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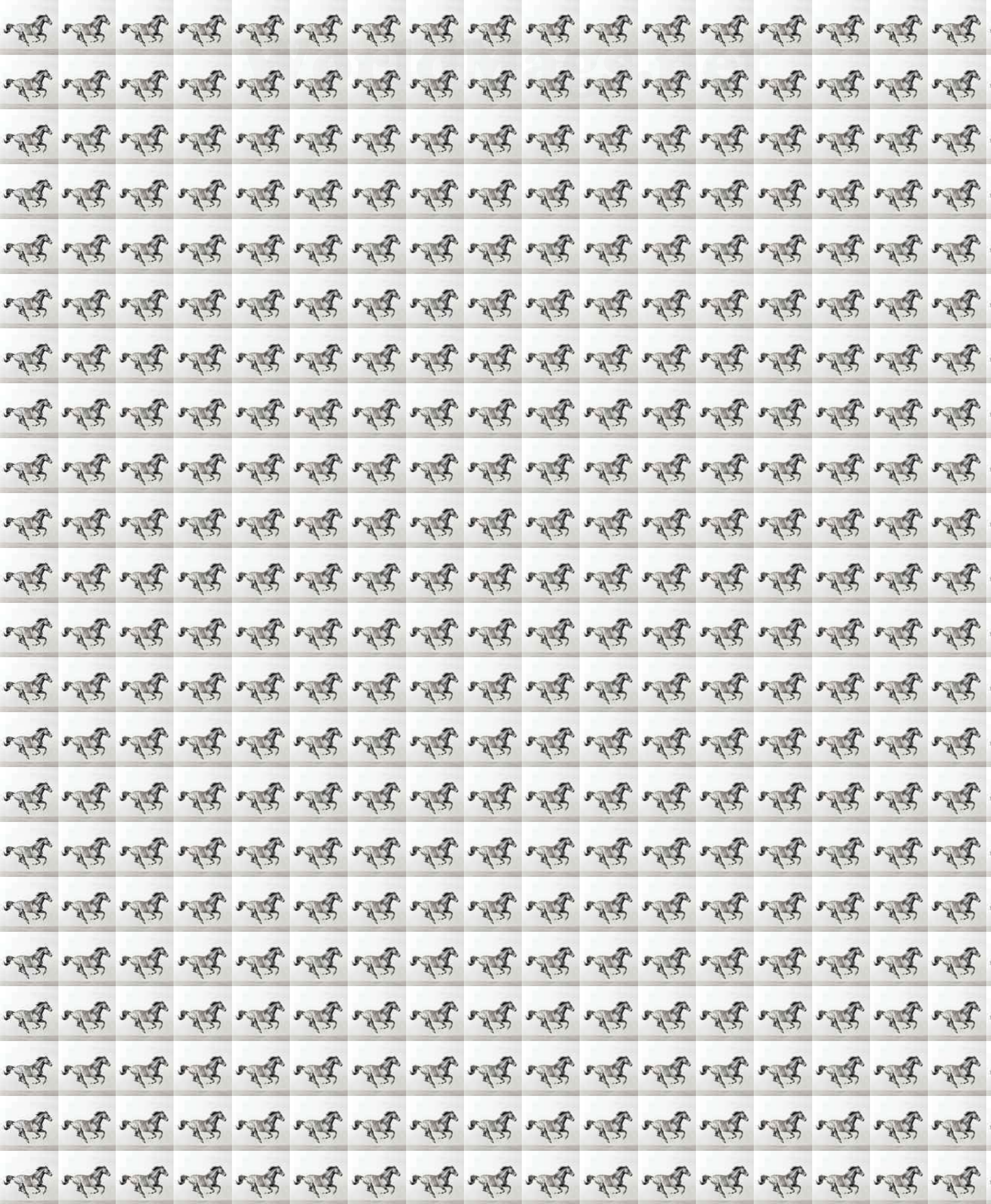
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**INTEGRALE EVO 3
PROTOTYPE TESTED**
WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN?
FINAL INTEGRALE DRIVEN

**LAST-EVER E90
BMW M3 DRIVEN**
BRILLIANT LIGHTWEIGHT
CRT ON THE LIMIT





Official fuel consumption figures for the Audi RS 4 Avant in mpg (l/100km): Urban 19.3 (14.6), Extra Urban 33.2 (8.5), at £4,000, 20" 5 V-spoke design polished titanium alloy wheels at £1,350 and matt aluminium styling pack at £480.



WorldMags.net

Audi
Vorsprung durch Technik



The new 444bhp Audi RS 4 Avant

Combined 26.4 (10.7). CO₂ emissions: 249g/km. Model shown is Audi RS 4 Avant 4.2 FSI quattro with ceramic brakes
audi.co.uk/RS4

WorldMags.net

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Mercedes-Benz

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'I wasn't sure Aston had it in it to deliver on the One-77'

This Ed Speak column could get me sacked. On the day that we were due to drive the Aston Martin One-77, I had a number of important meetings lined up at our headquarters in London. It was year-end time, so the grown-ups at Dennis Publishing wanted to talk budgets, subscription strategies and commercial activities for 2013. As editor, I spend a lot of time in meetings like this – but not this time. How could I miss the opportunity to drive the One-77? A quick call to my publishing director, some first-class excuse making, and then it was off to Millbrook to drive arguably the most desirable car on the planet.

The One-77 is totemic. It's a 750bhp aluminium and carbon-clad symbol of Aston Martin at its finest. You can feel and touch the engineering expertise and the design genius when you caress the car – which, believe me, you do. Over and over. Most of all, you genuinely witness the ambition and enthusiasm of the One-77's creators when you drive it – a spirit that runs through every duct, pipe, manifold and combustion chamber of this exquisite car. Aston Martin has quite comprehensively nailed every element that makes people like us giddy with excitement – from the yowling soundtrack to the beautifully measured control feedback. If I'm honest, I wasn't entirely sure that Aston Martin had it in it to deliver on the One-77. It does, and then some.

Shortly after driving the One-77, a call came through from Aston that Italian investment and capital group Investindustrial would be joining as a major shareholder. Few could hide their relief in this office – after all the strife at Lotus, the UK sports car

industry needs a good-news story. As the info filtered through, it became clear that the management would not rule out a technical collaboration with another manufacturer – with many recognising Mercedes and AMG as the likely candidate. We couldn't confirm this as we went to press, but Investindustrial and Merc/AMG have a strong marketing partnership forged when Ducati (which the former owned) was sponsored by AMG. When I made frequent trips to Aston's HQ in 2009 – the year it showed the Lagonda concept – a Merc GL SUV was a permanent resident in the car park, so if I was a betting man, I'd say Aston has been courting Mercedes for years...

Aston Martin boss Dr Ulrich Bez has made it clear that the firm needs an SUV – and Mercedes has the architecture. Many recoil at the thought of an Aston SUV, and others will view it as a necessary evil. For me, having driven the most acute demonstration of Aston-ness, I only hope that if a collaboration with Mercedes and/or AMG occurs, the DNA of Aston will survive intact. Part of the appeal of modern AMGs is that they cannot be confused with anything else. The homogeneity of the driving experience, the DNA; it's all singularly AMG.

Can these two fiercely unique brands marry? Should they? I'm keen to hear your thoughts (nickt@evo.co.uk) – if I've still got a job, that is...

Nick

Nick Trott Editor



THIS MONTH ON PLANET EVO



CARS FOR SALE

» [evo's](http://forsale.evo.co.uk) new website for buying and selling cars – forsale.evo.co.uk – is the best place to spot a performance car bargain. Matthew Hayward picked out his Fantasy Garage from the site this month – turn to page 141.

EVO MERCHANDISE

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Lots of pics never make the pages of evo, often for good reason! Here are a few from evo 179, including a special pic from Dobie's 'sheep I fancy' album. Elsewhere there's new art director Rob Gould (centre), and Harry's new Lamborghini (bottom right), of which you'll see more in evo soon...



WHO IS THIS?
 email nickt@evo.co.uk

evo 179 – behind the scenes

» Attention iPad users: evo's interactive digital edition features extra sounds and videos that can't be seen in print. Check out the App Store for more information and offers, including joint digital and print subscriptions.

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*'THESE CARS ARE
UNITED BY THEIR
TIGHT FOCUS
AND SUBLIME
EXECUTION'*

Features

050 ONE-77 DRIVEN

We've been waiting a long time for this. Finally we're putting Aston Martin's £1.2million hypercar to the test, with two full days' driving in the UK, including a visit to some of our favourite Welsh roads. Is it as talented, desirable and intoxicating as a Pagani Huayra?

066 V12 ASTON BUYING GUIDE

However lovely the One-77 may be, it'll set you back a seven-figure sum – and it's sold out anyway. The good news is that there are plenty of other V12 Aston Martins to choose from, and you can bag one for as little as £30,000

072 BMW M3 CRT DRIVEN

The last of the current-generation M3s could be the very best. With the engine from the hardcore GTS, the better handling four-door chassis and a host of new carbon technology, is the CRT saloon the best of its breed?

080 THE LAST INTEGRALE

You probably know the Lancia Delta Integrale Evo 1 and 2, but what about the 3? With 237bhp and an interesting colour scheme, this unique 'Grale is the end product of an interesting tale

088 FINAL FLING

Four *evo* heroes are not long for replacement – or culling altogether. We take the Renault Clio 200 Cup, Porsche 997 GT3, Subaru WRX STI and V8-powered BMW M3 for a final fling in – where else? – Wales

100 PORSCHE PILGRIMAGE

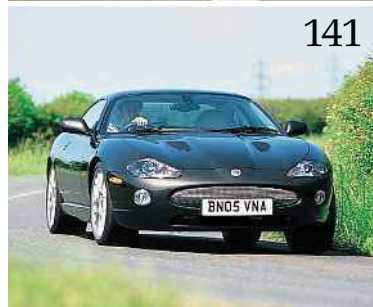
The new 911 Carrera 4S is Porsche's latest all-wheel-drive sports car. We suss it out via an Austrian road trip to discover more about its little-known, but really rather special ancestor

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How much better is cold-weather rubber when the roads are white and slippery? And which tyres should you invest in to keep you moving this winter?



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The future's looking bright for Aston Martin, but it's less rosy for the Jaguar C-X75 hypercar and sporty Subarus

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Porter reckons we should all drive Aston Rapides, while Metcalfe insists we should all be in Range Rovers. Needell is too busy gloating about his F1 predictions

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You're a bossy bunch this month, telling Aston what they should do, Caterham what they shouldn't and us lot what to write

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Guess what Harry's bought? Three clues: it's Italian, wears a four-leafed clover badge and makes a very interesting noise...

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The muscle car restorer with a lesser-spotted Shelby GT

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CALSONIC SKYLINE

evo gets behind the wheel of a Japanese racing legend



NEXT ISSUE ON SALE WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30



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A man in a plaid shirt and jeans is leaning against the side of a white convertible car. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The car is parked on a grassy area in front of a house with a tiled roof and white windows. The background is slightly blurred.

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JAGUAR KILLS OFF C-X75...

