

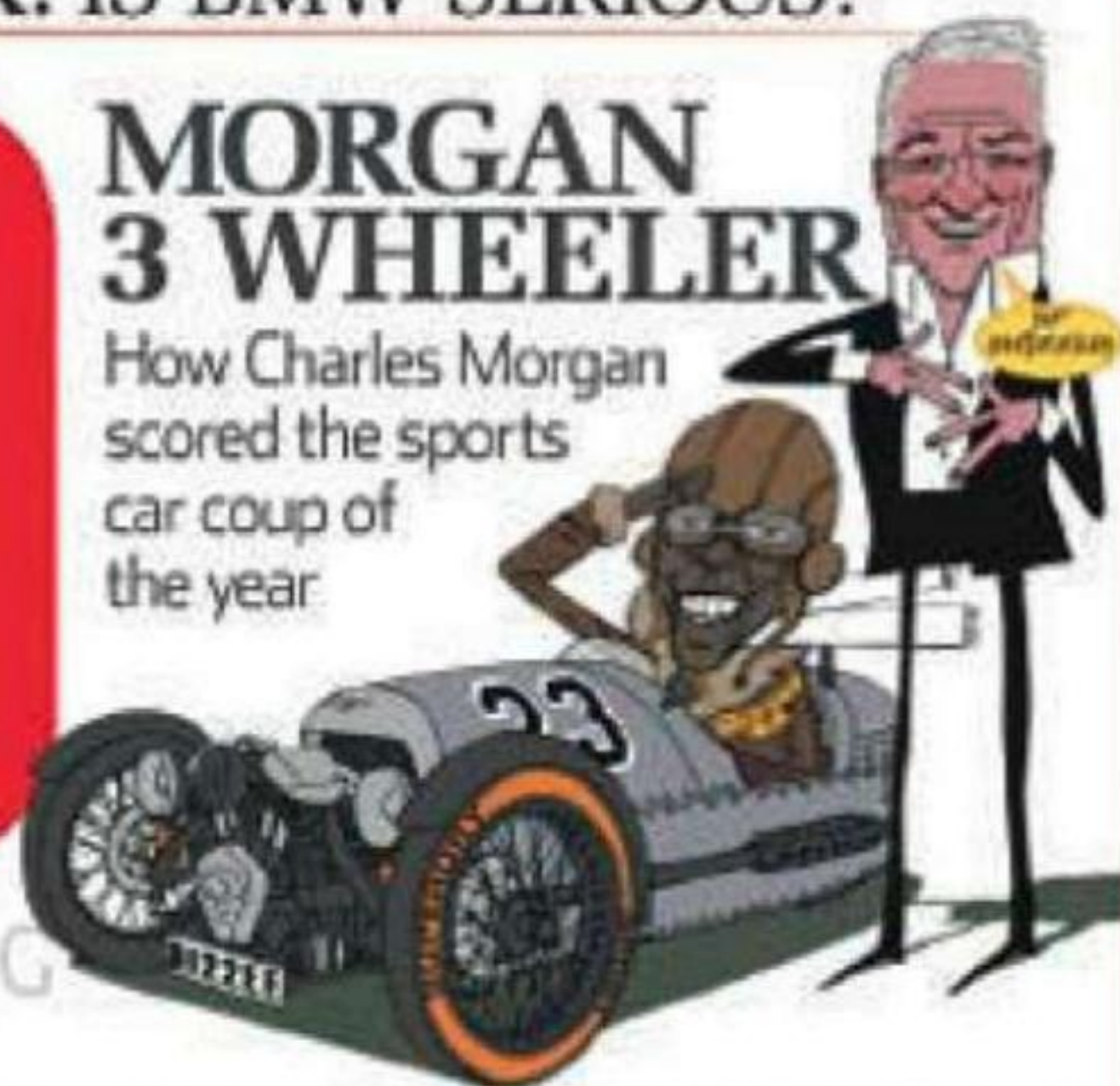
3-CYLINDER HYBRID SUPERCAR. IS BMW SERIOUS?



evo

MORGAN 3 WHEELER

How Charles Morgan scored the sports car coup of the year.



THE THRILL OF DRIVING

THE ART OF NOISE



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FEATURING

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TOM KRISTENSEN

GREATNESS



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It strikes me as extraordinary that the internal combustion engine makes a noise that can give you goosebumps. The pioneers of this metal and rubber machine, this fuel-fired stove that turns fossilised remains into forward momentum, didn't design an instrument of music – indeed the very notion is preposterous. But here we are celebrating the roars and rumbles and screams and wails of the engine. How bizarre.

The idea for this issue came about a few months ago when Dickie Meaden used the phrase 'Sound of Speed' in a features meeting. Immediately, the conversation turned to our favourite car sounds. We argued, we debated, we consulted YouTube and Google, and an issue was born. Then came the obvious problem – bringing the engine noises to life in a paper magazine...

So, this issue of **evo** marks the introduction of a new concept. We have created a companion microsite accessible either directly online via extras.evo.co.uk or the QR codes dotted throughout the magazine. You don't need the latest fandango iPhone 7.4XXL ultra-model to scan the QR codes – pretty much any internet-enabled mobile phone, tablet or PC/Mac will do.

The microsite is stuffed full of videos, sound effects and images relating to the features in this issue. So, for instance, when you're reading Dickie's epic LFA v GTO test on p96, you can simply scan the QR code or input extras.evo.co.uk on your mobile or computer, and you can listen to the sound of both cars, watch the video or download a wallpaper. For more information about how to get the best from this issue and the

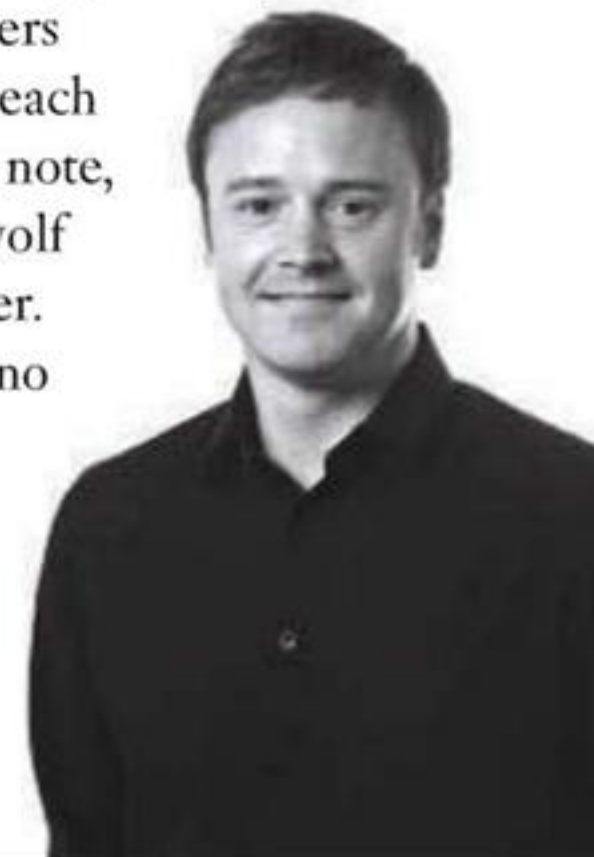
accompanying interactive features, see p53.

Inevitably, editing an issue like this has made me contemplative about the topic in question and try to imagine what's next for engine noises in general. Chris Harris, as Chris Harris does, makes some very strong comments about the Nissan Leaf racer's unique soundtrack on p115 and fears for the future of motorsport if electric power becomes the norm. I'm not with Monkey on this one. Don't get me wrong – I adore the sound of the IC engine – but as a bit of a tech-freak too, I love the opportunities that electric racing cars present. For instance, Nissan believes the Leaf racer could bring motorsport to city centres, which could be an amazing spectacle.

And as Fisker has shown (p41), the synthesised engine note is now a proven technology and this means that car sounds can be created and projected outwards from an electric vehicle. The purist in me

feels uncomfortable about this, but another part of me is in wonderment at the opportunity it offers. Think about it: 20 Leaf racers charging through London, each emitting a different engine note, ranging from the cry of a wolf to a scream of a TIE Fighter. Individual racing cars will no longer be identifiable by liveries, but by the noise they make...

Nick Trott
 Editor



'THIS ISSUE OF EVO MARKS THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW CONCEPT'

THIS MONTH ON PLANET EVO



EVO VIDEOS

» It's an amazing month for videos at evo.co.uk. There's the Lexus LFA v Ferrari 599 GTO head-to-head, and also our group test of roadsters on the Stelvio Pass. Not only that, but there's also a video of the incredible Le Mans-winning Mazda 787B and the Rothmans Escort.

EVO TRACKDAYS & RWYB

» **evo's** last track evening of the year is at Bedford Autodrome on Friday September 2. It'll be another top event, as will **evo's** final Run What Ya Brung 1/4-mile thrash at Santa Pod on Saturday October 15. We'll be there with assorted Fast Fleet metal.

FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

» There are tons of new features on **evo's** Facebook page this month, including competitions, videos and much more. If you're a Twitter user, search for @evomagazine and follow us to keep abreast of all the latest from the world of **evo**

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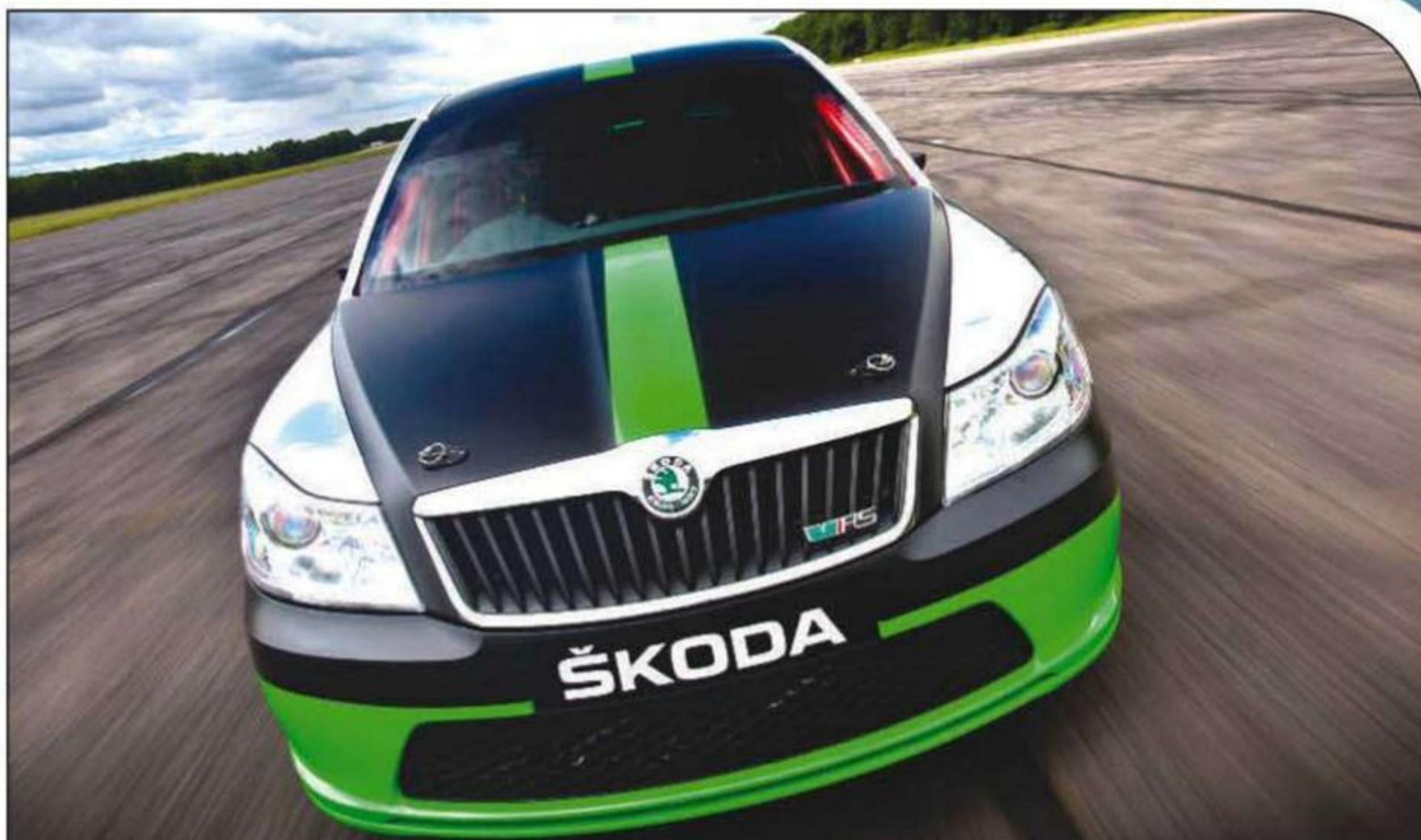
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evo Next Month



200MPH AT BONNEVILLE

evo aims for the double-ton on the famous salt flats – in a Skoda
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MERCEDES GOES

IT'S THE RETURN OF THE hardcore MERC. THE NEW 510BHP C63 AMG BLACK SERIES IS



Mercedes has revealed the fourth instalment of its hardcore Black Series. It's a steroidal version of the new C63 AMG Coupe and, as with any Affalterbach product, power is the most obvious place to start.

A tuned version of the C63's 6.2-litre naturally aspirated V8 engine produces 510bhp and 457lb ft, respective rises of 59bhp and 15lb ft over the regular coupe or saloon. The C63 Black is just 10bhp healthier than its spiritual CLK63 Black forebear, though, and 7lb ft worse off. But there's plenty more to ensure

it's a faster and more exciting proposition, as well as a more useable one.

Engine revisions are derived from the SLS AMG, with forged pistons, conrods and crankshaft and a tweaked ECU. Perhaps most encouraging, though, is a new gearbox. The CLK Black was hamstrung by a disappointing automatic; the C63 Black doesn't go manual, but gets Mercedes' seven-speed MCT Speedshift gearbox. In short, it's an auto transmission with the torque converter replaced by a wet start-off clutch, and with four different modes it offers everything from

the full Mercedes auto experience to 0.1sec manual shifts.

Its claimed 4.2sec 0-62mph sprint is 0.3sec swifter than a C63 Coupe's and 0.1sec ahead of the CLK Black's. No top speed has yet been announced, but we'd expect a 186mph limiter, pegging the C63 back a little to stop it troubling its glamorous SLS sibling.

There's plenty of under-the-skin work to transform the C63 into a hardcore road and track car. The coilover suspension is motorsport-derived and manually adjustable, and there's a 5mm drop in ride height. Track

BRISTOL: THE NEXT CHAPTER

New owners reveal plans for a 200mph electric supercar **P19**



Q&A: HENRIK FISKER

Ex-Aston stylist on why he's championing range-extenders **P22**



BONNEVILLE SKODA

All the latest on our 200mph salt-flat adventure **P25**



BACK TO BLACK

MERCEDES' ANSWER TO THE 911 GT3 RS AND M3 GTS, AS **STEPHEN DOBIE** REPORTS



'ENGINE REVISIONS ARE DERIVED FROM THE SLS'

widths are up 40mm at the front axle and a more substantial 79mm at the back.

Other dynamic changes include a sharper tune of power steering, a standard limited slip diff and a three-stage stability control, including a full 'ESP Off' stage. The brakes have retuned ABS and bigger ventilated discs all round, 390mm (with six-piston calipers) up front, 360mm (four-piston calipers) at the rear.

And while the styling is intentionally muscular, it's not without purpose: those pumped-up arches (the front is 28mm wider than standard, the rear 42mm) help

Above: flared arches accommodate wider tracks front and rear. Wheels are 19in lightweight forged alloy



accommodate the wider track widths. The angry, wide-nostrilled front packs in plenty of air intakes while the rear boasts a lift-reducing boot spoiler and a dramatically protruding rear diffuser inspired by the SLS AMG GT3 racer.

A number of weight-saving measures are offset by added components elsewhere, so overall the Black is just 20kg less than a regular C63 AMG Coupe, at 1710kg. The arch-filling 19in alloys save 11kg a corner over conventional rims via light forging technology. The rear seat bench is lost to save weight, but there's the option of two rear sports seats.

There are further, optional ways to sharpen up the experience. The Track Package comprises stickier Dunlops and active rear-

axle transmission cooling, provided by a radiator in the rear apron. The Aerodynamics Package brings a carbonfibre front splitter and rear spoiler as well as 'flics', small winglets on the front bumper to increase downforce, similar to those on a Porsche GT3 RS 4.0.

It all adds up to a formidable all-rounder. On the one hand, as with its CLK predecessor, the C63 AMG Black is a honed and hardcore M3 GTS and GT3 RS rival. But on the other, it packs a slick auto 'box and plenty of equipment, with seating for four an option. The new Black Series goes on sale in spring 2012 and while Mercedes has yet to announce a UK price, north of £100,000 is probable.

Above left: C63's naturally aspirated 6.2-litre V8 has been reworked to produce an extra 59bhp, lifting peak power to 510bhp. Interior looks suitably purposeful with bucket seats and acres of Alcantara and carbonfibre



MERC V8 NOW SEMI SKIMMED

AMG'S NEW POWER UNIT FOR SLK CAN RUN ON HALF THE CYLINDERS

AMG will launch a radical new atmospheric V8 at September's Frankfurt show. Fitted to the SLK roadster, the 5.5-litre V8, codenamed M152, is a tantalising view of the future, offering a cylinder cut-off mode that will allow the car to cruise at up to 95mph running on four cylinders. Driven like this, it's said to return over 30mpg.

In full-froth specification, running 12.6:1 compression, the engine offers 416bhp at 6800rpm and 398lb ft at 4500rpm. AMG won't reveal exact figures for the car in four-cylinder mode, but says it produces 170lb ft and can only operate between 800 and 3600rpm. The system works by cutting fuel to cylinders 2,3,5 and 8, keeping the intake valves closed

'RESTARTING THE CYLINDERS – BY ACCELERATING HARD – TAKES JUST 30 MILLISECONDS'

and evacuating the combustion chambers until they are simply pumping clean air. Restarting the cylinders – by accelerating hard – takes just 30 milliseconds which, according to AMG, is imperceptible because the 7G-tronic gearbox takes longer to kickdown. The headline figures for the new engine are 33mpg combined and 199g/km.

Chris Harris





**'BMW HOPES TO
BECOME A MASS-
MARKET, PREMIUM
ELECTRIC CAR
MAKER'**



BMW GOES ELECTRIC

i3 CONCEPT SET TO BE PRODUCTION REALITY BY 2013

This is the funky i3, the electric car that will be the first production model of BMW's new 'i' sub-brand, and which the firm hopes will establish it as a mass-market, premium electric car maker.

BMW says the i3 was designed to be electric – it's not a converted regular car or halfway house – and as a consequence is lighter and so both faster and more agile.

A slab-like battery pack sits low between the axles of the mainly aluminium chassis. All up, the i3 weighs around 1270kg, which is a good 250kg less than the Nissan Leaf, with which it shares a similar 100-mile range. However, the i3 gets to 60mph 4sec faster, in just 8sec.

As well as the pure electric version there will be the option of a 'range extended' i3 with a twin-cylinder petrol engine running at a fixed speed to recharge the battery when required. This engine and its small fuel tank fit alongside the electric motor, close to the rear axle, and double the i3's range to around 200 miles.

As you'd expect, there is a price premium. The production version of this concept is expected to go on sale in late 2013 at a current best-guess price of around £36K. Which sounds expensive until you note that a Nissan Leaf is £31K.

John Barker

i3 will be available in pure electric and 'range extended' form, with a small petrol engine to recharge the battery pack on the move

» Read about the new BMW i8 on page 58

HOT CLIO TO GET TURBO

NEW GENERATION WILL ALSO HAVE TWIN-CLUTCH OPTION

Evo has learned that the next-generation Renaultsport Clio, due to go on sale in summer 2013, will feature both a turbocharged engine and the option of a new twin-clutch gearbox.

The current Renaultsport Clio remains our favourite hot hatch, but although its rev-hungry 2-litre naturally-aspirated engine is a big part of its magic, the pressure of forthcoming emissions regulations means a switch to forced induction for the next car is inevitable. A Renaultsport insider has told us that a suitably tuned version of the 1.6-litre direct injection turbocharged four-cylinder motor used in the Nissan Juke will power the

next car, with an output close to the existing car's 197bhp but considerably more torque.

The news of a twin-clutch gearbox is a more radical departure for Renault. A six-speed manual transmission will remain standard on the new car, but there will definitely be the option of a paddle-shift automated manual. Although our source couldn't confirm the exact system that will be used, Renault does already have an eco-focused 'EDC' (Efficient Dual Clutch) transmission on diesel Méganes that could conceivably be reworked for the hot Clio.

And what about a reborn Clio Williams, following Renault's new deal to supply the



Above: current Clio 200 has 2-litre naturally aspirated engine; emissions regulations mean its replacement will have 1.6-litre turbo unit

Oxfordshire F1 team with engines? Renault would like it to happen, we're told. The question would be whether it's a tweaked version of the current Renaultsport Clio, or a more thorough re-engineering of the next-generation model.

Stephen Dobie



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On the road price is the Manufacturer's Recommended Retail Price plus Car Tax, First Registration Fee and Delivery Pack. Representative 0% APR Advance Payment Plan available on new 11 MY XF models only, registered between 1st July and 30th September 2011 at participating dealers. Promotions are not available for used cars. Finance subject to status. Guarantees may be required. Jaguar Cars Finance, PO BOX 108, Leeds LS27 0WU. Total initial payment varies dependent on model and mileage, and is typically 50%. With Advanced Payment Plan you have the option to return the vehicle and not pay the final payment, subject to the vehicle not having exceeded an agreed annual mileage (a charge of 12p per mile for exceeding 10,000 miles per annum in this example) and being in good condition. We work with a number of creditors to provide finance to our customers, including Jaguar Cars Finance.

JAGUAR | XF

BRISTOL TO RETURN WITH 200MPH HYBRID

NEW SUPERCAR GETS RANGE-EXTENDER TECHNOLOGY AND 4WD

Evo has learned that Bristol, the British sports car maker that was recently bought from administration, has begun development of a new electric supercar.

Bristol was acquired earlier this year by Kamkorp Autokraft, part of the Frazer-Nash group. Frazer-Nash owner Kamal Siddiqi was quick to see the potential of the iconic brand, and *evo* was invited to visit the company's headquarters in Surrey to meet both him and the team tasked with creating the new car.

Siddiqi told us that he bought Bristol because he likes 'what the company stands for' – innovation and luxury within a useable package. He believes Bristol can again be at the forefront of automotive technology and has tasked his team with creating a new car capable of 200mph and the equivalent of 100mpg, while seating four in comfort.

Rather than designing a car from scratch, Siddiqi is in final discussions with an as-yet undisclosed outside manufacturer to use another car as a base vehicle. Frazer-Nash will fit to this its 'range-extended' electric drivetrain, which features two separate twin-motor electric power modules, with each motor driving one wheel. That means the new model will be four-wheel drive. The accompanying 14kWh battery pack can be topped up by either the mains, regenerative

braking or an onboard generator driven by a dedicated Wankel engine.

Like Fisker (see page 22), Frazer-Nash is convinced that pure electric passenger cars will never be a viable solution for most drivers because of their well-documented range issues, and that the only way forward is extended-range electric vehicles.

The big question is if it will all actually happen. It may sound far-fetched, but having driven two Frazer-Nash prototypes, I'm impressed by their technological lead over other electric range-extender cars. Frazer-Nash quotes 97 per cent driveline efficiency for its electric powertrain thanks to the combination of very efficient motors powering individual wheels, cutting out the need for a power-sapping gearbox or differential.

That just leaves one big unanswered question: which car is going to provide the basis for the new Bristol? As soon as we find out, we'll let you know. **Harry Metcalfe**



Frazer-Nash owner Kamal Siddiqi (above) wants Bristol to continue its tradition for luxurious, usable fast cars, but with added hybrid tech

GLASS TOP FOR 458

CONVERTIBLE FERRARI TO GET FOLDING SOLID ROOF

Ferrari is set to launch a Spider version of the 458 at September's Frankfurt motor show. But while most people have been expecting the junior supercar to come with a folding cloth roof, Ferrari has other plans.

Company insiders say the Spider will have a unique folding roof made from 'chromatic' glass. When the roof is up it can be switched between being clear or opaque at the push of a button. When it's lowered, the roof's two sections will flip over 180 degrees before stowing beneath the rear clamshell. It's essentially a more elaborate version of the system used on the 575M Superamerica.

The car will also have a rear window that can be retracted separately, like that on an Audi R8 or Gallardo Spyder. **Michael Taylor**



Fixed-roof 458 will be joined by a convertible, but it won't have the traditional cloth roof

ABARTH 4C CANNED

WORK ON ALFA-BASED RANGE-TOPPER CEASES

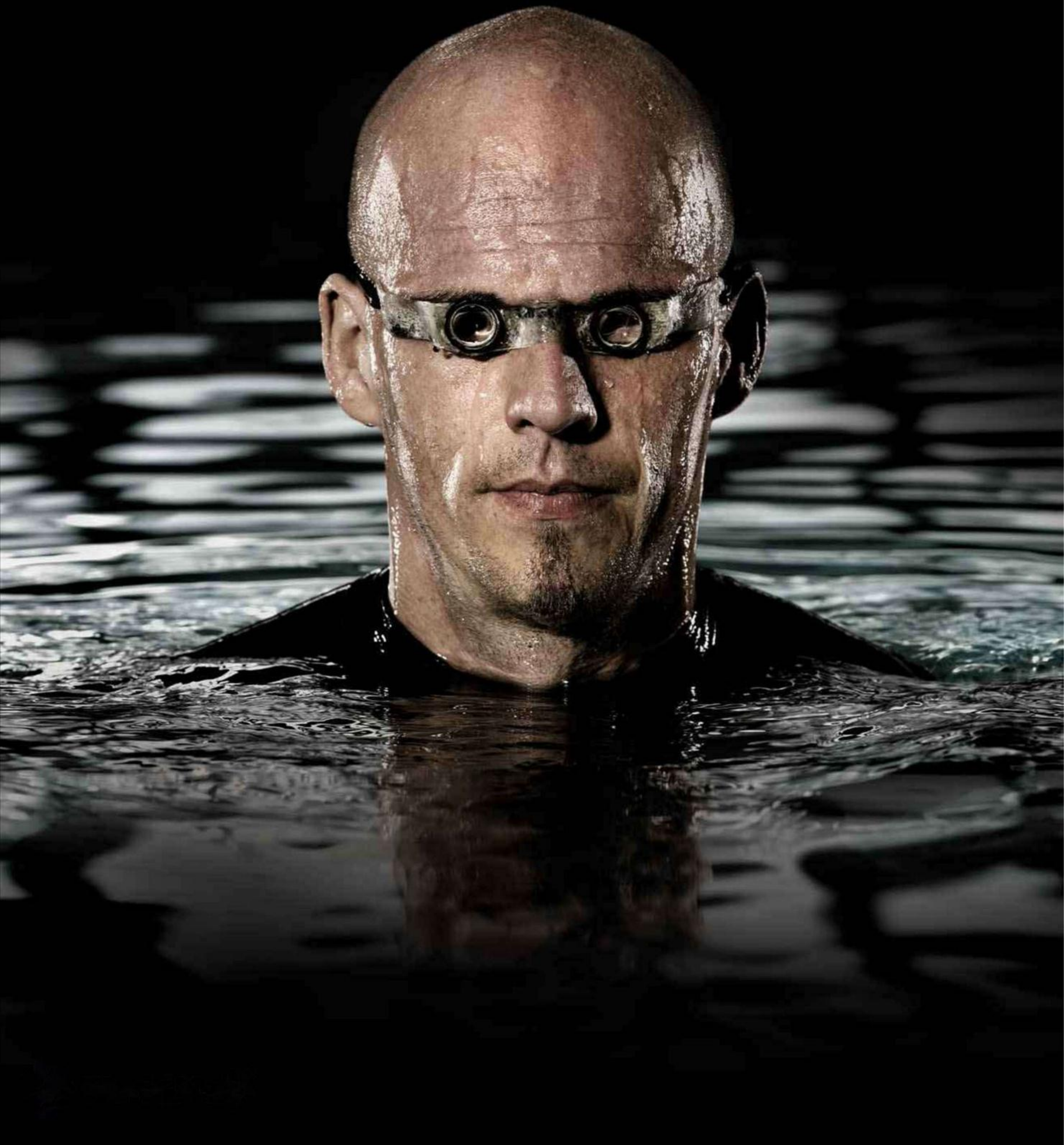
As work continues on getting the stunning Alfa Romeo 4C mid-engined coupe (below) into production next year, *evo* has learned that development has quietly ended on the Abarth-badged coupe that was being developed alongside it.

Fiat's original plan was to have a two-seat Abarth 'halo' model to be sold alongside the Abarth versions of the Punto and 500. However, the company has now switched all engineering resources into getting the Alfa version of the 4C into showrooms as quickly as possible. **Mike Duff**



Alfa 4C (left) is well on the way to production; Abarth sister model canned

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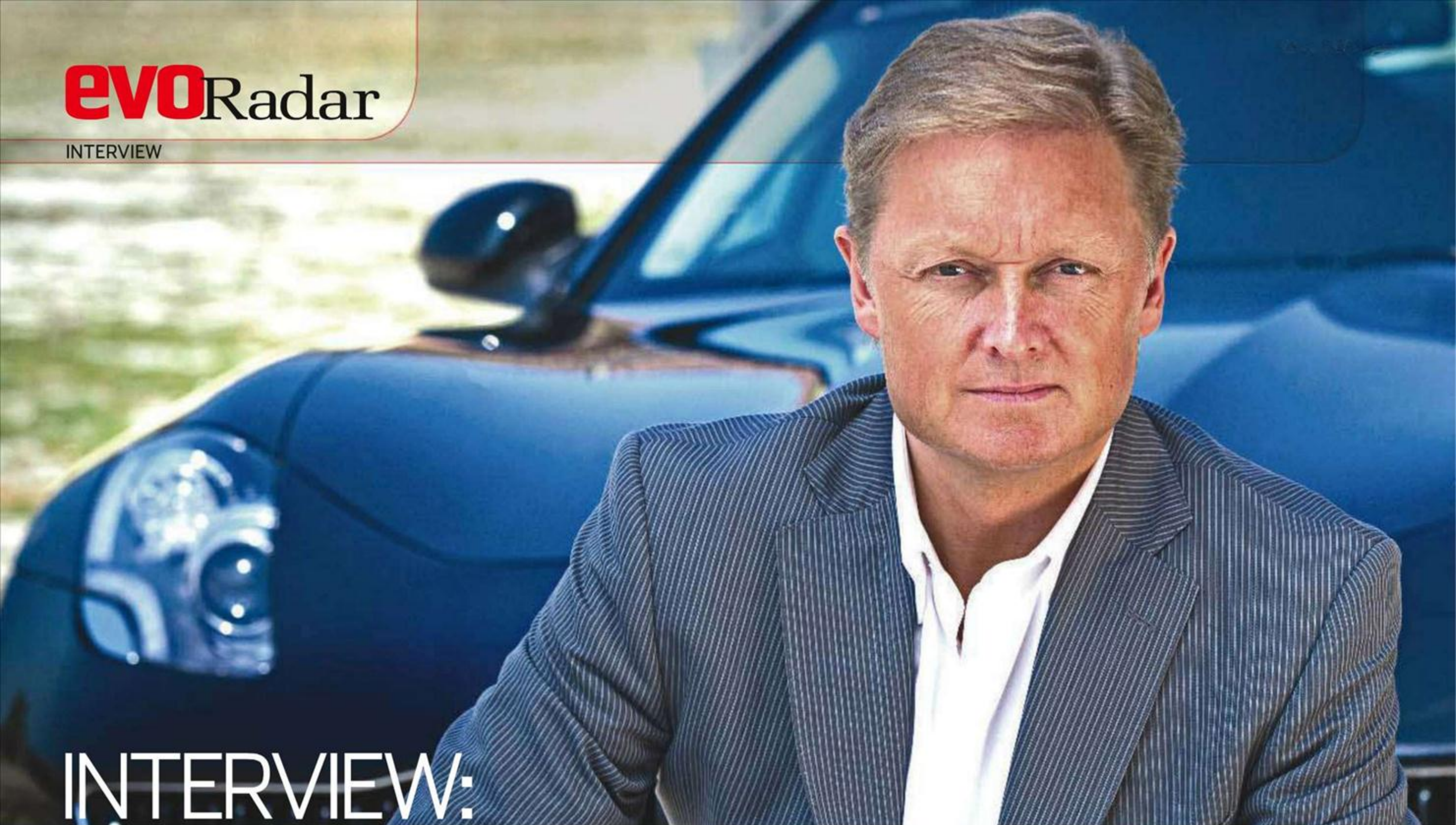
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INTERVIEW:

HENRIK FISKER

THE CEO OF FISKER AUTOMOTIVE ON THE KARMA HYBRID AND WHAT COMES NEXT

Q With deliveries of the 'range-extended' electric Karma saloon just starting in Europe, the main question from a British perspective is why are we not going to get a right-hand-drive version?

A Put simply, cost. It's a volume problem, like GM has with the Corvette. The volume we hope to have with the Karma just doesn't justify spending around \$50million to engineer a right-hand-drive version. We'd have to sell a huge number of cars to justify that. We do have people who have ordered the car in the UK knowing that it will be left-hand drive and we'll be supplying cars to them – and our next model, the Nina [a smaller, more affordable plug-in hybrid], will be right-hand drive from the get go.

Q You've said that you want to turn Fisker into a major carmaker – can you talk us through your predictions for growing sales?

A We're very confident. We've sat with our dealers and made projections. We've got solid numbers behind everything we're saying. We've got 45 dealers set up in the USA already and we've got importers all around the world. We're about to announce that Pendragon will be our importer in the UK. In Europe we expect to have around 40 dealers in the next couple of months, and that will be scaled before 2013 when we launch the Nina.

We expect the Karma to sell between 12,000 and 15,000 cars a year once we've got three models in the line-up. We'll start with the four-door you've already seen and then we're showing another car later this year that will be going on sale next year – and then there'll be a convertible coupe in 2013. The Nina line will be much higher volume, and we'll be building it in our own facility [the Karma is produced by Valmet in Finland] – we're looking at between 80,000 and 100,000 Ninas a year.

Q Why did you go with the extra weight and complexity of a range-extended electric car over a pure electric one?

A You can exchange this car for your current petrol-powered vehicle without having to sacrifice range, and without having to wait for the development of a charging infrastructure. The big car companies seem to be making small electric cars for people who live in cities, and who therefore don't have garages or anywhere to charge the car. This is a different sort of car – people who buy a Karma for €100,000 will have a garage, will have somewhere to charge it. We and our investors believe that the electric vehicle with range extender will be the largest market, far bigger than that for pure electric cars.

Q As a former chief designer for Aston Martin, why did you decide to found a



Luxurious Karma saloon is Fisker's first production car; other Karma variants will follow, as will a more affordable, higher-volume model

new company based on such conspicuously green principles?

A I love cars and I couldn't imagine a world without cars. But when you look at the situation in both Europe and the US, you see lawmakers who don't know how to make cars producing lots of regulations – and every regulation seems to be taking us towards a future where cars become more boring. What's exciting about the Karma for me is when I saw this technology that had been developed for the US military and realised we could use it to produce a good-looking, powerful car that meets even the strictest conditions. I think it shows there is a future for big, powerful cars – we won't all have to drive something that looks like a G-Wiz.



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200MPH BONNEVILLE SKODA ARRIVES IN U.S.

600BHP OCTAVIA READY FOR RECORD-BREAKING SPEED WEEK RUN

The Skoda Octavia vRS that evo's Richard Meaden will be driving at the Bonneville Speed Week this month has survived its long trip across the Atlantic by container, and has arrived safe and sound in America.

The target is to get the Octavia into the record books as the fastest ever Skoda when it gets to the salt flats. To that end it has been modified with a 600bhp engine, revised gearbox ratios and – in case things go wrong – a very, very tough roll-cage.

At the moment the car is still wearing road wheels and tyres – allowing it to be driven on the streets of Utah, as seen here – but when it gets to the salt it will be fitted with special high-speed tyres on steel rims, and



it will also be losing its front brake discs and calipers to reduce aerodynamic drag. Braking will be handled by a parachute.

The team's target is 200mph, and Meaden admits that he's already 'properly excited' at the prospect of driving at Speed Week, which is held between August 13 and 19.

You'll be able to follow updates live from Utah on evo.co.uk – and we'll bring you the full story in next month's evo.

Above: the heavily modified Octavia vRS has made it to Utah; next stop, the Bonneville salt flats



AUDI'S ELECTRIC SHOCK FOR FRANKFURT

» Audi has released sketches of one of the concepts it will be showing at this year's Frankfurt motor show. The Audi Urban Concept is a smart-looking electric city car made from carbonfibre-reinforced polymer and featuring a sliding canopy roof and what's described as 'one plus one' seating. Cosy. Beneath the motor-show bling it's rumoured to be hinting at a future extra-small production model.



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» Fancy some lovely artwork of your car? Artycar (www.artycar.co.uk) produces bespoke graphic art of your pride and joy, with prices starting at £875. If that's a little out of your price range (or you aren't proud of your car) you can also buy limited-edition, one-of-65 prints from £275, with Ferrari, Jaguar and Marcos among the names to choose from. Or you can enter our competition to win a bespoke A3 print of your car. Head to competitions.evo.co.uk to enter.



CHEAP POWER UPGRADE FOR ZETEC S

» The current Ford Fiesta Zetec S can now be sharpened up thanks to an inexpensive new remap from Superchips. Just £249 (including VAT) is all you need to give the 1.6-litre petrol Zetec S an extra 10bhp and 10lb ft, boosting the totals to 128bhp and 122lb ft. Buyers get a 12-month/30,000-mile warranty for the modifications, and fuel economy is unaffected.

'THE vRS HAS BEEN MODIFIED WITH A 600BHP ENGINE'

COMPETITION

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Fancy a VIP trip with Aston Martin Racing to the Silverstone round of the Intercontinental Le Mans Cup on September 11? Read on...

evo has joined forces with Aston Martin Racing and Radio Le Mans for this great prize. You and a mate/partner will get entry to race day on September 11, access to Aston Martin Racing's official hospitality unit, food and drink all day, a garage tour and a chance to meet the AMR drivers. Not only that, but you'll also visit John Hindhaugh at the on-site Radio Le Mans studio as he and the team work their magic over the airwaves.

The six-hour race, formally known as the 1000km of Silverstone, is the British round of the world's premier Sportscar racing championship, and many of the cars and drivers of the Le Mans 24 hours will be present.

Radio Le Mans and radiolemans.com should need little in the way of introduction. Easily the best, most knowledgeable and passionate motorsport broadcasters in the world, the team covers a number of events including the Nürburgring 24, the 24 Hours of Silverstone, the Race of Champions and select UK rally events, including the WRC round.

If you miss out on the competition prize, tickets for the race can be booked at www.silverstone.co.uk or by calling 0844 37 28 260.





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HOW TIME FLIES...

New Bremont chronograph incorporates parts from an actual WWII Mustang P-51 fighter 'plane

BREMONT P-51 MUSTANG
PRICE: £7450 FROM: BREMONT.COM

Bremont, the young UK-based watch brand that created dashboard clocks for Jaguar's Platinum concept saloon and the CX-75 supercar, is now offering the ultimate wristwatch for Mustang owners – of the winged variety. The P-51 chronograph features material from the fuselage of a 1944 Mustang fighter 'plane that saw action in the Pacific during WWII. Serial number 44-12016 was credited with downing two Japanese aircraft, a Mitsubishi Zero and a twin-engine bomber. The 'plane was nicknamed 'Fragile but Agile' and, post-war, served with both the Swedish and Israeli military before ending up at Duxford airfield, where it was restored by pilot and collector Stephen Grey. Aluminium from parts removed from the original fuselage during the restoration has subsequently been incorporated into both the dials and movements of the 251 P-51 watches, which feature automatic winding rotors shaped like miniature versions of a Mustang's four-blade propeller. A similar Bremont watch incorporating parts from a restored Spitfire fighter sold out.

BRM V6 RECORD
PRICE: £6600
FROM: BRM-MANUFACTURE.COM

Bernard Richards, the French car and motorcycle fan who set up his own watch brand in 2002, sponsors a land speed record team called the Triplettes, who attend Bonneville speed week with a variety of unlikely vehicles, including a Suzuki GSXR-engined Reliant Robin and a highly tuned, 1935 Monet-Goyon motorcycle. To give the team an extra edge, BRM (for Bernard Richard Manufacture) made a watch in which the dial was protected by a transparent cover made from an ultra-light material called Makrolon. It helped create the lightest self-winding wristwatch in the world – a gossamer-like 29 grammes. The V6 Record (pictured) is the full production version. A conventional sapphire crystal has been used in place of the Makrolon for water-resistance, but the watch still weighs a mere 42g thanks to every component having been drilled, milled and pared-down as far as possible. A total of just 50 will be made.



BAUME & MERCIER CAPELAND CHRONOGRAPH
PRICE: £12,990 (GOLD); £4990 (STEEL)
FROM: BAUME-ET-MERCIER.COM

Brands that make sports watches are always telling us how rugged they are, but few can have proved the point as comprehensively as Baume & Mercier did at the 1979 Le Mans 24Hrs. At the start, one of its Riviera models was allegedly strapped to the wheel of a BMW M1, where it remained for the duration of the race, only to be removed after the finish and found to still be in perfect working order. The new Capeland chronograph hasn't been quite so rigorously tested, but with its retro looks, central tachymeter scale and flyback function – useful for lap timing – it does make an excellent driver's watch.

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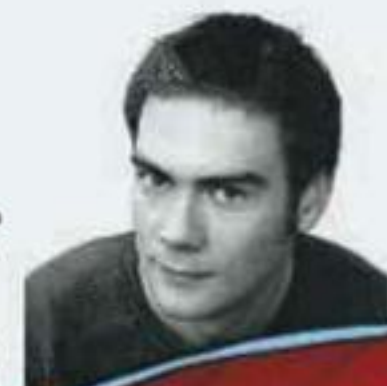


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Petrolhead

by Richard Porter

Top Gear TV script editor, occasional F1 radio pundit and full-time petrolhead



Porter has just bought a Fiat 500 TwinAir. It's for his missus – or at least that's what he's told her

In an issue dedicated to engine sounds, I can admit that it was the thrum that got me. You might remember a few months back I mentioned in this column that I was looking for a car for my wife. Well, I found one. And it turns out to be a Fiat 500 TwinAir.

Naturally, Mrs Porter is delighted about this because it's a 500 and that's a car she has long coveted for its cutesy retro charm. But the truth is, I'm delighted because it's a TwinAir, which I have recently become fascinated by for its unusual layout and electro-hydraulic camless trickery. So she thinks I bought her something she wanted, when really I bought it for myself. Ergo, I get the brownie points and something I want at the same time. It's a marital win-win. Although if you're ever attempting such a tricky move, do remember that – crucially – the item or items you buy must be genuine things she wants. Don't come crying to me when your opening gambit of 'Happy birthday! I bought you a power drill and Guns & Ammo 7 for the Xbox' leads to some severe damage to your testes.

Anyway, there are no such problems here because my wife loves her 500 and I love my thrum. Although to call it a thrum is to do the tiny two-cylinder, 875cc engine a disservice. It starts, weirdly, with almost total silence. Not because of the slightly flaky stop-start system but because the TwinAir is eerily quiet at tickover. That gives way to a gentle flutter, one with a faint but detectable higher register that will be familiar to Citroën 2CV fans. Then, at around 3000rpm, the noise gets louder and you're into the meat of the thrum. Enjoy it while you can, though, because just 1000rpm later it turns suddenly into a much deeper growl, as if the 500 has pulled on a home-made mask and is shouting, 'I am not a small Italian car; I am A DRAGON'. This endearing backbeat continues, strident but smooth, until you meet with the red line.

Truth is, to call the sound of a TwinAir a thrum is to undersell its charms. What you actually get is a whole symphony of sound effects, the like of which you would normally find emerging from a Ferrari or Aston Martin. It's just that the Fiat's are played in a different key. There's percussive pattering at lower revs, a sort of mechanical fluttering in the mid-range and then the weirdly addictive top end where a quickening two-step beat underlies a sort of farty snarl. If you could spin the London Eye at 5000rpm and then insert a playing card the size of a tennis court, this is what it would sound like.

The Fiat's thrum orchestra is utterly addictive, especially now the car's run in and I can spin it right

up to the noisy end of the rev-range. Of course, there is a downside to doing this because, whilst the TwinAir's claimed urban consumption is 57.6mpg, I'm currently averaging 37mpg.

But how can I drive it like your maiden aunt when I know the reward for not short-shifting is another

'THE ENGINE NOTE TURNS INTO A DEEP GROWL, AS IF THE 500 IS SHOUTING "I AM NOT A SMALL ITALIAN CAR, I AM A DRAGON!"'

wonderful dose of thrum. A bit of pace too, because the TwinAir has a turbo on it and feels faster than its 85bhp. For a little car, it really does clip along, though I suspect the thrum makes it feel even faster than it is. Which, actually, is another reason I love the 500.

I also like the way it looks, especially since I

spec'd it with some optional alloys that look a bit like '70s supercar wheels (if you squint), and I love the way Fiat has cleverly spent money on the parts of the interior that matter. In the general scheme of things, the 500 is not an expensive car and if you poke around the inside you can soon find some scratchy plastics to remind you of that. But the bits you see and touch every day are of decent quality and excellent appearance. Yes, they could have used the hazards button from a Punto and I'm quite certain they wouldn't have lost a single sale as a result, but the fact that they put in the effort so that this particular control resembles a funny little bulbous boiled sweet brings delight every time you do a van driver's thank you.

Yes, a Fiesta or a Mini would have been ultimately more rewarding to drive hard, but in town this is irrelevant. Neither of those cars has the 500 TwinAir's personality or charm. And that's because, above all, neither of those cars has the thrum.



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Car-buying habits in the UK are changing apace. The BMW 5-series that everyone wants is now a 4-cylinder diesel

If you want a vivid illustration of how rapidly the UK new car market is changing in 2011, then consider for a moment the sales figures for the BMW 5-series. Total 5-series sales to the end of June stood at 7210 and, of those, 5934 (or 82 per cent) are accounted for by the lowly 520d. Shocked? I certainly was: not very long ago a four-pot engine in a 5-series was a thing of great horribleness, but in 2011 it seems to be the engine everybody wants.

What buyers don't want any more is any sort of 5-series powered by a petrol engine, especially one as chunky as the twin-turbo V8 in the mighty 550i. Since its launch in September 2010, just 51 of these luxury flagships have grumbled their way out of BMW showrooms, making it an even rarer beast on British roads than the strictly limited-edition Ferrari 599 GTO (of which around 60 have been sold here in the UK). Even the more eco-friendly, straight-six petrol models are struggling to find buyers, to the point where both the silky-smooth 528i and twin-turbo 535i are being outsold in the UK by the Ferrari 458 Italia. So what's going on?

Let's go back to a time when every sales executive in the land was swooning over the newly arrived E60

5-series saloon (2004, to be exact). Back then it was six-pot models all the way, with a combination of diesel and petrol six-cylinder versions accounting for 78 per cent of 5-series sales.

That's because a six-cylinder engine was what people expected to find under the bonnet of their 5-series; four-cylinder versions were only there for those poor unfortunates grasping at the first rung of the corporate ladder and trying to make a big impression; having a 'six' under the bonnet marked you out as a fully paid-up member of the executive club. They came with membership to the local golf club and a platinum Amex card attached to the key fob (buying the 550i put you in line for the fabled Amex Centurion card).

Fast-forward seven years, and for most people in 2011 it's only the brand of the car that really matters and not the badge on the bootlid. Just buying a new car in 2011 is status enough, and if it's a shiny new BMW 5-series, well, things must be going really well. The other reason everyone is going for the 520d version today is because we've all been spooked by diesel prices hitting 145p/litre earlier this year and it's that mpg figure on your digital readout on the dashboard that matters more than the once-esteemed 0-60 time.

'THE 550i IS AN EVEN RARER BEAST ON BRITISH ROADS THAN THE STRICTLY LIMITED-EDITION FERRARI 599 GTO'

Buyers still want their new car to look cool, though, so it's no surprise many 520d buyers are adding M-Pack upgrades to their car, giving it that sporty look they crave. You might turn your nose up at this sort of behaviour but with oil prices where they are today, together with the recent chunky tax hikes on both VED and company car tax, I can fully understand why buyers today are flocking to cars like the 520d.

The only real surprise to me is why no manufacturer has yet done a properly sporty diesel. Imagine a tweaked 520d M-Sport in BMW's line-up. The CO2 figure would still be spectacular, but via an 'M' button on the steering wheel, the engine could switch to another fuelling map offering a higher boost setting for more power which, combined with a remap of the gearbox to make the most of the more peaky delivery, would turn it into something of a weapon.

Or, even better, why not introduce a BMW 1M diesel to the range? Now that would really fly off the shelf. Or how about an Audi RS3 with a high-boost four-pot diesel in its nose, rather than the heavy (and expensive) five-cylinder turbo?

I really think Jaguar missed a trick by not making its otherwise excellent XF-S 3.0 diesel a proper RS model. It would have been perfect for today's new car market. However, Jaguar has still got time to make amends. Its 2.2-litre XF diesel is a belter – so let's see it in RS form before the Germans get there first. Yes, it would upset the odd Jaguar purist, but it would sell – and isn't that the whole point of this car manufacturing game anyway?





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Charles Morgan pulled off a PR coup at Goodwood with an effortless style that the bosses of rival companies would die for

In the undignified scrabble for cash-enabled brand prominence at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, Charles Morgan isn't a player. He's not even a caddy. Unlike Audi and Mini, he hasn't the resources to cover the cost of an hour's refreshments and canapes in either of their temporary conurbations on Lord March's estate, let alone build something that deserves its own postcode.

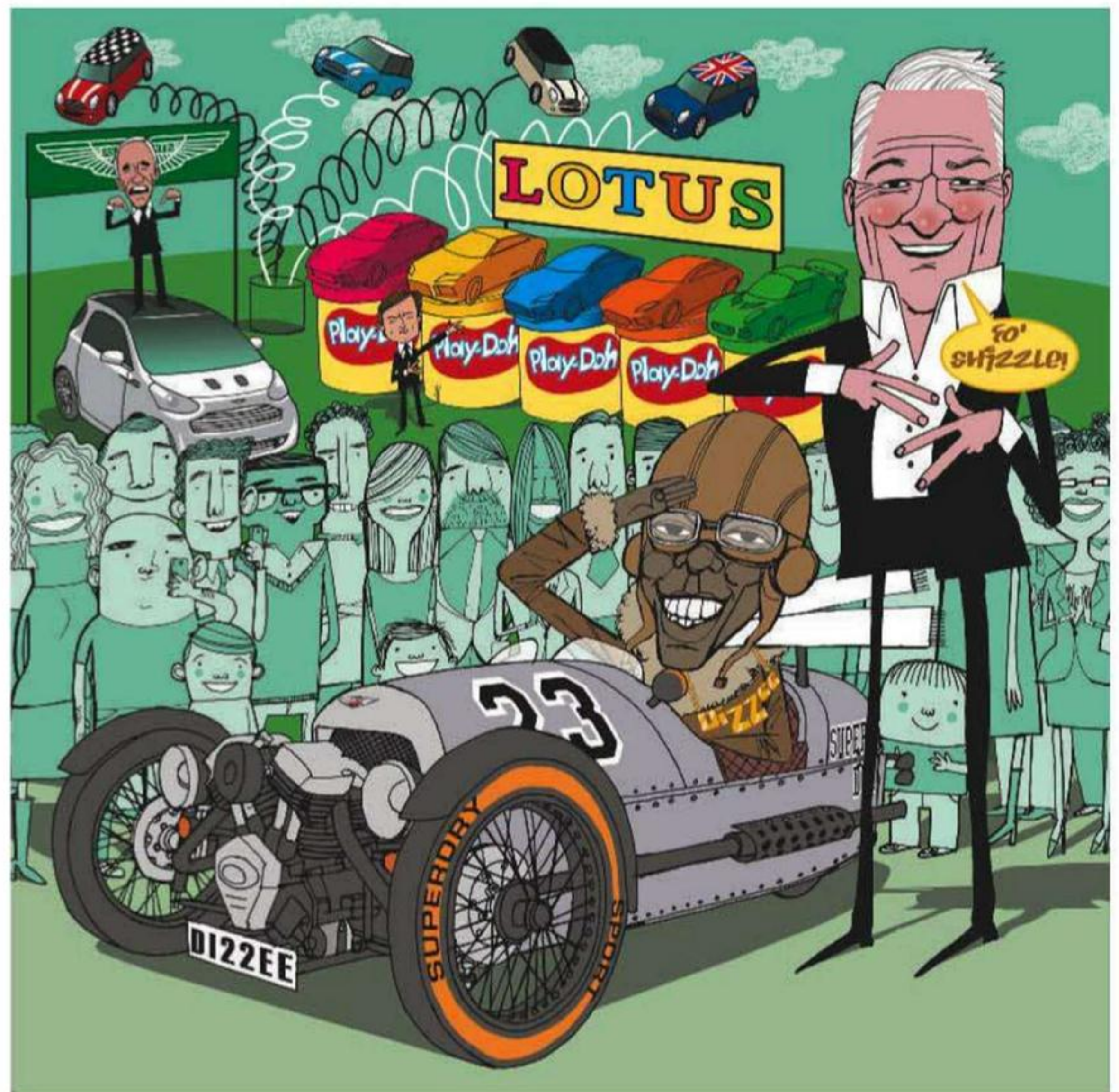
But he does have an instinctive understanding of the role incongruity plays in sharp promotional activity – perfectly demonstrated by the sight of one Dizze Rascal (a rapper-cum-pop-star for us oldies) climbing aboard the new 3 Wheeler in full Biggles regalia. He looked perfect; everyone talked about it. Job done.

There's a relaxed composure about C Morgan Esq that is easily mistaken for arrogance. His default facial expression is an emerging chuckle, and he rarely completes a sentence without a guffaw or an avuncular *ha ha!* This suggests some manner of buffoonery, but his track record at the family firm tells a different story. While the likes of TVR, Marcos, Jensen and others have all foundered, Morgan has flourished. Charles is, for want of a better phrase, a clever bastard.

But he also has one enormous advantage over those other individuals who also run sports car companies in the United Kingdom: his name appears on the company emblem.

