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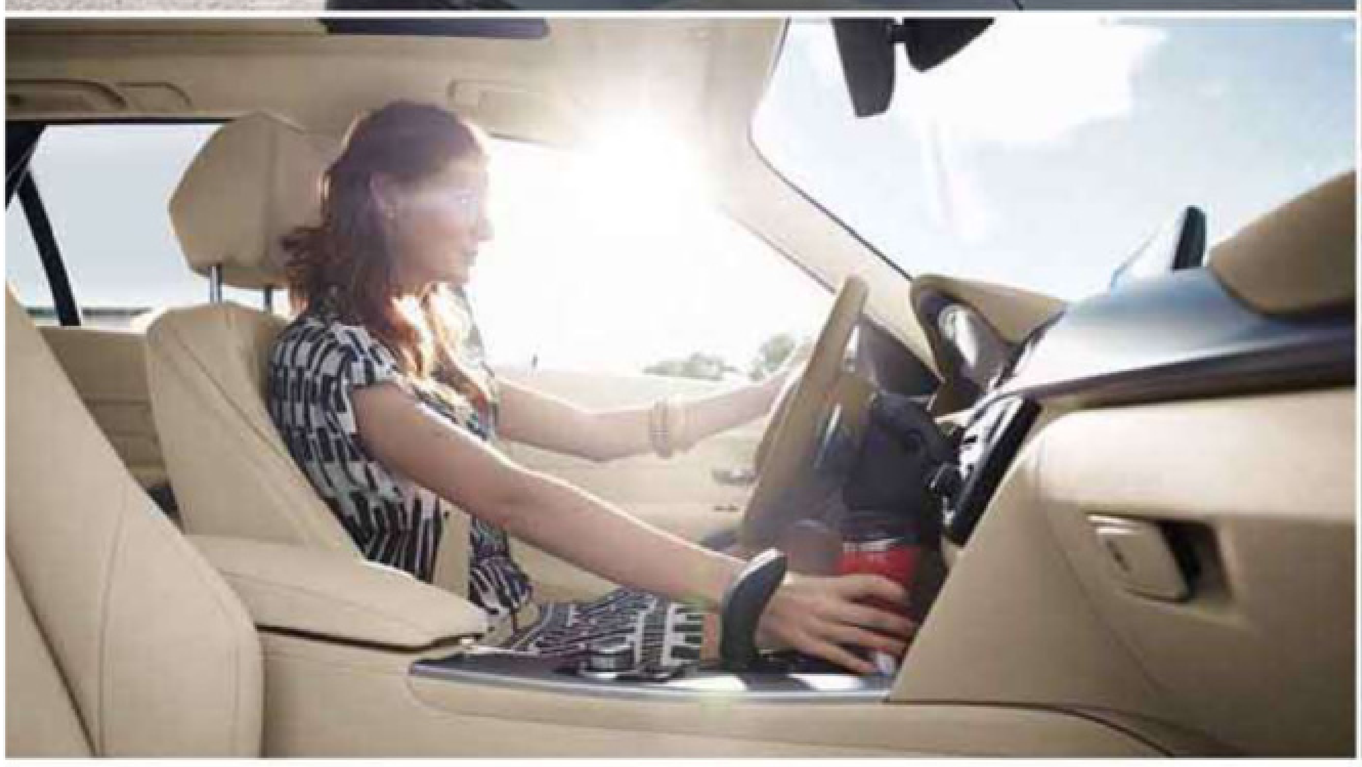
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It's been a brilliant summer to be British. We expertly managed to not screw up the Olympics and, while I'm no royalist, it was difficult not to be moved by such large-scale celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. It's been three months of red, white and blue, and three months of national pride. Hopefully you don't think we've overdone the patriotism (with, um, a whacking great Union flag on the newsstand cover), and likewise we hope that you join us in enjoying this zeitgeist – the moment when British-built and British-engineered cars are leading the world. It hasn't happened for a while…

The recent success of Jaguar Land Rover is casting a glow over the British car industry as a whole. Britishness is once again considered a virtue overseas, with Morgan, Caterham, Bentley, Ariel, Rolls-Royce and Aston Martin joining JLR in sympathetically exploiting the quality of being British to an increasingly receptive global market. British cars in the 1970s were considered ugly, slow, poorly engineered and unreliable. Today, they are considered beautiful, innovative, thrilling and dependable.

It's a curious state of affairs, and one which inevitably leads to a scrutinisation of other domestic car industries. What qualities, for instance, currently define US car manufacturing, or that in France, Italy or Japan? Have GM, Citroën, Fiat or Nissan succeeded in shaking off negative perceptions?

As we stitched this issue together, the biggest disappointment by far was not having a good news story to report from Lotus. As Mike Duff explains on p15, its future is uncertain and the atmosphere at Hethel is dire. There can be no doubt that the Lotus brand has considerable equity: Dany Bahar knew this, but his exploitation of the hallowed ACBC badge could never be called sympathetic and his grand plans have yielded little more than a 'Lotus Originals' store on Regent Street and a mountain of problems.



'LOTUS'S FUTURE IS UNCERTAIN AND THE ATMOSPHERE AT HETHEL IS DIRE'

Of the many tragedies involved, one of the biggest is that we've been denied the fruits of arguably the best chassis engineers in the world. The new Esprit, insiders tell us, would have matched Ferrari's sublime 458 and McLaren's 12C in every area.

If only a company with commercial nous, an understanding of British manufacturing and industry, a supply of engines, a worldwide dealer network and a whole heap of ambition could take on Lotus and rejuvenate it… a company like JLR perhaps? Imagine the visit to a 'JLLR' showroom: 'I'll have an Elise S for weekends and trackdays, an Evoque for the missus and an XF Sportbrake for me, please.'

'Certainly sir, step this way…'



Nick Trott Editor

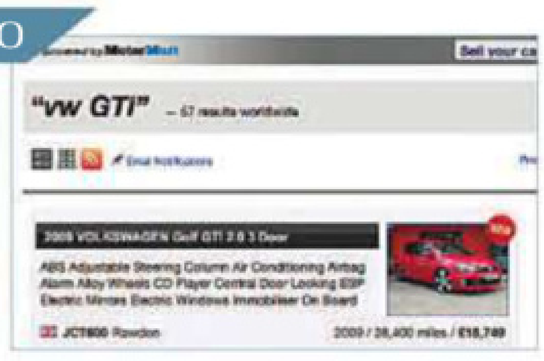


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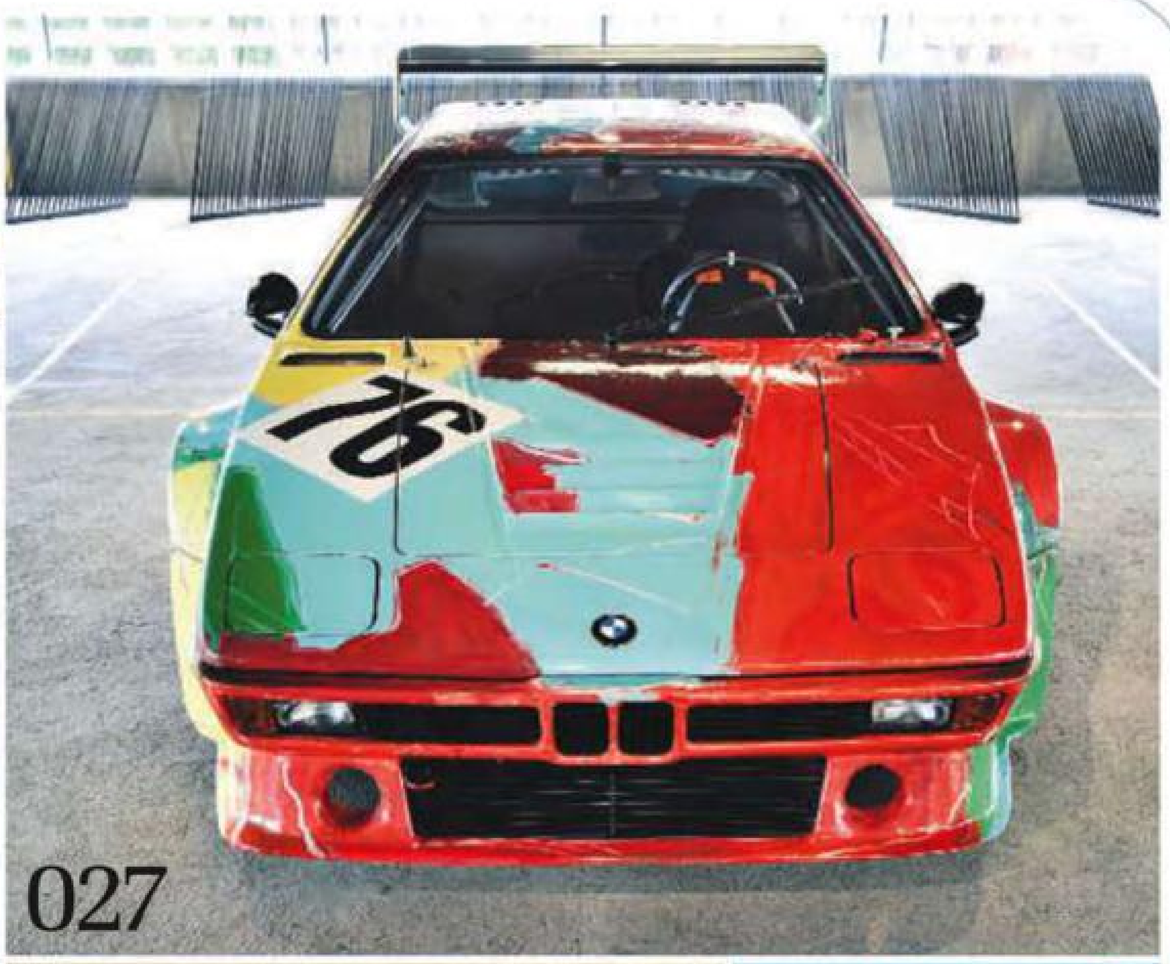
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Is the Singer, built by an Englishman living in California, the ultimate 911? We find out.



NEXT ISSUE ON SALE WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10

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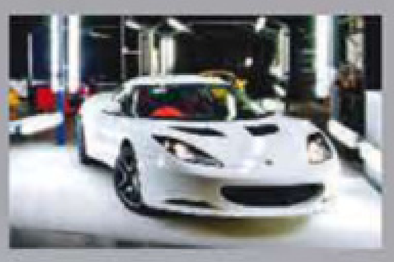


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THIS MONTH

CRISIS AT LOTUS
Heavy losses, cancelled projects and Bahar sues his ex-employer P15





McLAREN SKUNKWORKS IS GO!

MULTI-MILLION-POUND X-1, BUILT FOR A MYSTERY CUSTOMER, COULD PAVE THE WAY FOR A HOST OF BESPOKE MODELS FROM SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIT

After its world reveal at The Quail event in the Pebble Beach Concours in August, the McLaren X-1 is on its way back to Woking – but not to the McLaren Technical Centre. It's actually headed for Unit One, Albert Drive, Woking, because that's where this very special car was built. Unit One is an important part of McLaren's history because it's where the iconic McLaren F1 road cars were created, and it's now the home of 'McLaren Special Operations', or MSO as it's known, where (almost) anything is possible.

MSO came into being in the late 1990s when McLaren realised it needed somewhere to repair and upgrade customers' F1 road cars, and a team of six was employed to do just that. With the launch of the Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren in 2004, a new set of customers started asking if certain bespoke modifications were possible and the answer always came back in the affirmative. So it was only natural that McLaren re-evaluated the operation when the MP4-12C loomed on the horizon, and today MSO employs 34 people who are all kept very busy making customers' dreams come true.

One particular MSO customer wanted to create his own McLaren model displaying 'timeless and classical elegance', a car that possessed all the performance of a bona-fide



Above: the X-1 was unleashed on an unsuspecting public at California's Pebble Beach Concours

McLaren but that he could still drive to the opera. His name is... well, we don't know, but we do know that he has a number of other McLaren road cars, including an F1, an SLR and an MP4-12C.

The project was first mooted during a conversation the customer had with McLaren chief Ron Dennis late in 2009, when he declared his wish to design his own car and saw potential in the 12C. MSO chief Paul Mackenzie and McLaren head of design Frank Stephenson were called in and a design brief was created. It was suggested by the customer that three designers from outside McLaren should also look at the design brief, but in the end the successful design was one penned by Hong Yeo, an Royal College of Art graduate working in McLaren's design office at the time.

The customer very much wanted to be part of the design process, so McLaren installed a link via a plasma screen in the customer's office to the design office at McLaren to make it easier for him to have input into the design. Over the following few months the X-1 (the name the customer had specified by that point) moved on to the modelling stage. Several models were created, culminating in a final full-size mock-up of the car, and once the customer was happy, the bespoke body panels were ordered.

The final design is certainly unique, with the wheels, headlights, tail lights and all the carbon body panels being one-offs created at great expense. Overall, the X-1 is 109mm longer than a 12C at 4.65m and a remarkable 188mm wider at 2.01m. The rear wheels are covered by aerodynamic 'slats' that hinge upwards should you want to inspect a wheel, while the rear spoiler/airbrake (machined from solid aluminium and then nickel plated) is hidden away until being deployed as speed increases. The rear window is taken from the 12C, as is all the rest of the glass on the car.

The only slight let-down is the interior, which is near-identical to the 12C's. The engine is standard too, with the same 616bhp and 442lb ft, although top speed should be higher than the 12C's 205mph as the X-1's body is marginally more slippery. (cont.)

850BHP SHELBY COBRA
American muscle car hero commemorated with one-off monster P19



DROP-TOP MULSANNE
Big convertible Bentley shown in secret in America P22



PEUGEOT READIES 208 GTI
197bhp hot hatch to be unveiled at Paris motor show P24



'THE CUSTOMER WANTED A CAR WITH McLAREN PERFORMANCE THAT HE COULD STILL DRIVE TO THE OPERA'



Above: the X-1 has taken three years to be completed from its initial conception. Right: while the exterior has been designed from scratch, the X-1 is almost identical to a 12C inside

The customer demanded that the finished car should have all the usability of a standard 12C, so an interim build was created to allow the shakedown tests to begin. Because only EU type approval was required (indicating a Europe-based owner), getting conformity wasn't too hard; the car soon passed all the tests required and the McLaren test team got on with the high-speed dynamic testing at a secret test track in Spain. The next stage was to bring the car back to Woking and rebuild it using the 'real' body panels before shipping it to California for the world reveal at The Quail on August 20. Now the car is due to come back to Woking for final tweaks before its delivery to the customer.

Will the X-1 remain a one-off? Part of the reason for its public showing was to see if anyone else fancied one, as the owner (who owns the rights to the design) would entertain the idea of a few more examples being built if the market demanded it.

The price of the first X-1 remains undisclosed, but we understand it runs into 'several million pounds' – one source had it as high as $5m (£3.15m). Subsequent X-1s wouldn't cost as much but it does show how expensive it is to build one-off designs like this. Yet according to Mackenzie, the demand is there from the super-rich for these special one-offs and MSO is already in conversation with two more prospective clients who are interested in creating their own bespoke McLarens. X-2, anyone? **Harry Metcalfe**



'THE X-1'S PUBLIC SHOWING WAS TO SEE IF ANYONE ELSE FANCIED ONE'

ONE-MAKE 12C RACE SERIES?

McLaren also revealed a new MP4-12C racing car at the Pebble Beach Concours. Called the Can-Am Edition, it could be used as the basis of a one-make race series.

The Can-Am is an evolution of the current GT3-spec 12C racer, with power rising to 621bhp and 30 per cent more downforce. The extra power comes from a revised version of the standard 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8, which is not subject to the detuning to 493bhp required for GT3-class racing. Instead it's the most powerful engine seen in a 12C to date.

Under the skin, the racing car features the same carbonfibre monocoque as the 12C road car, but on this stripped-out race version, the dry weight comes in at just 1200kg. The dramatic increase in downforce is thanks to a new aerodynamic package, including a front splitter, dive planes and a rear wing made of carbonfibre. These changes point to an all-McLaren championship based around the car, as the tweaks mean the Can-Am no longer adheres to any current FIA technical regulations for GT cars.



The Can-Am show car was finished in McLaren Orange as a tribute to the similarly painted cars of Bruce McLaren and Denny Hulme, who made McLaren such a big name in the USA during the 1960s and '70s through success in the Can-Am sportscar series.

The car looked fantastic on the stand, but an official statement from McLaren says that the Can-Am is still a one-off design study and has not been confirmed for production... HM



With no restrictions on downforce or engine output, the Can-Am Edition is set to be the fastest MP4-12C yet



LOTUS: IS THE END NIGH?

NEW MODEL CANCELLATIONS, HUGE LOSSES AND BAHAR LAWSUIT ADD TO HETHEL GLOOM

In the last issue of **evo**, we reported that Lotus had cancelled most of its new model programme following the ousting of chief executive Dany Bahar. Now sources inside the company have confirmed that all five of its new car projects are dead, including the new Esprit and its V8 engine – just as Bahar sues his ex-employer for what he claims is wrongful dismissal.

Figures released by Lotus's parent company DRB-Hicom have also revealed the dire financial trouble that Lotus is in. During a recent visit to the UK, Hicom's group managing director, Datuk Seri Mohd Khamil Jamil, said the company has already spent £100million keeping Lotus afloat after it lost £20.6m in 2010 and a whopping £33.5m last year. Cost-cutting measures and the suspension of development work have reduced monthly operating expenses from £7m to £5m. Khamil Jamil has also told Malaysian journalists that development funds will only be spent on existing models, saying that 'money will be used wisely and on the correct product'.

Lotus insiders confirm that staff morale inside Hethel is close to rock bottom, especially among those brought in by Bahar to work on the new model range – most of whom are now wondering about their futures at the company. It's almost certain that there will be more cost-cutting and likely redundancies as the company struggles to become profitable.

Whether or not DRB-Hicom holds on to Lotus is where it becomes murky. We know that accounting giant KPMG was employed to look through Lotus's books in May, presumably to report back to Malaysia about its viability as a going concern. Since then there have been persistent rumours that Group Lotus, which includes both the car-making division and the (presumably profitable) engineering consultancy, is up for sale and that interested parties have been invited to submit offers. These rumours have been denied by Khamil Jamil, who insists that DRB-Hicom remains committed to making Lotus work – and analysts have also expressed doubts as to whether Lotus's road-car operations possess any value.

Above: fears are growing that Hethel's factory floors could fall silent after Lotus's owners admitted the Norfolk firm is haemorrhaging cash

It's fair to say that the company's medium-term future is far from certain. Khamil Jamil insists DRB-Hicom remains committed to the brand, but considering Lotus's dire financial record – 2009 was the only year since 1996 in which the group made a profit – it's hard to see how it can survive as an independent manufacturer without significant investment in new product lines.

While all this is going on, former CEO Bahar has filed a lawsuit demanding £6.7m for what he claims was his wrongful dismissal. And, in a fitting synergy, Lotus has put the 2002 Esprit V8 that was rebuilt to near-concours standard for Bahar's personal use up for sale (see p19). There's at least one fitting metaphor for the recent fate of the company in there. **Mike Duff**

'IT'S EXPECTED THAT THERE WILL BE MORE COST-CUTTING'

INTERVIEW: GRAHAM MACDONALD

EVO GRILLS THE NEW C.E.O. OF CATERHAM ON THE SPORTS CAR MAKER'S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Q Welcome to the top job – how did you find yourself here?

A I've been at Caterham for five years as chief financial officer. With Ansar [Ali] deciding to move on, it felt like a natural progression to the number one role and I'm delighted I got it.

Q The big question for Caterham fans is how long can you keep the Seven in production – are you in a position to guarantee its long-term future?

A We're definitely having issues with homologation in a lot of the countries we sell to. It's a frustrating process that we have to go through and there's no doubt it's getting harder due to the fact there's no ABS or airbags in our cars. It's a constant battle to try and keep up with legislation. But we don't see a finite timescale for the Seven – that's something we'll do as long as there's a market for it.

Q And what about plans for new models in the future?

A We're looking to develop the Seven, but we're also looking to develop a completely new road car which will be more user-friendly with better ingress and egress, and with a sealed roof and air conditioning so that we can sell it in hotter climates.

Q Do you think that Lotus's current difficulties might see Caterham owner Tony Fernandes buy any of its assets? Or look at merging the two companies?

A Not that I'm aware of. Tony is a great negotiator and I can't speak for what's going on in his mind right now, but as far as I can see, there will be no crossover or acquisition between Caterham Cars and Lotus. I just don't believe that's going to happen.

Q But it's fair to say that you see the Elise and Exige as representing a part of the market you'd like to move into?

A You've hit the nail on the head there. We're not a Porsche or a Ferrari – we're not trying to compete with the 911 or with more expensive supercars. But we still believe that there's a void between the middle-of-the-road Caterham – the £25,000 car – up to around £50,000. There's a plan to bring something to market in mid-2015, and if you work that back you'll realise we're pretty far down the line of developing the product.

Q And what have you got planned for the Seven?

A Next year is the 40th anniversary of Caterham Cars and we're keen to launch a retro classic that taps into the spirit and the roots of the business.

Q At the other end of the range, are we going to see a more powerful successor to the R500?

A That's the other product we're working on. We've had the 500 for some time and we do have owners telling us that they want something even faster.

Q Could you use the SP300R's supercharged engine in the Seven?

A Potentially, yes. I would love that, of course – especially if we took the next step and made it an R600. However, there are some real packaging issues and we'd have to deal with some big cooling problems. I'd love to think we could take it a step further – it would definitely present our engineers with a bit of a challenge. What I'd say is 'watch this space'...





An R600 could sit above the R500 (left), with the supercharged engine from the SP300R (above) providing power



 Words: Mike Duff Pictures: Stuart Collins

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*Offer applicable to ŠKODA Octavia vRS Blackline 2.0 TDI CR 170PS DPF and Octavia vRS Blackline 2.0 TDI CR 170PS DSG DPF in Candy White, Black Magic pearl effect and Race Blue metallic with model specific specification. **Octavia vRS Blackline leather upholstery contains some artificial leather. Offers may be varied or withdrawn at any time, are subject to availability and cannot be used in conjunction with any other offers. At participating retailers only. Prices, specifications and unit volumes are accurate at time of print. Optional specification cannot be added to this offer. Offer available on orders placed by 31st December 2012.

Official fuel consumption in mpg (litres/100km) for the Octavia vRS Blackline range: Urban 35.8 - 36.7 (7.7 - 7.9); Extra Urban 57.6 - 61.4 (4.9 - 5.7); Combined 47.1 - 49.6 (5.7 - 6.0). CO_2 emissions for the Octavia vRS Blackline range 149 - 159g/km.

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*S60 T3 Manual Business Edition.

Image shows Volvo S60 with optional metallic paint, BLIS (Blind Spot Information System), Winter Pack and Accessory Front Skid Plate.

See more pictures of the Shelby Cobra at www.evo.co.uk

SHELBY MEMORIAL COBRA

MUSCLE CAR LEGEND HONOURED BY 850BHP ONE-OFF SPECIAL

Ex-chicken farmer Carroll Shelby, who died in May, will be remembered as one of the most important figures in motorsport history. A charismatic and brave racer-turned-team owner, he fought Ferrari in 1960s sportscar racing – and won.

This one-off Mustang has been built as a tribute to Shelby and to honour the 50th anniversary of the Shelby Cobra – Carroll's most famous car. Unveiled at Laguna Seca in California during the Monterey Motorsports Reunion, the Shelby GT500 Cobra packs a scary 850bhp 4-litre V8. That's 188bhp more than the regular GT500, thanks in part to a Whipple-Ford Racing supercharger.

Shelby American designed and built the unique bonnet and the wide-arch body kit. There are Shelby Wilwood brakes all round, and the Michelin tyres are 13in wide at the rear, 10in at the front, fitted to 20in wheels.



Above: 20in tyres will take plenty of punishment. Below: one-off Cobra carries retro paintjob

But even with those enormous gumballs, we reckon traction will still be an issue...

The livery of this tribute consists of the same Guardsman Blue with Wimbledon White stripes made famous by the original Cobra roadsters of the '60s.

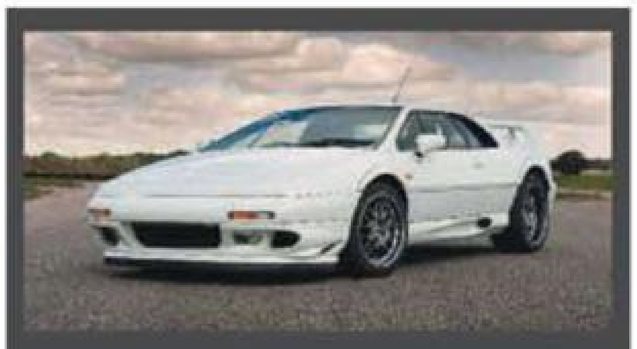
The GT500 Cobra was created jointly by the Ford Motor Company, Shelby American and Ford Racing, and will tour the US. It will then be 'used in a special way at the end of its tour, a way Carroll would appreciate'. Wouldn't it be great if they reignited the battle with Ferrari, just for a special one-off race? After all, hasn't the Scuderia just shown off its own wildly powerful rear-wheel-drive coupe... **Nick Trott**

MUSCLE CAR ROUND UP

» Look away now, Al Gore: the power war in the US muscle car scene is showing no sign of abating. New arrivals for the 2013 model-year include the 662bhp Shelby GT500 Mustang and Chevrolet's Camaro ZL1 Convertible with a 580bhp supercharged V8 and six-speed manual gearbox, while Dodge is thought to be readying a new 500bhp+ Challenger for the tail-end of next year. A new Corvette is also set for a 2013 launch.

'EVEN WITH THOSE ENORMOUS GUMBALLS, WE RECKON TRACTION WILL STILL BE AN ISSUE...'





BAHAR'S LOTUS FOR SALE

» An Esprit owned by recently departed Lotus CEO Dany Bahar is reportedly up for sale. In 2010 he commissioned an extensive overhaul of a 2002 Esprit V8, and the full engine rebuild, brake upgrade, interior retrim and pearlescent white respray was completed less than 1000 miles ago. Contact your nearest Lotus dealer if you're interested...



ATOM'S POWER PUSH

» If the Ariel Atom has ever struck you as being a bit too sane, North Carolina tuning company DDMWorks has the answer. It will fit the car with a 2-litre GM Ecotec engine, with a Garrett turbocharger *and* an Eaton supercharger winding the humble four-pot up to 700bhp. There's little in the way of chassis tweaks, though new wider wheels wear stickier Toyo R888 rubber.



300BHP RENAULTSPORT MÉGANE

» Renault tuning specialist K-Tec has unveiled its latest ECU upgrade for the RS Mégane. 'Performance Pack 1' applies to both 250s and 265s and takes their turbo 2-litre's power up to 300bhp and torque to 325lb ft. It costs £414 and includes a 12-month or 30,000-mile warranty. An option called 'Renflash', costing £234, allows easy switching back to the ECU's original settings.



SPECIAL EDITION VEYRON

» Bugatti Veyron spotters don your anoraks – here's another new special edition. The one-off Grand Sport Vitesse SE's 'Bianco over New Light Blue' paint scheme pays homage to the 1928 Type 37A racer, while underneath it the Vitesse's 1183bhp W16 drivetrain remains, as does the roadster's 255mph top speed. If you're a fan, you'll need to stump up £1.37million to buy it.

Stoneridge



Whether at the controls of one of his jets or his many other flying machines, John Travolta daily plays his own role: that of a first-rate pilot who has notched up over 6,000 flight hours and eight certifications on various types of aircraft. That of a man who is passionate about everything embodying the authentic aeronautical spirit. On his wrist is a Breitling Navitimer with its famous aviation slide rule. A cult-watch for all devotees and professionals of the conquest of the skies, equipped with Breitling Caliber 01, probably the best selfwinding chronograph movement. For John Travolta, it is simply the ultimate chronograph legend.

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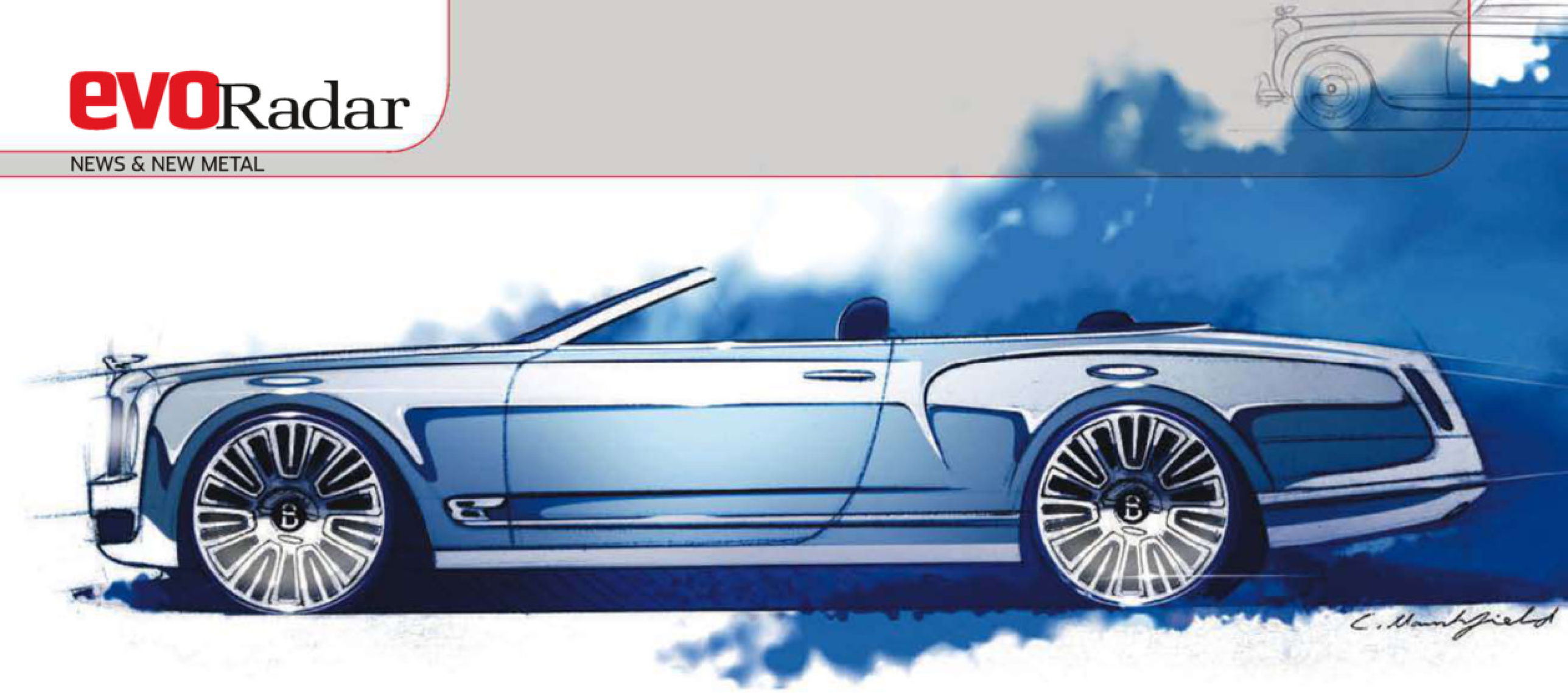
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SOFT-TOP MULSANNE PLANNED

CONVERTIBLE VERSION OF GIANT BENTLEY SALOON SHOWN TO PROSPECTIVE AMERICAN BUYERS

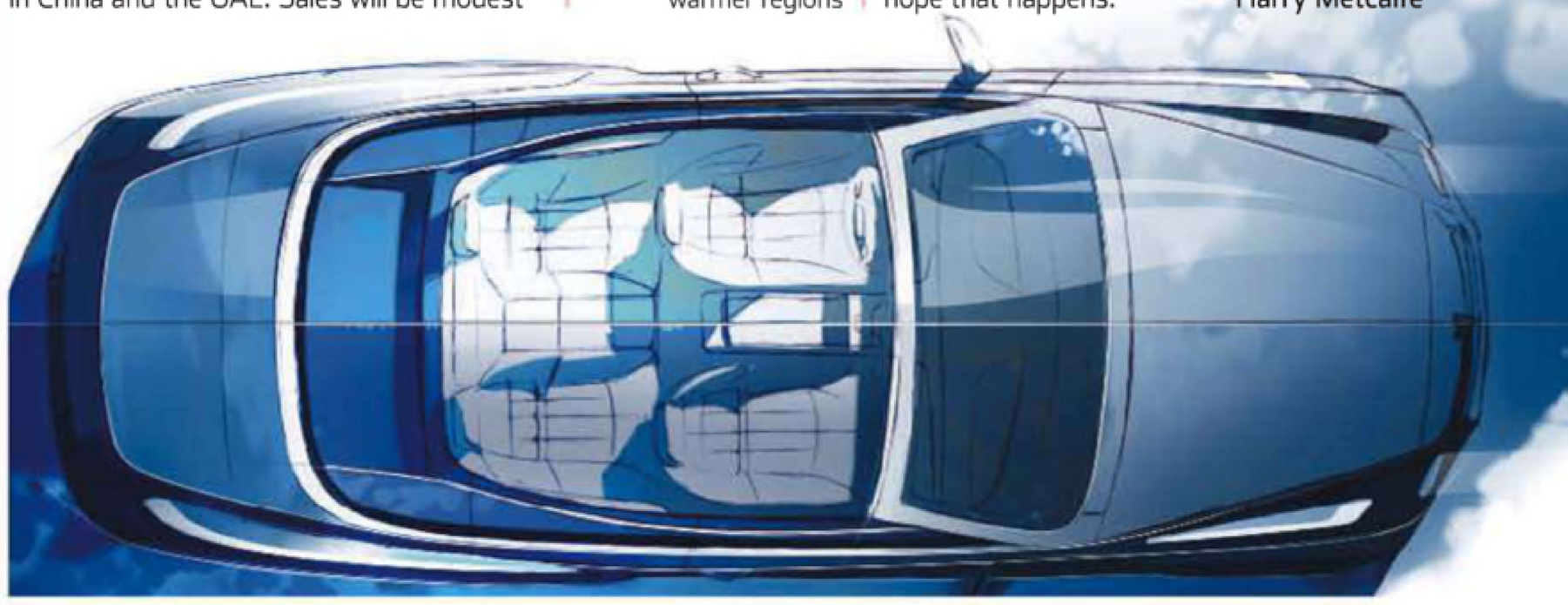
Bentley gave a private preview of its proposal for a new Mulsanne convertible at the recent Pebble Beach Concours event in the USA. Sadly, the company wasn't sporting enough to release any pictures, but we can show you this sketch of the planned design.

Technical details are sketchy, but it's a safe bet that the production version will use the same 505bhp 6.75-litre twin-turbo V8 engine as the Mulsanne saloon. The company admits it considered using a folding hard-top for the convertible, but opted for an easier-to-package soft-top instead. The wheelbase has been cut by 150mm for the convertible, but the car is still a massive 5.35m in length, meaning it's nearly the same size as its only obvious rival, the Rolls-Royce Phantom Drophead. The Mulsanne convertible also has a lower windscreen line than the saloon by 25mm.

'BENTLEY ADMITS IT CONSIDERED A FOLDING HARD-TOP'

Bentley reckons that the USA will be the biggest market for the open-topped Mulsanne, but also predicts it will be popular in China and the UAE. Sales will be modest – around 250 a year – and the price tag will likely start north of £250,000 and then rise considerably once a few option boxes have been ticked.

Interestingly, Bentley is also considering a coupe version, echoing the great two-door coupes of its past – like the Continental T that went out of production in 2003. Let's hope that happens. **Harry Metcalfe**



Above: wheelbase of convertible will be 150mm shorter than saloon. Below: soft-top should appeal in warmer regions

CONTINENTAL SHIFT

EIGHT-SPEED GEARBOX MAKES W12 BENTLEY EVEN QUICKER, PLUS NEW GT SPEED REVEALED

Bentley is planning to update its entire W12-powered Continental GT and GTC ranges with a new eight-speed automatic gearbox, which will also be fitted to the incoming Continental GT Speed (pictured). The new 'box is built by ZF and its closely stacked ratios improve both acceleration and fuel economy compared to the old six-speeder.

Performance-wise, the W12 GT is now 0.1sec quicker from rest to 60mph at 4.3sec and the GTC 0.3sec quicker at 4.4sec.

The new GT Speed, meanwhile, boasts a 616bhp version of the W12 engine – up 59bhp on the regular W12 Conti – which cuts the 0-60mph dash to just 4sec dead.

Deliveries of the updated cars should start at the end of October.



Above: Continental GT Speed is one of the models to benefit from new eight-speed 'box

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GTI SUCCESSOR READIED

PEUGEOT 208 HOT HATCH TO BE FITTED WITH 197BHP ENGINE AS FRENCH MARQUE ATTEMPTS TO RECAPTURE THE 205 GTI SPIRIT

Peugeot has shown off the production version of its 208 GTI ahead of its official unveiling at the Paris motor show in late September.

We'll leave the question of whether it's a worthy successor to its GTI ancestors until we get behind the wheel, but we can tell you that it's powered by a 197bhp version of the Peugeot/Mini 1.6-litre turbocharged petrol engine and will get a close-ratio six-speed gearbox. Peugeot claims it will be capable of 0-62mph in 'under 7sec'.

Visually, the 208 GTI is trying to channel the spirit of the much-missed 205 GTI rather than the forgettable 206 or 207 versions, with a modern take on the 205 GTI's 'repeater flash' on the C-pillar and chunky arch-filling 17-inch alloys. We're promised it will have unique chassis tuning and fully switchable stability control. **Mike Duff**





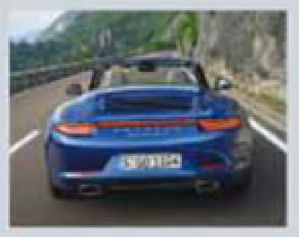
Top: 208 GTI will produce close to 200bhp. Above and below: red flashes on black interior evoke memories of classic 205





CARRERA 4S FOR CHRISTMAS

FOUR-WHEEL-DRIVE 991 VERSIONS SET FOR DECEMBER LAUNCH



Hot on the heels of the new entry-level Porsche 911 Carrera and Carrera S, the four-wheel-drive Carrera 4 and 4S will go on sale in December.

The 991-spec models will utilise the 345bhp 3.4-litre and 394bhp 3.8-litre engines of their respective RWD siblings. Seven-speed manual gearboxes are standard with PDK an option, while a new active AWD system – 'Porsche Traction Management' – displays how torque is being spread between front and rear axles. A rear-drive feel is promised, though the increased traction cuts 0-62mph times by up to 0.4sec, the C4S coupe taking 4.1sec.

A PDK-equipped C4 coupe is 65kg lighter than the 997 version, helping boost its fuel economy by 16 per cent to 32.8mpg. Prices range from £77,924 for a C4 coupe to £96,619 for a C4S Cabriolet.



400BHP INSIGNIA MOOTED

» **evo** has learned that Vauxhall is considering a high-output Insignia VXR with up to 400bhp. The Insignia's twin-turbo 2.8-litre V6 can produce more than the 321bhp it does currently – and its standard four-wheel-drive system means that it could handle the extra urge, although likely only through the optional six-speed automatic gearbox. If made, it should hit the showrooms next year at around £40K.

BMW ZAGATO ROADSTER

» BMW used California's Pebble Beach Concours to unveil its Zagato Roadster. Effectively a drop-top version of the Zagato Coupe shown earlier in the year, it's basically a Z4 covered in a more aggressive skin. It's a one-off, with power coming from the 335bhp straight-six turbo used in the Z4 35iS.





SUBARU STI: £6K OFF!

» Subaru has sliced a whopping £6000 off the cost of its increasingly specialist WRX STI. At £26,995, the 296bhp AWD saloon is now priced to rival hot hatchbacks. There's also a new 340R upgrade, costing £1599, that lifts power to 335bhp, drops the 0-62mph time to 4.7sec and doesn't affect the STI's warranty.

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Diffuser-style rear bumper
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Perfect 50:50 weight distribution
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The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Mazda MX-5 range: Urban 25.4 (11.1) - 28.8 (9.8), Extra Urban 45.6 (6.2) - 50.4 (5.6), Combined 35.3 (8.0) - 39.8 (7.1). CO_2 emissions (g/km) 188 - 167

Retail sales only, subject to availability at participating dealers only on vehicles registered between 01 April and 30 November 2012. Terms and conditions apply. *0% finance available on all Mazda MX-5 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. Mazda Financial Services RH1 1SR. Model shown: Mazda MX-5 Roadster Coupe 2.0i Kuro OTR £21,995. Model shown features optional Pearlescent paint at additional cost. On the road price includes VAT, number plates, delivery, 12 months' road fund licence, first registration fee, 3 year or 60,000 mile warranty and 3 years' European roadside assistance. Test drives subject to applicant status and availability. Details correct at time of going to print. Not available in conjunction with any other offer unless specified.

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For more pictures of the Art Car collection, visit www.evo.co.uk

A POSTCARD FROM:

LONDON 2012: BMW ART CARS

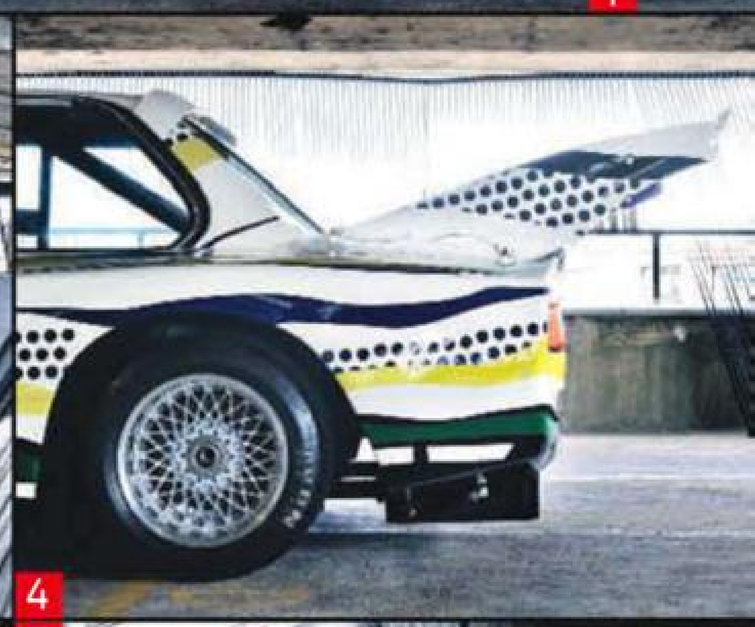
A MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK FORMS THE UNLIKELY SETTING FOR A SHOWCASE OF THE 'CANVAS ON AN AUTOMOBILE' DREAM

As part of its London Olympics sponsorship, BMW brought 16 of its 17 Art Cars to the capital during August and temporarily transformed a multi-storey car park in Shoreditch into our kind of art gallery. The only missing Art Car from the collection is covered in ice and is therefore a little tricky to transport, as anyone who has tried to get an ice cream from shop to beach without drippage will attest...


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1) 1999 V12 LMR by Jenny Holzer is covered in mirrored maxims like 'monomania is a prerequisite of success'. 2) 1979 Group 4 M1 was hand-painted by Andy Warhol in just 23 minutes. 3) 1976 3.0 CSL was the second Art Car, painted by Frank Stella. 4) 1977 320i Group 5, with Roy Lichtenstein's hallmark Ben-Day dots. 5) 2010 M3 GT2 by Jeff Koons was designed to 'impart a dynamic appearance even when it's standing still'. 6, from left) 1992 3-series Touring Car (Sandro Chia), 1991 Z1 (AR Penck) and 1995 850 CSi (David Hockney). 7) 1975 3.0 CSL of Alexander Calder – the Le Mans car where it all began. 8) One of two cars by Australian artists, a 1989 BMW M3 Group A by Ken Done

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PORSCHE 911: TECH OVERLOAD?

WITH DYNAMIC OPTIONS ON THE NEW 991 TOTALLING £11.5K, PORSCHE DEFENDS ITS MOST COMPLEX 911 TO DATE

As regular readers will have most likely noticed, **evo** hasn't been entirely convinced by some of the driver aid technology fitted to the recently launched '991' generation of the Porsche 911. The decision to fit the 991 with electric power steering has taken the majority of our criticism, but prolonged exposure to the range has also revealed that we prefer the most basic and tech-free versions of the Carrera.

This explains why Porsche invited us to a

THE COST OF PORSCHE'S GADGET LUST



PASM sports suspension

What does it do?
Reduces ride height by 20mm, and comes with some meatier aero kit that effectively eliminates aerodynamic lift

How much?
£558

Sports exhaust

What does it do?
Provides aural enhancement for that flat-six, with switchable acoustic baffles for full-noise mode

How much?
£1772

Porsche Ceramic Composite Brakes (PCCB)

What do they do?
Increase stopping endurance and reduce fade

How much?
£5787



INTERVIEW: MANFRED HARRER

PORSCHE'S HEAD OF VEHICLE DYNAMICS ON THE 911'S HIGH-TECH FUTURE

Q Was it a big decision to put electric power steering onto the 911 and the Boxster?

A At the beginning of the project in 2006 there were a lot of discussions about which steering technology was right for Porsche. We did a lot of comparison with competitor vehicles too – we were sure that we were able to manage the challenge of electric power steering.

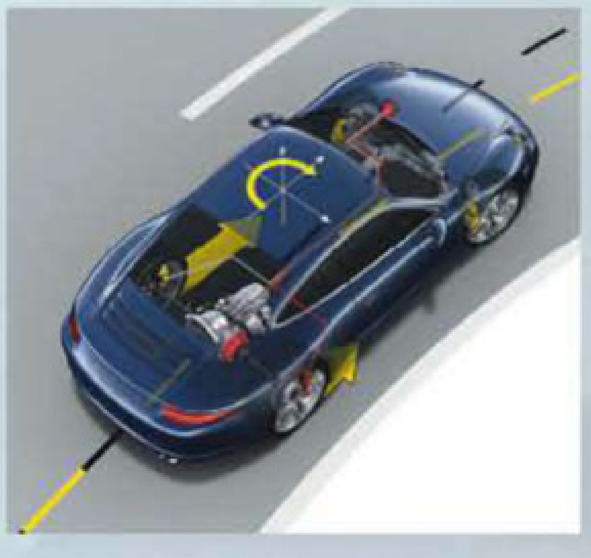
Q But why EPS – were the environmental benefits *that* crucial for a car like the 911?

A That was just a part of the decision – the main motivation was to be fit for the future. We

Porsche Torque Vectoring

What does it do?
Brakes inside rear wheel to help redistribute torque and aid turn-in

How much?
£890
(standard on Carrera S)



recent 'dynamic workshop' at Silverstone. This gave us a chance to drive versions of the 911 and the new Boxster both with and without various dynamic options, but also, more usefully, it enabled us to question some members of the senior engineering team responsible for the numerous tech options on the new 911, which, as you can see here, total £11,402 on the basic Carrera and £11,564 on the Carrera S.