HYBRID SUPERCAR PROTOTYPES
WILL BE FINISHED, BUT LACK OF
INTEREST SCUPPERS PLANS
FOR A 250-CAR RUN



the car into very limited production, with some of the development budget for the powertrain coming from the UK Government's Technology Strategy Board, which also underwrote development of the Lotus 414E and Infiniti Emerg-e range-extender hybrids.

Unsurprisingly, the plans to use Bladon jet engines to charge the batteries quickly fell by the wayside. They would never meet today's tough emissions standards, especially when starting from cold. So Williams proposed replacing them with a turbocharged and supercharged 1.6-litre four-cylinder petrol engine, developed by Cosworth and capable of producing over 500bhp at 10,000rpm.

In early 2011, Jaguar announced it would put

the C-X75 into limited production, with a run of no more than 250 cars priced at a whopping £840,000 plus taxes. For that customers would get a car capable of 205mph and 0-60mph in under 3sec, but with an official CO2 emissions figure of just 100g/km, and a range of 40 miles on electric power alone.

Then Williams started wind tunnel testing and discovered some serious technical problems. The cooling requirements of the electric motors, battery and petrol engine required an air intake bigger than the frontal area of the original concept car. New intakes were added to the roof, the sides and the nose of the car – and space for 17 radiators had to be found. After a huge amount of computer modelling, five fully functioning prototypes were built and started testing in 2012.

Adrian Hallmark, Jaguar's brand director, is keen to put a positive spin on the project's

Few people were completely surprised by Jaguar's decision to kill the C-X75 project before the car ever reached production. Selling a hybrid mega-car powered

by a combination of electricity and a four-cylinder engine was always going to be a hard sell in the current market. Perhaps the big surprise is that Jaguar persisted with the programme for as long as it did.

The C-X75 was first revealed at the 2010 Paris motor show, with a pair of jet engines on-board to generate electricity when the batteries ran low. The reaction there was positive enough for Jaguar to commission Williams F1 to explore the possibility of putting

'PERHAPS THE BIG SURPRISE IS THAT JAGUAR PERSISTED WITH THE PROGRAMME FOR AS LONG AS IT DID'

Above: original C-X75 concept car used micro gas turbines to generate electricity, but these were dropped for a four-cylinder petrol engine

BRITAIN LOSES IMPREZA

Legendary rallying saloon pulled from UK market **P14**



THE FUTURE IS CARBON

BMW plans first-ever production cars with carbonfibre bodies **P18**



BMW 4-SERIES REVEALED

Coupe and cabriolet 3-series are spun off and refreshed **P19**



WOULD ANYONE HAVE BOUGHT ONE?

The C-X75 was a stunning piece of design – but did the world really need another eco-friendly supercar?

It's a quandary that's also troubling both McLaren (with the P1) and Porsche (with the 918), because finding actual customers for these hybrid supercars is proving much harder than they expected. Jaguar admits it never took any deposits for the C-X75, although it had around 100 letters of interest. To make the project pay, the company needed to sell all 250 at around £1million including taxes.

It was never going to happen, especially once it was announced that the car would use a four-cylinder engine. That's not what customers of this type of car expect, however fast it goes.

Harry Metcalfe
Editorial
director



cancellation. He's confirmed that all five prototypes will continue to be developed until they meet all the performance targets the company set for the C-X75. This should be completed by May, after which the engineers working on the car will be absorbed into other projects at Jaguar Land Rover.

'We always intended the technology we've developed on the C-X75 project to trickle down to our regular production cars,' Hallmark told a small group of journalists as he announced the cancellation. 'For example, the electric motors used on the C-X75 only weigh 23kg, but have a torque rating of 295lb ft. Developing such a compact power source offers us significant packaging advantages.' Hallmark also confirmed that Jaguar is working on further engines with both turbocharging and supercharging.

We've been promised a drive in one of the C-X75 prototypes soon, so we'll get to find out whether this electric Jaguar really would have been a match for a Veyron. And there will still be a chance to buy a C-X75 – Jaguar is planning to auction off three of the five prototypes later in the year. It will be fascinating to see what they fetch.

Harry Metcalfe

...AS ASTON SECURES FUTURE FUNDING

ITALIAN PRIVATE INVESTOR PROMISES A £500MILLION BOOST TO HELP BRITISH MARQUE REFRESH ITS RANGE

Below: Aston Martin hopes to be pinning badges to far more cars in the future than it is currently

Good news from Gaydon, where Aston Martin has secured its future – for now, at least – with a cash injection from a new investor.

Italian private equity fund Investindustrial has bought a 37.5 per cent stake in the British sports car maker for £150million. This will release other investment totalling around £500m over the next five years, enabling the company to start developing a new generation of models.

Aston has had a tough time of things recently. The company sold just 2500 cars in the 12 months to September 2012, a 20 per cent fall compared to the same period in 2010/11. That's barely a third of the peak of 7000 cars a year Aston managed before the global recession bit, numbers that reflect both the weakness of the luxury sports car market and the company's ageing model range.

Although a new DBS and a revised DB9 were launched in 2012, both use the same 'VH' architecture that has underpinned

all the company's cars since 2004. Aston still builds its engines in a leased section of former owner Ford's Cologne plant, and both its V8 and V12s are set to face tougher emissions challenges.

The investment will give Aston much-needed breathing space – the company's credit rating had previously been downgraded to 'junk' by ratings agencies – but it should also help it to begin serious work on new models.

Aston previously came close to agreeing a technical collaboration to use Mercedes engines, and chairman David Richards has confirmed that the company is considering working with another carmaker to share costs. He told the *Financial Times*: 'We have spoken to a number of people over the last couple of years and looked at various options and these are on the table. We may go our own way – who knows?'

Aston's top priority is to replace the nine-year-old DB9, which is struggling to match the showroom appeal of more modern rivals. But Investindustrial can certainly share some experience of turning around struggling marques – it tripled its return on Ducati after rejuvenating the Italian bike brand and selling it to Volkswagen for €1.1billion.

Mike Duff





IMPREZA WITHDRAWN FROM UK SUBARU PULLS PLUG ON RALLYING HERO

The Impreza is dead – in the UK at least. Subaru has stopped importing the WRX STI, the last of the family to reach these shores. The remaining stock is expected to last until summer, which works out at around 100 cars, based on Subaru's quoted annual sales figures. A new fourth-generation Impreza is already on sale in Japan and the US, but it does without WRX or STI variants.

The fast Impreza has been with us since 1994, and has established its place in the *evo* hall of fame through some illustrious special editions, such as the RB5, 22B and RB320. The Impreza name was dropped in 2010, with the rebranded WRX STI struggling to sell against posher rivals and in the face of punitive CO2 tax ratings. British Subaru dealers will now only offer SUV models and the BRZ, of which Subaru plans to bring in more next year. A company spokesman told us: 'We're not forgetting our performance heritage entirely.'

So rest in peace, Impreza. Flick to page 88 for a very apt group test. **Stephen Dobie**

LIGHTER, FASTER RS6 GETS V8 POWERPLANT

V10 IS GONE, BUT AUDI'S NEXT SUPER-ESTATE WILL BE CAPABLE OF 0-62MPH IN 3.9SEC, 189MPH AND 28.8MPG

Audi has released images and details of the next RS6 Avant, the first of four new RS models that are set to be launched in 2013.

You probably won't be surprised to hear that Audi has opted to ditch the fuel-gargling V10 of the last RS6 in favour of a more economical V8. This is a tuned version of the twin-turbo 4-litre engine that we've already seen in the S6, S7 and S8 (and also the Bentley Continental), with 552bhp and 516lb ft of torque. That's 20bhp less than the old RS6, but with 37lb ft more. And, with the official economy figure of 28.8mpg marking a 40 per cent improvement on the old car, it seems like a fair swap.



Above: V8 is much more frugal than the old V10. Below: carbonfibre trim

The new RS6 is 100kg lighter, thanks to the combination of aluminium body panels and the smaller engine. That, plus a quicker eight-speed ZF automatic 'box and quattro four-wheel drive, translates into a claimed 3.9sec 0-62mph time, 0.7sec quicker than the old car. The standard speed limiter is set to 155mph, but this can be upgraded to 174mph with the optional 'Dynamic' package, or 189mph with 'Dynamic Plus'.

The RS6 will go on sale in July, with prices set to start at around £77,000. Later in the year, we'll also see the new RS7, being offered in lieu of an RS6 saloon, plus the first of Audi's SUV line-up to wear the 'RS' badge – the Q3 RS. The new RS5 Cabriolet, which you can read about on page 40, completes the mini RS product blitz.

Audi's new development head, Wolfgang Dürheimer, has also spoken about his plans for the company. The former Porsche and Bentley engineering boss has made no secret that he wants to produce some radical new models; some of these have peripheral *evo* interest – like an ultra-economical city car – but we do like the idea of a lightweight sports car spun off the next TT.

'It will need to use a combination of steel, aluminium and carbonfibre,' Dürheimer told journalists recently. 'I would prefer a five-cylinder engine and a roll cage. In terms of price it would have to use the 911 GT3 model



RADICAL'S RING RECORD- BREAKER?

BRITISH SPORTS CAR MAKER PREPARING 380BHP RXC FOR ROAD, TRACK AND NORDSCHLEIFE BID





'THE NEW RS6 IS 100KG LIGHTER, THANKS TO ALUMINIUM PANELS AND THE SMALLER ENGINE'



Above and left: RS6 will be offered only as an estate, although there will be an RS7 four-door coupe

– it will cost much more than the standard TT, so you actually get less for more.'

Dürheimer also spoke of his desire for a 'super sports' model above the R8, possibly featuring a hybrid diesel powertrain, saying, 'If it's quick, cool and has low consumption, then it will be a success.'

Mike Duff

Additional reporting by Jack Rix



991 GT3 CUP SET TO HIT THE TRACK

**PORSCHE REFRESHES
LEGENDARY RACER**

This is the new Porsche 911 GT3 Cup, the first racer based on the 991-gen 911 and a taster of the next road-going GT3. But don't get too excited: while the new GT3 road car will use a new-generation engine, the circuit-based version sticks with the familiar 'Mezger' 3.8-litre flat-six from the old GT3.

It's gained a 10bhp boost, taking it up to 454bhp, while the six-speed sequential gearbox gets steering wheel paddle-shifters for the first time. The tyres are marginally wider and there are upgraded brakes, with 380mm slotted and vented discs up front.

The 911 GT3 Cup is available exclusively in white, and costs €181,200 plus local taxes – around £175,000 at current exchange rates. It's the latest iteration of the world's best selling race car, with nearly 2500 GT3 Cups sold since its debut in 1998. **Stephen Dobie**



Above: 991 gets the GT3 Cup treatment. Left: stripped-out interior gains paddle-shifters

You're looking at what can only be described as Radical's radical new direction – a hard-top sports car that will be spun into both racing and road versions.

Only renderings were available as *evo* closed for press, but the production version of the Radical RXC will make its debut at the Autosport show in January, before going on sale later in the year. Radical plans to offer racing versions, which will be eligible for a variety of championships, and fully European type-approved road cars. Both are based around the same tubular-steel chassis and have glassfibre bodywork. Overall weight is just 900kg and – thanks to the flat underside and



that massive rear wing – the RXC can generate up to 900kg of downforce at speed.

