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DISTRIBUTION IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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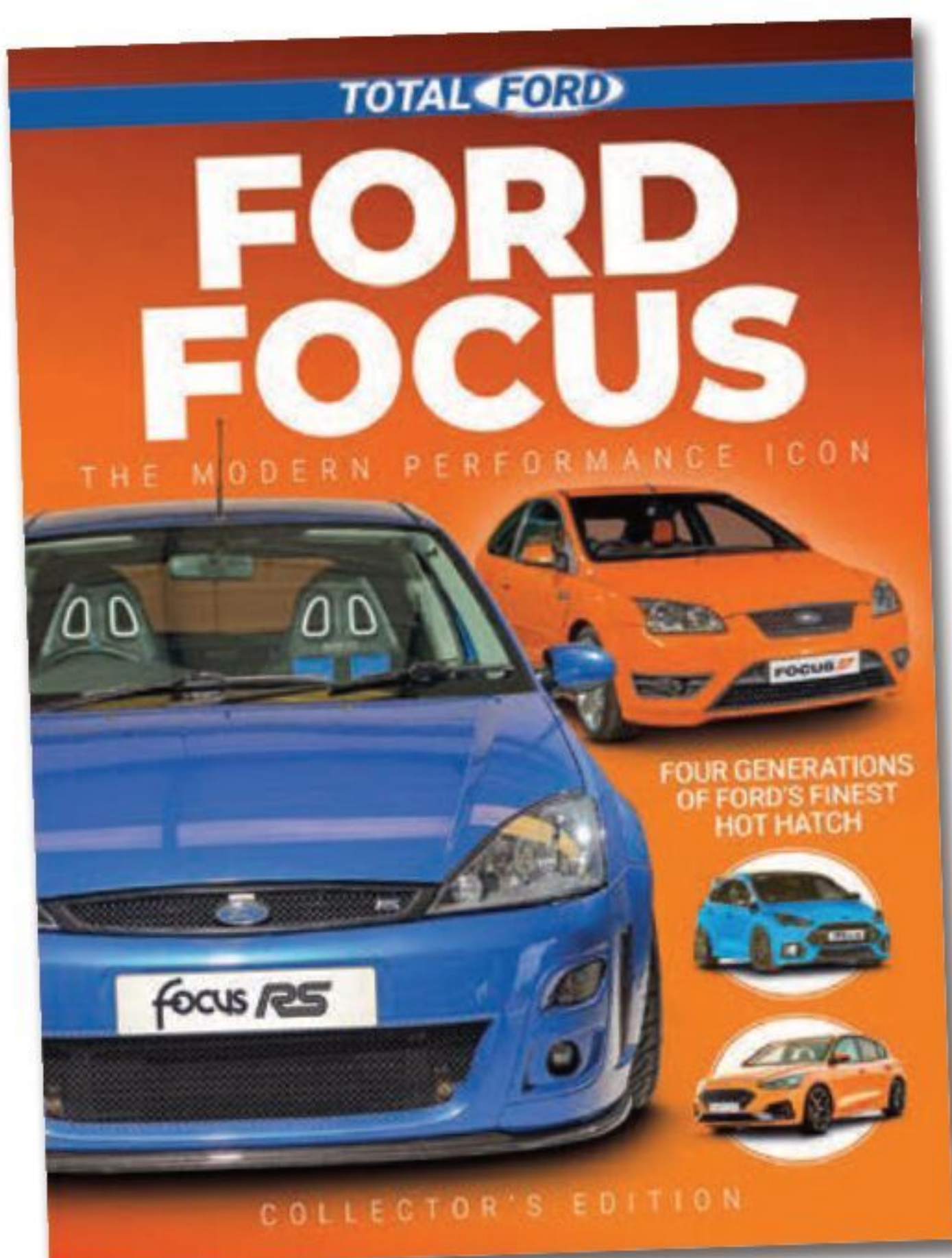
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WELCOME

Hello, and welcome to the third edition of our *Total Ford* series of bookazines. This issue is one that is particularly close to my heart, because it covers the very car I own myself.

But that's not a particularly exclusive club, given that performance Focus models have dominated the fast Ford scene for 20 years.

Inside this special-edition bookazine we celebrate the fast Focuses, including all four generations of ST and three generations of RS.

Using archive images coupled with detailed research (not to mention being there ourselves for most of it), we've compiled history features on both the ST and RS brands.

Building on that, and directly responsible for many of the road-going performance models we enjoy today, the Focus has proven to be – and still is – a formidable force in the leading motorsport championships all over the world. We take a look at the Focus's motorsport career, from when it first burst onto the WRC scene with Colin McRae behind the wheel, right through to the multiple race-winning Mk4 STs currently competing in the British Touring Car Championship.

Covering four generations and no fewer than seven mainstay performance variants (plus various special editions of those) in a 100-page bookazine was no easy task, but we've tirelessly worked through all the essential information to bring you all the good stuff, including detailed buying tips on Mk1, Mk2 and Mk3 models, as well as top tuning tips on all four generations.

And, after showing you what to look out for when buying one, and then what to do when tuning one, we've also included a selection of fantastic feature cars to give you some further inspiration – one of each of the main performance models; seven in total!

If you like what you see in this bookazine, make sure you check out *Fast Ford* magazine too. Most of the articles in this bookazine first appeared in *Fast Ford*, and as the UK's leading Ford tuning magazine it regularly features the very best modified Focuses on the scene today.

For now, though, sit back and get ready to indulge in 20 years of fast Focus history. It really is the modern performance icon. ■

JAMIE KING EDITOR

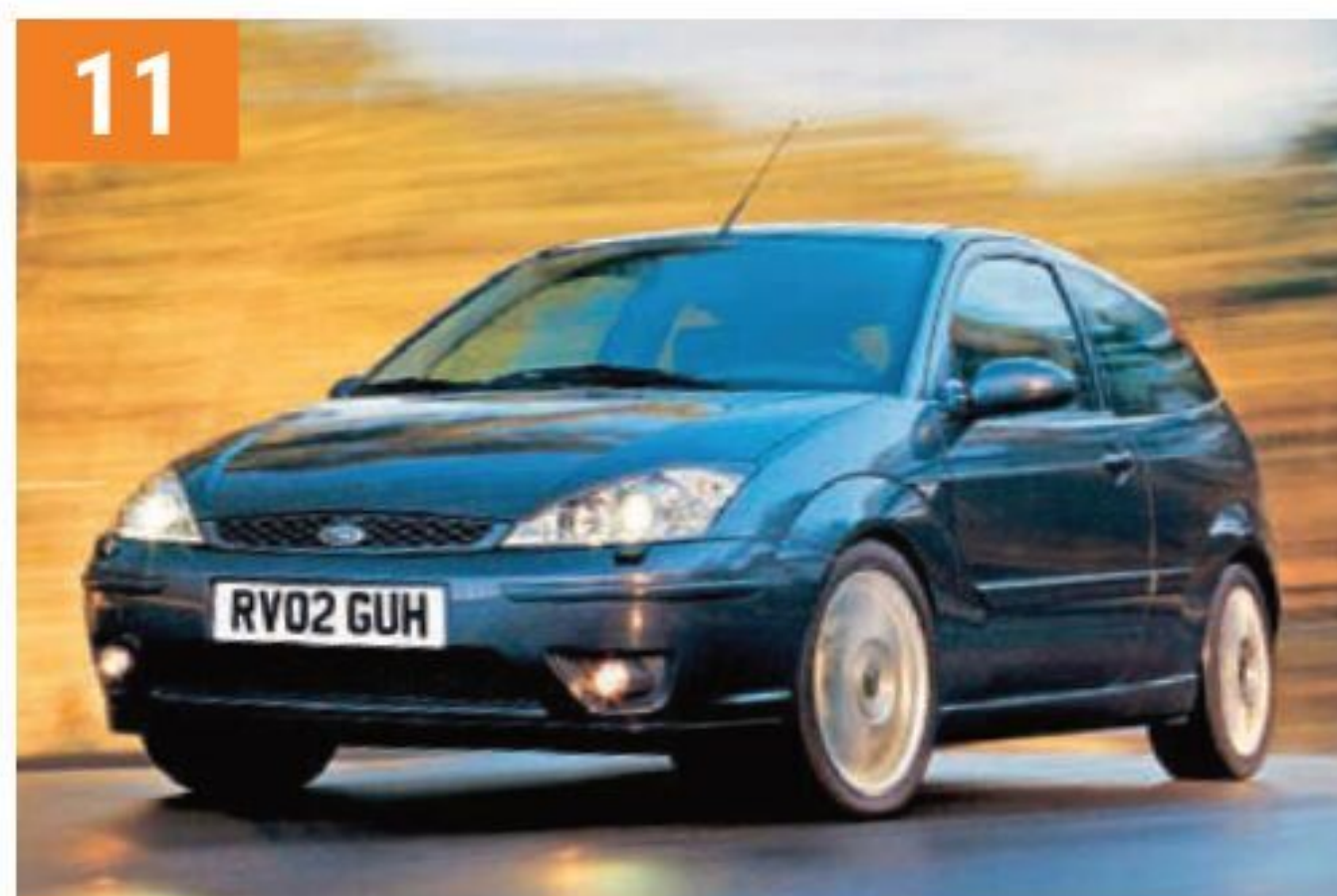


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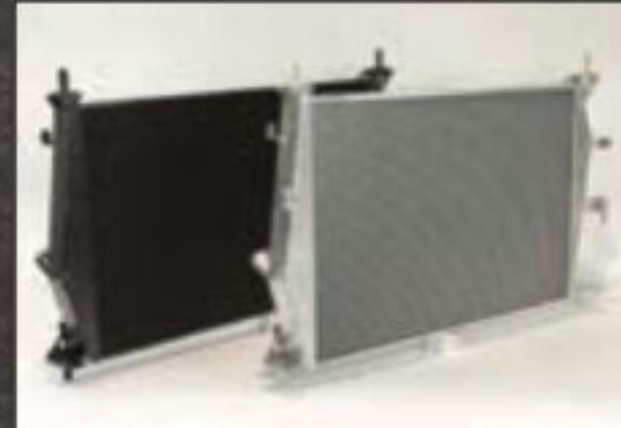
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20 YEARS OF THE PERFORMANCE FOCUS

Over the last two decades the Focus has redefined what it means to own a fast Ford. Let's look back at some of the sporty models from the past 20 years as we delve into the history of the high-performance Focus...

Words **DAN WILLIAMSON** / Photos **FORD MOTOR COMPANY**

Futuristic. Dynamic. Effortlessly brilliant. The Ford Focus of 1998 was a radical game-changer for the medium car sector, shaking up a market of humdrum hatchbacks with its eager handling, elevated build quality and Ford's inimitable New Edge styling.

Two decades on, we're waiting for the

facelifted Mk4 – another evolution of the Focus formula: simply a world-beating machine.

Launched at the 1998 Geneva Salon, the first Focus was mind-blowing as a replacement for the tired old Escort. Yes, the Escort was adequate, but the car that had conquered motorsport and inspired generations to love the Blue Oval was long past its sell-by date. It was time for change.

A new name. A new philosophy.

While the Focus badge signalled a break from the past, its attention to detail reinvigorated Ford's until-then complacent attitude. Gone was the nondescript Escort styling in favour of sharp lines and trapezoidal lights, a theme echoed into styling cues in the cabin, where ergonomics and finish were notably improved. →

But it was under the skin that impressed most: while a MacPherson strut front end remained, the rear boasted Control Blade suspension that scored rave reviews for its ride and driver appeal. Even the basic engine – a 1.4-litre, 16-valve Zetec – made the Focus feel alive.

EARLY PERFORMANCE

Yet, staggeringly, Ford failed to take advantage of the agile chassis or the brand's army of Rallye Sport followers. The hottest Focus was a 128bhp two-litre, offered at first only in four/five-door Ghia guise, followed a year later by Zetec trim as a sign of sporty intent.

It took until March 2002 for that to change. The Focus ST170 was introduced under the Sports Technologies banner, representing fast-road rather than motorsport intentions. As such it was a lukewarm rather than full-blown hot hatch, but it packed just enough power and poise to entertain enthusiastic drivers.

Designed by Ford Special Vehicle Engineering, the ST170 boasted stacks of bespoke high-performance parts – including an engine

breathed on by Cosworth. The regular 1988cc normally-aspirated Zetec was renamed Duratec ST and equipped with high-compression pistons, big-valve head, variable valve timing, high-lift cams and beefy exhaust manifold. Producing a rev-hungry 171bhp, it was mated to a close-ratio six-speed Getrag MT285 transmission geared for respectable performance of 134mph and sub-eight-second 0-to-60.

Its suspension was updated, the clutch was beefed up, the steering was tweaked, there were bigger brakes (300mm front discs; 280mm rears)

“IT WAS DEVELOPED WITH ASSISTANCE FROM MCRAE AND CARLOS SAINZ – NO WONDER IT’S REVERED AS ONE OF THE FINEST-HANDLING FORDS OF ALL TIME”



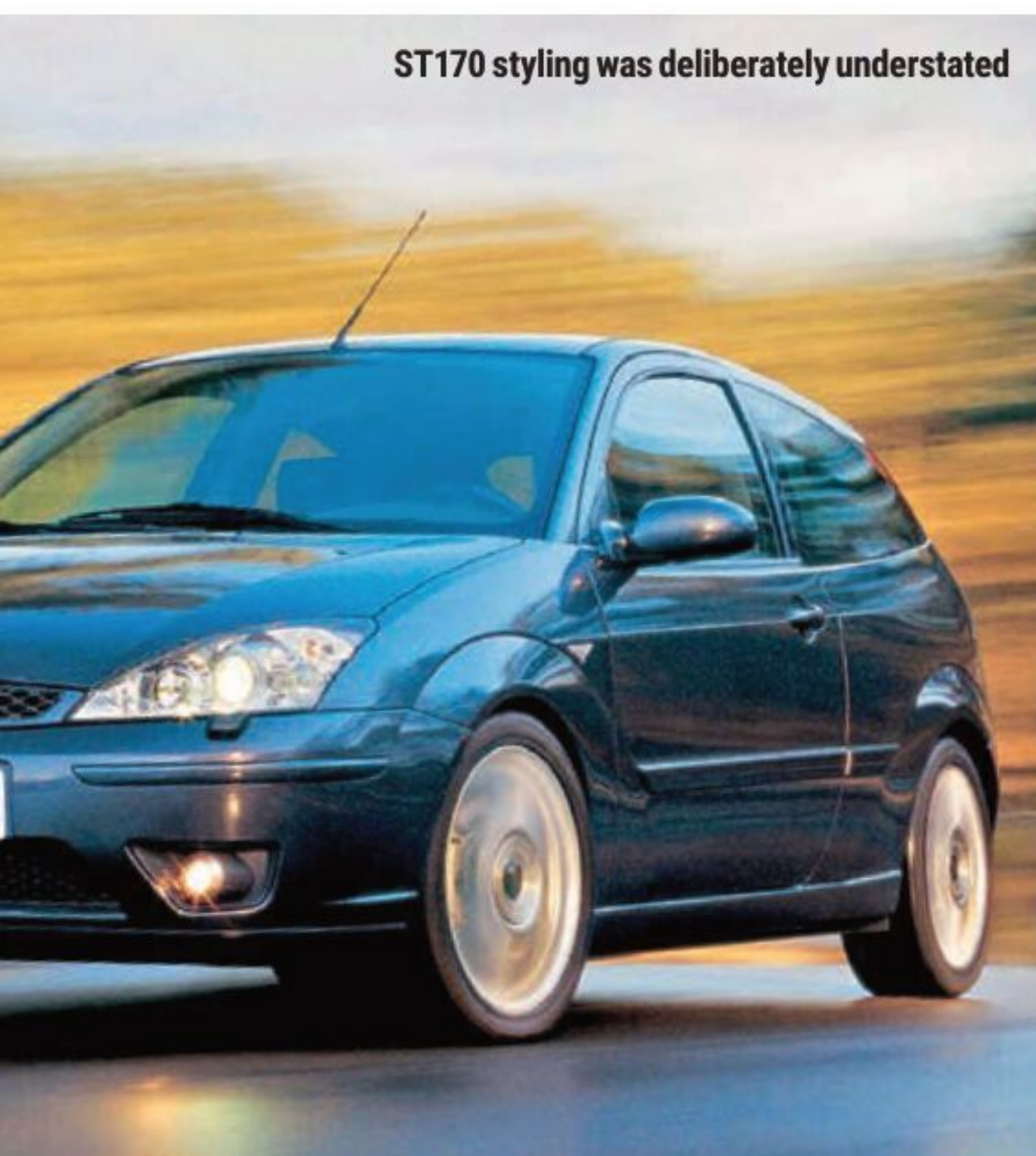
ST170's key attribute was sublime cornering poise





The closest you can get to McRae's Focus WRC rally winner

Every production Mk1 Focus RS was finished in Imperial Blue paint



ST170 styling was deliberately understated



Moondust Silver was a popular ST170 colour

and 17in multi-spoke alloy wheels.

Yet instead of attracting punters with wild wings and decals, Ford stayed subtle, restricting the ST170 to honeycomb grilles, new headlamps and colour-coded mouldings. A rear spoiler remained on the options list, and five-door hatchbacks and estates were offered alongside the sexier three-door. Still, at least racy Imperial Blue was among the limited range of colours.

The cabin received similar treatment, adding electro-luminescent dials and half-leather sports front seats; leather Recaros were offered in an optional Custom Pack, while a Comfort Pack included climate control and heated windscreen.

Okay, the ST170 was a mainstream model rather than tyre-shredding terrorist, but 13,443 found British homes before production ceased in summer 2005. And, besides, the hooligan-spec Mk1 RS was hot on its heels...

THE RS IS BACK!

In October 2002, Ford revived the Rallye Sport brand from a six-year hiatus to create the first Focus RS. Designed to commemorate the Blue Oval's rallying success, the RS was promoted as 'the closest you can get to a road-going version of Colin McRae's Focus World Rally Championship

contender.' It was even developed with assistance from McRae and Carlos Sainz – no wonder it's revered as one of the finest-handling Fords of all time.

Based on a stock three-door hatch, the RS included 521 unique components, many of which were sourced from suppliers to the WRC team. At its heart was a heavily-reworked Zetec E 2.0-litre engine, renamed Duratec RS and housing forged pistons, modified head and Garrett GT2560LS turbo to kick out in excess of 212bhp. Top speed was 144mph; 0-to-60mph took 6.4 seconds.

Rather than the ST170's six-speed, the RS used a regular MTX75 gearbox but revamped with close ratios, shot-peened cogs, AP Racing clutch and Quaife ATB differential to aid traction.

Beefier driveshafts, WRC-width suspension arms, Sachs springs, Brembo four-pot front brake callipers and revised ABS perfected the Mk1's amazing chassis, with WRC-style OZ alloys stuffed beneath broad wheelarches, mated to rally-look bumpers, side skirts and roof spoiler. Imperial Blue paintwork was standard, with matching blue bulbs in the indicators.

The cockpit was also pretty special, containing black/blue Sparco-badged

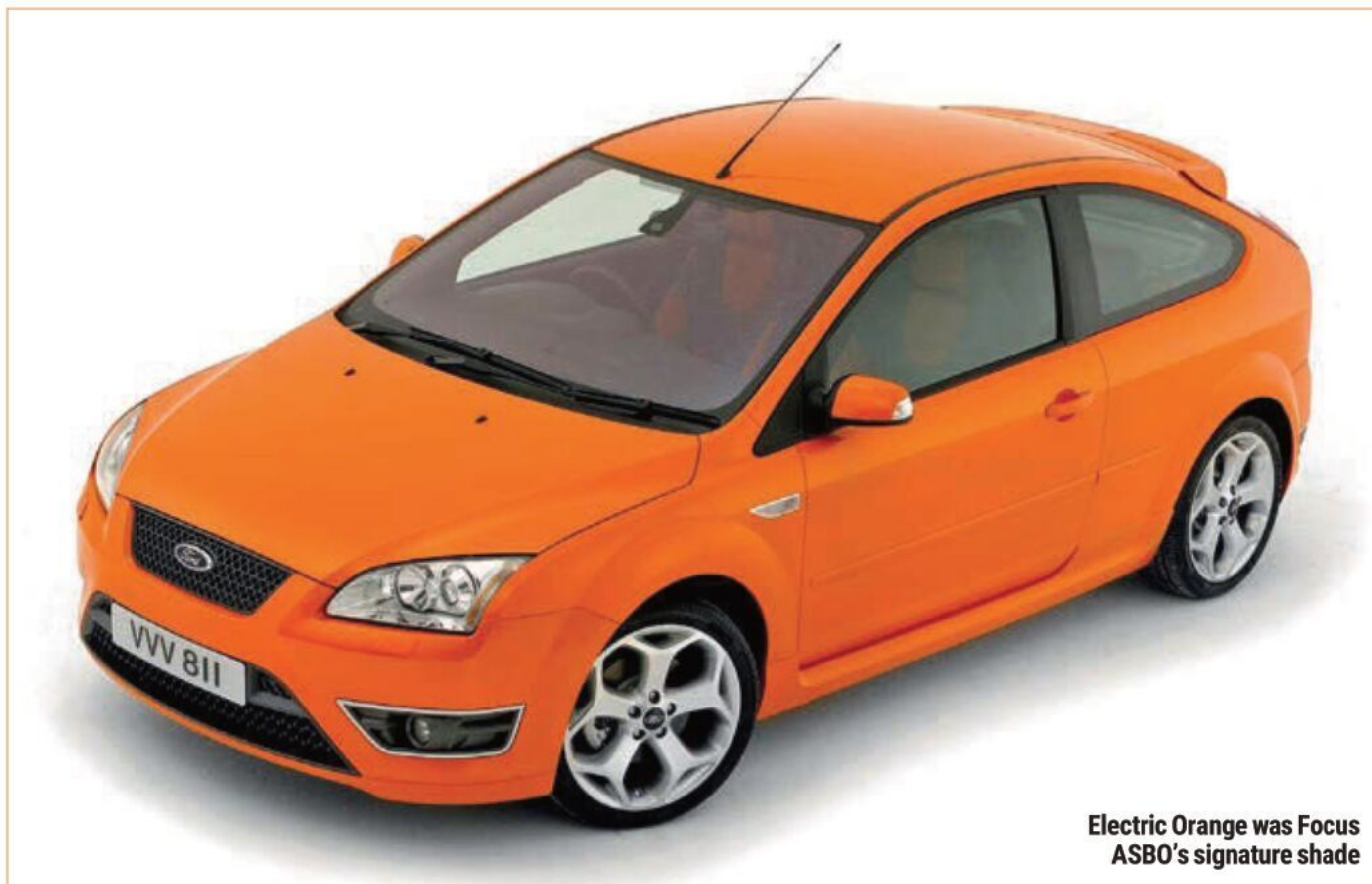


ST170

MADE 2002 to 2005
POWER 171bhp @ 7000rpm
TORQUE 145lb.ft @ 5500rpm
0-60MPH 7.9 seconds
TOP SPEED 134mph

RS MK1

MADE 2002 to 2003
POWER 212bhp @ 5500rpm
TORQUE 229lb.ft @ 3500rpm
0-60MPH 6.4 seconds
TOP SPEED 144mph



Electric Orange was Focus ASBO's signature shade

bucket seats and steering wheel, with an individually-numbered plaque on the carbon-fibre console. No optional extras were available.

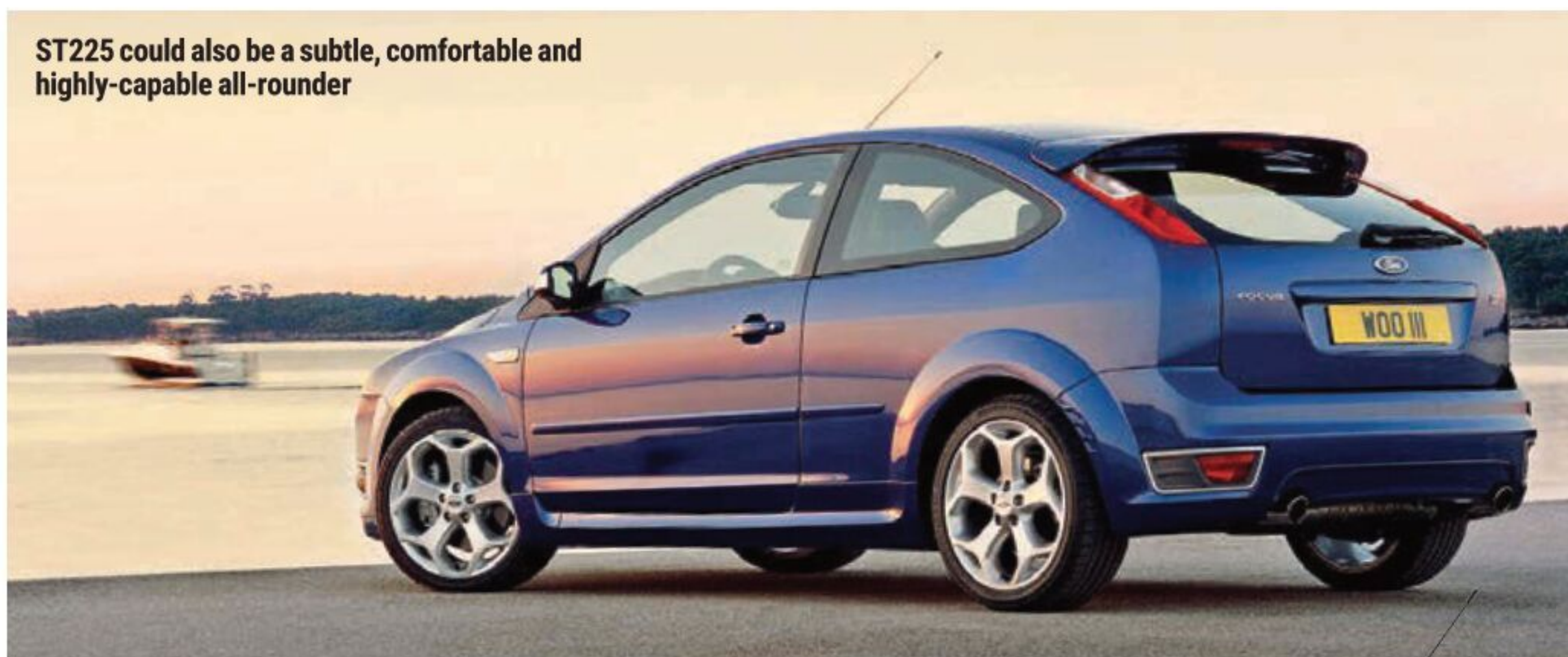
Produced for just one year alongside the regular Focus in Saarlouis, Germany, the RS received minor alterations (including extra stitching on the seat bases and remapped engine management). In total, 4501 were built.

TIME FOR AN ASBO

By 2005 the original Focus had made way for the Mk2, an incredibly competent car, if lacking a little of the Mk1's sparkle or quirky styling.

Ford's colourful solution was the Mk2 ST, unveiled at February's Geneva show. Somewhat less specialised than either the ST170 or Mk1 Focus RS, the new machine was nevertheless more powerful and better equipped than ever.

The basis was a regular Focus three/five-door hatchback wearing a muscular bodykit with functional rear spoiler. It was offered in a variety of shades, including rowdy Electric Orange, which led to Jeremy Clarkson infamously calling the car a Focus ASBO.



ST225 could also be a subtle, comfortable and highly-capable all-rounder

ST225

MADE 2005 to 2011

POWER 222bhp @ 6100rpm

TORQUE 236lb.ft @ 1600-4000rpm

0-60MPH 6.5 seconds

TOP SPEED 150mph

Mk2 RS made every other Focus Ultimate Green with envy



Normal folk, meanwhile, nicknamed it the ST225, thanks to its 225PS/222bhp, 2522cc five-cylinder engine, boosted by a KKK turbo. Yes, the powerplant was taken from a boring Volvo, but the ST burbled its way to 150mph, hitting 60mph in just 6.5 seconds.

It handled brilliantly too. Although it lacked the RS's limited-slip differential in its Getrag six-speed gearbox, Ford Team RS tweaked the ST with recalibrated dampers, stiffer springs, thicker rear anti-roll bar, quicker steering, 320mm front brakes and funky 18in alloys.

A selection of three specifications strengthened sales, with the basic ST including plain Recaro front seats and auxiliary gauges on the dashboard. The ST-2 added colour-keyed trim, heated windscreen and xenon headlamps, while the ST-3 gained Ebony leather upholstery and six-disc Sony CD head unit. Loads of options were offered too, including touch-screen sat nav and ST stripe kits.

Official UK deliveries began in January 2006, while November 2007 brought an extra model to the line-up: the ST500, a limited edition (of

“RS TRANSFORMED THE THREE-DOOR ST225 INTO A FIRE-BREATHING SUPER-HATCH, BOASTING 301BHP AND THE BIGGEST WINGS WE’D SEEN SINCE COSSIES REIGNED THE ROADS”

500 – all for the UK) STs finished in Panther Black with silver stripes along the sides, bonnet, roof and tailgate. Offered as a three- or five-door hatch, each ST500 featured full ST-3 spec plus red leather trim.

The Mk2 Focus received a mid-life facelift in January 2008, featuring new headlamps, body styling and revised fascia. September saw Ford officially sanction Mountune’s MP260 package – offering 257bhp from its bigger intercooler and remap – but it was soon overshadowed by the Blue Oval’s very own modified ST: the Mk2 RS.

BIGGER, BADDER BROTHER

Appearing in January 2009, the headline-grabbing RS transformed the three-door ST225 into a fire-breathing super-hatch, boasting 301bhp and the biggest wings we’d seen since Cossies reigned the roads. The wild spoilers and wide arches were matched by bonnet vents and whopping 19in alloy wheels, which wrapped around 336mm front discs and 300mm rears.

A big BorgWarner K16 turbo had been bolted to the ST’s five-cylinder engine, taking top speed to 163mph and reaching 60mph in just 5.7 seconds. Traction was helped by fancy RevoKnuckle front suspension and a return

to the ATB limited-slip differential inside its M66 gearbox; as before, the Focus RS set new benchmarks for front-wheel-drive handling, and drew a new generation of fans to worship at the Rallye Sport altar.

Recaro bucket seats and an RS steering wheel lifted the cabin above ST trim, while options included part-leather upholstery, Luxury Pack 1 (climate control and key-free entry), and Lux Pack 2 (touch-screen sat nav). Three body colours were offered: Frozen White, Performance Blue and Ultimate Green.

Again, Ford approved Mountune upgrades, but this time included the 345bhp MP350 conversion as standard on the factory-built Focus RS500. Available from April 2010, the RS500 was coated in a satin-black 3M wrap over Panther Black paintwork, complete with matching black wheels. Sat nav and red leather seats were optional (in Europe), and there was a numbered plaque on the dashboard: just 101 of the limited-run of 500 were sold in the UK.

RS production ceased in September 2010, and the mainstream Mk2 Focus was killed off in 2011, by which time 22,361 STs had reached our shores, and 11,500 examples of the RS had left the Saarlouis assembly lines. →

RS MK2

MADE 2009 to 2010

POWER 301bhp @ 6500rpm

TORQUE 325lb.ft @ 2300-4500rpm

0-60MPH 5.9 seconds

TOP SPEED 163mph

Wide arches, wild wings and big rims brought the RS badge back to life



THIRD GENERATION

It took until June the following year for a high-performance Mk3 to arrive, when the ST was offered to 40 markets around the world. Faster and more economical than its predecessor, the ST250 (named after its 250PS/247bhp output) had reverted to a four-cylinder engine – now the 1999cc EcoBoost, with BorgWarner K03 turbo. Maximum speed was 154mph, 60mph was reached in 6.2 seconds, and it could easily keep pace with the outgoing RS.

The ST boasted six-speed manual gearbox, uprated suspension, 320mm front brakes and sharpened steering, but in enthusiasts' minds it lacked its predecessor's character: there was no limited-slip differential, no five-cylinder soundtrack and no three-door option.

Still, at least the five-door hatch was now joined by a sublime estate. Both types featured a stylish bodykit and 18in alloys, and both were offered in three trim levels: the ST-1 included Recaro front seats and air conditioning, the ST-2 added coloured panels on cloth-covered seats,

climate control and heated windscreen, while the ST-3 topped the lot with black leather seats, Recaro rear bench, keyless entry and xenon headlamps. A selection of popular options included the Style Pack (Rado Grey wheels and red brake callipers) and a trendy new colour: Tangerine Scream.

ST production was paused in mid-2014 until a facelifted version arrived the following year, when it was reintroduced as a choice of the previous EcoBoost or oil-burning ST TDCi. Criticisms of the ST's torque-steer were addressed with revised suspension and recalibrated steering, while there was sharper-looking front end styling and softer-styled dashboard. Options now included 19in rims and

335mm front brakes.

The derv-powered ST TDCi was Ford's first diesel hot hatchback, offering most of the regular model's benefits – including the taut chassis and Recaro-trimmed cabin – but with 67mpg potential. Yes, the performance deficit was substantial – down to 183bhp, the 135mph top end and 0-to-60mph time of 8.1 seconds appeared lethargic – but reviewers reckoned it was barely noticeable for day-to-day driving.

