now be filled from new.

## Can any engine run synthetic oil?

Rebuilt older designs will need running-in with mineral oil but should be capable of running a synthetic after the first change. Current additive packs mean that leaky seals are largely a thing of the past, but always take advice from a lubricant specialist or an expert on your engine. Whether your engine would benefit from running a fully synthetic oil depends on how hard the oil has to work.

## Is it true that synthetic oils are infinitely recyclable?

No; synthetics still suffer degradation.

■ With thanks to Brian Utton at Castrol Automotive ([www.castrol.com/uk](http://www.castrol.com/uk))





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# A POSTCARD FROM... VMAX200

SPEED TRAPS ARE THE SCOURGE OF MODERN MOTORING –  
UNLESS YOU'RE AT VMAX, AS **RICHARD MEADEN** DISCOVERS

I never went to a rave in my youth, but having attended VMAX200's latest gathering at the Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground, I think I've found the petrolhead's equivalent.

There's no loud music and the only drug on offer is a massive hit of adrenalin (and some frankly terrible burger-van coffee), but if you're a car freak looking for the ultimate rush, VMAX is something unique.

Founded by Craig Williams, VMAX gatherings occur a couple of times a year. Always organised covertly by word-of-mouth, and always held at Bruntingthorpe – Britain's best-known

runway venue – these events attract a loyal following and a brilliant blend of seriously quick metal. At the most recent event, held in May, there was everything from a hyper-rare Ruf CTR3 and Lexus LFA to a shrieking Carrera GT, wildly tuned Monaros and banzai Nissan GT-Rs. There was even a Morgan Aeromax.

I'm mildly ashamed to admit that in all my years of hooning I'd never hit an authenticated 200mph. Consequently I was relishing VMAX as the chance to finally join the 200 Club. There are a handful of road cars that can do that on Brunters' two-mile straight. Most of them are tuner specials or £1 million

trinkets. Another is the 650bhp Noble M600, which as luck would have it is built just up the road. A quick email exchange later and Noble's battle-worn pale blue development car was mine for the day.

After a 198mph warm-up run, the M600 never dipped below 200mph all day. My eventual best was 205mph, which is pretty bloody exhilarating I can tell you! That was good enough for joint second with a 1000bhp Monaro, and 2mph shy of the satanic CTR3. The outright VMAX record is 222mph, set by the lunatics from 9ff.

To find out more about VMAX, take a look at [www.vmax200.com](http://www.vmax200.com)

**'IF YOU'RE A CAR FREAK LOOKING FOR THE  
ULTIMATE RUSH, VMAX IS SOMETHING UNIQUE'**





1. Ruf CTR3 on its way to a best of 207mph. 2. VMAX attracts a truly eclectic mix of cars. 3. Contenders are released in pairs. Here an 800bhp RS4 toasts a Carrera GT off the line. 4. Speedo shot from Dickie's Noble M600. White knuckles out of frame. 5. M600 draws much attention form VMAXers. 6. Aeromax sounds like thunder. Manages 156mph. 7. 'You're nicked!' 8. LFA an unexpected visitor





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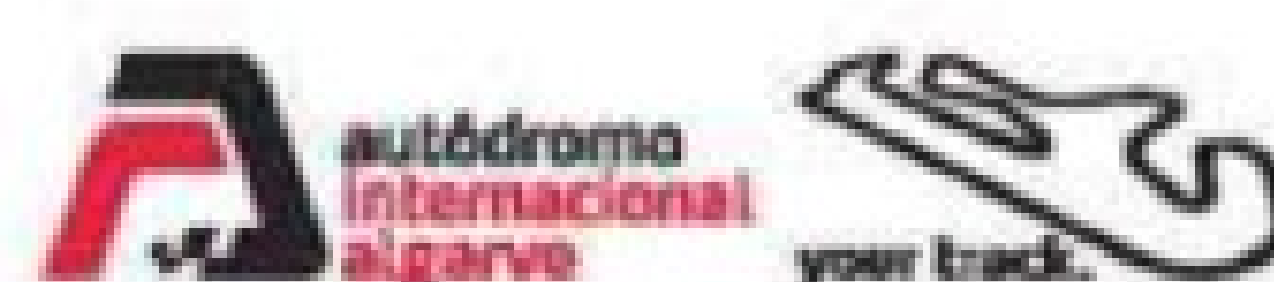


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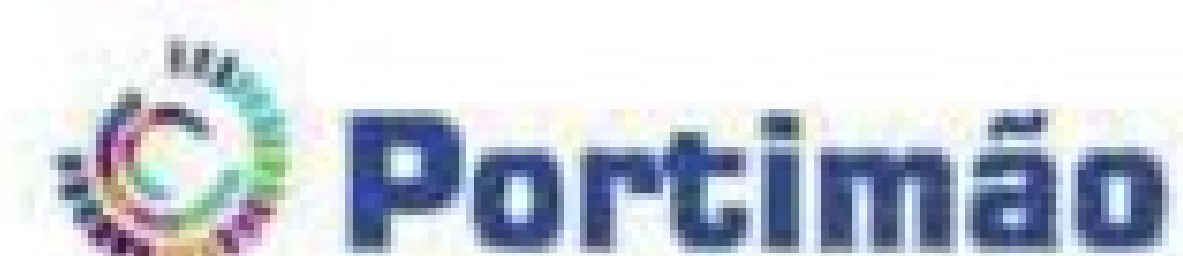


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# TONY SET TO GO RACING

LUCKY READER WINS PLACE IN MSV'S TRACKDAY TROPHY CHAMPIONSHIP

'I can't remember the last time I won something!' said a stunned Tony Hurcombe when I called with the good news that his was the winning entry in our MSV Trackday Trophy competition. If everything goes to plan, he'll soon be developing the winning habit...

The aim of the MSV championship is to encourage trackday regulars to make the next step up and begin racing. The rules have been

formulated to keep costs down by including the types of machines you'd find on a regular trackday, and with all the drivers at the same level it ought to be a far less intimidating experience than leaping into a regular race series.

The first part of Tony's prize was to take him through the process of gaining a race licence, so we headed for the Bedford Autodrome and met his instructor for the day, Martin Sismey. Tony had never driven at the



Left: competition winner Tony Hurcombe with MSV instructor Martin Sismey before they head out onto Bedford Autodrome's GT circuit (below) for some practice laps. Below left: varied field for a Trophy race

Autodrome before and to make his task that bit more complicated he would be tested over the full four-mile GT circuit. But he would get three 20-minute training sessions in the VX220 school car before the nerve-wracking moment of truth.

Turned out we needn't have worried – Tony and Martin arrived back in the pitlane after the judging phase wreathed in smiles. 'As soon as the test started he put in his best two laps of the day!' said Martin.

Bodes well that: possessing the correct mind-set and the ability to perform under pressure is a key part of racing successfully. Tony walked the written part of the exam too. He's now officially a race driver.

The next stage will be for Tony to get himself a car, and after that he'll

get more training from us and a free entry into his debut race. Choosing a car will require a little homework, such is the wealth of options. There are four classes, all based on power-to-weight with the outright maximum permitted set at 200bhp/ton. This means a wide selection of machines has been lining up on the grid during the first couple of rounds of the championship: everything from hot hatches like Clios and Minis, through to 3-series BMWs and even the odd Porsche 944. Now Tony has a lot of eBay searching and not a little head-scratching ahead of him. We'll let you know how he gets on.

For more information about the championship and how to go racing, log onto [www.trackdaytrophy.co.uk](http://www.trackdaytrophy.co.uk)



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# EVO ESSENTIALS

AMONGST THIS MONTH'S OBJECTS OF DESIRE: SOME RETRO POSTERS AND A MOTORIZED SKATEBOARD



## Historic Ferrari posters

Price: £395 each  
From: [www.pullmaneditions.com](http://www.pullmaneditions.com)

Old race posters in good condition command big money, but there is a more affordable way to get that same look on your wall. Pullman Editions specialises in commissioning and producing new posters in a classic style. Its latest collection is titled 'Historic Ferrari – Legends of Road and Track 1949-1974' and consists of 24 limited-edition posters, all printed using traditional lithographic techniques on 100 per cent cotton paper



## Boom Borda 2 Classic electric skateboard

Price: £307.49 From: [www.rokitscience.co.uk](http://www.rokitscience.co.uk)

Fancy a fun electric vehicle but can't stretch to a Tesla? Then how about this battery-powered skateboard from Rokit Science? Controlled by a hand-held remote, it's got a 400W, 3600rpm motor, a top speed of 20mph and can travel 13 miles on a single charge



## Leica M9 'Titanium'

Price: £19,800  
From: [www.leica-camera.co.uk](http://www.leica-camera.co.uk)

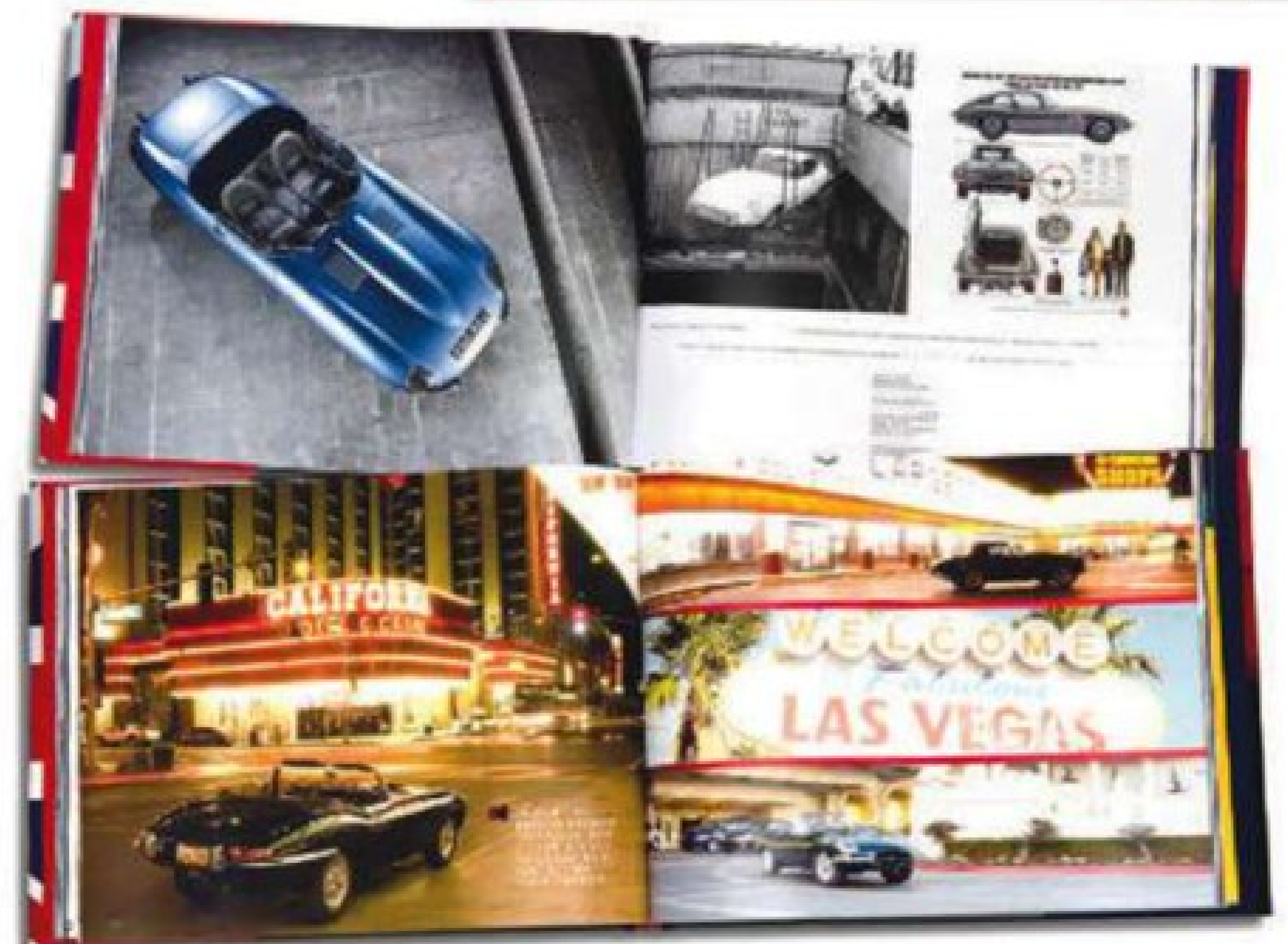
As if Leica's classically styled, 18-megapixel M9 wasn't desirable enough already, this limited-edition version has been further improved by none other than VW Group design head Walter de'Silva. Its shell is made from super-tough titanium, the grips use Audi-spec leather and the rear screen is protected by scratch-resistant sapphire crystal glass. Just 500 are being made



## Bosch Ixo Vino

Price: £59.99  
From: [www.bosch-do-it.co.uk](http://www.bosch-do-it.co.uk)

The Bosch Ixo is Europe's most popular cordless screwdriver, with around 10million having been sold to date. To celebrate – or perhaps to help with the celebrations – it's now available with a corkscrew adapter. The usual selection of ten screwdriver bits are also included, so you've got no excuse for not doing some DIY too, preferably before you uncork the wine



## E-type – 50 Years of a Design Icon

Price: £49 From: [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

Specially commissioned by Jaguar to mark the E-type's 50th birthday, this lavish, 144-page hardback by FP Creative is a fitting tribute. Previously unseen shots from the Jaguar archives, newly commissioned photography, and facsimiles of original brochures and artwork make this a clear cut above the usual hagiography. A 'VIP' version at £299 even includes a reproduction of the E-type's original upholstery leather





### TAG Heuer Monza

Price: £4500

From: [www.tagheuer.com](http://www.tagheuer.com)

When Ferrari drivers Clay Regazzoni and Niki Lauda took first and third respectively in the 1975 Monza GP (resulting in a championship win for Lauda), team sponsor Heuer was inspired to create the original Monza chronograph, which has since come to be highly valued among vintage car watch fans. Now the name has been resurrected in this deliciously retro chronograph, which looks remarkably like the 1970s version, right down to the yellow hands and numbers and the simple Heuer (rather than TAG Heuer) branding. Despite the retro looks, the 38mm cushion case contains TAG Heuer's state-of-the-art Calibre 36 movement. Just 1911 examples will be available worldwide – a number that commemorates the year Heuer introduced the first dashboard-mounted car chronograph, the Time of Trip.



# A slice of retro Monza magic

HEUER CHRONOGRAPH KICKS OFF OUR ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST DESIRABLE TIMEPIECES. BY SIMON DE BURTON

### Legends in Time 'Moss Monaco 61'

Price: £2695. From: [www.legendsintime.co.uk](http://www.legendsintime.co.uk)

Believe it or not, last month saw the passing of half a century since Sir Stirling Moss achieved his most celebrated F1 victory in the Rob Walker Lotus 18 at Monaco to become the first GP driver to win at the circuit three times. To mark the milestone, Sir Stirling's main sponsor, Peter Ratcliffe of F1 art firm Legends in Time, has created this limited-edition chronograph with a dial in the 'blue-black' team colour of Rob Walker racing. Based on the 80th birthday model produced last year (see *evo* issue 151), the Moss Monaco 61 will be limited to 161 pieces, each with a dial and presentation box personally signed by the great man and supplied with three leather straps. Trivia fans might be interested to know, incidentally, that Sir Stirling designed his own gold watch bracelet back in the '50s – it comprised just four large links, meaning it could easily be wiped clean of post-race oil and grime.



### Zenith El Primero 'Blashford'

Price: £5500

From: [www.urlinhere.com](http://www.urlinhere.com)

Fans of classic Range Rovers will know all about the Darien Gap expedition of 1971/72, in which a pair of Rangies were driven through the dense jungle between north and south America. The Gap is just 100 miles long and 30 miles wide, but it was four months before the battered vehicles emerged, led by the redoubtable Major (now Colonel) John Blashford Snell, who continues to explore the world's most inhospitable places even at the age of 74. While flicking through some dusty press cuttings last year, Zenith CEO Jean-Frederic Dufour discovered that Blashers and his team had been equipped with Zenith El Primero chronographs for the trip – and was amazed on contacting the Colonel to discover that he still had possession of his original watch almost 40 years on. Cue the launch of the 'Blashford' El Primero, a modern-day replica, of which 500 will be made.





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Sam Hignett  
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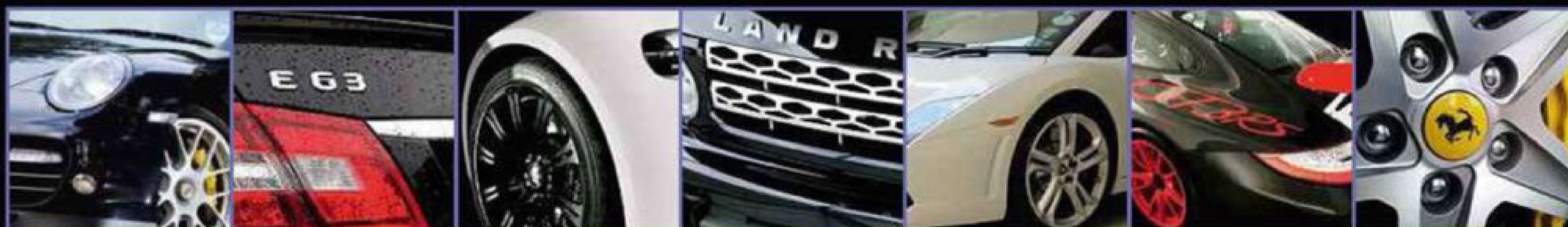
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# Petrolhead

Richard Porter

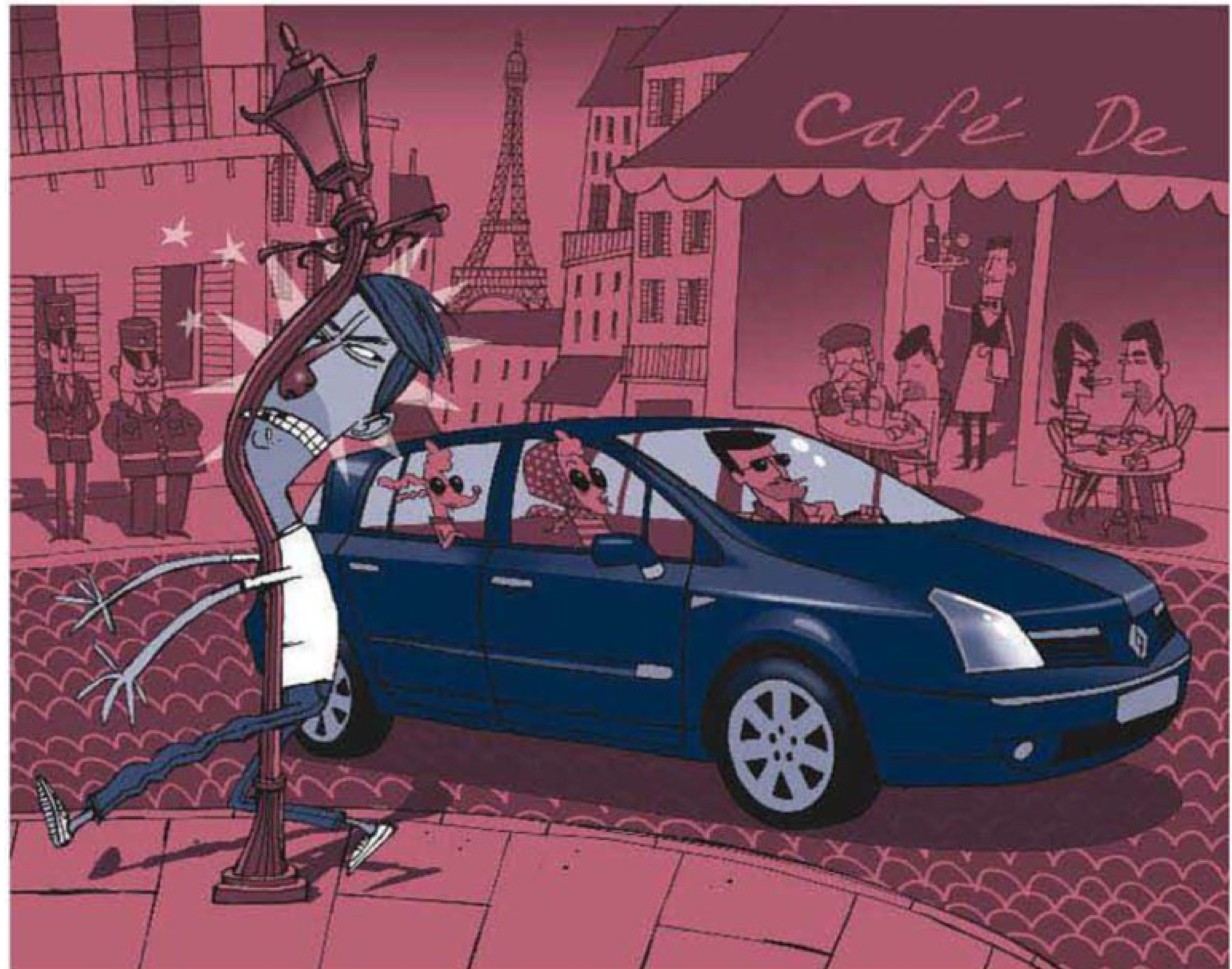
*Top Gear* TV's script editor has an unhealthy fondness for unsuccessful executive saloons. Top of his list? The Renault Vel Satis...

**D**o you remember the Renault Vel Satis? A Laguna underneath, a festival of beige leather and unusual marquetry on top, it was sometimes called 'the French 5-series' even though it was so self-consciously distanced from its dour German rivals that it was practically falling into La Rochelle harbour. The Vel Satis heralded an era when Renault decided its cars would look better if they appeared to have a lot of junk in the trunk and was also, fact fans, the very first car we filmed for the pilot episode of what became the current format of *Top Gear*. If memory serves, we took it to Swindon.

Oh, and there's one other thing you should know about the Vel Satis: it was rubbish. Utterly, hopelessly rubbish. You know how some cars are set up to ride well and some cars are set up to corner flatly? The Vel Satis managed the rare feat of being set up to do neither, so it was fidgety and annoying over bumps yet lollopy and vague around corners as if the entire thing had been benchmarked against a knackered 1980s American hire car. The top-of-the-range 3.5-litre V6 version also boasted an automatic gearbox of such unresponsiveness that on some occasions you might assume it had left the car entirely and nipped home to put a wash on.

In fact, the only thing more disastrous than the Vel Satis's on-road ability was its sales performance in the UK. This unconvincing executive car was such a bustle-bottomed dead weight in the showroom that by 2005, just three years after it went on sale, Renault's British importer politely asked the factory not to send any more across the Channel. In other countries it soldiered on for another four years, but us Rosbifs received just 1400 of these unloved oddballs before right-hand-drive production ceased.

Fair enough. After all, it was a woefully underdeveloped car. Which makes it all the more curious that I really, really want one. I know it's a hopeless old crock. I also know it's from a time when Renault's quality



## **'A BLACK, FRENCH-PLATED VEL SATIS CRUISING THROUGH PARIS IS A GENUINELY ARRESTING SIGHT'**

control department couldn't organise a tasting in a winery. Ergo, buying a used one would be an ongoing masterclass in electrical malfunction. Yet still I find myself lusting after them and I think I know why. Firstly, they look amazing, especially in dark metallics. A black, French-plated Vel Satis cruising through Paris is a genuinely arresting sight. Although it's worth remembering that a black, French-plated Vel Satis contains men whose job genuinely is arresting people.

The second reason is part of a wider problem: I'm hopelessly drawn to big, obscure, commercially unsuccessful saloons. Undoubtedly part of this weird compulsion is because they're cheap. They've got 30 years to wait until rarity makes them worth

something, and in the meantime the heady stench of failure follows their inexorable slide down the steep slope of depreciation. Which makes finding one in the classifieds part of that delightful car-nerd game that starts, 'Guess what you can get a [insert car name] for these days?'

But near-worthlessness is just part of the appeal. When it comes to the Vel Satis I also like its obscurity, its oddness and even the fact that it was hopelessly ill-equipped to take on its mainstream rivals. It's not just the big Renault that interests me on that score. Do you remember the Volkswagen Passat V8? This was a car so badly resolved that on its press launch one of VW's senior engineers freely described the automatic gearbox option as 'shit'. For this and other

reasons, the number of examples sold was barely more than the number of oddly arranged cylinders in its engine. Yet today I quite fancy one.

And this strange obsession gets even more perverse. Chrysler 300C SRT-8? Ahhh, more power in a baggy chassis that really didn't need it. Rover 75 V8? Ohhhh, sister to the excellent MG ZT 260 but without the performance or the handling. Chevrolet bloody Epica? Awww, it's got a transverse straight-six like a Leyland Princess.

I really don't know what's wrong with me. Just because something is obscure and almost certainly awful shouldn't mean it's desirable. Still, I suppose it could be worse: instead of simply lusting after these inadequate and unloved saloons, I could have gone ahead and bought one.





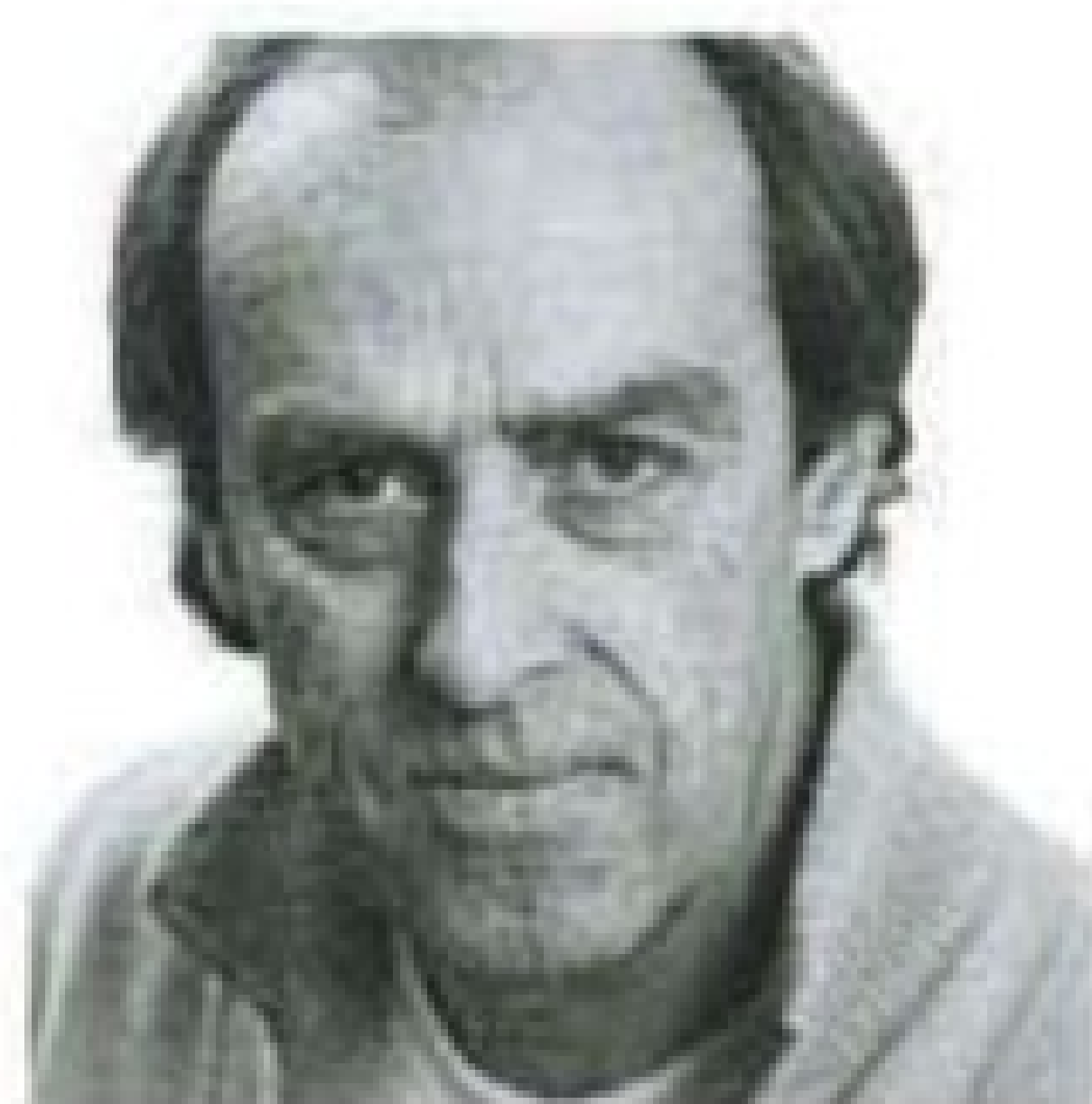
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# The Insider

Harry Metcalfe

Competing in this year's Mille Miglia has made Metcalfe question if modern supercars are trading performance for useability

**W**hat's the perfect car to drive on the Mille Miglia? This was a question I asked myself as we hooned around this year's fantastic Ferrari Tribute to Mille Miglia (of which you can read more on page 110).

It struck me that the 1000-mile road route the event runs over is actually the perfect test for performance cars, having far more relevance to real-world driving than the Nürburgring ever could. Taking in everything from fast dual-carriageways and twisting mountain roads (some with surfaces so bad they would make even Kazakhstan's transport minister blush) to the traffic snarl-ups of Rome and Siena and, finally, blasts through wide-open countryside, it's like one giant proving ground. So if a car works well on the Mille, it should be as close to perfection as a road car can get.

This year's Ferrari contingent was stuffed full of fabulous cars, from the bewitching but fragile 250 SWB, through iconic road-racers like the F40, F50 and 288 GTO, all the way up to the fastest road-going Ferraris of all, the 458 Italia and 599 GTO. Driving any of these would make for an unforgettable experience, but which would be the best of all?

It's not often you get to spend three days observing different generations of Ferraris from such close quarters, but chasing some of the early cars (the 250 Lusso and SWB in particular) and watching them teeter on the edge of adhesion through the endless twists and turns was fascinating, as was following later cars like the 275 GTB and Daytona, both of which proved surprisingly quick on the straighter sections but lost out in the mountains, where you could tell their drivers were having to work pretty hard to keep them on the boil. Heavy steering and their bucking, unforgiving chassis seemed mainly to blame.

The drivers of cars from the late '80s and 1990s were having a much easier time of it. Chassis design had moved

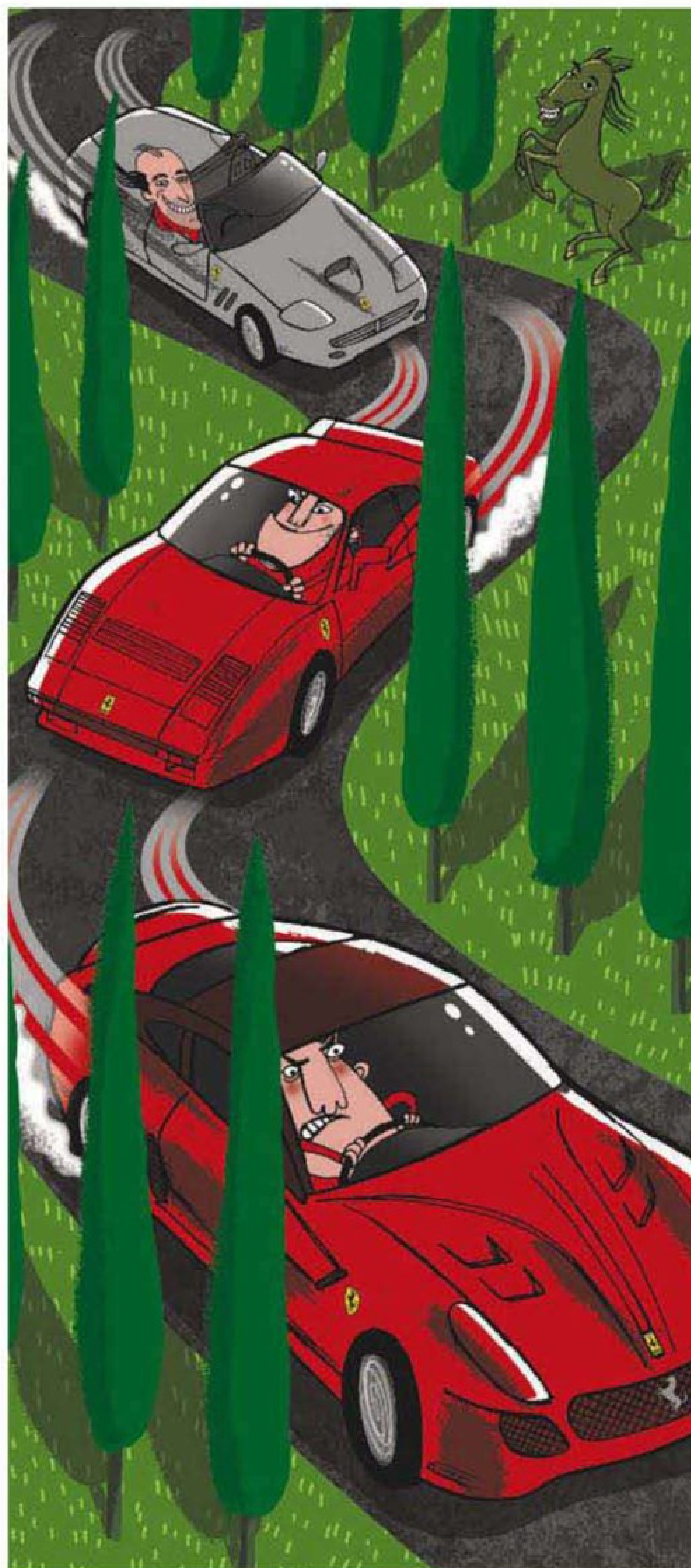
on significantly by then, so these cars seemed to cope far better with the crappy Italian tarmac. Ferrari's wonderful V12 engines in the likes of the 456 and 550 were playing their part too, delivering über levels of torque, ready to catapult you out of corners.

But it was power steering that seemed to make the biggest difference. It may seem odd to mention it as being critical to driver enjoyment, but taking the strain out of constantly heaving on the wheel seemed to have a massive effect on the state of a driver, allowing them to keep pushing right to the end.

With the latest models like the 458 and the 599 GTO, drivers were having an even easier time of it. Paddle cog-swapping, carbon brakes and monumental horsepower all meant the speed along the route was no longer limited by the car so much as by the driver's self-control. Some experienced owners I spoke to admitted to mixed emotions, as they felt they couldn't reach their cars' limits as they could in previous generations of Ferraris.

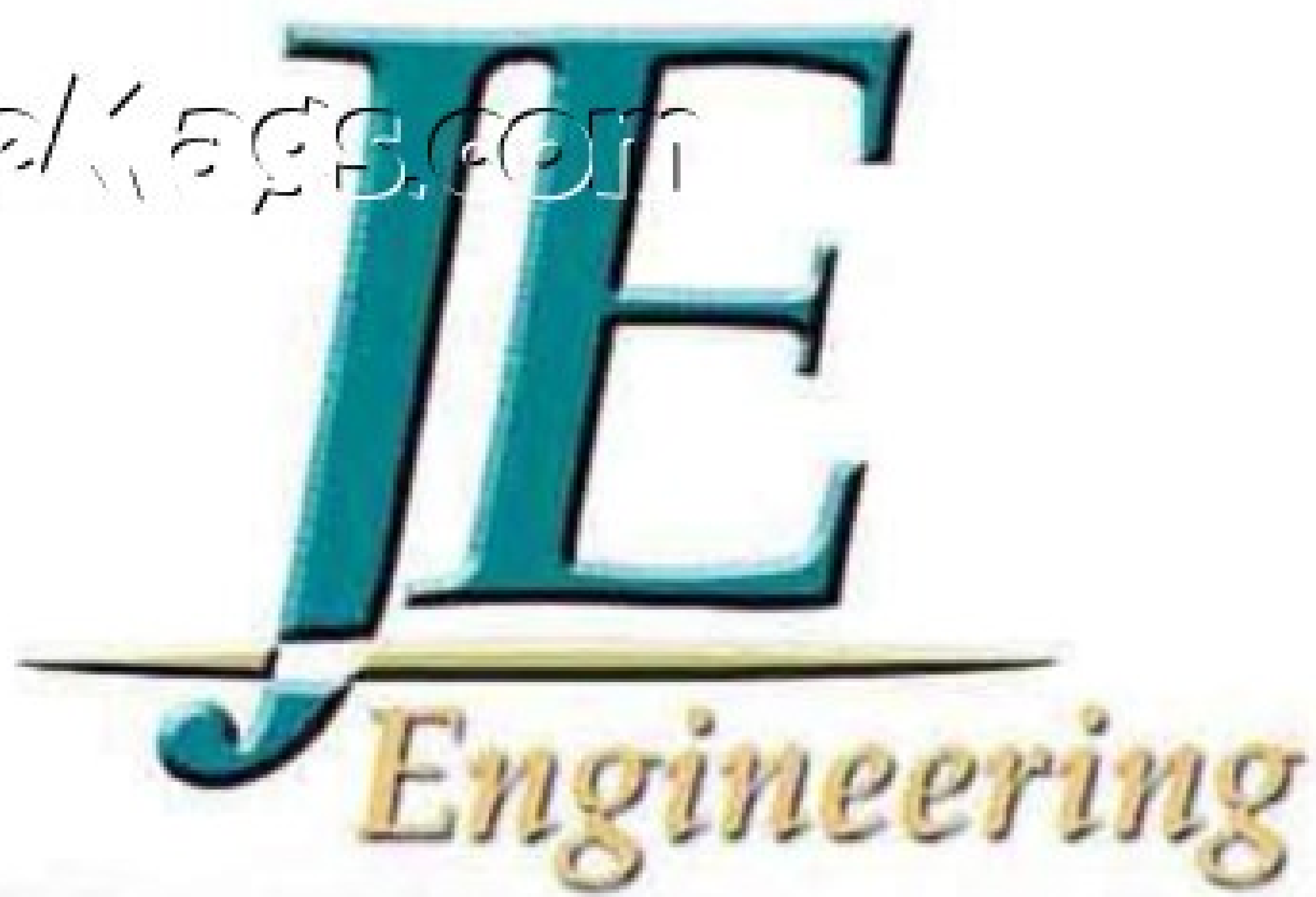
For me, the big worry is that while today's Ferraris perform brilliantly on the Nordschleife or super-smooth roads, on the knurled, potholed tarmac found on the Mille Miglia – and elsewhere in the real world – it's clear that their circuit-honed dynamics come at the expense of decent ground clearance, good visibility and compact dimensions.

So which car proved to be the perfect Mille Miglia Ferrari? Well, there wasn't one clear winner. My 550 Barchetta coped far better than I'd dared hope it might, thanks to its friendly chassis and monster engine, but the one car that really stood out was the 288 GTO. Combining the F40's addictive turbo V8 firepower with surprisingly compact dimensions, excellent suspension travel and decent ground clearance, it appeared to be an absolute delight to drive on those roads. The only thing missing was a set of modern carbon-ceramic stoppers. Fit those and, for me, you might just have the perfect Ferrari.



**'THE CIRCUIT-HONED DYNAMICS OF NEWER FERRARIS COME AT A PRICE'**





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## 'SALUKI'

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# For those who demand the Best

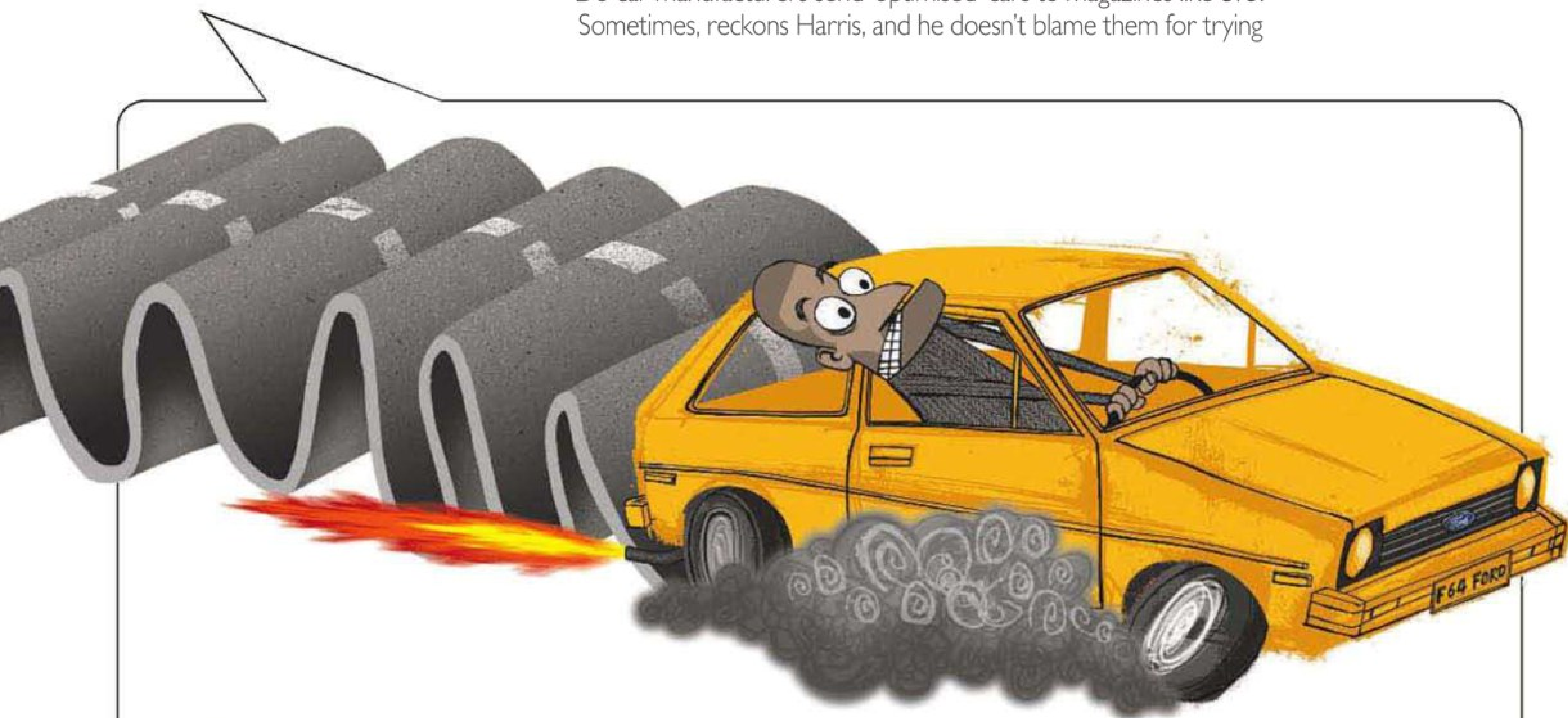




# Crossed Up

## Chris Harris

Do car manufacturers send 'optimised' cars to magazines like *evo*? Sometimes, reckons Harris, and he doesn't blame them for trying



**M**uch conversation sprang from an article I wrote on the US car website *Jalopnik* earlier this year. Among the topics were what sum I was being paid by Porsche to write nasty things about Ferrari's communications department and whether I'd soon be sleeping next to a horse's head, but the main discussion centred around the mechanical specification of cars people like *evo* are given to test by manufacturers.

There seem to be two camps here: those who are shocked that any car-maker would even attempt to provide non-representative machinery to journalists, and those who think that the game has been corrupt for so many years that every Fiesta that Ford gives to *Auto Express* has a DFV inserted for the performance-testing exercise – and anyone who assumes otherwise is a complete mug.

Well, there's news for both parties. The first bunch will be saddened to know that car manufacturers are subject to the same moral weaknesses as you and I: they will sometimes be prone to stacking the odds in their favour. The second lot will also be disappointed to learn that the vast majority of the cars

### 'SOME THINK THAT EVERY FIESTA THAT FORD GIVES TO AUTO EXPRESS HAS A DFV INSERTED'

that pass through *evo*'s hands each year are identical to the ones sold to you guys. When I say identical, I mean their mechanical specifications will be exactly the same.

That doesn't necessarily mean that the machine itself will retain exactly the same driving characteristics, because mechanical objects that consist of thousands of components will always differ from each other. Every component has a tolerance; multiply that throughout the car and you not only have the chance for inconsistency to creep in but, for the purposes of this discussion, your cleanest chance to optimise a car for a magazine road test.

It is for this reason that anyone who thinks a car bound for a road-test life isn't removed from the production line and lavished with the very best engine, bushes and dampers, and aligned to the nearest millimetre, is in a state of denial. But hopefully you can see why I consider it to be identical to a showroom model, because it doesn't contain any modified parts.

There are no rules of engagement between manufacturer and magazine/

journalist. But why do you need them if your staff contains professional road testers with a zillion miles' experience of everything from Miura to Veyron SS? Personally, I couldn't give a monkey's what wickedness a car-maker employs to try and cheat its way to a better group-test result – it's for us to spot the fact that a car isn't representative and, if we can prove that it isn't, to inform the brand that it has been rumbled.

New car launches still get around this because the tester has no context on which to base his findings. I have never driven an Aston DB9 with the same ride and handling characteristics as the car I drove on the launch in early 2004, and the only way I could really express that fact was the next time I drove a DB9. By which time there was already a story in the public domain with my name on it proclaiming the car to be the second coming. Did I feel a wally? Absolutely.

Freedom is the main bone of contention for me; freedom to borrow a test car, do what you want with it, and then return it. I don't have an especially cosy relationship with Audi, but I do admire the confidence it has in

its products. The R8 V10 we used for a group test last summer was fresh back from a stint as a long-termer at *Autocar*. Yes, it felt a little baggy in areas, but it was honest and robust. No one else would divvy up a 10,000-mile machine for an *evo* group test – Audi deserves huge credit for doing so.

Mercedes is nearly as relaxed, as is Porsche, as is BMW. Use a press M3 for a week and when it arrives it will be immaculate down to the neat vacuum stripes on the carpet, but what you do with it, and what you compare it against, is your call.

In the end, the prerogative lies with the magazine editors to control this situation. For too long now they've allowed certain manufacturers to take the piss, just so they could score the exclusive, or be the first. Or just be kind. I'm glad to say *evo* doesn't fall into this camp, hence the reason why we've been last to a few new products of late. Perversely, this is a situation that, in the end, benefits neither magazine nor car-maker. Because as Ryan Giggs is now able to confirm, the truth will always come out. Always.



# DRIVEN

- **PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS 4.0** P42
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# PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS 4.0

- 4-LITRE ENGINE ■ POWER UP TO 493BHP ■ 10KG LIGHTER
- IMPROVED SUSPENSION ■ INCREASED DOWNFORCE



Let's cut to the chase. The 4.0 GT3 RS is appreciably superior to the 3.8. It's worth pondering that for a moment, for the 3.8 is itself one of the most remarkable cars we've

ever driven. It's also our reigning Car of the Year, having seen off (amongst others) Ferrari's 458, Lexus's LFA and Porsche's own GT2 RS supercar. After three amazing days in Yorkshire we proclaimed that it had been 'honed to an extraordinary level'.

And yet, astonishingly, this version really is a step on again. The 4.0 is faster across the ground, it has a significant amount of extra poke and it bites the tarmac even harder, but

## SPECIFICATION

Engine Flat-six, 3996cc CO2 326g/km  
Power 493bhp @ 8250rpm Torque 339lb ft @ 5750rpm  
0-62mph 3.9sec (claimed) Top speed 193mph (claimed)  
Price £128,466 On sale Now

more remarkably still it comes with sharper, heightened responses, taking the intimacy of the interaction and the intensity of the sensations to another plain. This is quite possibly the greatest road-going iteration of the 911 we've ever seen.

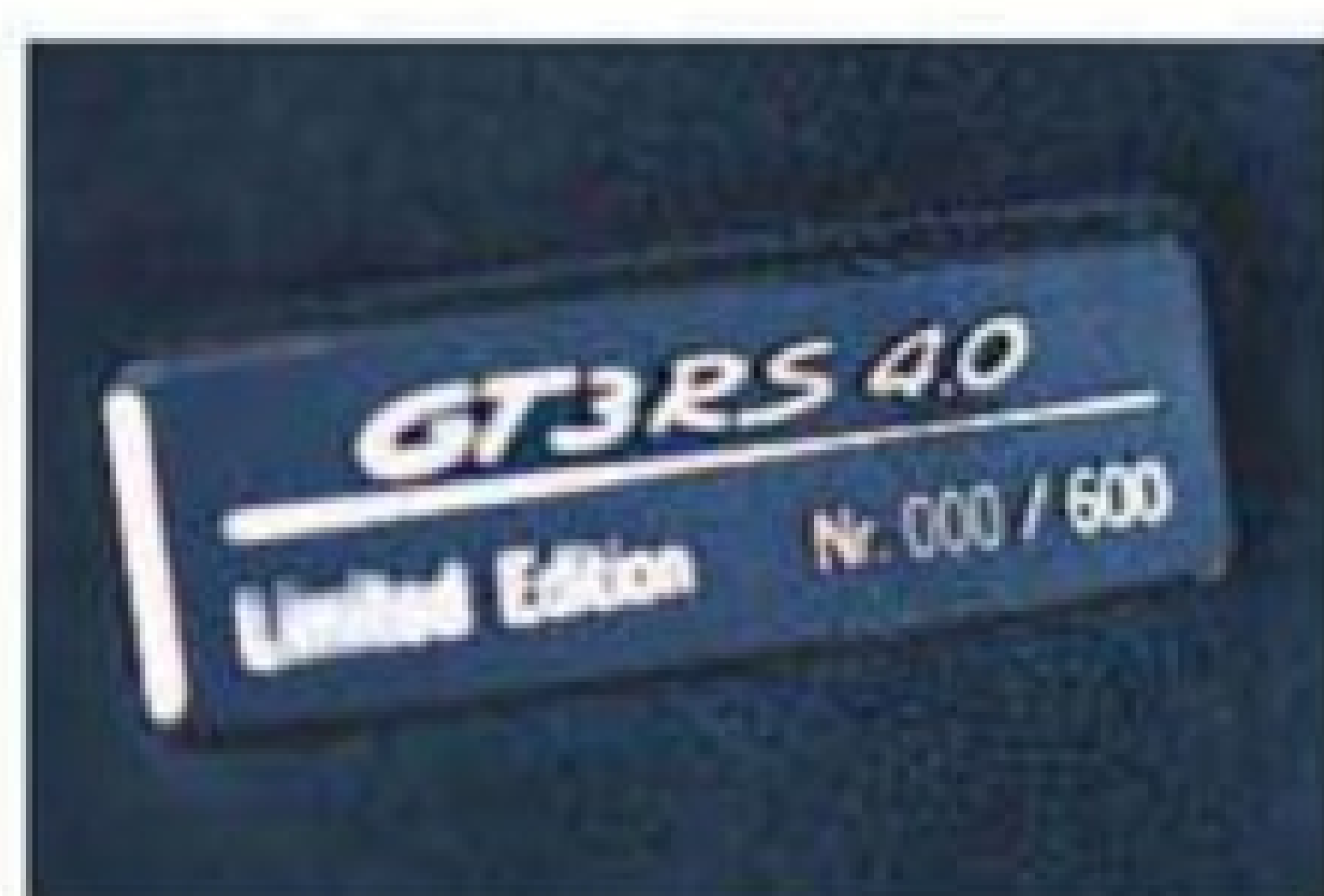
It's a send-off model, the last 997 GT3, and just seven examples a day will be built from now until the end of the year. There will, of course, still be GT3 machines in the future. Project boss Andreas Preuninger promises that







Above: smaller lithium-ion battery can be specified to save even more weight. Right: just 600 4.0s will be built, each individually numbered



'they will still be exciting', but even he admits that they won't be from the same mould as this. And they won't be fitted with the nape-tingling 'Metzger' flat-six either. So the RS 4.0 is guaranteed to become an instant icon, and – ignoring the dynamic kicks for a moment – such will be the clamour for this machine that the 40 lucky UK buyers (600 worldwide) will be sitting on a potential goldmine.

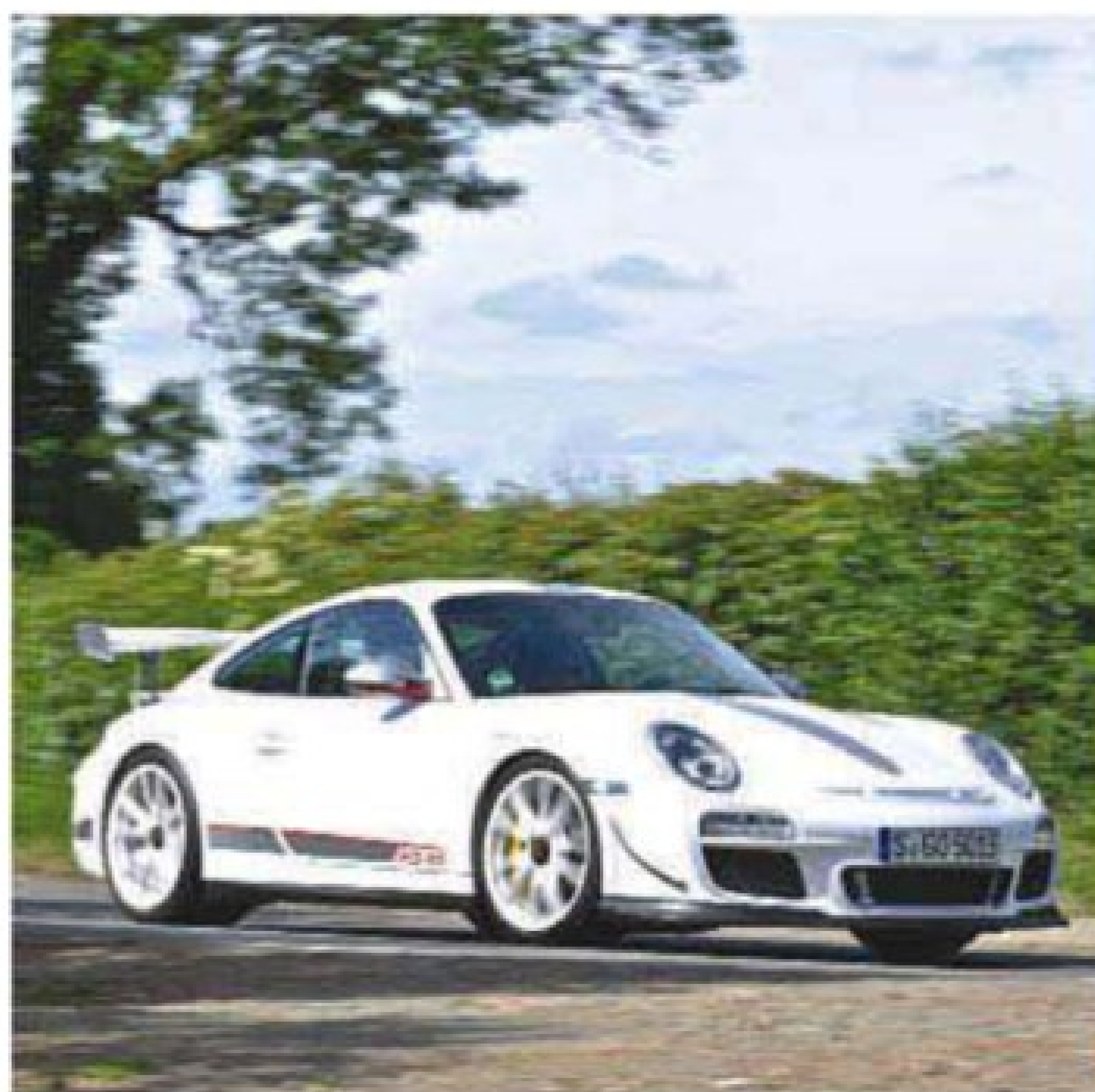
The motor is the driving force behind this RS in more ways than one. Preuninger describes the car as having been 'built around it'. It's certainly one hell of a swansong. Already bored to its limit, the extra capacity has come from a stroke increase, but that alone wasn't enough to extract the 493bhp (500 PS) target figure, so it was also fitted with a crank lifted straight from the RSR and GT3 R race cars. In addition it has modified titanium conrods, different heads, strengthened cam adjusters and an uprated chain-tensioner, plus the obligatory remap. As a result it's actually able to produce the numbers while running a lower compression ratio than the 3.8. To get more air in, the 4.0 has two new large, red air filters with carbon ducting and a new intake manifold and air box.

But it's not just the 49bhp and 22lb ft increases that blow you away, for the smoothness across the rev-range makes this engine deliciously sweet, while the low-range torque allows you to corner comfortably a gear higher than was possible in the 3.8. The specification might lead you to believe that this is a race-bred engine that only comes alive in a small band at high revs, but it's actually even more rounded than the 3.8. Not only is it strong across the range, there's also a lovely extra little kick as you close in on 8500rpm, a final flourish at the end of each gear as the car yowls up the road. It's utterly tractable, the throttle response is electric and boy is this thing useably quick. The 0-62mph dash now takes just 3.9sec – a tenth of a second quicker than the old car.

The clutch has been given a reinforced pressure plate to cope with the extra urge, but otherwise the transmission remains as was. In



## 'THIS IS AN EXCEPTIONAL CAR – ONE



Top: twin red air filters and carbonfibre ducting are new for the 4.0. Left: carbon-ceramic discs (indicated by yellow calipers) are 50 per cent lighter than the standard items, but they remain an option

a world increasingly dominated by paddleshift gearboxes, it is only right that the final incarnation of this generation of GT3 remains faithful to manual. Changing gears with that stubby Alcantara-clad lever still stirs emotions that can't be denied irrespective of how much faster and more efficient an automated system would be. Not only is there the satisfaction of nailing a sequence of perfect shifts, you feel more connected to the mechanicals – and when they're as polished as these, any filtration would be criminal.

The 4.0's chassis benefits from the addition of uniball joints on the lower rear arms, a development first seen on the GT2 RS. The top wishbones retain rubber fittings to reduce NVH, but this car has its own spring, damper, camber and toe settings. The wheels, tyres and locking diff may be the same as the 3.8's, but they now react with even greater alacrity and precision. The steering retains the beautifully detailed and natural feel, only now there's a higher level of alertness. The 3.8 could hardly be described as sluggish in its responses, but they really do feel sharpened up here. It's like progressing from a scalpel to a laser cutter.

If there's one small group of drivers who might find the 4.0 less to their liking than its forerunner it would be the showboaters, as this greater zeal does mean the shift from grip to slip is faster and less transitional than before.





## ‘THAT WILL PROVE TO BE A VERY HARD ACT TO FOLLOW’

It is, in other words, more efficient and as a consequence less drift-friendly. What hasn't diminished is the almost spookily compliant ride – track-based cars are not supposed to be so acquiescent on the Queen's highway. Sure, it reacts to imperfections in the tarmac, but it's never unsettled and nor is it unsettling for the occupants when by rights it should be shaking the fillings from your teeth.

All this accuracy and ability builds confidence, and in turn that builds speed. This isn't a game of point-and-shoot as it can be in the 611bhp GT2 RS – here you can make those powertrain changes count, and for that reason I reckon it would be faster than its big brother over a give-and-take road. There are also weight savings and aero changes that add to the 4.0's advantage over the 3.8. The front wings and bonnet are carbon (painted, as this is lighter than lacquer); in addition to the rear screen the rear side windows are now also formed from Perspex, and as before the car has a lightweight battery, with a tiny, even lighter lithium-ion battery available as an option. Even without this, the 4.0 is 10kg lighter than the 3.8.