It's taken me some time to understand the significance of this fact, but I think that having seen Charles casually milling around the Supercar Paddock at Goodwood, I now get it. You don't need an ego if your family founded the business and you share its name. You don't need a business card. People don't ask what Charles Morgan does. I wonder how much Dr Ulrich Bez of Aston Martin and Dany Bahar of Lotus would pay to be able to say the same thing? Like you, of late I've watched the increasingly bizarre public utterances and product decisions of both and wondered whether they might be losing the plot, but it turns out they both want to be just like the guffawing bloke with the vaguely ruddy cheeks from Malvern. Who'd have guessed?

All of the good Doctor Bez's posturing and preening – the ludicrous outburst at the 2010 Geneva motor show about journalists failing to understand the Rapide's packaging (a failure the buying public appears to share), the decision to 'allow' a car to be named after himself to celebrate ten years at the company – all of it would have been avoided if his name was above the door. Company name: Ulrich-Aston – shazzam: no need for the Cygnet.



Likewise Bahar, who appears to treat Lotus as a personal fiefdom, would surely have alighted at a different course of action than launching five new models that didn't exist outside of the Play-Doh factory, and a new racing car each week if he could simply have been allowed to put a badge that said 'Bahar' on the bonnet.

Neither of them should worry about taking a step into the unknown – this has been done before by the

'INCONGRUITY HAS A ROLE IN PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY – LIKE SEEING DIZZEE RASCAL ABOARD THE MORGAN 3 WHEELER'

affable Arash Farboud. I once was sitting in his office and suddenly felt the urge to ask him what the hell he was up to. He clearly had the funds to buy whatever car he wanted – he's a massive car enthusiast: why bother trying to make his own? His answer was simple: 'Because it's fun, and it has my name on it.' There is only one acceptable face of egotism: the honest, self-parodying type. Arash has it nailed.

Sadly, the generic British sports car firm is vulnerable to ego-addled, predatory CEOs. It is usually catastrophically managed and rotting with debt and

when the shining knights of industry arrive bearing cash and individuals with some semblance of a track record, it can do nothing to resist. It all comes to pass because these ego-maniacs want more than the top job within the organisation, they want immortality – they want not only to become the brand, but the brand to become them. It's an unworkable situation: one that must drive the foot-soldiers round the bend and up the wall.

What emerges is a kind of benign dictatorship, a cancerous autocracy that people like me simply cannot fathom. Or rather couldn't fathom until I heard C Morgan Esq say 'Dizze Rascal' in clipped English. Imagine the Duke of Edinburgh chewing on the final vowels of 'Beyonce' and you'll have the sound in your head. In that brief moment I realised the truth: C Morgan Esq is the real deal, the others I have mentioned are not.

The solution for non-family-owned concerns is simple: change the name of the company with each incoming CEO. That way the company saves a fortune on remuneration (can you imagine having that as a salary bargaining tool? £50K a year, plus a car, and your name on the bootlid) and mitigates against all manner of ridiculous product line-ups and PR disasters. I will be submitting my findings to the Boston Consulting Group in the morning.



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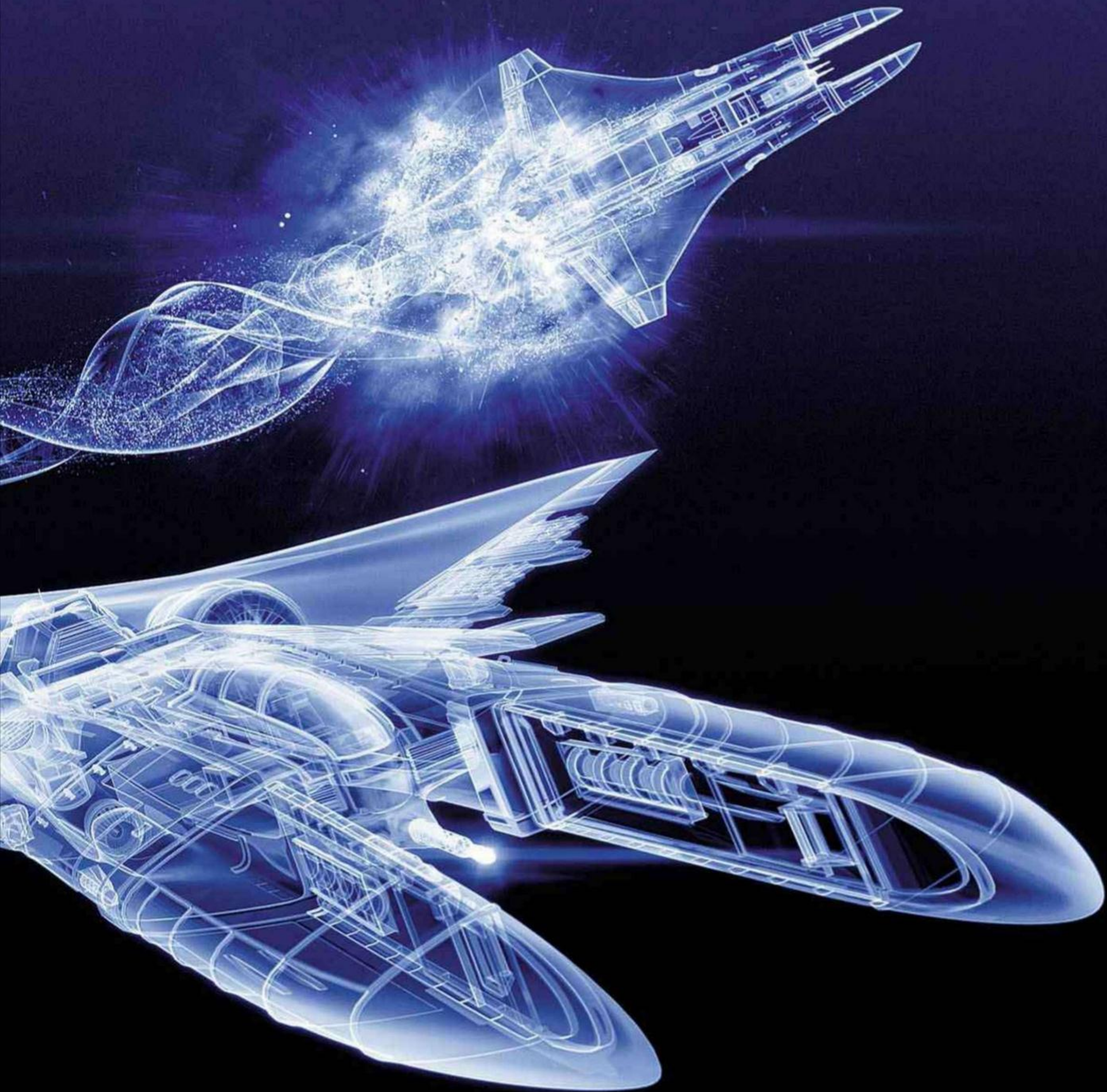
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Bringing it all together

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THE EVO VERDICT ON THIS MONTH'S NEW LAUNCHES



MASERATI GRANCABRIO SPORT

» POWER UP TO 444BHP » UPGRADED SUSPENSION » RESTYLED EXTERIOR
» QUICKER SHIFTS FOR AUTO GEARBOX

The 434bhp Maserati GranCabrio is already a pretty damn sporty device, but Maserati has obviously decided it isn't quite sporty enough, so it's given the car a further sprinkling of sporty-dust, just to make sure. The result is the GranCabrio Sport.

There are all the usual bodywork refinements you'd expect to see on

a car like this, including front corner splitters, extended side skirts, a black front grille, 'shadow-line' trim (where almost all the exterior chrome is replaced with black anodised parts) and black exhaust tips. But it's the mechanical differences that really set this new model apart.

The Ferrari-sourced 4.7-litre V8 now has an extra 10bhp (bringing the total up to 444bhp) and 16lb ft of torque thanks to

a new friction-reducing coating on various internal components. The suspension has been mildly tweaked and features new 'Sport Skyhook' dampers for better control, plus 20 per cent stiffer anti-roll bars and 15 per cent stiffer springs. The brakes have been upgraded with grooved and drilled discs. It's when you look at the GranCabrio Sport's new transmission that things get confusing.

Right: 4.7-litre V8 has gained an extra 10bhp and 16lb ft in Sport form; interior has four proper seats; aluminium pedals with MC (Maserati Corsa) logos are an option

TESTED THIS MONTH

MASERATI GRAN CABRIO SPORT P36
MERCEDES-BENZ E63 AMG P39
FISKER KARMA P41

PORSCHE PANAMERA DIESEL P41
BMW 118i P42
FORD FPV GT E P42

VOLKSWAGEN BEETLE P45
RANGE ROVER EVOQUE SD4 P46
JAGUAR XF 2.2D P46



SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 4691cc **CO2** 337g/km
Power 444bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 376lb ft @ 4750rpm **0-62mph** 5.2sec
 (claimed) **Top speed** 177mph (claimed)
Price £102,615 **On sale** October



Up until now, the sportiest versions of the GranTurismo have come with a six-speed automated manual transmission (borrowed from the Ferrari 599), where the gearbox is an integral part of the differential unit, sat between the rear wheels for optimal weight distribution. But that's not the case on this car. Maserati took the view that the automated manual is too aggressively sporty to suit the convertible's more laid-back demeanour, so instead the regular model's ZF six-speed torque-converter auto has been modified to give much quicker gearchanges (shift times have been halved

to 200ms) and to automatically provide a blip of revs during downshifts in Sport or Manual mode. I'm surprised by the decision to use this set-up, as I'm not convinced a conventional auto can really deliver what you'd expect from a properly sporty Maserati. We'll see... There's no doubt the GranCabrio Sport looks the part, though. All that black trim sets off this car's terrific good looks perfectly, and the latest wheels are more 'spidery' – all the better for exposing the brake calipers (which can be specified in seven different colours). Inside the cabin, not much has changed.

The seat stitching is subtly different, the rubber on the foot pedals has been swapped to aluminium, and the paddles behind the wheel are longer than before. Hardly earth-shattering then.

Twist the key to bring the engine to life and the moment it fires you get that gooey feeling you experience when you're in something special. The V8 idles at a busy 1400rpm, sounding both cultured and racy, with nothing like the bassy thrum you get from an AMG V8 and the like. Slip the auto selector into Drive, press the accelerator and the car effortlessly builds speed. You can sense the mass around you, but then this mass also seems to enhance the ride by smothering bumps, while the new Sport Skyhook dampers immediately feel better resolved than Skyhook dampers ever did previously.

The electric roof disappears in around 28 seconds, which is a bit slow by modern standards, but then there's acres of roof to stow away – to the point where there's less than half the boot capacity of the coupe. At least you can operate the roof on the move (at speeds up to 20mph), and with all the windows up the lack of buffeting inside is impressive, even at motorway speeds. This car will give you far fewer

bad hair days than most other four-seater rag-tops I can think of.

If all this sounds like the GranCabrio Sport is a bit too civilised, well, that's how it feels on first acquaintance, but then this car has a very clever trick up its sleeve that only comes to light when you press the Sport button. As soon as you do, it's as if the GranCabrio Sport transforms itself into the car you expected it to be all along. The throttle response sharpens, the dampers tighten, the gearchanges get quicker and, most important of all (as long as you're north of 2500rpm or in Manual mode), the butterfly valves in the exhaust snap open and you're left in no doubt you're sitting behind a fiery Ferrari V8 as it howls its way towards the 7500rpm red line, followed by pops and crackles on the way back down again.

The ability to switch between these two personalities, combined with the fact that the Sport costs just £4315 extra, almost makes the standard GranCabrio redundant. It certainly makes this Maserati far more addictive to drive than rival drop-tops. Okay, the brakes still aren't as sharp as they could be and the auto gearbox doesn't feel quite as snappy as the MC-Shift automated manual, but



Top: dash gains a 'GranCabrio Sport' badge in front of the passenger; longer, carbonfibre shift paddles are taken from Trofeo race car

both of these issues hardly detract from the fact that the GranCabrio Sport is a very cool way to travel. Roof up, you're well insulated from outside disturbances and there's the added advantage that it's a proper four-seater too.

Priced at £102,615, this car seems to sit in a marketplace all of its own. It's much more glamorous than, say, the 6-series Convertible, but nowhere near the price of the Bentley GTC or Aston DB9 Volante. The regular GranCabrio is already Maserati's best-selling model, and the Sport moves its desirability several notches higher.

Harry Metcalfe

evo RATING ★★★★★

- ➕ Looks, performance, cruising ability
- ➖ Brakes, boot space

'YOU'RE IN NO DOUBT THAT YOU'RE SITTING BEHIND A FERRARI V8 AS IT HOWLS TOWARDS 7500RPM'





MERCEDES-BENZ E63 AMG

- » NEW 5.5-LITRE TWIN-TURBO V8
- » OPTIONAL 550BHP UPGRADE

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 5461cc, twin-turbo CO2 230g/km
 Power 518bhp @ 5250-5750rpm
 Torque 516lb ft @ 1750-5000rpm 0-62mph
 4.3sec (claimed) Top speed 155mph (claimed)
 Price c£75,000 On sale September



When the new BMW M5 arrives in a few months' time, this new E63 AMG is the car that it will have to go into battle against. And the fellows from Affalterbach have developed quite a proposition for the chaps over in M division, not least because the E63 now has the new 5.5-litre, twin-turbo V8 engine that we've previously seen in '63' versions of the CL, CLS, and S.

The engine will effectively be available in two states of tune – 'Standard' and 'Power Pack'. The former gives you 518bhp and 516lb ft, while the latter (an £8500 option, which also adds a limited-slip differential) raises its game to 550bhp (just 2bhp behind the M5's projected output) and a whopping 590lb ft. The naturally aspirated 6.2-litre V8 from the outgoing E63 was a wonderful thing, but I personally think that some sort of forced induction under the bonnet is much more befitting of a big AMG. In its most potent form, the new twin-turbo car has 126lb ft more torque than the old car, and it is instantly and wonderfully noticeable, with monumental force-of-nature-style surging acceleration from low revs.

It even has a decent soundtrack to match, and the resultant performance figures are pretty mighty too, with 0-62mph coming up in just 4.3sec (4.2 with the PP). However, with the addition of stop/start, fuel economy has also improved by 22 per cent, taking the combined figure to 29mpg

The auto gearbox, as always seems to be the case with AMG Mercedes, is disappointingly unresponsive if you try to use the paddles. However, if when driving quickly you set the seven-speed 'box to its Sport Plus setting and resist the temptation to touch the paddles, instead relying on the complicated algorithms to control the shifts, then it is miraculously good. It feels slightly weird driving fast without any input into

'FORCED INDUCTION SEEMS BEFITTING OF A BIG AMG'

the gearshifts, but it works brilliantly, and even if the onboard computer very occasionally leaves you one gear higher than you might have chosen yourself, you've always got that fabulously flexible engine to cover for you.

The E63 is a big car – bigger still if you opt for the rather cool and less taxi-like estate version – but it is surprisingly nimble. The steering is precise, particularly with the dampers at their firmest (although admittedly this setting might prove too stiff when the roads are Welsh rather than French) and there is a lovely neutral balance to the chassis, which allows you to work the grip of both front and rear tyres through



E63's engine is now a twin-turbo 5.5 V8; wings are badged accordingly; interior boasts a flat topped and bottomed wheel

a corner. It's a much more involving and fluid experience than in the same-engined CLS, and although there is only so much you can do to disguise 1840kg, it's a lot more fun than I expected it to be down uncomfortably narrow roads through gorges.

Mercedes promises that the E63's price will remain almost unchanged at around £75,000 – roughly the same as the new M5 is expected to cost – so it will be quite a fight when BMW and AMG go head-to-head with their two turbocharged V8 über-saloons. The tyre smoke probably won't clear for months. I can't wait. **Henry Catchpole**

EVO RATING ★★★★★

➢ Extra punch welcome

➤ The full beans costs more



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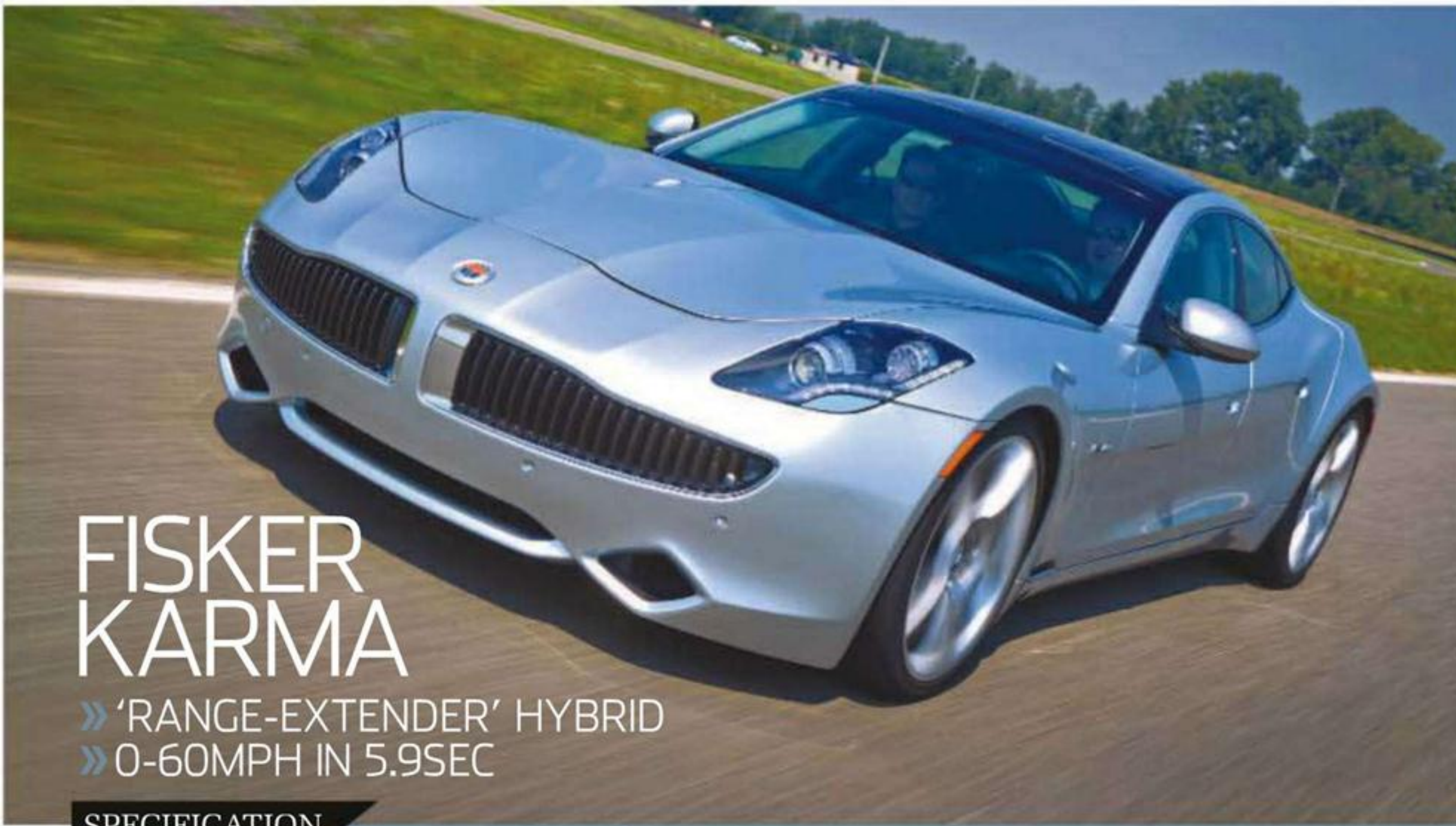
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FISKER KARMA

» 'RANGE-EXTENDER' HYBRID
» 0-60MPH IN 5.9SEC

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo, plus 2 x 150kW electric motors **CO2** 81g/km
Power 403bhp (combined) **Torque** 981lb ft @ 0rpm (from electric motors) **0-60mph** 5.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 125mph (limited)
Price c87,000 **On sale** October

So, is this really the future of the performance car? The Fisker Karma is a 'range-extended' petrol-electric saloon that combines the seemingly contradictory attributes of a 5.9sec 0-60mph time with an official economy figure of 118mpg.

Those numbers don't tell the whole story, of course, but it's still very hard not to be impressed by an all-new car from an all-new car company – it's just three years since former Aston design boss Henrik Fisker's firm began work on his vision of creating a 'desirable eco car'.

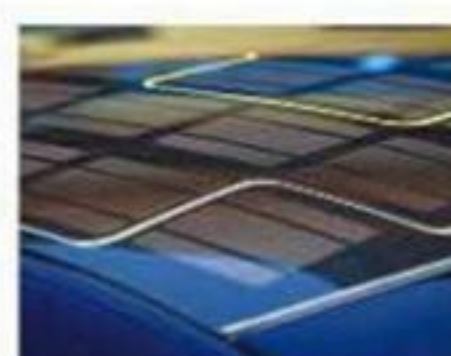
The Karma is a saloon of nearly five metres in length, although a hefty 'backbone' inside the cabin (used to accommodate the 20kWh battery pack) limits it to being a strict four seater. It has a 260bhp 2-litre turbocharged GM petrol engine, but unlike in a conventional hybrid this isn't physically connected to the driven wheels. Instead it turns a DC generator, which supplies current to either the two 150kW electric motors that turn the rear wheels through a shared differential, or alternatively tops up the battery pack. The battery can also be recharged by plugging it into the mains.

That means the Karma can operate in either all-electric 'Stealth' mode or blended Sport mode – where the petrol engine generates the traction current. And this explains where those magic numbers come from, as the Karma is able to perform fuel economy tests with a fully charged battery; the 36-litre fuel tank then adds around 250 miles of range to the 50 miles or so it will get on pure electric power.



Above: 2-litre turbo motor doesn't drive the wheels but supplies power to the electric motors or charges the batteries

Top and below: Karma was styled by ex-Aston design head Henrik Fisker. You can read our interview with him on page 22



Fisker has spent a considerable part of its sizeable development budget making sure the Karma ticks the dynamic boxes so that anyone coming to it from a conventional car isn't disappointed. It rides well, especially considering the vast standard 22-inch alloys, it's quiet at cruising speeds and – although ultimately there's understeer – it feels agile and responsive at real-world speeds. In Stealth mode – which can be used up to 95mph – the Karma accelerates strongly and almost silently (although a synthesised noise is played by speakers to warn pedestrians at speeds below 30mph).

In Sport mode the engine fires up and supplies current to the rear motors. In normal use, it stays impressively subdued, but when you make a request for big acceleration – the sort that would get an automatic gearbox kicking down to its lowest available ratio – the four-cylinder accelerates to peak revs and makes a racket that's out of keeping with the character of the car.

This is slightly disappointing, but it shouldn't take away from the fact that this is the most real-world realistic electric car we've driven so far.

Mike Duff

evo RATING ★★★★★

- A genuinely exciting eco car
- Left-hand drive only, engine noise

PANAMERA DIESEL

» 247BHP 3.0 V6 DIESEL
» 172G/KM AND 150MPH



SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 2967cc, turbodiesel
CO2 172g/km **Power** 247bhp @ 3800-4400rpm
Torque 406lb ft @ 1750-2750rpm
0-62mph 6.8sec (claimed) **Top speed** 150mph (claimed) **Price** £62,134 **On sale** October

Meet what is either the ultimate hate symbol for the 'air-cooled' mob, or a Panamera with reduced running costs, depending on your point of view. Under the bonnet is an Audi diesel engine with 247bhp and 406lb ft, driving the rear wheels through an eight-speed auto gearbox instead of the twin-clutch PDK fitted to the rest of the range.

It's uncannily quiet and smooth, and pulls much harder than the figures suggest. It probably sounds better than the wheezy V6 petrol too. Economy is an impressive 43.5mpg combined.

But, for all that, it's hard to square the overt Autobahn-slayer styling with something that barely nips under 7 seconds to 62mph. The handling isn't noticeably blunted, and the steering is especially good, but the Panamera diesel isn't fast enough to wear the clothes it does.

Chris Harris



Above: V6 diesel is an Audi unit that produces 247bhp. Right: gearbox is a conventional torque-converter automatic



evo RATING ★★★★★

- Strong economy, looks the part
- Just not quick enough



BMW 118i

» BIGGER NEW 1-SERIES » 168BHP TURBO PETROL MODEL

SPECIFICATION

Engine 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbocharged
 CO2 137g/km Power 168bhp @ 4800rpm
 Torque 184lb ft @ 1500rpm-4500rpm
 0-62mph 7.4sec (claimed) Top speed 140mph
 Price £21,985 On sale Sept 2011

The good news is that the hatchback version of the new BMW 1-series is still rear-wheel drive, although plans are advanced to offer front-drive versions with different body styles later on.

Behind the revised look, it's a very similar car to the outgoing model. It's 85mm longer and gets a 30mm stretch in the wheelbase but keeps the same McPherson strut front suspension. From launch, the engine choice is limited to 1.6-litre turbo petrol units or 2.0-litre diesels – sportier versions follow later.

We tried what will be the fastest petrol version for now, the 168bhp 118i, which covers 0-62mph in a claimed 7.4sec while combining decent torque with an enthusiasm for revs – and an official 48mpg combined. Transmission choice is between a new eight-speed automatic or a six-speed manual.

All versions of the hatch come with 'Drive Performance Control', which has four modes – comfort, sport, sport plus and 'eco', the sports settings sharpening the responses of the throttle and electrically assisted steering, 'eco' saving fuel by trimming the throttle.



Top and above: 1-series has been given a pretty subtle makeover inside and out. It's slightly bigger than before too, though the old bugbear of limited rear space remains

Below: five-door hatchback will be joined by a three-door next year. There's also talk of a front-wheel-drive version. This one handles very tidily, with much-improved electric steering

Inevitably lots of big-car gadgets have migrated from further up the BMW range and into the options list, including lane departure warning, adaptive cruise control and even internet access. UK buyers can add Adaptive M Sport suspension for an extra £750 too.

The power steering is much better than that of the old car, losing much of the artificial feel that affected the previous system. Responses are keen and body roll is well contained – on a twisty, bumpy road the 1-series grips hard and feels impressively agile. BMW says that its engineers visited north Wales during the car's development to tune the suspension for the unique challenge of British tarmac, and on first impressions the trip seems to have paid off.

It's still pretty cramped in the back despite the promised practicality of five doors – a three-door arrives next year, along with a 116d that will get below the 100g/km barrier. But on first impressions, the new 1-series looks set to carry on with the sales success its predecessor enjoyed in the UK.

Sam Hardy

evo RATING ★★★★★

- Better to drive than old car, and greener
- Still no great looker, steep prices

FORD FPV GT E

» AUSSIE MUSCLE SALOON
 » SUPERCHARGED 449BHP



SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharged
 CO2 n/a Power 449bhp @ 5750rpm
 Torque 421lb ft @ 2200-5500rpm
 0-62mph 4.9sec (claimed) Top speed 175mph
 Price \$81,000 (Aus) On sale Now (Aus only)

This is the latest – and greatest – of Ford Australia's 'FPV' versions of the Falcon saloon. Think of it as an Aussie brute in a tailored suit. But with declining sales of the ageing Falcon, there's been talk in Oz of ditching the rear-drive platform for the next Falcon, so this blue-badged muscle saloon could be the end of an era.

Developed with Ford Performance Vehicles' technical partners, Prodrive, the GT's party piece lies beneath its bonnet bulge: the latest-gen 'Coyote' 5-litre V8 that also powers the new Mustang. The GT adds a supercharger to produce 449bhp and 421lb ft.

It's a big car – tipping the scales at 1852kg – but damping maintains good body control over larger bumps. Show it a challenging sequence of corners and sadly the steering doesn't weight up as hoped, while the front end displays a preference for slight understeer. The motor's a true powerhouse though, with an output that keeps the stability control busy.

Down Under, the GT E goes up against the HSV GTS – the Vauxhall VXR8 in the UK – and the FPV has the legs on its GM rival, even if it lacks a clear handling advantage. Sadly, though, there are no plans to bring it to the UK.

Adam Davis



evo RATING ★★★★★

- Engine compresses your insides
- Needs a final dynamic polish



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Photo : MINI with OZ Leggenda wheels in black

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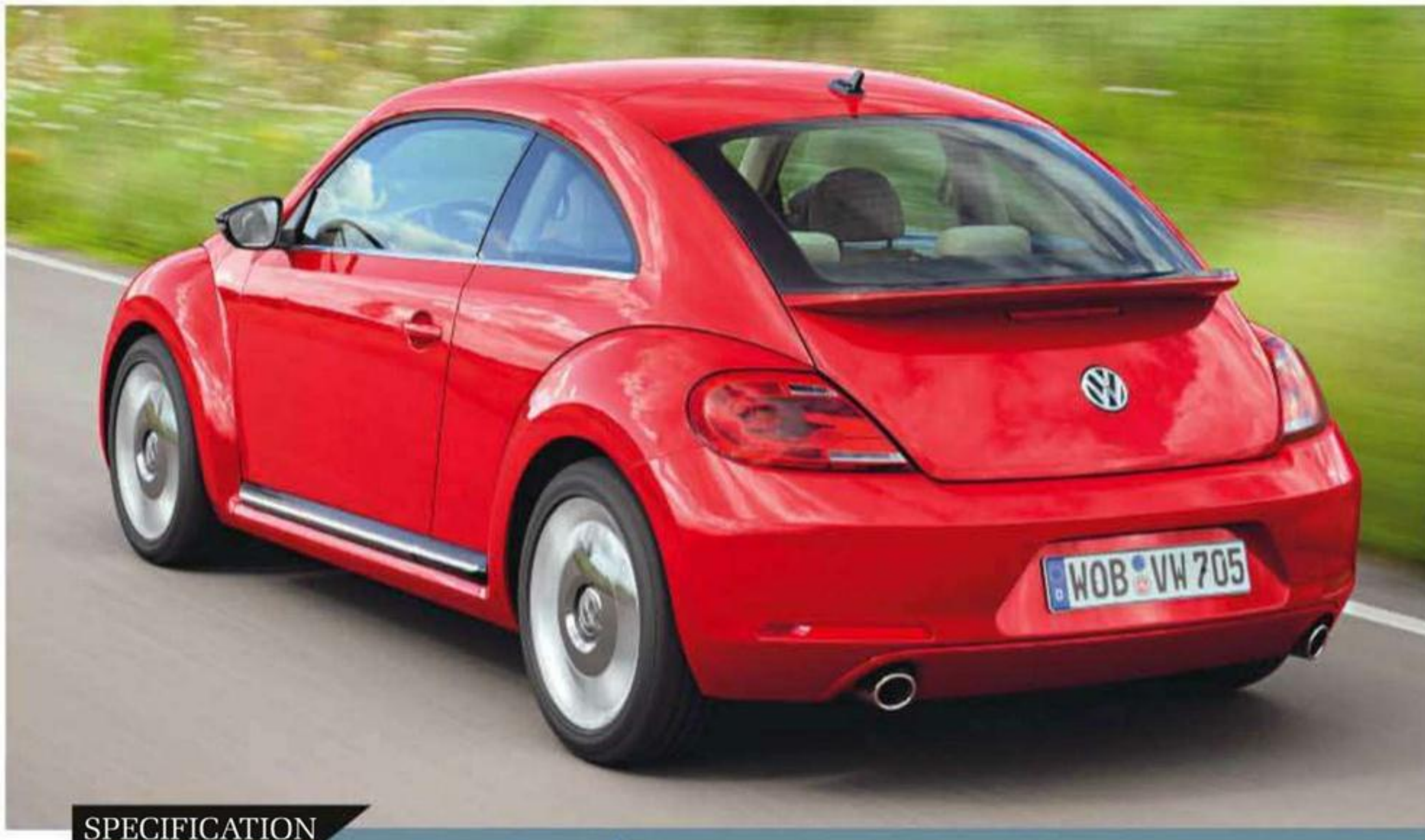
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SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo **CO2** 179g/km
Power 197bhp @ 5100rpm **Torque** 207lb ft @ 1700-5000rpm **0-62mph** 7.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 139mph (claimed) **Price** c£25,000 (est)
On sale Autumn 2012 (other engines spring 2012)

VW BEETLE

» SECOND-GEN NEW BEETLE
 » SPORTIER THAN BEFORE

Volkswagen Beetle as thrill-of-driving machine? That's not quite part of the Beetle heritage-canon, and the 1998 remake's cartoon-car looks didn't exactly help its petrolhead credibility. That's where a BMW-era Mini has always scored over the Toytown VW: Minis have been a hoot to drive since 1959, so the recent ones haven't had to reinvent the dynamics bit.

Anyway, the Beetle breed's second remake is now with us and driving amusement is the new flower vase (which is hereby deleted). US buyers, who will form the majority, also have a powerful old-Beetle (or Bug) tuning culture to guide their perceptions of the new car, a culture less evident in Europe. So the new Beetle has a more cab-rearward look, enough to evoke hazy Porsche 911 references, and it's wider, lower and flatter. Cleverly, the front air intake (needed because a rear-mounted engine



Above, from top: design is now more cab-rearwards; mk6 Golf-style front grille; 2.0 TSI engine is a 197bhp version of the Golf GTI's unit

Below: dash has lost the flower vase and gained some shapes - most notably the glovebox - familiar from earlier Beetles

is long off the agenda) is like a Golf mk6 grille, just mounted lower.

Inside we find hard plastics (built in Mexico like the last one, the Beetle is cheaper than a same-engined Golf), optional body-colour paint for dash and waist rails, and a dashboard centre section hinting at a mid-'50s Beetle.

Can we really take this newly macho Beetle seriously? Perhaps not with the entry-level 103bhp engines (1.2 TSI and 1.6 TDI), maybe more so with the 158bhp 1.4 TSI. All these have torsion-beam rear suspension from the also-Mexican-built, US-spec Jetta, which R&D boss Dr Ulrich Hackenberg reckons would also do perfectly well for the top 2.0 TSI version with 197bhp (it's a slightly detuned Golf GTI motor). However, for reasons of buyer-perceived credibility, that car gets the Golf's four-link arrangement.

That's the version we drove, both on standard and sport suspension. The former makes a sweet-handling Beetle: grippy, sufficiently supple and enjoyably precise in its throttle-alterable balance. It's genuinely good fun in a straightforward, Golf GTI mk5 way, with unusually good electric power steering and enough rorty, keen-edged pace to give a good time. The DSG 'box is good of its type, too, but fortunately a manual will also be offered.

On sport suspension the ride goes to pieces on broken surfaces and the anti-roll bars are unnecessarily stiff. The plan was for this suspension to be standard on UK 2.0 TSIs, but thanks to our feedback this might change. Hope so; it seems a shame to over-egg the 'sportiness' and spoil a surprisingly likable car. **John Simister**

evo RATING ★★★★★

- Retro-look but no longer risible
- Sport suspension spoils the flow

VW SCIROCCO BLUEMOTION

» 138BHP DIESEL ENGINE
 » £30 ANNUAL ROAD TAX



SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1968cc, turbodiesel
CO2 118g/km **Power** 138bhp @ 4000rpm
Torque 236lb ft @ 1750-2500rpm
0-62mph 9.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 129mph (claimed) **Price** £22,210 **On sale** Now

In 2-litre petrol guise, the Scirocco is our favourite small coupe currently on sale. This is the 'eco special', and two (138bhp and 168bhp) versions of the 2-litre TDI diesel engine are offered. If you're choosing this car to save money (which you will be), the former is the only one to boast sub-120g/km emissions, and hence £30 annual road tax. Its claimed 62.8mpg beats its bigger brother's 55.4mpg, too.

The six-speed manual's gears are tall and you can drop just outside the powerband on upshifts. It's brisk when you're in its sweet spot, though, 138bhp and 236lb ft being respectable figures in a 1.3-ton car. A moderate 9.3sec 0-62mph time belies some quick real-world progress.

Understeer feels more prevalent than in the petrol Sciroccos, thanks to the heavier diesel engine, but the handling is still crisp and the steering communicative. The ride on our 18in-wheeled test car was impressive too, more compliant over rough roads than many a hot hatch.

The BlueMotion is nearly as satisfying to drive as the class-leading 2.0 TSI. While it can't quite match the TSI for all-out excitement, even driving the BlueMotion with some gusto can still yield 50mpg. Indeed several members of the evo team have declared, 'I'd actually buy one of these'. That's a phrase uttered far less often than you'd think. **Stephen Dobie**

evo RATING ★★★★★

- Good to drive, cheap to run
- The petrol's still more fun





RANGE ROVER EVOQUE SD4

» 188BHP TURBODIESEL ENGINE » SET TO BE UK BEST-SELLER

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2179cc, turbodiesel
CO2 174g/km **Power** 188bhp @ 3500rpm
Torque 310lb ft @ 2000rpm **0-60mph** 8.0sec
 (claimed) **Top speed** 121mph (claimed)
Price £31,315 **On sale** Now

The Range Rover Evoque is suddenly the car of the moment, arriving just as buyers switch towards shrunken SUVs for their (perceived) greater style and lower running costs. That's why this five-door, 188bhp, 2.2-litre diesel Evoque, known as the SD4, is expected to be the biggest seller here in the UK.

We already know from the three-door, 2-litre turbo petrol version we drove last month that the chassis on the Evoque is surprisingly accomplished. When you realise that the starting point was the Freelander, but with an extra 20mm of ground clearance added, that's a remarkable achievement.

The result is a pocket SUV that feels light on its feet and up for a spirited drive whenever you fancy it. What's particularly impressive is the way the chassis adjusts as you lift off the power approaching a corner – the Evoque tightens its line and homes in on the apex in a very un-SUV-like way. There's some magic going on here, and, even in this diesel model, the sort of progress you can make cross-country is quick enough to embarrass cars with much more sporting profiles.

Unsurprisingly, the five-door diesel Evoque is the heaviest car in the range, weighing in at 1715kg in auto form, though that's over 800kg(!) lighter



Despite the Evoque being the smallest premium Land Rover, its interior isn't short of space, front or rear. Top: five-door almost matches the three-door on looks, and is more practical

than a diesel Range Rover Sport. It's still 45kg heavier than the Si4 petrol version, and as this extra heft is mostly over the front wheels, the diesel is more prone to understeer than the petrol Evoque. However, thanks to the chassis' responsiveness, it's easy to adapt your driving style to suit, although you do need to keep the engine on the boil as torque falls off sharply below 2200rpm or so.

As you'd expect, the diesel version's trump card is much cheaper running costs. Expect to average 35-40mpg (compared with 22-24mpg for the petrol), resulting in a usable range of over 400 miles per tank. Another nice surprise is the amount of interior space you get. Sitting up front you get that desirable 'big car' feel thanks to the distant windscreen and plush surroundings, while in the back there's still plenty of space for six-foot passengers (spec'ing sports seats increases rear legroom even further) and the boot is pretty good too – a lot of work went into reducing the depth of the drivetrain to create more space inside.

All in all, then, this is a very clever car. The five-door diesel Evoque offers more practicality than the same-engined coupe, looks almost as good and is exactly £1000 cheaper. No wonder Land Rover reckons it's the one everyone is going to buy – it's the one I'd go for too. **Harry Metcalfe**

eVO RATING ★★★★★

- Good to drive; reasonably economical
- Petrol version is more fun

JAGUAR XF 2.2D

» FOUR-CYLINDER DIESEL
 » SAME GREAT CHASSIS



SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2179cc turbodiesel
CO2 149g/km **Power** 190bhp @ 3500rpm
Torque 332lb ft @ 2000rpm **0-60mph** 8.5sec
 (claimed) **Top speed** 140mph (claimed)
Price £30,950 **On sale** Now

This is the car Jaguar should have been selling when it launched the XF three years ago. Four-cylinder diesels are what sells in the Euro exec segment, meaning that, since the XF went on sale, Jag has effectively ruled itself out of the running for a majority of potential punters.

Still, better late than never. The new engine is the Ford/PSA unit that we've already seen in the Mondeo and Peugeot 508, but reworked for north-south installation and mated to an eight-speed auto gearbox – as with all XFs, there's no manual version.

On the road the 2.2D certainly doesn't feel like a hairshirt eco special, with decent performance and a similarly focused driving experience to that offered by the brawnier members of the range. The transmission shuffles its hand of ratios almost seamlessly under everyday use, and although the four-cylinder motor doesn't have the lungs of its V6 diesel sisters, the low torque peak means real-world performance is acceptably brisk.

The new engine isn't the nicest-sounding diesel motor, but as an everyday cruiser the XF excels – the engine turns at under 2000rpm at motorway speeds. Economy and CO2 figures are reasonable, though nowhere near those delivered by the ultra-frugal BMW 520d EfficientDynamics.

The rest of the driving experience stays as before, with an impressively supple ride and decent cornering responses, despite what sometimes feels like too much steering assistance.

A welcome, and overdue, addition to the XF range, then. **Mike Duff**

eVO RATING ★★★★★

- Sensible and great to drive
- Can't match economy of 5-series



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WHAT'S GOT YOUR GOAT THIS MONTH?

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Extras, extras – read all about it

Firstly, great, great test of the MP4-12C (evo 159). First-rate photos, and the usual informed and heartfelt copy. I was glad of the outcome, being a fan of 'analogue' cars. Fantastic effort by the Noble, too – goes to show what honest engineering done well is capable of.

However, I would love to know what options were on the cars. I glanced at the specs at the end of the test and was transfixed at the bottom row of figures. Please tell me what you can add to a £175,000, state-of-the-art, world-beating Ferrari that can cost £55,000! Or £51,000 on the 12C! At this money, these cars should be more or less fully loaded, at least with the things you need to drive fast. Anything else is surely just excess weight.

Simon Green, chassis technician, Swan Yamaha

With the 458, most of the extra cost was for carbonfibre panels. For example, carbonfibre engine bay cover £4651, carbon rear diffuser £5167, carbon outer sill cover £5063, lower passenger compartment trimmed in carbonfibre £5683... You get the picture. Other substantial options fitted to our test car included racing seats at £4961 and 20in Diamond Sport wheels at £4651. Oh, and a Ferrari iPod connection at £580.

Carbonfibre options galore on the McLaren too, from engine bay panels at £2980 to mirror casings at £2130. Other notable extras fitted to the test MP4-12C were the carbon-ceramic brakes (standard on the 458) at £9770, Volcano red paint, £3820, forged wheels, £2980, and an upgraded hi-fi and satnav system, £5100. It all adds up... – Ed

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The thrill of karting

I have long been into karting, locked in battle for fastest lap with my mate for years (currently the score is 17/13, to him I'm afraid). It's just as well I have karting, because things here in Ireland are going from bad to worse. Besides the economic crises, the RSA (Road Safety Authority) has placed speed cameras everywhere and is planning to toll practically every road wider than a country lane. The thrill of driving has gone from Irish roads, and as someone who commutes 70 miles to and from work, I can't place my licence in jeopardy, so my Boxster has gone and a diesel is on the way. I am being squeezed gradually from driving a car to being forced to use a transportation device.

As a petrolhead, I need my cornering kicks, which is why karting is even more important now. A friend and neighbour, who is 37, had never sat in a kart before, so recently I took him along. After a half-hour race, off came his lid and there it was, the thrill of driving personified. A big, sweaty, beaming adrenalised head – and he had instantly acquired all sorts of excuses for his performance. A racer born right in front of me. If you are into cars and haven't got the funds for a McLaren OMG12p, then get karting.
Garreth Walsh, Dublin, Ireland

Keep it grounded

Love love love evo, have been subscribing for years and really feel like I've grown up with it.

Got issue 160 through the post today, ripped open the grey plastic the same way I do every month (like an excited nine-year-old on his birthday morning) and began leafing through it. What's this?

Lamborghini Gallardo Performante vs some sort of two-wheeled car with wings??!!

Is this a joke? Have Clarkson and his gang kidnapped my evo lads in an attempt to spread lightweight tabloid car journalism over another magazine? No, Roger Green's face is there – a 'Top Gun', apparently. Jeez, this is for real.

Please evo, you have thousands and thousands of fans that love you for your style, your photos and your ability to distil the thrill of driving into features designed for genuine car enthusiasts. Please then don't pander to the Top Gear generation who'd probably care more about whether or not the latest Ferrari can get to Lisbon and back quicker than a text message than what it's like to drive. A bit of car silliness every Sunday evening is great, but please don't make us read about it every month too.

Tiarnan Magos



Last month's car v plane test has Tiarnan Magos worried that we're going 'Top Gear' ('Keep it grounded')

Liking the new look

I must say I feared the worst when I saw the magazine had been redesigned. I read over 30 mags a month and have found that not all facelifts are successful. You seem to have pulled it off, though.

Also, can I join, I am sure, all of your readers in hoping Nick gets well soon.

R Glenister

We've had lots of reaction to the last issue, much of it positive, all of it valued. Don't worry – we're not going in a new direction, just evolving. The car v plane piece was produced with evo's principles very much in mind – hence the high level of writing plus comprehensive detail and tech. Thanks for the kind wishes – back is still buggered though! NT

Losing their touch?

Recently I had a go in a new, manual E90 3-series, and in comparison with my own 14-year-old E36 I simply couldn't believe the degeneration in dashboard design philosophy.

On my own car (with its arced-about-the-driver dash), all of the buttons are approximately equidistant from my shoulder. A swing of my arm allows me to adjust all of the (dissimilar geometry – for easy identification without looking) buttons. The new car, with its flat, Scandinavian dash, has a reach requirement from the torso and, worse, all the buttons feel the same. You even have to look at a little screen

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to see what the button is doing!

That's a bit rubbish but survivable. Worse was to come in the form of an indicator stalk positioned way too close to the cruise control stalk. Every right turn had me adjusting the cruise control. In the E36, this doesn't happen because the stalk is further from the indicator and also shorter, so you can't accidentally reach it from the steering wheel.

The deal-breaker was the armrest. Gears 2, 4 and 6 were rendered pretty much unusable (for normal human beings) by said obstruction that completely blocked the natural path of my arm when shifting from 1st, 3rd or 5th. The ultimate driving machine? Once, perhaps...

Graeme Kidson

Triangle revealed

A recent mountain biking trip to Wales involved me and a friend staying in a tent in the depths of Snowdonia, so obviously the latest evo (159, McLaren v Ferrari) had to be brought along for entertainment. Whilst waiting for a pan of hot water to



Rob Lyons' SEAT Leon (and mountain bike) takes a break on the evo Triangle

boil just to make a brew, I saw the route map of the legendary evo Triangle.

I must just say how grateful I am to you lot for finally releasing this amazing piece of motoring information! The route home involved an extra 60 or 70 miles' worth of driving (in the wrong direction) just to cover the Triangle, with a boot full of camping gear and a bike on the back seat as well as one on the roof.

At first we thought we may have taken a wrong turn, for high hedgerows and stone walls surrounded the narrow and bumpy road, but suddenly the road opened up and off we went, albeit at a reasonably restrained pace! The extra kilos in and on the car combined with a slightly nervous passenger meant seven-tenths was all I could respectably give it. However, I had one of my most thrilling and enjoyable drives since I started driving. It really illustrated the evo philosophy of fast is not always the most fun!

Rob Lyons, Manchester

Ex-evo TVR Griffith update

Thought I'd give you an update on the TVR Griffith I bought from Harry Metcalfe earlier this year. I'm still loving owning it and the noise alone still makes me grin. The sense of occasion is amazing.

Harry was right about the boot release; it started annoying me really quickly! The central locking wasn't playing either, so I booked it into X Works to get it sorted. Rather than mess about with investigating all the wiring for the alarm (the primary culprit for door lock problems apparently) I decided a new alarm would kill two birds with one stone. I now have a more modern alarm, working central locking and a boot release on the fob, all for just over £300.

Otherwise, the car has been brilliant. We've been to Oulton Park in it to watch the BTCC (in the rain), to Silverstone for the MotoGP (in the rain) and on countless drives out just for the hell of it. The MotoGP involved an hour and 40 minutes in crawling traffic into the circuit, and the car never missed a beat. The heat-soak from the dash is the only downside when you have to have the roof on!

Right now I'm looking forward to more trips to BTCC events - all sunny hopefully!

Nick Shaw

Out to launch

After reading Harry Metcalfe's Insider column about launch control, etc (evo 160), I think he missed the point. We should be celebrating this technology. These staggering 0-60 times are now available to any driver, any time they wish. No need to learn the dark art of a fast start by trashing your transmission.

This has another interesting effect on the roads. In times gone by you knew a traffic light sprint race was on by the car next to you edging forward. Now you know to be afraid when a confused look crosses the driver's face as his hands whirl around the cockpit pressing every button!

Mark Brown

The science of economics

Three cheers for Harry! His brilliant new way of working out the depreciation on his recent Maser deal (Fast Fleet, 160) will surely be eagerly seized by all of us who have the difficult task of convincing 'those who have to know' of the wisdom of what we've just done. The man's a genius!

Ross Ward, Tredington, Warwickshire

FROM THE FORUMS: 'YOUR CAR HIRE NIGHTMARES'



Reversing camera on a VW Golf – whatever you do, resist the temptation to moon it

Matt Sketch: After having my weekend plans completely scuppered by a rental company's ridiculous interpretation of the term 'or similar', make me feel better by sharing your similar tails of woe.

Evostick: I wrote off a Chrysler Sebring convertible whilst in Hawaii. At the time, car insurance was optional in Hawaii. The bill came to the initial rental fee + \$27,000. They wouldn't lend me another one so I had to get a Daewoo from another agent.

8Ball: One less Chrysler Sebring in the world is a good thing, from my experience. I think a Daewoo would be preferable.

SimonB: Parked an Astra convertible outside my mate's home in Spain by moving a cone off the pavement with a 15mph nudge. Unbeknown to me there was a lamppost underneath the cone – went through the bumper and ruined the radiator too. 700 quid bill.

Mik: Not me, but a friend's mum hired a people carrier in the USA to take sprogs and olds on a 'once in a lifetime' holiday following a marriage breakdown. She got freaked at driving on the wrong side of the car and drove

into the barrier exiting the car-hire compound. She had no confidence now so handed the car back and had to pay for the first full week of a two-week hire, plus a \$900 damage excess. She then spent £1m (approx) on taxis over the next two weeks.

ShockDiamonds: My sister went through three Chrysler Sebrings (broken roof mechanisms on all of them!) and a Honda Accord (brakes) in Florida on a two-week holiday.

Colin182: Rental car last Friday: '207 or similar'. Needless to say, I was gutted when it actually turned out to be a 207.

Dannyw100: On my stag do in the French Alps, four of the lads hired a cracking Golf – brand new with a reversing camera. Being from the frozen north-east of England, we stood in awe of such a device. Next morning, hungover and waiting for lifts, whilst the Golf was reversing one of the party dropped his trousers to give the driver an eyeful. Driver panicked and hit said mate in the bollards with the sharp end of the VW badge. Everyone involved was scarred, mentally or in one painful case physically.

JORG GRAY
JG

THREAD OF THE MONTH
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What is the greatest-sounding car ever?

Now there's a question! Is it the flame-spitting Quattro S1, the mk2 Escort, the Subaru WRX or the Ferrari GTO? No? Then perhaps it's the Lexus LFA, or the Aston V8 Vantage or the Alfa 8C. Or maybe the new Morgan 3 Wheeler or a flat-six Porsche. From 2 to 16 cylinders, we've driven all these cars and more in our pursuit of an answer. We've been to the Highlands of Scotland and the

mountains of Italy, and argued long into the night.

You may not agree with our winner, in which case vote for your favourite or nominate another at evo.co.uk – the only rule is that it has to be road-legal. OK, we know the Mazda 787B is a race car but we couldn't resist. Indeed we thought about including more race cars, but that's another issue entirely...

Nick Trott



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Twin

*As if having a two-cylinder engine didn't make the latest addition to the Morgan line-up unusual enough already, it's further distinguished by a deficiency in another department. **Mike Duff** tries the new 3 Wheeler*

freak





Left: air-cooled, 2-litre V-twin engine – the first in a Morgan since before WWII – sits at the very front of the car. Above: offbeat engine note is emitted from a pair of side exhausts; 3 Wheeler is Morgan's first three-wheeler in nearly 60 years

T

he residents of Malvern have had over a century to practise ignoring Morgans. This corner of Worcestershire has been home to the carmaker since it was founded 102 years ago, and the inhabitants are used to seeing some of the company's more radical creations blating to and from the factory. It's not that long since the roads in the nearby hills were used for unofficially testing Morgan's racers after hours, and today the locals barely bat an eyelid as an Aero SuperSports in a custom paintjob comes burbling past.

But even ten decades of practised insouciance are no match for the Morgan 3 Wheeler, which manages to stop Malvern High Street dead in its tracks. There can be few vehicles that offer a greater disparity between the way they sound and the way they look. It's preceded by a noise that sounds like a sighting salvo for an artillery barrage, loud enough to get everybody turning to see what's coming. But, audience won, the sight that greets them when the 3 Wheeler enters the stage is impossibly incongruous, as what looks at first glance like a motorised bathtub whizzes through the frozen street-scene.

MORGAN HAS always been a cult as much as a car company. For the brand's faithful fans – and there are still thousands of them – the traditional 'Moggy' remains the pinnacle of both automotive design and engineering. And for all the attention won by the Aero 8 and its successors – plus the supporting programme of GT racing – the vast majority of the company's business is still its 'traditional' models, the Plus Four, 4/4 and Roadster.

The 3 Wheeler is a synthesis of the modern and traditional strands of Morgan. Inspiration is clearly drawn from the motorbike-engined three-wheelers

that the company started out making, but it's far more than just a modern replica. And, like the Aero and its ilk, the 3 Wheeler is also intended to bring new buyers to the brand.

The idea for the car wasn't Morgan's own, as it cheerfully admits. Several companies have been offered kits enabling replica three-wheelers to be constructed using modern parts – and last year Morgan learned of plans to market a fully-built version in the US, called the Liberty Ace and powered by a Harley Davidson V-twin engine... Morgan production director Steve Morris and finance director Tim Whitworth went to the States to check it out and liked it so much they persuaded the Morgan board to buy out the smaller company, bringing the project 'in house'.

Barely eight months later, Morgan's 3 Wheeler is going into production after a major re-engineering exercise. Seen up close, the finished product is impressive; any fears that it will feel like some kind of backstreet lash-up are instantly dispelled when you see the clean, handsome lines and strong detailing. Matt Humphries, Morgan's design boss, admits he found the 3 Wheeler a real challenge to style due to its 'inside out' nature, with engine and front suspension on display.

Construction is typical Morgan, scaled down: a steel chassis with alloy panels over a wooden frame made out of ash. There are no doors, roof or windscreen, and the interior features little more than a neatly trimmed seat and what's described as an 'aircraft themed' instrument binnacle with dials and flip-switches. The aerospace theme continues with the starter button, sitting under an inhibitor flap that was chosen, according to Humphries, for its resemblance to a bomb release switch.