As you'd expect, the official line is that all of Porsche's active systems are fitted to improve safety, driveability or environmental numbers. But it's also interesting to learn that all 'dynamic' aids are expected to post demonstrable performance gains, with time trimmed from the Nürburgring Nordschleife lap time being the company's favourite engineering benchmark.

Although the day didn't dramatically alter our view of the 911 and Boxster – both of which remain seriously impressive sports cars – it did show that Porsche does care about what people think. **Mike Duff**



Sport Chrono Package Plus

What does it do?
Adds an enhanced 'Sport Plus' mode for PASM dampers, throttle mapping and the stability control system. It also brings active engine mounts that stiffen under hard use

How much?
£1084

Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control (PDCC)

What does it do?
Reduces body roll and improves suspension geometry under hard loads

How much?
£2185
(available on Carrera S only)

Power Steering Plus

What does it do?
Adjusts power steering ratio to reduce effort at low speeds

How much?
£178

Porsche Active Suspension Management (PASM)

What does it do?
Electronically adapts the active dampers' level of resistance according to road conditions and the switchable 'Sport' mode

How much?
£1133
(standard on Carrera S)

thought about the driving situations we're going to face without running the combustion engine, like doing stop-start on the move. Therefore we needed a power supply without the engine running. The further advantage of electro-mechanical steering is that you can offer support functions like split braking and heading control.

Q You also claim that Porsche's EPS system is more advanced than your competitors' – why?

A In simple terms, the current systems on the market are open-loop, meaning they have some information about the steering input and the speed of the car. These are the main ways to control the motor torque, but they can't adapt according to grip levels. They work well generally but for specific circumstances like understeer and oversteer you're facing some problems which you can't allow in a sports car. That's why we went for closed-loop control, allowing the system to be far more adaptable.

Q Can active dynamic systems be used to mask failings of the 'passive' car beneath?

A For Porsche, it's vital that the mechanical chassis components make a perfect operating car. That should always be the case, regardless of what the car is. Our philosophy with stability control is not to intervene too much, not to start too early or to intervene before it's necessary. That means you must have a perfect working chassis concept.

Q But are active systems vital to making cars go faster, for example, around the Nordschleife?

A Absolutely, yes. These systems are making a major difference, and at Porsche we have to justify using them by demonstrating they will have a positive effect. For example, the PDCC system alone has improved the Nürburgring lap time by about five seconds. Other systems in the future may have a similar effect...

Q How many more active systems are we likely to see on Porsche models? Is there a limit to how much technology you can fit?

A A lot of ideas for the next generation are being discussed now. The future is not just focused on control systems, we have ideas on the car's body and an optimised chassis – refinements that will bring small steps. But in terms of control systems I think we are near the limit; maybe we will have active damping, roll control and rear steering, but that's it. We don't want to make cars too complicated, and the investment for each system gets higher. We need to make cars that customers can buy.

EDITED BY
SIMON DE BURTON

THE WINNING FORMULA

Hublot makes an 18-carat celebration of the British Grand Prix, while Elysee remembers F1's first German superstar Wolfgang von Trips



HUBLOT F1 KING POWER GREAT BRITAIN
PRICE: £23,000 **FROM:** HUBLOT.COM

Hublot is run by Jean-Claude Biver, a marketing genius who revived the brand by inventing 'fusion watchmaking', the art of combining traditional materials such as gold and steel with less traditional ones such as ceramic, titanium, aluminium and resin. Biver has formed many alliances for the brand, with Usain Bolt, Ferrari, Manchester United, Diego Maradona and the Morgan Motor Company among others, but the deal he brokered with Bernie Ecclestone in 2010 to make Hublot the 'official watch' of Formula 1 is one of the biggest. We've had limited editions to mark the Grands Prix of Abu Dhabi, Japan, Brazil and India, and now there's one to commemorate July's race at Silverstone. The F1 King Power Great Britain is being made in a 250-piece edition with a case of so-called 'King Gold', an amalgam of 18-carat gold, copper and platinum, intended to be redder than normal red gold. There's a carbonfibre and ceramic bezel modelled on a brake disc, the F1 logo on the dial and some red highlights to complement the stitching on the rubber-lined alligator strap. The watch should be lucrative for Hublot – £23,000 multiplied by 250 pieces equals £5.75 million…



ELYSEE EDITION GRAF BERGHE VON TRIPS PRICE: £385
FROM: CLASSIC-TIME.CO.UK

A wander around the outer reaches of the annual Baselworld watch fair always reveals some interesting lesser-known names that are not always obtainable in the UK. One I discovered this year is Elysee, a German brand now being distributed in this country by Classic Time. Elysee offers a nice line in driving watches with a historic bent, notably a series dedicated to 1950s aristocrat Ferrari racer Wolfgang Reichsgraf Berghe von Trips. Known simply as 'Graf von Trips' in motoring circles, he competed in 29 Formula 1 races, winning two. In 1961 he came close to becoming Germany's first F1 world champion, but was killed after colliding with Jim Clark's Lotus during the Italian Grand Prix at Monza. Elysee has commemorated his career with four different watches, including the automatic three-hander with date featured here. The chequered-flag design and red detailing on the engine-turned dial lend the watch a slight sporting touch while retaining an air of understatement, and it's great value for money. A steel bracelet is available, but the perforated leather strap looks best.

TISSOT MOTOGP LIMITED EDITION
PRICE: £530
FROM: GOLDSMITHS.CO.UK OR FRASERHART.CO.UK

Of all the Tissot watches made to mark its role as MotoGP's official timekeeper, few have been as vibrant as the 2012 special edition. The watch features a silicone bracelet in black and yellow to match the yellow of the seconds hand and chronograph subdials. A high-quality quartz movement makes the watch affordable, as does the steel case with a rotating 'brake disc' bezel that provides a dual time-zone function. The black dial is carbonfibre while the back of the watch carries the edition number and the MotoGP logo. Some 8888 pieces are being made available.



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PETROLHEAD

Richard Porter

Top Gear TV's script editor wonders if the easy driveability of today's supercars is a good thing





'DON'T WE WANT FAST, RAREFIED CARS TO BE A BIT STROPPY AND IN NEED OF SOME TAMING? DON'T WE WANT THEM TO PUT UP A FIGHT?'

Easy to drive. What a strange expression that is. It's usually applied to something like the Nissan Micra and probably means it has light steering. But in truth, it makes very little sense because I can't remember ever getting into a current production car and finding it difficult to drive.

The closest example I can think of is the Land Rover Defender, which takes some getting used to because it's heavy, it's old fashioned and the seat doesn't go back far enough, but the need to adapt to the machine and learn its quirks adds to the sense of novelty and occasion. The same was true the first time I drove a 7.5-tonne lorry.

The last car I found truly difficult to drive was the road-going version of the Ford RS200 Group B rally car, which had an on-off clutch, rampant driveline wind-up and an interior that quickly become hotter than an Egyptian's office. All of this made for an interesting challenge, but it also made it unforgettable.

Which brings me to the Ferrari 458 Italia I borrowed a couple of weeks ago. This was not difficult to get out of T-junctions, nor did it make me sweat like Felipe Massa in a contract re-negotiation. It just got on with the business of being a fast, sensational car. On A- and B-roads any clear line of sight is an easy overtaking opportunity. On a decent straight with a line of bumbling Sunday traffic ahead, you simply pick off each car before they've heard you coming, like piloting a fighter jet through a cavalcade of hot air balloons. It goes round corners rather well too and, if you're a bit of a divvy, the discreet stability control intervenes and kids you into thinking that *you* prevented the expensive accident, not the car. It's a class act, a life-affirming thing to drive, a piece of rigorous engineering that also manages to be soulful and charming. In other words, a proper supercar.

Yet the single most striking thing about the Ferrari 458 is not how fast, agile or exciting it is. No, the most striking thing about the Ferrari 458 is that – and I'm afraid there's no other way to say this – it's really easy to drive. When it comes to the actual nuts and bolts of driving the thing, the Italia is easy-peasy, limoncello-squeezy.

If you switch the chassis to its most relaxed setting and leave the double-clutch 'box in auto, the 458 will cruise around town as easily as an Audi. And ride better than one. Poke the hornet's nest of settings to make everything a bit angrier and, thanks to the general polish and clarity of the controls plus that clever stability system, you can slice cleanly across vast swathes of countryside without once puckering your sphincter. It's a remarkable achievement.

And yet I started to wonder, do we really want our supercars to be this friendly? If you grew up reading car mags during the 1970s and '80s, you might remember tales of heroic wheelsmiths wrestling with unassisted steering, hefty clutches and open-gate gearboxes, emerging from the other side exhausted but utterly in love with brutal beasts like the Lamborghini Countach and Ferrari Testarossa. Don't we want fast, rarefied cars to be a bit stroppy and in need of some taming? Don't we want them to put up a fight because it's the challenge that makes them interesting? And, with that in mind, isn't the 458 just a bit too unthreatening?

I've thought about this quite a lot and I've decided that, actually, it's not. You couldn't say this car lacks drama or a sense of occasion and at no point did I find myself driving it hard and thinking, 'Golly, I wish I was more sweaty and uncomfortable.' It's incredible that we've got to a point where something so fast and so capable can be so unintimidating but relentlessly entertaining. The fact that it's so approachable means that I suspect if you owned one you'd use it far more regularly than if it was a grumpy old bugger. After all, it's a wonderful car and why wouldn't you want to drive it as much as possible? Especially as they've made it so easy to drive.

Illustrations by Simon Cooper

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Harry Metcalfe

evo's editorial director reckons tech developments spell the end for four-wheel-drive supercars





'THERE'S A GROWING TREND IN THE U.S.A. FOR CONVERTING LAMBOS TO TWO-WHEEL DRIVE, AND I CAN FULLY UNDERSTAND WHY'

The year 2012 has proved to be a special one for supercar launches, as I discovered recently when I drove the Pagani Huayra and Zonda, the Lamborghini Aventador and the Bugatti Veyron Vitesse back-to-back in a mad dash across Europe.

The amount of interest around the first drives of the Huayra has been amazing. But does the new car really deserve every bit of gushing praise it's received recently? Is it that much better than the Zonda it's replaced? That's what I wanted to discover during the couple of days I spent with the car in Tuscany.

It's a hard call to make because the Huayra and Zonda are so different to one another. The former has a power-crazed twin-turbo V12, the latter a howling naturally aspirated V12 of legendary status. Engines can define a car's character and that's very much the case here: step out of a Zonda Cinque and into a Huayra and you'll soon be pining for the Cinque's 7.3-litre scream. But if you'd just been piloting a Veyron, the Huayra's turbo V12 feels just as powerful and more responsive than the Veyron's mighty quad-turbo W16.

However, a nagging thought persisted. Would the Huayra be an even better car if it had the Zonda's V12 installed, rather than the twin-turbo engine? Probably, but then that can never happen because the old V12 is not Euro 5 emissions compliant and is too noisy in Cinque spec to pass today's drive-by tests. That's the trouble: there's a minefield of regulations for manufacturers to comply with nowadays, many of which aren't doing performance cars any favours.

But the one area where the Huayra does move the supercar game on is in chassis manners. Mid-engined 720bhp supercars aren't normally friendly devices, but once you've tasted the Huayra's delicious squiggle out of corners (with the traction control set to 'Sport') it's impossible to resist trying it again. It's here where it decisively bests the Veyron because it's so much more exciting to drive when pushed.

What the Huayra's chassis proves is that today's sophisticated traction control systems have got to the point where the drivetrains on modern two-wheel-drive cars are more than up to the job of delivering massive amounts of power to the road, nullifying the need for all-wheel drive. The Veyron's 1183bhp may push this theory a little too far, but I reckon the 690bhp Aventador would be a more enjoyable drivers' car in rear-drive only, rather than in the 4WD form that Lamborghini insists on using. Interestingly, there's a growing trend in the USA for converting Lambos to 2WD (including several Murciélago SV670-4s), and I can fully understand why. If Ferrari can make the F12's 730bhp front-engined 2WD layout work then there's little excuse not to use rear-drive only on a mid-engined car, a layout which automatically offers greater traction anyway.

The issue seems to be Volkswagen Group's unhealthy obsession with 4WD, despite the progress being made in tyres and traction control systems. With even Land Rover experimenting with 2WD, I reckon it's about time VW reconsidered its 4WD fixation. There's a good chance this might happen too, because when Porsche was absorbed into VW, Porsche's well-respected development chief, Wolfgang Dürheimer, was made CEO of Bentley. One of his first moves there was to question the company's all-wheel drive policy on the Continental GT range, stating that he wanted Conti development to mirror that of the 911, which should lead to plenty of future rear-drive Bentley models.

Just 18 months later, Dürheimer has been called back to Ingolstadt to head up research and development over the whole Audi portfolio. That includes Lamborghini, so it will be interesting to see if he follows that same development path with the next-generation Audi R8 and Lamborghini Gallardo (which are being developed jointly within the VW group) and we duly end up with some two-wheel-drive, high-performance versions. Let's hope so.

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Tiff Needell

The racer and presenter skips across the pond to experience motorsport, American-style





'WE WERE GETTING INTO THE AMERICAN MOOD; BEER, BURGERS AND WINGS BECAME OUR STAPLE DIET, ALONG WITH THE ODD STEAK'

Those that know me well know that I never pass up on a chance to have a dig at the Americans. Their cars are useless, their food is unhealthy and their 'have a nice day' mentality is maddening. But when it comes to putting on a show – or a motor race – they can still teach us a thing or two.

A friend and I had promised our sons that, if they worked hard for their GCSEs, we'd take them to a NASCAR race. Ever since Juan Pablo Montoya gave up F1 for NASCAR in 2006, my son Harry and I have followed his progress, or rather the progress of his '42 car'. With 36 championship rounds, there were plenty to choose from but, of those we could all make, one stood out – the Brickyard 400 at Indianapolis. Having never been there myself, this would be a treat for me as well as for Harry, even though the Indy 500 is the track's true showpiece.

We made it to the city on the Wednesday lunchtime prior to the race, took in a tour of the Lucas Oil Stadium, home to the Indianapolis Colts NFL side, and then watched the Indianapolis Indians in a Minor League baseball fixture. We were getting into the American mood; beer, burgers and wings became our staple diet, interspersed by the occasional steak, while evenings would end with the boys in bed and a few more beers and some live blues for the dads…

By now our expectations of the self-styled 'Racing Capital of the World' were at fever pitch and when we reached the back of the towering grandstands, we weren't disappointed. No artistic masterpieces here – just the underside of bare concrete steps ready to seat 257,000 fans. Testing began on the Thursday with plenty of time to visit the 'Hall of Fame' museum and soak up some history – marvelling at the front-engined roadsters that the likes of AJ Foyt used to wrestle round the 2.5-mile oval 200 times to claim Indy 500 victory.

As a bonus, the track staged two Grand Am sportscar races on the former F1 course on the Friday. For $10 (£6) each you could sit or stand anywhere you wanted and watch a 90-minute event for 70 GT cars followed by the three-hour Grand Am prototype race, which was an electrifying wet/dry classic with the outcome in doubt to the very end.

If that wasn't enough for one day, we refuelled with more burgers and wings and headed for the 0.7-mile Lucas Oil Raceway on the outskirts of town and the 'Messina Wildlife Animal Stopper 200'. This ARCA race, a lower level of NASCAR, gave us 200 laps of floodlit action as 35 cars squeezed themselves between the concrete walls.

Saturday was reserved for NASCAR's second-tier act, the Nationwide Series race, which was all about one woman – IndyCar poster girl turned NASCAR rookie Danica Patrick. After a wild reception greeted her qualifying run, it ended with a groan of disappointment as Danica only managed the 20th fastest time. With tickets just $25 (£16) we joined the rest of the 45,000 fans, and took up our positions at the exit of Turn One – exactly where Danica slammed into the wall and out of the race…

With waistlines fast expanding, we waddled into the stadium on Sunday for the big race. Even at $90 (£57), the ticket prices seemed a bargain and 125,000 fans squeezed through the turnstiles. Nothing fills all of Indy's seats these days, but the atmosphere was still great as most fans (including us) watched from the start-finish straight.

At the driver introductions, huge cheers greeted the likes of Dale Earnhardt Jr and Tony Stewart, with equally loud boos for Kyle and Kurt Busch and the driver of the '42 car'! Harry stood proud in his newly purchased Montoya T-shirt and we hailed our hero. Prayers were said, the national anthem sung and as the call came – 'gentlemen, start your engines' – the hairs stood up on the back of my neck.

It wasn't a classic race, but the thrill of 43 leviathans, each with 850bhp, blasting past you at 200mph is not something you'll quickly forget. Get online now and book that trip!

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MAZDA MX-5 GT CONCEPT

» DEVELOPED BY TEAM BEHIND GT RACER » OVER 200BHP » COULD RETAIL FOR £30K

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc **CO2** n/a
Power 200bhp+ @ 6500rpm **Torque** 144lb ft @ 4800rpm **0-60mph** 7.0sec (est) **Top speed** 140mph (est) **Price** £29,995 (est) **On sale** TBC

This is what I call a car launch. Drive to a great circuit for about 8.15am, sign some indemnities, eat some pains-au-chocolat and drink strong coffee before the track opens at 9am. Then you hop in an MX-5 and re-familiarise yourself with Donington Park. It's still awesome. But to be sure, why not have a few quicker laps in a race-prepped MX-5? Yep, still awesome. OK, now it's time to drive the MX-5 GT Concept. Can I try it on the road? 'Sure. Just be back by 11.30am so you get the full track time.' Mazda UK, I salute you.

In fact we should all salute Mazda UK, because this GT Concept is an entirely home-grown project, funded and developed in Britain by Jota Sport, which also runs Mazda UK's MX-5 race programme (including a GT4 challenger with 320bhp). The GT Concept is very likely to go on sale soon for around £30,000 – strong money for an MX-5, but with a reworked 2-litre engine producing over 200bhp at 6500rpm, 144lb ft at 4800rpm (these figures may change for production) and a kerb weight of 1173kg, it's an appealing package.

You can tell it's not a factory-developed package from the moment you fire the four-cylinder engine into life. It's loud. Deep, rorty, old-fashioned loud. This is race team-style tuning rather than a bit of ECU-fiddling. The Jenvey throttle bodies, hotter cams and free-breathing central-exit exhaust are clearly as good at producing noise as they are horsepower.

Jota Sport hasn't gone too far with the chassis, lowering the car by 35mm with bespoke Eibach springs and revalving the dampers, but not going down the whole adjustable bound and rebound route. Even the anti-roll bars are standard items.

Inside, noise apart, it's standard MX-5 with a little splash of carbon trim, Alcantara gear and handbrake gaiters and four little shift light indicators mounted centrally above the standard oil pressure gauge. However, combined with the carbonfibre front splitter and rear diffuser and the little carbonfibre lip spoiler, those tiny changes are enough to make the GT Concept feel a little bit special once you've hopped inside. The brakes and 17in wheels remain standard but stickier Federal 595RS trackday tyres should improve grip and steering response. Well, that's the theory, anyway.

Nosing out of Donington's main gate, the GT feels quite the little racer. This isn't the cuddly MX-5 we've come to know. Having said that, the ride remains supple, and despite the stiffer springs eliminating some of the strange floatiness of the standard car and beefing up steering feel just off-centre, there's still plenty of body roll and a minor delay between turning the steering wheel and the chassis settling into its stance.

But on fast, flowing roads with more crests and compressions than real corners, the GT Concept is great fun. The engine is a proper little screamer and those shift lights are a great aid, keeping you focused on wringing every last rev from the seriously perky motor. The gearbox is fantastic, the brakes have plenty of bite and in terms of pure performance it feels









Top: GT Concept is bred from MX-5 racer. Above: trackday-spec tyres aid grip from 17in wheels. Left: GT Concept is fun on track and easy to slide. Right: interior remains standard, save for the odd splash of carbonfibre



TESTED THIS MONTH

MERCEDES-BENZ C63 AMG BLACK P42
BMW X6 M50d P44
AC SCHNITZER ACS1 COUPE P46
PORSCHE BOXSTER S SPORT P49
VAUXHALL ASTRA GTC BITURBO P49
LITCHFIELD SUBARU BRZ P50
MERCEDES-BENZ SLK250 CDI P50
JAGUAR XJ 3.0 V6 S/C P52
SEAT Mii SPORT P52

'IN TERMS OF PURE PERFORMANCE, IT FEELS LIKE IT WOULD EASILY GET THE BETTER OF THE GT86'



like it would easily get the better of the GT86/BRZ twins.

For such a specialised little car, I'd like more body control – there's still too much roll and quite often the body feels like it's getting away from the dampers over those fast crests. Somehow that doesn't marry with the manic little motor, nor the beautiful chassis balance that you uncover if you can find a long corner: tip the MX-5 in, wait for it to settle and then use that extra power to get the tyres gently slipping sideways. There isn't the torque to really slide the car under power, but with some momentum thrown in there's plenty of adjustability.

On the track you can use that balance more, diving into corners on a trailing throttle, letting the rear tyres slide wide and then picking up the throttle to keep the slide going. In fact the GT Concept hangs together better on track because you've always got the chassis loaded up and don't notice the hesitation between input and response that you can experience on the road.

We really hope the GT Concept makes it to limited-run production, that Jota Sport gets to dial in some more body control with different anti-roll bars and dampers, and that the noise remains intact. This has the makings of a proper little hero car. **Jethro Bovingdon**

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ Sounds great, improved body control
− £30K seems a lot for an MX-5

Pictures: Mazda



MERCEDES C63 AMG BLACK SERIES

» ULTIMATE C-CLASS MINUS AERO AND TRACK KIT » £12,165 LESS EXPENSIVE » SAME 510BHP

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 6208cc **CO2** 286g/km
Power 510bhp @ 6800rpm **Torque** 457lb ft @ 5200rpm **0-62mph** 4.2sec (claimed)
Top speed 186mph (limited) **Price** £98,765
On sale Now

You'd need a very hard heart not to be won over by the Mercedes C63 AMG Black Series. For a start it's based on the fabulous C63 AMG, a compact coupe with a 6.2-litre V8. An engine that size in a C-class is extraordinary, especially when it's tickled with the conrod, pistons and crank from an SLS to produce 510bhp at 6800rpm and 457lb ft at 5200rpm. The Black also has a 40mm wider track at the front, 79mm at the rear, fully adjustable suspension, 390mm brakes up front and a brutal, beautiful blistered-arch body.

This particular BS does without the £6995 AMG Aero Package that adds carbon flicks at the front and a rear wing, and the £5170 AMG Track Package, which brings active rear axle cooling and sticky Dunlop Sport Maxx Race tyres. You may argue that at £98,765, the Black Series should at least get the Track kit included. I agree. But I should also say that I love the look of this standard car, bereft of wings to distract from the muscular perfection of that shape.

So how important is that extra £12,165? I'm sure the Aero Package adds a sliver of high-speed stability on a computer screen, but will it make any difference in the real world? And can a set of road-biased ContiSportContact 3s transmit all that torque and support the hardcore suspension set-up? More importantly, can the Black Series still shine after the GT3 RS 4.0, M3 GTS, Nissan GT-R Track Pack and Lotus Exige S overshadowed it at the Nürburgring (**evo** 171)?

It certainly feels special. The noise is sharp, and at low speeds the ride is even more aggressive than a GT3's. As the Black Series fidgets and jolts, the instantaneous torque fires you angrily



Top: absence of aero kit emphasises the Black's muscular body. Above: huge grooved and cross-drilled discs sit behind 19in alloys. Below: oversteer is easy



along, while traction is incredibly impressive even on standard high-performance rubber on a warm English summer's day. You might expect wheelspin and oversteer at every turn, but drive the car neatly and it's effective, with mild mid-corner understeer quickly bleeding away into a neutral, hooked-up exit, the race-prepped V8 pouring easily metered power into the rear wheels.

Other areas that impress are the seven-speed MCT transmission, which is more responsive than the dual-clutch 'box in the SLS, and the clean steering feel. It's a little too light just off centre but quickly builds weight and you can feel the front tyres pushing into the surface and slowly edging wide… Of course this is just one side to the Black Series – if you just want blood, thunder and oversteer, it's easily provoked and easily held.

It might lack the agility of a GT3 or M3 GTS, but this is still an exceptionally entertaining car. **Jethro Bovingdon**

evo RATING ★★★★½

+ Looks, noise, hooligan potential
– Low-speed ride, sharper rivals

 Pictures: Stuart Collins

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BMW X6 M50d

» TRIPLE-TURBO DIESEL ENGINE MAKES SUV DEBUT
» 376BHP AND 546LB FT » 0-62MPH IN 5.3SEC

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2993cc, triple-turbo
CO2 204g/km **Power** 376bhp @ 4000rpm
Torque 546lb ft @ 2000rpm
0-62mph 5.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Price** £62,280 **On sale** Now

If you thought the Audi SQ5 we reviewed last issue marked the point where the German fast-car industry left the **evo** universe, it's probably best not to read on, because BMW has stuck its iconic 'M' badge onto a diesel-powered pseudo-SUV, the lexicographically challenged X6 M50d.

Like the recently launched M135i (**evo** 173), this X6 isn't a 'proper' M-car of the M3 or M5 kind. Rather it's the product of what's dubbed 'M Performance', the sub-brand charged with creating models that sit between BMW's mainstream offerings and its fully fledged M-cars. But, as the 'M' badge on this X6's tailgate is every bit as big and shiny as the one you'd find on a 'real' M, I fear it's a semantic distinction that'll be lost on most. To the casual tailgater, this is a diesel M-car.

We've already driven this engine in a 5-series – the M550d xDrive, to use BMW's increasingly tortuous naming format – but sadly that car (**evo** 170) isn't going to make it to the UK. BMW's all-powerful marketing department is seemingly flummoxed by the idea of selling a four-wheel-drive 5-series over here, so this diesel unit will only reach Blighty in the X5 and X6.



Let's start with the good news: it's a powerplant that raises the bar for the squeeze-sparked engine by several notches. The figures are close to outrageous: just 3 litres of swept capacity force-fed by three turbochargers to produce 376bhp and 546lb ft of torque. It's enough for a claimed 0-62mph time of 5.3sec, despite a 2150kg kerb weight.

And the engine is as impressive on-road as it is on paper. It uses what's known as 'compound' turbocharging, with one small blower delivering boost at low engine speeds and then a larger, low-pressure turbo coming in to supply pre-pressurised air to the intake side of this small turbo. When boost levels get too high for the first small turbo to deal with by itself, a second one kicks in, also getting its air pre-charged by the bigger rotor. The end result is both low-down torque and top-end power, with the 50d delivering serious urge from idle speed to the red line.

BMW's engineers have also done a good job at turning most of the noise that comes from compression ignition forces into an impressively un-diesel soundtrack. Inside the cabin it sounds more like a big-capacity petrol motor breathing through a sports exhaust, although at smaller throttle openings the turbos can be heard whooshing away.





Above: torque is strong from idle to the 5400rpm red line. Below: one large turbo feeds two smaller ones. Bottom: M badge seems out of place on a diesel





Sadly, the rest of the driving experience can't keep up. The eight-speed automatic gearbox is sluggish at low speeds, taking a long time to deliver kickdowns as (we presume) it tries to protect the transmission from sudden exposure to the engine's full torque output. The result is a 376bhp car that feels surprisingly slow when asked to provide a spurt of speed to 'roll through' a give-way junction, or to exploit a sudden tractor-passing opportunity. As with other X6s, the chassis is also pretty inert by BMW standards, and although it grips remarkably well considering its mass and centre of gravity, this isn't a car that relishes the challenge of a twisty, cresty road. In short, it feels like a vehicle designed for a life in the outside lane of the Autobahn rather than one tackling the A701 or B660.

Overall, the X6 M50d probably makes more sense than the utterly ludicrous X6M as it offers similar real-world pace, high-20s fuel economy and a £20K saving on the price tag. But we'd still rather have a chance to experience this almighty motor in the 5-series. **Mike Duff**

evo RATING ★★★☆☆

+ Storming diesel lifts performance bar
– It's in an X6, not a 5-series

 Pictures: Stuart Collins

www.citroen.co.uk

CITROËN prefers TOTAL

SEE NEXT PAGE.
ENVIOUS GLANCES COME AS STANDARD.



CITROËN

Official Government Fuel Consumption Figures (litres per 100km/mpg) and CO_2 Emissions (g/km). Highest: DS3 Ultra Prestige THP 155 6-speed manual: Urban 8.2/34.4, Extra Urban 4.7/60.1, Combined 6.0/47.1 and 139 CO_2. Lowest: DS3 Ultra Prestige e-HDi 110 Airdream 6-speed manual: Urban 4.6/61.4, Extra Urban 3.4/83.1, Combined 3.8/74.4 and 99 CO_2.

AC SCHNITZER ACS1 COUPE

» GERMAN TUNING HOUSE CREATES MONSTER 1M » 394BHP AND 413LB FT » CONVERSION STARTS AT £19,774

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo **CO2** 224g/km **Power** 394bhp @ 6100rpm **Torque** 413lb ft @ 1500rpm **0-62mph** 4.7sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Price** see text **On sale** Now (www.ac-schnitzer.co.uk)

Tinkering with a much-loved car is a risky business, and when AC Schnitzer's update of the BMW 1M heaved into view, rolling on rapper rims tucked up in those lovely flared arches, it didn't look promising. The rear tyres in particular made me goggle, as I couldn't recall ever seeing 25-profile rubber on anything outside of a motor show. A designer's dream maybe, but dynamically they must surely be a nightmare on B-roads…

What you can see here is the full ACS1 Sport Coupe upgrade package. Mechanically this involves a new ECU and rear silencer that hike the power of the twin-turbo six-cylinder by 59bhp and 44lb ft (complete with a three-year engine and drivetrain warranty). Added to this are new tailpipes, new brakes (including six-piston calipers at the front), new adjustable race suspension and new wheels and tyres. Cosmetically there's a front spoiler and rear diffuser (both in carbonfibre), a small roof spoiler and a chrome grille on the exterior, while inside there's a new gearknob, handbrake cover, iDrive controller cover, pedal set and sports steering wheel. The price for all this, with painting and fitting, is £27,828, but if you skip the cosmetic parts the price drops to £19,774.







Above: 25-profile rubber gives a jarring ride, but looks great on lowered chassis (right)

The first thing to say is that the 20in wheels pictured are a no-cost upgrade from some more reasonable 19in items that we also tried. They're also not the issue you might think as the suspension does a remarkable job: the ACS1 rides surprisingly well in day-to-day driving and down decent A-roads – better than the standard 1M, in fact. With less roll and more power it's even happier to slide too, staying flat and nicely controllable through corners. Performance-wise, there's now a more obvious step when the turbochargers kick in, but the ACS1 takes off when they do and the marginal 0.2sec reduction in the 0-62mph time doesn't feel like it tells the whole story.

There are a couple of issues, however. Although the suspension works well within the confines of its travel, the significant drop in ride-height can't be disguised over bigger bumps, and as you push harder, the suspension (front and rear) bottoms out with a thump. The other limiting factor is the chin spoiler, which looks fantastic but is far too low. You worry that every big compression is going to be followed by the sound of expensively splintered carbonfibre clattering along the underbelly of the car.

I suspect that the ACS1 would be huge fun on a racetrack. But if you ditched the chin spoiler and avoided the bumpiest of B-roads, it would be fun getting there and back too. **Henry Catchpole**

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ Looks the part, superb grunt
– Appointments to see a chiropractor



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CITROËN prefers TOTAL

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ENVIOUS GLANCES COME AS STANDARD.



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PORSCHE BOXSTER S

» NEW £1K SPORT CHASSIS FOR TRACK BUFFS » FIRMER SPRINGS AND LOWER RIDE

SPECIFICATION

Engine Flat-six, 3436cc **CO2** 206g/km
Power 311bhp @ 6700rpm **Torque** 265lb ft @ 4500rpm **0-62mph** 5.1sec (claimed)
Top speed 176mph (claimed)
Price £46,384 (est) **On sale** Autumn 2012

So let's meet a car that, in its own modest way, is as much an example of the extremes to which the Porsche brand can reach as the Cayenne Turbo S or the Panamera Diesel, because the new optional sports suspension pack for the Boxster S seems to have been designed for the tiny number of people who regularly take their Boxster on track.

We drove the sports set-up on a prototype Boxster S both on track and on the roads around Silverstone, and there's no doubting that it coped better with the demands of the National Circuit than those of rural Northamptonshire. Opting for this pack will lower the Boxster S by 20mm compared to the standard car, and by 10mm compared to one fitted with the optional PASM active dampers. Spring rates become 20 per cent firmer at the front and 25 per cent firmer at the rear, but the biggest dynamic difference is with the anti-roll bars, with the front one 22 per cent and the rear one 46 per cent stiffer than on the standard S.

There's not much wrong with the standard Boxster's driving experience, especially with the PASM kit's switchable dampers, but the sports suspension is definitely hardcore. On track there's less roll under hard cornering and a more responsive front end that dials out even the small amount of understeer you get with the boggo S. But you can really feel the impact of the firmer anti-roll bars stiffening up the back end and making the car feel far more steered-from-behind, but in an instinctive and easily controlled fashion. For regular track users, it will be money well spent.







Above: Sport buttons alter throttle and ESP, but not the damping. Below: sport set-up works best on track

But on road, the sports kit stays equally hardcore and is quick to remind you just what a sweet dynamic compromise the standard Boxster S offers. The lightning responses remain equally entertaining on smooth tarmac – the A43's many roundabouts were particularly good fun – but the firmer spring rates put a real edge onto the normally compliant suspension. Over rougher, narrower tarmac, the sport-suspended Boxster was being moved around by the sort of road imperfections that a standard S would just float over. The Sport kit uses conventional passive dampers too, meaning that unlike the active PASM system, you can't switch them into a softer mode.

Pricing hasn't been finalised yet but we're told the kit will cost around £1000 – or almost exactly what Porsche charges for the PASM upgrade. On our experience, the active system is the better all-round bet.

Mike Duff

evo RATING ★★★★½

✚ Great on the track
– Too firm on the road





VAUXHALL ASTRA GTC BITURBO

» 192BHP DIESEL » 57.7MPG
» SAME TORQUE AS VXR

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1956cc, twin-turbo diesel
CO2 129g/km **Power** 192bhp @ 4000rpm
Torque 295lb ft @ 1750-2500rpm **0-60mph** 7.8sec (claimed) **Top speed** 139mph (claimed)
Price £23,925 **On sale** Now

It looks like a VXR and boasts an identical torque figure. It sits 6mm lower than a regular Astra. And there's not a single diesel badge on it as it's dubbed the far more exciting 'Biturbo'. Vauxhall's gone to an awful lot of effort to sex up its VW Golf GTD rival.

Its 2-litre twin-turbo diesel engine comes from the Insignia. A smaller 'charger deals with the low-rev stuff before a larger turbo takes over at 3000rpm. The stats are impressive, the full 295lb ft on tap from 1750rpm and 80 per cent of it from just 1250rpm. Claimed fuel economy is 57.7mpg.

However, the resulting thump in the back you might expect is missing and it never feels quicker than the Golf, despite a 24bhp and 37lb ft advantage. Refinement is also an issue – rev much past 3000rpm and you'll hear a gravelly soundtrack, though the low-end torque means you can work around this.

We've long praised the finely judged ride and handling of cooking Astra five-doors and Sports Tourers, and the same applies to the Biturbo, which feels keener still with its lower suspension. Better yet is the GTC three-door and its standard HiPerStrut front suspension, which delivers a sharper, more incisive front end.

But the Biturbo – which ranges from £23,925 for the GTC to £25,110 for the Sports Tourer – looks pricey and can't deliver the bite that its sharply styled bark promises.

Stephen Dobie

evo RATING ★★★☆☆

✚ Sharp styling, talented chassis
– Not as quick as it looks, expensive

LITCHFIELD SUBARU BRZ

» COUPE TUNED BY BRITISH EXPERTS » 25BHP EXTRA FOR £1500

SPECIFICATION

Engine Flat-four, 1998cc
CO2 159g/km **Power** 203bhp @ 7200rpm
Torque 160lb ft @ 4800rpm **0-62mph** 7.0sec (est) **Top speed** 150mph (est)
Conversion price See text **On sale** Now



It's fair to say we've given the Subaru BRZ (and Toyota GT86) a hard time so far, mainly because we feel it doesn't deliver sufficient performance for the asking price.

Subaru guru Iain Litchfield agrees. He can't do anything about its price, but he can do plenty for its performance. He has attempted to inject some character into the car while keeping the price reasonable, and to this end has created a suite of modest upgrades.

The most significant is the Stage 1 ECU remap (£600), which delivers a 14bhp boost with more mid-range meat. When combined with Litchfield's Milltek-made performance exhaust system (£866), there's a 25bhp total gain over the standard power output. Interestingly, Litchfield's dyno measured the unmodified machine at 178bhp, some ten per cent less than Subaru's claimed 197bhp…

Litchfield can also beef up the BRZ's stance a little with a set of Eibach springs (£245) that bring a 30mm drop in ride height. Together with a fast-road geometry set-up, lightweight 18in 'Nurburg' wheels (£1056) and a set of 225/40 Michelin Pilot Super Sports (versus standard 215/45 R17s) it looks tougher and has a sharper, more controlled feel. The ride is a little busier, but still suited to everyday use.



Above: upgrades push BRZ past 200bhp. Below: wider and lower-profile Michelins sharpen the ride



The result is a BRZ – or GT86, as all the parts are interchangeable – that feels and sounds keener, with an improved response through the mid-range and top-end. Despite fears the Michelins' grip would spoil the fun, the car is even more enjoyable because the tyres have greater progression and are happier working harder. And the car still slides.

It's encouraging stuff, and proves there's potential to be unleashed. We can't wait to see what Litchfield does with the car next. **Richard Meaden**

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ Upgrades inject urgency and character
– Lifted into tougher class of rivals



MERCEDES SLK250 CDI

» DIESEL SPORTS CAR
» 0-62MPH IN 6.7SEC
» 56.5MPG COMBINED

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2143cc, turbodiesel
CO2 132g/km **Power** 201bhp @ 4200rpm
Torque 368lb ft @ 1600rpm **0-62mph** 6.7sec (claimed) **Top speed** 151mph (claimed)
Price £32,255 **On sale** Now

Meet the first diesel sports car. There have been oil-burning convertibles before, of course, but as a proper rear-drive two-seater, this is the first derv drop-top to have tickled our interest. With the rumoured BMW Z4 diesel yet to surface, has Mercedes scored an enviable first?

No. That's the impression as you turn the key and its 201bhp C-class-sourced engine rattles into life. Sports cars simply shouldn't sound like this. Once on the move, there's little to change your mind. The standard seven-speed automatic gearbox is well suited to the engine, but you'll need to be in Sport or Manual mode if you want snappy responses to throttle inputs. Meaty low-down torque makes it relatively easy to overwhelm the rear tyres, especially if the roads are greasy, but it's not behaviour that feels natural. The SLK is a capable handler but enthusiastic driving is neither fun nor particularly rewarding.

The AMG Sport version we drove costs an extra £4000 and gains leather, a body kit and 10mm lower suspension. Its ride is rather firm, affecting the refinement of what is likely to be a company car cruiser. At the end of the day, this isn't a car for enthusiasts – it's a chance to pose while enjoying tax band E and claimed 56.5mpg running costs. And to its credit, the CDI is also over two grand cheaper than its petrol 250 equivalent. **Stephen Dobie**

evo RATING ★★½☆☆

+ An economical sports car!
– Too much 'eco', not enough 'sport'

 Pictures: Chris Wallbank Photography / Mercedes



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JAGUAR XJ 3.0 S/C V6

» SAME SUPERCHARGED ENGINE AS F-TYPE » 335BHP » 0-62 IN 5.9SEC

SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 2995cc, supercharged
CO2 224g/km **Power** 335bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 332lb ft @ 3500-5000rpm
0-62mph 5.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Price** £75,815 **On sale** Now

The new 3-litre supercharged V6 petrol engine in this XJ is big news for Jaguar's future. Partly because it's the perfect unit for sales in China and Russia, but more importantly because it's the engine that will be dropped into the new F-type.

The V6 has been developed from Jag's 5-litre V8, and replaces the naturally aspirated version of the 5.0 in the XJ engine line-up, but it's lost 45bhp as well as two cylinders, bringing its output down to 335bhp (though a 375bhp variant will be available in the F-type). As you'd expect, that means a drop in performance, with the official 0-62mph time shifting to 5.9sec from 5.7.

In performance-car circles that might be cause for outrage, but in the relaxing environment of the XJ's cabin you'll barely notice either of those missing tenths, especially when you consider that Jaguar has just replaced the six-speed automatic gearbox from the old XJ with an even quicker and smoother-shifting eight-speed across all its engines.

And the V6 does a great impression of a V8. There's 332lb ft of torque from 3500rpm as opposed to 380lb ft with the V8, but the V6 feels just as flexible. A progressive, consistent surge of power is waiting whenever you want it and there's a strong, forceful note from the exhaust. The XJ is strong on fuel economy too, with the addition of a stop-start system helping to boost economy from 24mpg to a claimed 30mpg.

Jaguar's engineers have also had a go at tweaking the suspension, with mixed results: we've said in the past that the XJ was a little firm for a luxury car, but that its impressive dynamic ability was a fair trade-off. In that sense, little has changed. It still handles incredibly well for a big limo, but niggly lumps and bumps can still be felt in the cabin.

DAB radio is now thrown in across the range, and there's a new 20-speaker Meridian stereo, which is standard on the top-end Portfolio and Supersport models and an option on the others.

But the most exciting thing about driving the 3-litre supercharged XJ is that it gives us a taste of how the F-type is shaping up. With a tuned exhaust note and this responsive, flexible engine under the bonnet, the F is set to be something very special indeed. **Luke Madden**

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ Great engine is good news for F-type
− Ride still too jittery to be luxurious







Above: 3-litre V6 will appear in next year's F-type. Below: ten different colours of leather are available



SEAT Mii SPORT

» SPORTS SUSPENSION
» SUB-£10,000 PRICE
» 60MPG CLAIMED



SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 3-cyl, 999cc **CO2** 108g/km **Power** 74bhp @ 6200rpm **Torque** 70lb ft @ 3000rpm **0-62mph** 13.2sec (claimed) **Top speed** 106mph (claimed) **Price** £9980 **On sale** Now

We're big fans of the little Up/Mii/Citigo family. Bounding down country lanes while merrily wringing the neck of a rasping three-cylinder engine is a joyful experience. It somehow makes you feel irreverently youthful. Until the Up GT arrives, the most eager variant looks like being this Sport-spec Mii, which gives you a manual gearbox mated to the more powerful 74bhp engine, 0-62mph in 13.2sec, 15in wheels and (most intriguingly) sports suspension.

The suspension kit lowers the car by 15mm while also stiffening the springs and dampers. Given that it feels like there's travel to spare underneath the arches of the standard car, this can only be a good thing. As soon as you pitch this Mii into a bend, you feel the added directness of the Sport set-up; push harder and the springs seem to become softer the deeper you reach into their travel (it's not quite like driving on crème brûlée, but you get the idea). Nevertheless, it doesn't reduce the grin factor.

Understeer is still the ultimately prevailing balance, but you can get the Mii to move its hips and it clings on impressively, giving you grip to work with and never feeling like it's simply going to wash out nastily.

Don't think the Mii has suddenly morphed into some sort of Clio Cup rival, but as an entertaining way of getting a startlingly large mpg score (a claimed 60.1 combined), it's a fun little car. **Henry Catchpole**

evo RATING ★★★★☆

+ Playful ride, great fuel economy
− Not exactly speedy

 Pictures: Jaguar & Dean Smith

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

It's mine and I'll wash it how I like

Imagine my delight when, after buying my first-ever copy of **evo**, I discovered a picture of myself (**evo**mail 173). What a welcome! But to read Tom Waugh's missive berating my car cleaning technique, well...

Away from home, where car cleaning facilities fall short of my own shoddy standards, never mind Mr Waugh's, what am I supposed to do? Hopefully he'll be relieved to hear that the interior survived and overall damage to the 550 Barchetta Pininfarina (not 575 as suggested) was remarkably light.

'I MERRILY BLASTED AWAY AT THE SUSPENSION, GEARBOX AND UNDERSIDE'

I'm relieved Tom wasn't on hand when I once stopped to pressure-wash another arguably more special vehicle. Popping up both clamshells, I merrily blasted away at the suspension, gearbox and underside with scant regard for the carbon panels.

I know, hanging's too good for some of us.

Peter Bullard, Hertfordshire



Left: Peter Bullard turns the hose on his 550 Barchetta, as captured by Tom Waugh

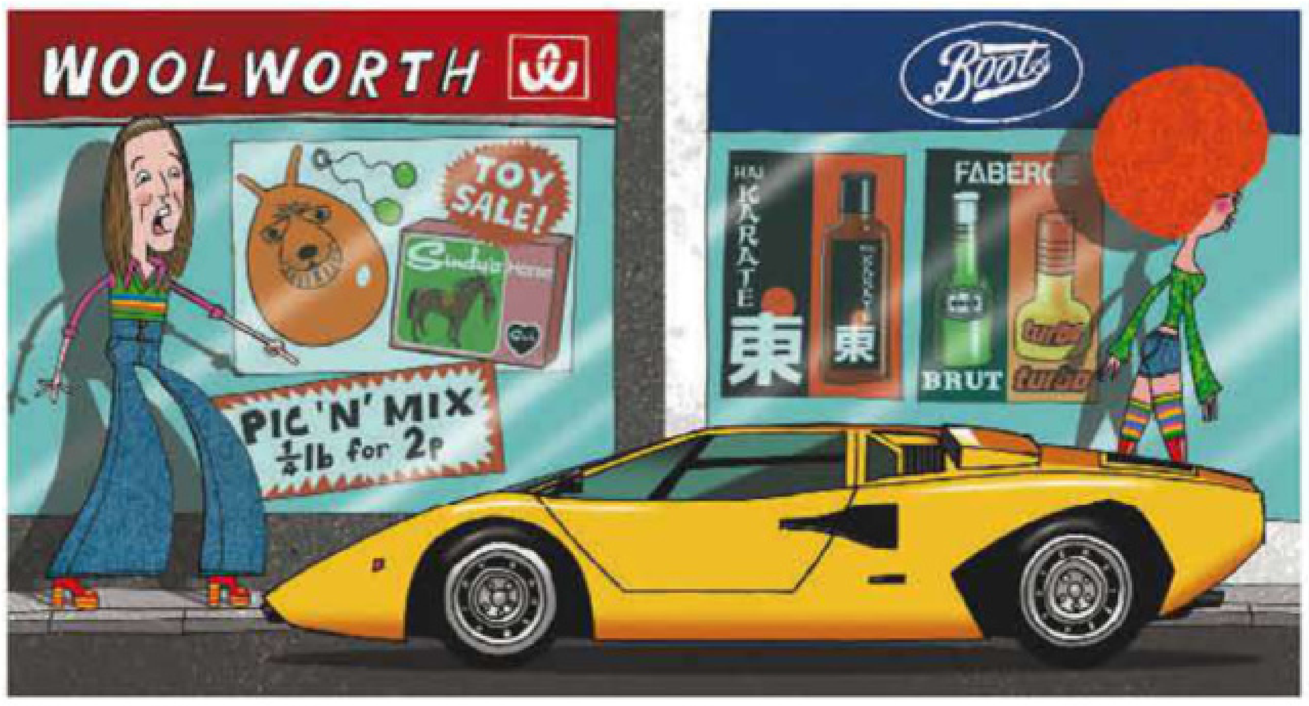
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Left: Harry's column about how and why reactions to cars have changed provoked a deluge of responses

That'll learn 'em

Fear not, Harry! Anyone can be seduced by the power of branding if they have no experience of the product itself, especially kids. You can't expect them to care about the difference between front- and rear-wheel drive, or about weight, steering feel and control, when the closest they've come to actually driving a car is on a PlayStation. Once they've had the chance to drive a few different cars with different layouts, driven wheels, weights, noise and quality, they will see beyond the brand projection and start choosing cars in the same way we do.

