

2012 CAR OF THE YEAR ISSUE

MY13 ROAD TEST SPECIAL

McLaren 12C Spider ● Bentley Speed
Aston Martin DB9 ● Audi R8

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CAR OF THE YEAR



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Mercedes C63 AMG Black **Porsche** Boxster S **BMW** M135i...
and **Morgan** 3 Wheeler!



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ECOTY 2012: SUNSHINE, AIRFLAPS, CAMERAS, SHEEP AND CASTLES

Picture the scene. It's a beautiful, crystal-clear autumn day. You're stood next to a flint-flat loch that is reflecting the glorious rolling hills and mountains of the Scottish Borders with perfect symmetry. A Tornado has just flown over the loch, its wings in full delta position, then flicked left and right between two mountain tops. A collection of the best new cars in the world are parked up, the ticking of hot metal signalling the end of another great drive.

One of the cars, the Pagani Huayra, the car of the moment, is being tended to by a man with an impossibly tidy beard. He tells you he was Schumacher's engineer at Ferrari. He's tending to the Pagani because you've just hit a sheep and bent a rod that controls its flaps (the Pagani's, not the sheep's).

Your next stop is Floors Castle, home of the 10th Duke of Roxburghe and a building of unequalled magnificence. You've just been told that you can assemble the cars outside the front of the castle for the picture you can see on page 86. Why? The Duke's son, the Marquess, is an *evo* reader...

Apologies if this comes across as vainglorious – it's not my intention. Indeed I'm relating this to illustrate the absurdity of this job. *eCoty* is the time of the year when this is most apparent, and more than once on this year's test I was shaking my head in disbelief: a McLaren spitting blue flames from its exhausts while chasing a Pagani around the edges of a loch, a Morgan pop-pop-popping and two-wheeling around a circuit, Dickie and Tiff executing twin drifts millimetres apart, the Huayra refilling at a tiny village fuel station in the Borders wilderness, a Boxster exploding from Kielder forest with its exhaust cackling and popping on the overrun.



eCoty is, as you've probably guessed, an absolute blast. But the real satisfaction comes afterwards, when you witness its reanimation in the pages of the magazine, or in the movies we've created this year (see evo.co.uk). The absolute aim for *evo* is to convey the experiences, feelings, sounds, sights and ultimately the thrills of driving the best performance cars in the world – and *eCoty* is the event when this is both difficult and easy. Difficult because the sheer breadth of the test creates so many narratives to explore, and easy for the same reason!

This year, as I read the proofs for these pages, I found myself exclaiming 'yes! yes! yes!' as Henry, Dickie and Jethro conveyed perfectly the absurdity, the fun and, of course, the in-depth analysis that epitomises *evo* Car of the Year.

For any *eCoty* newbies reading this, you may be shocked to see a Pagani battle a Morgan for the title. But we've always maintained that the thrill of driving is non-discriminatory, so our choice of cars for *eCoty* is too. Besides, if it wasn't then we wouldn't have witnessed the shock result this year.

Enjoy the mag. Mind the sheep...

Nick Trott Editor



THIS MONTH ON PLANET EVO



CARS FOR SALE

» *evo*'s new website for buying and selling cars – forsale.evo.co.uk – is the best way to find your next performance car. Turn to p139 to check out the gems production editor Ian Eveleigh unearthed from the site this month.

EVO MERCHANDISE

» Christmas is coming, so why not ask Santa to pop some *evo* goodies in your stocking? We've got T-shirts, caps, some lovely keyrings (pictured) and, of course, car stickers. Get 'em from evo.co.uk/shop

iPAD EDITION

» *evo*'s iPad edition is the finest interactive motoring magazine for iPad that money can buy. Check out the App Store for more information and offers, including joint digital and print subscriptions.

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Model shown: Civic 1.8 i-VTEC Ti Manual in Alabaster Silver at £17,495. **Terms and Conditions:** New retail Civic Ti registrations from 19 September 2012 to 31 December 2012. Subject to model and colour availability. Offers applicable at participating dealers and are at the promoter's absolute discretion. **Honda Aspirations (PCP):** Example shown based on annual mileage of 10,000. Excess mileage charge: 5p per mile. You do not have to pay the Final Payment if you return the car at the end of the agreement and you have paid all other amounts due, the vehicle is in good condition and has been serviced in accordance with the Honda service book and the maximum annual mileage of 10,000 has not been exceeded. Indemnities may be required in certain circumstances. Finance is only available to persons aged 18 or over, subject to status. All figures are correct at time of publication but may be subject to change. Credit provided by Honda Finance Europe Plc. 470 London Road, Slough, Berkshire SL3 8QY.

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Features

060 ECOTY 2012

After driving 174 new cars in the last 12 months, we've whittled them down to the ten that have entertained, impressed and intrigued us most. These are the only cars talented enough to have a hope of being etched into evo's history. And yes, there's a 911 in there. The journey to find evo's Car of the Year 2012 starts at the Blyton Park circuit, before heading north to the beautiful Scottish Borders...

102 DRIVER OF THE YEAR

Our review of 2012 kicks off with its most celebrated racing drivers, and one very inspirational Man of the Year. We also meet a potential Driver of the Year of the future...

107 CONCEPT OF THE YEAR

2012's motor shows have teased us with unrealistic concept cars as usual, but one stands out. It's got a proper drivetrain under the skin, and it looks gorgeous

108 IMAGES OF THE YEAR

evo's camera-clutchers travel far and wide, hang bravely out of cars and drink all manner of questionable energy drinks to bring you the best pictures in the business. Here are our favourites from the last 12 months

112 TURKEY OF THE YEAR

Bad cars are fortunately rather rare these days, but that doesn't stop some of them from seriously upsetting us. Step forward the Turkey of the Year (and its champion credentials). Plus our favourite tuner car, and 2012's most scintillating statistics

114 RANGE ROVER IN AFRICA

Harry Metcalfe finally gets his hands on the new Range Rover, and takes it just a little bit out of its normal territory as he goes barrelling over sand dunes in the Moroccan desert

120 TESLA IN THE ARCTIC

Your phone's battery will drain itself far quicker in sub-zero conditions. So what happens to an electric car? John Barker finds out - by maturely drifting a Tesla Roadster Sport on a frozen lake



057



178

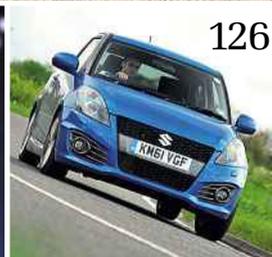
evoDriven

- 036 McLAREN 12C SPIDER
- 038 JAGUAR XF SPORTBRAKE
- 040 ASTON MARTIN DB9
- 042 AUDI R8 V10 PLUS
- 044 BENTLEY CONTI GT SPEED
- 046 PORSCHE 911 CARRERA 4
- 047 PORSCHE CAYENNE S
- 050 SUBARU WRX STI 340R
- 052 VW GOLF 1.4 TSI GT
- 054 LEXUS GS450h F SPORT
- 054 VOLVO V40 T4

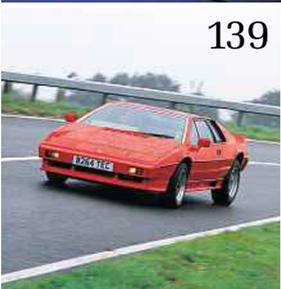
036



033



126



139



016

Regulars

014 NEWS

More details on the Porsche 918 Spyder and a drive in Lotus's Evora 414E: the hybrid that's quicker than a Diablo

029 COLUMNS

Porter whines about the cost of things these days, Metcalfe celebrates the quality of modern cars and Needell laments the career he could have had

057 LETTERS

An attack on Aston Martin's questionable design philosophy, a homemade BMW Art Car and an inquiry into our film-maker's spending habits

124 LONG-TERM TESTS

Meaden gets a white car to match his caravan, while we bid the Swift Sport farewell

137 EVO KNOWLEDGE

Just £35k can buy you a former eCoty champion and one of the quickest cars we've ever tested - the mighty Nissan GT-R

139 FANTASY GARAGE

The challenge: buy a mid-engined supercar, a four-seater coupe and a classic for £80,000. How would you spend yours?

178 ME AND MY CAR

Master of the F1 grid walk Martin Brundle adores his unique Eagle Jaguar E-type

NEXT MONTH...

SLS AMG GT

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NEXT ISSUE ON SALE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5



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CATERHAM TO JOIN FORCES WITH RENAULT

TECHNICAL COLLABORATION COULD YIELD A COMMON SPORTS CAR PLATFORM, RENAULT-POWERED CATERHAMS AND SHARING OF DEVELOPMENT COSTS

Caterham is set to announce a technical collaboration with Renault that *evo* understands will lead to the joint development of a new sports car platform that will underpin radical new models from both companies.

We've already reported Caterham's plans to develop a completely new model above the Seven and aimed squarely at the part of the market currently occupied by the Lotus Elise (*evo* 175). The big news this month is that it will be created in collaboration with Renaultsport, with the same mechanical package as the basis of a new French sports car that we believe will wear Alpine badges.

The news marks a radical step in the development of Caterham, and shows the ambition that owner Tony Fernandes has for the brand. Fernandes bought Caterham last year, having been stymied in his plans to take control of Lotus Cars, and has since rebranded his Team Lotus Formula 1 outfit as Caterham. Under Fernandes, Caterham has set up a new engineering division (Caterham Technology and Innovation) and recruited a team of around 40 engineers to work across both road and racing projects, including Tony Shute, the project manager for the original Lotus Elise.

Speaking in August, Caterham Cars CEO Graham Macdonald told us that the project for a new car was: 'Reasonably well-progressed on paper. There's still lots of design work going on, but we're planning to bring something to market in mid-2015. If you work that back you'll realise we're pretty far down the line of developing a new product.'

At that point, we didn't know that there was going to be a Renaultsport connection, but it was tacitly confirmed when we were invited to a joint press conference with the two companies just after the Paris motor show, which was subsequently cancelled. Nonetheless, *evo* understands that the collaboration will be confirmed at a rescheduled conference in early November.

Looking back, there have been a fair few clues dropped in recent months that the two companies were moving closer together. In September it was announced that Cyril Abiteboul, the deputy managing director of Renault's Formula 1 engine operation, would be joining Caterham F1 as CEO, while Caterham's F1 cars are already powered by Renault engines. Meanwhile, Renault showed off the stunning Alpine A110-50 concept at last year's Monaco Grand Prix, but underneath the skin was the chassis of the existing Mègane Trophy racer and we were explicitly told that it couldn't



'WE'RE PLANNING TO BRING SOMETHING TO MARKET IN 2015, SO YOU'LL REALISE WE'RE PRETTY FAR DOWN THE LINE'

GRAHAM MACDONALD
CEO OF CATERHAM



Above: Renault's Alpine A110-50 concept could be produced for the road with a Caterham contribution towards development costs

become a road car. To do that, Renault said, the company would have to find a partner to split development costs – further explaining the collaboration.

The French connection also suggests that the new Caterham, which Macdonald has told us will 'fill the void in the sub-£45,000 sports car market', is also likely to feature a Renault-sourced powertrain, rather than one of the Ford engines that Sevens are (and will continue to be) fitted with. If that does turn out to be the case, then there's a toy box of options within the Nissan-Renault empire, from the 200bhp

LOLA COLLAPSE

Caterham says that it won't be affected by the final collapse of Lola, its development partner on the SP300R project.

Lola went into administration in May, and in early October the receiver announced that he hadn't been able to find a buyer for the company and that the firm's remaining 19 employees were being made redundant.

'It's obviously a huge shame for everyone involved,' Caterham CEO Graham Macdonald told *evo*, 'but from Caterham's point of view the good news is that we developed the car in conjunction with Lola, but we build it entirely ourselves. We



manufacture the chassis and source all the parts. Therefore the sad demise of Lola has no impact on the SP300R – we're still building them, selling them and shipping them.'

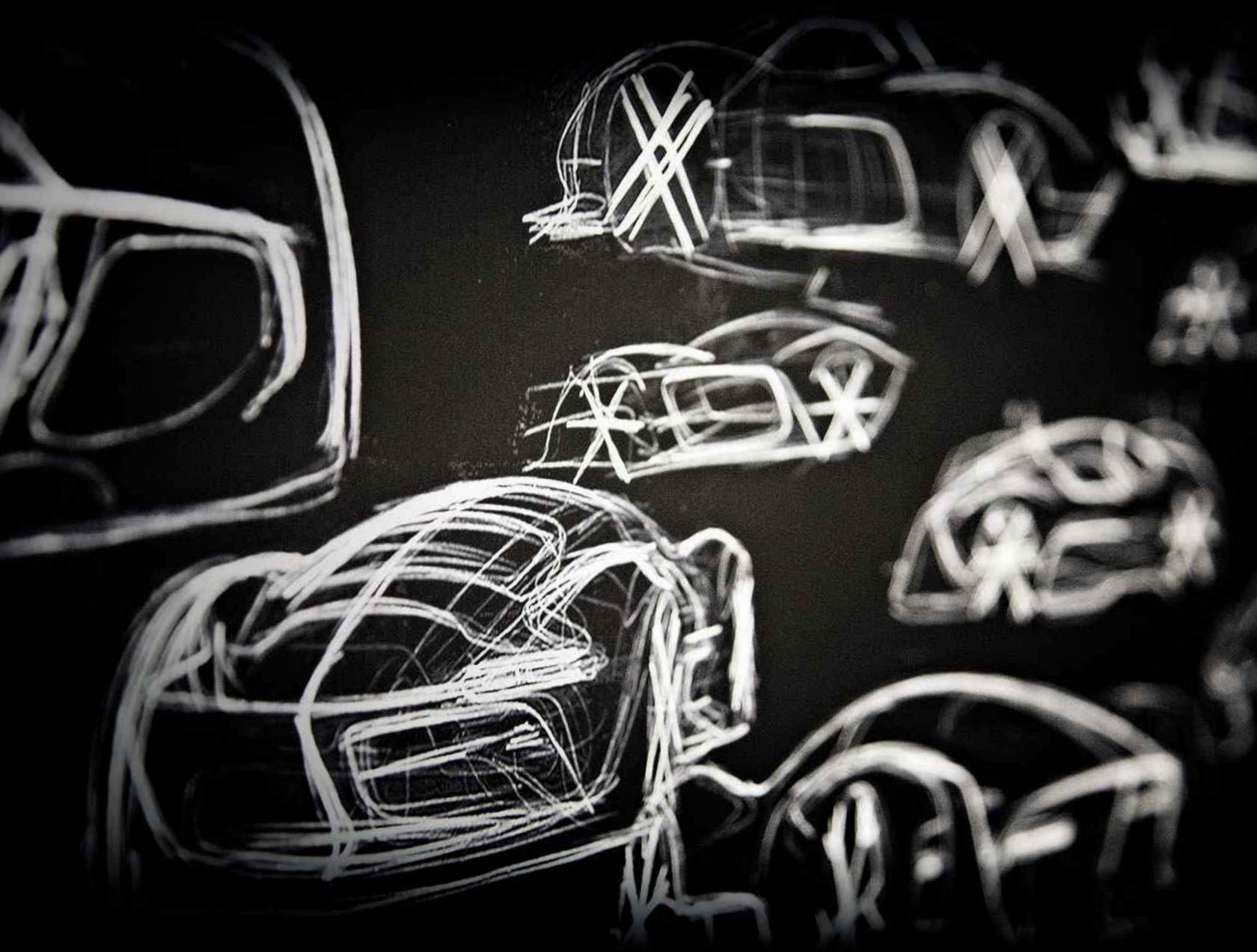
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Engine legend seeks
new owner for further
investment P19



**FIRST CUSTOMER
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Mini-crossover with
GT-R engine gets more
power, too P22



**HYBRID
LOTUS EVORA**
evo gets behind the
wheel of the Evora 414E
prototype P24



1.6-litre four-pot of the new Renaultsport Clio all the way through to the mighty twin-turbo V6 in the GT-R. It will be fascinating to see what finds its way into Caterham products.

There are still more questions than answers at the moment. The biggest unknown will be what, if anything, the collaboration will mean for the two companies' other operations – including motorsport. And it's also unclear at this stage what balance will be struck between the firms when it comes to developing different parts of the mechanical platform. But we're looking forward to the results. **Mike Duff**

CATERHAM R600

Amid all the excitement it would be easy to miss Caterham announcing the 'R600' version of the Seven.

It uses the supercharged 275bhp 2-litre Duratec motor from the SP300R, working in conjunction with a six-speed sequential gearbox. In traditional Caterham fashion, it will form the basis for a one-make series, and although the racer's 'box won't be

able to work on road and the supercharged engine hasn't been emissions certified, you'd be mad to bet against a road-going version following.

Graham Macdonald told evo: 'We want to make sure that on the types of road our customers like to drive on, they're not going to be scared senseless. We'd have to develop it so that the power is smooth and tractable enough for road use.'



PORSCHE 918: SPECS LEAKED

SALES PUSH REVEALS HYBRID HYPERCAR WILL START AT £625K

In evo 176, we told you how it feels to ride in the new Porsche 918 Spyder, with rally ace Walter Röhrl taking Harry Metcalfe for an extended blast in a prototype. Now, after an unscheduled leak, we can bring you more details and what seems to be full pricing for the hybrid mega-car, considerably ahead of the official schedule.

Porsche has declined to confirm any of the details, but the leaked document seems genuine and is believed to be part of the communication pack sent out to potential customers. As well as confirming some finer points of the 918's technical package it also suggests that only the very rich need apply, especially when it comes to some of the ultra-expensive options.

The headline figures are as evo has previously reported, with a 4.6-litre V8 petrol engine working in conjunction with two electric motors to produce a peak of 'at least' 784bhp accompanied by 'more than' 577lb ft of torque. The 918 will use one electric motor to assist the V8 driving the rear wheels, with the second powering the front axle and providing what's described as 'electric all-wheel drive' up to 146mph. The onboard lithium-ion battery has a relatively modest 6.8kWh capacity, giving a range of around 15 miles in pure-electric mode, but it will feature a plug-in recharger so it can be topped up when parked. Other tech highlights include torque vectoring, active steering for the rear wheels and a 'sailing' mode that disconnects the drivetrain from the wheels when coasting to boost economy.

As we already knew, the 918 Spyder carries a very serious price tag – €768,026 (£625,000) for the standard car and €839,426



"THE CLAIM OF A NORDSCHLEIFE TIME OF 'LESS THAN 7:20' IS ALREADY OUT OF DATE"



(£683,000) for the stripped-out 'Weissach' pack version. What's interesting is to learn that opting for the lighter car – which shaves 35kg from the 1700kg of the standard model – will mean losing the 500-watt audio system, the air-con and the external recharging point for the on-board battery. In addition, it uses a foil wrap instead of paint to save 2.5kg, magnesium wheels that shave off another 13.5kg and will get a stripped-out cabin with no glovebox or armrests, and with straps instead of door handles. The Weissach is reported to be 'approximately two seconds quicker' around the Nürburgring than the standard car, which seems like a lot of pain for minimal gain. Still, at least we know that the leaked claim of a Nordschleife time of 'less than 7:20' is already out of date: during our time with the car last month, one of Porsche's testers posted 7:14.

Yet it's the option pricing that takes things stratospheric. How about around £47k for 'liquid metal' paint with part foil wrap? Or £14k for the made-to-measure five-piece luggage set? Porsche will also sell an external 'fast charging' system for £16k, a front-lift axle for £740 and 'special leather' trim for £19k.

But if you've got nearly £1million for a hybrid supercar, you aren't very likely to get shirty over the cost of the extras. **Mike Duff**

Above: 918 Spyder prototype was quick out of the box at the Ring. Below: stunning looks come at an equally stunning price



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RX F SPORT fuel consumption figures: urban 43.5 mpg (6.5L/100km), extra urban 47.1 mpg (6.0L/100km), combined 44.8 mpg (6.3L/100km). CO₂ emissions 145g/km.



COSWORTH'S GREATEST HITS

FORD SIERRA RS COSWORTH

The turbocharged 'YA' Cosworth engine created an instant performance icon – and moved the Cosworth brand to the badge of this and the subsequent Sapphire and Escort Cosworths.



FORD DFV ENGINE

This V8 was the greatest F1 engine of all time, being competitive from the 1960s well into the '80s, and latterly producing in excess of 500bhp.



FORD ESCORT TWIN CAM

Cosworth developed the 'BDA' engine for Ford – and it powered sports cars, mk1 and mk2 Escort rally cars and their road-going cousins.



MERCEDES 190E 2.3/2.5

When Merc needed more oomph to take the 190E racing it turned to Cosworth for a bespoke 16v naturally aspirated motor producing 197bhp (later 205bhp).



VAUXHALL ASTRA 16V

The Astra was always one of the quickest hot hatches of the '80s thanks to the 'red top' 150bhp 16-valve motor and its Cosworth-designed cylinder head.



AUDI RS4 (B5)

Cosworth Technology – then owned by Audi – designed and built the first RS4 engine, which turned a cooking-spec 2.7-litre turbo V6 into a 380bhp monster.



SUBARU IMPREZA CS400

This tuned STI knocked out a storming 395bhp, although it also carried a £50k price tag it struggled to justify. It got Cosworth badges, though.



CATERHAM CSR260

The range-topping Caterham CSR260 has a Cosworth-tweaked 2.3-litre Duratec that produces 260bhp – good for a 3.1-sec 0-60mph time.

COSWORTH PUTS ITSELF UP FOR SALE

FAMOUS ENGINE FIRM LOOKS FOR NEW OWNER TO EXPAND MOTORSPORT AND ENGINEERING EFFORTS

When news broke that Cosworth had put itself up for sale, the evo office collectively groaned. After Lola's collapse, we feared another part of Britain's specialist motor industry was in trouble.

The good news is that it's not; indeed, the potential sale may well prove to be the start of a brighter future for the engineering firm. Cosworth is both profitable and busy, but its American owners have decided to cash in and move on.

Founded in 1958 by Mike Costin and Keith Duckworth, Cosworth began as a race

engine constructor, later diversifying into designing and building some iconic road-going motors. The company was effectively split in 1998 when then-parent Vickers sold the race division to Ford and the road engine division to Audi (which later became Mahle Powertrain). ChampCar team owners Gerry Forsythe and Kevin Kalkhoven took control of the racing side in 2004, with the company moving into aerospace and defence as its racing business declined, largely due to the death of the ChampCar series in 2008.

After a hiatus, Cosworth is now building F1 engines again (for Marussia and HRT), but the majority of its business is engineering consultancy, with 300 employees and a £55m turnover last year. It's likely that Cosworth will be bought by a bigger concern – Prodrive has expressed guarded interest – but the company is keen for funding so it can expand further. Let's hope the future holds another Cosworth road car icon. **Mike Duff**

'THE SALE MAY BE THE START OF A BRIGHT FUTURE'



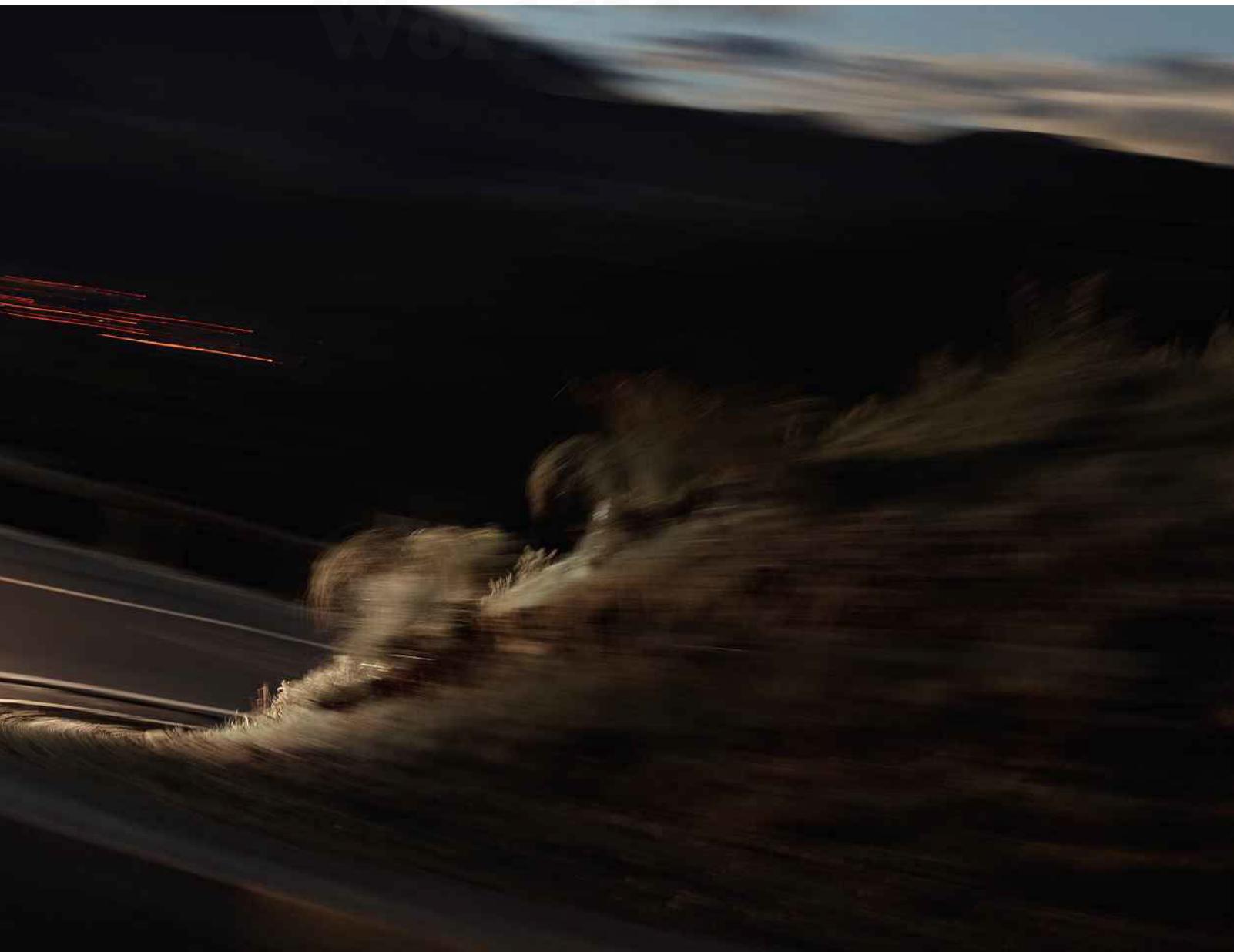
Two impressive red lines.

The new 911 Carrera models.

The redline of a Porsche 911 has always been impressive. For almost 50 years now, each new generation has pushed the boundaries of performance further and further. The new 911 Carrera 4 models are no exception. As well as their legendary all-wheel drive handling, they feature broad shoulders, making for a striking presence.

And the iconic red LED light strip across the rear, means other road users can now appreciate the red line of a 911 too.

To find out more visit www.porsche.co.uk/redlines



Model shown is a Carrera 4S Coupe at £88,774.00 including first year road fund licence and first registration fee. Fuel consumption figures for the new 911 Carrera 4S Coupe in mpg (l/100km): Urban 19.9 (14.2); Extra Urban 37.7 (7.5); Combined 28.5 (9.9). CO₂ emissions (g/km) 234.



PORSCHE



JUKE-R HITS THE ROAD

FIRST PRODUCTION SUPER-JUKE FINISHED – WITH MORE POWER

Nissan has confirmed that the first 'production' version of the Juke-R has been completed. Like the original concept, the customer version of the GT-R/Juke mash-up has been built by UK motorsport specialist RML.

The production Juke-R, which uses the GT-R's twin-turbo V6 engine and twin-clutch gearbox, will make more power than the concept, with the same 542bhp as the 2012 GT-R. This means a claimed 0-62mph time of 3.0sec and top speed of 170mph. The styling has been updated too, with bumpers and side skirts remodelled by Nissan Design



Top: the Juke-R's new look. Above: all-gold 'Bolt' GT-R will go under the hammer to raise funds for charity

Europe. New carbon trim on both the front and rear cooling vents and the diffuser complete the changes.

Nissan has also revealed more detail on the Juke Nismo, which goes on sale early next year. It will be powered by a 200bhp version of the 1.6-litre turbo engine that will appear in the new Renaultsport Clio.

And if that's not enough, Nissan has unveiled a Usain Bolt-inspired all-gold 'Bolt' edition GT-R that will be auctioned for the Olympic 100m champion's charity later this year. Bolt has also been made Nissan's 'Director of Excitement'... **Mike Duff**

COMPETITION

WIN

A DAY'S RACING TUITION FROM FORMULA 1 VETERANS IN A 535BHP GT3-SPEC SPORTSCAR



» Very few people can say they've driven a GT3-level racing car. So how's this for a competition prize?

Courtesy of Supercar Lifestyle, you can win a full day of one-to-one tuition as you get to grips with either a Lamborghini Gallardo or Ascari KZ1-R GT3 racer. Run at the MIRA test facility in Nuneaton, you'll spend five hours learning the ropes with ex-Formula 1 drivers. Starting off in a BMW M3, you'll be put through practical and theory sessions on the art of racing,

graduating into a Porsche GT3 Cup car and then finally a fully prepared GT3 race car.

It's once-in-a-lifetime stuff, and it's dead easy to get involved – just head to win.evo.co.uk, answer a couple of questions correctly and you'll be entered into the draw. There's one prize up for grabs, you must hold a full UK driving licence to enter, and the competition closes on December 3, 2012. Full terms and conditions are online. Best of luck!



BUGATTI VEYRON RAFALE

» Meet this month's special-edition Veyron. While we patiently await the Galibier super-saloon, Bugatti continues to find new shades of paint to flog its remaining Veyron stock in. The world's fastest convertible is the latest beneficiary, with the Grand Sport Vitesse Rafale gaining a 'Gris Rafale' (grey) exterior along with splashes of blue-weave carbonfibre, while the interior is covered in blue leather. It's yours for €1.9million – about £1.52million at current exchange rates.



SUPER TROFEO UPDATED

» Lamborghini has updated its Gallardo Super Trofeo racer in line with its road-going relation's facelift. The biggest change is a new aerodynamic kit, which includes a ten-way adjustable wing that contributes to a downforce increase of up to 160kg, while new brake cooling ducts increase thermal efficiency by 50 per cent. The 2013 Super Trofeo series kicks off in March, with plans to expand to Asia and America.



NEW RENAULT CLIO CUP

» Meanwhile, Renault's Clio Cup racer has had more than just an update; it's being replaced by a circuit-honed version of the controversial new RS Clio 200. Its 1.6-litre turbo has been wound up to 217bhp and 199lb ft, and it gets a six-speed sequential gearbox and limited-slip diff. There'll be a gridful of them in the 2013 Clio Eurocup, while it'll be introduced to the BTCC-supporting Clio Cup UK series in 2014. Prices for the car will start at around £37,000.

www.citroen.co.uk

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ENVOIOUS GLANCES COME AS STANDARD.



Official Government Fuel Consumption Figures (litres per 100km/mpg) and CO₂ 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 CO₂. Lowest: DS3 Ultra Prestige e-HDi 110 Airream 6-speed manual: Urban 4.6/61.4, Extra Urban 3.4/83.1, Combined 3.8/74.4 and 99 CO₂.

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Two electric motors are plugged into Evora's rear (above), as screen indicates when petrol motor is needed (right)

LOTUS REALISES ELECTRIC DREAMS

EVORA PROTOTYPE BREAKS NEW GROUND IN GREEN MOTORING

The future of Lotus Cars may have a question mark against it, but the company's engineering division is still working hard. This petrol-electric Evora, developed using money from the British government's Technology Strategy Board, is a beguiling advert for what Lotus Engineering can deliver.

Lotus admits the 414E, as the car is known, will never make production, but its underpinnings are shared with the Infiniti Emerg-e concept (see p107), a car that could become the Japanese firm's halo model. The 414E is a 'series hybrid', more commonly known as a range extender. Two electric motors (each with 150kW and 295lb ft) drive the rear wheels, taking their energy primarily from the 15kWh battery pack, with a 1.2-litre three-cylinder engine generating more electricity when the throttle is floored or the battery drops below 30 per cent charge.

Electricity alone will carry the Evora up to 35 miles, but when you're out of juice and under the small engine's steam, you won't top 60mph. Open the taps with everything



'IT FEELS LIKE IT'S BEEN FIRED FROM AN ELASTIC BAND'

charged, though, and the total power output is equivalent to 449bhp, translating to a claimed 8.0sec 0-100mph time (while emitting just 55g/km of CO2).

Our sample laps on Hethel's test track were fascinating. The car handles with the Evora's usual balance – despite weighing 377kg more than standard – and it's properly quick. On full throttle it feels like it's been fired from an elastic band, thanks to

Above: our man Dobie enjoyed the 414E's instant torque on the test track at Hethel

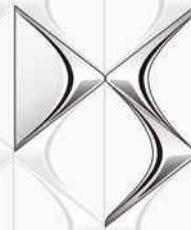
the instant torque its electric motors provide and its seamless single-speed transmission.

That does inevitably mean a lack of engagement, something chief engineer Steve Doyle's team has considered. The next step is a 'virtual' seven-speed paddleshift, with torque interruption built into the power delivery to simulate gearchanges, and energy recuperation for the batteries as a by-product. This will be mated to 'Halosonic' sound synthesis, an artificial engine note changing as you tug the paddles. It will be possible to switch the 'gears' on or off, so you can cruise in smooth, single-speed mode, then enable the seven speeds when a good bit of road turns up.

On low-throttle loads, the 414E is a typically quiet electric car, and the range extender seems to trickle in seamlessly, though its gruff noise – which has received no NVH work yet – means you'll always hear it. This has apparently been left to help showcase noise cancellation – Halosonic's other capability – later in the 414E's life.

This car will also help develop torque vectoring. The electric motors are already independently powered, and although the software isn't ready, open-diff, simulated-LSD and active set-ups will be shown.

Much of the 414E has been developed via Carmaker, software that runs virtual track tests, saving months of labour and build costs. Let's hope Lotus Cars has a long enough future to benefit from the engineering team's prowess. **Stephen Dobie**



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ENVOIOUS GLANCES COME AS STANDARD.



NEW CITROËN DS3 ULTRA PRESTIGE

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CRÉATIVE TECHNOLOGIE



FITS LIKE A SCHU

A limited edition celebrating a retiring F1 icon and a stylish Swiss special join a watch made out of real bits of DeLorean...



AUDEMARS PIGUET ROYAL OAK OFFSHORE MICHAEL SCHUMACHER
PRICE FROM £31,550 FROM AUDEMARSPIGUET.COM

Audemars Piguet's Royal Oak – which marks its 40th anniversary this year – has long been a favourite among F1 stars, with past models dedicated to drivers such as Rubens Barrichello, Juan Pablo Montoya and Jarno Trulli. Now Michael Schumacher has lent his name to an all-new version of the 44mm diameter Offshore model, which he helped to design and is replete with references to the seven-time world champion's glory years. Two blue stars and five red ones on the dial allude to his championship wins with Benetton in 1994 and 1995 and Ferrari from 2000-2004; the minute track is decorated with a chequered flag motif and the hour and minute hands look like the silhouettes of a racing car monocoque.

The subdials are inspired by dashboard instruments and, when you turn the watch over, you'll find a wheel-like case back with a crystal centre that reveals an oscillating weight with the famous 'MS' signature. The watch is limited to 1000 pieces in titanium at £31,550, 500 in pink gold at £50,470 and 100 in platinum at an eye-watering £83,590. Only those on F1 salaries need apply...



CERTINA DS PODIUM GMT SAUBER
PRICE £550 FROM CERTINA.COM

Certina watches have recently become available in the UK again after an absence of more than a decade. This special version of the DS Podium GMT celebrates the Swiss brand's seven-year allegiance with its compatriot Formula 1 team Sauber and features a 12-hour chronograph counter and dual time zone display. As worn by Sergio Perez and Kamui Kobayashi, the watch is liveried in the Sauber colours of grey, white and red and is supplied on a grey leather strap with 'de rigueur' red stitching. The model is limited to an edition of 2012 examples, each of which is delivered in a presentation box shaped like the nose cone of an F1 car. You get a numbered certificate of authenticity, too.



ROMAIN JEROME DELOREAN DNA
PRICE €12,900 FROM ROMAINJEROME.CH

Few people had heard of the Romain Jerome brand until 2007, when it came out with the first of its 'DNA' watches which broke new horological ground – because they were covered in stabilised rust. The Titanic DNA watch featured a case made with metal salvaged from the famous wreck and has since been followed by models such as the Liberty DNA (containing bits of the Statue of Liberty) and the Moon DNA (moon dust and fibres from an Apollo 11 space suit). The latest RJ watch is the DeLorean DNA, made from the same brushed stainless steel used for the ill-fated DMC-12's gullwing body. The hands were inspired by the shape of a dashboard and the small seconds dial is meant to evoke the DeLorean's tail lights. The back of each watch is engraved with an image of a DeLorean and an edition number. Just 81 will be made, a nod to the first year of original DeLorean production.

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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). CO₂ 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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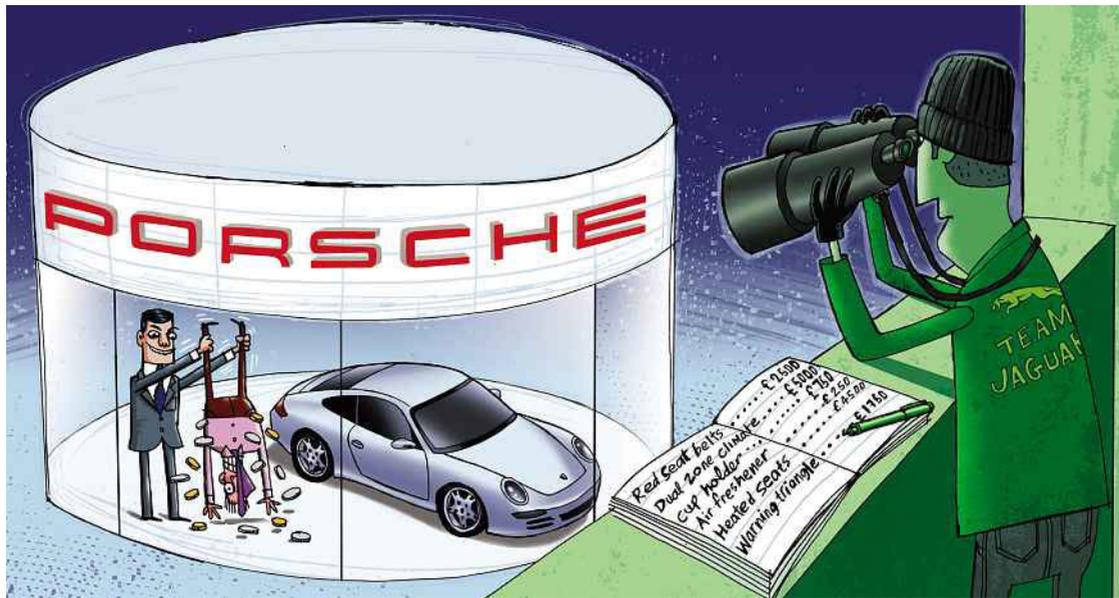


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Richard Porter

Top Gear TV's script editor shares his concerns that Jaguar has priced its new F-type out of the market



'SOMEONE AT JAG HAS STUDIED THE "HOLD 'EM UPSIDE DOWN AND SHAKE 'EM" RETAIL POLICY LONG EMPLOYED BY PORSCHE'

How much does a Golf GTI cost? Without cheating, have a guess. We all know the car well enough and we probably like its blend of quiet confidence and driver amusement, but we also like the fact that they've always felt attainable. So, what do you reckon? £20k? That's sort of what a Golf GTI feels like it should cost at the moment. But it doesn't. Right now, the basic three-door, manual-boxed version of the current model lists for £25,650.

What about the Astra VXR? Looks nice, drives well, surely that's a £20k hot hatch? It isn't. It costs £26,995 – and that's before you've given it the £995 factory body kit that no buyer is going to ignore. The Renaultsport Mégane 265 must be the bargain in this company then? Ah, sorry, even the stripped-out Cup version is £24,840.

This isn't the fault of medium-sized hot hatchbacks but it is a perfect illustration of something that's been bothering me: cars today are more expensive than we think. Unless it's just me who's stuck in 2001 and, hey, aren't The Strokes brilliant? I'm not sure if anyone else has this problem. I mean the car price thing. Not The Strokes, they were over-rated.

In my head, Fiesta-sized cars cost £8-12k, maybe up to £16k for a sporty one. They don't. The cheapest Fiesta is almost £10k and a Methodist-spec Polo is about the same. I'm convinced the BMW 3-series range kicks off at £19,000 when in fact you'd be nearly £25k lighter if you bought the most affordable version at list. I tried to correct this by swotting up on prices, so that I could look at a Mondeo and not assume it was seven shillings. It seemed to work... until Jaguar startled me with the price list for the new F-type.

In the past, you could have a good stab at the price of any given Jaguar. The answer was always 'slightly less than its rivals'. That was Jag's thing, a tradition laid down by company founder William Lyons and adhered to ever since, even if it meant cutting a few corners in places where they

hoped the customer wouldn't notice.

But now Jaguar has big plans. It wants to be a proper global concern rather than an endearing niche company and that means the end of corner cutting and farewell to surprisingly reasonable prices. Which is fine, but it doesn't quite explain why the F-type kicks off at £58,500 and roars all the way up to £79,950 for the V8. This is not me living in the wrong decade. Surely that is just too expensive.

And it gets worse. If you go to the online configurator, you'll see that someone has studied the 'hold 'em upside down and shake 'em' retail policy long employed by Porsche. You want MG Metro-tastic red seat belts? Find £150 down the back of your sofa. Fancy headlining in grey rather than black? No problem, that'll be £350 please. Dual-zone climate control and heated seats? Even on the most expensive Jag, you'll still need to stomp up another £700.

The worry is, Jag is doing all this on a two-seater sports car that looks like it should compete with the SLK and Boxster, cars that start at £29,985 and £37,589 respectively. Jag argues that the unilaterally supercharged F-type has more power and occupies a new niche between small roadsters and full-size sports cars, but that's their word against the perceptions of the rest of the world. I could argue that I occupy a new niche between a man and a unicorn but it would be patently obvious to everyone that I was talking bollocks. You can't invent stuff in marketing meetings and just expect it to stick.