Besides, at least it was a proper ST – unlike the ST-Line revealed in June 2016. Pretty much a repackaged Zetec S, the Focus ST-Line was offered as a 1.0-litre (123 or 138bhp) or 1.5-litre (148 or 178bhp) EcoBoost petrol, or 1.5-litre (118bhp) or 2.0-litre (148bhp) TDCi.

“NOW THE 1999CC ECOBOOST, WITH BORGWARNER K03 TURBO. MAXIMUM SPEED WAS 154MPH, 60MPH WAS REACHED IN 6.2 SECONDS, AND IT COULD EASILY KEEP PACE WITH THE OUTGOING RS”

Facelifted Focus Mk3 ST – all the car you really need



Tangerine Scream keeps the fast Focus theme

Oil-burning ST TDCi was Ford's first diesel-powered hot hatch



Mk3 RS took the fast Focus into super-hatch territory



All-wheel drive gave RS insane levels of grip



Drift mode could see this RS in loads of fun – or just the Armco

All were available as hatchback or estate, and automatic transmission was optional. Standard kit included ST bodykit, 17in alloys, sports seats and ST-Line badging.

In stark contrast was the greatest Focus to date, and arguably Ford's best-ever all-rounder: unveiled at 2015 Frankfurt Motor Show was the Mk3 RS, the most hotly-anticipated machine in fast Ford history.

GAME CHANGER

And it was well worth the wait. Boasting a

2.3-litre EcoBoost four-cylinder engine with twin-scroll turbo, the RS produced 345bhp, hitting 165mph and 0-to-60mph in 4.5 seconds.

Answering Rallye Sport fans' continual calls for four-wheel drive, it featured an advanced new system with electronic clutch packs, which allowed 70 per cent of the torque to be taken to the rear axle; four different driving modes allowed the driver to choose between Normal, Sport, Track or Drift settings.

In five-door form only, the RS came with Brembo 350mm brakes, 19in wheels, deeper

spoilers, rear wing, Recaro seats and an options list including Luxury Pack, forged rims and shell seats. Colour choice included Frozen White, Stealth Grey, Magnetic, Shadow Black or unique Nitrous Blue.

September 2017 saw the RS Edition released, adding a Quaife limited-slip front differential to the standard spec, along with Nitrous Blue paintwork, matt-black roof and carbon fibre cabin goodies. A similar Race Red RS Edition was announced for Christmas; 300 examples were built between February and March 2018. →

ST250

MADE 2012 to 2018

POWER 247bhp @ 5500rpm

TORQUE 250lb.ft @ 1750rpm

0-60MPH 6.7 seconds

TOP SPEED 154mph

ST TDCi

MADE 2015 to 2018

POWER 183bhp @ 3500rpm

TORQUE 295lb.ft @ 2000-2750rpm

0-60MPH 8.1 seconds

TOP SPEED 135mph

RS MK3

MADE 2016-2018

POWER 345bhp @ 6000rpm

TORQUE 347lb.ft @ 2000-4500rpm

0-60MPH 4.5 seconds

TOP SPEED 165mph

Ending production on 6 April 2018, the RS went out with a blast: 50 Heritage Editions were assembled, painted Deep Orange and including LSD and mountune FPM375 (370bhp) performance upgrade.

NEXT GENERATION

But that's not the end of the Focus story. Far from it, indeed.

The Mk4 launched in 2018 with an ST-Line and ST-Line X integral to the range of five-door hatchbacks and estates, offering lowered suspension and 17/18in alloys as standard. With powerplants including a 123bhp three-cylinder EcoBoost and a 179bhp 1.5-litre, performance was lively – if not the full-fat ST experience.

For that we needed to wait until July 2019; the ST retained its predecessor's four-cylinder EcoBoost but increased the capacity to match the outgoing RS – 2261cc. Tamed to a mere 280PS (276bhp), the ST's engine featured a twin-scroll turbo, meaning rapid response and impressive acceleration – now hitting 62mph in 5.7 seconds,

aided by an electronic limited-slip differential inside its six-speed manual gearbox. Three selectable drive modes were Normal, Slippery and Sport.

Like the Mk3, the Mk4 ST was available in five-door hatchback or estate bodystyles, but now with only one highly-specced trim level, including 19in alloys, bodykit and part-leather Recaro seats. Panoramic roof and Blind Spot Information System were popular extras. Hatchbacks were also offered an optional Performance Pack, with continuously-controlled damping, launch control, shift indicator,

ambient lighting and Track mode; press-fleet wagons received this option, but customer cars were denied.

A seven-speed automatic gearbox option was added to the ST for 2021, which reduced driver appeal and torque (down to 306lb.ft from 310lb.ft), adding 0.3 seconds to the 0-to-62mph sprint.

A hatch-only ST Edition was launched in August 2021, in RS-esque Azura Blue paintwork, just before Ford unveiled the facelifted version (dubbed Mk4.5 by fans) with updated tech and redesigned front end, which is due to hit the streets in 2022. ■

ST MK4

MADE 2019 onwards
POWER 276bhp @ 5500rpm
TORQUE 310lb.ft @ 3000rpm
0-60MPH 5.7 seconds
TOP SPEED 155mph

ST DIESEL MK4

MADE 2019 onwards
POWER 187bhp @ 3500rpm
TORQUE 295lb.ft @ 2000rpm
0-60MPH 7.6 seconds
TOP SPEED 137mph



Mk4 ST is arguably the best fast Focus yet



Facelifted Mk4 ST goes Mean Green



OTHER PERFORMANCE-ORIENTATED FOCUS MODELS

While the ST and RS models stole the limelight, there were plenty of more affordable Focuses that offered fast Ford fun on a sensible budget.

MK1

- Focus Black – 2001-02 1.6 (99bhp)
- Focus Zetec – 1998-2003 1.6 (99bhp), 1.8 (113bhp), 1.8 TDdi (89bhp), 1.8TDCi (99bhp or 113bhp) or 2.0 (128bhp)
- Focus Silver – 2001 1.6 (99bhp) Zetec-based edition
- Focus Chic – 2002 1.6 (99bhp) Zetec-based edition
- Focus Flight – 2002 1.6 (99bhp) Zetec-based edition
- Focus ELLE – 2002 1.6 (99bhp) Zetec-based edition
- Focus Ebony – 2003 1.6 (99bhp) Zetec-based edition
- Focus Ink – 2003 1.6 (99bhp) Zetec-based edition
- Focus Edge – 2003 1.6 (99bhp) or 2004 1.8 (113bhp) Zetec-based edition
- Focus MP3 – 2002 1.8 (113bhp) Zetec-based edition
- Focus Zetec Collection – 2000-01 1.8 (113bhp) with RS body styling and 15in alloys
- Focus Sport – 2003 edition based on Zetec 1.8TDCi (113bhp) with ST170 fog lamps and 17in alloys

MK2

- Focus Sport – 2004-07 1.4 (79bhp), 1.6 (99bhp or 113bhp), 1.6 TDCi (89bhp or 106bhp) or 1.8 TDCi (113bhp)
- Focus Zetec S – 2004-11 1.6 (113bhp), 1.8 (123bhp) or 2.0 (143bhp)
- Focus Zetec S TDCi – 2008-11 1.8 TDCi (113bhp) or 2.0 TDCi (134bhp)
- Focus 125 Sport – 2006-07 1.8 (123bhp)
- Focus 125 Sport S – 2006-07 1.8 (123bhp) or 1.8 TDCi (113bhp)

MK3

- Zetec S – 2011-on 1.0 (123bhp), 1.5 (147bhp), 1.6 (125bhp or 179bhp), 1.5 TDCi (118bhp) or 1.6 TDCi (113bhp)

MK4

- ST-Line – 2018-on 1.0 (123bhp), 1.5 (147bhp), 1.5 EcoBlue (118bhp), 2.0 EcoBlue (147bhp)



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MIGHTY WHITE

Tougher than an RS and stanced to perfection, Greig Traynor's Mk1 Focus packs 300bhp of supercharged strength

Words **DAN WILLIAMSON** / Photos **ADE BRANNAN**



Funny, isn't it, how followers of every fad and fashion think they're the first to come up with their wacky new ideas.

Cast your mind back a couple of years, for example, to when British buyers began their strange fascination with overpriced, underpowered German cars. Before long, a few simple truths had come to light: a pseudo-posh badge appeals to all the neighbours, as does a set of oversized wheels attached to an oil-burning, understeering, unreliable box of blandness.

Most noticeable of all, though, was a fixation with an amazing new colour scheme, seemingly never before considered by us unimaginative

Brits buying traditional motors: fresh-and-funky Finance White.

That's right: the shade that for five decades has been the default option for fast Fords. The Lotus Cortina. The RS1800. The Series One RS Turbo. The motorsport-spec Escort Cosworth. If it's not white, it's not right.

Which is exactly the philosophy of Focus owner Greig Traynor, who's not only addicted to everything Blue Oval, but likes to ensure each machine is mighty white and modified to the absolute maximum.

Okay, we're not talking in quite the same terms as DJ Chris Evans's monochrome Ferrari collection, but Greig's list of icy Fords is

impressive nonetheless.

He's had a Fiesta RS Turbo running a 1.8 ZVH, decked on Escort Cosworth wheels and resplendent in white paint. There was his RS2000-fronted Mk5 Escort with a Fiesta RS Turbo engine; that was white too. His *Fast Ford*-featured, 2.1 ZVH-powered Series Two Escort RS Turbo boasted full leather interior and Series One wheelarches, along with pearly white bodywork. And his current Sapphire Cosworth (packing 400bhp) was factory-finished in Diamond White. Naturally.

Yes, he's owned some less noteworthy machines, but the real quandary came along in the form of a Mk1 Focus RS. Greig added his



own touches – including coilovers, four-branch manifold, black alloys and ST170 headlights – but that car was always going to stay blue.

The brighter, whiter solution was something essentially similar, yet in many ways even better – a fat, forced-induction Focus with more attitude, more power, and much more scope to make it his own.

This supercharged Mk1 was found in Glasgow several years ago, where Greig swiftly exchanged a two-door Impreza Type R he'd blown up while doing donuts; the Subaru had been repaired, only to break again 22 miles down the road. The bills were getting pricey, so a swap back to Fords seemed ideal. And, besides,

Greig reckoned he could get a Focus looking great within no time at all...

He remembers, "It was silver, with a DIY-looking paint job. It had stupid, cheap-'n'-nasty, multi-fit five-spoke wheels, and aftermarket angel-eye headlights that had gone a dull yellow colour. The bodywork brought it down."

Still, the Focus undoubtedly had the makings of something pretty special. Based on a Zetec shell, it already boasted RS panels plus Phoenix Autosport rear arches, which Greig reckons are half-an-inch wider than the real deal.

Best of all, there was magic hiding beneath the bonnet – a Powerworks blower bolted to a trick ST170 motor, installed and set up by sadly-

defunct tuner Torque Of The Devil.

Greig says, "It was built in 2001 for a guy down south. The forged engine was done by CFM Performance (Central Florida Motorsport) in America, which specialises in ST170s."

Alongside his Mk1 RS, Greig was impressed by the car's smooth surge of power, pulling harder than the turbocharged 2.0-litre, if a little less tractable with its Torsen LSD than the Ford factory ATB-equipped car. And although it ran superbly, Greig gradually grew tired of the tatty silver bodywork.

"After six months I hated the looks," he recalls, "so I parked it up for a wee bit."

Greig advertised the Focus for sale, →



White-hot, white-washed, white-knuckle ride

“IT’S UNREAL – IT MAKES YOU DRIVE FAST. THERE’S INSTANT POWER ON THE STRAIGHTS. FROM ZERO IT PULLS ALL THE WAY TO 160MPH... YOU CAN’T HELP BUT GIVE IT A GOOD KICKING”

duly receiving interest from tyre-kickers inviting deals on Clios and Civics. Er, no thanks. Meanwhile, he swapped his RS for his minty Sapphire Cosworth, and quickly discovered the delights of rear-wheel drive. The Focus would remain unloved.

“But it was a lot of money to stay sitting around,” says Greig, “so I decided to change the looks. I started by fitting RS alloys, but a silver car with silver wheels was not what I was looking for.”

He continues, “I saw a few Focus RS Mk1s in white, and the decision was made. It was a toss up between white and VW Nimbus Grey, because I love cleaning cars, and white isn’t as good for showing reflections. But Frozen White was the best choice. It’s gleaming, so I’ll just keep buying the wax.”

A burst of energy saw the Focus resprayed in super-quick time, getting stripped on a Friday,

sprayed on Monday night and completely rebuilt by midweek.

Greig removed the windows, bonnet, doors and tailgate, then his pal, Paul, tackled the paintwork. His mate tinted the glass, then Greig and his friends got the lot back together. All it needed was an MOT and a few odd jobs finishing off, before being ready to hit the road.

Only that didn’t happen. For two years, the Focus remained forgotten and unloved, forced to sit outside Greig’s house while he enjoyed his Cossie instead – which in turn inspired a new direction. To match the Sapphire’s anthracite-coloured alloys, Greig sprayed the five-spoke RS wheels in an Aston Martin dark grey. Then, after switching the Cossie to gold-coloured Compomotives, he trial-fitted them to the Focus.

At last, the look was complete. Spaced to fill the wide wheelarches, the 7.5x18in six-spokes give an incredibly aggro stance to this otherwise

ultra-clean beast. With Greig’s recent additions of genuine RS grille and Pumaspeed splitter, there’s no doubting it packs a hefty punch.

Greig grins, “It’s unreal – it makes you drive fast. There’s instant power on the straights. From zero it pulls all the way to 160mph. In third or fourth – or even sixth – you can put your foot on the accelerator ever so slightly, it spools up and wants to go. You can’t help but give it a good kicking.”

It’s an intoxicating sensation, heightened by a jet-fighter roar on full chat. Greig swapped the previous twin-silencer stainless exhaust for a stock Focus RS single-box system, and reckons the result is louder still.

“The noise is crazy,” he says. “At high revs it sounds like a straight-cut gearbox. Sit and hold it at idle and it’s like anti-lag – bang, bang! It’s brilliant. I love it.”

Despite his talk of selling the car, or even breaking it for parts, Greig has to agree he’s not yet done with exploring the Focus’s potential. He plans to fit an all-black cabin in place of the RS interior, highlighted by a full roll cage in Frozen White and maybe a pair of wrap-around bucket seats.

He’s also intent on taking in some track time to exploit the Mk1’s superb chassis. Kicking

MK1 FOCUS ZETEC

ENGINE Focus ST170 iron block, Eagle conrods, JE pistons, 9:5:1 compression ratio, Ric Wood CNC ported and polished ST170 head, Ford Racing billet oil pump, ARP bolts throughout, complete high-boost Powerworks supercharger kit including intercooler, CFM vernier pulley (exhaust cam), Omex 710 ECU with semi-sequential fuelling setup, 60lb injectors, Focus RS fuel pump and swirl pot, CFM oil separator, Vibra-Technics engine mounts and torque mount, Focus RS exhaust system

POWER 300bhp (owner's estimate)

TRANSMISSION Focus ST170 Getrag six-speed gearbox, Torsen LSD, SPEC solid flywheel, ARP flywheel bolts, SPEC clutch cover plate, custom-made Helix ceramic four-paddle drive plate

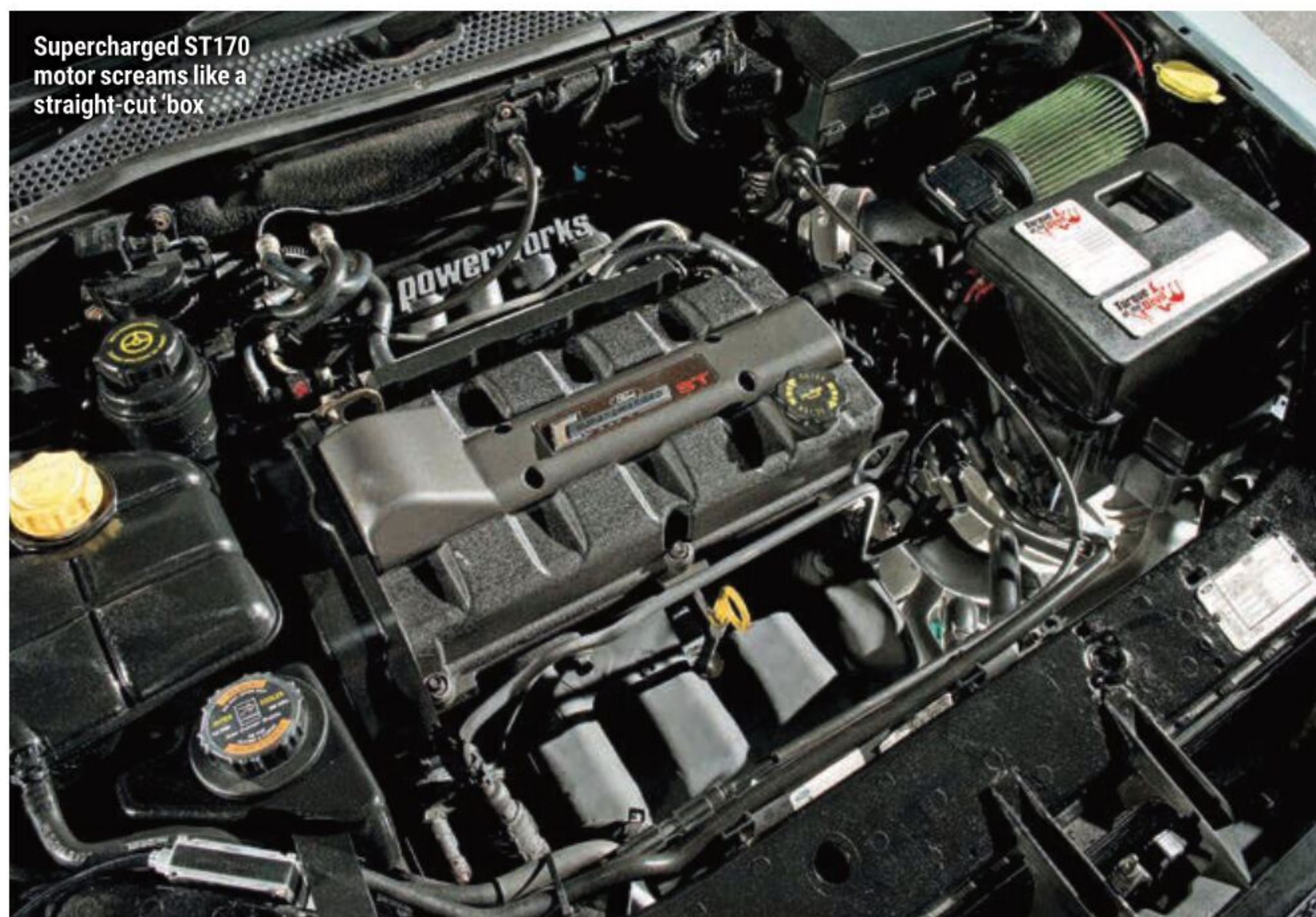
BRAKES Brembo front callipers with 300mm discs

SUSPENSION ST170 AP coilovers

WHEELS AND TYRES Compomotive 7.5x18in six-spokes finished in gold on 225/40x18 tyres or Focus RS 8x18in five-spokes finished in anthracite on 225/40x18 tyres

INTERIOR Genuine Focus RS interior, black harnesses, ST170 gauges plus A-pillar gauges for water, oil temperature and boost (switchable from white to green)

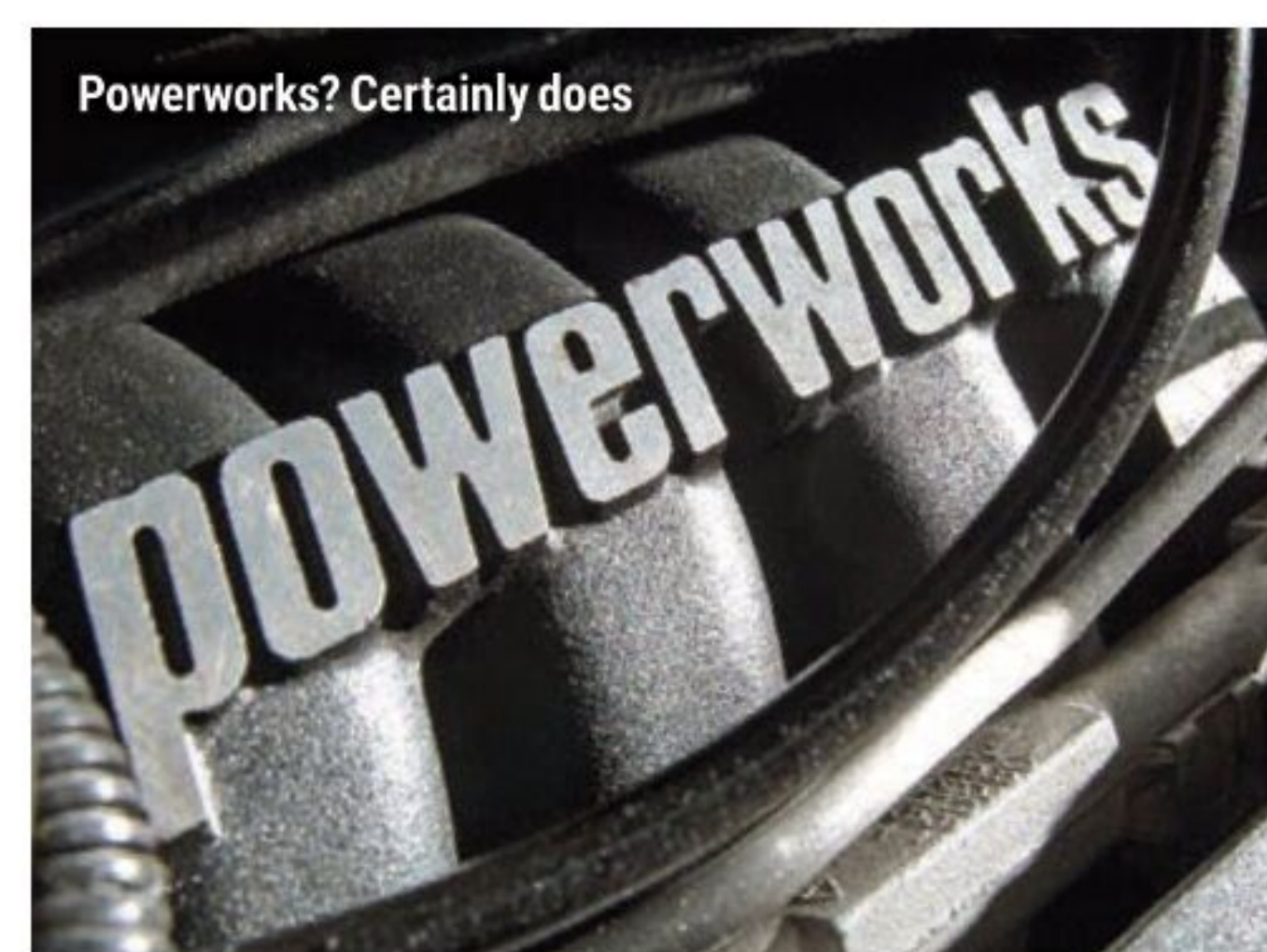
EXTERIOR Focus Zetec three-door bodyshell with genuine Focus RS front bumper, grille, front wings and arch liners, side skirts, rear bumper and tailgate spoiler, Phoenix Autosport rear quarters, Pumaspeed front splitter, full respray in Frozen White



Supercharged ST170 motor screams like a straight-cut 'box



Devilishly good



Powerworks? Certainly does

out around 300bhp, it's well shy of his Stage 4 Cosworth, but there's every chance the front-wheel-drive Ford would lead the way around the Knockhill circuit.

Greig agrees, "The Focus will be great there. Touch wood, I'm not gonna crash. But if I rolled it I'd love to put the engine in a biscuit-tin Mk1 or Mk2 Fiesta."

Whatever he decides, there's no denying Greig's supercharged Focus is a perfect all-round package. It's fast, it's noisy, and it looks simply stunning. It's truly mighty white. ■

THANKS Mate Paul Donnelly for painting the car, Darren and cousin Gav for helping out – cheers, lads!



Seats and steering wheel are from Mk1 Focus RS

Magnum Grey ST170 – subtle, maybe, but a hoot to drive



BUYING TIPS

MK1 FOCUS ST170 & RS

From £500 to £30,000-plus, you can spend as much or as little as you want on a fast first-generation Focus, but here's what to look out for regardless of budget...

Words **DAN WILLIAMSON & JAMIE KING** / Photos **FAST FORD ARCHIVES**

WHY YOU WANT ONE...

- So much fun for not much cash. If you enjoy making maximum use of every single engine rev in every gear, you'll find the ST170's sublime handling incredibly addictive.
- Few cars have the heritage of a Mk1 RS – designed to celebrate Ford's WRC success, and tested by rally heroes Colin McRae and Carlos Sainz.
- The perfect everyday investment – its value will rise even while miles are piled on, and you won't spend your journeys to shows waiting for it to break down.
- Few cars are more practical than a Focus, and the sporting edge of the ST170 and RS doesn't detract from that usability – in the ST's case being offered as three/five-door hatchback or spacious estate.
- A real driver's car, it's a hardcore warrior that's happy on road or racetrack – and its legendary handling lets it run rings around much more powerful modern machines.

WHY YOU DON'T...

- Rust is a real problem for the Mk1 Focus, and the RS's unique panels make restoration costs impressively pricey.
- Too modern and shouty to be considered a classic, yet for many buyers the RS is considered too precious to be an everyday driver – despite great practicality.
- By fast Ford standards, the ST170 isn't particularly quick, and it doesn't look sporty, with even a rear spoiler on the options list. A head-turning Electric Orange ST it ain't.
- You'll soon become so acquainted with dashboard warning lights and diagnostic trouble codes that you'll always carry a roll of black electrical tape to stick over the dials – especially on an ST170.

HOW MUCH TO PAY

£500 TO £1000

An ST170 for breaking can fetch £700, although many will still have some MOT and their fair share of rust. A decent car with slipping clutch should also be low-priced.

£1000 TO £2000

ST170 middle ground is packed with cars whose owners are having to guess what they're worth, so you might find an option-packed minter, or you could get a scrapper that barely scraped through its last MOT.

£2000 TO £5000

Standard, low-mileage ST170s are in demand, and you'll be able to choose the right colour and spec. A Custom Pack and/or Comfort Pack is preferable unless the car's a proper concours-spec example, worth up to £5000. Most ropey RS Mk1s have been stripped and scrapped or restored, but breakers in bits could dip down to £5k.

£8000 TO £14,000

For an entry-level RS you'll need double the ST170 budget. A running car needing work will be £10k, and tatty/high-mileage examples with MOT will top this bracket.

£14,000 TO £20,000

The bulk of RS Mk1s hover here, with price reflecting mileage and condition. Beware of rotters masquerading as minters. Bear in mind repaired write-offs are worth a third less.

£20,000 TO £30,000-PLUS

Here you'll want a standard RS with excellent bodywork and less than 40,000 miles. Thirty big ones will bag a sub-15,000-miler, while a 335-mile RS recently sold at Silverstone Auctions for £77,063.

ST170's Duratec ST was actually a Zetec tweaked by Cosworth



ST170 Custom Pack came with leather Recaros

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO INSURE?

The ST170 is in lofty insurance group 31, although some online comparison sites see it as just a 2.0-litre Focus, which isn't too pricey. But shop around specialist brokers, and you may find a future-classic policy, complete with sensible premium and the option of agreed-value or limited-mileage discounts.

The RS isn't much higher; insurance group 34 means cover is affordable, but the RS badge and limited parts availability means most mainstream insurers won't do you any favours – whether on your premium or in the event of a claim. It's far better to seek a specialist broker for an agreed-value/limited-mileage policy with added track-day cover.

WHERE DO I FIND ONE?

Most ST170s are in the hands of private punters, so scour the depths of eBay and Facebook groups for a suitable candidate. Some specialist dealers have cottoned on to the ST170's future-classic status, so if you want a low-mileage minter, check out ads on Auto Trader or classic-car auctions.

If you're in the market for an RS, begin by contacting the Mk1 Focus RS Owners' Club, where members almost certainly know of any suitable cars for sale; every Focus RS was uniquely numbered, and the online FRS Build List will include useful history of your prospective purchase. Classic and/or online auctions are a good source for the RS Mk1, as are specialist car dealers – especially for a concours example.



TIMELINE

MARCH 1998

Ford Focus launched at the Geneva motor show as an Escort replacement, featuring all-new platform, bold New Edge styling, ergonomic cabin and Control Blade rear suspension.

OCTOBER 1998

Ford Focus introduced into the UK. Range of engines includes Zetec petrol units in 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 and 2.0 capacities. Handling is highly praised, despite no sporting Focus being offered.

OCTOBER 2001

Facelifted Focus appears, commonly referred to as Mk1.5, with mildly revised styling, new headlamps and trim options.

11 FEBRUARY 2002

ST170 – internally codenamed Piranha – production begins at Saarlouis, Germany as three-door or five-door hatchback.

MARCH 2002

ST170 launched in UK with 2.0-litre Duratec ST engine, six-speed manual gearbox, uprated suspension and brakes, 7x17in alloy wheels and half-leather sports seats. Optional extras include sunroof, ESP stability control, Custom Pack (including metallic paintwork, heated Recaro front seats, leather upholstery, and upgraded sound system) and Comfort Pack (including climate control, heated windscreen and xenon headlamps).

AUGUST 2002

ST170 five-door estate introduced. Optional extras as hatchback but Custom Pack not available.

4 SEPTEMBER 2002

Focus RS production begins at Saarlouis, Germany, based on regular Focus three-door but with 521 unique WRC-inspired components. Specification includes turbocharged 2.0-litre Zetec E engine (badged Duratec RS), MTX75 gearbox with Quaife ATB differential, uprated suspension, Brembo brakes, 18in OZ alloys, wide wheelarches, bodykit, Imperial Blue paintwork, black/blue Sparco-badged seats and steering wheel, plus individually-numbered plaque.

OCTOBER 2002

Focus RS introduced in UK. No optional extras are offered.

JULY 2003

ST170's 228mm clutch replaced with 240mm version.

MID-2003

RS revisions introduced gradually, including pink grommet on the throttle cable, 'engine start' stamped around the starter button, extra stitching on front seat bases, and AF instead of AE engine management software. Such cars are colloquially known as phase twos.

11 DECEMBER 2003

RS production ends, after 4501 built (2147 supplied to the UK).

9 MAY 2005

ST170 production ends, after 13,443 UK sales.

KEY POINTS

IDENTITY

Beware of fakes and ringers. Not so much of an issue with the ST170, but before buying any RS be sure to contact the Mk1 Focus RS Owners' Club and cross-check the car's serial number with the online FRS Build List.

BODY

Rust is a Mk1 Focus-killer. Check the sills (inner and outer), front wings, wheelarches and tailgate for corrosion. Pay special attention to the inner wings and wheelarches. RS wings, rear quarters and front bumpers are rare and reassuringly expensive, but rust just as easily as the ST170's regular Focus panels.

ENGINE

The ST170's naturally-aspirated Zetec is prone to niggles more than major issues, so expect to find flat-spots and a dodgy IMRC, but walk away from blue smoke from the exhaust or knocking crank bearings.

The turbocharged RS is tough but not invincible, so look for oil leaks around the turbo and breathers and beware of blue smoke from the exhaust. Early cars had AE-type software on the EEC-V engine management, which suffered cold-start problems, whereas the later AF map tends to misfire at 5000rpm.

TRANSMISSION

Clutch slip can be a death sentence for an ST170 – the price of getting a garage to change a clutch and flywheel can easily outweigh the cost of the whole car.

The RS's MTX75 already has shot-peened gears and a Quaife ATB as standard, so should be trouble-free. The stock clutch can even handle 300bhp.

SUSPENSION AND BRAKES

Knocking noises from the front will probably be broken coil springs, anti-roll bar drop links or bottom ball joints. Factory-fitted bushes are particularly prone to failing, resulting in clonking on rough roads. Don't be tempted by track-focussed coilovers for a road car, as it can ruin the handling finesse.

The ST170's large 300mm front discs and 280mm rears are robust but don't like cheap pads, whereas the RS's 324mm front discs with Brembo callipers have a habit of suffering with age and tend to squeak. Rear discs and callipers start seizing on the handbrake mechanism if left, but reconditioned replacements are available.

ELECTRICS

Flickering dials are common in most Mk1s, and an engine-management light is almost obligatory in ST170s. But beware dashboard warning lights and iffy headlamps. Minor electrical issues such as central locking and electric window motors are shared with all Mk1s, so no big deal. The rear windscreen wiper may be faulty, generally due to wiring or relay problems. The six-disc CD head unit is notoriously fickle, and prone to draining the car's battery.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO RUN?

The RS is remarkably frugal if you take it easy, and components shared with the regular Focus cost peanuts. But drive hard or need RS-specific parts, and your bank balance will begin to hurt.

In contrast, the ST170 sips fuel a little too fast for the performance on offer, and the ever-present in-car entertainment of dashboard disco lights means you'll often be chasing IMRC/lambda/cat issues. On the plus side, there are still loads of ST170s being broken, so second-hand spares are cheap and plentiful.