The aero balance front-to rear remains the same but the level of downforce has been increased by the fitment of larger endplates to the rear wing and carbon dive planes on the sides of the nose. Together they produce 190kg of downforce at the car's top speed of 193mph,

Right: dive planes on each front corner increase downforce; rear wing (above) has been modified to balance the downforce at the rear. Far right: interior uses plenty of Alcantara



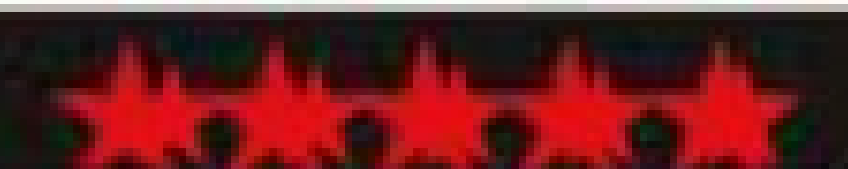
a figure that is unchanged from the 3.8 thanks to the drag these aero changes create. I wasn't able to explore the added stability at that rarefied level, but a bunch of laps of Silverstone's Southern Circuit was enough to feel the tyres working harder than ever.

No question this is an exceptional car and one that I'm sure will prove to be a very hard act to follow. It is, quite simply, the very pinnacle of 911 development. Quite where Porsche's engineers will go from here will be very interesting to see. We've heard rumours of some dealers offering £25,000 to buy people out of their place in the queue. All I know is that if it were me, I'd need to be offered a hell of a lot more than that.

Roger Green



### EVO RATING



- The ultimate modern 911
- They're all sold out





# LOTUS EVORA IPS

- AUTO OPTION FOR EVORA ■ PADDLESHIFT OPERATION
- COSTS £1800 ■ SLIGHT WEIGHT AND PERFORMANCE PENALTIES

**T**

he Evora's manual gearshift has never been one of its strongest suits. Rather vague and occasionally obstructive, you could sometimes be forgiven for thinking

that the linkages were fashioned from knitting needles and baling twine. If only it had a really snappy, state-of-the-art, paddleshift transmission, something like Porsche's PDK dual-clutcher, for example...

Well, you can now get an Evora with IPS, which stands for Intelligent Precision Shift. Sounds good, that, and it comes with just two pedals and a pair of natty little paddleshifters tucked just behind the wheel. Now the not-so-good bit. What they shift is a regular torque-converter automatic, a Toyota unit to go with the mid-mounted Toyota-sourced 3.5-litre V6. It adds 54kg to the kerb weight (now 1436kg) and almost half a second to the 0-60 time, up from a claimed 4.9 to 5.3sec.



## SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 3456cc CO2 208g/km  
Power 276bhp @ 6400rpm Torque 258lb ft @ 4700rpm  
0-60mph 5.3sec (claimed) Top speed 155mph (claimed)  
Price £51,400 (basic) On sale Now



Above: readout shows what gear you're in, and whether you're in manual mode. Far right, no gear lever, just buttons and (above right) paddleshifters

Not overly promising, but Lotus boffins spent many months tweaking the software to give a more 'involving' drive. So in default 'D' mode it behaves pretty much like any regular auto, but with sensors to stop it changing gear when you're cornering hard. Flick a paddle and you have manual mode for the next 10 seconds.

'Sport' mode gives you manual control for 30 seconds, and what's more, the software prevents the box from shifting up even when you hit the rev-limiter. 'Sport' also simultaneously sharpens both the engine and transmission responses, and loosens the grip of the traction and stability control systems. It even throttle-blips on downshifts.

Which is all fine and dandy, but how does it feel in practice? Weird, initially, to be driving a Lotus sports car with only two pedals (there hasn't been any sort of auto Lotus since the Excel SA in the mid-80s). Once you get over



the shock, the gearbox works... well, much like any other auto, albeit with slightly lumpier changes than the very best. If that's to make it feel more involving, I'm not entirely convinced. Around town, though, and stuck in traffic, it's slick enough and undeniably less aggro.

Out onto country roads and into 'Sport' mode, the Evora instantly feels happier. Changing gears manually, the speed of shift is, predictably, nowhere near the best dual-clutchers or automated manuals, but it's not so tardy as to spoil your enjoyment of the rest of the car. Hard on the brakes into a 90deg turn, flicking down one, two ratios with a discreet flaring of revs, you get a glimpse of what the next generation Lotus sports cars will be like. And freed from the distraction of the occasionally recalcitrant manual shift, you can focus on what the Evora does so beautifully. Sublime ride, balletic balance, perfectly



# HONDA CR-Z MUGEN

■ FIRST HYBRID HOT HATCH ■ NO PRODUCTION PLAN YET



**'IT ALLOWS YOU TO FOCUS ON WHAT THE EVORA DOES SO BEAUTIFULLY'**



weighted steering flowing with feel... The way the Evora covers ground remains a total joy.

It's still wanting for a gearbox that truly matches the genius of its chassis. But then this auto isn't really for people like us (tellingly, there's no auto option for the supercharged 'S' as yet). It's for customers coming from DSG-equipped TTs and the like, and for whole markets, like the States, that won't even look at manuals. And for them it should do very nicely. What really impressed me about this Evora was how much better finished, how much more 'mainstream' and less 'cottage industry' it felt than earlier examples. Encouraging stuff.

Peter Tomalin

## EVO RATING



- A truly great chassis...
- ...still looking for a great gearbox

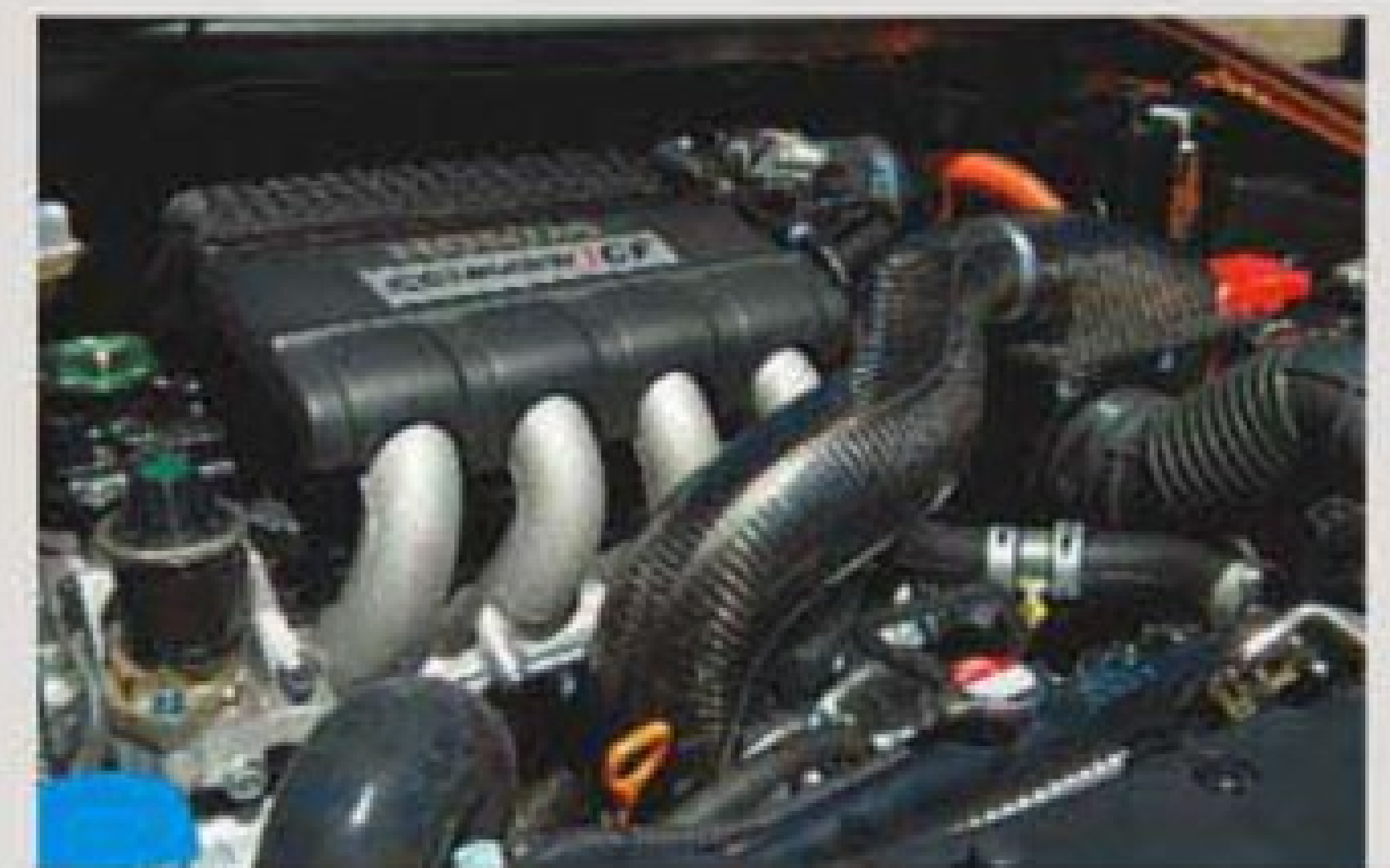
**H**onda's aim for the CR-Z Mugen, the supercharged version of its hybrid coupe, was Civic Type-R performance. The stats certainly look promising. It has almost identical power to the now-defunct hot hatch (just 1bhp less), but produced 1500rpm earlier, and an extra 16lb ft of torque. The Mugen's 1080kg kerb weight is not only 52kg lighter than a regular CR-Z (thanks to a carbon bonnet and doors, sports front seats and deletion of the rears, and lightweight 17in GP alloys) but a full 187kg less than the Civic. The upshot is 185bhp per ton where the Type R managed just 158.

In the real world, the CR-Z's advantage doesn't quite play out. Low-down grunt from the electric motor (from 1000-1500rpm) is strong enough to yield a touch of torque-steer, while the shove from the Mugen-added supercharger and a typically vivacious VTEC top-end make hanging onto every last rev rewarding. It makes for exciting progress: each straight-line squirt is soundtracked by electric motor whistle, supercharger whine and Mégane R26.R-like induction roar, the latter exaggerated by the empty, van-like rear quarters. However, the tall (standard) gearing means a slight lull in the middle of the torque-curve between peak power from the electric motor and around 4500rpm when the supercharger comes on song.

As well as 50 per cent more power, Mugen's transformation of the CR-Z extends to five-

## SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl. 1497cc, hybrid, supercharged CO2 N/A  
 Power 197bhp @ 6300rpm Torque 158lb ft @ 5000rpm  
 0-62mph 6.6sec (est) Top speed 145mph (est)  
 Price N/A On sale Not yet...



Supercharged 1.5-litre four-cylinder petrol combines with electric motor to give total of 197bhp. Right: three extra gauges for oil temp, pressure and water temperature



step adjustable dampers, a wider front track and more powerful stoppers, with 320mm vented and grooved brake discs up front. It steers and handles with more precision and verve, though the prototype's semi-slick Yokohama Advan tyres endowed it with more grip than power. And fuel economy? Keeping it in 'sport' for keen throttle response, after a couple of hundred miles of mixed driving we managed 30mpg.

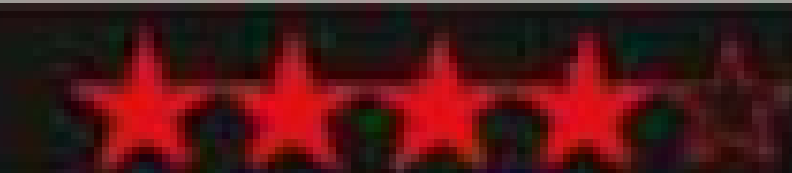
The CR-Z Mugen is a one-off for now, with Honda gauging press and public reaction before deciding on whether it makes production. But we'd wager another big-price, limited-run Mugen is on its way...

Stephen Dobie



Left: carbonfibre door helps cut weight. Lightweight GP wheel is actually an option on the regular CR-Z

## EVO RATING



- Unique performance car experience
- It's a one-off for now





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\*Actual model shown is 1.6L Acenta with optional Sport pack priced at £14,695 plus metallic paint at £400. Nissan Motor (GB) Ltd, The Rivers Office Park, Denham Way, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 9YS.

Fuel consumption figures for Juke range are: URBAN 46.3-27.7mpg/6.1-10.2L/100km – EXTRA URBAN 62.8-47.1mpg/4.5-6.0L/



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## PORSCHE PANAMERA TURBO S

■ FASTEST PANAMERA YET ■ 542BHP AND 590LB FT ■ 0-62MPH IN 3.8SEC ■ 190MPH

**A**s befits a top-of-the-tree model, the new Panamera Turbo S has more of everything: more power courtesy of a 542bhp version of the 4.8-litre V8 (49bhp up on the non-S Turbo) and more chassis acronyms. The air-sprung, adaptively damped, four-wheel-drive Turbo S has just about every bit of available chassis tech as standard, up to and including active anti-roll bars (PDCC) and torque vectoring (PTV Plus). PTV Plus is the real deal, too, using the electronic locking rear diff to apportion torque to each rear wheel to assist agility. The only items not fitted as standard are

### SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 4806cc, twin-turbo CO2 270g/km  
Power 542bhp @ 6000rpm Torque 590lb ft @ 2250-4500rpm  
0-62mph 3.8sec (claimed) Top speed 190mph (claimed)  
Price £122,623 On sale Now



PCCB (Porsche Ceramic Composite Brakes) and PKS (Porsche Kitchen Sink).

The uplift in performance from the twin-turbo V8 is enabled by a reprogrammed ECU and the fitment of new titanium-aluminium turbines. These are 50g lighter than the original Inconel items and they spool up to 170,000rpm some 30 per cent quicker for improved throttle response. And if you press the tailpipe logo'd button on the centre console, the engine gains an attractive baritone edge to its rumble.

Dynamically, however, things don't get off to a great start. There's a slightly false feel to the steering, an over-lightness at low speeds, then a better weight at A-road speeds but with an unnatural increase in effort required as you

**'A TEST OF THE LAUNCH CONTROL SUGGESTS THE 3.8SEC 0-62MPH TIME IS CONSERVATIVE'**

move away from centre. Open the taps and the Turbo S blasts forward, but as the nose lifts the steering lightens again, and if you throw in a curve it feels distracted and imprecise. The ride and refinement are surprisingly surface-sensitive too, with transverse ridges in particular jolting the body.

There is something a bit magical about the active anti-roll bars, though, the way the body control goes from supple to taut and roll-free as, say, you peel off the Autobahn. You can tighten things up at will too, and sharpen up the transmission responses, with a prod of the Sport

Above right: twin-turbo V8's outputs are up 49bhp and, including over-boost, 74lb ft on the standard Turbo



## ZOLFE GTC4

■ NEW BRITISH-BUILT TWO-SEATER SPORTS COUPE ■ 185BHP AND 280BHP ENGINE OPTIONS ■ WEIGHT BELOW 750KG

**I**t's been some time since we reported on the Zolfe, the fledgling British sports car designed in the Midlands. Orders are now being taken, though, and the example you see here – the original show car – is helping the company refine some aspects, particularly the final chassis set-up.

The entry-level Zolfe GTC4 will cost £33,950 and come with the current MX-5's 2-litre four-cylinder Ford Duratec engine tuned to 185bhp, plus a five-speed manual gearbox and an open differential. This, however, is the minimalist 'Sprintz' version and it's considerably feistier, running the optional 280bhp 2.3-litre Duratec (an extra £2995), a snickety six-speed 'box, a limited-slip diff

### SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2261cc CO2 n/a  
Power 280bhp @ 7500rpm Torque 200lb ft @ 6000rpm  
0-60mph 3.8sec (claimed) Top speed 161mph (claimed)  
Price £36,945 (with 2.3-litre engine) On sale Now

(£1995) and bright finish Enkei alloys (£995) that are an inch wider on the rear.

It takes a bit of effort to get into the Zolfe but once you're there it's a pretty roomy, comfy place to be. The optional Tillet carbonfibre race-seat drops you even lower and puts your elbows high, but the driving position still works well and offers good visibility.

Twist the key and the throttle-bodied 2.3 fills the cockpit with a raucous idle that has



Above: Zolfe's orange-painted spaceframe is exposed in the cabin; company plans to offer car in kit form too, minus drivetrain, for £6500 less





or Sport Plus buttons, which also give over-boost torque – a massive 590lb ft – if you’ve got the throttle pinned. The effective rate of the air springs also rises and the PASM dampers firm up their control, giving a sharper feel, yet the sense that this car is all of its two tons is there in the corners. It grips, it turns, but it’s not what you’d call nimble or deft, and it’s certainly no match for our favourite hot-rod limo, the Jaguar XJ Supersport.

Your £123K certainly buys you the fastest Panamera that Porsche has yet built. Top speed is 190mph (it feels imperious at 170) and

a test of the launch control function suggests that the quoted 3.8sec 0-62mph time is very conservative. But is this the best Panamera? I’m afraid not. The rear-drive Panamera S with its naturally aspirated 394bhp V8 remains the driver’s choice. When it comes to the Panamera, less is more.

**John Barker**

**evo RATING** ★★★★★

- ✦ Excellent ergonomics, pace
- ✦ Steering feel, ride

attractive high-tune Mini overtones, though when you poke the throttle the bark is more Caterham-like. As soon as you’re moving, the car’s lack of mass is obvious – even with optional air-conditioning it weighs just 750kg – and the way the Zolfe moves over difficult surfaces is a pleasant surprise; this is a chassis that takes the sting out of the road yet feels connected and poised.

Pin the throttle to the bulkhead, let the engine haul strongly through the mid-range and it gets dramatically, spectacularly into its stride between 6000 and 8000rpm. The sound is piercing, the pace gob-smacking.

There’s still some detail work to be done on the steering – it’s a little too distracted on bumpy, cambered roads – and tighter chassis responses would be welcome at the pace this example can manage, but pretty much



Body is glassfibre; 2.3-litre version has a Caterham R400-matching 400bhp/ton

all the basics are nailed. With Jez Coates (ex-Caterham technical director) overseeing it, it should be right on the money soon.

**John Barker**

**evo RATING** ★★★★★

- ✦ Distinctive, lightweight, zesty
- ✦ Still some details to be sorted





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## JAGUAR XKR

- XK GETS A FACELIFT
- SAME UNDER THE SKIN

### SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharged CO2 292g/km  
 Power 503bhp @ 6000-6500rpm Torque 461lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm  
 0-62mph 4.8sec (claimed) Top speed 155mph (limited)  
 Price £78,550 On sale September



## JAGUAR XFR ■ MAKEOVER FOR HOT XF ■ 503BHP V8 UNCHANGED

**I**f there was one thing you could criticise about the XFR as was, it would have been its looks. Despite being a supersaloon that could keep the BMW M5 more than honest, it kept its talents resolutely to itself. After initially insisting its customers liked it that way, Jaguar recently had a change of heart. The knife beckoned and the surgeons wielding it were clearly feeling more extrovert than those who did the original car.

All-new panel work at the front includes a new bonnet with a more steroidal power-bulge and a trailing edge that kicks up before the windscreen for improved cabin refinement. New wings incorporate slimmer headlamps with LED running lights, while the vertical side-vents get a chrome bar at the top to fall in line with the XJ and latest XK. Perhaps the biggest change is the beefed-up air ducts on either side at the front, which get chrome surrounds and, like the main grille, black mesh. See one of these coming up behind you now and you'll know it's a bit special.

At the back there are subtly different lights and a racy-looking black diffuser. Inside, new colour combinations are available for the revised seats, and new veneers and headlinings will further satisfy the lust for personalisation. There's also an updated steering wheel (which you'd barely know has changed), the centre console switches are now black instead of

### SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharged CO2 292g/km  
 Power 503bhp @ 6000-6500rpm Torque 461lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm  
 0-62mph 4.9sec (claimed) Top speed 155mph (limited)  
 Price £65,350 On sale September



silver to make them easier to read, and the 7in touchscreen has new software.

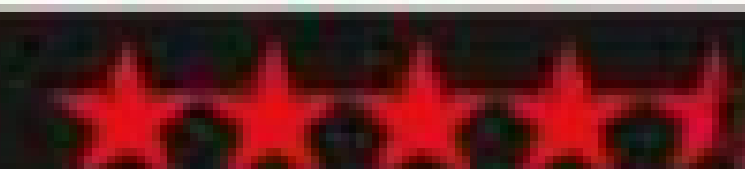
Mechanically, the XFR is identical to the pre-facelift model. It's still agile enough to belie its size, still responds pertly to driver inputs, rides well and features that stonking supercharged 5-litre V8 engine. As before, you get no characteristic supercharger whine – in fact there's very little indeed in the way of aural embellishment. What you do get is a car that'll play when you want it to and happily follow suit when your mood is more subdued. And for the updates that tell others that's the sort of car you're driving, you'll pay a £950 premium over the outgoing model. Cheap at twice the price, as a shiny-suited salesman might say.

James Foxall



Top: XFR now has a more aggressive 'face'. Above right: diffuser is new; 20in 'Draco' alloys are a £400 option

### evo RATING



- Now looks as special as it is
- ➖ Still doesn't sound it

**W**e've previously rated the XKR as the best car Jaguar makes. The message is clear then: Jaguar should tinker at its peril. So put some bunting up because its engineers have been mindful of this. The new-look XKR is exactly that: it just has a new look.

The body panels are unchanged, but the grille has been made slightly larger (it's chrome on regular XKs, black on the R), the headlights are slimmer by 15mm, the vertical side-vents have become horizontal and there are new rear lights.

Mechanical changes are non-existent, which is no bad thing. The power elicited by even a twitch on the accelerator still pushes your back into the newly sculpted seats. And the ride is still comfortably compliant with razor-sharp reactions, attention-grabbing grip and superb steering feel.

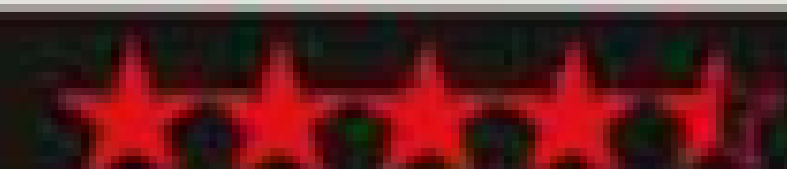
Only the gearbox is starting to show its age. The changes now feel a bit sluggish, the slightly flimsy paddles a bit out of place. But that's largely because the XKR is still excellent in almost every other area.

James Foxall



Above: headlights feature 'J-Blade' LED running lights. Top: rear gains a 'leaper' badge. Left: interior gets 16-way adjustable seats

### evo RATING



- Not much has changed
- ➖ Gearbox feels a bit dated



# ASTON CYGNET

■ iQ-BASED CITY CAR  
■ PRICES START AT £30,995

## SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1329cc CO2 116g/km  
Power 97bhp @ 6000rpm Torque 92lb ft @ 4400rpm  
0-62mph 11.8sec (claimed) Top speed 106mph (claimed)  
Price £30,995 On sale Now



New panels, grille, vents, wheels and lights help transform Toyota iQ into Aston Cygnet

**N**ot since Porsche announced it was building an SUV has there been quite such a furore about a new car as there has been about the Cygnet.

As we all know, Aston Martin's baby is a re-skinned, re-trimmed Toyota iQ. In design and engineering terms that's a good thing, for the compact, four-seater iQ is a clever piece kit. It's cooler and more versatile than a Smart, and like any good small car it's inherently wieldy and fun to drive.

Where it gets a bit sticky is the leap from £10K for the iQ to £31K for a basic Cygnet. Although Aston takes delivery of fully built

1.3-litre iQs from Toyota, they then have to be partially dismantled for the fitment of Cygnet-specific body and trim components. The bodywork is painted at Gaydon to the very highest quality, the interior completely re-trimmed (using a herd's worth of hide). A set of new 16in alloy wheels completes the time-consuming transformation.

As you'd expect, the quality and interior ambience is first rate. Only the absence of a thumping B&O hi-fi – and a V12 engine – betrays the fact you're in something with more humble origins. Looks-wise there's no question it's bizarre to see Aston styling cues on such a stubby machine. All the signatures are present,

from the bonnet vents and side strakes to the rear lights and stylised diffuser. It's a contrived car for sure, but then so is the group CO2 legislation that in part led Aston to build it.

Much as a V12 Vantage feels mighty on the A9 in the Scottish Highlands, so the Cygnet's diminutive size means you can exhibit Kamui Kobayashi levels of commitment through London's Docklands. CVT (a £1120 option) is the transmission of choice in town, but there is a six-speed manual version too.

Whatever you think of the Cygnet and its reason for being, it's worth remembering there have always been people who love to spend big money on small cars, from the wild Radford and Wood & Pickett coachbuilt Minis of the '60s to the fully loaded factory-optioned Minis of today. Still, you know you're living in strange times when you can walk into an Aston Martin dealership and spend £40K on an early V8 Vantage or £35K on a spanking new Cygnet with a few options.

Richard Meaden



Left: comprehensive retrim puts the Cygnet's interior in a completely different league to any other city car's

## EVO RATING



- Cleverly engineered and lavishly appointed
- Big money for a small car

# SUPERCHIPS MINI COOPER S

■ 224BHP, 223LB FT POWER UPGRADE ■ JUST £455 FITTED

**T**he Mini brand steamroller has done a great job of promoting the John Cooper Works upgrade, but it's not the only route to increased performance for your Cooper S, as tuner Superchips is proving by offering some useful gains for the turbocharged 1.6-litre engine via its Bluefin system.

On the rollers, Superchips' demo car develops 207bhp and 192lb ft as standard (already quite a bit more than the 181bhp and 177lb ft quoted by Mini). After the remap it produces 224bhp and a meaty 223lb ft – relative uplifts of 17bhp and 31lb ft. The latter figure in particular is a big gain for a little car, and it makes for truly formidable in-gear acceleration.

## SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo CO2 n/a  
Power 224bhp @ 6590rpm Torque 223lb ft @ 2630rpm  
0-60mph 6.7sec (est) Top speed 150mph (est)  
Conversion price £455 On sale Now (www.superchips.co.uk)

This car is standard in every other respect, so it's no surprise to feel an increase in torque-steer through the chunky wheel. It's perfectly manageable, but there's no question it makes the car feel like a little bruiser when you're in the meat of the mid-range.

It may not have the hardcore cachet of a Renaultsport Clio, but there's no question the Mini Cooper S is a fine little hot hatch. This

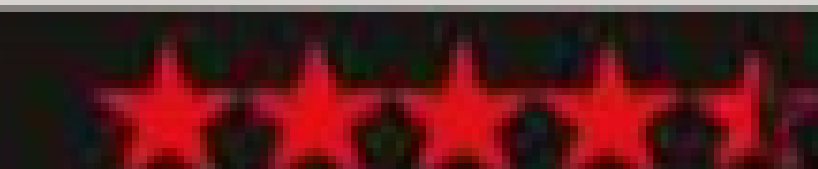


Left: turbo 1.6-litre engine gains 17bhp and 31lb ft with the Superchips upgrade

simple (and, at £455 fitted, affordable) upgrade gives it stonking performance while retaining a factory feel. We like.

Richard Meaden

## EVO RATING



- Big boost in torque; factory feel
- Standard chassis struggles a little





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# MERCEDES-BENZ C250 CDI COUPE

- 369LB FT TURBODIESEL
- PROPER 3-SERIES RIVAL

**T**he C-class Coupe could easily have been yet another variant on the C-class, full of competence but light on genuine driving entertainment.

It isn't. Instead, what Mercedes has created is one of its best-driving models this side of those wearing AMG badges.

In a supreme piece of fortune for the budget-conscious, the frugal C250 CDI version also happens to be easily the best of the breed.

The four-cylinder, never the smoothest small diesel in the world, feels more at home when its natural harmonics have been harnessed for a rortier character. It has 369lb ft of torque starting at just 1600rpm, and that makes the



Above: aluminium trim is standard; 7G-tronic auto gearbox is a £1500 option (a six-speed manual is standard). Left: engine is punchy and economical

## SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2143cc, turbodiesel CO2 143g/km  
 Power 201bhp @ 4200rpm Torque 369lb ft @ 1600-1800rpm  
 0-62mph 7.0sec (claimed) Top speed 149mph (claimed)  
 Price £32,860 On sale Now

relatively paltry 201bhp at 4200rpm feel more than adequate, especially with the wheel-mounted paddles giving a direct link to the (optional) seven-speed automatic transmission and making it a doddle to keep the engine in the richest part of its torque curve. With the twin turbos huffing away, the C250 CDI can get to 62mph in 7.0sec, yet it also achieves 52.3mpg on the combined cycle.

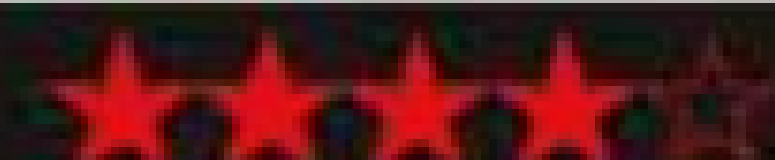
It doesn't take long for the Coupe to reveal its overwhelmingly upbeat nature. On Spain's southern hills, it begs you to throw it at corners where lesser (and far more expensive) Benzes give you their best under sufferance. Find a fast turn and the car's steering and balance give you stupendous levels of confidence in what it's doing. The steering in particular grabs your attention, helping you ease the nose into corners at ever-greater speeds, communicating even the most subtle nuances from the contact patches to your fingertips.

Adjusting the car on the throttle mid-corner reveals even more talent, the rear end squatting deep into the asphalt, the front tucking in neatly towards the apex. It's simply superb in a series of fast, winding corners, switching tack in a totally assured and confidence-inspiring fashion. Best of all, the ride quality hasn't been hurt in this transition from adequacy to brilliance.

It's not all good news, though, because even in its dotage the 3-series Coupe is a far better proportioned coupe than the C-class, but in every other respect the little Mercedes is a genuine rival for the BMW.

Michael Taylor

## evo RATING



- Impressive handling; best-of-both-worlds engine
- Ho-hum styling

# MERCEDES-BENZ C350 CGI COUPE

- 302BHP PETROL V6
- 0-62MPH IN 6.0SEC

## SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 3498cc CO2 164g/km  
 Power 302bhp @ 6500rpm Torque 273lb ft @ 3500-5250rpm  
 0-62mph 6.0sec (claimed) Top speed 155mph (limited)  
 Price £36,830 On sale Now

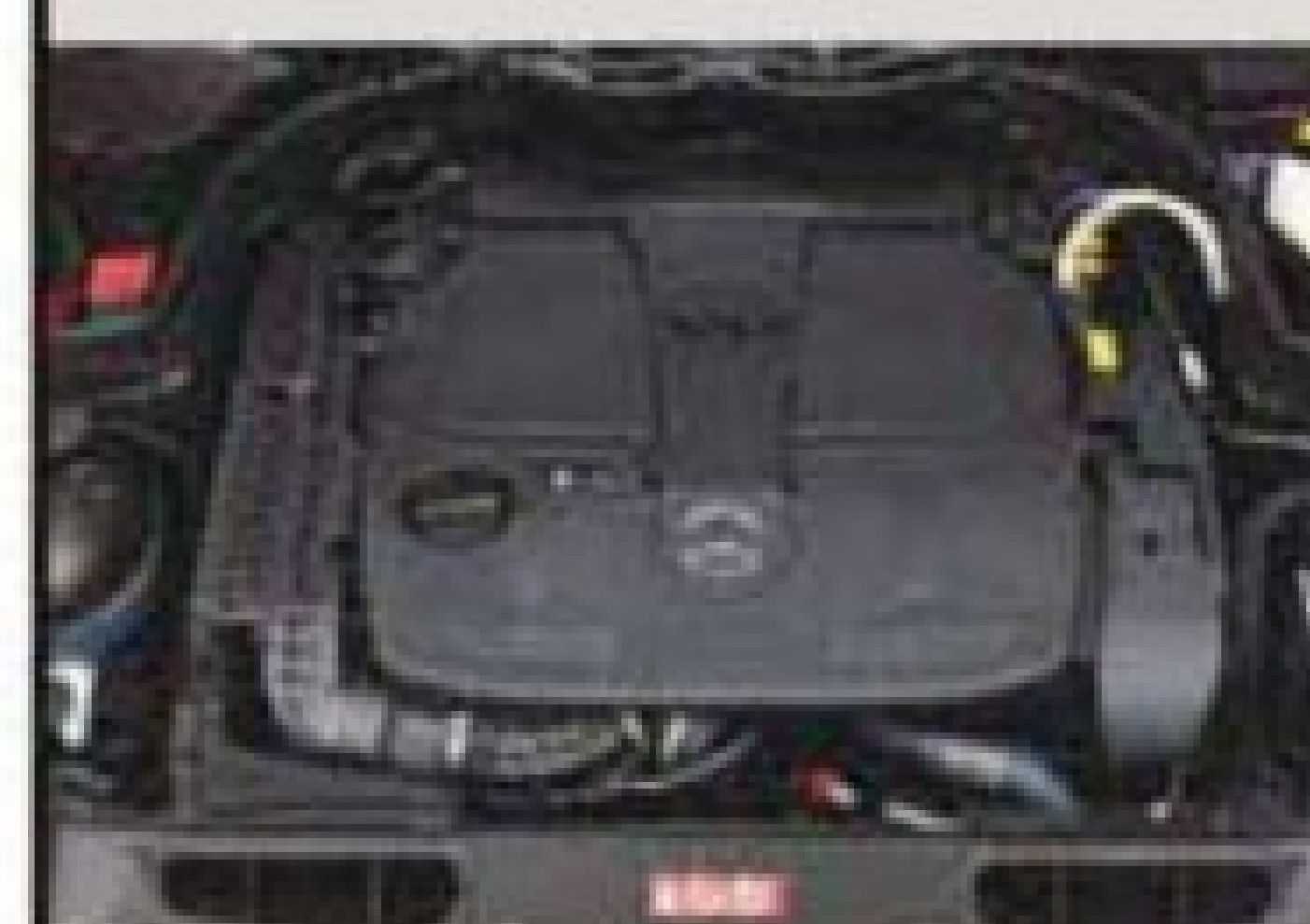
**O**n any other day, you'd have to argue that the C350 is a pretty convincing package. But that reckons without the threat from within its own ranks, because while it's still a very good car, the C250 CDI (left) is just better.

The diesel's not faster in a straight line, though, because the 302bhp, 3.5-litre petrol V6 delivers its performance in a wonderfully linear way and charges the C350 to 62mph in 6sec flat. Unfortunately the weight of that same engine also hampers the handling enough to rob the Coupe of its last 10 per cent of nuance, detail and excitement.

In truth, the C350 is ultimately almost as good, but it takes a lot more time to gather confidence in its front end because it talks less and hides some important details.

Some people will prefer it anyway, largely because it's the strongest (non-AMG) petrol engine available, but even here it's bettered by the less-powerful C250, which uses a 1.8-litre turbo offering 201bhp and 221lb ft, is 65kg lighter and far more agile.

Michael Taylor



Above: large expanse of metal above the (18-inch) rear wheels does the Coupe's looks no favours. Left: extra weight of the V6 engine compared to the turbocharged four-cylinder units takes the edge off the keen handling

## evo RATING



- Straight-line performance
- You'll pay a price in the corners



# evo

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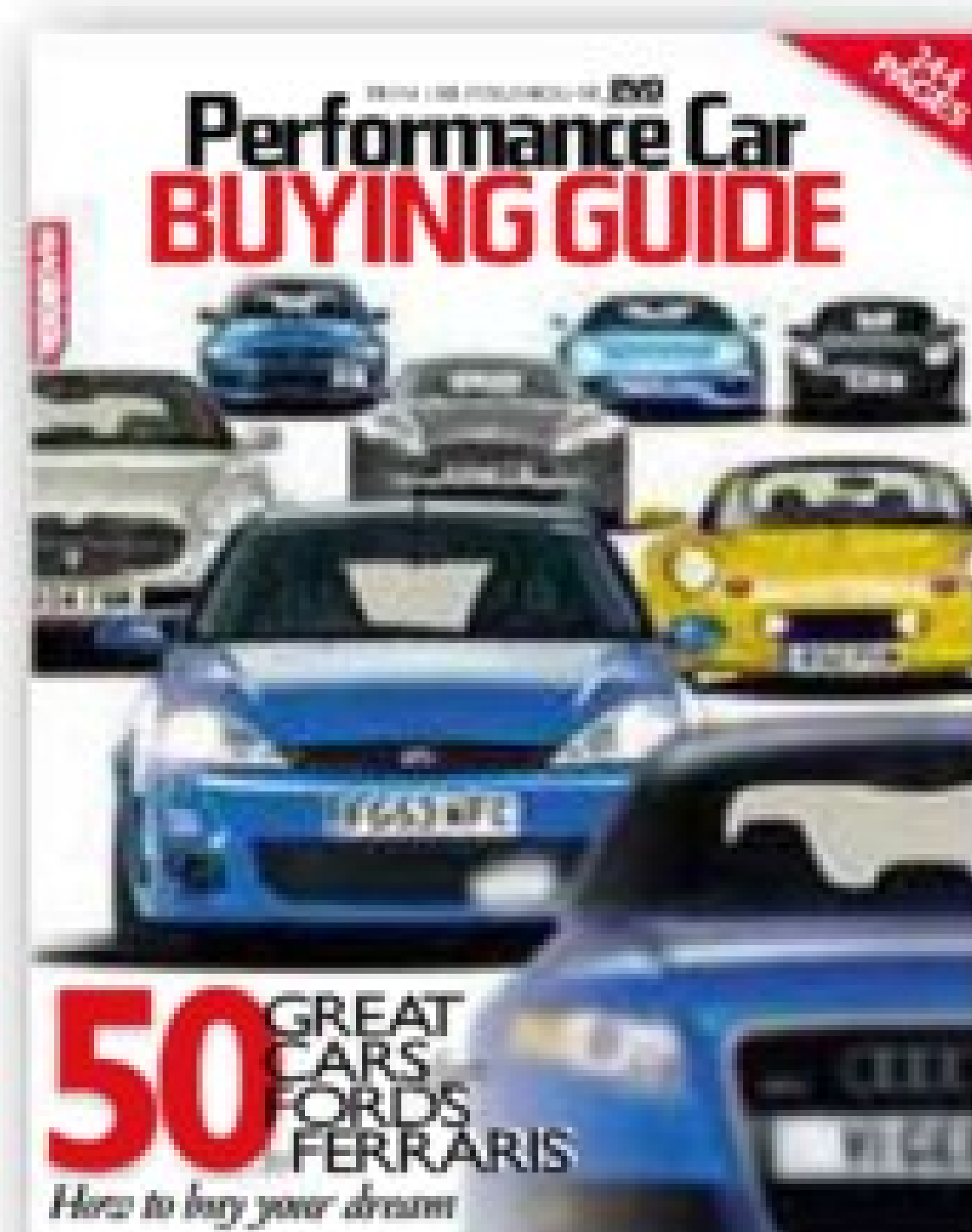
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## Letter of the Month

## Cars and numbers

I can very much empathise with Chris Harris's column on cars and numbers (evo 158), having myself gone through the phase of memorising every key number in car magazines back in the pre-internet '80s. My highlights? A certain Countach with 1.07m height and 345mm rear tyres. And the first 911 Turbo reaching 0-100kph in 5.4sec with a gearbox with just four speeds.

But despite all my love for cars and numbers, I reckon there is a downside to this figures-mania: numbers cannot express character, involvement, sound, feel and handling traits. So

**'Numbers cannot express character'**

car makers have an interest to show better numbers even if they come at the detriment of other characteristics which cannot be quantified.

I have nothing against more power, faster acceleration, higher top speeds, but I'm concerned the 'numbers escalation' has led to road cars being optimised to work best in conditions that are very seldom achieved.

Now we find that, in an attempt to find a magic number to cover it all, track lap times (in particular at the Nürburgring) are increasingly used as a surrogate. One more number to memorise, but still not revealing much of a car's character.

A big thanks to evo for giving us just a few essential figures and plenty of text (and increasingly videos) covering what numbers cannot express.

**Lucio Pompeo, Switzerland**



Our obsession with numbers starts young, but does it eventually lead to cars that are less enjoyable to drive, asks Lucio Pompeo

## ROAD ANGEL Vantage

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## The death of driving pleasure

The 400-odd bhp 911 GT3 offers all the performance anyone can reasonably use on the road and is exciting on track. So why do we see ever more cars with 500, 600, or more horsepower?

One of the pleasures of driving is a well-executed manual gearchange. Automated gearboxes forfeit this satisfaction and dual-clutch versions add weight, blunting agility. The quicker shifts possible are pointless: we are not trying to win a race in a road car and there is no increase in the accelerative force, which is the experience that gives pleasure. So why are more and more performance cars available only with automated gearboxes?

It is human nature to be easily diverted by superficialities. The marketing industry preys on this. Once design parameters are optimised, how does the manufacturer get its customers to trade their car for a new one? After restyling, by touting more technology, regardless of whether it is superfluous or detrimental to the driving experience.

Instead, why not adopt the approach used to develop road cars by Porsche and Renault's motorsport departments: minimise weight, use a manual gearbox and limited-slip diff for maximum driver involvement, and market the continual honing of clarity, immediacy and consistency of response?

The question is, will these two

industry stalwarts also succumb, as even Ferrari has done, to marketing convention?

**Hal Walter, France**

## Lambo time-warp

'I'm adding the Aventador to my list,' shouts Max, my 11-year-old son, whilst reading the latest issue (158) of evo. So that's a Zonda, a Veyron, a DB9, a Superleggera and now an Aventador. 'I hope you did well in your SATS,' I say, and then stop dead in my tracks. I've just caught a glance of the subscribers' cover. An action shot of a white Aventador sprinting diagonally across the front with a blurred green background. I'm immediately transported to 1982 where as an 11-year-old I thumbed through the November issue of Car magazine.

I rummage through my study and dig it out. It's almost a mirror image! Flicking through the pages, I see all my dream cars. The Countach obviously, the Lotus Esprit S3, Magnum's 308 GTS, and the original 911 Turbo. But where is the 288 GTO? Ah, that will be in another couple of years. It took me until I was 14 to finalise my 'must have' list. No wait, 17 for the F40.

Thanks for bringing this memory back to me.

**Tris Simpson**

## Chris in a Agera

This letter is directed at three people. Firstly the photographer, David Shepherd, who covered the Koenigsegg Agera R article last month (evo 158). His images were fantastic, conveying a sense of power, purpose and, on my part, unmitigated want. Exactly the 'evo' hit I was after.

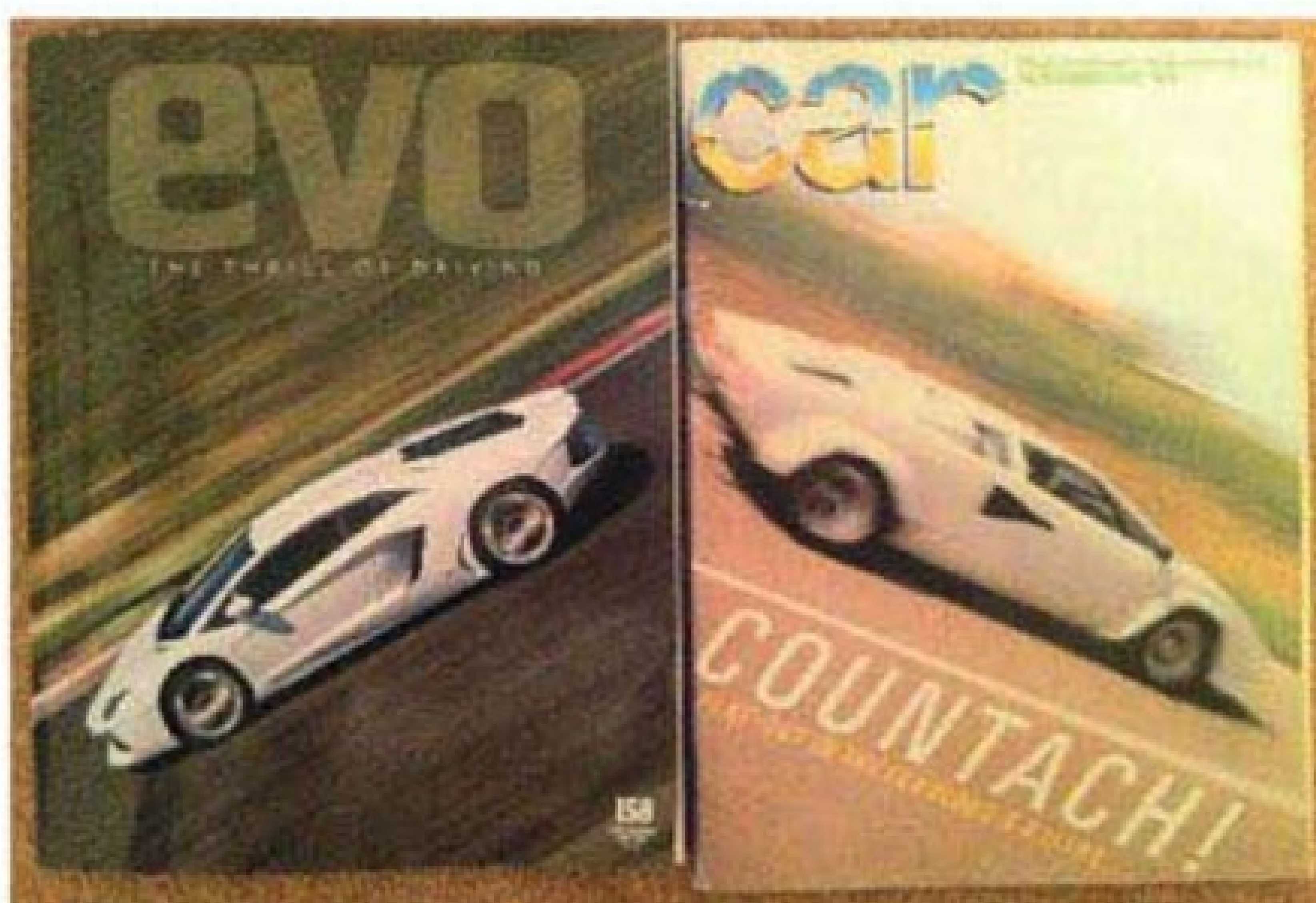
Secondly to Chris Harris, who wrote the words. To be in such a privileged position as to be trusted to drive this supercar was totally wasted on this individual, who came across as churlish, bored and uninterested. An iota of professionalism or enthusiasm would not have gone amiss.

Finally to the editor. I, like many, subscribe to your usually excellent magazine because I believe in the joy of driving. If you cannot encourage said writer to find and demonstrate a sense of joy and wonderment that people are still building such truly great supercars as a Koenigsegg, may I suggest there is a long list of people who would grasp an opportunity with both hands rather than sulk like a stropky teenager!

I, like most, will sadly never drive, let alone own a supercar, but given the chance I would not pout and complain that it's not the right one!

Rant over.

**Jez Jerome, Brackley**



Our recent Lamborghini Aventador cover brought back some memories for Tris Simpson (see 'Lambo time-warp')



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### Back in Seven Heaven

One of the many things I really enjoy about evo are the articles on Caterhams. I used to own a Seven and I miss it so much, so the Driven article on the new Supersport (evo 157) really made me feel nostalgic. I used to own a '96 Supersport with the 1.6 K-series that ran about 138bhp.

Around ten years ago, I was out in my Caterham with a mate who was never comfortable with my driving in more everyday cars. He is one of those people who don't really like cars and never understood. 'You drive too fast,' he used to say. That day was his first ride in a Caterham and I wasn't driving particularly slowly...

There wasn't much traffic around as we entered a nice empty roundabout, slightly too fast. I turned in and touched the brake to transfer the weight to the front, and just as physics started trying to take over I applied the opposite lock and opened up the throttle again, taking the Seven into a nice controlled slide. Straightening the car up on the exit, I nailed the throttle up the dual-carriageway, all the way through second gear as the engine screamed through the competition exhaust until I hit the red shift-change light. Into third and my mate was cackling with laughter beside me. 'What's wrong?' I asked. 'You hate my driving!' 'Yes,' replied my mate, 'but in this car it just feels right! Can we go back to that roundabout?'

A couple of years later I made the biggest mistake of my life and replaced my Caterham with a SEAT Leon Cupra R, which I have since had remapped. A great all-round car, but no Seven.

A Caterham is not really a car. It's not a 'four-wheeled motorbike' either. It is a device, the best driving device around.

**Matthew Holden**

### DS3 reflections

Glad you ended up enjoying your Citroën DS3 long-term (end of term report, evo 158). Some of your earlier articles had been a bit of a roller-coaster. We purchased ours in February, and we're thrilled to bits. It's reasonably quick, ditto economical (we also get around 40mpg) and thus far seems very well screwed together. Handling wise I'm okay with the Bridgestones, but come renewal we'll go for the Contis on your advice.

As for competitors, I'd dismiss the Mini as being totally impractical (although my daughter loves her Cooper!) and the Clio for being too tinny and not that much faster on rough

B-roads. Granted a Clio would no doubt slaughter a DS3 on a trackday.

And I agree with you about the D Racing – not worth the extra money.

**Mark Harber**

### Forgotten turbo hero

I really enjoyed issue 157 of evo. Great magazine as always and a very interesting theme of turbo cars. However, you missed the greatest turbocharged special edition of all time in your 'Blast Masters' article. Naturally, I'm referring to the 1985-1987 Buick Grand National and GNX.

During the late '80s when most 'performance' cars offered in America were still struggling to cope with tough emissions standards and could barely manage 200hp, these cars were cranking out almost 300hp and could hit 60mph in less than 5 seconds. Not too shabby for a Buick that didn't look too dissimilar to your grandma's!

**Jason Sheets, North Carolina, USA**

### 'Hefty', Mercedes-style

So John Barker thinks £370 is 'hefty' for an 18,000-mile service for a V8 M3 Competition (Fast Fleet, end of



Our M3 was expensive to service, but not as expensive as Kenny Brown's SLK...

term, evo 157). Try £470 for a standard Mercedes 200 SLK service after 18,000 miles (allegedly including a 'discount')! Add to that an earlier £246 at 10,500 miles. Compared with the BMW, we have half the cylinders and half the performance, but twice the servicing costs. John's report was 'end of term' and mine is too – Mercedes has lost a customer who feels ripped off.

**Kenny Brown**

### Size matters

Just a quick one. Mini have made a bit of a cock-up naming their special edition Clubman as a 'Hampton'. Who wants to admit to owning a 'Mini Hampton'?

**James Mousley**



## From the forums: the new Lamborghini

Spectacular new Lambo Aventador has caused quite a stir in the **evo** online community



**LT:** For most of us it's totally hypothetical barring a Lotto win, but now that I've seen all the photos and videos of the current crop of super/hypercars, I have to say that if I was lucky enough to actually be able to choose amongst all of them I would not be able to resist the Lambo. Its styling simply shames all the others, and how can you resist the *fin-de-siècle* awesomeness of a 6.5-litre n/a V12 (and its sound) in a turbo world. This is the car that future generations will point to and say, 'They just don't make 'em like that anymore.' OK, I'm off to buy my Lotto tickets.

**Holley:** Unless on track, I think that head-snapping gearbox would do my head in, though. Otherwise I completely agree.

**Mark BT52:** It would be my first choice, no question. Mainly due to the lack of turbo.

**Marv:** Lottery win would be an F40,

McLaren F1 or Zonda F Clubsport (coupe) for me.

**AI\_McD:** What if you won about a quarter of a million more?

**Woland:** Put fuel in the b\*gger.

**Marv:** If we're talking about current cars, then test drives for a McLaren MP4-12C (everyday car) and Aventador (weekend car) would be booked post haste.

**Zedleg:** I like it, but the term hypercar is really getting on my nerves so I shan't be buying one.

**Marv:** Lambo themselves refer to it as a Super Sports Car. Does that help?

**Zedleg:** That is better. I'm back in.

**Mark BT52:** Why oh why didn't they make it look and go like that but with four seats, a big boot and the off-road ability of a Land Rover? For £20,000.

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Our Franken-Porsches inspired reader D Bowen to create one of his own Nim ilir nit

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THE DEFINITIVE TEST

# McLAREN MP4-12C

Pictures **James Lipman & Chris Rutter**



*A new McLaren supercar is a major event for people like us. Over five days and more than 1000 miles, on our favourite roads and on the test track, and pitted against five of the toughest foes imaginable, we find out just how good it is...*







DAY 1

# THE JOURNEY BEGINS

*It's late evening as **Henry Catchpole** collects the MP4-12C from McLaren and heads off into the night. Are you sitting comfortably? Then we'll begin...*

**T**he view out is the first thing that hits you. Step from just about any other car and into a McLaren and your view of the world through the windscreen seems to be bigger. It's like upgrading your computer monitor two sizes or making this magazine the size of a tabloid. Then you adjust the seat (the controls are below your right knee in this left-hand-drive car) and steering column and you seem to be in exactly the correct position, arms and legs bent just-so, feet at the right height, spine and hips at the correct angles. It's like finding a jacket that fits absolutely perfectly across the shoulders, buttons-up sweetly and has just the right length in the sleeves. You feel snug, prepared and good about tackling what lies ahead. Just about the only way you could improve it would be by putting the seat in the centre...

What lies ahead for Ron Dennis's baby is quite a test. When I leave (apparently becoming the first person ever to drive a press car away from McLaren's Surrey HQ) I'm heading straight through the night for north Wales and **evo's** favourite three-sided set of roads. But driving the Triangle in isolation would be no good. We need a benchmark, an automotive



‘The dark red metallic makes it look expensive, the mid-engined stance instantly exotic’

litmus test, to find out exactly where MP4-12C registers on the supercar scale. And why have one test when you can have five...

For now, though, it's just the McLaren and me. It's the first time I've been really close to one, sat inside, and felt the controls. It's a moment that I've been looking forward to for months. The dark red paint is über-metallic and undoubtedly the best colour we've seen it in. It makes the 12C look a much more expensive car than the traditional but slightly garish (on this car at least) orange. Although the overall shape doesn't make your jaw drop, it still has that innate mid-engine stance that to my eyes looks instantly more exotic than that of any front-engined car. It's also a shape that

seems to grow and shrink as you walk around it – from dead head-on or dead rear it looks supremely compact, but in profile it is actually quite long, especially from the cab back.

The spindly spoked wheels show off monstrous carbon brake discs that would dwarf an original Mini rim and tyre. As I put my bags into the front boot, I note that the aluminium bonnet feels paper-thin. Other things that catch my attention in the dusk are the elegant door-mirror arms and the lights at the front, which mimic the McLaren swoosh and have small gill-like slashes. For the most part, though, it is a very clean design, helped partly of course by the lack of door handles...

Brush your hand under the side, stopping just





Above: Catchpole collects the 12C from McLaren HQ and (right) strikes out for North Wales. Below: a quick food-stop







‘Darkness exaggerates the sense of speed, but there’s no doubting the massive pressure on my back and neck as I give the accelerator full range’

before the end of the door. There’s a pause, and then the latch pops and you can arc the door skywards. Ingress and egress (those famous Norwegian twins) are not particularly easy, but there’s theatre, for both you and spectators, in the shuffle across the wide sill and down into the tub. The door needs a good heft to get it to close (you’ll probably be too gentle the first time and need a couple of goes) and then you’re in that wonderfully simple cockpit. The Cyclops vent in the middle seems a little odd (presumably you have to fight over it with your passenger, like you do with arm-rests in cinemas) but the general lack of clutter is refreshing.

The instrument binnacle is a mixture of Ferrari and Audi, and again it’s wonderfully clear. Hold the steering wheel either at quarter-to-three or ten-to-two and it fits beautifully in your hands: perfect diameter, comfortably rounded where it sits in the crook between thumb and forefinger, more of an edge where your fingers hook round at the back. Flick your fingernails against the spoonbill-shaped indicator and wiper stalks and you get the cool ting of metal. The only things that visually grate are the three dials that adjust the Handling and Powertrain modes and the lights – they’re cheap plastic and would be more at home setting the death lasers to ‘frazzle’ on a child’s toy. I’m amazed they got past Ron.

Press a small silver button with a glowing ‘start’ script and the twin-turbo V8 spins, catches and settles to its idle. It’s a curious tick-over sound, almost, dare I say it, industrial. In fact I’d go further: it’s almost lumpy and coarse like a four-cylinder diesel. Curious. To pull away, you press the button marked ‘D’ placed down by your hip and simply drive off.

There are three modes, Normal, Sport and Track, for both Handling (suspension and steering) and Powertrain (gearbox, engine, sound) but, unless instructed otherwise, the car always begins with its twin-clutch gearbox in Automatic and the suspension in its most compliant setting. I’m happy to let it do its thing as the final light fades from the sky, the fluids begin warming and we pass through security. It’s a shame Button didn’t manage to win at Monaco over the weekend – then the amazingly bright McLaren sign at the entrance would have been lit red.

The gearbox has either heard about the fuel prices or it’s very environmentally aware, because in auto it shuffles through to seventh just as you hit 30mph. In ‘Normal’ suspension mode, the 12C really does float over the road, the way a proper Citroën would. Before long we’re on a relatively deserted M40 heading towards Birmingham and I even set the cruise control – not something I tend to do in a lot of supercars – as I consider the test ahead...



The plan is to split the rivals up and test the McLaren on a number of different levels. The 911 Turbo S and Merc SLS are supercars that we can imagine living with everyday, so first thing tomorrow Chris Harris will be assessing the McLaren's usability (calling it practicality would probably be going a bit far). The following day, John Barker will pitch it against its arch rival, the Ferrari 458. On the fourth day, Richard Meaden will don a small chest-wig and measure the McLaren against the Noble M600 and Ford GT – two supercars with manual gearboxes, passive dampers and a slightly more old-school ethos about them. And finally we'll head to the test track to find out which is ultimately fastest.

Andy Wallace, who did so much work on the original McLaren, will also be lending a very valuable hand throughout. It should be fascinating – in fact I'd be hard pushed to think of a better way of spending a week!

We stop at some services on the M6 for food and photos. Eventually, in the wee small hours

of the morning, we hit the A5. I press 'Active' on the centre console, which illuminates the two mode-dials and brings them into play – now I can change the Handling and Powertrain modes as well as selecting 'manual' for the gearbox and choosing 'aero' to give the rear wing some angle. The headlights are incredibly bright as they pick out the road ahead through the windscreen. As I downshift for the first approaching roundabout, two things strike me: the paddles have a long throw and are really quite heavy in their action, and the carbon brakes are a bit Gallardo-like, with nothing for quite a bit of the pedal travel then *bang!* a big grab. Perhaps I'll get used to both.

The way the 12C delivers its 592bhp and 442lb ft is absolutely mental, almost scary. I know the darkness exaggerates the sense of speed, but there's no doubting the massive pressure on my back and neck as I give the accelerator full range in second, third and most of fourth gear on the way out of roundabouts. It is astonishingly, brutally rapid once those

turbos spool up. It feels like a GT2 RS engine, but instead of running out of puff after 6000rpm it just keeps on climbing and zinging all the way to 8500rpm. And then the big single wiper sweeps across the screen. Oh Lordy.

On the fast, deserted curves the other side of Oswestry, the McLaren gets into a rhythm, steering beautifully accurately between the shadowy walls and trees. It really does flow, breathing with the road, and you feel like you're right in the nose of the car, the forward gunner in a Lancaster bomber. The only curious thing is that the hydraulic roll-control means there's a very, very fractional pause between turning the steering wheel and it weighting up. It's an odd sensation that just dents my confidence a little. But then it is 3am and I'm sure it'll be different on dry roads...

By the time I reach Betws-y-Coed it's almost getting light again. The hotel doesn't have a night porter and the doors are locked, so I settle down to sleep in the MP4-12C. Bet McLaren didn't think we'd be testing that.



Right: closing in on North Wales, Henry finds the 12C 'almost scarily quick' but also extremely civilised when you just want to cruise. Left: blink and you'll miss it







# BRITAIN DAY 2

# GERMANY

McLaren designed the MP4-12C to be useable every day. But can it combine searing pace and genuine useability like the ballistic 911 Turbo S and sublime SLS? **Chris Harris** decides

‘It’s a Porsche Turbo,’ you say to yourself with some relish, as the aluminium-skinned door pops away from the bodyshell and you climb inside. Twist the key into that over-sprung ignition barrel and the starter motor prattles away somewhere in the car’s buttocks and, when its job is done, there is almost silence as the engine lightly bobbles and thrums.

