



227MPH SKODA! HOW WE BROKE A LAND SPEED RECORD

EVO

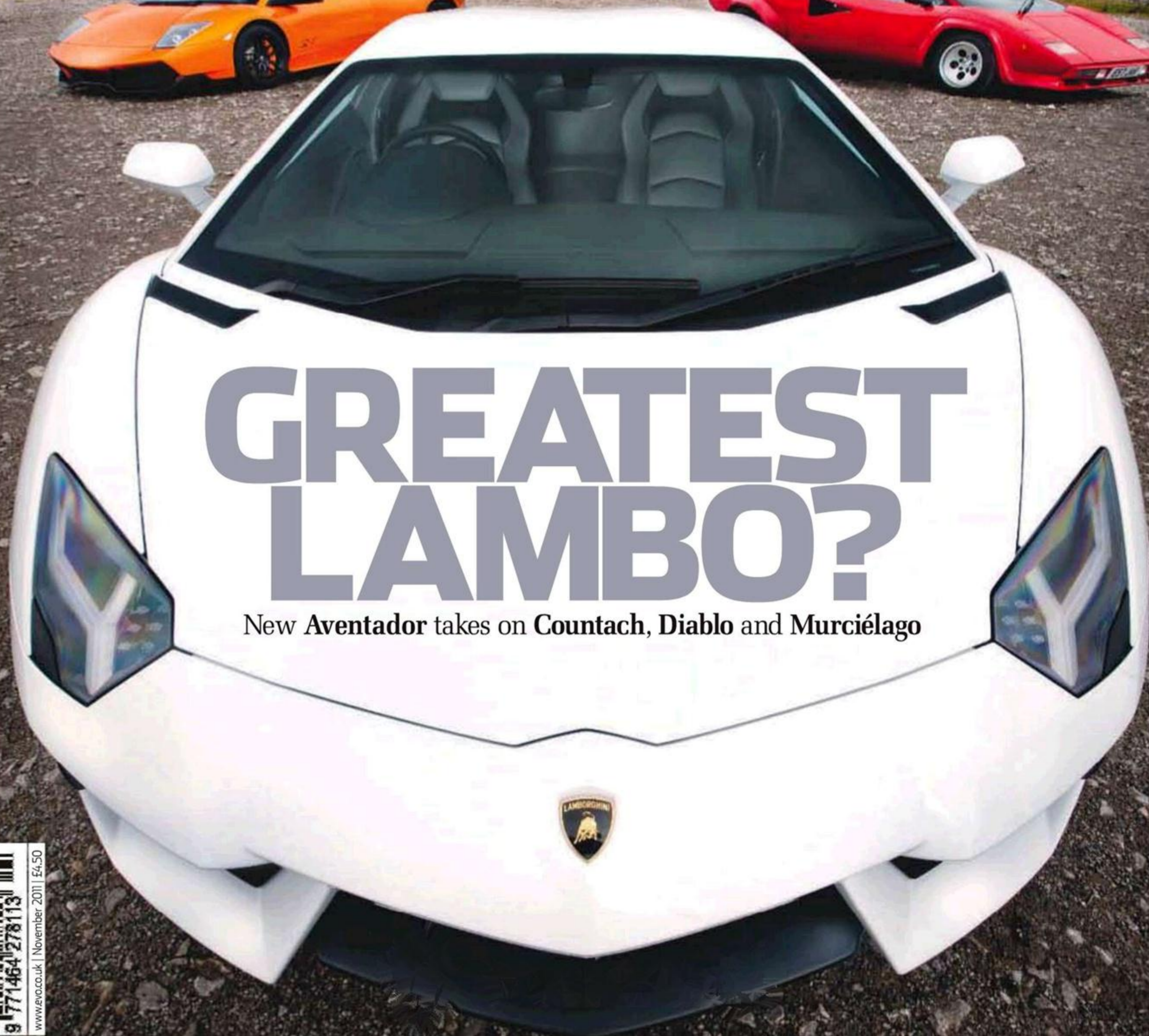


YOUR NEXT CAR?

Stunning new models from Jaguar, Lotus & Porsche. Full details inside

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STARS OF 2012

THE THRILL OF DRIVING



GREATEST LAMBO?

New Aventador takes on Countach, Diablo and Murciélago

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This month, evo's founder, Harry Metcalfe, hit me with a comment that I'll admit knocked me off kilter for a while.

Having returned from holiday in a reflective mood, Harry asked if the nature of 'the thrill of driving' was changing – and asked if evo should be celebrating cars like the Fiat 500 TwinAir in the same way we celebrate the Lamborghinis, Paganis and Ferraris of this world. Harry's point was that while the world continues to labour in austere times, we shouldn't be afraid to emphasise the fact that driving thrills can be extracted from more humble metal.

He even went on to say that the BMW 320d EfficientDynamics is arguably *the evo* car of the

moment – and this is an issue when we boiled the air above south Wales with four V12 Lamborghinis, one of which belongs to, you guessed it, Mr H Metcalfe.

When I picked myself up off the floor, I started to argue the point – which is a strange situation to be in when you're a guardian of someone else's baby. I said I wasn't prepared to dilute our proposition, especially when rival car magazines struggle without a firm statement like 'the thrill of driving' to police their judging processes. It is this statement, I argued, that keeps us honest, unique and resolute.

Now, I'll let you into a secret – Harry is bloody good at this kind of thing. He can knock you off guard with a statement, make you flounder as you try to argue it, then as you exit stage left and reflect, you think: 'um, he might have a point here.'

What really stumped me as I flailed around defending our USP was when Harry asked what I

thought was the evo car of the moment – something that aligns performance with efficiency and driving thrills with affordability. After a short period of umming, ahing and an attempt to escape the room, I could only think of two cars... the Fiat 500 TwinAir and the BMW 320d ED. Bugger.

However, my closing point was this: I said I was not prepared to commit to such a bold statement at this time because if this issue's remarkable collection of new metal shows us anything, it's that car manufacturers themselves are only just beginning to make their bold statements. We are only just starting to see their futures – the all-electric sports cars, BMWs with carbon chassis, hybrid supercars, cars

with range extenders and much more.

If there isn't an evo car of the moment right now, then there sure as hell will be this time next year.

Question is, what shape will that car take? And which

brave manufacturer will be building it? I appreciate that some of you will groan at the thought of it being a Porsche ('not another Porsche, evo!') but it's difficult not to look at the 911's reinvention (page 66) and be impressed.

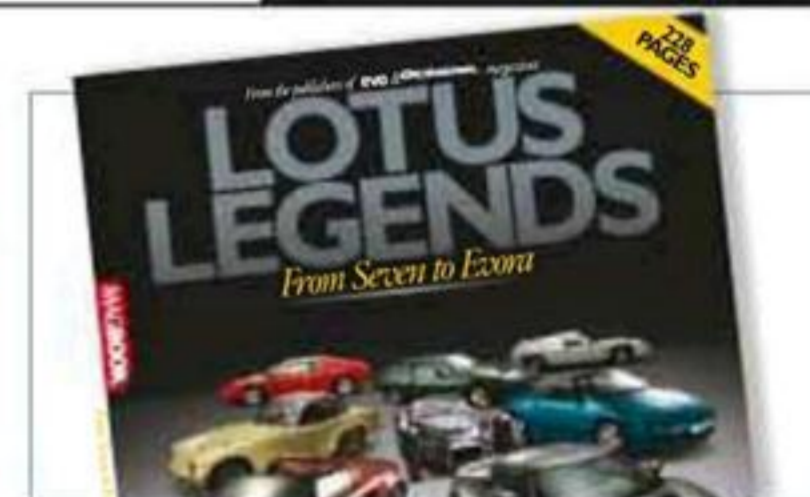
And strangely, it's not the GT3 I'm looking forward to driving, but the hybrid. 2012 will be a remarkable year for the automobile.

Nick Trott
 Editor



'SHOULD WE CELEBRATE CARS LIKE THE FIAT 500 TWINAIR IN THE WAY WE CELEBRATE LAMBOS?'

THIS MONTH ON PLANET EVO



EVO VIDEOS

» New videos at evo.co.uk this month include the Boss Mustang drag-racing its V8 rivals. You can also catch Richard Meaden doing 227mph in a Skoda vRS. And don't forget you can still see great videos from past months, like our Lexus LFA v Ferrari 599 GTO head-to-head.

EVO RUN WHAT YA BRUNG

» evo's last Run What Ya Brung event of the year takes place at Santa Pod, Northants, on Saturday October 15. Entry costs £10, and you can sign-up for unlimited runs for just £25. We'll be there with assorted Fast Fleet metal, too. More info at www.RWYB.co.uk

LOTUS MAGBOOK

» Brought to you by the teams of evo and our sister magazine, Octane, this MagBook is the ultimate collection of exhilarating road tests and buying guides for the greatest Lotus sports cars, from Seven to Evora. Order your copy from www.magbooks.com

HERO OF THE MONTH: SKODA BONNEVILLE TEAM

» Transforming a showroom-spec Skoda Octavia vRS into a car capable of breaking records at Bonneville Speed Week is no mean feat. To complete the build in a little over two months, then run the car without a hitch in the harsh and alien environment of Utah's blisters is remarkable.

to Skoda UK's salty, sunburnt team of technicians, project partners and support crew – Andy Orme, Ricky Elder, Nick Kasberger, Tim Radley, Steve Harris and Abe Potter – for their tireless work on the world's fastest Skoda.

You can read the full story of how our own Dickie Meaden drove it to a new class record of 200mph from p96.



SCAN ME!



SCAN FOR VIDEOS, SOUND FILES & WALLPAPERS RELATED TO THIS ISSUE

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 JAGUAR | **XKR**

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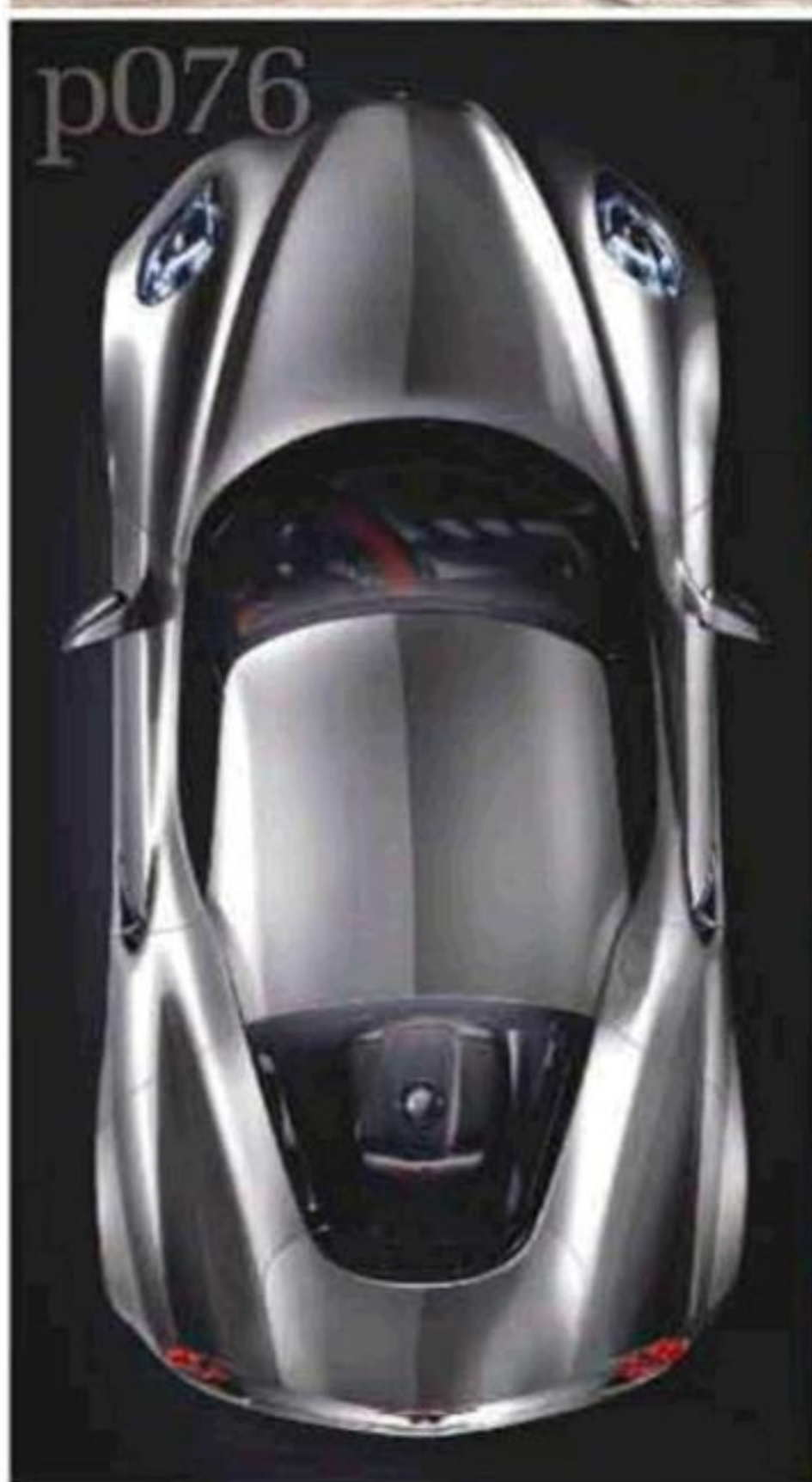
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FIRST DRIVE

The *evo* verdict on BMW's new twin-turbo V8 supersaloon



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BENTLEY GOES HARDCORE

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

THOUGHT THE SUPERSPORTS WAS THE ULTIMATE BENTLEY CONTINENTAL? THINK AGAIN. PLANS ARE AFOOT FOR AN EVEN MORE AGGRESSIVE VERSION, WITH AN INCREDIBLE 500KG TRIMMED FROM ITS WEIGHT.

MIKE DUFF REPORTS



Bentley is developing a lightweight version of the Continental Supersports that – if it makes it to production – will move the British coupe into a different performance league.

Yes, the image you're looking at is an artist's digital rendering rather than an official image of a production model – but it's one that's based on a project that recently appointed Bentley CEO Wolfgang Dürheimer has personally confirmed to *evo*. Bentley's engineering team has been tasked with creating a prototype Continental with no less than 500kg trimmed from its kerb weight – a target that Dürheimer concedes will require the extensive use of lightweight materials.

Dürheimer's previous gig was as the head of Research and Development at Porsche, and since arriving at Bentley he's made no secret of his desire to bring some lessons from his experience at Weissach to Crewe. That almost certainly means we will see the introduction of both a Bentley SUV and diesel-powered models (see interview, page 24), but it also includes increasing the number of variants within existing model lines. 'When I look at the Continental I think that, comparing it to the 911 in Porsche, there should certainly be room for some more derivatives,' Dürheimer told us.

Which is where the car that we're going

to unofficially label Bentley's 'Supersports RS' fits in. The Continental GT is set to continue in production until at least 2015. At the bottom of the range, a new V8-powered version will join the line next year and – presuming the idea of an oil-burning Bentley gets signed off – a diesel V8 will follow it. But Dürheimer also acknowledges a strong desire to inject more excitement into the Continental. 'There is still potential above F

Above: rendering shows what the lightweight Conti might look like; carbonfibre panels will help the weight saving be achieved

potential in the future,' he said.

The Continental has always been a heavy car – even the lightened Supersports version tips the scales at a hefty 2240kg – but trimming 500kg from it will still be a major engineering challenge, and one that will involve the extensive use of composite materials. Anticipate the 'RS' using carbon for its bonnet and body panels, and possibly also for its bumpers and roof. However, the most substantial mass savings are likely to

TECH ANALYSIS: DELTA WING

The incredible new race car that's headed for Le Mans P20



AUDI'S NEW V8

The full story on the big 'S' models' next engine P21



Q&A: WOLFGANG DÜRHEIMER

Bentley CEO on diesels, SUVs and returning to racing P24



PLUS

BUGATTI GALIBIER IS GO!

» Wolfgang Dürheimer's other role is as boss at Bugatti, and he confirmed to *evo* that the Galibier saloon is still moving through development, and that a production version of the car will be produced.

Apparently the Galibier was delayed when the decision was taken – after the first motor show concept – to re-engineer it to offer more rear legroom. The car will be powered by a development of the Veyron's W16 engine and will feature what Dürheimer described as a 'four figure' power output – '1000bhp-plus is a Bugatti USP, we can't go below that,' he said.

The Galibier is also set for far higher production volumes than the Veyron, with Bugatti planning to build up to 1500 of the saloons. The only thing that hasn't been decided is how much it will cost.



'THE REDUCTION IN BULK SHOULD PUT THE BENTLEY ONTO THE SAME PERFORMANCE LEVEL AS THE FERRARI 458 AND LEXUS LFA'

come from lightened wheels, suspension and transmission components.

Power will continue to come from the existing 6-litre twin-turbocharged W12 engine. Bentley will be introducing hybrid tech onto future models, but it's unlikely the pared-back 'RS' will be forced to accept the weight penalties of such a system. However, presuming a modest power boost from the current Supersports' 621bhp to around 650bhp, the end result will still be a power-

to-weight ratio of around 379bhp/ton – a massive improvement over the standard Supersports' 282bhp/ton.

The reduction in bulk should sharpen up the Supersports' dynamic behaviour, but it should also be enough to put it onto the same performance level as cars like the Ferrari 458 Italia (384bhp/ton) and even the mighty Lexus LFA (379bhp/ton), suggest a 0-100mph time of around the 7sec

current Supersports' 204mph.

Will a production version follow? Dürheimer wouldn't have given a prototype the go-ahead if he thought it wouldn't make it to reality, and he's clear in his aim that the company will produce 'ultimate' models to win both headlines and sales under his watch. The idea of a model quicker than anything produced by his old company, Porsche, must have a strong emotional appeal to Bentley's new boss.

IT'S SHOW TIME!

AS EVER, THIS YEAR'S FRANKFURT MOTOR SHOW IS PACKED WITH INTRIGUING CONCEPTS. **MIKE DUFF** ROUNDS UP SOME OF THE BEST – AND LOOKS AT WHERE THEY MIGHT LEAD



LAND ROVER DC100

COULD THIS BE THE NEXT DEFENDER?

The good news for Land Rover fans from the Frankfurt show is that the company has confirmed it's working on a replacement for the Defender – one of the undisputed icons of the British car industry. The bad news is that early shots of the DC100 concept have met with what could politely be described as a lukewarm reception.

Still, this is just the first step in what Land Rover design boss Gerry McGovern describes as the beginning of a 'four-year journey to design a relevant Defender for the 21st century,' so there's plenty of time to produce something that looks a bit tougher.

The current Defender dates back to 1983 and is having increasing

difficulty in passing various legislative hurdles, although it will soon be getting a version of Jaguar Land Rover's new 2.2-litre four-cylinder diesel.

However, even after the new Defender comes out, it's possible that the 'classic' car will continue, with production moving to India for sale in developing markets.

AUDI A2 CONCEPT HINTS AT LOOK OF CITY CAR

Audi is set to bring back the A2. At Frankfurt it showed an electric-powered concept sharing both its looks and its name with the defunct city car.

The first A2 was axed six years ago after poor sales, but the very similar design of the new concept suggests Audi reckons the original was ahead of its time.

No further details have been released about the concept's powertrain, but senior Audi bosses have previously told evo that the company won't build any 'pure

electric' models other than the e-tron supercar. You can therefore anticipate any production version having a range-extender internal combustion engine.

When the A2 makes it into production – allowing Audi to 'complete the set' with a range of models from A1 to A8 – it's likely to share major components with the existing A1 supermini. But it's unlikely to repeat the original A2's costly aluminium construction, which effectively priced it out of the supermini market.



See more pictures from
the Frankfurt motor show
at www.evo.co.uk



FORD EVOS

FOUR-SEAT COUPE PREVIWS DESIGN LANGUAGE FOR FUTURE FORD PRODUCTION MODELS

Sadly this stylish coupe is an old-fashioned motor-show teaser rather than an insight into any planned new production model – although that won't stop a raft of 'new Capri' headlines appearing elsewhere...

The Evos marks the debut of Ford's new 'Kinetic 2.0' design language, the corporate look that's going to be applied to the company's next-generation production models. So don't be surprised if, in five years' time, the Evos turns out to have

predicted nothing more than the front-end styling of the next Mondeo.

Still, Ford understands the importance of motor-show magic, and the Evos has separate gullwing doors front and rear, plus an interior that features all-digital instruments and touchscreen interfaces. Power comes from an efficiency-enhancing 'Atkinson cycle' 2-litre petrol engine, assisted by an electric motor – a powertrain that Ford is known to be considering for forthcoming production models.



VW & AUDI ELECTRIC CITY CARS BIG NAMES SHOW COMPACT RESEARCH VEHICLES

One of the clear themes at Frankfurt is tiny electric city cars, with both VW and Audi showing their respective takes with the NILS and Urban Concept.

The NILS (above right) is a single-seater that's said to be 'researching an economically feasible concept for micromobility' and uses a 5.3kWh battery pack to give it a maximum range of about 40 miles.

There are fewer details on the Urban Concept (right), but we know it features '1-plus-1' seating and separate fairings for each wheel. Neither car is close to production, but both indicate these large carmakers are looking at downsizing.



PEUGEOT HX1 SCISSOR-DOORED SIX-SEAT MPV



This is surely the coolest-looking MPV concept in years. Peugeot's HX1 has six seats and – not entirely unlike the Ford Evos – four separate scissor-opening doors. Under the surface it's more realistic, with a 2.2-litre turbodiesel engine working in conjunction with an electric motor

to deliver a combined 300bhp.

More sensibly, Peugeot is also showing its new 508RXH at Frankfurt – a production, four-wheel-driven diesel hybrid version of its minicab-in-waiting 508 estate, claimed to combine 200bhp performance with 67.9mpg economy.

SPECIAL EDITION ABARTH'S

FIAT TUNER ANNOUNCES THREE NEW MODELS – INCLUDING A 178BHP 500

Abarth is showing off no fewer than three new heated-up Fiats at Frankfurt: the 695 Competizione, the Punto SuperSport and the 500 Cabrio Italia.

The 695 is the most exciting – it's the hottest version of the 500 yet and is officially described as Abarth's first street-legal racing car. It's a two seater, powered by a 178bhp, 184lb ft version of the turbo 1.4-litre engine, mated to a five-speed automated-manual



695 Competizione (above), Punto SuperSport (below left) and 500 Cabrio Italia (left) go on sale soon

single-clutch gearbox controlled by wheel-mounted paddles. The suspension is tweaked with Koni dampers and there are bigger brake discs (305mm front, 240mm rear). Top speed is claimed to be 140mph – this in a 500, remember – and 0-62mph takes under 7sec.

The Punto SuperSport gets the same engine, although boosted to deliver 199lb ft of torque and with a six-speed manual gearbox. It takes half a second longer to hit 62mph and

top speed is 135mph – but there's two-tone paintwork to distract you from the relative performance deficit.

Finally the 500 Cabrio Italia – celebrating 150 years of Italian unity, no less – has the 500 Esseesse's 158bhp 1.4-litre engine and unique 'Abu Dhabi' blue paintwork. Abarth claims a 7.4sec 0-62mph time and 131mph.

All three will go on sale later in the year, with UK prices set to be announced soon.



LOTUS EXIGE TO GO RALLYING

R-GT BASED ON NEW EXIGE S; SUPERCHARGED V6 GIVES 300BHP



Lotus is set for a busy Frankfurt show. You can read about the new V6 Exige S and Evora GTE on page 72, but the company is also showing off the Exige R-GT rally car – although we only got this digital rendering in time for our print deadline.

Privateers have already run earlier Exiges in various rallies, but this new car has been built specifically to comply with the new 'GT' class that's intended to bring more manufacturers into rallying.

The R-GT shares the new Exige S's 3.5-litre supercharged V6, but breathes through a 34mm air restrictor that cuts peak power down to 300bhp. The car is also ballasted up to the FIA's minimum 1200kg class weight, meaning it's certain to be slower in a straight line than its road-going sister.

Drive is supplied to the rear wheels via a close-ratio six-speed sequential gearbox – and you'll be competing on selected

Above: Exige R-GT is set to be Lotus's first 'official' rally car since the early 1980s, when the Lotus Sunbeam was a fam

NEW CIVIC REVEALED

...BUT DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH FOR A TYPE-R

Behind the very familiar styling, this is an all-new Honda Civic – both bigger and greener than the outgoing model. Aero improvements have boosted both mpg and performance figures – Honda claims the new car is 20 per cent better aerodynamically than the already-slippery outgoing model thanks to 'strakes' on the bodywork to smooth airflow and a radiator intake that motors shut at speed.

Sadly, there are currently no plans for any hot versions, with poor sales of the previous Type-R making the business case for a successor 'wafer-thin' according to company insiders.





LAMBO ROAD RACER

LIMITED-EDITION 'SUPER TROFEO STRADALE' INSPIRED BY ONE-MAKE RACE SERIES

Lamborghini has unveiled what it describes as the 'most extreme Gallardo model yet' – the LP570-4 Super Trofeo Stradale – at Frankfurt.

As the name suggests, the Gallardo has been built to play on the connection with Lambo's Blancpain Super Trofeo one-make series. It's a trick the Italian supercar maker has played before, with last year's almost identical LP570-4 Blancpain Edition.

The Stradale gets unique lightweight 19in

alloy wheels and a carbonfibre engine cover – plus the race car's rear wing, claimed to double downforce over the LP570-4 Superleggera.

Power comes from the Superleggera's 562bhp 5.2-litre V10 engine, and the claimed 1340kg kerb weight and 3.4sec 0-62mph are identical. Top speed is down from 202mph to 193mph, though, presumably because of the drag from that big wing...

Just 150 Super Trofeo Stradales will be produced, costing over £200,000 in the UK.



Left and below:
unique wheel design,
large rear wing and
carbonfibre engine
cover help mark out
this special Gallardo

*'THE RACE CAR'S REAR
WING IS CLAIMED TO
DOUBLE DOWNFORCE
OVER THE LP570-4
SUPERLEGGERA'*



Interior features plenty of carbonfibre.
Alcantara covering the dash has a
Super Trofeo Stradale logo
stitched into it

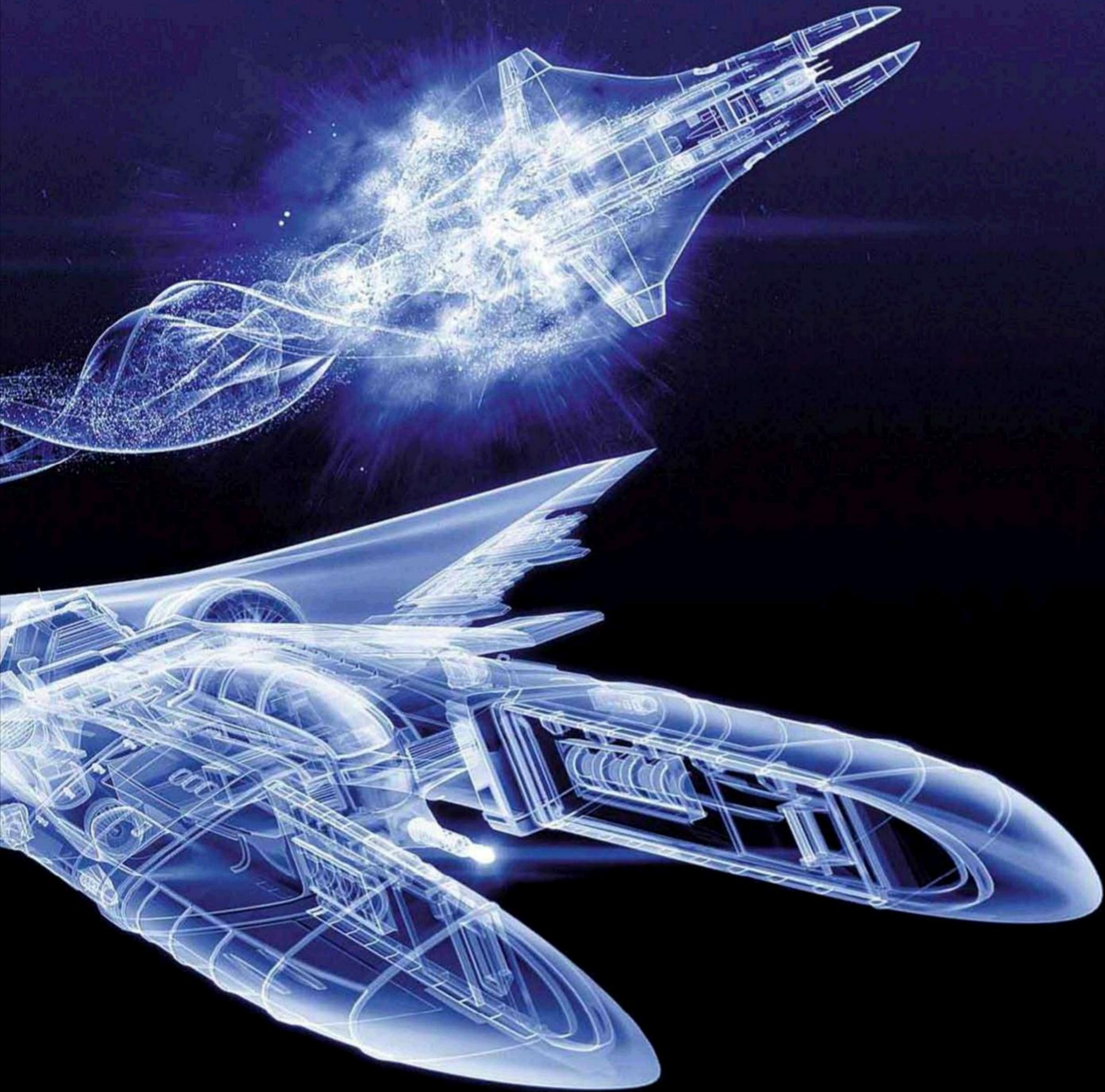


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Bringing it all together



DELTAWING SET FOR LE MANS

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THE CAR YOU SEE HERE WILL RUN IN THE LE MANS 24 HOURS NEXT YEAR. BUT WHAT IS IT? AND WHY IS IT SHAPED LIKE THAT? **STUART CODLING** HAS THE ANSWERS



What is the DeltaWing?

» One of the most outside-the-box racing cars since the 'teardrop' Mercedes of the 1920s. Prompted by the need to make racing more relevant to the road-car industry, it will run at next year's Le Mans 24 hours in a category of its own. The organisers have set aside a grid slot for cars that demonstrate technological and environmental leadership, and the DeltaWing promises to deliver both raw pace and substantially better fuel economy.

'I'm very excited that this concept has got a place to run – outside the competition, outside the regulations, just to show what's possible,' says former Lola designer Ben Bowlby, now DeltaWing Racing Cars' chief technology officer. 'Our goal was to create a car that was twice as efficient for the same speed.'

How are they going to do that?

» 'No engine is twice as efficient as another, so you have to downsize,' says Bowlby. 'Then you have to reduce weight and drag.' By bringing the engine and transmission to the

centreline so that the car is almost triangular in plan view – Bowlby cites aircraft such as Concorde and the Vulcan bomber as inspirations – the DeltaWing concept has less bodywork hanging in the airstream. Besides making for fewer aerodynamic blockages, less bodywork also means less weight, enabling the DeltaWing to run a smaller engine.

'We only need 300bhp to get the performance we need to be looking for,' says Bowlby. 'If you take a modern 1.6-litre direct-injection engine – let's say a World Rally Championship-type – running for 24 hours is completely within their capabilities.'

Will it handle?

» Bowlby believes that with 72.5 per cent of its mass distributed towards the rear, and the roll stiffness generated between the rear wheels, the DeltaWing will steer more sharply and exhibit less understeer than conventional Sportscars. The aerodynamics and transmission will play a part, too. 'The highly optimised aerofoils you see on many modern cars are designed for efficiency in turbulent air,'



Left: delta shape reduces drag, meaning less power is required for a given level of performance and making for a more efficient racer. Above: torque-vectoring will reduce tyre wear and improve handling



'AIRCRAFT SUCH
AS CONCORDE
AND THE VULCAN
BOMBER WERE
INSPIRATIONS'



he says. 'We have a Gurney flap on the rear bodywork, which is much less sensitive to turbulence and flow angles. We've also got some nice torque-vectoring in the transmission, which will help the handling and tyre usage.'

Will it be fast enough?

» Since the two biggest accidents at this year's Le Mans were caused by frontrunners tripping over backmarkers, it's important that the DeltaWing doesn't get in the way. 'We're going to work with the ACO to ensure that the speed we run at is going to be entirely appropriate,' says Bowlby. 'There's no points to be had for going fastest. We're aiming for a lap time between LMP1 and LMP2, to run reliably and safely while demonstrating how credible the concept is.'



AUDI'S CLEVER NEW V8

CYLINDER DEACTIVATION IMPROVES EFFICIENCY OF 4-LITRE UNIT

Audi has unveiled its all-new twin-turbo 4-litre V8, set to power the new S6, S7 and S8, as well as the Bentley Continental GT.

The new engine is a 3993cc 90-degree V8 made from an aluminium-silicon alloy. It has two twin-scroll turbochargers mounted in the middle of the vee. Two versions of the engine will be available: the one in the S6 and S7 will produce 413bhp and 406lb ft, while in full-fat tune in the S8 – and later the Continental GT – it will turn out 512bhp and 479lb ft.

But Audi is giving more emphasis to economy than raw performance. This is the company's first engine with cylinder deactivation, capable of turning the V8 into a four-cylinder when the power of eight cylinders isn't needed. Audi reckons the system cuts around five per cent from total fuel consumption.

Cylinder deactivation comes into play when the car is in at least third gear, with between 1000rpm and 3500rpm on the tach. To keep things sounding smooth, there are active engine mounts and 'Audi Noise Control': four microphones

in the cabin scanning for unwanted V4-ish sounds, which are counteracted with 'inverse noise' played over the car's speakers.

In the S8, Audi reckons cylinder deactivation will improve consumption by 12 per cent at 50mph – but in the Bentley the new engine will improve official consumption figures by an astonishing 40 per cent when compared to the thirsty 6-litre W12.

The new engine will make its debut in the S8 in October, before appearing in other Audi models during 2012. **Michael Taylor**



MITO GETS TWINAIR

Alfa is introducing a version of the Mito fitted with Fiat's popular TwinAir two-cylinder engine. Displacing just 0.9 litres, the tiny turbocharged motor will produce enough power for a 0-62mph time – and emit 98g/km, earning the Mito a £0 road-tax rating in the UK. There will also be a new 1.3-litre JTDM diesel version, which will provide an identical 84bhp but will (officially) put out just 99g/km.

0-62mph time – and emit 98g/km, earning the Mito a £0 road-tax rating in the UK. There will also be a new 1.3-litre JTDM diesel version, which will provide an identical 84bhp but will (officially) put out just 99g/km.



ALL-NEW FIAT PANDA

Frunkfurt sees the debut of the new Fiat Panda. The previous-generation version of the cheap-and-cheerful Italian city car was a firm *evo* favourite, and the all-new model sticks with an evolution of its

predecessor's upright styling. Power will come from the familiar engines, including the 0.9-litre turbocharged TwinAir two-pot. And, yes, there will be four-wheel-drive versions. Prices should start below £9000.



RCZ ASPHALT. FINISHED IN MATT GREY.

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PEUGEOT **RCZ**



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INTERVIEW:

WOLFGANG DÜRHEIMER BENTLEY BOSS ON SUVs, DIESELS AND RETURNING TO RACING

Q So how are you settling in as Bentley's new boss?

A It's been a very exhausting time, but an enjoyable one. The team is very motivated and has outstanding passion and dedication to designing the most beautiful and luxurious cars. The mood in the factory is good and markets are picking up again.

Q Bentley really suffered during the recession. How are sales doing now?

A It's true that we were hit remarkably hard in the financial crisis, but now I would say that all traffic lights are green. We've had the best start to a year since 2008 and we're already up by 20 per cent. Things are more stable in the UK, but we still maintain a remarkable market share with 25 per cent of the luxury segment. I would say the whole story is heavily underlined by our success in China. It's now our second biggest market and our growth rate there against the previous year is an astonishing 57 per cent.

Q How did your experience as Porsche's head of Research & Development equip you for life at Bentley?

A If you're CEO of a brand like Bentley then it definitely can't hurt to have the experience of Porsche. I've been a board member of Porsche for ten years and I would say that the question of how to approach the luxury segment, how to design and build high-quality, dynamic cars that people want

to buy is the same. And I think that with my knowledge of both high-performance engines and hybrids I have many contributions to make to future projects within Bentley.

Q Company insiders admit that Bentley has been considering producing an SUV for years. Is that something you want to make happen?

A Obviously I can't confirm anything. But I can say that if you look at the international market you will see that the SUV segment is still growing, and that Bentley is particularly strong in markets where the SUV plays a major role, particularly America and China. When I look at our Continental or Mulsanne and imagine what an SUV would look like if it was built with this level of exclusivity, craftsmanship and Britishness, I think there would certainly be room for a Bentley SUV.

Q How about the other taboo – producing a Bentley powered by a diesel engine?

A That's another very interesting question. Diesel technology has developed extraordinarily within the last ten years. And with the best diesel engines you don't smell them or hear them any more. Plus, of course, the reduction in CO2 is remarkable, which is an area of increasing concern going forwards. So I think there is definitely potential for the application of a high-output diesel engine in a car like



Top: Dürheimer became chairman and chief exec of Bentley in February. Above: the company's Speed 8 LMP car won Le Mans in 2003, but don't expect to see Bentley back at la Sarthe any time soon

Q And how about a return to motorsport for Bentley?

A Bentley certainly had a tremendous success with its Le Mans victory in 2003. I know that the company, its dealers and its customers still talk about this. And it shows how powerful a big motorsport success can be for a company. With my history at Porsche, and my strong belief that there's a connection between motorsport and sales, I'm definitely going to investigate how to bring Bentley back to the racetracks of the world.

Q But not Le Mans again?

A Ha! Le Mans at present is covered by two brands out of our group – Audi is leading the pack and Porsche has announced its re-entry, so I don't think it's necessary for a third brand to compete at the same time. But there are some very international race series around the world where I think they would appreciate us very much.



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FLIPPING GREAT

A lightweight watch by Porsche Design that flips open to reveal a built-in compass, a new Pininfarina 'convertible', and a British-made bargain...



PORSCHE DESIGN COMPASS

PRICE: £4500 (APPROX)
FROM: WWW.PORSCHE-DESIGN.COM

A satnav might be standard equipment in many cars nowadays, but it's hard to beat the solid reliability of magnetic north. Back in 1978, Professor Ferdinand Porsche designed a nifty wristwatch with a built-in compass – and now the model has been reprised and updated in the latest P6520, due to go on sale next month. In common with modern practice, the case of the re-issue is somewhat larger than that of the original at 42mm instead of 39, and is made from lightweight, hypo-allergenic titanium. Comprising two parts, the top contains a three-handed watch with a self-winding mechanical movement, all housed in a split case that hinges up to reveal a liquid compass. Despite the hinge mechanism and the resulting gaps, the watch is still water-resistant to 50 metres and, since the bracelet is also made from titanium, the whole thing is remarkably light. There are no prizes for guessing that the P6520 will be made in a limited edition of 911 examples.



PININFARINA CAMBIANO CHRONOGRAPH

PRICE: £13,000 (APPROX)
FROM: EXTRA.PININFARINA.COM

'Pininfarina Extra' is a branch of the celebrated styling house that specialises in non-car products – anything from football grounds to soft drinks dispensers. To mark Pininfarina's 80th anniversary last year, it got together with 214-year-old Swiss watch brand Bovet to create the £180,000, limited edition Ottanta tourbillon, effectively four watches in one – a wristwatch with a flip-over case that could be worn both ways, or converted to either a pocket watch or a desk clock. The 'convertible' theme has been adopted for the more reasonably priced Cambiano chronograph, which can be wristwatch, clock, pocket watch or sports timer. It includes chronograph push-pieces designed to look like a car's pedals, and a dial made from no fewer than 35 components arranged on five different levels.



CHRISTOPHER WARD BECKETT'S

PRICE: £799
FROM: WWW.CHRISTOPHERWARD.CO.UK

We featured Christopher Ward's value-for-money C70 Brooklands on this page last year, since when the six-year-old British brand has upped its appeal by increasing the number of its watches powered by mechanical rather than quartz movements. This month, a new jumping-hour model is set to become the first watch in the range to retail for more than £1000 – but we like the look of the more affordable C90 'Beckett's' which is, of course, named after the Silverstone corner. Wristwatches don't come much cleaner and easier to read than this 43mm three-hander, which uses a nice quality Valgranges ETA self-winding movement modified to include a power reserve display, while fans of micro engineering can see the mechanism through the crystal display back. It's a bargain.





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Petrolhead

by Richard Porter

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



Porter thinks the multi-talented Range Rover is the best 4x4 by far. He just hopes the next one doesn't lose its way

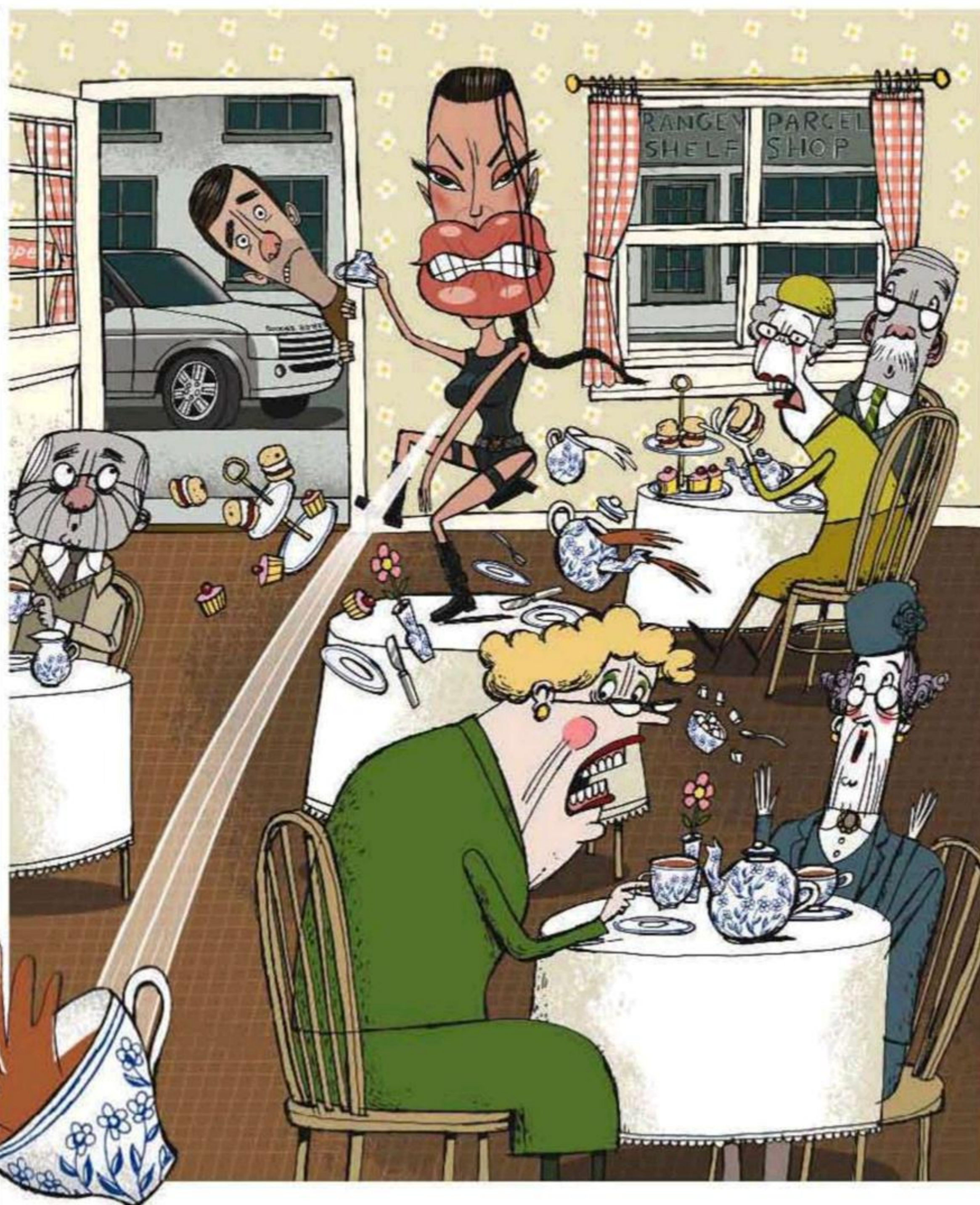
Jeremy Clarkson has one. Richard Hammond has one. James May used to have one and sometimes regrets that he got rid of it. It's not just *Top Gear* presenters either. *evo*'s own Harry Metcalfe has one and, if rumours are to be believed, so does pneumatic awfulness tornado Jordan. In fact, you'd be amazed at how many people have Range Rovers.

It's easy to see why. For one thing, there are few cars around that have such effortless prestige. It's actually quite surprising to find that the current Range Rover starts at under £70,000 because it radiates a commanding, sophisticated presence that feels worth at least twice that. Put it this way, if you suddenly found yourself taking the actress Angelina Jolie on a tour of the West Country you'd be hard pushed to find something better to do it in for the money. If you collected her from the airport in a 70-grand S-class or 7-series she'd think you weren't trying hard enough and had borrowed a car from the local posh minicab outfit. But even a boggy Range Rover has enough discreet class and unfussy refinement to fit in anywhere. Probably more so than Ms Jolie herself, who appears to be a bit mad and might cause a scene in a tea shop near Bude.

It's not unfair to say that earlier Range Rovers weren't famed for their reliability and that even the present model suffered notable failings like a flaky front diff early in its life. It's also fair to say that if you've ever tried looking for a current shape one in the classifieds, you'll spend a long time trying to find an example that hasn't been plastered with an artless version of what a northern scrap metal dealer believes to be 'bling'. Yet despite these problems, and notwithstanding the searing contempt they attract from cyclists in major cities, the image of a modern Range Rover is remarkably positive.

All of which would mean nothing if it wasn't backed up by a remarkable ability to drive across shattered and sludgy terrain before clambering back onto tarmac and swooshing effortlessly up to a quiet and comfortable cruise. There's nothing else for any money that can do that even half as well.

The Range Rover's abilities are even broader than you might think too, because, as we've discovered on *Top Gear* over the years, there's simply nothing to touch it as a camera tracking vehicle. The crews love the split tailgate, the big boot and the fact that when filming is over they can all pile inside and be whisked back to base in total comfort. Someone on our team clearly loves the parcel shelf too, because they keep forgetting to put them back in when we give the keys back to the rental company and we've now got



so many of the damn things in the office I'm thinking of opening a Range Rover parcel shelf shop.

What really defines the Range Rover, however, isn't its prestige or its vast breadth of ability. It isn't its performance or its handling either, because there are high-riding 4x4s that can do one or both of these

'A RANGE ROVER HAS ENOUGH DISCREET CLASS TO FIT IN ANYWHERE, UNLIKE MS. JOLIE, WHO APPEARS TO BE A BIT MAD'

things with more conviction. But what they don't have is another quality that's almost impossible to define and sounds a lot like car journalist bollocks to anyone who's never driven one – the Range Rover feels special. Driving one is an event, it has a sense of occasion about it. It gives you a feeling that

using a set of numbers off a spreadsheet.

And this, strangely, is a worry, because whilst all attention is drawn to the excellent new Evoque, Land Rover's engineers are busying themselves with the next generation of its big daddy. Happily, the Evoque itself is remarkably able off-road and extremely pleasant on it, plus it has an undeniable feel-good factor, partly from that mysterious and hard to quantify Range Rover-ness.

This bodes well for the next gen of the mothership. There's every reason to believe that Land Rover won't lose its mojo for this car. After all, its engineers have managed to pull it off three times in the past and the Evoque is clear evidence that they've not forgotten how to do it since last time.

Hopefully they can get it right again. Not to put too much pressure on them or anything, but Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond, Harry Metcalfe, Jordan and the entire *Top Gear* crew are waiting. Maybe Angelina Jolie is too.

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Electric-only cars are pointless, reckons Metcalfe. But add a generator and you might be onto something...

Those manufacturers that have invested heavily in electric-powered cars are having a miserable time of it just now. Seems it's proving much harder than they expected to find buyers prepared to pay the additional premium they're charging

for their range-limited models, though why this should be a shock to anyone escapes me. It was no surprise to see Nissan announce recently that it has drastically reduced its 2011 sales target for its Leaf to 10-12,000 cars globally. Compare that with Toyota, which plans to shift 150,000+ units of its petrol-electric-hybrid Prius this year.

With Nissan having an estimated €5.4bn invested in electric-car technology, you soon realise that this sort of sales performance is a potential disaster for the Japanese carmaker. Here in the UK, just 338 Leafs were registered in the first six months of 2011, with the next best-selling electric car being the Mitsubishi i-MiEV on 105 sales. Both are hardly worth a mention when you consider Ford UK sold 282 Fiestas every single day in 2010. None of this will have been helped by *Top Gear* TV recently having a pop at electric cars, highlighting how their limited range is a pain to live with. Again, no surprises there, but the story still made headlines.

It'll take more than one episode of *Top Gear* to kill electric car sales, but some common sense is needed.

The thing is, there are some very real advantages to an electric vehicle, but the idea of a family car that is powered solely by electricity is, to my mind, fundamentally flawed. I'm not alone. VW CEO Martin Winterkorn recently told me he thought the idea of an electric-only family car wasn't commercially viable (or desirable), as the cost of the batteries needed to give such a car a reasonable range made the vehicle uncompetitive against today's conventionally powered cars. He went on to explain how a plug-in hybrid was a much better proposition, because it would still give customers electric-only propulsion for a limited distance (around 15 miles was his target) and because the size (and therefore cost) of the

'IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN TOP GEAR TO KILL ELECTRIC CAR SALES, BUT SOME COMMON SENSE IS NEEDED'

battery pack required was much smaller, meaning the car could still be competitively priced.

I recently visited Frazer-Nash, a small UK company that, for the last 20 years, has been looking into alternative forms of vehicle propulsion. It decided early on that electric power had the greatest potential, but also realised that electric power alone in a vehicle would be a hugely limiting factor for potential buyers, and thus would severely limit sales.

So nine years ago the company developed an electric car with a separate generator on board that could top-up the batteries when needed – a range-
extender in today's parlance – allowing the car to
achieve a similar range to a conventionally powered

generator, as rotary engines are compact, light and very refined. (You might remember Audi's A1 e-tron concept also used a Wankel-powered generator. Interestingly, that car appeared around 18 months after a group of Audi engineers visited Frazer-Nash for the first time. Make of that what you will...)

Frazer-Nash is now turning its attention to commercial vehicles and heavy trucks in particular. Its technology partner is Proton, and out in Malaysia right now are a fleet of range-extended, electrically powered trucks, each capable of carrying a 20-tonne container, yet weighing nine tonnes less than a conventional truck. Think about that for a moment; imagine the energy saving if every heavy truck in the world today was nine tonnes lighter. It would make a mockery of what Brussels is achieving with the CO2 restrictions it's currently applying to the car industry.

I drove one of Frazer-Nash's ten-wheel-drive, 12-tonne prototype trucks during my visit and can tell you it all felt pretty normal, with plenty of low-down torque to get moving with. What wasn't normal was the fuel consumption read-out on the dash, which stated we were averaging 492mpg. No, that's not a misprint. Because the truck was speed-limited (as most are), the ten electric motors were merely cruising for most of our journey, meaning the on-board generator hardly got called upon. The result is not only deeply impressive but could be the start of a revolution in commercial transportation.