FOCUS ST170

ENGINE 1988cc in-line four-cylinder, 16-valve, DOHC, belt-driven Zetec (referred to as Duratec ST), cast iron block, uprated conrods, high-compression pistons (10.2:1 compression ratio), alloy cylinder head, enlarged inlet valves, uprated valve springs, high-lift intake and exhaust cams, variable inlet valve timing and variable-length inlet tracts, Ford EEC-V engine management system, four-into-two-into one exhaust manifold and large-bore (65mm) stainless steel system

TRANSMISSION Front-wheel drive with Getrag MT285 six-speed close-ratio manual gearbox, 228mm hydraulic clutch (until July 2003; 240mm thereafter), dual-mass flywheel

SUSPENSION Front: MacPherson strut suspension with lowered/uprated coil springs, uprated dampers, lower A-arms mounted on separate front subframe with double horizontal bushings, 21mm anti-roll bar; rear: Control Blade multi-link suspension with vertical dampers, lowered/uprated coil springs, uprated dampers, 21mm anti-roll bar and urethane drop-links; revised power steering pump and rack

BRAKES Front: 300mm ventilated discs; rear: 280mm solid discs; ABS, traction control and optional ESP

WHEELS & TYRES 7x17in 15-spoke alloy wheels and 215/45x17 tyres

EXTERIOR Focus three- or five-door hatchback or five-door estate with body-coloured bumpers and bodyside mouldings, honeycomb grille and front fog lamps, tinted headlamps (except Comfort Pack with xenon headlamps). Optional rear spoiler, electric sunroof and rear parking sensors. Colours (metallic paint standard on Custom Pack): Moondust Silver, Panther Black, Magnum Grey, Imperial Blue, Capri Blue, Blue Print or Deep Navy

INTERIOR Sports front seats with part-leather trim (Blue Waffle cloth/Midnight Black leather), leather-rimmed steering wheel, aluminium pedal covers, bright scuff plates with ST logo, unique instruments with silver-faced electro-luminescent dials, air conditioning, 6006N head unit with six-disc in-dash autochanger. Optional Comfort Pack (including climate control, heated windscreen and xenon headlamps) and Custom Pack (including heated Recaro front seats, Midnight Black leather upholstery, 9006 head unit with six-disc changer and luggage-compartment sub-woofer)



RS Mk1's aggressive stance was aided by wide arches and 18in rims

SHOULD I MODIFY IT?

Perhaps a little. ST170s sound meatier with an induction kit, and handle better with good-quality refreshed suspension. And although the RS drives superbly as standard, it really comes alive with a Stage 1 remap, while a few Ghia/ST170 gadgets add a little luxury to the cabin.

WILL VALUES RISE OR FALL?

Experts have long been tipping the ST170 as a wise investment, and values are already on the up. As more of the rough examples get scrapped, it won't be too long before the price of an ST170 is double what it was a year ago.

The RS Mk1 was one of the first fast Fords bought by investors in large numbers, so low-mileage museum pieces may well plateau when every collector owns one...



Black and blue can't be beaten



FOCUS RS MK1

ENGINE 1988cc four-cylinder 16V DOHC Duratec RS with forged pistons and connecting rods, 8:1 compression ratio, uprated oil system with oil-spray nozzles and oil cooler, modified valve seats, sodium-filled exhaust valves, uprated valve springs, Garrett GT2560LS water-cooled turbocharger, 1.2 bar maximum boost, redesigned throttle body and induction system, water-cooled intercooler, high-capacity water pump, uprated cooling fans, Ford EEC-V engine management, high-flow injectors, uprated fuel pump and fuel pressure regulator, recirculating dump valve, large-bore exhaust system

TRANSMISSION Uprated MTX75 five-speed gearbox with revised ratios, Quaife Automatic Torque-Biasing differential, uprated driveshafts, AP Racing uprated clutch, Sparco aluminium gear selector with quickshift

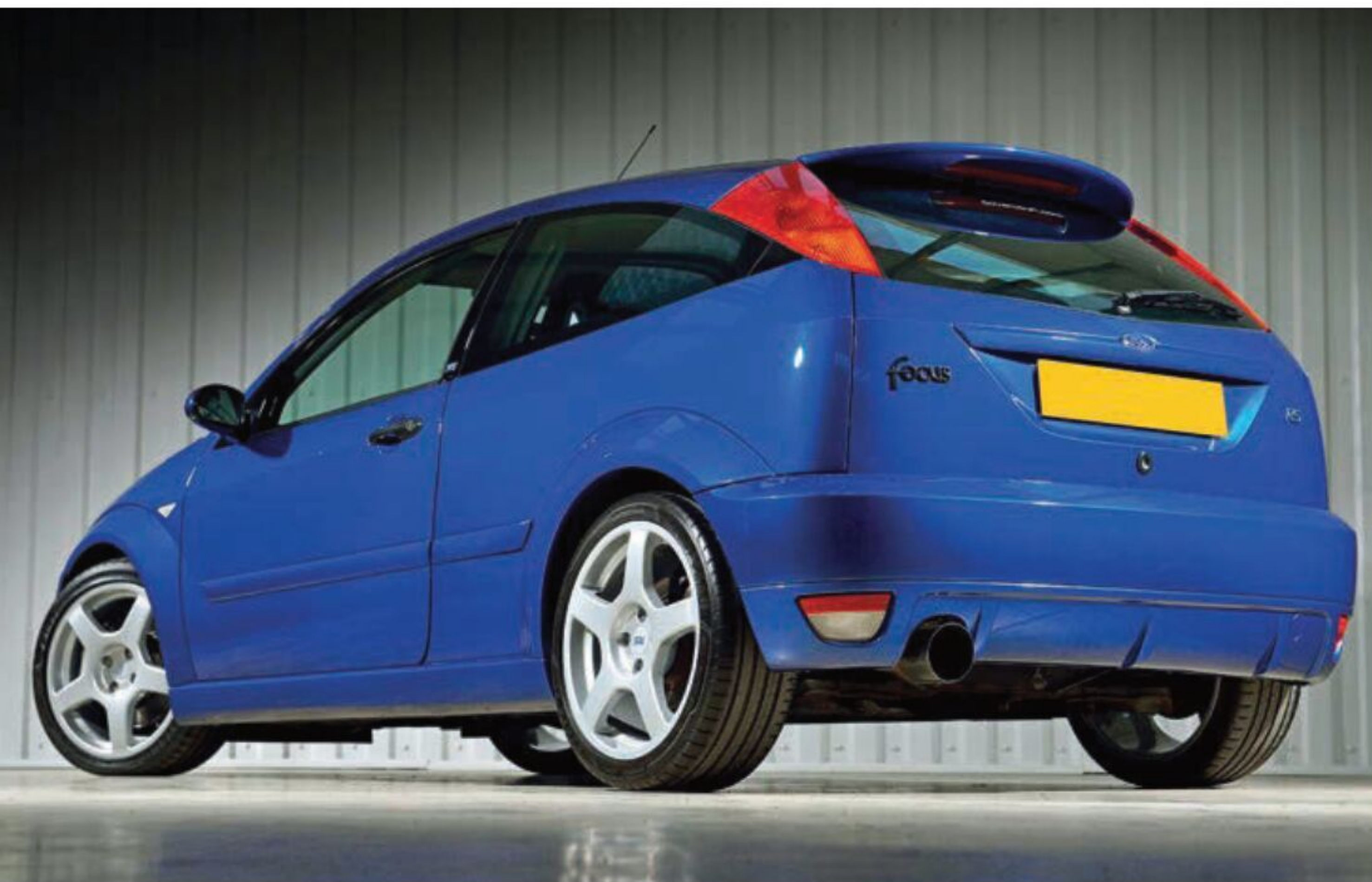
SUSPENSION Front: MacPherson struts with uprated, 25mm-lowered coil springs and Sachs dampers, 65mm increased track, uprated lower A-arms with unique hydro bush, revised negative camber, 18mm anti-roll bar, enlarged hubs, revised steering mount bushings; rear: stiffened rear multi-link suspension with Sachs dampers, increased track, uprated bearings, revised negative camber and anti-roll bar

BRAKES Front: Brembo four-pot callipers and 324mm ventilated discs; rear: solid 280mm discs; custom-configured Bosch ABS

WHEELS & TYRES OZ 8x18in alloy wheels with 225/40x18 Michelin Pilot Sport tyres

EXTERIOR Focus three-door bodyshell with wider front wings and rear quarters in pressed steel, polypropylene RS front and rear bumpers, side skirts and roof spoiler, unique headlamps, Hella front fog lamps, Imperial Blue metallic paintwork

INTERIOR Ford/Sparco-badged leather-and-Alcantara-trimmed seats in black and blue, rear bench trimmed to match, black and blue four-spoke leather steering wheel with oversteer indicator, Sparco aluminium handbrake handle, gearknob and pedals, carbon-fibre centre console with starter button, blue instruments with boost gauge and change light, centre-console-mounted plaque with build number, stainless RS scuff plates, RS front mats, air conditioning, six-disc in-dash CD player



TUNING THE MK1 FOCUS RS

The Mk1 RS boasts a formidable spec list of performance upgrades from the factory, but it can be improved... And here are our suggestions

Words JAMIE KING / Photos FAST FORD ARCHIVE



STYLING

The message here is simple – leave it alone. The RS already has its own distinct styling and doesn't need messing with. If you feel compelled to alter the styling, then keep it minimal. Subtle touches like a carbon-fibre front splitter, ST170 headlights, or different front grille look a million times better than garish bodykits.



SUSPENSION

Like all Focus models the RS handles really well in factory trim. If you use the car daily or mainly drive on the UK's rubbish roads, there is no point in changing the standard Sachs dampers, as they're perfect for the RS – although you might want to uprate the springs. H&R's offerings seem to be the most popular route as they lower the car about an inch and are the perfect compromise between fast-road and occasional track use.

If you do opt for a set of lowering springs it's worth looking at camber adjustment too. Lowering the car will affect the camber of all four wheels, and in an FWD car with as much power as the RS, excessive negative camber can cause all sorts of traction problems. Front and rear camber adjustment kits allow you to set the camber at the correct angle.

A set of polyurethane bushes provides a wise investment – especially the rear trailing arm bushes, which the RS has a habit of chewing up.



BRAKES

Massive 320mm discs and Brembo four-pot callipers up front do an excellent job of stopping all but the fastest of Mk1 RSs, especially when coupled with a performance-spec pad and disc combo – of which there are plenty to choose from. Add some decent fluid and a set of braided hoses for improved pedal feel, and that's as much as most people will ever need.

Of course, bigger options are available for track weapons or just for the show pose factor; big brake kits start at around 330mm but you can squeeze 360mm discs under the factory wheels; anything larger will require different alloys, and usually means having to run 19s.

ENGINE

The 2.0-litre Zetec turbo engine in the Mk1 RS is capable of so much more than the stock 212bhp. In fact, a decent performance remap not only increases power and torque outputs, it sharpens the throttle response, delivers a crisper driving experience, and gets rid of some of the known software niggles within the factory ECU settings. A Stage 1 remap should be high on your list of priorities.

Add an uprated actuator and recirc valve, a high-flow panel filter, and maybe a set of uprated spark plugs, and an otherwise stock car will produce around 270bhp and 300lb.ft.

Replacing the restrictive exhaust manifold for a fancy tubular design will help you get over

that 300bhp barrier, but the stock turbo soon runs out of puff and is better swapped for a GT28 (or bigger) with a larger diameter downpipe for anything around 330bhp and above. At the same time you'll want to swap the chargecooler for an aftermarket intercooler.

The original EEC-V engine management can be coaxed to give great results – retain the stock airbox and add an uprated recirc valve (not dump valve) to avoid stuttering and issues with the stock MAF sensor – but for big-power builds over 400bhp, a switch to a standalone engine management system might be wise. This opens up a whole world of possibilities too, and 450-to-500bhp is easily achieved with the right bits.



TRANSMISSION

The RS comes with a super-tough MTX75 gearbox and Quaife ATB front differential as standard, so there's little need to touch anything here if it's all working okay. Even the stock clutch will cope with mild increases up to around 340bhp, but will need uprating for anything approaching 400bhp. A heavy-duty organic replacement is perfect for most uses, but a full-blown paddle clutch can be fitted for track users.



WHEELS AND TYRES

The RS comes with 8x18in rims as standard, so there really isn't need to go any bigger. You can squeeze a set of 19s under the arches without too many problems, depending on what suspension setup you are running, but some owners report detrimental handling as a result.

The original alloys have a 4x108 PCD, which limits choice somewhat. Despite the wider arches, the stock offset is quite high at ET42, again limiting choice – Compomotive MO6 and Team Dynamics Pro Race 1.2s are both available in 8x18in with an ET40, so are among the most popular upgrade choices.





Concours competitions are a huge test: of precision planning, an eagle eye for detail and, most of all, an unwavering dedication to the cause. To place anywhere in an event is a serious achievement, but to win two of the most prestigious Ford concours honours in the same year is truly remarkable.

Well, in 2019 this Mk1 Focus RS did just that – it not only won the Overall Gold Cup two years running (2018 and 2019), it also won the RS Owners' Club National Day car of the show award in 2019.

“Winning National Day is our proudest moment yet,” smiles owner Steve Evans. “It’s a real historic trophy, and usually won by really beautiful older Fords... My wife Kate and I didn’t expect it, and we’re both still on cloud nine.”

As we listen to the couple’s story, we realise they’re being very humble – many years of

blood, sweat and tears built up to these well-deserved wins, and it all started with a Ford Orion... fitted with fish tanks.

Back in the late Nineties, Steve and Kate competed in shows and sound system sound-offs (remember those?) in a silver and blue Ford Orion. In those days, the wilder and crazier a car was, the better, and Steve has always been able to come up with unique ideas to make his cars stand out.

He remembers, “It had a big ICE install, complete with fish tanks. We had great fun in that car, and the silver-and-blue theme lives on with the Focus. But my wild ideas have calmed down a bit nowadays.”

Steve bought the Focus as a present to himself back in 2006, following the sale of his business. He says, “We worked so hard for 12 years building a company up, and wanted something to show for it at the end.”

They had always liked the shape and colour of the Mk1 RS, so the search was on for a minter. But after 12 months of disappointing viewings, he was getting despondent.

“We looked at a few, and even back in 2006 finding a good one was really hard. Eventually I found a 9000-mile example up in Leicester, and we shot up there to take a look.”

Steve was initially sceptical because the seller had only owned it for a month, but further investigation revealed that a club member had owned it previously, so Steve gave him a call.

“It all checked out, thankfully”, he continues, “so we bought it, and simply enjoyed driving it to shows with the only modification then being a Superchips remap”.

Over the next ten years, the car was driven, entered into show-and-shine events, and subtly modified as funds allowed. One early modification was a pair of Sapphire



MIRROR, MIRROR...

...ON THE WALL, IS THIS THE CLEANEST FOCUS OF ALL?

Steve Evans has poured countless hours and endless amounts of dedication into his concours-condition Focus RS – an effort that's been rewarded with a treasure trove of trophies

Words **BEN BIRCH** / Photos **AS DESIGN**

Cosworth bonnet vents, which Steve and his paint man laboured over to make perfect, as surely they were a unique touch.

He recalls, “Our first show with the bonnet vents was West Wales in 2013. I drove in feeling proud, but to my amazement we found another two Focus RSs at the show with the same vents.”

An exhaust and air filter, under-bonnet colour-coding and US-spec rear lights were slowly added to the spec list, but it wasn't until 2016's RSOC show at Castle Combe that things got really serious.

Steve says, “We'd initially entered into the show-and-shine, but at the last minute decided to enter concours for the first time with the car.”

The couple cleaned, polished, dusted and preened, and were feeling happy when Paul Cox judged the car.

Steve continues, “We won first place in the ‘novice – post-'81' class, but when we asked Paul for a candid assessment of what could be improved, it dawned on us just how far behind the curve we actually were.”

The experienced judge pointed out there was

“WE NOT ONLY GOT INSPIRED BY THE LEVELS THEY TOOK THEIR CARS TO BUT WE ALSO HAD A GREAT TIME, SO WE DECIDED TO JOIN THE CONCOURS FAMILY FOR GOOD”

dust in the seatbelt stitching, dust behind the pedals, and water marks in the roof gutters. Far from this putting the couple off, it actually spurred them on.

Steve recalls, “The other concours competitors were so lovely to us that day. Everyone was so helpful and kind and welcoming. We not only got inspired by the levels they took their cars to, we also had a great time, so we decided to join the concours family for good.”

Over the next year, lots of concours events were driven to, and successes enjoyed in novice and intermediate modified classes. But it wasn't all plain sailing, as one day Steve forgot to pack the Hoover hose.

He laughs, “I had to run around the traders' stands, buy a Sierra Cosworth coolant hose for £25, then gaffer tape it to the Hoover. With the time lost, I didn't remove the wheels to clean them, and was marked down to second place because they were still a bit dirty...”

It was a slice of inspiration from another concours car that took the Focus into a new stratosphere of cleanliness.

Steve explains, “We saw Paul Stonebridge's stunning Imperial Blue Escort Cosworth. The painted underside and colour-coding blew us away, and we took the Focus off the road in the winter of 2017 to give it the same treatment.”

The couple had just finished a new garage to house the car, and Steve spent countless hours in his new den stripping the underneath: “I only had two axle stands, so I did the rear first and then the front. It was really hard work.”

Starting with the rear, the subframe, fuel tank, brake lines, discs and suspension came off, and most of it was sent off to the powder-coaters. At the same time, he cleaned and sanded the underside ready for paint – and Steve's elbow grease really paid off.

He says, “The painter came over and used Imperial Blue, then lacquered it and finished it off with GTechniq Crystal Serum ceramic coating. It made a huge difference, and I couldn't wait to start building the car back up again.”

New parts included KW suspension, with Steve getting the springs powder-coated blue to match the subframe. He also bolted a Reyland brake conversion to the front end, had billet



MK1 FOCUS RS

ENGINE Milltek sports cat and exhaust system, K&N Gen 2 induction kit, Superchips Bluefin, Airtec chargecooler radiator, Samco silicone hoses, full split loom change, DPC air ducted slam panel, braided fuel lines, stainless steel underbonnet plates, chargecooler cover/cap, fuse box cover, brake fluid reservoir cover/cap, power steering reservoir cover/cap, screen washer cap/cover, header tank cap/cover, wing top rails, billet strut top covers, full bulkhead cover, cambelt cover, manifold cover, coil pack bracket, polished throttle elbow, engine mount cap, blue motorsport ignition leads, colour-coded chargecooler, battery box, slam panel and rocker cover

POWER 270bhp (owner's estimate)

SUSPENSION KW V1 RS Edition coilovers, Powerflex poly bushes, Hardrace adjustable toe arms, Roadnutz adjustable drop links

BRAKES Reyland two-piece front brake kit, custom billet brake line brackets, HEL braided brake lines

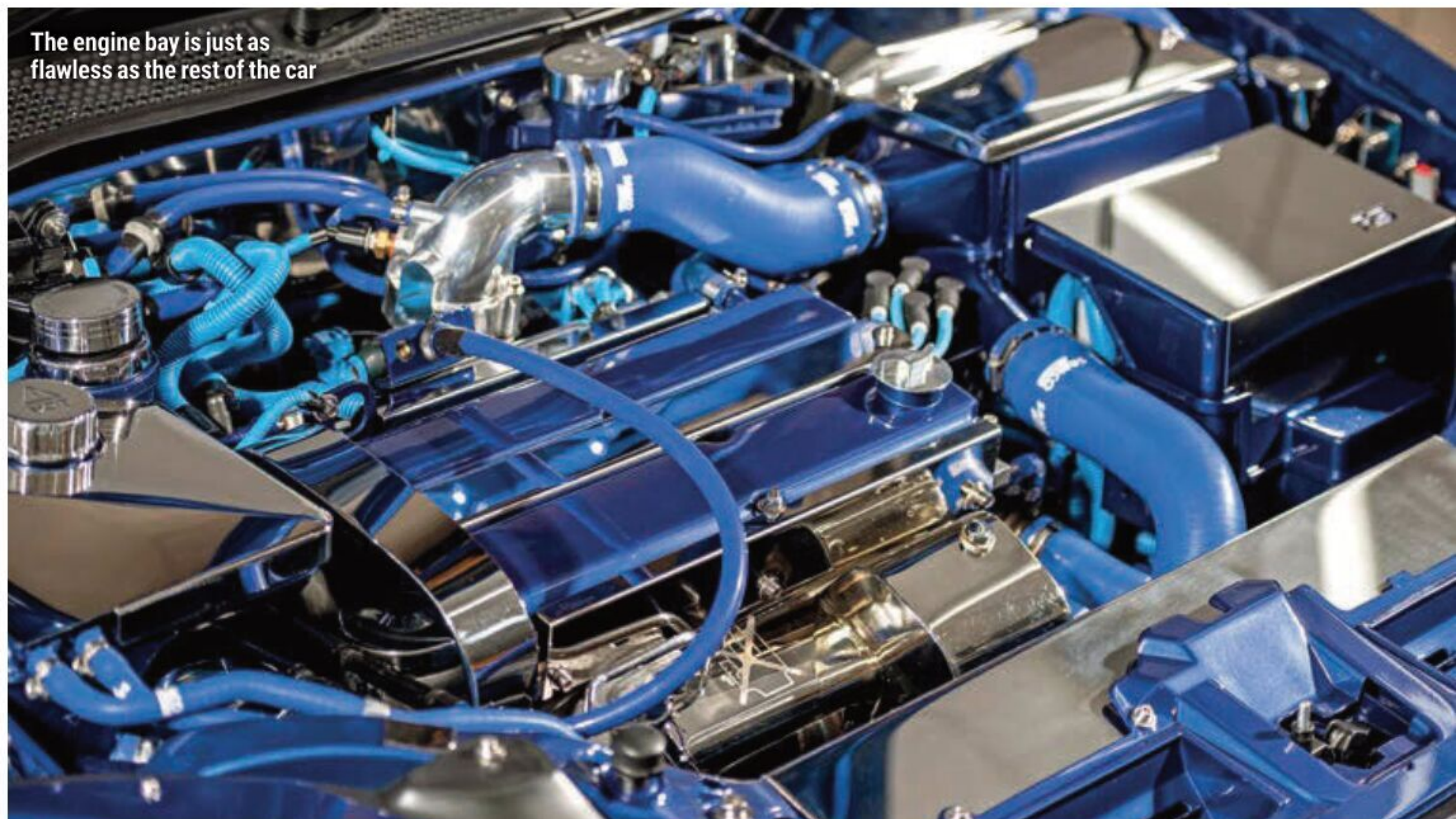
WHEELS AND TYRES 12.5mm rear spacer kit, OZ Racing 8x18in alloys repainted in high bright silver, 225/40R18 Michelin Pilot Sport 3 tyres

EXTERIOR Sapphire Cosworth bonnet vents, colour-coded door handles, bumper vents/grille, Hella twin headlights, US rear lights and rear fog light, smoked front/side indicators, Maxton Design front bumper splitter, side diffusers and rear spoiler lip, underside painted Imperial Blue, two-tone powder-coated front/rear subframes, all nuts and bolts nickel and chrome plated, GTechniq Crystal Serum applied to underside and exterior

INTERIOR Intermittent wiper stalk, Scangauge, RSOC logo Dinamica door pockets, carbon sill protectors



Looking better than new under the lights in a dealer's showroom



The engine bay is just as flawless as the rest of the car

alloy fuel line clamps made by concours friend Mr Cox, and proceeded to send all new nuts and bolts off for nickel-plating followed by chrome plating. The final build-up with all the shiny new components gave the couple a huge buzz.

Steve says, "It was coming together and looking amazing. Kate polished the exhaust system to a mirror finish and we refurbished all the heat shields. Not a stone was left unturned."

But after five months of work, when it was all finished, the couple stood back and realised the gravity of what they'd done. Their first competition was nine hours away in Scotland, and the prospect of having to clean the mint underside regularly between shows, and maybe after rain, led to a big decision.

"We made the leap to enter the expert class, and trailer the car to and from events" explains

Steve, "which means we don't actually get to drive the car at all nowadays."

To some, that may seem extreme but it's one of the sacrifices at this level of competition. But why bother doing all of the modifications if it's all about the condition?

Steve explains, "In the modified classes, each modification is worth an extra point. For example, we were losing points with the Ford headlights as they were worn and you can't buy new from Ford any more. So we bought the twin-headlight conversion – being new, they can't be marked down for bad condition, and being a mod they actually gain us a point."

All this meticulous thinking and prep paid off, with countless prizes in the concours scene. But what about average show-goers?

"Some don't like my style of colour-coding,

or mods like the headlights," admits Steve, "but I have always been a bit unique with my taste. Most people do appreciate it, though, and one of the biggest compliments was when a detailer came over at a show and said he's never seen a car anywhere near as clean as this in his whole career. That was a lovely thing to hear."

So after all of this success and fun with the concours family, what's next for the car?

Steve says, "We've bought a Mk2 Focus RS to get our driving kicks with, and the Mk1 will get different wheels and tyres, a headlining colour change to something dark like the Mk2 Focus RS, and we're going to install a sound system."

Hang on. A sound-system? Does that mean Steve and Kate will be diving back in to aquatic boot builds?

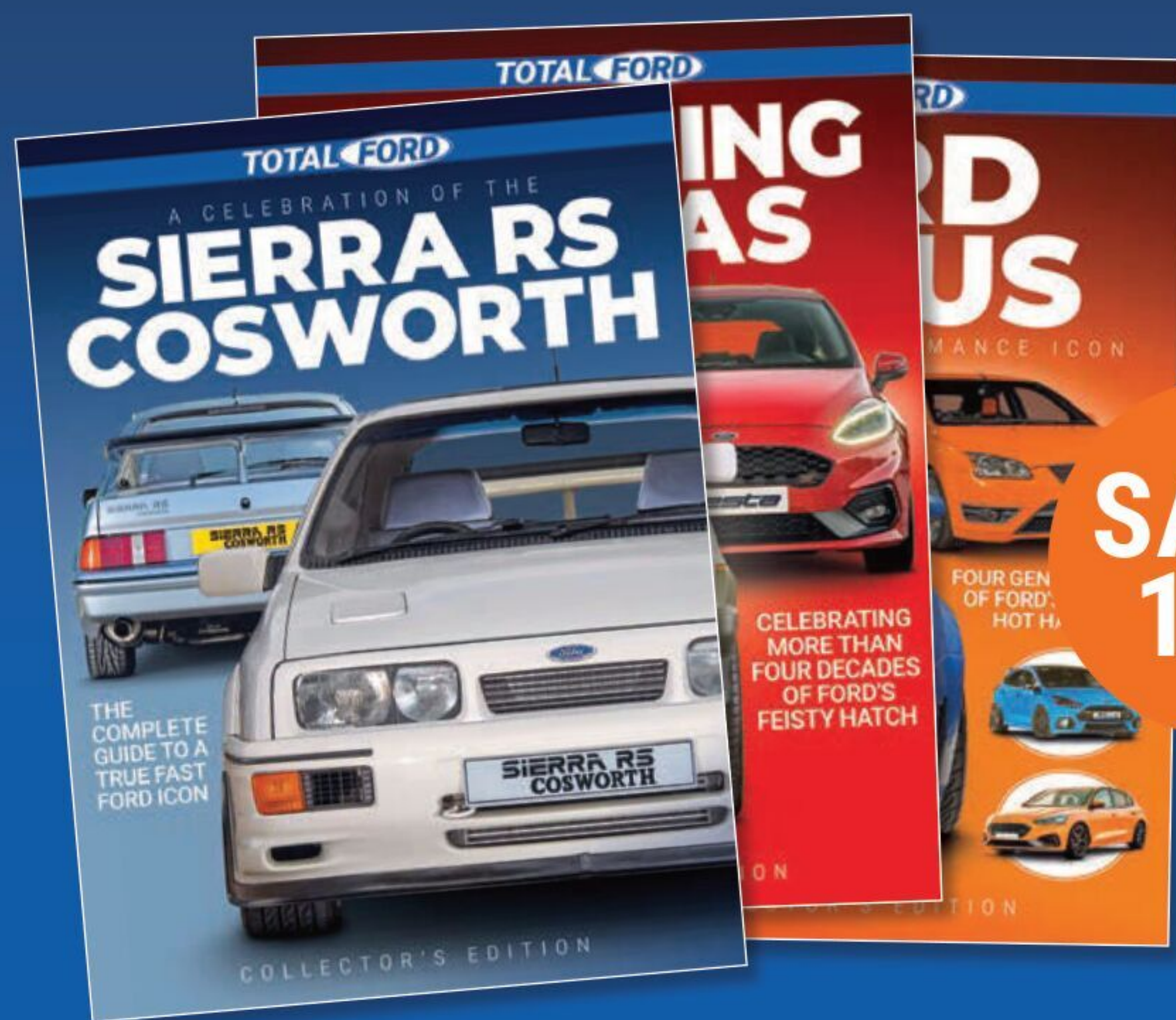
"No tanks or fish," says Steve, "I promise." ■

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THE HISTORY OF THE FOCUS ST

Combining thrilling performance with everyday usability, the ST brand found the ideal home with the Focus, and the ever-impressive Focus ST still dominates the fast Ford scene today

Words DAN WILLIAMSON & JAMIE KING / Photos FORD UK & FAST FORD ARCHIVES

When the Focus was first launched back in 1998 it was hailed as a world-beater, and put Ford back on the map after the dismal Mk5 Escort was rebuffed by critics, journalists and... Well, anyone who drove one, to be honest.

But for all its New Edge design, 16-valve Zetec engines and clever Control Blade suspension, we had to wait four years until a proper performance version was announced.

And when the ST badge finally appeared on a Focus in 2002 – as the ST170 – it was worth the wait: a high-revving optimised version of the 2.0-litre Zetec (for the ST170 it was badged Duratec ST), fresh and funky (if slightly understated) styling, and sublime handling offered one of the most entertaining drives

available at the time.

The ST170 was followed by the Mk2 ST225, a car that epitomises the ST brand. The fact that it was famously dubbed the ‘ASBO’ by Jeremy Clarkson only served to bolster the ST’s image as a bit of a tearaway that just likes to have fun.

Ford dialled the image back a little with the Mk3 ST250, but the same combination of performance and practicality shone through. And with the latest Mk4 ST280, the ST has moved away from the cheap-and-cheerful approach of fast Fords of old, and now has a premium feel that’s good enough to tempt people away from the established German brands and into the Blue Oval, but still offering that signature combo of performance and practicality.

Across all four generations so far, the Focus ST

hits the sweet spot between fun-and-sporty and practical-and-usable. While more expensive RS models may grab the headlines, the ST provides a more considered approach to delivering the same kind of exciting and entertaining driving experience but wrapped up in a more discreet, more useable package. No wonder it sold so well.

ST170

Ford’s first Focus was a big hit throughout the motoring world, famed as much for its impeccable driving dynamics as its New Edge styling and perfectly practical packaging.

So why did it take the Blue Oval until March 2002 to introduce a hot-hatch version?

The ST170 summed up Ford’s early intentions for the ST badge – warmed-up motors for motoring enthusiasts, rather than outrageous tyre-shredders for hooligans. In a project penned by Ford Special Vehicle Engineering with a little powertrain assistance from Cosworth, the ST170 featured the ultimate normally-aspirated Zetec production engine (albeit badged Duratec ST for marketing purposes). High-compression pistons, big-valve head, variable valve timing, high-lift cams and big-bore exhaust manifold were added to the 2.0-litre unit, pushing out a rev-happy 171bhp.

It was mated to a six-speed Getrag MT285 close-ratio gearbox, along with stiffer springs, chunkier dampers, urethane rear bushes, revised steering, bigger brakes (300mm front discs and 280mm rears) and 17in alloys.

Yet the ST170’s performance was disappointing, and its subtle appearance did the car no favours. The selection of three/five-door

ST170 got off to a strong start





ST170 was the first sporty Focus estate

hatchback or (from August '02) estate bodystyles looked like run-of-the-mill machines, with only honeycomb grilles and tinted headlamps to give a racy touch. Even a rear spoiler was optional.

The cockpit was a similar story, offering sports seats and silver instruments, with an optional Custom Pack needed to specify heated leather Recaros instead of the standard half-leather trim. Meanwhile, a Comfort Pack added climate control, heated windscreen and xenon headlights.

ST170 production ceased in May 2005, after 13,443 had found UK homes.

ST(225)

If one car can epitomise the Sports Technology brand, it's the second-generation Focus – named simply and bullishly the Focus ST.

Yes, we might today refer to it as the ST225 – thanks to its burbling, 225PS/222bhp Volvo-sourced five-cylinder powerplant – but the Focus ST made a massive impact on the hot-hatch market, bristling with attitude and as likely to keep you grinning on the way to work as it was being hammered around a track.

The ST225 appeared in September 2005 as a three- or five-door hatchback, beefed up with a funky bodykit, 18in alloys and an option of shouty Electric Orange paintwork, triggering TV's Jeremy Clarkson to nickname the tearaway Focus the Ford ASBO.