Peter Bett, Glasgow

Youth awareness

I'm 17, subscribe to **evo**, and have an interest in F1 and other forms of motorsport, including Audi's Le Mans efforts. Maybe I'm an exception within my age group, but Ferrari's bulging back catalogue of iconic road cars, particularly the 250 GTO, California and F40, do mean something to me. So don't write off youths just yet, Harry – there's still passion in some of us!

Henry Richardson

Generation game

Harry Metcalfe's column in **evo** 174 provoked many thoughts, mainly that our children's likely driving experience will be very different to ours (assuming there's some fuel left for them!).

Roads are becoming increasingly restricted: I recently drove a local country B-road that in the '70s was the scene of many an enjoyable blat, but it's now mainly 40mph. Warwickshire, meanwhile, is turning into a giant 50mph zone.

And if they've spent their teenage years on video games, will tomorrow's drivers expect their car to have controls with any sort of feedback? Judging by my recent experience of new models, manufacturers are aiming to minimise any direct interaction, with wooden steering and over-servoed brakes. Then there are more and more 'driver aids' that dilute the driving experience and, I believe, make drivers less aware and hence less safe. Perhaps the brand you drive really will be more important...

David Oldridge

Accept no substitute

In response to Barry Forshaw's letter supporting 'fake' Ferraris (**evo** 173), I have to come out and take Richard Porter's side for three reasons.

Firstly, making a Toyota MR2 look like a Ferrari is the grown-up equivalent of putting bonnet scoops and 'go-faster stripes' on a 1-litre Corsa. It's like putting on boxing gloves, bobbing about and waving your fists around, only to cower down and cry the first time someone challenges you to a fight.

Secondly, if you can't afford a real Ferrari and its running costs, get over it! And finally, there is no shame whatsoever in being seen in a nice clean MR2. They look good, they're fun to drive and are plenty quick enough for today's roads.

We all have dreams of owning a supercar, but don't order lemonade and pretend it's champagne. Replicas are a waste of space and make the driver look a prat.

Edward Winchester

Sales pitch

So then, letter of the month in **evo** 173 explains what a great car the Lotus 340R is. Lo and behold, a couple of weeks later a certain **evo** founder puts his on sale (lightly publicised on Twitter). Fair play, Harry!

If you could print an article about how the car you really need for winter is a Subaru Legacy Tourer (preferably one that's earned its keep), I'd be a happy camper.

Dean Cantelo

Below: Simon George's immortal Murciélago is earning its fair share of admirers, including reader Jo Chan



Trigger's Lambo

My enjoyment of **evo** is heightened by the inclusion of a true spiritual successor to David Yu's grenading 'Godzilla' in your Fast Fleet, namely Simon George's Murciélago.

I love Simon's endless enthusiasm (and seemingly bottomless wallet) that keeps his old stager heading towards one million miles on track. It reminds me of *Only Fools and Horses*,



evo Mail

Trigger and his faithful broom!

Thank you, Mr George. Your optimism will forever be a shining example to **evo**'s readers and our love for the internal combustion engine!

Jo Chan

Extra time

In **evo** 173, a diesel Audi A6 Avant joined your long-term fleet. A £60K diesel A6 with £12K of extras! That puts it into M3 and RS5 territory. Isn't it time for the motoring press to start insisting that test cars stop being delivered with every conceivable opional extra loaded onto them? They're free to you but unrealistic to most of us.

David Robertson, Aberdeen

Consumer advice

Thank you very much for telling us about the Ford Fiesta Zetec-S (Buying Guide, **evo** 171). We would never have guessed it was so good. Coincidentally, we were looking for an entertaining but affordable hatch at the time, and, with previous knowledge of Minis, 106s, Clios and the like, we'd almost certainly have gone for one of those. Instead, we bought the Ford, and will never look back. Top marks!

David Harrold

Take the high road

I always enjoy reading **evo**'s Trips & Travel section to see where to go for a driving holiday next summer. I was originally thinking it might be nice to head to the Alps? From home, it's 500 miles to Dover, undoubtedly passing through 342 speed cameras, then another 500 miles to Davos sat behind endless lines of slow, trundling Dutch caravans.

It's probably better for me to point northwards and discover a driving paradise like no other – the Scottish Highlands. Light traffic, great visibility and scenery created by God when he was in a very good mood. The roads around that neck of the woods are amazing, but more importantly, you can actually enjoy the thrill because you're pretty much on your own. There's no sitting behind crawling traffic, and definitely no being stopped by the *gendarmerie* every ten miles!

During some glorious May sunshine, I took my 911 Carrera S along the A835 between Garve and Ullapool. It was one of those perfect moments in the right car, in the right place, at the right time. You poor lost southern souls! Tell you what – why don't you all head off to Switzerland and leave Europe's best driving roads to us provincial petrolheads.

Scott Sills, Edinburgh

F40 faults

evo 173, along with a number of Ferrari F40 owners I've spoken to, states that the car has a carbon-composite tub. This is a load of rubbish. Only the interior cladding is carbon-composite. The only carbon in the chassis' steel tubing is the circa 1.6 per cent content in the steel. Ferrari has enough of an aura already – you don't need to magnify it with wrong information.

As a side note, the F40's dizzy prices indicate how much people value a light, 'analogue' turbocharged car that handles, but I do question its status compared to other great supercars. What you get is a basic chassis with little/no triangulation, crude on/off turbo boost (compared with the 959's clever system) and a 308 engine with forged pistons. I hope nobody loses their life savings just to live their childhood dream, because the price tag of the F40 bears no relationship with the product.

Chris Catto, Kent



Above: F40's quirks don't impress Chris Catto

Thai fighter

Whilst on holiday in Thailand recently, I discovered the real meaning of **evo**'s tagline 'The Thrill of Driving' – and all without there being a single fire-breathing supercar in sight.

Running on 91-octane fuel and producing little more than 50bhp, our hired Suzuki SJ jeep provided real entertainment on the roads and tracks of Koh Samui. With skinny tyres and little weight over the rear wheels due to its pickup-style body, the limits of grip could be found on the dusty roads at speeds that didn't endanger your licence or other people.

It just goes to show that while we all love to read about Ferraris, Lamborghinis and the like in the pages of **evo**, fun and thrills on the roads don't need to be the sole preserve of those with the deepest pockets. In the right place and with the right car, 'The Thrill of Driving' is attainable by anyone.

Jon Kenwell, Cheshire

FROM THE FORUMS: D.I.Y. INCOMPETENCE



Above: when attempting DIY car repairs, even the most experienced can make mistakes

nefarious_: Sometimes I think I shouldn't be let loose on a Meccano set, let alone a proper car. I've just spent most of the afternoon trying to get the pistons back into my freshly rebuilt calipers. There was lots of colourful language and threats of phyisical violence, but they still wouldn't go in. I even snapped a G-clamp in the process of trying to get them back in their bores. And then I realised I was trying to put them in backwards. Feel free to point and laugh...

Swervin_Mervin: I haven't *ever* tried to undo sliding caliper bolts by turning the bolt clockwise. Oh no. Definitely not to the extent of getting an impact driver on the case and stripping the hex bolt head.

Markcoopers: It happens mate. I spent all day putting six-point harnesses in my car to realise I had bolted the lap buckle strap in upside down... and so had to wrestle the seats out again. Mind you, as a member of an owners' club we do see all sorts of worrying technical tips. One chap couldn't fit suspension bushes by hand, so had filed his down to push them in.

integrale_evo: I spent several hours last Friday trying to free up what I thought was a stuck handbrake mech on the Golf as the brake was sticking. Had it off the car, wound the piston in, and used the handbrake to push it out again dozens of times, and after that it was moving as freely as ever. Put it back on the car, bled the brakes, pressed the pedal a few times and it wedged solid again. Repeat the above. Swear. Take it off again, then realise one of the sliders is wedged absolutely rock solid.

JezH: Forgot to put the sump plug back in doing an oil change! My dad, whose garage I was using at the time, couldn't look me in the eye without wetting himself laughing for about a week after.

exiges: I find the best time to start jobs like this is about 3:00 on a Sunday afternoon, just before all the shops that sell the bits you're sure you don't need close.

caneswell: There are many jobs that are only solvable with a hammer and a blow torch. I think four Halfords visits in one afternoon was my record. I thought 'I'm a chartered engineer, this should be easy'... and by 10pm on Sunday I'm desperately trying to get it all back together so I can get to work.

JORG GRAY JG

THREAD OF THE MONTH WINS A JORG GRAY CHRONOGRAPH



The originator of the best **evo** forum thread wins a fabulous Jorg Gray chronograph. Since gaining international attention after the Jorg Gray 6500 Chronograph was identified as the watch worn by President Barack Obama, Jorg Gray has quickly become one of the world's most sought-after brands and is found in fine jewellery stores throughout the UK. For more information, visit www.jorggray.co.uk



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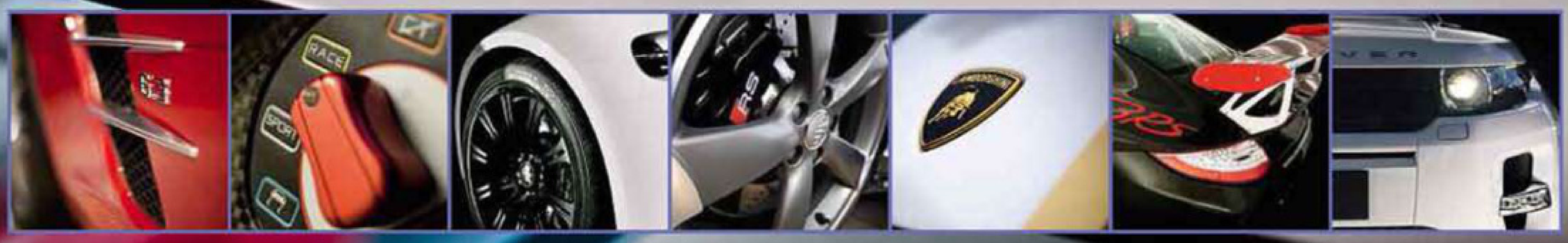
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997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP
997 CARRERA » 348 BHP
997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
997 GT3 3.6 » 436 BHP
996 3.6 » 344 BHP
BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+ BHP
CAYMAN S » 342 BHP
CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 » 578+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 » 600+ BHP
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C63 AMG » 530+ BHP & DE-LIMIT
SL63 AMG » 560+ BHP & DE-LIMIT
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CL600 BI-TURBO » 580+ BHP
S500 2008 » 411+ BHP
SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP & DELIMIT
SLK 350 » 328 BHP
200K » 205+BHP
C220 CDI (W204) » 210 BHP
280 /300 CDI V6 » 257 BHP
320 CDI V6 » 274 BHP
350 CDI V6 » 312 BHP
420 /450 CDI V8 » 358 BHP
63AMG 5.5V8 TURBO » 600+ BHP & DE-LIMIT

BMW:

M5 V10 » 548+ BHP 205 MPH
X5M / X6M » 618 BHP & DE-LIMIT
M3 E90/92 » 445+ BHP & DE-LIMIT
M3 E46 » 370 BHP & DE-LIMIT
1M » 400+BHP & DE-LIMIT
F10 M5 » PLEASE CALL
F10 535I » 370+ BHP
F10 DIESEL MODELS » PLEASE CALL
335I/135I/ X6 » 378+ BHP & DE-LIMIT
123D » 252 BHP
330D E90 » 296+ BHP
325D E90 » 285 BHP
320D E90 » 209 BHP
330D E46 » 260+ BHP
730D » 290+ BHP
X5 4.0D / 740D » 358 BHP
X5 3.0D » 278 BHP
X6 50I » 500+BHP
535D/335D » 344 BHP
X5 SD » 344 BHP

EXOTIC & MISC:

FERRARI CALIFORNIA » 487 BHP
FERRARI 599 » 660+ BHP
FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP
GALLARDO » 546 BHP
LP560 » 608+ BHP
LP640 » 707 BHP
MURCIELAGO LP670SV » 715 BHP
MASERATI GRANTURISMO/QPORT » 438 BHP
GRANTURISMO S / MC » 479+ BHP
AUDI RS6 V10 » 700+BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI R8 V10 » 602+BHP
AUDI B7 RS4/ R8 » 439 BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI RS5 » 475 BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI RS3/ TTRS » 405 BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI Q7 /A8 4.2 TDI » 387 BHP
AUDI (ALL MODELS) 3.0TDI » 298 BHP
AUDI S3 / GOLF R » 317 + BHP
RANGE ROVER 3.6 TDV8 » 338 BHP
R ROVER SPORT 3.0D INC2012 » 305 BHP
R ROVER SPORT 2.7D » 240 BHP
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The BEST of BRITISH

It's not long since the British motor industry seemed destined to do little more than make oddball specials – and stamp out identikit hatchbacks from foreign-owned factories. But thanks in no small part to the non-British companies that bought some of our domestic brands, and then invested billions of pounds in them, Great Britain's luxury car industry is booming.

This is **evo**'s celebration of Britain's next generation, from the tech-laden new Range Rover that is set to combine Bentley-rivalling performance with the ability to drive straight across a desert, to the stunning new Jaguar F-type and our exclusive preview of some of the variants it will spawn. And that's not all – **evo** has been the first to drive the new Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster.

It's enough to bring a patriotic lump to your throat, isn't it?



FEATURING

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» DRIVING THE V12 VANTAGE ROADSTER
PAGE 72

TEAM GB:
NEW RANGE ROVER

DUNE BUSTING

RIVER CROSSING





RANGE ROVER REDEFINED

Can the new version of Britain's hallmark SUV keep up in the performance stakes and still be fit for the Queen? ***Harry Metcalfe*** *investigates*

Like it or loathe it, there's an SUV sales explosion sweeping across the globe. SUVs are fast becoming the luxury vehicle of choice in many regions and total sales are continuing to rise – Land Rover is anticipating a 40 per cent increase in global SUV sales by 2020.

So it's no surprise to discover that Land Rover has invested heavily in its Range Rover flagship, which first defined the SUV sector when the original Rangie arrived over 40 years ago. This fourth-generation version (internally known as L405) represents a new direction for this iconic luxury off-roader. It's 100 per cent new (the only interchangeable parts with the previous model being the wheel nuts), extensive use of aluminium has resulted in big weight savings over the old model (420kg in the case of the V6 diesel) and, unlike any previous Range Rover, this one will spawn several variants using modified versions of the platform, the first being next year's all-new Range Rover Sport.

So what can we expect?

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'LAND ROVER HAS CLICKED THE LUXURY METER UP SEVERAL NOTCHES'

Above: 8in touch screen dramatically reduces button clutter on the centre console; electric power steering promises to introduce some much-needed steering feel. Right: ground clearance tops 300mm, with 597mm of wheel articulation

Cabin

» There's no doubt that Land Rover has clicked the luxury meter up several notches on the new Range Rover. Passengers in the rear now have 118mm of extra legroom thanks to the stretched wheelbase, as well as reclining seats to lounge in. There's even the option of two fully adjustable 'executive' seats for the rear compartment of premium models, to attain the full Maybach experience.

Up front, driver and passenger can be blessed with (optional) 20-way adjustable seats with five massage modes. There's a revised dash layout that halves the button count by utilising an 8in touch screen for various functions that used to have their own switches, while the instruments feature new 3D-like graphics, combining regular readouts with Terrain Response settings and navigation instructions.

Two options Land Rover expects to be popular are the new full-size, sliding panoramic glass roof and the Meridian 1700W 'Signature Reference' sound system, which comes with no less than 29 speakers sprinkled throughout the cabin.

Engine

» Three engines will be available at launch, the range starting with a 3-litre V6 diesel producing 254bhp and 443lb ft of torque and delivering the performance of the outgoing 4.4-litre V8 diesel thanks to the weight loss. It's claimed that this TDV6 model can sprint to 60mph in 7.4sec, top out at 130mph, and achieve a relatively eco-friendly 196g/km of CO2 emissions and 37.7mpg combined.

Next up is the 334bhp, 517lb ft, 4.4-litre TDV8 model, running an updated version of the highly regarded V8 diesel used in the outgoing Range Rover but with power boosted by nine per cent thanks to a second intercooler and revised engine management settings. Land Rover reckons it can manage 0-60mph in 6.5sec, a top speed of 135mph, 229g/km and 32.5mpg combined.

Above these sits the V8 Supercharged,







with the same 5-litre petrol engine used in the current Range Rover with 503bhp and 461lb ft, resulting in a less impressive 322g/km and 20.5mpg combined.

There are also plans to unleash a V6 diesel hybrid version next year, with a target CO2 figure of 165g/km and capable of 45mpg combined – remarkable for such a large off-roader.

Off-road

» It's on the muddy stuff where Land Rover has gone to extreme lengths to better the existing car, which was already the best in its class off-road. Key features include a wading depth of 900mm – twice that of a Defender and over 200mm clear of any of the Rangie's rivals. Engineers had considered making it 950mm but found the car starts to float at that depth.

Land Rover tests wading depth by stopping in water, turning off the engine, opening the doors and walking away, then returning half an hour later to restart the engine. The new car passes this at 900mm with ease thanks to a fully waterproofed wiring loom, although we're told the carpets can get a bit smelly…

Wheel travel has been increased to 260mm at the front and 310mm at the rear – well over the 200mm of a BMW X5 – while ground clearance is now a remarkable 303mm. Because of the 42mm wheelbase increase, the new car features a flat-floor arrangement that enables it to 'surf' over obstacles more easily, as well as improving on-road airflow under the car.

Land Rover has also updated its Terrain Response system, so instead of selecting a setting manually, there's an automatic function that constantly monitors the type of terrain being driven over and adjusts the chassis to suit the conditions.

Chassis

» The benchmarks for L405's on-road performance were the Bentley Flying Spur, Mercedes S-class and Rolls-Royce Ghost, and Land Rover reckons the new Range Rover bests them all in terms of

Above: new Range Rover can sit in water 3ft deep and still be fired up and driven out half an hour afterwards. Left: front suspension requires steel cloaking (top of picture) to protect the airbags from possible puncture

handling and refinement – a bold claim, but a huge achievement if true.

Electric power steering (complete with automatic parallel parking) is new. Land Rover says this has led to markedly better steering feel – not hard to achieve, as steering feel on the previous model was almost non-existent.

The suspension has been heavily revised, with a new aluminium hollow-cast subframe at the rear featuring an aluminium multi-link and air suspension arrangement, while at the front there's another aluminium subframe with the first front double-wishbone set-up on a Range Rover, the bottom wishbone being made of steel for durability. Also new is the Dynamic Response system, which replaces conventional anti-roll bars with an updated two-channel version of the computer-controlled anti-roll system first introduced on the Range Rover Sport. This allows front and rear roll to be controlled independently, although the system won't be available on the basic TDV6 model.

Alongside the 42mm stretching of the wheelbase, both the front and rear track have been increased by 60mm in order to dramatically improve on-road manners, while thinner sidewalls on the front suspension's airbags make for even better absorption of minor road imperfections.

Drivetrain

» All versions feature an eight-speed ZF torque-converter automatic gearbox combined with a two-speed transfer 'box. Stop-start is only available on the V6 diesel to begin with, while an electronically lockable rear diff is available on the TDV8 and V8 Supercharged versions.

Body

» The aluminium monocoque on the new Range Rover marks another world first for an SUV. Land Rover has invested over £1billion in a state-of-the-art production facility at Solihull, where the car is to be built. Using up to 75 per cent recycled aluminium (28,690 drinks cans are used in the making of one Range Rover body), the individual panels are riveted together to form a monocoque that is 180kg (39 per cent) lighter than the steel body used in the outgoing Rangie. The only body components not made of aluminium are the steel door hinges and the composite upper tailgate.

With 33,000 Range Rovers expected to be sold per year and an annual build capacity at the new facility of 100,000 units, there are plenty of resources there for the future variants, even after the new Range Rover Sport goes into production in 2013.

Personalisation

» With the introduction of the new Range Rover comes a new era of personalisation. Customers will be able to choose a separate colour for the 'flying' roof, as well as pick from a range of 37 exterior hues, 17 interior colours (with three grades of leather), eight wheel designs (in 19, 20, 21 and 22in sizes) and three wood veneers.

Thanks to a new handover facility at Solihull, Land Rover will be able to offer factory collection, and for truly bespoke versions there will also be opportunities for consultation with designers. LR design director Gerry McGovern reckons that if customers really go to town on the personalisation, then a Range Rover Autobiography costing as much as £200,000 is a possibility.



Above right: your old Coke cans could be used to make Range Rover body panels at the Solihull plant. Right: longer wheelbase and wider track will aid on-road stability; a high-speed pack on the V8 Supercharged model will increase top speed to 155mph

'LAND ROVER HAS CLEARLY GONE TO GREAT LENGTHS TO IMPROVE THE RANGE







Summary

» The new Range Rover undoubtedly represents a significant improvement on today's version, but then it needs to, because there are some serious competitors currently under development (such as the Bentley EXP9F).

Whilst the L405 is still recognisably a Range Rover, it's the first that actually looks like it's seen a wind tunnel. All previous Range Rovers have had bluff exteriors that bully the air into submission, rather than working with it as the new car seems to do with its 0.34 drag coefficient (compared with the existing car's Cd 0.37). This quest for slipperiness has resulted in a lower roofline (especially at the rear), which, along with the raked rear screen, has shrunk the boot area – no real issue as the previous car's boot was so big, you had to climb in to reach the far corners. But there's no hiding the fact that this car is *big* – the existing one is the widest regular car on sale in the UK and this new model adds 60mm to its beam. Add in the longer doors, and I suspect negotiating multi-storey car parks could become as tricky as crossing the Sahara…

However, the chassis improvements sound revolutionary, and saving 420kg over the outgoing model is tremendous (the TDV6's kerb weight of 2160kg is, remarkably, within a few kilos of the 1995 Classic Vogue SE, the last of the mk1s). Land Rover has also clearly gone to great lengths to further improve off-road ability while making strides with on-road behaviour, but we won't know for sure how good the car is until we get to drive it in November.

Prices start at £71,295 for a base TDV6 and will rise to just under £100K for a V8 Supercharged Autobiography. That sounds expensive, but that could represent a bargain given the cars the Range Rover is designed to compete with.

Our only reservation is whether the existing model's regal quality has been retained, but Land Rover let slip that the car has already been tried by the Royal Household and the reaction was 'very positive'. So expect to see one carrying corgis outside Waitrose in Windsor quite soon…

ROVER'S OFF-ROAD ABILITY WHILE MAKING STRIDES WITH ON-ROAD BEHAVIOUR'

FUTURE PERFECT

Jaguar has taken a back seat to Land Rover since the two marques were bought by Tata, but the new F-type is the centrepiece of its fightback. ***Mike Duff*** *assesses the car tasked with rejuvenating a British automotive icon*

The waiting is almost over. The production version of the F-type will be front and centre on Jaguar's stand at the Paris motor show in late September. And the roadster will be arriving at dealerships next April. As it was only a year ago that we first saw the C-X16 concept that previewed this new model, that's an impressively rapid turnaround.

It's happened because Jaguar is a brand in urgent need of a 'halo model'. Since Tata took control four years ago, it's sister brand Land Rover that's been enjoying serious success, selling numbers that have turned Jaguar into a junior partner. Last year, the world bought 230,000 Land Rovers but only 50,000 Jags. And although that's not a situation the F-type is going to change by itself – Jaguar is adamant it's not intended to be a volume model – it will spearhead a new direction for the company, and will be charged with attracting younger buyers and proving that Jaguar can produce an uncompromising sports car. Plus, later in the model cycle, it will spawn some serious ultra-performance variants.

Well before getting behind the wheel, there are already plenty of reasons to be properly excited about the F-type. Jaguar Land Rover has thrown major resources at it, developing a new all-alloy supercharged V6 primarily to power this car (see sidebar) and creating a lightweight aluminium body that should ensure

Below: roadster version of the F-type will hit the showrooms next April, followed by the coupe a year later

Storemags.com

 Renderings: Jan Kamenistiak

an impressive power-to-weight ratio. Although official performance figures hadn't been released as we went to press, even the most basic 335bhp version should be able to cover the 0-62mph benchmark in around 5sec and go on to a top speed in the region of 180mph.

Jaguar insiders tell us that the F-type has also been engineered from first principles as a pure sports car, with the development programme dedicated to making it as low and light as possible. Not only is the lightweight V6 engine mounted far enough back in the chassis to render it effectively 'front mid-engined', but as much mass as possible has been moved into the best locations to help lower the car's centre of gravity. For example, F-type drivers needing to top up their washer fluid will have to open the boot to do so, as the reservoir has been moved away from the front of the car to enable the bonnet line to be made as low as possible.

The bonnet itself is effectively a clamshell, and gets a pyrotechnic deployment system like that of the XK as this enables it to satisfy the latest pedestrian impact standards while shaving more millimetres from the height of the front of the car. Jaguar even experimented with a transaxle gearbox to move more mass backwards, although this won't make production.

Instead the F-type will use an eight-speed torque-converter automatic as standard, with the as-yet unconfirmed possibility of either a manual or an ultra-quick twin-clutch transmission being offered later. The design team has worked hard to allow the wheels to be pushed right to the corners of the car's footprint and even the most basic versions will have the widest track the bodywork can allow.

Ever since we first saw the C-X16 concept (**evo** 162), Jaguar has promised a production F-type that will stick as closely as possible to its styling, both inside and out. Jaguar's design boss Ian Callum even





'THE F-TYPE HAS BEEN ENGINEERED AS A PURE SPORTS CAR AND TO BE AS LOW AND LIGHT AS POSSIBLE'

Engine

We've already tried the F-type's new supercharged 3-litre V6 engine, albeit fitted to the considerably porkier XJ (see Driven section). It's certainly not short of urge, but it should really come alive in the lighter F-type.

The all-alloy V6 has a cylinder block strengthened with cross-bolted main bearing caps and features full variable timing. On top of that, direct injection squirts fuel into the cylinders at pressures

'THE BRAWNIER MOTOR'S 125BHP/LITRE OUTPUT IS THE HIGHEST OF ANY JAGUAR'

of up to 2200psi – up to five times per combustion cycle – to create a more homogenous air-fuel mixture. The compression ratio is 10.5:1.

Intake air is delivered by a twin-rotor supercharger that sits in the 'V' of the cylinder banks. The 335bhp and 375bhp versions of the engine are mechanically identical, suggesting a relatively simple 'chip fix' for anyone wanting more power from the basic engine. The brawnier motor's 125bhp/litre specific output is the highest of any Jaguar road car to date.

assured us that the C-X16 was '95 per cent' of the production car. We'll know for sure once we see the final car at Paris – the images you're looking at here are digital renderings – but company insiders insist that the promise has been met, and that even the C-X16's funky interior design is going to be translated into production form pretty much unchanged. The biggest difference is the fact that the original concept was a coupe and the first production F-type to arrive will be a roadster; the tin-top version will follow about a year later as part of Jaguar's plan to manage the F-type's life with the gradual release of new models.

Which, of course, is where it gets really interesting. The F-type will be launched with two supercharged 3-litre V6 engines and a version of Jaguar's existing supercharged 5-litre V8. But company insiders have also indicated that Jaguar is going to bring out a series of higher-performance versions. We can take an 'R' variant as a given, Jaguar having launched one for all of its recent models with the exception of the unloved X-type. The 'R' will use the supercharged V8 engine, likely in its lesser 503bhp state of tune, but will still have the performance credentials to put it among the quickest road-going Jaguars ever made – likely having its top speed curtailed by the same 186mph limiter fitted to the XKR-S.



Right: bold interior will change little from C-X16 concept design (pictured). Below: F-type's wheels are positioned as close to its corners as possible

That neatly brings us to the car that we reckon – based on conversations with knowledgeable insiders – will complete the clan: the F-type RS. We acknowledge that this isn't an official part of the model plan at the moment, and if it does happen then it's likely to be held back for several years to act as a flagship for the entire range. But Jaguar bosses have already admitted that they see performance derivatives as vitally important to proving the company's sports car credentials, especially in developing markets. The XKR-S was developed by JLR's new 'Engineered To Order' (ETO) division, the unit forming the nucleus of an in-house skunkworks for the two brands (see panel). Given the basis of the F-type R, it's not hard to see how ETO might create another 'ultimate' variant.

'JAGUAR BOSSES HAVE ALREADY ADMITTED THAT PERFORMANCE

JLR'S SECRET SKUNKWORKS



ETO

JLR's 'Engineered To Order' division was launched earlier this year so quietly that few people outside the company are likely to be aware of its existence.

Working across both brands, ETO is the special operations team charged with broadening the range of personalisation options available to buyers and also creating limited-edition models. It's already given us the XKR-S and the Autobiography Ultimate version of the outgoing Range Rover, but it was also responsible for that 'Range Rover Evoque Special Edition with Victoria Beckham' that we'd rather forget...

'ETO WAS LAUNCHED SO QUIETLY THAT FEW PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF IT'

The official role of its designers and engineers is to 'work alongside product development teams on future products with a focus on offering additional luxury, performance and capability.' Not quite AMG or M division, but interesting nonetheless.



Consider the evidence: Jaguar admits the supercharged V8 engine can be tuned to produce even more than the 542bhp it makes in the XKR-S, the F-type's power-to-weight ratio is already set to be ultra-competitive, and a new range-topper will be required once the XKR-S retires. Add to that Jaguar's Nürburgring expertise and you'll see the attraction of a model with a chance of setting a glorious record time…

That's all in the future, of course. If this car is going to become one of the greats, the more basic versions of the F-type will have to prove themselves first. We're told to think of the F-type as a completely new direction for Jaguar, as a spiritual successor to the E-type and even the D-type rather than as a downsized XK. With prices set to start around the £60,000 mark and run past £80K, and possibly further still for an RS version, it'll have to be good if it's going to succeed.

But admit it, you already want one.



IS VITALLY IMPORTANT TO PROVING ITS SPORTS CAR CREDENTIALS'



BEST OF BRITISH

Ariel

Ambitious plans for 2013 include Atom Cup race series and a Honda-engined motorbike. Brit ambition at its best.

Bentley

Bentley insiders tell us that they are unconcerned by negative comments regarding the styling of the EXP9F concept. Why? Because 1000 pre-orders have been taken, making it an immediate production sign-off. Yours to buy in 2015. Hybrid also planned.

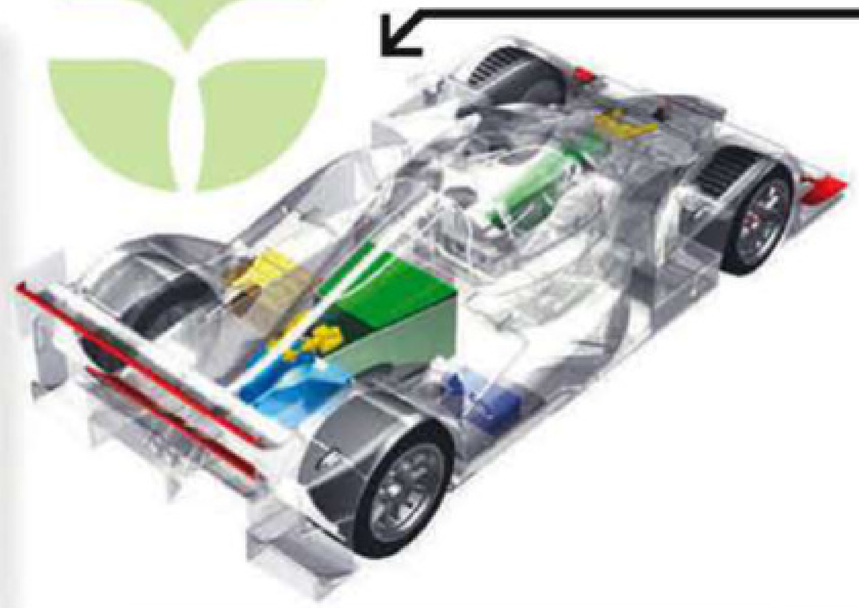


Chevron

Range now includes the B1 road car, the GR8 (a modern racer) and a 'new heritage' B16. Exciting stuff.

Drayson Racing Technologies

Drayson's LMP-style electric racer is now running (and running fast at that). Meanwhile, the Oxfordshire-based team's chief, Lord Paul Drayson, is part of the consortium promoting Formula E – the FIA's new zero-emission electric racing championship, which is due to start in 2014 and will feature the DRT machine.



Zagato

Zagato's not British, but the Z badges will appear on a new car from AC (made in Brooklands) and, we hear, a Roadster version of the Aston Martin V12 Zagato.



Yu, David

Surrey-based, Skyline-loving gearhead returns to the pages of **evo** soon, as he attempts to build an 850bhp GT-R...

Westfield

A third of Westfields go abroad, with a new dealer in India leading the charge in Asia. Basic kit costs just £2500.

TVR

If there's one thing Brit car enthusiasts are good at, it's not allowing a car to die. TVR is dead as a manufacturer, but skilled experts like Str8six and TVR Power keep the legends alive – and often better than new.

Silverstone

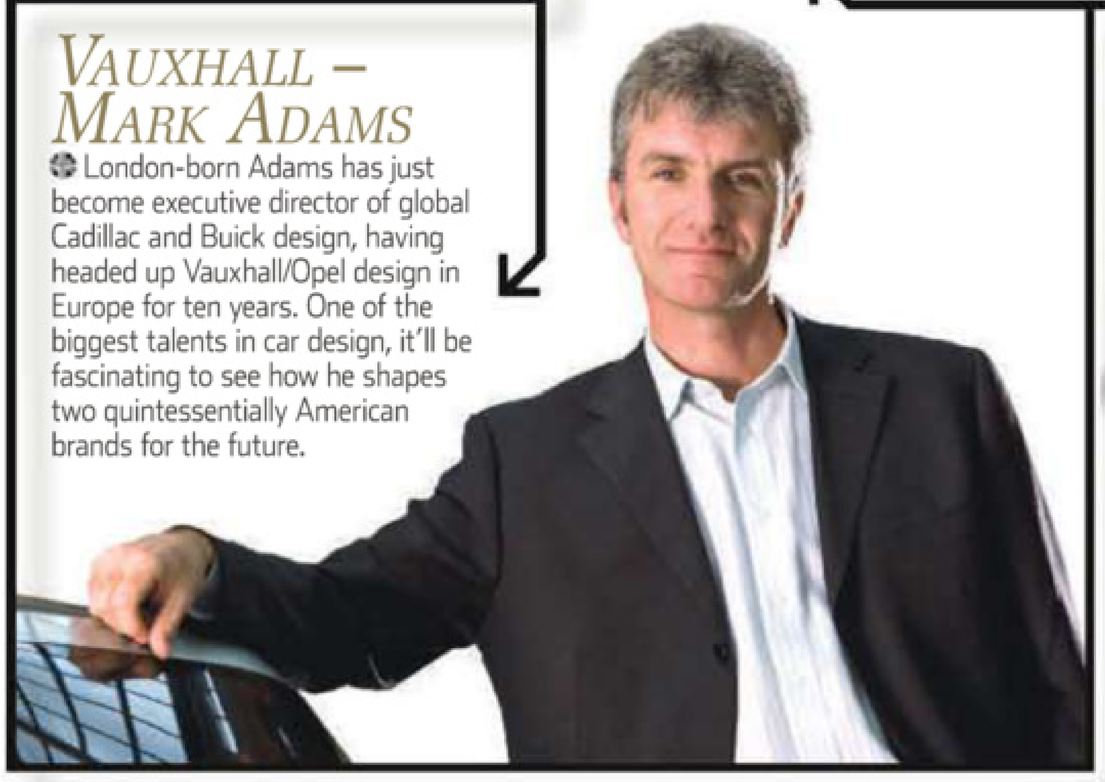
Plans for a technology park, education campus, motorsport museum and three hotels at the Northamptonshire track have just been approved. 8400 permanent jobs will be created.

Rolls-Royce

We hear that the Ghost range will be expanded with two new cars, one of which is a shorter-wheelbase coupe with 600bhp. Plans to call it the RR RS have yet to be confirmed...

Vauxhall – Mark Adams

London-born Adams has just become executive director of global Cadillac and Buick design, having headed up Vauxhall/Opel design in Europe for ten years. One of the biggest talents in car design, it'll be fascinating to see how he shapes two quintessentially American brands for the future.





P12 – McLaren

Latest from Woking is that the 'P12' hypercar is currently undergoing feasibility studies. We reckon the sooner it reveals the production version, the better – Ferrari's new Enzo won't be shown until next year, giving McLaren a useful marketing advantage over a key rival.

Frazer-Nash

UK-based R&D firm's range-extending tech is expected to appear in 2013... in a Bristol. Frazer-Nash bought the assets to the marque last year and has intriguing plans for it.

Ginetta

Two road cars, several successful race cars and championships, and the ambition and funding to take Ginetta to the next level – it's impossible to ignore entrepreneurial Yorkshire-bred boss Lawrence Tomlinson and his Leeds-based firm.



Halewood

Jaguar Land Rover's factory on Merseyside bucked the downward production trend with a recent switch to 24-hour manufacturing following the recruitment of 1000 new staff. 2013 could be its busiest year ever, with the revised Freelander entering production and the Evoque success story showing no sign of abating.

iStream & Gordon Murray



Late last year, and with little fanfare, Gordon Murray Designs entered a partnership with Japan's Toray Industries. The plan is to further develop Murray's innovative iStream manufacturing process and build a lightweight (846kg) two-seat electric sports car. We can't wait to drive it.

Jaguar, Aston and Range Rover are the stars, but there's a lot more to the British car industry. ***Nick Trott*** *reports on the other key players, and their future plans*





Overfinch

The great Range Rover 'enhancer' returns with a suitably bonkers 575bhp GTS-X (pictured). Evoques, Discos and Defenders also available.

Morgan

With two dealers appointed in China, Morgan is turning its attention to Brazil and India. evo's Henry Catchpole has volunteered to drive a 3 Wheeler through Mumbai. In rush hour.

Jann Mardenborough

If you've never heard of Jann, you will soon. The Cardiff-born 21-year-old won the gamer-to-racer GT Academy in 2011 and now drives a Nismo GT-R in British GT races. Full feature next month.

Lotus

Exige V6 goes even more hardcore with Track Day (£63K) and Competition (£75K) versions. Both should be brilliant. New Evora derivatives are also planned, so it's fingers crossed for Hethel in 2013.





storemags.com

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

After three long years of waiting, the Roadster version of the Aston Martin V12 Vantage has finally arrived. To find out whether the lack of a fixed roof hinders its performance, ***Jethro Bovingdon*** *makes a beeline for North Wales and the* ***evo*** *Triangle*

 Pictures: Matt Howell

TEAM GB: ASTON V12
VANTAGE ROADSTER



Aim the oblong chunk of glass at the round 'Engine Start' target on the centre console, push it into the small slot at its centre and through the spring-loading that tries to fire it back out like a missile. Now keep it there and wait. The little delay gives all your cynicism the chance to bubble to the surface. 'Pah, it's just another Aston that looks the same and feels the same. Come on guys, when are we going to see something really new?' Then a high-pitched starter whirs and the 5.9-litre V12 catches with a sharp, multi-layered scowl and settles down into a busy, impatient, expensive-sounding blare. The bubbles pop. And despite your rational mind screaming 'don't do it!' an irresistible force flexes your right ankle. What a noise. Old, recycled, stolen… who cares when the final result is a 510bhp V12 stuffed into a tiny V8 Vantage shell that's been decapitated? Cynicism melts away pretty quickly when the V12 Vantage Roadster is tingling with that mighty engine.

Yes, this is the new Vantage V12 Roadster. And the question it begs isn't so much 'why would you?' – more like 'what's taken you so long?' The tin-top V12 Vantage has been around since 2009 and it's Aston's wildest, most extrovert machine. It's a little ball of noise and fury leaking hot gases through carbonfibre vents. Take off its roof and what you lose in structural integrity you get back with interest in noise and drama, right? Well, that's the theory, but the V12 already asks some pretty big questions of the Vantage's chassis. There is a danger that without a roof to keep a lid on all the chaos, the V12 Vantage could descend into a noisy reminder that Aston really does need a new trick…

Peel away the familiar body panels and you'll find an equally familiar chassis. Aston's VH (vertical/horizontal) chassis has been around since the Vanquish arrived in 2001, but it's evolved significantly over those 11 years. And it isn't as if the bonded and riveted aluminium chassis is outmoded technology: Porsche has only just introduced a largely aluminium chassis for the 911 and Ferrari has committed to the material for the foreseeable future, too. The V12 Vantage Roadster gets the same basic structure as a V8 Vantage Roadster, which features a stronger crossbeam behind the dash and thicker, more rigidly fixed aluminium undertrays to further boost structural strength. Unique to the V12 Roadster are a new rear damper and spring design and, of course, the damper and spring rates are revised to compensate for the loss in rigidity.

It's what the aluminium chassis cradles that's really important, though. Almost 6-litres, 48-valves, 510bhp at 6500rpm and 420lb ft at 5750rpm, hooked up to a six-speed manual gearbox (hallelujah!) driving the rear wheels. That's one heck of a set-up for a car considerably shorter and lower than a 991-generation Porsche 911. And although the peak torque figures might suggest that the big motor needs some revs to get going, the truth is that it always feels beautifully and effortlessly muscular, despite the fact it's pushing a substantial 1760kg, some 80kg more than the coupe





'THE EASILY DELIVERED TORQUE SMOOTHES THE FIRST FEW MILES – THERE'S JUST SO MUCH OF IT'



version. Aston claims a top speed of 190mph (same as the coupe) and 0-62mph in 4.5sec (0.1sec slower), so a Nissan GT-R or 911 Turbo would swat it away with ease. But as cars become so quick that they can make your eyes bleed, 0-62mph stats become less and less relevant. This little car does 190mph, so it's very rare that it feels a bit flat, I can assure you.

So you've waited that tantalising wait, heard the V12, done that bloody childish blip, grabbed the huge metal gearshifter with the well-oiled action that doesn't quite fit with its awkward, lumpen shape. Bring up the clutch, tickle the throttle but get a load more revs than you expected and you're away with the smell of lightly toasted clutch hanging in the air and that fizzy feeling in your stomach. The Roadster has already marked your card: 'Up your game, son, this car needs driving.'

The easily delivered torque smoothes the first few miles, though. There's just so much of it, sweet and linear and with none of the hurried, boosted delivery that has increasingly become the norm with the near-ubiquity of turbocharging. The Vantage celebrates exactly what it is: a small car with a thumping great engine, and it feels special even at 15mph. But you don't need to go much quicker than that to notice





Top: Roadster doesn't suffer too badly from normal open-top issues. Above: don't worry – you don't have to take the red and pink trim options if you don't want them. Left: Vantage sits on 19in wheels front and rear

that this isn't a coupe, the odd wobble through the steering column and the occasional shimmy around the windscreen header rail soon giving the game away. It's not terrible by any means and I'll admit to an almost pathological hatred of convertible shakes, so perhaps a 'normal' person (i.e. someone not suffering from OCD) wouldn't even notice. Not enough to care anyway.

Subtle or not, if you're going to feel those tugs and shudders, you might as well enjoy the benefits. Today, thankfully, we can. The air is cool; look right and vast, inky clouds are hovering menacingly, look left and it's all blue skies and sunshine. But with a hood that opens this swiftly, any opportunity, however fleeting, is worth taking. Besides, the Vantage is one of the few cars that looks even better in Roadster form, so why not let everyone enjoy it while you get up close and personal with that V12?

People really do love the V12 Vantage Roadster, too. The Vantage's stance has always been absolutely right but the carbonfibre jewellery adds an edge. The front splitter and rear diffusers are beautifully executed, the extended rear spoiler looks just-so and the carbon bonnet vents will never look old. I'm sure this particular spec isn't to everyone's taste, but

doremags.com

‘THE STAR ATTRACTION REMAINS THE 5.9-LITRE ENGINE. IT HAS A CHARACTER ALL OF ITS OWN AND FLINGS THE VANTAGE ALONG AT A MIGHTY LICK’

the impact it creates and the feeling that this is a meticulous, bespoke car is fantastic. Aston has made leaps and bounds in quality terms over the last few years, too. Early DB9s felt handmade in the worst sense of the word and the first V8 Vantages weren't much better, but this car immediately feels solid and honed. Even the stitching of the leather, the actions of all the switches and buttons seem more precise and permanent. And you don't have to go for the pink formica centre console.

Those warm, fuzzy feelings aren't enough, of course. This is a £150,000 car. That's £15,000 more than the coupe and over £30,000 more than an Audi R8 V10 Spyder or a 911 Turbo Cabriolet. It's also only £23K less than a Ferrari 458 Italia. You might buy in to the whole James Bond cool of Aston Martin, but if it were you writing the cheque, you'd want to know that it can compete. Well, this is where we find out, on the roads the **evo** crew knows as well as its own driveways.

You might be tempted to press the Sport button to crank up the noise and quicken throttle response. In the dry it's a pretty good set-up that gives you instant, sharp access to the engine, but the standard throttle map is actually easier to modulate, even if it initially feels a tad lazy. A setting between the two would work better as the more aggressive Sport mode feels too jumpy, particularly in wet conditions. But do press the glass button with the picture of a skidding car for a few seconds to select DSC Sport. It's beautifully configured and gives you freedom to express yourself, safe in the knowledge that the system will wake up quickly and decisively should your ambition outweigh your talent. Now the V12 Vantage Roadster is ready.