Power will come from a standard 3.7-litre Ford V6 producing 380bhp, giving the RXC a 429bhp/ton power-to-weight ratio. That should translate into a 2.8sec 0-62mph time and a

Above: design of Radical's new RXC is based on Peugeot's Le Mans-winning 908 prototype

top speed of 175mph (limited by gearing). Radical's rev-happy V8 engine, based on two Suzuki superbike cylinder blocks, will be offered as an option for racing. All versions will use a Quaife seven-speed racing 'box.'

The prospect of a fully street-legal version also raises the possibility of Radical returning to the Nürburgring, where the Germans have always denied that the time set by the Radical SR8 – 6:48 – counted as a 'road car' record. 'We'll definitely be taking this car there, absolutely,' Radical co-founder Phil Abbott told *evo*. 'And with proper European type approval, they're not going to be able to deny that this is a legal car.' **Mike Duff**

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ABOVE AND BEYOND



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(9.9) – 40.4 (7.0), Combined 20.5 (13.8) – 37.7 (7.5). CO₂ emissions g/km: 322 - 196.



BMW'S CARBONFIBRE FUTURE

MASS-MARKET CARBONFIBRE CARS HAVE BEEN A LONG TIME COMING. THIS YEAR, THEY'LL FINALLY ARRIVE. HERE'S WHY

It's over three decades since carbonfibre made the crossover from aerospace to automotive, with the 1981 McLaren MP4-1 being the first F1 car built around a carbon monocoque. In 1992, the McLaren F1 became the first road car with a carbon body. But although the use of composite has spread since then, its cost and complexity has restricted its use to either expensive supercars, or for making smaller components on limited-run specials.

That's set to change in 2013 with the launch of the BMW i3 city car – the first

Above: masses of carbon yarn will roll out of US factory. Below: i8 is one of two carbon-bodied models planned

volume-produced model with a carbonfibre body. This will be accompanied by the considerably more expensive, but equally carbon, i8 sports car. And although BMW is initially going to reserve the use of carbon bodies for these new electric models, citing the need to offset the weight of batteries,

'OTHER MANUFACTURERS ARE MOVING TO A SIMILAR LIGHTWEIGHT FUTURE'



senior execs admit that it's 'highly likely' the technology will be used elsewhere in the range as costs fall. And, behind the scenes, other manufacturers are moving almost as quickly to a similar lightweight future.

The benefits of carbon may seem obvious, but it comes with substantial downsides. It's around 50 per cent lighter than aluminium (when used to build a structure of equivalent strength), it doesn't corrode and can be formed into intricate shapes. But it also requires a lot of energy to make and is relatively expensive. Even though the carbon

in the i3 will cost only a third as much to make as the composite roof on the M3 coupe, BMW admits reducing the cost of carbon to that of aluminium is years away.

But carbon's biggest problem, when it comes to mass-manufacture, is its lengthy production time. Steel or aluminium can be stamped into shape in seconds, and welded into intricate structures on a fast-moving production line. But even with the efficiency advances BMW claims to have made, it still takes hours to mould and set carbon parts.

There's no faulting BMW's ambition, though. The new Moses Lake plant in Washington state, USA, a joint venture with established carbon producer SGL, is set to become one of the world's biggest carbon yarn producers. The yarn will be exported to another new factory in Wackersdorf, Germany, where the body panels for the i3 and i8 will be moulded and bonded. With two parallel production lines, Moses Lake will be able to make 3000 tonnes of carbon weave a year – eight per cent of total global production. There's also enough space on site for six more lines if demand takes off.

And it's not just BMW. Audi is dropping some very broad hints about its own lightweight future (see page 14), and VW Group has just taken a minority shareholding in SGL. Carbonfibre is set to go mainstream, and sooner than you think.

Mike Duff



BMW READIES NEW 4-SERIES

3-SERIES COUPE AND CABRIO GET NEW
NAME AND MORE DISTINCTIVE LOOK

As long predicted, BMW is to split the coupe and cabriolet versions of the 3-series from the saloon and estate by branding them '4-series'. The move mirrors the division between the 5- and 6-series.

The new 4-series has been previewed by this close-to-production concept, with the finished version set to be in showrooms by the end of 2013. The car is wider and lower than the one it replaces, with more visual distinction between

it and the 3-series saloon. It also features a vent in the trailing edge of each front wing called an 'air breather', which is claimed to reduce drag around the front wheels and is set to become a feature on all future BMWs.

The 4-series shares all of its mechanical architecture with the 3-series. There's no official word on engines, but BMW insiders say the 4 is likely to receive only the more powerful units. Expect the range to kick off with one of

BMW's turbo 2-litre four-cylinders, either in 181bhp '20i' or 214bhp '25i' state of tune, with a 428i and 435i above that. Expect diesels in 420d, 430d and 435d variants, too.

As with the 3-series, buyers will also be able to choose four-wheel drive versions from next year. The 3-series family is also set to expand further with what insiders have described as a 'GT' version, as well as cabriolet and Gran Coupe versions of the 4-series. **Mike Duff**



Above left: concept's angular door handles.
Top: new 'air breather' vent behind the front wheels will become a BMW design signature

M6 GRAN COUPE REVEALED

MIGHTY 552BHP TWIN-TURBO V8
FOUR-DOOR COUPE ARRIVES IN MAY
- WITH A £97,000 PRICE TAG



Above: M6 Gran Coupe will command a huge premium over the M5 saloon, with a price close to £100,000

BMW has also unveiled what's likely to be the last variant of the V8-powered M5/M6 family – the four-door M6 Gran Coupe.

The ingredients are as you'd expect – the blend of the Gran Coupe's low, sleek bodyshell with the familiar twin-turbocharged 552bhp V8 and seven-speed twin-clutch DCT gearbox. It's distinguished from lesser versions of the 6-series saloon by a brawnier body kit, unique 20in alloys and a carbonfibre rear diffuser. BMW claims a 4.2sec 0-62mph time, identical to the M6 coupe and 0.1sec ahead of the M6 Convertible and M5 saloon. All four

cars share the same 155mph limiter.

Unsurprisingly, BMW is determined to extract a premium for the new car, which will cost £97,490 when it goes on sale in May. That's £3700 more than the M6 coupe, and a whopping £24,400 more than the M5 saloon. Still, it certainly looks good, doesn't it?

There's also some bad news for anyone hoping for an M5 version of the current 5-series Touring. BMW's sales and marketing boss, Ian Robertson, recently told *evo* that there were 'no plans' for an estate variant of this M5 after poor sales of the previous version. He did, however, say that BMW is considering producing some limited edition M5 spin-offs in the spirit of the M3 CRT. **MD**

SUPERFAST WRISTBAND

Golden Chopard special is joined by avant-garde Porsche Design pieces and a Jaeger chronograph inspired by the new Aston Martin Vanquish

CHOPARD SUPERFAST

PRICE £14,380-£21,420 **FROM** CHOPARD.COM



Karl-Friedrich Scheufele blends his fanaticism for cars and watches as co-president of Chopard, a brand well known for its sponsorship of motoring events such as the Mille Miglia and the Monaco Historic GP. In November, Scheufele undertook the arduous task of unveiling Chopard's new Superfast range of drivers' watches at the Ascari Race Resort in southern Spain, driving Porsche 911s on track with close friend and Le Mans legend Jacky Ickx. The watches are only available in rose gold (hence the prices), the range comprising a three-hand automatic, a power reserve model and the chronograph pictured here. The former has a 41mm case while the other two measure 45mm in diameter, but all feature suitable automotive imagery such as red lacquer indicators and rubber straps based on the look of a slick tyre.

PORSCHE DESIGN P'6300 FLAT SIX AUTOMATIC RANGE
PRICE c£1900-£2200 **FROM** PORSCHE-DESIGN.COM

It's 40 years since F.A. Porsche founded the Porsche Design studio which has gone on to create numerous objects based on the car marque's 'form and function' ethos. The original Porsche Design watches were produced by IWC before the gig was given to the Eterna brand (owned by Porsche since 1995), which has just launched the 'Flat Six' series comprising the chronograph and the simple three-hand automatic featured here. Available in 44mm and 40mm case sizes, the watches can be had in black, white, grey, yellow or red colour schemes. The look is based on that of a 911 rev counter and designed specifically for ease of reading. Movements are quality Swiss units by Sellita.



JAEGER-LECOULTRE AMVOX7

PRICE £17,400 **FROM** JAEGER-LECOULTRE.COM

In 2004, Jaeger-LeCoultre joined forces with Aston Martin to produce the first Amvox watch. Since then, there have been several variations, including the Amvox transponder models that could unlock a DBS, Rapide or DB9 from 30 paces, the Amvox3 Tourbillon GMT and the Amvox5 World Chronograph LMP1, which paid tribute to Aston Martin Racing's endurance effort (evo 164). Now we're up to the just-launched Amvox7 (there was no 4 or 6) to coincide with the arrival of the range-topping Vanquish – hence the dial of the watch being adorned with a representation of the car's grille. It's the technical aspect of the titanium-cased 7 that makes it really interesting, however. It features Jaeger-LeCoultre's 'vertical trigger' system in which the chronograph function is operated not with conventional push pieces but by simply prodding the crystal. The mechanism was first seen on the Amvox2, but this new watch adds a power reserve indicator in the form of two red markers that get closer to 12 as the watch is wound up and gradually disappear as it winds down.



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Richard Porter

Top Gear TV's script editor finds the British image of expensive cars isn't shared over the Atlantic



'I GOT WAVED CHEERFULLY INTO THE KITT-ONLY CAR PARK, DESPITE THE RAPIDE BEING VERY FAR FROM A TALKING TRANS AM'

As I step from the car, a very feminine yelp of excitement carries on the warm evening air. 'Oh. My. Goodness!' says the girl emerging from the entrance to my hotel. She's pretty, 20-something, long curly hair, wearing a dress that shows a lot of shoulder. 'I just *love* this car,' she gushes. The valet guy gives me a look that says, 'Dude, you are *so* in there.' This appears to be what happens when you drive an Aston Martin in LA.

We're slightly embarrassed about having flashy cars in Britain. If you own something quite smart and expensive, there's always a nagging feeling that people resent you and want to leave deep scratch marks in your expensive paintwork. As my *Top Gear* colleague Jeremy Clarkson once noted when he had a Ferrari 355, the only place you could go in it was back home because to leave it parked in a public place was to nervously assume you would return to find it covered in key marks and phlegm.

In America, things are rather different: in a can-do, let's-go nation, people have more respect for success and the sleek, shiny things that come with it. Cruising the world's most superficial city in a Rapide earns you nods of encouragement from men and shrieks of delight from women. It also gets you special treatment all across town. One afternoon, I ended up at a *Knight Rider* fan convention – bit of an accident, long story – and got waved cheerfully into the KITT-only car park, despite the Rapide being very far from a talking Trans Am. They even gave me a commemorative T-shirt.