Of course, the ST's angry image was backed up by plentiful performance – the turbocharged 2522cc capable of hitting 60mph in 6.5 seconds and topping 150mph – and supple handling, thanks to uprated suspension and big brakes.

Three specifications were offered: a basic →



“THE ST’S ANGRY IMAGE WAS BACKED UP BY PLENTIFUL PERFORMANCE – THE TURBOCHARGED 2522CC CAPABLE OF HITTING 60MPH IN 6.5 SECONDS AND TOPPING 150MPH”



“EVEN NOW, AN ST250 TAKES SOME BEATING AS A GREAT ALL-ROUNDER. WHAT ELSE OFFERS RS-BATING PACE IN SUCH AN AFFORDABLE EVERYDAY PACKAGE?”

ST meant plain Recaro front seats, ST-2 added colour-keyed trim, heated windscreen and xenon headlamps, while the ST-3 boasted Ebony leather and sculptured rear bench.

A limited edition (of 500) ST500 arrived in July 2007, followed by December's Focus facelift, which brought a revised ST, featuring fresh bodystyling and improved fascia.

A final revision in summer 2009 improved

spec but ditched the basic ST, and by 2011 the Mk2 had been superseded by the Mk3. Yet with immense tuneability and a dedicated following, the ST225's appeal stayed stronger than ever.

ST(250)

Rapidly becoming hot property on the tuning scene, the third-generation Focus ST took time to find its way into enthusiasts' hearts for

one simple reason: it lacked the five-cylinder soundtrack of its ST225 predecessor. But the newer car was better in every other respect.

Beneath the bonnet was a turbocharged, four-cylinder EcoBoost engine, which pumped out 250PS (247bhp), dictating an ST250 nickname. There was uprated suspension, bigger brakes and revised steering.

And, topping 154mph, it was faster than its ancestors, offered greater fuel economy and an added dose of practicality: alongside the five-door hatch was a spacious estate.

Available to British buyers from June 2012 (followed by more than 40 markets worldwide, including the USA), there were three specs: ST-1 with sexy bodykit, 18in alloy wheels and Recaro front seats; ST-2 adding coloured upholstery,



ST225 (here a pre-facelift) was offered with five-door practicality alongside three-door model



No three-door for the Mk3 – just a five-door hatch or estate



Facelifted (Mk3.5) ST took over in 2015

climate control, rain-sensitive wipers and heated windscreen; ST-3 boasting black leather trim, Recaro rear bench, keyless entry, xenon headlamps and reverse parking sensors. An optional Style Pack added Rado Grey wheels, red brake callipers and illuminated scuff plates.

Production paused in mid-2014, resuming with a facelifted ST in January '15, featuring a neater fascia and more aggressive styling. Criticisms of torque-steer were addressed with revised suspension and recalibrated steering, while new options included 19in rims and 335mm front brakes.

A Mk4 Focus replaced the Mk3 in 2018 but, even now, an ST250 takes some beating as a great all-rounder. What else offers RS-bating pace in such an affordable everyday package? →



Mk4 Focus ST steps up the quality and pace



The view of a Mk4, as seen from many an RS...



ST(280)

When Ford introduced the Focus Mk4 in 2018, social media moaned about its BMW/Korean-crossbreed styling and iPad glued to the dash. But that's all the usual suspects could criticise, because the current-generation Focus is an almost flawless family car.

And the ST badge makes it everything any fast Ford fan could ever hope for.

Introduced in July 2019, the ST retained its predecessor's four-cylinder EcoBoost but increased the capacity to match the outgoing RS – 2261cc. Tamed to a mere 280PS (276bhp), the ST's engine featured a twin-scroll turbo, meaning rapid response and impressive acceleration – now hitting 62mph in 5.7 seconds, aided by an electronic limited-slip differential

inside its six-speed manual gearbox. Three selectable drive modes were Normal, Slippery and Sport.

Like the Mk3, the Mk4 ST was available in five-door hatchback or estate bodystyles, but now with only one highly-specced trim level, including 19in alloys, bodykit and part-leather Recaro seats. Panoramic roof and Blind Spot Information System were popular extras.

Petrol-powered STs featured continuously-controlled damping, while hatchbacks were also offered an optional Performance Pack, with launch control, shift indicator, ambient lighting and super-stiff Track mode; press-fleet wagons received this kit, but customer cars were denied.

A seven-speed automatic gearbox option was added to the ST for 2021, which reduced driver

appeal and torque (down to 306lb.ft from 310lb.ft), adding 0.3 seconds to the 0-to-62mph sprint.

A hatch-only ST Edition was launched in August 2021, in RS-esque Azura Blue paintwork. Boasting adjustable coilover suspension and lightweight forged alloy wheels among a host of upgrades, the ST Edition has all but rendered an RS version obsolete.

Meanwhile, the brilliant regular ST continues and in 2022 will arrive with a fresh new front end, more tech, new seats and a new signature colour of Mean Green. The arrival of the new facelifted Mk4.5 (as dubbed by fans) sparks the recurring debate about the arrival of a new RS version, but perhaps the more pressing question should be 'is there really any need?'

When the ST is this good, maybe not. ■



Mk4.5 facelift wears subtle new nose



Mean Green is the ST's new signature shade

STop



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FOCUS ON MOTORSPORT

The Focus has been a race-winner and championship contender in various branches of top-flight motorsport since its launch, right through to the present day. Here are just some of its career highlights...

Words **GRAHAM ROBSON & JAMIE KING** / Photos **FORD ARCHIVES, MOTORBASE PERFORMANCE**

Launched to much fanfare and a media blitz at the dawn of the 1999 season, the Focus WRC was intended to do everything its Cosworth-badged predecessor had been unable to, something reflected in both its spec and the team charged with developing and rallying it.

Malcolm Wilson's M-Sport concern had been handed the reins of Ford's rally operation with the Escort WRC, but it was with the Focus that the fruits of the relationship became apparent.

The new car groaned under the weight of Cumbrian know-how and Dearborn money. It

was compact with short overhangs – both of which would become hallmarks of a new breed of World Rally Car. The Zetec was relocated as advantageously as the rules would permit, now mounted 20mm rearwards and canted over by a full 25mm. That transversely mounted engine also sent its drive through a full 90 degrees to a longitudinal Xtrac six-speed transmission, an attempt by Ford to get as close to a 50:50 weight distribution as possible... The team eventually settled on 52:48.

Quite how seriously Ford was taking rallying at the turn of the century was reflected in the

man chosen to lead its charge – a certain Colin McRae, then at the apex of his powers. The £10 million, two-year deal was then the most expensive in rallying history and marked the Scot as one of the UK's best-paid sportsmen, and he would in time be joined his old sparring partner, Carlos Sainz.

EARLY PROMISE

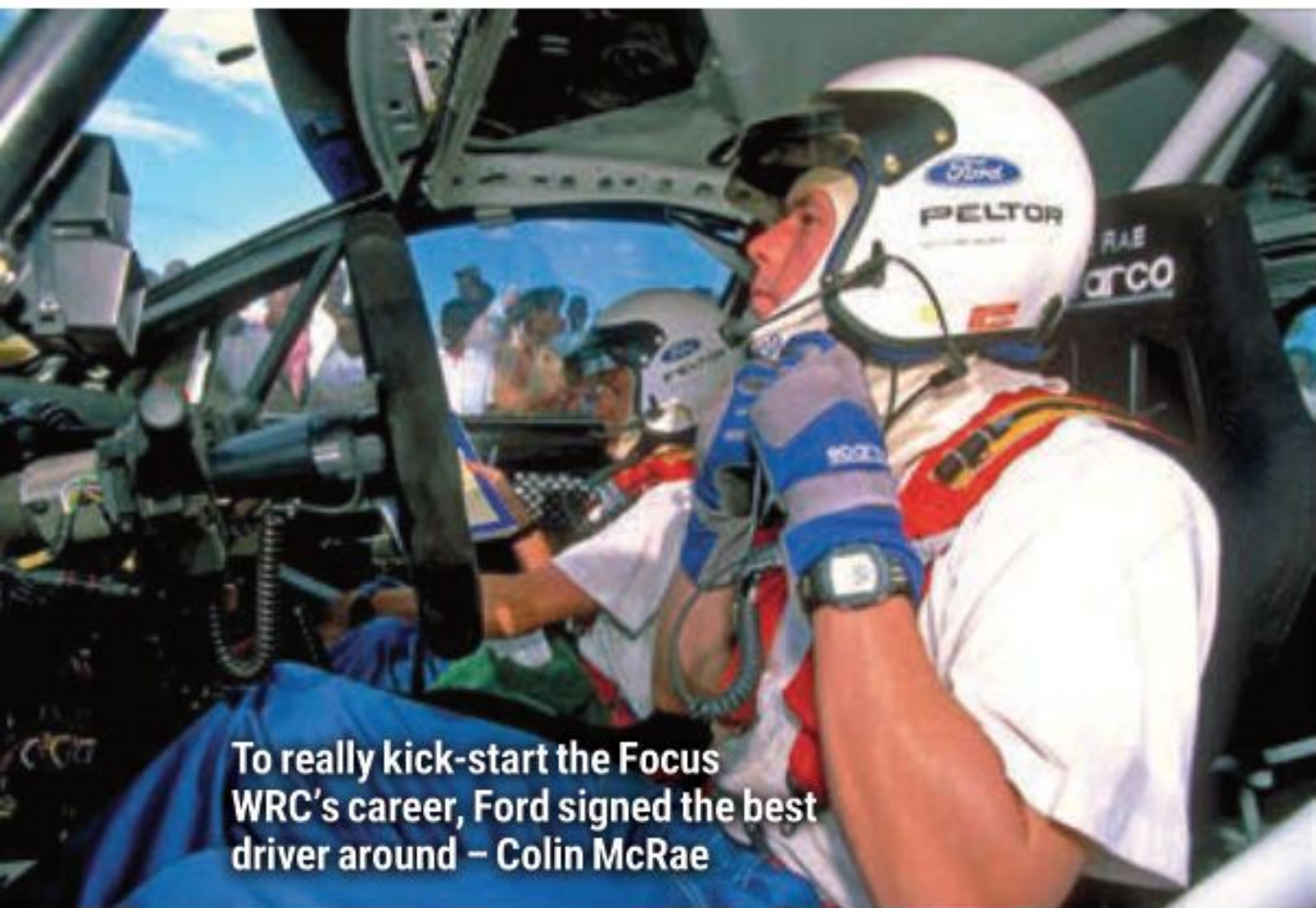
The career of the Mk1 Focus WRC can be neatly divided into two: there's the first-generation car campaigned from 1999 through to the midway point of the 2003 season, and one known by

One of Ford's all-time great rally cars? You bet it is!





Colin McRae may not have won the WRC in the Focus, but he will be forever linked with the Martini-livered icon



To really kick-start the Focus WRC's career, Ford signed the best driver around – Colin McRae



The Evo version arrived in 2003, complete with loads of technical and aero upgrades



pretty much everyone as the Focus Evo. The latter was campaigned until the arrival of the Mk2 Focus in 2006. That's not to say that there weren't plenty of revisions made before the Evo's introduction, but it's the later car that constituted the biggest alterations since the original car's homologation.

For Ford and McRae, 1999 was very much a season of two halves, with joy and frustration in equal measure. The early season brought impressive pace and some truly spectacular results, not least overall victories in Portugal and the legendarily gruelling Safari Rally. But this proved to be something of a false dawn, and from the mid-season onwards, McRae's title ambitions were slowly undone by maddeningly poor reliability gremlins.

The addition of Carlos Sainz bolstered Ford's challenge from 2000 onwards, though neither he nor McRae had an answer for Peugeot or Grönholm's pace, and it was only in 2001 that

“THIS BEING MCRAE, HE COULDN'T, AND THE IMAGE OF THE FOCUS CARTWHEELING OUT OF THE RALLY AND OUT OF THE CHAMPIONSHIP RECKONING HAS SINCE GONE DOWN IN RALLYING HISTORY”

McRae and M-Sport were able to mount a real title push. A hat-trick of wins on the bounce in the middle of the season cemented the Scot as one of rallying's true greats and ensured he was able to sustain his title ambitions into the autumn months.

Then Rally GB happened. McRae went into his home rally with a lead over best-of-the-rest Richard Burns, meaning all he had to do was finish either just ahead or just behind the Subaru man. This being McRae, he couldn't, and the image of the Focus cartwheeling out of the rally and out of the championship reckoning has

since gone down in rallying history.

The following season couldn't hope to match the drama of 2001, and in any case, the pairing of Grönholm and the 206 proved unbeatable. Sainz and McRae ended the year in third and fourth respectively, and both decamped to Citroen for the 2003 season.

CONSTANT EVOLUTION

This left Ford to field an all-new driver line-up of François Duval and Markko Märtin, and the latter would prove to be quite the find, spearheading the Blue Oval's charge for the →



The Mk2 Focus won more WRC events than its Mk1 predecessor



remainder of the Mk1 Focus's works career.

It was abundantly clear by this point that the Focus was slipping behind its rivals, both in terms of development and raw pace. The good news is that Ford had commenced a wholesale development push 12 months previously, one spearheaded by the widely respected Christian Loriaux. The Belgian was poached from Prodrive and promptly given the keys to the M-Sport/Ford toy box, and the Focus Evo (or the Focus RS WRC '03) was the result.

The most obvious difference from the previous car was in aero, the '03 car sporting a far more aggressive crop of air-channelling appendages than the previous iteration. These wings and splitters were bolted to a revised bodyshell based upon the USA-spec Focus, and therefore able to run larger, more efficient front and rear bumpers.

Cosworth was tasked with working its magic once more, Northampton's finest coming up with

a revised engine, the Duratec R, both lighter and more responsive than its predecessor and now governed by a revised ECU.

Technical highlights were innumerable and far-reaching but the most striking feature of the new car was how it looked, and in a related matter, how it captured the collective imagination of the rallying public. Rarely has a rally car been greeted by so much acclaim as the '03 Focus, certainly not since the demise of Group B.

It went as quickly as it looked, especially in Martin's hands. The Estonian truly clicked with the car in a manner that was all too plain to see, and the pairing would eventually net five WRC wins outright.

TIME TO CHANGE

You couldn't call the first-generation Focus WRC a failure; Ford's first stab at a purebred World Rally Car took 16 wins and allowed both

Colin McRae and Carlos Sainz to challenge for championship honours on several different occasions, while helping to bolster the fledgling careers of future stars like Markko Märtin and Petter Solberg.

But for all its promise, the Focus never achieved its full potential; it never brought either a drivers' or a manufacturers' crown to Ford by way of M-Sport, and by the mid-point of the 2005 season it was beginning to show its age. Nor could the revised car stem the PSA juggernaut of Loeb, Citroen and the Xsara. A new car would be required for that, and luckily for all concerned, Ford had just the model in the second-generation Focus.

M-Sport and Ford went back to the drawing board, now armed with the then-new Mk2 Focus ST. It might have been a larger car than the model it replaced but that didn't really matter, with the new shape handily falling within the FIA's new size regulations – just.

It also gave M-Sport a chance to correct some of the early car's foibles, the kind of sweeping, wholesale changes only possible with a new car with an associated new homologation.

The most pressing of these were a need to reduce weight (always a Focus bugbear), increase suspension travel and, with one eye on the new regulations intended to cap costs from 2006, chassis and transmission engineering.

That, of course, was of supreme importance, the FIA having decreed that such transmission luxuries as active front and rear differentials would be outlawed from the end of the 2005 season as a way of cutting down the spiralling costs associated with running a World Rally Car programme.

Pipo Moteur had been responsible for the 206 WRC's cracker of an engine and so it made a great deal of sense to employ the firm's services for the new Focus. There was simply no way that the road-going ST's 2.5-litre five-pot was going to pass muster with the FIA, so the 2.0-litre Duratec was selected as the base engine, albeit with a forced induction system and mandated 34mm restrictor in place. It made an easy 300bhp and,

more importantly still, proved amenable to further development work as the Focus Mk2's career progressed.

But M-Sport did have something of a secret weapon at its disposal: the keen eye and sharp pencil of its chief designer, Christian Loriaux. The Belgian was something of a WRC legend by the time it came to develop a second generation Focus, and Loriaux-penned cars swiftly garnered a reputation for exceptional balance efficient packaging, none more so than the Mk2 Focus. Its gearbox was a case in point; redesigned to sit transversely and therefore in complete contrast to the Mk1. It was also now a five-speed unit, the reduction in gears an attempt to improve packaging, and most importantly of all, reduce frictional losses.

Changes were also afoot outside of the car, with a fresh roster of driving talent drafted into the team, the most significant being the addition of Marcus Grönholm. The Finn's contribution to the story of the Mk2 Focus WRC is hard to overstate. The double champion had proved his potential in the 206 WRC and was more than just a natural talent; he was the only one able

to mount a sustained, serious challenge to the French pairing of Loeb and Citroën.

NEW CAR

While the new car broke cover on the final rally of the 2005 season, its first full year of competition was in 2006, the beginning of a new era in the WRC and one that would come to be dominated by Citroën and Sébastien Loeb.

Ford and Grönholm struck first and won back-to-back on the Monte and in Sweden, but the pairing of Loeb and Xsara WRC proved impossible to best. Grönholm lost out in the final reckoning by a single point, though Ford and M-Sport were able to claim the manufacturers' crown for the first time since 1979.

This rather set the theme for Grönholm's time at Ford, the Finn netting some of the finest victories of his career behind the wheel of the Focus, including a stunning drive to the top step of the podium in New Zealand in 2007. His winning margin over Loeb's C4 WRC? A scant 0.3 seconds.

Grönholm left Ford and retired from the WRC at the end of the 2007 season, a move that →

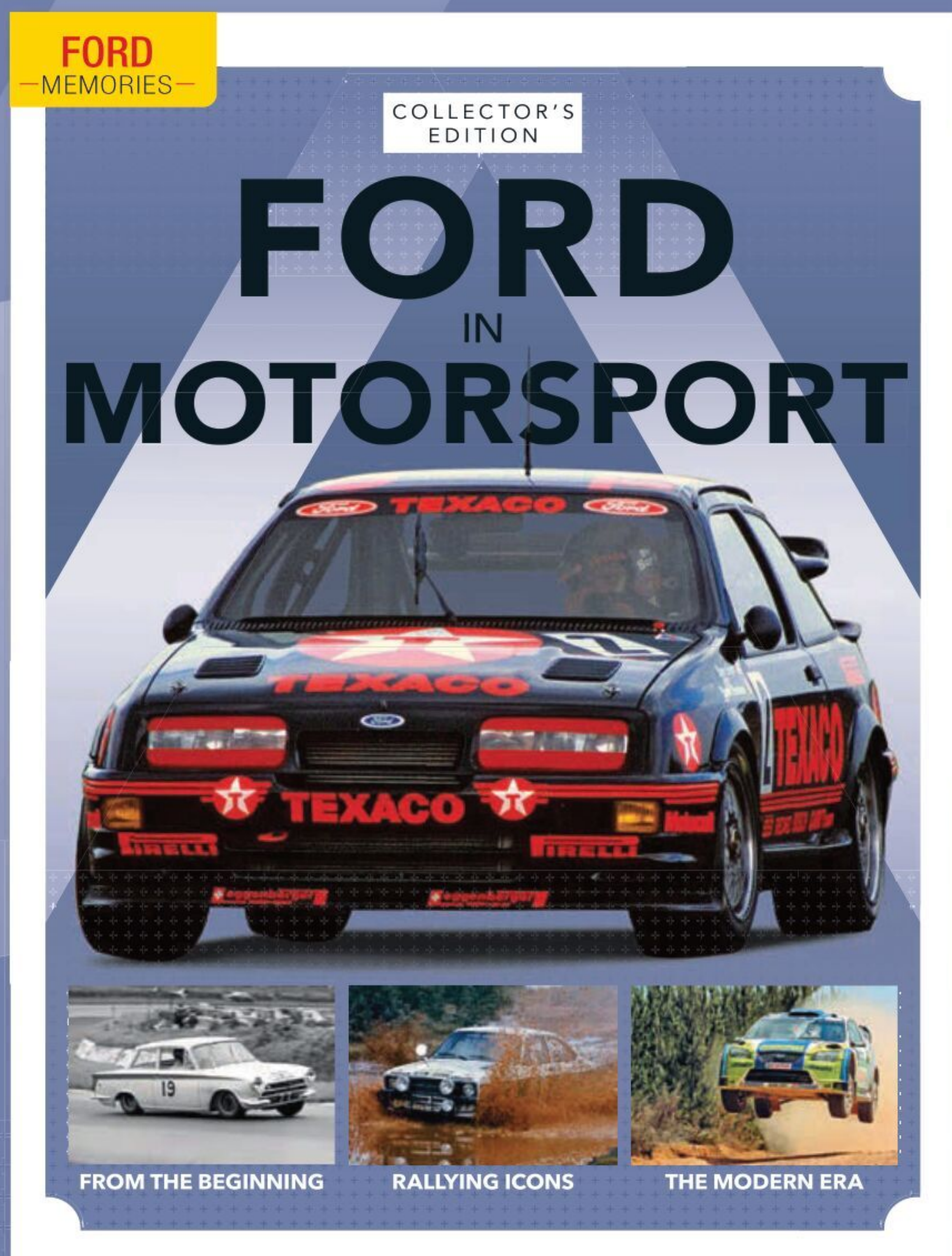
“THERE WAS SIMPLY NO WAY THAT THE ROAD-GOING ST'S 2.5-LITRE FIVE-POT WAS GOING TO PASS MUSTER WITH THE FIA, SO THE 2.0-LITRE DURATEC WAS SELECTED AS THE BASE ENGINE, ALBEIT WITH A FORCED INDUCTION SYSTEM”



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Ford joined forces with Ken Block's Hoonigan Racing Division to enter the Mk3 RS in the World Rallycross Championships of 2016 and 2017

effectively promoted Mikko Hirvonen to the role of team leader alongside an up-and-coming Jari-Matti Latvala. Hirvonen couldn't match the pace of either Loeb or Citroen in 2008, but then again neither could anyone else.

Twelve months later, and while the eventual result might have been the same, the margin between the two drivers was far smaller; gut-wrenchingly so. A single point gave Loeb his fifth crown on the bounce, though this was of course no consolation to M-Sport or Hirvonen.

Come 2010, and the WRC was in a state of flux thanks to the fallout from the global economic downturn. Subaru and Suzuki had both left the WRC, leaving just Ford and Citroen to fight it out, and the FIA reacted by announcing a slew of measures designed to cut costs.

There was no hiding the fact that the Focus WRC was getting a little long in the tooth by this point, it having been at the vanguard of M-Sport's rally programme for half a decade. To take the fight to the new DS3 from Citroen, Ford and M-Sport switched to the Fiesta for

WRC duties – a move that ultimately paid off when they secured both the drivers' and manufacturers' titles in 2017 and the driver's title once again in 2018.

RALLYCROSS RS

The Mk3 Focus may not have been given a shot at the WRC with M-Sport but that doesn't mean the Mk3 hasn't enjoyed spitting gravel and flames simultaneously in the World Rallycross Championship. Using its established links with YouTube sensation Ken Block – who was also involved in the development of the Mk3 Focus RS road car project – Ford teamed up with the Hoonigan Racing Division to enter two Focus RS RX Mk3s in the World RX Championship in 2016 to coincide with the launch of the Focus RS road car.

It was a fantastic publicity exercise, and there are some brilliant videos online that detail how the Focus RS RX was designed and developed, but the Mk3 Focus also proved itself a race-winner on the RX stages too.

Andreas Bakkerud made series history by becoming the first FIA World Rallycross driver to win all four qualifying rounds of an event weekend, going on to win his semi-final, before becoming the first Norwegian to win the Norway event.

Bakkerud then repeated his success in Sweden in the following event and Argentina at the end of the year. Finishing the 2016 campaign in third place overall, only poor points in the opening rounds prevented the Focus from taking the RX crown in its first year.

Sadly, 2017 couldn't build on the successful first year; Bakkerud finished sixth and Block in ninth. And with production of the Mk3 RS already starting to wind down, Ford pulled the plug on the Focus RS RX project and decided not to return for 2018.

ON THE TRACK

Rallying wasn't the only motorsport endeavour for the Focus – it was a regular winner and championship contender in the fiercely- →



Mk2 Focus made waves in the BTCC



Mk3 Shredded Wheat

fought British Touring Car Championship too. The first Focus to appear in the BTCC goes all the way back to 2009 when Team AON campaigned a Mountune-powered Mk2 Focus ST touring car.

The following year saw the Team AON cars experiment with LPG fuel systems, while with no official works return or official funding from Ford, it fell to independents like Motorbase Performance (which switched from BMWs to the ex-Team AON cars for 2011) to keep the Blue Oval on the BTCC grid.

Motorbase has been pioneering the Focus in the championship ever since, overseeing a switch to yet another set of regulations (this time turbocharged NGTC rules) and from Mk2 to Mk3, and most recently to Mk4 guise.

The Mk2 Focus was an immediate success for Motorbase; Mat Jackson racked up several victories in Team Airwaves colours during the 2011 season, which was enough to see him finish fourth overall in the drivers' standings and claim second spot in the Independents' Trophy too. Several more victories the following year saw the Redstone Racing Focuses take fourth in the overall teams' championship and second in the Independent Teams' standings.

The Mk2 was replaced by the Mk3 as the teams built new cars – initially in 2011, when Team AON fielded three new Mk3s, which were later bought by Motorbase and phased in during the 2012 season.

By the time the green flag dropped on the first race of 2013 the switch to the Mk3 was complete, and although the Mk3 didn't win in 2013 it came very close with several podium finishes. And that was impressive enough to coax one of the BTCC big-hitters to the Motorbase stable for 2014, as three-time BTCC champ Fabrizio Giovanardi joined the team to drive the Focus. More race wins followed, and once again Mat Jackson finished the season as runner-up in the Independents' Trophy and the team finished second in the Independent Teams' standing too.

The Mk3 went on to continue winning races with drivers like Mat Jackson, Andrew Jordan, Sam Tordoff, and Tom Chilton, and in 2018 the pre-facelift version was replaced with a full RS-spec version – the first time the legendary RS badge returned to the BTCC since Sierra Cosworths in the early 1990s.

NEXT GENERATION

The RS won several races throughout 2018 and 2019, Chilton finished third in the drivers' table in 2018, but by 2019 the third-generation Focus was starting to show its age. Many of the rival teams had switched to new builds, based on more modern, stiffer chassis, and the performance advantage was clear to see. The answer for Motorbase was to build an all-new Mk4 Focus ST for the 2020 season.

Rory Butcher and Ollie Jackson led the charge in 2020 and the brand-new Focus came flying



BTCC Focuses started with the Mk2s entered by Team AON in 2009



Motorbase have been racing a Focus in the BTCC since 2011



The Mk4 ST has already proved to be a multiple race winner and championship contender

out of the traps; Butcher scored a podium in the first two races at Brands Hatch and was on for a victory in the third race before a puncture took him out of contention.

Still, Motorbase had proved the Focus had the pace to be a real force to be reckoned with, and over the season the Mk4 racked up five wins and a further six podiums.

Four Mk4s were on the grid for the 2021 season, two running under the MB Motorsport banner and two Racing with Wera Tools cars – all run by Motorbase Performance. Once again, the car proved its credentials, winning several trophies along the way and with driver Jake

Hill going into the last round of the season still with an outside chance of claiming the overall drivers' crown.

And, at the time of writing, the Motorbase team are gearing up ahead of the 2022 season. A new title sponsor and new drivers are expected to be announced at the Autosport International Show in January, but the team seem very excited and very confident about their chances for the 2022 season.

Will the Mk4 be the Focus that finally secures championship honours after two decades of coming so close? We certainly hope so, and can't wait to find out. ■

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(ANTI)SOCIAL EXPERIMENT

Spitting flames and howling like a jet fighter through a screamer piper while it deploys a riotous 515bhp directly to the tarmac, Danny Tanton's Focus ST certainly fulfils his ambitions of building a car worthy of that infamous ASBO nickname

Words JAMIE / Photos JASON DODD

If there's one car that sums up the fast Ford scene today, the Mk2 Focus ST is it. It's a car that's as comfortable on the school run as on a weekend track session; as confident on the summer show ground as it is the supermarket car park.

And the best bit is the ST can – and usually does – combine all those things into one very neat, very capable package. No wonder it's the backbone for modern fast Ford culture.

But let's face it, the real reason we all love the ST is because it's a little hooligan of a car. Of course, being labelled the ASBO by Jeremy Clarkson helped set the ball rolling, but like all stereotypes it had to be based on an element of truth, otherwise it simply wouldn't stick.

And that was 16 years ago, talking about a car with the factory 222bhp. Things in the ST world have come a long way since then – getting faster

and faster, and becoming ever more powerful – but one thing that has remained a constant is the way the Focus ST is viewed as a tearaway of the hot-hatch market.

Perhaps not as technically adept as some of its (more expensive) German rivals, the ST has something not many other cars have: character, and bags of it. In this case, an anti-social hooligan personified by boisterous paintwork and a thunderous five-cylinder soundtrack. And that, ladies and gents, is the real reason we love the Focus ST.

"It's true," confirms owner of this



particular ASBO, Danny Tanton. "I only got mine back in 2016, but I've wanted a Focus ST ever since I first saw one in the Ford showroom. Of course, it had to be Electric Orange too."

Danny came very close to buying a brand-new Electric Orange ST, but he'd just put down a deposit on a Fiesta ST. As it turned out, he then had a change of heart and stepped back into his faithful Escort RS Turbo. "I still miss that old tin," he laughs.

Fast forward to 2016 and Danny finally became an ST owner. Purchasing the car from a friend (Jason, who was selling up to make space for a Focus RS), he knew the Focus had been well looked after, so jumped at the chance to become

its next owner.

Danny remembers, "It had already been modified with some nice bits; stuff like the K-Sport brakes, exhaust and the block mod, and it was maintained to a high standard. But it was just lacking some of the ASBO-ness I was after."

So, the plan was always to build something of an anti-social thug for the streets, then?

"Err, not at first. My original plan was to keep it sensible with just a few cosmetic mods. Obviously, that very quickly went out of the window," laughs Danny.

Much of the catalyst behind the project quickly spiralling was Danny's job as a tunnel fitter – a man that spends his day underground

digging big holes with a tunnel boring machine. That also means he spends a lot of time working away from home, where a dangerous combination of an abundance of free time in evenings away from the family, and a smartphone with internet access to various tuning websites wreaked havoc with any notion of 'cosmetic upgrades only'.

Danny recalls, "My first few mods were actually purely cosmetic: Maxton Designs splitters and skirts, Zunsport grilles, light brows and so on. My first performance upgrade was swapping the lowering springs for a set of BC Racing coilovers.

"But the biggest changes started to come →



when I was working away from home a lot; I had time on my hands after work, and I would sit in my digs looking through the Auto Specialists website saying, 'I want that', before promptly ordering loads of bits."

The next few years saw Danny chopping and changing any bits he could. The mapping was swapped to Dreamscience Mod XRS software (complete with the anti-social pop-and-bang add-on, naturally), and a host of bolt-on performance upgrades found their way under the bonnet.

Part of this process saw Danny and Andy at BRC Performance become good friends, and with Danny always knowing he wanted to go for more power eventually, Andy proved an invaluable source of knowledge and advice.

Then, one fateful day, the time came for those big ideas to become reality.

"After four years of abuse, the stock turbo blow itself to pieces," recalls Danny, "but this served as the perfect opportunity to go for it, and pull the engine out to forge it ahead of chucking some serious power at it."