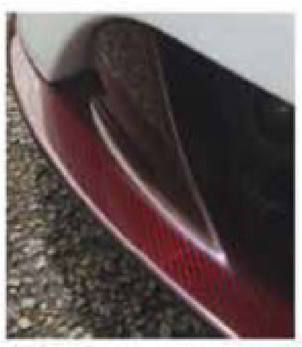
Above: oddly shaped gearknob delivers a deceptively smooth change through six-speed manual 'box. Below: Roadster tackles tortuous routes of the **evo** Triangle with aplomb

I LOVE THIS road, but it's a car-killer. There are sump scars everywhere, fast corners with nasty compressions, slow corners that kick you wide over a sudden crest on the exit, and braking zones that plunge downhill so you panic and trigger the ABS. Basically it's the road to pick apart a car that's had its roof lopped off with clinical efficiency.

The Roadster gets to the end of it in one piece, lightly frazzled but with its triumphant V12 hollering. It does squirm when you really get into the carbon-ceramic brakes, the steering sometimes goes sticky if you're asking the car to turn, brake and soak up ragged tarmac, and the body can heave over those compressions and you suddenly feel all 1760kg. So it's not perfect. But there is real quality here amongst those instances when it threatens to unravel and, more than that, you're with it every inch of the way. You feel what it feels, and as it communicates so clearly, you try to make its life a bit easier by being more considered, picking lines more carefully, looking well ahead so you can precisely time braking input, downchange and turn-in. It's not a car you beat up like the GT-R – you tease and cajole it.

The star attraction remains the 5.9-litre engine. It is just fabulous. I know it doesn't have the sheer bite of a Ferrari V12 or the runaway force-of-nature fury

'YOU MIGHT STILL FEEL THE MASS MOVING AROUND BUT THE ROADSTER CHANGES DIRECTION BEAUTIFULLY'



Above: V12 Roadster is a gentle oversteerer, so isn't a handful with the DSC off. Left: carbonfibre front splitter on our test car has been given the same red finish as the interior trim...

SPECIFICATION

ASTON MARTIN V12 VANTAGE ROADSTER
Engine V12, 5935cc
Power 510bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 420lb ft @ 5750rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, dual-rate coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 9 x 19in front, 11 x 19in rear
Tyres 255/35 ZR19 front, 295/30 ZR19 rear
Weight (kerb) 1760kg
Power-to-weight 294bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 190mph (claimed)
Basic price £150,000
On sale Now

evo RATING ★★★★☆

of a Lamborghini V12, but it has a character all of its own and it still flings the Vantage along at a mighty lick. Unlike an F12 or an Aventador, you can actually use all of the performance it offers; you sometimes clatter into the limiter but I love the feeling that you can hustle this car along as fast as it'll go.

There isn't the mechanical grip of something like a 991 or GT-R either, but that again just makes the Roadster more accessible, and the P Zero Corsas still provide loads of traction. You have to manage just a bit of turn-in understeer (although much less than you'd ever expect with that big engine out front), maybe rolling in a little oversteer correction on corner exit. In fact, the balance is very impressive, and in the dry you quickly feel happy to disable DSC altogether, although in the wet the Vantage does start to feel a bit more spiky. You'd keep learning more about this car every day for a very long time.

That great moorland road leads back onto the A5 towards Betws-y-Coed, but if you take a left before you get there you'll find other great roads that are smoother and tighter. Here the Roadster's structural compromises are less marked but its weight is felt more forcefully. I'm having a great time, enjoying the gently murmuring steering, that elastic power delivery and using the weight to dictate the balance through some of the better-sighted corners. You might feel the mass moving around but the Roadster still changes direction beautifully. And when you get the rear loose, the linear torque is a real boon. You don't get that great AMG-style *whumpf* that sends the car out onto the lock-stops, instead the Vantage likes to work smaller angles but hold them from entry to exit with one steering input. It's a fantastic sensation. In isolation you can only conclude that this is an intoxicating way to blow £150,000.

However, you have to put this car, like any other, into the context of its perceived rivals. Quite simply, the new 991 Cabriolet has more grip, more control and less scuttle shake. The 997 Turbo is on another planet in terms of outright pace. The R8 has an even finer balance, less corrupted steering on bumpy surfaces and feels very nearly as special. The 458 is a little more expensive and is so much sharper and more agile. If this were a group test, the Aston would be fighting for its life and gasping for air.

Fortunately for Aston Martin, the world isn't that black-and-white. This car does have real dynamic polish but its appeal is vastly magnified by the way it makes you feel. The noise is endlessly entertaining, the sense that a huge engine has been shoehorned into this compact shell is faintly ludicrous and deeply wonderful, and the unique interior is sometimes frustrating but always uplifting. I can't pretend it's perfect, but this car makes you happy, and surely that's got to count for something?

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SMALL CARS,

Renaultsport's smallest creation, the Twingo 133, has had a makeover as it attempts to take on the

Harrying each other down these narrow lanes and hounding each other's jinking tyre tracks, the two superminis feel right at home. Most cars feel unwieldy up here, like aircraft carriers trying to negotiate the Kennet and Avon Canal, but the Renaultsport Twingo and Suzuki Swift Sport are just fine. The Surrey Hills hail from a bygone age of motoring; slim strips of tarmac snaking between high earth banks, which themselves are held together by the roots of the trees towering high overhead. In places the emerald leaves of the arboreal canopy block out all but a thin latticework of sky, making it seem dark even on the sunniest of summer days and adding to the tunnel-like feeling of the confusing rabbit warren of roads.

The tarmac is bumpy too, where roots have pushed up the surface like bulging veins in a forearm (unless you venture across to the hairpins of Box Hill, freshly laid for the Olympic cycling events). It's about as severe a test as you could find for two full sets of MacPherson struts and torsion beams, and one of the duo is dealing rather better with the corrugations and crenulations than the other…

Hasn't the Twingo come a long way? Two decades ago a strange, sleepy-eyed little box of a car emerged, available only

BIG STARS

Suzuki Swift Sport in the supermini stakes. ***Henry Catchpole*** *makes a big call on the little rivals*

in left-hand drive and only across the channel. Inevitably a few trickled across here, but it always seemed slightly unfair that we never got our own version. Can you imagine the French keeping all the Camembert to themselves? Anyway, given that that first-generation Twingo went 15 years without any discernable facelift whatsoever, it's amazing that the second generation has been nipped and tucked around the jowls after only five years on the market.

Well, nips and tucks haven't really entered the equation, to be honest. It's more like this 133 version has just charged headlong into a lighting factory and seen what sticks. I've never seen so much illumination on the front of a car outside of a forest rally stage at night, yet amazingly, when you see it for real, it all seems to work. Styling apart, there haven't been many changes, the main ones being in terms of spec so that it can compete more keenly with the other car in this test.

The Swift Sport really couldn't be a better match for the Renaultsport and if the two were squaring-up and weighing-in for a boxing match, then it would be too close to call. Both have 1.6-litre naturally aspirated engines that produce exactly 118lb ft of torque at 4400rpm. Both claim an identical 8.7sec for the 0-62mph sprint. Their power outputs are just 3bhp apart

(in the Swift's favour) and their bantam-like kerb weights are separated by a mere 5kg (the Swift being the lighter). Even the wheel and tyre combos are nearly identical, both running on 17in-diameter alloys with 195-section ContiSportContact 3 rubber. I'm surprised they didn't both go for the same shade of Farrow & Ball.

Clamber into the Twingo and there's an instant sense of fun. For some reason, it reminds me of one of those Fisher-Price children's cars (with the red body and yellow roof). Perhaps it's the shape of the instruments and the overall silhouette of the car. Anyway, the Renaultsport feels a little childish, but in a good way, like playing on the swings and climbing frame in the park when no-one's looking (I really hope it's not just me who does that). It does look as if the steering wheel has been made a lot bigger than it really should be, and you also feel perched up high on the seat, but the engine buzzes into life enthusiastically.

The gearshift on our fairly box-fresh car is somewhat tight, as though some nylon bushes need to wear in, but the steering instantly feels engaging with no slack at all around the straight-ahead position. Ally this to an engine that is joyfully eager to be thrashed round to its red line at every opportunity and you have a car with exactly the brimful-of-brio temperament you expect in a hot hatch. Down the twisting, narrow lanes, the little Twingo's pointy, reactive steering makes it an ideal companion, as you need to be able to place the car you are driving very accurately. Despite quite a tall profile that makes it look as though it might roll like a ship on a swell, there's actually very little roll and a lot of lateral grip too, so it won't pick up an inside rear wheel as easily as you might imagine.

This car's firmer and lower 'Cup chassis' set-up (which also includes those 17in wheels) is a £700 option, but one we're used to praising on the Clio and Mégane. Here it increases the insatiable, puppy-like nature of the Twingo and as staff writer Stephen Dobie says, 'It prickles your enthusiasm from the moment you get in.' However, there is also a downside to the suspension, and it manifests itself in the form of a ride so solid





Above: Swift's 1.6-litre four-cylinder just shades the Twingo's (right) for power. Below: Twingo's facelift looks better in person than in photos (promise). Bottom and far right: Swift is less overtly sporty, but still looks the part

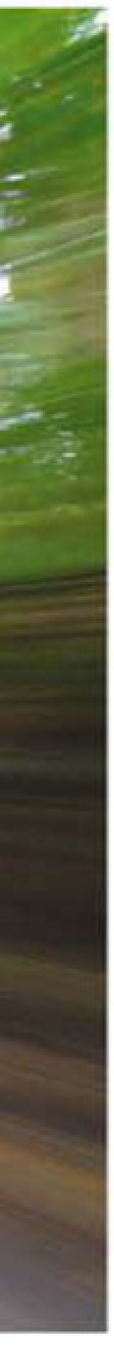






'THE WAY THE SWIFT SOAKS UP THE BUMPS AND LETS YOU ATTACK ANY ROAD IS SIMPLY EXTRAORDINARY'





that driving quickly down a B-road you can find yourself being launched out of your seat over bumps. Fortunately, there's a decent amount of headroom.

Up to a point it makes the car feel lively, but press harder down a typical B-road (not just those in the Surrey Hills) and it starts to get in the way and frustrate, as you're left with the impression that at times the car is travelling as far vertically as it is down the road. You notice it under braking too; there's wonderful response and power right from the top of the pedal, but trail-brake slightly into a bend or even in a straight line over bumps and all too often you find the pedal going hard under your foot and the ABS triggering. A lack of travel in the suspension seems to be the biggest problem, although a bit more rebound damping might help too.

Lunch is sought at the legendary Peaslake post office and then eaten, as usual, in the bus shelter opposite. We probably should have splashed out as it's photographer Gus's birthday, but he professes delight with a mug of tea and a cheese straw. Suitably sated, I head for the Swift and as soon as I get in it feels very different to the Twingo. It's much more sober, much darker, more grown-up, but also with a much better steering wheel and driving position (although the latter could be lower still). Press the starter button and an extra layer of sound-deadening means the engine seems slightly softer and more distant as it comes to life. If you got into one at an airport, you might assume you'd been unwittingly upgraded from the 'what's the cheapest thing you've got?' category by the hire car company.





Above: 17in wheels are an option on the Twingo, but standard on the Swift (below)

For all the 'big car in a little car' qualities, however, it feels a bit dull as we set off into the lanes again. The steering is accurate but a little lacking in weight compared to the Twingo's and feels slightly soft-focus around the straight ahead. The engine sounds good when you start piling on the revs, though, with a hard edge to the Japanese four-cylinder buzz. The gearshift is much more crisp too, with a shorter, more pleasing throw, although the ratios feel taller than the Twingo's, despite an extra (sixth) gear. And while the red line is north of 7000rpm, there's a natural change-up point at about 5500rpm, after which the revs begin to labour a little.

If you were to go on a normal ten-minute test drive from a dealer in each car, then the Suzuki might leave you a little cold after the exuberant Twingo. It has certainly matured a bit compared to the previous-generation Swift Sport, which, let's face it, sounds quite dull. But… if you dig a little deeper, push the chassis a little harder, you suddenly start to realise what a talented little car you're driving. Just at the point where the Twingo starts to get ragged and makes you want to back off, the Suzuki begins to reveal how good it is. The suspension is some of the best I have come across – it's hard to sing the praises of the damping highly enough. The way it soaks up the bumps and lets you attack any road is simply extraordinary.

The Swift remains calm and quite four-square flat underneath you; very neutrally balanced with a smidge of push at the front if you lean on it, but a bit of restorative pivot if you lift off the throttle. Throw it at a corner at speed and you have faith that

SPECIFICATIONS

RENAULTSPORT TWINGO 133	SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT
Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc	**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1586cc
CO2 150g/km	**CO2** 147g/km
Power 131bhp @ 6750rpm	**Power** 134bhp @ 6900rpm
Torque 118lb ft @ 4400rpm	**Torque** 118lb ft @ 4400rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive	**Transmission** Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	**Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers	**Rear suspension** Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated 280mm discs front, solid 240mm discs rear, ABS	**Brakes** Ventilated 275mm discs front, solid 260mm discs rear, ABS
Wheels 7 x 16in front and rear (17in optional)	**Wheels** 6.5 x 17in front and rear
Tyres 195/40 R16 front and rear	**Tyres** 195/45 R17 front and rear
Weight (kerb) 1050kg	**Weight (kerb)** 1045kg
Power-to-weight 127bhp/ton	**Power-to-weight** 130bhp/ton
0-62mph 8.7sec (claimed)	**0-62mph** 8.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 125mph (claimed)	**Top speed** 121mph (claimed)
Basic price £13,565	**Basic price** £13,499
On sale Now	**On sale** Now

★★★★☆ **evo** RATING ★★★★½





Right: Swift's interior has a darker feel than the Twingo's (above right). Opposite: Twingo is most at ease on smoother surfaces. Below: both cars are adorned with their sporting credentials





it will deal sublimely with any unexpected mid-bend lumps, leaving you to look up and ahead to prepare for the next corner. That's immensely helpful in keeping the flow going, which is important if you've only got 130bhp to hand. After a while you begin testing the Swift, searching out the bumpiest roads you know, routes you'd previously avoided because of their wicked compressions or disruptively decayed asphalt. It actually reminds me of the suspension on my old Swift rally car, and that had Proflex dampers that cost £1500 a corner…

As the day goes on and the lanes get narrower and more confusing, Stephen and I continue to swap cars, and then over the next few days I drive both the Twingo and the Swift on **evo**'s local roads too. It really is extraordinary that two cars that look so similar on paper and seem to be aiming at exactly the same market can be quite so different in character.

On the track, as you can read below, the Twingo claws back some ground again, the Cup chassis at home on the smooth surface and the handling marginally more entertaining with its more incisive turn-in and edgier feel. On a purely practical day-to-day basis, although both are well-specced with air-con and even cruise control, the Swift is the easier car to live with, as its sixth gear soothes motorway travel and the suspension deals with daily inconveniences like sleeping policemen rather less spine-shatteringly. It's swings and roundabouts.

So which to choose? Well, the Twingo looks great, is a wild ride and if it's your first foray into the world of **evo** cars then it would be jolly exciting. It would be fun on the occasional trackday as well. But after you've got over the initial buzz, when you actually want to concentrate on tackling a set of corners with some poise, the bounce and bump of its suspension mean you have to back off just when you really want to push on the most. We'll try a non-Cup version soon to see what difference that makes, but for now it's not quite the sparklingly finished hot hatch that we've come to expect of Renaultsport.

The Swift could do with a little of its predecessor's more spirited on-limit character to complete the picture, but there's no doubt that it wins this test. Snicking through that lovely gearbox, lining up each corner with confidence, feeling the suspension working with the tarmac, not letting an ounce of precious power scrabble away, almost floating through a corner when you get it right… it is a beguiling little car.

TRACK BATTLE

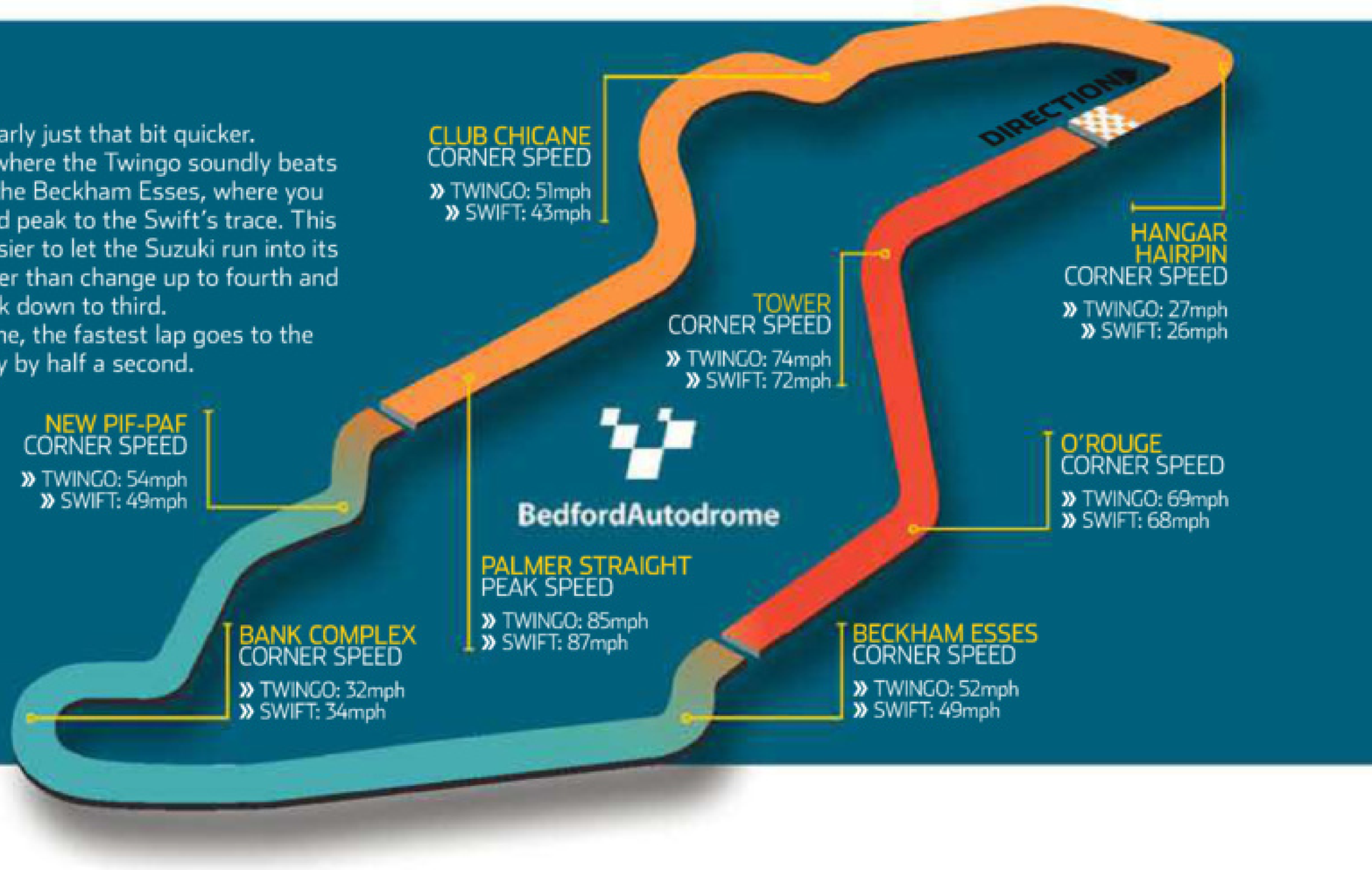
» On the West Circuit the Twingo feels like the better car and from the graph it's easy to see why – it's able to turn into corners (especially faster ones) at higher speeds than the Swift.

However, what's interesting is how the Swift claws that time loss back on the straights, often hitting higher peak speeds. Sometimes this is because the Twingo's traction under power on corner exits can't emulate its turn-in grip, but the Swift is regularly just that bit quicker.

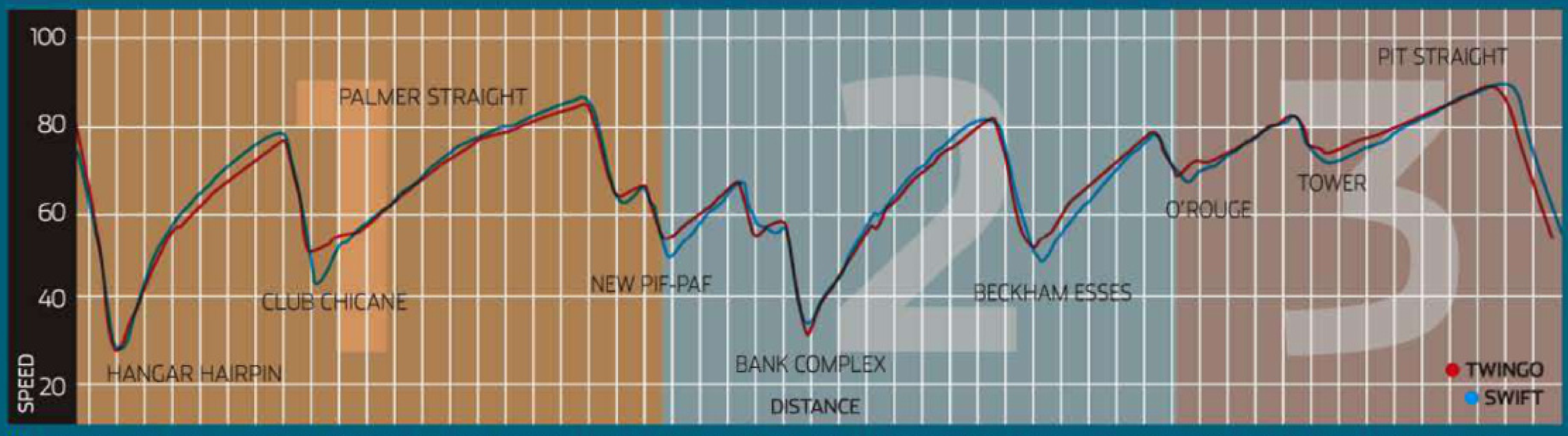
The one place where the Twingo soundly beats the Swift is into the Beckham Esses, where you can see a rounded peak to the Swift's trace. This is because it's easier to let the Suzuki run into its (soft) limiter rather than change up to fourth and then straight back down to third.

All said and done, the fastest lap goes to the Twingo – but only by half a second.





'THE BOUNCE OF THE TWINGO'S SUSPENSION MAKES YOU BACK OFF JUST WHEN YOU REALLY WANT TO PUSH ON THE MOST'



» As you can see from the graph, both cars reach their peak speeds at the end of the start/finish straight (as opposed to the more powerful cars, which usually top out just before New Pif-Paf). Club Chicane is a classic example of the more stiffly sprung Twingo turning in faster, but then struggling to get its power down cleanly through the corner's curving exit

LAP TIMES: RENAULTSPORT TWINGO 133 1.36.3 (peak speed 88.9mph) **SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT** 1.36.8 (peak speed 89.6mph)

STAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

*Having put the Renaultsport Twingo 133 through its paces against the Suzuki Swift, **Henry Catchpole** pushes a rally-prepped version to its limits – and beyond – on the Jim Clark Rally*

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It's several minutes into the sixth stage of the Jim Clark Rally. The stage is called Fogo, the last of four tests before the service halt at midday, and I'm finally starting to get to grips with the Twingo. It's been a steep learning curve since the rally started yesterday evening – trying to become acquainted with the intricacies of an unfamiliar car on a rally stage is a bit like learning to read by tackling Tolstoy.

Initially each braking point, corner and jump was (sometimes literally) a leap into the unknown. But now I'm finding some flow and settling into a bit of a rhythm, managing to meld steering and pedal inputs, carrying good speed, committing more… even though I'm struggling a little to hear Chris Brooks, my co-driver, through the intercom.

The road we're on is typical of the Jim Clark: very fast, rough, single-track tarmac. There are some uncomfortable patches of gravel and there's little room for error between the blurring green verges. It makes the Nürburgring look like the M6 Toll. Chris calls 'five right' (fifth gear, right-hander) and even though I can't see the road through the corner because there's a hedge inconveniently in the way, I know I don't need to lift off the throttle as I turn in. I say 'know', but an elevated heart rate implies that I'm still settling back into the world of pace notes – 'strongly believe' is closer to the truth. But I trust Chris.

Just before I turn, there's a bump – not big, but a little kicker. Fleetingly everything goes weightless as the torsion-beam rear axle reacts more than the MacPherson-strut front end and the Twingo's rear bounds up in the air like a lamb in spring, taking attitude as it lands. Now we're sliding on the tiny road, going forwards at an angle, oversteering in fourth gear... towards a house. There's no front garden and the doorstep is on the edge of the road. I feel surprisingly calm, but I can see everything in high-def and I'm trying not to stare at the window of what I imagine is a family sitting room that could well become our run-off area if things don't go well in the next half-second. Nice curtains.

And that, right there, in a freeze-frame of wide-eyed, adrenalin-augmented concentration, is the utterly brilliant and slightly unhinged world of closed-road rallying. I love it. To me it's the motorsport that Hemingway was talking about when he said, 'There are but three true sports: bullfighting, motor racing and mountain climbing. The rest are merely games.' Despite any margins you might leave or any smidgen of driving talent you might have been born with, it's incontrovertibly dangerous. But that's what brings clarity to your thoughts and makes you feel so startlingly alive.

The Jim Clark takes place in the Scottish Borders and is the only closed-road rally on the UK mainland (rallies in Northern Ireland, Jersey, Mull and the Isle of Man all benefit from more relaxed road-closing laws). Despite having tested various rally cars in recent times, including some full-blown WRC machines, it's nearly four years since I last competed. That was in a Suzuki Swift, also in the British Rally Championship and also with Chris Brooks alongside me.

The little Renault is effectively the Swift's successor in the entry-level R1 class of the BRC. Apart from removing the interior and inserting a roll cage, very little else on this (pre-facelift) Twingo

Pictures: Jakob Ebrey

133 Cup has been tampered with to create the R1 version: the engine, springs and dampers remain standard, and there is still no limited-slip diff. It's quite a different car to the Suzuki to drive, its suspension less sophisticated but its engine stronger. To go fast you need to get it moving around more on the way into corners, which is fun. We missed the house – just – in case you were wondering.

Yesterday evening the rally began with two short spectator stages in Duns, Jim Clark's hometown. It's nerve-wracking being watched and fun dashing through the streets, but it's really a banana skin to be avoided before things get serious the following day. The first stage this morning started well as we caught the car ahead, which started a minute before us. We lost some time sitting behind the Citroën C2 on a fast downhill stretch (flashing and hooting an inch from its bumper like an impatient van driver) but managed to stuff it up the inside on a tight right-hander for a rare rallying overtake.

Since then, we've gradually been getting quicker. Our only rivals in the R1 class are fast local lad Garry Pearson and his co-driver Craig Wallace, and as they've been in their Twingo all season I don't expect to have much of a chance. If we're close to them on stage times by the end, that

Right: Twingo R1 is only available in left-hand drive. Below: Catchpole gets air over the crests



'NORMALLY YOU'D ROLL GENTLY TO A STOP AT THE JUNCTION, LOOK RIGHT, LOOK LEFT AND LOOK RIGHT AGAIN. THIS IS NOT NORMALLY'

would be a good result. But the nice thing is, the result isn't everything in rallying. Not to me, anyway. When you're in the stage you're just immersed in driving as fast as you can down closed roads. Quite frankly no-one else in the world apart from your co-driver exists…

Braking downhill towards a 'one-right-over-narrow-bridge', a flash of white amongst the blurred greys and greens momentarily fills my peripheral vision as we keep tight to a building. Two big round bales stand on the dashed white lines of a junction. Normally you'd roll gently to a stop, look right, look left and look right again. This is not normally. Today I have to sweep out without looking, merely cursing at the *BANG!* as the right-hand wing mirror (or 'width gauge') snap-folds into the car as I cut it a bit fine and the Twingo rubs against the inside bale.

This is the second run through the Abbey St Bathans stage and the junction has spat us out like a piece of Renaultsport gristle onto the relative Autobahn that is the B6355. I adore this section. There are two lanes to use and the road initially sweeps through mixed woodland on a succession of flat and nearly flat corners, with patches of damp under the overhanging branches just to keep you on your toes. A flat right-hander turns out to be only nearly flat and the consequent little lift to keep us out of the trees makes the Twingo's rear end go light again. The brief slide compromises the next corner.

But it's as we emerge from the trees that the best bit arrives. The Twingo is high up in fourth gear, its 1.6-litre engine buzzing loudly in the stripped-out interior as I wait to snatch fifth. This next group of corners is entirely flat if you get it right but the road snakes, so you need to thread the eye of the needle through each bend. Every apex is also on its own small crest, so the road's profile does a good impression of the Loch Ness Monster. It's fast enough and tight enough to make you hold your breath, but the reward is huge. You launch off the first small rise and feel both car and stomach go light simultaneously. The tyres land and compress just as the white line of the road curves underneath you, then you immediately hit the second crest. More air. The wheels buzz again – don't lift off the throttle or the nose will dip – your stomach goes light again and you're glad you tightened the belts so much at the start of the stage. And so it goes on – there you are skimming along the surface of the B6355 like a flat stone skipping across the surface of a rippled lake at 100mph. It's an incredible feeling.

It requires plenty of concentration, though, and as Saturday wears on, so the demands of an international-level rally really begin to make themselves felt. Driving 152 stage miles (three times what you'd get on a national rally), plus all the road miles linking the stages, really tests your mental strength. Add to this the issues hearing Chris's pace notes and mistakes are starting to creep in, so it's a relief to get to the end of the day in one piece for supper and bed, with fingers crossed for a fresh mind in the morning.

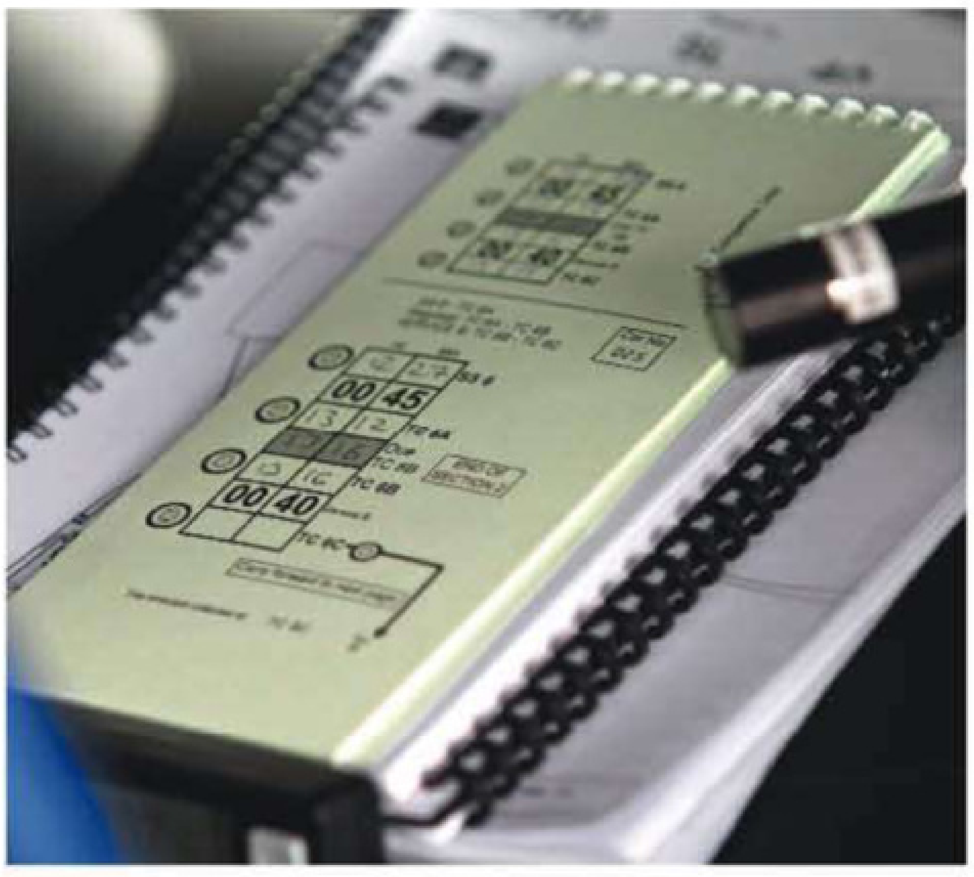
SUNDAY'S FIRST STAGES turn out to be terrifying. With the weather fine and sunny, the chaps from my Monster Sport team (who prepare Twingos for rallying in the UK) put on a full set of slicks and send us on our way with the words 'maximum attack' ringing in our ears. However, it's raining when we reach the start of the Bothwell stage. It's a particularly bumpy and sketchy stage too, so the total lack of adhesion is, to put it mildly, a bit of a nightmare. The trouble, as Chris says, is that you enter a vicious circle of tyre temperature, grip, speed and confidence. As one decreases, so do all the others and you sink ever lower.

Our saviour on a number of occasions is a good dose of handbrake. Through the tighter hairpins in the rally it's hilarious to feel the car snap round and arrive at the corner pointing backwards. There are



Above: the narrow, hedge-lined lanes of the Scottish Borders help to focus Catchpole's mind

Below left: co-driver's time card rigidly schedules a crew's entire rally, including servicing (below right)





TWINGO R1
RALLY CAR

'EVERYONE'S ADVICE JUST SEEMS TO BE TO QUOTE THE COLIN McRAE

lots of corners, jumps and 'moments' that I could regale you to tears with, but there's a lot of light and shade with rallying and the moments of calm that juxtapose so starkly with the moments of excitement are just as memorable. Sitting at the start of a stage, for example, is a curious thing. You're parked in some remote, quiet lane



Above: Twingo's lively rear makes for a fun drive. Below: hammock stores helmets when crew is on road sections



surrounded by fields, wind stirring the long grass, birds singing. And like the Guinness advert says, you wait, as tick, follows tock, follows tick, follows tock… and the seconds flow slowly by.

There's not a lot of chatter before a stage, except for the shattering of silence every 60 seconds as another car is released in a frenzy of revs and hurtles down the road into the stage. Stirling Moss was apparently asked later in his career if he got butterflies in his stomach before the start of a race and he said, 'Yes, but I can get them flying in formation now.'

As I've got older, I've got better at marshalling my own butterflies. You establish routines to focus and quash the nerves; belts, balaclava, HANS device, helmet, glasses, tighten the belts again. You look forward to the squeak as the intercom connects and your co-driver's voice flows reassuringly inside your helmet. You go through the first few pace notes, but there's no point doing more than that. You'll recall snippets, sometimes large chunks of the stage as you go through it, but you can't visualise what's coming like you can on a circuit. There's no safety net of predictability.

Motivation changes as you go through the rally too. On Saturday I just wanted to go as fast as possible so I tried to stay focused but aggressive, but on Sunday afternoon it's a different feeling. Passing Garry Pearson at the side of the road during a stage (he's broken a driveshaft), I know we're leading our class. All we have to do is finish the final three stages and we'll get a class win. I'm well aware that it's largely by default, but suddenly the restraint needed to keep it shiny side up

DICTUM OF "IF IN DOUBT, FLAT-OUT". IT DOESN'T QUELL MY NERVES'

all seems worthwhile – a win's a win, after all! But we've got to get through the last three stages first.

We keep it smooth but quick through the next two, actually going rather well, with a slide over a fifth-gear crest the only moment of slight concern. But ever since the road book arrived in the post a couple of weeks ago, I've been nervous about the very last stage. The Swinton crossroads is notorious; it's a flat-out approach and you essentially cross a main road without ever touching it. The landing area is uphill, so you tend to smash the front bumper into the tarmac, which feels brutal for both the car and your neck. I can still remember the impact and subsequent smell of washer fluid when we did it in the Swift. What I'm worried about now is how the Twingo's lively rear axle will react, but everyone's 'advice' just seems to be to quote Colin McRae's dictum of 'if in doubt, flat-out'. It doesn't quell my nerves.

Two of the Twingos in front of me do just what I feared. By some miracle, Chris



Above: Brooks and Catchpole celebrate class win. Below: Henry gets grilled by Sky Sports TV crew

Ingram catches his car and drives along the verge, but the following Nick Allen just spears hard left into a tree. Both he and co-driver Andy Bull are OK, but the car is a mess (search YouTube for 'Jim Clark Twingos'). All of which means that as I approach the crossroads flat-out, willing my right foot not to waver, there is a marshal in hi-vis waving his arms frantically. So we back off, a lot, and drive slowly through, much to the relief of my girlfriend who is spectating and has seen both previous incidents…

As we roll into the finish it all feels like a dream. We shake hands, do interviews with TV and radio, waste some cheap fizz and relax properly for what feels like the first time in three days. Yet that evening, all I can think about while driving home (slower than I'd passed a house, sideways, less than 36 hours previously) is that I want to do it all again… Duns, Fogo, the B6355, even the Swinton crossroads. Rallying gets to you like that.



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911: LIVING LEGEND

The new 991-spec Porsche 911 can trace its roots back through half a century of automotive evolution. ***Richard Meaden*** *charts the iconic coupe's journey*

Has any single model of car come under more intense scrutiny than the Porsche 911? From its introduction in 1964 to this year's re-invention (the most radical yet), Stuttgart's iconic, anachronistic sports car has fuelled debate and divided opinion like no other.

In this unashamed orgy of 911s, we're taking what we hope will be an enlightening trip back through time, starting with the new 991 model and working back through the 997, 996, 993 and 964 versions to



‘IN THE 991, EVERY IMPERFECTION HAS BEEN IRONED OUT, THOSE

the 3.2 Carrera, 3.0 SC and a delightful 1969 2.2T. For the sake of consistency and purity, all are manual and rear-wheel drive, while Jethro Bovingdon and I have vowed to arrive at the Porsche Experience Centre at Silverstone leaving prejudice, pre-conceived ideas and rose-tinted glasses at the plate-glass door.

This test isn’t about raw performance, so we won’t be attempting standing-start acceleration comparisons. Nor is it about lap times and cornering forces. Instead this gathering is about the all-important emotion and tactility that has defined 911s of all eras, and how that feel and connection may or may not have been eroded over the years.

Sadly there are one or two gaps in the group, most regrettably a very early short-wheelbase 2.0-litre, which we simply couldn’t secure in time for the test. We’d have loved to include a 2.7 Carrera too, as it would have neatly plugged the gap between the ’69 2.2T and the ’79 3.0 SC. But we hope you’ll agree eight 911s spanning six decades ain’t too shabby.



Top: new 991 raises the Carrera power bar. Above: vintage 2.2T is 328mm shorter and 198mm narrower than the 991. Right: 991 is first 911 to be fitted with a seven-speed manual transmission (see gearknobs, bottom-right)

991 Carrera (2012-)

Seeing the 991 amongst its ancestors is both reassuring and alarming: reassuring because you can clearly see the bloodline in its stance and profile, but alarming because it looks so much bigger than the others. It’s as though someone at Weissach erroneously pressed 110 per cent on the photocopier before sending the blueprints to the manufacturing department.

Still, there’s no denying it’s a handsome machine, and once inside you’re struck by just how finely wrought these new-generation Porsches have become. It does feel wide, though, and not just in the context of the snake-hipped early 911s. You sit low, with the deep dashboard rising away from you to the distant, rakishly inclined windscreen, which further accentuates the sense of size. But it’s still good to twist the ignition key and hear the engine come to life from somewhere near the back bumper.

The 991 is all about control and it feels planted from the moment you get underway. The gearshift is a bit knotty across the gate, but the fizzy, rev-hungry 345bhp 3.4 flat-six is sensational. It lacks torque, but compensates by building to a wonderful high-rev crescendo. I actually prefer it to the gutsier Carrera S motor, because it feels more alive and requires more effort to reap the ample rewards.

The way it carries speed around the Porsche Experience Centre’s tricky high-speed handling circuit is breathtaking, even in the sections where you have to brake and change direction at the same time. Its grip, traction and poise are mighty, and when you really throw it at a corner, it does that magical 911 trick of finding the optimum balance of slip angle and corrective lock if you just let the wheel slip in your hands. You do have to try bloody hard though.









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FEW REMAINING DYNAMIC WRINKLES GIVEN A BIG SHOT OF BOTOX'









It's miraculously capable – engaging and enjoyable too in absolute basic specification – but despite the searing corner speed and seductive quality, there's still a sense that something's missing. That something is the subtle flow of information that connects you to a 911 as completely at walking pace as it does at warp speed. In the 991 every imperfection has been systematically ironed out, those few remaining dynamic wrinkles given a big shot of Botox to smooth things over. Like Amanda Holden, it lacks expression.

997 Carrera (2004-2012)

As is so often the case, it's the model that has just been replaced that gets overlooked the most. In the case of the 997 Carrera that's criminal, because it remains a special car by any yardstick.

It's very interesting trying this car with the 991 still fresh in your mind – and not just because it highlights those areas where the newer car lacks feel or expression. Initially you miss the 991's neck-straining grip and no-nonsense turn-in. You also miss the quality of its interior and the intoxicating top-end fizz of that new 3.4-litre engine. In short, you appreciate the huge steps Porsche has made in enhancing its pace and elevating the 991 to a higher level of fit, finish and feel.

However, with a little time you appreciate the 997's more detailed commentary through the steering wheel, the slickness and precision of its gearshift and the fact you don't need to try so hard to feel like you're in control. The 321bhp 3.6-litre engine has a more gutsy delivery too, so although you don't get fireworks, you still get plenty of meaningful propulsion. It doesn't match the 3.4's banshee howl, but it's still impressive.

Though not small by pre-993 standards, the 997 feels noticeably more compact than the current 911, and thanks to the greater sense of connection you can confidently place the car with inch-perfect precision, even when you're way over the limit of mechanical grip. On the handling circuit it's possible to set the 997 up into a corner by playing with the weight transfer on entry with a small, well-timed lift of the throttle. It still has the moves.

Because you don't need to be quite so brutal to break grip and traction, it feels like a more natural process to make the



997 slide, and while you're not going quite as fast as in the 991, it's still super-impressive, both for the speed it carries and the options it gives you. The newer car leaves it behind in many ways, but you have a more intimate bond with the 997.

996 Carrera (1998-2004)

I can still recall attending the international launch of the 996. This 911 was a big deal in countless respects, having made the jump from air- to water-cooling, ditched the floor-hinged pedals, lost the old-school interior and shed the dinner-plate dials. It also featured those infamous 'fried egg' headlamps. This was the moment the 911 lost its quirks, trading throwback hardware for modern technology to suit cost-effective mass production that – in conjunction with the Boxster – would lay the foundations for Porsche's return to robust finances.

Above: delicacy of the 996's steering particularly stands out. Interiors, top row: 2.2T, 3.0SC, 3.2 Carrera and 964. Bottom row: 993, 996, 997 and 991

This particular example has done more than 100,000 miles. Externally you'd be hard-pressed to tell, but the interior has not worn well. Indeed, it's a bit of a horror show of worn-through switches and plastics with a billiard-ball shine. But don't let that deter you, for the 996 – maligned and defamed though it is – actually feels as sharp as a tack. The lightness and delicacy to the way it steers and changes direction come as a big surprise.









993 Carrera (1993-1998)

The 993 is the first generation of 911 I really got to know as a full model range, as I group-tested pretty much everything from Carrera to GT2 on *Performance Car*. It still looks cracking today: lithe and curvy compared to its predecessors, in much the same way the 991 is to the 997 and 996.

After the 996, first impressions are dominated by your proximity to the upright windscreen, the small dimensions and the old-school interior and switchgear. The air-cooled motor has so much character compared to the water-cooled ones, whirring and purring in unique style, but with 268bhp it doesn't have the immediate pace of the 996. This 993 is a tip-top example, but still it feels soft and imprecise, which shows how your memory can play tricks. It's not recalcitrant or obstructive, but it does require you to put thought into what you're doing in a way the newer cars don't.

Bovingdon, who ran a 993 Carrera as a (second-hand) **evo** Fast Fleet car in 2005, has equally mixed feelings: 'Received wisdom is that this is *the* air-cooled 911, making the 964 feel archaic and ordinary, but I'm not so sure. For me it lacks a bit of steering feel compared to the 996. It also hasn't got the throttle response you'd like, nor the incredible front-end accuracy that characterises the water-cooled cars. I love the brakes, that uniquely mechanical gearshift and its looks, but it's not the standout I was expecting.'

And on that bombshell…

'THE 993'S AIR-COOLED MOTOR HAS SO MUCH CHARACTER, WHIRRING AND PURRING IN UNIQUE STYLE'

The 3.4-litre motor has a distinctive song, a busy Boxster-like yowl, but with a ballsier delivery. Putting out 296bhp it doesn't have the punch of the 997 and the gearshift lacks the oiled weight and expensive feel of its successor, but the overall experience is still far from mainstream.

Bovingdon, who has been sniffing around the classifieds at 996s for years, is clearly smitten: 'It's probably the most battle-worn of the cars here and initially I feared for it. History has been rewritten about the 996 – it now seems to be regarded as the lemon that struggled to manage the transition from brilliant 993 to brilliant 997… but it feels bloody good. It's such an accurate, fluid car to drive quickly. It doesn't have the mechanical grip of the newer cars and the engine's not as sorted, but there's feel in abundance – the steering is as good as any here – and dynamically it still feels special. The plastics aren't Audi-spec, but I still want one.'











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Above: 964 was fitted with a trick rear spoiler that could be raised and lowered electronically

964 Carrera 2 (1989-1993)

Like the 996, the 964 is commonly held in lower regard than other 911 generations. But why? I'm not entirely sure, not least because it looks great; fist-tight and truly compact, it's a proper 911. OK, the front bumper looks heavy, but the slim hips, upright screen and round headlamps give it a timeless silhouette.

It feels tough as old boots, shot through with that sense of bombproof solidity only found in German cars of a certain age. It's a bit basic in some areas, but that sense of functionality prepares you perfectly for the driving experience to come.

It's hard to explain how potent this car feels, especially when the spec sheet says it has less than 250bhp. It really does have thumping performance, rich with torque and spiced with a dry-edged rasp that is – to my ears, at least – one of the great engine notes of any car.

The power steering feels sharper, weightier and more precise than the 993's. There's more chat too, from both ends of the car, and for the first few miles you have to concentrate to decipher the white noise from the important information. There's a stronger, more linear connection between your inputs and the car's responses than in the 993. There's plenty of grip to lean on and when you begin to work it, the handling balance is beautifully expressive.

You have to be more positive and confident than in the newer cars because you're more aware of that rear-slung engine, but it's an engrossing process and one that – thanks to power steering – is more immediately exploitable than my 964 RS with its heavy, unassisted steering.

Bovingdon has also found it to be pretty special: 'The engine sounds terrific and really pulls hard. It has that same creamy torque as the 964 RS and here, thanks to power steering, you feel liberated to really work it hard, get the car floating between a bit of understeer and full-on oversteer. It's got those modern 911 traits of strong, consistent brakes and a positive, if long-throw 'box, plus mini-supercar grunt and tiny dimensions for agility and an aggressive but controllable balance.'