So early adopters can champion electric-only cars if they want, but I'll be backing companies like VW and Frazer-Nash and their proposals for range-extended cars and commercial vehicles. With sales of electric-only cars failing to take off, it looks like pioneering manufacturers like Nissan and Mitsubishi are discovering some commercial realities the hard way.



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Crossed Up

by Chris Harris

No stranger to controversy, Harris writes like he drives – right on the limit



Finding petrol expensive but not ready to trade in your V8 yet? Don't worry – Harris has some fuel-saving tips for you

Fuel is now so expensive, I gave up looking at individual forecourt prices months back. For the thick end of two decades I have shopped around and allowed myself to become quite excited over a one-pound saving on a tankful, but now that the cost of filling an 80-litre AMG bladder with super-juice has breached the £100 mark I have shouldered arms, punch-drunk, and surrendered. If you run a pair of V8s and the odd flat-six, the cost is insane. Besides, an SLS uses more fuel hunting out the bargain forecourt than you save on the lower price. I know, your heart bleeds.

But it's a problem when you can't even afford to fuel the free car your job brings you. There are only two solutions: earn more money, or use less fuel – and seeing as option one appears to be impossible, option two has recently been enforced. That's right, I'm one of the growing ranks of crazy-fast-car-eco-drivers. The saddest bunch of capitulators since the flat-earthers caved in to satellite photographs.

But when fuel costs seventeen thousand pounds a millilitre, even committed twerps like me have to ration its consumption. This means I've started separating needs from musts and, for the first time ever, I'm questioning how and when I use fuel. At first, this was an unpleasant exercise, largely because when you have an SLS to drive every day, the answers to both questions are: 'Oh sod it, at every opportunity.' At

the beginning of my eco-phase, I managed to record 13.6mpg on a trip to the takeaway.

So what is the charter of the eco-hoon – or rather, what should it be? It's pretty simple I reckon: if you find yourself in a situation where using the bare minimum of fuel doesn't affect your enjoyment of the ride, just use the bare minimum of fuel. For the most part, that means motorway driving and tedious A-road chuntering.

Especially the motorway. I didn't realise how inefficient my motorway driving was until I began to experiment with different speeds and methods. For starters, the relationship between consumption and

'WHEN FUEL COSTS £17,000 A MILLILITRE, EVEN COMMITTED TWERPS LIKE ME HAVE TO RATION ITS CONSUMPTION'

speed is most certainly exponential, and it becomes drastically bad above 85mph. On a recent trip to Germany in the Benz, I conducted several experiments in this area and reached the conclusion that only Warren Buffet can afford to cruise at 125mph in an SLS. At 85mph, it will do 21mpg. At 95mph it will only return 17.9mpg. That's a big difference. At 125mph a crying face appears on the fuel gauge.

Which leads to the rather sad conclusion that the eco-leadfoot's first move to reduce fuel consumption is to drive more slowly on the motorway. It brings the single biggest saving, of that there can be no doubt.

The next area of investigation was cruise control. Do not use cruise control ever again, unless you have a money fuel card, or founded Berkshire Hathz

misconception that the cruise control function of a modern car is linked to the engine electronics and deftly uses more or less throttle to retain a chosen speed. This is wrong. What actually happens is a microprocessor capable of faster inputs than A Senna constantly, and needlessly, plays with the throttle until the numbers on the trip computer are so tragic you wonder if the fuel tank is holed. Avoid cruise control like you avoid people with massive wrist-watches.

And make sure you keep yourself occupied with a challenge, because above all else that's the key to successful eco-hoonage. The moment you get bored, you're at the mercy of your testicles and hormones. Always have the trip computer displaying the consumption for your current journey, select a reasonable target in your head and then try to achieve it. Making fuel-saving a game in this manner can be so engrossing that you find yourself draughting fast-moving Luton vans and free-wheeling down hills, which, in an SLS, must look decidedly odd to other road users.

The last point concerns the gearbox. If you drive a manual, it stands to reason to get it into the highest gear possible, but as most moderns seem to use these double-clutch transmissions, it's as well to know the following: they are much cleverer than us. I tried beating the SLS's most frugal auto mode by shifting manually – it didn't work. In fact it made me look silly. If you have DCT, DSG, SMG4 or whatever, go auto.

Drive like this and you will reduce your fuel costs considerably. To the point that when the conditions and mood take you, you are completely at liberty to use every last crank revolution and wilfully ignore everything that has been practised above. Just as there's no point wasting money to have no fun, there's every point in feeding a V8 when the time's right.

ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THE ULTIMATE TEST DRIVE?

WIN A MERCEDES-BENZ C-CLASS COUPÉ FOR TWO WEEKS,
AND BECOME AN EVO ROAD TESTER...



You've read the reviews, now we want you to write one of your own... *evo* has teamed up with Mercedes-Benz to offer you the chance to win a C-Class Coupé for two weeks and have your review published by the country's biggest motoring magazines.

With its AMG bodystyling kit, 18in AMG alloy wheels and sublime handling, the C-Class Coupé has received rave reviews from the motoring press – and no wonder. In the words of *evo*: 'It begs to be thrown at corners. Find a fast turn and the car's steering and balance give you stupendous levels of confidence.'

Now we want to hear what you have got to say. Working with a panel of expert road testers, you'll see your words published in leading motoring magazines including *evo*, *Auto Express* and *Octane* – as well as featuring in interactive titles *iGizmo* and iPad mag *Padder*. As if that wasn't enough,

one of Mercedes' professional drivers will also take you out on track for an exhilarating ride in the V8-engined C 63 AMG Coupé – the ultimate performance version of the C-Class Coupé.

Interested? Then show us what you're capable of by entering our competition now. You'll find full details opposite.

The new Mercedes C-Class Coupé – available from £30,720 OTR.

In association with



Mercedes-Benz

SPECIFICATION

C 350 BlueEFFICIENCY AMG Sport Edition 125

Engine V6, 3498cc
CO2 164g/km
Power 306hp @ 6500rpm
Torque 273lb ft @ 3500rpm
Transmission 7G-Tronic Plus
7-speed auto with ECO
start/stop
Suspension Three-link front
suspension with a multi-link
independent rear suspension
Brakes Hydraulic dual-circuit
brakes
Weight (kerb) 1615kg
0-62mph 6.0sec
Top speed 155mph (Limited)
Price £38,140 OTR
O flow

'IT BEGS TO BE THROWN AT CORNERS.
FIND A FAST TURN AND THE CAR'S STEERING
AND BALANCE GIVE YOU STUPENDOUS
LEVELS OF CONFIDENCE'



HOW TO ENTER

Drive it, admire it, and then at the end of the fortnight join our test team by writing a review that shows off what you think of it. We've teamed up with Mercedes-Benz to offer you the chance to test drive a C-Class Coupé for two weeks.

To enter, all you need to do is visit our competition microsite at evo.co.uk/coupe and provide 150 words on the following:

Tell us why you would make the perfect test driver for the stylish C-Class Coupé, describing an aspect of the car you're most excited about experiencing.

Each entry we receive will be reviewed by an expert judging panel, drawn from the editorial teams of *evo*, *Auto Express* and *Octane*.

THE JUDGING PROCESS

Enter online at evo.co.uk/coupe

If your entry is shortlisted, you will be asked to supply a short video presenting your answer, which will be uploaded to YouTube.

WHAT YOU'LL GET

We're giving away a Mercedes-Benz C-Class Coupé for you to drive for two weeks. On Saturday 15th October we'll drive you to your local Retailer to collect your prize car. Then on Saturday 22nd October

you'll go to Mercedes-Benz World at Brooklands, Surrey, where one of Mercedes' professional drivers will give you an unforgettable lap of the test track in the top-of-the-range C 63 AMG Coupé.

We are also offering an overnight stay at a luxury hotel nearby, including dinner for you and a guest. Plus, we will be on hand to offer hints and tips to help you with the process of writing the review.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS Dennis Publishing T&Cs apply: go to evo.co.uk/comp/terms. Entrants must be over 25, hold a full UK driving licence and be prepared to sign the Mercedes-Benz disclaimer form on evo.co.uk/coupe. All shortlisted entrants to submit a video presentation of their written review. Closing Date: Monday 10th October.

evo Driven

THE EVO VERDICT ON THIS MONTH'S NEW LAUNCHES



TESTED THIS MONTH

MINI COUNTRYMAN WRC	P36	ALPINA B5 BITURBO TOURING	P45	AUDI A6 3.0 TDI BITURBO	P48
EAGLE LIGHTWEIGHT SPEEDSTER	P40	ROLLS-ROYCE GHOST EWB	P46	MAZDA MX-5 SPORT BLACK	P50
MOSLER PHOTON	P42	PORSCHE PANAMERA S HYBRID	P46	FORD FIESTA S1600	P50

MINI COUNTRYMAN WRC

» WORLD RALLY CONTENDER » DEVELOPED BY PRODRIVE
» 310BHP BMW MOTORSPORT ENGINE » SEQUENTIAL GEARBOX
» CUSTOMER CARS AVAILABLE FOR £450K

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbocharged
CO2 n/a **Power** 310bhp @ n/a rpm
Torque 310lb ft @ n/a rpm **0-60mph** 3.0sec (est)
Top speed 120mph (gearing limited)
Price £450,000 plus tax **On sale** Now

Punch in four downshifts, move your hand two inches to the right and haul back positively on the big handbrake. You're still travelling towards the corner quite quickly, but in the blink of an eye you're now approaching it somewhere between sideways and backwards. This is so much fun.

Before the momentum of the pirouette peters out, you pick up the throttle hard so that all four wheels start spinning and the car continues floating sideways/backwards across the surface. If you could

bucket seat on a magic carpet, then this is what I imagine it would feel like. There's surprisingly little steering input as you keep the slide going and the car arcing, then even before you've fully exited the corner you put in an upchange and start accelerating towards the next one.

We don't normally put competition cars into the Driven section of evo, let alone as the leader, but then it's not every day that we get to drive the newest kid on the WRC block. And of course if you've got £450,000 (plus tax) then you can buy one, so it's practically a production car and makes perfect sense here. Sort of.

The WRC Mini Countrymans are being shaken down for Rally Deutschland by the Prodrive team when we are given our tin

the wheel (only the second journalist and the first from the UK to do so. I can tell you're impressed...)

Amazingly, I'm not the worst person to have a stab at assessing the Mini, because I've been incredibly lucky over the past few years and have tested a fairly wide selection of top-flight rally cars. The first thing that's obvious is that this is quite a big car. The relatively heavy bodyshell of the Countryman means that Prodrive didn't have as much flexibility to play around within the 1200kg weight limit (down from the 1230kg weight limit for previous WRC cars) as they might have liked, but the upside is that it's an excellent platform for WRC suspension. There are other plus points too...

Open the hollow-feeling door on its simple hinges, swing your legs over the side impact bars of the roll-cage and slot yourself into the Sparco seat. It's always something of a struggle for someone as lanky as me, but the Mini is easier to get into than most and the reason why is apparent as soon as you start taking in your surroundings – it's huge inside. Alright, it's not an S-class, but it genuinely feels like you've got quite a bit more room in which to 'work', which if you're spending hours and hours a day doing a rally, frequently in extreme climes, will no doubt be appreciated by drivers and co-drivers alike.

Helmet on, tighten the belts, the familiar squeak as the intercom is plugged in, and we're ready to go. Prodrive technical director Dave Wilcox takes me through the simple start procedure, which just involves flicking a switch and pressing a small oblong button (marked 'Start') on the unit between the seats. There is a smoother, quieter idle than I was expecting, but I'm nervous about the next bit. Getting any sort of competition car to move away from a standstill without stalling is a tricky process. The throttle flares at the merest touch and sounds like you're giving it too many revs when in fact you're giving it too few, and then the clutch usually doesn't so much bite as snap with the ferocity and finality of a mother's patience at the end of a long day.

The big single-paddle shifters of old WRC cars have been replaced with a mechanical sequential change for the six-speed 'boxes in the new cars, and here again the Mini's ergonomics have clearly been given a lot of thought. It's subtle, but the U-bend-shaped shifter (a bit like a walking stick sprouting from



the dash with the curve of the handle pointing to the floor) is closer to the wheel and falls more easily to hand than the shifters in either of the sequentially equipped Peugeot and Skoda S2000 cars I've tried. The actual shift action feels shorter and more precise too.

With only 310bhp and short gearing that tops out at about 120mph, the Mini, like most rally cars, doesn't feel gut-alteringly fast on a wide circuit. Get it on a special stage, however, where you generally want shorter stabs of acceleration, and the 310lb ft of torque from the 1.6-litre turbocharged four-cylinder makes the scenery blur just fine. Fortunately Prodrive's Kenilworth facility has a suitably short, sharp, tarmac loop, which wriggles around to make maximum use of the space between trees and banks.

Third gear for the first right-left then accelerate hard, watching for the bright blue shift-light in your peripheral vision.



Top: cabin has more space than you'll find in most rally cars; U-shaped gearshifter is positioned usefully close to wheel. Above: huge wing increases downforce at rear

Fourth gear, fifth, hold your breath and dive into a left-right. Next there's a small hump built into the tarmac, but you hardly feel it inside the car despite the fact that, outside, the wheels can be seen leaving the ground every time. The specially developed Öhlins suspension is said to be hugely sophisticated, even by WRC standards, and it feels it – paradoxically firm but soft, so that the car maintains grip while also soaking up big bumps. I certainly hardly notice the car climbing on and off the edge of the tarmac as I use all the marked circuit and a bit more.

Wilcox switches on the ALS (Anti Lag System) after a couple of laps and the change in throttle response is remarkable. In the same way that you have to recalibrate your left foot's sensitivity when you start braking with it, you have to adjust your right foot to life with anti-lag. Once you get used to it, though, you seem to be able to get the car angled into the corners and driving forwards with more precision.

You have to work the Mini noticeably harder than an old WRC car with active





‘WITH THE ANTI-LAG ON, YOU CAN GET THE CAR ANGLED INTO THE CORNERS AND DRIVING FORWARDS WITH MORE PRECISION’

diffs where you just kept the throttle open and the electronics juggled the power for you, but the Countryman’s longer wheelbase (it’s about 150mm longer than the WRC Fiesta and DS3) seems to give it greater stability and make it slightly less twitchy, particularly over the limit, than the smaller, squarer-stanced S2000 Fabia and 207. This is particularly noticeable through the one quick right-hander between some trees where, on distinctly ‘old’ tyres, the Mini oversteers in fifth gear all the way out to the Armco. When it’s all working and flowing well it’s a bit like driving on very grippy ice.

But you don’t need to take my word for how impressive the Countryman WRC is, because a week after my trip to Kenilworth, Dani Sordo scored the car’s first ever podium on its first ever tarmac WRC event. Ford and Citroën had better watch out... **Henry Catchpole**



Left: 1.6-litre engine is the work of BMW Motorsport; features include a dry sump and a Garrett turbo capable of running 2.5bar of boost. Engine bay dominated by air intake box with copious heat-proofing



Left: Catchpole looks suitably chuffed about his rare opportunity to sample a current WRC machine; state of the tyres after his run shows how much he enjoyed himself

evo RATING ★★★★★

- ◆ Ability, ergonomics
- Price; it's still a Countryman



EAGLE SPEEDSTER

» NEW 'LIGHTWEIGHT' MODEL » JUST 1008KG » 330BHP FROM 4.7-LITRE ALL-ALUMINIUM STRAIGHT SIX » £500,000 » YES, REALLY

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 6cyl, 4693cc **CO2** n/a **Power** 330bhp @ 4800rpm **Torque** 360lb ft @3600rpm
0-60mph 160mph+ (claimed) **Top speed** sub-5sec (claimed) **Price** £500,000 **On sale** Now

For a shape that's so simple you don't half want to spend a long time gazing at it. Even when you're given the keys to drive it, you feel the need first to look at it from every conceivable angle and drink in every detail, quenching some previously unknown thirst for aluminium-wrought beauty. I don't usually hold with those wealthy collectors who buy two cars – one to have on display in their house and one to drive – but with this I could almost understand it.

This is the second Speedster that Paul Brace and the chaps at Eagle have lovingly crafted, and this 'Lightweight' version is arguably even more exquisite than the first. The changes are mostly very subtle, but they do make a difference to the overall look and feel. Things like the two central exhaust pipes instead of the first car's two pairs, and the silver instead of black around the headlights, streamline it even further. Inside, the leather is more



Dash is classic early E-type, as is the view over the bonnet through the cut-down windscreen

simply fluted on the seats instead of diamond-quilted and there is no elaborate (and heavy) sound system.

The bodywork is aluminium, but Eagle's dedication to the use of the shiny silver metal with atomic number 13 is more than skin-deep. As well as the gearbox and the differential, Eagle's 4.7-litre version of the original Jaguar straight-six is now all-aluminium with a cast and machined block developed in conjunction with Crosthwaite & Gardner. Fuel injection is new,

The stripped Speedster weighs in at just 1008kg. Paul Brace would like to have brought it in under the magical tonne but he's honestly not quite sure where he could have lost another eight kilograms. Best settle for tipping the scales at just under the imperial ton, which is still mighty impressive when there's 330bhp and 360lb ft on tap.

Like just about everything with the Speedster, swinging open the small door, stepping over the high sill and





Jaguar's classic XK straight-six has been thoroughly re-engineered by Eagle for the Speedster; note carbon intake manifolds for fuel injection system

swept-back windscreen is a wonderfully evocative process. The gearstick for the five-speed 'box is quite high to your left and the thin-rimmed Nardi steering wheel feels incredibly delicate after any modern car as you settle into the experience during the first few miles. However, one of the great things about an Eagle E-type (and this is very much still an E-type underneath) is that it doesn't feel like some flaky classic – you really do feel like you could cross a continent in the Speedster... as long as it doesn't rain.

The sound of the straight-six is everything you want it to be: mellow and fruity at low revs where it pulls with incredible flexibility, building smoothly to a tearing, ripping snarl like the best racing

Jaguars of the '50s and '60s. According to Brace, the fuel injection has been tuned to allow 'some' pop and crackle on the overrun, but in reality it sounds like the glorious demise of a small munitions factory every time you back off the throttle sharply. As you'd expect from the numbers and the streamlined shape, there is very palpable pace, and, with only a tonne to anchor, the big, drilled AP brakes are more than up to the job of stopping you just as quickly.

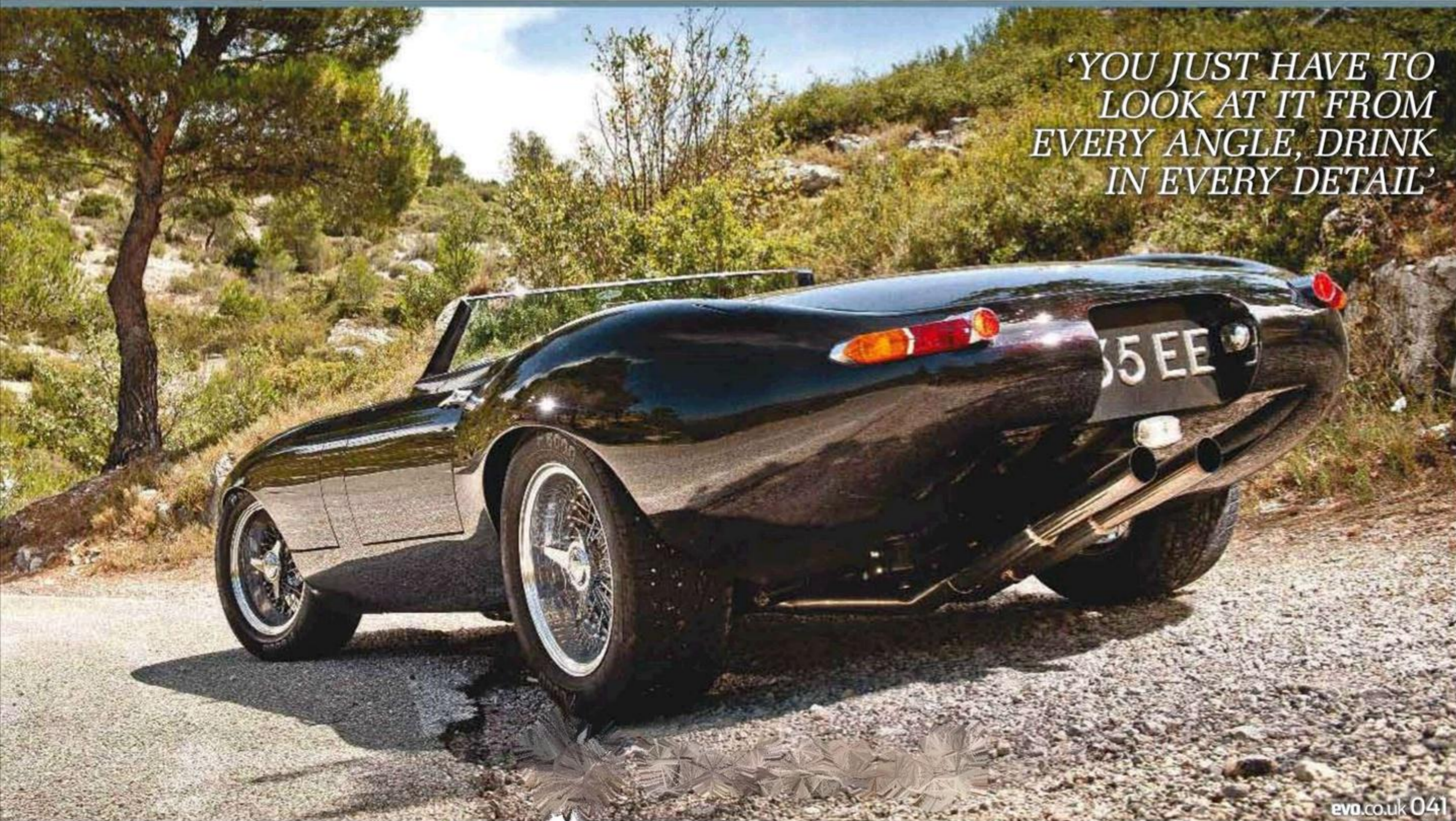
The suspension is firm initially but quite soft at the rear when you really start leaning on it, and as a result you can drive it hard through corners on the throttle with the rear tyres slipping slightly and tightening the long nose's trajectory

ahead of you. It's a driving method and an experience that can feel quite unnatural, almost imprecise at first but, once you get your head around it, it's massively rewarding and huge fun – particularly as you increase the pace.

As you can probably tell, I absolutely adore the Speedster. Even more so in its new Lightweight form. The only downside is its price, which sadly makes owning one, let alone one for driving and one for drooling over, just a dream for the vast majority of us. **Henry Catchpole**

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- Looks make you weak at the knees
- So does the price



'YOU JUST HAVE TO LOOK AT IT FROM EVERY ANGLE, DRINK IN EVERY DETAIL'



MOSLER PHOTON

» ROAD-LEGAL RACE CAR » 550BHP 7-LITRE V8 » AMERICAN-MADE
 » FINE-TUNED FOR EUROPE » MAY BE THE LAST MOSLER

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 7011cc CO2 n/a Power 550bhp @ 6800rpm Torque 520lb ft @ 4800rpm
 0-60mph 3.0sec (est) Top speed 200mph (est)
 Price £275,000 On sale Now

We slide onto the Hangar Straight, the rear tyres comprehensively losing their battle to get all 550bhp onto Silverstone's tarmac while simultaneously reducing their rolling circumference as we smear Toyo trackday rubber onto the floor. My driver is Martin Short, boss of Rollcentre Racing and head of Mosler's European activities, and he is laughing loudly. In fact if it wasn't such a raucous chuckle, I wouldn't hear it over the extraordinary rumbling roar of the flat-chat 7-litre Chevy V8.

Short points at a wing mirror in between sequential upshifts, and I realise he wasn't just amused by the thumping performance of this latest incarnation of the Mosler supercar. The Photon's mirrors are filled by a massive, multi-winged Aston Martin DBRS9 race car. This was only supposed to be a couple of gentle sighting laps so

that I could find out what to expect when I got behind the wheel. But now there's a race on and I'm nothing more than ballast.

We stretch out a short lead on the straight, which is mightily impressive. But power's one thing – I reckon we'll be easy meat when it comes to braking and cornering as the Aston has lots of downforce and slick tyres. Short has other ideas. He covers the line and stamps on the middle pedal impossibly late. The Mosler squirms a little under the incredible pressure, but it sheds speed in a remarkable hurry, leaving me gasping for breath, dangling against the seatbelt. A lack of mass is being exploited here. The Photon may look like a large lump of a thing, but it weighs just 1034kg, thanks in the main to a carbon-composite chassis.

Short – who won the British GT Championship in a Mosler a few years ago – holds the Aston at bay for another three laps. He whoops with delight at this unlikely victory and peels into the pits before hopping out saying, 'Demo drive over, my pleasure. Yours now. Enjoy.'

I do r



Brake discs are 335mm in diameter all round and are grabbed by Wilwood six-pot calipers at the front, four-pots at the rear; dial allows brake bias to be adjusted

opportunity because sadly this may well be the last iteration of the ultimate American GT muscle-car. Warren Mosler, the company's founder, is looking to retire and is searching for a buyer for the whole business. Short, meanwhile, who for the best part of a decade has been developing these barely diluted racers for the European market, admits he too may be wrapping things up. Earlier he explained he's just about had enough of fighting against race organisers who have consistently sought to ban or slow the Mosler for being just too damn fast. Enjoy it while you can then.

I open the gullwing door, drop over the wide carbon sill and into a seat that will be changed for something a little more figure-hugging. The cockpit is narrower than it appears from the outside. In fact you sit almost centrally, looking through a curved screen that reminds me of the view from a Porsche 962 Group C car.

Twist the key to wake the noise, dip the weighty clutch and punch the sequential lever forwards (it's a bit hefty for road use, so Short says he's going to make it



Top: Photon is six and a half feet wide, but shrinks around you when you're behind the wheel. Above: slimmer seats will be fitted. Bottom left: 7-litre V8 is mighty



paddleshift). Hear the *clunk!* as first gear engages in the Hewland 'box, then dial in a few revs and ease down the pitlane.

I begin to explore the shove – it feels just as mighty when you have control of the throttle. Along with the rampant power, there's a wealth of torque – 520lb ft at 4800rpm – ensuring the thrust is instant wherever you are in the rev-range. Knowing how effective the brakes are, I leave it late on the approach to Stowe and then immediately regret it. The pedal feels surprisingly soft and for a fraction of a second I wonder if the brakes have gone off after the 'race', but as I push through the initial squidge the bite comes. I'd expected a rock-hard race car-like feel, but this is more road-biased.

The power steering feels American – there's far too much assistance in the electro-hydraulic set-up (Short will re-engineer this for Europe, too) – but the Photon has a very strong front end. You can load it far harder than you might imagine and it resolutely refuses to upset. The suspension is by KW, and

would expect to work on the road. (Sadly we won't find out today, as this car has only just arrived from the States and isn't yet registered for the road.)

Despite the massive speed and thrust at your disposal, the Mosler inspires confidence to push, to get it right up on its toes, to explore its limits and a few of your own. It's an absorbing machine that sucks you in. After one run you want another, and another.

In a world where supercars are becoming increasingly complicated, it is refreshing once in a while to go back to basics. It might be a little old-school, and in some ways a little crude (you don't buy a Mosler for sumptuous interiors and detailed design features), but light weight plus big power and a composed chassis equals big fun. It really will be a shame to lose Mosler, but if this is the last hurrah, it's a hell of a way to go. **Roger Green**

EVO RATING ★★★★★

➤ Greater power-to-weight than a Veyron

➤ The Photon won't be here much longer



Here's one little reason
why we make tyres that stop
shorter in the wet*.



*Compared to an average standard tyre

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visit our website
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BRIDGESTONE
Your Journey, Our Passion

ALPINA B5 BITURBO TOURING

» NEW ESTATE VERSION » REVISED SUSPENSION » SAME 500BHP V8

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo **CO2** 255g/km
Power 500bhp @ 5500rpm **Torque** 516lb ft @ 3000rpm **0-62mph** 4.7sec (claimed) **Top speed** 188mph (claimed) **Price** £75,850 **On sale** Now

A year ago we tested the saloon version of the B5 (evo 149) with high hopes that it would effectively be an M5 substitute to plug the gap while we waited patiently for the next big M machine. It wasn't. We fired it around one of our regular road routes and it felt wayward. It was difficult to place precisely (crucial in something as large as this) and the messages fed to the helm were too filtered. Sure it had pace – 500bhp and 516ft lb saw to that – but it was far from satisfying when you fancied making some spirited progress.

Of course, Alpina never directly rivals the M-cars with its products – it's too intertwined with the mothership for that. Instead its goal is to offer performance that's a little less hyperactive, something it has done with great success since 1983. However, the B5 was too soft, the edge and control missing.

Changes have since been made to the set-up, and now we have the Touring version too. Since there probably won't be a new M5 estate, this Alpina has a real niche. How well it exploits it depends entirely on those revisions.

The one big thing that hasn't changed is the lump up front – a thumping 4.4-litre V8 with a pair of turbos strapped to it. For a big car the B5 has a very impressive rate of acceleration. There's



Above: eight-speed auto gearbox delivers fast changes. Below: getting the big B5 sideways takes care and consideration

a rich seam of torque to be mined from any speed in any gear, but there is also a curious delay in the throttle response that can make the re-application of power awkward. You have to pre-empt and pick up the throttle earlier than you'd expect to get the required response. Opposite-lockery is therefore more complicated than it should be in a car with so much torque, but even in normal fast driving it can become frustrating. There are no complaints about the gearbox, though. The eight-speed ZF auto shuffles cogs in just 180 milliseconds, which feels almost instantaneous and a very acceptable alternative to a twin-clutch system.

There's plenty of lateral grip, but there's also a lot of mass on the move. The B5 Touring tips the scales at a smidge under two tons, so this is not a car you toy with lightly. As with all current 5-series machines, the steering suffers from a lack of feel, but it's not the major issue it was because those suspension revisions mean that, thankfully, you can now position the



car accurately – as long as the suspension is in either Sport or Sport+ mode, that is, for Normal and Comfort are best left for transporting priceless antiques.

So the B5 still isn't perfect, but its flaws are now of the smaller, forgivable type, and it now has the dual personality we were hoping for from last year's car. That ability to soak up countries in one luxurious, well-appointed, high-speed surge is there in spades, and the capability to dish up a bit of old-fashioned long-way-home entertainment when the mood takes you exists despite the caveats.

It's not cheap (our test car came in at £86,925) but it does have that bespoke feeling of grandeur that raises it above 'mere' BMWs. Alpinas appeal to a very specific band of buyers and we reckon they'll love this one. **Roger Green**

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- Superb engine, luxurious ambience
- Steering feel, throttle response



'THE B5 NOW HAS THE PERSONALITY WE WERE HOPING FOR'



ROLLS-ROYCE GHOST EWB

» LONGER WHEELBASE » £30K MORE EXPENSIVE

SPECIFICATION

Engine V12, 6592cc, twin-turbo
CO2 317g/km **Power** 563bhp @ 5250rpm
Torque 575lb ft @ 1500rpm
0-62mph 4.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Price** £230,000 **On sale** Now

It seems that no builder of high-end motors can ignore the predilections of emerging markets' big spenders, and China's new rich, in particular, like their limos extra-long. You might have thought the regular Rolls-Royce Ghost was rangey enough at 5.4 metres (that's 17.3cm more than a long-wheelbase Mercedes S-class), and the 2200 people who bought Ghosts in 2010 would seem to agree. But in markets where status is measured by how much rear legroom your limousine has, space to swing a cat appears to be the accepted minimum.

So kitty lovers everywhere might have cause to despise the emergence of the Ghost EWB (not 'yube' but extended wheelbase), which adds an extra 17cm to the 'entry level' Roller's nose-to-tail tally and balloons rear kneeroom from a more-than-adequate 160mm to a chairman-of-the-board spec 360mm. Not that the EWB looks like a 'stretch'; the extra length is absorbed into the design without harming the Ghost's elegant proportions.

What's it like to drive? Climb in the back and you might begin to wonder why you care. As well as all that feline airspace,



Above: sense of luxury is fabulous. EWB spec adds nearly £30K to the price of a Ghost, but it's still £55K more affordable than the range-topping Phantom



Below: extra length has added just 30kg to the Ghost's weight. V12 engine, eight-speed automatic gearbox and adaptive air suspension remain unchanged

you get fabulously comfortable seats (I immediately powered them to the fully reclined position, the better to exploit all that extra legroom), polished wood tables, lambswool rugs, TV screens, individual climate controls – everything the pampered plutocrat could want. Except, maybe, quite the same extraordinary ride comfort you get in the more expensive Phantom flagship.

So perhaps behind the wheel is the best place to be to enjoy the unlikely feats of acceleration and A-to-B alacrity the Ghost is capable of when asked. Of course, it will waft with the best of them, but get your toe down and the Ghost EWB can be a seriously rapid way to travel, the chassis' active anti-roll-bar system keeping body-roll in check and allowing surprisingly swift and tidy transitions.

So long as you keep things smooth and neat behind the wheel, the Ghost will respond in kind. And if the way it eats up the straights between bends (0-62mph takes an improbable 4.9sec) isn't a good reason to give the chauffeur the day off, it's hard to know what is. **David Vivian**

EVO RATING

★★★★★
 + As good to drive as the regular Ghost
 - Do you need that much rear...?

PANAMERA S HYBRID

» 374BHP HYBRID POWER
 » 41.5MPG AND 159G/KM



SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 2995cc, supercharged, plus 34kW electric motor **CO2** 159g/km **Power** 374bhp (combined) **Torque** 428lb ft (combined)
0-62mph 6.0sec (claimed) **Top speed** 168mph (claimed) **Price** £86,396 **On sale** Now

Hot on the heels of the Panamera Diesel (evo 161) comes another apparently mpg-focused variant, the Hybrid. It uses a rear-drive version of the powertrain fitted to the Cayenne S Hybrid, meaning an Audi-derived 3-litre supercharged petrol V6 with 328bhp, backed up by an electric motor that musters 34kW – or 46bhp in old money. That makes for a car capable of both a 6.0sec 0-62mph time and 41.5mpg, but not at the same time.

Engine and motor can power the car separately or together, although the maximum distance the Panamera can travel in its pure electric 'E-Power' mode is 1.25 miles, and only at speeds below 47mph.

The good news is that, from the driver's seat, the eco mission is effectively invisible. Petrol and electric power are blended seamlessly, from urban wafting to full-bore acceleration. On paper it's not quite as quick as a Panamera S, but in the real world it feels every bit as rapid thanks to the 'leccy motor's instant torque and the quick reactions of the eight-speed automatic (not PDK) gearbox.

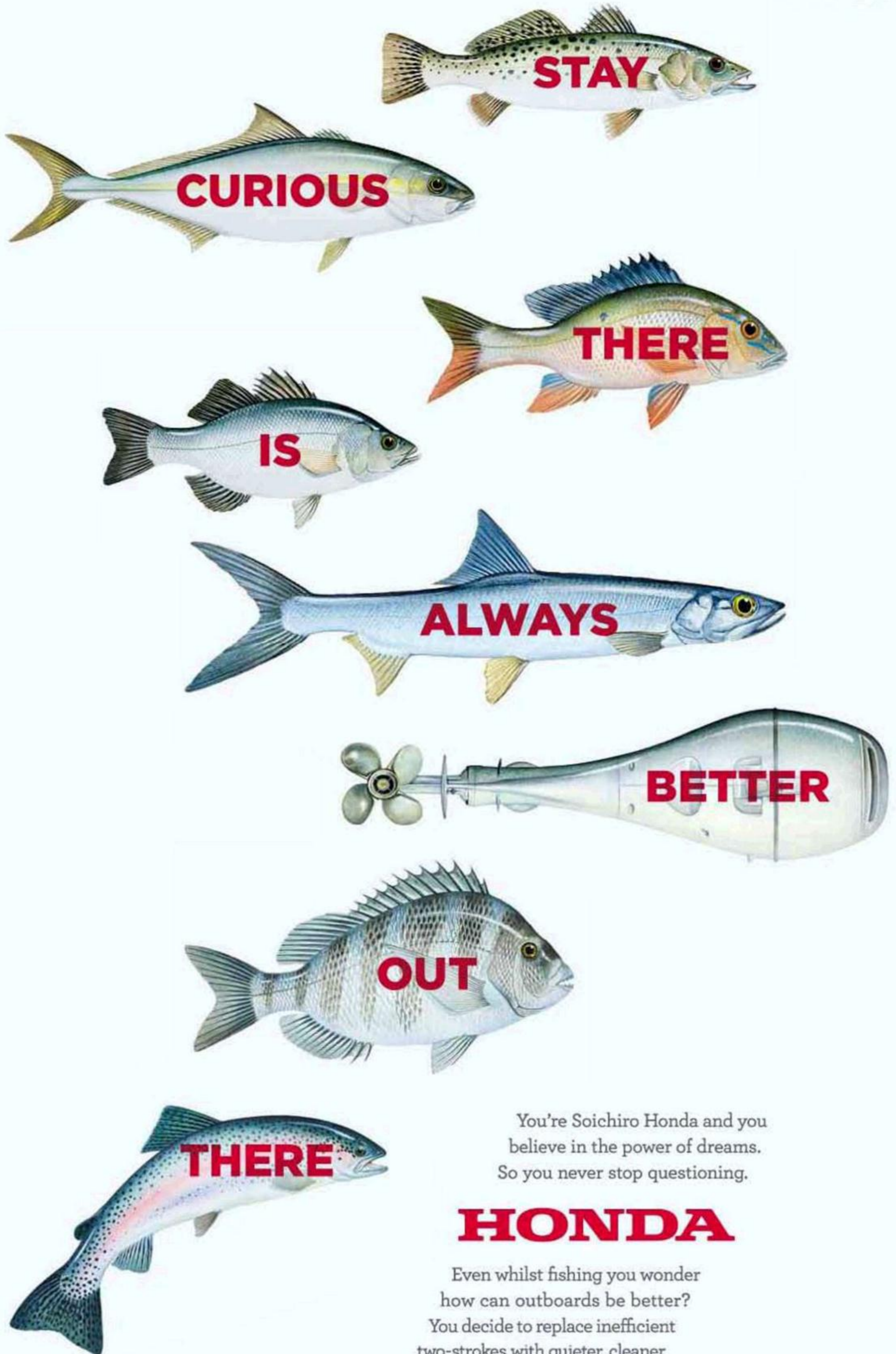
Spring and damper rates are softer than those of the turbo-nutter Panameras, and the Hybrid is far better for it. Body control is excellent and – despite its green tint – the Hybrid is happy to be hustled.

What it isn't is a rival to the diesel. The Hybrid is £24K more expensive and, even on the official economy figures, 2mpg thirstier. Still, we managed 35mpg in mixed real-world use, which is impressive for such a leviathan. **Mike Duff**

EVO RATING

★★★★★
 + Great powertrain; waft and pace
 - Not priced to appeal to mpg-misers





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(Small, illegible text at the bottom of the page)



AUDI A6 AVANT 3.0 TDI

» NEW TWIN-TURBO DIESEL V6 » 309BHP, 479LB FT » 0-62MPH IN 5.3SEC

SPECIFICATION

Engine 2967cc, V6, twin-turbo diesel
CO2 169g/km **Power** 309bhp @ 3900-4500rpm
Torque 479lb ft @ 1450-2800rpm
0-62mph 5.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Price** c£46,000 (est) **On sale** November

Think of this car as Audi's answer to the BMW 535d: all bases covered with long-legged performance and decent economy too (44mpg on the combined cycle).

This range-topping A6's version of Audi's all-new 3-litre diesel V6 uses twin, sequential turbochargers: a small one for low-rev response, a larger one for maximum fireworks. It produces exactly the same power as the BMW at 309bhp, but exceeds it for torque, mustering a substantial 479lb ft (against 442lb ft). That's too much for the S-tronic twin-clutch gearbox, so the eight-speed Tiptronic auto is fitted instead.

Of course, it's the torque that dominates, swatting this Avant to 62mph from rest in just 5.3 seconds and easily snagging the limiter at 155mph. But it's the power and the voracious appetite for air of the larger turbo that



Above: cabin is well equipped, with MMI and 6.5in screen standard. Below: new bi-turbo diesel V6



defines this car; you can rev the engine to beyond 5000rpm quite usefully – unusually for a diesel – while it even sounds vaguely appealing in a gruff, rumbling sort of way.

Like the recently launched A6 saloon, the Avant is constructed from a mixture of steel and aluminium. Audi claims the resulting car is up to 80kg lighter than the one it replaces. It's lower and wider than before too, with a reduced front overhang and a longer wheelbase that increases cabin space, although it's no match for an E-class wagon in its load-carrying ability.

The A6 is still a remote, emotion-free device to pilot, particularly in the way it steers, but it's a good deal less inert than the old car – especially the S-line model with its sport differential. How it will ride on poor roads in the UK, though, remains to be answered. **Adam Towler**

evo RATING

- ★ Performance and economy
- ★ Could be more exciting

BMW X3 3.0d

» NEW V6 TURBODIESEL
 » 413LB FT OF TORQUE



SPECIFICATION

Engine 2993cc, V6, turbodiesel **CO2** n/a
Power 255bhp @ 4000rpm
Torque 413lb ft @ 2000rpm **0-62mph** 6.2sec (claimed) **Top speed** 130mph (claimed) **Price** £37,600 **On sale** Now

The Range Rover Evoque has gone straight to the top of every fashionista's want-list, but the newly launched BMW X3 3.0d can lay decent claim on being the drivers' choice in the compact SUV segment.

These things are relative, of course. Buying an off-roader – even a pretend one – on the basis of its dynamic performance might seem as odd as choosing a roadster for its ground clearance, but within the limits of its genre, the current X3 is a sharp steer. It pretty much drives like the ramped-up 3-series Touring that, beneath the SUV styling, it basically is.

What it has been missing until now, however, is much in the way of firepower. BMW has now addressed that with this new 3-litre diesel version. The 30d has 255bhp, 413lb ft of torque and a standard-fit eight-speed auto gearbox, which combine to deliver a claimed 6.2sec 0-62mph time.

This is a great diesel engine: smooth, powerful and accompanying progress with a pleasant, multi-cylinder burble. The gearbox shifts smoothly and intelligently, too. The steering has a decent weight and heft to it, grip levels are keen up to the well-flagged limits, and – considering the forces at work – body control is excellent.

Of course, the X3 still weighs the best part of two tons and carries much of its mass in the wrong place. But while it's no sports car, it's impossible to drive the X3 and not be impressed by how well BMW's engineers have overcome the physical limitations inherent within it. **Mike Duff**

evo RATING

- ★ Performance, engine, manners
- ★ Won't get far down a green lane



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

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"IT FEELS LIKE THE LOVE CHILD OF AN SL65 AND A PORSCHE GT2" EVO OCT '10

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"THIS CAR IS STUPENDOUSLY FAST"
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997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
997 GT3 » UP TO 436 BHP
996 3.6 » 344 BHP
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CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 » 578+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 » 600+ BHP
CAYENNE DIESEL » 300+ BHP

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CL600 BI-TURBO » 580+ BHP
S500 2008 » 411+BHP
SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP & DE-LIMIT
SLK 350 » 328 BHP
SLK 200K » 205+ BHP
C220 CDI (W204) » 210 BHP
280/300 CDI V6 » 257 BHP
320 CDI V6 » 274 BHP
350 CDI V6 » 312 BHP
420/450 CDI V8 » 358 BHP
4.7/5.5 V8 BI-TURBO » PLEASE CALL

BMW:

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

EXOTIC & MISC:

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FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP
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GALLARDO LP560 » 600+ BHP
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GRANTURISMO S / MC » 479+ BHP
AUDI RS6 V10 » 680+BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI R8 V10 » 592+ BHP
AUDI B7 RS4/ R8 » 439 BHP & DE-LIMIT
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FORD FIESTA S1600

» LIMITED EDITION » MORE POWER » 0-62MPH IN 8.2SEC

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1596cc
CO2 139g/km **Power** 132bhp @ 6700rpm
Torque 118lb ft @ 4250rpm
0-60mph 8.2sec (claimed) **Top speed** 121mph (claimed) **Price** £15,900 **On sale** Now

The Fiesta S1600's 132bhp might sound paltry by modern standards, but until the long overdue ST finally hits showrooms, this is the pokiest version of Ford's small hatch you can buy. The lack of fire in its belly has never stopped the Fiesta being fun, though. We ran a 118bhp Zetec S – the car that loses its range-topping position to this S1600 – as a long-termer in 2010, and it proved an entertaining little thing. Its stiff but well-judged chassis set-up only served to highlight how much power it could really handle, though, and we've been eagerly awaiting Ford's next move since.

A mildly warmed version of the Zetec S's 1.6-litre four-pot petrol wasn't exactly what we were hoping for. Rises of 14bhp and 6lb ft are yielded by a new low-loss air intake, an overhauled exhaust system (complete with new twin tailpipes) and a 300rpm increase in maximum engine speed (to 6800rpm). Predictably, the result doesn't feel worlds apart from the Zetec S, though it's still a lot of fun.

While those higher peak figures are delivered a few hundred revs higher than before, this Fiesta actually feels friskier at lower engine speeds, an area where the Zetec S always felt notably lacking. The S1600's closer gear ratios are probably a significant contributor here, likewise for the 1.7sec quicker 0-60mph time (although the raised rev-limit removing the need to change up to third gear to reach 60mph also helps with this).



Colour scheme is unique to the S1600 (you can also have blue with white stripes). Above: white alloys are standard, as are logo'd kick plates

All told, the S1600 is more likeable than the similarly potent Mountune MP140 upgrade for the Zetec S (evo 131); the red line is reached with smooth linearity and the engine is a delight to work hard. The Fiesta's combination of precise steering, composed ride and crisp handling is still crying out for an extra 50bhp or so, though, so you'll soon be wondering how good a time you'd be having with a bhp count more befitting the current small hot hatch class.

The 500-off S1600 is certainly eye-catching, with a choice of blue-on-white or white-on-blue striped colour schemes, both with glaring white alloys and new aero kit. Equipment levels are impressive, too, with heated leather seats, climate control, Bluetooth and Ford Motorsport logo'd mats and kick-plates. If only there was a motorsport stamp under the bonnet too... **Stephen Dobie**

evo RATING ★★★★★

- Fun Fiesta gets a touch faster
- We still want the ST...



MAZDA MX-5 SPORT BLACK

» SPECIAL-EDITION MX-5
 » STYLING TWEAKS ONLY



SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc **CO2** 181g/km
Power 158bhp @ 7000rpm **Torque** 138lb ft @ 5000rpm **0-62mph** 7.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 136mph (claimed) **Price** £22,995 **On sale** Now

Yep, it's another special-edition MX-5. This one has a little more integrity than some past efforts, though, being inspired by Mazda's MX-5 GT endurance racing car rather than a new *Charlie's Angels* film.

The Sport Black isn't a road-going version of the 850kg, 275bhp GT, however. Its links to Mazda's overachieving racer stop at the lurid green paint (red or white are also offered), dark alloy wheels and sprinkling of black trim. Under the skin, it's as you were, the 158bhp 2-litre engine unchanged and no weight lost. And you can only buy the Sport Black as the Roadster Coupe, which weighs 83kg more than a soft-top MX-5.

While the folding hard-top's greater mass and higher centre of gravity soften the MX-5's edges and exaggerate its body-roll a smidge, the dynamics don't suffer too badly. It remains one of our favourite sports cars, combining a spirited naturally aspirated engine, an ultra-satisfying six-speed manual gearbox and a fine front-engine/rear-drive balance.

Just 500 Sport Blacks will be made, costing £360 more than the 2.0 Sport Tech they're based on, and while it's no better than a regular MX-5, it's no less enjoyable either. **Stephen Dobie**



Badges and black wheels help mark out this limited-edition MX-5; just 500 will be made

evo RATING ★★★★★

- All the usual MX-5 goodness
- No soft-top option



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WHAT'S RUFFLED YOUR FEATHERS THIS MONTH?

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Flat over crest into kitchen

Another great issue (Sound of Speed, evo 161), and what a great photo of that Rothmans Escort on the lock-stops (Rallying Cry).

Having grown up in west Wales and spectated at far too many rallies as a child, the words Epynt, Brechfa, Escort and Manta are etched permanently in my memory. As are the sounds, which Henry Catchpole described and brought to life in print so well in his piece on four-cylinder rally cars.

It reminded me of manic kids at school who ran up the stairs to classrooms doing worryingly good impressions of a Pinto or BDA at 8000rpm, accompanied by varying degrees of oversteer.

Now I have a child of my own, and if she requires me, for instance, to negotiate a tricky 90 left from hallway into living room whilst having a shoulder-ride, it's the BDA at 8000 or even 9000rpm every time...

D Bowen



'IT REMINDED ME OF MANIC KIDS AT SCHOOL DOING IMPRESSIONS OF A B.D.A. AT 8000RPM'

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The quiet revolution

It's 5 o'clock on a Sunday morning in June. Dawn breaks in the distance, the sun making its presence felt for the first time as it flickers through the trees. Birds can be heard breaking into song. You squint now, trying to make out the four sets of lights jostling for position. In this light, the liveries are hard to make out so you have no way of knowing who it is. Has McNish taken the lead?!

Finally, you catch the glow of the ceramics and the faint thrum of KERS at work as it charges the battery. Side by side now, the two cars sweep through the apex before disappearing into the distance to the sound of more birdsong.

If that is the future of motorsport (Nissan Leaf RC: The Quiet Racing Car, issue 161), Chris Harris won't be the only one working on his golf swing. See you on the first tee, Monkey.
Matt Jones, Wrexham, North Wales

Classical music

A few significant omissions from the Sound of Speed issue...

No six-carb Ferrari V12? I remember the sound of a 250 GTO at an Oulton Park trackday in the '90s to this day. From the pits you could hear him from Knickerbrook through Druids, Lodge and all the way back out to Island... glorious. Also no eight-cylinder Bugatti? Have you guys never heard one of these at full chat? Like continuously ripping calico.

On a personal note, my old Boxster S was anodyne in the sound department, so I cannot see what John Barker is getting excited about (Boxster v SLK twin test). My old 308 Ferrari sounded like a four (it's timed like two fours) until you got above 5500, and then it howled all the way to the 7000rpm red line.

My personal favourite, though, was my old Chimaera 500 – almost like Jonny Smith's hemi impersonation of PO-TA-TO-PO-TA-TO on tickover but rolling thunder from 2000rpm. Unforgettable. My neighbours still remember the 5am departures for trackdays!
Bryn Owen, Southminster, Essex

Burble and thrum

Enjoyed Richard Porter's column about his thrumming Fiat 500 TwinAir (Petrolhead, 161).

Matt Jones won't be spectating if future racers are electric like the Leaf RC (see 'The quiet revolution')



An unexpected surprise-and-delight feature of our Fabia 1.6 TDI CR is that at modest revs and modest throttle openings, she burbles.

She doesn't woofle like a Subaru flat-four, nor warble like an Audi five, neither does she rumble like a Yankee V8: she burbles.

Best sound I have heard recently was from a posse of three wedding cars bedecked with ribbons and driven by three morning-suited and cravatted blokes. They were driving three jet-black AC Cobras and the sound was from the halls of Valhalla.

Lee Thickett

Cam on, feel the noise

I have enjoyed your Sound of Speed issue, but you have made a glaring omission with the four-cylinder twin-cam engines. I love the sound of my 1994 Toyota MR2 twin-cam when it kicks in, but my particular favourites are the Honda VTEC engines. When the VTEC kicks in... wow. Especially if it's a DC2 Integra or '90s Civic.
Tom Brewerton

M5 memories

Really enjoyed Chris Harris's article on the E60 BMW M5 (161). What a car and what an engine! Fantastic pictures, too. The feature reminded me of a great moment when I was on work experience with *Autocar* in 2005.