The troubling thing is that the F-type looks terrific, has a great interior – complete with groovy, Eurofighter-inspired gold detailing – and, on Jaguar's current form, it's got a strong chance of being superb to drive. It'd be nice if this car did well. It'd be even nicer if you started to see them around all the time, reminding people that Jags are handsome and cool. But I'm worried that buyers will expect it to cost £40k and then run away sobbing when they find out it doesn't.

But what do I know? I thought a Golf GTI cost 20 grand.



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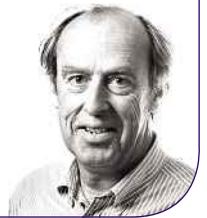
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Harry Metcalfe

evo's editorial director finds that there's a downside to the superb reliability of modern cars



'BACK IN THE '70S, ANY CAR HEADING TOWARDS 100,000 MILES PUFFED OUT ENOUGH BLUE SMOKE TO CHOKE BYSTANDERS ON THE SPOT'

Have you ever wondered what the life expectancy of a new car is these days? It's something that's always intrigued me and I reckon the answer is probably much longer than you'd expect.

I was speaking to the engineers responsible for developing the new Range Rover recently and they told me all components not considered to be wear and tear parts have to remain functional for at least ten years or 150,000 miles before being replaced. For all the VW Group brands, the prescribed limit is even longer at ten years or 300,000km (186,000 miles).

Things stretch even further when you turn to engine life. Most engineers expect an engine in today's cars to last 300,000-500,000 miles before anything other than regular servicing is required, while some manufacturers even go as far as quoting engine life as 'indefinite'. That's in complete contrast to the 1970s when dozens of companies offered exchanges for 'short' engines, because any car heading towards 100,000 miles was either suffering from advanced rust worm or was so worn that it was puffing out enough blue smoke to choke bystanders on the spot.

We may bemoan the automatic and paddleshift gearboxes of today, but they're great for reliability because they make it impossible to over-rev the engine. Then there's a myriad of sensors monitoring engine behaviour hundreds of times a second – should any detect a hint of overheating, knocking or high oil temperature, they shut the engine down before any damage is done. Factor in garage-only servicing and modern lubricants, and suddenly engine life is no longer the issue in terms of whole-car life.

Reliability issues today generally hinge around the failure of electrical components. So why do most car owners still think a three-year-old car with 60,000 miles on the clock is about to self-destruct? Because they're mugs, that's why.

The main reason this unwritten three-years/60,000-

miles rule still exists is because of the UK's obsession with company cars, the majority of which are leased for three years and are replaced as soon as the lease ends. Back in the '80s, cars fell apart at 60,000 miles anyway, but quality and reliability has improved so much since then that the reason to change isn't nearly so clear-cut.

You also need to consider the cost of exchanging old for new. Last week I looked into swapping my current Range Rover (TDV8 Vogue SE, 2007, 61,000 miles) for a new one. My current Rangie has been a paragon; the engine hasn't consumed any oil, there's zero wear to the interior and the exterior is still in showroom condition. So I was a wee bit miffed when offered a mere £19,000 for it against a new, similarly optioned Range Rover SDV8 Vogue SE (£90,260). That means I'll need to shell out over £71k to swap a near-as-damn-it perfect '07 Range Rover (less than halfway through its life, according to its maker) for a new one with near-identical life expectancy but more bells and whistles.

I'm not singling out Land Rover here, because this is a dilemma facing anyone who has bought a new car in the last few years; the cost to change has exploded as manufacturers get greedy with new car prices and used car values fail to keep up. A serial Ferrari buyer friend told me it was going to cost him £160,000 to change his '08 Ferrari 599 into a new F12, so he wasn't going to bother. I can't say I blame him.

The car trade will vigorously deny all this because their business would grind to a halt if we all started to keep our cars longer. But there's evidence that this is already happening as pre-registration is rife across Europe as buyers stay away from showrooms until hefty discounts are offered. Even luxury cars are designed to get us from A to B, but paying a huge amount to upgrade to a new one makes little sense when your current one still has years of life left in it. You wouldn't buy a new washing machine just because a new model is launched, so why do we buy cars that way?

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Tiff Needell

The racer and presenter wishes there were more opportunities for drivers of a certain age



'I WENT THROUGH A STAGE OF WANTING TO BE THE LEAD GUITARIST IN A ROCK BAND, BUT I WAS NEVER IN THE LEAST BIT MUSICALLY TALENTED'

E

ver since being dragged to Goodwood as soon as I could walk, I'd wanted to be a racing driver. And even though I'm interested in almost anything where there is that win or lose competitive edge, motor racing has always been my real passion. I did go through a brief stage of wanting to be the lead guitarist in a rock band but, having never been in the least bit musically talented, that was

always a bit of a long shot. So a racing driver it had to be.

But the recent overload of sport has got me asking myself if I indeed chose the right one back then. Could life have been better if I'd taken a different sporting path? The answer was no, well at least not for what I have already done. But what about the things I might still be able to do?

It was returning to Goodwood in September for the 15th running of the Revival Meeting that got me thinking. Having been very lucky to have raced at every one of these, I've seen an ever increasing number of younger drivers appear on the grids over the last few years. Thankfully, they don't turn up for the cricket match where I join racing legends such as Derek Bell, Jackie Oliver and Richard Attwood and we boldly attempt to re-live our youth, only to discover that our bodies are no longer tuned for such shoulder-wrenching, knee-twisting action. Although in fairness, we thought we were a bit old for it when it all started 15 years ago...

But it's when you suddenly find yourself lined up on a grid alongside the likes of current World Touring Car star Rob Huff or GT ace Oliver Gavin and Darren Turner that you feel like your party has been gatecrashed. If it's a race for cars that appeared before the circuit closed in 1966, surely the drivers should be of a similar age too...

With the average age of drivers at the Revival dropping year-on-year, a stand needs to be taken and, after a weekend of high drama at the Ryder Cup, perhaps we need

look no further than golf for some inspiration. After all, if I'd chosen golf, I could now be enjoying its Seniors Tour!

While most of today's millionaire golfing stars probably won't need to head back onto the tee when they reach the qualifying age of 50, some just love to keep on playing. And for others, who perhaps didn't get the break when they were younger, it's a chance to compete – and earn a nice pension package at the same time.

Of course, we'll need something to drive and there have been a couple of series created in the past that tried to hit the right notes. Tom Wheatcroft, the man who revived Donington Park, built a gridful of Formula Classic machines in the mid-1990s. He had the right idea with front-engined single-seaters on skinny tyres, but they were too short on power and never looked or sounded quite right. Not wanting to pour good money after bad, Wheatcroft soon folded the series when interest waned.

Then there was the Grand Prix Masters series that arrived in 2005. Only problem was, the organisers created modern-day high-downforce 650bhp brutes that only the likes of Nigel Mansell could hang on to. An expensive formula for expensive drivers, and restricted to ex-F1 pilots only, it went bust after just three races...

So what's it to be, then? Once again my inspiration comes from the Revival and surely the most spectacular race of this year's event was the Whitsun Trophy for sports prototypes of '63 to '66 vintage. All the cars were open-topped with mid-mounted Chevy V8 powerplants, and were loud and spectacular with a great view of the drivers working away behind the wheel.

Of course, these cars were all very expensive originals. But allow teams to build replicas with a modern engine, get national series going in Europe and America, let anyone over 50 enter and who knows – we could have our very own Ryder Cup for racing drivers one day!



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- Compact crossover design
- 1.6 DIG-T 190 hp
- ALL MODE 4x4-i with Torque Vectoring System



McLAREN 12C SPIDER

» FOLDING HARD-TOP VERSION OF BRITISH SUPERCAR » JUST 40KG HEAVIER THAN COUPE » NO CHASSIS STRENGTHENING REQUIRED » 616BHP » 0-62MPH IN 3.1SEC

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo **CO2** 279g/km
Power 616bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 442lb ft @ 3000-7000rpm **0-62mph**
3.1sec (claimed) **Top speed** 207mph (claimed)
Price £195,500 **On sale** Now

The press conference for the McLaren 12C Spider is very short. We hear a little about the two-piece folding hard-top that retracts in 17sec at speeds of up to 19mph and the extra luggage space liberated under the tonneau cover. We hear a little more about the 2013 model year calibrations that are ushered in with the Spider but

will be fitted to all existing customer cars and also rolled out on new coupes (like the one in this issue's Car of the Year feature). We're told that the price of the open-top car is £195,500 (a premium of £19,500) and that McLaren expects 80 per cent of 12Cs will be ordered as Spiders. And that's it. Nothing about chassis bracing, changes to spring rates and dampers to account for the less rigid structure – none of the good stuff that people like us love to hear about.

It isn't because our hosts have forgotten or that they're keen to get stuck into the Rioja. It's simply because the 12C Spider

has no additional bracing and because the suspension (hardware and software) is completely unchanged. Chris Goodwin, McLaren's fiendishly committed test driver, had every intention of tweaking, well, *something*. But in the end it just wasn't necessary: 'I drove the Spider and almost immediately realised we didn't have to change anything,' he explains. 'It was the easiest job I've ever done!'

For that he can thank the carbonfibre MonoCell tub, which weighs less than 80kg but is incredibly stiff. I've never known of a convertible model that required no compromises in terms of



TESTED THIS MONTH

JAGUAR XF SPORTBRAKE

P38

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT SPEED

P44

VW GOLF 1.4 TSI GT

P52

ASTON MARTIN DB9

P40

PORSCHE 911 CARRERA 4

P46

LEXUS GS450h F SPORT

P54

AUDI R8 V10 PLUS

P42

SUBARU WRX STI 340R

P50

VOLVO V40 T4

P54

Right: wind can swirl around your head when top is down. Far right: carbon brakes still feel imprecise



chassis set-up, nor one that totally resists shake, shimmy and shudder even when dumbed down to take account for the lower torsional rigidity. The Spider exhibits precisely none of those traits. It is, to all intents and purposes, the dynamic twin of the coupe.

The Spider is 40kg heavier (at 1474kg) but you'd be hard pushed to tell the extra strain on a 3.8-litre twin-turbocharged V8 that now produces 616bhp at 7000rpm and 442lb ft from 3000rpm. The engine's delivery is simply endless and dizzying. It punches hard and early but then builds and builds like all the great engines do. A 458 Spider sounds purer and has even

better throttle response, but the 12C feels faster pretty much everywhere.

Of course, it's a very different car to the Ferrari 458 Spider in every way. The interior is more elegant. The steering wheel is bare and all the better for it, the slender centre console is pure class and the view out through the deep windscreen that cuts way down into a low scuttle is just amazing. On that centre console are two rotary dials with three positions each – Normal, Sport and Track. One dial controls the ProActive Chassis Control settings (adjusting damping force and roll stiffness), the other adjusts the powertrain. Early

12Cs were criticised because they were apparently a bit quiet. Those days are over. The revised exhaust system and 'Intake Sound Generator' can actually make the Spider uncomfortably loud with the roof up. Fortunately, you can opt for the quietest setting even in Track mode through a menu system. Or just lower the roof and turn it up to 11...

When you do, the character of the noise and of the whole car changes. Suddenly you hear the turbos whistling, the wastegates chuffing and the V8 crackling and snorting. This might sound trite, but the 12C now feels like a supercar as we know it: garrulous, exciting and with a bit





Above: 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8 produces 616bhp. Right: driver aids benefit the Spider's agility

of a sense of humour. To be honest, you do feel very exposed to the elements and the wind whips around your head quite uncomfortably at times, but it's worth it to bring the 12C to life. It's even better keeping the roof up and lowering the tiny rear screen between the buttresses to get the same aural effect.

Of course in many ways, the 12C isn't a supercar as we know it. With no anti-roll bars and the ingenious ProActive suspension, the ride is superb in Normal and Sport modes (although very harsh in Track) and there's no question that it's a devastatingly effective car, covering ground at speeds that would make even GT-R owners feel queasy. The Spider is amazingly agile, helped by the Brake Steer function, and it has grip and traction that boggles the mind. I love the steering response and weight, the sheer precision of the way the car turns in and the traction that fires you out of corners. It is a unique and staggering experience.

However, it isn't perfect by any means. The gearbox is fast but without the sweet savagery of the 458 shift, the paddles are small and the push-or-pull functionality is weird. The optional ceramic brakes are fine on track but the long, imprecise pedal is at odds with the chassis on the road and, despite being highly configurable, you still can't have the most lenient ESP setting on anything but Track mode.

But above all, roof or no roof, the 12C's defining trait is that it still feels like a car set up more for speed than entertainment. Drive it at anything less than ten-tenths and it's hugely capable and hugely impressive, but may not deliver the kicks you want from a supercar. Drive it like your life depends on it, though, and it's mesmerising.

Jethro Bovingdon

evo RATING ★★★★★

- + No discernible dynamic compromises
- Requires commitment to come alive



JAGUAR XF SPORTBRAKE DIESEL S

» FIRST NEW JAG ESTATE SINCE 2001 » 271BHP AND 443LB FT

SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 2993cc, turbodiesel CO2 163g/km
 Power 271bhp @ 4000rpm Torque 443lb ft @ 2000rpm
 0-60mph 6.1sec (claimed)
 Top speed 155mph (limited)
 Price £44,355 On sale Now



The last time Jaguar made an estate car, it was the now very unloved X-type. This new XF Sportbrake stands a much better chance of being remembered fondly; it looks so much cooler than its gawky ancestor, and possesses more style than its saloon counterpart. In fact, I can't think of a better-looking estate currently on sale.

It's been a rather long time in the making, though; the XF has been on sale

nearly five years and received a major facelift a year ago, so this holdall version arrives a fair way into the car's life. It competes strongly, though, matching comparative BMW 5-series Tourings and Audi A6 Avants on price – and on loadspace, despite its more svelte shape.

Above: estate rear suits the XF; in fact the Sportbrake looks even better than the more familiar saloon

The bad news for us thrill-seekers is that the Sportbrake range is diesel only, but the good news is that it's hardly relevant, with the black stuff bossing sales in this class. It's also impressive to drive regardless.

The XF is already a great-handling car, offering a mix of suppleness and agility that eludes most of its rivals. The Sportbrake gets a different set-up at the rear, with the saloon's coil springs traded for self-levelling air suspension designed to counteract your spending sprees at B&Q. It's been developed to offer identical feel and response to its four-door sibling, but having driven them back to back, this actually feels better.

You're not rewarded with oodles of feel and feedback, and the steering is way too light, but the car responds very well to direction changes. You can get a real flow going, never deflected from your line thanks to the well-judged ride, with each



Above: XF's 1675 litres of bootspace equals its main rivals. Left: new air suspension at rear rides better than standard set-up



corner needing just one steering input. It's a very satisfying car to drive quickly, with much better body control than an A6 and less reliance on confusing chassis settings than a 5-series.

This range-topping V6 Diesel S engine is a cracker too. The standard-fit ZF

eight-speed automatic gearbox is as smooth as ever, and with an even spread of torque rather than a narrow power band, progress is smooth and relentless. There's enough grunt to adopt some rear-wheel-drive attitude, too. It's light years ahead of the 2.2-litre four-pot

diesel in terms of refinement (and, of course, pace), though that will doubtless be the model that mops up most sales in the Sportbrake range.

The Diesel S also gets Jaguar Adaptive Dynamics as standard – active dampers that continually adapt to conditions and can be altered by the driver. It's optional on some lesser models, but considering how adept a regular XF chassis is, we doubt it's essential kit.

Costing up to £2500 more than an equivalent saloon, the XF Sportbrake represents good value – its boot is huge, yet it looks and drives better. Our only qualm is the lack of petrol powertrains. Just think how appealing an XFR Sportbrake would be... **Stephen Dobie**

evo RATING ★★★★★

- + Looks and drives better than the saloon
- No petrol options

ASTON MARTIN DB9

» NEW 5.9-LITRE V12 » 510BHP AND 457LB FT » 0-62MPH IN 4.6SEC
 » 183MPH TOP SPEED » STIFFER STRUCTURE » UPDATED LOOKS

SPECIFICATION

Engine V12, 5935cc CO2 333g/km
Power 510bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 457lb ft @ 5500rpm **0-62mph** 4.6sec
 (claimed) **Top speed** 183mph (claimed)
Price £131,995 **On sale** Now

Much like buses, it seems you wait ages for one new Aston Martin to come along, only for three to arrive in quick succession. Not that we're complaining. Indeed there's something remarkable about the introduction of the limited-edition V12 Vantage Roadster, all-new Vanquish and now the new DB9 coupe and Volante in the space of little more than six weeks.

The new DB9's styling is more muscled and defined than the original car (launched back in 2004), yet it remains sleek and elegant. The introduction of solutions to tough new pedestrian impact protection legislation mean the DB9 retains a shapely, aquiline nose while the overall detailing and surfacing are immaculate. Critics will say there are no big surprises, especially as the new DB9 takes much of its looks from the now discontinued Virage, but in the face of such an unarguably handsome car, sniping seems a bit churlish.

Swing open the upswept driver's door and you reveal a beautiful interior that's defined by shapely curves and swathed



in supple leather. The central stack now has glass switchgear for added tactility. Options include an excellent B&O hi-fi and lightweight sports seats, with a delete option for the tiny rear seats to create a more focused '2+0' configuration.

Under the new skin is the latest evolution of Aston Martin's off-

referenced VH architecture. Though the principles, methods and materials of construction are the same as those debuted in the original DB9 – that's to say a bonded aluminium central structure with a front-mid-mounted V12 engine connected to a rear transaxle via a magnesium torque tube and a carbonfibre propshaft – the design has been continually developed and improved. The result is a structure with much increased torsional rigidity, up 20 per cent for the coupe and 30 per cent for the open-topped Volante, which in turn leads to a greater feeling of integrity, refinement and suspension control.

The engine is Aston's new AM11-generation V12, the same basic engine that made its debut in the new Vanquish. With a new cylinder block, heads (with variable valve timing), intake system, knock sensors and management, it has a more urgent and free-revving delivery. It's also more efficient and significantly more potent than the engine it replaces, peak power and torque now at 510bhp (up 40bhp) and 457lb ft (up 14lb ft). It also sounds magnificent, with a rich low-speed burble rising to a barrel-chested cry at high speed. It goes like stink when you extend it, but crucially it's happy to settle at less banzai speeds.

Sadly there's no manual transmission option, which is a shame as the old DB9



Above and below: looks borrow much from the recent Virage. Above left: new 5.9-litre V12 puts out 510bhp (55 less than Vanquish). Below right: interior has quality finish; carbon brakes are standard





was always a bit of a hooligan when fitted with a stick, but the Touchtronic 2 six-speed torque converter automatic is undeniably effective. It can't match the punchy shifts of the best DSG 'boxes or the new breed of eight-speed autos, but the V12 motor doesn't need that many ratios. Better to hold higher gears and use the torque.

Brembo carbon-ceramic brakes are standard. They have first-rate feel both at low and high speed, which makes a mockery of McLaren and Lamborghini's continued inability to get carbon brake feel sorted. Three-stage adaptive damping also comes as standard, adding real breadth to the DB9's dynamics. 'Normal' feels beautifully supple, while 'Sport' tightens vertical body control for a more connected feel. Despite its label, 'Track' is also more than useable on the road, bringing that final level of tautness and immediacy to enable you to truly attack a great stretch of tarmac, without ruining its ability to cope with less-than-smooth surfaces.

It all combines to create a polished, big-hearted GT. Simple, honest and



transparent in everything it does, the DB9 has a warm character and accessible performance that would surely make every journey an absolute pleasure, yet it can also carouse convincingly when the opportunity arises. This DB9 is a critical new car for Aston. On the evidence of this test, it's nailed it. **Richard Meaden**

evo RATING ★★★★★

- + Better than old DB9 in every respect
- Automatic gearbox could be quicker





AUDI R8 V10 PLUS S-TRONIC

» HARDCORE NEW R8 RANGE-TOPPER » MORE POWER, LESS WEIGHT » NEW TWIN-CLUTCH GEARBOX

SPECIFICATION

Engine V10, 5204cc **CO2** 299g/km
Power 542bhp @ 8000rpm **Torque** 398lb ft
 @ 6500rpm **0-62mph** 3.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 197mph (claimed)
Price £127,575 **On sale** Now

You might struggle to spot the visual difference between the new-generation R8 and the model it replaces, but don't let that fool you, for some subtle but worthwhile changes have been made beneath the aluminium and carbonfibre skin of Audi's sporting flagship.

The revised R8 can be identified by its reshaped front grille, all-LED headlights and, at the rear, new directional-sweep LED indicators that treat those behind to a unique light show. The wheels – 18-inches on the V8 models, 19s on the V10s – are of a different design, and available in a choice of finishes.

The lighter, faster, more focused and coupe-only V10 Plus sits at the top of the new R8 range. There's no 'Plus' badging, but it's easy to spot one thanks to its carbonfibre splitter, door-mirror shells, side-blades and rear diffuser. It can also be had in a unique Sepang Blue



Above: new optional twin-clutch S-tronic transmission suits the character of the Plus. Left: carbon-ceramic brakes are standard

satin paint finish, while gloss black wheels are standard. Inside, there's more leather trim on the dash and doors to increase the sense of luxury, while supportive lightweight sports seats and a pleasingly coarse-grained suede steering wheel create a suitably sporty feel.

There are bigger changes when it comes to the hardware. The headline story is that the clunky R-tronic single-clutch paddle-shift gearbox has gone, replaced by an all-new seven-speed S-tronic twin-clutcher. It's 15kg heavier, but it's also shorter, so sits further inside the wheelbase. The six-speed manual remains the default 'box across the range, however.

The regular R8 gets new-design steel brake discs as standard, featuring a weight-saving wave-like exterior contour. The V10 Plus, meanwhile, gets carbon-ceramic brakes, which contribute 12kg to a total weight saving of 50kg over the 1620kg regular V10 coupe, other savings coming from those lighter seats and a more extensive use of carbonfibre in the body.

The Plus's 5.2-litre engine develops an extra 24bhp and 7lb ft to raise power and torque to 542bhp and 398lb ft (the

*'THE MOTOR HAS A
WONDERFUL SENSE OF
CRAZY FEROCITY'*



standard engines are unchanged). The motor feels creamy smooth yet has a wonderful sense of crazy ferocity as you work towards the 8000rpm red line, the quattro four-wheel-drive digging in hard. With Sport mode engaged it sounds magnificent, hollering and whooping under hard acceleration, then popping and gargling as you brake and downshift. With S-tronic, 0-62mph takes just 3.5sec (a tenth quicker than the regular V10 R8) while the top speed is 197mph.

Stephan Reil, the boss of quattro GmbH, describes the V10 Plus as being halfway between the standard V10 and the old limited-edition R8 GT. It certainly feels more focused than the boggy V10, not least because there are no switchable magnetic dampers. Instead you get fixed-rate items that are slightly firmer than the regular adaptive system on its Sport setting, but a little softer than the passive set-up on the old GT.

Low-speed ride suffers a little, as you'd expect, but it's far from sharp-edged; up the pace, however, and the benefits are immediately noticeable. The Plus feels more planted on the road and finds more



bite on turn-in. Body control is tight and precise, and it copes with compressions and bumps in a no-nonsense manner without being deflected from your chosen trajectory. The steering is beautifully judged; quick-witted enough to enhance the sense of agility, but not so hyper-alert as to make the car nervous on turn-in.

The S-tronic transmission is brilliantly responsive, with clean, punchy shifts that are a world away from the clumsy old R-tronic 'box. The paddle-shifters are a bit stubby for my liking, but otherwise there's nothing but good things to say. The V10 Plus can be had with the manual



Above: 5.2-litre V10 powerplant produces 542bhp in the Plus, resulting in a 0-62mph time of 3.5sec; gearshift paddles are a bit on the small side, though

'box, but it's a mark of how integral the S-tronic feels to the Plus package that a stick-shift is likely to diminish the overall experience rather than add to it. Likewise, the carbon-ceramic brakes are more progressive and easier to modulate at low speed than they used to be, and a saving of 3kg per corner helps with wheel control over busy road surfaces. The pedal could do with being a fraction firmer during track use, but overall there's no doubting the stopping power they deliver.

The R8 has always been a supremely impressive car, but despite that I've never been consumed by raw want-one lust. Improved though they are, that's still true of the revised regular V8 and V10 models, but the R8 V10 Plus really hits the spot. Its sharper focus, more expressive delivery and increased performance make it a more memorable and desirable machine. All R8s are great, but this V10 Plus is something truly special.

Richard Meaden

evo RATING ★★★★★

- + More power and aggression, less weight
- Firm ride may be too much for some



BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT SPEED

» 616BHP FROM 6-LITRE, TWIN-TURBO W12 » 205MPH
 » 0-60MPH IN 4.0SEC » NEW EIGHT-SPEED GEARBOX

SPECIFICATION

Engine W12, 5998cc, twin-turbo CO2 338g/km
 Power 616bhp @ 6000rpm
 Torque 590lb ft @ 2000-4000rpm
 0-60mph 4.0sec Top speed 205mph
 Price £151,100 On sale Now

This, the new Continental GT Speed, is the fastest production Bentley ever. It will reach 205mph, and I know this not just because I read it on the spec sheet, but because at approximately 1.00am on an Autobahn south-east of Munich I saw those exact digits tick over on the digital display in front of me. I even had the massage function running on my seat at the same time. Which was nice.

You might think that the Speed is a bit of a niche model, but in actual fact it accounted for around half the sales of the old Conti GT. It seems that if people are buying a Bentley, they want the best. In this case, the best gets you upgrades of 49bhp and 74lb ft of torque over the standard W12 car, taking the overall figures to 616bhp and 590lb ft

respectively – very healthy, especially given that maximum torque is available from just 2000rpm and doesn't tail off until after 4000rpm.

For the first time, the W12 is mated to an eight-speed ZF auto gearbox, and as well as enabling that augmented top speed, the 0-60mph time has also been reduced to a mere 4.0sec and the 0-100mph dash to just 9.0sec – mighty impressive for a car weighing in at a robust 2320kg.

Chassis-wise, the Speed has the new Conti GT's 40/60 front/rear torque split (which replaces the 50/50 split of the old model), while the air suspension has been given stiffer springs, dampers and bushes as well as a ride height drop of 10mm and uprated anti-roll bars. Despite this car's striking Continental Yellow paint, accessorised by carbon bits and bobs which come as part of the optional 'Classic Pack' (I wouldn't have thought carbonfibre was classic, but there we go), the actual cues denoting



Top: GT Speed may be fast, but huge engine makes tight corners a challenge. Above: carbonfibre touches are subtle; quilted leather adds to luxurious feel

this being a Speed are pleasingly subtle. The front grille has a darker tint, there are exclusive 21in wheels and the exhaust tailpipes are rifled. Sadly, this last detail is purely cosmetic and doesn't spin the exhaust gases to improve their accuracy, but the whole system has been retuned to produce a sportier sound.

There are few nicer places to find yourself than the interior of a Bentley, and I'm not sure quite what it is about the diamond-quilted leather on the Speed, but it adds a certain level of tactile luxury as you settle into the big seats. The satnav has thankfully been upgraded – our car even has Google Maps. We also have the optional Naim stereo system, the clarity and purity of which always astounds me.

During the day we spend quite some time on roads just south of Salzburg (overlooked by the Eagle's Nest, no less). Constantly twisting tightly, these are not the Speed's forte, but it deals with them remarkably well and even

'AS I TOOK A SLIGHT CURVE AT 202MPH, IT FELT IMPERIOUS AND UTTERLY AT HOME'



though there's a lack of any real steering feel, it's obvious that the torque split does improve the overall balance of the car. You could even consider cajoling it into some form of hooliganism if you had some space. Luxembourg would be about the right size.

The new eight-speed 'box might sound like an odd fit with a car that has such deep wells of torque to draw on, but it has such a smart, snappy change between ratios that you really do appreciate the extra sparkle it brings to the drivetrain. The exhaust re-tune is also very welcome, the rich bass-baritone making its woolly presence known without ever intruding.

Ultimately, however, the GT Speed cannot disguise the fact that it is a two-ton car with 12 cylinders slung out ahead of the front axle, and there is a strong sense of inertia when pushing on. It isn't helped by a throttle which seems irritatingly imprecise at the extremities of its travel, surging slightly near the top



and then, even more disconcertingly, continuing to accelerate for a fraction of a second after you'd backed off.

No, the clue to the GT Speed's natural habitat is in its name, a Gran Turismo built for speed, which is why we took the trouble to go out at night and find that quiet stretch of three-lane Autobahn on which to stretch its legs. As the double ton registered on the digital



Top: Catchpole felt comfortable behind the wheel of the GT Speed, even at speeds over 200mph. Above: the Austro-German border provided a spectacular setting to test out Bentley's new grand tourer; hulking great W12 engine puts out 616bhp

speedometer, and then as I had to take a slight curve at 202mph, it felt imperious and utterly at home thundering through the night. A proper Bentley in every sense.
Henry Catchpole

evo RATING ★★★★★

+ Fast and luxurious

- Less than ideal for slow corners

PORSCHE 911 CARRERA 4

» FIRST FOUR-WHEEL-DRIVE VERSION OF 991-GEN MODEL
 » 345BHP AND 288LB FT » 0-62MPH IN 4.5SEC » 177MPH

Sure enough, nearly a year after the arrival of the first 991, the range is growing steadily with the launch of the four-wheel-drive versions. As well as introducing a driven front axle, it also marks the debut of the wider 991 bodysell – with an extra 44mm across the hips – that will also be used for future Turbo and RS models.

The latest version of Porsche's PTM traction management system uses an electromechanical clutch continuously informed by a variety of sensors to distribute torque to the front axle when required, with a claimed maximum response time of one-tenth of a second. The four-wheel-drive cars benefit from a wider rear track (42mm on the C4 and 36mm on the C4S) with 10mm wider rubber at the rear. And as with all 991s, there's an extensive range of high-tech (and pricey) chassis options available such as the PDCC active anti-roll bars and PTV torque vectoring.

All other main mechanical components are carried over from the regular Carrera,

SPECIFICATION

Engine Flat-six, 3436cc CO2 219g/km
Power 345bhp @ 7400rpm
Torque 288lb ft @ 5600rpm **0-62mph** 4.5sec (claimed) **Top speed** 177mph (claimed)
Price £77,924 **On sale** Now

including the choice of a 3.4-litre engine with 345bhp that hits 62mph in 4.5sec, or the 3.8-litre 395bhp motor in the S that'll do the same sprint in 4.1sec. Both come with your choice of a seven-speed manual or seven-speed PDK twin-clutch gearbox. You can also order either all-wheel-drive 911 as a cabriolet.

Naturally, there's a weight penalty on the 4wd model (50kg over the equivalent rear-drive 991, so 1430kg for the 3.4, 1450kg for the S), but Porsche claims it's up to 65kg lighter than the equivalent 997 thanks to the carefully chosen materials used in the car's construction.

As with the rear-wheel-drive 991, this is not a car that immediately wants to begin a dialogue with the driver like a 997 does. On one hand it's a superbly useable GT – even more so with its increased all-



weather ability – that's content to shuffle into seventh gear as soon as possible, and (especially in 3.4-litre form) sip fuel at a miserly rate. But the electro-mechanical steering and the reduced '911-ness' of the 991 make it a cooler character to know.

However, when you find the right road to really exploit it, the Carrera 4 is blisteringly effective. There's a little more weight to the steering from the moment you begin to turn, and grip levels are immense. Whatever your feelings may be on the steering, you never find yourself making a second input once you've set your course. A digital representation of current torque distribution on the dash reveals that the C4 is rear-drive on corner entry, but once you're back on the power it sends some grunt to the front, and by the time you're at the exit it's pushing plenty of drive forwards.

Understeer? In practice, the C4 doesn't know the meaning of the word. It furiously claws its way out of corners,

Carrera 4 is available as a seven-speed manual (left) or a paddle-shift twin-clutch (below left). Bottom left: sports exhaust replaces twin oval pipes with four round ones

'IT CLAWS FURIOUSLY OUT OF CORNERS AND OFFERS MANIC POINT-TO-POINT PACE'



PORSCHE CAYENNE S DIESEL

» 4.1-LITRE TURBO V8
 » 377BHP » 5.7SEC 0-62
 » 627LB FT OF TORQUE



SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 4134cc, twin-turbo diesel CO2 218g/km Power 377bhp @ 3750rpm Torque 627lb ft @ 2000-2750rpm 0-62mph 5.7sec (claimed) Top speed 157mph (claimed) Price £58,243 On sale Now

If you've a soft spot for the old VW Touareg V10 TDI, you'll find its spiritual successor here. To create an 'S' version of the diesel-fuelled Cayenne, Porsche has dropped in a 4.1-litre, twin-turbo V8 sourced from Audi, but not before reworking it with internal revisions, a new intercooler and a new exhaust system.

The result is an SUV that bludgeons straights into submission, thanks to 377bhp and a colossal 627lb ft of torque. Despite now weighing a hefty 2195kg, it'll get to 62mph in just 5.7sec. If you're anywhere in the torque peak zone of 2000-2750rpm, the way the V8 flings this car forward as if it weighed the same as an empty crisp packet is laugh-out-loud absurd.

Porsche has tried hard to make the V8 sound as appealing as possible: an informed ear will guess the fuel type on start-up, but it's superbly refined inside the cabin, and when you're going for it there's a real Detroit iron quality to the rumble behind the bulkhead. And rumble on it will, with a 100-litre tank meaning a theoretical 745-mile range at 34mpg combined.

It can't cheat physics though, and as it lacks the agility of the petrol models, it's best to adopt a slow-in, fast-out policy and manage the weight carefully. Given the core competencies of the Cayenne, plus the performance/economy mix, there's much to like here. **Adam Towler**

offering such manic point-to-point pace that on a really twisting road the standard brakes begin to wilt (possibly amplified by the intervention of PSM, although it's so subtle you can barely feel it working, as is the operation of the PTM clutch).

The 3.4-litre flat-six produces searing power and painfully loud sound effects with the sports exhaust, aided by the standard 'Sound Symposer' transmitting intake vibrations into the cockpit, but the otherwise excellent PDK tested here feels like it has a short second gear and a long third. With the 3.4 needing 5000rpm before it delivers a real punch, you can be left waiting for the real fireworks.

Fans of old 911s might be nonplussed by its devastating vice-free competence, but subjectively it feels like there's more to engage with in this car than the 2wd version. What's now clear is that the forthcoming 991 Turbo will surely require further mental recalibration on the part of the driver. **Adam Towler**



Left: 20in alloys come as standard. Above: combined digital and analogue stopwatch atop the dash indicates the fitment of the Sport Chrono Package

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- A touch more engaging than 2wd 991
- Still stand-offish compared to 997

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- Rewards bravery down the straights
- Requires caution in the corners



NOT FOR THE FAINT **HEARTED** THE LOTUS EXIGE S

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Model shown is Exige S at £55,400 on-the-road including optional premium paint at £1,200 and diamond cut wheels at £350 (price includes VAT, delivery, 12 months Road Fund License, number plates, new vehicle registration fee and fuel, 3 year Manufacturer's Warranty). Prices correct at time of going to print.



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Official fuel consumption, Lotus Exige S in mpg (l/100km): Urban 19.5 (14.5), Extra Urban 37.2 (7.6), Combined 28.0 (10.1).
CO₂ emissions: 236 g/km.



SUBARU WRX STI 340R

» UPGRADE TO 335BHP » TORQUE UP BY 61LB FT » 0-62MPH IN 4.7SEC » ALL FOR £28,594

SPECIFICATION

Engine Flat-four, 2457cc, turbocharged
CO2 243g/km **Power** 335bhp @ 5400rpm
Torque 361lb ft @ 3600rpm **0-62mph** 4.7sec
 (claimed) **Top speed** 158mph (limited)
Price £28,594 **On sale** Now

In 2011, Subaru sold just 250 WRX STIs, comparing rather unfavourably with 2003, when hot Impreza sales peaked at 4262. Take that into account, and the model's recent price cut from £32,995 to £26,995 makes an awful lot of sense.

The discussion of whether a six grand discount constitutes positive or negative PR is one best saved for elsewhere, but it's hard to argue that a 296bhp, four-wheel-drive saloon proves incredibly tempting at fast-Astra money. And it's only a grand more than a BRZ...

Subaru's performance upgrade options make it an even more intriguing proposition. The 320R upgrade is something we sampled on our 2011 long-term, but this 340R upgrade is new, and hikes power from 296 to 335bhp, lifts torque from 300 to 361lb ft, and cuts the claimed 0-62mph time to 4.7sec – half a second quicker than a standard STI. The improvements are courtesy of tweaked ECU settings and a new exhaust system. At £1599, they also keep the car's price

Right: ECU tweak and new exhaust ups power of the boxer engine by 39bhp. Below: rest of the car, including its 18in alloys, is unchanged



below £29k. Short of importing some American muscle, you won't get more power for the money.

Everything is pretty familiar as you first get acquainted with the WRX STI. It feels 'proper', with heavy (but satisfying) weightings to its pedals and gearshift. It feels proper on the move, too; there's not a lot below 3000rpm, with some good old-fashioned turbo lag if you're in the wrong gear, but keep above those revs and this thing's fast, with a very linear punch towards its red line. It feels quicker than the 320R, and sounds better too. It's got that characteristic old-school Subaru burble plus some enjoyably rally-esque *chrrrrkkks* and hisses as you exercise its boxer four.

The extra power helps make the chassis work a bit harder. It's just a shame the steering still feels horrid. It's very light and loose around the straight-ahead and on turn-in, especially when you're not in maximum attack mode. Drive harder, transferring more weight over the front wheels into corners, and it improves somewhat, but it's still too vague and quells some of the confidence the car's competent chassis and myriad diff settings otherwise build.

It can be an awful lot of fun, though, the



STI, and beside even the very best hot hatches it's priced against, it has spades more character. It just feels a bit of a dinosaur nowadays, not least when you're perched in its old-hat interior.

While throwing more power at the WRX STI and commissioning a price cut DFS would blush at doesn't exude sophistication, it has succeeded in making Subaru's most potent car a much more enticing prospect than before. For Subaru's sake, let's hope the buying public agrees.

Stephen Dobie

evo RATING ★★★★★

+ Quicker, better, cheaper

- But still an acquired taste

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VW GOLF 1.4 TSI GT

» SEVENTH GENERATION OF BENCHMARK HATCH » LIGHTER THAN MK6 » 138BHP RANGE-TOPPER

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1395cc, turbocharged
CO2 112g/km **Power** 138bhp @ 4500-6000rpm **Torque** 184lb ft @ 1500-3500rpm
0-62mph 8.4sec (claimed) **Top speed** 132mph (claimed) **Price** £22,050 **On sale** Now

The Golf is like the Porsche 911. So says Volkswagen, anyway. It used the eCoty favourite (plus the Range Rover) as examples of icons whose designs are so well recognised that there's little argument for drastically changing them.

This all-new mk7 Golf is actually a little bigger than before, with more cabin and boot space, but it weighs up to 100kg less than the mk6 thanks to a lighter body structure and lighter engines. The styling



Top and above: styling on the latest Golf is only mildly different to that of its predecessor. Below: centre console is now angled towards the driver, BMW-style

represents the smallest model-to-model change in the Golf's history, but there are some very nice touches – the way the lines of the fuel filler cover match those of the nearby rear light and rear door, for example – which show that plenty of thought has gone into the design.

The revolution is saved for under the skin, where the VW group's new MQB (modular transverse) platform, first seen on the mk3 Audi A3 (evo 172), is mated to a reworked engine range. An ultra-efficient 1.6-litre diesel – boasting a claimed 88mpg – will star at the responsible end of the range, while the 138bhp 1.4-litre TSI ACT featured here is the most potent petrol option until friskier versions – including the new 218bhp GTI – arrive next year.

Only available on the top-spec 'GT' cars, ACT is VW-speak for cylinder deactivation, two of the engine's four

cylinders switching off when throttle load isn't too demanding (helping to yield a claimed 58.9mpg and 112g/km). The change is barely perceptible, the only off-beat engine note occurring when you hang on to gears in our DSG-equipped car. It does nothing to damage the Golf's class-leading refinement, and doesn't affect the usefully brisk performance.

Like the A3 it's related to, the latest Golf corners very competently, with less understeer and body roll than its forebears and an extra sniff of agility thanks to its lower kerb weight. It's more fun than the Audi, though, with its electrically assisted steering managing a decent impression of feel. This is boosted further when you select 'Sport' in VW's new Driver Profile Selection system (essentially Audi's Drive Select), which is standard on all but the most basic Golfs. When properly pushed, the handling is safe rather than scintillating, but there's plenty of promise for the sportier models.

Ultimately, the Golf remains the default hatchback. It's a far more able all-rounder than a Focus or Astra, and it's cheaper than its cousin, the A3. An icon of the sensible sort. **Stephen Dobie**



evo RATING ★★★★★

- A classy car that handles competently
- More exciting versions to come



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LEXUS GS450h F SPORT

» SMART-HANDLING HYBRID SALOON » 340BHP » 0-62MPH IN 5.9SEC

SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 3456cc, plus 147kW electric motor
CO2 141g/km **Max power** 340bhp (combined)
 @ 6000rpm **Max torque** 260lb ft @ 4500rpm
 (engine), 203lb ft (electric motor)
0-62mph 5.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph
 (limited) **Price** £50,995 **On sale** Now

Surprises in this industry are, sadly, few. Cars are drip-fed to us as soon as their designer's pen has left the sketch pad, so by the time we get to drive them, there's little left to shock.

Here's a car that managed it, though. Ignoring the hooligan IS-F and the Ferrari-topping LFA, Lexus has offered very little to the 'Thrill of Driving' cause. Its latest-generation GS, though, is significantly sharper than its forebears and genuine fun to drive. Those hardcore models aside, this GS450h F Sport is the best-handling Lexus we've driven.

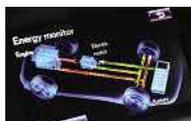
The F Sport trim costs £6000 more than standard, but brings more aggressive looks, sharper suspension, stiffer bushing and adaptive damping, which uses low-viscosity oil to reduce friction. The resulting ride is very firm – too jiggly for the GS to match the cruising ability of its hybrid rivals – but the payoff is it feels in its comfort zone on challenging roads.

The steering feels artificial but is nicely weighted, and the GS seems more nimble than its sizeable 1910kg kerb weight suggests, helped by the 450h's standard four-wheel steering. It's unexpectedly engaging to drive, and with all the power sent to the rear wheels, the instant torque of its electric motor can bring the back end into play if you're committed enough.