‘It’s a Porsche Turbo,’ you say to yourself with some anticipation as you pull the PDK lever back into ‘D’ and cruise through the village and head for those moorland roads. When we judge the speed-versus-usability aspects of modern performance cars, is there a better combination than this Turbo S? Come rain or shine, it’ll consistently run 0-100mph in under 7sec, all the while remaining no more taxing than an Audi S4 at low speed. It’s small, too – the visibility is good, the seating position is good, the ergonomics are good. And it has two extra seats. Good.

Away from the village, you smile like Dreyfus learning of Clouseau’s demise: ‘It’s a Porsche Turbo,’ you say to yourself, one eye-lid flickering – and you bang that slightly ornate PDK lever away from you into manual mode, prod the Sport Plus button, calm the dampers back into normal mode and begin a new phase of the relationship: one that uses the steering-wheel-mounted paddles.

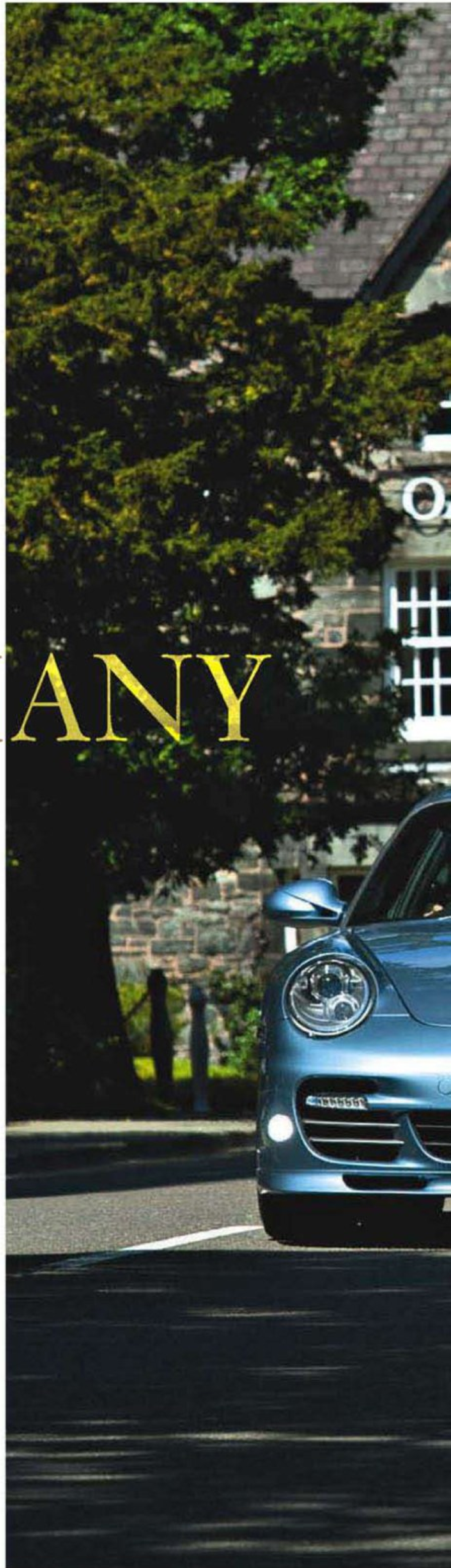
And for the next twenty minutes you are quite possibly the fastest moving land-based object on earth. You accelerate and brake, turn and

scoot. You don’t look at the numbers because that would be unnerving and besides, you don’t have time to avert your gaze from the blur of road, white-line and apex. You’d swear this car isn’t bound by the same laws of traction and mechanical grip as the others here: it is not possible to reach the limits of mechanical adhesion without deliberate provocation.

Soon, you begin to deconstruct what you and the 911 Turbo S are actually *doing* together. You are covering ground, making time, the car fashioning grip and forward motion from situations that didn’t seem to offer the potential. But what about the driver? What are you doing? Guiding the machine, not interacting with it – snatch a moment to actually think about where you sit in the process and you are merely controlling the drone ship.

Is that too harsh? Nope. The Turbo S driven fast isn’t the Thrill of Driving, it’s a cardiovascular work-out. Under full throttle in second it squeezes your chest cavity hard enough for counter-breathing to be necessary; under brakes the belts carve into your pectorals; through quicker turns, forearms ripple as you try to grasp the wheel.

And then something remarkable happens. You say to yourself, or rather you *ask* yourself: ‘Is this really a Porsche Turbo, the way I remember Turbos?’ Because at that moment, you have probably just knocked the gear-lever back into D and carried on driving. This moment is a metaphor for what the 911 Turbo has become – a device whose quest for point-to-







‘When we judge speed-versus-useability, is there a better combination than the Turbo S?’





Left: gearlever for the Porsche's impressive PDK twin-clutch gearbox; there are paddles too (far left). SLS (above) has its own twin-clutch, but it's not quite so slick. Right: no complaints with the Merc's mighty V8...



point performance has posted its first casualty: the driver. A superfluous member. A phantom limb. And I did just that – I left it in 'D' for the rest of the drive.

Attempt to follow a hard-driven Turbo S on roads like these in a SLS and one of two things will happen; perhaps both. At first you will have a most chucklesome time sawing away at the wheel, managing the generous quantities of hip-waggle allowed by the ESP system when set to Sport mode (in Normal, it poops the party if you even think the word 'gas'), and you watch the Porsche gently disappear. But the Merc changes direction brilliantly and feels so damn fast, that you think 'That Porsche shouldn't be disappearing so quickly' and you try harder. At this point there is a fair chance that the ESP will become too constricting, even in Sport, so you'll disengage the whole lot and bare your soul to the full 562bhp. The SLS is a car you allow to move around only so much; step beyond those very specific points and its cuddliness rapidly subsides into nastiness. Which brings us to the second thing that might happen following a Turbo S. Heavy panel damage.

But what fun you will be having in the meantime. I think we all expected the SLS to lurk on the fringes of this gathering: it hasn't quite the glamour or plain speed of the others, but you underestimate its appeal, not only as a driving machine but also as a regular, fascinating companion, at your own expense.

Poignantly, it manages to sparkle in all the areas where the Porsche comes across and numb and aloof. The start-up drama from cold is magnificent: pop open that strange door, wriggle down in between door-sill and transmission tunnel and then press that

starter button: *waaa-BOOOOOOOOOM* goes the V8, then comes shades of crackle and a hacking, eager response to the throttle. This is everything the Porsche isn't: a deliberate event, a natural extrovert.

The MP4-12C straddles the middle ground. For all its chassis sophistication, it lacks the Porsche's final, almost uncomfortable, degrees of performance extraction from any given road surface, but then so does any other motor car. It rides beautifully though – supple and easy with the chassis on its softest setting and, this will come as a surprise to many, with a real advantage over the Porsche in terms of tyre noise. The 997 has long suffered with excess tyre roar, but this Turbo S takes the matter to a new level, largely because everything else about the package is so mute.

It does seem churlish to try to pick holes in the everyday armoury of the MP4-12C. Even five years ago, cars of this performance only really emanated from the nuttier corners of the supercar kingdom, and it was as much as they could manage to not expire during a road test, let alone be assessed for everyday suitability. So I'll flip the question on its head: is there anything about the McLaren that would drive you nuts if it was your only form of transport?

For me just one thing: the fancy door locks. Electro-touch-thermo-tecular-whatever – they have a propensity to not work, leaving the driver stroking the underside of the door top, in faux-relaxed fashion so as to persuade onlookers that he's not some pervert who likes fondling other people's supercars. I know this, because I saw John Barker doing it in Betws-y-Coed

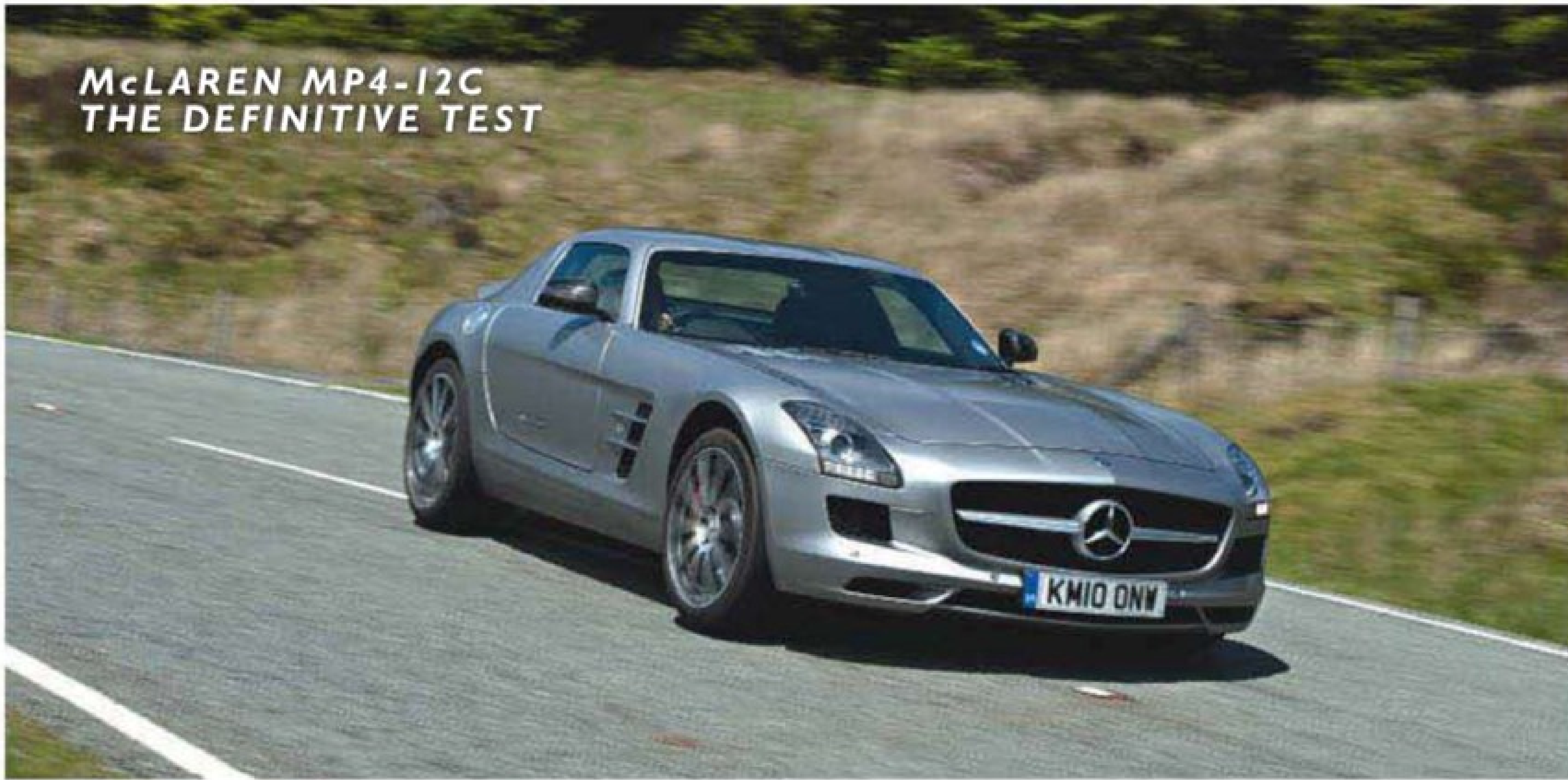




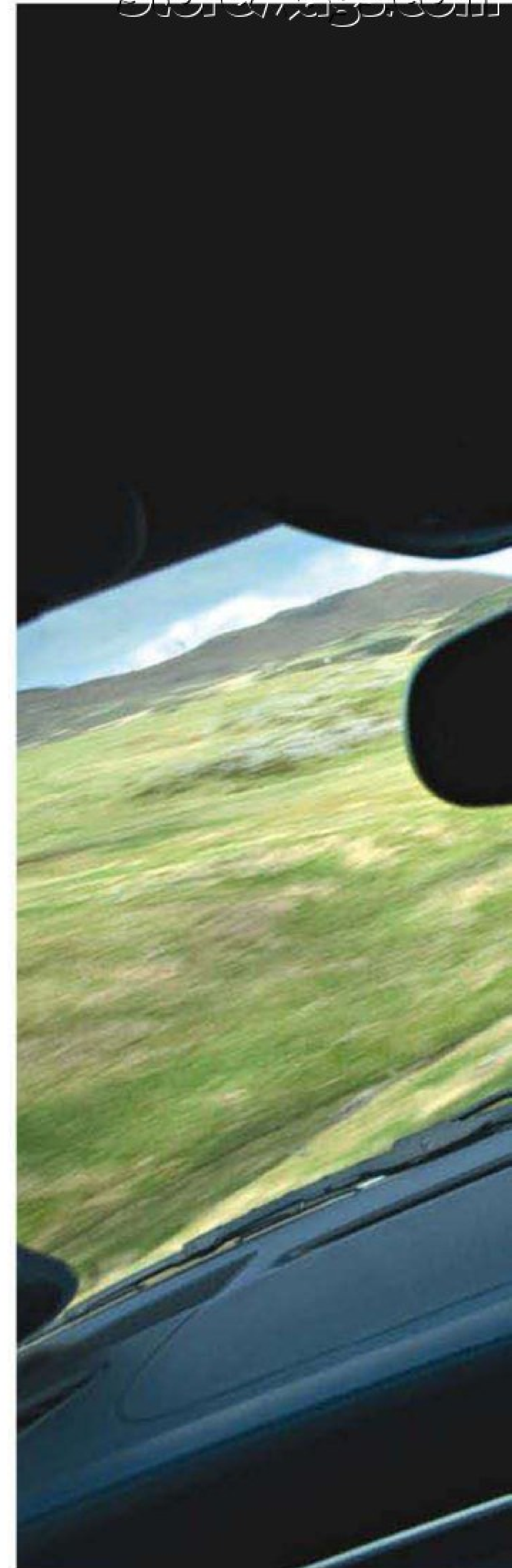
'I'd say the  
McLaren has the  
best gearbox of  
the three for  
pootling'



## McLAREN MP4-12C THE DEFINITIVE TEST



Above: front-engine, rear-drive balance makes SLS a playful companion, if you've got the space. Left: optional carbon trim in this 12C. Right: standard carbon brakes on 911. Below: access to 12C decent but not as easy as Porsche. Pair well matched for pace (main pic, right)



# 'The 12C has the Porsche covered in just about every area bar all-weather traction'

and he looked ever-so-slightly deviant. But the driving position and cabin are well-organised, and that snazzy door-hinge gives clear, dignified access. The interior is a design masterpiece: airy, roomy and, as we now know, capable of affording a 6ft 5in man a decent night's kip.

The essence of the McLaren's chassis is the separation of ride comfort from roll stiffness, and this is best demonstrated on the public road, where suspension has to deal with ever-changing cambers, bumps and surface changes. After the Porsche and the Benz, the 12C offers a serene detachment from the outside world, but it feels strange in the context of the low seating position and speed-focused driving environment: a bit like a conventional supercar running virtually no tyre pressure.

The pre-production car I drove in February didn't have a working touch-screen in the centre console and, sadly, neither does this one due to component delays. It's a shame because both the 911 and the SLS excel in the distraction department. They have enough toys and a loud enough hi-fi to deflect attention from the raucous behaviour of their engines or wind-noise or chassis graunching. This will seem absurd, but to not be able to tell you what the MP4-12C's hi-fi is like, is to not be able to tell you how it behaves in a workaday role.

I'd say the McLaren has the best gearbox of the three for pootling and the best for going quickly, too (but then the 458's is even better).

And how does the McLaren fare in the critical division of painlessness and deliberate drama?

Well, it more than holds its own. It has the Porsche covered in just about every area bar all-weather traction and those rear seats, but I think we were all surprised at how brightly the SLS still shone in the presence of this newest, brightest market entrant.

You see, there are times when the McLaren feels a little too clever, as if its inner-self is just crying to be released from the electronic repression. Whereas the SLS never feels like anything more than a scintillating engine strapped in an aluminium shell with the sole purpose of making its occupants smile, regardless of speed. Simplicity can often be compelling – the MP4-12C is a far better performance car than the SLS, but the latter is actually much more engaging company.





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DAY 3

# McLAREN V FERRARI

MP4-12C goes head-to-head with 458 Italia on the **evo** Triangle. Can the McLaren's super-sophisticated chassis and explosive performance overshadow the Ferrari's undoubted brilliance? **John Barker** finds out





When I think of the 458, the memory that plays in my mind's eye is of it hacking through some twists and turns in Yorkshire on last year's *evo* Car of the Year test, V8 yowling to 8500rpm, twin-clutch 'box slamming in instantaneous and seamless shifts, the car clinging tenaciously, almost surreally to the line, the chassis absolutely nailing the road. That was always going to be difficult for the McLaren to better, but what I'd forgotten was the sense of quality and refinement that pervades the 458 at low speeds.

I've yet to drive the McLaren. I wanted

a refresher in the Ferrari first, and here we are, the 458's vitals still coming up to temperature, sauntering up the road that snakes between jagged stone walls heading east out of Betws-y-Coed. The Ferrari feels quiet and undemanding yet still in character; the chunky steering wheel moves with a smooth weightiness, the car responsive to small inputs, while the ride is both supple and quiet and the gearbox slips seamlessly between ratios, keeping the low-inertia V8 spinning below the point where the exhaust valving flicks open and lets out the blare. I do wonder how a junior supercar could be more undemanding – and whether it should be.

The Ferrari is up to temperature by the time the turn off for the Triangle appears. Well, almost. With the mid-setting 'race' mode selected on the manettino, you can call up a schematic of the car's engine, brakes and tyres in a screen to the left of the large tach. The tyres aren't yet coloured green, indicating that they still need a bit of heat in them. Happy to oblige. Press the throttle wide open and the 458's character changes before its throttle hits the carpet, the engine suddenly loud and strong, the transmission snicking instantly and sweetly down a gear or two. The ferocity of the V8 is shocking, closely followed by its reach, and in 'auto' the gearbox responds to the tempo





## McLAREN MP4-12C THE DEFINITIVE TEST



Above: the moment we've been anticipating ever since McLaren unveiled the 12C. Right: John Barker and Andy Wallace go head-to-head in the crisp-munching showdown



you ask for, but I know this road and exactly when I'll want a gearshift, so the column-mounted paddles take over.

It takes a few corners to calibrate yourself to the 458's steering. It's so high-g geared and there's so little slack that it feels over-bright at first, the nose super-direct and the rear giving a hint that it's swinging along behind. The 458 looks almost as wide as it is long, and feels it, too. Mind, these are brand new tyres, so this isn't a definitive appraisal. The DCT gearbox is a peach, though, full-throttle upshifts hitting home with a little torque boost, while the MagneRide damping parries the worst of the lumps and bumps, maintaining reassuring

composure. No question, the 458 is a thrilling little supercar that goes, sounds and drives like it looks. The Ferrari has put its line in the sand.

At McLaren, much of the benchmarking the team carried out during development of the MP4-12C was against the 430 Scuderia. I imagine the arrival of the 458 Italia, although perhaps not unexpected, shifted that line further up the beach than expected. We at *evo* never thought the 458 would be such a big step on from the 430, in every way. McLaren has had a little time to react to it before bringing its own car to market, and here on some of our favourite roads is where we find out if the 12C has the measure of the 458.

'Bumps that give the 458 something to think about vanish unacknowledged beneath the McLaren's wheels'







You'll have your own opinion on the looks of the two cars. This McLaren's combo of dark, thin-spoke wheels and candy-apple-red paint is the most attractive I've seen, and there's a lot more detail close up, but for me the shape is still a bit bland. The flip-up doors add drama, though, and the cockpit you step into is rather special too, and quite unlike the 458's. The scuttle is much lower, the space more generous and the blend of double-stitched Alcantara with glossy carbonfibre inserts has a more tailored feel. It's a good place to be, and the driving position is spot-on.

As soon as it's rolling, it's clear that the McLaren is a quite different proposition to the Ferrari. Or any other supercar, come to that. The Ferrari does undemanding, but beneath it you know there's a darty, eager car itching to get out. It's hard to tell what the McLaren is doing. Riding very softly, for sure. The MP4's 'Proactive' chassis has no front anti-roll bar and a Z-bar at the rear so that the wheels on each axle are not mechanically joined. This should mean that there's less reaction to single-wheel bumps, improving ride quality, while the hydraulics at each corner are interconnected, side to side and front and rear, to limit roll and pitch when required.

Oddly, although the first road we're on looks pretty flat there's a slightly unsettled feel to the McLaren, a hint of hydropneumatic Citroën about it. On a more typical British B-road there's a sense that bumps aren't being dealt with in the straight-forward manner of the Ferrari but being 'processed'. It's as if they're absorbed by the suspension to take out the sting but the energy manifests itself as a sort of swell in the ride. Knowing what the road has in store, I switch the handling to the feistiest Track mode but this feels too resilient, the



Above: Ferrari's normally aspirated 4.5-litre V8 produces 562bhp at a giddy 9000rpm. McLaren tops that with 592bhp at 7000rpm from its turbocharged 3.8-litre V8, though it can't match the 458's throttle response. Nor can it match the immediacy of its steering (left). The 12C's pace, though, is never in any doubt

nose bobbing up and down like some cars do with nose-raising systems jacked up for speed-humps. So I plump for handling and powertrain set to Sport – and the 12C tackles this familiar road in an unfamiliar and very effective way.

Compared with the 458, there's a much bigger kick from the turbocharged engine from low down, while its twin-clutch transmission is as impressive as the Ferrari's in its shift-speed and quality, but the most remarkable thing is that the 12C seems to be re-surfacing bits of the road as we go. Bumps that give the 458 something to think about vanish

unacknowledged beneath the 12C's wheels. Its slightly slower steering is serenity itself, too, moving smoothly across locks as you guide the car down the road at a pace that the 458 would be very busy trying to match. In the corners it's as if the McLaren has a much longer wheelbase than the Ferrari, and much grippier tyres, too. Mid-corner, I'd say that it would be maybe 10mph up on the 458 through some turns here, and feeling a lot more stable, too.

Game over for the Ferrari, then? Not quite. There are some aspects of the McLaren that knock your confidence initially, and which



## McLAREN MP4-12C THE DEFINITIVE TEST

Cornering comparison is fascinating. Ferrari feels a bit looser, communicates more lucidly, has a little less grip and is the more extrovert oversteerer. McLaren conjures more cornering force and feels more stable. With no limited slip diff, it will slide with power and momentum, but then the power bleeds away



‘Across another of our favourite roads, the McLaren delivers

detract from the pleasure even when you're acclimatised. The first is a momentary lack of response when you turn in. It's only a fraction of a second and almost as soon as you've registered it the car has settled for the corner and is pushing through confidently on line, but it's there and it's a hesitation exactly when you want a positive response. Add to that the overly firm tug needed to operate the paddleshift and the on/off feel of the brake pedal and you have a car that makes you feel a bit clumsy at times. Which is a shame because there are few cars that make ballistic progress feel so effortless.

The 12C's engine doesn't have the vocals of the 458 but it feels so much stronger, matching a turbo-swollen mid-range with a scintillating 8500rpm redline. There are times when you hanker after the clean, instantaneous throttle response of the Italian but the further you drive, the more this seems to contribute to a character that's as consistent as the Ferrari's, but quite different. Everything has a slightly damped, smoother edge, be it the steering, throttle or the chassis' reactions. Get the measure of the brakes, dial into the weight of input required by





a brilliant drive. It feels so fast and invincibly hooked up'

the paddleshift, carry more speed calmly into corners and the 12C is astonishingly quick and confident across the ground.

'The speed you go at doesn't tally with the car's ease. It's not really breaking sweat,' says Meaden, later. 'I think you'd take greater risks in the 458 to keep up.' He prefers the 12C more today than yesterday, he says, but still doesn't like the brake feel: 'Every time I go for a confidence dab it gives me the willies...'

Le Mans winner and sportscar ace Andy Wallace reckons that the 458's steering is a fraction too quick, but overall he prefers its reactions. 'It recovers so much more quickly. You're not quite sure what the McLaren will do.' He loves the feel of the 12C in long sweepers, though, and says the grip is extraordinary. He has a theory as to why there's occasionally a delay as you turn-in, too: he reckons the cross-car hydraulics need to see movement before they can react.

Several note that the ride of the McLaren is very surface-sensitive, especially when you're loafing along, and the effect is more marked for passengers. On the 'wrong' kind of

smooth road, the ride is variously described as 'queasy', 'like it's balanced on a beach ball' and 'like a waterbed'. Yet when you're pushing on, the chassis snaps to attention and is still comfortable and refined. Odd.

Day three, decision time. Across another of our favourite roads in brilliant sunshine, the McLaren delivers another brilliant drive. It feels so fast and invincibly hooked up; when a bit more lock is required it digs in and delivers, poise intact. Very satisfying. Straight after, the 458 feels a bit nervous; front pointier, rear looser. There's a lot more honesty and feel to what it does, the way it deals with the road's imperfections and cambers. There's also a lot more noise to enjoy, and throttle response sharp enough to cut yourself on. The faster you go, the weightier the steering becomes, presumably to mitigate against over-sharp inputs, and you don't carry speed like you do in the 12C, even with properly bedded-in tyres. Instead you listen to the feedback through the fat-rimmed wheel and the base of the seat, ready to react if the rear slips – and it will, requiring measured correction.

I've got the McLaren ahead, just. Until, that is, I drive it along this great road again, only a bit slower, at the sort of pace you might adopt if you had a slightly nervous passenger but wanted to make progress. Stroking the car along nicely, steering smoothly for the sweetest line, the McLaren suddenly feels all at sea. With only moderate loadings to deal with, the strange, Citroën-like ride reactions are back and the chassis feels out of tune with the road.

I can look past the occasional hesitation on turn-in and accept that there will be a whiff of turbo lag because what comes after is exceptional, even measured against the Ferrari. But a pocket supercar that doesn't deliver at a merely brisk pace on one of the best driving roads we know doesn't cut it for me.

'It seems to change on every road I've driven it on,' says Catchpole, who has covered more miles in this 12C than anyone else here. The Ferrari has been out-dragged in a straight line and left trailing along some demanding roads, but it's still a thrilling, accomplished supercar with a great repertoire. And, in this particular battle, it's the clear victor.





# DAY 4 DIGITAL VANALOGUE

The 12C is a technological tour de force. The Noble M600 and Ford GT are old-school. Is there anything they can teach the McLaren, asks **Richard Meaden**



**L**ooking at the MP4-12C flanked by the Noble M600 and Ford GT, I'm reminded of an urban myth about the American and Russian space programmes. So the story goes, when faced with the challenge of writing in a zero-gravity environment, NASA spent countless millions developing the 'space pen': a biro filled with a pressurised ink canister that would write upside down and on all surfaces in a wide range of temperatures. Meanwhile Russian astronauts simply used pencils.

Like all great urban myths, this one is factually wide of the mark, but that doesn't mean there isn't a lasting and versatile moral to the tale. In the context of this digital versus analogue element of the MP4-12C supertest, there are no



McLAREN MP4-12C  
THE DEFINITIVE TEST

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Red dial in Noble turns the wick up from 450 to 550 to 650bhp. Below: 12C's alloys look skeletal next to M600's



prizes for guessing which of our three cars is the space pen and which are the pencils.

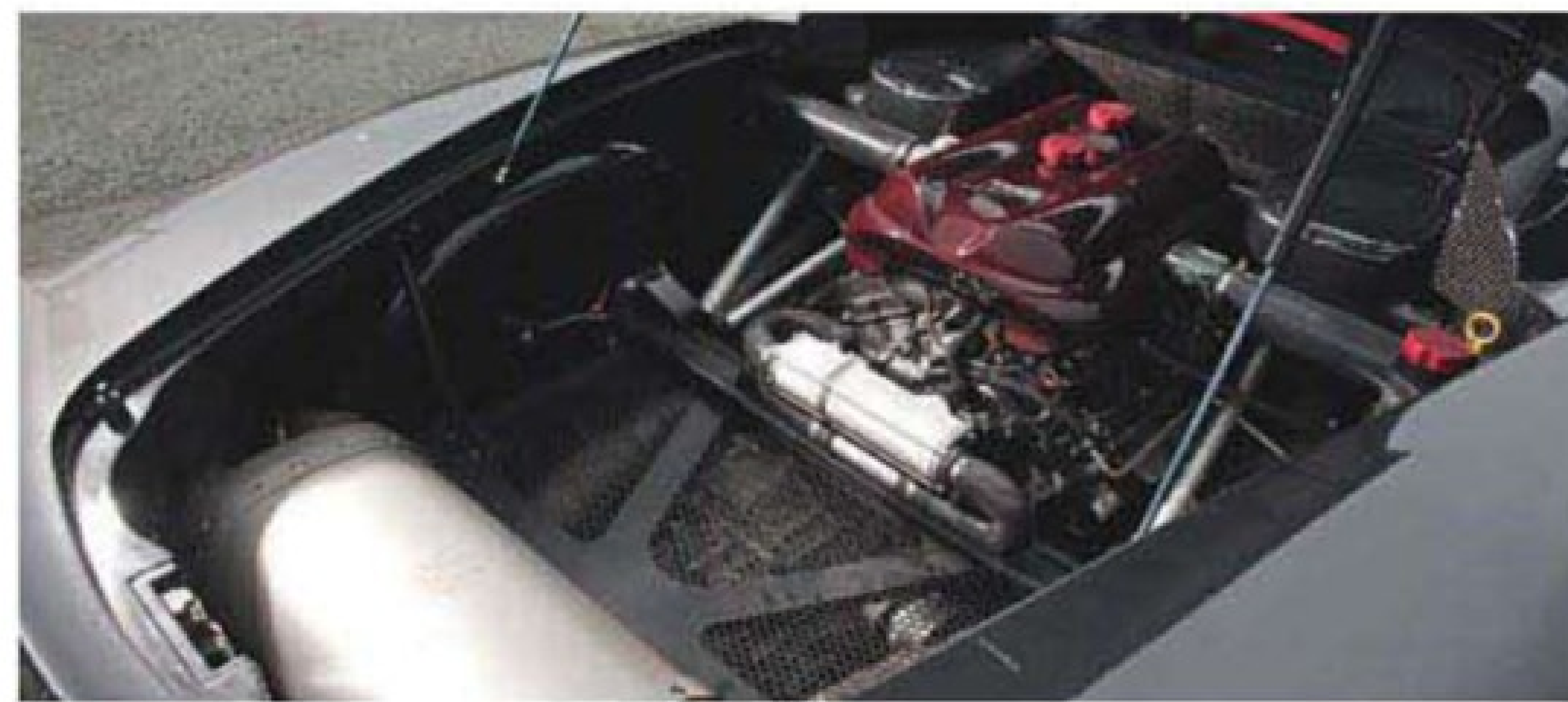
My first hours with the 12C are a mix of excitement, apprehension and mild confusion. At its most basic level the McLaren is just a car, but such is the level of groundbreaking engineering and technology, you feel momentarily lost when trying to get to know it. The choice of chassis and powertrain settings is wide, and while the interface is simple, understanding what each setting feels like and finding where the sweet-spot lies is not the work of a moment.

Admiration for what McLaren has achieved comes quickly – the ride comfort and powertrain in particular are immediately impressive – but making an emotional bond with the car takes longer than you might expect. Only after a night to sleep on my first drive do I begin to appreciate what I've experienced and crave the opportunity to learn more about its character and probe its performance with a longer, faster drive.

Second time around, the 12C is gobsmacking. Uniquely capable and absurdly rapid point-to-point, it enables you to cover the ground at speeds so far beyond that of any other car, I simply don't see how you could own a 12C for more than a week before you found yourself on a gap year in Wormwood Scrubs. Apply the Nissan GT-R's physics-bending abilities to mid-engined junior supercars and you get the picture.

There's more to it than crushing capability too. The steering is beautifully accurate and coupled with perfect forward vision it means you can place the 12C with incredible accuracy on tricky roads at very high speeds. The engine has a fabulous blend of small-capacity fizz and ballsy turbocharged torque and is silky as you like, while the transmission is seamless and breathtakingly immediate. In all these areas it moves the game on appreciably.

There is a tactility and involvement to the 12C, but inevitably there's also something contrived about its chameleon-like ability to adapt to its environment. Those rotary switches



Top: Noble's twin-turbo 4.4-litre V8. Ford's supercharged 5.4-litre V8 can't match it for outright power (550bhp plays 650) but they're both compelling partners on these sort of roads

trigger remarkable changes in the ride comfort, steering feel and powertrain response, but it also means you're always wondering if you need to tweak a setting here or there when the character of the road changes. I never feel completely happy with any combination of settings. Perhaps this compulsion recedes with familiarity, but I suspect it doesn't.

Of greater annoyance are the carbon brakes. I never get used to the dead then overly responsive pedal, which is annoying at best and gives me the willies at worst. Given that Ferrari and Porsche make similar materials work far more progressively, they should be flawless. However, the biggest issue I have is the lack of feedback on turn-in, for it's the point you crave confidence most, especially at the speeds the 12C can carry. Yes it always turns in, but you have to tell yourself that, rather than rely on the car to tell you. In my book that's wrong, for leaps of faith have no place on the road.

There's no denying creating a sub-£200K car with Veyron-esque performance that emits saloon car levels of CO<sub>2</sub> and has suspension that can be urban-pliant one moment and track-taut the next is a terrific achievement and a quite audacious debut for McLaren Automotive. Still I'm left with a nagging sense that despite the rigor, discipline and target-driven F1 work ethic,





‘Has McLaren lost sight of our fundamental desire to feel simple exhilaration and a sense of connection?’



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in the quest to create a Swiss Army knife of a supercar, McLaren has perhaps lost sight of our fundamental desire to feel simple exhilaration and enjoy a genuine sense of connection with the machine.

A reminder of what's missing is immediately provided by a drive in the Ford GT. Unlike the momentous 12C, the GT was a zero-risk, low-stakes supercar. Bluntly, Ford wasn't trying to reinvent the wheel with the GT, and no one would have been that bothered if it had been crude and outmoded. Indeed, its reverential styling led many to believe it would be just that. However, the genius of the GT was the fact it took a very basic recipe and finessed it to the point where it was far more capable, comfortable and covetable than it had any right to be.

We loved it when it was new, a fact evidenced by it winning our Car of the Year test in 2005. Since then it became something of a forgotten supercar, although values are now hardening at around £150,000. What's more, its combination of 550bhp and 1583kg remains just as compelling today as it was half a dozen years ago.

Swinging open the weird, flat-topped door sets the tone for a memorable experience. It's a surprising car, not just because it feels a lot more modern than it looks, but because unlike any other fast American car I've driven, the GT has

feel as well as grip, rather than a set-up honed for high lateral g at the expense of handling.

Much against expectations, it's also a mellow car to drive, loping along with assured, tall-gear ease. There's fire there if you stoke it, but when you just want to make progress it's smooth, supple and surprisingly refined. The flipside is minimal luggage space, a rather rudimentary interior and unwieldy dimensions, but in the driving it's a freakishly capable combination of pliancy and potency. It's nowhere near as rapid point-to-point as the 12C, but it offers a sweeter ratio of challenge and reward.

The Noble is similarly simple in concept and even more satisfying to drive. Taking inspiration from the Ferrari F40, its objective is pure and unambiguous. Like the Ford, it's the antithesis of the McLaren. There are a couple of switches: one for traction control, the other to select 450, 550 or 650bhp states of tune. As switches go, this is a particularly good one and tells you an awful lot about the M600.

The interior is cramped compared with the 12C and there's no fancy ISIS-style infotainment system, but it's finished to a high standard and is comfortable and functional rather like a 911 GT3 RS. There's a similar level of physicality to the way it drives too, with reassuring meat, but not excessive weight, to all the major controls.



Above and below: GT's cockpit harks back to the GT40, but although the basic recipe is a simple one there's plenty of finesse about the way it drives





McLAREN MP4-12C  
THE DEFINITIVE TEST



It sounds heartier and more menacing than the 12C, and indeed the GT. Its turbocharged 4-litre V8 might not be the most exotic, but it gurgles and burbles soulfully at idle and has a rousing Stateside bellow when worked hard. In full-on 650bhp mode it hisses and boils with forced induction fury, sucking and coughing through its wastegates in exuberant and slightly scary fashion. It's a living, breathing creature, not a cyborg with hydraulic fluid in its veins.

Even in this elevated company, the Noble feels sensationally quick, but instead of the McLaren's sustained and disdainful demolition of whatever road you throw at it, the M600 covers the ground in explosive bursts. Each gear – selected with a gearlever! – administers a punch of acceleration so shocking in its intensity you feel momentarily dazed. Short of juggling lit sticks of dynamite, I can't think of a crazier or more intense experience.

What's equally impressive about the Noble is that despite having the potential to unleash Armageddon with the last half of the throttle's travel, the chassis has real finesse. It'll break traction in second gear on a bone-dry road – third too if you catch a crest – but remarkably



Top: our 2005 Car of the Year still feels fab. Above: Noble's functional cockpit has shades of 911 GT3 RS. Below: Catchpole, Wallace, Meaden and Barker



it never feels snappy or malevolent. The damping is firm, but there's expertly judged control and depth to the way it works with the road, so it always feels planted and pliant. The steering is perfectly weighted, the minimally servoed brakes have a firm feel and a level of retardation that increases perfectly with pedal pressure. Every major control has the ideal rate of response, an orchestrated harmony that ensures you have confidence at all times. It just feels *right*.

There's nothing fancy or flashy about the M600. What you see, feel and hear is what you get. Nothing groundbreaking, no buzzwords like PreCog (McLaren's system of priming the next gear when you start to squeeze the paddle). Instead there's an honesty and carefully honed cohesion to every dynamic element, and this makes it an incredibly special car to drive.

Of course £200K is a lot of money for a car with no F1 provenance and a Leicestershire postcode, but in terms of sheer excitement and engagement, the Noble M600 has the McLaren licked. Sometimes a pencil is all you need.



'In the Noble there's an honesty and carefully honed cohesion to every dynamic element'



## WHAT IS THE EVO TRIANGLE?



There are a number of reasons why we keep returning to the trio of roads in north Wales that even the locals call 'The **evo** Triangle', chief among them being the challenge it presents for any chassis. This 14-mile, three-road loop just to the east of Betsw-y-Coed climbs and falls, blends tight and technical with smooth and flowing and has texture changes, off-cambers, mid-corner bumps and pretty much everything else you'd want a car to tackle to reveal how complete a job its engineers have done. After just ten minutes or so, you know most of what you need to know about a car's dynamics under pressure.

The second reason is that even in high season it's never very busy. The roads that form the peak of the triangle are not an obvious route to anywhere in particular, which means we can get our driving and photography done without getting in anyone's way. And the third reason is that it's a public road, with traffic, sheep and hikers, so you drive it like a road, not a racetrack that looks a bit like a road (i.e. the Nürburgring Nordschleife). This turns a spotlight on the composure and accuracy, the feel and fine feedback of a chassis (and drivetrain) in a way that a track never does. Oh, and it's good fun to drive, too.

JB





# AGAINST THE CLOCK

DAY 5

MP4-12C, 458 and M600 head to the Bedford Autodrome for timed laps of the West Circuit. It's serious business, as **Roger Green** discovers

**D**on't be afraid to damage the car. A little damage is okay. Just push, okay? Push, push, push! If there was any doubt as to the importance of this test to Ferrari, then this pep talk from one of the support crew is enough to banish them. And don't imagine for one minute that McLaren is taking this shootout lightly either. Its chief engineer might not be employing quite such unabashed psyching techniques before every run but I can most definitely sense the pressure. They've brought along an even greater number of engineers and support staff

than the Italians to the Bedford battleground.

This is the track test we've been waiting for. McLaren MP4-12C versus Ferrari 458 Italia is *the* head-to-head of 2011, and you can be sure the mighty brains of Woking and Maranello have been working towards this showdown. There's an awful lot at stake, and the tension in the pitlane is palpable. No question, these laps are a big deal. Both camps keep their distance, Ferrari in the red corner, McLaren all in black, both armed with stopwatches and laptops. Every time I get in either car there's a flurry of mobile phone activity too – the respective HQs are being kept fully informed.

The 12C has the edge on paper, being both more powerful and lighter (a test weight of 1433kg plays 1469kg), but that doesn't always tell the whole story. And just to make things even more interesting, we've added a wild card. The Noble M600 may have a manual gearbox and no ABS, and the factory may lack a trophy room crammed full of F1 silverware, but discount the M600 at your peril. At just 1245kg it's significantly lighter than both, and more powerful too. Light the turbo touchpaper and its 650bhp almost sends it supersonic.

My Ferrari gee-up came after I'd completed one run in each car to dial myself in. Now it's







Ferrari and McLaren are both rapid and massively involving but quite different too. 458 (left) feels almost too hyper at first



‘This is the track test we’ve been waiting for. The tension in the pitlane is palpable’

time to nail the laps. All three are still on the tyres they used in the Welsh part of the group test, which began some four days earlier, and they’ve also been to Bruntingthorpe for half a dozen standing-start drag races (see the figures over the page, and enjoy the video at [www.evo.co.uk](http://www.evo.co.uk)). No fettling or specific track preparation has been permitted in between.

On the initial runs the Ferrari recorded 1:20.6, the McLaren 1:20.8 and the Noble 1:21.7. All will be faster now and there’s undoubtedly a big chunk to find from the Noble after we discovered the front left tyre had just 8psi in it. My fault: I spun it on the exit of the Beckham

Esses on the first lap, testing the level of intervention I could expect from the traction control system. It wasn’t working... The 458 had CST off, but the 12C still had the final layer of traction switched on and it interfered a tad too much in the tight corners, reining power and dropping the turbos off boost. For the second runs, all cars will have their systems fully off, which requires a convoluted sequence of button-pressing in the McLaren. They really don’t want you to do it by mistake.

‘Motivation!’ says our friend in red as staff writer Stephen Dobie and I climb aboard the Italia once more (we always conduct these





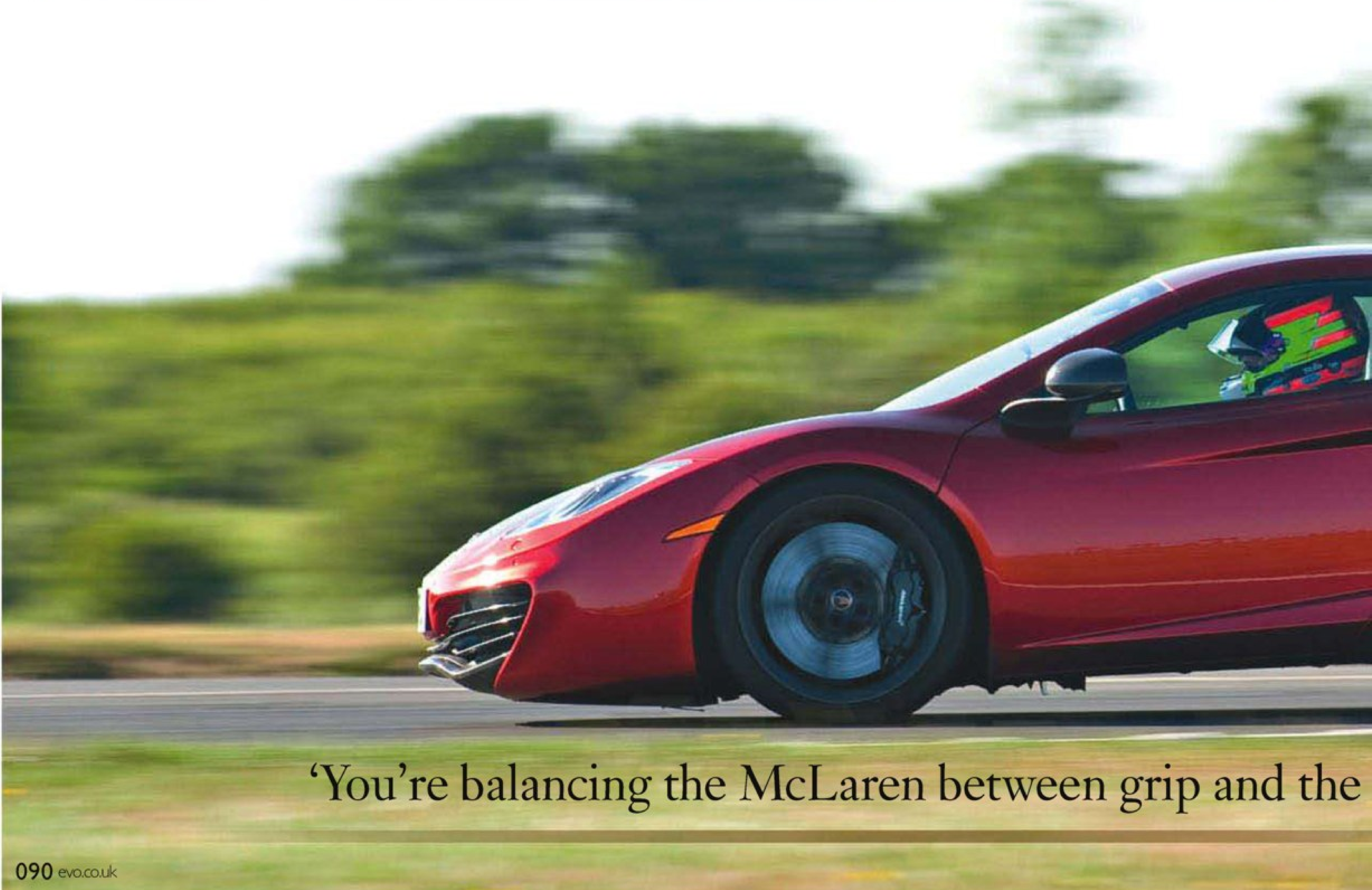
ACCELERATION

**T**wist the dials for chassis and drivetrain all the way to Track. Press the button marked Launch. Squeeze the brake pedal with your left foot. Flatten the throttle with your right. Wait for the boost to build. Brace yourself. Release the brake. And 6.4 seconds later the McLaren has smashed through the ton. Of all the supercars we've tested ourselves, only the Veyron and Caparo T1 are quicker. Physically brutal it may be, but supercar figuring has never been easier – in many you don't even have to change gear. It's the same for the 458, electronics dishing out just the right amount of torque for the perfect

	MP4-12C	458	M600	SLS	TURBO S	GT
0-30mph	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.9	1.2	1.7
0-60mph	3.0	3.2	3.8	4.1	2.9	3.5
0-100mph	6.4	6.8	7.7	8.4	6.8	7.8
0-150mph	15.3	15.8	15.2	18.5	16.3	17.5
Quarter mile	10.8sec/ 131.0mph	11.2sec/ 128.2mph	11.7sec/ 128.4mph	12.1sec/ 123.4mph	11.0sec/ 127.2mph	11.7sec/ 123.0mph

emergency start. And if you've activated the launch system in the 911 Turbo S (no specific button, just switch out the traction and load the transmission) you'll have an instant jump on everything here. It's extraordinary. Four-wheel drive enables launches from 5000rpm, when the McLaren and Ferrari can only use 3000. The SLS doesn't have launch control, it has 'Race Start', but we recorded its fastest time by simply nailing the throttle. Unfortunately

we weren't able to time the Ford GT as it is part of Ford's heritage fleet (the figures come courtesy of *Autocar*), but I doubt it would have required quite the temperance of the Noble. In the M600, you dial in 3000 revs, watch the boost, avoid slamming into the limiter and try not to fluff a gearshift. It loses out a little in the early phases but has overtaken everything by 150mph. Oh, and just 28 seconds after the start it's cracked 190mph. What a machine. **RG**



'You're balancing the McLaren between grip and the



tests two-up). Righto. On the out-lap I work a little heat back into the tyres and retune myself to the car. The steering is incredibly fast, the 458 reacting to even the smallest twitch of the wheel. To begin with it feels almost *too* sensitive, hyper even, so you find yourself recalibrating your own rate of input.

Once that's sussed, you can revel in the incredible level of detail and a chassis balance that's adjustable almost to the point of being unstable. It isn't, of course – it's both incredibly biddable and surprisingly tolerant of any over-eagerness. The 458 slides at will, but it's easy to hang on to and balance. The E-diff allows the power to be applied hard and early – it pays to use all the revs and you always have a clear picture of the loadings of all four tyres.

If the chassis is all flair and exuberance, it's matched by the engine, which gives its best when wrung right out to 9000rpm and has the further benefit of being mated to a seven-speed gearbox with the best twin-clutch system I've ever used. The torque interruption is negligible, allowing the thrust to continue unabated in one seamless, wailing surge.

The lap feels good, right on the limit, but I'm still astonished at the lap time. The 458's 1:19.3 is a tenth faster than that set by the Gumpert Apollo (effectively a race car with a number-plate), six tenths quicker than the 911 GT2 RS

Right: evo's Green, Trott and Wallace feel slightly outnumbered by the squads of technicians from Ferrari and McLaren. The Noble had no such back-up but performed superbly, apart from traction control going AWOL



(the fastest 'proper' road car we've previously figured) and a whole second faster than we managed last time we tested a 458 (the track was cooler back then and the car had more fuel on board). It's an extraordinarily quick time and some target for the MP4-12C and M600.

The McLaren feels completely different. More measured, the calm after the frenzied blur of the Ferrari. Inside it's quieter, both in terms of the engine note and the rate of arm movements. It's more stable in its responses, a little less on tip-toe. Of course, that doesn't mean you're not still driving it by the seat of your pants, balancing it on the thin line between grip and the huge amount of slip that can be brought on by 592bhp. In fact on my fastest lap I got a little too much oversteer on the exit of Hangar Hairpin and it cost a tenth.

There's no slippy diff, of course, and spectators later said they noticed a couple of instances when there was a wisp of white smoke from the inside rear tyre. From the helm, the Brake Steer system ensures you don't feel any individual wheelspin, but there's not quite the level of accuracy and delicacy that you get from the 458. The brakes themselves are mighty, though, and the airbrake helps keep the 12C more stable than the Ferrari, too. As you'd expect, the guttural-sounding twin-turbo V8 is immensely strong now that I can keep it on boost, bellowing all the way to 8500rpm.

The moment of truth. For all its speed and stability, the McLaren can't touch the Ferrari's lap time. Its 1:20.6 is impressive in isolation, and with more time I may have found a tenth or two, but even then it'd still be a second away. Analysing the data showed that most of the time was lost to the Ferrari in the transitional corners, where a left immediately becomes a right (or vice-versa). Here the 458 darts from one to the next with lightning directional changes the 12C just couldn't match. On a circuit with longer straights and continuous-state corners the results are likely to be closer.

However, McLaren does have an instant way of clawing into the deficit. The 12C can be ordered on track-friendly Pirelli Corsa rubber, so after the second run the boys from Surrey



huge amount of slip that can be brought on by 592bhp'



bolted on a set on for me to try, just to discover the difference. It found exactly a second. The overall balance remained the same, only now I had a little more grip under braking, a little more bite on turn-in and I could pick up the throttle that bit earlier. But it was still behind that extraordinary Ferrari time.

Picking up the throttle early in the Noble requires no little bravery. The power arrives far lower in the rev-range and it does so with an almighty wallop so you'd better be ready. Dobie later commented that he always thought there was a straight between the Palmer Curves and Pif-Paf. It doesn't exist when you're in the M600. In slow corners you need to get the front tyres pointing straight as soon as possible, almost squaring off the corners ready to launch down the track. Not that there's anything wrong with the handling – balance, feel and mid-corner grip are all very impressive – it's just that the whole package is dominated by the rampant, old-school big-bang turbo. If I could have fitted any of the three



Onlookers could just detect the slightest wisp of tyre-smoke from the Noble out of some of the slower corners

with slick tyres it would have been this one.

It's properly physical; you have to do more of the work yourself and as a consequence it presents the driver with the biggest challenge, but it's one you want to take on again and again. This is no back-street kit car, it's a real alternative to either of the others. And it backs it up with a 1:20.8 lap. With more grip

(perhaps from a set of Corsa tyres) I reckon it might find even more time than the McLaren did, and when you factor-in the time lost on every gearchange then the small team from Leicestershire have a lot to be happy about.

Three brilliant machines, each delivering very different, adrenalin-pumping thrills. But it's another win for the men from Maranello.

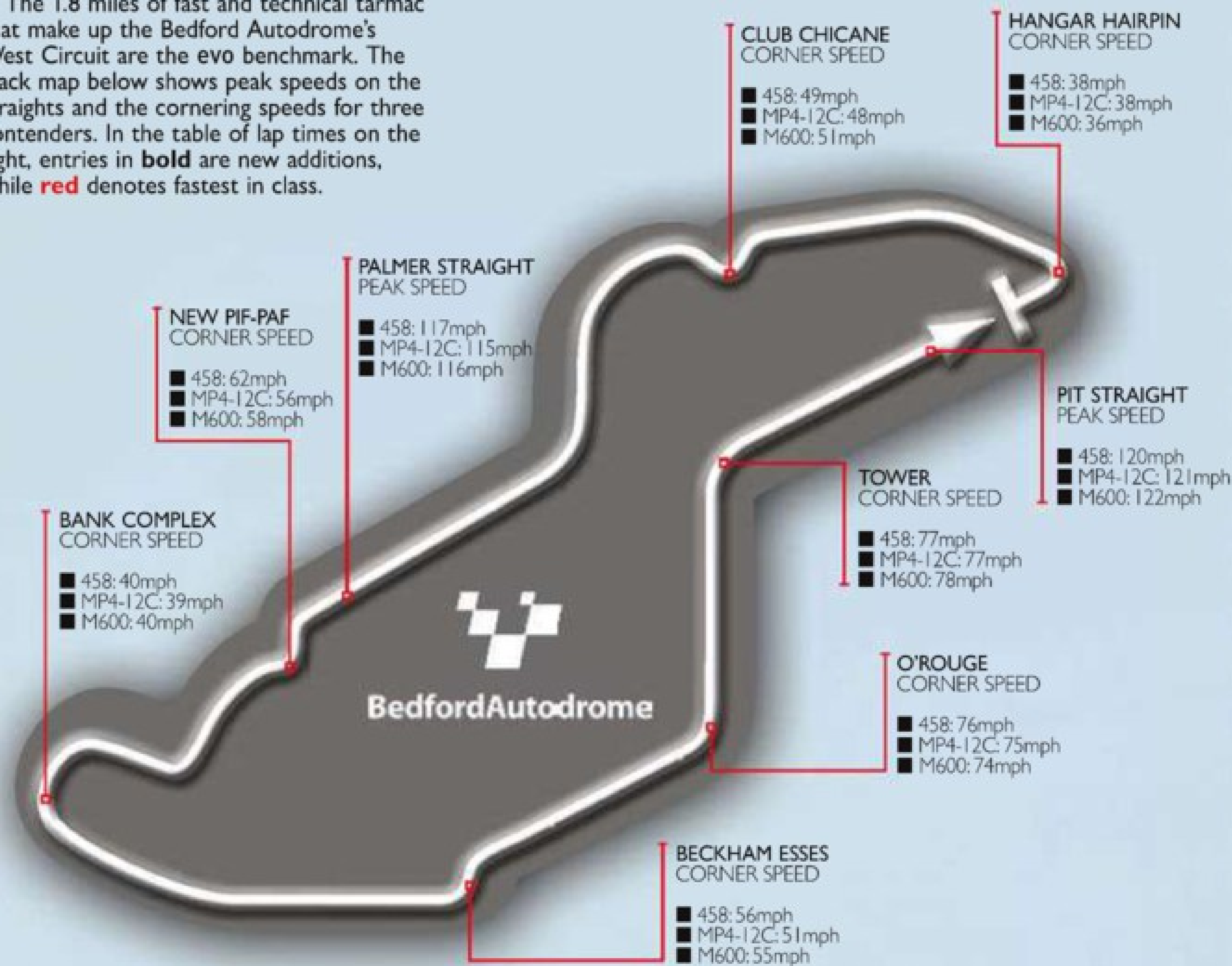
‘The lap in the Ferrari feels good, right on the limit, but I’m still astonished by the lap time’





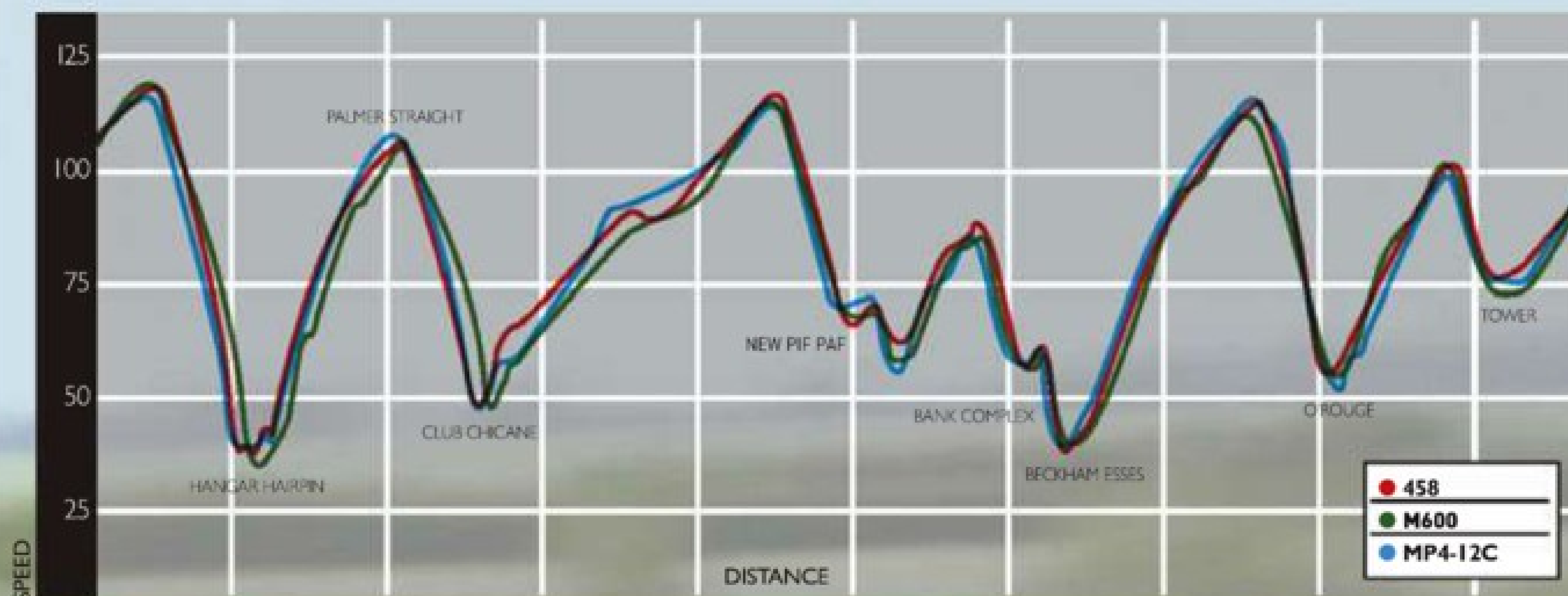
## HOW FAST?