The mag had organised a test day on Rockingham's infield circuit to find out the



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best-handling car of the year – and I'd tagged along! 'The moment' came during a photoshoot in which an M5 (driven by Harris, I think) had to drift alongside a Mercedes CLS55 AMG around the final turn onto the pit straight where I was watching from. To this day I can still hear the BM's V10 *woooooaaar-woooooaaar-woooooaaar-ing* as Harris balanced the car on the throttle.

The M5 sounded so different to the AMG, which rumbled like rolling thunder alongside the screaming motor from Munich. It was quick, too – two seconds quicker than the Benz round the track.

It pains me to say it, but they're a dying breed these cars. We should appreciate what we have before the electric/hydrogen revolution really kicks in.
Kyle Molyneux, Surrey



Tom Diethe enjoyed one of our Great Drives in a classic Porsche ('Spyder fan')

Spyder fan

Liking the new layout, and the added section on routes. Funnily enough we had just got back from a trip to Nice when I read the bit on the Col de Turini – you describe nearly exactly the route we took.

Rather than stay in a posh hotel, we decided to rent a sports car and camp! We'd plumped for a Lotus 7 from rentacarclassic.com, but since it wasn't ready when we turned up they said we could take any of their other cars for the same price, so we chose their Porsche 550 RS Spyder. It didn't disappoint – she may be an old girl but the howl from the flat-four (especially through tunnels) was still there and the traction was stunning.

Campsites were easy to find and definitely the way to do it (a 12-quid Argos tent fits in the smallest of boots!). When we were there (beginning of July) the roads were nearly empty too – fab!
Tom Diethe, Englefield Green, Surrey

Bargain Beemer?

Harry Metcalfe's piece on the lack of sales for the new BMW 550i (Insider, 161) struck a chord with me. In 2006, I bought an E60 545i M Sport – the BMW 545i was a bit of a bargain and



Cars like the V10-engined BMW M5 are a dying breed, says Kyle Molyneux

with just 2000 miles on the clock. As the salesman handed over the keys, he said he would miss the car because the dealership would not be getting any more V8s as demonstrators.

I drove away pleased with myself for buying the car for £41,500 when its full retail with options was a tad under £50,000, but I had a little niggle at the back of my mind about the salesman's comment. Shortly after, petrol prices really started to climb and I realised why the dealership had decided not to have any more big-engined demonstrators and why I had got my 'bargain'. I rarely see another 545i or 550i on the road, so I guess the sales decline began with the E60 5-series. However, with the gearbox in Sport mode and the throttle floored, the grunt and growl of the big V8 still puts an evo-wide smile on my face.
Dan Drogman, Loughton, Essex

Voting with their fleet

I think Harry has missed an important point: most BMW 5-series are chosen by fleet customers, who these days have to wrangle with income tax based on both the CO2 emissions and value of the vehicle when new.

This essentially prices the majority of financially sane people out of owning a big petrol. So I wouldn't consider it not 'wanting' a 550i, more that it's insanely expensive to have one as a company car. I'd hazard a guess that most Ferraris are personal playthings rather than company cars, so this problem doesn't apply, as intriguing a stat as that was to read.

Great magazine last month, by the way. Love the QR-code idea – it's something different and the idea of the 'sound of speed' is particularly relevant based on the discussions surrounding future F1 engines. I was given a new three-cylinder VW Polo as a courtesy car the other week and thrashed it mercilessly à la Mr Porter in his 500 TwinAir simply because (and it took me a while to work this out) over 4500rpm it sounds almost like half-a-911.
Ben Wicks

FROM THE FORUMS: FORMULA 1 – THE KILLER YEARS



Were the drivers who risked their lives in F1 during the '60s and '70s heroes or just selfish?

Delphi: Anybody else see this on BBC2? Utterly riveting. Made for pretty sobering viewing.

PugRallye: It really was quite barbaric wasn't it? And I'm not sure I buy into the whole 'they were heroes/real men etc' – taking stupid risks isn't a sign of being a real man IMO. Never knowing if this would be the race in which you died (often for reasons beyond your control) just seems a bit daft to me.

ShockDiamonds: Seem to recall reading something years ago that Senna would have still climbed into the car even if he'd known what was going to happen. Seemed strange at the time and it still does.

PugRallye: Thing is, I file this under James Cracknell's attitude on that Arctic thing, where he was quite happy to pile into a glacier field without a care for his safety – it's not just about him. He has a wife, kids. It's basically selfish, not heroic to wilfully risk your life. IMO.

Donfisher: I think the total opposite TBH. Unless of course they said at the point of meeting their significant other that they would give up doing

whatever dangerous activity it is that they love to do.

If it's someone's career/pastime presumably the partners + family realise that that's what makes someone part of who they are and let them get on with it knowing the pitfalls.

Si: It was Russian Roulette, but look at the guys who were doing it. They were hooked on the adrenalin.

Mike Rainbird: You can't live your life letting potential 'what if' scenarios prevent you from doing anything. If you ride a motorbike, you're putting yourself at an 80 per cent greater risk of death or injury than if the same journey was carried out by car – does that stop any of the motorcyclists from getting up and going to work in the morning?

Si: It's all up to the assessment of risk vs reward. These guys must have been getting a big reward.

Marv: A Grand Prix, you might say?

Si: I was thinking more of an adrenalin/endorphin rush, but girls, money, prestige, and bad puns would probably cover it.

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THE STARS OF 2012 YOUR NEXT CAR

A new Jaguar coupe, a supercharged V6 Exige and a brand new 911 – just three of the great new cars heading your way in 2012. Welcome to our 24-page preview

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JUST BUILD IT!

Officially, this 'baby' Jaguar coupe is just a concept, but if it makes production – and it really should – it'll be one of the most exciting new cars of 2012.

***Mike Duff** takes a closer look at the C-X16, and speaks to the men behind it*





T

here's a deeply strange convention when it comes to near-production concepts like the Jaguar C-X16 – that of pretending that there's every chance the manufacturer concerned isn't going to build them.

Picture the scene: *evo* has been invited to Jaguar's engineering centre to look over the car and discuss it with senior execs ahead of its official unveiling at the Frankfurt motor show. By either luck or (quite possibly) design, there's a similarly proportioned prototype passing through the security gates at Whitley just as photographer Dean Smith and I arrive, an XK coupe with about a foot chopped out of its wheelbase – which blasts off with a six-cylinder soundtrack.

Yet, ten minutes later, standing in the studio, looking at what has to be the most production-ready concept I've ever seen, we're back in never-maybe-land, with design director Ian Callum and engineering programme boss Russ Varney's every sentence containing a

proviso along the lines of 'if we choose to build it' or 'providing it happens, of course'. There are even PR minders hovering to keep everything on message.

It's a polite, but pointless, fiction. And one that's effectively blown not just by the conspicuous presence of the engineering hack, but also by the amount of investment that's clearly gone into creating the 'show concept' itself. One of the first things I ask Callum about is why the bonnet has been expanded over the top of the front wings.

'That's a solution we have to a lot of the issues of pedestrian safety,' he explains. 'On the current cars the front wings are static areas, and that means that everything within that area has to comply with the regulations, which makes for a very difficult set of measurements. But if we include the wing top surface into the pyrotechnic bonnet it gives us a bit more freedom in form. It's a bit of a ploy, you could say – a clamshell bonnet that gets us through a lot of the regulatory issues.'

One of the PRs coughs.

'If we choose to build it, of course,' adds Callum, a twinkle in his eye.

Of course, Jaguar's corporate reticence is understandable, with the company having a history of under-delivering with its motor show cars. The CX-F of 2007 was a classic case in point – a stunning, blinged-up concept that did little to prepare people for the considerably more conservative XF saloon. It's a mistake that Callum, for one, is determined not to make again.

'I think with the C-XF we did over-promise,' he admits. 'We designed it after we'd finished the XF, and we knew it was



Above: early sketch of the C-X16. Below: concept is a hybrid, although what form this tech takes isn't clear. Right: nose features new squared-off grille

going to be a dramatic statement by itself. But I think we took the CX-F perhaps a step too far – we certainly wouldn't over-promise like that again. If we were to do another production-ready concept car it would be very close to the real thing. Very close.'

He doesn't actually nudge me, or tip me a comedy wink, but it's fair to say I'm not left struggling to read between the lines.

BY CALLUM'S OWN estimation the C-X16 is '95 per cent viable', although when asked to nominate which external details couldn't make it into production his only suggestions are that the rear-view mirrors would have to be made slightly bigger for legal compliance in some markets, and that ride on the 21in wheels of the show car would be 'marginal'.

It's a handsome thing in the flesh, the C-X16. The front end has lost much of the tickbox detailing of some of Jaguar's other, less confident models – the oval grille is squared off, the new bumper intakes don't seem to have been inherited from anywhere else. It's a strict two-seater and – if it gets the green light, of course – Callum confirms that it will be sistered by a roadster version. 'We couldn't do one without the other,' he admits, 'and it would fit very much into our sports car history.'

At the back there are strong haunches, what design types refer to as a 'muscular stance' and a squared-off tail that calls the Aston Martin Vantage to mind. By happy coincidence, the C-X16 is almost exactly the same size as the baby Aston – a car Callum also penned the early versions of during his time as AM's design boss.

But when I turn the conversation to the Vantage, Callum plays the Scottish equivalent of a forward defensive stroke, probably because several of his earlier Jag models were likened to his work at Aston: 'Well, in packaging terms it's probably not far away, but there are no similarities in terms of the contents of the cars. As a designer you derive an overall shape from a series of events – and if you think of the events that went into creating the Vantage they were very similar to those that went into this. But I don't see this as being a Jaguar Vantage, no.'

Jaguar has been here before, of course. An F-type concept got very close to being signed off ten years ago. Callum admits that he's been pushing for a chance to do a two-seater ever since – but company insiders say it took the acquisition of Jaguar Land Rover by Tata, and the realisation that big boss Ratan Tata also saw a lightweight sports car in Jaguar's future, to get the project to the top of the pile.



*'THE C-X16 HAS TO BE THE
MOST PRODUCTION-READY
CONCEPT THAT I'VE EVER SEEN'*





'THE 375BHP V6 IS ASSISTED BY A "PERFORMANCE HYBRID"'

'The F-type was going to be smaller than this, but it was a two-seater too,' says Callum. 'That car never saw the light of day because other priorities took over – we had to create a whole new series of engines, we had to start thinking about the next generation of cars, which were fundamental to the business. But, for me, the two-seater sports car is right at the centre of the Jaguar brand, and it really always has been if you think back – the SS100, the XK120, the E-type, even the XJ-S to a certain extent. It got muddled after that, but internally we always felt a natural tendency back to a raw two-seater.'

A chance to look inside the concept's cabin shows off what feels like acres of red leather, some trick-looking touchscreens and plenty of what I take to be old-school motor show jewellery. But, once again, Callum is quick to steer me right.

'Again, I'd say it's do-able. Very do-able,' he says. 'The interior has been designed to be both legally and technically correct. In

this car we've got some fairly minimalist seats, which unfortunately can't contain airbags and so wouldn't make production. But overall it's very feasible.'

And the red leather?

'That's an indulgence on my part,' Callum laughs. 'I've always loved the idea of a completely red interior – this is something that we've pushed hard for and I think it works well. I love the idea of a red glow coming out of the metallic grey exterior.'

It's beneath the surface that the C-X16 moves furthest away from reality. The concept is made with carbonfibre body panels, the 'best way to build it in the timeframe we had' according to Callum. It's a point that seems to have escaped whoever wrote the press kit, which reckons the car is made from aluminium – proof that even the PR department is having difficulty in separating the unofficial fact from the fiction. But a production version...





SYSTEM, WHICH CAN ADD ANOTHER 93BHP AND 173LB FT'

'With the XJ and XK, going from steel platforms to aluminium ones was a giant leap,' says Russ Varney. 'Having made that leap and made that investment there's no turning back now... It's fair to say that we are becoming much more aware of carbon. Were we to build the car, you might see some carbon components in it. But overall this body is carbon for expediency more than anything else. Our natural material is aluminium.'

Under the bonnet the C-X16 has a supercharged 3-litre V6 engine that's clearly destined for the production version. This produces a claimed 375bhp and 332lb ft of torque and sends drive to the rear wheels through a ZF six-speed automatic gearbox. It's also assisted by what's described as a 'performance hybrid' system, which can add another 93bhp and 173lb ft, and which is powered by a fast-discharge 1.6kWh battery pack. The net result – with due deference to show spec inflation – is a cl

0-62mph time and a 186mph top speed, along with CO2 emissions of 165g/km.

Jaguar is being reticent about exactly how the engine, electric motor and gearbox work together – a clear nod that the hybrid system is destined for production and that the company is keen to keep details away from its competitors. Insiders have previously told us that it will be offered on higher-spec versions of the car, possibly even as the performance differentiation over an engine-only base car. That said, Callum is also happy to mischievously point out that the concept's engine compartment could also accommodate the company's 5-litre V8.

Getting less feasible, the concept's hybrid system is controlled by a KERS-style 'push to pass' button on the steering wheel – something that Varney confirms is mostly there to grab motor show attention. 'We could do it,' he says, 'but the big question is whether you'd want to. I think that

assistance] to be automatic rather than manual. Look at a 50-75mph overtaking manoeuvre. The XKR-S does that in 1.8 seconds and this car will do it in 2.1. By the time the driver works out whether to press the button he's going to be past the obstacle anyway.'

Of course, Jaguar currently doesn't offer any of its model range with a manual gearbox. And despite its clear dynamic intent, any production version of the C-X16 is unlikely to buck the trend. 'Never say never,' reckons Varney, 'but the big consideration now is probably what's actually going to be out there in terms of manual transmissions able to take the power and torque, as there are only two or three to choose from. Speaking personally I understand the desire for interaction, but when you get a high-torque engine and a reasonably heavy car, I know that a ZF six-speed auto can cope with one-to-two shifts – or two-to-one shifts – much better than I can... We'll listen to what customers

Chief engineer Russ Varney (far left) and design head Ian Callum (left) talk C-X16. Above: car is a strict two-seater and has proportions to match



STARS OF 2012
JAGUAR C-X16



Interior is 'do-able' according to Callum; carbon-shelled seats (right and below) wouldn't make production, though, as they have no space for integrated airbags



*'WITH THIS CAR,
JAGUAR HAS AN
OPPORTUNITY
TO GET BACK TO
THE FRONT OF
THE PACK'*



want, but making [a manual gearbox] happen would have what I'd term a "not insignificant" cost implication.'

Interestingly, when it comes to chassis settings, Varney reckons that a (purely putative) production version wouldn't necessarily use the active electrically variable dampers that many manufacturers are switching their performance models to. 'I think it's a case of horses for courses,' he says. 'Clearly with the active damping systems you can broaden the range of things, you can have more refinement and more performance. But I think that as you move towards more focused vehicles, having the broad range can sometimes distract from the character of the car. Maybe a passive damper could offer a more focused feel than an adaptive one. We're not in a position to rule out either.'

Looking at the C-X16's slippery shape gets me wondering about aerodynamics and the roll they played in the development of the car. 'For us engineering chaps, our job is to help Ian deliver the design he wants,' says Varney. 'We can make a very aerodynamic car and we know what it would look like – low at the front, high at the back, square at both ends. But it's not going to look very good.'

But what about the C-X16's lack of any wings or active flaps at the back? Could it work without any active aerodynamics?

'I'll answer that one,' says Callum, with a warning glance at the patrolling PRs. 'The answer is no. The shape of this car is in defiance to a good, stable aero design. And therefore – if we were to produce it –

expect some sort of aerodynamic aid. I say this because anyone who understands aerodynamics would look at the car and see it immediately – the back is untypically low. We've done that for the aesthetics as much as anything else.'

One question remains unanswered: the name of a production version. The early betting was on XE, but company insiders insist that no decision has been taken, and that it's even possible the car could see a return to a '-type' moniker. If they build it, of course.

DON'T WORRY, they will.

Jaguar has been late to the party with pretty much every one of its recent models. The XK was launched without the horsepower to get close to its German rivals, and Jaguar has quietly acknowledged that launching the XF without either an estate variant or the four-cylinder diesel engine that European buyers were clamouring for was another round in its corporate foot.

With the production version of this car – whichever name it carries – the company has a definite opportunity to get back to the front of the pack. Deliver this concept and you're looking at a car that would be cheaper, quicker and cleaner than an Aston Vantage V8, with the question of which was the better-looking likely going to a points verdict for most of us.

Last word to Callum: 'The other cars we've done recently were fundamental to the business, that's why we did them. But this car, to me, is fundamental to the brand – and that's why it's so important.'

JUST ANOTHER

It may not appear that different at first glance, but this latest version

We need to get one thing straight before we go any further: this is a brand new 911. No really, it is. According to Porsche, this latest version of the über-Beetle (known internally as the 991) is 90 per cent new, and after spending a day with both the car and the team that developed it, I reckon it represents a significant new chapter in the long-running 911 saga.

To give you a flavour, consider this:

even on the most basic model of the new 911 (which goes on sale in December this year), the red zone on the tachometer doesn't begin until 7800rpm – exactly where the rev-counter on the original 911 GT3 of 1999 turned scarlet. That's a shocking number of engine revolutions in this age of mass tree-hugging and low-revving, turbocharged M-cars.

The similarities with the iconic 996 GT3 don't stop there either, as both cars share identical 0-62mph times of

4.8sec (equipped with the twin-clutch PDK gearbox, the base 3.4-litre Carrera drops that to just 4.6sec), and while the GT3 had 360bhp at 7200rpm compared with 345bhp at 7400rpm for the 3.4-litre 991, it loses the torque contest with 273lb ft verses 287lb ft, meaning on-road performance should be near identical. Even the kerb weights of the two cars are closer than you'd ever expect, the new Carrera weighing in at 1380kg, down 45kg on the outgoing 997 version and only



PORSCHE 911?

of the 911 is 90 per cent new. Harry Metcalfe looks at what's changed

30kg more than the stripped-out GT3, a difference that is easily accounted for by the plush front and rear seats, leather trim, satnav and climate control, all of which are standard on the new model.

So what we're looking at here is a new 911 where, as near as dammit, the base model matches the limited-edition GT3 of just over a decade ago in performance terms, yet is capable of averaging 34.5mpg and producing a mere 194g/km of CO₂. Now there's progress for you...

So what are the big changes with the 991? One of the most significant is the way Porsche has managed to shave the kerb weight by between 30 and 45 kilos, depending on model specification. That's an impressive reduction, especially when you consider that the new 911 is longer than the model it replaces (by 56mm, with the wheelbase up 100mm).

Delve into the detail and you'll discover most of this reduction has come about from a big drop in the weight of the body

shell, which is some 95kg lighter than the current 997's. Not only does this weight reduction offer significant benefits in terms of efficiency and handling, it also bodes well for Porsche's motorsport division and future GT3 and RS versions, which could weigh as little as 1280kg in 991 form.

To achieve this, steel has only been used in the 991's body where its inherent extra strength is required. The doors, front bonnet, wings and roof are all now



NEW 911: THE KEY CHANGES

BODY

Over 50 per cent of the body is constructed from aluminium, including the doors, roof, wings and front bonnet. The result is a reduction in 'body in white' weight of 95kg – a remarkable achievement for what is a bigger 911 than before.

MIRRORS

For the 991, the door mirrors have moved from the window-corner position seen on previous 911s to the upper door in order to maximise airflow efficiency and reduce wind noise at speed.



SIZE

The 991 is only 56mm longer than the 997, despite having a 100mm longer wheelbase. The front overhang has been shortened by 32mm and the rear overhang by 12mm. The new car is 7mm less tall but no wider, despite the 46mm (52mm on the 'S') increase in front track width.



PDK

The twin-clutch gearbox still comes with unintuitive push/pull shift controls on the wheel, although the vastly superior paddles are an option.

KEY

The 991 is still started with a key, despite some senior Porsche personnel wanting to fit a starter button. Keyless entry is now an option, though.

MODES

All 991s get stop/start as standard. PDK-equipped cars can also 'sail' (see right). Drivers can disable both functions with a button on the steering wheel.



991 Carrera S (above) can be identified by its larger, 20in alloys and quad exhausts; regular Carrera (top) has 19in wheels as standard and just two tailpipes. Prices rise around £4-5K to £71,449 for the Carrera, £81,242 for the S

WHEELS

19in wheels are standard on the 3.4-litre Carrera, while the Carrera S gets 20s. Bigger wheels allow lower tyre pressures to be used for greater comfort. The 991's tyres offer a 7 per cent reduction in rolling resistance, despite there being no reduction in performance.

LOOKS

With a 7mm reduction in height, a wider track and a 100mm longer wheelbase, the new 911 has a much more streamlined look than the 997 version. The new longer, sleeker side windows make it look especially good in profile too.

SUNROOF

If you spec a sunroof, the 'lid' now slides out over the outer roof, rather than between the roof and headlining. This increases headroom and allows the panel to be bigger.

REAR SPOILER

The rear spoiler on the 991 extends to different heights and angles, depending on the car's speed. The leading edge of the spoiler also features a 'special pivoting kinetic mechanism' to alter airflow over the blade. At top speed, the spoiler generates 88kg of downforce.



PORSCHE
911 Carrera

S GO 4020

ENGINE

The entry-level Carrera's engine has been downsized to 3.4 litres (from 3.6) but power is up by 4bhp to 345bhp. The Carrera S remains a 3.8, with power rising from 380 to 394bhp.

EXHAUST

On both the 3.4 and 3.8 versions of the 991, the exhaust system gains active valves that optimise its acoustic performance. With the optional Sport Chrono pack, this is enhanced even further, meaning the new 911 should sound much more sporty than it did before.

GEARBOX

All 991s will have seven gears – even those fitted with the H-pattern manual gearshift (a world first). The 7th gear is purely to maximise economy when cruising, and with PDK the engine will disengage when its power isn't required in 7th, allowing the car to 'sail' (or coast) to save more fuel. The Carrera GT-inspired rising centre console puts the gearknob closer to the driver's hand.

'THE DOORS, FRONT BONNET, WINGS AND ROOF ARE ALL NOW ALUMINIUM'

aluminium; even the plastic body parts have 'thickness optimised' walls to cut weight as much as possible.

Look at the mechanical specification of the 991 and you stumble upon the most controversial change of all: the introduction of electro-mechanical steering. The engineers are keen to point out that the system has been developed from scratch by Porsche, to make sure it delivers all the precision and feedback drivers expect from a 911. Those who have driven the car say it's as good as the hydraulic system that preceded it. It seems a strange move wh

saving is only 0.1 litres per 100km.

Other new tech includes PDCC (Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control), an active roll reduction system that makes its 911 debut as an option on the 3.8-litre Carrera S. The PASM active suspension system has been upgraded too (and comes as standard on the Carrera S), with the introduction of wheel-height sensors for even better control. Finally, there's Porsche's torque vectoring system, PTV (or with the PDK transmission, the more sophisticated PTV Plus), which makes its way onto the Carrera S as standard or as

Another headline-grabbing component is the world's first seven-speed H-pattern manual gearbox. Seventh is effectively an overdrive gear to maximise cruising fuel consumption, and it can't be selected until you are already in fifth or higher. Porsche expects PDK to remain the most popular gearbox option, though. In fact, new R&D boss Wolfgang Hatz reckons the enhanced version of the seven-speed twin-clutch system in the 991 is so good, it could sound the death knell for the manual gearbox in the 911.

Hatz wanted there to be more 'emotion' in the 991, and the PDK gearbox in

STARS OF 2012 THE NEW 911

particular has received attention. Using the excellent DCT in the Ferrari 458 as inspiration, it now promises the 'sportiness of a manual transmission'.

On all models, new valves in the exhaust system have improved the soundtrack. Sport Chrono-equipped cars have enhanced induction noise too, and there are more pops and crackles from the exhaust during gearchanges than you'd ever expect.

Add this new sonic onslaught to the 7800rpm rev limit and lighter kerbweight, and the 991 looks set to be the most sporting "basic" 911 of all time. And if you want further proof, then consider this: a 991 Carrera S (on standard tyres) has just lapped the Nürburgring in 7min 40sec, which is a second quicker than the ballistic 997 Turbo S. Amazing.

SPECIFICATIONS

PORSCHE 911 CARRERA	PORSCHE 911 CARRERA S
Engine Flat-six, 3463cc	Engine Flat-six, 3800cc
Location Rear, longitudinal	Location Rear, longitudinal
CO2 212g/km (194g/km with PDK)	CO2 224g/km (205g/km with PDK)
Power 345bhp @ 7400rpm	Power 394bhp @ 7400rpm
Torque 288lb ft @ 5600rpm	Torque 324lb ft @ 5600rpm
Transmission Seven-speed manual gearbox (PDK optional), rear-wheel drive, PSM	Transmission Seven-speed manual gearbox (PDK optional), rear-wheel drive, PSM
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled discs, 330mm front and rear, ABS, EBD, BA	Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled discs, 340mm front, 330mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 19in rear	Wheels 8.5 x 20in front, 11 x 20in rear
Tyres 235/40 ZR19 front, 285/35 ZR19 rear	Tyres 245/35 ZR20 front, 295/30 ZR20 rear
Weight (kerb) 1380kg	Weight (kerb) 1395kg
Power-to-weight 254bhp/ton	Power-to-weight 287bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.8sec (claimed, 4.6sec with PDK)	0-62mph 4.5sec (claimed, 4.3sec with PDK)
Top speed 180mph (claimed, 178mph with PDK)	Top speed 189mph (claimed, 188mph with PDK)
Basic price £71,449	Basic price £81,242

*'THE NEW 991 LOOKS SET TO BE THE MOST SPORTING
"BASIC" PORSCHE 911 OF ALL TIME'*





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THE FUTURE STARTS HERE

The future of Lotus, that is, with the arrival of the all-new, V6-powered Exige S. And it's joined by the most powerful road-going Lotus ever – the Evora GTE



It's instantly recognisable as an Exige, but Lotus says the car you see here is all new. Body is wider and longer than before. Traditional Exige roof scoop has been dropped; instead there's a new glass rear screen

If you admire Colin Chapman's famous 'add lightness' engineering dictum, you won't want to read the next sentence. The new Lotus Exige S is 125kg heavier than the car it replaces. For a company facing widespread criticism for the manner in which it is conducting its reinvention, this is a spew-your-tea moment. 125kg! ACBC would be spinning in his grave like a Spitfire prop!

Or would he? As ever, there's more to this story. For starters, the Exige S now gets the supercharged V6 engine from the Evora S, lifting power by... 125bhp (from 220bhp to 345bhp).

The old Exige slid from production late last year – killed by Euro 5 legislation and the non-compliance



of the 1.8-litre Toyota engines. It was unclear at the time whether the Exige would soldier on at all, with confusing messages emerging from the normal Lotus communication channels.

But here it is, making its debut at September's Frankfurt motor show. Lotus claims the 2012 Exige S is 'all new'. The bodywork is still recognisable as an Exige, but it's longer and wider to accommodate the new engine. At the front the headlights are taken from the current Elise and there's a re-profiled clamshell and a new splitter.

The rear gets a new diffuser, a new bumper and a dramatic new wing. Overall downforce on the old Exige was an impressive 42kg at 100mph; we're told the new car promises to match or better it. One sad omission for fans of the old car's quasi-Group C styling is the roof scoop. Gone, but not forgotten.

Wheel sizes are bigger all round, with the fronts increasing from 16 to 17in and the rears from 17 to 18in. Likewise, tyre sizes jump from 175/60 to 205/45, a whopping



*'THE EXIGE S NOW GETS THE SUPERCHARGED V6 ENGINE
FROM THE FORMULA S, LIFTING POWER BY 125BHP'*

STARS OF 2012 NEW LOTUSES



Above and below right: aggressive styling of the Evora GTE is inspired by the race car of the same name. Road car shares the racer's engine, meaning an output of 438bhp. Combined with a weight reduction, the result is 348bhp/ton

265/35 at the rear. In terms of overall dimensions, the new car is 75mm wider and 255mm longer than the old Exige S, while the 2370mm wheelbase is 70mm longer.

And that engine? It's the same Toyota V6 seen in the Evora S, with Lotus's own ECU and a manual six-speed gearbox. An Eaton Roots-type supercharger pushes power to 345bhp at around 7000rpm. Although the V6 doesn't have the lofty 8500rpm rev ceiling of the old car's four-cylinder, it promises plenty of good old-fashioned mid-range torque.

While the overall weight of the car

increases, front:rear weight distribution improves from 38:62 to 40:60. The crucial power-to-weight figure makes interesting reading too. The previous car delivered 239bhp per ton (293 for the 260 Cup version); the new one produces 331bhp per ton – that's better than a Porsche 911 Turbo. Performance figures have not been released, but you can bet this car will be a rampant performer.

A three-mode Lotus 'DPM' (Dynamic Performance Management) system is standard, the three modes being Touring, Sport and DPM-off. A Race Pack option is also available, which adds

a fourth driving mode – Race – including a launch control system. At present, an open differential is the only option, although we wouldn't be surprised to see a limited-slip version appear on the options list soon after launch.

Prices for the new Exige S will start at around £56,000 – an increase of some £20K over the old car. Will it be worth the money? Lotus CEO Dany Bahar reckons the new Exige 'gives the driver the ultimate Lotus experience'. That's a hell of a claim, especially when you see the other new model the company is about to launch... **Nick Trott**

LOTUS'S NEW V8 AND THE NEXT ESPRIT

August 18, 2011, will go down as a momentous day in the history of Lotus, as that was the day its all-new, bespoke, super-high-revving, normally aspirated V8 engine ran on the dyno for the first time.

It turned out to be a very long day – the actual time the engine finally sparked into life was 11.40pm – but for the team that had been working night and day on this project since it was first given the green light in December 2010, it was a magical moment.

There's more hard work to come yet, though, as durability trials begin on this important new engine that will be critical to Lotus's future – it will be fitted not only to the new Esprit, but also to the front-engined Elite 2+2 and the Eterne four-seater.

It is hoped that the engine will be running in the first working Esprit prototype before the end of the year.

The core development team of experienced engineers working on the new Esprit project – led by ex-AMG chief engineer Wolf Zimmermann – has been bolstered recently by some well-known names from the supercar fraternity. Firstly, in July 2011, Peter Tutzer joined the team as technical director. His specialist knowledge is in chassis design: he is probably best known for his work on the underpinnings of both the Bugatti Veyron and Pagani Zonda. Right now, though, his task is to create the most elegant and lightweight suspension design for the new family of Lotus V8 cars.

Helping him will be



Lotus chief engineer Wolf Zimmermann with the company's bespoke V8

name synonymous with supercar development, Loris Biccchi – the test driver behind the Bugatti Veyron, Pagani Zonda and Koenigsegg, amongst others. He

will be working almost full-time on the new Esprit (and other Lotus projects) from early 2012.

We await the results with bated breath. **Harry Metcalfe**

EVORA GTE

Meet the most powerful road-going Lotus to date. The Evora GTE trumps the old Esprit V8 by nearly 100bhp, and after what was meant to be a limited 25-car run for China more than sold out – 120 orders were placed – Lotus has done the decent thing and upped production. The company has also announced that it is bringing the car to more markets, Europe included. ‘We decided the only logical step from a business perspective was to increase production and widen our reach,’ said Dany Bahar.

The Evora GTE is heavily inspired by the racing car with which it shares its name, something that should be obvious just by glancing at it. It looks wild, the standard car’s neat and inoffensive lines all but forgotten. Compared with the

standard Evora, it’s wider and more muscular, with the air intakes packing some real visual clout at the front, and a dramatic diffuser and enormous rear wing bringing some attitude to the rear. We reckon it’s the most visually daring Lotus since the skeletal 340R.

More importantly, it should deliver the performance its styling promises. Its engine comes from the racer, so it’s a highly tuned version of the standard car’s Toyota-sourced 3.5-litre V6. With 438bhp on tap, it trumps the entry-level Evora by 162bhp, the supercharged Evora S by 93bhp, and the most potent Lotus road car to date – the last-of-line Esprit V8 – by 88bhp. The engine is hooked up to a hydraulically activated single-clutch automated manual gearbox.

Thanks to liberal use of carbonfibre – including bumpers, rear wing and doors



– the GTE weighs some 105kg less than the standard car at 1277kg. While there was little additional information as we went to press, the interior will no doubt be sprinkled in carbonfibre too, while the seats are said to be Recaros.

A Cayman R killer? Its performance should be on another level, but with the price of a basic Evora S already touching £60,000, the GTE is likely to be a more exclusive – and more expensive – car altogether. **Stephen Dobie**

*‘WITH
438BHP, IT
TRUMPS THE
MOST POTENT
LOTUS TO DATE
– THE ESPRIT
V8 – BY 88BHP’*

2012: THE ONES TO WATCH

Jaguar, Porsche and Lotus aren't the only carmakers with new performance models on the horizon. Here's our rundown of the most exciting new cars due in 2012, from Audi to Zagato

AUDI

Next year Audi will be introducing its new twin-turbocharged 4-litre V8 in its bigger 'S' models. The S6 (right) and S7 (below right) will get a 413bhp version, the S8 (far right, top) a 512bhp one that will also do duty in the Bentley Continental. Performance will be towering – the S8 will hit 62mph in a claimed 4.2sec – but the bigger question is how much driver involvement there will be.

Further down the range we're also set to see a four-wheel-driven S1 version of the A1, likely to have over 180bhp from a version of the VW Polo GTI's 1.4-litre TSI motor.

And the Quattro (far right)? It's all gone ominously quiet on that front...



BENTLEY

We'll have to wait slightly longer for Bentley's all-new models – including an SUV and ultra-performance variants. But before then we'll see the revised version of the Continental GTC cabrio, featuring the 567bhp version of the familiar twin-turbo 6-litre W12 and the rear-biased 4WD system already given to the Conti coupe.



ALFA

The good news is that the Alfa Romeo 4C (pictured in updated concept form below) is nearly here – and we're already properly excited at the prospect of driving the mid-engined coupe next year. But we'll also be seeing Alfa's first SUV next autumn – an X3 rival spun off the Giulietta platform.



BMW

It's that time again. A new version of the BMW 3-series is due to touch down next year, but we'll have to wait longer for the exciting versions.



CHRYSLER

Despite Fiat's control of Chrysler, the new 300C SRT-8 should still give the full American muscle-car experience. It's also going to be...



CORVETTE

Twin-turbo six-cylinder and a V8 mooted for new Vette. It's likely to remain front-engined – although mid-engine rumours won't go away.



FERRARI

Ferrari has already revealed the new 458 Spider (above) ahead of its launch early next year. The Spider shares its coupe sister's sonorous 562bhp 4.5-litre V8 – good for 198mph and a sub-3.4sec 0-62mph time – but adds a clever two-piece folding aluminium hardtop that flips through 180 degrees as it gets stowed beneath the rear cover. 2012 is set to be a busy year in Maranello. We'll also be seeing the replacement for the Ferrari 599, which will use a development of the FF's V12 engine. And – later in the year – the mighty 'new Enzo' should also be touched down, rumoured to feature both an 800bhp twin-turbo

FISKER

Henrik Fisker's company is showing its second petrol-electric model at this September's Frankfurt motor show, and it will go on sale in 2012. The crossover version of the Karma is being pitched as a mix of 'lifestyle' estate and SUV, and is based on the same rear-drive platform as the Karma saloon we tried last month. In 2013 we'll see the smaller 'Nina' saloon.

FORD

Both the Fiesta and Focus ranges are set to get some much-needed excitement next year with the arrival of ST variants.

The Fiesta will be powered by a version of Ford's 1.6-litre petrol turbo engine, and should be punchy enough to provide competition to the Skoda Fabia vRS and VW Polo GTI – if not the mighty Renaultsport Clio. Reckon on about 180bhp and a 7sec 0-60mph time.

The Focus ST will get a bigger version of Ford's EcoBoost engine – a 2-litre turbocharged four that takes the place of the previous model's characterful (if thirsty) 2.5-litre five. Power should be comparable – around the 230bhp mark – but CO2 and fuel economy figures will be far better.

Another welcome return to the mix will be a Focus ST estate alongside the hatchback – the mk1 Focus had an ST170 tourer, but the previous generation missed out.



LEXUS

Lexus has been promising us an open-top version of the mighty LF-A for some time – the good news is we'll finally see it next year. It will have 552bhp and the same amazing V10 soundtrack as the coupe, although you'll be looking at the thick end of £400K for one.

LAND ROVER

Next year sees the arrival of the all-new Range Rover, which is set to feature alloy construction and share engines and other major components with the Jaguar XJ.

STARS OF 2012 AN A-Z GUIDE

MINI

The tauter, two-seat Mini Coupe should produce the hottest member of the growing Mini clan we've seen so far when it's given the full, 208bhp John Cooper Works treatment.



MAZDA

Lighter and with lower CO2 – that's what we know about the new MX-5 for sure. Indeed the car's programme chief has indicated that it should weigh under 1000kg. Word has it that the engine could be a turbocharged 1.5-litre four-cylinder, while electric and rotary powerplants are rumoured too.



McLAREN

We don't know exactly what it will be called – although 'GTR' has a nice ring to it – but McLaren insiders have told us to expect a hotter MP4-12C in 2012. Any power increase will be modest, but the car will get a harder edge inspired by the GT3 racer (pictured).

MERCEDES

SLS AMG ROADSTER

Just before the Frankfurt motor show opened its doors, *evo* got an exclusive ride in the new SLS Roadster with AMG boss Ola Källenius.

AMG reckons that the Roadster will make up more than half of SLS global sales when customer deliveries start later this year, and losing the coupe's gullwing doors has required a more substantial re-engineering than that normally given to soft-top variants: the Roadster has different A-pillars to accommodate its conventionally hinged doors. To help maintain the body's rigidity there are thicker sills and additional struts on the front bulkhead. There's also a new cross-member behind the seats to accommodate the deployable roll-over hoops.

Mechanically the SLS Roadster is effectively identical to the existing SLS coupe, sharing the hard-top car's 563bhp 6.2-litre naturally

aspirated V8 engine and seven-speed twin-clutch rear transaxle. Its performance should be identical too, with a claimed 3.8sec 0-62mph time and a top speed – with the roof up – of 197mph.

Källenius says that losing the gullwing doors and their top-hinged mechanism has saved around 20kg, effectively offsetting the extra weight of the body reinforcement. The Roadster's bodyshell is just 2kg heavier than the coupe's, and although the three-layer soft-top and its electrical mechanism adds another 40kg, the numbers are close enough to allow the roadster to effectively match the coupe's performance.

We'll have to wait a little longer before we can tell you how the roofless SLS feels from behind the wheel, although from the passenger seat it feels both impressively rigid and as effortlessly rapid as its tin-top sister.



Above: retro-inspired interior remains; roof is a three-layer affair. Right: *evo*'s Mike Duff gets taken for a ride

The Roadster also gets three-mode active dampers for the first time on an SLS, with the ability to choose between Comfort, Sport and Sport Plus modes. The Comfort setting is slightly softer than that provided by the coupe's passive dampers, but both the Sport modes are stiffer.

The passenger ride also gave us a chance to get close to AMG's new 'Performance Media' system, an on-board data-logger that uses sensors and the car's GPS system to record and display performance figures, including 0-60 times, quarter miles and cornering G loads. A neat detail is the ability of the system to 'learn' a track, which can then be divided into sectors, with the driver shown how much better, or worse, they're doing in each sector compared with previous laps. Although designed for use with racetracks, Källenius confirms there's nothing to stop a driver from using the system to record a favourite road.

UK sales of the SLS Roadster will begin in November this year, with a price around the £180,000 mark.

Mike Duff



PORSCHE

Porsche is determined to become a leader in performance hybrids, and the new 911 will be getting an electrically assisted variant next year. Performance will be on a par with the standard Carrera S, but this will also be the first 911 capable of cracking the 40mpg barrier.

It's also likely that we'll see the convertible version of the new 911 next year – it's important enough for international sales to be moved to the top of the model mix. Beyond that, Porsche is staying tight-lipped on what happens when. Four-wheel-drive variants might arrive before the end of next year, but we'll have to wait until 2013 for the new GT3 – although a Porsche source has let slip that it's already being tested with the updated seven-speed PDK gearbox.



'THE SLS ROADSTER'S PERFORMANCE SHOULD BE IDENTICAL TO THE COUPE'S – 0-62MPH IN 3.8SEC AND 197MPH'



Left: Black Series version of the C63 AMG will arrive in the spring. Below: new B-class hatchback will spawn a saloon-coupe



C63 AMG Black Series

AMG's fourth Black Series model – this one a development of the C63 AMG Coupe – will go on sale next spring, and is set to cost somewhere near the £100,000 mark. For that considerable investment, buyers will get 510bhp – 59bhp more than the standard C63 Coupe – plus revised suspension, a wider track and a very serious-looking rear diffuser inspired by that of the SLS GT3.

Track

Package that will bring ultra-sticky Dunlop tyres and cooling for the rear differential, while an Aero Package adds a carbonfibre front splitter and rear spoiler.

BLS

Mercedes' new B-class hatchback will also be the basis for a smart-looking junior saloon-coupe, called the BLS, similar in principle to the bigger CLS. And yes, an AMG version will follow later.



RADICAL

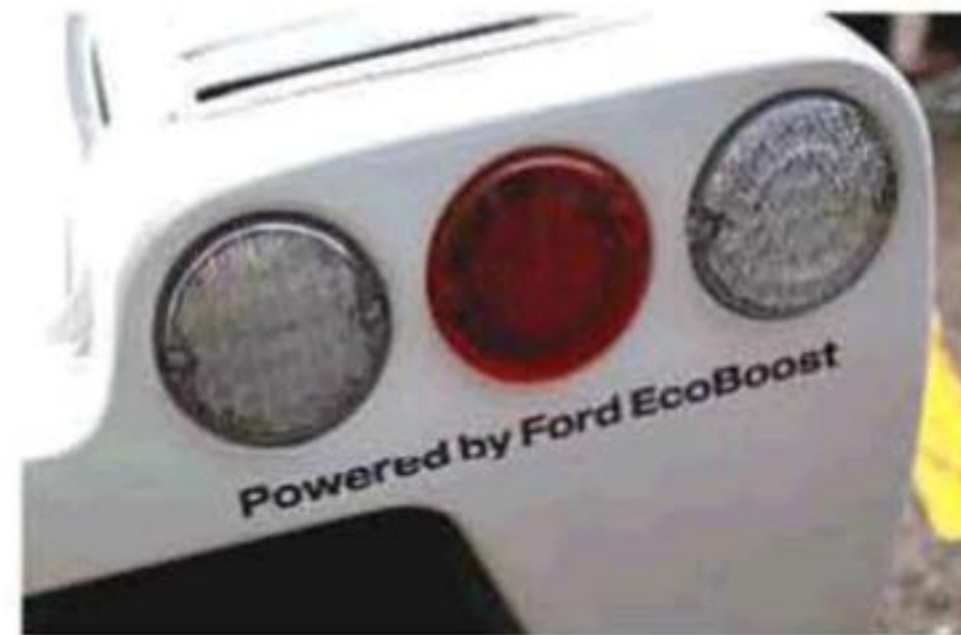
There have been road-legal Radicals before, but they were effectively race cars with number plates and a few tweaks to pass the UK's Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA) test. That's fine if you live within our shores; trouble was, Radical had for years been receiving requests from the rest of Europe, and European low-volume type approval is much more complicated.

That's why in the back of the £81,300 Radical SR3 SL (Street Legal) you'll find a new, Euro 5-compliant engine. It's a 2-litre turbo Ford EcoBoost unit – the same engine that will be used by the next Focus ST, in fact, only here it's remapped for more power and torque. It currently runs at 280bhp and 340lb ft, but we're promised there's even more to come. Not that this thing lacks pace

you understand. It accelerates comically quickly – whiplash is possible if you're not braced for it – and the race-spec Hewland paddle-shift gearbox keeps the thrust coming virtually uninterrupted, all the while accompanied by a hysterical mix of whooshes and tweets from the turbo just behind you.

There are also numerous bodywork alterations on the SL compared with the racers, the most obvious being the rear wing, which has had to become narrower. To compensate for the loss of width, it now has three planes instead of two. It produces 60 per cent of the downforce of the race version.

I've driven the SL on track and it laps faster than a BTCC machine, despite running on road-legal rubber. However, more impressive than that is the car's ability to scuttle down the bumpiest of B-roads. It's fitted with Intrax dampers and they're astonishing. I'd



expected the SL to ground out and be upset by cambers and bumps, but it's not at all – you feel them as it's pretty stiff, but it's not uncomfortable and doesn't slow you down.

This, then, is more than just a gimmick to allow owners to avoid having to use a trailer every time they want to take part in a trackday. It's a proper highway warrior and in 2012 there will be no quicker way of getting from Austria to Belgium. **Roger Green**

RENAULT

We already know the next Clio Renaultsport will be switching to a 1.6-litre turbocharged engine and the option of a twin-clutch gearbox. Performance will be similar to that of the current model, but it should be considerably better on both CO2 and mpg. If Renaultsport works its customary magic, it should go straight to the top of the hot hatch pile.

WHAT WE WANT FROM 2012

There are no official plans for any of these in 2012, but we still want to see 'em...



SKODA YETI vRS

We love the standard Yeti, but boosting the output of the 1.8 TSI engine to 200bhp could turn it into a performance weapon.



VOLKSWAGEN POLO R

There's definitely some space between the £19K Polo GTI and the £25K Golf GTI, so how about an 'R' version of the smaller Polo?

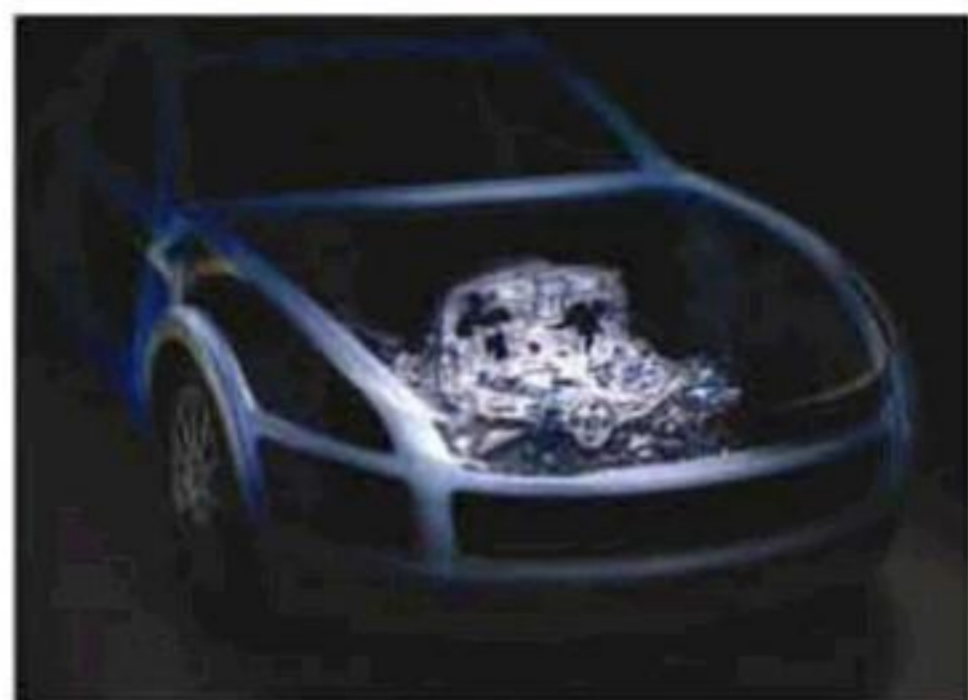


VOLKSWAGEN BEETLE R

And how about a hot version of the new VW Beetle? The Golf R's mechanical package would pretty much bolt in...

SUBARU

You're probably bored with hearing stories about the small coupes that Subaru and Toyota are developing together – and which both companies have been talking about for several years. But in 2012 we'll finally get to drive them both.



Although they'll look different, both cars will share the same mechanical package that includes a 2-litre four-cylinder boxer engine supplying drive to the rear wheels only. With an anticipated output of around 200bhp, and lightweight bodies to keep the power-to-weight ratio sharp, that should translate into a 0-60mph time somewhere south of 7 seconds and a top speed of around 140mph. Quicker versions, possibly using a turbocharged version of the same engine, will follow later.

And the names? Toyota's internal moniker of FT-86 clearly references the 1980s 'AE86' Corolla that inspired the project, but Subaru has announced that it's going to call its version the BRZ, standing for Boxer engine, Rear-wheel drive and, um, Zenith, which we guess is what it's meant to be.

SUZUKI

The Suzuki Swift Sport has proven itself to be a real star of the junior hot-hatch class, but will the new one, shown here, be the same? We hope so. The 2012 car has more aggressive exterior styling and, most importantly, more power (and lower fuel consumption) from a new 1.6-litre engine developed exclusively for the Sport. The gearbox is a straightforward six-speed manual and Suzuki is promising even more responsive handling than its predecessor.



TESLA

Tesla isn't going to let electric upstart Fisker grab all the headlines. Next year will also see the arrival of Tesla's second model, the 'Model S' saloon. The company claims it will be good for both a 300-mile range and a 5.6sec 0-60mph time.

VAUXHALL

Don't say three-door Astra – the GTC is being pitched as a coupe alternative to the VW Scirocco. There will be four engines initially, including a 178bhp 1.6-litre petrol turbo and a 163bhp 2-litre diesel, and if it builds on the Astra five-door it should be a tidy steer. But excitement arrives later, in the form of the VXR – once again, an Anglicised version of the Opel OPC. It's anticipated that it will join the range late in 2012 and it will be a tyre-fitter's best friend, with around 300bhp being channelled through the front wheels. They can't be serious, can they?



ZAGATO

Aston's long relationship with styling house Zagato continues with the confirmation that there will be a road-going version of the V12 Zagato that raced at the Nürburgring 24 hours earlier this year.

Based on the V12 Vantage and sharing its 510bhp 5.9-litre engine, the Zagato features a weight-saving aluminium and carbonfibre body. Only 150 will be built and – if you want one – you'll have to dig very deep indeed, as it will be priced at £396,000.



SUBARU IMPREZA WRX D

We know what could save the performance Scooby from its sliding sales: a 200bhp version of Subaru's 2-litre boxer diesel.



VOLVO C30 POLESTAR

Come on, Volvo, give this thing the green light! We've already proved the prototype is quicker than an Audi RS3.



HONDA CIVIC TYPE-R

Honda's got no plans to produce a Type-R version of the next Civic, but we'd still love one, or at least a warmish Type S or Ti.

2012



MASERATI

'Baby'

Quattroporte: an Italian M5?

SUV: and it's going to be based on Jeep mechanicals...



AUDI

RS6: an estate with nearly 700bhp.



McLAREN

'Megacar':

Woking's answer to the Ferrari Enzo.



LAMBORGHINI

Expect to see an all-new Gallardo replacement.



PORSCHE

918 Spyder:

Stuttgart's own new supercar.



MERCEDES

A-class AMG:

Merc's first hot hatch.



JAGUAR

XE-R: 500bhp version of new small coupe.