The Aston also allowed me a new perspective on that classic LA measure of status: the spot chosen by the valet to stash your car. When I first arrived at my hotel I was in a normal saloon car. Every time I wanted it back I had to wait 45 minutes while they retrieved it from the very bowels of an underground car park seven blocks away. The Rapide,

however, got parked front and centre, right by reception where everyone could see it. Most places want to present a swanky image, so they'll always line up the expensive cars in the parking places nearest the entrance but, equally, they don't want to seem too brash. A gold-plated Dodge Viper might be worth a million dollars but it's not necessarily going to project the right image. The Aston, tastefully handsome and in a sober colour, hit the spot.

This is all well and good, but it was hard to reconcile with a natural British sense of embarrassment at driving something flash. I found myself worrying that I should be tipping the valet with wads of \$50 bills and supporting the *Knight Rider* convention by buying a replica of Michael Knight's digital watch. Although that wasn't to do with the car; I just really wanted one. 'Don't worry about it,' said an American friend of mine (she was referring to valets, not the watch. I still wish I'd bought the watch). 'You can just tip the same as everyone else. Actually you can tip less because you've got a nice car and you can afford to be a dick.'

Over a few days, I tried to relax into the idea that, unlike at home, no one was going to goz on me for daring to have a nice motor. If anything, this being LA, they were going to like me more. And that, for a British person, is even harder to deal with. Which brings me back to the excitable girl at the front of my hotel: 'I'm sorry, this is so inappropriate but this is, like, my *dream* car,' she continued, gently stroking a hand across the Aston's sheeny aluminum bonnet.

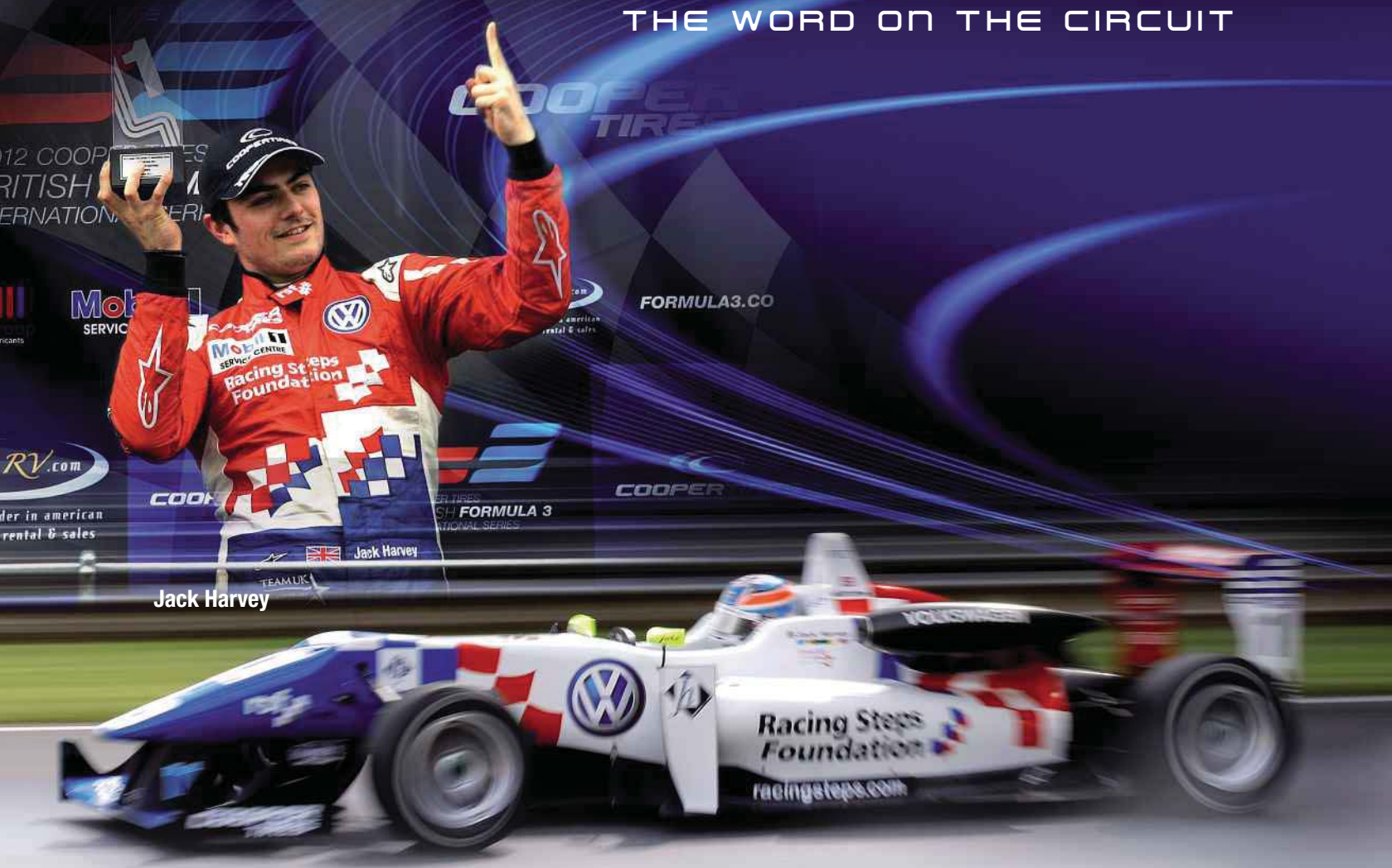
'It's not mine, I've just borrowed it,' I spluttered pathetically. The girl looked at me with palpable bemusement. 'I mean, I've not stolen it,' I continued as if determined to cement my unimpressiveness. 'But it's not mine.'

The girl handed her ticket to the valet man. 'Oh,' she said flatly. 'Well, you must have some really generous friends.' Like most flash cars, the Aston Martin Rapide plays well in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, as it turns out, I don't.



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Harry Metcalfe

evo's editorial director says drastic measures are required to cover Britain's motoring tax void



'THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NEVER ADMIT IT, BUT IF EVERYONE DROVE A RANGE ROVER, WE WOULDN'T HAVE GOT OURSELVES INTO THIS MESS'

As 2013 begins, it looks increasingly likely that the humble UK motorist is about to be hit for six again, and yet again, it's all thanks to that 'green agenda'. Isn't it odd that we've been doing precisely what we've all been instructed to do, but the result of our good behaviour is that the UK government finds itself in a proper financial pickle? Now they've got to do something about it, and that means the motorist is about to be mugged again.

What's got us in this mess is that we've been buying new cars with much better fuel consumption than ever before and we've been driving fewer miles because fuel has got so expensive. Delve into British forecourts' sales figures and you'll discover a noticeable drop of late. Figures for the whole of 2012 have yet to be published, but over the first six months there was a 12.8 per cent drop in the amount of fuel sold compared to the first half of 2008, from 19billion litres to 16.7billion. And for the UK government, what's really worrying is that the rate of decline is starting to accelerate. With every litre of fuel delivering approximately 81p in tax revenues to the UK exchequer, that's a £1.86billion hit. Even if fuel usage remained at the same rate for the second half of 2012 as the first, it still creates a £3.72billion hole in the government's accounts in just one year.

It's not just revenues raised from fuel sales that are withering away, either, as the amount the government receives from the annual Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) is falling away too. Currently, VED raises around £6billion a year, but thanks to our eco-friendly buying trends, there's a distinct possibility that this could halve over the next few years if the UK fleet average CO2 emission figure continues to drop at the same rate as now (3.4 per cent annually). According to figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, the average new car sold in the

UK in the first nine months of 2012 emitted 133.4g/km of CO2, tantalisingly close to the 130g/km mark below which the first year's VED rate drops to zero. To put all this into perspective, you need to know that the total amount the government extracts from the motorist in direct taxes (fuel duty, VAT on fuel and VED) in an average year is estimated at £38-42billion. So a drop of £6-7billion hurts.

The only glimmer of 'good' news for the government is that we haven't taken to the idea of buying electric cars. If we had, then the UK government would have been even more out of pocket. With a subsidy of up to £5000 on each electric car sold, combined with zero VED and no future fuel tax revenue to speak of, the government would have been in a proper bind. Since the electric car subsidy scheme opened in January 2011, 2435 subsidies have been paid out. That equates to 0.06 per cent of the 3.74million conventionally powered cars sold in the UK over the same period.

So the government is now looking at how it can generate alternative income streams from the motorist to make up for this shortfall, and that likely means that road pricing is coming to the UK soon. But the cost of implementing a toll-road system across the UK network would be unworkable, so a simpler system is being contemplated where you need to buy an additional pass to drive on motorways. With approximately 33million cars registered in the UK, it would take a levy of £150 to make up the shortfall, but I'd be amazed if it was that high, or there was a 100 per cent take-up. That's why I expect to see a hardening of VED rates too.

The alternative is for new car buyers to abandon this fad for ultra-economical cars and do their bit for 'GB plc'. The government would never admit it, but if everyone drove a Range Rover, and had a fun car in the garage as well, then we wouldn't have got ourselves in this mess. With my garage currently overflowing with cars at the moment, I'm doing my bit. But what about you?

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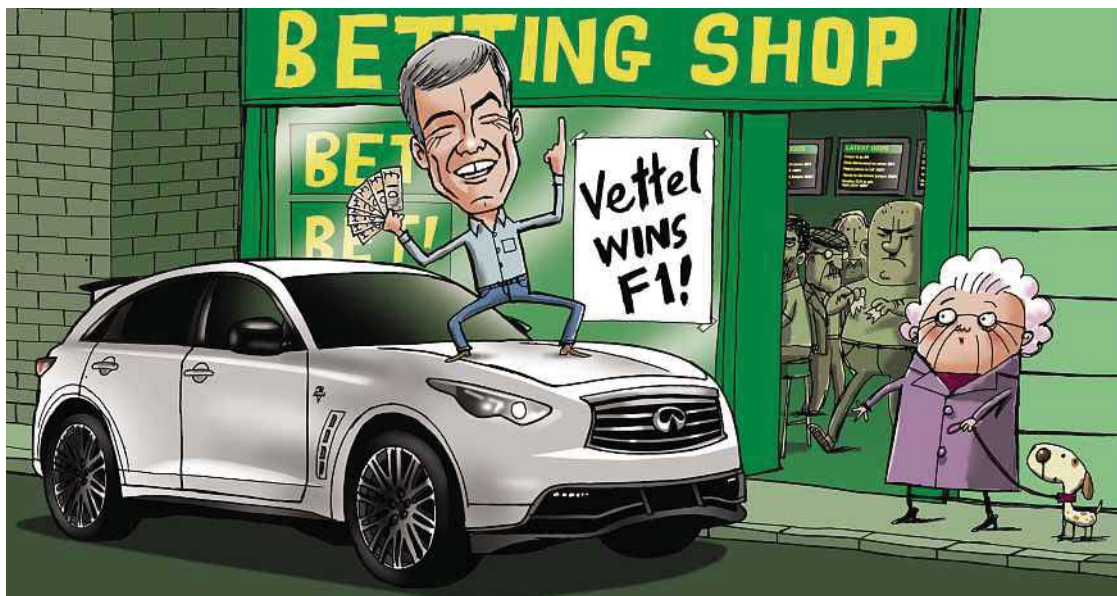


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Tiff Needell

The racer and presenter revisits his pre-season Formula 1 predictions



'SO VETTEL WON AND THE FERRARI TEAM WAS ONCE AGAIN LEFT IN TEARS, BUT WHAT ABOUT MY PREDICTIONS FOR THE REST OF THE FIELD?'