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



## WHICH WAS FASTER?

458 1min 19.3sec (peak speed 120.0mph) MP4-12C 1:20.6 (120.9mph) M600 1:20.8 (121.8mph)



▲ Ferrari carries more speed through the transitions at Pif-Paf and Bank. Noble's power evident from steepness of trace out of corners, but the flow is interrupted by gearshifts (most notable after Hangar). Kink in McLaren's trace in long right-hander after Club shows turbo hits full boost, driver forced to lift

## THE LEADERBOARD

	LAP TIME	PEAK
Radical SR8LM (fastest car)	1:13.6	127.8
Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)	1:14.8	130.9
<b>Ferrari 458 Italia</b>	<b>1:19.3</b>	<b>120.0</b>
Gumpert Apollo S	1:19.4	120.4
<b>McLaren MP4-12C (Corsa tyres)</b>	<b>1:19.6</b>	<b>121.2</b>
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
<b>McLaren MP4-12C</b>	<b>1:20.6</b>	<b>120.9</b>
<b>Noble M600</b>	<b>1:20.8</b>	<b>121.8</b>
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
<b>Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (fastest coupe)</b>	<b>1:21.9</b>	<b>116.8</b>
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
Porsche 997 Turbo S	1:23.5	117.5
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
Mercedes SLS AMG	1:24.6	115.7
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
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1:25.8	110.9
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1:25.9	108.8
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1:25.9	106.4
<b>Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400 (fastest saloon)</b>	<b>1:25.9</b>	<b>107.5</b>
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
<b>Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)</b>	<b>1:26.9</b>	<b>107.4</b>
Audi RS5	1:26.9	106.8
Lotus Evora	1:27.1	104.2
Nissan 370Z	1:27.1	104.0
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
<b>Renaultsport Mégane R26.R (fastest hot hatch)</b>	<b>1:27.8</b>	<b>103.3</b>
<b>Audi RS6 Avant (fastest estate)</b>	<b>1:27.9</b>	<b>111.0</b>
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
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	1:28.8	106.3
Bentley Continental Supersports	1:29.2	105.8
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1:29.9	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



# THE VERDICT

We've given the MP4-12C the toughest workout imaginable. Now, after five days on road and track, it's time for our testers to deliver their verdict. **Henry Catchpole** takes notes





So, after the best part of a week, it all boils down to a simple question: 'Given the choice of any of the six, which one would you take home and keep?' I know which one I'd have, but what about my colleagues?

John Barker almost picks the Noble, but then says that if he could have only one, it would be the relative old-stager, the 2005 eCoty winner, the Ford GT. He'd change the seats, though, and what he really wants is one of the last-of-

the-line Roush power-upgraded GTs. We'll allow it just this once.

Andy Wallace seems to talk himself out of the Ferrari – and then chooses it anyway. 'The car that you would choose to take away and live with is not the car that's the *best* one here,' he says. 'The best car is the bright red Italian one, but could you drive around in a Ferrari every day?' I don't know, Andy... could you? 'Aw, hell, yes, I suppose you could! Apart from a long time ago, I don't think I've ever driven a

Ferrari, and I jumped in the 458, pulled away, spun the wheels a bit, changed gear a couple of times and I just thought, "oh wow, I can't believe how good this is!" and I so wanted the new McLaren to do that, but it didn't.' He likes the dual-clutch 'box too: 'Outside of a race-car, that 'box is the best gearbox in the world. It feels like a pneumatically driven race gearbox without the harshness and it's absolutely at your command at every moment.'

Richard Meaden next. 'If I didn't pick the





# McLAREN MP2-12C THE DEFINITIVE TEST

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Noble, I just know that I'd miss it,' he says. 'I'm sure it would annoy me, but in a lot of respects I think it's probably the most exciting car I've ever driven. It's just amazingly fast and raw and thrilling, but the steering and damping are also arguably the best here. It just seems very natural, too. There are no tricks. Noble are not pretending to have reinvented anything, they're just applying known engineering and making it work in an amazing way. They've done it for the pure joy of doing it and I like that. I'm fed-up of being marketed at'

Sadly, at 6ft 5in I don't really fit in the Noble, so, much as I love it, I'd choose something

else. The SLS couldn't be more different from the MP4-12C (ironic, given Mercedes' and McLaren's past collaborations). It's almost old-fashioned in its ethos, but I think there's a lot to be said for its front-engined layout, which feels so wonderfully friendly and hilariously chuckable. The gearbox is rubbish, but the whole car's relaxed, torque-rich nature means you can forgive it this and, besides, you're too busy smiling at the big, naturally aspirated V8, which sounds like a Second World War aeroplane taxiing out for a sortie. It's genuinely useable every day too. So I'd have an SLS... except that I wouldn't. I'd have the 458. Just

because it's so flick-knife-sharp and eye-poppingly exciting that I'm grinning from ear to ear just sitting here thinking about it. When I ask Chris Harris 'the question' he says the same thing. And when we aggregate all the testers' scores, it's the overall winner too.

What you might have noticed is that no one has said, 'I'll have the McLaren, please.' The reasons why have probably become clear enough over the previous 32 pages, but it's worth going over them again...

The MP4-12C is a brilliant car in many respects – innovative, stonkingly fast, with perfect packaging and frequently sublime on

## SPECIFICATIONS

	McLAREN MP4-12C	FERRARI 458 ITALIA	NOBLE M600	MERCEDES-BENZ SLS AMG
Engine	V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo	V8, 4499cc	V8, 4439cc, twin-turbo	V8, 6208cc
Power	592bhp @ 7000rpm	562bhp @ 9000rpm	650bhp @ 6800rpm	563bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque	442lb ft @ 3000-7000rpm	398lb ft @ 6000rpm	604lb ft @ 3800rpm	479lb ft @ 6475rpm
Transmission	Seven-speed dual-clutch with Pre-Cog, rear-wheel drive, Brake Steer, ESC	Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, E-Diff3, FI-Trac	Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, traction control	Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, ESP
Front suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, hydraulic roll control	Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, hydraulic roll control	Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Ventilated and cross-drilled cast-iron discs (carbon-ceramics optional), 370mm front, 350mm rear; ABS, EBD	Ventilated and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear; ABS, EBD	Ventilated cast-iron discs, 380mm front, 350mm rear	Ventilated and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs, 402mm front, 360mm rear; ABS, EBD
Wheels	8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 20in rear	8.5 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear	9 x 19in front, 12 x 20in rear	9.5 x 19in front, 11 x 20in rear
Tyres	235/35 ZR19 front, 305/30 ZR20 rear; Pirelli P Zero	235/35 ZR20 front, 295/35 ZR20 rear; Michelin Pilot Super Sport	255/30 ZR19 front, 335/30 ZR20 rear; Michelin Pilot Super Sport	265/35 ZR19 front, 295/30 ZR20 rear; Continental SportContact
Weight (kerb)	1434kg	1485kg	1198kg	1620kg
Power-to-weight	419bhp/ton	384bhp/ton	551bhp/ton	335bhp/ton
Top speed	205mph (claimed)	202mph (claimed)	225mph (claimed)	197mph (claimed)
Basic price	£168,500	£173,132	c£200,000	£168,345
Price as tested	£219,560	£228,076	c£200,000	£205,730

**EVO RATING** ★★★★★

★★★★★

★★★★★

★★★★★



‘The Ferrari is so flick-knife-sharp and eye-poppingly exciting that I’m grinning from ear to ear’



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the limit. But as Barker says, ‘it’s not flawless and it’s quite surprising the details that they’ve got wrong’. One of the main problems is with the gearchange. It’s not a problem with the transmission itself, but the paddles. As Meaden notes, ‘the gearbox is brilliant – it’s so seamless and yet you still feel like you’re changing gear. But the actual gearshift action takes too much effort – I like the click, but there’s too much of a pull before it. And the push thing is just a nonsense because it’s so heavy that you physically can’t push it back with your fingers.’

The brakes come in for criticism, too. ‘It’s very easy to jolt yourself forward,’ says

Wallace. ‘Sometimes you just want a little bit of braking but there’s a heavy, dead feel to the top of the pedal and it seems like there’s nothing there, so you press a bit harder and then suddenly there’s too much.’

‘It’s particularly not good if you just want to brush the pedal going into a quick corner,’ adds Meaden, ‘and I can see why they need the airbrake because it does squirm around a lot under braking, too.’

I reckon the McLaren needs a chassis setting between Sport and Track. I want the roll stiffness of the Track mode in order to take out that hesitant lightness on turn-in that I first

felt on Monday night, but combined with the magical vertical suppleness of Sport mode.

In fact everyone agrees that the whole car feels like it needs extra tuning for fast road driving. It seems to do up to five-tenths pace brilliantly and we’ve found that it does tenths round a track phenomenally well, but at the moment I’m not sure if it’s capable of being really satisfying in that crucial seven- to eight-tenths bracket where so much fast, fun, road driving is done. So it’d be fantastic on the long boring journey to a European circuit, cruising over the horrible Belgian motorways with all the serenity of an A8. And you know that with the push of a button it can drive straight out of the pitlane at Spa and nail the braking point at Les Coombes, but it seems they’ve slightly missed the middle ground. As Meaden says: ‘Sure it will carry more measurable speed, but carrying more speed isn’t what road driving is about. It’s about feel.’

We’ve been amazed and impressed by a lot of the things the MP4-12C has done over the last few days, but I don’t think anyone reached the end of a drive, however fast or even occasionally sideways, grinning. I certainly never found myself buzzing with excitement during a drive, wanting to bottle the moment.

Chris Harris hit the spot in his initial review (*evo* 155) when he talked about a curious lack of emotion, and he adds that despite being a serial supercar buyer, in the months since he’s never once found himself longing to own one. Emotion. Ferrari’s trump card.

■ [Discuss the verdict at evo.co.uk/community](http://Discuss the verdict at evo.co.uk/community)

#### PORSCHE 911 TURBO S

Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo  
523bhp @ 6250rpm  
516lb ft @ 2100rpm  
Seven-speed twin-clutch, four-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, PTM, PTV  
MacPherson struts, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar  
Five-link, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar  
Ventilated and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs, 380mm front, 350mm rear, ABS, EBD  
8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 19in rear  
235/35 ZR19 front, 305/30 ZR19 rear, Michelin Pilot Sport  
1570kg  
338bhp/ton  
196mph (claimed)  
£125,864  
£129,863



#### FORD GT

V8, 5409cc, supercharged  
550bhp @ 6500rpm  
500lb ft @ 3750rpm  
Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential  
Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar  
Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar  
Ventilated cast-iron discs, 355mm front, 335mm rear, ABS  
9 x 18in front, 12 x 19in rear  
235/35 ZR18 front, 315/40 ZR19 rear  
Goodyear Eagle F1  
1583kg  
353bhp/ton  
205mph (claimed)  
c£150,000 (today)  
c£150,000



The stats reveal how closely matched are the McLaren and Ferrari, and in terms of sheer pace and ability they’re both extraordinary devices, but the MP4-12C is far from perfect and, perhaps just as tellingly, lacks an element of emotion

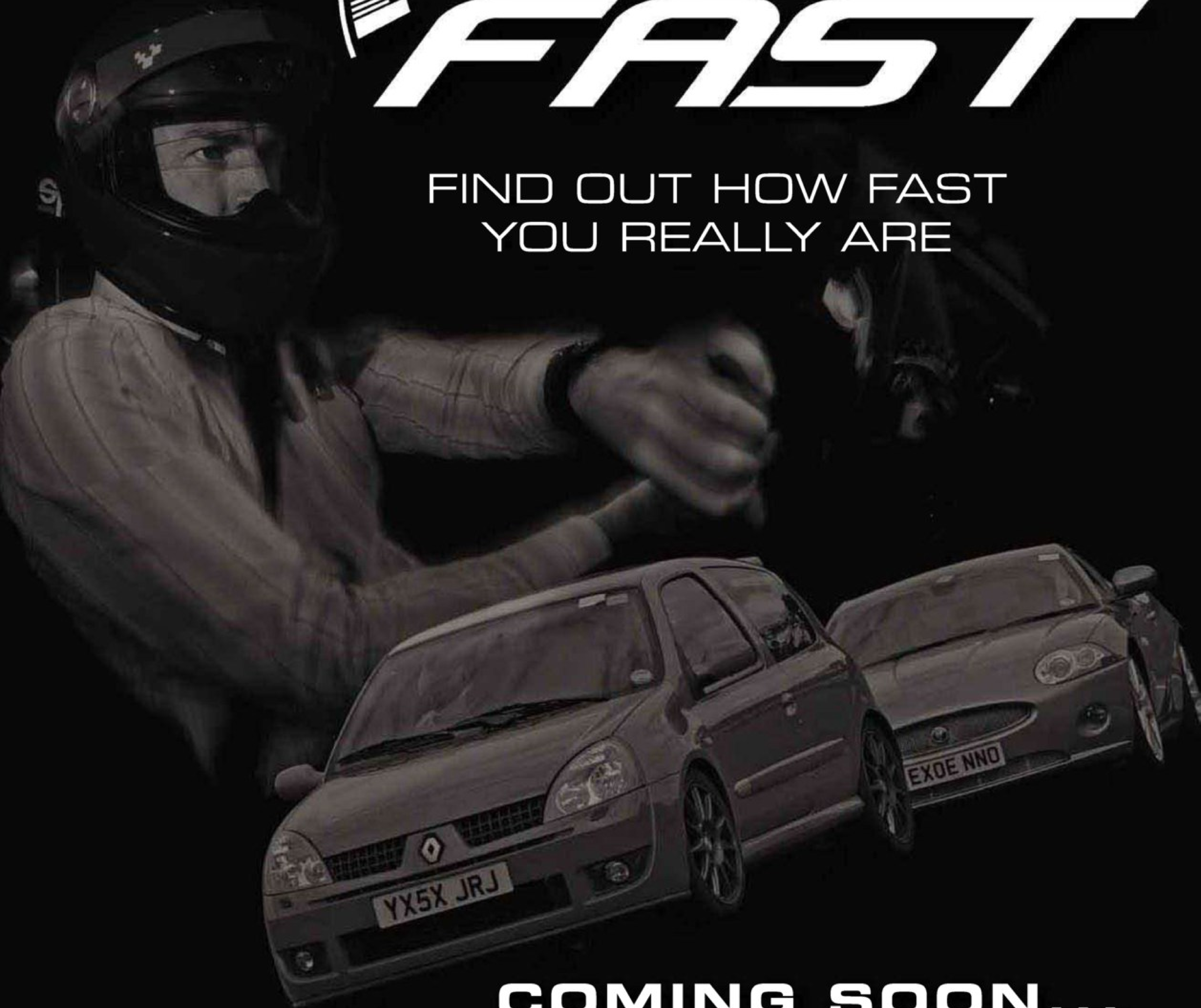




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# Mamma Miglia!

1000 miles of stunning roads, glorious cars and the sort of madness that could only happen in Italy, the modern Mille Miglia is a gruelling test of man and machine, as **evo** discovered...

SUPERCHARGED

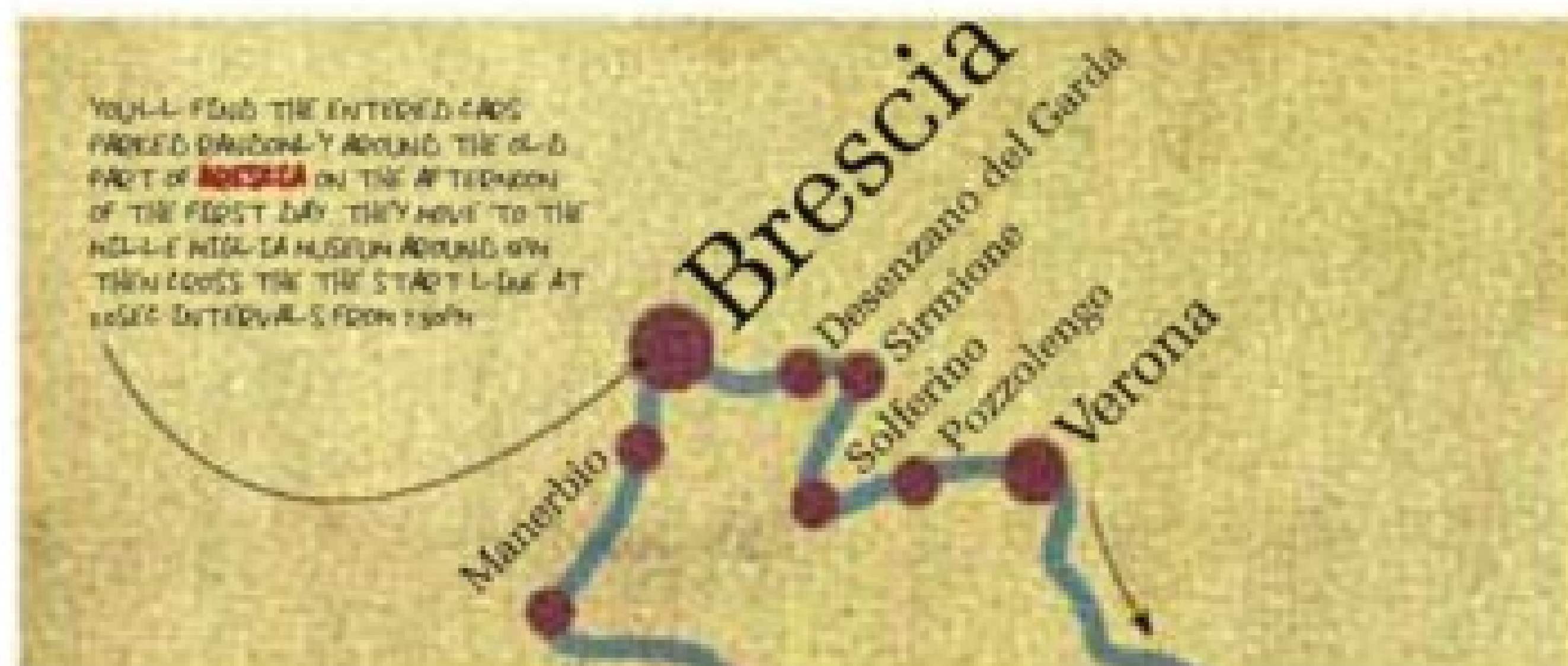
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## CONTENTS



### XKR-S ON THE MILLE MIGLIA

■ Henry Catchpole chases the historic contenders in the brand new 542bhp version of Jaguar's coupe



### MILLE MIGLIA GUIDE

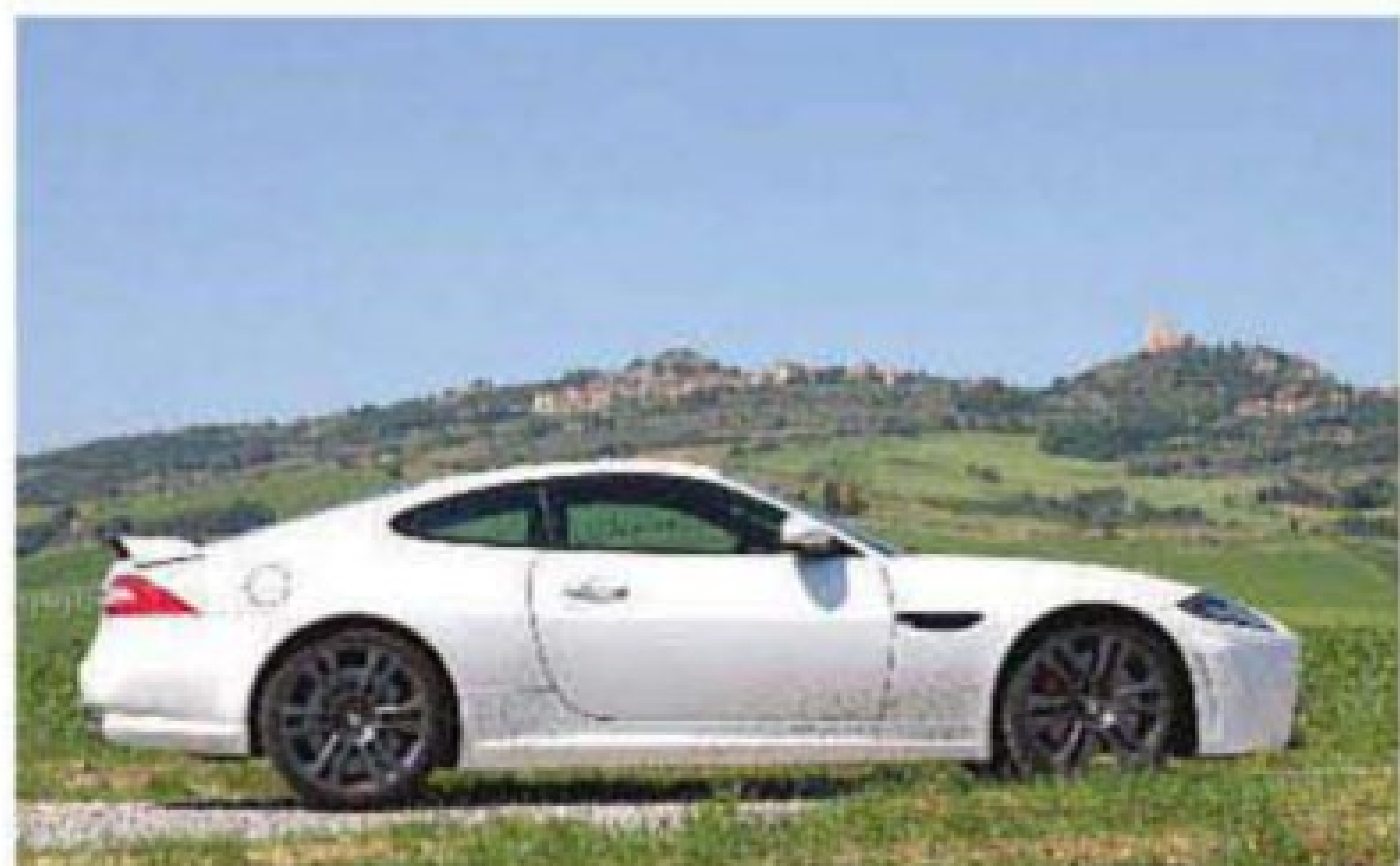
■ The full route, where to see the best action and how to get an entry next year – you'll find it all here



### FERRARI TRIBUTE TO MILLE MIGLIA

■ Harry Metcalfe tries a new way of taking part in the Mille Miglia that isn't restricted to classic cars







# BIG CAT DIARY

Could there be a tougher first test for the new 542bhp Jaguar XKR-S than to chase the 2011 Mille Miglia for three days and 1000 hard-driven miles? **Henry Catchpole** finds out how it fares

Pictures **David Shepherd, Sam Riley, Henry Catchpole & Jaguar**







Three abreast. About £3million-worth of classic cars has just gone through a red traffic light side by side and then tried to jostle and out-brake each other into a single carriageway. What's more, holding my breath, I followed them through... Welcome to the three days of utter insanity that is the Mille Miglia.

The famous thousand-mile race round Italy ran for the first time in 1927 and ended in 1957 after Alfonso de Portago's fateful 150mph puncture and crash into a crowd. Twenty years later the modern event rose from the ashes, no longer a race but instead a regularity rally for cars that could have competed in the original. It still follows a route from Brescia through Verona, down over the mountains of L'Aquila to Rome and then back up through Tuscany and across the plains of the Emilia Romagna to Brescia again (see map, page 110). Our aim for the next three days is to follow said route and the cars competing in the 2011 Mille Miglia. And to do so we'll be using a brand new Jaguar XKR-S, which is nice.

When I saw the first photos I wasn't sure about the big wing and gilled snout of the R-S, but sitting in the sun in a scruffy hotel car park on the outskirts of Brescia, it looks absolutely ace. Even parked next to a C-type. This is a relief, because if you are about to try to mix it with over 300 of the most glorious cars ever produced then you want something that looks a bit special. I also have a sneaking suspicion that we'll need to do a certain amount of blagging

over the next few days and it's easier to outflank people in high-vis if they're drooling.

It's Thursday morning and we're about to go and watch the ceremonial sealing of the cars (where a metal cord with a lead seal bearing the Mille Miglia logo is attached to each competing vehicle) in the Piazza della Loggia in the centre of Brescia. Our passport round the Mille Miglia is a big green circular 'press' sticker on the bonnet of the Jaguar. We're hoping that this will open doors and let us get close to the action, but as I have no previous experience of the MM it's all a bit unknown. Nearing the centre of the city, the sticker seems to be doing the trick though, as blue-shirted policemen wave us past barriers and up cordoned streets. Eventually we enter a corridor of spectators and join a long queue of aero screens, chrome bumpers, cycle wings and body shapes penned with single-minded artistry. I look in the mirror and see Mika Häkkinen pull up behind in an ex-works Fangio Mercedes 300 SLR. Surreal, and it won't be the last we'll see of him...

There are a lot of **evo** readers, both British and Italian, in the crowd and they all clock what is actually the first right-hand-drive XKR-S fresh off the production line. 'How much...?' always gets an impressed coo when I reply 542bhp, or 501lb ft, or £97,000.

Eventually we find the limits of our sticker and get siphoned off into a side-street before the piazza, so I suggest to **evo** film-maker Sam Riley that we go and have a look at the start/finish ramp, which is a few streets away on the wide and imposing Viale Venezia. Naturally the huge stage is behind barriers and there is security everywhere. However, I'm not a complete beginner at this sort of caper and a speculative left turn sneaks us and the Jag behind the railings and onto the ramp for a few seconds before I have to deal with heavy-set security using only a puzzled look and my best Valentino Rossi accent to say, 'errr, Inglese?'

The first cars don't set off until the evening and the crews all gather in the grounds of an old convent until the allotted hour. It's here that the breathtaking quality of the cars taking



From top: participating cars gathered for scrutineering; Mika Häkkinen in an ex-Fangio Mercedes; D-type cockpit (XKR-S's cabin pictured left). Below: police support the event by leading convoys and stopping traffic. Right: sneaking towards the start/finish ramp





1000  
MIGLIA

TROFEO  
UBI Banco di Brescia

JAGUAR XKR-S ON  
THE MILLE MIGLIA

Chopard

STEFANO RICCI

SIXT  
rent a car

‘If you’re mixing it with over 300 of the most glorious cars ever produced, you want something that looks a bit special’

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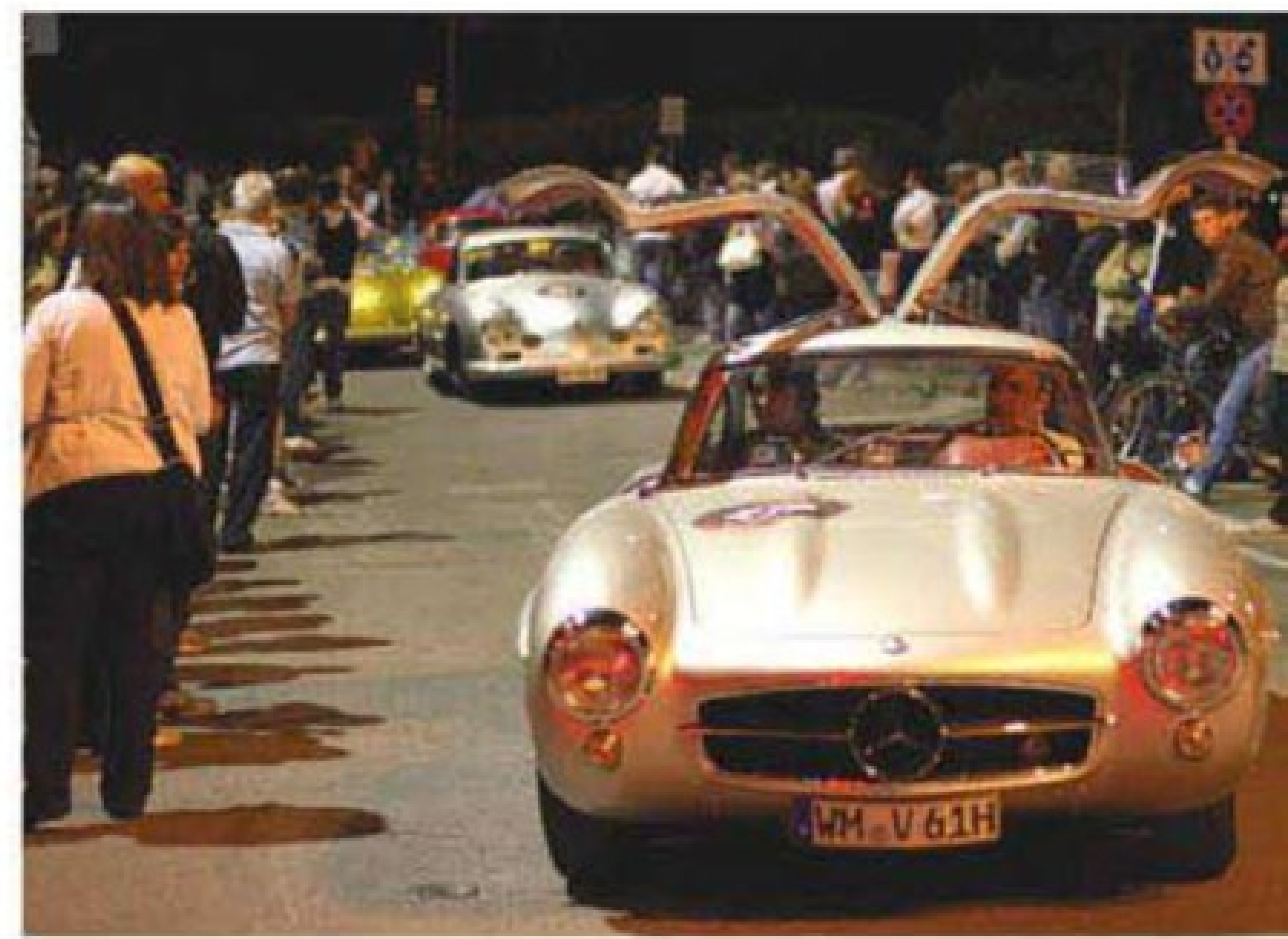


## JAGUAR XKR-S ON THE MILLE MIGLIA

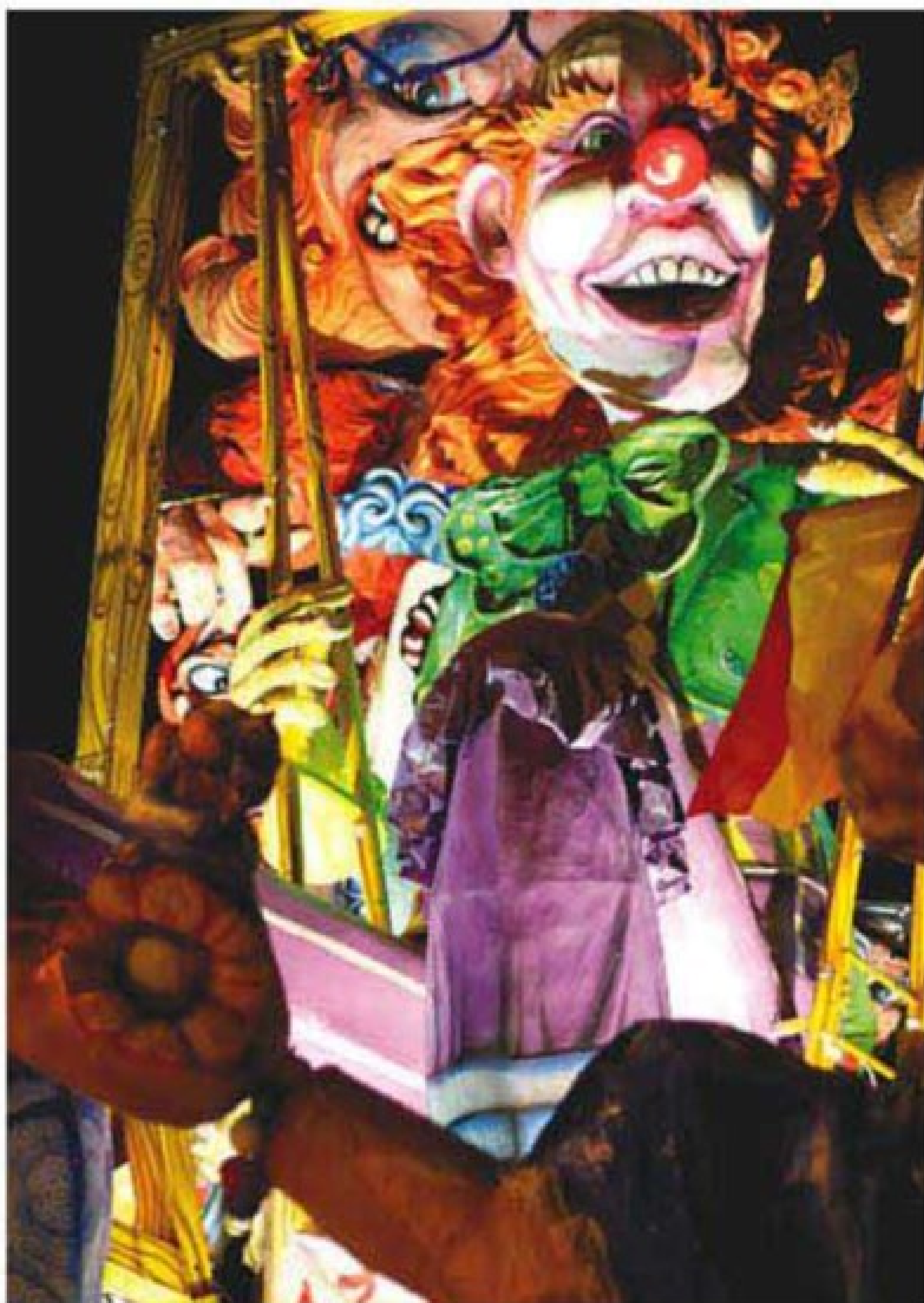
part becomes clear. Häkkinen's here again, a mechanic revving the SLR's 3-litre in-line eight-cylinder to warm it up. Standing near the Silver Arrow as the mechanic stabs the throttle at metronomic second intervals, my ears throb and I can feel every hot gust from the side-exit exhausts. My particular favourite is a Ferrari 500 Mondial in French racing blue that seems to have remained cosmetically untouched since it finished its last race in the '50s. Not only is it a beautiful shape, but it also possesses a patina that oozes history – like a dimple in a smile, I even love the dent in the back.

After a while we drive up towards the centre of Brescia again and manage to join the crowds lining the sides of the road not far from the start. Our plan is to just drive onto the route behind a police convoy and then try to hang on in the hope that they don't object. We wait and watch in the XKR-S, then when a couple of Jags come hurtling past with a police motorbike, we give chase. They're already heading round the next corner as we pull out, but we manage to keep the flashing blue light in view and the corridor of cheering people makes it fairly obvious where to go. It feels crazy and initially slightly uncomfortable haring through a city at over twice the normal speed limit. It's like *Gran Turismo* brought to life.

As we near a junction, we've just managed to reel in and tag onto the tail of the fast-moving convoy, so policemen and flag-waving officials rush us through whilst holding up the evening traffic. Roundabouts litter the way east out of Brescia, but following the bobbing rump of an



'It feels crazy haring through a city at over twice the normal speed limit. It's like *Gran Turismo* brought to life'



XK120 we only touch the brakes or change down just enough to jink right-left-right on the straightest line possible through each one. And still there are crowds of people; I had expected them near the start, but as the race heads into the countryside and the gathering gloaming, they're still there, the elderly sitting in chairs outside bars, mothers clutching babies outside houses, teenagers standing on traffic islands, all cheering and inciting you to go faster.

The R-S is already proving a hit, both with me and those watching. I've been driving with the windows down not only because the evening air is warm but because I want to feel the atmosphere of the cheering spectators as much as possible. Select Dynamic Mode so a little chequered flag appears on the dash and the sound from the exhausts is truly epic, which delights all those we pass. Turn the traction and stability controls off and with 501lb ft of torque and quick steering it's as easy as you like to hold a slide out of the dusty roundabouts too, again to the smiling whoops and cheers of the onlooking Italians (and me!).

A bit like in cycling, you don't want to drop the slipstream of the car in front. If you haven't got Castrol R fumes constantly flooding up your nostrils then you're probably not close enough. Convoys of sometimes a dozen cars seem to be charging across the countryside in a manner that isn't what I'd imagined from a historic regularity rally. Even without any police escorts in attendance the pace remains astoundingly, lawlessly high, and as night falls the insanity just seems to increase.

There are not just the historics but also support and event cars and occasionally enthusiastic locals all tearing around too. Plus, of course, 'ordinary' traffic. I've never driven an emergency vehicle that's got its 'blues and twos' on, but I imagine my concentration levels wouldn't be any higher if I did. I'm constantly scanning the way ahead, watching, positioning, judging gaps, accelerating hard yet expecting to have to brake. All this in darkness with a mixture of lights in red, green, white, blue and very occasionally orange, ranging in brightness from candle-dim to xenon-blinding, both

STORKE/EGG.COM





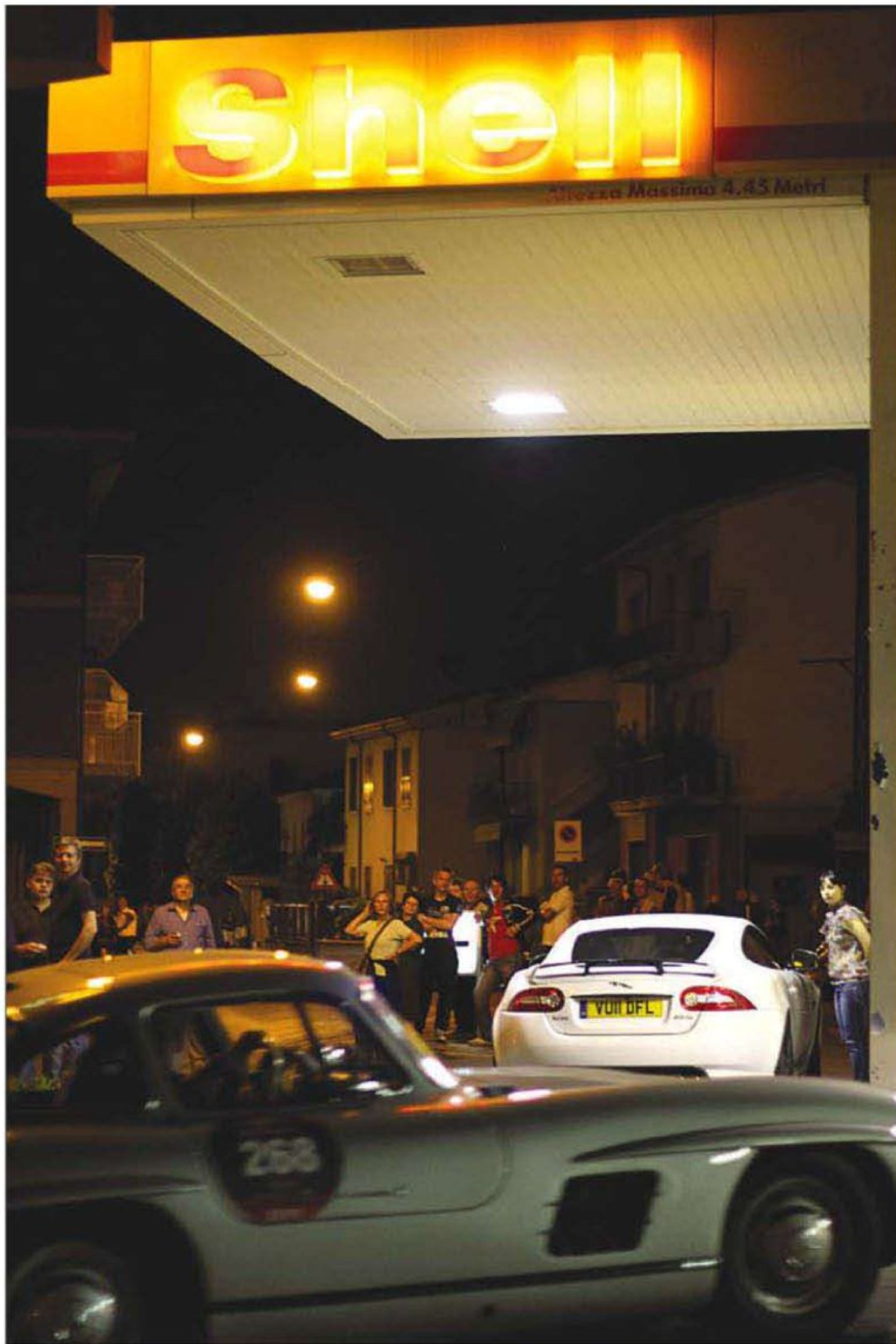
Far left: 1955 Ferrari 500 Mondial is Catchpole's fave. Left: gorgeous Mercedes 300 SL. Above: Italian-registered Jag XK120. Below: Aston DB3 with police escort. Bottom left: freaky funfair at the end of the first night's driving. Bottom right: D-type in parc fermé



flashing and constantly on. And still there are people waving and cheering at every junction and through every village.

Ah, yes, villages and towns. The pace simply doesn't drop as you dash between houses. Most of the time there are police and officials stopping traffic and creating clear passages through lights and junctions, but not always. The roads we're using as we charge towards Verona and then Bologna are not big either, and for hour after hour there is no chance to relax. The only occasional pause comes when the historics are siphoned off towards a town-centre checkpoint and we get diverted around the outskirts to wait on the other side. Out here, waiting at the side of the road, there's a camaraderie of its own amongst the supporting vehicles as people listen for the approach of a particular blaring competition exhaust. Then they run for their car and it all starts again.

We eventually reach parc fermé in a Bolognese multi-storey at about 3am. We've been driving for six hours and Riley and I have still got to find our hotel, 20 miles out of town (via the world's most annoying motorway diversion and a frustratingly incorrect postcode). Just before I flop onto the bed and fall into instantaneous sleep, I consider the fact that on their record run in 1955, Moss and Jenkinson would already be past Rome...





## JAGUAR XKR-S ON THE MILLE MIGLIA



JUST THREE HOURS later the Jaguar's supercharged 5-litre V8 fires into life, the deep cacophony reverberating around the hotel's underground car park. Minutes after that we're back out in the mêlée, this time mixing it with some of the oldest pre-war cars at the head of the cavalcade. Daylight doesn't diminish the drama, it just means you can see the lunacy more clearly. Long southbound straights (where Moss et al would have been hitting over 170mph and the R-S could potentially reach 186mph) are clogged with Friday-morning traffic. But this doesn't seem to bother the competitors. There are priceless Alfas and Maseratis being driven like they're motorbikes, overtaking down some mythical middle lane at incredible speeds towards oncoming traffic. Solid lines mean nothing. Only when something too wide, like an artic, appears and spells imminent doom do they haul on their ancient drum brakes at the last minute and force a gap in the traffic back on their side of the road.

Cars queuing for a red traffic light? Simply overtake the lot and cut in at the front before negotiating the crossroads like you're

Below: XKR-S's supercharged 5-litre V8 has 542bhp, so there's lots of fun to be had in the hairpins (above). Right: Allard charges down the wrong side of the road – a normal state of affairs on the Mille Miglia



colour-blind. What's even scarier is that I'm not just an observer in all this but following them. Sometimes I'm safely in their wake as they scythe a path through the turmoil, but sometimes I'm forging my own way through non-existent gaps and by mid-morning I feel like I know the width of an XKR-S to the nearest half-millimetre.

After climbing up to the precariously perched hill-top principality of San Marino, we head down onto smaller, quieter roads that twist through the trees. The road surface we're tackling is far from pristine, the tarmac frequently contorted and writhing like it's in pain. This must be a car-wrecking event for the historics and it's a stern test for the XKR-S. Fortunately, despite 28 per cent stiffer spring rates, the R-S's ride remains everything you'd hope for in a Jaguar, smothering the vicious bumps and leaving our spines immensely glad they're not travelling 1000 miles in a GT3.

Mid-afternoon we pop out onto a section of dual carriageway... which promptly grinds to a halt. Sitting there, glad of the brief respite but wondering if we're ever likely to reach Rome,

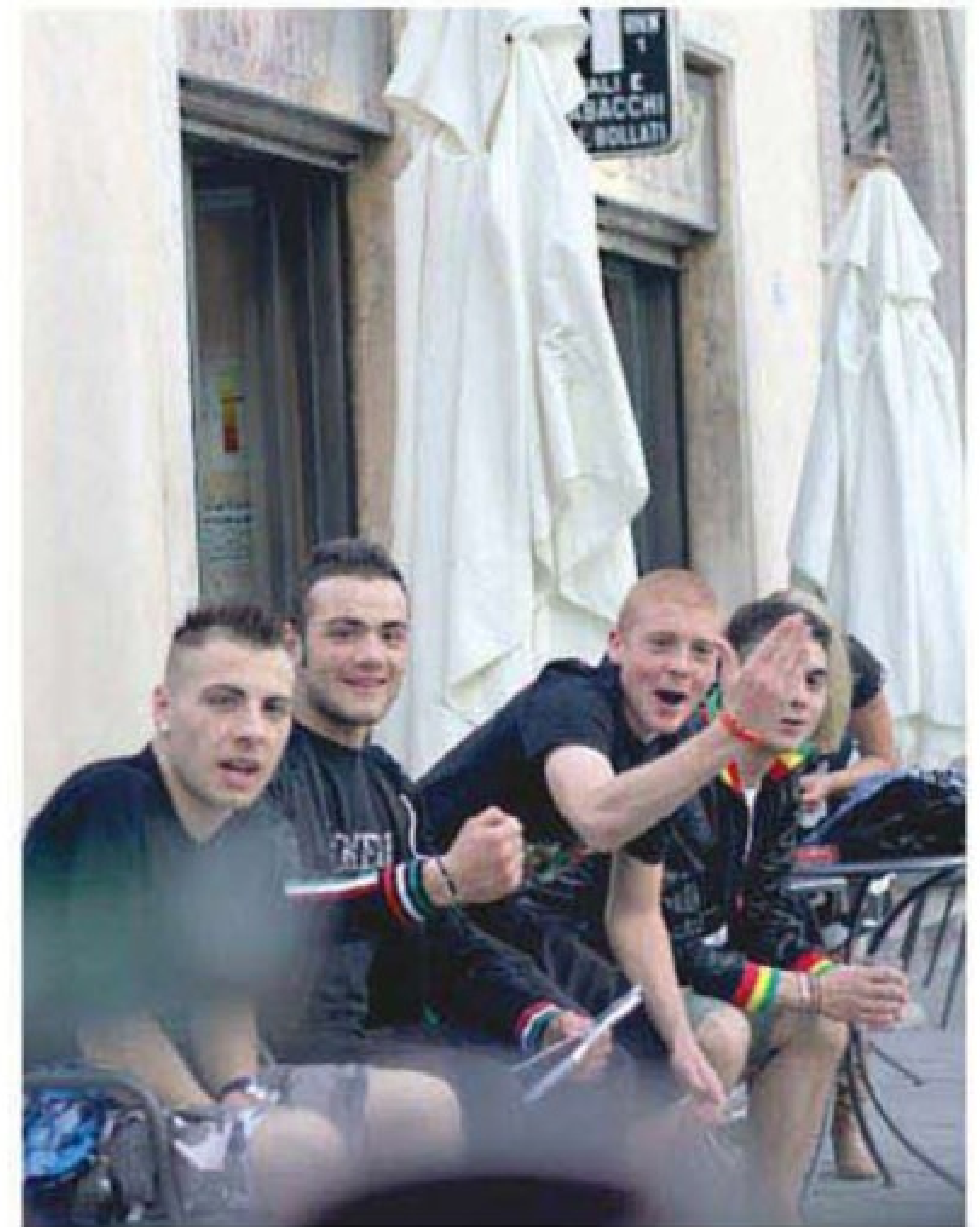




‘Front-end grip is tremendous, so you can turn in hard and then just light up the rear tyres’



Above: hard-shoulder shortcut past queuing traffic on a dual carriageway eventually becomes a jam too. Below left: snow can still be seen from the highest roads. Below right: spectators line much of the route, cheering the cars on



the barely silenced gnashing and wailing of an Allard J2 rips past my open driver's window, causing me to jump. Silly me. Why sit in traffic when there's a perfectly good hard shoulder to hammer down? Eventually even that clogs up so everyone gets out and has a wander around until things start easing and we head for the hills once more.

The jam has spaced everyone out a little and we get a wonderfully clear run down a fast valley road before climbing up through broad hairpins. The R-S's chassis is exactly the same as the one underneath the limited-edition XKR 75 that we enjoyed so much in Austria last year (evo 150), but now you've got even more power to exploit it – another 19bhp, so 39bhp up on the standard XKR. The steering is undeniably light, but it is phenomenally accurate (whether picking an apex or squeezing through traffic...) and the chassis is beautifully balanced. There is still a softer edge to it than you might expect from a car with an R-S badge on its rump, but only when you're really pushing does it lose a little ultimate bite. However, it is huge fun through the switchbacks. There's tremendous

grip from the front end, so you can turn in hard and then just light up the rear tyres. The eDiff will lock initially before opening again to stabilise the slide in a wonderfully benign manner as you continue painting black lines all the way through the corner.

There's still some snow at the top of the Micigliano pass and we pause to take some photos as the sinking sun turns the sky orange. We hear a car approaching, hard charging, no revs being spared. Then we see it. That shock of very blond Finnish hair hunkered down behind the low screen as it comes howling up and over the crest, flat chat. A timeless car, a timeless road, a timeless scene. It's like a spine-tingling snapshot from 1955.

Sometime around 10.30pm we descend into the heart of Rome and the usual buzzing throng of multitudinous scooters. It's a mark of the craziness of a day chasing the Mille Miglia that the manic Roman traffic feels relatively tame. A litre of beer (in one glass!) and a pizza make up the first proper meal in over 24 hours and it tastes just wonderful. All that lies ahead is the return leg to Brescia...



## JAGUAR XKR-S ON THE MILLE MIGLIA

FIVE HOURS LATER I fall blearily out of bed, having slept through my alarm half an hour previously. I feel like I need a Red Bull to get me going, like an alcoholic needs a whisky to start the day. We tag onto the now familiar police convoy rushing through traffic lights on the way out of Rome in the early morning mist, before stopping to fill up alongside an Aston DB3 at an Esso garage.

As the race makes a diversion to Vallelunga, we press on past cypress-lined driveways to Tuscan villas and the ever-present crowds and head for Siena. We're in front of the entire race – sorry, regularity rally – by the time we get there, and as we're early we manage to sneak past the flustered official who is meant to be diverting any car younger than 54 years old around the city walls. Once in, we slowly edge down the quiet and oh-so-narrow renaissance streets and find somewhere to park up and wait for the volume to increase.

evo's own Harry Metcalfe eventually passes us in his Bruschetta (see page 112) and then the field proper begins arriving. I get back into the Jag and ease out into the stream of cars between two blue pre-war Bugattis. As you do. Just around the corner we emerge, blinking from the confines of the shady street, into the brightness of the enormous, sky-ceilinged Piazza del Campo, where the Palio horse races are held. It's mayhem. People are four or five deep either side of the car, taking photos and standing in the way. You feel like a Group B driver in slow-motion, parting the sea of spectators as you drive through. An official looks at us scathingly but there's nothing he can do and the crowd clearly loves the sound of what must be one of the loudest Jaguars ever to roll out of the factory. Half a mile the other side of the piazza we park up outside a small church, and while Sam does some filming I wander off in search of a celebratory *gelato* for each of us.

The afternoon sees us being chased across sun-drenched Tuscan hills by an original Gullwing Mercedes and then us pursuing a Porsche 550 Spyder down into Florence. As an art history graduate it is one of the most bizarre experiences of my life to cross the Arno River with the medieval Ponte Vecchio bridge on our right and then drive through the Piazza della Signoria. Bowing to the crowd's hollered wish and lighting up the tyres on the cobbles whilst Michelangelo's David looks down through the windscreen will stay with me forever.

From Florence we head up over the Futa and Raticosa passes, following a hard-charging C-type. Its driver is clearly making up time and it's just as well the XKR-S is such a monstrously effective overtaking tool, able to surge past lines of cars in the shortest of straights, treating the overtaken to crackles and explosive reports on the overrun when you lift off the throttle sharply to dive back into a gap.

Bologna, Modena, Maranello, Fiorano and Parma all slip by as night falls once more. Eventually, with the final few hours to Brescia ahead, we settle in behind an incredibly loud



### 'The XKR-S really couldn't have been a better companion for our 1000-mile blast around Italy'

328 BMW and the flashing blue lights of the *pompieri* (firefighters) who do the route each year. I'm incredibly weary but the crowds are still out in force in the last few towns and it seems churlish not to get the XKR-S crossed-up on the cobbles for them too.

This new Jaguar really couldn't have been a better companion for our 1000-mile blast around Italy: cosseting enough to let us survive, brutally fast enough to execute the hundreds of overtakes as swiftly as possible, raucous enough to put a smile on everyone's faces, good looking enough to reach places other press cars couldn't and engaging enough to really enjoy on the mountain passes. An RS from Porsche is ultimately a more focused driving tool, but the greater useability of this R-S is something that gives it its own very appealing draw.

It should almost be an anti-climax when we reach Brescia at 3am and our press sticker doesn't let us drive up to the finish ramp, but the end of any journey as epic as the Mille Miglia could never be seen as anti anything. I'm sure someone's won but it honestly doesn't seem to matter – in the modern Mille Miglia it really is the taking part that counts.

As the BA flight touches down at Heathrow the following morning I realise that I've had just ten hours' sleep in three days. No wonder it feels like a dream. Must remember to stop at any red traffic lights on the way home...



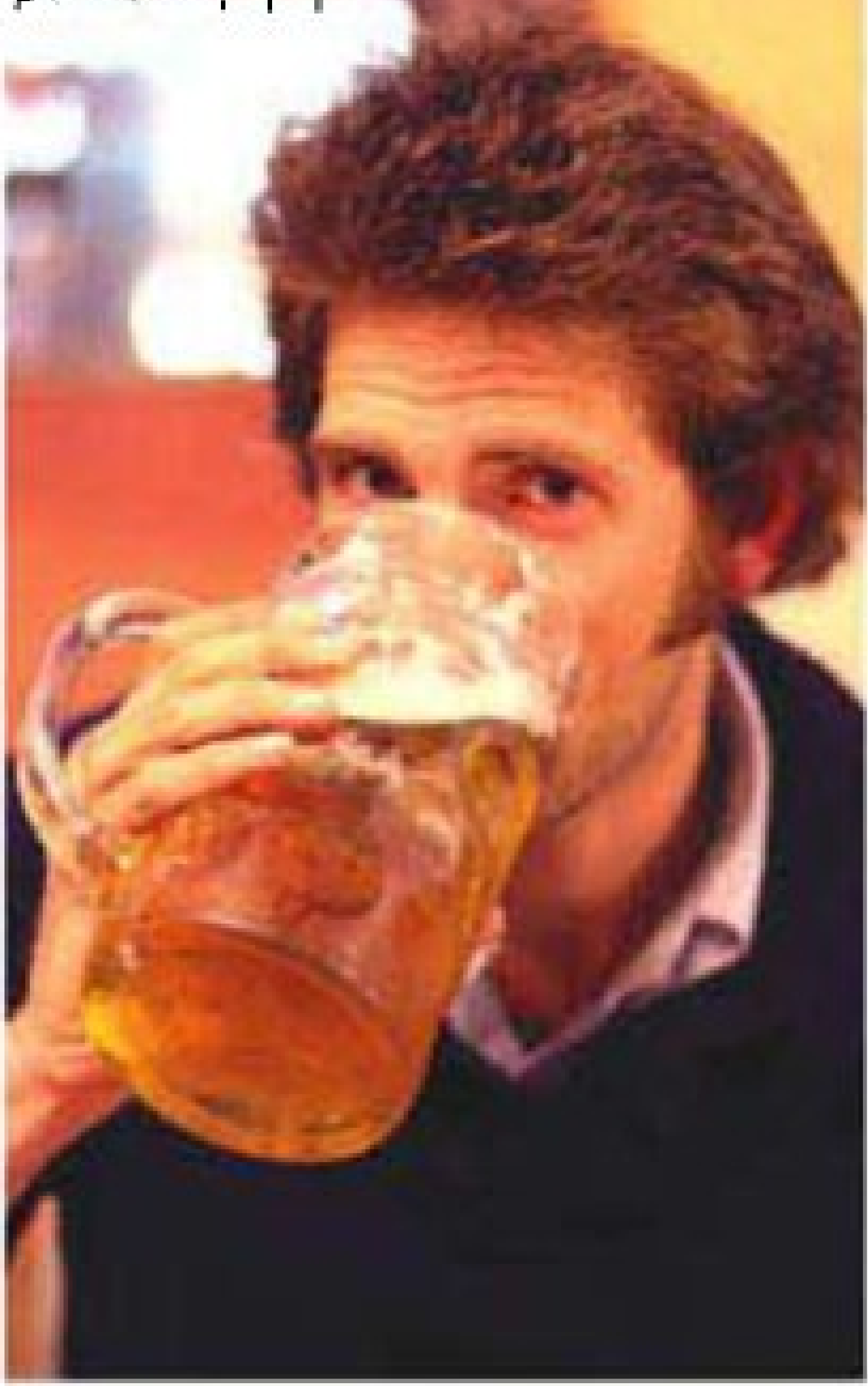
#### SPECIFICATION

##### JAGUAR XKR-S

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharged  
Location Front, longitudinal  
CO2 292g/km  
Power 542bhp @ 6500rpm  
Torque 501lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm  
Transmission Six-speed automatic gearbox, rear-wheel drive, eDiff, traction and stability control systems  
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar  
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar  
Brakes Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 376mm rear, ABS  
Wheels 9x20in front, 10.5x20in rear, aluminium alloy  
Tyres 255/35 R20 front, 295/35 R20 rear, Pirelli P Zeros  
Weight (kerb) 1753kg  
Power-to-weight 314bhp/ton  
0-60mph 4.2sec (claimed)  
Top speed 186mph (claimed)  
Basic price £97,000

evo RATING ★★★★★





Right: the XKR-S heads into Siena alongside the classics – and parts the crowds just as successfully (below). Bottom: chasing the pompieri on the final leg to Brescia. Above: Catchpole enjoys a hard-earned, extra-large beer. Bottom right: XK120 fixed-head coupe gets its moment on the finishing ramp





# Mille Miglia Guide

Fancy following the Mille Miglia yourself, or perhaps even taking part? **Harry Metcalfe** explains where to catch the best action and what you'll need to enter

YOU'LL FIND THE ENTERED CARS PARKED RANDOMLY AROUND THE OLD PART OF **BRESCIA** ON THE AFTERNOON OF THE FIRST DAY. THEY MOVE TO THE MILLE MIGLIA MUSEUM AROUND 5PM THEN CROSS THE START LINE AT 20SEC INTERVALS FROM 7.30PM

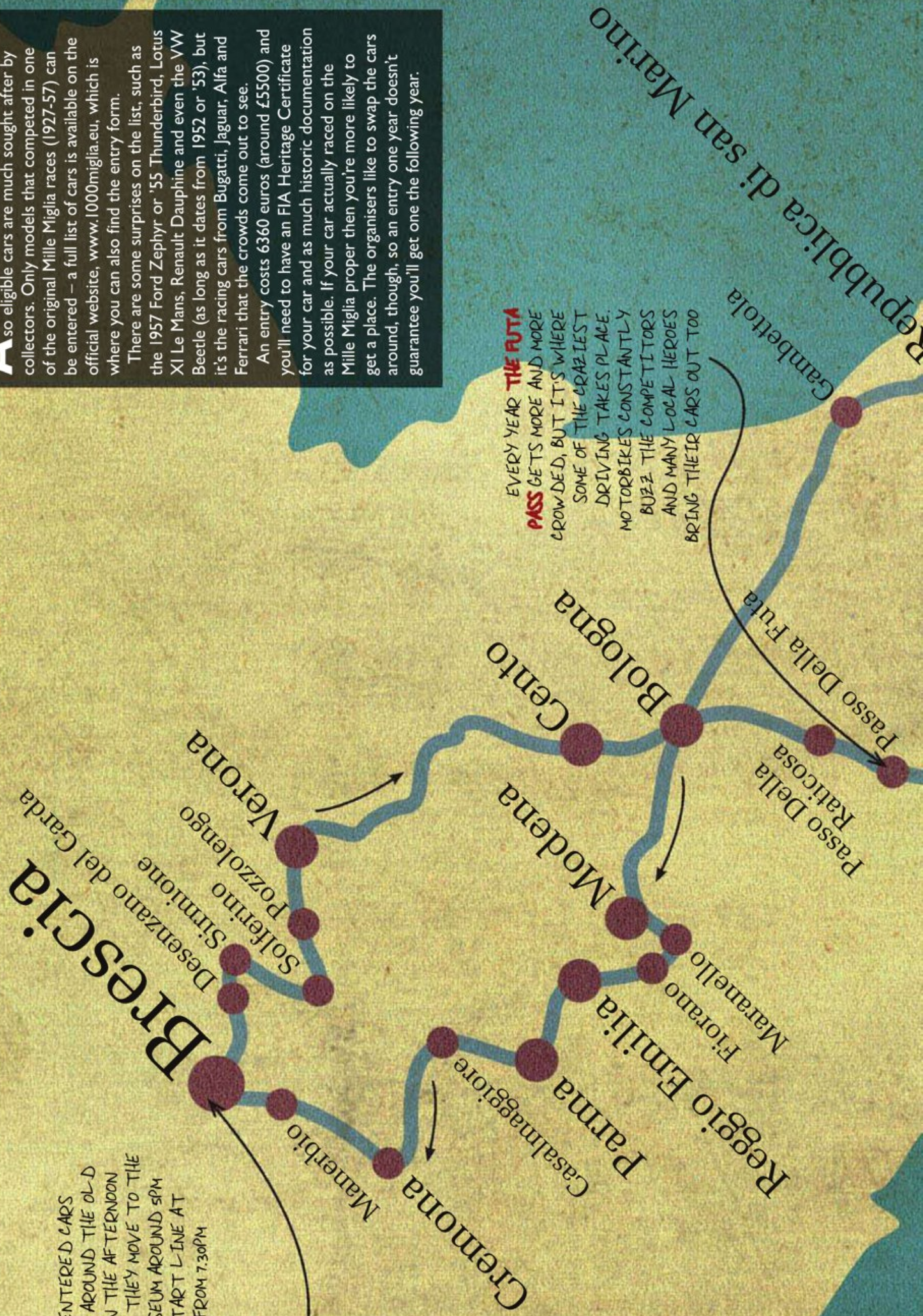
## HOW DO YOU ENTER THE MILLE MIGLIA?