The chassis set-up has clearly been



Above: dashboard is packed with tech, including energy monitor (below). Bottom: CVT gearbox is a disappointment



given to someone who cares about driving, but the gearbox choice sadly hasn't – a CVT is your only option, and it smothers the GS's enthusiasm. It makes the claimed 340bhp and 5.9sec 0-62mph time of the 3.5-litre V6/electric motor combination feel optimistic, and the only way to extract decent pace from the drivetrain is with a very heavy right foot. That leads to a buzzy and unpleasant soundtrack, and less than 30mpg – a poor show when the claimed figure is 45.6...

But if you're sold on the GS's persona, the base GS250 is also available with the F Sport treatment. It uses a 206bhp 2.5-litre V6 (with no electric motor) and a more conventional six-speed automatic 'box, while costing £11k less than its hybrid counterpart. It could be the year's most surprising Q-car. **Stephen Dobie**

evo RATING ★★★★★

- An unexpectedly good chassis...
- ...undermined by a bad gearbox



VOLVO V40 T4

» QUIRKY HATCHBACK
 » 178BHP AND 140MPH

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1596cc, turbo
CO2 129g/km **Power** 178bhp @ 5700rpm
Torque 177lb ft @ 1600-5000rpm **0-60mph**
 7.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 140mph (claimed)
Price £23,730 **On sale** Now

Like the new Mercedes A-class, the Volvo V40 seems to fall somewhere between a hatchback and a small estate, giving it the handsome profile of a badger. It's a pleasing, high-quality place to sit when you get behind the wheel too, particularly with the optional (£350) active TFT instruments and illuminated gearknob as fitted to our test car.

This T4 version, the fastest currently available, gets a 178bhp 1.6-litre turbocharged petrol engine, and despite sounding like a diesel when it first fires into life (and when you switch it off), it has a nice four-cylinder edge to it when the revs climb. It's perfectly happy to rev as well, and the acceptable claimed 0-60mph time of 7.3sec feels eminently achievable. The standard six-speed manual gearbox (combined with well-spaced pedals) is lovely to use, too, the shift action being weighty but slick.

The £650 Sport Pack on our car includes a chassis upgrade, which lowers the ride height and keeps body roll pleasingly in check, yet with relatively demure 17in wheels, the ride remains pliant. If you delve into the bewildering array of menus then it's even possible to adjust the assistance given to the steering, which is accurate and quick, although far from brimming with feel.

The V40 is a well-rounded car that looks a bit different and goes down a road jolly well. But it feels more accomplished than thrilling – perhaps a few Polestar mods would spice it up... **Henry Catchpole**

evo RATING ★★★★★

- Good gearshift, fun instruments
- Not going to set your pants on fire

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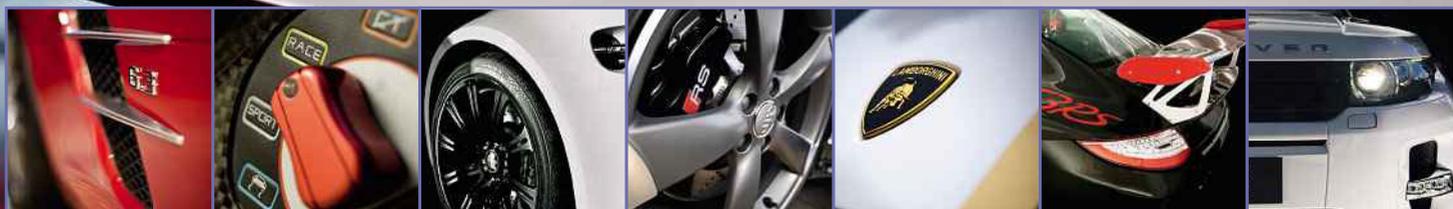
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 997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
 997 GT3 3.6 » 436 BHP
 996 3.6 » 344 BHP
 BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+ BHP
 CAYMAN S » 342 BHP
 CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP
 CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP
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 SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP & DELIMIT
 SLK 350 » 328 BHP
 200K » 205+BHP
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WHICH PLEB HAS ENRAGED YOU THIS MONTH?

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Aston villains

The Aston Martin features last month made for gloomy reading. As a young man, I was just getting into cars when the DB9 and the even more compelling V8 Vantage were released, and they made a hefty impression upon me.

But now, eight years later, we see the new Vanquish is effectively a DBS with some pretty ugly swoops, and Ulrich Bez discusses the car in terms of technology rather than design. He also says 'the DB9 can still be here

'THE DESIGN MADE ME FALL FOR THE DB9 – NOT THE PERFORMANCE'

in ten years' time', while there's very little else in the pipeline.

It was the design of the DB9 and the Vantage that made me fall in love with them – not their performance, which wasn't brilliantly received. But nobody minded because we had two beautiful Astons again.

Aston clearly can't afford to build a brand-new car right now, but it doesn't need to. It just needs to let its designers off the leash once more and design a new body which we can all get excited about, rather than continuing to tweak a once-beautiful but now rather conservative design.

George Solomon



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Lotus position

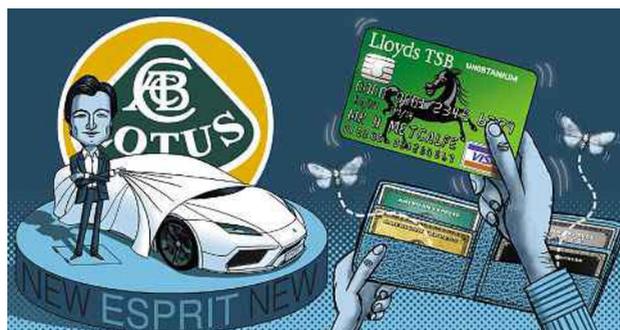
I'm usually quite critical of car journalists making inaccurate accounts of management, and despite the fact I'm a big fan of his work, Harry Metcalfe's recent column on Lotus (evo 176) falls into that category.

Whether you find the next Esprit brilliant or not is irrelevant within the context of Lotus's survivability. I find DRB-Hicom's decision to freeze development at Lotus sensible, even if it hurts my feelings as a car enthusiast, because I'd rather see Lotus alive than joining TVR in the afterlife. I recently read elsewhere that Lotus owes its suppliers £370million, and the Esprit, no matter how you look at it, is not a significant revenue-regenerating car.

With America in deep recession, EU countries in varying degrees of recession and depression, Japan facing the world's highest debt ratio and the Chinese economy cooling, it's the worst time to launch a car, especially as Lotus is weaker as a brand than its competitors. In recessions, even the people who continue spending rarely venture beyond proven, established products such as the 458, the Gallardo and the MP4-12C.

It's not that Dany Bahar's idea to expand the Lotus brand was wrong, and Lotus is clearly capable of building the type of cars it envisages, but any plan is bad if you borrow substantial money to expand a luxury brand with shrinking demand in a recession. Jaekeun Yoo, via iPad

I'm more of a 'glass half full' person. I think the problem was that parent company Proton (now acquired by DRB-Hicom) didn't perform as hoped over the last three years, rather than an overspend at Lotus. If Lotus had been bought by Kia or Hyundai back in 1996, it wouldn't be in this



mess, but unfortunately it was bought by Proton. Proton's sales have stagnated of late, so I suspect it ran out of cash at a critical moment. – HM

The life of Riley

Over 25 years of driving, I have had no problem justifying with myself the sometimes crazy amounts I've spent on what may have seemed like the most pointless things. But even I would struggle to justify the £1818 Sam Riley spent on the roll-top cargo cover for his Fast Fleet Nissan Navara. Personally, I'd rather risk having the futon stolen!

Jon Martin, via iPad

Backing Singer

Whilst I've always appreciated 911s, I've never lusted after them... until I saw the Singer (evo 176). Such beautiful, sordid engineering detail! To plagiarise a certain well-known journalist, I do believe I might have had a crisis... that or an arrhythmia! I'm glad Richard Meaden, being the Porsche enthusiast he is, deservedly got to experience it.

Keep up the good work – my wife still rolls her eyes and writes off a couple of days when my copy of evo arrives here Down Under. Shame the

Above: Harry's defence of Dany Bahar's leadership of Lotus didn't find favour with Jaekeun Yoo

Below: Dr Gavin Sullivan shared Dickie Meaden's love of the beautifully crafted Porsche 911 by Singer

ridiculous protectionism of the Australian motor industry means such a creation as the Singer is unlikely ever to grace these shores.

Dr Gavin Sullivan, Newcastle, Australia

Adam attack

Is it just me or does every one of Adam Shorrock's Fast Fleet reports contain nothing but complaints about some aspect of the Suzuki Swift Sport?

Last month he moaned about the keyless entry and how you can't open all the doors by pressing one of the door handle buttons once. If he pressed the same button twice it would open all the doors – the same as any similar system on other cars. In issues past he has complained about missing service intervals, how the seats aren't to his liking or how the car seems softer than the previous model.

Having owned both the old and new Swift Sports I may be a little biased, but I feel that his constant criticisms are somewhat unfair. The old Swift Sport remains one of my all-time favourite cars because it was such a fun little thing. The new model has moved the game on considerably by being more refined, better equipped and better made whilst still being a laugh to drive.



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PORSCHE PANAMERA TURBO and TURBO S

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Milltek has taken great care to maintain the dual personality that Porsche has carefully engineered into the car, and has exploited the latest construction and material techniques to endow the car with the best of both worlds; a relaxed and refined demeanour for motorway cruising, balanced with a superbly sporty growl under load and when driving hard.



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Forget the Dacia...

Richard Porter's suggestion in his Petrolhead column (evo 176) for a refreshing back-to-basics hot hatch sounded suspiciously like a Peugeot 106 Rallye to me. What's more, a 106 Rallye won't cost you £12,000 – and it won't depreciate like a Dacia either...

Iain Dyer

Sergeant Sustainable?

Recently on our holiday in Gran Canaria, I spotted a Renault Twizy police car whizzing silently around the aptly named town of Teror. The car created such interest that local people were chatting



Above: Spanish bobbies on the (green) beat

away to the police officers and taking pictures of it. It was an interesting scene and since most of the streets of said town were pedestrianised, the small, near-silent Twizy fitted in well. Possibly an idea for the streets of the UK?

Ivan W Scully

Porsche progress

I greatly enjoyed reading the '911: Living Legend' feature in evo 175, especially as I've owned various 911s, from a 1970 S through to my new 991 S. I largely agree with your assessments, but there is one nit I need to pick: the 911T, being a 2.2-litre car (as was seen in one of the feature's photos), is either a 1970 or 1971 model. Those were the only years in which cars with the 2.2-litre engine were produced. The 1969 cars had a 2-litre engine.

My buying a new 911S in 1970 clearly puts me into the 'old geezer' category, but that doesn't mean that I don't still enjoy driving these cars. I traded a 997 GT2 for the new 991 and must admit that, on the whole, I enjoy the 991 more. Its performance is so much more exploitable on American roads. As much as it gives away my age, I find the 991 to be an even more enjoyable car to drive on track than the GT2, too.

Hans Weber, San Diego, USA

It's funny how Henry Catchpole sings the Swift's praises (evo 175), yet Mr Shorrock seemingly doesn't like the car very much. I appreciate that having a car on the Fast Fleet is a different proposition to a group or twin test, but it should be a fair reflection of car ownership and I feel that Adam hasn't been very fair to 'his' Swift Sport.

Edward Kent

Conceptual art

Reading your article about the Paris motor show got me thinking. Why do car manufacturers constantly design and build concept cars that they have no intention of putting into production?

Take the Ford Iosis from a few years ago, for example – rear-view cameras, front and rear butterfly doors, and an incredible interior – and it ended up as the new Mondeo. It's not that there's anything wrong with the new Mondeo, but it was a big leap back from the Iosis.

Or the Peugeot Onyx – an incredible design, but Peugeot's way of (in evo's words) 'hinting at little more than future headlight design'. Come on guys – live a little and get some of your concepts in production!

Thomas Coates, Kendal, Cumbria

Shock horror

I've just got around to reading Richard Porter's 'Ferrari 458 Italia is easy to drive shocker' column in evo 175. Who knew?! What will it be next month? Economic diesel shocker?

He should get a job writing for *Top Gear*. Oh, wait a minute...

Garreth Walsh, Ireland

Inspired to create

I loved the piece by Henry Catchpole on the history of BMW Art Cars (evo 175). I race an E30 in the BMW Race Driver Series in New Zealand and have created my own version. The numbers and race sponsors names have to be on all the cars in the series as they are on mine, but the rest is my own work.

Grant Schultz, New Zealand



Above: Grant Schultz's patchwork Art Car

FROM THE FORUMS: WHY OWN A PERFORMANCE CAR?



Running a fast car probably costs you more, so why bother? Our forumites explain...

Andybond: Why do you pay over the odds for a performance car? How can you justify the increased fuel consumption, higher insurance and increased running costs?

Markcoopers: Because life is for living and not enduring. I enjoy owning a car that makes my heart pump just that little bit faster, be that when I open the garage door or when clipping the limiter with an exhaust bark to herald your arrival.

Integrale_evo: Because I like cars, I like driving, I like feeling what the car is doing underneath me and that my actions have a direct mechanical reaction.

Eric Pisch: Because I want a watch! I don't like driving dull cars - I would honestly rather take public transport than drive 99% of the offerings available, and that includes all front-wheel-drive cars and all diesels.

Beany: Some people don't understand it, but then I don't understand why they enjoy going to the gym. When I point out they could get the same benefit by

running up and down the stairs a few times, I get the same look from them that they get from me when they ask why I didn't just get an old base-spec Polo...

Ben_B: In reality a normal car costs a lot too, so I might as well pay a bit more and have a car that involves and delights.

Sundayjumper: Owning and maintaining a nice-ish car is my hobby. Hobbies are something you do for enjoyment and generally without financial gain, and so cost money. The difference in running costs between my car and a generic Euro-box is the cost of my hobby and I'm comfortable with that.

Toon-10: I spend so much of my life driving that it would kill me to drive a family diesel 'A-to-B' car. Sure, I'd like a better car, but I drive something with a bit of fun and performance about it, that I can afford and which meets my practical needs. Car ownership is a bit of a compromise but it doesn't mean you have to drive an eco-box or a people carrier.

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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OF THE YEAR



From £30,000, 80bhp Morgan 3 Wheeler to £820,000, 720bhp Pagani Huayra, the ten best performance cars of the last 12 months come together for one big test. It could only be evo Car of the Year

How does this test like no other motoring mag. After all, why would you bring together such a disparate bunch of cars for a group test that awards a winner based on nothing more than subjective feel? As eCoty newbie Tiff Needell pointed out on more than one occasion during this year's proceedings 'it doesn't make sense' and 'how can I not factor price into it?' and 'what on earth have a Morgan and a Pagani got in common?'

All very valid points, of course, but none more valid than the reason why *evo* does its Car of the Year test this way, and that's because the whole concept of 'the thrill of driving' is non-discriminatory. The right car delivers the thrill of driving regardless of whether it costs £1million or £10,000, and sometimes the right car delivers the thrill of driving regardless of whether it has three wheels or four...

To apply filters to the process of choosing the finalists is to undermine the concept. If, for instance, an eCoty category was created for hot hatches then we'd never have been able to describe the moment when a Renaultsport Mégane R26.R chased a Lamborghini Gallardo down Mont Ventoux in 2008 – and dished up the same, if not more thrills, than the Lambo. The same goes for this year. A couple of cars revealed hitherto unseen talents when asked to perform against cars not only in another stratosphere when it comes to price, but also bhp.

The majority of car manufacturers, to their credit, understand that to provide a car for eCoty means to enter into a test



As always, our contenders will be tested mostly on the road (right and far right) but also on track (above) to push them to their limits



against non-direct rivals – and still give us the cars. And for some, it means providing two cars within a range and leaving us to determine a verdict that may not match the message that the manufacturer is trying to promote...

This year, eCoty was sensational. It was felt that we needed a solid, British-based test after the grandeur of Portugal last year. The beer may be cooler in the Algarve, but the roads in Kielder are second-to-none. Twenty twelve will go down as the year that a Morgan 3 Wheeler got into the top ten cars of the year, and when every car in the test was rear-wheel drive, and when we got the chance to drive a 720bhp Pagani on Border roads dotted with black ice and sheep crap. Which, I can confirm, is second only to Tiff's ability to nail a video take in terms of slickness.

And talking of videos, apologies if you find my presentation skills in our eCoty movie a little 'over-excited schoolboy', but the test was an extraordinary event this year and I couldn't help myself.

Over to Jethro to begin the story...



THE JUDGES



Harry Metcalfe
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Serial supercar buyer and potential elderly cast member of *Made in Chelsea*. Tweets about boats and life on the farm. Patented the one-man film unit



Nick Trott
EDITOR

evo's editor and man of steel (he's the scourge of airport security personnel). Tweets about replacing his much-missed Clio V6 with... a Clio V6



Mike Duff
MOTORING EDITOR

Idaho's candidate for the House of Representatives according to Twitter. Actually, it's possible that our Mike Duff is not on Twitter



Henry Catchpole
FEATURES EDITOR

Currently running-in a set of generous Wolverine-like sideburns for a man named Wiggins. Young enough to be on Facebook



Jethro Bovingdon
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Returned to *evo* this year and quickly settled back into a wardrobe of large sunglasses. Declares admiration for Kamui Kobayashi a lot on Twitter



Richard Meaden
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Most prolific *evo* Tweeter, mostly about a pile of bricks with 'potential'. Recently drove an F1 car. Rumours of a booster seat unconfirmed



Tiff Needell
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Housewives' favourite. Needell is slightly louder but less oversteery in real life. Tweets often include the words 'book', 'my', 'available', 'Amazon'

*'A COUPLE OF CARS REVEALED
HITHERTO UNSEEN TALENTS WHEN
ASKED TO PERFORM AGAINST CARS IN
ANOTHER STRATOSPHERE'*



PAST EVO CAR OF THE YEAR WINNERS



1998
PORSCHE
996 CARRERA S



1999
PORSCHE
996 GT3



2000
PORSCHE
996 TURBO



2001
PAGANI
ZONDA C12S



2002
HONDA
NSX-R



2003
PORSCHE
996.2 GT3



2004
PORSCHE
997 CARRERA S



2005
FORD
GT



2006
FERRARI
599 GTB



2007
PORSCHE
997 GT3 RS



2008
NISSAN
GT-R



2009
LOTUS
EVORA



2010
PORSCHE
997.2 GT3 RS



2011
PORSCHE
997.2 GT3 RS 4.0

THE CONTENDERS

Pagani Huayra



Engine V12, 5980cc, twin-turbo
Power 720bhp @ 5800rpm
Torque 737lb ft @ 2250-4500rpm
Weight (dry) 1350kg
Power-to-weight 542bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.3sec (claimed)
Top speed 224mph (claimed)
Price c£820,000



Mercedes C63 AMG Black



Engine V8, 6208cc
Power 510bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque 457lb ft @ 5200rpm
Weight (kerb) 1710kg
Power-to-weight 303bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.2sec (claimed)
Top speed 186mph (limited)
Price £98,765



Lotus Exige S



Engine V6, 3456cc, s'charged
Power 345bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 295lb ft @ 4500rpm
Weight (kerb) 1176kg
Power-to-weight 298bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.0sec (claimed)
Top speed 170mph (claimed)
Price £53,850



BMW M135i



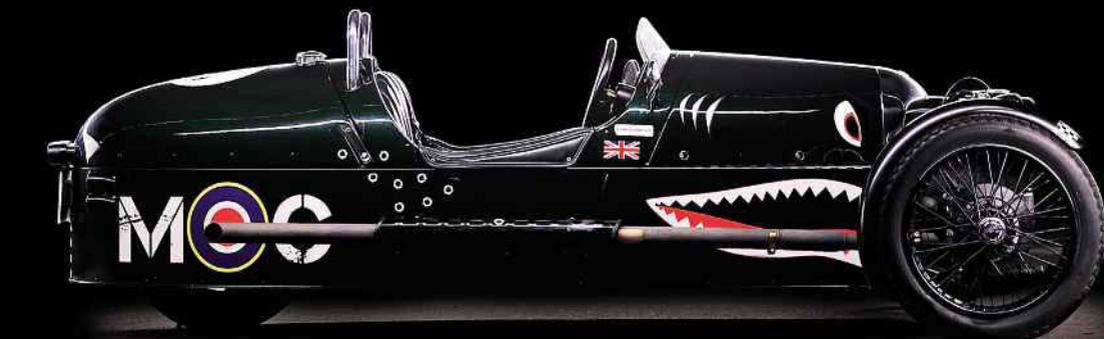
Engine In-line six, 2979cc, turbo
Power 316bhp @ 5800rpm
Torque 332lb ft @ 1400-4500rpm
Weight (kerb) 1425kg
Power-to-weight 225bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.9sec (claimed, auto)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Price £29,995



Morgan 3 Wheeler



Engine V-twin, 1990cc
Power 80bhp @ 5300rpm
Torque 103lb ft @ 3250rpm
Weight (kerb) 500kg
Power-to-weight 163bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 115mph (claimed)
Price £30,000





McLaren MP4-12C

Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo
Power 616bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque 442lb ft @ 3000-7000rpm
Weight (kerb) 1434kg
Power-to-weight 435bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.1sec (claimed)
Top speed 204mph (claimed)
Price £176,000



Porsche 911 Carrera

Engine Flat-six, 3436cc
Power 345bhp @ 7400rpm
Torque 288lb ft @ 5600rpm
Weight (kerb) 1380kg
Power-to-weight 254bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 179mph (claimed)
Price £71,449



Alpina B3 GT3

Engine In-line six, 2979cc, twin-turbo
Power 402bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 398lb ft @ 4500rpm
Weight (kerb) 1535kg
Power-to-weight 266bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 186mph (claimed)
Price £66,950



Porsche Boxster S

Engine Flat-six, 3436cc
Power 311bhp @ 6700rpm
Torque 265lb ft @ 4500rpm
Weight (kerb) 1320kg
Power-to-weight 239bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.1sec (claimed)
Top speed 173mph (claimed)
Price £45,384



Toyota GT86

Engine Flat-four, 1998cc
Power 197bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 151lb ft @ 6400rpm
Weight (kerb) 1200kg
Power-to-weight 167bhp/ton
0-62mph 7.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 140mph (claimed)
Price £24,995

R

ewind 12 months and there was only ever going to be one eCoty 2012 winner – and it was going to be a genuine hero car.

We'd salivated over the technical aspects of a lightweight new chassis, applauded a mainstream manufacturer for making a U-turn (or should that be spin-turn?) out of a performance figures-chasing dead end, and dreamt that the affordable, fun and accessible drivers' car was about to return with a shriek of simmering rubber. The Toyota GT86/Subaru BRZ twins were going to be the stars of 2012 and there

wasn't a thing Porsche, BMW, Lotus or Ferrari could do about it.

That was the theory. But as a stubborn autumnal night slowly flickers into a blinding dawn – a suitably dramatic curtain-raiser to eCoty – the Toyota GT86 that I'm wending up to Blyton Park in deepest, strangest Lincolnshire is very far from the pre-fight favourite. In fact it's already punch-drunk, having watched its Subaru sibling being roundly trounced by a Mégane Trophy, and then being exposed to some of the all-time greats in these pages and coming off second best. And if Toyota thought that putting the

GT86 up against the celebrated E30 M3 and Integra Type-R was cruel, it ain't seen nothing yet...

To be honest I'm pretty happy in the GT86. I didn't much like the BRZ we first drove but perhaps that was due to the sheer weight of expectation heavy on its shoulders. However, the GT86 I subsequently tried on the international launch in Spain was great fun. And even on the motorway schlep from Northamptonshire to Blyton Park the Toyota feels special. The low-slung driving position is superb and the six-speed manual gearbox is terrific, all



'YOU HANG OUT OF THE SIDE OF THE MORGAN, WATCHING THE ANTIQUE TYRES FOLD UNDER LOAD AND THE SUSPENSION BOBBLING AROUND'



the more satisfying thanks to perfectly positioned pedals. Then there's the meaty, direct steering and the obvious sense that the centre of gravity is about 6in below the seat base. The sun is shining and I think that maybe the GT86 has a shot.

Swinging into Blyton Park, that thought suddenly seems rather naïve. The main body of the eCoty team have stayed locally and are predictably late, but Dickie Meaden has already arrived. Dickie has never been early for anything, or at least he hadn't until he moved into a caravan (due to his new house being built). Obviously the lure

of a comfortable, warm car and the soft tones of Radio 4 suddenly seem stronger. Imagine his disappointment when he got up, flung open the flimsy fibreglass door and saw... a Lotus Exige S. Luxury travel the supercharged V6 Exige is not. But God, it looks good with hours of motorway behind it, streaked in grime, with a racetrack to one side and some fast, bumpy, narrow roads to the other. We loved the Exige S when we first drove it on and around the Nürburgring and I suspect we still will a week from now.

The other contenders trickle in one by one, Henry in the Alpina B3 GT3, Harry



Above: Catchpole stops for a pricey fill-up. Below: Trott enjoys the Morgan





Above: Alpina feels wonderfully well-rounded on the road, with particularly impressive damping.

Top right: McLaren feels surprisingly underwhelming when not driven at its limits

in a Morgan 3 Wheeler, editor Nick in a very plain-looking 991 Carrera and art director Paul Lang in a searing Racing Yellow Boxster S.

And then two transporters rumble in, depositing a definitive-spec McLaren MP4-12C with the new 616bhp upgrade and the definitive-nutter Pagani Huayra onto Blyton's concrete service road. We all giggle and coo and Harry starts trying to blag a Zonda F exhaust for his C12S. He fails. Again. In the meantime, a BMW M135i has quietly landed and another truck has propagated a C63 AMG Black Series, which is plastered in stickers (but not for long) and complete with He-Man dual controls as it's a last-minute stand-in from Mercedes-Benz World at Brooklands. We can only imagine (and start to concoct wild rumours about) what happened to the press car we were supposed to get, but surmise it probably involved some 'spilt diesel', a roundabout, a lamppost and an awkward phone call. We've all been there.

The final star to complete our line-up is loud, unpredictable, lairy and has been honed over many, many years. Some say he once nearly qualified for an F1 race on the streets of Monaco and that he's written a book that he doesn't like to mention. All we know is he's called Tiff Needell. It's an honour to have Tiff with us, a man whose

career shone brightly on BBC's *Top Gear* before it became a global phenomenon with new hosts, and now sparkles on *Fifth Gear*, firstly on Channel 5 and now on Discovery (note from Tiff: 'Sky channel 520, Virgin channel 212, have you bought my book yet?'). Of course, I'm jesting. Tiff has done some very cool stuff – racing 962s amongst other things – and now he's with *evo* near Scunthorpe and is as excited as any of us about the next few days. Top bloke.

JOB ONE IS TO lay down a road route to ensure that this first part of the test, where we'll whittle down ten contenders to a definitive final six, isn't dominated by track driving. The lure of an empty racetrack is strong, but often the black and white qualities needed on circuit don't translate into the brilliant Technicolor required to really shine on unpredictable time-ravaged roads. So Henry and I grab the new-fangled McLaren and make a hasty escape with an old-fashioned map.

My past exposure to the 12C is limited to ten minutes in a kind owner's car a few months back, whereas Henry has traversed Europe and Africa at great speed in various McLarens. He loves the 12C and within about 30 seconds I can see why. The interior is beautifully minimalist and the view through the vast

windscreen is just incredible, the driving position is fantastic with the brake pedal perfectly positioned for left-foot braking, and the damping and sheer performance is mesmerising. There's a cleanliness of response and an almost inertia-free immediacy to the 12C. Within five minutes I'm beginning to wonder if Henry and I are already driving the winner.

Half an hour later, I'm not so sure. The McLaren has blown my mind in terms of the speed with which it can cover the ground, but there are some huge frustrations. The carbon-ceramic brakes have mighty stopping power but the long, inconsistent brake pedal is pretty awful and makes smooth progress nigh on impossible. The new and much louder exhaust system is unpleasant in Sport and Track modes with a resonance that drills deep into your head, and the 'magic carpet' ride I've read so much about is pure fiction. I'm actually pleased that it doesn't just flow along on a river of honey, that you feel the car working to deal with craggy tarmac, but I'm astonished at how quickly you need to travel to feel like you're even scratching the surface of the car's ability. Henry, driving at something approaching the speed of sound, feels like he's getting much more out of it and there's no doubting the poise and precision the 12C displays, but I'm not



'IN THE 12C, I'M
ASTONISHED HOW
FAST YOU HAVE
TO TRAVEL TO
EVEN SCRATCH
THE SURFACE'



sure it's very much fun.

Our grand route-planning exercise is a bit of a failure, but fortunately Blyton has some wickedly punishing roads as soon as you turn out of the gates, and the team have already been exploring them. The surprise hit of the morning is the BMW M135i. Dickie explains: 'It's very together – much more so than the 1M would be on these roads – and the drivetrain is fantastic. It's just so fast.' Even Tiff has been torn away from the circuit and is virtually beside himself with excitement about the little BMW: 'It's so much fun, almost as much fun as reading *Tiff Gear*...' The GT86, meanwhile, is going down well with Harry: 'I love the sense that you can thrash every last bit of performance from it. It feels absolutely with you.'

But nothing quite tugs at heartstrings like the C63 AMG Black Series; it looks so comically brutal and sounds so terrifyingly angry. It's also likely to have bald rear tyres after three laps of Blyton, so I burble out onto the road as discreetly as possible while the photographers and video crew aren't looking.

At 30mph the BS is everything you could hope for and more. The V8 sends a

heavy beat through the carbon-trimmed interior, while the wide tyres slap against car's eyes and thud into potholes with a latent malicious intent. It might have an automatic gearbox but it feels natural to turn the rotary dial on the centre console around to 'M' and criminal not to reach for the ESP button to select – at the very minimum – ESP Sport. The 6.2-litre V8 has 457lb ft and the chassis is more about entertainment than precision. Frankly, if you don't like oversteer, go elsewhere.

It's a wide car to hustle along these roads but the instant access to all that torque means you can build up a good rhythm pretty quickly, engine climbing and descending through the mid-range and the light, quick steering creating a sense of agility that perhaps you don't expect. But the road is still damp in places and the steering doesn't seem keen to communicate when grip is running out, so sickeningly silent understeer occasionally pushes the car off-line. Gun the throttle and the rear more than compensates, but the transition to oversteer can be equally abrupt. There's no escaping the car's weight, nor its relative lack of traction in these cold conditions, and the frustratingly



Clockwise from left: the Huayra's car-shaped key; M135i and Boxster feel like great value; C63 has no problem spinning up its rear wheels



delayed downshifts. Henry and Dickie later report that they prefer the car in the most aggressive Sport Plus auto mode, but concede that it's the lesser of two evils rather than a truly engaging option. For me the C63 AMG is just too heavy to fulfil its brief. Dickie later sums it up best: 'a relatively blunt instrument.'

The Alpina B3 GT3 has much in common with the Black Series, being based on a humble car and then upgraded in every area with track driving in mind. It even has an automatic gearbox, too. But if the Merc is all puff and bluster, the GT3 is the quiet assassin. It trades a bellowing V8 for a twin-turbo 3-litre straight-six with 402bhp and 398lb ft, has wide arches and aero flicks for an understated streamliner look, and instead of big slip angles and grand gestures it adopts a subtle, almost



Above, from top: Boxster's ride and poise impress; GT86 is fun, despite modest power output; Henry's hair, styled by Morgan

laser-guided precision. The steering is weighty at low speeds and the ride feels expensively damped – firm but with every edge smoothed. The Alcon brakes have that unmistakable race car response and the engine – although a little laggy – delivers its performance in a sweet, linear sweep. It's just beautifully judged and feels so, so special. On the same roads that wrong-footed the C63, the B3 is a master in damping precision and feels light, stable and imperious. And the way it slips into oversteer is lip-smackingly creamy. I want one quite badly.

Dickie and Tiff have already driven the Alpina on track and, sadly, it's no GT3, by which we mean the GT3 that usually sweeps all before it at these gatherings. Tiff actually hates it for reasons which Dickie explains: 'The balance is too understeery on the track and for a car so focused the automatic gearbox is frustrating.' Henry points out that the suspension is fully adjustable and that it's

currently in the default 'road' setting, but the 'box is a hard issue to ignore. As is the £66,950 price, especially when the M135i feels every bit as fast for less than half that. And boy, the little BMW has got a good transmission.

In fact, the M135i is just plain good in nearly every way. It can't match the Alpina's outright control on the road, but the single-turbo 3-litre engine is so much keener to rev, and it feels entirely lag-free thanks to an optional eight-speed ZF 'box that stacks ratios as closely as a Formula 1 transmission. So you skim along the road, engine always in the red, front and rear slipping and hopping but never being flung off-line like the edgy 1M's might be. It's like a little whirlwind of agility and you drive it with almost reckless abandon, just like you might the very best front-drive hot hatches. The steering isn't exactly dripping with feel and seems a little spongy in response, but that's irrelevant when the car is so alive to the road beneath it. For a £30k car, its performance and polish is astounding.

Lincolnshire isn't Portugal in autumn (why didn't we go to Portimão again?), so bad light stops play pretty early. Still, that means all the more time to enjoy Scunthorpe's finest cuisine and hear what's getting the judges excited. Henry is so excited by the Lotus that I can almost hear what he's saying (Catchpole is a church mouse in his free time). I miss most of it but he's smiling and I catch 'brilliant balance' and 'fast'. Dickie, a long-time Exige admirer, is equally fired up by the Lotus. 'It sounds like a serious race car,





*'AT 20MPH, THE HUAYRA FEELS A
MILLION TIMES MORE EXOTIC AND EXCITING
THAN MANY SUPERCARS DO AT 200'*



it looks stunning and it's less prescriptive than most Exiges of old. You can impose yourself on it a bit more and feel like it's working to your brief rather than the other way around.' Tiff is particularly fond of the Chablis.

THERE'S AN IMPENDING sense of doom as day two begins. Soon we'll have to cut four of our ten and this year, perhaps more than any other that I can recall, it's going to be a very difficult decision. The Boxster S, I reckon, is a dead cert to stay. What a sublime car – as supple and precise as the McLaren, but with a superb manual gearbox, superior brake feel and an engine that just revs and revs. It's a genuine star, and where it really scores over the McLaren in my mind is in the rewards it serves up even at sane road speeds. You can revel in its stability and poise or bully it into taking attitude. Its breadth of talent and responsiveness to any driver's mood or style means it finds favour with everyone. Duff thinks it's 'fantastic' and Dickie ponders how the Carrera can really be worth £25k more.

Ah, the 991. That most controversial of 911s. Bigger, more refined and with quite incredible grip and performance, but stripped of all that lovely feedback that so defines the breed. However, this is a 991 Carrera without PASM suspension or the weird Power Steering Plus system that

constantly alters assistance or, crucially, the PDCC active anti-roll bars that rip grip from the surface but also create a car that never quite behaves how you expect. It is, confusingly, rather brilliant.

The 3.4-litre flat-six is a masterpiece, howling smooth and savage like a GT3 motor, and although the seven-speed manual can't match the lovely mechanical feel of the Boxster's six-speed 'box, it's still so satisfying to use. And without trick dampers and PDCC you can feel exactly where the engine is located and enjoy that timeless 911 dance as it flows over bumps and wiggles its hips out of corners. It might not be £25k better than a Boxster S but it has even better turn-in, superior traction and the pure energy of the engine helps to make it feel more special. Harry proclaims: 'For me it's more exciting than the Boxster – and it's all in that amazing engine.' Will we really put two Porsches in the top six? It's starting to look that way.

Fold yourself into the Exige S and you're confronted with a cabin and dash that are disappointingly familiar. Start the 3.5-litre supercharged V6, though, and it's a whole new world. The engine whoops, hollers and crackles like a race-tuned normally aspirated V6. It's as loud as the C63 and delivers a purer noise than either of the true supercars on this test. The six-speed 'box immediately feels a shade tighter and better-defined than expected,

Below: Spandau Ballet tribute band (Bovingdon, Duff, Catchpole, Metcalfe and Trott) took turns in the ten nominees, along with Messrs Needell and Meaden



Above: inconsistent carbon-ceramic brakes spoil the 12C experience for Jethro. Left: C63 fails to match the Exige as a 'race car for the road'

too. Only the poorly spaced and slightly flimsy pedals let the side down.

But wow. This thing is *so* fast and *so* physical, the heavy steering wriggling and sometimes juddering over broken tarmac then weighting-up even more through corners. The delicacy of the Elise is certainly gone and the busy steering transmits as much noise as it does feel, but the sense that you're having to roll up your sleeves and really drive the thing is addictive. Go really hard and you'll sneak up to some understeer, but with the manettino-type control set to Race, the stability control is magnificent, trimming any push and rounding the edge off oversteer with maximum efficiency and minimum interruption. It's a riot of acceleration, agility and feedback. Whatever Henry was saying last night, I think I agree wholeheartedly.

I've been saving the remaining two cars – the Pagani and the Morgan – until



'IT MAY NOT BE £25K BETTER THAN THE BOXSTER, BUT THE ENERGY OF THE 991'S ENGINE MAKES IT SPECIAL'



last. They couldn't be more different, but both feel equally ridiculous on the road. The Morgan because it's so unruly and all-enveloping and the Pagani because it's so shockingly fast and so alien. Most of us love the Morgan despite its ineptitude in 'dynamic' terms as we might know them. You snuggle down into it, steering wheel almost rubbing your thighs, and then the 2-litre V-twin sets the whole car shaking and throbbing. Its five-speed gearbox, sourced from an MX-5, is conventional but the driving experience certainly isn't.

You can't really see through the Perspex aeroscreen but it protrudes just a little too much to look over it, so you hang out of the side of the car, watching the antique tyres folding under load and the suspension bobbling around. This thing is quick and there's plenty of rear grip, so the main task is to manage the sometimes-alarming understeer and to read the road ahead so that you're never asking the front

tyres to do too much braking or turning. Because they simply won't. For some reason it just feels wonderfully satisfying and more than a little terrifying. There's certainly nothing else like it.

Pull the gullwing door of the Huayra down hard and it slams with a light carbon-on-carbon snap. The highly stylised, obsessively detailed interior feels even wilder on a cold British autumn day than it did when I drove the car in Italy a few months back. And the thought of guiding 720bhp along the same narrow roads that the GT86 glides over so effectively and the Porsches ruthlessly demolish sets my stomach aflutter. It feels huge, and although the sheer torque of the twin-turbo V12 and the supple ride should make the Huayra effortless, the many indistinguishable noises that fizz, creak and chatter through the carbon tub and the exponential power delivery make for an intimidating getting-to-know-

you phase. However, at 20mph it feels a million times more exotic and exciting than many supercars manage at 200.

That unbridled madness and sensory overload continues from 20 to 30mph, and from 40 to 60mph. In fact, the Pagani feels ludicrous and wonderful in equal measures at any speed. Better still, it's not all just drama, noise and fury – there's real balance and traction, excellent damping, and you can use more of the 720bhp than you'd believe possible without feeling like you're heading towards a very large accident. As Dickie says: 'The crazy looks and detailing almost trivialise the Huayra. It's a brilliantly sorted supercar and all the more impressive as it's a total departure from the Zonda but retains that unique Pagani feel.' We all want to drive it again and again, but before it gets a pass through to the final six, we need to put it, and the other nine contenders, to the test on track. Over to Dickie.





road driving, and how the cars make us feel on the public highway, will always be the backbone of eCoty, but track driving has

always played a part too. In the past it has been the opportunity to safely explore the outer limits of each contender's performance and handling, get some lairy images and have a bit of fun.

This year marks something of a departure from that format, for not only are we using the excellent Blyton Park to shoot a series of track battles between myself and *evo's* resident überhooner, Mr Tiff Needell, for inclusion in our eCoty video, but we've also set ourselves the task of setting lap times in each car. With yours truly as the designated driver, ably assisted by VBOX operator and arch egger-onner Jethro Bovingdon, our task is to record a time in each car, keeping the number of laps to a minimum (an out lap, three flyers and a cool-down lap) in order to ensure we've got brakes and tyres left for the final road leg of eCoty.

I'm not sure which car Jethro and I are more worried about going for a time in, the 720bhp, £820k Pagani Huayra or the 80bhp, £30k Morgan 3 Wheeler. On balance we decide the Morgan poses the greatest threat to life and limb, but as it's the least powerful car here, and therefore the logical starting point, we just have to man-up and get on with it.

It's pretty snug two-up, with insufficient elbowroom for the driver should things get busy behind the flat-faced, three-spoke 'wheel. First impressions are an overwhelming mix of noise, vivid acceleration, strong brakes, a sweet gearshift, an alarming sense of exposure and gargantuan amounts of understeer. The trick is to really commit and really chuck the Morgan at the corners. It's a counter-intuitive action as normally that's the last thing you'd do in an understeery car, but for some reason the skinny, rock-hard front tyres find more bite as steering angle increases.

You know you've found the limit when the inside front wheel lifts clear of the track. And I mean well clear at times. You



Above: how the Huayra got to Blyton. Below: Meaden gets the 3 Wheeler on two wheels while GT86 gives chase

can play with this see-saw balance on the throttle, working the grip until it tips the car up, then easing back to bring all three wheels into play once more. It's a hairy process, but one you enjoy more and more as you learn to trust (or hope) that the Morgan won't capsize.

I have to confess to not getting the 3 Wheeler experience at all on the road. I just couldn't get beyond the paralysing sense of vulnerability and sphincter-cramping lack of directional stability on bumpy, cambered B-roads. But on track you can hurl it about with measured abandon, at which point it becomes one of the most enjoyably scary cars you'll ever drive. I stress drive, for from the colour of Bovingdon's face I suspect being a passenger is rather less pleasurable. Its time? The longest 1:19.2 of Jethro's life.

Next up is the GT86. After the madness of the Morgan the Toyota feels quick, sharp, pointy and at least a century more modern. Much has been made of this car's emphasis on fun, and there's no doubting it's a malleable and enjoyable car on track. However, issues remain.

The engine isn't nice when extended to the red line, but more critical is the lack of torque (just 151lb ft). If it had a bit more muscle it could take the long left-hander at Lancaster in third, but instead it needs second to get out of The 'Ump' left-right that precedes it. The energy-saving Michelin Primacy tyres allow plenty of sideways fun, but unsurprisingly they're not as progressive as a high-performance tyre, so you don't get the grip you need through the high-speed corners and under extreme braking.

