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Are you the kind of person who is happy to accept the risks involved with buying a modern classic for new hot hatch money? If you're not, turn to page 64 and see if we can't tempt you…

Scanning dealer ads and classifieds for unique **evo**-type cars can border on an addiction for people on this magazine (me included). Whether we're in the market or not, spending an hour or so discovering interesting cars for sale will always score a decisive victory over an evening in front of the telly watching nobodies do nothing – and I'd wager that as you're reading this magazine, you think the same.

It was the arrival of used BMW V10 M5s in the price point normally reserved for junior hot hatches that sparked this issue of **evo** into life. For me, this car is still the most exotic saloon ever made, and will take the fight to even the most modern supersaloons for years to come. Then editorial director Harry Metcalfe, a serial Maserati owner, highlighted that 4200 GTs could be had for similar money…

I like to think that **evo** is not 'auto-ageist'. How old a car is, or for that matter how expensive it is, does not concern us. Our mission is simply to find if it can deliver the thrill of driving. That's why we've had a good look at the latest junior hot hatches in this issue too – hatches for similar money to that M5, promising proper driving thrills wrapped up in stylish bodies, with modern chassis plus the security of warranties and the latest safety features.

The good news is that whether you pick a new hatch or a used modern classic, you've never had a better choice. Just check the dealer ads or classifieds…

OVER AT THIS year's North American International Auto Show in Detroit – frankly an unmissable event for any motoring



'THIS YEAR COULD BE THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA FOR HONDA'

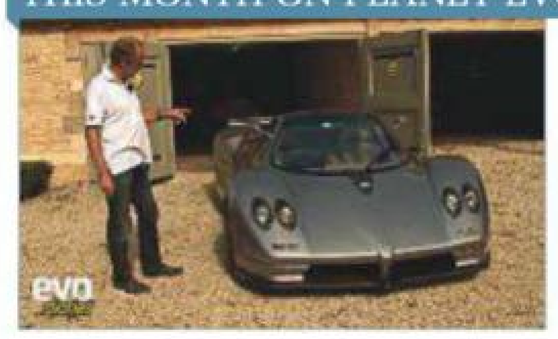
commentator – I watched closely as the new Acura/Honda NSX was revealed. That Honda chose Detroit, the epicentre of US car manufacturing and the birthplace of the muscle car, to debut the technology-packed NSX was fascinating – especially as the Tokyo motor show occurred just a couple of months earlier and this NSX was nowhere to be seen.

It was a brave move, because unveiling the car in the domestic market would've guaranteed favourable comments. To throw it into the gladiatorial pit of the Detroit show floor, where you couldn't walk 20 paces without tripping over something V8-powered or pick-up shaped (or both), was ballsy. As Harry discusses in his column on page 29, this year could be the dawn of a new era for Honda – a more aggressive, driver-focused Honda. I just hope we don't have to wait too long for the famous red H badge to reappear on one of its cars.



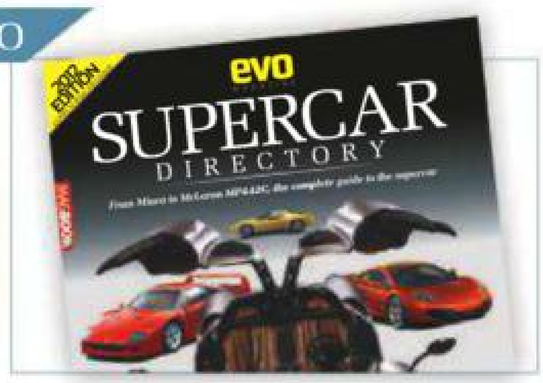
Nick Trott
Editor

THIS MONTH ON PLANET EVO



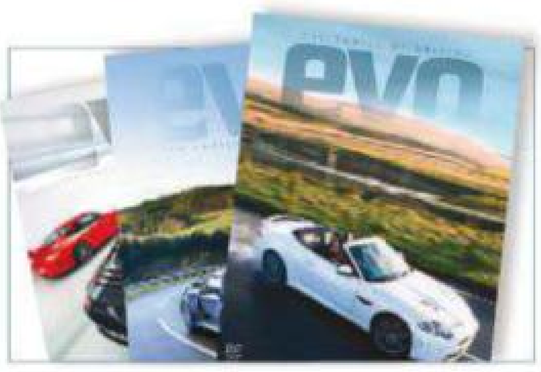
EVO VIDEO DIARIES

» Check out www.evo.co.uk and www.youtube.com/evotv for a new round of video diaries from the **evo** team. This month, Harry takes his Pagani Zonda out for a blast and Roger Green charges through Italy in the Lamborghini Super Trofeo Stradale. Your speakers won't be the same again.



NEW SUPERCAR MAGBOOK

» *The Supercar Directory* is a brand new Magbook from the team at **evo**. Packed with fresh content, it contains the facts, figures and definitive verdicts on every new and classic supercar, from Miura to McLaren MP4-12C. On sale now, it costs just £9.99. Buy your copy from www.evo.co.uk/shop



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» Ever thought about subscribing to **evo**? Subscribers get the most cost-effective deal, plus unique covers and delivery before newsstand (with a few embargo-related exceptions). This month's cover shows Le Mans winner Andy Wallace sliding the new 542bhp Jaguar XKR-S convertible. See p112 for info.

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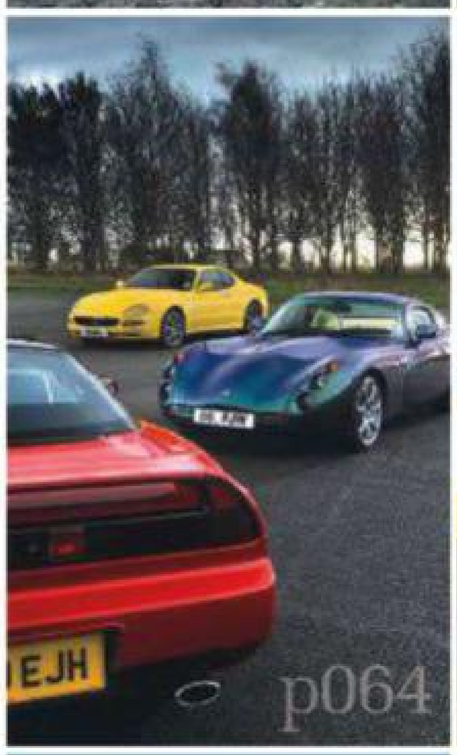
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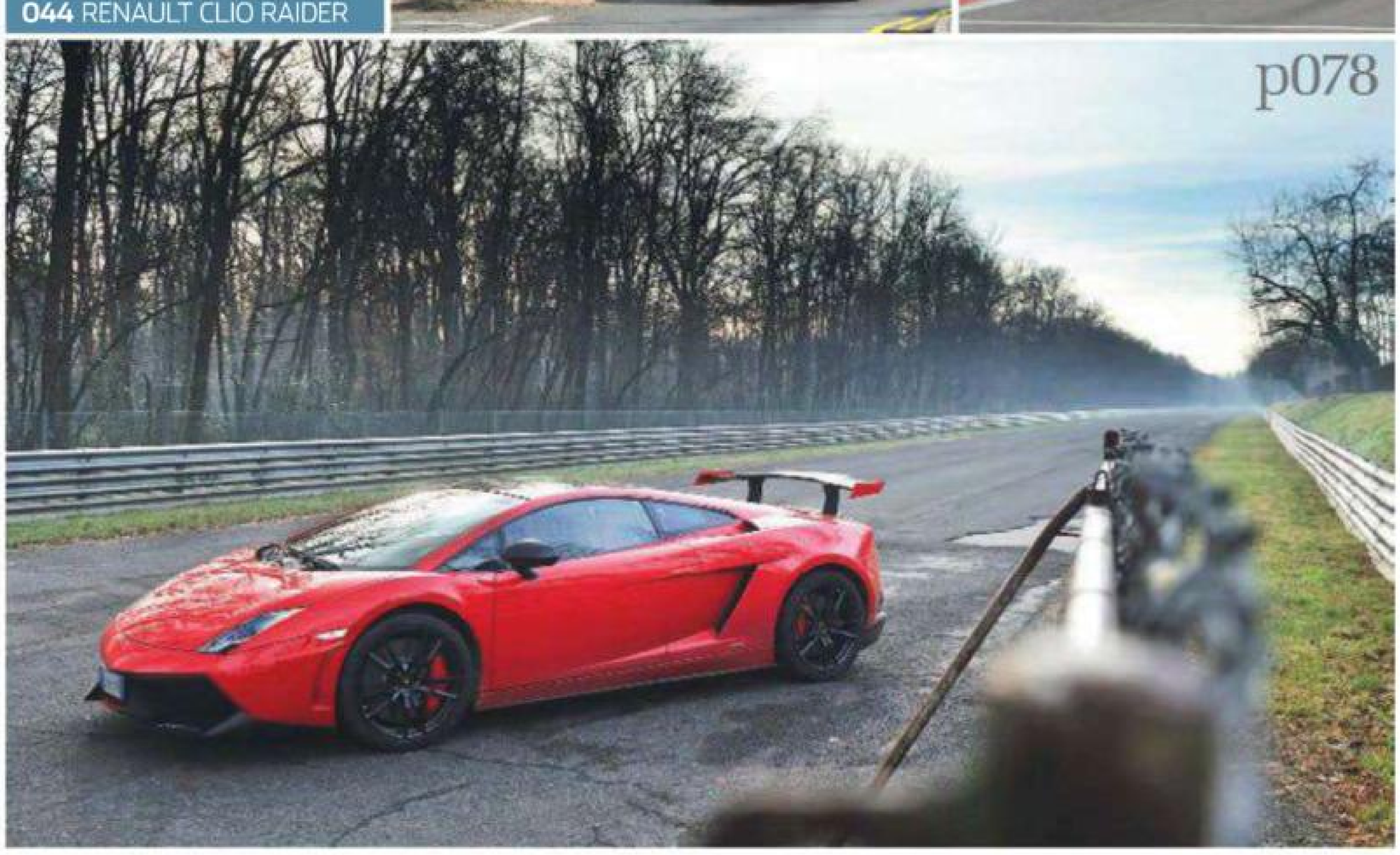
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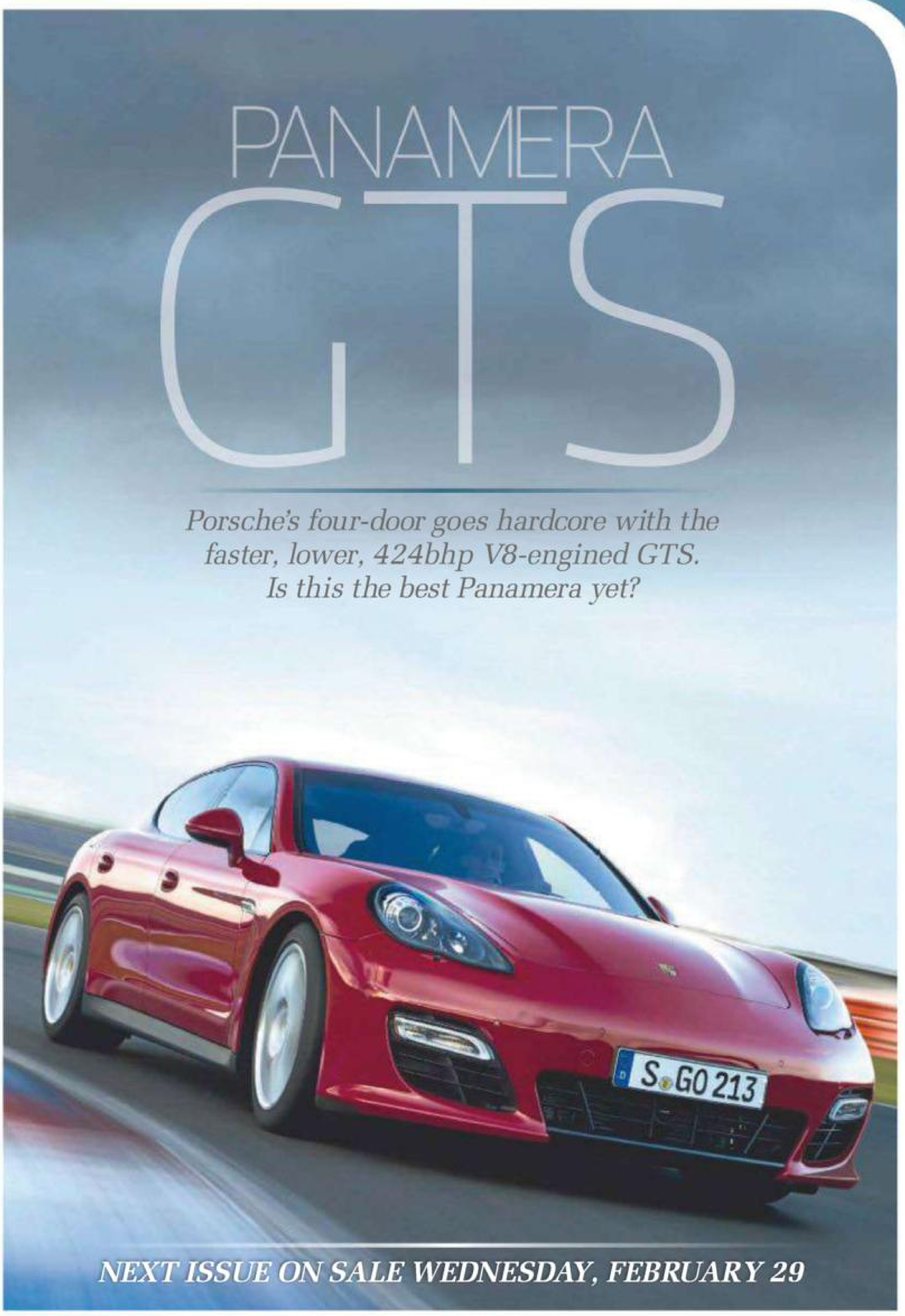
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IF WE NEVER VENTURE INTO THE UNKNOWN HOW DO WE GET ANYWHERE NEW?

HONDA
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MODEL SHOWN: CIVIC 1.8 I-VTEC EX GT MAN. OTR £24,985. FUEL CONSUMPTION FIGURES IN MPG (L/100KM) FOR THE EX GT RANGE. URBAN 54.3-37.2 (5.2-7.6), EXTRA URBAN 72.4-54.3 (3.9-5.2), COMBINED 64.2-46.3 (4.4-6.1), CO_2 145-115 G/KM. **FOR MORE INFORMATION SEARCH: NEW HONDA CIVIC**

THIS MONTH

BLUESPORT NOT DEAD!
Volkswagen's baby roadster could yet see the light of day P16





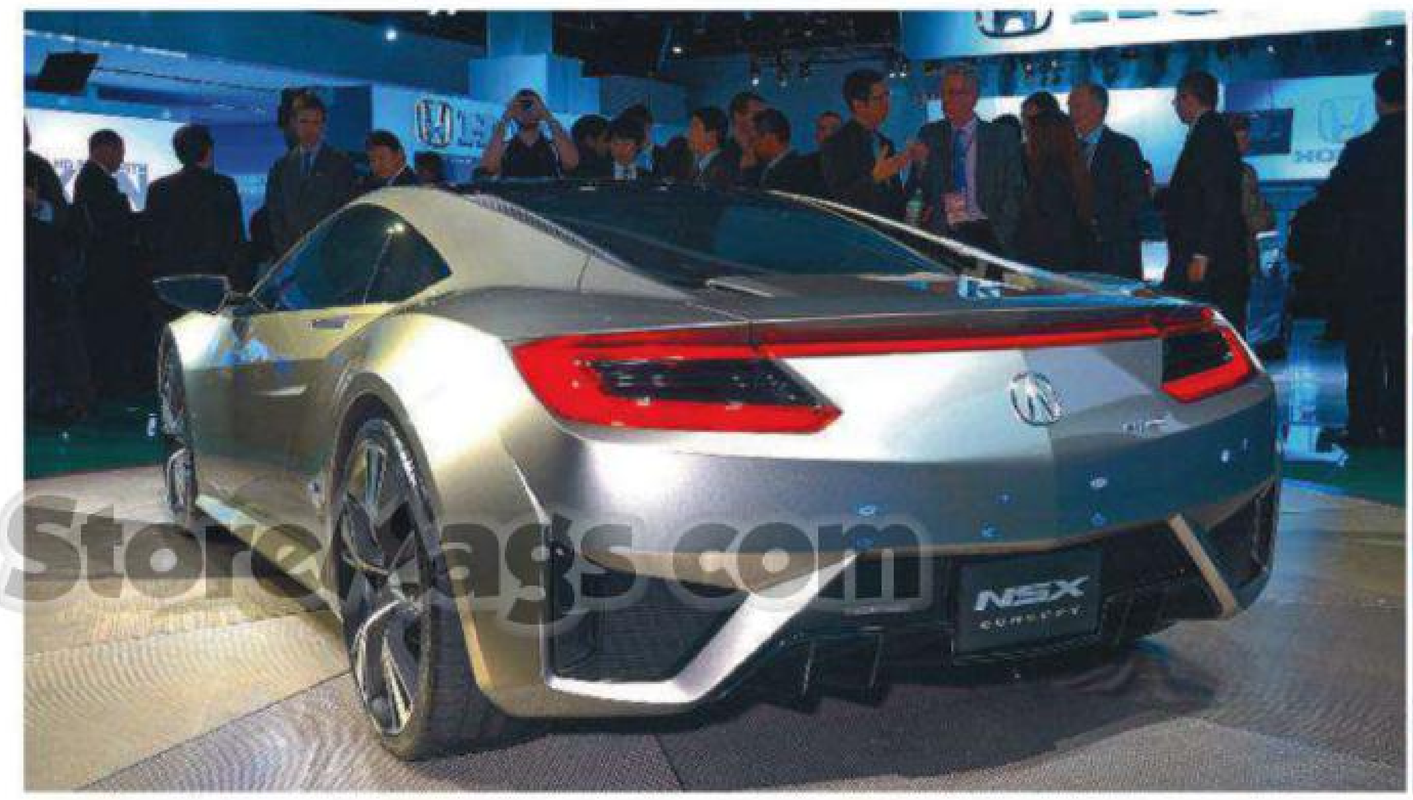
JAPAN STORMS DETROIT!

HONDA NSX AND LEXUS COUPE CONCEPTS STEAL THE SHOW, WHILE PORSCHE AND MERCEDES HEAD THE EUROPEAN PRESENCE. **MIKE DUFF** IS YOUR GUIDE TO ALL THE DETROIT SHOW STARS

Despite Detroit's symbolic importance as the spiritual home of the US motor industry, the big news at this year's North American International Auto Show didn't come from America, but rather from Japan. Because Honda and Lexus stole the headlines with a stunning pair of concepts, both hinting at new production cars.

Of the two, it's the **Honda NSX** that's far closer to production reality. The company remains coy about the technical specs of the mid-engined hybrid, but at the show Honda president Takanobu Ito was happy to confirm that we'll be seeing a production version within three years, almost certainly sharing the same hybrid drivetrain.

Despite the official reticence, we revealed details of the SH-AWD system that will power the NSX in **evo** 166. The car is set to use a mid-mounted 3.5-litre V6 to power the rear wheels, supplemented by twin electric motors turning the fronts – plus an extra electric motor integrated in the twin-clutch transmission. Combined output will be about 400bhp, but the car is being engineered around a 'green performance' brief that should see it set new class standards for mpg and emissions.







Above and left: NSX Concept is clearly close to production reality. Power is expected to come from a combination of a mid-mounted V6 petrol engine and no fewer than three electric motors

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YOUR CHANCE TO DRIVE McLAREN
Online racing hits a new high with launch of Simraceway **P18**



BOXSTER'S BOLD NEW LOOK
Baby Porsche gets more power, and 918 Spyder styling cues **P20**



EXIGE RALLY CAR GOES TESTING
Lotus prepares to take on the world in tarmac championships **P23**





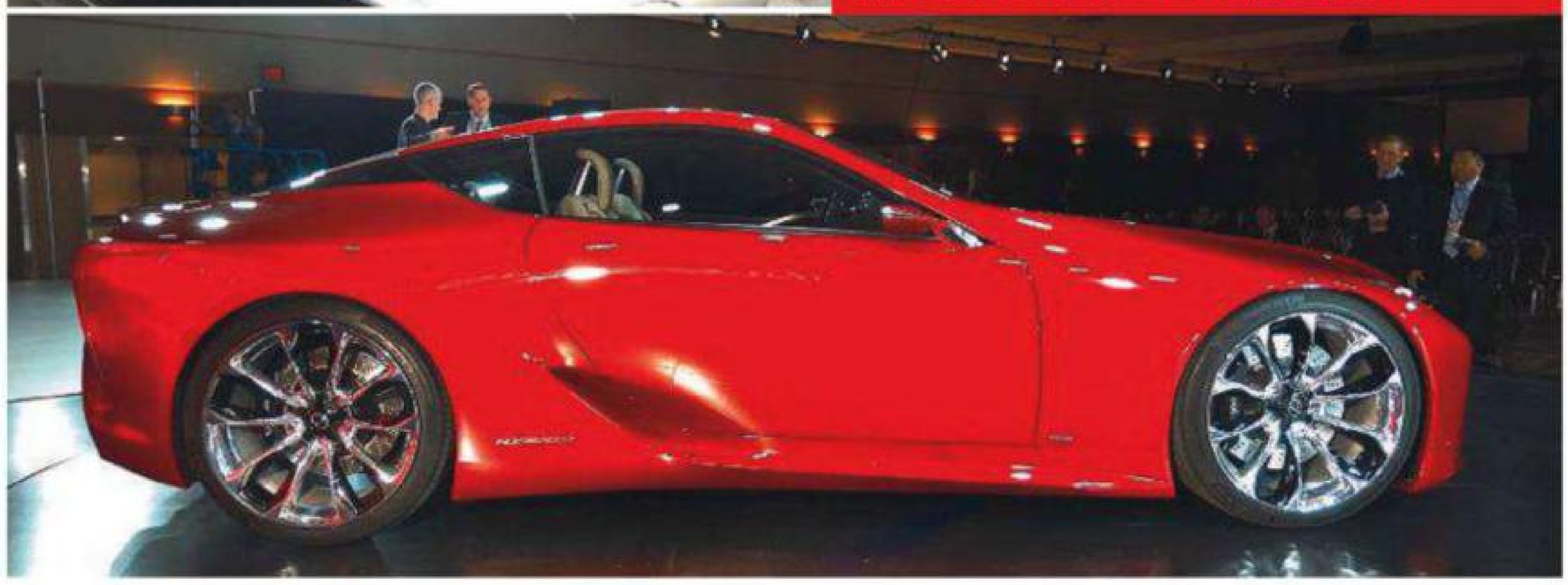
The Detroit concept car wore the branding of Honda's upmarket US sub-brand, Acura – and it's likely that the production version will be built in America – but we are promised that European models will still be badged as Hondas. The concept is clearly close to production reality, with company insiders reckoning that even details like the LED headlights and the glass roof could make it to the road. Pricing? Too soon to say – but we're told that it's likely to be priced closer to junior supercars rather than rivals like the Nissan GT-R. Don't expect much change from £100K.

'WE'LL BE SEEING A PRODUCTION VERSION OF THE NSX WITHIN THREE YEARS'





This page: Lexus LF-LC Hybrid Coupe Concept is described as a styling exercise, but elements of it could appear on a new Lexus GT with a hybrid powertrain



Images of the **Lexus LF-LC Hybrid Coupe Concept** had leaked out ahead of its unveiling at Detroit, but it still drew crowds. The official line is that the concept is no more than a styling exercise, proving that future Lexus products are set to get considerably more radical, but **evo** has learned that parts of it preview a new 'plus two' coupe that Lexus is considering for production as a replacement for the axed SC coupe-cabrio.

Longer and taller than the LF-A, the concept was being pitched as a grand tourer rather than a supercar – Lexus was keen to steer comparisons towards Aston Martin. Of course, some details were purely for show – like the single piece of glass that forms the windscreen, roof and rear screen, and control of all functions through capacitative touch-screens. Oh, and inspiration for the rear lights came from the cowling around the jet engines of an F22 Raptor. Few technical details were released – we're told that the engine is a 'next generation' hybrid system directing 'over 500bhp' to the rear wheels. A production version would be likely to share its powertrain with the next-gen Lexus LS hybrid.

Supercar makers have long ignored Detroit, and 2012 was no exception. Fortunately the German makers were happy to take up some of the slack with debuts for the **Porsche 911 Cabriolet** and all-new **Mercedes SL**. The 911 is as expected, with a clever lightweight fabric roof and smart lines when it gets stowed. Only two engines will be available from launch, the same 345bhp 3.4-litre and 393bhp 3.8-litre flat sixes that power the coupe. Losing the roof carries an £8000 supplement.

The SL belies its clever tech with design that doesn't move on hugely from the outgoing version – beneath the conservative styling lies a bodyshell that's 80 per cent aluminium. Fuel-



Pictures: Phil Berg





Above: Smart For-US concept drops strong hints about the next ForFour. Right: new 911 Cabriolet. Below: Ford Fusion (aka Mondeo)



saving tech boosts the economy of the SL500 by 22 per cent over the outgoing car, while power goes up from 383bhp to 429bhp and the 0-62mph time is cut by 0.8 seconds to 4.6sec.

There was a surprising lack of American muscle at Detroit – Ford showed a cabrio version of the supercharged 650bhp **Mustang Shelby GT500** and Shelby itself had a 'Super Snake' version with a claimed 800bhp. American sports car maker Falcon Motorsports showed off the **Falcon F7** – complete with carbonfibre bodywork, a 612bhp Chevrolet LS7 V8 and a '$200,000-plus' pricetag.

As always, there was plenty of real-world stuff on display as makers took the opportunity to introduce new cars to the US market. A fair amount of it didn't ping the **evo** radar – another crop of me-too compact SUVs and XXL pick-up trucks. But we did see the new **BMW 3-series Activehybrid**, which uses a 300bhp version of BMW's 3-litre straight-six turbo petrol, helped out by a 40kW electric motor. We also got to check out the new **Ford Fusion**, which will become our next-gen **Mondeo** and the more interesting **Dodge Dart**, a US-market saloon that's been spun off the Alfa Giulietta's platform as one of the first fruits of Fiat's takeover of Chrysler. It looked decent by American standards – and might even come to the UK wearing Chrysler badges.

'BRACE YOURSELVES FOR YET ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO LAUNCH





Clockwise from above: 198bhp Hyundai Veloster Turbo, 800bhp Shelby Mustang 'Super Snake', Alfa-based Dodge Dart, BMW 1-series-inspired Chevrolet Code 130R concept, and all-new largely-aluminium-bodied Mercedes SL, looking rather a lot like the old SL...







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More Detroit show coverage online at www.evo.co.uk



A Beetle for blokes: Volkswagen's E-Bugster is a 'Cal-look' speedster that could well become reality

CADILLAC HERE IN THE UK – THE FOURTH BY OUR RECKONING'

Elsewhere in the Cobo Arena, **Cadillac** showed off the **ATS**, an alleged 3-series rival, based on a shortened version of the CTS's rear-drive platform. GM promises that it will be sold in all significant markets, meaning we have to brace ourselves for yet another attempt to relaunch Cadillac over here in the UK (the fourth by our reckoning.) With no plans to give it a diesel engine for several years, GM will have its work cut out. Meanwhile, the **Hyundai Veloster Turbo** looked surprisingly good, with a chunky bodykit and a 1.6-litre turbo engine with 198bhp.

One thing that the Detroit show was conspicuously lacking was wacky, far-looking concepts. Smart showed a funky-looking pick-up designed to increase the brand's presence in the 'States. The **Smart For-US** (see what they did there?) looked surprisingly good – behind the bling it's apparently previewing the look of the next Forfour.

GM showed two **Chevrolet** sports car concepts intended to target younger buyers. The **Code 130R** was clearly channeling the BMW 1-series, looking (slightly) like a miniaturised muscle-car and built on a shortened version of the Cadillac ATS's rear-drive platform. The front-driven **Tru 140S** was actually more promising – a compact coupe with a side window profile clearly inspired by the Lamborghini Gallardo. Either could make production if the reaction of the US public is deemed favourable enough.

An unlikely star of the show was the **Volkswagen E-Bugster**, a 'Cal-look' version of the recently launched Beetle with a widened track, chopped windscreen, lowered roof – and even a near-period set of Fuchs alloys. VW design boss Marc Lichte cheerfully admitted that he was trying to make a 'Beetle that would appeal to male buyers'. The concept's electric powertrain might not go ahead, but VW insiders say the speedster itself is likely to make it into production.

Right, from top: BMW's soon-to-be-launched Activehybrid 3, Chevrolet Tru 140S concept and 612bhp carbon-bodied Falcon Motorsports F7



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VW BLUESPORT: NOT DEAD YET

DESIRE TO DOWNSIZE COULD MEAN GREEN LIGHT FOR ECONOMICAL ROADSTER, SAYS VW BOSS



Much of the talk on the Volkswagen stand at the Detroit motor show was that the chances of a production version of the pretty BlueSport concept – which made its debut at Detroit three years earlier – were close to death after it failed to gain enough support from US dealers to get the go-ahead.

The plot thickened the following week when Porsche boss Matthias Mueller told a German magazine that a 'new generation' of customers would be needed before the company would consider producing an entry-level roadster beneath the Boxster – the original plan having been for Porsche, Audi and potentially SEAT to also use the BlueSport's core architecture to produce their own models.

With that, the BlueSport's obituary was already being written by much of the motoring press. But when **evo** caught up with Volkswagen's engineering boss, Ulrich Hackenberg, we got a very different story – and exclusive confirmation that the BlueSport project is still very much alive.

During a rare visit to the UK, Hackenberg admitted to having been very frustrated by the dealers' low sales forecasts. 'Dealers are always looking backwards, not forwards,' he said. 'This is particularly the case when a new model is being considered as they don't have any reference point to guide them, so they look around at the current market and give an estimate based on that.'

Hackenberg believes that the sports car market is going to change radically over the next few years. The current lack of entry-level sports cars means that sales volumes are low – with the Mazda MX-5 having the £20K roadster segment almost to itself. But with public desire to downsize and an influx of new models over the next few years – including the Toyota FT-86 and Subaru BRZ – the junior sports car market is set to look far healthier in three years' time.

'IT COULD BECOME A REALITY WITH A PRICE OF £25,000-£30,000'



BlueSport concept weighs under 1200kg; we drove a 178bhp diesel-powered version in 2009 (evo 133)

Hackenberg also reckons that the strength of the US dollar against the euro will make European cars more competitive in America, further stoking demand. That's why the story broke in Detroit – VW is planning to ask its dealers to reappraise their original sales estimates and Hackenberg is confident that forecasts will break the 50,000-a-year mark needed to make this exciting roadster a production reality with a price tag between £25,000 and £30,000.

That, in turn, would give Porsche a new dilemma – whether to go ahead with its own version, or to leave the market to Volkswagen and Audi. **Harry Metcalfe**



Pictures: Matt Vosper



MERCEDES SLK AMG PRICED

» Mercedes has announced the price for its fastest SLK yet. The SLK55 AMG (see Driven, **evo** 165) gets a 416bhp, naturally aspirated 5.5-litre V8 and promises hot hatch-like efficiency (33.6mpg, 195g/km of CO2) thanks to cylinder de-activation technology. Order books are open now, with prices starting at £54,950.



RIGHT-HAND-DRIVE CTS-V

» GM is planning to build a right-hand-drive version of the Cadillac CTS-V saloon as part of its drive to broaden the international appeal of the US luxury brand. That means we'll have a chance to sample the V's 556bhp V8 while sitting on the proper side of the car. The new 3-series-rivalling Cadillac ATS saloon, unveiled at Detroit, will also be offered as a right-hooker.



AUDI A6 ALLROAD ARRIVES

» You didn't need a crystal ball to see this coming – Audi has confirmed a third-generation of the A6 Allroad, the slightly off-roady version of the A6 Avant. It will ride 60mm higher than the standard Avant, have height-adjustable air suspension and come with a choice of three V6 engines: a 3-litre 306bhp petrol TFSI and 3-litre diesels in 201bhp and 241bhp states of tune.

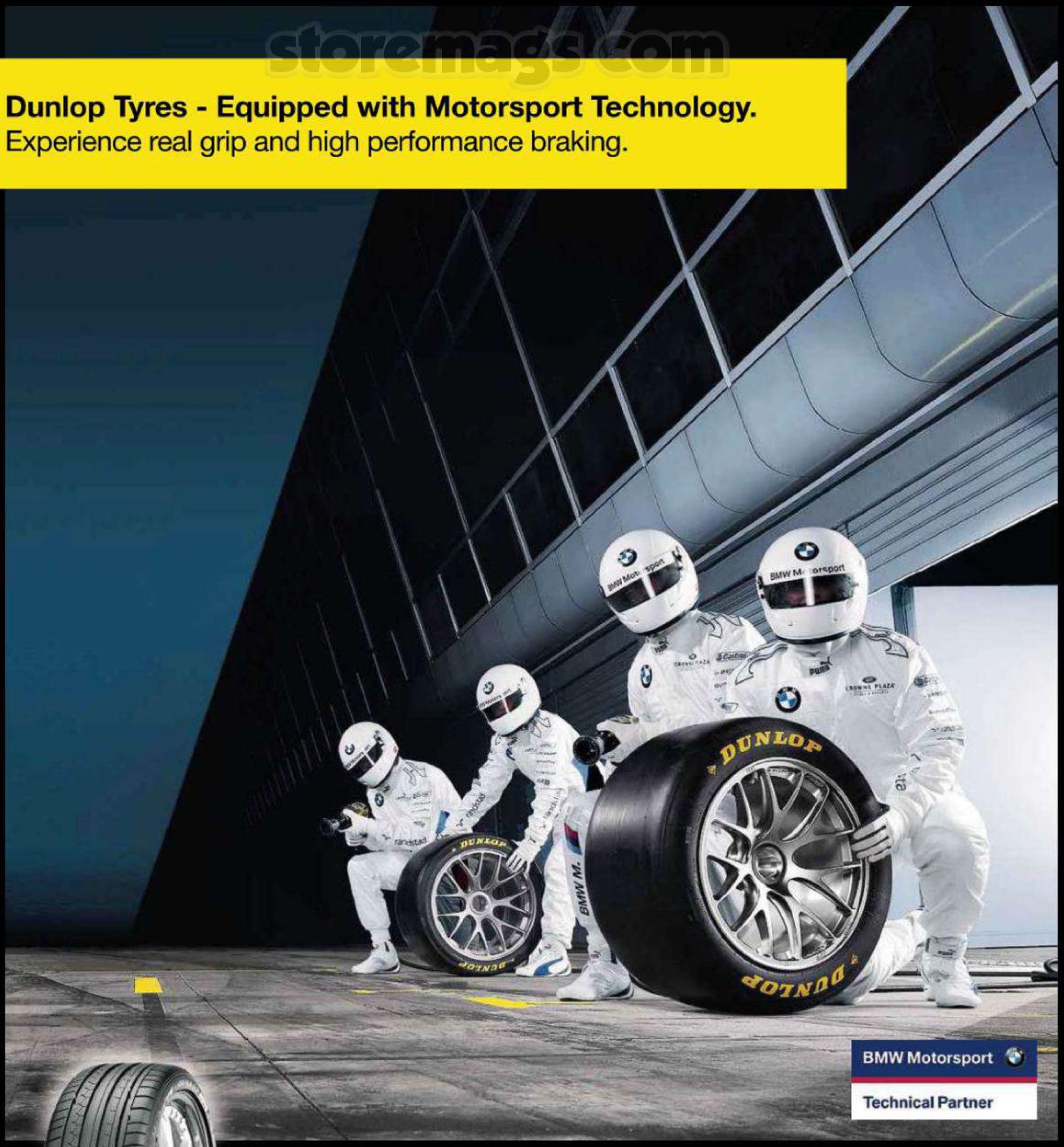


BMW X4 IS GO!

» BMW's X range of SUVs may not be entirely our cup of tea, but there's no denying that they sell in big numbers. And so, just as the X5 spawned the coupe-like X6, we can look forward to a curvier, less practical take on the X3 joining the range in three years' time, when X4 production begins at BMW's Spartanburg plant in South Carolina, USA.

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ONLINE RACING'S NEW LEADER

SIMRACEWAY TAKES MOTORSPORT GAMING TO A NEW LEVEL, AS **RICHARD MEADEN** REPORTS

First we got our virtual racing kicks via arcade classics Sega Rally and Daytona. A few years later Sony literally changed the game with the PlayStation console epic Gran Turismo. Then, with the advent of home internet, hardcore PC-based racing simulators such as GP Legends, rFactor and iRacing found huge followings, with the very best drivers attaining cult hero status within their online communities.

Now US-based online gaming company Ignite Game Technologies has taken things to the next level with the innovative Simraceway (www.simraceway.com). Fusing the edgier, more underground feel of the pure online racing simulators with the eye-catching style and easy accessibility of the PlayStation and Xbox megabrands, Simraceway could just be the virtual playground we've all been dreaming of.

Where Simraceway differs from the major console games is in the accuracy of the simulation physics and the continually evolving nature of the racing environment. Because it exists only online and uses a client server model similar to the weird but phenomenally successful World of Warcraft multiplayer online role-playing game, Simraceway isn't constrained by the production schedules and release dates that famously tie Gran Turismo's perfectionist creator Kazunori Yamauchi in knots.

This means cars and circuits – real-world and fantasy – can be added as soon as Simraceway's development team create them. Likewise the all-important physics model can be continuously improved for added realism and closer racing. Real racing legends Dario Franchitti and Allan McNish are part of the Simraceway project, and they've been helping develop the physics model to make the challenge of racing as close as possible to the real thing. The online racing sim is also being used as a training tool at the Simraceway Performance Driver Centre, based at the Infineon Raceway in Sonoma, California.

Another trick up Simraceway's sleeve is parent company Ignite's expertise in skill quantification, which means drivers can be more closely matched on skill level than ever before. It's free to download and get started, but hardcore racers will doubtless be looking forward to the pay-to-enter races where the winners are awarded real prize money.













Cars that you can win – or buy for actual money – include everything from classic McLaren racers like the M6 (top) to road cars like BMW's 1M Coupe (below)

'NEW CARS AND CIRCUITS ARE ADDED AS SOON AS THEY'RE CREATED'

Another neat element of Simraceway is the ways in which you can build your garage of cars. You can either toil away and accrue credits with which to 'buy' cars, or you can actually buy cars with real money, like iTunes for petrolheads. Pricing is based on dividing the retail value of a real car by 100,000, so an Alfa 8C is $2.41, while a 2010 Dodge Viper is just $1.10. Some extraordinary licensing deals have already been struck, the most impressive being for all 60 of McLaren's road and race cars. Cars already available include the Bugatti Veyron SS, Maserati MC12, BMW 1M Coupe, M3 GTE and Z4 GT3 and even the Morgan 3 Wheeler! There will also be a range of Simraceway peripherals, the first of which is the SRW-S1 steering wheel, which cleverly does away with wheel-and-pedal set-ups.

Frankly it all sounds right up our pitlane, so we'll be following the Simraceway story closely over the coming months. In the meantime we're off to buy a monster PC and get practising. If issue 168 of **evo** fails to appear you'll know why...



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 Pictures: Simraceway

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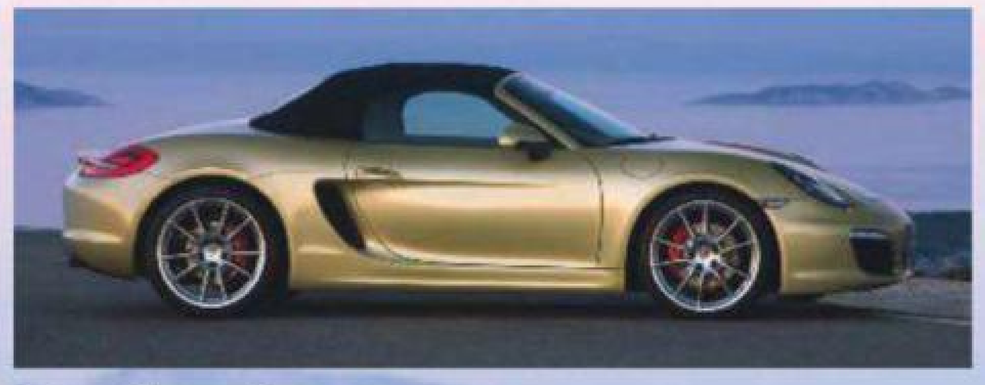
WHEN YOU COMBINE DIESEL AND ELECTRIC POWER, YOU DON'T JUST MAKE A NEW HYBRID.

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See more pictures of the new Porsche Boxster at www.evo.co.uk

NEW BOXSTER HERE IN APRIL

POWER INCREASES AND IMPROVED ECONOMY FOR ENTRY-LEVEL PORSCHE



Styling of the new Boxster gets a welcome injection of character with large side vents, presumably inspired by the 918 Spyder's

Porsche has released the first official images of the new Boxster, which is set to go on sale in April.

The third-generation Boxster features a mostly aluminium bodyshell and a redesigned roof mechanism that together are said to reduce weight by around 100kg over the outgoing model. Although Porsche is being officially coy about the car's dimensions, we do know that it has a wider track and a longer wheelbase. We also know that, like the new 911, the car has switched to electric power steering.

Power comes from familiar mid-mounted flat-six engines – speculation that the car would be launched with a turbocharged flat-four has proved to be wide of the mark. The basic car gets a 2.7-litre unit boasting 261bhp, 10bhp more than the 2.9-litre engine in the second-gen car. The Boxster S has a 311bhp 3.4-litre motor, an increase of 5bhp over the model it replaces. Porsche claims that the basic Boxster will now dispatch 0-62mph in 5.7sec while the S cuts the time for the benchmark sprint to 5sec dead. Seven-speed PDK and a six-speed manual gearboxes will be offered.

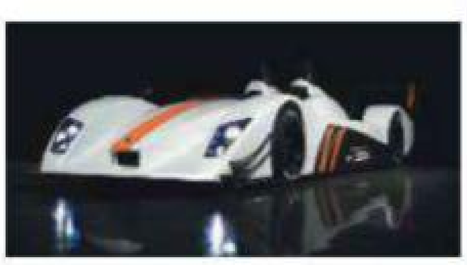
Porsche also claims improvements to environmental performance, with both Boxsters able to top 35mpg when driving through the PDK gearbox.

Prices start at £37,589 for the Boxster, with 18in alloys, stop-start and Alcantara trim all standard. The Boxster S will cost £45,384 and brings 19in alloys, part-leather trim and bi-xenon headlights.

CATERHAM FACTORY MOVES ANNOUNCED

ROAD AND RACE CAR TEAMS TO SHARE SITE

Caterham has announced that production of its Seven will move to Leafield in Oxfordshire. Since 1987 the Caterham factory has been in Dartford, just inside the M25 and a short hop from the company's HQ in Caterham.



New SP300.R track car will be amongst those built at Leafield

The move is part of 'a group consolidation', bringing road car production onto the same site as the F1 and GP2 race teams, which will move from their current base in Hingham, Norfolk.

The news means that all of Caterham's production will be on one site, but the company's engineering arm, Caterham Technology and Innovation, will still be based in Hethel, Norfolk – 150 miles away cross-country. Should make for a nice commute for the company's engineers.

PEUGEOT LEAVES LE MANS

» Just as we went to press, Peugeot announced that it was canning its endurance racing programme in response to the worsening economic situation. That means there will be no works entry for Le Mans, making it hard to predict anything but an Audi whitewash this year. Shame.



MANUAL GEARBOX FOR BMW M5

» BMW has announced a six-speed manual gearbox for the new M5. It won't make it to the UK, though, being limited to the US market where it'll be a no-cost option alongside the seven-speed DCT automatic. The same option was also offered in the US (but denied to Europe) with the E60 M5.



UP GT MAKES PRODUCTION

» Good news! Volkswagen has given its funky little Up GT the green light. Firm details are thin on the ground, but the standard city car's thrummy three-pot 1-litre engine is set to remain, upped to around 110bhp via turbocharging, while the gearbox will be upgraded to a six-speed manual. It gets us all misty-eyed for a modern-day Lupo GTI to shake up the warm hatch market (see group test on page 52).



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To find out more about what makes the New Citroën DS5 award winning, visit www.citroen.co.uk/ds5

CRÉATIVE TECHNOLOGIE

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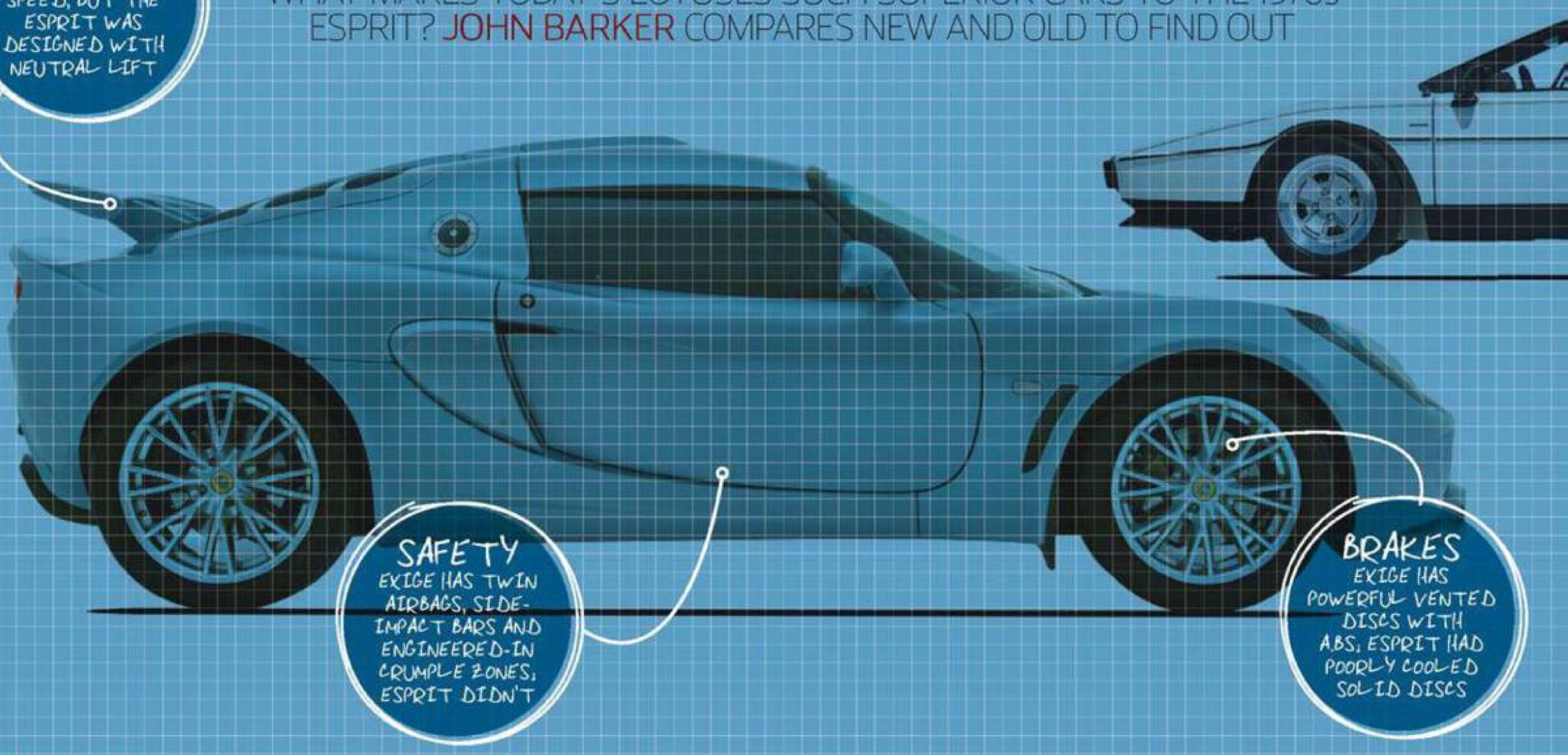
Official Government Fuel Consumption Figures (Range): Urban Cycle, Extra Urban, Combined (litres per 100km/mpg) and CO_2 emissions (g/km); Highest: New Citroën DS5 HDi 160 6-speed automatic DStyle 7.9/35.8, 5.1/55.4, 6.1/46.3, 158 CO_2. Lowest: New Citroën DS5 Hybrid4 200 Airdream EGS6 DSign 3.9/72.4, 3.7/76.3, 3.8/74.3, 99 CO_2.

Model shown: New Citroën DS5 Hybrid4 200 Airdream EGS6 with pearlescent white paint and 19" black alloys. *200 bhp available by combining the power of the diesel and electric drive trains. †99g of CO_2/km is available on the DS5 Hybrid4 200 Airdream EGS6 DSign which is available from mid 2012.

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LOTUS EVOLUTION

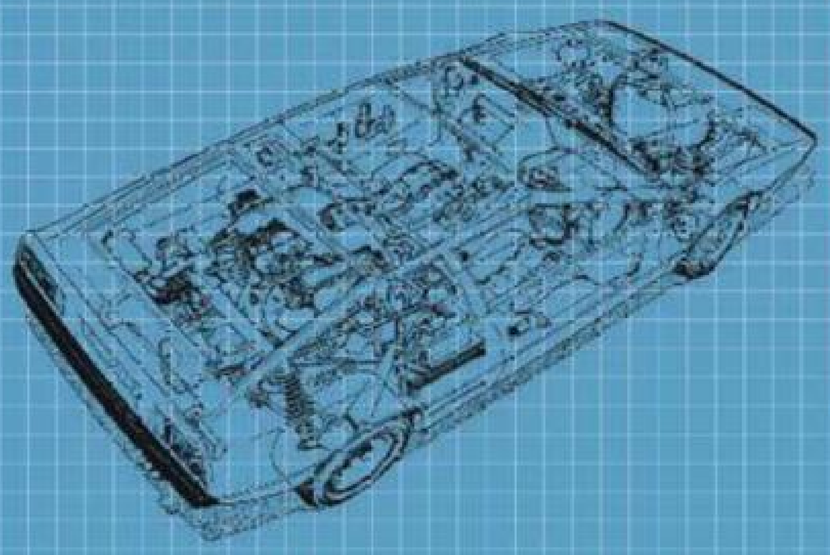
WHAT MAKES TODAY'S LOTUSES SUCH SUPERIOR CARS TO THE 1970s ESPRIT? JOHN BARKER COMPARES NEW AND OLD TO FIND OUT



Structure

A car's structure is crucial to its dynamic precision. The backbone chassis of the Esprit was upscaled from the 1960s Europa's and was constructed from folded and welded pressed steel. It was neat but rather flexible, offering torsional rigidity of 1500-2000Nm per degree. 'You want a chassis like an anvil, something that will take big hits,' says Roger Becker, who helped develop the original Esprit, 'but the Esprit's is like a big spring and makes many things hard to tune.'

The extruded and bonded aluminium tub of the Exige S2 offers 10,000Nm per degree, allowing higher spring rates and ride frequencies (the rate at which the suspension oscillates up and down). The Exige can also work its tyres harder. Matthew Becker, Roger's son and current chief engineer of vehicle attributes at Lotus, says it rolls at 3deg per G compared with around 6deg per G on the Esprit. 'On the V8 Esprit the spring rate was limited by the sunroof squeak...' he recalls.



Tyres

Low-profile tyres were just emerging in the mid-'70s and didn't find their way onto the Esprit for a number of years. The original Esprit used 195/70 R14 front and 205/70 R14 rear tyres – modest rubber on a regular hatchback today. They would have been pretty much off-the-shelf, says RB. 'And with a weight distribution of 44/56, those sizes are not ideal,' adds MB. The forthcoming V6 Exige S (38/62) has appropriate tyre widths to load (195 front, 255 rear) and there have been significant advances in technology. Michelin's Steve Dolby says lower profiles and higher tensile steels give greater directional stability, while improved compounds have increased wet-weather performance considerably.

Brakes

Constrained by 14in wheels, the original Esprit had non-vented disc brakes that barely matched its performance, especially as the rears were inboard, away from cooling air. The Exige S2's brakes are 20 to 30 per cent over capacity. The headroom is there to allow for the additional workload imposed by anti-lock and stability control. Pad material is now more stable and works better across a greater range of conditions.

Kinematics and Compliance

Today, how a car's suspension behaves and the driving characteristics it will produce can be accurately modelled on computer. 'We are about 70 per cent there with the new Esprit,' says MB. The Esprit engineers 35 years ago, armed with drawing boards, calculators and experience, did not have the tyre or K&C data to predict geometry changes under load and roll-centre migration. Nor would they have had benchmark data of rival cars' dynamics. Suspension bushes were much simpler than the multi-axial types of today, too, but what is common to the Esprit and the Exige is that it still takes skilled engineers to tune the set-up to produce an homogenous, balanced whole. 'The human element is still important and probably always will be,' says MB.

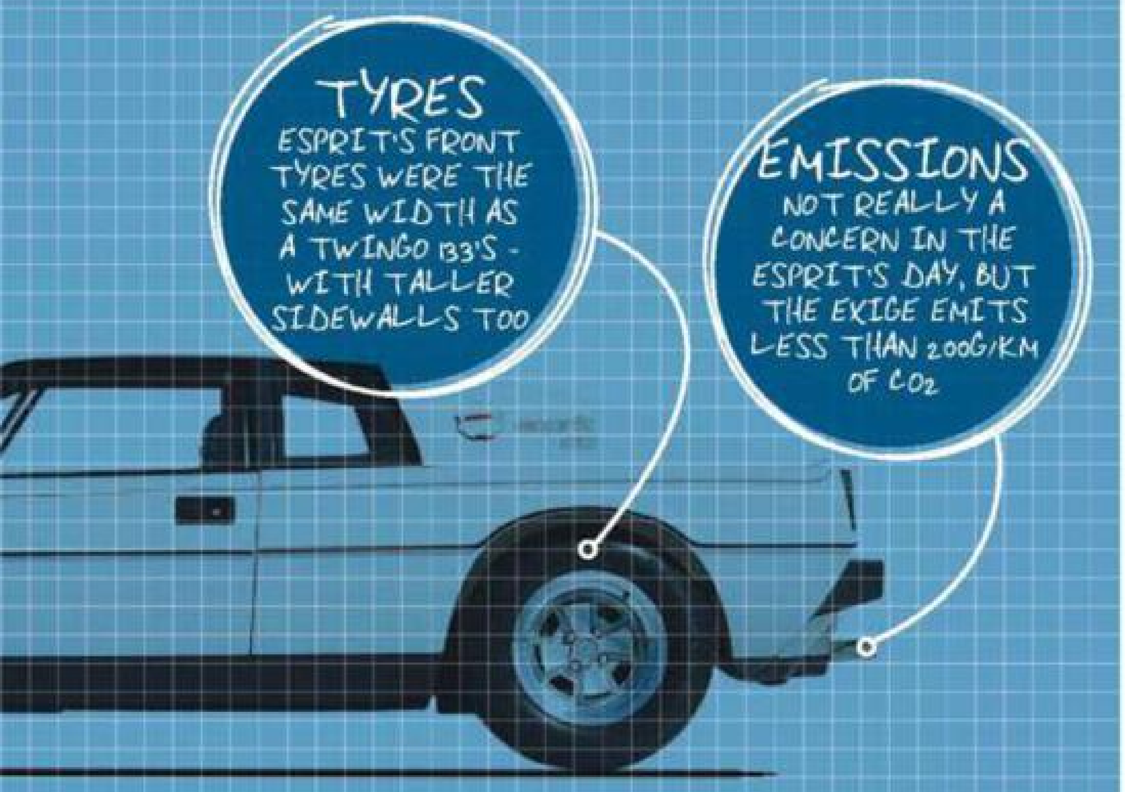
Development

The Esprit was off the drawing board and into production in under two years. The 'Think Tank' led by legendary F1 engineer Tony Rudd drew out the car and built a fully functioning prototype in four months, which boss Colin Chapman drove and approved. It was then handed to Roger Becker and his small team to develop and productionise in just 15 months. 'We had to work with what we were given because there was no money to re-tool,' he recalls. The Evora took 27 months from drawing board to showroom, which is impressive for such a complex, modern car.

Emissions

Although the 1973cc twin-cam slant-four (the '907') in the Esprit was certified for sale in the US, it would fail today's emissions test even before it fired up, such

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would be the vapours leaking from its pair of Dellorto twin-choke carbs.

Aerodynamics

The Esprit is as sleek as it looks. Lotus employed a string of great aerodynamicists to ensure the show car's Cd 0.3 became no higher than 0.33 with neutral lift front and rear in production. 'It was a quick car so it had to be stable,' says RB. The Exige S2 manages a Cd of 0.42, but it comes with downforce over both axles – 19.3kg front, 21.9kg rear at 100mph.

Safety and equipment

The Esprit had to pass seat belt tests, three impacts – front, rear and side – plus a roll-over, but that's nothing compared with the phalanx of tests performed on a current production car. Equipment-wise, the Esprit was no stripped-out racer, yet the pared-down Exige S2 has all the luxury items of the Esprit, including a 12V power point (née cigar lighter), electric windows and a radio as standard (£75.06 on the Esprit).

SPECIFICATION

Esprit (1976)		Exige S2 (2008)
Glassfibre reinforced plastic (GFRP)	**Body**	Glassfibre reinforced plastic (GFRP)
Steel backbone/spaceframe (undersealed)	**Chassis**	Extruded and bonded aluminium
In-line 4-cyl, 1973cc, dohc, 16v, mid-mounted, longitudinal	**Engine**	In-line 4-cyl, 1796cc, dohc, 16v, VVTL-i, mid-mounted, transverse
Two twin-choke Dellorto DHLA 45E carburettors	**Fuelling**	Lotus multi-point electronic fuel injection
160bhp @ 6200rpm	**Max power**	189bhp @ 7800rpm
140lb ft @ 4900rpm	**Max torque**	133lb ft @ 6800rpm
Five-speed transaxle	**Gearbox**	Six-speed transaxle
Front: unequal-length wishbones, anti-roll bar	**Suspension**	Front: unequal-length wishbones, anti-roll bar
Rear: trailing arms, lateral links, fixed-length driveshaft		Rear: unequal-length wishbones, anti-roll bar
Solid discs, 246mm front, 269mm rear (inboard)	**Brakes**	Vented discs, 282mm all round, ABS
6 x 14in front, 7 x 14in rear, alloy	**Wheels**	6.5 x 16in front, 7.5 x 17in rear, alloy
195/70 HR14 front, 205/70 HR14 rear	**Tyres**	195/50 R16 front, 225/45 R17 rear
898kg (44/56% front/rear)	**Weight**	875kg (38/62% front/rear)
181bhp/ton	**Power/weight**	219bhp/ton
6.8sec (claimed)	**0-60mph**	4.9sec (claimed)
138mph (claimed)	**Top speed**	147mph (claimed)
33mpg combined (claimed)	**mpg**	34.4mpg combined (claimed)
£5844 (1976)	**Price new**	£30,945 (2008)



EXIGE R-GT SHAKEDOWN

RALLY-SPEC VERSION OF NEW SUPERCHARGED EXIGE V6 UNDERGOES FIRST TESTS AHEAD OF HOMOLOGATION

Lotus has started shaking-down its new Exige R-GT rally car, ahead of its appearance this year on the stages of some of the world's toughest tarmac rallies.

Closely related to the forthcoming new Exige V6 road car, the R-GT got its first shakedown in Turin, Italy, in December, with the plan being to submit it for full FIA homologation in February. Presuming it passes, it will then be able to compete in the new 'GT' class at selected tarmac events.

Power comes from the same supercharged 3-litre V6 that will be used in the road car, but it breathes through a 34mm air restrictor plate to knock its output back from 345 to 302bhp. Transmission is handled by a six-speed Xtrac sequential gearbox, with drive going only to the rear wheels. The car also needs to be ballasted to the class's minimum 1200kg kerb weight, although Lotus has confirmed that it is considering production of a less powerful four-cylinder version that would be able to compete with a lower 1050kg minimum weight.



Once homologated, rally-ready R-GT will be sold by Lotus Motorsport to privateer teams

As it stands, the R-GT will only compete in tarmac events – it would be theoretically possible to convert the car to gravel spec, but it would lack pace compared with 4wd rivals. Although the Exige has missed out on this year's Monte Carlo rally, it could still make it to the Tour de Corse or San Remo.

As soon as it's homologated, Lotus Motorsport will start selling the R-GT to customers and it will be eligible for both international and national championships.



EDITED BY
SIMON DE BURTON

TIME ON ITS SIDE

Rotated dial of re-issued Vacheron Constantin watch enables the wearer to tell the time more easily while driving



VACHERON CONSTANTIN AMERICAN 1921
PRICE: £25,330 **FROM:** VACHERON-CONSTANTIN.COM

Back in 1921 (so the story goes) an important US client of Vacheron Constantin commissioned an elegant-looking wristwatch that would be readable while driving a motor car. The design the firm came up with had its dial rotated a few degrees so that '12' was in the position normally reserved for '1', while the winding crown was moved to the same corner, so the watch could now be worn on the back of the wrist, enabling the driver to see the time without releasing the wheel – a definite boon in the days of rough, unmetalled roads and vague, heavy steering. Few examples of the original were made, but this re-introduced version, with a rose-gold case upsized to 40mm, is undoubtedly one of the chicest retro driving watches ever.



BREITLING FOR BENTLEY ICE SPEED RECORD
PRICE: £189,550 (INCLUDING LIMITED-EDITION BENTLEY)
FROM: BENTLEYMOTORS.CO.UK

Back in February 2011, Finnish rally legend Juha Kankkunen powered a Bentley Continental Supersports Convertible to a record-breaking 202 mph – on ice. To celebrate the achievement, Bentley is making a limited edition of 100 Ice Speed Record Supersports Convertibles (see Driven), each supplied with a rather nice chronograph from Breitling free of charge. Naturally, the watch is replete with car-inspired design ranging from the carbonfibre dial to the lightweight, 49mm titanium case, which carries 'ISR' engraving on the back.

CERTINA DS PODIUM BIG SIZE GMT
PRICE: £440 **FROM:** CERTINA.COM

Certina was founded in 1888 and established a reputation for making robust watches which were often chosen by gung-ho explorer types for their strength and reliability. In more recent times, Certina (which has been part of the giant Swatch Group since 1983) has also backed rally drivers such as Petter Solberg and the late, great Colin McRae, and since 2005 has sponsored the Sauber F1 team. Only now, however, are Certina watches again available in the UK after an absence of a decade – and we find ourselves instantly impressed by the DS Podium, a 42mm, steel-cased chronograph with a second time zone and a nicely designed dial that can be had in either black or 'silver sunray'. The 'DS' in the title refers to the brand's 'Double Safety' concept introduced in 1959 to mark its high shockproof and water resistance standards. The Podium is so affordable because it has a quartz movement, but it's a good-quality Swiss one made by Swatch-owned ETA.



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Fuel consumption for the Volvo S60 range in mpg (l/100 km): Urban 19.5 (14.5) - 55.4 (5.1), Extra Urban 38.7 (7.3) - 72.4 (3.9), Combined 28.5 (9.9) - 65.7 (4.3). CO_2 Emissions 231 - 114 g/km. For the Volvo V60 range in mpg (l/100 km): Urban 19.5 (14.5) - 54.3 (5.2), Extra Urban 38.7 (7.3) - 68.9 (4.1), Combined 28.5 (9.9) - 62.8 (4.5). CO_2 Emissions 237 - 119 g/km.

0% APR representative, minimum deposit 50%, over 24 months. Retail sales only. Subject to availability at participating dealers only on vehicles registered between 1st January and 31st March 2012. Finance available on all S60 & V60 models with a minimum 50% deposit required. Finance subject to status. Terms and conditions apply. Applicants must be 18 or over. Guarantees/Indemnities may be required. Volvo Car Credit RH1 1SR. The service offer is only applicable to Volvo S60 & V60 vehicles ordered in the customer's name on or after the 1st January 2012 up to and including 31st March 2012. The retail service is for 3 years or 54,000 miles (whichever occurs first) and includes 3 services at a one-off cost to the customer of £300 inc VAT (£250.00 +VAT). The services must be carried out at a Volvo Authorised Repairer by Volvo Approved Technicians. Where the work is carried out outside the UK, the customer must pay for work and retain receipts for reimbursement by VCUK. The retail offer is only available for purchase at any time up to 1 month after registration, as long as the vehicle meets the appropriate conditions. Subject to additional terms and conditions, and excludes Fleet operators and Business users. Retail Offer only. See volvocars.co.uk for full terms and conditions.

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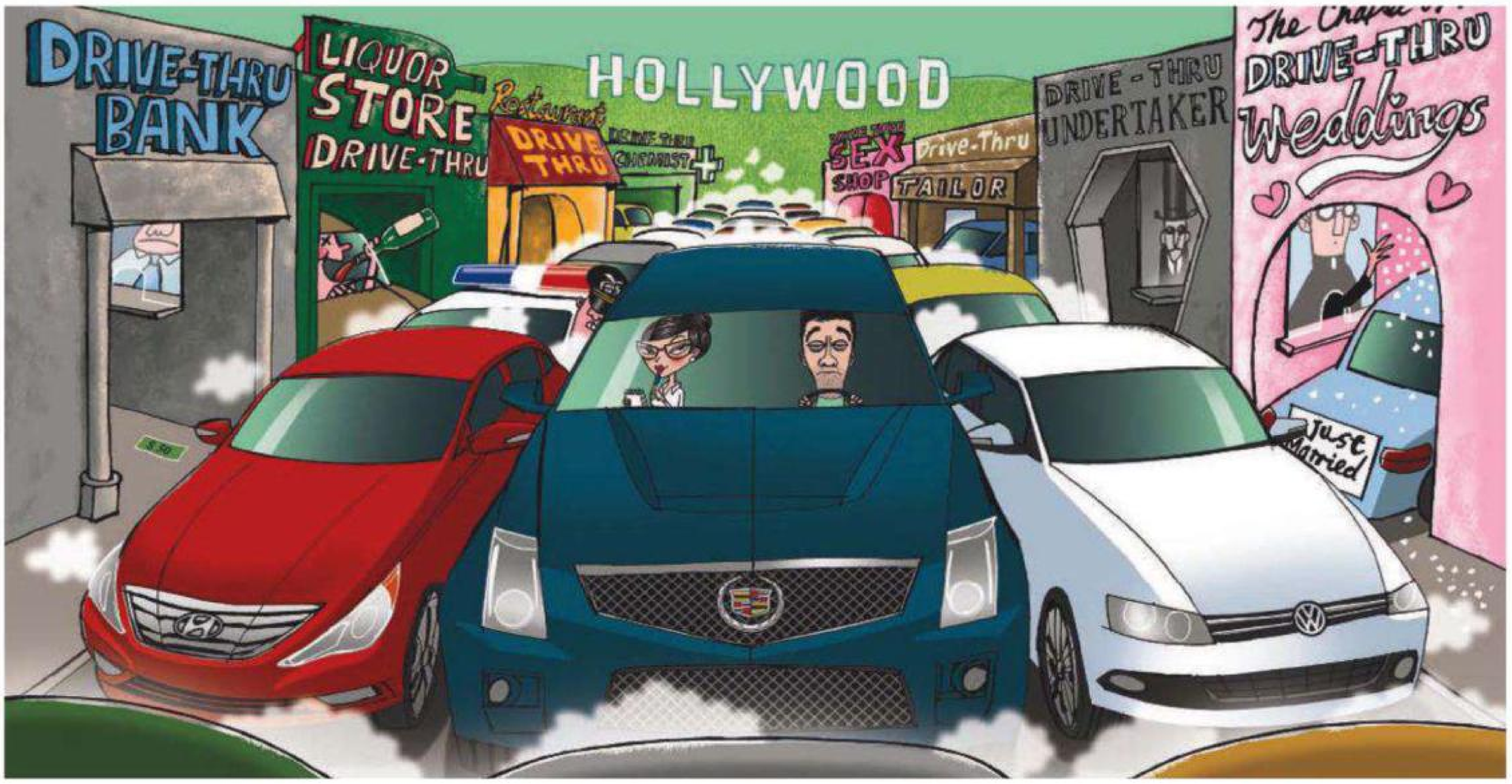
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Petrolhead

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





A 556bhp Cadillac estate should have been a hoot. Sadly for Porter, he couldn't have chosen a worse place to try it

Fast estates are like that other male fantasy, saucy secretaries. We're drawn to the idea that apparent sensibleness (ample load bay/glasses and hair in a bun) conceals utter naughtiness (wildly powerful V8 engine/might do lewd things behind the photocopier). Sadly, the really fast estate market isn't well populated at the moment. The Audi RS6 has gone, the new BMW M5 is yet to spawn a wagon and there's no guarantee that the forthcoming Jaguar XF estate will be available in R form. Which leaves the Mercedes E63 AMG estate with this niche market to itself. Or so you might think. Actually, there's another naughty secretary in the offices of Powerful Dog Carrier Industries Ltd – the Cadillac CTS-V.

After the V'd-up CTS saloon and coupe, the estate crept quietly into the world, and it was easy to miss its arrival because, though technically you can buy one in the UK, you'd be mad to stump up £74,610 on a left-hand-drive wagon from a company that doesn't have a proper dealer network. In the US it's a different story. There are Caddy dealers everywhere and, as an added bonus, the CTS-V wagon retails for $62,360 against $91,500 for the E63 estate. So, since I was in Southern California for Christmas, I arranged to spend a few days with America's naughtiest secretary.

What a fine looking machine it is. And it's got the chops to back up the smart looks too. The 6.2-litre supercharged V8 has a sensationally flat torque curve and, whilst not the keenest revver in the world, slowly swells to a mighty crescendo that feels every bit as strong as the quoted 556bhp. Such is the engine's strength that in normal driving you soon adopt a lazy skip-shift policy. First to third to sixth usually does it. Which is good because, whilst the V boasts the easiest shift I've ever experienced from the sturdy old Tremec TR-6060 (also used to biceptular effect in various Mustangs, Camaros and the Vauxhall VXR8), it's still far from finger-snap slick.

As for the chassis, it feels taut and balanced and is blessed with nicely hefty steering of zero slack, perfectly judged ratio and a feel-good Alcantara rim. The ride isn't bad either. All in all, the CTS-V feels like a class act at medium speed and gives sound indication that, if you really stepped things up a notch, it wouldn't get all panicky and give silly answers.

'LOS ANGELES IS A HORRIBLE PLACE TO DRIVE ANYTHING THAT PLACES EMPHASIS ON THE PLEASURE OF THE ACT ITSELF'

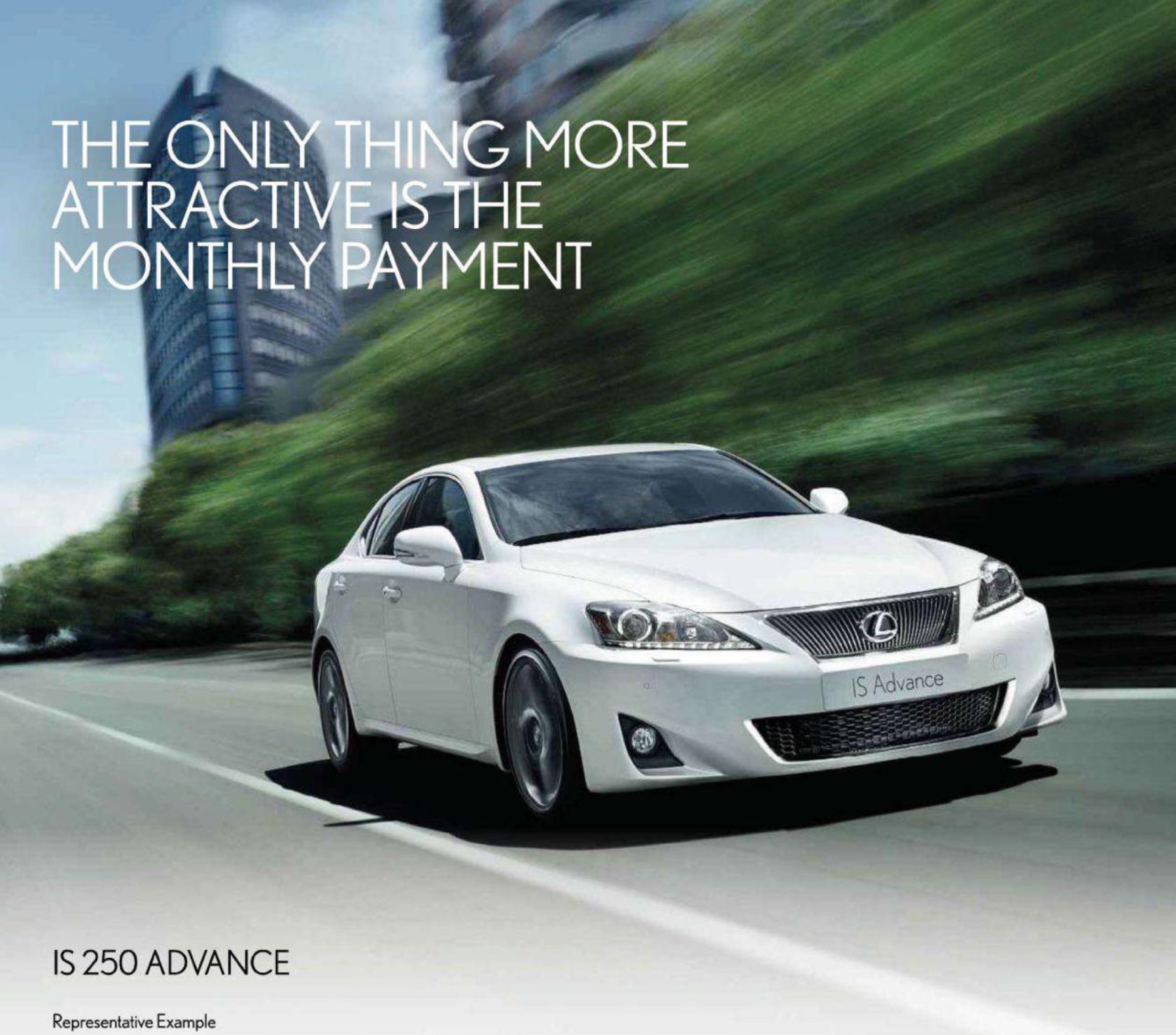
I'd like to tell you more but sadly my time with the V wagon was spent almost entirely in Los Angeles, and Los Angeles is no place to drive a car. This, you might think, sounds strange. After all, LA is a city entirely built around the car. There's a common misconception that auto companies and oil giants crushed the development of public transport in SoCal, but the truth is that by the time its biggest city was expanding, cars were already attainable. The tram, subway and train networks of this vast metropolis remained stubby and immature because there simply wasn't the demand to justify their expansion. A great many of its population could already afford a car.