A place on the Mille Miglia is highly prized, so eligible cars are much sought after by collectors. Only models that competed in one of the original Mille Miglia races (1927-57) can be entered – a full list of cars is available on the official website, [www.1000miglia.eu](http://www.1000miglia.eu), which is where you can also find the entry form.

There are some surprises on the list, such as the 1957 Ford Zephyr or '55 Thunderbird, Lotus XI Le Mans, Renault Dauphine and even the VW Beetle (as long as it dates from 1952 or '53), but it's the racing cars from Bugatti, Jaguar, Alfa and Ferrari that the crowds come out to see.

An entry costs 6360 euros (around £5500) and you'll need to have an FIA Heritage Certificate for your car and as much historic documentation as possible. If your car actually raced on the Mille Miglia proper then you're more likely to get a place. The organisers like to swap the cars around, though, so an entry one year doesn't guarantee you'll get one the following year.

EVERY YEAR **THE RUTA** **PASS** GETS MORE AND MORE CROWDED, BUT IT'S WHERE SOME OF THE CRAZIEST DRIVING TAKES PLACE. MOTORBIKES CONSTANTLY BUZZ THE COMPETITORS AND MANY LOCAL HEROES BRING THEIR CARS OUT TOO





## FERRARI TRIBUTE TO MILLE MIGLIA

An alternative to the Mille Miglia 're-enactment' is the Ferrari Tribute to Mille Miglia. Introduced in 2010, it is open to any Ferrari built after 1957 and follows the same route, with the cars leaving shortly before the historic.

The most common Ferrari in 2011 was the California, followed by the 599 GTO, but that could be because many existing Ferrari owners don't yet know about the event, while buyers of new cars are being made aware of it by dealers. Even so, the Tribute was three times oversubscribed this year, so don't assume an application will be successful, especially as Ferrari likes to have a good mix of models represented and spreads the entries around the regions it sells cars in.

evo's own Harry Metcalfe was lucky enough to secure a place in the 2011 Tribute with his 550 Barchetta - you can read his story over the page.

### PREPARATION

This is a very tough event; out of the 152 Ferraris that started in 2011, 21 didn't make it to the finish. Three were damaged in accidents and several of the older cars succumbed to mechanical woes, while some drivers simply found the event too hard-going and pulled out early.

Because you're often driving in convoy on poorly surfaced roads, getting stone-chip protecting film fitted to vulnerable areas is a good idea. It's also advisable to get your car serviced before the event rather than after, thus providing a chance for any potential problems to be identified in advance - there's nothing worse than having to retire halfway round.

### HOW TO ENTER

Register at [ferrari.com](http://ferrari.com) and you'll get an alert when entries for next year's Tribute open. See [www.ferraritribute.1000miglia.eu](http://www.ferraritribute.1000miglia.eu) for full details of the event.

Entry forms and fees (6360 euros in 2011, covering two people, all hotels and invites to lunches along the way) need to be submitted by January 16.





# A thoroughly modern Mille

The Ferrari Tribute to Mille Miglia enables any post-1957 Prancing Horse to take part in this extraordinary rally, but is it as good as the real thing? **Harry Metcalfe** finds out

**H**aving filled in the lengthy online entry form, all I had to do was click 'send'. Yet each time my finger went to push the button, it refused to make contact. It wasn't just the thought of the £5506 entry fee that was stopping me, it was also the worry that the Ferrari Tribute to Mille Miglia might turn out to be a Ferrari owners' love-in and not bear any relation to the actual Mille Miglia re-enactment.

I was lucky enough to compete in the 'historic' Mille Miglia back in 2009, when I partnered Jaguar racer Nigel Webb in his incredible C-type (evo 133). To this day, the event still stands out as one of the greatest experiences of my life. Nigel's 'C' turned out to be utterly unsuitable for driving around Italy as it was in full race spec, but threading that flame-spitting motoring icon through

the excitable Italian crowds, there was an inescapable feeling that we were part of something magical and perhaps unrepeatable. The only thing I could imagine might top it would be to enter the MM in my own car.

That's where the Ferrari Tribute came in. First run in 2010 and open to all those Ferraris ineligible for the historic event, it follows exactly the same route but starts slightly earlier. With a 550 Barchetta in the garage, this was my chance to enter the Mille Miglia in my own car. As you've probably guessed, in the end I did press the 'send' button – and in February I received an email telling me I'd got a place on this year's event.

That's how I now find myself in an enormous hall in Brescia (around 50 miles east of Milan) early on a Thursday morning in May, surrounded by delectable Ferraris and iconic road racers from the past. It's here that the official form-signing is done, race stickers

are applied, the start times and route-books are handed out and the compulsory drivers' briefing is attended. It's not long before I fall victim to Italian officialdom when they spot I don't have the correct competition licence for the event, so I'm ushered off to another desk where, 39 euros (cash only) and four signatures later, I receive a scrap of paper allowing me to take part in Italian regularity events for the next 12 months. Easy money for someone.

My co-driver, Mrs M, is shocked by the size of the road book, which runs to 145 pages. It's a serious tome, but I thought it best not to mention anything about it beforehand...

Along with everything else, we also receive a Ferrari booty bag (including two rather nice watches), some vouchers for lunch and a list of the (posh) hotels we'll be staying in en route. A police escort then takes us into Brescia old town, where we join in with all the pre-start festivities alongside the historic competitors.



Far left: over 150 Ferraris took part, including Metcalfe's 550 Barchetta. Left: various Ferrari Tribute paraphernalia, including chunky route-book. Right: open top proved perfect for enjoying the Italian scenery



'The Mille is Italy's excuse to have one big street party, and

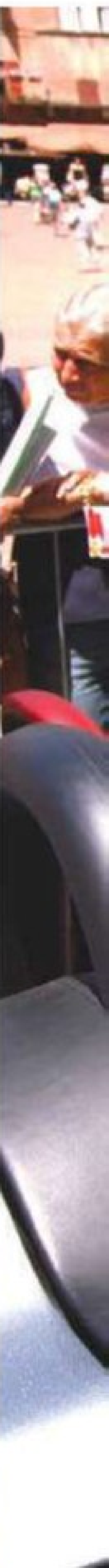


Any post-1957 Ferrari is eligible for the Tribute. This year's entries ranged from 750 Monza (above right) to 430 Scuderia (above), 599 and F40 (below) and 458 (right)

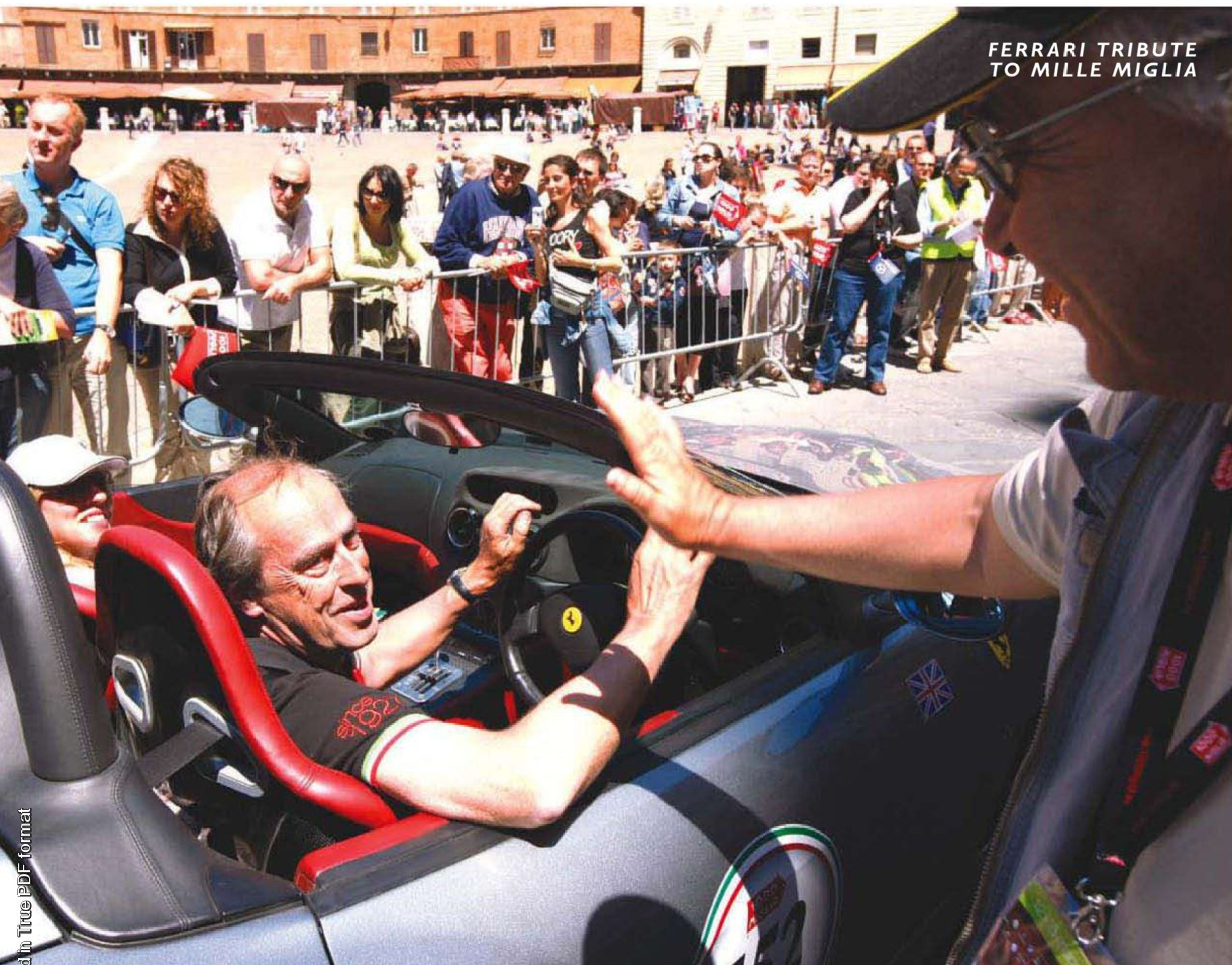


As our start time of 18:11 approaches, I realise I've no idea where the start area is. It turns out it's some four miles away from where we've parked and, to make matters worse, Brescia's traffic has ground to a halt. Chaos now reigns and, along with a fellow Brit in a tasty 599 GTO, we end up removing some barriers blocking a link road, picking our way through a pedestrian area and getting to the start line with just seconds to spare. It turns out that 15 of the 50 cars that should have left ahead of us haven't managed to reach the start, so by sheer fluke team Metcalfe has bagged some early points before we've even started. Perhaps this isn't going to be so tough after all...

The first stage is 173 miles long and makes for a brilliant appetiser for the event proper tomorrow. Driving an open-topped car on a warm summer's evening always feels special, and I'm amazed by the crowds lining the route,







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## ‘Everyone seems to be having as much fun as us competitors’

from kids waving MM flags to full-scale formal dinner parties set up by the side of the road. The Mille appears to be Italy’s excuse to have one big street party and everyone seems to be having as much fun as us competitors.

As darkness falls we realise a torch might have been useful, but we muddle through and make it to tonight’s Imola checkpoint on time and get to the hotel by midnight – remarkably early by MM standards.

Friday’s leg is much more demanding. Covering 321 miles, it takes us to San Marino, then across to Spoleto and over a snow-lined pass through Italy’s southern Apennine mountains, before dropping down into Rome. Once there, like lemmings being herded before jumping over a cliff, cars are put into batches for the police-escorted trip around the city, finishing in an underground car park. The trick is to stay glued to the bumper of the car

in front of you, otherwise you will be cast into Rome’s braying pack of city racers, who take no prisoners. We make it through unscathed and by 10pm we’re happily swapping tales in the hotel bar, preparing ourselves for tomorrow, the longest day of all.

The alarm chimes at 4am – an hour Mrs M didn’t know existed – as our start time is 5.46am. Soon we’re approaching Radicofani and enjoying some of the best driving roads in Italy. From here it’s north to Siena, then Florence, over the Futa pass and on to Maranello for a quick lap of Fiorano. The final leg to Brescia never seems to end, but mixing it with some of the early starters from the historic MM keeps us entertained during the final push to the finish, which we reach around 11pm.

By the end, any concerns that the Ferrari Tribute wouldn’t feel as special as the historic Mille have been sent packing. It has been just

as magical, but without the worry over whether the car would make it. The Barchetta proved to be perfect too, being incredibly rewarding to drive (and not almost *too* fast, like, say, a 599) and with the open top putting you closer to the crowds lining the route.

For me, it’s those crowds that makes the Mille Miglia so unique. It’s like the whole of Italy is cheering you on. Ferrari PR head Antonio Ghini, who came up with the idea of the Tribute, says competitors are not merely driving their Ferraris around the route, they are allowing them to be run for the fun of everyone else. I understand what he means, and if this appeals then I urge you to do everything you can to enter the Mille Miglia yourself one day. It’s bloody hard work, but the sense of achievement by the finish is huge.

One question remains, though: how the hell did Stirling Moss get round in just ten hours?



# A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

*As cars get heavier, it's refreshing to find two that buck the trend. But which should you choose, Lotus Elise Club Racer or Caterham 7 Supersport? Roger Green decides*



**D**on't fight the craving. If, like me, you've found the last couple of months of unexpected sunshine has only heightened the urge to get out there in a back-to-basics, no-nonsense British sports car, then take my advice and give in to it. After spending a warm, early summer day alternating between the driving seats of a Caterham 7 Supersport and a Lotus Elise Club Racer, with the only destination being an exploration of the outer limits of grip, I've been seduced like a reformed former smoker who's sneaked a crafty fag. I've re-fed my addiction to these pared-back-to-the-chassis machines. The thrill of lightweight motoring has never tasted better.

Not that these little cars are bad for you, you understand. They're fitted with

small engines, so power rarely dominates proceedings and dynamics come to the fore instead. Weighing so little, they sip fuel, while their tiny brakes and tyres take an age to wear out, so neither car requires a call to the bank manager before you book a service. Both wear price-tags in the mid-twenties, which makes it easier to justify garaging them for the winter months than it would with their bigger, more muscular and considerably more expensive brethren.

The Caterham Supersport can actually be bought for less than £20K if you don't want to bother with paint and you're happy to bolt it together yourself. However, if you want one to emerge from the Dartford factory looking like our test car, then it'll set you back another £4000, though that's still £17K less than you'd need for an R500.





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## SEVEN SUPERSPORT v ELISE CLUB RACER

Make no mistake, it's minimalism in extremis this Seven, a roofless roller-skate of a thing, and with no windscreen to hang the usual flappy doors on, it makes do with sidescreens. The technique for clambering aboard is much like that for a single-seater racing car: you stand on the seat and post straight legs under the wheel until your feet are resting on the tiny pedals. You'll need to be wearing narrow shoes, of course, and unless you like flies in your teeth or want to risk headbutting a bee at 70mph, a helmet's a useful accessory too.

Once the four-point harness has been fastened, you will only be able to articulate forearms, wrists and ankles; the rest of your body is fixed so tightly into the unpadded seat and so snugly confined between the transmission tunnel and the side of the Seven that you effectively become part of the car. Hardwired into the machine, three inches off the deck, it's the optimal location from which to sense everything that's happening just below at ground level.

Unfiltered and raw, there are no fripperies here. If it doesn't add to the driving experience, it's been omitted. It's a wonder they've left the gauges... The Supersport weighs in at just 520kg, and it could weigh even less, for a carbon dash, nose and mudguards are all on the options list. But although they look nice, they destroy the value-for-money balance and, let's face it, we're talking grams with this stuff. Skipping breakfast and wearing a thinner jumper would probably have the same effect.



Left: Supersport's front-mounted 1.6-litre Duratec unit puts out 140bhp, giving a power-to-weight ratio of 273bhp/ton. Below left: Club Racer's mid-mounted 1.6-litre Toyota engine is shared with the standard Elise; peak power is 134bhp, but power-to-weight is down at 160bhp/ton



The Elise has undergone a similarly strict diet. Out have gone the radio, the central locking, air-con, carpets and noise insulation, while a smaller battery has been fitted along with natty-looking, lightly padded, colour-coded seats. The cumulative effect (in Chapman speak) has been to add 24kg of lightness, which may not sound huge, especially when the resulting kerb weight is 852kg, but this is a deletion of things the Elise never needed on the base model anyway, and it

saves £600, meaning the Club Racer can be yours for £27,500.

Climbing in is a very different experience to getting into the Caterham. There are doors for a start, and, once in and secured by the recoil seatbelt, it is far less restrictive. It feels a little weird at first that there's suddenly so much space to move around in.

The ergonomics are perfect; wheel, gearlever and pedals beautifully set, while the reduced padding on the seat allows more detail to transfer into your nerve endings. The Lotus also possesses the ambience of a little racer, so even though it is very much a road car the nomenclature remains apt.

It's powered by the very same 1.6-litre Toyota unit fitted to the regular Elise, which means there's just 134bhp and 118lb ft on tap, but it's a willing little motor that enjoys a decent workout – a good job, because it needs to be wrung out as the gear ratios are a tad too

‘They dart and turn with the alacrity of a startled rabbit, the driver’s brain wholly absorbed with the drive’







widely spaced. This is most marked between second and third, where the revs drop from just short of 7000rpm to 4500rpm when to keep the thing really humming it needs to stay closer to 5K. Shame that, as the shift itself is light and as sweet as you like, and, with limited resources in the grunt department, keeping the engine on the boil is crucial, especially when there's a bright orange Caterham on your tail.

The Elise sounds gruff, with a purposeful edge to the exhaust note, but its volume is tens of decibels lower than the bassy *brwaaarp!* bellowing from the Caterham's almost straight-pipe exhaust. With 332kg less to motivate, it's not unexpected that the 140bhp, 120lb ft 1.6-litre Duratec unit found under the thin aluminium louvres of the Supersport's bonnet has a more accelerative effect. Tightly packed ratios help too. It's a five-speed 'box and the shift has a fast, precise, rifle-bolt action that can only be created by having the lever on top of the cogs themselves.

Both of these cars were designed to be hustled down English country back-roads, where they dart and turn with the alacrity of a startled rabbit and engage the driver so completely that the brain is wholly absorbed with the drive itself. Both cars hit the bullseye, but the way they smash the target couldn't be more different. The Caterham is very stiff; you experience every part of every road-surface imperfection. It reacts to bumps like it's being shocked by bolts of static electricity, and if you weren't so tightly held in place it's quite possible you might be thrown clear through



Both cockpits are pared-back affairs. Lotus (left) has minimalist seats and no carpets; Caterham (above) forgoes windscreen and full-size doors too

a really rough section. In fact it's so stiff that over ridges the rear axle can briefly leave the ground. The front tyres stay earthbound, so hitting such an imperfection hard causes the Supersport to feel like a motorbike performing a stoppy. It may sound bad, but it's really nothing more than a skip and it certainly keeps you attentive.

By contrast the Elise pours down the same section of road. You still have the connection and awareness of all the imperfections underneath the tread blocks, but now the edges have gone. It's as if those same bumps are now somehow more rounded. It's an easier ride with less fidget but at the same time detail remains – an amazing trick and a Lotus trademark.

Both cars have surprisingly superb braking abilities – surprising, that is, after seeing how small the discs are. They're almost comically diddy. The wheels on the Caterham are just 13 inches in diameter; the fronts on the Elise three inches larger, and in both cases they still dwarf the anchors. Appearances are very deceptive, though, and the brakes of both cars are massively effective and feelsome too. Actually, if you're up at a decent lick in the Caterham, just lifting off produces decent retardation, which probably tells you all you need to know about the 1950s-spec aerodynamics.

So now we get to the heart of the matter: the corners. Here both of our test cars could do with a touch more bite on turn-in. In the Caterham this could be overcome with a small rake adjustment (lowering the nose relative to the rear), but once tucked in and settled you have choices, my favourite being to mash the throttle against the bulkhead, bringing the limited-slip differential out to play. With such a small quantity of torque, the slip angles aren't wild – in fact you often don't need to lift to





straighten things out as friction does the job for you – but it feels very sweet.

In the Elise you alter your line not by increasing the amount of throttle, but by either braking into the heart of the turn or giving the subtlest of lifts to pivot the little Club Racer into the corner. As with the Caterham, the steering provides all the feedback you could ever wish for, but here there's more delicacy and a touch less wrist-flick immediacy. Go hard on the power now and the Elise digs in and the attitude adjusts, balancing the grip all round. It doesn't snap the tail but corners all-of-a-piece and it's equally satisfying.

So which car is best? To answer that you have to decide which drug you crave. The Caterham is more aggressive and will satisfy the hooligan in you too, as it'll oversteer, wheelspin and doughnut all day. It's the one to choose if you enjoy the buzz of a short, sharp hit. But if the Supersport is the motoring embodiment of an espresso, then the Club Racer is tempered and smoothed by a layer of cream – there's more depth and detail. It's the car you would enjoy over a longer drive, and it's also something to use on a more regular basis. Either way, you will become addicted.



Big stoppers aren't needed on cars this light. Lotus (above) employs 288mm vented and drilled discs; Caterham's (top) are just 230mm in diameter and solid

## SPECIFICATIONS

### CATERHAM 7 SUPERSPORT

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1595cc  
CO2 n/a  
Power 140bhp @ 6900rpm  
Torque 120lb ft @ 5790rpm  
Transmission Five-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive  
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar  
Rear suspension de Dion axle, lower A-frame, Watts linkage, dampers, anti-roll bar  
Brakes Solid discs, 230mm front and rear  
  
Wheels 6 x 13in front, 8 x 13in rear  
Tyres 175/55 R13 front and rear  
Weight (kerb) 520kg  
Power-to-weight 273bhp/ton  
0-60mph 4.9sec (claimed)  
Top speed 120mph (claimed)  
Basic price £22,995 (factory built)

### LOTUS ELISE CLUB RACER

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc  
CO2 149g/km  
Power 134bhp @ 6800rpm  
Torque 118lb ft @ 4400rpm  
Transmission Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, ESP  
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar  
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar  
Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled discs, 288mm front and rear, ABS  
Wheels 5.5 x 16in front, 7.5 x 17in rear  
Tyres 175/55 R16 front, 225/45 R17 rear  
Weight (kerb) 852kg  
Power-to-weight 160bhp/ton  
0-60mph 6.5sec (claimed)  
Top speed 127mph (claimed)  
Basic price £27,500

★★★★★ **EVO RATING** ★★★★★



‘Which drug do you crave?  
The Caterham is more aggressive,  
the Elise has more depth’



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**F I N A N C E**



In just a few short months, Aston Martin has turned the V12 Vantage into a spectacular road and race car with styling by Zagato.



## Here's how they did it (and how we raced it)

**W**hen it comes to evocative names and iconic design, an Aston Martin Zagato is right up there amongst the world's most coveted cars. The first – based on the DB4GT – was commissioned by Aston's then owner David Brown as a lighter, faster DB4 to take the fight to Ferrari's dominant 250 SWB on the racetrack, and to give Aston Martin an exotic road car to challenge the Italians at their own game.

First shown at the London motor show in the autumn of 1960, the Zagato-bodied DB4 entered production the following year. However, though unarguably lighter and faster than the standard DB4GT, it wasn't light enough nor fast enough to truly challenge the Ferrari. Worse, it provoked Maranello into responding with the 250 GTO.

As a result, history records that the DB4GT Zagato was rather less than the runaway success Brown had hoped for. Sales were

glacial, thanks in part to its fierce price (some three times more than a Jaguar E-type), but also due to the Zagato's uncompromising character as a road car. In the end just 19 were built, the last two sticking stubbornly to the showroom floor for almost six months!

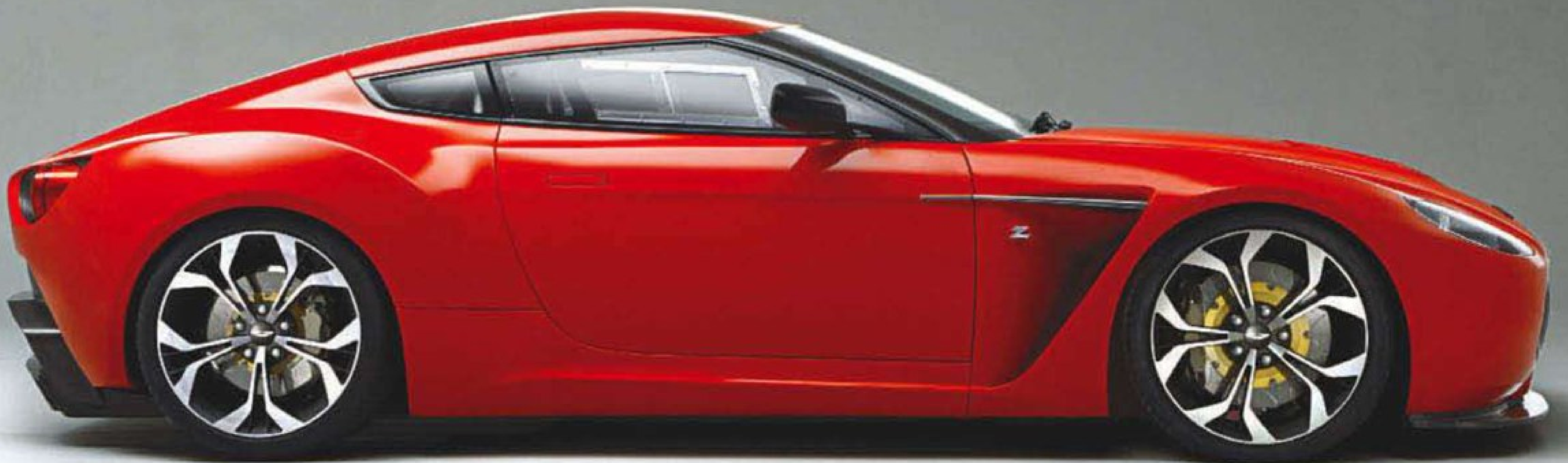
As is so often the case, a troubled car in period becomes a treasured car with the passage of time. Half a century later, DB4GT Zagato values are currently simmering around £5m. All 19 cars still exist. It's no great surprise, therefore, that Aston Martin felt the DB4GT Zagato's 50th birthday deserved celebrating in some style. Still, few of us could have predicted that the landmark would be marked with such a dramatic re-imagining of the car that started the Anglo-Italian partnership.

Unlike its '60s forebear, which was a project entrusted entirely to the Italian *carrozzeria*, the new V12 Zagato, which is based on the V12 Vantage, has been a more collaborative effort. This reflects the fact that Aston now has

Words **Richard Meaden**

Pictures **AML/David Shepherd**







its own in-house design team, and as Zagato is now part of Coventry-based CPP Global Holdings group, which also owns Coventry Prototype Panels – the artisans responsible for clothing Aston's One-77 supercar – the project has greater resonance than ever.

Work began on the new car last year, when Aston Martin and Zagato first thrashed out ideas on how to combine Aston's current design language with Zagato's signature details and express them in a thoroughly contemporary way. The result is a car that's at once brutal and curvaceous, retaining some familiarity but also jolting any preconceptions about what an Aston Martin should look like.

All the trademark Zagato flourishes are present and correct, from the gaping grille and pumped rear haunches to the 'double-bubble' roof, which ironically wasn't a feature of the DB4GT Zagato but did define many other Zagato models. With Aston often criticised for too much similarity between its series production models, the V12 Zagato has been a great opportunity to cause a stir.

The company has never been better placed to build a car like the V12 Zagato. With production of the One-77 in its final phase, not only does Aston have the perfect production facility in which to build it, but it also has a crack team of engineers – led by One-77 programme manager Chris Porritt – capable of bringing ambitious ideas to profitable reality in very short timeframes.

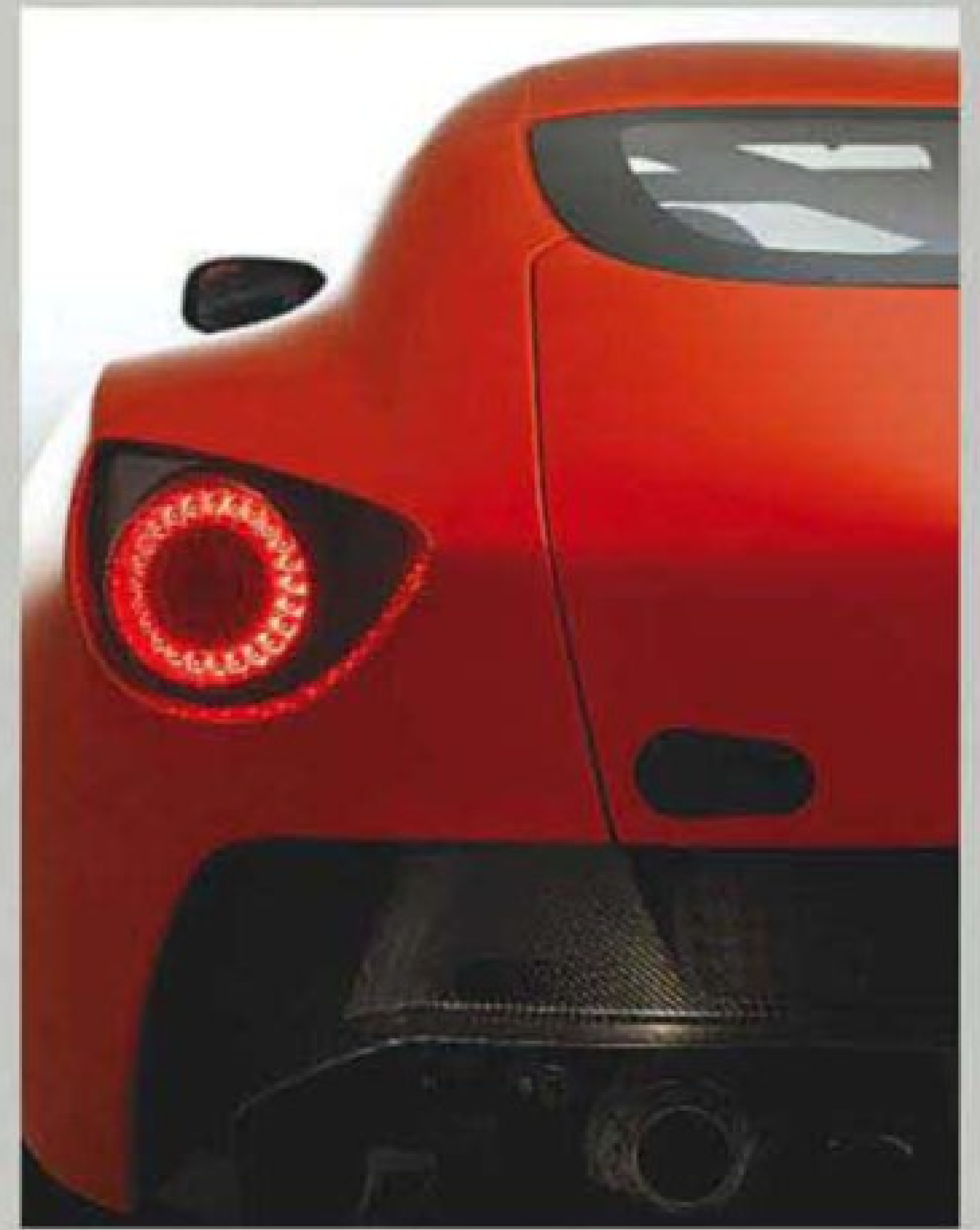
Like the DB4GT Zagato, the V12 Zagato is underpinned by tried and tested production mechanicals. That means the familiar 5.9-litre

V12 engine and bonded aluminium chassis. With 510bhp and 420lb ft promised – identical figures to the V12 Vantage – it's fair to say the new Zagato won't want for performance.

Just as you'd hope, the body is a work of art. Each and every aluminium panel is made entirely by hand, formed using an English wheel and traditionally crafted wooden bucks. Each front wing alone comprises seven individual pieces of aluminium, which are welded together and hand-finished to create a seamlessly flowing panel. No wonder the number of man hours required to sculpt all the panels runs into four figures.

Porritt and his team had a scant few months to complete the build of the first V12 Zagato – nicknamed Zag – prior to its debut at the Villa d'Este concours, on the shores of Lake Como, Italy, in May. The schedule was unforgiving, the workload unrelenting. Just before Zag left for Villa d'Este on a truck, I called Porritt on his mobile. It was a Wednesday morning and he sounded a bit groggy, understandable given he hadn't been home – or slept in a bed – since the previous Sunday evening.

The midnight oil wasn't burned in vain. That weekend the Zagato beat ten international entries, including James Glickenhaus's Ferrari P4/5 and BMW's 328 Hommage, to win the coveted Design Award for Concept Cars and Prototypes. For many companies that could have been the end of the story, but for Aston it was merely the start of something much more exciting. Like its illustrious ancestor, the V12 Zagato would be going racing, and rather sooner than anyone imagined...



V12 Zagato's body is a marked departure from recent Aston shapes. All the usual Zagato cues are there, including the oversize grille and double-bubble roof



‘Just as you'd hope, the body is a work of art, each





Bottom: Gaydon team developed an endurance racing version of the V12 Zagato in parallel with the show car. It made its debut at the Ring (left) just seven days after the show car's first appearance



and every aluminium panel made entirely by hand'

Just one week after Zag wowed the crowds at Villa d'Este, I'm stood nervously in the Nürburgring's chaotic pitlane waiting for its sister car – 'Zig' – to scythe onto the concrete apron of Garage 30. Porritt is currently completing his mandatory qualifying lap for round 4 of the VLN endurance series and I'm in next – the first person outside Aston Martin to drive the new Zagato.

Building a car for Villa d'Este was a tall order, but to simultaneously engineer and build a full-on racer explains the team's crazy hours in the last few weeks. It also explains the Zagato's extreme aerodynamics package, which must have looked suspiciously racy, even to those who didn't know Aston's bold plans.

This is the fifth year running I've been lucky enough to be included in Aston Martin's VLN and N24 line-up, and without doubt it's the most exciting yet. You only have to look back at the list of drivers who raced DB4GT Zagatos to appreciate what a buzz it is, and while I'm somewhat less than worthy of joining a list that includes Jim Clark, it's hard to

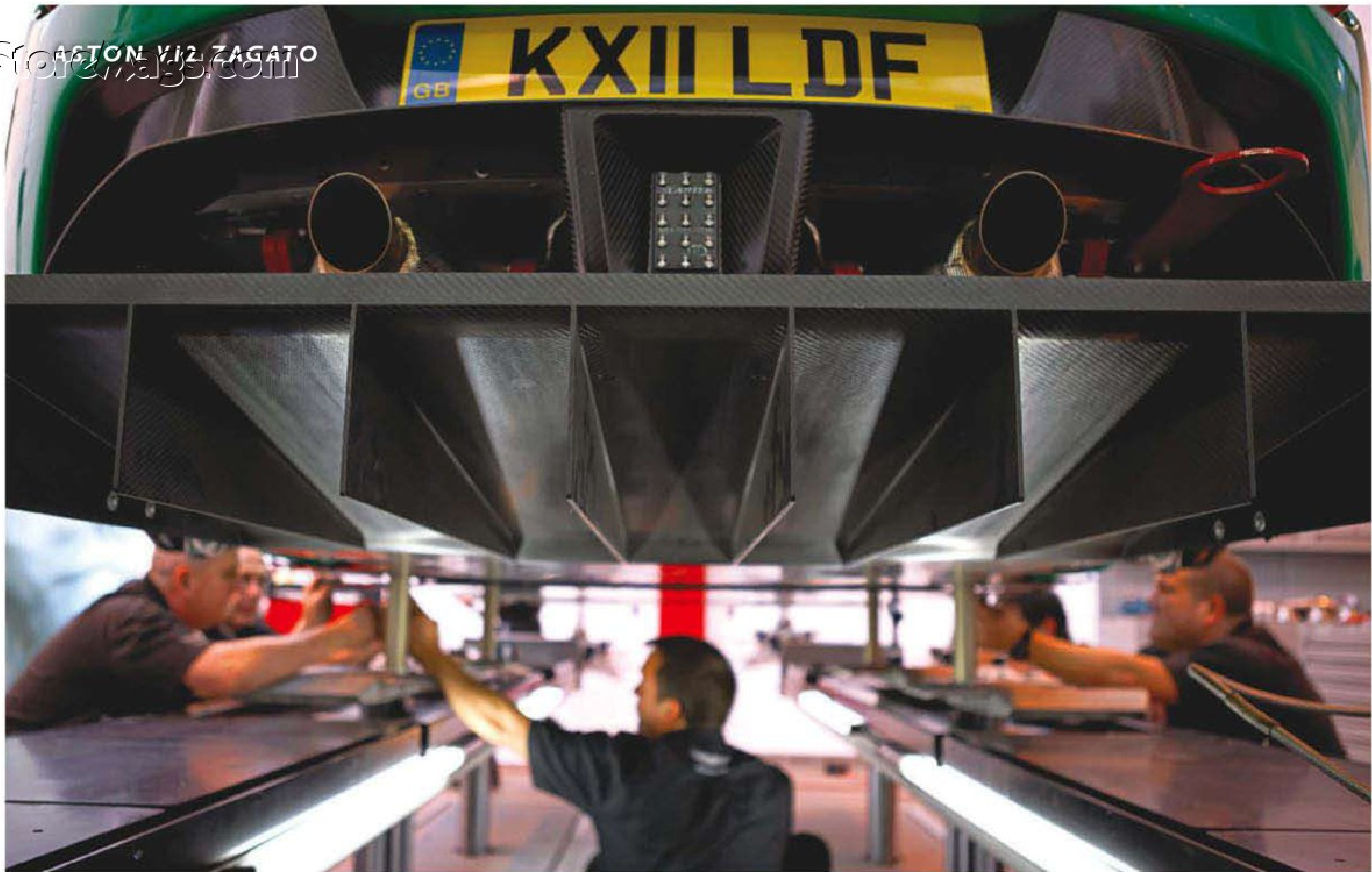


suppress a grin when the time finally comes to take my turn behind the wheel.

In VLN race trim the Zagato is a direct evolution of the near-standard V12 Vantage that won its class in 2009. The biggest development is the aerodynamic enhancements, which now include fully ducted engine cooling, a full-length flat floor, front wings with gaping extractor vents and a diffuser the size of a Victorian viaduct. It's all topped off with a huge rear wing and supplemented by monster Yokohama slicks for truly neck-straining cornering ability.







Above: combination of a roll-cage and the Zagato's smaller door aperture makes accessing the cockpit tricky. Below: race car's brakes use cast-iron discs to comply with VLN regs



In recent years Aston Martin has used the N24 as a rather extreme sign-off test for its road cars. With the Zagato it's a little different in that the racing has come at the beginning of the engineering development, but it's entirely befitting of the car. It also backs up Aston's assertion that in addition to building a strictly limited run of V12 Zagato road cars (exactly how many and how much they will cost remains undisclosed) it will also build a small number of racing versions.

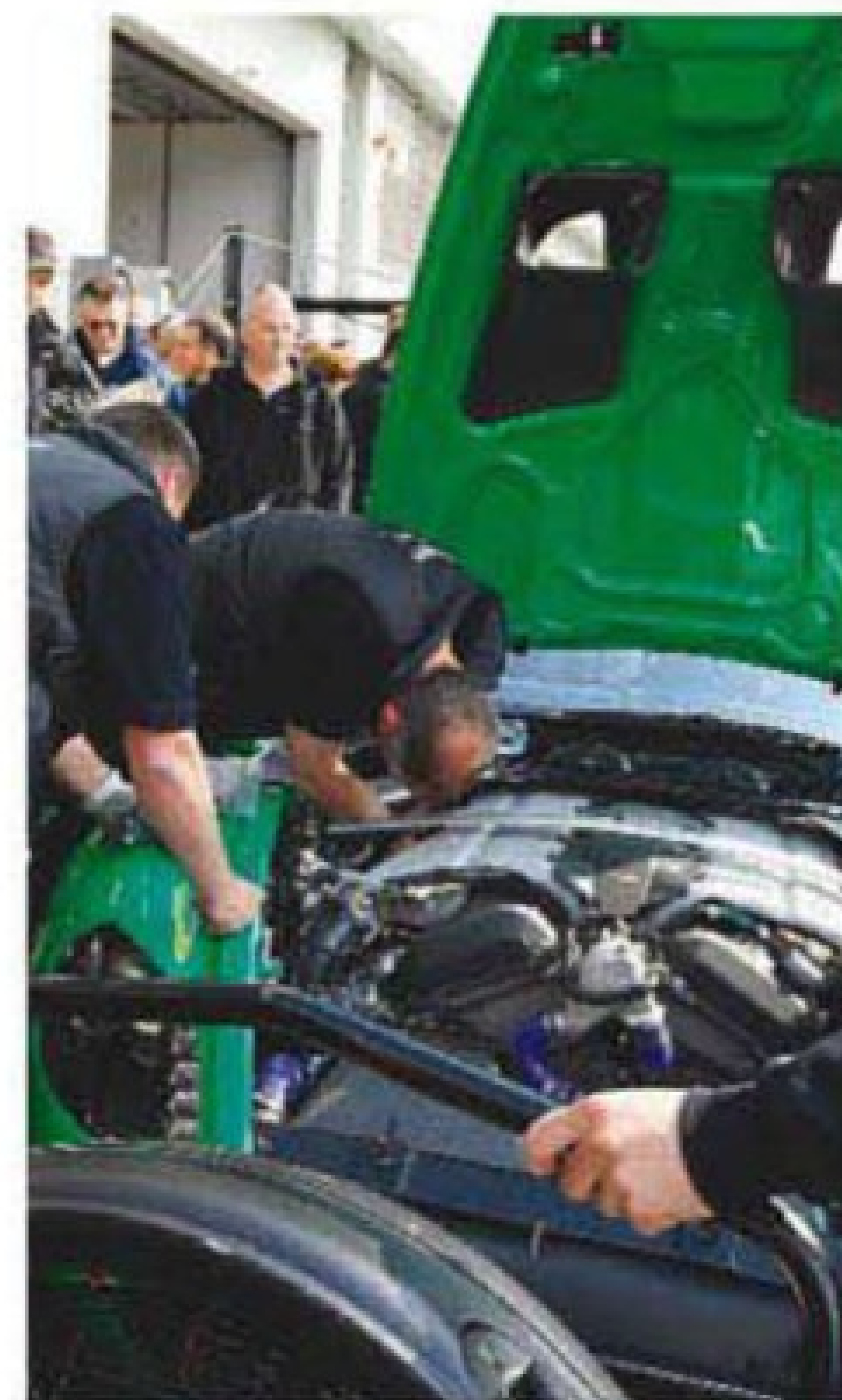
Some technology from the One-77 has made it into the Zagato, most notably the six-speed single-clutch paddle-shift transmission and fully adjustable Multimatic DSSV dampers, which use a clever spool valve to control the damping force instead of traditional shim stacks. Sadly the 750bhp, 7.3-litre engine was out of bounds, but as VLN rules allow cars in the SP8 class to run at 1350kg, the Zagato's 510bhp has a few hundred kilos less to lug around.

That falling roofline makes it an act of considerable discomfort to get over the roll-cage and into the driver's seat, but it's worth the trouble, for the Zagato is a big step on from anything the Aston Martin factory (as opposed to Aston Martin Racing) has raced here before. In short it's a bit of a monster.

Powering out onto the track, the view ahead shimmers with heat blasting out through those big bonnet vents. That stream of super-heated air, plus the fact that the flat floor completely encloses the exhaust system, makes it very hot inside. The cockpit booms and resonates to the

sound of that huge V12, revs flaring through the first three gears as the cold slicks struggle to find purchase.

Zig only completed a lap of the Gaydon test track before coming to Germany, so we're expecting some teething issues. I've not driven it before and the team is learning more with every lap. We may be entering a race, but it's really just a shakedown to us, and I'm not about



Above: race engine is 525bhp version of the 5.9-litre V12 that will be used by the road-going Zagato. Top: diffuser is even larger than the road car's. Right: huge rear wing and lower side-skirts are unique to the race

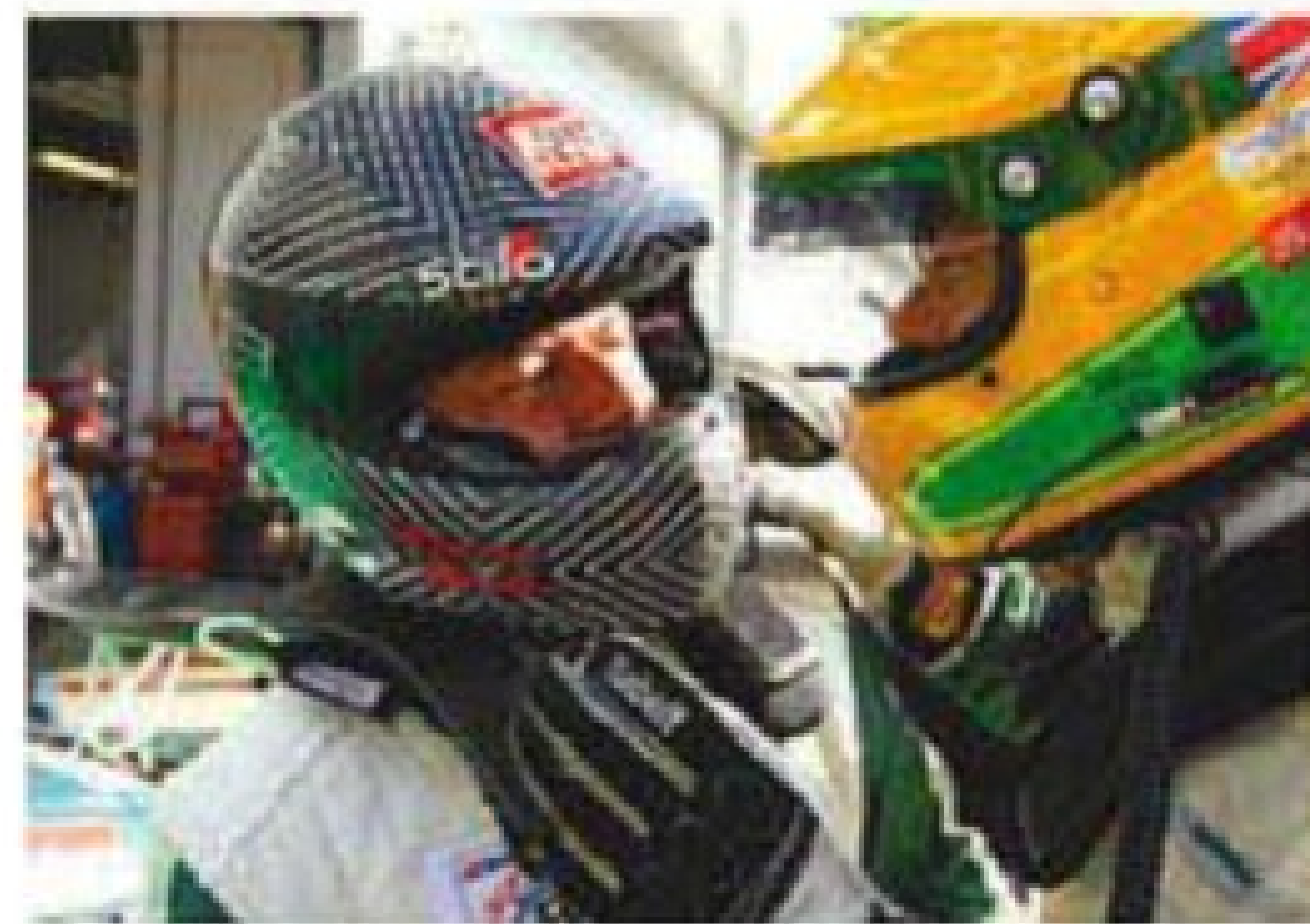






**SPECIFICATION**

**ASTON MARTIN V12 ZAGATO (VLN SPEC)**  
 Engine V12, 5935cc  
 Location Front, longitudinal  
 CO2 n/a  
 Power 525bhp @ 6500rpm  
 Torque 440lb ft @ 5750rpm  
 Transmission Six-speed sequential manual gearbox with paddle-shift, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential  
 Front suspension Double wishbones, adjustable Multimac DSSV dampers, coil springs, anti-roll bar  
 Rear suspension Double wishbones, adjustable Multimac DSSV dampers, coil springs, anti-roll bar  
 Brakes Ventilated and grooved cast-iron discs, 380mm front, 332mm rear  
 Wheels 11 x 18in front, 12 x 18in rear  
 Tyres 280/650 R18 front, 300/650 R18 rear, Yokohama slicks  
 Fuel system 120-litre endurance racing fuel tank  
 Weight (dry) 1350kg  
 Power-to-weight 384bhp/ton  
 0-60mph 3.9sec (est)  
 Top speed 190mph (est)



Above: in the crowded Ring pitlane. Left: Aston's Chris Porritt (yellow helmet) hands over to our man Meaden. Far left: running repair to the front splitter. Right: looking for a cure for the overheating transmission



## ‘The cockpit booms and resonates to the sound of that huge V12...’

to add to my CV by being the first person to crash a V12 Zagato, so my qualifying lap is pretty timid. Despite cruising, it does a 9min 13sec lap, which suggests it should comfortably eclipse the V12 Vantage's best race lap of 8min 56sec once we can start to push.

Unfortunately, come the four-hour race, transmission cooling issues bring Zig to a premature halt after five laps. Once back

at Gaydon, the team work like Trojans to implement a series of upgrades, including NACA ducts in the flat floor and in those precious rear wheelarches, plus a transmission cooler located on the boot floor, which then vents into the diffuser.

I've never been so closely involved in the creation of a new racing car, and while it's frustrating at times, being right in the midst of

it all, seeing and feeling the car evolve, gives a unique perspective. As I write, I'm preparing to head back out to Germany for round 5 of the VLN, where we'll hopefully be able to gauge the Zagato's pace and refine its set-up.

Then a fortnight later it's the big one: the N24. You can follow the action throughout the weekend of June 25/26 at [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk). Needless to say, I can't wait.





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# Fast Fleet

LONG-TERM TESTS

Three new arrivals this month: a gorgeous Ferrari 458 Italia, a stunning Mercedes SLS AMG, and a Mini Countryman. Meanwhile, it's been road trips all round for the Clio Williams, the 550 Barchetta and – yes, really – the V8 Capri

## NEW ARRIVAL

I'll kick off with a confession. I didn't want to like the 458 Italia. Not, you understand, because of my poorly disguised leaning towards the weapons from Ferrari's rivals in Sant'Agata. Nope. It's just that it's been a tad boring seeing accolade after accolade directed at this milestone from Maranello. Could it really be *that* good?

Well, having spent six weeks living, eating and even catching a cheeky nap in the elegant magnolia interior of one, I'll attempt to summarise my 458 experience so far. Sensational. Brilliant. Oh, and utterly frustrating. With a touch of incredulity thrown in.

Now, you could be forgiven for thinking that all of this is directed at the jaw-droppingly pretty 458 itself, but in fact only the first two apply to the car. And this despite the fact that it has already left me perched on a motorway embankment trying to ignore a cacophony of horns from motorists revelling in my embarrassment. But then these things happen. It's how they're resolved that counts. Cue the last two. More of which later. First, let's slot into reverse and return to November last year.

To be frank, it was purely a business decision to purchase a 458 Italia to run on the fleet of the supercar experience company that I co-own. The enormous positive exposure this car received in the media around the

### FERRARI 458 ITALIA

Date acquired	April 2011
Total mileage	2899
Mileage this month	1228
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	15.0

time of its launch meant that enquiries from the gift-voucher-buying public asking if we had 'that new Ferrari Clarkson likes' hit such numbers that the maths soon made sense. So the decision was made. Game on.

However, as premiums on both new and barely used 458s were still strong, we decided to hold off until just before the start of the driving-experience season before buying a car, in the hope that prices would begin to fall. It wasn't to be, and that left us with a major



**'WE'D SOLD OVER 2000 FERRARI 458 DRIVING EXPERIENCE VOUCHERS,**



This month: Ferrari 458 Italia Mini Cooper S Countryman Mercedes SLS AMG Jaguar XJ Supersport Porsche 997 GT3 Renault Mégane 250 Cup Renault Clio Williams SEAT Leon Cupra R Peugeot RCZ Ford Capri V8 Infiniti G37S Coupe Vauxhall Insignia VXR Ferrari 550 Barchetta Audi RS5 Renaultsport Clio V6 Mazda 3 MPS Jaguar XJR Skoda Yeti



Below: Simon was momentarily stunned when he first saw his 458 in the metal. Left: it will be used on the road as well as racking up the miles with countless different drivers as a trackday experience car

problem. We'd sold over 2000 Ferrari 458 driving experience vouchers via the high-street chains, and with just three weeks to go, we didn't have the car. We had to move. Fast.

For various reasons, our 458 had to be brand new, Rosso Corsa red and preferably with a black interior. But where to start given the two-year waiting list? Initial, and with hindsight naïve, calls to some Ferrari dealers indicating that a premium would be forthcoming in order to secure a 458 for immediate delivery were met with a variety of responses ranging from polite indifference to abrasiveness bordering on arrogance. It soon became apparent that to get anywhere fast, I needed an intermediary to put some distance between any

Ferrari dealer, who would want to be anonymous, and yours truly. Enter the refreshingly straight-talking Kevin Knight from motor dealer Bramley near Guildford. Within a week he'd sourced a brand new 458, albeit via two further intermediaries!

WX11 DBY came with a pretty reasonable specification, which fortunately included the large racing seats (although in the not-so-practical magnolia), wing-mounted Scuderia shields, red brake calipers and a smattering of carbonfibre bits and bobs, amongst other goodies. Listing at around £197,000 including these extras, the required premium was £23,000 – a painful but necessary evil given the aforementioned rarity of the model. We were nearly there...

Of course, £220,000 is a serious amount of lolly, and given the low interest rates at present it seemed sensible to pay for this car on finance. Enter Jeff Higgs from Close Asset Finance, one of the few lenders not to subscribe to the tedious 'computer says no' mentality. He's not the cheapest, but one doesn't get chicken nuggets at the Fat Duck. Should you require a similar service, give him a call on 07796 321902 and mention evo.

It was with a growing sense of expectation that I slipped through the sliding doors at Bramley a few days later, keen for a first glimpse of our 458. Its svelte lines weren't hard to spot. And that's when the penny dropped. Now, I'm a pretty level-headed sort of chap, but I have to



**BUT WITH JUST THREE WEEKS TO GO, WE DIDN'T HAVE THE CAR...'**

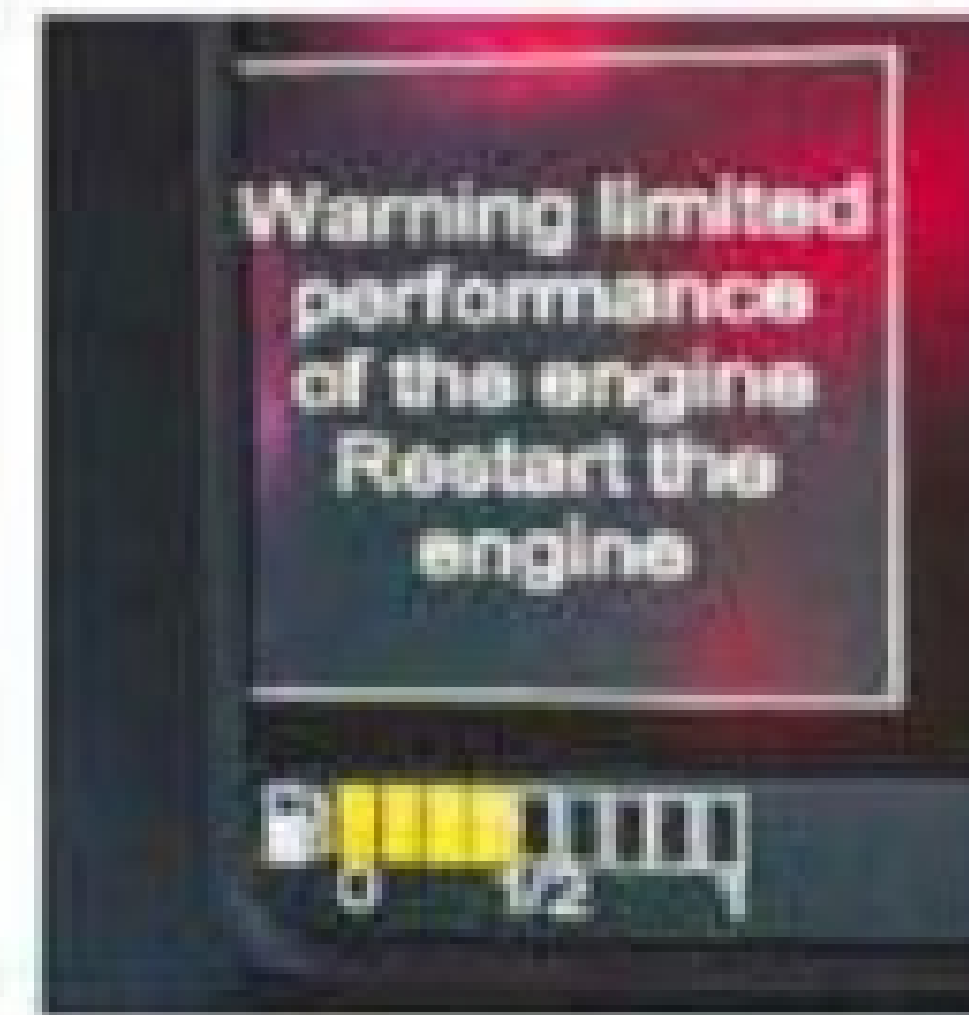


# Fast Fleet

||| LONG-TERM TESTS



Left: being rescued from the hard shoulder. Below: all was not well... Bottom: magnolia leather wasn't Simon's first choice



confess to being somewhat speechless for a couple of minutes whilst trying to take in the stark reality that this Italian sculpture would, in just a few minutes' time, be hurtling north with me behind its F1-style wheel.

Famous last thoughts... It turned out that a missing bit of paperwork was holding up the money transfer. An hour and four cappuccinos later, it still wasn't looking good, until, that is, a smiling Kevin Knight pressed the keys into my sweaty palms with the words, 'I trust you.' The money hadn't arrived, but he knew where to find me if it didn't. The 458 and I were gone before he changed his mind.

It was just three weeks later when, in the fast lane of a crowded southbound M1, I heard a loud backfire and the 458's V8 switched into limp-home mode. Fortunately Leeds-based Ferrari dealer JCT600 was but five miles away. Unfortunately, we didn't make it: a smaller backfire followed, and the car lost all power. Thankfully a prompt response from Ferrari Assist saw WXII collected on a low-loader and safely behind JCT's workshop doors within 90 minutes.