There's nothing worse than some clever know-it-all saying 'I told you so' but... I told you so! Back at the start of the year, I decided I was so bored with all the experts telling us who they thought 'can' win the Formula 1 title – when anyone on the grid 'can' – that I decided to tell you all who *would* and, yes, I made

the right call...

Of course, Sebastian Vettel wasn't exactly an outsider to win the title, but avid readers of *evo* can pull out issue 169 and check my predictions for the rest of the field in what turned out to be a pretty epic year of Grand Prix racing. I said Fernando Alonso would be Vettel's closest challenger, and even I believed that surely the title was going the Spaniard's way as he cruised into a 37-point lead after the Italian Grand Prix with just seven races to go.

At that time, Lewis Hamilton was his nearest challenger and even Kimi Räikkönen – yet to score that brilliant win in Abu Dhabi – was ahead of Vettel, who himself had only just crept past team-mate Mark Webber into fourth in the points table. I bumped into Adrian Newey at the Goodwood Revival a week after Monza and told him to pull his finger out to make my prediction come true, but he gave no indication of any great turn-around – and certainly not the four dominant victories that would follow!

So Vettel won and the Ferrari team was once again left in tears at Interlagos, but what about my predictions for the rest of the field? Well, unfortunately for the many aspiring young talents desperate for a chance and contrary to my crystal ball, both Felipe Massa and Webber have been given another year and indeed both had their moments of inspiration to help their causes. It means Sergio Perez doesn't go to Ferrari but surprisingly to McLaren instead – and I certainly didn't see that one coming!

Mercedes didn't quite end up as the fourth-best team, but did at least win that race I promised – although sadly not with the great Michael Schumacher behind the wheel. The surprise of the year was the performance of Team Toleman/Benetton/Renault/Lotus and I still remain a fan of the wild child of Formula 1, Romain Grosjean, who did occasionally outshine the Kimster. Between the two of them they provided much to talk about.

With the unexpected resurgence of Williams and a feisty drive by Nico Hülkenberg for Force India in Brazil we almost had six different teams winning a race this year, so there can be few complaints about big team domination. It was all helped by the deliberately unpredictable nature of the Pirelli tyres, which can be thanked for adding sparkle to what would otherwise have been boring races.

A new Hermann Tilke-inspired circuit made its debut on the calendar with the Texas track being yet another masterpiece of style at the expense of substance. It did produce a much better race than I'd expected, but that was mainly due to the steely determination of Hamilton and a great comeback drive from his team-mate Jenson Button. Too many turns were once again the problem with the layout which, as with all Tilke designs, relies on the artificial influence of a DRS zone to help following cars make up the ground they lose in the corners. And even then, it needed an innocent Narain Karthikeyan to be in the wrong place at the right time to help Lewis past...

Sadly, I fear DRS is here to stay, and more often twice a lap rather than once, as the other option to help overtaking – reducing the airflow dependency of the cars – will forever be blocked by the teams who love their wind tunnel experiments. You only have to revisit that Brazilian GP to see how exciting Formula 1 could be with lowered grip levels, so here's to plenty of sudden rain showers in 2013 and an even more unpredictable season!

MASERATI QUATTROPORTE

» NEW VERSION OF LUXURY ITALIAN SALOON » 523BHP FROM 3.8-LITRE TWIN-TURBO V8 » 191MPH TOP SPEED » 90KG LIGHTER

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 3798cc, twin-turbo **CO2** 278g/km **Power** 523bhp @ 6800rpm **Torque** 524lb ft @ 2250-3500rpm **0-62mph** 4.7sec (claimed) **Top speed** 191mph (claimed) **Price** €110,000 (est) **On sale** Now

The revolution starts here. Last year Maserati sold 6159 cars: not a bad return for a tiny company with an ageing model line-up and a substantial cost of entry. However, by 2015, Maserati is determined that it will reach 50,000 sales in a single year. The grand plan appears to be built upon sound logic: Maserati has secured 1.2bn euros of investment from Fiat to roll out new models, a new factory near Turin is already operational and the infrastructure required to sell and service the cars is steadily being put into place.

Even so, the targets seem ambitious to say the least. Maserati points out that Porsche sells 130,000 cars per annum and that its projections still amount to a minuscule share of the luxury market. But the truth is that Maserati as we know it will fundamentally change. The spike in volumes will come from a 5-series rival and an SUV, and in Europe most of them will be powered by a diesel engine...

It's all a long way from the glamour of a crackling petrol V8 and the sunshine of the south of France, but today that's exactly what we'll be enjoying. The first of the new models to emerge is, rather comfortingly, the new Quattroporte, and we're driving it near Nice. Even more comfortingly, it's more powerful, faster, lighter and even more expensive than the one that went before. In fact the range-topping version is the fastest production Maserati ever built (the wonderful MC12 doesn't count). So while the forthcoming Ghibli saloon and Levante SUV will provide the big volumes, the new Quattroporte should reveal whether the new wave of models will retain that slightly wild charm that Masers have always had.

Of course it pays not to be a purist when it comes to Maseratis. The first Quattroporte, launched in 1963, might have been a saloon car with a racing-derived V8, but the next was a front-wheel-drive V6 based on a Citroën SM chassis. That version wasn't even homologated for road use anywhere in the world, which seems like quite an oversight. Next came the regal Quattroporte III, which reverted to V8 power, then the smaller, twin-turbocharged Quattroporte IV. Schizophrenic? Yep. Finally though, Maserati nailed it with the Quattroporte V. It relaunched the company under Ferrari's brief ownership and was, and still is, a beautiful, bewitching and wonderfully agile supersaloon. The style, the noise and the lithe dynamics are, we hope, the blueprint for the new wave of Maseratis.

The new Quattroporte's spec sheet suggests things have moved on, though. Out goes the refined savagery of the normally aspirated 4.7-litre V8 and in come two new direct injection and forced induction engines built by Ferrari. The range-topping car gets a 3.8-litre twin-turbocharged V8 with 523bhp at 6800rpm and 524lb ft at 2250-3500rpm. A new entry-level model gets by with a 3-litre twin-turbo V6 with 404bhp and 405lb ft. Both engines drive through an eight-speed ZF automatic gearbox.

The Quattroporte has also grown from 5097mm to a gargantuan 5262mm in length, so it's now longer than a long-wheelbase S-class. However, extensive use of aluminium has helped the weight drop from 1990kg to 1900kg for the V8 model. In most markets the car will be available with rear- or four-wheel drive, but right-hand-drive cars will have to make do with all that torque going to the rear 285/35 ZR20s. Prices will start at circa £80,000 for the V6, rising to around £110,000 for the V8.

It looks like it's worth every penny. OK, so this vast new Quattroporte is plainly not as elegant as the outgoing machine; it simply can't replicate



TESTED THIS MONTH

ASTON MARTIN V12 ZAGATO

P32

BMW M5 MANUAL

P38

MERCEDES-BENZ C250 AMG

P40

VOLVO S60 POLESTAR

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AUDI R55 CABRIOLET

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the timeless simplicity and lightness of touch that seemed to spring from its predecessor. Then again, it makes a 7-series look very ungainly, an S-class invisible and a Porsche Panamera almost painfully clumsy. The interior is suitably sumptuous, too. Everywhere you look there's understated but unmistakable luxury and all clutter is removed by a large touchscreen control system. It works well enough but, of course, these systems date a lot quicker than old-fashioned buttons and rotary dials. And inevitably, if you have an iPad at home, pretty much any other interface feels a bit 2008.

The new V8 is likely to fare much better against Father Time. It doesn't start with the same velvety bark as the old unit or howl around to the rev limiter like a supercar engine, but it is thumpingly powerful at any revs and melds an irresistible mid-range with a sharp, searing top end. Maserati claims the V8

QP will do 191mph and cover 0-62mph in 4.7sec and it feels good for those numbers. The V8 noise is deeper and more industrial than before, which perfectly matches the effortless torque. It's still got a bit of Italian brio, too – the booming explosions on high-rev downshifts make you feel good inside. Perhaps Maserati has engineered-in a bit more of a thump between ratios in the eight-speed box in manual mode than in the equivalent 7-series, and there's certainly a little more shunt at low speeds, but it adds a little sparkle to the experience rather than undermining the refinement.

So how does it perform as an S-class rival? Well, it's not as hushed as the Mercedes, with wind noise around the top of the windscreen a particular annoyance. The ride is busier, too. It's not a hard-riding car by any means, but sometimes the wheels do feel a little too heavy for the dampers. Select

'THE HYDRAULIC POWER STEERING HAS PLENTY OF FEEL AND WEIGHT,



Left: luxury interior is simplified by moving most functions onto a touchscreen. Below left: wheels are 20-inches; 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8 produces 523bhp





AND THE SPEED AND ACCURACY OF RESPONSE BELIES THE CAR'S BULK'

the stiffer suspension setting (you can decouple the suspension setting from the wider Sport mode) and the ride is quite agitated on broken urban surfaces. Of course, I couldn't really give a monkey's how it compares to an S500L. What I really want to know is how it stacks up against an M5 or one of the 648 AMG models available this week...

Well, the performance is right on the money and the chassis soaks up the 479lb ft with ease (524lb ft for short bursts of overboost). The hydraulic power steering has plenty of feel and a nice meaty weight to it, and the speed and accuracy of response belies the car's bulk. Select Sport mode to cut gearshift times from 250 to 150 milliseconds and then hit the button marked 'M' beside the gear selector and you have full control of the 'box via long, light but slightly slimy paddles. They work superbly and the 'box is always eager to shift just when you ask. To compensate for the slightly busy ride, body control is assured, and I'd say despite its large dimensions the QP feels lighter at low speeds than the rather hefty-feeling M5. But the BMW comes alive when you push past that sense of inertia and delivers stunning

speed and control. Can the Maser get close?

I'd love to tell you. Sadly, the launch route skirted around some of the greatest roads in the world and put us on narrow, busy and poorly sighted sections that didn't allow me to push the car at all. By the time I'd realised that the twisty sections simply strung together village after village, it was too late to go off-piste in search of more answers.

What I can say after this rather frustrating taste of the new Quattroporte is that it's obvious that this car doesn't quite have the focus and agility of its predecessor. You never fully forget its bulk and can sense that the engine isn't as far back in the chassis as it once was. The focus has shifted from out-and-out supersaloon to limo with a sporting edge. Perhaps that's unfair and it can shed its bulk and thrill like the old car when given room to breathe. We look forward to finding out soon.