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‘THE 964 REALLY DOES HAVE THUMPING PERFORMANCE, RICH WITH TORQUE AND SPICED WITH A DRY-EDGED RASP THAT IS ONE OF THE GREAT ENGINE NOTES OF ANY CAR’

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3.2 Carrera (1984-1989)

This is the 911 I used to draw on the back of my school exercise books when I should have been learning the periodic table or some other cobblers. Consequently I feel like I know the 3.2 Carrera, even though I've never driven one.

After the power-assisted precision of the 964, the 3.2's unassisted steering is a shock. It's really heavy, so although it does wriggle and shuffle in your hands, it feels quite dead once you apply steering lock. There's surprising grip, but you're always aware of the tail's effect on your trajectory. It's an effort to drive this car quickly and it's much harder to relax and have fun with than the 964. In truth, it's the first car in the test where I've felt the old-school 911 traits actually inhibit the driving experience.

Bov hits the nail on the head after his drive: 'In this company the 3.2 Carrera feels like a bridge between the classic and the modern, and it's compromised as a result. There's much more grip, but that brings much more weight to all the controls and the information is lost somewhere along the way. The steering is really hefty, the clutch a bit of a pain, and although beneath all that is a car with a workable balance, I'm not sure you'd feel that keen to dip into its reserves as freely. To me this is the biggest disappointment of the day. I love the way it looks, but I'm not keen on how it drives.'

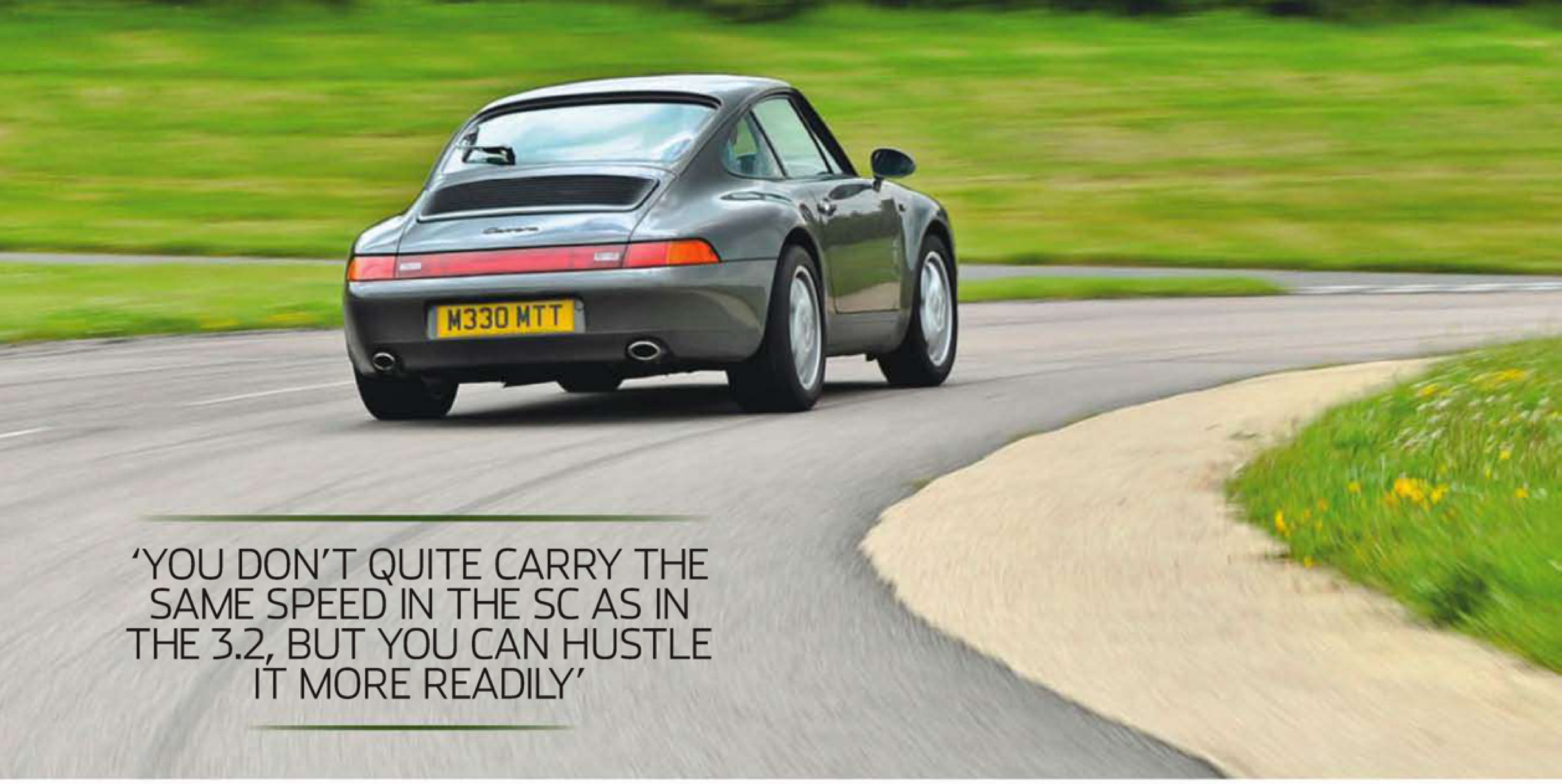
Above: oft-overlooked 3.0 SC is something of a gem, with a playful balance and keen engine. Below: Jethro doesn't rate the 3.2 Carrera's mix of old-school handling and modern-era grip



3.0 SC (1978-1983)

Resplendent in bright Minerva Blue with a tan-tastic interior and sitting on its original 'Cookie Cutter' alloys, the 3.0 SC is a perfect slice of late-'70s funkiness. It's unusual to find a coupe (most seem to be Targas) and rarer still to find one in such





'YOU DON'T QUITE CARRY THE SAME SPEED IN THE SC AS IN THE 3.2, BUT YOU CAN HUSTLE IT MORE READILY'

time-warp condition. I love it already.

The SC is a 911 that fell through the cracks, overshadowed by prettier and less common models of the early '70s and too subtle to be remembered ahead of the whale-tailed 3.2 Carrera of the '80s. As a result I'm not expecting much, but from the moment I drop into the caramel-coloured driver's seat, I'm impressed.

The 3-litre motor feels a little revvier than the later 3.2, so you don't miss the difference in power (185bhp versus 228). The steering is unassisted, but lighter and more lively, which makes a huge difference to how you approach driving the SC. This car's gearbox feels good for a '915' unit, but has an inherently long-winded throw compared to the later cars. Still, so long as you're precise and positive with the stick, it slots home sweetly every time.



Above: floor-mounted pedals in the 3.0 SC are surrounded by period tan carpeting. Below: wheel sizes have grown on each of the last four versions (bottom row), up to 19in on the 991

There's less mechanical grip, but this makes the SC's balance more easily enjoyed and its limits more readily explored. You don't quite carry the same speed as in the 3.2, but you can hustle it more readily so you undoubtedly have more fun. The brakes aren't as emphatic as on cars from the 964 generation onwards, but they're still man enough for the SC's performance. It feels magic when driven fast, but it's still an occasion at any speed.

I'm thoroughly smitten by this car, as is Bov: 'I love the balance – just a bit of understeer and then easily provoked and held oversteer – I love the rev-hungry engine and I love the sweet fluidity of the damping. The 915-series gearbox feels a bit feeble, but everything else is spot-on. There's not much I'd want to change about this car, except maybe the name of the owner on the V5.'

Get in the queue, Jethro.



‘WHEN SETTING UP FOR A FAMILIAR CORNER, IT’S AMAZING HOW LITTLE PROVOCATION IT TAKES FOR THE 2.2T’S REARWARD WEIGHT BIAS TO COME INTO PLAY’

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2.2T (1969-1971)

As we explained, this isn't the genesis of the 911 timeline, but this 1969 2.2T is still the earliest example I've ever driven. It's a beautiful car – so delicate and modest. The skinny tyres date it, as does the angry rasp of its small-capacity flat-six. Contrasted with the 991, it's hard to believe one strand of DNA can stretch so far.

There's certainly little to connect them in terms of initial feel. The T's steering is unassisted, yet once underway it is light enough to steer from your fingertips rather than working your forearms as the SC does, or the shoulder work-out the 3.2 gives you. The front-end has a busy, distracted feel, but as you feed some lateral loading into the front wheels the information becomes cleaner and direct.

Once into a corner, there's considerable body roll. You also feel the outside-rear wheel begin to tuck under with the cornering effort. Ease off the throttle and you immediately sense the tail unloading and shifting into oversteer, suggesting the rear is steering more than the front. Through this you understand how the early 911 got its hedge-seeking reputation – while it feels friendly and soft-edged when you're deliberately setting it up through a familiar corner, it's amazing how little provocation it takes for the rearward weight bias to come into play. Despite its modest power (123bhp) and pace, I'm sure it would feel a little less benign if you were on a dark, wet road and got caught-out by a tightening off-camber corner. Gulp.

Bovingdon also had his eyes opened by the T: 'The amazing thing about 911s of any era is how modern they feel to drive, which speaks volumes about their innate "rightness". But this one does feel very vintage, from the thin-rimmed steering wheel to the lack of grip and the pronounced body roll. Having said that, all the core 911 qualities are present in abundance – the gorgeous steering feel, the compactness and, most of all, the keenness to shift its balance according to the driver's inputs. It's like the 911s we know and love in slow motion. It sets the template: the noise, the agility, the oversteer, the feedback. I love it.'

Conclusion

Perhaps it's inevitable that if you start with a layout so at odds with physics, the battle to tame the resulting waywardness becomes an overriding priority. In the days before the electronic aids we now take for granted, Porsche's desire to control the 911s handling and simultaneously increase its performance was justified. But now?

The 2.2T was educational, especially as its soft suspension and skinny tyres showed what passed as high-performance dynamics in the '60s. The body roll and 'I don't remember it raining' road-holding made it feel all its 43 years, yet there was delicacy in how it could be driven to the limit of its grip, and its small flat-six was a gem.

The 3.0 SC was an unexpected star. It did help that this example was mint, but we weren't prepared for how much it moved the game on from the 2.2T in performance and handling, yet preserved so many of the old-school characteristics you'd want to keep. There's a lesson there somewhere.

Both the 3.2 Carrera and the 993 lacked a certain something; the former felt a bit cumbersome and unwilling, thanks mainly to heavy unassisted steering combined with increased mechanical grip. In the context of the other air-cooled cars, the 993 had a whiff of the 991 about it, having apparently traded the fine tactility and 'connectedness' exhibited by the best of its predecessors for prettier looks and greater all-round dynamic polish.

The 964 and 996 'underdogs' both emerged with honour. If you're looking for the best blend of dynamic challenge and reward, and levels of performance that remain impressive in 2012, it's very hard to beat a 964 Carrera 2. It was also heartening to find plenty to like about the generally unloved 996. If you can look past the mediocre interior, the uplift in urgency and precision over the 993 is amazing.

Then, of course, there's the 997, which sets the benchmark for all future 911s.

What we learned is that the best 911s share a sense of connection, transparency and an all-pervading feeling that you're driving something unique. Things go wrong when that balance is skewed in favour of grip and power, or refinement and stability. **evo** isn't lobbying to restore widow-making on-limit handling, but now electronic stability systems can smooth on-limit behaviour, it's surely unnecessary to erase the last traces of a dynamic fingerprint that makes your car unique.

The 991 has such complete mastery of its own mass that it was hard to tell whether it was rear-engined or mid-engined. That's an extraordinary engineering achievement, but also a little bit sad, at least if you believe a 911's feel should reflect its engine positioning. Hopefully Porsche can accept it has exorcised the dynamic demons of that outboard motor and apply its prodigious talents to amplifying the 911's feel and expression a little bit more.







Opposite page: 2.2T suffers from huge body roll (also note petrol escaping from the fuel tank breather pipe!); small engine makes great sounds. Below left: interior is pure '60s vintage

With thanks to Thom Dean, Andrew Buchanan, Ben Bradley, Mark Hinxman and Paul Stephens for the loan of their cars, and to the Porsche Experience Centre at Silverstone. For a fine selection of classic 911s, visit www.paul-stephens.com









SPECIFICATIONS

2.2T
Engine Flat-six, 2195cc
Power 123bhp @ 5800rpm
Torque 130lb ft @ 4200rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual, rear drive
Tyres 165 HR15 front and rear
Weight 1020kg
Power-to-weight 122bhp/ton
0-62mph 10.0sec (claimed)
Top speed 128mph (claimed)
Years produced 1969-1971
Price new £2110 (1969)
Price today £25,000-£35,000
evo RATING ★★★½☆

3.0 SC
Engine Flat-six, 2994cc
Power 185bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 195lb ft @ 4100rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual, rear drive
Tyres 185/70 VR15 front, 215/60 VR15 rear
Weight 1120kg
Power-to-weight 168bhp/ton
0-62mph 7.0sec (claimed)
Top speed 140mph (claimed)
Years produced 1978-1983
Price new £10,870 (1978)
Price today £8000-£18,000
★★★★★

3.2 CARRERA
Engine Flat-six, 3164cc
Power 228bhp @ 5900rpm
Torque 209lb ft @ 4800rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual, rear drive
Tyres 185/70 VR15 front, 215/60VR 15 rear
Weight 1280kg
Power-to-weight 181bhp/ton
0-60mph 5.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 153mph (claimed)
Years produced 1984-1989
Price new £22,537 (1984)
Price today £10,000-£20,000
★★★½☆

964 CARRERA 2
Engine Flat-six, 3600cc
Power 247bhp @ 6100rpm
Torque 229lb ft @ 4800rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual, rear drive
Tyres 205/55 ZR16 front, 225/50 ZR16 rear
Weight 1350kg
Power-to-weight 186bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 162mph (claimed)
Years produced 1989-1993
Price new £41,505 (1989)
Price today £12,000-£20,000
★★★★★

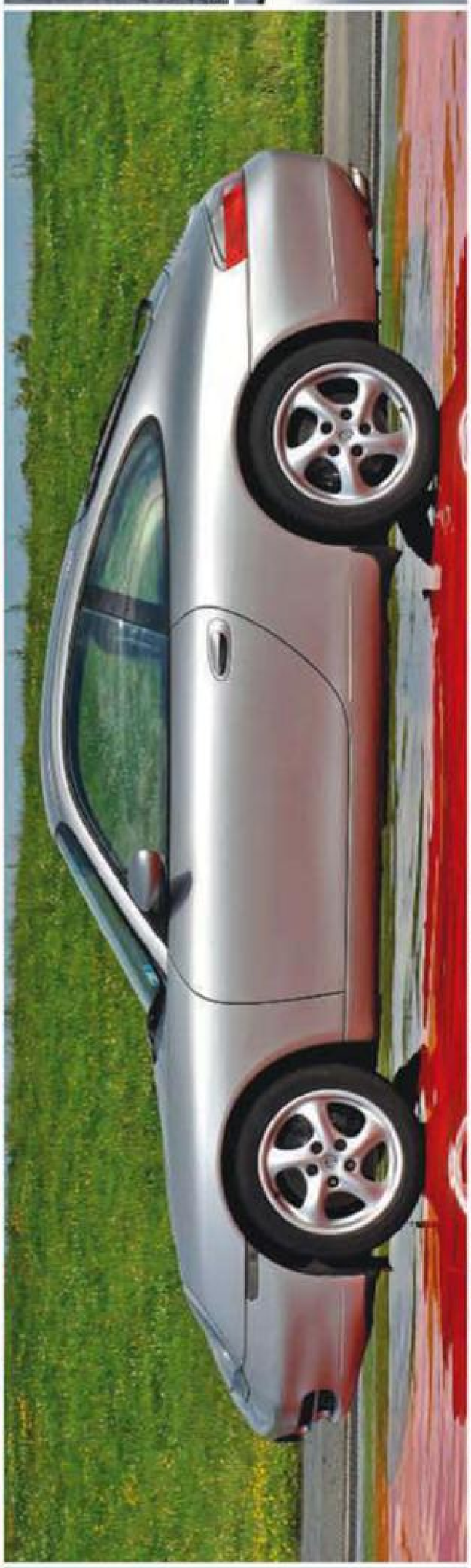














993 CARRERA
Engine Flat-six, 3600cc
Power 268bhp @ 6100rpm
Torque 243lb ft @ 5000rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, rear drive
Tyres 205/55 ZR16 front, 245/55 ZR16 rear
Weight 1370kg
Power-to-weight 199bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.3sec (claimed)
Top speed 166mph (claimed)
Years produced 1993-1998
Price new £46,378 (1993)
Price today £20,000-£30,000

★★★★☆

996 CARRERA
Engine Flat-six, 3387cc
Power 296bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque 258lb ft @ 4600rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, rear drive
Tyres 205/50 ZR17 front, 255/40ZR 17 rear
Weight 1320kg
Power-to-weight 228bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.2sec (claimed)
Top speed 174mph (claimed)
Years produced 1998-2004
Price new £64,800 (1998)
Price today £15,000-£25,000

★★★★½

997 CARRERA
Engine Flat-six, 3596cc
Power 321bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque 273lb ft @ 4250rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, rear drive
Tyres 235/40 ZR18 front, 265/40 ZR18 rear
Weight 1345kg
Power-to-weight 242bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 177mph (claimed)
Years produced 2004-2012
Price new £56,610 (2004)
Price today £30,000-£50,000

★★★★★

991 CARRERA
Engine Flat-six, 3436cc
Power 345bhp @ 7400rpm
Torque 288lb ft @ 5600rpm
Transmission Seven-speed manual, rear drive
Tyres 235/40 ZR19 front, 285/35 ZR19 rear
Weight 1380kg
Power-to-weight 254bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 179mph (claimed)
Years produced 2012-
Price new £71,449

★★★★½

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TYRE TEST 2012

The tyres you fit to your car can make or break the way it performs. So which should you be looking at amongst the current crop of rubber? ***John Barker*** *has the answer*

The phrase 'you get what you pay for' might not have been coined for tyres but it's a pretty good rule of thumb. As numerous **evo** tests have shown, cheap tyres typically fall well short of premium tyres, and usually in the most vital tests – those concerning wet-weather performance.

From November a rating system will be introduced giving us, the consumers, some information to help us make a more informed decision. New tyres will come with a label showing ratings for rolling resistance, noise and wet braking, much as the efficiency of, say, a refrigerator is rated. This is welcome news, a long-overdue development. However, as the results of this test show, it really only hints at the overall wet-weather performance you can expect.

This year we tested the 225/45 R17, a massive seller in the 17in size and standard fitment on a tranche of performance hatches, mid-sized saloons and a fair few MPVs too. We put ten different tyres, from budget to premium, through the same extensive test cycle, with the top-rated tyre in each test scoring 100 per cent and the rest earning a percentage of this. Objective tests make up 60 per cent of the final score, subjective ratings the other 40 per cent, so that you have the all the information to choose the tyre that best suits your needs and preferences.



THE TYRES

1. BRIDGESTONE POTENZA S001
225/45 R17 91Y £91

2. CONTINENTAL SPORTCONTACT 5
225/45 R17 91W £95

3. DUNLOP SPORT MAXX RT
225/45 R17 94Y XL £98

4. GOODYEAR EAGLE F1 ASYMMETRIC 2
225/45 R17 94Y XL £99

5. HANKOOK VENTUS S1 EVO2
225/45 R17 94Y £90

6. KUMHO ECSTA LE SPORT
225/45 R17 91W £79

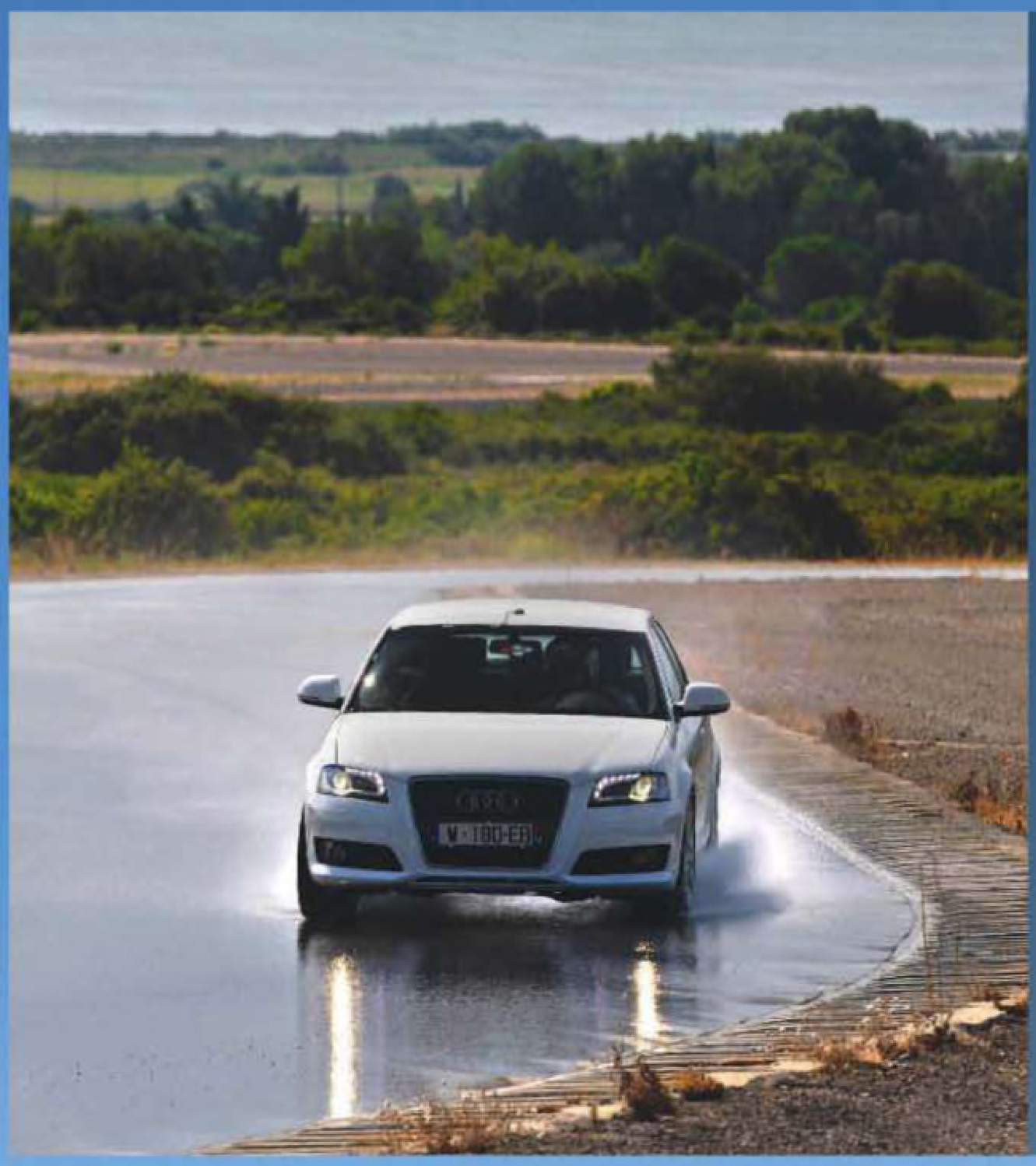
7. MICHELIN PILOT SPORT 3
225/45 R17 94W XL £96

8. NEXEN N8000
225/45 R17 91W £70

9. PIRELLI P ZERO
225/45 R17 94Y XL £99

10. VREDESTEIN ULTRAC VORTI
225/45 R17 94Y £93

'AS THE RESULTS OF THIS TEST SHOW, THE NEW RATINGS ONLY



The car

The front-drive Audi A3 1.8 TFSI was our tyre testing platform this time. It's powered by a turbocharged in-line 'four', so it's able to put tyres under pressure nice and early in a turn – peak torque arrives at a diesel-like 1500rpm. Full power of 168bhp weighs in at around 6000rpm, while the chassis is capable and benign, the steering accurate and well weighted. It also has excellent air conditioning, which was a boon given the (ahem) harsh climate in which we had to work...

The track

There's probably no more glamorous a setting for a proving ground than Goodyear's Mireval in the south of France – a location chosen partly because the climate is so consistently warm and dry. The high average temperatures – around 26deg C on our visit – give tyres a hard time, as do the elevations and curves of the handling tracks. Once more, our test team comprised editor-at-large John Barker on driving duties and Kim Adams on logistics.

Many thanks to Goodyear Dunlop's Kate Rock for her tireless assistance and to Mireval performance tester Patrice Fouqueray and tyre fitter Steve Picardin for support at the track.

HINT AT THE WET-WEATHER PERFORMANCE YOU CAN EXPECT'

Wet handling

When the sky is grey and the road shimmers with rain, you get closer to the performance limits of your tyres than in the dry. How they grip under acceleration, cornering and braking is paramount, and is reflected unflinchingly in the lap times we recorded for this test, but for your sense of well-being, the feedback they give, their responses and the confidence they inspire are equally valid; a tyre that communicates how hard it is being pushed and looks after you if you broach the limits will help keep you out of trouble. We assessed both on the wet handling circuit.

A weir system irrigates the shiny, wetted road that snakes and loops through the parched, scrubby landscape under the Mediterranean sun. It's a challenging circuit, featuring significant gradient changes and plenty



of testing corners. The trickiest are the shallow, downhill left-hander, and the hairpin that follows and leads you into the tense, fast, left-right-left sequence that gives the lap a knife-edge finish. Adding extra spice are some grabby mid-corner patches of calcification deposited by the flowing water.

We still had anti-lock brakes to fall back on if required, but the Audi's stability control was disabled.

No fewer than four tyres were within

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Left and right: our Audi tackles Mireval's wet handling circuit; unusually, there are no big sprinklers – a weir system spreads the water – so there is no need for wipers

a second at the top of the lap time table, the Pirelli topping them on 70sec dead and backing this up with the highest lateral G-force at 0.682G. The Goodyear and Michelin were barely half a second down on lap time, with the Continental only a fraction behind them, but it was the Goodyear that topped the subjective ratings. 'This tyre makes all the right moves,' we noted, 'hooking up well out of the turns, braking confidently and taming the fast left-right-left better than any other. Unmatched.'

Subjectively, the second-placed Michelin displayed a very similar skill set, blended with a little more neutrality: 'A tyre that delivers security and ability in equal measure.' Although it missed out on the hat-trick of wet handling results, the Pirelli was also well-liked for its almost gritty hold on the wet surface and well-matched traction, lateral grip and braking. Like the other fancied tyres, it was 'consistent in its abilities, reassuringly transparent in its intentions'.

The Continental was not far behind this top trio. A little down on lateral G, it was within a second of the Goodyear around the lap and the difference seemed to be corner-exit traction:

'GRIP UNDER ACCELERATION, CORNERING AND BRAKING IS PARAMOUNT'

'Spins up a little more readily out of turns, a fraction looser in the quickest kink but otherwise a solid performer.'

Bagging fifth in both lap time and lateral G was one of the Kumho's strongest showings of the whole test. Subjectively it was a little off the pace, inducing noticeable tail slip, which helped get the car into the corners and was good for the lap time but not driver confidence.

The Dunlop scored the second-highest lateral G and nailed a good lap time too, but it didn't rank well subjectively: 'Has a lighter hold on the road compared to the best.' In contrast, the Bridgestone was within two seconds of the best lap time and felt like it was going to deliver more but never quite did, perhaps because it was very neutral. The more willing Vredestein scored fractionally better but with the caveat of a light, tentative feel, and it was well down on lateral G and over 2sec adrift of the Pirelli's lap.

However, only the Nexen felt completely out of this league. It wasn't just that it was placed last by all three measures but that it was so by a significant margin, notably 5.1sec behind over the wet lap. It wasn't rated subjectively, either: 'Simply doesn't grip very well. Feels approximate, even when it's travelling more slowly than the rest, let alone the best.'

WET HANDLING

LAP TIMES	sec	%	LATERAL G	G	%	SUBJECTIVE	score	%
1. PIRELLI	70.00	100	1. PIRELLI	0.682	100	1. GOODYEAR	54	100
2. GOODYEAR	70.63	99.1	2. DUNLOP	0.678	99.4	2. MICHELIN	50.5	93.5
3. MICHELIN	70.67	99.1	3. MICHELIN	0.655	96.0	3= CONTINENTAL	50	92.6
4. CONTINENTAL	70.81	98.9	4. GOODYEAR	0.649	95.2	3= PIRELLI	50	92.6
5. KUMHO	71.17	98.4	5. KUMHO	0.617	90.5	5. VREDESTEIN	49	90.7
6. DUNLOP	71.19	98.3	6. CONTINENTAL	0.613	89.9	6. BRIDGESTONE	48.5	89.8
7. BRIDGESTONE	71.82	97.5	7. BRIDGESTONE	0.611	89.6	7= HANKOOK	47	87.0
8. VREDESTEIN	72.10	97.1	8. HANKOOK	0.603	88.4	7= KUMHO	47	87.0
9. HANKOOK	72.18	97.0	9. VREDESTEIN	0.599	87.8	9. DUNLOP	46	85.2
10. NEXEN	75.11	93.2	10. NEXEN	0.543	79.6	10. NEXEN	34	63.0

'TWO OF THE THREE RATINGS ON THE INFORMATION LABEL THAT

Braking

Two of the three ratings on the information label that must be available with every new tyre sold in the EU from November are tested here. The first, wet braking from 80kph (50mph) to 1kph, shows a very close result, with the best, the Goodyear, stopping in 24.62m, which is less than 1.5m better than the tyre that took the greatest distance to stop, the Hankook, at 26.08m. That 1.46m is less than half the length of a normal car, so all ten tyres would attract the same rating on the tyre label. However, as our wet handling test shows, the wet braking result cannot be taken as an indicator of overall wet-weather performance.

Dry braking, which isn't in the labelling system, is similarly close. The top tyre is the Dunlop, which takes 33.75m to slow from 100kph (62mph) to 1kph. That's 38cm better than the Goodyear, while at the other end of the table, the Kumho takes 36m dead, some 2.25m longer than the Dunlop.

There are greater differences in the other label category – rolling resistance. This is a measure of the energy the tyre absorbs as it runs against the road. Best is the Goodyear, worst the Bridgestone, their difference equivalent to about 1mpg on a car capable of around 30mpg. This stacks up with the labelling – the Goodyear and Dunlop would be C-grade tyres, the rest down to the Bridgestone E-grade (on an A to G scale).



All ten tyres performed respectably in both the wet (right) and dry (above) braking tests

BRAKING

WET BRAKING	metres	%	DRY BRAKING	metres	%	ROLLING RESIST	coeff	%
1. GOODYEAR	24.62	100	1. DUNLOP	33.75	100	1. GOODYEAR	7.98	100
2. DUNLOP	24.69	99.7	2. GOODYEAR	34.13	98.9	2. DUNLOP	8.86	90.1
3. CONTINENTAL	24.82	99.2	3. BRIDGESTONE	34.58	97.6	3. MICHELIN	9.59	83.2
4. PIRELLI	24.85	99.1	4. CONTINENTAL	34.73	97.2	4. HANKOOK	10.07	79.2
5. NEXEN	25.11	98.0	5. VREDESTEIN	34.80	97.0	5. CONTINENTAL	10.09	79.1
6. BRIDGESTONE	25.43	96.8	6. NEXEN	35.15	96.0	6. KUMHO	10.31	77.4
7. VREDESTEIN	25.82	95.4	7. PIRELLI	35.18	95.9	7. NEXEN	10.36	77.0
8. KUMHO	25.91	95.0	8. MICHELIN	35.58	94.9	8. VREDESTEIN	10.41	76.7
9. MICHELIN	26.01	94.7	9. HANKOOK	35.89	94.0	9. PIRELLI	11.00	72.5
10. HANKOOK	26.08	94.4	10. KUMHO	36.00	93.8	10. BRIDGESTONE	11.73	68.0

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Aquaplaning

These tests are all about clearing away water from the tread footprint to keep the rubber in touch with the asphalt. Michelin was the star here, claiming the top spot in both the straight-line and curved tests.

The results reflect performance across a range of speeds, each tyre starting from the same nominal speed. This is 50kph (30mph) in the straight-line test and here some of the tyres, like the Michelin, resist aquaplaning well beyond this and only reach 15 per cent slip beyond 80kph (50mph). All of this is worked into the overall percentage score, so the max kph shown in the table (the speed at which 15 per cent slip occurs) is only one indicator of performance.

Up there at the top of both tables with the Michelin were Pirelli and Continental, with Dunlop not far behind. In the straight-line test, all four resisted slip in 6mm of water until beyond 70kph (44mph) and didn't reach 15 per cent slip until beyond 80kph (50mph). At the other end of the table were Kumho and Goodyear, the latter starting to slip from 67kph and reaching 15 per cent by 74.9kph.

In the curved aquaplaning test, carried out on a 100m-radius circle with 8mm of standing water, the results were largely similar, the only notable adjustment being to the Nexen. It was a respectable mid-field performer in the straight test but was bottom of the table on the curve.

AQUAPLANING

STRAIGHT LINE	max kph	%
1. MICHELIN	81.4	100
2. PIRELLI	80.5	97.5
3. CONTINENTAL	81.1	97.4
4. DUNLOP	80.3	95.9
5. HANKOOK	77.1	90.7
6. NEXEN	76.8	90.5
7. BRIDGESTONE	74.6	89.8
8. VREDESTEIN	74.9	89.2
9. KUMHO	73.5	88.8
10. GOODYEAR	74.9	88.3

CURVED	max kph	%
1. MICHELIN	87.9	100
2. CONTINENTAL	87.4	95.0
3. PIRELLI	84.9	93.0
4. DUNLOP	84.3	91.9
5. HANKOOK	84.7	89.5
6. KUMHO	83.5	86.9
7. VREDESTEIN	83.5	86.6
8. BRIDGESTONE	84.7	86.3
9. GOODYEAR	83.3	85.3
10. NEXEN	81.5	82.9

Far left: aquaplaning test involves driving the car along a rail, while slip on the wheel driving through water is measured

MUST SOON BE AVAILABLE WITH EVERY NEW TYRE ARE TESTED HERE'



Dry handling

As is normally the case, the dry handling circuit produced a narrow spread of lap times, the slowest tyre setting a time within three seconds of the fastest. It's a fast, 2-mile lap at Mireval, punctuated by some tricky technical sections that tease out the depth of ability of a tyre and, just as importantly, reveal its character: its turn-in response, its impression of grip and how it handles flicking from one lock to another. And rated subjectively, there was a much greater spread from best to worst.

Overall dry handling victory went to the Pirelli. On lap time it was a very close second to the Vredestein and was top rated subjectively: 'Outstanding steering feel; connected and responsive and with a light, accurate touch.' It was also remarkably neutral where others got loose, but still made a good job of hitting every apex.

The Bridgestone was a second adrift of the Pirelli's lap time despite finding more traction driving out of the slower corners. It came closest to matching the Pirelli's well-balanced abilities too: 'Stable and neutral but changes direction well and gets stuck in. A solid, confidence-inspiring performance.' A mere half a point behind the Bridgestone's subjective score was the Continental. It was a fraction quicker around the lap despite feeling like it was scrubbing out. 'Not the brightest but soaks up the pressure and gets on line where you think perhaps it won't.'



Below left: one of many, many wheel changes. Below right: Adams and Barker analyse another batch of test results

Just outside the top three was the Goodyear, another tyre that feels 'gritty' under pressure, like it's working hard to make the clipping points. But it does, and proved the most agile in the lower speed right-left-right sequences. 'Effective rather than inspiring.'

The Hankook scored well subjectively, feeling light and biddable. It wasn't the most tenacious but felt connected and gave the car a sense of flow and poise. Very similar comments applied to the Michelin, which felt balanced and willing turning in but then ran a fraction wide on the exit.

The Dunlop had a connected, direct feel but this didn't translate into useful agility and under pressure it became less responsive and accurate, though this didn't stop it being third fastest. Fastest of all was the Vredestein, yet like some others it felt scrubby and, like the Dunlop, lost its precision when





worked hard.

Dead last on lap time, the Nexen felt slow-witted and a little reluctant, while extracting that lap time involved ignoring the slightly tortured noises and extra lock required to get near the line. Despite being a second a lap faster than the Nexen, the Kumho was rated dead last subjectively. It gave light steering and seemed to have an equally light hold on the road. Oh, and it was very noisy, too.

DRY HANDLING

LAP TIMES	sec	%	SUBJECTIVE	score	%
1. VREDESTEIN	107.45	100	1. PIRELLI	41	100
2. PIRELLI	107.74	99.7	2. BRIDGESTONE	39	95.1
3. DUNLOP	108.03	99.5	3= CONTINENTAL	38.5	93.9
4. CONTINENTAL	108.17	99.3	3= GOODYEAR	38.5	93.9
5. GOODYEAR	108.55	99.0	5= HANKOOK	38	92.7
6. BRIDGESTONE	108.70	98.9	5= MICHELIN	38	92.7
7= HANKOOK	108.75	98.8	7. DUNLOP	35	85.4
7= MICHELIN	108.75	98.8	8. VREDESTEIN	34.5	84.1
9. KUMHO	109.10	98.5	9. NEXEN	31	75.6
10. NEXEN	110.06	97.6	10. KUMHO	29	70.7

'TRICKY TECHNICAL SECTIONS TEASE OUT THE DEPTH OF ABILITY OF A TYRE AND REVEAL ITS CHARACTER'

'OUR ROAD ROUTE INCORPORATED THE SORT OF IMPERFECTIONS THAT HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH EVERY DAY'

Results



10TH NEXEN
This is the least expensive tyre here but not by as big a margin as some woefully underperforming 'budget' tyres in previous tests. Scores mid-table in wet braking – the test included in the new mandatory tyre labelling – and also straight aquaplaning, but is then poorest performing in all other wet tests. Objectively better in the dry but not liked on the handling track ('slow witted and noisy,' we noted) or the road route, where it rode decently but felt vague. Cheaper than the rest, and it shows.

9TH KUMHO
Much closer in performance to the tyres above it than the Nexen, the Kumho scores well in the wet tests with fifth best lateral G and lap time, the latter helped by some tail-happiness. It felt rather light at the wheel, though, and in dry handling, where it was among the slowest, it was rated dead last, principally because it felt lacking in grip. Lack of steering weight saw it score low marks on the road route, too, though like the Nexen its ride was good.

8TH VREDESTEIN
The new Vredestein delivered the goods in dry handling, posting the fastest lap time. It didn't feel like it was giving up the time willingly but bolstered this with a strong dry

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Road route

Our road route took us beyond the proving ground's limits and onto quiet local lanes characterised by the sort of imperfections that have to be dealt with every day. We incorporated speed humps and sharp transverse ridges, broken edged and pristine asphalt, and raised manholes and sunken drains. To help assess steering feel, weight and accuracy at a variety of speeds from town to motorway, we used the dry handling circuit again.

The Pirelli made a convincing case for itself, blending bright, connected steering with smooth running over imperfections. It wasn't the quietest but neither was it the noisiest. 'Unmatched feel and ability – the only tyre here that brings noticeable sparkle to the test car's steering,' we noted.

The second-placed Michelin came close, mind, showing a good road balance: 'Nicely weighted, keen steering and up there with the best in terms of quietness and suppleness, too.'

In third was the Continental. It was a little more surface sensitive and its steering was a little dull at town speeds, but thereafter it felt as connected as the Pirelli. 'A good performer that gets better the faster you go.'

Just off the podium came a trio of closely matched tyres. The Bridgestone felt firm-riding and gave good steering weight but not quite as much feel as the leading brands. The Hankook was great for feel and precision but rather noisy, flagging up surface changes in particular. The Dunlop rode firmly and quite noisily over coarse asphalt at moderate speeds, but the pay-off was steering that was responsive and connected, though it became less sharp at higher speeds.

Goodyear and Kumho were close behind. The Goodyear absorbed big imperfections and choppy surfaces well but was rather noisy and offered only a half-decent sense of connection through the steering. The Kumho's steering was lighter and less positive, even at motorway speed, though it too rode most surfaces well.

The Vredestein delivered decent steering – consistently positive with a crisp, clear feel – but this came at the expense of ride quality: 'Very firm, abrupt, lots of rumble over rough surfaces. Not good.' Just below it came the Nexen, which had a fair, if noisy, ride but delivered easily the poorest steering. It was described as 'vague and unresponsive' at 30mph and it didn't get any better thereafter.



Left: our Audi A3 ventured onto public roads for the final test, and it claimed a few victims along the way (above)

ROAD ROUTE

SUBJECTIVE	score	%
1. PIRELLI	22.5	100
2. MICHELIN	21.5	95.6
3. CONTINENTAL	21	93.3
4. BRIDGESTONE	19.5	86.7
5= DUNLOP	19	84.4
5= HANKOOK	19	84.4
7= GOODYEAR	18.5	82.2
7= KUMHO	18.5	82.2
9. VREDESTEIN	17.5	77.8
10. NEXEN	17	75.6

braking result. Its demeanour on the road route showed that good steering came at the expense of ride comfort ('very firm, lots of rumble'). It was OK in the wet, a little off the pace in aquaplaning and braking, but demonstrated a good precision feel in the handling test.

7TH HANKOOK

A fair set of results across the board for the Hankook. Second to last wet handling lap time and longest wet braking distance were the low points, yet it felt OK, with enough swing to help the Audi around the lap and compensate for a lack of lateral grip. It wasn't the most tenacious in the dry either, but gave a decent rolling resistance result and was well rated subjectively: 'Felt connected and gave the car a sense of flow and poise.'

6TH DUNLOP

A strong performance from the Dunlop in the wet, with second best braking and lateral G, and good aquaplaning numbers, too. It scored best braking in the dry, was third fastest in dry handling and delivered a very strong rolling resistance result, too. However, its subjective scores held it back; its steering felt direct and connected but the tyre didn't deliver positive feedback under pressure in the dry or the wet, and on road its ride was firm and quite noisy.

5TH BRIDGESTONE

Middle-ranking in most of the wet tests, the Bridgestone's positive, grippy feel suggested it ought to have attained a little more, especially around the wet handling circuit. It did deliver in the dry, though, getting within a metre of the best in dry braking and being ranked second in dry handling: 'Stable but changes direction well… confidence-inspiring.' On road it was firm with well weighted steering.

4TH CONTINENTAL

The Continental was impressively close to the performance of the best in the wet tests, scoring especially well in aquaplaning and wet braking, and it was a solid performer subjectively, too. It backed this up with equally strong results in the dry – objective and subjective. It soaked up the pressure to produce accurate, quick, repeatable laps, and on the road its steering was a little dull-feeling at town speeds but great thereafter: 'Gets better the faster you go.'

3RD MICHELIN

Top in both aquaplaning tests and top three in most of the other wet tests, the Michelin Pilot Sport 3 is a great rain tyre, despite the anomalous second to last in the stock wet braking test… 'Delivers security and ability in equal measure.' It didn't shine quite as brightly in the dry tests but felt 'willing and responsive' around the lap and was well liked on the road for suppleness and quietness that were among the best, and its 'nicely weighted, keen steering'. A high-quality tyre.

2ND GOODYEAR

There were plenty of table-topping performances from the Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 2, including wet braking. It was ranked number one subjectively in the wet too – 'unmatched'. Which makes its bottom-ranking aquaplane results rather odd. It sparkled less in the dry tests, being described as 'effective rather than inspiring' as it ground out a decent dry handling time, sentiments that were echoed on the road route, but the lowest rolling resistance cemented an impressive all-round performance.

1ST PIRELLI

There's no doubt about our winner. The Pirelli P Zero puts together a consistent and convincing set of objective test results and subjective scores to take the overall win by a good margin. It topped the wet handling test – 'consistent in its abilities, reassuringly transparent in its intentions' – and dominated dry handling too – 'outstanding steering feel; connected and responsive and with a light, accurate touch'. Its only weak spot is rolling resistance (where it found itself second to last), because on the road it delivered a smooth ride and was 'the only tyre to bring sparkle to the test car's steering'. In a very crowded, very competitive segment of the market, the Pirelli is clearly the best.

FINAL RESULTS

TYRE	%
1. PIRELLI	95.5
2. GOODYEAR	94.6
3. MICHELIN	94.1
4. CONTINENTAL	93.8
5. BRIDGESTONE	91.9
6. DUNLOP	91.6
7. HANKOOK	90.9
8. VREDESTEIN	89.6
9. KUMHO	88.2
10. NEXEN	79.9

DUNLOP
MSA British Touring Car Championship

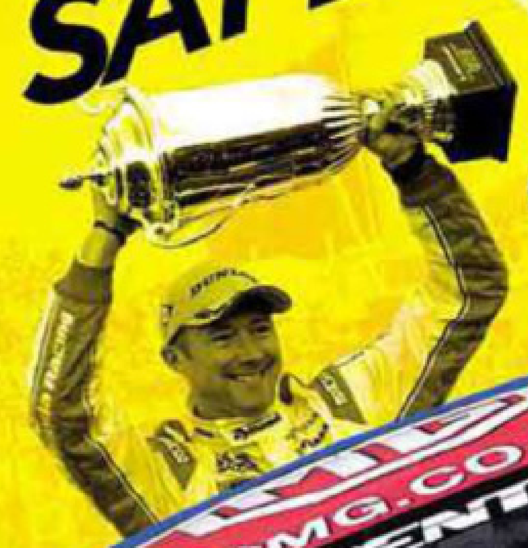
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evo Fast Fleet

'HOW FAST' TRACKDAY

Starring: Morgan 4/4 75, Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe, Lotus Elise S and Vauxhall Astra VXR

The format of a 'How Fast' day couldn't be simpler. You arrive, get your exhaust probed for noise, participate in a quick briefing and then enjoy an hour's practice where you try not to kill your brakes. Following this, you get two timed flying laps where everything you practised goes out the window. You drive two scrappy laps, hitting every cone around the circuit, and then some more on your cooling-down lap (yes, that means you, **evo** art director Paul Lang!).

This year **evo** joined an amazing collection of cars at the Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit for our annual 'How Fast' special. Highlights included Alexis Drew's very sideways Nissan Skyline R32 and Russel Tomkins's rapid modified Mini Cooper S. Vicki Butler-Henderson rolled up with the *Fifth Gear* cameras in tow and a Pug1Off 205 GTI under her derrière, while Duncan Cawper's extraordinary slick-shod Dax Rush MC stole the show with a frankly astonishing 1:14.868 lap time. That's as quick as a Caparo T1, and some 23 seconds faster than our own Henry Catchpole managed in his Morgan 4/4 – although having said that, there were few bigger smiles at Bedford than the one on Henry's face as he climbed out of the Moggie after his timed laps. What a great day.