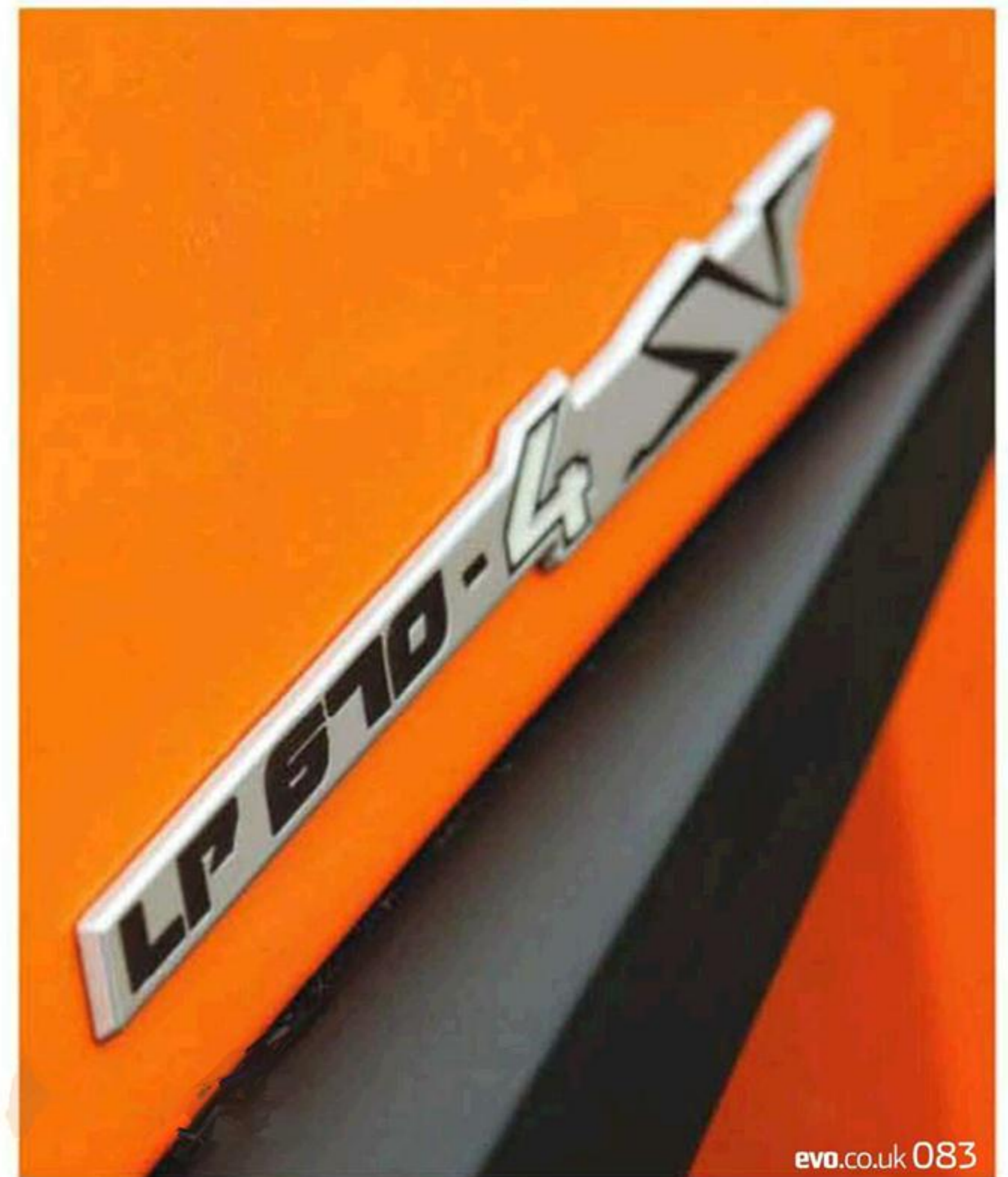
COVER STORY
FOUR LAMBOS





BULL FIGHT

Simple question: which is the greatest V12-engined Lamborghini of all, Countach 5000 QV, Diablo 6.0 VT, Murciélago LP670-4 SV or stunning new Aventador LP700-4? **Chris Harris** finds the answer



L

hey look like nothing else, they sound like nothing else; they ensnare us with their ludicrous coachwork and outrageous proportions, but there is a paradox that is both central to and responsible for the greatness of many of Lamborghini's road cars.

It is this: despite the strutting-peacock styling and shameless exuberance of their silhouettes, these cars are actually best defined by the way they *drive*.

It is a fact that the foundations of Automobili Lamborghini were based on Ferruccio Lamborghini's dissatisfaction with the performance and refinement of his Ferrari road cars, not with the way they looked. The story of his falling-out with Enzo Ferrari is well-known, but in the context of this test – one that sets out to discover the greatest Lamborghini road car – it's important to remember that for a brand immortalised for a generation by vast aerofoils and pornographic Pirellis, the company was conceived through mechanical conviction, and not otherwise.

There endeth the lesson on the importance of recognising the driver-currency of the greatest Lambos – or at least it certainly ends when you are presented with these four cars on a Welsh hillside. There are no greater extroverts belonging to the genus *Supercar* than these wonderful creations.

How did we arrive at these four? Simple: we chose the ones we knew we could arrange for the photo shoot – hence the lack of a Miura. That's a joke, by the way. The gorgeous Miura doesn't make the grade on driving grounds. As anyone who has squeezed themselves inside will confirm, the reality is somewhat removed from the dream: it's a pig. Prettier than a Countach, but this is *evo* and we are about driving *and* beholding, not just beholding.



There are Countaches and there are Countaches, and the QV is the one to have. This has been made clear to me in a lengthy email by a certain H Metcalfe, Editorial OverGod (or whatever he calls himself these days) of this magazine. The car you see here is his own, and sifting through the anecdotal and factual evidence in his extensive communication, he does seem to have a point.

The Countach might best be described as a point of friction between the opposing forces of aesthetics and vehicle dynamics. It was conceived as a styling exercise, then adapted for use on the public highway – but its genesis was hijacked by people with an obsession for high performance and, worse still, motorsport. Its tubular steel chassis was delicate but light and strong, as was the alloy body. The needless space-efficiency of the Miura's transverse motor was ditched for a longitudinal V12 and from each corner hung a pair of wishbones. If ever you have the chance to see the bare Countach chassis at the factory museum, grab it: it's a work of singular beauty and genius.

That first Countach, the LP400, was a

layout with this red beastie, but not much else. For starters, the Quattrovalvole is a good deal taller than those early cars, losing some of their flying-wedge appeal, but allowing grown adults to sit upright in the cabin. Harry is clearly basking in that early phase of ownership with his QV – the one that entails vast amounts of knowledge accumulation...

According to H, the quattrovalvole engine was developed after Lamborghini learnt Ferrari was due to launch an all-new model (which would turn out to be the Testarossa) and were worried their current V12 would be left behind in the power race. The new QV engine was 'stroked' for extra capacity and produced much more power than expected. Valentino Balboni (legendary Lambo test driver) reckons 470bhp was regularly seen on the dyno and 500bhp was achievable with a blueprinted engine. And yet Lambo quoted 455 at launch – to keep something up their sleeve in case the new Ferrari had more. When the Testarossa was launched with 'only' 390bhp, Lambo couldn't believe the output was so low and never bothered to change the official figure. There was simply no reason to.

Main pic, above: Countach QV and Aventador are separated by around 25 years but united by jaw-dropping road presence (and wallet-worrying thirst...). Bottom: waiting for the mist to clear





'THE MIURA DOESN'T MAKE THE GRADE ON DRIVING GROUNDS. THE REALITY IS SOMEWHAT REMOVED FROM THE DREAM: IT'S A PIG'



I never drove Countaches in period – because 12-year olds weren't allowed to. But I did drive Diablos. I was transfixed by them because, unlike with Ferraris and Porsches, the magazine tests I'd read as a boy somehow didn't prepare me in any way for the actual experience: the intimidation of those vast hips, the noise, the sheer difficulty. So much of a Diablo SV was so rubbish, but the bits that counted in terms of the driving experience were perfectly judged. This is a theme I want to explore over the next few pages, because it sits at the epicentre of what makes a great Lamborghini.

For me there were two stand-out Diablos: the crazy GT with its carbon-everything and exhaust noise from the darker reached of Hades, and the 6.0 VT. The latter may lack some of the GT's shock-factor, but it is unarguably the better car. It was also, of course, the first car sold under Audi ownership.

Alistair McKillop bought his yellow 6-litre quite recently on the back of a sustained Ferrari love-affair and, allowing actions to outweigh words, says he hasn't driven his 430 or 550 since taking delivery of the Lambo. 'I just love it,' he beams.



Clockwise from above left: Countach, Diablo, Aventador and Murciélago. Newer cars have paddle-shifters in place of traditional exposed -gate manual 'boxes

Love is something we all share for cars that straddle generations and carry with them great stories, and the 6.0 is definitely one of those. Audi's purchase of Lamborghini had most of us grimacing at the thought of the company imposing its then staple dynamic cancer on Sant'Agata's finest, like those god-awful black things from Harry Potter that suck the life out of you. In would come dreadful brake pedal feel, the body-control of an incontinent octogenarian and maybe, just maybe, some passable switchgear. We couldn't have been more wrong.

The 6-litre Audighini was dynamically polished – better even than the ‘pure’ Italian cars. Its engine was treated to variable valve timing and completely new calibration that made it a puppy-dog at low revs but allowed it to remain a salivating psychopath at the top end. I thought it was captivating back in 2001: seeing one again reawakens lustful urges.

Next we leap to the end of the same decade: 2009. With the Diablo's replacement, the Murciélago, now nearing retirement, Lamborghini decided to dust off the *Super Veloce* title and created the LP670-4 SV. It was, by some margin, the greatest of the Murciélago family and its significance radiates with the same aura as its older siblings. Power from the 6.5-litre V12 was 661bhp, up from the original 6.2-litre Murci's 572bhp. Weight had been trimmed here and there, but this was still a fair lump of metal because it was to be the last of the old-school Lambo V12s: a steel spaceframe wrapped in lightweight panels and propelled by a V12 that could trace its lineage right back to the LP400. To hear the demented shriek of an LP670 above 7000rpm and be told it is directly derived from something nearly 40 years old is to be left in disbelief.

The hinge to this gathering is, of course, the arrival of the most significant development in the history of the V12 Lamborghini since messrs Bizzarini, Stanzani and Wallace embarked on the Countach project – the Aventador. The singular nature of its specification must surely have old Ferruccio grinning from his cloud.

Not only has Lamborghini blossomed under Audi, but it has somehow managed to become even more unhinged – the Germans seem to have treated their Italian patient like a smack addict, and just given it more heroin. The 670 SV proved the point – it was, and is, a truly extreme machine. At least as potty as anything attempted in the previous 40 years – with the exception of the LM002. But the Aventador attempts to take the game a stage further. Gone is the antiquated steel space-frame, replaced by a full carbon tub and pushrod suspension. An all-new 690bhp 6.5-litre V12 motor runs through a compact, lightweight, single-clutch gearbox bringing fast but aggressive gear-changes. A few years ago, this thing would have been eligible for Le Mans, and all with styling to make a McLaren MP4-12C weep into its Farah trousers.

I'M TRYING TO THINK of something that makes you feel better about yourself than a truck unloading a white Aventador onto your driveway – a post-coital compliment perhaps; maybe Jackie Ickx expressing his admiration for your line through the Whipperman? Nah, the white Lambo is double Prozac with a Viagra chaser. I curtain-twitch most of the evening, then leave for the moors earlier than is strictly necessary.

The intimidation is still there – and thank God for that. The day that you

Main pic: an object lesson in how to grow old disgracefully, the outrageous Murci SV. Below: Countach still sports the widest rear rubber. Wheel design echoed by Diablo rims



'WITH THE MURCIÉLAGO NEARING RETIREMENT, LAMBORGHINI DECIDED TO DUST OFF THE "SUPER VELOCE" TITLE. THE LP670-4 SV WAS BY SOME MARGIN THE GREATEST MURCIÉLAGO'



Below: Countach, Diablo (below left) and Murciélago (bottom) all have variants of the classic Lambo V12. Aventador's V12 (far left) is clean-sheet design. Revs to over 8000rpm





'THE COUNTACH QV IS A BLAST, A CARDIOVASCULAR GYM SESSION





DRENCHED IN CARBURETTOR GURGLE AND RASPING V12 OVERRUN'





'YOU USE THAT REV-COUNTER. YOU NATURALLY BACK OFF IN THE HIGH-SEVENS, BUT THE NEWEST BULL HAS PLENTY MORE FEAR TO UNLOAD'



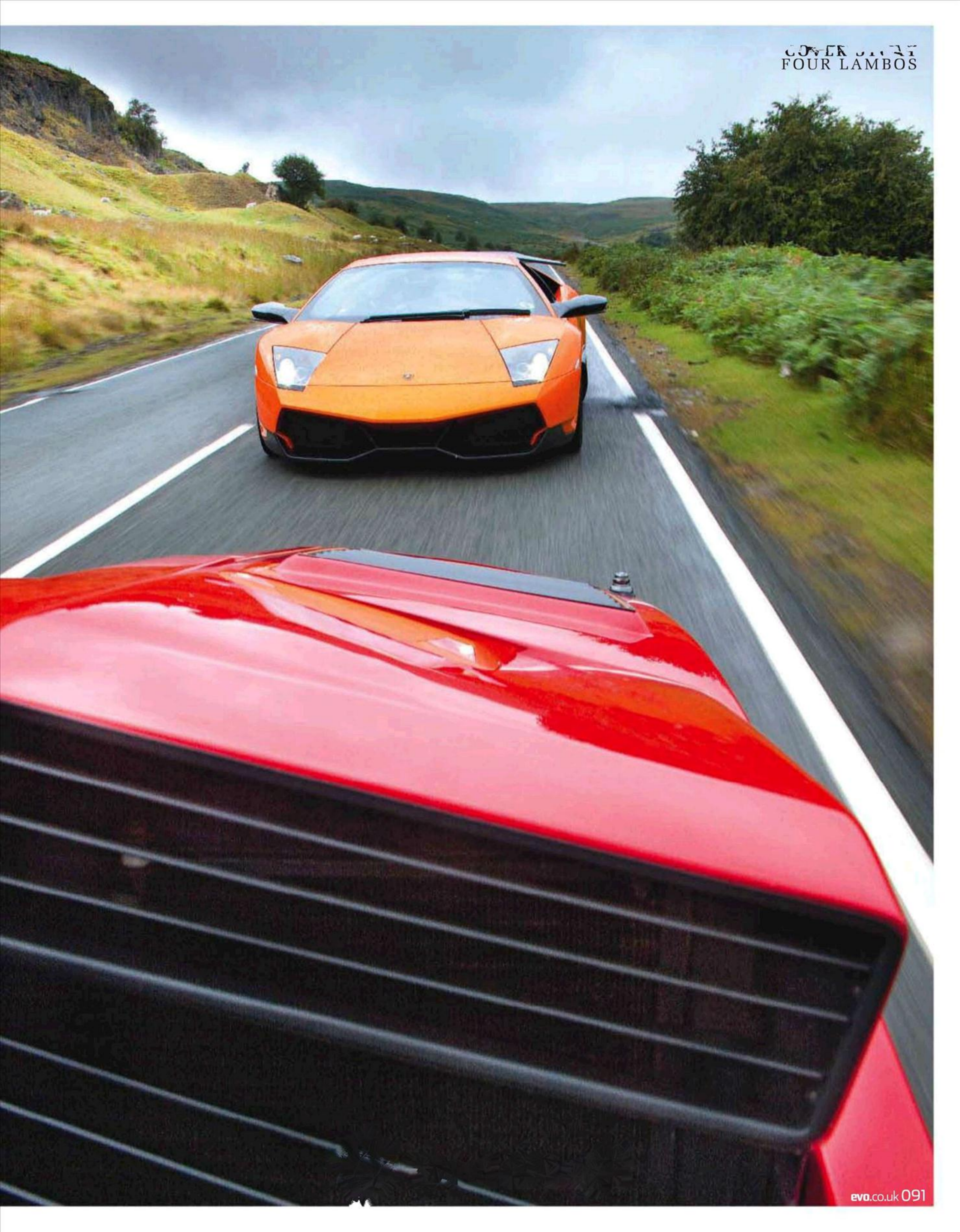
climb into a V12 Lambo and drive it without fear of ripping something expensive from its body or, perish the thought, have any idea what is occurring behind your line of sight, is the day the world ends. The Aventador feels less 'hippy' than its predecessor, even though it is actually 1mm wider. Must be the less severe taper from front body width to the rear. Even so, you take extra care – and hold your breath – the first time you pass oncoming traffic the way you never would in a Ferrari 458.

Within a few miles the Aventador's behaviour is provoking pertinent questions – ones that have never previously occurred to me in a big Lambo, because I've never driven one that is quite so technically, well, superb over broken road surfaces. It's a recurring theme this, in the year of our Lord and supercar 2011 – the question of some element of rubbishness presenting itself as 'character' in a car of this type. Whenever you read the word 'visceral' in the context of a car magazine, perhaps you should substitute it with 'crap NVH' or 'crippling driving position'? There is no such rubbishness here, just a genuinely gratifying feeling of immense, unshakeable torsional strength that facilitates the use of softer spring-rates. This car has suspension in a way the last 670 SV I drove had concrete dampers: it's much more absorbent than a GT3 RS 4.0 – much more.

The engine takes time to unravel because its breadth of thrust is enormous – it pulls from 2000rpm to 8500rpm – but also because it has perhaps the most linear delivery of any V12. Again, notions of character contaminate your first impressions because there's none of the angry chunter and brimstone of the old V12. It doesn't hesitate at low revs or take a second breath during some variable-valve injection of energy. It just keeps going. And going.

The throttle travel is long and the springing firm, forcing you to push your near-horizontal leg further into the recesses of the footwell. But in the Aventador you also have to use that great Ferris wheel of a rev-counter because the thrust is so overwhelming that you naturally back off in the high-seventhousands, at which point this newest bull has plenty more fear to unload. The steering requires less physical effort than the SV's and the driving position makes the wheel feel less like it's protruding several feet from the dashboard, but the carbon tub also forces your legs quite far to the left – a deliberate nod to those supercar compromises of old?

For road use, the chassis is mesmerising: it rides bumps, remains level and doesn't



LAMBO PRICES

» Fancy owning one of these heroic V12 Lamborghinis? Then a degree of patience is required, as all of them are much harder to source than you'd imagine.

Easiest to buy is the Aventador: all you need to do is walk into a dealer, hand over a chunky deposit and your car will arrive in two years' time. Too long to wait? Then physical cars are changing hands for an £80-100K premium today, though waiting until the end of the year should reduce this to £30-40K.

Next easiest is the Diablo 6.0. Dealers are asking serious premiums for the final SE version but regular examples can be had for around £95-100K.

The Murciélago SV and Countach QV are both much trickier to source. SVs rarely come up for sale and seem to head to the Far East for around £270K (just under the new price) when they do, while a proper Countach QV is now a very rare car, with only 12 examples thought to be in the UK. You'll need to pay well over £110K to secure one.

Harry Metcalfe



understeer. Nor, for that matter, does it oversteer. Snapper Matt Howell asks for a little squiggle exiting a hairpin, and the car duly accepts all 690bhp without a whiff of corrective lock being needed. Only under extreme duress does it relinquish grip.

Stepping from the new kid into the Murciélago SV is like leaving Babbington House and heading for a week in Guantanamo Bay: if asked the age-gap between the two, you'd say, perhaps, 15 years. Certainly not the two years that separate them.

Everything that relaxes you in the new car – the ergonomics and the yielding seat cushions – has the opposite effect in the SV. It is unashamedly from another generation, a car so extreme that it feels closer in spirit to the Countach than the 6-litre Diablo.

People often wonder what the definitive supercar driving experience is, and I think the 670-4 SV might just offer the answer to that question. In a supercar we don't necessarily look for technical achievements, leaning instead towards emotional embellishment – and here the SV has no rival in this test; perhaps in any test. It's a jabbering ball of neurosis, a frothing race-horse, a great lump of friction that hurls itself at the horizon leaving you to savour the by-products of its vast appetite for fuel: noise and action (for the driver).

The transmission is slower than the Aventador's, but actually more pleasant to use on the road, and none the worse

for lacking the former's 'Corsa' mode, which was surely created to support the chiropractic industry.

Deconstruct the car's behaviour in the context of its replacement and the SV has few answers in terms of composure and resulting cross-country speed, but does that really matter in the context of a great Lamborghini? I'm not sure it does. I climbed out of the SV as if the seat had injected me with amphetamine-laced Red Bull. It's just so naughty, so clearly too big for any public road, so god-damn-it-understeery-then-SNAP!-jeeeeeeeeepers-oversteery it demands full concentration and rewards accordingly. It is also savagely fast – to this backside the equal of the new Aventador. The old V12 may not have the

available rev-range, but its character is more strident and the resulting surges and crescendos of its less perfect calibration make the new V12 seem slightly antiseptic. I have a clip of it accelerating through 1st, 2nd and 3rd on my computer; I've listened to it dozens of times – the noise above 6500rpm is unlike any other street car, a shrill, vaguely hollow shriek that



penetrates the surrounding air more perniciously than any other car here.

Its voice isn't the purest expression of the famous old V12 in this test though. That honour belongs to the 6-litre Diablo and its Larini exhaust – not a combination for the serial introvert. And how the benefit of hindsight helps those of us who drove these cars when new understand their significance now: the 6-litre Diablo is a Murciélago in drag. The steering feels identical to an early Murci's, the power delivery has that familiar thrum and oscillation through the chassis (something, curiously, the Aventador does at an 85mph cruise too) and even though the Diablo's dash architecture is way more

bizarre, the feeling of the wheel reaching way into the cabin space makes you think, 'This was just an early test-bed for the Murciélago.'

This example doesn't discredit those fond memories of 2001, despite showing over 35,000 miles. The manual gearbox is a peach, the clutch a bastard. You feel like the captain of a 737 – right at the pointy end of a vast machine (the wide wing mirrors really only give the driver a view of those voluminous thigh-bones). But despite initial intimidation, a few minutes later the car is drifting wide on the exit of turns and you're in awe of its inherent balance. It's yet another reminder how misleading Lamborghini's Athena poster

image is: there is no doubt that the 6-litre Diablo is a superior driving device to its Ferrari contemporary, the 575 Maranello – even with the Fiorano handling pack fitted. And so much of that comes from the engine's appetite to work and rev. Whereas the 550/575's V12 became breathless at the very top end, the Diablo 6-litre keeps pulling.

And then there's the 4wd system: one that gives a driver confidence in the wet, and yet still leaves the car feeling rear-driven under normal conditions. The 6-litre defines the roles of intimidation and eye-popping speed under any conditions. The leap of faith required to turn one into the other is one of the



Diablo 6.0 VT chases Aventador; the first 'Audighini' and the very latest one

'YOU CAN GRAB A 6.0 BY THE NECK AND DRIVE IT LIKE YOU RENTED IT. OR BORROWED IT. SORRY ALISTAIR'

COVER STORY FOUR LAMBOS



Above: SV still defines the flamboyant V12 Lamborghini. Right: Lambos draw a crowd wherever you park, and Countach gets just as much attention as new Aventador



most satisfying motoring experiences, like finally taking a corner of a race-track flat-out when previously you thought it just wasn't possible. You can grab a 6-litre by the neck, and drive it like you rented it. Or borrowed it. Sorry Alistair.

And so to the Countach. Talk of 10sec dead from 0-100mph might be a little far-fetched, even for this healthy Quattrovalvole. What isn't in doubt is how embarrassingly slow a Testarossa must have felt after one of these, nor how outrageous the Countach still feels despite the world now being awash with modern supercars. This is the original drivers' supercar, and quite possibly the best.

Its racing car origins shine through in the way it drives, with fully uni-balled suspension and a kerbweight almost 200kg under the 6-litre's. As someone who has never driven a Countach before, besides realising a boyhood dream,

it left me trying to name a car whose driving position and controls (all of them heavy as hell) were less indicative of the way it covers ground. Once it's up and running, the Countach is a blast, a cardiovascular gym session drenched in carburettor gurgle and rasping V12 overrun. Heavy, but useable. If you had told me last month that I would enjoy a Countach oversteering and, apart from nearly dislocating my shoulder in the process, find it to be quite controllable at a slip angle, I would have called you a liar. What a journey of learning this is.

The Countach also reminds us what a car of vast mechanical power used to feel like before powered controls and electronic assistance: the reason for not provoking the car into oversteer more often is the weight of the steering, not the expected viciousness of a mid-mounted V12. It's always heavy, the rack, but it's

*'THERE ARE FOUR GREAT CARS HERE,
FOUR GREAT LAMBORGHINIS'*



SPECIFICATIONS

	COUNTACH 5000 QV	DIABLO 6.0 VT	MURCIÉLAGO LP670-4 SV	AVENTADOR LP700-4
Engine	V12, 5167cc	V12, 5992cc	V12, 6496cc	V12, 6498cc
Power	455bhp @ 7000rpm	550bhp @ 7100rpm	661bhp @ 8000rpm	690bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque	369lb ft @ 5200rpm	457lb ft @ 5500rpm	487lb ft @ 6500rpm	509lb ft @ 5500rpm
Transmission	Five-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, LSD	Five-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel drive	Six-speed e-gear automated manual, four-wheel drive	Seven-speed ISR automated manual, four-wheel drive
Front suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, gas dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, electronic dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, electronic dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, inboard coil springs and dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Upper lateral links, lower wishbones, trailing arms, coil springs, gas dampers	Double wishbones, coil springs, electronic dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, electronic dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, inboard coil springs and dampers, anti-roll bar
Tyres	225/50 VR15 front, 345/35 ZR15 rear	235/35 ZR18 front, 335/30 ZR18 rear	245/35 ZR18 front, 335/30 ZR18 rear	255/35 ZR19 front, 335/30 ZR20 rear
Brakes	Ventilated discs front and rear	Ventilated, cross-drilled discs, ABS	Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, ABS	Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, ABS
Weight (kerb)	1447kg	1625kg	1565kg	1575kg
Power-to-weight	320bhp/ton	343bhp/ton	429bhp/ton	445bhp/ton
0-60mph	4.2sec (Fast Lane test)	3.8sec (claimed)	3.2sec (evo test)	2.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	190mph (Fast Lane test)	212mph (claimed)	212mph (claimed)	217mph (claimed)
Price	£82,000 (new), £110,000 (now)	£139,000 (new), £170,000 (now)	£139,000 (new), £170,000 (now)	£247,000

EVO RATING



like a glass-bottomed boat compared with the others' painted plastic hulls. It chatters, constantly.

The clutch travel is so long my tiny legs struggle to fully disengage it, and the throttle pedal doesn't so much release the horsepower as tell a story every time it moves: you feel the hinged pedal creak a little and pull that ancient cable a few inches forward, coaxing life from the bevy of carburetors. It's so unashamedly mechanical: a warm glow if you get it right, your own page on WreckedExotics.com should you be less successful.

There are four great cars here; four great Lamborghinis. In a way it's unfair to judge the Aventador directly against its predecessors because in being so accomplished it cannot quite satisfy the cravings of those who, for want of a better word, want that visceral experience. But there can be little doubt that the

Aventador is the best V12 Lamborghini ever made.

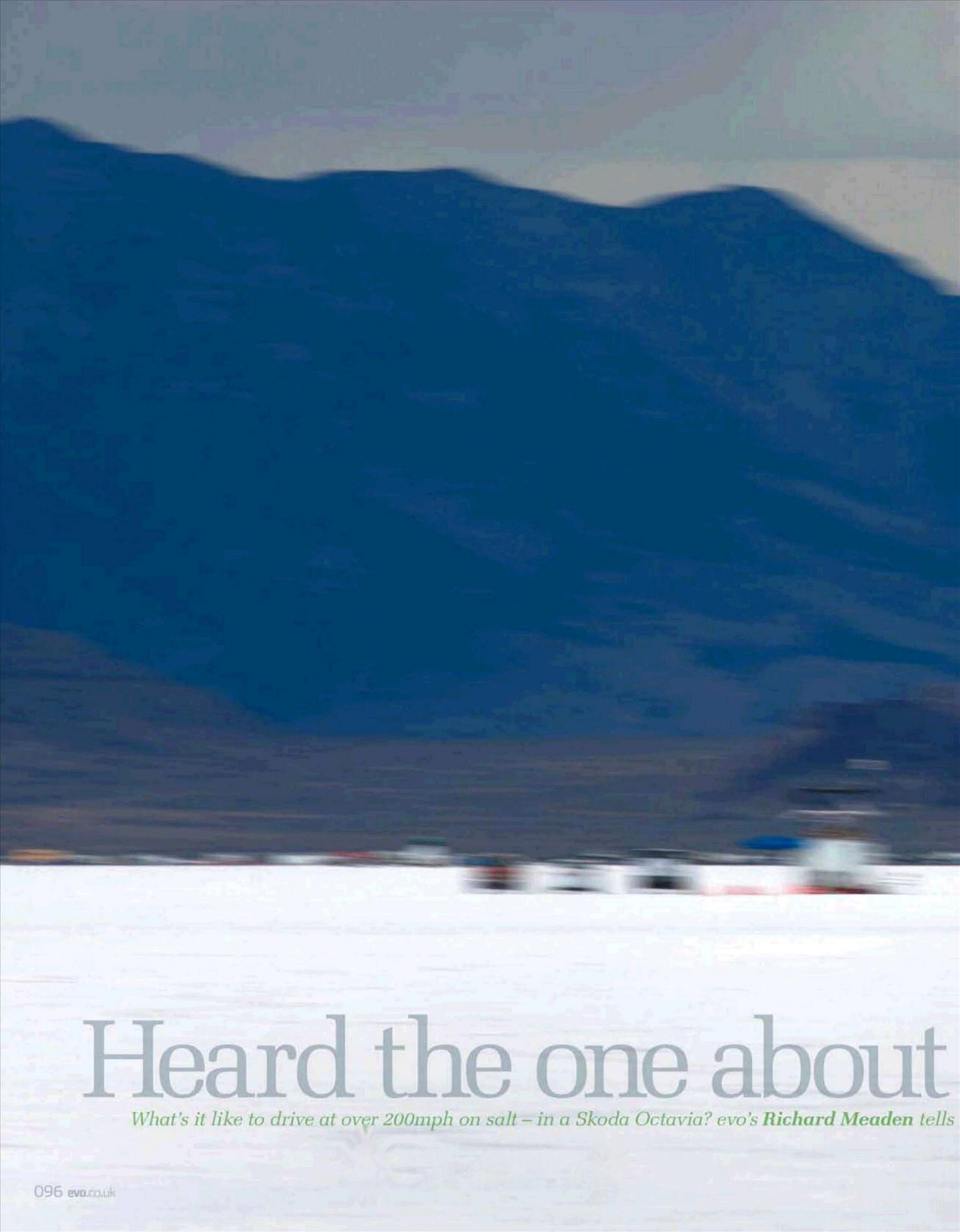
The other three all suffer from unfortunate cultural associations – the poster generation for the older two, the R&B video for the youngsters – and this means people still see them as plumage rather than substance. The truth is they are truly great drivers' cars. The 6-litre Diablo VT is the ultimate incarnation of Italian wackiness and *Audi-Technik*; the LP670-SV nails the generic role of the flamboyant Lambo V12 supercar even more convincingly than its successor.

I loved driving both, but where they were pleasant surprises, the Countach was a shock. It has no right to be such a great driving machine, and much as I hate the thought of bolstering the residual values of Harry's latest toy, the world needs to wake up to the Countach as a driving machine. This is the alarm call.



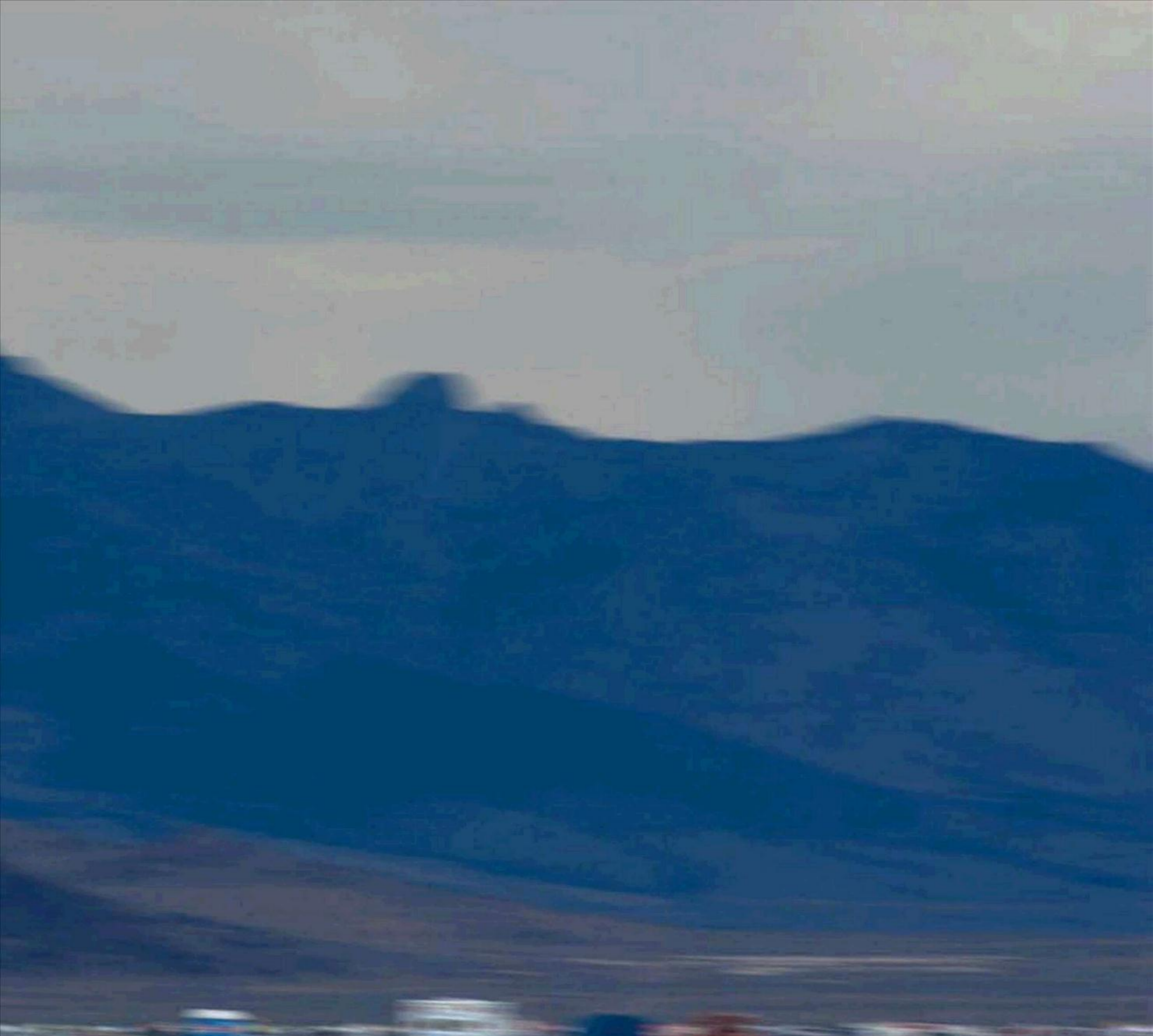
Big thanks to Doug Lawrence and Alistair McKillop for allowing us to enjoy their wonderful cars





Heard the one about

*What's it like to drive at over 200mph on salt – in a Skoda Octavia? evo's **Richard Meaden** tells*



the 227mph Skoda?

the remarkable story of how Skoda went record breaking on the Bonneville Salt Flats

T

here was a time when Skodas were the butt of every comedian's jokes. If you write for the *Daily Mail* that time is still with us, but for the rest of us Skoda has morphed from Eastern Block oddity into a credible and creative European carmaker. That said, it's still something of a surprise when Skoda UK's PR manager, Pietro Panarisi, calls to explain his idea to mark the tenth anniversary of Skoda's vRS performance brand: a one-off Octavia that he hopes will do 200mph at Bonneville Speed Week. Oh, and would I like to be the driver?

And so it begins. The car is built from a regular production car, stripped and rebuilt into a salt-spec vRS saloon by Skoda UK technicians Andy Orme and Ricky Elder. Revo Technik's Nick Kasberger provides engine tuning know-how and countless other specialists pitch in with help and advice. Mechanically it's close enough to standard to comply with Bonneville's production car class known as G/PS. The 2.0-litre TSI engine retains standard block, pistons, valves, camshaft, head gasket, coil packs and ECU. Factory conrods are replaced by items from Integrated Engineering and the turbo is a monster Garrett GT3562R. The intake, exhaust and cooling systems are also modified and the vRS transmission is swapped for the longer-striding 'box from an Octavia Greenline, Skoda's economy-biased diesel.

Chassis-wise, the car sits 80mm lower than standard on adjustable dampers, while the regular wheels and tyres are replaced by skinny spacesaver-style rims fitted with bespoke Goodyear Eagle Bonneville tyres. You don't brake on the salt, so the front discs are removed, but the Simpson parachute

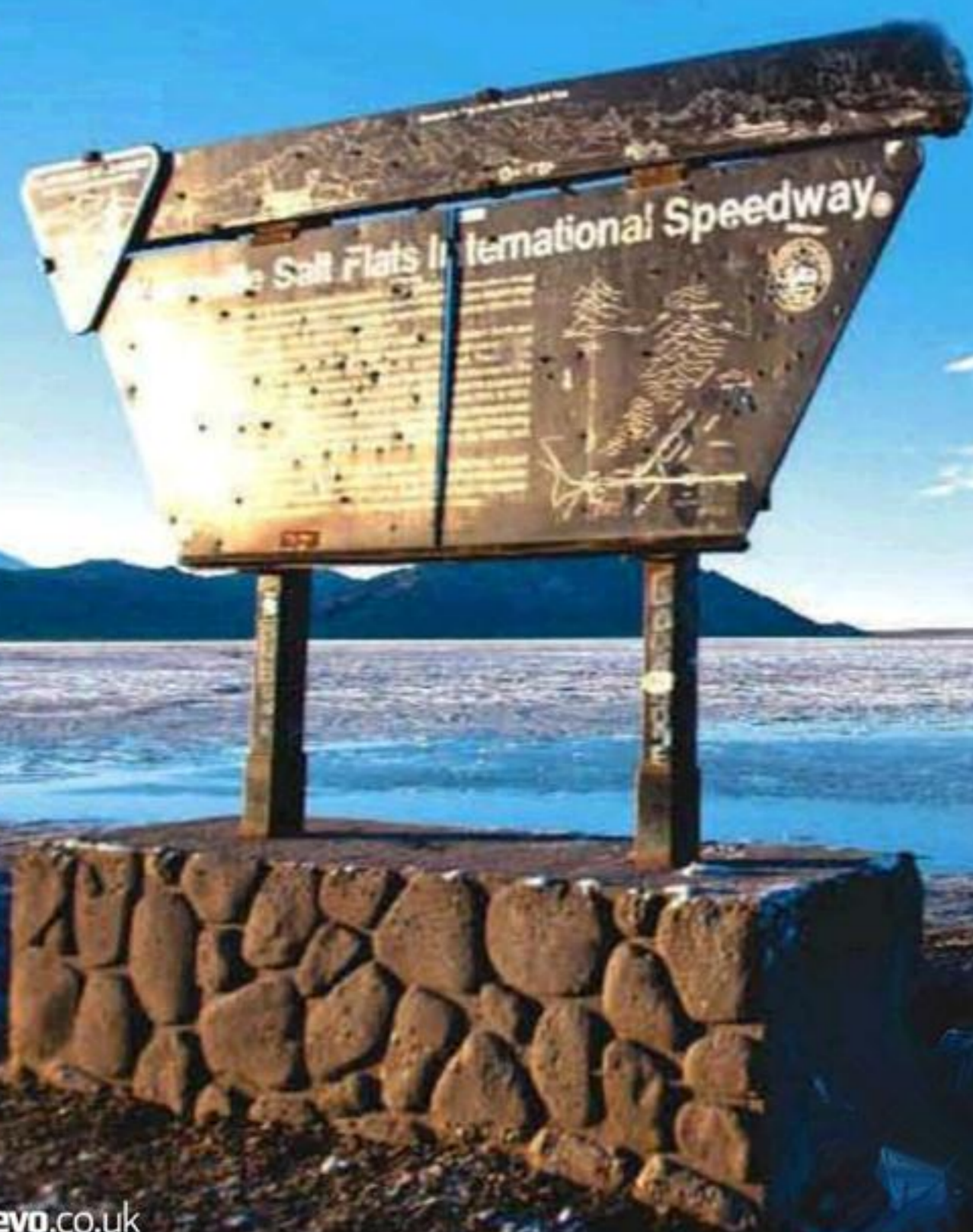


Left: the Octavia arrives at Bonneville for Speed Week, and finds itself sharing 'garage' space with a lightly modified Corvette...

mounted on the rear of the car should be more than sufficient to slow the Skoda from what we hope will be the far side of 200mph.

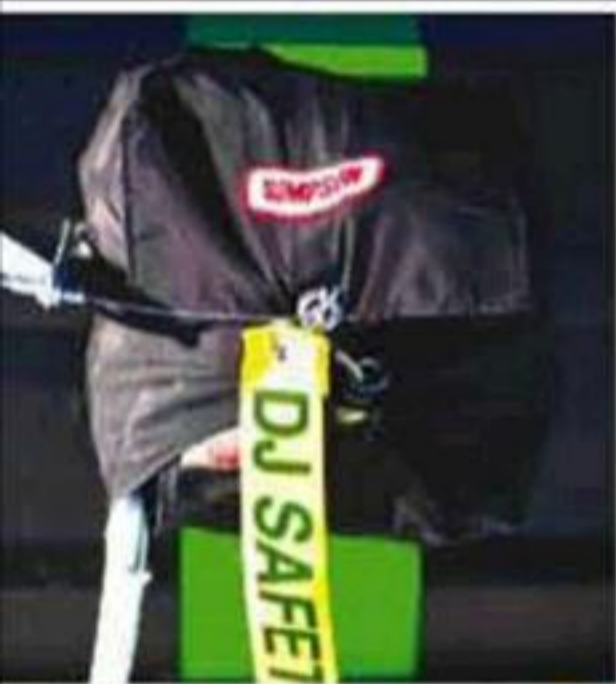
After spending six weeks in a container on a trans-Atlantic voyage, the Bonneville Octavia passes through customs at Long Beach before being hauled to Salt Lake City, where it's subject to some final fettling and a crucial dyno session to get the engine working in Utah's thin mountain air. It's here I meet with the team and see the car for the first time since our shakedown at Bruntingthorpe. It's the start of what we all hope will be an unforgettable adventure.

Speed Week begins with Tech Inspection, where the car undergoes detailed safety and eligibility checks. Some of the requirements seem arcane compared with European standards, but it's one of the unspoken truths about Speed Week that the SCTA officials and emergency crews have seen drivers maim and kill themselves in a hundred different ways over the years. There might not be anything to hit out on the salt, but when things go gnarly, cars can tumble for hundreds and sometimes thousands of metres. Such catastrophic incidents are mercifully rare, but the SCTA learns from them. It's





*'YOU DON'T BRAKE
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FAR SIDE OF 200MPH'*



this process that has shaped the specialised rules, regulations and cars that run here.

'Bale-out' is one of the more sobering parts of Tech Inspection, for it's where a driver has to prove he or she can pull the parachute, hit the extinguishers and operate the master switch, ignition and fuel pump switches then extricate themselves from the car in double-quick time. Sounds simple, but when you're strapped into your seat so tightly you can barely breathe, have your helmeted and HANS-restrained head literally wedged between the wings of the metal seat's head support, have your arms tethered by straps and are fully toggled-up in a Top Fuel-dragster-spec firesuit and gloves, it's anything but easy. I manage to drag myself out with the requisite urgency, but still I'm left with a lingering tinge of anxiety fizzing in the pit of my stomach. It might 'only' be driving fast in a straight line, but Speed Week is clearly a serious and dangerous business.

There's a record entry of just under 600 cars and motorcycles for this year's Speed Week. Judging by the wide-eyed faces gathered around for the drivers' briefing, that means a record number of salt virgins.

If they're anything like me, they'll be experiencing a weird blend of apprehension, excitement and belonging. It might be new and bewildering, but if you've got the slightest drop of petrol in your veins, standing on the salt beneath Utah's baking sun feels as right as anything can in life.

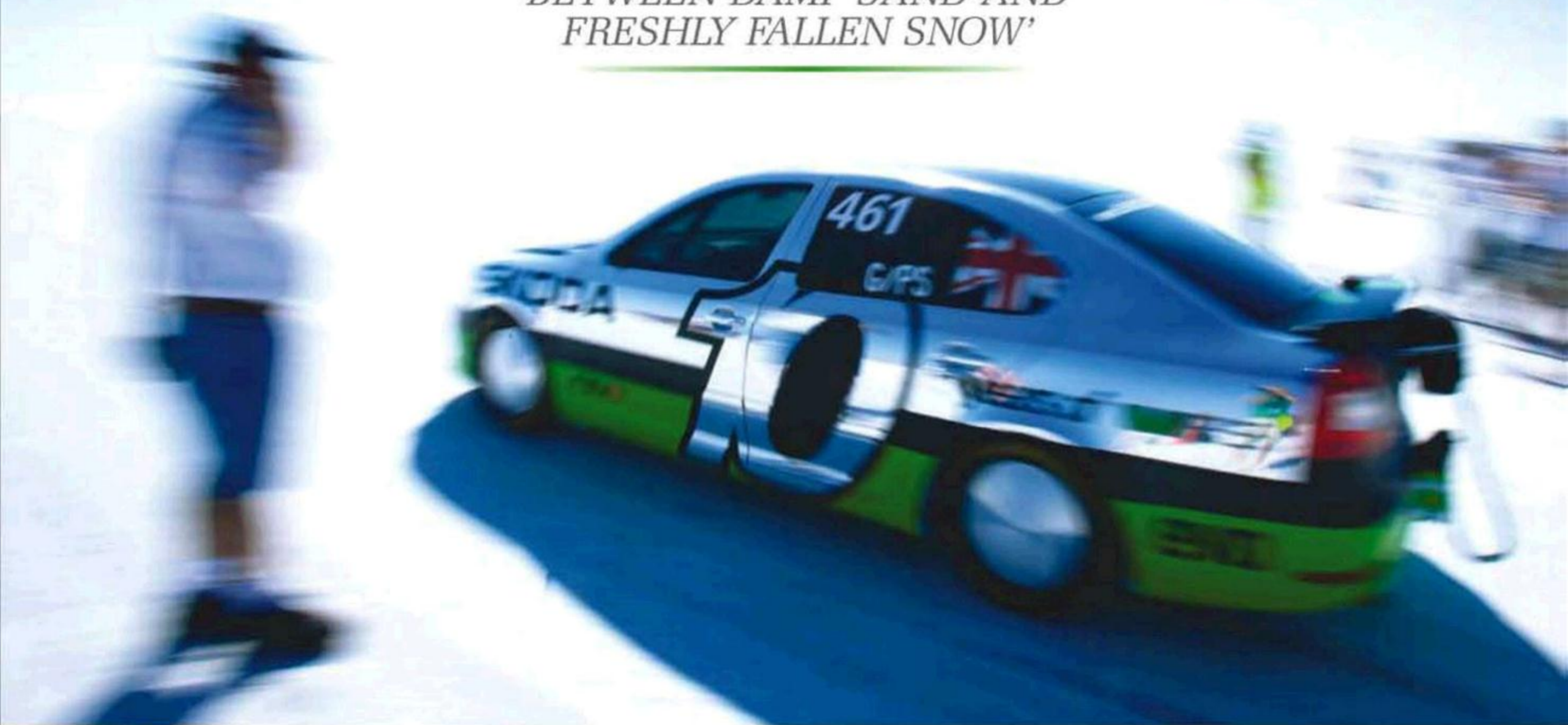
The white stuff is a weird surface on which to drive. First thing in the morning it's sticky underfoot and cakes to car tyres and the soles of your shoes. As the sun begins to climb and the ambient temperature rises, the salt dries and hardens, but still it proffers very little grip. Imagine accelerating on something part-way between damp sand and freshly fallen snow and you get the idea. Because of its unique properties, all new drivers have to complete a mandatory rookie run on Course 4, the shortest on the salt at just three miles. There's no minimum speed limit, but you're strictly forbidden to exceed 150mph, as the objective is to prove you can operate your car safely and follow instructions, not break records. However, if you can average anywhere between 125 and 150mph you qualify for a D licence test as well as shedding rookie status.



Main pic: it's a serious business, Speed Week, which is why Meaden's doing his Bibendum impression in Top-Fuel-dragster-spec firesuit and gloves. Seat (left) is metal because composite could shatter. Tyres are like space-savers. 2-litre engine keeps many standard parts; mods include giant Garrett turbo



*'IMAGINE ACCELERATING
ON SOMETHING PART-WAY
BETWEEN DAMP SAND AND
FRESHLY FALLEN SNOW'*



Before a record run, petrol is drained from the tank and refilled (above) with regulation fuel, then the tank is sealed (below). Below right: Meaden and lead technician Ricky Elder celebrate breaking 200mph. Entries include bikes, trucks and 'streamliners'. Above right: cooling the Skoda's engine with ice-bags

On the dyno at Salt Lake City, the Octavia managed 510bhp at the wheels in 100deg ambient temperatures and one mile above sea-level. That's a lot to put through the front wheels of any car, let alone one running skinny tyres pumped to 60psi on a strangely slick surface. Everything's fine until 5500rpm, at which point the turbo begins to wake up. A thousand rpm later it's fully lit and so are the front wheels. It demands the shortest of short shifts through the first four gears, and even then it'll break traction at will.

We get the rookie run and D licence run done in one hit, leaving me to complete my C, B and – hopefully – A licence runs. This means working up my average speeds in 25mph increments from 150 to 200 and beyond. Each run is a brilliant confidence-booster for me and provides invaluable data for the guys. It's also proving effortless for the Octavia and bodes extremely well for our double-ton objective.

We make our first 200mph attempt on Monday afternoon. It's clear the car has huge untapped potential, but it's also apparent the standard ECU and ignition coil packs are close to the limit of what

they can cope with. It's Nick's job to coax more from the hardware by being creative with the software, but doing it on the hoof is a huge challenge. Despite the growing pressure, Nick, Ricky and Andy are all adamant that the car will do the job: if it can pull 7000rpm in fifth, the gearing and rolling radius of the tyres will dictate a speed of 202mph. Nick has warned me I'll need to be sensitive to the fuelling issues and possibly have to back off the throttle ever-so slightly at high rpm to try and help the injectors and coil packs catch up with the demands for more fuel and a stronger spark. Sure enough, it falters slightly but clears with some coaxing and pulls strongly to the rev limit Nick set.

As the Octavia rolls to a halt, dragging its flaccid 'chute behind, I'm not certain what our speed was, but when I hear the boys hollering from the big white Dodge Ram pick-up storming up the course to meet me, I know we've topped 200. A timing slip confirms the good news: 202.15mph. We're all mildly stunned at the relative ease with which the Octavia has done it. The class record of 216mph is still a long way off, but with four days left and



plenty to come from the motor, we know we have a good shot at doing something really special.

Even when you're not driving (which is much of the time) Bonneville can still blow your mind, as I discover when I see a streamliner in full flight for the first time. A pencil-thin profile silhouetted against the gently curving horizon, these wheel-driven missiles skim through your peripheral vision like small black bullets across a dazzling sea of white and blue. Distance and physics dictate the scene and soundtrack stay bewilderingly out of sync, the low oscillating drone of a blown V8 hauling hard on a 400+mph gear totally at odds with the speed you're witnessing. I swear there's a collective pause as all eyes track the projectile's progress, then as the 'chutes billow and the engine noise is snuffed like a candle we all breathe a sigh of relief, shake our heads in a mix of awe and admiration, then carry on with whatever we were doing. It's a defining part of the Bonneville experience.

Things you take for granted when driving a standard car at high speed on a runway suddenly become magnified to an uncomfortable degree on the salt. Driving at 200mph on a solid surface in a car designed to do 200mph is no big deal, but contemplating 220 or more on slippery salt in a car with aerodynamics honed for 150mph is more than a little spooky. You hope it won't swap ends, take off or find some other catastrophic way of ruining your day, but hoping is very different to knowing, which explains why there's a different vibe within the team when the time comes to go for the G/PS class record.