And they still can. While I was there I saw TV ads promoting a Hyundai Sonata for $199 a month or a VW Jetta for $219pm with no money down. If your credit rating stacks up, you can drive away a normal four-door saloon tomorrow without a single cent leaving your bank account. So almost everyone in LA has a car and almost everything in LA is built to reflect that. Drive-in restaurants, drive-in off licences, drive-in banks. There's little you can't do from the comfort of your car, short of defecation and divorce.

Problem is, it's a horrible place to drive anything that actually places emphasis on the pleasure of the act itself, and that includes the CTS-V. The freeways are a coagulated mass of sluggish metal; the normal streets are a litany of repeated red stop lights. Contrary to popular belief, there *are* corners on the roads – especially in certain parts of the Hollywood Hills – but there's almost always someone slow-moving up ahead, barely paying attention because they're simultaneously using their cell phone and drinking a double skinny frappamochachino. Besides, you don't want to risk speeding because, as I once discovered the hard way, cop cars have forward-facing radar.

As a consequence, I never really got to use the CTS-V estate to the full extent of its considerable abilities. Truth is that testing a proper drivers' car in LA is as big a deflator of male dreams as a saucy secretary that really does just do admin.

Stoneings.com



IS 250 ADVANCE

Representative Example

Model	Term	35 Monthly payments	Cash price	Customer deposit	Finance Deposit Allowance	Fixed rate of interest (per annum)	Amount of credit	Guaranteed Future Value/ Optional final payment	Total amount payable	Representative
IS 250 Advance	36 months	£299	£27,105	£7,892.32	£1,000	3.55%	£18,212.68	£10,664.10	£30,021.42	6.9% APR†

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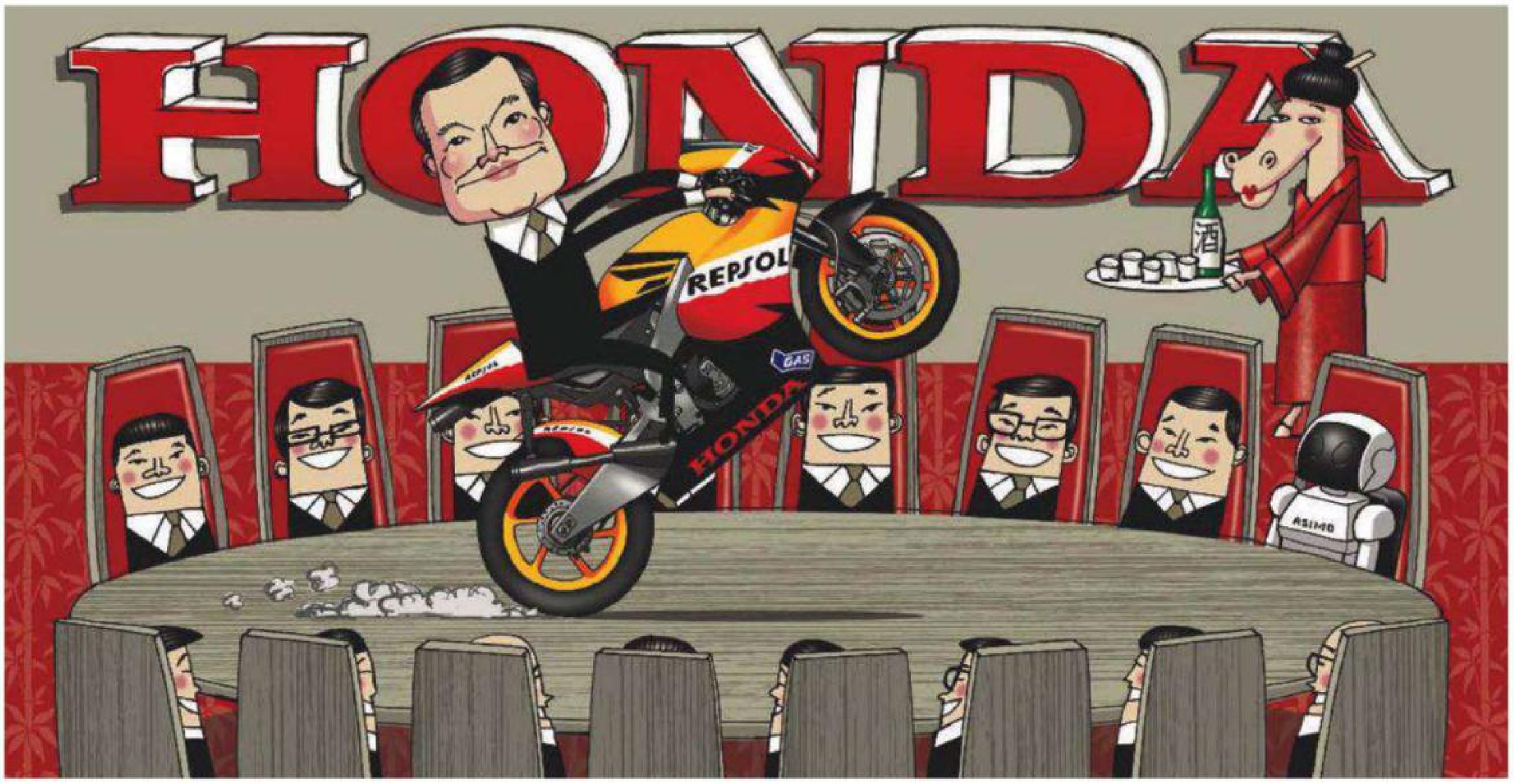
IS Series prices start from £25,370 OTR. Model shown is IS 250 Advance costing £27,105 OTR including optional metallic paint at £610. Prices correct at time of publishing and includes VAT, delivery, number plates, full tank of fuel, one year's road fund licence and £55 first registration fee. †6.9% APR Representative and £1,000 finance deposit allowance over 3 years on Lexus Connect Contract Purchase (PCP) available on all new retail IS for orders between 9 December 2011 and 31 March 2012, registered and financed by 30 June 2012, through Lexus Financial Services, Great Burgh, Burgh Heath, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5UZ at participating Lexus Centres. Other finance offers are available but cannot be used in conjunction with this offer. Terms and conditions apply. Excess mileage charge applies over 30,000 miles at 12 pence per mile. Indemnities may be required. Finance subject to status to over 18s only. Lexus Centres are independent of Lexus Financial Services. Subject to availability. The Lexus IS received the highest numerical score among compact executive cars in the proprietary J.D. Power and Associates 2011 UK Vehicle Ownership Satisfaction Study℠. Study based on 16,840 UK consumer responses measuring 108 models and measures ownership satisfaction with 2 year old vehicles. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of consumers surveyed November 2010-February 2011. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com

IS Series fuel consumption figures: urban 16.3-44.8 mpg (17.3-6.3 l/100km), extra urban 33.6-64.2 mpg (8.4-4.4 l/100km), combined 24.4-55.4 mpg (11.6-5.1 l/100km). CO_2 emissions combined 270-134 g/km.

Insider

by Harry Metcalfe
evo editorial director, serial supercar buyer and the man with his finger on the industry pulse





After a number of years in the doldrums, there are signs Honda is rediscovering its mojo, and that's great news

Of all the car companies out there today, Honda is one of the strangest. For starters, it doesn't just make cars, it makes loads of stuff – as long as it needs powering by an internal combustion engine. The list includes motorbikes, outboard engines for boats, quad bikes, mobile power generators, mowers, even home heating systems, which we'll get to in a moment.

What I love most about Honda, though, is its dedication to brilliant engineering. It's a given in everything it creates, meaning the Honda badge is a symbol of real quality. Choosing to fit a Honda outboard motor to your boat is a sure sign that you're more interested in whisper-quiet running and infallibility in all conditions than an unbeatable price. It's the same when it comes to mowers: spot a Honda-powered rotary in your local garden centre and you already know it's better than the near-identical one topped off with a Briggs & Stratton engine (which sounds like it should come with a sticker of a smiling Fred Dibnah, although they're actually made in a giant factory in Wisconsin, USA).

Yet, when it comes to cars, Honda hasn't always got it so right, and recently it seems to have completely lost its sense of 'Hondaness'. Wind the clock back to December 2008 and the first sign that something was wrong was when Honda made the surprise announcement that it was pulling out of Formula 1. For a company so entrenched in motorsport, it seemed a very odd decision. Then, a few months later, it announced it was ending production of the popular S2000 roadster. It got even worse in 2010 when production of the Honda Civic Type-R ceased; for car enthusiasts around the world, that was the last true Honda performance car in production.

It wasn't just with sports cars that Honda was stumbling. Consider the then-new Insight introduced in 2009. Here was a chance to give Toyota a bloody nose after the runaway success of the Prius hybrid, but Honda even managed to mess this up. From the moment it was launched, the second-generation

'HARDLY TYPICAL BEHAVIOUR FOR A MOTOR COMPANY C.E.O. BUT THEN TAKANOBU ITO IS A PROPER ENTHUSIAST'

Insight disappointed on all counts. Most crucially, it wasn't as economical as a Prius; unforgivable really when you consider that Honda's original Insight, launched in 1999, is still the world's most efficient petrol-powered production car (emitting a mere 80g/km of CO2). But rather than using its technology powerhouse to out-hybrid even the mighty Toyota, Honda made the fatal mistake of trying to develop a cheaper version of a Prius instead.

What was it thinking? The one thing Hondas have never been is cheap. Look back and every successful Honda product has always been the best-engineered in its sector. And the upshot is that the new Insight is being outsold by the Prius by a ratio of eight to one.

Well, after visiting Honda HQ in Japan last month, I'm pleased to be able to report that Honda is starting to rediscover its mojo. One of the most encouraging developments is the arrival of new president and CEO, Takanobu Ito. I first met Ito as he returned to the pits after a few hot laps aboard Casey Stoner's Repsol Honda RC212V MotoGP bike. Hardly typical behaviour for a motor company CEO, but then Ito is a proper enthusiast who first made his mark at Honda by developing the aluminium chassis for the original Honda NSX... With a background in R&D, he has intimate knowledge of all the latest technology and is now working round the clock to re-establish Honda as a global leader by using its engineering nous to the full.

One of the best examples of Honda's fanatical take on engineering that I saw during my visit was a prototype domestic heating boiler, which it is developing around a very special, gas-powered four-stroke engine featuring a longer power stroke than exhaust stroke (for cleverness it rivals the oval-shaped pistons Honda created in 1979 to allow eight valves per cylinder in its NR500 GP racer). With this jewel-like engine running at precisely 1950rpm to power a 240V generator, it can supply all the domestic power a house needs (as well as charge your electric car), while the waste heat gets pumped around radiators to heat the house. The result is an efficiency rating of 94 per cent.

When you throw in the high-performance hybrid NSX announced at Detroit, and the welcome return of Type-R to the Honda range later this year, it looks to me as if that 2009 wobble could soon be a distant memory. Welcome back Honda; we've missed you.

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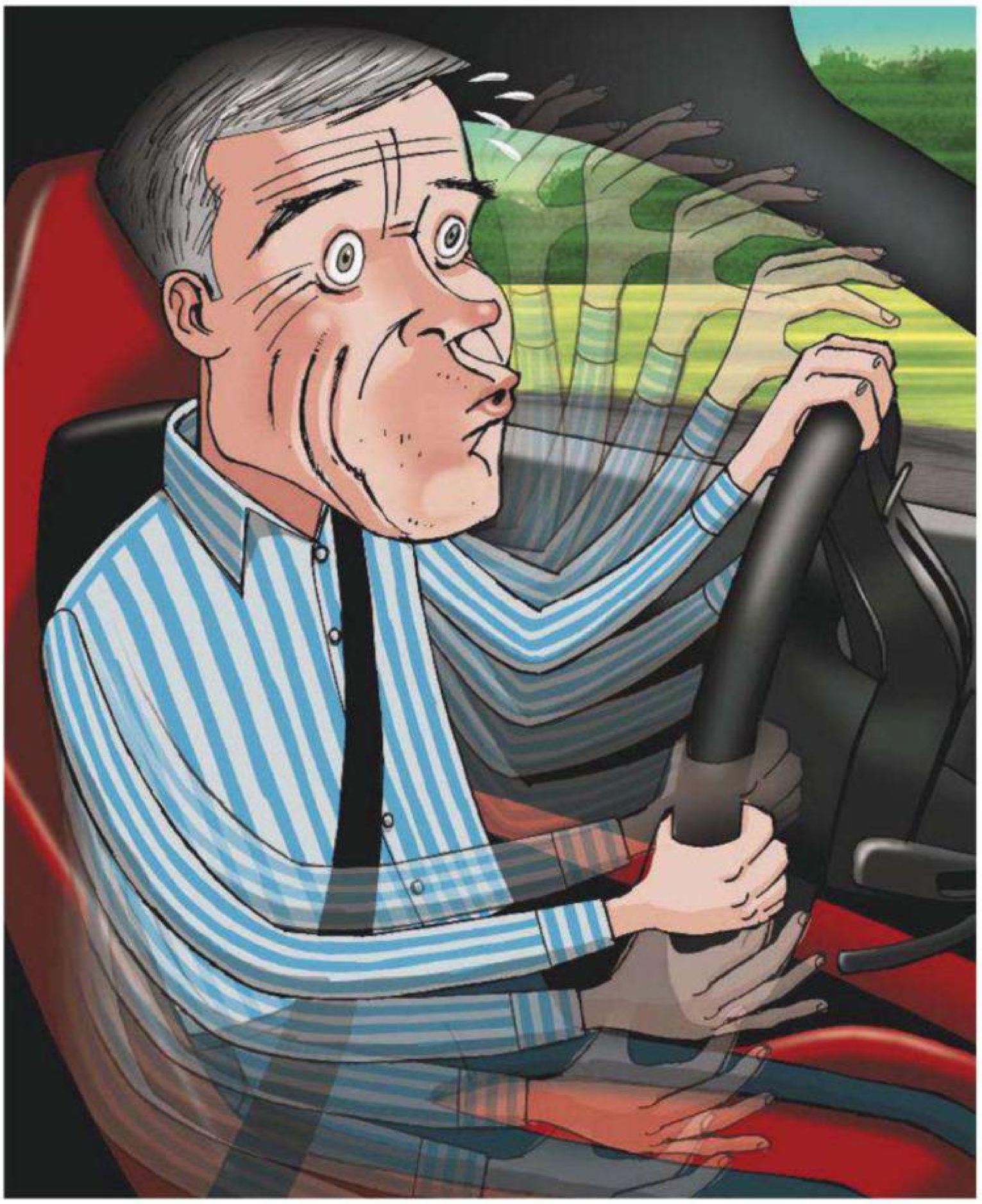
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Ten Tenths

by Tiff Needell
Racer, motor talker and the most sideways man we know



Our new columnist looks back at some of the supercars he drove in 2011 and wonders what 2012 holds in store



While many of us will have begun the New Year determined to stick to our resolutions – which were probably the same as the ones we made the year before – what I rather like is the Chinese system, which sets out a new theme to follow in the year ahead.

They've just moved from their 'Year of the Rabbit' to the 'Year of the Dragon', which means that, after a period concentrating on creativity and passion, now is the time for success and happiness. Excellent! Actually it's not quite that simple – you also have to add a different rotation of wood, fire, earth, metal and water, each alternating from Yin to Yang, and it takes 60 years before the same combination is repeated...

If I were to look back on my own 2011, I think I'd have to call it the 'Year of the Gears'. Not only did *Fifth Gear* chalk up its 20th series, but I also made a brief cameo return as the stand-in Stig for *Top Gear*, joined the three amigos to help present the *Top Gear Live* shows in both South Africa and England, and launched my autobiography, *Tiff Gear*!

Gears were also a key element of a couple of new supercars that I tested in 2011, starting with a trip to the Italian Alps to drive the fabulous new Ferrari FF. Now, in general I'm not a fan of four-wheel-drive supercars – humping all that extra weight around just in case it gets a bit slippery one day – but this was different. Ferrari has halved the weight of conventional systems by simply sticking a second gearbox on the front of the engine – which only drives the front wheels when slip indicators demand it and only operates in the lowest four of the car's seven gears. So basically it's still a rear-wheel-drive Ferrari with a get-out-of-snow system bolted on!

I experienced the second new gearbox development of the year during what turned out to be my most controversial test of 2011 – yes, the McLaren MP4-12C. Whereas McLaren ran my original *Top Gear* test of its F1 in its Park Lane showroom for several years – and it remains my favourite road car of all time – I knew our *Fifth Gear* film wasn't going to get the same treatment. But we felt the story, as we found it, had to be told.

Quite obviously the benchmark for the new car was Ferrari's sumptuous 458 Italia and the 12C got off to a bad start by having the muted tones of a turbocharged engine. Yes, turbocharging does have benefits for fuel consumption, but we felt this was hardly of concern to the likely buyers of a £200,000 car...

Then there's the gearbox. It's a clever piece of engineering, designed to get around the fact that these revolutionary 'twin clutch' gearboxes can only have one gear ready to instantly change to, with the car's 'brain' deciding whether you are more likely to want to change up or down. To get over this, McLaren introduced a 'pre-cog' feature, whereby a soft touch of the paddle would let the gearbox know which direction the driver wanted to go next. But the problem is you can never really be bothered and the resulting change is heavy and compromised.

'THE CAR'S STABILITY SYSTEMS HELPED SPEAR ME OFF THE ROAD WITH A MASSIVE DOSE OF OVER-CORRECTION'

To be honest I'm not really bothered how many milliseconds quicker a new system is. I'd still rather be the driver and change wherever I want – even straight from seventh to second if I so choose – whenever I want and in however long it takes me, with the pleasure of a manual system. But such is progress.

Then there was 'that' moment, when the car's stability systems helped spear me off the road with a massive dose of over-correction. Many have criticised me for pushing the car right to the limit in the first place. 'No buyers would drive it like that so why did you?' seems to be the gist of what they're saying.

Well, few owners will launch it to 60mph in three seconds, and even fewer will take it to a top speed of 205mph, but they all like to know that it can do it and I believe they also like to know if it's the best handling car in the world – which it isn't! Anyway, I've already been told I won't be able to drive any more McLarens, so I'll just have to stick to Astons, Ferraris, Lamborghinis, Paganis and Porsches instead.

So what else will 2012 bring? Well, I'd like to think that, now I've joined evo, this will be the 'Year of the Accelerator'. I can promise you that it will be my pleasure to stamp on as many throttle pedals as I can – and let the world know exactly what happens!

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evo Driven

THE EVO VERDICT ON THIS MONTH'S NEW LAUNCHES

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT V8

» NEW TWIN-TURBO 4-LITRE V8
» 40 PER CENT MORE ECONOMICAL THAN W12
» 0-60MPH ONLY 0.2SEC SLOWER
» EIGHT-SPEED GEARBOX » KEENER HANDLING

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 3993cc, twin-turbo **CO2** 246g/km
Power 500bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 487lb ft @ 1700-5000rpm **0-60mph** 4.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 188mph (claimed)
Price £122,000 (est) **On sale** Summer 2012

A Bentley should never feel light. That was the contention of the company's previous chairman, Dr Franz-Josef Paefgen. Certain things were in a Bentley's DNA: mass, low-end torque, refinement, pace. And lashings of luxury, of course.

So meet the mutant. Or, at least, a very good automotive actor, because while the new Continental GT V8 might

TESTED THIS MONTH

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT V8 P32
SUBARU IMPREZA WRX STI S206 P35
CHEVROLET CAMARO ZL1 P36
DMS BMW 1-SERIES M COUPE P38
HYUNDAI VELOSTER P39
MERCEDES-BENZ ML63 AMG P41
FIAT PANDA P42
FRONTLINE MG LE50 P42
RENAULT CLIO 200 RAIDER P44



have two-thirds the cylinder-count and capacity of the familiar W12 version, it has actually shed just 25kg. But that is not how it feels. Not at all.

Bentley pledged a couple of years ago to make its most popular cars use 40 per cent less fuel, and that target has now been hit by the new V8. Compare the figures: 500bhp against the W12's 567, 487lb ft of torque against 516. Top speed 188mph against 198. From a standstill to 60mph in 4.6sec instead of 4.4. This is not a pace reduction to get upset about when your Continental will go 40 per cent further on a tankful of fuel and emit an almost-polite 246g/km of oxidised carbon. That's promised to be a real-world 40 per cent, too, not just a combined-cycle stat.

It does make you wonder just where all the petrol goes with the W12. But then the Continental W12 doesn't have the V8 model's plethora of energy-saving tricks and tweaks. That 40 per cent includes the simple act of downsizing from 6.0 to 4.0 litres (accounting for 16 per cent), with the eight-speed ZF auto gearbox saving another six per cent relative to the W12's six-speeder.

Next comes the engine's ability to become a V4 under light loadings, much as the giant Mulsanne's V8 does, except here it's always the same four cylinders whose valves shut and whose fuelling and sparks are switched off. These are the inner two on one bank, the outer two on the other: five per cent saved.

Other savings to reach that 40 per cent total come from an electro-hydraulic steering pump, better aerodynamics, engaging the alternator only when off the throttle, and heating the gearbox oil from the engine after a cold start. It's the usual energy-efficiency stuff, not including, you'll notice, stop-start, because drivers find it too annoying.

The engine is based closely on the Audi S8's V8, but assembly is completed in Crewe and it's tailored to Bentley's needs. For example, it has a proper oil dipstick, it lacks electro-hydraulic

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mounts and its torque curve is plumper at the lower end, staying flat all the way from 1700 to 5000rpm.

A more aggressive nose than the W12's, with black grille mesh and bigger valance vents, sets a racier tone. So do the revised steering and suspension settings, intended for greater precision and feedback. The V8 and its GTC sibling are clearly positioned as the 'sporting' Continentals, as becomes apparent as soon as you fire it up. There's a deep bass backbeat, overlaid, as the 6000rpm power peak approaches, by an increasingly enthusiastic percussive crackle. It sounds brilliant.

Feels it, too. Direct injection plus twin scrolls for each turbo ensure a near-instant throttle response, making this a keener, sweeter engine than the W12, so it's easier to exploit its ample pace. The quick-shifting, always-smooth eight-speeder helps here, but the real surprise is the way this Bentley attacks bends.

Whether on track or road, it feels like a car two-thirds the weight, thanks to the precision and confidence of the steering and the near-absence of understeer. It will slip into benign power-oversteer to order, yet always feels stable and alert on its feet. It also rides uncommonly well on its adaptive suspension, retaining its precise responses even when soaking up under-tyre mayhem.





'THE REAL SURPRISE IS THE WAY IT ATTACKS BENDS'

It's true that by the time you've specced a V8 up to W12 levels, much of the 10 per cent price saving has gone. But that's hardly the point. What matters is that this is the most driver-pleasing road-going Bentley there has ever been, Supersports included. What's the point of the W12 now? **John Simister**

Above: cabin is less well equipped than the W12's, but it can be specced-up to match. Below: V8 can be identified by its more aggressive front-end treatment

evo RATING ★★★★½

+ Performance, soundtrack, economy

– Makes the W12 Conti seem pointless

BENTLEY CONTI ISR

» CELEBRATION EDITION
» 631BHP W12 » 204MPH



SPECIFICATION

Engine W12, 5998cc, twin-turbo
CO2 388g/km **Power** 631bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 590lb ft @ 2000-4500rpm **0-60mph** 3.8sec (claimed) **Top speed** 204mph (claimed)
Price £189,300 **On sale** Now

The lengthily named Continental Supersports Convertible ISR celebrates the ice speed record set by Juha Kankkunen last winter, when he powered across a frozen Baltic sea just off Finland at 205mph. Like Juha's car, it's based on the previous-generation Conti GTC rather than the new model launched in the summer. It features an uprated W12 with 631bhp – 10bhp more than the regular Supersports. That's not enough. Owners won't be able to smash the former WRC champ's score as the ISR will max out at 'just' 204mph. If I'd been in charge, aero modifications and a parachute would be on the options list.

In the real world it is, of course, comically rapid, especially as it has a quickshift version of the six-speed auto gearbox, apparently making possible a sub-4 second sprint to 60mph – faintly ridiculous in a car that weighs 2430kg. Ultimately you can never completely get away from the effect of that mass when a series of bends arrive, although you can certainly surprise the uninitiated with the amount of momentum that can be maintained. That's thanks in part to the wider Supersports track and the all-wheel drive with its 60:40 rearward-biased split that helps resist understeer.

Unique to the ISR are red air vents on the bonnet, red-weave carbon on the dash and some blinged-up wheels, all of which sparked some debate in this office. Most reckoned Bentleys shouldn't be quite so overt, but what the hell, it's a hoot to drive and that's all that really matters. **Roger Green**

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ Fastest four-seat convertible

– Slightly slower new GTC is better

SUBARU IMPREZA WRX STI S206

»316BHP 2-LITRE ENGINE »REVISED SUSPENSION »LIMITED EDITION »ONLY AVAILABLE IN JAPAN

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1994cc, turbo **CO2** n/a
Power 316bhp @ 6400rpm **Torque** 318lb ft @ 3200-4400rpm **0-60mph** 4.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited) **Price** c£45,000 (in Japan) **On sale** Now, in Japan

This is the quickest and best-handling Impreza that Subaru's in-house tuning arm, STI, has ever produced. But unless you're reading this in Japan, and you've already got your name on the list, then you can't buy one. The S206 is a Japan-only model with production limited to just 300 cars, and it's already sold out.

So what's different? Well, under the bonnet is a reworked version of the turbo 2-litre boxer engine used in the Japanese WRX. Power is up from the stock WRX STI's 305bhp to 316bhp, while torque increases from 290lb ft to 318. The engine is hand-built, with the pistons, conrods and crankshaft all meticulously balanced before assembly. There's also a special low-friction twin-scroll ball-bearing turbo, a remapped ECU and an exhaust system that boosts low- and mid-range torque by reducing back pressure.

The suspension gets STI-tuned Bilstein dampers, STI coil springs and a flexible front strut-tower brace. The wheels are 19-inch items wrapped in 245/35 ZR19 Michelin Pilot Super Sport rubber, and behind them are cross-drilled discs with huge six-pot Brembo calipers up front.

On the road, the S206 feels at once perfectly poised and ready to be properly hoofed. Compared with the regular STI, it displays beefier torque between 3200 and 4400rpm, exactly where you need more urge for quicker corner exits. And bends are what the S206 does best – so well that it almost defies logic. How can you make a WRX corner with so little roll, maintain so much lateral grip and yet retain such comfortable ride quality?

STI Motorsport boss – and former chief test driver – Hideharu Tatsumi explains that his team has introduced some 'little secrets' from the STI race car, which is being prepared for a second go at the Nürburgring 24-Hour race, in which the team took a class victory last year. So the S206 gets extra support braces, special lateral suspension links and race-spec bushes. The steering ratio has been dialled back from 13:1 to 15:1, improving stability at speed. Even under extreme use there's almost no understeer and the rear tyres hold on amazingly well too.





Rear wing, carbon roof and black BBS alloys are part of the NBR package. Interior (above) gets some minor trim changes. Below: 2-litre boxer produces 316bhp

So why no export model? According to Tatsumi-san, even two catalysers wouldn't reduce emissions to Euro standards. The strong yen also means that the S206 would be prohibitively expensive in most export markets. At current exchange rates it costs the equivalent of £45,000 in Japan.

Of the 300 cars, 100 will get the 'NBR Challenge Package', designed to celebrate that Ring win. This adds unique 19in BBS rims, and a carbonfibre roof and rear wing. Oh, and £4500 to the price.

Good as the S206 is, it's hard to imagine European buyers foregoing an M3 or a C63 AMG for one. **Peter Lyon**

evo RATING ★★★★★

+ The best current Impreza
– For Japan only, where it's sold out





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Pictures: Yoshitada Moro

CHEVROLET CAMARO ZL1

» MOST POWERFUL CAMARO YET » SUPERCHARGED 6.2-LITRE V8
» 580BHP » 0-60MPH IN 4.0SEC » MAGNETIC DAMPERS

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 6162cc, supercharger **CO2** n/a **Power** 580bhp @ 6100 rpm **Torque** 556lb ft @ 3800 rpm **0-60mph** 4.0sec (claimed) **Top speed** 180mph (claimed) **Price** c£35,600 (in the US) **On sale** Now, in the US (UK TBC)

Pity General Motors for the poor timing. Mere months before the on-sale date of the 580bhp Chevrolet Camaro ZL1, Ford goes and steals all the thunder by announcing that its Mustang Shelby GT500 will pack 650bhp. Who cares about a car when its nearest rival has more power, a lower kerb weight and similar pricing?

But overshadowed though the super-Camaro may be, it's still an astonishing thing. After all, 580bhp is supercar territory, even in a car weighing 1900kg. The supercharged 6.2-litre V8 engine is shared with the Cadillac CTS-V, but here it has a reworked air intake and an active exhaust system borrowed from the Corvette ZR1. Everything touched by its power is modified from the standard Camaro, or unique in some way. Highlights include a beefed-up rear differential and CV joints, plus unequal-stiffness half-shafts to prevent wheel-hop under hard acceleration. The brakes are by Brembo, with six-piston calipers squeezing the two-piece front discs.

All the aerodynamic changes on the ZL1 are functional, resulting in net downforce at speed. The centre bonnet bulge, made of carbonfibre, covers the top-mounted intercooler and also extracts air from behind the radiator and pulls it up and over the body. Underneath the car a flat belly-pan finishes in NACA ducts that direct air to cool the transmission. The front grille, reminiscent of the *Transformers* Bumblebee, hides brake-cooling ducts in the outer edges of its lower section.

On the suspension front, the ZL1 comes with third-generation magnetorheological dampers with two driver-selectable settings. This latest iteration of the system uses two small coils instead of one large one to create the magnetic field that aligns and thickens the ferrous damping fluid, resulting in a faster field dispersal and better control. These new units react 1000 times per second – more than fast enough to stiffen up the car's front end under braking. Forged alloy wheels – either the standard black ten-spoke design or the optional shiny five-spoke rims, both 20 inches in diameter – and Goodyear Eagle Supercar G:2 tyres save a total of 10kg in unsprung weight.

All of this work is toward the singular purpose of making the Camaro ready for a full day at the track, straight out of the box. The only performance-related option on offer is a six-speed automatic transmission, and it too has been modified to run lap after lap. Chevrolet says the two-pedal car reaches 60mph from rest a tenth of a second quicker than the six-speed manual – 3.9sec rather than



Above: ZL1 badges appear everywhere. Top: lower grille is larger than on lesser Camaros; a jutting splitter sits beneath

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Left: interior refinement has been improved for the 2012 Camaro; seats and wheel unique to ZL1. Above: supercharged engine has 160bhp more than naturally aspirated Camaro SS

4.0 – and tops out 4mph faster, at 184mph. But the manual is better to drive, plus it adds launch control and a trick 'no-lift shift' function that allows you to keep the throttle pinned on upshifts without the revs rushing for the limiter.

The ZL1's Performance Traction Management system has five settings, which loosen up traction and stability control boundaries in incremental steps. In its final setting, Race, intervention is near impossible to detect unless you make a deliberately stupid manoeuvre. Turn everything off and the ZL1 proves amazingly easy to drift. The car has a neutral balance, bordering on oversteer, and the only downside to the higher limits is that they highlight a lack of support in the flat seats. On track the ZL1's sharpness might surprise even an M3 owner.

On the road, the Camaro's aircraft-carrier width is more of a problem than on track, but otherwise the ZL1 is easy to drive in traffic and rides comfortably over long distances. Chevrolet has managed to turn the Camaro into a proper GT car.

In the States the ZL1's $54,995 (c£35,600) base price is an impressive power-per-dollar deal, although buyers in the US have to pay a $1300 gas guzzler tax ($2600 for the auto), while the Shelby GT500 dodges the fuel consumption surcharge. It's a shame, really – the Shelby beats the ZL1 in nearly every numerical category, but don't let that fool you into thinking this Camaro isn't one of the very best cars in its class.

Sadly, its chances of coming to the UK are 'less than 50:50' according to Chevrolet. We'll have to prove an appetite for imports of the less powerful SS before it will even consider bringing the ZL1 over here. **Mike Austin**

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ Bang-per-buck, dynamic focus
– Can't match the Mustang's figures

'ON TRACK, THE ZL1'S SHARPNESS MIGHT SURPRISE EVEN AN M3 OWNER'

DMS BMW 1M COUPE

»ECU REMAP »POWER UP TO 402BHP »180MPH-PLUS TOP SPEED »UPGRADE COSTS JUST £954

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo **CO2** n/a **Power** 402bhp @ 6350rpm **Torque** 453lb ft @ 3950rpm **0-62mph** 4.4sec (est) **Top speed** 180mph+ (claimed) **Conversion price** £954 **On sale** Now (www.dmsautomotive.com)

Is more power always a good thing? Most racing drivers would say, 'yes, it is'. Most tyrannical dictators would say the same thing too. Conclude from that what you will (but I don't think it means we're likely to see Jenson Button trying to take over a small African country any time soon). On the other hand there has been a school of thought for a while now that the spiralling AMG, M and RS power war isn't necessarily an awfully good thing. The argument is that there's only so much power you can actually use on the road, that more power breeds the quest for more grip and the end result is less involvement, more of the time.

All of which brings us to this DMS-tuned BMW 1-series M Coupe. I can't remember speaking to anyone who's said that the diminutive 1-series with the big arches is lacking a bit of oomph, and as if to confirm this, Rob Young, boss of DMS, says that most 1Ms he's seen on the rollers have been putting out around 355bhp as standard. That's 20bhp more than BMW claims. Once DMS has remapped the 1M's ECU, though, power is lifted to 402bhp and torque rises a massive 84lb ft to 453lb ft. In addition to the power and torque hikes, the remap also raises the speed limiter so that you can go beyond 180mph. That in itself seems quite staggering – approaching 300kph in a 1-series. Barmy.

On the road, the first thing you notice is something that you no longer have to do. In the standard car, throttle response is a little lazy at the top of the pedal travel unless you press the Sport button on the steering wheel. In the re-tuned DMS car that non-Sport throttle response is vastly better, giving you more decisive control over what goes on at the rear axle.

The greater shove is instantly noticeable too, with an even more muscular delivery and a real rip to the way the revs pile on above 4000rpm. Now, more than ever, you need to drive the 1M with the traction control off or in its slightly chilled-out 'M Dynamic Mode', otherwise the little yellow warning light flashes more than a kilted Scotsman in a hurricane.

Needless to say, oversteer is even easier to achieve than before. However, perhaps more crucially, the 1M doesn't feel outfaced by the extra performance. Traction is still surprisingly good and the power delivery remains smooth, so you don't feel the car's natural and appealing everyday useability has been compromised, it's just more bonkers fast.

At £954 for the three hours' work, the remap is good value for the level of extra power that's liberated. It doesn't change the service intervals required or show up on service diagnostics either, although you might become even friendlier with your local tyre fitter.



Top right: remapped straight-six puts out 67bhp over claim for standard 1M; rest of car is unchanged









For plenty of people the standard car's already healthy outputs will be more than enough, but if you do crave more power (and not in the Idi Amin sense), then the DMS conversion shows that the wonderful 1M Coupe can happily handle it. And that is a good thing. **Henry Catchpole**

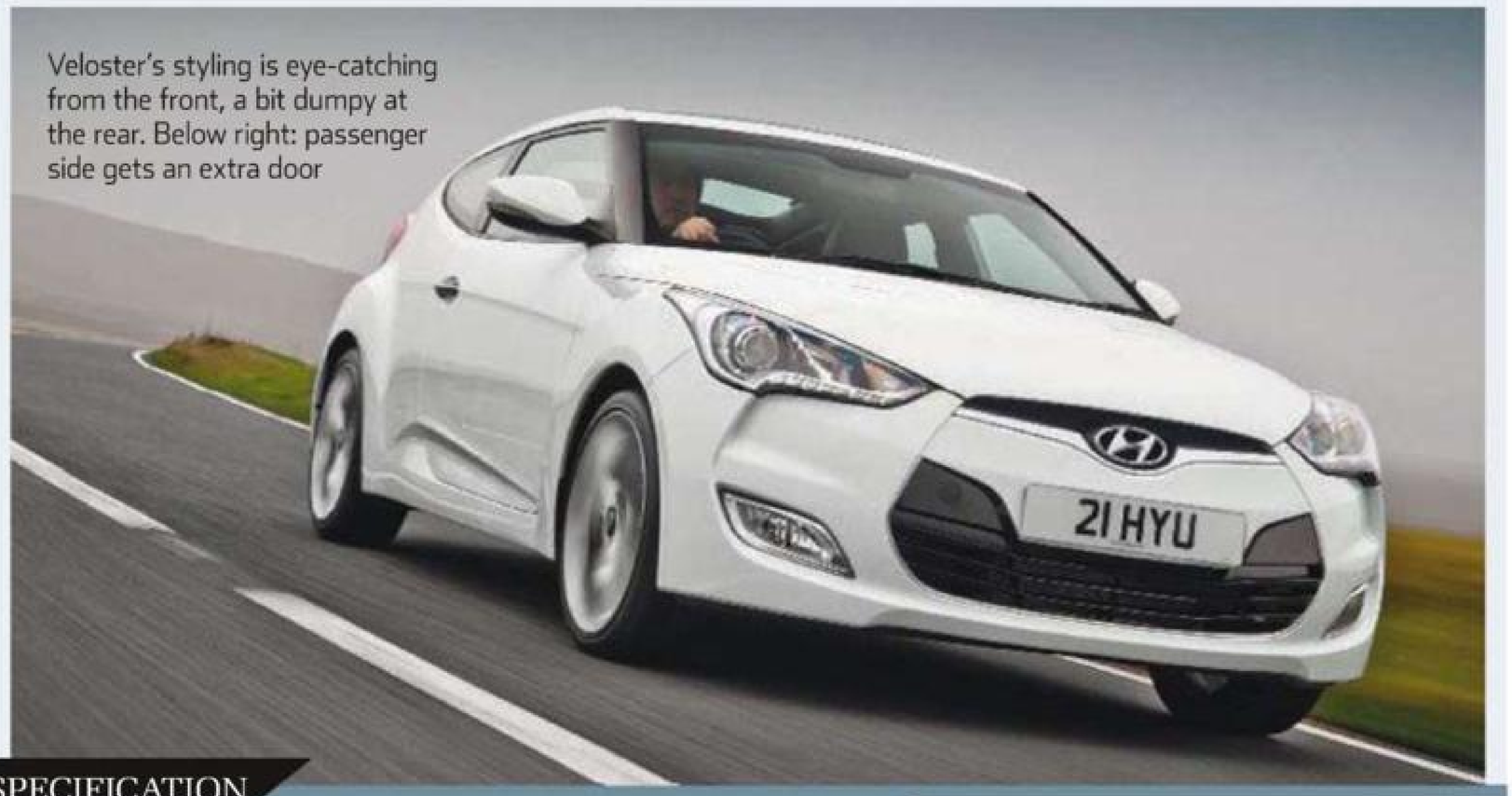
evo RATING ★★★★★

+ 402bhp. In a 1-series

– Bigger tyre bills

'THERE'S A REAL RIP TO THE WAY THE REVS PILE ON ABOVE 4000RPM'





Veloster's styling is eye-catching from the front, a bit dumpy at the rear. Below right: passenger side gets an extra door

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1591cc **CO2** 148g/km **Power** 138bhp @ 6300rpm
Torque 123lb ft @ 4850rpm **0-62mph** 9.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 125mph (claimed) **Price** £17,995 **On sale** Now



HYUNDAI VELOSTER

» ASYMMETRIC BODYSHELL » 138BHP
» PRICE UNDERCUTS COUPE-HATCH RIVALS

Since the quiet death of the Hyundai Coupe you'll have been hard pressed to name a Korean car capable of making the **evo**-meter even twitch, but the new Veloster is certainly different enough to get a chance to plead its case before the jury.

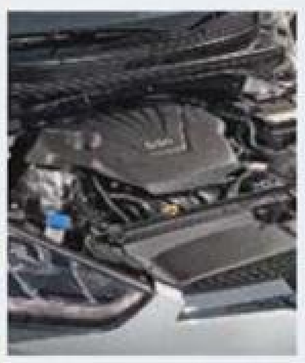
It's a coupe-hatchback in the mould of the Volkswagen Scirocco and Vauxhall Astra GTC, although one with a unique trick: an asymmetric bodyshell with one door on the driver's side but two on the passenger's, the extra door making it easier to access the rear seats.

Underneath the surface the Veloster abandons all pretence of radicalism, with suspension drawn from the corporate parts bin: MacPherson struts at the front and an old-school twist-beam axle at the back. Only one engine is available from launch in the UK, a 1.6-litre direct-injection four-pot petrol with 138bhp and a relatively feeble 123lb ft of torque (at a peaky 4850rpm). This is delivered to the front wheels via either a six-speed manual gearbox or a new six-speed twin-clutcher (Hyundai's first).

Rapid it ain't. Hyundai claims a 9.7sec 0-62mph time with the manual, which feels about right. The engine lacks any kind of low-down enthusiasm, but fortunately it's keen to rev, both to and through the 6300rpm that peak power arrives at. It sounds pretty good too, with a decently rorty soundtrack, and the manual 'box has a nice, positive action.







Standard wheels are 17-inchers, 18s are an option; 138bhp 1.6-litre engine sounds good, but needs to be worked hard. Below: heavily styled interior suits the Veloster



It's no sports car, but the Veloster puts in a composed and thoroughly sensible performance. If you've not driven a Korean car since the bad old days then you'll be pleasantly surprised at how close this one gets to class standards. The over-light power steering gives sketchy feedback, but at everyday road speeds the Veloster reacts well enough with keen initial responses and a good impression that it's enjoying itself.

Sadly, though, its dynamic performance wanes in direct proportion to speed. The front end lacks grip when asked to digest a keen corner, and the limit brings nothing beyond safe, boggy understeer. The chassis also struggles on rougher road surfaces at speed.

The Veloster is a lot of car for the money, as the old saying has it. Starting at £17,995, it comes with generous standard kit, undercutting the most basic 120bhp 1.4-litre TSI Scirocco by £2070 and (perhaps more pertinently) the boggo 118bhp Astra GTC by £500. If the forthcoming turbocharged version undercuts rivals by a similar margin then we might be looking at a genuine Korean pulse-raiser. **Mike Duff**

evo RATING ★★★☆☆

+ Well built, well priced, decent to drive

– Lacks punch, struggles at speed

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MERCEDES ML63 AMG

» TWIN-TURBO 5.5-LITRE V8
» 518BHP » 0-62MPH IN 4.8SEC
» IMPROVED ECONOMY!



SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 5461cc, twin-turbo **CO2** 276g/km
Power 518bhp @ 5250rpm **Torque** 516 lb ft @ 1750rpm **0-62mph** 4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Price c£85,000 (est) **On sale** July

Meet the latest mega-SUV to grow a conscience. The third generation of Mercedes' flagship Cayenne Turbo fighter gets AMG's 5.5-litre twin-turbocharged V8 engine and dramatically trimmed emissions and fuel consumption – but it's still a monster capable of 0-60mph in well under five seconds.

The V8 is the same one we've seen in AMG versions of the CLS and E-class. With help from direct injection (and, to a lesser extent, stop-start) it's managed to transform the ML63's eco performance from abysmal to almost acceptable – the official 'combined' score is 23mpg, 30 per cent better than the old naturally aspirated 6.2-litre V8.

Of course, the temptation of 518bhp and 516lb ft of torque means that few owners will manage anything like those economy figures. Performance is brutal. The bi-turbo engine makes a wonderfully bass-heavy rumble and delivers effortless shove pretty much regardless of what's showing on the rev-counter. The 4.8sec 0-62mph time tells only part of the story – the most impressive thing about the AMG ML is the way it gets into its stride as speeds rise, blasting into three figures with alarming ease.

Handling is sharpened by Mercedes' 'Active Curve System' – active anti-roll bars that stiffen under cornering loads. The ML63 also has adaptive dampers and active air suspension, which lowers the body at higher road speeds to improve aerodynamics. As before, there's permanent four-wheel drive with a 40/60 front/rear torque split.



The clever roll bars can be felt working hard under cornering loads, the towering ML resisting roll even under extreme provocation. Considering its two-tonne-plus kerb weight it's an impressively composed dynamic performance. The electromechanical steering is linear and accurate without any slop, the brakes are strong and the ride is composed.

The only downside is the seven-speed automatic transmission, which doesn't feel as responsive as it should when operated manually. It's as if it's saddled with the same slightly dull-witted software as the twin-clutch SLS 'box – arrive at a corner asking for several downshifts in quick succession and you'll find an annoying pause between each one.



Bi-turbo V8 has 518bhp, with 549bhp an option

Above: standard kit inside the well-equipped cabin includes an AMG steering wheel with aluminium shift paddles. Below: standard wheels are 20 inches in diameter; 21s are an option



As you'd expect, the ML comes with something close to kitchen-sink specification. In addition to the usual leather seats, Alcantara trim and XL digital screen there's more safety equipment than anything else in the segment, including blind-spot monitoring, lane departure warnings and 'Attention Assist', which beeps angrily if it thinks you're about to nod off at the wheel.

Prices haven't been officially confirmed, but Mercedes reckons you'll be looking at around £85,000. Add another £6000 to that and you can get the AMG Performance package, which brings 21in alloys, ups power to 549bhp and shaves another tenth off the 0-62mph time. But remember you could buy both a regular ML350 CDI and a Porsche Boxster for the same money… **Sam Hardy**

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ Great engine, decent dynamics
– Cost, weight, gearchange



Pictures: Mercedes-Benz



FIAT PANDA

» NEW BABY HATCH » TWINAIR VARIANT » IMPROVED CHASSIS

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 2-cyl, 875cc, turbo
CO2 99g/km **Power** 84bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 107lb ft @ 1900rpm **0-62mph** 11.2sec (claimed) **Top speed** 110mph (claimed) **Price** £11,200 (approx) **On sale** Now

Here at **evo** Towers we used to have quite a fondness for Fiat's post-millennial Panda, especially the 100HP version. Boxy, functional and with minimalist tendencies, the regular Panda had a practical purity yet was also good fun to drive in a fluent, roll-along, thrash-it-to-death way.

Now there's a new Panda. Not all-new; the basic structure and the approximate outline remain, but the corners are rounded and the body is longer (thanks to crash tests.) As before, there's no obvious luxury inside, rather a neat fitness for purpose. That means a giant dashboard cubby-hole, an optional sliding rear seat and a handbrake shaped like a computer mouse with a button on the side.

The new car gets both a wider track and larger, more compliant suspension bushes – plus acoustically decoupled top mounts for the front struts and a stiffer rear torsion beam. The engines mirror the Fiat 500's – a 68bhp 1.2, a 74bhp 1.3 turbodiesel and the intriguing 84bhp, 875cc TwinAir – but a new, non-turbo





TwinAir is added of 964cc and 64bhp.

The Twinair turbo is the liveliest, the most sonically interesting and the closest in vigour to the old 100HP, and thanks to a throttle re-map it feels crisper than the 500's unit if ultimately no faster.

Best, though, is the transformation that has been wrought on the chassis. Now we have the alertness of the old 100HP combined with a ride better than any version of the previous Panda. It's quiet and supple but never lolloping or vague. The steering feels more natural and transparent (than a 500's, too), and roll angles are much reduced.

Is it a major facelift or a new model with carry-over parts? Both, is the answer. But it doesn't matter. What does is that driving the new Panda really makes you feel unexpectedly good. And it bodes well for how this year's facelifted 500 should drive. **John Simister**



Above: curious, mouse-shaped handbrake. Facia is dominated by huge cubby-hole. Top and below left: body is larger and curvier than previous Panda; chassis is best yet

evo RATING ★★★★☆

\+ Sense and sensibility combined

– VW's Up is shorter *and* roomier

FRONTLINE MG LE50

» CLASSIC UPDATED » 212BHP » 0-60 IN 5.1SEC



SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc **CO2** n/a
Power 212bhp @ 7200rpm **Torque** 174lb ft @ n/a rpm **0-60mph** 5.1sec (claimed)
Top speed 160mph (claimed)
Price £49,950 **On sale** Now

Yes, it's an MGB GT. But stay with us. Think in terms of an Eagle E-type and you'll have a measure of this collaboration between B specialists Frontline Developments and British Motor Heritage. It's effectively a new car, to be built in a limited edition of 50 (to celebrate the B's 50th, hence the name), and it costs 50 grand. We're losing you again, I can tell…

For that you get a brand new shell, finished to a standard that's closer to an Aston than an MG, an interior beautifully trimmed in leather, Alcantara and Wilton carpet and equipped with air-con and a top-end hi-fi, and a thoroughly modern mechanical package including an uprated current MX-5 engine and six-speed gearbox, power steering, disc brakes and multi-link rear suspension. A kerb weight of just 941kg translates to 229bhp/ton, the same as a Boxster S.

And it's bloody good fun. The engine delivers a shove unknown to drivers of standard MGBs, revs all the way to 7800rpm and even sounds like a classic Brit sports car. The gearbox is a delight. The chassis retains the live axle but it's much more tightly controlled here, and although the ride can become choppy, the LE50 just begs to be flung around. The steering is ideally geared and weighted, and there's bags of feel from both ends.

Negatives? The engine's a bit lacking low-down torque, the seats are rather short in the cushion and the pedals could be better placed for heel-and-toeing. That's it. Fifty grand's a lot, but the car's a cracker. **Peter Tomalin**

evo RATING ★★★★☆

\+ The best MGB GT ever

– The most expensive MGB GT ever

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SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc **CO2** 190g/km **Power** 197bhp @ 7100rpm **Torque** 159lb ft @ 5400rpm **0-62mph** 6.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 141mph (claimed) **Price** £21,695 **On sale** Now

Our favourite hot hatch lives on. Before the arrival at September's Paris motor show of a fresh Clio – and a newly turbocharged Renaultsport version – there's time for another special-edition 200. Enter the Raider, a name with mildly iconic status thanks to an end-of-line edition of the 5 GT Turbo.

The 5 Raider boasted lots of extra kit and a unique colour scheme, and its modern-day namesake follows the same script. Two matt colours are available – Stealth Grey and Diavolo Red – and it's a proper paintjob, not just a wrap, so jetwashes are out. Just 50 Raiders will be made, all of them coming to the UK.

Inside, there's a pair of leather Recaro sports seats and a more tactile gearknob, while all the best option boxes are ticked, among them the ones for the stiffer Cup chassis and your choice of either a TomTom satnav or the Renaultsport Monitor (with its 0-62mph timing, lap stopwatch and G-meter). There are 18in black alloys, too – an inch bigger than you normally find on a Clio 200 – wrapped in new Bridgestone Potenza RE050 rubber.

This represents the first and only dynamic change the 200 has seen in its lifetime, but the effects are predictably slight. A larger tyre footprint brings a touch more grip and adds some weight to the steering, which remains as direct as ever, and while the ride is as firm but well-judged as always, any bumps you do encounter are communicated in a harsher fashion.

None of that alters the Clio's character, though, with the top-end hyperactivity of its 197bhp natuarally aspirated 2-litre engine and the exploitability of its unfailingly communicative front-drive chassis present and correct. It's brilliant.

But then so is the basic 200 Cup, which, at £16,930, is getting on for five grand cheaper than the £21,695 Raider. But if you want the best hot hatchback on sale today in a specification that will almost certainly be highly sought-after tomorrow, this is it. **Stephen Dobie**



Above: Raider's matt finish is paint, not a wrap







Recaro seats are standard equipment; 18-inch wheels are the biggest yet fitted to a Clio; just 50 Raiders will be made, each individually numbered

evo RATING ★★★★★

\+ Looks cool and drives as well as ever

– Pricey compared with standard

CHRYSLER 300C SRT8

» 470BHP HEMI V8
» SUB-5SEC TO 60MPH
» MIGHT COME TO THE UK



SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 6410cc **CO2** n/a **Power** 470bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 470lb ft @ 4300rpm **0-60mph** 4.8sec (est) **Top speed** 175mph (limited) **Price** c£55,000 (est) **On sale** TBC

Meet America's answer to the BMW M5 and Mercedes E63 AMG. The 300C SRT8 has just gone on sale in the States, and it could well turn up in the UK later this year with a price tag undercutting the aforementioned German supersaloons by around £20,000.

It can't match the Mercedes or BMW on power, although it comes close with 470bhp from a 6.4-litre Hemi V8 that's as American as Mickey Mouse eating his mom's apple pie. Make that a low-fat apple pie, though – the SRT8's V8 features a fuel-saving mode that allows it to cruise on just four cylinders, making it 21 per cent more efficient than the previous-generation version.

On the road it's seriously fast – we used the in-dash timer to record a 5sec 0-60mph time on cold concrete, so it should knock a couple of tenths off that in optimum conditions. Even with the traction control on, there's a squeak from the rear tyres as they struggle to hook up; turn the TC off and you'll find yourself going nowhere at the front of a sudden bank of fog.

It's an enjoyable car, but it always feels heavy and doesn't like rapid changes of direction. The five-speed automatic gearbox isn't the quickest shifter either.

If the SRT8 does come to the UK, expect a price around the £55K mark. It can't match the dynamic polish of its German rivals, but it's certainly got them licked on price. **Steve Fowler**

evo RATING ★★★½☆

\+ Storming performance, quality interior

– Dull-witted auto, not great in corners

 Pictures: Dean Smith / Chrysler

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F10 535D » 358 BHP
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320D E90 » 209 BHP
330D E46 » 260+ BHP
730D » 290+ BHP
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LETTER OF THE MONTH

Twin peaks

A standing ovation for the talented people behind the new Toyota and Subaru coupes (**evo** 166). Never before can I recall two cars more apt for their launch markets.

It's great to see the Toyobaru coalition waving two fingers at the 'power race' and putting handling first – something that real-world enthusiasts, stymied by oppressive speed limits and increasingly congested roads, have been crying out for. Heck, these cars may even be insurable for a young whipper-snapper.

A slap on the back, too, for the lightweight construction – after all, fuel isn't getting any cheaper, and we've all been moaning about bigger, heavier cars for years. And thanks

'IT'S GREAT TO SEE THE TOYOBARU COALITION WAVING TWO FINGERS AT THE POWER RACE'

for the small-ish 17-inch standard-fit alloys – I'll happily leave the bling hoops to those looking to trash the ride on their BMWs.

But I think the biggest vote of thanks must go to whoever in the Toyobaru partnership has their finger on the pulse of the petrolhead market. They have delivered something that answers seemingly all of **evo**'s past prayers, and something that (unannounced price notwithstanding) could go down in history as a new icon.

Iain Cameron



THE STAR LETTER WINS A ROAD ANGEL VANTAGE SAFETY CAMERA & BLACKSPOT ALERT DEVICE WORTH £249.99.

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Lotus's gamble

I'm afraid that Lotus will have to start its new 'golden age' (Dany Bahar interview, **evo** 166) without me on board. £50K or thereabouts for the Exige V6 may not break the bank for some, but it is too much for me and, I suspect, for many of the people who have bought and enjoyed Lotus products over the years. It does seem rather rash to alienate one's core supporters in this manner.

That said, I like the new Exige very much and would love to drive one. I am rather less enthusiastic about Lotus's future models. They are, in my opinion, far too similar to the offerings of other manufacturers who occupy an established position at the upper end of the market. This position is not something that can be built overnight, no matter how skilled one's marketing team is.

The sort of people who spend those sorts of sums on cars tend to care a great deal about the image they are projecting. Even if Lotus were to make a series of cars that equalled or indeed surpassed those of its main competitors, I suspect they would still find it extremely tough to poach their rivals' clientele.



Lotus CEO Dany Bahar – one reader reckons he shouldn't be worrying about door mirrors. Another thinks the Exige V6 (below) looks great, if a little pricey



The absurd thing is that Lotus already has a very strong image and clear ethos, built on the ability to produce light, compact, thrilling cars that can be enjoyed in the real world by driving enthusiasts. It is very hard to create a truly distinctive brand.

I hope, for the sake of all those working at Hethel, that the new management's gamble pays off. I have loved all three of the Lotus cars I have owned, but I'm afraid my next one will be a Caterham.

Max Allen, London

Bahar humbug

I was shocked reading the Dany Bahar/Goldfinger article in your Lotus special. Should a CEO really be choosing door mirrors and rear end designs? Not to mention setting up a merchandise outlet before dealers are signed up. Perhaps Mr Bahar should try to be less like a Bond villain and focus entirely on making and selling affordable lightweight sports cars.

I fear Lotus risks becoming a merchandising company which sponsors F1 and has a sideline making cars.

James Blackmore

Lots of talent...

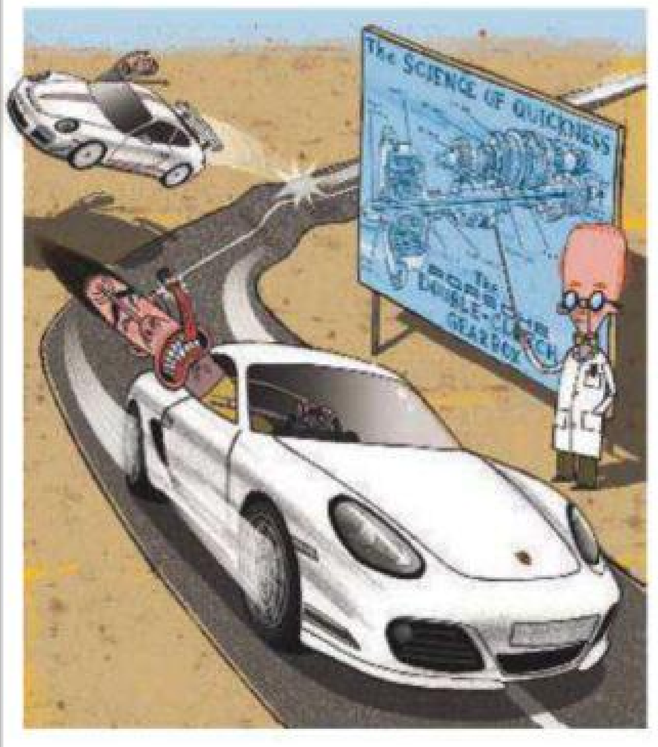
Thank you for the informative and eye-opening Lotus critique (**evo** 166). When the initial announcements were made regarding the number of new models (not to mention the pricing structure) a few months back, I, along with others I'm sure, cast a cynical, sceptical glance towards Hethel.

The phrases 'biting off more than you can chew' and 'learn to walk before you run' sprung to mind... but your article confirmed that they are, indeed, deadly serious, and have some major automotive experience on board to take the name forward.

I still have reservations about the prices, and it will take clever marketing in the current financial climate to convince people to spend their money on Lotus products, as opposed to more 'established' brands.

What Lotus can do is remind people that they are not a new, unproven brand, but have a long and illustrious motorsport heritage. With that in mind, I urge anyone with a drop of green and gold in their blood to visit the Jim Clark room in the small Borders town of Duns, where there is plenty of evidence that, when Lotus gets it right, it can indeed be a world-beater.

Euan Gibson



Exercises in excess

Richard Porter made a fine point (Petrolhead, 165) when he wondered whether modern cars are just too fast. It's something that has long

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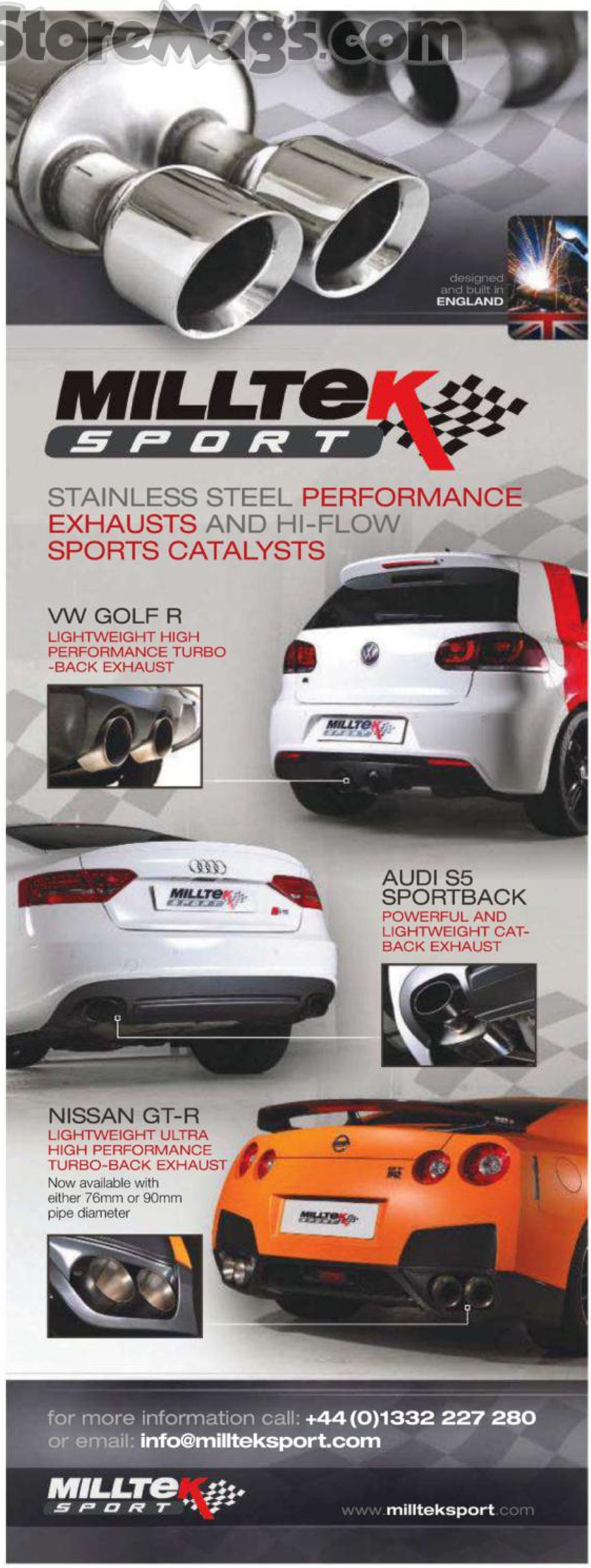
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evo Mail

bothered me, mainly because I wonder where it will end. If everyday cars, such as hot hatches, are becoming as fast as supercars from 20 years ago, where are we going to be in another 20 years?

The sheer futility and excess of these cars is quite ridiculous and I worry that **evo** is being sucked in a little – are these point-and-squirt machines really **evo**? A true **evo** car, to me, is an Elise or a Caterham and is increasingly less a Ferrari or a Lambo.

George Solomon



Above: our man Catchpole and Nissan's GT-R en route to John O'Groats

Fantasy highland

Henry Catchpole's quest to get from Land's End to John O'Groats in 24 hours (Nissan GT-R drive story, **evo** 166) was simply awe-inspiring. I stood on that very pier at John O'Groats, and it felt like I had travelled to the edge of the world. Its sheer emptiness has an aura of endlessness about it. And having a GT-R there, it was just all too perfect!

You see, I'm an international student, and last summer I decided to go up to Inverness and explore the highlands in a rental car but apparently I didn't have the relevant documents to rent a car (not what I was told when I made my reservations over the phone). A devastating blow after a 14-hour bus ride, but Henry's dream drive in my dream car gave a physical form to my fantasy. Cheers guys!

Kuhen K Velusamy, Hatfield

Knowledge anomaly

As a long-time subscriber to this wonderfully enlightening magazine (by now I have probably helped pay for at least two dust caps for Harry's Zonda) I am at times still baffled by The Knowledge.

I am particularly curious about the parameters that place the Audi R8 GT (pretty rare, expensive, five-star rating, etc) in the coupe/GT class and one of your beloved Porsches, in this instance the 911 Turbo S (seen everywhere, not as expensive, meagre 4.5-star rating) in the Supercars section. Seems more than a little suspicious...

Neil Hunt

*For ease of reference we try to group model-lines together, so we made a decision to put all the R8s in Coupes/GTs, and all the turbocharged 911s in Supercars. By the same token, all 911 GT3s are in Coupes. It's not perfect, but it's just tidier that way – **Ed***

Brake point

Reading Harry Metrcalfe's account of how a Ferrari 458 owner needed new brakes after a trackday (Insider, **evo** 165) reminded me of the similar experience I had in my Audi R8 after a trackday at Castle Combe in the autumn. The shot brakes on my R8 prevented me taking part in **evo**'s Bedford track evening, the same one where Roger Green found the new 1M (otherwise an excellent car) to have brakes apparently inadequate for track use! At least the new brakes on my R8 set me back 'only' £1000, somewhat less than new carbon brakes on a 458!

Still, this does raise a serious issue, namely that a number of your top-rated road cars seem unable to take a few laps of circuit use without the brakes giving out. Surely a car such as an R8 (and particularly a brand new 458) should be able to cope with track work? My old 996 Turbo never needed new brakes despite trackdays including Bedford and numerous trips to the Ring. Is Porsche really the only GT/supercar manufacturer whose cars can actually take some proper track use?

Paul Williams, Meilen, Switzerland



Above: what's wrong in this picture? Clue: it's a Golf, and probably not 4wd...

Chain letter

Had to laugh when I saw how someone had gone about fitting snow chains to their Golf. I wonder if the driver detected any benefit...

Andy Wallace

FROM THE FORUMS: DRIVING WEIRDNESSES



All the dials lined up: a form of driving OCD? Join the debate at community.evo.co.uk

the-ginga-ninja: sat in a hotel car park while waiting for a meeting, I was thinking about some of my little driving weirdnesses...
1. Identifying cars behind me at night only by their headlights.
2. Refusing to use the clutch. When bored I'll slide out of gear, and just by making sure the engine speed matches I'll slot the next gear home *sans* clutch and grinding. Easier on upshifts than downshifts. Also it highlights that my Pug has a terrible 'box.
Anyways, what are yours?

Dinny_G: from time to time if I'm in no particular hurry, I drive at exactly 70mph on the motorway (which is probably 65 in reality). Slow lane only, only moving over to pass trucks doing their 56. It's a surprisingly relaxing way to travel.

Mito Man: When I'm alone in the car, I can't be bothered to cancel the indicator by flicking it back to cancel it, I just give the wheel a quick left-right.

Jimmy Choo: When changing lanes on motorways, I try to avoid driving over cat's eyes.

Beany: I also avoid cat's eyes – or try to hit as many as possible in one stretch. Ba-dum, ba-dum, ba-dum, ba-dum, ba-dum, ba-dum, ba-dum, ba-dum, ba-dum.

_: I try to drive with my eyes shut for 10 seconds on deserted stretches of motorway. Scares the bejesus out of me after 7-8 seconds.

Barry: Oh crap, an OCD of mine – the icon on the cigarette lighter has to be angled correctly so the 'smoke' is going vertical...

Swervin_Mervin: I'm the same on heater controls – everything pointing up if poss. Annoying in winter as the temp dial is round to the right. Also I do the cat's eyes, headlights ID things as well.

Delphi: Most of the above, plus all the air vents have to be aligned.

Mik: Making V8 noises when pootling in traffic.

Maurice: When either starting or cancelling indication it has to be done, where possible, on the 16th bar and where time is constrained on the 4th bar of the music I'm listening to.

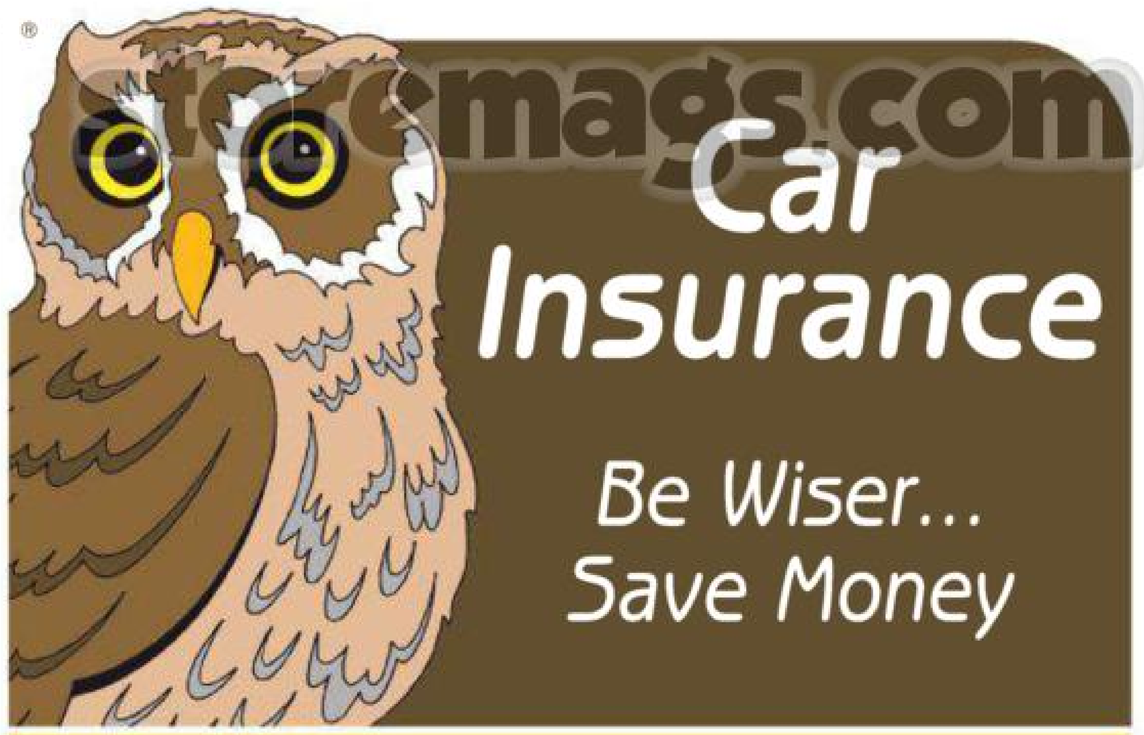
MattyB_: I sit in my car trying to think of topics that will win me a watch...

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26-PAGE SPECIAL

HOT HATCH OR MODERN CLASSIC?

£15,000 gets you the pick of the current crop of small hatchbacks, but it also gives you access to a tempting selection of high-performance legends. We help you choose

MODERN

» £15K HOT HATCHES: SEVEN-CAR SHOOTOUT ON ROAD AND TRACK

PAGE 52

CLASSIC

» THE £15K ALTERNATIVE: FIVE CLASSIC PERFORMANCE LEGENDS PUT TO THE TEST

PAGE 64

StoreMags

MICRO M

The new Suzuki Swift Sport takes on six of its closest rivals in our £15,000 hatch shootout. ***Mike Duff***

FEATURING

- ABARTH 500
- MINI COOPER
- FORD FIESTA METAL
- SEAT IBIZA FR 1.4 TSI
- SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT
- AUDI A1 1.4 TFSI SPORT
- RENAULTSPORT TWINGO 133 SILVERSTONE GP

ACHINES

puts them to the test on some great British B-roads and one scaled-down, but challenging, test track

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Have a quick mental glance at your personal list of top ten drives and I'd be prepared to bet – pretty much regardless of which stage of motoring life you're in – that one of them will feature a junior hot hatch, similar in spirit (if not necessarily vintage) to the group we've assembled here.