For more info plus lap times and the leaderboard, visit www.howfast.co.uk

Nick Trott



See more pictures and the 'How Fast' leaderboard at www.evo.co.uk















Top: Catchpole's Morgan, Trott's Mercedes and Lang's Vauxhall wait for their turn against the clock. Above: **evo** staffers and readers learn the rules of How Fast. Above right: Catchpole removes the Morgan's doors to save weight. Right: Trott tops up the oil in the C63 AMG

 Pictures: Max Earey

This month: Nissan 370Z Roadster VW Golf GTI Edition 35 **Vauxhall Astra VXR** Suzuki Swift Sport **Jaguar XF 2.2D** Nissan Navara **Morgan 4/4 75th Anniversary** Mercedes 190E Cosworth **Mercedes C63 AMG Coupe** Mazda MX-5 mk2 **Renaultsport Twingo 133** Lamborghini Countach **Range Rover Evoque** Mini JCW Coupe **Audi A6 Avant quattro 3.0 BiTDI** BMW 520d ED

















'EVERYTHING YOU PRACTISED GOES OUT THE WINDOW'













Notable lap times included Catchpole's Morgan on 1:38.0, VBH in the Pug1Off 205 at 1:34.6, Lang's Astra VXR on 1:28.8, **evo** Lotus Diaries competition winner Martin Pass in an Elise S on 1:26.8 and Trott's C63 on 1:28.1. Duncan Cawper's Dax Rush (centre) set the fastest time: 1:14.868

evo Fast Fleet

END OF TERM: NISSAN 370Z ROADSTER

Date acquired July 2011 **Duration of test** 12 months **Total test mileage** 17,802
Overall mpg 24.5 **Costs** £1281 (five tyres), £526.76 (two services) **Purchase price** £38,836
Trade-in value £22,500 **Depreciation** £16,336

I think it's safe to say that Nissan's 370Z is a grower. Like the 350Z that preceded it and unlike all its obvious rivals, it can come across as a little cumbersome and crude on first acquaintance. I can easily see how you might have a brief test drive in one and decide it isn't for you. But take time to get to know it and eventually it all makes perfect sense. You discover that the Zed is in fact an immensely satisfying thing to drive, with your efforts rewarded and then some.

Thankfully, I had plenty of time to get to know our 370Z Roadster – 12 months and nearly 18,000 miles to be exact. OY11 PUH arrived in July 2011, complete with the GT Pack (19in alloys, suede trim, part-leather seats with heating and cooling, and an eight-speaker Bose audio system), Connect Premium (satnav, a 9.3GB music hard-disk and a rear-view camera), a seven-speed auto gearbox and pearlescent Storm White paint. Although this little lot took the price up from £32,050 to £38,836, such a highly specced 370Z was still considerably cheaper than competitors like the BMW Z4 35i, Mercedes SLK 350 and Porsche Boxster S would have been *basic*.

The automatic transmission may have seemed like an odd choice, but it had been well-received when we group-tested the Zed Roadster back in issue 143, so we thought we'd give it a go long-term. Even though I'm someone who enjoys changing gears the hard way, it's a decision I didn't regret for a second. The 'box was very good at guessing which gear you wanted to be in when left in auto, while flicking the paddles delivered some of the quickest gearchanges that I've ever experienced from a torque converter. Unlike many autos, it always responded, so you constantly felt in complete control and you could always be confident that it would deliver that last-second downshift – complete with rev-matching blip – when braking deep into a corner.



Above: Eveleigh rated drop-top. Below: short seat base hindered driver comfort

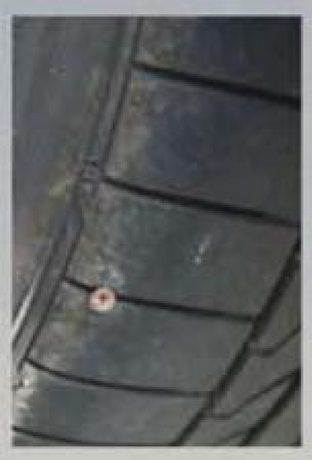


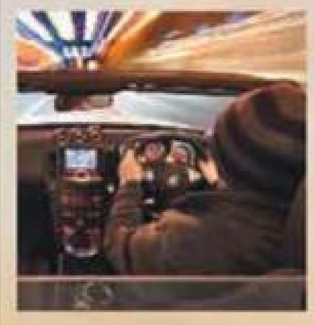
The 3.7-litre V6 it was mated to was a little harder to love. I can't help but admire the way that Nissan offers its Zed with just the one engine choice – no diesels, no underpowered turbo fours – but the V6 never felt truly special, simply because its gruff note didn't send a shiver down your spine. Returning an average of 24.5mpg over our time together made it a bit on thirsty side, too, but its performance was beyond reproach. After 5000 miles, by which time it was nicely run in, it gave its all freely, and with no turbos and therefore no turbo lag, it responded instantly to pressure on the

throttle pedal. There was never any doubt that it had every one of its claimed 326bhp.

Combined with huge grip from its big tyres (on the original Bridgestones, at least; less so on the Dunlops we tried later), you could set a searing pace cross-country. The lack of roof did mean the Roadster's handling wasn't quite as sharp as the coupe 370, but it was marginal stuff far outweighed by the extra sensations of driving without a roof over your head. With meaty, feelsome steering, plenty of feedback through the seat and a chassis that encouraged you to get front and rear working in harmony through a turn, B-road blasts were always engaging.

It was when you weren't wrapped up in mastering the perfect lines on your favourite back road that weaknesses revealed themselves. Road noise was shocking (you could forget about hearing any subtleties in whatever music you might be playing on the excellent stereo), few people could get truly comfortable in the driving seat (some blame the lack of reach adjustment for the steering; I reckon the unusually short seat base might be a contributing factor too) and luggage space was very limited – at a meagre 140 litres, it was half that of a Z4.







Above: puncture meant extra tyre change. Below: boot space was cramped



But otherwise the Zed was easy to live with. The fabric roof proved more than adequate over a hard British winter – and unlike the folding hard-tops of the SLK and Z4 I've run previously, it didn't squeak constantly. The optional rear-view camera made parking a doddle, although with a high rear deck and a hot rod-like slit of a rear window, I can't imagine parking a Zed Roadster without either that or parking sensors. The only maintenance required was a set of new tyres (£1011), one extra tyre to replace a puncture, and two services, both carried out in efficient fashion by Marshall Nissan in Cambridge, the first at 9000 miles (£212), the second at 18,000 miles (costing just over £100 more).

So, it's not perfect, but for people like us it's got an awful lot going for it. A year ago I stated that my main aim with this long-term test was to find out if the drop-top 370 is more enjoyable to live with than the Z4 35i I'd run previously. Not only did it achieve that goal, but I'd go as far as saying that it's the most enjoyable long-termer I've run in my six years at **evo**.

Ian Eveleigh

'WITH A CHASSIS THAT ENCOURAGED YOU TO GET FRONT AND REAR WORKING IN HARMONY THROUGH A TURN, B-ROAD BLASTS WERE ALWAYS ENGAGING'

Storemags.com

Pictures: Ian Eveleigh / Dean Smith

evo Fast Fleet

VW GOLF GTI EDITION 35 & VAUXHALL ASTRA VXR

GTI Date acquired January 2012 **Total mileage** 11,642
Mileage this month 1053 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 26.4
VXR Date acquired July 2012 **Total mileage** 3543
Mileage this month 831 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 25.1

Two more different hot hatches you couldn't hope to find. The Astra VXR is a numbers car; big horsepower, small 0-60mph, built for the rigours of the Nürburgring with huge wheels and an aggressive Aerokit so that everyone knows it. The Golf GTI, however, doesn't shout about anything, even in its slightly ballsier Edition 35 form. It's subtle, it doesn't have class-leading power or performance, and although its engineers probably enjoyed plenty of steak-on-a-stone in a little village near a large track during its development, you wouldn't call it a trackday natural.

But in one way they are direct rivals: the VXR costs £27,990 with the Aerokit, just £490 less than the five-door Edition 35. So should you choose 276bhp, 295lb ft, a mechanical limited-slip diff and a large dose of attitude, or a slightly puny-sounding 232bhp, 221lb ft and understated cool?

Climb into the VXR and it's all buttons and chrome. The engine fires up fast and loud, and when you pull away there's obviously some off-boost lethargy. Then the turbo gets spinning and the torque comes in with a bang, the steering tugs left and right and the exhaust sounds like a blast furnace. It is, you immediately gather, a hardcore car. And then you notice that the ride isn't so bad, that the chassis is responsive but not hyper-agile like a Renaultsport, and that all that Aerokit bluster is just a bit misleading. The Astra is fast and pretty good fun but it's also rather grown-up; there's a bit of Golf GTI in here.

But only a tiny bit: the interior of the VW looks beautifully functional and classy after the heavily festooned centre console of the Astra, and the materials are of an altogether higher order. It may be a cliché, but the Golf really does ooze ownership appeal. The steering is lighter than the VXR's, the ride is a shade more supple, the engine's delivery is much more linear and the car feels very nearly as quick. It scores over the Astra with a sweeter gearbox too, and although the GTI lacks the incisive turn-in of the VXR, it feels more neutral and tweakable thanks to lower grip levels and a rear end keener to shift its balance. But really work the Edition 35 hard and cracks begin to appear. Traction becomes an issue much sooner than in the brilliantly hooked-up VXR, the damping starts to crash and skitter and the steering feels loose and disconnected.

There's no question that the Astra is quicker and more composed, but I wish it didn't feel so heavy. The VXR is neither as refined as the Golf nor as single-minded as a Renaultsport Mégane. Of course, stealing elements of the two defining hot hatches might not be such a bad idea. I regularly yearn for a bit more edge from the Golf and I'm sure there are Mégane drivers who'd kill for more comfort. Maybe the VXR will be the hot hatch for all-round appeal – I guess it's up to the regular keeper of ours, Paul Lang, to determine if that is the case over the coming months… **Jethro Bovingdon**





Top: Golf's gearshift has a nicer action than the Astra's (above). Right: the GTI trails the VXR in the performance stakes







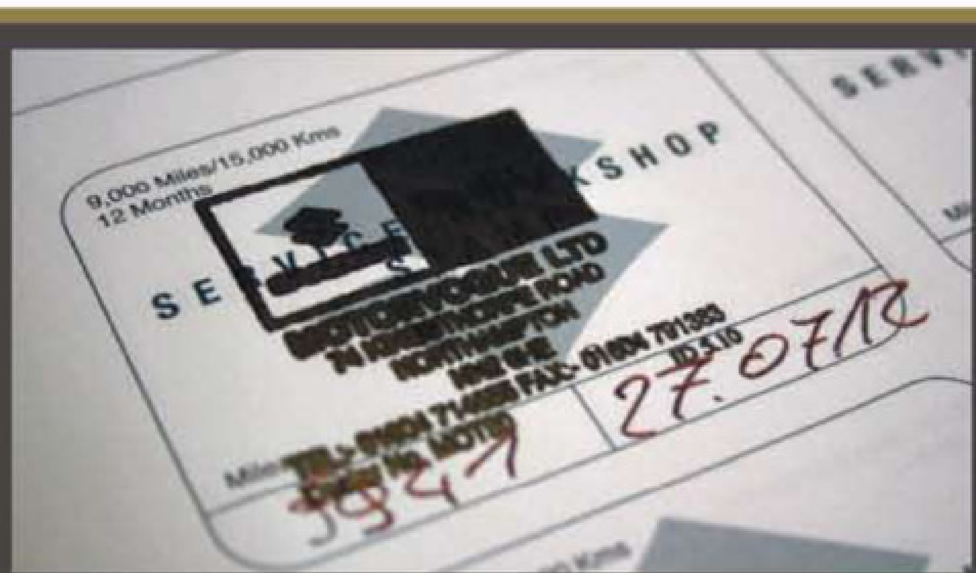
'THE GOLF FEELS MORE TWEAKABLE THANKS TO LOWER GRIP LEVELS AND A REAR KEEN TO SHIFT ITS BALANCE'

SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT

Date acquired February 2012 **Total mileage** 10,300 **Mileage this month** 1298 **Costs this month** £145 (service) **mpg this month** 38.9

I learnt a valuable lesson recently – always double-check your service manual. Half being lazy and half assuming, I ended up driving 600 miles past the first 9000-mile service barrier without realising. With modern cars increasingly going further between services, I'd assumed that the Swift's maiden pit stop would be after at least 10,000 miles. But no. I also read in the manual that there's a free optional 2000-mile service if you want to really take care of your new car; would have been nice if I'd known about it...

'I DROVE PAST THE FIRST SERVICE BARRIER WITHOUT REALISING'



 Pictures: Dean Smith / Ian Eveleigh / Matt Woods / Adam Shorrock

fastfleet@evo.co.uk

Got one of the models featured on our fleet?
email and tell us about your experiences





Above: Suzuki asks for frequent servicing. Left: Shorrock got first stamp (finally)

However, I felt a bit better when I heard that the service regime even caught out **evo** features editor and 'Wiggo' sideburns bearer Henry Catchpole when he ran the previous-generation Swift Sport two years ago (**evo** 152). Henry's service cost £189, which was flagged up as being a little pricey, whereas mine, at Motorvogue in Northampton, was a sensible £145, which seems even more reasonable given that VAT is now at 20 per cent. The service consisted of the typical oil and filter changes, with the added bonus of the Swift being returned immaculate inside and out.

That still doesn't change the fact that if you're covering a high mileage in a Sport you could find yourself having to make two trips to the dealer per year. The costs and inconvenience of such frequent servicing certainly don't look great when compared to the Swift Sport's closest rival and **evo**'s newest long-termer, the Renaultsport Twingo 133 (see later in Fast Fleet).

The 133 costs about the same basic as a Swift Sport, so it'll be more expensive by the time you've specced it to a comparable level. However, the Twingo comes with Renault's '4+' package as standard, which includes four years of warranty, roadside assistance, finance and servicing (at 12,000-mile intervals, with up to four services being allowed in total). If you take into account the potential saving from the free servicing alone, the Renault starts to look like a better buying proposition than the Suzuki.

Adam Shorrock

evo Fast Fleet

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MORGAN 4/4 75

Date acquired December 2011 **Total mileage** 9192 **Mileage this month** 391 **Costs this month** £352.15 (five tyres, fitted) **mpg this month** 35.0

Driving doesn't often feel heroic these days. Gone are the times when you lived in fear of the chain snapping on your Frazer Nash and inflicting a horrific flagellation upon you. No longer do you set off up a one-in-five incline wondering if you'll get to the top (or if your brakes will manage to halt your roll back down). The Morgan has no such worries of course, but hunkered behind the windscreen as the rain lashed down and the triple wipers struggled to clear the torrents raging across the glass, it felt a bit epic as I launched the 4/4 into the corner for Dean's camera.

The beady-eyed amongst you might notice that the Morgan's tyres are slightly skinnier than they were. It originally came on Avon CR6ZZs, which are essentially wet-weather race tyres and come as standard on a Plus 4. Although they looked old-fashioned, they were actually quite a soft compound and the grip they generated felt in excess of what the 4/4's chassis was comfortable with. Contrary to most 'upgrades', I wanted less grip.

'IT TOOK A WHILE TO FIND THE SPANNER THAT GETS THE BIG CENTRE NUTS OFF'

Below: skinnier tyres have given Catchpole's Morgan 4/4 more fluid handling

It took a while to find the spanner that gets the big centre nuts off the wire wheels, but the chaps at Tyres Northampton eventually located it (and the necessary Thor hammer!) in a wooden box under the carpet behind the seats. The new tyres (all five of them) are



JAGUAR XF 2.2D

Date acquired December 2011 **Total mileage** 25,697 **Mileage this month** 1699 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 35.4

Whether it's induction roar, a turbo spinning up or a rumbling exhaust note, the sounds of a car add to the whole driving experience for me. After all, who doesn't enjoy winding down their window as a tunnel heaves into view? Sadly, the XF doesn't really meet any of those audible ideals. But it does have an exceptional stereo.

Bowers & Wilkins is a British company that worked in partnership with Jaguar during the XF's development to ensure its stereo was perfectly integrated into the car. The system comprises 20 strategically positioned speakers, a 15-channel amp pumping out 1200W, surround sound and a sub speaker that's seemingly bigger than a Fiesta's fuel tank. The speaker cones are made of Kevlar, the tweeter domes from man-made diamond and the reflex ports are covered in golf ball-like dimples for better airflow.

The result is a sound like nothing else I





Above: XF is packed with 20 Bowers & Wilkins speakers. Left: system was designed in parallel with XF, but is being phased out for 2013

 Pictures: Dean Smith

Continental Contact CT22s and they're just 165mm in width as opposed to the 185mm of the Avons and are slightly taller in profile.

The benefit of the latter is that it has noticeably improved the ride comfort. But that's just a bonus, because the real aim was to get the car happier in the corners. It now flows through longer bends and gently moves around without feeling like it's putting so much pressure on the chassis – it drives the way you think it should when you look at it. And while the lack off a limited-slip diff means it still isn't a drift king in the dry, in the wet... **Henry Catchpole**



have experienced in any car; it's crystal-clear and completely envelops you. This kind of system for your home would set you back around £8000, but it comes as standard in the 2012 Portfolio-spec XF, and is a mere £2K option in the Luxury version.

I've enjoyed the stereo so much that I've arrived home from work and sat on the drive to let whatever track is playing finish. The Bowers & Wilkins system is a reason for me to consider a Jaguar in the future, so it's such a shame that it's being phased out for the 2013 model year... **Paul Lang**

NEW ARRIVAL: NISSAN NAVARA

Date acquired July 2012 **Total mileage** 1906 **Mileage this month** 1254
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 27.0

It's been four years since **evo** last ran a Nissan Navara; in that example's end-of-term write-up in issue 127, we said that it had been the hardest-working vehicle on the fleet and that it hadn't required a single penny spending on it during its 11-month tenure as a long-termer. As you can imagine, this filled me with plenty of confidence when I was handed the key to our new 3-litre V6 diesel double-cab Navara Outlaw.

Compared to the standard 2.5-litre diesel version, the 3-litre has an extra 41bhp, increasing power to 228bhp, and an additional 74lb ft of torque, taking the total to 406lb ft. A seven-speed automatic gearbox is standard (the 2.5 has a choice of six-speed manual or five-speed auto) and the 0-62mph dash takes just 9.3sec. On top of its extra oomph, the 3-litre V6 seems quieter too, and Nissan claims 29.7mpg on the combined cycle.

As **evo**'s film-maker, I always have lots of gear to take to photoshoots, so I was suitably delighted when the editor suggested a pick-up truck as my long-termer, and this Navara should be just the thing for trying to keep test cars in sight

Right: 3-litre V6 turbodiesel puts out 228bhp. Below: Bose sound system is added luxury. Bottom: Navara is big on size and space





'IT SHOULD GET A CHANCE TO PROVE ITS MUD-PLUGGING CREDENTIALS'

around the **evo** Triangle whilst carrying all that kit. So with chequered shirt and baseball cap at the ready, I'm more than happy to take on the role of trucker.

And why not? Pick-ups are no longer for farmers carrying their veg to market of a morning. This modern truck has all the luxuries of a premium family car – satnav, iPod connectivity, heated leather seats and a Bose speaker system. In fact it has many of the same mod-cons as my last long-termer, the Infiniti EX (itself, of course, part of the Nissan family).

So aside from making the most of its space and pace, what else am I hoping to achieve with the Navara? Well, with its simple but incredibly robust four-wheel-drive system I feel as though it should get a chance to prove its mud-plugging credentials at some stage. The Navara has a limited-slip differential and can be driven in two-wheel drive as well as four-wheel drive, with the third option of low-ratio gearing to help out when climbing very steep terrain or driving off-road. I can't wait to test this properly, but until then, I'll just keep on truckin'! **Sam Riley**



evo Fast Fleet

MERCEDES 190E COSWORTH

Date acquired May 2012 **Total mileage** 157,750
Mileage this month 525 **Costs this month**
£95 (brake pads), £205 (service and brake fitting)
mpg this month 25.1

The problem with not relying on the 190E Cosworth as everyday transport is that remedial jobs tend to slip down the priorities pile. I've no other excuse for taking nearly three months to sort the brakes after I cooked them at the first **evo** track evening of the year. They still worked well enough for everyday road driving afterwards, but after experiencing near-total fade at the Bedford Autodrome, I never trusted them to get hot. Which, let's face it, limits the amount of entertainment you can have in any car.

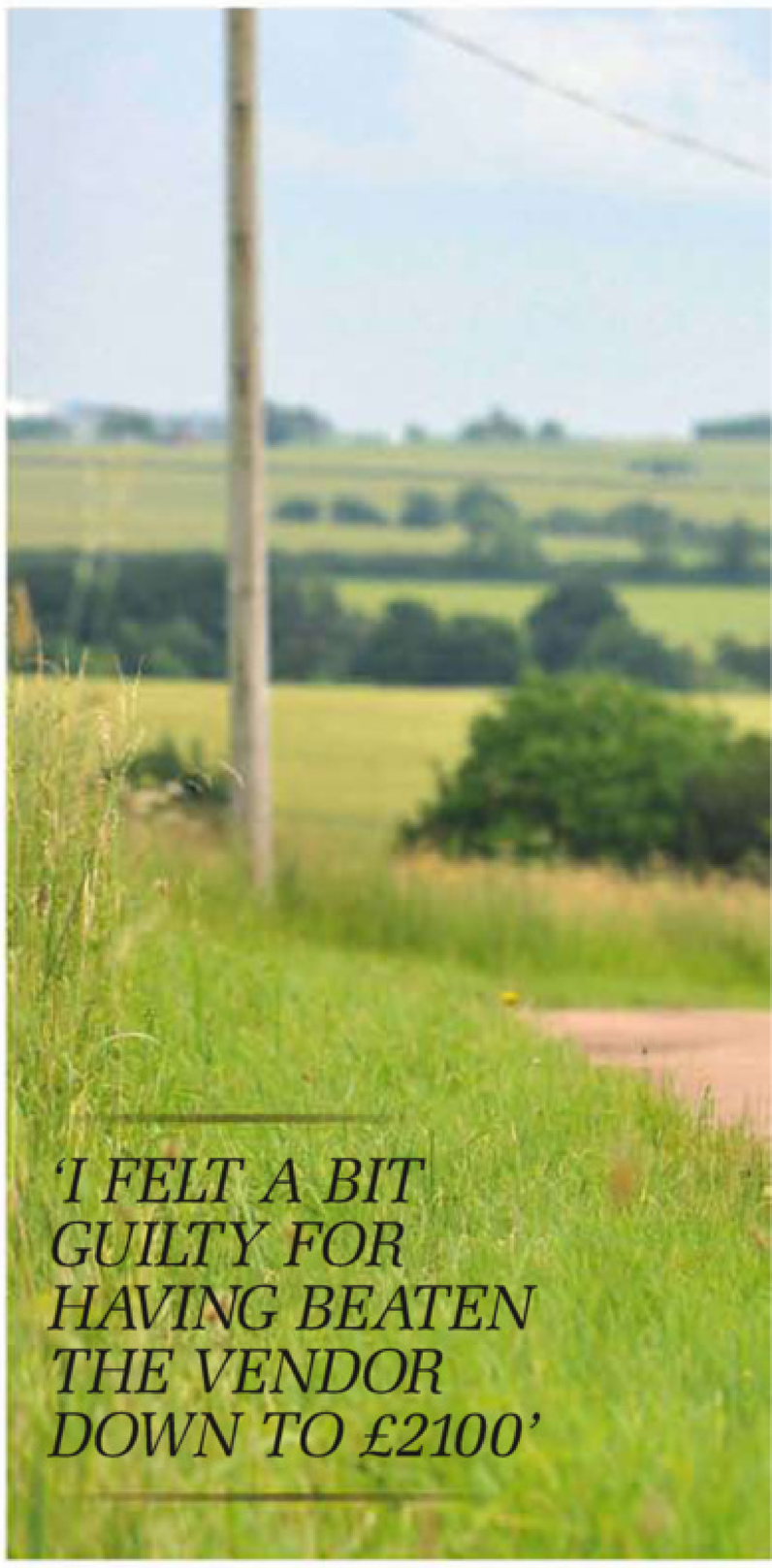


Below: EBC 'Yellowstuff' brake pads have finally restored some stopping power to Duff's Mercedes

The big surprise was just how few aftermarket brake tweaks there seemed to be for the 190E – the normal upgrade route seems to be just to swap for bigger discs. As I want to keep the car as standard as possible, I decided to see if I could get away with a set of high-temperature pads rather than a set of monster discs. I got in touch with EBC Brakes, where technical manager Andrew Bartosiak recommended switching to a set of 'Yellowstuff' pads.

Yellowstuff is EBC's most aggressive road-legal compound (sitting above Greenstuff and Redstuff) but the 190's relatively small discs and my hopes for regular trackday action meant they looked like the best bet, and I was assured they'd still be fine for everyday use. I'll report back on my findings, both on road and track, soon. Watch this space.

I'm normally too tight to pay somebody else to fit brake pads, but as the 190E was already due for an oil service, I decided to dig a bit deeper and save my knuckles from the skinning they usually get when I clutch a spanner. Mercedes specialist Auto Class in Milton Keynes did both jobs – £145 for the service, £60 to fit the pads. They also gave the Merc more or less a clean bill of health, so now I've got no excuse not to start using it regularly. **Mike Duff**



'I FELT A BIT GUILTY FOR HAVING BEATEN THE VENDOR DOWN TO £2100'

MERCEDES C63 AMG COUPE

Date acquired April 2012 **Total mileage** 9995
Mileage this month 1643 **Costs this month**
£10.16 (1-litre oil) **mpg this month** 20.2

The indicator on the dash tells me that I've got another 2900 miles before my AMG needs a service. Currently, the C63 feels bulletproof – I've had not a squeak or rattle from the interior and other than a litre of oil, I've not given maintenance a second thought. Even the mpg has climbed – albeit by 0.3. I'm now proudly driving a car that delivers fuel consumption in the 20s (well, 20.2mpg…).

The interior is wearing very well – even the Designo red leather on the driver's seat bolster is relatively scuff-free. The only blemish is a small scratch on the carbonfibre trim above the glovebox. I've no idea how it got there, but it draws my eye like a hairy mole on a supermodel's face – how can I remove it?

In other news, a trip to the Wilton House supercar show in the C63 proved fun. On my arrival I was asked to join a convoy of supercars into the grounds – embarrassing, really, as the C63 was filthy and I was signalled to park between an Aston V12 Vantage and a Porsche GT3 RS 4-litre. It has to be said that the C63 fortunately didn't look too out of place in this company – is there nothing it can't do? **Nick Trott**



Above: only oil required so far. Below: C63 blended in with supercars



NEW ARRIVAL: MAZDA MX-5 1.8i

Date acquired April 2012 **Total mileage** 109,309 **Mileage this month** 1101 **Costs this month** £232 (exhaust), £176 (induction kit), £42 (oil and filter) **mpg this month** 31.0

I'd read all the buying guides. Hell, I'd even written some of them. So I knew exactly what to look out for when searching for an MX-5. And when I found one with sills bubblier than an '80s footballer's perm, clearly the only course of action was to walk away.

In my defence, it wasn't any old MX-5. It was a 1.8i Euphonic with a set of 16in Enkeis, a limited-slip diff, the bigger brakes of the Sport, 146bhp VVT-i, leather trim, Velocity Red Mica paint and a snazzy (for 2004) Sony hi-fi. What's more, it was only half a mile from home and it was only a little over budget. Besides, how rusty could an eight-year-old MX-5 actually be?

The price in the window was £2250, which seemed very reasonable for a 2004 MX-5

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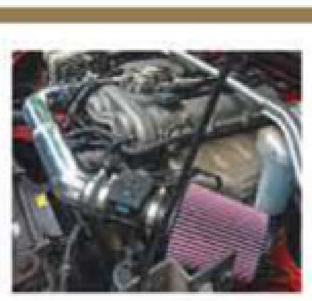
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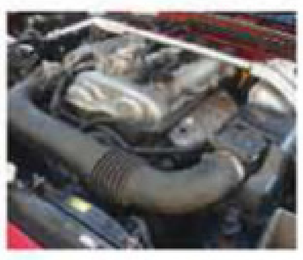


– even one with Kevin Keegan hiding in the sills. I only discovered just how reasonable when I looked up similar Euphonics online afterwards. The cheapest was £3500 and most were £4000 or more. So I felt a bit guilty for having just beaten the vendor down to £2100, although I justified it by pointing to the semi-slick rear tyres.

It came with a fresh MOT and a pleasingly full service history but in some respects it had been rather neglected. The wheels were scabby; the underbonnet scruffy. More







Above: K&N induction kit dramatically improved MX-5 sound. Left: replacement exhaust rear box was well worth £232

importantly, no-one had cleared the drain holes in the rear wings. If they're blocked, water collects in the rear of the sills, which then go very rusty within just a few years, as this car demonstrates. I've unblocked them but I fear new metal will have to be welded in; mercifully the rest of the structure doesn't look too bad and I've ordered a rust-proofing kit to try to keep it that way.

The next job was to change the oil in the engine and diff; I wanted to change the gearbox oil too, but the bolts holding the protective steel plate underneath are rusted solid and resisted wave after wave of WD40.

What was really bugging me, though – and not without a degree of irony given the car's Euphonic tag – was the fact the engine sounded so darn dull. Applying the principles of **evo**nomics, I figured that since I'd bought the car for less than the going rate, I could splash out on a few goodies (conveniently ignoring the fact that I'd already spent my budget). The exhaust's rear box looked pretty rusty, so I logged on to mx5parts.co.uk and ordered an IL Motorsport stainless pipe. Then, dangerously, I started looking at induction systems and before I knew it, I'd also ordered a K&N Typhoon kit.

The latter I was able to fit myself one sunny Sunday morning, junking a large pile of ugly plastic trunking in the process. K&N claims a small increase in bhp, but I'd defy anyone to notice it. Throttle response was slightly sharper, but the big news was the noise: a subtle hiss at tickover, a real snort under full load, a blare at high revs and a carb-like cough when heel-and-toeing.

Rusted studs meant I had to ask my local Kwik-Fit to remove the old back-box and bolt on the shiny new one. They charged £33, but the 'classic '60s Brit' growl to complement the induction roar was worth it. In short, the MX-5 now sounds like a sports car. Next on the list: replace the semi-slicks and stop the rot.

Peter Tomalin

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NEW ARRIVAL: RENAULTSPORT TWINGO 133

Date acquired August 2012 **Total mileage** 1140 **Mileage this month** 451
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 35.3

Yes, this is the very same Twingo you can see going head-to-head with a Suzuki Swift Sport earlier in this issue. I won't give away the verdict of that test here in case you haven't read it yet, but now the little Renaultsport has joined our Fast Fleet it faces a very different challenge, namely whether it works as a car to live with, day in, day out.

It's got its work cut out. For starters my daily commute is an 85-mile round trip – a big ask for a small car – and the Twingo is following in the tyre tracks of some pretty desirable long-termers: in recent years I've had the pleasure of running a Nissan 370Z Roadster, BMW Z4 35i and a Mercedes SLK350 to name but three.

So what does our new arrival have in its armoury to help it fight its cause? First up there's a kerb weight of just 1050kg, which puts it amongst the lightest performance cars on sale. With its naturally aspirated 1.6-litre engine producing 131bhp, that gives a power-to-weight ratio of 127bhp/ton and a 0-62mph time of 8.7sec. Oh, and a welcome 43.5mpg on the combined cycle.

But just because the 133 is a bit of a flyweight and is based on an entry-level model, don't go thinking it's short of kit. Standard equipment includes air-con, Bluetooth, cruise control and tinted rear windows. In fact we've added just two options to our car: one is the Renaultsport Monitor, which shows 0-62mph times, G readings, lap times and the like on the central display; the other, of course, is the Cup chassis, which brings 17in alloys with 195/40 R17 tyres, a lower ride height and firmer springs and dampers. At £125 and £700 respectively, these options take our Twingo's price up from £13,565 to £14,390.

'131BHP IS AN AMPLE AMOUNT OF POWER IN A CAR OF THIS SIZE'

At this point I should probably mention the facelift. As with most Renault mid-life refreshes, it's probably safe to say that this one hasn't been met with universal approval. But compared to the rather dated face it replaces, I'd say it's a distinct improvement, and it brings the looks neatly in line with the current Clio and Mégane.



Also new are revised rear lights and a larger-than-before standard tailgate spoiler, while the chunky Renaultsport body kit is still present and most definitely correct. Inside there are supportive seats, now complete with yellow stitching, 'RS' logos on the headrests, and bolsters trimmed in white leather(!). The steering wheel gets a matching section of white leather too.

So, first impressions? 131bhp is an ample amount of power in a car of this size, the shift of the five-speed gearbox feels a little tight (hopefully it'll get smoother with use), and the ride is firm. Very firm. But the payback is outstanding handling of the type we've come to expect from Renaultsport chassis, especially those of the Cup variety. In short, I'm having a heck of a lot of fun. Long may it continue... **Ian Eveleigh**

Top: facelifted 133 is the first Twingo we've run on our fleet. Above: white leather inserts make a bold statement inside

 Pictures: Ian Eveleigh

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JAGUAR XJR

I said last month that the Jag was definitely for sale. Then I remembered that my in-laws are visiting from the US at the end of the month and there's no better way to show them the sights than in a very woody, very leathery Jag-waaar. So the XJR stays until it's finished keeping the British end up. **Richard Porter**

MINI JCW COUPE

The Mini Coupe is built in Britain alongside the almost-identical Roadster, so it's been interesting to try the soft-top against my JCW. Good bits? The Roadster allows easy access to the UK's fleeting sunshine, its half-electric, half-manual roof dropping (when below 20mph) in 10sec. Doing so reveals the wee turbo four's rorty soundtrack much more than in the Coupe, too. Bad bits? Noticeable scuttle shake (though negligible given the fast Mini's already-unremitting ride), more wind noise, 40 litres less bootspace than in my car, and at £24,755, it's a grand more. **Stephen Dobie**

RANGE ROVER EVOQUE

The Evoque's touch-screen display has never been one of my favourite bits of the car and it seems to be getting even less sensitive recently. Navigating between satnav and audio functions is becoming slower and more frustrating, and it doesn't help that the screen is almost impossible to read in bright sunlight. It's a chink in the armour. **Mike Duff**

BMW 520d EFFICIENT DYNAMICS

A recent house move has allowed me to take the 520d onto more entertaining roads of late. The result is a new-found respect for its suppleness and chassis balance. It's not done the fuel economy much good though, with my monthly average falling to 43.4mpg. Still, I'm sure I'll yearn for that level of parsimony when my new long-termer arrives next month... **Richard Meaden**

AUDI A6 AVANT 3.0 BiTDI

Whilst slowing down, the Audi's Tiptronic gearbox occasionally likes to hold on to third gear for longer than it should and then thumps into second. It makes braking feel slightly clumsy, though I admit that swapping eight cogs through the glut of roundabouts in Milton Keynes can't be easy. I'll mention it at its service in a few weeks, so fingers crossed it behaves until then. **Dean Smith**



HARRY'S GARAGE: LAMBORGHINI COUNTACH

Date acquired September 2010 **Total mileage** 36,048 **Mileage this month** 570 **Costs this month** £1434 (tyres) **mpg this month** 14.1

As you may have read in **evo** last month, I now have a brand-new set of Pirelli tyres, self-made by hand, for the Countach.

One thing I was surprised to discover at Pirelli's factory in Turkey was that the same rubber compound and construction is used for its so-called 'classic' tyres as for its extreme road tyre, the P Zero Corsa. This means my new tyres should deliver better high-speed performance and wet grip than a set built to the exact spec of the original Countach tyre, the Pirelli P7, would.

I was extremely excited when I got the call from Tyres Northampton to tell me that my new tyres had arrived and I whisked the Countach over to get them fitted. But on the way home, while the grip on the new rubber seemed as good as the tyres they replaced, there was a niggling feeling that the steering wasn't as direct as before. Several hundred miles later and that feeling hasn't gone away, and I'm now in no doubt that the turn-in was better on the Hankook Ventus RS2s I previously ran. Which leaves me with a conundrum: do I stick with the fab-looking (and historically more in keeping) Pirellis, or revert to the part-worn Hankooks?

Above: Harry's self-made tyres get fitted. Below: Balboni (left) marvelled at electric power steering conversion. Bottom: tall tread blocks causing some handling issues



'THE TALL TREAD BLOCKS MEAN THE TYRES SQUIRM WHEN CORNERING'



I called Pirelli to see if it could explain what was going on. It turns out the 'problem' is due to tread design moving on massively since the original P7 was designed. The combination of today's softer compounds and the tall tread blocks of the P7 pattern (adopted for my new set) means the tyres 'squirm' more than they should when cornering. Most Countach owners don't complain because most don't drive their cars much, but I do, and I've been spoilt by the excellent performance of the Hankooks. One option is to buff the tyres to lower the tread blocks (something I used to do when competing in hill climbs years ago). The other is to live with the 'squirm' for now and see how quickly I can wear the tyres out.

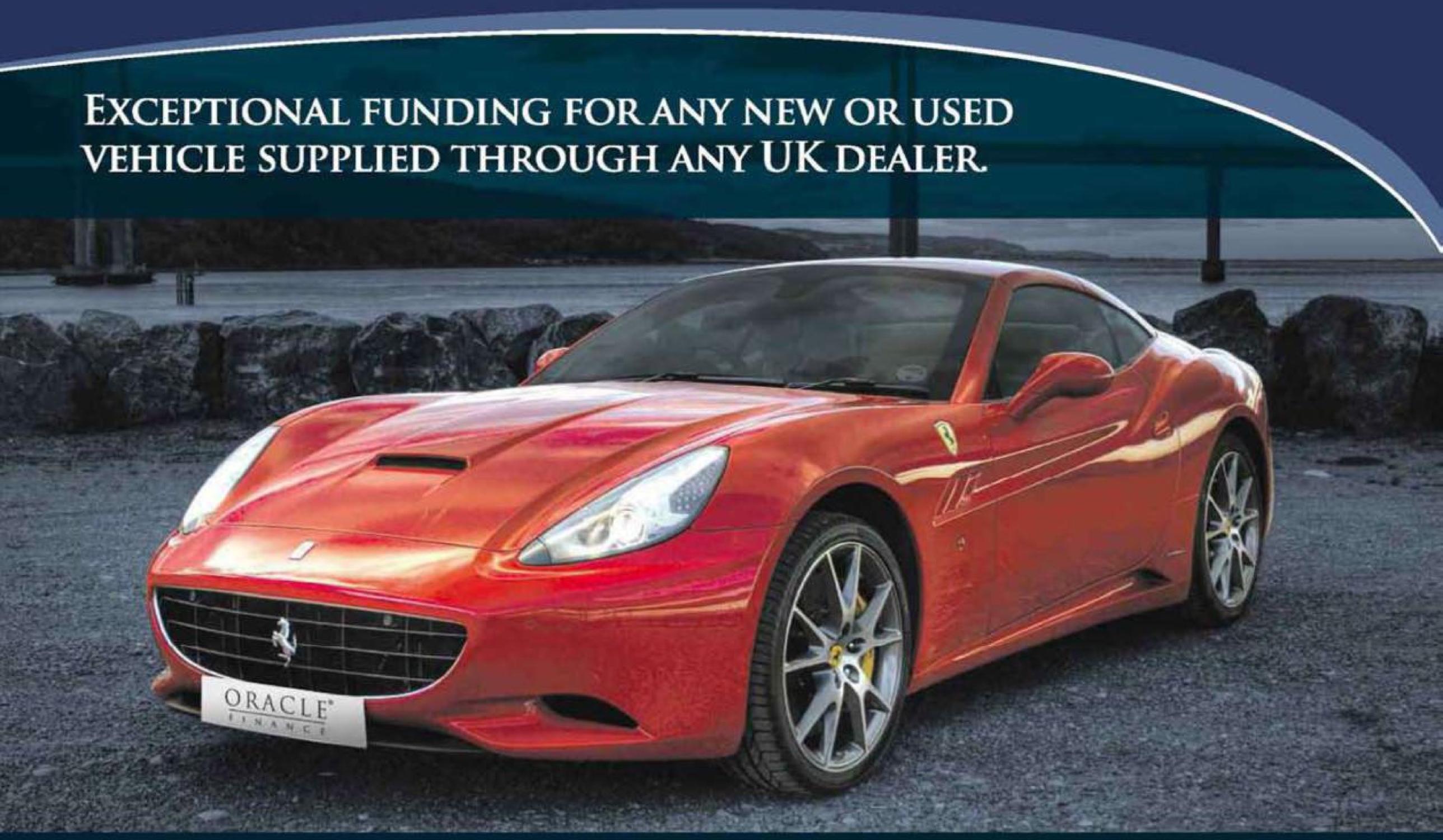
I ran the Countach to the Silverstone Classic this month to join some other Lamborghini owners and it was a treat to catch up with former Lambo test driver Valentino Balboni there. He was fascinated by the EZ power steering I've had fitted to my car (**evo** 170) and couldn't get over how compact and hidden away it was. It was a shame he didn't get to try it out, but with the Lamborghini 50th anniversary bash at Sant'Agata coming up next May, I promised him I'd bring the Countach over so he could have a proper drive then. Now that'll bed the front tyres in nicely... **Harry Metcalfe**

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Pictures: Harry Metcalfe

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ASK THE EXPERT

Q I'm torn between a used Mercedes E63 AMG or BMW M5. Which would you go for? Also, if money was no object, what would be your choice between E63 and CLS63? **Ian Chuang**



Above: E63 is an easier car to live with day-to-day than the more highly strung V10 M5

A Choosing between the E63 and M5 is tough, but what I find interesting is that while most road-testers say they prefer the M5 (E60) for its racy V10 and extreme character, owners say the car can be a pain to live with and often prefer the more laid-back nature of the E63.

The E63's V8s are peachy, be it the naturally aspirated 6.2 of '06-'09 or the later twin-turbo 5.5; there's real punch lower down then plenty of firepower as they snarl to the red line. The E63's auto gearbox is also much easier to live with than the awkward single-clutch automated manual the M5 is plagued with, and it's only at the outer limits where the M5 starts winning points back for its more precise chassis.

As for the CLS63, it's a more elegant design than the E63, but is a strict four-seater, so the choice between them depends on whether it's internal space or cool design that's more important to you. **HM**

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MARKET WATCH



RS6 IS THIRST CHOICE

Low mpg makes fast Audi a bargain. Plus, big savings on ex-rentals

Ever fancied buying an ex-rental car for not a lot of money? Well, Hertz has just launched a new 'Rent2Buy' scheme in the UK (www.hertzcarsales.co.uk), which allows you to browse through the cars it is about to dispose of. If you see one that takes your fancy, you can book it online, pick it up a few days later and enjoy a ten-day test drive. The only slight catch is that you will be charged a minimal hire fee should you not purchase the car at the end of the test drive, but this seems to me to be a great way to get to know if your chosen car really suits your needs.

I had a look at what's on offer at the moment and, as you might expect, many of the cars were pretty pedestrian. Highlights included two-year-old Abarth 500s at around £9500, or low-mileage, year-old Ford Focus 1.6 TDCi Sports for around £10,000. What will be interesting to see is whether Hertz starts selling off its 'Prestige Collection' fleet this way too. If it does, then look out for some real bargains coming up for grabs.

Talking of which, bargains continue to appear in the classifieds, especially models that have a perceived mpg problem. If you're not doing huge mileages, then it's well worth taking a look at what's on offer as the difference in overall fuel costs is never as much as you think. A 2004 Audi RS6 with 60-70,000 miles on the clock can now be had for well under £15,000, as can Mercedes E55 estates and BMW M5s of the same vintage. That's mega money for a fast German family holdall. Happy hunting!

Harry Metcalfe
Editorial director



Auction watch

Records broken as top-end classics fetch big money at Monterey Car Week auctions



Long-wheelbase California Spider was one of only nine made with a lightweight alloy body

California's Monterey Car Week is an amazing spectacle. For some it's an opportunity to show off at the Pebble Beach concours, for others a chance to see some seriously exotic cars racing at Laguna Seca, but for many it's the best place to buy or sell, with thousands of classic cars being offered by different auction houses.

This year some amazing prices were achieved, with RM Auctions selling a 1968 Ford GT40 Gulf/Mirage lightweight race car for $11m (£6.9m) – not only a world record for a GT40, but also the most expensive US-built car ever sold at auction.

In total, £164m was raised in sales over the week. Gooding and Company sold the two most expensive cars: a 1936 Mercedes-Benz 540K Special Roadster for $11,770,000 (£7.4m), and a 1960 Ferrari 250 GT California LWB Competizione Spider at $11,275,000 (£7.1m).



GT40 that sold for $11m was used as a camera car on the movie *Le Mans*

Big numbers all-round then, and important proof for many that there's still huge confidence at the very top end of the market. **Matthew Hayward**

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NEW FEATURE: CARS FOR SALE, POWERED BY evo

£100,000 CHALLENGE

'I FOUND THREE CARS THAT I'D BUY IN A FLASH'

Welcome to the first 'Fantasy Garage' – a new regular feature in **evo**. If I'm honest, the title is a bit misleading as all the cars featured are available to buy (at the time of writing) via Cars For Sale – the newest (and fastest) car search engine online, powered by **evo**.

Every month I'll set an **evo** staffer a challenge to find a car, or cars, for a fixed budget. This month I've set, er, me a challenge to find three cars – a toy, a sports car or GT and a daily driver – for £100,000. It wasn't the most irksome of tasks as a) the website is easy to use (I would say that, but it's true), and b) scanning the classifieds is always fun.

I got distracted during my search by a De Tomaso Pantera and a quick check of my savings account to see if I could afford it (I can't), but when I got over the disappointment I found three cars that, if I had £100K, I'd buy in a flash. In fact, that Noble is looking particularly tempting...



Nick Trott
Editor



THE TOY NOBLE M12 GTO

Chassis performance and fear factor win Trott over

I had the biggest 'moment' I've ever had on the road in a Noble. It was a wide, wet two-lane roundabout. I pushed the accelerator pedal too hard, and – *whoosh!* – the rear wheels span as fast as the turbos spooled and I travelled 30ft on full opposite lock. A following colleague pulled alongside and applauded; he didn't know I was totally out of control.

So why pick the Noble? Total chassis brilliance. Few cars, even today, manage such levels of interactivity, precision and balance – and few cars will stick with a Noble on a trackday.

That's why it's my toy. Despite the fact that one tried to kill me.

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FROM THE FORUMS

We put the same challenge to our forum users, with unsurprisingly diverse results. Duncs500 chose to spend the majority of the fantasy cash on the 'toy' – a **Lamborghini Diablo VT** at £89,950. He then used the remaining pennies on a **Nissan 300ZX** at £2495 and a **Lotus Elan SE** at £7500.

Regular forum user Marv found a far more practical selection of cars – well, sort of. A **Porsche 928 GTS** at £18,000 was chosen for its GT abilities, then a £34,000 **Exige S2** for trackday fun and a £48,000 **Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Estate** daily driver.