We have to make two runs above the existing record of 216mph. The first run is in effect a



qualification run that then entitles you to a record-setting attempt early the following day. It's Thursday afternoon by the time our first chance comes. This means a further Tech Inspection to ensure the car is within the class rules. Fuel and water for the water-injection system is pumped out, then refilled with regulation fluids under the watchful gaze of SCTA officials. The tanks are then sealed and we're waved towards the seven-mile-long Course 2. Having managed 214mph earlier in the day, we're confident the Octavia has speed to spare, but there's only one way to find out.

Nick has been constantly massaging the fuel mapping and we're now beginning to get the car working well in sixth gear, but it's not until I've soft-pedalled it through the first four gears, nailed it through fifth and dropped it into top at just over 200 that we know whether the latest tweaks have worked. There's a momentary pause as the turbo

'I FIGHT THE URGE TO LIFT, EVEN THOUGH FOR AN UNCOMFORTABLE



Left: feeling the heat. 'Impound' is like parc ferme: you have four hours to prepare for a second run. Above and right: official checks bore sizes



winds itself up, but then the solid, relentless shove returns, powering the Octavia through the 220mph barrier before hitting Nick's chosen rev-limit at just under 226mph!

The shutdown procedure is always the same. Pop the 'chute while hard on the power to maintain stability, feel the drag pull the car back and down into the salt, then ease off the throttle and coast down in gear to ensure the maximum oil and coolant circulation. Only when we come to a halt is the motor finally switched off. As you can imagine, the heat-soak is always extraordinary, but on opening the bonnet I know something's wrong. The engine is literally humming with heat. Smoke is curling from the heat-wrap and I can hear the water boiling inside the head and block. It looks, sounds and smells bad.

After an agonising few minutes, the boys arrive and dump gallons of water over the engine to bring

the temperatures down. They quickly establish it has blown a coolant hose during the run, though how early on we don't know. It's a desperate scene, for the 225mph run will mean nothing if we can't make a repeat run tomorrow. I return to Wendover feeling distraught and get a fitful night's sleep.

Next morning the now familiar starting area has an added sense of purpose. The only cars here are those making record runs, so everyone is under the same stress as they line up to have their shot at history. The weather has taken a turn for the worse, with large thunderclouds encircling the Salt Flats and jagged forks of lightning sparking across the sky. It's blustery too, with a powerful crosswind reportedly cutting a diagonal and potentially lethal path from left to right across both Long Courses.

There are a bunch of cars ahead of us in the queue for Course 2, but no one seems too keen on making a run. The start official makes his way down the line asking who'd like to go. A few drops of rain hit the Skoda's windscreen as he reaches us. We all decide we haven't come this far to be denied, so the boys wheel me up to the front of the line. This is it!

The start marshal always checks the driver is securely strapped in before they wave them off. Today is no different, except he's also at pains to warn me of the crosswind (gusting to 16mph somewhere between the 3.5 and 4.5 mile markers) and to remind me that I don't have to make the run. Now in the grip of salt fever, I assure him I want to run, so he steps aside and waves me off.

Revo Technik's 'Boss of Boost' has wound a little more mumbo into the motor just to help us on our way. It's hard to be sure, but it probably equates to almost 600bhp at the wheels. The first four gears



FEW SECONDS I'M CERTAIN WE'RE GOING TO LEAVE THE COURSE'

**RECORD BREAKER:
THE 227MPH SKODA**

have always been traction-limited, but now as I shift up into 5th the Octavia's clawing at the salt yet again, even as we pass 180mph. Upshift to sixth at just over 200 and the revs drop straight back into the engine's sweet spot. The super-long stride of top gear j-u-s-t tames the traction issues and the Octavia continues to accelerate with startling conviction, numbers piling on beyond 200 like never before, but just as I begin to relax into the run, the crosswind slams across the Octavia's nose.

A more seasoned driver would have run up the

*'I'M OVERWHELMED
WITH RELIEF, DISBELIEF
AND A MONSTER HIT
OF ADRENALIN'*

left side of the 35-metre wide course, but nerves and inexperience mean I've driven straight up the middle. The crosswind is strong and sustained; shoving us a good 10 metres to the right before I've really had a chance to apply any left lock. In all previous runs – even a butt-puckering 202mph test run with the rear boot spoiler removed – I've just nudged the Skoda's steering with almost imperceptible inputs for fear of scrubbing speed,

or worse upsetting its delicate directional stability. Now there's nothing for it but to apply an eighth of a turn of left lock in the vain hope it'll check our inexorable drift to the right.

I fight the urge to lift even though for an uncomfortable few seconds I'm certain we're going to leave the course. To my great relief we slip from the crosswind's grasp with perhaps a metre to spare. From start to finish this heart-in-the-mouth moment has lasted no more than a handful of seconds, but at 228mph that's getting on for half a mile! I keep it pinned to the five-mile marker. On releasing the 'chute I'm instantly overwhelmed with relief, disbelief, pride, euphoria and a monster hit of adrenalin. We haven't just beaten the record, we've smashed it, posting a peak average of 228.642mph. When averaged with yesterday's run, we get a new G/PS class record of 227.08mph. It also means I become a life member of Bonneville's 200mph Club and get a coveted red hat to prove it.

To come as rookies and leave as world record holders is testament to the imagination, skill and dedication of everyone involved. None of us will forget Speed Week. Moreover I suspect Speed Week won't forget the curious Czech-born, British-built car that took a Land Speed Record and an unlikely place in history. To anyone who doubted the validity or relevance of this project, I'm pleased to say the joke's on you.

It's official: they're record breakers. An elated Meaden flanked by Skoda technician Ricky Elder and Revo Technik's Nick Kasberger. Who's laughing now?



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WHO'S THE BOSS?

*Ford says its new Boss 302 Mustang is a match for the very best European coupes. Time to put that claim to the test as we pitch the big Ford against the BMW M3, Audi RS5 and new Mercedes C63 AMG Coupe on road and track. **Henry Catchpole** adjudicates*



H

ere's today's premise: Imagine you are part of the US Air Force based in the UK (I rather think I'd be called Hank) and you enjoy driving. What do you choose to make your journeys between bases? Loyalty dictates that you should pick the new, all-American Boss 302 Mustang. But can it really cope with the narrow, bumpy and, above all, twisting roads that interlock middle England? Wouldn't you instead be better off accepting defeat, swallowing your national pride and picking a German V8 with some independent rear suspension...?

The particular part of middle England where we find ourselves today is littered with ex-USAF bases. Two of them, Thurleigh (otherwise known as the Bedford Autodrome) and Bruntingthorpe, we visit regularly – and will do again during the course of this test. But for the first day we are going to be driving between three other airfields: Molesworth and Alconbury, which are still in use by our American friends and therefore off limits, and Upwood, which closed down a few years ago and which we hope we just might be able to access.

Together this triumvirate make up the so-called 'Tri-Base Area' and there are some fantastic roads criss-crossing the land between them (including the legendary B660), so if the latest version of the Mustang can handle this novel commute, it could just be a success this side of the pond.



THE DAY BEGINS with the Mustang, Audi RS5, BMW M3 and a new Mercedes C63 Coupe all parked outside the imposing Cold War-spec security fencing at RAF Molesworth (stations retain their RAF signature despite having baseball pitches rather than cricket wickets within their grounds). The sky overhead is nearly as forbidding as the barbed wire and it's not long before the first heavy raindrops begin to fall.

The familiar bulges and stances of the two white cars still look good and everyone seems to like the more rakish lines of the C63 Coupe, but there is



Top: M3 and Mustang meet outside RAF Molesworth. Above: chatting with USAF police. Below: Merc C63 and Audi RS5 complete our quartet



really only one car in this quartet that people are going to stop and gawp at when it's stationary. The big orange 'Stang with its blanked-off lights would make some supercars seem like shrinking violets. And the attitude of the jutting front splitter could have been stolen straight from the chin of some impossibly macho comic-strip hero. The Ford is massive too – look at the labels in their collars and even the big Audi would only be wearing XL to the Boss's XXXL.

Photographer Gus Gregory hasn't been wielding his Hasselblad for long before, unsurprisingly, a couple of pickups rumble towards us and two USAF policemen get out. They're perfectly friendly but one of them has a very large assault rifle and wants us to clear off. So, despite being tempted to strike up a discussion about our two countries' 'special relationship', we saddle up and roll out across the rapidly moistening Cambridgeshire countryside.

It's fairly safe to say that we've been unlucky with the conditions. A day either side and we would have been enjoying perfect combine harvesting weather, but today we've got rain, and because it's the first for a while that means the roads are slicker than a beach in the Gulf of Mexico. It's a pain for the photos, but in some ways it's actually quite instructive for assessing the cars. A good, well-balanced and communicative chassis should shine through, while any handling foibles will be exacerbated...

The M3 has to be the favourite in this test – it's not for nothing that Ford decided to target the BMW by cheekily fitting this Mustang with a number plate



'WOULD YOU BE BETTER OFF PICKING A GERMAN V8 WITH SOME INDEPENDENT REAR SUSPENSION?'



The four V8 engines, clockwise from right: Merc's 451bhp 6.2, Mustang's 444bhp 5.0 (that's 302 cubic inches), BMW's 444bhp 4.4 and Audi's 444bhp 4.8



GROUP TEST BOSS 302 v M3 v C63 v RS5

beginning 'M3'. However, with 414bhp and 295lb ft, the BMW has the least power and torque of any of the cars here. It's also the oldest, something you notice most clearly as you look around the unremittingly black dash. Trickling through the aptly named village of Old Weston, the seat also seems higher than I remember and the steering wheel still feels unnecessarily chunkily rimmed.

All of this is forgotten as soon as you press the small 'M' button to tune the throttle, dampers and DSC just so and simply concentrate on driving. The M3 doesn't feel like a coupe, it feels like a sports car, such is the tautness of its chassis. Direction changes happen with an alacrity and force that you really wouldn't expect of something with four seats and a boot, while the tight, slightly metallic howl from the 4-litre V8 speaks of tiny tolerances and a motorsport mentality. Our test car is equipped with BMW's Dual Clutch Transmission, and although we're big fans of the knucky manual shift, there's no denying

Interiors, clockwise from below: Audi's is best of bunch; Ford's cheapest; Merc's has a quality feel; BMW's now a touch dated. Top right: outside RAF Alconbury



that the small silver paddles attached to the back of the wheel allow you to make the absolute most of the sweet, high-revs powerband. The ratios (there are seven) feel slightly shorter than they do in the manual too, so you really seem to be able to sprint between corners and there's a fantastic zip to the blips on downchanges.

Our journey from Molesworth to Alconbury takes us along a brilliant road that is narrow yet fast because it is largely very well sighted. The M3 invokes curious feelings when you drive it quickly in the wet. It inspires confidence because it generates a huge amount of grip and there's a very positive edge to lean on when you're cornering, but at the same time it sows a little seed of nervousness, because you're always wondering if, once the phenomenal grip runs out, the drop-off in stiction will be alarmingly instant and possibly final.

You can be almost certain that when the grip does run out it will be behind you, because the nose seems to be nailed to the road no matter what. This means you can concentrate on exactly how much power to feed through the M-diff to the tyres, and that's made easier by the fact that there is absolutely no wooliness to the accelerator – it's like drinking chilled neat gin to most cars' warm Merlot.

You have to lean hard on the Michelins to get them to relinquish their hold on the road and they let go in a flash once they do, but the steering is so





‘THE M3 IS DEFINITELY A CAR TO BE ENJOYED OVER THE LIMIT. YOU CAN KEEP THE WHEELS SPINNING FOR AS LONG AS YOU WANT’

quick and the accelerator remains such a precise instrument that the M3 is definitely a car to be enjoyed over the limit. As long as you're alert you can bleed out of the throttle rather than jumping off it entirely, thus keeping the wheels spinning sweetly for almost as long as you want.

RAF Alconbury's runway might be chock-a-block with stationary lorries rather than active aircraft now, but there is still a model Northrop F5-E Tiger II (yes, I looked it up) outside the gates and, amazingly, the sun comes out briefly as we pass by. Keen not to chat to any more bristling USAF police, we don't stop for long and just swap cars before heading on towards the excellent B-roads on the far side of the airfield.

The Audi RS5 is undoubtedly the best car of our foursome to sit in. The big, wing-backed buckets are instantly sportier than the BMW's slightly plump chairs, with less padding and more support. The high transmission tunnel accentuates the feeling

sitting lower in the chassis too, and the rest of the interior gives the usual Audi impression of being inside a beautifully elegant B&O stereo.

Unfortunately, while it's a lovely thing in which to listen to *Test Match Special* as the rain begins trickling down the windscreen once more, things aren't so good when you start driving the RS5. The steering is the first surprise – it just feels so light and unconnected. On the kind of wide, smooth roads that really ought to suit the big coupe and its four-wheel drive, it feels utterly vague, and the front end appears to have a worrying lack of grip. A fiddle with the various chassis, steering, sport-diff and transmission settings improves things a little, but you have to leave the suspension in Comfort, otherwise it's needlessly harsh with apparently no travel at all.

The 444bhp Audi is certainly quick down the straights, and the 4.2-litre V8 is a match for the M3's 4.0-litre V8. But trying to negotiate corners is a different matter. The steering is so light that it's hard to feel the car's response. The suspension is so soft that it's hard to feel the car's response. The steering is so light that it's hard to feel the car's response.



Above: Mustang feels like a big car on narrower UK B-roads, and, of course, it's still only available in left-hand drive and as an import. Left: glow-in-the-dark escape handle inside the American car's boot

GROUP TEST
BOSS 302 v M3 v C63 v RS5



the BMW on a knife-edge of oversteer. The front tyres seem to relinquish grip earlier than expected – the onset of which isn't really communicated – and then you're left with a rather inert lump sliding across the surface of the tarmac. Not nice.

Gus, shooting from through the sunroof of his venerable Subaru Forester, is now starting to resemble a trawler captain on the bridge as he battles against the elements, but others are not so hardy and I have to turf sub editor Ian Eveleigh and friend of *evo* Phil Holland out of the Mercedes, where they've apparently been 'assessing the radio'.

The C63 has been the eternal bridesmaid to the M3 in the past, but then it was always saloon versus coupe, whereas now the Mercedes comes in two-door guise as well. It might just be my imagination, but it does seem like you're sitting lower in the Coupe when you get in and feel the excellent seats gently squeeze your abdomen. Alcantara also greets your hands when you grip the flat-bottomed and topped wheel, while the metal paddles feel decently weighty (and cool if you've had the air-con pointing at them).

Twist the key and you're treated to a single deep, almost impatient growl firing from the exhausts, like Selma and Patty, the chain-smoking aunts from *The Simpsons*, simultaneously clearing their throats. It's the best-sounding engine in this test, Detroit V8 included.

With 451bhp and 442lb ft, the C63 also feels the fastest of the cars here, with a wonderfully torque-rich delivery that gives you that intoxicating light-limbed feeling under sustained acceleration. The seven-speed auto is one of the better Mercedes gearboxes, but using the paddles in manual mode can still seem a ponderous process compared with the rapid-fire BMW 'box. In fact, I discovered recently that the



Above: Catchpole and motoring ed Mike Duff explore RAF Upwood. Left: that's US gallons – call it 14.5mpg in imperial. Below: United Auto Workers union sticker in the Stang



best way to treat an AMG cog-shuffler is to put it in Sport+ and leave the paddles alone. It might feel a bit weird relying on the car to do all the work, but there's also a curious delight to hearing the car change down two or three gears at the last moment as you brake hard for a corner – it's a bit like one of those confidence games where you have to close your eyes and trust someone to catch you as you fall backwards.

The C63 Coupe's new suspension settings definitely make it a little tauter than the saloon (although that's due to get the settings too), with the whole chassis working and responding as one, yet it still has a wonderfully easy demeanour. You feel encouraged to throw it around and really work the rear tyres. Set the ESP to Sport Handling mode and it's surprising and gratifying to find that you can get the tail a long way out of line before the safety net catches you. Even if you pack up the nanny's bags and take her to the bus station, the Merc still feels incredibly friendly over the limit. You can be gratuitously greedy with the throttle, light up the tyres halfway through a corner and hang the boot into the breeze and it never feels unsettled. And because the steering is quick but beautifully judged, you don't even need to take your hands off the wheel to gather it up.

With the cornering shots in the bag (on a closed piece of road but a rather unnervingly fast corner) we all swap cars again and head towards our last USAF haunt – RAF Upwood. There's a decision to make before you even start the Boss's engine: which key are you going to start it with? The normal key has a grey badge, but there is also a red-badged 'TracKey'. Twist this in the ignition barrel and the engine mapping

figures itself to the full Boss 302R race-car set-up, etc with fantastically lumpy idle. Although you



Left: all four cars sport 19-inch alloys. Mustang's (top) have a Minilite-like appearance; black finish on M3 wheels (middle) is optional, as is the multi-spoke design on this C63 AMG (bottom)



'THE C63'S WHOLE CHASSIS WORKS AND RESPONDS AS ONE. YOU FEEL ENCOURAGED TO THROW IT AROUND AND REALLY WORK THE REAR'

don't actually get any more power, low-end torque is improved and throttle response is sharpened.

Even without the TrackKey's race mapping, the Boss engine is significantly modified over a standard Mustang GT's 5-litre V8, with a new intake and new camshafts helping lift power from 412bhp to 444bhp, although curiously the torque drops by 10lb ft to 380lb ft. It's the only car in the test with a manual gearbox and it's a really good one, with the pool ball-topped gearlever sitting perfectly in the palm of your hand and movement around the gate feeling tight and precise. The picture is completed by perfectly placed and nicely responsive pedals for heel-and-toeing.

As an aside, it's perhaps worth mentioning where 'Boss' came from. Famous designer Larry Shinoda had just been recruited from GM by Ford President Bunkie Knudsen (himself a former GM exec) when he started work on the original 1969 Boss 302. The car was intended to dominate SCCA Trans-Am racing and the whole project was highly secret, so when asked what he was working on, Shinoda would reply 'the Boss's car'. The rest, as they say, is history.

To be honest, the Mustang still feels a bit too much like a throwback to that original car. Despite new adjustable dampers there is still a lot of roll in the

set-up that robs it of any comparable precision. The big, Alcantara-trimmed wheel feels great and you can hustle the Mustang surprisingly quickly and amusingly down a narrow road, but it is a process of sometimes worryingly big gestures. The suspension is 11mm lower at the front but only 1mm lower at the rear compared with a standard GT and it feels like it, with the back taking an age to rock onto its springs and start really working the tyres after you've turned in. The more positive and almost aggressive your inputs the better, as this keeps things loaded up, but it feels like a big car to try and control... particularly when there are also bumps and cambers constantly distracting it from your hoped-for trajectory.

Amusingly, the Mustang's radio describes Radio 4 as 'Adult Hits' and Classic FM as 'Nostalgia' (which might be understandable if you were born in Austria in the eighteenth century). Nostalgia is certainly something that's dripping from the remains of RAF Upwood when we get there. Under a leaden sky it's an eerie, post-apocalyptic sort of place to wander around, and the lack of people in a place so clearly designed to be inhabited makes the hairs stand up on the back of your neck. I suppose Bruntingthorp - Bedford



THE DRAG RACE

They're all about as quick as each other, that's what it boils down to! With joint best 0-60mph and 0-100mph times, the M3 is the quickest if you go by the figures in the table, but it takes an absolutely perfect launch (which is very hard to achieve) to get those numbers – more frequently it would be at least half a second slower to 60mph.

Supreme traction from quattro helps the big Audi reach 30mph before anything else, but its launch control isn't happy with more than a couple of attempts and, curiously, it is the slowest car from 60 to 100mph.

The C63 AMG has a Race Start mode, but

it still struggles to put all of its 451bhp down off the line. From there onwards, however, it absolutely flies and is also the most consistent car.

Finally, the Mustang. With the TrackKey inserted, you can choose to hold the revs wherever you want for the launch control, which is quite clever, but like the Mercedes it still struggles not to smoke its tyres off the line. However, it is joint fastest (with the AMG) from 60 to 100mph and its times are very impressive when you consider that you have to change gear manually and all the others have automated transmissions. HC

ACCELERATION

	FORD	BMW	MERC	AUDI
0-30	2.0	1.8	2.1	1.7
0-40	2.9	2.5	2.8	2.5
0-50	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.3
0-60	4.6	4.3	4.4	4.3
0-70	5.9	5.4	5.7	5.5
0-80	7.1	6.9	6.9	7.0
0-90	8.8	8.5	8.4	8.6
0-100	10.5	10.3	10.3	10.6
0-110	12.5	12.5	12.3	12.9
0-120	15.8	15.1	14.5	15.6
1/4 MILE				
SEC	13.0	12.8	12.9	12.8
MPH	112.5	111.2	113.1	109.8

Left: figures show how evenly matched the four cars are from a standing start – they're separated by just 0.3sec at 100mph



'THE MUSTANG WILL HAVE TO BE EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD TO SCALP THE BMW – THE M3 HAS THE ATTITUDE OF A RACE CAR'



CIRCUIT SHOOTOUT

There are plenty of things to like about the Boss Mustang but, as we've discovered, on the road it can't compete with the broad breadth of high-tech thrills deployed by the scalpel-sharp M3 or the hot rod-esque C63 AMG. So what about on track? Here that lack of sophistication may not be such a compromise; a composed chassis and a decent slug of grunt can be both entertaining and very fast without gizmos. Indeed, Ford claims that the Boss is faster than an M3 around the Laguna Seca circuit in California.

Will the same hold true at the Bedford Autodrome here in the UK? The Mustang will certainly have to be exceptionally good to scalp the BMW. Select the stiffest suspension setting, switch out the stability control completely and the M3 takes on the attitude of a race car. The front end lasers-in on apexes, the throttle can be picked up early, the balance is spot-on, and the very clever M-Diff gets all of the power onto the tarmac. The brakes are powerful (for a while at least – the pedal begins to go soft after three hard laps) and the M DCT gearbox not only ensures your hands can remain on the wheel, but wastes no time slicing through the seven ratios.

You need quick wits and reactions to keep on top of the M3 – it will break away hard and fast, particularly through the high-speed corners, but you can ride the limit as it's clearly detailed through both seat and wheel. A fast lap is a thrilling buzz of speed and efficiency and the lap time of 1.25.1 is properly rapid. The perfect weather (20 degrees and not a breath of wind) probably explain why this is the fastest lap we've ever scored for an M3. And Ford reckons its 302 is even faster...

I insert the red 'TracKey' into the barrel, fire up the rumbling V8 and head out again. The 5-litre has a broad spread of power and, encouragingly, the throttle response is as crisp and clean as the M3's. There's a manual gearshift to be operated, of course. In fact, although it'll be impossible to match the Bavarian hardware on every shift, the Boss's shift is precise, feelsome and effective.

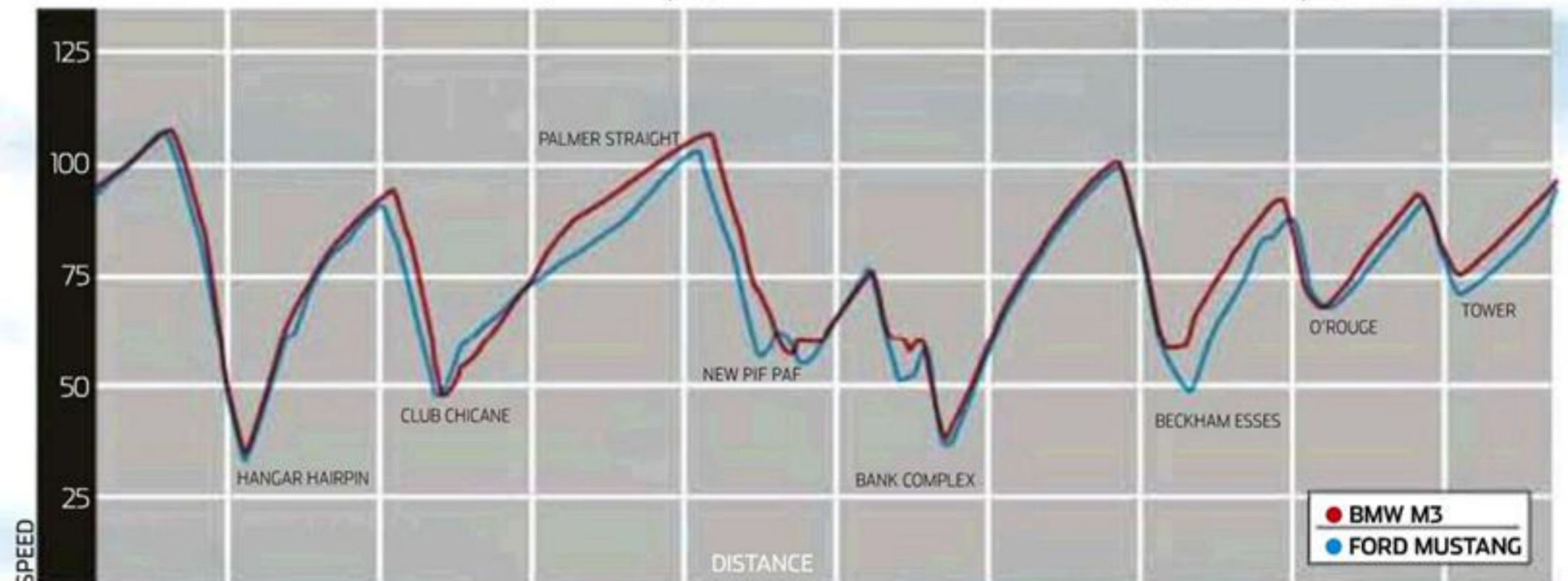
The early signs are good, then. Trouble is, things take a turn for the worse as we get near the bendy bits. The brakes have meat, but not the sharpness of response of the M3's. More of an issue is the way the Boss pitches forwards, suggesting a considerably softer spring set-up than is ideal on track. It's amplified on turn-in – the precision that was key to the M3's success isn't there with the Mustang and it also requires more steering lock, labouring the whole cornering process.

What it needs to stay in the game is high levels of grip and traction, but it lacks these too. Through mid-speed turns the rear tyres have trouble matching the fronts, slipping into oversteer where the M3 would be hanging on. The Ford is also too vague in terms of feedback; it feels a world away from being a true M3 rival and the stopwatch confirms it: four seconds off the pace.

Neither the Audi nor the Merc can quite catch the BMW either, the RS5 proving stonkingly fast but efficient rather than fun, the C63 hilariously lairy but just a little too tail-happy. But has the M3 done enough to win the group test outright? Turn over for the verdict. **RG**

WHICH WAS FASTEST?

BMW M3 1.25.1 (peak speed 109.1mph) **AUDI RS5** 1.25.4 (108.8mph)
MERCEDES C63 AMG 1.27.7 (110.0mph) **BOSS MUSTANG** 1.29.0 (108.4mph)



» DCT helps M3 (red trace) achieve higher peak speeds than the Mustang (blue). Corner speeds are higher too, thanks to the BMW's stronger grip. Audi and Merc were also lapped, their times (above) falling between those of M3 and Boss

Below: Mustang was started with the TracKey for its laps to take advantage of the keener, track-biased engine mapping



THE VERDICT

So, should Hank or any other airman really choose a Boss 302 over its European competition? Well, it takes the scalp of the RS5. We've said it before, but I'll say it again: it's nothing to do with the four-wheel-drive Audi's inability to oversteer. The steering simply lacks any consistent weight or feel and the ride and handling seem to lack any subtlety or poise. As nice as I'm sure it would be to spend a long time in on an Autobahn, it's no fun over here.

The Mustang is next to fall. It looks abso-flippin'-lutely fantastic and I'm sure there are some people for whom that will be enough. We loved the lumpy tickover with the TracKey, the gearbox is great and there's even some

satisfaction to be had wrestling it at speed between the hedges and ditches of various shire

roads. However, character can only go so far and in all honesty 'the Boss's car' is still dynamically some way behind our leading pair...

Choosing between the M3 and the C63 is incredibly difficult, and if you are lucky enough to be in the market for either one I couldn't fault your decision whichever you plumped for. But there has to be a winner, and it's still the BMW. The decision is easiest to make when jumping from the M3 back into the C63, because it's then that you really notice how everything feels slightly softer and less focused in the Mercedes. Some might prefer this as an everyday experience, but the extra weight and feedback of the M-car's steering, the lack of slack, its fantastically sharp throttle and super-precise chassis mean it is still the best drivers' car. Whichever side of the Atlantic you're on.

'THE BOSS MUSTANG LOOKS ABSO-FLIPPIN'-LUTELY FANTASTIC, BUT CHARACTER CAN ONLY GO SO FAR...'



SPECIFICATIONS

	BMW M3	MERCEDES C63 AMG COUPE	FORD MUSTANG BOSS 302	AUDI RS5
Engine	V8, 3999cc	V8, 6208cc	V8, 4951cc	V8, 4163cc
Location	Front, longitudinal	Front, longitudinal	Front, longitudinal	Front, longitudinal
Power	414bhp @ 8300rpm	451bhp @ 6800rpm	444bhp @ 7400rpm	444bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque	295lb ft @ 3900rpm	442lb ft @ 5000rpm	380lb ft @ 4500rpm	317lb ft @ 4000rpm
Transmission	Seven-speed DCT with paddleshift (optional), rear-drive, M-diff, DSC+T	Seven-speed automatic gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, ESP	Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, ESP	Seven-speed DCT, four-wheel drive, centre limited-slip differential, ESP
Front suspension	MacPherson struts, coil springs, electronic dampers, anti-roll bar	Three-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coil springs, electronic dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Multi-link, coil springs, electronic dampers, anti-roll bar	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Three-link solid axle, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Multi-link, coil springs, electronic dampers, anti-roll bar
Wheels	9 x 19in front, 10 x 19in rear	8 x 19in front, 9 x 19in rear (optional)	9 x 19in front, 9.5 x 19in rear	9 x 19in front and rear
Tyres	245/35 ZR19 front, 265/35 ZR19 rear	235/35 ZR19 front, 255/30 ZR19 rear	255/40 ZR19 front, 285/35 ZR19 rear	265/35 ZR19 front and rear
Weight (kerb)	1655kg	1730kg	1647kg	1725kg
Power-to-weight	254bhp/ton	265bhp/ton	274bhp/ton	261bhp/ton
Top speed	155mph (limited)	155mph (limited)	155mph (claimed)	174mph (limited)
Basic price	£54,690	£57,100	£45,000 (grey import only)	£58,725



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As long-termers come and go through the months, seasons and years, some stand out for their dynamic brilliance (Caterham), some for their practicality (Navara), some for their lack of practicality (Caterham again), some for their comfort (XFR) and so on. It would be hard to pick one single outstanding attribute of BF60 FLZ, apart from its huge rear wing, yet I was extremely sad to see it go because it stands out simply as being one of my favourite long-termers ever.

Let's get the downsides of living with a WRX STI out of the way first. The ride is

firm and NVH is at least a couple of generations behind what you'd expect to find in an Audi A4. Likewise the plastics and dash, but more of that in a minute. Fuel consumption is the other major worry when running a 300bhp turbocharged flat-four. Although the Subaru actually improved during its time with us (possibly, ironically, due to the mild 320R power upgrade/engine remap which was fitted after a few months) and while it averaged over 26mpg in normalish driving, it did require a liquid diet of finest 97 RON, or better super-unleaded, which meant the fuel bill wasn't pleasant.

The other running costs were surprisingly meagre by comparison. A 10,000-mile service cost £189 and the brake pads were in need of replacement by the time it went back, but the tyres didn't need renewing once during its stint with us. The big additional cost was the rear wing, which sounds quite expensive at £945 until you consider



LONG-TERM TESTS

This month: Renault Wind Gordini Renault Clio Williams VW Polo GTI Aston Martin Rapide BMW 1M Coupe Mk2 Escort Nissan 370Z Roadster Mini Countryman Infiniti EX30d Mercedes SLS AMG VW California Jaguar XJR Ferrari 458 Italia Jaguar XJ Supersport Fiat 500 TwinAir Subaru WRX STI Skoda Yeti Audi RS5 SEAT Leon Cupra R Infiniti G37S Coupe

that this includes a new boot lid too. In fact that wing was something of a contentious issue. Initially, Subaru UK wasn't going to offer it as an option (despite it being available in the US, Australia and plenty of European countries). A little light campaigning in these pages seemed to help change their minds, but it still baffles me that a company should want to distance itself from a motorsport heritage that has helped generate a huge number of sales over the years. Everyone who approached me to chat about the car had their own back catalogue of blue-painted saloons with gold wheels, and I enjoyed the attention that the STI attracted, loved the feeling of being in something a bit special. That's something that shouldn't be underestimated by Subaru. It's lucky to have an image and shouldn't be ashamed of it.

Of course, the seeds of that image were sown in rallying and, even though Subaru is sadly not currently in the WRC, the STI nevertheless draws heavily on its experience on the special stages. The reason that this second generation of the latest STI is better than the hatchback-only first version is because it comes with a Spec-C chassis as standard. This firmed everything up and most importantly removed the huge amount of roll that made cornering such an imprecise process in the first iteration.

The ride might be firm but one of the things I love

about the STI is that you can tackle literally any road in it at speed. The damping just seems to shrug off even the worst tarmac and the four-wheel drive imbues it with a feeling that it can go where other cars can't. This feeling was proved to be true numerous times during the winter. Despite remaining on summer tyres throughout, the STI tackled snow-covered roads with ease. I had a couple of memorable early-morning runs to the airport down pristine untracked B-roads, which obviously fed my Rally Sweden fantasies, but the clearest illustration of the benefit of AWD came one Saturday afternoon in December when I was cutting it fine trying to get to a wedding in London. The snow started falling as I passed junction 13 of the M1 heading south. By junction six everything had started slowing and by junction five all the traffic in front of me had ground to a halt. People were wandering around the three-lane carriageway pushing slowly crabbing cars, and the stink of hot clutch hung in the frozen air.

I turned the traction control off, left the centre-diff in its standard setting (sending more power forwards is safer but a little boring; sending more power rearwards gave too much sideways slip when getting off the line on a surprisingly cambered motorway) and we were off. Once I'd picked my way through the carnage of beached BMWs and Mercs, the Scooby and I suddenly found ourselves



'I PICKED MY WAY THROUGH THE CARNAGE OF BEACHED BMWs AND MERCS'



Highlights of eight months included meeting early Subaru (far left), mountain biking with Mark Webber; exploring the C Diff, and getting accustomed to the new rear view. Puncture was one of the few lowlights

evoFast Fleet



presented with an empty, snow-covered motorway – something that FLZ tackled with relish at the national speed limit!

Dry tarmac was, of course, equally happily dispatched and that interior, which might look a little prosaic during a showroom inspection, actually works really well when driving quickly. The lack of automated gimmicks seemed to make on-the-fly adjustments simpler, with the big heater controls easy to locate for demisting and the brilliant (pardon the pun) headlights switching between high- and low-beam in an instant when you flicked the stalk. Despite its slightly '90s appearance, the radio was actually jolly good too.

The highlight of the interior, however, was the front seats. The Recaros' side bolsters were extremely figure-hugging (even for my mal-nourished-looking frame) but the padding was also exceptionally comfortable. I did some very big journeys, but I never once found myself with a numb bum. Paul Lang (a big fan of FLZ) loved the rear seats' Isofix points and I loved the fact that they split-folded so that I could easily put all manner of bikes in.

Some long-termers can be a pain, some you enjoy but don't really get attached to, and others, sometimes almost unexpectedly, you really bond with. I was genuinely sorry to see the Subaru leave. I loved the way that it went like a performance car, looked and felt like a performance car and yet didn't restrict my life in any way. It was capable of carrying bikes and people and going down any road in pretty much any conditions. It was versatility automotively personified. **Henry Catchpole**



Catchpole's flexible friend, strutting its cross-country stuff. Top: prosaic but functional cabin

NEW ARRIVAL MK2 ESCORT

Date acquired August 2011 Total mileage n/a
Mileage this month 250 (est) Costs this month
£10,500 (purchase) mpg this month n/a



Catchpole's spent £10,500 of his savings on this 1979 Escort RS2000. Good man

NEW ARRIVAL RENAULT WIND

Date acquired August 2011 Total mileage 712
Mileage this month 598
Costs this month £0 mpg this month 31.4

Okay, you can stop sniggering now. So the Renault Wind Gordini isn't the most masculine car we've ever had on the Fast Fleet, and I won't be driving past too many building sites. But there are a few things you should know before you pigeon-hole this car.

One, it's been developed by Renaultsport, which means it should handle well, roof up or down. The chassis is basically from the previous-generation Renaultsport Clio and the engine is the same spirited 1.6-litre unit from the Renaultsport Twingo, which produces a respectable 131bhp at 6750rpm (0-62mph in a claimed 9.2 seconds).

Two, it's good value. HY11 XWL cost £16,145 (Wind prices start from just £12,995) and that includes a CD player with MP3 connection, cruise control, climate control, comfy heated leather seats, 17in wheels and a fancy Gordini paint job.

Three, it's surprisingly practical. The neat, Ferrari 575 Superamerica-style roof goes from closed to open in 12 seconds, although while the windows go down in preparation for the roof moving, they don't automatically go back

'IT'S BEEN DEVELOPED BY RENAULTSPORT, SO IT SHOULD HANDLE WELL'

I wanted to go rallying again. Really wanted to. And the only way that this was realistically going to happen was by buying my own car again. However, I wanted something that I would get real joy out of owning and driving, so although there are cheaper and faster rally cars, it had to be a Mk2 Escort. There are few cooler and more fun. I decided all this about two years ago, but I then succumbed to prevaricating on a glacial scale – until last month,

'I WAS ABOUT TO LAY DOWN A DECENT PROPORTION OF MY HARD-EARNED HOUSE FUND ON A CAR'

when I found myself standing in front of a car, fretting. If I'm honest, I love driving cars but I'm not red-hot on the oily bits. Better than a lot of people perhaps, but when faced with something like a 1979 Mk2 Escort RS2000 and asked to critique it, I start to feel like I do when I know that I've wandered out of the shallow end of a swimming pool without my armbands.

I knew it had lots of the right bits – bias pedal box, World Cup cross member, Ralloy tank in the boot, Bilsteins, quick rack – but nerves are unavoidable when you're potentially about to lay down a decent proportion of your hard-saved house fund on a car. Peering underneath the bonnet and into the arches, the shell all looked solid, shiny and spiffing... So with the kind of wild stab in the dark that wouldn't be out of place on *Midsomer Murders*, I bought it.

We then had a baptism of fire as I drove it from Morecambe all the way back to Milton Keynes. If you've ever flown in a light aircraft, then you'll be familiar with the kind of racket that a 2.1-litre Pinto and Quaife four-speed 'box make inside a rally-prepped Escort at motorway speeds. Mercifully, DNF 557T didn't live up to its initials (I like a challenge!) and made it home. And my smile as I tackled the BP roundabout in the rain the following morning was all the convincing I needed that I'd done the right thing.

The plan now, obviously, is to go rallying. Which will mean new seats (amazingly uncomfortable and too big at the moment) and belts, plus a few other bits and bobs. And while I absolutely love the way it looks, a set of tarmac arches will be making their way on at some point too. This is going to be fun...
Henry Catchpole



Above: previous owner has kitted the Escort out with all the proper bits, though the seats don't fit Catchpole so they're going. Below: mighty Pinto engine, good for around 180bhp



Above: rear deck rises then roof panel flips back and disappears beneath. Whole process takes 12sec. Left: despite looks, Wind is front-engined and front-wheel-drive

up, which is a slight pain. The roof stows in its own compact area between the boot lid and the boot itself, which means that with the top either up or down you're left with an extremely usable 270 litres of shallow yet square space that has already been packed with two people's weekend kit with room to spare.

But is it fun? That surely is what this car has to be predominantly about. Well, it certainly looks the part with its funky angles and Lancia Stratos-like doors, and I'm looking forward to finding out more in the coming months. This is a completely new model for Renault, which is interesting in itself, and it also seems to have all the ingredients to shake off the stereotyped image that has been created by its less-inspiring mini-roadster competitors. We shall see...
Adam Shorrocks

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END OF TERM SKODA YETI

Date acquired July 2010 Duration of test 12 months Total test mileage 35,050
Overall mpg 27.0 Costs £238 (service), £41 (oil), £600 (set of tyres)
Purchase price £22,865 Trade-in value £15,925 Depreciation £6940

Seven months at **evo** and seven months with the Skoda Yeti have flown by. As you may know, I took over the running of the Yeti from former news ed Ollie Marriage, who (like the rest of the team) was more than pleasantly surprised by the little Skoda. I say little, but the Yeti is quite deceptive. OK, when you're next to a Range Rover at traffic lights, you do feel like you're in a four-fifths scale model off-road vehicle, but then the Yeti was never intended to be a muscly 4x4. Once you accept it for what it is, the positives just start flowing.

The 1.8-litre TSI petrol engine is said to produce 158bhp but, as Ollie found out when he took it to a rolling road, our Yeti was actually making 165bhp. It certainly felt brisk enough away from the lights, while its lightness meant it was more agile than most 4x4s. This was proved when Ollie took the Yeti on our Bedford West circuit and, with the help of a set of semi-slick Dunlop Direzza tyres, it lapped in an impressive 1min 33.7sec, beating two Renaultsport Clios.

The Yeti's off-road ability was brilliant. I drove all over the Scottish Highlands on single dirt tracks into the middle of nowhere and the Yeti never once complained. When driving on one particular track on the Isle

of Skye I remember sparing a thought for all those other tourists who would struggle getting up and down the pass and would be forced to turn back; the Skoda just took it in its stride. Unfortunately I never got to drive the Yeti in the snow but, from what Ollie said, the performance was outstanding –

'IT'S SURELY THE MOST VERSATILE LONG-TERMER WE'VE EVER RUN'

especially on a borrowed set of winter tyres.

I know you're waiting to hear the negatives but I'm struggling to find many. I've heard people say the rear seats are a little heavy and awkward to remove, but for me it was no bother and with them out you're left with 1760 litres of space, which can come in extremely handy. In fact I went the whole of June with the seats out, the Skoda transformed into an agile and practical van. As a colleague once stated, the Yeti must surely have been the most versatile long-termer we'd ever run.

It wasn't the most refined. There was quite



On track (above) and in the Highlands (right). Below: snow tyres. Main pic: filmmaker Riley transfers gear from Yeti to his new long-termer



a lot of wind and tyre noise when travelling on the motorway, even when we changed back onto summer tyres.

If we're looking for negatives, then I guess the most obvious one is that the Yeti is no great looker. It's a matter of opinion, of course, and in fact the looks grew on me. The Yeti has a unique presence that I personally think is cool. As for its image, a 'crossover' like the Yeti is not the sort of car that would normally be 'credible' for someone like me, a 27-year-old single male, but I was perfectly happy to be seen in it.

The point of a long-term review is to determine what a car is like to live with, and overall the Yeti proved to be an absolute pleasure. It was reasonably quick, brilliantly practical, comfortable and, above all, fun to drive. In the time I ran it, there were no problems whatsoever. It was serviced back in January at 15,200 miles (the £238 bill seemed steep) and was just due another service when it had to go back.

I was gutted. In fact I'd pretty much begged Skoda to let me keep it for longer – it was really hard to imagine finding something to replace it with the same range of talents. But then I realised that the Yeti had opened my eyes to the whole genre of the crossover. And now I've found another one, as you can see on the right. Meanwhile you can see my final homage to the little Skoda at www.youtube.com/EVOTV

Sam Riley

NEW ARRIVAL INFINITI EX30D

Date acquired July 2011 Total mileage 971 Mileage this month 410
Costs this month £0 mpg this month 28.5



Above: Riley's replacement for the Yeti is another four-wheel-drive crossover. His stylish new Infiniti, though, cost rather a lot more...

The Infiniti EX30d, my new long-termer, is almost twice the price of the Skoda Yeti it replaces, so one of the questions I'll be trying to answer in the coming months is whether it's worth it! Even though the Infiniti is another four-wheel-drive crossover, it appears to occupy a niche all of its own.

The EX30d comes with a price tag of £44,094. Editor Nick Trott's beautiful and very desirable BMW 1-series M Coupe costs £45,340 (with extras). Right now, I'm struggling to get my head around the fact that as a relative new boy in the office, my long-termer is one of the more expensive on the fleet.

So what do you get for your 44 grand? Well, the EX30d has just about every gadget you can get on a modern

luxury car. Far too many to mention right now, and apart from the optional Bose 11-speaker sound system (which is awesome, by the way) everything comes as standard. My first impression was that it felt like driving a small all-wheel-drive limo.

The 3-litre V6 diesel engine is very punchy, taking you up to motorway speeds effortlessly, and the handling feels alert. What is already emerging is a split personality – a car that will allow you to have some fun when you're in the mood, but when you want to kick back and relax, it will take over and pretty much drive itself. At the time of writing, I've only had the EX30d for a little over a week; it's going to be interesting getting to know this intriguing new crossover. Sam Riley

FERRARI 458 ITALIA

Date acquired May 2011 Total mileage 7335
Mileage this month 1567 Costs this month £966 (set of tyres) mpg this month 14.0

Had a couple of rattles from the front end recently, so was straight on to the local dealer for some TLC. After being greeted with a smile and offered a cappuccino, the problem was speedily identified by the same chap who's always allocated to my car.

The loan vehicle was immaculate, and throughout the day I was kept up to date with progress before a call came to inform me the beastie was ready for collection.

When I arrived back, the very same chap explained the invoice in detail before politely asking for payment. Next day, a follow-up call to check everything was OK and was there anything else they could do?

Pity, then, that this is Land Rover dealer Guy Salmon of Wakefield, whom I trust with a Range Sport V8 that I also run.

So where am I going with this? The point is, in my experience it seems the more one spends on a car the worse the service.

'THE FERRARI IS SOUNDING LIKE A VULCAN BOMBER'

If I told you I've been waiting over a month now for a part that the 458 urgently needs – and despite numerous unreturned phone calls to a Leeds-based Ferrari dealer – would you be surprised? Probably not. Of course why would Ferrari care when they can sell every supercar they make?

So WX11 is sounding like a Vulcan bomber from the moment the red button is pushed, since the exhaust valves refuse to close. The novelty has worn off and the sound frightens the dog. I'll update you next month. Rant over. Simon George



The valves in the 458's exhaust are stuck open, so it's VERY LOUD ALL THE TIME



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ASTON MARTIN RAPIDE

Date acquired June 2011 Total mileage 3965
Mileage this month 1388
Costs this month £0 mpg this month 19.3

Contributing editor Meaden had kindly agreed to swap supersaloons for a weekend, which is how I came to find myself inserting the chunky crystal 'key' into the centre of the Rapide's beautifully trimmed dash, triggering an almighty bellow from the 5.9-litre V12. Whatever else the Rapide is in comparison to the XJ, it's bloody loud. Do not consider this car if you're planning an elopement.

On paper, the Jag appears to hold other advantages too. Its supercharged 5-litre V8 produces 503bhp to the Aston's 470bhp. And it's marginally lighter – 1892kg plays 1990. But there's no question which is the more sporting machine. The driving position in the Rapide is lower, snuggier, more intimate, and its controls feel more direct, more positive – the steering especially. It's



'NO QUESTION WHICH IS THE MORE SPORTING MACHINE'

a cinch to drive at moderate speeds – easier than the Jag with its slightly sticky throttle and, by comparison, heavily-servoed brakes. The gearbox shifts slickly and the low-speed ride isn't much less cossetting, which is impressive given its rapid steering responses

Above: Tomalin tries Meaden's Rapide for a weekend, and finds it very much to his liking, if not as rapid as his regular Jaguar

and tight body control. Where it can't quite match the Jag is high-speed ride; the XJ just seems to breathe with the road. And I never thought I'd say this, but the Aston just doesn't feel that quick. Its power delivery is beautifully linear and there's a lovely rasp at high revs, but I missed the low- and mid-range wallop of the Jag, its effortless torque.

The XJ is a stupendously rapid machine, a full five-seater that does things big saloons aren't supposed to do. But the Aston is a four-door sports car. OK, it's a strict four-seater and the rears are tight for anyone approaching 6ft, but my teenage boys loved travelling in the back of it. They knew it was special, a cut above. And like the V12 Vantage, it has a wonderfully complete, consistent feel to the way it departs itself.

Fact is, the £91,000 Jag undercuts it by around £60K, and given its extraordinary range of talents, that makes the XJ the more impressive achievement. But if Dickie ever feels like swapping again... Peter Tomalin



NEW ARRIVAL VW CALIFORNIA

Date acquired July 2011 Total mileage 2044
Mileage this month 1844
Costs this month £0 mpg this month 35.4

It's the biggest long-term evo's ever run. With 0-62mph taking 15.7sec, it's the slowest too. And a 2.5-ton kerb weight certainly makes it one of the heftiest. Yet our new Volkswagen California is already the Fast Fleet's most popular member by far, despite its claimed 106mph top speed making it anything but fast...

And that's because it offers something no previous fleet car has mustered up:

two double beds, a twin-hob gas cooker, wardrobes and central heating. It's funny how a Candy White van can reignite a whole office's love of the great outdoors, but that's exactly what's happened, and the queue to borrow the VW is a long one.

OV11 FXW is an entry-level California SE TDI 140, with a 138bhp/251lb ft 2.0-litre turbodiesel engine and a six-speed manual gearbox. With a roll-out awning, rear privacy glass, and front and rear parking sensors ticked on the options list, it totals £43,075.

The engine's revband is fairly narrow

and acceleration isn't fiery, but there's more than enough pace to keep up with traffic and even hustle horseboxes and the odd Q7 or Discovery. A pricier 178bhp twin-turbodiesel is also available, with a seven-speed DSG gearbox and four-wheel drive as options, but performance and handling aren't really the issue when you've packed the cupboards full of personal possessions. Our 35mpg average is impressive for something so cumbersome.

The California is full of neat little surprise-and-delight features, too: the pop-up 'upstairs' and its halogen lighting, an



Above: California has everything, including the kitchen sink...

Right: seats fold down to create double bed. There's another double in the roof

JAGUAR XJ SUPERSPORT

Date acquired February 2011 **Total mileage** 13,410 **Mileage this month** 1550
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 21.8

I was chuffed that Mr Tommo suggested a car swap, for it meant I'd have the chance to try Jaguar's bold new XJ for the first time.

The exterior styling is contentious and all the better for it in my view, while the interior is even more remarkable. It's got a real avant-garde feel and employs plenty of sexy materials, but the more time I spent in it the more I grew to dislike it. The abundance of chrome is tacky, the digital instruments nasty and dating fast, while the touchscreen control graphics look a bit cheap. As a whole it's confused and try-hard and lacks the confidence of the Aston's clean, less-is-more design.

There's no arguing with the way the XJ SS goes, though. It's got tremendous step-off acceleration and monster mid-range muscle the like of which the heavier, less powerful



'YOU CAN HUSTLE THE JAG ALONG AT INDECENT SPEED'

Above: Meaden gets his first taste of Jaguar's flagship XJ Supersport. Below: two giants in the supersaloon field

Rapide simply can't match, though the SS can't compete with the soundtrack of Aston's ageing but rousing V12.

I was a bit disappointed to find the XJ doesn't have the Rapide's fabulous sense of connection. The steering is precise, but light

and slightly too eager. The ride isolates you from more of the road's imperfections, but those hefty wheels do occasionally have an unseemly bobble over sharp-edged potholes. The Rapide is a firmer car overall, but its damping is more consistent, its controls and responses more engaging and all-of-a-piece.