There's definitely one on my roll-call: an early-morning blast across the Scottish borders in a shabby 1.6-litre Peugeot 205 GTI that I'd bought – in lieu of a savings account – after leaving college. I was in my early 20s and the car had just entered its teens, but the roads were almost completely empty. Given the Pug's cheapo tyres and marginal brakes, I'm sure a mid-spec modern diesel could match my pace. But the two hours it took me to get from Edinburgh to the English border – via Heriot, Innerleithen, Eskdalemuir and Langholm – remains one of my defining drives as the well-thrashed 205 delivered an object lesson in chassis balance. As a memory it's right up there with what full throttle in a Bugatti Veyron feels like.

Of course, like me, the hot hatch has grown up and got fatter since its GTI heyday. The quickest of the modern crop are far more powerful and better trimmed, with their handling underwritten by fat tyres and foolproof stability control systems. But they've also moved to a different part of the market, with running and insurance costs to match. Which is why you can make an excellent case that it's the junior category of performance hatchbacks – warm, rather than hot – which get closest to the spirit of the classics. Not only are they based on smaller and lighter cars, they're less able to hide dynamic failings behind whizz-bang performance.

So meet seven of the best of them. All our contenders are priced around the £15,000 mark, all can (officially) return better than 40mpg and – of benefit to younger drivers in particular – five of them have insurance ratings below group 20 on the 50-group scale. Every little helps, as the voiceover puts it.

ONE CAR HAS catalysed this test – the new Suzuki Swift Sport. It carries on pretty much where its predecessor left off, with a more powerful version of the original's 1.6-litre engine – now with 134bhp, 11bhp up on before – its character defined by the fact peak power arrives at a dizzy 6900rpm. There's also a six-speed gearbox in place of the previous five-speeder, plus the addition of electric power steering. It's still a bit of a bargain, though, thanks to a £13,499 price tag.

To keep it honest we've got a Renaultsport Twingo 133. The Twingo is about to be replaced by a facelifted model, but it's long been a firm **evo** favourite and the class benchmark. Like the Swift, it has a 1.6-litre naturally aspirated engine, producing 131bhp at an almost-as-high 6750rpm. This is a loaded 'Silverstone GP' edition, with various toys and unique silver paintwork, and it carries a £14,995 price tag, but the basic 'Cup' version offers the same mechanical package for a more frugal £12,210.

And yes, we've also got an Audi A1. It's fair to say that we haven't really gelled with the babiest Audi thus far, finding that the quicker versions suffer from the dynamic inertness that could be medically defined as *four-ringitus*. But with the 120bhp turbocharged model in Sport trim weighing in at an almost reasonable £15,670, we decided this was a good chance to find out if the basic 1.4-litre TFSI is better than the brawnier versions. This being an Audi, our press car came with a couple of toyshops' worth of extra-cost extras, including an Audi Sport graphics pack designed to make the A1 look like a miniature Group B Quattro. Don't worry, it's optional.

Next is the SEAT Ibiza FR 1.4 TSI. At £16,515 it's more expensive than the A1 – indeed, it's the priciest car here. But it's also bigger, more powerful and considerably quicker than its posher cousin, with a 148bhp 'twin-charged'





Above: SEAT Ibiza is the only car here with a twin-clutch gearbox. Top right: Fiesta Metal is based on the Zetec S, but has an extra 14bhp. Right: A1 is in 120bhp 1.4-litre petrol form. Far right: Duff makes notes

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1.4-litre engine and a standard-fit seven-speed DSG transmission – good enough for a claimed 0-62mph time of 7.6sec.

Two cars that will need minimal introductions are the Mini Cooper and Ford Fiesta Metal. The second-gen BMW Mini is approaching its sixth birthday, and the recent plethora of bodyshell and engine variants means it's easy to forget what a good car the basic unadorned hatch is. It's well priced in this company too – certainly if you can resist the options – with the £14,840 Cooper coming with a 120bhp naturally aspirated 1.6-litre engine and a six-speed gearbox. The Fiesta is a limited edition based on the familiar Zetec S, sharing the same suspension and body kit but with a mildly boosted 1.6-litre engine delivering 132bhp



'IT'S NOW JUNIOR HATCHES THAT GET CLOSEST TO THE SPIRIT OF THE CLASSICS'







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compared to the standard 118bhp. These are expensive extra horses, though, with the Metal's £15,845 price tag making it the second most expensive car here.

Which leaves only one, the Abarth 500. Most attention – including ours – has been focused on the more powerful (and expensive) versions of the scorpion-badged 500. But, at £14,707, the basic one is something of a steal by comparison with its glitzier sisters. Its less powerful version of the same 1.4-litre turbocharged engine that powers those cars still has 133bhp – and the official 7.9sec 0-62mph time makes it the only car here other than the SEAT capable of breaking the eight-second barrier for the benchmark run.

THE SIMPLICITY of the hot hatch formula means that it's easy to list the core attributes of a good one. It's got to be agile and responsive, feel light on its feet, and its chassis should prioritise adjustability over outright grip. It's got to be quick enough to be interesting – and to relish being thrashed – but small enough to thread down a narrow country lane at speed in reasonable confidence that you'll reach the far end with a full complement of door mirrors. And most of all, it's got to be fun. You'll notice that 'relaxing', 'cosseting' and 'well equipped' didn't figure on the list.

Which is why I find myself having some initial doubts about Suzuki Sport v2.0 as I



'THE IBIZA REVS CLEANLY AND PULLS HARD, WITH STRONG URGE FROM LITTLE MORE THAN IDLE'







Left: Mini Cooper. Bottom left: inside the Abarth. Below: Twingo rev-counter. Bottom: nimble Renault chases more powerful SEAT



drive it to our rendezvous at the Bedford Autodrome. The first Swift Sport had a few gizmos – keyless go stands out – but it was a car that was more about playing games than counting toys. Yet the first thing I see when I get into the new one is a switch for the headlamp washers. This is what should be a pared-down hot hatch, but there's also climate and cruise control, high intensity headlights and *seven* airbags. Have the priorities slipped?

Not that I'm complaining about the new six-speed gearbox. Cruising in the original Swift Sport was always a noisy affair thanks to the shortness of its five ratios. Sixth in the new car is effectively a motorway gear, knocking the engine back to about 3500rpm at 80mph. Together with what feels like snugger noise insulation, it makes the cabin a far quieter place. Off the motorway and onto smaller roads, it's clear the twin-cam motor positively relishes trips towards the 7200rpm red line. There's also some meaningful feel behind the servo assistance of the new electric power steering, and a pliant, well-damped ride that deals effortlessly with abrasive B-road surfaces.

I'm last to arrive at Bedford. Amongst those already here are Nick Trott, David Vivian and Stephen Dobie, so there's not going to be any shortage of expertise. As a three-decade road tester, Viv has driven every hatch with a temperature above tepid since the '80s, Trott is a serial hot hatch owner, and Dobie has a half-share in an original Clio Williams, still one of the genre's icons.

Although the Autodrome is our base, we're not going out on the track itself. The West Circuit's high-speed corners and smooth surfaces aren't going to tell us nearly as much about this rat pack as the B660, and we've got a carefully selected loop of local roads marked out for appraisal purposes. And when it comes to track time, we've got a suitably scaled-down challenge later on…

I swap straight into the Renaultsport Twingo, wanting to reacquaint myself with the segment benchmark. From the moment you fire up the rorty little 1.6-litre engine it's clear this is a car that's all about driving. It takes well under a mile to realise that, impending retirement or not, it's going to take something special to beat the Twingo. It's not a car that enjoys travelling slowly – the engine feels anaemic and slightly lumpy low-down, the ride has a jagged edge and the tinny stereo struggles to compete with the road and mechanical noise that gets into the cabin. But add speed and it comes good: 4000rpm is where the engine wakes up, 5000rpm is where it gets out of bed and – at risk of snapping this metaphor – 6000rpm is where it downs a morning-strength coffee and really comes alive. In overall terms it's not that quick, a



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point reinforced by the effort required to overtake diesel rep-boxes, but there's something compellingly Scrappy Doo about the Twingo's let-me-at-'em power delivery: it might not have much punch, but it certainly likes a fight.

Once stoked up, the Twingo crosses country at an impressive rate. All the dynamic cues are in place: gearshift and pedal weighting are spot-on, while the hydraulic power steering gives a properly detailed level of feedback, helped by a relatively low-geared rack. Grip levels are high, but even with the stability control switched on, the back end can be felt coming into play, helping to tip the little car into corners and tightening the line on an eased throttle.

Time to swap again, and I find Viv already singing the praises of the Swift he's just driven: 'Terrific steering, strong engine, sweet gearchange and supple ride. It's just too well honed and polished to be a Suzuki.'

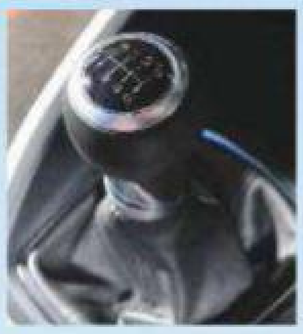
Next, the car I've really been looking forward to driving, the basic Abarth 500. I've never got on that well with the more powerful Abarth versions of Fiat's cutesy city car. Driving them quickly often feels more like an exercise in throttle discipline than a joined-up driving experience as turbocharged torque threatens to overwhelm the front wheels. So a less powerful version sounds promising.

We've borrowed this one from a local dealer – Rockingham Cars in Corby (it's their showroom demonstrator) – and it's a great looking car, with a body kit that adds some much-needed masculinity to the basic 500.

Onto the road, and the Abarth initially underwhelms. Coming straight from the Twingo hasn't helped, but the 500's gearshift feels loose and baggy, the electric power steering is too light and the ride feels under-damped when the suspension is asked to digest bumps at speed. There's certainly plenty of grip – this car is riding on optional 17-inch alloys shod with 205/40 R17 Pirelli P Zero Neros – but it's lacking finesse.

The 500 is a grower, though. The turbocharged engine is a storming little thing, with a fat 152lb ft of torque meaning that it doesn't feel significantly slower than the more powerful 500s at everyday speeds. Revving it produces a suitably rorty soundtrack, and there's a bright orange 'shift up' light to encourage you to keep everything on the boil as the red line approaches. And once you get dialled in to the light assistance, there is some digital feedback coming through the steering wheel, too.





Top: arriving at our track-with-a-difference. Above: A1 has lesser-spotted manual gearbox; sadly, we're not fans. Below: Twingo excels in tight corners

Another swap-around sees editor Trott raving about the Twingo he's just vacated: 'I think that's as close to an original Mini as any modern car has ever got – stiff, responsive and hyperactive. It just wants to play all the time.'

Maybe the Audi A1 can keep it honest. Climbing into the well-trimmed cabin feels like I'm passing into a different, classier universe – not least thanks to a proper driving position. Adjusting the A1's low-slung seat, I realise that I've been pretty much sitting *on* the Abarth. It's not hard to see the showroom appeal that's seen A1s moving quicker than superheated cakes.

Audi's corporate desire to push DSG at every opportunity means that this is the first right-hook A1 that I've driven with



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a manual gearbox. Sadly the shift action is ultra-light and has little feel, ditto the steering, and come the first corner there's confirmation that the brakes are similarly over-boosted. Nice engine, though. Despite forced induction, the TFSI motor spins up cleanly and without lag, and seems to enjoy being revved.

Our car has the 'Competition Line' pack (another £1155 to you, sir), which adds bigger, 17-inch wheels and fat 225/35 Bridgestone Potenzas. Which is probably why it feels over-tyred and unemotional, certainly at road speeds, with the quantity of grip giving the chassis an inert dullness and the ride a needlessly hard edge. I've a suspicion that the basic 215/45 R16 tyres would be better.

The frustrating thing is, as editor Trott says, 'You know there's a sparkling little hot hatch waiting to be engineered into this car.' But sadly, this isn't it.

Moving on – and into the Fiesta. Blasting around rural Bedfordshire, the Ford has been pretty much invisible, surrounded as it is by more visually interesting machinery. The Metal shares the Zetec S's body kit, but you'd hardly



Above: 500 is in oft-overlooked basic Abarth spec, rather than being an Esseesse or Ferrari Tributo. Left: likewise, the Mini is a Cooper, not a Cooper S or John Cooper Works

'THERE'S SOMETHING COMPELLINGLY SCRAPPY DOO ABOUT THE TWINGO'S LET-ME-AT-'EM DELIVERY: IT MIGHT NOT HAVE MUCH PUNCH, BUT IT CERTAINLY LIKES A FIGHT



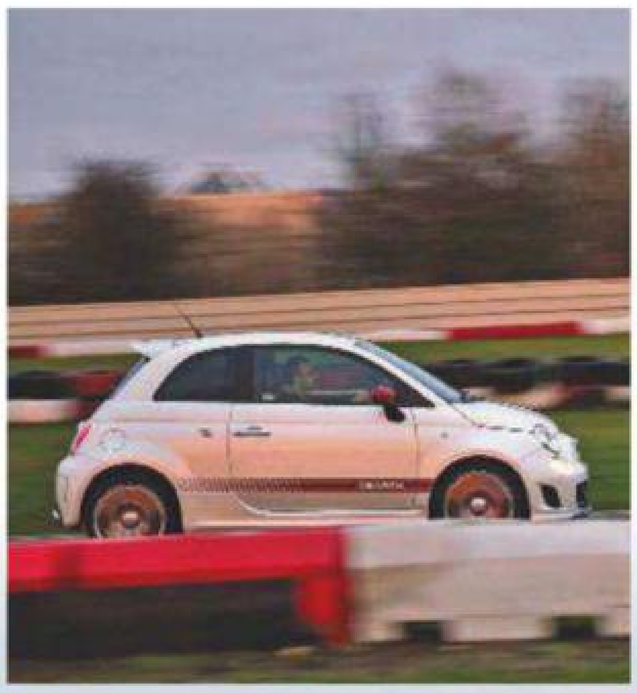
say it's bristling with visual aggression – it doesn't even get a boot badge to tell you what it is. Inside, the cabin feels dark and low-rent after the Audi; from a driver's perspective 'Plastic' might have been a better model name than 'Metal'.

Still, this is a test of driving – something the Fiesta has always been good at. And on the corners and contours of our rural playground the Metal feels right at home, with spot-on damping, accurate steering and a chassis that's been set up to include both ends in the handling equation. Like the Audi it can feel slightly over-rubbered at lower velocities, but unlike the A1 it's possible to wake it up with higher speeds and bigger steering inputs. Like a corrupt politician, it's more than happy to take a bung – and with the stability control isolated, the Fiesta will lift-off oversteer in a manner that an '80s GTI would be proud of, even on dry tarmac.

There's one big problem, though – the Ford's engine. The basic 118bhp Zetec S barely qualifies as tepid, and despite an additional 14bhp, the Metal's 1.6-litre motor is lacking in both punch and sparkle. Pace needs to be extracted through revs, with the motor feeling tight well before the 6700rpm that peak power arrives at, and all this is accompanied by a noise far closer to that of a blender than a rorty hot hatch. Roll on the ST.

We loved our recently departed SEAT Leon Cupra long-termer – but after approximately three corners in the Ibiza FR it's clear that little of the magic of the Leon has rubbed off on its little brother. On paper, the Ibiza is a proper contender, with the most power here and a standard-fit seven-speed DSG transmission. Build quality is good, too, and the styling unique, even in this company. But on tarmac, where it counts, it struggles against this competition. The chassis and and steering feel inert, and the handling balance offers little more than understeer at the limit.





Right: A1 comes alive on track; Swift (bottom right) feels good too. Top left and bottom left: Fiesta handles well, but is let down by its engine



'THE FIESTA HAS SPOT-ON DAMPING, ACCURATE STEERING AND A CHASSIS THAT'S BEEN SET UP TO WORK BOTH ENDS'



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Upside? Well the SEAT's certainly not short on ultimate firepower. The engine revs cleanly and pulls hard, with strong urge from little more than idle (the peak 162lb ft of torque is available from just 1250rpm), with rapid progress helped by the speed of the excellent DSG 'box. But while there is a fair amount of debate about the relative positions of all our other contenders, at this stage it looks likely that the Ibiza will be propping up the tail end of the group.

So what about the Mini Cooper? Familiarity might have bred indifference to the 'R56' Mini, and it's certainly easy to overlook the cooking versions, something I'm guilty of myself. It's a few years since I last drove a basic Cooper, and although a claimed 9.1sec 0-62mph time makes it (officially) the slowest car here, there's still plenty to like about the way it does its thing. It needs to be worked hard to give its best, but the engine certainly feels far better being revved than the Fiesta's.

One surprise is that our test car arrived wearing Bridgestone Blizzak winter tyres, and not only do they work extremely well on both the dry and damp surfaces the day produces, they also give the Cooper's ride a compliance missing with the normal summer-spec runflats.

Throughout the day, pretty much everyone steps out of the Mini singing its praises. But although it's undoubtedly a classy performer, it's hard to see the Cooper as a true entry-level hot hatch – there's a level of dynamic detachment you never quite get beyond, especially when it comes to the linear weighting of the electric power steering. It's relentlessly competent, but it's missing the X factor of a true hot hatch.

Before long it's time to head off for our slot on track – at the Daytona karting centre in Milton Keynes. To complete the circle, I swap back into the Swift Sport. It might have felt soft-edged in direct comparison with the Twingo, but time spent with the blunter end of the field has really sharpened its case. The



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chassis gets better when you add pace, and there's a near perfect match of front- and back-end grip. It's not a hooligan hatchback, not a car that's ever going to encourage you into acts of lunacy. It's a tool rather than a weapon, a car with the dynamic depth to back you up when you want to press on, pretty much regardless of how hard. The added refinement is just a welcome bonus, even if headlamp washers do seem like a step too far.

DAYTONA IS huge fun, if not the most relevant test of any of our challengers. At nearly three quarters of a mile in length, it's a big kart track, and although it feels unsurprisingly narrow in real cars, it's got enough contours and cambers to make things interesting – plus a near total lack of run-off. Low-speed corners are a stern test of front-end grip and handling balance; joining them up without constantly downshifting into first is a good way of measuring engine flexibility, and scrubbing speed off is a constant challenge for the brakes. And, come on, would you turn down a chance to go haring around a kart track in a supermini?

The Swift does a reasonable job, all things considered. The engine's lack of low-down urge tells against it, but it feels light and responsive when asked to cope with this strange, alien challenge. By contrast, the Twingo is supreme in this slightly unlikely crucible, especially with the stability control off and the back axle working enthusiastically to turn the car in and keep it on a chosen line. Everyone





Left: supportive, 'Sport'-logo'd seats are part of a better-equipped cabin in the mk2 Swift Sport. Above: 17in alloys are standard equipment

'THE SWIFT HAS LEFT US STRUGGLING TO SPOT FLAWS: AS ENTERTAINING AS THE TWINGO WHEN YOU'RE PRESSING ON, AND PAINLESS ON LONGER JOURNEYS'

SPECIFICATION

	ENGINE	MAX POWER	MAX TORQUE	WEIGHT (KERB)	POWER-TO-WEIGHT	0-62MPH	TOP SPEED	INSURANCE GROUP	BASIC PRICE	EVO RATING
ABARTH 500	In-line 4-cyl, 1368cc, turbo	133bhp @ 5500rpm	152lb ft @ 3000rpm	1035kg	131bhp/ton	7.9sec (claimed)	128mph (claimed)	26	£14,707	★★★★☆
AUDI A1 1.4 TFSI SPORT	In-line 4-cyl, 1390cc, turbo	120bhp @ 5000rpm	147lb ft @ 1500-4000rpm	1125kg	108bhp/ton	8.9sec (claimed)	126mph (claimed)	16	£15,670	★★★½☆
FORD FIESTA METAL	In-line 4-cyl, 1596cc	132bhp @ 6700rpm	118lb ft @ 4250rpm	1045kg	128bhp/ton	8.7sec (claimed)	121mph (claimed)	17	£15,845	★★★★☆
MINI COOPER	In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc	120bhp @ 6000rpm	118lb ft @ 4250rpm	1075kg	113bhp/ton	9.1sec (claimed)	126mph (claimed)	17	£14,840	★★★★☆
RENAULT TWINGO 133 SILVERSTONE	In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc	131bhp @ 6750rpm	118lb ft @ 4400rpm	1049kg	127bhp/ton	8.7sec (claimed)	125mph (claimed)	19	£14,995	★★★★☆
SEAT IBIZA FR 1.4 TSI	In-line 4, 1390cc, twin-charged	148bhp @ 5800rpm	162lb ft @ 1250rpm	1254kg	120bhp/ton	7.6sec (claimed)	132mph (claimed)	22	£16,515	★★★☆☆
SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT	In-line 4-cyl, 1586cc	134bhp @ 6900rpm	118lb ft @ 4400rpm	1045kg	130bhp/ton	8.7sec (claimed)	121mph (claimed)	18	£13,499	★★★★½

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who drives it emerges grinning and, although we aren't timing laps, it certainly feels like it's the quickest.

More surprising is the way the A1 rises to the challenge, mining the grip of its fat tyres and resisting understeer well. But the real revelation is the Abarth 500: it's decent on road, but it's great around the Daytona track, with the 'TTC' (Torque Transfer Control) quasi limited-slip diff really helping to haul it around the tighter turns.

Honourable mentions go to the Fiesta and Mini. The Ford is great to steer, but feels even more underpowered than it does on the road – and it starts to run out of brakes after a couple of quicker laps. And the Mini manages to find extraordinary grip from its winter tyres. But even track speeds can't wake up the SEAT's inert chassis.

AS DAYTONA'S floodlights come on, it's time for us to vacate the track, which means it's also the moment to decide the relative positions of this disparate pack.

Last place is easy. Sorry, SEAT, but the Ibiza doesn't get close to the high standard being set here. Next is the Fiesta: too slow, too expensive and just not special enough. Ranking the midfield gets harder, but the Mini ends up finishing ahead of the A1 – although neither really delivers what we'd expect from a proper performance hatchback.

The Abarth 500 finds itself on the bottom step of the podium, largely on the strength of the size of grin it leaves on people's faces. It's not perfect, but it's never not fun. Which, if you've been keeping count, leaves only two: the Renaultsport Twingo and the Suzuki Swift Sport. The Renault is undoubtedly the purer drivers' car, and it has set the benchmark for its soon-to-arrive facelifted successor very high indeed. But it's not a car that knows how to compromise, and we know from past experience that living with one on a daily basis can get tiring.

The Swift has left us struggling to spot the flaws: every bit as entertaining as the Twingo when you're really pressing on, as a bonus it's also painless on longer journeys and as an everyday proposition. It's the cheapest car here, but it's also the best all-rounder. And that's a win-win in anyone's book.

With huge thanks to Daytona Milton Keynes (www.daytona.co.uk) and Rockingham Cars Corby (www.rockinghamcars.co.uk)



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£15,000 MODERN CLASSICS

 Pictures: James Lipman

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

You could have Honda's NSX supercar, TVR's brutal Tuscan, Maserati's sublime 4200 GT, BMW's epic V10-engined M5, or a 996-gen Porsche 911 for just £15,000. ***David Vivian*** *samples them all*

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So, the Suzuki wins. I drove it over to **evo** reader Mark Walton's place to pick up his 996. It's a great little car: zesty, engaging, practical, and a painless, hassle-free ownership proposition. If a baby hot hatch for £15K is what you want, we don't think you can do any better than the Swift.

But let's just suppose that you're not currently in the market for a baby hot hatch but you've got a hatch-sized budget. Well, the good news is that £15K also opens up the possibility of a number of fabulous cars that have brought benchmark levels of beauty, brutality and tyre-smoke to these pages over the years.

Of course, you'll need to take a deep breath, convince yourself that the safety net of new car ownership is for wimps, and budget accordingly for the maintenance and running cost challenges that attach themselves to charismatic old-timers like barnacles to the hull of a ship. Moreover, you'll need to do this while maintaining a steadfast belief that depreciation is your ally and not a temptress that will merely stump up for a pair of rose-tinted specs. But just look at the cars we've assembled here to tempt you, starting with…

A Honda NSX. It's something of a wow moment just to see an NSX on the road these days. As Honda shapes go, it's stood the test of time better than most. Yes, it looks a bit dated, but the short snout, forward cab, ultra-low scuttle and long tail with wrap-over wing still hit the right notes. True, the NSX never sold in great numbers in the UK – certainly not in the sort of volumes that would have persuaded Honda to bring over the lightened and track-honed '-R' variant – but owners of good manual 'box examples have cottoned on to their cult classic status and rising stock (£20K plus) and tend to keep their pampered treasures locked away, which is understandable if perverse given the Honda's everyday useability.

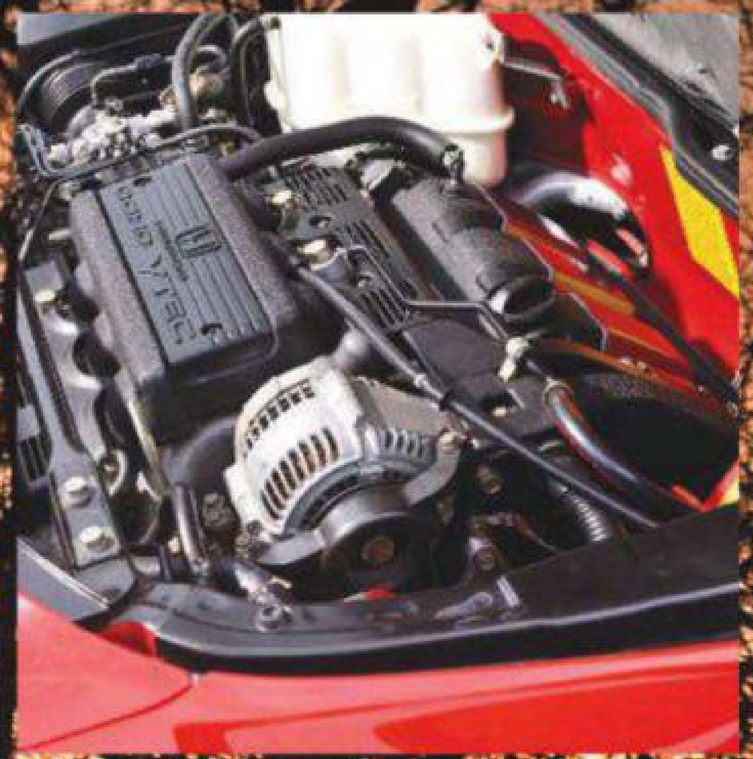
Early, leggy autos with pop-up rather than fixed headlights, on the other hand, fall comfortably within our nominal £15K budget and, in particular, have built a good rep for being reliable and durable.

In fact, editor Trott is thinking hard about one as a replacement for his Clio V6. If he takes the plunge he'll certainly have fewer heart-in-mouth moments keeping it on the island than in the dynamically tetchy mid-engined Renault. The NSX may never have cut it as the 'Japanese Ferrari' glibly coined by oxymoron-loving sections of the Press, but then something that was so much easier to drive and live with never could. It attempted to blend elements of advanced technology with a polished mechanical purity as an alternative to the rough-cut passion you could almost taste in a Ferrari. Maybe it wasn't enough. What it did do was force Ferrari to raise its game in areas it previously hadn't even thought about. And what is the roundly lauded Audi R8 if not the spiritual successor to Japan's original user-friendly supercar?

This mint early NSX auto has been mothballed by Honda, not least because it is believed that Ayrton Senna's backside, undoubtedly the most advanced instrument used during the NSX's development, was a visitor to the remarkably unworn driver's seat. In fact this car is almost too perfect. Even the auto 'box feels uncommonly slick and crisp, making a stronger case for the self-shifter than it probably deserves. There's a reason manual NSXs command a hefty premium: they nudge the involvement factor just enough in the right direction to make it come truly alive. That said, the auto doesn't undermine the Honda's still impressive medley of abilities – the combination of

'OWNERS ARE COTTONING ON TO THEIR CULT STATUS AND KEEPING THEM LOCKED AWAY, WHICH IS PERVERSE GIVEN THEIR USEABILITY'





Aluminium-bodied NSX brought new standards of sophistication to supercars in the early '90s and still feels refined and decently quick today, even in 252bhp auto guise



SPECIFICATION

HONDA NSX (auto)
Engine V6, 2977cc
Power 252bhp @ 7100rpm
Torque 209lb ft @ 5400rpm
Transmission Four-speed automatic, rear-wheel drive
Suspension Double wishbones front and rear, coil springs, gas dampers and anti-roll bars
Weight (kerb) 1365kg
Power-to-weight 188bhp/ton
0-60mph 5.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 165mph (claimed)
Price new £65,000 (1991)
Price now c£15,000-20,000

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nimbleness and stability, the pliant ride, the meaty steering brimming with feel. Fast? In a straight line, and slugged somewhat by the auto, hardly heart-stopping by today's standards. But fast enough. It may have just 252bhp, but the 3.0-litre VTEC V6's gloriously hollow, resonant bark still sends a tingle down the back of your neck, while the power delivery seems virtually open-ended. And all the time the chassis' sublime composure measuring it out on the tarmac.

McLaren F1 designer Gordon Murray owned one and used it not just to commute from his home to Albert Drive – a chore he said it performed as well as any family hatch – but also to benchmark several aspects of the F1, not least its usability. So easy is the NSX to drive, so undemanding to live with and so well made, you might just forget what it is you're driving. A bit of a double-edged sword, then. But that was always Honda's aim. To make the no-sweat supercar.

I MADE A PACT with myself before I sat down to write this that I wouldn't use the term 'no-brainer' in anger. Occasionally, it's just too easy to convince yourself that you're looking at the bargain of the century and start calculating what elderly relatives might be worth on the open market. Or who hasn't been tempted by the thought of a gleaming old-generation S-class or 7-series on the drive for an initial outlay you might otherwise spend re-tiling the downstairs loo? The irony, of course, is that's where you'd spend most of your time: flushing money down the toilet. As I hinted at earlier, asking price isn't the same thing as affordability.

And so we come to the V10-engined, 500 horsepower E60 BMW M5. No-brainer on the outside – still, arguably, the world's greatest supersaloon – a vortex of complexity, mountainous fuel bills and potential pain on the inside. So a few words of advice: think very, very carefully.

IT project manager Gary Tall did. He ummed and he arred, scratched his head and walked round in circles for a few minutes. And then he bought one. And, in his position – with the financial wherewithal to have a 996.2 GT3, Mitsubishi Evo VI (500bhp) and Lotus Excel SE already in the garage – I'd have done exactly the same.

You'll find plenty of E60 M5s floating around the classifieds for circa £20K, and the odd one with galactic mileage for as little as £15K. But you'll be lucky to find one quite as mint (read virtually indistinguishable from new) as Gary's. Registered in 2005, just 33,000 miles on the clock and sold with a long warranty at a smidge under £20K, it was, in the final analysis, a no-brainer. And just about the perfect fit for Gary at this time in his car-owning career. 'After years of ever more extreme cars, I wanted a comfortable family car that could transform into something which is fun and exciting to drive,' he explains. 'I like the thought of having your cake and eating it. The engine noise is superb, too.'

Hardly surprising when you consider what's under the lid. The M5's all-alloy, naturally aspirated, 90 degree V10 has bi-Vanos variable camshaft control and, in addition to that astonishing 500bhp at 8250rpm, 383lb ft of torque at 6100rpm.

The roads around Grafham Water aren't really the place to let the M5 off the leash, but the road test stats are telling. Above 100mph, dispatched in 10.4sec, not even the Tuscan would be able to live with it. The 0-150mph time of 21sec places it in the company of big-hitting supercars.

The chassis is easier to assess. Shorn of lesser E60 5-series' run-flat tyres and active steering, the M5 is a deeply satisfying steer on the twisty stuff, not least for its consistently fine ride, whatever damper setting you manage to access via the still largely unfathomable iDrive system. True,



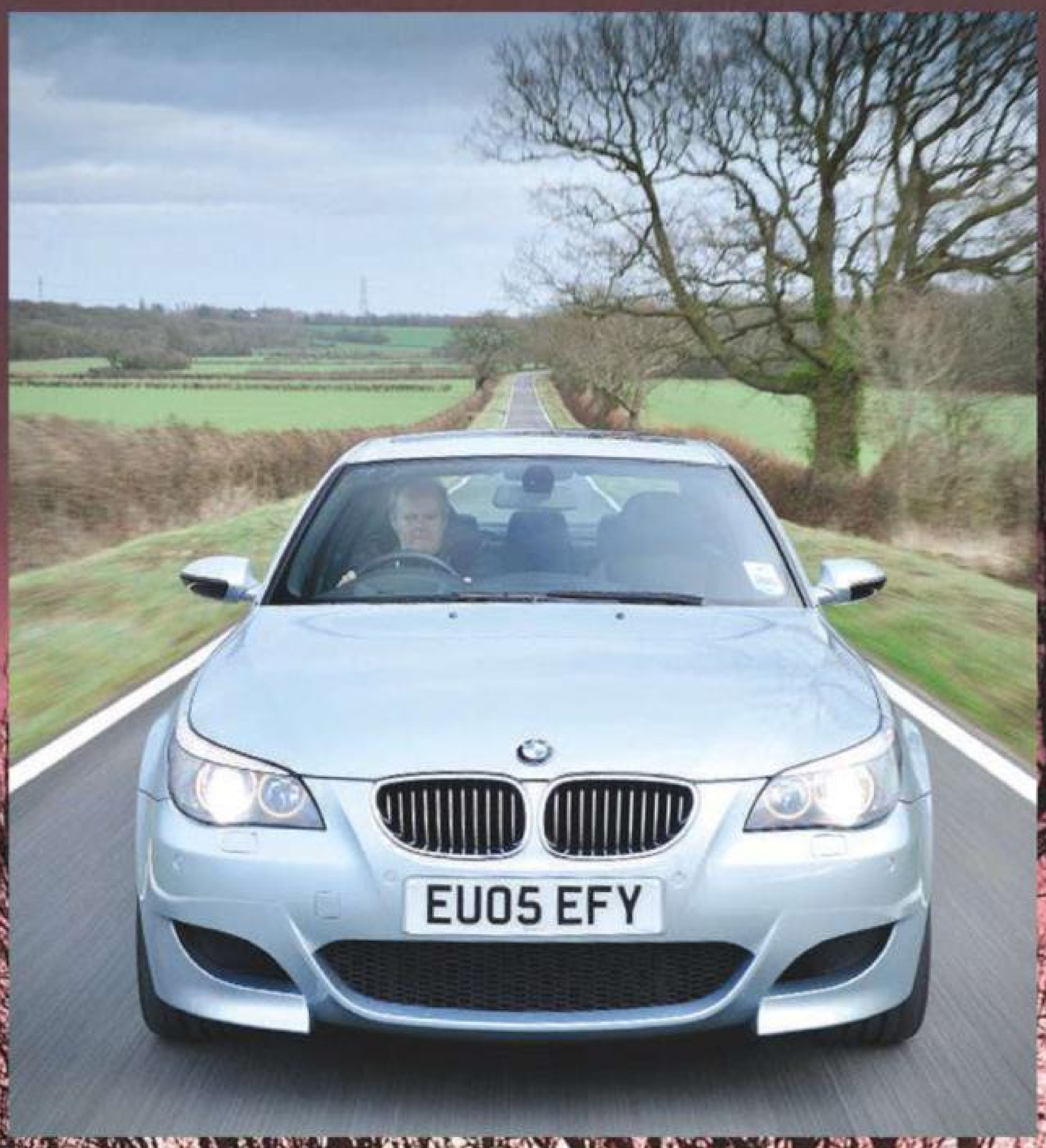
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E60-generation M5 with its fabulous 5-litre V10 (below) is in many ways still the ultimate supersaloon, which makes the fact that you can pick one up for less than £20K simply astonishing. Only real weakpoint dynamically is the occasionally jolting gearshifts of the SMG seven-speeder





SPECIFICATION

BMW (E60) M5
Engine V10, 4999cc
Power 500bhp @ 7750rpm
Torque 383lb ft @ 6100rpm
Transmission Seven-speed SMG automated manual, rear-wheel drive, M differential, DSC
Suspension MacPherson struts front, multi-link rear, coil springs, electronic dampers, ARBs
Weight (kerb) 1755kg
Power-to-weight 289bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (restricted)
Price new £61,775 (2005)
Price now c£15,000-20,000





'ABOVE 100MPH, NOT EVEN THE TUSCAN WOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH IT. 0-150MPH IN 21SEC PUTS IT IN THE COMPANY OF BIG-HITTING SUPERCARS'

the SMG paddle-shift transmission can be either slow and slurry or fast and thumpy (it's a pity BMW didn't put more effort into developing a better manual gearbox than the one they made available for the US market) but, for £20K, I'm inclined to conclude that it isn't just that the M5 holds all the cards. Rather, it has another couple of packs on standby.

NEXT UP is Simon Loat's Maserati Coupé (or 4200 GT as it's more generally known). Simon runs a 150-year-old Manchester-based family business selling musical instruments, including grand pianos that cost up to four times as much as the £16,000 he paid for his startlingly yellow 2003 Maser (replete with new clutch, brake pads and tyres). During one coffee break we discuss the beautiful 'old school' timbre of the beloved Bösendorfer grand that jazz legend Oscar Peterson kept in his basement music room. Oscar used to invite other, inevitably less gifted, pianists down to play it just so he could place his ear close to the instrument and soak up its magical tone.

I hope I'm not making a specious connection here, but it seems more than coincidental that Simon should own a V8 Maserati and an extremely musical one at that. When I slip behind the wheel for a blast down the road, he asks if he can come along (Simon's seven-year-old son Henry comes too) – not, I suspect, in the hope of learning anything useful from my driving technique but to listen to the 4.2-litre Ferrari-developed 90-degree V8 when I give it the beans. Which I'm encouraged to do at every opportunity, especially by Henry from the back seat. Is this what Catchpole was like as a child, I wonder.

Naturally it sounds magnificent and exactly like a tautly-strung, high-revving Italian V8 with a right-angled (rather than Ferrari's preferred flat-plane) crankshaft should. An angry howl with a mellifluous edge. Which might seem like as good a reason as any to take a bet on a Maser with a (let's say) patchy portfolio. But what really takes me aback is the shove. The instant throttle response is part of it, but bury the pedal and the acceleration is simply brutal, an adjective that serves equally well for the shift quality of the Cambiocorsa transmission with every paddle-flick. Rather like the M5's SMG, it's a stark reminder of what life was like before silky-slick double-clutchers.

I mentioned a 'patchy' portfolio. This has nothing to with the way the car looks – especially great in yellow (much better than some of the blander metallics, Simon remarks). The interior's pretty special, too: an extravagantly sculpted cocoon of dark blue leather with yellow stitching that wears its nine years lightly. Accommodation? A proper 2+2 with plenty of room for Henry to kick back and shout instructions to the helm while simultaneously taking digital snaps of the blurred scenery.

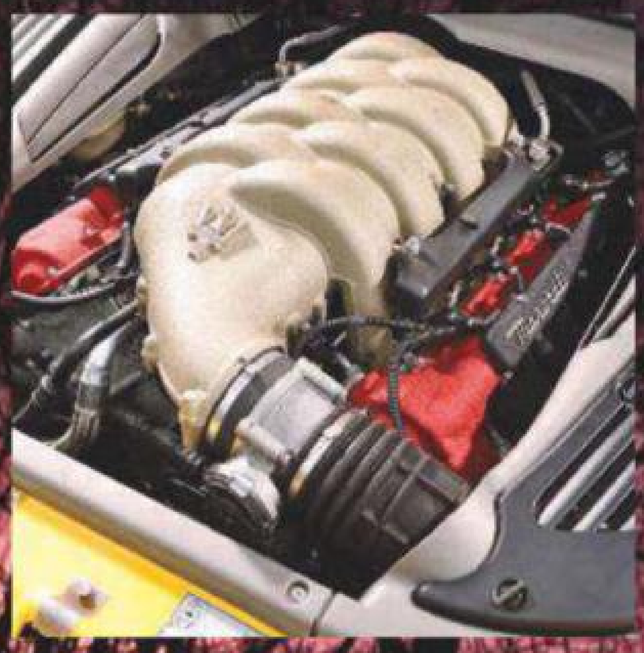
Running costs then? No, the prices a good indie specialist will charge to keep it sweet are far from ruinous – even if you need to replace the Cambiocorsa transmission's clutch from time to time, and you will. If it weren't for its 15mpg thirst, you might even say running costs were reasonable. It's been touch-wood reliable, too.

The fly in the ointment is the suspension. Well, not so much the suspension as the early form of Skyhook adaptive damping which, unhelpfully, is either board-hard or marshmallow-soft and doesn't give the chassis – shown to much better effect in the GranSport evolution of the 4200 GT – a chance to deliver its best game. After the quickly dispatched straights come the evilly cambered turns and the Maser doesn't care for them much at all, suddenly getting edgier than Ed Miliband on the other end of a John Humphrys roasting. Even Henry falls silent.



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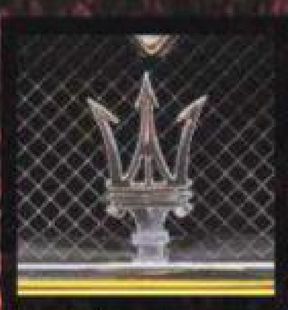




SPECIFICATION

MASERATI 4200 GT
Engine V8, 4244cc
Power 390bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 333lb ft @ 4500rpm
Transmission Six-speed automated manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, MSP
Suspension Double wishbones front and rear with Skyhook adaptive damping, ARBs
Weight (kerb) 1680kg
Power-to-weight 236bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 177mph (claimed)
Price new £64,000 (2003)
Price now c£15,000-20,000





The Maser has a normally aspirated 4.2-litre Ferrrari-developed V8 (the earlier 3200 had a twin-turbocharged engine) and it's a cracker, with a mighty punch and a stirring soundtrack. Left: world of leather inside



'IT SOUNDS MAGNIFICENT AND EXACTLY LIKE A TAUTLY STRUNG HIGH-REVVING ITALIAN V8 WITH A RIGHT-ANGLED CRANKSHAFT SHOULD. AN ANGRY HOWL WITH A MELLIFLUOUS EDGE'

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£15K VILLAINS

So, which cars *shouldn't* you be buying for £15K? A couple spring immediately to mind. Both look great value but both have the potential to turn into money-pits of epic proportions.

When we first drove Mercedes' SL55 AMG in 2002, it blew us away with its performance. There was talk of a 200mph top speed with the limiter removed, and we recorded 0-100 in a smidge over 10sec. All accompanied by the brilliant, bassy rumble of its supercharged, 493bhp V8. The problem for today's buyer is that it's a horribly complicated car, with trick anti-roll suspension (including computer-controlled spring platforms) and a space shuttle's worth of electronics. The result is a constant stream of expensive problems, and our advice is to steer well clear.

Then there's the pretty Aston Martin DB7, which looks a tempting route into Aston ownership at £15,000. Don't. The DB7 was past its sell-by date as soon as it appeared, being based on the under-pinnings of the ancient Jaguar XJS. Today, a DB7 is a cramped, creaky and potentially rusty relic from the past. Suspension bushes are a constant problem and you need to look out for rusty floorpans, bulkheads and chassis rails. Make no mistake, there's no such thing as a bargain DB7. HM



SPECIFICATION

PORSCHE (996) 911
Engine Flat-6, 3397cc
Power 300bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque 258lb ft @ 4600rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
Suspension MacPherson struts front, multi-link rear, coil springs, gas dampers, ARBs
Weight (kerb) 1320kg
Power-to-weight 231bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 173mph (claimed)
Price new £66,355 (1998)
Price now c£10,000-16,000

'EVEN IN THIS OLD-TIMER WITH A MODEST 300BHP, THERE'S A DELICIOUSLY BROAD POWERBAND, CAPABLE OF DELIVERING A GENEROUS TUG FROM JUST 2000RPM'

Supercars

The thought of putting a 911 on your drive for as little as £10K is an appealing one, though you might have to compromise on the exterior and interior colours...



But it just makes the return of the Maser's full-bore V8 on the next straight all the more special.

I GOT TO SPEND a little more time with Mark Walton's Porsche 996 Carrera 2. As Mark couldn't join us for the day, I collected it from his house on the outskirts of Northampton before joining up with Simon and Henry in the Maserati for the final 20-mile run to our photo location. The 996, as regular readers won't need reminding, is something of an **evo** hero to put it mildly, winning the magazine's inaugural 1998 eCoty in Carrera 2 guise, and bagging two subsequent eCoty gongs as the GT3 and Turbo. A lot to live up to, then.

Maybe not the happiest shape in the 911's long evolution – the 'fried egg' headlights always looked like an aesthetic aberration – the on-road presence of Mark's car is further suppressed by its rather murky navy blue paintwork, while the caramel-coloured interior is a tad incongruous. Getting on for 14 years old and with 87,000 miles on the clock, it nevertheless seems like a remarkably honest, unmolested example, carrying a predictable ragbag of minor niggles that would be easy to put right: a dodgy sunroof seal that generates a gale of wind-noise at speed (alleviated by raising the tilt action of the sunroof an inch or so); an adjustable steering wheel that seems to be stuck in a rather low-slung position (not a problem for me or, presumably, for Mark as it's his daily driver); and, perhaps unsurprisingly, a slightly tappety tickover. But give it a bootful of revs and that uniquely gruff-yet-smooth watercooled flat-six soundtrack is as sweet as any 911's.

Undoubtedly, the years have left their shiny mark – not least on the leather, which has acquired more craggy lines than a map of the Nile Delta – but the essence of the car, of the 996, remains as pure and uncorrupted as if it had been preserved in amber. Even with the less than ideal driving position imposed by the stuck steering wheel, you get in, clunk the still vault-solid door shut and drive away feeling immediately in-sync. Control weightings are even and harmonious; there's an over-arching coherence, a mechanical tautness that's immediately reassuring.

The car's compactness is one of the facets that Mark, whose previous car was a mk3 MR2, really appreciates. It's such a simple thing: the car that takes up the least amount of road is the one that can use it most effectively. It has more space, more options, more chances to exploit traffic dynamics. Its own aren't too shabby either. If you want to know what truly great steering feels like, the 996 C2 is the car: fast, accurate, perfectly weighted and dripping with feel. And relieved of the contribution of ultra-low-profile tyres (pretty fresh-looking Conti Sport Contacts all the same) the ride is remarkably pliant and forgiving.

When Porsche replaced the 996 with the 997, there was a feeling that a few layers of intimacy, involvement and, perhaps most crucially, attitude adjustability had been peeled away and a few degrees of understeer had been dialled in. With the 996, you can palm that decisive yet fluid gearchange down a cog or two and power out of a corner in a mild, oversteering slide that demands no more than a roll of the wrists to hold.

Truth is, there's still nothing quite like it. The sense of connection flows almost immediately, and there's a depth of character that's evolved over decades: the timbre and feel of the engine, the easy precision of the gearchange, the tactile rewards associated with build and finish and, even in this old-timer with a comparatively modest 300bhp, a deliciously broad powerband capable of delivering a generous tug from just 2000rpm that simply doesn't let up.

AND SO to the TVR. At its launch in 1999, The Tuscan Speed Six was the cock-sure poster-boy for Blackpool's bastion of automotive biff, a car gloriously belligerent and defiant in the face of contemporary pressures, uninterested in the need to adapt to survive with a spot of anti-lock braking here or a dab of traction control there. It had neither. The disconnect with modern, high-octane, Porsche-

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pampered consumer sensibilities was gaping and provocative and rather wonderful.

So I'm not quite sure why I feel compelled to confess to Tuscan owner Paul Vincent that I've got a bit of history with his automotive object of desire, including two of the scariest moments I've ever had in a car. One involved disturbing a flock of sheep grazing peacefully in a field enclosed by a dry stone wall in Wales. Probably the last thing they expected was a metallic orange TVR joining them for breakfast, or the blizzard of shattered glassfibre bodywork that blew in soon after. The other happened at 170mph (and counting) in a black Tuscan S on an Autobahn when the front splitter fell off and made a noise so loud I momentarily believed a sniper had taken out a front tyre with a high velocity bullet.

There's a chuckle as the keys arc towards me, followed by the reassurance from their owner that splitters falling off aren't unheard of. I don't mind feeling apprehensive at this point. I have a theory that if you don't feel nervous as you slide down into a cockpit that, at first glance, seems to have been constructed from parts stolen from a store cupboard in Area 51, you're either an owner and therefore live in the 'Tuscan Zone' or you have absolutely no imagination at all.

Paul, a design engineer, has real estate in the Tuscan zone (he also owns a thoroughly sorted Tuscan S, and a Cerbera for good measure). He bought his green/purple flip-painted 12-year-old mk 1 4.0-litre example for £13,000, which was something of a snip given that its Speed Six engine had been fully rebuilt at 49,000 miles. His initial idea was to re-fettle it and move it on, but although he's shelled out for a new set of ignition leads, a lambda sensor and door and boot rubbers, the relationship is lingering – let's call it a work in progress.

If the Tuscan is the only car truly to nail the idea of beauty and the beast being one and the same, Paul's takes things a stage further with straight-through exhausts that were on the car when he bought it and make it sound not unlike a Spitfire (the plane not the car). That he hasn't changed them must mean decibels are clearly his drug of choice – loud, rude and, if you're anywhere close, visceral. It's the sort of aural onslaught Motorhead's Lemmy might even be able to hear mid-gig. One thing is clear. If 'grunt is good', you won't find a car for £15K closer to the top of the food-chain than the Tuscan.

As well as sounding like a WW2 fighter, it feels every bit as stupidly fast as it should with 360bhp and a kerb weight of just 1100 kilos. This isn't power you apply blithely, not even in a Tuscan with a perfectly sorted chassis. This one, Paul readily concedes, isn't quite there yet, as I discover on the awkwardly cambered section of road that had the Maser in two minds. Here the Tuscan seems to enter a state of quantum uncertainty and wants to be in at least two places at the same time. You're not sure whether to loosen your grip on the wheel and let it get on with it or try to force it to your will. Either way, you feel uncommonly wired.

Fact is, 12 years on, the Tuscan retains the potential to splatter 911 drivers' egos all over the front number-plate. It's savagely, scarily rapid and it still looks the business, too. At heart, it encapsulates everything that was great about TVR. At £13K, adrenalin-rush-per-pound is off the scale.

For me, though, it's the 996 that's got under my skin. The only car I could truthfully entertain as a realistic prospect. As I drop it back at Mark's house and climb into the Suzuki late on Saturday evening, I wonder for a moment if I should have made up an excuse to keep it for the whole weekend. It wouldn't be enough. It's got me thinking.

Huge thanks to Simon Loat, Gary Tall, Paul Vincent and Mark Walton for the use of their cars.



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SPECIFICATION

TVR TUSCAN SPEED SIX
Engine In-line 6-cyl, 3996cc
Power 360bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 310lb ft @ 5250rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
Suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, gas dampers and anti-roll bars front and rear
Weight (kerb) 1100kg
Power-to-weight 332bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.4sec
Top speed 180mph+ (claimed)
Price new £39,750 (2000)
Price now c£13,000-20,000



This Tuscan cost owner Paul Vincent just £13K. It's in need of a little fettling but feels – and sounds – in very rude health. If you can find one that's had a fairly recent engine rebuild, few offer more thrills per £

'AS WELL AS SOUNDING LIKE A WW2 FIGHTER, IT FEELS EVERY BIT AS STUPIDLY FAST AS IT SHOULD WITH 360BHP AND A KERB WEIGHT OF JUST 1100KG'

THE REALITY CHECK

Just before you start scanning the classifieds for one of these £15K modern classics, ***Jethro Bovingdon*** *has some hard facts and figures for you to absorb*

Let's be honest here: none of these cars is a purchase made by the head. They variously suffer from prodigious thirst, eye-watering servicing costs and, should an engine let go, another form of transport might spring to mind – a large train, to throw yourself under… However, buying with your heart needn't be a disaster as long as you engage your brain just a little bit, too. And of course you can weigh all those big receipts against shallow depreciation or maybe even strengthening values.

The TVR is probably the scariest on paper. The problems with the Speed Six engine and its finger followers are well documented and many adverts will list a rebuilt engine in the details. If it's been done by TVR Power (most have) then this can only be a good thing and bring real peace of mind. Check that the tubular chassis has been rustproofed regularly, too. A body-off chassis restoration will cost over £5000. You'll also want to look closely at the electrics, leaky dampers, bent Spider alloys… the list is extensive but there are plenty of good cars out there. Ultimately we'd suggest enlisting the experts. TVR Power will inspect a car for around £200 and then offer a one-year unlimited mileage mechanical warranty for £900. Highly recommended.

Incredibly, the 996 also has a reputation for lunching engines. The problem centres on a chain-driven intermediate shaft that runs along the underside of the block and turns the twin camshafts on each bank of cylinders. At the end of the shaft there's a sprocket, which turns on a bearing. If the stud that supports the sprocket snaps the bearing fails and terminal engine problems are possible… Look out for leaky rear main seals (RMS) as a tell-tale but don't assume a leaky RMS means a terminally ill engine.

'We don't see huge numbers of failures and it tends to be the earliest cars. To be honest any engine that is going to cause problems has probably done so by now,' says Mick Clare from Porsche specialist Paragon. 'A characteristic of the flat-six is that they can smoke on start-up, heavily, for 15-20-seconds but that's nothing to worry about,' he continues.

Do look out for rust around the rear edge of the front wheelarches and around the door striker plates; reckon on clutches lasting as long as 60,000 miles and dampers around 90,000 miles. You'll want your dampers in tip-top condition – why have a Porsche if the chassis isn't perfect?

The Maserati V8 has a reputation for rock-solid reliability. 'These engines are going strong through 100,000 miles with no real problems,' says Andy Heywood of Bill McGrath. However, there are issues with balljoints on the lower wishbone, which can fail after just 20,000 miles and cost £860 each fitted – look for 'rattly' steering and odd tyre-wear to signify a front problem. At the rear, the rosejoint on a track adjustment arm fails at a similar mileage. Thankfully Bill McGrath can just replace the rosejoint at around £230 per corner. Sudden (even more so than standard) oversteer is the giveaway.

The brakes have no backing plates and tend to corrode quickly: discs are around



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£540 per axle, pads around £300 per axle. Most 4200s feature the Cambiocorsa 'box and clutch life fluctuates wildly from around 20,000 miles (around town) to 40,000. Bill McGrath charges £2200 for a full clutch change, plus another £300 for the flywheel. Overall these are reliable cars but the parts prices are very high.

There are no horror stories with the NSX. Overall they're super-reliable and relatively cheap to run. Look out for excessive engine movement when revved or engine mounts creaking (they're very expensive to replace), ascertain if the timing belt has been changed (recommended at 72,000 miles or eight years) and of course look for any signs of crash damage. The aluminium structure and panels are tricky to repair and you should view large or inconsistent panel gaps with suspicion. Some early cars ('91-'92) suffer from a faulty transmission countershaft bearing snap ring that could result in gearbox failure. Check the five-speed manual gearbox's VIN number to see if it falls between J4A4-1003542 to J4A4-1005978 and, if it does, make sure this has been replaced. Clutches cost around £1600 to replace, so factor that in if it hasn't been changed for 30,000 miles or so. Of all the cars here, the NSX is the least likely to require regular heavy expenditure. They do munch through rear tyres, though…

'OF THE CARS HERE, THE NSX IS LEAST LIKELY TO REQUIRE REGULAR HEAVY EXPENDITURE'

The M5's V10, SMG gearbox and EDC dampers add up to an incredible driving experience, and the E60 is generally very reliable, but the spectre of ECU failure, SMG pump issues and the like mean we'd strenuously recommend taking out a BMW warranty. As long as the car has a full service history and fewer than 100,000 miles, you can buy a warranty for just over £100 per month with no excess. Also check for newish tyres (they're very expensive), and a recent new clutch/flywheel (ditto). Then close your eyes… and jump.

HOW MUCH TO RUN ONE?

	HONDA NSX	BMW M5 (E60)	MASERATI 4200 GT	PORSCHE 911 (996)	TVR TUSCAN
SERVICING COSTS (All prices include VAT at 20 per cent)	**Annual service: £189** **2nd year service: £550** (annual service plus coolant change, gearbox/diff oil change, spark plugs) **Cambelt service: £1000** (including waterpump) Prices from Plans Motorsport, a service and performance specialist who offer a number of upgrades for the NSX plus regular servicing to Honda guidelines (plansmotorsport.com/01483 548999).	**Minor service: £228** **Major service: £840** (The M5 uses condition-based services and will provide maintenance info through the iDrive system) Prices from Classic Heroes, a leading independent BMW specialist with a fantastic knowledge of all things M from early Batmobiles to E60 M5s (classicheroes.co.uk/01825 830227).	**Annual service: £714.53** **2nd year service: £1387.51** (annual service plus air filter, gearbox/diff oil change, a/c recharge) **4th year service: £1387.51** (2nd year service plus spark plugs, carbon canister, lambda sensors) Prices from Bill McGrath Ltd, the UK's premier Maserati specialists (classicmaseratis.co.uk/01438 832161).	**Minor service: £312** **Major service: £594** (including spark plugs, 24mths) **48,000-mile service: £714** (major plus poly belts, spark plugs and fuel filter) Prices from Paragon Porsche, a leading independent Porsche specialist who provide servicing, sales and upgrades for all models of Porsche (paragongb.com/01825 830424).	**6000-mile service: £420** **12000-mile service: £780** (including tappet adjustment) Prices from TVR Power, a fully approved performance and TVR service centre and the UK's leading TVR experts (tvrpower.co.uk/02476 366177).
TYRES (Prices from Blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT at 20 per cent and fitting)	Front: **£96.87** (205/50R15 Z) Rear: **£136.38** (225/50R16 Z) (Bridgestone Potenza RE050)	Front: **£281.72** (255/40 R19 W) Rear: **£356.62** (285/35 R19 W) (Michelin Pilot Sport 2)	Front: **£203.81** (235/40 R18 Y) Rear: **£223.82** (265/35R18 Y) (Continental Sport Contact 3)	Front: **£140.47** (225/40 R18 Z) Rear: **£258.19** (285/30 R18 Z) (Conti Sport Contact 2, N-rated)	Front: **£171.46** (255/35 R18 W) Rear: **£171.46** (255/35 R18 W) (Toyo Proxes C1-S)
FUEL COSTS (Based on official combined mpg, super-unleaded at 140p/litre)	12,000 miles at 30.4mpg: **£2519.33**	12,000 miles at 19.1mpg: **£4009.82**	12,000 miles at 16.1mpg: **£4756.95**	12,000 miles at 23.9mpg: **£3204.46**	12,000 miles at estimated 20mpg: **£3829.35**
FUTURE VALUES	There are very few NSXs for sale at any one time, which should help make them a great long-term investment. Honda's supercar was sold in tiny numbers and its association with the great Ayrton Senna and game-changing dynamics and reliability ensure its classic status. It's already not easy to find a manual NSX at £15,000 and we suspect that standard and well-maintained examples will only go one way – upwards. Of all these cars, a clean NSX coupe looks like the one most likely to appreciate quickly. The message is, get one while you can.	M5 prices have fallen rapidly in the last year or so thanks to spiralling fuel costs, the relatively poor reputation of the SMG 'box and the fear of a V10 getting sick. That makes them almost unbelievable value but also suggests they still have some way to fall. Even the sought-after E39 M5 V8 has fallen to as little as £5000 and there's little reason to think the V10 will be immune from similar depreciation. One day an E60 M5 might be worth rather a lot more than it is now, but you'll need to hang onto it and maybe pass it on to the kids to realise its full potential!	The Maserati is perhaps the trickiest car to assess in terms of long-term depreciation. Early 3200GTs had dipped below £10K but have now rebounded to around £12K (though rare high-mileage cars can be priced as low as £8000). The turbocharged 3200 is less reliable and more fragile, so you might expect the later, much-improved, normally aspirated 4200 to command a large premium. At present the gap is narrow, but we reckon a good 4200 will look a safer and even more glamorous bet and hold steady at around £15-17K for the next few years.	The 996 looks great value at the moment and prices have stabilised in the last year or so. Very high-mileage cars have dipped below £10,000 but won't go much lower, while clean, cherished cars with a good spec and history look likely to hover around the £13-16K mark for some time to come. Perhaps the lure of the £20,000 997 (they're getting close already) might drive prices lower still, but we reckon your money is pretty safe with a 996. The highly rated C4S is a little more expensive (starting from £18,000) but might prove to be the best bet in the long term.	The £13,000 Tuscan is already a reality and with Cerberas available at well below £10K it looks like this model still has a little bit of depreciating to do. A reputation for poor reliability scares off many potential buyers and a test drive in the wet probably quite a few more... But as the message gets out about TVR Power's excellent warranty packages and know-how, perhaps these monster sports cars will start to be viewed as the bargain that they are. Pay £15K now for a good car and a couple of years down the line we'd expect you to recover 80 per cent of that.
INSURANCE	Driver A: **£825** (£500 excess) Driver B: **£460** (£250 excess)	Driver A: **£1320** (£350 excess) Driver B: **£715** (£350 excess)	Driver A: **£1341** (£500 excess) Driver B: **£680** (£300 excess)	Driver A: **£958** (£500 excess) Driver B: **£625** (£500 excess)	Driver A: **£901** (£350 excess) Driver B: **£510** (£250 excess)

INSURANCE EXAMPLES: Driver A: 28 years old, male, lives Nottingham, car garaged overnight, 3 penalty points, full no claims bonus
Driver B: 45 years old, male, lives Surrey, car garaged overnight, clean licence, full no claims bonus
Quotes from Adrian Flux, the UK's largest specialist insurance company (adrianflux.co.uk/0800 369 8590). Prices include VAT at 20 per cent.



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RED BULL RACER

Inspired by a race car, the new LP570-4 Super Trofeo Stradale is described by Lamborghini as its most extreme road-going Gallardo to date. ***Roger Green*** *finds out just how extreme it is on a pilgrimage to the old Monza circuit*

Déjà vu. The sprawling, depressingly grey industrial zone of Sant'Agata finally slips into the duvet of mist behind us and at last the road ahead is clear. For the first time since we tugged down on the harnesses and headed out through Lamborghini's factory gates I can explore the throttle, and after the frustrations of the last 30 minutes it's not an opportunity I'm about to pass up.

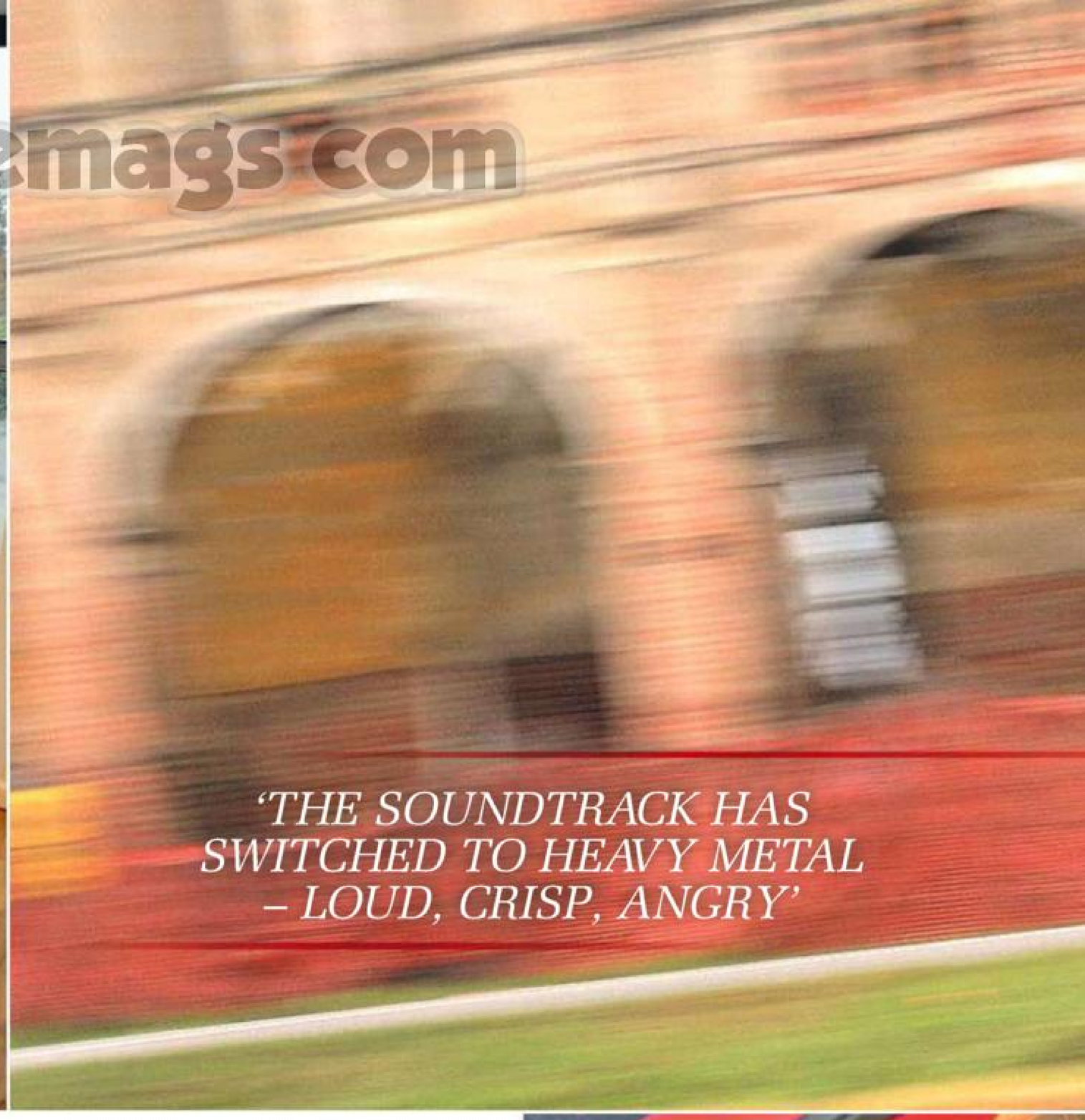
The pedal goes all the way to the floor in second gear and the rear tyres squirm briefly as a wave of torque hits them hard. Then the front axle takes its share of the workload and the Gallardo is pushing and pulling hard as the 562bhp V10 nestling behind our backs goes feral. From humming along emitting a mellow burble just a second ago, the soundtrack has switched to heavy metal – loud, crisp, angry; ten cylinders pounding your eardrums with a savage intensity. It's one of the Gallardo's enduring tricks and it gets so far under your skin it ends up embedded in your bones.

It's the first time I've driven this car, and this road is new to me too, yet I've been here before – the relentless surge, that bark, and a crescendo that peaks with an almighty thump as you pull the e-gear paddle and set the outrageous sequence

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'THE SOUNDTRACK HAS SWITCHED TO HEAVY METAL – LOUD, CRISP, ANGRY'



Top: passing a Countach prototype on the way out of the Lamborghini factory. Above: Super Trofeo race car was the inspiration for the Stradale; Green competed in the racer at Silverstone in 2009 (evo 137)

off again, only with the world passing by in an ever-increasing blur.

Lamborghini's Gallardo has been with us for what seems like a lifetime and yet the vividness of its acceleration never dims. That alone is enough to bring a strong sense of emotional recall, but in this car there's an extra dimension to the memories swimming around my head. This is one of the 150 limited-edition (and long-titled) LP570-4 Super Trofeo Stradale versions and, as its name suggests, it's themed on the race cars that compete in Lamborghini's one-make series, arguably the most glamorous way to take to the track. It's a championship that I've managed to blag my way into a couple of times and it has delivered some of the most dramatic racing I've ever witnessed. Appropriately, Lamborghini is calling the Super Trofeo Stradale the most extreme road-going Gallardo ever.

The shocking thrust instantly brings back memories of my Lambo race debut at Silverstone in 2009, in the inaugural Super Trofeo season. Back then it wasn't just me with my eyes out on stalks. To get a handle on the performance we were allowed a short familiarisation session, sharing the track with the British GT runners. As I took to the circuit a GT3-spec Ferrari F430 appeared in my mirrors. As he was already up to speed I waved him by as we approached a second-gear hairpin. What happened at the exit was utterly extraordinary. As soon as the wheels were straight again, I mashed the gas and the Gallardo took off, gunning straight back past the F430 like it had been tied to a post. No need, then, to doubt Lamborghini's claim that it had created the fastest one-make race series in the world.

The Super Trofeo Stradale isn't quite one of those race cars with number plates Blu-Tacked to the body. It's got carpets for a start. In fact it's based on the LP570-4 Superleggera, so thanks to swathes of highly polished carbonfibre and lightweight seats it tips the scales at 1340kg, or to put it another way 70kg less than the regular LP560-4 Gallardo. The Trofeo is also equipped with the larger, higher and adjustable rear spoiler that's fitted to the racers, and it's claimed that this can produce three times the aerodynamic load of the one fitted to the LP560-4. For road use it also has the more immediately obvious benefit of being higher than the letterbox rear screen, thus giving you an unobstructed view of what's going on behind.

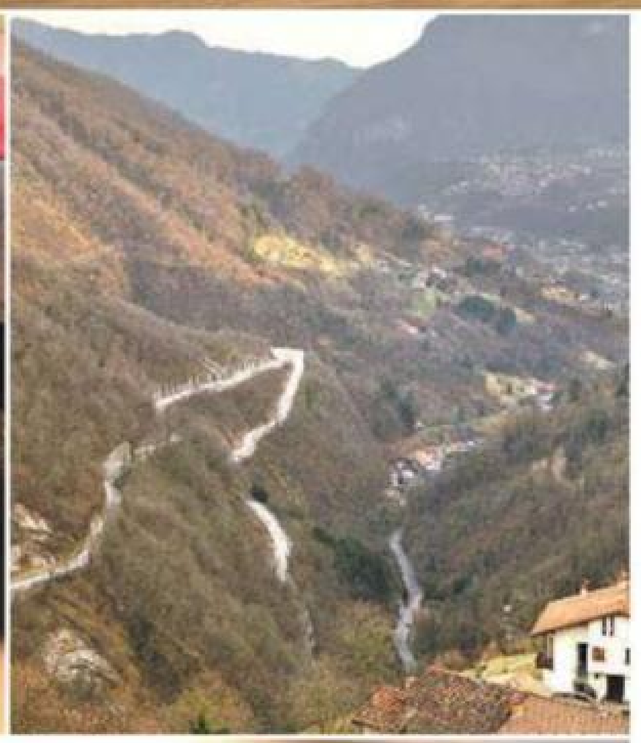
Through that rear screen you can also see the completely removable engine cover, which like the wing is constructed in featherweight carbon composite. Inside, the Alcantara is trimmed to match the exterior's glossy lipstick and ebony













paintwork, and you feel at one with the Gallardo from the moment you drop into its beautifully trimmed fixed-back carbon-shelled seats. In part that's thanks to the faithful steering that, unlike a 458's, doesn't have a hyper-rapid rack that requires a recalibration of your inputs. It's also got more feel. You just get in and go.

We're heading to Monza, the original destination for the opening round of the pan-European Super Trofeo series and an annual pilgrimage for the racers. But this is very much a road car, so rather than trying it on the track, we want to soak up some of the atmosphere of past battles – and if possible sneak onto Monza's crumbling disused banking.

But that's for later. First we'll skip past Milan and head into the Alps that bite into the skyline beyond. The main road to Monza is the arrow-straight A1 autostrada that we're already on, but other than rediscovering the buzz of acceleration, all we've learnt is that the (optional) roll hoops severely limit the amount of camera gear lensman Jamie 'I'll have to ditch the lights and my clean pants' Lipman can bring with us.