It's entertaining for a few laps, but after



'YOU KNOW YOU'VE FOUND THE MORGAN'S LIMIT WHEN THE INSIDE FRONT WHEEL LIFTS CLEAR OF THE TRACK'

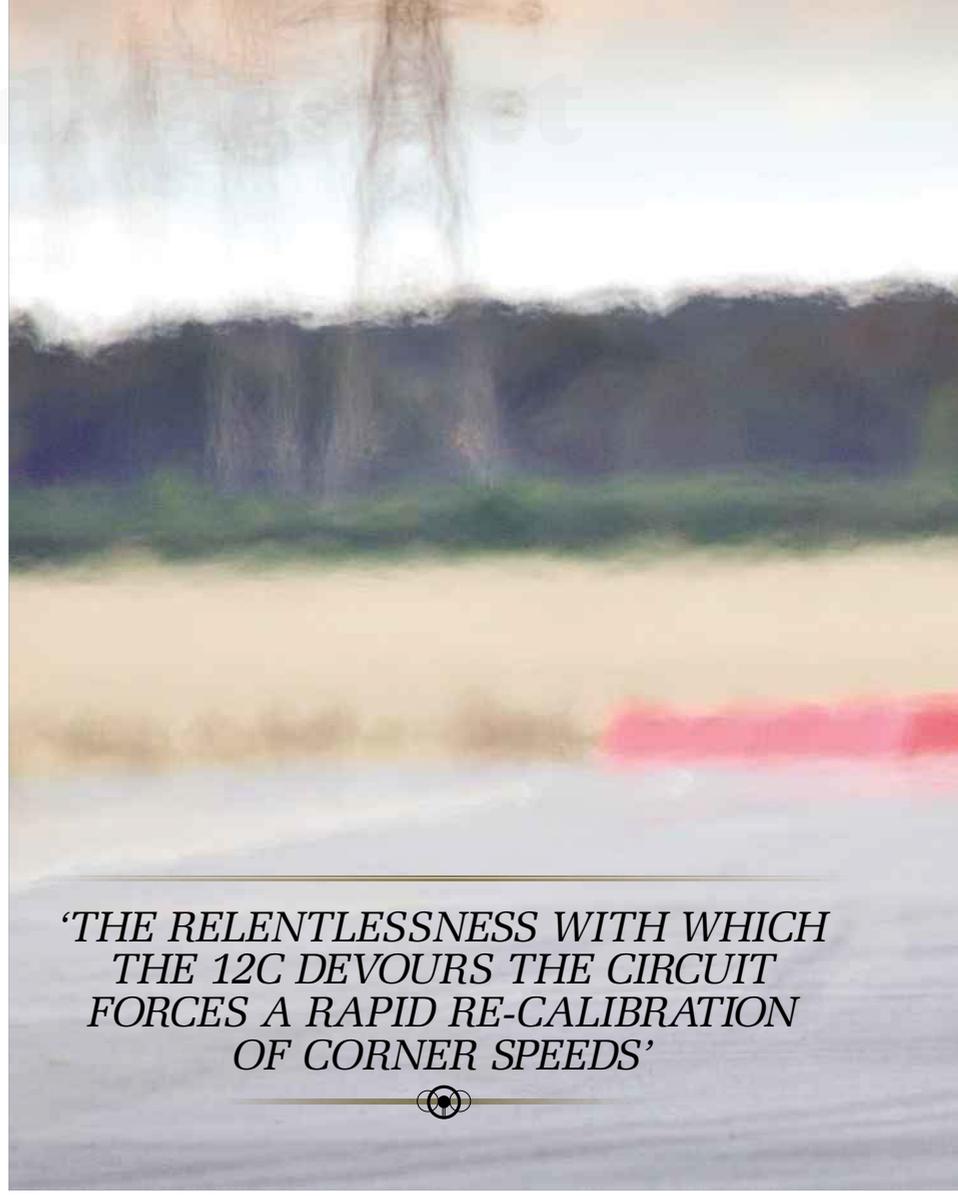


a while the experience feels contrived to suit the low-grip high-fun objective. That's frustrating because you can feel the chassis and engineering behind it is genuinely brilliant – the structure is really rigid, the steering is sharp and accurate, the brakes strong, and the modest mass and low centre of gravity give it exceptional balance and agility. With another 50bhp, 50lb ft and a set of Michelin Pilot Super Sports not only would it be significantly quicker than a best of 1:12.8, but I'd wager it would be no less enjoyable or accessible.

It's a big performance jump to the M135i. We've all been keen to try it, but past on-track experiences with otherwise promising BMWs sow a few seeds of doubt over whether it can truly deliver. Brakes are usually the undoing of even full-blown M-cars, while this 135's optional eight-speed auto transmission could also be a source of frustration.

Much to our delight it proves our fears unfounded in less than half a lap. Taut and compact, it feels nicely wieldy and immediate. The balance of grip front to rear is nicely neutral, which is just how you want it for a quick, tidy lap, yet you can play with that balance to induce oversteer if the need or desire arises. The motor is an absolute screamer, revving hard and high despite being turbocharged. The transmission partners it brilliantly, too, with eight tightly stacked ratios and

Right: 12C spits blue flames. Below: Morgan produced a few flames of its own when a spark plug worked loose – no damage done, though. Bottom: Alpina and GT86 alloys; 12C dials



'THE RELENTLESSNESS WITH WHICH THE 12C DEVOURS THE CIRCUIT FORCES A RAPID RE-CALIBRATION OF CORNER SPEEDS'





up- and downshifts so punchy and clean you'd swear it was a DSG 'box.

It all conspires to make the M135i a car you really want to drive with commitment and attack the circuit with. The brakes have plenty of power and impressive stamina (at last!) and though the lack of a limited-slip differential means you can get the inside rear wheel spinning though certain corners, it manages the power (316bhp) and torque (332lb ft) impressively. Through the super-quick right-left-right section at Port Froid it's little short of sensational, helping it post a blistering best of 1:07.7.

Traditionally the Boxster has always played second fiddle to the 911, especially when it comes to track driving, but for the first time I can remember I'm as keen to try this latest-generation Boxster S on track as I am its rear-engined relative. This particular example is in prime spec, with a manual 'box, PASM suspension, a sports exhaust and a

few other goodies.

Track driving places less demand on feel, as you tend to drive straight to the limit of grip, but still it's worth mentioning that not only does the Boxster have the more natural feeling rack of the two Porsches, but also the sweeter gearshift. With the dampers in their firmest setting, the Boxster S remains surprisingly soft-edged on track, but it results in a beautifully expressive and exploitable balance that's a million miles away from edgy mid-engined sports cars of yore.

Care is needed though, for the Boxster can be surprisingly tail-happy on turn-in. Over-drive it and you spend too much time containing the rear, but concentrate on getting dialled-in to its responses and give a little on the way into a corner and you can tread the fine line required to minimise the slide and maximise forward motion. Typically tireless brakes (cast iron discs on this car), a super-zingy

Left: Boxster feels a little soft on track but is also wonderfully balanced; Exige, meanwhile, feels completely at home

Right: minimalist Exige interior seems perfectly at home at a circuit, unlike the automatic gearbox of the Alpina, which hampers fast lapping



3.4-litre motor and smart gearing mean you don't have to compensate for any shortcomings, which explains why the Boxster S's best of 1:05.5 is the most satisfying lap yet.

After the Boxster it seems appropriate to swap straight to the 991 Carrera. As with the GT86, we've had a rocky relationship with Porsche's new 911, but over the past months we've driven all manner of specifications, eventually finding the sweet spot in this, the most basic 991 on the planet. With no PDCC, PASM or PDK to worry about, the only button I need to push is that which disables the stability control.

As you'd expect, the rearward weight bias means the 911 manages to find better traction than the Boxster from apex to exit out of pretty much every corner. Surprisingly it's much more neutral too, with greater stability on turn-in and steadfast resistance to understeer through the long left-hander at Lancaster. It also shows exceptional poise through the fourth-gear direction changes at Port Froid and finds some bite into the awkward 90-degree right at Ushers and nadgety 90-degree left at Twickers.

The seven-speed manual gearbox isn't as slick as the Boxster's non-PDK-derived six-speeder, but the brakes (again cast

'SHORT OF A 997 GT3 RS, IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE A MORE FULL-ON TRACK EXPERIENCE IN A ROAD CAR THAN THE EXIGE S'

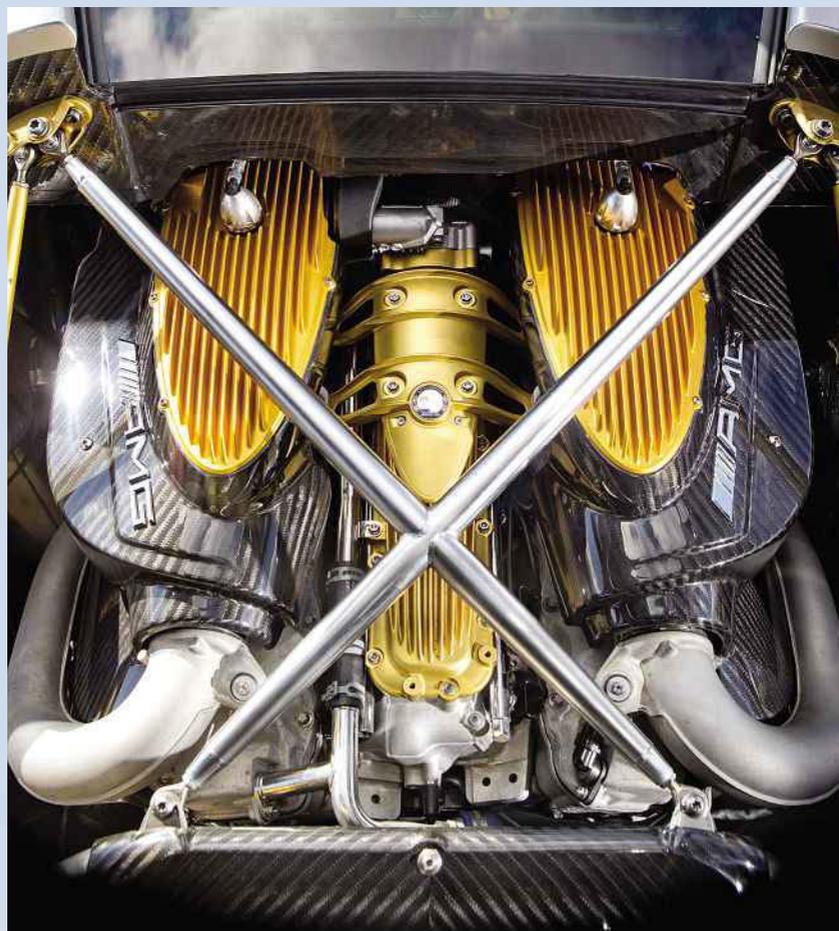


iron) are mighty and the 3.4-litre flat-six – in a hotter state of tune than in the Boxster S (345bhp versus 311) – is truly one of the all-time great engines. It feels faster, but neither Jethro or I have a sense of the margin, and we're both surprised to see that the 991's advantage is a scant 0.4sec. The Boxster has come of age.

Things start to get serious now, as we fold ourselves into the gorgeous Lotus Exige S. Of all the cars present it looks the one most at home in a race circuit paddock, so we're expecting big things of the little Lotus. God knows Hethel needs some good news after the tawdry headlines of the past few months.

It's hard to get your head around quite how much more intense the 345bhp 3.5-litre supercharged V6 feels here compared to its original home in the back of the Evora S. The way it fires the car between the corners is major-league stuff, as is the ripping banshee howl that fills the sparsely trimmed cockpit. Short of a 997 GT3 RS it's hard to imagine a more full-on track experience in a road car.

This car is fitted with Pirelli P Zero Corsa tyres as a nod to eCoty's road-based bias (stickier Trofeo rubber would most likely wipe a further 8/10ths from the lap time), but it's not exactly lacking in grip or traction. We're running the



Left: Huayra's 6-litre, twin-turbo AMG V12 is every bit as gltzy as the rest of the car. Below: GT86 is playful at Blyton, if not that quick





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Exige S in Track mode, which means the limits of the stability control system are higher while allowing us to lean on the spookily effective understeer detection system, which learns the grip of the tyres and track and adjusts itself accordingly.

You still need to drive with precision and big commitment, but from the point you come off the brakes and get back on the power it's a case of keeping your steering inputs tidy, your right foot pinned and letting the system do its thing. There's no limited-slip differential, so you don't always get that hooked-up feeling from the rear, and the unassisted steering is heavy, which makes correcting oversteer quite an effort. The brakes are superbly powerful and resist ABS intervention brilliantly, although this particular car has a maladjusted pedal, making it unduly hard to heel-and-toe. Awkward stoppers not withstanding, a time of 1:04.4 is deeply impressive.

It's a big step up in power and weight to the B3 GT3. With fully adjustable suspension, monster brakes and a big-boost twin-turbo straight-six good for 402bhp, Alpina's take on the M3 GTS certainly has the hardcore hardware for the job, but an Alcantara-swathed interior and a torque converter automatic transmission suggest otherwise.

Initially the B3 GT3 is solid, poised and responsive, but as you up the

pace it becomes less convincing. Its encouragingly neutral balance shifts to nose-led understeer, which prevents you from chasing the throttle as early or as insistently as you'd like. Of course, it's possible to provoke the B3 into oversteer, but it requires effort and compromises your corner entry speed.

The engine is strong and sounds great, but feels laggy compared to the M135i's, which is surprising considering the Alpina has the twin-turbo motor. The automatic 'box isn't suited to track use, especially when you try to quickly change down a couple of gears while braking as hard and as late as you can at the end of the back straight. Despite all this it's an appealing car, but it's not as focused or well enough resolved on track to carry the GT3 tag, a sense backed up by the fact its best time only manages to match that of the giant-slaying M135i.

If looks counted towards lap times, AMG's C63 Black Series would be at least a second quicker than any other car here. Sadly for the power-crazed dudes at Affalterbach, our VBOX is impervious to the Black's imposing physique.

With a significant power and torque advantage over the Alpina, it should and does feel quicker. The 510bhp naturally aspirated 6.2-litre V8 donated from the SLS has immense shove. Too much in fact, as the C63 Black seems to spend



Above: M135i's eight-speed auto gearbox works perfectly, delivering rapid changes on demand. Top: 911 is impressively poised in the corners

'WHEN THE HUAYRA HOOKS UP IT FEELS LIKE YOU'RE SITTING ON A CONTROLLED, DIRECTIONAL EXPLOSION'



TIFF ON...



01

BOOZE

I'd like a vanilla vodka right now

02

THE MORGAN CATCHING FIRE

Did you p**s on it Harry?

03

TODAY'S YOUTH

These young people have stolen the word 'growler'

04

CAR JOURNOS

***** is the worst analyst of cars I've ever known

05

UNDERSTEER

That's humiliating. I've never worn out a set of front tyres before

06

HUAYRA'S STYLING

Looks like a Zonda

07

FOOTWEAR

I like my Geoxes, but Hugos are better oversteer shoes

08

ABLUTIONS

I can't concentrate when people are watching me



most of its time sideways whether you like it or not. Not only is traction an issue out of the corners, but stability on the way in is also at a premium. As a result you waste valuable time controlling the rear on turn in, then repeat the process as you attempt to put all that prodigious poke into the tarmac.

It's fun for a while, but if you were on a regular trackday you'd be black flagged before your second lap and run out of tyres on your third. As for setting a time,



Above: race car-style wing is part of the £6995 Aero Package fitted to this Black Series. Top: C63 and B3 GT3 light 'em up

well it's pretty hopeless. It seems crazy, but despite the £100k price tag and DTM-alike accoutrements, the Black Series is hamstrung by the same on-track shortcomings as the regular C63 Coupe. The only difference is they happen at higher velocities and cost you £40k more to access. A scruffy 1:06.9 puts it 0.8sec ahead of the B3 GT3, but a humiliating 1.8sec shy of the basic 991 Carrera.

Eight down, two to go. Of the two bona fide supercars in eCoty 2012, the McLaren 12C is the one you'd bet your shirt on setting a blistering time. Having pressed the Active button to awaken the Handling and Powertrain switches,

then click-clicking both of those to their most aggressive modes, the 12C is ready for action. It's in another league compared to the cars we've lapped so far. Indeed the ferocity of the acceleration, the immediacy of the gearshifts and the relentlessness with which it devours the circuit forces a rapid re-calibration of braking points and corner speeds.

With everything set to track mode, the 12C's suspension is extremely stiff. There's absolutely no body roll whatsoever, and when you get it fully loaded up with lateral G it starts to hop, as if trying to find some way of releasing the grip it's managing to find. The way





'IT'S FUN FOR A WHILE, BUT IF YOU WERE ON A REGULAR TRACKDAY YOU'D BE BLACK FLAGGED BEFORE YOUR SECOND LAP AND RUN OUT OF TYRES ON YOUR THIRD'



it cuts through the slower corners is awesome, as is the way you can chase the throttle through the long, understeer-inducing Lancaster. It feels like a race car.

At the beginning of the day we took the decision to miss the chicane midway down the straight so as to let the really powerful cars stretch their legs. That seemed like a pretty harmless notion in the Morgan, 911 Carrera and even the Exige S, but in the 616bhp McLaren, braking from north of 150mph into the awkward left-hander, it makes each lap feel a whole lot more serious. Fortunately the carbon-ceramic brakes are massively capable, if a bit abrupt.

The only place the 12C struggles a little is during the direction changes at Port Froid. The front-end is its usual hyper-alert self, but the rear end struggles to react in tune and feels snappy. The sheer pace of the 12C makes the whole lap an urgent affair, but then you wouldn't expect a time of 1:02.8 to come easily.

And so to the Pagani Huayra. The physical size of this extraordinary machine is enough to make you feel hugely intimidated, let alone the giant price tag, yet attaching timing equipment to a crazy car like this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that should be savoured, not feared.



Above: optional G meter replaces one of the air vents in the dash of the Alpina. Left: GT86 working hard to keep in touch with the Boxster S



After the razor sharp responses of the 12C, the Huayra feels almost lazy. The steering isn't quite as immediate, there's slight but tangible body roll and the monstrous 720bhp turbocharged Merc V12 takes a little longer to fill its lungs. But my God, when the Huayra hooks up it feels like you're sitting on a controlled, directional explosion.

Despite the titanic torque on tap (737lb ft) it finds exceptional traction, and the brakes have epic power. You'd expect it to perhaps feel a bit cumbersome though the tight turns, but it cuts a clean line through them all. You have to be patient through Lancaster, which costs you a bit of speed onto the straight, but once the hammer's down nothing can live with the Pagani's acceleration above 120mph. Through Port Froid's ballsy kinks the Huayra teaches the 12C a lesson in stability and confidence, and by the end of the lap you're left gobsmacked by the Pagani's dynamic polish. The time? A truly remarkable 1:02.5.

BLYTON PARK HAS been a total blast. True, the lap times aren't going to influence our thinking as much as the on-road driving, but they have played their part, for there's no doubt lapping for fun and then for a time has provided a complete picture of each car's outright capabilities. Question is, which cars get the chop, and which go on to Scotland for our next road stage?

The obvious fall-guys are the C63 and the Morgan; the former because it's just not as good as it looks or we'd hoped on road or track, and the latter because its charm is due to its dynamic shortcomings. It's a great little car but you'd want something else tasty in the garage to get your real thrills. All six judges put both cars at the bottom of their lists.

Then it gets confusing. Jethro wants to lose the McLaren (which draws gasps at the dinner table) because it doesn't give much enjoyment below warp speed and because the brakes are unforgivable at this price. I'm in agreement for broadly similar reasons. Duff nearly completes its

Above: M135i is beginning to look like outrageous value. Right: skinny front wheels contribute towards the 3 Wheeler's interesting handling characteristics



exit, but has a change of heart to save the 12C by a single vote.

Much to Bovingdon's chagrin the charismatic and quirky Alpina B3 GT3 is out, having been undone by its soft-edged automatic transmission and by the superb but much cheaper M135i. I think we're all a little sad to see the B3 fail to make the cut, but genuinely excited that BMW seems to have rediscovered its purpose with a new car we can all aspire to.

Sadly, the people's champion-elect, the GT86, is the last car to fall. It's an enjoyable car, but it has a strange turn-in yaw that feels a bit contrived on the road as well as the circuit, and the engine is underwhelming. Ultimately, it simply doesn't have the performance or the quality to sneak through.

So our big six contains two Porsches (that'll give the forums something to moan about), an unexpectedly great BMW, the uncompromising Lotus Exige S, the otherworldly McLaren MP4-12C and the mind-altering Pagani Huayra. Scotland, here we come...

TRACK TIMES

01	Pagani Huayra	1:02.5
02	McLaren MP4-12C	1:02.8
03	Lotus Exige V6	1:04.4
04	Porsche 911 Carrera	1:05.1
05	Porsche Boxster S	1:05.5
06	Mercedes C63 Black	1:06.9
07	Alpina B3 GT3	1:07.7
07	BMW M135i	1:07.7
09	Toyota GT86	1:12.8
10	Morgan 3 Wheeler	1:19.2

Huayra just pips the MP4-12C to the fastest lap around Blyton, by 0.3sec; the Morgan, unsurprisingly, brings up the rear, trailing some 6.4sec behind the ninth-placed Toyota GT86





'THERE'S NO DOUBT LAPPING FOR FUN, AND THEN FOR A TIME, HAS PROVIDED A COMPLETE PICTURE OF EACH CAR'S OUTRIGHT CAPABILITIES'



'NONE OF US KNOWS WHAT IS GOING TO WIN...'



D

arkness descends. The hands of the clock in the middle of the Boxster's dashboard say that it's 2.00am, so of course it's already been dark for hours. But now we're swinging off the A1 just north of Newcastle, onto the dual and then single carriageways of the A696. And it's only here, leaving the urban outskirts of Tyneside behind and watching the last orange glow of man-made illumination recede in the rear-view mirror, that proper inky darkness really closes in tight for the first time in the journey.

We all scattered to various parts of the country when we departed Blyton

on Friday evening, splashing down the motorways to spend our respective weekends attending birthday parties (Nick), waiting for a baby (Mike), rolling around in money (Harry) and, predictably, cycling (me). According to text messages, they all returned north at some sensible hour on Sunday afternoon and should already be in the hotel, tucked up in soft bed sheets, having got some venison-based broth and pints of Belhaven for supper. I'm not quite so organised and didn't stop pedalling round Buckinghamshire until it was dark, which is why I'm late.

The Racing Yellow 981 Boxster is a good place to be on a night drive, though. For a start, it has splendid headlights

I CAN'T EVEN NARROW IT DOWN THAT MUCH'



(much better than the McLaren's), so the road ahead is bathed in a wash of bright white light with a very defined top edge to the beam projecting from the nose. There is also a comforting solidity to the Boxster, a reassurance that's evident from the moment you touch the door handle and get settled into the simple, slim seat. The way that feet move easily between the perfectly spaced pedals, the way the left hand falls naturally to the high-set gear lever... the initial miles are like sharing a pint with someone for the first time and laughing easily, instantly feeling like you'll be friends for years to come.

You need that sort of instant rapport with a car if you're going to drive it

up here in the dark at speed, because although there's no traffic (bar the distinctive LEDs of an Audi haring the other way), there are plenty of surprises in the way the road tightens round corners and ducks and dives over crests. The Boxster S is wonderfully positive, however – the front end is precise, the steering beautifully weighted and the ride capable of soaking up everything to an uncanny degree. It's almost too refined with the adjustable dampers in normal mode, so you switch them to Sport, which gives a little more tautness to the suspension. But still there's not a hint of crash or undue resilience. Will it feel like it could do with a little more edge, a bit

more bite, when daylight allows more commitment? The following days will reveal all.

'Scotland welcomes you' says the sign, followed swiftly by a very unwelcome grey box and accompanying hopscotch marks on the tarmac of the A68. Luckily, Porsche brakes are still brilliant things. And the benefit of having to slow down is that you get the fantastic crackling overrun from the exhaust, which breaks the stillness of the night with a sound like a distant firework finale.

Through the sleeping town of Jedburgh, I branch right on the A698 to Kelso. A fox slinks quickly across the road up ahead, pausing on the verge to glance back, eyes flashing their yellow pinpricks in the darkness. The signs for the Roxburghe Hotel catch in the headlights and before I know it I'm stumbling into the warmth of the entrance hall, where an elderly man is tending to a crackling fire. 'I was just about to give up on you, sir...'

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, after Meaden has investigated all the breakfast permutations, there's a bit of stamping about in the car park as engines are warmed and Nick discusses potential routes with *evo*'s friend in the Borders, Charlie Bowmont, who has raced in the Caterham Academy, driven tanks for the Household Cavalry and lives nearby. He's kindly agreed to help drive as we've lost a judge overnight – it seems that Duff Jr has a sense of humour and let his father get all the way to Scotland before announcing his imminent arrival in the world, at which point Mike grabbed the Audi Avant camera car and headed swiftly back south (thereby explaining the fast-moving LEDs I saw). Track videos done, Tiff is also no longer with us. Probably working on a second edition of his book or something...

Eventually Nick and Charlie settle on a photography-friendly road next to St Mary's Loch, and there's an unseemly scramble for cars. When the music stops, I'm rather chuffed that I've ended up in the pre-heated seat of the BMW. I'm third in the convoy down the A708, with Bowmont leading in the 911 and Bovingdon between us in the Pagani, which could be wild on these roads. Normally when we come to Scotland, we head further up to the dramatic west coast and even on towards Skye, but the Borders has so much to offer that it's a crime to always skirt round on the A1 or A74(M). Look at a map and there's not a plethora of roads, so you might assume that the limited network would be more congested than the waiting room for



'AT FIRST THE McLAREN DOESN'T FEEL LIKE A CAR TO BE EXPLORED ON THE ROAD, OR POSSIBLY EVEN THIS PLANET'



Above: Exige and 12C make polar-opposite demands on the driver, the former being a workout, the latter effortless. Right: Boxster shrugs off whatever surface is thrown at it





a Sudafed trial, but it's always seemed blissfully quiet to me. That's not to say there won't be the odd van or horsebox coming the other way, and Jethro is having to be suitably cautious of his wide carbon flanks round the tighter bends, which in turn gives the small BMW behind a chance to keep up.

The M135i is an absolute joy to hustle and it's not just because it's the only car here where you sit behind the engine. The truth is that it's a much more supple car than we've seen come out of Munich over the last few years. Instead of bouncing around over bumps with a rear end like a flea on a pogo stick, the M135i breathes with the road and lets you work its chassis much harder as a result. The touch of lean into corners gives you confidence to throw the car around a bit, knowing that it will work its sidewalls in a more friendly fashion as you near the limit.

A series of small crests sees the huge rear venturi in front shimmy as the big tyres struggle to deploy all 737lb ft and Jethro has to lift off. No such worries for the Beemer, which can carry speed and take



the undulations without a lift, closing the gap to the Huayra's rocket-ship exhausts in the process. It's this juxtaposition of talents that I love more than anything else about eCoty; the chance for a £30k hot hatch to go treadblock to treadblock with a £820,000 hypercar down a road and hassle it all the way.

The BMW's drivetrain as a whole is deserving of the highest praise. Chasing down towards the loch, in and out of the conifers, over patches of residual damp on the tarmac and braking into wickedly tightening bends, the short-geared eight-speed auto 'box is sensational. You flip up and down between ratios, not even registering which number you're in – you're just using it to play tunes on the musical straight-six like an automotive octave. You're unconsciously aware that the engine's always in the meatiest part of its 332lb ft of turbocharged torque and the throttle becomes a useful rudder. A

limited-slip diff would be nice, just to give the last word in precision to the rear end and allow more accuracy to the inevitable slides, but it's a small quibble.

After a breathless quarter of an hour or so, we all park up in a lay-by next to the loch. Jethro steps in a shallow puddle getting out of the Pagani and while he's hopping around, I stuff a dictaphone under his nose. 'Look... I've got a soggy clutch foot now. Why what? Oh, Huayra... um... there's certainly a lot more going on than in a Veyron. Being rear-wheel drive, you can't just mash the throttle and forget all about it... Oh, they're my favourite cotton-mix ones too, with little NASCARs on...'

Thankfully Trott wanders over at this point and muses about the Huayra's active aero flaps and their seemingly unfathomable deployments: 'It would be nice to have a trace of its brain to understand what it's thinking.' I agree and

Left: Bovington deals with sunshine and chills; M135i's Eco Pro mode doesn't see much action; crossing the border

Below: having survived Lincolnshire, each of the final sextet has to prove its worth in the beautiful Scottish Borders

say I've often thought that about Harry. The 'graphers (both photo and video) are keen to get on with capturing the images, so it's all hands on deck for a few hours with cars going back and forth and booms and tripods sprouting out of various clumps of heather. After a while though, I manage to pinch the McLaren for a bit and sneak off to 'look for other locations'. I say sneak, but that's patently impossible in a car that's almost race-car loud on start-up; a deep, aggressive bark erupts from the high tailpipes when you ignite the V8 with the starter button and you can imagine the

'NORMALLY WHEN WE COME TO SCOTLAND, WE HEAD FURTHER UP TO THE DRAMATIC WEST COAST AND EVEN ON TOWARDS SKYE, BUT THE BORDERS HAS SO MUCH TO OFFER THAT IT'S A CRIME TO ALWAYS SKIRT ROUND IT'



shockwaves rippling the water on the loch. I've just jumped out of the Exige and, despite having spent so much time in the driver's seat of a 12C this year that a magistrate would probably have to grant me squatting rights, it's something of a surprise how light and airy the McLaren's steering feels as I set off down the road.

Go for the carbon brakes for the first time and they make you feel like a learner as the pedal gives you nothing-then-everything in quick succession. Hit an open stretch and the acceleration of this updated 616bhp version seems violent as well, slamming you back into the seat

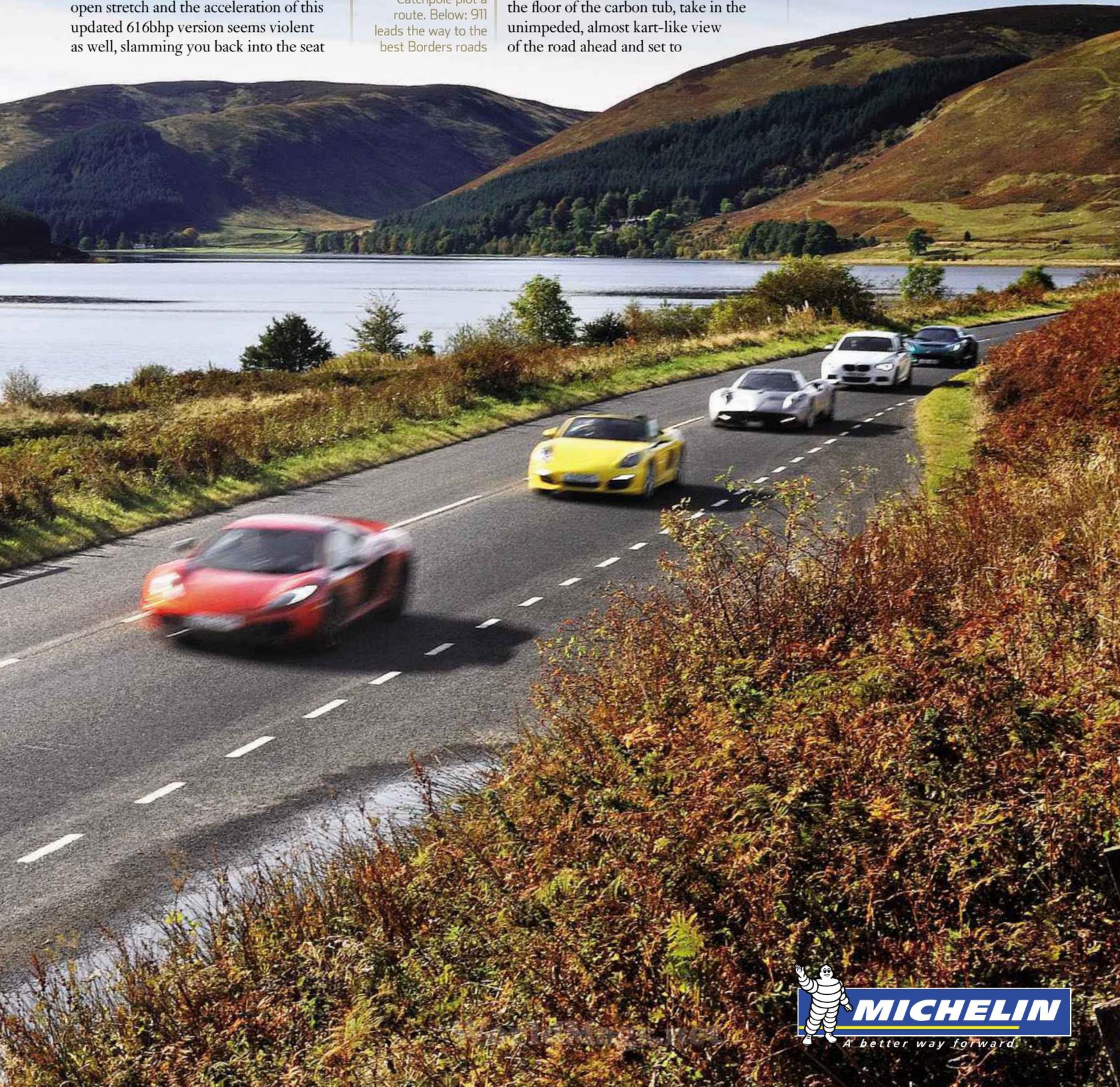


Above: Trott and Catchpole plot a route. Below: 911 leads the way to the best Borders roads

and holding you there with a force equal to that with which the brakes pitched you towards the windscreen. Add in up-changes that go through without any interruption (save for a curiously IT-derived click from the paddle) and it's all a bit sense-scrambling. In short, at first it doesn't feel like a car to be explored on the road, or possibly even this planet.

So you take a deep settling breath through your nose, wriggle further down into the seat, bum only millimetres above the floor of the carbon tub, take in the unimpeded, almost kart-like view of the road ahead and set to

work. Sitting in a convoy in the McLaren is child's play – it's so fast that, as Richard Meaden said to me earlier, 'you can reel in something like a wrung-out 911 without even trying'. No, you need to be on your own, so that you can push its limits, slingshot through corners and feel the car physically testing the placement of your internal organs during direction changes. Nothing clings on quite like the 12C and you feel the need to reset your parameters for how fast you can





turn in, how late you can brake and how quickly a straight will disappear.

The curious thing, and what some don't like, is that it deploys all this brutal speed in quite an unflustered way. You're aware that it's doing something special when it slices impossibly quickly through a tight, bumpy left-right combination, almost tearing the grass from the verge with its ferocious slipstream, but the reality is that inside it was just two measured inputs to the wheel. But if you like speed for speed's sake, if sometimes you just want to point your skis down the run and try to get to the bottom of the mountain as fast as the two planks and the muscles in your legs will let you, then the McLaren will flick your switch and leave you buzzing.

By the time I get back, everyone has relocated to a small café a mile or so down the road. I treat myself to something utterly delicious called a tartan burger, which combines beef with not only bacon but also haggis (side order of cardiac arrest optional). Once the meat sweats have passed, I discover that we're on the move again and heading back towards Kelso and Floors Castle to take the group static shot. The convoy remounts, with Charlie again leading in a Porsche (this time the Boxster), then Meaden in the BMW and me folded into the Lotus.

Metcalf put it very well earlier when he said that 'going for a drive in the Exige is a bit like going for a swim in the sea. You know you'll love it once you're in.' But once you're across that wide sill, you find yourself in the most fabulously intimate cabin. The wheel is tiny, the scuttle low and, if you're as tall as me, the gearstick is permanently pressed lightly against your leg. The result of all this is that if the McLaren feels easier to place than the Pagani, then the Exige feels even easier than the McLaren. It's so small that you can stick entirely to your side of the road and still have room to scribe racing lines between the car's eyes and the hedge.

Yet small doesn't mean dainty. An



Above: big Huayra copes with the narrow and twisty Scottish roads remarkably well. Right: Catchpole in... well, it could only be the Pagani's cabin, couldn't it?

engine brimming with supercharged torque gives huge punch, while wider tyres and more grip mean that the lightly wriggling wheel of early Elises is not in residence here. No delicately pouring the car into corners as you chase the Beemer and Boxster flat-out back up the side of the loch; this is a physical experience requiring a fair amount of heft at times, with the heavy wheel prepared to kick back and make a fight of it if you encounter bumps mid-corner.

Even though you might not get the finer detail you expect, the Lotus still communicates more than any other car here. Tip in on a positive camber and

you feel the whole car (and you inside it) moving as one, tilting with the road.

As we dive into the shade under the trees to discover a road that hasn't dried, the Exige changes instantly. It's as dramatic as going onto sheet ice in any normal car, that sensation where everything lightens, screaming that grip has lessened and the rules have changed. And it's on a slipperier surface that you really appreciate the friendlier balance of the V6 chassis that lets the rear swing round almost lazily, but easily correctable with power or momentum as the catalyst.

It's possibly the best drive yet, although Charlie leads us all over some tortuous





*'ALTHOUGH YOU'RE ALWAYS AWARE OF THE
LARGE AMOUNT OF CAR BEHIND YOU, THE
TRACTION FROM THOSE HUGE 20-INCH REAR
TYRES GIVES YOU REAL CONFIDENCE'*



yumps at the end, where the road doesn't so much act like a ramp but instead simply falls away beneath you like an unseen trapdoor suddenly opening in a stage. The Exige flies well, but one or two turn up to the castle looking slightly wide-eyed and remain so as we wash the cars, position them neatly on the gravel and then stand around saying that none of us know what is going to win. We really don't either. For the first time ever, I can't even really narrow it down that much. Then photographer Dean Smith announces, to everyone's delight, that the light has gone, he can't get the shot and we need to return in the morning...



Above: the delicious but hugely calorific 'tartan burger' got the eCoty panellists through the test



ALL THOUGHTS OF SUMMER, even a late Indian one, are behind us as we stand in the very same spot 12 hours later, waiting for the sun to rise above the battlements and make an appearance in the cold, cloudless sky. The grass is tinged white with an ethereal frost and the cold, crisp air of autumn is acting like nature's own menthol blast as it hits the nostrils on every intake of breath. Eventually the shutter on Dean's Nikon rises and falls and in a blink I find myself in another world, inhabiting the extraordinary Jules Verne-esque interior of the Pagani. There's so much shiny theatre all around you from the moment you pull down the door that it's hard not to be overwhelmed. You could easily find yourself sitting there hours later, engine untroubled, your inner child still utterly transfixed by those dials.

A near-freezing morning is not the ideal time for a large, 720bhp turbocharged artwork, but somehow it has to get from Kelso to Bonchester Bridge, so I set off in pursuit of the Boxster's pretty new rump.

The steering is weighty, which is reassuring when the grip is low, and the pedals both have a nice firm resistance too, but the Pagani is nonetheless intimidatingly big as we crawl through town. Released onto A- and B-roads, you try to use the lag, keep the revs below 3500rpm, short-shift with those light-action paddles, yet there's still phenomenal force being squeezed from the AMG engine in great chunks and the odd slide is inevitable. It's indicative of just how well-sorted the Huayra is that it's controllable rather than instantly hedge-



From top: BMW M135i surprises with its suppleness; videographer Guy Lambert rescues his tripod from a stream; blanked-off buttons in 991; trademark quad exhausts on Pagani

hunting in such situations, but there's a feeling that you're trying to slice a lemon with a chainsaw. Once we've reached our muster point intact, I decide to leave it a couple of hours and have another go...

With warmish tarmac, it's a very different story. Deploying everything the Pagani has down a straight is as utterly intoxicating as gazing at its interior. The hypercar free-fall G-forces are all present and correct, but it's also the fact that the engine behind you seems to be a living, breathing thing with more chuffs and whistles than a drawing room full of snoozing grandfathers. It's a fascinating soundtrack, as if a whole new type of powerplant has been used for propulsion, but without any real crescendo to the sound (it's very quiet from the outside, too) it's also quite hard to judge the revs – and the beautiful dials certainly won't help you decipher anything!

The ride is firmer than I was expecting: not as creamy as a Zonda, but you can push hard into corners, really leaning on the front end. Although you're always aware of the large amount of car behind you, the traction from those huge 20in rear tyres gives you real confidence. The idea of hustling an unpronounceable Italian supercar over stone bridges and down roads that are essentially no more than a metal drover's track might seem as absurd as riding a camel in the Kelso point-to-point, but the Pagani proves it's possible. Quite some achievement.

And so to the 911. Can it really win again? Just the addition of a couple of outrider dials in the binnacle marks this out as a 991 cabin rather than a Boxster's, but the stark ranks of blank buttons on the transmission tunnel also indicate just what a base-spec car we have – exactly what

we wanted. Twist the key and the 3.4-litre engine (the same as in the Boxster, albeit with an extra 34bhp) has a deeper, richer sound to it as though amplified by the 911's larger cabin. Like the Boxster, initial weightings and spacings are all tangibly, delightfully Porsche, but the shift action of the seven-speed manual 'box is notchier than the six-speed, with an incredibly short pivot point that seems to go only as deep as the stubby stick.

There's a section of road just up from where we've parked that is the sort to make your heart leap. It mirrors the meanderings of a small river, then climbs up a hillside of rusty bracken in a perfect set of curves that are well-sighted enough to be linked together. Devoid of any optional anagrams and wearing standard 19in rims (an inch smaller than those on the Boxster S here), this 991 is still very much a 911 when you attack a road.

Levels of grip are a significant hike up from the previous 997s (particularly at the front, where you don't find yourself waiting for the nose to settle into a corner like you used to), so you have to drive harder to invoke those wonderful corkscrewing sensations. They are most definitely there – they're just not quite as readily exploitable as they used to be, and the steering's not telling you as much. The damping is as superb as ever, though, and the chassis feels firm and sporty in this company, particularly when you're just pottering, giving it a welcome added edge on a road like the B6357. Combine this with an engine that sings magically above 7000rpm, emitting a yowl that wouldn't be out of place in a baby GT3, and it's hard not to love the 911.

But it's getting dark, and we've got to pick a winner. This won't be easy...