Consequently the XJ makes you feel more like a passenger than a driver fully immersed in the process of driving. So while you can hustle it along at indecent speed, I never felt that inclined to do so. It's more accelerative, but it doesn't have the Aston's infectious and wholly authentic sporting character. It also misses a limited-slip diff, which makes it overly reliant on electronics to rein things in.

The huge price difference between the two is impossible to justify in purely rational terms, but that has long been the case when comparing Astons and Jaguars. I enjoyed my weekend with the impressive and intriguing XJ, but unlike the Rapide it never felt like my kind of car.

Richard Meaden



outdoor table-and-chair set that tucks neatly away into the hatchback, and front seats that spin round for table-for-four inside dining.

It all adds up to a fine holiday companion, one that saw the parents and I enjoy a cracking break in the Lake District. Mam and Dad even enjoyed a few stints behind the wheel, legendary Hartside Pass included.

And with a number of endurance races on the evo calendar (both spectating and driving) alongside the usual plethora of far-flung group tests, demand for the Cali's sure to remain high.

Stephen Dobie



evoFast Fleet

NEW ARRIVAL FIAT 500 TWINAIR

Date acquired May 2011 Total mileage 3953
Mileage this month 2353
Costs this month £0 mpg this month 39.1

Fast Fleet? Speed is a relative thing, and in spite of my new wheels' mere 84bhp and two cylinders, I have so far been overtaken by practically nothing. Partly this is because most people seem to be driving more slowly than they did, probably in an effort to stave off fuel costs. The alternative antidote to fuel-pump robbery is to drive something properly frugal that's still fun. Hence, you might think, the arrival of this Fiat 500 TwinAir.

Slightly wrong, on two counts. Count one: this might be the only four-seater petrol car with a CO2 score as low as 95g/km (at least it was until the Nissan Micra DIG-S arrived), but the official 68.9mpg combined-cycle figure occurs only in fantasyland. In reality, you drive this 500 with gusto because that's what it encourages, and the result is a sub-40mpg score.

Should I be outraged, as many buyers have apparently been? Not at all. It's the inevitable result of working a small petrol engine hard. Besides, I'm still getting the zero road tax and zero London congestion charge, and 40mpg with highly entertaining motoring seems a fair deal to me.

Count two? A meagre fuel thirst wasn't the reason I wanted to run a TwinAir. I simply wanted to have more time with its utterly fascinating engine with its 875cc, its near-100bhp per litre output, its clever inlet-valve actuation and its noise, which finally gives the 500 the aural character it should have. It sounds like an original rear-engined 500 or a 2CV, but refined with a smoother edge and a deep rasp when roused.



Above: TwinAir engine is what drew Simister to this 500. Below: electric steering 'stodgy'



Besides which, I have always been a big fan of the new-500 idea. I love the looks and the incredibly useful smallness in an urban setting, and the latest steering and suspension settings are bearable enough not to spoil the good things. Yes, the ride can still be unsettled and the rear suspension bottoms out too easily, the steering retains some old-school-electric stodginess and the brakes are unprogressive, but the sheer eagerness of the little car, its remarkable torque and giant-killing real-world pace are compensation enough.

I like, too, that this example is in subtle metallic grey and runs on sensible-size 15in wheels. My Fiat is neither chavved-up nor feminised; it simply is what it is. And in all the years I've been doing this job, I can honestly say that I have never looked forward to a long-term test car's arrival more than this one. **John Simister**

MERCEDES-BENZ SLS AMG

Date acquired April 2011 Total mileage 5990 Mileage this month 2389
Costs this month £0 mpg this month 18.6

I needed to be in Germany for four days, dotting between the Nürburgring and Stuttgart. It made sense to fly into Frankfurt and hire a car. So I took the SLS. So would you if you had an SLS to take. It was mag-bloody-nificent.

I hadn't intended to take the SLS on the Nordschleife, but after doing some driver training on the Monday at the Destination Nürburgring event, I had a few hours to kill Tuesday morning, so I went for a handful of laps. Wowsers. On street rubber, soft suspension and steel brakes, it was easily the best stock machine I've driven there. The tyres overheated after one lap, but the balance, the grip and the lack of understeer was outrageous. You could nail some very tricked-up GT3s in this big GT. For one lap. Then they caught up.

Below: Harris takes the SLS to visit its folks back at AMG. Right: waiting for the return tunnel



SEAT LEON CUPRA R

Date acquired September 2010 Total mileage 17,140 Mileage this month 980
Costs this month £0 mpg this month 28.9

A few years back, sub editor Ian Eveleigh ran a SEAT Leon Cupra on the Fast Fleet. One of the highlights was when he took it to the Bruntingthorpe proving ground to do some top speed runs and managed an extremely impressive 150mph. Now it was time to see what my 261bhp Cupra R with its extra 24bhp could do.

Tyre pressures and fluid levels were checked, and my TomTom 930 was suckered' " windscreen: I figured that



Fast Fleet



Simister is a fan of his 500's simple, uncustomised looks

The highlight of the lap has to be the is-it-flat kink running up the hill just before Mutkurve. The SLS is so damn fast through a section you don't even think about lifting for in a race car, it presents a serious challenge – the car gets completely airborne!

An hour later I was heading south, the big V8 burbling along at 2000rpm, squeezed in what might be the perfect seat for a chap of my proportions. The side support is so good, you don't really notice the lack of a race harness on the circuit, and yet after five hours in the saddle I didn't ache at all.

Average mpg for the track session had dropped to 11.8mpg, which is tragic, but once settled to 85mph, the long, slippery, seven-speed Benz easily beats 20mpg, which is pretty amazing given that it can switch into NASCAR power-delivery mode with the flick of a toe.

The following day I took the SLS back home to Affalterbach for the unveiling of the new M152 V8 engine. Have to say I spent most of the time talking to new brand ambassador David Coulthard, who now sits atop my lottery list of after-dinner speakers. Very sharp, understands road cars, refreshingly swears – but only when necessary. The factory was ace, especially the skunk-works bespoke area where every question pertaining to country of delivery was answered 'Russia' or 'Middle East'.

The track work exposed the delay in manual shifting once again, and in the knowledge that this is the same gearbox that's also found in the Ferrari 458 Italia, I still don't know why Mercedes signed it off like this. But the rest of the SLS is magnificent. Return trip: 612 miles, 58mph average, 20.6mpg. **Chris Harris**

*'IT MADE SENSE TO FLY TO
FRANKFURT. SO I TOOK THE SLS.
IT WAS MAG-BLOODY-NIFICENT'*



Left: Lang lines up on Bruntingthorpe's 2-mile straight, hoping to beat the 150mph achieved by Eveleigh's regular Cupra back in 2008

with five satellites plotting my speed, the readout would be plenty accurate enough for the purpose of eclipsing Ev's efforts.

To give myself the best possible chance, I entered the two-mile straight as fast as I dared, flooring the throttle out of the bottom bend at around 80mph and keeping my toe in. First run... 149mph.

Second run, confidence high, I took the bottom bend even faster, tyres squealing, the rev-counter hitting the red line before each upshift. Result... 150mph.

Third run, even quicker gear-changes and I decided to brake as late as my bravery chip would allow. The R gets up to 150mph

amazingly quick but those last 10mph took ages. Matt Howell, who was brave enough to snap away, was calling the figures as the tarmac began to run out. '145... 146... 147... 149... 150... 150... 150...!' Damn!! Hard on the brakes, ABS kicking in and the back kicking out, the SEAT slowed (just) enough to get us safely round the bottom bend.

I'd given it everything I could, and even evo 'Top Gun' Henry Catchpole had a crack, posting a top speed of 149mph from a standing start! It wasn't to be.

But I can't believe the Cupra R won't go faster than 150mph given enough space. The Autobahn beckons. **Paul Lang**



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NISSAN 370Z ROADSTER

Date acquired July 2011 Total mileage 2635
Mileage this month 1363
Costs this month £0 mpg this month 23.4

A month in and I've had the chance to get to know the 370Z Roadster a little better. So what's been occupying my thoughts?

It's definitely a woolly-hat kind of convertible. On the sort of cooler, overcast days that typify a British summer, the breeze passing over the car does tend to chill the top of my bonce. To be fair, I've found few convertibles cocoon the driver sufficiently to prevent this, and it's possible it may not even be an issue for someone less follically challenged. The rest of me is certainly kept nice and toasty, thanks to the powerful heater and well-positioned vents – important details in an open-top car.

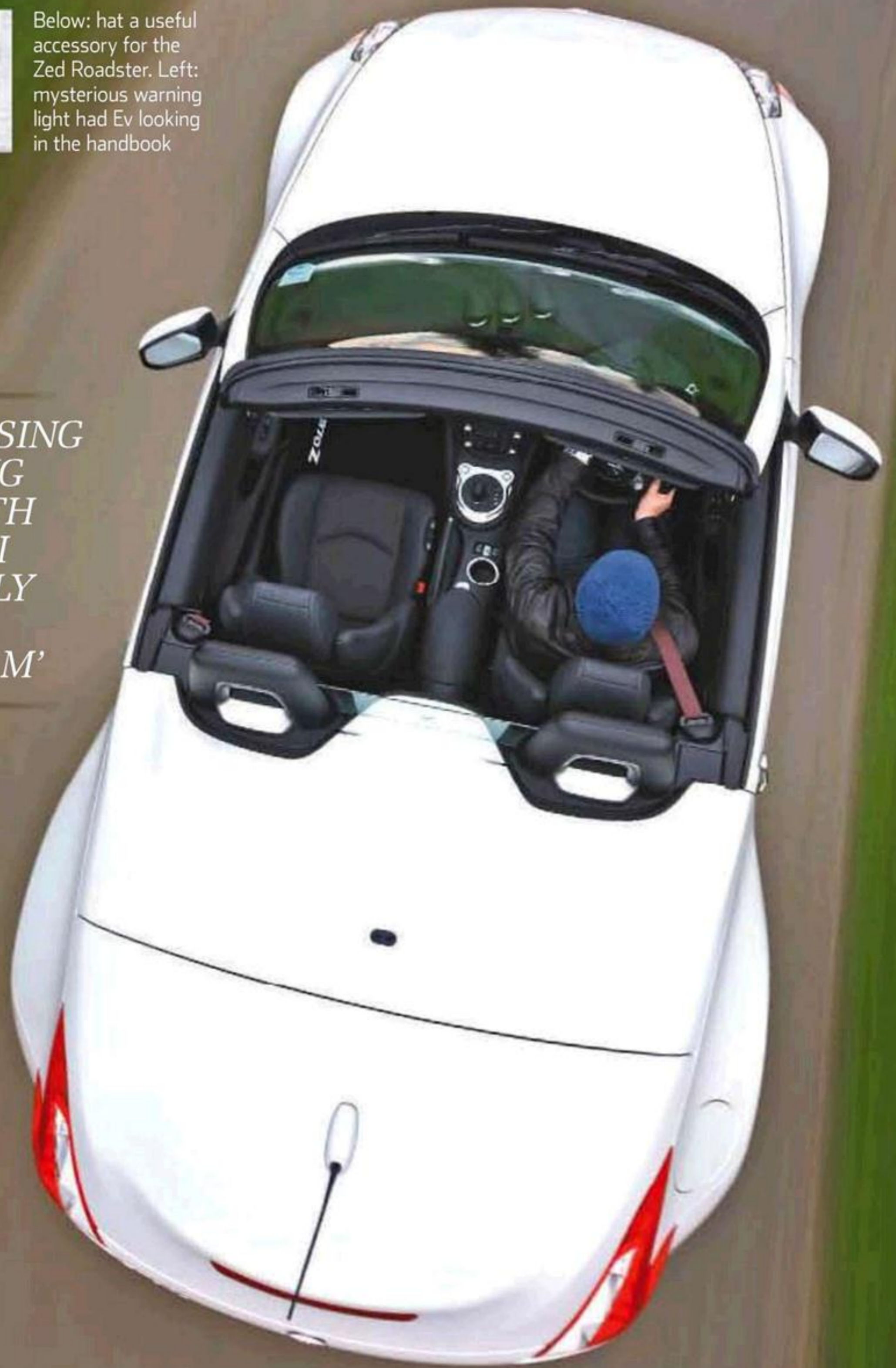
The auto gearbox has had me thinking too. It might seem like madness to forgo the manual gearshift with its nifty Synchro Rev Control feature, but I'm not so sure. The seven-speed auto really doesn't feel out of place in the drop-top Zed. It's smooth in auto mode and capable of particularly quick shifts – complete with rev-matching blips – when you're flicking the column-mounted paddles. Am I missing changing gear with a stick? I genuinely don't think I am.

I had to break the habit of a lifetime this month and refer to the 370Z's handbook. When the car first arrived, a warning light seemed to suggest either the bonnet or boot wasn't properly closed. But both were, and the illuminated symbol didn't look quite right for this. It turns out that it refers to the Zed's pop-up bonnet, a safety feature that increases the space between bonnet and engine in the event of a pedestrian impact. So the fault is with this. Not a show-stopper, then. I'll get it looked at when I've got a spare moment, and in the meantime I'll try not to run into anyone. Ian Eveleigh



Below: hat a useful accessory for the Zed Roadster. Left: mysterious warning light had Ev looking in the handbook

'AM I MISSING CHANGING GEAR WITH A STICK? I GENUINELY DON'T THINK I AM'



BMW 1M COUPE

Date acquired June 2011 Total mileage 7561
Mileage this month 1943 Costs this month £2.99 (washer fluid) mpg this month 26.9

What's pretty much the worst thing you can do when you start a new job? Steal from the petty cash? Insult the boss's wife? Or worse, crash the boss's car?

For evo's new film-maker, Sam Riley, it turned out to be the latter. Yep, late one night recently Sam called me, clearly in some distress. He'd taken the 1M home



A recent 'incident' in the 1M has left two of its all-terrain wheels mangled

– 'my' 1M – and switched off the stability control. His ambition overtook his talent, just as the rear end of the BMW nearly overtook the front, and Sam slid the car into a kerb. Both nearside wheels have been damaged, but the 1M is clearly tough – the tracking remains straight and there's no damage to suspension or steering. Oddly, the seat-height adjust has also broken, but I believe this occurred before the shunt.

There's little doubt the 1M's short wheelbase, big power and tight steering combine

to create an entertaining handling car but even evo's top road testers have reported that you disengage the DSC at your peril. On track, the 1M's playfulness is a joy – but on the road it can bite you. Just ask Sam.

In other news, dozens of @evomagazine and @evoNickTrott followers have suggested the 1M should be wrapped in a classic 2002 Turbo-tribute colour scheme. Hopefully by the next report the BMW should be wearing a nice new suit, and Sam will have left the doghouse... Nick Trott

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www.santapod.com

www.driftwhatyabrung.co.uk



Santa Pod Raceway, Airfield Road, Pod Wellingborough, Northants NN29 7XA. Signed from J14/15 M1.

RENAULTSPORT CLIO V6

A mystery scratch has appeared on the lower front bumper of my V6. It's easy to tag it on kerbs when you park, but I'm super-careful when manoeuvring the Clio and don't recall scraping it. The other potential culprit is road debris flicking up and catching the corner. Whatever, I need to get it resprayed. Damn. **Nick Trott**



RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS

We bought the Williams as a back-to-basics alternative to the slew of sophisticated press cars we see here at evo. And with my current long-termer – the Polo GTI – having only two pedals, the Clio's slightly juddery clutch and involving gearchange are ensuring my left limbs don't waste away. **Stephen Dobie**

JAGUAR XJR

John Simister isn't the only one with a new 500 TwinAir (see p128) and, since I collected mine a few weeks ago, I've been bombing about in it almost constantly. As a result, the Jaguar has been rather neglected. If this carries on, I fear it may have to be 'let go'. Hear that unusual noise? That's not a two-cylinder Fiat. That's a grown man weeping. **Richard Porter**

MINI COOPER S COUNTRYMAN

The Countryman's combination of 30mpg thirst and dinky 47-litre tank means it rarely manages more than 300 miles between fills. And since the 'low fuel' warning takes over the digital speed display in the rev-counter, forcing you to rely on the comedy maxi-speedo in the middle of the dash, I rarely get further than 270 miles before being bullied into another trip to the petrol station. **Mike Duff**

AUDI RS5

Having covered just under 16,500 miles, the RS5 is closing in on its first service. This morning when I started it up, it told me that it's due in 500 miles or 313 days (I think I know which will be sooner). This will give us the chance to get the intermittent damper warning looked into too. More next month. **Roger Green**

HARRY'S GARAGE MASERATI GRANTURISMO S

Date acquired June 2011 Total mileage 15,701 Mileage this month 621
Costs this month £1460 (anti-chip film) mpg this month 18.1

Stone-chipped paintwork drives me nuts. I know the marks are so miniscule they shouldn't matter, but for some reason, to me, they do. They're preventable, of course, by having protective film fitted to vulnerable areas of paintwork. My Ferrari 550 Barchetta was so equipped from new and there's no question it's done a great job, but I've never liked the way you can see the edges of the film, especially on the strip that ends halfway up the bonnet. But the Barchetta's protection was applied back in 2001, and over the last ten years the world of anti-chip film has moved on markedly, something I discovered when I looked into having some applied to my 'new' Maserati GranTurismo S.

Today, the film comes in much wider reels, allowing whole panels to be covered, meaning no more unsightly edges. As the front of the Maser was still immaculate after

being resprayed by Meridian Maserati to get rid of some 'stone-pox', I booked the car in with Paintshield in Peterborough to get it suitably protected.

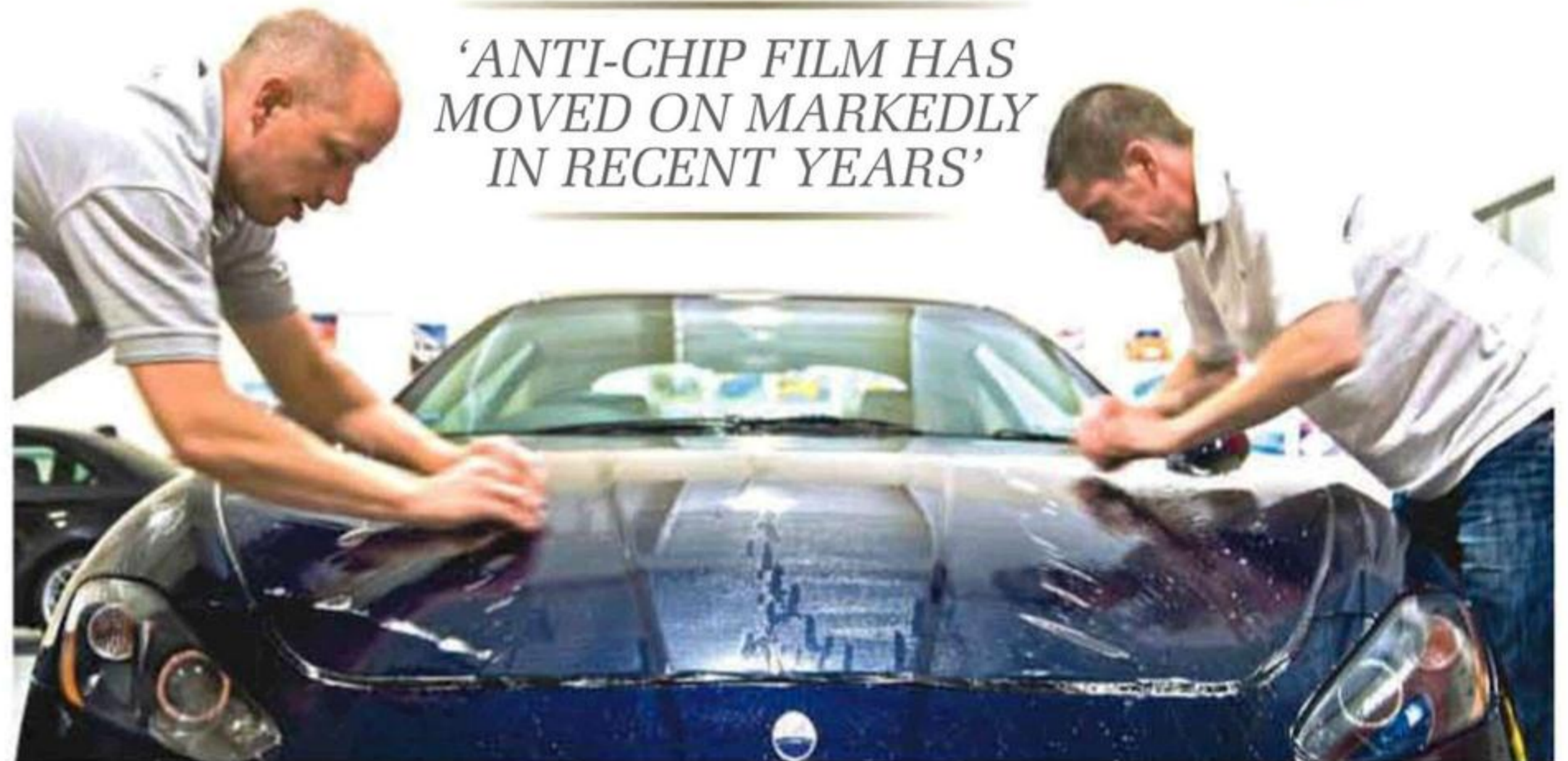
There's a choice of film – value, standard, extreme or premium – the two more expensive options being two-ply and having a glossier finish. I chose 'extreme' and had it applied to the nose, bonnet and both front wings at a cost of £1460. Not cheap, but it's one of those jobs worth doing, especially if you intend keeping your car for a while. The end result is that M4SER should remain stone-chip-free for years (the film comes with a four-year guarantee) and, for some silly reason, that makes me very happy.

If you feel the same way as I do about stone chips, then Paintshield is offering evo readers a 15 per cent discount for the next month only. Call 01733 390777 and mention evo. **Harry Metcalfe**

Below: the team at Paintshield apply anti-chip film to the freshly painted front-end panels of Harry's new Maserati, which should prevent them needing another respray for the foreseeable future



'ANTI-CHIP FILM HAS MOVED ON MARKEDLY IN RECENT YEARS'



VOLKSWAGEN POLO GTI

Date acquired June 2011 Total mileage 6918 Mileage this month 1844 Costs this month £16 (oil, 1 litre), £12 (coolant, 2 litres) mpg this month 38.4

'Easy-going' was how I described life with the Polo last month. Since then, I've received several emails from evo readers and members of www.polodriver.com alerting me to cars with high oil consumption. It seems a batch of early twin-charged 1.4 TSIs have suffered from faulty piston rings, with a small handful of cars needing new engines.

Polo needed a litre of oil this month. Dobie hopes it's not a sign of trouble ahead



As if on cue, with the odometer reading just shy of 6500 miles (around 4000 of them with evo), on popped the oil warning light on our Polo. The handbook suggests consumption of up to 1 litre per 2000km (1243 miles) is possible, so this is well within tolerances, and

a butcher's around the manuals of other VW group cars revealed this to be a blanket warning.

One litre of Castrol Edge Sport later, the engine was topped up again, but with my head under the bonnet I noticed the coolant was also running low. Around 600ml of Halford's finest later, it's back to the maximum mark too.

I'll be keeping my eye on both fluid levels from now on, and would love you to share any 1.4-litre TSI experiences with me via fastfleet@evo.co.uk **Stephen Dobie**

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Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder E Gear



2008/08, 23,100 miles, Grigio Lynx Grey, Black leather, Navigation, iPod, £89,999

Bentley Continental GT Coupe's



2004-2010 Model's, 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



2006/06, 12,000 miles, Madera Moccasin Hide, 1 owner, Rear Screens, Fridge, Front + Rear Cameras, £149,999

Bentley Arnage T, Green/Red Label



1998 - 2007, choice of six cars in stock, all with FSH from,.....£24,999 - £49,999

Aston Martin DB9, Choice from, £44,999 - £46,999
 Aston Martin V8 Vantage Sportshift, convertible, 2009/09, 9,000 miles, Black with Red leather, iPod,.....£63,950
 Maybach 57, Choice of three cars, 2003 - 2006, low miles, all with FSH, From,£80,000 - £130,000
 Jaguar XFR V8 Supercharged, 2009/09, 2,800 miles, Black with Ivory leather, Rear camera.....£39,999
 Ferrari 599 GTB LHD, 2007/07, 8,100, Grigio Silver, Cream leather Carbon trim, 1 owner.....£134,950
 Bentley Flying Spur, Choice, 2006 - 2010 Models, all with FSH from.....£49,999 - £104,950
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INSIDE THIS MONTH'S PACKED, 44-PAGE KNOWLEDGE SECTION

JUST LOOKING

p137

Every month, we try two of the cars from the classified ads. This month it's the turn of an Aston DB7 Vantage and a Gemballa 911

BUYING GUIDE

p140

The Series 2 Lotus Exige offers mini-supercar looks and driving dynamics. **Brett Fraser** tells you what to watch out for

SPEEDSHOP

p145

A new feature, Speedshop brings you the latest tuning products and expert advice on how to get the best from your car

WORKSHOP

p147

Another new feature, Workshop is where you'll find all the latest tools and cleaning products, plus tips on maintaining your car

ESSENTIALS

p149

Amongst this month's must-have stuff: Zonda R and Renault Turbo 2 models, a Quattro t-shirt, and Derek Bell's life story

TRIPS & TRAVEL

p150

The low-down on a classic driving road in the Austrian mountains, and our verdict on a Road Angel app for the iPhone

TRACK & RACING

p152

Castle Combe gets put under the evo microscope, plus the closing stages of this year's British Touring Car Championship

TRACK BATTLE

p156

What's fastest around the West Circuit, a lightweight sports car or a state-of-the-art hot hatch? **Roger Green** finds out

KNOWLEDGE

p160

All the essential data – and evo's verdict – on every new performance car, plus the very best second-hand buys

ME & MY CAR

p178

The car-mad **Earl of Pembroke** on the Japanese super-coupe that's given him some of his best motoring memories

MARKET WATCH



Continental drift as recession bites

Bentley bargains galore as top marques continue to feel the squeeze

New car sales in July 2011 were down 3.5 per cent compared with a year ago, the thirteenth month in a row they've fallen. But which models are suffering the biggest drop in demand? To find out, just scan the classifieds for those 'delivery mileage' specials available at a chunky discount relative to their official list price.

In the last issue, our 'deal of the month' was a delivery-mileage Mercedes SLS at £50,000 below list. That SLS was advertised at Tom Hartley, who are now listing a delivery-mileage 2012 model year Bentley Continental GT Mulliner finished in Beluga Black with Saffron hide (so a desirable combination and another brand new model) for just £129,950, or some £22,000 under list. Tom Hartley Jnr reckons the new Continental isn't visually different enough to tempt existing buyers to trade up and expects values to continue to drift. That's in sharp contrast to what happened when the Conti GT first appeared back in 2002. Back then they were flying out the door at £30,000 over list; how times change. Also in stock is a 4000-mile Conti Supersports for £109,950, some £60,000 less than it cost new a few months ago. In another corner of the showroom sits a 2011 Mercedes CL with just 2000 miles on the clock and available for £90,000, or £40K under list.

Elsewhere, Aston dealers are offering Rapides showing less than 1000 miles for around £40,000 under their new price and Jaguar dealers have plenty of delivery-mileage Jaguar XJ Supersports on offer for around £70,000, some £25,000 under list.

I reckon there are a few factors at work here. Firstly, all of the above models are petrol-powered and, right now, people value the economy of a diesel over the performance of a petrol. Next, new company car tax rules introduced in April 2011 mean individuals are now taxed on the full list price (including options) of their company car, when previously this was capped at £80,000. What this means is that company director favourites like the Bentley Conti GT now attract a £53,000 benefit-in-kind charge, leading to a whopping annual personal tax bill of over £21,000. So you can see how the appeal of owning one has waned somewhat. I'm afraid the glitzy company directors' car park looks like becoming yet another casualty of this infernal recession.

Harry Metcalfe
Editorial director



DEAL OF THE MONTH: BENTLEY CONTI GT £38,999

» Early Bentley Continental GTs represent spectacular value for money at the moment. There's plenty to choose from and they have a reputation for granite-like build quality, so running costs (apart from fuel) are lower than you might expect. They also look virtually identical to a new one – in many people's eyes at least. Here's a good one dating from 2004 that's covered only 41,000 miles and in excellent condition, full Bentley service history, etc. Priced at £38,999, that's around £110,000 less than today's new cost. Someone else's pain could be your gain...



Year 2004 Mileage 41,000
Vendor Marlc... Duckinghamshire
(www.marlc... 0844 5501227)

AUCTION WATCH: PORSCHE 2.7 RS £200-250,000

» With only 16 RHD 2.7 RS lightweights ever built, you rarely see them come up for sale on the open market. Originally owned by ex-F1 racer Mike Fisher, this example didn't get registered for the road until the mid-'80s as he was too busy racing it. From '74-'77 it took part in 47 races, achieving 19 wins, 14 seconds and 3 thirds and set 11 lap records in the process. Showing 20,000 miles, it's currently fitted with a recently built 2.7 RS-spec engine but its original engine will also be included in the sale. With such a fascinating history, it looks reasonable value... £200-250,000.



Year 1973 Mileage 20,000 Auctioneers
Bonhams (www.bonhams.com) Date of
auction September 16 (Goodwood Revival)

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Graphite Grey,
7,650 miles, A/C
£26,995



Lotus Evora 2 + 2 Sport Tech
Premium pack, James Bond
Bronze, Reverse Camera,
13,100 miles **£36,995**



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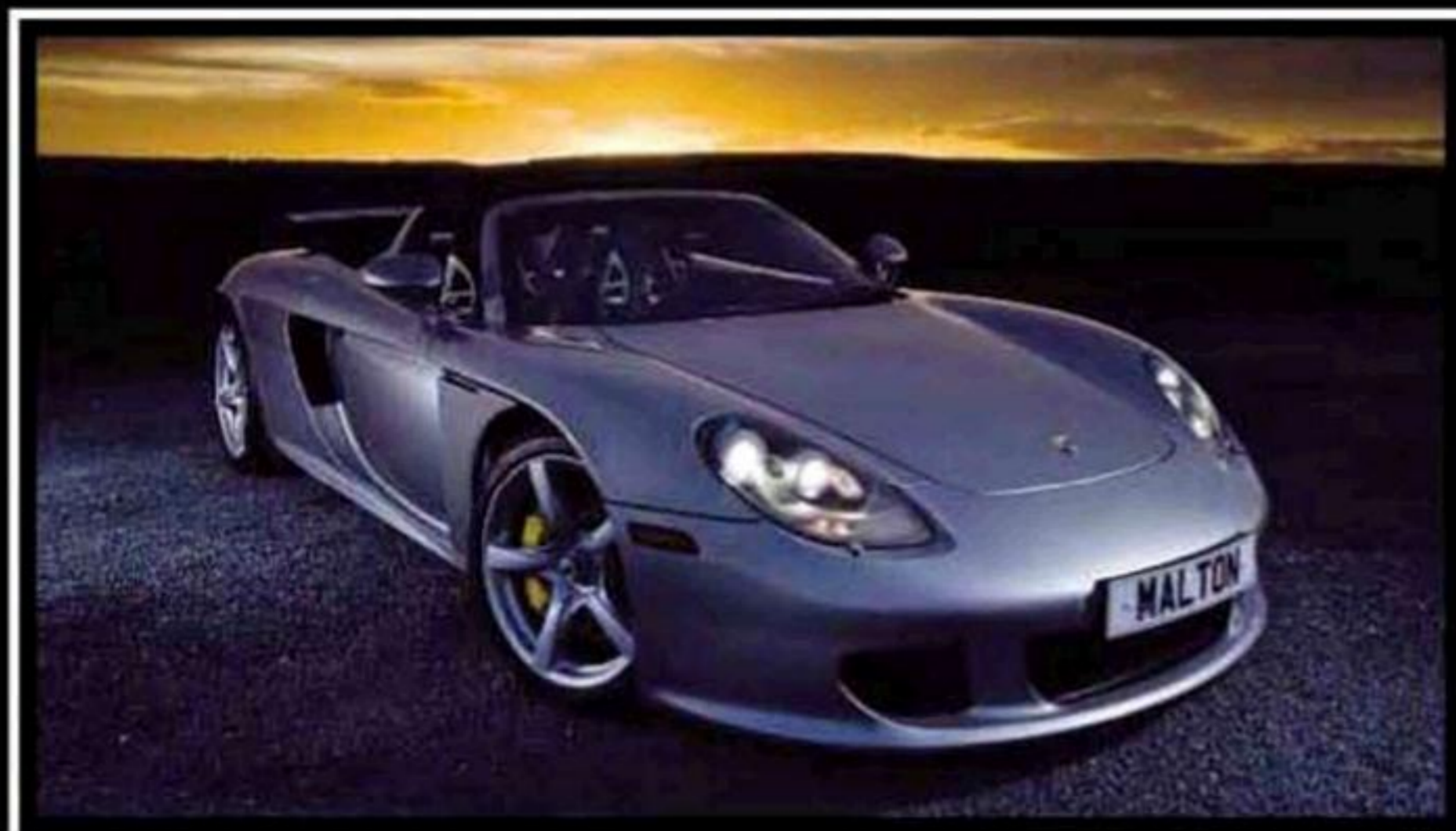
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DRIVING THE CARS IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

ASTON MARTIN DB7 VANTAGE £27,950

Vendor Nicholas Mee and Co, London W6
www.nicholasmee.co.uk, 020 8741 8822

When it comes to the DB7, the V12-engined Vantage model is definitely the one to have. Early cars came with a six-cylinder supercharged engine that struggled to deliver Aston-appropriate levels of performance, but the Vantage, introduced in 2000, more than redressed the mouth/trousers imbalance.

With DB7 Vantages now well south of the £30K mark, this immaculate car, being sold by London Aston specialist Nicholas Mee, is a fine example of the top end of the market. The combination of silver metallic and blue hide means it still looks fresh after 11 years.

Like the majority of DB7s, it comes with the optional automatic gearbox. On the road it's soon clear it lacks the brains of more modern autos, but even the occasional reluctant kickdown can't blunt the effortless pace provided by the 5.9-litre engine. It sounds great too, progress accompanied by a proper V12 wuffle.

The interior does feel dated, with the incongruous contrast between late '90s Ford switchgear and a hand-finished wood dash, but the trim has stood up to its 40,000 miles of gentle use well, and this Vantage still feels like a very classy place to spend time. **Mike Duff**



Once described by some bloke off *Top Gear* as the most beautiful man-made object on the planet, the DB7 still looks good, although cabin (left) is a touch dated



SPECIFICATION

Year 2000
Mileage 40,200
Engine V12, 5935cc
Max power 420bhp @ 6000rpm
Max torque 400lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 185mph (claimed)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR

» Near perfect, light scuffs on the wheel-centres being the only obvious flaws

INTERIOR

» Excellent. Light wood dashboard and DIN-sized stereo feel a bit old by modern tastes, but it's all here and it all works

MECHANICALS

» Feels strong and comes with a full Aston service history plus a new service and a 110-point inspection by Nicholas Mee

VERDICT

» A genuine, usable modern classic

ALSO FROM THIS DEALER

ASTON V8 VANTAGE ZAGATO £125,000, 1987, 27,000 miles » One of 50, Javelin grey
ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH £54,950, 2004, 20,600 miles » Black, excellent throughout

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 Testarossa (Modificato) £46,990

1991, 24,314 Miles

Over seventy thousand pounds has been spent on this 1991 Testarossa including a complete engine rebuild increasing the horsepower to 489BHP. Finished in Nero with Nero hide, the brakes have been upgraded to larger Ferrari 4 pot calipers and large drilled and ventilated discs.

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2006, 8,167 miles
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£79,990



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2004, 15,128 miles
£62,990



996 Turbo
2002, 31,902 miles
£32,990



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
£79,995



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2006, only 9,000 miles
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PORSCHE 911 CARRERA S GEMBALLA GT 380 £49,950

Vendor Top555, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 7AA
www.top555.co.uk 01572 774830

This is not one of Gemballa's eye-grabbing full conversions, rather a raid on its catalogue by the car's second owner. His £10K-plus shopping spree included front and side skirts, 20in 'Black Edition' alloys, aluminium pedals, a short shift for the six-speed manual gearbox and a DMS upgrade that lifted the output of this 997.1 Carrera S Cabriolet from 350 to 379bhp. It strikes a pretty neat balance between standard and full tuning lunacy.

Equipment levels are high, with a Bose sound system, Park Assist, heated leather seats, a tracking system and Porsche's Sport Chrono pack amongst the kit. And with fewer than 9000 miles on the clock, everything looks and feels as new. It drives well too, the small dose of extra power making it feel as quick as the now similarly powered 997.2 Carrera S. Wider 325-section rear tyres mean it's more planted than a standard 911.

At £49,950, it's good value when you account for how fresh this car still feels, and the fact its list price before being Gemballa'd would have been north of £80K. If you can sacrifice a bit of rarity, though, you can get a slightly leggier 997.1 GT3 for little more cash... **Stephen Dobie**



Gemballa makeover means you're unlikely to ever come across another 911 that looks the same as this one. Condition is spotless



SPECIFICATION

Year 2007
Mileage 8900
Engine Flat-six, 3824cc
Max power 379bhp @ n/a
Max torque 309lb ft @ n/a
0-60mph 4.6sec (est)
Top speed 185mph (est)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR

» In flawless condition. Aero kit and wheels not subtle, mind

INTERIOR

» Much less modified in here, with plenty of equipment. Still spotless

MECHANICALS

» Low mileage means it feels as new; extra power brings it close to current 911s

VERDICT

» If a look-at-me 911 is what you're after, this is a good 'un. £55K can buy a 997.1 GT3, though

ALSO FROM THIS DEALER

BMW M3 GTS £109,950, 2011, Delivery miles
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evo Buying Guide

THE INSIDE LINE ON BUYING USED



LOTUS EXIGE S2

*The S2 Exige built on the original with a tough new engine, more power and options aplenty, and now you can get one for just £17K. **Brett Fraser** takes a look*

It may not have been borne directly from a race series in the manner of its K-series-engined predecessor, but the second-generation Lotus Exige quickly proved that its mettle was forged in the same foundry. Launched at the Geneva motor show in 2004, the 189bhp S2 Exige had as standard almost as much horsepower as the hairy-chested VHPD version of the S1, but with a notable improvement – the dependability of a Toyota-sourced 1.8-litre, four-cylinder, VVTL-i engine. And while it

may have lacked the rabid frenzy of the highly tuned old Rover lump, its two-stage power delivery – courtesy of variable valve timing and lift – gave a buzz akin to an old-school turbo coming on-boost.

With its track-developed chassis and downforce-producing rear wing, the Exige S2 swiftly established itself as a circuit star, eclipsing the Elise and measuring up favourably (particularly when price was thrown into the equation) to exotic versions of the S1. Who could want more?

Yep, you guessed it: pretty much everybody. Including Lotus. The chassis could clearly handle more power, so that's what it got when, in the early part of 2005, Lotus launched the limited-edition – just 50 of them – 240R. A cult machine from the off, the 240R was fitted with a Roots-type intercooled supercharger that hiked the power to 243bhp. It also boasted more hardcore track suspension, brakes and engine auxiliaries. These days, 240Rs rarely come to market, so prices tend to be 'robust'.

Right: series 2 Exige got a 1.8-litre Toyota engine; supercharged versions increased power. Below right: options packs could make sparse cabin more comfortable, or more sporty

In the wake of the 240R, Lotus went through the whole 'If there's enough customer interest we might consider a supercharged production model' charade, but it was no surprise when in late 2005 the supercharged Exige S was introduced. It had 'just' 218bhp and its suspension and brake components weren't as extreme as those of the 240R, but with 0-60mph in 4.1sec and 0-100mph in 10.0sec, you'd have been churlish to complain about the performance. And in terms of soul-searing driving pleasure, there were few rivals.

Choosing which Exige S2 to set your heart on is a little more complicated than deciding between naturally aspirated and forced induction. In the early days, Lotus offered four trim 'packs' - Touring, Super Touring, Sport and Super Sport. But you could mix them up. And you could also opt for the



CHECKPOINTS

» Many owners save their Exige S2 for special occasions, so mileages can be low. According to Lotus specialist Greg Lock of Hangar 111, most owners are near-religious in their car's care, and even those who use them hard tend to upgrade components long before they get the chance to wear out; cars that have been used on track, therefore, needn't be too scary a prospect.

ENGINE

» While the Toyota twin-cam is a tough-hearted four-banger, do check for a plausible service history with either main dealers or reputable specialists. Hangar 111 reports that upgrades to 300bhp and beyond can be achieved reliably, but if you're using your car extensively on track, a baffled sump or Accusump oil accumulator is a worthwhile investment.

TRANSMISSION

» Clumsy shifting can cause the failure of third and fourth gear ratios in the Toyota-sourced six-speed 'box. To fix any baulking of the shift from third to second generally entails the fiddly adjustment of the cable: it's a job worth doing, though.

SUSPENSION & BRAKES

» The Exige's standard suspension is superb, but trawl the forums for a local specialist who can check the geometry is A-OK, as precise set-up is vital. Lotus Motorsport and the various tuning outfits have myriad alternatives to the standard suspension for serious circuit work.

The standard brakes easily endure heavy road use, but regular trackday fans should consider a switch to grooved discs and high-performance pads, such as Pagid.

BODYWORK & INTERIOR

» Signs of a respray at the front end or along the flanks usually means someone's tidied up the stone-chips to which the Exige is prone. If you're still concerned about crash damage, get the car on a ramp, remove the undertray, and look for signs that the aluminium tub has been repaired.

Air-conditioning may not have much pitlane kudos, but will make it easier to sell your car on. Competition seats and harnesses are popular options and aftermarket add-ons, but be sure you want them, as they can be uncomfortable and restrictive when used on the road.



'I BOUGHT ONE'



Gary Renouf

» Suffolk-based demolition company manager Gary

Renouf has a penchant for the Lotus brand – prior to buying his Chrome Orange 2007 Exige S he owned an Elise and, before that, a Seven replica.

'I bought the Elise because I wanted to enjoy some topless motoring, but all the while I hankered after the more aggressive looks of the Exige and its superior handling. Early last year I decided to make the swap, and I knew that my Exige would have to be a bright colour. I spotted the car I wanted on

Murray Motors' website, did the deal over the phone, and went all the way to Edinburgh to collect it.

'As yet I haven't had the chance to use the Exige on a trackday, but I have done a couple of "activity days", organised by Car Limits at North Weald Airfield, which involve a sprint course and big corners where you can push things to the limit.

'To date there have been only a couple of problems – one of the front oil coolers was damaged and a rear damper leaked. But nothing else has surfaced and the Exige flew through its MOT. It's a fantastic car.'

Performance Pack, hiking power and torque to 240R levels. Plus there have been special-edition Exiges galore: Exige Cup, Cup 240, Cup 255, British GT, Club Racer, Cup 260...

For the 2010 model year there was a facelift, together with a power hike for the standard Exige S that lifted its total to 240bhp. It was soon complemented by the 257bhp Cup 260 and, in September 2010, as an appreciative farewell to celebrated Lotus test driver and seasoned engineer Roger Becker, an eponymous special edition cherry-picked from the parts catalogue.

That's still not the end of the multi-faceted Exige picture, though. Lotus Motorsport lured many owners into its parts catalogue; many others were enticed by offerings from aftermarket tuners. So when scoping out a

'PATIENCE IS A PREREQUISITE IN THE EXIGE HUNT'

used Exige, check precisely what it's got, and where it all came from – then do a Google search for the opinions and experiences of others. Test drive a handful of Exiges to get a feel for what spec best suits your driving requirements. The majority of owners are fastidious guardians, so if a car seems a bit ropery, wait for the next one.

Patience, however, is a prerequisite in the hunt for your perfect Exige. Comparatively few are for sale at any one time, so finding the right spec in the right colour in the right part of the country could take some time. And that has a bearing on prices... The aid,

SPECIFICATION

- » Naturally aspirated Exige S2
- » **Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1796cc
- » **Max power** 189bhp @ 7800rpm
- » **Max torque** 133lb ft @ 6800rpm
- » **Transmission** Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive
- » **Tyres** 195/50 R16 front, 225/45 R17 rear
- » **Weight (kerb)** 875kg
- » **Power-to-weight** 219bhp/ton
- » **0-60mph** 4.9sec (claimed)
- » **Top speed** 147mph (claimed)
- » **Price when new** £29,995 (2004)

PARTS PRICES

- » Supplied by Hangar 111, Lotus specialist. Tyre prices from www.blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT at 20 per cent.
- » **Tyres** £194.97 front, £230.40 rear each (Yokohama A048 LTS, fitted)
- » **Brake pads (front set)** £45.84
- » **Brake discs (front pair)** £116.64
- » **Clutch kit (uprated)** £393.60
- » **Oil filter** £11.94
- » **Air filter** £24.88
- » **Exhaust system, cat-back** £474
- » **Catalyst** £456

SERVICING

- » **9K intermediate service** £199
- » **Annual service** (including brake fluid change) £264
- » **Major service** (including brake fluid, spark plugs and air filter) £364

WHAT TO PAY

» With relatively low supply and fairly steep demand, don't expect to find many bargain Exiges. Or very many at all. Unless they have high mileages, few privately owned naturally aspirated cars dip below £17K – dealers tend to price them closer to £20K – while even oldish supercharged models always seem to have a '2' at the front of the price tag. Low-mileage 2010 examples, such as the Roger Becker special edition, are mid- to high-£30Ks. Cup versions from 2010 with under 15,000 miles are on the forecourts for close to £40K. When comparing prices, remember to thoroughly research specification first.

USEFUL CONTACTS

- » www.hangar111.com (Lotus specialist)
- » www.seloc.org (enthusiasts' group)
- » www.exiges.com (Exige forum)
- » www.eliseparts.com (parts supplier)
- » www.lotusdriversguide.com/Genealogy/index.php (invaluable guide to models)
- » www.evo.co.uk (cars for sale)

IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



» Exige
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» www.dovehousecars.com

£18,995



» Exige
» 2006 06-reg
» 18,500 miles
» Blue, Touring Pack, leather trim, air-con, satnav, stage one exhaust
» romanscars.com

£21,995



» Exige S
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RACE PERFORMANCE MODIFIED BMW Z4 COILOVER SUSPENSION
 £825 WWW.RACEPERFORMANCEMODIFIED.COM

Lessons learned from racing, tuning and modifying various BMWs over the years have been put to good use in this adjustable coilover suspension kit by RPM for the BMW Z4. A single control knob adjusts bump and rebound, and you can specify road or motorsport springs.



VIPER PERFORMANCE HOSES £129.99 WWW.VIPERPERFORMANCE.CO.UK

Available for a variety of cars, from De Tomaso to Subaru (pictured), Viper Performance Hoses promise long service life and durability from their four-ply silicone construction. All come with a three-year warranty.



AP RACING FOCUS RS MK2 BRAKE KIT: FROM c£2112 (SIX-PISTON FRONT KIT) WWW.APRACING.COM

The Formula Big Brake Kit Range for the Focus RS Mk2 has been developed for everyday road use and trackdays. The kit includes six-piston calipers, discs with 48 curved cooling vanes, pads, bespoke mounting bracket, braided hose kit, and DOT 5.1 high temp brake fluid.



GREEN REPLACEMENT AIR FILTER
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Green High Performance Air Filters claim that their filters improve air-flow and filtration compared with OE paper filters. They are reusable, too – after a good clean and a reoil using a Green Service kit. Recent additions to the range include a direct replacement air filter for the Mitsubishi Evo X (pictured).

TRIED & TESTED

LIQUID GAUGE & DIAGNOSTICS TOOL KIT £170, PLUG-AND-PLAY FROM c£200 RACEDIAGNOSTICS.COM

» The Liquid is a multifunction gauge and diagnostics tool that can be either be fitted to the vent of most small Audis, VWs, SEATs and Skodas, or to anything else if you use the option of an LCD screen with either the flush-mount or windscreen kit.

We've had one fitted to our 'Project Veyrog' TT for the past couple of years and it has proved extremely useful for keeping an eye on the performance and well-being of the tuned motor. The aspects of the engine's performance

that you interrogate are almost endless: real time power, torque, boost pressure, mass air flow, air/fuel ratio, air intake temperature and coolant temperature are just some of them. It even gives an exhaust temperature reading, which was very useful for working out when the Veyrog was spitting flames on upshifts...

As well as the diagnostic information, it'll also record your 0-60mph and 0-100mph times, along with G-loading, and there are numerous ways to display



the various data options. The screen is a little small, but it's clear enough and it gives you access to more information than you'd find even on a Nissan GT-R. It's useful and entertaining, and we reckon that for what it offers the price is pretty good, too. **Roger Green**

ASK THE EXPERT

Q Whenever I get my copy of *evo* through the door each month, I'm always struck by the advertisements from the various tuning companies. One firm claims that its chip upgrade can release an extra 50bhp from the BMW 123d, taking the power to a very impressive-sounding 252bhp.

I badly want to find out what another 50bhp feels like! What do you think the performance gains are likely to be? Also, do you think the transmission parts will be up to the significant increase in power and, more importantly, torque gains?

Dan, Cambis



BMW's 123d: potential for 250bhp-plus

A The extra 50bhp should equate to about 0.5sec faster on the 0-60 dash, but it is in-gear acceleration where you will notice the main benefit. The down side is that not only do you put more force through the gearbox and driveshafts, but the chances are you will arrive at corners at higher speed and so also work the brakes and suspension harder, too.

As with most things in life it depends how you use the extra power. Choose your moments, use the extra force sparingly and you might not affect the durability at all. In fact engine wear could potentially be reduced if the higher torque allows lower revs to be used more often.

But the whole point of car tuning is to enjoy it and thoroughly use the extra performance. In which case things will wear out faster. This may be mitigated by more frequent and thorough servicing, but anyone tuning a car must accept the consequences of their actions and take responsibility for wear and tear incurred.

Luckily your gearbox is pretty robust; remember to keep up the maintenance and this sort of power increase shouldn't be an issue.

Ralph Hosier

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ASK THE EXPERT

Q You hear a lot about detailing car exteriors, but my M3's interior is a mess! Problem is, there are loads of materials in there – Alcantara, perspex, plastic, rubber... How do I clean them all?
Robert Simons



Cleaning an interior is easy, but needs care

A A car's interior is a critical area – the last thing you want to do is cover it all in a cockpit spray that leaves it shiny, greasy and dangerous. Before starting, I run the fans at full speed to blow through any dust or debris that may be caught in the pipes. A toothbrush, cotton buds and an unused paint brush are perfect tools for getting into all the switches and vents.

The dash top is normally dull to prevent reflections bouncing onto the screen, so don't apply anything that will turn it glossy. A damp, clean microfibre cloth is sufficient, and when rubbed hard over dirty areas is often abrasive enough to lift dirt without the need for chemicals. Exterior wax is usable on some trim material (e.g. walnut or black piano wood, or carbonfibre) providing they have a clear-coat finish, as most do.

With Alcantara or suede just be sure not to get it too wet as it may expand and start to ripple or appear to lift off. It does normally retract back to its original state once dry, but it may lose its softness if it is drenched.

A leather shampoo and conditioner can be used on steering wheels, but it's wise to use a leather feed or even hand cream to keep the leather supple afterwards. Finally, perspex instrument screens are easily scratched, so use your softest clean microfibre cloth.

Richard Tipper
Twitter: @perfectionvalet

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CLARION NZ501E
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This new multimedia head unit from Clarion combines built-in Parrot Bluetooth with a 44-country satnav, a 7-inch touchscreen, two AV inputs, iPod and iPhone connectivity and an 8GB microSD card that stores the entire navigation application and enables direct data updating. Options include an external microphone, rear headphones, a colour camera and a digital TV tuner.