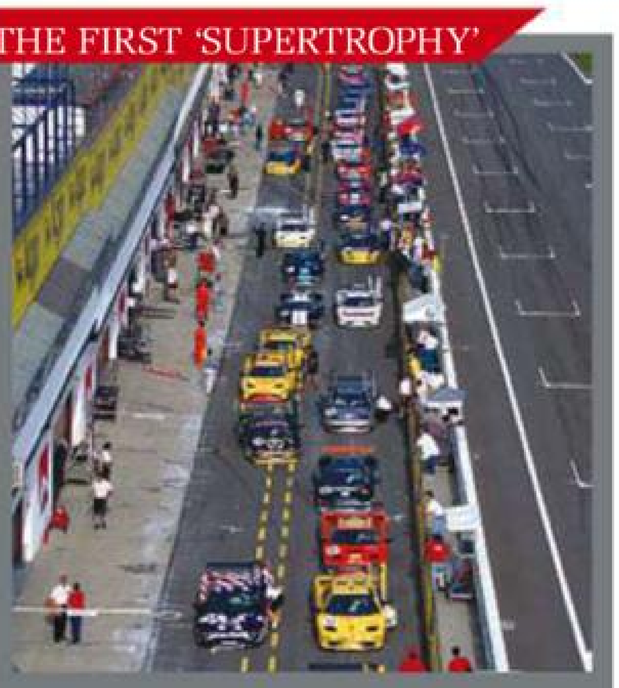
Actually, that's not true. We've also found that the harnesses (again optional) are a major hassle at tollbooths. They're rather uncomfortable too, so that you're always aware of them – not something that ever bothers you in the racer, but

Optional harnesses and roll hoops (left) can be inconvenient in a road car, restricting movement and reducing storage space respectively; carbon-backed seats offer little adjustment, so aren't ideal for long journeys. Below left: cabin gets colour scheme to match the exterior; note Super Trofeo logo stitched into the Alcantara on the dash. Left: the view from Vedeseta

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THE FIRST 'SUPERTROPHY'



The Gallardo isn't the first Lamborghini to form the basis of a one-make series. Back in 1996 the Supertrophy was launched with its opening round being the support race for the Le Mans 24 Hours. No fewer than 28 Diablo SV-Rs, powered by monstrous 5.7-litre V12s, took to the track, looking and sounding fantastic.

The series' first champion was Thomas Bscher, who was also famous for regularly commuting to work at 200mph on German Autobahns in his McLaren F1. The Supertrophy format was so successful it ran unchanged for four years.

In 2000 the SV-R was replaced by the Diablo GTR, based on the road-going GT. The bodywork was enhanced to look even more outrageous and featured a huge rear wing bolted directly to the chassis. It used the 6-litre V12 from the road car but with a lightened crankshaft, individual throttle bodies and revised fuel and ignition systems to produce 582bhp and 472lb ft of torque. They were perhaps the wildest single-marque racers ever seen. Let's hope Lamborghini does the same with the Aventador – that really would be something worth seeing. RG

then there's rather more to concentrate on. Blasting along a deserted section of highway is intense; being in the middle of a tightly formed pack, inches apart as you approach the start is something else. You see nothing but Lambo rumps filling the screen, noses in the mirrors, all poised and ready to erupt as one as all that pent-up energy is simultaneously transformed into acceleration. In those moments you live on your nerve endings; adrenalin hits don't get any bigger.

Those memories are still swilling around in my head a couple of hours later when we pass through the village of Moggio – and suddenly the environment changes completely. From flatlands smothered in fog and clogged with typically bustling, jostling Italian traffic, the roads and the air have cleared. We're climbing into the foothills of the mountains now, and as the unseasonably mild January temperature quickly drops to low single figures, the tarmac gains a white coating of frost. We need to make the most of the last few hours of daylight because once the sun drops below the snow-covered crags these roads will become lethal for a hot hatch, never mind a £200K supercar.

They would be treacherous now were it not for the Pirelli Sotto Nero winter tyres our test car is wearing instead of the usual Corsas. It's extraordinary the amount of grip they can find. Once you begin to trust just how much purchase you have, you can still attack these twisting roads. Combined with the traction benefits of four-wheel drive and the Gallardo's compact dimensions, this car is devastating up here. Nothing else would come close to keeping up. I reckon eight-tenths would be good enough to wave bye-bye to anything from Maranello right now. Seriously, it's that good – settled, precise, up on its toes and covering the ground at a barely believable pace.

Go harder still and the chassis remains exploitable, but the game becomes edgier and the occasional moment of turn-in understeer is the car's warning shot. The tyres may exhibit incomprehensible levels of purchase on frozen tarmac, but pushing the envelope demands ultra-quick wits. Here there's little warning of the exact moment when grip will dissolve into





Above: on the way to the mountains. Above right: passing through San Pellegrino Terme (where the fizzy water comes from). Bottom: engine cover can be removed completely, race car-style; 5.2-litre V10 sits below

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'FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE AND COMPACT DIMENSIONS MAKE THIS CAR DEVASTATING UP HERE'

slip and there's zero progression. Back off sharply when the nose washes wide and after a heart flutter it'll gather itself together. Alternatively, if you're really up for it, you can take a deep breath and stick with the throttle, and a moment later the torque will shuffle to the rear, neutralising the balance. Or if you go harder still, it'll snap into oversteer.

It's hard and fast, the STS, very much alive, almost overly reactive in the way it flicks through these turns. Its agility asks some serious questions of the driver. Are you good enough to keep up? The Gallardo may be closing in on its tenth birthday – it's been around since Ferrari was still knocking out 360s – but right now it feels as feisty as a tiger cub.

Above left: frost coats the big Super Trofeo wing. Below: entrance to the modern Monza circuit – closed for the New Year holiday

Until recently the e-gear robotised manual gearbox has always been the component to expose the Gallardo's age, and in its early iterations the system was comparatively slow and clunky. Over the years it has benefited from software

upgrades that have improved its action and shift times, and although it's still no match for the best double-clutch systems – and can occasionally be a little grabby around town – it's no longer the major character flaw it once was.

For a race car where lap times are everything, paddles have always been the way to go, but it's only been in the last year when we haven't bemoaned the lack of an open gate and a stick sprouting up between the seats of a road-going Gallardo. Good job too, as, fittingly, e-gear is the only gearbox option on the Trofeo. When you're fully focused on negotiating a series of slippery hairpins, with a rock face on one side and a huge drop on the other, anything that leaves more brain capacity for steering, throttle and brake control suddenly makes perfect sense.

Despite the glassy surface, the brakes still bite exceptionally hard. In fact you can leave your braking until it seems impossibly late – at which point those harnesses prove their worth. Our test car has the optional carbon-ceramic discs. Again, until recently inconsistent pedal feel made it difficult to be smooth and they ruined your flow. But no longer. They're now as progressive as a good set of iron anchors, and despite my best efforts they show no signs of fade. Conversely the race cars run regular discs with ABS, so feel is never an issue and they have always excelled in awkward conditions. Qualifying at Spa in 2010, I remember being astounded by the incredible level of braking available on a wet track. It took time to acclimatise because it was almost possible to use the same braking points as in the dry.

It was hard not to get carried away then and it's the same in the mountains now, with the heady wail of the 5.2-litre V10 intensified by the rock walls and echoing through the valleys. But the light is disappearing and with the encroaching darkness comes more ice and less opportunity to spot it. We drop down to Monza. It's dark by the time we arrive, so we head into town to find a hotel, pizza and Peroni. It's been a good day.

WE'RE UP EARLY, stumbling out of the hotel into light that's bright enough to burn away sleepy blurriness with the effectiveness of laser eye surgery. The Lambo's Rosso Mars paintwork is still vibrant, despite being shrouded in a thick layer of crystallised frost and wearing the grime from yesterday's Alpine adventures. The colour scheme is another nod to the track, and all 150 Trofeos will be produced in this traditional Italian racing red.

Top left: opening a gate to the old Monza circuit. Above left: underside of the concrete banking is now overgrown; it was last used in 1969. Top right: winter tyres and four-wheel drive result in impressive traction levels in wintry conditions

Ours sits there waiting for us, squat, square-jawed, bristling with aggressive intent. Other supercars use subtlety and delicacy to create desirability, both in their overall shapes and their details. Lamborghini shuns all that stuff. It's the hard man of supercar visuals and this Gallardo looks like it could simply shoulder-charge other cars off the road. Handy when you need to get through the centre of town in rush hour…

Unsurprisingly, the Stradale draws huge attention and wherever we go there are requests to give it the beans. We do our best to oblige at every opportunity, and each time we stop we're accosted by Italians desperate to tell us they're Lambo fans rather than Ferrari. The rivalry between the marques divides the population here like red and blue in Manchester and Liverpool – it's one or the other, you can't like both it seems.

Only in Italy could you have a racetrack in the middle of a country park that's open to all. By the time we arrive at Parco di Monza the only people around are the last of the joggers, completing their fitness regimes before heading off to work. When they leave, we're alone in this cathedral of motorsport. Winter has stripped the park of its colour, the air is still and cold, and despite being in the centre of town the only sound is a woodpecker drilling

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'OTHER SUPERCARS USE SUBTLETY AND DELICACY TO CREATE DESIRABILITY IN THEIR FORMS AND DETAILS. LAMBORGHINI SHUNS ALL THAT STUFF'

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one of the many ancient trees for food. It's eerie standing near the old banking and I'm not sure whether it's the cold or the thought of the old cars racing on these narrow, steep walls with no meaningful safety barriers that's making me shiver.

With the place to ourselves, the temptation to explore the banking further is impossible to resist, and after a while we discover a gate that's held closed by nothing more than a twisted piece of wire. We slip through and park up on the banking itself. We're not supposed to be here and every time we move the STS for another shot I curse the show-off flare of revs the Gallardo indulges in when you twist the key. Thankfully only a squirrel comes to investigate.

We decide it's worth risking a moving shot so I drive to the top of the banking where it's too steep to stand and the ice and moss cause the STS to slip sideways. I can't imagine the all-wheel-drive system was designed

Below: Green and Gallardo on the old Monza. Right: temptation to try the Trofeo on the 38-degree banking impossible to resist

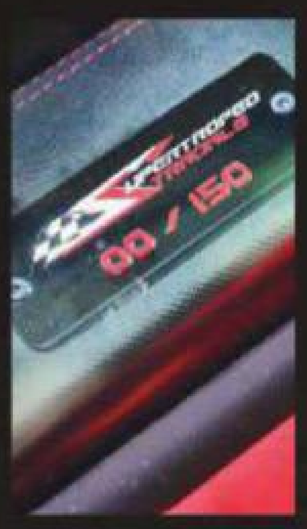


'THE GALLARDO IS NOW MORE INTOXICATING THAN EVER, AND THE SUPER TROFEO IS THE BEST OF THE BREED'

to stick limpet-like to 38 degrees of banking, but it finds some purchase and for one short but glorious moment we blast through the end of the turn. It's an incredible thrill to spend a few moments amongst the ghosts of those fearless pioneering racers.

Like deserted racetracks, supercars are so much more than their constituent parts. They too possess histories littered with extreme highs and lows, they have the ability to stir emotions and create indelible personal memories, and the Gallardo's longevity has allowed an even greater scope for those experiences. Its flaws have diminished over time, but the rate of progress and the exceptional all-new metal (and carbon) launched in the last few years would make it an unlikely winner of a contemporary group test.

However, don't dare think that the baby Lambo should be overlooked. The Gallardo is now more intoxicating and compelling than ever before, and the Super Trofeo Stradale is the best of the breed. Now, more than ever, we'll miss it when it's gone.



Above: each of the 150 Super Trofeo Stradales will wear a plaque indicating its position in the production run

SPECIFICATION

LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO LP570-4 SUPER TROFEO STRADALE

Engine V10, 5204cc
Power 562bhp @ 8000rpm
Torque 398lb ft @ 6500rpm
Transmission Six-speed e-gear automated manual, four-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, ESP
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, gas dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, gas dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Vented and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs (optional), 380mm fr, 356mm rr, ABS, EBD
Wheels 8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 19in rear
Tyres 235/35 ZR19 front, 295/30 ZR19 rear
Weight (dry) 1340kg
Power-to-weight 426bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.4sec (claimed)
Top speed 199mph (claimed)
Basic price £197,918

evo RATING ★★★★★



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2012 FORMULA 1 SEASON PREVIEW

Returning champions, revitalised teams, new circuits and expanded TV coverage… Formula 1 engineering consultant ***Pat Symonds*** *looks at what's in store for F1 fans this year*

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The drivers

While Sebastian Vettel was totally dominant in 2011, we must not forget that his championship win in 2010 was unexpected and even fortuitous. That win enabled him to enter 2011 with a level of self-esteem and confidence that only a true champion can have, but following up such a performance in 2012 is a tall order indeed.

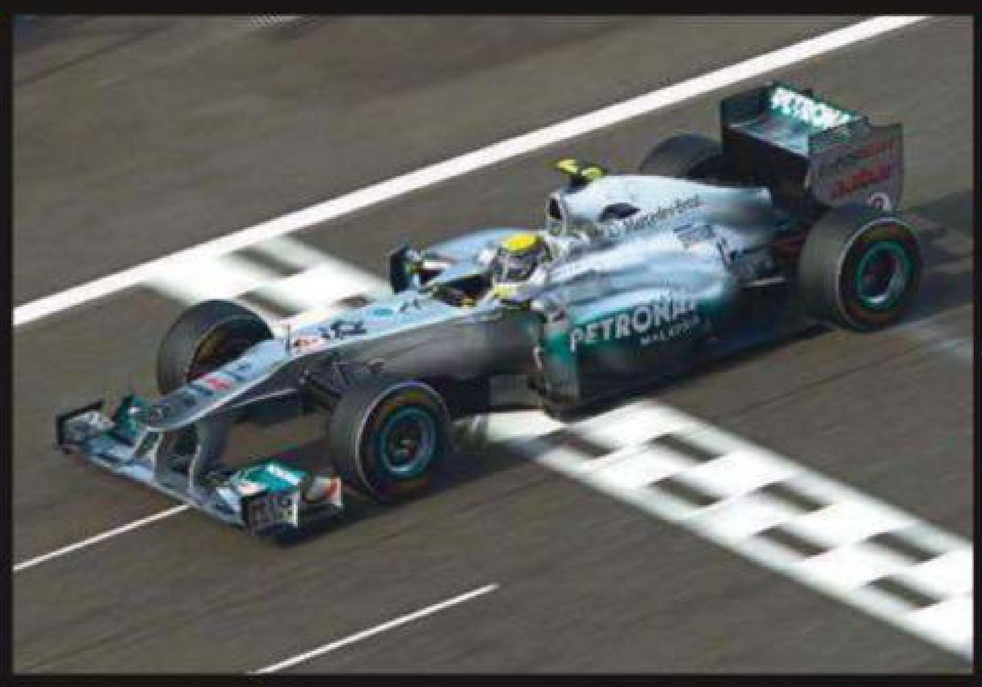
No one will deny that Lewis Hamilton is potentially one of the fastest drivers on the track, but 2011 showed that for the ultimate performance a good balance needs to be found not just in your car but in life as well. After his roller-coaster 2011 season, and with life now more settled, the McLaren driver will undoubtedly be able to lift his game and realise once again the potential we saw earlier in his career. If I was to nominate my favourite for 2012 against the run of play, Hamilton would be my choice.

Fernando Alonso will, as always, give it his all if he feels there is a chance of winning, but will Ferrari be able to make that final step it so desperately needs? I suspect this might be difficult and Alonso's main challenge may well be to keep the team focused. It is almost forgotten now that it was Alonso's teammate, Felipe Massa, who so nearly stole Hamilton's crown in 2008. Amongst the *tifosi* there is no contest; Alonso is their hero and it is hard to believe that anything will change that.

Jenson Button's second place in his McLaren in 2011 was a highlight of the year. He adapted well to the requirements of the Pirelli tyres and showed time and time again that his mixture of intelligent race planning and controlled aggression could pay dividends. With Pirelli having the commendable intent of pushing the tyres yet further, his style and approach could just take him a step further in 2012.

Intra-team battles will continue to intrigue. Will Red Bull's Mark Webber get his head round the Pirellis and take the fight to Vettel? Probably not. The psychology is now such that Webber has a mountain to climb to regain his self-confidence. Over at Mercedes the intriguing challenge of the (relatively) young Nico Rosberg against the old master, Michael Schumacher, continues with signs that it will be ever closer.

Force India has two bright prospects in Paul di Resta and Nico Hülkenberg, and their progress will be interesting to watch as both have shown enormous potential. Either could start to upset the establishment on a regular basis.



As always there will be focus on the rookies. Toro Rosso has, through its parentage, inherited two extremely exciting drivers in Daniel Ricciardo and Jean-ÉricVergne. While Ricciardo should have the upper hand initially, I expect his teammate to be giving him trouble by mid-season.

Ultimately much will come down to style. The Pirelli tyre is a hard taskmaster and yet one that demands a modicum of gentle treatment from both the car and the driver. It responds to a flowing style with a minimum of abrupt loading. Those that perfect the technique will prosper.

TALKING POINT

KIMI

The biggest surprise of 2012 is the return of Kimi Räikkönen – and to a team that currently appears to be midfield. It will be fascinating to watch how this complex character performs after a two-year hiatus. His personality polarises opinion and it is a brave move by Lotus to make him a key player in its ambitious renaissance. But, in my opinion, it's a well-calculated risk. If Lotus produces a car that can perform, it will have a world-class driver to exploit it. I would imagine that his remuneration will be largely result-based.



Left: Kimi Räikkönen is to return to F1 in 2012 as Lotus's lead driver. Top: Nico Rosberg will continue to put pressure on Mercedes teammate Michael Schumacher

The teams

Stability is an attribute that is often underestimated when it comes to predicting how a team may perform. Red Bull, having dominated 2011, carries that vital quality through to 2012, making it hard to bet against another dominant year for the Milton Keynes team. That said, I have been lucky enough to have been involved in two back-to-back championships with Renault in 1994/95 and 2005/06 and know just how hard it is to sustain the intense effort needed to stay at the top. In my case I didn't have that continuity and subsequently suffered as a result. I think Red Bull, with a stable driver and team line-up coupled with minimal changes to the technical regulations, has to start as the favourite in most peoples' minds.

At many points last year McLaren was the equal of Red Bull in race performance, but once again it suffered from a slightly slow start to the season. It is fully cognisant of that fact and is unlikely to allow it to happen again. I think we can expect a slightly more conventional launch car from McLaren so as to avoid the distraction that its novel, yet ultimately unsuccessful, 'octopus' exhaust system brought on the team at the start of last year.

Having stuck my neck out to nominate Hamilton as favourite for the drivers' crown next year, I really should back it up by predicting that McLaren will become the dominant team. Its problem, if indeed it has one, may be the loss of John Iley, a senior aerodynamicist, to another team, but McLaren has huge depth in its engineering staff and I suspect this loss will be absorbed.

Ferrari is difficult to call. We saw the beginning of a blame culture emerge in 2010 when Chris Dyer carried the can for a tactical error in the final race, and this continued in 2011 with the highly respected designer Aldo Costa being dismissed when it emerged the F150 Italia was not the dominant car that the Ferrari management had demanded. The team still has the very experienced Nicholas Tombazis as a chief designer, and he is promising a car that is 'aggressive'. There is a feeling within the team that it suffered last year from being

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to leave the sport and Ferrari chairman Luca di Montezemolo is the master of polemics. With such a strong brand it knows that its threats will be taken seriously, even if common sense and precedent suggests that they should be regarded otherwise.

FOTA has achieved much over the last few years, particularly in curbing some of the financial excesses of the sport. It has also been instrumental in making bold changes and managing those changes for the benefit of the spectator. I sincerely hope it continues to exist in some form.

It's hard to believe that it was 34 years ago that Ecclestone first took control of the commercial aspects of F1. He shows no signs of slowing down and indeed the new Concorde will likely invigorate him yet more. Amongst the teams the squabbles will continue and, as usual, the more successful will attract the majority of the criticism. Red Bull is the current target and will probably continue to be so with McLaren and Ferrari doing everything in their power to destabilise



FERRARI

Above: consistency will keep Red Bull strong. Below: Nicholas Tombazis is working on making the Ferrari more competitive. Bottom: Bernie Ecclestone faces new financial battles with the teams

too conservative, thereby closing their minds to some strands of development. Technical director Pat Fry has an enormous task to orchestrate the many diverse elements that make up Ferrari, but if he manages to, then its resources are formidable.

Further down the field, this is the year when Mercedes must perform. It has thrown huge resources at 2012 with a recruitment drive that has seen a large increase in headcount throughout the organisation. It cannot be fun, nor can it remain acceptable, for the works team to be regularly beaten by McLaren, a customer for the Mercedes engine.

Meanwhile, the newly named Lotus team, the phoenix that has risen from the ashes of Renault, also has a lot to prove, as its competitiveness rapidly declined last year. The signing of Räikkönen was a bold statement. It now needs equally bold engineering.

The politics

This year will be a politically active one. The 2009 Concorde Agreement – the contract between the FIA, the teams (as the Formula One Teams Association) and Bernie Ecclestone's Formula One Administration – comes to an end on December 31, and much rhetoric and bravado will occur prior to that date as a new agreement is debated.

Since negotiations for the last agreement took place we have seen a number of major manufacturers leave F1. They were the main protagonists in trying to wrestle more of the profits generated by the sport away from Ecclestone and into the teams' coffers. Having smelt blood, the teams will now be far more intransigent in their negotiations with Bernie.

Irrespective of this, Ecclestone is the master of the divide-and-conquer philosophy, and one can't help but wonder if the recent defections from FOTA are not the beginnings of the phoney war. Ferrari regularly threatens

TALKING POINT

TEAM AMBITIONS

The 'new' teams need to deliver in 2012 to justify their position in the premier league of motorsport. Caterham has the facilities and budget to mix it with the midfield, but as Tony Fernandes' other acquisition, Queens Park Rangers, has shown, it takes more than money to achieve success. HRT is an enigma and its lack of stability is the antithesis of the requirements for success. It has a mountain to climb, so signing Pedro de la Rosa is an intelligent move. Marussia has had a near-total reset with a new operation based in Banbury; 2012 will be a stage on the journey to where it would like to be.



'THE RELATIVE STABILITY OF THE 2012 RULES WILL SERVE TO CLOSE THE FIELD UP'

FERRARI



PA



the team. It will, however, take some doing to shake an organisation with such solid foundations.

Technology

In comparison with recent years it is likely that 2012 will not see as much novel interpretation of the rules. With the current aerodynamic regulations entering their fourth season it would seem that many loopholes have now been uncovered and the rules subsequently 'clarified'. However, the essence of loopholes is that they are not obvious before the fact. Who is to know if there will not be one team that, on unveiling its car in February, will not have all its rivals smacking their foreheads and wishing they had thought of a particular nuance that is revealed!

With a major shift of powertrain regulations for 2014 – the current 2.4-litre V8s will be replaced by 1.6-litre turbocharged V6s, joined by new energy recovery systems – teams will already be looking ahead to the implications of these on the basic architecture of the car and this will be diverting the attention of the design groups charged with evaluating advanced concepts.

These circumstances are likely to lead to teams spending more time on evolution than revolution. I expect to see many fine detail changes on the 2012 cars such as ever-tighter packaging around the rear of the engine and transmission and yet more attention to airflow management of the multiple vortex flows that emanate from the front wing. These details, unfortunately, may well be lost to the eyes of all but the trained aerodynamicist.

The relative stability of the 2012 rules and the banning of the fiendishly complex exhaust-blown diffusers will serve to close the field up somewhat. This in turn will reinforce the emphasis on detail, as success and failure are measured in ever-smaller margins.

Pirelli will once again be a significant player in the technology race. With its welcome vow to keep producing tyres that explore the extremes of the performance envelope, the teams that best understand how to utilise and

TALKING POINT

AEROELASTICITY

During last season a number of employment advertisements appeared for aero/FEA (fine element analysis) engineers. What is this strange breed? Essentially they are engineers who understand and exploit aeroelasticity, the science that predicts how a structure (such as a wing) deflects when aerodynamic and inertial loads are applied to it. This gives us a clue as to how seriously the teams are treating this subject and, when one considers that a 50mm deflection of the tip of the front wing can give a 5 per cent improvement in downforce, one can understand why. However, a directive from the FIA in early December effectively doubled the stiffness requirement for the front wing, thereby reducing the power of this design avenue.

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New F1 circuit in the USA is still under construction. Bottom: Pirelli tyres will continue to provide a challenge for drivers

'THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE NEW "CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS" TRACK LOOKS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING'

exploit the complex tyre characteristics will reap benefits. Back in the teams' technical centres, vehicle dynamicists will be re-doubling their efforts in mathematically modelling and understanding the thermal effects of these complex engineering devices.

The circuits

The calendar returns to 20 races in 2012. We lose Turkey and its magnificent Turn 8, but welcome back the USA in the form of the new Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas. As well as F1 being back in an important world market, the topography of this new track looks particularly interesting and should provide great racing.



While Bahrain remains on the published calendar, we will probably have to wait until nearer the time (April) to see if the country displays sufficient political stability to attract the teams.

The summer break is longer this year, with five consecutive weekends to wait with bated breath before seeing the cars unleashed again at the magnificent Spa-Francorchamps circuit.

Circuits such as Spa fuel the debate as to whether the new venues offer the attraction of the classic circuits. I think there is good and bad in both. Monaco, the jewel in the crown of F1, scores right at the top for atmosphere but rarely does it produce a truly exciting race. The advent of the drag reduction system last year totally re-ranked the attraction of various circuits, as did the knife-edge performance of the Pirelli tyres.

These facts proved that great racing requires many factors to line up before exciting action ensues. In many cases, for the live spectator at least, the atmosphere surrounding the circuit is all part of the experience, whether it comes from the glamour of Monte Carlo or the sheer passion displayed by the fans at Monza or Silverstone.

My tip for a cheap but enjoyable experience this year would be to attend the F1 testing at Mugello in the first three days of May. The circuit is magnificent and really allows the cars to show their potential, while the setting, in the hills of Tuscany and close to Florence, takes some beating.

Predictions

The 2012 championship is not an easy one to call. As I have alluded to, the continuity at Red Bull will make it a formidable competitor, and the self-esteem that is exemplified by its lead driver will percolate through the entire team. Sometimes, however, hunger and ambition can provide an even greater drive to success, and this is what I think we will see from McLaren and in particular Lewis Hamilton. Ultimately, I believe this combination could prevail, but there is no doubt it will be a close-run thing.

Adding to the mix will be Ferrari, or at least the one with the number 5 on the front, but while I do not expect this to be a sustained challenge, it certainly should find a victory or two somewhere in the season.

Who might sneak the unlikely win? My money would go on Mercedes as it brings its strengthened technical staff to bear, and based on its late-2011

TALKING POINT

TV COVERAGE

The BBC raised the bar when it returned to broadcasting F1 in 2009, providing not just excellent coverage of the events themselves but adding value with behind-the scenes analysis. This allowed Martin Brundle to add to his already informed commentary, and both his and David Coulthard's contributions have done much to increase public understanding of this complex sport. For 2012 the BBC will broadcast half the races live, with the others being covered by a delayed highlights programme. Sky, meanwhile, launches a new dedicated F1 channel in March – with Brundle part of the team – that as well as providing every race live, will add in-depth interviews, archive action and weekly magazine shows. Through an interactive service, fans will be able to follow the action via on-board cameras, go behind the scenes with the teams in the pits, and observe race data, taking them further inside F1 than ever before. It may add some cost to following the sport, but if it lives up to expectations, it will be well worth it.

performance, it could come from either driver. I would love to see Schumacher prove that at 43 years old he still has what it takes to win.

Räikkönen is the other contender for the unexpected result. Since his F1 debut in 2001 he has shown his exceptional ability many times. Unfortunately this has also been tempered by occasions when he has been suspected of not applying his full effort. If Lotus can give him the car he requires then maybe he can become the talking point of 2012. My feeling is that the team probably cannot make the progress required quickly enough to keep Kimi motivated. From his perspective he needs to play catch-up in learning the style required of the



Pirellis, but this should not present a big problem for one so talented.

One might argue that there are no losers in F1 but, as in any meritocracy, there will be those who attract criticism. Amongst the drivers, the rookies and near-rookies will have to bear the focus of the media. Di Resta, Hülkenberg and Ricciardo have already shown huge potential, while Vergne promises much. I am not so sure about Romain Grosjean at Lotus, however, and I wonder if the ink on his P45 will have already dried before the flag falls in Brazil in November.

Politics and intrigue will grab the headlines in 2012 more than ever, but I have every belief that at the end of the season we will be looking back at a classic year of racing. We will see the worldwide audience increase as the Indian sub-continent becomes ever more aware of the sport and I sincerely hope that the return to the US will erase memories of the Indianapolis debacle and open up a whole new audience to Formula 1.



PA

Hamilton is Symonds' bet for the title; he'll also be watching Michael Schumacher (above right) and both Force India cars (far right) with interest

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TIME TRAVEL



ON THIS ROAD IN 1955, an epic battle raged between Mercedes and Jaguar. Armed with a SLS AMG Roadster and the new Jaguar XKR-S Convertible, ***Henry Catchpole*** *heads to a Northern Ireland to revisit this incredible race*

Pictures: Dean Smith 095

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As our SLS Roadster rushes through the darkness of a deserted North Wales, chasing the tail-lights of a new Jaguar XKR-S Cabriolet in a race to catch our overnight ferry, I'm wondering just what we're going to find on the other side of the Irish Sea. In 1955, German ace Wolfgang 'Taffy' von Trips would have been similarly preoccuppied. It was his first time with the factory Mercedes squad and he'd been given a 300 SLR Carrera coupe to drive from Germany to Ireland so that he could get used to the layout of the car he would be racing – one of three open-topped 300 SLRs competing in the Golden Jubilee running of the RAC Tourist Trophy.

Mercedes was in severe need of points in the World Sportscar Championship. On paper its drivers would face stiff competition over the seven hours and 84 laps from three factory Ferrari 857 Monzas and a trio of factory Aston DB3Ss, but in fact it was a lone Jaguar D-type that was to prove their main rival…

The terrible events at Le Mans three months earlier can't have been far from von Trips' thoughts as he drove, but he must also have been wondering about the fearsomely fast and yet frighteningly narrow 7.5 miles of lanes that made up the Dundrod circuit. And if, like photographer Dean Smith sitting next to me, he wasn't a good sailor then he wouldn't have been relishing the prospect of bobbing around on the water for several hours trying not to throw up.

High winds are whipping across most of the UK this January evening, consequently stirring up a decent swell on the Irish Sea, so to limit our time afloat (and ensure a good drive along the A5!) I've booked us (that's Dean, Andy Wallace and me) onto the shorter Holyhead to Dublin Stena Line route instead of the more obvious Liverpool to Belfast one. Nonetheless, the loud exclamation of 'Daddy, it's just like *Titanic*!' from a small child just after we've left dock doesn't go down well with a pale-faced Smith.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, safely on dry land and after an untroubled couple of hours' drive north on empty dual-carriageway to Belfast, we head west and go in search of the Dundrod circuit. It's still used today for the Ulster GP motorbike race, so I'm hoping it might be easier to find than some of the long-lost circuits we've gone in search of in the past.

A bit of grubby black-and-white kerbing at a junction is the first indication that we're in the right area. Then, protruding from a bank, there's a rudimentary raised wooden platform that I assume must be a marshals' post. Soon after, a thin, painted yellow line appears randomly about two-thirds of the way across the road and disappears off round a corner. We follow what I'm hoping is a pit-lane line and thankfully some Armco materialises on one side of the road. On the other is a structure with a tribute on it to Joey Dunlop (who won a record 24 Ulster GP motorbike races). It's probably a grandstand, but might just as easily be there to keep the rain off farm machinery as spectators.

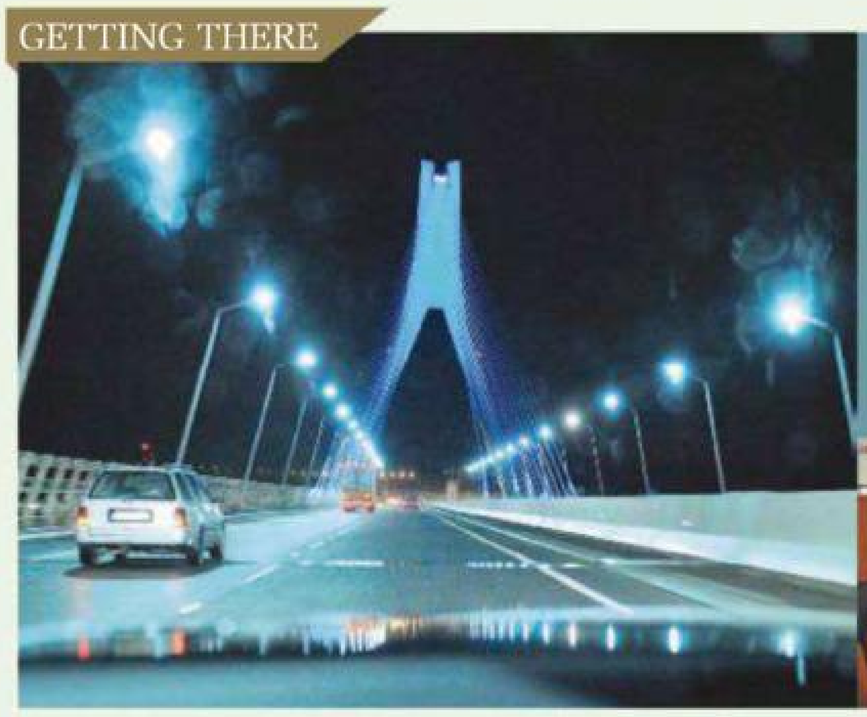
The start/finish straight is a rather desolate place once we've switched off the two V8s, with only the gentle pattering of rain on corrugated iron interrupting the mid-morning peace and quiet. Back in 1955, at 10.30am on September 17, there would have been a veritable thronging hubbub as all 49 cars lined up for the start. The noise of an eclectic mix of race engines being warmed, mingling with the excited chatter in the full two-storey grandstand is hard to imagine. Incredibly, over 60,000 spectators were spread out round the circuit.

'BACK IN 1955 THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN A VERITABLE THRONGING HUBBUB AS ALL 49 CARS LINED UP FOR THE START'

Stirling Moss was always an expert at the short sprint and leap into the cockpit of the Le Mans start, and it was no surprise that it was his no. 10 Mercedes that roared past in the lead after the first lap. Peter Collins in his Aston had got a terrible start and was away dead last, but Mike Hawthorn in the Jaguar D-type was second and in hot pursuit of Moss.

I try to keep a straight face as I ask Wallace what it was like when he had to do proper Le Mans starts, but he doesn't rise to it and just grins and calls me a cheeky git. So, with him playing the diminutive Moss

GETTING THERE







Bottom right: catching the Holyhead ferry meant a chance to enjoy the A5 en route. Right: boarding the ferry. Below: Catchpole naps on the Irish Sea. Left: crossing the Boyne river in the Irish Republic

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MERCEDES SLS AMG ROADSTER
v JAGUAR XKR-S CONVERTIBLE

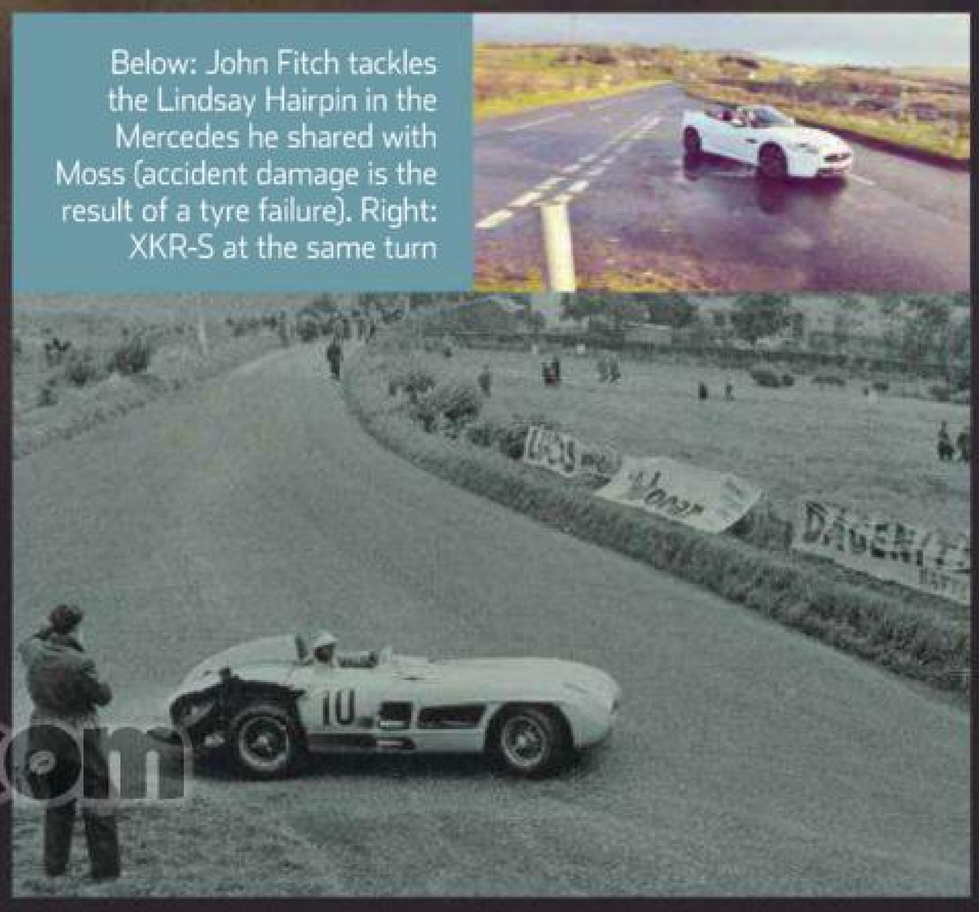
'WHAT YOU LOSE IN LOOKS YOU GAIN IN NAPE-PRICKLING OPEN-AIR CONCERT ATMOSPHERE'

to my lanky Hawthorn, we take a rather more leisurely stroll across to the SLS and XKR-S before putting their respective roofs down (the Merc's taking a lot less time) and turning the heated seats on (the Jag's warming more comfortingly).

The slightly downhill start/finish straight kinks right into an arrow-straight stretch of road known as 'The Flying Kilo', where the bikes reach 190mph. Then it's a fast, blind kink left through a crossroads before a long right-hander hugging a high grass bank, which is matched almost immediately by a similarly fast left-hander with an equally high and view-obscuring bank. At this point the original circuit went right and over a stone bridge, but the 'modern' track goes down to a junction and on to a long uphill straight where it rejoins the original route.

You can imagine the cars in '55 working hard and battling against the gradient as the road swept up to the track's highest point. Unsurprisingly, the 542bhp Jaguar and 563bhp Mercedes dispatch it with complete disdain. Both feel absurdly fast, but the Jaguar struggles to lay down all of its power on the wet tarmac, zizzing its rear tyres on the change from second to third gear, so losing a little ground every time to the SLS's brutish and almost baffling levels of traction.

The top of the hill has a blind right-hander that crests on its apex (unweighting the back of the car just when you want to get on the power) before failing roller-coaster-like downhill towards a crest known as Deer's Leap. Even at our relatively sedate road speeds there doesn't feel like there's much time to look at the



Below: John Fitch tackles the Lindsay Hairpin in the Mercedes he shared with Moss (accident damage is the result of a tyre failure). Right: XKR-S at the same turn

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TOURIST TROPHY CIRCUIT



Tree-lined Cochranstown Road bypasses the actual village of Dundrod



Back out on Quarterland Road (B154) for the tricky Ireland's Corner



Accelerating down to Deer's Leap, scene of the first tragedy in 1955



The deceptive left of Tornagrough comes just before Lindsay Hairpin



With straights like this one on the B101, it's no wonder the bike racers average over 130mph

The 1955 circuit crossed this now-unused stone bridge at Leathemstown





Entire southern side of circuit is on Hannahstown Road



START/FINISH
(Lap length: 7.5 miles)



Above: flowers left by the Joey Dunlop grandstand. Northern Irishman Dunlop won 24 Ulster GP bike races between 1979 and 1999; he died in a 125cc race in Estonia in 2000

wonderful view across towards Lough Neagh, but with the throttle wide open in a race it must have felt like a terrifying plummet as the cars gathered speed with gravity at their backs. At least they had good brakes in the '50s…

With this in mind it's perhaps not surprising that it was here, on the second lap of the race, that a large cloud of smoke was seen to rise. No one is entirely sure what happened, but it seems Vicomte Henri de Barry in a road-going 300 SL was holding the middle of the road, rather baulking those behind. As Jim Mayers came over the crest at Deer's Leap at about 130mph in his Cooper T39, he was presented with a blue Mercedes-shaped moving chicane and swerved left and then right to try to overtake before losing control and smashing into a stone gatepost. Killed instantly, he and the now flaming car ricocheted back into the road, covering it with burning fuel from the split tank.

Peter Jopp described coming over the crest alongside Bill Smith with all four wheels off the ground and seeing the carnage ahead. Jopp squeezed his disc-braked Lotus through, albeit collecting a photographer scrambling for the bank on the way, but Smith's Connaught couldn't avoid the blazing wreckage of Mayer's car and dug into the bank, throwing him out and killing him. In the end, seven cars were involved. It's hard to imagine such a scene of carnage in such a tranquil setting. But then it also seems utterly incredible that the race wasn't stopped…

After Deer's Leap there's a hideous downhill, gently curving braking zone before you peel right into a side road that funnels into an overarching avenue of beech trees. This is where convertibles come into their own. I love the gullwing doors of the SLS coupe – they're a big part of its appeal. And the wings and vents of the XKR-S don't sit quite so well on the convertible as they do on the fixed-roof version. But what you lose in looks and door theatre, you gain in nape-prickling open-air concert atmosphere. Through the acoustically accentuating tunnel of trees, the two cars have quite distinctive soundtracks. The Jaguar has a real snarl to it, with a slightly rough edge and just the occasional hint of supercharger whine. The Mercedes sounds almost like a massive V-twin at idle before developing a rich, fast-spinning growl as the revs rise. The SLS is mellower in sound than the XK but there's a deep quality to it that

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'THE SLS FEELS REWARDING WHATEVER SPEED YOU'RE MISSING APEXES AT'

is intoxicating. And then you lift off at high revs and the crackles spilling into the cockpit on the overrun are pure aural nirvana.

As the trees recede, we turn right again at a junction – away from the tiny collection of houses that make up Dundrod itself – then there's a tightish left hugging some more black-and-white kerbing at Ireland's Corner. From here for the next mile and a bit it's difficult to get your head around racing on this circuit because it is just so fast. There are corners, but they're really, really fast and mostly really, really unsighted. We can't get near the speeds it would be possible to hit if the roads were closed, and at times we're almost 100mph shy of the speeds Bruce Anstey, Guy Martin et al would be travelling, sorry, *racing* at on the bikes.

At these sorts of speeds a mechanical failure is a terrifying prospect, but that's exactly what happened to Moss in '55. His right rear tyre threw a tread at Wheeler's Corner, throwing him into the bank. Incredibly, he limped back to the pits where the mechanics cut away the mangled bodywork and John Fitch took over behind the wheel. Meanwhile, Hawthorn had already pitted the D-type, handing over to Ulsterman Desmond Titterington, who inherited the lead.

Titterington might not be a familiar name, but had he not retired so young many think he could have become Northern Ireland's first world champion. Hawthorn was apparently dumbstruck with his young teammate's speed around the Dundrod circuit, and with the Jaguar pulling out a breezy ten seconds a lap on Fitch's 300 SLR, the imposing Mercedes team boss, Alfred Neubauer, was forced to call the American into the pits after only six laps and put Moss back into the car just as rain started to fall.

By now, Vicomte de Barry had been black-flagged for his part in the second-lap crash, and although he vehemently denied any wrongdoing there were additional reports from stewards that he had also been spotted smoking in the car later in the race! Whatever, he couldn't be blamed for the events at Tornagrough. It's a very tricky left-hander that comes after a decent straight, but the braking area is slightly uphill so you can lean on the pedal a fraction later. The corner goes on longer than you expect and crests gently halfway through, making it even trickier. Richard Mainwaring, a 24-year-old farm manager from Sussex, had got it all wrong in his Elva, possibly caught out by the moistening track conditions. The car overturned and burst into flames when it hit the bank. Three drivers had been killed before half the race was run.

The weather isn't exactly fantastic today, and as we head downhill towards the Lindsay Hairpin (passing the first junction that the motorbikes now use and taking the much tighter second junction 50m further on) the Jaguar feels nervy on the wet tarmac. The steering is very light, and although it's accurate the lack of resistance when you turn makes the front tyres feel remote and hard to trust. Talking to Andy Wallace later, he makes the point that lateral grip is in fact good, but once



Right: Hawthorn's D-type chases Fangio's 300 SLR at Tornagrough in 1955. Below: Jaguar chases Mercedes around the same turn 57 years later. Left: SLS's half-Alcantara wheel is the perfect size



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into the corner you're constantly on edge because of the lack of longitudinal grip. Just when you want to feed in the throttle and drive through the corner, you're hesitant because you sense that the rear wheels could spin up so easily and pitch you sideways so quickly that you'll have to catch it on instinct. Of course, out of the first-gear hairpin, it's just fun (and easy) to hold a big, long slide.

It's gradually downhill now for approximately a mile, all the way to the pit straight again, but there are some tricky corners along the way. The cambers frequently seem to be of the 'off' variety and I find the speeds really hard to judge even after several runs through, with the feeling usually being that you are coming in too quickly and yet somehow nearly always exiting too slowly as well.

Thankfully the SLS is one of those cars that feels rewarding whatever speed you're missing apexes at. Remarkably, the roadster doesn't seem to have lost any of the coupe's rigidity, and any poseurs expecting a boulevard cruiser will be shocked by the firmness of the ride. Sitting so far back in the chassis, you can really feel how the rear wheels are gripping and slipping (mostly gripping) underneath you, so you tend to drive the SLS by pouring the long bonnet into the corner and then concentrating on steering the subtly pliable rear end with the throttle. There's a worry with so much traction that the edge of grip might be sudden and fairly final when you find it, but it's actually beautifully controllable for such a big car. It's a driving style that, bizarrely, probably wouldn't have been unfamiliar to the drivers in the race all those years ago.

By lap 56, Moss had reeled in Titterington, who pitted and handed the D-type back to the bow-tied Hawthorn, who in turn regained the lead when Moss pitted. The period footage (both a colour film and a black-and-white Pathé report are viewable on the internet) shows just how fast and how closely the Jaguar and Mercedes were brushing the banks compared with the others, both cars in near constant, inch-perfect four-wheel drifts. Ultimately, though, there was to be no stopping Stirling on what was his 26th birthday. As the rain started to fall even harder, the Mercedes tucked into the Jaguar's watery slipstream on the start/

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'YOU SENSE THE REAR WHEELS COULD SPIN UP SO EASILY AND PITCH YOU SIDEWAYS SO QUICKLY THAT YOU'LL HAVE TO CATCH IT ON INSTINCT'





Left: XK-R's interior feels a little dated, but then the current XK does date back to 2006. Above: SLS's cabin feels more modern and more expensive – as it should

finish straight and then hammered past.

Hawthorn still had the small matter of keeping both the legendary Fangio and the young von Trips behind in the other two Mercedes, and he was pushing hard, slipping briefly into a ditch at one point but recovering in time to hold on to second place. A certain Colin Chapman sadly retired towards the end of the race with a broken oil pipe, having been leading the 2-litre class and the Index of Performance. Then, with everything seemingly settled and just two laps remaining, the D-type's straight-six engine seized, spinning Hawthorn into a side road just up from the finish line. Apparently, in his typically insouciant style, he wandered back to the pits as though nothing had really happened. Moments later, Moss crossed the finish



line to win his third TT, heading an all-Mercedes podium.

The modern Jaguar and Mercedes aren't really in direct competition because the two cars are separated by over £70,000. However, if I had to pick one to go for a fast lap of the circuit in then it would be the Mercedes. The Jaguar would be huge amounts of fun in the dry, when the tarmac's resistance would give a bit more feel to the steering, and it would be as hilariously drifty as a lot of historic machinery as well as breathtakingly fast, but in the wet it doesn't give you enough confidence. It's also fair to say that you do notice the price gap in the XK's slightly dated-looking interior and more protracted roof mechanism. But, just like its ancestor, I do love the way it looks from front three-quarters.

The SLS might not look as dramatic as a mid-engined 458 or Gallardo, but it feels every bit as heavy-hitting and ludicrously fast. It's even quite practical, and I can forgive the perennially slightly disappointing manual mode on the twin-clutch gearbox (it doesn't respond with enough alacrity when you use the paddles) because the automatic shifts in Sport Plus are so spookily good. Mix in that glorious, deep soundtrack and the beautiful front-engined rear-drive balance and I think you've got one of the most desirable and enjoyable supercars on sale today.

THE 1955 RAC Tourist Trophy was the last one to be held at Dundrod, and the last time the TT was to take place on any road circuit. The understandable reaction after the race was that it was simply too dangerous. This somehow makes it even more incredible that motorbikes are still racing at Dundrod today, the lap record now standing at a jaw-dropping 133mph *average*, making it faster even than the Isle of Man TT course. As a place to visit it's curious, because like so many road circuits it's not glamorous, there's not much that



Above: Moss takes the flag, leading home a Mercedes 1-2-3 finish. Top: SLS AMG on the start/finish line

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'IF I HAD TO PICK ONE OF THESE CARS TO GO FOR A FAST LAP OF THE CIRCUIT IN, IT WOULD BE THE MERCEDES'

'THE JAGUAR WOULD BE HUGE FUN IN THE DRY AND BREATHTAKINGLY FAST'

SPECIFICATIONS

MERCEDES-BENZ SLS AMG ROADSTER	JAGUAR XKR-S CONVERTIBLE
Engine V8, 6208cc	**Engine** V8, 5000cc, supercharged
Location Front, longitudinal	**Location** Front, longitudinal
CO2 308g/km	**CO2** 292g/km
Power 563bhp @ 6800rpm	**Power** 542bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 479lb ft @ 4750rpm	**Torque** 502lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, ESP	**Transmission** Six-speed automatic gearbox, rear-wheel drive, eDiff, traction and stability control
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	**Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	**Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs, 402mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD	**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 376mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 9.5 x 19in front, 11 x 20in rear	**Wheels** 9 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear
Tyres 265/35 ZR19 front, 295/30 ZR20 rear	**Tyres** 255/35 R20 front, 295/35 R20 rear
Weight (kerb) 1735kg	**Weight (kerb)** 1800kg
Power-to-weight 330bhp/ton	**Power-to-weight** 306bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.8sec (claimed)	**0-62mph** 4.4sec (claimed)
Top speed 197mph (claimed)	**Top speed** 186mph (claimed)
Basic price £176,895	**Basic price** £103,000

★★★★★ **evo** RATING ★★★★½





Above: SLS sports 19in front alloys, 20in rear, with carbon-ceramic brake discs behind. Below: XKR-S has 20in wheels all round with smaller cast-iron discs

screams 'track', and sometimes it's hard to even find the route. But when you know the history behind the roads, they come alive in your mind and I love that.

I did actually manage to take the SLS for a slightly faster lap of the circuit when the roads were quiet and I won't forget it for a while. Roof down, windows down, hunkered behind the windscreen, V8 noise rising and falling as passing banks, hedges and houses all acted as fleeting sounding boards. Speed was tempered at times by the ghosts of Mayers, Smith and Mainwaring, yet on the better-sighted corners and straights I couldn't help but try to invoke just a little bit of the bravery of the straight-armed Moss, the local boy Titterington and the dapper Hawthorn…

Thanks to Stena Line (www.stenaline.co.uk) for arranging our last-minute crossing.

ULTRA VAUX

Meet Red Victor 3 – not just the fastest ever Vauxhall but, with 3000bhp, quite possibly the fastest street-legal car ever. But can it really be driven on the road? ***Jonny Smith*** *hitched a ride*

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'I'll leave the 'chutes on. We designed it so they don't obscure the rear number plate or lights.' Andy Frost chuckles, signature cig in tattooed hand. Positioning a pair of parachutes so that speed cameras can photograph your licence plate isn't a dilemma faced by many car builders. But as you may have noticed, this is no ordinary car. In ten minutes, Andy is going to taste for the very first time what 2200bhp per ton feels like on the public road. And I'll be in the passenger seat.

Red Victor 3 is the culmination of this Wolverhampton man's 30-year quest to make his £60 family car 'go a bit faster each year'. The previous generation, Red Victor 2, already a monstrous caricature of that original 1972 Vauxhall Victor VX4/90, achieved a world record 0-190mph in 7.67 seconds on street tyres and super-unleaded.

When that record was smashed by American Rod Saboury's 6sec Corvette (**evo** 151), the only feasible way for Andy to retaliate was to turn his Street Eliminator-class car into something that could compete in the methanol-burning Pro Modified series. But with an MoT.

With determination and experience in abundance, Andy just needed to raise the necessary funds – no easy feat with Britain's public awareness of drag racing and commercial purses being so small. But it's amazing what an appearance on TV (*Fifth Gear*) and six million YouTube hits can get you. Backing from Vauxhall VXR and Wolverhampton City Council, by all accounts.

It's still taken two years of calculations and construction to get to this point. 'But if I'd built it alone, it would have taken a decade,' says Andy, 'meaning I'd have no backing and be nearly 60. Eventually this is going to do 5s [that's a quarter-mile in under 6sec], so it has to be done pro.

'It's no longer a road car altered to race – now it's a race car adapted for the road. We will still be able to take it to the shops. Just.' So that's precisely what we shall do. 3000bhp to Waitrose ahoy.

WHAT IS PRO MODIFIED?

Pro Modified is a class of full-bodied V8 drag cars that typically run on methanol and use turbos, superchargers or nitrous oxide to reach 230mph on the quarter-mile in late-five to mid-six secs.

Bodyshells are always composite (glassfibre or carbonfibre) with an approved chrome moly tubular chassis, and maximum wheelbase of 115 inches. A floating rear axle and slick tyres commonly take punishment via a Lenco planetary gearbox, with a separate lever for each gear. Two parachutes are compulsory to aid braking.

Red Victor 3 is due to make an attempt at the street-legal Pro Mod record at Santa Pod's Main Event, June 1-4. To catch up on its progress, go to www.redvictor1racing.co.uk or www.facebook.com/Redvictor



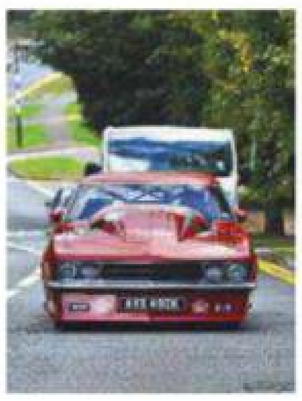
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The roller shutters of Rushden-based WRE (Webster Race Engineering) are hoisted and we push Red Vic out into what is a perfect morning for turbo-fed engines – cold, clear and dry. Andy cranks the starter and methanol meets spark plug deep inside the injected 8.8-litre V8's throat – the block being one of the few original organs donated from Victor 2. When it fires, adrenalin is delivered via Taser. It makes you jump even if you're expecting it.

It was in WRE's workshop, under the eye of drag racing genius Jon Webster, that this creation on the outer limits of road legality was born. Webster is the Brunel of British quarter-mile and isn't easily fazed even when a customer says: 'I want a car that can handle up to 4500bhp with an MoT and electric windows.' Jon just studies the rulebook and executes the job perfectly.

'Biggest challenge was the packaging,' he says in his quiet, matter-of-fact manner, only just audible over the idling V8. 'To build a Pro Mod car that was heavier than normal because of the street equipment – wipers, horn, lights, extra wiring loom, etc – and with higher ground clearance, for speed ramps and that.'



Red Victor 3 ventures out onto the public highway for the first time. When it hits the drag strip in anger, it's aiming to cover the standing quarter-mile in less than 6sec

Right now, the inside of the Victor is a shuddering amphitheatre. The upswept side-exit exhausts kick-up half way along the doors, force-feeding my open window with tangy, noxious gases. You sit extremely low, to the point where I feel like a nine-year-old. Vision is the first issue. The combination of tall bonnet-scoop, tiny back window and the spaghetti of safety-cell cage makes me glad I'm not the one trying to point it through the lunchtime traffic.

The seats are trimmed in (fireproof) leather, and the floor carpet juxtaposes hilariously with the three-lever Lenco drag gearshifter. The planetary gear transmission was adapted to shift faster with compressed air assistance, and it's this that makes more noise than the engine. Selecting reverse, there's a *PSSSSSSSST* of air from the centre console.

'ANDY CRANKS THE STARTER AND METHANOL MEETS SPARK PLUG DEEP INSIDE THE 8.8-LITRE V8'

Manoeuvring out of the trading estate, we're metres from joining Queen Liz's asphalt. On the one hand it feels so completely immoral, but admirable. Hilarious actually. Three times the bhp of a Veyron 16.4, liveried, bewinged, and yet with a tax-exempt disc in the screen.

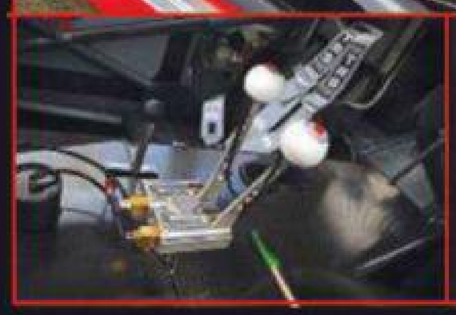
Of course we're not really uncorking all 2500lb ft on the road. That would end in £200K tears. We're barely tickling the pair of dog-sized 91mm Garretts, which Jon had to mount deep in the wheel-wells so as to offset the frontal weight of the radiator cooling system. (The cost in materials alone for the turbo pipework was in excess of £3000.) For our jaunt, Andy is running a docile ECU map with barely any boost. It's probably making a third of its intended fury – still more than two DBS Astons.

A 30mph drive through Rushden has

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Vauxhall VXR backed the project, hence the branding. Left: how much boost would you like with that?



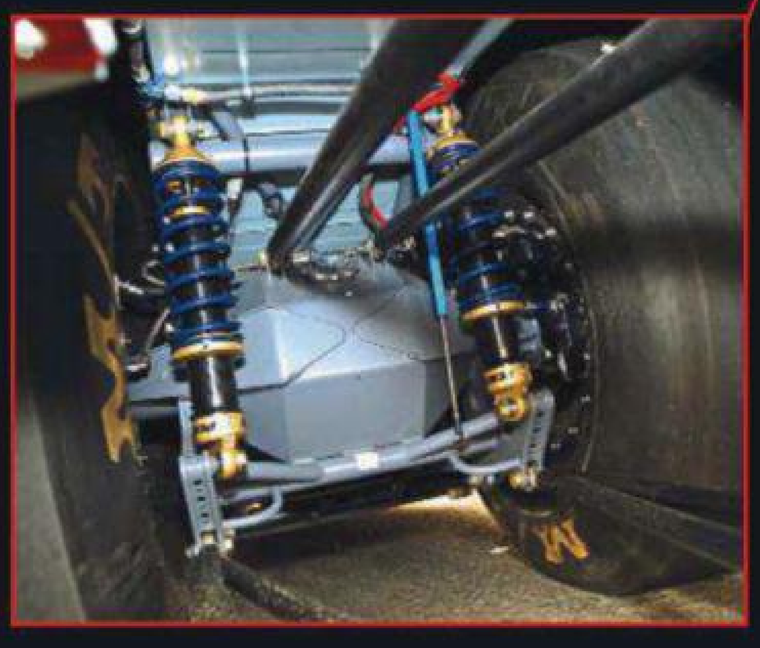


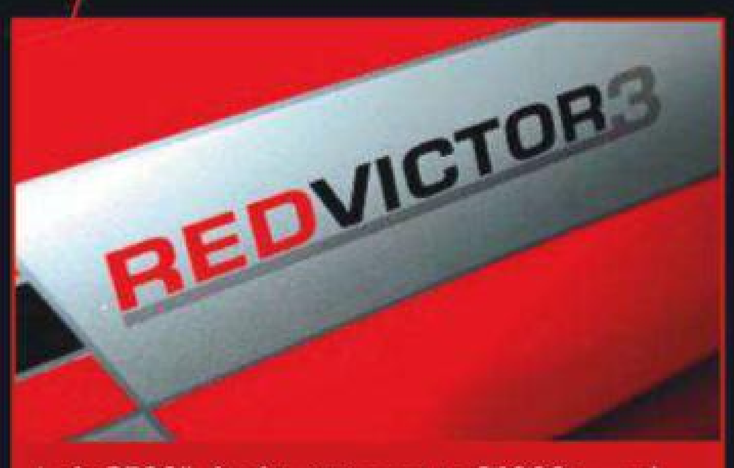












Left: 2500lb ft of twist is sent to £6000+ worth of Tim McAmis 9.5-inch floating back axle and custom Strange 3.5-inch chrome-moly prop shaft, before handing the baton on to 34in-wide slicks



never been met with such wide-eyed awe. Andy drives with his chin raised (so as to see), and we're soon amongst the white vans and Mondeos. The public response is either one of slack-jawed amazement, or a scrabble for the smartphone.

Whereas the previous Red Vic could be driven on the road almost indefinitely, this mk3 is more hardcore. For starters, Pro Mod cars have to race on slicks, so for the road Andy had to remove the back axle in order to bolt up smaller (15in) diameter wheels with narrower radial tyres. They're still 33 inches wide, mind.

The pace at which the car picks up, even with revs barely at fast idle, is like a wrapper in a gale. But the biggest shock is the genuine comfort. I crack the electric Lexan window down and watch as we conquer Northamptonshire mini-roundabouts and pass 20mph school zones.

You've got to laugh at the lunacy. Andy, on the other hand, has one eye on his Motec datalogger. Although it burns cooler because of the methanol, there isn't any intercooling on RV3. 'It's getting hot,' he shrugs. 'The water passages in the billet heads are perfect for the quarter, not so good for longer driving. I'll change them.'

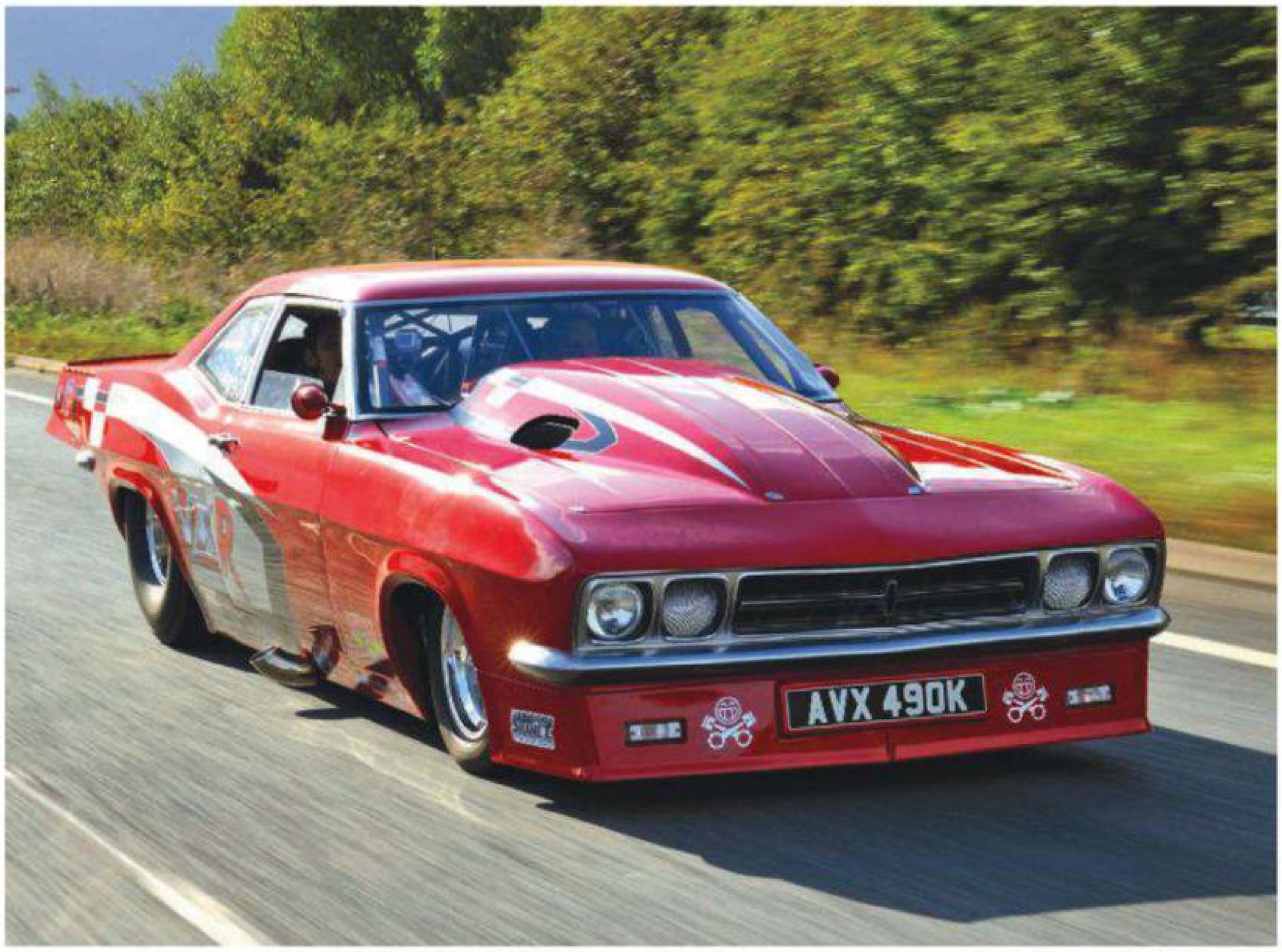
The traffic clears and Andy's face lifts. 'It steers just like the old one, with proper geometry. The rear shocks are set a bit hard but it's comfortable enough for 100 miles though, huh?'

It is actually. There is far more legroom because you're sat further away from the engine. I remember passenger footspace in RV2 being dominated by the wiring harness, ECU and ignition module. A bloody high-voltage ignition at that.

We pass a sign for Waitrose but Andy doesn't indicate. We're heading to the short stretch of A45 dual carriageway. Since we set off I've had the same gut-churning excitement you got when you were a kid and a neighbour or uncle took you for a spin in something from your Top Trumps deck.

Andy gives his Vic a light prod. The rpm barely alters but it's the typhoon of torque that seems to instantly ping the monster's speedo reading. Weirdly, while it is ridiculously fast, the fact that it's all so controllable almost impresses more.

Shuddering up alongside mirrored office glass, I remember Jon Webster's first words about Andy's car: 'For me a race car has to look instantly right. The proportions [on RV3] are just superb.' Credit there goes to Wayne Allman from Intergalactic Custom Shop in Warwickshire, who took five months fabricating the bodywork, first in metal, then reproduced in glass- and carbonfibre for the necessary lightness.



'THE REVS BARELY ALTER, BUT THE TYPHOON OF TORQUE PINGS THE MONSTER'S SPEEDO'

Above: the roads of Northamptonshire have never seen anything quite like it. Barely tickling the turbos has RV3 up to the national speed limit. Next stop: Santa Pod

'Without it being a road car, no one would know about Red Victor,' says Andy. 'No one would know me and there would be no major interest. It would simply be another generic dragster. It *has* to have a tax disc – that's its USP. It has to be able to be seen on the road.'

We've covered about seven miles, and Andy's body language has settled down – he's satisfied himself that it's running happily. He's understandably anxious – last May an exhaust valve seizure during a shakedown sent the engine back to the build bench. It punched the wind out of Andy's sails for several months, but such is the following for this Great British icon that forum members generously donated to help resurrect the 8.8.

Thankfully, our sortie passes without incident. And as our surreal drive brings us to a Waitrose car park (to collect a rocket salad sandwich in a dual-parachuted car) Andy has shown that a competitive Pro Mod can work on the road.

A couple of weeks later, he calls in a state of some excitement. 'Straight out of the box… base tune… 199.8mph in 7.2 seconds. That was launching in second, just to be careful. The slicks bite and you have to brace. The telemetry clocked 204mph when I rolled off the gas. It just has the right feel. The car's got mid-6s in it at least, Jonny.'

You've got to love blokes like Andy Frost. And what does a father-of-three who thrives on 3000bhp drive to work in? A 1970s Victor, but an estate. With 104bhp…

SPECIFICATION

RED VICTOR 3
Engine V8, 8849cc, two Garrett GT55/91 turbos
Fuel VP M1 methanol for racing, VP 100 unleaded or Shell V-Power for road
Power 3000bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque 2500lb ft @ 5000rpm
Transmission Bruno converter drive with Neal Chance 10.5in billet aluminium/steel converter, three-speed Lenco CS1 planetary transmission
Front suspension Strange Engineering spindle mount aluminium double adjustable struts with Hyperco springs
Rear suspension Penske double adjustable aluminium coil-overs with Hyperco springs
Brakes Forged steel discs, twin parachutes
Wheels 16x16in rear (15x15in for the road)
Weight (kerb) 1392kg
Power-to-weight 2190bhp/ton
0-60mph 1sec
0-220mph 6.7sec (for starters)

evo RATING ★★★★★

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NEW ARRIVAL: MORGAN 4/4 75

Date acquired December 2011 **Total mileage** 1859 **Mileage this month** 1342
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 38.2

Factory is a wholly inadequate description for the wonderfully ramshackle assortment of outbuildings where Morgans are brought to life. Depending on which barn door you open, intense smells of wood or leather or paint waft warmly out at you, and despite several visits I'm still not entirely sure how the whole concoction comes together. What I do know is that sitting behind the gorgeous Moto-Lita steering wheel, looking out over the long, louvred bonnet and watching the triple wipers swish the rain off the screen as I drive out of the 'factory' gates in Malvern, I like the end result.

What you see before you is a brand new, £38,915, Morgan 4/4 75th Anniversary edition. The 4/4 is not, as some people assume, a four-seater, but rather the two-seater at the bottom of the four-wheeled Morgan family tree (4/4 stands for four wheels, four cylinders) and this is its 75th year in production. To celebrate, Morgan has taken the 4/4's narrow body and put the engine from the similar-looking but wider-winged Plus 4 under the bonnet. So where there was once a 1.6-litre Ford Sigma engine putting out 110bhp and 97lb ft, there is now a 2.0-litre Ford Duratec pushing out a healthier 145bhp and 140lb ft.

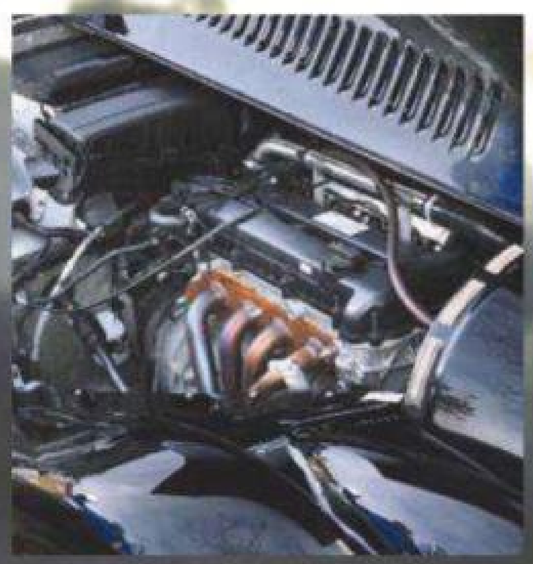
So far, the first question most people seem to ask me about my new long-termer (the first long-term loan Morgan has done!) is 'where are you going to put a bike?' followed swiftly by something along the lines of 'aren't they made of wood?' to which the answers are 'I haven't a clue' and 'partly'. Underpinning the 4/4 is a steel ladder chassis, which is then topped with an ash frame and some aluminium panels. It is a melting pot of materials. Inside, there is more wood in the form of the beautiful polished 'tawny ash' dash (with cargo-netted cubby hole) while the black leather seats have perforated centre pleats. I wouldn't normally bother to mention some perforated centre pleats, but as somebody will have carefully covered the seats by hand, it seems only right and proper to acknowledge their handiwork.

The 'Sport Black' paintjob, with the matching wire wheels and grille, is something I'm particularly enamoured of – somehow it makes

 Pictures: Dean Smith

Stevemags.com

Right: quintessentially English and slightly barmy... Catchpole finds his perfect match in the Morgan 4/4. Below: 75 gets 145bhp Duratec four





the swooping 75-year-old design look just that little bit more up-to-date. Add in a PVC nine-stud hood and some very subtle '4/4 75' decals on the bonnet and it all comes to a grand total of 920kg with a claimed 0-60mph time of about seven seconds and a top speed of 118mph.

Perhaps even more impressive is the claim (which seems entirely reasonable on the evidence so far) of a combined-cycle fuel consumption figure of 39mpg.

I'm thoroughly looking forward to life with my Moggie. It may lack creature comforts (although there is a heater, which keeps your knees jolly toasty, and a radio) and I might be a bit daft trying to use what is patently a second or third car as everyday transport, but, as with a Caterham, I know that every journey over the next 12 months is going to be an event! **Henry Catchpole**

'I MIGHT BE A BIT DAFT TRYING TO USE WHAT IS PATENTLY A SECOND OR THIRD CAR AS EVERYDAY TRANSPORT...'