*'EVEN THOUGH YOU MIGHT NOT GET
THE FINER DETAIL YOU EXPECT, THE LOTUS
STILL COMMUNICATES MORE THAN
ANY OTHER CAR HERE'*





'AFTER A LOT OF HEAD SCRATCHING, A FINAL ORDER WAS ARRIVED AT'

The scoring system was scurrilously simple: just rank the cars in order from one to six. Yet like trying to pick your perfect five-car garage, the simplest of things can seem fiendishly tricky at times. After a lot of head scratching, though, a final order was eventually arrived at.

There are no losers in this group, but in sixth place is the BMW M135i. There were absolutely no regrets about bringing it to Scotland; it's huge fun, feels classy, the drivetrain is sensational and we haven't driven a better-damped BMW for a long while. The looks are certainly not to everyone's taste. Harry was heard to lament: 'I just wish they would employ a designer who could make pretty cars again.' Although as Nick observed: 'Only a select few people are going to know what it is, and that it's very, very special, which is cool.' Ultimately it felt just a little overawed by the exalted company it was keeping in the Borders, but it is a cracking car and I certainly won't forget chasing the Pagani in it for a very long time.

There will no doubt be many a sigh of relief that *evo* hasn't somehow conspired to award the eCoty trophy to a 911 yet again. Harry loves the way 'it tempts and goads you to the red line with that final howl' and Jethro praised its 'amazing traction and amazing engine' but went

on to say that it only has 'so-so steering, which is a bigger deal in a 911 than in any other car'. There was a lot of talk about options too, because although we all loved this bum-basic 991, as Meaden said: 'I don't think anyone is actually going to buy a car in that spec, and if you did it would probably be suicide financially.' Ultimately, however, the 911 Carrera, brilliant though it is, was undone as much by the other car from the same Stuttgart stable as anything else...

'One minute you love it, the next you don't, then you love it again, then you realise you might go to prison driving so quickly...' That's how Jethro summed up his roller-coaster relationship with the fourth-placed McLaren, and it's an opinion echoed by others, Meaden saying: 'The amount of pleasure you get seems directly related to the number of risks you're prepared to take. And that's not a sustainable relationship really.' Elements of the 12C are utterly intoxicating though, and it appeals to some simply for offering a different take on the supercar. I love its mind-boggling levels of grip, plus the fact that its view out makes it so wieldy compared to the Pagani (which is why I ranked it above the Huayra). But in updated '625' guise there are still too many annoyances, like the engine noise which sounds fantastic from the outside, but as Meaden said, 'just makes you go





cross-eyed in Sport or Track mode when you're inside, with this weird resonance going on.' Brilliant, but still flawed.

'If you didn't know the Porsche hierarchy, you'd probably say the Boxster was the more expensive car,' commented Meaden, before going on to say, 'I think it's arguably the most accomplished and desirable car they've ever done.' That echoed the lavish praise heaped on it by all who drove it. Two people actually put the Boxster in first place. Jethro was one of them: 'To me it shows the 12C that you can do clinical speed and indulgent entertainment in one package. Sounds pretty tasty too.' Editor Trott summed up the joy it invokes: 'You find yourself over-operating it just because it's so fun, blipping it, changing down... It makes you want to go on a long drive.' If Harry hadn't put it fifth, it might have been closer still at the top.

THE WINNERS

Words: Henry Catchpole



AND THE WINNER IS... (pause for an interminably long time here) ...well it's a tie actually. Yes, settle down, please. For the first time in eCoty history two cars have accrued the same number of points and sit atop the podium singing a mash-up of their respective national anthems. Some will happily argue that the Lotus

Far right: table shows how the judges voted for the six cars in the final round; a first place earned six points, a second place five, and so on

should take the victory by economic default. However, while the Exige is quite patently the heroic performance car bargain of our duo, the Pagani is equally incredible for actually living up to an £820,000 billing and not disappointing.

Meaden was particularly smitten with the Exige: 'I adore its looks, its presence. It's like a little shrunk-down, condensed, distilled supercar. And I love the fact that when you're on the road and going for it, it just takes off.' Trott echoed this: 'You

feel like you're getting a bargain exotic in the Exige. And Lotus undoubtedly owns certain areas of dynamic involvement – it is simply wonderful to drive.' Metcalfe loved the little Lotus with the big engine too: 'It's just super-smooth and I love the noise – a supercharged V6 shouldn't sound that good. It reminds me of the rally raiders of the past.'

Ironically, the noise of the Huayra's engine was the one aspect Harry wasn't sure about: 'If you told someone in the





*'BOTH MAKE YOU FEEL
INSANELY GOOD ABOUT LIFE,
EMBODYING EVERYTHING WE
LOVE ABOUT CARS AND DRIVING'*



street it was nuclear powered they'd probably believe you!' At which point Meaden chipped in with: 'You're certainly not going to have it as a ring tone!'

But the Pagani had most of us at 'hello', with its sheer romance and automotive theatre prickling the emotions in everyone. As Metcalfe said: 'I love that if you ran out of petrol you'd still enjoy the car.' But as Trott also pointed out: 'You can definitely talk about the Huayra in terms of its dynamic capacity, not

coloured by its looks or cost.' Bovingdon agreed: 'It is an incredible achievement. To manage so much power and make it exploitable even on craggy roads... It's mad and utterly wonderful.'

In short, both the Exige and the Huayra will make you feel insanely good about life, embodying everything we love about cars and driving. They simply can't be separated in terms of the smile they put on your face. Unless... Perhaps just one more drive would settle it. I'll take the...

FINAL SCORE	HM	NT	HC	JB	RM	FINAL SCORE
01 Pagani Huayra	1st	1st	4th	2nd	2nd	25
01 Lotus Exige V6	2nd	2nd	2nd	3rd	1st	25
03 Porsche Boxster S	5th	3rd	1st	1st	3rd	22
04 McLaren MP4-12C	3rd	4th	3rd	5th	5th	15
05 Porsche 911 Carrera	4th	5th	6th	4th	4th	12
06 BMW M135i	6th	6th	5th	6th	6th	6



Koenigsegg Agera R, Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse, BMW M6 convertible...

These were just a few of the beauties to blast up the famous hillclimb at June's Goodwood Festival of Speed. Thousands of petrolheads lined up alongside the West Sussex estate's hallowed tarmac – with millions more tuning in on TV – to enjoy what was widely regarded as the best parade of supercars assembled in the event's 19-year history – thanks to Michelin.

The tyre giant made a glorious return to Goodwood by sponsoring the annual Supercar Run – one of the highlights of the Festival of Speed weekend. Michelin is the tyre of choice for many of the world's finest performance cars, so not surprisingly it was Michelin tyres that were smoking up the 1.16-mile slope. Everything from the Lotus Evora GTE to the Ferrari 458 Spyder was wearing the brand's rubber, while rare cars like the Spyker C8 Aileron Spyder and Weissmann MF5 only appeared as a result of their connections with Michelin.

Supercar manufacturers choose Michelin because they know they deliver. The company's tyres provide the driving enjoyment demanded by buyers in this market, even in the most extreme

ADVERTISING FEATURE



KING OF THE HILL

Fit the tyres that starred at this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed, with Michelin



conditions – they've proven this time and again in the world of motorsport.

Also in June, Michelin recorded its 15th successive Le Mans 24 Hours victory, continuing a long and successful relationship with the world's greatest endurance race. The brand also has a glittering history in the gruelling World Rally Championship, while closer to home it sponsors and supplies the Porsche Carrera Cup GB, plus the Ginetta GT Supercup and Ginetta Junior Championship. And every ounce of the knowledge and expertise it has gained in such varied racing environments is used to produce the best tyres for your road car – like the latest Michelin Pilot Super Sport.

The Pilot Super Sport sits at the top of the Michelin range (see panel, right), and

has been developed with Porsche, Ferrari and BMW's M division to enhance a supercar's personality and deliver amazing performance, without compromising safety. As such, it debuts a raft of cutting-edge track technologies. The Bi-Compound Tread uses different kinds of rubber on each side of the tread to maximise durability and wet road grip. Plus, Michelin's Variable Contact Patch ensures that, even when the tyre changes shape when cornering, the same amount of rubber remains glued to the road.

The Pilot Super Sport is available in wheel sizes ranging from 18 to 22 inches, and is the tyre to fit whether you're racing against the clock up the Goodwood hill or just enjoying the twists and turns of a favourite B-road on a Sunday afternoon.



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www.michelin.co.uk is the Michelin UK website for all your tyre needs. Find out when to change your tyres, which tyre best meets your needs and the correct tyre size. Use the dealer locator to find a Michelin tyre dealer close to your home or workplace.

www.mymichelin.co.uk features motorsport, motoring, travel, lifestyle

and exclusive offers. You'll also find details of competitions and track day events, and be able to share your experience with other Michelin customers in the online forum. Sign up to the Michelin e-newsletter for up-to-the-minute news, features and product information, and if you are considering purchasing tyres in the next three months, be sure to register on

Michelin's "Buy Now" page for special tyre purchase offers.

www.youtube.com/michelinuk Michelin UK's official video channel provides the opportunity to view TV ads, event videos, tyre advice and the best of Michelin motorsport.

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evo

2012 DRIVER OF THE YEAR



Nine-time world champion Sébastien Loeb retires from full-time rallying as undisputed top dog

This has not, by any means, been the toughest WRC season of Sébastien Loeb's career.

A compliant team-mate in Mikko Hirvonen (replacing young pretender Sébastien Ogier) quelled any intra-team threat, while Ford's last attempt at deposing the Frenchman failed amid a spate of driver errors. Lead driver Jari-Matti Latvala's broken collarbone, sustained in a cross-country skiing accident in April, put the Blue Oval on the back foot, and neither he nor stablemate Petter Solberg ever managed a strong run of results.

Loeb's five straight wins mid-season

made world title number nine a formality, and success so routine wouldn't normally be worthy of *evo's* Driver of the Year mantle. But the 38-year-old proved how much of a superman he really is in a Los Angeles car park in July, when he took on the superstars of America's burgeoning Rallycross scene at the X Games – and swatted them away like flies. OK, Loeb would have had a fight on his hands had old rally adversary Marcus Grönholm not been injured in practice, but Loeb went to LA with zero rallycross experience, and won its biggest race. Easily.

It's hard to measure how Loeb ranks in the pantheon of WRC greats when his success has come against such thin



Above: Loeb's WRC win tally of 75 is more than double that of anyone else

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Sebastian Vettel

May be in the best car on the F1 grid, but he does his best with the tools he's given. Three straight wins in the autumn put him ahead in the title race

Sergio Pérez

Three podiums (so far) made the Mexican Sauber's best-ever driver, earned him a 2013 McLaren drive and knocked highly rated Kamui Kobayashi off his perch – all great achievements

Gordon Shedden

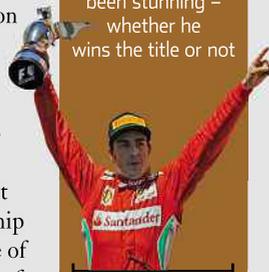
Proved you don't have to barge people out of the way to win the British Touring Car Championship. Driving a Honda Civic lacking in top speed, he soldiered through to eight wins

Fernando Alonso

We all knew the Spaniard (below) was good, but he's taken a mediocre Ferrari to results it had no business claiming. His performance has been stunning – whether he wins the title or not

Elfyn Evans

The son of rally legend Gwyndaf Evans dominated the WRC Academy series to win a free drive next year. The young Welshman is Britain's best hope of a new WRC superstar



'LOEB SWATTED AWAY THE RALLYCROSS STARS LIKE FLIES'

opposition. But several flashes of brilliance point to a driver who would have proved more than a match for the likes of McRae, Sainz and Mäkinen at their peaks. See Corsica in 2005, where Loeb won every stage of the entire rally, or Finland in 2008, where he beat the Scandinavians on their home turf (and then admitted that he drove so quickly that it scared him).

Resisting calls to win a WRC crown away from Citroën (he rejected a mega-bucks move to Volkswagen last year), Loeb may instead front a Citroën assault on the World Touring Car Championship from 2014, putting him in with a chance of becoming the first FIA world champion of two different disciplines. He'll also devote more time to his eponymous sportscar team, which is ultimately aiming to claim an LMP2 class win at Le Mans.

Loeb will compete on a few WRC events in 2013, but he's already stated that he won't run enough to mount a title defence. For his peers, that's probably for the best – if they lost to a part-time Loeb, they'd never live it down... **Dan McCalla**

evo

2012 MAN OF THE YEAR



Racing legend Alex Zanardi fought back from losing both legs in a 200mph crash to win two Paralympic gold medals this year. And he's not finished yet...

The words 'brave' and 'inspirational' were rightly used aplenty during the Paralympics this summer. But when you really think about what **evo's** Man of the Year Alex Zanardi did to claim two gold medals, those words come nowhere near doing him justice.

The Italian, twice American ChampCar champion and a veteran of 41 Grands Prix, lost both his legs in a ChampCar crash in Germany in 2001 that almost killed him. After a spin exiting the Lausitzring pits took him onto the track, a rival speared through his cockpit at 200mph, ripping off the front of his car – and his legs.

Amazingly, Zanardi won his first World Touring Car Championship race just four years later. His BMW 320 had been adapted with a hand-operated throttle behind the steering wheel that he helped to develop, and with a pedal housing that allowed him to brake with one of the prosthetic legs he self-designed for racing.

He took up hand-cycling in 2007 and after only a few weeks of training, finished fourth in the New York Marathon. The effort inspired him to swap four wheels for three, and by applying his motorsport R&D knowledge to the hand-cycle he prepares at his home, Zanardi has become the man to beat in his new-found sport. Come the Paralympic hand-cycle events, held somewhat fittingly for Zanardi at Brands Hatch, he surged to road race gold, time trial gold and a team relay silver.

Many would regard such a fightback as mission accomplished. But Alex Zanardi refuses to stop – and his ultimate challenge could be to contest the Indy 500 next May. IndyCar constructor Dallara has confirmed that it has the technology to prepare a hand-operated racer, his former ChampCar team boss Chip Ganassi is willing to run him, and Zanardi's driving



Zanardi dominated the Paralympic hand-cycling events

'ZANARDI APPLIED MOTORSPORT KNOWLEDGE TO HIS HAND-CYCLE'

talent is undoubtedly still there. After all, when Zanardi returned to the scene of his accident in 2003 to 'complete his race' in a hand-operated ChampCar, he lapped fast enough to qualify fifth for that day's race.

And if a 46-year-old double amputee could win America's biggest race, it would surely rank as one of the greatest achievements in sport. **DM**

evo

2012 EMERGING TALENT OF THE YEAR



Jann Mardenborough went from GT5 to the British GT Championship in just 18 months. **Richard Meaden** meets the gifted 21-year-old

Making the journey from teenage console gamer to GT3 pacesetter in a little over 18 months is an incredibly

tough test of a young man's mettle, yet 21-year-old Jann Mardenborough remains unfazed. Blessed with star quality without the swagger, abundant aptitude without the attitude, and the kind of blistering pace that makes you want to weep, Mardenborough is the worthy recipient of our 2012 Emerging Talent Award.

He's the product of the convention-challenging Nissan PlayStation GT Academy. Originally regarded as little more than a marketing gimmick – at least by the less enlightened corners of motorsport and the media – this audacious virtual-to-reality competition (now in its fourth cycle) has consistently discovered precocious driving talents who would otherwise have been denied the chance to shine behind the wheel of a real racing car.

Drawing from a vast pool of worldwide entrants (a total of almost two million in the European element alone), the GT Academy is unquestionably the world's



most accessible driver scholarship. Thanks largely to the achievements of its first winner, Spaniard Lucas Ordoñez, who stood on the LMP2 podium at Le Mans just two years after being discovered, it's also one of the most successful.

Even by the 24-carat standards of the GT Academy, Cardiff-born Mardenborough is special. The son of a former professional footballer (and a skilled player in his own right), he has poise and self-assurance that belies his age, yet he's also incredibly grounded and thoroughly likeable. And he has great taste in cars, as we discover when we catch up with him at Silverstone.

'I own an E30 318iS,' he says. 'It's my first car, which I bought before the whole GT Academy thing kicked off. I love it. I keep meaning to fit a limited-slip differential, but it's so hard to find the time these days. What would I love to own? If we're talking supercars it's gotta be a Carrera GT. If we're talking older stuff then an F40 would be top of my list. My non-supercar choice would have to be an M635 CSI. I know, I'm a bit weird, but I love '80s style. Sharknose all the way! Likewise, if I could race any car in any era I'd love to have done Group C at Le Mans – all those mega Porsches, Jags, Mercs and Nissans. Failing that then DTM when the E30s and 190s were racing.'

But what of Mardenborough's meteoric career? His prize for winning the 2011 GT Academy title last summer was a drive alongside previous GT Academy winners Ordoñez, Frenchman Jordan Tresson and American Bryan Heitkotter in this year's Dubai 24H race. To do so he underwent an intensive six-month programme of training and club-level racing in order to upgrade from a National B to an International C race licence, and to gain sufficient experience to satisfy his team mentor, RJN Motorsport's Bob Neville. All went to plan and the GT Academy squad took an impressive class podium place in their Nissan 370Z.

While a seat in the all-gamer car was his official prize, behind the scenes Mardenborough was being groomed for a very serious debut in the 2012 Blancpain Endurance Series and British GT Championship driving a Nissan GT-R. Such a big, brutal car would be a challenge for a far more experienced driver, but amazingly Mardenborough took the whole thing in his stride.

'I've always associated feeling pressure with bad preparation,' he explains, 'so I try to learn as much as I can before and during the course of each weekend, then



**'BAPTISMS DON'T
COME MUCH MORE
FIERY, BUT HIS
STEADY NERVE
ENSURED HE DID
A STELLAR JOB'**



go home and study data and videos like crazy. I felt a bit of pressure at the first British GT race, but then it was my first time in the car, my first time in the wet, my first time at Oulton, and I hadn't had a chance to drive it on the simulator. That was pretty full-on!

Baptisms don't come much more fiery, but yet again Mardenborough's clear head and steady nerve ensured he did a stellar job, as Bob Neville explains: 'I don't think many of the established GT teams or drivers really paid much attention to Jann. That is until he turned up at Oulton Park and went super-quick in warm-up despite terrible weather conditions. It's a mark of his ability that the organisers soon had him seeded as a Silver grade driver; a rating normally reserved for those with high-level racing experience.'

With driving and sponsor commitments our time with Mardenborough is quickly up, but before he has to leave there's time to ask him the Big One, namely what he hopes to achieve in the next five years. 'I'd like to have moved on from the "he's a gamer who races real cars" label by then. I'm very grateful for what Nissan, Sony and the GT Academy has done for me, but I think it has already established itself as a credible way into motorsport, just like karting. I want to be judged as a racer, pure and simple. I know I've still got tons to learn, but if we meet back here in 2017 I want to be telling you about winning Le Mans outright. That's my goal.'

■ For more information about the Nissan PlayStation GT Academy visit www.facebook.com/GTAcademy

evo

2012

INNOVATION OF THE YEAR



The quirky DeltaWing, originally designed to be a next-generation IndyCar, is now raising eyebrows in international sportscar racing



There's a saying in car design: 'if it looks right, it is right'. Which is probably why so many people are bothered by the DeltaWing. Well, it doesn't look right, does it? And yet, in the 1000-mile Petit Le Mans race at Road Atlanta in October, it came fifth overall against a strong Le Mans Prototype (LMP) field.

In race car terms, it is unremarkable in construction and mechanics, but in design concept it is radical and innovative. The DeltaWing targets efficiency – it only has half the power of a conventional LMP2 car, but that's with half the weight and half the aerodynamic drag. Its 300bhp 1.6-litre Nissan four powers 475kg of car, and the wingless design generates downforce with very little drag. It runs at LMP speeds and needs only a 40-litre tank (instead of 65-75) to run the same distance between pit stops. It doesn't need tyres as often, either.

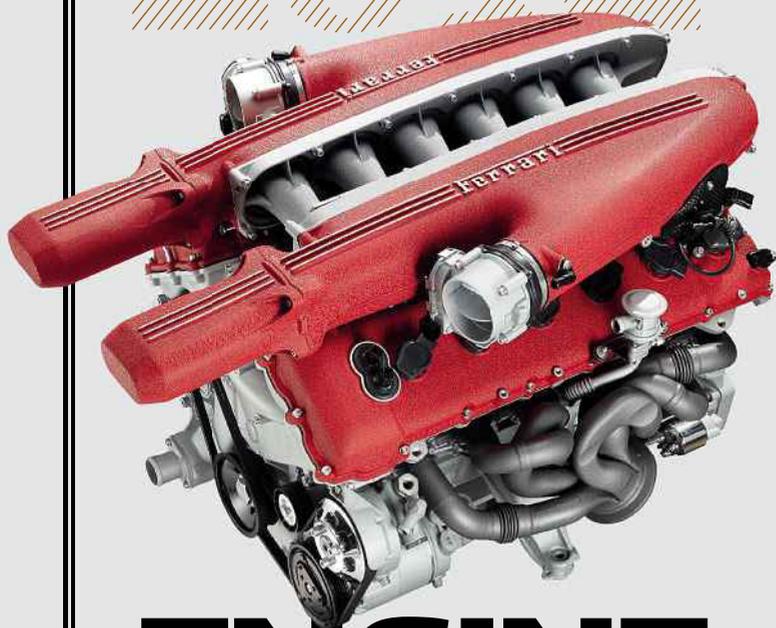
Low inertia means it's fast out of the

corners and low drag means it's very fast down the straights, but the big question is: how does it turn? Very well, is the answer, due partly to the downforce being split in the same proportions as the DeltaWing's mass – 25 per cent front, 75 per cent rear.

'It's a lot better than it looks,' says Spaniard Lucas Ordoñez, one of its drivers at Petit Le Mans. 'The steering needs a lot of effort – it has a fast ratio – but it also gives very good feedback, so you know exactly where you are with it. The car is very good braking in a straight line but we brake earlier than LMP cars, and you get on the power before the apex to plant the rear tyres against the road, but it requires patience because there's no locking diff yet and the inside rear picks up. It's brilliant in the wet, though – we could have won Petit Le Mans if it had rained.'

Some remain to be convinced that the DeltaWing is as stable as a regular race car. Perhaps a full season will answer that, but whichever way you cut it, efficiency has rarely looked so exciting. **John Barker**

evo



ENGINE OF THE YEAR

The Ferrari F12's brutal V12 gets its incredible performance through seeking efficiency

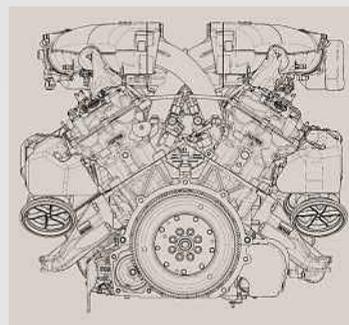
Now that downsizing is in full swing, you might expect to find an outstanding small engine here. But the best hope for the job, Ford's teeny yet potent 1-litre three-pot EcoBoost, didn't quite deliver. Instead we have the magnificent 6.3-litre V12 from the Ferrari F12 Berlinetta, an engine, I can reveal, that some road testers secretly hoped wouldn't deliver all that it promised, because 730bhp carries a whiff of real menace in a front-engined, rear-driver. Can that amount of power really be deployed by two tyres?

Yes, it can, so let's celebrate a relentlessly optimised V12 that makes the Lamborghini Aventador's unit feel and sound like it's holding back. The F12's V12 is an evolution of that fitted to the FF and really comes alive thanks to an emphasis on efficiency; it delivers a 30 per cent reduction in CO2 emissions compared with the 599's V12 and a remarkable specific output of 116.6bhp per litre.

Refinements include a very high 13.5 to 1 compression ratio, 200bar

direct injection and ion-sensing knock control to help minutely control and optimise combustion, plus drag reduction measures such as a variable displacement oil pump and a similarly 'smart' water pump. The result is that headline-grabbing 730bhp at 8250rpm and peak torque of 509lb ft, 80 per cent of which is available at 2500rpm for that lung-squeezing, any-gear-any-revs urge.

The F12 engine also features resonators in each intake manifold that pulse the air to maximise pressure before each intake valve opens, thus delivering more oxygen to burn. Oh, and they help the V12 sound utterly glorious. **JB**



Above: V12 produces 455bhp/ton in F12



evo

Infiniti stunned us with its 402bhp hybrid sports coupe, the Emerg-e

CONCEPT OF THE YEAR

When we first saw the gorgeous Infiniti Emerg-e concept – ahead of its unveiling at this year's Geneva motor show – our first reaction was to categorise it as the sort of motorshow vapourware that a manufacturer knocks up when it wants to win a few quick headlines.

When we learned that, underneath the curvaceous exterior, sat a production-viable range-extender petrol-electric powertrain – and one capable of delivering a four-second 0-60mph time – it's fair to say that our collective interest level increased considerably.

You can read the full story on

the Lotus-developed powertrain on page 24. If Infiniti did decide to produce this car, that could certainly serve as the basis for it. And it's fair to say that Infiniti is a brand in need of an icon. Our opinion of its current direction has been mixed, to say the least – as you'll find out when you get to our Turkey of the Year...

But we reckon the Emerg-e is exactly the sort of car the company should be producing if it wants to put itself properly on the performance car map – cool, contemporary and distinctive enough to give Infiniti some of the identity it currently lacks.

Build it. Please. **Mike Duff**



01



| evo |

2012

IMAGES
OF THE YEAR

Top photographers shooting top cars in top locations – 2012 has been a year to remember for evo's shutterbugs. Here are just some of our favourite images from the last 12 months

02



01

911 twin drift**BY DEAN SMITH**

evo 175. Nikon D3

Shooting from the boot of a car while two other cars chase you – sideways – isn't for the faint-hearted, but having Meaden and Bovingdon driving does help

02

12C in Africa**BY DEAN SMITH**

evo 173. Nikon D3

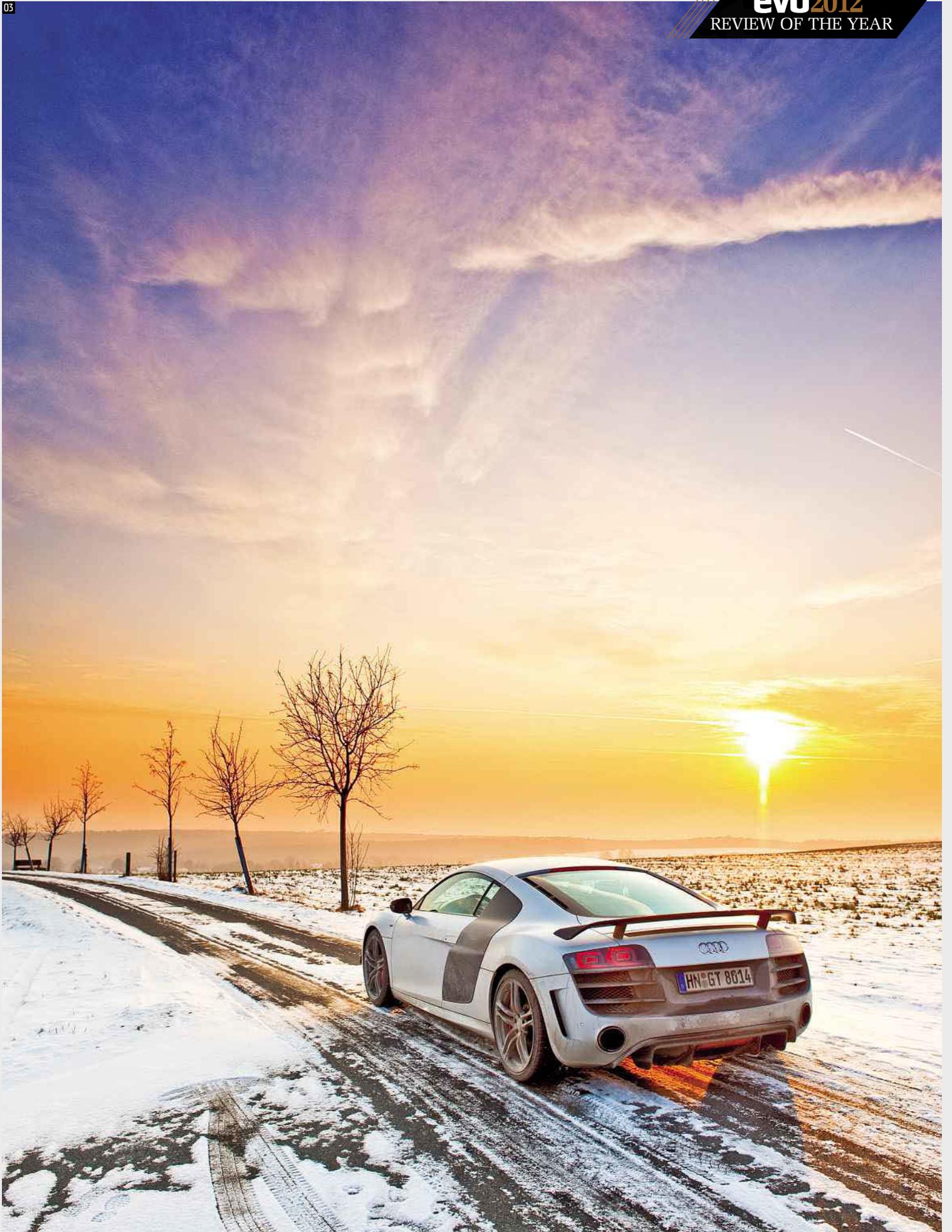
Henry Catchpole sought the perfect road with a 12C in Morocco. Perched 7414ft above sea level, this was a contender

03

R8 GT**BY DAVE SMITH**

evo 169. Canon D700

A snowy Saxony made for this Christmas card image as David Vivian retraced the Grossdeutschlandring



04



04

Flying Vanquish

BY DEAN SMITH

evo 176. Nikon D3
Jethro Bovingdon pushed Aston's new hero to its limits on the scenic roads of the Scottish Borders

05

Inside the Miura

BY DAVID SHEPHERD

evo 174. Canon EOS 5D Mark II

The Lamborghini Aventador was spied through the interior of its ancestor, the ultra-rare Miura SVJ

06

Esprit exhibition

BY MATT HOWELL

evo 171. Canon EOS 1D-S Mark III

Where better to celebrate the history of a British motoring icon than on the test track at Hethel, its spiritual home?

07

White-knuckle ride

BY JAMES LIPMAN

evo 168. Nikon D700

The Audi R8 and Nissan GT-R knocked the Porsche 911 off its perch during this test in Wales

05



06



07





08

Bentley exposed
BY TOM SALT

evo 168. Nikon D3

When the sun shone in a wintry Spain, Harry Metcalfe made the most of the opportunity to put the Conti GTC's top down

09

Mind of McNish
BY DAVID SHEPHERD

evo 172. Canon EOS 5D

Mark II

This studio shot summed up the intensity required from one of Britain's top racers to fight for victory at Le Mans



10



10

Huayra at sunset
BY DEAN SMITH

evo 172. Nikon D3

Rolling Italian hills, late summer sun and one of the most beautiful cars in the world. You can't really go wrong, can you?

11

GT3 RS 4.0
BY DEAN SMITH

evo 171. Nikon D3

The 2011 eCoty winner took on five rivals in Germany – and gave them bloody noses



THE ECOTY 'NEARLY' CARS



The meeting to decide the cars that qualify for eCoty usually descends into your British-standard pub fight. Pints get spilled, chairs get cracked over heads and the police arrive to tell us all to grow up. This year was no different.

Three cars in particular only just missed out on the final selection: the new **Audi RS4**, the **Vauxhall Astra VXR** (above) and the **Ford Focus ST**. Good cars all, but not necessarily great ones that would have stood realistic chances of winning overall. Of the ten we eventually picked to take to Blyton and Scotland, we were (almost) all confident that any one of them could pick up the big prize – and hand on heart, we couldn't say that about the RS4, the VXR or the ST.

The **Ferrari 458 Spider** (below), however, was a different matter. Its inclusion was virtually guaranteed early this year after discussions with Ferrari, but as eCoty approached a message came through from Maranello that it simply didn't have enough cars to support the test. This gave us little time to source a customer car, and hence a potential winner was removed from the eCoty 2012 test. And the **Ferrari F12**? It's a MY2013 car, as is the new **Aston Martin Vanquish**, so roll on eCoty in 12 months' time...

Bugatti tried to source a **Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse**, and welcomed inclusion in eCoty. The press office had specced two extremely desirable cars, but sadly and rather rudely, a couple of customers had gone and bought them – scuppering our plans for a Huayra/Veyron face off. But we promise to bring you that test soon...
Nick Trott



evo

2012

TURKEY OF THE YEAR

This SUV honed by a F1 champ should have been a superstar car – especially given its superstar price tag



evo

2012

TUNED CAR OF THE YEAR

Of the many tuned cars we've driven during 2012, one stands out from the rest – the Mountune MR375 Clubsport. A Focus RS with 370bhp and 406lb ft of torque might sound like it's heart-pounding for all the wrong reasons, and it's true to say the track-biased MR375 can be a handful, but it's still a car you just crave one more go in.

By taking such a hardcore approach, Mountune has blurred the boundary between a hot hatch and something like a Nissan GT-R. It needs a smooth surface to



evo

2012

CAR OF THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

Analysing the facts of the 2012 eCoty test – and the rest of the evo year. Stephen Dobie does his best Johnny Ball impression

2012 IN NUMBERS

174

We've road, track or group tested 174 brand-new cars in 2012, from two-cylinder Fiat Pandas to road-legal single-seaters (via a £190,000 Volvo). But a disparate pair dominates the biggest and smallest spec-table numbers.

The priciest, most powerful and fastest car to appear in our pages in 2012 is the

£1.55m, 1183bhp, 255mph

Bugatti Veyron Vitesse – the complete antithesis to the £6690, 17bhp, 50mph Renault Twizy, which is also the puniest mainstream car on sale in the UK. The Veyron claims 2012's quickest 0-62mph time at a frighteningly fast

2.6sec

– something it can technically do in first gear, and something that the electric Twizy can't hope to achieve. That means looking elsewhere – the SEAT Mii – to discover that 14.4sec is our slowest acceleration time of the year. The heaviest car we tested was the

2590kg

Overfinch GTS-X, the equivalent of nearly six 450kg Twizys. The little Renault might prop up 2012's stats in pretty much every way, but its moon buggy looks and skinny-wheeled, Renaultsport-fettled chassis (really!) brought some of the biggest joy seen in the evo office over the course of the last 12 months. It is, without doubt, an unexpected hero.

The turkey relates to the car in the image on the left, not the bloke. Although why Sebastian Vettel willingly gave his name to this shockingly overpriced SUV is a mystery that ranks alongside the Mary Celeste and why people still watch *The X Factor*. Vettel is, after all, an extraordinary driver and an outwardly facing, charming and intelligent chap. We hear he owns a Porsche 911 GT2 RS, which puts him firmly at the top table of car enthusiasts around these parts. But this? Oh Sebastian...

The standard FX is an alluring, beautifully built, if awkwardly styled SUV. The range-topping 50 S Premium model uses the same V8 engine as the Vettel, albeit with 29 fewer horses (it's

'THE VETTEL ISN'T SPORTING ENOUGH OR QUICK ENOUGH'

rated at 443bhp). It's a decent car, rare and well equipped too. It isn't an evo car, but at £58,280, it's a premium SUV for those who think Range Rovers are too ubiquitous and X6s too naff.

We hoped the Vettel, with input from the man himself, would be a firecracker – a car that dynamically matched the promise of the Red Bull-designed body kit and delivered M5-type ability in a pugnacious and unique body shape. In other words, a performance curio of the kind we celebrate here at evo.

But at £100,800, the Vettel clutches defeat from the jaws of victory because it isn't sporting enough, quick enough or dynamically capable enough, offering a two per cent improvement in (subjective) ability – for a 73 per cent increase in price. **Nick Trott**

shine on the road, but on track the result is a car that laps Bedford's West Circuit almost 6sec quicker than a standard Focus RS, and 1.7sec faster than our production front-wheel-drive benchmark, the Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy.

Special mention has to go to Pug1 Off and its manic Peugeot 205 GTI 195. With a tuned 306 GTI-6 engine, six-speed 'box, Quaife limited-slip differential, Bilstein/Eibach suspension and induction noise to die for, it's one of the most addictive cars we've ever driven. **Richard Meaden**

2011 AVERAGE
463BHP 2012 AVERAGE
384BHP

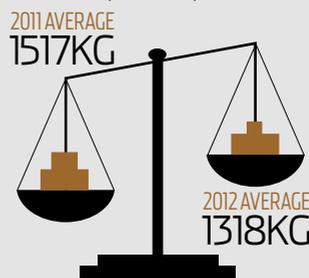


HORSEPOWER

This year's average eCoty bhp is 17 per cent lower than 2011's, and the 80bhp Morgan is partly to blame – discount it and the 2012 figure rises to 418bhp

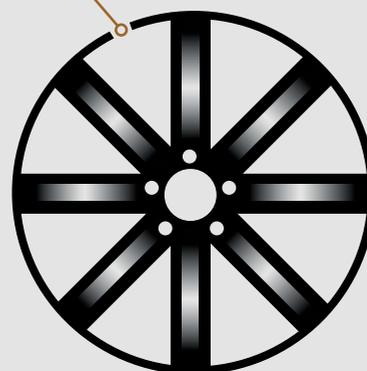
WEIGHT

2011's higher horsepower was necessary to shift its bigger bulk, but average power-to-weight is also down, from 310bhp/ton last year to 296 this



2012 AVERAGE **3.9** WHEELS

The average eCoty finalist has had four wheels since 1998. This year, though, the Morgan 3 Wheeler comedically shaved that number to 3.9. Interestingly, this is also the first eCoty where every car has been rear-wheel drive



VALUE

The average cost of an eCoty finalist is up £31,444 this year, but the £820,000 Pagani skews things – ignore it and the figure is nearly half of last year's, at £66,376



THE EX

*Two cars from opposite ends of the **evo** spectrum get put to the test at opposite ends of the thermometer*





TREMES

as **Harry Metcalfe** tackles a desert in the new Range Rover, while **John Barker** tries a Tesla on ice



THE EXTREMES:
RANGE ROVER IN THE DESERT





SAND AND DELIVER

*The new Range Rover is more luxurious than ever, but can it still perform off-road as well as on? **Harry Metcalfe** travels to Africa to find out*

Morocco is a weird country. One minute you're spearing down a deserted stretch of tarmac that shimmers under the fearsome desert sun; the next, you're dodging overloaded donkey carts and mopeds carrying everything from grannies to sheep strapped precariously to the petrol tank. Morocco is hardly typical Range Rover country, then, but that's what we've come out here to drive, because some of the best off-roading terrain in the world is assembled in the north-western corner of Africa.

Stretching out in front of me is miles of deserted beach that I'm about to drive along, with the promise of a sand dune section a few miles up from where we are now. Wind the clock back to when the very first Range Rover was launched and this was where Land Rover execs wanted to introduce their new go-anywhere executive car to the press for the first time. But, at the very last minute, Lord Stokes (then chairman and managing director of British Leyland) decided it was going to be too expensive and that the money would be better spent on a lavish launch for the Triumph Stag. So the Range Rover team had to pack away the sun-cream and

launch the new machine on a beach in Cornwall instead.

Some 42 years on, I'm in the new-generation Range Rover and with the sand being pretty soft in places, the tyres have been deflated to 20psi. I'm ready to go. Quite how relevant this challenge is to typical Range Rover usage I'm not too sure, but I'm not complaining because I know it's going to be fun.

The trick with driving on soft sand is to keep up plenty of momentum at all times. Accelerating away as gently as I can, I soon sense the Range Rover's tyres aren't directly keyed into the sand but are moving around looking for grip on the endlessly shifting surface of the beach beneath me. This constant flow of information coming up through the steering wheel immediately feels different to any Range Rover I've driven before. We're obviously not talking about encyclopedic levels of feel, but that characteristically numb steering of yore seems banished for good.

With the dramatic Atlantic rollers crashing in to my right and endless beach stretching on into the distance, my guide spears to the left in the balloon-tyred Defender I'm following as the promised dunes appear, and it's not long before we're surfing up and down the slopes like a couple of kids gallivanting around on holiday. Every now and then we charge up a dune, only to discover there's a near-vertical slope on the other side, but the massive clearance under the new Range Rover's nose makes for a soft landing as we surf



down the pillowy sand, before going off in search of the next black run.

It does seem very weird behaving like this while sat in a sumptuous cabin more akin to that an Aston Martin than any Land Rover product I've travelled in before. The section of the centre console between the front seats sits higher than it did previously and has significantly fewer buttons and knobs punched into its stripy wood surface. That means you have to scroll through more on-screen menus as a result, but if Bang & Olufsen designed car interiors then they would look very much like this one.

Having an overly generous glass area is a defining feature of any Range Rover and that holds true with this fourth-generation version – even more so now that the roof can be fully glazed. Engineers tell me this tempting option adds some 52kg to the car's kerb weight but it's probably worth

it for the feel-good factor you get from viewing the world from up high in such a bright, airy cabin.

To the front, the huge square bonnet falls gently away to those famous RR castellations that define each corner and make judging the extremities of a Range Rover child's play, but the depth of those creases isn't as great as before. As any die-hard Range Rover driver knows, water used to gather in the two valleys they created at the top of the bonnet when it rained, before getting flicked away in the passing air-stream – but that isn't going to happen any more because the whole exterior design has been smoothed off after the endless wind-tunnel testing this new version has presumably been subjected to. The result is an undoubtedly modern design, but I'm not sure the new Range Rover has the regal good looks of the outgoing version, particularly from

the rear, which now tapers far more dramatically, reducing the glass area.

While charging about in these dunes is ridiculously good fun, I really need to know more about how the new Range Rover behaves on road. So we reluctantly stop, re-inflate the tyres and head in the general direction of the snow-capped Atlas Mountains in the distance, which divide Morocco from the Sahara beyond.

Back on tarmac, I find another surprising feature of the 334bhp, 517lb ft diesel-powered SDV8 version I'm driving is its surprising turn of speed, as its quoted 0-60mph time of 6.5sec suggests. While there's a slight injector clatter audible under part-load, the engine note quickly changes under full load to that of a beefy V8. With eight speeds in the new ZF gearbox to choose from, the engine never seems caught off-boost either, and making (very) brisk progress is easy.