It's where it gets oily that the 3 Wheeler gets really interesting, with a mechanical spec that makes it genuinely unique. The air-cooled 1982cc V-twin engine comes from S&S, a specialist US bike-engine builder that usually makes motors for top-spec custom machines. (Standard Harley engines were assessed for use, but reckoned not to be up to the task.) Each of the two vast cylinders has nearly a litre of swept capacity, and they share the same pin on the machined crank, firing within a few degrees of each other. That means that although the engine's maximum 'continuous' torque output is 100lb ft, between 3200rpm and 4200rpm, the imbalanced nature of the engine's firing cycle means it actually delivers instantaneous peaks of up to 1800lb ft. Engineering director Mark Reeves reckons that taming this output, and eliminating most of the inherent vibration, was the toughest challenge in the project.

The engine is mated to a five-speed manual transmission sourced from a Mazda MX-5, with this feeding a secondary bevel gearbox that turns a belt drive connected to the rear wheel – a simpler solution than a chain. There's

no need for any differential at the back, where a single 195/55 R16 Vredestein Sport tyre sits attached to a custom hub assembly. The skinny 4.0 S19 65S tyres at the front are normally fitted to vintage road cars, their narrow profile necessary to balance the grip that's available between front and rear. That's the theory, anyway.

'ONE SPECTATOR LIKENED THE SOUND TO THAT OF A .50-CALIBRE MACHINE GUN'

LEGALLY, the 3 Wheeler isn't a car. It falls under the archaic categorisation of being a motorised tricycle. That means it doesn't need to conform to various bits of car-specific legislation, including – Morgan reckons – the requirement to display a front numberplate. Despite the lack of windscreen, helmets are optional too – although you'll need either goggles or chunky glasses to have a chance of

seeing through a 60mph slipstream.

The engine fires into a fat, lumpy idle. The soundtrack is pure Hog, delivered by two side-mounted exhaust pipes. At rest it's an offbeat throb that's almost slow enough for you to count the beats, but add revs and it develops a harder edge – one spectator likened it to the sound of a .50-calibre machine gun. If you can imagine *Easy Rider* without Steppenwolf then you already know what the 3 Wheeler sounds like.

Driving it is a doddle. The seating position could be politely described as 'intimate', especially if you're sitting next to a passenger. The pedal box is tight in the narrow footwell but the clutch bites progressively and – unlike almost every other bike-engined special – the motor produces enough low-down torque for smooth low-speed trundling. The gearbox keeps the clean, accurate action of its donor Mazda, although there's the occasional squeak as the drivebelt slips momentarily, something we're told is going to be tightened up on the production versions.

Brakes? Well, there are some, but the middle pedal requires a disproportionate amount of pressure to get a response.



There's no servo assistance and Morgan claims the heavy pedal is deliberate to prevent lock-ups in the absence of any form of anti-lock. I do get used to it, but I'd still find it easier to modulate a lighter pedal. Braking itself is done by discs at the front and a single drum at the rear.

On the quiet roads of the hills above Malvern it's time to give the 3 Wheeler its head. With the combination of 115bhp and a 480kg (driverless) weight, the Morgan boasts a very respectable power-to-weight ratio, although it's one a hefty driver will have a disproportionate effect on. It certainly feels quick, even if a fair part of the experience comes from sitting directly in the rushing airstream. The official 0-60mph time is 4.5sec, but you'd need careful management of throttle and clutch to manage that without smoking



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Above from left: aircraft style instruments; cosy seating; gearbox is from MX-5; wheel is a modern Momo; leather straps for luggage compartment; fuel tank; aero screens offer minimal protection



EVO'S BEST-SOUNDING
2s & 3s



MORGAN 3 WHEELER
» 115bhp V-twin thumping away just inches from your face



DAIHATSU CHARADE GTT (3-CYL)
» 'Sounds remarkably like a 911,' says Barker



SAAB 2-STROKE (3-CYL)
» Nothing rips through the air quite like it. Great clip on extras.evo.co.uk or via QR code



SMART ROADSTER - WITH TRICK EXHAUST (3-CYL)
» Want proof? See the video at extras.evo.co.uk or via QR code



FIAT 500 TWINAIR (2-CYL)
» 'The thrum orchestra is utterly addictive,' says Richard Porter, p29

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SPECIFICATION

MORGAN 3 WHEELER

Engine 2-cyl V-twin, 1982cc
CO2 TBC
Power 115bhp @ 5300rpm
Torque 100lb ft @ 3200-4200rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers
Rear suspension Swing beam, coil springs, dampers
Brakes 280mm ventilated discs front, 230mm drum rear
Wheels 19in front, 16in rear
Tyres 4.0 S19 65S front, 195/55 R16 rear
Weight (kerb) 480kg
Power-to-weight 243bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 120mph+ (claimed)
Basic price £30,000

evo RATING ★★★★★

up the rear tyre. At higher speeds traction isn't an issue, and the engine's relatively narrow power-band – with no point revving beyond 5500rpm – makes it great fun to run through the closely stacked ratios. The only thing to stop you laughing out loud is the very real chance of getting a mouthful of flies.

The steering is great – light, direct and brimming with communication as the narrow front rubber searches for grip. A novel feature of the 3 Wheeler is the fact you can place the car through driver's-side bends by looking down at the front tyre and suspension, leaving you with no excuse for any apexes that whizz by unclipped. Ultimate grip levels are reasonable, certainly higher than you'd expect from the vintage-look front rubber, but Morgan has deliberately

set up the 3 Wheeler to understeer. At lower speeds the back end is more than happy to respond to a dose of throttle, but as velocities increase so the transition between grip and slip becomes more sudden and harder to call – the quickest way through faster corners could be best described as a three-wheel drift, with front and rear slipping at a similar rate.

Despite its vintage inspiration, the Morgan 3 Wheeler has plenty of appeal in the modern world. This is a vehicle you can drive at something over nine-tenths of its potential without ever putting your licence in serious jeopardy, a way to make 60mph feel like about 120mph. At £30,000 it's not a cheap plaything, but you'd be hard pressed to find a more unique driving experience, whatever your budget.

The £130K, three-

BMW's i8 has 349bhp and can hit 62mph in 4.5sec, but its CO2 rating is

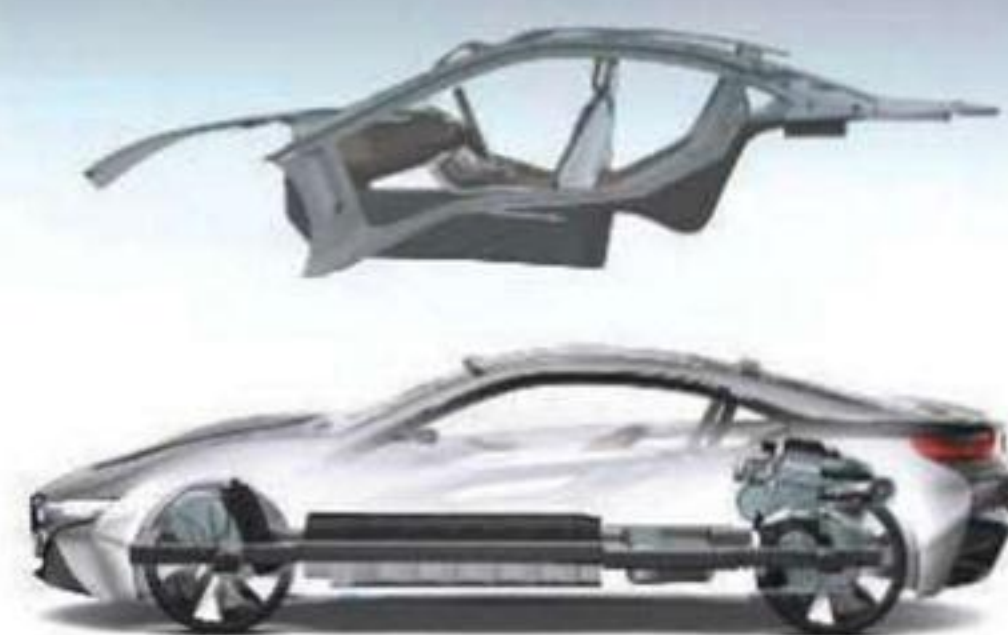


Silent as a toy car, the low, sleek, partially camouflaged BMW i8 Concept appeared from our right as we sat in the semi-darkness, the only sound as it passed the quiet thudding of its narrow wheels on the velodrome-like track's patchwork panels, before it disappeared from view again. Sporty, yet silent: that was the message I got from this teasing glimpse of the car that will be the flagship for the Munich firm's new 'i' sub-brand when it goes live in late 2013.

Later in the presentation, the pull-away stealthiness of the hybrid i8 is promoted as a strong plus-point and I can see how it could be. The fanfare start-up strategies of some conventional performance cars have ensured that I've woken my children and most of the neighbours on some aching early starts. But I also know that the novelty of the soundtrack of a pure electric vehicle has limited appeal; with a single ratio from

rest to maximum speed, there's only a whine of varying pitch to enjoy. So I was surprised that there was no mention of the more conventional aural appeal that the plug-in-hybrid i8 might have, particularly as a look at its specification suggests it could be an oddly familiar and attractive soundtrack that fills the cockpit of this futuristic 2+2...

Unlike its sister car, the i3 (see *evo* Radar), which is a pure electric car, the i8 comes only as a petrol-electric hybrid, with a version of the i3's electric motor driving the front wheels and a turbocharged three-cylinder petrol engine at the back driving the rears. The 1.5-litre, 220bhp, 221lb ft three-pot is a member of BMW's new modular engine family and will see service in the next Mini Cooper and the new front-drive 1-series. Here it's hooked up to a six-speed twin-clutch gearbox. Top up the petrol output with 129bhp and 184lb



ft from the electric motor (which will get you about 20 miles on its own) and you've got a total of 349bhp and 405lb ft, and standing-start performance that'll drop the current M3 – 0-62mph will take just 4.5sec. Yet the i8 will also deliver a CO2 rating of as little as 66g/km.

Lightweight architecture plays its part. 'Born Electric' is the tag line for the i models and they are lighter than they would be if they were conventional cars converted to electric drive. Both the i3 and i8 have two primary parts, a 'drive

cylinder hybrid

just 66g/km. And it goes on sale in 2013. **John Barker** takes a closer look



module' and 'life module'. The drive module forms the vehicle platform and incorporates the drivetrain, batteries and suspensions. The i3 drive module has a flat slab of batteries while the lower-built i8 has a smaller, liquid-cooled lithium-ion battery pack formed into what would be the transmission tunnel.

Glued and screwed to each platform are the first series-production CFRP (carbonfibre reinforced plastic) bodies, clad with thermoplastic panels. BMW reckons this holistic approach saves 250-300kg, more than offsetting the weight premium added by the electric motor and batteries. The kerb weight of the i8 is around 1500kg, distributed 50/50 front/rear and giving a lower centre of gravity than a conventional car. The i8's aerodynamics are said to be 'of an order not seen before', so the 155mph top speed (limited) is no surprise.

The headline fuel economy and CO2

figures are a bit misleading, though, as indeed they are for all cars that can run for a limited distance on pure electric power. The i8 can complete a chunk of the NEDC (New European Drive Cycle) test before the petrol motor kicks in, which gives a bit of a false impression. Drive it any decent distance as a performance car and you won't be getting 104mpg or emitting 66g/km, but with the engine-driven generator and some regenerative braking recharging the battery pack, you'll have the best part of 350bhp when you pin the throttle, and four-wheel-drive traction.

The bigger kick will come from behind, which is very BMW, though the sound might be more familiar to Porsche owners. An in-line triple can sound very like a throbby flat-six, and given that the sound will be coming from behind the i8's cabin and possibly overlaid with the whistle and chatter of a turbo, it might

just sound like a 911 Turbo. Given the i8 will cost around £130K when it goes on sale in two years' time, that's perhaps the least we enthusiasts can hope for.

Even the i3 will cost around £36K, proof that BMW is making an early claim on the premium sector of this growing market. I can't help wondering what sort of car the i8 would be if its lightweight structure simply had a V6 in the back. Or perhaps a 3-litre straight-six...

Left: CFRP body sits atop the drive platform, with batteries mounted low in the centre of the car and the petrol engine to the rear



RALLYING CRY

*When it comes to four-cylinder engines, it's those found on the rally stages that make the best noises, as **Henry Catchpole** discovers when he tries three giants from the last three decades of top-level rallying*







*‘THE BUZZING
RESONANCE IS LIKE A
DENSE SWARM OF VERY
ANGRY HORNETS BEING
FIRED OUT OF THE
EXHAUST PIPE’*

Silence. Perhaps the rustling of wind in the canopy of branches above, but that’s all. You strain your ears against this almost oppressive lack of noise, trying to pick up the first distant vibrations on the air. Then you hear it, muffled by the mossy banks and tight-knit tree-trunks, but definitely there: the sound of a car accelerating hard.

Then the sound stops. The car must be braking. Then the noise reappears, louder this time and increasing in volume as it works its way closer. You hear the sharp reports as the driver backs off, then the staccato blips as he grapples with a long, gripless corner. A shrill blast from a marshal’s whistle and the ball of furious noise is upon you and filling the air and your head. For a fleeting second or two you see the bright livery or maybe just the headlights in the dark... and then you’re listening again, plotting the

slides, noting the braking points, charting the crew’s onward course purely by sound. The rally car comes under more aural scrutiny than most.

BDA is probably only trumped by DFV in terms of iconic three-letter engine labels. The letters stand, rather prosaically, for ‘Belt Drive, A series’, and the famous engine was, of course, the brainchild of the same person who designed the DFV: Keith Duckworth (the ‘worth’ in Cosworth). It is, I would argue, the best-sounding in-line four out there.

The 2-litre variant is found here in a truly iconic mk2 Escort – one of the Rothmans cars run by the David Sutton team. This very car, DKP 191T, was driven to victory by Ari Vatanen on the Acropolis and 1000 Lakes rallies in his title-winning 1981 season. Open up the bonnet and you’re presented with simplicity itself: a tall block of an engine with the Belt Driven part of the name very obviously at the front.





Right: 2-litre four-cylinder puts out 265bhp; note the drive belt on the front of the engine. Below: driving the ex-Vatanen Escort is a dream come true for Catchpole. Bottom right: it likes to go sideways, as the rear tyres (bottom left) destroyed by several laps of Blyton prove



The car is owned by Andrew Haddon, who very kindly takes me for a few extremely sideways laps of Blyton Park then swaps the rear tyres side-to-side (there are more left-handers than rights, and, yes, it really was that sideways) before inviting me to finish them off!

It's something of a dream come true to drive this car that's the same age as me. It's instantly loud inside, the distinctive growl of the BDA filling the sparse interior even before we've moved out of the makeshift service area. Andrew warns me that it's a bit agricultural, and the gearshift certainly feels loose, with a clackety rattle when you shake it across the gate in neutral, but the actual engagement as you pull the lever across and back for the dog-leg first is sweet.

The very low register, in the first couple of thousand revs of each gear, is a fruity grumble, but always with a hard-as-nails edge to its building *bwaaaaarrrrrrr*. Despite the noise, I'm instructed to *rev* it more

revs and the rortiness builds with the volume until right at the top it morphs in character to an almost buzzing resonance, as though a dense swarm of very angry hornets is being fired out of the exhaust pipe. Once you give it the full revs it's amazing how quick it feels, too. It's certainly not all mouth and no trousers.

Because DKP is still running gravel-spec springs and dampers it's a bit of a struggle to get it turned in initially. To get it into a proper mk2 stance you need to trail-brake on the way into the corner

and then, with the front tyres tucked towards the apex, you'll already have the rear nicely unweighted and much more easily provoked out of line with the throttle. The Escort actually seems to feel happiest when it's oversteering, with everything loaded up and communicative, yet the controls lighter because you're sliding. Being the pansy brought up on power steering that I am, my forearms are absolutely pumped by the time my stint's over, but the smile on my face is huge.

'I BOUGHT ONE'



» I can't quite believe I've actually gone and done it. I always knew that the need to go rallying again would bubble up like rust in a sill.

When it did (all of two days after I did my last rally in the Suzuki...), I knew that the only likely way I would get back on a stage was if I bought my own car. I also knew that I wanted that car to be rear-wheel drive, and fairly quickly I set my heart on a mk2 Escort, which was a bit silly really because they're a lot of money for what they are. But they do look great.

I procrastinated for a long time, scouring the adverts and looking for just the right thing at just the right price – something which obviously doesn't actually exist. But then, after driving Andrew Haddon's Rothman's car, I knew I had to pull my finger out and buy one. Which is why I'll soon be heading off to Morecambe to pick up my mk2 Escort! Expect a full debrief in Fast Fleet soon.

Henry Catchpole



A FEW DAYS before I drove the Escort, Prodrive very kindly allowed me to drive the car you can see here, the very first WRC Impreza, on the roads around the company's Banbury base. Thanks Prodrive – and thanks to the car's generous owner, too. It's worth stating for the record that I think this, the first of the two-door rally Subarus, is quite probably the coolest-looking Impreza of all time.

With its locked rear diff (which is particularly noticeable at low speed) and front end that darts instantly at the slightest movement of the small wheel, it's incredibly aggressive to drive. It doesn't feel loose and oversteery, but you can't imagine that it's ever once understeered in its life.

The gearshift is a thing of wonder too. It's one of the last H-pattern gearboxes in a WRC car but it's nothing like a standard gearshift. All you need to do is just begin the shift, give it a slight push in the right

'THERE'S NEVER A CLEAN EDGE TO THE SOUND; IT'S ALWAYS OSCILLATING'

direction, and it almost leaps out of your hand as it snaps through into the next ratio with a bang that sounds alarmingly heavy, despite the shift action being amazingly light. You're permanently flicking the lever around the H too, because the gearing is so short.

It might seem strange to be wearing ear-defenders when I'm meant to be writing about the greatest-sounding cars, but it is so incredibly loud inside that they're absolutely necessary to have any hope of talking to the person in the passenger seat. In any case, from inside, 80 per cent of the noise seems to be coming from the transmission.

If you were standing on the verge as we went past it would be different, but... I'll come right out and say it... I think we chose the wrong Impreza for this feature. There is another car in Prodrive's collection that we should really have driven if it had been taxed: Colin McRae's Group A Impreza. You still get a distinctive burble from the later WRC car when it starts up, but in truth it's nothing compared to the purring *dubadubadubaduba* of the Imprezas that came before it.

Some initially claimed that the change in sound came because Subaru had

altered the firing order of the 2-litre turbocharged boxer engine, but in fact the order has always remained 1, 3, 2, 4, with one bank firing entirely, then the other. The sound became smoother because the length of the exhaust headers was changed. In the standard road car at the time (and the Group A car) the exhaust manifolds were simply as short as possible, which resulted in unequal lengths and the distinctive sound. However, with World Rally regulations the exhaust manifolds no longer had to be standard, so Prodrive's engineers fitted equal length manifolds, which evened out the firing pulses but lost some of the boxer burble.

Anyway, the Impreza has one of the most wonderful engine notes ever. If you listen carefully you realise that it's a very low sound with no high-pitched register to it at all, even as the revs rise. There's never a clean edge to the sound either; it's always oscillating rather like if you gargle or make a *brrrrrrr* sound with loose lips. To me, this slightly deep, woolly sound somehow makes it seem wonderfully comforting. Even emanating from a rally Impreza in full cry, where it's interjected with pops and crackles like small French bangers going off, it still sounds friendly.

The first of the new WRC-spec Imprezas, this very car was used by Colin McRae for testing on the 1997 Monte Carlo Rally with his then-new co-driver, Nicky Grist, in the passenger seat





Left: turbocharged 2-litre flat-four not quite as distinctive here as in the earlier Group A Imprezas, but it is good for 310bhp. Above: roof-mounted vent feeds cool air to cockpit. Bottom: Catchpole at the wheel; headphones essential for communicating with co-driver



WORLD RALLY CARS aren't generally noted for their soundtracks. Back at Blyton, however, I'm about to drive a WR car that sounds quite extraordinary. The last of the mk1 Focus-shaped World Rally cars came in 2005, and with a huge chin and massive rear wing it looks like a much more formidable car than the original Martini/Valvoline-sponsored Focus of 1999. In fact the looks are deceiving, because I think it's the easiest rally car I've ever driven. Possibly the easiest car, period.

The trickiest bit, as with most competition cars, is to get off the line without stalling, but even this goes without a hitch and once you're moving you can forget about the clutch pedal entirely and move your left foot over to the brake pedal.

The gearshift is operated by one big carbonfibre paddle, which remains stationary behind the right-hand side of the steering wheel – pull it towards you with the tips of your fingers to change up, push it away with the back of those same fingers to change down. Despite never having used such a system before, it feels completely natural.

The steering's just as reactive and the turn-in just as instant as in the eight-years-older Subaru, but the whole car is so much smoother to drive. 2005 was the last year for active front and rear differentials and they clearly play a massive part in the car's ease of use. You simply approach a corner with what feels like a slightly uncomfortable amount of speed, turn in, get back on the throttle and hold it open so that the diffs can sort out the resulting slide. Steering inputs are relatively small, even when you're in quite big slides, and the whole process feels calm. (Whether Steve Perez, the

car's owner, feels calm in the passenger seat is another matter!)

To be honest, the Focus is the closest thing to playing on an Xbox or PlayStation that I've ever felt. That might sound dull, but it really isn't – it still requires input and a bit of thought, but it just makes translating those thoughts into the desired result wonderfully easy. Anyway, you're sliding a WRC Focus around. How could that *ever* be dull?

It's not dull outside either, because the '05 Focus makes the most incredible sound as it tackles a stage. Unusually, you've got noises coming from both ends, so to speak. If you were a spectator on the inside of a corner, with the nose of the car nearest to you as it slid through, you would hear extraordinary high-pitched *tssbooo, tssbooo, tssbooooo* sounds, like a choir of mice sneezing through loud-hailers or a gun battle in *Star Wars*, as the anti-lag manages the turbo boost on part or closed throttle. If you were standing on the outside of the corner, you would not only get hit with all the stones and dirt being spat up by the scrabbling tyres, you would also hear the more usual ripping chainsaw sound under throttle, interspersed with a disharmonious firing squad as unburnt fuel ignites in the exhaust when the driver backs off. It's not just one instrument, it's a whole orchestra on wheels.

SO THERE WE ARE, a whistle-stop tour through the last 30 years of rallying. Each one of these cars is as beguiling and as different to drive as it is to listen to. And they all demonstrate that whether the cylinders are standing neatly in line or horizontally opposed, in rallying form, the humble four is capable of producing some of the most spine-tingling engine soundtracks ever.



Above: turbo 2-litre four produces 300bhp. Top: gearshifts are activated by the single large paddle behind the steering wheel. Right: control panel moved to between the seats to help optimise weight distribution



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EVO'S BEST-SOUNDING 4s



SUBARU IMPREZA P1
 » Actually, any early Impreza will do. A gloriously unique sound from the turbo flat-fours.



FORD ESCORT RS1800 BDA
 » 'And the 2-litre rally cars with giant Webers sounded even better,' says Nick Trott.



CATERHAM R300/400/500
 » So close, you can touch the blaring exhaust. Wouldn't recommend it, though...



HONDA S2000
 » All Honda VTECs sound fabulous, but with no roof the S2000 sounds the best of all.



BMW M3 (E30)
 » Workmanlike, but with a sensational hollow induction roar. DTM cars off the scale.

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'THE RIPPING CHAINSAW SOUND IS INTERSPERSED WITH A DISHARMONIOUS FIRING SQUAD'

SPECIFICATIONS

	FORD ESCORT RS1800	SUBARU IMPREZA WRC	FORD FOCUS WRC05
Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 2000cc	Flat-four, 1994cc, turbo	In-line 4-cyl, 2000cc, turbo
Location	Front, longitudinal	Front, longitudinal	Front, transverse
Power	265bhp @ 8000rpm	310bhp @ 5500rpm	300bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque	160lb ft @ 6750rpm	480lb ft @ 4000rpm	c400lb ft @ 4000rpm
Transmission	Five-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive	Six-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel drive	Six-speed sequential gearbox, four-wheel drive
Front suspension	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Five-link, struts, coil springs, dampers	Trailing arms, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Trailing arms, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Wheels	6 x 13in (tarmac)	8 x 18in (tarmac)	8 x 18in front and rear (tarmac)
Tyres	175/60 R13	225/40 R18	235/40 ZR18 front and rear
Weight	980kg	1230kg	1230kg
Power-to-weight	275bhp/ton	256bhp/ton	248bhp/ton
0-60mph	6.0sec (est)	3.5sec (est)	3.5sec (est)
Top speed	115mph (gearing limited)	120mph (gearing limited)	120mph (gearing limited)

evo RATING



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WRC v GROUP B

The Audi Sport Quattro is one of the best-sounding five-cylinder cars ever, but is the Group B legend as quick as a modern, four-cylinder WRC Focus?

Henry Catchpole finds out

Please don't spoil it by looking at the table of figures. First take a moment to ponder this simple question: which type of rally car is faster, WRC or Group B? One has all the technology of launch control and paddleshifts, the other has so much power that it spits flames. You can spend hours wondering. I know.

It's exactly that same question that Steve Perez, the lucky and generous man who owns both these cars, was asking himself when I was introduced to him at the Goodwood Festival of Speed this year. I ventured that *evo* possessed the requisite timing equipment for recording acceleration runs and a week later a day at Blyton had been set up. If only all tests were so easy to organise!

The cars that we'll be using are a 2007 Ford Focus WRC and a 1984/5 Group B Audi Sport Quattro, as driven by Hannu Mikkola. The Focus is up first. As we pull to a stop at the start of the back straight, I clutch the VBOX tighter and crane my neck to try and see over the dash from the super-low co-driver's seat. Steve hauls back on the upright carbonfibre handbrake, selects first gear with a *clonk*, pins the throttle, pauses with the revs hovering, then releases the handbrake.

What follows is the same impressive, unflustered smoothness as a theme-park ride. Like the other WRC cars in this

issue, the noise inside is almost entirely gearbox whine. After the initial dash, the 300bhp Focus noticeably slows its rate of acceleration, but it would still be plenty terrifying enough on a forest stage.

I've never been in a car that sounds so pissed off as the Sport Quattro. The first part of the rev-range has the distinctive off-beat five-cylinder warble, but it's louder and more brutal. Then at the same time as your body starts being pressed harder into the bucket seat, your ears hear the first incredible sucks and hisses of the forced induction system as it starts channelling compressed air. Imagine yourself stuck in an aeroplane lavatory during turbulence with the loo on constant flush and a massive irate snake hissing at you. (They should make a film of that. Samuel L Jackson could star...)

Steve launches the car with the assurance of one who is very used to being counted down to a stage start. In the first three gears, his hand has to leave the wheel and go for the upchange almost as soon as the turbo starts spooling because the turbocharged kick catapults the rev-counter round into the red. Each change appears to interrupt the flow horribly after the seamless progress of the Focus, so I'm sure the 396bhp Audi's times must be down as a result, but when it's lit, the Quattro feels like it's trying even harder to squeeze my spine into the seat and fold



my shoulders round in front of me.

The times are revealing. Despite the '07 Focus's launch control, both cars are blindingly fast and almost identical off the line up to 30mph. To give you some idea of how impressive this is, an exceptional four-wheel-drive road car would take 1.7sec, a Veyron 1.4sec.

If you were then just to glance at the standard 0-60mph and 0-100mph times, you would conclude that the Group B Quattro is fast but not quite fast enough to beat the WRC car. However, closer inspection is required. We know that the gearchanges in the Audi happened at 34mph, 55mph, 75mph and 98mph. If you look at the 10mph increments where a gearchange *didn't* interrupt the flow (60-70mph or 80-90mph), the Quattro is significantly quicker. If the long, cross-gate shift into fifth hadn't come at 98mph, the Quattro would easily have been faster to 100mph, as it was already ahead at 90mph and is ahead again by 110mph.

It's pretty much a dead heat, if you ask me. You can be amazed that a 25-year-old car is so stonkingly fast, but you can also be amazed that the WRC car's technology allows it to sneak a splitter's width in front of a car with a vastly better power-to-weight ratio. Either way, both are incredible.

ACCELERATION

	AUDI	FORD
0-10	0.46	0.40
0-20	0.91	0.86
0-30	1.33	1.31
0-40	2.45	1.77
0-50	3.02	2.64
0-60	4.09	3.48
0-70	4.85	4.53
0-80	6.25	5.75
0-90	7.26	7.33
0-100	9.45	9.25
0-110	10.96	11.81

2007 Focus (right) feels slick as it accelerates through its paddleshifted gears; flame-spitting, short-wheelbase Quattro (above right) feels ballistic, but hampered by its conventional gearshift. Times (above) confirm what is felt inside the cars

SPECIFICATIONS

AUDI SPORT QUATTRO

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2110cc, turbo

Location Front, longitudinal

Power 396bhp @ 7500rpm

Torque 339lb ft @ 5500rpm

Transmission Six-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel drive

Suspension MacPherson struts, springs, dampers, anti-roll bar (front and rear)

Wheels 9 x 16in front and rear (tarmac)

Tyres 23-62/390 front and rear, Michelin TRX

Weight (dry) 960kg

Power-to-weight 419bhp/ton

Produced 1984-1985

FORD FOCUS RS WRC 07

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo

Location Front, transverse

Power 300bhp+ @ 6000rpm

Torque n/a

Transmission Five-speed sequential gearbox, four-wheel drive

Suspension MacPherson struts front, trailing arms rear, springs, dampers, anti-roll bars

Wheels 8 x 18in front and rear (tarmac)

Tyres 235/40 ZR18 front and rear, Pirelli

Weight (dry) 1230kg

Power-to-weight 248bhp/ton

Produced 2007

★★★★★ **evo** RATING ★★★★★

EVO'S BEST-SOUNDING 5s



AUDI SPORT QUATTRO (ROAD CAR)

» 'Sweet and melodic, with turbo chuff and chatter,' says John Barker



AUDI TT RS

» Its turbo 2.5-litre TFSI unit is so good it was named as evo's 2009 Engine of the Year. Sublime



FORD FOCUS RS500

» At maximum throttle its sound is truly menacing. Be afraid



VOLVO 850 T5

» Especially the five-cylinder BTCC cars (visit extras.evo.co.uk or scan the QR code)



VW V5

» 'Ideally in a leggy SEAT Toledo - they get quicker and louder as they get older,' says Mike Duff

AGREE OR DISAGREE? Go to community.evo.co.uk



'IT FEELS LIKE IT'S TRYING TO SQUEEZE MY SPINE INTO THE SEAT AND FOLD MY SHOULDERS ROUND IN FRONT OF ME'



SEE THE VIDEO AT WWW.EVO.CO.UK

FIVES ALIVE!

Audi's five-cylinder RS3 is the fastest accelerating hot hatch ever to enter production. But it may soon face a challenge from another car with an identical cylinder count: Volvo's C30 Polestar. **Henry Catchpole** finds out which is quicker with a drag race

The Audi RS3 is undoubtedly the fastest production hot hatch on sale. It's not just fast in hot hatch terms either. Audi claims 0-62mph in 4.6sec, but on a soaking wet Bruntingthorpe runway our timing gear recorded a 4.3sec 0-60mph time. Later, on a drier surface, this fell to 4.1sec, with 100mph arriving in 10.7sec. There have even been reports of a 0-60 time starting with a three. For the record, there isn't a single Aston this side of a One-77 that will live with that sort of acceleration.

The 335bhp RS3 might not be the most dynamically exciting car, but those figures mean it is capital-F Fast. Some might call it *unnecessarily* fast for a very practical-looking hatchback, though you can bet that someone will try to beat it – what else are lines in the sand for? But which daredevil manufacturer is going to go a bit crazy with some boost pressure and try to better that performance? Vauxhall possibly. Maybe Ford. What's that you say? *Volvo?*

Although the Swedish racing blue C30 you see here is currently just a concept, it really could make it into production. And if it does, there's a good chance it might just take the crown of hottest hatch away from Ingolstadt. Under the bonnet is a turbocharged straight-five (just like the Audi), this one lifted from the Focus RS500. This was, of course, originally a Volvo engine, but it's come a long way since then and now produces an almighty 399bhp and 376lb ft of torque.

Clearly these sorts of numbers would be absurd in a front-wheel-drive car, so this C30 has become four-wheel-drive

with the help of some Volvo V50 running gear (a Haldex system, also Swedish) and a Quaife limited-slip diff in the rear axle. Add some Öhlins suspension and the same wheels you'll see on lots of Ferrari 458s and you've got a truly tantalising machine. But it's a concept car and, as we know, concept cars are only allowed to be driven at 30mph for fear of spontaneous disintegration. Except that this is a concept car engineered by Swedish Touring Car team Polestar, and it clearly hasn't heard about the norm...

When I ask Polestar marketing director Hans Bååth (pronounced 'Boat') if he minds doing a drag race against the RS3 for the video cameras, he's happy to oblige. I have the assassin's quiet confidence that the fragile Volvo will be easy meat for the RS3. For a start (so to speak) I've got launch control in the Audi, and it works brilliantly. Simply select Sport for the ESP and DSG 'box, press hard on the brake with your left foot, pin the throttle to the floor, watch the revs settle at 3250rpm and then unleash hell when the hankie drops. The sound as I engage the launch control system is fantastic – a deep, rapid-fire *bububububububub* – but the Polestar to my left is arguably even more raucous as Bååth raises the revs in readiness.

This could be sticking my neck out a bit, but I'm going to say that the two

most distinctive (not necessarily best, but instantly identifiable) engine notes are the boxer four and the in-line five cylinder. There is just something about the unbalanced warbling note of a five that makes it very recognisable. I imagine if Johnny Cash had gargled mouthwash (or more probably bourbon) before he got into bed he would have sounded a bit like a five-cylinder.

Unscientific though drag races are, they're still revealing. There's a fractional pause in the RS3 (as there is in most two-pedal cars) between requesting launch and it actually occurring, and the manual 'boxed Volvo seizes the chance to leap away and open a small advantage. The Audi is quickly scrabbling onto its tail though, and the gap stabilises. I'm certain that a couple of DSG flat-shifts will claw back some ground, but there's no such luck, just an almighty bang like

Right: Polestar and RS3 go head-to-head. Top right: Polestar makeover has made C30 look every bit as purposeful as the RS3





an industrial nail-gun as Bååth rams home each upchange. Some concept car. Once into third, the C30's extra power starts to tell, and by the time we're up to 130mph the Volvo has eked out some daylight and we have a clear winner.

A drive of the Polestar round Bruntingthorpe's few sweeping corners reveals more roll than I was expecting, but also a more engaging chassis than the RS3's. The steering is weightier and more feelsome too, and it's allied to a front end that's got more bite – it needs fine tuning, but it's impressive.

For anyone that grew up watching estate cars tackle the BTCC, there is still something very cool about a fast Volvo. So, I hereby issue a plea for a small production run... the crown of fastest hot hatch awaits.

'THE POLESTAR IS ARGUABLY EVEN MORE RAUCOUS THAN THE RS3 AS ITS REVS RISE IN READINESS'



SPECIFICATIONS

AUDI RS3

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo

Power 335bhp @ 5400-6000rpm

Torque 332lb ft @ 1600-5300rpm

Transmission Seven-speed DCT with paddleshift, four-wheel drive with electronically controlled centre clutch, ESP, EDL

Brakes Ventilated discs, 370mm front, 310mm rear, ABS, EBD

Weight (kerb) 1575kg

Power-to-weight 261bhp/ton

0-60mph 4.1sec

Top speed 155mph (limited)

Basic price £39,900

VOLVO C30 POLESTAR

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2521cc, turbo

Power 399bhp @ 6000rpm

Torque 376lb ft @ 4000rpm

Transmission Six-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel drive with Haldex central clutch, rear limited-slip differential

Brakes Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 330mm rear, ABS

Weight (kerb) n/a

Power-to-weight n/a

0-60mph 4.0sec (est)

Top speed 155mph (limited)

Basic price n/a



CAN'T READ IT?
EXTRAS.EVO.CO.UK

SEE THE VIDEO
AT WWW.EVO.CO.UK

★★★★★ **evo** RATING ★★★★★

THE JOY

*It's the wail of the V6 versus the growl of the flat-six as the latest Mercedes SLK350 takes on the established mid-sized roadster of choice, the Porsche Boxster S. **John Barker** decides which six is best*



Look at the statistics and this is one of the most finely balanced twin tests imaginable. The list prices, engine sizes, power outputs and performance claims are all within a few points of each other. Then you look at the cars and they couldn't be more different, the SLK front-engined and chunky like a shrunken SLS, the Boxster mid-engined with a lower-slung, smooth, palindromic shape. Indeed, from the moment the two roadsters first appeared in 1996 dynamically there has been clear water

between them, the fabric-capped Porsche having always been the driver's choice. The appeal of the little Mercedes, with its once unique folding hard-top, has always lain in other areas, and most of all in the showroom.

Can the third-generation SLK get any closer to the Boxster? In its armoury is an all-new direct-injection 3.5-litre V6 engine that produces surprisingly similar numbers to the 3.5-litre V6 it replaces, except that it delivers a remarkable 167g/km of CO₂ (Porsches tend to be rather efficient but this PDK-equipped Boxster S is rated at 221g/km). All very laudable, but what we're really hoping to find in this SLK350 Sport is a more willing,

OF SIX



free-breathing and enthusiastic-sounding V6 than the effective but asthmatic lump that used to sit in the SLK's nose. A bit more dynamic finesse wouldn't go amiss either.

Since we've mentioned it, let's take a look at the Merc's new hooter. Inspired by the current SL and SLS, it looks like it should be attached by elastic cord, so uncomfortably grafted on does it look. Still, at least there's no doubt you're looking at the new SLK. Pop a private plate on the Boxster and most people wouldn't know if it was freshly minted or five years old.

The SLK overhaul is much more successful on the inside, where SLS detaches, including a quartet of bullseye air vents

and a centre console that's a solid-looking slab of satin-finish aluminium, help give it a glittery, expensive feel. Haul open the surprisingly heavy door, slide into the deeply padded driver's seat and you're in a feel-good place, especially at night if you've ticked the option box for ambient lighting, which adds slivers of warm red detailing.

The new V6 sounds like most V6s; appealingly gruff and bassy at idle, a bit restrained through the mid-range and a fraction buzzy by 5000rpm. It's worth pushing on to the red line, though, as there's a decent finish – the peak of 302bhp arrives at 6500rpm. It's not quite as vocal as, say, the Nissan 370Z's V6,



‘YOU FIND YOURSELF TAKING THE PORSCHE’S FLAT-SIX OUT TO THE RED LINE BECAUSE OF THE ENTHUSIASM OF ITS DELIVERY’

THE BEST-SOUNDING PORSCHE ENGINE



What is the best-sounding Porsche engine? I could spend years researching this. Therefore I need to be logical. First, nothing turbocharged makes the grade. So no 936, 934, 935, 956, 962, etc. Same goes for the road cars. The GT2 RS is memorable, the noise it makes certainly isn't.

Old stuff? The four-cam 356 is a honey, but Porsches should benefit from the angry bite of six cylinders or more. The current

4.0 RS is a musical instrument, but the Carrera GT's V10 makes it sound limp. The 964 RS has a pleasing, resonant warble unmatched in recent models, but both defer to the mechanically injected 3.0 RSR from 1974. On open pipes, it sings.

But the best for me was a little 904 GTS I drove recently with a Carrera 6 motor fitted. It's the same engine as found in the 911R. It has the best intake noise of any Porsche. **Chris Harris**

Porsche's interior (right) looks quite staid next to that of Mercedes (opposite). Below: new SLK's nose appears out of proportion with rest of the car. Bottom: Boxster styling perhaps too familiar



but it's a bit smoother and it's a proper step on in character from the previous V6. No manual gearbox is offered this time, though, so it is hooked up to the now familiar 7G-Tronic automatic. It has Sport and Manual modes as before, but Comfort has been replaced with Economy. This feels the same as the old Comfort did, with early, gentle upshifts, so any reprogramming to improve the CO2 figure must be subtle. Of more obvious benefit is the standard-fit start/stop system, which works as sweetly as any other we've tried.

Dynamically, the SLK350 feels good initially. The steering draws unnecessary attention to itself at parking speed, the rate feeling unnaturally quick and false (this car has optional 'Direct Steering', which adds a variable ratio to speed-sensitive assistance), but once you're rolling it's fine. You sense that the ride has a preference for smoother roads, the sort more common in Germany than the English Midlands, but the car feels poised and compliant at an amble. The surprise is that, with the roof up, it doesn't feel or sound quite as solid and refined as the coupe look suggests, with a flutter of wind noise on the driver's side glazing and a constant zizz from somewhere behind.

Step into the Porsche and you instantly miss the panache and contrasts of the Mercedes' interior. It's well made and neat enough, but not even optional



Above: Merc's chassis feels fine on smoother roads, but on rougher tarmac it starts to feel like it's struggling.

Left: Porsche, by contrast, dismisses imperfections quickly

leatherwork (or lurid colours) can deflect the impression that the Boxster's cockpit is a bit plain. The lower driving position conveys a greater sense of purpose, however, and there's something instantly exotic about the rasp of the engine coming from behind you. Like the SLK, this Boxster has a seven-speed transmission, although this one is optional (£2K) and of the twin-clutch variety. Also optional is the simple three-spoke steering wheel with paddle-shift controls, which is a £300 must-have.

There's a weightiness to the Porsche's controls right from the off, the steering in particular feeling solidly engineered. The PDK Boxster S is the best part of 100kg lighter (the kerb weights are 1380 and

1465kg respectively) but the pressure needed for the pedals and the weight of the steering give the opposite impression. The PDK 'box is every bit as smooth and silky shifting as the SLK's torque-converter auto, and the Boxster's chassis rides with a similar suppleness, feeling taut over in-town ripples and bumps but absorbent at a moderate A-road pace.

The Porsche's 3.4-litre flat-six is a fraction more potent at 306bhp but delivers a little less peak torque at higher revs, and although the differences are small, that's just how it feels when you pick up the pace. The Boxster seems to have shorter gearing in the lower ratios but punching out of turns the SLK feels initially stronger. Keep the throttle pinned and the Boxster feels quicker outright, and you find yourself taking the flat-six out to the red line because of the enthusiasm of its delivery. The SLK's V6 is punchy low down but seems to plateau soon after and stay linear to the limiter, whereas the Boxster's flat-six comes to a first boil at 4000rpm, its note hardening at the same time, and then gets ever more enthusiastic as the revs build until it's spinning sweetly past 7000rpm. At which point PDK will shift up smartly, crisply even if you've prodded the Sport button. There's Sport-Plus too, which gives the throttle and gearshift an even sharper edge, but this feels more like a trackday setting unless you're calling the shifts in manual mode.

As the road gets more lumpy, the SLK feels more unsure. A big dip at the side of the road challenges the travel and damping of the suspension, while lateral ridges punch through the veneer of control with equally sharp cautions. This car doesn't have the continuously variable damping of the Dynamic Handling Package, and the Porsche's chassis is similarly stock, lacking as it



does the optional PASM (Porsche Active Suspension Management) adaptive dampers. But while the Porsche feels the blows just the same, as features ed Catchpole says, its damping is 'ruthless'; the bump hits and is dealt with in one bite, never to trouble the chassis again.

Tackling a challenging road, you wonder whether the Merc's Direct Steering is giving a strange feel on turn-in; at a moderate speed it feels like there's too much steering weight as you turn into a decent corner. However, pick up the pace and you discover that what you've felt is the reluctance of the nose to change direction. An all-new, all-aluminium V6 it might be, but, when you turn, the SLK350's nose wants to continue the way it was headed. This is a 300bhp, rear-drive roadster, of course, so you should have options, and you do. They go beyond managing the understeer into an enticing corner and readying a dab of oppo when you power

up for the exit, but we'll get to that.

Fundamentally, the Porsche's grip front and rear ebbs and flows in exactly the same way as the Mercedes'; it has a slightly nose-light feel compared with the SLK and when you push it into a tight-ish turn the front takes a moment to bite. Get back on the gas keenly after the nose has locked onto the line and the rear will nudge out at the very exit of the turn. However, the differences are significant. For starters, the Porsche is much less troubled by bumps into, through and out of the corner, while

through the seat of your pants – and especially your hands – you can feel the quality of the surface that the Boxster chassis is keeping at arm's length.

In comparison, the Merc feels like it's in a messy fight with the surface, constantly getting drawn into a distracting brawl. Jump on the brake pedal of the Porsche and there's a marvellous progression and great deceleration before individual wheels begin to lock. Do the same in the SLK and early in the pedal travel it feels like all four wheels are pulling in different directions. All that said, you can choose to ignore what's going on at this level and work with the big picture, to push what is a seven-tenths car to eleven-tenths and simply manage the excesses. The stability control never switches off entirely so there's only so much you can get up to, but it's cathartic, working the SLK on the limit of its grip, getting it dancing to your tune, swinging with momentum.

Your average SLK owner won't do that, of course, but it seems a shame that they have to put up with a pretty ropey ride as well as dynamic wooliness. I'm not sure that Direct Steering adds to the experience, either. As it has always been, the Boxster is the drivers' car here. Visually bland, inside and out, it undeniably is, but dynamically it still leads the way. It's also amazingly practical, even though mid-engined cars aren't supposed to be. The SLK's roof folds magically into its boot but in doing so claims half the boot space, while the canvas roof of the Boxster folds on top of its engine, leaving a decent boot front and rear. Boringly obvious and practical the Porsche might be, but nobody, not BMW with its Z4, Nissan with the 370Z Roadster or Audi with the TT Roadster, gets close to its all-round ability. Except on paper, of course.

'AS IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN, THE BOXSTER IS THE DRIVERS' CAR HERE'

SPECIFICATIONS

PORSCHE BOXSTER S	MERCEDES-BENZ SLK350 SPORT
Engine Flat-six, 3436cc	Engine V6, 3498cc
Location Mid, longitudinal	Location Front, longitudinal
CO2 221g/km	CO2 167g/km
Power 306bhp @ 6400rpm	Power 302bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 265lb ft @ 4400-5500rpm	Torque 273lb ft @ 3500-5250rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual gearbox (seven-speed PDK optional), rear-wheel drive, PSM	Transmission Seven-speed automated gearbox, rear-wheel drive, ESP
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Front suspension Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled discs, 318mm front, 299mm rear, ABS, EBD	Brakes Ventilated 343mm discs front, solid 300mm discs rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 8 x 18in front, 9 x 18in rear	Wheels 7.5 x 18in front, 8.5 x 18in rear
Tyres 235/40 ZR18 front, 265/40 ZR18 rear	Tyres 255/40 ZR18 front, 245/35 ZR18 rear
Weight (kerb) 1355kg	Weight (kerb) 1465kg
Power-to-weight 229bhp/ton	Power-to-weight 209bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.3sec (claimed)	0-62mph 5.6mph (claimed)
Top speed 170mph (claimed)	Top speed 155mph (limited)
Basic price £43,800	Basic price £44,225

★★★★★ **EVO RATING** ★★★★★



THE GREATEST SIX

EVO'S BEST-SOUNDING 6s



BMW M3 CSL
 » 'Epic. A note that changes between idle and 8000rpm in a remarkable, engaging, organic way,' says John Barker.



HONDA NSX-R
 » A 'hard-edged bark' is how *evo* described the ultimate NSX's engine note on our first drive in 2002. Helped make it our Car of the Year.



MG METRO 6R4
 » No ordinary Metro, as Kris Meeke will tell you (see extras. evo.co.uk or scan the QR code).



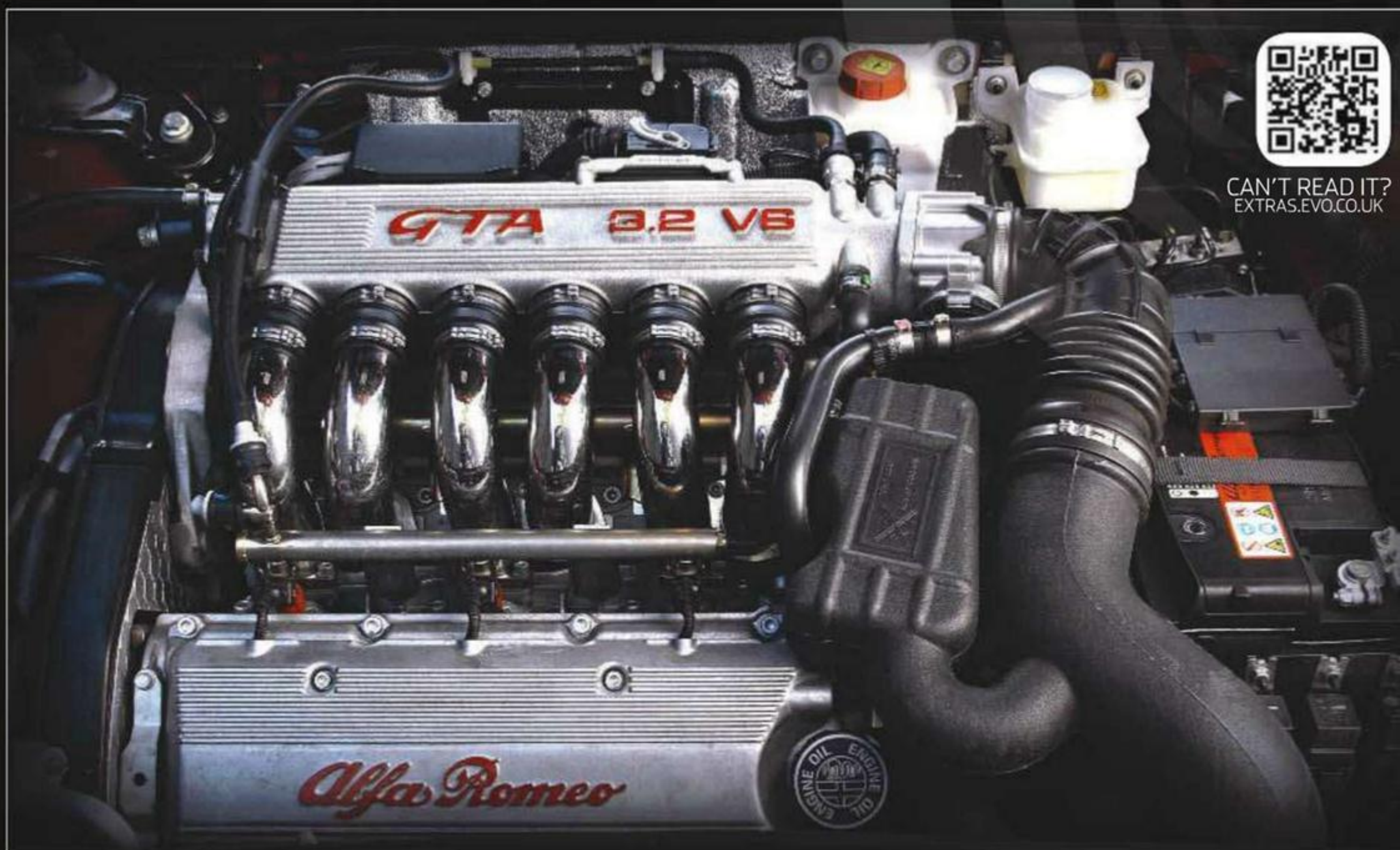
TVR SAGARIS
 » Speed Six engine is the most muscular-sounding six ever. Meaty and scary.



ALFA ROMEO V6
 » 'Generous, colourful Italian acoustics,' says John Barker.

AGREE OR DISAGREE? Go to community.evo.co.uk

The original Alfa Romeo V6 was the most glorious-sounding six-cylinder road engine ever. Sadly, it disappeared in 2007. John Simister remembers it



CAN'T READ IT? EXTRAS.EVO.CO.UK

How did that happen? You can no longer buy a new Alfa Romeo with a V6 engine; production stopped last August. Ah, the Alfa V6, you might say, misty eyes and musically attuned ears in full nostalgia mode. But that Alfa V6, the one that created the best soundtrack a road-going V6 has ever had, actually met its production end in 2005, although a stockpile of 5000 units kept V6-engined Alfa GTs going to 2007. By then, though, the 159 and Brera were coming through, products of Fiat Auto's ill-fated alliance with General Motors.

They used a new V6 engine, whose GM block was cast in Mexico, shipped to Australia to be built as a Holden V6, then sent to

Italy with two Alfa-designed cylinder heads and associated paraphernalia to convert it into an Alfa V6. It did a fair job of emulating its predecessor's sonic blueprint, but when Giuseppe Busso created the original back in 1979, for launch in the unpromising Alfa 6 and with six separate carburettors to feed it, he wasn't trying to emulate anything. He just used the knowledge he'd gained since 1939 from working at Alfa Romeo and Ferrari.

It was a 2.5-litre, 60-degree V6, initially with one camshaft in each head, using short pushrods to reach the exhaust valves. V6s usually have a bit of an exhaust beat, but when installed longitudinally the Busso engine had a note like crème brûlée, creamy with a

delicious crispness on top. Turned transversely it gained a granular edge, especially when uprated to 24 valves and four camshafts. The most powerful version, 3.2 litres and 247bhp for the 156 and 147 GTA, was fabulously vocal, as though a choir of tenors had hit the top note of 'O Sole Mio' and channelled their outpourings through a drainpipe; Italian camshaft profiles have something to do with it, with abrupt openings and closures that make the air crack.

If you ever heard the Alfa 155 DTM car, its V6 hitting 450bhp at 12,000rpm, you'd think yourself in sonic nirvana. Busso died in 2006, just after his engine ended production. If he heard that 155, he'll have died a happy man.

6-CYLINDER BARGAINS

The best sixes combine sophistication with a unique howl when roused. Here's our pick of affordable six-pot heroes...



Ford Mondeo ST220 (2003) £3000



VW Golf R32 (2003) £6500

Alfa Romeo 147 GTA (2004) £6000
 Alfa Romeo GTV 3.0 V6 (2000) £3000
 Porsche Boxster 2.5 (1998) £5000

Nissan Skyline R34 GT-T (1999) £7995
 BMW M3 E46 (2003) £8500
 BMW Z3M Roadster (1998) £7500



Aston Martin DB7 (1999) £17,000

*Sound
OF
Speed* 6 v 8 CYLINDERS
911 GTS v R8 v 8C v VANTAGE S





THE HILLS ARE ALIVE

...with the sound of V8s (and one glorious flat-six). Alfa 8C Spider, Aston Vantage S Roadster, Audi R8 Spyder and 911 Carrera GTS cabrio head for the Stelvio Pass to find out which is most fun – and which sounds best. Mike Duff takes notes

We're in the deserted car park halfway up the Stelvio Pass and the loudest noise is the ticking of hot brakes as the Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster that's just delivered me here cools in the chilly air. It might be the middle of July, but the Alpine weather seems closer to a British spring than an Italian summer, its mood swinging between sun and showers as the wind moves high clouds across the sky like a video timelapse.