Jethro Bovingdon

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- Performance, steering response, sense of occasion
- Lacks the charisma and edge of its predecessor



ASTON MARTIN V12 ZAGATO

» V12 VANTAGE GETS A ZAGATO MAKEOVER
» SAME 510BHP 5.9-LITRE ENGINE » £396,000

SPECIFICATION

Engine V12, 5935cc **CO2** 388g/km
Power 510bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 420lb ft
@ 5750rpm **0-62mph** 4.2sec (claimed)
Top speed 190mph (claimed) **Price** £396,000
On sale Now

And you thought the only exclusive Aston in this issue was the green thing on the cover. But when they've all been built, there will be just 101 Aston Martin V12 Zagatos in the world – a mere 24 more than there are One-77s cruising around. Admittedly, the Zagato isn't quite the ground-up creation that the One-77 is; instead it's merely an existing model in some sharp new bespoke tailoring (although you can hardly call the Zagato's V12 Vantage roots humble). Nevertheless, the Zagato will be worth almost as many points in your 'I-Spy' book of supercars as the One-77.

Just to recap, Aston Martin and Zagato have a long history together and this car

has been created to celebrate the very birth of the Anglo-Italian relationship 50 years ago. Back then, it was the DB4 GT's bodywork that was subtly resculpted by the Milanese coachbuilder and just 20 Zagato versions were produced (although an initial run of 25 had been planned). My father recalls reading stories that mechanics hardly dared breathe near the cars for fear of denting the beautiful but paper-thin aluminium bodywork.

This modern Zagato actually has very little to do with Italy as it was designed in the slightly less flamboyant surroundings of Gaydon by Aston's Sheffield-bred director of design, Marek Reichman. But whatever the method, I think the end result, wrought in aluminium and carbonfibre over 2000 man-hours, is stunning. There are clear nods to the original DB4, with details like the gently undulating 'double





bubble' roof and the rounded snout. Equally there are some very modern lines, particularly the sharply slanting angles of the side windows, which have a hint of GT-R about them. The overall effect is that the Zagato appears wonderfully compact, although it actually has identical dimensions to the V12 Vantage it's based on.

Press the illuminated end of the flush-fitting door handle and the swan door swings out and up to reveal a beautifully trimmed interior. Most of it is standard Vantage fare, but the reworked door panels, seats and, most of all, the headlining above you make it feel like a very special place to be. The leather is thick, the stitching bold, and the wavy design curiously mesmerising. There are just three 'Z' motifs that I can spot to brand it as a Zagato. Of course, because it's based on a Vantage, a few of that car's curiosities remain, like the decidedly unintuitive satnav joystick in front of the gearstick and the slightly lofty transmission tunnel which forces your elbow awkwardly high when you go to change gear.

For reasons that will become clear in a future issue of *evo*, I got to conduct this test on one of my all-time

favourite roads, the A701 from Moffat to Edinburgh. It's a perfect stretch of tarmac for the Zagato, being wide and well-sighted enough to let the V12 properly off the leash. Through the tighter early corners where the road climbs steeply, the Zagato instantly displays a lack of traction as it tries to deploy 510bhp and 420lb ft onto the cold tarmac (despite wearing Pirelli Sotto Zero winter tyres), and it's obvious why the claimed 0-62mph time isn't better than 4.2sec – I imagine it simply struggles to get smoothly and smartly off the line. Thankfully the traction and stability controls are extremely good, intervening so beautifully gently that you wouldn't know power was being stifled if you covered the flashing orange light in the dash.

The controls feel very natural with a pleasing weight to them, particularly the pedals. Press the Sport button in front of the gearlever and the throttle response sharpens and the bellow from the V12 increases. And what a voice it has: from inside there's a deep, almost baleful sound, while from outside or through a tunnel with the windows dropped it sounds like a pure-bred race car. It is the sort of glorious, emotionally resonant



Above: bold stitching dominates interior.

Right: gearstick feels high up. Below: Zagato looks stunning in Scottish Borders

'USE THE FULL RANGE OF GEARS AND IT IS AS STONKINGLY FAST





AS YOU'D HOPE A SMALL CAR WITH A BIG MOTOR WOULD BE'

noise that would make even the most shy and retiring person want to change down and blip the throttle gratuitously over and over again.

Such is the flexibility of the 5.9-litre engine that you can leave it in sixth and flow down the road tackling everything from slow corners to long straights, riding the effortless reserves of torque. Use the full range of gears, though, and the Zagato is as stonkingly fast as you'd hope a small car with a big motor would be. Thankfully the large carbon-ceramic brakes (398mm at the front) have plenty of power and feedback, although they can be momentarily disconcerting if they've cooled down (like on a long motorway stretch).

You're aware of the size of the engine in the nose, though, as it takes a moment to settle the weight onto the outside front tyre as you turn in and you find yourself using the throttle to drive through the corner more. But the steering is communicative and the Zagato retains a fundamentally enjoyable front-engine rear-drive

balance, making it an incredibly rewarding car to drive quickly. Slacken the DSC either to its well-judged halfway Sport setting or switch it off completely and the Zagato is happy to oversteer once you've got the front turned in and hooked up. As you'd expect, it can be quite a hooligan, but I think it feels most rewarding at quite understated slip angles.

At £396,000, or approximately three times the price of a standard V12 Vantage, it might seem hard to make a case for the Zagato in purely financial terms. Yet when you clap eyes on it, all possibilities of rational thoughts seem to melt away from your brain. The fact that it is based on the best drivers' car Aston Martin makes, and that it is almost as rare as a One-77 just adds even more to its aura. It is a deeply, deeply desirable car. **Henry Catchpole**

EVO RATING ★★★★★

➤ The looks, the noise, the way it drives...

➤ We didn't get one for Christmas



Above: Zagato struggled for traction in the cold. Left: carbonfibre detailing. Below: 5.9-litre V12 sounds glorious



VOLVO S60 POLESTAR

» FOUR-DOOR SALOON WITH APPROVED UPGRADE PACK » ENGINE TWEAKS
BOOST POWER TO 324BHP » 0-62MPH IN 5.5SEC » LIMITED TO 155MPH

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2953cc **CO2** 231g/km
Power 324bhp @ 5600rpm **Torque** 354lb ft
@ 3000-3600rpm **0-62mph** 5.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited) **Price** £40,160
On sale Now

The film – *End of Watch* – was rather good. A bit gruesome, but interesting POV filming, funny in parts and not too long. All in all, a good take on the classic LA cop movie.

And as the credits rolled, the lights went up and people started funnelling into the central aisle, it occurred to me that I'd almost got my very own cop car waiting in the car park outside the cinema. No big Dodge Interceptor for me, obviously, but the sensible staple of traffic police up and down the British Isles – a large-ish quick Volvo. Looking at it under the dim orange glow of a

lamp-post, there was even something police-esque about the bright Rebel Blue paint job.

The S60 is the saloon version of the V60 estate, and in size and four-door coupe-type styling, it seems like a natural rival for the Jaguar XF. This particular car started life as a top-of-the-range T6 R-Design Lux, which means Haldex all-wheel drive, a





‘YOU HAVE A VERY GOOD CHANCE OF WINNING THE MAJORITY OF TRAFFIC-LIGHT GRANDS PRIX, BECAUSE YOU CAN SIMPLY PIN THE THROTTLE TO THE CARPET’

firmer R-Design chassis and its 3-litre turbocharged six-cylinder putting out 300bhp and 324lb ft of torque. However, as denoted by the discreet badges, black wheels and black wing mirrors, this car has also had the optional £2495 Polestar Performance Pack applied to it.

The pack isn't just a styling exercise, however. It also includes some fettling under the bonnet (which can be purchased separately for £815), raising the power to 324bhp while retaining the claimed 28.5mpg combined fuel economy figure. Being an official Volvo factory option, the warranty helpfully remains unharmed too.

It's a shame the interior isn't more arresting, because although it all feels very well put together, there are no overt hints that you're sitting in something with sporting pretensions – just some flashes of that Rebel Blue paint on the dash would lift it. The view out is great, though, with the A-pillars seemingly pushed right out of the way and a lovely clear sight of the road

ahead filling your vision.

The claimed 0-62mph time is 5.5sec and it feels eminently achievable in a completely unflustered way. The torque feels perfectly matched to the grip available through the four-wheel drive and the throttle is alert to any pressure right from the top of its travel. What this means in practice is that you have a very good chance of winning the majority of traffic-light Grands Prix, because you can simply pin the throttle to the carpet on the 'g' of green and, without any hesitation or slip, the Volvo will catapult itself off the line like a bargain-hunter that's spotted a Louis Vuitton handbag on a sale rail.

Because there's not a surfeit of power, you find yourself using all the revs when you're on a decent bit of road and the straight-six is happy to oblige, with a muted but vaguely interesting soundtrack right at the top of its range. What isn't so great is the Geartronic automatic 'box. It's smooth and unobtrusive in everyday driving, but



Above: discreet R-Design and Polestar nods – and less-discreet Rebel Blue paint; automatic gearbox comes without paddles

useless when you put it into its Sport setting because it completely fails to change down on the way into a corner, resulting in a jolting kick-down just as you begin accelerating out of the bend. Unusually for this day and age, there are no paddles to let you help yourself to another ratio either.

Fast corners are better than slow ones in the Volvo, largely because of steering which seems to lose precision the further you get into its lock. But seemingly, however rapidly you go, everything is tackled neatly and securely without any indication that either end will get overexcited. It just won't be goaded, so in the end you simply give up looking for entertainment and just drive it smoothly. Exactly like a policeman should on this side of the Atlantic. **Henry Catchpole**

EVO RATING ★★★★★

+ Capable of swift, smooth progress

- Swift and smooth doesn't mean fun



BMW M5 MANUAL

» SIX-SPEED STICK-SHIFT VERSION FOR AMERICAN MARKET » SAME 552BHP AS AUTOMATIC

SPECIFICATIONS

Engine V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo **CO2** n/a **Power** 552bhp @ 6000-7000rpm **Torque** 502lb ft @ 1500-5750rpm **0-60mph** 4.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Price** US\$89,900 (c£55,500) **On sale** Now (US and Canada)

Here's something a little bit different: a manual version of the current BMW M5. We've been denied a stick-shifting version of BMW's supersaloon since the E39 generation was retired in 2003. But in America, a small but clearly significant number of potential buyers refuse to consider an automatic M5, and BMW has been forced to engineer six-speed versions of the 'E60' M5 and the current 'F10' model. In other words, this is a German performance car that we had to go to California to drive.

The sight of a manual gearshift in the M5's button-laden cabin is an odd one. But in every other regard the car is identical to the DCT twin-clutch version, and its power output remains the same at 552bhp, making this M5 the most powerful manual production saloon in the world.

The gearbox itself comes from the 550i and, apart from a heavier-duty clutch, is otherwise unchanged. The manual M5 uses the same final drive as the DCT, meaning that, with only six ratios versus the automatic's seven, intermediate gearing is slightly higher. BMW claims the manual is only 0.1sec slower to 60mph, although the pungent aroma of friction plate that accompanies enthusiastic off-the-line use acts to discourage drag-strip behaviour.

That aside, the six-speed box reveals



Above: manual gearshift wedged in amongst the buttons. Below: on-road performance can feel laggy at low revs

a very different side to the F10 M5. Put politely, it's clear that BMW didn't concentrate a huge amount of development effort on this minority transmission option. Yet, despite its flaws, the DIY gearbox gives back to the M5 some of the character that this generation of the car had lost beneath its battery of tech.