Above: huge windscreen enhances visibility; Harry found the new electric steering set-up requires more effort than you might expect when cruising along. Below: centre console has been de-cluttered



'THE MASSIVE CLEARANCE UNDER THE NOSE MAKES FOR A SOFT LANDING AS WE SURF DOWN THE PILLOWY SAND'



But it's not just the engine helping to deliver this massive leap in performance; the wider track and anti-roll technology play a big part too. As you turn in, that typical Range Rover initial body lean before a change of direction begins no longer materialises, meaning direction changes occur with barely any detectable lag between you issuing the instruction and the nose reacting. The downside of this new-found athleticism is that you're tempted to drive the wheels off the new car, just like everyone did when they got behind the wheel of the Range Rover Sport for the first time. The new electrically powered steering also causes issues when travelling along motorways, as the effort needed to keep the car on the straight and narrow seems more than you'd expect it to be.

Part-way along my journey, I take the opportunity to swap over to the new



3-litre TDV6 Range Rover, which Land Rover's engineers hint might well be the pick of the range (there are also two petrol motors: a 370bhp V8 and a 503bhp supercharged V8). The smaller diesel, which has 254bhp and 442lb ft, seems particularly well insulated and I'm soon thinking it feels even more refined than the V8. The gearing is slightly lower, and this helps disguise the drop in peak power, but the big surprise is the feeling of greater 'alertness', which engineers put down to the lower kerb weight (the V6 is a remarkable 200kg lighter than the SDV8) and reduced engine weight over the front axle. The V6 doesn't get the anti-roll technology either, but unless you're really pressing on, you'll never notice. The only real give-away between the two diesel engines is that the peakier power delivery of the V6 makes it possible to catch it off-boost occasionally (especially when overtaking), but that's about the only time you really miss the punch of the V8.

Another off-road section takes us 2800 metres up into the Atlas Mountains, but whilst the Range Rover's off-road performance remains as mighty as ever, it's the on-road performance that has really been transformed with the introduction of this fourth-generation model. My lasting impression is that the Range Rover has finally left its country roots behind and elevated itself to become a true luxury vehicle in its own right, ready to do battle with such lofty rivals as the Bentley Continental GT and even perhaps the Rolls-Royce Ghost. The fact it can do this while still fully capable of fording swollen rivers and charging across sand dunes is an incredible achievement.



Above: 20in wheels were used in Morocco to reduce risk of punctures while off-road; standard wheels are 21s, while 22s can be specified

But all this ability comes at a price, namely the significant rise in list prices, which are up around £15,000 compared to the outgoing model. You can save around half of this by going for the V6 version, but if budget isn't too much of an issue for you, then the pick of the range has to be that mighty 4.4-litre SDV8 because it offers such effortless performance linked to reasonable running costs.

Tick the option for 22in wheels and kit it out with decent tyres, and the on-road handling is a world away from what Range Rover has ever offered before. The Range Rover always served up a unique driving experience and while that still holds true, it's now a whole lot better. No wonder Bentley is having second thoughts about the level of demand for its proposed ultra-luxury SUV – the new Range Rover has stolen its thunder.

SPECIFICATION

RANGE ROVER AUTOBIOGRAPHY SDV8

Engine V8, 4367cc, turbodiesel
CO2 229g/km
Power 334bhp @ 3500rpm
Torque 517lb ft @ 1750-3000rpm
Transmission Eight-speed automatic, four-wheel drive, Terrain Response, DSC
Front suspension Double wishbones, air springs, adaptive damping, Dynamic Response
Rear suspension Integral link, air springs, adaptive damping, Dynamic Response
Brakes Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 365mm rear, ABS
Wheels 9.5 x 21in front and rear
Tyres 275/40 HR21 front and rear
Weight (kerb) 2360kg
Power-to-weight 144bhp/ton
0-60mph 6.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 140mph (claimed)
Basic price £87,895

EVO RATING ★★★★★

THE EXTREMES:
TESLA ON ICE





DURABLE CERIL

*Batteries hate the cold, right? So how long can an electric car run in temperatures well below zero? **John Barker** finds out in a Tesla Roadster Sport on a frozen lake*

Uh-oh. This Tesla isn't going far without some assistance. I remove a thick glove, fish my mobile from an inside pocket and find that it's completely dead. Heck, it was fully charged just a couple of hours ago. Still, as we all know, batteries don't like the cold and up here in the wilds of Norway, it's minus 18deg C. Bringing an electric car here sounds nuts, but it's not a lack of amps that's stopping us having fun, it's brake pads frozen to a front disc. We need the Tesla technician with his hot-air gun again.

The moisture locking the front-left hasn't come from the air because this is a breathtakingly dry cold; it catches in the back of your throat as you step outside and makes fresh snow squeak beneath your boots like polystyrene. The wheel is locked because I got far too ambitious and buried the Tesla and its warm brakes into one of the snow banks that line the nearby 4km ice circuit. All credit to Tesla; not only has it brought us somewhere really cold to show how well the Roadster's batteries perform, it's also given us the chance to try and drain them as fast as possible by booking us in on a trackday on a frozen lake. It's the sort of thing the team would do on *MythBusters*.

WHEN WE PICK up the Tesla from near our hotel earlier that morning, it's fully charged after having spent the night plugged into the mains in the (ironically) wonderfully aromatic, oily workshop of a local garage. Wearing every item of clothing

I've packed over a base layer of thermals, I feel bulky as I fall into the driver's seat, but I'm pleased to find there's enough room in the footwell to operate the pedals in my hiking boots. Thank goodness I won't need the slipper-thin race boots I've packed.

The Tesla's familiar, near-silent getaway is soon replaced by the *sboossh* of its tyres cutting through the snow. I confess that car-plus-white stuff turns me into a kid and I can't wait to discover how the Elise-based Roadster handles here with 450kg of batteries in its tail. Within a few hundred metres I've found the traction control button and I'm testing the only modification to the car – a set of Nokian Hakkapeliitta 7s, a short-studded winter tyre.

Electric motors deliver maximum torque from zero rpm and, this being the 'Sport' Roadster, there's even more instantly delivered urge for the rear tyres to deal with – 295lb ft to be precise. The more tightly wound motor delivers 299bhp, but the mass over those Nokians does a pretty good job of nailing the car to the road, as progressively deeper throttle lunges show. And then it's free and we're crabbing up the road for yards and yards. Woo, and indeed, hoo! Bring on the ice circuit!

How long will the fun last? The full-charge, just-out-of-a-warm-garage 'optimum' range was 381km (237 miles), according to the Tesla's display, while the current range prediction is 264km (164 miles). The revelation that comes quickly is that the sole source of power is the vast battery pack at your back. Just as you're acutely aware of the body heat you are losing when you take off a glove to, say, find

THE EXTREMES: TESLA ON ICE

your dead mobile, so the Tesla's ampere gauge, which indicates the draw from the battery, makes you aware that the battery is the sole source of energy in the car. At rest, the headlights and heater together take 8 amps. Turn off the heater and the draw drops to 1-2amps.

Contrary to received wisdom, the battery pack in the Tesla works just as well in these sub-zero temperatures as it does in a hot climate, if not better. Tesla has spent millions of dollars experimenting with batteries and uses that knowledge to produce what it describes as 'the happiest batteries in the world'. They work best between -20 and +30deg C, and some of the charge is invested to keep them at the optimum temperature. The draw can be greater keeping them cool in a hot country than it is to keep them warm in a cold climate, as rapidly discharging or charging generates heat. I intend to do my best to keep them warm.

We arrive at the 'circuit' to find a flat, 360-degree view. If this was summer I'd be sinking in the middle of a lake. I look down and, slightly alarmingly, see that the glassy, near-black ice swept clear of snow is shot through by some thick, darker veins. On closer inspection, these prove to be large cracks. My stomach does a nervous summersault. Tesla's European sales director, Esben Pedersen, assures me that the ice is at least 40cm thick, adding



that when the lakes freeze they become public rights of way. It must be safe, then.

The trackday begins and on my first lap I find an Audi A3 buried deep into the snow bank at the first corner. I'm not surprised – it does come at the end of a 1.6km straight. Yep, a one-mile straight. And even on short studs the surface is inconsistently grippy beneath the Tesla's wheels. Oddly, the Hakkapeliittas are better on the dark ice than on the snow-covered bits, and it takes a couple of laps to figure out where these bits are and quite a few more to learn the circuit. Then there's the car.

It's quite tricky because of the changing surface and because, 911-style, some 60 per cent of the Tesla's weight is over the rear. This gives excellent traction so it is quite effective if driven 'normally', but given where we are, I have an overwhelming desire to drive like a Scandinavian rally driver...

The Tesla's traction control works both ways, preventing the rear wheels spinning up when you nail the throttle and stopping them from locking up when you snap it shut. TC switched off, the overrun torque usefully steps the back out on corner entry, to help turn the nose in, but you've got to be *sooooo* precise when you get back on the throttle to maintain the slide but not spin. The throttle is remarkably linear in its response, which helps, but because of the changing surface it's easy to find

I HIT MY BRAKE POINT... AND MOMENTS LATER REALISE I



yourself on full opposite lock, pointing at a snow bank, hoping you won't spin.

There's a wonderfully bizarre range of vehicles taking part, including a Ferrari FF, a Gallardo and a Camaro convertible. Being overtaken by one of the Imprezas sporting what look like space-savers shod with spiked bicycle tyres is thrilling; inside the quiet cockpit of the Tesla you can hear the driver working the throttle as they catch you, then you watch the car swing and drift at close quarters until you're in its wake and suddenly blinded by a cloud of glittering snow.

In the Tesla, the mile straight is as big a challenge as the twisty bits. Countdown boards start 300 metres before the slight right then full 90 left at the end, so what are you going to do but go flat out and dare yourself to pick a late brake point? The surface is far from smooth so it's an approximate straight line as the Tesla rides the grooves and tracks in the snow, motors whining strongly enough to be



MIGHT BE CARRYING A TERMINAL AMOUNT OF MOMENTUM'

heard over the sound of snow and ice dashing off its wheelarches and underside.

It keeps on accelerating until we're doing well over 100mph, after which I'm focused on my brake point, the 300m board. I hit it... and moments later realise I might be carrying a terminal amount of momentum. 'Oh. Aaaah. Ooooh. Please, no,' I have time to say as I sail towards the turn. I've plenty of time to wonder if cadence braking might help the anti-lock, and it does! Hurrah! We make the first turn with a bit to spare. However, I only know this because we don't thump into a snow bank – alarmingly, when I hit the brake the heater stopped working and the screen misted up and instantly froze into opaqueness on the inside!

It's as if all the energy has been sucked from 'non-vital' functions to pamper the battery, which has gone from maximum discharge to maximum regen charge in an instant. 'Make sure the air conditioning is on,' is Pedersen's advice when I relay this



back in the paddock. It works: next time I can see clearly that I really have braked too late, and get to feel exactly what the Audi driver did as I plant the Tesla broadside (never give up!) into the snow bank. Happily there's no damage.

There's very little charge, too. Dropping the Tesla back at the local garage for a recharge we find one of the Imprezas refuelling. You can't splash-and-dash an electric car yet; the minimum charge time is coming down but even with Tesla's high-performance charging (70 amps at 240V) it still takes two to three hours. With a UK domestic supply, it would be six. The big reduction will come when charging switches from AC to DC current, which Tesla says it's close to cracking.

There's no question that the Tesla Roadster works at sub-zero temperatures, though. We've covered about 170km (105 miles) on a full charge, which feels about right. 'The range depends very much on driving style,' says Pedersen. 'Around this

track we'd expect between 150 and 200km; the more time you spend sideways with the wheels spinning, the shorter the range.' In which case, I'm slightly disappointed we went that far.

SPECIFICATION

TESLA ROADSTER SPORT

Engine 375-volt air-cooled electric motor

CO2 0g/km

Power 299bhp @ 4400-6000rpm

Torque 295lb ft @ 0-100rpm

Transmission Single-speed fixed gear

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, ten-position electronic dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, ten-position electronic dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated discs, 355mm front, 365mm rear, ABS

Wheels 6 x 16in front, 7.5 x 17in rear

Tyres 175/55 R16 front, 225/45 R17 rear

Weight (kerb) 1235kg

Power-to-weight 246bhp/ton

0-60mph 3.7sec (claimed)

Top speed 125mph (claimed)

Basic price £103,745

EVO RATING ★★★★★

evoFast Fleet

NEW ARRIVAL JAGUAR XKR-S

Date acquired September 2012
Total mileage 2402 Mileage this month 1851
Costs £0 mpg this month 18.6

Having spent much of the last year driving a BMW 520d Efficient Dynamics, the prospect of running a 5-litre supercharged

V8 Jaguar with 542bhp and 501lb ft has been simultaneously joyous and terrifying.

There's no doubt my right foot has been craving some serious performance, and my inner show-off loves the idea of a dazzling white V8 convertible rolling on forged 'Vulcan' 20s, but my wallet has got rather



XKR-S looks ace in Polaris White with contrasting carbon spoiler (below)



used to travelling the best part of 700 miles between openings.

To my relief, any concerns that the tree-hugging Beemer had neutered my desire for a snorting sports car evaporated as soon as OY62 OMF rumbled to a halt outside my caravan (in which I currently reside while my new abode is being constructed). The Jag looked and sounded stunning, although whether it quite manages to look worth £105,000 is debatable. Still, the big rims, overt aerodynamic addenda and carbon accents leave you in no doubt that this 186mph convertible, that surges to 60mph in 4.2sec, is the most sporting Jaguar since the XJ220. It isn't subtle, but it turns heads.

Having specced the car myself, I was surprised to find there weren't more paint and leather colours to choose from. Of the choices available, my preference would have

'IT REALLY DOES HAVE STONKING PERFORMANCE, WITH A TERRIFIC BLEND OF EFFORTLESS IN-GEAR MUSCLE AND MIGHTY ALL-OUT SHOVE'

This month: Ferrari 458 Italia Renault Clio Williams Nissan Navara Pagani Zonda S Lamborghini Murciélago Audi A6 Avant 3.0 BiTDI Vauxhall Astra VXR Mazda MX-5 1.8i Mercedes C63 AMG Coupe Jaguar XJR Range Rover Evoque Jaguar XF 2.2D Suzuki Swift Sport Renaultsport Twingo 133 Jaguar XKR-S Convertible Maserati GranTurismo S

been the whole hog of black paint, roof, wheels and leather, but *evo's* art team still hasn't forgiven me for my all-black Mégane 250 Cup of a few years ago. I think they wanted me to choose Smurf Blue for the XK, but it's a bit too try-hard, so I went for Polaris White instead. It looks mega when clean, but as I'm currently living on a building site, that's never for very long.

Like its exterior, the interior of the R-S is hardly understated, but the carbon-look leather inserts and contrasting red stitching is a long way from Jaguar's fuddy-duddy image of old. The 'infotainment' system is looking and feeling its age, but the standard Bowers & Wilkins hi-fi is brilliant and the overall ambience is pretty special. And now that autumn is here, the heated steering wheel – wrapped in £500 of optional Alcantara – has become a guilty pleasure.



Above: black interior with red stitching fires Jaguar into the 21st century

First driving impressions are mixed. It really does have stonking performance, with a terrific blend of effortless in-gear muscle and mighty all-out shove. The ride is supple, there's virtually zero buffeting with the roof down, the automatic 'box works well and you rarely need to stretch the smooth V8 beyond 4000rpm. When you do, you're rewarded with a raucous bellow that sounds great with the roof up and epic with it down. Less satisfying is the lightness of the steering and brakes – whenever I drive more feelsome machinery, it takes a while for me to re-adjust on my return.

The Jag is a beguiling but prodigiously thirsty car. If I average 19mpg I feel blessed, which is a shock after the 520d. Still, if my theory that friends who like a drink are more fun also works with cars, the XKR-S and I should get along just fine. **Richard Meaden**



END OF TERM SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT

Date acquired February 2012 Duration of test 7 months
 Total Mileage 11,805 Overall mpg 37.5 Costs £145 (service)
 Purchase price £13,499 Trade-in value £10,000 Depreciation £3499

Back in February, when our Suzuki Swift Sport first arrived, I had high expectations for it. After all, the Swift had come out on top in our '£15k Heroes' group test (evo 167), despite being the cheapest car assessed. With no options available, you simply fork out £13,499 and get as standard nearly every bit of kit you'd normally have to spec on other cars – metallic paint, climate control, cruise control, Bluetooth, keyless entry, 17in alloy wheels... The only tech notable by its absence was satnav, but that's me being extra picky considering what great value the little Suzuki represents.

All the toys made the Sport particularly practical for a car of its size. The Bluetooth was intuitive and also featured an SMS-reading facility, which was very handy, although it did struggle to interpret spoken words when replying to texts. The cruise control was possibly the easiest bit of car tech I've ever operated, the only downside being that adjusting your speed didn't feel



Above: first service happened late; B-road blasts left Shorrock frustrated. Below: keyless entry is standard, while parcel shelf was an irritant



very subtle, especially when slowing down.

The front seats were comfortable, but probably more so the driver's seat. With arms outstretched to the wheel, the side bolsters were barely noticeable, but in the passenger seat they tended to push your shoulders into your body, causing a slightly odd posture. Back seat space was ample for two adults, but a squeeze if you added a third. The boot would fit luggage for a weekend away but, frustratingly, if you lifted up the parcel shelf to improve access, it didn't self-correct and got stuck as you shut the tailgate, leaving you unable to see out of the back window!

Fuel economy was good, although not as good as the trip computer suggested. Double-checking the figures, it turned out our Swift was doing 36-38mpg rather than the displayed 43-44. There was one service needed during the car's time with us, at 8000 miles, although we didn't notice until 9000 (oops!). This cost a respectable £145 for the usual oil and filter changes.

All this talk of value and practicality might make me seem quite sensible, very adult and not particularly 'evo', but to be fair, this reflects exactly what's happened to the 2012

Swift Sport. The handy gadgets, inoffensive looks, light steering and comfy ride all point to Suzuki deciding to tone down the fun that the whizzy-engined Swift Sport of old had, in favour of something more refined. It means the new Swift handles bumps beautifully and is therefore able to make exceptional progress when gunning along your favourite B-road, but it lacks a little of the raw excitement of the old model. Rarely was I prompted to take the Swift for a drive on a Sunday evening (like I occasionally do the Williams, when it starts...).

Chatting to production editor Ian Eveleigh, I found that his experience with our Renaultsport Twingo 133 long-termer (see below) couldn't be more different. Despite a slightly notchier gearshift and, thanks to the Cup chassis, a much stiffer ride than the Swift, he's having a blast. Ev loves the fact that Renault is still committed to making a small and relatively low-priced car that has trackday-worthy suspension and weighty steering for the road. There's nothing else quite like it on sale today.

Yet in a head-to-head test between the two cars in evo 175, Henry Catchpole awarded victory to the Swift, stating that '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'. This is probably true, but few people can push a car as close to its limits as Henry can! I need and wanted the excitement to be more obtainable. Even popping to the shops in the Twingo is fun, more involving. That's why I'd pick the Renault, given the choice.

After initial high expectations, I ultimately found the Swift a little underwhelming as far as the driving experience was concerned. Which is a shame, as few could argue that it's a fantastic buying proposition, its value, practicality and comfort making it great car to live with.

Adam Shorrock



RENAULTSPORT TWINGO 133

Date acquired August 2012 Total mileage 4363
 Mileage this month 1496 Costs this month £0
 mpg this month 34.0 (road), 14.9 (track)

I'd been itching to find out what our Cup-chassis Twingo would be like on track, and the opportunity finally came this month in the shape of a Renaultsport trackday at Brands Hatch.

After completing the sighting laps (behind a Twizy, no less!), I wasted no time in heading back out. I'd planned to leave



Left: Eveleigh had a hoot at Brands – once he'd turned the driver aids off (above)



'SUZUKI SEEMS TO HAVE TONED DOWN THE FUN OF THE OLD SWIFT SPORT IN FAVOUR OF SOMETHING MORE REFINED'

the ESC switched on while I got up to speed, but the bumpy approach to the fast Paddock Hill Bend really upset it. Even when braking in a straight line the ABS would tug at individual brakes, causing the car to pull left and right somewhat disconcertingly.

'WITH ESC SWITCHED OFF, THE TWINGO WAS TRANSFORMED'

This made me wonder if the Twingo was going to be particularly edgy with the stability systems off, but I needn't have worried. With the well-hidden button pressed, the Twingo was transformed – and completely on-side. There was no more wayward behaviour before Paddock Hill, and on the way into other, less hairy corners, the car could be set up beautifully with a little trail braking to encourage the nose towards the apex. Body roll was negligible, grip impressive and understeer minimal – and

always easily neutralised with a brief lift of the throttle. I was having an absolute riot.

Of course, with only 131bhp, the Twingo was a bit of a mobile chicane for the fast Méganes, but with the Clios it was a different story. Many was the time I entered the Brabham Straight past the pits with a 197 or 200 right on my tail, only for them to make it no further than my blind spot by the time I backed off at the end of the straight. Hmm – maybe the next Clio really does need that turbo after all...
Ilan Eveleigh



FERRARI 458 ITALIA

Date acquired May 2011 Total mileage 28,788
Mileage this month 3341 Costs this month
£731 (check-over, handbrake shoes, front
number plate) mpg this month 18.5

Should you have asked me a couple of months ago what I thought of the 458, having spent well over a year behind its F1-style wheel, I'd have summed it up in one sentence: 'An astonishing driving machine, but for me, maybe a tad too clever.'

Of course, this is the way all mainstream supercar manufacturers are heading and it makes one wonder just how long it will be before a car like the 458 will literally drive itself. Because of this, I've really struggled to get passionate about WX11, which seems like an awful paradox for a Ferrari, especially one this stunning. But with more faces than a town hall clock, any of them instantly available at the flick of a switch, it's a bit like dating a beautiful actress without being able to decipher whether she's acting or not.

Yet having just returned with the Ferrari from 3000 miles of European trekking, this technological marvel from Maranello has had me doffing my cap to it. It has had to contend with torrential rain, hail and hot sunshine, plus everything from Pyrenean mountain passes to lovely smooth French autoroutes. And it didn't miss a beat.

The route south was via the Hull-Zeebrugge ferry and an overnight stop in Lyon, after which we continued to Carcassonne at the foot of the Pyrenees, then east to Nice. After spending a few days



'AFTER 3000 MILES OF EUROPEAN TREKKING, THIS TECHNOLOGICAL MARVEL FROM MARANELLO HAS HAD ME DOFFING MY CAP TO IT'



Top: French customs went through George's 458 with a fine toothcomb at a rest stop. Above: the reliable 458 managed 18mpg on its European tour

there we covered the remaining 863 miles back to the ferry at Caen in just 12 hours.

But none of this was before the 458 and I visited Graypaul Ferrari Nottingham, where the air conditioning was re-gassed, replacement handbrake shoes were fitted, and as I'd been warned that the *gendarmerie* had cracked down on the naughty English *rosbifs*, a new front number plate replaced the one that always 'fell off'...

That proved to be good advice, because the very next morning, WX11 didn't even get to the first fuel stop near Dijon before we were confronted by the French authorities. Stopping to stretch our legs at the services, a minibus full of French customs officials rocked up. 'English?' they commanded rather than asked, before emptying the entire contents of the 458's boot and cabin onto the grass. With two of them in the seats, one halfway into the boot and another wielding a torch and poking around the

still-ticking V8 for bootlegged booze, fags or worse, the others looked on impassively.

Things didn't get any better. After I took a bollocking for trying to get a sneaky picture of the whole debacle, a crowd of spectators gathered, oohing and gesticulating before a miffed officer informed me via hand signals that a dog was on its way. 'Ah, cochon!' I offered helpfully. I later learned that 'cochon' is French for pig, which would explain the general mirth that resulted from my attempt at speaking the local language. The apparent fact that we use sniffer pigs on our side of the Channel obviously gave some cause for amusement. Still, it lightened the mood...

On our way once more, I was amazed by the insane pace of this entry-level Ferrari. I won't bang on about the 458's many talents as they've all been covered countless times. But to cross continents at speed, there's few supercars I'd rather drive. More on my foreign foray next time. **Simon George**

MERCEDES C63 AMG COUPE

Date acquired April 2012 **Total mileage** 13,546
Mileage this month 1503 **Costs this month**
 £15.98 (washer fluid, jet wash, 1 litre of Shell
 Helix oil) **mpg this month** 20.5

This month, two evo readers have contacted me to say they have bought C63 AMG Coupes based on my Fast Fleet reports.

It's encouraging to hear – and proves the worth of this section of the mag – but I'll admit to some mild concerns too. What if they don't share my love of the 6.2-litre V8's neck-wrenching torque? Or what if they can't get on with the oversteer-biased handling? I have no doubts the C63 is a great car, and one that has dovetailed beautifully with my driving life, but still there's a niggling thought that the C63 might not be for everyone – in which case I expect to be sent two very large bills



'IT'S INEVITABLE THAT A FEW SMALLER ISSUES WILL ARISE...'



Seat height doesn't adjust low enough – one of several niggles in the C63 that irk Trott

for unwanted AMGs! The readers have promised to share their impressions with me, so I'll let you know how they fare.

Speaking of niggles, the C63 has a few characteristics that grate from time to time. This will sound like nitpicking, but when you live with a car and absorb the broader facets of its character, it's inevitable that a few smaller issues will arise. And they are...

When I switch off the satnav voice, why

does it reactivate the next time I switch the engine off? Why can't the seat adjust lower? When you fold the seat to access the rear, why does it stop short of the end of the rail? Why does the top of the wheel hide the top of the speedo dial when I'm in my optimum driving position? And why is the rear-view camera picture so poor?

Told you they were just niggles. Still a great car though...
 Nick Trott

RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS

Date acquired August 2010 **Total mileage**
 92,025 **Mileage this month** 9 **Costs this**
month £0 **mpg this month** n/a

Iknew I was tempting fate. Last month I filed my Williams copy just as I went on holiday, the car's MOT test failed but the necessary repairs and retest booked. But they hadn't yet happened...

Well, Sod's Law intervened and I returned to find the wee Clio with three quarters of its new Brembo discs and pads fitted, but the front-right corner untouched, its alloy stuck on thanks to a truly locked locking



Specialist tools (above) and mangled ratchet (right) fell victim to Williams' stuck wheel nut

wheel nut. Co-owner Shorrock's mechanic friend – who'd taken on our repairs – had tried all sorts to free the seized nut, which is either on unfeasibly tight from its last tyre swap or crossthreaded.

Brute force didn't work. A locking wheel nut remover was unsuccessful. And a visit to a number of tyre specialists to use their tools resulted in a scuff on the affected alloy and a mysterious (and bloody annoying) kerbing of the entire circumference of the nearside-front wheel – but didn't free the nut.

So the Willy's off the road and two alloy wheel repairs now need to be budgeted for. Renaultsport's Brands Hatch trackday, which production editor Ev attended in his Twingo, was meant to be the first big test of our uprated brakes, but all Williams activity is on hold until we can work out how to remove that wheel. Old cars, eh? Stephen Dobie



'OUR FRIEND TRIED ALL SORTS TO FREE THE NUT'

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JAGUAR XF 2.2D

Date acquired December 2011 Total mileage 29,366 Mileage this month 1937 Costs this month £0 mpg this month 40.0

The more time I've spent in our Jag, the more I've tapped into what is quite a talented chassis.

Our XF's 197bhp 2.2-litre turbodiesel is best described as lethargic; it's certainly not a drivetrain you'd select if your commute consisted mostly of B-roads. And its standard-fit eight-speed automatic gearbox simply has to be clicked into 'S' or controlled manually if you want it to be vaguely responsive.

Despite this, though, there's fun to be had. Steering that is too light at plodding pace firms up nicely once the suspension is adequately loaded, and backed up by the XF's supple ride and fine balance, you can thread your way along twisty roads with smooth single inputs of steering. It's not a car that you'll ever drive at



Above: XF's chassis is satisfying on the right road. Below: gearbox is best kept in 'S' mode



ten-tenths, or one in which to carve cool arcs of oversteer, but there's a lot of satisfaction to be had from keeping momentum up along an engaging road.

That engine is an ever-present weak point, though – it sounds coarse under acceleration, and while you can carry plenty of speed into and through corners, it isn't able to deliver a meaningful punch out of them to reward your confidence enough. But then again, this month's indicated fuel economy average of 40mpg is testament to the one area where it does shine more brightly. Stephen Dobie

RANGE ROVER EVOQUE

Date acquired March 2012 Total mileage 14,250 Mileage this month 150 Costs this month £0 (so far) mpg this month 39.2 (eD4)

No, I haven't had the Evoque repainted in Fridge White – I took the departure of our Fast Fleeter to have its parking ding repaired as a chance to try the basic, front-wheel-drive eD4 version.

Of course, the idea of a 2WD Range Rover has a fair amount of intrinsic comedy value, especially when you think of what people would say if you got it stuck somewhere unchallenging. But, as with rival mini-SUVs, a large number of Evoque buyers are keen enough to trim their running costs that they'll opt for the less capable version.

After a week of running around in one, our advice would be to dig deeper and find the extra £800 for the cheapest four-wheel driver. The big surprise is how different the front-drive model feels on the road, proving that the 4WD Evoque's powered rear axle does indeed contribute to the dynamic experience. The eD4's eco-tuned version of the 2.2-litre four-pot turbodiesel motor only makes 148bhp



Above and below: entry-level Evoque produces just 148bhp, and with front-drive only feels quite different on the road

(compared to 188bhp for our SD4), but that's enough to get the front end scrabbling for traction on slippery roads. It also understeers in a way our car doesn't, losing grip early and running wide where the 4WD car would still be able to hold its line by sending torque to the back end.

It's slow as well – slower than you'd expect a diesel-powered SUV to be. Like some other green diesels with flat torque curves, it's got the odd quality of accelerating at near-identical rates in different gears. So when you decide to select a lower gear to speed up an overtake, not a huge amount happens in terms of increased urge.

In short, the eco-Evoque proved what a good all-rounder our long-termer is. There's a quality feel to the way our car drives that this hair-shirt special doesn't provide. The only real upside was 39mpg, an improvement on the 35-ish our Evoque manages. Mike Duff

'OUR ADVICE WOULD BE TO DIG DEEPER AND FIND THE EXTRA MONEY FOR THE 4WD EVOQUE'





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VAUXHALL ASTRA VXR

Date acquired July 2012 Total mileage 7485 Mileage this month 1483 Costs this month £0 mpg this month 27.0

‘THE VAUXHALL GIVES ME THE CONFIDENCE TO GO A LITTLE BIT QUICKER EACH TIME’



After a couple of evo trackdays and a ‘How Fast’ session (evo 175), I’m now getting to grips with the handling characteristics of the VXR. I’m not on the edge as a road tester might be, but the Vauxhall is giving me that confidence to go a little bit quicker through my favourite bends each time.

I’ve also been playing with the Sport and VXR buttons at the top of the centre console. Selecting Sport sharpens up throttle response, gives a weightier steering feel through the hydraulic assistance and stiffens the suspension; VXR mode takes all of these to a higher level and makes the dials glow a fiery red. Sport is where the VXR spends most of its life with me as I get the performance benefits but with a softer ride for comfort on the road. On track, however, VXR mode is the only choice – plus a press of the ESP button to enter ‘ESP Competitive Mode’, which relaxes the driver aids.

With 276bhp, the VXR can struggle with understeer in tighter corners if I get on the power too early, but with its clever HiPerStrut front suspension, Sachs adaptive dampers and mechanical limited-slip diff, the handling is remarkable. I was told by Dickie Meaden that, with the ESP fully off, you can get the VXR completely sideways when it’s damp, a lift of the throttle mid-corner provoking a drift that a rear-drive car would be proud of. Check out his VXR v Focus ST Track Battle video at evo.co.uk and you’ll see the Astra’s rear wheels leaving black lines in the corners. Remarkable.

So the VXR is great fun – until you need to look left when exiting a junction. The A-pillar design makes it difficult to see traffic



Above: view left at junctions is obscured by A-pillar. Below left: dials glow red in VXR mode. Below right: Competitive Mode relaxes ESP



coming in certain situations, and I often find myself ducking down to look through the small triangular quarter-light to double-check that the coast is clear. It makes quick getaways tricky.

As a drivers’ car, I really like the Astra VXR. I know it has issues with turbo lag, that the torque-steer fires you across the road every now and then, and that you have to work it hard through the gears to keep it in the power band, yet it has a personality that I really get along with.

But from next month, the key to the Astra will be in someone else’s hand as I am leaving evo after 58 issues as art director. It has been a huge privilege and a lot of fun working on the world’s best car mag. I’ll miss it – and the Astra. Paul Lang

MAZDA MX-5

Date acquired April 2012 Total mileage 110,268 Mileage this month 514 Costs this month £63.20 (rustproofing kit) mpg this month 33.2

In the bad old days, Japanese cars had a reputation for rust that would have made Alfa bosses blush. In 1973, my neighbour bought a new Datsun 160B. It had a radio, seatbelts, all mod-cons... and within a year, blisters on its wings.

I got a distinct sense of déjà vu surveying the bubbly sills of my MX-5. The previous owners had neglected to regularly unblock the drain holes, with the consequence that trapped water was slowly but surely creating holes of its own. And this in a car barely eight years old.

Armed with a Dinitrol rustproofing kit, trolley jack, axle stands and a wire brush, I



‘IT WAS A DIRTY JOB, BUT SOMEBODY HAD TO DO IT’

wriggled underneath the Mazda. I would be gone for some time. It was a dirty job, but somebody had to do it.

My first job was to spray rust converter into the box sections. The sills were alone in showing external evidence of rust, but if it was developing elsewhere I wanted to nip it in the bud. Once the converter had reacted, I liberally sprayed the same areas with cavity wax, before tackling all the exposed areas – wheelarches, wishbones, brake lines – with converter and then underbody wax, which dried to a smart, matt black finish.

It was probably too late to save the outer sills, but the rest of the underbody now has a fighting chance. I’d like to think there was more gunk on the car than on me when I’d finished, but it was close. Peter Tomalin

HARRY'S GARAGE MASERATI GRANTURISMO S

Date acquired June 2011 Total mileage 27,960 Mileage this month 1320
Costs this month £1180 (service) mpg this month 19.7

My GranTurismo S is about to hit 28,000 miles. This means I've covered 14,000 miles in the 14 months since I bought it, which isn't bad going considering the previous owner took 31 months to do the same mileage. Why do people buy cars like these and not drive them? Particularly when it's a GranTurismo – such a useable car, fitted with all the toys and powered by one of the world's great engines.

Still, I'm happy to report that I'm not the only one who's using their GranTurismo properly. A quick online search reveals plenty of examples clocking up 12-15,000 miles per year, and the really good

news is values seem to be holding up pretty well. I grumbled in *evo* 174 that values were dropping fast, but early cars now seem to have bottomed out as people realise how much this Maserati has to offer.

Since its last report, mine has had its 24,000-mile service done (only the second time it's been serviced since it rolled off the production line four years ago) and the only additional item beyond regular servicing was a suspension bush, which was covered under the four-year warranty. The bill came to £1180, which is probably more than your regular German rival might cost you, but then depreciation on the Maserati is seemingly less than its rivals, so it's a case of swings

and roundabouts as far as running costs go.

In other news, the Zonda is back home again (hurrah!) but returned from HR Owen with an invoice for £4207.27 – sorting out the soft brake pedal required some major work including a new ABS unit, and they don't come cheap. The old unit has gone back to Pagani for analysis because, as ever with these things, my Zonda is the first to suffer from this problem. It's times like this I have to remember that my Zonda is over ten years old, so it's bound to suffer from the odd niggle every now and then.

Still, all is forgiven when that fabulous V12 erupts into life and I get to hear that whooping exhaust note again. I still rate it as one of the best-sounding exhaust notes ever because it's so rich and distinctive, but on the Pagani tour this year there was another Zonda S that sounded even better than mine. I later discovered its cats had been removed, so when the director of BTB Exhausts (near Banbury) emailed me to say he was interested in buying my Honda Insight, I wondered if there might be a deal to be done...

Several emails later and the Insight was sold for a smidge over £4000, with a bespoke de-cat for the Zonda thrown into the deal. If you live near Banbury, keep an ear out – you'll know when it's been fitted...
Harry Metcalfe

Below: Harry's GranTurismo S keeps clocking up the miles. Above left: Zonda is back in action



'VALUES SEEM TO HAVE BOTTOMED OUT AS PEOPLE REALISE WHAT THIS MASERATI HAS TO OFFER'

AUDI A6 AVANT 3.0 BiTDI

Audi's advertising states that this is the quickest-thinking car it has ever made, being able to make 2000 decisions a second. So it's pretty frustrating when applying throttle at low speeds to find that nothing happens for a second, making pulling out at roundabouts somewhat cumbersome. Thankfully a quick shift into Sport mode seems to cure the issue and helps me save precious tenths en route to Heathrow.
Dean Smith



The sluggish auto shift in the A6 is grinding Dean Smith's gears this month

LAMBORGHINI MURCIÉLAGO

With all mechanical repairs now complete, the orange leviathan has its first new MOT ticket in a couple of years and is currently cooking in the paint shop. After its full repaint it just needs a new tax disc in the windscreen to be back in business. I have to say that after such a massive overhaul, the anticipation of the Murciélago hitting the tarmac once again has got me feeling like a kid waiting for Christmas. There's lots planned for it too – more news soon.
Simon George

NISSAN NAVARA

The Navara continues to be the office workhorse. As well as helping Henry move house and shifting furniture for my grandmother, it's also been racking up the miles on jobs all over the country. Although it's mostly been boring motorway journeys, the ride is surprisingly comfortable, and with the cruise control set and access to all the mod cons at Nissan's disposal, it's easy to forget that you're in a two-ton truck.
Sam Riley

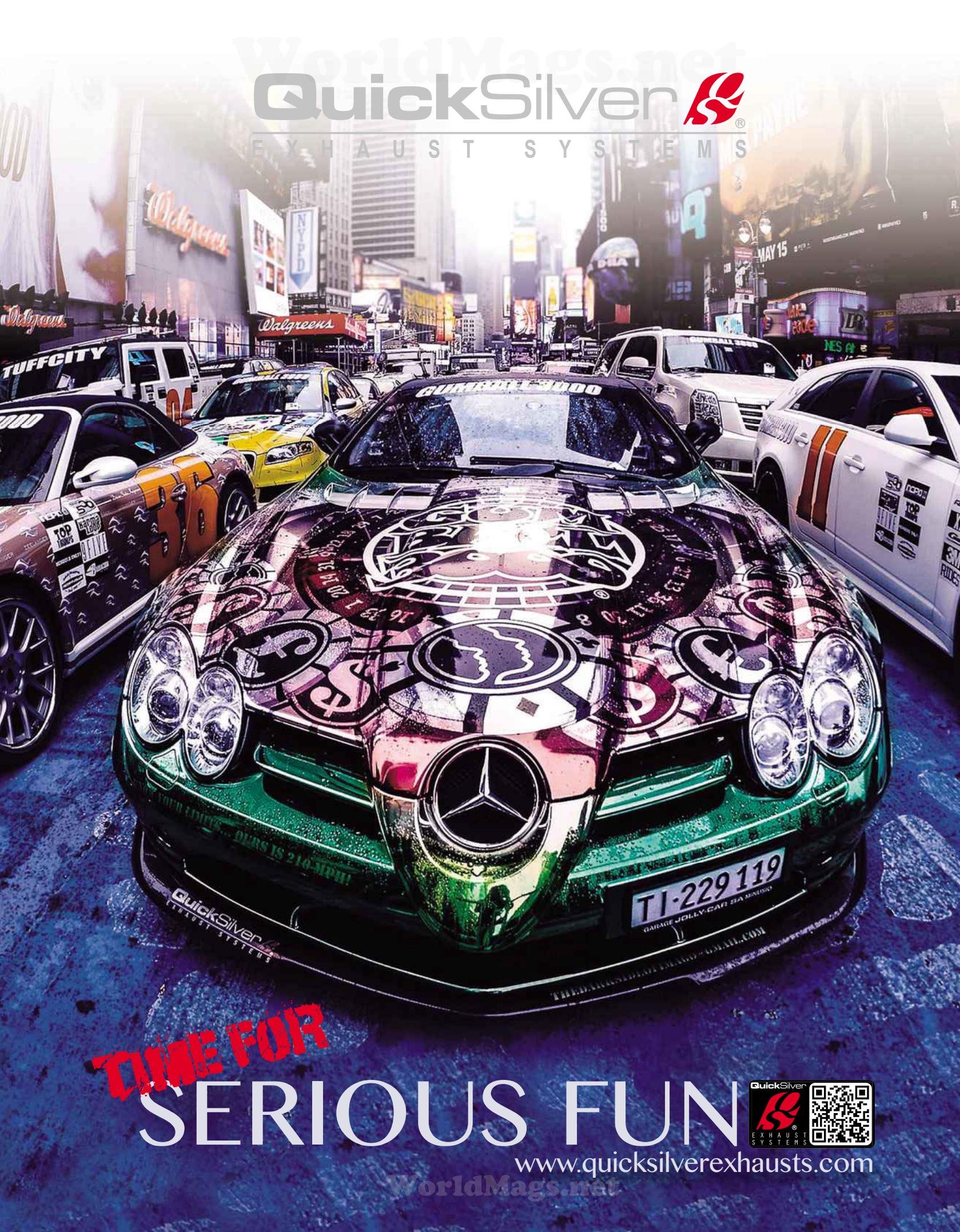
JAGUAR XJR

Poking around the new F-type, I discovered that the battery is in the boot to aid perfect weight distribution. My Jag's battery is also in the boot, although that's because it's massive and there's no room up front. The other difference between the batteries in the F-type and my XJR is that mine is flat. I really need to drive it more often.
Richard Porter



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 2009 (59)



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 Basalt Black
 Dark Grey Leather Seats
 Air Suspension
 66,000 miles
 2007 (56)



Cayman S (6-Speed) £22,995
 Arctic Silver
 Black Leather Seats
 19" Sport Design Wheels
 19,000 miles
 2005 (55)



911 GT3 (996, 6-Speed) £39,995
 Atlas Grey
 Black Leather Sports Seats
 Large Carbon Interior Package
 27,000 miles
 2004 (04)



Boxster S (Tiptronic S) £14,995
 Arctic Silver
 Black Leather Seats
 17" Boxster S II Wheels
 28,000 miles
 2002 (52)

356 C Cabriolet £98,495
 Ivory White, Red Leather Seats, 108,000 miles

911 Carrera 2 'S' Cabriolet (997) £57,995
 Meteor Grey, Black Leather Seats, 15,000 miles

911 Turbo (997, Tiptronic S) £49,995
 Guards Red, Black Leather Seats, 34,000 miles

911 Carrera 4 'S' Cabriolet (997) £43,995
 Arctic Silver, Blue Leather Seats, 14,000 miles

911 Carrera 4 S (997) £36,995
 Meteor Grey, Black Leather Seats, 38,000 miles

911 Carrera 2 S (997) £34,995
 Basalt Black, Black Leather Seats, 44,000 miles

Boxster S (GEN II PDK) £34,995
 Basalt Black, Black Leather Seats, 7,000 miles

911 Carrera 2 S (997) £32,995
 Seal Grey, Blue Leather Seats, 35,000 miles

911 Carrera 4 Cabriolet (993) £31,995
 Metallic Black, Black Leather Seats, 62,000 miles

911 Carrera 2 S (997) £24,995
 Seal Grey, Black Leather Seats, 71,000 miles

Cayman S (6-Speed) £24,995
 Basalt Black, Black Leather Seats, 48,000 miles

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 Arctic Silver, Black Leather Seats, 61,000 miles

911 Carrera 4 (996, Facelift) £19,995
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911 Carrera 2 Cabriolet (996) £19,995
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ASK THE EXPERT

Q I'm considering buying a BMW 650i M Sport auto on a 56 plate with 48,000 miles on the clock. The car is £15k from a main dealer with a year's MOT, breakdown assistance and warranty. What similar cars do you recommend at this price? **Andrew Gardner**



Above: the Vauxhall Monaro offers serious driving thrills – but good luck finding one

A It's hard to argue against spending £15,000 on a 650i M Sport. That represents excellent value, especially with the peace of mind of the inclusive main dealer warranty.