To see more results, look for the 'New **evo** mag feature' thread on the **evo** forums (in the '**evo** magazine' sub-category) or visit forsale.evo.co.uk

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THE SPORTS CAR/GT PORSCHE 911 TURBO (997)

Obvious, perhaps, but little else would fit my needs. I searched for a DB9 or a Vanquish as I'd sometimes need rear seats, but then the 911's lure took over.

Only the Nissan GT-R is maybe a better all-weather supercar, but the compactness of the 911 appeals. This car is stunning, too – black, a manual gearbox and the Sport Chrono Package. 193mph for £50K. Perfect.

FOR SALE

Mileage 36,975
Price £49,999
Search 'Porsche 911 Turbo £50,000'
Seller Stratton Motor Company at forsale.evo.co.uk





DAILY DRIVER BMW M5 TOURING (E61)

I wasn't looking for this – my initial search for 'AMG estate' revealed a few C-classes, but with two small kids I'd need something bigger. So I popped 'BMW estate' into the search function and this beauty leapt off the page.

What's not to like about the E61 M5 Touring? We'll never see another car like it – a race-bred V10 engine matched to an Ikea-friendly boot area. Just brilliant.

FOR SALE

Mileage 30,851
Price £27,500
Search 'M5 Touring'
Seller Munich Legends at forsale.evo.co.uk





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LHD in Black, £80,000 restoration recentlty completed. Flawless.
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1998 993 Turbo (Pictured)
High spec car with blue interior, 'S' Wing and 546bhp engine
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FERRARI 458 ITALIA £174,950

Vendor William Loughran, Lancashire
www.williamloughran.co.uk 01772 613114

Whether you're swayed by having a celebrity's name on your V5 or not, this car has something to shout about. Its previous owner was Chris Evans, the ginger-haired DJ who's owned more than his fair share of Ferraris. He ought to know how to properly spec one new, then...

His 458 Italia is no exception. Its Vinaccia (i.e. aubergine, i.e. purple) paint will probably divide opinion, but it looks mega in the metal, appearing black from a distance but transforming the closer you get to it. It's a well-specced car inside, with a pair of ace black leather and Alcantara carbonfibre sports seats, and it's all been meticulously well kept. Among the other options Evans ticked are carbon-ceramic brakes (with yellow calipers), an iPod connection, satnav and parking sensors (front and rear).

Underneath all that, of course, is a darn good supercar – our current favourite, in fact, after the 458 beat the McLaren MP4-12C last year (**evo** 159). With under 6000 miles on the clock and in impeccable condition, this Ferrari is practically as new. Specing a factory-fresh car to the same level would cost nigh on £200,000. The parking sensors alone cost £1448, while that paint is over £7K. And you'd have to wait for it...

Stephen Dobie









Above: Vinaccia paint is deceptive from a distance. Left: Evans has kept interior immaculate. Below: yellow calipers and Alcantara seats add extra class

SPECIFICATION

Year 2010
Mileage 5560
Engine V8, 4497cc
Max power 562bhp @ 9000rpm
Max torque 398lb ft @ 6000rpm
0-60mph 3.2 sec
Top speed 202mph (claimed)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR
» It's spotless and you won't see another like it

INTERIOR
» Breakfast DJs clearly know how to spec a car and keep it clean

MECHANICALS
» Low mileage and two years of warranty left

VERDICT
» No waiting list, unique spec, same price as a basic new car – sounds like a good deal!

ALSO FROM THIS DEALER

FERRARI ENZO
£900,000, 2005, 2173 miles
» Classiche Certification, rare black paintwork

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2009 Porsche 911 Turbo CAB £65,995



09 Reg, Gen2, Seal Grey with Full Black Leather Interior & Dash, Black Hood, 6 Speed Manual, Onboard Computer, Climate Control & AirCon, Newest touchscreen SatNav & Phone, PSM, Adaptive Heated Electric Memory Sports Seats With Lumbar, Multifuctional Steering Wheel, Litronic Lights, Chrono Pack & Sport Plus, Bose, Rear Park Assist, 19" Turbo Alloys, Only 33,000 Miles, A stunning car in excellent condition.

2002 Ferrari 360 Modena Spider 3.6 V8 F1 £49,995



Ferrari 360 Modena Spider 3.6 V8 F1 in Rosso Corsa Red with Champagne Leather Interior & Blue Trim, Only 25,000 Miles, F1 Gear Box, Ferrari Encrested Sports Seats, Air Con, Traction Control, ASR, Electric Windows, Parrot, CD Player, Bizenon Lights, Heated Door Mirrors, Billet Aluminium Fuel Cap, 18" 5 Spoke Alloys, New hood worth £4000.00, All belts changed on recent service, A stunning car that handles superbly.

2007 Porsche C4S Wide Bodied Coupe Manual £33,995



In Basalt Black with Graphite dark grey Leather Interior, Only 32,000 Miles, Onboard Computer,PASM, PSM, Sat Nav, Cruise Control, Climate Control & AirCon, Autodim Mirrors & Rain Sensor, Litronic Lights, Rear Park Assist, VTS, 19" Turbo Alloys, FSH, A stunning car throughout.

2005 Porsche Carrera 3.8 S Manual £29,995



Seal Grey with Full Black Leather Interior & Matching Black Hood, Leather Dash, Heated Comfort Leather Seats, 6 Speed Manual, Only 36,000 Miles, Onboard Computer, PSM, PASM, AirCon & Climate Control, Sat Nav & Phone, CD Player, Litronic Lights, Home Light, 19" Alloys, PX Welcome, A stunning example.

2005 Porsche Carrera 3.8 S Tiptronic £25,995



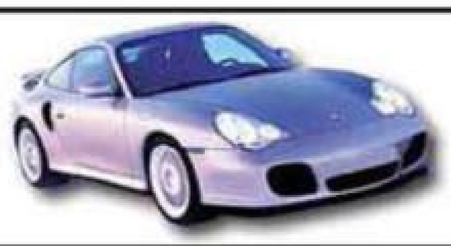
55 reg in Artic Silver metallic,with Black Hide Interior, Onboard Computer, Air Con & Climate Control, Phone, Sat Nav, PSM, Comfort Heated Seats, Multifuctional Steering Wheel, Litronic Lights, Rear Park Assist, 19" Alloys, 54,000 Miles, sold by us before and still in excellent condition throughout.

2005 Porsche 911 Widebodied C4S Tip Coupe £22,995



05 reg in Lapis Blue metallic with Metropole Blue Hide Interior, Tiptronic, Only 37,000 Miles, Onboard Computer, Air Con & Climate Control, SatNav & Phone, CD Player with Bose, Cruise Control, PSM, Comfort Seats, 18" Alloys, full service history and in really lovely condition throughout.

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911 (997) TURBO 3.6 (06 - 2006)
Silver with black leather, sat nav, 42,000 miles.....**£45,000**



911 (997) "C2S" 3.8 (05 - 2005)
Silver with black leather, sat nav, 49,000 miles.....**£29,000**



911 (997) "C2S" 3.8 TIP (55 - 2005)
Basalt black with black leather, sat nav, 54,000 miles.....**£39,000**



911 (997) "C2S" 3.8 TIP (54 - 2004)
Seal grey with ocean blue leather, sat nav, 46,000 miles.....**£28,000**



911 (996) TURBO CAB 3.6 TIP (04 - 2004)
Silver with black leather, sat nav, 34,000 miles.....**£34,000**



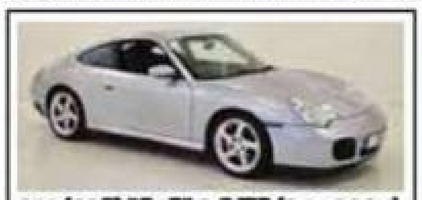
911 (996) TURBO "X50" TIP 3.6 (02 - 2002)
Silver with black leather, sat nav, 37,000 miles.....**£32,000**



911 (996) TURBO 3.6 TIP (Y - 2001)
Silver with black leather, sat nav, 52,000 miles.....**£26,000**



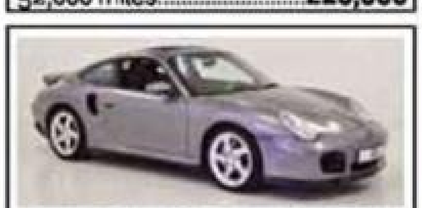
911 (996) TURBO "S" 3.6 (05 - 2005)
GT Silver with black leather, sat nav, 31,000 miles.....**£38,000**



911 (996) "C4S" 3.6 TIP (04 - 2004)
Polar silver with black leather, sat nav, 49,000 miles.....**£23,000**



911 (996) TURBO 3.6 (54 -2004)
Basalt Black with black leather, sat nav, 18,000 miles.....**£37,000**



911 (996) TURBO 3.6 TIP (52 -2002)
Seal Grey with black leather, sat nav, 41,000 miles.....**£30,000**



CAYMAN "S" 3.4 (06 - 2006)
Silver with black leather, sat nav, 43,000 miles.....**£23,000**



CAYMAN "S" 3.4 (56 - 2006)
Cobalt blue with black leather, sat nav, 46,000 miles.....**£22,000**



CAYMAN "S" 3.4 TIP (56 - 2006)
Cobalt blue with black leather, sat nav, 26,000 miles.....**£22,000**

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AUDI R8 V8 £52,995

Vendor Amari, Lancashire
www.amarisupercars.com 01772 663777

When **evo** first group tested the Audi R8 in 2007 (issue 106), a basic V8 coupe cost £76,725. The latest, mildly facelifted version kicks off at a far chunkier £91,575. Put in that sort of context, Amari's £53K scarlet red example is close to being a half-price hero.

Being an 'entry-level' V8 does it no harm, of course: it's our sports coupe of choice, beating the Nissan GT-R and new Porsche 911 earlier this year (**evo** 168). It's also got the great, open-gate six-speed manual gearbox we like so much in R8s; it's a lovely antidote to the increasing stream of auto-only sports cars.

Despite its relatively low price, this R8 is healthily kitted out. Among the spec highlights are satnav, a Bang & Olufsen stereo (with CD changer) and xenon headlights. It also boasts the proper carbon side blades. More questionable is the interior; the sports seats are part-leather, part-Alcantara and finished in what Audi calls 'Pale Grey'. We'd call it 'beige'. It's all very well-kept, though, and makes a welcome change from a dour black cabin.

With just 16,000 miles to its name, a recent service and a full valet before sale, this R8 looks and feels as good as new while costing nearly £40K less – and that's before you consider its lengthy spec list. If your heart's set on an R8, this is a good 'un.

Stephen Dobie





Above and left: keenly priced R8 is in tip-top conditon outside and in. Below: seat finishing is dull but the pull of the V8 engine makes up for it





SPECIFICATION

Year 2008
Mileage 16,000
Engine V8, 4163cc
Max power 414bhp @ 7800rpm
Max torque 317lb ft @ 4500rpm
0-60mph 4.1 sec
Top speed 187mph (claimed)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR
» Glorious in red, proper side blades, immaculate

INTERIOR
» Trim unusual, B&O stereo desirable

MECHANICALS
» V8 engine and manual gearbox makes for our favourite R8. Low mileage and FSH, too

VERDICT
» Well-specced, great price, what's not to like?

ALSO FROM THIS DEALER

ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH
£54,995, 2002, 37,377 miles
» Skye Silver, Charcoal leather, full service history

PORSCHE 997 GT2 CLUBSPORT
£84,995, 2008, 10,016 miles
» Guards Red, Clubsport interior, satnav, cruise and climate, full Porsche service history

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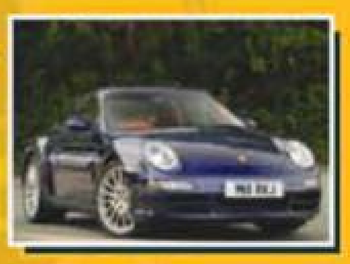
2012 LOTUS ELISE 1.8 S 220 TOURING Finished in Chrome Orange with Black Leather trim, 500 miles
£38,950



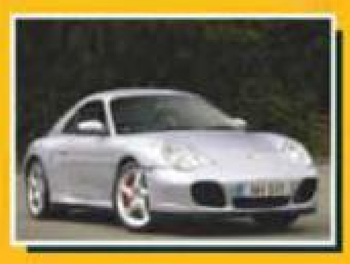
2008 AUDI R8 V8 4.2 FSI QUATTRO Finished in Metallic Black with Grey Leather trim, 44,000 miles
£47,950



2006 PORSCHE 911 CARRERA 3.6 TIPTRONIC S Finished in Lapis Blue with Terracotta Leather trim, 26,900 miles
£27,950



2004 PORSCHE 911 CARRERA 4S TIPTRONIC CABRIOLET Finished in Polar Silver with Dark Blue Leather trim, 62,000 miles
£22,950



2009 PORSCHE BOXSTER 3.4 S Finished in Aqua Blue with Black Leather trim, 19,000 miles
£25,950



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1998 TVR GRIFFITH 5.0 V8 Finished in Yellow with Dark Blue Leather trim, 47,900 miles
£16,450





FORD FOCUS RS

The mk2 Focus RS has a fanatical following – not least among tuners, who squeeze as much as 400bhp from its turbo engine. ***Peter Tomalin*** *is your guide to the used market*

A hot hatch with the visual clout of a Lamborghini: if the mk1 Focus RS had been fairly subtle by fast Ford standards, its successor, launched to a slack-jawed world in January 2009, was an all-out assault on the eyeballs. The barrage began with a small acreage of black mesh grilles, continued through pumped-up bodywork peppered with ducts and vents, and ended with a giant venturi and high-mounted spoiler. For sheer drama, nothing else came close – or has done since.

Ford ratcheted up the effect by offering the RS in just three colours – Ultimate Green, Frozen White and Performance Blue (of which the relatively subtle blue is, perhaps tellingly, the rarest). So perhaps the first thing to know about the mk2 Focus RS is that this is not a car for shrinking violets, nor those who like to make progress discreetly.

But make progress you most assuredly will. The RS backed up its visual promise with a heavily reworked version of the Focus ST's turbocharged 2.5-litre in-line five – bigger turbo, new intercooler, forged crank, silicon-aluminium pistons and graphite-coated bores. The tweaks helped produce a nice round 300bhp at 6500rpm (78bhp up on the ST) and a torque plateau of 324lb ft that stretched all the way from 2300 to 4500rpm.

That lot could have been an unruly handful had the chassis not been thoroughly well-sorted. The RS may not have had the four-wheel drive that many had hoped for, but a combination of Ford's trick RevoKnuckle front suspension, a Quaife limited-slip diff and well-judged ESP did a great job of putting the power down and managing the torque-steer while still providing plenty of involvement. The RS hit 60mph in under 6sec and topped 160mph, all accompanied by a distinctive five-cylinder warble, plenty of turbo chatter and even the occasional pop and bang from the exhausts. And when you weren't on a charge, the RS was a civilised and practical hatchback capable of returning 25-30mpg. No wonder it sold well.

Around 11,500 were built in a production run that lasted a little over three years. Of those, 4000 found homes in the UK, so it's not exactly rare. But prices have held up remarkably well, with only high-mileage examples dropping much below £20K thus far (see 'What To Pay').

 Pictures: Gus Gregory / Dean Smith / Chris Rutter

Spec-wise, Ford offered two option packs. Luxury Pack 1 featured dual-zone climate control, automatic headlights and wipers, rear parking sensors, tyre pressure monitoring, keyless go, DAB radio and a Sony six-disc CD player. Luxury Pack 2 came on top, replacing the hi-fi with a Ford system including a rear-view camera and touch-screen satnav. Air-con was standard on all versions.

The regular mk2 RS remained essentially unchanged throughout its production run, but the evocatively named RS500 ramped up the performance – and desirability – to a new level upon its launch in April 2010. Limited to 500 units (just 101 of which were allocated to the UK), the RS500 sold out within a week despite its £35,750 list price (an £8K premium over the RS) and remains highly prized today. All 500 of them were finished in a matt black wrap with black alloys and red brake calipers, while the interior featured extra slices of carbon trim and a numbered plaque on the centre console.

Under the bonnet, there was a larger intercooler and airbox, a larger-diameter exhaust downpipe, an uprated fuel pump and recalibrated software – the net result













Top right: pristine alloys indicate careful owners. Above right: cabin quality is normally good, although seat bolsters can wear

CHECKPOINTS

» Early cars have now reached the end of Ford's original three-year warranty; extended Ford warranties are available, but you'll have to stick to approved parts. Specialists may offer their own warranties, but check the small print carefully. www.etis.ford.com is a useful site for reading about technical bulletins on Ford models.

ENGINE

» The engine itself is bulletproof as standard and even tuning to 400bhp doesn't seem to create any issues. If you're considering a tuned car, check the service record even more rigorously. Ford's recommended service intervals are long (see 'Servicing'); if the car is being driven hard regularly, some specialists recommend halving the intervals.

One weak spot is the original (plastic) intake plenum. Some early cars suffered from exploding manifolds, apparently caused by backfires. Ford addressed this with a change to the fuelling map (carried out as part of a recall for a hard brake pedal), but some tuned cars still experience problems. A number of companies offer cast alloy replacement manifolds.

SUSPENSION & BRAKES

» Tyres can last 10-15,000 miles, but can also wear out at 5000 if driven hard, so check to see how much life is left in them – at £200 per corner, they're a major expense. Excessive wear on the inner edges suggests that the tracking's out and corroded wheel-nuts are another sign that a car hasn't been loved. A slight clunking sound from the rear when manoeuvring at low speeds isn't a worry – it's just the brake pads moving away from the discs.

BODYWORK / INTERIOR

» No major rust issues yet. First place to go seems to be the rear wheelarches, so check for blistering or signs they've been touched up. If they've been wax-oiled, that's good!

The front bumper, bonnet, rear arches and side-skirts are vulnerable to stone-chips, but these are cosmetic issues, as is the sometimes inconsistent colour matching between the main bodywork and the spoilers and skirts.

Check the rear-view camera works – it's well worth having as rearward visibility is poor. Rattling windows are tough to fix, so a test drive on varied surfaces is advised.



'I BOUGHT ONE'

Neal Harvey

» 'I've always had a passion for fast cars – my other car is a Lotus 2-Eleven, and before the RS I owned a couple of Renaultsport Clios. The 200 never really grabbed me like the 182 Cup did, so I decided to sell for a cheap, practical runabout.

I quickly realised the error of my ways and I'd read the reports on the mk2 Focus RS. As it always got five-star reviews, I thought it was worth a look. Conveniently, my local Ford dealer – Hartwell in Kidlington, Oxfordshire – had one for sale: a 2009 RS in Frozen White with Luxury Pack 1 and only 6173 miles on it. I knew I was going to buy it as soon as I saw it: it has real presence in the flesh, so unless the test drive was a disaster, it was a done deal. Needless to say it drove as well as it looked and I picked it up last November.

Since then the car has clocked up a further 7500 miles and it's been faultless. There are very few squeaks and rattles, and nothing's broken or fallen off. My only cost so far has been tyres, with the fronts being replaced at 10,000 miles. It averages about 27mpg on my commute and on a 1000-mile trip to Le Mans it averaged 31mpg – not bad for a practical hatchback with 300bhp!'

IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



» 2009 RS
» 17,257 miles
» Performance Blue
» Luxury Pack 1, sports seats, Sony 6-disc autochanger, 12-month warranty
» forsale.evo.co.uk

£18,589



» 2009 RS
» 23,656 miles
» Frozen White
» Luxury Packs 1 and 2, satnav, rear parking camera, Bluetooth
» forsale.evo.co.uk

£20,922



» 2010 RS500
» 2000 miles
» Luxury Packs 1 and 2 (satnav, Bluetooth and USB), one owner, still under warranty
» focusrsdirect.co.uk

£37,999

being 345bhp at 6000rpm (up 45bhp on the standard car) and 339lb ft from 2500 to 4500rpm. We also recorded a 0-60mph time of 5.6sec (three-tenths faster than the regular RS).

Alongside the RS500 launch, Ford announced a performance upgrade option for the regular RS. The MP350, developed by Team RS and Mountune Performance, was basically the RS500 mechanical upgrade for £1995 (plus fitting). It was available through a network of approved dealers, and crucially kept the factory warranty intact. Of course, for some that would never be enough, and several independent tuners – Graham Goode,

'THE FIVE-CYLINDER LUMP SEEMS HAPPY CHURNING OUT 400BHP OR MORE'

JW Racing, Revo and others – were soon offering all manner of upgrades, from remaps to comprehensive mechanical packages, with 400bhp (or more) available if the owner's pockets were deep enough. Mountune itself got in on the act with its MR375 upgrade, although this one wasn't factory-backed. Usefully, the Ford/Volvo lump seems perfectly happy churning out 400bhp or more.

Other popular and well-proven mods include the Elevate engine torque mount, which takes any slop out of the drivetrain, and Mountune's 'Clubsport' suspension. Oh yes, and stainless exhausts from the likes of Milltek and Mongoose – all the better to hear the warble of that famous five...

SPECIFICATION

» **Engine** In-line 5-cyl, 2521cc, turbo
» **Max power** 300bhp @ 6500rpm
» **Max torque** 324lb ft @ 2300-4500rpm
» **Transmission** Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive
» **Weight (kerb)** 1467kg
» **Power-to-weight** 208bhp/ton
» **0-60mph** 5.9sec
» **Top speed** 163mph (claimed)
» **Price when new** £27,575 (2010)

PARTS PRICES

» Parts prices from grahamgoode.com. Tyre prices from lovetyres.com. All prices include VAT at 20 per cent

» **Tyres (each)** £185 front and rear, Conti SportContact
» **Brake pads (front set)** £184.03
» **Brake discs (front pair)** £250.13
» **Suspension upgrade** £764.99 (BC Racing coilovers set)
» **Engine stabiliser bracket** £102.00 (GGR)
» **Exhaust** £470.57 (Mongoose, cat-back)
» **Oil filter** £13.42
» **Air filter** £17.71
» **Spark plugs (set of five)** £49.15

SERVICING

» Prices from grahamgoode.com including VAT at 20 per cent

» **12,500 miles (or 12 months)** £275.94
» **25,000 miles (or 24 months)** £331.20
» **37,500 miles (or 36 months)** £420.00

WHAT TO PAY

» Early cars with 30,000-40,000 miles can be had from a dealer for £19,000, or for as little as £18K if you buy privately. The vast majority of mk2 RSs are in the £20-23K bracket, where there's a wide choice of both standard and modified cars with a full service history. Even Mountune-upgraded cars don't attract a significant premium, but then neither do any of the best-known upgrades devalue a well-cared-for RS. Top dealer price for a late, low-mileage RS with all the options is £27K.

The rare RS500 is pricier: many dealers ask £35K and specialist Focus RS Direct has delivery-mileage cars up for £40K.

USEFUL CONTACTS

» focusrsoc.com (forums, advice, events)
» rsownersclub.co.uk (forums, advice, events)
» grahamgoode.com (parts, tuning, servicing)
» focusrsdirect.co.uk (specialist, sales)
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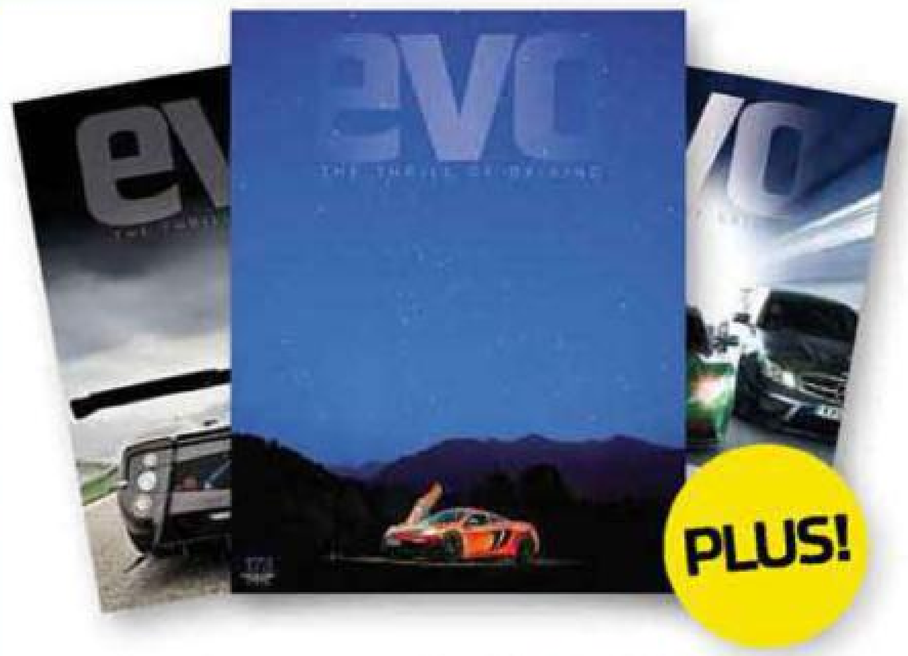
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AKRAPOVIC SLIP-ON LINE TITANIUM EXHAUST FOR PORSCHE CAYENNE TURBO €3675 (£2920) WWW.AKRAPOVIC.COM

Akrapovic's new 'Slip-On Line' titanium exhaust for the Porsche Cayenne Turbo lifts power and saves weight. Suitable for 2010 models onwards, the titanium alloy system increases torque from 2600rpm and ups power by 6bhp. It's also 6kg lighter than standard and Akrapovic claims it gives the Cayenne a deeper engine sound. Tailpipes in carbonfibre (above left) and titanium (above right) are available.

SEAT DAYTIME RUNNING LIGHTS £179 PLUS FITTING

SEAT MAIN DEALERS

Leon and Ibiza drivers can now get the safety benefits of daytime running lamps (DRLs) thanks to Philips. The light maker has come up with a custom mount for a tweaked version of its DayLight 4 DRL unit, designed to be fitted by SEAT dealers. Philips is also working on a fitment for the Mii.





Above and left: daytime running lamps are fitted to grilles of Leon and Ibiza

SUPERPRO ROLL CENTRE CORRECTION KITS £154.80

WWW.SUPERPRO.EU.COM

SuperPro's kits for the Subaru Impreza and Mitsubishi Evo (VII onwards) feature revised ball joints and track rod ends to correct the roll centre position and compensate for geometry changes on lowered cars.







SYNIONIC RACE SPECIFICATION OILS FROM £19.50 WWW.SYNIONIC.COM

A new range of oils aimed at race and trackday cars has been launched by Synionic. Mainly developed in Time Attack machines where small engines develop massive power outputs, the lubricants have been designed to increase film strength and cut friction. A full range of oils is available, including gear oil.

ASK THE EXPERT

Q I know that for ride, handling and acceleration, larger diameter wheels have been considered a bad thing, so what are the upsides that are leading carmakers and tuners to go bigger? **Jim Walker, New Zealand**

A There is definitely an element of aesthetics in the mix – generally, bigger wheels with lower profile tyres look more dynamic and more visually appealing than small diameter wheels shod with plump tyres. There's an element of maintaining scale and load capacity too, because cars have grown in size and mass over the last couple of decades.

There are practical, engineering justifications as well. Bigger wheel rims allow bigger brake assemblies to be fitted and promote better brake cooling. A lower profile sidewall has less give in it, so the springs and dampers can do their jobs more completely and consistently. There will be a benefit to steering precision and reactions will be crisper in transient manoeuvres such as lane changes.

The downside is often that the biggest wheel and lowest profile tyre combination is not that which the suspension has been tuned to, so the lack of sidewall damping results in a harsher ride. This effect is even greater if the bigger wheel and tyre assembly is heavier, and it will probably transmit more noise to the cockpit, too. Handily, in recent years tyre manufacturers have succeeded in making their low-profile tyres more refined. **John Barker**

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TRIED & TESTED

FORGE VAG FILLER CAPS

FROM £39.95 WWW.FORGEMOTORSPORT.CO.UK

» Underbonnet filler cap 'bling' is rarely a must-have mod, but this trio from Forge are so over-engineered that they're practically automotive art. The alloy CNC-machined caps fit the washer bottle on almost any VAG car of the last 20 years, plus the coolant and oil fillers on the popular 2.0 TSI engine. The washer bottle cap is easy to fit – just slide off the tethered plastic original and replace with the Forge version. The oil and coolant caps slide over the originals, maintaining the OE seal, and are secured with small Allen bolts using a supplied wrench. The caps are available polished or in anodised black, with the washer version costing £39.95 and the oil and coolant combination £70.80. **Kim Adams**



Above: alloy filler caps add some sparkle to a VAG engine bay

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TUNER PROFILE



JON OAKLEY, DIRECTOR, OAKLEY DESIGN

WWW.OAKLEYDESIGN.EU

» I was an Ascari test driver and I'm still a factory driver for Pirelli. My racing and set-up background allowed me to get financial backing from a client to set up Oakley Design in 2005. We produce carbonfibre components for performance and styling, making all our moulds and all the carbon in-house. We've got a complete range of Porsche products but that market has been quiet recently, so in 2010 we moved on to the Ferrari 458 and then started on the Lamborghini Aventador. Thanks to Pirelli, I get behind the wheel of cars two years before the launch so I know what's required to take them forward.



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MUC-OFF ÜBER WAX KIT
£80 WWW.MUC-OFF.COM

Despite the high carnauba content, Muc-Off claims its new Über Wax is easy to apply and buff to a deep shine. There are no abrasives and it can be used on all paints to get a water-resistant finish. The kit contains 150g of wax, a sponge applicator and a microfibre cloth.



ALLOYGATOR £59.94 (£95.94 FITTED)
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The protectors on the innovative AlloyGator system sit between the rim and the tyre bead, leaving a tough nylon ridge to keep wheels away from kerbs. They come in nine colours so can be used for styling or to make rims look bigger. Packs include five protectors that can be repaired if marked.



STANLEY FATMAX POWER TOOLS
FROM £99.99 WWW.STANLEYTOOLS.CO.UK

Hand tool expert Stanley has launched its first powered kit range. The cordless tools, which run on lightweight lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries, will be the DIY mechanic's favourites, with the 18V, twin power-pack hammer drill priced at £179.99. There's also a compact 10.8V drill driver and an impact driver on sale at £99.99 each.





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This new wheel sealant from Race Glaze makes time-consuming wheel cleaning much easier. It uses a nano-polymer formula with brake dust inhibitors and waxes to give a glossy shine. It also makes washing easier, with no more than soapy water required. Each 250ml bottle is good for up to 30 sets of wheels.



TRIED & TESTED

KENWOOD DNX521DAB
£999.95 (FITTED) WWW.KENWOOD.EU

» It's no surprise that after adding digital radio to its multimedia head unit (**evo** 174), DAB has found its way onto Kenwood's VAG-specific DNX521. Designed for SEATs, Skodas and VWs with twin-height dash slots, the unit aims to feel like original equipment – and it does.

In our test Skoda Octavia, an adaptor makes the unit fit the fascia perfectly and you can match its illumination to the dash lights. On start-up it displays the Skoda logo and on suitably equipped models it will show the parking assistance display and climate control settings.

At a stroke it eliminates all the dash and screen clutter of satnav, hands-free kits, iPods and the like. The new DAB radio is one of the best I've tried, with near-faultless national station reception thanks to the powered screen-mounted aerial. Local reception is not quite as effective, but is still acceptable.



Above: Kenwood unit fits snugly into Octavia's central console

The 521 also includes the latest Garmin satnav with 'PhotoReal' junction displays and TMC traffic alerts. A speed camera database can be added via a microSD slot that can also play music and films. Add in FM radio, Bluetooth hands-free and a CD/DVD spinner and the weighty price starts to look better value. **Kim Adams**

HAVE A PRODUCT FOR US TO REVIEW? CONTACT TRIED&TESTED@EVO.CO.UK

ASK THE EXPERT

Q I've got an early mk2 Golf GTI as a fun car to use at weekends. Unfortunately it has to live outside, and I find that its red paint tends to fade and look 'dry' quite quickly. I've used T-Cut to bring it back to life before, but I suspect I shouldn't do this too often. Can you recommend a better solution? **Chris Stewart**



Left: polishing and then applying wax or sealant should revive and protect faded paint

A What you are experiencing is paint oxidation, a known trait associated with older automotive paints that are exposed to air and water. Over time the oxygen molecules in the air interact with the paint, causing the colour pigment, which is suspended within the clear resin, to react and become dull.

Whilst it may appear irretrievable, the cure is reasonably simple. If the surface is polished either by hand or professionally by machine, thus removing the 'dead' paint, it will be shiny underneath. The secret is to only remove the bare minimum required.

Protecting your newly polished paint is now essential, otherwise oxidation will take place again. Waxes and sealants provide a layer of protection between the exposed material and the elements. Waxes contain essential oils and carnauba amongst other things specifically designed to protect the surface and improve its shine, thus making it less penetrable. However, by the nature of its make-up, carnauba will evaporate off the paint eventually, hence it is advisable that older cars are protected after every two or three washes.

Sealants provide a far more durable finish and will protect for longer, but they require a more precise application to get the desired effect so are often applied by professionals; some even come with a guarantee or contract that you must follow to ensure the product does what it's designed to do. **Richard Tipper**
Twitter: @perfectionvalet

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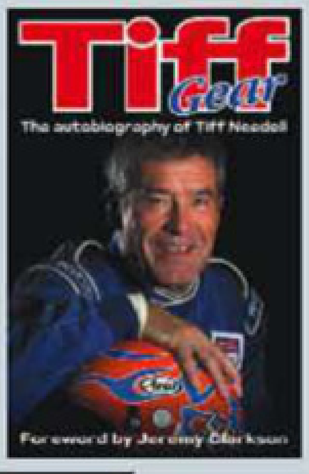
The new James Bond film *Skyfall* hits the big screens soon (October 26, to be exact) and slot-car specialist Scalextric will release this set at the same time. We don't know much about the car chase in *Skyfall* yet, but it does involve the iconic Aston Martin DB5 and a sinister-looking Range Rover, which you can drive around this course (which includes a jump!) in 1:32 scale.



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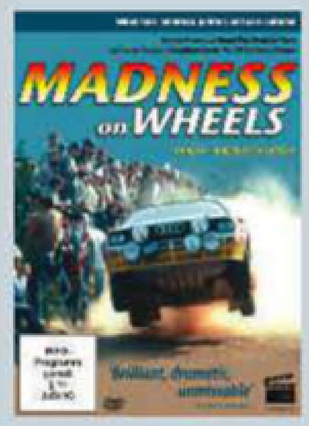
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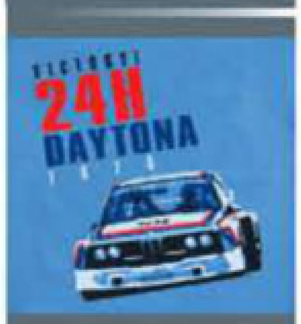
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A small left turn leads you between dry stone walls onto the B3491 up towards Llan Ffestiniog and then onto the unmarked road from Hutton-le-Hole. Where next? Maybe the high hairpins of the Stelvio or Tizi N'Tichka or even some of the beautiful passes in Switzerland that you'd normally avoid because of their strict speed limits – they don't matter today as you've pinched the Isle of Man's de-restriction rules. Let's take the climate of Portugal too, unless you want to fit the car with some studs and cover the whole landscape in a stunning Swedish winter.

As this is my dream Sunday-morning drive, I'll have the Italian population's passion for cars and their food too. Finally, the high octane fuel ratings of Germany would be just perfect – at Oklahoma prices.



Henry Catchpole
Features editor



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MOUNT TEIDE, TENERIFE

Enjoy some Canary Island sun and some stunning views with a blast around one of the world's largest active volcanoes. By ***Henry Catchpole***

The Canary Islands might not seem like an ideal driving destination; think of Tenerife and you probably think of package holidays to the beach and lobster-complexion sunburn. But head inland and there are some truly spectacular roads running through a national park dominated by Mount Teide – a volcano that marks, slightly bizarrely, the highest point in Spain. We went there for the launch of a new Mercedes SLK and the scenery rather overshadowed the car.

From the small town of Vilaflor, follow the TF-21 north, up through tight pine-lined hairpins. The roads are wonderfully smooth and a deep, dark grey. As you climb, the trees thin out and views west towards the Atlantic begin to be snatched. At this point you still can't see Teide itself; instead the road does a flourishing reveal as it rounds a right-hand bend.

At this point you have a choice. Turn left onto the TF-38 and you will drive through incredible lava fields which spread out on either side of the road like some giant, slightly over-done apple crumble topping. Eventually plant life slowly begins to re-emerge from the ground and if you carry on down, you will end up in Chio. The best time to drive the TF-38 is in the evening as you get views of the wonderful sunsets.

EVENTS CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

» **28-29 September** Trackrod Rally Yorkshire
www.rallybrc.co.uk

» **29-30 September** Passion for Power, Manchester www.cheshireautopromotions.co.uk

OCTOBER

» **7 October** Goodwood Breakfast Club
www.goodwood.co.uk

» **21 October** BTCC Finals Day, Brands Hatch
www.btcc.net

» **21 October** Red Oktober Day, Crich
www.tramway.co.uk

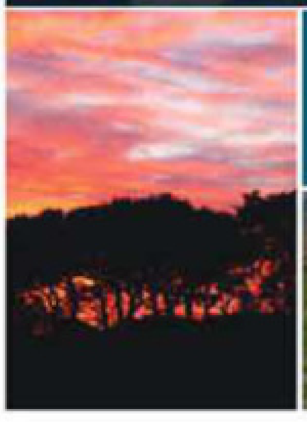
» **27 October** Flame & Thunder, Santa Pod
www.santapod.com

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READER'S ROAD TRIP: TOUR OF BRITAIN







James Minchew's trip took in some of England and Wales's best roads – and an RAF museum





» At the end of 2010 I decided to take my BMW E46 330i Sport on a trip around some of England and Wales's greatest roads. The start point was the B4560 from Ebbw Vale up over the Brecon Beacons. After I'd cleared the council estate, the landscape opened up with wide sweeping corners, hairpins, mountains and a clear blue sky on deserted roads.

I headed north to Rhayader and then on to the Elan Valley. The drive was intense; there was sheet ice where the road was in shade! Safely through, I continued north to Pentrefoelas and the **evo** Triangle. Much is said about the Triangle, and it's all true. Get there and drive it.

The next day was RAF Museum Cosford in north London. Highlights included a



Ignore the 38, however, and you will be treated to arguably even more breathtaking vistas. With red rocky slopes rising up immediately on your right and Teide dominating the view to the left, it initially feels like you're driving through some sort of gargantuan crater.

The road then rises up through some cuttings and spits you out on a huge long straight that points directly at the third largest volcano on the planet – although you have to catch a cable car to reach the 3718-metre summit. The road heads east when it reaches the volcano's base, giving you more spectacular views looking back to the south.

Your options after this are to head down through the hairpins of the TF-21 to Orotava and Puerto de la Cruz, or turn east along the TF-24. The latter gives you access to the TF-523 down to Arafo and the TF-12 right up in the north-east of the island. Although we weren't able to try out either of these on our visit, both look well worth investigating.



Above: the steep volcanic slopes of Teide are worth venturing inland for

HOW TO GET THERE

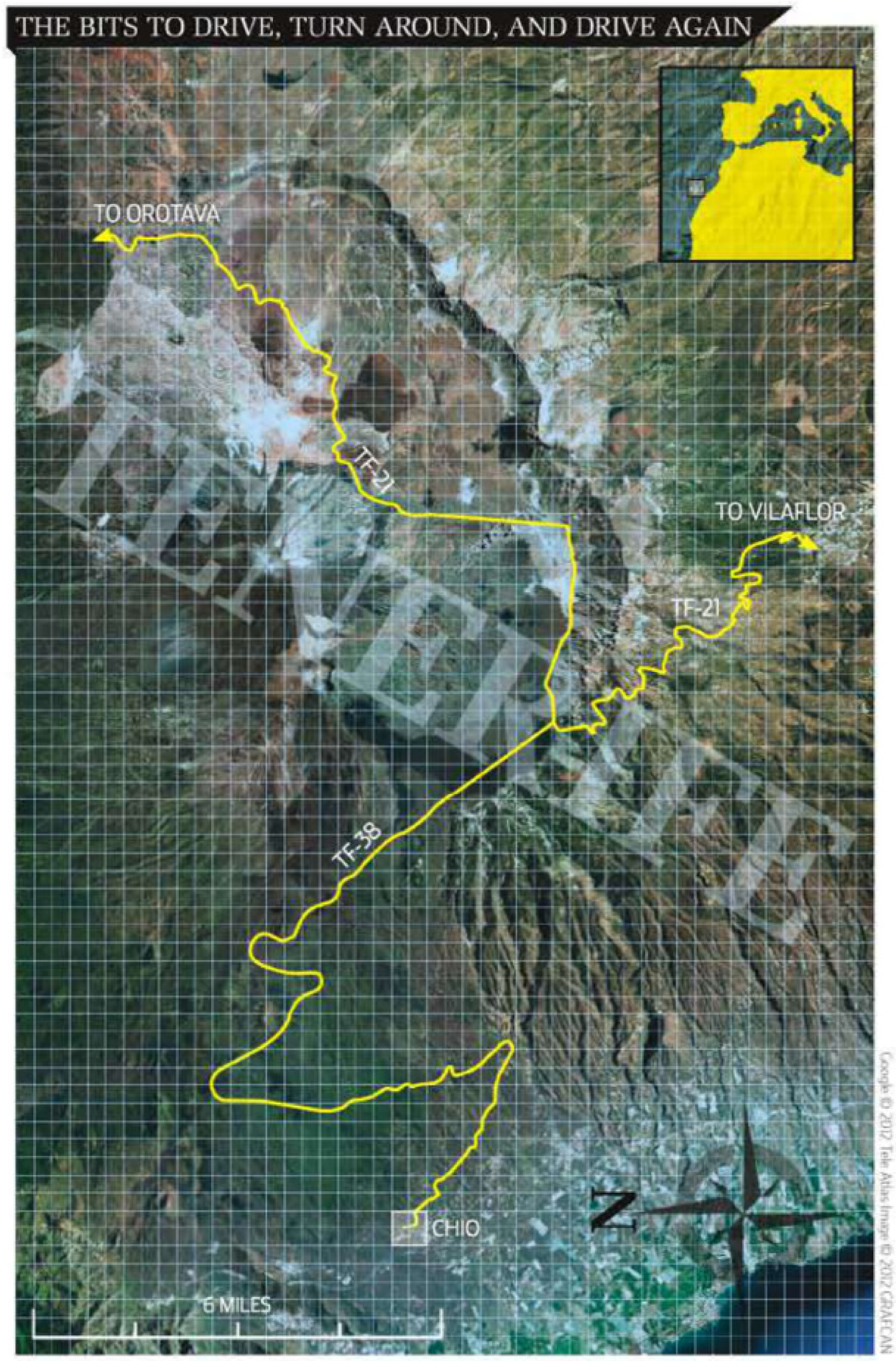
It's a long flight to Tenerife (around four hours from the UK) because, despite technically being part of Europe, it's actually on the same latitude as the Sahara. Don't get confused if you see a Scottish flag on landing – Tenerife has the same one (albeit with a slightly darker shade of blue). Once there it's a case of hiring a rental. If you do want to take your own car, then be prepared to spend a day and a half bobbing around on a ferry from southern Spain...

WHERE TO STAY

If you want five-star luxury, then try the Abama hotel on the western coast of Tenerife. It's a large, dusky red-coloured complex (easy to spot from the road) with a big underground car park. If you'd like somewhere more reasonable and more British-sounding, you could try the Sunningdale Village resort (complete with miniature golf course), close to the airport on the southern tip of the island. Alternatively, you could stay right in Teide National Park at the Parador de Canadas del Teide and wake up with views looking over Mount Teide itself.

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

Nelson's arm. Apparently the Admiral lost it there when he tried, unsuccessfully, to invade the island in 1797. Other than that, you might need to keep an eye out for cyclists (including none other than Bradley Wiggins) cluttering up the roads as they go there for altitude training.



Vulcan, a Lightning and a TSR-2. If you like planes, I recommend a visit.

Day three was Snake Pass, which didn't disappoint: the 330i felt at home on this sort of road. Next was the Woodhead Pass, but lots of slow traffic made it frustrating. Heading back I took a detour down the B6105 Glossop Road and began to make progress. A foggy Cat and Fiddle was always going to be challenging and I was driving to how far I could see and react – blind crests into blind straights into blind corners!

I'd left it too long to take a road trip. It was a memorable break and I'll be back to tackle the Triangle, Snake Pass and the Cat and Fiddle in better conditions before too long. **James Minchew**

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» There have been accusations, nay even snipes, about living in the dark ages and of the need to embrace technology like the fluffy cushion it most assuredly isn't. And yet in spite of this mild persecution, I stand firm in my love of maps because you can't beat a good book drawn by a geographer with some coloured pencils.

I've resoundingly sung the praises of the Philip's Navigator in the past for British usage, but if you are venturing forth to the continent then another supplier of road atlases is required. Don't be lulled into buying a big one that covers all of Europe – they are rarely much use for anything other than very general planning, or assessing where Croatia is in relation to the Czech Republic. Instead you need something that covers the writhing network of back roads, something that will encourage you over narrow mountain passes and into sleepy backwaters spilling over with charm.