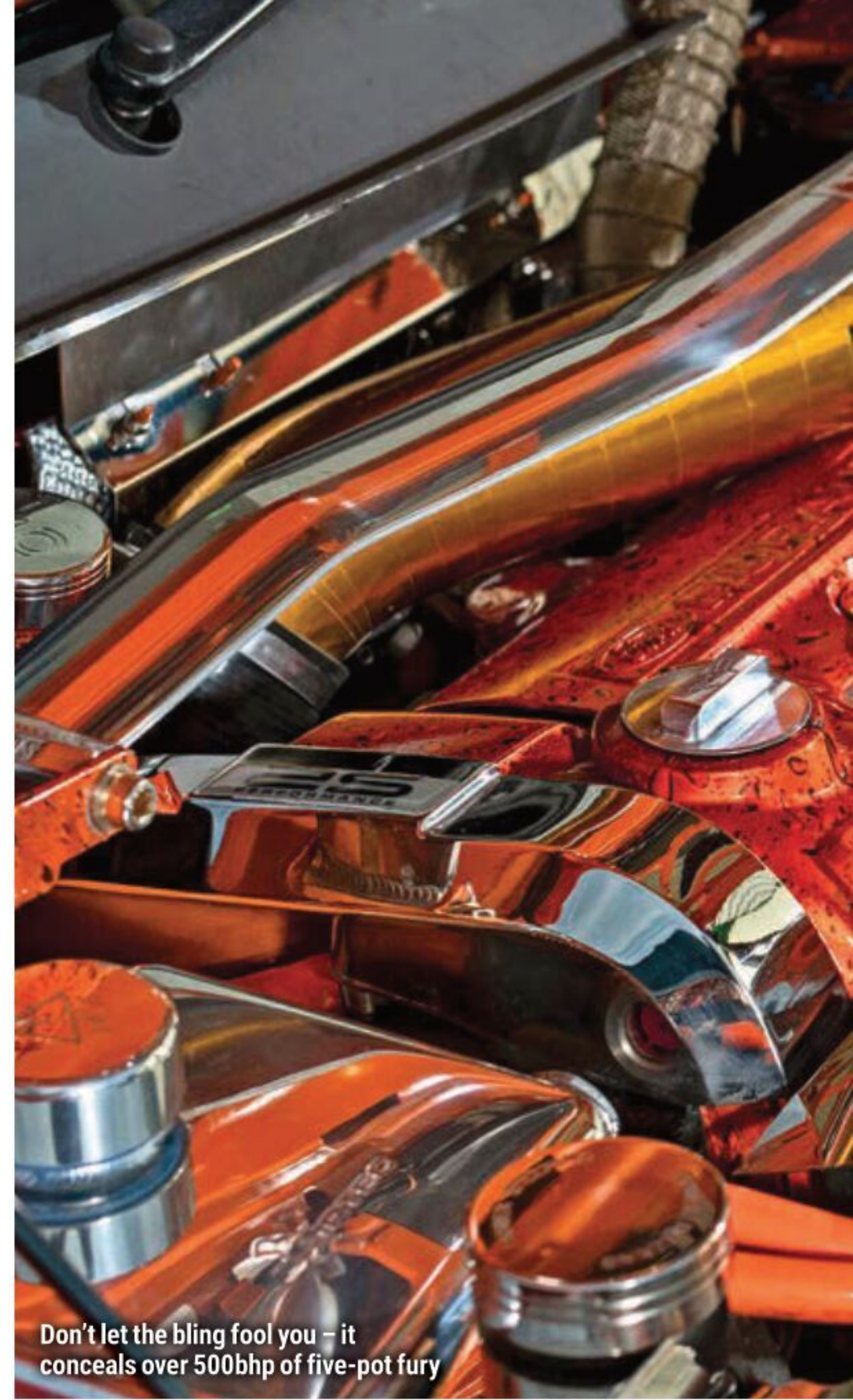
The engine was duly removed, stripped

and inspected by Andy and Jamie at BRC Performance, before a set of Wossner pistons and PEC conrods were added – along with Newman cams in the refreshed cylinder head – and the five-cylinder was dotingly rebuilt in anticipation of a significant power hike.

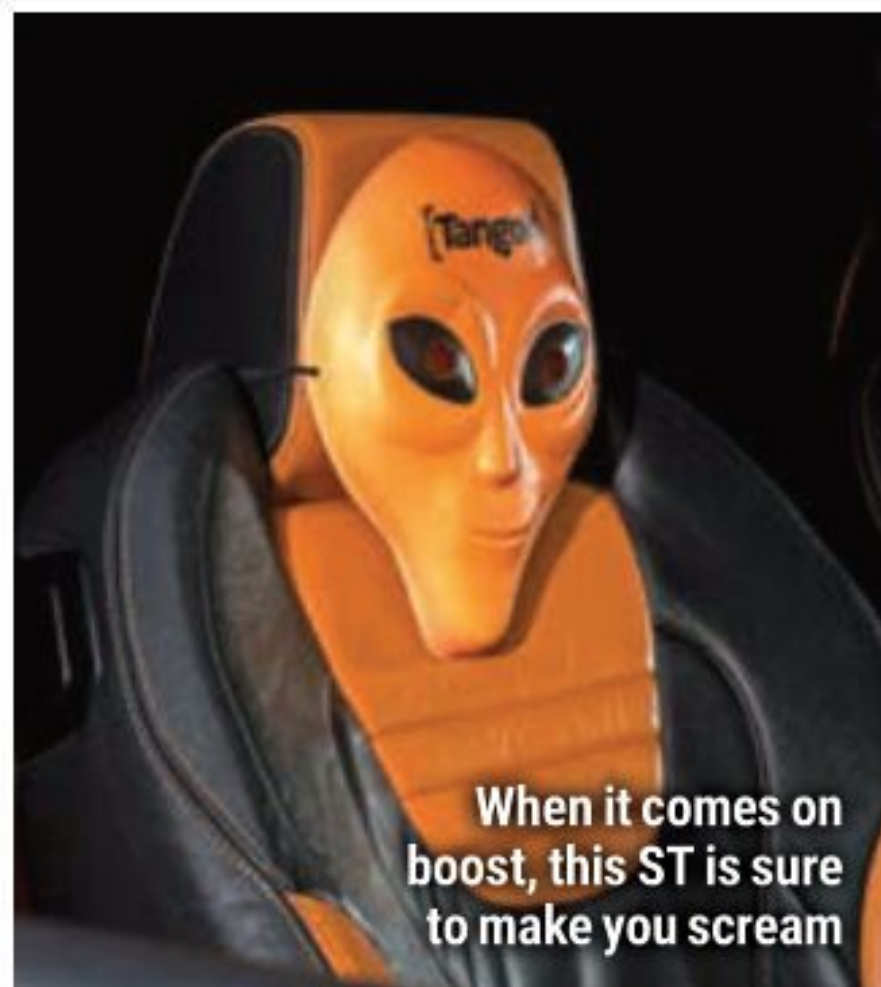
At this point, the turbo was a BorgWarner K16 from a Mk2 Focus RS and the software was the tried-and-tested Revo Stage 4-plus.

"That only lasted while I was running-in the new engine, though – about 200 miles, I think. I managed to get my hands on a Garrett GTX3076R turbo setup, and Andy at BRC came back with a new Ecumaster EMU Black engine management system and complete wiring harness," remembers Danny.

Things had just gone up a notch. Unlike the direct-fit RS item, the massive GTX turbo meant Danny needed to fit an external wastegate system too. And that lends itself to another of this ST's hooligan upgrades – the screamer pipe that exits at the back of the bonnet. Not only does it sound like a jet fighter about to launch, it also spits huge flames all over the windscreen. Not your average optional extra.



Don't let the bling fool you – it conceals over 500bhp of five-pot fury



When it comes on boost, this ST is sure to make you scream



Huge K-Sports rein things back in when needed



This ST is worthy of the ASBO tag



MK2 FOCUS ST

ENGINE 2522cc turbocharged Duratec five-cylinder, Wossner forged pistons, PEC forged conrods, block mod, Newman high-lift cams, BRC Performance 'development' fuel pump, 1000cc injectors, Garrett GTX3076R turbo, Turbosmart external wastegate, Focus RS oil cooler, Funk Motorsport turbo heat blanket, BRC Performance custom downpipe and screamer pipe exiting at rear of bonnet, Anembo Engineering inlet plenum, oversized throttle body, Airtec ported lower inlet manifold, Airtec intercooler, Airtec breather kit, Hardrace and Powerflex engine mounts, Pro Alloy big boost pipes, Syvecs MAF-less crossover pipe, RamAir Proram filter, KMS Thunderstorm exhaust, Auto Specialists engine dress-up kit, hydro-dipped engine bay plastics, DnA custom bonnet prop, Ecumasters EMU Black engine management system

POWER 515bhp (will be capped at 550bhp after further tweaks)

TRANSMISSION Focus ST Getrag M66 six-speed gearbox, Quaife ATB limited-slip diff, Helix Motorsport six-paddle clutch, B&M short-shifter kit, Hardrace uprated mounts

SUSPENSION BC Racing coilovers, Hardrace lower arms and track-rod ends, Summit strut brace and rear subframe brace, Hardrace rear anti-roll bar, Whiteline front anti-roll bar, Powerflex bushes

BRAKES Front: K-Sport 356mm drilled and grooved discs with eight-pot callipers and EBC Yellowstuff pads; rear: Focus ST callipers with drilled and grooved discs and EBC Yellowstuff pads; Goodridge brake lines all round

WHEELS & TYRES 8.5x18 Cruise Blade alloys in gloss black with ET42 offset, 225/40R18 Michelin Pilot Sport 4 tyres

EXTERIOR Focus ST in Electric Orange, Maxton Designs lowline kit, Zunsport grilles, Maxton Designs RS-style rear spoiler with extension, Climair wind deflectors, custom rear diffuser, DRL switchbacks in headlights and fogs, direction arrows behind wing mirror glass, custom grille lights, underbonnet mirrors, Rally Flaps mud flaps, RS bonnet vents

INTERIOR Focus ST, custom floor mats, custom flat-bottomed steering wheel, orange and black leather seats, hydro-dipped interior plastics, custom dial faces to match hydro-dipping, ST puddle lights, 'ASBO' custom door sills, custom boot liner and parcel shelf, Alpine head unit, Edge 6x9s, tweeters and mids, 1000w amp and 10in JBL sub in custom enclosure

“WE’LL PROBABLY CAP THE POWER AT 550BHP – THE NOISE, THE POWER, THE FLAMES THAT SHOOT OUT OF THE BONNET, AND THE WAY IT SCARES PASSENGERS ALREADY IS JUST AWESOME”

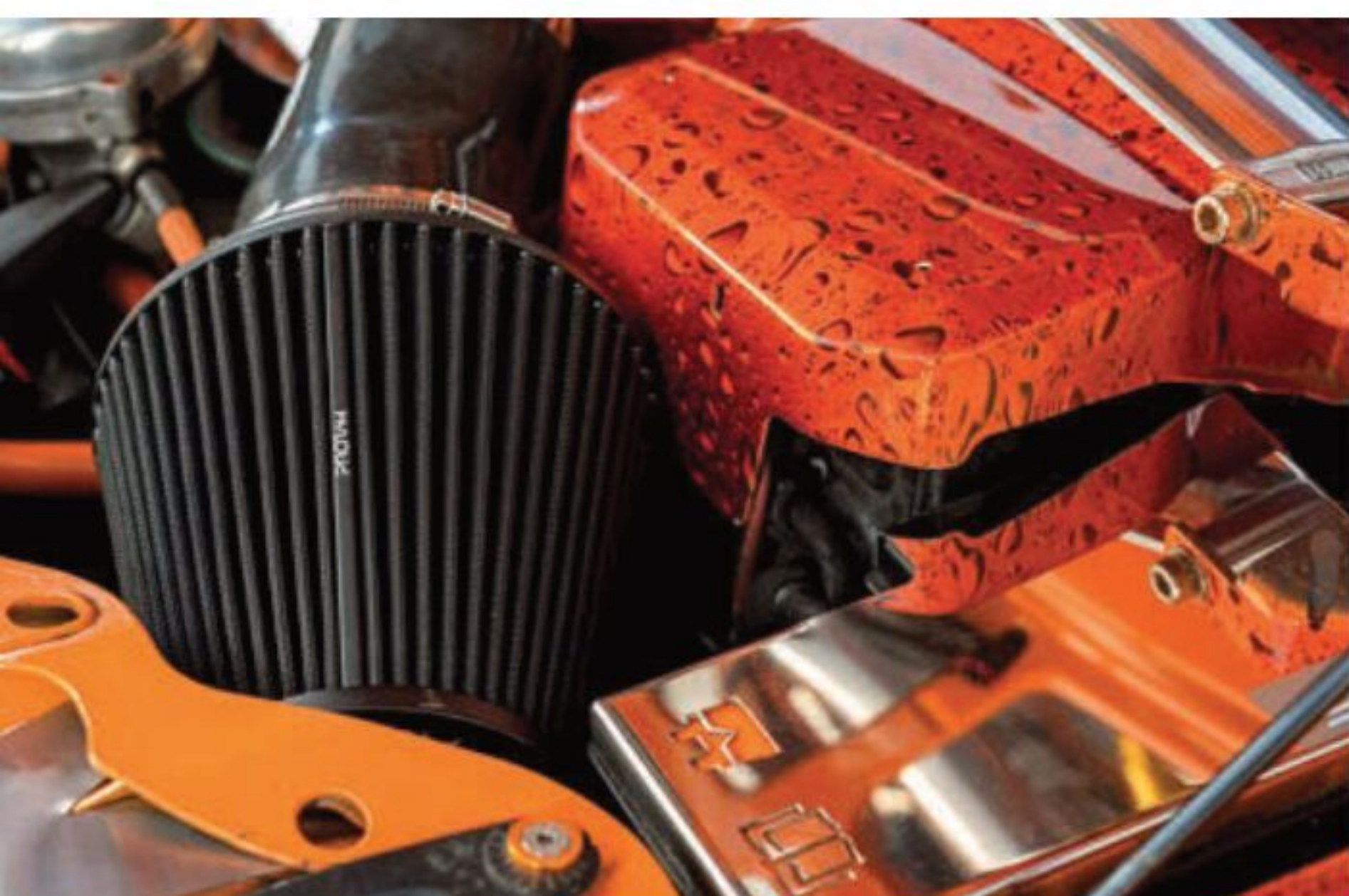
But this isn't your average car. It's been built with thrills and giggles in mind from the very start, and after Romain at Race Cal had tweaked the very clever EMU Black ECU, the ST produced a raucous 515bhp.

“We're not finished there, either. We're currently running a development BRC fuel pump, so there's definitely more power to come yet once that's dialled in. We'll probably cap the power at around 550bhp – that'll be plenty. The noise, the power, the flames out of the bonnet, and the way it scares passengers already is awesome,” admits Danny.

But then, Danny drops a bombshell. “I do wonder what it would be like with this power and all-wheel drive...”

Blimey. Sounds like this story is far from over. Which brings us to what is perhaps the biggest reason so many of us love the ST – its ability to constantly evolve, and the seemingly limitless tuning possibilities.

While wider society may frown upon cars like Danny's ST for their antisocial nature, in a bizarre paradox, it's precisely these kinds of cars that bond us enthusiasts and help form the fast Ford society. It's a funny old world... ■



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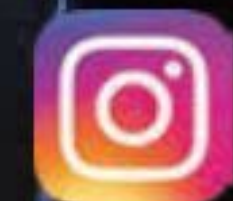
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Flywheel = **£1,066.65**

Organic = 400Nm 290lbft

Paddle = 527Nm 388lbft



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Paddle = 985Nm 730lbft



Ford Fiesta 1.0ltr Ecoboost

Organic Clutch Kit

= **£1,033.63**

Paddle Clutch Kit

= **£1,066.65**

Organic = 400Nm 290lbft

Paddle = 527Nm 388lbft

Pre-facelift MK2 ST225 is fast, practical and affordable



BUYING TIPS

MK2 FOCUS ST225 & RS

Whether you're looking for affordable track fun or a sound future classic, a high-performance Mk2 Focus has got you covered...

Words DAN WILLIAMSON & JAMIE KING / Photos FAST FORD ARCHIVE

WHY YOU WANT ONE...

- Hugely tuneable to stratospheric figures (yes, 1000bhp-plus), and pennies to boost for real-world performance.
- For many Blue Oval fans, the RS is still the best fast Focus, with a perfect blend of road presence, gutsy power, sharp handling and inimitable five-cylinder soundtrack.
- Probably the last ever three-door RS, so you can be certain your money is safe, especially in a standard, concours example.
- The ST offers the best all-round fast Ford you can buy for the money – a genuinely rapid hot hatch with easy everyday practicality.

WHY YOU DON'T...

- Image is everything – and the ST screams out ASBO even more today than when nicknamed by Clarkson in 2005. And, RS badge or not, to your neighbours the image is the same – so put your baseball cap on backwards before buying.
- Corrosion is festering beneath the depths of many STs, and it may be that an immaculate-looking example will soon be just as rotten as its ST170 predecessor.
- Modifying will devalue an original RS. And even if you do, there'll always be someone else going 1bhp better.
- Owning the cleanest or lowest-mileage example is nigh on impossible; investors have been buying delivery-mileage RS Mk2s since day one.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO INSURE?

The ST's in group 34, which isn't too bad unless you're particularly young, and some online insurers consider it to be merely an everyday Focus with a bigger engine. Mint ST500s, modified and concours cars need a specialist insurer to ensure you receive the right cover.

The RS is in group 38, so it's generally the safest option to seek out a policy from a specialist broker. Ideally, your RS won't be a daily driver, so you can limit the mileage, add an agreed value, and even track-day cover for the times when you need to use your Focus as Uncle Henry intended.



Five-cylinder engine was Volvo-sourced and extremely tuneable



Shouty Electric Orange paintwork gained the ST225 its ASBO nickname

HOW MUCH TO PAY

£1000-£2000

You'll pick up an ST with a blown engine for a grand to £1500, although most in this bracket are being broken for parts. You could bag a running example with a variety of issues – and for a few quid more maybe with MOT. Perfect if you're planning a big-power rebuild.

£2000-£5000

Tatty but useable STs start at around £2k. Facelift examples cost upwards of £3500, but you'll need to wade through a load of rubbish and ex-write-offs to find a gem. It's a saturated market, so choose your ideal colour, year and specification. If you're planning to modify, astute purchasing will bag a bargain before the seller puts it back to standard.

£5000-£8000

Into the realms of Mk3 ST250 money, an ST225 must be sub-50,000 miles or a high-powered tastefully-modified machine. Concours end-of-line ST225s may command more, but they're not deemed collectible just yet.

£17,000-£20,000

It's a big price jump from top-end STs to bottom-of-the-ladder RSs. Most cheap examples of RS are tatty, high-mileage, broken and/or badly modified. Repaired category N/S write-offs can be bargains, but beware of fakes and ringers – loads are out there.

£20,000-£25,000

An ideal budget for an RS to enhance and enjoy – expect higher mileage (80,000-plus) and some modifications. But current prices are erratic, and you might find a £25k car that would be advertised elsewhere for £30,000.

£25,000-£40,000-PLUS

Ideally, fewer than 60,000 miles on the clock; prices rise with lower mileages: £30k-plus for 40,000 miles, and sub-10,000-milers asking £45k. Delivery-mileage cars and RS500s are £50k-plus, and they're regularly available.



Recaro seats were standard

WHERE DO I FIND ONE?

Most STs are in private hands, so (very carefully) scour the depths of eBay and Facebook Marketplace or owners' groups for bargains. Many more are with used-car dealers, where you'll have the luxury of some warranty. For average RS examples in private hands, owners' clubs and social media groups are well worth investigating, while for mint/low-mileage STs and RSs, contact classic car dealers and specialist auction houses for incoming stock. It's a buyer's market, so shop around for your preferred spec.

TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER 2004

Focus Mk2 introduced with engines up to 2.0-litre, available in Europe concurrently with Mk1.

SEPTEMBER 2005

Focus ST launched, dubbed ST225 due to 225PS (222bhp) Volvo-based five-cylinder engine with KKK turbo. Offered as three-door or five-door hatchback, with full bodykit and 18in alloy wheels. Three specifications available: ST (colour-keyed Recaros), ST-2 (heated windscreen and xenon headlamps) and ST-3 (heated leather Recaros and sculptured rear bench).

JULY 2007

Focus ST500 goes on sale in UK in limited edition of 500 cars, based on ST-3 three/five-door with Panther Black paintwork, silver body decals and red leather upholstery.

DECEMBER 2007

Facelifted Focus ST introduced with revised bodywork (most notably including lights, bonnet and bumpers), new fascia, red-glow instruments and ESP stability control on base ST. ST-2 and ST-3 add rear LED lights.

JULY 2008

Focus RS Mk2 concept debuts at the 2008 London International Motor Show.

SEPTEMBER 2008

Official dealer-fitted MP260 package launched for ST, including MounTune intercooler, free-flowing panel filter and remap to produce 257bhp. Factory warranty is unaffected.

MARCH 2009

Focus RS Mk2 available in UK, based on three-door ST225 but with uprated (301bhp) version of the ST's 2.5-litre engine, ATB limited-slip differential, RevoKnuckle front suspension, 336mm front brakes, 19in alloys, wide wheelarches, full bodykit, WRC rear wing and Recaro bucket seats. Available in Frozen White, Performance Blue or Ultimate Green.

SEPTEMBER 2009

Base ST deleted. Alloy wheels now Panther Black. ST-3 adds privacy glass, keyless entry, dual-zone climate control and Sony DAB radio.

APRIL 2010

Focus RS500 launched, with 3M satin-black wrap over Panther Black paintwork. Power is increased to 345bhp with MounTune MP350 conversion. Black wheels and numbered/engraved dashboard plaque are included.

JULY 2010

RS500 production ends after 500 built (not including prototypes); 101 cars were destined for UK buyers.

SEPTEMBER 2010

Focus RS Mk2 ends Saarlouis production after approximately 11,500 built, including 4209 UK sales.

JANUARY 2011

Focus Mk2 range discontinued. Replaced by Focus Mk3.

KEY POINTS

IDENTITY

Both the ST and RS are favourites of thieving scum, so inspect the VIN number and invest in a decent history check – also essential to ensure it's not on finance. And be careful you're not buying a fake, ringer or rep built from nicked bits – there are disturbingly large numbers around.

BODY

Rot is bad news. Rusty rear arches are normal but front wings, sills and floorpan could also be corroded. Stone chips are common, but check panel gaps and paintwork for signs of accident damage. If you spot any, run away. Fast.

ENGINE

Steer clear of any symptoms of head gasket failure – cracked cylinder liners are a true horror story, potentially meaning a replacement engine – so check for misfires, a smoking exhaust, and water in the oil. Poor performance could be a boost leak, ECU fault or failed sensor. Check the source of any oil leaks very carefully.

TRANSMISSION

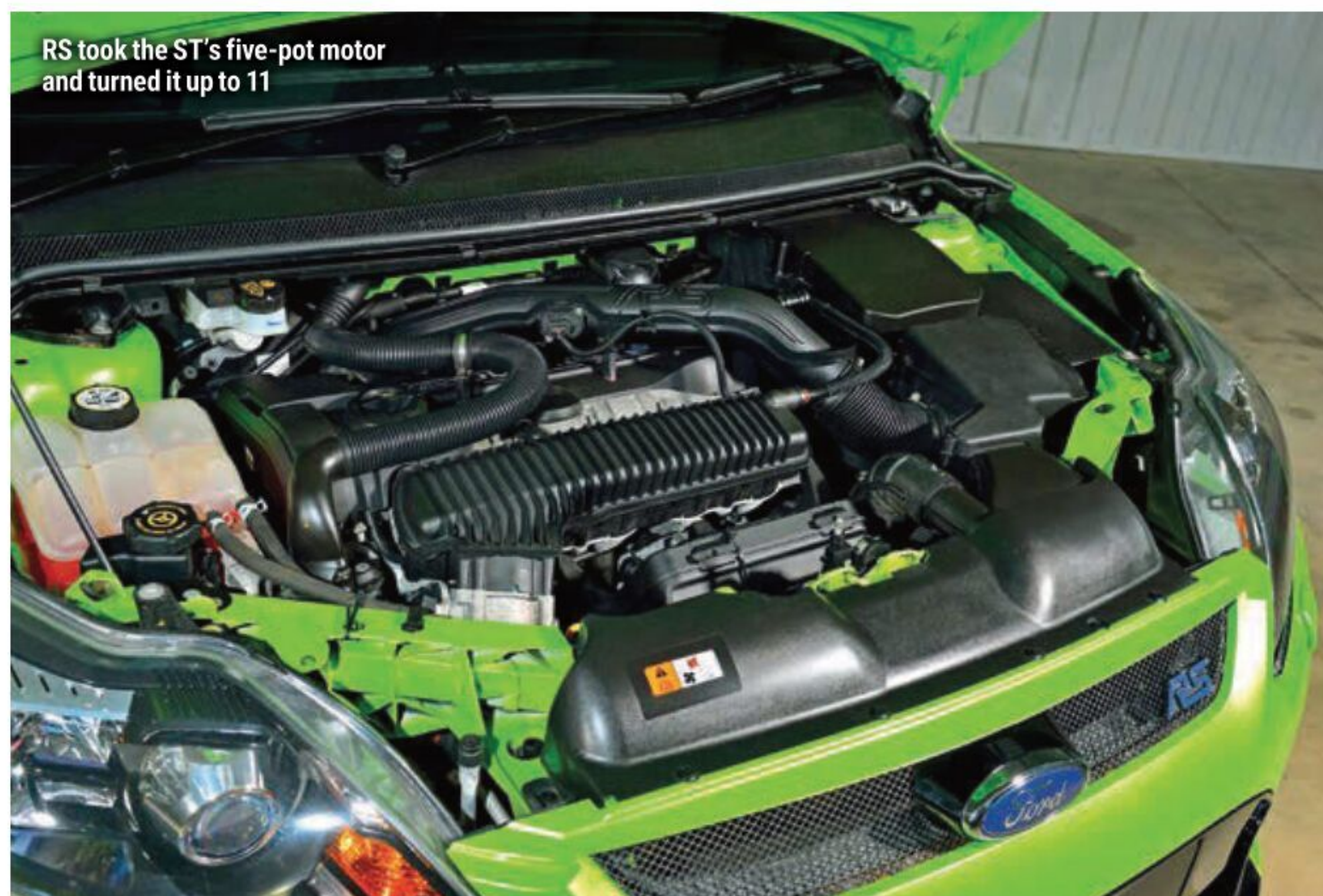
Clutch slip is common, especially on modified STs. Take a test drive and boot the throttle in fifth or sixth gear. Driveshafts are prone to clicking, but shouldn't be a deal-breaker. The gearbox is tough as old boots and almost unburstable, so shouldn't show any signs of trouble.

SUSPENSION AND BRAKES

ST and RS are both prone to lower wishbone bush failure and snapped springs, broken rear drop links and excessive front tyre wear, and the RS can suffer from wobbly RevoKnuckle joints too. Slight clunking from the brakes is probably the pads moving against the discs, and no cause for concern. But beware of ABS issues. If the ABS lamp stays on, it's likely a wheel sensor or cable. But more serious issues could require a complete new ABS module.

ELECTRICS

Check the air conditioning gets cold (condenser failure is quite common). DAB radios are known to cause trouble (sometimes cured with firmware updates), and central locking mechanisms occasionally fail; fortunately, they're the same as any other Focus's. A battery warning lamp tells you the alternator is playing up, especially from 70,000 miles upwards. They're expensive, so ensure the smart-charge system is working: it should charge above 14 volts with the engine running. It's crucial to use a calcium battery with this system.



RS took the ST's five-pot motor and turned it up to 11



FOCUS ST225

ENGINE 2522cc in-line five-cylinder, 20-valve, DOHC Duratec with alloy block and head, 9.0:1 compression ratio, toothed belt drive, KKK-Warner turbocharger, intercooler, sequential electronic fuel injection, Bosch ME 9.0 ECU, electronic distributorless ignition

TRANSMISSION Front-wheel drive with Getrag Ford Durashift M66 six-speed manual gearbox

SUSPENSION Front: MacPherson struts, gas-filled dampers, 15mm lower/30 per cent uprated coil springs, 21.5mm anti-roll bar; rear: independent short-long arm (SLA) control blade multi-link system, gas-filled dampers, 15mm lower/30 per cent uprated coil springs, 21mm anti-roll bar; ESP on ST-2, ST-3 and all facelift models

BRAKES Front: 320mm ventilated discs; rear: 280mm discs; ABS with electronic brake force distribution (EBD)

WHEELS & TYRES 8x18in alloys and 225/40x18 tyres

EXTERIOR Three-door or five-door Focus hatchback with ST bodykit including front bumper with fog lights, side skirts, rear bumper and rear spoiler, plus xenon headlights with washers and heated windscreen (ST-2 and ST-3). Available in Diamond White, Frozen White, Electric White, Colorado Red, Performance Blue, Electric Orange, Panther Black, Sea Grey or Moondust Silver. Optional stripe kits, sunroof and parking sensors

INTERIOR ST steering wheel, auxiliary gauges in dashboard pod, aluminium gearknob, handbrake and pedals, black headlining, Recaro front seats in Modus Dark Flint cloth with coloured sides in Generic Orange, Generic Red, Generic Blue or Anthracite (ST and ST-2) or heated Ebony leather fronts with sculptured rear bench (ST-3), single-disc Ford CD head unit (ST), single-disc Sony MP3 head unit (ST-2) or six-disc Sony CD head unit (ST-3), optional heated cloth seats (ST and ST-2), climate control, sat nav and Bluetooth

WILL VALUES RISE OR FALL?

Prices of poor examples of ST225 have been plummeting, and they're becoming a breaker's favourite. Meanwhile, stock low-mileage machines are steadily rising. But don't hold your breath. At the time of writing, all used-car prices are high, and although the RS might drop back down at some point, in the long-term it's a rock-solid investment in the Cosworth mould.





Ultimate Green RS is ultra-desirable machine

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO RUN?

If you need to ask the question, you're looking for the wrong car. Fuel consumption is poor, you'll have to choose super-expensive premium petrol too. As for parts, so many ST225s are now being broken that there'll be no shortage of spares for years to come, but for any rare or model-specific parts on the RS, pull down your pants and think of RS Tax.

SHOULD I MODIFY IT?

Definitely. But you might choose not to if you're more concerned with keeping your cash safe than exploring the performance potential. No ST or RS should be forced to live with factory power outputs when a basic remap makes such an enormous difference to the driving experience. Yes, money spent on mods will inversely affect value, but it'll increase the grin factor.



You'll not find an RS Mk2 this clean for less than £25k

FOCUS RS MK2

ENGINE 2522cc in-line five-cylinder, 20-valve, DOHC Duratec with alloy block and head, forged crankshaft and connecting rods, graphite-coated piston sleeves, 8.5:1 compression ratio, toothed belt drive, Ti-VCT (twin independent variable cam timing), Borg Warner K16 turbocharger, intercooler, sequential electronic fuel injection, Bosch ME 9.0 ECU

TRANSMISSION Front-wheel drive with Getrag Ford Durashift M66 six-speed manual gearbox, Quaife automatic torque biasing (ATB) limited-slip differential, uprated driveshafts, 240mm clutch

SUSPENSION Front: MacPherson struts, gas-filled dampers, coil springs, 24mm anti-roll bar, RevoKnuckle with fixed mount to anti-roll bar; rear: independent short-long arm control blade multi-link system, gas-filled dampers, coil springs, 24mm anti-roll bar; 40mm wider track, electronic stability programme (ESP) and Traction Assist (TA)

BRAKES Front: 336mm ventilated discs; rear: 300mm solid discs; ABS with electronic brake force distribution (EBD)

WHEELS & TYRES 8.5x19in 15-spoke RS alloys and Continental 235/35x18 tyres

EXTERIOR Three-door Focus hatchback body with wider wheelarches, RS bodykit including front bumper with fog lights and piano black mesh grille, deeper side skirts and rear bumper, black WRC-style roof spoiler, chromed xenon headlamps, bonnet vents, RS-badged wing vents, rear privacy glass. Luxury Pack 1 adds rear parking sensors and rain-sensing wipers. Available in Frozen White, Performance Blue, Ultimate Green or Panther Black with satin-black vinyl wrap (RS500 only)

INTERIOR Recaro front seats with colour-keyed blue or green fabric side bolsters (partial-leather-trim optional), three-spoke RS steering wheel, additional angled dashboard gauges, carbon-look dashboard trim, aluminium gearknob and pedals, black headlining. Luxury Pack 1 adds climate control, auto-dimming rear-view mirror, tyre deflation detection and key-free system. Luxury Pack 2 adds touch-screen DVD navigation. Optional USB port and Bluetooth



Big brakes and 19s came as standard

Andy Bassett's mates have started calling him Mr Carbon. And it's not because he's suffering from a build-up of cokey black deposits. It only takes a few seconds in his Mk2 RS's company to see that the modern-classic fast Ford formula has been comprehensively shaken up with the liberal addition of nature's sixth element, and it's led him to apply a unique name to it: Carbon Edition.

This one-of-one special is something all of Andy's own devising, but let's not allow the carbon fibre obsession to overwhelm the story of the car completely. After all, this Focus has an extremely lengthy spec list, the function as crucial as the form, and Andy's put a lot of effort into optimising every individual element beneath the car and under the bonnet. All of which makes sense, as Andy has a long and distinguished history of modifying cars, right back to when he passed his test.

Andy explains, "I started out in a Volvo 340, then moved on to a host of Renaultsport Meganes – about seven in total. It's a harmless hobby, which I've always enjoyed."

It's interesting to note that Andy opted to swap from Renault's RS badge to Ford's, after such lengthy endeavours. How did that come about?

He grins, "I've just always liked them. Even through my Megane days, I always thought the Focus RS looked so much more aggressive on the road. Eventually I gave up the Renaults for a stock Focus, and I've never looked back."

With a clear idea of what he wanted, Andy set out on a mission to find just the right example. Travelling from London to Chester to view a couple of cars, he found nothing to truly ignite the passion; looping back down to Bristol, RS Direct came up with the solution: a fully standard car in first-class condition. Andy knew straight away that it was the one. Hands were shaken, and the adventure commenced.

"I kept the car standard for about three or four months," he says. "But then, having done a bit of research, I found that Airtec Motorsport was only ten minutes from me."

"So one Saturday I popped over and met the guys, who I now consider some of my best and closest friends; they spoke to me about what can be done to the RS, and the pros and cons of various modifications."

"Alan and Ryan at Airtec have hands-down been the most influential people in helping me tune the car to the level it's at now. I've always listened to and respected their input."