With a bank holiday looming and a planned south-coast driving bash

now looking depressingly unlikely, the next morning saw me at JCT's service reception once more. The news wasn't good. Apparently the fault could have been caused by any of three separate parts, none of which was held in the UK. This was not ideal, obviously, but what had me reaching for the smelling salts was learning that it wasn't possible to immediately order all three to cover every possible scenario. Why? It turns out Ferrari dealers don't have a sale-or-return agreement with the factory, meaning a dealer could be stuck with any parts it orders but doesn't use. So it was a case of sitting tight and hoping the correct part would arrive the week after.

And I'm pleased to report that there was a happy ending. After five days, Ferrari UK had a technician hot-foot it up north to attend to the stricken 458, and the next day it was ready. The problem? A faulty fuel sender unit, which indicated the car was carrying half a tank of 97 RON when in fact it had none. In other words, WXII had simply run out of fuel.

So does the 458 experience get better? Oh yes. Very much so. More next month...

**Simon George**



## NEW ARRIVAL

**'S**o welcome to your dream job at evo. And – before you can change your mind – here's your Mini Countryman.'

Okay, so that wasn't quite how the job interview went, but it's fair to say that editor Trott did broach the subject of my first car with a slightly apologetic tone.

The idea of a quasi off-road Mini with what looks like a major steroid-abuse problem was probably quite far down all our lists of the directions we thought BMW would take the brand in. But the Countryman deserves a fair trial, and, to be fair, the Skoda Yeti that has proved itself to be such a blue-collar hero on the evo fleet is pretty much the same deal. Like the Skoda, the über-Mini gets a raised ride height and optional four-wheel drive to give it some (slight) off-road ability, plus a smallish turbocharged petrol engine that's claimed to combine performance and decent economy. In the case of this Cooper S, that means the familiar BMW/PSA 1.6-litre turbo with 181bhp and an official 42.2mpg.

Despite a £22,505 basic price tag, standard Cooper S specification isn't particularly generous, so we've opted for the £2515 'Chili' pack to get some toys, including an upgraded stereo, sports seats and steering-wheel controls. On top of that we've added the upgraded Harman Kardon hi-fi (£740), the Media Pack, which brings satnav and somewhere to plug the iPod (£1035), 18in double-spoke alloys (£435), a detachable tow bar (£670), heated front seats and a quick-clear windscreen (£595). The Mini press office ticked a few

MINI COOPER S COUNTRYMAN	
Date acquired	May 2011
Total mileage	1675
Mileage this month	1085
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	33.7

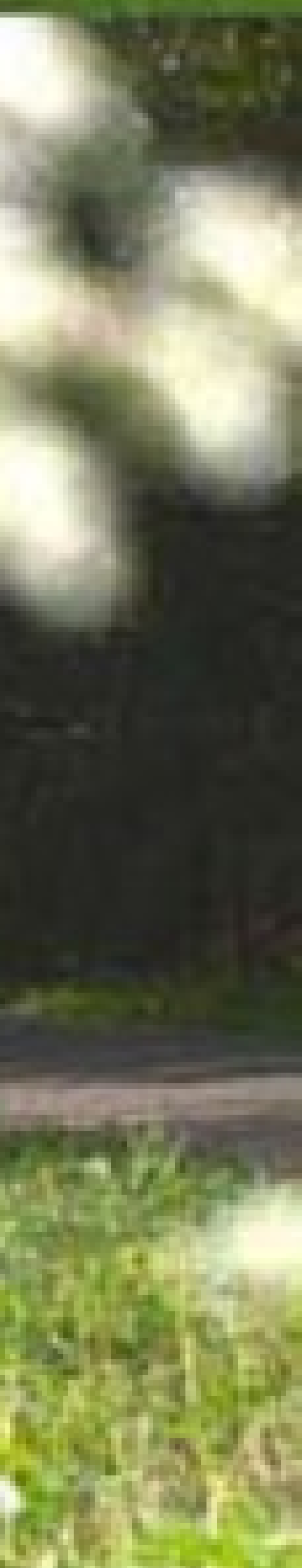
more boxes, including sun protection glass (£170), folding (£210) and auto-dimming (£105) mirrors – and a luggage compartment net (£150). Final score? A hefty £29,175.

What there isn't, you'll notice, are any of the stripes, contrasting roof colours or graphics packs that pricey Minis tend to attract. And with the combination of 'True Blue' metallic paint, a black interior and graphite wheels, this is about as visually modest as a Countryman gets. Which is, I reckon, a very good thing.

First impressions are pretty positive, too. The petrol engine is much, much nicer than the very agricultural diesel option, with lag-free low-down responses and an enthusiasm to rev. The satnav system, the screen for which takes over the centre of the central speedometer, seems to be quick-witted and accurate, and the expensively upgraded hi-fi is very, very loud. I'm not sure about the ride, though – the combination of 18s and run-flats makes the Countryman feel like it's wearing diving boots.

Anyway, I promise not to mollycoddle it. How do you think it would handle a bit of green-laning?

**Mike Duff**







Above and below: sensible colour, dark wheels and a lack of graphics help to soften the impact of the maxi Mini. Below right: cabin needed a few options to bring it up to scratch

**'THIS IS ABOUT AS VISUALLY MODEST AS A COUNTRYMAN GETS. WHICH IS A GOOD THING'**





# Fast Fleet

||| LONG-TERM TESTS

## NEW ARRIVAL

**T**he running-in period was a disaster. The Daytona Blue SLS arrived with 25 miles on the clock and the sticker on the windscreen delivered non-avoidable orders: for the first 1500km, you mustn't exceed 4000rpm or 85mph. Most of the used SLSs for sale in the UK right now show fewer than 500 miles, so you have to assume no one has driven them properly.

Sadly this will not be a one-year adventure, but hopefully it will last half that time. As someone who likes to try and jab as many objective finger-holes in these slabs of unobtainium, I have to admit to an embarrassing dose of weakness just because someone has altered the hinge-point for the doors. From the way the panel pops gently upwards as the compressed gas struts elongate, to the way the car looks, stationary, with one door open, to the sheer practicality of the set-up, you just feel like a rock star.

As someone who has regular access

### MERCEDES-BENZ SLS AMG

Date acquired	April 2011
Total mileage	2100
Mileage this month	2075
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	18.2

to an E63, the extra performance afforded by the SLS's 563bhp, 479lb ft (45bhp and 15lb ft up on the standard M156 unit found in the E-class) and lower kerb weight is startling. It feels different-world rapid.

Of course it didn't feel like that at 80mph, but I drove to North

Yorkshire and back to dispatch some of the mileage.

The SLS misses out on the super-GT limelight. It doesn't have the sex appeal of the 458 Italia or the crowd-pleasing antics of a Lambo. It is one of those cars whose very appeal – its practicality and everyday useability – is also its perceived problem. It's too normal.

Well, it's easy to get in and out of, the boot fits two golf bags, the seats have these vast side bolsters that grip your ribs like a long-lost aunt and the controls are familiar Mercedes-Benz.



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Left: control for XJ's 'Rear Seat Entertainment' package. Right: Supersport's 503bhp keeps the driver entertained

### JAGUAR XJ SUPERSPORT

Date acquired	February 2011
Total mileage	7400
Mileage this month	700
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	20.2

I am beginning to wonder if I have an unhealthy affection for this car. It's just so much better than I ever thought possible.

Being an old meanie, I will only

release my children from the horrors of the family sing-song if the journey is especially long; if so, they get to watch a DVD. They sit in the back, wearing Bluetooth headphones, watching a pair of large-ish screens, while we sit in the front with the radio providing light backing music to conversation. Like everything else about this car, it's just so damned civilised.

This must be one of a handful of cars with over 500bhp that can really cover





Left: 6.2-litre AMG V8 is better than ever in its 563bhp SLS form. Far left: interior isn't showy, but its familiar Mercedes controls make it easy to get familiar with and to live with too

I love the fact that the satnav works like the one in an E-class, but some people will be put off by the lack of jewellery and flamboyance. The optional natural brown leather is, to my eyes, the perfect accessory to the dark blue, almost heavy turquoise paint, the finish of which is liquid perfect. Does it feel like a £180,000 car? In every possible sense.

Especially in the way it drives. This

engine is rapidly moving into the realms of legend, and this is its most exciting state of tune and application yet. It has enough torque to shunt 1620kg at eye-popping pace, even in running-in mode, but the full 7000rpm, using the shift lights, just makes you laugh out loud. On the overrun it pops and bangs.

The gearbox is a mixed bag. In auto mode it is miles smoother than the

last SLS I drove, but in manual the response to each paddle-shift is just too delayed. The ride on non-sports suspension is pretty good and the dry grip is remarkable. I keep checking if it's on Cup tyres. The only real downside is that it looks much better clean, and I tend to like cars dirty. In three weeks, I have washed it twice. This is unusual behaviour.

**Chris Harris**

**'I HAVE TO ADMIT TO AN EMBARRASSING DOSE OF WEAKNESS JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE HAS ALTERED THE HINGE POINT ON THE DOORS'**



ground and still reduce your pulse-rate. I love every journey in it and can't praise Jaguar enough for the funky cabin, incredible hi-fi and, best of all, the discreet exterior styling.

The throttle still seems oversensitive from a standing start, but the gearbox is as smooth as chocolate mousse. If it had a seventh ratio, the car would add significantly to the 22mpg I see on long runs.

**Chris Harris**

### PORSCHE 997 GT3

Date acquired	December 2010
Total mileage	26,500
Mileage this month	800
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	22.7

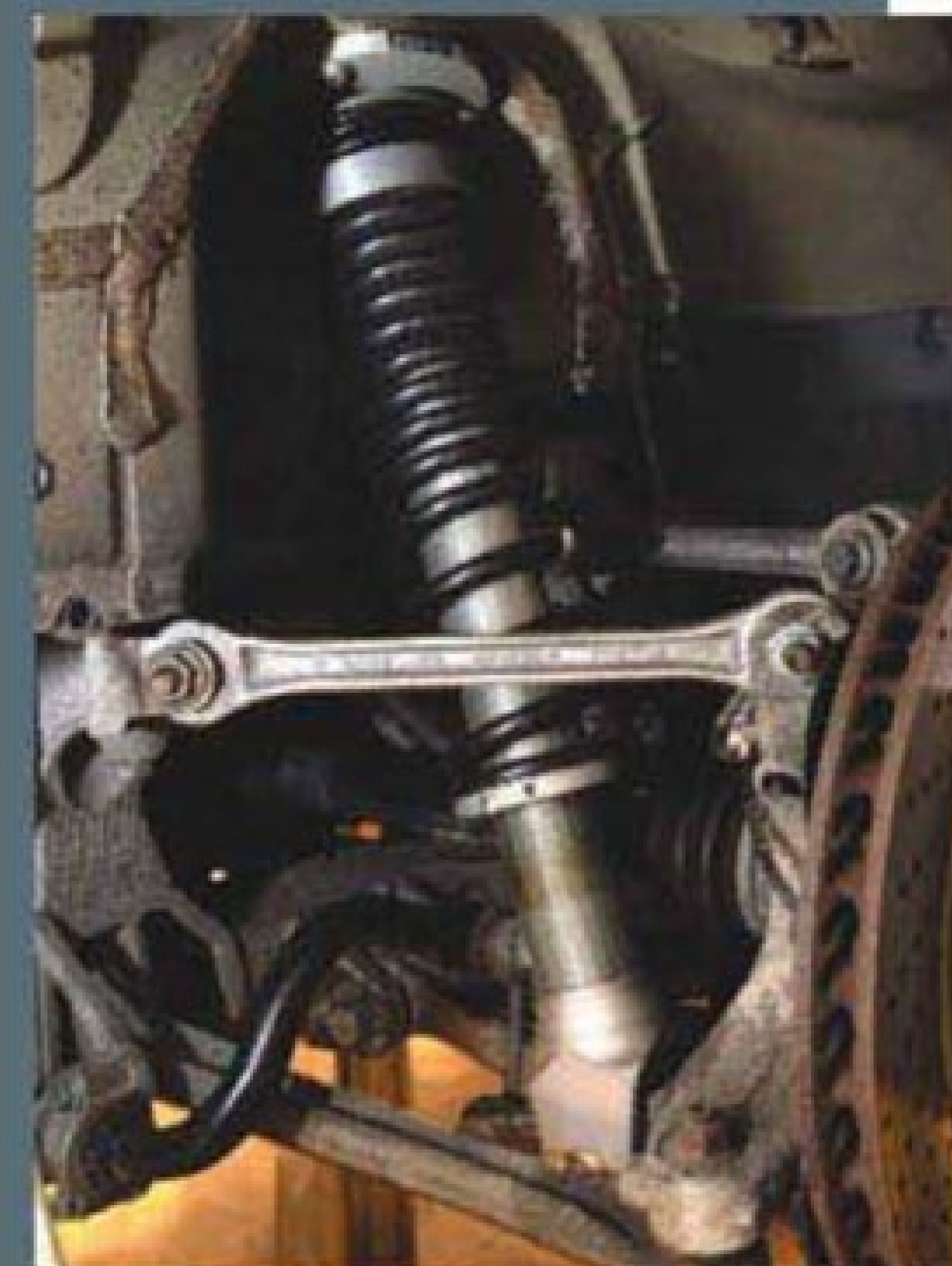
**S**uspension testing: that's what I've been doing this month. All the rubber bushes have gone, a set of Exe-tc single-adjuster dampers are in place and the result is, as a street car, mind-blowing.

The single-adjuster kit is obviously less sophisticated than the three-way version we use in the VLN series on a 997 Cup car, but the results over a mixture of surfaces almost defy comparison with anything else I've driven. I asked a good mate, also in this trade, to try the car and he said: 'Only an MP4-12C could go down a bumpy road like that.' He's right.

There's some added noise from the uniball joints and larger spherical bearings, which we need to work on, but the Akrapovic exhaust is so bloomin' loud you don't hear it on the move! The current caster setting has pulled some weight from the steering, which I actually like.

What I've ended up with is a GT3 that works on all UK roads – especially the broken-surfaced ones – in a way the standard car simply doesn't. Above all, it just gives the driver enormous confidence in all conditions.

**Chris Harris**



Exe-tc dampers have transformed the GT3's ride on rough tarmac



# Fast Fleet

||| LONG-TERM TESTS



Clockwise from above: Meaden opted for black paint and 19in wheels; Remus exhaust improved car's voice; Recaros were cloth versions; 'Renaultsport Monitor' was hardly used; 18in rims showed chassis at its best



**'LET'S JUST SAY IT WAS A QUICK AND COMMITTED 20,000 MILES...'**

## END OF TERM

**M**y 13-month relationship with HNI0 FGD started early last year with some idle play on the Renaultsport configurator. The ever-enthusiastic Jeremy Townsend from Renault's PR team had agreed to loan me an RS 250, so all I had to do was spec it. What a chore.

I love black cars almost as much as I love watching photographers squirm when trying to shoot them, so the colour chose itself. I'm also a big fan of Renaultsport's Cup-spec chassis, so that too was a no-brainer, especially as it also comes with a limited-slip differential. I steered clear of the leather Recaros, opting instead for the cheaper and more appropriate cloth items. A middling-spec stereo plus an

### RENAULT MÉGANE 250 CUP

Date acquired	April 2010
Duration of test	13 months
Total test mileage	19,641
Average mpg	27.3
Costs	£213 (service), £115 (brake pads), £566 (exhaust), £18 (puncture repair)
Purchase price	£25,865
Trade-in value	£20,100
Depreciation	£5765

MP3 connection and Bluetooth sorted the tunes and comms.

The wheels caused me some vexation. My head told me the standard 18-inchers would be best, but I was curious to know how the optional 19s would affect the car's ride and handling, so I ticked that box too, with the proviso I could swap to 18s mid-term to do a back-to-back

comparison. I call that a win-win.

In hindsight the only option I regret was the Renaultsport Monitor, a Nissan GT-R-like data display that shows everything from boost pressure and 0-62mph times to cornering G and lap times. All good fun, but if you choose it you can't have satnav, which to someone as directionally challenged as me makes it a bit of a folly. As does the fact I only used it twice.

Two things really impressed me about the RS 250 when it arrived back in April 2010: the styling, which I still think knocks spots off every other hot hatch out there, and the quality, which feels a big step on from the previous-generation Mégane. No it's not Audi-like, but given the choice I've always preferred hardcore dynamics to soft-touch plastics.

Running a new car in is normally a drag, but as luck would have it a Renaultsport trackday was happening at Spa just a week after I took delivery. OK, so a few hundred miles on French and Belgian autoroutes equates to the bare minimum bedding-in phase, but the Meg didn't complain at lapping the wonderful Belgian GP circuit and felt none the worse afterwards.

The big 19in rims definitely added some sharper edges to the Cup-spec chassis' undeniably hard ride quality. The Conti rubber also numbed the steering feel a little, but the combo didn't ruin the RS 250's composure or corrupt the delicate balance of the car as you might expect. They worked well at Spa too, although a handful of laps in a 250 Cup on 18s (and the special Michelin Pilot Sports





made for the car) confirmed that the bigger wheels and tyres deny you access to the Mégane's exuberant and expressive on-limit behaviour.

I'd be lying if I said it didn't take me a little while to warm to the 2-litre turbo engine. I'd previously spent six months or so in a Renaultsport Clio Cup, which is a rollicking little machine with a hyperactive delivery and a fizzy motor that demands to be caned. The Mégane is more measured and mature. Consequently you extract the performance in a different way. It's not hugely characterful, but I found a fix for this thanks to Remus Exhausts. Remus fitted a new fully stainless cat-back system, which is considerably lighter than standard and adds a bit of meat to the engine note. The beauty of it is the voice coaching is so subtle it

could – actually *should* – be OE. It also added 8lb ft and 10bhp on the rolling road, which is not to be sniffed at.

The service indicator dictated a pit-stop at 12,500 miles, which seemed like an opportune moment to swap to the 18in rims too. By this time the front tyres were a bit thin and the brakes – which always felt brilliant on the road, but always sounded rumbly after a track session – needed some attention. Otherwise the Meg hadn't missed a beat, and had only needed a splash of oil to keep it topped-up.

Parts and labour for the service amounted to £213, with a further £115 for the pad change. At the end of its time with us, the Mégane could probably have done with new front discs too, but it had done a couple more trackdays since Spa, and my local

roads tend to encourage enthusiastic progress. Let's just say it was a quick and committed 20,000 miles...

Dislikes? Well, that rakish, coupe-like profile and funky glasshouse meant the rear-three-quarter visibility was poor. Good job our car had parking sensors. Other gripes included a speedo needle that was far too hard to see in daylight (it needs to be illuminated at all times – official fix on the way, apparently), a hands-free phone microphone that required you to shout to be heard clearly and a squeaky noise from the rear parcel shelf, which shuffled in its mountings and was one of the few cheap-looking items on the car.

These minor niggles did very little to diminish my enjoyment of the Mégane, though. It was an effective mile-eater on motorways, but it truly came alive

on great A- and B-roads. It lacked the raw grunt of a Focus RS, but it had a sublime chassis that was so much more precise and controlled. The tuning industry is now remapping 250s to an easy 300bhp. I've tried a couple of examples and have been extremely impressed. If you own a Mégane you'd be amazed at the performance uplift.

It's traditional at this point in a long-term report for the custodian to say they're going to miss their departing long-termer. Well, after more than a year and nearly 20,000 miles in the Mégane, I'm *really* going to miss it. If I wasn't doing this ridiculously jammy job, I suspect I'd buy one with my own money. I love hot hatches, and right now no one does them better than Renaultsport.

**Richard Meaden**



# Fast Fleet

||| LONG-TERM TESTS

## RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS

Date acquired	September 2010
Total mileage	86,761
Mileage this month	1230
Costs this month	£114 (trackday insurance), £15 (headlamp converters)
mpg this month	32.5

**T**here's no better way to find your car's fortes and foibles than to spend three days and a thousand miles road-tripping in it. With 30-odd laps of Spa-Francorchamps on a Renaultsport trackday in the middle for good measure, of course. So what did Adam Shorrock and I learn about our Clio Williams on just such a jaunt?

1. It's a blooming comfortable place to spend time. The ride is more compliant than a modern hot hatch's, which is useful on poorly surfaced Belgian motorways, while the questionably upholstered seats are nicely squasy for long-distance mileage, yet almost bucket-like in their support during hard driving.

2. We've bought a good 'un. The weeks leading up to Spa were a real worry; it was hard to forget that a high-speed circuit could be the mechanical breaking of our Clio. To our knowledge it was the car's first

Right: the Williams makes its trackday debut. Below: stopping off at the old Reims circuit pits on the way home



track appearance in its 17-year life, and it passed the test with flying colours. With warm-up and cool-down laps stringently observed, even the brakes proved strong.

3. It's a friendly, intuitive but thrilling track car. There were more pre-trackday nerves here: would its lairy lift-off reputation make it a nightmare on the circuit's trickier turns? Or would Spa's inclines and a grid full of fast Méganes drown a 150bhp Clio? No on both counts. On most parts of the track the Williams felt little slower than my Clio 200 Cup long-termer did last year. More fun, too, lower grip limits making it lighter on its feet and ultimately more agile. It's so throttle-adjustable during cornering, you can instinctively keep it on line via the right-hand pedal.

4. 1200 miles of 80mph-plus cruising and quick lapping results in a 32.5mpg average, 21.2mpg for the circuit part alone. The Clio 200 managed 14mpg around Spa. That's lightness for you...

5. From the attention garnered in a 120-car paddock to enthusiastic questions from an E90 BMW M3 owner at the old Reims circuit in northern France, a Clio with gold wheels and decals still carries kudos.

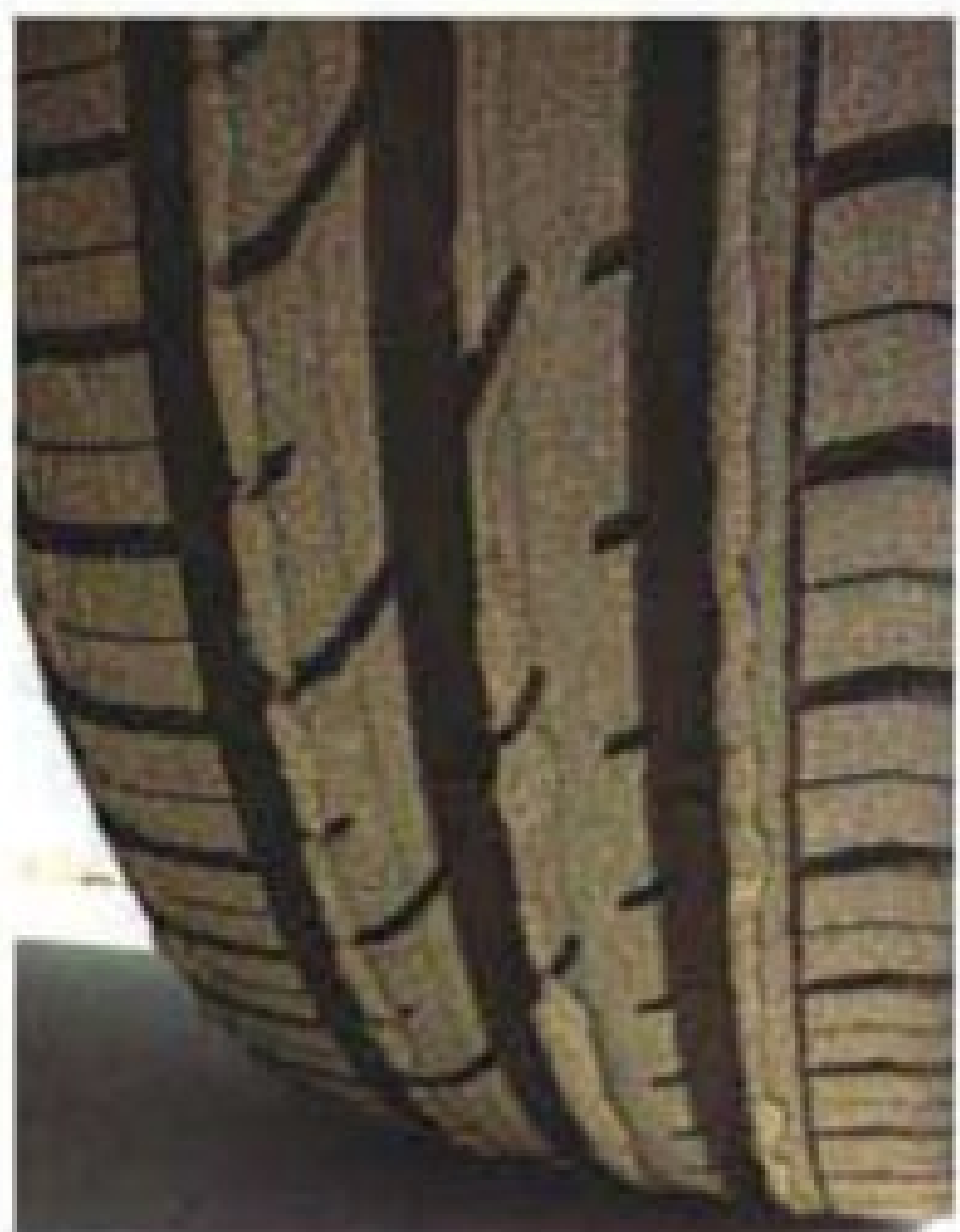
6. We need new tyres. An excursion like this is exactly why we bought our Williams. Showing it off or pottering to work in it is fun, but a road trip is the best way to enjoy a car like this. It absolutely relished track use too, belying its age and perceived fragility. This won't be L97 JUD's only big outing this summer...

**Stephen Dobie**



**'A ROAD TRIP IS THE BEST WAY TO ENJOY A CAR LIKE THIS'**





From top: makeshift stereo; packed Spa paddock; tyres took a beating; rally driver Jean Ragnotti in attendance; French Willy; rare Group B Citroën BX in Reims auto museum; 1200 miles of bugs



### SEAT LEON CUPRA R

Date acquired	September 2010
Total mileage	13,230
Mileage this month	1434
Costs this month	£105.60 (cradle)
mpg this month	29.4

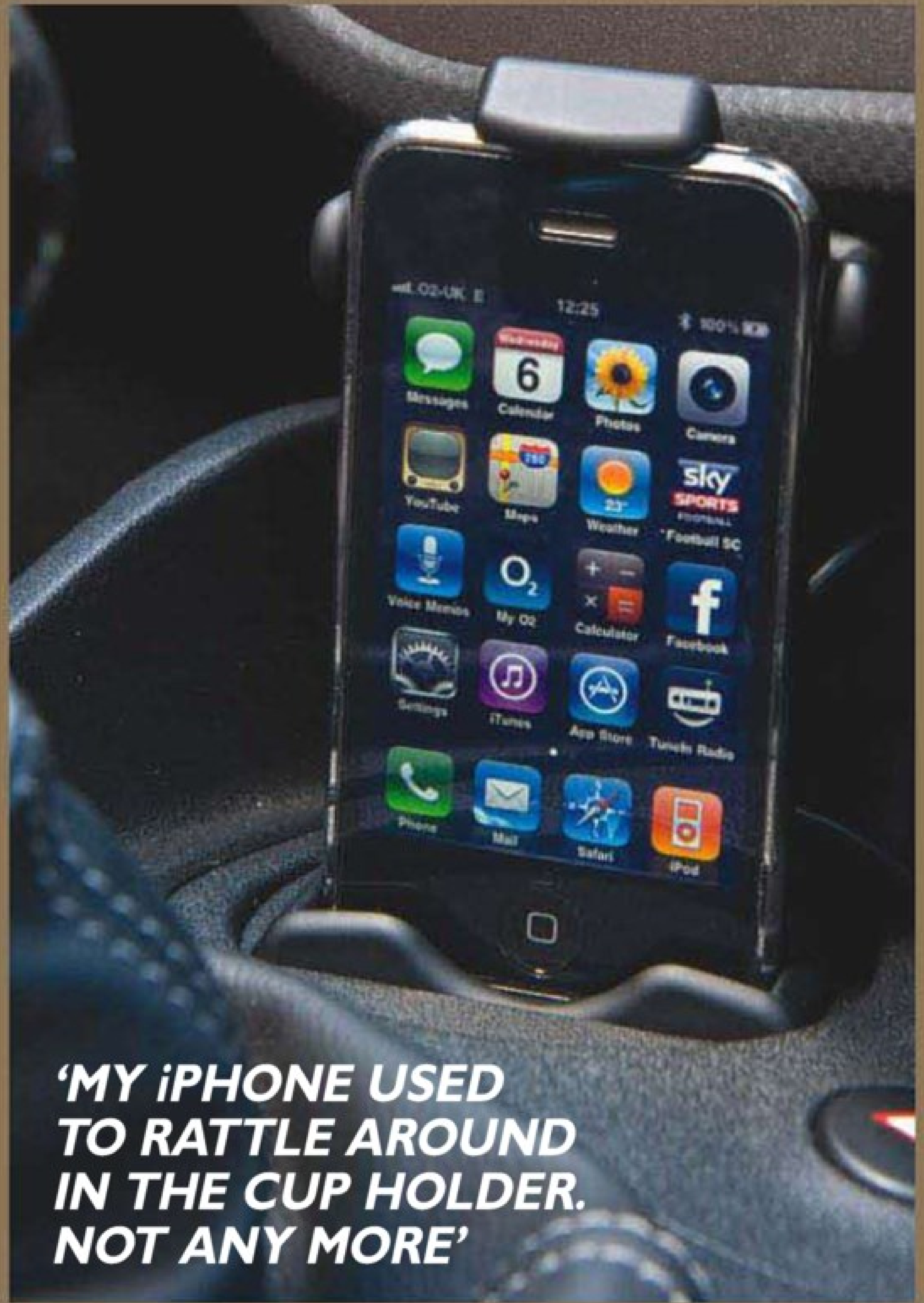
**B**oringly, the Leon hasn't missed a beat this month. Again. It's still delivering the thrill of driving, still transporting my family around with ease. It's even been on track again, getting thrashed around the Bedford Autodrome, helping an evo competition winner on a novices' trackday. And, as always, it just shrugged it off.

There is some news, though. As I mentioned last month, I was flicking through the SEAT catalogue when I noticed an iPod/iPhone cradle that would solve a couple of niggles I had. You see, my iPhone used to rattle around in a cup holder and the wires connecting it to the stereo would get tangled up. It drove me nuts.

Not any more. My new cradle sits snugly in the cup holder near the gearstick, while two small wires connect it up. As an added bonus, it charges my phone's battery, too.

It costs just over £100 and can be ordered through any SEAT dealer. And it makes the Cupra R even more boringly good than ever.

Paul Lang



**'MY IPHONE USED TO RATTLE AROUND IN THE CUP HOLDER. NOT ANY MORE'**

### PEUGEOT RCZ GT THP200

Date acquired	December 2010
Total mileage	13,642
Mileage this month	1856
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	33.1

**I**t's not scientific, but the autobahn flat-chat test always proves irresistible to me, especially when the roads are deserted on an early Sunday-morning dash home from the Nürburgring. One-four-two was the RCZ's top score (I actually saw 146mph a little later on a downhill section, but that doesn't really count).

Okay, this might not be earth-shatteringly rapid, but it exceeded the maximum velocity of the identically engined Mini Challenge car I'd just been racing in a six-hour VLN event by 6mph (we finished third in class, thanks for asking). The svelte body



Left: the 197bhp RCZ nudged an indicated 142mph on a quiet stretch of autobahn this month – and here's the proof

and bubble-roof obviously have more than just looks going for them, then.

Not all was rosy on the long, trophy-carrying journey home though, as after a couple of hours the lower section of the seat-back proved uncomfortable, and while the pain wasn't quite as bad as that inflicted by the fixed-back carbon jobs found in a Gallardo Superleggera, the solution was the same: a jumper stuffed behind the small of my back.

More worrying still was the gearbox, which has begun to be a little baulky on downshifts. I think the problem might be heat-related, as it works perfectly at the beginning of a trip and becomes more recalcitrant the further you go. It will need more investigation and quite possibly a trip to the garage, so if you have an RCZ and have experienced anything similar, please get in touch.

Roger Green



# Fast Fleet

||| LONG-TERM TESTS

## FORD CAPRI V8

Date acquired	October 2001
Total mileage	1166
Mileage this month	265
Costs this month	£54.85 (MOT), £215 (road tax), £300 (four tyres)
mpg this month	15.0



**C**heck out the 'mileage this month' line in the table. That might not look like a big number, but for the Capri it's the equivalent of two years' motoring. And it managed most of those miles on one day, going to the launch of Blyton Park circuit, where it did a few laps too. A big month, then.

It started with a successful visit to AM Engineering in Kettering for an MOT, followed by a geometry check back at QPrep in Oundle. QPrep's



Quentin Nicholls discovered a bit of an issue here, in that the suspension is long-travel 'forest' spec and the 15in wheels (it was designed for 13s) and low ride height meant it was running out of travel. When I collected it, he'd raised the ride height by 1.5in at the front and an inch at the back. He'd also set the front toe-in at 45 minutes to give the steering a more positive feel in a straight line.

I also expected the car to be sat on four brand new trackday tyres. The originals had been on for seven years

and, although not worn, a couple of experts said they would be dicey – age-hardened and possibly at risk of delamination. Choosing replacements was easy. The Yokohama Advan Neova AD08 impressed me in our 2010 MX-5-based tyre test (evo 146), being superb in the dry and not too shabby in the wet either. Trouble was, when Q dropped the car back down after fitting them, it wouldn't budge. Turns out their slightly wider, squarer profile mean the 205s foul the front struts... Slimmer 195s will replace them.

## VAUXHALL INSIGNIA VXR

Date acquired	June 2010
Total mileage	22,717
Mileage this month	2097
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	24.4

I'd made it through almost a year without taking the Insignia on track – big, heavy estate cars, even ones as accomplished as the VXR, aren't natural trackday machines. But it goes back to Vauxhall very soon and I was curious to see how well it would cope, so the prospect of a sunny Friday evening mingling with evo readers at the Bedford Autodrome was eventually impossible to resist.

Out we went, and yep, for the first

few laps it felt as I suspected it would. Decently quick and grippy, but lacking the instant biddability, the sharpness and alacrity that make a great track car. A lot of that's weight-related, of course. I could feel it pitching into corners, heavy on its tyres and brakes. And since the track was warm and bone-dry and I'm not Dickie Meaden, I couldn't seem to coax much of a skid out of it either.

After 20 minutes I cruised back to the pits and grabbed the keys to the Cayman R, which was around for last month's BMW 1-series M Coupe group test. Jeez, what a fabulous little car – everything about it honed and keen and beautifully in balance. I could have driven it all evening, but my



**'I WAS CURIOUS TO SEE HOW WELL IT WOULD COPE ON TRACK'**

colleagues had other ideas. So back I went to the VXR. I didn't feel inclined to push it hard – partly because it felt a bit dumb to do so, but also because it recently had the warped front discs replaced under warranty (evo 158).





Left: John puts the Capri to the test on the newly laid track at Blyton. Below left: 205-section tyres proved too wide. Right: tweaking the suspension at QPrep

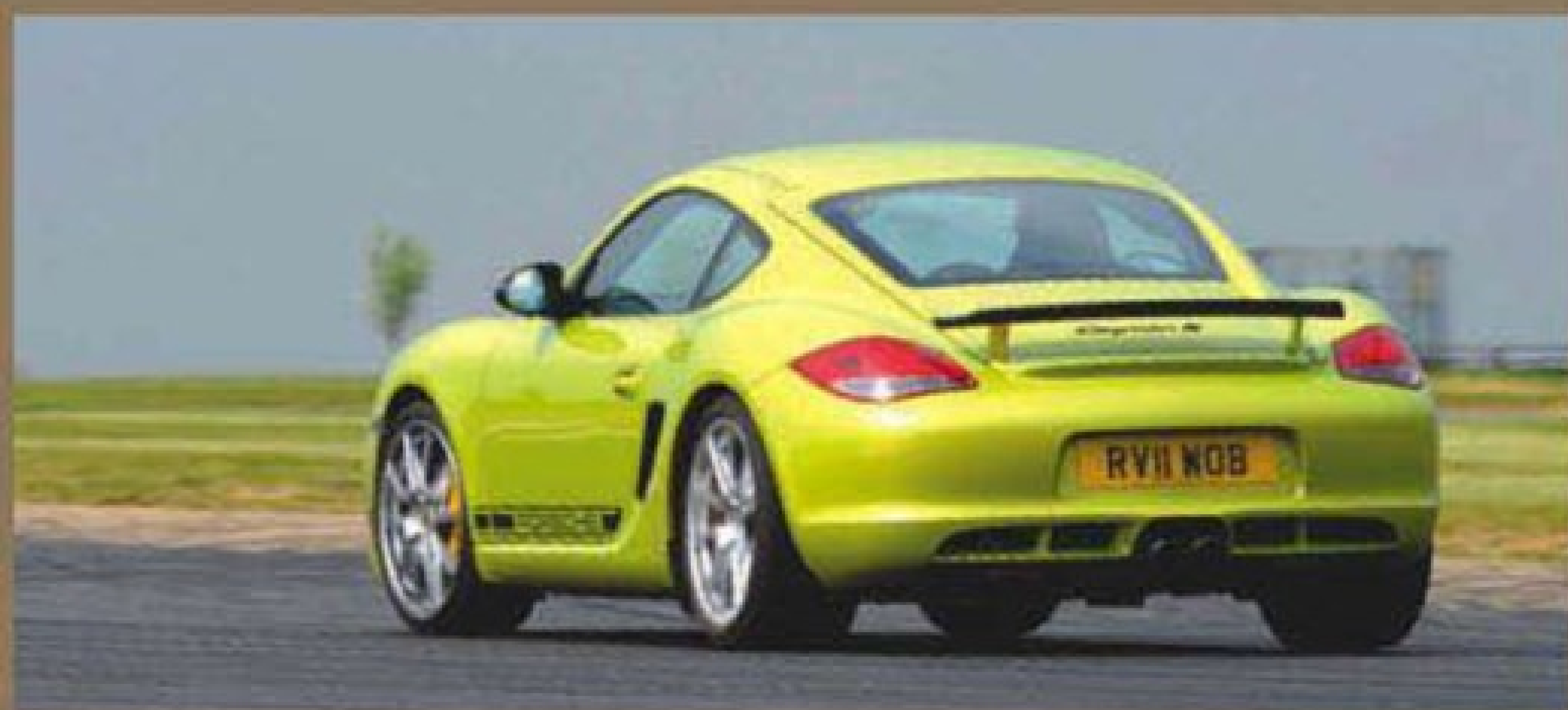


## 'IT FELT BLOODY GOOD, AND DECEPTIVELY QUICK ON TRACK'

So the old rubber went back on for the journey north to Blyton in Lincolnshire. Quentin has eliminated a lot of the distracting chassis clonks and creaks, and although the Capri is still noisy (as an empty room is) it was a comfortable lope there and back. It felt bloody good to be enjoying it, and it proved deceptively quick on track, too. Surprisingly, the old tyres warmed

up and softened up, and their grip was impressive, which is another way of saying it wasn't sideways enough for me. The chassis needs some work but, finally, we're into the fun stuff. Which is why I invited Richard Tipper of Perfection Valet around to work his magic. She's never felt or looked better.

**John Barker**



Left: the big VXR estate isn't a natural track car, unlike the Cayman R (above)

But I did drive it a little harder, a little more assertively, and it was rather more impressive as a result. In particular, it proved pleasingly disinclined to understeer, working all four corners through the quicker

turns. It even got some favourable comments from the drivers of some very rapid 911s. I left not exactly blown away but actually quietly impressed.

**Peter Tomalin**

I've barely mentioned the Infiniti's four-wheel-steering system so far, and there's a good reason for this: I'm not entirely sure I can notice its effect.

In my defence, the rear wheels only turn by a maximum of one degree, in the same direction as the fronts, and only at medium to high speeds. The idea is to improve stability, particularly when changing lanes at speed. Maybe I'd notice a difference if suddenly the system wasn't there, but at least I can safely say that its presence is not spoiling my enjoyment of the G37.

Interestingly, the rear wheels never turn in the opposite direction to the fronts, so they won't tighten the car's line when, say, parking or negotiating a small roundabout, but here you might notice the variable-ratio steering.

Pleasingly, the change of ratio is very natural, and not at all gimmicky and over-exaggerated like some other similar systems. In fact the only time it crosses my mind is when I'm driving something other than the Infiniti and find that I have to move my hands

### INFINITI G37S COUPE

Date acquired	July 2010
Total mileage	18,134
Mileage this month	1705
Costs this month	£390.50 (service)
mpg this month	27.4

## 'THE VARIABLE-RATIO STEERING DOESN'T FEEL AT ALL GIMMICKY'

from the ten-to-two position to negotiate a particularly tight right-hand turn on the way home.

Two more things to report this month. Firstly, GG10 EVO has had its second service, which involved replacing the oil, oil filter, pollen filter, air filters and brake fluid, and cost £390.50. Secondly, I have been exercising a lighter right foot of late, resulting in a new monthly mpg high of 27.4, an improvement of around 3mpg. Approximate monthly saving? £45.

**Ian Eveleigh**

The G37S's steering ratio quickens at low speeds, so you rarely need to move your hands on the wheel





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**RENAULTSPORT CLIO V6**

When I got my Clio back from its belt service at R Sport last month, the technician made a note on the invoice informing me that tyre wear is approaching illegal status. Problem is, you can't get the 205/40/18 Michelin front tyres any more...

**Nick Trott**

**MAZDA 3 MPS**

I've tried out all of the Mazda's gadgets and gizmos, and apart from the heated seats (a real boon after a cold photo shoot), the keyless entry and the auto lights, most remain dormant, although this probably says more about me than the gadgets themselves.

**Chris Rutter**

**SUBARU IMPREZA WRX STI**

The new special ed STI 320R gets satnav as standard. My STI didn't, but I like it that way. A good fuddy-duddy map is just fine. Bumpy lanes hold no fears for the Subaru, so minor roads are in play when planning. Occasionally they throw up a gem. Occasionally you find yourself surrounded by cows.

**Henry Catchpole**

**JAGUAR XJR**

The '90s XJ was always considered low-slung for a saloon. In fact, it's just 17mm taller than the current XK sports car and a startling 117mm – that's over 4½ inches – lower than the latest XJ. Put the two saloons next to each other and the effect is like an A380 pulling in beside a 737.

**Richard Porter**

**SKODA YETI 1.8 TSI**

Before we set off on last month's 1-series M Coupe test, I unclipped the Yeti's back seats and left them at Evo Towers, turning the trusty Skoda into a van. Even fully loaded with video gear, it managed to keep up with the 1M convoy on the twisty Welsh roads. This small 4x4 remains an essential part of our fleet.

**Sam Riley**

**fastfleet@evo.co.uk**

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

**HARRY'S GARAGE ROUND-UP**



What an amazing event May's Mille Miglia Ferrari Tribute turned out to be. You can read more about it on page 110, but suffice to say the 550 Barchetta turned out to be a brilliant car to do it in, covering over 2000 miles in just a week. In fact, I watched the car's odometer click past the 10,000-mile mark as we drove away from the Ferrari factory in Maranello, almost ten years to the day after it first left there.

The car (gleaming in the Italian sunshine thanks to Perfection Valet) ran faultlessly, although the water temperature gauge did rise high enough for me to use the old trick of turning the heater to full to help cool things down. In fairness, it was over 30 deg C and I was giving the car no mercy on the amazing hairpin sections through the Italian countryside.

Unlike most of the 550s present, the brakes on my car didn't wilt when put under serious strain through the mountains. That's probably because it's equipped with EBC 'Yellow Stuff'

front brake pads, something I only discovered when a new set of Pirelli P Zero Rossos was being fitted just before we left the UK.

I wish I could bring you some news about how the new Pagid pads for my Countach are performing too, but after much chasing they are yet to arrive, even though it's been over six weeks since I first ordered them.

Now, as you may remember, I placed a deposit on a new Ferrari FF back in January. Well, I've just done the unthinkable and cancelled it. It was a tough decision, but the more I got to know about the FF, the more I realised it was never going to be a true replacement for my Range Rover as the main family car, and because I'm one of those rare (just 4 per cent apparently) Range owners who actually uses their off-roader off-road, I was still going to have to own a RR – and that made the FF a potential £240K extravagance.

Still, I've just bought another car to help ease the pain of cancelling the FF. More news about that next month...

**Harry Metcalfe**



Upgraded brake pads (right) were discovered when new P Zeros were being fitted (top). Above: nearing a mileage milestone



Last month we reported just how well the RS5 performed on evo's first trackday of the year. It was unbelievably quick, safe, secure and reliable. Since then, I've taken it on another evo trackday and yet again it simply got on with the task of being silly-fast.

The Continental SportContact 2 tyres are resisting excessive wear on track – which is a surprise considering the huge forces generated by the

**AUDI RS5**

Date acquired	December 2010
Total mileage	10,015
Mileage this month	2243
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	22.3

RS5's high outright grip levels and its simply brilliant ceramic brakes. It seems like the quattro four-wheel drive is managing tyre wear well.

A couple of curious things have

occurred with the RS5 this month. Firstly, I had two braking lock-ups on track – nothing unsafe, just a big squeal and a slight wriggle from the rear. It seemed like the ceramics had overwhelmed the ABS briefly.

A suspension warning symbol has popped up a couple of times too, but disappeared after a few seconds. Oddly, this seems to occur when the car is parked on unlevelled ground.

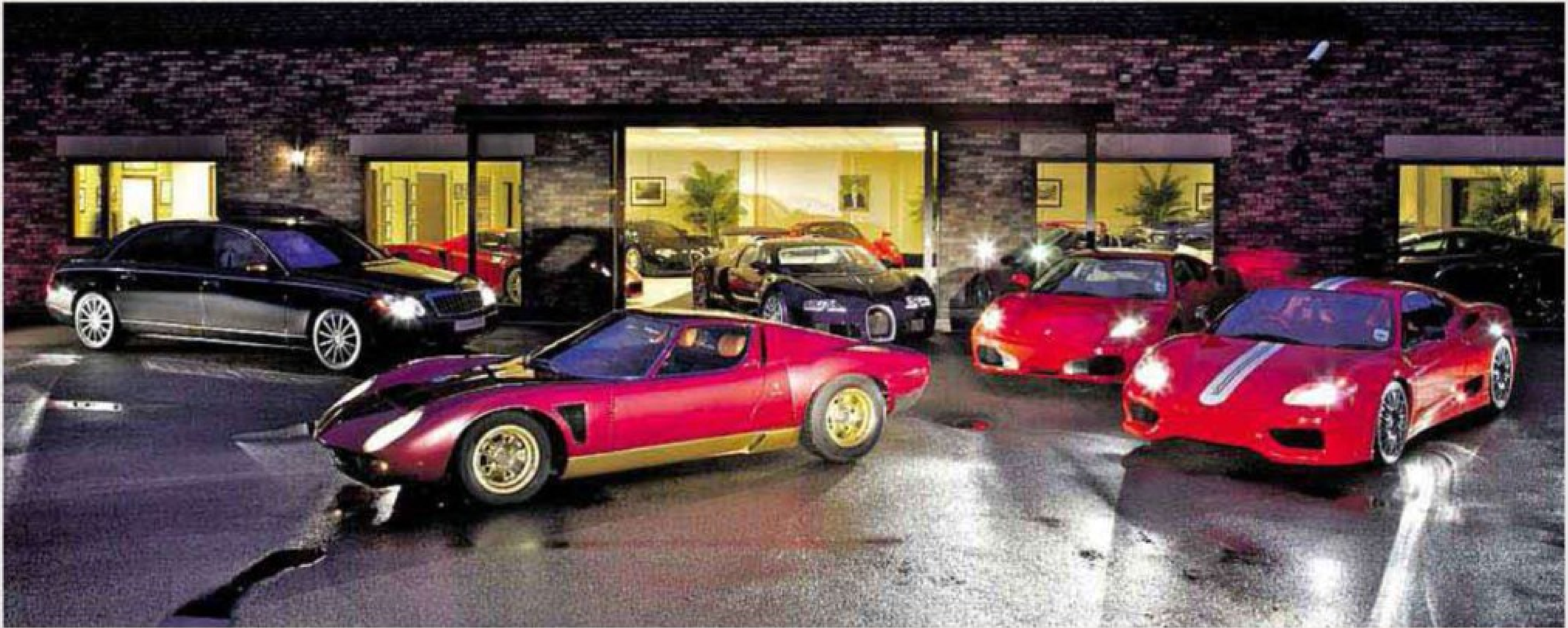
**Nick Trott**



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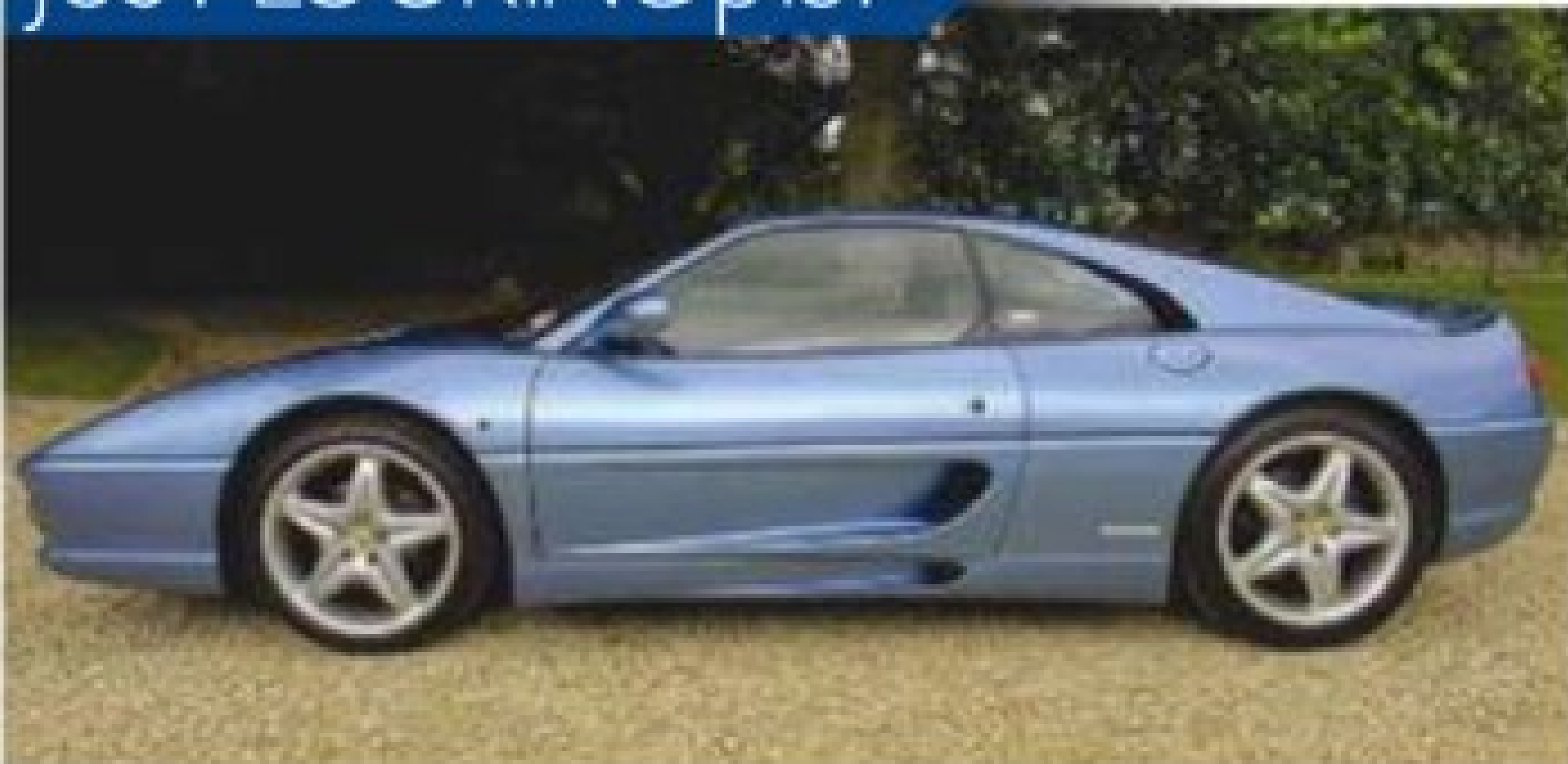


## BUYING GUIDE

**BMW M6** 500bhp, V10-engined supercoupe from just £22K

Not long ago, this was BMW's quickest accelerating car. Now one could be yours for just a quarter of its original price

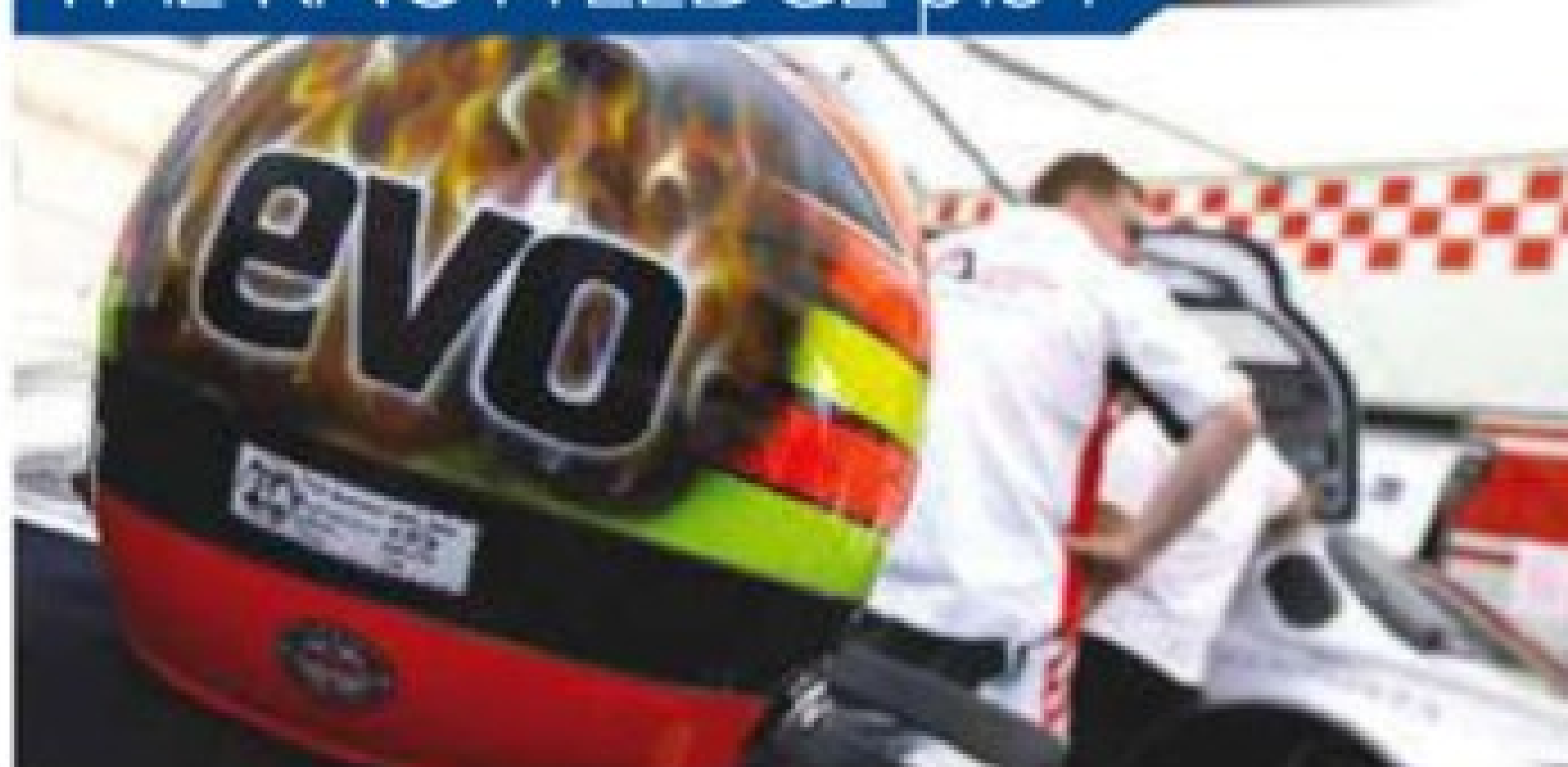
## JUST LOOKING p151



### CARS FOR SALE

We all love browsing the classifieds, but what are the cars like to drive? This month we try a 500bhp R32 Nissan Skyline and a gorgeous Ferrari F355

## THE KNOWLEDGE p154



### TRIED AND TESTED

Facts, figures and our verdict on every drivers' car. Plus the latest gadgets reviewed: this month, a new Michelin tyre and a crash helmet fit for Formula 1

## ASK THE EXPERTS p171



### YOU ASK, WE ANSWER

What do you need to consider when switching from run-flats to regular tyres? And how do you make a GT3 RS quicker? Our experts have the answers





# BMW M6

*It's effortlessly fast, has an engine to die for and can do cossetting too. Best of all, it's now something of a bargain. Here's what to look for*

**T**here is only one M6, unless you also count the motorway. We used to refer to the mid-'80s M635i as an M6, but that was a motoring colloquialism. The car you see here is the real deal.

On its 2005 launch it was the fastest road car that BMW had ever made, or would have been with the 155mph speed-limiter disabled. It was

the most accelerative, too, although the current M3 has since trumped that statistic. These superlatives are hardly a surprise, given that the E63 M6 used the 500bhp V10 and SMG transmission of the already-mental E60 M5 in a lighter body.

This one-throttle-per-cylinder engine, and the 80 per cent version that powers the V8 M3, might together prove to be the last



Words **John Simister**

Pictures **Chris Rutter**

## SPECIFICATION

- Engine V10, 4999cc
- Max power 500bhp @ 7750rpm
- Max torque 384lb ft @ 6100rpm
- Transmission Seven-speed sequential manual, rear-wheel drive
- Tyres 255/40 R19 front, 285/35 R19 rear
- Weight (kerb) 1635kg
- Power-to-weight 311bhp/ton
- 0-62mph 4.6sec (claimed)
- Top speed 155mph (limited)
- Price when new £79,760 (2005)

## PARTS PRICES

(Supplied by Munich Legends.  
Tyre prices from blackcircles.com.  
All prices include VAT at 20 per cent)

- Tyres £242.88 each front, £264.89 each rear (Continental SportContact 2, fitted)
- Brake pads (front set) £228
- Brake discs (front pair) £480
- Clutch kit (excluding flywheel) £540
- Flywheel £480
- Oil filter £18
- Air filter (pair) £57.60

## SERVICING

(Prices supplied by Munich Legends)

Servicing is by on-board indicator and different components' replacement cycles often don't coincide, so there are no set service menus.

Example prices are:

- Oil change £150
- Spark plug change £360
- Brake fluid change £48

## WHAT TO PAY

■ Around 25 per cent of M6s have been specified via BMW's 'Individual' programme, and the highest price we've seen for one is for a delivery-mileage 2011 example with Competition Pack, being offered by a dealer for a heady £101,305.

At the opposite extreme are cars for as little as £22K, which may still not have covered a vast mileage. Double that will get you into a 2008 example. Convertibles cost more new but don't command a premium secondhand.

## IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



**2005 55-reg,  
55,000 miles**

Full service history, silver, black leather, pre-March 2006 so cheaper road tax

**£22,995**



**2005 05-reg,  
40,750 miles**

Full service history, upgrade to 546bhp, space grey, oxblood leather, new tyres

**£28,500**



**2008 08-reg,  
12,500 miles**

Interlagos Blue, two previous owners, light grey leather, full service history

**£42,995**

normally aspirated M division engines we'll see, so that's a good reason for considering an M6. Another is that, despite being created in BMW's Chris Bangle design era of flame-surfaced wackiness, it's almost a conventionally handsome machine, yet has a character slightly lacking in the new 6-series that has just been launched (as yet without an M version). As ever, it's the coupe that looks cleaner, though a convertible M6 is certainly one of the speediest ways to blow a hurricane through your hair.