Leaning against the front wing of the aptly-named Vantage, I've got a perfect view down the scree-strewn slope at the series of short straights and savage hairpins the Aston and I have just negotiated. It's the perfect perch for what's coming – the next car up the hill for snapper Jamie Lipman's lens is going to be the Alfa Romeo 8C Spider, with none other than Andy Wallace at the wheel. And if there's one rule I intend to live the rest of my life by, it's to never miss the chance to watch a Le Mans winner thrash an Italian sports car up an Alpine pass.

I've barely got time to hum the opening bars to 'On Days Like These' before the Alfa enters stage left as a blurred red shape. Wallace, predictably, isn't hanging around: I can see the back of the car bob under braking for the first hairpin and then squat down on its



haunches as Wallace gives it what looks like all the beans on the way out. But although I can see the speed, I can't hear it – the wind at my back is robbing me of any soundtrack beyond that provided by the Aston's ticking discs, the Alfa carving silently through the landscape.

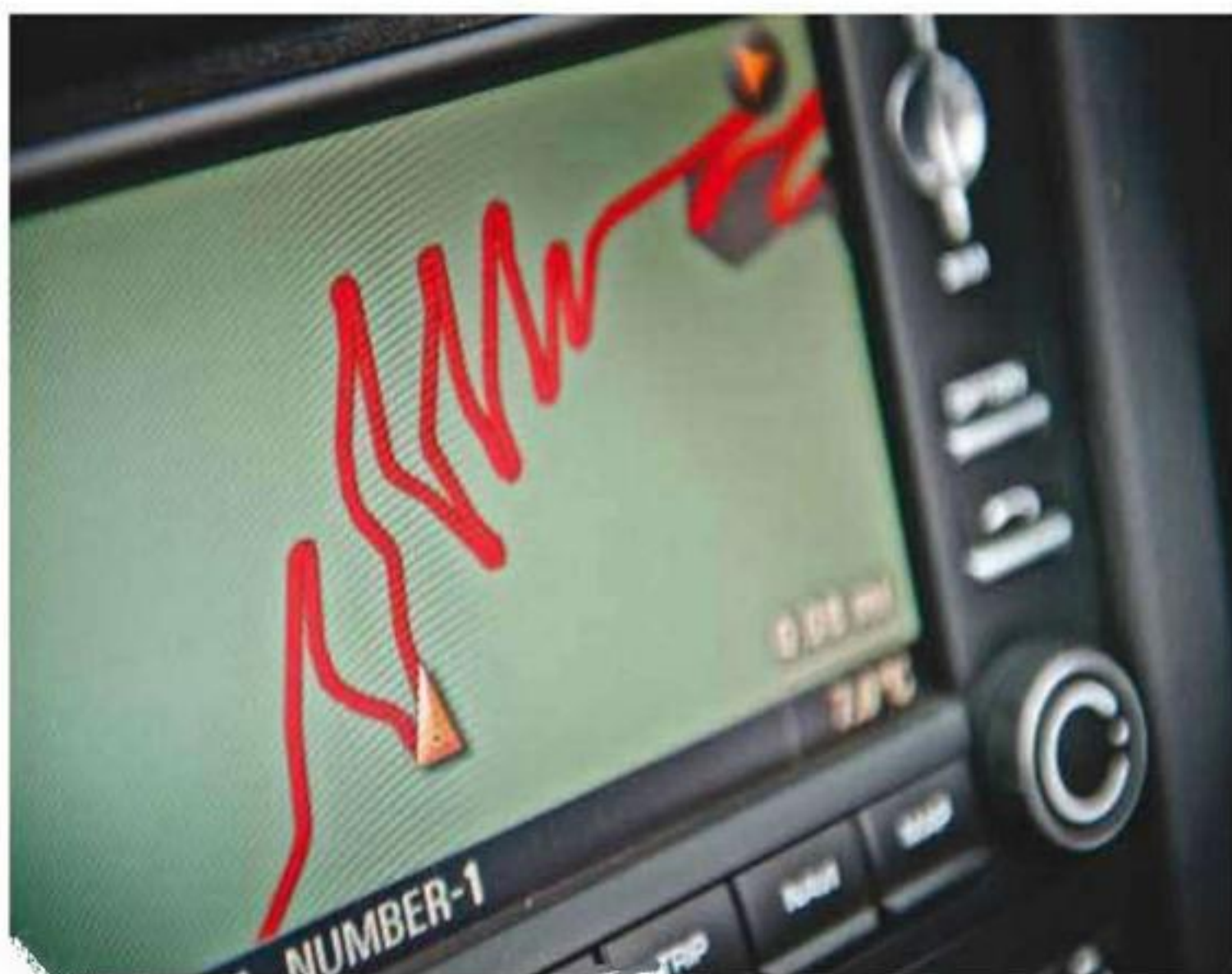
Sensing the need for a punchline, the breeze drops for a moment. Suddenly – and I promise not to use this line again – the hills are alive with the sound of music, the Alfa's exhaust note echoing back from the surrounding mountains, a yowling wail that's as much animal as it is mechanical, every microscopic movement in the throttle pedal reflected by its varying pitch. Throw in the cracking fusillade of bangs and pops every time the throttle gets lifted – ringing around the hills like small arms

fire – and you've got a noise that could reanimate a petrolhead's corpse.

LET'S FACE IT, we didn't need an excuse to bring four of our favourite soft-top sports cars to one of Italy's foremost driving roads. But we've got one anyway – we're here as part of our 'Sound of Speed' cover feature. Because there's no better way for a driver to experience the sound of a well-chosen engine than through nothing more than thin air. To that end, all the cars here have been selected on the basis of prior experience of both their aural and dynamic characters.

We'll start with the odd one out – the only car here that doesn't have a V8. Like the rest of its extended family, the Porsche 911 Carrera GTS cabriolet has

Below: sustenance for the long journey down to the Alps; both Porsche and Aston drove down from the UK; below right: Andy Wallace takes a breather on the Eurotunnel





'LET'S FACE IT, WE DIDN'T NEED AN EXCUSE TO BRING FOUR OF OUR FAVOURITE SPORTS CARS TO ONE OF ITALY'S FOREMOST DRIVING ROADS'

a rear-mounted flat-six, here displacing 3.8 litres and driving the rear wheels. The '997' 911 is on the verge of getting its pension, but the run-out GTS is definitely going to be remembered as one of the stars. The GTS combines two driven wheels with the 'wide track' body that Porsche previously reserved for the four-driven and 'motorsport' versions of the 911. There's a tasty-looking bodykit and the brawnier 'Powerkit' version of the 3.8, meaning 402bhp – plus a standard-fit sports exhaust. It's here because we reckon it's the best sounding 911 Cabrio, and at £85,249 – before options, naturally – it's also something of a bargain, barely more than the Carrera 2 cab and the cheapest car here.

The Aston Martin Vantage Roadster has been a firm *evo* favourite since it was



THE OUTTAKES



launched thanks to its combination of looks, performance and usability. Over the years it's been tucked and tweaked, but the fundamentals are unchanged – it's a baby Aston you don't need to make excuses for, and which, at the bottom of the range, comes dangerously close to affordability. You'll need deeper pockets for the car you see here, the recently launched Roadster S, which lists at £110,700 – about 12 grand more than the standard V8 Roadster. But the extra investment brings the most powerful 430bhp version of the 4.7-litre V8, bigger brakes, quicker steering and the new seven-speed 'Speedshift II' single-clutch automated system, claimed to be 20 per cent quicker than the old six-speeder.

Next, there's the still-fresh V8 version of the Audi R8 Spyder, here as the roadster that requires owners to make fewest compromises over its coupe sibling. Other than the ever-present risk of sunburn, and the need to find an extra £9000, it's hard to think of any real downsides thanks to the near-identical driving experience. Power comes from the familiar mid-mounted 420bhp 4.2-litre V8 and – because this is an Audi, and they have to stick the 'quattro' badge on it – drive is supplied to all four wheels. This German press car arrived with the six-speed manual gearbox, but also the optional carbon brakes. In the UK the standard car costs £96,595, the ceramic stoppers adding another £7295.

Which brings us to a car so good that we dug it out of a museum. Well, almost. Alfa has sold all 500 examples of the 8C Spider, the last of which are just being delivered to customers, and there are no press cars available. But such are our collective memories of the 8C as one of the great-sounding V8s, we decided to beg the company into letting us have a go in the one it saved for its own heritage collection. The 8C has a dry-

sumped 450bhp version of Maserati's 4.7-litre V8 and comes with both a standard-fit single-clutch transmission and carbon brakes. The erstwhile UK price of £174,000 also means it's the most expensive car here, although you can shave a few grand off that with a barely used second-hander. Consider its presence a bit of artistic licence.

WHEN IT COMES TO the Stelvio, getting there definitely isn't half the fun. It's one of the more obscure Alpine passes and isn't really on the way to, or from, anywhere – meaning that reaching it is a long, slow grind. The 8C has come from Milan, with Alfa PR boss Davide Kluzer delivering it in person, but the Porsche and Aston have driven from the UK – a ten-hour journey from Calais for Wallace, photographer Lipman and staff writer Stephen Dobie. Which leaves film maker Freddy Wichert and myself to land what seemed the cushiest

gig – picking up a factory-fresh Audi R8 Spyder from Munich and blasting down from the Austrian side.

Things start well. A clearish Autobahn and the R8's enthusiasm for life to the north of 150mph gets us to what the satnav tells us is 100km from the top of the pass barely two hours after finishing breakfast. Actually making it to the summit takes another two and a half hours, as it becomes clear the Stelvio's fame has made it into a destination in its own right. The northern side of the pass is filled with cars, tourist coaches, seemingly suicidal motorcyclists – and what seems like every single Dutch-registered motorhome. Then there are the cyclists, dozens of lycra-clad types who clearly reckon the Stelvio's 2760 metre summit will make for a light morning workout. The tarmac is crumbling and the road is barely two cars wide. The R8 handles the grind without complaint, but for some





Clockwise from above: R8 feels brilliantly agile, Aston reluctant to slide, 911 the most feelsome, Alfa the most bombastic

stretches we hardly manage to get out of second gear for minutes at a time. This definitely isn't what anyone would call a driving paradise: have we made a terrible mistake?

Fortunately, breasting the summit makes everything clear, and clearer. It turns out the traffic is concentrated on the Austrian side, and the road on the northern side is both wider and, mercifully, quieter – although with equal numbers of corners and hairpins. The R8 is suddenly in its element, with the rev-happy V8 happy to go to work demolishing the straights and those ceramic brakes shedding the momentum tirelessly for the bends. The R8 makes effortless progress down a road like this, barely breaking sweat at speeds few other cars could match, and happy to carry serious speed into and through the quicker corners. The controls are light – it takes a while to get a decent heel-and-toe position on the brake pedal – but moving the gearshift through its magnificent open gate is one of the great tactile pleasures. It's only on the way out of the (many) hairpins that the quattro drivetrain can be felt doing its

'THE R8 IS SUDDENLY IN ITS ELEMENT, THE REV-HAPPY V8 HAPPY TO GO TO WORK DEMOLISHING THE STRAIGHTS'





'THERE'S NO ARGUING WITH THE WAY THE ALFA 8C DOES ITS THING.'

thing, shunting drive to the front as the rear wheels approach their limits, the steering tugging slightly as the drive moves forwards. Hell, I'm having so much fun that I'm most of the way down the hill before I realise what's missing – even with the roof down, the R8's soundtrack seems a bit subdued, needing a real dose of revs to really make it sing. Maybe it's that thin mountain air.

We rendezvous in Bormio, the biggest town hereabouts. Porsche and Aston are wearing the spectacular insect debris that tells of a high speed cross-European trip – one fly took at least three feet of the 911's bonnet to die – but it's the Alfa that's drawing the appreciative crowd of onlookers. I 'missed' the 8C Spider when it was new and this is the first one I've seen that's not sitting on a motor show stand. The roadster misses the coupe's spectacular bubble roof profile, but it's still a strikingly attractive thing – especially when I'm climbing into the cockpit with the keys in my hand.

Now this is what an engine should sound like. The Alfa fires up into a surprisingly light idle – baritone rather than bass – with the induction side's woodwind section overlaid by a lovely rattle from the exhausts at the quietest

Above: voluptuous 8C draws the most attention – not least through its broad repertoire of sound effects. Italians love the Aston, too. Audi and Porsche slip by almost unnoticed by comparison

pressure on the throttle, and then the firing squad impression when you lift off.

Not that the 8C gets all the attention. Italians might always support the home team, but they're far from immune to the considerable charms of the Vantage. With the convoy formed and rumbling back towards the hills, it's the snap, crackle and pop of the Alfa's overrun that turns the most heads – but it's the Aston's tight lines and spot-on proportions that seems to keep the most attention. By contrast, the Porsche and Audi are almost completely ignored.

Heading back up the SS38 towards the pass, traffic disappears and the speeds start to rise. The front-engined 8C is a very different proposition to the R8 – taller, less wieldy and slower to react to steering inputs. Take too much speed into a corner and the front washes wide; the Alfa needs to have its nose pulled tight to a slow apex before you get back on the gas. But even then you need a fair bit of restraint – overlapping throttle and steering inputs either sets the big yellow light flashing or, with stability off, leaves you scrambling for some corrective lock. But with everything pointing in the right direction and the blue touchpaper lit there's no arguing with the way the

8C does its thing. It's definitely got the legs on both the Aston and the Porsche, acceleration helped by the way the gearbox automatically bangs in the next ratio as the limiter arrives, even in manual mode.

The next time we stop, Andy is grinning from behind the wheel of the 911 GTS: 'I was right behind you and I could hardly hear this – looks like you were having to work hard, though.'

The Aston seems the obvious place to go next, sharing as it does the Alfa's combination of a front-mounted V8 engine and a single clutch manual sending drive to the rear wheels. The 8C does manage to make the Vantage look like an unlikely bargain, and even after six years the babyest 'Martin is still a stunner. The 'S' is the most powerful version of the V8 Vantage – it's got 10 bhp more than the N420 – but like the rest of the clan it has to be revved to deliver – and also to sound its best. The first thing to do is to press the 'sport' button, which sharpens the gearshift and frees up the exhaust. Even with that done, the Aston remains a car with a split sonic personality. At lower engine speeds it's got a light, slightly raspy tone – pleasant, but not exceptional.



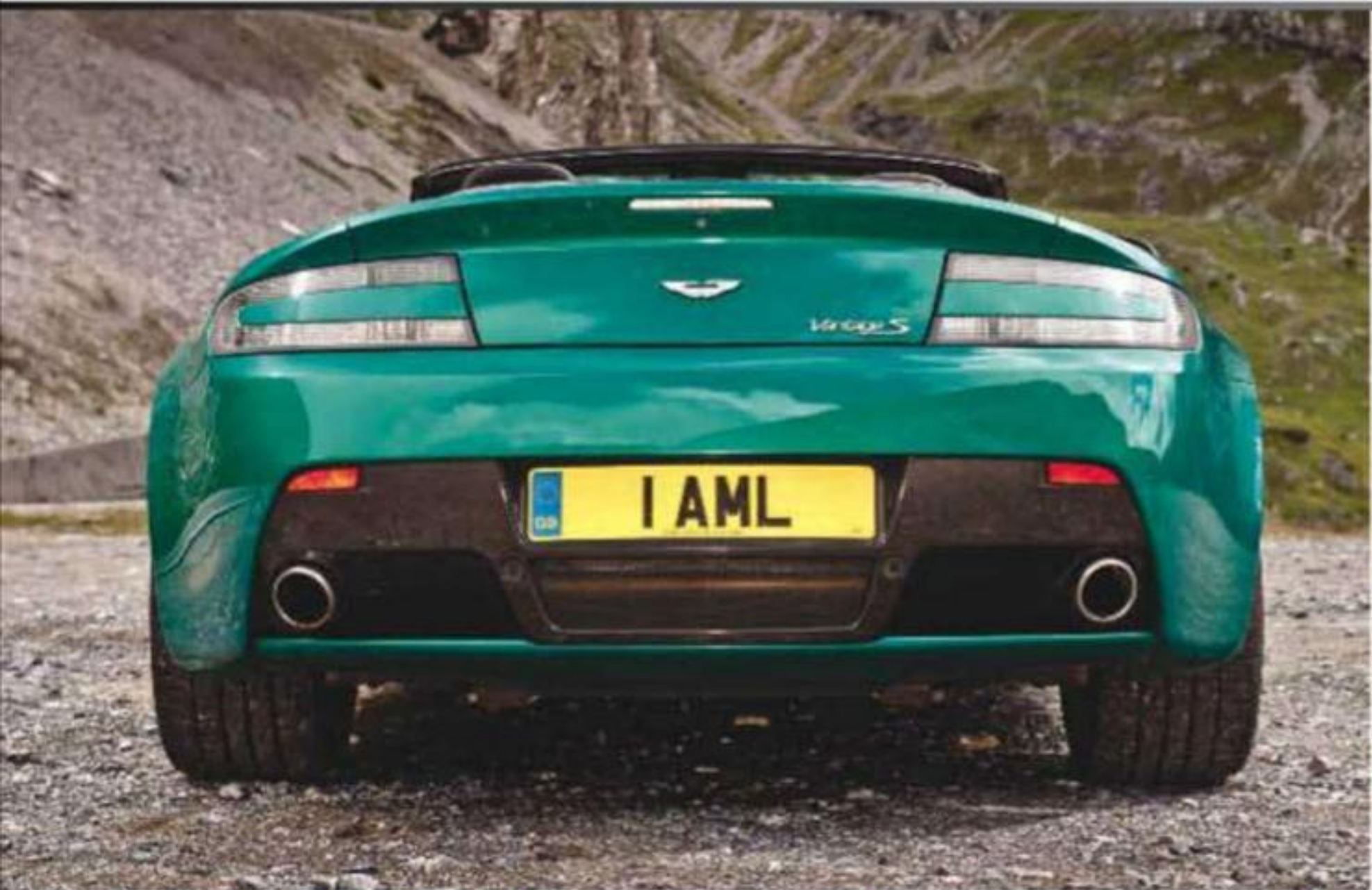
Carbon-ceramic discs (left) add £7295 to the R8 Spyder's £96,595 list price. Magnetic dampers and wonderful six-speed manual gearbox (right) are standard



8C Spider is by some margin the most expensive here with a list price of £174,000, but since the entire run was sold out almost immediately, it's not really an issue



IT'S DEFINITELY GOT THE LEGS ON BOTH THE ASTON AND THE PORSCHE'



Like the Alfa, the £110,700 Aston has a front-mounted engine, rear drive and a paddleshift automated manual transmission. Pressing 'sport' sharpens up the shifts



Last of the 997-line Carrera GTs is one of the sweetest 911s we know, and at £85,249 basic, it's by some margin the cheapest car in the test. Brakes superb, as ever



*Sound
OF
Speed* 6 v 8 CYLINDERS
911 GTS v R8 v 8C v VANTAGE S

*'ON THESE TIGHT, DEMANDING ROADS, THE 911
GTS HAS A LIGHTNESS AND AGILITY THAT BELIE
ITS REAR-BIASED WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION'*





The spinach-tin moment happens at 4000rpm, when flaps in the exhaust open and you're suddenly listening to the full noise of the hard-working V8. It's a gorgeous sound, less sonorous than the 8C – which sounds like it's got most of an orchestra stuck under the bonnet – but with a harder, almost racy edge to it.

The 'S' pack also means slightly less weight – so equipped, the Roadster is 30kg lighter than the standard car – and it also gets a slightly quicker steering rack, with 2.6 turns between locks instead of the normal 3. Like the Alfa, the Aston feels predictably nose-heavy in this company, with similarly limited tolerance for too high an entry speed into the slower corners. Traction is good, though, with a disappointed Andy Wallace reporting that, even when he wanted to go sideways, the Aston wanted to stick. But the Vantage's brakes are quick to protest the all-hairpin diet with a spongy pedal.

Still, the Aston is a brilliant eight-tenths car – easing the throttle to smooth the gearchanges, enjoying the way the suspension flows with the road – and using a slower entry speed as an excuse for a bit more noise on the way out. And as we climb higher, the Aston reveals another surprising facet – what seem to be deeper lungs than our other contenders. As we pass above about 2000 metres, both the Alfa and the Audi suffer a noticeable decrease in power as the oxygen levels fall away, the R8 also developing a slight hesitancy to small throttle inputs. Yet, despite similar



capacity, and an equal lack of forced induction, the Vantage doesn't seem to notice. Useful to know if you're planning to buy one for your alpine chalet.

And the Porsche? Aurally the GTS struggles to make itself heard above the other cars here, despite the best efforts of its sports exhaust. In isolation it's got a lovely, crisp flat-six soundtrack – one that works particularly well in the series of tunnels, blasted from solid rock, which punctuate the hairpins. But the 911 lacks sonic firepower when compared with the V8s – to the extent that, as Wallace reported, its driver often has difficulty hearing it over the monsters of thrash. At risk of sounding like a frustrated wine taster, the scrawl in my notebook

describes the 911's noise as 'light and crisp with a slightly metallic aftertaste'. Make of that what you will.

More important, of course, is the fact the Porsche offers the purest driving experience here. It's got the least power and the least torque, but it also scores the lowest mass and – as a result – its power-to-weight ratio of 270bhp-per-ton is bested only by the substantially more powerful Alfa's 273. The relatively svelte kerbweight also helps with braking, the GTS suffering from far less fade than the Aston, despite a similar lack of carbon discs. On these tight, demanding roads, the Porsche has a lightness and agility that belie its rear-biased weight distribution,

Clockwise from above: Carrera GTS is typical Porsche: solid and unspectacular; Alfa makes big design statements with heavily cowled instruments; Aston and Audi both strike a classy, stylish note

'THE TEST HAS DIVIDED NEATLY BETWEEN THE TWO CARS THAT ARE THE BEST TO DRIVE, AND THE TWO THAT ARE THE BEST TO LISTEN TO'



SPECIFICATIONS

	ALFA ROMEO 8C SPIDER	ASTON VANTAGE S ROADSTER	AUDI R8 V8 SPYDER	PORSCHE 911 CARRERA GTS
Engine	V8, 4691cc	V8, 4735cc	V8, 4163cc	Flat-six, 3800cc
Location	Front, longitudinal	Front, longitudinal	Mid, longitudinal	Rear, longitudinal
Power	450bhp @ 7000rpm	430bhp @ 7300rpm	424bhp @ 7900rpm	402bhp @ 7300rpm
Torque	354lb ft @ 4750rpm	361lb ft @ 5000rpm	317lb ft @ 6000rpm	310lb ft @ 4200-5600rpm
Transmission	Six-speed paddleshift automated manual, rear-wheel drive, LSD, VDC	Seven-speed paddleshift automated manual, rear-wheel drive, LSD, DSC	Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, EDL, ASR	Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, PSM, LSD optional
Front suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, gas dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, gas dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, magnetic dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, gas dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, gas dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, magnetic dampers, anti-roll bar	Multi-link, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
Tyres	245/35 ZR20 front, 285/35 ZR20 rear	245/40 ZR19 front, 285/35 ZR19 rear	235/35 ZR19 front, 295/30 ZR19 rear	235/35 ZR19 front, 305/30 ZR19 rear
Weight (kerb)	1675kg	1690kg	1660kg	1515kg
Power-to-weight	273bhp/ton	258bhp/ton	260bhp/ton	270bhp/ton
0-62mph	4.5sec (claimed)	4.7sec (claimed)	4.8sec (claimed)	4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	181mph (claimed)	189mph (claimed)	186mph (claimed)	190mph (claimed)
Basic price	£174,000 (all sold ¹)	£110,700	£96,595	£85,249



with impeccable drive out of the slower corners but also a real sense of 'slingabilty' in the quicker ones – throw it in, feel it settle and then adjust the line with steering and throttle.

THE TOP OF THE PASS gives us a chance to compare notes, and to reach the shared realisation that the test has divided neatly between the two cars that are best to drive and the two that are best to listen to. Dynamically, the 911 and the R8 are the head of the class. The R8's

all-paw traction gives it the ultimate legs on the 911, but the Porsche has the better steering. Then again, the Audi boasts one of the finest gearshifts on the planet. As an overall proposition, the R8 just shades the GTS, but on these roads it's the closest of points verdicts.

But when it comes to the question of which of these cars makes the best noise, the tables turn. And while fully acknowledging the subjectivity that goes into preferring any tune to another, the consensus at the Stelvio was that

while the Porsche and Audi both sound great, the Aston and the Alfa are in a different league. The Vantage's split personality will appeal to many – the aural equivalent of an iron fist in a velvet glove. But if you had to pick one of these cars to provide the soundtrack for your funeral – or at the very least turn it into your ringtone – it would be the Alfa.

Big thanks to Eurotunnel (eurotunnel.com 08443 35 35 35) for their help with this story. Crossings from £44 per car (two-day return).



THE HEMI V8

No celebration of great-sounding engines would be complete without mention of Chrysler's street-racer V8. **Jonny Smith** explains why

A sticker in the glovebox reads: 'Notice. This car is equipped with a 426 cu in engine (and other special equipment). This car is intended for use in supervised acceleration trials and is not for highway or general passenger car use.'

They say the ultimate V8 sound should be lumpy, angry, with intent for GBH. Verbally, it should have a *PO-TA-TO, PO-TA-TO, PO-TA-TO* idle to it. You want the 1-8-4-3-6-5-7-2 firing order so clearly audible that it becomes a tribal drum calling to all surrounding American V8 worshippers.

The most legendary V8 is the 426 'street Hemi'. Chrysler's 426 cubic inch (7.2-litre) V8 with the hemispherical combustion chamber head had already been in production for several years, but not in any real form of street-usable car. An evolution of the firm's earlier 'Max Wedge' performance V8, under the bonnets of both Dodges and Plymouths the Hemi swatted its competitors like gnats in '64. In 1965 the engine was banned from NASCAR on the grounds it was not a regular production engine.

The Chrysler group introduced it onto the public options list with the sole aim of winning back NASCAR legality, and inadvertently moved to the head table at the horsepower banquet. The Hemi became the 'it' street-racer engine

overnight. Why? Because it was still a race engine, merely detuned for street use. Same race crank, rods, valves, mechanical lifter and rocker arms. Even with a lower compression ratio (10.25:1), a calmer cam (276-degree duration for longevity) and cast-iron exhaust headers, it was conservatively rated at 425hp and 490lb ft.

Beautifully ill-suited for normal street use, the huge Hemi chambers quenched their thirst via a 'dual quad' fuel system – a pair of four-barrel Carter AFB carburetors on a special aluminium inlet manifold. All eight butterfly throats yawned when you mashed the gas pedal. A relatively unsilenced chrome air cleaner ensured induction was very audible.

Dodge/Plymouth didn't have the cash to make all-new models for the engine, so the Hemi could only be ordered in one of their middle-aged librarian brick-shaped Satellite or Belvedere models, or in the new-for-'66 Charger (pictured below). Whatever car you opted for, it would cost the same as a big-block Corvette, and the Hemi badging was microscopic.

It was purely the thunderous *PO-TA-TO PO-TA-TO* – and devastating acceleration – that gave the game away to unsuspecting stop-light prey. To this day the Hemi is the unsurpassed American muscle trump card.



*'IT WAS STILL A RACE ENGINE, MERELY
DETUNED FOR STREET USE'*

EVO'S BEST-
SOUNDING 8s



**MERCEDES
SLS AMG**

» 'Combines menace and music. AMG's finest moment,' says Nick Trott.



TVR GRIFFITH

» '4.3 rather than 5.0 because it's softer-edged and less strained-sounding,' says John Barker.



**ALFA ROMEO
8C SPIDER**

» The exhaust note alone almost justifies the current £170K second-hand values.



**FERRARI 458
ITALIA**

» Not just the engine note – everything about its naturally aspirated V8 is sublime. A work of art.



NOBLE M600

» Yamaha-derived Volvo V8 fettle to deliver extraordinary noise and pace.

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'We will never see or hear a car like it again...'

THE 500 BHP V10 M5

It could frustrate as easily as it could delight, but what an engine, and what a noise. Chris Harris looks back at the E60 M5

I'm looking at them now, like I do most weeks. I'm looking at used E60 BMW M5s and battling the urge to own one. A 500bhp, normally aspirated V10 saloon car for under £20K. Many of you will surely suffer the same affliction.

We will never see or hear a saloon car like it again. Some people will celebrate this fact, among them some serious petrolheads; others, myself included, now mourn the loss of this complicated and fabulously characterful machine.

How innocent we all were back in

2004 when the V10 M5 was launched, unaware that performance cars would soon labour under a potentially lethal concoction of social and legislative pressures. Unaware just how dramatic its specification was. This was the year of the normally aspirated V10: first the Gallardo, then the mesmerising Carrera GT, and then this – the most outlandish of them all – complete with 500bhp and nothing more than atmospheric pressure for the induction system.

I can remember the press conference at the international launch in some



Austrian village – BMW's then boss, the charismatic Gerhard Richter, after a few too many Warsteiners extolling the virtues of high engine speeds and denouncing the turbocharger. First rule of being a boss? Never say never.

But most of all I remember the first time the motor spun to its rev-limiter in third gear – it was vaguely preposterous the way it just carried on pulling and pulling towards some ever-extending ignition cut-out that never seemed to arrive, and only then at approaching 9000rpm did the energy subside.

And the noise, deary me, the noise was captivating. I think we all had strong notions of M-ness back in 2004, just as we do today, but the previous E39 M5 had been a V8 and before that the E34 was a straight-six. So there was no expectation of engine sound for this model, and that made the E60's noise characteristics even more exciting. It warbled low down like a modern Quattro and it then assumed a manic blare above 7000rpm. We can safely say that no saloon car, before or since, has ever given the impression that

its internals are moving faster.

Lest we should forget, the E60 M5 was born of BMW's repeated attempts, and failures, to win the F1 drivers' and constructors' titles. This was the era of V10s and BMW deliberately sought a synergy between its M-flagship and Montoya's weekend wheels. The engine block was cast in the same foundry as the F1 motors. The staggering electronics that controlled the individual throttles were derived from the race project. And all of it was chucked in a 5-series.

And this is where the problems started for the E60 M5 – it was borne out of a powertrain exercise with no obvious conclusion or home. Its 4999cc V10 may have produced 500bhp and 384lb ft, but it didn't quite work in an everyday supersaloon where ballistic, nonchalant pace is valued above all else. That torque arrived at a crazy 6100rpm, and the transmission, an automated-manual SMG system, had a shonky 'automatic' mode that didn't fool anyone. This was a powertrain looking for a supercar that found its way into a sedan.



Above: hydraulically actuated SMG gearbox delivered quick shifts, but its full auto mode left a lot to be desired

Watch and listen to 10-cylinder symphonies via the QR code below



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At this stage I think I need to apologise on behalf of the motoring media to those who bought the first E60 M5s – because we didn't test the car in its intended role. We just nailed it over a few Austrian passes, were stunned by the engine, the performance (0-62mph took just 4.7sec), the handling, the cabin space, the fact that it would keep a 911 Turbo honest – and we forgot the important stuff.

Most notably the fuel tank. For a car that liked to consume 98 octane like a racer, the 70-litre bladder was laughably inadequate. To drive 200 miles between refills was a triumph. Then there was the gearbox: superb for fast shifting, but mostly a pain-in-the-München on the daily commute. And then there was that torque: the E60 M5's place as the fastest factory saloon on the planet was never in doubt, but the equivalent Mercedes E55 AMG, with its supercharged mill and conventional automatic gearbox, gave you much more accessible pace for nothing like the effort. In fact that's the telling word – effort. This was a car that required the driver to grab it by the seeds

'I HEARD A SCREAMING V10 AND WAITED FOR A GALLARDO TO APPEAR –



and only then did it deliver something no other saloon had ever done before.

In many ways that experience was defined by the sound. The E39 had good lungs, as did contemporary AMGs and Audi RSs, but none of them compared to an E60 in full fury. I can remember hearing a screaming V10 in Bristol one day and waiting for the inevitable Gallardo to lunge into sight – what actually presented itself was a black saloon car. This was mechanical naughtiness on a different scale.

History already judges the E60 harshly. It went out of production more than a year ago, and the more rounded E39 M5 that preceded it is rightly considered a better fast saloon car because its manual transmission and torquey V8 make life easier. But just try telling someone that as he watches an E60's rev-counter needle move beyond 8200rpm, accompanied by a noise that's more pitlane than middle-lane, and then realises that he hasn't even reached the red zone yet. He won't care. Believe me when I say there will never be another car like this.



Above: 5-series body made a fabulously incongruous home for BMW's 5-litre V10, but the driving experience was very different to that of those M5s that had come before

EVO'S BEST-SOUNDING 10s



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PORSCHE CARRERA GT

» 'Sharply vocal with a honey-coated bark,' says Richard Meaden.



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AUDI R8 SPYDER V10

» With the open-gate manual, a combination to die-for.

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WHAT ACTUALLY PRESENTED ITSELF WAS A BLACK SALOON CAR'



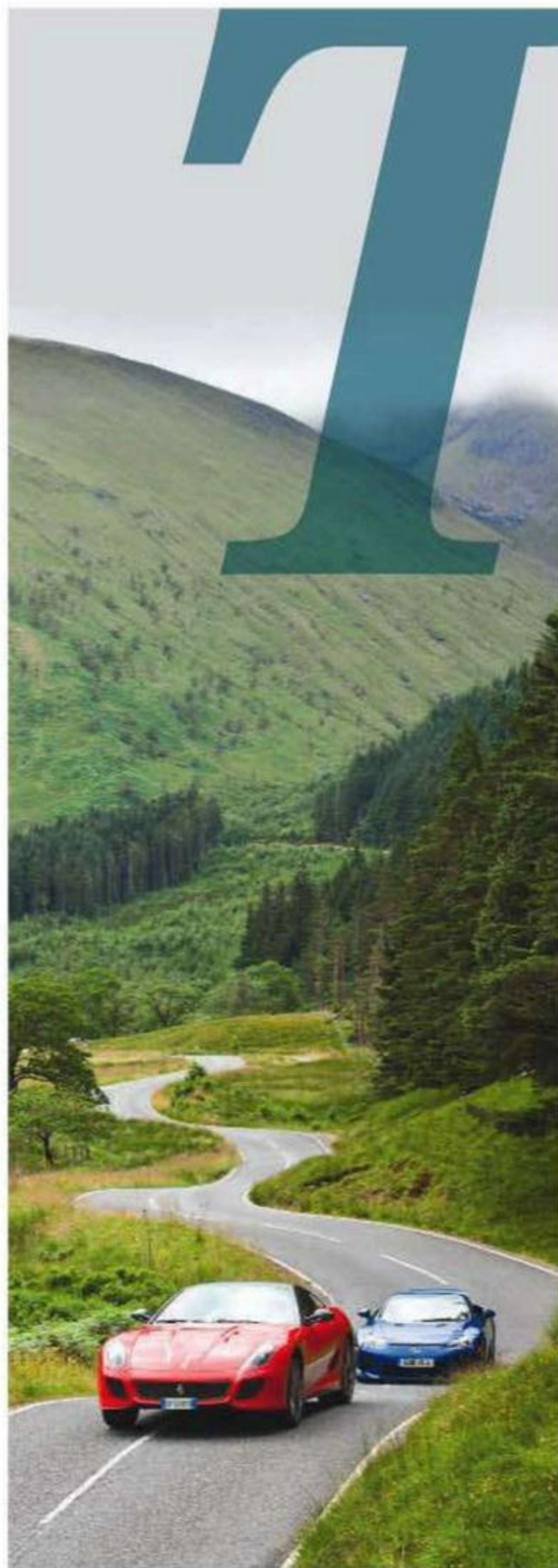
Sound
OF
Speed 10 v 12 CYLINDERS
LFA v GTO





SCREEAM MACHINES

*Two high-revving supercars, V10-engined Lexus LFA and V12-engined Ferrari GTO, lock horns in the Scottish Highlands. **Richard Meaden** savours an assault on the senses*



The Glasgow Airport Travelodge has never witnessed anything quite like this. At one end of the car park, an Italian-registered car transporter pulsates to the beat of a barely silenced V12 as it disgorges a scarlet Ferrari 599 GTO; at the other an inky-blue Lexus LFA yelps into life and backs slowly from a covered trailer.

We first discussed getting the LFA and GTO together for a head-to-head in the autumn of last year, but it's taken this long for the planets to align. Seeing these two shards of exotica roll out into a car park full of regulation grey and silver Audis and BMWs is a bit like Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie walking into your local boozer. Roger Green and I honestly can't remember feeling this excited about a test in years.

Such high anticipation is with good reason, for the GTO and LFA make a fascinating pairing. Culturally and historically they couldn't be further apart, yet glance down the spec sheets and there's no question the pair stand toe-to-toe in the front-engined supercar stakes. Both cost in excess of £300,000 as tested (we insured the GTO for £330K, the LFA £350K), boast front-mid-mounted V12 and V10 masterpieces mated to six-speed, single-clutch paddle-shift gearboxes. Each channels drive to the rear wheels only, will accelerate to 60mph in comfortably less than 4sec, 100mph in 8sec or less and hit a top speed of more than 200mph. They are, as my old granny used to say, the Doberman's danglers.

Epic supercars deserve an epic setting, and they don't come any more spectacular than Glen Nevis

Mother Nature seems wholly unimpressed by our 22-cylinder, 1213bhp, £680,000 duo, treating us to a sky blanketed with grey cloud and some light drizzle as Green and I head out of Glasgow. It's a strangely humdrum start to what promises to be an epic three days, but the succession of urban dual carriageways provides an easy, challenge-free getting-to-know-you phase in which to dial in to the cars' responses. Bypassing the city, we eventually cross the Erskine Bridge, heading due north towards Loch Lomond and Crianlarich, gateway to the Scottish Highlands and some of the most spectacular roads in the world.

I've elected to take the Ferrari, not least because I haven't driven a 599 GTO before. On first acquaintance it's everything you'd hope it to be: much more aggressive-looking (and sounding) than a regular 599, with plenty of silky carbonfibre on the inside to reinforce the notion that this is a no-nonsense, pared-back road car. When it comes to sending a message of intent, the 599 GTO is as explicit as a flick-knife.

Pulling down on the shoulder-straps of the four-point harness is always a good way to focus your brain on driving, and this, coupled to the busy, bassy, barrel-chested sound emanating from beneath the GTO's vented bonnet, completely engages your senses. Indeed it's not until we're midway between Glasgow and Loch Lomond that I realise there's no radio or satnav. As I don't have a map and there's no hands-free phone connection, I'm soon concentrating on



'THE GTO'S AGGRESSIVE DYNAMICS AND EXPLOSIVE PERFORMANCE



not losing sight of the LFA's bluff tail and the mesmerising high-rise wing that elevates into the airstream at 50mph, then sinks back down at 30.


Given that the GTO's 6.2-litre V12 develops 661bhp, it's remarkably tractable, lugging without protest at low speeds and shuffling satisfyingly up and down the single-clutch paddle-shift 'box in Auto mode. Of course it's no chore to flip the long-eared carbon paddles – especially once Loch Lomond hoves into view and the road becomes more interesting.

In true 21st century Ferrari style, the mood of the car is dictated by the little red manettino switch, mounted on the right-hand side of the steering wheel. By toggling between Wet, Sport, Race,






HAVE PROVED POWERFULLY SEDUCTIVE. THE LFA HAS A LOT TO DO...'



Left and below: both cars have excellent sound systems. Lexus's three-pipe set-up offers the more complex sound effects but GTO's four-pipe system is one louder

CT and CST settings you can soften the GTO's attitude for inclement weather or particularly poor road surfaces, or ramp everything up (and disable the electronic safety systems) to the point where it's so angry you half expect a gloved fist to spring from a compartment in the dash and punch you in the face.



You don't mess with a car like the GTO. Any hint of mickey-taking on cold tyres and it sends a message in the form of a warning squirm from the rear Michelins. Scroll through the dashboard display menu and there's a graphic that shows engine, brake and tyre temperature. You'd be amazed at how long it takes for those four little contact patches to go from blue to green in normal driving, but you'd also love the

sense of anticipation, focus and respect it brings to your driving.

Our target is Fort William and the roads that run around the foot of Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain. To get there we follow the A82, passing up and across the stark, exposed panorama of Rannoch Moor before craning our necks at the humbling scale of Glencoe. I stick with the GTO until we reach Crianlarich, revelling in the sense of both it and the LFA limbering-up like athletes, gradually, imperceptibly lengthening their stride as our pace increases.

By the time we stop and switch cars I feel connected to and hugely impressed by the Ferrari. As you'd expect – and perhaps hope – it's noisy over a prolonged period of time, but it's not

too physical, either in terms of damping or driver effort. Pleasingly it has a tremendous sense of coiled, pent-up energy that proves harder and harder to contain as the road becomes increasingly inviting and my self-control buckles under the sustained onslaught.

Regular readers will know that I'm a huge fan of the LFA, but stepping from Ferrari's ultimate front-engined road car presents an unexpectedly stern test of my love for the Lexus. Not so much on first impressions, for I think this particular LFA looks spectacular in purple-blue metallic with smoked chrome wheels, but simply because the GTO's aggressive dynamics and explosive performance have proved powerfully seductive. The LFA has a lot to do...



Bruntingthorpe the venue for the drag race and the smoky cornering shots

The Highlands might be the perfect stage on which to compare the on-road performance and characters of the LFA and GTO, but to really explore their absolute capabilities you need the freedom to hoon in a spacious and speed-limit-free environment.

Ordinarily we would have nailed them around Bedford Autodrome, but both are so loud they'd make Jonathan Palmer's noise meters twitch from the comfort of the evo office car park. So we head instead to Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground, both to see how fast they'll go down the runway and also to get a feel for their on- and over-the-limit handling with all stability systems disabled.

'THE LFA SLIPS INTO BALANCED, EASILY INDUCED OVERSTEER FROM APEX TO EXIT'

On the road, both have such epic reach you can only explain their relative performance in emotional rather than empirical terms. Here the GTO wastes no time in asserting itself as the rocketship of the pair. The concrete surface doesn't offer perfect traction and it's slightly uphill for the first half of the runway, so the figures are not definitive. But they illustrate the Ferrari's ferocity, the GTO growing a 0.4sec advantage at 60mph (3.8 plays 4.2) to 0.7sec by 100mph (7.7 against 8.4) and a gob-smacking 3.6sec at 150mph (16.5 for the GTO, 20.1 for the LFA). By the end of the runway the GTO is still pulling at 193mph, LFA trailing in its wake at 179mph.

Though it gives best in a straight line, the LFA feels magnificent through the corners, exhibiting awesome stability under braking and on turn-in. It's neutral enough to allow you to carry big speed into the corner – it really feels like that rear wing makes genuine downforce – from which point it'll remain neutral, or progressively slip into balanced, easily induced oversteer from apex to exit. By contrast the GTO is ultra-edgy. The super-quick steering and zero-understeer front-end makes for electric turn-in, but the rear feels loose and immediately wants to – and does – oversteer. The throttle is also hyper-sensitive, and all that torque makes it very easy to break traction. That's fine into and out of a slow second-gear corner, but not so enjoyable tipping into a 90mph curve when the car is already sliding before you're on the power. It is possible to find a balance point, but it's a high-risk, unforgiving quest and one that would make serious track driving pretty hair-raising.

Doing smoky cornering shots isn't exactly scientific, but it does reveal whether a car is intrinsically benign or malevolent. While hardly a pussycat, the LFA is huge fun, gives plenty of confidence and never feels like it wants to give me a mid-corner mauling. The GTO is a handful and more than happy to bite, as evidenced by a trio of 100mph spins. There's no arguing with its straight-line fireworks, but ironically giving the GTO such edgy on-limit handling detracts from the on-track experience. Though not overtly track-focused, the LFA feels mighty from the moment you turn-in. **RM**



'THE RUN ACROSS RANNOCH IS ENHANCED BY SEEING THE FROWNING FACE OF THE GTO DUCKING AND DIVING IN MY MIRRORS'





It's testament to the depth of ability of both cars that they simply eat up roads like this. GTO feels hyper-alert, LFA more measured but equally effective

Opening the door to the LFA reveals stark contrasts. The white leather interior is the biggest clue that the Lexus is not a track refugee, but the exposed structural carbonfibre beneath the A-pillar, complete with chunky weave and functional finish, is a very cool riposte to the GTO's dashboard plaque proclaiming 31 Formula 1 World Titles. I'm sure Toyota's top brass had visions of attaching a similarly boastful badge to the LFA's dashboard, but it wasn't to be. Still, the fact they've built an all-carbon supercar that weighs 125kg less than the GTO, despite the leather, satnav and Mark Levinson hi-fi, is a victory of sorts.

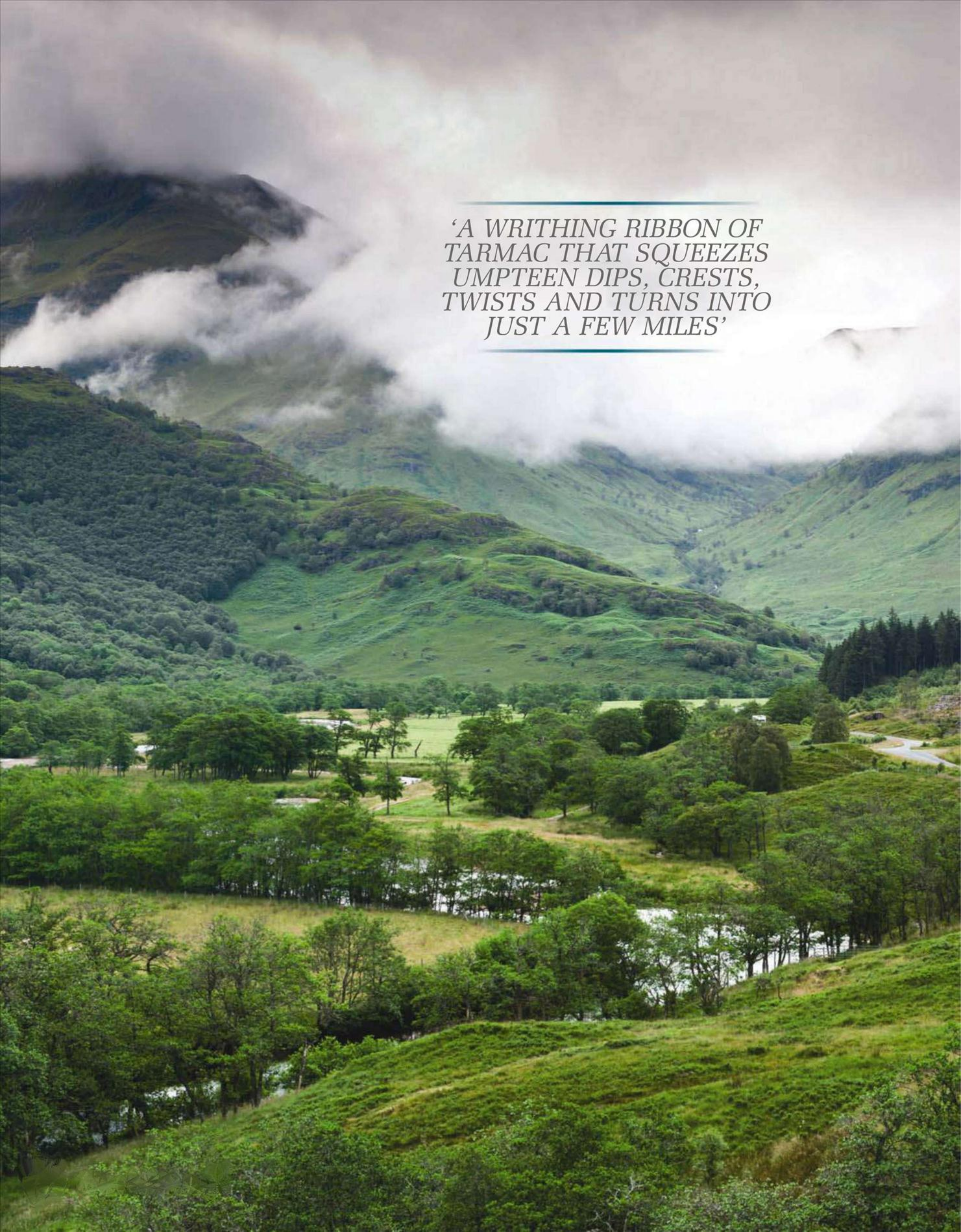
Like the GTO, the LFA starts with a prod of a starter button on the steering

wheel. There's no manettino, but you can choose from Wet, Normal and Race modes via a rotary switch on the right of the instrument binnacle. There's also a smaller rotary switch to adjust the gearshift speed. The Lexus V10 doesn't command your attention the way the Ferrari does, yet still you feel its power coursing through the car.

It's perhaps a characteristic of the carbon chassis, but there's a greater variation in road noise in the LFA. Changes in surface dressing are transmitted through the car, with coarse granite chippings in particular generating more of a din than you might expect given the LFA's luxurious surroundings. The trade-off is a structure with a

tangible sense of anvil-like integrity that allows the suspension to work with no distractions. This feeling is enhanced by the steering, which lacks the GTO's hyper-alert, think-and-you've-turned-in responsiveness, instead preferring to deliver a satisfying sense of measured, consistent weight and tactility.

The run across Rannoch, through Glencoe and beyond to Ballaculish and the shores of Loch Linnhe is a fabulous drive, enhanced in no small way by seeing the frowning face of the GTO ducking and diving in my mirrors. Despite enjoying a number of previous encounters with LFAs, it's still a great joy to re-discover just how special this engine is. Displacing 4.8 litres and



*'A WRITHING RIBBON OF
TARMAC THAT SQUEEZES
UMPTEN DIPS, CRESTS,
TWISTS AND TURNS INTO
JUST A FEW MILES'*

10 v 12 CYLINDERS
LFA v GTO

*Sound
OF
Speed*





Ferrari lives up to GTO billing, from carbon-ceramic brakes to howling V12. Listen to it and other 12-cyl legends here...



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developing 552bhp, it is comfortably out-gunned by the bombastic Italian V12, but in terms of specific output it's even more special, screaming out 115bhp-per-litre versus the GTO's 106.

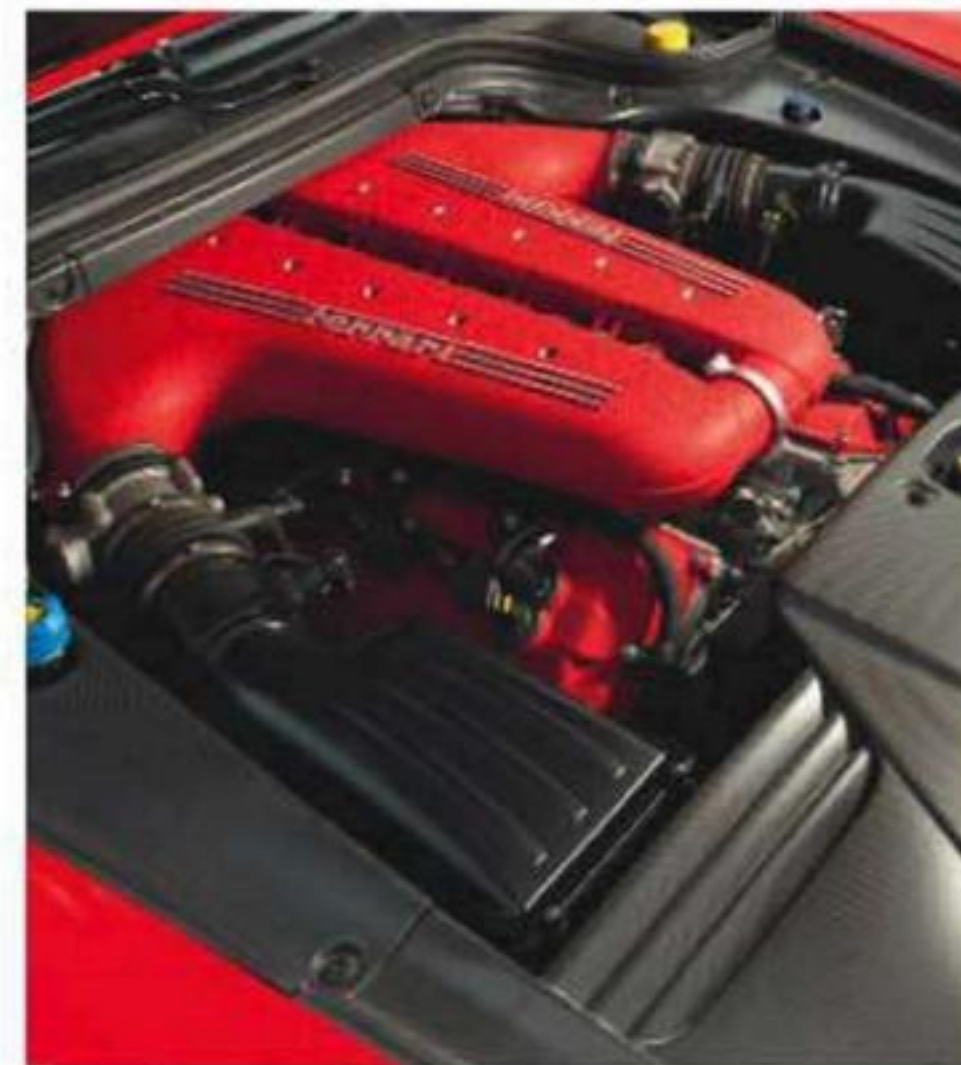
Perhaps because it has to work harder, over a screaming 9000rpm rev-range, it's a more complex, multi-faceted experience. It has a dry, metallic timbre that hums and sings and snarls and snuffles as the needle graphic dances round the tacho. Outside the car it sounds pure, clean, almost synthesized, but from behind the wheel it has a grittier, dirtier edge. Hard and steely with unmistakable purpose, the noise builds and evolves with throttle opening, revs and load. Unlike the Ferrari,

'IT HUMS AND SINGS AND SNARLS AND SNUFFLES'

which gives you the full Nessun Dorma virtually from tickover, you have to goad the LFA's V10 into baring its teeth. Your reward for digging deep into the rev-range is a fire that lights at 7000rpm and builds to an inferno at 9000. It's quite unlike any other road car engine and utterly addictive.

It takes self-control to negotiate the magnificent ascent through Glencoe

and on towards Fort William, for these long, open straights and endless high-g corners are made for cars like the LFA and GTO. There's no question you could explore the full extent of their performance envelope if you chose to fully depress the throttle and disengage your brain. We don't see any police cars and there's less traffic than you might expect for the holiday season, but the potential consequences don't bear thinking about, so we content ourselves with 'making progress' rather than making headlines in the evening news reports. Even so, it's clear those earlier impressions are crystallising into a more detailed picture of each car's character, the GTO always the more expressive





and visceral machine, the LFA measured and cerebral, but no less exciting and right with it for public road pace.