The engine work is true testament to how strong the five-pot is as standard: this car's still running the stock internals and turbo, but with supporting mods including an Airtec inlet plenum and Stage 2 intercooler, 3in downpipe and KMS Thunderstorm exhaust system, along with a few other tricks, it's making around 400bhp thanks to Revo Stage 4 software. →



THE SIXTH ELEMENT

You can crush it into diamonds or burn it as coal – but when you stir carbon into the fast Ford recipe, you can create something truly dynamic... Behold, the one-off Focus RS Carbon Edition

Words DAN BEVIS / Photos JASON DODD



MK2 FOCUS RS

ENGINE 2.5-litre five-cylinder, Revo Stage 4 software, Airtec inlet plenum, Airtec Group A air filter, Airtec Stage 2 intercooler, Airtec large boost pipe kit, Airtec crossover pipe, Airtec yellow Pro hoses, Airtec Turbosmart recirc valve, Airtec uprated torque mount, Airtec alloy header tank with yellow sight glass, Airtec alloy power steering tank with yellow sight glass, Airtec alloy caps (full kit), Bosch 550cc injectors, Airtec 3in downpipe, KMS Thunderstorm 3in downpipe-back exhaust system, Kuro Carbon battery cover, Kuro Carbon fuse cover, Kuro Carbon engine covers, Kuro Carbon wing rail covers, Kuro Carbon slam panel, Carbon BRY slam end plates, carbon brake fluid cover, carbon hot plate, DNA bonnet props

POWER 400bhp (owner's estimate)

TRANSMISSION Stock gearbox and clutch, Airtec torque mount

SUSPENSION KW V3 coilovers, Summit front and rear upper strut braces, Summit exhaust brace, Summit lower Big 4 brace, Summit rear lower chassis brace, Summit lower subframe brace, Summit lower Middle 4 chassis brace, Summit lower rear tie-bar sub-brace

BRAKES Front: K-Sport Forged eight-pot callipers with 356mm discs; rear: K-Sport Forged six-pot rear callipers with 330mm discs, Hi-Spec electronic spot callipers (handbrake) custom-fitted by Wizard Engineering; Ferodo DS2500 pads

WHEELS & TYRES 20in BBS CH-R wheels, 245/30x20 Michelin Pilot Sport tyres

EXTERIOR Kuro Carbon wing mirror covers, carbon rear boot trim, carbon rear spoiler lip, carbon door handles, carbon bonnet vent, carbon bonnet lip, carbon headlight trims, carbon headlight washer covers, carbon fog light covers, carbon front wing vents, carbon rear wiper blade, carbon number plates by NumberPlatesRUs, Monkey Wrench bespoke dual xenon headlights, JWR LED smoked tail lights, LED rear fog lights and reversing lamp, full Maxton Design lowline kit, rally mud flaps, Team Heko wind deflectors, COD graphics and decals

INTERIOR Full custom retrim by Anthony at InteriorModz in black leather with yellow stitching, yellow RS logos added to heated seats, custom armrest in Alcantara and black leather, custom parcel shelf in leather and Alcantara, carbon fibre Recaro seat-backs and seat inserts, JCR lowered seat frames, Kuro Carbon seat plates, carbon A-pillar trims, carbon steering wheel, carbon centre console and radio surround, carbon door handles, carbon boost pod, carbon handbrake handle, carbon glasses case, carbon interior light, carbon door sills, carbon grab handles, carbon clocks/display, home-made back nav/radio and buttons, Airtec short-shifter, SAS interior lighting and black buttons, SAS needles, yellow KoloKoncept seat belts, home-made Vibe audio install

The chassis has been comprehensively muscled up to suit, starting with a set of KW V3 coilovers and moving onto basically the entire Summit catalogue. We're talking front and rear upper strut braces, exhaust brace, lower Big 4 brace, rear lower chassis brace, lower subframe brace, lower Middle 4 chassis brace, lower rear tie-bar sub-brace... This thing's stiffer than the testing room at Pfizer.

A driver's car as much as a show-piece, then, and Andy loves to join the Airtec guys on their annual trip to the Nürburgring, as well as attending as many UK shows as possible. Not in 2020, obviously; Covid spoiled that...

And now we arrive at the crux of the project. "I got bitten by the carbon bug," says Andy with masterful understatement.

"After having a random chat on Facebook with Kuro Carbon, I've spent a lot of time and money sending parts off to be made in real carbon fibre. I also deal with a couple of other

Andy maintains his carbon offset



"I'VE ALWAYS LIKED THEM. I THOUGHT THE FOCUS RS LOOKED SO MUCH MORE AGGRESSIVE ON THE ROAD. EVENTUALLY I GAVE UP THE RENAULTS FOR A STOCK FOCUS, AND I'VE NEVER LOOKED BACK"





friends with bespoke carbon parts.”

The carbon upgrades are rife throughout the interior, exterior and underbonnet area. And if you’re not sure what the fuss is about, here’s a fun experiment: grab a handful of carbon atoms, and bond them together into crystals arranged in a line. Repeat this a few thousand times, then bundle all the strands into a sort of tiny, untwisted rope. Now lay a load of these little ropes into a thermoset resin – epoxy, say, or polyester – cook it in the oven for a while, and voilà: you’ve just made some carbon fibre. Well, carbon fibre-reinforced polymer, to be precise.

Now you’ve got something with a very high tensile strength, low weight, high stiffness, high

temperature tolerance, low thermal expansion, and high chemical resistance – all the properties you may desire for making housings for oily machinery without adding too much mass. The benefits hardly need spelling out: making things simultaneously stronger and lighter is a total no-brainer.

Of course, being race-car tech, it also acts as a badge of honour on road weapons. So when you see it in the sort of abundance that Andy’s Focus enjoys, the link is clear: it looks fast because it is fast. The carbon is simply emphasising the point. Perhaps not every part exists here to make the car faster, but you can’t deny the impact.

The pursuit of uniqueness is what really

characterises this build. Aside from all the custom carbon, the interior retrim is also bespoke, and one-off engineering touches include the clever rear brake setup, masterminded by Wizard Engineering to run six-pot callipers – something that took a good couple of weeks, necessitating custom-engineered carrier arms and fixings to integrate a Hi-Spec e-handbrake setup.

The self-styled Carbon Edition name is fully justified – a true one-off, sprinkled with the racy weave, and sporting all sorts of performance-oriented upgrades. Andy’s switch from Renault to Ford has been total and all-embracing, and he’s really earned that new nickname. ■

TUNING THE MK2 FOCUS ST

A bright orange ST epitomises the fast Ford tuning scene, and because they respond so well to modifications it's almost impossible to leave one stock. Here's what to upgrade

Words JAMIE KING / Photos FAST FORD ARCHIVE



ENGINE

The growling turbocharged five-pot found in the Mk2 ST (and RS) has become the signature soundtrack for a generation of fast Fords. While it has been proven to produce very big numbers (over 1000bhp has been achieved on numerous occasions), the stock engine does need some TLC to get the best out of it.

A Stage 1 software upgrade with no other mods should see you with around 260bhp, but add intercooler, air filter and exhaust upgrades, and circa 300bhp is easily achieved. You'll want an uprated breather and will also need to relocate the ECU if fitting an induction kit.

Beyond this, you'll need a block mod (a worthy investment on any ST, tuned or stock) or a stronger RS block. With some bigger RS injectors and a stronger turbo actuator, that will take you to around 340bhp, which is getting close to the limits of the stock rods and pistons. RS internals will safely see you into the 400s, and you'll need the RS's BorgWarner turbo to get you there too.

Around 420bhp is generally considered the limit for OE RS stuff, after which point you'll be looking at the same type of forged internals, turbo and fuelling upgrades as you would for the RS. The good news is there is a wealth of tuning paths available, including several aftermarket ECU options that open a whole new world of tuning possibilities, as well providing a solid 600bhp-plus.



TRANSMISSION

The ST's Getrag M66 gearbox is a durable, reliable and super-tough unit; as long as it's kept in good health it'll not cause you any bother. The standard ST clutch, though, will give up the ghost at around 300bhp, or less if it's already worn. Swapping to a full clutch assembly (flywheel, friction plate and pressure plate) from the Mk2 RS is a great OEM upgrade and is perfect for most road-going STs, capable of circa 450bhp before it causes any real problems. Of course, for those running more power, or driving more aggressively on track, there are a number of aftermarket upgrades, ranging from heavy-duty organic items right through to multi-plate paddle clutches.



STYLING

The ST looks good in standard trim (and many owners like to keep things just as the factory intended), and subtle additions like splitters, lowline kits, bonnet vents and spoiler extensions are all in keeping with the OEM-plus vibe.

But the ST is merely a blank canvass for you to express your personality, and you can go as crazy as you like; wide-arch kits and WRC-inspired wings and bumpers are all readily available to give the Focus an adrenaline shot, while many owners tend to top these off with custom-designed wraps to really stand out.



BRAKES

The ST has 320mm discs at the front as standard, which are pretty big for a road car. A decent set of pads is the first step, at around £100-200, and when coupled to performance discs, decent fluid and braided lines, provide enough stopping power for most road-going STs.

Of course, for track cars and those looking for the pose-factor, there are plenty of big brake kits available from the likes of AP Racing and K-Sport, and Collins Performance even offers a kit using the Brembos from the Mk3 Focus RS.



WHEELS AND TYRES

The stock ST alloys are heavy, and they've been fitted to everything from Mondeos to Transit Connects. Ditch them in favour of some lightweight motorsport rims for a reduction in unsprung weight, better brake cooling and better style. Stock sizes are 8x18in with a high offset of ET52.5, but there's room to reduce this to around ET42-45 – even an increase to 8.5in width will fit without causing issues. Of course, if you've fitted a wide-arch kit, you can go even wilder and more aggressive on the offset too.

SUSPENSION

What do you want from your ST? There's a suspension package to suit.

Simple lowering springs offer more pleasing aesthetics and a sportier ride, and are ideal for a fast-road Focus when combined with a matched set of sports dampers.

Coilovers tend to feature firmer settings and stiffer springs that give fantastic track performance, but be careful not to over-spec for your desired use; many coilover kits designed for road and occasional track are fantastic, but using full-blown race-spec dampers on the road can be too much of a compromise.

The Mk2 ST also responds well to a set of uprated anti-roll bars. Many are adjustable, altering the effective stiffness of the bar; start at the softest setting and work up from there.



Subtlety. It's a much underrated quality in this day and age. With the hysterical excitability of social media, constant connectivity and fashionable one-upmanship, it would be easy for us all to end up with extreme, shocking and jarring cars that push the envelope of uniqueness to an absurd degree, wearing 14in-wide neon-blue split-rims and rhodium-plated Recaros, with carbon-fibre bodywork hand-woven by the Kevlar-tipped fingers of virginal sirens.

But thankfully there's a hardcore of tuners that keep us balanced, focusing on performance above all else and allowing a more natural aesthetic flow to emerge – the purposeful look

that's achieved by the judicious application of quality upgrades. With this level-headed approach, equilibrium is restored and reason returns to the scene. Ostentatiousness is happily balanced by subtlety, the yin and yang of the modifying world.

Now, you might argue that suggesting a car with bright red side stripes, a low-slung gait and a distinctly rorty exhaust rasp is in any way subtle might be pushing the boundaries of what the word means, but stick with it.

You see, what Liam Merrick has achieved here is to start with a strong base – a Mk3 Focus ST-2 – and make it exponentially stronger where it matters. This all slots into place when we learn that, as well as being his daily driver, Liam takes

the ST out on track whenever he's able, including an annual pilgrimage to the Nürburgring.

He explains, "This is the fourth car I've owned since passing my test, and they've all been modified in a track-day manner. I started out with a Mk3 Fiesta, then a Mk5 Fiesta Zetec-S, which had a 150bhp Ford Racing Puma engine; that was followed by a Mk6 Fiesta ST150, in Mountune MP185 spec with bucket seats and so on. And now this."

The Focus ST feels like a natural progression for somebody who'd been eagerly and consistently honing his skills in this fashion, although Liam hadn't planned on buying such a thing at all.

He recalls, "I wasn't actually looking for →



EVERYDAY HERO

Liam Merrick's Mk3 ST is just about stealthy enough to sneak through the everyday commuter traffic. But unleash it on track, and its inner superhero is revealed...

Words **DAN BEVIS** / Photos **ADE BRANNAN**





Ultra-rare Rays alloys weigh in at just 9kg each



The ST is fitted with plenty of parts from US-based Cobb Tuning

another car. I was in a local Ford dealership in West Bromwich, picking up a family member's new car, and I saw this Mk3 ST-2 sitting there as a manager's special. It was a very good price; completely standard and with just 10,000 miles on the clock. And having owned naturally-aspirated vehicles for all those years, I thought it was about time for some boost."

Fair enough, that's the sort of logic we can get on board with. And it's fair to say that Liam embraced the world of forced induction wholeheartedly, as it was only two months of ownership before he blew it up.

Of course, it was a clear green light to upgrade. The engine was duly rebuilt with forged pistons and rods, the car being off the road for around a month, at which point Liam started working at Co-ordSport as motorsport/performance parts distributor – which obviously helped the project's progression immeasurably.

He says, "This led to my Focus having demonstration parts supplied by COBB Tuning in Texas, all for test purposes. The car was fitted with a COBB carbon induction kit, intercooler and hard pipes, 3in cat-back exhaust system, rear motor mount, short-shifter, and a COBB Accessport. With the Stage 3 map installed, the ST was producing around 315bhp."

A pretty robust way to level-up, for sure – but Liam wasn't done yet. Turbosmart UK then offered to equip the Focus with a recirculation valve and actuator, and with the engine rocking a formidable spec, he turned his attention to the chassis. Now, it's key to remember that this car is a daily driver rather than an out-and-out track beast, but it does also need to hold its own on the racetrack, so Liam had some thinking to do.

In the end, he concluded that the ultimate fusion of road manners and circuit agility would come from a set of lowering springs and anti-roll bars from Whiteline, which acted to augment the natural talents of the chassis. A set of Rays wheels were then stirred into the mix – a real rarity in the Ford world, he was lucky to pick up a set of 57 Xtreme wheels in a 5x108 PCD, which are seriously featherweight at just 9kg apiece. Combined with a set of sticky Nankang NS-2Rs they work beautifully with a setup that was becoming increasingly refined.

Liam says, "In late 2018, I decided to swap to a hybrid turbo from AET Motorsport. Naturally, I then needed to get it mapped again to suit the hardware, so Motorsport Developments (MSD) in Blackpool was my first port of call. With the COBB Accessport already installed, MSD was able to use this to remap the car, and I left it with the team for a week so they could get it perfect. After 94 runs on the dyno, it made 355bhp and 385lb.ft, which I was more than happy with.

"Afterwards, MSD's Stewart Sanderson sat down with me for about two hours before I collected the car and explained exactly how and why it was mapped in the manner it was; MSD's



Fully built EcoBoost serves up 355bhp and 385lb.ft

“THE CAR WAS FITTED WITH A COBB INDUCTION KIT, INTERCOOLER AND HARD PIPES, 3IN CAT-BACK EXHAUST SYSTEM, REAR MOTOR MOUNT, SHORT-SHIFTER AND A COBB ACCESSPORT”

after-service is second to none – Stewart and I still have chats about the car to make sure it’s all running okay.”

A natural consequence of putting more power through any drivetrain and chassis is that you’ll keep finding bits that need upgrading as the new forces operate outside the stock parts’ tolerances, and, sure enough, with 385lb.ft to cope with the OE clutch cried ‘enough’. But it was easily remedied with a swap to a Mk3 RS item, supplied by Pete at Demon Performance Centre. Liam also saw fit to install a Quaife ATB diff to quell the torque-steer and help to get the power down effectively. The front lower arms were poly-bushed for good measure.

Liam adds, “The most recent items to really help cope with the extra power are the KW V3 coilovers, and the upgraded brakes. The car now has Brembo four-pots at the front with two-piece 350mm discs, and a conversion to 300mm rears.”

All of which must make the daily commute pretty entertaining, as well as fully lighting up the potential on those Nordschleife runs. Liam’s

Focus may look relatively subtle, but that really is its trump card: to the uninformed observer it might simply pass unnoticed as a white five-door commuter hack.

But the fact that the number plate says ‘BYE’ is significant – hiding beneath the demure exterior is a heart of pure darkness. A full-on track build, masquerading as something mild-mannered and sensible. Liam’s playing the subtlety game masterfully. These still waters run deep. ■



MK3 FOCUS ST

ENGINE 1999cc EcoBoost, Manley forged pistons and rods, King Race Bearings (mains and rods), ARP stud and nut kits (mains and head), AET hybrid turbo, COBB carbon induction kit, COBB intercooler with hard pipes, COBB 3in cat-back exhaust system, Turbosmart recirc valve, Turbosmart actuator, Mishimoto alloy radiator, Mishimoto oil cooler, Mishimoto oil breather, Mishimoto silicone coolant hoses, COBB rear engine mount

POWER 360PS (355bhp), 522Nm (385lb.ft), mapped by Motorsport Developments via COBB Accessport

TRANSMISSION COBB short-shift, Mk3 Focus RS clutch, Quaife differential

SUSPENSION KW V3 coilovers, Whiteline front and rear anti-roll bars, poly-bushed front arms

BRAKES Front: Mk3 Focus RS Brembo callipers, EBC two-piece discs (350mm); rear: EBC USR slotted discs (300mm), upgraded carriers; EBC Bluestuff pads, Goodridge braided lines

WHEELS & TYRES 8.5x18in ET38 Rays 57 Xtreme wheels (9kg apiece), 235/40x18 Nankang NS-2R tyres

EXTERIOR TRC Low Line splitter kit, DMB Graphics custom gel badges, COBB side stripes

INTERIOR ST-3 leather interior, COBB gearknob, COBB Accessport handset



As Ted Rogers used to say, 3,2,1...

THE HISTORY OF THE FOCUS RS

As the rumour mill gets ready to go into overdrive with talk of a fourth-generation RS, we look back at the complete history of the Focus RS – so far...

Words **DAN WILLIAMSON AND JAMIE KING** / Photos **FORD UK & FAST FORD ARCHIVES**

The RS badge was almost extinct. It had been six long years since the Escort Cosworth was killed, and Ford had seemingly dropped off the motorsport radar. Mid-sized RS models had been the stars of Ford brochures dating back to the 1970s, and a Focus was running in the WRC, but by the 2000s it looked like the Rallye Sport brand was gone for good.

So, thank God for the Focus RS.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

Like most Mk1 Fords, the first-generation Focus RS was a pure, uncompromising success. It was built for one reason, and it was specced perfectly for the job.

The reason? A tribute to Ford's assault on the World Rally Championship (WRC). The spec? A

delicious mixture of motorsport-style goodies, supplied by the exact-same manufacturers that equipped WRC cars. Yummy.

The Mk1 RS was conceived as a 2000 concept, and there were rumours of it being the Focus RS Cosworth – remember, Ford owned Cosworth at the time and the legendary tuner was heavily involved with the WRC car's 2.0-litre YC engine – but the road-going RS was developed by Ford under the supervision of Blue Oval supremo Jost Capito, with assistance from Tickford.

Led by John Wheeler (designer of the RS200), a team of 60 mainstream engineers worked on the project, tagged as 'the closest you can get to a road-going version of Colin McRae's Focus World Rally Championship contender.' Which was pretty handy, really, considering the wild Scot himself (alongside super-talented Carlos Sainz)

tested the RS throughout its gestation.

Driver enjoyment was given top priority, which led to 70 per cent of the Focus's components being uprated, and 521 unique parts differentiating the RS from its three-door Focus hatchback basis.

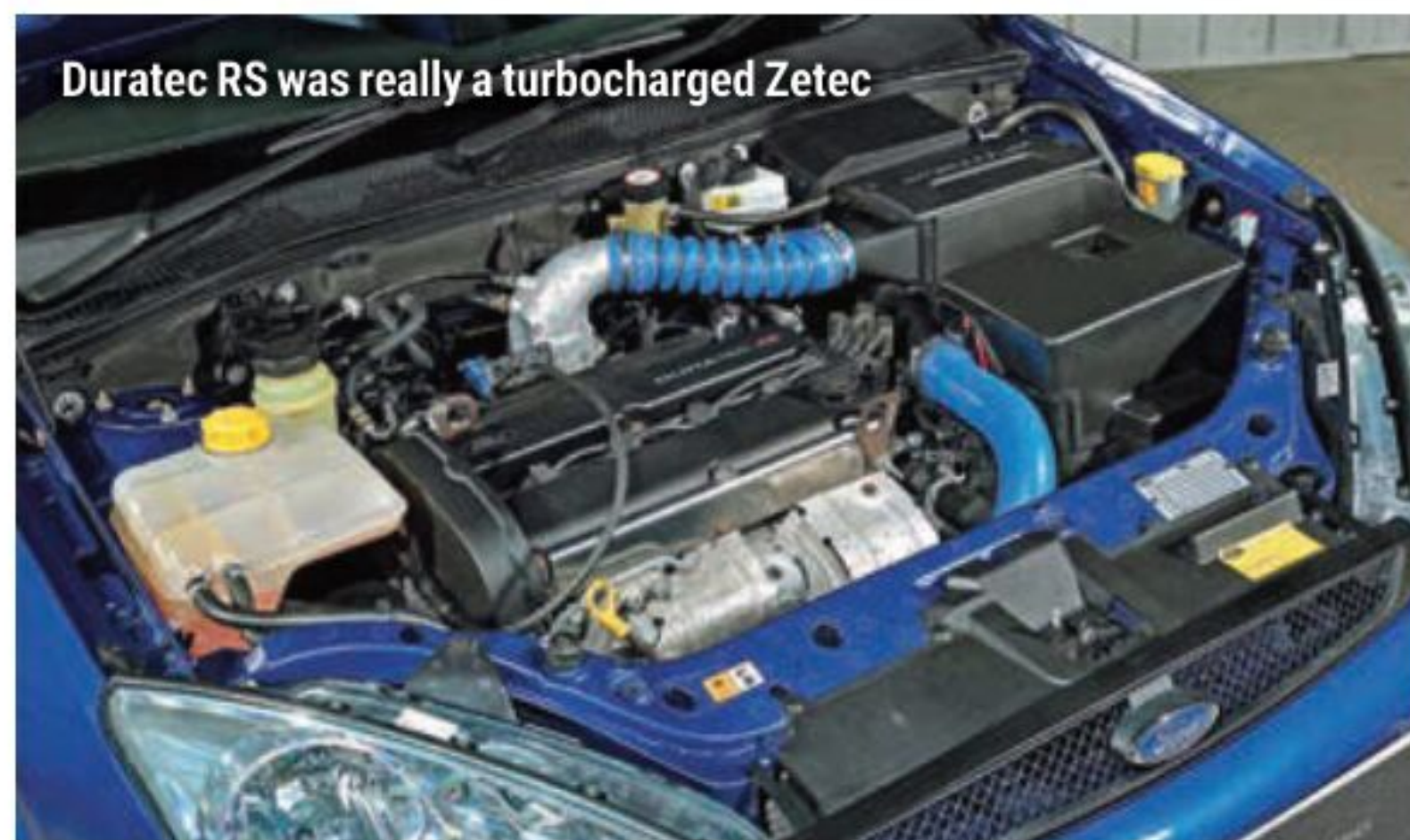
Under the bonnet was a so-called Duratec RS powerplant, in fact a radically reworked Zetec E 2.0-litre complete with oil-spray-cooled forged pistons and uprated head. It was decompressed to 8:1 to withstand a custom-built Garrett GT2560LS turbo with stainless steel housing, running 1-bar of boost. An air-to-water intercooler (chargecooler) was added, along with high-flow fuel pump and injectors that were managed by Ford's EEC-V system. Power was quoted as 212bhp, but most factory cars had at least 10bhp more.

The regular MTX75 five-speed gearbox benefited from close ratios and short shifter, along with shot-peened cogs, an AP Racing uprated clutch and beefier driveshafts to handle the RS's new-found torque. Best of all (or worst of all, if you're a pompous performance car magazine), a Quaife Automatic Torque Biasing differential was fitted to aid traction and cornering ability.

Not that the RS needed much assistance. Ford had transformed the Focus Mk1's already-amazing chassis into a work of wonder. Its track was widened 65mm/95mm front/rear to match WRC tarmac spec, there were new Sachs dampers and 25mm lowered springs, plus strengthened suspension arms, bushes and crossmember. The original 21mm front anti-roll bar was replaced by an 18mm part to improve



RS Mk1 was the original – and some still say the best



Duratec RS was really a turbocharged Zetec



RS boasted WRC-inspired bumpers and wide track

“A TRIBUTE TO FORD’S ASSAULT ON THE WRC... THE SPEC? A DELICIOUS MIXTURE OF MOTORSPORT-STYLE GOODIES, SUPPLIED BY THE EXACT-SAME MANUFACTURERS THAT EQUIPPED WRC CARS”

traction, and geometry was revised to provide negative camber; the RS was claimed to have the quickest steering of any Ford road car.

RALLY INSPIRED

Braking was a revelation, with Brembo four-pot callipers and 324mm ventilated discs up front, 280mm rear discs and specially-tweaked ABS. Around the stoppers was a set of WRC-lookalike OZ 8x18in alloys and Michelin 225/40R18 tyres, which were stuffed beneath pumped-up wheelarches, matched to rally-style bumpers, side skirts and roof spoiler. The standard colour was Imperial Blue, and there were no options.

The motorsport theme extended to the cabin, where black/blue alcantara-trimmed Sparco-badged (but Ford-built) bucket seats and steering wheel were joined by an alloy gearknob, pedals and handbrake lever. In the centre, a carbon-fibre console was fitted with a green starter button and individually-numbered plaque. →

Finally on sale in October 2002, each RS was built alongside the regular Focus in Saarlouis, Germany. Despite a mere one-year run, minor changes appeared during production: a pink grommet on the throttle cable to reduce vibration, 'engine start' stamped around the starter button, extra stitching on the front seat bases, and an engine management remap, updated from AE to AF software.

Despite the Mk1's lack of competition history, it sold fast and quickly gained a cult following. Yes, it lacked the Cosworth's extreme power potential, but tuners could still find 500bhp.

But that's not what the Focus was for. It came alive with around 270bhp, creating what some Ford fans still believe to be the ultimate Blue Oval all-rounder on road or track.

TAKE TWO

No sooner had the first Focus RS appeared than it was gone, just 12 months after launch. And it took another six years before its much-promised

successor arrived: the Focus RS Mk2.

If the first Focus RS was a little overlooked and aesthetically underwhelming, its successor was a masterpiece of image awareness. The Mk1 could have been labelled as a niche product for track-day nerds and Blue Oval addicts, but the Mk2 was a muscular daily-driver for the masses. A shouty, big-spoilered show-off that demanded attention and spat back whether you liked it or not. A proper Rallye Sport road car that could – at the time – justifiably lay claim to being the finest fast Ford of this century.

But that doesn't mean the Mk2 RS was a better car. Far from it, in fact. Whereas the Mk1 was created for ultimate driving enjoyment, the Mk2 was built to be a back-street bruiser. A thug of a hot hatchback that could drag the nation's attention back to the RS brand.

Like the Mk1, pre-production rumours of the incoming RS Focus promised four-wheel drive and a return to the Cosworth tie-in. And again, the public was disappointed – albeit not for long.

This time, the RS-badged Focus boasted pub-talk-beating power figures that burst through the 300bhp barrier, and at last there was a set of spoilers to give car-park presence – not to mention the fear factor in lesser machines' rear-view mirrors.

Yet, underneath, the Mk2 was based much more closely on a regular Focus, albeit the smooth and sharp ST225 hot hatch. Taking advantage of the ST's fine balance and fantastic five-cylinder soundtrack, the 2009 RS simply pumped up the package.

Key to the appeal was the familiar Volvo-sourced 2.5-litre powerplant, now featuring graphite-coated piston liners and a bigger Borg-Warner K16 turbo. Okay, not all RSs made the quoted output, but with an all-or-nothing power delivery the Mk2 felt substantially quicker than any standard Blue Oval we'd seen before.

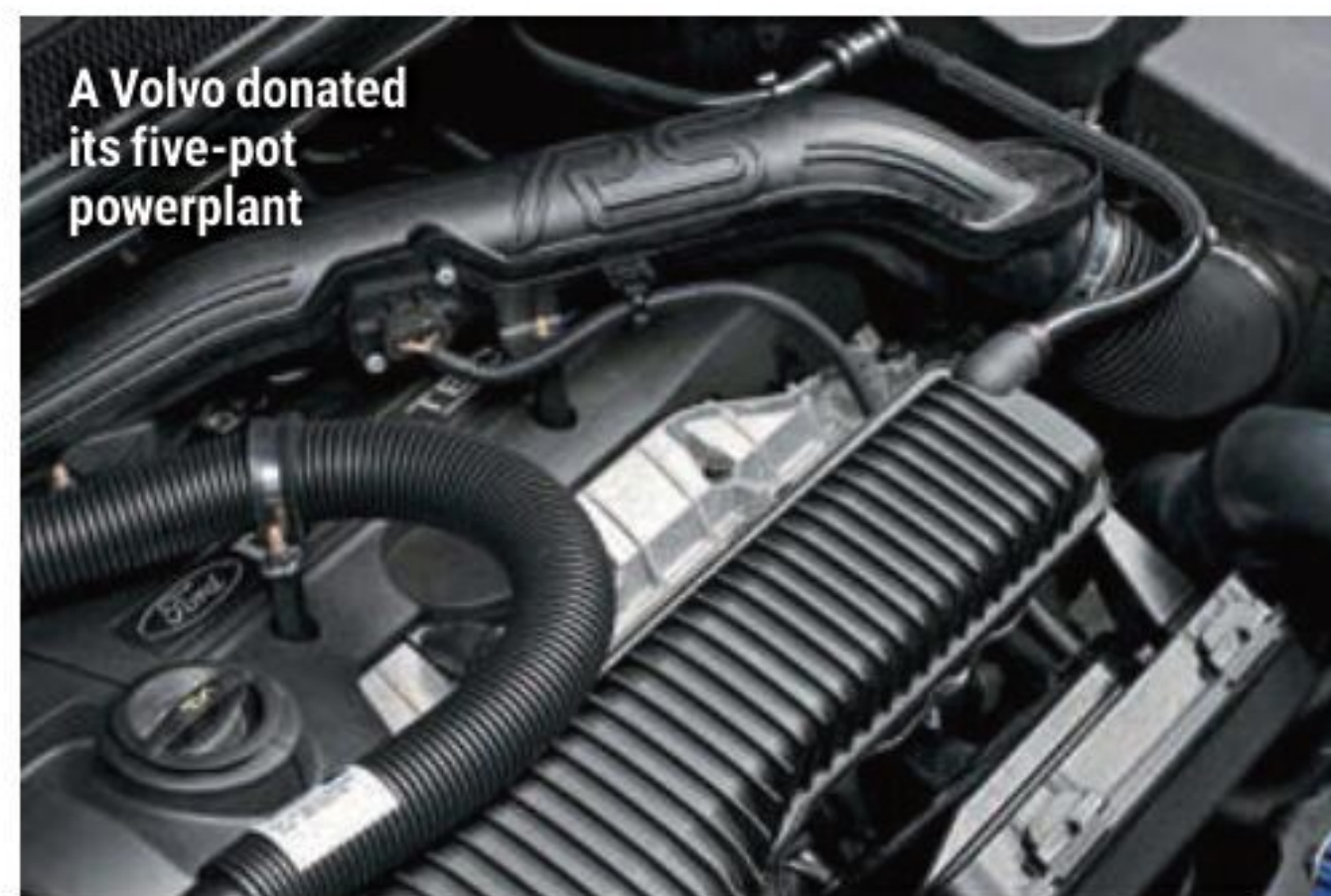
CLEVER DESIGN

Taking lessons from its predecessor, the Mk2 was equipped with a Quaife ATB differential to keep the front wheels under control, this time linked to an M66 six-speed gearbox and fancy RevoKnuckle front suspension. Torque steer was kept to a minimum, but grip levels made four-wheel drive feel redundant, and steering feedback was spot on.

Rather than bagging expensive four-pot Brembo brakes, Ford fitted massive Volvo callipers with 336mm front discs and 300mm rears, hidden behind oversized 8x19in alloy wheels; they might have done no favours for



RS bucket seats were standard in the Mk2



A Volvo donated its five-pot powerplant





RS Mk2 packed the brutal styling that was absent in its Mk1 predecessor

ride comfort, but they fitted the fashion and filled the Mk2's widened wheelarches perfectly. A full RS bodykit was also added, including get-out-of-my-way front spoiler, bonnet vents, funky rear diffuser and an enormous WRC-style wing above the tailgate. Just three colours were available: Frozen White, Performance Blue and Ultimate Green.

Typically, Ford cut corners in the cockpit, offering Recaro front seats and RS steering wheel but little else above your usual ST. Still, why bother, when buyers could be charged extra for an option pack? Luxury Pack 1 gave goodies such as climate control and key-free system,

while Lux Pack 2 meant touch-screen sat nav.