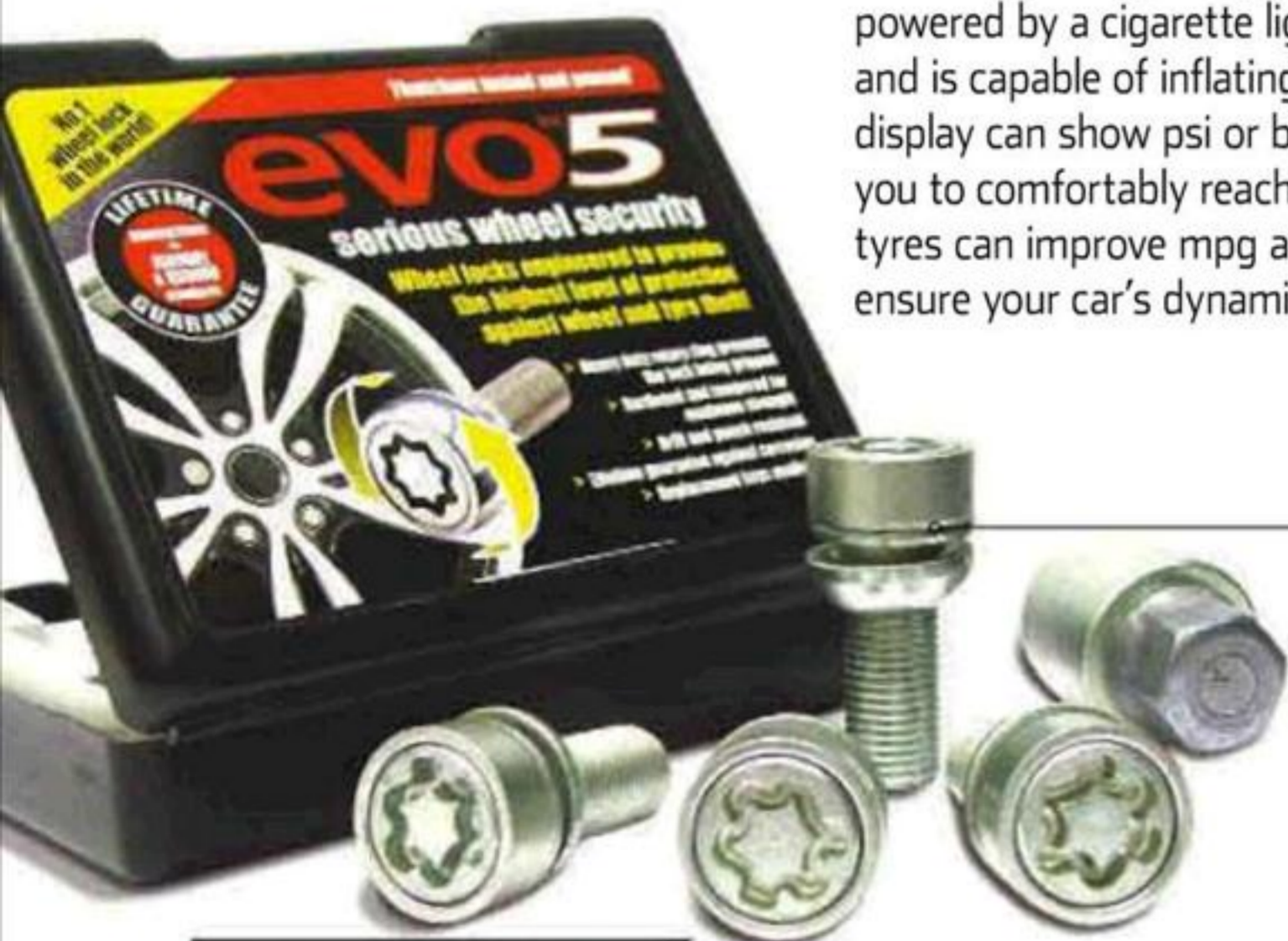
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TRIED & TESTED

AUTOGLYM HIGH DEFINITION WAX
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» The ingredients read like an advert for one of those women's anti-wrinkle creams: carnauba, microcrystallines, waxes and saturated hydrocarbons and oils. One of the higher-end Autoglym products with a price tag to match, the High Definition Wax is claimed to give a 'super quality finish with exceptional durability'. It also makes bold claims for lasting protection against environmental conditions like salt, detergents, UV light and acid rain. It even claims to resist 'industrial fallout'. Crikey.

So what better car to test it on than the one I share with Stephen Dobie – a 1994 Renault Clio Williams that's still coated in its original paint. And what better test than to apply it just before a 1000-mile round trip to Spa Francorchamps in Belgium.

You apply liberally, one square foot of bodywork at a time, using one of the two pre-damped sponges provided (make sure you keep them bagged to prevent them drying out). Application is tough – but the effort is worth it. After ten minutes the once creamy wax hardens, leaving a white residue, which you buff with the included microfibre.

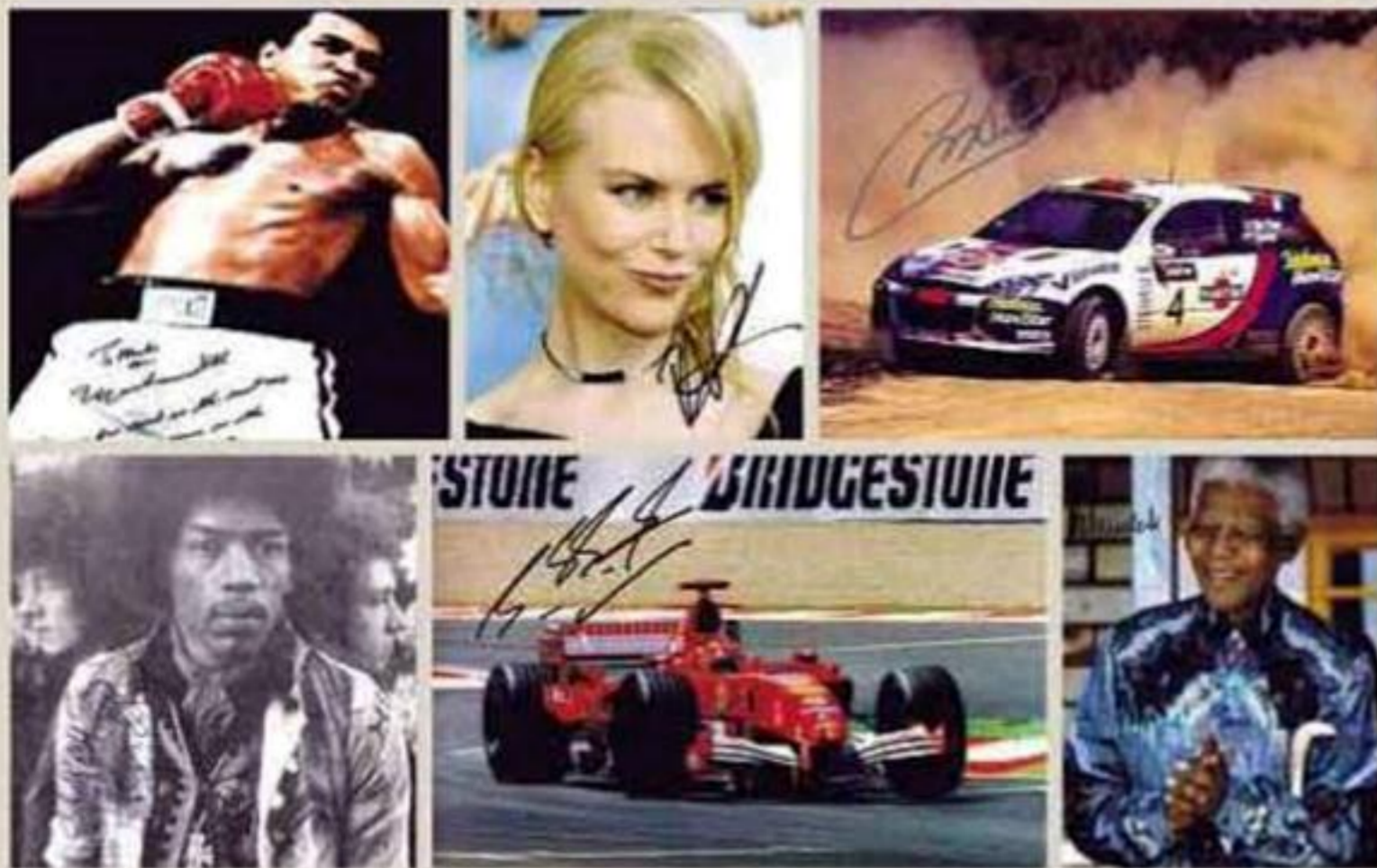


As well as leaving the bodywork with a shiny, glass-like finish, after returning from Spa it was a doddle to wipe off 1000 miles' worth of flies with only a sponge and hot soapy water.

Overall, the wax is expensive but the quality is undeniable. **Adam Shorrock**

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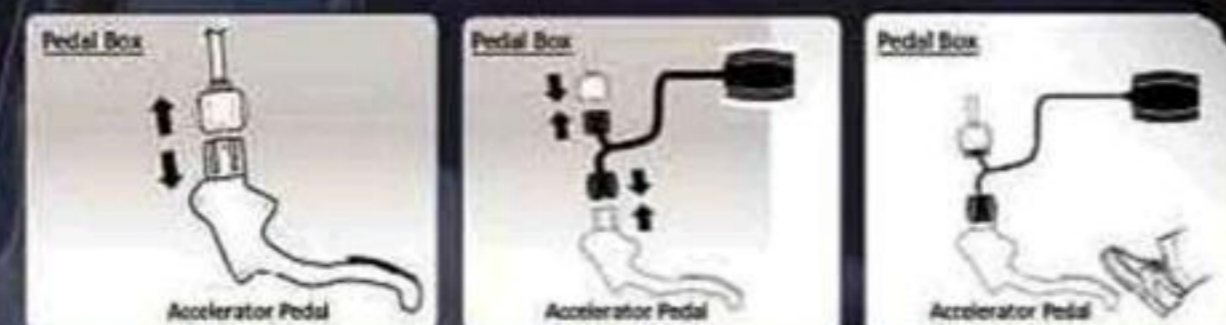
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PAGANI ZONDA R
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Just ten examples of Pagani's £1.4m, 739bhp Zonda R track car were built, but this 1:18-scale version by AutoArt is a little easier to get your hands on. In model terms, its finish is almost as exquisite too, its 658 components including functioning metal pushrod suspension, scrubbed slick tyres and nylon harnesses.



RENAULT 5 TURBO 2
£120 WWW.OTTO-MODELS.COM

Renault's mid-engined 5 Turbo was designed to win rallies, but it also spawned one of the maddest road cars ever made. The post-homologation Turbo 2 may have used some slightly less exotic components, but it was no less loopy than the original. This 1:12-scale model celebrates that car, and is available in metallic blue or white.

T-SHIRTS



QUATTRIFIC £21
WWW.SLICKATTIRE.CO.UK
Few rally cars have ever looked more purposeful than the legendary Audi Sport Quattro, with its shortened wheelbase and, in 'S1' trim, snowplough front spoiler. This tee depicts the S1 that Walter Röhrl drove to victory at the San Remo rally in 1985.

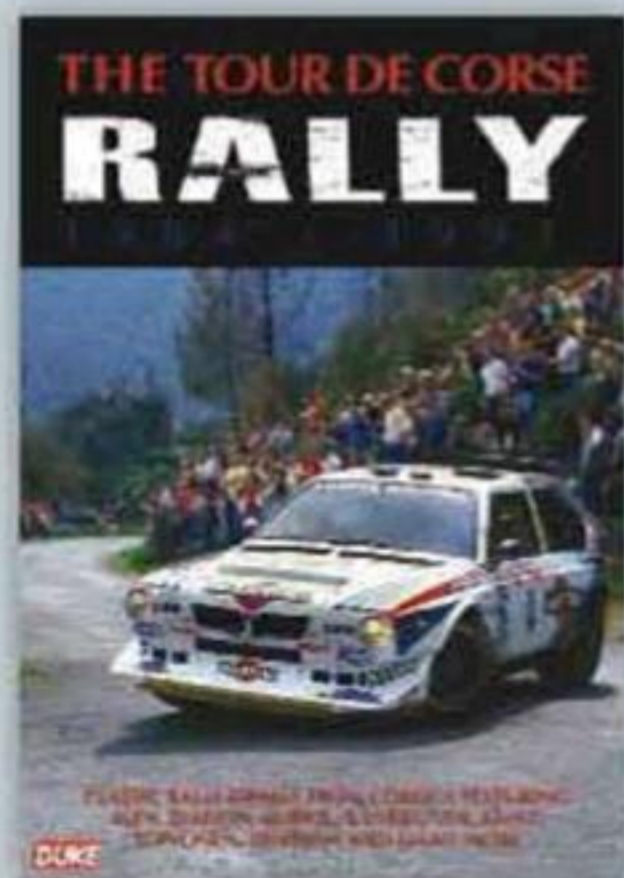


WHEEL HOARDS £25
[WHEEL-WHORES.COM](http://WWW.WHEEL-WHORES.COM)
wheel-whores.com has been the web's home for wheel geeks since 2007. Its current range of rim-related merchandise includes this tee showing 20 iconic wheel designs, from Ronal Turbos to classic Compomotives. It's available in gold on black or, if you're feeling brave, black on fluorescent pink.



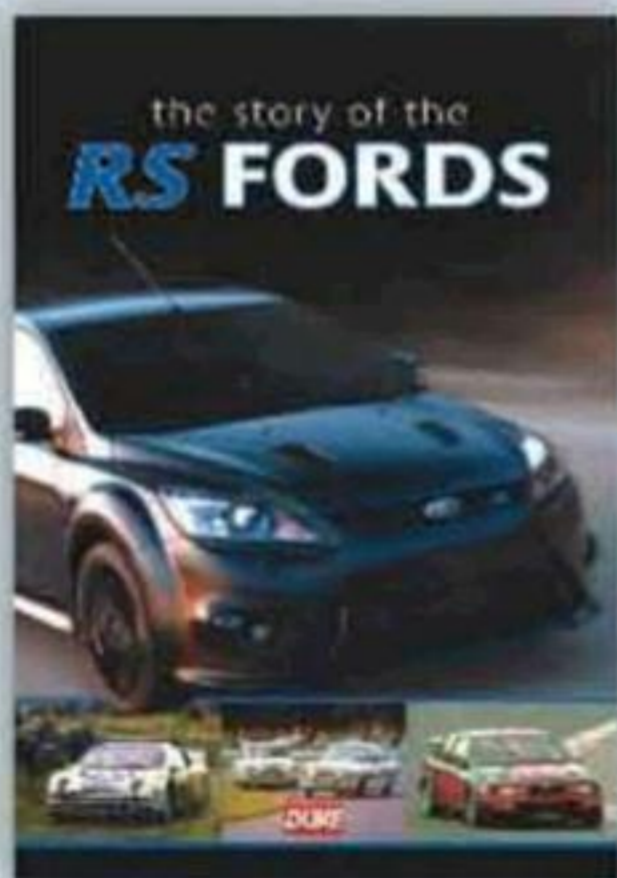
PARABOLICA £25
WWW.T-LAB.EU
The recent Monza GP should have left you in no doubt that the Curva Parabolica remains one of the most fearsome corners in racing. As the small print on this T-shirt points out, F1 cars tackling this 180-degree turn can apex at 210kph (130mph), generating 2.8 lateral G. This tee comes in Italian racing red, or in blue with long sleeves.

DVDs



THE TOUR DE CORSE RALLY 1984-1991 £16.99
WWW.DUKEVIDEO.COM

In the era covered by this DVD, Corsica was home to some of the best rallies ever – and also some of the most tragic. There is a huge amount of footage and some wonderfully dodgy title music, as well as some amazing displays of skill. You can also see how the quality of the coverage seemed to go up a notch or two in 1990 with the revelation of the in-car camera!



THE STORY OF THE RS FORDS £14.99
WWW.DUKEVIDEO.COM

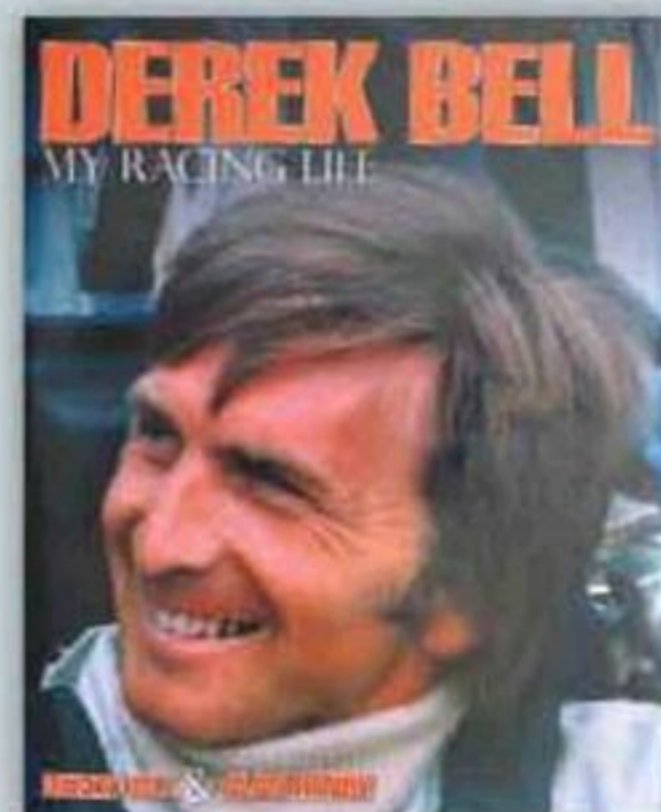
No fancy graphics, no specially (and expensively) shot scenes, just very interesting and thorough interviews with the right people, teamed with excellent archive footage. Never heard of a rear-wheel-drive mk3 Escort? Then this DVD will tell you all about the RS1700. If your name is Henry Catchpole, you'll also approve of the glowing reports of the mk3

BOOK OF THE MONTH

DEREK BELL: MY RACING LIFE £35
WWW.HAYNES.CO.UK

This may be the second edition of Bell's autobiography, but it has been completely re-written and expanded. Bell is now 70, but the five-times Le Mans winner shows no signs of slowing down, still enjoying the historic scene and manufacturer work.

This is a well-written tome that charts Bell's whole career with large colour photographs on every page. The formative years, Formula 1 (with Ferrari and Brabham), the making of the film *Le Mans* (where he suffered burns to his face when the Ferrari 512 he was driving caught fire), the Porsche years and the Group C era (including racing at



the Nordschleife with Stefan Bellof) are all covered in detail.

As is the one that got away – the near win in 1995 while sharing the Harrods-backed McLaren F1 GTR with his son, Justin, and Andy Wallace. He describes standing on the podium at the end of that race as his greatest Le Mans memory but also his biggest disappointment – they had led in tricky conditions until slowed by gearbox issues.

If you're into Sportscar racing, you'll find plenty to enjoy here.



READ THE FIRST CHAPTER AT EVO.CO.UK/DOWNLOAD

CATCHPOLE'S VIEW

'THERE ARE GREAT ROADS THAT EVO COULD NEVER USE'

Some people think that we're a little bit unimaginative here at Evo Towers. There's a suggestion that the office road atlas suffered badly in the great tea spillage of 2002 and we were left only with pages 19, 20, 27, 28, 43, 58 and 61, meaning that North Wales, the North York Moors and the west coast of Scotland are now our only destinations for group tests.

However, a good driving road is, sadly, not necessarily a good road for an evo test. I have had some of my best drives on fantastic roads that I know could never be used for a feature. The Cotswolds, for example, are often lovely, but the walls and hedges are so close to the roadside that a photographer simply can't get far enough away to swing a lens.

There are two other requirements: safety and scenery. A blind entry is no good for a cornering shot and tracking is tricky in tourist hot-spots. We could do all our photography on the easy-to-use environments of circuits, but scenically it would be crashingly dull in the magazine, and some roads are like that too.

So next time you're on a good road thinking, 'evo should use this,' we'd probably love to, but it just wouldn't work.



Henry Catchpole
Features editor



GREAT DRIVES

GAISBERG, AUSTRIA

Once a European Hill Climb Championship venue, this mountain road is a must for its well-kept tarmac and spectacular views

Gaisberg might not be as long or as well-known as the Col de Turini or Route Napoleon, but this gem of a road is well worth a drive. Situated in northern Austria near the border with Germany, the 9km stretch was built in 1928, replacing a railway track that had

been doing service to the top of the Gaisberg mountain since 1887.

Although 9km or 5.6 miles doesn't sound a lot, there are more scene changes than your average pantomime. One minute you're plunging through dark forest, the next there's a huge rock wall next to you

with the exhaust note ricocheting off its face. Then you're dashing through open meadows before diving back into the trees, ready to tackle the final wide hairpin and the last fast left and long right up to the summit.

Even before the road was finished, people were racing up it and it

EVENTS CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

» **16-18 September** Goodwood Revival www.goodwood.co.uk

» **18 September** Ford RS Owners Club National Day, Donington rsownersclub.co.uk

» **23-26 September** D1 Ultimate-GT - Nürburgring Grand Tour www.ultimate-gt.com

» **25 September** Brooklands Classic Breakfast www.brooklandsmuseum.com

OCTOBER

» **1-2 October** American Autumn Classic, Prescott Hill www.prescott-hillclimb.com

» **9 October** Morgan Day, Brooklands www.brooklandsmuseum.com

MORE EVENTS AT
WWW.EVO.CO.UK/EVENTS

UPCOMING TRIP

MACAU GRAND PRIX 17-20 NOVEMBER
WWW.MACAU.GRANDPRIX.GOV.MO

» And now for something completely different... a street race in China. November's a bit of a nothing sort of month. You're hanging around waiting for Christmas, and Vettel will probably have wrapped up the F1 championship months ago, so why not pop across to the Macau GP?

Held on a 3.8-mile street circuit, which is, as you'd expect, phenomenally tight but also extremely fast, it is one of the most challenging and arguably dangerous motorsport events in the world. The weekend is also unique for holding both four-wheeled and two-wheeled races.

The WTCC has its final two races of the season at Macau, there is a GT race and there is a Formula 1 race. However, some would



Superbike (above) and WTCC cars (above right) all race at the Macau GP

soon became part of the European Hill Climb Championship. As you drive up, you can imagine the likes of Caracciola, von Trips, Rindt and Lauda hammering along against the gradient and the clock. The European Championship climbs ended in 1969 but there has been a historic event, the Gaisbergrennen, held there every year since 2003, so if you're thinking of going around the end of May/ beginning of June then you might be able to coincide your visit with the event. Go to www.src.co.at for more information and a video.

The road up is fun to drive (its real



challenge becomes apparent when you start to drive it quickly, so pick a quiet time of day) but the view from the top of the aptly named Gaisberg Panoramastraße is worth the trip in itself. The final piece of road to the 100m-tall TV transmitter curls round on itself like a snail's shell and almost unexpectedly you find yourself at its end, 1288m above sea level.

Park up and have a wander round. To the south is the Göll Massif and Tennen Mountains arrayed perfectly in front of you as though Gaisberg were built by Mother Nature as a viewing platform for their splendour.

HOW TO GET THERE

» Gaisberg is easy to find because essentially you go to Salzburg and then look in the direction of the rising sun for the enormous hill with the enormous red and white transmission tower on top of it. Head east along the B158 towards Guggenthal, then take the turning to the right just after a petrol station – the road itself is signposted 'Gaisberg'.

WHERE TO STAY

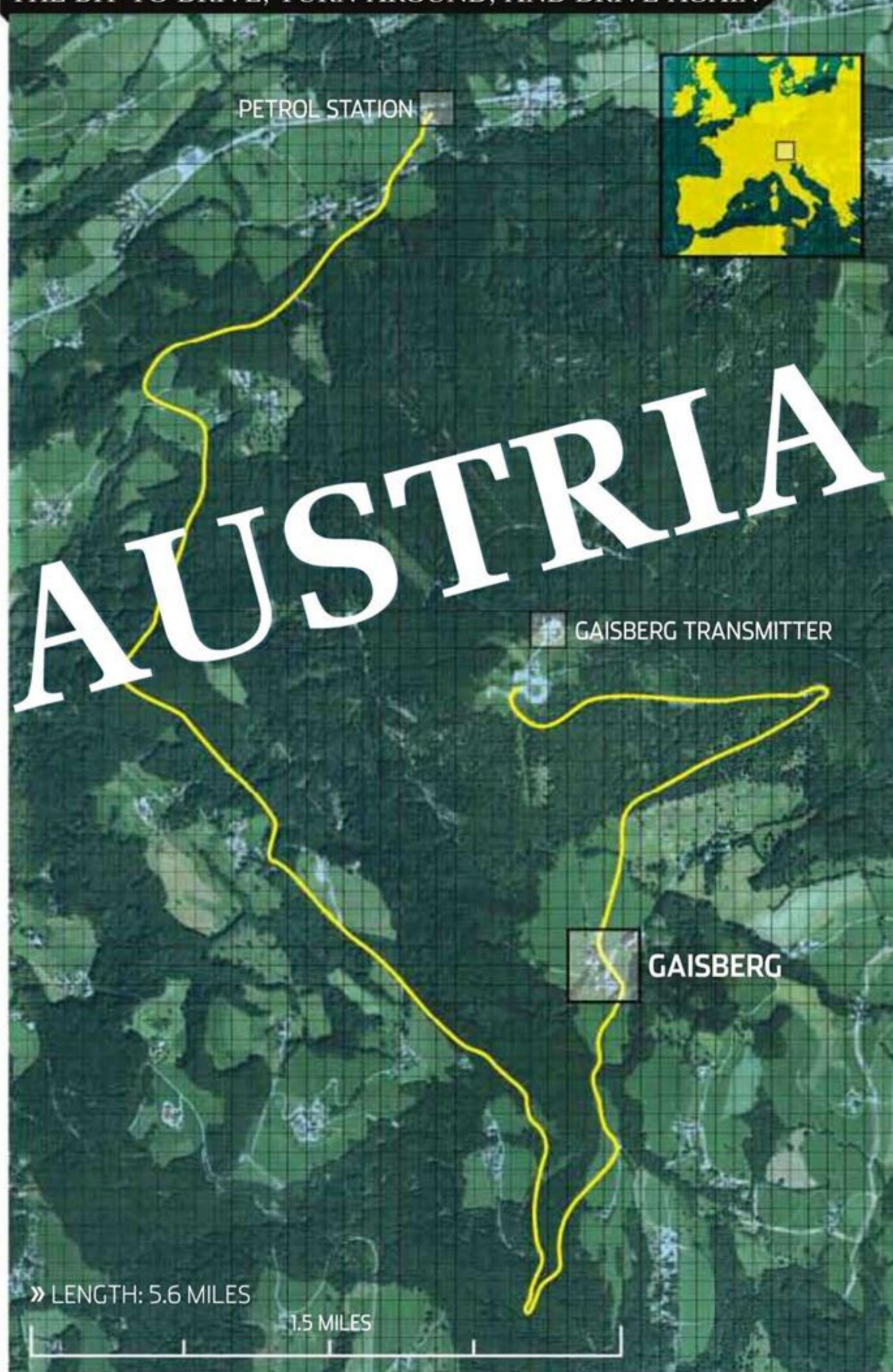
» There are plenty of hotels in the area, and you could easily stay in Salzburg itself. But if you want rustic alpine charm and a fantastic view, try Hotel Zistelalm, which is a large chalet located about three-quarters of the way up the mountain. More info at www.zistelalm.at/en

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

» When we visited with a Porsche Boxster S in January 2009 (evo 128) there was snow lying thickly on either side of the road but the tarmac itself was completely clear and obviously very well maintained, so it seems that there are no meteorological restrictions (apart from lightning storms – the tower gets hit about 50 times a year) on when you visit.

However, it would be worth avoiding weekends and bank holidays, as the area is popular with energetic types from Salzburg who like to yomp and pedal all over the hill. If a weekend is unavoidable then try early morning or evening – the road should be quieter and sunrise/set will look spectacular from the top. **Henry Catchpole**

THE BIT TO DRIVE, TURN AROUND, AND DRIVE AGAIN



Google © Image © 2011 Aerodata International Surveys © 2011 Tele Atlas Image © 2011 Salzburg AG/Wenger Osh



say that the most extraordinary race is that of the superbikes, which sees riders from the road racing world taking part and brushing the walls and Armco with their leathers. Type 'Macau GP on board' into YouTube...

You'll need a visa to go to China, of course, but travelling there is relatively simple. You can either catch a flight direct to Macau or you can go to Hong Kong and take a 16-minute helicopter trip across to the peninsula.

TRIED & TESTED

ROAD ANGEL iPhone APP £1.99 A MONTH OR £17.99 12-MONTH SUBSCRIPTION
WWW.ROADANGELGROUP.COM OR THE APPLE APP STORE

» I have owned three Road Angel devices over the years and they have all been superb at alerting me to speed cameras. But the trouble with such devices is that they're no use to you if you forget to put them in the car!

That shouldn't be a problem with Road Angel's latest offering as it's an iPhone app. As with other Road Angels, you are alerted to fixed, average and mobile cameras, school zones, black spots and congestion charges.

When approaching a mobile camera site, a small button appears on screen that allows you to 'set live' that position if the van is actually

there. That info is then shared with users of other compatible Road Angels.

I've used the app for a few weeks now and it really works. The audible warnings can be heard over the loudest of stereos, but I would recommend some type of iPhone holder so that the display is in your peripheral vision. It's also worth noting that the current speed reading sometimes lags behind a little.

You definitely feel like your licence is safer when you're using the app, and as you get a free trial when you first download it, you've nothing to lose by giving it a try. **Paul Lang**



HAVE A PRODUCT

WANT TO REVIEW? CONTACT TRIED&TESTED@EVO.CO.UK

GREEN'S VIEW

'YOU CAN COMPARE YOUR LAP TIMES WITH OURS'

When it comes to trackdays, you'll find no bigger advocate than me. I spent five years running evo's track events and was the first to introduce novice-only days. It worked beautifully, and hundreds of drivers were bitten by the circuit bug.

However, I always felt there was something missing at the other end of the scale. Experienced trackday drivers who don't want to take the big leap into racing reach a plateau – the skills are there, but there's no incentive to push on further. In brainstorming sessions, the subject of allowing timing on our trackdays was often mooted, but the issue of public liability always meant the idea stopped there.

But now there's an answer. MSV has recently introduced 'How Fast?' trackdays, where for £99 you get a one-hour 'free practice' session that runs like an open-pitlane trackday, and after that a transponder is fitted to your car. You then have two single laps on an empty track to set a time. It's competitive, but really the challenge is to improve yourself, and as it happens on Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit you can also measure yourself against us. Give it a go, but if you beat any of our times, we don't want to know...



Roger Green
Features writer



BTCC DOWN TO WIRE

It's all to play for – as long as the leading drivers stay fit to fight

The battle for the BTCC drivers' title is once again running to the very last races of the season, with numerous permutations mathematically possible, and it all concludes at Silverstone on October 16.

It's been a fascinating year, packed, as usual, with controversy, arguments, shunts and extra-curricular injuries. Matt Neal certainly hasn't made life easy for himself, breaking his hand while indulging in a little light sparring before the Knockhill round. It happened shortly after he had been shoved off the Snetterton tarmac (and the top of championship table) by arch-rival Jason Plato, leading to rumours of behind-the-scenes retribution. These, it transpired, were untrue, although he was taking his Second Dan exam in the gentle art of street fighting...

This isn't the first time Neal's been compromised by an off-track injury at the tail end of a season. Back in 2005, just before the title decider – when he was in contention for the drivers' crown for the first time – he managed to damage his back falling off a bucking bronco in a bar. It had to be heavily strapped for the final round, but he overcame the pain, was victorious and became the champion.

Neal's not the only one to suffer an injury at the crucial



Above: injured Neal.
Left: Giovanardi and Plato in 2007

stage of the season, though; back in 2007, Plato was also forced to race in bandages and excruciating pain at the final round, this time at Thruxton. He'd suffered serious burns to his hands and neck just a few days earlier when a Caparo T1 he was testing for *Fifth Gear* caught fire. But his bravery went unrewarded, and despite heading into that weekend at the top of the table he was overhauled by Vauxhall driver Fabrizio Giovanardi.

So can Neal fight through the pain again? We won't know until the red lights go out at Silverstone for the final time in 2011, but you can bet there will be further twists, turns and most probably plenty of tears before bedtime. **RG**

For the 2011 BTCC calendar and standings, visit btcc.net

EVENTS CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

» **18 September** BTCC, Rockingham www.btcc.net

» **18 September** British Rallycross Championship, Knockhill www.knockhill.com

» **25 September** F1 Singapore GP www.formula1.com

» **26 September** 'How Fast?' trackday, Bedford www.howfast.co.uk

OCTOBER

» **2 October** BTCC, Brands Hatch GP circuit www.btcc.net

» **15 October** evo Run What Ya Brung, Santa Pod www.RWYB.com

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WWW.EVO.CO.UK/EVENTS

TRIED & TESTED

ALPINESTARS TECH 1-K KARTING BOOTS £110 WWW.DEMON-TWEEKS.CO.UK

» Getting the very best race kit is an expensive business, and unnecessary if you're a trackday enthusiast rather than a well-heeled, top-level racer. However, narrow shoes with a sole that offers both pedal sensitivity and grip is important whether you're in a road car or a single-seater, so we've been trying a pair of Alpinestars karting boots. These have the benefit of the same thin sole that you'll find on Schumacher's shoes without the full-blown, F1-spec price tag.

The price saving is down to the fact that they are not Nomex-lined. Instead, the uppers and tongue have mesh panels that have the added benefit of making them more comfortable when wandering around the pitlane and paddock. I tried the 1-Ks while testing a Radical SR8, and from a



1-K's F1-spec thin soles help you get a better feel of the pedals beneath your feet

driving point of view it was impossible to tell the difference between these and the Alpinestars race boots I wear when competing, though they did feel a little warmer.

The 1-Ks come in a range of colours – the example shown here is a limited edition, so if this design isn't your cup of tea then you'll be pleased to know that they are also available in black, white or red. **RG**

TRACK GUIDES: NO. 3 CASTLE COMBE

It may not be one of the highest-profile circuits in the UK, but it is one of the fastest and represents one of the biggest challenges for the driver – nail a fast lap here and the adrenalin buzz will last for ages.

Situated near Chippenham in Wiltshire, Castle Combe is 1.85 miles long and surrounded by tyre-walls,

making it intolerant of mistakes, so if it's your first time here, take your time – and book some instruction.

It also has a very strict 100 dB static noise limit (at 4500rpm), but don't let any of this put you off – it's a brilliant circuit to drive, with long straights and surprisingly technical turns. It's also a great track to

spectate at, with raised banks all the way around, and race meetings here always pull in large crowds.

The facilities may not be up to the standards of, say, Silverstone – there are no pits, and the pitlane itself is more like a collecting area – but who needs a huge garage when the circuit is as thrilling as this one? **RG**

CAMP

» The final turn is fast, bumpy and has a false early apex that often catches out novice drivers. Use the pitlane entrance as a guide to braking and ensure the car is balanced as you turn in. There is a long run from here to Quarry, so time lost here is amplified. Use all the road on the exit and a little kerb too. This can be nerve-racking as the pit wall is very close.

THE ESSES

» You can brake later than it first appears because the right-handed first section is faster than the tighter left. In fact many racers don't brake until they start turning right, trail-braking through the first part of the turn. Some drivers choose not to run right out at the exit – the aim here is to open out the following curve as much possible to ensure it can be taken flat-out.

BALLSIEST BEND: QUARRY CORNER

» The approach through Avon Rise makes this one of the most challenging corners in the UK. It's approached at maximum speed and Avon curves and crests just where you want to start braking. This gives you a choice: you either brake just before the crest and release the pedal again as you go over the rise, or you squeeze it on hard and late once the suspension settles after you've crossed it. The latter suits cars with a surfeit of power over grip (think lairy TVRs). Cars that brake early tend to take the more conventional line into the corner; those that brake later will not be able to get all the way over to the left before turning in. The clipping point is late to open out the exit, so you can get back on the power early.

TOWER

» Another fast approach, and this time braking is extended because the track is falling downhill. The turn point is later than it might first appear as the corner turns through more than 90 degrees. This also means the apex is a long way round – there is a drain right there, so this can be used as a marker. Exit speed used to be critical, but this has been reduced by the chicanes that follow almost immediately.

ASK THE EXPERT

Q I'll shortly be embarking on a driving tour of south-west France and the Pyrenees in my series 1 Lotus Elise. I happened to notice that we will be passing close to the circuit of Pau-Arnos. Can you tell me if it's a good circuit and worth me trying to get some track time there?

Rick Medlocke



Situated beside the Pyrenees, the circuit of Pau-Arnos is worth a visit if you're nearby

A The short answer is yes! Pau-Arnos is a cracking little track, and like many hidden circuit gems in France, very little is known about it here in the UK.

It's positioned at the foot of the mountains, rather than in the middle of the range, but there's still a huge amount of elevation change built in – there's a 55-metre difference between the highest and lowest points. It reminds me a little of Knockhill (but with better weather), particularly the first section, which dips and twists and requires a decent level of bravery if you're on a hot one. The Elise will be ideal here – its chassis will be extended by all the technical sections and it'll flow well through the high-speed stuff.

Pau-Arnos is challenging, picturesque and you can view most of it from the pit wall too, so while you're having a break you can study other drivers' lines. The circuit is about 15 miles outside the town of Pau itself, which you really should visit to take a look at the impossibly tight street circuit that runs through it. **RG**

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR TRACK EXPERT?
email experts@evo.co.uk



VLN SERIES

SIX HOURS AT THE RING

Missed out on the N24? Then the races of the Nürburgring-based VLN endurance series are the next best thing, as **Roger Green** discovered

The 24-hour race at the Nürburgring sucks up so much coverage that little is often said about the VLN endurance series with which it is closely associated. Yet the VLN features the same mix of cars (everything from hot hatches to 600bhp-plus GT3 machines), the same crazy 200-car grids (and the chaotic pitlane that creates), and the same epic race track (every race in the VLN is run at the Ring). So if you missed out on the N24, these races are a more than adequate substitute.

That's exactly what happened to the Gemac Racing team, which I'd been set to join at this year's N24. One of our drivers was injured in the run-up, so we pulled out of the big race and re-grouped. Dan Watkins, Mark Ainslee and I then headed back to the Green Hell for the Ruhr-Pokal six-hour, or VLN 7 as the regulars call it (it's the seventh race of the ten-round VLN season).



Above: the Gemac Racing 997 Cup tackles the Karussell. Top: weather was changeable

The weather was typical for the Eiffel region in late August – sunshine one minute, heavy rain the next. I was the last driver behind the wheel of our Porsche 997 Cup car during qualifying and I got the best of a drying track, nailing a lap that slotted us into 49th place on the grid for the race, the second highest-placed British team.

The race began in similar conditions. Mark took the start and after two laps had made up a bunch of places before pitting for a set of slicks. It was the right call at that moment, but just a lap later the heavens opened again. Mark slid off the virtually undriveable track, gently nerfing the barrier, which was enough to split the car's radiator, bend a steering arm and break a rear toe link.

For most teams that would have been game over, but the Gemac Racing boys are made of stern stuff. They loaded the van with tools and spares, headed out to find the car and fixed it up in the pouring rain. It was an outstanding effort but we lost two and a half hours, so their hard work wouldn't be rewarded with a classified finish. But we got going again and took the flag, albeit some 23 laps down on the winners.

The Nordschleife may have beaten us on this occasion, but it hasn't put us off. The VLN is a t... race series. We'll be back

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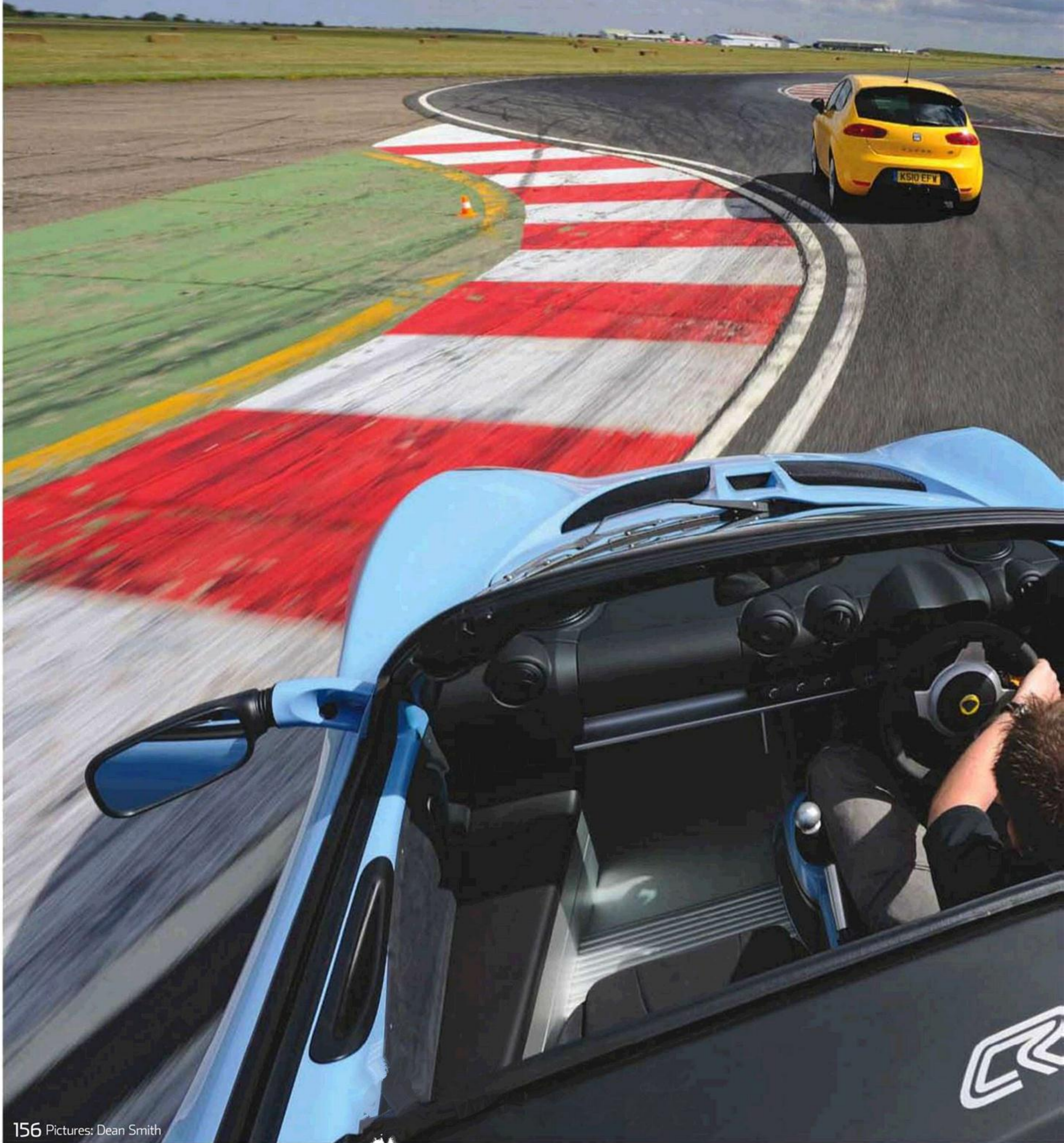


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SPECIFICATIONS

SEAT LEON CUPRA R	LOTUS ELISE CLUB RACER
Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo	Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc
Power 261bhp @ 6000rpm	Power 134bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque 258lb ft @ 2500rpm	Torque 118lb ft @ 4400rpm
Weight (kerb) 1375kg	Weight (kerb) 852kg
0-62mph 6.2sec (claimed)	0-60mph 6.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (claimed)	Top speed 127mph (claimed)
Price £25,995	Price £27,500

SEAT LEON CUPRA R v LOTUS ELISE CLUB RACER

The Leon has almost twice the power of the Elise, but can the heavy hot hatch outrun the lightweight sports car around the West Circuit? Roger Green finds out

Power-to-weight ratios are a good indicator of how two cars are likely to compare on a circuit, but they certainly don't give you the whole picture.

A lighter car will typically have greater agility, an ability to brake later and, crucially, should be more entertaining from the driver's seat, reacting faster to your commands, putting you in closer contact with the action. That's the theory anyway. We're about to discover just how this plays out in reality with a junior sports car and a fully grown hot hatch.

The Club Racer is the pared-back entry-level Lotus Elise. It has 134bhp, weighs 852kg and costs £27,500, a sum that could alternatively land you a SEAT Leon Cupra R (with change) like the one we're currently running on our Fast Fleet.

It arrived towards the end of last year costing £26,580 on the road (including

options) and it packs a very wholesome 261bhp while tipping the scales at 1375kg. So that's very nearly twice the horsepower at over one-and-a-half times the weight. It therefore has a 21 per cent power-to-weight advantage (193bhp/ton plays 160). But will that be enough to see off the advantages of light weight? Let's see.

We attach the Video VBOX data-logging equipment to the SEAT first, and as I twist the key to fire up the 1984cc turbo motor, staff writer Stephen Dobie installs himself in the passenger seat (we always record our times two-up). I'm expecting good things from the SEAT because I've driven it here before on an evo track evening, where it felt impressively quick and exploitable. I switch out the stability control – well, as far as is possible without removing fuses; there's still a final layer of electronic assistance – and head out onto the track.

The engine sounds gruff and hard-working. It pulls eagerly and rips through the gears. That's partly because you don't need to rev it past 6800rpm, as it's all but done by this point, and partly because it's so strong. Big power outputs and front-wheel drive can be unhappy bedfellows on a racetrack, though. If there's good low-speed traction, then the car is likely to be lively at the rear through high-speed stuff; finding the happy medium can be difficult.

Coming out of the Hangar Hairpin you need a little



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evoTrack Battle

HEAD-TO-HEAD LAPS AGAINST THE CLOCK

patience to get the front Michelin Pilot Super Sports hooked up, but you can square the corner off a little to get the steering lock unwound as early as possible and help get all the power down.

The Palmer Curves add lateral grip into the tricky equation alongside the traction demands, yet the Cupra R clings on gamely. Starting with a tight right and slow left, you ease off the brakes to allow the front tyres to roll into the right-hander before briefly easing back on the throttle. Then almost immediately you lift again to get some weight over the nose to allow the tyres to bite as you swing into the left-hand part of the turn. From now on you can get back on the power much harder than I thought would be possible. In fact the only front-wheel-drive road cars that have been more impressive through here were the Renault Mégane R26.R and Mugen Honda Civic – and both of those had the advantage of trackday rubber.

The Pif-Paf chicane requires care, as it's easy to bundle in too fast and scrub off speed with excessive understeer, but judge it *juust* right and the Cupra hangs on to a decent lick. Maintaining the momentum is key in a car like this, and the long hairpin at Bank requires more prudence on the exit.

Through the lap's final pair of high-speed corners the brakes are again needed for more than just slowing – a little trail-braking on turn-in keeps weight over the front tyres to increase their grip. And you can do this without excessive steer from the rear – it will move, but not wildly so, and that underlying layer of stability control deals with it for you. From there it's a short run to the line, and the lap time of 1.28.7 is a very good one – only 0.9 seconds off the track-focused R26.R. The Elise has a very challenging target to aim for.

From the moment you fold yourself into the Elise the environment couldn't feel more different. This is very much the chalk alternative to the cheese wedge-like SEAT, and before you're out of the pitlane



a moment of clarity arrives. Clarity and cleanliness of steering, that is – it's just so light, detailed and uncorrupted by power, you can place the car perfectly every lap. You drive it with your fingertips and the messages from the track/tyre interface are so clear it's like reading Braille.

Skimming over the ground, your senses have substantially more information to work with, while the lower centre of gravity gives the Elise another advantage. However, there's an issue that wasn't immediately apparent – the gearbox. It shifts sweetly enough, but the ratios are far too widely spaced to exploit every one of those 134 horses. When grunt's limited, it's vital to squeeze out the lot – and you can't. On every upshift the revs drop out of the power-band and it seems to take

Elise's naturally aspirated 1.6 (above left) produces 134bhp; heavier Leon counters with a 261bhp turbo 2-litre (above right). Below: gearing is a weak point in the Elise



an age to build them back up again. From the exit of Bank until the end of the lap you hold third all the way, where most cars (including the SEAT) will use all of fourth.

Shame that, because the Elise feels beautifully poised and it's easy to choose your favourite attack angle. Lift-off oversteer is there on demand (there's a Sport button to allow small angles and another to turn everything out, which you'll need to do to record a fast lap).

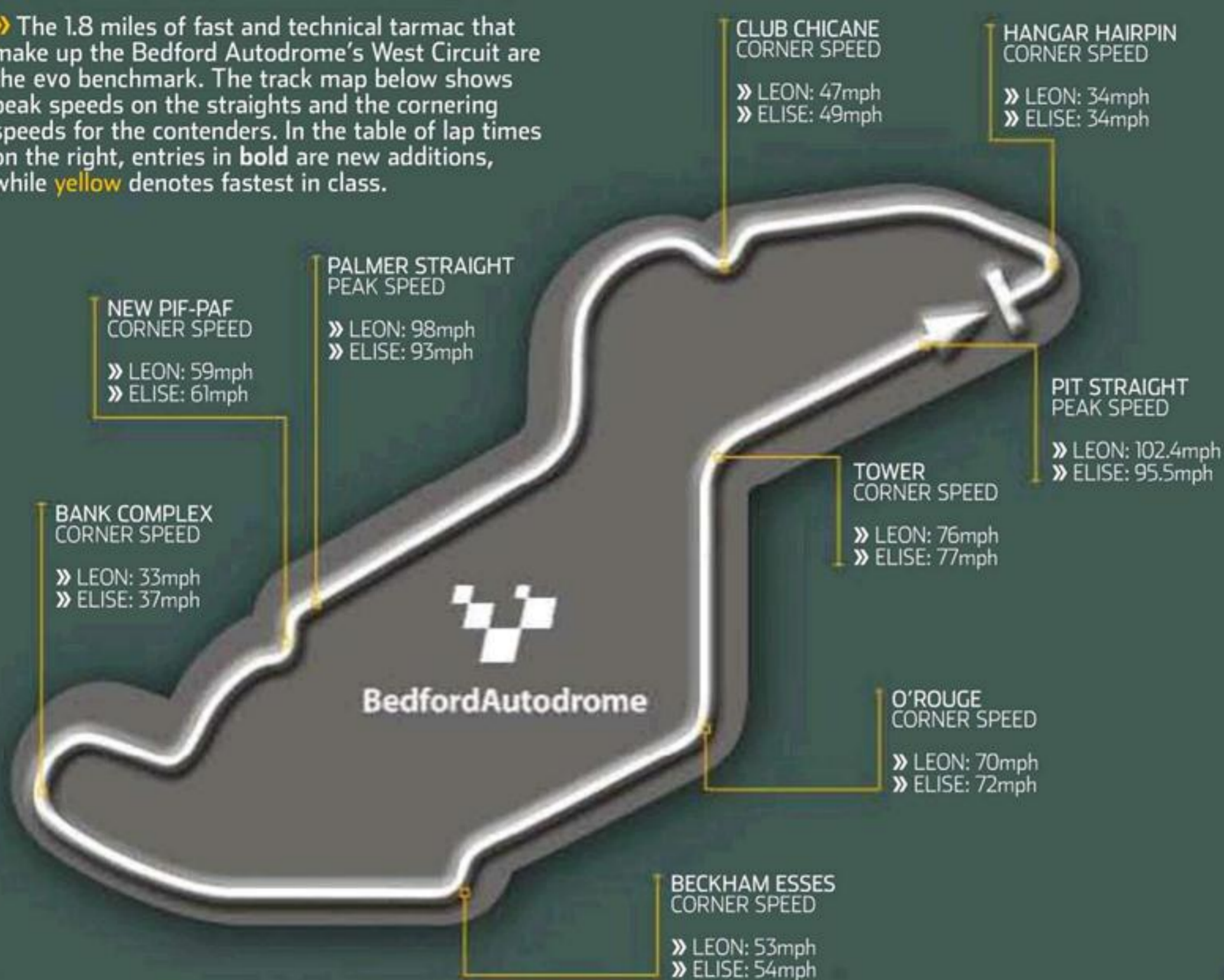
Getting your entry speed right with the Elise is another critical element to scoring the best time. The front tyres are almost comically narrow but this is where all that steering lucidity comes from. Yet while they make the car delightfully talkative, the amount of lateral grip available is compromised, resulting in lower cornering speeds than would be possible with more rubber on the deck. Braking points are also earlier than they would be with wider tyres. That said, the Elise already outperforms the SEAT in both these areas.