If Scottish Highland roads are amongst the best you'll find anywhere, the selection of hotels is rather less inspiring, especially when you arrive in Fort William without reservations. We eventually find beds for the night, but the hotel ambience is a nightmare blend of cut-price cruise ship and old folk's home. We wreak our revenge at 6am next morning, the Ferrari and Lexus kicking into life with a seismic snarl and a feral whoop. I picture false teeth pulsating in bedside glasses, ripples radiating across the Sterident-infused water like the T-Rex scene from *Jurassic Park*.

Our destination is Glen Nevis and an entirely different road from the open, sweeping A82. It leads to some of Britain's highest mountains, including the McDaddy, Ben Nevis. It's a writhing, rollicking ribbon of tarmac that squeezes umpteen dips, crests, blind corners and inviting combinations of twists and turns into just a few miles. Not natural supercar territory then, but proven superstar territory, having been used as a backdrop for scenes in *Harry Potter* and *Braveheart*. It also works brilliantly for Dave Smith's Nikons and Sam Riley's Sony, so we make the most of our early start and a blissfully traffic-free few hours.

I came here nearly 15 years ago in another 550bhp supercar – Aston

Martin's behemoth twin-supercharged Vantage – but back then the two-ton monster didn't so much attack this tricky, unforgiving road as negotiate it. Slowly. By contrast the LFA and GTO are happy to go to work on it, shimmying carefully over the most severe yumps, but piling into the more gradual crests and compressions with confidence approaching disdain. Both cars feel sensational, but it's the Lexus that displays the greater body control, traction and progressive on-limit breakaway, never once grazing the road with its belly, despite countless pre-emptive grimaces from Green and myself. The Ferrari is a wilder ride, uttering the odd *skrrsssb* from a few bits

LFA is unlike anything else. Extraordinary 552bhp 4.8-litre V10 revs all the way to 9000rpm, as you can listen to here...



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McLAREN F1

» Why all cars should have a centre-seat and an overhead intake. And a BMW V12 designed by Paul Rosche.



LAMBORGHINI DIABLO SV

» Harry's not happy that his Countach didn't make the top five, but we reckon the Lambo V12 was at its very best in the Diablo SV.



PAGANI ZONDA

» Harry's a little happier now the Zonda's in. Cinque Roadster best showcase for AMG V12.



FERRARI F50

» Watch evo's John Barker redline this glorious V12 via the QR code (or extras.evo.co.uk)



FERRARI 512TR

» Flat-12 Ferrari engine a masterpiece. Shame we won't see its like again.

of sacrificial plastic and breaking traction with greater ease and less warning, but it's still grin-inducing fun.

If there's one area Ferrari has Lexus licked it's the gearshift. It's not shift-speed that's the issue, although there's no question the GTO's light-switch-quick up and downshifts leave the Lexus 'box breathless, but the toothy chatter that accompanies every gearchange in the LFA. It's not clunky and antiquated like a Lambo e-gear system, but it can be harsh and never has the refinement of the Ferrari. Given it's mated to an engine with a throttle so sharp and precise you could perform surgical procedures with it, that's a shame, and perhaps betrays the LFA's protracted gestation.

The final pieces of this twin test puzzle are the brakes. Both cars feature carbon ceramic discs – sometimes tricky when it comes to finding the sweet spot for consistent braking feel. It seems the Lexus and Ferrari engineers have come at the problem from opposite sides. The LFA's initial pedal response feels over-sharp, but soon settles to deliver a beautifully firm and consistent pedal. By contrast the GTO has a very brief dead phase, where the pedal travels a few millimetres with little bite, before delivering the stopping power you crave. It's hard to drive around either trait, and ironically it's more of an issue when you're driving at modest pace; when you're going for it you tend to push straight through into the meat of the pedal, rather than search for subtle shades of retardation. Neither set-up is perfect, but for us the LFA brakes get the nod by a slim margin.

By the time we have to end our Highland odyssey both cars have made a big impression. The GTO is a proper, full-blooded Ferrari, with a louder bark and a greater propensity to bite than the regular 599 or 599 HGTE. Those 661 horses make for a wild ride, and the reduced weight and aggressive chassis set-up guarantee to get your heart pumping – and on occasion your palms sweating – but it also has surprising manners if you can resist the constant urge to make a rumpus. No question, the GTO is an unforgettable car.

Privately I'd wondered in the days prior to this test if the GTO's extrovert character would simply overwhelm the LFA, but with each passing day the Lexus has proved itself to be a worthy and formidable adversary. What it lacks in outright accelerative savagery it makes up for in deft dynamics and the sheer musical quality of that extraordinary V10. What marks out the LFA for particular praise is its bravery and originality; for Lexus to create such a car from scratch, with no evolutionary engineering or existing basis from which to work, is a remarkable achievement. Innovative, extreme, immaculately executed and exquisite to drive, it's the greatest high-performance car Japan has ever produced.

Get hung up on the badge and you'll be blind to its magic. Revel in its rarity, its rare abilities and the fact we're unlikely to see its like again and you'll understand why the LFA is one of the greats, and why this test ends with three unexpected, hard-won and thoroughly deserved words: Lexus beats Ferrari.

SPECIFICATIONS

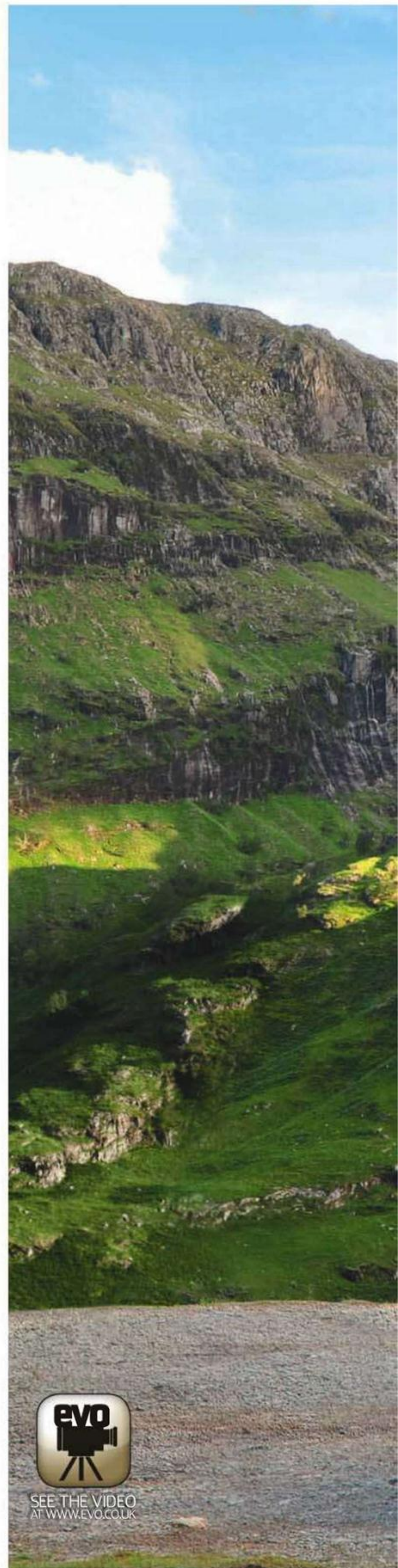
	LEXUS LFA	FERRARI 599 GTO
Engine	V10, 4805cc	V12, 5999cc
Location	Front-mid, longitudinal	Front-mid, longitudinal
CO2	379g/km	411g/km
Power	552bhp @ 8700rpm	661bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque	354lb ft @ 6800rpm	457lb ft @ 6500rpm
Transmission	Six-speed automated manual gearbox, rear drive, limited-slip diff, VSC, TRAC	Six-speed automated manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, F1-Trac
Front suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, magnetic adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, magnetic adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, 390mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD	Ventilated and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels	9.5 x 20in front, 11.5 x 20in rear	10 x 20in front, 11.5 x 20in rear
Tyres	265/35 ZR20 front, 305/30 ZR20 rear	255/35 ZR20 front, 295/35 ZR20 rear
Weight (kerb)	1480kg	1605kg
Power-to-weight	379bhp/ton	418bhp/ton
0-60mph	3.6sec (claimed)	3.4sec (claimed)
Top speed	202mph (claimed)	208mph (claimed)
Basic price	£352,000	£305,676 (£338,688 as tested)

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★★★★★ EVO RATING ★★★★★



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*'WITH EACH PASSING DAY
THE LEXUS HAS PROVED ITSELF
TO BE A WORTHY AND
FORMIDABLE ADVERSARY'*



Science of sound

The Aston One-77's glorious V12 noise didn't just happen by chance – it was tailored that way

How hard can it be to get a fabulous sound out of a 7.3-litre, 750bhp V12, the world's most powerful naturally aspirated engine? Not hard, you might think, but even the world's finest orchestras only perform at their best when led by a great conductor.

Aston Martin's conductor is Shunichi Ishikawa, manager of NVH and powertrain engineering. 'Shun', as he's known, has been at Aston for ten years and was involved in the One-77 supercar project at the concept stage, working closely with chief engineer Chris Porritt to get the

under the low bonnets of other Astons. Those have forward-mounted intakes and this leads to 'wave break', a disharmony where the sound waves collide and the purity is lost. 'I always wanted to do a symmetrical intake with a central entry,' says Shun, and this time he got it, because its almost perfect geometry is good for the performance of the engine too.

It also helps that the intake is carbonfibre – it's better for tone than cast aluminium, which has resonance in an undesirable sound range. But that's only half of the story. 'The sound you hear from a DB9 V12 is around 20 per cent engine intake and 80 per cent



Above: 7.3-litre V12 is unique to the One-77. Left: exhaust system is made from Inconel

design of intake and exhaust system he wanted to ensure the huge V12 had a suitably epic soundtrack.

Inspiration came in part from classic Italian racing V12s from Ferrari and Maserati, says Shun. 'I wanted the One-77 to have a sound that matched its looks, a pure sound, an endless crescendo.' The bespoke, dry-sumped V12 in the One-77 is quite

different to those squeezed exhaust,' says Shun. 'On the One-77 it's about 50:50, with the intake taking over as the dominant sound from around 5000rpm to the red line at 7300rpm.'

Naturally, there's a little theatre built into the start-up, the engine bursting into life with a complex, multi-cylinder bellow and settling to an unusually high 1250rpm idle. The exhaust system is actively valved and made from Inconel, a

lightweight, heat-resistant nickel-chromium-based 'superalloy'. The system is tubular right from the cylinder heads and grows to 70mm diameter with a thin, 0.9mm wall thickness, which helps produce the big sound.

The real trick, though, is the mixing of the exhaust outputs of each bank of six cylinders. 'There was no benefit to doing this on previous Aston V12s but the One-77 really responds,' says Shun. The outputs of each cylinder bank come together right at the back of the car in a surprisingly small muffler to give a deliciously rich, multi-layer sound. As Shun had planned, it all adds up to a marvellously evocative, distinctive and stimulating soundtrack. **John Barker**

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SWEET SIXTEEN

The Bugatti Veyron's 1000bhp-plus quad-turbo W16 engine is often criticised for being 'soulless', but is that really the case? Chris Harris has evidence to the contrary

Much as we cannot fathom how life existed before the mobile telephone, it is hard for me to understand my professional life before the GoPro action camera. Whereas once I had to delve into patchy, alcohol-addled memories, I now simply type something into my MacBook and a video appears. I just typed 'Veyron launch'. I'd forgotten how silly it was.

The Veyron doesn't sound like a car. Well, it does in parts, but there are times when the 8-litre W16's exhaust note owes more to the world of locomotion than the automobile: it's memorable for not being easily place-able in the

hierarchy of car noise, rather than for being especially appealing.

The Veyron Super Sport is the fastest road car yet made. It has 1183bhp and 1106lb ft of torque, all of which reaches the road through a dual-clutch gearbox and a four-wheel-drive system. Owners of the original Veyron complained that it was impossible to overcome the car's immense traction and therefore impossible to do smokey burnouts, which does seem about the most puerile customer feedback imaginable, but who are we to judge the occasional oligarch?

Bugatti obliged with a new launch-control setting for the Super Sports, called, er, Smokey Launch. Ask me to describe Smokey Launch without the benefit of GoPro footage and I can only

recall physical sensations – adjectives swirl in an attempt to describe the violence: foreign, absurd, brutal. But most of all there was fear. When the car jumped forward I had to steer into a slide that must have been caused by a slight crown in the road surface. This was unexpected. Beneath all of this I have very little recollection of noise beyond some extreme tyre-squeal. The type of squeal I have never heard before or since, and which I suppose must be partly down to the unique Michelin PAX system tyres fitted to the Veyron.

And now I've just watched the video. I'm disappointed how little emphasis my memory places on the audio references from that event. Perhaps it's because we all dismiss the Veyron as a soulless, mute



machine. Either way, the sounds are crucial to the pungency of the memory. The brief chat with test driver Loris Biccchi: 'Chris, only stay two seconds on the brake.' (You have to keep the throttle and brake pinned at the same time, then release the brake.) Then the telling chime of the traction control system being de-activated on a near-1200bhp machine.

And then the launch. Consistent, high-frequency screams from the rear 365/25 Michels before the surprising bit: engine noise. Perhaps the Veyron SS's performance is so overwhelming we cannot digest the noise as well as the physicality? But it's there, like a pair of Audi RS4 motors at high revs – a deeply technical sound. But there's one thing the GoPro cannot convey, and that's the low-frequency rumble of the W16. No other car engine ingests so much air and fuel, and you feel those volumes in the noise, in the rumbles. It's like a home hi-fi system with the subwoofer turned up a little too high.

There's one other noise, and it comes from me. You'll need to watch the video to hear it. Without children present.



'IT'S LIKE A PAIR OF AUDI RS4 MOTORS AT HIGH REVS – A DEEPLY TECHNICAL SOUND'

Top right: evo's Harris (right) and Metcalfe were the first people outside the Bugatti factory to sample the SS's new launch mode (see issue 151)



CIZETA V16T: THE OTHER 16-CYLINDER SUPERCAR

The Bugatti Veyron wasn't the first supercar to sport a 16-cylinder engine. In the late 1980s, an Italian auto engineer by the name of Claudio Zampolli founded a new company called Cizeta (the name taken from his initials, CZ) to make a V16-engined supercar. Just eight examples of the Gandini-styled Cizeta V16T were built before the initial production run ceased.

Back in 2004, I met Zampolli at his relocated Cizeta workshop in Southern California to interview him for evo (issue 076) and to get a drive of one of his V16 creations.

The car was suitably imposing at fourteen and a half feet long and a full seven feet across – dictated by the transverse layout of the impossibly long 6-litre V16, which was effectively two flat-plane-crank V8s sharing a single block.

After a prolonged churn of the starter motor, the engine erupted into life with a syncopated thrashing and whirring of the eight camshafts and 64 valves, all overlaid with a fearsome exhaust roar. The clutch wasn't as heavy as I had expected



Cizeta claimed its V16 was good for 560bhp and 398lb ft – and 190mph

and the 16 cylinders ensured a smooth and effortless getaway. The engine pulled insistently from low revs with masses of torque instantly accessible, but it was also surprisingly willing to rev to its near-8000rpm red line.

With the engine just forward

of the rear wheels, traction was uncommonly good and all of the claimed 560bhp could be deployed in first gear without wheelspin. When settled into a bend, the handling was faithful, although you could sense the effects of the height and mass of the engine during rapid direction changes.

Of course, the dominant memory is one of that extraordinary engine and its unique noise. I described it as sounding like an amalgam of a Ducati Desmo and a Merlin aero engine – a mechanical symphony in celebration of the internal combustion engine. David Yu



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RACING CAR

...AND THE QUIETEST

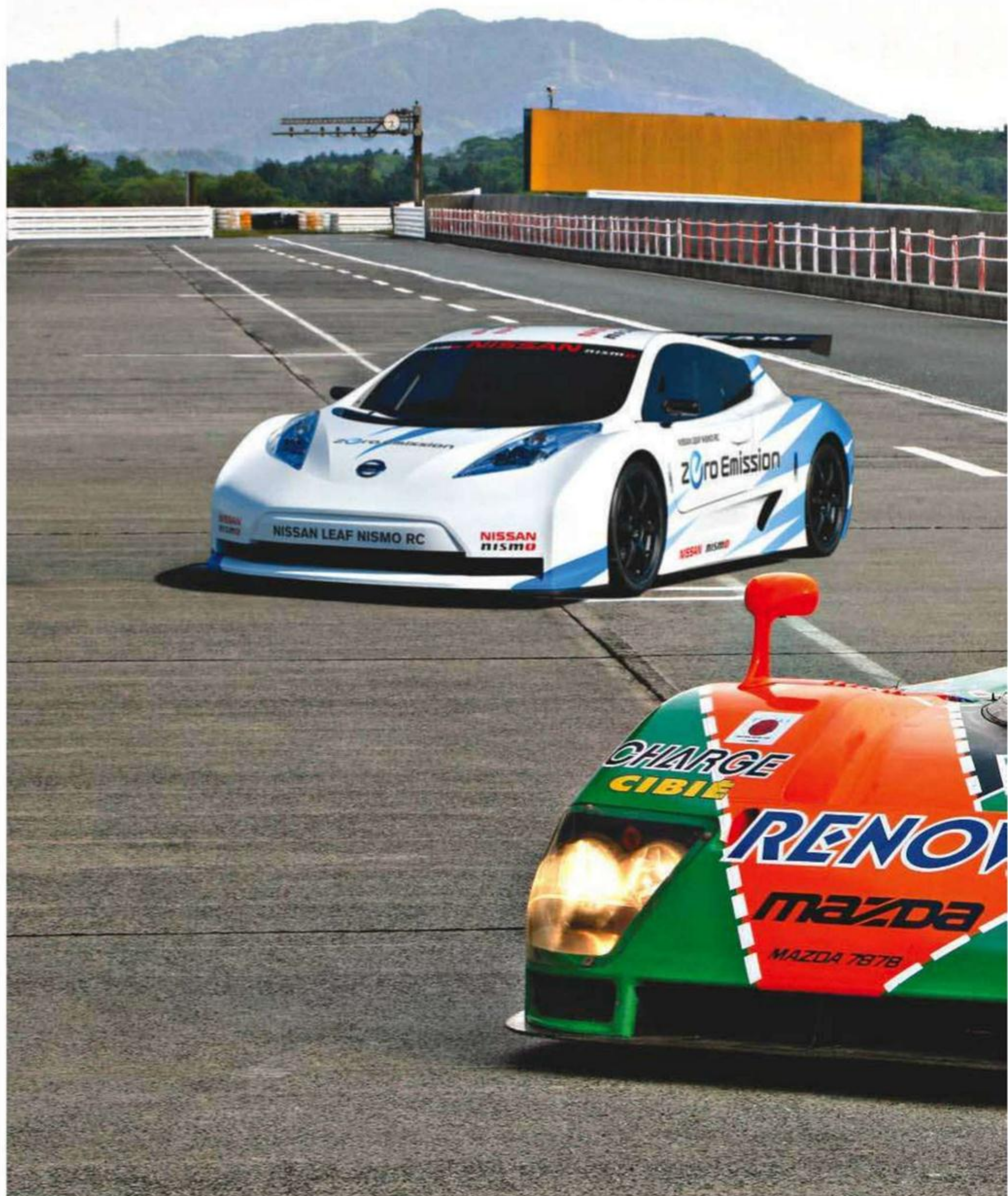
The 1991 Le Mans-winning Mazda 787B makes the best noise a circuit ever heard; the Nissan Leaf RC doesn't.

Chris Harris drives both

You will read several thousand words in this issue on the subject of noise. Some of them will describe loud noise, a few might venture an opinion on quiet noise, but most will pertain to the subject of truly memorable noises and the role they play in our relationship with the motor car.

I'm a lucky soul because I've heard a Formula 1 car from inside and outside the cockpit, grimaced as a McLaren M8F rounded La Source hairpin and witnessed an S1 Quattro throwing flames from close quarters. All of them are wondrous celebrations of man's engineering addiction, but none of them compares to the Mazda 787B. It's a personal opinion, and one that will land me in trouble yet again, but the noise of this machine is the one I will take to my grave. It stands above all other internal combustion engines for the way it invades your senses, and for the mechanical intrigue that lies behind it.

Mazda is the only Japanese car manufacturer to have won Le Mans, and it did so in this very car. For the past 20 years, 787B chassis no. 002 has housed moths back in Hiroshima, except for a brief outing at the Goodwood Festival of Speed a few years back. This year, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the company's finest hour in motorsport,



FAST EVER...

ROTARY & ELECTRIC
787B & LEAF RC
*Sound
OF
Speed*



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Mazda commissioned a complete rebuild of the car at a cost of \$1million so that it could run a lap of the famous French circuit one more time. Johnny Herbert, one of the victorious 1991 team, drove the car and anyone with computer access must watch the video (scan the QR code or visit extras.evo.co.uk).

Racing cars were just beginning to become complicated when the 787B emerged. It runs a carbon tub and carbon disc brakes – both being cutting-edge for Sportscars in 1991 – but apart from its basic construction it is far less complicated than today’s road cars, or at least it would be were it not for the engine. That is from another dimension. It is a four-rotor whizz-kid producing 700bhp at 9000rpm. No turbochargers, no superchargers, just four rotors with a collective displacement of 4709cc.

Mazdaspeed saw the evolution of its racing cars as an integral part of the company’s R&D activities because it was alone in using rotary engines in its road cars. The success of an endurance racing engine depends on two things: reliability and fuel consumption, both of which undermined the popularity of Mazda’s Wankel-cycle engines in showrooms. Never has a race programme been more pertinent to the commercial realities of the parent company that authorised it.

If your expectation of a four-rotor engine producing 149bhp per litre is of something flighty and temperamental, then this one will disappoint you, as I’m about to discover first-hand.

The engineers bolt me into a cockpit so small it fits my Hobbit-sized frame quite perfectly. The pedals aren’t *too* canted left by the right-front wheel, and despite



Above: Harris at the wheel. Clockwise from below: 787B-002 still wears the Le Mans-winning drivers names; lucky charm behind driver’s seat; radiator in nose; mid-mounted Wankel



running a carbon clutch, the left one isn’t that heavy. The steering wheel is vast – about twice the size you’d expect in a car of this type. The gearlever, operating five forward ratios, sits to your right and is arranged with a dog-leg first. The ignition is a simple toggle switch and a large button to the right of the wheel starts the motor.

My Arai-muffled enquiry about the start procedure is met with puzzled incomprehension. I’m expecting the thing to need priming, fettling, pressuring and then some kind of re-boot to make it run properly. ‘Just press the starter,’ shouts someone, assuming that my enquiry was based on me not being able to spot the button. Push the button and a manic starter motor wails for a few seconds and then the creature behind you cackles into life. It parps and fizzes, sending the chassis into little paroxysms of joy. Earplugs were strongly recommended, but you don’t dilute your one chance to hear this motor.

It’s even better from the outside. The exhaust note is fascinating, catching the pulses of each rotor with an arrhythmic *ber-der-ber-ber-ber-der-ber-der* but also introducing an entirely new noise, a kind of ripping sound, as if each contact between rotor-tip and chamber wall has been slowed and played for the audience’s delectation. Even at idle, this is the best-sounding motor I’ve used.

We are driving the car in Majorca on a circuit that is more suited to go-karts than race cars, let alone ones that are geared to exceed 200mph. We might just get into third. Ah, who cares. All I want to do is wind the thing out in a single gear to feel and hear it. But first comes



Right: inside the 787B – note the unusually large steering wheel. Below: car no. 55 won Le Mans in the last year a rotary-engined car would be eligible



the nightmare scenario: a slow lap of tracking photography. It seems crazy to expect a car built to run flat-out to dawdle in 35 degrees ambient. That's the least of my worries right now, though. With minimal torque, a carbon clutch and an engine that revs like a superbike on methanol, I've got to try not to stall it. Fortunately the 787B has enough torque to move on idle. I should have trusted the variable intake system (which looks like a physics experiment bolted to one side of the engine).

The reason why this is the greatest motor I have ever experienced is actually very simple to explain: it offers the clearest relationship between the driver's neurological activity and the engine's behaviour. You think; it does. Even in the first few corners you know it's going to be a pleasure to use: the throttle is light and has a very long throw, encouraging you to push further and further.

And the noise is all-conquering, so masterful you cannot help but laugh out loud at its potency. As the revs build, it hardens and hardens, and it somehow bridges the aural gap that sits between a conventional car engine and a high-revving motorcycle engine. Imagine a ZZR 1100 on Akrapovic pipes siamesed with a DFV and you'll get as close to experiencing the four-rotor in your mind as you can without hearing it in reality.

For a driver, what singles it out is the lack of inertia. The moment you lift the throttle the revs die and the exhaust cackles dozens of curt over-run parps quite unlike anything I've heard before. The power delivery is extraordinary for its breadth and consistency – it pulls hard from as little as 1000rpm and

the intensity remains unchanged until 9000rpm. The gearshift is a bit of a pig, and I repeatedly manage first to fourth, but that probably says more about me than the car.

From outside, the audio is perhaps even more exemplary. It's possible to decipher so many different noises within its voice – a little V8 here, perhaps a bark of V12 at the top, and a decent scoop of superbike thrown in for good measure. And it's so loud – louder than any other race car I can think of, in fact. But again it's that ripping exhaust note, like a giant tearing a vast piece of paper in two, that makes it so compelling. It just leaves you standing there, mouth-breathing like a child. And giggling.

After the 787B's victory in 1991, Mazda had the car flown back to its R&D base in Yokohama, then the engine was removed and inspected for mechanical wear and tear. After 3000 miles the walls of the rotor chambers were as new, and the average wear of the apex seals on the very tips of the rotors was only 20 microns. In other words, the engine could easily have completed a second Le Mans 24hrs without needing any remedial work. Sadly, the same couldn't be said of the chassis: the rear bulkhead had nearly failed under stress.

Even now, people still talk about the Mazda 787B's noise. No conversation about Le Mans is complete without reference to the famous green and orange machine – perhaps even to the detriment of the car's ultimate race-winning achievement, because above all else it will simply be remembered as a noise that people adored. The best-sounding racing car ever made.

NISSAN LEAF RC: THE QUIET RACING CAR



The chocolate fireguard. The porous condom. The electric racing car. There, you now have a good idea where I stand on the subject of the near-silent, direct-drive racing car. It is much like loss of bowel control: inevitable, but abhorrent all the same.

The Nissan Leaf RC (Racing Competition) is an interesting study into the possibilities of zero-emissions motor racing, but I have to say that if this is the racing car of the future, I'll be spending future weekends working on my golf swing.

Now I don't want to demean Nissan's efforts in creating a



Below: AC motor's 107bhp and 207lb ft is sent to the rear wheels; 0-62mph takes 6.9sec

very attractive and beautifully finished machine. No, I want to demean the concept of racing without noise and a gearbox. I thought it was at best stultifying, at worst scary.

First the boring bit. The silent race car is devoid of character. You push a pedal and the car moves from stationary to around 90mph. That's all it can do. The driver has no control over how quickly it gets to that unimpressive terminal velocity other than pushing a pedal.

Now, the frightening bit. Being noiseless, the Leaf racer doesn't communicate. You only realise how much emphasis you place on noise when it isn't there. And you only appreciate how unattractive the peripheral sounds of a racing car are in the absence of induction and exhaust sound. I found placing the car difficult, exit points hard to judge. And I didn't trust the handling because the heavy batteries felt liable to fling the car into a terminal spin.

When the first electric car races at Le Mans, we will all sign a petition asking the ACO to bring back the diesels. Motorsport is about noise. The noiseless racing car is sugar-free chocolate. Insuper. CH



And the winner is...

The greatest-sounding road car of all time is the McLaren F1. Here's why

There's a certain irony in the fact that McLaren has returned to the drawing board to release more intake roar from the new MP4-12C, because the F1 of 1994-98 was designed from the outset to deliver the most sensational induction note ever heard on a road car.

The F1's creator, Gordon Murray, in his inimitable way, thought long and hard about the noise. The Honda NSX was benchmarked, tested and analysed. Its music was in its intake roar. The F1 is the same.

To experience it is like nothing else. The acoustic theatre begins the moment you fire up the BMW Motorsport V12. Insert the key into the slot mounted in the carbon chassis, flick up the fighter-jet style covered starter, then press the button. A sharp whirr from the starter and – *BARK!* – a small explosion occurs over your head. The first of many small explosions that combine to make the greatest road-car sound of all time.

Once on the move, the 6064cc, 60-degree V12 gorges on air sucked in above your head. The bark

gets louder as you pick up the throttle and the 12 individual butterfly valves open. Then, as the variable cams come into play, another instrument is added to the orchestra – a more melodic and hollow noise; the woodwind section perhaps. Push the throttle hard and another layer is added, then another, until a pulsating, yowling high-rev acoustic nirvana is delivered direct to your eardrums.

Then you change into second gear and repeat. Then third. Then fourth, fifth and sixth. The you drop a gear, just to experience the *BARK!*-and-fall, *BARK!*-and-fall as the revs flare and drop away.

The whole experience is utterly absorbing. You feel so close to the engine, so at one with its workings that at times it seems as if there is no physical connection between you and the V12, just a direct neural instruction from brain to engine requesting more or less of the wonderful noise and the extraordinary performance.

Thank you McLaren. Thank you Gordon Murray. Thank you BMW M and Paul Rosche. Now, can you build a successor please? **Nick Trott**

...AND THE LOSER IS...

THE BUGATTI VEYRON

» As a rule of thumb, the higher the cylinder count, the richer the sound an engine produces. But something went very wrong with the standard Veyron's W16. Here's an engine with sixteen separate explosion chambers that sounds, frankly, rubbish.

Fortunately, when you drive a Veyron there's plenty to distract you from the noise it makes. So it's only when someone asks you what a Veyron sounds like that it dawns on you: you've no idea because it possesses the most unmemorable soundtrack in automotive history.

It doesn't help that there are four turbos to soften the pulses going into the exhaust and the rev limit is a mere 6000rpm, but surely someone during the car's development noticed that its engine note at idle resembles that of a twin diesel-engined boat?

Apparently not, which is a great shame. Unless you like the sound boats make; then you're going to love it. **Harry Metcalfe**



**'THE 6064cc,
60-DEGREE
V12 GORGES
ON AIR
SUCKED
IN ABOVE
YOUR HEAD'**

HOW WE VOTED

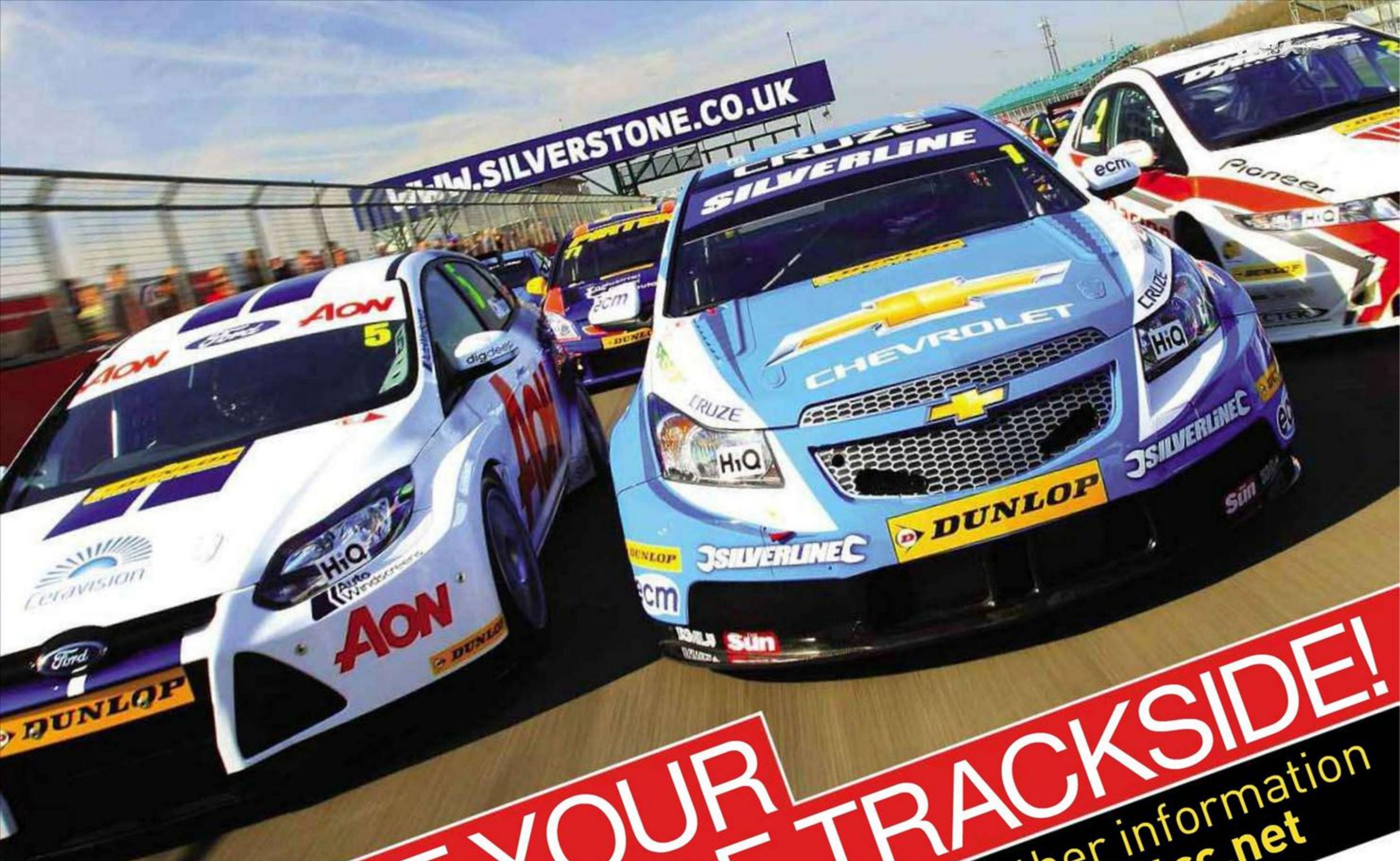
» *evo's* writers each picked five cars for each category (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 16-cylinder cars). A top five for each category was then identified. It's these results you'll find in the strips on the previous pages.

Then the team were asked to pick the 'best of the best' – their favourite-sounding car from the winners of each category. When these votes were totted up, it was a landslide victory for the McLaren F1.

So that's our choice – now it's your turn. Head to evo.co.uk to nominate your favourite. The *evo* readers' choice will be announced in the next issue and online at evo.co.uk on Wednesday September 14.



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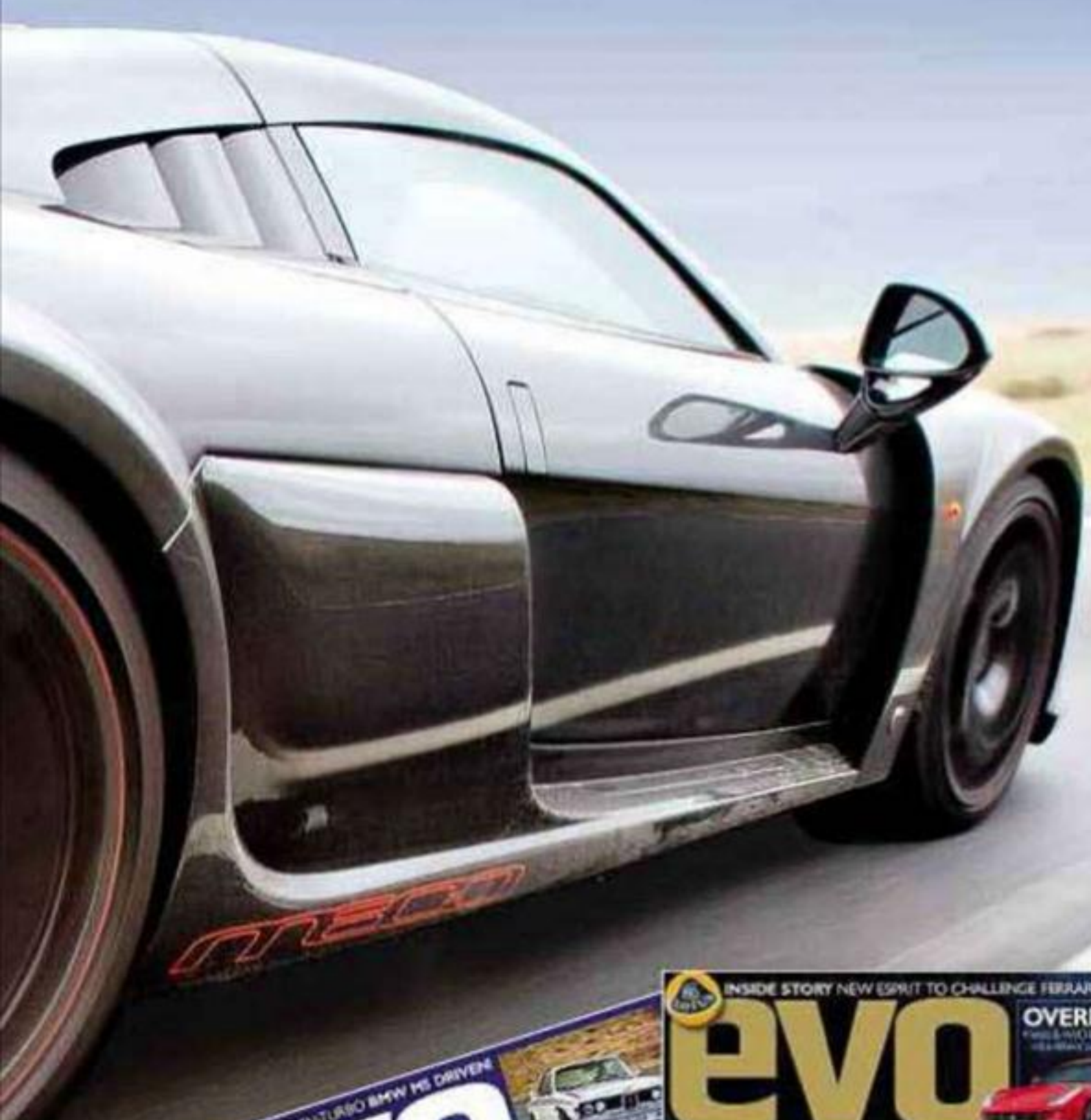
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END OF TERM PEUGEOT RCZ GT THP200

Date acquired December 2010 **Duration of test** 7 months
Total test mileage 10,442 **Overall mpg** 33.8 **Costs** £0 (see text)
Purchase price £27,065 **Trade-in value** £20,600
Depreciation £6465

The RCZ was the first new Peugeot to join our fleet since the much-derided 206 GTI left us way back in August 2004, and the fact that the lion badge was once again adorning something that intrigued us was cause for celebration. There are plenty of guys on this team who have enjoyed owning various iterations of 205, 306 and 106 over the years – in fact two still do – and while we know it's unlikely that we'll ever see their like again, just a hint of that former magic would be very well received.

The RCZ got off to a strong, positive start, mainly thanks to its good looks and its combination of a decent spec at a reasonable price. It was easy to be seduced by the aluminium cant rails, the double-bubble carbon roof flowing into the rear screen, and

those hunched rear arches. There were some reservations about the standard Peugeot front end, but I reckon it still worked well as a whole, and in the seven months that we had ours the looks and lavishly appointed interior never lost their lustre. The leather did begin to stretch a little on the seats, though, and the overall build quality didn't feel as robust as the RCZ's Audi TT nemesis, but you could temper that with the thought that you wouldn't get as many gadgets or as much flair for the money with the German option.

Being a GT THP200, our RCZ was fitted with the same lively 197bhp 1.6-litre turbo engine found in the Mini, and its character suited the Peugeot perfectly, with its smooth delivery and punchy top end. It was enough to propel me up to 142mph when I had the opportunity for a spot of Autobahn storming, and it never missed a beat in the time we had it. It consumed a litre of oil in 10,000 miles and it did require a new thermostat housing



Above: exotic double-bubble roof helped make the RCZ feel particularly special. Left: Green saw 142mph on the Autobahn. Opposite page: build quality wasn't a match for the TT; leather on seat became saggy. Turbo 1.6 'punchy'



'THE LION BADGE ONCE AGAIN ADORNING SOMETHING

LONG-TERM TESTS

This month: Peugeot RCZ Renault Clio Williams VW Polo GTI Aston Martin Rapide BMW 1M Coupe Lamborghini LP640 Nissan 370Z Roadster Mini Countryman Ford Capri V8 Mercedes SLS AMG Porsche 997 GT3 Jaguar XJR Ferrari 458 Italia Jaguar XJ Supersport Lamborghini Countach Subaru WRX STI Skoda Yeti Audi RS5 SEAT Leon Cupra R Infiniti G37S Coupe

when the gauge gave up reading the water temperature. This is apparently a known fault with early cars and was quickly fixed – unlike the clutch plate, which cracked during our last month with our RCZ. This was a new one for Peugeot, and our local dealer, Broad Green of Wellingborough, kept the car for over a week while they investigated the problem, although they did loan me a 508 courtesy car.

KX60 WMY only went on track once in our hands, but it was on Peugeot's press fleet for the first 6000 miles of its life, so it's quite possible the clutch damage was done by the numerous 0-60mph sprints the car would have been subjected to in that time. We've certainly not heard of any other instances of this happening, but we have heard a lot about punctures. Our sister title, *Auto Express*, has also been running an RCZ and its car suffered a couple of deflations, as did ours. Coincidence? I'm not sure, but the firmly sprung suspension probably doesn't help, as

the wheels do tend to thump potholes hard. In fact, one of our alloys got kinked by just such an impact. As no dealers had our style of wheel in stock at the time, Peugeot's press office kindly stepped in and replaced it for us.

The chassis itself generated plenty of grip, particularly at the front. Trouble was, it lacked the adjustability of the heroic hatchbacks of yesteryear and you had to work with artificially weighted steering that was both numb and imprecise. And it was these things, ultimately, that were the RCZ's downfall as a long-term proposition: you very quickly felt like you'd got all you could from the car, so after a very short while it didn't inspire you to go and drive it just for the sake of it.

This is a real shame, because the shoots of a Peugeot petrolhead revival are there. The intent is obvious, but right now the cars still lack Renaultsport levels of verve and involvement. Maybe that will come in the future. Let's hope so. **Roger Green**



‘THAT INTRIGUED US WAS CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION’

evoFast Fleet



RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS

Date acquired September 2010 **Total mileage** 88,202 **Mileage this month** 296 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 34.0

A few months ago I visited Auto Glym for some car cleaning tips. I learned how to successfully wax a car, and hence how to keep the Williams semi-spotless with minimal effort.

Yet when I dragged myself out of bed one Sunday morning for a three-hour schlep west to La Vie en Bleu, a French car celebration at Prescott Hill, it was utterly mucky. Knowing I'd be parking in a line of classic Renaults all vying for concours glory (and I was technically entered, too), this wasn't ideal. Needless to say, the judges were disapproving, but it was nice to chat to some fellow owners and ogle some Alpines. I'll own one at some point...

The highlight, though, was a parade run up the hill. I'd driven Prescott for the first time a few weeks earlier – in a supercharged Atom, of all things – but the climb is more enjoyable in something slower. You enter its technical corners with eyes less wide, able to correctly pick out your line and stick to it. It's a great course and I hope the Clio gets the chance to really attack it in anger soon. The hillclimb-prepped Williams 2 that I saw competing only fuelled my imagination... **Stephen Dobie**



Top: not winning the concours. Above: a Willy 2 in hillclimb spec. Below: lots of lovely Alpines



Above: slow puncture is latest wheel-related

NEW ARRIVAL VW POLO GTI

Date acquired June 2011 **Total mileage** 5074 **Mileage this month** 2852 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 37.5



'IN MOST AREAS, LIFE WITH THE POLO HAS BEEN PAINLESSLY EASY-GOING'

Cars like this are exactly why we run long-termers. The Polo GTI is far from our favourite small hot hatch; it finished fourth out of five in an evo group test in south Wales earlier this year (issue 154). Yet models that are outshone on a magazine shootout often reveal a deeper breadth of talents when lived with daily. The Audi TT RS we ran in 2010 is a shining example of this.

The Polo missed out on a podium place chiefly for its dynamics, which are polished

rather than pulsating, and nowhere near as engaging as a Clio 200 or Mini JCW's. But what it offers that they don't is Mini-Me Golf GTI styling (plus the slice of heritage and class that goes with it), greater refinement, and a tech-heavy mix of a twin-charged 178bhp 1.4-litre engine and seven-speed DSG twin-clutch gearbox.

Its impressively brisk pace is undeniable (we've clocked one at 7.1sec to 60mph). But a hot hatch initially feels wrong with two pedals in the footwell, and VW doesn't offer a manual with the GTI (same's true of its

Dobie's a fan of the Polo GTI's smart looks (above right) and well-made, ergonomically faultless interior (above left); he's yet to be convinced by the DSG gearbox, though

ASTON MARTIN RAPIDE

Date acquired June 2011 **Total mileage** 2577 **Mileage this month** 1609 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 19.1

It's been a busy time for the Rapide these last few weeks, with a trip to the Nürburgring for the 24-hour race followed by a slog down to Goodwood for the Festival of Speed. I'm pleased to say the big Aston excelled at both journeys.

The drive to the Ring is tedious at the best of times, but the Rapide made light work of the trudge through France and Belgium. The B&O hi-fi sounds stonking, while the

effortless V12 steamrollers the miles without complaint. Despite running on 20in rims, the ride is supple and refined.

Once into Germany, the Aston upped its game brilliantly, running at 140mph like most cars cruise at 80, then lunging to 160 and beyond when the traffic allowed. Even my 21-year-old nephew Jake was impressed, staying awake just long enough to witness 164mph flash up before traffic stopped play.

I'm still amazed I managed to squeeze my ridiculously large race-kit bag into the boot – plus another hefty bag, some camera kit and



Above: Meaden's been impressed by the Rapide's long-distance abilities



SEAT and Skoda cousins). Whether I'll be a DSG-convert after six months genuinely intrigues me. Hesitant throttle pick-up onto roundabouts and out of junctions plus some dim-witted downchanges in D-mode – uphill and when trying to gain speed on motorways – are currently proving bugbears. I'm using manual paddleshifts on nine journeys out of ten.

In most other areas, though, life with the Polo has been painlessly easy-going. While perhaps not a core *evo* topic, VW really does nail ergonomics. Every button

falls perfectly to hand and is satisfyingly damped. And although the interior is not the most sparkling you'll find, it's incredibly well screwed together and subtly livened up by the obligatory tartan sports seats and a red-stitched GTI steering wheel that's free of distracting buttons.

J4 VWW is pleasingly simple in spec: 17in alloys, air-con and heated electric mirrors are standard equipment highlights, while the only option fitted is the £840 touchscreen infotainment system. It may sound pricey, but with intuitive satnav, excellent traffic

reports and an iPod-mimicking music display, it's probably worth it.

The £19,635 total price for a car specced like ours is a bit more of a sticking point, though. A former long-termer of mine – a Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup like the aforementioned group test's winner – cost a nice round £18,000, and while it lacked satnav, it offered more kit on the whole, better interior space and the hedonistic driving experience the Polo is missing. I look forward to seeing which hand of cards the VW plays back.

Stephen Dobie

my crash helmet – without folding the seats down. My wife Emma cadged a lift on the way home too. This relegated Jake to one of the back seats, but he seemed comfortable enough to watch a movie or two.

By contrast the trip to Goodwood was generally horrid, but the Rapide is uncannily good at de-stressing potentially hateful journeys, the smooth auto 'box schmoozing its way through stop-start traffic. The fuel bills are smarting somewhat – I've still yet to see 20mpg – but the Rapide is proving highly addictive.

Richard Meaden



Rapide meets its race-spec counterpart, which came 2nd in the SP8 class in last year's N24; behind is the V12 Zagato racer

evoFast Fleet

NEW ARRIVAL 370Z ROADSTER

Date acquired July 2011 Total mileage 1272
Mileage this month 174 Costs this month £0
mpg this month 22.5

I seem to have unwittingly developed a specialism with my long-termers: rear-drive coupes and convertibles, usually with around 300bhp. So far I've been fortunate enough to tick the SLK, Z4, RX-8 and G37S off my list, but there was one more I was particularly keen to spend some serious time with: a 370Z, and specifically the Roadster version.

Why? Well, I've been a big fan of Nissan's brawny Z-cars since racing a 350Z in a round of the Dunlop Sport Maxx Cup in 2007 (evo 113). I also like a good convertible, and last spring the 370Z Roadster proved itself to be just that by beating BMW's Z4 35i and Audi's TTS in an evo group test (issue 143). As the more-than-happy keeper of the very Z4 that was defeated, this result got me wondering: what would the Zed Roadster be like to live with? Even better than the Bee-Em? Now I'm going to get to find out.

OY11 PUH arrived in the height of the summer. It's a GT Pack model (suede trim, leather seats with heating and cooling, eight-speaker Bose audio system, 19in alloys and cruise control, adding £3300) with Connect



Premium (satnav, 9.3GB music hard-disk and a rear-view camera - £1550), the seven-speed paddleshift automatic gearbox (£1250), pearlescent Storm White paint (£550) and some 370Z-logo'd floor and boot mats (£136). Altogether this little lot takes the price of the convertible 370Z from £32,050 to £38,836, and that, impressively, is still less than the *basic* price of the Z4 35i, Mercedes SLK350 and Porsche Boxster S, all of which have at least 20bhp less power than the 326bhp Nissan.

Why the auto gearbox? A few reasons. Firstly, we've already lived with the manual in the coupe 370Z run by Henry Catchpole last year. Secondly, around 50 per cent of Zed Roadster buyers go auto. Thirdly, the Zed

in the aforementioned group test was thus equipped, and it didn't prevent it winning, despite the BMW having a slick manual 'box and the TTS a swift-shifting twin-clutcher. In fact the test team found the Nissan's auto surprisingly likeable.

So, first impressions. I've not even covered 200 miles in the drop-top Zed yet, but it's been a promising start. That big, gruff V6 sounds even bigger and gruffer without a roof, the gearbox does indeed appear to be a good 'un, and the suede-lined cabin is definitely a nice - and well-equipped - place to spend time. And it's fantastic having open air above my head again. Yes, it's early days yet, but I've got a feeling the Zed and I are going to get along just fine. Ian Eveleigh

Below: 370Z Roadster arrived just in time to make the most of the latter half of the summer; dazzling pearlescent white paint is a £550 option

'THAT BIG, GRUFF V6 SOUNDS EVEN BIGGER AND GRUFFER WITHOUT A ROOF'



MERCEDES-BENZ SLS AMG

Date acquired April 2011 **Total mileage** 3601
Mileage this month 790 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 19.8

Should you invert an SLS and need to extract yourself from the wreckage, an explosive charge will detach the pins in the hinges at the top of the doors, allowing them to be pulled away. It's a safety device I hope I never have to use. Opened in their normal way, the novelty of gullwing doors is no closer to wearing-off. Even if I'm a little too short to shut myself inside without groaning.

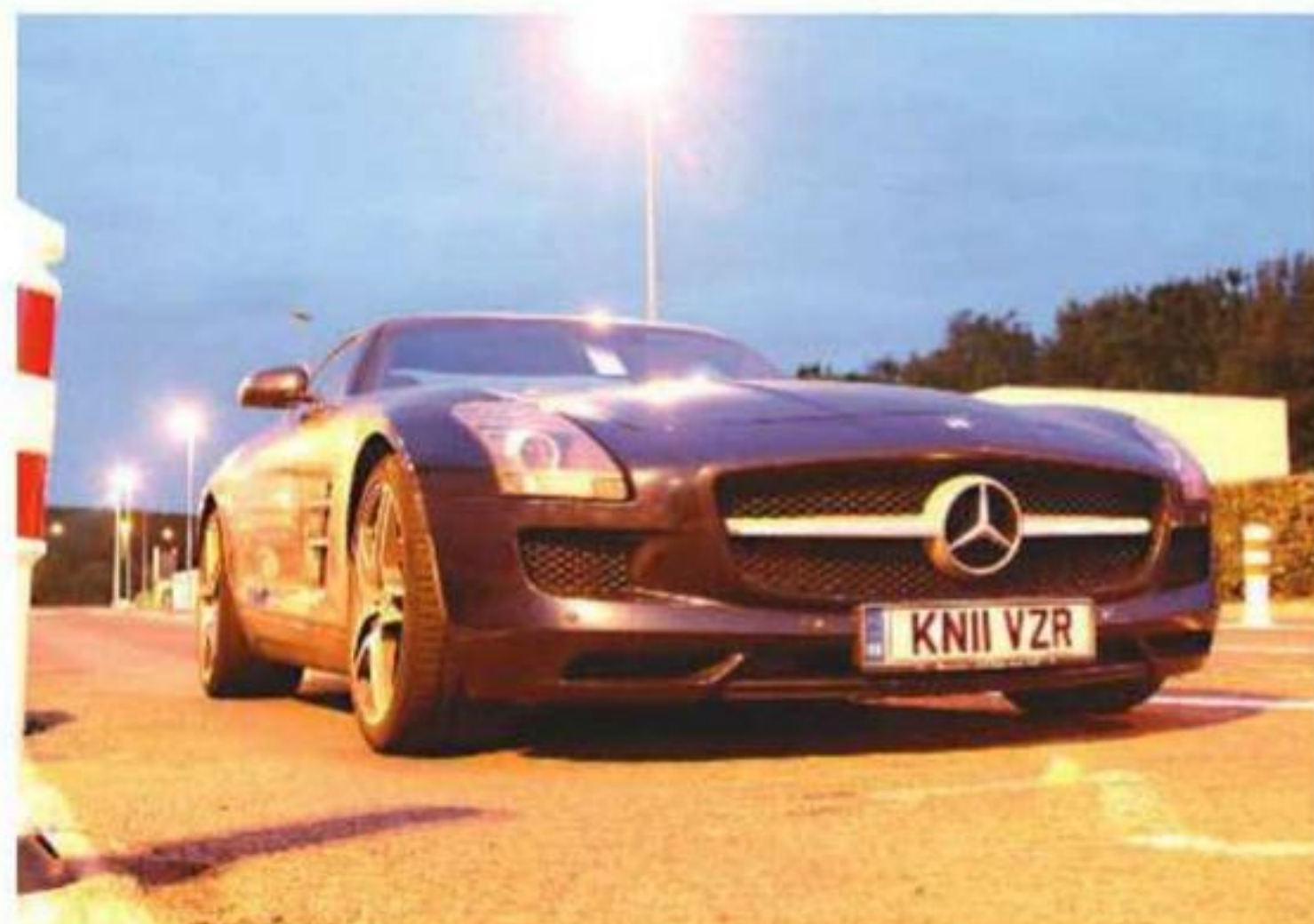
It is easy to forget just how much performance this car offers, and just how well it can be deployed on UK roads. Even in the wet, traction is very impressive. Its abilities are supported by the 7min 40sec Nürburgring lap time set by *Sport Auto*

magazine in Germany. That's astonishingly fast for a GT-cum-supercar.