Left: spiral-bound Michelin atlases are on sale for most of western Europe as well as North America

Michelin is the manufacturer for the job with its excellent spiral-bound range of 'Tourist and Motoring' atlases. The only thing to watch out for is the occasional small change in scales between the different countries' mapping, which could cause confusion. Otherwise, they're a delight. **Henry Catchpole**

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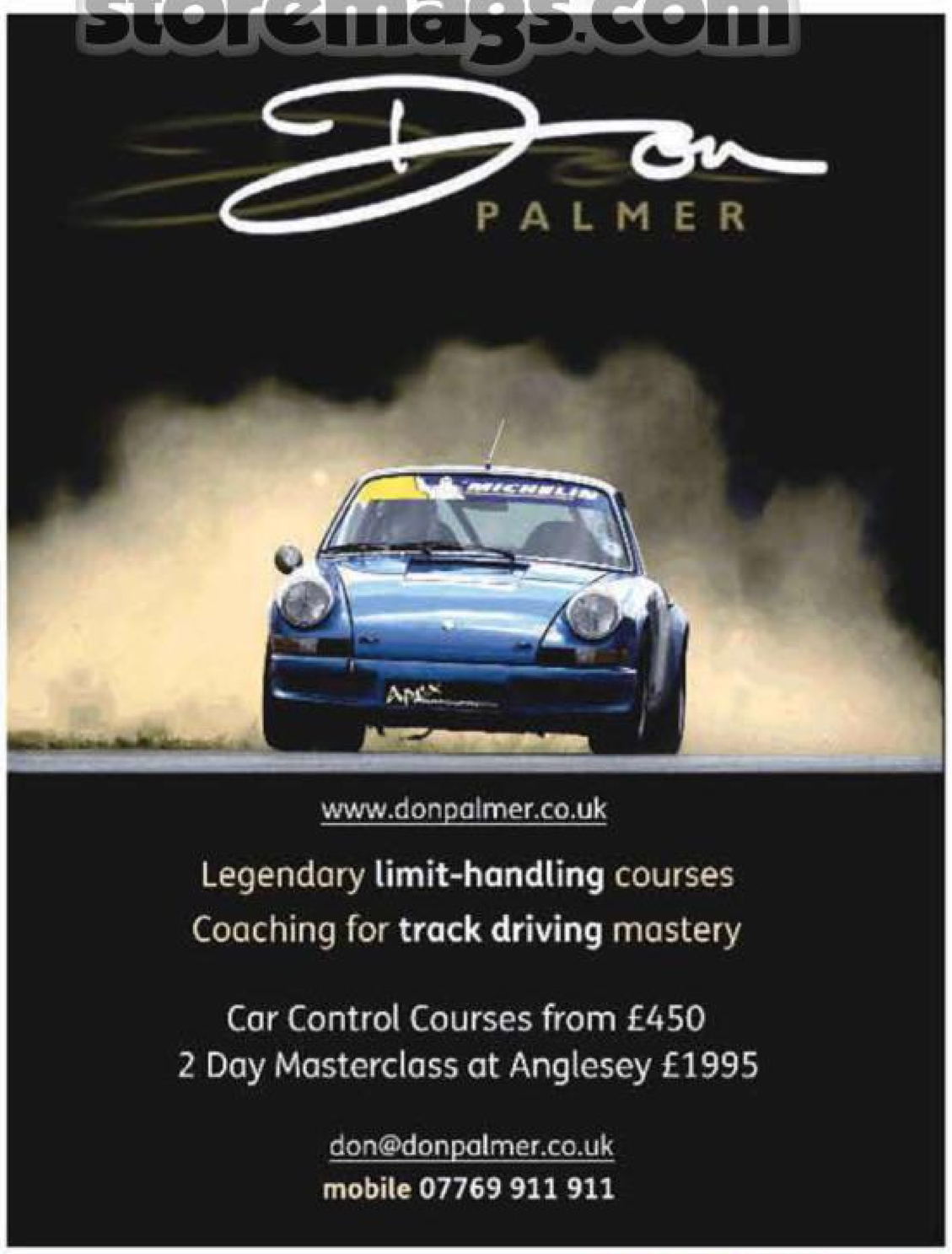
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evo Track Times

THE LEADERBOARD	LAP TIME	PEAK	ISSUE NO.	CONDITIONS
Radical SR8LM (fastest car)	1.13.6	127.8	138	Dry
Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)	1.14.8	130.9	131	Dry
Ferrari 458 Italia	1.19.3	120.0	159	Dry
Gumpert Apollo S	1.19.4	120.4	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C (Corsa tyres)	1.19.6	121.2	159	Dry
Caterham Levante V8	1.19.6	118.6	131	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2 RS	1.19.9	122.3	158	Dry
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	1.20.1	113.2	138	Dry
Caterham Superlight R500	1.20.2	115.7	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C	1.20.6	120.9	159	Dry
Noble M600	1.20.8	121.8	159	Dry
Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0 (fastest coupe)	1.21.0	118.2	160	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	1.21.3	121.1	134	Dry
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	1.21.5	113.6	119	Dry
KTM X-Bow (300bhp)	1.21.5	112.7	138	Dry
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	1.21.7	117.2	121	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (3.8)	1.21.9	116.8	150	Dry
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	1.22.5	119.1	122	Dry
Brooke Double R	1.22.5	113.2	119	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	1.22.9	116.7	143	Dry
Porsche Carrera GT	1.23.3	115.2	119	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3	1.23.3	114.5	138	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo S	1.23.5	117.5	146	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2	1.23.5	115.1	119	Dry
Nissan GT-R	1.23.6	113.1	119	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo	1.24.1	113.5	136	Damp
Lotus 340R (190bhp)	1.24.2	110.0	135	Dry
Caterham Superlight R300	1.24.3	101.5	138	Dry
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	1.24.5	115.1	160	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	1.24.6	115.7	146	Dry
Porsche Boxster Spyder	1.24.7	107.7	167	Dry
Ferrari California	1.25.0	111.8	134	Dry
KTM X-Bow	1.25.0	105.0	123	Dry
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1.25.1	109.1	162	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	1.25.2	108.6	131	Dry
Audi RS5	1.25.4	108.8	162	Dry
Audi R8 Spyder V8	1.25.5	107.0	167	Dry
Porsche Cayman R	1.25.5	106.8	158	Dry
BMW M5 (F10) (fastest saloon)	1.25.7	112.0	165	Dry
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1.25.8	110.9	146	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	1.25.9	107.5	138	Dry
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1.25.9	106.4	158	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X RS 360	1.26.1	106.6	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy (fastest hot hatch)	1.26.1	105.3	166	Dry
Audi TT RS	1.26.3	107.2	149	Dry
Aston Martin DBS	1.26.4	109.5	143	Dry
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1.26.5	109.2	137	Dry
Jaguar XJ220	1.26.7	111.7	131	Dry
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	1.26.8	104.9	165	Dry
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)	1.26.9	107.4	158	Dry
Lotus Evora	1.27.1	104.2	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z	1.27.1	104.0	158	Dry
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen 2.2	1.27.2	102.6	166	Dry
Porsche Panamera S	1.27.3	102.4	165	Dry
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	1.27.7	111.0	162	Dry
Lotus Elise SC	1.27.7	104.6	131	Dry
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	1.27.8	106.1	131	Dry
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1.27.8	105.4	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1.27.8	103.3		
Audi RS6 Avant (fastest estate)	1.27.9	111.0	121	Dry
Jaguar XFR	1.27.9	108.1	137	Dry
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen 2.0	1.28.0	104.4	138	Dry
Lexus IS-F	1.28.1	106.4	151	Dry
Porsche Boxster S	1.28.1	105.4	120	Dry
Subaru WRX STI	1.28.3	101.6	157	Dry
Jaguar XJ Supersport	1.28.4	106.6	147	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra R	1.28.7	102.4	162	Dry
Bentley Continental Supersports	1.29.2	105.8	149	Dry
Lotus Elise Club Racer	1.29.2	95.5	162	Dry
Maserati Quattroporte S	1.29.5	105.0	137	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1.29.9	101.4	156	Dry
Honda NSX	1.30.1	101.3	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z Roadster	1.30.3	100.1	173	Dry
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	1.30.4	98.9	155	Dry
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	1.30.8	101.8	131	Dry
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	1.31.4	100.9	174	Damp
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	1.31.9	97.2	144	Dry
Mercedes SLS Roadster	1.32.3	104.8	172	Wet
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	1.32.4	99.3		

In the table of lap times above, entries in **bold** are new additions, while yellow denotes fastest in class.

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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 RS Mégane is the Clio's more mature but still thrilling big brother, while the new Focus ST is great fun – and good value. If you're on a tighter budget, the Renault Twingo 133 Cup and Suzuki's second-gen 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 Esseesse power upgrade	★★★½☆
Abarth 500 Esseesse	129 R	£17,207	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 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		'96-'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		£21,270	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 A1 quattro	168 F	£41,020	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1300kg	198	5.6	-	152	-	-	+ Extreme AWD hatch, 253bhp - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi S3	106 R	£31,065	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	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 M135i	173 D	£29,995	6/2979	316/5800	332/1400	1500kg	214	5.0	-	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - Odd styling, steering lacks feel	★★★★½
BMW 123d M Sport	122 R	'07-'11	4/1995	201/4400	295/2000	1420kg	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 bouncy*	★★★★☆
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	£7995+	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	108	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	143/4750	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	£16,500	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	954kg	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	103/6000	107/4000	976kg	106	**10.2**	-	113	-	38.2	+ *Better than you'd ever believe - No-one else will believe it*	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	'05-'08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ *Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine*	★★★☆☆
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	'08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ *Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note*	★★★★☆
Ford Focus 1.6T Zetec S	165 D	£20,695	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 Focus ST (Mk2)	172 R	£21,995	4/1999	247/5500	265/1750	1362kg	184	6.4	-	154	169	-	+ All-round cracking hot hatch. Good value, too - There's a bit of torque-steer	★★★★½
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	1467kg	208	**5.9**	**14.2**	163	225	30.5	+ *Huge performance, highly capable fwd chassis - It could be the last RS...*	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune (Mk1)	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 (Mk1)	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	1043kg	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	£12,995	4/1498	103/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	★★★½☆
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	£23,395	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 iffy	★★★½☆
Mercedes-Benz A250 'by AMG'	173 D	£28,755	4/1991	208/5500	258/1200	1445kg	146	6.5	-	149	148	46.3	+ Mercedes builds a proper hot hatch - But denies it a manual gearbox	★★★★☆
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		£13,460	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	167 R	£14,900	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	£18,180	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	£18,870	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	£22,455	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1140kg	185	6.5	-	148	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe	164 R	£23,800	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	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk2)	111 F	'07-'08	4/1598	188/6000	199/1750	1130kg	170	**7.6**	**18.0**	145	-	-	+ *Cracking hot Mini, until the JCW - Expensive with option packs included*	★★★★½

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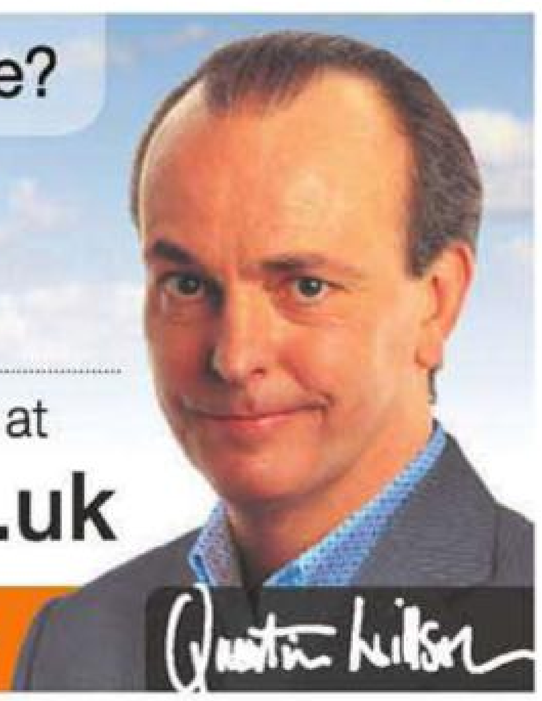
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KEY: ➤ New entries this month. Issue no: our most recent major test of the car (R = Road test or group test with figures, D = Driven, F = Feature article). You can order back issues where still available – call 0844 844 0039. Entries in italics are 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

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 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	£14,229	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 106 Rallye (Series 2)		'97-'98	4/1587	103/5200	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	8.26kg	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	965kg	134	8.3	-	124	-	28.2	+ 205 GTI in drag, cheap - Who wants a cheap drag queen?	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Twingo 133 Cup	132 R	£13,595	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1049kg	127	8.7	-	125	155	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	£17,120	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	1339kg	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	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	**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	£21,690	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 265 Cup	173 R	£24,825	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	-	158	190	34.4	+ More power than before, chassis still superb - Not a lot	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy	170 R	£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	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	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 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	167 R	£15,875	4/1390	148/5800	162/1250	1254kg	120	7.5	-	132	139	47.9	+ Strong engine, great value - You're forced to have the DSG automatic 'box	★★★☆☆
SEAT Ibiza FR 2.0 TDI	144 F	£16,340	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	★★★½☆
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 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	£16,915	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 callipers?	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk1)	032 D	'01-'05	4/1781	178/5500	173/1950	1354kg	135	7.9	-	146	-	35.3	+ Remarkably fun and capable - Cabin quality	★★★★☆
Smart Fortwo Brabus	110 D	£15,000	3/999	91/5500	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 trudos. 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)	167 R	£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 R	'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 1.6T SRi	164 D	£20,215	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 (Mk2)	173 R	£26,995	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	189	-	+ Better than the car it replaces. Loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision	★★★★☆
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	295/6650	317/4250	1393kg	215	5.1	-	160	221	-	+ Crazy power, chassis copes admirably - Lacks exploitability of Mégane R26	★★★★☆
VW Lupo GTI 6-spd	036 D	'00-'05	4/1598	125/6500	112/3000	978kg	128	8.3	-	127	-	38.2	+ Looks, performance, snappy gearshift - Lacks fizz of 106 GTI	★★★★☆
VW Polo GTI	154 R	£18,935	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	£24,650	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)	172 R	£25,650	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	148	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more	★★★★☆
VW Golf GTI Edition 35	168 F	£27,560	4/1984	232/5500	221/2200	1318kg	179	6.5	-	154	189	34.9	+ The pick of the Golf hot hatch range - Nearly £28K before a single option...	★★★★½
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	£31,435	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	'05-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	**6.7**	**17.9**	145	-	-	+ Character and ability: the original GTI is back - Lacking firepower?	★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	**5.8**	**15.2**	155	-	26.4	+ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI	★★★★☆
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 F	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	**6.4**	**16.3**	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome	★★★★☆
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)		'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	1111kg	127	8.0	-	124	-	28.8	+ Arguably the best all-round Golf GTI ever - We'd be splitting hairs	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk1)	095 F	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one	★★★★☆
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	£22,125	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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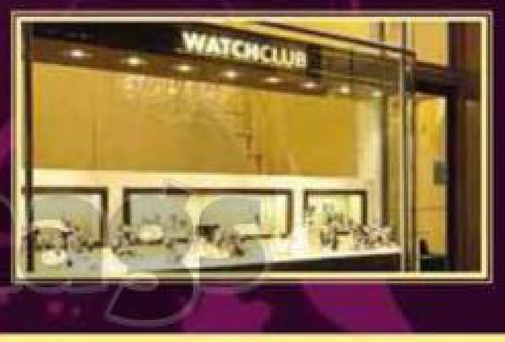
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SALOONS/ESTATES/4X4s



OUR CHOICE: BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the new M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's brutally fast, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. It looks cool, too. The best big saloon is now 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	★★★½☆
Alpina D3		£31,650	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	-	155	159	41.5	+ A good match for its German foes - No longer any naturally aspirated options	★★★½☆
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	1710kg	206	5.4	-	155	-	-	+ Effortless V8, agile handling - Lacks ultimate finesse of class leaders	★★★½☆
Audi RS4 Avant (Mk3)	173 D	£54,925	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1798kg	251	4.6	-	174	249	26.4	+ Looks, value, quality, noise, balance - Harsh ride, unnatural steering	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 (Mk2)	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 (Mk2)	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 (Mk1)	024 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1630kg	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 obscure 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 S7	171 D	£61,695	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	155	225	-	+ Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs £8000 more	★★★½☆
Audi S8	164 D	£77,900	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	493/5750	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	£153,200	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	£211,000	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	737/1200	2585kg	196	5.2	-	179	-	14.5	+ Still able to impress - Something of an anachronism	★★★★½
BMW 320d	168 F	£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	'06-'11	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1535kg	200	5.6	-	156	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	296/1200	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	1655kg	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	£57,880	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	174 D	£71,340	8/4395	449/5500	480/2000	2020kg	226	4.7	-	155	199	-	+ Well specced, impressively refined - Lags far behind the Mercedes S-class	★★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 - Ginsters suspension	★★★½☆
Ford Mondeo 2.0T Titanium		£23,045	4/1999	200/6000	221/1750	1584kg	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	1370kg	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	1308kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image	★★★★½
Infiniti M35S	150 D	£40,675	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1769kg	180	6.2	-	155	235	27.7	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals	★★★½☆
Jaguar XF 3.0D S	145 D	£41,950	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1820kg	151	5.9	-	155	169	44.8	+ Best XF after the R - But we'd still have the R...	★★★★☆

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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Jaguar XF 5.0		£49,200	8/5000	380/6500	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 (second hand) 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	£56,545	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1750kg	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	£74,895	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1840kg	286	4.2	-	155	295	28.8	+ 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	1640kg	219	5.5	-	155	-	23.0	+ Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	£112,890	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2115kg	257	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive cat	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	098 F	£164,230	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 CLS63 AMG	154 D	£81,145	8/5461	549/5750	590/2000	1870kg	270	4.3	-	155	231	28.5	+ All-new fast CLS boasts more power, less weight, more mpg - Pricey options	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 F	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	167 D	£82,995	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	234	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine and decent dynamics - £85K buys a Boxster and an ML350...	★★★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 G63 AMG	172 D	£123,115	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.3	-	130	322	-	+ It exists, epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	★★★☆☆
Mercedes-Benz G55 AMG	092 F	'04-'12	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 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 SST	118 F	£31,349	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be	★★★½☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	£38,559	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-300		'08-'12	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-330 SST	134 F	'08-'12	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-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	305/6800	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 S	165 R	£78,221	8/4806	394/6500	369/3500	1770kg	226	5.6	-	177	298	22.6	+ Great cabin and typically fine Porsche chassis - Only a mother could love its looks	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera GTS	168 D	£90,409	8/4806	430/6700	383/3500	1920kg	228	4.4	-	179	251	26.4	+ Sharper chassis, more urgent and vocal V8 - A BMW M5 is £17K less...	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£103,807	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 GTS (M42)	173 D	£67,147	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.6	-	162	251	26.4	+ Dynamically the best SUV on sale - At two tons, it's still no sports car	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (M42)	144 D	£86,896	8/4806	468/6000	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	£86,895	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 STI S206*	167 D	c£45,000	4/1994	316/6400	318/3200	1470kg	218	4.5	-	155	-	-	+ The best current Impreza - Japan only, and it's sold out there...	★★★★★
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 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 Impreza 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 WR1	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	1831kg	236	4.9	-	155	320	20.9	+ Oversteery and characterful. Available as a pick-up tool - Very nearly M5 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	444/6050	413/2750	2741kg	201	6.1	-	155	348	19.5	+ Technomasterpiece that works - Seventy-eight grand for a VW!	★★★½☆
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

FORD FIESTA ZETEC-S

WHY WOULD YOU?
Because it's a great first **evo** car with a superb all-round package. Small, uncomplicated, balanced and fun.

WHAT TO PAY
Well-used but well-maintained models can come in at as little as £1000. Expect to double that for low-mileage examples in tip-top condition.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR
Rust can be an issue around the sills and the rear wheelarches (although it's worth checking to see if it's merely superficial), as can corrosion on the brakelines. Rear dampers and lower suspension arm bushes regularly need replacing, so be on guard for any problems surrounding the ride or handling in case those parts are showing their age. (Full guide, **evo** 171)



THE VITAL STATS
Years 2000-2002 **Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1587cc **Power** 102bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 107lb ft @ 4000rpm **0-60mph** 10.2sec **Top speed** 113mph (claimed)

Adjustable damping at your fingertips

KW suspensions

Made in Germany

Available on the iPhone App Store

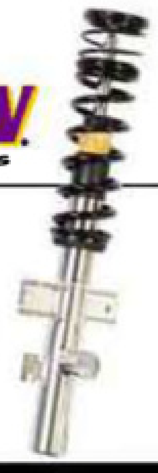
Spring kit - (4WD only)

Lowering 30 mm all round
Lowered centre of gravity
Improved looks
Finished in 'Signature' colour



Variant 1

Pre-set factory damping
Stainless steel technology
Sporty ride



DDC ECU

Three damping setups
Comfort / Sport / Sport+

Operating via button inside the car, optional damping control via iPhone app



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+The Z4 has grown up…
– …and got fat
BMW Z4 sDRIVE 20i, ISSUE 164

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: Despite its electric steering, the mk3 Porsche Boxster (right) is just brilliant, while the Mazda MX-5 remains the best choice for budget rear-drive fun. For the ultimate thrills, though, treat yourself to a Caterham R300 or an Ariel Atom.



	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*	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
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	165 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	165 F	£146,699	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	**3.0**	**5.8**	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150K for an Atom	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 2 300 Supercharged	*123 R*	*'03-'09*	*4/1998*	*300/8200*	*162/7200*	*550kg*	*554*	**3.3**	*-*	*155*	*-*	*280*	*+ 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	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£138,150	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1819kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★½
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	★★★½☆
Audi TT Roadster (Mk1 225bhp)	*015 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*	★★★½☆
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,895	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	165 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	★★★★½
Bentley Continental GTC V8	168 F	£136,250	8/3933	500/6000	487/1700	2470kg	207	4.9	-	187	254	25.9	+ Still arguably the world's best topless GT - Still no sports car	★★★★☆
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*	★★★★½
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	★★★½☆
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	★★★½☆
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*	★★★★½
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*	★★★½☆
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 shaky	★★★★☆
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*	★★★★½
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	★★★½☆
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	★★★½☆
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	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
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	★★★★½
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*	*230/8500*	*155/7200*	*460kg*	*510*	***3.6***	***8.8***	*146*	*-*	*-*	*+ Fine for the Nurburgring - Hard work around the Bullring*	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
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	★★★½☆
Ferrari California	171 D	£152,086	8/4297	483/7750	372/5000	1705kg	290	3.8	-	193	299	-	+ Revised with sharper performance and dynamics - We'd still take a 458 Spider	★★★★½
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 XKR-S	167 F	£103,000	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1800kg	306	4.3	-	186	292	23.0	+ Loud and mad, most exciting Jag in years - It's also the most expensive in years	★★★★½
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*	★★★★½
Jaguar XKR		*'06-'09*	*8/4196*	*414/6250*	*413/4000*	*1705kg*	*247*	*5.0*	*-*	*155*	*-*	*-*	*+ First Jag sports car for years - Overwrought detailing*	★★★★½
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*	★★★★☆
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 S	172 R	£37,150	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.5	-	145	175	37.5	+ New supercharged Elise boasts epic grip and pace - £37K before (pricey) options…	★★★★★
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*	★★★★½
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

MERCEDES CLK63 AMG BLACK SERIES – ISSUE 106, JULY 2007

The Black heralded a new dawn for AMG and wowed Jethro Bovingdon when he tried the car in California.

'Too often, horsepower has been the centre of the AMG experience at the expense of agility, but this, the CLK63 AMG Black Series, is part of a new breed. AMG expects the Black to be used extensively on track and, to make sure it performs as spectacularly as the new, muscular physique suggests, the suspension is almost entirely new.

The 6.2-litre V8 makes light work of the heat and the gradient, launching the Black at the canyon with a relentlessness that only AMG products seem to summon. Mild oversteer is so easy to induce, and now you have the option to add angle should you desire thanks to the accurate throttle and deep well of torque.'



Left: the CLK63 AMG Black shifted the focus of Mercedes' performance brand away from pure power and towards handling performance

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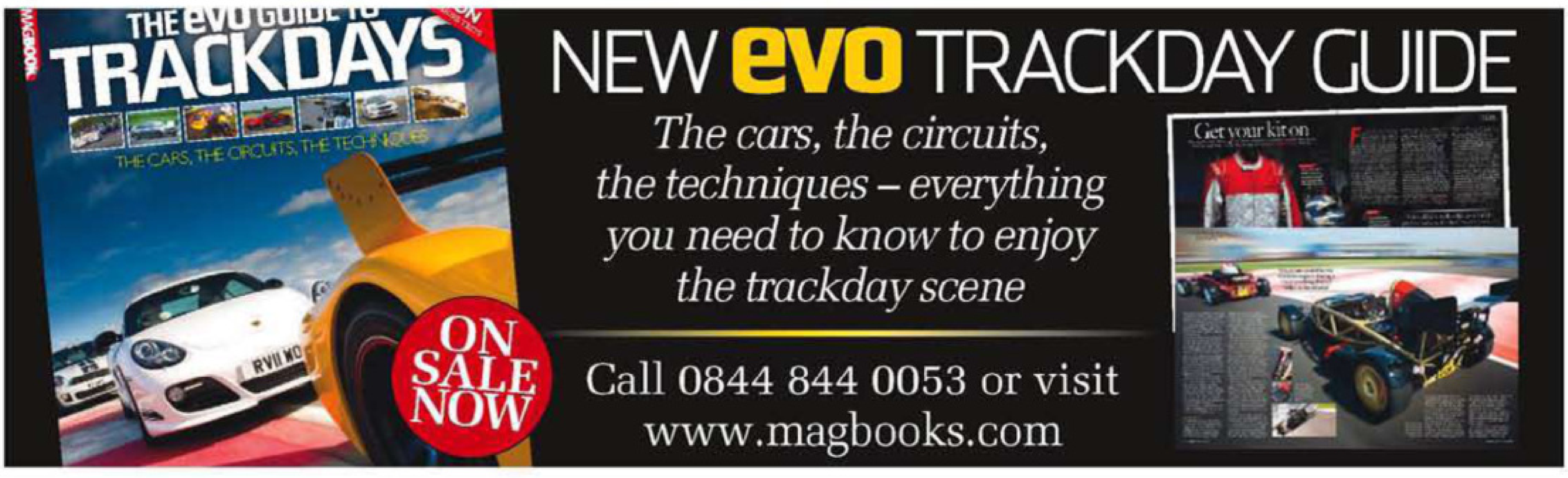


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+Handles brilliantly again
–Less than macho image
MAZDA MX-5 2.0i SPORT TECH, ISSUE 170

	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	731kg	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 75-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	£102,615	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	170 R	£21,135	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1173kg	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	1159kg	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	161 R	£44,725	6/3498	302/6800	273/3500	1465kg	209	5.5	-	155	167	39.8	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater	★★★½☆
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	171 D	£54,965	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1690kg	195	4.5	-	155	195	33.6	+ AMG SLK is quicker and more economical than ever - Should be sharper, though	★★★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	169 D	c£80,000	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1800kg	242	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Wafty performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£112,000	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	£106,820	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1870kg	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	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 F	£176,895	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1735kg	330	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works Convertible	130 F	£24,850	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	★★★★☆
Morgan 3 Wheeler	161 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 Plus 8	171 R	£82,500	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★☆
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 (Mk3)	172 R	£37,589	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.4	-	164	192	34.5	+ Goes & looks better, cleanest Boxster ever - Steering now electric to help cut CO2	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (Mk3)	169 D	£45,384	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.0	-	173	206	32.1	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing new steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (Mk2)	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-'12	6/2893	252/6400	214/4400	1335kg	192	5.9	-	163	221	30.0	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (Mk2)	161 R	'05-'12	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 (Mk1)	049 F	'99-'04	6/2687	228/6300	192/4700	1275kg	182	6.3	-	155	-	29.1	+ Still an impeccable sports car - Very little	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (Mk1)	070 F	'99-'04	6/3179	260/6200	228/4700	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S Cabrio (991)	171 R	£89,740	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.6	-	187	229	29.1	+ All-new open 911 drives just like the coupe - Which means the same artifical steering	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS Cabrio (997)	161 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 Turbo Cabrio (997)	139 D	£118,015	6/3800	483/6000	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	402/7300	310/4200	1540kg	265	4.4	-	189	242	27.0	+ Rarity, quality, head-turning styling - More collectors' than drivers' car	★★★★☆
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	174 F	£69,850	4/2000	300/6000	265/4000	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	131 F	£87,945	AC motor	248/4500	273/0-4500	1283kg	196	5.0	14.3	120	-	-	+ If this is the future, it's going to be fun - Limited range, high price	★★★★☆
Toniq-R Duratec	102 D	£23,500	4/1999	195/6500	174/4500	550kg	357	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Very good value, well built, and lots of fun too - No roof, no windscreen	★★★★☆
Toyota MR2	078 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★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-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★☆
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★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	8/1900	271/6000	-	627kg	441	4.4	9.4	144	-	-	+ Snarling, fire-breathing V8; ferocious pace - Spits fuel at you	★★★★☆
Wiesmann Roadster MF3	077 D	c£65,000	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1180kg	291	4.9	-	158	-	-	+ Engine, ride, build quality, exclusivity - Umm... '50s styling?	★★★★½



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HONDA CR-Z GT, ISSUE 144

evo Knowledge

COUPES/GTs



OUR CHOICE: Audi R8 V8. After a long time at the top (and currently lacking a hardcore GT3 variant), the Porsche 911 relinquishes its crown to the Audi R8: a car with more feel through its controls and arguably more desirability as a genuinely useable junior supercar.

BEST OF THE REST: 991-gen 911 (right) isn't far off the pace, replacing rich character with true all-round ability. BMW's 1M Coupe is utterly brilliant, the Nissan GT-R mixes practicality with supercar pace and the new Lotus Exige S V6 is a proper road racer for £50K.



	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*	-	*24.7*	*+ 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	1700kg	273	4.9	-	170	-	-	+ Stunning looks, chassis up with the best – Interior design, price ★★★★½
Aston Martin V8 Vantage 4.7	169 D	£84,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ 2012 upgrades keep the V8 Vantage on song – Starting to feel a little dated, though ★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N420	147 F	£96,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Aston's best V8 Vantage yet... – ...is one of the most expensive ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 R	£102,500	8/4735	430/7500	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 (Mk3)	*081 D*	*'06-'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	168 R	£87,935	8/4163	414/7800	317/4500	1560kg	270	4.1	9.9	187	332	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	169 F	£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*	*1529kg*	*146*	***6.2***	***18.2***	*143*	-	*19.1*	*+ Modern classic – Buy wisely to avoid big bills* ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	167 D	c£122,000	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2295kg	221	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy – W12 suddenly seems pointless ★★★★½
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	17.5	+ 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	095 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	8/3999	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)	*171 R*	*'10-'11*	*8/4361*	*444/8300*	*324/3750*	*1530kg*	*295*	*4.3*	-	*193*	*295*	-	*+ Highly exclusive, most focused M-car ever – Good luck trying to find one* ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	*066 F*	*'00-'07*	*6/3246*	*338/7900*	*269/5000*	*1496kg*	*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*	*1499kg*	*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 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 (Mk2)	173 D	£95,820	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology – Dull sound, more charismatic rivals ★★★★☆
BMW M6 (Mk1)	*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	£35,025	8/6162	426/5900	420/4600	1769kg	245	5.1	-	155	329	20.0	+ Looks like a Transformer made real – We'd prefer it in robot mode ★★★☆☆
Chevrolet Camaro ZL1*	167 D	c£60,000	8/6162	580/6100	556/3800	1900kg	310	4.0	-	180	-	-	+ The most powerful Camaro yet – UK sales yet to be confirmed... ★★★★☆
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	425/6200	420/4800	1877kg	230	5.2	-	160+	-	-	+ Effortlessly cool – ...if you live in Hazzard County ★★★★☆
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*	172 D	c£55,000	8/5812	650/6500	631/4000	1763kg	374	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ Massive power never fails to entertain. Silly top speed, too – No official UK imports ★★★★☆
Ginetta G40 R	165 F	£29,950	4/1999	175/6700	140/5000	795kg	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 GTS 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*	*1413kg*	*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* ★★★★★



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+Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag
–The kids will have to stay at home
JAGUAR XKR, ISSUE 168

	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	
Infiniti G37S Coupé	127 R	£38,247	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	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	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR	168 R	£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	168 R	£97,000	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1759kg	314	4.2	-	186	297	23.0	+ The most exciting XKR ever – It's nearly £100,000	★★★★½
Jaguar XKR		*'98-'06*	*8/4196*	*400/6100*	*408/3500*	*1735kg*	*234*	*5.2*	-	*155*	-	*22.9*	*+ Extra grunt of 4.2-litre motor – Lacks feedback*	★★★★½
Lotus Exige S V6	171 R	£50,850	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	4.0	-	170	236	-	+ Exige matures into a breathtaking road-racer – Continuing doubts over Lotus's future	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S	*105 F*	*'06-'11*	*4/1796*	*218/7800*	*158/5500*	*930kg*	*238*	*4.5*	-	*148*	*199*	*33.2*	*+ Lightweight with a hefty punch – Uninspiring soundtrack*	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 260	*139 D*	*'10-'11*	*4/1796*	*256/8000*	*174/6000*	*890kg*	*293*	*4.0*	-	*152*	*199*	*31.1*	*+ Feels like a race car, yet works on the road – Pricey for a four-pot Exige*	★★★★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 (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	168 R	£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 Sport	172 D	£90,390	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.6	-	186	331	-	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet – Starting to get long in the tooth?	★★★★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	*122 R*	*'03-'11*	*2R/1308*	*228/8200*	*156/5500*	*1429kg*	*162*	*6.5*	*16.4*	*146*	*299*	*24.6*	*+ Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive – Wafer-thin torque output*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	£57,165	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 C63 AMG Black	171 R	£98,765	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1710kg	303	4.1	-	186	286	-	+The C63 turned up to 11 – Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old	★★★★½
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	£110,000	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Weird and utterly wonderful – They're all sold	★★★★½
Nissan 370Z	170 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 GT-R (2012MY)	168 R	£74,450	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.8	-	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	-	196	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	131 F	£39,162	6/2893	261/7200	221/4400	1330kg	199	5.8	-	165	221	30.1	+ Extra power, just as involving – Still lacks the desirability of other Porsches	★★★★½
Porsche Cayman S	132 F	£47,604	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? – Yeah, us too (even though it's the best Cayman yet)	★★★★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 (991)	168 R	£71,449	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1380kg	254	4.7	-	179	212	31.4	+ 911 becomes cleaner and cleverer – But some of its character's gone AWOL	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	168 R	£81,242	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1395kg	287	4.4	-	188	224	29.7	+ As above, but with supercar pace – Electric steering robs it of some tactility	★★★★½
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*	*'11-'12*	*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 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, now from just £12K – 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-'96*	*8/5396*	*350/5700*	*317/4250*	*1790kg*	*199*	*5.2*	-	*171*	-	*17.0*	*+ Big-hearted and beautiful – Be sure to buy a good one*	★★★★☆
Renault Alpine A610		*'92-'96*	*6/2975*	*250/5750*	*258/2900*	*1420kg*	*179*	*5.4*	*13.8*	*160*	-	*21.0*	*+ Overlooked, bargain-price French 911. Try one – RS interior*	★★★★☆
Subaru BRZ	170 R	£24,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1202kg	166	7.5	-	143	159	40.9	+ Fine chassis, great steering – Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised	★★★★☆
Toyota GT86	174 R	£24,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	162	7.5	-	140	161	36.2	+ More fun than its cousin (above) – Same lack of torque, poor interior quality	★★★★☆
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 Cerbera Speed Six	*004 R*	*'98-'04*	*6/3996*	*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	-	156	199	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

evo POCKET BUYING GUIDE

CATERHAM 7 ROADSPORT

WHY WOULD YOU?
As Caterham's entry-level car, it gives plenty of thrills at an affordable price.

WHAT TO PAY
Cars formerly used in the Caterham Academy race series tend to sell for about £11,000, while Caterham itself sells Roadsports for £15K. The Roadsport's predecessor, the Super Sprint, is a cheaper alternative at £7-10K.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR
Caterhams are normally well-kept, so steer clear of any that aren't in good condition. The aluminium and composite bodywork doesn't rust, but the space-frame can suffer from it, while windscreens are often cracked in the corners from people getting in and out of the car. (Full guide, **evo** 172)



THE VITAL STATS
Years 2007-present **Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1595cc **Power** 125bhp @ 6100rpm **Torque** 120lb ft @ 5350rpm **0-60mph** 5.9sec **Top speed** 112mph (claimed)

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+Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud
– It's very, very loud

FERRARI 360 CHALLENGE STRADALE, ISSUE 068

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. Pagani's Huayra (right) is every bit as awesome as the Zonda, while Ferrari's fastest-ever road car – the F12 – could pip its mid-engined brother once we try it in the UK.



	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	
Wiesmann GT MF5	127 D	£150,000	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1380kg	368	3.9	-	195	-	-	+ Striking coupe mated to BMW M5's V10 - Steering a little light	★★★★★
911 GT9R	127 D	c£450,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1344kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M5 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*	*-*	*196*	*-*	*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£1.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	-	-	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans roof - Ridiculous brollyproof 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	686kg	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 F12 Berlinetta	174 R	£239,736	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	211	-	-	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - We've yet to try it in the UK	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	164 R	£227,077	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	208	360	18.4	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
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*	*1530kg*	*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'	*169 F*	*'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	*169 F*	*'97-'02*	*12/5474*	*485/7000*	*419/5000*	*1716kg*	*287*	*4.3*	*10.0*	*199*	*-*	*12.3*	*+ Everything - Nothing*	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	*161 R*	*'11-'12*	*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 599 GTB Fiorano	*101 R*	*'06-'12*	*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 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 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	*087 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 Superleggera	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 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 Gallardo Superleggera	*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 Murciélago 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	173 R	£176,000	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Lacks design flair	★★★★★
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*	*1878kg*	*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	604/3800	1250kg	528	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Leicestershire's unbelievably good attack on the supercar class - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	172 F	c£820,000	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Just as astonishing as the Zonda - ..though turbo engine isn't as nape-prickling	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 F	£1.5m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg	630	3.3	-	217+	-	-	+ The most extreme Zonda ever - The last Zonda ever (probably)	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	*147 D*	*'09-'10*	*12/7291*	*669/6200*	*575/4000*	*1400kg*	*485*	*3.4*	*-*	*217+*	*-*	*-*	*+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often*	★★★★★
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	1613kg	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	1370kg	453	3.5	-	205	284	-	+ More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm..	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.1)	*094 F*	*'06-'09*	*6/3600*	*472/6000*	*457/1950*	*1585kg*	*303*	*4.0*	*8.7*	*193*	*-*	*22.1*	*+ Monster cornering ability - A bit woolly on its standard settings*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (996)	*017 F*	*'00-'06*	*6/3600*	*420/6000*	*413/4600*	*1540kg*	*272*	*4.1*	*10.0*	*189*	*-*	*21.0*	*+ The 911 for all seasons - We can't find any reasons*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (996)	*072 F*	*'04-'06*	*6/3600*	*475/5700*	*457/3500*	*1420kg*	*339*	*4.0*	*-*	*198*	*-*	*-*	*+ Later revisions made it even more of a star - Care still required*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (993)	*066 F*	*'95-'98*	*6/3600*	*408/5750*	*398/4500*	*1502kg*	*276*	*4.3*	*9.2*	*180*	*-*	*19.4*	*+ Stupendous all-weather supercar - It doesn't rain enough*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (993)	*003 F*	*'96-'99*	*6/3600*	*430/5700*	*398/4500*	*1290kg*	*339*	*3.9*	*-*	*184*	*-*	*-*	*+ Hairy-arsed homologation special - Harry won't buy one*	★★★★★
Porsche Carrera GT	*149 F*	*'04-'06*	*10/5733*	*604/8000*	*435/5750*	*1380kg*	*445*	*3.8*	*7.6*	*205*	*-*	*-*	*+ Probably the greatest modern supercar - Can bite*	★★★★★
Porsche 959	*149 F*	*'87-'90*	*6/2850*	*444/6500*	*369/5000*	*1450kg*	*311*	*3.7*	*-*	*197*	*-*	*-*	*+ Tech showcase, still a great drive - Limited choice of colours?*	★★★★★
Ruf Rt 12	097 F	c£155,000	6/3746	641/7000	641/3500	1530kg	426	3.3	-	219	-	-	+ Beautifully executed car with truly immense power - Needs care	★★★★★
Ruf CTR3	126 F	c£357,000	6/3746	691/7600	656/4000	1400kg	501	3.2	-	235	-	-	+ 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*	★★★★★
Spartec 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	★★★★★

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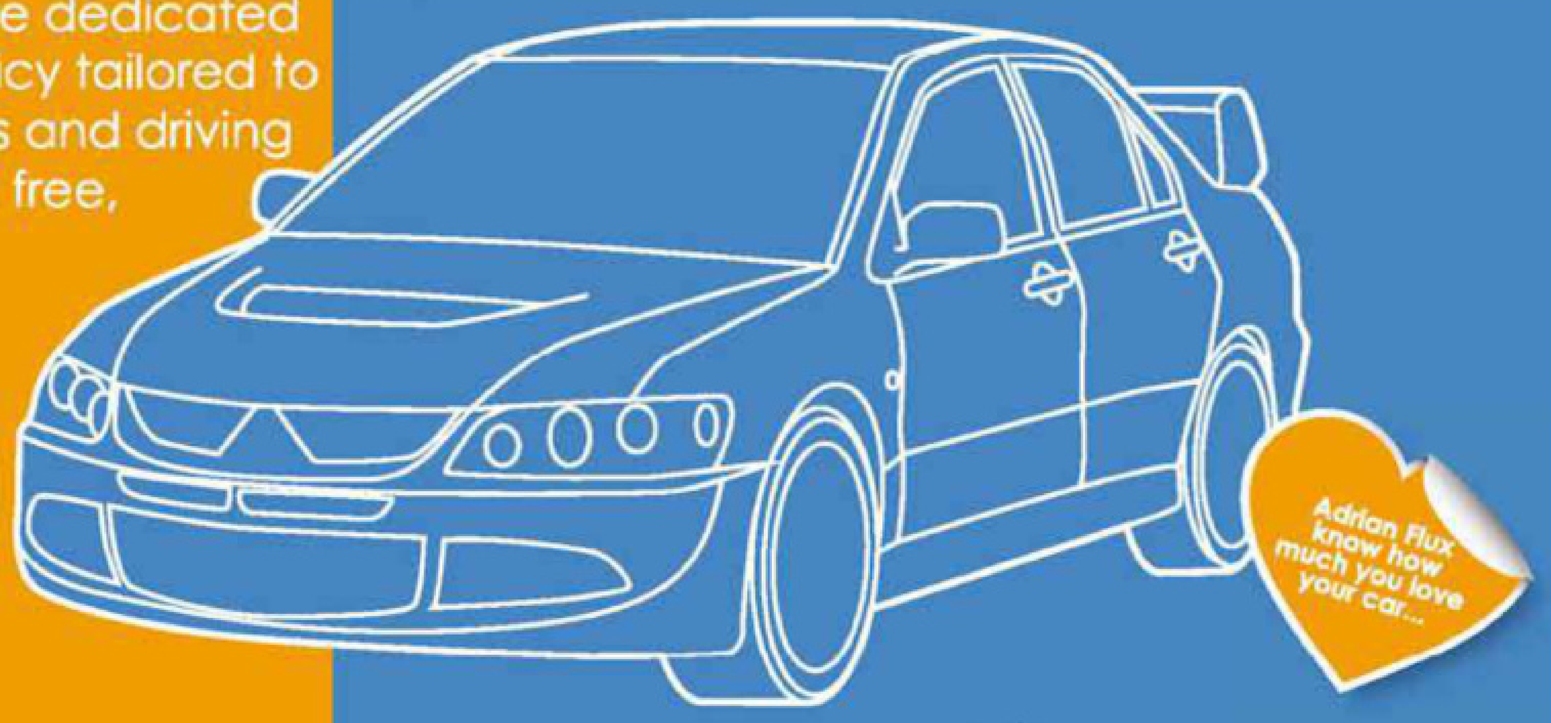
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Bradley Price & his

Alfa Romeo GTV6

The Autodromo founder and watch designer who fell for a wedge-shaped Alfa

'I had been living in New York City without a car for six years before I finally snapped. The convenience of riding the subway and the trains was a novelty, and I enjoyed not being encumbered by parking and traffic. But as a car fanatic of the first order, I knew I had to have a toy.

When I was growing up, my dad had an Austin Healey 3000 and my first love affair with cars started when I was two feet tall, standing behind it staring at the tail lights. I grew up around British cars – my dad had a number of Jaguars, Healeys and MGs – and I was initially looking for an MGB GT, as my reliance on the subway meant I didn't need anything practical. But when I drove a really nice MGB, I realised they just aren't very fast.

Then, through a series of happy coincidences, I came to learn of the Alfa Romeo GTV6, which is very undervalued in the States. I didn't have a lot to spend and this was the best car I could get on my budget. I've had my GTV6 for four years now and I haven't regretted choosing it for a second.

Even though I didn't need anything practical, the GTV6 has proved useful and reliable. I think the reputation Alfas have stems from two things: build quality in the 1970s and owners who didn't really treat their cars right. Now all the really bad cars have gone and owners who have classic Alfas look after them properly; the right cars and right owners have stuck together! I've never had a single problem: I've had times when I've driven 250 miles to Watkins Glen, really pushed the car around the track all day, and driven back home without any kind of issue.

It's a fantastic car for handling. It's not very powerful, so it can't do much on the straights, but in the corners it can hang on to anything. I can keep up with R8s and Corvette Grand Sports – well, the ones that are driven badly! It's incredibly agile and well balanced, it breaks away gradually and you can really sense when it's reaching its limit of adhesion and push right along that edge.

I enjoy a really spirited drive on an empty twisting road more than I do track time, though; it's a little more dangerous but much more exhilarating. I often go in search of great driving roads and the Tail of the Dragon in North Carolina is a favourite of mine.

I recently purchased a Ferrari 208 GT4; it's stunningly beautiful and I love the experience of driving it, but I still think the GTV6 puts a bigger smile on my face. I can't believe that they made something so good that you can get so cheap without everyone knowing the secret! Everyone wants to buy old 911s or E30 M3s but in *Octopussy*, James Bond stole a GTV6 from a German frau in order to speed to a military base and disarm a bomb. I don't recall Bond ever driving a Porsche!

I'm a huge fan of Marcello Gandini's designs and I'm really into wedge-shaped cars – I think they're undervalued and look amazing. The Lamborghini Urraco, Ferrari Daytona and Alfa Romeo Montreal are my dream cars.

'NOW ALL THE REALLY BAD CARS HAVE GONE AND OWNERS WHO HAVE CLASSIC ALFAS LOOK AFTER THEM PROPERLY'

My GTV6 still has a completely stock set up – it's all standard. Every hour you spend meddling with your car's engine could be spent driving it, or learning to be a better driver to gain more speed from yourself. It adds to the satisfaction – the slower your car is, the faster you get to drive it. Besides, there's nothing better than being quicker than somebody with a modified car in your inexpensive stock s***box Alfa!'

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*Model shown is the ST 1.4 85PS SE available from £219 per month. ^Model shown is the 5dr 1.4 85PS SE available from £218 per month. †Model shown is the SC 1.4 85PS SE available from £199 per month. A 9.6p per mile excess mileage charge applies if the annual contract mileage of 10,000 miles is exceeded. All quotations apply when ordered by 31st October 2012. Prices correct at time of print. Retail customers only. Subject to availability. Initial rental contribution equivalent to monthly payment is only payable to customers who purchase their car with personal contract hire. Figures shown are based on 42 months, assuming a maximum of 10,000 miles per annum. All rentals are quoted inclusive of VAT. The quotations are given subject to the vehicles being serviced and maintained in accordance with manufacturer guidelines. Further charges may be payable when vehicle is returned. Indemnities may be required. Over 18's in the UK only. Excludes the Channel Islands. Subject to status from participating dealers only. Personal Contract hire provided by SEAT Finance, Freepost SEAT Finance. Offer may be varied or withdrawn at any time. ††Up to 3 years servicing or 30,000 miles whichever comes sooner. Available to customers who purchase their car through SEAT finance.