Most desirable of all was the cynically-tagged (but nevertheless very desirable) RS500 of spring/summer 2010, finished in a satin-black wrap (over Panther Black paintwork). The limited-edition of 500 cars (not including prototypes; 101 were destined for the UK) were also equipped as standard with a 345bhp Mountune MP350 conversion, black wheels, and numbered plaque on the dashboard. Sat nav and red leather seats were optional.

Production of the Mk2 RS ended in September 2010, but by that point the model's ambitions had already been achieved. It had set light to

the hot hatch market and encouraged a rebirth in Rallye Sport tuning; not only was the Mk2 astonishingly good in standard form, it was also practical and usable when pushed to 600bhp.

Maybe even best of all, the Mk2's success was undoubtedly a factor in continuing the RS brand. In turn, that led to possibly the best Focus yet: the Mk3 RS...

CONSTANT EVOLUTION

The most hotly-anticipated machine in fast Ford history, the third generation of RS-badged Focus finally hit the streets in 2016, bringing with it four-wheel drive, a big turbocharger and →

"IT ENCOURAGED A REBIRTH IN RALLYE SPORT TUNING; NOT ONLY WAS THE MK2 ASTONISHINGLY GOOD IN STANDARD FORM, IT WAS ALSO PRACTICAL AND USABLE WHEN PUSHED TO 600BHP"



Mk3 RS found fans as a real driver's car



RS Edition added black vinyl-wrapped roof

the performance to kill almost any supercar that dared to be in front on any B-road.

But not everyone was happy.

British Blue Oval fans were complaining that the new car had too many doors (it was five-door only) and too few spoilers. They wanted it to look bigger and badder than the previous Focus RS. Until, that was, they drove the Mk3...

The Mk3 proved to be not just a revelation but a motoring media sensation. In many ways, it was the longed-for successor to the much-missed Escort RS Cosworth.

Key to the Mk3's appeal was its all-new all-wheel-drive transmission system, which brought electronic trickery to the RS party. A proper six-speed manual gearbox was linked to a series of electronic clutch packs, which allowed as much as 70 per cent of the torque to be taken to the rear axle, or – if need be – the whole lot to work on just one side of the car. Coupled to four different driving modes, swappable from the centre console, it let whoever's behind the wheel choose between Normal, Sport, Track or Drift settings. Even American skidder Ken Block was involved in developing the car for a worldwide audience.

The RS's 2.3-litre EcoBoost engine was similarly international, being a revised version of the powerplant found in four-pot Mustangs. With 345bhp as standard it meant huge performance, hitting 165mph and 0-to-60mph in 4.5 seconds. And, of course, there was much more to come, with tuners tinkering with the EcoBoost to push well through the 600bhp barrier. How long their transmission systems cope still remains to be seen.

Still, such matters were merely trivial; we could enjoy the big Brembo front brakes, the sexy (optional) Recaro shell seats and funky forged 19in alloy wheels (also for special order).

The very last Mk3s rolled off the production lines at Saarlouis on 6 April 2018, but during its three-year production life there were a number of changes.

Early cars came with minimal equipment as standard (not even those sexy Recaro Sportster CS bucket seats, which were standard trim on the Mk2), with buyers having to tick all the options boxes if they wanted anything that could even compete with the less-powerful and cheaper ST-3. And even then, while a heated steering wheel and heated seats were available in other markets, UK buyers had to wait until late 2016 before they could add the Winter Pack

to their wish list. Gadgets like auto wipers, rear camera, parking sensors and adaptive front lights became standard trim on later cars, although the original £30k base price eventually ended up at £32,765 for the last orders.

SPECIAL EDITION

Never one to miss a trick, Ford employed its favourite trait of releasing last-of-the-line 'special' models. Only, with the Mk3, it was done too many times...

The RS Edition added all the goodies, along with two-tone shell seats, a Quaife ATB differential, and matt-black (wrapped) roof, rear spoiler and door mirrors. It was initially only offered in Nitrous Blue, with Ford's September 2017 press release never announcing an official quantity to be built.

Then, just before Christmas 2017, came an exclusive-to-Edition-models Race Red version – this time confirming only 300 UK cars would be available. The price had risen to £36,295, but Ford had one more trick up its sleeve; in February 2018 it announced the Heritage Edition. Fitted with all the toys plus Mountune's warranty-approved FPM375 tuning package as standard and finished in Tief Orange (Deep Orange), the Heritage Edition signalled the very final fling of Mk3 RS production, coming with a hefty price tag of £39,895. Only 50 cars were built, and unlike other Editions, the Heritage model was available only in the UK.

Finally, three Focus RS 50 Evocations were produced (one blue; two white) in a hugely cynical move by Ford – and massive sale price of £83,000. If you wondered what the next hugely collectable Blue Oval will be, look no further.

Yes, there were ups and downs – as there always are with any new car – but we can forgive the excessive oil consumption issues on some early RSs, the randomly-hissing radio, the much-talked-about head gasket problems, and the lack of a sporty three-door bodystyle.

In fact, we'll forgive the Mk3 Focus RS for almost anything. It really is that good. ■



RS Heritage Edition is a collectors' special



WWW.OC-MOTORSPORT.CO.UK



FORD TUNING SPECIALISTS



Unit 7 Ivanhurst Industrial Estate
Wickford, ESSEX, SS11 7QY
01268 906380

✉ contact@ocmotorsport.co.uk





Jamie was so impressed by the Mk3 RS he went and bought one of his own

BEHIND THE WHEEL

MK3 FOCUS RS

What's the last RS-badged Focus really like to drive? We found out...

Words JAMIE / Photos FORD UK

After years of speculation, hype, praise and criticism (mostly by those who have never even sat in the car, let alone driven it) the hotly anticipated Mk3 Focus RS landed in 2016. We were invited to drive a launch model to see what all the fuss was about.

My first impressions of the RS were very positive. Yes, it may have been criticized for having too many doors and not enough vents and bulges, but personally I actually think the Mk3 RS looks pretty tough. And there is nothing on the RS that isn't functional; if it doesn't offer any performance benefits, then it hasn't got it.

That means the huge apertures in the front bumper are all there for a reason, complete with fully functioning brake-cooling ducts, and the rear diffuser and spoiler work in harmony with

the rest of the aero package to result in a car that produces zero lift. And it does all this and still manages to be more aerodynamic than the Mk2 RS.

So, despite what the internet haters have to say, the Mk3 RS genuinely doesn't need any extra vents, winglets, or beefed-up arches – that would be akin to ordering the perfect flame-grilled rib-eye steak and then drowning it in cheap chilli sauce just to make it 'more aggressive'.

Step inside the RS and, unless you ordered the optional shell bucket seats, at first glance there is little to distinguish the RS from the Mk3 ST – especially a well-specced ST-3. But that's not necessarily a bad thing, as the ST has a pretty neat interior to start with.

Look a little closer and you start to notice some of the buttons and switches that you won't

find inside an ST. Buttons like the Drive Modes selector on the centre console, and the little damper icon on the end of indicator stalk.

But the only way you can test these gadgets is to drive the car...

So, what's the RS like to drive? Well, fire it up and immediately you know this is no ordinary Focus. The exhaust has an encouraging growl, albeit a little quiet for the hardened enthusiast. But open the taps and that growl becomes a full-on bark, complete with the pops and bangs that we all crave. In fact, Ford engineers deliberately made the car less efficient (pops and bangs on the overrun are as a result of incomplete combustion, remember) just to make it sound more exciting.

The car feels quick and precise in Normal Mode, and it's plenty fast enough for everyday

use. The surge of torque that we've become accustomed to from the EcoBoost range of engines is ever-present and gives you a real kick in the back when you plant the throttle – and then keeps you pinned there as the wave of torque continues to thrust you towards the horizon until the little yellow RS light on the dash flickers at you, telling you it's time to change gear.

And that's because, although the official figures are quoted as 440Nm (324lb.ft) the RS has an overboost function that sees peak torque raise to 470Nm (347lb.ft).

Thanks to the huge 350mm Brembos up front, stopping the RS isn't an issue either. But the real difference between the Mk3 RS and any of its predecessors (or rivals) is the way it drives.

When I first drove the Mk2 RS I was impressed by the Revo-knuckle system's ability to control understeer, but the Mk3 is in a different league. I mean, at the end of the day the

Revo-knuckle system, as good as it is, is still just a solution to an inherent flaw – front-drive cars tend to understeer.

With the Mk3, Ford ripped up all the previous workings and started again from a blank sheet, with the number one goal being to eliminate all traces of understeer. To that end, the engineers designed the Mk3 to behave like a rear-drive car, and thanks to some clever engineering they achieved the goal.

The Mk3 RS does feel nimble and precise, and you get the feeling that the back end wants to overtake the front if you're not careful – but thanks to the four-wheel drive system and some clever electronic controls, the car will never actually let this happen. Well, unless you turn everything off, that is.

But before I was brave enough to go fully disable the traction control and head straight into Track and Drift modes, I first thought I'd try out Sport mode. This leaves the damper

settings in 'normal', along with the stability/traction controls, but it does liven up the exhaust note, sharpens the steering, and gives full use of the engine's power. This is the mode most enthusiasts will use most of the time when on the road. It makes the drive a bit more exciting but without compromising any on-road comfort – you would take the kids to school in Normal mode, and then switch to Sport when you've dropped them off.

While Sport mode does make a notable difference, switching to Track mode provides another level again. The car feels stiffer, has less body roll through the corners, and the front end just goes wherever you point it – you really do notice the difference.

And then flick through the drive settings once more and you'll come to Drift mode. In all reality this may be a bit of a gimmick, but if you ever get the chance to use it (somewhere safe), it can be huge amounts of fun.

But the first rule of Drift mode is not to think of the car as a rear-drive drifter. You don't need to modulate the throttle, and you don't need to be quite as delicate balancing the throttle against the steering inputs. Instead you just chuck it into the corner and stand on the throttle – the car will then sort the rest and make you look like a drift king. All you need is to provide a bit of opposite lock to maintain the drift.

One other toy the RS comes fitted with is a launch control system. Far from just a fancy rev-limiter, the launch control adjusts the dampers, engine, and all-wheel drive settings to provide the best possible acceleration from a standing start. For the best launch you need to be aggressive and simply side-step the clutch. The car will then sort everything out and will give a phenomenal launch, and see the RS hit 62mph in 4.7 seconds.

After spending the day with the new RS I fell in love with it. Yes, there are critics who want to knock it for one reason or another, but all I would say to them is actually go and drive one before you pass judgment. I would go as far as saying it is actually the best standard Ford I have ever driven – it really is that good. ■

“GIVES YOU A REAL KICK IN THE BACK WHEN YOU PLANT THE THROTTLE, AND THEN KEEPS YOU PINNED THERE AS THE WAVE OF TORQUE CONTINUES TO THRUST YOU TOWARDS THE HORIZON”



Pre-facelift ST250 represents incredible value for money



BUYING TIPS

MK3 FOCUS ST250 & RS

Possibly the best buy in the fast Focus market right now, the Mk3 offers an excellent all-rounder in ST guise or a sure-fire future classic in the RS... And both are huge amounts of fun to drive

Words **DAN WILLIAMSON & JAMIE KING** / Photos **FORD MOTOR COMPANY**

WHY YOU WANT ONE...

- RS is quite possibly the last ever Ford to wear the Rallye Sport badge, making it a sound future investment that you can still enjoy today.
- It does everything you could ever want: shows, track days, fast road, shopping trips, and the ST even comes in extra-practical estate guise – or frugal diesel for those who don't mind sacrificing performance.
- The ST offers unbeatable bang for your buck, combining modern equipment levels and spec with potent performance in an affordable package.
- It's easily tuneable with a wealth of performance and styling upgrades available to make the Mk3 your own.

WHY YOU DON'T...

- EcoBoom: the fear of the pistons falling apart and sending a conrod straight through the block could stop you enjoying it as you really should.
- Rattly trim and flappy door seals will drive you crazy.
- Loads of delivery-mileage RSs have been stored from new by investors, so don't expect a sub-10k miler to be anything special.
- Electrics, especially the rear camera and Sync 2 system, only work when they want to – not when you need them.

HOW MUCH TO PAY

£6500 TO £10,000

Much of the lower price bracket is taken up with damaged/repaired STs, but you might find a high-mileage gem among the dross. Pay a £1k premium for an ST wagon.

£10,000 TO £15,000

Choose your spec, choose your colour: almost any type of ST250 can be picked up in this bracket, with straight big-mileage facelift models starting at £12,000.

£15,000 TO £20,000

Top money bags a late-registered ST with low miles, but shop around and almost anything should be available at 20 big ones or less. If see an RS in this bracket, question its history.

£20,000 TO £25,000

The best STs are £25k, but don't be afraid to trawl the bottom of the market for an RS – a 60,000-miler is nothing to be afraid of, but beware of victims of Drift Mode ditch visits.

£25,000 TO £30,000

Prices generally reflect age and mileage, but pay more for options, and avoid anything without Luxury Pack. An ultra-low-mileage non-Edition shouldn't be any more than £28k.

£30,000 TO £35,000-PLUS

You'll need deep pockets for an RS Edition – Blues may dip below, but a low-mileage Red Edition will command high 30s. Heritage Editions are around £60k, and RS Evocations sold for £83,000 each – now valued far more.



EcoBoost gives instant performance



Standard Recaros – here in ST-2 Tangerine Scream

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO INSURE?

Performance Mk3s sit anywhere from insurance group 34 to 36 for the ST (with advised categories of 34 for the ST-1, 35 for the ST-2, and 36 for the ST-3) and 40 to 43 for the RS (40 for the regular RS, 42 for the Edition, and 43 for the higher-value Heritage). But in the real world there won't be a massive difference in prices. Find a high-street insurer that sees the ST as a run-of-the-mill Focus rather than a turbocharged tearaway, and you'll be talking sense, but for an RS or modified machine you'll want cover that reflects the car's true value. Look towards a specialist performance-car broker offering limited mileage or an agreed-value policy and your mods fully declared. Discounts are often available for club membership, and don't forget to mention the extra security features fitted too.

WHERE DO I FIND ONE?

Plenty of STs are still in the Ford network, so try your local dealership – there's a fair chance they'll not be any dearer than non-franchised dealers, but many ST250s are sold privately, through Auto Trader, eBay and classified ads.

RS buyers are better starting their search with a reputable specialist (you'll find some of the best listed on the specialists directory on page 98), particularly if you're searching for a low-mileage machine or Edition.

Buying privately can be worrying, but if you're armed with the right knowledge (and history checks) it could be a way to bag a bargain – especially if you're seeking a modified machine (and bear in mind, many are put back to standard before sale). It also means you'll meet the owner and get an idea of how the car's been treated...



TIMELINE

JUNE 2012

Focus ST becomes available in UK, based on Focus Mk3 five-door hatchback/estate with 247bhp EcoBoost petrol powerplant.

SUMMER 2014

Focus ST production (pre-facelift) ends.

OCTOBER 2014

Facelifted Focus Mk3.5 ST 12-model range goes on sale in ST-1, ST-2 or ST-3 trim with five-door hatchback/estate bodystyles and choice of 250PS petrol or 180PS diesel powerplants. Revised, aggressive styling includes new headlamps and rectangular fog lamps. Cabin has redesigned dashboard layout and centre console. Mechanical upgrades include revised front springs, uprated dampers, stiffer front and rear suspension bushes, and recalibrated electrically-assisted steering. Options include 19in alloy wheels and 335mm front brakes.

DECEMBER 2014

Ford confirms Mk3 Focus RS is coming.

JANUARY 2015

UK deliveries begin of Focus ST TDCi.

JUNE 2015

Ken Block debuts the RS at Goodwood Festival of Speed.

JANUARY 2016

PowerShift six-speed dual-clutch automatic becomes available on ST as an extra-cost option.

First RS rolls off the production line at Saarlouis.

MARCH 2016

First RSs leave the factory at Saarlouis and are delivered to customers.

FEBRUARY 2017

Focus ST-1 discontinued. ST-2 and ST-3 continue with satellite navigation now included as standard.

SEPTEMBER 2017

RS Edition with matt-black roof, mirror caps, two-tone Recaros, carbon fibre trim, and Quaife ATB available to order.

DECEMBER 2017

Race Red version of the RS Edition announced (300 made), to be built between February and March 2018.

FEBRUARY 2018

Limited run of 50 Heritage Edition models announced.

APRIL 2018

Focus RS production stops.

JUNE 2018

Focus Mk3 ST discontinued. Replaced by Focus Mk4.

KEY POINTS

IDENTITY

It'll probably cost more to fake an ST than to buy a genuine car, but don't underestimate the importance of a full history check, if only to ensure there's no outstanding finance on the car. ST and RS Mk3s are thieves' favourites – stolen effortlessly and without damage using the signal booster method. Don't forget the basics: check the VIN on the logbook tallies with the VIN on the left-hand side of the dashboard (visible through the windscreen), the sticker at the bottom of the driver's-side B-pillar, and on the ECU via its OBDII port if you've access to a diagnostic code reader.

BODY

A ropey RS/ST will be obvious from a mile away, and only a clean car is worthy of your cash. Walk away from anything with scratches, dents, mismatched paintwork, kerbed alloys or – worst of all – signs of accident damage such as overspray, dodgy-looking panel gaps or creases underneath. Don't forget the Focus is a Ford, and its rear wheelarches will inevitably rust – notably where they meet the back bumper, which rubs away the paintwork and flakes it off. The RS has plastic tabs here, but it's wise to inspect the area carefully.

ENGINE

The ST's 2.0-litre has a reputation for going pop – standard 2.0 engines rarely break unless abused, but over 330bhp is asking for trouble. The most likely outcome will be piston failure, showing up as smoking, misfiring, running on three cylinders or knocking at idle. The RS has been known to fail at stock power – first, the head gasket debacle (check it's been replaced by a reputable dealer or specialist), and later the real horror stories of RS engines going bang in a big way. Religious maintenance, regular oil changes (with correct Ford-approved grade) and running on premium fuels go a long way to safeguard a standard or Stage 1 engine, but for anything over 400bhp you're dicing with death on stock internals. Forged rods and pistons are the cure, and provide foundations for over 500bhp.

TRANSMISSION

Ford's Getrag MMT6 gearbox is not quite indestructible but it's proven to cope with more torque than an EcoBoost can throw at it. The stock ST clutch will cope with around 300bhp, whereas the RS item has been used on 500bhp machines without fuss. Much is made of the RS's 4x4 transmission, but it's basically a front-wheel-drive system like the ST's but with a power take-off to the rear, controlled by the ECU and a pair of clutch packs. In the even of the rear diff getting hot or experiencing too much torque, the car reverts to FWD. A quickshift kit works wonders on the ST and RS.

SUSPENSION AND BRAKES

Like all modern performance Fords, the Mk3 tends to be on the firm side when it comes to suspension. A set of lowering springs not only reduces the ride height and resists body roll for better handling, a good set will also help improve ride quality. RS dampers have switchable track mode too, which is so harsh it's all but unusable on the street – and it's too soft to make any meaningful difference on track. Stock 320mm ST stoppers are adequate, but the RS Brembos and 350mm discs are a straight swap and offer an excellent cost-effective upgrade. A good set of pads and discs will be more than up to the job of a few track days too.

ELECTRICS

Gadgets galore, but it's unlikely you'll spot many electrical issues on a Mk3. The Focus is remarkably reliable in this respect, and any problems tend to be niggles rather than anything serious. The headlamps can fill with condensation and DRLs (daytime running lights) sometimes flicker or stop working altogether. Auxiliary gauges have been known to fluctuate, and the dual-zone climate control can be temperamental. SYNC issues also arise, the rear parking camera has a tendency to play up when wet or damp, and RSs have been known to emit a constant white noise from the speakers – the amplifier in the boot overheats if left out in direct sun for too long. Thankfully, in most cases, a software update cures all ills.

FOCUS ST250

ENGINE 1999cc turbocharged four-cylinder 16-valve DOHC EcoBoost with alloy block and head, 10.0:1 compression ratio, cast iron crankshaft, cast iron pistons, forged connecting rods, twin-independent variable cam timing (Ti-VCT), timing chain drive, Borg-Warner K03 low-inertia turbocharger, high-pressure direct fuel injection, redesigned intake, Bosch MED17 engine management, redesigned exhaust system with twin hexagonal centre-exit tailpipes

TRANSMISSION Front-wheel drive with Getrag Ford Durashift MMT6 six-speed manual 'box

SUSPENSION Front: MacPherson struts, gas-filled dampers, 10mm lowered coil springs, anti-roll bar, revised steering knuckles, uprated bushes; rear: independent control blade multi-link system, revised suspension knuckles, gas-filled dampers, 10mm lowered coil springs, revised 22mm anti-roll bar; electronic stability programme (ESP), torque vectoring control (TVC), recalibrated variable-ratio electronic power-assisted steering with quick rack

BRAKES Front: 320mm ventilated discs; rear: 271mm discs; ABS with electronic brake force distribution, optional 335mm front discs

WHEELS & TYRES 8x18in alloys and 235/40x18 Goodyear Eagle F1 tyres; 8x19in alloy wheels with 235/35x19 tyres on facelift Style Pack/Black Style Pack

EXTERIOR Focus five-door hatchback or five-door estate with ST bodykit including front bumper with fog lights, gloss-black grille, side skirts, rear bumper and rear spoiler, plus black headlight surrounds, black roof rails (estate), auto headlights (ST-2 and ST-3), rain-sensitive windscreen wipers (ST-2 and ST-3), heated windscreen (ST-2 and ST-3), (ST-3), xenon headlamps (standard on ST-3 or optional on ST-2 City Pack), rear parking sensors (facelift ST-3). Optional rear privacy glass (ST-2 and ST-3), optional glass electric sunroof (ST-2 and ST-3 hatch), optional Performance Pack/ST Style Pack adds Rado Grey wheels, red brake callipers and illuminated scuff plates (pre-facelift ST-2 and ST-3); facelift ST-3 has illuminated scuff plates, red brake callipers and Rock Metallic wheels as standard. Available in Frozen White, Race Red, Stealth, Spirit Blue, Deep Impact Blue, Tangerine Scream, Panther Black, Shadow Black or Moondust Silver

INTERIOR Recaro front seats in Lux in Charcoal Black cloth (ST-1), Protection in Lux in Smoke Storm/Tangerine Scream/Spirit Blue/Race Red (ST-2) or Windsor leather in Charcoal Black (ST-3), heated and power-adjustable front seats (ST-3), sculpted Recaro rear bench seat (ST-3), ST leather-trimmed steering wheel, ST gearknob, ST pedals, Ford Power Start button, air conditioning (ST-1), climate control (ST-2 and ST-3), keyless entry (ST-3), auto-dimming rear-view mirror (ST-2 and ST-3), Ford DAB audio (ST-1), Sony DAB audio with 4.2in display (pre-facelift ST-2 and ST-3), SYNC3 with 8in touchscreen sat nav (facelift), optional premium sound system, reversing camera, sat nav (pre-facelift), cruise control (standard on facelift ST-3), heated steering wheel, BLIS, Active City Stop and Driver Assistance Pack (ST-2 and ST-3)



SHOULD I MODIFY IT?

Yes, definitely. Both the ST and RS come alive with simple bolt-on mods, and both are supported by a fantastic tuning scene. Stick to upgrades that are easily removed if you want to sell – then you have the option to sell to an enthusiasts as is, or put it back to stock as a trade-in and sell the performance parts separately – which is what most owners have been doing.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO RUN?

More than you'd think. Don't let the EcoBoost name fool you; neither the ST or RS are particularly frugal on fuel if you're driving them hard, although the ST can easily return 30mpg-plus on a run. RS and, to a lesser extent, ST specific parts can be pricey, but many parts that tend to break or fail are shared with lesser models and are still cheap and easy to get hold of.



Mk3 RS in signature Nitrous Blue with forged rims and blue callipers

FOCUS RS MK3

ENGINE 2261cc turbocharged four-cylinder 16-valve DOHC EcoBoost with alloy block and head, 9.4:1 compression ratio, cast iron crankshaft, twin-independent variable cam timing (Ti-VCT), timing chain drive, Honeywell twin-scroll turbocharger, high-pressure direct fuel injection, redesigned intake, Bosch MEDG17-14 engine management, large-bore exhaust system with twin tailpipes

TRANSMISSION Four-wheel drive with Getrag Ford Durashift MMT6 six-speed manual gearbox, electronically-controlled AWD system incorporating Twinster rear drive unit, and Dynamic Torque Vectoring

SUSPENSION Front: MacPherson struts, uprated coil springs (33 per cent stiffer) and anti-roll bar, electronic shock absorbers with two modes (normal/track 40 per cent firmer), revised knuckles, uprated bushes; rear: independent control blade multi-link system, reinforced subframe and connecting rods, electronic dampers, uprated coil springs (38 per cent stiffer) and anti-roll bar; electronic stability Control (ESC), torque vectoring control (TVC), traction control, recalibrated variable-ratio electronic power-assisted steering with quick rack

BRAKES Front: 350mm ventilated discs with Brembo four-piston monoblock callipers; rear: 302mm discs; ABS with 20 per cent smaller module. Optional blue-painted callipers. Optional Active City Stop

WHEELS & TYRES 8x19in Ronal 20-spoke alloys and 235/35x19 Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres or optional 8x19in Dicastal 10-spoke forged alloys with 235/35x19 Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres

EXTERIOR Focus five-door hatchback with RS bodykit including front bumper with fog lights, grille, side skirts, rear bumper and rear spoiler, plus xenon headlights, adaptive front lighting, rain-sensitive windscreen wipers, heated windscreen. Optional electric sunroof, door edge protectors, and Luxury Pack comprising privacy glass, rear parking sensors and power-folding door mirrors. Available in Frozen White, Stealth Grey, Nitrous Blue, Shadow Black or Magnetic, plus Red Edition in Race Red and Heritage Edition in Deep Orange

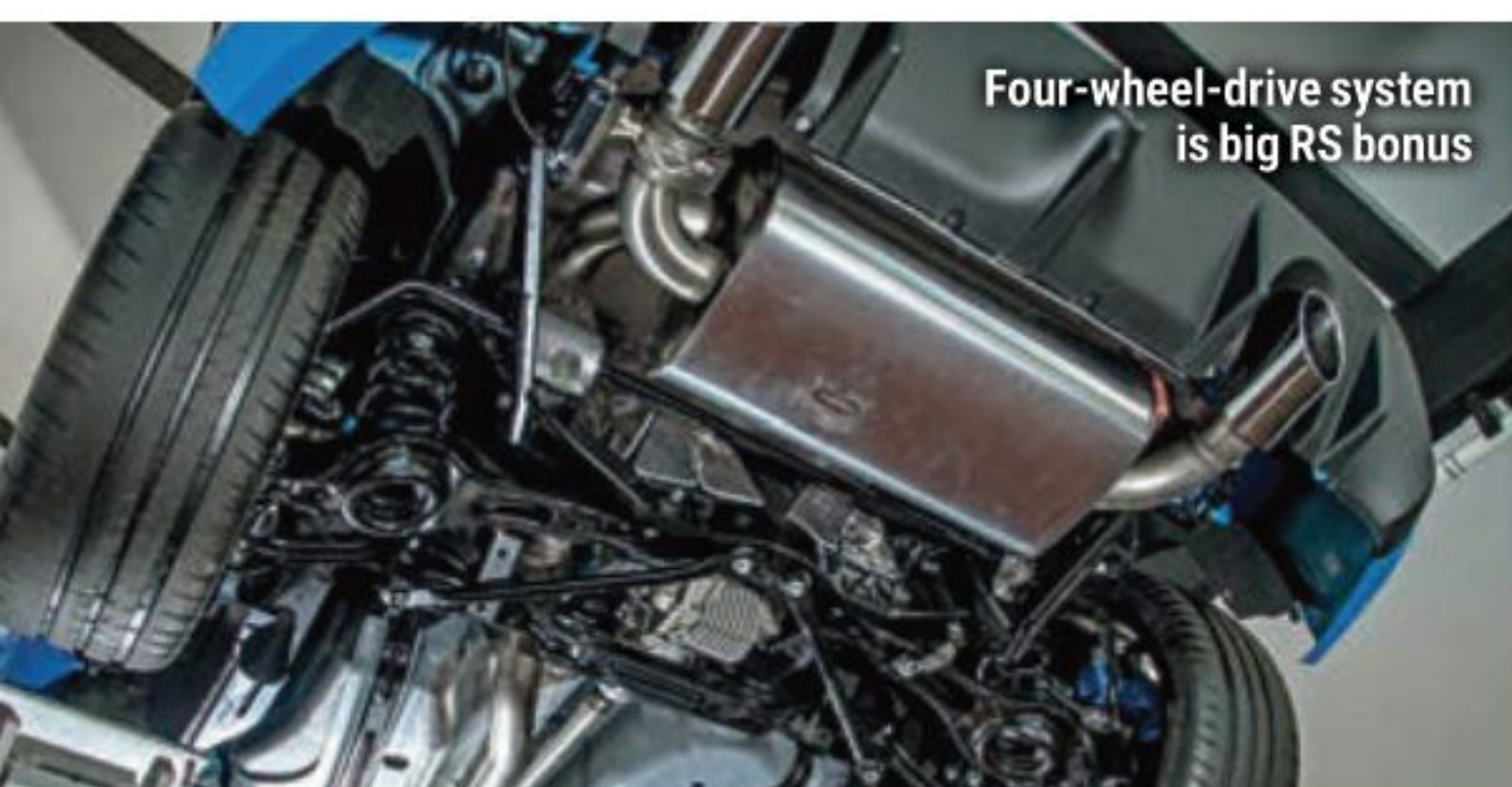
INTERIOR Recaro front seats in Charcoal Black/Salerno partial leather in Charcoal Black or Charcoal Black/Salerno partial leather in Nitrous Blue (standard with Nitrous Blue bodywork), sculptured rear bench, RS instrument cluster, gearshift light, flat-bottomed RS steering wheel, dual-zone climate control, Power Start button, auto-dimming rear-view mirror, leather RS gearknob, RS scuff plates, alloy pedals, SYNC2 with 8in touchscreen and nine Sony speakers until Aug 2016/SYNC3 with 8in touchscreen from Aug 2016. Optional Recaro shell seats (Dinamica Micro Fibre in Ebony/Salerno leather in Charcoal Black), heated steering wheel, heated (standard) seats, Active City Stop, SYNC2/SYNC3 navigation with ten premium Sony speakers, subwoofer and rear-view camera. Optional Luxury Pack with cruise control, rear parking sensors and KeyFree system



RS EcoBoost has shrugged off its reputation for going pop

WILL VALUES RISE OR FALL?

ST models will continue to drop in value in line with age, mileage, and condition (making them one of the best-value Blue Ovals of the moment), but all ST and RS values have risen in recent months as demand increased – car supermarkets that will buy any car have been offering inflated prices to meet demand. This blip is likely to drop again soon, but the RS will always hold its value.



Four-wheel-drive system is big RS bonus



TUNING THE MK3 FOCUS RS

It's the fastest Focus so far, but don't think the Mk3 RS can't be improved – it really can, and here's how

Words JAMIE KING / Photos FAST FORD ARCHIVE



ENGINE

The 2.3-litre EcoBoost found in the Mk3 RS may be better known for media hype surrounding head gasket issues and bottom end failure, but it has the potential to produce some seriously big numbers. Sadly, those internet horror stories do have an element of truth to them; if you've got an early model, make sure the head gasket issue has been rectified before you even start to think about tuning, and even then start to save up for forged pistons and conrods if you want to enjoy hard driving without fear of it all ending in an oily mess.

Having said that, the standard bottom end is generally believed to be okay for around 400bhp (although plenty of standard cars have seen failures), and a decent remap (of which there are many to choose from), air filter, intercooler and pipework, and sports cat should give around 400-to-420bhp.

For anything over 420bhp it's highly recommended to fit forged internals, and many tuners opt for a balance shaft delete at the same time.

The stock turbo doesn't have too much more to give, but there's a surprisingly wide range of bolt-on upgrades available, catering for everything from 450bhp right up to over 600bhp.

The EcoBoost's direct fuel injection can pose a restriction when searching for higher power figures but higher-flow DI fuel pumps are now available, or you can opt to fit a secondary port-injection system to supplement the fuelling when needed. Off-the-shelf tuning kits already take the Mk3 RS over well 500bhp, while full custom tuning can see you with over 700bhp, and it's constantly developing and evolving. There'll plenty more to come from the 2.3 EcoBoost in the coming years.