If the engine and chassis are almost beyond reproach, I'm now properly calibrated to the DCT's slightly delayed responses, even if the shift lights are too slow to be of any real use. Overall, it isn't perfect, but it no longer frustrates me and I fully appreciate its gangly seventh gear. At a fast motorway cruise the SLS will return 21mpg, but wind it back to 75mph and that figure climbs to 25mpg.

I have only one gripe this month. For some reason the Bluetooth system won't import my address book. I hope you understand how hard it is to drive around in a beautiful, sonorous, extremely fast supercar and not have one's address book imported onto the 'Comand' unit. Someone pinch me when this dream ends.

Chris Harris



Above: explosive device detaches the door hinges of an upturned SLS, allowing the doors to be pulled away and passengers to escape

FORD CAPRI V8

Date acquired Oct 2001 **Total mileage** 1313
Mileage this month 102 **Costs this month** £790 (suspension recommissioning, first service and sundries) **mpg this month** 17.5

'We've had quite a few people ask if it's for sale,' said QPrep's Quentin Nicholls when I arrived to collect the Capri at the close of the local carnival. Perfection Valet did such a great job bringing the shine out of the Capri that it seemed a shame to just drive it and get it dirty, so I was pleased when Quentin



QPrep's stand showed a variety of machines



Barker's V8 Capri (left) was joined by another asked if he could show it on his stand.

It was quite a collection of cars and included another local V8 Capri, that of Will Holman, editor of *PPC* mag. Incredibly, Oundle is home to a third V8 Capri, this one a perfectly preserved, period custom car with slot mags, candy apple red paint and a jacked up rear axle. Holman's is for sale but mine isn't, of course. In fact, I might treat it to a tailored car cover.

John Barker

MINI COOPER S COUNTRYMAN

Date acquired May 2011 **Total mileage** 5462
Mileage this month 2250
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 31.7



Mini acted as support vehicle to rally Manta

So far, so good for the Countryman. With 5000 miles showing, the Maxi-Mini has proved itself a far better all-rounder than I expected it to be, adapting to my long motorway commute, occasional trips to the Smoke and even demonstrating enthusiasm for the occasional B-road detour. It's grippy and keen, yet refined at motorway speeds.

Early highlights include the easy-going nature of the turbocharged 1.6-litre engine, which pulls strongly from 1500rpm upwards. Another, being shallow here, is the excellent optional digital tuner, which seems to get a signal everywhere. Lowlights are the sometimes horrendous ride quality of the 18in runflat tyres and the fact that – even with gentle use – I can't better 32mpg. These things are relative, of course. I'd be delighted to get that from a Porsche, but in a Mini – even a fat, four-wheel-driven one – it just seems wrong.

Still, it's practical. I've had four adults in it with no complaints, and the spacious boot (compared with a regular Mini) saw it drafted in as 'service barge' for a mate's Opel Manta at the recent Abingdon CARnival rally stages – referencing the Countryman's distant WRC connections. It rained all day, meaning the Mini's most important role was providing shelter and keeping the sandwiches dry – until the Manta blew its head gasket and I spent an hour getting very wet indeed, leaving me grateful for the excellent heater and quick-clear windscreen.

Mike Duff



Countryman also met 'our' Bonneville Skoda

evoFast Fleet

LAMBORGHINI LP640

Date acquired August 2007 Total mileage 41,009 Mileage this month 922 Costs this month £0 mpg this month 13.0



If the truth be told, the LP640 has taken a back seat since the Ferrari 458 arrived a few months ago. That said, I found myself climbing into those lovely Schedoni leather seats recently and heading up towards the Scottish Borders.

Talk about having a workout – within 15 miles I was almost breaking out in a sweat after having become used to the 458's effortless driving style. It's so easy to forget what a big, heavy supercar this monster is. That's not a criticism, mind. It's just so different to Maranello's finest. In fact there's nothing that clears the fast lane of a motorway quicker than an angry Murciélago, apart from perhaps something equipped with blue lights.

Last month I mentioned that the LP640's third-gear synchromesh had started making the dreaded whining noise. It's getting worse. Hopefully it will be OK until November and the end of the trackday experience season, whereupon Lamborghini Manchester will have another gearbox to rebuild. There goes another five grand. Stewth.

But gearbox problems aside, LP07 continues to entertain. Sure, the rear spoiler always sticks in the up position, and the 'check engine' light appears as frequently as the 'low fuel' light, but the car soldiers on regardless. I wouldn't have it any other way. **Simon George**



LP640's spoiler refuses to go down by itself

BMW 1M COUPE

Date acquired June 2011 Total mileage 5618 Mileage this month 2699 Costs this month £0 mpg this month 26.8

My first month with the 1M should've been a dream. But if you've been following my Fleet Tweets @evoNickTrott you'll know

I slipped a disc early last month and didn't drive for some time. It happened four days after I took delivery of the 1M and just before I was scheduled to take it to the Nürburgring to watch the 24-hour race. Gutted. However, Stephen Dobie's arm shot up when I asked who wanted to take the car out there, more of which to follow.

On another note, I've decided to vinyl-wrap the Valencia Orange 1M. The colour clashes with my hair. Honest! Initially, I was thinking of white or silver with M-stripes, like a BMW 2002 Turbo – and there's a vague link in that I own a 1502 BMW (a poverty-spec 2002). However, I'm now tempted by something like the black Castrol CSLs that Hans Stuck jumped all over the Ring. Decisions, decisions. Any suggestions? Email or tweet me. Speaking of the Ring, over to Mr Dobie... **Nick Trott**

I WAS OBVIOUSLY FULL of sympathy for Nick and his back. But not enough to deny myself a small whoop of excitement at getting his 1M for a week, most of it to be spent at what is surely one of its natural haunts, the Nürburgring. I'd been itching to drive the mini-M3 since BMW first pulled the wraps off its cartoonish body, and seven days and 1500 miles seemed the perfect way to introduce myself to the editor's new long-termer.

On the day-long run from Stamford to Nürburg it was everything I hoped it would be: effortlessly fast, comfy, refined and capable of swallowing my and film-maker Sam Riley's gear. Never mind tripods and video cameras – his hat collection is huge.



Above: would the 2002 Turbo colour scheme suit the 1M? Let Nick know what you think. Left: 1M meets M1 ProCar at the M Festival

But Riley and I weren't just at the Ring to stick cameras and microphones in the faces of evo's racing drivers. We were attending the inaugural BMW M Festival, the highlight being the chance to drive the Nordschleife in the 1M. My boss's 1M. On my first ever lap of the North Loop. In peeing-down rain...

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately) we got to drive just one lap, and that was behind a parade car. There was extra relief as our 1M's brakes don't feel fantastic, its hard life as a press car before arriving at Evo Towers perhaps at fault. Still, even at half-speed the Ring's an awe-inspiring place to drive. It's whetted my appetite for a trackday there.

The 1M performed well during the rest of the trip, ferrying us around the circuit's extremities during all hours of the race, with a favourable response from the inebriated spectators littering the local area. But it was on the way home that the car and I really gelled: it was

'I WAS GOING TO DRIVE THE RING. IN MY BOSS'S 1M'



Left: 1M beside its spiritual predecessor, the E30 M3. Above right: refuelling after earning the 1M the right to wear a Ring sticker (below). Right: on the way to an indicated 170mph





PORSCHE 997 GT3

God I wish the Akrapovic exhaust had always been like this. With the new side-boxes and re-connected Sport button, it's fabulous: quiet when you need it, dastardly when you don't. Lent the car to a nice chap called Martin to drive to the N24 race. I'll get him to write something about it next month.

Chris Harris

JAGUAR XJR

Passing roadworks one night recently, a piece of old tarmac fell off a lorry and dinged the Jag's door. A pristine car is one thing. A pristine car that's also 13 years old is another, because at that age the unsullied condition feels like an achievement. I'm going to have to get the door damage fixed, and soon.

Richard Porter

JAGUAR XJ SUPERSPORT

The Jag's Bower & Wilkins hi-fi is phenomenally good – apart from one thing. It's supposed to get louder when it detects increased road noise (i.e. when you're going faster), but it seldom gets the level quite right – and you can't disable it. Worse, this one's gone wonky, so occasionally it gets louder when you're slowing down, sometimes quite deafeningly so. Cue stern looks from Mrs T, who thinks I'm doing it on purpose. If it ever coincides with the final chorus of 'Since I've Been Loving You', I'm toast.

Peter Tomalin

FERRARI 458 ITALIA



I'm finally up to speed with WX11's on-board computer. Of course, being a bloke I've not looked at the manual, but I've figured it all out. Apart from the CD player, which is complicated and sounds pants.

I've also been discovering how sensitive the throttle pedal is. It's sometimes difficult to make smooth progress on indifferent surfaces as your foot continually bounces off the pedal. However, hit the steering wheel-mounted suspension 'de-coupling' button and the situation improves markedly. As I live in Yorkshire, it looks like I'll be using it every day.

Simon George

a willing partner for my first ever Autobahn blast, reaching an indicated 170mph with ease. And I'm sure we were hitting a limiter – one higher than the claimed 155mph – as the engine felt like it had more to give.

Downsides? A 27mpg average was impressive given our motorway V-max run, but the 53-litre fuel tank meant we had to fill up every 300 miles. The ride is also inescapably firm over rougher surfaces, which can widen your eyes when you're well into three-figure speeds. I'm nitpicking, though. This car is what the M3 should still be, and handing the keys back was hard.

Stephen Dobie





INFINITI G37S COUPE

Date acquired July 2010 Total mileage 23,340
Mileage this month 3733 Costs this month £0
mpg this month 26.9

There's no logical reason to drive to the south of France. It's significantly cheaper to fly, and there are plenty of perfectly good hire cars available at Nice airport. But there is something about doing it the hard way, actually being properly involved in the process of getting from A to B rather than spending hours twiddling your thumbs in stale airports and on stuffy aeroplanes. Driving gives you a proper feeling of distance, and even if you're making the journey in a modern car on modern autoroutes, there's a sense of old-fashioned adventure about it. So with a week on the Côte d'Azur planned, my wife and I decided we'd travel by Infiniti.

After an early ferry crossing, the cruise control was set to fine-avoiding speeds, putting the engine at a barely audible 2500rpm or so, and progress was truly effortless. Even swapping drivers was a doddle, thanks to the two memory settings for the driver's seat and steering wheel.



As the miles slipped by, the only flies that landed in the ointment were the spurious traffic info being picked up by the satnav and the lack of height adjustment for the driver's seatbelt, which bugged Mrs Ev until we found a makeshift solution.

The 750 miles from Calais to Cannes took less than 12 hours, and we arrived feeling... well, about as fresh as you could expect after a 5.30am start. Costs amounted to £84 in tolls and, at an average of 31mpg,

£150 in fuel. Perhaps that's another reason to make a journey like this by car now – if fuel prices rise much further, it won't even be worth contemplating.

All things considered, the Infiniti earned its country-crossing GT badge with ease, and over the week that followed it was infinitely more enjoyable than a bog-basic rental Twingo would have been. It attracted glances while cruising la Croisette in Cannes (perhaps people were tired of looking at the 599 GTOs and Veyrons), its torquey V6 and auto gearbox made light work of climbing the spectacular Route des Crêtes, and the quick steering was just the thing for enjoying the endless turns of the Route Napoleon. And could there be a more fitting machine in which to clip the red and white kerbing in Monaco than one from the manufacturer whose name is on the car that won the Grand Prix there earlier this year?

After racking up 2250 miles in just eight days, the G37S had proved itself to be a consummate all-rounder, which was exactly what we needed. My respect for this car continues to grow.

Ian Eveleigh

'THE 750 MILES FROM CALAIS TO CANNES TOOK 12 HOURS'

Right: door-to-door journey was just over 900 miles. Holiday highlights included venturing into the hills above Monaco (top) and climbing the stunning Route des Crêtes (above)



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RENAULTSPORT CLIO V6

Date acquired Jan 2010 **Total mileage** 14,863
Mileage this month 161 **Costs this month**
£887 (tyres), £40 (MOT) **mpg this month** 18.9

A couple of months ago I reported that my Clio V6 was due for new rubber – and that the 205/40 ZR18 front tyre is no longer available. I have to admit that I was gutted about this; Renaultsport engineered the car to work best with 205/40s on the front and 245/40/18s on the rear, and such is the V6's tricky handling, the thought of switching to a larger sized front tyre filled me with dread. The last thing a short-wheelbase, mid-engined, rear-wheel-drive car needs is more front grip afforded by wider front tyres. The understeer that a narrower front tyre generates is a nice, safe warning that things are about to get squirrely...

I mentioned this to a contact at Renault UK who looked into it for me. He advised that I fit 225/40s at the front instead. Same profile – but a fair bit wider. Hmm. What to do? After another look around, the only alternative I could find was a pair of 215/35s – only marginally wider than the originals but a lower profile.

Problem was, I wanted to stick with Michelins, as the original Pilot Sports



Worn Michelin Pilot Sport tyres (far left) have been replaced with a set of new Pilot Sport 3s (left) – with the fronts in a slightly wider size than before

had suited the car well and performed strongly. Eventually I did the sensible thing: took the manufacturer's advice regarding the alternative size, stuck with Michelins and plumped for a full set of newer Pilot Sport 3s.

I've done around 150 miles on them as I write this, and I have to admit that the handling balance has changed – but not as dramatically as I expected it might. Front grip has indeed increased but not at the expense of feel, which means that judging the limits of adhesion is no better or worse than before. This, it has to be said, is a good thing. It's no secret that the Clio V6's chassis gets challenging when pushed, so the clearer the message to the driver that things are about to go wrong, the better. The tyres are proving excellent in the wet too, and noise levels are very low. So far then, so good. **Nick Trott**



'THE LAST THING A SHORT-WHEELBASE, MID-ENGINE CAR NEEDS IS MORE FRONT-END GRIP'

AUDI RS5

Date acquired Dec 2010 **Total mileage** 13,011 **Mileage this month** 1601 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 22.1

The RS5 has had a tough time in the pages of evo. We never really gelled with the model at launch, and after several months on the Fast Fleet the sleek, white Audi has still not been able to worm its way into our affections.

However, I have discovered that it's the perfect machine for my daily commute to the office. It's a short

trip, no more than 12 miles, almost entirely along a single-carriageway A-road invariably infected by Ditherers' Disease.

Is it me or are there more people than ever driving at 45mph on well-sighted, arrow-straight roads? No one ever overtakes, either, so soon a slow-moving train develops where the 'engine' has seemingly no interest in reaching its destination before the next ice age.

So I have reached the conclusion

that I need a minimum of 400bhp at my disposal to allow me to dispatch dawdlers in one hit and get on with my life. Turbocharging is good for instant, punchy torque (the GT2 RS is the ultimate tool for this on a dry day), four-wheel drive helps in the rain, and foolproof, rapid gearchanges complete the requirements. So there we are, we've discovered the RS5's forte: the A509 at 0830 on a wet weekday morning. **Roger Green**



RS5 may be a little unloved, but Green has discovered it excels on his daily commute

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SUBARU WRX STI

Paul Lang, one of evo's two resident drummers (you'll never guess the other one), loves the Subaru. He has an old one of his own, but there is one little detail that particularly tickles his fancy on BF60 FLZ. It's the small, pink, glowing STI logo on the rev counter. Sometimes it's all in the details... Henry Catchpole



SKODA YETI 1.8 TSI

Not a single complaint about the Yeti this month. Despite the fact that it isn't exactly a 'chick magnet' in the looks department and I can't put my finger on exactly what colour it's supposed to be, it still fulfills all my needs. I have also noticed nods from other Yeti drivers, like we are in some sort of owners' club. I think its rarity keeps it a little bit special. Sam Riley

PEUGEOT 106 RALLYE

The Pug's had a quiet spring and early summer, mainly thanks to racing commitments for the Nürburgring 24-hours. Having the key to a Rapide has also proved something of a distraction, but that doesn't mean I'm not enjoying the Rallye when I get the chance. It still provides unrivalled fun on country roads, but it also serves as a cut-price Cygnet, doing the journeys - and finding the parking spaces - unsuited to the Rapide. Richard Meaden

SEAT LEON CUPRA R



I try to look after my stuff really well, so when cleaning the Leon recently I couldn't believe it when I found a whacking great crack across one of the front foglights. I invented new swear words to vent my anger. When I had calmed down I carried on cleaning only to discover that - would you believe it? - the foglight on the other side had also been damaged. What are the chances? Then, on closer inspection, I could see that the number plate had also been struck by something... twice! What has gone on? Paul Lang

HARRY'S GARAGE



LAMBO COUNTACH 5000 QV

Date acquired September 2010 Total mileage 32,920 Mileage this month 310
Costs this month £178.61 (brake pads), £1893 (service) mpg this month 11.8

I had ordered a set of Pagid RS4-2 brake pads (often called 'Pagid Blue') for the Countach a couple of months ago. While the car's straight-line performance is off-the-scale quick, braking (or rather the lack of it) was bordering on frightening, especially compared with modern-day supercars. Well, the new brake pads eventually arrived and, once fitted, the first test drive turned out to be a revelation.

I couldn't believe the difference these outwardly similar pads delivered, bringing the Countach's braking performance bang up to date, with instant bite the moment you touched the pedal (even when cold), followed by a perfect, linear increase in braking force the harder you leant on them. The only problem now was, because I'd only fitted the pads on the front, the Countach was trying to perform a 'stoppie' every time I hit the brakes. So a set of rear Pagids are on their way and should bring the front/rear brake balance back under control.

I made contact with Pagid to report back on how amazed I'd been by the improvement its pads had made to the Countach, and I was told the company has been supplying RS4-2 pads for all the cars used by PalmerSport at the Bedford Autodrome for a while now, and that the same pads are also used on all carbon disc-equipped Ferrari and Porsche road cars.

If you're after better brake performance and don't want to go to the expense of upgrading the discs and calipers, I strongly recommend trying a set of the firm's carbon-based pads, as you'll be amazed by the difference they can make. Check out Pagid's website (www.pagid-brake-pads.co.uk) for more information.



Above: new Pagid 'Blue' pads have vastly improved the Countach's braking performance. Top: steam from the exhaust not a good sign, so the Lambo is now back in the Carrera Sport workshop (below)

With the Countach back from its service, I thought we were all set for a summer of Lambo fun, but the car had other ideas. After an invigorating run back home from the office one evening, as I went to put the Lambo in the garage I noticed one of the exhausts was occasionally chuffing out puffs of steam. A quick check on the water level revealed I'd lost some coolant during the trip. It all pointed to a head gasket being on the way out. Oh great.

That's why the Countach is back at Carrera Sport's workshop in Haywards Heath again, with both cylinder heads removed awaiting a set of new gaskets. I'm disappointed at having to have this work done now, but I suppose it's probably my own fault, because after the new 'wonder' brake pads went on I drove the Countach harder than I had before, so any weak points were bound to make themselves known. I just wish it had happened at the end of the summer, rather than the start of it. Still, with the Zonda back at home, I reckon it's time to start enjoying that car more again. Now there's a car with proper brakes; bet it comes with Pagid pads as standard... Harry Metcalfe

'ONE OF THE EXHAUSTS WAS CHUFFING OUT PUFFS OF STEAM'



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INSIDE THIS MONTH'S PACKED, 44-PAGE KNOWLEDGE SECTION

JUST LOOKING

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Every month, we try two of the cars from the classified ads. This month it's the turn of an Esprit Sport 350 and a Bentley Arnage R

BUYING GUIDE

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Want near supercar pace in a discreet, practical four-seat package? **Brett Fraser** tells you how to find the perfect Audi RS6

SPEEDSHOP

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A new feature, Speedshop brings you the latest tuning products and expert advice on how to get the best from your car

WORKSHOP

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Another new feature, Workshop is where you'll find all the latest tools and cleaning products, plus tips on maintaining your car

ESSENTIALS

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Amongst this month's must-have stuff: a Lego Unimog, a trio of muscle-car T-shirts and a workshop manual for an F1 car

TRIPS & TRAVEL

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The low-down on the Route Napoleon, entertainment advice for long journeys, and a speed camera warning device tested

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KNOWLEDGE

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All the essential data – and evo's verdict – on every new performance car, plus the very best second-hand buys

ME & MY CAR

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Darren Turner on the car he drives when he's not racing Aston Martins in the GT1 World Championship and the Le Mans Cup

MARKET WATCH



'Past heroes have been badly affected'

High running costs mean low second-hand prices for performance cars

Dealers are reporting that sales of used performance cars have slowed significantly over the last couple of months, with the biggest fall-off in demand affecting those cars sitting in the higher VED bands. The two highest bands – L and M – were introduced back in 2008 and apply to any car registered post March 23, 2006, and producing more than 225g/km of CO2 on the official cycle. It's cars populating these two bands in particular that have remained stuck to the showroom floor recently as potential buyers balk at the thought of purchasing a car that commits them to paying £445-£460 every year just to tax it.

Add to this the ever-increasing insurance costs (up by some 30 per cent in 2011 alone) and today's horrific fuel prices and it's no wonder sites like Auto Trader are reporting that they currently have more cars advertised for sale than ever before. Owners are trying to bail out of cars that have become too expensive to run, and the resulting increase in the number of second-hand cars for sale has led to a slide in values.

One of the worst affected cars is the otherwise excellent Mazda RX-8, where an offer of around £3800 is all that's needed to bag a mint 50,000-mile, 228bhp example dating from 2006-7. That's just 16 per cent of what the car would have cost its first owner a mere four years ago.

Another car badly affected by this dramatic rise in running costs is the venerable Subaru Impreza WRX.

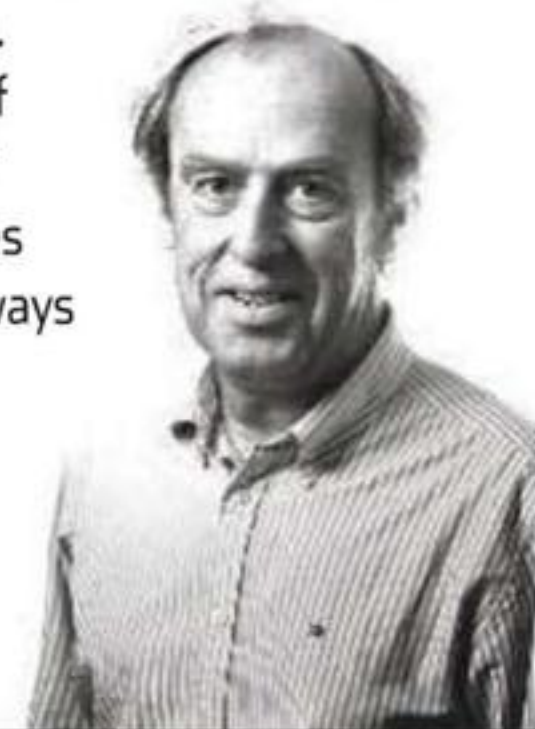
Bid around £5000-£6000 today and you could pick up a 2006 2.5-litre WRX, most probably with the 266bhp Prodrive Performance Pack already fitted. That's a bargain for such a remarkable car.

Drop down a VED band and life isn't quite as bad. Cars in band K (201-225g/km) are taxed at £260 per year, so hot-hatch favourites like the Ford Focus ST (just squeaking into this lower group with a CO2 score of 224g/km) and Renaultsport Clio 197 (209g/km) haven't suffered quite such a dramatic fall in value. Today, £6500 will bag you a good, 2006 example of either of these, but when you consider that a lowly Clio 1.5dCi 86 Dynamique (117g/km, so just £30 per year VED) of the same vintage is worth similar money to a 197, you can see how badly affected some of our past heroes have been.

The biggest performance-car bargain of them all, though, must be the earlier Clio 182, with '04 examples now available for £2500-£3000.

That's a lot of fun for not a lot of money and is solely the result of Renault selling so many examples when they were new. There's always a silver lining somewhere, if you know where to look.

Harry Metcalfe
Editorial director



DEAL OF THE MONTH: MERCEDES SLS AMG £134,950

» It seems that early buyers of the fabulous Mercedes SLS AMG are now suffering horrendous depreciation, as the market decides the £168,400 list price is simply too high. Part of the problem is that Mercedes has produced too many for the market to cope with, so the classifieds are now littered with delivery-mileage examples available for a significant discount. Take this 2010 example at Tom Hartley. It cost its original owner £181,500 a few months ago, but even though it hasn't turned a wheel it's available for just £134,950 – a shocking £50,000 saving.



Year 2010 Mileage Delivery miles
Vendor Tom Hartley, UK
(www.tomhartley.com, 01283 762762)

AUCTION WATCH: BMW M635 CSI £11,750-£14,500

» King's Lynn-based Anglia Car Auctions holds regular classic car sales that often include some rather tasty '80s metal. Its sale on September 3 is no exception, when this 1985 M635 CSI will go under the hammer.

It looks to be in excellent original condition, having covered just 72,000 miles from new, and is in the perfect combination of Zinnober Red with a full grey leather interior. The original metric wheels are included in the sale.

With '80s classics hot property right now, the estimate sale price of £11,750-£14,500 looks very reasonable.



Year 1985 Mileage 72,000 Auctioneers
Anglia Car Auctions (www.angliacarauctions.co.uk) Date of auction September 3



Lamborghini Murcielago LP640 E Gears Convertible,
2008, 4,000 miles
£199,950



Lamborghini Murcielago V12 Coupe,
2002, 42,000 miles
£79,995



Lamborghini Diablo VT LHD 6.0 SE,
2001, 3,000 miles
£199,990



Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Spyder Performante,
2007, 14,000 miles
£89,995



Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder,
2006, 11,000 miles, One Owner, Choice of two
£82,990



Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder E Gear,
2007, 10,000 miles
£89,995



Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Coupe LHD,
2006, 8,000 miles
£84,990



Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Scissor Doors Coupe,
2004, 18,000 miles
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Simon Furlonger

SPECIALIST CARS



Ferrari 550 Barchetta

2001, 11,402 Miles

Number 32 out of 448 produced worldwide this example is in superb condition with only 3 owners. Finished in Le Mans metallic blue with Bordeaux carbon sports seats, red stitching, split rim wheels, Scuderia shields, red calipers and a very rare Maranello UK produced tourneau cover.

£169,990



Ferrari 330 GT 2+2

1965, 50,967 Miles

This Italian supplied 330 GT 2+2 has just had a full restoration at the Ferrari factory complete with a Clasiche certification. It is in perfect condition and would complement any collection. It is one of 575 cars produced worldwide. Finished in Grigio Notte with Pelle Nera Franzi hide.

£149,990

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Tel: 01233 646328 www.simonfurlonger.co.uk



575 Superamerica
2006, 8,167 miles
£149,990



Murcielago
2003, 16,411 miles
£105,990



Diablo SV
1998, 30,101 miles
£79,990



360 Spider F1
2004, 15,128 miles
£62,990



996 Turbo
2002, 31,902 miles
£32,990

evo Just Looking

MODELS BOOKS DVDS & CLOTHING THE CARS IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

LOTUS ESPRIT SPORT 350 £39,995

Vendor Bramley, nr Guildford, Surrey, GU5 0HB
www.bramleyweb.co.uk 0844 8227917

The Sport 350 is arguably the pinnacle of Esprit development. It was certainly the last version of the model. This special edition didn't extract any more power from the V8, but the engineers did extract a little more torque in the first three gears. A remarkable 80kg was also stripped from the kerb weight, although air-con was retained and the blue Alcantara interior is not as sparse as the race car exterior might lead you to expect.

From the outside the 350 is instantly recognisable by the big carbonfibre rear wing with spindly aluminium supports and the OZ Racing magnesium alloy wheels. Oh, and the large '350' graphics are a bit of a giveaway too.

On its stiffer Eibach springs, the handling is edgier to the point of being intimidating, but you do get some of the best steering ever. It should also sprint to 100mph in just 9.9sec, although it won't sound quite as good as you'd hope on the way there.

Only 50 were produced, so the Sport 350 is a very rare car. This one is a particularly good example with very few miles beneath its P Zeros, but you'd have to be a serious fan to cough up the asking price as it's double what you'd pay for a standard V8 Esprit... Henry Catchpole



Anti-clockwise from above: this Sport 350 is no. 40 of 50; carbonfibre parts helped cut weight; interior has Alcantara seats; OZ wheels are magnesium alloy



SPECIFICATION

Year 2000
Mileage 23,800
Engine V8, 3506cc, twin-turbo
Max power 350bhp @ 6500rpm
Max torque 295lb ft @ 4250rpm
0-62mph 4.3Sec (claimed)
Top speed 175mph (claimed)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR

» Immaculate. This car's one previous owner clearly cared for it

INTERIOR

» The blue Alcantara is all in incredibly good condition

MECHANICALS

» Low mileage and a full service history from Lotus Cars and the Stratton Motor Company, who recently carried out an MOT and service

VERDICT

» Amongst the best Esprits, but pricey. One for a Lotus collector

ALSO FROM THIS DEALER

LAND ROVER DEFENDER £44,995, '09, 1900 miles » Black, 'Twisted' upgrades
MERCEDES CL63 BLACK £87,995, '08, 21,500 miles » Black, Alcantara Sport seats

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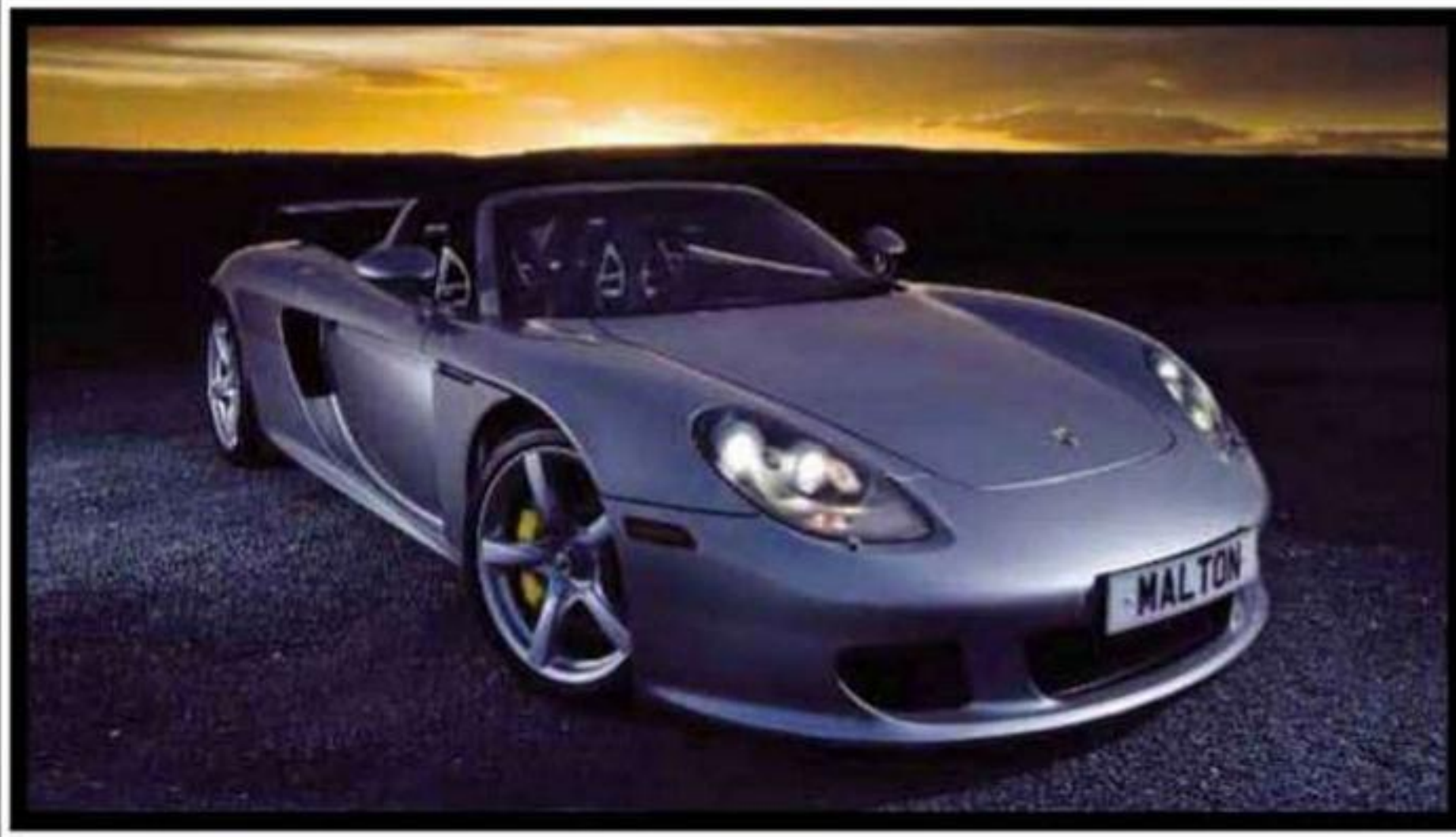
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BENTLEY ARNAGE R £34,950

Vendor Hofmann's, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1HG
www.hofmanns.co.uk 01491 848800

The Arnage is one of those cars that seems to suit middle age far better than it did newness – not least because depreciation has slashed what was once a £150K price tag into something alarmingly close to affordability.

Of course, even with the reassurance of this car's fully stamped history and a fresh service, Arnage ownership is always going to be pricey, with 15mpg under gentle use constituting the good news. A specialist will charge £800 for a 10K service, £2000 for the 60,000-miler.

This car comes with the combination of silver metallic paintwork and magnolia leather that will help sell it again. It's stood up to the rigours of nearly 50,000 miles and four owners well, with a few cracks on the driver's seat the limit of the 'patina'. Everything still works – even the comedy period satnav – and the twin-turbo engine fires up with a healthy burble. Being a 2002 car, it has only the four-speed auto 'box – later ones got six gears – but with 616lb ft it really doesn't matter what gear you're in.

Arnage values have still got a way to fall before they reach the inevitable wedding-rental basement, but a well-bought version isn't going to lose much in the short term. For the money, it's hard not to be tempted. **Mike Duff**



This Arnage R has aged well, with a few cracks on the driver's seat (below left) one of the few signs of wear. Paint and leather colours are both good for resale



SPECIFICATION

Year 2002
Mileage 48,600
Engine V8, 6750cc, twin-turbo
Max power 400bhp at 4000rpm
Max torque 616lb ft at 3250rpm
0-60mph 6.2sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR

» Very good, with scuff-free alloy wheels and just a couple of polishing marks on the metallic paintwork

INTERIOR

» Driver's seat a touch worn, but magnolia hide still looks good. Has fitted mats instead of normal thick carpets

MECHANICALS

» Fully stamped book and just serviced

VERDICT

» Still feels special after all these years – a 'proper' Bentley

ALSO FROM THIS DEALER

AC COBRA 427 MKIII £POA, '02, 44,950 miles
» 'Continuation' car made from original parts
FERRARI 360 SPIDER F1 £44,950, '02, 44,950 miles
» Leggy but has full history

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THE INSIDE LINE ON BUYING USED

AUDI RS6

*It's practical, reliable and, with a V10 engine fit for a supercar, as fast as you like. Now a lightly used one could be yours for just £40K. **Brett Fraser** takes a closer look*

As hard acts to follow go, the original 4.2-litre twin-turbo V8-engined Audi RS6 set the bar uncommonly high. Sure, it was more cudgel than scalpel, but anyone who claimed to be unimpressed when the snarling motor began its full 444bhp top-end rampage was either fibbing badly or sitting in the wrong version of Audi's mid-field exec. Thuggish and brutal, the RS6 traded finesse for fury, and its madcap pace and bombastic soundtrack were

addictive stuff, however critical you may have been of its other dynamic traits.

How could Audi top it? Well, in the dying days of that RS6, the company introduced a run-out special, the RS6 Plus, complete with a Cosworth Technology-developed engine producing 473bhp, Dynamic Ride Control as standard and the option of an even more hardcore suspension set-up, improved steering and uprated brakes. Which led to another question: how would Audi top *that*?

The answer arrived in emphatic fashion in April 2008: the all-new RS6. It didn't look much, but boy-oh-boy was it packing some hardware. V8 power? How passé... Instead, how about a 5-litre TFSI bi-turbo V10? Derived from the engine found between the haunches of the Lamborghini Gallardo no less, it belted out 572bhp and 479lb ft, and was capable of pushing the big saloon or estate along at 200mph – once Audi had disabled the 155mph speed limiter.



There were whacking great 390mm discs on the front with six-pot calipers, gargantuan 275/35 ZR20 tyres all round, a six-speed Tiptronic automatic gearbox with paddles, and a torque split for the quattro four-wheel-drive system that in normal driving favoured the rear wheels to the tune of 40:60. To further prove how seriously Audi was taking the spec of the new RS6, both the saloon and 'Avant' estate used aluminium for both bonnet and (blistered) front wings.

Performance was ballistic. Not so much in the dash from standstill to 62mph, accomplished in the same 4.6 seconds as the previous RS6, but everywhere beyond. It was absurdly powerful, laugh-out-loud-and-swear-uncontrollably aggressive, a devilishly dangerous threat to the ego of supercar drivers in straight lines and twisting

Right: bi-turbo V10 is bulletproof. Below right: interior should be in good order, but watch leather on driver's seat. Bottom right: brakes withstand hard use well



CHECKPOINTS

» The first RS6 had a plethora of faults afflicting engine, gearbox and suspension, but the V10 car put Audi's reputation for solid build quality back on track. Very little goes wrong with them. That said, despite early models being three years old now, high-mileage examples are rare.

Those early cars are now out of warranty and are finding their way into Audi specialists – such as Cheshire's Unit 20, whose Martin Adams is our guide here – to escape main dealer labour rates, so don't be alarmed if the car you're looking at doesn't have a full Audi dealer service history.

ENGINE

» The bi-turbo V10 has proven pretty much bulletproof, although a few early cars suffered loose or fractured oil cooler pipes. RS6 cognoscenti reckon to have heard of only one complete engine failure, and even that might have been just a rumour.

Tuning is becoming popular now that older models are becoming more affordable. A remap lifts the power output from the standard 572bhp all the way to about 700bhp; fit sports cats and hi-flow air filters and you're looking at 760bhp, while bigger turbos lift the total to 850bhp. Unit 20's Martin Adams reckons the V10's standard internals are well up to big figures.

TRANSMISSION

» Unlike the previous model's 'box, the six-speed Tiptronic auto in the V10 RS6 is trouble-free. Adams advises that to ensure it stays that way, you should change the gearbox oil and filter every 20,000 miles: the £360-or-so cost to do so seems a worthwhile investment for silken shifting.

SUSPENSION & BRAKES

» As yet there are no horror stories concerning suspension or brakes. The latter – huge 390mm diameter, 36mm deep two-piece discs on the front – are said to cope well with trackdays, despite needing to slow down two tons of fun. Audi can provide optional 420mm ceramic discs if you're still concerned about stopping power, provided you can afford their £12K cost...

BODYWORK & INTERIOR

» At such a tender age, the RS6's bodywork should still be immaculate. Ditto the interior, except in a few isolated cars where the driver's seat bolster has gone a little saggy.

evo Buying Guide

THE INSIDE LINE ON BUYING USED

MODELS, BUYERS, DYING AND NOTHING



'I BOUGHT ONE'

Martin Adams

» A car mechanic since he was 17, Martin Adams of fast Audi specialists Unit 20 began specialising in the S and RS models six years ago, having fallen for the brand after owning a twin-turbo V6-engined S4.

'I followed that up with a 2003 RS6 Avant that I owned for four years,' says Martin, now 39, 'during which time I did every modification known to man, then invented a few of my own.'

'Eventually, though, I felt I needed to change up and move with the times, so in 2010 I bought a brand new, Suzuka Grey, V10-engined RS6 saloon.'

'It's a totally different car to the V8 I had before. The interior is beautiful, the switchable

suspension works really well, and the gearbox is silky smooth – I just can't fault anything about the car. And to say that it's a super-fast cruiser is a serious understatement.

'Although it's a big, two-ton car, I have used it extremely hard on the track, where it was not only bullying modified RS4s out of the way, but its brakes were fade-free, unlike the old model's...

'After a few modifications the power of my car is now up to 720bhp; later on I'm going to carry out the big turbo conversion to take it to 850bhp. I don't foresee the power increase causing any problems, as in a V10 it doesn't represent a large load per cylinder.'

ones. It was insane, in the best sense of the automotive expression. Particularly in a car that looked so little different from an entry-level turbodiesel rolling on 20in rims.

As with its predecessor, the RS6 V10 ultimately suffers from a deficiency of real interactivity, which could be a drag if it were your only car. Many, however, bought their RS6 as a day-to-day complement to the supercar – or supercars – in their garage: large ticks in the boxes marked 'spacious', 'comfortable', 'practical', and 'hugely bloody fast' were reason enough to buy one.

The second-generation RS6 only departed the line-up as recently as 2010, when its list price was the thick end of £80K. But early models are now popping up for half that money, meaning you can buy a Lamborghini-

'IT WAS INSANE, IN THE BEST SENSE OF THE EXPRESSION'

engined saloon or wagon complete with Audi build quality for about the same price as a new A4 Avant 3.2 with a few options.

Appealing, yes? Hugely, we'd say. But there's a caveat here – your pocket is likely to suffer a beating with running costs. The RS6 is a heavy consumer of fuel (17mpg, or much, much less) and tyres (17,000 miles, or one trackday). And while specialists will save you money on labour costs compared with a franchised dealer, there's little choice but to use genuine Audi parts. This is not to put you off, simply to warn you. As Spiderman's uncle didn't quite say: 'With great power comes great financial responsibility.'

SPECIFICATION

Audi RS6 Avant

- » **Engine** V10, 4991cc, twin-turbo
- » **Max power** 572bhp @ 6250-6700rpm
- » **Max torque** 479lb ft @ 1500-6250rpm
- » **Transmission** Six-speed Tiptronic automatic, four-wheel drive
- » **Tyres** 275/35 ZR20 front and rear
- » **Weight (kerb)** 2025kg
- » **Power-to-weight** 287bhp/ton
- » **0-62mph** 4.6sec (claimed)
- » **Top speed** 155mph (limited)
- » **Price when new** £79,130 (2008)

PARTS PRICES

» Supplied by Unit 20. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT at 20 per cent.

- » **Tyres** £315.05 each (Dunlop SP Sport Maxx GT, fitted)
- » **Brake pads (front set)** £195.60
- » **Brake discs (front pair)** £632.40
- » **Clutch kit** n/a
- » **Oil filter** £27.71
- » **Air filter (pair)** £75.68
- » **Exhaust system, cat-back** £1334.40

SERVICING

- » **10,000-mile service** £165.92
- » **18,000-mile service** (including oil change and replacing particulate and pollen filters) £354.00
- » **20,000-mile service** £612.00
- » **Gearbox oil change** (including filter) £361.20

WHAT TO PAY

» The V10 RS6 was launched a mere three-and-a-bit years ago, and already early cars are worth just half of their original price. Some dealers are taking a punt and pricing RS6s on the other side of £50K, but the reality of the matter is that a car with about 30,000 miles on the odometer is yours for roughly £40K.

Dealers will try the 'low mileage' and 'big spec' ruses to shake more money from your pocket, but very few RS6s have big mileages and almost all were pretty well specced, so stand your ground. However, the run-out 'RS6 Plus' had about £8K's worth of options (but no mechanical upgrades), so attracts a premium.

USEFUL CONTACTS

- » www.unit20.org (Audi RS specialist)
- » www.rs246.com (RS forum)
- » www.audiSRS.com (RS forum)
- » www.mtm-online.de (tuning)
- » www.audiownersclub.co.uk (owners' club)
- » www.evo.co.uk (cars for sale)

IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



- » 2008 08-reg
- » Avant
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- » Daytona Grey, black leather, satnav, Bose sound system, TV, Bluetooth
- » staffordaudi.co.uk

£39,850



- » 2008 08-reg
- » Avant
- » 32,500 miles
- » Daytona Grey, black Nappa leather, MOT until 05/12
- » cvmgroupp.co.uk

£40,000



- » 2008 08-reg
- » Saloon
- » 22,000 miles
- » Black, white leather, satnav, DAB and Bose sound system
- » Lookers, Brighton

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Bentley Continental GTC's



2007 - 2011 Models, choice of four cars in stock, all with FSH from,.....£69,999

Bentley Continental GT Speed's



2008 - 2010, choice of four low mileage examples in stock from.....£82,999 - £109,999

Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder E Gear



Aug 08, Grey/Black.....£89,999

Bentley Continental Coupe's



2004 - 2010 Models, choice of 15 in stock, all with FSH, from.....£39,999 - £109,999

Maserati Granturismo V8 S MC



2009/09, 13,000 miles, Silver with Black leather, crested seats, ipod, sat nav.....£67,999

Rolls Royce Phantom



06/06, Madeira red metallic, 1 owner, 12,000 miles, as new.....£150,000

Bentley Arnage T, Green/Red Label



1998 - 2007 Models, choice of eight in stock, all with FSH from.....£27,999 - £82,999

- Ferrari 550 LHD, 1999 MD 29,000 miles, Black with Tan leather, just serviced.....£49,999
- Ferrari 599 GTB LHD, 2007/07, 8,100, Grigio Silver, Cream leather Carbon trim, 1 owner.....£139,950
- Porsche Cayenne Turbo, 09/09, Meteorite grey with black leather, only 4,000 miles, as new.....£59,999
- Mercedes CL65 AMG Bi-Turbo 6.0L, 2004/04, 45,000 miles, Silver with Black leather, 2 owners.....£32,500
- Aston Martin DB9, Choice from.....£44,999
- Maybach 57, 2003, 35,800 miles, Caspian Black with cream leather, Rear DVD screens, navigation system, Choice of 3 cars, from.....£80,000
- TVR Chimaera 450, 99/T, Starmist green metallic with magnolia, 47,000 miles, TVRSSH.....£12,999
- BMW 335 SE Coupe Auto, 07/07, Big spec, 21,000 miles.....£17,999
- Lamborghini Diablo Roadster, 99/T, Big spec with FSH, 28,000 miles.....£80,000
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Brake pads? From Cosworth? Yep – the legendary British racing firm is expanding its performance tuning portfolio rapidly. Two grades of friction material are available: StreetMaster and TrackMaster. Features include a shock-absorbing interlayer, claimed to reduce stress on the disc surface, and a V-shaped groove to clear debris. Already available for a number of fast Japanese and Ford cars, Cosworth has now extended the list to include the BMW M3 (E36 and E46) and Z4, Audi TT and TTS, SEAT Leon Cupra, Skoda Octavia, VW Golf GTI, Golf 4Motion, Passat and Scirocco.



K-TEC RACING RENAULT BIG DISC KIT
£838.80 WWW.K-TECRACING.COM

K-Tec's 330mm front disc kit fits the Mégane 225, F1, R26, R26.R and 175 DCi. The Clio 197, R27, 200, 200 Cup and Gordini are also suitable for the upgrade – even those on 17-inch wheels. The Performance Friction slotted discs use a high-carbon alloy with copper and molybdenum for strength at high temperatures, and K-Tec assure us the kit is even suitable for race applications. The original Brembo four-pot calipers can be retained.

TRIED & TESTED

DUNLOP SP SPORT MAXX TYRES
£110 EACH
WWW.DUNLOP.EU/DUNLOP_UK

» The Trott family wagon is a first-gen Ford Focus ST170 estate. It's a great car: decent running costs, good spec, fun to drive and rare – fewer than 150 were made. Excellent value too, if you can find one. The only downside is that the consumables tend to cost a little more than they would for one of the more sensible Focus estates. The 215/45/17 tyres, for instance.

When the tyres needed replacing last year I went for a brand I hadn't tried

before – Dunlop. The recommended tyre on the Dunlop website configurator turned out to be the SP Sport Maxx. Shopping around, I found that they were around £110 each – or £10-£15 cheaper per corner than equivalents from Continental and Bridgestone.

I write this 12 months and 5000 miles after fitting the Dunlops. The SPs have proved to be excellent in the wet – particularly in resisting aquaplaning and overall front-to-rear balance and grip. Braking, wet and dry, is very strong, although again it's in the wet that the Dunlops impress the most. Grip is strong and consistent, and overall wear



has been minimal. Indeed, I think there's another 10-12,000 miles in the tyres if we're sensible.

If there's a slight negative, it's that tyre roar is a little higher than ideal – but in this case the many positives far outweigh the negative. Nick Trott

ASK THE EXPERT

Q I drive a pretty boring Jaguar XF 3.0d. There seem to be so many companies offering remaps for diesels and I am tempted by the extra performance (I wish I'd opted for the 'S' version!) but I really want some expert guidance on where to look for a reputable company. John Joyce, Norwich



Jaguar's 3.0 diesel engine is ripe for a remap

A Tuning an engine by just remapping the ECU is a compromise. Yes, the potential performance gains on a modern turbodiesel are substantial. Boost can be increased along with fuelling and tweaks to timing, so mid-range acceleration can be massively improved and pedal response made quicker. All this can transform the feel of a car wonderfully, but it has to be balanced against the potential for increased wear and tear.

Increasing the force produced by the engine obviously increases the punishment that the engine, gearbox, drive shafts and even brakes will have to deal with. And no matter what anyone says, it will definitely invalidate the manufacturer's warranty.

It is relatively easy to make a crude tune that has the performance but pushes turbo temperatures, oil temperatures and smoke limits too far, and may cause many other problems such as clogged catalysis.

A good tune will have been tested to ensure the extra burden is very small. When looking at any tuning product, start with online forums to see what people recommend. Reputable companies (DMS, Superchips and the like) will have performance test results and can show you temperature and emissions data. All this test work makes for a better tune but also costs more, but it is generally a price worth paying to avoid damage or disappointment. Ralph Hosier

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Image: Danny Dzenis www.dd-photography.co.uk

MILLERS OILS 'TRIPLE ESTER' PERFORMANCE OILS c£15 (1 LITRE OF 10W-40) WWW.MILLERSOILS.NET

Millers Oils specialises in engine oils, lubricants and fuel treatments, and its 'triple ester' oils have been used in motorsport for a while – especially in the BTCC – but they can be used in high-performance road cars too.

The oils comprise heat-stable synthetic esters blended with a fully synthetic base-stock oil and additives including 'antiwear' zinc. Millers claims this combination resists shearing and viscosity loss at higher temperatures, and keeps 'in grade' for a longer period.



DODO JUICE RAINFOREST RUB WAX £29.95 (250ML) WWW.DODOJUICE.COM



This is the original soft wax from Dodo Juice – a big (and slightly odd) name in high-end car detailing products. Rainforest Rub has a high content of carnauba wax (a famously ultra-high-gloss wax), which is mixed with Candelilla and beeswax to give it a softer feel – meaning it can be applied by hand. Dodo Juice promises that this wax delivers the depth, warmth and durability of more expensive waxes. Oh, and it smells of watermelon.



BOSCH AEROTWIN WIPER BLADES c£9.99 WWW.BOSCHAUTOPARTS.CO.UK

Forget stability control, ABS, four-wheel drive and trick diffs – if you really want to drive comfortably fast in the wet you need... a good set of wipers.

Bosch's Aerotwin blades are designed to be effective at high speeds and in what Bosch calls 'critical conditions'.

Flexible rails are used, custom-designed for each application, and there's an integral spoiler to keep the wiper glued to the screen, rather than create front downforce we presume. Bosch also claims reduced wind noise and easy replacement due to a unique plug system.

TRIED & TESTED

WAXOYL FROM £5.99 WWW.HAMMERITE-AUTOMOTIVE.COM

» You've probably heard of Waxoyl, as it was first introduced almost before the car had been invented. I've been a fan ever since I began buying second-hand cars back in the '70s, because of its almost divine power to withhold the onset of rust. Do we still need to use it today? If you're planning on keeping a car for a while, I think you do.

It's sold in various forms, from 400ml aerosols to 5-litre cans, and in both clear (my preference) and black. If you

buy one of the bigger cans, you also need the spray attachment that squirts the Waxoyl out via an adjustable nozzle.

Make sure you heat the can to around 25 deg C first (placing it in a bucket of hot water works best) as this helps the Waxoyl spray more evenly, then jack the car up, remove the wheels and spray the suspension, chassis and inner wheelarches. Leave it for 24 hours to dry and then repeat every couple of years or so.

It's messy stuff to apply, so protect the surrounding area from over-spray. It's worth the pain, though, as this stuff really works. **Harry Metcalfe**



ASK THE EXPERT

Q I've noticed a lot of bioethanol conversion kits on the market here in France. In terms of price per litre, bioethanol looks to be a good deal, and of course it's probably quite a lot greener to run a car on biofuel. However, do these kits pose any problems for performance cars? What about turbocharged or supercharged engines? Are normally aspirated engines with larger capacities better suited to conversion, or is there no difference?

Jeremy Wilks



Bentley proves fast cars can run bioethanol

A It's perfectly possible for a performance car to run bioethanol. For proof look no further than Bentley's FlexFuel-engined models, which include the 631bhp Supersports ISR, the firm's most powerful car to date.

Ethanol is a fantastic fuel, but its energy density is about 34 per cent lower than petrol's, meaning you have to inject more of it to get the same power. So although bioethanol is cheaper per litre than petrol, you will be buying more of it.

Race engines make use of bioethanol's higher octane rating by using higher compression ratios. Without this there is little scope for performance enhancement on a naturally aspirated engine, but turbo engines can be boosted to a higher level than would be possible on petrol.

The downside is that ethanol reacts with iron and can eat the fuel system. It can react with some plastics too, and it's lower resistance can destroy fuel pumps and cause fuel gauges to misread.