The weight savings over the M5 saloon, which itself was made mainly from aluminium from the bulkhead forward, came partly from the use of composite plastic for the bootlid and front wings and, specific to the M6, a carbonfibre roof panel similar

to that of the previous-generation M3 CSL. Not that 1635kg is exactly featherweight, but with all that power, a rev-band extending right up to 8500rpm and a seven-speed, sequential-shift gearbox to exploit it, the M6 hides its mass well.

There's plenty to think about when driving it, too. You'll almost certainly keep the Power button toggled to its 500bhp setting; why would you want the 395bhp alternative? And you'll probably have configured the steering-wheel-mounted M Drive button's settings to your liking. It's a shortcut to an all-in-one favourites set-up, which can, for example, simultaneously select that 500bhp, the firmest of three suspension options, a stability and traction setting that allows more freedom





**Lamborghini Murcielago LP 640**  
08/58, RHD, 15,000 miles,  
£179,995



**Lamborghini Diablo VT LHD 6.0 SE**  
01/51, 2000 Miles, LHD,  
£199,995



**Lamborghini Murcielago V12 Coupe**  
2002/02, 42,000 miles,  
£79,995



**Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder E Gear Convertible**  
07/57, 10,800 miles,  
£91,995



**Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Spyder Performante Convertible**  
07/57, 14,000 miles,  
£94,995



**Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder**  
06/56, 11,000 miles  
£87,995



**Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Coupe LHD**  
06/06, 8,000 miles  
£87,995



**Lamborghini Gallardo Coupe**  
06/56, 8,000 miles,  
£82,995



**Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Scissor Doors**  
2004, 18,000 miles,  
£79,995



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£66,995



**Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Coupe LHD**  
High Spec, 2005, 11,000 miles,  
£74,995



**Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Coupe New Clutch**  
2005, 22,000 miles,  
£69,995



**Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Coupe**  
High Spec, 2005, 28,000 miles,  
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before saving you from yourself, and number five out of six rising speeds of gearshift. (An excellent trackday combination, that one.)

From a smooth but busy idle, the revs rocket upwards, the note turning from a double-harmonic boom redolent of an old Audi Quattro (a V10 being effectively two straight-fives) to a hard-edged blare to the kind of raw shriek you used to hear from a V10 Formula 1 car, a flashing from the auxiliary head-up instrument display signalling that giddy rev-limit. Every drive in an M6 is theatre.

It handles pretty nicely, too, lacking the unnatural-feeling 'active steering' found in some lesser 6-series cars, which dramatically alters the steering ratio with road speed. The M6 is too pure for such gimmickry. Giant 19in wheels, deeply dished with five pairs of slender spokes, enclose similarly giant brakes, further helping to dispel the notion of perceived mass. Yet for all the fireworks when roused, the M6 can be a civilised cruising companion with ample pull from lowish revs (though it's nothing compared with what lurks further up the rev range) and acceptably smooth gearshifts, be they automatic or manual, if you select a calmer shift speed.

To buy new at launch, an M6 cost £79,760. By the time sales ended early this year – production actually ended last July – that had risen to £87,335, but you can now buy an early example for a quarter of that amount. Should you? As long as you watch out for a couple of potentially expensive snags, as outlined in our checkpoints, you probably should.

## CHECKPOINTS



Above: check interior for signs of water ingress. Below right: V10 engine is tough, but watch for VANOS problems. Below: expect front brake discs to last 30,000 miles at best



Munich Legends, based in East Sussex, has been specialising in classic BMWs for years but also sells and services recent ones. General manager Stuart Draper has seen many M6s pass through his service bay and has gained a good handle on what goes wrong. He's our guide here, and points out that maintenance costs for an M6 are typically around double those for a regular 6-series.

### ■ Engine

'Beware of the engine management warning light coming on,' says Draper. 'The VANOS [variable valve timing] system has its own oil pump and can suffer from pressure faults, and it's a two-day, £2000 job to replace the pump because the front subframe and lower suspension arms have to come out. Also, the eight solenoids across the two double-VANOS systems can leak internally, causing the warning light to come on at high revs. Otherwise the

## 'Engine and ancillaries are durable'

engine and its ancillaries are durable. We've seen 100,000-mile cars with no signs of engine wear.'

### ■ Transmission

The worry here is that a previous owner has indulged in the launch control, a dramatic and very violent process. 'It's logged in the software and only BMW can get the data out,' Draper reveals, 'and BMW recommends that it's used no more than three times – in total.' Without this abuse the clutch can last to 50,000 miles or beyond, so check the service history to see if it has been replaced – preferably with a new, and expensive,







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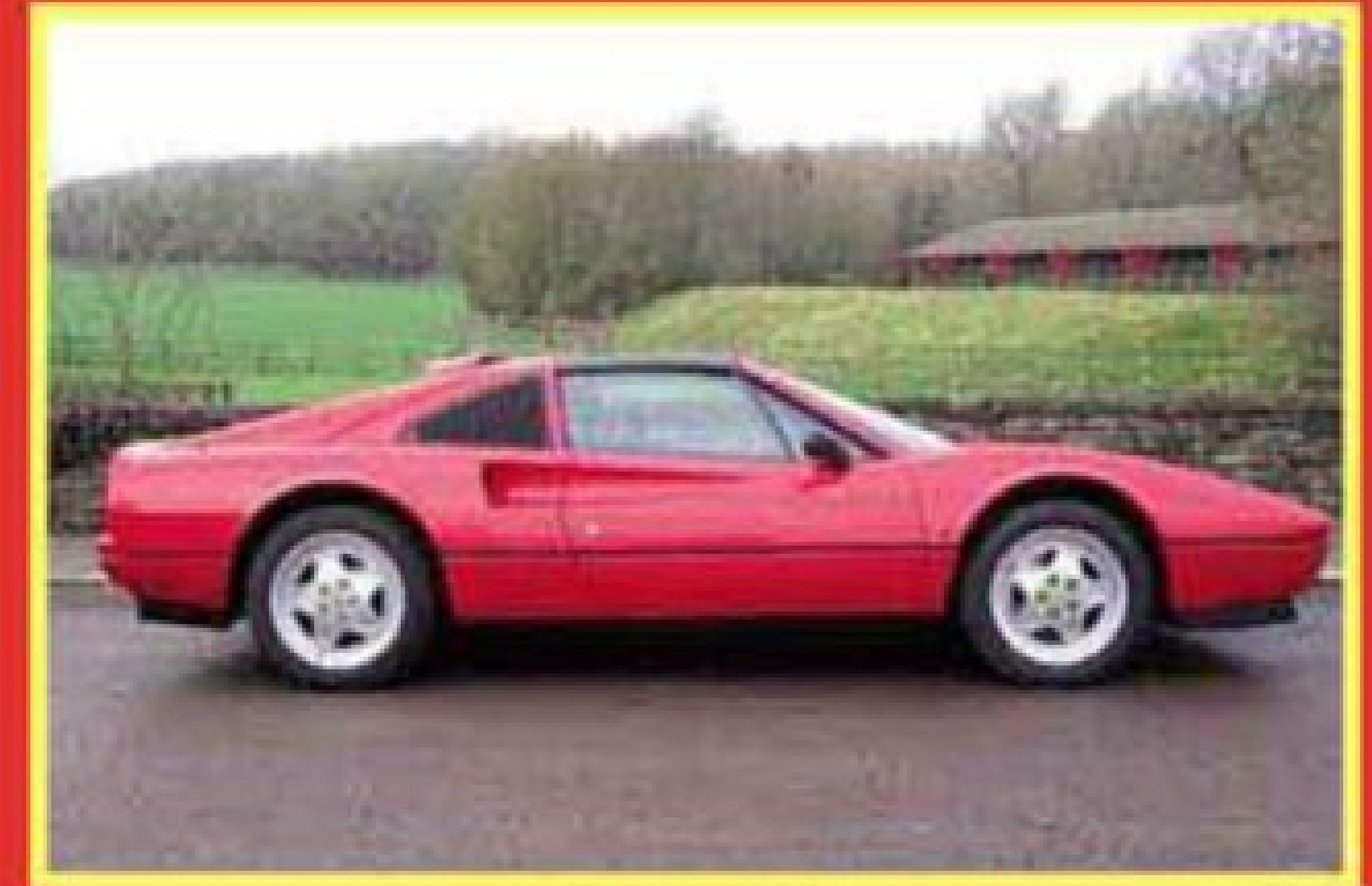


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**Ferrari 355 Berlinetta F1**  
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### Ferrari 328GTS

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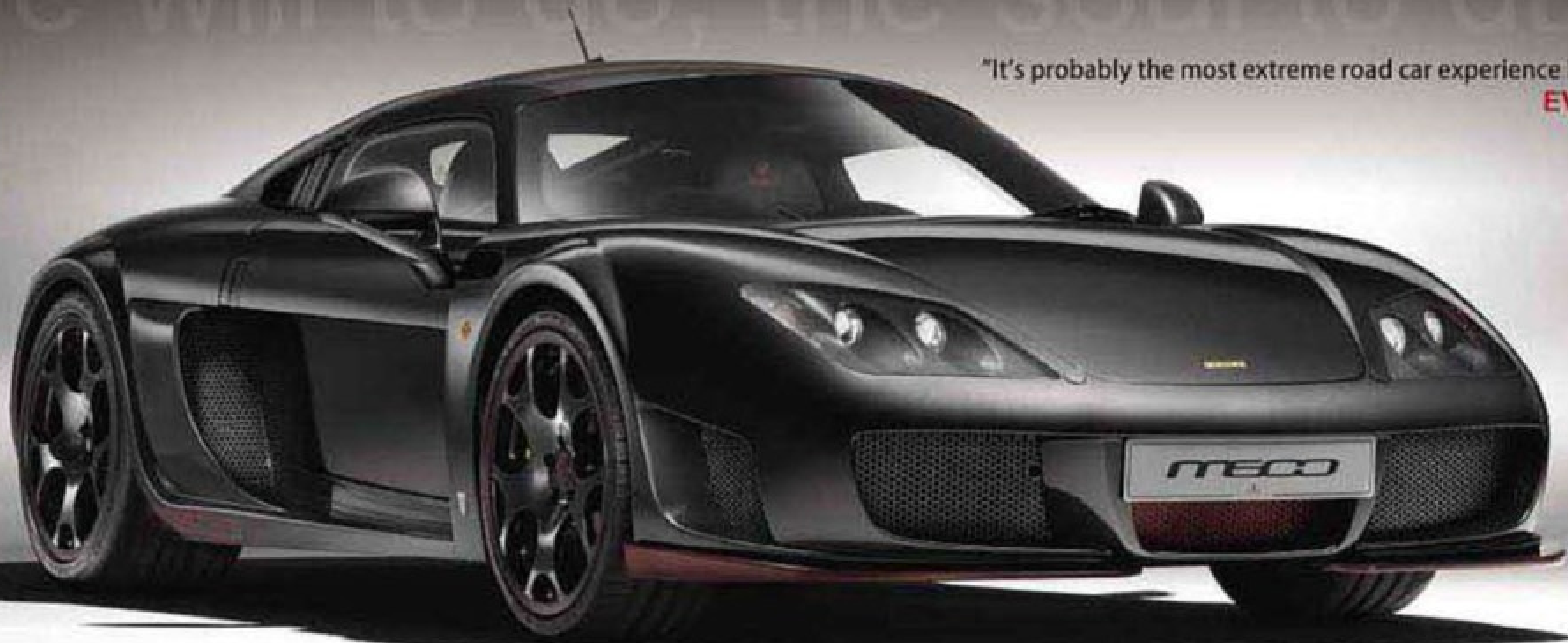
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M6 was in production from 2005 to 2010; the last examples were registered in 2011



## CHECKPOINTS

flywheel at the same time. The SMG gearbox itself is reliable. Various software updates have reduced hesitations and jerks, so check you're happy with the shift quality.

### ■ Suspension, brakes

'The suspension is really hard-wearing,' Draper says, 'and we've seen few leaking or fading dampers. These cars seem light on their feet; they don't need bushes and balljoints every 40,000 miles like some older BMWs did. The brake discs start to get noisy as they wear, then they distort and judder. The front ones last probably 20-30,000 miles and two pad changes.'

### ■ Bodywork, interior, electrics

The big problem here is the carbonfibre roof: 'There can be bonding problems, most commonly over the rear pillars. Damp around the rear seat and carpets is a giveaway. The roof can be removed for repair without destroying it, but carbonfibre

is a difficult material to clean of sealant. It's better to fit a new roof. The whole job takes 10-12 hours and costs £1800, including a new roof at £1200. Sometimes people pay to have it done instead of making a warranty claim, because they don't want it mentioned in the BMW history in case it puts buyers off.' The other view is that fixing it properly means it shouldn't happen again...

Check the illuminated kick-plates, if fitted, illuminate. If not, they can't be repaired and they cost hundreds of pounds to replace. 'They're more often not working in convertibles,' says Draper, 'maybe because they get wetter.'

**'These cars seem light on their feet'**



Above: carbon roof can leak. Below: quality of the shifts from the SMG gearbox can be improved with software updates. Bottom: well-equipped cabin got a head-up display as standard



## I BOUGHT ONE

### ■ John Cunningham

John, 43 years old, from Larkhall, Lanarkshire, bought his M6 from Birds of Buckinghamshire just over a year ago. He's still blown away by the performance on offer and particularly likes the Jekyll and Hyde split personality bestowed upon the car by its 'M' button...

'The difference when you press the button is very noticeable. I have configured the suspension to stiffer than normal in "M" mode, and the extra 100bhp and the way everything sharpens up is incredible. It's like a completely different car.'

'I was running a 525i Sport before this, but the M6 is in a different league altogether. I've put 16,000 miles on it in the year or so that I've had it and it's been a joy to own. I haven't had any problems with it at all.'

'I get roughly 16mpg from it in town and up to 24mpg on the motorway, and probably average about 20mpg overall, which isn't bad considering the size of the engine and the weight of the car. Economy can drop into the low tens when you open the taps on that V10, but then again this is a 500bhp motor.'

'Overall, there's nothing not to like about the car; it does everything you could ever want.'

## USEFUL CONTACTS

- [www.munichlegends.co.uk](http://www.munichlegends.co.uk) (sales and servicing)
- [www.bmw.co.uk](http://www.bmw.co.uk) (official site, approved used cars)
- [www.m6board.com](http://www.m6board.com) (forum)
- [www.bimmerpost.com](http://www.bimmerpost.com) (forum)
- [www.6post.com](http://www.6post.com) (forum)
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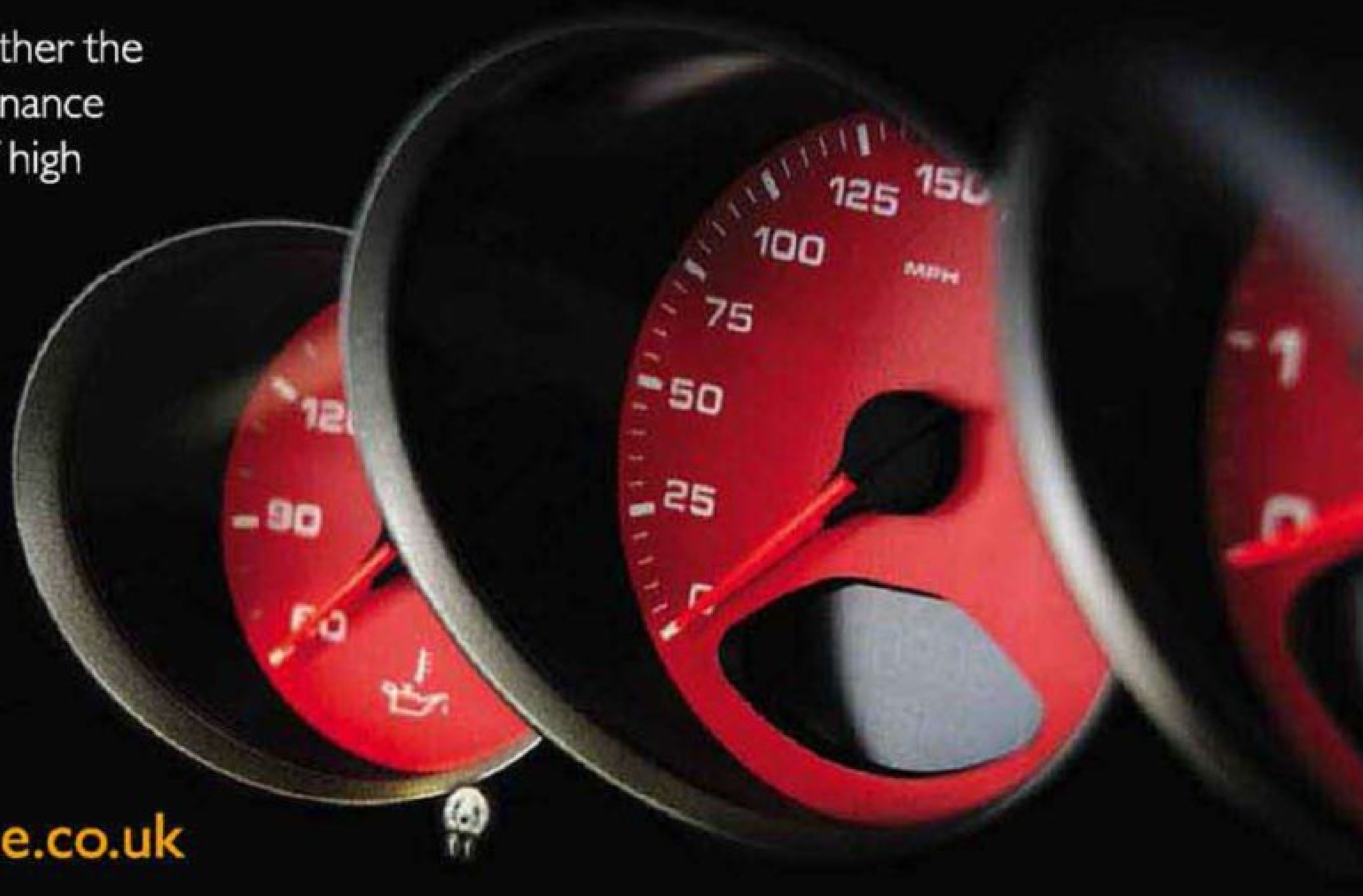
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# Just looking...

## NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R R32

■ Price £9495 ■ Year 1991 ■ Mileage 124,795

■ Vendor Platinum Autos, High Wycombe (www.platinumautos.co.uk, 01494 443976)

■ Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2596cc, twin-turbo ■ Max power 500bhp @ n/a rpm

■ Max torque n/a ■ 0-60mph 4.5sec (est) ■ Top speed 165mph (est)

A pinging bright orange Skyline with a bare carbon bonnet and 500bhp is not a car for shrinking violets. It also seems like a lot of motor for less than £10,000.

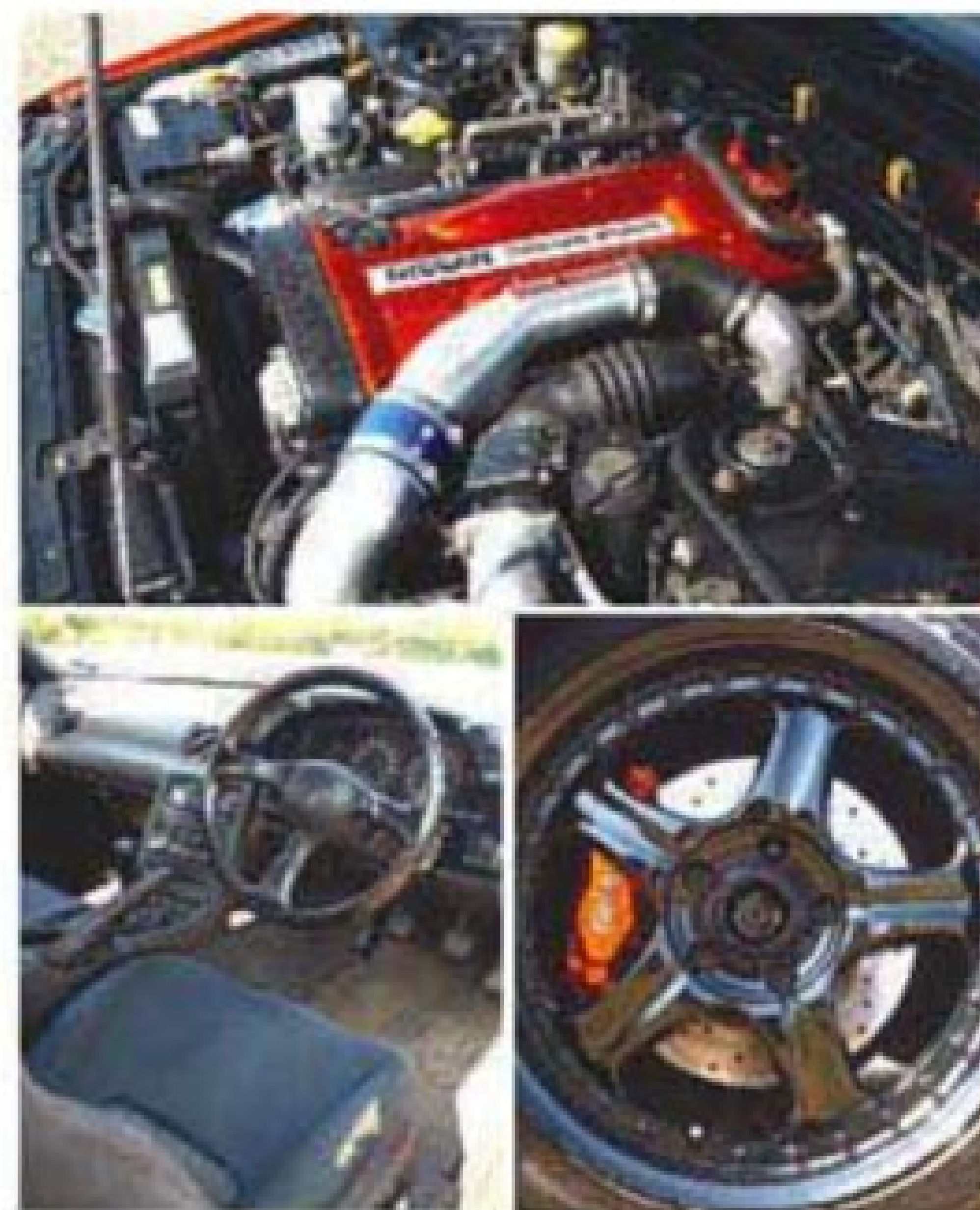
As we know, Skylines are prime targets for modifiers and tuners and, according to the advert, this R32 has had about £25,000 of work done on it. Apparently £6000 of that was spent on the 'Outrageous Orange' paintwork. Perhaps more importantly, some of the remaining £19,000 was spent on twin HKS 2510 turbos, a front-mounted HKS intercooler, 550cc injectors, adjustable cams and pulleys and Haltech engine management. There's also an OS Giken twin-plate clutch, Bilstein springs and dampers, 17in Volk Racing GT-C split-rim alloys and a 5Zigen Fireball exhaust.

Inside there's an Alpine head unit with a screen that unfurls from the dashboard, two amps, Carrozzeria speakers and a 12-inch Vibe subwoofer in a box in the boot. All of which seems a slight shame as it only adds weight where the carbon bonnet seeks to remove it...

This GT-R is not at its happiest around town as the lowered and stiffened suspension tries to deal with riding over bumps and potholes. However, what it's designed to do is go extremely quickly in a straight line – and it certainly does that. There's considerable lag, but as the needle swings past 4000rpm the HKS turbos get into their stride and the Tangerine Dream simply launches up the road, reminding you what you're really paying your money for. **HC**



£9495



### SUMMARY

● **EXTERIOR**

Sunglasses a prerequisite, but otherwise tidy if not immaculate

● **INTERIOR**

Showing its age, particularly on the seat bolsters

● **MECHANICALS**

Obviously heavily modified, but they don't feel fragile

● **SHOULD I BUY IT?**

If you're on a budget and like to spend your weekends at Santa Pod, then yes

● **FOR:** Big power on a relatively small budget

● **AGAINST:** The image may not be to everyone's taste

## Simon Furlonger

SPECIALIST CARS



### Lamborghini Gallardo Spider £94,990

Nov 2007, 2,717 Miles

This stunning Lamborghini has been cherished from new by its 2 owners. Fully serviced by Lamborghini main dealers it has been kept as an occasional toy rather than a daily driver as so many Gallardo's. Finished in 'stealthy' Grigio telesto with Nero hide and Silver stitching.

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### Porsche Carrera GT £289,990

2005, 8,738 Miles

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£249,990



**430 16M**  
2009, 3,674 miles  
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**360 Spider F1**  
2004, 15,000 miles  
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**599 GTB**  
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09/09, 9,600 mls, blk/blk, silver stitch, carbon, inlays, Nav, Bluetooth..... £70,000

## BENTLEY AZURE'S



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T, Red label, Green label. Choice of 10 cars in stock.....from £29,999

- Aston Martin DB9 Volante, 07/07, silver, blue hide ..... £67,999
- Bentley Continental T Wide body final series, black, black, 31,800 miles ..... £85,000
- Ferrari 599 GTB F1, 07/07, Left hand drive, 8,000 miles ..... £140,000
- Jaguar XKR Convertible . 08/58 .grey/blk. 17k miles stunning..... £38,999
- Jaguar XKR Convertible 02/52, 39,800 miles, black, ivory, nav, wood wheel.....£19,999
- Range Rover Sport 5.0, V8, s/charge, HSE, 09/59, 11k mls, silv/blk, v.high spec..... £56,999
- Maybach 57, 5.5, 2003, auto, Caspian black/cream leather, 35,800 miles..... £79,900
- Aston Martin DB9 coupes, automatic, choice of two from .....£46,999
- Porsche 911 Turbo 2003, 32k miles, black, grey hide ..... £34,999
- Porsche Cayenne GTS 08/58, 09 model, 25,400 miles, grey, black hide, t/s nav, rear screens..... £44,950

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# Just looking...

## FERRARI 355 F1 BERLINETTA

■ Price £39,995 ■ Year 1998 ■ Mileage 21,900

■ Vendor Bob Houghton Ltd, Gloucs (www.bobhoughtonferrari.co.uk, 01451 860794)

■ Engine V8, 3496cc ■ Max power 375bhp @ 8250rpm

■ Max torque 268lb ft @ 6000rpm ■ 0-60mph 4.7sec ■ Top speed 183mph

Ferrari buyers tend to fall into two camps: those who will only buy a Ferrari if it's painted red and those who will only buy one so long as it isn't painted red. Well, here's a lovely 355 perfect for the second group, as it's finished in 'Azzurro California', with dark blue leather interior.

Bob Houghton Ferrari knows this car very well as it has been looking after it for the current owner since August 2000, and the number of stamps in the service book shows no expense has been spared over the years. Both exhaust manifolds were recently replaced, the clutch was renewed in 2006 and both the F1 gearbox actuator and cambelts were replaced in July 2010.

The car was sold new in Singapore in 1998 and imported to the UK in 1999,

when Stratstone of Wilmslow changed the kph speedometer for an mph one (the original speedo is still with the car). That's why the car shows 17,940 miles when the real total is closer to 22,000.

This 355 is in near pristine condition – there's even the original plastic film on the interior carpets and there is no sign of the paint cracking where the rear buttresses meet the body – a regular problem on 355 Berlinettas.

To drive, it feels perfectly together. The engine revs cleanly to its 8500rpm red line and feels just as strong as it would have done new. OK, so the 430 moved the game on but, at this money, the 355 is the perfect way to get into Ferrari ownership and experience what makes the mid-engined V8s so special. **HM**



£39,995



### SUMMARY

#### EXTERIOR

Excellent paintwork; a few stonechips around the nose but nothing to worry about

#### INTERIOR

Minor wear on driver's seat, leather lifting around passenger airbag, otherwise like new

#### MECHANICALS

You won't find one in better mechanical condition; will be serviced before delivery

#### SHOULD I BUY IT?

The Berlinetta is the pick of the 355 range, so if you like the colour then go for it

● **FOR:** A perfectly presented 355 Berlinetta; you'd struggle to find a tidier one

● **AGAINST:** Colour might count against it if you like your Ferraris red...

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## SUPERMINIS/HOT HATCHES



**OUR CHOICE Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup.** After the mild disappointment of the Clio 197, Renaultsport has got the Clio back to its very best, producing a cracking small hot hatch more than capable of chasing down supercars on eCoty 2009 for a top five finish.

**Best of the Rest:** The 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.



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	★★★★
Abarth 500 Esseesse	129 R	£16,100	4/1368	158/5750	170/3000	1035kg	155	<b>7.2</b>	<b>20.4</b>	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...	★★★★
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	★★★★
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 equivalent 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	★★★★
Alfa Romeo 147 2.0 Lusso		'01-'09	4/1970	150/6300	134/3800	1270kg	120	9.3	-	129	-	31.7	+ Fantastic looks, engine and handling - Build quality still lacking	★★★★
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	053 F	'03-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	<b>6.0</b>	<b>15.5</b>	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	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.6</b>	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	216	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	★★★★
BMW 123d M Sport (5dr)	122 R	£27,170	4/1995	201/4400	295/2000	1495kg	137	<b>6.5</b>	<b>17.4</b>	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	<b>6.1</b>	<b>15.3</b>	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	110	<b>9.3</b>	-	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	<b>7.6</b>	<b>22.6</b>	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★
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	★★★★
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	★★★★
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	★★★★
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	★★★★
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	★★★★
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	£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	<b>10.2</b>	-	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	<b>5.6</b>	<b>12.7</b>	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than above - Pricy (and all sold!)	★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	139 R	'09-'11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	<b>5.9</b>	<b>14.2</b>	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	<b>5.8</b>	<b>14.3</b>	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS	★★★★
Ford Focus ST	119 R	'05-'11	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	<b>6.7</b>	<b>16.8</b>	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	<b>5.9</b>	<b>14.9</b>	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	<b>8.6</b>	<b>27.6</b>	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	<b>7.8</b>	<b>23.2</b>	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	<b>6.8</b>	<b>17.5</b>	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R	075 R	'01-'05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	<b>6.8</b>	<b>16.9</b>	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - Looks divide opinion, dull 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	★★★★
Mazda 3 MPS (Mk2)	137 R	£23,155	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	<b>6.3</b>	<b>14.5</b>	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's still iffy	★★★★
Mazda 3 MPS Aero Kit (Mk1)	106 R	'07-'09	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1410kg	184	<b>6.1</b>	<b>14.3</b>	155	-	29.1	+ Speed, grip, stability - Slightly strange steering, dull styling	★★★★
MG ZS 180	035 D	'01-'05	6/2497	175/6500	177/4000	1235kg	144	7.3	-	139	-	29.7	+ Well-sorted chassis, characterful engine - Image: looks like a 45	★★★★
Mini One		£13,400	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	£18,015	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1205kg	153	<b>7.0</b>	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Lacks old car's direct front end	★★★★

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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO <sub>2</sub> g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
* Mini Cooper SD	158 D	£18,750	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1225kg	117	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative <b>★★★★</b>
Mini John Cooper Works	154 R	£22,320	4/1598	208/6000	206/1850	1205kg	175	6.5	-	148	165	40.9	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk2)	111 F	'07-'08	4/1598	189/6000	199/1750	1130kg	170	<b>7.6</b>	<b>18.0</b>	145	-	-	+ Cracking hot Mini, until the JCW - Expensive with option packs included <b>★★★★★</b>
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' <b>★★★★★</b>
Mini Cooper S (Mk1)	077 R	'02-'06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	<b>7.8</b>	<b>19.9</b>	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
Peugeot 106 GTI 16v	034 R	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	<b>7.4</b>	<b>22.2</b>	127	-	34.9	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
Peugeot 306 GTI-6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	<b>7.2</b>	<b>20.1</b>	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more <b>★★★★★</b>
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	141	<b>6.9</b>	<b>19.2</b>	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTi-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours <b>★★★★★</b>
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? <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	154 R	£16,810	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	<b>6.6</b>	<b>16.7</b>	141	190	34.4	+ The hot Clio is back to its best - Why the long face? <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	<b>6.6</b>	<b>17.5</b>	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	095 F	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	<b>6.6</b>	<b>17.3</b>	140	-	34.9	+ Most fun you can have on three wheels - Just 500 were built <b>★★★★★</b>
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	<b>6.5</b>	<b>17.7</b>	138	--	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 F	'99-'02	6/2946	230/6000	221/3750	1335kg	175	<b>5.8</b>	<b>17.0</b>	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky <b>★★★★</b>
Renault Clio Williams	095 F	'93-'96	4/1988	150/6100	126/4500	981kg	155	<b>7.6</b>	<b>20.8</b>	121	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile like an Integrale <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	£23,650	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	<b>6.1</b>	<b>14.6</b>	156	195	33.6	+ Fantastic chassis... - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity <b>★★★★★</b>
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	157 F	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	<b>5.8</b>	<b>15.1</b>	147	-	-	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows <b>★★★★★</b>
Renaultsport Mégane 230 R26	102 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	<b>6.2</b>	<b>16.0</b>	147	-	-	+ Best hot Mégane... until the R26.R - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste <b>★★★★★</b>
R'sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	<b>8.3</b>	<b>23.5</b>	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy	087 F	'05	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1355kg	166	<b>6.7</b>	<b>17.3</b>	147	-	32.1	+ Mega grip and traction - Steering needs a touch more feel <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	139 R	£17,020	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1172kg	154	<b>6.9</b>	-	140	148	44.1	+ Funky (especially in Bocanegra trim), economical - The FR's a better drive <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	£25,985	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	<b>6.1</b>	<b>14.0</b>	155	190	-	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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? <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
Subaru Impreza STI CS400	146 R	£49,995	4/2457	395/5750	400/3950	1505kg	267	<b>4.6</b>	<b>10.7</b>	155	-	-	+ Cosworth kudos. Fastest hatch we've tested - Pricey. Lifeless steering <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	£18,900	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared to rivals <b>★★★★</b>
Vauxhall Astra VXR	102 R	£22,875	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	<b>6.7</b>	<b>16.7</b>	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	139 R	£25,045	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	<b>6.4</b>	<b>16.5</b>	149	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★★</b>
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	102 R	'05-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	<b>6.7</b>	<b>17.9</b>	145	-	-	+ Character and ability: the original GTI is back - Lacking firepower? <b>★★★★★</b>
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	<b>5.8</b>	<b>15.2</b>	155	-	26.4	+ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI <b>★★★★</b>
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 F	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	<b>6.4</b>	<b>16.3</b>	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome <b>★★★★</b>
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2													





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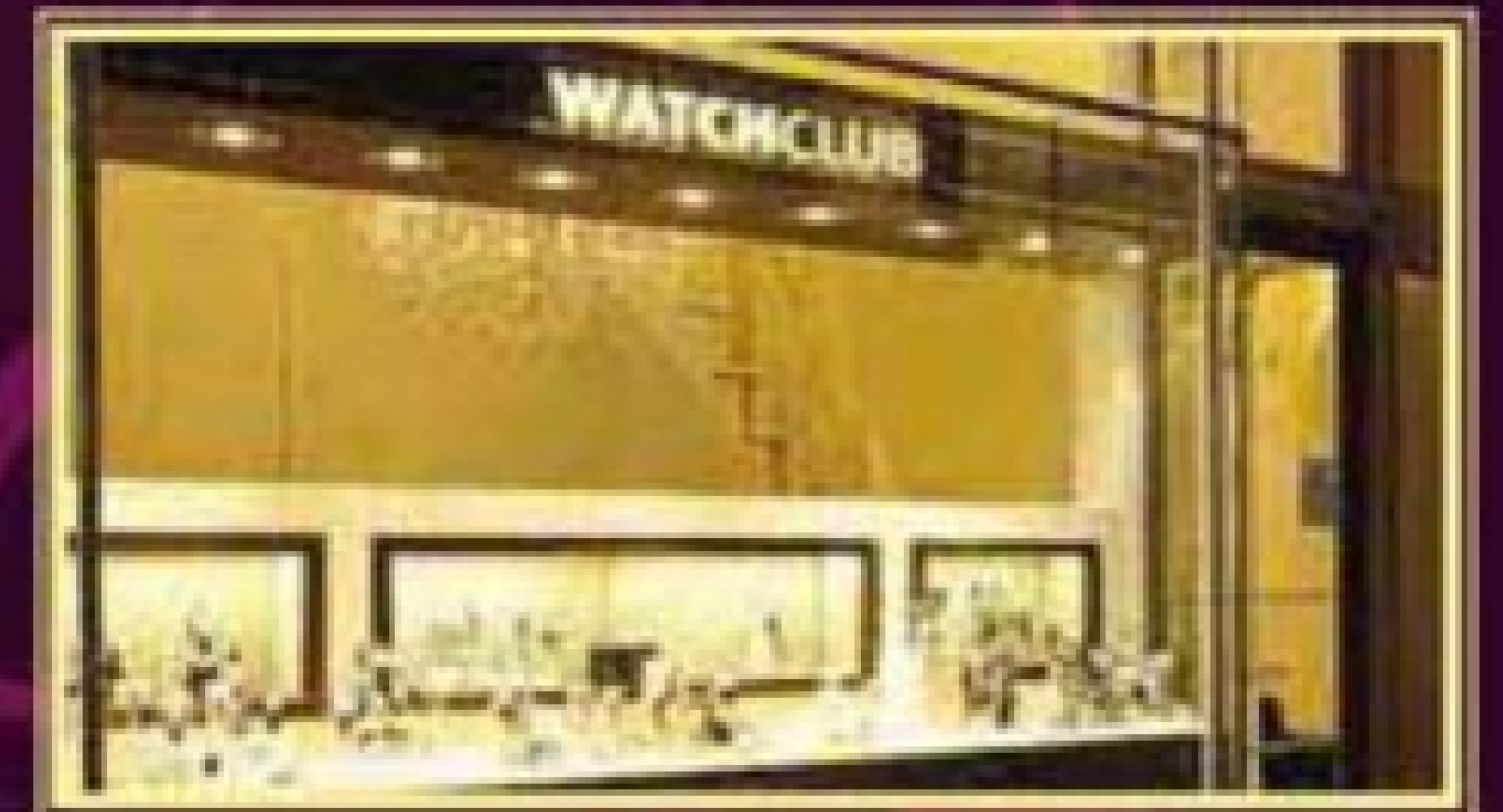
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SALOONS/ESTATES/4X4s



**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	CO <sub>2</sub> g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Alfa Romeo 156 GTA	045 F	'02-'06 6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1410kg	180	6.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ Noise, pace and individuality - Front-drive chassis can't keep up ★★★
Alpina D3		€30,950 4/1995	211/4000	332/2000	1495kg	143	6.9	-	152	-	52.3	+ Excellent chassis, turbodiesel oomph - Rather narrow powerband ★★★★★
Alpina B5 Biturbo	149 D	€69,995 8/4395	500/5500	516/3000	2040kg	265	4.7	-	191	-	-	+ Big performance and top-line luxury - Driver not really involved ★★★★★
Alpina B5 S	118 D	'07-'10 8/4398	523/5500	535/4750	1720kg	309	4.5	-	197	-	23.0	+ Quicker and more exclusive than the E60 M5 - Suspension has its limits ★★★★★
Alpina B7	134 D	€97,950 8/4395	507/5500	516/3000	2040kg	252	4.5	-	174	-	-	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled ★★★★★
Alpina B7	085 R	'05-'08 8/4398	500/5500	516/4250	1950kg	261	4.8	-	186	-	-	+ Alpina makes a mad, bad 7-series - Over-cautious traction control ★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	€149,995 12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater ★★★★★
Audi A4 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... ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
Audi RS6	124 D	'08-'10 10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	-	155	331	20.3	+ Looks and drives better than estate version - M5 still looks tempting ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant	116 F	'08-'10 10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything ★★★★★
Audi RS6	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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
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	231/6500	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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★
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 ★★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 F	€300,000 12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds ★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 F	€57,718 8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	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 ★★★★★
Chrysler 300C 5.7 Hemi	088 D	'05-'08 8/5654	340/5000	387/4000	1910kg	180	6.2	15.1	155	-	23.3	+ Gangster chic - Ginsters suspension ★★★★★
Ford Mondeo 2.0T Titanium X		€24,945 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 reprobable image ★★★★★
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4		'90-'93 4/1993	220/6250	214/3500	1305kg	159	6.6	-	144	-	24.4	+ Fast and furious - Try finding a straight one ★★★★★
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth		'86-'90 4/1993	204/6000	204/4500	1220kg	169	6.2	-	143	-	-	+ Roadgoing Group A racecar - Don't shout about the power output! ★★★★★
Holden HSV GTS S'charger	041 D	'02 8/5665	502/6050	457/5100	1799kg	283	4.5	-	180	-	-	+ Massive linear power, great chassis - Slow 'shift, cheap interior ★★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R *	108 D	'07-'10 4/1998	222/8000	158/6100	1252kg	180	5.9	-	150	-	-	+ Screaming engine, razor-sharp chassis - Specialist import only ★★★★★
Honda Accord Type-R	012 R	'99-'03 4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image ★★★★★
Infiniti G37S		€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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
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? ★★★★★
Jaguar XF SV8	116 F	'08-'09 8/4196	410/6250	413/3500	1842kg	226	5.1	-	155	-	22.4	+ Convincing driving experience - Overshadowed by XFR ★★★★★
Jaguar S-type R	048 R	'02-'07 8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1800kg	226	5.3	-	155	-	22.5	+ Fine dynamics belie olde worlde looks - Auto-only, and no lsd ★★★★★

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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO <sub>2</sub> g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 diesel	148 D	£55,500	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1796kg	153	6.0	-	155	184	40.1	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the Supersport...	★★★★
Jaguar XJ Supersport	144 D	£91,000	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1892kg	270	4.7	-	155	289	23.4	+ Superb ride and handling, monster performance - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	054 R	'03-'09	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1665kg	244	5.0	-	155	-	23.0	+ Genuine 7-series rival - 2007 facelift didn't help middle-aged image	★★★★
Jaguar XJR 4.0	018 R	'00-'03	8/3996	370/6150	387/3000	1775kg	211	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.5</b>	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	<b>4.7</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>173</b>	270	24.8	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too	★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	035 F	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.6</b>	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	<b>5.1</b>	<b>12.1</b>	174	365	18.0	+ Finally, a QP with more bhp - New grille a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★★
Maserati Q'porte Sport GTS	141 F	£94,300	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	17.9	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 F	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	+ Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode	★★★★★
Maserati Q'porte Sport GTS	113 D	'07-'08	8/4244	396/7000	339/4250	1930kg	208	5.5	-	167	-	-	+ Best Quattroporte chassis so far - More power wouldn't go amiss	★★★★★
Mazda 6 MPS	093 F	'06-'07	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1665kg	156	6.5	-	149	-	27.7	+ Agility, effective 4wd system, price - Inconsistent steering	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5 16		'89-'92	4/2498	197/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	£54,600	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	<b>4.4</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>160</b>	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	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.2</b>	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cosseting ride - Speed limits	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG		'98-'02	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	1642kg	219	5.5	-	155	-	23.0	+ Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	£112,250	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2115kg	257	4.5	-	155	244	-	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	098 F	£163,580	12/5980	604/4750	737/2000	2260kg	272	4.4	-	155	334	19.5	+ God's own supersaloon - Unholy price and thirst	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	073 F	'04-'05	12/5980	603/6500	738/5950	2220kg	275	4.3	-	155	-	16.1	+ Eye-widening wallop - Wallet-shrivelling thirst	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 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 - Pricy options	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 F	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	104 F	'07-'10	8/6208	503/6800	464/5200	2310kg	221	<b>4.6</b>	<b>11.0</b>	155	-	17.1	+ Goes like an SUV has no right to - Gordon Murray will hate you	★★★★★
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	★★★★
MG ZS 180	071 D	'01-'05	6/2497	175/6500	177/4000	1235kg	144	7.3	-	139	-	29.7	+ Sweet V6 engine, pace, tidy handling - Image	★★★★
MG ZT 260 V8	068 F	'03-'05	8/4601	256/5000	302/4000	1680kg	155	<b>6.5</b>	<b>16.3</b>	155	-	21.5	+ Lovely woolly 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	<b>5.2</b>	<b>13.9</b>	155	256	26.2	+ As above with twin-clutch transmission - As above, with paddles on	★★★★
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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	103 F	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1260kg	206	<b>5.0</b>	<b>13.0</b>	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	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.8</b>	145	-	-	+ Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo - A little uncompromising	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen Ed.	128 F	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Still one of our favourite Evos. Exclusive, too - Import only	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera S	133 D	£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	<b>3.6</b>	<b>8.9</b>	188	286	23.2	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold	★★★★
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	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	104 F	'06-'10	8/4806	494/6000	516/2250	2355kg	213	<b>4.7</b>	<b>11.4</b>	171	-	19.0	+ Appears to defy physics - Still cracks mirrors at 50 paces	★★★★★
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	★★★★
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	★★★★
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	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX	087 F	'05-'07	4/2457	227/5600	236/3600	1410kg	163	5.4	-	143	-	27.4	+ 2.5 litres gives even greater thump - Slightly light steering	★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C *	084 D	'05-'07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	+ Lighter, faster, fiercer - The need for self-restraint	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 F	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?	★★★★★
Subaru Imp'za WRX STI PPP	073 F	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	<b>5.2</b>	<b>12.9</b>	148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet	★★★★★
Subaru STi Type RA Spec C *	067 F	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	<b>4.3</b>	<b>11.1</b>	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	<b>5.3</b>	<b>13.1</b>	155	-	-	+ Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 - Spec C is better	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 F	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	<b>5.4</b>	<b>14.6</b>	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza P1	067 F	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	<b>4.9</b>	<b>13.3</b>	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	<b>5.0</b>	<b>14.1</b>	143	-	-	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B	011 F	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	<b>5.0</b>	<b>13.1</b>	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	<b>4.6</b>	<b>10.7</b>	155	-	-	+ A tauter VXR8. Bonkers pace, brilliant noise - Gearchange still rubbish	★★★★★
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	★★★★

# evo TRIED & TESTED

## STILO ST4 8860 CARBON HELMET

Price: £2454  
Website: www.stilo-helmet.com

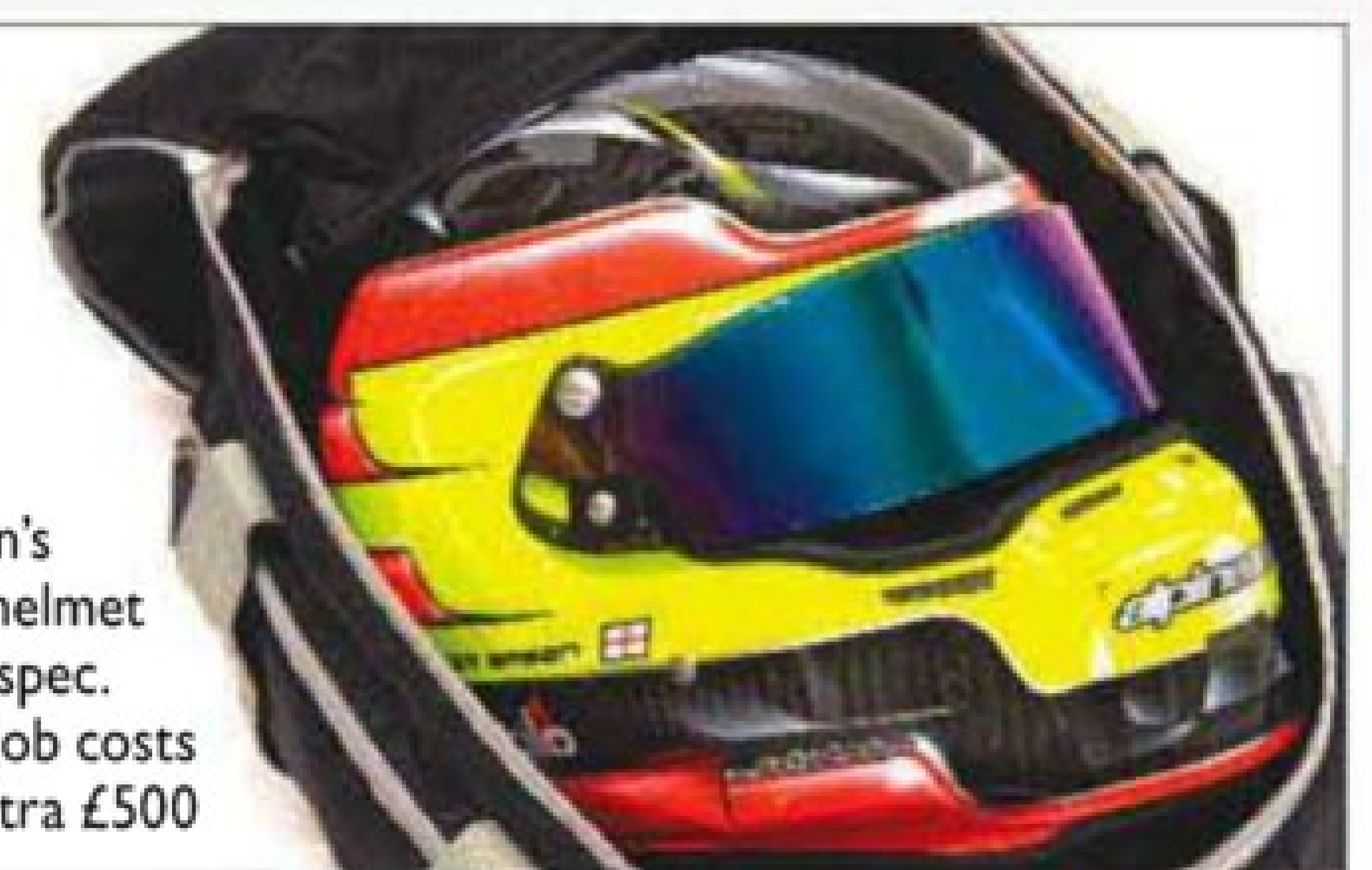
FIA-sanctioned GT races require the use of Formula 1 specification carbon helmets, so when **evo** got the chance to enter a European championship race last month in an AMG SLS (issue 158), as the lucky driver the first thing I needed was a helmet upgrade...

It's immediately apparent that a lot of thought has been put into the design of the 8860 Stilo. It can be ordered with an integral radio system (complete with noise-cancelling ear defenders and microphone) and a quick-release drinking system, which not only keeps

everything tidy, it also makes rapid driver changes easier as there's much less external clutter.

Of even greater importance, though, is the way it feels, and it scores well here too. It's predictably light (just 1.5kg), very comfortable and well ventilated. My helmet has a short visor made specifically for enclosed cars (around £100 for the iridium version), which is completely out of your sightline when open, and has gaps at the bottom when closed to keep the air circulating for cooling and to prevent it fogging up. All in all, a great lid then, and the factory-approved paintjob by Lucky Design (approx £500 extra) is equally impressive.

Roger Green



Green's new helmet is F1-spec. Paintjob costs an extra £500



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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	CO <sub>2</sub> g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
AC MkVI GT	135 D	£93,500	8/6162	437/4800	431/4800	1000kg	444	3.9	-	162	-	-	+ Cobra charm with a modern twist - It's priced against some strong rivals ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	139 F	£174,000	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Good luck trying to buy one ★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	£29,954	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty... ★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 F	£42,000	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental ★★★★★
Ariel Atom 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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
Audi TT Roadster (Mk1 225bhp)	016 R	'00-'06	4/1781	225/5900	206/2200	1395kg	164	6.9	20.0	150	-	30.4	+ Winner on the King's Road - Trails Boxster on the open road ★★★★★
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£45,120	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	224	29.1	+ Gets the S4's trick new supercharged engine - Just a little bit dull ★★★★★
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1845kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	+ That engine - Wibble wobble, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate ★★★★★
Audi R8 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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 F	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1450kg	228	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better ★★★★★
BMW 335i SE Convertible	102 D	£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 ★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 R	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive ★★★★★
Brooke 260 Double R	094 F	£34,995	4/2261	260/7500	200/6100	550kg	480	3.9	-	155+	-	-	+ Fast, dynamic, well built - No roof, looks not for everyone ★★★★★
Caterham 7 Classic	068 F	£16,650	4/1397	105/6000	95/5000	540kg	198	6.5	-	110	-	-	+ The Caterham experience starts here - It's pretty raw ★★★★★
Caterham 7 Roadsport 125	105 F	£21,650	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ New Ford-engined model is just great - Bigger drivers need SV model ★★★★★
Caterham 7 Supersport	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 ★★★★★
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-lev pick-up ★★★★★
Caterham 7 Superlight R500	123 R	£41,000	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver ★★★★★
Caterham CSR 260 Superlight	094 F	£43,800	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays ★★★★★
Caterham Levante	131 F	£115,000	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly ★★★★★
Caterham 7 R300	068 F	'02-'06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps ★★★★★
Caterham 7 R400	068 F	'03-'06	4/1796	200/7500	150/5750	490kg	415	3.9	-	140	-	-	+ Race-car with a number plate - Your missus will leave you ★★★★★
Caterham 7 R500	068 F	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ Fine for the Nürburgring - Hard work around the Bullring ★★★★★
Caterham 7 R500 Evolution	069 F	'04	4/1998	250/8000	190/4000	460kg	552	3.9	8.1	150	-	-	+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette C6	083 D	£56,186	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1460kg	300	4.3	-	186	-	21.2	+ Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics ★★★★★
Fiat Barchetta	061 D	'95-'05	4/1747	130/6300	117/4300	1060kg	125	8.7	-	124	-	33.2	+ Out-chics the MX-5, great fun and terrific value, too - LHD only ★★★★★
Ginetta G20		£15,995	4/1796	140/5800	101/3500	660kg	341	6.3	-	126	-	-	+ Classic looks, old-fashioned value - Vintage driving experience ★★★★★
Honda S2000	118 D	'99-'09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better ★★★★★
IFR Aspid	126 D	£90,000	4/1997	398/8600	240/7800	740kg	451	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Imagine a Caterham crossed with a Zonda - It's a bit pricey ★★★★★
Jaguar XK 5.0		£69,900	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1696kg	227	5.3	-	155	264	25.2	+ Basic XK gets extra power... - ...but loses some of its GT refinement ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	130 F	£83,900	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	-	155	292	23.0	+ Gains Jag's fantastic new V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes ★★★★★
Jaguar XK	089 F	'06-'09	8/4196	294/6000	303/4100	1635kg	183	6.6	-	155	-	25.0	+ Every bit as good as the XK coupe - 294bhp still only just enough ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR		'06-'09	8/4196	414/6250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Overwrought detailing ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	004 F	'97-'06	8/3996	370/6150	387/3600	1750kg	215	5.4	12.8	155	-	15.6	+ Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to 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 ★★★★★
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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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO <sub>2</sub> g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Lotus Elise R	068 F	£31,450	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.9</b>	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrilling Elise yet - Blaring engine note
Lotus Elise SC	131 F	£34,450	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.4</b>	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	£32,440	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricy once it's made road-legal
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	£40,945	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 F	£76,590	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 F	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	<b>6.3</b>	<b>18.7</b>	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	<b>4.7</b>	<b>12.1</b>	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricy
Lotus Elise S1	126 F	'96-'00	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	<b>6.1</b>	<b>18.5</b>	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?
Lotus 340R	126 F	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	<b>4.5</b>	<b>12.5</b>	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... - ...that looks like a dune buggy from Mars
Lotus Elan SE	095 F	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved
Lotus Elan Sprint	126 F	'71-'73	4/1558	126/6500	113/5500	720kg	178	6.6	-	122	-	-	+ Sensational chassis, properly quick - Affording a mint one
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,200	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.3	-	176	354	18.5	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals
Maserati 4200 Spyder	055 F	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1720kg	229	4.9	-	177	-	15.2	+ Magnificent engine, decent chassis - Brutal turn-in
Mazda MX-5 1.8i SE	131 F	£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
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3 v1)	091 F	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1155kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid
Mercedes-Benz SLK350	120 R	£39,065	6/3498	301/6500	266/4900	1485kg	206	<b>5.5</b>	<b>13.5</b>	155	227	29.1	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 F	'05-'09	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black	110 F	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	<b>4.9</b>	<b>11.2</b>	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted 7G-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics
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	<b>4.6</b>	<b>10.2</b>	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun
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 pricy
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
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
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
Porsche 911 Speedster	152 D	£144,100	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1540kg	265	4.4	-	189	242	27.0	+ Rarity, quality, head-turning styling - More collectors' than drivers' car
Porsche 911 C2 Cabrio (1996)		'05	6/3387	316/6800	273/4250	1386kg	232	5.0	-	174	-	25.4	+ Feels solid like the hard-top - What more do you want?
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (1996)	060 F	'03-'05	6/3596	414/6000	413/4600	1700kg	250	4.7	-	185	-	-	+ Faster than you'll ever need it to be - Just the image thing again
Radical SR4 Tracksport	070 F	£28,995	4/1500	250/9000	130/8000	462kg	550	3.5	-	160	-	-	+ 2004 Trackday Car of the Year - You may want a trailer
Radical SR8LM	138 F	£88,000	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal
Rolls-Royce Phantom DHC	106 D	£332,400	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2620kg	176	5.6	-	149	377	18.0	+ Opulent throwback - Short of pace and perfection
Smart Roadster Brabus	067 D	'04-'07	3/698	101/5600	96/2500	895kg	115	9.8	-	121	-	54.3	+ Feisty engine, growly soundtrack - Slow paddleshift gearbox
Tesla Roadster	131 F	£87,945	AC motor	248/4500	273/0-4500	1283kg	196	<b>5.0</b>	<b>14.3</b>	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	<b>7.2</b>	<b>21.2</b>	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space
TVR T350T	067 D	'04-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.4	-	175+	-	-	+ Targa top roof, grunty engine - Lacks polish
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	<b>4.8</b>	<b>11.2</b>	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	<b>4.8</b>	<b>11.2</b>	167	-	22.1	+ Griff diamond - A few rough edges
Ultima GTR	017 R	£45,500	8/6300	534/5800	528/4800	990kg	548	<b>3.9</b>	<b>8.2</b>	204	-	-	+ Turns the M1 into the Mulsanne - You'll have to build it yourself
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability
Westfield Megabusa	036 F	£24,450	4/1298	175/9800	102/9000	430kg	413	3.7	-	140	-	-	+ Bike-engined road-rocket - Not big on practicality...
Westfield 1600 Sport Turbo	140 D	£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
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
Westfield SEIGHT	068 F	'92-'94	8/3900	270/6000	-	622kg	441	<b>4.4</b>	<b>9.4</b>	144	-	-	+ Snarling, fire-breathing V8, ferocious pace - Spits fuel at you
Wiesmann Roadster MF3	077 D	£65,000	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1180kg	291	4.9	-	158	-	-	+ Engine, ride, build quality, exclusivity - Umm... '50s styling?

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# COLOURED WAXES:

# DO THEY REALLY WORK?



Pic 1: the 'natural' shot, as onlookers would see the panel



Pic 2: a manipulated shot, with colour balance and contrast altered

## YOU DO THE JUDGE.

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM SAID COLOURED WAXES MADE NO DIFFERENCE TO PAINT FINISH. WE FOUND THAT CONVENTIONAL WISDOM WAS WRONG.

IN FACT, WE FOUND THAT AFTER LAYERING ONE TO SIX LAYERS OF COLOURED WAX ON A WHITE PANEL, A DIFFERENCE COULD BE SEEN AFTER JUST ONE LAYER. GOOD NEWS IF YOU WANT TO ENHANCE THE COLOUR OF YOUR PAINT. BAD NEWS IF YOU'RE A FORUM EXPERT WHO THOUGHT A SUB-MICRON WAX LAYER WAS TOO THIN TO DO ANYTHING AT ALL.