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END OF TERM: MINI COOPER S COUNTRYMAN

Date acquired May 2011 **Duration of test** 7 months **Total test mileage** 14,090 **Overall mpg** 29.1
Costs £0 **Purchase price** £29,175 **Trade-in value** £22,000 **Depreciation** £7175

You'd think that spending 14,000 miles in a car would give you more than enough time to answer the most basic question – that of whether it's any good. Yet after seven months in our Mini Cooper S Countryman I was still vacillating over whether I liked it or not. Sometimes it was great, sometimes it was deeply frustrating.

Don't get me wrong, there's a good car lurking underneath the Countryman's slightly obese styling, just one that's let down by its occasional rough edges. As you'd expect, it's Mini XL, with the five-door utility and useable boot space previously denied to Mini owners. But it's also most of the way to being a compact SUV, with a raised ride height and optional four-wheel-drive to give it some vague off-road credentials. Which, in the form of the all-paw Cooper S All4, was how we chose to test it.

Sitting at the top of the Countryman range, the Cooper S gets the 181bhp version of the familiar 1.6-litre turbocharged petrol engine, with performance accompanied by a rorty soundtrack. The combination of a solid mid-range and an effective (if raucous) top-end meant our big Mini never felt short of pace, but its podgy 1455kg kerb weight – 240kg up on the Cooper S hatch – meant it always felt a magnitude slower than its smaller sister.

The Countryman also came with a maxi-sized price tag. The basic £22,505 didn't seem outrageous considering the space and pace on offer, but our car was equipped with another seven grand of options, highlights including the £2515 'Chili' Pack that upgraded the stereo and added sports seats, plus the £1035 Media Pack that brought satnav and an iPod interface. The final score was a hefty £29,175, an amount that put the quality of the Countryman's hatch-derived switchgear and scattergun ergonomics into perspective – from the inside, this was a car that felt far closer to ten grand than thirty.

Dynamically, the Countryman felt bigger and more sensible than a Mini hatchback, cruising well at motorway speeds. But the

'THERE'S A GOOD CAR LURKING UNDERNEATH



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Left: Cooper SD version proved less fun. Right: with the 227mph Octavia... and (below) with our new JCW Coupe



THE SLIGHTLY OBESE STYLING'

quick rack of the electric power steering system also gave it a decent impression of keenness on more twisty stuff, even though grip always faded to dull, steady understeer in extremis. The deeply frustrating thing was the ride quality, or lack thereof – the combination of run-flat tyres and upgraded 18-inch alloys giving a serrated edge to anything but the smoothest surfaces. Carrying too much speed on rougher roads would even get the stability-control light flashing in straight lines.

Overall, running costs were reasonable. High demand for early Countrymen minimised depreciation, and after 14,000 miles we still had another 6000 miles to go before the first service was due. There was still a decent amount of life left in all four tyres, too. Problems were limited to a chip in the windscreen and occasional phantom warning messages – 'low brake fluid' was a particularly alarming one, although popping the bonnet proved it to be groundless. Fuel economy was disappointing, though – even extreme nannying couldn't get more than 32mpg, and the Cooper spent most of its life in the high 20s. I don't mind paying for that sort of consumption in a sports car, but in a Mini it just felt wrong.

My hesitation in endorsing the Countryman isn't reflected by the wider motoring public – after what appears to have been a slow start, it's one of those cars that suddenly seems to be everywhere. But, from my experience, expanding the Mini hasn't improved the ownership experience. **Mike Duff**

NEW ARRIVAL: MINI JCW COUPE

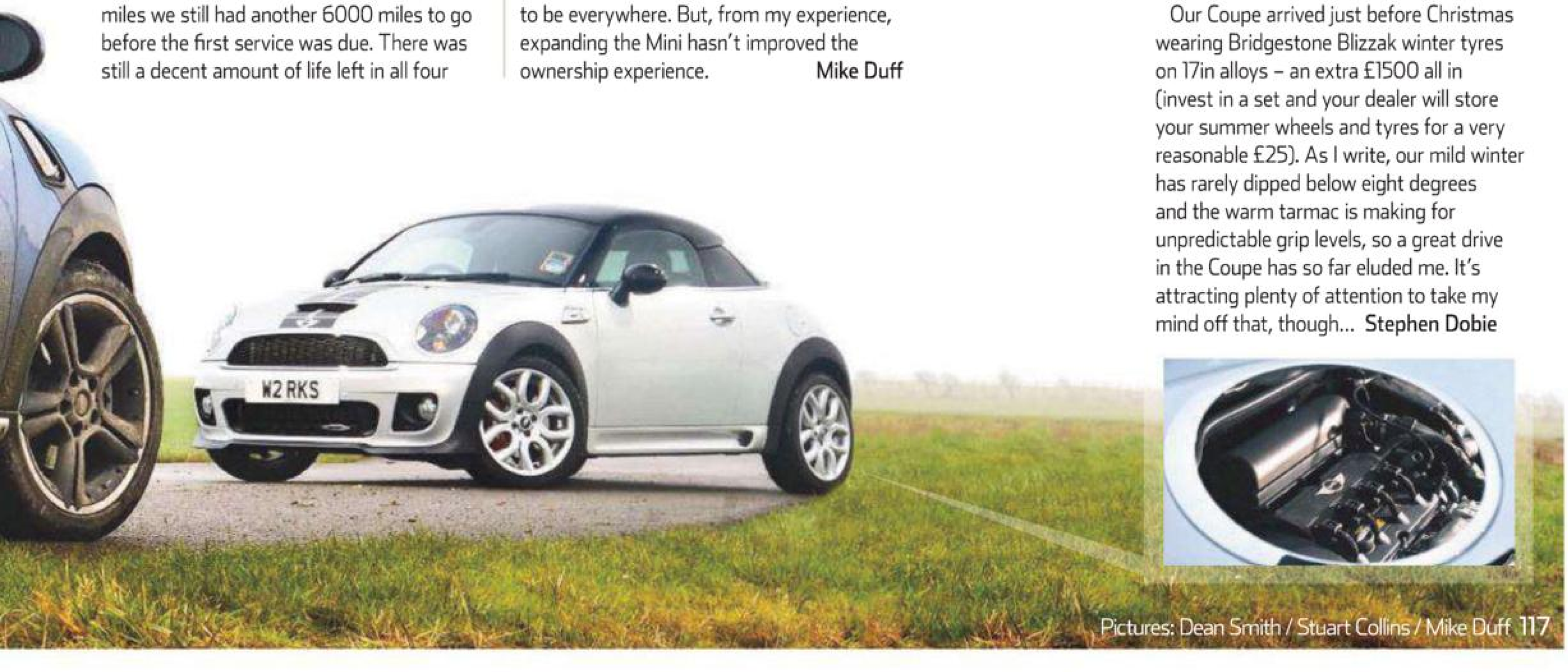
Date acquired December 2011 **Total mileage** 4472 **Mileage this month** 805 **Costs this month** £1500 (winter wheels and tyres) **mpg this month** 34.6

I like it. That might put me in a minority of two in this office, but I love the way the Mini Coupe's bonkers styling divides opinion. Too many car designs tread a careful, bean-counter-pleasing line. This ain't one of them.

Choosing 'my' Coupe was easy. I've always been a big fan of the John Cooper Works Mini and its 208bhp 1.6-litre turbo four. Arguably, a Cooper S is a more rounded package, but the JCW boasts an addictive turn of turbocharged pace and an amusingly ragged edge to its dynamics that doesn't really sit with the rest of BMW and Mini's polished produce. It also looks more pumped up and, well, manlier than the rest of the Mini line-up.

Coupe prices start below £17K, the JCW topping the range at £23,795. Standard equipment includes DAB radio, sports seats and – thanks to dreadful rear visibility – parking sensors. However, being a former member of Mini's press fleet, W2 RKS boasts a host of extras including a Harman Kardon hi-fi (£550), leather dashboard (£805), heated (£215) and leather (£635) seats, Chili Pack (£1505, adding auto air-con, bi-xenon lights and a trip computer) and Media Pack (£1015, for Bluetooth, satnav and Mini's 'Connected' online set-up), all of which takes the total to £29,335. I wouldn't spec my own Mini so lavishly, but it's representative of what many customers do.

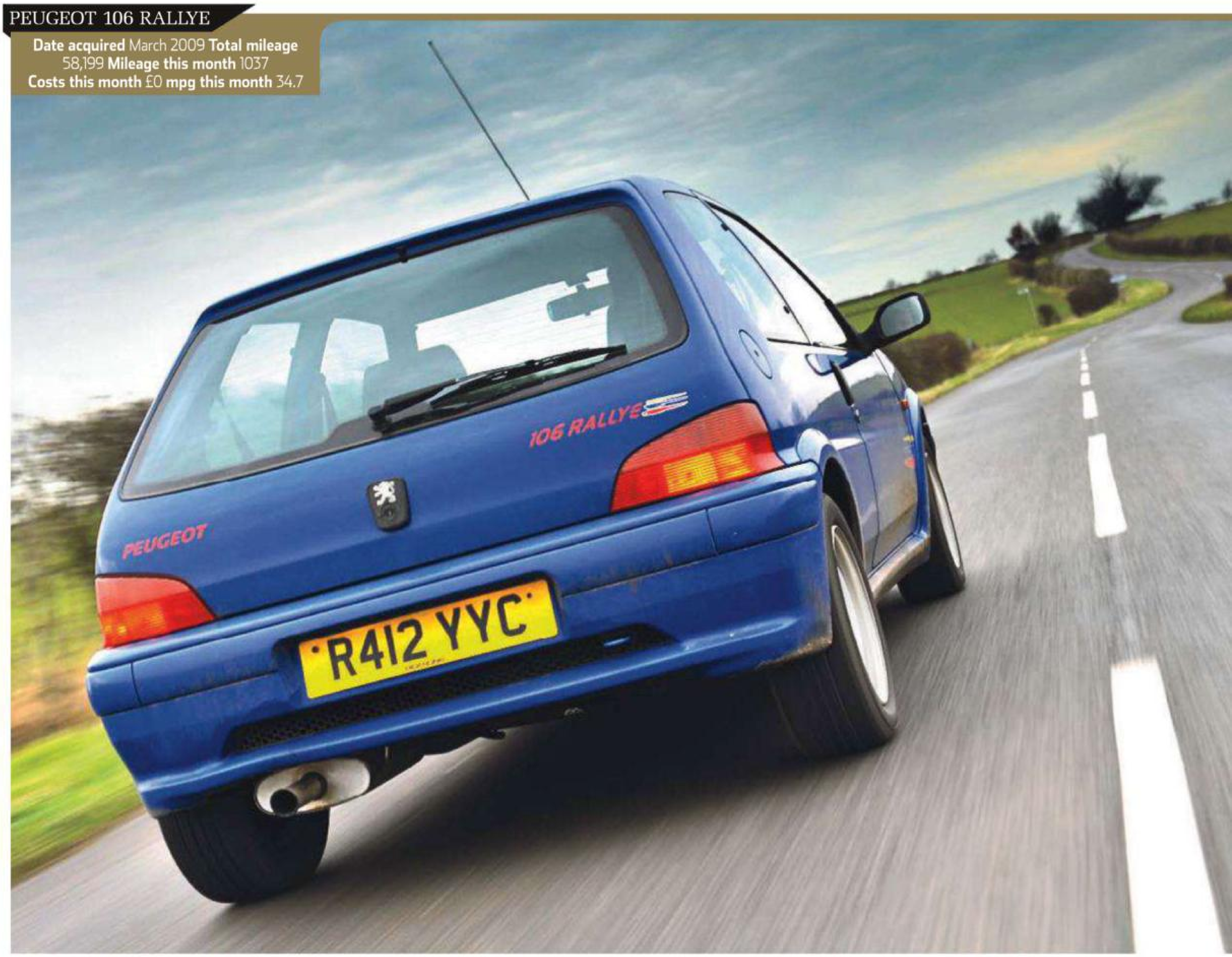
Our Coupe arrived just before Christmas wearing Bridgestone Blizzak winter tyres on 17in alloys – an extra £1500 all in (invest in a set and your dealer will store your summer wheels and tyres for a very reasonable £25). As I write, our mild winter has rarely dipped below eight degrees and the warm tarmac is making for unpredictable grip levels, so a great drive in the Coupe has so far eluded me. It's attracting plenty of attention to take my mind off that, though... **Stephen Dobie**



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PEUGEOT 106 RALLYE

Date acquired March 2009 **Total mileage** 58,199 **Mileage this month** 1037 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 34.7



SKODA FABIA vRS

Date acquired October 2011 **Total mileage** 7411 **Mileage this month** 1432 **Costs this month** £122.57 (tyre inc fitting) **mpg this month** 37.6

Not again, I thought. The tyre warning light shone brightly from the Fabia's info panel to let me know I was about to get wet. My last long-termer, the Leon Cupra R, had suffered a massive puncture when a piece of alloy wheel went through the Pirelli. It was pouring with rain when that happened. And now it seemed I had another one to investigate. Again in pouring rain. Brilliant.

Surely it couldn't be the same nearside rear? As I ran my hands around the sodden tyre, my finger snagged on it – a Phillips screw, well and truly stuck into the tread.

Fortunately the tyre wasn't flat, so I limped back to the office, went online and ordered a new Dunlop SP Sport Maxx from a mobile fitter. The price was £122.57 and the job was done in under 20 minutes. According to the technician, the screw was a nice fit – the tyre had only lost 3psi.

Trauma over, it was back to enjoying the vRS. Still don't like the DSG gearbox – I want full control – but the engine is magnificent. Nothing could stop me now. Then *ping!* Oil warning light. Oh, come *on*... Paul Lang



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 Pictures: Dean Smith / Chris Rutter

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The Rallye and I have been piling on the miles this month, through fair weather and foul. More of those miles than I'd like have been on motorways and around town, neither of which are the hyperactive 106's natural habitat, yet I'm pleased – and a little surprised – to say I've enjoyed every journey.

It might sound funny, but using the Peugeot every day feels a little bit intrepid. Not, I hasten to add, because I doubt the fizzy French tearaway's ability to get me to or from my destination, but because its lack of frills means you *drive* every single mile, rather than switching to autopilot as you can so easily do in a modern car.

With few creature comforts, the Rallye's not an especially inviting car to jump into on a dark and frosty December morning. No air-conditioning means it takes an age to demist, while the tweaked 1.6-litre engine is a bit lumpy until some warmth has soaked into its cylinder block. I'm pretty sure my neighbours don't rejoice in the flatulent rasp of the Peugeot Sport exhaust as we *parrp* out of the village, but as a driver there's something quite satisfying about coaxing R412 YYC though this truculent warm-up phase.

The wintry weather has brought slippery roads with it, and I have to say that while cold, wet tarmac more readily reveals the Rallye's more exuberant traits, it can also reveal its unforgiving side. I'm becoming increasingly dialled-in to the subtle shift in weight through the plastic rim of the steering wheel as the modest Dunlop Fast Response tyres slip-grip-slip over the greasy surface and the front and rear ends take turns to assert themselves over our trajectory.

The good news is that it's all happening at less than the national speed limit; the bad news is that there's enough of an edge to the Peugeot's behaviour to know it would readily have me into the hedgerow with nary a Gallic shrug. It might be little, but the Rallye can be fierce when riled.

The other thing that's noticeable in winter is just how bad the headlights are. I swapped the standard bulbs for some much brighter Philips items last year, but still the pool of light (more of a puddle, really) on dipped or main beam is laughable. I'd best start eating a few more carrots. **Richard Meaden**

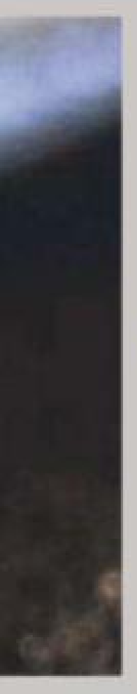


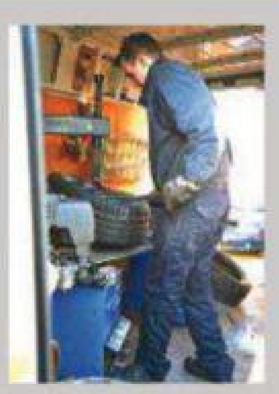
'THERE'S ENOUGH OF AN EDGE TO KNOW IT WOULD HAVE ME INTO THE HEDGEROW WITH NARY A GALLIC SHRUG'





Slippery roads reveal 106's playful side, but also its mean streak. Left: 1.6 doesn't like cold starts





Left: screw was fractionally too close to the tyre's edge to effect a repair, so mobile tyre-fitter slapped on a new Dunlop SP Sport Maxx

AUDI Q3 2.0 TFSI

Date acquired Nov 2011 **Total mileage** 4084
Mileage this month 1728 **Costs this month** £2.99 (screenwash) **mpg this month** 29.4

Stylishly penned, evenly proportioned and beautifully built. That's our Q3. So why do I feel slightly sorry for it?

It's got nothing to do with the ride. Soft seats combined with supple damping plane the road remarkably flat – certainly for an Audi. So it's not the ride then.

The performance? No, the performance is strong considering that the four-cylinder's 207 horses do battle against 1565 kilos. And it's not the interior either. Fit and finish are a wonder to behold, while ergonomically the Q3 excels. Even voice control works well.

So why do I feel sorry for the Q3? Because while driving it the other day – enjoying the ride, the performance, the classy interior and easy ergonomics – I saw a Range Rover Evoque. And the Evoque looked *sooo* fine as it slinked by with its led-sled windows and beltlines like a model's cheekbones.

For those in the market for a compact soft-roader, the Evoque outshines its rivals and renders shortlists very short. So short that the Q3, for all its qualities, might not even make the list at all. And that would be a crime. This is a good car. **Nick Trott**



Quality and design of Q3's cabin are superb, even if caramel seats aren't to all tastes...

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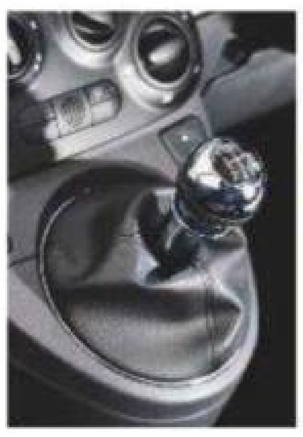
FIAT 500 TWINAIR

Date acquired May 2011 **Total mileage** 7147
Mileage this month 792 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 36.2

The mpg figure above is slightly shocking, actually, even to someone (me) who defends the TwinAir's real-world thirst compared with the 'official' average on the basis that there is no more entertaining way to qualify for free road tax and London congestion charge.

The last three fills reveal the little Fiat to have travelled just over half as far on a gallon than the feather-footed official test suggests it might. It's the worst mpg return yet, perhaps because of fewer big drives and more small ones.

Above: drive the TwinAir like it wants to be driven and you're unlikely to see 40mpg. Below: over-long gearing is partly to blame



In absolute terms, 36.2mpg is reasonable for a warm hatchback driven with the vigour it encourages, but a tank capacity of just 35 litres (7.7 gallons) makes for annoyingly frequent refills. And that can be a problem given the rapid depletion of Britain's filling-station count.

That apart, I'm still very fond of the 500. Some people don't 'get' the appeal of its gruff, two-cylinder engine note, while others think it's excessively long-geared in the intermediates. The former clearly aren't proper car-nuts with a sense of history and an open mind, but the latter may have a point.

The torque curve, peaking at just 1900rpm, seems theoretically a good match for long gearing, but what actually happens is that the low-revs boost pressure sometimes isn't quite enough to accelerate the Fiat with vigour in fourth and fifth gears. So, if you're in a hurry, you end up regularly revving the engine to its modest 6000rpm limit. That's why it's thirsty, and in real-world driving I reckon shorter gearing (and perhaps a sixth gear) would make it more economical.

Squirt the Fiat through the urban obstacle course, however, and all is right with its world. When I see people trying to berth some ludicrous SUV or thick-pillared, bloated piece of premiumness into a parking space, inch by agonising inch, I just laugh. **John Simister**

NISSAN 370Z ROADSTER

Date acquired July 2011 **Total mileage** 9798
Mileage this month 1700 **Costs this month** £212.36 (service) **mpg this month** 25.1

With 9000 miles on the clock, it was time for the 370Z's first service. This was handled by Marshall Nissan in Cambridge one Saturday morning while I popped into town to do some shopping. By midday the job was done, the warning light for the pedestrian-protecting pop-up bonnet had been cleared (a false alarm, apparently), and the coating of winter grime had been washed away too. The bill? £212.36. Can't grumble at that.

Now that it's more than fully run-in, the Zed's 3.7-litre V6 feels at the top of its game, responding quickly and freely to throttle inputs. It's perhaps not the most charismatic of engines – one reader who got in touch likened its sound to that of a Second World War bomber – but it's an impressively potent thing when you've got it thundering away. No new-age turbo four-cylinder or diesel power here!

Interestingly, the effort required to move the once-quite-stiff column-mounted gearshift paddles has reduced noticeably too. Either that or my finger muscles have got stronger from the workout. **Ian Eveleigh**



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 Pictures: Dean Smith/Ian Eveleigh

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NEW ARRIVAL: JAGUAR XF 2.2D

Date acquired December 2011 **Total mileage** 11,120 **Mileage this month** 1091 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 37.9

When I were a lad, the fastest production saloon in the world was the 3.8-litre Mk2 Jaguar (yes, I really am that old). Its straight-six engine, a detuned version of the one in the E-type, took it from 0-60mph in 8.5 seconds. Doesn't sound that quick now; back then it was the stuff of schoolboy dreams.

It almost pains me to say it, but today a 3.8 would be comprehensively outgunned by this 2.2-litre four-cylinder diesel. Not only does the XF get to 60 in 8sec, but its top speed of 140mph makes the Mk2's 125mph maximum look, frankly, a bit silly. Progress eh?

And the XF 2.2 wasn't even conceived to go quickly. It exists because the only saloons selling in big numbers these days are four-cylinder diesels (around 80 per cent of 5-series BMWs, for example). Jaguar was slow off the mark with the XF 2.2, but since it was launched last summer they can't build them fast enough.

It's not hard to see why. While it's not quite as frugal as its German rivals (though 149g/km and 52.3mpg combined is a fiscal dream-ticket compared with any other current Jag), looks-wise it beats them hands-down. Recently facelifted with sleeker headlights and a curvier bonnet, the XF looks the cat's pyjamas – and especially

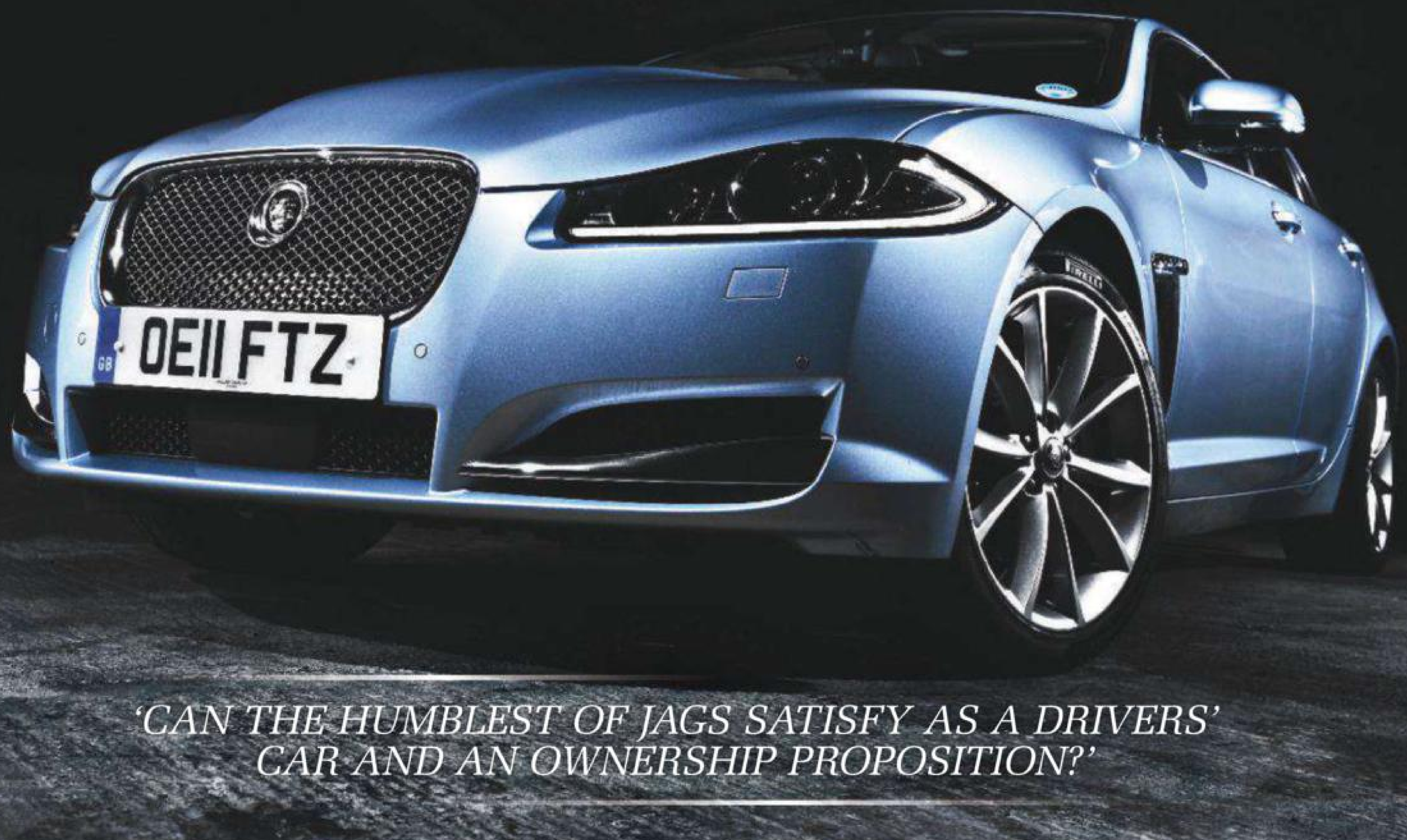


striking in the Crystal Blue of our ex-press-fleet car, which arrived with around 10,000 miles on the clock.

We'd asked for a mid-range Premium Luxury model (£37,950), but somewhere down the line it morphed into a top-of-the-range Portfolio (£43,050). That's a lot for a 2.2, but it does feel like a quality item. With its soft-touch leather facings for the door-tops and dash, tastefully dark veneers, Suedecloth headlining and heated seats and steering wheel, it's a lovely, warm, welcoming thing to tumble into on a dank winter's evening.

So, three questions to be answered in coming months. Can the humblest of Jags satisfy as a drivers' car and an ownership proposition? Can it convince this cat-lover that a 2.2-litre diesel really is worthy of the famous 'leaper'? And can I resist the temptation to call it Fitz? **Peter Tomalin**

Below: 2.2D looks every bit as classy as other Jags. New daytime running lights, bigger grille and bulgier bonnet mark out facelifted XF. Interior's had a mild revamp, too



'CAN THE HUMBLEST OF JAGS SATISFY AS A DRIVERS' CAR AND AN OWNERSHIP PROPOSITION?'

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END OF TERM: PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS 4.0

Date acquired August 2011 **Duration of test** 5 months **Total test mileage** 3011 **Overall mpg** 18.8
Costs £0 **Purchase price** £135,276 **Trade-in value/Depreciation** n/a (see text)

So it's goodbye from me, and it's goodbye from him. It is with great pride that I can say that I used the 4.0 right up until the second week in December, but a reasonable tank-slapper on a lightly flooded section of the M4 made me realise I either needed to buy a set of normal tyres for it, or bung it into hibernation for a few weeks.

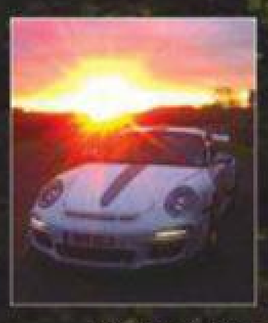
With a little over 3000 miles under those single-bolt wheels, the engine just gets better and better – in fact the moment the road turns greasy you just cannot use full power above 5000rpm, which is a rarity in this day and age. I rather like it: makes you *think* rather than simply burying the right pedal and letting Intel do the work instead.

One question I keep being asked is whether I think this car would be better using the Exe-tc suspension I had on my old gen.1 997 GT3. The answer is a definite yes – as a road car. The standard set-up's combination of wide rubber and uni-balled lower arms at the rear makes the 4.0 prone to following the crown of the road. A little more compliance would make it nicer to drive in the UK – but then the shocking state of our roads makes setting up a car to work over here a nonsense exercise for virtually any other market aside from rural Mongolia. Interestingly, I asked a Porsche engineer what he thought of the British B-road and he just scowled: 'Hate them – more like a small rally stage.'

I follow the conversations about the 4.0, its significance and its values with a strange mixture of passion and detachment: on one hand I write about these things, on the other I read the opinions of owners and potential buyers on the web and wonder at the level of knowledge and, occasionally, idiocy.

Well, as someone who has now shaved his rear Michelins pretty low with childish sliding, a part of me doesn't actually care what people say about the 4.0. I've owned one, that's all that matters to me. It's been my everyday car for a while, done the shopping, done the school run, the red-eye airport run – everything you might ask of an ordinary family car it can do quite easily. Except run in flooded conditions on those Cup tyres.

Would I have bought it if I suspected it was going to lose £40K in the first six months? What do you think? Thankfully this limited-run 911 remains the talk of the specialist



Right: 4-litre engine's 493bhp is proving too potent for the RS's trackday tyres on wet winter roads



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'PEOPLE SUSPECT THIS IS THE LAST CAR OF ITS TYPE FROM PORSCHE'





With its big wing, bucket seats and fire extinguisher, the 4.0 may look like it has escaped from a starting grid, but Harris has still used it as his everyday car marketplace. It's like a rear-engined unicorn – traders are desperate to get hold of them but very few seem to come to market. Compare this to the difficult time McLaren is having – the 'overs' market for the MP4-12C is gone already – and a strange picture emerges.

It comes down to two things: technology and scarcity. People suspect this is the last car of its type from Porsche, and it hasn't brought enough to the UK to satisfy demand. Best to forget all talk of numbers and drive it like you borrowed it from the press office.

I'll be keeping the 4.0 for the time being, but this will be my last report on the car in these pages – as you may have read elsewhere, I'm leaving for pastures new. I'll miss **evo** more than I can ever explain: I dreamed of working here as a young 'un. Best to all the team and all of you. Thanks for the memories. Keep driving. **Chris Harris**





VOLKSWAGEN POLO GTI

With the Polo's front tyres now quite worn (after an impressive 15,000 miles) but less than a month left before VW snatches the car away, I've gone for a good old-fashioned front-to-rear tyre swap. Extra grip at the front and less at the rear has sharpened the little GTI's turn-in, while handily extending the life of its Dunlop Sport Maxx rubber. **Stephen Dobie**

RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS

Use of the Williams is fairly limited at the moment, but the moments I do drive it continue to be special. A recent road closure on the A605 meant my standard commute home was ruled out, and with the little Clio's antiquated interior barren of a satnav to re-route me, I headed to a familiar alternative: the B660. The road was empty and, thanks to a splash of rain, grip wasn't abundant. Carlsberg don't do drives home, but if they did... **Stephen Dobie**

SUBARU LEGACY 2.0D SE

The Legacy recently hit 12,000 miles, which meant it was time for its first service. A quick call to Souls of Olney and it was booked in for three days later. The work was carried out quickly and no issues were reported. It did, however, cost a rather steep £248 – thankfully the girlfriend didn't want anything for Christmas. **Dean Smith**

JAGUAR XJR

The weather brought snow and ice, for which the Jaguar is signally ill-equipped, and then I went to the US for Christmas, for which the XJR proved too large to fit into my suitcase. So it has been languishing in the BBC car park, wonky bumper unfixed, clonking axle unattended to. I actually feel guilty. **Richard Porter**

RENAULT WIND GORDINI

A double blow for the Wind Gordini with the recent news that Renault is axing half its model range in the UK. Not only is the Wind to be withdrawn, but also the Gordini brand. Personally, I believe this is no reflection on the Wind as a car, it's just that it wasn't making enough profit. Around 1700 Winds (all variations) have been registered since it was launched in the UK last year. Sounds respectable, but Mini sold 6744 convertibles here in 2011.

According to HowManyLeft.co.uk there are only eight Wind Gordinis on the UK's roads (as of Q3 2011). All the more reason to enjoy one of the rarest cars on the UK's roads while I still can. **Adam Shorrock**



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HARRY'S GARAGE: COUNTACH

Date acquired September 2010 **Total mileage** 33,920 **Mileage this month** 302 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 12.9

Is it a good idea to modify your car? My advice is don't if you're likely to be selling in the near future – you'll never get your money back – but if the car is a 'lifer' and the mods are relatively discreet, then I reckon it's daft not to. That's why my Lotus Elan runs bigger front brake discs (from an Elan +2) than standard, the 340R has an ultra-close-ratio gearbox and the Countach QV and Clio Trophy are about to get subtly 'enhanced' too.

While the sheer physical effort it takes to drive the Countach is part of its character, having discovered how much a set of Pagid RS4 pads reduces the pressure required at the brake pedal, I've been on the lookout for some other easy mods to do a similar job on the excessive steering and accelerator loads.

Am I losing it? Probably, but if I were to buy an E-type, I'd be more tempted by an Eagle E-type (with its added usability) than a standard version and that's all I'm trying to do here with the Countach.

Talking to Lamborghini expert Mike Pullen at Carrera Sport, it seems the main reason the accelerator pedal is so heavy is that there are six carburettors, each with its own return spring capable of returning the accelerator cable all by itself. But as all the carbs are linked via a fixed rod (with each throttle arm locked in position by twin locking nuts) there's no reason not to remove some of the return springs to make the throttle that bit lighter. I ended up uncoupling three springs (you don't actually remove them, just stop them operating on the arm). I then discovered the accelerator pedal position is adjustable too, so I tweaked it to make heel-and-toeing that bit easier.

It's amazing the difference these simple mods have made. Blipping the throttle between gearchanges is now easy and the lighter throttle somehow makes the car feel even quicker, which is a surprise side-effect I'm certainly not going to complain about!

'THE LIGHTER THROTTLE SOMEHOW MAKES THE CAR FEEL EVEN QUICKER'

Above: Metcalfe gets busy under the Countach's engine cover, uncoupling some of the throttle return springs (don't worry, there are six of them). Below left: one part of the throttle mechanism – the spring's hidden just behind the arm. Below: throttle pedal was adjusted too

But how do you go about lightening the steering? After a lot of research, I've decided to pay EZ Electric Power Steering a visit (they're based in Holland) and have one of their systems fitted to the Countach. Madness? I don't think so. The original steering system will be retained, while the Japanese electric power steering unit fits under the dash, hidden from view. It'll be speed-sensitive and you have the option of turning it off completely via a rocker switch. I've only heard good things about these systems but as the company has never fitted one to a Countach before, I'm going to leave the QV with them for a week.

Meanwhile I've got a new exhaust on the way for the Clio Trophy. The excellent Cliotrophy.co.uk did a group-buy on the new Scorpion RS192 system, which is said to add a distinct burble right through the rev-range but has no nasty boom when cruising. The fact it can potentially add a few horsepower is the icing on the cake. Priced at £348.90 delivered for the 'cat-back' system, it's made out of stainless steel and is a straight replacement for the existing set-up. More about this next month. **Harry Metcalfe**





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Pictures: Izzy Metcalfe/Harry Metcalfe

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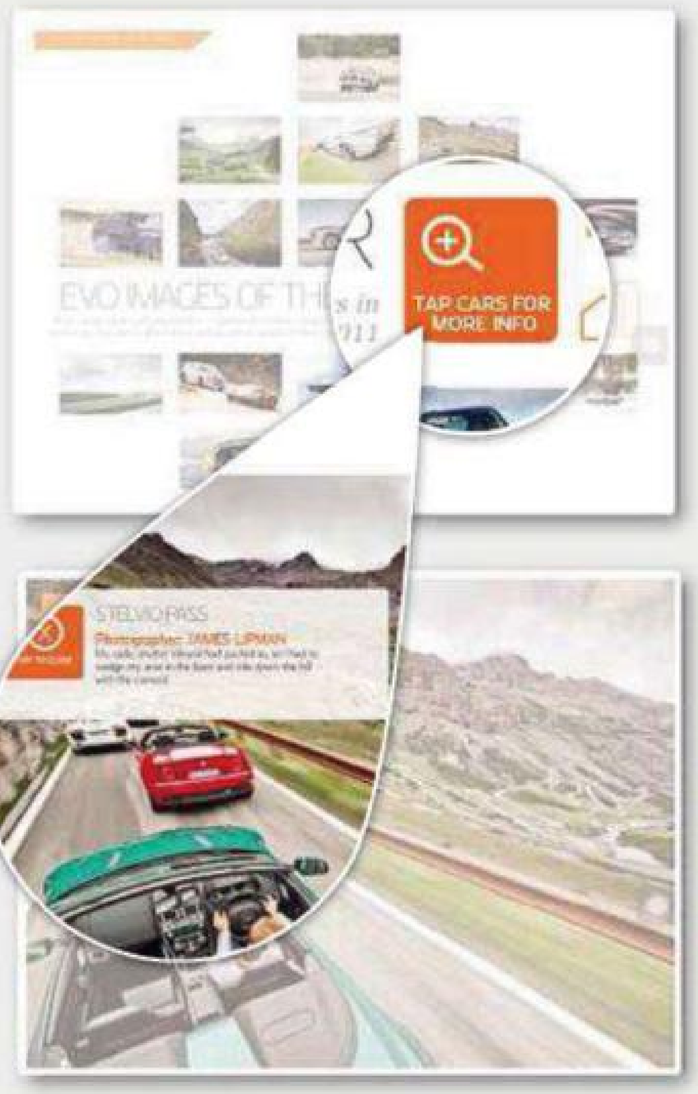
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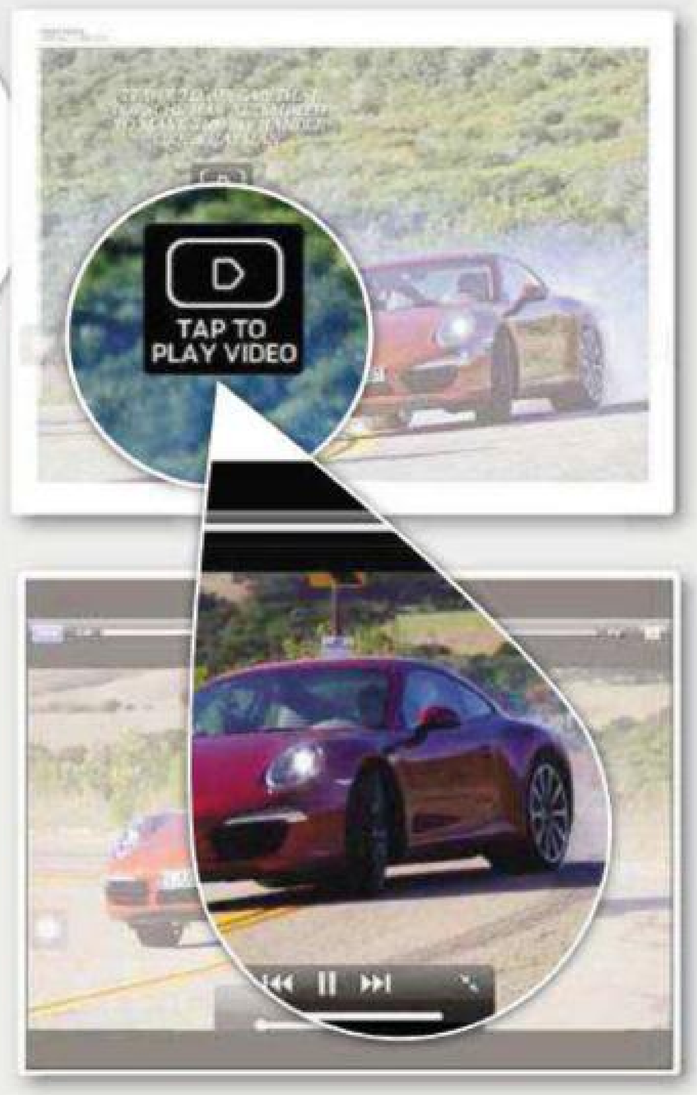
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BMW 1M COUPE

Date acquired June 2011 **Total mileage** 15,800
Mileage this month 1659
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 25.0

Seats. It's so difficult to criticise seats because we drivers come in all shapes and sizes, and for every difficult-to-get-comfy wriggler (like me) there's someone who can settle into the same seat with the blissfulness of a gosling nestling beneath its mother's wings.

BMW M-cars tend to have wonderful seats. The E36 and E90 M3s' in particular. But the 1M's seats, for me, just don't quite match the rest of the car's brilliance. Shallow bolsters prevent true lateral support, forcing you to grip the wheel harder, which in turn can force clumsy steering inputs (at least that's my excuse). I also find the cushioning too flat and unyielding, and the ratio of seat height to steering wheel reach/rake at odds with my build. Basically, when I set the wheel and seat to a position I find comfortable, my line of sight to the top third of the dials is rudely chopped off by the steering wheel rim.

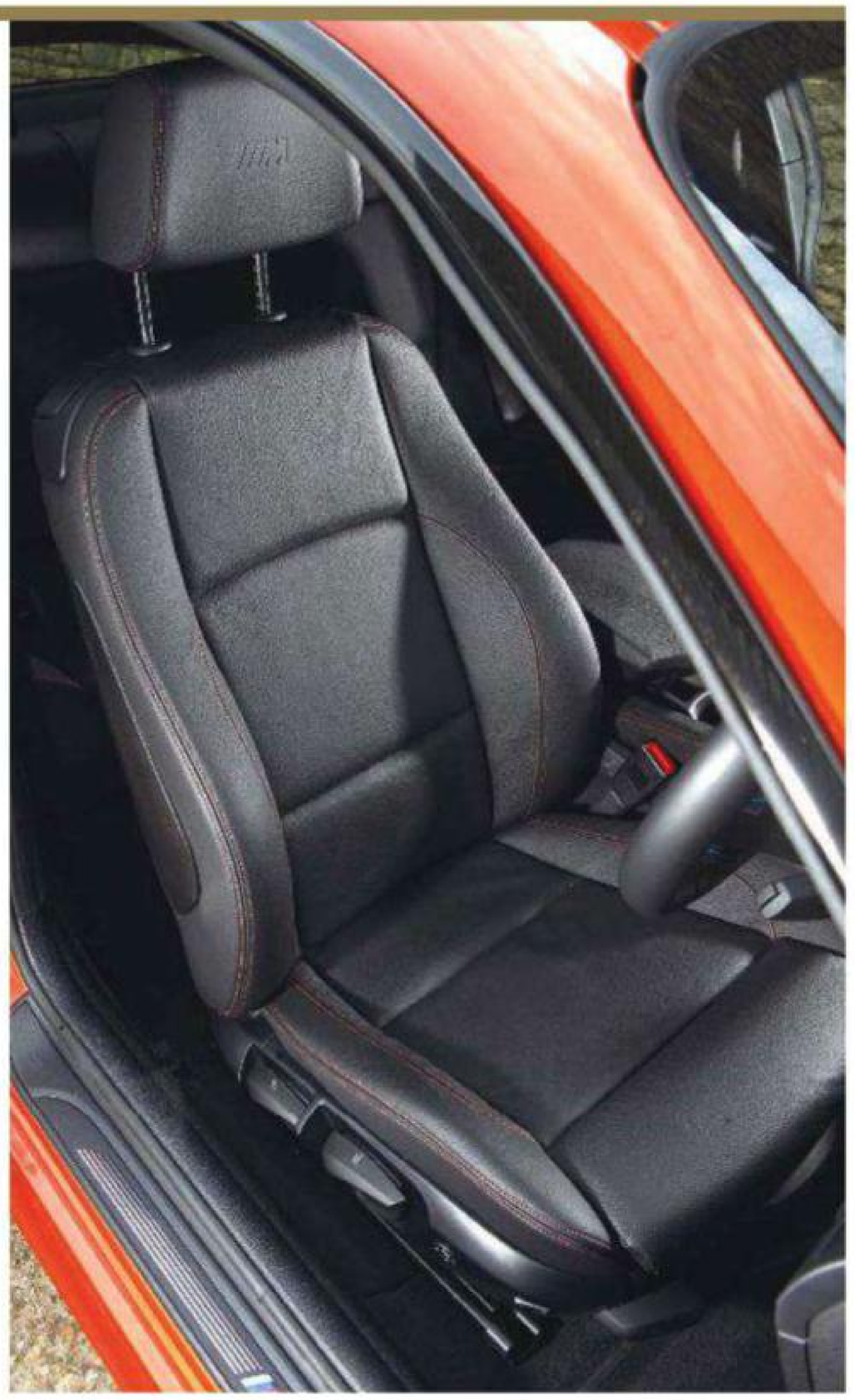
And the extendable thigh support? It does nothing of the sort. The adjustable lumber is mildly effective, but for me the optimum setting is with it almost fully inflated, which pushes me out of the seat, which in turn renders the bolsters even less effective. Arghhh – I can't win!

You'd be forgiven for thinking that I have the arms of an orangutan and the legs of a squirrel, but I'm 5ft 10in and of medium build, which means I can't quite understand why I can't find a suitable driving position (and comfort) in the 1M.

So what does all this posterior postulating mean? Simple. I still adore the 1M, but if I was to keep it forever I'd seriously consider changing the seats to those found in the E90 M3.

Nick Trott





Right: Trott reckons the 1M's seats don't offer the level of lateral support you'd expect in an M-car. Left: with his ideal driving position set, he also finds the steering wheel partly obscures the dials

VOLKSWAGEN CALIFORNIA

Date acquired July 2011 **Total mileage** 7695 **Mileage this month** 1161
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 35.1

Here's a bold statement. I believe the Volkswagen California could be the best value vehicle on sale today. And here's why...

While other **evo** staffers blagged luxobarges for the Christmas break (stand up Mike Duff), I looked at the California in the car park and thought: 'That's got everything I need for the Yuletide break.'

Space? Check. Seats five, plus luggage room for seven. Versatility? Check. With the rear chairs folded flat, I fitted in a two-seat sofa, a chest of drawers and various other random stuff from Ikea that I didn't really need. Not only that, but running late for a jam with my band, I left the Ikea shopping spree in the California and also squeezed in two guitars and a 2x12in Marshall amp.

'SPACE? CHECK. SEATS FIVE, PLUS LUGGAGE ROOM FOR SEVEN'

You're probably thinking, 'Well it's just a van after all,' and you'd be right (sort of). But what really impressed me was just how driveable this maisonette on wheels is. A commanding driving position and a short front overhang combine to deliver single-seater levels of apex-clippery, albeit with slightly (OK, extremely) woolly steering. I also love the way it innocuously slots into a UK parking space (a Q7 can't do that), and the way my two-year-old son thinks it's the coolest car daddy has ever brought home.

On top of all this, I love the way that when guests stay over and your bedrooms are full they can comfortably spend a night on the drive in the Cali and whip up a breakfast on the (standard-fit) cooker in the morning.

Our California 2.0 TDI SE 140 cost £43,075 with options – or the same as a mid-range (and middling) Audi Q7. But that's not why the California could be the best value vehicle on sale today. No, it's because there's a new basic-spec version, the 112bhp 2.0 TDI BlueMotion, and it comes in at a mere £34,970. Now, you name me a car that gives you more for the money.

Nick Trott



Below: California had more than enough space to transport the spoils of an Ikea visit

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1994 PORSCHE 968 CLUB SPORT

One of 179 UK RHD cars. In superb condition with only 38k miles and a complete history from new.



1988 PORSCHE 911 CARRERA CLUB SPORT

1 of 53 RHD UK supplied examples. 55k miles. Complete history with all books and invoices from new. Fantastic to drive. Increasingly hard to find.



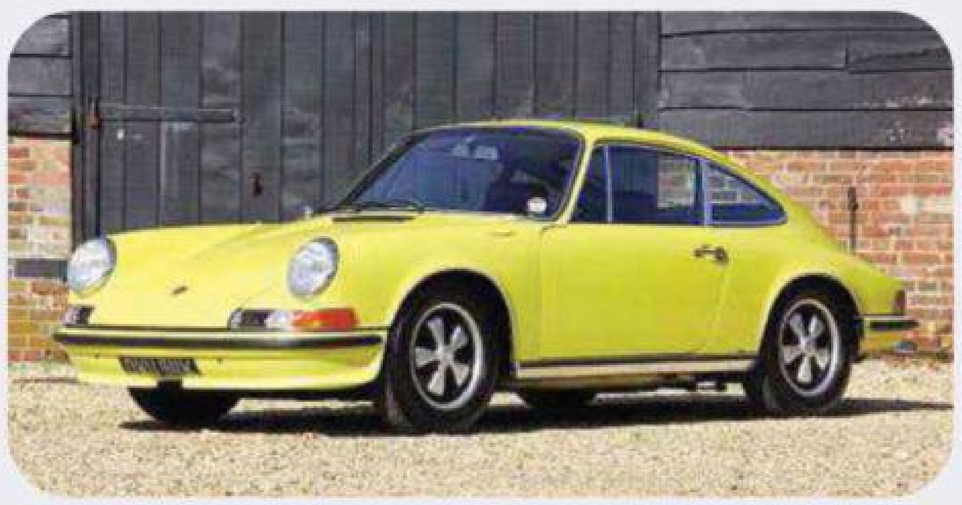
2005 ASTON MARTIN DB9

Rare six speed manual. 260W Linn hi-fi, navigation, electric heated seats, park sensors. One owner and only 10k miles.



1991 MINI COOPER SVP

A limited edition Cooper. Like new, having covered only 200 miles in total. Retains factory markings and wax underneath. Books and tools.



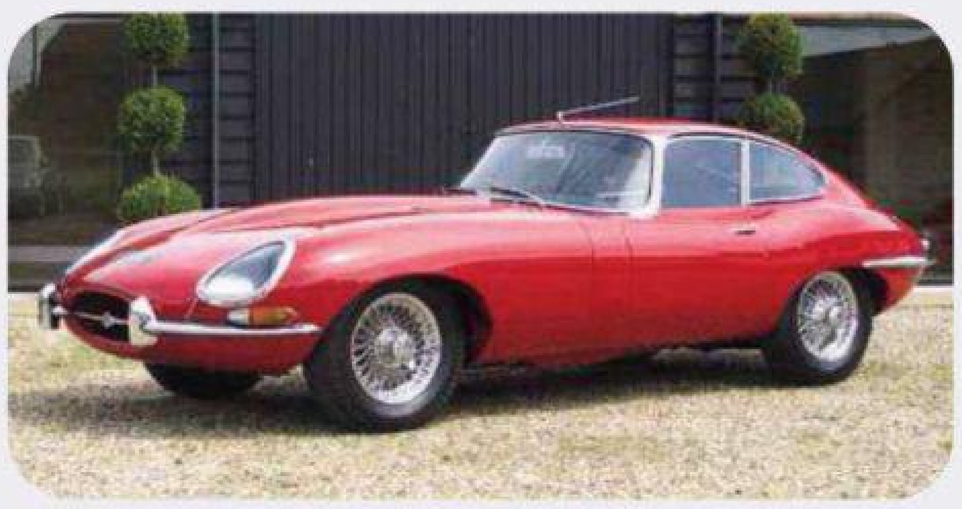
1972 PORSCHE 911 2.4S

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1964 JAGUAR E-TYPE SERIES 1 4.2 COUPE

Supplied and modified by Coombs from new. 20k miles. Unbelievably original. Full history. 1st place JDC E-Type Register Concours 2007. Unique.



1970 MERCEDES 280SL

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ASK THE EXPERT

Q I have found a really tidy, 44,000-mile Renaultsport Clio Trophy that will cost me £3000 to change into from my Clio 182. Do you think it's worth the extra money over my car and what will happen to values in the future?

Craig Toone



Clio Trophy values should hold strong – just take care of those fancy Sachs dampers

A All 550 Trophy versions of the Clio 182 (500 for the UK and 50 for the Swiss market) were hand-built at the ex-Renault Alpine plant near Dieppe, rather than on the Clio production line, which adds to their kudos. They came with extra kit including Recaro front seats, a bigger rear spoiler and the infamous remote-reservoir Sachs gas dampers. These trick dampers can lead to expensive bills, as they don't take kindly to road grime (especially salt), and corrosion will lead to gas leaks and a potential £500 rebuild.

The Trophy has a big UK following (check out www.cliotrophy.co.uk) and tends to be treated with much greater reverence than the standard 182. The price premium over a 182 has stretched from £800 when new to around £2000 today (when comparing identical-mileage cars) and I expect this will continue to widen further, as good 182s get even harder to find. **HM**

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MARKET WATCH



ESTATE CAR BARGAINS

Why conventional load-luggers are the smart alternative to SUVs

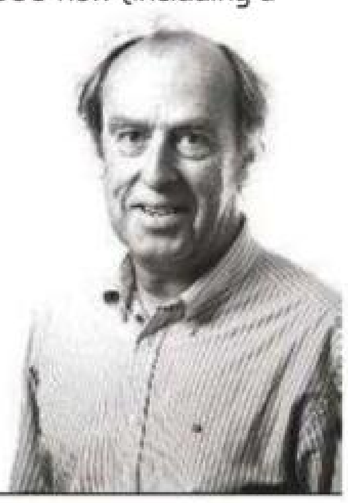
The used-car market is a cruel place at the moment, especially for car brands grabbing the headlines for all the wrong reasons. Take Renault, which announced just before Christmas it was dropping four models from its UK line-up, as well as culling a third of its dealers. The models being axed (Laguna, Espace, Modus and Wind) have suddenly become orphans in the marketplace and trade values have been adjusted accordingly. The same goes for Saabs after the troubled Swedish carmaker filed for bankruptcy.

But this is good news if you want to pick up a second-hand bargain, especially if you're after something to move the family around and you're prepared to look at an estate car rather than a trendy SUV. The trade is currently valuing a 10,000-mile, 2011 Laguna 150 dCi Dynamique estate at around £10,000, which is £12K less than it would have cost new a few months ago. Over at Saab, we've seen a 2011 ex-demo 9-3 1.9 TiD 150 Turbo with 5000 miles priced at around £14,000. But you know there won't be any takers at that money, so try a cheeky bid in the knowledge that Glass's guide has them priced at £10-11,000, depending on spec. That's £14K less than list.

There are other estate bargains to be had, too. If you're not a badge snob then ex-hire Vauxhall Insignia estates look spectacular value for money. Just £10,000 (£15K off list) gets you a nine-month-old Insignia SRi estate, with three years' warranty thrown in. Or you can get the diesel-powered version for around £12,000.

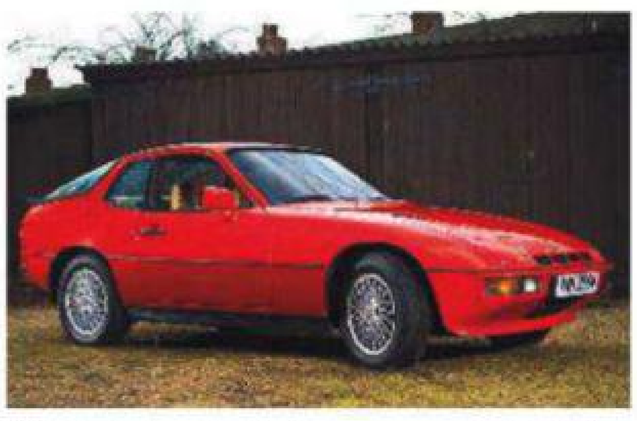
Another estate car offering great value is the Mercedes E-class, mainly because so many have been sold via contract-hire agreements and these now need disposing of in the trade. The best deal I've seen is for a ten-month-old, 12,000-mile E250 CDI BlueEfficiency Avantgarde estate, which would have cost over £40,000 new (including a few extras) but is now up for grabs at a Mercedes main dealer for £26,850, including a full manufacturer warranty. For an upmarket family holdall that will return close to 50mpg, that's a bargain.

Harry Metcalfe
Editorial director



Auction watch

Low-mileage Porsche 924 Turbo and unique twin-engined Mini at Race Retro auction



924 Turbo has had just two owners in the last 32 years, and has covered under 37,000 miles

Silverstone Auctions will be holding a sale at the Race Retro show at Stoneleigh Park, Coventry, on 25 February. Amongst the eclectic mix of lots are an immaculate, two-owner, 1980 Porsche 924 Turbo, offered without reserve. With fewer than 37,000 miles covered, I'd expect this to go for around £4000-5000.

The quirkiest car in the auction, though, must be the 1965 Austin Mini Cooper S 'Twini', which has one tweaked 1275cc engine in the normal position up front and another identical engine and gearbox in the boot, making this car a 2550cc, eight-cylinder, 4wd road rocket.

Two prototypes Twinis were created by BMC's experimental department in 1963, and one was entered in that year's Targa Florio, but the rear engine overheated and the car never reached its potential. This replica was completed in 2010 and is the result of over 2000 hours of work. With a guide price of £20,000-25,000, it doesn't seem bad value at all.



Cooper S 'Twini' is a recently completed project. Guide price is £20,000-25,000

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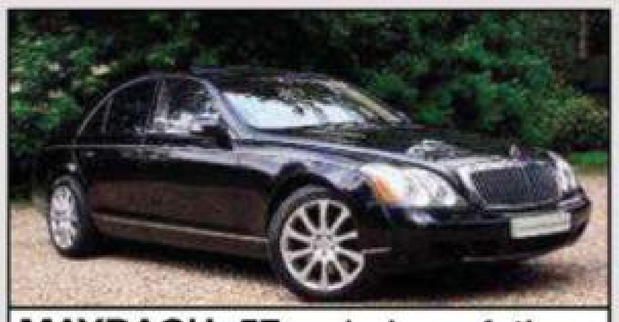
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PORSCHE 911 C4 TIP CONVERTIBLE 2001/51 53,000 miles, 2002 Facelift model, blue with savannah leather.....**£17,500**



ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM 2006/2007 choice of two cars, from **£140,000**



ASTON MARTIN DB9 COUPE choice of three cars, manual/ automatic, from.....**£42,000**



FERRARI 599 GTB F1 LHD 2007/ 07 8,100 miles, Grigio silver, cream leather, carbon trim, 1 owner..**£124,999**



ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE CONVERTIBLE 2009/09 8,200 miles, automatic, black, red leather, nav, iPod.....**£57,999**



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MERCEDES CL65 AMG V12 BI TURBO COUPE 09/09 21,000 miles, silver, black.....**£76,999**



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BMW 135i M SPORT
£20,850

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The BMW 135i Coupe has become something of a forgotten machine, particularly since the 1M landed last summer. This goes some way to explaining how a car that was expected to be elevated to cult status can now be snapped up for well over ten grand less than it would have cost the original owner, despite having a low mileage and being sold by a main dealer.

It may lack the limited-slip differential of the 1M, but then the lairiness that comes with it is also gone, which for those who don't feel the need to go sideways on every corner is probably a good thing. The 135 also has hydraulic steering rather than the electronic systems of lesser 1-series machines, and that gives it the benefit of greater feel, which is handy, as it reacts quickly to your inputs.

There's plenty of grip (and in fact it's the front axle that relinquishes its hold first), it generally rides well (though mid-corner bumps can unsettle it) and the engine is punchy, completely linear in its delivery and audibly entertaining. In short, it's a fun little car, and this one has the right spec: Le Mans Blue paint, black 'Boston' leather and brushed aluminium interior trim. It also looks almost as bright and shiny as it did when new. **Roger Green**





Having covered under 15,000 miles, this two-year-old 135i Coupe is in great shape, both cosmetically and mechanically





SPECIFICATION

Year 2009
Mileage 14,197
Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo
Max power 302bhp @ 5800rpm
Max torque 295lb ft @ 1300rpm
0-60mph 5.3sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR
» The wheels are pristine and the paintwork is virtually blemish-free, with just a few tiny stone-chips on the nose

INTERIOR
» Tidy. The leather has no wear marks and the seats have the optional electric lumbar support

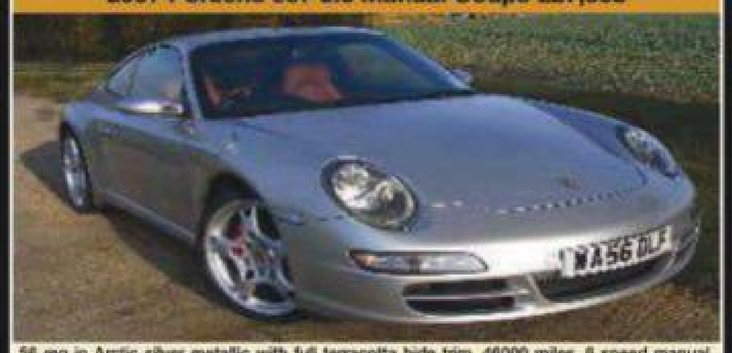
MECHANICALS
» Only two years old and with a full dealer service history. It doesn't get much better

VERDICT
» You'd have to pay double this to get a used 1M right now, so it's undoubtedly a good deal

ALSO FROM THIS DEALER

BMW Z4 3.0si COUPE £13,850, 2007
» 52,971 miles, silver, red leather, satnav
BMW M3 SALOON £30,850, 2008
» 10,096 miles, black metallic, red leather

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2007 Porsche 997 3.6 Manual Coupe £27,995

56 reg in Arctic silver metallic with full terracotta hide trim, 46000 miles, 6 speed manual, 19" S alloys, litronic lights, sat nav and phone, electric memory heated seats, computer, cruise, sports steering wheel, cdc6 disc multi-changer, speaker upgrade, full service history and a really tidy car.

2. 2005 Porsche 997 3.8 C2 S Coupe £26,995

In Basalt black metallic with black hide trim, manual 6 speed, 59000 miles, 19" S alloys, rear wiper, litronic lights, full service history and very clean.

2004 Porsche 996 C4S Coupe Manual £21,995

53 reg in Basalt Black metallic, with black hide trim, 61000 miles, sat nav, litronic lights, cd multi changer, computer, electric memory seats, aly trim pack, Psm, full service history and a really good example of this ever iconic version.

2002 Porsche 996 C2 TIP Targa £17,995

02 reg in Arctic Silver metallic with dark blue hide trim, 59000 miles, 2 owners from new, computer, Psm, Cdr22 stereo with upgrade, litronic lights, with a full main dealer service history including bills and really tidy.

2007 Porsche 2.7 Boxster 987 £13,995

56 reg in Artic silver metallic with dark blue hide seats and trim, 67000 miles, 5 speed manual, 19" Carrera alloys, litronic lights, computer, sports seats and steering wheel, Bose stereo upgrade and cdc 6 multichanger, full service history and really excellent.

1997 Porsche Boxster 2.5 Lux Manual £5,995

In Guards Red with full black hide trim, 94000 miles, 5 speed manual, climate control, wind deflector, 17" alloys, computer, cd22 stereo with cd multi changer, full service history with bills, new rads and condensers and very tidy example.

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ASTON MARTIN HERITAGE



ASTON MARTIN DB6 VOLANTE.
1968. Anthracite with Fawn Hide, 5 speed. Extensively restored and completed in 2010. 4.2 Litre lead free specifications. Fitted with original Power steering, Becker Mexico retro hi-fi and black Mohair type hood. A photographic record of works and service history accompany the car. One of only 140 built and only lightly used since completion.

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ASTON MARTIN DB5.
1965. Silver Birch with Black hide. 5 speed. Restored to a very high standard and with sensitivity by respected marque specialists with subtle and effective improvements including 4.2 litre lead free specification engine, concealed Hi-Fi and quartz movement time clock. A superb example of this iconic model being marketed for the first time in 15 years.

£325,000



ASTON MARTIN V8 VOLANTE.
1981. Chichester Blue with Grey/Blue hide piped dk Blue. Automatic. Original specification, converted to unleaded fuel. Excellent condition example, with an extensive service history with AM Works service and Heritage agents supporting the 55,000 miles covered from new.

£62,500



ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH S 2+2 LHD.
Midnight Blue with Caspian and Artic Blue hide. Paddleshift 6 speed manual gearbox.. Fitted with Silver brake calipers, body colour door release, 2+2 seating arrangement and SatNav. Full AM service history and in excellent condition. 9,000 miles.

£84,950



ASTON MARTIN DB7 VANTAGE COUPE.
2000. Solent Silver with Light Grey and Pacific Blue hide. Fitted with automatic transmission, heated front screen, heated seats, mesh grille, premium audio and usual standard Vantage refinements. Full AM service history and excellent condition with 40k miles from new. Great Value.

£26,500



ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE.
2008. Onyx Black with Obsidian Black hide and Silver stitch. Fitted wit Piano Black fascia, Black brake calipers, bright finish grille, HID headlamps, powerfold mirrors, front stone guards, 19" wheels, heated front seats, SatNav, Premium Audio, memory seats, cruise control, bluetooth and Ipod integration. Full AM service history and 28k miles from new. Stunning.

£46,950



ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE PRODRIVE.
2008. 6 speed manual. Meteorite Silver with Obsidian Black hide and Silver stitch & Piano Black finishers. Full Prodrive upgrade including 425 bhp engine, switchable suspension, Carbon Fibre aero kit and forged wheels fitted with Pirelli P Zero tyres. Full spec. Stunning condition and just 7,900 miles from new.

£54,950



ASTON MARTIN V8 VOLANTE.
1987. Buckingham Green with Parchment hide and dk. Green mohair type hood. Late fuel injected model, with extensive service history, including new sills with AM Heritage agents. Very useable and rare.

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PANTHER SOLO
£17,950

Vendor Zero One Performance Cars, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire www.zero-onecars.com 01664 841212

Don't see many of these about, do you? Firm production numbers for the late-'80s Solo are hard to pin down, but they fell short of the planned 90-strong production run by at least 60. This is number 15, and what a sight it is: from some angles there's more than a whiff of kit car, but from others it's rather beguiling and I can't imagine much else as conversation-worthy for £18K.

It's easy to play 'spot the borrowed Ford bits' – door handles, electric window switches, rear lights – but that's probably missing the point. The best parts lie beneath the skin: a mid-mounted 2.0-litre Sierra Cosworth turbo engine powering all four wheels via a five-speed manual gearbox. Of course 204bhp isn't much nowadays, and the Solo feels its age. There's a swell of four-pot noise and turbocharged whoosh, above 5000rpm especially, but the horizon doesn't seem to reach you any faster. All of the controls feel very substantial, the non-assisted steering laboriously heavy at times and the gearlever requiring a forceful shove to swap cogs. It's certainly different.

If potentially big bills for parts don't scare you, the Solo is an exotic slice of sports car history for the price of a middling Focus. Go on, I dare you. **Stephen Dobie**





Solo was mid-engined with a Ferguson four-wheel-drive system. Styling was by Ken Greenley. Tiny rear seats were an option





SPECIFICATION

Year 1989
Mileage 39,400
Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1993cc, turbocharged
Max power 204bhp @ 6000rpm
Max torque 200lb ft @ 4500rpm
0-60mph 6.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 150mph (claimed)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR
» A couple of chips and scuffs, but it looks undeniably unique

INTERIOR
» Idiosyncratic and full of '80s Ford bits, but it's all in good nick. And it's a 2+2!

MECHANICALS
» Not quick, but pleasingly meaty to drive. Sold with a fresh engine service

VERDICT
» A wilfully left-field purchase but one with visual clout and immense rarity

ALSO FROM THIS DEALER

BMW M3 (E92) £26,950, 2007, 18,000 miles
» Melbourne Red, leather seats, upgraded hi-fi
PORSCHE 993 TURBO £54,950, 1996, 34,500 miles
» Silver, loads of kit, two owners, Porsche FSH

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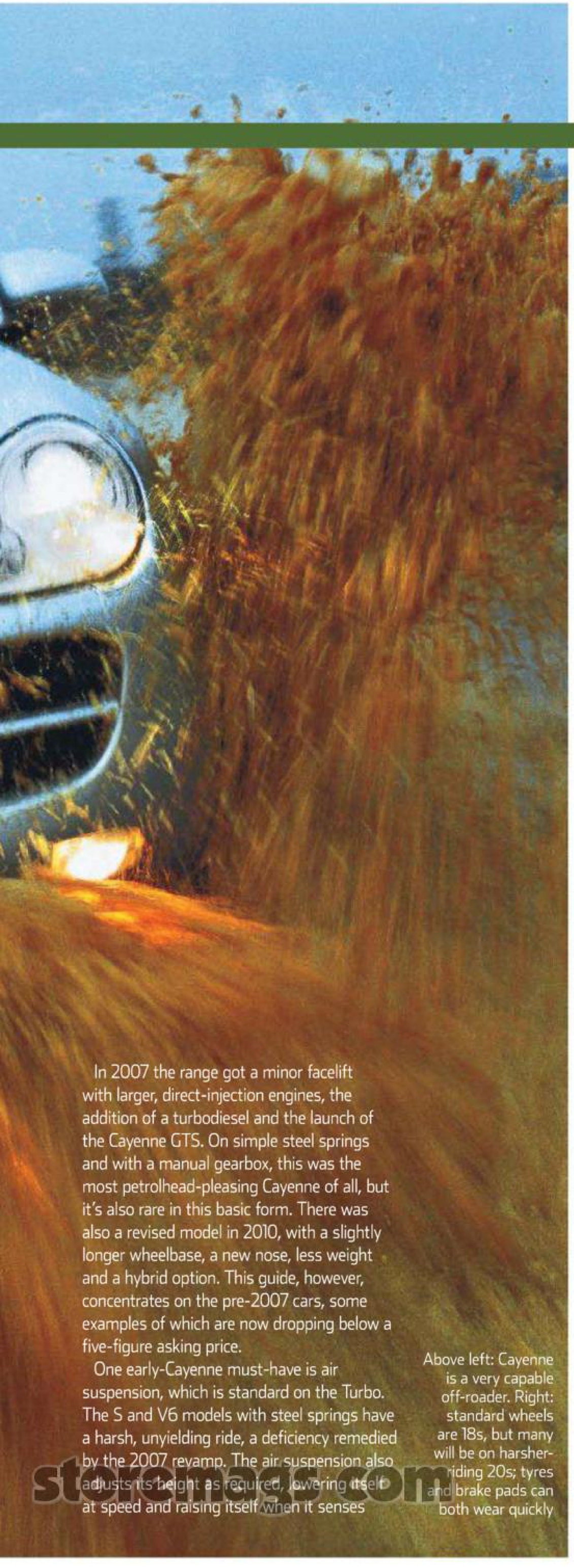
You can now pick up one of these controversial performance SUVs for under £10,000. But you need to buy carefully. ***John Simister*** *explains why*

When the Cayenne first rumbled and muscled into view back in 2002 – nearly a decade ago! – the four-wheel-driving, V8-pulsating, SUV-redefining Cayenne might have brought Porsche-flavoured thrills and spills to all the family, and over the sort of terrain hitherto trekked by Porsches only on African rally-raids, but it was not what the purists thought a Porsche should be. Not at all.

How could anyone mix that facial graphic with notions of Range Rover or Mercedes M-class rivalry? How *dare* they? Well, the US market, and the emerging ones of Russia and especially China, are how. Rich customers there wanted fast 4x4s and they wanted a Porsche badge. Porsche could hardly *not* make the Cayenne.

It has proved hugely lucrative for the company, its profits ensuring that the manufacture of 'proper' Porsches remains viable. And you can't deny that there's a certain appeal to a hefty SUV with, if it's an original Turbo as featured here, 444bhp from its twin-turbo, 4.5-litre V8, a 165mph top speed and the ability to reach 62mph from rest in 5.5 seconds. Especially when it has proper off-road ability, complete with long-travel suspension and a low-ratio gear set. A non-turbo Cayenne S arrived at that 2002 launch, too, with the same engine capacity but a gentler 335bhp (good for 150mph and a 7.0sec 0-62mph time). A Cayenne V6 soon followed, with a 3.2-litre, 246bhp VW/Audi engine. At the opposite extreme, the Turbo S of 2006 offered a rousing 513bhp.

EDITED BY
ROGER GREEN
rogerg@evo.co.uk



In 2007 the range got a minor facelift with larger, direct-injection engines, the addition of a turbodiesel and the launch of the Cayenne GTS. On simple steel springs and with a manual gearbox, this was the most petrolhead-pleasing Cayenne of all, but it's also rare in this basic form. There was also a revised model in 2010, with a slightly longer wheelbase, a new nose, less weight and a hybrid option. This guide, however, concentrates on the pre-2007 cars, some examples of which are now dropping below a five-figure asking price.