The only car I can think of which can get close to that sort of value is the Vauxhall Monaro VXR. Yes, I know it's got the wrong badge on its nose, but it's well worth a test drive because they're great cars to live with and have superb GT qualities. The only issue is that they have none of the kudos that comes from owning a 650i M Sport, but you may enjoy the driving experience of a Monaro even more than the 650i.

The trouble will be trying to find one for sale, because there aren't that many about and those that did buy one new tend to hang on to them for a while because there's nothing else they'd rather own. **HM**

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR BUYING EXPERT?
email experts@evo.co.uk

MARKET WATCH



NIRVANA FOR NEW CARS

Desperate dealers use pre-registration to clear stock at rock-bottom prices

Pre-registering new cars is rife at the moment, particularly amongst manufacturers jostling for position in the top ten sales chart – but prestige marques aren't immune to it either and it's around this time of year when the best deals come to light.

Take Jaguar, for example. Marshall Jaguar of Peterborough is offering a delivery-mileage 5-litre supercharged XKR convertible, in black with a burgundy hood, for just £64,945 – around £15k off list once extras like the sports exhaust and trim have been accounted for. Meanwhile, the XJ is still struggling to find buyers in the UK, so it's no surprise to see Perrys Huddersfield offering a pre-registered 2012/12 3.0D V6 'Premium Luxury' XJ, finished in black and with ten miles on the clock, for £41,994 (£18k off list, a discount of 30 per cent).

Even Audi has indulged in a bit of pre-registering recently, and a couple of R8s have caught my eye. With a revised version imminent, dealers are keen to move existing stock as quickly as possible, leading to Audi West

London offering a 54-mile, 2012/12 5.2-litre V10 FSI coupe for just £88,850. That's a spectacular discount of over £25,000 (22 per cent), just because there's a new model on its way. If you fancy a drop-top version of the R8, then Lincoln Audi has a pre-registered 4.2-litre V8 Spyder available for £89,450, around £10k off list.

Finally, Lotus dealers have been pre-registering Evoras recently and as such they are being offered at bargain rates. Stratstone Lotus has several available, including a 2012/62 supercharged 3.5-litre V6 2+2 version with ten miles recorded for £53,355 OTR, some £10k off what it should be.

It's tough out there in new car land, so if you're a buyer, now's the time to haggle hard.

Harry Metcalfe
Editorial director



Auction watch



Above: this 1981 Porsche 911 3.0 SC, estimated at £20-24k, has had a charmed life on the Isle of Man

Bargain hunters prepare to descend on the NEC for mammoth Classic Motor Show sale

Silverstone Auctions is once again hosting the auction at the NEC Classic Motor Show on November 17, and yet again the UK's largest indoor classic car show has attracted a varied selection of cars for sale.

Amongst the Ferraris, a nice example of a 1997 456 GTA stands out as a potential bargain buy, estimated to sell for between £35,000 and £40,000. With a V12 up front and a (small) pair

of rear seats, this cherished 456 could still be capable of crossing continents in true Prancing Horse style.

There's plenty of contemporary machinery going under the hammer too, from original Minis and Mk1 Golf GTIs to more exciting models like a Ford RS200 road car with 1066 miles on the clock that is estimated to sell for £80-100,000.

The 1981 911 3.0 SC that is being



Above: this Ferrari 456 offers a real '90s look and could go for as little as £35k

offered, at £20-24,000, will interest classic 911 fans. Having just had a top-end engine rebuild, this 42,000-mile Porsche has spent the last 18 years on the Isle of Man. **Matthew Hayward**

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'HE'S CLEARLY TAKEN THE "FANTASY" PART TO THE EXTREME'

This month I've set **evo's** production editor, Ian Eveleigh, the task of finding three cars within a total budget of £80,000 – a two-door four-seat coupe, a mid-engined car capable of at least 150mph, and a classic. The cars featured are all on sale (at the time of writing) via Cars for Sale, powered by **evo**, the newest and fastest car search engine online.

Ev clearly knows how to spend a budget, because he came in with just £20 to spare. There's a nice mix of supercharged, turbocharged and naturally aspirated engines, and he's clearly taken the 'fantasy' part of the challenge to the extreme – choosing what is undoubtedly our least practical trio of cars so far and managing to squeeze two mid-engined supercars out of the £80k!

Let us know how you'd spend the cash on the forum at evo.co.uk (details below). And remember, it's not all about buying – you can also sell your car on Cars for Sale for FREE!

Nick Trott
Editor



THE FOUR-SEAT COUPE FORD SHELBY GT500

A bargain lump of American muscle wowed Ian Eveleigh

Two doors and four seats? My head says E92 M3 coupe, but my heart wants a V8 with a bit more thunder.

A Mustang will get you exactly that for relatively little cash – you can bag a new V8 model for £31k. But it's a 2008 GT500 that caught my

eye. A supercharger plus an enlarged 5.4-litre V8 equals 500bhp, while this car's Roush suspension should help make the most of it.

FOR SALE

Mileage 10,200
Price £28,995
Search '2008 GT500'
From Atlantic Sports Cars at forsale.evo.co.uk



FROM THE FORUMS

We put the same challenge to our forum users and, as always, they didn't disappoint with their suggestions.

Bryan found a rare six-speed manual Ferrari 456 GT at £29,995, a modified Lotus Exige S with 298bhp for £33,950 and a handsome 1970 Alfa 1750 GT Veloce Series II for £12,000, leaving him £4k to spare. This month JonathanE chose a 1977 Rolls-Royce Corniche at £22,990, a Ferrari 308 GTS QV at £31,995, and a Morgan Plus Four at £25,950. Gregg, meanwhile, plumped for an M3 CSL at £22,500, a supercharged Elise 111R at £20,950, and a 1977 Aston Martin V8 for £34,990.

To see more choices, look for the 'Fantasy Garage' thread on the **evo** forums (under 'evo magazine').

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THE MID-ENGINE CAR FERRARI F355 GTB

Some sort of Cayman would be the sensible choice here, and would easily top the 150mph target, but surely every Fantasy Garage should have a Ferrari in it, and preferably a pretty one, too. So how about a 355? This 1995 berlinetta in obligatory Rosso Corsa is a touch leggy at 55,000 miles, but hopefully that means any niggles will have been thoroughly ironed out...

FOR SALE

Mileage 55,223
Price £35,995
Search '£36k Ferrari F355 Rosso Corsa'
From Farkers at forsale.evo.co.uk



THE CLASSIC LOTUS TURBO ESPRIT

This could also qualify as my 150mph mid-engined car – just – but I wouldn't fancy putting it to the test. Better to just stand back and admire those oh-so-'80s angular lines, perhaps? Then again, we know the Turbo Esprit is a decent steer, too – in fact, we know the form of this very Turbo Esprit. How so? Because we drove it on an **evo** test back in 2005 (evo 085).

FOR SALE

Mileage 43,265
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ROLLS ROYCE DROPHEAD CONVERTIBLE 08/08 Jubilee silver with black, 18,000 miles, RRFSH..... £185,000	ROLLS ROYCE PHANTOM COUPE 2009/09 16,000 miles, black/black, RRFSH..... £170,000	BMW 635D Sport, 2008/08, 19,200 miles, Silver, Black leather, Privacy glass, 5 spoke star wheels... £23,999	ROLLS ROYCE SILVER SERAPH LHD AUTO 2001/51 65,244 miles... £49,999	ROLLS-ROYCE 1981 83,000 miles, blue, cream leather £45,000	ROLLS ROYCE SILVER SHADOW II AUTO 77/R Reg ROA 44R 78,000 miles, Brewster green, MOT'd £11,999
ASTON MARTIN DB9 VOLANTE 10/10 only 4,900 miles, silver £79,999	ASTON MARTIN RAPIDE LHD 2010/10 black/tan, big spec, 11,000 miles £89,999	ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE ROADSTER CONVERTIBLE 2011/11 lightning silver, giant spec, 11,000 miles, inc VAT £67,999	BENTLEY GTC SUPERSPORT 11/11 granite with black, only 7,000 miles £119,999	BENTLEY CONTINENTAL SUPER SPORT 2011/11 2012 model, 7,000 miles, Naim sound, Comfort 4 seat..... £109,999	BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GTC SUPER SPORT AUTO 2010/10 4,900 miles, Suqatti seats, Naim sound..... £120,000
BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GTC 51 SERIES LTD EDITION 2011/11 black with linen & black leather, 1,800 miles, as new, massive spec..... £104,999	BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GTC MULLINER 2008 Model 24,000 miles, black, black, piano black wood, silver stitch, reverse camera, power boot..... £69,999	BENTLEY GTC SPEED 2011/11 Kingfisher blue, 2,800 miles £109,999	BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT SPEED COUPE 2010/10 6,000 miles, silver, black leather, 2012 21" alloy wheels..... £84,999	BENTLEY GT SPEED LHD 07/57/08 MODEL 43,000 miles, matt black wrap, with big spec..... £64,999	BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT SPEED 2008/08 17,000 miles £69,999
BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT MULLINER AUTO 2007/57 31,000 miles..... £99,999	BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT MULLINER COUPE 2006/56 black emerald with magnolia leather, 26,000 miles..... £52,999	BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT MULLINER AUTO 2006/06 25,800 miles..... £49,999	BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT MULLINER AUTO 2006/06 28,200 miles..... £49,999	BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT MULLINER 2005 43,000 miles, black, black, red stitch, black wood, 1 owner..... £44,999	BENTLEY CONTINENTAL MULLINER R WIDE AUTO 1999/V 32,000 miles £87,999
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BENTLEY AZURE 2003/03 Final Series performance, black, black quilted leather, 21,000 miles, BFSH, big spec..... £79,999	BENTLEY AZURE CONVERTIBLE 06/56 black with black quilted leather, 17,000 miles, BFSH £99,999	BENTLEY AZURE CONVERTIBLE 99/V peacock blue with cream, 32,000, BFSH..... £59,999	BENTLEY AZURE AUTO 1998/R 30,200 miles £59,999	BENTLEY AZURE AUTO 1999/T 35,000 miles £49,999	BENTLEY TURBO R LWB AUTO 1997/P 25,000 miles..... £34,999
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WIESMANN GT MF4 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION €134,500

Vendor Classic Heroes, East Sussex
www.classicheroes.co.uk 01825 830227

To celebrate two decades in the sports car-making business, Wiesmann built just 20 special Anniversary Edition versions of its GT MF4 coupe, of which this is one. It's in exceptionally good condition too, being unregistered and with only delivery miles on its clock.

Why so? It turns out the car's first owner bought it on a whim at a motor show, but then decided it wasn't for him and so asked BMW specialist Classic Heroes to sell it on.

Mechanically, it's identical to a regular GT MF4, which means an aluminium tub, glassfibre bodywork, and a 4.8-litre BMW V8 putting out 362bhp, in this case through a six-speed manual 'box. Expect it to be as 'brutally quick' (0-62mph in 4.6sec) and 'remarkably poised' as the MF4 we drove back in 2008 (evo 117). What's different is its 'Alubeam' silver paint (a shiny formula usually seen on Mercedes concept cars), wall-to-wall blue leather inside, matching blue dials and special alloy kickplates.

The price of €134,500 (£109,000), including VAT and UK registration, seems sensible compared to the few low-mileage GT MF4s on the market, and is justified for this special version of an already special car. Ian Eveleigh



Rare Wiesmann has just delivery miles on the clock. Below left: seat backs have 20th Anniversary logos stitched into their pale blue leather



SPECIFICATION

Year 2011
Mileage 65
Engine V8, 4799cc
Max power 362bhp @ 6300rpm
Max torque 361lb ft @ 3400rpm
0-62mph 4.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 180mph (claimed)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR

» Immaculate and truly attention-grabbing

INTERIOR

» Clean and luxurious, but you have to like blue...

MECHANICALS

» It's barely turned a wheel, so as new

VERDICT

» If it's a Wiesmann you're after, you should be considering this one

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POA, 1988, 10,625 miles

» Misano Red, very low mileage, concours condition, no. 113 of 501

BMW E24 M635i

£16,500, 1985, 89,000 miles

» Zinnober Red, full BMW service history, only two owners from new

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ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE 4.3 £49,945

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The V8 Vantage has never led the GT genre, but when it made its debut eCoty appearance in 2005, it won plenty of hearts with its 'so handsome it hurts' styling and the V8 engine's 'demonic race-car snarl'.

Seven years on, and with the model still on sale (albeit with a bigger, torquier engine), those early cars look good value, kicking off at just £30,000. Here's one of the last 4.3s, just 40bhp lighter and not even 8000 miles older than a brand new 4.7, but over £40k cheaper.

Aston's design philosophy might seem tired now, but the taut little Vantage still looks spot-on, especially with this car's N400-style sills. The grille is colour-coded, as is the stitching on the black leather sports seats, and it's all in belting condition: if it wasn't for the '09' on the number plate, only Aston die-hards would know it's not box-fresh.

It drives like new, too, with the V8 engine feeling very fit. You certainly can't rely on low revs to make swift progress, but winding up the tachometer unleashes that wonderful eight-cylinder gargle, and the fitment of a six-speed manual gearbox (refreshing now that many modern Astons are autos) makes exercising the engine yet more rewarding. A proper half-price hero. **Stephen Dobie**



Above: only the number plate gives this Vantage away as a 2009 car. Left and below left: dash and seats are highlighted with red stitching

SPECIFICATION

Year 2009
Mileage 7817
Engine V8, 4281cc
Max power 380bhp @ 7300rpm
Max torque 302lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 5.2sec
Top speed 175mph (claimed)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR

» Feels as brand new as it looks

INTERIOR

» Tasteful red stitching and a proper gearstick

MECHANICALS

» Low-mileage fresh; V8 sounds race-car epic

VERDICT

» It's not a class leader, but it looks and sounds fantastic, and it's almost half price

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NISSAN GT-R

*Even when new, the GT-R offered unparalleled bang for your buck. Now that you can buy used examples for as little as £35k, nothing else comes close, as **Peter Tomalin** explains*

It's January 2008, and evo has got its hands on the first GT-R to land in Europe, but what to do with it? Any conventional group test seems futile because, quite simply, there's nothing else on earth quite like it.

Beneath its square-jawed bodywork, this GT-R packs an unprecedented arsenal of performance hardware: a twin-turbo 3.8-litre V6 generating 473bhp and 434lb ft of torque, a six-speed dual-clutch paddle-shift transmission, ATTESA ET-S four-wheel drive, Vehicle Dynamics Control, adaptive dampers and onboard telemetry. Nissan claims 0-62mph in 3.8sec and a top speed approaching 200mph. The only car seriously

comparable in performance is the £100k 911 Turbo, but the GT-R is quicker around the Nordschleife – and costs just £56,795.

In the end, we give up trying to put together a conventional test. We go to the drag strip for a 0-100mph-0 shootout with a £62k, 505bhp Corvette Z06, which is 322kg lighter and more powerful; the GT-R beats it. Then we take it to our favourite roads with an Audi R8 for company; the GT-R makes it feel 'weedy' and a generation behind. Finally we put it on track against a 911 GT3; the Nissan crushes the Porsche, slotting into our lap-time table just below the Ferrari Enzo. 'Respect is due,' we conclude. 'Big respect. Nissan has built a new performance icon.'

So how is the icon faring four years on? And is all that hardware and tech a boon or a liability? Iain Litchfield, boss of Japanese car specialist Litchfield Imports, helps fill us in.

The first thing to know is that there are no mechanical differences between Japanese and European-market cars, and all were subject to the same upgrades introduced with each new model year. However, when the first 'official' cars arrived in the UK in April 2009, the launch control was disabled (though the really determined could effect a 'cheat' and risk jeopardising the warranty in the process). These first cars came without satnav and had a lower-resolution central display, both issues that were rectified later that year. For



2010, there was a hike in power to 485bhp, improved exhaust flow through less restrictive cats, additional vents in the diffuser for better gearbox cooling, improved gearbox bushing/mounts, and upgraded satnav and stereo.

But the biggest changes came for 2011 with the facelifted GT-R. Power reached 523bhp and the gearbox software was significantly updated, providing a much smoother drive and more 'intuitive' gear-changing in Auto mode. 'This has become a hugely popular upgrade for us,' says Iain Litchfield, 'as we're able to program the new software into the earlier cars.' Nissan also introduced a proper launch control system (LC4), which could be used without affecting the warranty. Suspension tweaks also gave much improved ride comfort compared with early cars.

Further changes for 2011 included a larger front grille, daytime running lights, improved engine cooling, larger turbo intake pipes, revised intercooler piping, scuttle panel bracing, a carbon front strut-brace, 390mm front discs (up from 380mm), increased sound-proofing and better interior trim.

Left: daytime running lights mark this out as a more recent GT-R; regardless of model year, the big Nissan is stunningly quick across country



CHECKPOINTS

» A car still under Nissan's three-year warranty is worth it if you can afford one, though a number of specialists offer their own: Litchfield Imports' one-year warranty and breakdown package costs £1200.

Despite the level of performance and the complexity of the drivetrain, the GT-R is proving to be well-built and generally very dependable, and most things are straightforward to repair.

Many cars will have been used on track, and generally that isn't an issue, although it does make it even more important that the car is serviced regularly.

ENGINE

» No biggies here. Iain Litchfield says: 'To date we have tuned over 400 cars and we have not had one single engine problem, despite many of these cars running over 600bhp and some at 750bhp.'

The most common fault is what is known as the 'bell-housing rattle', and it's something Nissan is yet to resolve. It's caused by a bearing at the end of the flywheel shaft moving in its casing. All GT-Rs suffer the rattle, but some will be louder than others and it can cause a vibration if the bearing becomes badly worn. It's usually fixed under warranty; if the car is out of warranty Litchfield Imports charges £738 to fit an upgraded item.

GEARBOX & CLUTCH

» Early gearboxes can have problems with the control solenoids, which ultimately lead to worn or broken components. These can be expensive to repair, as the whole gearbox needs to be removed and stripped down. Nissan currently has a policy of not supplying any gearbox parts, apart from the sump gasket at £35 or a new gearbox at £16,000(!), so it's worth checking carefully that gearchanges are clean, quick and smooth. Standard clutches are extremely reliable and very rarely wear out.

BRAKES & TYRES

» A GT-R can be expensive to run, being particularly hard on brakes and tyres due to its performance and weight. It's easy to spot a car that has had a hard life on track as the discs tend to develop cracks around the drilled holes. Tyres will also show clear signs of wear on the outer edges. Budget just over a grand for new front discs and pads, and around £1500 for a set of tyres.



'I BOUGHT ONE'

David Yu

» 'I took delivery of one of the first UK R35 GT-Rs in April 2009, having sent my deposit to Middlehurst Motorsport 18 months earlier. Initial impressions were that it was massively capable. Even whilst running it in, it was one of the quickest cars on the road, and when fully unleashed it was devastating. But the ride was jarring and the noise anodyne.

Servicing was on a six-monthly schedule, but I had no hesitation in sending mine up to Middlehurst Motorsport as they're the most experienced GT-R dealers in the UK.

I only lasted two months

before sliding down the slippery slope of modification, starting with a Milltek Y-pipe that gave the GT-R the voice that the factory system stifled. This was soon followed by a Cobb Accessport with GTC remaps, and over the next three years there followed further mods including an Akrapovic titanium exhaust, Alcon brake discs, GTC air intakes, ID 1000 injectors and lots of carbonfibre frippery.

It has been faultless running at over 600bhp for three years and is the consummate all-rounder. I've owned some outstanding performance cars over the years, but the R35 GT-R is the best of the lot by a massive margin.'

Finally, the 2012 model year brought yet another power hike, to 542bhp, plus revised suspension and a small improvement to the gearbox and launch control software. For an extra £10k you could now have the Track Pack Edition with brake cooling ducts in the front lip spoiler, cooling vanes for the brakes on the front and rear suspension arms, Nismo alloys, retuned suspension, 'high grip cloth' front seats and no rear seats.

There's also the rare Spec V model, with a titanium exhaust, reworked suspension, carbon-ceramic brakes and 60kg trimmed from the kerb weight. It cost around £50k more than the standard car new, which was generally thought to be too much – especially

'SOME ROAD-GOING CARS RUN AS MUCH AS 800BHP'

without any increase in power.

Which brings us to tuning. Many GT-Rs have been modified – some road-going cars running as much as 800bhp. The good news is that the GT-R appears to be fantastically well-engineered and takes even these sort of power increases in its stride, though being such a heavy car, there's a commensurately heavy price to pay in tyres, brakes and fuel if you use the performance to the full.

And use it you will, for no other car, save perhaps for a 911 Turbo, makes true supercar levels of performance as accessible as a GT-R. And for as little as £35k, right now it's looking more than ever like the biggest performance bargain on Planet evo.

SPECIFICATION

- » 2008-2010 MY
- » **Engine** V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo
- » **Max power** 473bhp @ 6400rpm
- » **Max torque** 434lb ft @ 3200-5200rpm
- » **Weight (kerb)** 1740kg
- » **Power-to-weight** 276bhp/ton
- » **0-60mph** 3.8sec (claimed)
- » **Top speed** 193mph (claimed)
- » **Price when new** £56,795 (2009)

PARTS PRICES

» Parts prices from litchfieldimports.co.uk, tyre prices from blackcircles.com, all including VAT at 20 per cent.

- » **Tyres (each)** £354 front, £429 rear (Bridgestone Potenza RE070)
- » **Brake discs (front set)** £702 (Alcon)
- » **Brake pads (front pair)** £264
- » **Suspension upgrade** (full set, Bilstein dampers, Eibach springs, etc) £3494
- » **Clutch** £1320
- » **Exhaust** (Milltek, cat-back) £1417
- » **Spark plugs (set of six)** £172

SERVICING

» Prices from litchfieldimports.co.uk including VAT at 20 per cent. *Annual service cost varies depending on servicing schedule.

- » **Interim** (6k miles or 6 months) £145
- » **Main** (12k miles or 12 months) £336-769*

WHAT TO PAY

» GT-Rs have generally held their value well, a reflection of their outstanding value when new and the strong following they've attracted. The cheapest cars, usually imports, are just below £35k. For UK cars, which started to arrive in April 2009, expect to pay £35,000-40,000 for a good, early, non-satnav example with a full service history, and over £40k for a post-Sept '09 car with the factory satnav and high-definition screen. The 2011 model year cars, which cost £69,950 new, are now in the £50-55k bracket. Modified cars don't generally attract a significant premium; on the other hand, providing the work was carried out by a reputable specialist, neither should tuning detract from the car's value.

USEFUL CONTACTS

- » gtr.co.uk (register, owners' club, forum)
- » nagtrac.org (North American owners' club, forum)
- » litchfieldimports.co.uk (tuning, parts, servicing, sales)
- » www.middlehurst.co.uk (sales, servicing)
- » severnvalleymotorsport.co.uk (tuning, servicing)
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- » forsale.evo.co.uk (sales)

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Renault tuning specialist K-Tec Racing has remapped the 265 Trophy's F4Rt engine to deliver an extra 40bhp at 6000rpm, increasing peak power to 301bhp. K-Tec also says the Performance Pack 1, which includes a performance air filter and 12-month warranty, delivers an extra 60lb ft of torque at 2750rpm. You can add the £234 Renflash ECU to allow switching between standard and tuned settings.

ASK THE EXPERT

Q When attempting to accelerate as quickly as possible, is it always best to rev the engine right through to the red line in each gear, or can it be quicker to change up earlier to make the most of a car's peak power or torque range?

Phil Gould



Left: it's not always best to go right through the rev range on bigger powerplants

A It depends on the engine and the gearing. An engine like a four-pot Honda VTEC, which makes peak power and torque close together at high revs, will pretty much need to be revved right out, whereas a bigger, torquier engine won't benefit from being taken to the red line. Experienced testers get a feel for this, but the exact shift point can be calculated if you know your gear ratios and the torque curve of the engine. The aim is to make each upshift at the rpm at which the torque available in the next gear would be higher than that of the current gear.

The art of extracting peak acceleration is gradually becoming redundant, as more and more cars have automatic 'boxes'. Claimed figures for the same car show that a DCT is faster than a manual because it is programmed with the optimum shift points and effectively engages the next gear before the previous one is disengaged to limit 'torque interruption'. **John Barker**

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£29.95 (SET OF FOUR)
WWW.RICHBROOK-STYLING.CO.UK

Protect your spare wheels and tyres with these new bags from Richbrook. Ideal for transporting trackday rubber without damaging seats and trim, or for protecting unused winter or summer tyres,

the washable bags fit any tyre size between 14in and 18in, and each set includes a bag for wheel nuts or bolts. You can also mark each tyre's position on the car and there's a carry handle on each one.



TRIED & TESTED

PHILIPS X-TREME VISION LED LIGHTS
FROM £16.99 WWW.PHILIPS.COM

» It's hard to believe how the feel inside my Skoda can be changed simply by switching to LED interior lights – the cool, white light gives the cabin a real upmarket feel compared to the yellow of halogen. Previously, I could only get LED replacements for the reading lights, but Philips' new range solves that. I now have LEDs throughout the cabin, including the glovebox and door warning lights, and the effect is dramatic. I've fitted the 6000-kelvin LEDs but some of the range is available in halogen-matching 4000 kelvin and xenon-white 6700 kelvin. They all give out five times more light than standard and with a lifetime of 10,000 hours, they won't need replacing any time soon.

Kim Adams



Above: new Philips LED range produces a cooler, crisper light

HAVE A PRODUCT FOR US TO REVIEW? CONTACT TRIED&TESTED@EVO.CO.UK

TUNER PROFILE

ANDREW PAWLEY, MD,
DIESEL TUNING UK
WWW.DIESEL-PERFORMANCE.CO.UK



» 'The diesel tuning market is like the remap market – there's a lot of rubbish. I started in 2005 with a 3-litre V6 CDTI Vauxhall Vectra. I went looking for a tuning box for it and had issues at around 3500 revs, so I started working with a company in Germany and got hold of the programming equipment. After six months I'd got rid of the problem and saw 220bhp. I bought ten boxes to sell at our butcher's shop and it went from there. We now sell about 50 a week – 95 per cent of them for self-fitting by the customer. These days it's more often about improving fuel economy than increasing power.'

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MODELS, BOOKS, DVDs & CLOTHING

FERRARI 599XX EVO
 £289.99 WWW.PAGEANDCOOPER.COM

It's the Ferrari 599 that costs over £1million, can only be driven on track, but can't be raced. The 599XX uses Formula 1 technology to create what can only be described as the ultimate trackday toy. This limited-edition 1:18-scale BBR model is of the updated Evolution version of the 599XX that gained an F1-style 'DRS' rear wing, and is presented in a red wooden display box.



LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR J
 £319.99 WWW.PAGEANDCOOPER.COM

Revealed at this year's Geneva motor show, the Aventador J – short for Jota – was a one-off model, built and fully homologated for a particularly wealthy Lamborghini customer. It also showed the world that manufacturers can still churn out bonkers show cars. This 1:18-scale model from MR Collection, in the correct (and unique) shade of dark red, is probably as close as you will come to owning a J.



T-SHIRTS



THAT 80S FEELIN'
WWW.PETROLTHREADS.CO.UK
 £20

» A tongue-in-cheek dig at cars of a certain vintage. The 205 is the choice for an '80s icon, but others in the range include an Austin Mini Clubman for the '70s.



312T
WWW.T-LAB.UK
 £25

» Ferrari's 312T4 dominated F1 in 1979, with Jody Scheckter beating Gilles Villeneuve to what would be the Scuderia's last drivers' crown until 2000.



VEE DUB BY STUARTIST
WWW.REDBUBBLE.COM
 £16.68

» Colourful cutaway drawing of the original Volkswagen Beetle, a car that mobilised a generation and represents the spirit of freedom to many.



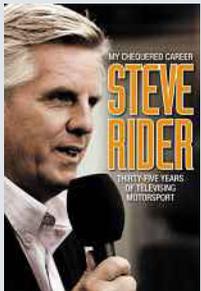
GTE'S PORSCHE LEGENDS
WWW.GEARBOXGIFTS.COM
 £25

» To most people, this might just look like a selection of random digits, but to certain petrolheads, it forms a holy creed of classic sports cars.

BOOKS

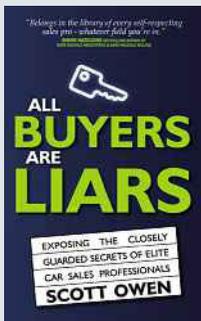
STEVE RIDER: MY CHEQUERED CAREER
 £19.99 WWW.HAYNES.CO.UK

» Steve Rider's position in the world of sports broadcasting over the last 35 years has given the presenter a unique view of Formula 1 politics. The battles over the television rights to the sport were an emotional time for all those involved, and Rider recalls in surprising detail the events that led to the BBC handing F1 over to ITV at the end of the 1996 season. He also talks about his many interviews with the legends of motorsport, and gives a personal account of the fateful San Marino Grand Prix of 1994. An interesting read.

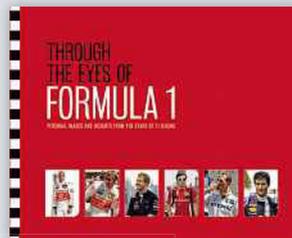


ALL BUYERS ARE LIARS
 £7.50 WWW.AMAZON.CO.UK

» The title of the book immediately raises eyebrows, but read a little further and you will be pleasantly surprised by the openness of author and car sales professional Scott Owen. Although it's geared towards people in car sales, it uncovers the truth behind many of the tricks of the trade, giving sound advice on how to deal with various buying and selling situations. Going into detail on all of the different management styles a salesperson could possibly have to deal with, Owen explains the politics and greed often found within dealerships.



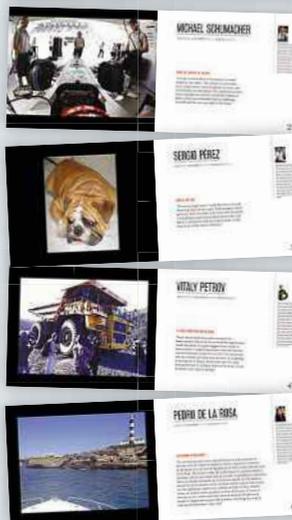
BOOK OF THE MONTH



THROUGH THE EYES OF FORMULA 1
 £20 WWW.EVO.CO.UK/SHOP

» Despite the best efforts of their PR departments, Formula 1 drivers are still interesting human beings behind their robotic interview facades. *Through The Eyes Of Formula 1* gives fans a photographic glimpse into what all 24 drivers, all 12 team bosses and a host of famous faces cherish most in their lives – be it childhood holiday homes, beloved pets or key colleagues behind the scenes.

All profits from the book, created by respected F1 journalists Christian Sylt and Caroline Reid and supported by the sport's commercial boss Bernie Ecclestone, go to Great Ormond Street Hospital. Amid the usual ocean of F1 stats books and driver biographies, this offers something a little different.





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GORDON THE GREAT

Gordon Shedden finishes on top in an epic BTCC title fight and succeeds John Cleland as Scotland's touring car hero



After knocking on the door for several years, Gordon Shedden finally became British Touring Car champion at the last round of 2012 at Brands Hatch last month, becoming the first Scottish title winner since John Cleland in 1995.

Second place in the second of three races on Brands' Grand Prix circuit gave the 33-year-old works Honda Civic driver the crown. Shedden kept out of trouble all weekend to finish all three races in the top five to clinch the title by 21 points, as outgoing champion and team-mate Matt Neal shared the race wins with first-time victors Aron Smith and Frank Wrathall.

Neal could have offered a strong challenge to his friend and team-mate, but a trio of retirements in the previous round at Silverstone (including a fire that engulfed his Civic mid-race) left him with too much to do. As for Jason Plato, he struggled to find a good wet set-up for his MG6, and was also hit by a reduction in

turbo boost for the Brands round, where he managed just one top-five finish. He ended the season third overall, 32 points off Shedden.

To equalise the performance of the vast array of cars in the series, BTCC chiefs adjusted each model's maximum turbo boost level on a round-by-round basis. It made for some very unbalanced races at times – see Plato's drive from 20th to the lead in just 12 laps of Silverstone's National circuit – but it also achieved series boss Alan Gow's goal of keeping the title race alive and exciting all the way to the end of the season.

'SHEDDEN WON EIGHT RACES, MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE'

Some fans feel the equalisation rules make BTCC racing artificial and contrived, but despite being pegged back heavily all year, what most considered to be the best car in the field – the Honda Civic – still won the manufacturers' title. On top of that, deserving champion Shedden still won eight races, more than anyone else, as he made the most of the weekends where the Honda was fully able to fight for wins.

Next year, the BTCC's existing Super 2000 machinery will largely be phased out. All the top teams will run to the Next Generation Touring Car rules, which feature more 'spec' parts and will hopefully make equalisation fairer and easier. With Mat Jackson's NGTC Ford Focus showing race-winning form towards the end of this year, and Plato's MG able to get a full winter of development this time, Shedden and Honda will have a real fight on their hands to retain their drivers' and manufacturers' titles in 2013.

Dan McCalla

WINTER WARMERS

Just because the clocks have gone back doesn't mean you can't watch top motorsport – or even compete yourself

» The motorsport season is drawing to a close – but that doesn't mean you have to go cold turkey until March before getting your next fix of action.

The Roger Albert Clark Rally (pictured) emulates the heyday of the RAC Rally with classic machines trekking through northern England and Scotland for three days in November (23-25), watched by hordes of dedicated fans. If you're down south, check out the Rockingham Stages on December 8-9, where all-asphalt stages are created from the race circuit and the surrounding service roads.

Or you could try competing – and it needn't cost the earth. Autotests involve a series of tests driving forwards and reversing around a technical cone layout, with entry fees normally £30-40 and no special equipment or safety gear required. AutoSolos are similar events that only require forward driving – check out btrda.com to find events near you. And if your offspring are starting to show petrolhead urges, the Let's Go Karting scheme (msauk.org) offers £5 junior taster sessions at 20 venues across the UK.



But if you'd rather curl up on the couch, there's still plenty of action on the box. As well as the F1 finale in Brazil, the world's best drivers will converge on Bangkok for the Race of Champions competition in December, before the WRC boots back into life in January with Rallye Monte Carlo. DM

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

» **25** Brazilian Grand Prix, Interlagos fl.com
» **23-25** Roger Albert Clark Rally rogeralbertclarkrally.org

DECEMBER

» **8-9** Rockingham Stages mcac.co.uk
» **14-16** Race of Champions, Bangkok raceofchampions.com

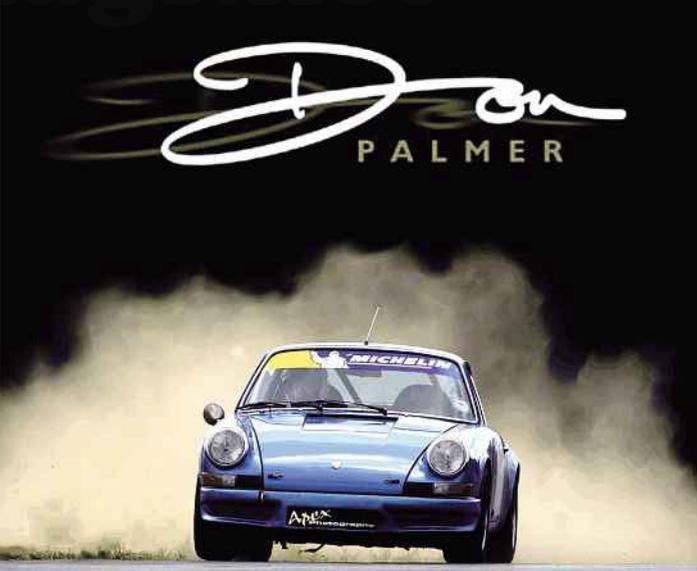
» **26** Plum Pudding Handicap Races, Mallory Park mallorypark.co.uk

JANUARY

» **15-20** Rallye Monte Carlo acm.mc

THE LEADERBOARD	LAP TIME	PEAK MPH	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)	1:21.5	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 R55	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	108.3	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 RS5 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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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/kc	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	★★★★☆
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	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta 14 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	★★★★☆
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	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	053 F	'03-'06	6/5179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0	15.5	153	-	23.3	+ Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 145 Cloverleaf		'95-'01	4/1970	150/6300	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	★★★★☆
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 125i M Sport	176 D	£26,070	4/1997	218/5000	228/1350	1420kg	156	6.4	-	155	154	42.8	+ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW M135i	173 D	£29,995	6/2979	316/5800	331/1400	1500kg	214	5.0	-	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - Odd styling, steering lacks feel	★★★★☆
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 boingy	★★★★☆
BMW 325ti Compact	031 D	'01-'05	6/2494	189/6000	181/3500	1480kg	130	7.1	-	147	-	31.7	+ Terrific engine, chassis, price - Looks a bit geeky	★★★★☆
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 F	£7,995+	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	103	61.4	+ Full of character and insurance-friendly - Insurance friendly power	★★★★☆
Citroën C2 GT	064 R	'04-'05	4/1587	108/5750	108/4000	1027kg	107	8.7	-	121	-	-	+ Appealing and affordable homologation special - Inert steering	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTR	013 R	'97-'03	4/1587	100/5700	100/3500	920kg	110	9.3	-	116	-	36.7	+ VTS poise, half the insurance group - Cramped pedals	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	'97-'03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	7.6	22.6	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	£16,800	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	133	155	42.2	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	£23,100	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	146	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - It's six grand more than a Clio Cup	★★★★☆
Citroën Xsara VTS		'98-'04	4/1997	167/7000	142/4750	1190kg	143	8.0	-	137	-	33.6	+ Citroën's GTI-6 - Missing one gear and a bit of handling polish	★★★★☆
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	★★★★☆
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£14,500	4/1368	133/5000	150/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	+ Great engine, smart styling - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★☆
Ford Sportka SE	084 R	'03-'08	4/1597	94/5500	100/4250	934kg	102	9.5	-	108	-	37.2	+ Big fun in a little package - Could handle even more power	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	£14,545	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Grown up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 F	£16,000	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - If you're 12 years old	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	020 R	'00-'02	4/1596	102/6000	107/4000	976kg	106	10.2	-	113	-	38.2	+ Better than you'd ever believe - No-one else will believe it	★★★★☆
Ford 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 Mk3's sparkle is still absent, though	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	172 R	£21,995	4/1999	247/5500	265/1750	1362g	184	6.4	-	154	169	-	+ All-round cracking hot hatch. Good value, too - There's a bit of torque-steer	★★★★☆
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	★★★★☆
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	1041kg	120	8.6	27.6	122	-	38.2	+ Everything - Nothing. The 1.4 is worth a look too	★★★★☆
Ford Racing Puma	016 F	'00-'01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.8	23.2	137	-	34.7	+ Exclusivity - Expense. Standard Puma does it so well	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen	144 F	'09-'11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	155	-	-	+ Fantastic on road and track - There'll only be 20, and it's a tad pricey...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R	102 R	'07-'11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.8	17.5	146	215	31.0	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on standard car...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R	075 R	'01-'05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	16.9	146	-	31.7	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★☆
Lancia Delta Integrale	011 F	'88-'93	4/1995	210/5750	220/3500	1350kg	158	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ Potent and great value - Looks divide opinion, diff steering	★★★★☆
Mazda 2 1.5 Sport	132 F	£12,995	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★☆
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	£23,395	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.3	14.5	155	224	29.4	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz A250 'by AMG'	173 D	£28,755	4/1991	208/5500	258/1200	1445kg	146	6.5	-	149	148	46.3	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy	★★★★☆
MG ZS 180	035 D	'01-'05	6/2497	175/6500	177/4000	1235kg	144	7.3	-	139	-	29.7	+ Mercedes builds a proper hot hatch - But denies it a manual gearbox	★★★★☆
Mini One		£13,460	4/1598	97/6000	113/3000	1070kg	92	10.5	-	116	127	52.3	+ Well-sorted chassis, characterful engine - Image looks like a 45	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper	167 R	£14,900	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Perfect power-to-grip ratio - HUGE speedo, slow car	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S	149 F	£18,180	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	-	142	136	48.7	+ Still desirable - Steering has lost a little feel	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper SD	158 D	£18,870	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Lacks old car's direct front end	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works	154 R	£22,455	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1140kg	185	6.5	-	148	165	39.8	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe	164 R	£23,800	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1165kg	181	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★☆
													+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof...	★★★★☆

ALL TURNS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

You're going to enjoy the All Wheel Drive Volvo XC60 with Instant Traction™, whether you're heading off into the muddy unknown, or simply popping out to buy a baguette.