The clutch is predictably heavy and the biting point is relatively abrupt. But, once you're used to it, it's smooth and easy enough. The gearbox shifts as sweetly as any BMW manual, with a nice, crisp action. On downchanges, an automated throttle blipper tries to match road and engine speeds without requiring you to heel-and-toe. It works well when dealing with big speed differentials – taking second for a hairpin, for example – but at normal road speeds it can give an oddly lumpy edge to downshifts.

The big surprise is the way the gearbox

reveals the twin-turbocharged V8 to be surprisingly laggy. The DCT M5 gives near-instantaneous throttle response, with the gearbox working quickly to kick the engine into life. At less than 2500rpm, the manual car needs the best part of a second to get up and running, and more than that at even lower engine speeds. The answer, of course, is to add revs: beyond 4000rpm, responses become effectively instant and the throttle's readiness to make small adjustments mid-corner is just as good as with the DCT.

We drove the manual M5 on some of California's more demanding roads, with the gearbox quickly becoming the car's defining dynamic characteristic. Even in its paddle-controlled manual mode, the DCT 'box is so effortless that it requires little more mental input than you'd use shifting gears in *Gran Turismo 5*. But the need to think ahead with the manual 'box, to decide on gear selection and to make sure it's there on time, gives this M5 an interesting twist. It also, strangely, makes it feel quicker than the warp-speed DCT, involving you more in the business of directing those 552bhp.

It's an interesting car, but one that almost certainly won't be coming to the UK. With BMW execs hinting that slow sales will make this the last manual M5, Americans should enjoy it while they can. **Mike Duff**



EVO RATING ★★★★★

➤ Gives a new dimension to the M5

➤ Turbo lag, not available in the UK

AUDI RS5 CABRIOLET

» SOFT-TOP VERSION OF RS5 COUPE » SAME 444BHP V8 » NEARLY £10K MORE EXPENSIVE

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 4163cc **CO2** 249g/km **Power** 444bhp @ 8250rpm **Torque** 317lb ft @ 4000-6000rpm **0-62mph** 4.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited, 174mph optional) **Price** £68,960 **On sale** Now

It's fair to say the RS5 has had a tough life so far. Following up the sublime old RS4 with poor ride quality and an unsatisfying set of chassis modes, it's won few fans at *evo*. It came last in each group test we put it in, beaten even by the flawed Boss Mustang. Our long-termers never fired its arrow through any office hearts, either.

As we chat, I'm aware that quattro GmbH's head of technical development, Stephan Reil, knows where I work. Happily, he's not been primed to spill my drink, but to announce the RS5 has been improved off the back of UK press criticism...

The tweaks – electronic changes, from the damping to the Drive Select modes – are ushered in as the RS5 coupe is facelifted and the Cabriolet debuts, along with (less excitingly) electric power steering. The new RS4 Avant has the same settings, and that's already had a better reception than its coupe forerunner.

One glance at the RS5 Cabriolet's spec sheet reveals the drop-top perhaps isn't the best place to try out the 'improved' chassis.



Above: four proper seats; seven-speed S-tronic 'box. Right: roof folds down in 15sec and at speeds of up to 31mph



To compensate for lopping off the roof, Audi has added a staggering 200kg to the car's weight in structural strengthening. You'll feel the extra bulk under anything but the shyest of braking, while multiple direction changes nudge the 1930kg cabrio out of its comfort zone.

The new CO2-friendlier steering, meanwhile, is overly light, lacks decent feel and delivers too little information on front-end grip. But this RS5 does change direction more precisely and while the ride is still firm, the uncouth body control of before has been smoothed out. There's little flex with the roof stowed, too.

While Audi cites the BMW M3 Convertible as this RS5's key foe, the two have different characters. The quattro-equipped car lives up to its heritage with abundant grip and traction. With a crown-gear centre differential distributing

power between front and rear axles (up to respective maximums of 70 and 85 per cent) and a standard Sport Differential varying output between the rear wheels, it's a capable car in which to make very fast but slightly unengaging progress, both feelings accentuated by the standard seven-speed S-tronic gearbox.

All of which jars with a hugely emotive naturally aspirated V8, whose peak power and greatest aural fireworks live north of 8000rpm. Rather than berate the RS5 for its slight chassis/engine mismatch, though, we ought to celebrate it. This is surely the last 'mainstream' RS car to dodge forced induction. And with the roof folded and Sports Exhaust option box ticked, it sounds magnificent. Whether the numerous pops and crackles are artificial or not will bother only the most cynical.

The RS5 remains flawed, not least with the Cabriolet's bulk to turn and stop, but it *is* an improvement, one that we'll assess better away from the smooth press launch roads near Nice, and back on Britain's more rut-ridden tarmac. **Stephen Dobie**

EVO RATING ★★★★★

+ Pace, looks, soundtrack, interior

- Not the last word in fun or involvement

MERCEDES C250 AMG

» NEW AMG-TWEAKED C-CLASS » 201BHP FROM 1.8-LITRE TURBO
» 0-62MPH IN 7.2SEC » 149MPH TOP SPEED

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1796cc, turbocharged **CO2** 161g/km **Power** 201bhp @ 5500rpm **Torque** 228lb ft @ 2000-4300rpm **0-62mph** 7.2sec (claimed) **Top speed** 149mph (claimed) **Price** £32,925 **On sale** Now



Is it possible to have too much of AMG? Mercedes obviously thinks not, at least in Britain, where the entire C-class Coupe model line-up now has the performance sub-brand somewhere in its name, from the basic C180 AMG Sport all the way through to the C63 AMG Black Series.

Plus, a new model. Its official name is 'C250 AMG Sport Plus with AMG Handling Package'. Trips off the tongue, doesn't it? It's one of the new 'halfway' AMG models fettled by the team in Affalterbach in response to Audi's 'S' models and BMW's 'M Performance' line.



Confusingly, and despite the name, it's a bit more than a handling package, with revised suspension, a new exhaust and a remapped engine and gearbox. What it doesn't have is any more power than the standard C250 – the 1.8-litre turbo four-cylinder motor still peaks at 201bhp.

Under the skin, there are firmer springs and uprated dampers, plus mild geometry changes to the front suspension. The throttle map is keener, and there's also more forceful software in charge of the standard-fit seven-speed automatic 'box. But that new exhaust is the first thing you notice when you fire the car up, with a raspy edge that sounds more aftermarket Japanese than premium German.

The chassis changes are great. The standard C-class Coupe is already a nice thing to drive, but the AMG handling



Above: 'Sport' labelling is subtle; 1.8-litre turbo engine has been remapped; red seat stitching

pack gives it a clear dynamic edge and doesn't seem to bring any downsides. The steering is more responsive, the front end keener to find a chosen apex and there's a noticeable improvement in feel. Balance is pretty much spot-on as well, certainly on slippery British tarmac, with the rear tyres surrendering grip progressively and predictably under mild provocation. Ride quality stays good on the firmer springs, too. It's a worthy junior to the full-on C63, for not much more than half the price.

It's sad, then, that the powertrain underwhelms. The engine needs to be revved to deliver its best, meaning you spend lots of time listening to the exhaust's farty soundtrack. And the C250 never feels particularly quick. In part this is because of the engine's relatively modest output, but it's also down to the gearbox's constant

confusion when asked for rapid progress. It almost feels like the transmission itself is waiting for a surge of power that never comes – kicking down, pausing, and then often kicking down again when not much happens. You can take control by moving the gear selector into manual, but even then the changes are slow enough to sap your enthusiasm.

The same handling pack is available with the 250 CDI diesel engine, with near-identical power and the option of a manual gearbox. That's the one most people will buy, and on the basis of this drive it's hard to disagree with 'em.

Mike Duff

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- Sharper to drive than standard C250
- No quicker, sounds weedy



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



DEFENDER ICON SPORT WAGON

» LAND ROVER MODIFIED FOR THE TRACK » ESTIMATED 270BHP » 0-60MPH IN THE SIXES

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 3200cc, turbodiesel
CO2 n/a **Power** 270bhp (est) **Torque** 500lb ft (est)
0-60mph 6.2sec (est) **Top speed** unknown
Price see text **On sale** Now

I love racetracks and I love Land Rovers, but I'd be lying if I said it had ever occurred to me to combine the two. You'd have to be looking at a 44-ton truck or a Sherman tank to find a vehicle less suited to life on track than a Landie. Yet, after a few laps of the Bedford Autodrome in this Icon Defender, I'm wearing a grin the size of a Series III's panel gaps.

There isn't space here to list all the dynamic shortcomings of the standard Defender, most of which are integral to making it as good as it is off-road. But the obvious points would include a centre of gravity at least 3ft higher than a normal car's, live axle suspension chosen for articulation rather than cornering response, steering that's vague at 10mph and tyres that grip mud better than tarmac.

All of which were seen as opportunities by Nene Overland, long-established Land Rover fettlers. Under the 'Icon' brand, the company has entered the growing aftermarket for reworked Landies, with the mission of both sharpening the driving experience and improving the standard Defender's glacial performance.

Nene will happily fit a range of engines

to the Defender, from V8s downwards, depending on the depth of your pockets. This Sport Wagon has a retuned version of the 3.2-litre five-cylinder TDCI diesel from the Ford Ranger pick-up. In standard form it puts out a respectable 200bhp, but Nene has reworked the engine management to boost output to around 270bhp, with about 500lb ft of torque. The numbers are vague as the car has yet to be strapped to a rolling road.

The engine needs a few revs to get into its boosted powerband, but once it does the Sport Wagon takes off with startling haste, progress accompanied by a spectacular induction roar. The car hasn't been figured yet either, but Nene's estimate that the 0-60mph dash is dispatched in just over 6sec sounds about right, and it certainly devours the ratios of the six-speed manual 'box convincingly.

Of course, in a standard Defender this sort of performance would be terrifying. The fact that it isn't here is a tribute to the comprehensive suspension mods that Nene has also made. The Sport Wagon sits no less than 3in lower than the standard Defender, and rides on 20in alloys. The springs are actually softer than those in the boggo car, with firmer dampers and fatter anti-roll bars. The track is wider than standard with spacers to fit the vast wheels, which has acted to both sharpen steering response and improve the normal



Above right: 3.2-litre turbodiesel is tuned to around 270bhp. Below: mods are extensive, both outside and inside



Defender's woeful turning circle. At the front there are AP racing discs and six-pot calipers to bring retardation up to something matching the acceleration.

It's no sports car, obviously, but the mods have given it a predictability that the basic Defender never possesses. The chunky Cooper LTZ tyres produce plenty of grip and although the 90's short wheelbase means the tail can get loose under braking, most of the time it just sticks and goes.

Does a car like this make rational sense? Of course not. You'll have to pay at least £15,000 before VAT for the engine, £2k for the suspension and £2k for the uprated brakes – on top of the cost of whatever you're fitting them to. But it certainly sends a few sparks into the bit of the brain that covets boys' toys.