PIC 1 SHOWS THE 'NATURAL' EFFECT, WITH THINNER WAX LAYERING ON THE LEFT, AND THICKER LAYERING ON THE RIGHT. PURPLE HAZE PRO AND ORANGE CRUSH, TWO OF OUR COLOURED WAXES, PERFORMED PARTICULARLY WELL. WE CHANGED THE COLOUR BALANCE AND CONTRAST TO ILLUSTRATE THE CHANGES IN PIC 2.

OF COURSE, THE EFFECT IS SUBTLE, AND IN MANY CASES, YOU WON'T SEE A DIFFERENCE AT ALL. IDEALLY, YOU NEED CONTRASTING PAINTWORK, MULTIPLE LAYERS AND UNWAXED AREAS FOR COMPARISON.

BUT THE EFFECT IS PHYSICALLY THERE.

COLOURED WAXES CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE, AND COULD ENHANCE THE FINISH OF YOUR CAR.

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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 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 new 1-series M Coupe (right) is the best M-car in years.



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO <sub>2</sub> 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 <b>★★★★</b>
Alfa Romeo GT 3.2 V6 Lusso	071 R	'04-'08	6/3179	240/6200	221/4800	1410kg	173	<b>6.3</b>	<b>15.5</b>	149	-	22.8	+ Gorgeous looks, strong performance - Unsettled ride <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 F	£111,000	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Aston Martin V8 Vantage 4.3	109 F	'05-'08	8/4281	380/7300	302/5000	1630kg	237	<b>5.2</b>	<b>12.0</b>	175	-	-	+ Gorgeous, awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match 911 dynamically <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Aston Martin DB7 Vantage	010 R	'00-'05	12/5935	420/6000	400/5000	1770kg	241	<b>4.9</b>	<b>11.2</b>	185	-	18.6	+ DB7 with near-supercar pace - Handling lacks edge <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI	155 R	£27,130	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	<b>6.3</b>	<b>15.7</b>	152	154	42.8	+ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Audi TT RS	158 R	£45,840	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	<b>4.4</b>	<b>11.1</b>	155	214	31.0	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Audi RS5	151 R	£58,685	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1725kg	261	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10.6</b>	155	-	-	+ Brilliant engine and accomplished chassis... - ...don't get together <b>★★★</b>
Audi R8 4.2 V8 quattro	106 R	£86,885	8/4163	414/7800	317/4500	1560kg	270	<b>4.1</b>	<b>9.9</b>	187	332	20.3	+ Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price <b>★★★★</b>
Audi R8 5.2 V10 quattro	146 R	£108,040	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	<b>3.9</b>	<b>8.4</b>	196	351	19.2	+ The fabulous R8 gets a supercar engine - Looks a lot like the V8 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Audi Quattro 20V	019 F	'90-'91	5/2226	220/5900	228/1950	1329kg	146	<b>6.2</b>	<b>18.2</b>	143	-	19.1	+ Modern classic - Buy wisely to avoid big bills <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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... <b>★★★★</b>
Bentley Conti Supersports	137 F	£170,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2200	2240kg	282	3.7	-	204	388	17.3	+ A thoroughly impressive car... - ...rather than a fun and involving one <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
* BMW 1-series M Coupe	158 R	£40,020	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1570kg	217	4.8	-	155	224	-	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Could hinder BMW M3 sales... <b>★★★★</b>
BMW 335i M Sport	095 D	£39,125	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1600kg	192	<b>5.2</b>	<b>12.2</b>	155	196	31.0	+ Eager engine, exploitable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling <b>★★★★</b>
BMW M3 [E92]	151 R	£54,545	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1655kg	254	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10.3</b>	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its talented new rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
BMW M3 [E46]	066 F	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1570kg	219	<b>5.1</b>	<b>12.3</b>	155	-	23.7	+ One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel <b>★★★★</b>
BMW M3 CS [E46]	088 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1570kg	219	5.1	-	155	-	27.3	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car <b>★★★★</b>
BMW M3 CSL [E46]	060 R	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	255	<b>5.3</b>	<b>12.0</b>	155	-	-	+ Stripped-down road-race M3 - Standard brakes barely adequate <b>★★★★</b>
BMW M3 [E36]		'93-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	<b>5.4</b>	<b>12.8</b>	157	-	25.7	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original <b>★★★★</b>
BMW M3 [E30]	019 F	'86-'90	4/2302	220/6750	180/4750	1257kg	178	<b>6.7</b>	<b>17.8</b>	144	-	20.3	+ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
BMW M6	106 R	'05-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.0</b>	155	342	19.8	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace <b>★★★★</b>
Chevrolet Camaro SS	148 F	£30,000	8/6162	420/5900	420/4600	1751kg	247	4.7	-	155	-	-	+ Looks like a Transformer made real - We'd prefer it in robot mode <b>★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Chevrolet Corvette Z06	099 F	£66,403	8/7011	505/6300	469/4800	1418kg	363	<b>3.9</b>	<b>8.5</b>	198	-	19.2	+ 8.5 to 100, brakes, price - Not quite the road-racer we expected <b>★★★★</b>
Dodge Challenger *	122 D	£40,000	8/6059	425/6200	420/4800	1877kg	230	5.2	-	160+	-	-	+ Effortlessly cool... - ...if you live in Hazzard County <b>★★★★</b>
Farbio GTS350	132 F	£76,375	6/2967	350/6500	308/5400	1066kg	337	4.0	-	170+	-	-	+ Genuine Porsche 911 rival - Needs final fettling <b>★★★★</b>
Ford Mustang GT *	148 F	£35,000	8/4951	412/6500	390/4250	1635kg	256	4.5	-	155	-	-	+ Compelling alternative to a Nissan 370Z - LHD and imports only <b>★★★★</b>
Ford Shelby GT500 *	140 R	£47,000	8/5411	540/6000	510/4500	1780kg	308	4.6	-	155	-	-	+ Massive power never fails to entertain - Heavy, unsophisticated chassis <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Honda Integra Type-R [DC2]	095 F	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	<b>6.2</b>	<b>17.9</b>	145	-	28.9	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
Infiniti G37S Coupé	127 R	£36,636	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1706kg	188	<b>5.8</b>	<b>13.8</b>	155	248	26.7	+ Softer 370Z delivers sharp-driving swing at the Germans - Bland looks <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>
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 <b>★★★★</b>

evo TRIED & TESTED

MICHELIN PILOT SUPER SPORTS

Price: from c£200 (225/45 ZR18)  
Website: www.michelin.co.uk

Tyres are always a compromise, juggling the demands of wet handling, dry performance and longevity, but Michelin reckons its new Pilot Super Sport excels at all three. We got to test it ourselves on a variety of high performance cars around the track at the Porsche Centre Silverstone. It displayed crisper turn-in, higher ultimate grip and better feedback than a number of key rivals, and was more communicative and fun to drive too. Moving to the water-soaked wet handling area, the Michelin managed to significantly out-perform very

good rain tyres too, recovering from a skid faster and also showing shorter stopping distances. And Michelin claims extended wear life, too.

How does it do it? The Kevlar-style Twaron reinforcing belts are wound tighter in the middle, so the Pilot Super Sport does not bulge at speed and the forces are spread more evenly through the tyre. The tread compound is harder on the shoulder for hard cornering and softer in the centre for good wet grip. Finally it's constructed so that the contact patch is kept constant as it moves across the tyre when cornering. The results are not cheap, but seem to be well worth it.

Ralph Hosier



Pilot Super Sport replaces the already excellent Pilot Sport 2



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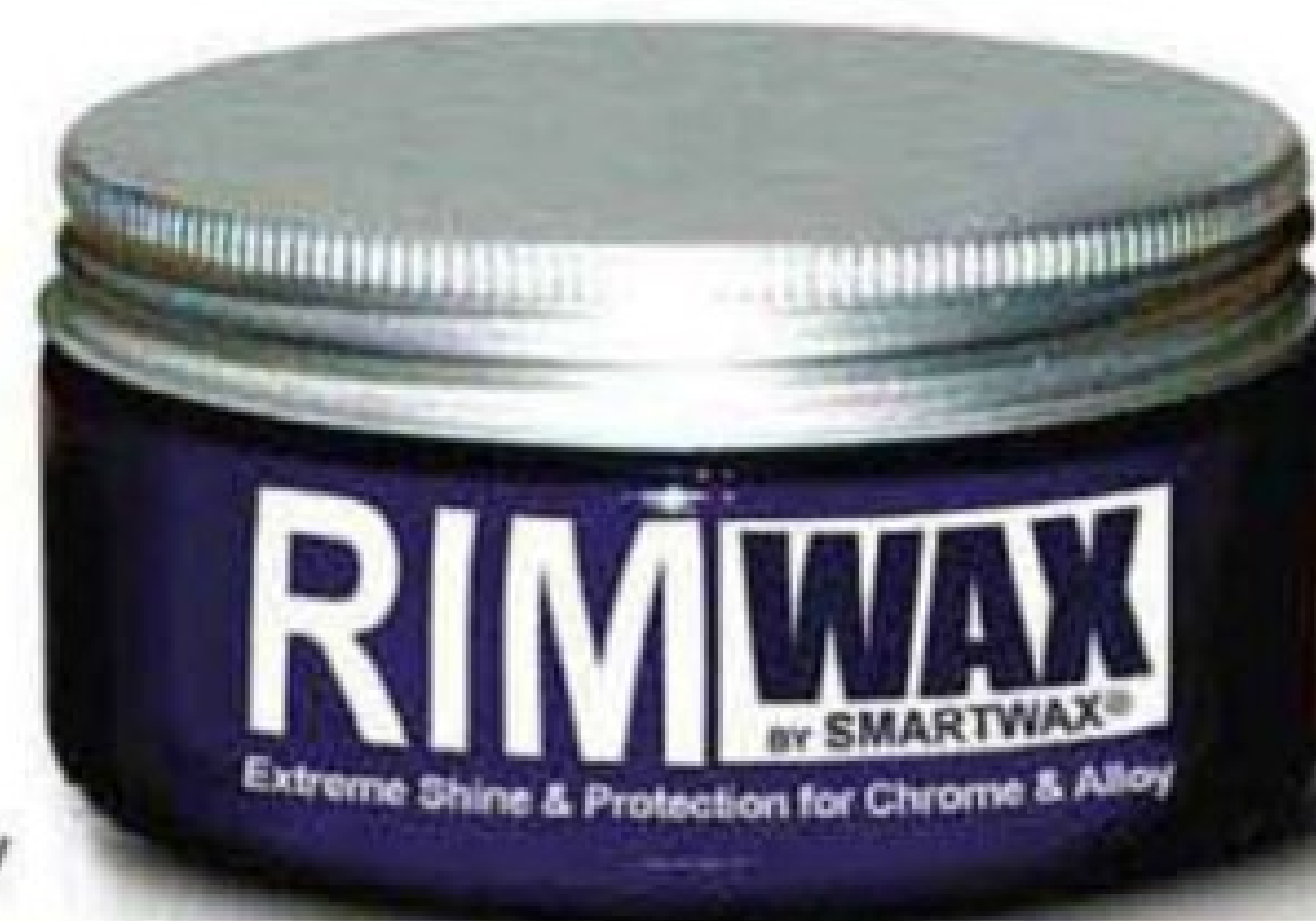
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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO <sub>2</sub> g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Lotus Exige (series 2)	068 R	'04-'08	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	875kg	219	4.9	-	147	-	32.1	+ Highly focused road and track 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	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.6</b>	162	205	32.5	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricy 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	★★★★★
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	005 R	'99-'00	8/3506	350/6500	295/4250	1299kg	274	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.9</b>	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	<b>5.5</b>	<b>12.7</b>	177	330	19.7	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo S	120 F	£92,360	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1880kg	234	4.9	-	183	354	17.0	+ A genuinely sporty Maser - A bit heavier and pricier than we'd like	★★★★★
Maserati 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	★★★★★
Mazda RX-8 R3	122 R	£26,065	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	<b>6.5</b>	<b>16.4</b>	146	299	24.6	+ Even sharper chassis than basic RX-8 - Same wafer-thin torque output	★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	071 R	'03-'08	2R/1308	228/8500	156/5500	1394kg	166	<b>7.0</b>	<b>19.0</b>	146	-	25.2	+ Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Dull-sounding engine	★★★★★
* Mercedes C63 AMG Coupe	158 D	£56,665	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	4.4	-	186	280	-	+ Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black	106 F	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	150 D	£115,620	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	737/2200	2240kg	273	4.4	-	155	334	19.1	+ Unsurprisingly rapid on non-wiggly bits - Lacks charm, involvement	★★★★★
Morgan AeroMax	097 D	£110,000	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Weird and utterly wonderful - They're all sold	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	158 R	£29,150	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1520kg	218	5.4	-	155	248	-	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z (309bhp)	107 R	'07-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	<b>5.5</b>	<b>13.0</b>	155	-	24.1	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z (296bhp)	094 F	'06-'07	6/3498	296/6400	260/4800	1525kg	197	5.8	-	155	-	24.8	+ Small power boost adds to Z's appeal - Slightly low-rent interior	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z (276bhp)	059 D	'03-'06	6/3498	276/6200	268/4800	1525kg	184	<b>6.1</b>	<b>14.8</b>	155	-	24.8	+ Original 350Z makes a great used buy - As above	★★★★★
Nissan 200SX		'94-'02	4/1998	197/6400	195/4800	1267kg	158	6.5	-	142	-	29.1	+ Fast, cheap and rwd - Looks, image	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R	152 F	£69,950	6/3799	520/6400	475/3200	1740kg	304	3.5	-	194	295	-	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year. Now even better - Pricier than before	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Spec V	150 F	£124,950	6/3799	478/6400	447/3500	1680kg	289	3.4	-	193	295	-	+ Phenomenal brakes and handling - Not really worth the extra £55K	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	009 R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	<b>4.7</b>	<b>12.5</b>	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	<b>5.4</b>	<b>14.3</b>	155	-	22.0	+ Proof that Jap hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply	★★★★★
Noble M400	089 F	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185	-	-	+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior	★★★★★
Noble M12 GTO-3R	070 F	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	+ The ability to humble exotica - Flawed driving position	★★★★★
Noble M12 GTO	023 R	'00-'03	6/2544	310/6000	320/3500	980kg	321	<b>4.1</b>	<b>10.2</b>	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	<b>7.3</b>	<b>18.1</b>	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	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S	132 F	£47,604	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too (even though it's the best Cayman yet)	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman R	158 R	£51,728	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	-	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S	097 F	'06-'09	6/3387	291/6250	251/4400	1350kg	219	<b>5.3</b>	<b>12.2</b>	171	-	26.6	+ Pure and rewarding - If they'd just move the engine back a bit...	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 [997.2]	138 F	£89,785	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	<b>4.2</b>	<b>9.2</b>	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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.2</b>	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	262/5600	1270kg	240	4.7	11.2	172	-	-	+ Barking engine note, gearchange - Not quite hardcore enough	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 [996.1]	066 F	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	<b>4.5</b>	<b>10.3</b>	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	<b>4.6</b>	<b>10.9</b>	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	★★★★★
Porsche 968 Club Sport	019 F	'93-'95	4/2990	240/6200	225/4100	1335kg	183	<b>6.1</b>	<b>15.7</b>	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	<b>5.4</b>	<b>13.8</b>	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	<b>4.7</b>	<b>10.0</b>	175	-	-	+ Looks, engine - Unsupportive seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish	★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	099 D	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'	★★★★★
TVR Typhon	102 F	'06	6/3996	400/7000	330/5250	1060kg	383	3.9	-	180+	-	-	+ Carbon body, exclusivity - Interesting damping, no supercharger	★★★★★
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3966	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	<b>5.0</b>	<b>11.4</b>	160+	-	-	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion	★★★★★
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	<b>6.1</b>	<b>15.8</b>	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	★★★★★
Wiesmann GT MF4	117 D	£108,000	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1250kg	294	4.5	-	174	-	-	+ Old-school looks with new-school go - Big-school price	★★★★★
Wiesmann GT MF5	127 D	£150,000	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1380kg	368	3.9	-	193	-	-	+ Striking coupe mated to BMW M5's V10 - Steering a little light	★★★★★

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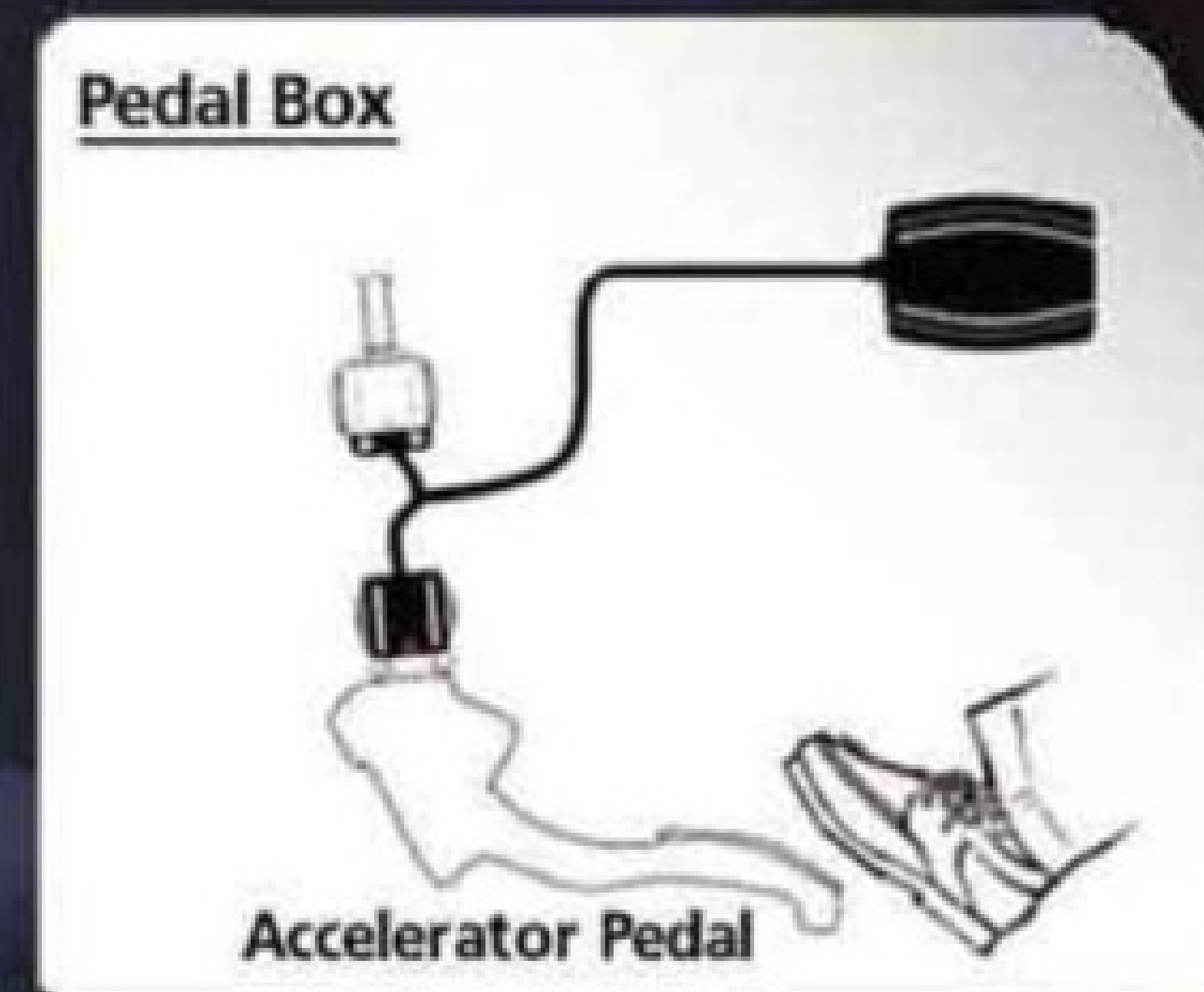
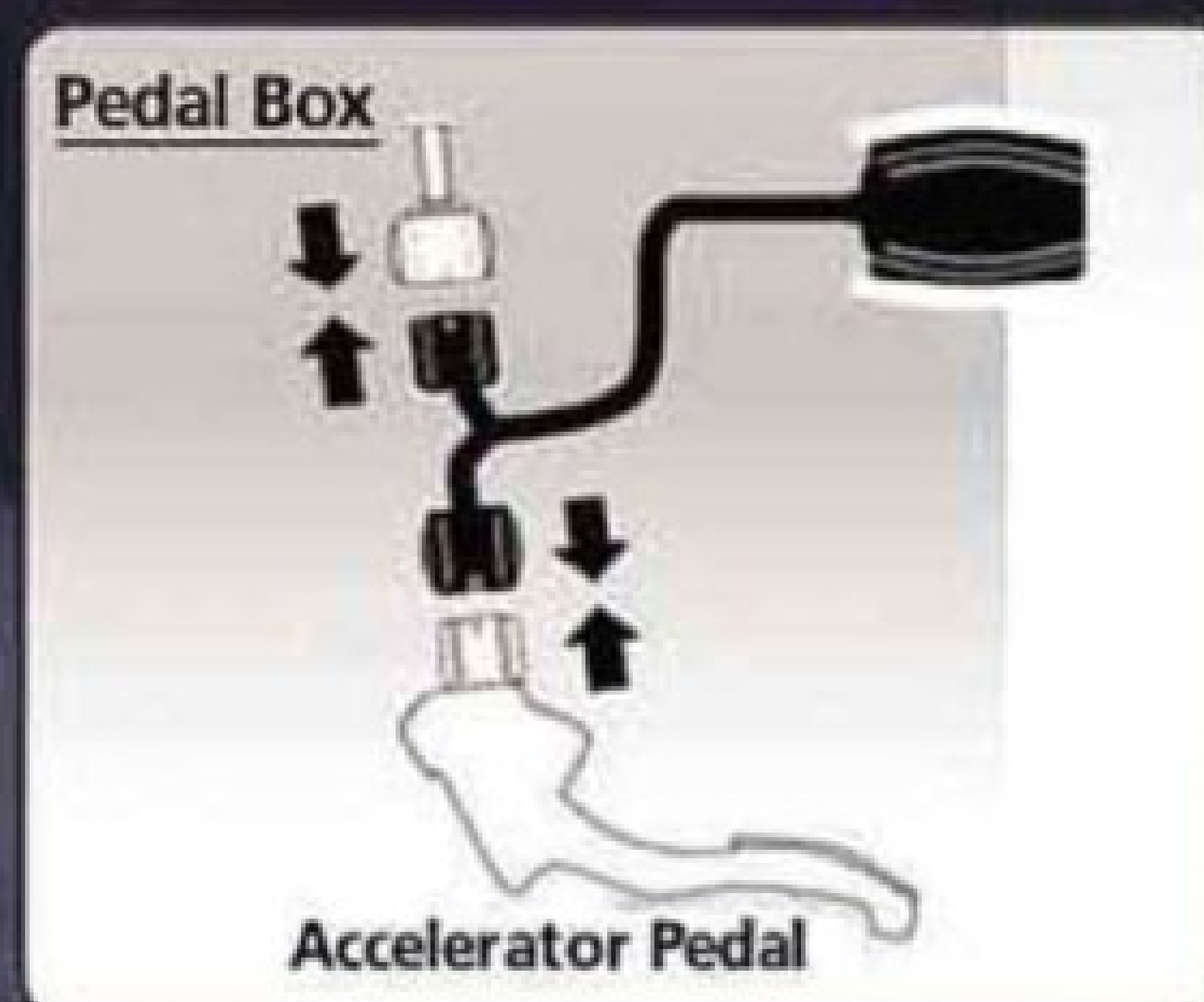
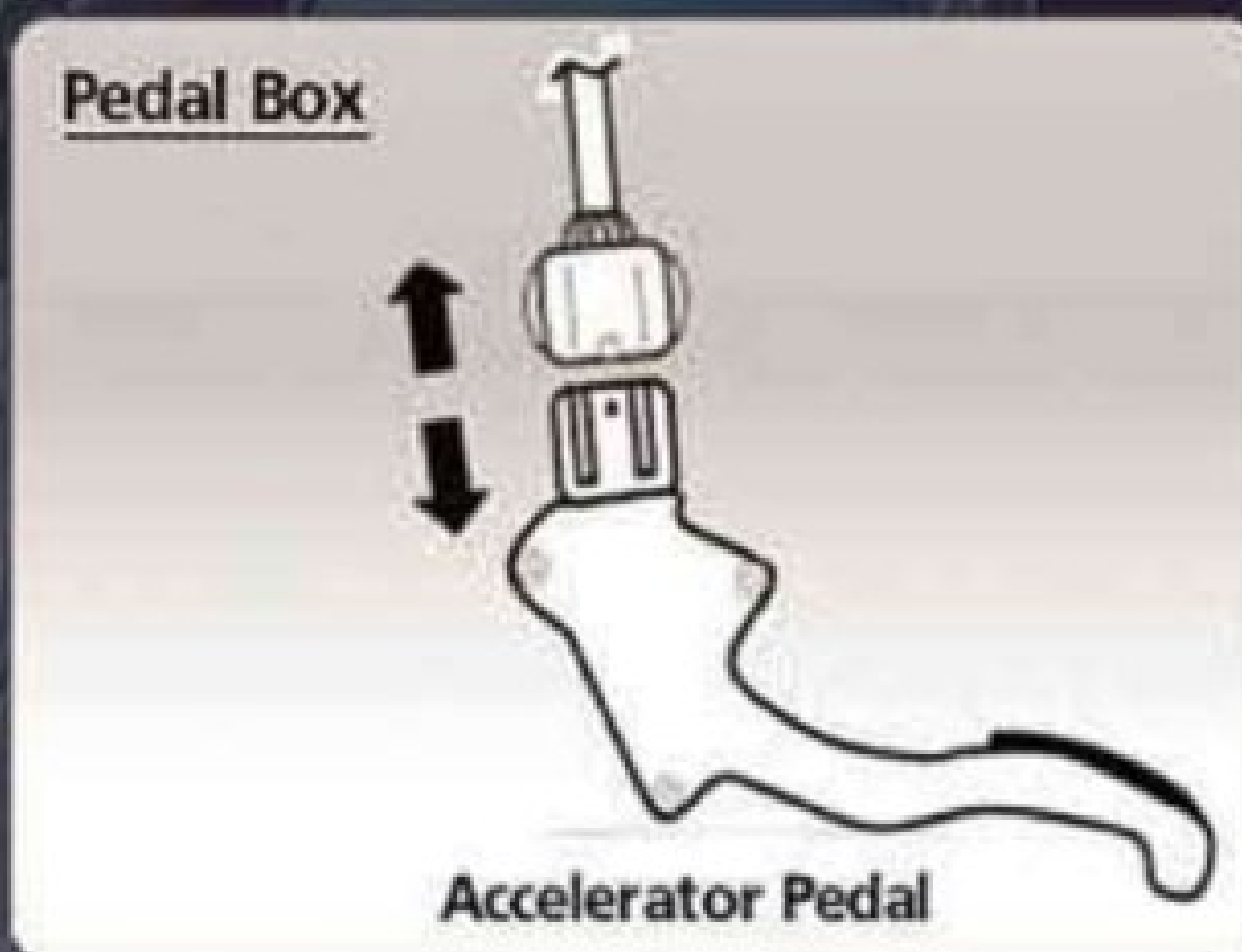
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SUPERCARS



**OUR CHOICE** Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4. The first all-new Lambo in nearly a decade has been worth the wait, and then some. A potent new V12, carbon construction and the new ISR gearbox move the game on nicely, and it looks absolutely sensational.

**Best of the Rest:** The Veyron Super Sport is just awesome, and Ferrari's 458 Italia, FF and 599 GTO are all utterly brilliant. 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	CO <sub>2</sub> 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	+ 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 Vantage s/c	001 R	'93-'00	8/5340	550/6500	550/4000	1988kg	281	4.6	-	186	-	+ Two tons of well-hung British beef - Leaden gearbox ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage 600	131 F	'98	8/5340	600/6200	600/4400	2020kg	302	4.6	11.0	190	-	+ A proper, full-fat Aston Martin - Running costs will be equally 'proper' ★★★★★
BMW M1		'78-'81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.8	-	161	-	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days ★★★★★
Bristol Fighter	146 R	£234,982	10/7990	525/5500	525/4200	1600kg	333	4.0	-	210	-	+ Unique, intriguing, goes like stink - Looks perhaps not for everyone ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	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 broly/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 ★★★★★
Caparo T1	138 F	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	£106,605	8/6162	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	3.8	7.6	205	-	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain ★★★★★
Ferrari California	143 F	£146,910	8/4287	453/7750	358/5000	1735kg	265	3.8	9.0	193	299	+ 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	+ 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	+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob ★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano HGTE	146 R	£221,884	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	+ As above, with a bit more edge - Can be a little too edgy in the wet ★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	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	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above ★★★★★
Ferrari F430	087 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1450kg	342	4.0	-	196	-	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point? ★★★★★
Ferrari F430 Spider	095 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1520kg	326	4.1	-	193	-	+ Berlinetta dynamics, 8000rpm with the roof down - Looks? ★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it ★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	008 R	'99-'04	8/3586	400/8500	275/4750	1390kg	292	4.5	9.0	180+	-	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be ★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud ★★★★★
Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta	003 F	'97-'99	8/3496	375/8250	268/6000	1332kg	286	4.7	-	183	-	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding? ★★★★★
Ferrari 575M 'Fiorano'	050 D	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	+ 'Fiorano pack' makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard ★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	066 F	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	+ Everything - Nothing ★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	149 F	'02-'04	12/5998	650/7800	485/5500	1365kg	484	3.5	6.7	217+	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1 ★★★★★
Ferrari F50	064 F	'96-'97	12/4968	513/8000	347/6500	1229kg	424	3.7	-	202	-	+ The best drivers' Ferrari - Lines lack tension ★★★★★
Ferrari F40	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 performance, 'Apollo' - High price, 'Gumpert' ★★★★★
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+	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spikey power delivery ★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	158 F	£875,000	8/5000	1100/6900	885/4100	1435kg	779	2.8	-	261+	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's almost Veyron money ★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2	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	+ The sound of a V10 with no roof - A smidge less hardcore than the coupe ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
Lambo Aventador LP700-4	158 F	£247,000	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.8	-	217	-	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Erm... expensive? ★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 F	'06-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	4.3	9.4	196	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear ★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo 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 ★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 F	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg	385	3.3	-	211	-	+ 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 ★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo GT	016 F	'99-'00	12/5992	575/7300	465/5500	1490kg	392	4.1	8.3	211	-	+ 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	-	+ Still the definitive supercar - Visibility, pract- oh hell, who cares? ★★★★★
Lexus LFA	152 F	£336,000	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	202	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match ★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 R	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better ★★★★★
McLaren MP4-12C	155 R	£168,500	8/3799	592/7000	443/3000	1434kg	419	3.2	-	205	279	+ 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+	-	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another ★★★★★
Mercedes SL65 AMG Black	131 F	£250,000	12/5980	661/6500	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	+ 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... ★★★★★
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	-	+ 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	-	+ The 911 for all seasons - We can't find any reasons ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (996)	072 F	'04-'06	6/3600	475/5700	457/3500	1420kg	339	4.0	-	198	-	+ Later revisions made it even more of a star - Care still required ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (993)	066 F	'95-'98	6/3600	408/5750	398/4500	1502kg	276	4.3	9.2	180	-	+ Stupendous all-weather supercar - It doesn't rain enough ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (993)	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	-			



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# Ask the experts

Every issue we put your questions to our panel of experts

## BUYING CARS

**Q** I recently had a car I had up for sale stolen by someone posing as a potential buyer. Unfortunately the car was not insured as I had already purchased its replacement and transferred the insurance to that car. I'm now left with a Mégane 225 Cup that I absolutely love but can no longer afford to keep. An expensive lesson has been learnt.

I now need to buy something relatively cheap yet rewarding. I have a budget of £3-3.5K and I'm currently considering the likes of the original Integra Type-R and the Clio 182 Cup. What do you think of these as used buys and do you have any other suggestions? – Lewis Mander, Manchester

**A** I feel your pain. Having a car stolen is just awful. Losing our Radical left me feeling sick, but like you I know there's nothing you can do but put it behind you and move on.

Looking at your choices, both will give you the sharp, incisive front-wheel-drive experience you seem keen to stick with. The Integra is the more hardcore of the two – and frenzied when the VTEC motor comes on cam. It's minimalist, almost to the point of a race car, but it's an absolute blast when you're in the mood.

That engine is remarkably reliable, especially if it's warmed properly before



A second-hand Clio 182 Cup would make a great affordable replacement for a Mégane 225 Cup

being extended. Cambelts require replacement every five years or 60,000 miles, along with the spark plugs, while the coolant and fuel filter should be changed every four years. The springs and dampers usually last for 60,000 miles (less if the car is used regularly for circuit work). Watch for worn synchros on the gearbox. That's about all you need to worry about, though – impressive for something so old.

The 182 is less extreme but equally

feisty. The suspension needs to be in A1 condition, though – the tracking should be checked regularly. Again, dampers should be good for 60,000 miles. The cambelt doesn't last as long as the Integra's, though, as 36,000 miles is the guide, but if your annual mileage is low you can stick to the five-year rule. Engine mounts can wear on the 182 Cup, so check them by getting on and off the power on the test drive. The clutch will feel heavy and have a

high biting point – they all do – but listen out for a whining release bearing when the pedal is depressed. You should also be aware that all Clios can rattle and squeak a bit, but don't let that put you off.

As for other options, why not take a look at rear-drivers? The E36 M3 is often overlooked and although it may stretch your budget a bit, we reckon it offers great value for money and there are plenty to choose from – **RG**

## 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

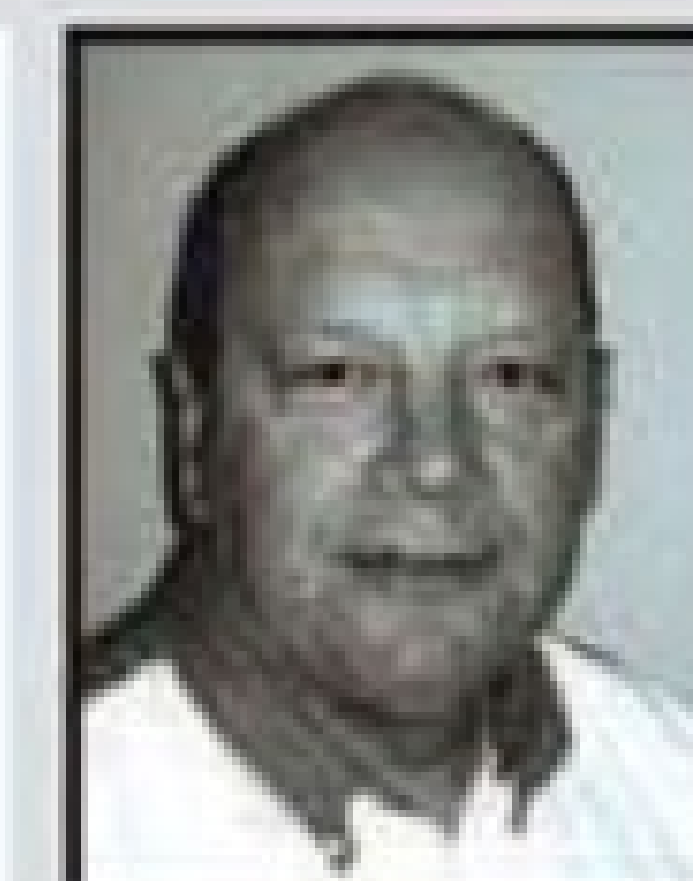
among others, Hosier is passionate about all things automotive. He also campaigns a Triumph GT6 racer – with a V12 engine, naturally



### 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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# Ask the experts

We answer your motoring questions

## TUNING & ENGINEERING

**Q** I own a 997 GT3 RS and would like to get your thoughts about improving the performance of this car without touching the engine. I use the car on road and track.

I was thinking about taking a few pounds off the car by replacing some existing parts, such as the wheels and roll-cage, with lighter, carbonfibre alternatives. So my questions are:

1. Are carbonfibre wheels safe for street and racetrack use?
2. Would a carbonfibre roll-cage be dangerous in a severe crash? (A steel cage would bend but would carbonfibre break, leaving dangerous sharp edges?)

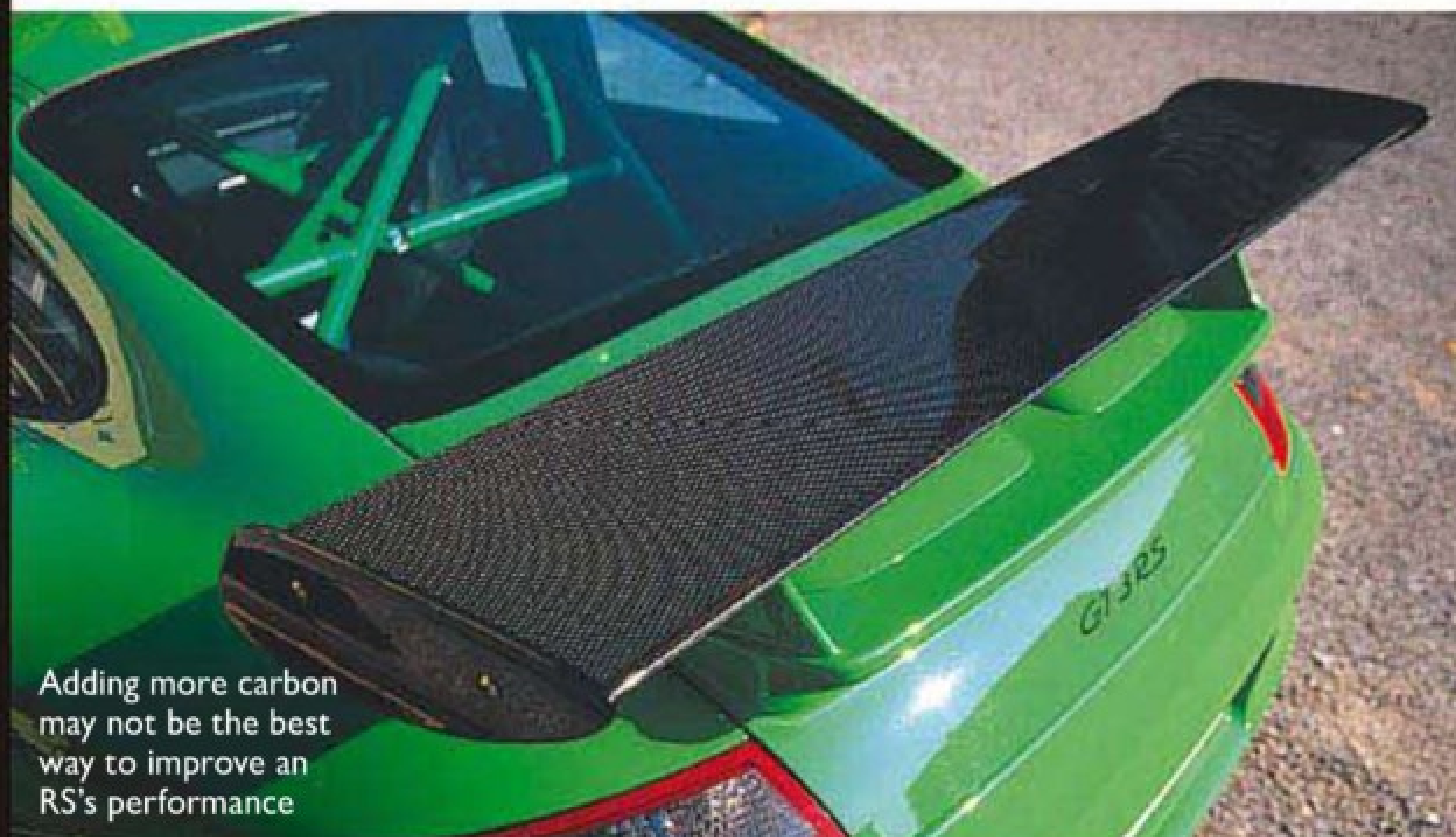
Finally, are there other things that you can suggest to improve my car's performance? – **Sung Wook Yang**

**A** First up, take it easy on the carbonfibre front. A bonnet might save a few kilos, but you'd be better off fitting a titanium exhaust – the Akrapovic one is pricey but in its lightest form saves a whopping 28kg.

After this, a lithium battery makes for a cost-effective weight saving, but I'd avoid any other carbon panels: they're expensive and don't save that much lard. I don't know anything about carbon cages, nor do I have any experience of carbon wheels, but I have never seen a Porsche race with either, so I wouldn't fit them to my 997 GT3.

Suspension work can bring benefits. Here it's really a choice between the established lot: KW adjustables or Bilstein or the specialist companies. I'm running Exe-tc gear on my car (see Fast Fleet) and think it's a great road and track set-up. Alcon discs and Pagid pads are the accepted ways of making the car stop better.

However, the most effective way to get more from the car is to get more from yourself. Porsches are particular things and they require a particular driving style. I'd spend my money with Sean Edwards (news.seanedwards.eu/coaching). He's a young chap, but a very talented 911 driver who has won Supercup races. A day with him will make you much quicker and help you enjoy the car far more than any number of mechanical modifications – **CH**



Adding more carbon may not be the best way to improve an RS's performance

## THE EXPERT



### CHRIS HARRIS

– our expert on all things Porsche, Harris has driven, owned and raced more 911s than he's had hot hatches

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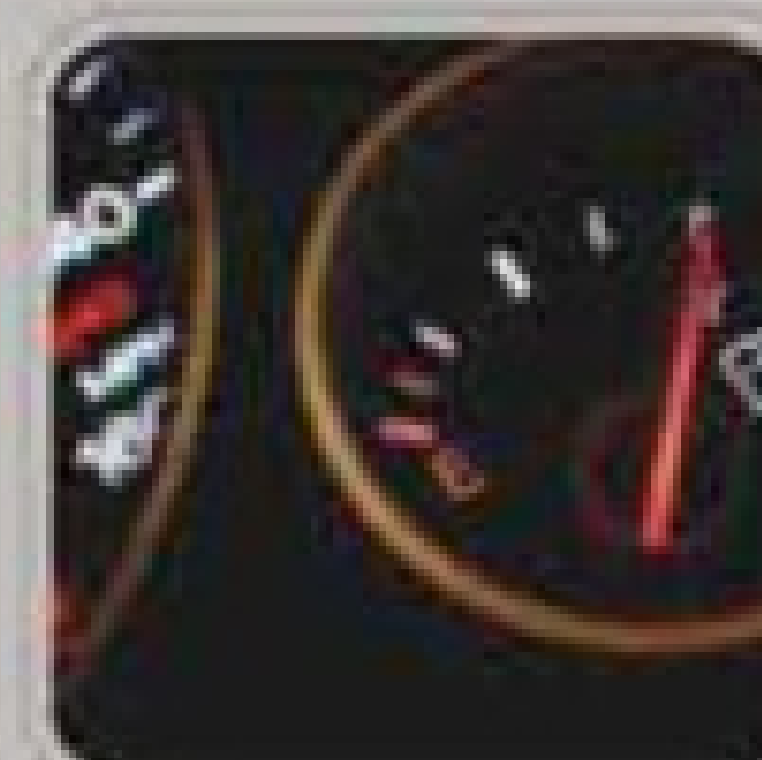


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# Ask the experts

We answer your motoring questions

## TUNING & ENGINEERING

**Q** I have a BMW Z4 35i fitted with the standard Bridgestone runflat tyres. Although they have their advantages, I find them terribly hard and heavy, so I would like to replace them with normal tyres. What are your thoughts on this? Is it true runflat tyres are more resistant to punctures and suffer less wear? Is it OK to fit regular tyres to runflat rims? And will regular tyres give an advantage in terms of ride and performance? – Vanni Galgani, Italy

**A** Storming down an Autobahn at three-figure speeds can suddenly become life threatening with a puncture. As the pressure drops, the tyre flexes madly and gets much hotter almost instantly. The carcass starts to disintegrate and you have seconds to get to safety and bring the car to a halt. Although punctures are rare, the effects at high speed are severe.

Runflat tyres support the tread area with very stiff sidewalls and a stronger carcass, allowing our intrepid Autobahn stromer to maintain control. As an added bonus, it will also allow the journey to be completed, within limits.

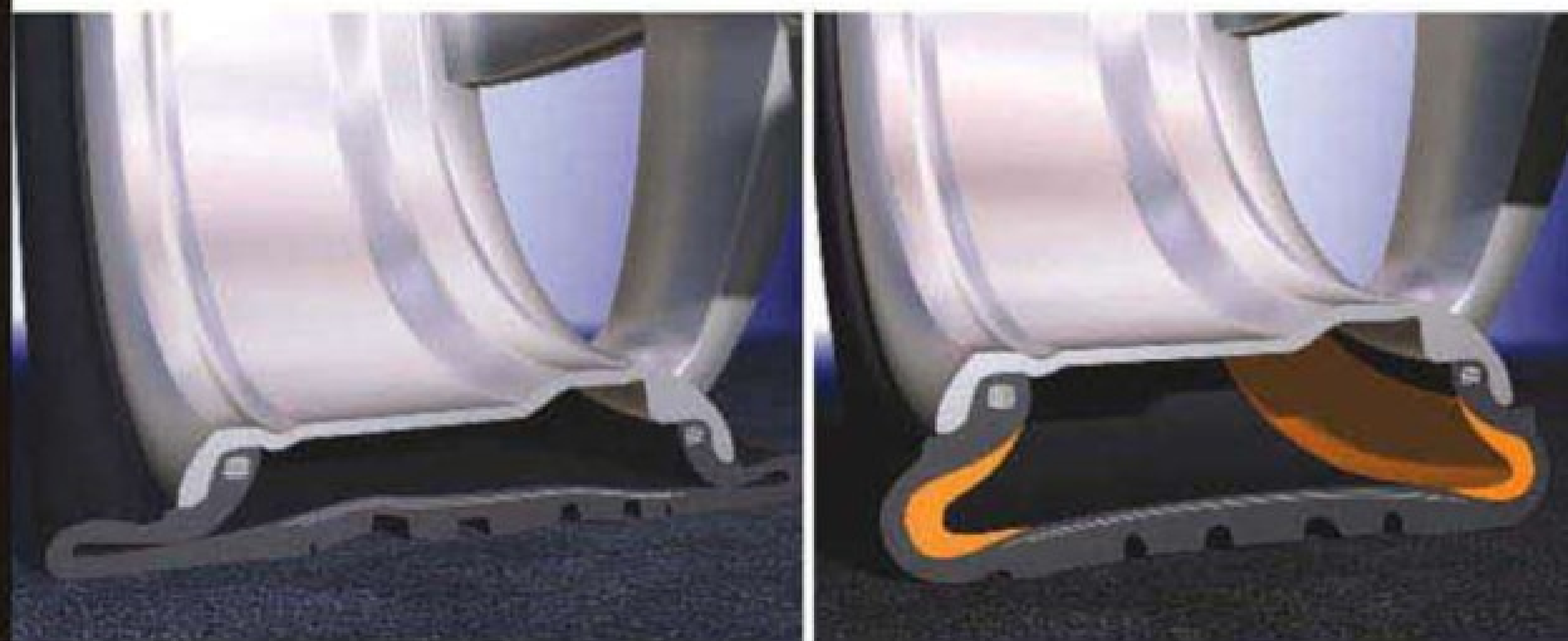
The thicker, stronger carcass is more resistant to punctures, and because it

flexes less, it also runs much cooler, so when the tyre is deflated the extra heat generated is still within a safe limit. Less flexing and lower temperatures mean the carcass lasts longer too. This is all fantastic, but there is a drawback...

The stiffer sidewalls and carcass are less able to flex around irregularities in the road and therefore transmit more shocks from the road surface into the car's suspension. This isn't a problem on a smooth road or racetrack, but on a lumpy back-road the car will tend to be thrown about more, the ride having a wooden feeling and being a bit more noisy. The stiffness and lower temperature mean that ultimately the tyre has less grip on such roads.

On most cars you can simply swap to 'normal' tyres if you want. The runflat wheel typically has a much wider hump inside around its centre to prevent the tyre's beads unseating in the event of a puncture, but other than that the design is the same as a normal wheel's. Fitting the tyre takes a few seconds longer as the bead is smoothly pushed over this central area.

As ever, tyre choice can transform a car's handling. Undoubtedly runflat tyres are much safer in the event of a puncture at speed, but normal tyres can offer improved grip and refinement. The choice is yours – RH



The less flexible construction of a runflat tyre (right) has both pros and cons

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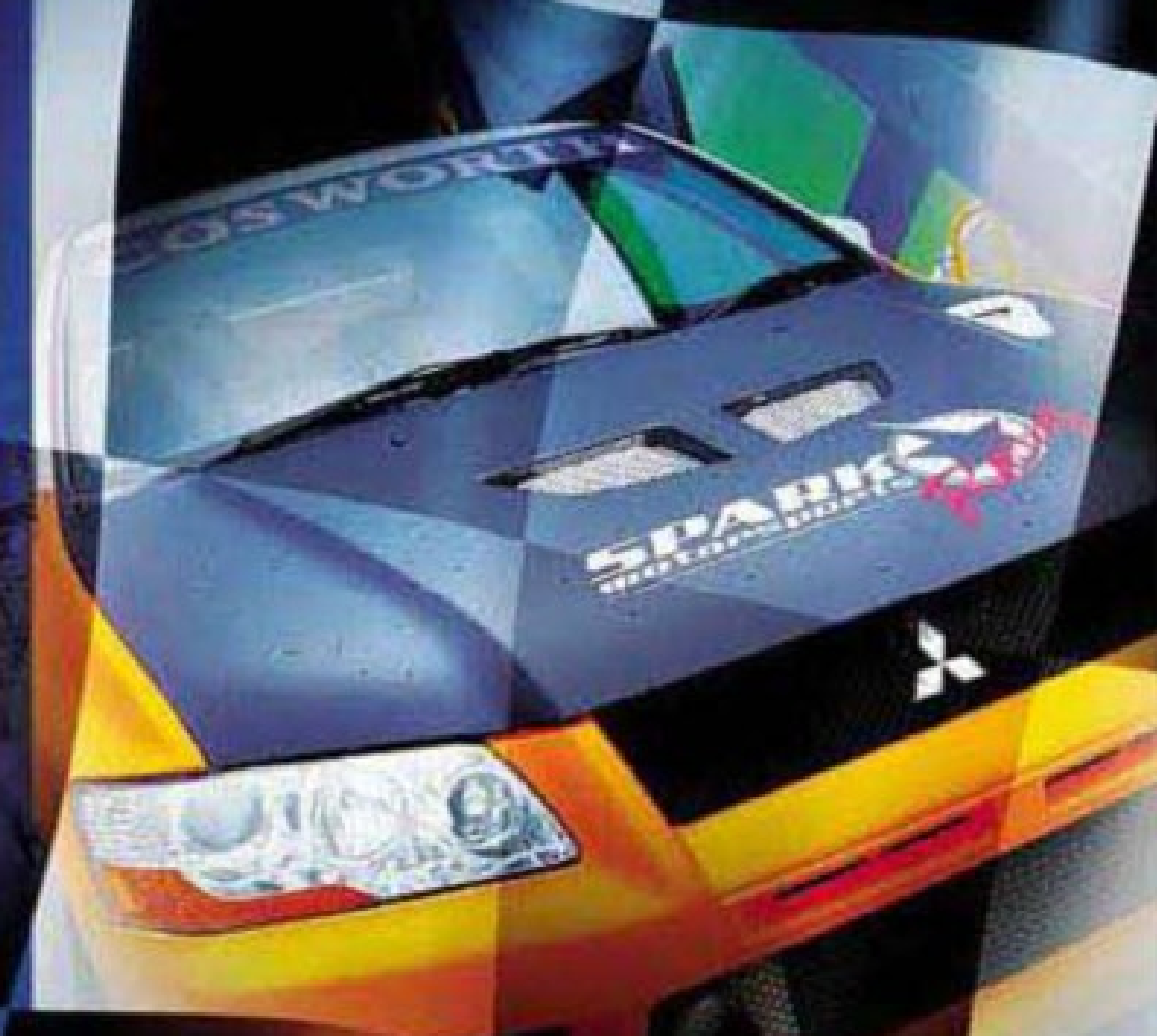
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## Andy Green & his VW GOLF GTI

THE LAND SPEED RECORD HOLDER ON HIS HOT HATCH – AND TRAINING FOR 1000MPH

**I** drive more slowly on the road now than I did before I started setting land speed records, and even back then I was never a highway speed freak. The reason's simple: I don't want to ever give a policeman the satisfaction of stopping the fastest man on earth and then having the bragging rights of giving him a ticket. Besides, nothing ever feels fast on the road. You have to be close to the limit of what a car's capable of for it to feel fast, so for me a road car is little more than a device for getting me to where I need to be.

Having said that, my Golf GTI is great, it does that job beautifully. I bought it 18 months ago because I suspected it would – and there was a VW garage up the road from my home, so it was all nice and convenient too.

I have to say I've never really been into traditional forms of motorsport either, but before going to Bonneville and setting the diesel land speed world record [350mph] in the JCB Dieselmex in 2006, I did find it useful

to go to the Bedford Autodrome to sharpen up my reactions. Okay, the Formula Palmer Audi single-seaters may be entirely different to a straight-line racer, but many of the things your brain has to cope with are the same. Whether it's cornering at 100mph or going roughly straight at 760mph [as Green did in Thrust SSC], the mental capacity to cope with the highly

stressful environment you're in is key. As an RAF Wing Commander, I come into motorsport with a very specific analytical mindset and I find that can give me an advantage.

Mid-corner at Bedford you have to possess extra mental capacity to be able to calculate what margins you are working within, exactly what each element of the car is doing, and this affects how hard you can push. If it's easy, you can go faster, if you're

overwhelmed, you can't.

It's the same in an LSR car – it doesn't actually go in a straight line, you have to drive it and, critically, be aware of what it's doing and how to recover any instability. In a race car that might actually mean increasing power rather than lifting off, and those are the instant calls you have to make when travelling through the

**I don't want to ever give a policeman the satisfaction of stopping the fastest man on earth**

sound barrier too.

With Bloodhound SSC, I'll be covering a mile in 3.4 seconds, and you don't just turn up and do it, you build up the speed, learning from each run, just as you do in the many forms of motorsport. It's a mind game as much as a massive engineering exercise. There are many guys who turn up at Bonneville having spent tens of thousands of dollars on their cars but they've never been near a racetrack.

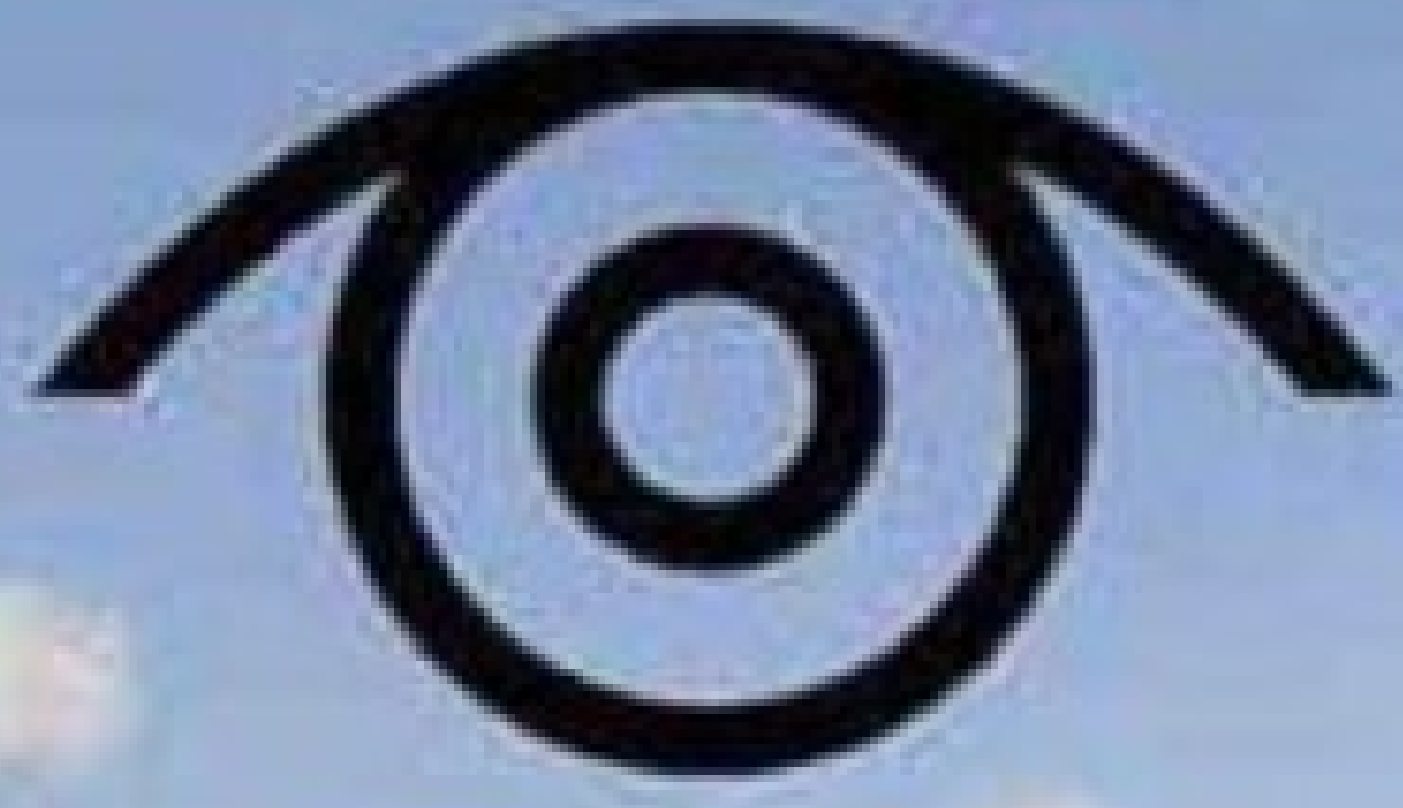
When I once suggested to them that they really would benefit from attending a trackday or two, it started an argument that's still ongoing.

The Bloodhound project is moving along nicely, and with Rolex now backing us we have the financial stability to push on with the static rocket test. The Cosworth CA2010 Formula 1 engine that we'll be using as a fuel pump is now available too, so there's a feeling that the programme is really beginning to motor.

Speaking of which, I won't be driving the Golf for a while as I've been posted to Italy for a few weeks on RAF duty. Hopefully when Gaddafi hears that the land speed record holder is on his way he'll do the right thing and give up!

■ More pictures at [www.evo.co.uk](http://www.evo.co.uk). For more on Bloodhound, go to [www.bloodhoundssc.com](http://www.bloodhoundssc.com). On July 12, *evo's* sister magazine, *Octane*, hosts an evening with land speed legends Andy Green, Richard Noble and Don Wales. More at [classicandperformancecar.com](http://classicandperformancecar.com)





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Quentin came to the rescue, and suggested we buy the car from Mr Bennett for the full market value. The deal was done and Mr Bennett (pictured below with Quentin at the handover) was only too happy with his settlement and service from Warrantywise. Another supremely happy customer.

### Testimonial

"First class service, Warrantywise are an exception to the public's image of car warranties. A genuine plan for genuine repairs. Would highly recommend Warrantywise to anyone. You cannot improve on a perfect product."

**Mr Foreham, Kent.**  
(Warrantywise customer).

### Testimonial

"Authorisation was given straight away. No lengthy claim forms to fill in and if I needed to ring you your operative was always helpful and pleasant. I can't tell you how grateful I am and how service like this is becoming harder and harder to find."

**A Coates, Huddersfield.**  
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<sup>^</sup>Specifications may vary by model. \*Lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions based on the improvements made to the new SEAT Alhambra when compared to previous model.  
<sup>†</sup>Requires driver control. Model shown Alhambra SE Lux 2.0 TDI CR Ecomotive 140PS at £29,180 RRP with bi-xenon headlights (£805 RRP) and custom palette paint (£635 RRP).

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