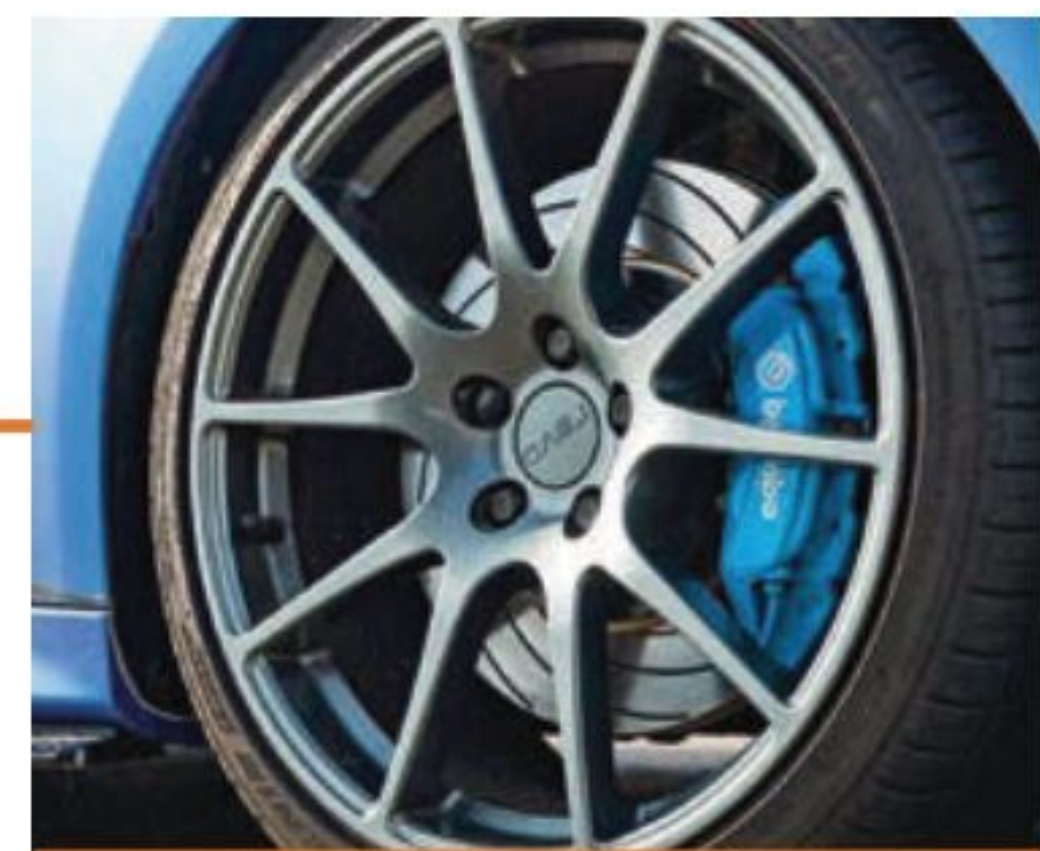


SUSPENSION

The standard ride is a little too crashy for road and too soft for track; a set of lowering springs (Eibach or H&R tend to be the preferred choices) not only drop the ride height for a better stance and improved road-holding, but actually ride better too.

Coilovers are an option for those who spend more time on track than the road, but you'll need to add a cancellation kit to maintain functionality with the drive modes. Unless you fork out for KW's DDC coilover kit; it's brilliant, works seamlessly with the different drive modes, and rides much nicer than the stock dampers... But it costs over £2700.

You can retune the OE dampers using an active suspension controller like the DSC Sport V1 to adjust the settings to better suit your needs. But at £1200 for the controller, many owners prefer to swap the OE dampers completely for a coilover-type unit with added ride height/camber/caster adjustments too.



WHEELS AND TYRES

The stock 19s are quite heavy and do look distinctly like Mondeo wheels. But then most RSs were fitted with the forged alloy option, and although over 1kg per wheel lighter than the 'standard' alloys, even these are heavier than a set of performance rims – the popular Revo RV019 is over 1kg per wheel lighter again.

The factory wheel has an offset of ET50, but this can be reduced to ET45 (or even ET40) without much concern – many owners fit 15mm wheel spacers without issue.

The RS is particularly sensitive to tyres, though; make sure the tracking is regularly checked (once a year is a good base) and keep an eye on the inner edges as it can chew through them at an alarming rate. It goes without saying to fit decent quality rubber too.

BRAKES

The RS's Brembos are fantastic stoppers and rarely need changing, even for regular track use. There's a selection of performance brake pads available too, so getting the right compound for road, track or a mix of both is easy too. Performance discs (ideally two-piece for more serious track-dayers) and braided lines complete the package. You'll be hard pressed to find the limits of the stock callipers on a full road car, even on track, but for those that really do push the limits or have gone down the track day route, big brake kits from AP Racing and Alcon are also available, typically around 380mm diameter with six-pot callipers.

STYLING

The RS already stands out from the Mk3 Focus range, but subtle additions such as a full lowline kit and splitters work well to create an aggressive OEM-plus style. Bonnet vents also tend to look the part, although you've got to have a steady hand when cutting holes in your bonnet to fit them.

Carbon fibre is proving as popular as ever with the Mk3 RS, and complete panels (bonnet, front wings, number plate panel, rear diffuser, fog light surrounds) are available from a few different manufacturers. Or for those looking for a really wild appearance, there's even wide-arch kits available for the RS.



TRANSMISSION

The RS's 4WD system uses a Getrag MMT6 gearbox, which is pretty durable even at higher power and when used hard. A set of shot-peened gears adds peace of mind, and if your RS isn't an Edition model then the first mod to make here is to fit a Quaife ATB – it makes such a difference to the way car drives, both on track and road.

The rear differential unit looks puny compared to rear axles of old, but you'll struggle to break one. Mind you, that's mainly because the clever computers prevent too much torque being delivered to it, and when it gets hot the ECU shuts it down and reverts to FWD spec. Diff cooler plates that direct cooling air across the differential are a quick and cheap add-on that are said to help in that regard.



Most people, generally speaking, enjoy a bit of fast food. It's not hard to fathom why – the appeal of wandering in off the street and having a hot meal in your hand within a couple of minutes speaks for itself, as does the familiarity. If you find yourself hungover in Margate, Malibu or Madrid, a Big Mac will always be a Big Mac.

Some of us always go for 'the usual'. Creatures of habit, we visit the same outlets on the same days like clockwork, and always order the same things. It's comforting, in a world of chaos, to have these constants.

And then, of course, there are tapas people. Those who want to sample a little bit of

everything. Why agonise over your menu choices, when you can just try it all?

The various dispositions carry across to the car modifying world. Fast food segues neatly into *Fast Ford*, and these modifiers like instant gratification – parts available off-the-shelf that offer proven results.

They may flit from car to car, but they'll want to minimise their risk. The people who opt for 'the usual'? They'll have worked out what they like and stick with it, each car operating within their comfort zone.

And the tapas modifiers? They create stuff like this Focus RS. Rather than following the established conventions of customising, owner Andy Murray has volleyed the rule book

right out of the window, drawing influences and inspiration from various car scenes and adjusting the recipe to his own tastes.

As is so often the case, it all stems from a teenage keenness to roll up the sleeves and get busy modding as soon as possible.

Andy says, "I've always been into cars, ever since I was young boy. I couldn't wait till the day came, on my 17th birthday, when I could slap the L plates on my dad's car and go for my first official driving lesson.

"I passed my test fairly quickly, and got my first car – a 950cc Peugeot 205 Junior. It wasn't the quickest car about, but I had to set about modifying it because having a standard car was simply not an option. It had to be customised in



some way or another, so I guess that's where this all started."

Those fledgling endeavours certainly lit a fire under his automotive affections, because a couple of decades-or-so down the line, Andy could be found in a pre-facelift Mk3 Focus ST-3, running around 300bhp thanks to a Stage 2 Revo remap and some healthy tweaks.

An entertaining build, for sure, but when the Mk3 RS came onto the scene he just couldn't resist. It didn't help matters that a bunch of his friends were getting RSs of their own, and before long it became too much to bear; Andy's name was signed on the dotted line in September 2016, a brand-new Stealth Grey Mk3 RS becoming his new best friend. →

FINGER-LICKIN' FOCUS

You can have buckets of fun in a factory-stock Focus RS. But ordering off-menu makes even Ford's spiciest hot hatch all the more tasty

Words **DAN BEVIS** / Photos **ADE BRANNAN**



EcoBoost serves
12-second quarters



“AFTER SPEAKING TO THE GUYS OVER AT LITCHFIELD, THEY HOOKED ME UP WITH THE COBB HANDSET AND STAGE 2 MAPS, WHICH DEFINITELY BROUGHT THE CAR TO LIFE”

And, as you’ve no doubt deduced, there was absolutely no way on earth this car was going to be staying stock. Sod the warranty – Andy didn’t want the lunchtime menu, he wanted this thing à la carte.

He laughs, “As soon as I got it home on the day I bought it, I was straight on the internet ordering parts. A good friend, Chris at KMS Scotland, helped me source some bits and fitted most of them too; after having the Mk3 ST, it was quite easy to look for the parts I was wanting, due to both cars having the same platform.

“And then, after a few months, I decided I wanted a bit more power out of the 2.3.”

Well, that’s no surprise. The RS is, of course, a formidable machine, and its mighty swells of power in stock form would be more than enough to keep most petrolheads happy, but Andy’s got form here. Too much ain’t enough. So once again he dived head-first into some expert research, plumping for a Revo Stage 1 remap paired with an uprated K&N air filter.

He says, “That certainly gave the car a bit more poke. But yes, after a little time I was after even more.

“I decided to upgrade the intercooler, fit an uprated exhaust system with decat, and an induction kit. After speaking to the guys over at Litchfield, they hooked me up with the Cobb handset and Stage 2 maps, which definitely brought the car to life – the way it should have left the factory – so it was all smiles-per-miles.”

The specification was looking pretty rugged by this point, with the various engine mods (including quite a lot of the Mountune catalogue) adding up to a thoroughly respectable 415bhp – good enough for a 12.7-second quarter-mile time, which puts it toe-to-toe with the likes of the Mercedes C63 AMG and the Ferrari California. Not bad company to keep.

But it’s not all about haring for the horizon. This Focus looks pretty damned tasty when it’s sitting still, and that’s thanks in large part to the mind-warping colour scheme.

Andy explains, “It’s had a few changes over the years with some graphics, but I really wanted something a bit different.

“Following a chat with Alan at Ultimate Customs, I decided on the 3M Flip Psychedelic wrap, as well as some Roush vents and an Airtec spoiler extension. I had my OZ Superturismos redone in Shadow Chrome, which I think really suits the car. The new look certainly gets plenty of attention anywhere it goes.”

No kidding. The way the light bounces off that TVR-like chameleon skin is a properly manic. Every surface is a different shade of mental.

The final (or, at least, most recent) order of business was to address the interior. Andy had noticed that after a few years of ownership, the Recaro shell seat bolsters were starting to show a bit of unsightly wear, which was all the impetus he needed.

He continues, “I spoke to Andy at Interior Mods, and we decided that a combination of black and grey leather was the way to go, topped off with some tasteful diamond stitching. I’m really chuffed with the way it came out.”

As well he should be. This off-menu approach has altered the recipe of the RS to reimagine it as something even more delicious: piquant, satisfying, and just a little bit spicier.

It’s like a Happy Meal box full of rib-eye steak, and it’s tossing Andy’s salad on a daily basis. ■

MK3 FOCUS RS

ENGINE 2261cc EcoBoost RS, Airtec induction kit with K&N filter, Radium dual catch can and baffle plate, Mountune recirc valve, Mountune big boost pipes, Mountune sound suppression chamber, Mountune PTU brace, Mountune roll restrictor, Airtec front-mounted intercooler, Scorpion turbo-back non-res valved exhaust system, carbon fibre engine covers, Cobb handset with Litchfield Stage 2

POWER 415bhp; quarter-mile: 12.7s

TRANSMISSION Factory RS MMT6 six-speed gearbox with RS all-wheel-drive

SUSPENSION H&R lowering springs

BRAKES Front: Focus RS Brembo four-pot callipers with Mountune 350mm grooved discs and Ferodo DS2500 pads; rear: Focus RS factory callipers with Mountune grooved discs and Ferodo DS2500 callipers

WHEELS & TYRES 8.5x19in OZ Superturismo LM alloys with ET45, finished in shadow chrome, Michelin Pilot Sport 4 235/35x19 tyres

EXTERIOR Wrapped in 3M Gloss Flip Psychedelic (original paint: Stealth Grey), TRC front splitter and side skirts, Rallyarmour flaps, smoked sequential mirror indicators, smoked sequential LED tail lights, Airtec spoiler extension, Roush bonnet vents, under-car LEDs

INTERIOR RS Recaro shell seats, custom retrim in grey/black leather with diamond stitching, blue LED footwell lights



Power, performance and poise:
an RS grand slam





The Focus ST can double up as comfortable cruiser or pants-on-fire B-road blaster at the flick of a switch

BEHIND THE WHEEL

MK4 FOCUS ST

*Does the fourth-generation fast Focus live up to expectations?
We get behind the wheel to find out...*

Words **DAN TRENT** / Photos **FORD MOTOR COMPANY**

The ST has always played underdog to the RS, but the latest Focus ST is the real deal, and with no fourth-generation RS to battle against, the Mk4 ST is more than a match for the Mk3 RS on many levels.

The engine is an evolution of the 2.3-litre EcoBoost, sharing fundamental architecture and breeding with that in the previous RS. It's got a twin-scroll turbo, anti-lag technology inspired by the GT and F-150 Raptor, and delivers 276bhp and a thumping 310lb.ft of torque. Basic stats include 0-to-62mph in 5.8 seconds, top speed of 155mph and a claim by Ford it can go 'toe to toe' with an RS over the quarter-mile, despite only being front-wheel drive.

It drives through a BorgWarner-supplied FXD

'front cross differential' you'll hear described by many – Ford included – as an electronic limited-slip differential or eLSD. It's not really, given its clutch pack is distinct from the actual differential, and offers proactive torque vectoring to improve traction without the need for ESC-driven intervention from the brakes.

The diff settings – along with continuously controlled damping and steering/throttle response settings – are controlled by driving modes familiar from other Ford Performance products, ranging from Slippery/Wet to Normal and Sport. The engineers responded to customer feedback to make the step from Normal to Sport more decisive than before.

Opt for the Performance Pack and you get an even sharper Track mode with another level

of damping stiffness, looser leash for the ESC, super-aggressive map for the 'diff' and sharper bite still for the steering and throttle. In addition to the standard flat-shift function you also get rev-matching for downshifts and launch control – it costs just £250 extra, but is sadly not available with the ST estate.

Gripped in part-leather Recaros, the interior is perhaps a little sober but feels well-built, the fat steering wheel and stubby little gear lever letting you know you're in something more special than a regular Focus. There's certainly plenty of standard kit, but the only bits you'll really want to know about are the Sport button and mode switch, both now on the wheel and no more than a thumb stretch away.

Left alone and the ST feels, well, as normal as

the mode setting suggests. Sure, the ride feels a little choppy at town speeds but is way better than a Fiesta, and the throttle and steering have enough slack in their response to mooch about on the commute, school run or motorway without feeling you've compromised too far in usability. Dare we say 'mature' in the context of a Ford Performance product? Possibly so.

Fear not, though. Because there's a whole different Focus a button push away. You feel it first in the steering, which snaps to attention and immediately makes the ST feel alert and ready for action. It's fast, smooth and responsive but there's no danger of the rest of the car being left behind.

The piped-in engine sound in Sport isn't entirely authentic but gets you in the mood, and the previous mushiness in the accelerator is replaced by real urgency. And the exhaust note gets more meaningful, thanks to a little extra fuel through the injectors and occasional pops and bangs that result.

"FAITH IN THE FRONT END AND A NEAR TOTAL LACK OF UNDERSTEER MEANS YOU CAN GO BARRELLING IN, ALL GUNS BLAZING"

It still feels – and sounds – turbocharged but the extra swept capacity means it has reserves to lean on before the boost comes in. In on-off throttle situations the anti-lag holds the throttle open for up to three seconds, keeping the turbo spinning for response when you get back on the accelerator – ideal for moments where you want a quick confidence lift without killing boost.

At over 1500kg the ST isn't the lightest and it doesn't erupt out of the blocks like some. Where it does score is in the speed it carries, and the confidence you have in maintaining your pace whatever the road is doing. Faith in the front end and a near total lack of understeer means you can go barrelling in, all guns blazing, confident it's not going to push on.

And if you're confident on the throttle, the front axle is ready to pull you into the turn on the power. It's not quite the helping hand from the rear as you get in an RS. But given how much torque is going through the front tyres, the ST has huge traction, proactively hauling itself out

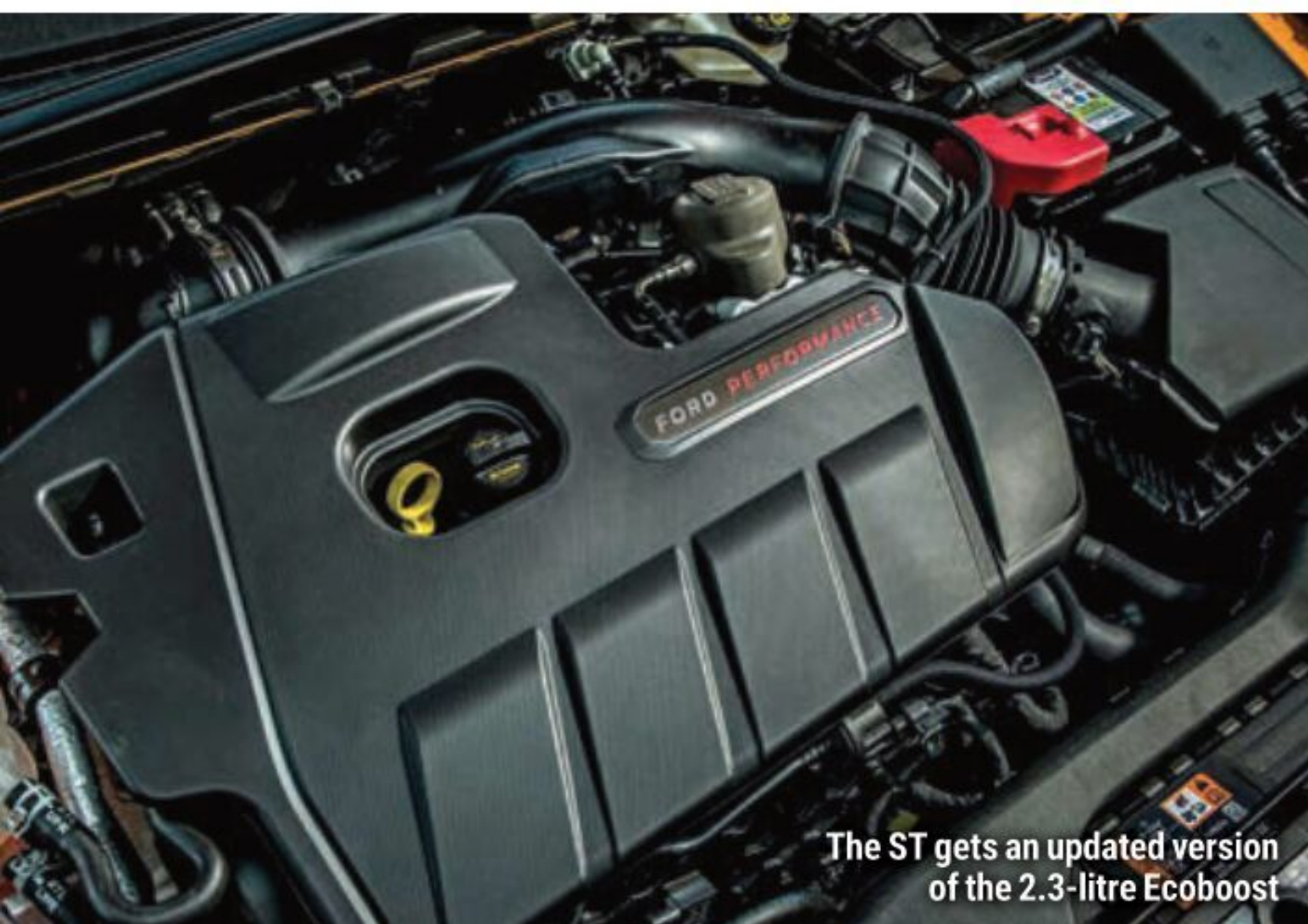
of turns without even a flicker of ESC light. And it's the same no matter what surface you're on.

Track mode isn't intended for the road. But, having done the sensible thing and opted for it, you'd be daft not to explore how it takes the ST to an even higher level. The stiffer damper setting keeps the car flat for an even sharper feel.

The best setting for really appreciating the car? That will depend on the road, your tastes and even your mood. There's a whiff of artificially enhanced sportiness in Sport and Track that risks over-egging the experience at times, to the extent Normal can actually feel more natural, flowy and fun, especially on a bumpy B-road or similar. Saying that, there are times when you want to go full pants-on-fire and, if that's your fancy, the sharper modes deliver something closer to RS than ST.

It's all there, meaning you're in effect getting two Fords for the price of one and a wider range of ability than anything that's gone before. And with the new facelifted version about to land, crammed with even more tech and what many consider to be better front-end styling, things are looking good for the future of the fast Focus.

Will Ford decide to build an RS version of the Mk4? Perhaps not. But is there really any need, when the ST does everything so well? ■



The ST gets an updated version of the 2.3-litre EcoBoost



The interior is a step up from previous fast Fords



FULL FOCUS

We've not yet seen many modified Mk4 STs, but Lucinda Lemmon is paving the way with her fruity Focus

Words **SIMON HOLMES** / Photos **JASON DODD**

It may seem to be an easy process, but people often forget that it's hard modifying a new car, especially when it happens to be a brand-new model and a generation that no one's got their hands on yet.

Not only does it take some guts to start swapping parts on a car that's only just rolled off the production line, there's little time to appreciate the car in its standard form. Then there's the matter of the limited parts availability early on, which often becomes the biggest issue of all for anyone thinking of improving their brand-new Ford.

Thankfully, some tuning brands such as Airtec Motorsport are quick on the uptake to develop new product ranges, and for Lucinda Lemmon and her Mk4 Focus ST, the timing of that process just happened to be perfect.

The company was actively on the search for



a new ST to develop parts and test products on, and a chance encounter meant Lucinda's car was chosen. The good fortune meant that before she knew it, Lucinda would be the proud owner of one of the most modified Mk4 STs in the country, which features various improvements and enhancements above and below the surface.

As expected, the story of Lucinda and her modified Fords began long before this car came along, as she's owned a few Fords over the years, including a Ka, a Mondeo, a Fiesta ST150 and a Mk3 Focus ST. Most of them featured a few modifications, although the ST150 was more extensively modified.

When the Mk4 Focus was released, Lucinda found herself drawn to the new model, although it took time to win her over.

She admits, "To be honest, I didn't really like the Mk4 when it first came out. But with my job I get to drive many cars, and the more I drove →





Induction kit adds zing



Juicy strut brace



Sounds fruity



“IT’S SO MUCH FASTER THAN ANY OF MY PREVIOUS CARS, AND IT BRINGS A HUGE SMILE TO MY FACE EVERY TIME I DRIVE IT”

the new model, the more I fell in love with it; so much that I had to have one.”

True to her word, Lucinda took the plunge and decided to put her order in for a new Focus, but with the latest ST announced in perfectly timed fashion, she was one of the first to reserve the new hot hatch.

She then patiently awaited its arrival, but by the time it turned up she didn’t really get a chance to experience the new purchase from behind the wheel.

She says, “I hardly drove the car before I started modifying it. I had the car a few months but, with my husband driving it, working hard and lockdown, I didn’t really get a look in before the mods began.”

The fact the modifications even came about was solely down to Lucinda’s husband, Simon,

who just happened to borrow the car to collect some parts for his own modified Mk2 Focus ST from Airtec Motorsport HQ in Essex. The new ST in the car park attracted the attention of director Alan Shepherd, who was searching for a suitable Mk4 to use as a development and demo car for the company. A conversation soon turned into an appointment to get the car in, and things promptly escalated from there as other additions made their way onto the car.

Work began with an Airtec Motorsport intercooler, induction kit and intake pipe, which were all developed, test-fitted and trialed using this car. And, keen to make the most of the new additions, a Scorpion exhaust system and remap were added at the same time.

These additions dramatically improved the car’s performance, so it was wisely decided to upgrade other areas of the car to match the new-found jump in power.

As a result, the car was promptly fitted with Eibach lowering springs and a Summit strut brace, together with matching Summit anti-roll bars to help stiffen up the suspension while improving the look. A set of bolt-on spacers further added to the appearance and allowed the standard wheels to fill the arches.

The improved stance was then reinforced with the full range of Maxton Design accessories,



Lucinda enjoys the fruits of her labour



Sounds fruity



which had just been released. These included the lower front splitter, upper rear spoiler lip and matching side skirt extensions. And to nicely finish the car's exterior improvements, a custom graphics package in Lucinda's favourite contrasting purple was applied.

Safe to say, Lucinda is happy with the modifications, as they all help to improve the car in small yet effective ways.

She says, "The Focus is so much faster than any of my previous cars, and it brings a huge smile to my face every time I drive it. My favourite parts of the car have to be the Sport and Track mode buttons.

"I never intended to modify it, but like every ST owner, once you start it's like a drug and you always want more."

Sure enough, the project isn't finished yet and there are more plans under way to further improve the car. These range from wind deflectors and a Maxton Design rear diffuser to another hike in power. Also on the cards is a new set of wheels to something suitably bigger and better.

But although Lucinda and her husband enjoy the car and its increased performance, it's not just them that make use of it, as the car is also put to good work.

She adds, "I mainly do shows with the car, but

I also attend events for many charities to raise money and awareness. One of my club's main charities is Club Ausome Base, in Kent, which is for children and young adults with autism. Some of the others are Essex and Herts Air Ambulance and MIND mental health."

With more plans on the horizon, we're sure Lucinda and her Focus will be enjoyed by many in the future, while her good work will be appreciated by many more. ■

MK4 FOCUS ST

ENGINE Airtec Motorsport intercooler, Scorpion exhaust system, Airtec Motorsport induction kit, SCC Stage 1 remap, Airtec Motorsport turbo intake pipe

TRANSMISSION Airtec Motorsport quickshift

SUSPENSION Eibach lowering springs, Summit upper strut brace, Summit anti-roll bars, Eibach bolt-on spacers

WHEELS AND TYRES Standard 19in ST wheels, 235/35x19 Michelin Pilot Sport 4S tyres all round

EXTERIOR Maxton Design front splitter, Maxton Design side skirt extensions, Maxton Design rear spoiler lip, custom graphics and gel badges

INTERIOR Stock ST

TUNING THE MK4 FOCUS ST

The most recent fast Focus is perhaps the most grown-up of all, offering fast road thrills combined with a genuinely good car underneath all the frills. But here's how to make it even better

Words **JAMIE KING** / Photos **FORD UK & FAST FORD ARCHIVES**

STYLING

The Mk4 is still a new car, so most aren't ready to be stripped and become dedicated track monsters or radical show-stoppers just yet. Instead, the majority of STs will need to combine daily duties with weekend thrills, and some well-placed bolt-on aesthetic tweaks can provide just the right amount of aggression. You're well catered for when it comes to splitters, lowline kits and spoiler extensions, and these – coupled with some clever use of vinyl wrapping panels such as the roof and mirror caps – can really transform the look of a stock ST.



SUSPENSION

The continuously controlled damping system on the stock ST works perfectly well on fast road machines, adapting to suit the driving dynamics of the moment to deliver optimum suspension settings. But as with any standard mass-produced car, there's a compromise and the settings might not be to everyone's individual preference. For the vast majority, the stock electronic dampers matched with a set of quality lowering springs (costing around £200) will be all you ever need. But for those looking to fine-tune the suspension settings, or those regularly venturing onto track, a set of coilovers will allow finite adjustments of several settings. Coilover kits range from £1000 to £2000-plus, depending on spec and quality – but you'll need to add the electronic damper delete module at another £200 to allow full functionality of the drive modes. The ST Edition has coilovers fitted as standard, and the Ford Performance units (made by KW) are available to buy direct through the Ford dealer network.



BRAKES

Mk4 ST tuning is still in its infancy, so at the time of writing there aren't any off-the-shelf big brake kits to choose from. Having said that, the factory 330mm discs and twin-piston callipers are decent, and when fitted with performance pads and discs, plus some braided lines to firm up pedal feel, they are more than capable of handling fast road duties and the odd track session. As Mk4 tuning continues to evolve, though, we don't think it will be too long before 350/380mm four/six-pot big brake kits will be available.

ENGINE

The Mk4 ST shares the same 2.3-litre EcoBoost as the Mk3 RS – only updated with fancy tech like anti-lag technology – and, so far at least, is proving to be more robust and reliable. Standard power was dialled down from the Mk3 RS at 276bhp, but that's easily remedied with a first-stage remap.

Upgrades such as Mountune's m330 software only need an updated panel filter on an otherwise stock car to deliver 325bhp. But it's the massive 380lb.ft of torque that makes it an RS rival.

Hardware upgrades are steadily being released for

the Mk4 ST, but one area that requires attention is the exhaust; you'll need a sports cat and a sports GPF to unlock next-level performance, ideally complemented with a full exhaust system. It's not cheap but is the key to unlocking more power; Mountune's m365 software makes use of these breathing upgrades to release 360bhp and huge 413lb.ft of torque.

Further goodies such as induction kits and intercoolers might not be strictly necessary at these levels of tune, but they won't hurt and certainly add to the 'tuned' appearance under the bonnet.



TRANSMISSION

We've not heard of any issues with the stock six-speed giving any troubles, and the fancy e-diff seems to cope with increases in power and torque well too.

The stock clutch will be fine for the majority of mildly tuned road cars, but companies like Helix already have various upgrades available to handle even more torque.

A well-weighted short-shift kit slickens up gearchanges and is a worthwhile addition.



WHEELS AND TYRES

Ford chose to fit the performance-orientated ST Edition model with lightweight 10-spoke 8x19in alloys, which the company proudly claims reduces unsprung weight by 10 per cent at each corner compared to the stock alloys. The same ST Edition alloys are available from Ford direct, albeit in matt Magnetite (not gloss black) for £355 per wheel.

The stock offset is ET55 on an 8in rim, but you can drop down to ET42/45 for more arch-filling appearance, and there are plenty of options to choose from in 8.0/8.5x19in fitment.



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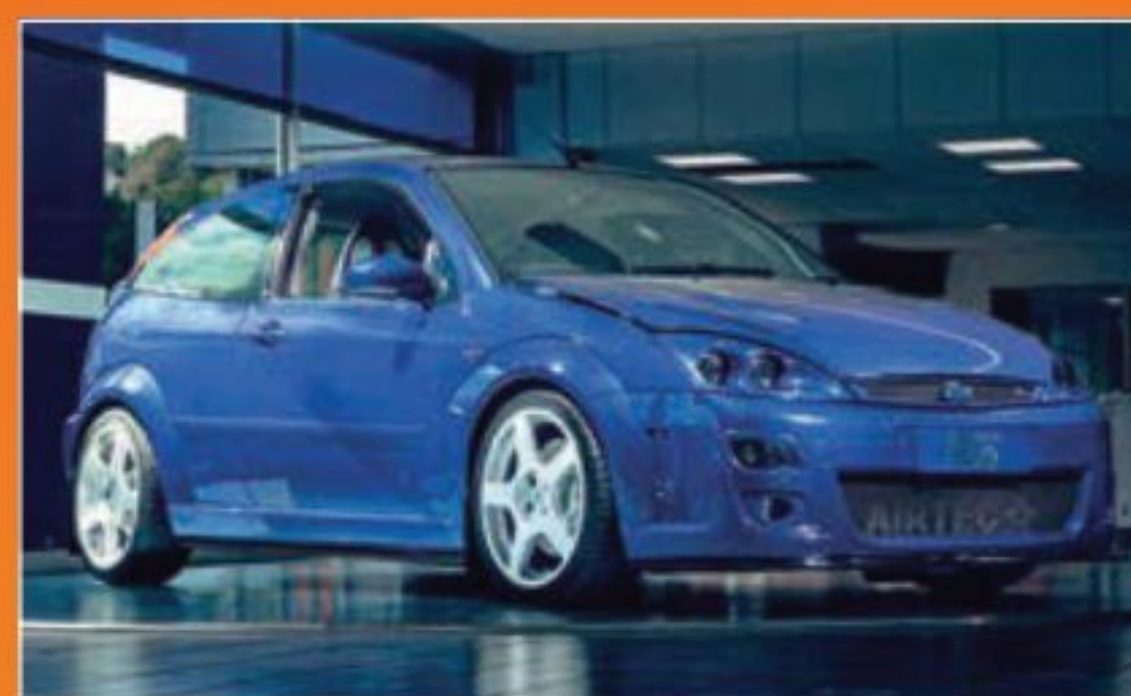
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TUNING TIPS



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FANTASTIC FEATURE CARS

The saviour of the modern fast Ford? Quite possibly. While the regular Focus wowed buyers and journalists from as early as 1998, we had to wait until 2002 before a proper performance version hit the streets.

But it was worth the wait, especially as we have been lucky enough to enjoy two distinct flavours of performance Focus ever since; ST models offer an unbeatable combination of fast-road fun and thrills alongside genuine everyday practicality, while the reintroduction of the RS brand brought back the uncompromising hardcore performance specials missing from Ford's line-up at the turn of the century.

In this 100-page collector's edition bookazine we look back at the full stories of the ST and RS models, coupled with an in-depth review of the Focus's motorsport history, expert buying advice, tuning tips and inspirational feature cars.

As we get ready to celebrate 20 years of the performance Focus, this special bookazine pays homage to one of the greatest fast Fords ever to hit the streets. It really is the modern performance icon.

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