Fuel consumption for the Volvo XC60 range in mpg (l/100km): Urban 18.6 (15.2) – 44.1 (6.4), Extra Urban 34.9 (8.1) – 61.4 (4.6), Combined

* Business users only. Rentals are based on vehicles with metallic paint. Examples exclude VAT and are based on non-maintained contract hire with an initial payment of 6 monthly rentals, between 1st October 2012 and 31st December 2012, or while stocks last. Not available with other promotions. Volvo Car Leasing Contract Hire is provided by Lex Autolease Ltd, trading

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 stephen@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 (Mk2)	111 F	'07-'08	4/1598	189/6000	199/1750	1130kg	170	7.6	18.0	145	-	-	+ Cracking hot Mini, until the JCW - Expensive with option packs included	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S Works GP	144 F	'06	4/1598	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	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Colt Rallart	132 F	'14-'22	4/1468	147/6000	155/3500	1060kg	141	7.4	-	131	161	40.9	+ Price, handling, performance - Its looks are a little odd	★★★★★
Nissan Sunny GT-R		'92-'93	4/1938	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	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	121	-	34.0	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	9.3	-	118	-	35.6	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs canvas to extract full potential	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 GTI 16v	034 R	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	7.4	22.2	127	-	34.9	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age	★★★★★
Peugeot 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 cash - Limited choice of colours	★★★★★
Peugeot 309 GTI		'89-'92	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	985kg	134	8.3	-	124	-	28.2	+ 205 GTI in drag, cheap - Who wants a cheap drag queen?	★★★★★
Renaultsport Twingo 133	175 R	'15-'16	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.6	-	125	150	43.5	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride	★★★★★
Renault 5GT Turbo	123 F	'87-'91	4/1397	120/5750	122/3750	831kg	146	7.8	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clo Williams' grand-daddy - Most have been thrashed	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	154 R	'17-'18	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	6.5	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ Most fun you can have on three wheels - Just 500 were built	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.5	17.7	138	-	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	255/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 F	'99-'02	6/2946	230/6000	221/3750	1335kg	175	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	095 F	'93-'96	4/1988	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 R	'17-'18	4/1998	178/5500	222/2250	1320kg	137	7.7	-	139	178	36.7	+ Rides & steers well - Not much cheaper than car below, lacks its sparkle	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	173 R	'14-'16	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	'14-'16	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	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
RŠport 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	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy	087 F	'05-'09	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 2.0 TDI	144 F	'16-'17	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	60.1	+ More fun than the petrol FR, manual 'box option - Almost as pricey as the Cupra	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	139 R	'17-'18	4/1998	178/6200	184/2000	1172kg	154	6.9	-	140	148	44.1	+ Funky (especially in Bocanegra trim), economical - The FR's a better driver	★★★★★
SEAT Leon FR+	163 D	'21-'24	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-'26	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	★★★★★
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-'19	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 F	'04-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 F	'20-'23	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-'16	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	96	119	54.3	+ Telling people you drive a Brabus - Them realising it's not a 720bhp S-class	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI CS400	146 R	'14-'16	4/2457	395/5750	400/3950	1505kg	267	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ Cosworth kudos, Fastest hatch we've tested - Incredible steering	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	130	270	-	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 F	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ A bit quicker than the STI... but not better	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 R	'13-'16	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	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport	132 R	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6900	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	'18-'19	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring	164 R	'22-'23	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-'21	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-'29	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	295/4650	317/4250	1393kg	215	5.1	-	160	221	-	+ Crazy power, chassis copes admirably - Lacks exploitability of Mégane R26	★★★★★
VW Up/SEAT Mi/Škoda Citigo	171 F	'16-'17	3/999	59/5000	70/5000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... but predictably slow	★★★★★
VW Lupo GTI	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-'19	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mki Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland	★★★★★
VW Golf GTD (Mk6)	133 D	'24-'25	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-'26	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-'28	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...	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'31-'35	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	★★★★★
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	121/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmoled one	★★★★★
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'22-'25	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6</						

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HONDA ACCORD TYPE-R, ISSUE 012

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/kc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max. mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Alfa Romeo 156 GTA	045 F	'02-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1410kg	180	6.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ Noise, pace and individuality - Front-drive chassis can't keep up	★★★★☆
Alpina D3		£31,650	4/1995	211/4000	332/2000	1495kg	143	6.9	-	152	-	52.3	+ Excellent chassis, turbodiesel oomph - Rather narrow powerband	★★★★☆
Alpina B5 Biturbo	149 D	£75,045	8/4395	500/5500	516/3000	2040kg	265	4.7	-	191	-	-	+ Big performance and top-line luxury - Driver not really involved	★★★★☆
Alpina B5 S	118 D	'07-'10	8/4398	523/5500	535/4750	1720kg	309	4.5	-	197	-	23.0	+ Quicker and more exclusive than the E60 M5 - Suspension has its limits	★★★★☆
Alpina B7	134 D	£94,845	8/4395	507/5500	516/3000	2040kg	252	4.5	-	174	-	-	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled	★★★★☆
Alpina B7	085 R	'05-'08	8/4398	500/5500	516/4250	1950kg	261	4.8	-	186	-	-	+ Alpina makes a mad, bad 7-series - Over-cautious traction control	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	£149,995	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★☆
Audi A4 2.0 TFSI quattro		£29,170	4/1984	208/4300	258/1500	1535kg	138	6.4	-	153	159	41.5	+ A good match for its German foes - No longer any naturally aspirated options	★★★★☆
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 is here now...	★★★★☆
Audi S4 (Mk2)	073 D	'05-'08	8/4163	339/7000	302/3500	1700kg	206	5.4	-	155	-	-	+ Effortless V8, agile handling - Lacks ultimate finesse of class leaders	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 Avant (Mk3)	173 D	£54,925	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	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	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Lacks finesse. Bends wheel rims	★★★★☆
Audi RS2	101 F	'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★☆
Audi S6	091 D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★☆
Audi S6	124 D	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	-	155	331	20.3	+ Looks and drives better than estate version - M5 still looks tempting	★★★★☆
Audi S6 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	★★★★☆
Audi S8	164 D	£77,900	8/3993	533/5800	479/1700	1975kg	264	4.1	-	155	237	27.7	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still overwhelming to drive	★★★★☆
Audi S8	088 D	'06-'10	10/5204	444/7000	398/3000	1940kg	232	5.1	-	155	-	21.4	+ V10 engine, ceramic brakes, fantastic gearbox - Light steering	★★★★☆
Audi Q7 V12 TDI	124 D	£100,370	12/5934	493/3750	731/1750	2635kg	190	5.1	12.2	155	298	25.0	+ Undeniably quick, relatively economical - A tad ostentatious	★★★★☆
Bentley Flying Spur	080 D	£133,200	12/5998	552/6100	479/1600	2475kg	226	4.9	-	195	396	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 Mullanne	145 D	£220,000	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2585kg	198	5.1	-	184	393	16.7	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★☆
Bentley Arnage R	048 F	'02-'08	8/6750	400/4000	616/3250	2585kg	157	6.9	17.1	155	-	13.7	+ Twin-turbo thrust, limo-like ride - It's a bit heavy	★★★★☆
Bentley Arnage T	096 D	'06-'08	8/6751	500/4200	737/3200	2585kg	196	5.2	-	179	-	14.5	+ Still able to impress - Something of an anachronism	★★★★☆
BMW 320d	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	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	10.7	165	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★☆
BMW 335i M Sport	134 F	'05-'11	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1535kg	200	5.6	-	155	196	31.0	+ Stunning drivetrain, controlled chassis - Looks a bit steady	★★★★☆
BMW 330i Sport	028 R	'99-'05	6/2979	231/5900	221/3500	1510kg	153	5.9	17.0	155	-	30.0	+ Clean, classy and confident - Too smooth for its own good?	★★★★☆
BMW 528i	164 D	£33,610	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ Four-pot 528i is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	★★★★☆
BMW 535i SE	141 D	£38,940	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1685kg	182	6.1	-	155	185	34.9	+ New 5-series impresses... - But only with all the chassis options ticked	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (F10M)	165 R	'07-'10	8/4395	552/7570	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	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E39)	110 F	'99-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	4.9	11.5	155	-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	'92-'96	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E28)	110 F	'86-'88	6/3453	286/6500	250/4500	1431kg	203	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Two handfuls in the wet	★★★★☆
BMW X5 xDrive 40d SE		£47,440	6/2993	302/4400	442/1500	2110kg	145	6.6	-	147	198	37.7	+ Handling, comfort, refinement - Looks like a big X3	★★★★☆
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	£57,880	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	★★★★☆
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	★★★★☆
Brabus Bullit	119 F	£330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★☆
Cadillac CTS-V	148 F	£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	1968kg	220	4.9	-	168	337	20.2	+ Looks, supple ride, composed chassis - Too much understeer, slow 'box	★★★★☆
Chrysler 300C 5.7 Hemi	088 D	'05-'08	8/5654	340/5000	387/4000	1910kg	180	6.2	15.1	155	-	23.3	+ Gangster chic - Ginsters suspension	★★★★☆
Ford Mondeo 2.0T Titanium		£23,045	4/1999	200/6000	221/1750	1581kg	128	7.9	-	144	184	35.8	+ Terrific chassis, sweet engine - People will still want an Audi	★★★★☆
Ford Mondeo ST220	043 D	'02-'07	6/2967	223/6150	204/4900	1550kg	146	6.8	-	151	-	27.7	+ Muscular engine, fine chassis - Hotted-up repmobile image	★★★★☆
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4		'90-'93	4/1993	220/6250	214/3500	1305kg	159	6.6	-	144	-	24.4	+ Fast and furious - Try finding a straight one	★★★★☆
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth		'86-'90	4/1993	204/6000	204/4500	1220kg	169	6.2	-	143	-	-	+ Roadgoing Group A racer - Don't shout about the power output!	★★★★☆
Holden HSV GTS S'charger	041 D	'02	8/5665	502/6050	457/5100	1799kg	283	4.5	-	180	-	-	+ Massive linear power, great chassis - Slow 'shift, cheap interior	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R*	108 D	'07-'10	4/1998	222/8000	158/6100	1252kg	180	5.9	-	150	-	-	+ Screaming engine, razor-sharp chassis - Specialist import only	★★★★☆
Honda Accord Type-R	012 R	'99-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image	★★★★☆
Infiniti M37S	150 D	£40,625	6/3696	316/7000	265/2000	1765kg	182	6.2	-	155	235	27.7	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals	★★★★☆
Jaguar XF 3.0D S	145 D	£41,950	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1820kg	161	5.9	-	155	169	44.8	+ Best XF after the R - But we'd still have the R...	★★★★☆

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VAUXHALL INSIGNIA VXR, ISSUE 163

	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
Jaguar XF SV8	116 F	08-09	8/4196	410/6250	413/3500	1842kg	226	5.1	-	155	-	22.4	+ Convincing driving experience - Overshadowed by XFR
Jaguar S-type R	048 R	02-07	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1800kg	226	5.3	-	155	-	22.5	+ Fine dynamics belie old world looks - Auto-only, and no LSD
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
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	361/4750	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
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
Maserati Quattroporte 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
Maserati Qpote 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
Lexus 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	1730kg	264	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - M3's just a little better...
Mercedes-Benz DRS20	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
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
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	096 D	06-09	8/6208	507/6800	464/5200	1840kg	280	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	03-06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG		98-02	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	1642kg	219	5.5	-	155	-	23.0	+ Drapster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	£112,890	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2151kg	257	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car
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
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
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 F	06-11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 R	£82,995	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - £85K buys a Boxster and an ML350...
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	104 F	07-10	8/6208	503/6800	464/5200	2310kg	221	4.6	11.0	155	-	17.1	+ Goes like an SUV has no right to - Gordon Murray will hate you
Mercedes-Benz 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
MG ZT 260 V8	068 F	03-05	8/4601	256/5000	302/4000	1680kg	155	6.5	16.3	155	-	21.5	+ Lovely woolly V8, well-sorted rear-drive chassis - Thirst
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 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
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-360	088 F	05-07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	103 F	05-07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	03-04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	03-05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	02-03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	+ Tenific all-rounder - You tell us
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	02-03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed
Mitsubishi Evo VI RS Sprint	011 F	99	4/1997	330/6500	323/3000	1255kg	267	4.5	11.8	145	-	-	+ Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo - A little uncompromising
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen Ed.	128 F	00-01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Still one of our favourite Evos. Exclusive, too - Import only
Porsche Panamera S	165 R	£78,221	8/4806	394/6500	369/3500	1770kg	226	5.6	-	177	293	22.6	+ Great cabin and typically fine Porsche chassis - Only a mother could love its looks
Porsche Panamera 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
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	£122,623	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride
Porsche Cayenne (Mk2)	173 D	£67,147	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.6	-	151	251	26.4	+ Dynamically the best SUV on sale - At two tons, it's still no sports car
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	144 D	£86,896	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	2170kg	231	4.7	-	173	270	24.6	+ Greener, faster, better - Odd rear styling, numb steering
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	104 F	06-10	8/4806	494/6000	516/2250	2355kg	213	4.7	11.4	171	-	19.0	+ Appears to defy physics - Still cracks mirrors at 50 paces
Range Rover Evoque S4	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
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
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	£26,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon is back (now with £8K off) - Blue paint and gold wheels aren't
Subaru Impreza WRX STI S206*	167 D	£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
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	05-07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C*	084 D	05-07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	+ Lighter, faster, fiercer - The need for self-restraint
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 F	07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?
Subaru 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
Subaru STI Type RA Spec C*	067 F	03-05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	4.3	11.1	160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the PI - Lost its throbby flat-four voice
Subaru Impreza 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
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 F	00-00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty
Subaru Impreza PI	067 F	00-01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this
Subaru Impreza 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	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.0	13.1	150	-	-	+ On paper, the ultimate - On the road, too uncompromising
Subaru Forester STI*	087 F	05-08	4/2457	320/5800	330/3500	1800kg	180	5.6	-	155	249	26.6	+ 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 £33K Vauxhall...
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	06-09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177						

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FERRARI CALIFORNIA, ISSUE 171

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 is brilliant, while the Mazda MX-5 is best for budget rear-drive fun. For the ultimate thrills, choose a Caterham R300 or an Ariel Atom, though Morgan's 3 Wheeler (right) is a curious alternative.



	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	8/162	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	£91,111	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Good luck trying to buy one	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	£29,954	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 F	£42,000	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom Mugen	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	£35,000	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	28.0	+ Makes your face ripple - ...like Clarkson's	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 1	015 F	£99,035	4/1796	125/5500	122/5000	485kg	256	5.6	18.0	115	-	-	+ Amazing styling, huge fun - As practical as a chocolate teapot	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 F	£98,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Lacks real teeth	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£110,700	8/4735	430/7500	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 F	£150,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shaker	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£138,150	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	£190,812	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feelgood car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight	★★★★☆
Audi TT S Roadster	122 D	£37,715	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question; not cheap either	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	£47,820	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engine... - is the best thing about it	★★★★☆
Audi TT Roadster (Mk1) 225bhp	016 R	£100,000	4/1781	225/5900	206/2200	1395kg	164	6.9	20.0	150	-	30.4	+ Winner on the King's Road - Trails Boxster on the open road	★★★★☆
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£45,895	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	+ Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Boring on dull	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	£66,000	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	176 R	£89,940	4/2261	280/7700	206/6000	500kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GTC V8	168 F	£136,250	8/3933	500/6000	487/7100	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	£91,111	12/5998	600/6000	590/1750	2485kg	245	4.5	-	200	396	17.0	+ A great convertible just got better - Optional carbon brakes a necessity	★★★★☆
Bentley Azure T	140 D	£91,111	8/6161	500/4200	738/1800	2695kg	188	5.2	-	179	465	14.5	+ Two-and-a-half-ton sunbed - Cheaper Conti GTC a much better drive	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 sDrive 20i (Mk2)	164 D	£29,480	4/1997	181/4800	199/1250	1470kg	125	6.8	-	142	159	41.5	+ The Z4 has grown up... - ...and got fat	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i (Mk2)	130 D	£39,430	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ As above, with more power - Not as much fun as it used to be	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 3.0s (Mk1)	094 D	£66,000	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	£66,000	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★☆
BMW M Roadster	002 F	£98,000	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★☆
BMW 335i SE Convertible	102 D	£41,710	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1735kg	177	5.8	-	155	205	32.1	+ Looks good, great to drive, fantastic engine - A bit 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	£101,000	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	£106,000	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1930kg	264	4.8	-	155	352	19.2	+ Composure, grip, power, comfort - Steering lacks feel at low speed	★★★★☆
BMW M7	026 R	£100,000	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★☆
Brooke 260 Double R	094 F	£34,995	4/2261	260/7500	200/6100	550kg	480	3.9	-	155	-	-	+ Fast, dynamic, well built - No roof, looks not for everyone	★★★★☆
Caterham 7 Classic	068 F	£16,650	4/1397	105/6000	95/5000	540kg	198	6.5	-	110	-	-	+ The Caterham experience starts here - It's pretty raw	★★★★☆
Caterham 7 Roadsport 125	105 F	£21,650	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ New Ford-engined model is just great - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★☆
Caterham 7 Supersport	165 F	£22,995	4/1595	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	+ One of the best Caterhams is less than £20K... - ...if you build it yourself	★★★★☆
Caterham 7 Roadsport SV 175	140 D	£28,850	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	555kg	321	4.8	-	138	-	-	+ The Caterham for everyday use, R300 engine - Loses intensity of R300	★★★★☆
Caterham 7 Superlight R300	150 F	£30,000	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - Factory-built cars top £30K	★★★★☆
Caterham 7 Superlight R400	105 F	£34,300	4/1999	210/7800	152/5750	525kg	406	3.8	-	140	-	-	+ R400 reborn with (lots of) Ford power - Slightly hesitant low-rev pick-up	★★★★☆
Caterham 7 Superlight R500	123 R	£41,000	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★☆
Caterham CSR 260 Superlight	094 F	£43,800	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★☆
Caterham Levante	131 F	£15,000	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly	★★★★☆
Caterham 7 R300	068 F	£15,216	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	£15,216	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	£15,216	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ Fine for the Nürburgring - Hard work around the Bullring	★★★★☆
Caterham 7 R500 Evolution	069 F	£15,216	4/1998	250/8000	190/4000	460kg	552	3.9	8.1	150	-	-	+ Maddier than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Corvette C6	083 D	£56,186	8/1612	430/5900	424/4600	1460kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics	★★★★☆
Ferrari California	171 D	£152,116	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	★★★★☆
Honda S2000	118 D	£29,990	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better	★★★★☆
IFR Aspid	126 D	£130,000	4/1997	398/8600	240/7800	740kg	451	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Imagine a Caterham crossed with a Zonda - It's a bit pricey	★★★★☆
Jaguar XK 5.0	130 F	£84,550	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1695kg	227	5.3	-	155	264	25.2	+ Basic XK gets extra power... - ...but loses some of its GT refinement	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR	167 F	£103,000	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1800kg	306	4.3	-	186	292	23.0	+ Gains Jag's fantastic new V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR-S	089 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	★★★★☆
Jaguar XK	089 F	£84,550	8/4196	294/6000	303/4100	1635kg	183	6.6	-	155	-	25.0	+ Every bit as good as the XK coupe - 294bhp still only just enough	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR	066 F	£84,550	8/4196	414/6250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Ovenrout detailing	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR	004 F	£97,000	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 - £57K before (pricey) options...	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise R	068 F	£104,111	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	£104,111	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	★★★★☆

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PALMER JP1 - ISSUE 055, MAY 2003

Dr Jonathan Palmer brought a race car experience to the ham-fisted masses with his JP1 - a focused track car built for a lifetime of corporate outings. Richard Meaden tried it out:

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+The car that made TVR. Cult status
- Mere details

TVR GRIFFITH 4.3, ISSUE 068

	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 S 1.8	104 F	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S2 1115	049 F	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 190	044 F	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S1	126 F	'96-'00	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 F	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	€102,615	8/4691	444/7000	332/4750	1980kg	228	5.1	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8 SE	170 R	£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	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3 vi)	091 F	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1155kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtop don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	970kg	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	302/6500	273/3500	1465kg	209	5.5	-	155	167	39.8	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 F	'05-'09	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black	110 F	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted 7G-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	€80,000	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1800kg	242	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Walty performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 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	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	€106,820	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	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	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL5 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	176 R	£25,000	2/1990	80/5300	103/3250	525kg	155	6.0	-	115	-	-	+ 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	161 R	'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	1257kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	29.1	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not practical	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (Mk2)	161 R	'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)	049 F	'99-'04	6/2687	228/6300	192/4700	1257kg	182	6.3	-	155	-	29.1	+ As above, but with more power - Lighter steering than before	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (Mk1)	070 F	'99-'04	6/3179	260/6200	228/4700	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ 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 artificial steering	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS Cabrio (997)	161 R	£85,240	6/3800	402/7500	310/4200	1515kg	270	4.7	-	190	242	27.4	+ The best 911 drop-top you can buy - Lacks glamour of an R8 Spyder	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (997)	139 D	€118,015	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1645kg	305	3.8	-	194	275	24.1	+ Absurdly quick and capable drop-top - We'd still take the coupe	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Speedster	152 D	'10	6/3800	402/7500	310/4200	1540kg	265	4.4	-	189	242	27.0	+ Rarity, quality, head-turning styling - More collectors' than drivers' car	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (996)	060 F	'03-'05	6/3596	414/6000	413/4600	1700kg	250	4.7	-	185	-	-	+ Faster than you'll ever need it to be - Just the image thing again	★★★★★
Radical 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	460/10500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal	★★★★★
Smart Roadster Brabus	067 D	'04-'07	3/698	101/5600	96/2500	895kg	115	9.8	-	121	-	54.3	+ Feisty engine, growly soundtrack - Slow paddleshift gearbox	★★★★★
Tesla Roadster	131 F	£87,945	AC motor	248/4500	273/0-4500	1283kg	196	5.0	14.3	120	-	-	+ If this is the future, it's going to be fun - Limited range, high price	★★★★★
Toniq-R Duratec	102 D	£23,500	4/1999	193/6500	174/4500	550kg	357	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Very good value, well built, and lots of fun too - No roof, no windscreen	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	078 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Griff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Ultima GTR	017 R	£45,500	8/6300	534/5800	528/4800	990kg	548	3.9	8.2	204	-	-	+ Turns the M1 into the Mulsanne - You'll have to build it yourself	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Westfield Megabus	036 F	£24,450	4/1298	175/9800	102/9000	430kg	413	3.7	-	140	-	-	+ Bike-engined road-rocket - Not big on practicality...	★★★★★
Westfield 1600 Sport Turbo	140 D	£26,500	4/1598	195/5850	170/2000	650kg	305	4.7	-	142	-	-	+ Very quick and composed - Expensive, and a little on the heavy side	★★★★★
Westfield XI	078 D	'04-'10	4/1275	65/6000	72/3000	498kg	132	8.5	-	120	-	-	+ Old-school charm - Old-school power	★★★★★
Westfield XTR4	068 D	'01-'10	4/1781	220/5500	184/5000	542kg	413	3.6	-	160	-	-	+ Mini-Le Mans racer - You wouldn't want to drive it there	★★★★★
Westfield SEGHT	068 F	'92-'94	8/3900	270/6000	-	622kg	441	4.4	9.4	144	-	-	+ Snarling, fire-breathing V8, ferocious pace - Spits fuel at you	★★★★★
Wiesmann Roadster MF3	077 D	€65,000	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1180kg	291	4.9	-	158	-	-	+ Engine, ride, build quality, exclusivity - Umm... '50s styling?	★★★★★

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+Character, turbo pace and great looks
- Could hinder BMW M3 sales...

BMW 1-SERIES M COUPE, ISSUE 158

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	-	24.1	+ Glorious V6 makes it a mini-Ferrari - So-so chassis	★★★★☆
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	★★★★☆
Alpina B3 Biturbo	108 F	'10-'11	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	29.1	+ Alpina's M3 alternative - Too refined for some	★★★★☆
Alpina B3 GT3	176 D	'06-'09	6/2979	402/6000	398/4500	1555kg	266	4.4	-	186	224	-	+ Alpina's M3 GT3 alternative. A beguiling package - Could look more hardcore	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage 4.7	169 D	'08-'11	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	'09-'11	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	'10-'11	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	'13-'15	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 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	'12-'15	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	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB5	142 F	'10-'11	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary	★★★★☆
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	★★★★☆
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI	155 R	'11-'12	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 TT S	119 D	'11-'12	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	'11-'12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	209	31.4	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	★★★★☆
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	155	-	30.3	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering	★★★★☆
Audi S5	163 D	'07-'10	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	'10-'11	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1725kg	261	4.3	10.6	155	252	26.2	+ Brilliant engine and accomplished chassis... - ...don't get together	★★★★☆
Audi R8 V8	168 R	'10-'11	8/4163	414/7800	317/4500	1650kg	270	4.1	9.9	187	332	19.9	+ Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price	★★★★☆
Audi R8 V10	146 R	'10-'11	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	'10-'11	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	199	-	-	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted	★★★★☆
Audi Quattro 20V	019 F	'90-'91	5/2226	220/5900	228/1950	1329kg	146	6.2	18.2	143	-	19.1	+ Modern classic - Buy wisely to avoid big bills	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT V8	167 D	'10-'11	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	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	'13-'15	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	'10-'11	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2240kg	282	3.7	-	204	388	17.3	+ A thoroughly impressive car... - ...rather than a fun and involving one	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT Speed	115 F	'07-'11	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2350kg	259	4.3	-	202	396	17.0	+ Stupendous performance, fine dynamics - Weight, thirst...	★★★★☆
Bentley Brooklands	116 D	'04-'06	8/6761	530/4000	714/3250	2655kg	203	5.0	-	184	465	14.5	+ More fun than it has any right to be - It's a bit thirsty	★★★★☆
BMW 135i M Sport	113 F	'11-'12	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	'11-'12	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	'09-'10	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1525kg	201	5.2	12.2	155	196	33.6	+ Eager engine, exploitable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E92)	162 R	'10-'11	8/3999	444/8300	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	414/8300	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	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	+ One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel	★★★★☆
BMW M3 CS (E46)	088 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	-	155	-	23.7	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car	★★★★☆
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	060 R	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	+ Stripped-down road-race M3 - Standard brakes barely adequate	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E36)	148 F	'93-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1460kg	223	5.4	12.8	157	-	25.7	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E30)	165 F	'86-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	17.8	147	-	20.3	+ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	155	-	23.3	+ A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in	★★★★☆
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	'06-'10	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	'03-'06	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	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Camaro SS	148 F	'11-'12	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	'11-'12	8/6162	580/6100	566/3800	1900kg	310	4.0	-	180	-	-	+ The most powerful Camaro yet - UK sales yet to be confirmed...	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Corvette C6	116 D	'04-'08	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	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Corvette Z06	099 F	'06-'08	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	★★★★☆
Dodge Challenger*	122 D	'08-'10	8/6059	425/6200	420/4800	1877kg	230	5.2	-	160+	-	-	+ Effortlessly cool... - ...if you live in Hazard County	★★★★☆
Ford Mustang Boss 302*	162 R	'05-'06	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	'08-'10	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 C40 R	165 F	'09-'10	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	'08-'10	6/5721	310/6500	288/4500	1080kg	292	4.9	-	165	-	-	+ Reborn Fabio GT5 boasts great engine and good looks - The ride still needs work	★★★★☆
Honda CR-Z GT	144 F	'10-'11	4/1997	122/6100	128/1500	1198kg	103	9.9	-	124	117	56.5	+ The first hybrid with sporting intent - No match for a good diesel hot hatch	★★★★☆
Honda Integra Type-R (DC2)	095 F	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some	★★★★☆
Honda Integra Type-R (DC5)*	037 F	'01-'06	4/1998	217/8000	152/7000	1250kg	176	7.1	16.7	140	-	-	+ Sharp looks, massive grip - Lost a little of the DC2's magic	★★★★☆
Honda NSX	043 F	'90-'05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.5	-	168	-	22.8	+ The useable supercar - 270bhp sounds a bit weedy today	★★★★☆
Honda NSX-R*	051 F	'02-'03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	168	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK	★★★★☆

LEXUS LF-A, MORGAN AERO 8, FORD MONDEO ST220, ALFA ROMEO 156 GTA, AUDI RS4 AVANT (Mk2)

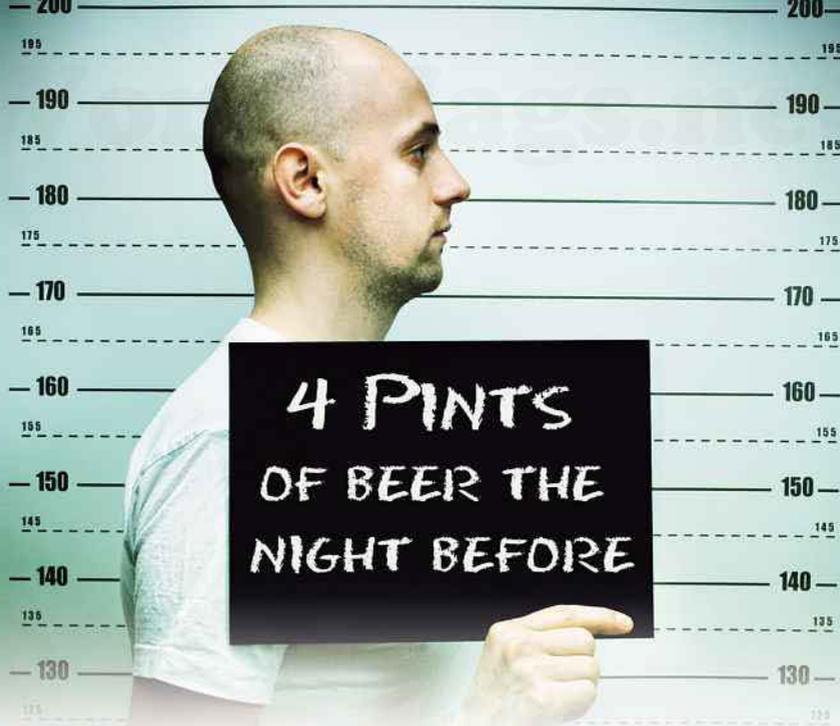
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** 17.1% of drink drive accidents are between hours of 5am and 1pm (Source: Dept. for Transport, Road Accidents and Safety Annual Report 2010)

* 4 Pints of Abbot Reserve contain 14.8 units of alcohol (Source: Greene King) and each unit takes 1 hour to leave the body (Source: NHS). Therefore 14.8 hours after 9pm the alcohol will have passed from the body.

+Big, brutal, and great fun
- Very firm ride

NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R (R34, ISSUE 009

	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
» Hyundai Veloster Turbo	176 D	£21,995	4/1591	184/5500	195/1500	1313kg	142	8.2	-	133	157	40.9	+ The usual Hyundai value, with added fun - Styling might be too quirky for some
Infiniti G37S Coupe	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
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
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	£97,000	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1753kg	314	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ The most exciting XKR ever - It's nearly £100,000
Jaguar XKR		'98-'06	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1735kg	234	5.2	-	155	229	22.9	+ Extra grunt of 4.2-litre motor - Lacks feedback
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
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	£50,250	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 spurs with the Porsche 911...
Lotus Europa SE	127 F	'08-'10	4/1998	222/5600	221/4000	995kg	227	4.9	-	146	-	28.8	+ More of a Lotus than before - Still overshadowed by the Exige and Evora
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	005 R	'99-'00	8/3506	350/6500	295/4250	1295kg	274	4.3	9.9	175	-	22.0	+ Designed for track work but brilliant on the road - Limited edition
Maserati Gran Turismo	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 Gran Turismo Sport	172 D	£90,390	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.6	-	186	331	-	+ The best everyday Gran Turismo ever - Starting to get long in the tooth?
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
Maserati Coupe	064 F	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering
Maserati GranSport	073 F	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little
Mazda RX-8	122 R	'03-'11	2/1308	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
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	122 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 M5 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
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black	106 F	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	150 D	£115,660	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	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
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
Nissan 350Z	107 R	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling
Nissan 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	-	193	295	-	+ Phenomenal brakes and handling - Not really worth the extra £50K
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 F	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	194	279	23.5	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 F	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	193	-	-	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year, now from just £35K - You won't see 20mpg often
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	009 R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Very firm ride
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	019 F	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0	+ Proof that Jap hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply
Noble M400	089 F	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185	-	-	+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior
Noble M12 GTO-3R	070 F	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	+ The ability to humble exotica - Flawed driving position
Noble M12 GTO	023 R	'00-'03	6/2544	310/6000	320/3500	980kg	321	4.1	10.2	165	-	-	+ Gives GT3 drivers a fright - Styling could be more cohesive
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£23,950	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
Porsche Cayman S	132 F	£47,604	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	257	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too (even though it's the best Cayman yet)
Porsche Cayman R	158 R	£51,728	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	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...
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
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
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (997.2)	152 D	£78,371	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1420kg	288	4.6	-	190	240	26.6	+ Fitting finale for the 997 generation - Absolutely nothing
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (997.2)		£80,785	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1480kg	261	4.7	-	185	247	26.9	+ Huge grip, power and composure - The Carrera S is £4K cheaper
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	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	-	192	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply
Porsche 911 RS (993)	036 R	'95	6/3746	300/6500	262/5400	1270kg	240	4.7	-	112	172	-	+ Barking engine note, gearchange - Not quite hardcore enough
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	066 F	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	+ Our Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough
Porsche 911 Carrera (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
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
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)	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
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
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 TR86	174 R	£24,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	162	7.5	-	140	181	36.2	+ More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality
TVR 330C	057 R	'03-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.7	10.0	175	-	-	+ Looks, engine - Unsupervisory seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish
TVR Sagaris	099 D	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'
TVR 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
Vauxhall Monaco 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	1375kg	153	6.1	15.8	149	172		

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+Two tons of well-hung British beef
- Leaden gearbox

ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE S/C, ISSUE 001

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/kc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max. mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Off GT9R	127 D	€450,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights	★★★★★
» Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	176 R	£189,995	12/5935	565/6750	457/5500	1739kg	330	4.1	-	183	-	-	+ A much better car than the DBS it succeeds - Shame it looks little different, then	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 F	05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.9	10.1	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage s/c	001 R	93-'00	8/5340	550/6500	550/4000	1988kg	281	4.6	-	186	-	13.1	+ Two tons of well-hung British beef - Leaden gearbox	★★★★★
BMW M1	110 F	78-'81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.8	-	161	-	-	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	€925,000	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 F	€1.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	-	-	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous brolly/roof thing	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 F	€2.0m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	-	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1656kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Caparo T1	138 F	£301,975	8/3499	575/10500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	£106,605	8/1662	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	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	159 R	£178,491	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	£198,936	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	£227,107	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	208	360	15.4	+ 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	1520kg	326	4.1	-	193	-	18.6	+ Berlinetta dynamics, 8000rpm with the roof down - Looks?	★★★★★
Ferrari F430 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	★★★★★
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	415/5000	1718kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 R	'11-'12	12/5999	661/8250	447/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Er, the car isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 R	'06-'12	12/5999	611/6000	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	1665kg	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...	★★★★★
Cumport Apollo	110 F	£275,000	8/4163	690/6300	675/4000	1200kg	584	3.0	-	220+	-	-	+ Stupendous performance, 'Apollo' - High price, 'Gumpert'	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	157 F	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	213	-	-	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - until McLaren built the F1	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCX	094 F	€500,000	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	3.9	7.7	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCXR Edition	118 F	€1.5m	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spike power delivery	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	158 F	£875,000	8/5000	1100/6900	885/4100	1435kg	779	2.8	-	261+	-	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's almost Veyron money	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2	176 F	£166,784	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg	399	3.9	-	199	-	-	+ The mad rear-driven Lambo is back! - Gallardo not feeling as fresh as the 458	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP560-4 Spyder	130 F	£162,240	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1550kg	362	4.0	-	201	330	20.0	+ The sound of a V10 with no roof - A smidge less hardcore than the coupe	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP570-4 S'leggera	152 F	£178,560	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg	426	3.5	-	202	325	20.6	+ A reminder of how great the Gallardo is - LP560-4 does as good a job	★★★★★
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 - Er... expensive?	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 F	'06-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	4.3	9.4	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini 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 Miago 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	467/6000	1665kg	385	3.3	-	211	213	-	+ 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	★★★★★
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?	★★★★★
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	442/8000	1134kg	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 - Design'll never be another	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	131 F	'09-'10	12/5980	661/5400	737/2200	1876kg	358	4.0	8.1	199	-	-	+ Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers £250K price	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 R	£168,395	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	355	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	€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	€882,000	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Just as astonishing as the Zonda... - although 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	1570kg	319	3.2	7.3	193	272	24.4	+ The Turbo at the very top of its game - The GT3's cheaper...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo S (997.2)	159 R	£125,865	6/3800	523/6250	516/2100	1570kg	339	2.9	6.8	196	268	24.8	+ As above, with more power - The GT3's even cheaper...	★★★★★
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 - Er...	★★★★★
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												

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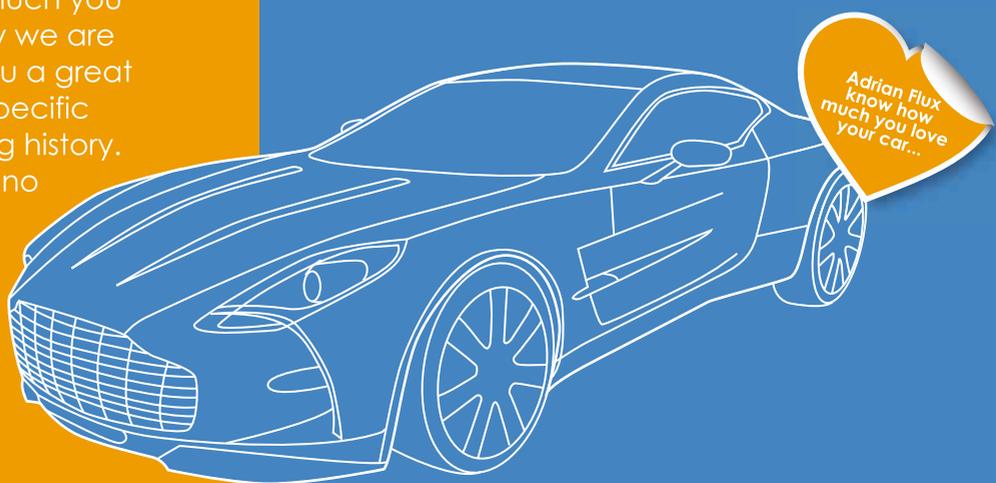
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Martin Brundle & his Eagle E-type

The former F1 driver and Le Mans winner on his dream E-type, built by Eagle

I've always loved E-types. My dad used to own 'East Anglia's leading sports car centre', as he called it, and my mum would drop me off at school in an E-type. We lived at the garage in West Lynn and in the late 1970s he'd have rows of E-types and Astons; he could hardly give them away because they were out of fashion by then. They were unreliable and they'd had their moment.

But there's always been something pretty special about E-types. I just can't imagine what it must have been like when it launched 50 years ago – seeing those things must have been extraordinary. Jackie Stewart told me the E-type wiped out a lot of the special body guys in Italy, because £1800 could suddenly buy something that looked amazing.

When Tom Walkinshaw's racing cars were auctioned off I bought chassis 185, the Group C XJR-6 I raced. It was beautiful, but it sat in my garage for three years. I realised it was decaying and needed to be owned by someone who could look after it properly – I decided I wanted something that I could actually jump in and drive. So I sold it to Henry Pearman, who owns Eagle [a company which enhances Jaguar E-types]. I was keeping my hours up in my helicopter and went to visit Henry one time, and he happened to have a

red Series 3 V12 Roadster. I bought it on the spur of the moment, a complete impulse buy.

But for me, *the E-type* is the Series 1 Coupe. I'm not one for getting the roof down in a car – I prefer not to be on show like that – so I sold the V12, Henry found a 1965 Coupe and then really went to town on it. I don't think of Eagle as restorers – they're artists. They do a lot of little things that make the car look right, things that alter the stance, the wider wheels, tucking the exhaust up closer to the body.

It's got a warmed-up 4.2-litre straight-six with around 300bhp, a five-speed gearbox, it's lower, there's subtly tweaked suspension geometry, a stronger engine frame, and wider competition chrome wheels with much more modern tyres. Arguably the most important thing I had put on it was air-conditioning – if you open up the windows, exhaust gases get in, so you need air-con if you're going to spend some time in it!

What would I change on it? Very little. It's got straight-through pipes, which on a long motorway trawl can get a bit noisy. But that's the only thing. It's two and a half hours from home to the centre of London, and I wouldn't hesitate in taking the E-type. I'm happy to take it out in the rain too; it'll clean! There's no point having a car like this if you're just going to babysit it.

Alongside my BMW K1600 GT bike and my helicopter, I've got enough toys to get me out of Norfolk and around the world! Unless it's outside of Europe, I'll use one of them to travel to Grands Prix myself. I got this E-type in August, shortly before the GPs at Spa and Monza – which had road trip written all over it! I covered 2000 miles in two weeks and the thing was just brilliant. Across the Alps, it got the nickname Elvis – '60s icon and all that. Next year will be my 500th GP as a fan, driver or broadcaster – over half that have ever taken place! – so I think I'll find a new way of getting to that one.

'THERE'S NO POINT HAVING A CAR LIKE THIS IF YOU'RE JUST GOING TO BABYSIT IT'

I like cars where you remember every journey you do in it – it's so hard to find one like that. I remember coming home late from work one night in 1997 in a Ferrari 355. I'd had such a thrilling drive home that I sat in the car on the driveway and thought: 'I'm going to go back out and do that again!' I love road driving and I've got an adventurer attitude – I'm sure when I stop broadcasting I'll book myself onto bike and car tours around the world.'



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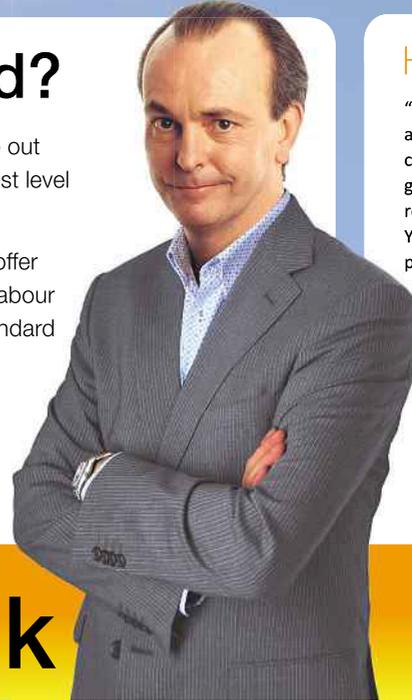
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