A good conversion kit will have a device to broaden the fuel injector pulse to allow more fuel flow, and a replacement fuel pump and lines where needed. In some cases new higher flow injectors may be required. Increasingly, modern cars are more ethanol-tolerant, so the parts needed varies by model. **Ralph Hosier**

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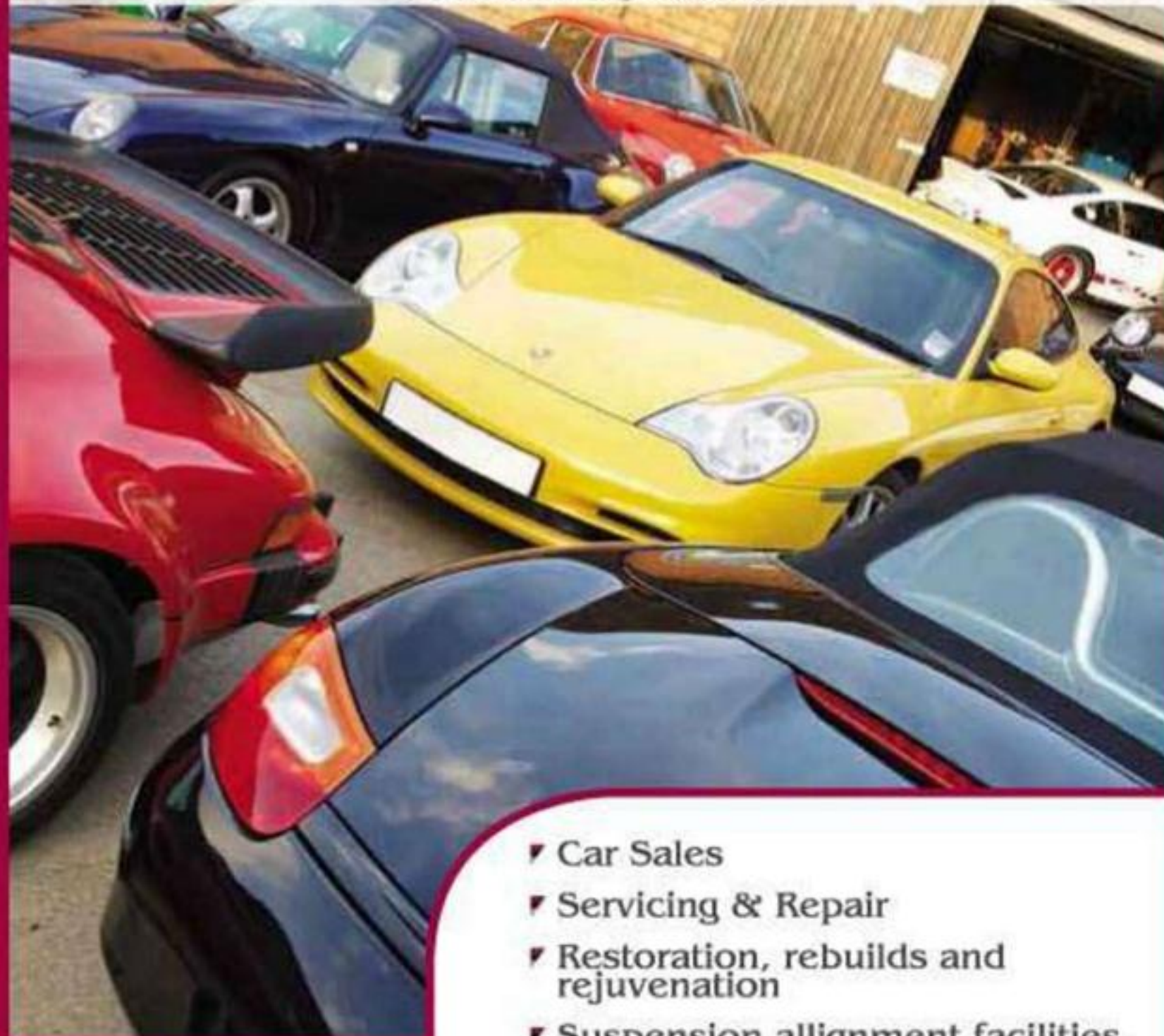
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LEGO TECHNIC UNIMOG U400 £154.99 WWW.ARGOS.CO.UK

The Unimog is our kind of 4x4. If it's yours too, then you'll be tempted by this 1:12.5-scale version from Lego Technic. It features a pneumatically powered crane and grab, a winch, a plough, an engine with moving pistons, and working steering and suspension. With over 2000 pieces, it's the largest Technic set yet.

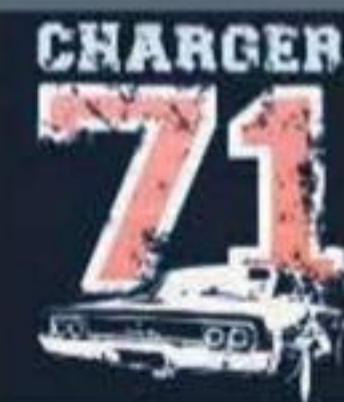


MAZDA 787B £36.99 WWW.DIECASTLEGENDS.COM

The Mazda 787B is the only Japanese car ever to win the Le Mans 24 Hours and, as you can read elsewhere in this issue, even 20 years after that victory, the sound of its rotary engine is impossible to forget. This 1:43-scale model from Ixo shows the car wearing its 1991 Le Mans-winning Weidler/Gachot/Herbert livery.



T-SHIRTS



CHARGER 71 £18 WWW.LIVE2RACE.CO.UK

Kicking off a trio of muscle-car T-shirts is this one from Live2Race, showing the mean, quad-light rear of a 1971 Dodge Charger. It's available in both men's and women's styles. For your chance to win one of the latter, visit competitions.evo.co.uk



68 FASTBACK £15.75 WWW.REDBUBBLE.COM/PEOPLE/SUPERIORGRAPHIX

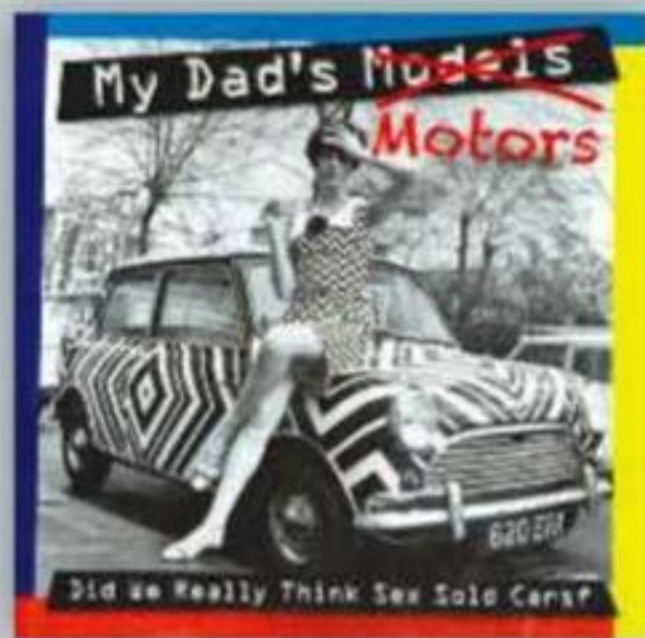
This T-shirt from Superiorgraphix features a late '60s Mustang GT390 that should be familiar to any movie fan. The fastback body, the Highland Green paint... yep, it's the star of one of the greatest car chases ever, the Bullitt Mustang. Available in a range of colours.



71 CUDA £20 WWW.CAFEPRESS.CO.UK

The fabulously named Barracuda was Plymouth's entry-level muscle-car contender. It really came into its own in its third-generation form, sharing its platform with the Dodge Charger and sporting engines up to 7.2 litres in capacity. It's this model that is celebrated on this delightfully retro tee.

BOOKS

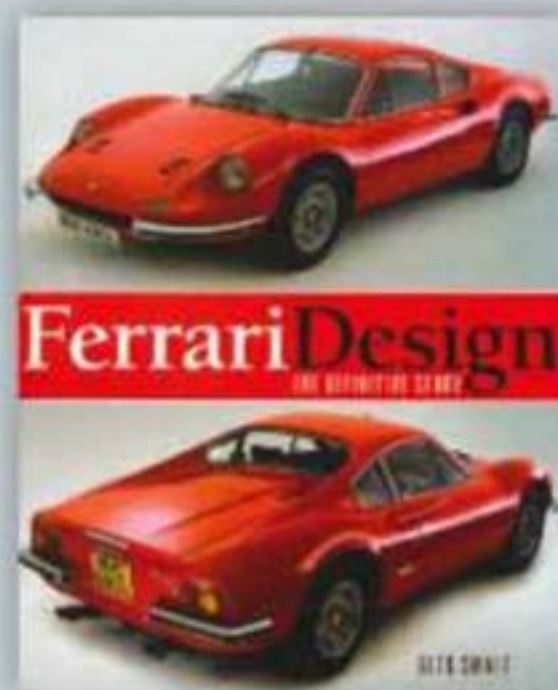


MY DAD'S MOTORS £6.99 WWW.HAYNES.CO.UK

Adam Powley, the author of this picture book, specialises in football, and that's obvious from the captions that barely mention the cars. Mind, as the cars are all decorated with decreasingly clad women as the book progresses from the 1950s to the '90s, perhaps it's not surprising the cars don't get a look in.

There are some gems: Joanna Lumley in a bowler by a Roller, Stirling Moss ogling some Bunny Girl assets, and a body-painted girl sharing a pond with flamingos in front of a Lambo Urraco, promoting British Road Safety. Obviously.

It's funny at times, with some automotive curios, but you wouldn't really buy it to look at the cars.



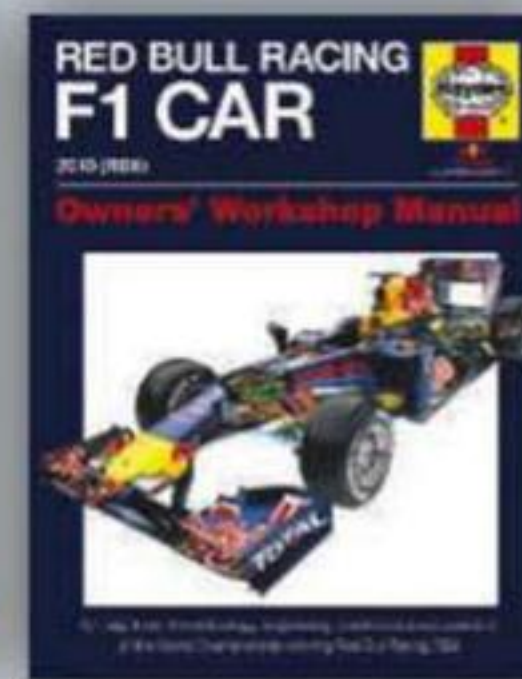
FERRARI DESIGN: THE DEFINITIVE STUDY £40 WWW.HAYNES.CO.UK

Design is not the sharp focus of this book, though it is design-centred. While author Glen Smale gives an overview of both important and obscure Ferrari models, don't expect aesthetic critiques of the type Stephen Bayley writes.

Contributions from designers and critics are the most interesting excerpts, such as those from Professor Dale Harrow, Head of Vehicle Design at the RCA. Pictures vary in quality and era, and plenty will be familiar to Ferrari aficionados. Many are from the Goodwood Revival, which is no bad thing.

It's by no means definitive, but this book is enjoyable nonetheless.

BOOK OF THE MONTH



RED BULL RACING F1 CAR £19.99 WWW.HAYNES.CO.UK

This is a superb insight into the dominant Grand Prix car of 2010. Every aspect is covered, starting with the story of Red Bull Racing's rapid ascent to the top of the sport.

The anatomy of the RB6 is illustrated and described in a straightforward fashion that is not as hard to grasp as it easily could be. This is the kind of book that would keep schoolchildren interested in physics lessons, and there's plenty for adults to learn too. In fact Haynes would have us

believe Red Bull's own engineers use the book as a reference...

The views of the designers, engineers and drivers are all here. The only possible complaint could be that some parts of the car are depicted by previous Red Bulls, but that's understandable.



READ THE FIRST CHAPTER FREE AT EVO.CO.UK/DOWNLOAD.
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CATCHPOLE'S VIEW

'I USUALLY TRAVEL HORRIBLY EARLY, OR LATE AT NIGHT'

Inevitably a lot of the driving I do is sadly not of the left-foot-braking, flat-in-fourth variety. A lot of it involves motorways (which could be driven flat in second, but not very entertainingly).

I usually try to avoid the worst of the traffic by travelling horribly early in the morning, or late at night, but sometimes it's just a case of sitting on a multi-lane all... day... long. For example the quickest way down to this month's great driving road, the Route Napoleon, is via France's very efficient, quiet and spectacularly dull autoroutes.

So, how to relieve the boredom? 'I spy with my little eye' used to be the popular time-passing method when I was five and sitting in the back of my parents' 240 estate, but after a while it loses something when you're doing both the spying and the guessing. So now it's talking books and podcasts. Music is too easy to tune out of, I find, so you need the spoken word to hold your attention and keep the mind on the boil. And songs only last four minutes, so you need a lot of them to fill a journey, whereas one Poirot chapter or Radio 4 comedy podcast can see you engrossed for a surprising number of junctions. Try it.



Henry Catchpole
Features editor



GREAT DRIVES

ROUTE NAPOLEON

It's been the setting for numerous evo tests, and with good reason: it's one of the finest – and longest – driving roads in Europe

The Route Napoleon is one of those roads that you've got to drive twice; once to enjoy the road itself and once to enjoy the scenery. Actually, better make that four times, as it feels and looks different each way...

Located in the south of France and

designated N85, the Route Napoleon runs 200 miles (325km) north from Cannes on the Med to Grenoble to the north, tracking the route taken by Napoleon Bonaparte and 1200 of his troops when he came out of exile in Elba in 1815. Rather than risk running into supporters of Louis XVIII, he

elects to go the direct route over the Alps, sometimes using tracks. It took him six days to complete the journey, but on the road that was built in 1932, it's a five-hour drive in one hit.

Those of a historical bent might want to start in Cannes as Napoleon did, but unless you're flying and

EVENTS CALENDAR

AUGUST

» **21 August** Retro Rides gathering, Prescott Hillclimb www.retro-rides.org

» **28-29 August** Wings & Wheels, Dunsfold Park www.wingsandwheels.net

SEPTEMBER

» **2-11 Sept** Petrolhead Nirvana Alpine South Tour www.petrolheadnirvana.com

» **4 Sept** Chelsea Auto Legends www.chelseaautolegends.com

» **4-10 Sept** MSA Euroclassic www.msaclassics.co.uk

» **10 Sept** Brighton Speed Trials www.brightonandhovemotorclub.co.uk

MORE EVENTS AT
WWW.EVO.CO.UK/EVENTS

UPCOMING TRIP

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» Presided over by a 12th century cathedral, Angoulême is a picturesque town in the west of France and every September it holds a wonderful race meeting for vintage and classic cars. It all starts with a concours d'elegance on the Friday evening, followed by a tourist rally on the Saturday and climaxing with racing and parade laps on the Sunday.

Obviously, you could try to organise a trip there yourself, but you might find it easier to let someone else sort routes, tickets, crossings and accommodation for you. If this sounds like you,



Above: historic street racing on the Circuit des Remparts d'Angoulême

hiring, we'd suggest you start at Grenoble. Firstly because finding the start of the N85 in Cannes is a bit like finding the source of the Amazon, but mostly because if you head south from Grenoble the scenery and the challenge get better and better, becoming truly spectacular beyond Digne-les-Bains.

Early morning from here to Castellane is often eerie and unforgettable. It's worth diverting west from Castellane to enjoy the stunning Gorge du Verdon (the circular D23, the Route des Crêtes, has some incredible views – tackle it clockwise as parts are one-way) before picking up the N85 again for the long, long downhill run to Cannes and the coast.

Time your trip well; it can be quite busy in the French holidays.

HOW TO GET THERE

» You could fly into Nice, pick up a hire car and then head along the A8, the coastal autoroute, for Cannes, but as mentioned, it can be a real challenge staying on the N85 as it twists and turns through suburban Cannes and Grasse. It's simpler to take the D6185 north to Grasse and then pick up the Route Napoleon (which you will see signed D6085) in Grasse. And fun though a hire car can be, it's likely to feel wheezy on the many climbs and lacking in grip and brakes on the descents.

Drive from Calais and it's all quite simple and unexciting on the autoroutes, via Reims, Dijon and Lyon to Grenoble, which will cost you

around £50 in tolls. From Grenoble your staging posts are Gap, Sisteron, Digne-les-Bains, Castellane, Grasse and Cannes.

WHERE TO STAY

» There's no shortage of accommodation in Grenoble, Cannes or any of the other decently sized places along the way. That said, small Castellane is ideally placed for a number of attractions, including the Gorge du Verdon to the west and, to the east, some of the roads you'll have seen in some of our *evo* Car of the Year contests.

WHO TO GO WITH

» There are a number of detailed guides to the Route Napoleon on the internet, so it's not too difficult to plan a journey from a day to a week that takes in all the sights you'd like to see. If you'd like an organised trip in the region, with an appropriate car included, check out Ultimate Drives www.ultimatedrives.net

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

» The N85 is well surfaced for most of its length. The character of the road can change quite abruptly, though, from open and flowing to tight and twisty, and you may find dawdling traffic, so spectacular are some of the views, so it's wise to always be able to stop within the distance you can see. Oh, and there is the occasional speed trap, too.

You could also see how many of the golden eagle statues that mark the route you can spot... **John Barker**



Google © Data SIO/NOAA/US Navy/NCA, GEBCO Image © 2011 DigitalGlobe Image © 2011 GeoEye

then try Grandstand Motor Sports, who offer two trips: a three-day and a five-day.

The longer of the two jaunts begins in Portsmouth on Wednesday for an overnight sailing to St Malo. From there you drive down to the Manoir de L'Automobile, which has a collection of 400 road and racing cars, before heading on to a beachfront hotel at Ile de Noirmoutie. Friday sees the final run via La Rochelle to Angoulême and the weekend's activities.

After the last wisps of Castrol R have melted away and the tinnitus from open exhausts has subsided, the return journey is a leisurely drive to Caen and the ferry back to Portsmouth. Various hotel options are available and Grandstand is happy to tailor your trip to any further requirements you may have.

TRIED & TESTED

MINI COYOTE V2 £185 (INCLUDING 12 MONTHS' UK SUBSCRIPTION) WWW.COYOTESYSTEMS.CO.UK

» The Mini Coyote is a speed camera warning device. It's small and neatly designed, and will stick to most parts of your car's dashboard. As well as alerting you to fixed cameras, it also calculates your average speed through those 50mph motorway zones that are currently all the rage.

Its mobile camera alerts are its main selling point, though. They're designed to be incredibly up to date thanks to the ability for Coyote users to register any snappy van they see with the touch of a

button. It's a great idea in theory – and in mainland Europe where over half a million people subscribe. But using it in the UK, where user numbers are smaller, I didn't see a single mobile alert.

The fixed camera alerts were similarly unimpressive. Testing it on familiar roads, it only chirruped as I was right on top of Gatsos. Good job I knew they were there. The average speed calculation is more successful, though.

Paying £185 for a gadget like this, you're likely craving peace of mind for



you and your driving licence. But until there's a big enough Coyote community to keep the device updated, it doesn't really deliver. **Stephen Dobie**

HAVE A PRODUCT FOR US TO REVIEW? CONTACT TRIED&TESTED@EVO.CO.UK

GREEN'S VIEW

'F1 MUST PROMOTE EXCELLENCE AT ALL LEVELS'

We're enjoying another brilliant season of Formula 1. After early Red Bull dominance, McLaren and Ferrari are fighting back hard. However, some of that Red Bull success was temporarily eroded by the off-throttle blown diffuser row that exploded during the British GP.

I quizzed Red Bull F1 team manager Christian Horner on the subject on the eve of the meeting, pointing out that it was odd for all this to occur mid-season. 'It's a rule clarification, not a rule change,' was his guarded response. Cynics suggested it was because certain teams hadn't perfected their systems (which produce downforce by channelling exhaust gases through the diffuser, even when not accelerating).

The attempt to get off-throttle blown diffusers banned mid-season looked to me like an attempt to penalise engineering ingenuity. If a team comes up with a legal advantage, it should last until the end of the year. Racing at this level has to promote excellence in all areas.

Thankfully, the FIA saw sense and allowed the diffuser set-ups to continue. But where did that call for 'clarification' come from? That remains unanswered. Perhaps someone wanted to clip those Red Bull wings.

Roger Green
Features writer



SILVERSTONE CLASSIC

Over 800 cars take to the track in a weekend of classic motorsport

Historic racing has never been more popular or taken more seriously, and the Silverstone Classic is amongst the biggest and best events in a very crowded classic motorsport calendar.

Predictably and deservedly, the dominant theme at this year's Classic was the Jaguar E-type, which celebrated its half-century in style with a gathering of more than 1000 examples of the iconic British sports car at the circuit to set a Guinness World Record. Many could be seen in action during the weekend's races, too, their gutsy straight-six engines howling in brilliantly brassy fashion.

With more than 800 racing cars (and 1000 lucky drivers) competing in no fewer than 22 races across the July 22-24 weekend, there was something to appeal to fans of every era. Indeed, whenever and wherever you looked there were fine displays of driving on show, from delicate open-wheelers dancing through the corners, to monstrous Group C prototypes revelling in Silverstone's high-speed, downforce-hungry layout.

As ever, the RAC TT race was a highlight, with the greatest GT cars from the '50s and '60s racing hard from lights to flag. Veteran Dickie Attwood – sharing with former

bike racer and Isle of Man TT winner Stuart Graham – took the spoils in their fabulous Aston Martin DB4 GT. Other great sights included seeing the Group C cars race into the sunset and the exuberant, no-prisoners argy-bargy of the excellent U2TC saloon car series, featuring scores of Alfa Giulia GTAs, Lotus Cortinas and Mini Cooper Ss. All were great showcases for historic racing and the Silverstone Classic's breadth of entries.

This was also the first time the classic racing community had visited Silverstone since the spectacular new 'Wing' pit and paddock complex opened earlier this year. Though undoubtedly a tremendous facility, when used in tandem with the old pits and paddock (as a meeting of this scale has to do), the cars, competitors and supporting car clubs are spread across a vast area. That's not good for teams or the public, as shuttle buses are the only practical means of getting around, adding another layer of potential queues and stress.

If the infrastructure can be further streamlined for next year, the Silverstone Classic will be an even bigger hit with the fans. Despite this year's transport challenges it was still a very special weekend of motorsport. **Richard Meaden**

EVENTS CALENDAR

AUGUST

» **28 August** F1 Belgian GP, Spa
www.formula1.com

SEPTEMBER

» **4 September** British GT Championship, Rockingham www.britishgt.com

» **4 September** GT1 World Championship, China www.gt1world.com

» **4 September** BTCC, Knockhill
www.btcc.net

» **11 September** F1 Italian GP, Monza
www.formula1.com

» **18 September** BTCC, Rockingham
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If you're thinking of giving it a go, there are few better places to begin than the Prescott Hill Climb Drivers' School. Located in Gloucestershire, there's been motorsport at Prescott for over 70 years. It's a pretty technical course, too, with two hairpins, a set of esses and a notoriously troublesome final corner during its 0.6-mile length.

Your £175 buys a full day at Prescott, which includes a convoy drive of the course, around six individual runs, video feedback (with lighthearted but helpful critiquing), plus refreshments and lunch.



While they can't sit in the car with you, the instructors are fantastic, explaining the best technique for each corner in detail during a walk up the hill. You'll be driving it in your own car, though I'd probably advise using something less potent than the Ariel Atom 300 I took along!

All in all, a very interesting alternative to a typical trackday or supercar experience. **Stephen Dobie**

HAVE A PRODUCT FOR US TO REVIEW? CONTACT TRIED&TESTED@EVO.CO.UK

TRACK GUIDES: NO. 2

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS

It's only a three-and-a-half-hour schlep from Calais and it's unquestionably one of the very best circuits in Europe, so if you've never visited Spa-Francorchamps, you simply must.

There's no other circuit where you repeatedly find yourself travelling in top gear approaching corners that you might *just* be able to take flat-out. It's also long – a lap is 4.35 miles – and the track rises and falls steeply amongst forested Ardennes hills so you feel like you're really going somewhere rather than driving

around in small circles – every lap is an adventure and a test of nerve as well as skill.

Over the past few years there have been a number of changes to the circuit, but the Bus Stop chicane is the only corner that has been reprofiled. It's the run-off areas that have been altered. Grass and gravel traps have been replaced by tarmac, making them safer, as running wide is now potentially a lot less expensive than it used to be.

But don't think for a minute that this place has lost its soul and been

turned into something resembling the new tracks built solely for F1. Spa still has an aura, the history still resonates between the trees, and when you take time out from lapping the current circuit you can head out onto the roads that used to form the original 15km loop.

The town of Francorchamps has a selection of hotels or you can head into Spa itself – it's only a 15-minute drive and it's packed with bars and restaurants. Perfect after a day on one of the most awe-inspiring race tracks you'll ever drive. **RG**

ASK THE EXPERT

Q I want to start racing next year and have a budget of £20,000. For the last few years I've been doing trackdays in my 911 GT3 and now want to take the next step. However, I don't want to jump into a championship where I'll be up against guys who have been racing for years. With that in mind I've narrowed the choices down to two – the Caterham Academy and the MSV Trackday Trophy – so I'd like to hear your thoughts on these championships.

Allan Rayes



A The Caterham Academy has been very successfully bringing novices into motorsport since 1995 and in that time over 700 people have begun racing this way. One of its real beauties is its simplicity – everything is organised for you, from a test day, through getting your licence, to the three sprints and four races.

You will need to build the road-legal, 1.6-litre, 125bhp Roadsport yourself if you want to remain in your budget, but this is a great way to get to know the machine. There is technical support, and as everyone will be in the same-spec car, the overall winner is the quickest driver, not the one who spends the most cash on upgrades.

They are brilliant little cars for novices, and as the car is yours you can either sell it at the end of the year or make a few changes to it and race in one of the many other Caterham championships.

If Caterhams aren't your bag or you prefer the variety offered by a mixed field of hatches and saloons, then the Trackday Trophy is an excellent starting point. It's not as structured as the Caterham system but you are free to buy or build whatever car your taste and budget allows. The series runs a class structure based on power-to-weight, so there's something for everyone.

I would suggest going to a meeting of both series to chat to the drivers and get a feel for which series suits you best. You'll find everyone buzzing and very happy to chat, and from there you'll be taking your first steps towards the start line. **RG**

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR TRACK EXPERT?
email experts@evo.co.uk

BALLSIEST BEND: EAU ROUGE

» One of the greatest corners in the world, with an epic approach. Speed builds massively quickly as you rush headlong towards it down the steep downhill section after La Source, and the corners loom up in front of you. Very few cars can take it flat but few require heavy braking as the climb helps scrub off speed. Steer smoothly – the climbing apex is later than you first think and it's blind, hidden by a crest, so it takes time to learn and increase pace. But even after a hundred laps it's still a hairy challenge.

POUHON

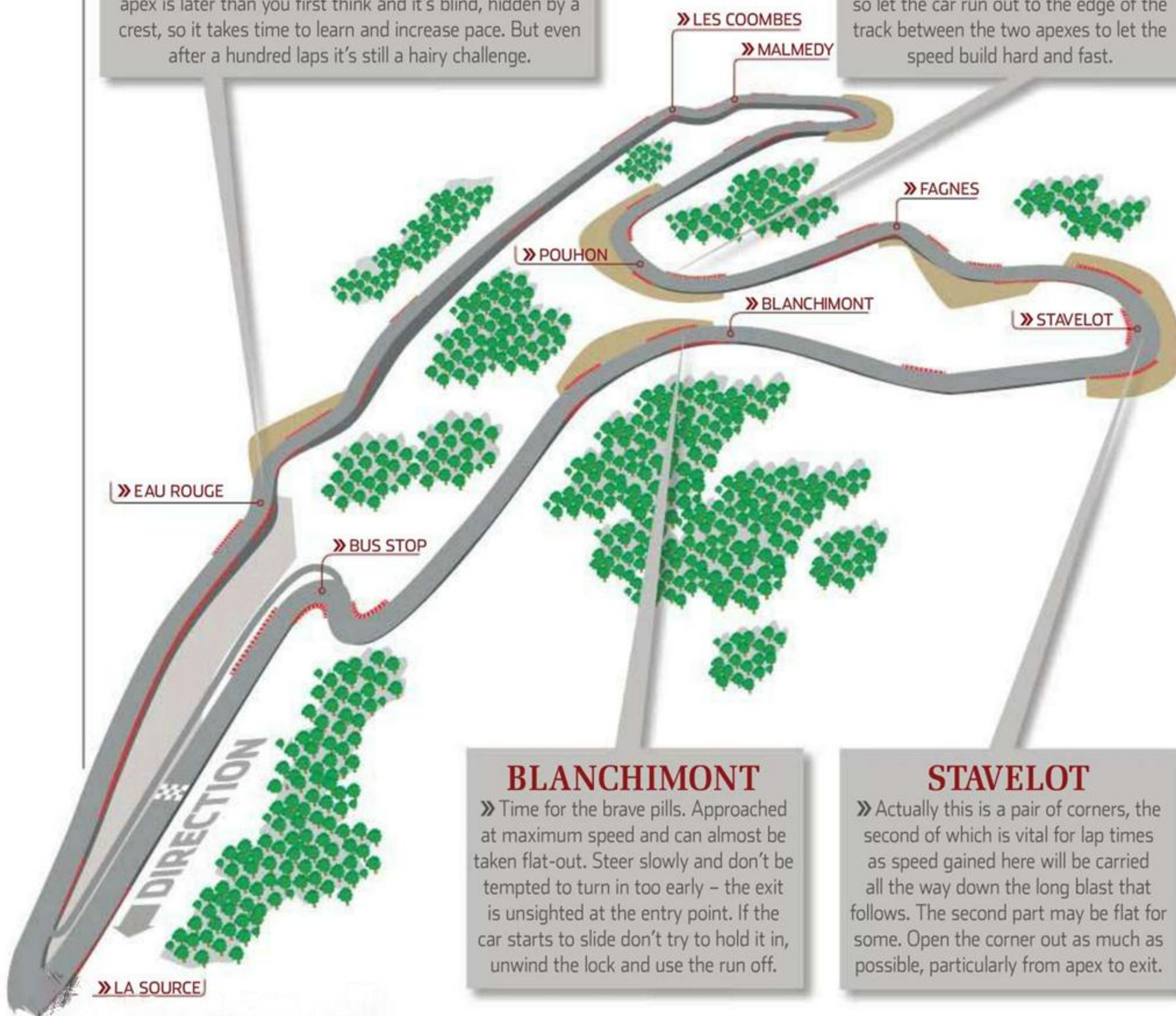
» Another standout corner that requires a high level of nerve. It's steeply downhill, very fast and it seemingly goes on for ages. Brake at the start of the kerbing and turn in as it ends. It's really two corners that are taken as one, so let the car run out to the edge of the track between the two apexes to let the speed build hard and fast.

BLANCHIMONT

» Time for the brave pills. Approached at maximum speed and can almost be taken flat-out. Steer slowly and don't be tempted to turn in too early – the exit is unsighted at the entry point. If the car starts to slide don't try to hold it in, unwind the lock and use the run off.

STAVELOT

» Actually this is a pair of corners, the second of which is vital for lap times as speed gained here will be carried all the way down the long blast that follows. The second part may be flat for some. Open the corner out as much as possible, particularly from apex to exit.





MSV TRACKDAY TROPHY

FETTLING THE FIAT

Competition winner preps his Bravo as countdown begins to his first race. Just one little problem with a slipping clutch...

By the time you read this, our MSV Trackday Trophy competition winner, Tony Hurcombe, will have completed his first race. Over the past few months he has gained his race licence, bought himself a race car, prepared it and warmed up with a couple of trackdays, and is now finally ready to go.

Tony opted to enter the Team Trophy,



Top and above: final preparations for the trophy included fitting new race belts

which meant he could pair-up with another novice racer, Adam Bates. Together they found themselves a stripped and caged £700 race-ready Fiat Bravo, which was something of a bargain. Not the most obvious choice of machinery, perhaps, but their Italian racer came with modified suspension and brakes and it really looks smart hunkered down on its trackday tyres.

There were a few jobs that needed completing before it complied fully with the regs; the sunroof needed welding up, a plumbed-in fire extinguisher had to be fitted and it required new safety belts. All fairly straightforward tasks, though one unexpected job was a little more complicated. During one of the trackdays the clutch began to slip, and once the whole thing was disassembled it was found to be full of oil. Turns out the gearbox oil seals had blown. Apparently this is common on Bravos if the car has been standing for some time, which it had before they bought it. Still, that's all resolved now and we'll let you know how they get on in their debut race next month.

Roger Green

Supercar Driving Experiences At Two Different Circuits



Photo: © Pete Gibson



New for 2011

The brilliant Ferrari 458 Italia and Lamborghini Gallardo join: Lamborghini LP670-4 SV, Audi R8, Aston Martin V8 Vantage, Porsche Cayman, Ferrari F355, Lotus Exige, Mazda3 MPS, MX-5 and Formula Renault racing cars

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evo Track Battle

HEAD-TO-HEAD LAPS AGAINST THE CLOCK

HONDA CIVIC Ti v BTCC HONDA CIVIC

As you can see, *evo's* **Roger Green** is fighting to stay in touch with Matt Neal's BTCC Honda. But just what is the speed differential between road and race car?



'Oh, and one more thing,' says Matt Neal as the window net is clicked into place. 'Watch the tail – it's quite mobile through the high-speed stuff. It's the compromise we have to make to get decent traction out of the slow corners. Have fun!' And with that he shuts the door of his Honda Civic – the car leading this year's British Touring Car Championship at the time of writing – and calmly walks away. For the next ten minutes it's all mine.

Flick the master switch to on, ignition

on, prod the green starter button and the 2-litre turbocharged engine fires instantly, settling into a beefy, rhythmic *dugger-dugger* idle. It might not be the most exotic race car noise, but its deep timbre has a menacing presence that reverberates around the cavernous interior. Flick on the switch to activate the power steering pump, dip the clutch pedal, pull firmly back on the sequential gearlever – *kerlunk!* – dial in a few revs, ease out the carbon clutch and we're away down the pitlane.

This is a track battle with a twist. First up we're going to see just how much faster

this £250,000 Touring Car is than the road car it inspired – the Civic Ti. And secondly Neal will be setting a target time in both cars to see how I measure up.

I fancy my chances in the road car – after all, I've probably done more laps around the West Circuit than anyone – but there's no question I've got my work cut out in the BTCC machine. I've very little experience of front-wheel-drive race cars and none at all in something as sophisticated as this. If that's not enough, I'm up against a two-time champion with an astonishing 450 Touring Car races under his belt.



SPECIFICATIONS

HONDA CIVIC Ti
 Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1799cc
 Power 138bhp @ 6000rpm
 Torque 128lb ft @ 4300rpm
 Weight (kerb) 1321kg
 0-62mph 8.9sec (claimed)
 Top speed 127mph (claimed)
 Price £16,995

HONDA CIVIC TOURING CAR
 Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2000cc, turbo
 Power 300bhp @ n/a rpm
 Torque n/a rpm
 Weight (including driver) 1140kg
 0-60mph 4.5sec (est)
 Top speed 150mph (est)
 Price £250,000

So that's the excuses dealt with, let's get on with the lap. Neal's already set his time so the tyres are up to temperature, but the first thing I notice is how accurate you have to be with the throttle on the exit of the hairpin. Squeeze it a millimetre too much and the front tyres light up, shooting the nose sideways and killing acceleration. This Racing Dynamics machine is fitted with a tightly wound Xtrac multi-plate limited-slip differential and there is little warning of when the limit is about to be breached. Experience of the car's traction levels is essential – you have to learn hard and

early you can deploy all 300bhp. 'It's a shame we weren't on new tyres,' says Neal later, 'because with fresh rubber you get what feels like 50 per cent more traction. It'd really fire out of the hairpin then.' The acceleration is strong. This Civic weighs just 1140kg (with driver), and optimised gearing in the rapid-fire Xtrac six-speed sequential 'box ensures the engine is always in the sweet spot of the power band. It eats up the ratios – I can't remember ever being in fifth before reaching the Palmer Curves. You don't lift off the throttle to shift,

just pull on the lever. And when your right foot is working the brakes, your left leg is employed purely to brace yourself while you punch the sequential lever forwards, letting the electronics take care of the blip. The four-pot AP Racing brakes (332mm up front) are mighty and there's plenty of feel to keep you aware of just how close you are to locking them. Through the left part of the Palmer Curves you can use no more than three-quarter throttle as again you're on the limit of what the Dunlop slicks on the front axle can take. Short-shift to fourth and then open the taps, take



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evoTrack Battle

HEAD-TO-HEAD LAPS AGAINST THE CLOCK

fifth as you turn right and keep your foot hard in. It's now that you feel the promised lightness at the rear. It doesn't slide enough to require opposite lock but you have the sensation that it's only just hanging in there. Lift now and you'd be spinning all the way to Bedford town centre. It feels a little uncomfortable but it's unquestionably fast. Sixth gear is taken right on the exit.

The data shows that up to this point I'm level with Neal, but his experience is about to pay dividends as he carries more speed into the Pif-Paf chicane, partly through using a little more kerb to open it out, but also by having more confidence in the grip level available as the Civic transitions between the left and right. This is the one corner where the car is caught slightly between gears and I slow a little more to take third, while Neal runs a gear higher.

The rear suspension is very trick and it takes more time than I have to get a real handle on it. The team were forced by the regulations into retaining the road car's torsion beam, only here it's very short and mated to long, three-way adjustable dampers. 'It took time to develop this system,' says Neal later. 'It wanted to swap ends on the straights when we first tried it!'

It's very effective now, though, and at Bank and the Beckham Esses I can just about match his pace. These slower corners require accurate braking and patience with the throttle, but when you drive just within the car's limits it responds with sharp, aggressive directional changes, and it is this pointiness that translates to nervousness in the high-speed corners at the end of lap.

This is where Neal's advantage stretches to just over a second. He carries an extra 6mph through O'Rouge, 4mph through Tower, whereas I'm very aware that it would be easy to make a mess of his race car through here – something I suspect wouldn't go down too well mid-season!

It's an unquestionably impressive machine, this BTCC car. There's very little wasted momentum, and that's borne out by the lap times. The Ferrari 458 amazed us all by scoring a 1min 19.3sec lap recently, but this little 300bhp Civic went round in



Clockwise from above: Touring Car's instrument panel; Ti's starter; BTCC car's interior; racer's 2-litre turbo engine. Below: Neal advises Green

1min 17.6sec in my hands and 1.3 seconds faster in Neal's. The last corner shows just how that was achieved. I was right on the ragged edge in the 458 and apexed at 77mph. Matt Neal's minimum speed at the same point was 94mph.

So what of the road car? After the brilliance of the BTCC Civic, it would be easy to be underwhelmed by the Ti. Unsurprisingly, it feels incredibly slow, soft and unresponsive by comparison. But once you've recalibrated your inputs to the real world you realise this road car is actually quite biddable and adjustable in the turns. With only 138bhp to play with it's not fast, but you don't need to brake until you're right on top of the turns. In fact that last corner can be taken completely flat out.

Extracting a lap time requires almost the same level of aggression as the BTCC car

on turn-in and arguably even more self control from then on – any scruffiness kills the hard-won momentum. The 1.8-litre engine needs to be kept on the boil, too. I use second gear five times during the lap (it's employed only twice in the Touring Car), Neal prefers to hold third, but the data trace shows that this costs him dear, as I get better drive out of the corners.

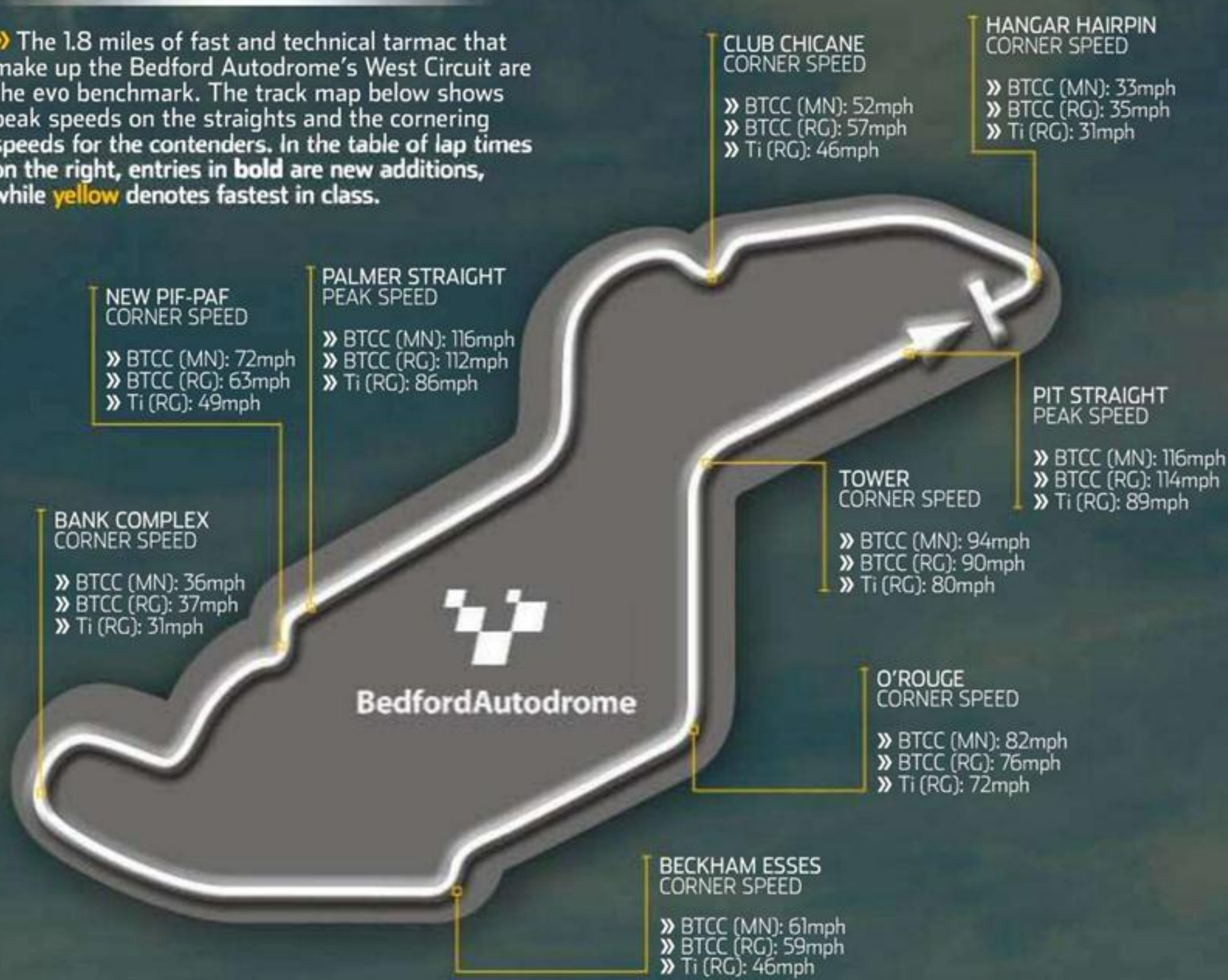
And this time I'm the one who carries more speed through the final turns, with a smaller lift into O'Rouge and no lift at all through Tower. I nail a 1.36.6 lap compared with Neal's 1.38.2, which makes it a one-all score draw. Sets things up nicely for a decider I reckon...

The next round of the 2011 BTCC season is at Knockhill on September 4. For more dates and the current standings, head to BTCC.net



THE WEST CIRCUIT

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

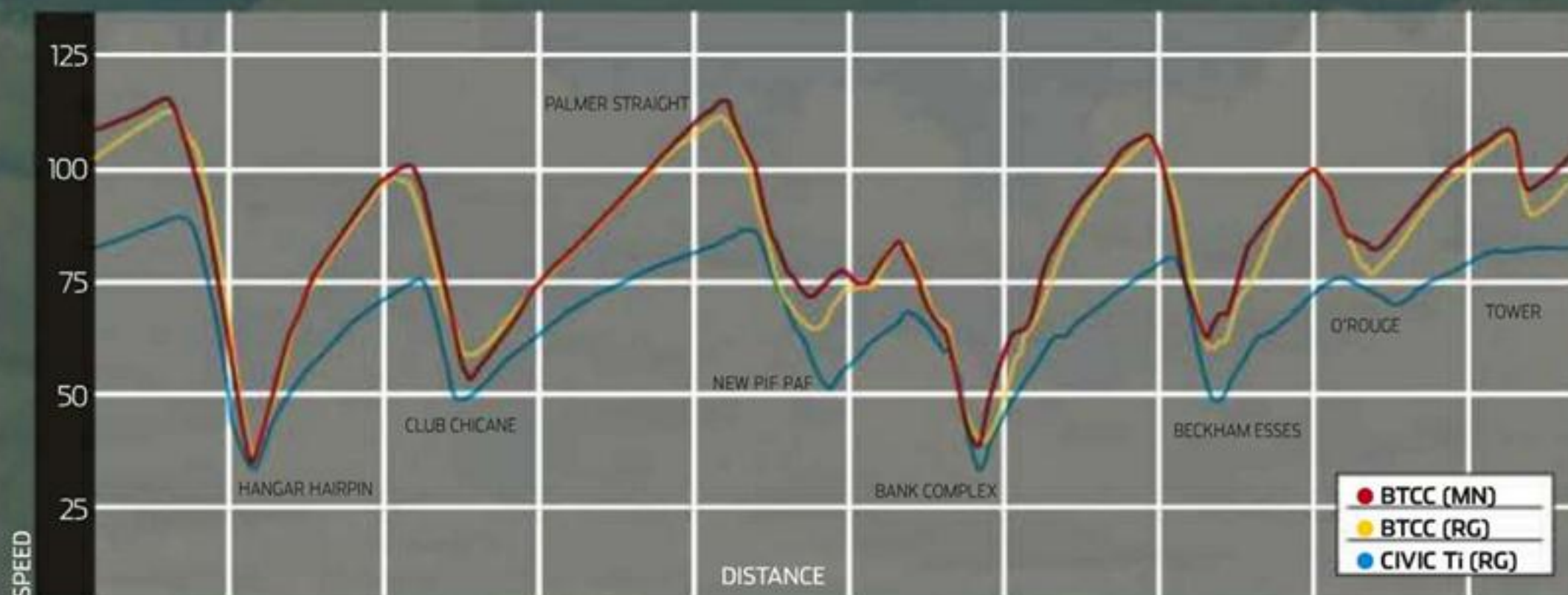


THE LEADERBOARD

	LAP TIME	PEAK
Radical SR8LM (fastest car)	1.13.6	127.8
Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)	1.14.8	130.9
Honda Civic British Touring Car	1.17.6	114.0
Ferrari 458 Italia	1.19.3	120.0
Gumpert Apollo S	1.19.4	120.4
McLaren MP4-12C (Corsa tyres)	1.19.6	121.2
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
McLaren MP4-12C	1.20.6	120.9
Noble M600	1.20.8	121.8
Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0 (fastest coupe)	1.21.0	118.2
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	1.21.3	121.1
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	1.21.5	113.6
KTM X-Bow (300bhp)	1.21.5	112.7
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	1.21.7	117.2
Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (3.8)	1.21.9	116.8
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	1.22.5	119.1
Brooke Double R	1.22.5	113.2
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	1.22.9	116.7
Porsche Carrera GT	1.23.3	115.2
Porsche 997.2 GT3	1.23.3	114.5
Porsche 997 Turbo S	1.23.5	117.5
Porsche 997 GT2	1.23.5	115.1
Nissan GT-R	1.23.6	113.1
Porsche 997 Turbo	1.24.1	113.5
Lotus 340R (190bhp)	1.24.2	110.0
Caterham Superlight R300	1.24.3	101.5
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	1.24.5	115.1
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
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400 (fastest saloon)	1.25.9	107.5
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1.25.9	106.4
Mitsubishi Evo X RS 360	1.26.1	106.6
BMW E90 M3 Saloon	1.26.2	108.2
Audi TT RS	1.26.3	107.2
Aston Martin DBS	1.26.4	109.5
Audi R8	1.26.5	112.0
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1.26.5	109.2
Jaguar XJ220	1.26.7	111.7
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)	1.26.9	107.4
Audi R55	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
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R (fastest hot hatch)	1.27.8	103.3
Audi RS6 Avant (fastest estate)	1.27.9	111.0
Jaguar XFR	1.27.9	108.1
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen	1.28.0	104.4
Lexus IS-F	1.28.1	106.4
Porsche Boxster S	1.28.1	105.4
Subaru WRX STI	1.28.3	101.6
Jaguar XJ Supersport	1.28.4	106.6
Bentley Continental Supersports	1.29.2	105.8
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1.29.9	101.4
Honda NSX	1.30.1	101.3

WHICH WAS FASTER?

BTCC (MN) 1.16.3 (peak speed 116mph) **BTCC (RG)** 1.17.6 (114mph) **Ti (RG)** 1.36.6 (86mph)



» Top two traces show how Neal (red) and Green (yellow) compare in the BTCC car; note Neal's higher speeds through the faster turns at the end of the lap. Civic Ti (blue) is understandably slower – it has half the power of the Touring Car



'THE Ti REQUIRES ARGUABLY MORE SELF CONTROL THAN THE BTCC CAR'

SUPERMINIS/HOT HATCHES



OUR CHOICE: Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup. After the mild disappointment of the Clio 197, Renaultsport has got the Clio back to its very best, producing a cracking small hot hatch more than capable of chasing down supercars on eCoty 2009 for a top five finish.

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



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Abarth Punto Evo	149 F	£16,667	4/1368	161/5500	184/2250	1155kg	142	7.9	-	132	142	-	+ Attractive and fun - Needs the upcoming Esseesse power upgrade ★★★★
Abarth 500 Esseesse	129 R	£16,100	4/1368	158/5750	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.2	20.4	131	155	-	+ A properly fun, old-school hot hatch - Limited numbers being imported ★★★★
Alfa Romeo Mito 1.4 TB	132 D	£16,745	4/1368	135/5250	152/1750	1145kg	120	8.2	-	129	-	51.4	+ So close to being a modern-day Alfasud - But not close enough... ★★★★
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	£10,109	4/1970	150/6300	134/3800	1270kg	120	9.3	-	129	-	31.7	+ Fantastic looks, engine and handling - Build quality still lacking ★★★★
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	053 F	'03-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0	15.5	153	-	23.3	+ Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy ★★★★
Alfa Romeo 145 Cloverleaf	'95-01	£4,1970	4/1970	150/6200	138/4000	1200kg	127	8.0	-	129	-	32.7	+ Fiery engine, individual appeal - Ape-like driving position ★★★★
Aston Martin Cygnet	159 D	£30,995	4/1329	97/6000	92/4400	920kg	107	11.8	-	106	116	54.3	+ Necessary - Evil ★★★★
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	'01-09	£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	1453kg	183	5.6	13.6	155	-	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... er, 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	'01-09	£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 (Sdr)	122 R	£27,170	4/1995	201/4400	295/2000	1495kg	137	6.5	17.4	148	135	54.3	+ Economical and no slouch - Doesn't feel special enough ★★★★
BMW 130i M Sport (Sdr)	106 R	'05-10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.1	15.3	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy ★★★★
BMW 325ti Compact	031 D	'01-05	6/2494	189/6000	181/3500	1480kg	130	7.1	-	147	-	31.7	+ Terrific engine, chassis, price - Looks a bit geeky ★★★★
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota 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	9.3	-	116	-	36.7	+ VTS poise, half the insurance group - Cramped pedals ★★★★
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	'97-03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	7.6	22.6	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary ★★★★
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	£16,300	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	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	126 F	£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	10.2	-	113	-	38.2	+ Better than you'd ever believe - No-one else will believe it ★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	'05-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine ★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	'08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note ★★★★
Ford Focus RS500	152 F	'10-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	12.7	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than above - Pricy (and all sold!) ★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	139 R	'09-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	14.2	163	225	30.5	+ Huge performance, highly capable fwd chassis - It could be the last RS... ★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune	137 R	'08-11	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	5.8	14.3	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS ★★★★
Ford Focus ST	119 R	'05-11	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.7	16.8	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling ★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	053 R	'02-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	5.9	14.9	144	-	-	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty) ★★★★
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 F	'92-96	4/1993	227/6250	224/3500	1304kg	176	5.8	-	143	-	24.5	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Ultimate trophy for tea leaves ★★★★
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	'97-02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	8.6	27.6	122	-	38.2	+ Everything - Nothing. The 1.4 is worth a look too ★★★★
Ford Racing Puma	016 F	'00-01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.8	23.2	137	-	34.7	+ Exclusivity - Expense. Standard Puma does it so well ★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen	144 F	'09-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	155	-	-	+ Fantastic on road and track - There'll only be 20, and it's a tad pricey... ★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R	126 D	'09-10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	146	-	31.0	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on standard car... ★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R	102 R	'07-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.8	17.5	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance ★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R	075 R	'01-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	16.9	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - Looks divide opinion, duff steering ★★★★
Lancia Delta Integrale	011 F	'88-93	4/1995	210/5750	220/3500	1350kg	158	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only ★★★★
Mazda 2 1.5 Sport	132 F	£13,290	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	49.6	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini ★★★★
Mazda 3 MPS (Mk2)	137 R	£23,155	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.3	14.5	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's still iffy ★★★★
Mazda 3 MPS Aero Kit (Mk1)	106 R	'07-09	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1410kg	184	6.1	14.3	155	-	29.1	+ Speed, grip, stability - Slightly strange steering, dull styling ★★★★
MG ZS 180	035 D	'01-05	6/2497	175/6500	177/4000	1235kg	144	7.3	-	139	-	29.7	+ Well-sorted chassis, characterful engine - Image: looks like a 45 ★★★★
Mini One	149 F	£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	7.0	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Lacks old car's direct front end ★★★★
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 ★★★★
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 ★★★★
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 ★★★★

THE ONLY THING MORE ATTRACTIVE IS THE MONTHLY PAYMENT.

IS Advance sports saloon and convertible. This summer they are available for a seriously good looking price.

Representative Example

Model	Term	35 Monthly payments	Cash price	Customer deposit	Finance Deposit Allowance	Fixed rate of interest (per annum)	Amount of credit	Guaranteed Future Value/ Optional final payment	Total amount payable	Representative
IS 200d Advance	36 months	£299	£24,995	£6,333.39	£1,000	3.55%	£17,661.61	£9,990.90	£27,789.29	6.9% APR†

IS Series prices start from £24,870 OTR. Models shown are: IS 200d Advance costing £25,605 OTR and IS 250C Advance priced at £37,390, both include optional metallic paint at £610. Prices correct at time of publishing and include VAT, delivery, number plates, full tank of fuel, one year's road fund licence and £55 first registration fee. †6.9% APR Representative over 3 years on Lexus Connect Contract Purchase (PCP) available on all new IS Series, when ordered between 1 July and 30 September 2011 and registered and financed between 1 July and 31 December 2011, through Lexus Financial Services, Great Burgh, Burgh Heath, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5JZ at participating Lexus Centres. Other finance offers are available but cannot be used in conjunction with this offer. Terms and conditions apply. Excess mileage charge applies over 30,000 miles at 12 pence per mile. Indemnities may be required. Finance subject to status over 18s only. Lexus Centres are independent of Lexus Financial Services. Subject to availability.