The Club Racer is faster through the quick corners, but it isn't quite quick enough all-round to overcome the power-to-weight advantage of the Cupra, completing the lap half a second behind. Tighter ratios alone may have been enough to swing the balance, though there is no doubt this hot hatch was a very worthy adversary and makes a very entertaining trackday machine. However, in terms of driving purity it can't beat the Elise, and this is the car I'd choose for a day at a circuit – unless we were racing, of course.



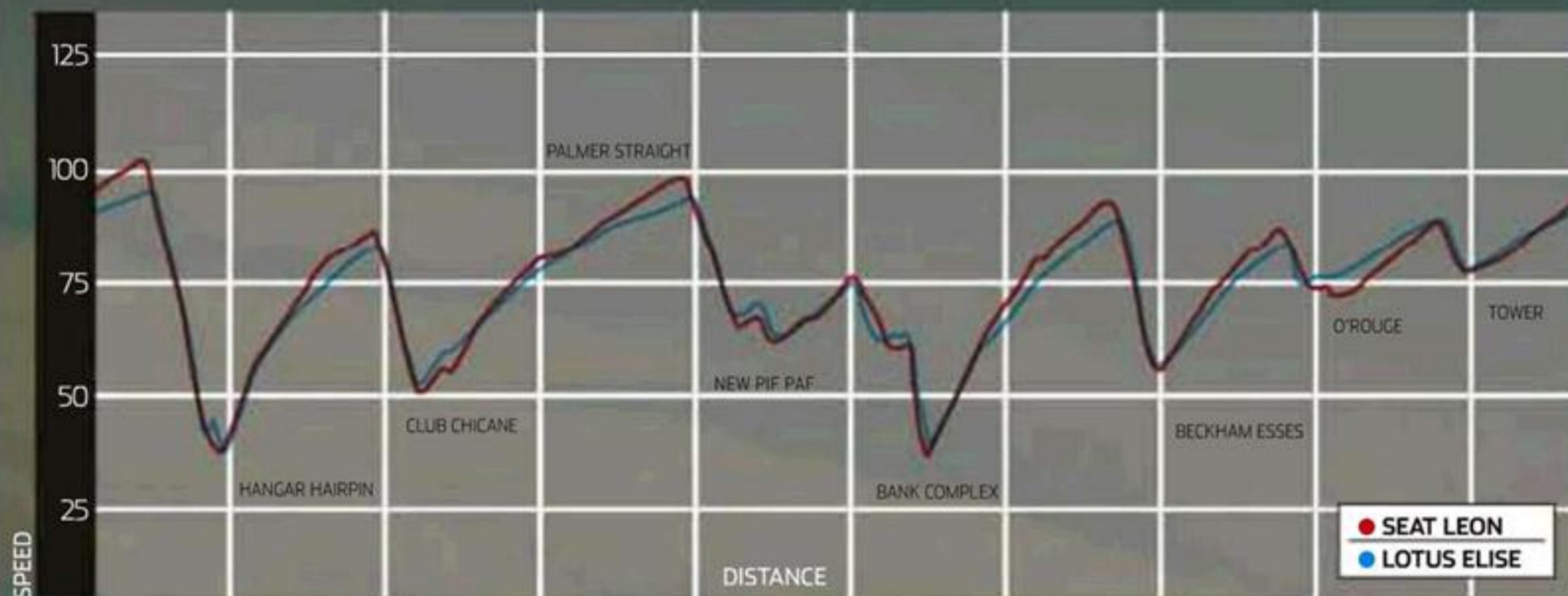
THE WEST CIRCUIT

» 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.



WHICH WAS FASTER?

LEON CUPRA R 1.28.7 (peak speed 102.4mph) ELISE CLUB RACER 1.29.2 (95.5mph)



» Superior power-to-weight of the Leon (red trace) can be seen in its higher peak speeds at the end of the straights. The Elise (blue trace) fights back with later braking and higher cornering speeds – both benefits of its lighter weight

THE LEADERBOARD

	LAP TIME	PEAK
Radical SR8LM (fastest car)	1.13.6	127.8
Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)	1.14.8	130.9
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
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1.25.1	109.1
Mercedes SL65 AMG Black	1.25.2	108.6
Audi RS5	1.25.4	108.8
Porsche Cayman R	1.25.5	106.8
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1.25.8	110.9
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
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
Lotus Evora	1.27.1	104.2
Nissan 370Z	1.27.1	104.0
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	1.27.7	111.0
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
SEAT Leon Cupra R	1.28.7	102.4
Ford Mustang Boss 302	1.29.0	108.4
Bentley Continental Supersports	1.29.2	105.8
Lotus Elise Club Racer	1.29.2	95.5

‘THE CUPRA R SETS A VERY CHALLENGING TARGET FOR THE ELISE TO AIM FOR’



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	£16,847	4/1368	161/5500	184/2250	1155kg	142	7.9	-	132	142	-	+ Attractive and fun - Needs the upcoming Esseesse power upgrade ★★★★
Abarth 500 Esseesse	129 R	£16,100	4/1368	158/5750	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.2	20.4	131	155	-	+ A properly fun, old-school hot hatch - Limited numbers being imported ★★★★
Alfa Romeo Mito 1.4 TB	132 D	£15,950	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	£20,005	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	£25,010	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	101-109	£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	£13,06	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	95-101	£9,101	4/1970	150/6200	138/4000	1200kg	127	8.0	-	129	-	32.1	+ 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	147 D	£21,400	4/1984	197/5100	206/1700	1295kg	155	7.0	-	148	164	39.8	+ Usual Audi strengths - Usual Audi weaknesses ★★★★
Audi S3	106 R	£31,625	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.6	13.6	155	-	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err, quality - A little too clinical ★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 F	£39,930	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	-	-	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above... ★★★★
BMW 118i	161 D	£21,985	4/1598	168/4800	184/1500	1365kg	125	7.3	-	140	137	-	+ Better to drive, and greener than the last one - But no better looking ★★★★
BMW 123d M Sport	122 R	£17,111	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	106 R	£29,996	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	£1,015	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	£8,695+	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	£10,405	4/1587	108/5750	108/4000	1027kg	107	8.7	-	121	-	-	+ Appealing and affordable homologation special - Inert steering ★★★★
Citroën Saxo VTR	013 R	£9,703	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	£9,703	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	98-104	£10,997	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	£19,600	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	£8,545	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	£9,508	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	£10,102	4/1596	102/6000	107/4000	975kg	106	10.2	-	115	-	38.2	+ Better than you'd ever believe - No-one else will believe it ★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	£15,08	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	£15,08	4/1999	185/7000	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note ★★★★
Ford Focus RS500	152 F	£15,222	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	12.7	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than above - Pricey (and all sold!) ★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	139 R	£19,111	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	£18,111	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	£15,110	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	£12,03	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	£9,296	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	£9,702	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	£10,111	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	£19,111	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 C'ship White	126 D	£19,110	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	£17,111	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	£17,111	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	£8,93	4/1995	210/5750	220/3500	1350kg	158	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only ★★★★
Mazda 2 1.5 Sport	132 F	£12,945	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	£23,185	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	£17,109	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	£15,2497	175/6500	177/4000	1235kg	144	7.3	-	139	-	29.7	+ Well-sorted chassis, characterful engine - Image: looks like a 45 ★★★★	
Mini One	099 D	£14,780	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1140kg	112	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Perfect power-to-grip ratio - HUGE speedo, slow car ★★★★
Mini Cooper	149 F	£18,015	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1205kg	153	7.0	-	142	136	48.7	+ Still desirable - Steering has lost a little feel ★★★★
Mini Cooper S	158 D	£18,750	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1225kg	117	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Lacks old car's direct front end ★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works	154 R	£22,320	4/1598	208/6000	206/1850	1205kg	175	6.5	-	148	165	40.9	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative ★★★★
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. Finance subject to credit checks. Finance subject to status to over 18s. Finance subject to credit checks. Finance subject to status to over 18s. Finance subject to credit checks. Finance subject to status to over 18s.

KEY: **N** New entries this month. Issue no: our most recent major test of the car (R = Road test or group test with figures, D = Driver's Car, F = Feature article). You can order back issues where still available - call 0844 844 0039. Entries in italics are no longer on sale. Prices are on-the-road including VED, excluding optional extras, and including a full manufacturer's warranty. 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 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	£21,645	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	-	121	-	34.0	-	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3 ★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	9.3	-	118	-	35.6	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs 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 dosh - Limited choice of colours ★★★★★
Peugeot 309 GTi	89-'92	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	985kg	134	8.3	-	124	-	28.2	-	+ 205 GTi in drag, cheap - Who wants a cheap drag queen? ★★★★★
Renaultsport Twingo 133 Cup	132 F	£12,210	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1049kg	127	8.7	-	125	159	40.4	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Could handle extra 30bhp ★★★★★
Renault 5GT Turbo	123 F	87-'91	4/1397	120/5750	122/3750	831kg	146	7.8	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Most have been thrashed ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	154 R	£16,930	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	141	190	34.4	+ The hot Clio is back to its best - Why the long face? ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	115 R	07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	134	-	33.6	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	6.6	17.5	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	074 D	04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	095 F	05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.6	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ Most fun you can have on three wheels - Just 500 were built ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.5	17.7	138	-	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	03-'05	6/2946	255/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Revised Clio V6 is a winner - Uninspired interior ★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 F	99-'02	6/2946	230/6000	221/3750	1335kg	175	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky ★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	095 F	93-'96	4/1988	150/6100	126/4500	981kg	155	7.6	20.8	121	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile like an Integrale ★★★★★
Renault Mégane GT TCe 180	154 D	£21,070	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	£24,020	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	£17,720	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	£20,600	4/1984	208/5300	206/1700	1334kg	158	7.2	-	145	170	35.8	+ As quick as a Golf GTi but £4k cheaper - Misses the VW's completeness ★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	£22,160	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R ★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	£25,995	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	£16,415	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	£20,330	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTi but costs much less - Green brake callipers? ★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk1)	032 D	01-'05	4/1781	180/5500	173/1950	1354kg	135	7.9	-	146	-	35.3	+ Remarkably fun and capable - Cabin quality ★★★★★
Smart Fortwo Brabus	110 D	£15,000	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 - Pricey. Lifeless steering ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX S	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	06-'11	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	08-'11	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	£21,875	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto ★★★★★

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BMW X6, ISSUE 118

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	'02-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1410kg	180	6.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ Noise, pace and individuality - Front-drive chassis can't keep up	★★★★
Alpina D3		£34,070	4/1995	211/4000	332/2000	1495kg	143	6.9	-	152	-	52.3	+ Excellent chassis, turbodiesel oomph - Rather narrow powerband	★★★★★
Alpina B5 Biturbo	149 D	£75,045	8/4395	500/5500	516/3000	2040kg	265	4.7	-	191	-	-	+ Big performance and top-line luxury - Driver not really involved	★★★★★
Alpina B5 S	118 D	'07-'10	8/4398	523/5500	535/4750	1720kg	309	4.5	-	197	-	23.0	+ Quicker and more exclusive than the E60 M5 - Suspension has its limits	★★★★★
Alpina B7	134 D	£94,845	8/4395	507/5500	516/3000	2040kg	252	4.5	-	174	-	-	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled	★★★★★
Alpina B7	085 R	'05-'08	8/4398	500/5500	516/4250	1950kg	261	4.8	-	186	-	-	+ Alpina makes a mad, bad 7-series - Over-cautious traction control	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	£149,995	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★★
Audi A4 3.2 FSI quattro S-line	111 D	£35,175	6/3197	261/6000	243/3000	1610kg	165	6.1	-	155	214	31.7	+ A good match for its German foes - An extra £2k buys an S4...	★★★★★
Audi A4 3.0 quattro	032 R	'01-'04	6/2976	220/6300	221/3200	1505kg	146	6.7	-	151	-	26.9	+ V6 adds class - Jag X-type shows how good 4wd can be	★★★★
Audi S4 (Mk3)	134 F	£37,330	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1650kg	202	5.1	-	155	234	29.1	+ More fun than you'd believe possible - When's the new RS4 coming?	★★★★★
Audi S4 (Mk2)	073 D	'05-'08	8/4163	339/7000	302/3500	1700kg	206	5.4	-	155	-	-	+ Effortless V8, agile handling - Lacks ultimate finesse of class leaders	★★★★★
Audi RS4	088 F	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ A leap on for fast Audis, superb engine - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant	105 F	'07-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1710kg	246	4.6	-	155	-	20.6	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! - Everyone thinking you're married with kids	★★★★★
Audi RS4	024 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Lacks finesse. Bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi RS2		'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★★
Audi S6	124 D	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	-	155	331	20.3	+ Looks and drives better than estate version - M5 still looks tempting	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant	116 F	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★★
Audi RS6	052 R	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1840kg	245	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ Huge real-world performance - Inert steering	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant	052 R	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1855kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi S8	088 D	'06-'10	10/5204	444/7000	398/3500	1940kg	232	5.1	-	155	-	21.4	+ V10 engine, ceramic brakes, fantastic gearbox - Light steering	★★★★★
Audi Q7 V12 TDI	124 D	£100,370	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	'02-'08	8/6750	400/4000	616/3250	2585kg	157	6.9	17.1	155	-	13.7	+ Twin turbo thrust, limo-like ride - It's a bit heavy	★★★★★
Bentley Amage T	096 D	'06-'08	8/6751	500/4200	737/3200	2585kg	196	5.2	-	179	-	14.5	+ Still able to impress - Something of an anachronism	★★★★★
BMW 320d EfficientDynamics	143 D	£27,900	4/1995	161/3250	280/1900	1420kg	115	8.0	-	142	109	68.9	+ A diesel close to its best - The Alpina D3 costs little extra	★★★★★
BMW 330d SE	123 D	£32,550	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		£31,280	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	£36,920	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	£53,125	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1680kg	250	4.9	10.7	165	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW 325i SE		'99-'05	6/2494	192/6000	181/3500	1485kg	131	7.1	-	149	-	31.4	+ Loses little to 330i - Steering not the best	★★★★★
BMW 330i Sport	028 R	'99-'05	6/2979	231/5900	221/3500	1510kg	153	5.9	17.0	155	-	30.0	+ Clean, classy and confident - Too smooth for its own good?	★★★★★
BMW 535i SE	141 D	£38,915	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1760kg	174	6.1	-	155	199	33.2	+ New 5-series impresses... - But only with all the chassis options ticked	★★★★
BMW M5 Touring (E60)	105 F	'07-'10	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1880kg	270	4.8	-	155	-	19.3	+ Brilliant at ten tenths - Feels slightly clumsy when pottering	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1855kg	276	4.7	10.4	155	-	19.6	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	110 F	'99-'03	8/4941	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-'96	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	110 F	'86-'88	6/3453	286/6500	250/4500	1431kg	203	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Two handfuls in the wet	★★★★★
BMW X5 xDrive 40d SE		£47,440	6/2993	302/4400	442/1500	2185kg	140	6.6	-	147	198	37.7	+ Handling, comfort, refinement - Looks like a big X3	★★★★★
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	£57,430	8/4395	408/5500	442/1750	2190kg	186	5.4	-	155	292	22.6	+ Stunningly good to drive - Will you want to be seen arriving?	★★★★★
BMW X6M	134 D	£82,190	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2380kg	234	4.7	-	171	325	-	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★
BMW 750i		£70,640	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	£330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 F	£67,143	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	365	18.5	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off	★★★★★
Chrysler 300C SRT8	096 D	'06-'11	8/6059	425/6000	420/4800	1965kg	220	4.9	-	168	337	20.2	+ Looks, supple ride, composed chassis - Too much understeer, slow 'box	★★★★★
Chrysler 300C 5.7 Hemi	088 D	'05-'08	8/5654	340/5000	387/4000	1910kg	180	6.2	15.1	155	-	23.3	+ Gangster chic - Ginsters suspension	★★★★★
Ford Mondeo 2.0T Titanium X		£22,695	4/1999	200/6000	221/1750	1581kg	128	7.9	-	144	179	36.6	+ Terrific chassis, sweet engine - People will still want an Audi	★★★★★
Ford Mondeo ST220	043 D	'02-'07	6/2967	223/6150	204/4900	1550kg	146	6.8	-	151	-	27.7	+ Muscular engine, fine chassis - Hotted-up repmobile image	★★★★★
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4		'90-'93	4/1993	220/6250	214/3500	1305kg	159	6.6	-	144	-	24.4	+ Fast and furious - Try finding a straight one	★★★★★
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth		'86-'90	4/1993	204/6000	204/4500	1220kg	169	6.2	-	143	-	-	+ Roadgoing Group A racecar - Don't shout about the power output!	★★★★★
Holden HSV GTS S'charger	041 D	'02	8/5665	502/6050	457/5100	1799kg	283	4.5	-	180	-	-	+ Massive linear power, great chassis - Slow 'shift, cheap interior	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R*	108 D	'07-'10	4/1998	222/8000	158/6100	1252kg	180	5.9	-	150	-	-	+ Screaming engine, razor-sharp chassis - Specialist import only	★★★★★
Honda Accord Type-R	012 R	'99-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image	★★★★★
Infiniti G37S		£40,615	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	£40,625	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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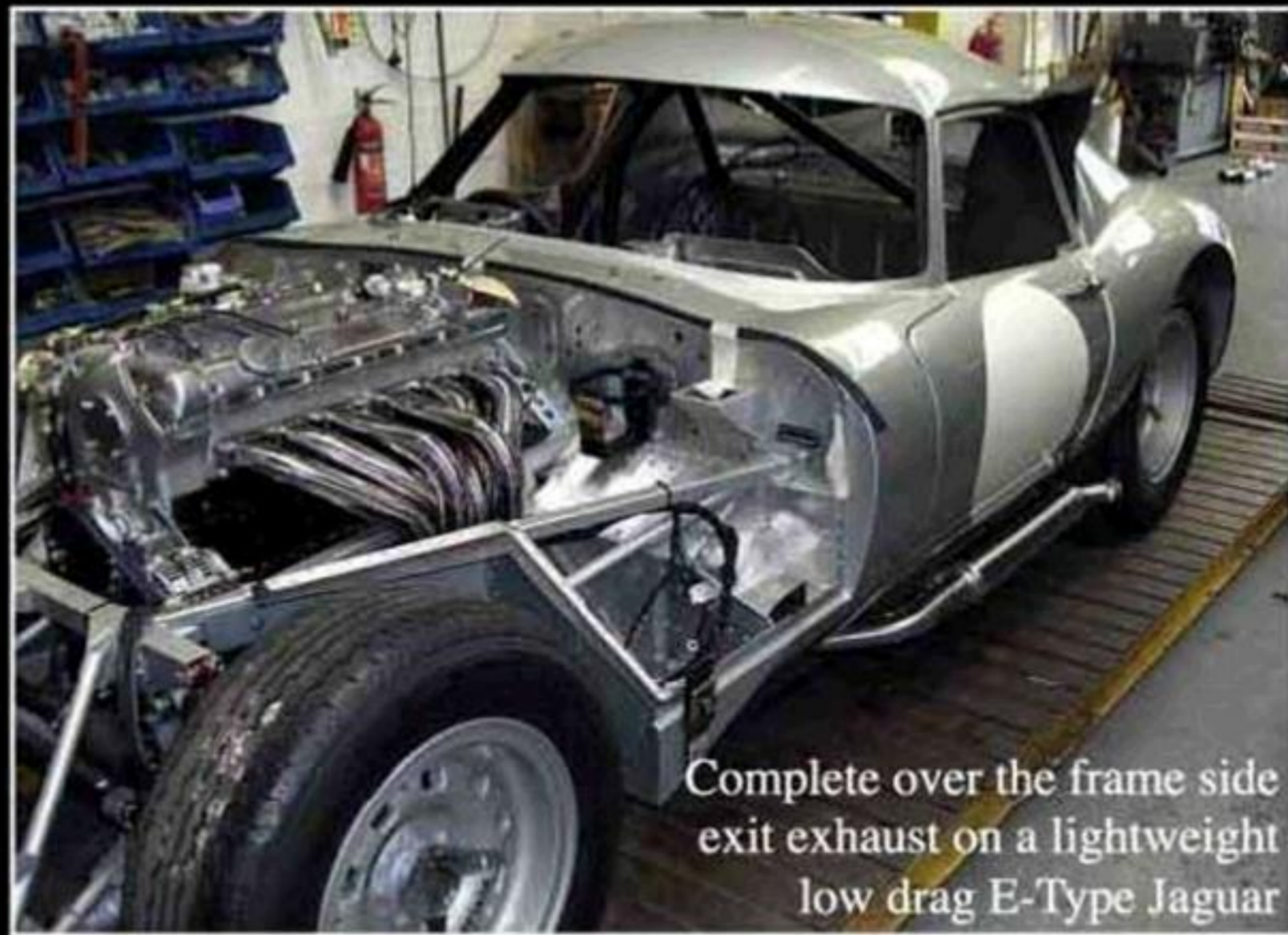
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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Jaguar XF 3.0D S	145 D	£42,950	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1820kg	161	5.9	-	155	179	42.0	+ Best XF after the R - But we'd still have the R... ★★★★
Jaguar XF 5.0		£49,950	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 olde worlde looks - Auto-only, and no Isd ★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 diesel	148 D	£55,515	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	£91,050	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	£58,350	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.8	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too ★★★★
Lotus Carlton	035 F	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out ★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	£87,350	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	+ Finally, a QP with more bhp - New grille a bit Hannibal Lecter ★★★★
Maserati Q'porte Sport GTS	141 F	£94,300	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	17.9	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride ★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 F	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	+ Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode ★★★★
Maserati Q'porte Sport GTS	113 D	'07-'08	8/4244	396/7000	339/4250	1930kg	208	5.5	-	167	-	-	+ Best Quattroporte chassis so far - More power wouldn't go amiss ★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5 16		'89-'92	4/2498	197/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer ★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	£55,065	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	161 D	£75,000	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1840kg	286	4.2	-	155	295	-	+ New turbo engine doesn't dilute E63 experience - Pricey options ★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	464/5200	1840kg	280	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ 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	£112,290	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2115kg	257	4.5	-	155	244	-	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car ★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	078 F	£163,630	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	093 F	'04-'05	12/5980	603/6500	738/5950	2220kg	275	4.3	-	155	-	16.1	+ Eye-widening wallop - Wallet-shrivelling thirst ★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG (Mk2)	154 D	£80,645	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	£117,460	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	174/6500	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 - Points. Lots of ★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	103 F	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food ★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up ★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money ★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us ★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed ★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI RS Sprint	011 F	'99	4/1997	330/6500	323/3000	1255kg	267	4.5	11.8	145	-	-	+ Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo - A little uncompromising ★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen 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 Diesel	161 D	£62,134	6/2967	247/3800	406/1750	1880kg	134	6.7	-	150	172	44.8	+ Impressive economy from sensible Panamera - Not really quick enough, though ★★★★
Porsche Panamera S	160 F	£77,453	8/4806	394/6500	369/3500	1770kg	226	5.6	-	177	293	26.2	+ Great cabin and typically fine Porsche chassis - Only a mother could love it ★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£102,909	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	286	23.2	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold ★★★★
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	£84,970	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	£66,445	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	£85,745	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	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ The fast Subaru saloon is back - Blue paint and gold wheels aren't ★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era ★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX	087 F	'05-'07	4/2457	227/5600	236/3600	1410kg	163	5.4	-	143	-	27.4	+ 2.5 litres gives even greater thump - Slightly light steering ★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at ★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C*	084 D	'05-'07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	+ Lighter, faster, fiercer - The need for self-restraint ★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 F	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some? ★★★★
Subaru Imp'za WRX STI PPP	073 F	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.2	12.9	148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet ★★★★
Subaru STI Type RA Spec C*	067 F	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	4.3	11.1	160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the 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*	087 F	'05-'08	4/2457	320/5800	330/3500	-	-	4.8	-	150+	-	-	+ Undercover fun, gutsy engine - Lacks ultimate edge of an Impreza ★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR	134 D	£33,480	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1810kg	180	5.6	-	155	249	24.7	+ Highly able and very likeable - It's a £32K Vauxhall... ★★★★
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	161	-	27.4	+ Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride ★★★★

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ARIEL ATOM 3 SUPERCHARGED, ISSUE 138

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	161 R	£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	£33,109	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	'99-'03	4/1796	125/5500	122/3000	496kg	256	5.6	18.0	115	-	-	+ Amazing styling, huge fun - As practical as a chocolate teapot	★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 F	£98,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Lacks real teeth	★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£110,700	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	-	-	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£138,150	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	£190,182	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	£25,320	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	£37,715	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	£47,820	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	221	29.7	+ Terrific engine... - Is the best thing about it	★★★★
Audi TT Roadster (Mk1 225bhp)	016 R	'00-'06	4/1781	225/5900	206/2200	1395kg	164	6.9	20.0	150	-	30.4	+ Winner on the King's Road - Trails Boxster on the open road	★★★★
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£45,150	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	224	29.1	+ Gets the S4's trick new supercharged engine - Just a little bit dull	★★★★
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1845kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	+ That engine - Wibble wobble, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate	★★★
Audi R8 Spyder V8	161 R	£96,945	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	£117,710	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1720kg	306	4.1	-	194	356	19.0	+ Looks and sounds sensational - It's the most expensive Audi ever	★★★★
Bentley Conti GTC Speed	131 D	£156,800	12/5998	600/6000	590/1750	2485kg	245	4.5	-	200	396	17.0	+ A great convertible just got better - Optional carbon brakes a necessity	★★★★
Bentley Conti Supersports	147 D	£182,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2395kg	263	3.9	-	202	388	-	+ Fast, capable and refined - Coupe does the Supersports thing better	★★★★
Bentley Azure T	140 D	£250,400	8/6761	500/14200	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	£30,425	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	£39,430	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1600kg	213	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ As above, with more power - Not as much fun as it used to be	★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	'06-'09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1385kg	194	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1485kg	231	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 F	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1450kg	228	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★
BMW 335i SE Convertible	102 D	£41,710	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	£58,690	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1885kg	223	5.3	-	155	269	21.9	+ M DCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge	★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible	035 D	'01-'06	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1655kg	207	5.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ That engine - Gets the wobbles on British B-roads	★★★★
BMW M6 Convertible	098 D	'06-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1930kg	264	4.8	-	155	352	19.2	+ Composure, grip, power, comfort - Steering lacks feel at low speed	★★★★
BMW Z8	026 R	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★
Brooke 260 Double R	094 F	£34,995	4/2261	260/7500	200/6100	550kg	480	3.9	-	155+	-	-	+ Fast, dynamic, well built - No roof, looks not for everyone	★★★★
Caterham 7 Classic	068 F	£16,650	4/1397	105/6000	95/5000	540kg	198	6.5	-	110	-	-	+ The Caterham experience starts here - It's pretty raw	★★★★
Caterham 7 Roadsport 125	105 F	£21,650	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ New Ford-engined model is just great - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★
Caterham 7 Supersport	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	508kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★
Caterham CSR 260 Superlight	094 F	£43,800	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★
Caterham Levante	131 F	£115,000	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly	★★★★
Caterham 7 R300	068 F	'02-'06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps	★★★★
Caterham 7 R400	068 F	'03-'06	4/1796	200/7500	150/5750	490kg	415	3.9	-	140	-	-	+ Race-car with a number plate - Your missus will leave you	★★★★
Caterham 7 R500	068 F	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ Fine for the Nürburgring - Hard work around the Bullring	★★★★
Caterham 7 R500 Evolution	069 F	'04	4/1998	250/8000	190/4000	460kg	552	3.9	8.1	150	-	-	+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad	★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette C6	083 D	£56,186	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1460kg	300	4.3	-	186	-	21.2	+ Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics	★★★★
Ferrari California	143 F	£146,960	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	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better	★★★★
IFR Aspid	126 D	£130,000	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		£71,000	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	£84,550	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-'09	8/4196	294/6000	303/4100	1635kg	183	6.6	-	155	-	25.0	+ Every bit as good as the XK coupe - 294bhp still only just enough	★★★★
Jaguar XKR		'06-'09	8/4196	414/6250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Overwrought detailing	★★★★
Jaguar XKR	004 F	'97-'06	8/3996	370/6150	387/3600	1750kg	215	5.4	12.8	155	-	15.6	+ Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to toupees everywhere	★★★★
Jetstream SC250	125 D	£29,450	4/1998	247/5600	236/2400	700kg	358	4.0	-	160	-	38.0	+ The way it drives - The way it looks	★★★★
KTM X-Bow	138 F	£49,482	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	790kg	305	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Mad looks, real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than we'd hoped	★★★★
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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	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	-	372	+ 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	-	409	+ 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	-	394	+ 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	-	210	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved *****
Lotus Elan Sprint	126 F	'71-'73	4/1558	126/6500	113/5500	720kg	178	6.6	-	122	-	-	+ Sensational chassis, properly quick - Affording a mint one *****
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,200	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.3	-	176	354	185	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals *****
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£102,675	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.1	-	177	377	195	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper *****
Mazda MX-5 1.8i SE		£17,990	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	£21,135	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	-	325	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin *****
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid *****
Mercedes-Benz SLK350 Sport	161 R	£44,225	6/3498	302/6500	273/3500	1465kg	209	5.5	-	155	167	-	+ 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	-	235	+ 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		£81,705	8/5461	383/6000	391/2800	1910kg	204	5.4	-	155	272	244	+ Unflappable, gorgeous, beautifully engineered - Just a bit dull *****
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	£106,820	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1895kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	203	+ 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	-	187	+ 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 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 135		£14,213	4/1796	133/6750	122/5000	1185kg	114	8.4	-	127	185	35.8	+ Cheaper than an MX-5 - But an MX-5 is much better ****
Morgan 3 Wheeler	161 R	£30,000	2/1982	115/3000	100/3200	480kg	243	4.5	-	120+	-	-	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Unnatural brake feel, you'd better not be shy ****
Morgan Roadster V6	073 D	£40,000	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 V8 and targa top - It's proper supercar money *****
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	'02-'08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear *****
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 F	£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	161 R	£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 Carrera GTS Cabrio	161 R	£85,249	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1515kg	270	4.7	-	190	-	-	+ The best 911 drop-top you can buy - Lacks glamour of an RB Spyder *****
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	£118,015	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 *****
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	£88,740	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-nipping 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	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability *****
Westfield Megabus	036 F	£24,450	4/1298	175/9800	102/9000	430kg	413	3.7	-	140	-	-	+ Bike-engined road-rocket - Not big on practicality... *****
Westfield 1600 Sport Turbo	140 D	£26,500	4/1598	195/5850	170/2000	650kg	305	4.7	-	142	-	-	+ Very quick and composed - Expensive, and a little on the heavy side *****
Westfield X1	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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+ Looks like a Transformer made real
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CHEVROLET CAMARO SS, ISSUE 148

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	1552kg	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	-	228	+ 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	-	241	+ 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	£50,745	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	291	+ 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 unremittably 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	£128,150	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	£149,995	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	£180,182	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	£27,140	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	6.3	15.7	152	154	42.8	+ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game ★★★★
Audi TTS	119 D	£35,605	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	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	214	31.0	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it ★★★★
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	155	-	30.3	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering ★★★★
Audi S5 quattro	105 D	£42,965	8/4163	349/7000	324/3500	1630kg	221	5.1	-	155	288	23.3	+ Fast, comfortable, beautifully built - Soft and a bit uninteresting ★★★★
Audi RS5	151 R	£58,725	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	£87,935	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	£109,090	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	£31,785	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	£39,145	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	£54,595	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)		'93-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1575kg	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	£32,000	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	£20,820	4/1497	122/6100	128/1500	1198kg	103	9.9	-	124	117	56.5	+ The first hybrid with sporting intent - No match for a good diesel hot hatch ★★★★
Honda Integra Type-R (DC2)	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	£38,245	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	£65,000	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	£78,500	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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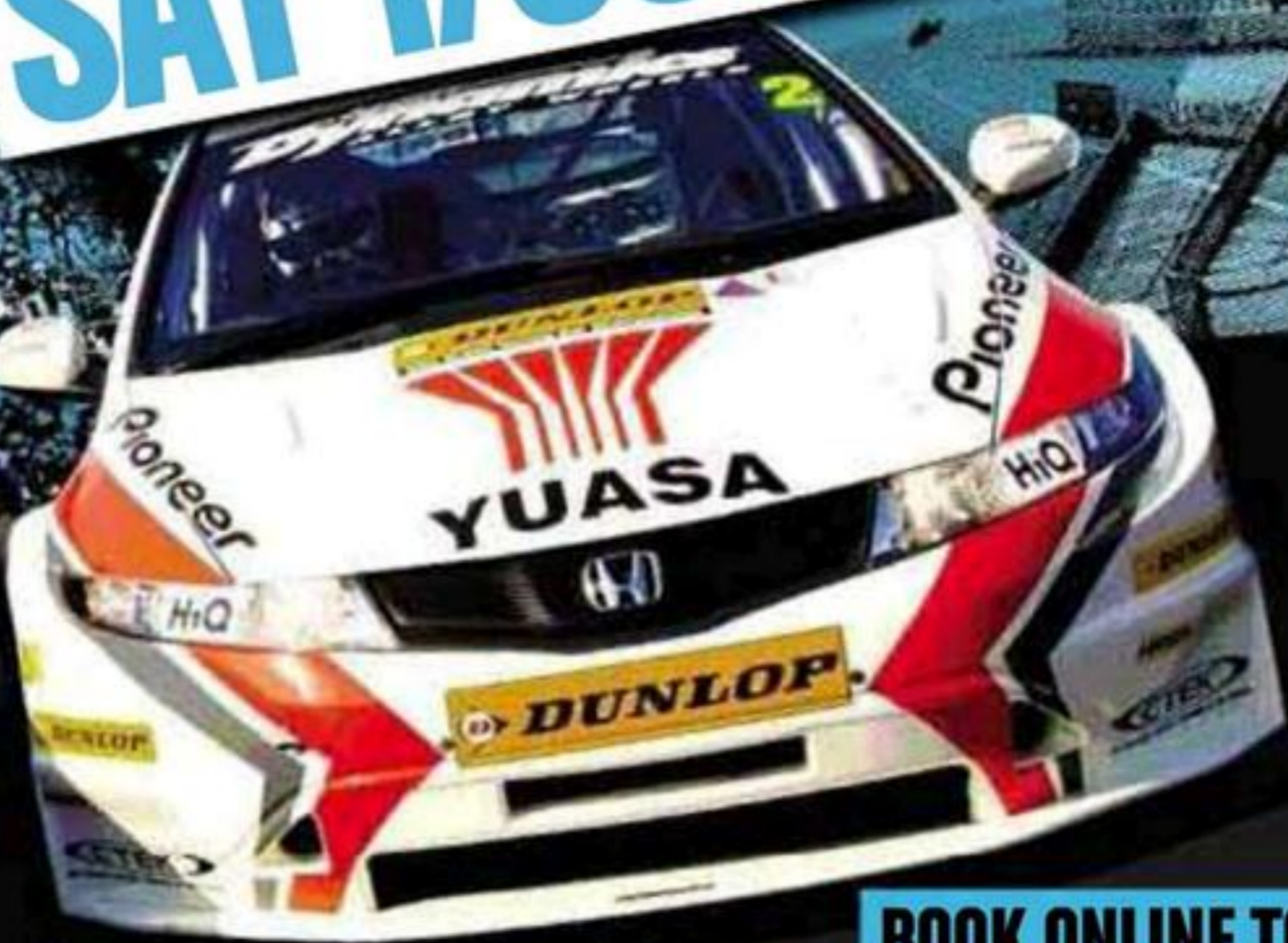
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MORGAN AEROMAX, ISSUE 097

	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	-	229	+ 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	£49,500	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	£109,995	8/4691	444/7100	376/4750	1770kg	255	4.6	-	187	-	-	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - No rear seats ★★★★★
Maserati Coupe	064 F	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering ★★★★★
Maserati GranSport	073 F	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little ★★★★★
Mazda RX-8 R3	122 R	£26,065	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+ Even sharper chassis than basic RX-8 - Same wafer-thin torque output ★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	071 R	'03-'08	2R/1308	228/8500	156/5500	1394kg	166	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	£38,140	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	£57,165	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	4.4	-	186	280	-	+ Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black	106 F	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	150 D	£115,660	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2050kg	264	4.5	-	155	244	-	+ Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CL65 AMG	115 F	£161,595	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	£71,950	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	£23,595	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	£39,162	6/2893	261/7200	221/4400	1330kg	199	5.8	-	165	221	30.1	+ Extra power, just as involving - Still lacks the desirability of other Porsches ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S	132 F	£47,604	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too (even though it's the best Cayman yet) ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman R	158 R	£51,728	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	-	+ 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	250/5750	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	437/5900	424/4600	1300kg	342	3.9	-	200+	-	-	+ Awesome engine, awesome looks - Damp roads equal moist palms ★★★★★
TVR T350C	057 R	'03-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.7	10.0	175	-	-	+ Looks, engine - Unsupportive seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish ★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	099 D	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic ★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements' ★★★★★
TVR Typhon	102 F	'06	6/3996	400/7000	330/5250	1060kg	383	3.9	-	180+	-	-	+ Carbon body, exclusivity - Interesting damping, no supercharger ★★★★★
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3966	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	5.0	11.4	160+	-	-	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion ★★★★★
TVR Cerbera 4.5	014 F	'97-'04	8/4578	420/6750	380/5500	1100kg	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	£24,705	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1373kg	153	6.1	15.8	149	172	38.2	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair ★★★★★
VW Scirocco R	138 F												

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FERRARI F355 F1 BERLINETTA, ISSUE 003

SUPERCARS



OUR CHOICE: Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4. The first all-new Lambo in nearly a decade has been worth the wait, and then some. A potent new V12, carbon construction and the new ISR gearbox move the game on nicely, and it looks absolutely sensational.

BEST OF THE REST: The Veyron Super Sport is just awesome, and Ferrari's 458 Italia, FF and 599 GTO are all utterly brilliant. We also love Porsche's GT2 RS and the screaming Lexus LFA, while the new McLaren MP4-12C (right) is staggeringly quick and refined.



	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	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	£135,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	+ The best car that Aston Martin makes - Erm, a tad thirsty? ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S	110 F	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	-	161	-	-	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days ★★★★★
Bristol Fighter	146 R	£234,982	10/7990	525/5500	525/4200	1600kg	333	4.0	-	210	-	-	+ Unique, intriguing, goes like stink - Looks perhaps not for everyone ★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	£925,000	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space? ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 F	£1.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	-	-	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous broly/roof thing ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 F	£2.0m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	-	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals ★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out ★★★★★
Caparo T1	138 F	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	£106,605	8/6162	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	3.8	7.6	205	-	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain ★★★★★
Ferrari 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	161 R	£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 F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it ★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	008 R	'99-'04	8/3586	400/8500	275/4750	1390kg	292	4.5	9.0	180+	-	17.0	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be ★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	-	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud ★★★★★
Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta	003 F	'97-'99	8/3496	375/8250	268/6000	1332kg	286	4.7	-	183	-	16.7	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding? ★★★★★
Ferrari 575M 'Fiorano'	050 D	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1750kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ 'Fiorano pack' makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard ★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	066 F	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing ★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	149 F	'02-'04	12/5998	650/7800	485/5500	1365kg	484	3.5	6.7	217+	-	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1 ★★★★★
Ferrari F50	064 F	'96-'97	12/4968	513/8500	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	1100kg	441	3.7	-	201	-	-	+ The shape that launched a thousand posters - Er... ★★★★★
Ferrari 288GTO	064 F	'84-'85	8/2855	400/7000	366/3800	1160kg	350	4.9	-	189	-	-	+ Painfully beautiful, rarer than the F40 - You are joking? ★★★★★
Ford GT	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 F1 ★★★★
Koenigsegg CCX	094 F	£500,000	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	3.9	7.7	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar ★★★★★
Koenigsegg 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	£242,280	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 G'ardo S'leggera	104 F	'07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg	373	3.8	-	196	-	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear ★★★★
Lambo M'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	550/7000	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	161 R	£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	1157kg	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	£125,865	6/3800	523/6250	516/2100	1570kg	339	2.9	6.8	196	268	-	+ As above, with more power - The GT3's even cheaper... ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2)	157 F	£171,468	6/3600	611/6500	516/2250	1370kg	453	3.5	-	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	14												

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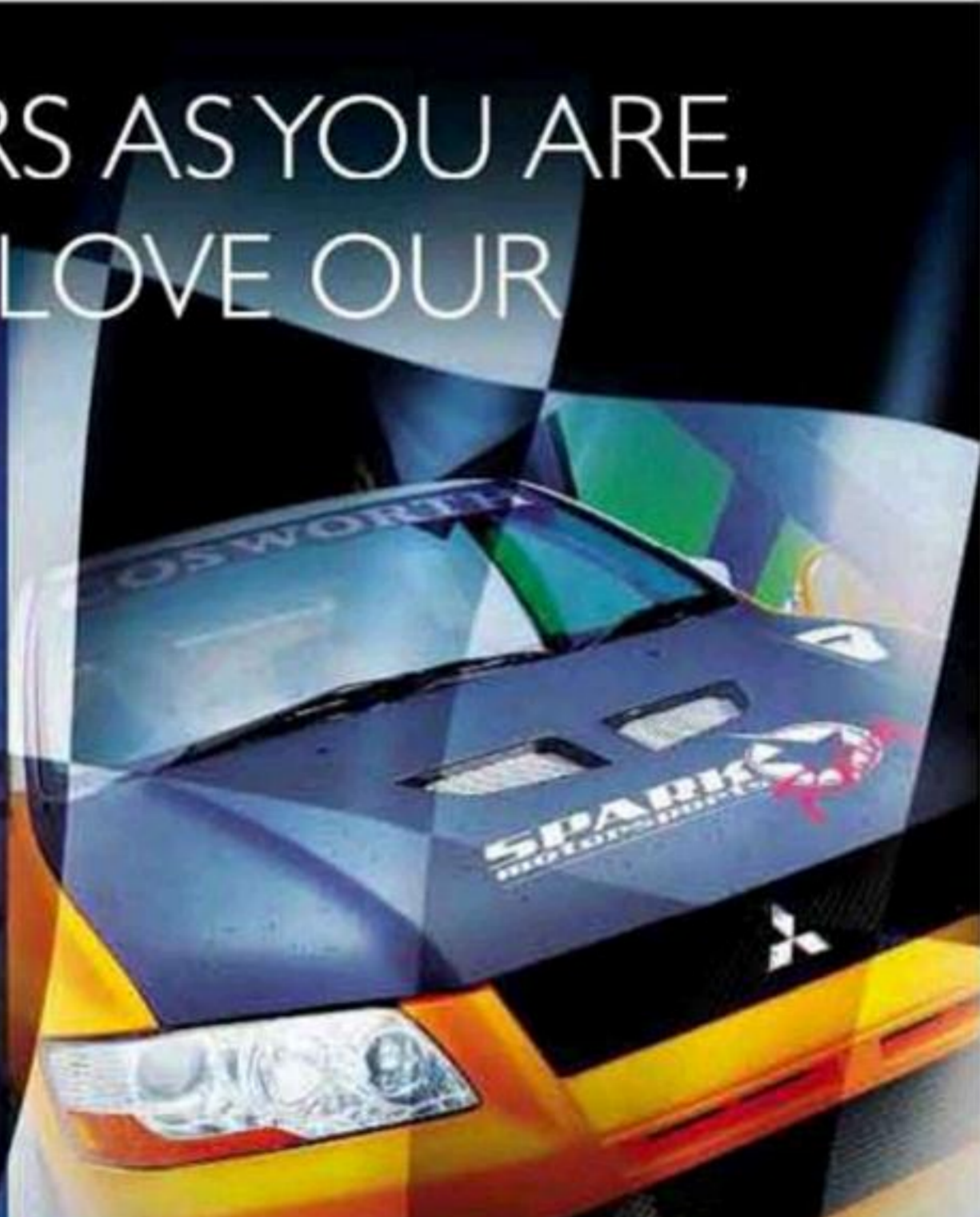
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The Earl of Pembroke & his Nissan Skyline GT-R

William Herbert, 18th Earl of Pembroke, on the car that's given him some of his best driving moments

If I wanted to appear more cultured I would probably have picked my BMW 3.0 CSL or Jaguar E-type, but the Skyline is the car that means the most to me as it's the one I've had the most adventures in.

It's actually the second GT-R I've owned. The first was stolen in London and the only consolation of that was that it gave me the opportunity to upgrade to a slightly better version. This one is a V-Spec II – one of about only 30 in the UK. It's a 2001 car that was imported from Japan when it was around a year old with 6000km on the clock. That's when I bought it and it's now covered around 39,000 miles in total.

One of my most unforgettable drives in the Skyline was when I was heading down to San Moritz one January. I made a late decision en route to head for Chamonix instead, so entered the new destination into my TomTom and – without checking a map – blindly followed its instructions.

It took me onto a quiet, uphill road, which I assumed led to the resort. But after 20 minutes or so, with the road still climbing, the air getting colder and 20ft snowdrifts appearing at the side of the road, I realised I was actually on the Mont Blanc pass!

It was 10pm by then, so there was no turning back. I got to the top OK, but going down the other side wasn't easy. With blizzard conditions and no winter tyres, the car was slipping everywhere – and there was often very little in the way of crash barriers. I slowed to 5mph, put some Pink Floyd on the stereo to calm me down and unfastened my seatbelt in case I needed to bail out. The car looked after me, though, and we eventually got to our destination in one piece.

It coped rather better in poor conditions on a trackday at Spa a couple of years ago. It was bucketing it down, and while most of the supercars present either stayed in the pits or tip-toed round the circuit, the GT-R, with its four-wheel drive and four-wheel steering, was flying past everything.

I thought about trading it in for a Nissan 350Z when they first came out, but I'm glad I didn't now. I also tried a 997 Carrera 2S for four or five months, but next to the Skyline it seemed as dull as anything. I suppose a new R35 GT-R might offer about as much usable performance as my Veyron does on UK roads, but I couldn't part with my R34 Skyline now. It's a hero car to a whole generation of us who grew up playing *Gran Turismo*.

completely different to what you'd get in, say, a Ferrari.

The Skyline was my everyday car for about five years, but these days my regular car is a Land Rover Discovery. It's practical, handles well for its size, is good off-road, has lots of toys... Maybe I'm getting old! Having said that, I am now racing in the Fun Cup endurance series. The cars are spaceframe-chassis'd, single-seater Beetle lookalikes, and the highlight of the calendar is a 25-hour race at Spa with 130 cars taking part. This year our car came first in its class.

'I TRIED A 997 CARRERA 2S FOR FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS BUT NEXT TO THE SKYLINE IT SEEMED AS DULL AS ANYTHING'

I've also recently started hosting an annual supercar day at Wilton House, my family home (www.wiltonhouse.com). The event raises money for Salisbury Hospital and it's grown rapidly in the three years it's been running. This year we had 160 supercars and over 10,000 visitors. I really enjoy walking around these dream cars and seeing other people enjoying them too. As you might have guessed, I'm really passionate about cars.'

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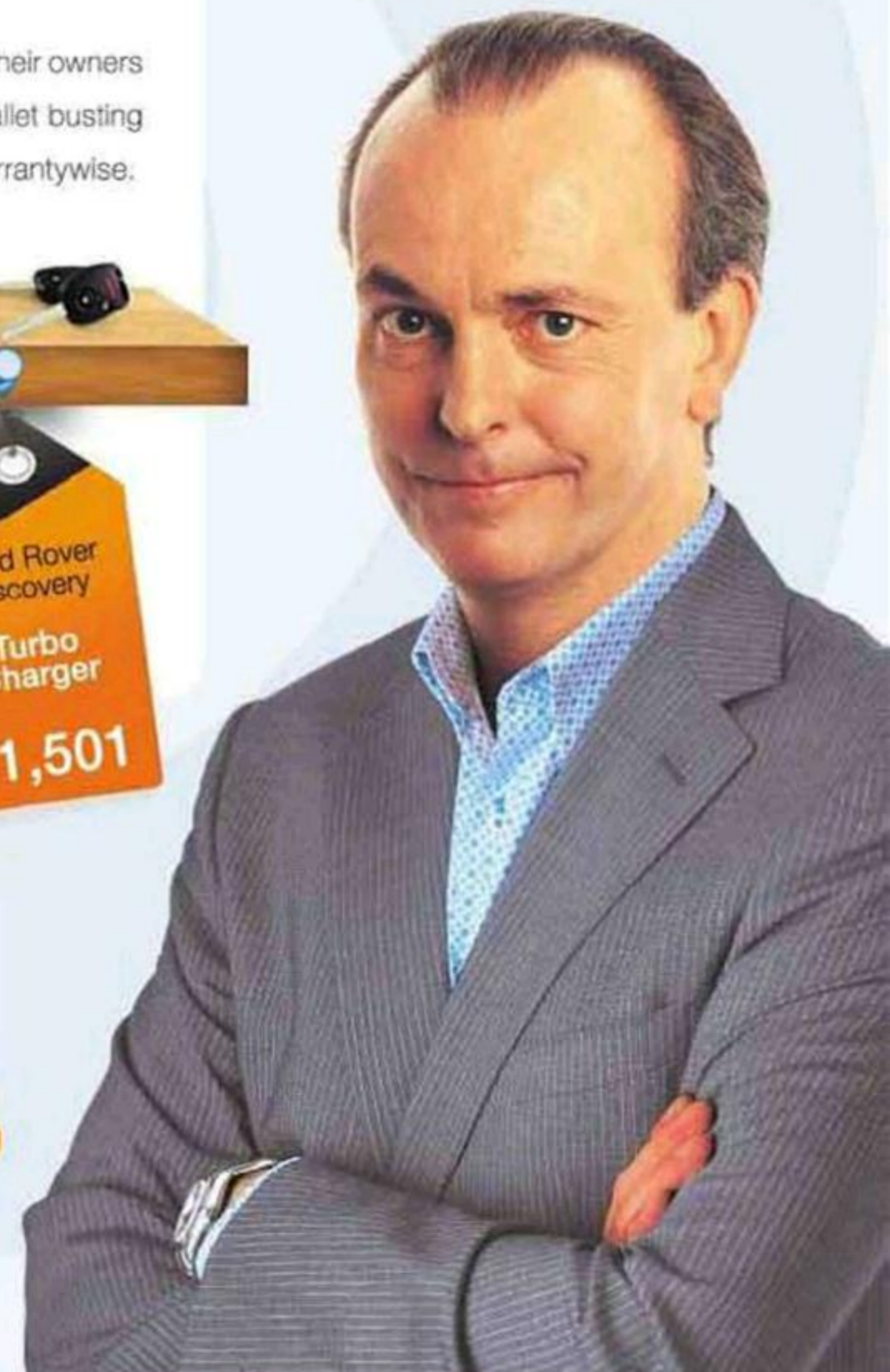
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