One early-Cayenne must-have is air suspension, which is standard on the Turbo. The S and V6 models with steel springs have a harsh, unyielding ride, a deficiency remedied by the 2007 revamp. The air suspension also adjusts its height as required, lowering itself at speed and raising itself when it senses

stefanart.com

Above left: Cayenne is a very capable off-roader. Right: standard wheels are 18s, but many will be on harsher-riding 20s; tyres and brake pads can both wear quickly











CHECKPOINTS

» Russ Rosenthal, JZ Machtech's sales manager, stresses the importance of an independent inspection: 'Many trade sellers won't know the potential pitfalls, so they just give the car a polish, slap an AA warranty on it and hope for the best.'

ENGINE

» Turbos and V6s are broadly trouble-free apart from the V8's original plastic coolant pipes under the inlet manifold, which should have been changed to the later aluminium ones. Each spark plug's individual coil pack can fail, too, leading to a misfire. The big problem is the S's Lokasil cylinder-coating failure. It starts with a sudden appetite for oil and an increasing knock, followed by a misfire as the bores and pistons are shredded. From first signs to death can take as little as 500 miles, and the problem can strike from around 70,000 miles. Turbos and later S models have a Nikasil coating which gives no trouble.

TRANSMISSION

» Generally reliable, including the four-wheel-drive componentry, but the automatic gearbox's valve block can fail. When this happens, drive is suddenly lost under acceleration then jerks back in again. Replacement is an £1800 job.

SUSPENSION & BRAKES

» This is a big, heavy car that can consume brakes and tyres at a frightening rate if driven with vigour. A 10,000-mile life for pads and rubber is quite normal, so check there's some meat left. The air suspension's pump can get lazy with age, flashing a warning until pressure is built up. A new one is around £1600 fitted.

BODYWORK & INTERIOR

» The drains under the scuttle can get blocked – the tubes could sometimes get flattened from new because they were too long and got trapped behind the wheelarch liner. This causes water to overflow onto the fuse box and ABS controller. The tube to the rear washer, inside the right-hand A-pillar, can freeze, damaging the tube. It then drips over the main ECU. Symptoms are headlights immediately going to main beam and indicators flashing when you turn the lights on. If the parking brake light stays on, the gas strut that actuates the switch has gone weak.

storemags



SPECIFICATION

» 2002-2007 Cayenne Turbo
» **Engine** V8, 4511cc, twin-turbo
» **Max power** 444bhp @ 6000rpm
» **Max torque** 457lb ft @ 2250-4750rpm
» **Transmission** Six-speed automatic, four-wheel drive
» **Tyres** 255/55 YR18
» **Weight (kerb)** 2355kg
» **Power-to-weight** 192bhp/ton
» **0-62mph** 5.5sec (claimed)
» **Top speed** 165mph (claimed)
» **Price when new** £68,970 (2003)

PARTS PRICES

» Supplied by JZ Machtech. Tyre prices from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT at 20 per cent

» **Tyres** £185.57 each (Continental Cross Contact UHP, fitted)
» **Brake pads (front set)** £244.67
» **Brake discs (front pair)** £374.71
» **Oil filter** £20.44
» **Air filter (two required)** £53.04 pair
» **Spark plugs** £131.71 set
» **Coil packs** £293.47 set

SERVICING

» Prices from JZ Machtech
» **20,000 miles** £270
» **40,000 miles** £540
» **80,000 miles** £575

WHAT TO PAY

» There are many more V6 and S Cayennes on offer than there are Turbos, and prices for these naturally aspirated versions are similar to each other and significantly lower than a Turbo commands. You can get into a high-mileage Cayenne for just under £10,000 now, but tread with great care, especially if it's an S. One with a replacement engine could, however, make a very good buy – just make sure it's not a second-hand unit that could lead to the problem happening again. Cayennes with manual gearboxes are very rare; the Turbo is Tiptronic-only.

Turbos start around £13,000 for an early high-miler and peak, in original 4.5-litre form, at around £30,000 for a late Turbo S with low mileage. Most examples seem to be in metallic black with 20in wheels, which will no doubt also prove the easiest combination to sell on.

USEFUL CONTACTS

» www.jzmachtech.com (sales and service)
» www.saxton4x4.co.uk (sales)
» www.cayenneforums.com (forums)
» www.porscheownersclub.org.uk (club)

troubled terrain. But even an air-sprung Cayenne in Comfort mode is still a taut, responsive machine able to perform agility feats previously undreamed of in an SUV, helped by a nominally rearward torque split. In essence the Cayenne feels a little like a 928 GTS, only taller and more sophisticated.

These early Cayennes are not paragons of reliability, though, and age doesn't help. Here, too, they are like a modern 928, especially in their electrical gremlins. Porsche specialist JZ Machtech goes so far as to recommend buyers avoid a pre-2007 Cayenne S entirely, thanks to a tendency beyond around 70,000 miles towards disintegrating Lokasil cylinder coatings and consequent catastrophic engine failure. A new engine from Porsche, once fitted, will at around £18,000 cost more than the car is worth.

'A NEW ENGINE WILL COST MORE THAN THE CAR IS WORTH'

In fact, JZ Machtech has given up selling all early Cayennes because they cause too much grief when customers bring them back for the inevitable faults to be fixed. Typically you'll find early Cayennes at 4x4 specialists rather than Porsche specialists, where the vibe is as different as the customers. So avoid the S and either opt for a sensible V6 (quite slow and little more economical than the S) or go for broke, brace yourself for a regular 14mpg and find a Turbo from £15,000. It's bonkers, but there's nothing else quite like it.

'I BOUGHT ONE'

James Barclay

» James, a serial 911 owner, bought a Cayenne S new in 2003 as the family car. He kept it for two-and-a-half years and 50,000 miles, so avoided the V8's ticking-time-bomb zone, but there was much else to keep the supplying dealer busy.

'The sat-nav failed within 24 hours of delivery, and we had three new units in all. Then there was the tailgate. Initially the opening glass part refused to shut, then the whole tailgate refused to lock, so the lock had to be replaced.

'And then a front air suspension unit collapsed. Porsche GB eventually paid £900 of the £1800 repair cost – even though we'd paid £1000 for a third-year guarantee. So we got rid of it.

'I think we were doing some of the development on Porsche's behalf. This was a much more complex car than previous Porsches, though I suspect that if I'd bought another it would have been fine.

'I did like the idea of a sporty 4x4, and by Porsche standards it wasn't desperately expensive. My wife still hankers after the power it had, although it was so big she used to find herself apologising to other people in car parks for the amount of space it occupied!'

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» www.saxton4x4.co.uk

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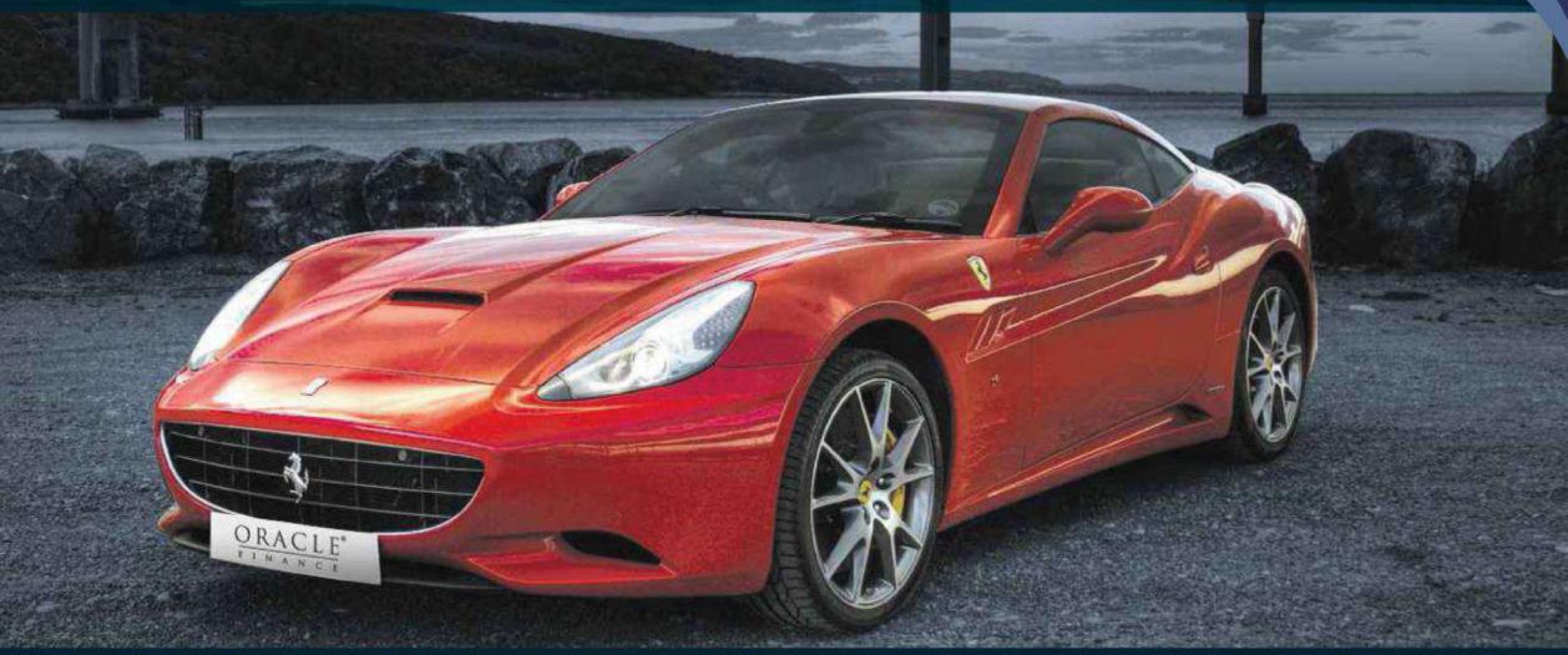


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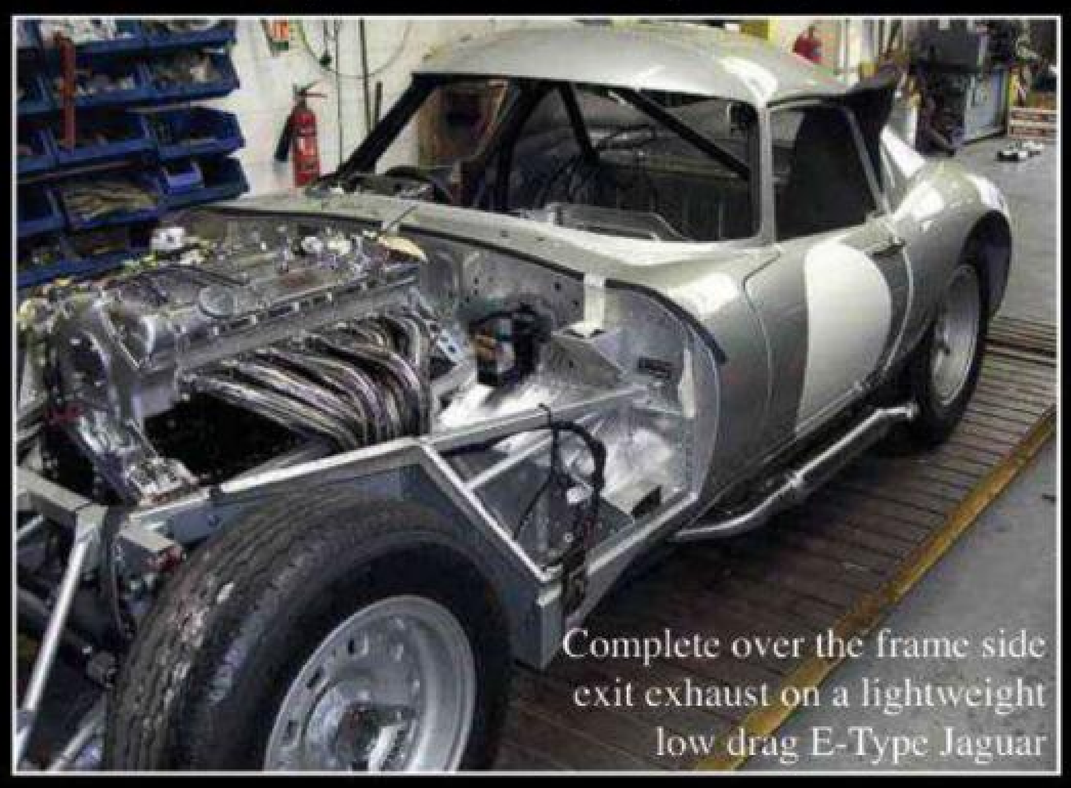
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SUPERPRO HONDA CIVIC BUSH KIT
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Want a sharper handling Honda Civic without wrecking the ride? Try this polyurethane suspension bush kit from SuperPro, which has been designed to improve feedback and grip without increasing noise or vibration. There are kits for the EK model (actually the control set-up for the Nippon Challenge's Buddy Club Civic Cup) and the newer EP3 version.



PIPERCROSS GOLF MK6 INTAKE KIT
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You can now have technology developed for the AmD BTCC Golf race car on your road-going mk6 GTI. The Pipercross PK370 induction kit includes a triple-layered filter, aluminium heat shield and SamcoSport hose (the Stage 2 aluminium turbo pipe is also available separately at £96). Pipercross claims a 45 per cent airflow improvement with the kit.



BILSTEIN CSC CLUBSPORT COILOVERS £TBC
WWW.BILSTEIN.DE

Aimed at road drivers who also want to take their cars on track, these new Clubsport coilovers are adjustable for bump and rebound and can lower a car by 30-55mm. A cheaper alternative to Bilstein's MDS motorsport suspension, initial fitments are for E46 and E36 BMW M3, Porsche 997 GT2 and GT3, and VW Golf mk6. Prices have yet to be announced.





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Cap off your engine detailing with a pair of these new CNC-machined beauties from alloy artists Forge Motorsport. They're designed to slip over the dull original radiator and oil caps of any VAG 2.0 TSI motor without modification. They come with a choice of a polished aluminium or a tough anodised black finish.

TRIED & TESTED

CLARKE CIR24 CORDLESS IMPACT WRENCH £107.98
CLARKEINTERNATIONAL.COM

» Swapping wheels is never the quickest of jobs and I've been doing a fair bit of it lately since I secured a set of winter tyres for my Octavia vRS. But thanks to this cordless impact wrench from Clarke the job took a lot less time than it usually does. Indeed, when it comes to spinning wheel bolts off and on, it's pretty much unbeatable.

Unlike some more expensive rivals, the CIR24 can spin off a tightened nut or bolt without it having to be loosened first. It only boasts 200Nm maximum torque, but it's more than enough grunt to quickly loosen wheel nuts and even heavily rusted tow-bar bolts.

It comes with everything you need, including four metric impact sockets and a spare battery in a rugged case. The battery has a good run time, as I found out when I used the wrench for wheel changing during last issue's tyre test. It would be more than up to a track session or race meeting.

I've used wrenches that are lighter and easier to handle, with the latest brushless motors and punchy li-po (lithium-ion polymer) batteries, but they can't match this powerhouse from Clarke. If you change wheels frequently, it's a workshop essential. **Kim Adams**



HAVE A PRODUCT FOR US TO REVIEW? CONTACT TRIED&TESTED@EVO.CO.UK

ASK THE EXPERT

Q I am planning to build a fast road/trackday car with a stripped-out interior and roll-cage. My options are a mk1 Focus or Alfa 156 2.0 TS. So my question is: which one has better aftermarket performance parts (availability, quality, etc) and where should I put my money first?
Juha Arveliw, Finland



A roll-cage may not be good for a road car

A First off I would advise anyone making a fast road car not to fit a roll-cage. Even in a modest crash your unhelmeted head can hit the steel bars, injuring you far more than the unmodified car would. If you still want to fit a cage, look at availability first – the Focus has many cheap cages available but the Alfa may need one making.

When looking for a cheap track car, it is worth getting one that competes in a one-make race series as this tends to mean there will be reasonably priced race parts available. Both your options have benefited from a strong following at club level, although arguably there are more tuning parts for the Ford.

Fit good tyres first, then lower the car a modest amount with slightly harder springs and the best dampers you can afford. Next spend a bit of time getting the geometry set up to your tastes. A lot of chassis tuning can be done just on toe settings and tyre pressures.

For a trackday car there is little point tuning the engine, but there is a lot to be gained from making it more reliable with a thorough service and performance oil. The brakes will get worked hard and will benefit from fast-road pads, new discs and new fluid. A decent sports seat will keep you steady and save weight too. But the secret is to keep things simple so your car spends more time on track and less in the garage. **Ralph Hosier**

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If you don't like wearing earpieces for your in-car hands-free calls, this neat gadget from MotorMouth could be the solution. It plugs into your car's auxiliary socket and plays phone conversations through the sound system. It can also be used to stream music from your iPhone or Android handset.



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There's something for all budgets and preferences in this new range of LED inspection lamps from Philips. The line-up starts with the battery-powered, 250-lux penlight that can also be used as a torch. The mains-powered 2400-lux wand is £79.99 and the top-of-the-range £129.99 rechargeable light puts out 1200 lux. All are impact-resistant and dust- and waterproof.





TRIED & TESTED

DODO JUICE HOME BREW WAX KIT
£39.95 WWW.DODOJUICE.COM

» Last time I made home brew I was a student and it tasted filthy. I'm a lot happier with my latest attempt, which smells much better, although I can't comment on the taste as it's a car wax. It was a lot quicker to make too, as you just heat the two ingredients in a saucepan of water, mix thoroughly and allow to cool.

The result is 250ml of wax packed with carnauba, beeswax and Dodo's solvent and fortifier mix, although mine was green rather than the amber claimed in the instructions. Just apply the labels and you're ready to go.

So does it work or is it just a slick trick from a producer known for tongue-in-cheek marketing? I tried it alongside Dodo's ready-mixed Purple Haze Pro wax, which is £44.95 for a 200ml pot. Both are hard waxes, so a little goes a long way. After leaving to haze, both were easy to buff to a shine with no sign of dusting. Beading was clear from the start; four weeks later, the rate had slowed slightly but both waxes were still clearly shifting water, with my DIY version only a fraction behind the Purple Haze. Another fun product from Dodo Juice that actually works. **Kim Adams**



Home brew ingredients need to be mixed with water in a saucepan

HAVE A PRODUCT FOR US TO REVIEW? CONTACT TRIED&TESTED@EVO.CO.UK

ASK THE EXPERT

Q I am about to take delivery of my first ever brand-new car, an Audi S3. I have read various techniques for running-in a new engine. Some say easy on the revs, others say use a wide rev-range so the ECU can learn your technique, some say don't use cruise control as using the same revs constantly is bad. I am also considering having the car remapped at some point (if I become bored of the power on tap). Ideally should this be done at low miles, or later on?
Andrew Hewitt



S3 is a remap candidate, but when to do it?

A First off, look at the manual – every engine design is different, so follow the advice in the book.

Using a range of revs is good, as running at one engine speed can result in a certain type of bore wear that leaves a ledge near the top, so I wouldn't use cruise control for the first few hundred miles. Most procedures require the maximum revs to be raised gradually over the running-in period, but again check your handbook. Avoid short journeys and light loads – don't be shy of the accelerator pedal either.

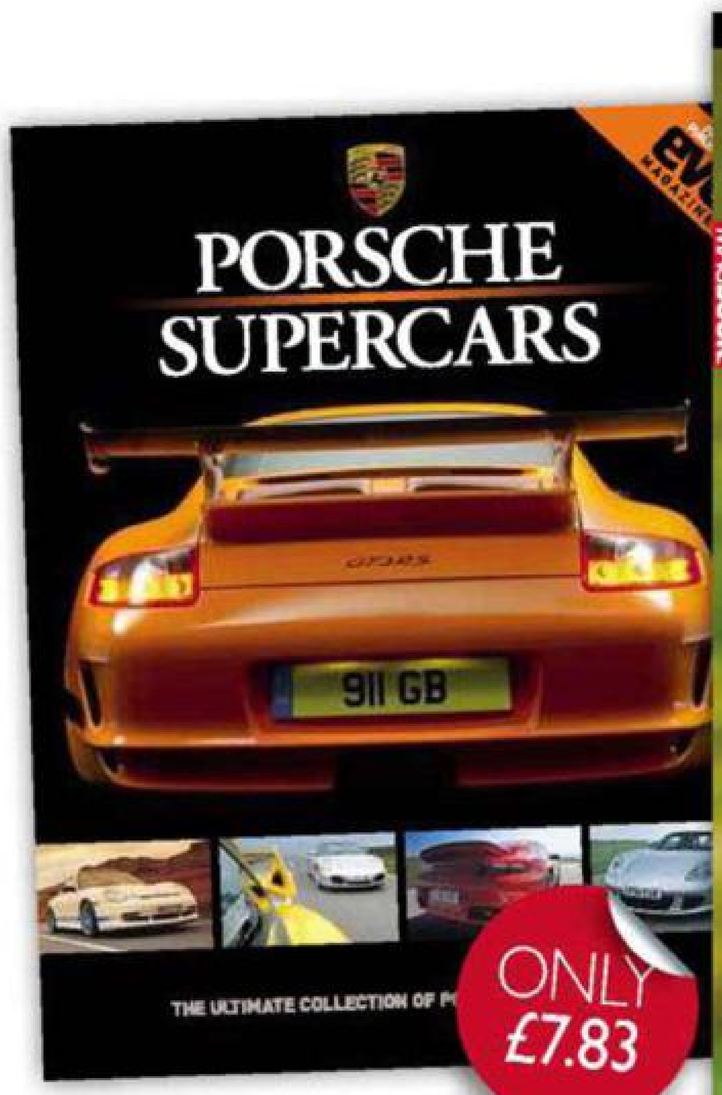
Modern oils are very good, too good in some respects, and on some highly tuned engines a high-quality oil would drastically slow down the process of the piston rings bedding in. Such engines may use a 'running-in' oil, which may be just a cheap oil with minimal additives. Once the rings have bedded in, this oil must be changed to get rid of all the by-products of running-in. It will be replaced with the normal high-quality oil. This is why the first service is so important.

I wouldn't consider re-mapping until the engine has settled in and had a few hundred miles of mixed driving under its belt after that first service. Some racers prefer engines to be 'seasoned' to at least 10,000 miles before they are stripped for race prep... **Ralph Hosier**

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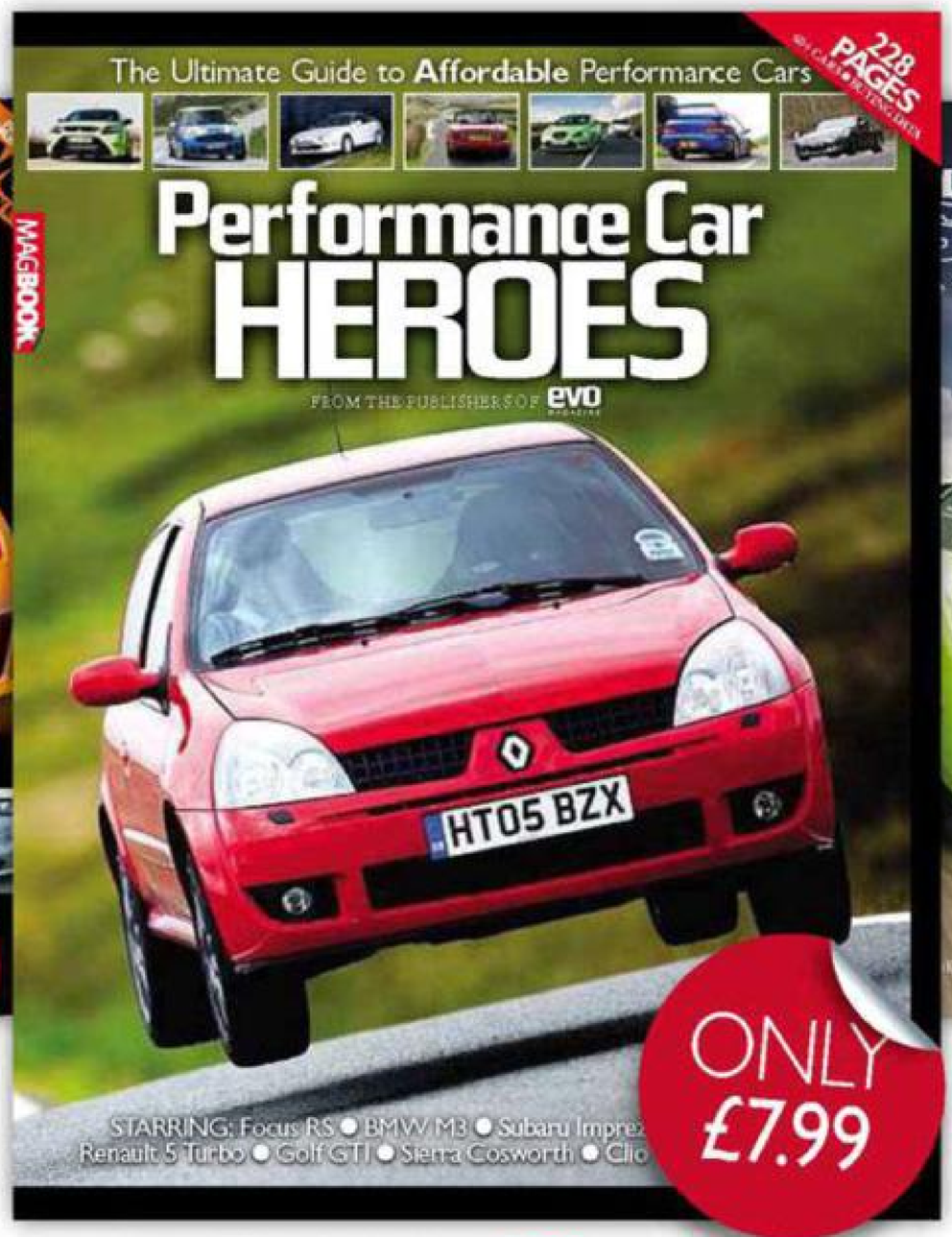
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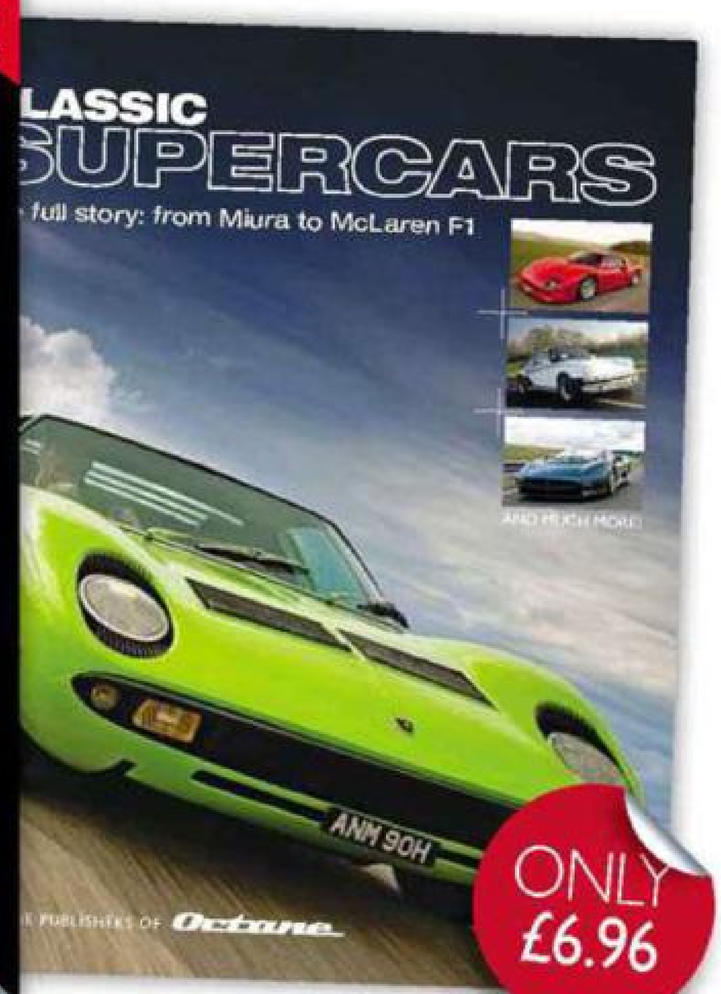
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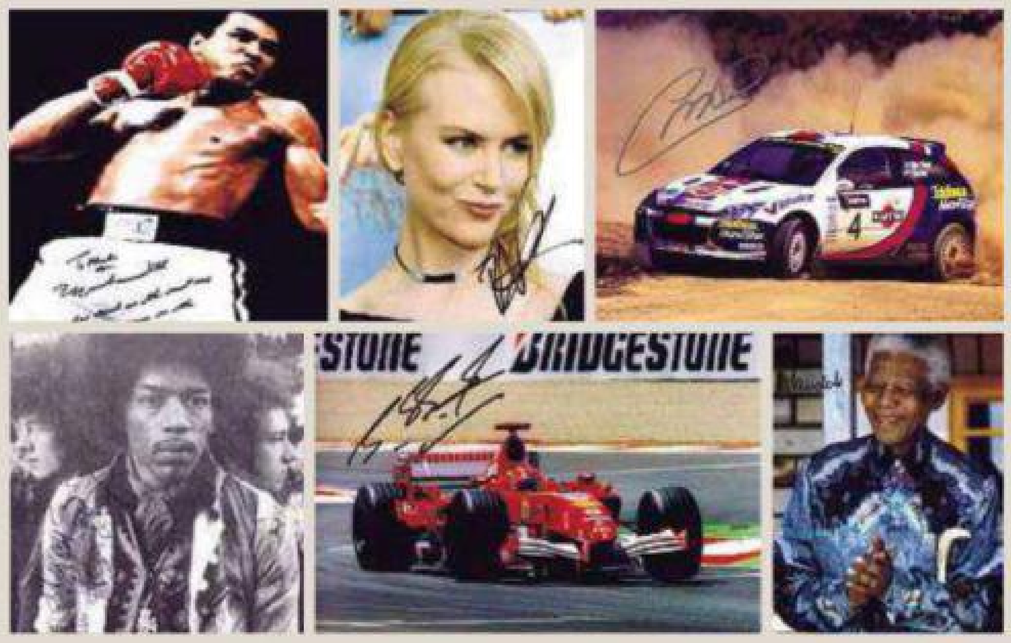
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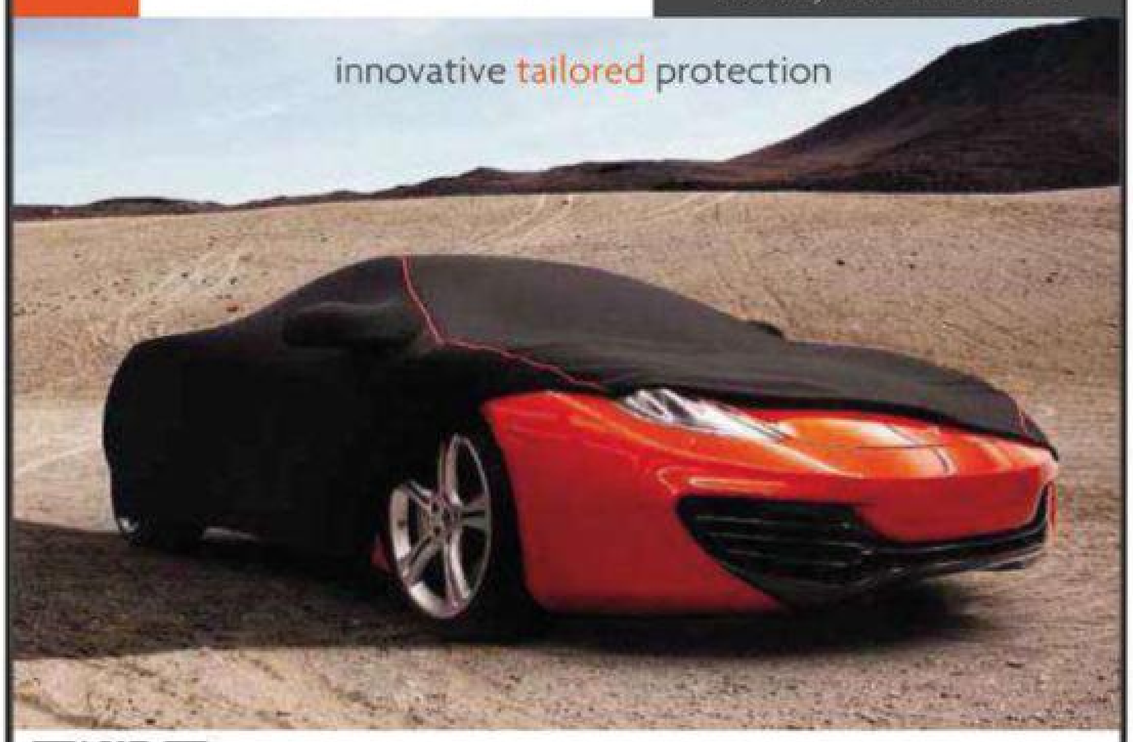
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MODELS, BOOKS, DVDs & CLOTHING





Interior of model Espace F1 features four race seats, a roll-cage and race instruments in the dash

RENAULT ESPACE F1
€59
OTTO-MODELS.COM

From Otto Mobile comes this model of the only Espace that's ever likely to appeal to **evo** readers: the 800bhp V10 Renault F1-engined version created by Matra back in 1995 to celebrate the first decade of the people-carrier. This 1:18-scale version is limited to just 3000 examples.







RENAULTSPORT MÉGANE R26.R
€39 WWW.OTTO-MODELS.COM

The Mégane R26.R is one of our favourite hot hatches. This 1:18-scale version, also from Otto Mobile, is accurate down to the red harnesses and (perhaps unintentionally) plastic windows. Just 1500 examples of the model will be available – slightly more than the 450 that Renault made of the real thing, but it's sure to sell out fast.



T-SHIRTS



WINGING IT
£19
WWW.SLICKATTIRE.COM
The late '60s were early days for aerodynamics in Formula 1, with crude, high rear wings beginning to appear on the cars. It didn't take McLaren long to figure out that two wings – one over each axle – would be better than one, as seen on the M7C-1 featured on this T-shirt. Available in four different colours.



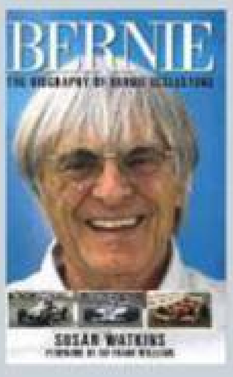
RUN GMC
£15
WWW.SHOTDEADINTHEHEAD.COM
In a cunning play on the once ubiquitous T-shirt sported by fans of 1980s hip-hop act Run DMC, this tee celebrates the coolest van ever – the GMC Vandura of TV soldiers of fortune The A-Team. The design is printed on a soft-style T-shirt in both men's and women's styles and in a choice of colours.



PORSCHE 2.7 RS
£20
PETROLTHREADS.COM
The larger engine, the wider wheels, the blistered rear arches and, of course, the ducktail spoiler... just some of the ingredients that went into the magical Porsche 911 2.7 RS of 1973 – still, perhaps, the greatest 911 of all time. This tee features that car and is available in a choice of four different colours.

BOOK

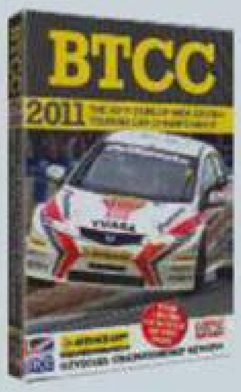
BERNIE: THE BIOGRAPHY OF BERNIE ECCLESTONE
£9.99 WWW.HAYNES.CO.UK



Susan Watkins' 30-year friendship with F1 boss Bernie Ecclestone has allowed her to chronicle his life like no-one else could, but it doesn't appear to have affected her open approach to covering the UK's 'most successful and controversial' businessman. Now in updated, paperback form, *Bernie* details the emerging rift between Ecclestone and former FIA head Max Mosley, includes frank 'I've hurt people' admissions, and is full of extraordinary detail, including the 80-year-old's mugging in 2010.

DVD

BTCC 2011 REVIEW
£19.99 WWW.DUKEVIDEO.COM



Just five points separated the three leading drivers as they entered the final weekend of the 2011 British Touring Car Championship, making for one of the closest finishes the series has ever seen. How Matt Neal, Gordon Shedden and Jason Plato arrived at their respective first, second and third places on the championship podium can be seen in this two-DVD set from Duke, which allows you to relive every important crash and pass from the 30-race season, complete with commentary from Ben Edwards and Tim Harvey. You'll need to be a huge BTCC fan to want to sit through the full seven hours of coverage here, but you certainly won't feel short-changed.

BOOK OF THE MONTH





THE OFFICIAL FORMULA 1 SEASON REVIEW 2011
£30.00 WWW.HAYNES.CO.UK

'Thorough' doesn't begin to describe the latest edition in Haynes' series of *Official Formula 1 Season Review* books. Crammed within its 280 pages you will find each of 2011's 28 participating drivers discussing the highs and lows of their season, an in-depth look at the 12 teams' cars, and a full race-by-race analysis of the season, with commentary on all the most memorable moments from the drivers or senior team personnel involved. There's also all the facts and figures you could ever need, including a lap-by-lap breakdown of each car's position for every race. Topped off with over 500 photographs and a foreword by Bernie Ecclestone, it's a must-have for any Formula 1 fanatic worth their salt.

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CATCHPOLE'S VIEW

'A 1M ON THE A1(M) WOULDN'T REALLY BE THE IDEAL PAIRING'

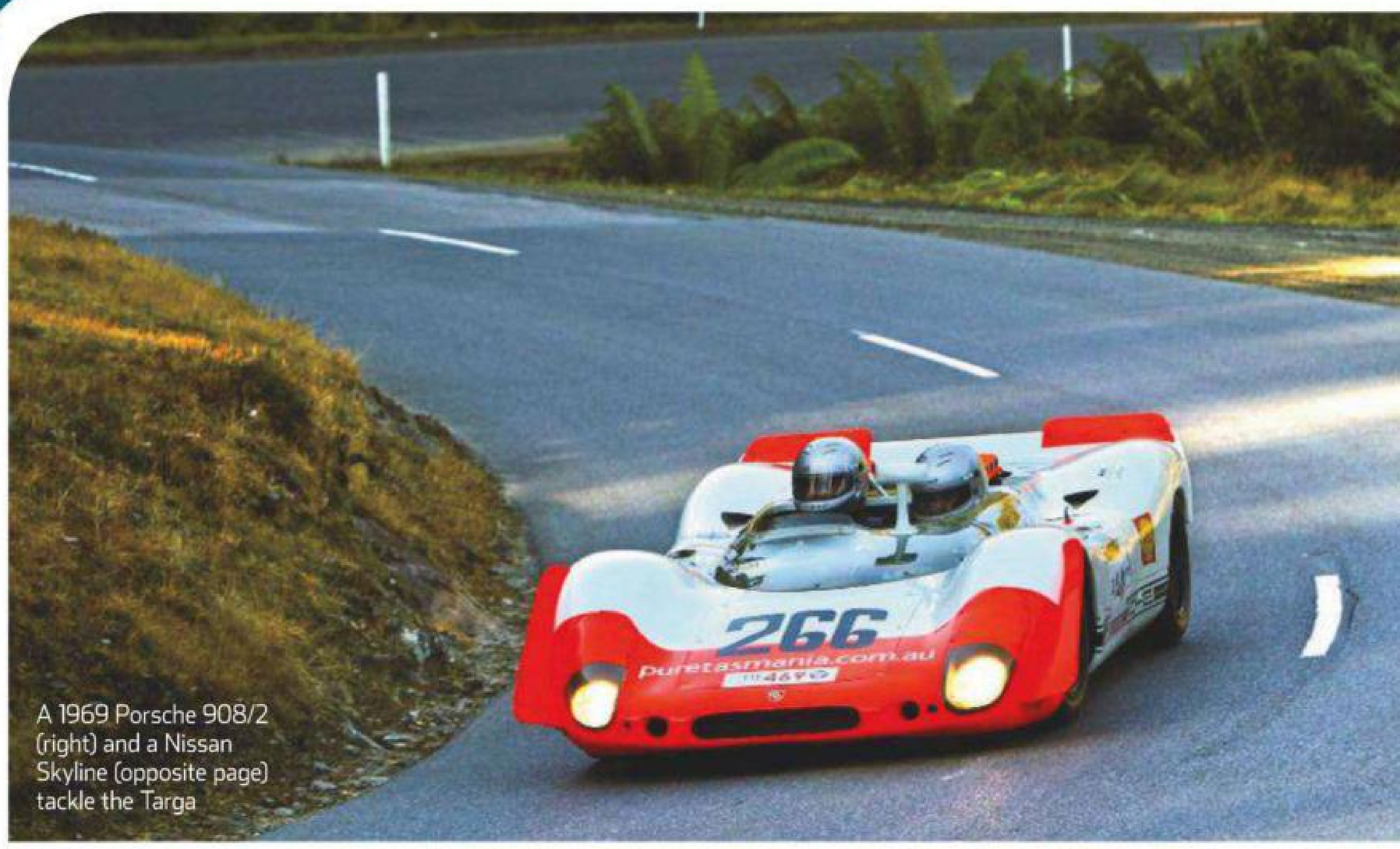
Which road number best matches its corresponding car? The short stretch of A288 into Southsea, for example, wouldn't really get the best from one of the finest of all Ferraris. London's South Circular might not be the ideal place for a Peugeot 205 to cock an inside rear wheel, but it is at least slightly more fitting. Conversely, the A7 through the Scottish Borders is a fine and glorious road, but I fear it would overwhelm the little Austin.

A 1M on the A1(M) wouldn't really be the ideal pairing, although an argument could perhaps be made for an M5 heading south-west or an M6 sweeping round Birmingham. Fife is where Porsches would need to migrate to, and arguably they should find a happier hunting ground on the A911 from Milnathort to Windygates via Glenrothes. Its close neighbour, the B917, might sadly be a touch tricky in a Le Mans car, but the B993 in Aberdeenshire looks like it could be promising for a little air-cooled fun.

As idle pastimes go, matching roads with cars is unlikely to catch on in the way that golf or darts has, but it's something to do when you're parked up waiting for someone to finish their shopping.



Henry Catchpole
Features editor



A 1969 Porsche 908/2 (right) and a Nissan Skyline (opposite page) tackle the Targa

GREAT DRIVES

TARGA TASMANIA

The route of this great modern road race takes in some amazing roads on the island of Tasmania – and you can drive them too

Last year saw the 20th anniversary of the legendary Targa Tasmania, an event that quite rightly employs the tagline 'The Ultimate Tarmac Rally'. The concept of utilising Tasmania's fabulous public roads as a showcase for great cars and drivers was hatched when John Large, then president of CAMS (Australian motorsport's governing body), met journalist Max Stahl. Large wanted a headline motoring event for Tasmania; Stahl had visions of a classic Italian-style road race. Targa was the result.

These days Targa runs over six days and regularly attracts more than 300 entrants in anything from 1930s Dodges to the latest Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggeras, and its honour roll includes Stirling Moss, Jack Brabham, Walter Röhrl and Bob Wolleck. Following in their wheel-tracks is no hard task, for the roads used at Targa are easily accessible – you just have to get there first!

Targa's North East Loop is

EVENTS CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

» **12 February** Mudeford Classic, American and Hot Rod Meet www.mudefordmeet.co.uk

» **18 February** Stuntfest, Santa Pod, Northamptonshire www.stuntfest.co.uk

» **19 February** Brooklands Classic Breakfast Club www.brooklandsmuseum.com

» **25 February** Drift What Ya Brung, Santa Pod www.dwyb.co.uk

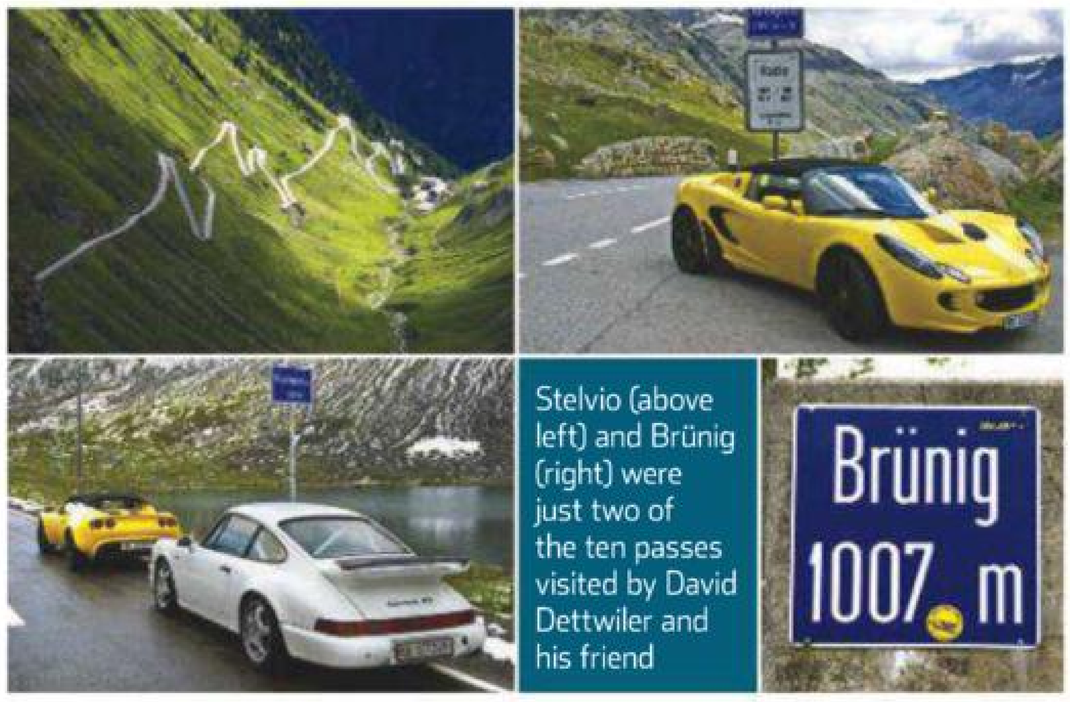
MARCH

» **4 March** Goodwood Breakfast Club 'Tax-Free Sunday' www.goodwood.co.uk

» **10 March** Saturday Night Special (RWYB + Jet Cars), Santa Pod www.rwyb.co.uk

MORE EVENTS AT
WWW.EVO.CO.UK/EVENTS

READER'S ROAD TRIP: TEN PASSES IN A DAY



Stelvio (above left) and Brünig (right) were just two of the ten passes visited by David Dettwiler and his friend

» My Basel home is only 200 miles from the Stelvio Pass, yet I had never experienced its endless switchbacks. So last summer I started making plans. When studying the map I realised that in order to get there I needed to cross two more passes, and on the way back I might as well visit another one. Then I saw that by just nipping across into another valley I could actually add another three! And if I stayed on Italian roads a little bit longer, I could add another one, too...

That's how I came up with the splendid idea of ticking off ten passes in one day. It took all of ten seconds to convince a friend that this was an excellent plan; ambitious, perhaps, but all we could think of was spending a full day driving some

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EDITED BY
HENRY CATCHPOLE
henryc@evo.co.uk





traditionally tackled on day two, and is revered for its challenging combination of twisting tarmac and tight stage times. From Launceston – the main base for Targa – the A3 takes you east towards St Helens, and after about 35km (22 miles) transforms into the roller-coaster known as 'The Sideling' – the loop's most famous stage.

This is a pugnacious road; its signature tightening-left into uphill-right (mind the camber change) sequences dominating the early reaches before the road climbs, morphing into a long, well-sighted straight across the peak of a mountain, with a great lookout if you care to stop, before cascading down the other side.

After a quick detour through Legerwood (a fast stage through pastureland) the route rejoins the A3 to St Helens, running alongside pristine surf beaches before switching to the A4 for the inland return over the Elephant Saddle.

The last competitive stage of the loop is completed through Longford. The Country Club Hotel in the town centre is a must-visit for scholars of open-wheel racing history for its large collection of memorabilia.

HOW TO GET THERE

The best option for overseas visitors is to catch a long-haul flight to Melbourne, on Australia's mainland. From there it's a 50-minute connection to Launceston, where you can pick up a hire car at the airport.

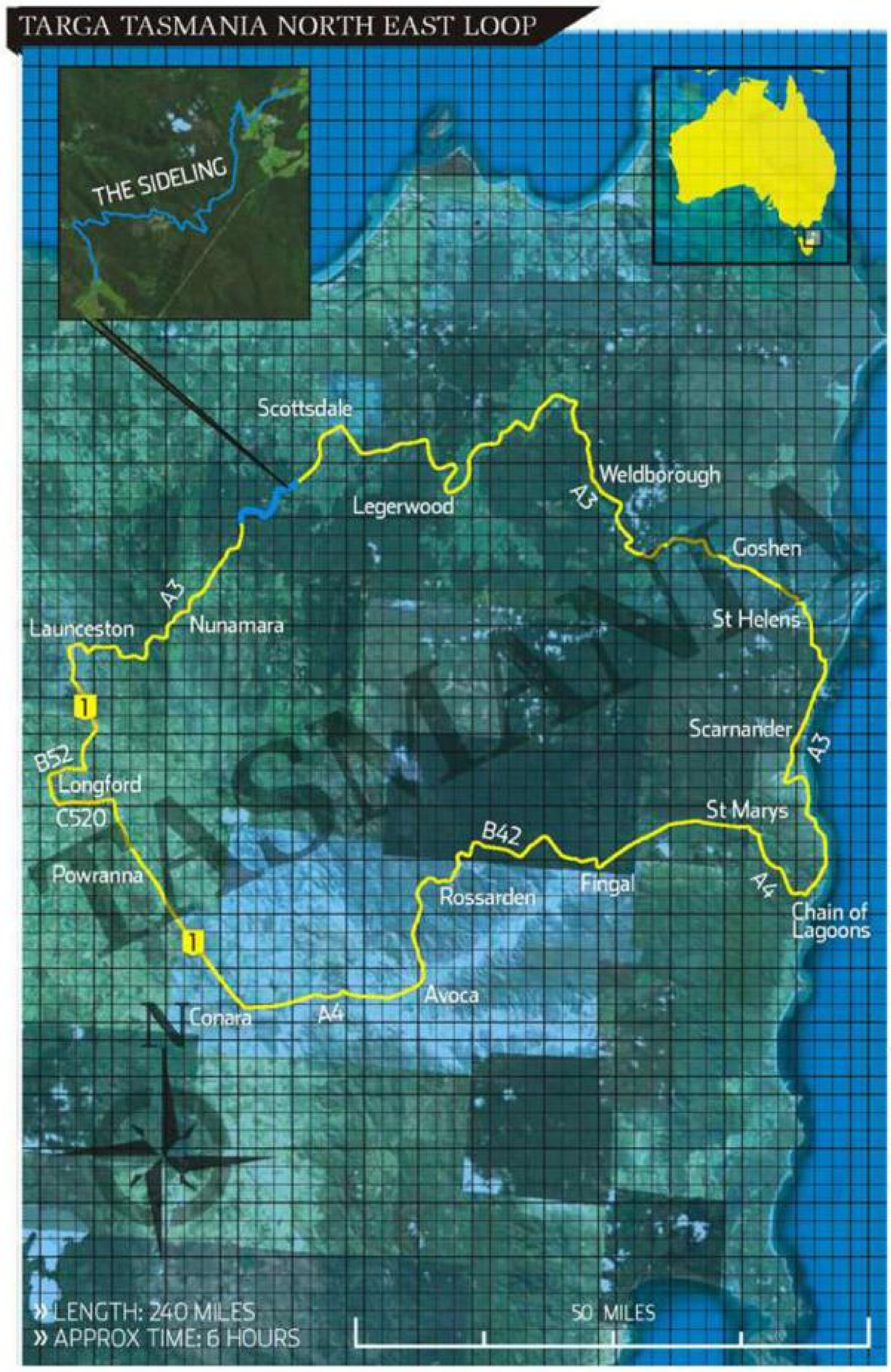
Alternatively you can board the Spirit of Tasmania cruise ship, which sails from Melbourne to Devonport on Tassie's northern coast. It's a nine-hour-plus journey.

WHERE TO STAY

Launceston's Country Club is the official start point for Targa and offers a range of clean, modern rooms and a wealth of facilities, including a golf course, five restaurants and a casino. For those wishing to make the North East Loop a two-day affair, we'd recommend an overnight stop at St Helens, where you can enjoy freshly caught fish for dinner while taking in the shimmering emerald coastline.

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

If you're planning to visit in April or May, check the official website of the Targa Tasmania (www.targa.org.au) for details of road closures for the race. When you're there, remember that Tasmania's vast wilderness teems with wildlife, so always allow a safety margin, particularly when driving at dusk or where forward vision is restricted. **Adam Davis**



exciting roads and experiencing the thrill of driving, me in my 2002 Elise, him in his 1994 Porsche 964 RS.

So one night in late summer we set off for Davos in eastern Switzerland. We stayed there for the night and at the crack of dawn set off to tackle the ten passes: Flüela, Fuorn, Stelvio, Foscagno, Bernina, Julier, Oberalp, Furka, Grimsel and Brünig. It was a long but fantastic day of driving, with mile after mile of enjoyable road and, of course, no shortage of beautiful scenery.

By the time we got home we had covered 400 miles – and were already planning our next trip. **David Dettwiler**

Send your road trip story to eds@evo.co.uk

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You pull into a toll booth in your right-hand-drive car, put the handbrake on, get out while trying not to bash the door on a high concrete kerb, jog round to the other side of the car, bend down and fiddle with the ticket machine, jog back round while raising an apologetic hand to the queue of traffic behind, get in and then stall in your anxiousness not to hold everyone up any longer. You can attempt to stay in the car and reach through the passenger window, but this requires feats of bendiness that only years of Pilates can prepare you for. There is also the possibility of a gearstick in the crotch.

You might have a passenger. However, inevitably they will have just nodded off to a blissful dribbling sleep and you waking them with the jolt of a kerbed wheel as you try to position them within an arm-stretch of the machine will not go down well.

For short journeys in or through France it's probably not worth paying the extra for the Liber-t tag, but if you're planning a couple of long trips then it's worth setting up the grey box with your direct debit details and sailing through the big empty lane with the large 't' above it. **HC**



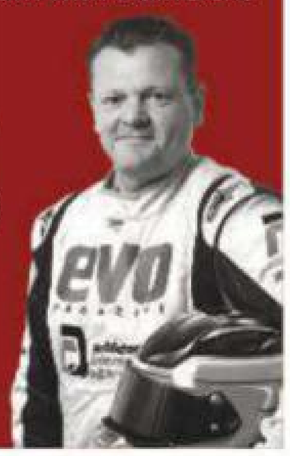
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GREEN'S VIEW

'GROSJEAN IS FAST, NO QUESTION'

Lotus has taken a big gamble with its 2012 Formula 1 line-up, dispensing with continuity and signing two new drivers. Okay, one has 'former world champ' and '18 wins' writ large on his CV, but the other had only a short spell in F1 in 2009 when he failed to make enough of a ripple to either be kept on or signed up by another team. He's the big risk, right? Well no, I reckon Kimi Räikkönen is, because Romain Grosjean was far better than he was given credit for in his Renault stint. He's hungry and ready to prove a point. Mark my words, he's going to be a tougher nut to crack than Rosberg has been for Schumacher.

That scenario proved championship crowns count for nothing when you've been away, and while Kimi has been crashing rally cars and racing a 'Perky Jerky' Toyota Tundra in NASCAR, Grosjean has been steadily rebuilding a career that was on the brink two years ago. The French driver is properly fast, of that there's no question, and with Robert Kubica still not ready to make a comeback after his accident in a rally car in early 2011 – and looking increasingly like he'll return with a different team – Lotus needs a new team leader. 'Iceman' Kimi will need to find some fire in his belly if he wants to fulfil that role.



Roger Green
Features writer

ALL CHANGE IN GT1

New cars and circuits join GT1 World Championship for 2012

This year's GT1 World Championship will be based around GT3 regulations, with existing GT1 cars pegged back to ensure performance will be equalised. The move comes because the current GT1 machines are nearly all based on old or defunct models (such as the Lamborghini Murciélago, Ford GT, Corvette ZR1, Aston DB9 and early Nissan GT-R) and manufacturers are much more keen to build GT3 machines that can be sold to a considerably wider customer base and are therefore much more profitable.

The good news is that this means the field will be considerably more varied in 2012, with each team representing one brand of car. Teams running McLaren and Mercedes models have already been announced and it is expected that Ferraris, BMWs, Astons and Audis will shortly enter the fray. The GT1 World Championship will be distinguished from the other GT3-based series running throughout Europe by only being open to professional teams with two fully professional drivers, and, as before, all cars will be 'performance balanced' before the start of the year to ensure the racing is close.

The calendar for 2012 has been announced, and although there will be no UK round this year (the nearest the championship gets to our shores is Zolder in Belgium on April 22 and Zandvoort in the Netherlands on October 7), the series will be visiting some intriguing locations, such as Beijing and Ordos in China, San Luis in Argentina and the new 2.5-mile Moscow Raceway, which is situated about 40 miles outside the Russian capital.



GT1 cars will mix with GT3 machines like SLS AMG (below)

The GT3-spec cars may not be as rapid as the GT1 contenders we have become used to, but the ingredients are in place for a spectacular season of supercar racing at an intriguing list of venues, none of which has ever hosted a modern Grand Prix.

Roger Green



EVENTS CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

» **17 February** Trackday, Donington Park
www.goldtrack.co.uk

» **23 February** Novice-only trackday, Snetterton www.clubmsv.com

MARCH

» **1 March** Trackday, Thruxton
www.goldtrack.co.uk

» **12 March** How Fast, Bedford Autodrome
www.howfast.com

» **18 March** Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix
www.formula1.com

» **25 March** Formula 1 Malaysian Grand Prix
www.formula1.com

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» There's no getting away from the fact that race gear is expensive. The underwear we've been testing this month will set you back almost £200 (and £38.50 more if you add a balaclava to the mix). But its makers claim that it offers significant benefits over and above regular Nomex undies because a layer of bioceramics has been added.

Bioceramics are durable metal oxides that were originally developed for orthopaedic surgery and dentistry, but can now be attached to textiles. So what do they do? Apparently they stimulate the lymphatic system, improving your immune system to allow you to recover faster after physical effort by eliminating toxins from the body. Furthermore, this underwear reduces inflammation in muscles and joints, prevents bacterial growth thereby reducing odour (always handy), eases joint pain and stiffness, and 'facilitates cell exchanges and produces better oxygenation within the body's soft tissues to temporarily increase local blood circulation'.

It all sounds impressive, but be aware that it also increases core body



temperature by 0.3°C. It does feel like you're wearing a set of thermals, which won't be desirable if you're going to be working in an enclosed cockpit with no air-con. I did seem to sweat less while wearing it, however, and the next version of this underwear will be made more breathable. Roger Green

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ROGER GREEN
rogerg@evo.co.uk

TRACK GUIDES: NO. 8

ZANDVOORT

Although perhaps not an obvious trackday destination, Zandvoort really is worth seeking out. It is one of the very best circuits in Europe, and if you drive there from Calais it takes no longer to get to than Spa or the Nürburgring. Alternatively you can catch an overnight ferry from Harwich to the Hook of Holland, and as the circuit is located about half an hour from the centre of Amsterdam, there's plenty of nightlife too.

The circuit has a history that dates back over 60 years, and it hosted Formula 1 Grands Prix up until 1985. Since then the track has been shortened, but the high-speed challenge of a swooping ring of tarmac that flows through sand dunes remains. Think of it as the Nordschleife on a beach and you'll get an idea of what it's all about.

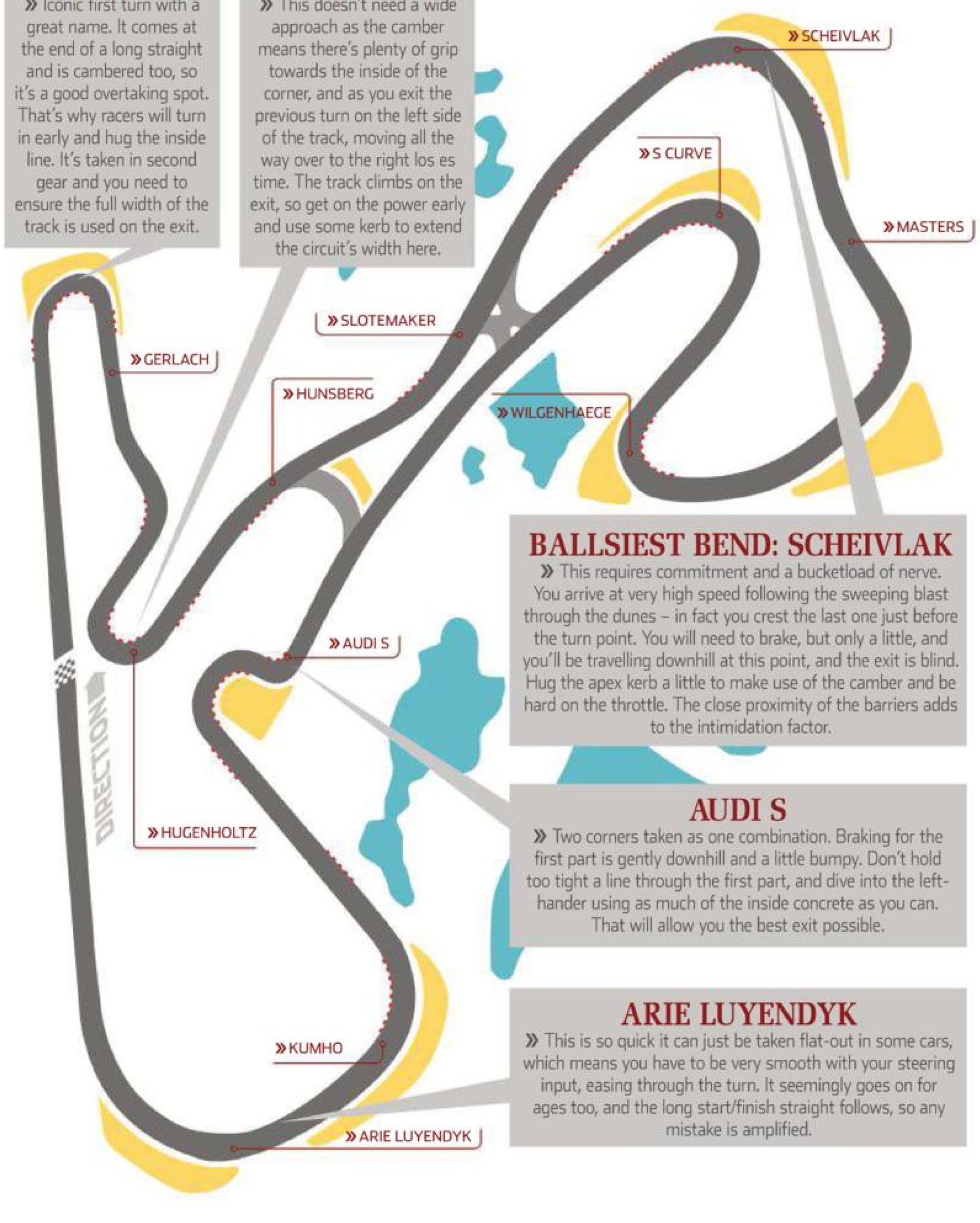
Unusually, the grip levels can vary depending on the wind, as sand can get blown onto the course, which makes it even more intense. Zandvoort will test you whatever car you have, but, just like the famous German track, it really gets the adrenalin pumping once you have access to 300bhp or more.

TARZAN

» Iconic first turn with a great name. It comes at the end of a long straight and is cambered too, so it's a good overtaking spot. That's why racers will turn in early and hug the inside line. It's taken in second gear and you need to ensure the full width of the track is used on the exit.

HUGENHOLTZ

» This doesn't need a wide approach as the camber means there's plenty of grip towards the inside of the corner, and as you exit the previous turn on the left side of the track, moving all the way over to the right los es time. The track climbs on the exit, so get on the power early and use some kerb to extend the circuit's width here.



BALLSIEST BEND: SCHEIVLAK

» This requires commitment and a bucketload of nerve. You arrive at very high speed following the sweeping blast through the dunes – in fact you crest the last one just before the turn point. You will need to brake, but only a little, and you'll be travelling downhill at this point, and the exit is blind. Hug the apex kerb a little to make use of the camber and be hard on the throttle. The close proximity of the barriers adds to the intimidation factor.

AUDI S

» Two corners taken as one combination. Braking for the first part is gently downhill and a little bumpy. Don't hold too tight a line through the first part, and dive into the left-hander using as much of the inside concrete as you can. That will allow you the best exit possible.

ARIE LUYENDYK

» This is so quick it can just be taken flat-out in some cars, which means you have to be very smooth with your steering input, easing through the turn. It seemingly goes on for ages too, and the long start/finish straight follows, so any mistake is amplified.

ASK THE EXPERT

Q I own a Renaultsport Clio and plan to take it on several trackdays this year. I've only done a few trackdays so far but I seemed to spend a lot of time getting overtaken and want to redress the balance a bit. I've been thinking about buying a set of lighter wheels with slick tyres. Would this be a wise buy or would my money be better spent elsewhere?

Ben Shepherd



Slick tyres will improve your lap times on a trackday, but there are consequences

A Fitting a set of slicks would instantly find you a chunk of lap time, giving you the obvious benefit of carrying more speed through the turns, which would then be carried down the following straights. However, things aren't as simple as that. Firstly, the extra grip will increase the stress levels placed on the suspension and brakes, even if you reduce the unsprung weight with lighter wheels (although it should be noted that even with lighter wheels the weight per corner might still increase, as track tyres can be heavier than road rubber).

To get the best from these tyres you really need to uprate the brake pads because now you will be able to brake later and harder due to the extra purchase race rubber has on the tarmac, and this in turn will heat the brakes faster. The extra corner loadings can also have a similar effect on the fluid in the dampers, causing temperatures to rise and reactiveness to reduce. Buying a set of road-legal trackday tyres rather than full-on slicks will lessen the loadings, but a pad upgrade would still be advisable.

Personally, I think you should spend your money on having more fun by taking part in more days and getting instruction. You'll be amazed by how much faster you can go with practice and tuition, and unlike the tyres, which will ultimately wear out and be thrown away, the knowledge and skills you gain will stay with you forever. RG

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR TRACK EXPERT?
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Caterham already has a presence in F1; now it's targeting the other end of the racing spectrum

THE INSIDE LINE

CATERHAM: KARTS TO F1

New karting championship will be first rung on Caterham motorsport ladder. By ***Roger Green***

Up until now, if you wanted to race a Caterham you would simply take your pick from the numerous Seven championships. All of them are based on essentially the same car, so all you had to do was decide how much you wanted to spend and how fast you wanted to go (the two are inextricably linked). But from next year things are going to be very different.

We have for some time now been following the development of the SP300.R, a mini Le Mans prototype sportscar that will be run in its own one-make series in 2013. And of course since the company was acquired by Tony Fernandes last summer it has the top of the motorsport tree covered with the Caterham F1 and GP2 teams. But now the marque is working on the entry point, unveiling plans to introduce its own karting championship.

Since 1995, Caterham has had a tradition of introducing new drivers into motorsport, and through its Academy almost 1000 have begun their racing endeavours this way, but this time it's aiming more at the career-minded driver than the hobbyist racer. The new scheme is poised to offer young drivers a variation on the usual first steps, and although details on how it will work are at this stage thin on the ground we are assured that it will be low-cost and all the machinery will be identical, placing emphasis on ability rather than access to funds.

Caterham Motorsport manager Simon Lambert said that more details would be released throughout 2012 as soon as they were finalised. 'With progression possible through the Caterham "ladder" right through to F1, Caterham karting will appeal to those looking to make a career in motorsport,' he said. 'But, more importantly, our aim is to target the mass-market of parents and youngsters who would like to race in a competitive and yet affordable karting series which, until now, might have been an unachievable dream. Caterham is determined to make motorsport accessible to everyone.'

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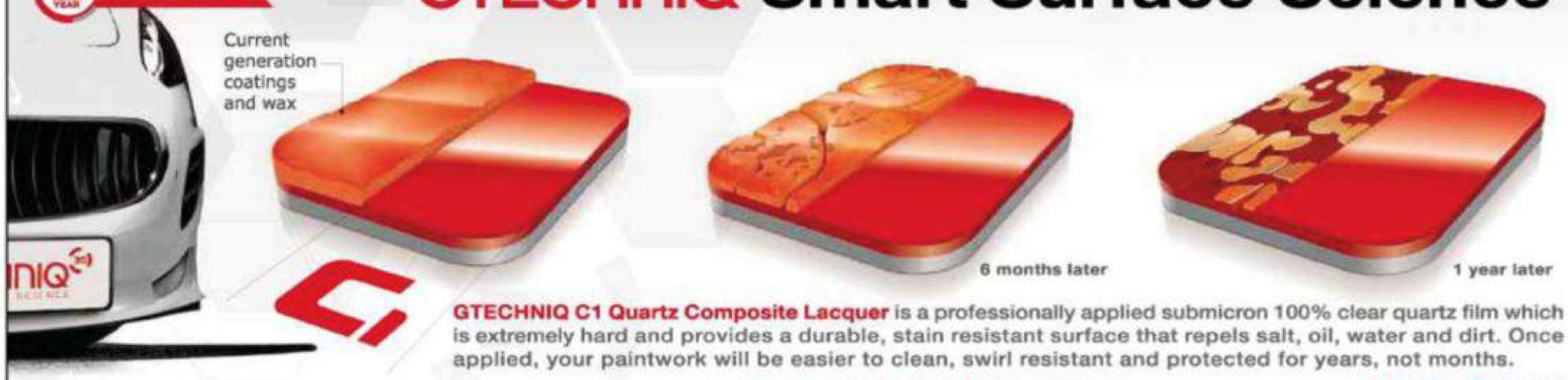
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PORSCHE BOXSTER SPYDER v AUDI R8 SPYDER V8

Over 100bhp separates these two Spyders, but will it be big power and four-wheel drive or light weight and rear drive that makes for the fastest lap time? ***Richard Meaden*** *finds out*



 Pictures: Max Earey

StoreMags com

Though they both share the same name, these Spyders from Audi and Porsche are very different creatures. One glamorous and luxuriously appointed, the other pared-back and selfishly performance-focused, they make a disparate yet very appealing pair.

With power-to-weight ratios within 7bhp per ton of each other (259bhp/ton for the R8 versus 252 for the Boxster) they are very closely matched on paper, so with neither car having posted a time around the West Circuit before, the stage is set for a fascinating track battle.

Or at least it would be if the weather would play ball. The sky is brilliant blue, but the ambient temperature is a chilly 3 degrees C and the tarmac at the Bedford Autodrome is wearing a slick coating of overnight rain. A few exploratory laps in each car reveals truly horrible conditions, so Jethro Bovingdon and I decide to grab a warming cup of coffee and take a closer look at the cars we'll be attempting to lap once the circuit has more dry patches than wet.

With its sweet 4.2-litre V8 engine, aluminium structure, hand-built exclusivity and quattro all-wheel drive, the R8 is a premium open-top sports car in every respect. Though 424bhp and 317lb ft of torque mean the V8-engined Audi lacks the outright firepower of its V10-engined brother, we've always expressed a preference for the V8's greater poise. This car also has the lovely six-speed manual transmission rather than the slightly clunky R-tronic paddle-shift, which makes it very close to our optimum specification.

Despite the aluminium used in its construction, the Audi is no lightweight, tipping the scales at 1660kg. That's the price you pay for all-wheel drive, air-conditioning, satnav, a thumping stereo and electric motors to power

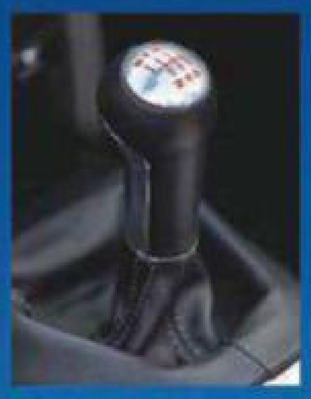
SPECIFICATIONS

PORSCHE BOXSTER SPYDER	AUDI R8 SPYDER V8
Engine Flat-six, 3436cc	**Engine** V8, 4163cc
Power 316bhp @ 7200rpm	**Power** 424bhp @ 7900rpm
Torque 273lb ft @ 4750rpm	**Torque** 317lb ft @ 6000rpm
Weight (kerb) 1275kg	**Weight (kerb)** 1660kg
0-62mph 5.0sec (claimed)	**0-62mph** 4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 166mph (claimed)	**Top speed** 186mph (claimed)
Price £47,843	**Price** £96,595

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Despite both being available with paddle-shifts, our test cars had manual gearboxes (Audi's above left, Porsche's above), which would be our choice. Left: Boxster Spyder's carbon-ceramic brakes are an optional extra

the roof and seats. At a whisker under £96K, the price is equally hefty.