KEY: ▶ New entries this month. Issue no: our most recent major test of the car (R = Road test or group test with figures, D = Driven, F = Feature article). You can order the issues where still available - call 0844 844 0039. Entries in italics are no longer on sale. Prices are on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. Weight is the kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. Bhp/ton is the power-to-weight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. 0-60 and 0-100 figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. CO2 is the official EC figure and EC mpg is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent. * = grey import. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of entries, some errors may have crept in. Please send comments/corrections to stephend@evo.co.uk

STAR RATINGS: ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Mini JCW Clubman	137 D	£23,290	4/1598	208/6000	207/2000	1280kg	165	6.8	-	148	167	40.4	+ Ride and handling more composed than the JCW hatch - It's no looker ★★★★★
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk2)	111 F	'07-'08	4/1598	189/6000	199/1750	1130kg	170	7.6	18.0	145	-	-	+ Cracking hot Mini, until the JCW - Expensive with option packs included ★★★★★
Mini Cooper S Works GP	144 F	'06	4/1598	218/7100	184/4600	1090kg	203	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements' ★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (Mk1)	077 R	'02-'06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.8	19.9	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing ★★★★★
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk1)	074 D	'03-'06	4/1598	210/6950	181/4500	1140kg	187	6.6	-	143	-	-	+ Even more power and pace than the 197bhp version - Even pricier, too ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Colt Ralliart	132 F	£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 ★★★★★
Nissan Sunny GTi-R		'92-'93	4/1998	220/6400	197/4800	1269kg	176	6.1	-	134	-	25.1	+ Nissan's Escort Cossie - Make sure it's a good one ★★★★★
Peugeot 308 GT THP 200	155 D	£22,445	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1412kg	142	7.6	-	140	159	-	+ RCZ engine in a practical body - Definitely a GT rather than a GTI, though ★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)		'97-'98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	127	-	34.0	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3 ★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	9.3	-	118	-	35.6	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs coning to extract full potential ★★★★★
Peugeot 106 GTi 16v	034 R	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	7.4	22.2	127	-	34.9	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age ★★★★★
Peugeot 207 GTi THP 175	105 F	'06-'09	4/1598	172/6000	195/1600	1325kg	132	7.1	-	137	-	39.2	+ Great engine - Sloppy controls and huge body smother the chassis ★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTi 1.9	095 F	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.9	-	124	-	36.7	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality ★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTi-6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.2	20.1	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more ★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	141	6.9	19.2	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTi-6 for less dash - Limited choice of colours ★★★★★
Peugeot 309 GTi		'89-'92	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	985kg	134	8.3	-	124	-	28.2	+ 205 GTi in drag, cheap - Who wants a cheap drag queen? ★★★★★
Renaultsport Twingo 133 Cup	132 F	£12,100	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1049kg	127	8.7	-	125	159	40.4	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Could handle extra 30bhp ★★★★★
Renault 5GT Turbo	123 F	'87-'91	4/1397	120/5750	122/3750	831kg	146	7.8	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clo Williams' grand-daddy - Most have been thrashed ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	154 R	£16,810	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	141	190	34.4	+ The hot Clio is back to its best - Why the long face? ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	115 R	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	134	-	33.6	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	6.6	17.5	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	074 D	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	095 F	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.6	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ Most fun you can have on three wheels - Just 500 were built ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.5	17.7	138	-	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	255/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Revised Clio V6 is a winner - Uninspired interior ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 F	'99-'02	6/2946	230/6000	221/3750	1335kg	175	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky ★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	095 F	'93-'96	4/1988	150/6100	126/4500	981kg	155	7.6	20.8	127	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile like an Integrale ★★★★★
Renault Mégane GT TCe 180	154 D	£20,825	4/1998	178/5500	222/2250	1320kg	137	7.7	-	139	178	36.7	+ Rides & steers well - Not much cheaper than car below, lacks its sparkle ★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	£23,650	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	195	33.6	+ Fantastic chassis... - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity ★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy	160 F	£27,820	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	-	158	190	-	+ Hot Mégane gets more power and fwd Ring record - A pricey upgrade ★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	157 F	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	5.8	15.1	147	-	-	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows ★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 230 R26	102 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ Best hot Mégane... until the R26.R - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste ★★★★★
R'sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/5750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power ★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 225 Cup	087 F	'05-'09	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1345kg	167	6.5	-	147	-	32.1	+ Good value and plentiful - You gotta like big backsides ★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy	087 F	'05	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1355kg	166	6.7	17.3	147	-	32.1	+ Mega grip and traction - Steering needs a touch more feel ★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza FR	134 D	£15,670	4/1390	148/5800	162/1250	1167kg	129	7.7	-	130	146	44.8	+ Fun and frugal - You're forced to have the DSG automatic 'box ★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza FR TDI	144 F	£17,540	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	61.4	+ Even more fun and frugality - Almost as pricey as the Cupra ★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	139 R	£17,020	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1172kg	154	6.9	-	140	148	44.1	+ Funky (especially in Bocanegra trim), economical - The FR's a better drive ★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	104 F	'04-'08	4/1781	178/5500	181/2000	1248kg	145	7.1	-	143	-	35.3	+ Well built, punchy engine - The 'warm' FR is a better bet ★★★★★
SEAT Leon FR	131 D	£20,520	4/1984	208/5300	206/1700	1354kg	158	7.2	-	145	170	35.8	+ As quick as a Golf GTI but £4k cheaper - Misses the VW's completeness ★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	£22,160	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R ★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	£25,985	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	6.1	14.0	155	190	-	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches ★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 20v T	020 R	'00-'06	4/1781	178/5500	173/5000	1322kg	137	7.7	-	142	-	33.2	+ Terrific value - Lacks sparkle of very best hatches ★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some ★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	£16,260	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	085 D	£20,145	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1335kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake callipers? ★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk1)	032 D	'01-'05	4/1781	180/5500	173/1950	1354kg	135	7.9	-	146	-	35.3	+ Remarkably fun and capable - Cabin quality ★★★★★
Smart Fortwo Brabus	110 D	£14,825	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	96	119	54.3	+ Telling people you drive a Brabus - Them realising it's not a 720bhp S-class ★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	£32,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	155	243	26.9	+ Spec C suspension makes a better drive - No blue paint or gold wheels ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI CS400	146 R	£49,995	4/2457	395/5750	400/3950	1505kg	267	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ Cosworth kudos. Fastest hatch we've tested - Pricy. Lifeless steering ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	130	270	-	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 F	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ A bit quicker than the STI... - ...but not better ★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport	132 F	£12,995	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1105kg	113	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR	102 R	£22,875	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.7	16.7	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision ★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR 888	127 D	£26,573	4/1998	295/4650	317/4250	1393kg	215	5.1	-	160	221	-	+ Crazy power, chassis copes admirably - Lacks exploitability of Mégane R26 ★★★★★
VW Lupo GTi 6-spd	036 D	'00-'05	4/1598	125/6500	112/3000	978kg	128	8.3	-	127	-	38.2	+ Looks, performance, snappy gearshift - Lacks fizz of 106 GTi ★★★★★
VW 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 ★★★★★
VW Golf GTD (Mk6)	133 D	£24,395	4/1968	168/4200	258/1750	1329kg	128	8.1	-	138	134	50.4	+ Punchy performance and good economy - Not as much fun as the GTI ★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	139 R	£25,045	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	149	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more ★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	£31,095	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.6	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price. ACC only optional ★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	102 R	'05-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	6.7	17.9	145	-	-	+ Character and ability: the original GTI is back - Lacking firepower? ★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	5.8	15.2	155	-	26.4	+ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI ★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 F	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.4	16.3	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome ★★★★★
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)		'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	1111kg	127	8.0	-	124	-	28.8	+ Arguably the best all-round Golf GTI ever - We'd be splitting hairs ★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk1)	095 F	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one ★★★★★
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	£21,945	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto ★★★★★



IS fuel consumption figures: urban 16.3-44.8 mpg (17.3-6.3 L/100km), extra urban 33.6-64.2 mpg (8.4-4.4 L/100km), combined 24.4-55.4 mpg (11.6-5.1 L/100km). CO2 emissions combined 270-134 g/km



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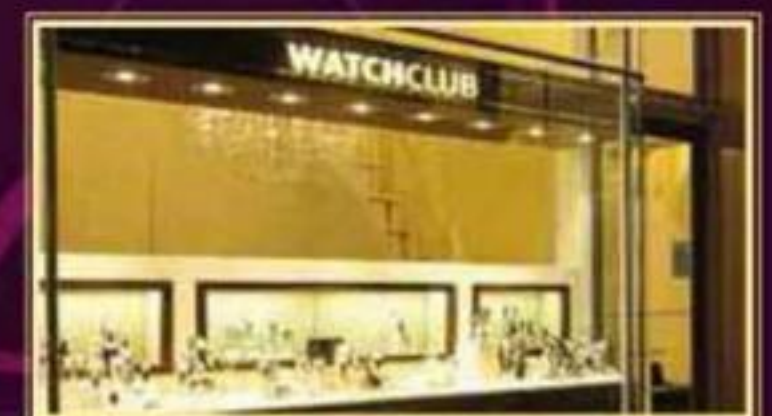
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BRABUS BULLIT, ISSUE 119

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: Lexus's IS-F is the M3's unnatural rival, with a glorious high-revving V8 and playful rear-drive. Moving up a size, we heartily recommend the Jaguar XFR (right) with its supercharged V8, while the Mercedes C63 AMG is our fast estate choice.



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Alfa Romeo 156 GTA	045 F	£102,006	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	£71,000	8/4398	525/5500	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	£105,000	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	£31,000	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	£105,000	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	£106,000	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	£107,000	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1700kg	246	4.6	-	155	-	20.6	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! - Everyone thinking you're married with kids ★★★★★
Audi RS4	024 R	£100,000	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Lacks finesse. Bends wheel rims ★★★★★
Audi RS2		£94,995	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	£106,000	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10 ★★★★★
Audi S6	124 D	£108,000	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	£108,000	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	£102,000	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	£102,000	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	£106,000	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	493/5750	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 Amage R	048 F	£102,000	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 Amage T	096 D	£106,000	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	£53,220	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		£99,105	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	£99,000	6/2979	231/5900	221/3500	1510kg	153	5.9	17.0	155	-	30.0	+ Clean, classy and confident - Too smooth for its own good? ★★★★★
BMW 535i SE	141 D	£38,895	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1760kg	174	6.1	-	155	199	33.2	+ New 5-series impresses... - But only with all the chassis options ticked ★★★★★
BMW M5 Touring (E60)	105 F	£107,000	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	£104,000	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	£99,000	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	4.9	11.5	155	-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	£92,995	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1853kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	110 F	£86,888	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	£106,000	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	£105,000	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	£102,000	6/2967	223/6150	204/4900	1550kg	146	6.8	-	151	-	27.7	+ Muscular engine, fine chassis - Hotted-up repmobile image ★★★★★
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4		£90,993	4/1993	220/6250	214/3500	1805kg	159	6.6	-	144	-	24.4	+ Fast and furious - Try finding a straight one ★★★★★
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth		£86,990	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	£102,000	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	£107,000	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	£99,000	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 ★★★★★

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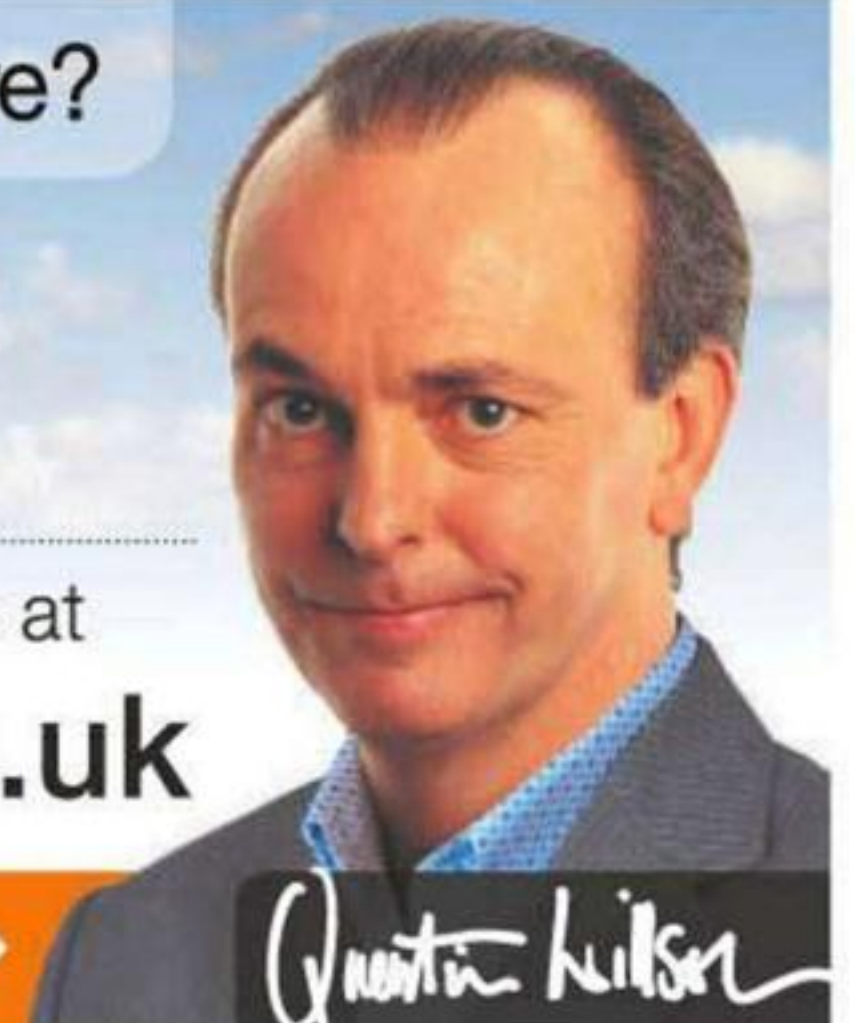
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SUBARU WRX STI, ISSUE 151

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Jaguar XF 3.0D 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	£65,350	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1891kg	270	4.8	10.2	155	292	22.5	★★★★	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is
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 older world looks - Auto-only, and no Isd
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 diesel	148 D	£55,500	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1796kg	153	6.0	-	155	184	40.1	★★★★	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the Supersport...
Jaguar XJ Supersport	144 D	£91,000	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1892kg	270	4.7	-	155	289	23.4	★★★★	+ Superb ride and handling, monster performance - Opinion-dividing looks
Jaguar XJR	054 R	'03-'09	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1665kg	244	5.0	-	155	-	23.0	★★★★	+ Genuine 7-series rival - 2007 facelift didn't help middle-aged image
Jaguar XJR 4.0	018 R	'00-'03	8/3996	370/6150	387/3000	1775kg	211	5.6	13.5	155	-	21.9	★★★★	+ Matchless grace, extraordinary pace - Not much space
Lamborghini LM002	016 F	'86-'89	12/5167	450/6800	369/5200	2700kg	169	-	-	130	-	-	★★★★	+ Craziest 4x4 ever, Countach V12 - Craziest 4x4 ever...
Lexus IS-F	151 R	£58,300	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1744kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.8	★★★★	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too
Lotus Carlton	035 F	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	★★★★	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	£87,350	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1930kg	216	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	★★★★	+ Finally, a QP with more bhp - New grille a bit Hannibal Lecter
Maserati Q'porte Sport GTS	141 F	£94,300	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1930kg	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	-	177	-	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	197/6150	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	★★★★	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	£54,600	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	4.4	9.7	160	312	21.1	★★★★	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - M3's just a little better...
Mercedes-Benz DR520	148 D	£62,920	8/6208	513/6800	479/5000	1730kg	301	4.1	-	187	-	-	★★★★	+ C63 AMG goes feral - For an extra ten grand, though
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	★★★★	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	134 D	£73,415	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1840kg	286	4.5	-	155	295	-	★★★★	+ Sounds good, drives very well - Not as lazily grumpy as its rivals
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	464/5200	1840kg	280	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	★★★★	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	★★★★	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG		'98-'02	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	1642kg	219	5.5	-	155	-	23.0	★★★★	+ Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	£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	738/2000	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 - Pricey 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	4.6	11.0	155	-	17.1	★★★★	+ Goes like an SUV has no right to - Gordon Murray will hate you
Mercedes-Benz G55 AMG	092 F	£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	6.5	16.3	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	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	★★★★	+ As above with twin-clutch transmission - As above, with paddles on
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	£33,799	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	★★★★	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	£36,799	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	230	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	★★★★	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five speed gearbox?!
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	138 F	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	★★★★	+ The best Evo X so far... - ...about X grand too much when new
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 F	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	★★★★	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Paints. Lots of
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	103 F	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	★★★★	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	★★★★	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	★★★★	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	★★★★	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	★★★★	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed
Mitsubishi Evo VI RS Sprint	011 F	'99	4/1997	330/6500	323/3000	1255kg	267	4.5	11.8	145	-	-	★★★★	+ Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo - A little uncompromising
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen 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	160 F	£78,221	8/4806	394/6500	369/3500	1770kg	226	5.6	-	177	293	26.2	★★★★	+ Great cabin and typically fine Porsche chassis - Only a mother could love it
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£102,909	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	286	23.2	★★★★	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	£122,623	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	★★★★	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride
Porsche Cayenne 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	4.7	11.4	171	-	19.0	★★★★	+ Appears to defy physics - Still cracks mirrors at 50 paces
Range Rover Evoque Si4	160 D	£39,995	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	★★★★	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and top petrol is auto-only
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
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	£32,995	4/2457	296/6500	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	1470kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	★★★★	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era
Subaru Impreza WRX	087 F	'05-'07	4/2457	227/5600	236/3600	1410kg	163	5.4	-	143	-	27.4	★★★★	+ 2.5 litres gives even greater thump - Slightly light steering
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	★★★★	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C *	084 D	'05-'07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	★★★★	+ Lighter, faster, fiercer - The need for self-restraint
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 F	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	★★★★	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?
Subaru Imp'za WRX STI PPP	073 F	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.2	12.9	148	-	-	★★★★	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet
Subaru STI Type RA Spec C *	067 F	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	4.3	11.1	160	-	-	★★★★	+ Best Impreza since the PI - Lost its throbby flat-four voice
Subaru Impreza WRI	067 R	'04-'05	4/1994	316/5800	310/4000	1470kg	218	5.3	13.1	155	-	-	★★★★	+ Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 - Spec C is better
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 F	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	★★★★	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty
Subaru Impreza PI	067 F	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	★★★★	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this
Subaru Impreza RBS (PPP)	011 F	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	5.0	14.1	143	-	-	★★★★	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers
Subaru Impreza 22B	011 F	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.0	13.1	150	-	-	★★★★	+ On paper, the ultimate - On the road, too uncompromising
Subaru Forester STI *</														

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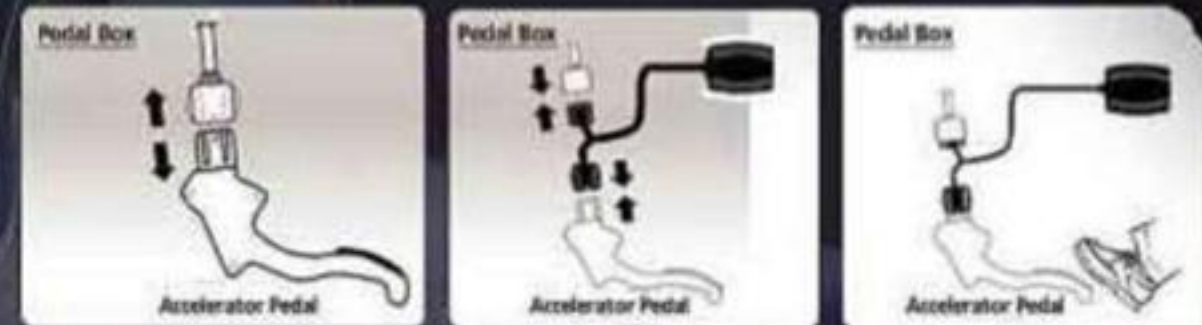
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BMW Z8, ISSUE 026

SPORTS CARS/CONVERTIBLES



OUR CHOICE: Audi R8 Spyder. The Spyder boasts supercar looks, presence and performance, yet you really could drive one every day. And while the V10-engined car makes the more spine-tingling noise, the lighter and even more agile V8 version gets our vote.

BEST OF THE REST: The Elise is a joy, with just enough power, while the revamped MX-5 handles like it should again. The Porsche Boxster is getting on a bit, but still special. For the ultimate thrills, though, treat yourself to a Caterham R300 or an Ariel Atom (right).



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
AC MkVI GT	135 D	£93,500	8/6162	437/4800	431/4800	1000kg	444	3.9	-	162	-	-	+ Cobra charm with a modern twist - It's priced against some strong rivals	★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	139 F	£174,000	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Good luck trying to buy one	★★★★
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	£34,109	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	£9,103	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	094 D	£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	£00,000	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	£84,163	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1845kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	+ That engine - Wibbly 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 Continental 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	£06,109	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1385kg	194	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	+ Temic straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	£06,109	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	£6,324	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	£01,106	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	£06,110	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	£00,103	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	159 R	£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-rev pick-up	★★★★
Caterham 7 Superlight R500	123 R	£41,000	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★
Caterham CSR 260 Superlight	094 F	£43,800	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★
Caterham Levante	131 F	£115,000	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly	★★★★
Caterham 7 R300	068 F	£02,106	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	£03,106	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	£09,106	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	£04,106	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	★★★★
Ferrari California	143 F	£146,910	8/4287	453/7750	358/5000	1735kg	265	3.8	9.0	193	299	21.5	+ Despite the CC roof, it's a real Ferrari - We'd still take an F430 Spider	★★★★
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	£99,109	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1280kg	197	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	£78,550	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	£06,109	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		£06,109	8/4196	414/6250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Ovenwrought detailing	★★★★
Jaguar XKR	004 F	£97,106	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	★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	152 D	£64,850	4/1984	295/5500	295/3300	790kg	379	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★
Light Car Company Rocket	104 F	£46,000	4/1002	143/10500	77/8500	406kg	358	4.4	-	145	-	35.0	+ Single-seater style, speed - Old Formula Fords cost £5K	★★★★
Lotus Elise 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	★★★★
Lotus Elise Club Racer	159 R	£27,500	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused Elise - A touch pricey for a stripped-out Elise	★★★★
Lotus Elise R	068 F	£31,450	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrillsome Elise yet - Blaring engine note	★★★★
Lotus Elise SC	131 F	£34,450	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	£32,440	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★
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	★★★★

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+Hardcore road-racer...
 - ...that looks like a Mars dune buggy
LOTUS 340R, ISSUE 126

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 F	£76,590	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof *****
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 F	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little *****
Lotus Elise S2 111S	049 F	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise? *****
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel *****
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 190	044 F	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey *****
Lotus Elise S1	126 F	'96-'00	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+A modern classic - A tad impractical? *****
Lotus 340R	126 F	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+Hardcore road-racer... - ...that looks like a dune buggy from Mars *****
Lotus Elan SE	095 F	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved *****
Lotus Elan Sprint	126 F	'71-'73	4/1558	126/6500	113/5500	720kg	178	6.6	-	122	-	-	+Sensational chassis, properly quick - Affording a mint one *****
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,200	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	225	5.3	-	176	354	18.5	+As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals *****
Maserati 4200 Spyder	055 F	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1720kg	229	4.9	-	177	-	15.2	+Magnificent engine, decent chassis - Brutal turn-in *****
Mazda MX-5 1.8i SE		£17,975	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	5.5	13.5	155	227	29.1	+Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater *****
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 F	'05-'09	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun *****
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black	110 F	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	+AMG gets serious - Dull-witted 7G-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics *****
Mercedes-Benz SL500		£81,655	8/5461	383/6000	391/2800	1910kg	204	5.4	-	155	272	24.4	+Unflappable, gorgeous, beautifully engineered - Just a bit dull *****
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	£106,770	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1895kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.3	+More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal *****
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	070 F	'02-'07	8/5439	493/6100	516/2650	1955kg	256	4.6	10.2	155	-	-	+As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun *****
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG		'08-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2045kg	300	4.2	-	155	-	18.7	+Humongous torque - Humongously expensive *****
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'07	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey *****
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 (996)		'05	6/3387	316/6800	273/4250	1386kg	232	5.0	-	174	-	25.4	+Feels solid like the hard-top - What more do you want? *****
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (996)	060 F	'03-'05	6/3596	414/6000	413/4600	1700kg	250	4.7	-	185	-	-	+Faster than you'll ever need it to be - Just the image thing again *****
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	5.0	14.3	120	-	-	+If this is the future, it's going to be fun - Limited range, high price *****
Toniq-R Duratec	102 D	£23,500	4/1999	193/6500	174/4500	550kg	357	4.5	-	140	-	-	+Very good value, well built, and lots of fun too - No roof, no windscreen *****
Toyota MR2	078 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space *****
TVR T350T	067 D	'04-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.4	-	175+	-	-	+Targa top roof, grumpy engine - Lacks polish *****
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling *****
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really? *****
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details *****
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details *****
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+Gruff diamond - A few rough edges *****
Ultima GTR	017 R	£45,500	8/6300	534/5800	528/4800	990kg	548	3.9	8.2	204	-	-	+Turns the M1 into the Mulsanne - You'll have to build it yourself *****
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge? *****
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	157	-	-	+Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability *****
Westfield Megabus	036 F	£24,450	4/1298	175/9800	102/9000	430kg	413	3.7	-	140	-	-	+Bike-engined road-rocket - Not big on practicality... *****
Westfield 1600 Sport Turbo	140 D	£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	4.4	9.4	144	-	-	+Snarling, fire-breathing V8, ferocious pace - Spits fuel at you *****
Wiesmann Roadster MF3	077 D	£65,000	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1180kg	291	4.9	-	158	-	-	+Engine, ride, build quality, exclusivity - Umm... '50s styling? *****

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Here are just some examples of the savings you could make: a BMW M3 Coupe for £52,019 (saving £2671); the recently updated Jaguar XFR for £58,972 (a massive saving of £6378), and an Audi TTS 2.0T FSI Quattro with S Tronic for £33,472 (that's a very handy £3612 off). So don't hang about...



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COUPES/GTs



OUR CHOICE: Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS 4.0. We really didn't think the previous 911 GT3 RS could be improved upon, but the new 4.0 version is even faster, even more hardcore and even more intoxicating. Quite possibly the greatest roadgoing 911 ever.

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	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Alfa Romeo Brera 3.2 V6	120 F	£30,065	6/3195	256/6300	237/4500	1532kg	170	6.9	-	155	260	-	+ Brera made better for UK roads - Steering still lacking some feel ★★★★
Alfa Romeo GT 3.2 V6 Lusso	071 R	04-08	6/3179	240/6200	221/4800	1410kg	173	6.3	15.5	149	-	22.8	+ Gorgeous looks, strong performance - Unsettled ride ★★★★
Alfa Romeo GTV 3.0 V6	010 F	96-06	6/2959	220/6300	199/5000	1406kg	159	6.5	-	150	-	24.7	+ Glorious V6 makes it a mini-Ferrari - So-so chassis ★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 F	€111,000	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold ★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo	108 F	£50,250	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	29.1	+ Alpina's M3 alternative - Too refined for some ★★★★★
Artega GT	122 F	£64,860	6/3597	296/6600	258/2400	1100kg	273	4.9	-	170	-	-	+ Stunning looks, chassis up with the best - Interior design, price ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage 4.7	120 F	£90,895	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ More power lifts Vantage to a new level - Ride is unremittingly firm ★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N420	147 F	£96,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	-	20.4	+ Aston's best V8 Vantage yet... - ...is one of the most expensive ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	156 D	£102,500	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	-	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage 4.3	109 F	'05-'08	8/4281	380/7300	302/5000	1630kg	237	5.2	12.0	175	-	-	+ Gorgeous, awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match 911 dynamically ★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	146 D	£125,050	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1760kg	271	4.6	-	190	389	17.2	+ Ride & handling transformed for 2010 - Rapide doesn't cost much more ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB7 Vantage	010 R	'00-'05	12/5935	420/6000	400/5000	1770kg	241	4.9	11.2	185	-	18.6	+ DB7 with near-supercar pace - Handling lacks edge ★★★★
Aston Martin Virage	156 D	£150,000	12/5935	490/6500	420/5750	1785kg	279	4.6	-	186	-	-	+ DB9 gets DBS assertiveness - Slightly dated feel, seems heavy ★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS	142 F	£175,891	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary ★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI	155 R	£27,130	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	6.3	15.7	152	154	42.8	+ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game ★★★★
Audi TTS	119 D	£35,590	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	155	184	35.3	+ Usefully quicker TT; great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game ★★★★
Audi TT RS	158 R	£45,840	5/2480	332/6000	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	214	31.0	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it ★★★★
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	155	-	30.3	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering ★★★★
Audi S5 quattro	105 D	£42,915	8/4163	349/7000	324/3500	1650kg	221	5.1	-	155	288	23.3	+ Fast, comfortable, beautifully built - Soft and a bit uninteresting ★★★★
Audi RS5	151 R	£58,685	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1725kg	261	4.3	10.6	155	-	-	+ Brilliant engine and accomplished chassis... - ...don't gel together ★★★★
Audi R8 4.2 V8 quattro	106 R	£86,885	8/4163	414/7800	317/4500	1560kg	270	4.1	9.9	187	332	20.3	+ Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price ★★★★★
Audi R8 5.2 V10 quattro	146 R	£108,040	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	3.9	8.4	196	351	19.2	+ The fabulous R8 gets a supercar engine - Looks a lot like the V8 ★★★★★
Audi R8 GT	151 D	£142,585	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	199	-	-	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted ★★★★★
Audi Quattro 20V	019 F	'90-'91	5/2226	220/5900	228/1950	1329kg	146	6.2	18.2	143	-	19.1	+ Modern classic - Buy wisely to avoid big bills ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£135,760	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2320kg	248	4.6	-	198	384	-	+ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst ★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	115 F	£144,440	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2350kg	259	4.3	-	202	396	17.0	+ Stupendous performance, fine dynamics - Weight, thirst... ★★★★★
Bentley Conti Supersports	137 F	£170,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2240kg	282	3.7	-	204	388	17.3	+ A thoroughly impressive car... - ...rather than a fun and involving one ★★★★
Bentley Brooklands	116 D	£241,600	8/6761	530/4000	774/3250	2655kg	203	5.0	-	184	465	14.5	+ More fun than it has any right to be - It's a bit thirsty ★★★★★
BMW 135i M Sport	113 F	£30,675	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1560kg	197	5.3	-	155	198	30.7	+ Fast, fun, £20K cheaper than an M3 - Not as wild as we'd hoped ★★★★
BMW 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... ★★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport	095 D	£39,125	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1600kg	192	5.2	12.2	155	196	31.0	+ Eager engine, exploitable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	151 R	£54,690	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1655kg	254	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its talented new rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M ★★★★★
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	156 F	£117,630	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	193	295	-	+ Highly exclusive, feels special - Highly priced, too. And it's no GT3 RS ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	066 F	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1570kg	219	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	+ One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel ★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (E46)	088 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1570kg	219	5.1	-	155	-	23.7	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car ★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	060 R	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	255	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	+ Stripped-down road-race M3 - Standard brakes barely adequate ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E36)	060 R	'93-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	5.4	12.8	157	-	25.7	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original ★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	019 F	'86-'90	4/2302	220/6750	180/4750	1257kg	178	6.7	17.8	144	-	20.3	+ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only ★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si Coupe	107 R	06-09	6/2996	261/6600	232/2750	1395kg	190	5.6	-	155	-	31.7	+ The looks, the sounds, the way it goes - Fidgety chassis ★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 F	06-09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1424kg	241	5.0	-	155	-	23.3	+ A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in ★★★★★
BMW M Coupe	005 R	'98-'03	6/3246	325/7400	258/3250	1450kg	228	5.1	-	155	-	25.0	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse ★★★★
BMW 640i Coupe	160 D	£59,565	6/2979	316/5800	332/1300	1660kg	194	5.4	-	155	179	-	+ New Six boasts improved looks, effortless performance - Not hugely exciting ★★★★
BMW M6	106 R	05-10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace ★★★★★
Chevrolet Camaro SS	148 F	€30,000	8/6162	420/5900	420/4600	1751kg	247	4.7	-	155	-	-	+ Looks like a Transformer made real - We'd prefer it in robot mode ★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette C6	116 D	£49,033	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1461kg	300	4.3	-	186	-	21.2	+ A Corvette with no apologies needed - Still left-hand drive only ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06	099 F	£66,403	8/7011	505/6300	469/4800	1418kg	363	3.9	8.5	198	-	19.2	+ 8.5 to 100, brakes, price - Not quite the road-racer we expected ★★★★★
Dodge Challenger *	122 D	€40,000	8/6059	425/6200	420/4800	1877kg	230	5.2	-	160+	-	-	+ Effortlessly cool... - ...if you live in Hazzard County ★★★★
Ford Mustang GT *	148 F	€35,000	8/4951	412/6500	390/4250	1635kg	256	4.5	-	155	-	-	+ Compelling alternative to a Nissan 370Z - LHD and imports only ★★★★
Ford Shelby GT500 *	140 R	€47,000	8/5411	540/6000	510/4500	1780kg	308	4.6	-	155	-	-	+ Massive power never fails to entertain - Heavy, unsophisticated chassis ★★★★
Honda CR-Z GT	144 F	£20,425	4/1497	122/6100	128/1500	1198kg	103	9.9	-	124	117	56.5	+ The first hybrid with sporting intent - No match for a good diesel hot hatch ★★★★
Honda Integra Type-R (DC2)	095 F	96-00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some ★★★★★
Honda Integra Type-R (DC5) *	037 F	'01-'06	4/1998	217/8000	152/7000	1250kg	176	7.1	16.7	140	-	-	+ Sharp looks, massive grip - Lost a little of the DC2's magic ★★★★
Honda NSX	043 F	'90-'05	6/3179	270/7300	220/5300	1410kg	196	5.5	-	168	-	22.8	+ 'The useable supercar' - 270bhp sounds a bit weedy today ★★★★★
Honda NSX-R *	051 F	'02-'03	6/3179	276/7100	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	168	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK ★★★★★
Infiniti G37S Coupé	127 R	£36,636	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1706kg	188	5.8	13.8	155	248	26.7	+ Softer 370Z delivers sharp-driving swing at the Germans - Bland looks ★★★★
Jaguar XK 5.0	130 D	£63,900	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1660kg	232	5.2	-	155	264	25.2	+ Fine car for the likes of us - Jag buyers may not like the harder edge ★★★★
Jaguar XKR	129 D	£77,900	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1753kg	292	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home ★★★★★

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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Jaguar XKR 75	150 F	£85,500	8/5000	523/6000	488/2500	1762kg	302	4.4	-	174	-	-	+Faster and more involving Jag XKR - They're only making 75 of them ★★★★★
▶Jaguar XKR-S	159 F	£97,000	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1753kg	314	4.2	-	186	292	-	+The most exciting XKR ever - It's nearly £100,000 ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR		'98-'06	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1735kg	234	5.2	-	155	-	22.9	+Extra grunt of 4.2-litre motor - Lacks feedback ★★★★★
Lotus Exige S	105 F	£35,550	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+Non-limited edition of the Exige 240R - Uninspiring soundtrack ★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 260	139 D	£45,950	4/1796	256/8000	174/6000	890kg	293	4.0	-	152	199	31.1	+Feels like a race car, yet works on the road - Costs the best part of £50K ★★★★★
Lotus Exige (series 2)	068 R	'04-'08	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	875kg	219	4.9	-	147	-	32.1	+Highly focused road and track tool - Lacks visual impact of S1 ★★★★★
Lotus Exige 240R	087 F	'05	4/1796	243/8000	174/7000	930kg	264	3.9	9.9	155	-	-	+Lightweight with a hefty punch - Instantly sold out ★★★★★
Lotus Exige (series 1)	067 D	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement ★★★★★
Lotus Evora	138 F	£49,600	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	205	32.5	+Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options ★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	152 F	£58,800	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	239	-	+A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911... ★★★★★
Lotus Europa SE	127 F	'08-'10	4/1998	222/5600	221/4000	995kg	227	4.9	-	146	-	28.8	+More of a Lotus than before - Still overshadowed by the Exige and Evora ★★★★★
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	005 R	'99-'00	8/3506	350/6500	295/4250	1299kg	274	4.3	9.9	175	-	22.0	+Designed for track work but brilliant on the road - Limited edition ★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£80,450	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.5	12.7	177	330	19.7	+Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911 ★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo S	120 F	£92,360	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1880kg	234	4.9	-	183	354	17.0	+A genuinely sporty Maser - A bit heavier and pricier than we'd like ★★★★★
Maserati GT MC Stradale	160 R	£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	1690kg	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	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+Even sharper chassis than basic RX-8 - Same water-thin torque output ★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	071 R	'03-'08	2R/1308	228/8500	156/5500	1394kg	166	7.0	19.0	146	-	25.2	+Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Dull-sounding engine ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C350 CGI Coupe	159 D	£36,830	6/3498	302/6500	273/3500	1615kg	190	5.9	-	155	164	-	+Straight-line performance - Cheaper C250 CDI is better in the corners ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 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 CL65 AMG	150 D	£115,620	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2060kg	264	4.5	-	155	244	-	+Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CL65 AMG	115 F	£161,545	12/5980	603/4800	737/2000	2240kg	273	4.4	-	155	334	19.1	+Unsurprisingly rapid on non-wiggly bits - Lacks charm, involvement ★★★★★
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	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	+Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling ★★★★★
Nissan 350Z (296bhp)	094 F	'06-'07	6/3498	296/6400	260/4800	1525kg	197	5.8	-	155	-	24.8	+Small power boost adds to Z's appeal - Slightly low-rent interior ★★★★★
Nissan 350Z (276bhp)	059 D	'03-'06	6/3498	276/6200	268/4800	1525kg	184	6.1	14.8	155	-	24.8	+Original 350Z makes a great used buy - As above ★★★★★
Nissan GT-R	152 F	£69,950	6/3799	520/6400	475/3200	1740kg	304	3.5	-	194	295	-	+Our 2008 Car of the Year. Now even better - Pricier than before ★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Spec V	150 F	£124,950	6/3799	478/6400	447/3500	1680kg	289	3.4	-	193	295	-	+Phenomenal brakes and handling - Not really worth the extra £55K ★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	009 R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	+Big, brutal, and great fun - Very firm ride ★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	019 F	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0	+Proof that Jap hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply ★★★★★
Noble M400	089 F	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185	-	-	+Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior ★★★★★
Noble M12 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	4.1	10.2	165	-	-	+Gives GT3 drivers a fright - Styling could be more cohesive ★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£23,245	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.3	18.1	147	159	40.9	+Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman	131 F	£37,261	6/2893	261/7200	221/4400	1330kg	199	5.8	-	165	221	30.1	+Extra power, just as involving - Still lacks the desirability of other Porsches ★★★★★
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	5.3	12.2	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 RS 4.0 (997.2)	160 R	£128,466	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+The ultimate modern 911 - They're all sold ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	138 F	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	+Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute... ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)	152 F	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+Our 2010 car of the year - Looks and noise are slightly OTT ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Sport Classic	140 F	'10-'11	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1425kg	287	4.6	-	188	-	-	+Curious concept that works well - GT2 price with Carrera S performance ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	103 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	+Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 F	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3 ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	066 F	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	4.3	9.2	190	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2003 - Looks softer than previous GT3 ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	+Track-biased version of above - Limited supply ★★★★★
Porsche 911 RS (993)	036 R	'95	6/3746	300/6500	262/5400	1270kg	240	4.7	11.2	172	-	-	+Barking engine note, gearchange - Not quite hardcore enough ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	066 F	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	+Our Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 F	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	+S' is like a junior GT3 - Tech overload? ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (996)	051 F	'02-'05	6/3596	316/6800	273/4250	1470kg	218	5.1	-	174	-	-	+Second best 996 only to the GT3 - Very little ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996 3.4)	008 R	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	230	4.6	-	173	-	28.0	+Beautifully polished 911 - Some like a bit of rough ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (993)		'94-'97	6/3600	285/6100	251/5250	1372kg	211	5.2	-	168	-	25.0	+More character than 996 - Harder work at speed ★★★★★
Porsche 968 Club Sport	019 F	'93-'95	4/2990	240/6200	225/4100	1335kg	183	6.1	15.7	149	-	-	+One of the all-time greats - Lots have been driven very hard ★★★★★
Porsche 928 GTS		'92-'95	8/5396	350/5700	317/4250	1790kg	199	5.2	-	171	-	17.0	+Big-hearted and beautiful - Be sure to buy a good one ★★★★★
Renault Alpine A610		'92-'96	6/2975	250/5790	258/2900	1420kg	179	5.4	13.8	160	-	21.0	+Overlooked, bargain-price French 911. Try one - RS interior ★★★★★
Superformance Daytona Coupe	149 D	£102,225	8/6162	451/5900	424/4600	1300kg	342	3.9	-	200+	-	-	+Awesome engine, awesome looks - Damp roads equal moist palms ★★★★★
TVR T350C	057 R	'03-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.7	10.0	175	-	-	+Looks, engine - Unsupportive seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish ★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	099 D	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic ★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	+Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements' ★★★★★
TVR Typhon	102 F	'06	6/3996	400/7000	330/5250	1060kg	383	3.9	-	180+	-	-	+Carbon body, exclusivity - Interesting damping, no supercharger ★★★★★
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3966	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	5.0	11.4	180+	-	-	+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	6.1	15.8	149	172	38.2	+Coff 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

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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 flawed but staggeringly quick.



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
9ff GT9R	127 D	£450,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	29	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights *****
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	£135,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	+ The best car that Aston Martin makes - Erm, a tad thirsty? *****
Aston Martin Vanquish S	110 F	105-107	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	-	13.1	+ Two tons of well-hung British beef - Leaden gearbox *****
BMW M1		'78-'81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.8	-	167	-	-	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days *****
Bristol Fighter	146 R	£234,982	10/7990	525/5500	525/4200	1600kg	333	4.0	-	210	-	-	+ Unique, intriguing, goes like stink - Looks perhaps not for everyone *****
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	£925,000	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space? *****
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 F	£1.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	-	-	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous broly/roof thing *****
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 F	£2.0m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	-	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals *****
Bugatti EB110	078 F	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out *****
Caparo T1	138 F	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag *****
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	£106,605	8/6162	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	3.8	7.6	205	-	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain *****
Ferrari 458 Italia	159 R	£173,181	8/4499	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.2	6.8	202	307	21.2	+ An astounding achievement, looks fantastic - There'll never be a manual *****
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 R	£212,066	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	15.8	+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob *****
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano HGTE	146 R	£221,884	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	-	+ As above, with a bit more edge - Can be a little too edgy in the wet *****
Ferrari 599 GTO	155 F	£305,676	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	£227,077	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 FI	090 R	'04-'11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1840kg	294	4.3	9.8	199	470	13.8	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above *****
Ferrari F430	087 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1450kg	342	4.0	-	196	-	18.6	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point? *****
Ferrari F430 Spider	095 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1520kg	326	4.1	-	193	-	18.6	+ Berlinetta dynamics, 8000rpm with the roof down - Looks? *****
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-	15.7	+ Successful FI technology transplant - Likes to shout about it *****
Ferrari 360 Modena	008 R	'99-'04	8/3586	400/8500	275/4750	1390kg	292	4.5	9.0	180+	-	17.0	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be *****
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 FI Berlinetta	003 F	'97-'99	8/3496	375/8250	268/6000	1332kg	286	4.7	-	183	-	16.7	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding? *****
Ferrari 575M 'Fiorano'	050 D	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ 'Fiorano pack' makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard *****
Ferrari 550 Maranello	066 F	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing *****
Ferrari Enzo	149 F	'02-'04	12/5998	650/7800	485/5500	1365kg	484	3.5	6.7	217+	-	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or FI *****
Ferrari F50	064 F	'96-'97	12/4968	513/8500	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	1009kg	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	159 R	'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 FI *****
Koenigsegg CCX	094 F	£500,000	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	3.9	7.7	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar *****
Koenigsegg CCRX Edition	118 F	£1.5m	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spike 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	20.0	+ 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	160 F	£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 Gardo S'leggera	104 F	'07-'08	10/4961	523/8000	376/4250	1420kg	373	3.8	-	196	-	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear *****
Lambo M'ago 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	-	21.3	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes *****
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	'01-'06	12/6192	570/7500	479/5400	1650kg	351	4.0	-	205	-	-	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed *****
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 F	'00-'02	12/5992	580/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions *****
Lamborghini Diablo GT	016 F	'99-'00	12/5992	575/7300	465/5500	1490kg	392	4.1	8.3	211	-	12.5	+ Briefly the world's fastest production car - They made only 80 *****
Lamborghini Countach QV	154 F	'88-'91	12/5167	455/7000	369/5200	1447kg	320	4.9	-	180	-	13.7	+ Still the definitive supercar - Visibility, pract- oh hell, who cares? *****
Lexus LFA	152 F	£352,000	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	159 R	£168,500	8/3799	592/7000	442/3000	1434kg	419	3.0	6.4	205	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Flawed gearchange, snatchy brakes *****
McLaren F1	145 F	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	6.3	240+	-	19.0	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another *****
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	131 F	£250,000	12/5980	661/5400	737/2200	1876kg	358	4.0	8.1	199	-	-	+ Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers price *****
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 R	£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-Benz SLR McLaren	073 F	'04-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1618kg	387	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel *****
Noble M600	159 R	£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1250kg	528	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Noble's unbelievably good attack on the supercar class - It's a bit pricey *****
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	£1.5m	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1400kg	485	3.4	-	217+	-	-	+ The best Zonda ever - The last Zonda ever (probably) *****
Pagani Zonda F Roadster CS	127 F	'06-'08	12/7291	641/6200	575/4000	1400kg	465	3.5	-	214	-	-	+ As light and stiff as the coupe - You'd better like carbonfibre *****
Pagani Zonda F	082 F	'05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg	497	3.6	-	214	-	-	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Choose interior carefully *****
Pagani Zonda C12S	096 F	'01-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	197	-	-	+ Set a new supercar benchmark - Harry won't let us use his long-termer *****
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.2)	140 R	£110,232	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1570kg	319	3.2	7.3	193	272	24.8	+ The Turbo at the very top of its game - The GT3's cheaper... *****
Porsche 911 Turbo S (997.2)	159 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	-	22.1	+ Monster cornering ability - A bit woolly on its standard settings *****
Porsche 911 Turbo (996)	017 F	'00-'06	6/3600	420/6000	413/4600	1540kg	272	4.1	10.0	189	-	21.0	+ The 911 for all seasons - We can't find any reasons *****
Porsche 911 GT2 (996)	072 F	'04-'06	6/3600	475/5700	457/3500	1420kg	339	4.0	-	198	-	-	+ Later revisions made it even more of a star - Care still required *****
Porsche 911 Turbo (993)	066 F	'95-'98	6/3600	408/5750	398/4500	1502kg	276	4.3	9.2	180	-	19.4	+ Stupendous all-weather supercar - It doesn't rain enough *****
Porsche 911 GT2 (993)	003 F	'96-'99	6/3600	430/5700	398/4500	1290kg	339	3.9	-	184	-	-	+ Hairy-arsed homologation special - Harry won't buy one *****
Porsche Carrera GT	149 F	'04-'06	10/5733	604/8000	435/5750	1380kg	445	3.8	7.6	205	-	-	+ Probably the greatest modern supercar - Can bite *****
Porsche 959	149 F	'87-'90	6/2850	444/6500	369/5000	1450kg	311	3.7	-	197	-	-	+ Tech showcase, still a great drive - Limited choice of colours? *****
Ruf Rt 12	097 F	£155,000	6/3746	641/7000	641/3500	1530kg	426	3					

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Darren Turner & his 1968 Fiat 500

The Le Mans class-winning Aston Martin works driver and the classic 500 he bought on eBay

She's got a name: Roberta. I bought her back in 2001. I'd been starting to look around for one and saw her on eBay. It was a spur-of-the-moment purchase, without looking too much more into it. £2100 I think I paid.

I wanted something cool to have, and the fact that the arrival of the new Fiat 500 has added a premium to prices of the originals is a bit of an unexpected bonus. It was a 500 I was after and I don't think anything else would have got me excited. I was driving a Smart at the time and was really enjoying it, and I drove a Fiat Cinquecento in the '90s – it was just like a go-kart. I've been driving an Aston Martin Cygnet of late too. I just really like small cars and the little Fiat is brimming with character. Every time I pull the cover off it I can't help but grin.

It's a really fun thing to drive around in and it creates smiles and attracts attention wherever it goes. I take it out three or four times a year and it covers less than 1000 miles annually. I really enjoy going on fun trips in it, though, and taking it up to the *Perstone Classic* was great.

There's a bit of a technique to starting it. You never know if it's going to take ten minutes or start straight away. Every journey is different and an adventure in itself – the gearbox isn't simple to use, there are coughs and splutters that mean I have to play around with the choke to keep it going, it's far from fast and it doesn't slow down very well either. But I never fail to enjoy driving it and it's totally different to the Aston Virage I drive daily. I'm really attached to it, and just like my 2000 MV Agusta F4, I don't want to ever get rid of it. I'm not specifically drawn to Italian things, but they certainly know how to do styling.

I bought another engine and gearbox a few years ago and transplanted these in to run around with while I restore the originals to perfect condition. I don't know when I'll get that finished – maybe when I retire! The temporary replacements are identical spec though, which is nice.

All the front suspension and brakes have been off and the whole front end has been sand-blasted and restored. The plan is to do exactly the same at the rear when the engine

and gearbox are out during replacement. It's a great little project and something fun to do indoors during the winter.

Its condition isn't deteriorating any more as it's always kept under a cover. A friend looks after it because I don't have a garage and don't always have the time to tend to it. The deal is that for looking after it, he gets to drive it and enjoy it. The only rule is he doesn't take it out in the rain! But I'll get

'IT'S A REALLY FUN THING TO DRIVE AROUND IN AND IT CREATES SMILES AND ATTRACTS ATTENTION WHEREVER IT GOES'

texts from him saying he's taken it down the pub or something. He probably does more miles in it than I do at the moment.

It doesn't get the best reaction from fellow racing drivers. A few of them have seen me out and about in it and don't see the point of old stuff. 'That's not very fast, is it?!' is an exclamation I often hear. It gets no affection from my colleagues, either. Put it this way – they never ask to borrow it!

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Quentin Willson

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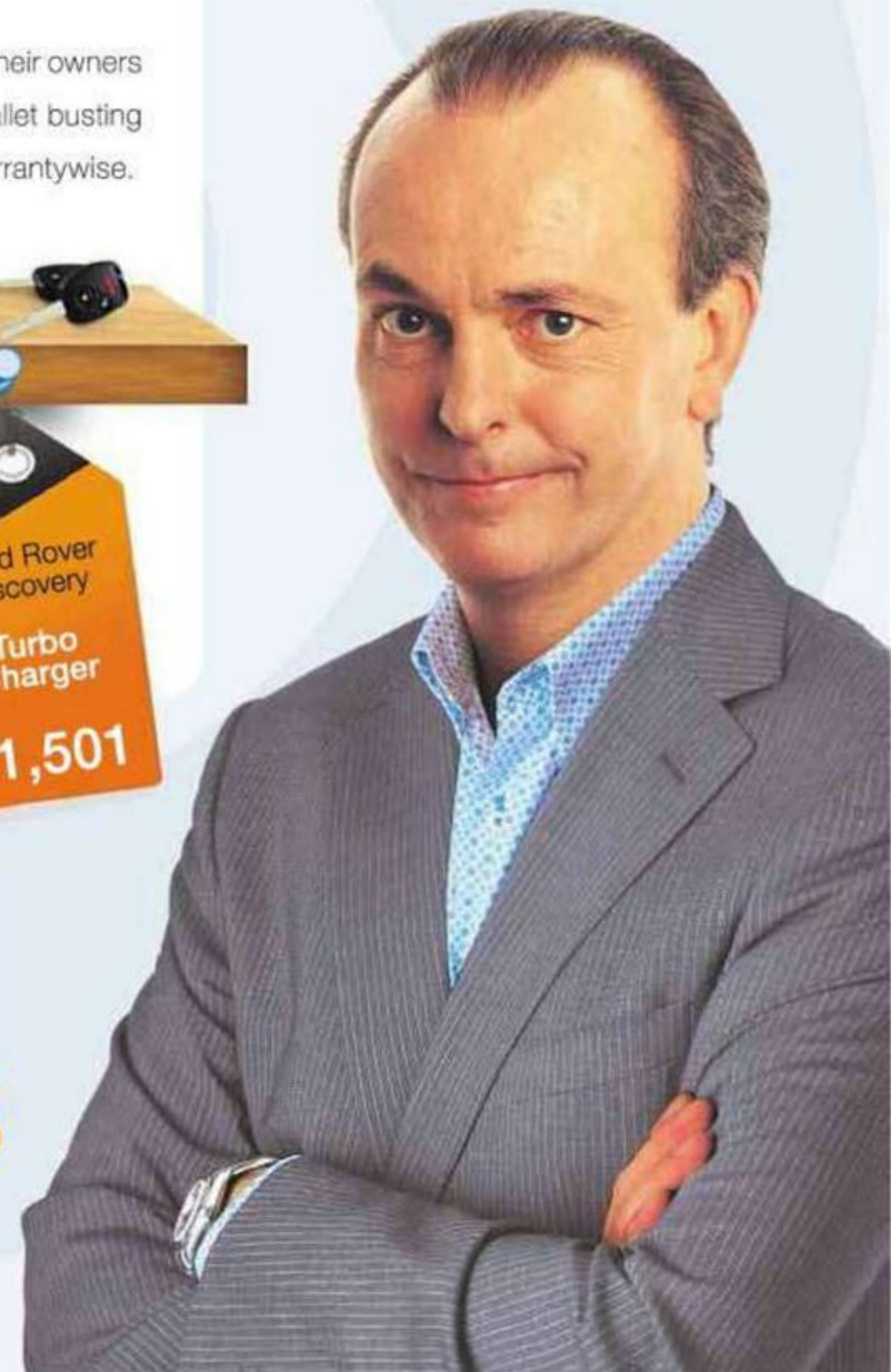
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[^]Specifications may vary by model. *Lower CO₂ emissions based on the improvements made to the new SEAT Alhambra when compared to previous model. [†]Requires driver control. Model shown Alhambra SE Lux 2.0 TDI CR Ecomotive 140PS at £30,045 RRP with bi-xenon headlights (£895 RRP) and custom palette paint (£635 RRP).
Official fuel consumption for the SEAT Alhambra range in mpg (litres per 100km); urban 30.1(9.4) - 42.2 (6.7); extra-urban 42.8 (6.6) - 50.2 (7.6) - 50.4 (5.6). CO₂ emissions 178-146 g/km.