Roughly half that budget buys Porsche's Boxster Spyder. Stripped back to the bare minimum with a similar level of obsession to an RS 911, the Boxster Spyder does without air-conditioning or a stereo and utilises aluminium for the doors, front bonnet and double-hump engine cover. To save further weight the roof is little more than a tailored canvas hat and the seat shells are carbonfibre, while the thin-spoked wheels are the lightest Porsche fits to a road car. If you're a fan of the Renaultsport Mégane R26.R you'd love the Boxster Spyder.

We attach the VBOX to the R8 first. Just as on the road, Audi's Spyder is a free and fluid car to drive on track. The steering is accurate and direct, but not too sharp, so even as we make our way round the sighting lap it's easy to feel familiar and confident with the car.

Crossing the line to start the flying lap, the R8 is pulling hard in fourth gear. The brakes have great feel and immediate bite, and prove a match for the performance (and the weight), slowing the car impressively and coping with the tricky conditions that see individual wheels momentarily locking on the damp patches that remain.

Initial steering response is good into the tight, second-gear Hangar Hairpin, but there's not enough front-end grip to cope with that promise, so you have to be careful not to ask too much too soon and push the nose wide. Accelerating hard towards Club Chicane sees the R8 reach the top end of third gear before hauling hard on the brakes once more.

The opening left of the Palmer Curves is still slippery, so the R8 wants to understeer, but it's beautifully responsive to a lift of the throttle to neutralise the balance. R8s very rarely feel like they're four-wheel drive, but here you can sense the front and rear finding traction and generating forward momentum. It's really satisfying and sets us up well for the transition into the fast fourth-gear right-hander.

That technique characterises the best way to get a time from the R8. The faster the corner, the more finely you need to play with the balance of the car to prevent it settling into understeer. That sounds like the same old Audi curse, but the R8 is so brilliantly willing that you can finely adjust its line and attitude all the way into and out of corners. It's tremendous fun and really rewarding, posting an entertaining 1:25.5 lap.

'THE FASTER THE CORNER, THE MORE FINELY YOU NEED TO PLAY WITH THE BALANCE'

The Boxster feels less grunty, but more eager, egging you on until you're constantly working at or slightly over its limits of mechanical grip. You notice its lack of mass in the braking areas and in the rapid direction changes, but much like its cousin the Cayman R, it's not all grip and no fun.

The Porsche is less prone to understeer than the Audi, but you do have to be mindful that the nose will push wide if you're lazy. You find yourself managing the front end, then balancing the rear as the diff hooks up and begins to generate oversteer. That sounds scrappy, but it's actually a fluid and communicative process. Finding and maintaining that balance requires you to roll your sleeves up a little more than in the Audi, but you have greater influence over the car when you do.

The Boxster has better front-end grip throughout the Palmer Curves, resisting initial understeer then holding full throttle in fourth gear through the left-right transition onto the straight. The PCCB ceramic brakes feel strong and consistent through the awkward approach to Pif-Paf, and while the Boxster also dislikes this quick chicane it makes the direction change more keenly.

Towards the end of the lap, through the fast left-hander at O'Rouge and the faster right at Tower, the Boxster's balance and lower mass gives greater confidence, enabling you to carry more speed across the line for a strong end to the lap and a best time of 1:24.7. That pips the Audi by eight tenths of a second and, interestingly, its kissing cousin the Cayman R by exactly the same margin. Impressive stuff.



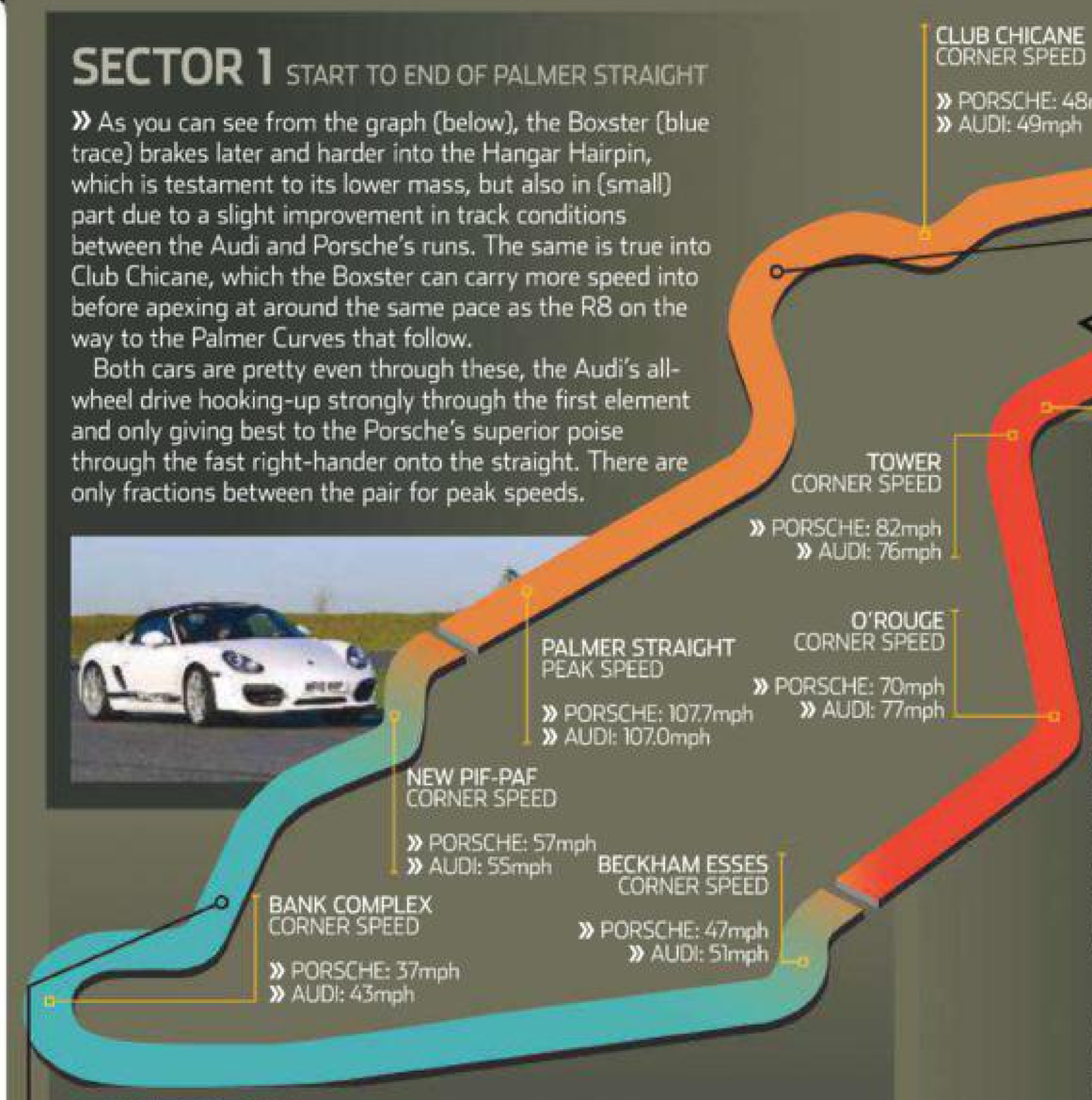
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TRACK RESULTS

SECTOR 1 START TO END OF PALMER STRAIGHT

» As you can see from the graph (below), the Boxster (blue trace) brakes later and harder into the Hangar Hairpin, which is testament to its lower mass, but also in (small) part due to a slight improvement in track conditions between the Audi and Porsche's runs. The same is true into Club Chicane, which the Boxster can carry more speed into before apexing at around the same pace as the R8 on the way to the Palmer Curves that follow.

Both cars are pretty even through these, the Audi's all-wheel drive hooking-up strongly through the first element and only giving best to the Porsche's superior poise through the fast right-hander onto the straight. There are only fractions between the pair for peak speeds.



SECTOR 2
PIF-PAF TO BECKHAM ESSES

» The Audi carries good speed into the Pif-Paf, but can't maintain it through the direction change, so the Boxster wins back ground on the run towards Bank. The Porsche brakes later than the Audi here, but the R8 manages a higher minimum speed in the heart of this 180-degree corner. Unfortunately its lack of front-end grip means it pushes wide if you try to use the torque and take the corner in third, so while second gear gives it more initial punch, it loses time with the extra upshift needed on the way to the Beckham Esses. The Porsche can use third gear at Bank so saves time on upshifts and gets better drive, so both cars are neck-and-neck once more by the time they arrive at Beckham.

SECTOR 3
BECKHAM ESSES TO FINISH LINE

» The sprint to Beckham highlights once more how close these two are in a straight drag- race. Beckham itself is a tricky chicane to nail – brake a few metres too late and you simply can't get turned in, which pretty much ruins the lap. On its best run the Audi nails its braking and slices through without so much as a twitch from the rear, whereas the Boxster requires a small steering correction in the heart of the chicane, despite wiping off more speed than the R8.

Yet again both acceleration traces are virtually identical until O'Rouge, where the Audi has a brilliant run. However, the tables are turned at the trickily cambered Tower where the R8 falls into oversteer and loses crucial tenths, while the Boxster charges through with real aggression.

LAP KEY MOMENT

» The Boxster is mega on the brakes, managing to brake later and harder almost everywhere it counts. It also tolerates trail braking more than the heavier Audi, which can snap into oversteer if you try to overlap the braking and turn-in into the faster corners.





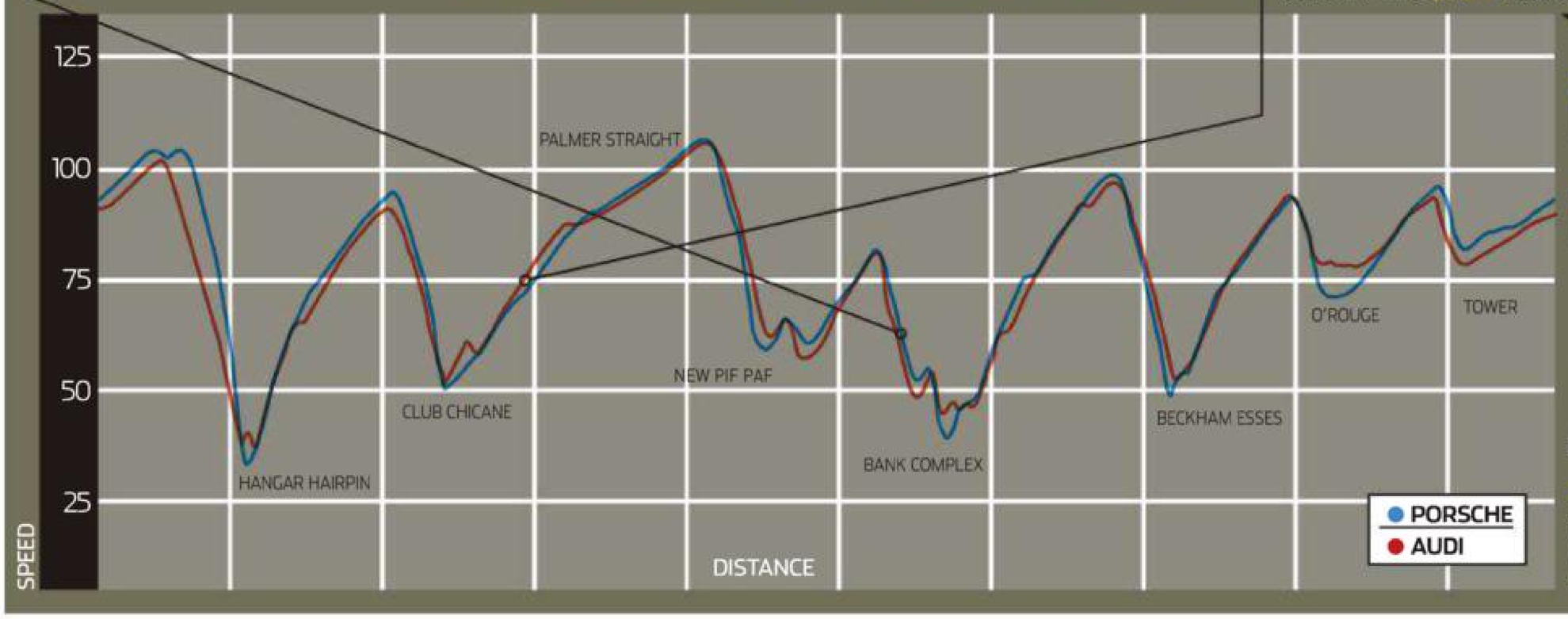
LAP KEY MOMENT

» Rarely does the R8 feel 4wd, but when you drive around the mid-corner understeer and the balance neutralises, you can get hard on the power. Nowhere is this more apparent than the first part of the Palmer Curves, where the R8 finds impressive traction and terrific poise.

THE LEADERBOARD

	LAP TIME	PEAK
Radical SR8LM (fastest car)	1.13.6	127.8
Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)	1.14.8	130.9
Ferrari 458 Italia	1.19.3	120.0
Gumpert Apollo S	1.19.4	120.4
Caterham Levante V8	1.19.6	118.6
Porsche 997 GT2 RS	1.19.9	122.3
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	1.20.1	113.2
Caterham Superlight R500	1.20.2	115.7
McLaren MP4-12C	1.20.6	120.9
Noble M600	1.20.8	121.8
Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0 (fastest coupe)	1.21.0	118.2
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	1.21.3	121.1
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	1.21.5	113.6
KTM X-Bow (300bhp)	1.21.5	112.7
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	1.21.7	117.2
Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (3.8)	1.21.9	116.8
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	1.22.5	119.1
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	1.22.9	116.7
Porsche Carrera GT	1.23.3	115.2
Porsche 997 Turbo S	1.23.5	117.5
Porsche 997 GT2	1.23.5	115.1
Nissan GT-R	1.23.6	113.1
Lotus 340R (190bhp)	1.24.2	110.0
Caterham Superlight R300	1.24.3	101.5
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	124.5	115.1
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	1.24.6	115.7
Porsche Boxster Spyder	**1.24.7**	**107.7**
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1.25.1	109.1
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	1.25.2	108.6
Audi RS5	1.25.4	108.8
Audi R8 Spyder V8	**1.25.5**	**107.0**
Porsche Cayman R	1.25.5	106.8
BMW F10 M5 (fastest saloon)	1.25.7	112.0
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1.25.8	110.9
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	1.25.9	107.5
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1.25.9	106.4
Renault Mégane 265 Trophy (fastest hot hatch)	1.26.1	105.3
Audi TT RS	1.26.3	107.2
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1.26.5	109.2
Jaguar XJ220	1.26.7	111.7
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	1.26.7	104.9
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)	1.26.9	107.4
Lotus Evora	1.27.1	104.2
Nissan 370Z	1.27.1	104.0
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen 2.2	1.27.2	102.6
Porsche Panamera S	1.27.3	102.4
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	1.27.7	111.0
Lotus Elise SC	1.27.7	104.6
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1.27.8	105.4
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1.27.8	103.3
Audi RS6 Avant (fastest estate)	1.27.9	111.0
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen (2.0)	1.28.0	104.4
Lexus IS-F	1.28.1	106.4
Porsche Boxster S	1.28.1	105.4
Jaguar XFR	1.28.2	106.2
Subaru WRX STI	1.28.3	101.6
Jaguar XJ Supersport	1.28.4	106.6
SEAT Leon Cupra R	1.28.7	102.4
Ford Mustang Boss 302	1.29.0	108.4
Bentley Continental Supersports	1.29.2	105.8
Lotus Elise Club Racer	1.29.2	95.5
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1.29.9	101.4
Honda NSX	1.30.1	101.3
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	1.30.4	98.9
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	1.31.9	97.2
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	1.32.4	99.3
BMW E30 M3	1.33.5	94.0

In the table of lap times above, entries in **bold** are new additions, while yellow denotes fastest in class.



THE RESULTS

PORSCHE 1.24.7 (peak speed 107.7mph)

AUDI 1.25.5 (peak speed 107.0mph)

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OUR CHOICE: Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup. After the mild disappointment of the Clio 197, Renaultsport got the Clio back to its very best with the 200 Cup – a cracking small hot hatch more than capable of chasing down supercars on eCoty 2009 for a top five finish.

BEST OF THE REST: The Mégane 250 is the Clio's more mature but still thrilling big brother, while Mini's mad JCW still appeals, too. If you're on a tighter budget, the Renault Twingo 133 Cup and Suzuki's second-generation Swift Sport (right) are belters.



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Abarth Punto Evo	149 F	£16,852	4/1368	161/5500	184/2250	1155kg	142	7.9	-	132	142	47.1	+ Attractive and fun - Needs the upcoming Esseesse power upgrade	★★★½
Abarth 500 Esseesse	129 R	£16,100	4/1368	158/5750	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.2	20.4	131	155	43.5	+ A properly fun, old-school hot hatch - Limited numbers being imported	★★★★
Alfa Romeo Mito 1.4 TB	132 D	£15,950	4/1368	135/5250	152/1750	1145kg	120	8.2	-	129	129	50.4	+ So close to being a modern-day Alfasud - But not close enough	★★★
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 F	£18,755	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1145kg	149	7.5	-	136	139	47.1	+ Great MultiAir engine, impressive ride - Not as feisty as we hoped	★★★½
Alfa Romeo Giulietta 1.4 MultiAir	144 D	£20,505	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1290kg	134	7.8	-	135	134	48.7	+ Has the equivalent VW Golf covered - An Alfa for your head, not your heart	★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	£25,510	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2	+ Shows signs of deep talent - but should be more exciting	★★★½
Alfa Romeo 147 2.0 Lusso		*'01-'09*	*4/1970*	*150/6300*	*134/3800*	*1270kg*	*120*	*9.3*	-	*129*	-	*31.7*	*+ Fantastic looks, engine and handling - Build quality still lacking*	★★★½
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	*053 F*	*'03-'06*	*6/3179*	*247/6200*	*221/4800*	*1360kg*	*185*	***6.0***	***15.5***	*153*	-	*23.3*	*+ Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy*	★★★★
Alfa Romeo 145 Cloverleaf		*'95-'01*	*4/1970*	*150/6200*	*138/4000*	*1200kg*	*127*	*8.0*	-	*129*	-	*32.1*	*+ Fiery engine, individual appeal - Ape-like driving position*	★★★★
Aston Martin Cygnet	159 D	£30,995	4/1329	97/6000	92/4400	920kg	107	11.8	-	106	116	56.5	+ Necessary - Evil	★★★
Audi A1 1.4 TFSI S Line		£20,710	4/1390	182/6200	184/2000	1190kg	155	6.9	-	141	139	47.9	+ Audi's Mini rival is an accomplished thing - But not a hugely fun one	★★★½
Audi S3	106 R	£31,065	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1485kg	183	**5.6**	**13.6**	155	198	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 F	£39,930	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	212	31.0	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above...	★★★★
BMW 118i	161 D	£21,985	4/1598	168/4800	184/1500	1365kg	125	7.3	-	140	137	47.9	+ Better to drive, and greener than the last one - But no better looking	★★★★
BMW 123d M Sport	*122 R*	*'07-'11*	*4/1995*	*201/4400*	*295/2000*	*1430kg*	*144*	***6.5***	***17.4***	*148*	*138*	*54.3*	*+ Economical and no slouch - Doesn't feel special enough*	★★★★
BMW 130i M Sport	*106 R*	*'05-'10*	*6/2996*	*261/6650*	*232/2750*	*1450kg*	*183*	***6.1***	***15.3***	*155*	-	*34.0*	*+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy*	★★★★
BMW 325ti Compact	*031 D*	*'01-'05*	*6/2494*	*189/6000*	*181/3500*	*1480kg*	*130*	*7.1*	-	*147*	-	*31.7*	*+ Terrific engine, chassis, price - Looks a bit geeky*	★★★★
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 F	£8695+	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	103	61.4	+ Full of character and insurance-friendly - Insurance friendly power	★★★★
Citroën C2 GT	*064 R*	*'04-'05*	*4/1587*	*108/5750*	*108/4000*	*1027kg*	*107*	*8.7*	-	*121*	-	-	*+ Appealing and affordable homologation special - Inert steering*	★★★★
Citroën Saxo VTR	*013 R*	*'97-'03*	*4/1587*	*100/5700*	*100/3500*	*920kg*	*110*	***9.3***	-	*116*	-	*36.7*	*+ VTS poise, half the insurance group - Cramped pedals*	★★★★
Citroën Saxo VTS	*020 R*	*'97-'03*	*4/1587*	*120/6600*	*107/5200*	*935kg*	*130*	***7.6***	***22.6***	*127*		*34.9*	*+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary*	★★★★½
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	£16,800	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	133	155	42.2	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	£23,100	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	146	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - It's six grand more than a Clio Cup	★★★★
Citroën Xsara VTS		*'98-'04*	*4/1997*	*167/7000*	*142/4750*	*1190kg*	*143*	*8.0*	-	*137*		*33.6*	*+ Citroën's GTI-6 - Missing one gear and a bit of handling polish*	★★★½
Fiat Panda 100HP	*132 F*	*'06-'11*	*4/1368*	*99/6000*	*97/4250*	*975kg*	*103*	*9.5*	-	*115*	*154*	*43.5*	*+ Most fun per pound on the market - Optional ESP can't be turned off*	★★★½
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£14,500	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	+ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name	★★★½
Ford Sportka SE	*084 R*	*'03-'08*	*4/1597*	*94/5500*	*100/4250*	*934kg*	*102*	*9.5*	-	*108*	-	*37.2*	*+ Big fun in a little package - Could handle even more power*	★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	£14,545	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Grown up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 F	c£16,000	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust - if you're 12 years old	★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	*020 R*	*'00-'02*	*4/1596*	*102/6000*	*107/4000*	*976kg*	*106*	***10.2***	-	*113*	-	*38.2*	*+ Better than you'd ever believe - No-one else will believe it*	★★★★
Ford Focus 1.6T Zetec S	165 D	£20,495	4/1596	179/5700	199/1900	1333kg	136	7.8	-	138	139	47.1	+ The fastest, keenest Mk3 Focus yet - The Mk1's sparkle is still absent,though	★★★½
Ford Fiesta ST	*075 D*	*'05-'08*	*4/1999*	*148/6000*	*140/4500*	*1157kg*	*132*	*7.9*	-	*129*	-	*38.2*	*+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine*	★★★
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	*115 R*	*'08*	*4/1999*	*185/6700*	*147/3500*	*1137kg*	*165*	*6.9*	-	*129*	-	-	*+ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note*	★★★★
Ford Focus RS500	*152 F*	*'10-'11*	*5/2522*	*345/6000*	*339/2500*	*1467kg*	*239*	***5.6***	***12.7***	*165*	*225*	-	*+ More power and presence than above - Pricey (and all sold!)*	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	*139 R*	*'09-'11*	*5/2522*	*300/6500*	*324/2300*	*1457kg*	*208*	***5.9***	***14.2***	*163*	*225*	*30.5*	*+ Huge performance, highly capable fwd chassis - It could be the last RS...*	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune	*137 R*	*'08-'11*	*5/2522*	*256/5500*	*295/2500*	*1392kg*	*187*	***5.8***	***14.3***	*155*	*224*	-	*+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS*	★★★★½
Ford Focus ST	*119 R*	*'05-'10*	*5/2522*	*222/6000*	*236/1600*	*1392kg*	*162*	***6.7***	***16.8***	*150*	*224*	*30.4*	*+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling*	★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	*053 R*	*'02-'03*	*4/1998*	*212/5500*	*229/3500*	*1278kg*	*169*	***5.9***	***14.9***	*144*	-	-	*+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)*	★★★
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	*157 F*	*'92-'96*	*4/1993*	*227/6250*	*224/3500*	*1304kg*	*176*	*5.8*	-	*143*	-	*24.5*	*+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Ultimate trophy for tea leaves*	★★★★
Ford Puma 1.7	*095 F*	*'97-'02*	*4/1679*	*123/6300*	*116/4500*	*1044kg*	*120*	***8.6***	***27.6***	*122*	-	*38.2*	*+ Everything - Nothing. The 1.4 is worth a look too*	★★★★★
Ford Racing Puma	*016 F*	*'00-'01*	*4/1679*	*153/7000*	*119/4500*	*1174kg*	*132*	***7.8***	***23.2***	*137*	-	*34.7*	*+ Exclusivity - Expense. Standard Puma does it so well*	★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen	*144 F*	*'09-'11*	*4/1998*	*237/8300*	*157/6250*	*1233kg*	*195*	*5.9*	-	*155*	-	-	*+ Fantastic on road and track - There'll only be 20, and it's a tad pricey.*	★★★★★
Honda Civic T-R C'ship White	*126 D*	*'09-'10*	*4/1998*	*198/7800*	*142/5600*	*1267kg*	*158*	*6.6*	-	*146*	-	*31.0*	*+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on standard car.*	★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R	*102 R*	*'07-'11*	*4/1998*	*198/7800*	*142/5600*	*1267kg*	*158*	***6.8***	***17.5***	*146*	*215*	*31.0*	*+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance*	★★★½
Honda Civic Type-R	*075 R*	*'01-'05*	*4/1998*	*197/7400*	*145/5900*	*1204kg*	*166*	***6.8***	***16.9***	*146*	-	*31.7*	*+ Potent and great value - Looks divide opinion, duff steering*	★★★★
Lancia Delta Integrale	*011 F*	*'88-'93*	*4/1995*	*210/5750*	*220/3500*	*1350kg*	*158*	*5.7*	-	*137*	-	*23.9*	*+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only*	★★★★★
Mazda 2 1.5 Sport	132 F	£12,945	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	★★★½
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	£23,185	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.3	14.5	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's still iffy	★★★½
Mazda 3 MPS Aero Kit (Mk1)	*106 R*	*'07-'09*	*4/2261*	*256/5500*	*280/3000*	*1410kg*	*184*	***6.1***	***14.3***	*155*	-	*29.1*	*+ Speed, grip, stability - Slightly strange steering, dull styling*	★★★½
MG ZS 180	*035 D*	*'01-'05*	*6/2497*	*175/6500*	*177/4000*	*1235kg*	*144*	*7.3*	-	*139*	-	*29.7*	*+ Well-sorted chassis, characterful engine - Image: looks like a 45*	★★★½
Mini One		£13,400	4/1598	97/6000	113/3000	1070kg	92	10.5	-	116	127	52.3	+ Perfect power-to-grip ratio - HUGE speedo, slow car	★★★★
Mini Cooper	099 D	£14,840	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Still desirable - Steering has lost a little feel	★★★★
Mini Cooper S	149 F	£18,075	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	**7.0**	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Lacks old car's direct front end	★★★★½
Mini Cooper SD	158 D	£18,810	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative	★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works	154 R	£23,390	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1140kg	185	6.5	-	148	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★
Mini Cooper S Clubman	110 D	£19,055	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1205kg	153	7.6	-	139	137	47.9	+ More rear space, load flexibility - Torque steer, looks are a matter of taste	★★★★
Mini JCW Clubman	137 D	£23,305	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1205kg	175	6.8	-	148	167	39.2	+ Ride and handling more composed than the JCW hatch - It's no looker	★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe	164 R	£24,850	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1165kg	181	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof	★★★★

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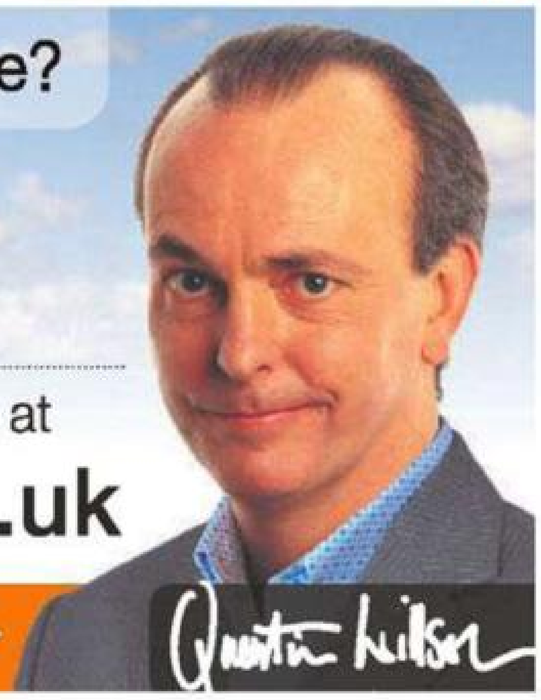
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KEY: ▶ New entries this month. Issue no: our most recent major test of the car (R = Road test or group test with figures, D = Driven, F = Feature article). You can order back issues where still available – call 0844 844 0039. Entries in italics are no longer on sale. Prices are on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. Weight is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. Bhp/ton is the power-to-weight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. 0-60 and 0-100 figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. CO2 is the official EC figure and EC mpg is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent. * = grey import. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of entries, some errors may have crept in. Please send comments/corrections to stephend@evo.co.uk

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STAR RATINGS: ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk2)	*111 F*	*'07-'08*	*4/1598*	*189/6000*	*199/1750*	*1130kg*	*170*	***7.6***	***18.0***	*145*	-	-	*+ Cracking hot Mini until the JCW – Expensive with option packs included*	★★★★½
Mini Cooper S Works GP	*144 F*	*'06*	*4/1598*	*215/7100*	*184/4600*	*1090kg*	*200*	*6.5*	-	*149*	-	*32.8*	*+ Storming engine, agility – Tacky styling 'enhancements'*	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (Mk1)	*077 R*	*'02-'06*	*4/1598*	*168/6000*	*155/4000*	*1140kg*	*143*	***7.8***	***19.9***	*135*	-	*33.6*	*+ Strong performance, quality feel – Over-long gearing*	★★★★½
Mitsubishi Colt Ralliart	132 F	£13,949	4/1468	147/6000	155/3500	1060kg	141	7.4	-	131	161	40.9	+ Price, handling, performance – Its looks are a little odd	★★★½
Nissan Sunny GTi-R		*'92-'93*	*4/1998*	*220/6400*	*197/4800*	*1269kg*	*176*	*6.1*	-	*134*	-	*25.1*	*+ Nissan's Escort Cossie – Make sure it's a good one*	★★★★
Peugeot 308 GT THP 200	155 D	£21,745	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1412kg	142	7.6	-	140	159	40.9	+ RCZ engine in a practical body – Definitely a GT rather than a GTI, though	★★★½
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)		*'97-'98*	*4/1587*	*103/6200*	*97/3500*	*865kg*	*121*	*8.8*	-	*121*	-	*34.0*	*+ Bargain no-frills thrills – Not as much fizz as original 1.3*	★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	*095 F*	*'94-'96*	*4/1294*	*100/7200*	*80/5400*	*820kg*	*123*	*9.3*	-	*118*	-	*35.6*	*+ Frantic, thrashy fun – Needs caning to extract full potential*	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 GTI 16v	*034 R*	*'97-'04*	*4/1587*	*120/6600*	*107/5200*	*950kg*	*128*	***7.4***	***22.2***	*127*	-	*34.9*	*+ Fine handling supermini – Looks its age*	★★★★½
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	*095 F*	*'88-'91*	*4/1905*	*130/6000*	*119/4750*	*910kg*	*145*	*7.9*	-	*124*	-	*36.7*	*+ Still scintillating after all these years – Brittle build quality*	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTI-6	*020 R*	*'93-'01*	*4/1998*	*167/6500*	*142/5500*	*1215kg*	*139*	***7.2***	***20.1***	*140*	-	*30.1*	*+ One of the great GTIs – They don't make them like this any more*	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	*095 F*	*'98-'99*	*4/1998*	*167/6500*	*142/5500*	*1199kg*	*141*	***6.9***	***19.2***	*137*	-	*30.1*	*+ Essentially a GTI-6 for less dosh – Limited choice of colours*	★★★★★
Peugeot 309 GTI		*'89-'92*	*4/1905*	*130/6000*	*119/4750*	*985kg*	*134*	*8.3*	-	*124*	-	*28.2*	*+ 205 GTI in drag, cheap – Who wants a cheap drag queen?*	★★★★
Renaultsport Twingo 133 Cup	132 F	£12,210	4/1598	133/6750	118/4400	1049kg	127	8.7	-	125	165	42.2	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money – Could handle extra 30bhp	★★★★½
Renault 5GT Turbo	*123 F*	*'87-'91*	*4/1397*	*120/5750*	*122/3750*	*831kg*	*146*	*7.8*	-	*120*	-	*28.4*	*+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy – Most have been thrashed*	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	154 R	£16,930	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	**6.6**	**16.7**	141	190	34.5	+ The hot Clio is back to its best – Why the long face?	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	*115 R*	*'07-'09*	*4/1998*	*194/7250*	*158/5550*	*1240kg*	*161*	*6.9*	-	*134*	-	*33.6*	*+ Quick, polished and capable – Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup*	★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182	*066 R*	*'04-'06*	*4/1998*	*180/6500*	*148/5250*	*1110kg*	*165*	***6.6***	***17.5***	*139*	-	*34.9*	*+ Took hot hatches to a new level – Flawed driving position*	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	*074 D*	*'04-'06*	*4/1998*	*180/6500*	*148/5250*	*1090kg*	*168*	*6.5*	-	*139*	-	*34.9*	*+ Full of beans, fantastic value – Sunday-market upholstery*	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	*095 F*	*'05-'06*	*4/1998*	*180/6500*	*148/5250*	*1090kg*	*168*	***6.6***	***17.3***	*140*	-	*34.9*	*+ Most fun you can have on three wheels – Just 500 were built*	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	*048 R*	*'02-'04*	*4/1998*	*170/6250*	*147/5400*	*1011kg*	*171*	***6.5***	***17.7***	*138*	--	-	*+ Bargain old-school hot hatch – Nervous in the wet, no ABS*	★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	*057 R*	*'03-'05*	*6/2946*	*255/7150*	*221/4650*	*1400kg*	*182*	*5.8*	-	*153*	-	*23.0*	*+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling – Uninspired interior*	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6	*029 F*	*'99-'02*	*6/2946*	*230/6000*	*221/3750*	*1335kg*	*175*	***5.8***	***17.0***	*145*	-	*23.0*	*+ Pocket supercar – Mid-engined handling can be tricky*	★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	*095 F*	*'93-'96*	*4/1988*	*150/6100*	*126/4500*	*981kg*	*155*	***7.6***	***20.8***	*121*	-	*26.0*	*+ One of the best hot hatches ever – Can be fragile like an Integrale*	★★★★★
Renault Mégane GT TCe 180	154 D	£21,565	4/1998	178/5500	222/2250	1320kg	137	7.7	-	139	178	36.7	+ Rides & steers well – Not much cheaper than car below, lacks its sparkle	★★★½
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	£24,020	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... – ...partially obscured by new-found maturity	★★★★½
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy	160 F	£27,820	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	-	158	190	34.4	+ Hot Mégane gets more power and fwd Ring record – A pricey upgrade	★★★★½
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	*157 F*	*'08-'09*	*4/1998*	*227/5500*	*229/3000*	*1220kg*	*189*	***5.8***	***15.1***	*147*	-	-	*+ One of the true hot hatch heroes – Two seats, plastic rear windows*	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 230 R26	*102 R*	*'07-'09*	*4/1998*	*227/5500*	*229/3000*	*1345kg*	*171*	***6.2***	***16.0***	*147*	-	-	*+ Best hot Mégane... until the R26.R – F1 Team stickers in dubious taste*	★★★★★
R'sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	*119 R*	*'07-'09*	*4/1995*	*173/3750*	*265/2000*	*1470kg*	*119*	***8.3***	***23.5***	*137*	-	*43.5*	*+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis – Could take more power*	★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 225 Cup	*087 F*	*'05-'09*	*4/1998*	*222/5500*	*221/3000*	*1345kg*	*167*	*6.5*	-	*147*	-	*32.1*	*+ Good value and plentiful – You gotta like big backsides*	★★★★½
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy	*087 F*	*'05*	*4/1998*	*222/5500*	*221/3000*	*1355kg*	*166*	***6.7***	***17.3***	*147*	-	*32.1*	*+ Mega grip and traction – Steering needs a touch more feel*	★★★★
SEAT Ibiza FR DSG	134 D	£16,515	4/1390	148/5800	162/1250	1167kg	129	7.7	-	130	146	44.8	+ Fun and frugal – You're forced to have the DSG automatic 'box	★★★★
SEAT Ibiza FR TDI	144 F	£17,480	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	60.1	+ Even more fun and frugality, manual 'box option – Almost as pricey as the Cupra	★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	139 R	£17,905	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1172kg	154	6.9	-	140	148	44.1	+ Funky (especially in Bocanegra trim), economical – The FR's a better drive	★★★½
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	*104 F*	*'04-'08*	*4/1781*	*178/5500*	*181/2000*	*1248kg*	*145*	*7.1*	-	*143*	-	*35.3*	*+ Well built, punchy engine – The 'warm' FR is a better bet*	★★★
SEAT Leon FR+	163 D	£21,940	4/1984	208/5300	206/1700	1334kg	158	7.2	-	145	170	38.7	+ As quick as a Golf GTI 5dr but £4K cheaper – Misses the VW's completeness	★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	£25,995	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	6.1	14.0	155	190	34.9	+ Bold car, blinding engine – Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches	★★★½
SEAT Leon Cupra	*105 F*	*'07-'11*	*4/1984*	*237/5700*	*221/2200*	*1375kg*	*175*	*6.3*	-	*153*	*190*	*34.0*	*+ Great engine, composure – Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R*	★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 20v T	*020 R*	*'00-'06*	*4/1781*	*178/5500*	*173/5000*	*1322kg*	*137*	*7.7*	-	*142*	-	*33.2*	*+ Terrific value – Lacks sparkle of very best hatches*	★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	*067 R*	*'03-'06*	*4/1781*	*222/5900*	*206/2200*	*1376kg*	*164*	*6.9*	-	*150*	-	*32.1*	*+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value – Not as thrilling as some*	★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	£16,415	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box – Dull steering	★★★½
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	*077 F*	*'04-'07*	*4/1896*	*130/4000*	*229/1900*	*1315kg*	*100*	*9.6*	-	*127*	-	*55.4*	*+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch – A little short on steering feel*	★★★½
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 F	£20,330	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less – Green brake calipers?	★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk1)	*032 D*	*'01-'05*	*4/1781*	*180/5500*	*173/1950*	*1354kg*	*135*	*7.9*	-	*146*	-	*35.3*	*+ Remarkably fun and capable – Cabin quality*	★★★★
Smart Fortwo Brabus	110 D	£15,000	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	96	119	54.3	+ Telling people you drive a Brabus – Them realising it's not a 720bhp S-class	★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	£32,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	155	243	26.9	+ Spec C suspension makes a better drive – No blue paint or gold wheels	★★★★½
Subaru Impreza STI CS400	146 R	£49,995	4/2457	395/5750	400/3950	1505kg	267	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ Cosworth kudos. Fastest hatch we've tested – Pricey. Lifeless steering	★★★½
Subaru Impreza WRXS	*125 D*	*'08-'10*	*4/2457*	*251/5400*	*288/3000*	*1395kg*	*180*	*5.5*	-	*130*	*270*	-	*+ An improvement over the basic WRX – Still not the WRX we wanted*	★★★½
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	*124 F*	*'08-'10*	*4/2457*	*325/5400*	*347/3400*	*1505kg*	*219*	*4.4*	-	*155*	-	-	*+ A bit quicker than the STI... – ...but not better*	★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (mk2)	164 D	£13,499	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	121	147	44.1	+ The Swift's still a great pocket rocket – But it's lost a little adjustability	★★★★½
Suzuki Swift Sport	*132 F*	*'05-'11*	*4/1586*	*123/6800*	*109/4800*	*1030kg*	*121*	*8.9*	-	*124*	*165*	*39.8*	*+ Entertaining handling, well built – Lacking in steering feedback*	★★★★½
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	£18,900	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine – Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals	★★★½
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nurburgring	164 R	£22,295	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff – But it's over £3K more expensive	★★★★
Vauxhall Astra GTC 16T SRi	164 D	£21,480	4/1598	178/5500	169/2200	1393kg	130	7.8	-	137	168	39.2	+ Three-door Scirocco rival looks good, drives well – Pre-VXR petrol engines lack zing	★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR	*102 R*	*'06-'11*	*4/1998*	*237/5600*	*236/2400*	*1393kg*	*173*	***6.7***	***16.7***	*152*	*221*	*30.7*	*+ Fast and furious – Lacks a little composure and precision*	★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR 888	*127 D*	*'08-'11*	*4/1998*	*295/4650*	*317/4250*	*1393kg*	*215*	*5.1*	-	*160*	*221*	-	*+ Crazy power, chassis copes admirably – Lacks exploitability of Mégane R26*	★★★★
VW Lupo GTI 6-spd	*036 D*	*'00-'05*	*4/1598*	*125/6500*	*112/3000*	*978kg*	*128*	*8.3*	-	*127*	-	*38.2*	*+ Looks, performance, snappy gearshift – Lacks fizz of 106 GTi*	★★★½
VW Polo GTI	154 R	£18,795	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG – It's a little bit bland	★★★½
VW Golf GTD (Mk6)	133 D	£24,635	4/1968	168/4200	258/1750	1329kg	128	8.1	-	138	134	55.4	+ Punchy performance and good economy – Not as much fun as the GTI	★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	139 R	£25,305	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	149	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch – 207bhp isn't a lot any more	★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	£31,420	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise – High price, ACC only optional	★★★★½
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	*102 R*	*'06-'09*	*4/1984*	*197/5100*	*207/1800*	*1336kg*	*150*	***6.7***	***17.9***	*145*	-	-	*+ Character and ability: the original GTI is back – Lacking firepower?*	★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	*087 F*	*'06-'09*	*6/3189*	*246/6300*	*236/2500*	*1510kg*	*165*	***5.8***	***15.2***	*155*	-	*26.4*	*+ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack – We'd still have a GTI*	★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	*053 F*	*'02-'04*	*6/3189*	*237/6250*	*236/2800*	*1477kg*	*163*	***6.4***	***16.3***	*154*	-	*24.6*	*+ Charismatic – Boomy engine can be tiresome*	★★★★
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)		*'88-'92*	*4/1781*	*139/6100*	*124/4600*	*1111kg*	*127*	*8.0*	-	*124*	-	*28.8*	*+ Arguably the best all-round Golf GTI ever – We'd be splitting hairs*	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk1)	*095 F*	*'82-'84*	*4/1781*	*112/5800*	*109/3500*	*840kg*	*135*	*8.1*	-	*112*	-	*36.0*	*+ The car that started it all – Tricky to find an unmolested one*	★★★★
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	£21,875	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo – Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto	★★★½



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SALOONS/ESTATES/4X4s



OUR CHOICE: BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW M-cars had its sceptics, but the new M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's brutally fast, and there's clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. It looks cool, too. The best big saloon just got even better.

BEST OF THE REST: Mercedes' AMG department is on a roll right now: the 6.2-litre C63 is superb as either saloon or estate, likewise the newly turbo'd E63 (right), which is only narrowly shaded by the M5. Lexus's tail-happy IS-F remains a wonderfully alternative choice too.



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Alfa Romeo 156 GTA	045 F	'02-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1410kg	180	6.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ Noise, pace and individuality - Front-drive chassis can't keep up ★★★
Alpina D3		£34,070	4/1995	211/4000	332/2000	1495kg	143	6.9	-	152	-	52.3	+ Excellent chassis, turbodiesel oomph - Rather narrow powerband ★★★★½
Alpina B5 Biturbo	149 D	£75,045	8/4395	500/5500	516/3000	2040kg	265	4.7	-	191	-	-	+ Big performance and top-line luxury - Driver not really involved ★★★½
Alpina B5 S	118 D	'07-'10	8/4398	523/5500	535/4750	1720kg	309	4.5	-	197	-	23.0	+ Quicker and more exclusive than the E60 M5 - Suspension has its limits ★★★★½
Alpina B7	134 D	£94,845	8/4395	507/5500	516/3000	2040kg	252	4.5	-	174	-	-	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled ★★★★
Alpina B7	085 R	'05-'08	8/4398	500/5500	516/4250	1950kg	261	4.8	-	186	-	-	+ Alpina makes a mad, bad 7-series - Over-cautious traction control ★★★½
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	£149,995	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater ★★★★½
Audi A4 2.0 TFSI quattro		£29,170	4/1984	208/4300	258/1500	1535kg	138	6.4	-	153	159	41.5	+ A good match for its German foes - No longer any naturally aspirated options ★★★½
Audi A4 3.0 quattro	032 R	'01-'04	6/2976	220/6300	221/3200	1505kg	146	6.7	-	151	-	26.9	+ V6 adds class - Jag X-type shows how good 4wd can be ★★★
Audi S4 (Mk3)	166 D	£38,665	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1685kg	198	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great powertrain, secure chassis - The new RS4 isn't far off now ★★★★
Audi S4 (Mk2)	073 D	'05-'08	8/4163	339/7000	302/3500	1700kg	206	5.4	-	155	-	-	+ Effortless V8, agile handling - Lacks ultimate finesse of class leaders ★★★½
Audi RS4	088 F	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	**4.5**	**10.9**	155	-	-	+ A leap on for fast Audis, superb engine - Busy under braking ★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant	105 F	'07-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1710kg	246	4.6	-	155	-	20.6	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! - Everyone thinking you're married with kids ★★★★★
Audi RS4	024 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	**4.8**	**12.1**	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Lacks finesse. Bends wheel rims ★★★★
Audi RS2	101 F	'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	**4.8**	**13.1**	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one ★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10 ★★★★½
Audi RS6	124 D	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	-	155	331	20.3	+ Looks and drives better than estate version - M5 still looks tempting ★★★★½
Audi RS6 Avant	116 F	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	**4.3**	**9.7**	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything ★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant	052 R	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	**4.8**	**11.6**	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering ★★★★
Audi S8	164 D	c£80,000	8/3993	513/5800	479/1700	1975kg	264	4.1	-	155	237	27.7	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still underwhelming to drive ★★★★½
Audi S8	088 D	'06-'10	10/5204	444/7000	398/3500	1940kg	232	5.1	-	155	-	21.4	+ V10 engine, ceramic brakes, fantastic gearbox - Light steering ★★★★
Audi Q7 V12 TDI	124 D	£100,370	12/5934	493/3750	737/1750	2635kg	190	**5.1**	**12.2**	155	298	25.0	+ Undeniably quick, relatively economical - A tad ostentatious ★★★½
Bentley Flying Spur	080 D	£133,200	12/5998	552/6100	479/1600	2475kg	226	4.9	-	195	396	16.6	+ Performance, wonderful interior - Have you seen petrol prices? ★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur Speed	141 F	£150,900	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2440kg	250	4.6	-	200	396	16.6	+ 600bhp; surprisingly fun handling - Could look a bit more like it goes ★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	145 D	£220,000	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2585kg	198	5.1	-	184	393	16.7	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too ★★★★
Bentley Arnage R	048 F	'02-'08	8/6750	400/4000	616/3250	2585kg	157	**6.9**	**17.1**	155	-	13.7	+ Twin turbo thrust, limo-like ride - It's a bit heavy ★★★½
Bentley Arnage T	096 D	'06-'08	8/6751	500/4200	737/3200	2585kg	196	5.2	-	179	-	14.5	+ Still able to impress - Something of an anachronism ★★★★
BMW 320d	165 D	£28,080	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	120	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new Three is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy ★★★★
BMW 328i	165 D	£29,060	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack ★★★★½
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	**4.9**	**10.7**	**165**	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the M3 coupe - No carbon roof ★★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport	134 F	'05-'11	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1535kg	200	5.6	-	155	196	31.0	+ Stunning drivetrain, controlled chassis - Looks a bit steady ★★★★
BMW 330i Sport	028 R	'99-'05	6/2979	231/5900	221/3500	1510kg	153	**5.9**	**17.0**	155	-	30.0	+ Clean, classy and confident - Too smooth for its own good? ★★★★
BMW 528i	164 D	£33,610	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ Four-pot 528 is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects ★★★★
BMW 535i SE	141 D	£38,940	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1685kg	182	6.1	-	155	185	34.9	+ New 5-series impresses. - But only with all the chassis options ticked ★★★
BMW M5 (F10M)	165 R	£73,040	8/4395	552/5750	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	190	232	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times ★★★★★
BMW M5 Touring (E60)	105 F	'07-'10	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1780kg	285	4.8	-	155	-	19.3	+ Brilliant at ten tenths - Feels slightly clumsy when pottering ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	10.4	155	-	19.6	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech ★★★★½
BMW M5 (E39)	110 F	'99-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	**4.9**	**11.5**	155	-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	'92-'96	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	**5.9**	**13.6**	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	110 F	'86-'88	6/3453	286/6500	250/4500	1431kg	203	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Two handfuls in the wet ★★★★★
BMW X5 xDrive 40d SE		£47,440	6/2993	302/4400	442/1500	2110kg	145	6.6	-	147	198	37.7	+ Handling, comfort, refinement - Looks like a big X3 ★★★★
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	£57,430	8/4395	408/5500	442/1750	2190kg	186	5.4	-	155	292	22.6	+ Stunningly good to drive - Will you want to be seen arriving? ★★★★
BMW X6M	134 D	£82,190	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	325	20.3	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor ★★½
BMW 750i		£70,640	8/4395	401/5500	442/1750	2020kg	209	5.2	-	155	266	24.8	+ The ultimate drivers' limo - The back's a nicer place to be than the front ★★★½
Brabus Bullit	119 F	c£330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds ★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 F	£72,381	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off ★★★★
Chrysler 300C SRT8	096 D	'06-'11	8/6059	425/6000	420/4800	1965kg	220	4.9	-	168	337	20.2	+ Looks, supple ride, composed chassis - Too much understeer, slow 'box ★★★½
Chrysler 300C 5.7 Hemi	088 D	'05-'08	8/5654	340/5000	387/4000	1910kg	180	**6.2**	**15.1**	155	-	23.3	+ Gangster chic - Gristers suspension ★★★½
Ford Mondeo 2.0T Titanium X		£22,695	4/1999	200/6000	221/1750	1581kg	128	7.9	-	144	184	35.8	+ Terrific chassis, sweet engine - People will still want an Audi ★★★★
Ford Mondeo ST220	043 D	'02-'07	6/2967	223/6150	204/4900	1550kg	146	6.8	-	151	-	27.7	+ Muscular engine, fine chassis - Hotted-up repmobile image ★★★½
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4		'90-'93	4/1993	220/6250	214/3500	1305kg	159	6.6	-	144	-	24.4	+ Fast and furious - Try finding a straight one ★★★★½
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth		'86-'90	4/1993	204/6000	204/4500	1220kg	169	6.2	-	143	-	-	+ Roadgoing Group A racecar - Don't shout about the power output! ★★★★★
Holden HSV GTS S'charger	041 D	'02	8/5665	502/6050	457/5100	1799kg	283	4.5	-	180	-	-	+ Massive linear power, great chassis - Slow 'shift, cheap interior ★★★½
Honda Civic Type-R *	108 D	'07-'10	4/1998	222/8000	158/6100	1252kg	180	5.9	-	150	-	-	+ Screaming engine, razor-sharp chassis - Specialist import only ★★★★★
Honda Accord Type-R	012 R	'99-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	**6.1**	**17.4**	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image ★★★★½
Infiniti G37S		£40,615	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1709kg	188	5.8	-	155	246	26.9	+ Credible alternative to its German rivals - Ladies their looks and kudos ★★★½
Infiniti M37S	150 D	£40,625	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1765kg	182	6.2	-	155	235	27.7	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals ★★★½



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evo Knowledge

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Jaguar XF 3.0D S	145 D	£42,950	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1820kg	161	5.9	-	155	169	44.8	+ Best XF after the R – But we'd still have the R...	★★★★
Jaguar XF 5.0		£49,950	8/5000	380/6800	380/3500	1780kg	231	5.5	-	155	264	25.4	+ Fifteen grand cheaper than the XFR... – ...which is still the one we'd have	★★★★
Jaguar XFR	165 R	£65,350	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1891kg	270	4.8	10.2	155	292	22.5	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement – Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★½
Jaguar XF SV8	116 F	'08-'09	8/4196	410/6250	413/3500	1842kg	226	5.1	-	155	-	22.4	+ Convincing driving experience – Overshadowed by XFR	★★★★½
Jaguar S-type R	048 R	'02-'07	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1800kg	226	5.3	-	155	-	22.5	+ Fine dynamics belie olde worlde looks – Auto-only, and no lsd	★★★★½
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 diesel	148 D	£55,515	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1796kg	153	6.0	-	155	184	40.1	+ A great Jaguar – But not as great as the Supersport...	★★★★
Jaguar XJ Supersport	163 F	£91,050	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1892kg	270	4.9	-	155	289	23.4	+ Superb handling, monster performance – Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★½
Jaguar XJR	054 R	'03-'09	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1665kg	244	5.0	-	155	-	23.0	+ Genuine 7-series rival – 2007 facelift didn't help middle-aged image	★★★★
Jaguar XJR 4.0	018 R	'00-'03	8/3996	370/6150	387/3000	1775kg	211	5.6	13.5	155	-	21.9	+ Matchless grace, extraordinary pace – Not much space	★★★★
Lamborghini LM002	016 F	'86-'89	12/5167	450/6800	369/5200	2700kg	169	-	-	130	-	-	+ Craziest 4x4 ever, Countach V12 – Craziest 4x4 ever...	★★★★
Lexus IS-F	151 R	£58,350	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus – The M3's available as a four-door too	★★★★½
Lotus Carlton	035 F	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars – Every drive a work-out	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	£87,400	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	+ Finally, a QP with more bhp – New grille a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★½
Maserati Q'porte Sport GTS	141 F	£94,350	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	18.0	+ The most stylish supersaloon – Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 F	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	+ Redefines big-car dynamics – Don't use auto mode	★★★★½
Maserati Q'porte Sport GTS	113 D	'07-'08	8/4244	396/7000	339/4250	1930kg	208	5.5	-	167	-	-	+ Best Quattroporte chassis so far – More power wouldn't go amiss	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5 16		'89-'92	4/2498	197/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	+ M-B's M3 alternative – Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	£55,565	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging – M3's just a little better...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz DR520	148 D	'10-'11	8/6208	513/6800	479/5000	1730kg	301	4.1	-	187	-	-	+ C63 AMG goes feral – Just try finding one: only 20 were made	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet – Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	165 R	£74,695	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1840kg	286	4.2	-	155	295	22.4	+ New turbo engine doesn't dilute E63 experience – Pricey options	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	464/5200	1840kg	280	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis – Vague steering, speed limits	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cosseting ride – Speed limits	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG		'98-'02	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	1642kg	219	5.5	-	155	-	23.0	+ Dragster disguised as a limo – Tyre bills	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	£112,290	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2115kg	257	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions – Massive car	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	098 F	£163,630	12/5980	604/4750	737/2000	2260kg	272	4.4	-	155	334	19.8	+ God's own supersaloon – Unholy price and thirst	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	073 F	'04-'05	12/5980	603/6500	738/5950	2220kg	275	4.3	-	155	-	16.1	+ Eye-widening wallop – Wallet-shrivelling thirst	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG (Mk2)	154 D	£80,645	8/5461	549/5750	590/2000	1870kg	270	4.3	-	155	231	28.5	+ More power, less weight, more mpg – Pricey options	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	099 F	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance – M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	104 F	'07-'10	8/6208	503/6800	464/5200	2310kg	221	4.6	11.0	155	-	17.1	+ Goes like an SUV has no right to – Gordon Murray will hate you	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz G55 AMG	092 F	£117,460	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	2550kg	190	5.2	-	130	378	17.8	+ Thuggishness, anti-style statement – It's a bit silly	★★★½
MG ZS 180	071 D	'01-'05	6/2497	175/6500	177/4000	1235kg	144	7.3	-	139	-	29.7	+ Sweet V6 engine, pace, tidy handling – Image	★★★½
MG ZT 260 V8	068 F	'03-'05	8/4601	256/5000	302/4000	1680kg	155	6.5	16.3	155	-	21.5	+ Lovely woofly V8, well-sorted rear-drive chassis – Thirst	★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300		£29,699	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1560kg	189	4.7	-	155	246	27.4	+ The Evo grows up – Perhaps just a little too sensible?	★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	£30,699	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	+ As above with twin-clutch transmission – As above, with paddles on	★★★½
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	£33,699	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	+ Great engine and gearbox combo – It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	£37,799	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	230	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo – A five-speed gearbox?!	★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	138 F	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ The best Evo X so far... – ...about X grand too much when new	★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 F	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares – Points. Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	103 F	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/5200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades – Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up – Brakes need beefing up	★★★★½
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	306/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude – Extra money	★★★★½
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder – You tell us	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon – For the truly committed	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI RS Sprint	011 F	'99	4/1997	330/6500	323/3000	1255kg	267	4.5	11.8	145	-	-	+ Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo – A little uncompromising	★★★★½
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen Ed.	128 F	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Still one of our favourite Evos. Exclusive, too – Import only	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Diesel	161 D	£62,134	6/2967	247/3800	406/1750	1880kg	134	6.7	-	150	172	44.8	+ Impressive economy from sensible Panamera – Not really quick enough, though	★★★½
Porsche Panamera S	165 R	£78,221	8/4806	394/6500	369/3500	1770kg	226	5.6	-	177	293	22.6	+ Great cabin and typically fine Porsche chassis – Only a mother could love its looks	★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£102,909	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	270	24.6	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound – It still leaves us cold	★★★½
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	£122,623	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics – Steering feel, ride	★★★½
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	144 D	£84,790	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	2170kg	231	4.7	-	173	270	24.6	+ Greener, faster, better – Odd rear styling, numb steering	★★★★½
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	104 F	'06-'10	8/4806	494/6000	516/2250	2355kg	213	4.7	11.4	171	-	19.0	+ Appears to defy physics – Still cracks mirrors at 50 paces	★★★★½
Range Rover Evoque Si4	160 D	£39,995	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics – Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only	★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 S'chgd	135 D	£67,295	8/5000	503/6000	461/2000	2590kg	200	5.9	-	140	348	19.0	+ Thumpingly fast and hugely comfortable – It's no Cayenne in the corners	★★★½
Range Rover V8 Supercharged	134 D	£86,345	8/5000	503/6000	461/2000	2710kg	189	5.9	-	140	348	19.0	+ Fast, comfortable, luxurious – Big, heavy, thirsty	★★★½
Rolls-Royce Ghost	140 D	£200,500	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2435kg	235	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ More sporting, more affordable Rolls-Royce – But it still costs £200,500	★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 F	£285,200	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2550kg	181	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st Century – The roads are barely big enough	★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	£32,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ The fast Subaru saloon is back – Blue paint and gold wheels aren't	★★★★½
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza – End of an era	★★★★½
Subaru Impreza WRX	087 F	'05-'07	4/2457	227/5600	236/3600	1410kg	163	5.4	-	143	-	27.4	+ 2.5 litres gives even greater thump – Slightly light steering	★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive – Not so stunning to look at	★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C*	084 D	'05-'07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	+ Lighter, faster, fiercer – The need for self-restraint	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 F	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend – Too hardcore for some?	★★★★½
Subaru Imp'a WRX STI PPP	073 F	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.2	12.9	148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge – Bit too edgy in the wet	★★★★½
Subaru STi Type RA Spec C*	067 F	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	4.3	11.1	160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the P1 – Lost its throbby flat-four voice	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRI	067 R	'04-'05	4/1994	316/5800	310/4000	1470kg	218	5.3	13.1	155	-	-	+ Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 – Spec C is better	★★★★½
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 F	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status – Thirsty	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza P1	067 F	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza – Prices reflect this	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	011 F	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	5.0	14.1	143	-	-	+ Perfect blend of poise and power – Limited numbers	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B	011 F	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/5200	1270kg	220	5.0	13.1	150	-	-	+ On paper, the ultimate – On the road, too uncompromising	★★★★
Subaru Forester STi*	087 F	'05-'08	4/2457	320/5800	330/3500	-	-	4.8	-	150+	-	-	+ Undercover fun, gutsy engine – Lacks ultimate edge of an Impreza	★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR	163 F	£33,480	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1810kg	180	5.6	-	155	249	26.6	+ Highly able and very likeable – It's a £32K Vauxhall	★★★★
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	161	-	27.4	+ Great engine, effortless pace, good value – Numb steering, lumpy ride	★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	160 F	£49,550	8/6162	425/6000	406/4600	1851kg	236	4.9	-	155	320	20.9	+ Oversteery and characterful – It's very nearly M3 saloon money	★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 Supercharged	113 R	'07-'11	8/5967	533/6000	568/4400	1831kg	296	4.5	-	180	-	-	+ The Lotus Carlton reinvented – Doesn't have polish of best Europeans	★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	148 F	'09	8/6162	564/6000	527/4000	1866kg	307	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ A tauter VXR8. Bonkers pace, brilliant noise – Gearchange still rubbish	★★★★½
VW Phaeton W12	046 D	'02-'11	12/5998	444/5050	413/2750	2240kg	201	6.1	-	155	348	19.5	+ Techno masterpiece that works – Seventy-eight grand for a VW!	★★★
VW Passat R36	120 D	'08	6/3597	296/6600	258/2400	1689kg	178	5.6	-	155	227	26.9	+ On paper a poor man's RS4 – You'd rather have a secondhand RS4	★★★★½

evo POCKET BUYING GUIDE

FERRARI F430

WHY WOULD YOU?
The F430 was one of the first truly 'useable' Ferraris, a Maranello product for which no excuses needed to be made. It was regarded by most critics as being close to perfection, and it seems to have dated hardly at all.

WHAT TO PAY
Prices start at £60K for a car with a proper history. £100K gets a late F430 with low mileage, £120-160K a Scuderia.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR
The engine has a reputation for being bulletproof, but listen for a cracked exhaust manifold. Sluggish pulling away in an 'F1' automated-manual car indicates a worn clutch – they can last just 12,000 miles. Worn ball-joints or wishbone bushes will be felt through the steering or heard as rattles. (Full guide, evo 164.)



THE VITAL STATS
Years 2004-10 **Engine** V8, 4308cc **Power** 483bhp @ 8500rpm
Torque 343lb ft @ 5250rpm **0-60mph** 4.0sec **Top speed** 196mph+

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SPORTS CARS/CONVERTIBLES



OUR CHOICE: Audi R8 Spyder. The Spyder boasts supercar looks, presence and performance, yet you really could drive one every day. And while the V10-engined car makes the more spine-tingling noise, the lighter and even more agile V8 version gets our vote.

BEST OF THE REST: The Elise is a joy, with just enough power, while the revamped MX-5 handles like it should again. The Porsche Boxster is getting on a bit, but still special. For the ultimate thrills, though, treat yourself to a Caterham R300 or an Ariel Atom (right).



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
AC MkVI GT	135 D	£93,500	8/6162	437/4800	431/4800	1000kg	444	3.9	-	162	-	-	+ Cobra charm with a modern twist - It's priced against some strong rivals
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	*161 R*	*'09-'11*	*8/4691*	*450/7000*	*354/4750*	*1675kg*	*273*	*4.5*	-	*181*	-	-	*+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Good luck trying to buy one*
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	£29,954	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 F	£42,000	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental
Ariel Atom Mugen	166 F	£55,000	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten being made
Ariel Atom V8 500	166 F	£146,699	8/3000	475/10,500	281/7750	550kg	877	**3.0**	**5.8**	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150K for an Atom
Ariel Atom 2 300 Supercharged	*123 R*	*'03-'09*	*4/1998*	*300/8200*	*162/7200*	*550kg*	*554*	**3.3**	-	*155*	-	*28.0*	*+ Makes your face ripple - ...like Clarkson's*
Ariel Atom 1	*015 F*	*'99-'03*	*4/1796*	*125/5500*	*122/3000*	*496kg*	*256*	*5.6*	*18.0*	*115*	-	-	*+ Amazing styling, huge fun - As practical as a chocolate teapot*
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 F	£98,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Lacks real teeth
Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£110,700	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£138,150	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	£190,812	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feelgood car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	£37,715	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question; not cheap either
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	£47,820	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it
Audi TT Roadster (Mk1 225bhp)	*016 R*	*'00-'06*	*4/1781*	*225/5900*	*206/2200*	*1395kg*	*164*	**6.9**	**20.0**	*150*	-	*30.4*	*+ Winner on the King's Road - Trails Boxster on the open road*
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£45,895	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	+ Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	*094 D*	*'06-'08*	*8/4163*	*414/7800*	*317/5500*	*1845kg*	*228*	*4.9*	-	*155*	-	-	*+ That engine - Wibble wobble, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate*
Audi R8 Spyder V8	161 R	£96,595	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	186	337	19.6	+ Dynamically outstanding, sounds terrific - V10 sounds even better
Audi R8 Spyder V10	152 F	£117,710	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1720kg	306	**4.1**	-	194	349	19.0	+ Looks and sounds sensational - It's the most expensive Audi ever
BAC Mono	166 F	£79,950	4/2300	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...
Bentley Continental GTC	163 D	£149,350	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2495kg	231	4.5	-	195	384	17.1	+ The world's best topless luxury GT - Not exactly fuel-efficient
Bentley Conti Supersports	147 D	£182,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2395kg	263	3.9	-	202	388	17.3	+ Fast, capable and refined - Coupe does the Supersports thing better
Bentley Conti GTC Speed	*131 D*	*'09-'11*	*12/5998*	*600/6000*	*590/1750*	*2485kg*	*245*	*4.5*	-	*200*	*396*	*17.0*	*+ A great convertible just got better - Optional carbon brakes a necessity*
Bentley Azure T	*140 D*	*'09-'11*	*8/6761*	*500/4200*	*738/1800*	*2695kg*	*188*	*5.2*	-	*179*	*465*	*14.5*	*+ Two-and-a-half-ton sunbed - Cheaper Conti GTC a much better drive*
BMW Z4 sDrive 20i (Mk2)	164 D	£29,480	4/1997	181/4800	199/1250	1470kg	125	6.8	-	142	159	41.5	+ The Z4 has grown up... - ...and got fat
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i (Mk2)	130 D	£39,430	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ As above, with more power - Not as much fun as it used to be
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	*094 D*	*'06-'09*	*6/2996*	*265/6600*	*232/2750*	*1310kg*	*205*	*5.7*	-	*155*	-	*32.9*	*+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like*
BMW Z4 M Roadster	*091 R*	*'06-'09*	*6/3246*	*338/7900*	*269/4900*	*1410kg*	*244*	*4.8*	-	*155*	-	*23.3*	*+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension*
BMW M Roadster	*002 F*	*'98-'02*	*6/3246*	*325/7400*	*258/4900*	*1375kg*	*240*	*5.3*	-	*155*	-	*25.4*	*+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better*
BMW 335i SE Convertible	102 D	£41,710	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1735kg	177	5.8	-	155	205	32.1	+ Looks good, great to drive, fantastic engine - A bit shakey
BMW M3 Convertible (E93)	119 D	£58,785	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1810kg	232	5.3	-	155	297	22.2	+ M DCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge
BMW M3 Convertible	*035 D*	*'01-'06*	*6/3246*	*338/7900*	*269/5000*	*1655kg*	*207*	*5.3*	-	*155*	-	*23.3*	*+ That engine - Gets the wobbles on British B-roads*
BMW M6 Convertible	*098 D*	*'06-'10*	*10/4999*	*500/7750*	*384/6100*	*1930kg*	*264*	*4.8*	-	*155*	*352*	*19.2*	*+ Composure, grip, power, comfort - Steering lacks feel at low speed*
BMW Z8	*026 R*	*'00-'03*	*8/4941*	*400/6600*	*369/3800*	*1585kg*	*256*	**4.8**	**11.1**	*155*	-	*14.4*	*+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive*
Brooke 260 Double R	094 F	£34,995	4/2261	260/7500	200/6100	550kg	480	**3.9**	-	155+	-	-	+ Fast, dynamic, well built - No roof, looks not for everyone
Caterham 7 Classic	068 F	£16,650	4/1397	105/6000	95/5000	540kg	198	6.5	-	110	-	-	+ The Caterham experience starts here - It's pretty raw
Caterham 7 Roadsport 125	105 F	£21,650	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ New Ford-engined model is just great - Bigger drivers need SV model
Caterham 7 Supersport	165 F	£22,995	4/1595	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	+ One of the best Caterhams is less than £20K... - ...if you build it yourself
Caterham 7 Roadsport SV 175	140 D	£28,850	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	555kg	321	4.8	-	138	-	-	+ The Caterham for everyday use, R300 engine - Loses intensity of R300
Caterham 7 Superlight R300	150 F	£30,000	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - Factory-built cars top £30K
Caterham 7 Superlight R400	105 F	£34,300	4/1999	210/7800	152/5750	525kg	406	3.8	-	140	-	-	+ R400 reborn with (lots of) Ford power - Slightly hesitant low-rev pick-up
Caterham 7 Superlight R500	123 R	£41,000	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver
Caterham CSR 260 Superlight	094 F	£43,800	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	**3.8**	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays
Caterham Levante	131 F	£115,000	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	**4.8**	**8.2**	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly
Caterham 7 R300	*068 F*	*'02-'06*	*4/1796*	*160/7000*	*130/5000*	*500kg*	*325*	*4.7*	-	*130*	-	-	*+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps*
Caterham 7 R400	*068 F*	*'03-'06*	*4/1796*	*200/7500*	*150/5750*	*490kg*	*415*	*3.9*	-	*140*	-	-	*+ Race-car with a number plate - Your missus will leave you*
Caterham 7 R500	*068 F*	*'99-'06*	*4/1796*	*230/8600*	*155/7200*	*460kg*	*510*	**3.6**	**8.8**	*146*	-	-	*+ Fine for the Nürburgring - Hard work around the Bullring*
Caterham 7 R500 Evolution	*069 F*	*'04*	*4/1998*	*250/8000*	*190/4000*	*460kg*	*552*	**3.9**	**8.1**	*150*	-	-	*+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad*
Chevrolet Corvette C6	083 D	£56,186	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1460kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics
Ferrari California	143 F	£146,960	8/4287	453/7750	358/5000	1735kg	265	**3.8**	**9.0**	193	299	21.6	+ Despite the CC roof, it's a real Ferrari - We'd still take an F430 Spider
Ginetta G20		*'02-'10*	*4/1796*	*140/5800*	*101/3500*	*660kg*	*341*	*6.3*	-	*126*	-	-	*+ Classic looks, old-fashioned value - Vintage driving experience*
Honda S2000	*118 D*	*'99-'09*	*4/1997*	*237/8300*	*153/7500*	*1260kg*	*191*	*6.2*	-	*150*	-	*28.2*	*+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better*
IFR Aspid	126 D	c£130,000	4/1997	398/8600	240/7800	740kg	451	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Imagine a Caterham crossed with a Zonda - It's a bit pricey
Jaguar XK 5.0		£71,000	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1696kg	227	5.3	-	155	264	25.2	+ Basic XK gets extra power... - ...but loses some of its GT refinement
Jaguar XKR	130 F	£84,550	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	-	155	292	23.0	+ Gains Jag's fantastic new V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes
Jaguar XK	*089 F*	*'06-'09*	*8/4196*	*294/6000*	*303/4100*	*1635kg*	*183*	*6.6*	-	*155*	-	*25.0*	*+ Every bit as good as the XK coupe - 294bhp still only just enough*
Jaguar XKR		*'06-'09*	*8/4196*	*414/6250*	*413/4000*	*1705kg*	*247*	*5.0*	-	*155*	-	-	*+ First Jag sports car for years - Overwrought detailing*
Jaguar XKR	*004 F*	*'97-'06*	*8/3996*	*370/6150*	*387/3600*	*1750kg*	*215*	**5.4**	**12.8**	*155*	-	*15.6*	*+ Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to toupes everywhere*
Jetstream SC250	125 D	£29,450	4/1998	247/5600	236/2400	700kg	358	4.0	-	160	-	38.0	+ The way it drives - The way it looks
KTM X-Bow	138 F	£49,482	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	790kg	305	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Mad looks; real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than we'd hoped
KTM X-Bow R	165 F	£64,850	4/1984	295/5500	295/3300	790kg	379	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper
Light Car Company Rocket	104 F	£46,000	4/1002	143/10500	77/8500	406kg	358	4.4	-	145	-	35.0	+ Single-seater style, speed - Old Formula Fords cost £5K
Lotus Elise 1.6	144 D	£29,050	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	876kg	155	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ New 1.6 Elise is light *and* fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	159 R	£28,450	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused Elise - A touch pricey for a stripped-out Elise
Lotus Elise R	*068 F*	*'04-'11*	*4/1796*	*189/7800*	*133/6800*	*860kg*	*223*	**5.6**	**13.9**	*150*	*196*	*34.4*	*+ Most thrillsome Elise yet - Blaring engine note*
Lotus Elise SC	*131 F*	*'08-'11*	*4/1794*	*218/8000*	*156/5000*	*870kg*	*254*	**4.5**	**11.4**	*148*	*199*	*33.2*	*+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle*
Lotus Elise S 1.8	*104 F*	*'06-'10*	*4/1794*	*134/6200*	*127/4200*	*860kg*	*158*	**6.3**	**18.7**	*127*	-	*37.2*	*+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little*

evo PAST MASTER

MITSUBISHI EVO VII RS SPRINT – ISSUE 041, MARCH 2002

For those who thought the standard Evo VII was a little soft and fluffy, Mitsubishi made this harder charging version.

'No ABS, no Active Yaw Control, no electric windows and definitely no prisoners. Turbo boost pressure is increased from 1.0 to 1.3bar, so the 2-litre four-cylinder now develops a ripsnorting 320bhp and 327lb ft – that's up around 40bhp and 40lb ft. With super-close-ratio gearing, the Sprint's accelerative urgency borders on the hair-trigger.

Entry to a corner is all about the front end's rabid bite, then you can dial in as much or as little oversteer as you like, but you need to be confident with your inputs to stay on top of it.

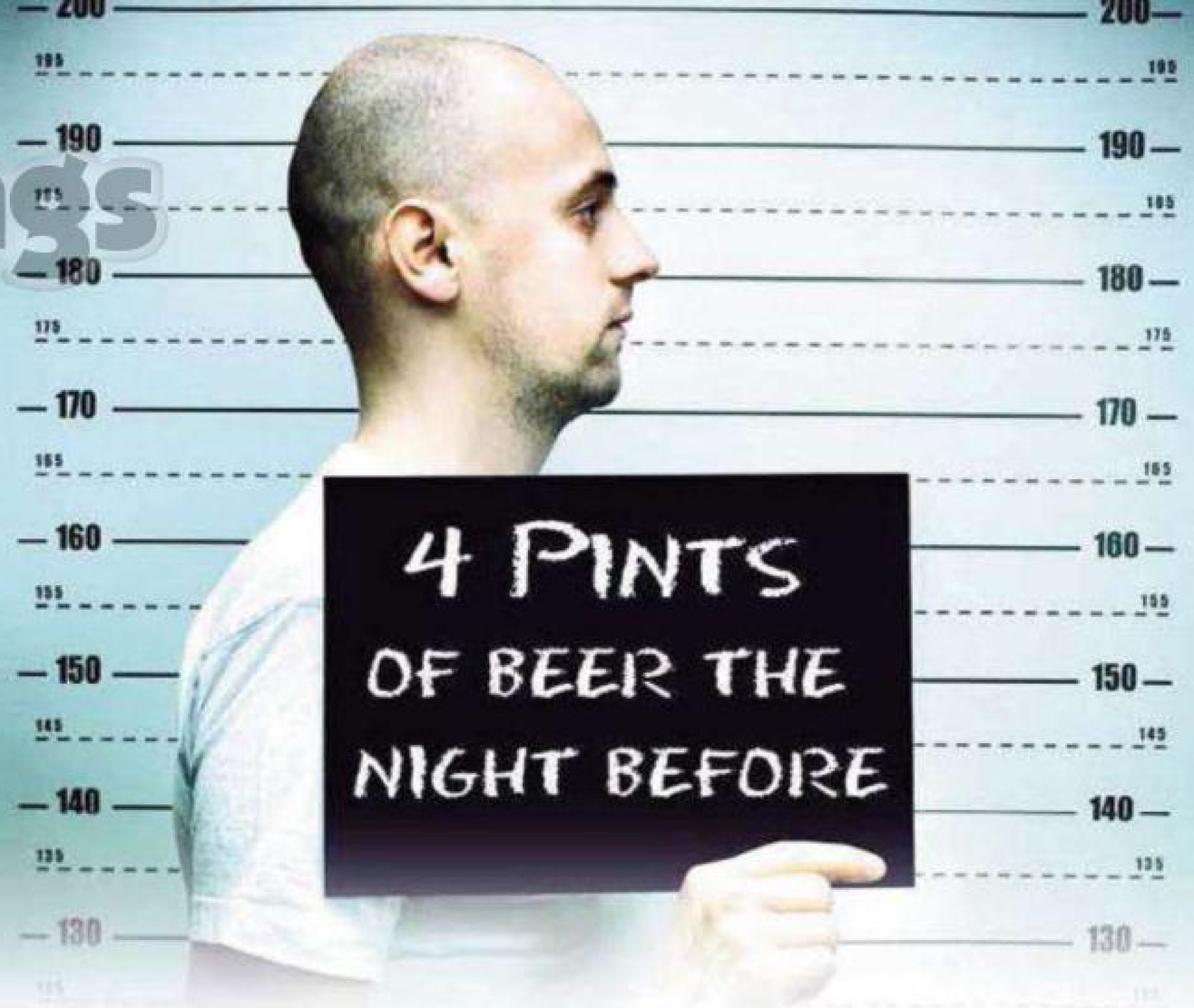
All in all, the RS Sprint is just about as full-on an experience as you can get this side of a Caterham R500.'



Left: proving less is more, the Sprint earned itself a five-star rating when we drove it in 2002

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If you drank 4 pints between 9pm and midnight, you may not be sober until noon the following day*. That's why almost 1 in 5 drink drive accidents happen the "morning after"**. AlcoSense quickly and accurately shows your blood alcohol level, so you know when you're clear.



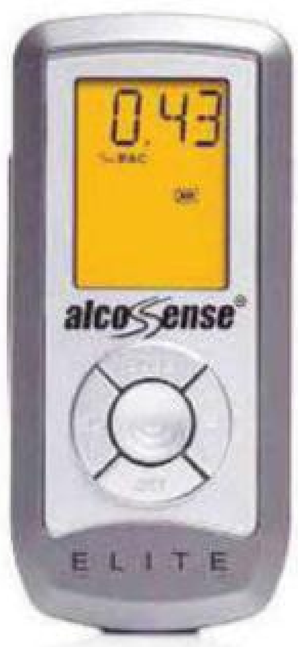
AlcoSense One
Only £24.99

Entry level breathlayser.
Provides a reading up to 1.5 times the UK drink drive limit.
Accurate to +/-0.02%BAC at the drink drive limit.
Recommended waiting time between tests: 1 hour



AlcoSense Lite
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Reliable
Intermediate level sensor for good accuracy, blow tubes for improved sample quality.
Clear
Results in seconds. Alerts you when close to or over the drink drive limit.



AlcoSense Elite
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Premium semi-conductor sensor for high accuracy, blow tubes improve sample quality.
Consistent
Blow Pressure Sensor and self cleaning increases accuracy and consistency.
Clear & Future Proof
Results in seconds. Alerts you when you when close to or over the limit. Recalibratable for many years of use.

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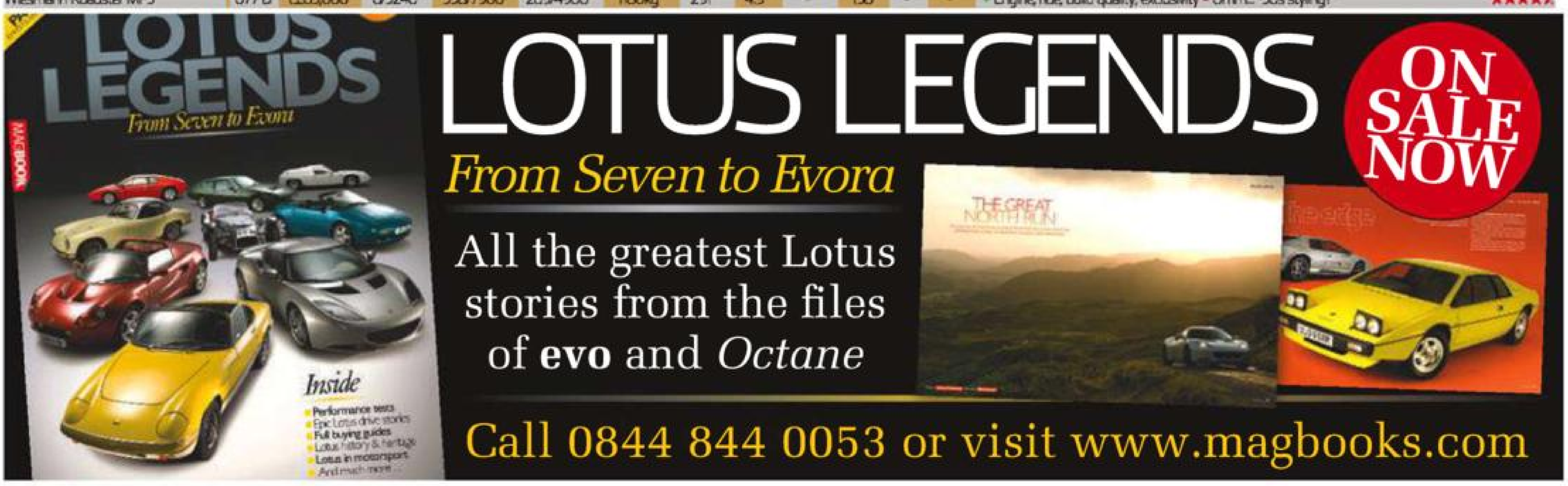
** 17.1% of drink drive accidents are between hours of 5am and 1pm (Source: Dept. for Transport, Road Accidents and Safety Annual Report 2010)
* 4 Pints of Abbot Reserve contain 14.8 units of alcohol (Source: Greene King) and each unit takes 1 hour to leave the body (Source: NHS). Therefore 14.8 hours after 9pm the alcohol will have passed from the body.

+Rarity, quality, head-turning looks
–More collectors' than drivers' car
PORSCHE 911 SPEEDSTER, ISSUE 152

Storemags.com

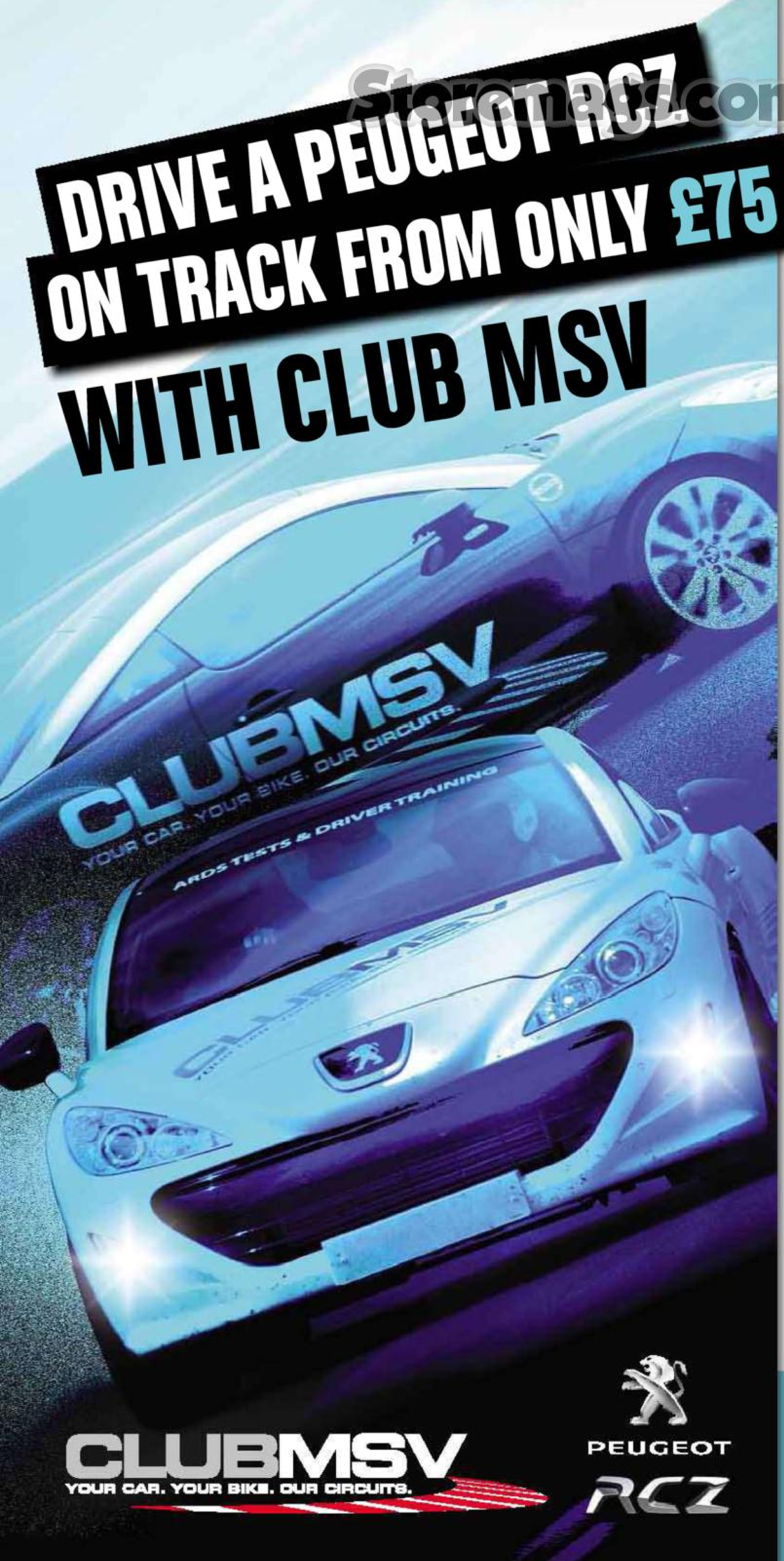
evo Knowledge

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Lotus Elise S2 111S	049 F	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 190	044 F	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	**4.7**	**12.1**	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★½
Lotus Elise S1	126 F	'96-'00	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	751kg	164	**6.1**	**18.5**	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 F	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★½
Lotus 340R	126 F	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	**4.5**	**12.5**	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... - ...that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Lotus Elan SE	095 F	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolving	★★★★
Lotus Elan Sprint	126 F	'71-'73	4/1558	126/6500	113/5500	720kg	178	6.6	-	122	-	-	+ Sensational chassis, properly quick - Affording a mint one	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,250	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.3	-	176	358	18.3	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★½
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£102,515	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.1	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★½
Mazda MX-5 1.8i SE		£17,990	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1155kg	109	9.9	-	121	167	39.8	+ Basic MX-5 offers ESP-less fun - But you'll probably want the 2.0's power	★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech	138 F	£21,135	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1175kg	144	7.6	-	132	181	36.2	+ Handles brilliantly again - Less than macho image	★★★★½
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3 v1)	091 F	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1155kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s	★★★½
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK350 Sport	'61 R	£44,725	6/3498	302/6500	273/3500	1465kg	209	5.5	-	155	167	39.8	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater	★★★½
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 F	'05-'09	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black	110 F	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	**4.9**	**11.2**	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted 7G-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★½
Mercedes-Benz SL500		£81,705	8/5461	383/6000	391/2800	1910kg	204	5.4	-	155	272	24.4	+ Unflappable, gorgeous, beautifully engineered - Just a bit dull	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	£106,820	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1895kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	070 F	'02-'07	8/5439	493/6100	516/2650	1955kg	256	**4.6**	**10.2**	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG		'08-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2045kg	300	4.2	-	155	-	18.7	+ Humongous torque - Humongously expensive	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'07	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey	★★★★½
Mini John Cooper Works Convertible	130 F	£24,780	4/1598	208/6000	206/1850	1230kg	172	6.9	-	146	169	38.7	+ A manlier Mini cabrio. As hardcore as the hatch... - ...which is still better	★★★★
MG TF 135		£14,213	4/1796	133/6750	122/5000	1185kg	114	8.4	-	127	185	35.8	+ Cheaper than an MX-5 - But an MX-5 is much better	★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	'61 R	£30,000	2/1982	115/5300	100/3200	480kg	243	4.5	-	120+	-	-	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Unnatural brake feel; you'd better not be shy	★★★★
Morgan Roadster V6	073 D	£40,000	6/2967	202/6000	206/4900	950kg	216	4.9	-	134	225	28.8	+ Lusty V6, romantic atmosphere - Bygone dynamics	★★★
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 F	£126,900	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and targa top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	'02-'08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 F	£32,050	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	155	262	25.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★
Nissan 350Z Roadster		'04-'09	6/3498	309/6600	264/4800	1600kg	196	5.8	-	155	-	24.8	+ Drives just like the coupe - But doesn't look as good	★★★★
Porsche Boxster		£36,572	6/2893	252/6400	214/4400	1335kg	192	5.9	-	163	221	30.0	+ Still as impressive as ever - It's a typically Porsche facelift	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S	'61 R	£43,800	6/3436	306/6400	265/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	170	223	29.7	+ As above, but with more power - Lighter steering than before	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder	140 F	£47,843	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	29.1	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not practical	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (Mk2)		'05-'09	6/2687	241/6500	201/4600	1305kg	188	6.0	-	160	-	29.4	+ Mk2 Boxster is even better than the Mk1 - Ubiquity?	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (Mk2)	101 D	'07-'09	6/3387	291/6250	251/4400	1355kg	218	5.3	-	169	-	27.2	+ Real drop-top alternative to a 911 - It ain't cheap	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (Mk1)	049 F	'99-'04	6/2687	228/6300	192/4700	1275kg	182	6.3	-	155	-	29.1	+ Still an impeccable sports car - Very little	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (Mk1)	070 F	'99-'04	6/3179	260/6200	228/4700	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS Cabrio	'61 R	£85,249	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1515kg	270	4.7	-	190	242	27.4	+ The best 911 drop-top you can buy - Lacks glamour of an R8 Spyder	★★★★½
Porsche 911 C4 Cabrio	122 D	£79,572	6/3614	341/6600	288/4400	1555kg	223	5.2	-	176	242	27.4	+ The usual - The usual image problems	★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio	139 D	£118,015	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1645kg	305	3.8	-	194	275	24.1	+ Absurdly quick and capable drop-top - We'd still take the coupe	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Speedster	152 D	'10	6/3800	402/7500	310/4200	1540kg	265	4.4	-	189	242	27.0	+ Rarity, quality, head-turning styling - More collectors' than drivers' car	★★★★
Porsche 911 C2 Cabrio (996)		'05	6/3387	316/6800	273/4250	1386kg	232	5.0	-	174	-	25.4	+ Feels solid like the hard-top - What more do you want?	★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (996)	060 F	'03-'05	6/3596	414/6000	413/4600	1700kg	250	4.7	-	185	-	-	+ Faster than you'll ever need it to be - Just the image thing again	★★★★½
Radical SR3 SL	166 F	£69,850	4/2000	300/n/a	340/n/a	795kg	383	3.0	-	161	-	-	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm	★★★★★
Radical SR8LM	138 F	£88,000	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal	★★★★★
Smart Roadster Brabus	067 D	'04-'07	3/698	101/5600	96/2500	895kg	115	9.8	-	121	-	54.3	+ Feisty engine, growly soundtrack - Slow paddleshift gearbox	★★★½
Tesla Roadster	151 F	£87,945	AC motor	248/4500	273/0-4500	1285kg	196	**5.0**	**14.3**	120	-	-	+ If this is the future, it's going to be fun - Limited range, high price	★★★★
Toniq-R Duratec	102 D	£23,500	4/1999	193/6600	174/4500	550kg	357	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Very good value, well built, and lots of fun too - No roof, no windscreen	★★★★
Toyota MR2	078 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	**7.2**	**21.2**	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★½
TVR T350T	067 D	'04-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.4	-	175+	-	-	+ Targa top roof, grunty engine - Lacks polish	★★★½
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★½
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details	★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	**4.8**	**11.2**	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR Cult status - Mere details	★★★★½
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	**4.8**	**11.2**	167	-	22.1	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★½
Ultima GTR	017 R	£45,500	8/6300	534/5800	528/4800	990kg	548	**3.9**	**8.2**	204	-	-	+ Turns the M1 into the Mulsanne - You'll have to build it yourself	★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★½
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Westfield Megabusa	036 F	£24,450	4/1298	175/9800	102/9000	430kg	413	3.7	-	140	-	-	+ Bike-engined road-rocket - Not big on practicality...	★★★½
Westfield 1600 Sport Turbo	140 D	£26,500	4/1598	195/5850	170/2000	650kg	305	4.7	-	142	-	-	+ Very quick and composed - Expensive, and a little on the heavy side	★★★★
Westfield XI	078 D	'04-'10	4/1275	65/6000	72/3000	498kg	132	8.5	-	120	-	-	+ Old-school charm - Old-school power	★★★★½
Westfield XTR4	068 D	'01-'10	4/1781	220/5500	184/5000	542kg	413	3.6	-	160	-	-	+ Mini-Le Mans racer - You wouldn't want to drive it there	★★★½
Westfield SEIGHT	068 F	'92-'94	8/3900	270/6000	-	677kg	441	**4.4**	**9.4**	144	-	-	+ Snarling, fire-breathing V8, ferocious pace - Spits fuel at you	★★★★
Wiesmann Roadster MF3	077 D	c£66,000	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1180kg	291	4.9	-	158	-	-	+ Engine, ride, build quality, exclusivity - Umm... '50s styling?	★★★★½



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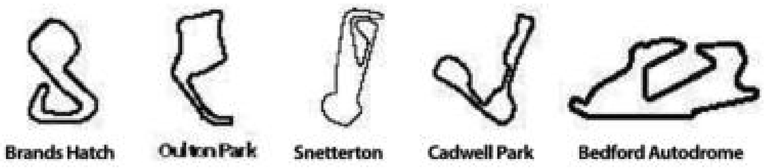
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evo Knowledge

COUPES/GTs



OUR CHOICE: Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS 4.0. We really didn't think the previous 911 GT3 RS could be improved upon, but the new 4.0 version is even faster, even more hardcore and even more intoxicating. Quite possibly the best road-going 911 ever, and **evo**'s Car of the Year 2011.

BEST OF THE REST: Previous eCoty winners – 2008's Nissan GT-R and 2009's Lotus Evora – offer serious thrills for rather less cash than the 911. Audi's R8 and BMW's 1M Coupe (right) are both utterly brilliant, and the 991-gen 911 is set to move the game on once more.



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Alfa Romeo Brera 3.2 V6	*120 F*	*'08-'11*	*6/3195*	*256/6300*	*237/4500*	*1532kg*	*170*	*6.9*	-	*155*	*260*	-	+ *Brera made better for UK roads* - *Steering lacking some feel*	★★★★
Alfa Romeo GTV 3.0 V6	*010 F*	*'96-'06*	*6/2959*	*220/6300*	*199/5000*	*1406kg*	*159*	*6.5*	-	*150*	-	*24.1*	+ *Glorious V6 makes it a mini-Ferrari* - *So-so chassis*	★★★½
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	*120 F*	*'07-'09*	*8/4691*	*450/7000*	*354/4750*	*1585kg*	*288*	*4.1*	-	*181*	-	-	+ *Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance* - *They're all sold*	★★★★½
Alpina B3 Biturbo	108 F	£50,745	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	29.1	+ Alpina's M3 alternative - Too refined for some	★★★★★
Artega GT	122 F	£64,860	6/3597	296/6600	258/2400	1100kg	273	4.9	-	170	-	-	+ Stunning looks, chassis up with the best - Interior design, price	★★★★½
Aston Martin V8 Vantage 4.7	120 F	£90,895	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	'80	328	20.4	+ More power lifts Vantage to a new level - Ride is unremittingly firm	★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N420	147 F	£96,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	'80	328	20.4	+ Aston's best V8 Vantage yet... - ...is one of the most expensive	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	164 R	£102,500	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only	★★★★½
Aston Martin V8 Vantage 4.3	*109 F*	*'05-'08*	*8/4281*	*380/7300*	*302/5000*	*1630kg*	*237*	**5.2**	**12.0**	*175*	-	-	+ *Gorgeous, awesome soundtrack* - *Can't quite match 911 dynamically*	★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	146 D	£128,150	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1760kg	271	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Ride & handling transformed for 2010 - Rapide doesn't cost much more	★★★★½
Aston Martin DB7 Vantage	*010 R*	*'00-'05*	*12/5935*	*420/6000*	*400/5000*	*1770kg*	*241*	**4.9**	**11.2**	*185*	-	*18.6*	+ *DB7 with near-supercar pace* - *Handling lacks edge*	★★★½
Aston Martin Virage	156 D	£149,995	12/5935	490/6500	420/5750	1785kg	279	4.6	-	186	349	18.8	+ DB9 gets DBS assertiveness - Slightly dated feel, seems heavy	★★★★½
Aston Martin DBS	142 F	£180,812	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary	★★★★½
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI	155 R	£27,140	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	**6.3**	**15.7**	152	154	42.8	+ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game	★★★★
Audi TTS	119 D	£35,605	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	155	184	35.8	+ Usefully quicker TT; great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game	★★★★
Audi TT RS	158 R	£45,840	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	**4.4**	**11.1**	155	209	31.4	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	★★★★
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	*081 D*	*'05-'06*	*4/1781*	*237/5700*	*236/2300*	*1390kg*	*173*	*5.7*	-	*155*	-	*30.3*	+ *Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis* - *Numb steering*	★★★★
Audi S5	163 D	£42,790	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1675kg	199	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Supercharged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Pricey once you add options	★★★★
Audi RS5	162 R	£58,725	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1725kg	261	**4.3**	**10.6**	155	252	26.2	+ Brilliant engine and accomplished chassis... - ...don't gel together	★★★
Audi R8 V8	106 R	£87,935	8/4163	414/7800	317/4500	1560kg	270	**4.1**	**9.9**	187	352	19.9	+ Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10	146 R	£109,090	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	**3.9**	**8.4**	196	346	19.0	+ The fabulous R8 gets a supercar engine - Looks a lot like the V8	★★★★★
Audi R8 GT	151 D	£142,585	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	199	-	-	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted	★★★★★
Audi Quattro 20V	*019 F*	*'90-'91*	*5/2226*	*220/5900*	*228/1950*	*1329kg*	*146*	**6.2**	**18.2**	*143*	-	*19.1*	+ *Modern classic* - *Buy wisely to avoid big bills*	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£135,760	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2320kg	248	4.6	-	198	384	17.1	+ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst	★★★★
Bentley Conti Supersports	137 F	£170,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2240kg	282	3.7	-	204	388	17.3	+ A thoroughly impressive car... - ...rather than a fun and involving one	★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	*115 F*	*'07-'11*	*12/5998*	*600/6000*	*553/1750*	*2350kg*	*259*	*4.3*	-	*202*	*396*	*17.0*	+ *Stupendous performance, fine dynamics* - *Weight, thirst...*	★★★★½
Bentley Brooklands	116 D	£241,600	8/6761	530/4000	774/3250	2655kg	203	5.0	-	184	465	14.5	+ More fun than it has any right to be - It's a bit thirsty	★★★★½
BMW 135i M Sport	113 F	£31,785	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1455kg	211	5.3	-	155	198	33.2	+ Fast, fun, £20K cheaper than an M3 - Not as wild as we'd hoped	★★★★
BMW 1-series M Coupe	158 R	£40,020	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.8	-	155	224	-	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Could hinder BMW M3 sales...	★★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport	096 D	£39,145	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1525kg	201	**5.2**	**12.2**	155	196	33.6	+ Eager engine, exploitable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling	★★★★½
BMW M3 (E92)	162 R	£54,690	8/5999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	**4.3**	**10.3**	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its talented new rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M	★★★★★
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	*156 F*	*'10-'11*	*8/4361*	*444/8300*	*324/3750*	*1530kg*	*295*	*4.3*	-	*193*	*295*	-	+ *Highly exclusive, feels special* - *Highly priced, too. And it's no GT3 RS*	★★★★½
BMW M3 (E46)	*066 F*	*'00-'07*	*6/3246*	*338/7900*	*269/5000*	*1495kg*	*230*	**5.1**	**12.3**	*155*	-	*23.7*	+ *One of the best BMWs ever* - *Slightly artificial steering feel*	★★★★½
BMW M3 CS (E46)	*088 F*	*'05-'07*	*6/3246*	*338/7900*	*269/5000*	*1495kg*	*230*	*5.1*	-	*155*	-	*23.7*	+ *CSL dynamics without CSL price* - *Looks like the standard car*	★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	*060 R*	*'03-'04*	*6/3246*	*355/7900*	*273/4900*	*1385kg*	*260*	**5.3**	**12.0**	*155*	-	-	+ *Stripped-down road-race M3* - *Standard brakes barely adequate*	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E36)	*148 F*	*'93-'98*	*6/3201*	*321/7400*	*258/3250*	*1460kg*	*223*	**5.4**	**12.8**	*157*	-	*25.7*	+ *Performance, image* - *Never quite as good as the original*	★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	*165 F*	*'86-'90*	*4/2302*	*212/6750*	*170/4600*	*1165kg*	*185*	**6.7**	**17.8**	*147*	-	*20.3*	+ *Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road* - *LHD only*	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Coupe	*097 F*	*'06-'09*	*6/3246*	*338/7900*	*269/4900*	*1420kg*	*242*	*5.0*	-	*155*	-	*23.3*	+ *A real drivers' car* - *You've got to be prepared to get stuck in*	★★★★½
BMW M Coupe	*005 R*	*'98-'03*	*6/3246*	*325/7400*	*258/3250*	*1375kg*	*240*	*5.1*	-	*155*	-	*25.0*	+ *Quick and characterful* - *Lacks finesse*	★★★★
BMW 640i Coupe	160 D	£59,565	6/2979	316/5800	332/1300	1660kg	194	5.4	-	155	179	36.7	+ New Six boasts improved looks, effortless performance - Not hugely exciting	★★★
BMW 640d	165 D	£62,080	6/2993	309/4400	465/1500	1790kg	175	5.5	-	155	144	51.4	+ Great engine and economy, excellent build - Numb steering, unsettled B-road ride	★★★★
BMW M6	*106 R*	*'05-'10*	*10/4999*	*500/7750*	*384/6100*	*1635kg*	*311*	**4.8**	**10.0**	*155*	*342*	*19.8*	+ *Awesome GT, awesome sports car* - *SMG gearbox now off the pace*	★★★★½
Chevrolet Camaro SS	148 F	c£32,000	8/6162	420/5900	420/4600	1751kg	247	4.7	-	155	-	-	+ Looks like a Transformer made real - We'd prefer it in robot mode	★★★
Chevrolet Corvette C6	116 D	£49,033	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1461kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ A Corvette with no apologies needed - Still left-hand drive only	★★★★½
Chevrolet Corvette Z06	099 F	£66,403	8/7011	505/6300	469/4800	1418kg	363	**3.9**	**8.5**	198	350	19.2	+ 8.5 to 100, brakes, price - Not quite the road-racer we expected	★★★★½
Dodge Challenger *	122 D	c£40,000	8/6059	425/5200	420/4800	1877kg	230	5.2	-	160+	-	-	+ Effortlessly cool... - ...if you live in Hazzard County	★★★½
Ford Mustang Boss 302 *	162 R	c£45,000	8/4951	444/7400	380/4500	1647kg	274	**4.6**	**10.5**	155	-	-	+ Looks great and has oodles of character - LHD only, far from dynamically perfect	★★★★
Ford Shelby GT500 *	140 R	c£47,000	8/5411	540/6000	510/4500	1780kg	308	4.6	-	155	-	-	+ Massive power never fails to entertain - Heavy, unsophisticated chassis	★★★½
Ginetta G40 R	165 F	£29,950	4/1993	175/6700	140/5000	793kg	224	5.8	-	140	-	-	+ A race-compliant sports car for the road - Feels too soft to be a hardcore track toy	★★★★
Ginetta G60	165 D	£68,000	6/3721	310/6500	288/4500	1080kg	292	4.9	-	165	-	-	+ Reborn Farbio GT5 boasts great engine and good looks - The ride still needs work	★★★★
Honda CR-Z GT	144 F	£20,820	4/1497	122/6100	128/1500	1198kg	103	9.9	-	124	117	56.5	+ The first hybrid with sporting intent - No match for a good diesel hot hatch	★★★½
Honda Integra Type-R (DC2)	*095 F*	*'96-'00*	*4/1797*	*187/8000*	*131/7300*	*1101kg*	*173*	**6.2**	**17.9**	*145*	-	*28.9*	+ *Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever* - *Too raw for some*	★★★★★
*Honda Integra Type-R (DC5) * *	*037 F*	*'01-'06*	*4/1998*	*217/8000*	*152/7000*	*1250kg*	*176*	*7.1*	*16.7*	*140*	-	-	+ *Sharp looks, massive grip* - *Lost a little of the DC2's magic*	★★★★
Honda NSX	*043 F*	*'90-'05*	*6/3179*	*276/7300*	*224/5300*	*1410kg*	*196*	*5.5*	-	*168*	-	*22.8*	+ *'The useable supercar'* - *270bhp sounds a bit weedy today*	★★★★½
*Honda NSX-R * *	*051 F*	*'02-'05*	*6/3179*	*276/7300*	*224/5300*	*1270kg*	*221*	*4.4*	-	*168*	-	-	+ *evo Car of the Year 2002* - *Honda never brought it to the UK*	★★★★★
Infiniti G37S Coupé	127 R	£38,247	6/3696	316/7000	266/5200	1706kg	188	**5.8**	**13.8**	155	246	26.9	+ Softer 370Z delivers sharp-driving swing at the Germans - Bland looks	★★★½
Jaguar XK 5.0	130 D	£65,000	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1660kg	232	5.2	-	155	264	25.2	+ Fine car for the likes of us - Jag buyers may not like the harder edge	★★★★

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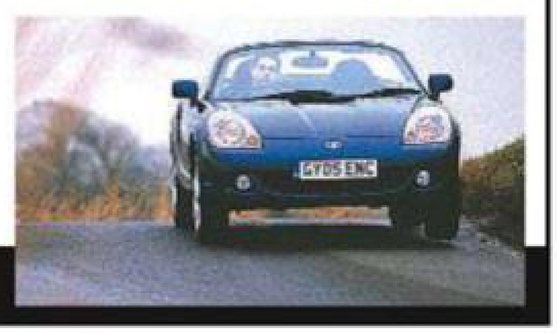
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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Jaguar XKR	129 D	£78,550	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1753kg	292	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home	★★★★½
Jaguar XKR S	164 R	£97,000	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1753kg	314	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ The most exciting XKR ever - It's nearly £100,000	★★★★½
Jaguar XKR		*'98-'06*	*8/4196*	*400/5100*	*408/3500*	*1735kg*	*234*	*5.2*	*-*	*155*	*-*	*22.9*	*+ Extra grunt of 4.2-litre motor - Lacks feedback*	★★★★½
Lotus Exige S	105 F	£35,550	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Non-limited edition of the Exige 240R - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 260	139 D	£45,950	4/1796	256/8000	174/6000	890kg	293	4.0	-	152	199	31.1	+ Feels like a race car, yet works on the road - Costs the best part of £50K	★★★★½
Lotus Exige (series 2)	*068 R*	*'04-'08*	*4/1796*	*189/7800*	*133/6800*	*875kg*	*219*	*4.9*	*-*	*147*	*-*	*32.1*	*+ Highly focused road and track tool - Lacks visual impact of S1*	★★★★★
Lotus Exige 240R	*087 F*	*'05*	*4/1796*	*243/8000*	*174/7000*	*930kg*	*264*	*3.9*	*9.9*	*155*	*-*	*-*	*+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Instantly sold out*	★★★★★
Lotus Exige (series 1)	*067 D*	*'00-'01*	*4/1796*	*192/7800*	*146/5000*	*780kg*	*247*	*4.6*	*-*	*136*	*-*	*-*	*+ Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement*	★★★★★
Lotus Evora	138 F	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	**5.6**	**13.6**	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	163 D	£61,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911...	★★★★★
Lotus Europa SE	*127 F*	*'08-'10*	*4/1998*	*222/5600*	*221/4000*	*995kg*	*227*	*4.9*	*-*	*146*	*-*	*28.8*	*+ More of a Lotus than before - Still overshadowed by the Exige and Evora*	★★★★½
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	*005 R*	*'99-'00*	*8/3506*	*350/6500*	*295/4250*	*1299kg*	*274*	**4.3**	**9.9**	*175*	*-*	*22.0*	*+ Designed for track work but brilliant on the road - Limited edition*	★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£82,190	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	**5.5**	**12.7**	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911	★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo S	120 F	£92,410	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1880kg	234	4.9	-	183	385	17.2	+ A genuinely sporty Maser - A bit heavier and pricier than we'd like	★★★★½
Maserati GT MC Stradale	160 R	£110,045	8/4691	444/7100	376/4750	1770kg	255	4.6	-	187	337	19.6	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - No rear seats	★★★★½
Maserati Coupe	*064 F*	*'03-'07*	*8/4244*	*390/7000*	*333/4500*	*1680kg*	*237*	*4.8*	*-*	*177*	*-*	*17.6*	*+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering*	★★★★
Maserati GranSport	*073 F*	*'04-'07*	*8/4244*	*400/7000*	*333/4500*	*1680kg*	*239*	*4.8*	*-*	*180*	*-*	*-*	*+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little*	★★★★½
Mazda RX-8 R3	*122 R*	*'08-'11*	*2R/1308*	*228/8200*	*156/5500*	*1429kg*	*162*	**6.5**	**16.4**	*146*	*299*	*24.6*	*+ Even sharper chassis than basic RX-8 - Same wafer-thin torque output*	★★★★½
Mazda RX-8	*071 R*	*'03-'08*	*2R/1308*	*228/8500*	*156/5500*	*1394kg*	*166*	**7.0**	**19.0**	*146*	*-*	*25.2*	*+ Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Dull-sounding engine*	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C350 CDI Coupe	159 D	£38,140	6/3498	302/6500	273/3500	1615kg	190	5.9	-	155	164	40.4	+ Straight-line performance - Cheaper C250 CDI is better in the corners	★★★½
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	£57,185	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	**4.4**	**10.3**	186	280	23.5	+ Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	*092 D*	*'06-'09*	*8/6208*	*481/6800*	*464/5000*	*1755kg*	*278*	*4.6*	*-*	*155*	*-*	*19.9*	*+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black	*106 F*	*'07-'09*	*8/6208*	*500/6800*	*464/5250*	*1760kg*	*289*	*4.2*	*-*	*186*	*-*	*-*	*+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	150 D	£115,660	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2060kg	264	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition	★★★★
Morgan AeroMax	097 D	£170,000	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Weird and utterly wonderful - They're all sold	★★★★½
Nissan 370Z	158 R	£29,950	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1520kg	218	5.4	-	155	248	26.7	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	★★★★½
Nissan 350Z (309bhp)	*107 R*	*'07-'09*	*6/3498*	*309/6800*	*264/4800*	*1532kg*	*205*	**5.5**	**13.0**	*155*	*-*	*24.1*	*+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling*	★★★★½
Nissan 350Z (296bhp)	*094 F*	*'06-'07*	*6/3498*	*296/6400*	*260/4800*	*1525kg*	*197*	*5.8*	*-*	*155*	*-*	*24.8*	*+ Small power boost adds to Z's appeal - Slightly low-rent interior*	★★★★½
Nissan 350Z (276bhp)	*059 D*	*'03-'06*	*6/3498*	*276/6200*	*268/4800*	*1525kg*	*184*	**6.1**	**14.8**	*155*	*-*	*24.8*	*+ Original 350Z makes a great used buy - As above*	★★★★½
» Nissan GT-R (2012MY)	166 F	£74,450	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1730kg	318	2.7	-	199	275	24.0	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But over £20K more than its launch price	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Spec V	150 F	£124,950	6/3799	478/6400	447/3500	1680kg	289	3.4	-	193	295	-	+ Phenomenal brakes and handling - Not really worth the extra £50K	★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	*152 F*	*'10-'12*	*6/3799*	*523/6400*	*451/3200*	*1740kg*	*305*	*3.0*	*-*	*194*	*279*	*23.5*	*+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive*	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	*125 F*	*'08-'10*	*6/3799*	*473/6400*	*434/3200*	*1740kg*	*276*	*3.8*	*-*	*193*	*-*	*-*	*+ Our 2008 Car of the Year, now from just £35K - You won't see 20mpg often*	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	*009 R*	*'99-'02*	*6/2568*	*276/7000*	*289/4400*	*1560kg*	*180*	**4.7**	**12.5**	*165*	*-*	*20.1*	*+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Very firm ride*	★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	*019 F*	*'97-'99*	*6/2568*	*276/6800*	*271/4400*	*1540kg*	*182*	**5.4**	**14.3**	*155*	*-*	*22.0*	*+ Proof that Jap hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply*	★★★★½
Noble M400	*089 F*	*'04-'06*	*6/2968*	*425/6500*	*390/5000*	*1060kg*	*407*	*3.5*	*-*	*185*	*-*	*-*	*+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweeks interior*	★★★★½
Noble M12 GTO-3R	*070 F*	*'03-'06*	*6/2968*	*352/6200*	*350/3500*	*1080kg*	*332*	*3.8*	*-*	*170*	*-*	*-*	*+ The ability to humble exotica - Flawed driving position*	★★★★
Noble M12 GTO	*023 R*	*'00-'03*	*6/2544*	*310/6000*	*320/3500*	*980kg*	*321*	**4.1**	**10.2**	*165*	*-*	*-*	*+ Gives GT3 drivers a fright - Styling could be more cohesive*	★★★★
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£23,595	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	**7.3**	**18.1**	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting	★★★★
Porsche Cayman	151 F	£39,162	6/2893	261/7200	221/4400	1330kg	199	5.8	-	165	221	30.1	+ Extra power, just as involving - Still lacks the desirability of other Porsches	★★★★½
Porsche Cayman S	132 F	£47,604	6/3436	315/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too (even though it's the best Cayman yet)	★★★★½
Porsche Cayman R	158 R	£51,728	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	29.1	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S	*097 F*	*'06-'09*	*6/3387*	*291/6250*	*251/4400*	*1350kg*	*219*	**5.3**	**12.2**	*171*	*-*	*26.6*	*+ Pure and rewarding - If they'd just move the engine back a bit...*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	165 F	£83,629	6/3800	394/7400	325/5600	1395kg	287	4.1	-	'88	205	-	+ 911 becomes cleaner, cleverer but no less fun - Hateful electric handbrake	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (997.2)	152 D	£78,371	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1420kg	288	4.6	-	190	240	26.6	+ Fitting finale for the 997 generation - Absolutely nothing	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (997.2)		£80,785	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1480kg	261	4.7	-	185	247	26.9	+ Huge grip, power and composure - The Carrera S is £4K cheaper	★★★★½
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	164 F	£128,466	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+ The ultimate modern 911 - They're all sold	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	*138 F*	*'09-'11*	*6/3797*	*429/7600*	*317/6250*	*1395kg*	*312*	**4.2**	**9.2**	*194*	*303*	*22.1*	*+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)	*152 F*	*'10-'11*	*6/3797*	*444/7900*	*317/6750*	*1370kg*	*329*	*4.0*	*-*	*193*	*314*	*-*	*+ Our 2010 car of the year - Looks and noise are slightly OTT*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Sport Classic	*140 F*	*'10-'11*	*6/3800*	*402/7300*	*310/4200*	*1425kg*	*287*	*4.6*	*-*	*188*	*-*	*-*	*+ Curious concept that works well - GT2 price with Carrera S performance*	★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	*103 R*	*'07-'09*	*6/3600*	*409/7600*	*298/5500*	*1395kg*	*298*	**4.3**	**9.4**	*192*	*-*	*-*	*+ Runner-up **evo** Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	*105 F*	*'07-'09*	*6/3600*	*409/7600*	*298/5500*	*1375kg*	*302*	*4.2*	*-*	*193*	*-*	*-*	*+ **evo** Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	*066 F*	*'03-'05*	*6/3600*	*375/7400*	*284/5000*	*1380kg*	*272*	**4.3**	**9.2**	*190*	*-*	*-*	*+ **evo** Car of the Year 2003 - Looks softer than previous GT3*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	*068 R*	*'03-'05*	*6/3600*	*375/7400*	*284/5000*	*1330kg*	*286*	*4.2*	*9.2*	*190*	*-*	*-*	*+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 RS (993)	*036 R*	*'95*	*6/3746*	*300/6500*	*262/5400*	*1270kg*	*240*	*4.7*	*11.2*	*172*	*-*	*-*	*+ Barking engine note, gearchange - Not quite hardcore enough*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	*066 F*	*'99*	*6/3600*	*360/7200*	*273/5000*	*1350kg*	*271*	**4.5**	**10.3**	*187*	*-*	*21.9*	*+ Our Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (997.2)		*'08-'11*	*6/3614*	*341/6500*	*288/4400*	*1415kg*	*245*	*4.9*	*-*	*180*	*225*	*29.4*	*+ Faster and greener than the mk1 997 - Lost a little of the 911 magic*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	*121 F*	*'08-'11*	*6/3800*	*380/6500*	*310/4400*	*1425kg*	*271*	*4.7*	*-*	*188*	*242*	*27.4*	*+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	*070 F*	*'04-'08*	*6/3824*	*350/6600*	*295/4600*	*1420kg*	*246*	**4.6**	**10.9**	*182*	*-*	*24.5*	*+ 'S' is like a junior GT3 - Tech overload?*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (996)	*051 F*	*'02-'05*	*6/3596*	*316/6800*	*273/4250*	*1470kg*	*218*	*5.1*	*-*	*174*	*-*	*-*	*+ Second best 996 only to the GT3 - Very little*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996 3.4)	*008 R*	*'98-'01*	*6/3387*	*300/6800*	*258/4600*	*1320kg*	*230*	*4.6*	*-*	*173*	*-*	*28.0*	*+ Beautifully polished 911 - Some like a bit of rough*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (993)		*'94-'97*	*6/3600*	*285/6100*	*251/5250*	*1372kg*	*211*	*5.2*	*-*	*168*	*-*	*25.0*	*+ More character than 996 - Harder work at speed*	★★★★½
Porsche 968 Club Sport	*019 F*	*'93-'95*	*4/2990*	*240/6200*	*225/4100*	*1335kg*	*183*	**6.1**	**15.7**	*149*	*-*	*-*	*+ One of the all-time greats - Lots have been driven very hard*	★★★★★
Porsche 928 GTS		*'92-'95*	*8/5396*	*350/5700*	*317/4250*	*1790kg*	*199*	*5.2*	*-*	*171*	*-*	*17.0*	*+ Big-hearted and beautiful - Be sure to buy a good one*	★★★★
Renault Alpine A610		*'92-'96*	*6/2975*	*250/5750*	*258/2900*	*1420kg*	*179*	**5.4**	**13.8**	*160*	*-*	*21.0*	*+ Overlooked, bargain-price French 911. Try one - R5 interior*	★★★★
Superformance Daytona Coupe	149 D	£102,225	8/6152	431/5900	424/4600	1300kg	342	3.9	-	200+	-	-	+ Awesome engine, awesome looks - Damp roads equal moist palms	★★★★
TVR T350C	*057 R*	*'03-'07*	*6/3605*	*350/7200*	*290/5500*	*1100kg*	*318*	**4.7**	**10.0**	*175*	*-*	*-*	*+ Looks, engine - Unsupportive seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish*	★★★★
TVR Sagaris	*099 D*	*'05-'07*	*6/3996*	*406/7500*	*349/5000*	*1078kg*	*383*	*3.7*	*-*	*185*	*-*	*-*	*+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic*	★★★★½
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	*076 R*	*'05-'07*	*6/3996*	*400/7000*	*315/5250*	*1100kg*	*369*	*4.0*	*-*	*185*	*-*	*-*	*+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'*	★★★★½
TVR Typhon	*102 F*	*'06*	*6/3996*	*400/7000*	*330/5250*	*1060kg*	*383*	*3.9*	*-*	*180+*	*-*	*-*	*+ Carbon body, exclusivity - Interesting damping, no supercharger*	★★★★
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	*004 R*	*'98-'04*	*6/3966*	*350/6800*	*330/5000*	*1130kg*	*315*	**5.0**	**11.4**	*160+*	*-*	*-*	*+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion*	★★★★½
Vauxhall Monaro VXR 6.0	*079 D*	*'05-'07*	*8/5967*	*398/6000*	*391/4400*	*1677kg*	*241*	*5.1*	*-*	*180+*	*-*	*-*	*+ Improved chassis and steering, 180mph - Looks a bit snouty*	★★★★
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	155 R	£24,705	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1373kg	153	**6.1**	**15.8**	149	172	38.2	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	★★★★
VW Scirocco R	138 F	£29,745	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1352kg	196	5.8	-	155	189	34.9	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Looks very grown-up, too	★★★★
VW Corrado VR6	*095 F*	*'92-'96*	*6/2861*	*190/5800*	*180/4200*	*1237kg*	*156*	*6.2*	*-*	*143*	*-*	*29.5*	*+ One of the great all-rounders - A little nose-heavy*	★★★★½
Wiesmann GT MF5	127 D	£150,000	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1380kg	368	3.9	-	193	-	-	+ Striking coupe mated to BMW M5's V10 - Steering a little light	★★★★★

evo POCKET BUYING GUIDE

HONDA CIVIC TYPE-R

WHY WOULD YOU?
No other hot hatchback revs quite like a Type-R. Then there's the dash-mounted gearlever (with titanium knob), the car's composure and suppleness on difficult surfaces, and the fact it all comes with Japanese reliability as standard.

WHAT TO PAY
£3500 gets a tidy, early car with a good history. Facelift cars start around £4K. Late, low-mileage cars make over £7K.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR
The cam chain tensioner and the VTEC system rely on oil pressure, so if oil runs low or hasn't been changed, there can be problems. Check the gearbox selects gears cleanly – especially second – from cold. Uneven tyre wear suggests the alignment could be out, which can cause tramlining. (Full guide, **evo** 165.)

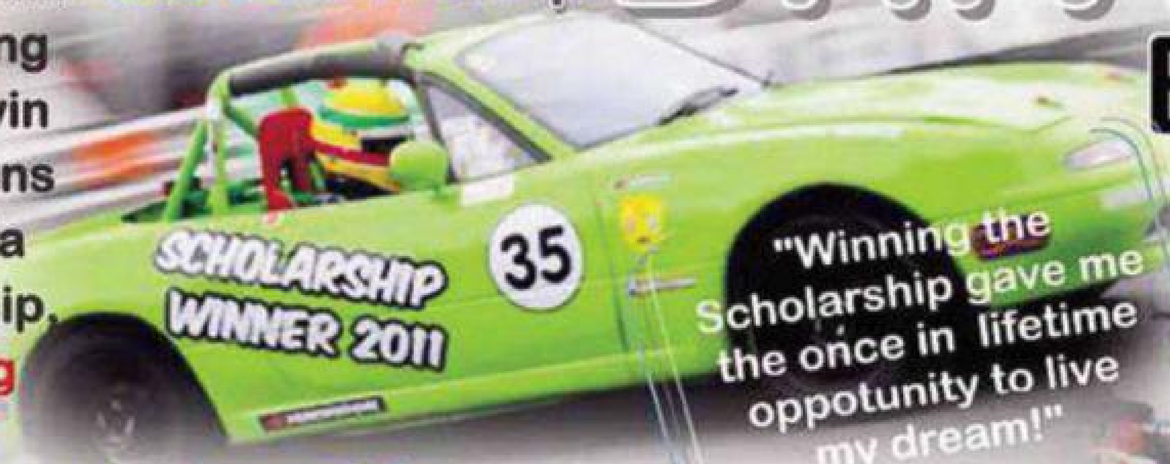


THE VITAL STATS
Years 2001-05 **Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc **Power** 197bhp @ 7400rpm
Torque 145lb ft @ 5900rpm **0-62mph** 6.6sec **Top speed** 146mph (claimed)

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+Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari
–Looks divide opinion
FERRARI FF, ISSUE 164

evo Knowledge

SUPERCARS



OUR CHOICE: Ferrari 458 Italia. A huge step on from the F430 it replaced. The lack of a manual gearbox is a shame, but the scintillating 4.5-litre V8 and snappy seven-speed twin-clutch transmission result in a car that's markedly quicker than its V8 predecessors.

BEST OF THE REST: A few detail improvements could yet see McLaren's MP4-12C topple the 458. Meanwhile Lambo's Aventador is a suitably outrageous flagship and the Lexus LFA (right) just edges the Ferrari 599 GTO for us, though both are mesmerisingly brilliant.



	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
911 GT9R	127 D	c£450,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	£135,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	+ The best car that Aston Martin makes - Erm, a tad thirsty?	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S	*110 F*	*'05-'07*	*12/5935*	*520/7000*	*425/5800*	*1875kg*	*282*	*4.9*	*10.1*	*200*	-	-	*+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit*	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage s/c	*001 R*	*'93-'00*	*8/5340*	*550/6500*	*550/4000*	*1988kg*	*281*	*4.6*	-	*186*	-	*13.1*	*+ Two tons of well-hung British beef - Leaden gearbox*	★★★★
BMW M1	*110 F*	*'78-'81*	*6/3500*	*277/6500*	*239/5000*	*1303kg*	*216*	*5.8*	-	*161*	-	-	*+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days*	★★★★½
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	c£925,000	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 F	c£14m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	-	-	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous brolly/roof thing	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 F	c£2.0m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	-	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	*078 F*	*'91-'95*	*12/3500*	*552/8000*	*451/3750*	*1566kg*	*358*	*3.4*	-	*212*	-	-	*+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out*	★★★★½
Caparo T1	138 F	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag	★★★★½
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	£106,605	8/6162	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	3.8	7.6	205	355	18.8	- Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	★★★½
Ferrari 458 Italia	159 R	£173,181	8/4499	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.2	6.8	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement, looks fantastic - There'll never be a manual	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Spider	164 D	£198,906	8/4499	562/9000	398/6000	1530kg	373	3.3	-	198	275	23.9	+ A 458 that sounds and feels more organic - Er, 4mph slower?	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 R	£212,066	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	15.8	+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano HGTE	146 R	£221,884	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	-	+ As above, with a bit more edge - Can be a little too edgy in the wet	★★★★½
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 R	£305,676	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	164 R	£227,077	12/6,262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	208	360	15.4	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti F1	*090 R*	*'04-'11*	*12/5748*	*533/7250*	*434/5250*	*1840kg*	*294*	*4.3*	*9.8*	*199*	*470*	*13.8*	*+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above*	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	*163 F*	*'04-'10*	*8/4308*	*483/8500*	*343/5250*	*1449kg*	*339*	*4.0*	-	*196*	-	*18.6*	*+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?*	★★★★★
Ferrari F430 Spider	*095 F*	*'04-'10*	*8/4308*	*483/8500*	*343/5250*	*1520kg*	*326*	*4.1*	-	*193*	-	*18.6*	*+ Berlinetta dynamics, 8000rpm with the roof down - Looks?*	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	*121 R*	*'07-'10*	*8/4308*	*503/8500*	*347/5250*	*1350kg*	*378*	*3.5*	*7.7*	*198*	-	*15.7*	*+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it*	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	*163 F*	*'99-'04*	*8/3586*	*394/8500*	*275/4750*	*1390kg*	*288*	*4.5*	*9.0*	*183*	-	*17.0*	*+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be*	★★★★½
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	*068 R*	*'03-'04*	*8/3586*	*420/8500*	*275/4750*	*1280kg*	*333*	*4.1*	-	*186*	-	-	*+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud*	★★★★★
Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta	*163 F*	*'97-'99*	*8/3496*	*374/8250*	*268/6000*	*1350kg*	*281*	*4.7*	-	*183*	-	*16.7*	*+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?*	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M 'Fiorano'	*050 D*	*'02-'06*	*12/5748*	*508/7250*	*434/5250*	*1730kg*	*298*	*4.2*	*9.6*	*202*	-	*12.3*	*+ 'Fiorano pack' makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard*	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	*066 F*	*'97-'02*	*12/5474*	*485/7000*	*415/5000*	*1716kg*	*287*	*4.3*	*10.0*	*199*	-	*12.3*	*+ Everything - Nothing*	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	*149 F*	*'02-'04*	*12/5998*	*650/7800*	*485/5500*	*1365kg*	*484*	*3.5*	*6.7*	*217+*	-	-	*+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1*	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	*064 F*	*'96-'97*	*12/4968*	*513/8500*	*347/6500*	*1229kg*	*424*	*3.7*	-	*202*	-	-	*+ The best drivers' Ferrari - Lines lack tension*	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	*157 F*	*'87-'92*	*8/2936*	*478/7000*	*425/4000*	*1100kg*	*441*	*3.7*	-	*201*	-	-	*+ The shape that launched a thousand posters - Er...*	★★★★★
Ferrari 288GTO	*064 F*	*'84-'85*	*8/2855*	*400/7000*	*366/3800*	*1160kg*	*350*	*4.9*	-	*189*	-	-	*+ Painfully beautiful, rarer than the F40 - You are joking?*	★★★★★
Ford GT	*159 R*	*'04-'06*	*8/5409*	*550/6500*	*500/3750*	*1583kg*	*353*	*3.7*	-	*205*	-	-	*+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - JC had one. Reckoned it didn't handle...*	★★★★★
Gumpert Apollo	110 F	£275,000	8/4163	690/6300	675/4000	1200kg	584	3.0	-	220+	-	-	+ Stupendous performance, 'Apollo' - High price, 'Gumpert'	★★★★½
Jaguar XJ220	*157 F*	*'92-'94*	*6/3498*	*542/7200*	*475/4500*	*1470kg*	*375*	*3.7*	-	*213*	-	-	*+ Britain's greatest supercar... - ...until McLaren built the F1*	★★★★
Koenigsegg CCX	094 F	c£500,000	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	3.9	7.7	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCXR Edition	118 F	c£1.5m	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spikey power delivery	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	158 F	£875,000	8/5000	1100/6900	885/4100	1435kg	779	2.8	-	261+	-	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's almost Veyron money	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2	138 F	£166,784	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg	399	3.9	-	199	-	-	+ The mad rear-driven Lambo is back! - For a limited period only...	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP560-4 Spyder	130 F	£162,240	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1550kg	362	4.0	-	201	330	20.0	+ The sound of a V10 with no roof - A smidge less hardcore than the coupe	★★★★½
Lamborghini LP570-4 S'leggera	152 F	£178,560	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg	426	3.5	-	202	325	20.6	+ A reminder of how great the Gallardo is - LP560-4 does as good a job	★★★★½
Lambo LP570-4 Performante	160 F	£186,000	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1485kg	384	3.9	-	201	-	-	+ It's a Superleggera Spyder - ...that's not really super-light	★★★★½
Lambo Aventador LP700-4	164 R	£242,280	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.8	-	217	398	17.2	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Erm... expensive?	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	*094 F*	*'06-'08*	*10/4961*	*513/8000*	*376/4250*	*1520kg*	*343*	*4.3*	*9.4*	*196*	-	-	*+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear*	★★★★½
Lamborghini G'ardo S'leggera	*104 F*	*'07-'08*	*10/4961*	*522/8000*	*376/4250*	*1420kg*	*373*	*3.8*	-	*196*	-	-	*+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear*	★★★★
Lambo M'lago LP670-4 SV	*138 F*	*'09-'11*	*12/6946*	*661/8000*	*487/6500*	*1565kg*	*429*	*3.2*	*7.3*	*212*	-	-	*+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares*	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	*093 F*	*'06-'11*	*12/6496*	*631/8000*	*487/6000*	*1665kg*	*385*	*3.3*	-	*211*	-	*21.3*	*+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes*	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	*089 D*	*'01-'06*	*12/6192*	*570/7500*	*479/5400*	*1650kg*	*351*	*4.0*	-	*205*	-	-	*+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed*	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	*019 F*	*'00-'02*	*12/5992*	*550/7100*	*457/5500*	*1625kg*	*343*	*3.8*	-	*200+*	-	-	*+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions*	★★★★½
Lamborghini Diablo GT	*016 F*	*'99-'00*	*12/5992*	*575/7300*	*465/5500*	*1490kg*	*392*	*4.1*	*8.3*	*211*	-	*12.5*	*+ Briefly the world's fastest production car - They made only 80*	★★★★★
Lamborghini Countach QV	*162 F*	*'88-'91*	*12/5167*	*455/7000*	*369/5200*	*1447kg*	*320*	*4.9*	-	*180*	-	*13.7*	*+ Still the definitive supercar - Visibility, pract- oh hell, who cares?*	★★★★½
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	161 R	£352,000	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Maserati MC12	*079 R*	*'04-'05*	*12/5998*	*621/7500*	*481/5500*	*1445kg*	*437*	*3.8*	-	*205*	-	-	*+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better*	★★★★
McLaren MP4-12C	159 R	£168,500	8/3799	592/7000	442/3000	1434kg	419	3.0	6.4	205	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Flawed gearchange, snatchy brakes	★★★★½
McLaren F1	*145 F*	*'94-'98*	*12/6064*	*627/7500*	*479/4000*	*1137kg*	*560*	*3.2*	*6.3*	*240+*	-	*19.0*	*+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another*	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	*131 F*	*'09-'10*	*12/5980*	*661/5400*	*737/2200*	*1876kg*	*358*	*4.0*	*8.1*	*199*	-	-	*+ Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers £250K price*	★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 R	£168,395	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	4.1	8.4	197	308	21.4	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	*073 F*	*'04-'07*	*8/5439*	*617/6500*	*575/3250*	*1618kg*	*387*	*3.7*	-	*208*	-	-	*+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel*	★★★★
Noble M600	159 R	c£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/5800	1250kg	528	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Leicestershire's unbelievably good attack on the supercar class - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	c£1.5m	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1400kg	485	3.4	-	217+	-	-	+ The best Zonda ever - The last Zonda ever (probably)	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F Roadster CS	*127 F*	*'06-'08*	*12/7291*	*641/6200*	*575/4000*	*1400kg*	*465*	*3.5*	-	*214*	-	-	*+ As light and stiff as the coupe - You'd better like carbonfibre*	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	*082 F*	*'05-'06*	*12/7291*	*602/6150*	*575/4000*	*1230kg*	*497*	*3.6*	-	*214*	-	-	*+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Choose interior carefully*	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda C12S	*096 F*	*'01-'05*	*12/7291*	*555/5900*	*553/4050*	*1250kg*	*451*	*3.6*	-	*197*	-	-	*+ Set a new supercar benchmark - Harry won't let us use his long-termer*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.2)	140 R	£110,252	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1570kg	319	3.2	7.3	193	272	24.4	+ The Turbo at the very top of its game - The GT3's cheaper...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo S (997.2)	159 R	£125,865	6/3800	523/6250	516/2100	1570kg	339	2.9	6.8	196	268	24.8	+ As above, with more power - The GT3's even cheaper...	★★★★½
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2)	157 F	£171,468	6/3600	611/6500	516/2250	1570kg	453	3.5	-	205	284	-	+ More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.1)	*094 F*	*'06-'09*	*6/3600*	*472/6000*	*457/1950*	*1585kg*	*303*	*4.0*	*8.7*	*193*	-	*22.1*	*+ Monster cornering ability - A bit woolly on its standard settings*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (996)	*017 F*	*'00-'06*	*6/3600*	*420/6000*	*413/4600*	*1540kg*	*272*	*4.1*	*10.0*	*189*	-	*21.0*	*+ The 911 for all seasons - We can't find any reasons*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (996)	*072 F*	*'04-'06*	*6/3600*	*475/5700*	*457/3500*	*1420kg*	*339*	*4.0*	-	*198*	-	-	*+ Later revisions made it even more of a star - Care still required*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (993)	*066 F*	*'95-'98*	*6/3600*	*408/5750*	*398/4500*	*1502kg*	*276*	*4.3*	*9.2*	*180*	-	*19.4*	*+ Stupendous all-weather supercar - It doesn't rain enough*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (993)	*003 F*	*'96-'99*	*6/3600*	*430/5700*	*398/4500*	*1290kg*	*339*	*3.9*	-	*184*	-	-	*+ Hairy-arsed homologation special - Harry won't buy one*	★★★★★
Porsche Carrera GT	*149 F*	*'04-'06*	*10/5733*	*604/8000*	*435/5750*	*1380kg*	*445*	*3.8*	*7.6*	*205*	-	-	*+ Probably the greatest modern supercar - Can bite*	★★★★★
Porsche 959	*149 F*	*'87-'90*	*6/2850*	*444/5500*	*369/5000*	*1450kg*	*311*	*3.7*	-	*197*	-	-	*+ Tech showcase, still a great drive - Limited choice of colours?*	★★★★★
Ruf Rt 12	097 F	c£165,000	6/3746	547/6500	541/3750	1370kg	405	3.9	-	205	-	-	+ Beautifully executed car with truly immense power - Needs care	★★★★★
Ruf CTR3	126 F	c£357,000	6/3746	547/6500	516/4000	1410kg	393	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ The best 911 that Porsche never made - But not the best looking...	★★★★★
Ruf CTR 'Yellow Bird'	*097 F*	*'87-'89*	*6/3366*	*469/5950*	*408/5100*	*1170kg*	*345*	*4.1*	-	*211*	-	-	*+ A true legend - We can't all drive like Stefan Roser*	★★★★★
Sportec SPR1 M	136 D	c£600,000	6/3600	846/8200	642/4800	1450kg	593	3.0	6.4	240+	-	-	+ A 911 Turbo that accelerates like Concorde - And costs almost as much	★★★★★
Spyker C8 Aileron	141 D	£191,000	8/4163	400/6800	354/3500	1425kg	285	4.5	-	187	-	-	+ Most convincing Spyker yet - Its rivals are quicker	★★★★½

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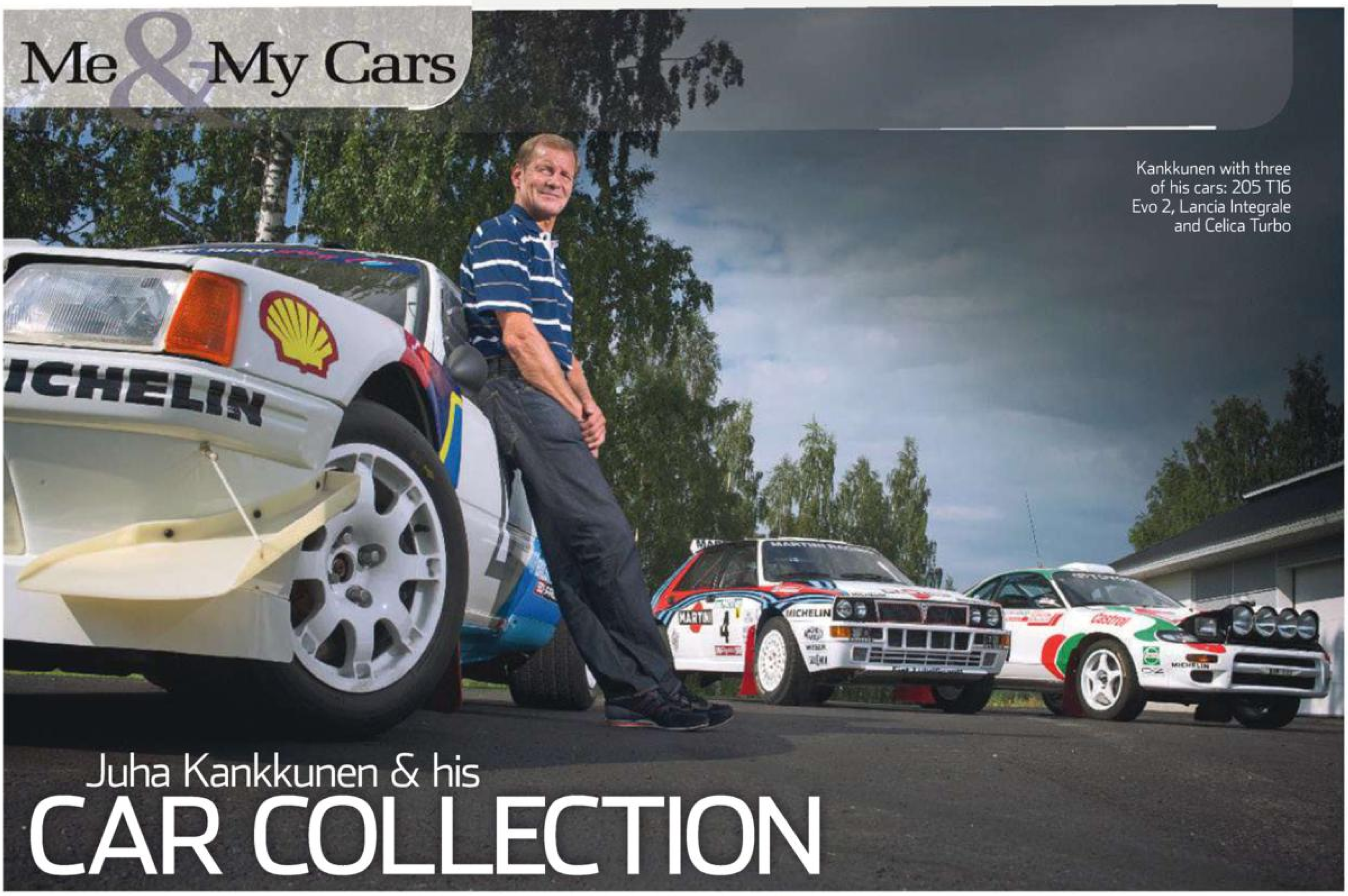
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CAR COLLECTION

The four-time World Rally Champion on his very personal collection of road and rally cars

'The collection started as an idea in 1992. I wanted something physical that my family could enjoy from my career. Carlos [Sainz] has a car and Didier [Auriol] has a couple, but I wanted to go further. It's a way of drawing a link between my past, the present and the future.

Together with my friend Kari Mäkelä, who runs Mäkelä Auto Tuning, I've put together a unique collection of road and rally cars. They're in a museum on my farm in Laukaa, Finland, where my family's lived since the early 18th century. It's not open to the public, but friends regularly stop by.

My dad was a successful ice racer who competed against Pauli Toivonen, father of Harri and Henri. I learnt to drive in his Cortina and I've built a Ford collection as a tribute. I've a Lotus Cortina, an RS1800 [one of just 109 built] and a road-going RS200.

The collection also has five Ferraris, including an F40, a 288 GTO and a 512 TR that was a present from Gianni Agnelli after I won the 1991 Drivers' World Championship for Lancia. After spending so much time with Italian teams, Ferraris became a passion, but the rally cars are still my prized possessions.

I have a Group B Toyota Celica Turbo similar to the one in which I won the Safari and Ivory Coast rallies. It was a good car but it was two-wheel drive and unable to take on the four-wheel-drive Audis or Peugeots over a full season. After Ari [Vatanen] was hurt in a huge accident in his 205, Jean Todt asked me to drive for Peugeot. Suddenly I was in the best car for '86 and I won my first Championship.

The Peugeot demanded a totally different style of driving but I won the second rally I entered. When you're a kid you can learn anything quickly. The 205 T16 Evo 2 in which I won the 1986 Swedish rally is now part of my collection.

The Group B cars were dangerous if you gave them to a normal driver, but the professional drivers could handle them. We knew what was happening. The lack of crowd control was a much bigger problem. The Portuguese Rally was abandoned after four spectators were killed, including two children. Of course you had to back off in those conditions – you are not crazy.

When Group B was banned, the step to Group A cars was just too big. It was like going from Formula 1 to Formula Ford. I won the championship in '87 for Lancia but there was lots of politics: Lancia were still angry that I'd beaten them with Peugeot and they wanted Miki Biasion to win.

I moved back to Toyota and then back to Lancia again. At the end of the 1991 season I won the RAC Rally to claim my third title and the Lancia team presented me with the winning car. It's one hundred per cent original and is one of four Lancias in my collection. The early '90s were a great time. With [teammate] Didier [Auriol] we won everything.

When Lancia withdrew from rallying at the end of '92 I moved back to Toyota. In '93 we won the Drivers' and the Manufacturers' Championships and they presented me with my Group A Celica Turbo. It was rebuilt by the factory at the end of the season and even has the original Network Q rally sticker inside. Even today, the Toyota looks and feels more modern than the Lancia.

'MY FERRARI 512 TR WAS A PRESENT FROM GIANNI AGNELLI AFTER I WON THE 1991 DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP FOR LANCIA'

I don't have any set plans for the collection. I just buy cars that interest me or are significant. The only car I'd really like is the Subaru Impreza WRC I drove in '99. That was a brilliant car; you could do anything with it. I wanted to buy one but [then Subaru boss] David Richards is a businessman and understands the value of everything, so it didn't happen. Maybe one day...'

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