Mike Duff

EVO RATING ★★★★★

➤ Possibly the quickest Defender ever

➤ You'll need plenty of cash

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DMS RS6 V10 "THICK LOW END TORQUE MORPHS INTO OHMIGOD TOP-END" EVO MARCH '09
DMS 335I "AS QUICK AS AN M3 ON THE ROAD" EVO MARCH '09
DMS 135I "THE STANDARD CAR IS GREAT BUT DMS HAVE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL" BMW CAR MAY '09
DMS 997 TURBO 3.6 "IT'S EPIC, HILARIOUS AND ADDICTIVE IN EVERY GEAR, YET DOCILE WHEN CRUISING" EVO SEPTEMBER '08
DMS SL55 AMG "THIS CAR IS STUPENDOUSLY FAST" PERFORMANCE CAR MAY '08
DMS 535D "LAUGH-OUT-LOUD FAST" EVO JUNE '05
DMS 330CD "NEW ECU MAKES CAR SO MUCH FASTER YOU SIMPLY HAVE TO HAVE IT!" AUTOCAR OCTOBER '04
DMS 996 TURBO "STUPENDOUS EXPLOITABLE PERFORMANCE" EVO AUGUST '04



PORSCHE:

997 TURBO/S 3.8 INC PDK » 611BHP
997 TURBO 3.6 » 625+ BHP
997 GT2 RS » 670+ BHP
996 TURBO/GT2 » 600+ BHP
997 CARRERA GTS » 439+ BHP
997 CARRERA S PDK » 400+ BHP
997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP
997 CARRERA » 348 BHP
997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
997 GT3 3.6 » 436 BHP
996 3.6 » 344 BHP
BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+ BHP
CAYMAN S » 342 BHP
CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 » 578+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 3.6 » 600+ BHP
CAYENNE DIESEL » 305 BHP
PANAMERA TURBO » 600+ BHP
PANAMERA DIESEL » 305 BHP

MERCEDES-BENZ:

SL65 BLACK SERIES » 720+ BHP & DE-LIMIT
SL65 AMG » 680 BHP & DE-LIMIT
AMG 55 KOMPRESSOR » 600+ BHP
C63 AMG » 530+ BHP & DE-LIMIT
SL63 AMG » 560+ BHP & DE-LIMIT
RE-MAP AND LOWER ABC SUSPENSION
CL600 BI-TURBO » 580+ BHP
S500 2008 » 411+ BHP
SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP & DELIMIT
SLK 350 » 328 BHP
200K » 205+BHP
C220 CDI (W204) » 210 BHP
280 /300 CDI V6 » 257 BHP
320 CDI V6 » 274 BHP
350 CDI V6 » 312 BHP
420 /450 CDI V8 » 358 BHP
63AMG 5.5V8 TURBO » 600+ BHP & DE-LIMIT

BMW:

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

EXOTIC & MISC:

FERRARI CALIFORNIA » 487 BHP
FERRARI 599 » 660+ BHP
FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP
GALLARDO » 546 BHP
LP560 » 608+ BHP
LP640 » 707 BHP
MURCIELAGO LP670SV » 715 BHP
MASERATI GRANTURISMO/QPORT » 438 BHP
GRANTURISMO S / MC » 479+ BHP
AUDI RS6 V10 » 700+BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI R8 V10 » 602+BHP
AUDI B7 RS4/ R8 » 439 BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI RS5 » 475 BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI RS3/ TTRS » 405 BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI Q7 /A8 4.2 TDI » 387 BHP
AUDI (ALL MODELS) 3.0TDI » 298 BHP
AUDI S3 / GOLF R » 317 + BHP
RANGE ROVER 3.6 TDV8 » 338 BHP
R ROVER SPORT 3.0D INC2012 » 305 BHP
R ROVER SPORT 2.7D » 240 BHP
R ROVER EVOQUE DIESEL » 245 BHP
R ROVER EVOQUE PETROL » 300+ BHP
BENTLEY CGT / F-SPUR » 630 BHP
BENTLEY GT SPEED » 680+ BHP
BENTLEY SUPERSPORTS » 700+ BHP

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WHAT'S CRASHED YOUR MURCIÉLAGO THIS MONTH?

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Status symbol

In *evo* 177, Harry asks the question why should we buy a new car when the old one isn't done with. I think the comparison to the washing machine is an incorrect one to make.

Does anyone invite friends into their kitchen to show them the latest white goods they've bought? No. Cars are an advert for

'IF YOU HAVE A PASSION FOR CARS, YOU NEED TO SHOW IT BY HAVING THE LATEST MODEL'

who you are, a status symbol, a sign you're in higher management, etc. Those of us that care wish to proudly show that we have the latest vehicle. Those that don't care actually do a similar thing, as they're telling people that they have other more important things in their life to care about.

Cars are more like tablets or mobile phones – if you have a passion for them then you need to show it by having the latest model, although the gadget manufacturers could take a leaf out of carmakers' books and extend the shelf life of their products a bit!

Bryan Selwood



Left: Bryan Selwood reckons he knows why people buy a new car before their old one is worn out

THE STAR LETTER WINS A ROAD ANGEL GEM SAFETY CAMERA & BLACKSPOT ALERT DEVICE WORTH £129.99.

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Left: Lewis McMurray admires Simon George's restraint after Lambo crash. Below: Senna-a-like driving the 12C Spider

have put in a stronger performance than the Morgan 3 Wheeler did.

Yes, it costs twice as much as the Morgan, but it's so much more than a fair-weather plaything (sorry, Morgan fans, but that's all they really are). Say you had to fill a hypothetical one-car garage tomorrow. Who wouldn't include an RS4 in their shortlist? It may not be the sharpest knife in the drawer, but it may well prove itself to be the most useful. The RS4 is a car for grown-ups, no question.

Mike Spencer

Killer blow

How is Simon George not in jail for murder? I would be if I was lucky enough to have a Murciélago and somebody stuffed it into a tree. Especially just after a very expensive rebuild. What a terrible shame! My heart broke for him reading his Fast Fleet article in *evo* 178.

However, there is a silver lining to this very unfortunate accident. This is yet another entry for this amazing car's amazing CV. SG54 is out having adventures and living its life to the fullest. I bet all the other Murciélagos are jealous of it, especially the ones stuck in museums with only 300 miles on the clock...

Lewis McMurray, Edinburgh

Mini amazes

After a six-month wait, I got my new Mini John Cooper Works GP the day before *evo* 178 arrived. Unusual for a punter to get their hands on a new car before the journos, isn't it? Early days and first impressions are promising, but my previous car was a cracking Mini Cooper S with the Works kit, LSD and sports suspension, so I have high expectations. I look forward to your full report.

Stephen Dobie seemed shocked at the price, as do most other commentators, but is it really that expensive? Buy a standard JCW and add the Chili pack, custom paint job, heated seats, trick suspension, unique wheels, brake kit, very expensive carbon rear wing, ECU and aero upgrades, and you'll be well north of £30k. Competitors like the VXR, Golf Edition 35, Focus ST3 and so on are often more expensive when extras are added, too. The BMW M135i made a strong case for itself, though, but in the end it came down to feel-good factor, and for me the GP is off the scale.

Am I mad? I suppose time and resale value will decide that.

Rob Speak, Shrewsbury

Audi partner

I'm looking forward to reading how you get on with your Audi RS4 in Fast Fleet over the coming months. Like Mike Duff (*evo* 178), I can't imagine a more suitable car for making that late-night dash from Scotland back to the Midlands. Indeed, I also feel that, had it been a contender in *eCoty* rather than a photography car, it might

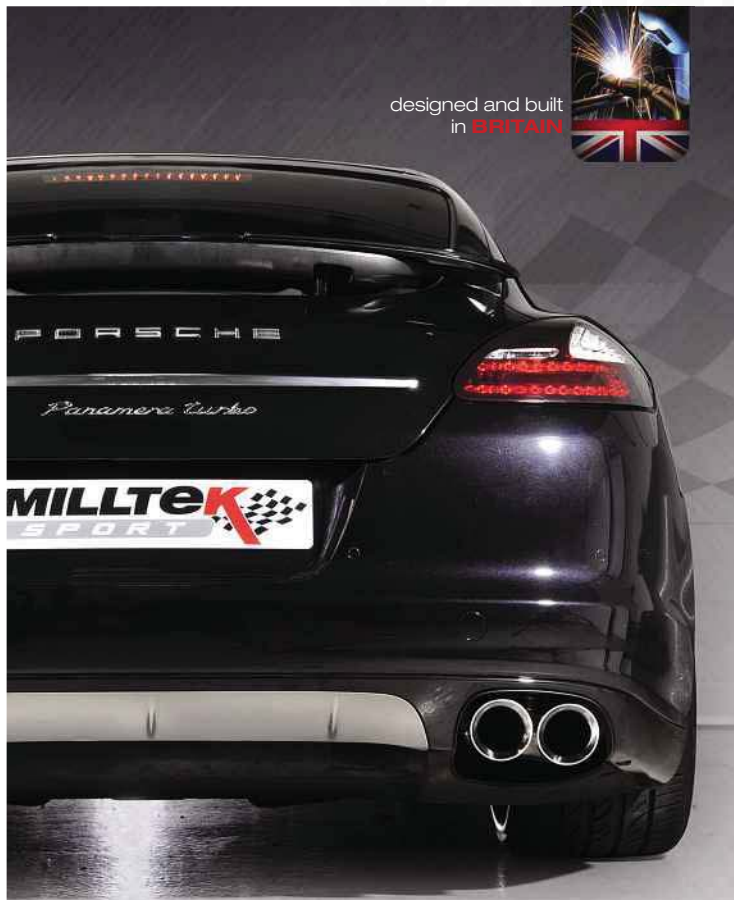
Senna spotted?

I know Ron Dennis is renowned for his attention to detail and quest for perfection, but cloning Ayrton Senna for the photo of the 12C spider on page 39 of *evo* 177 seems to be going a bit far. **Stuart Knipe, Abingdon**

Astons for the masses

In the Aston Martin feature 'A Decent Proposal' in *evo* 176, it was suggested that Aston is in need of a 'saviour' car to turn its fading fortunes around. I found the article thought-provoking and wish to take your suggestion of a modernised, leaner and greener Vantage a rather





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PORSCHE PANAMERA TURBO and TURBO S

Milltek is proud to announce the release of its latest metallurgic masterpiece; a hand-finished stainless steel exhaust system for Porsche's ultimate GT, the Panamera Turbo and Turbo S.

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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controversial step further. I believe the future for Aston lies with taking a lesson from Porsche; specifically its creation of the Boxster and the Cayman.

All modern-age Astons are built around the same look, style and demographic, and this was the same for Porsche until it opened up its market by introducing the Boxster – a two-seater for around £36k – and then the Cayman at around £40k.

In *evo* 178, you quote Caterham CEO Graham Macdonald discussing the plans for the forthcoming joint venture with Renault, stating: 'We see a definite gap in the market – the sub-£50k, mid-to-high 30s upwards. If you look at it sensibly, that's where the hole is.' A £30-50k Aston Martin two-seater sports car, perhaps with a six-cylinder engine, would open up a huge sector of the market. I'd love one and I most certainly can't afford anything else Aston has to offer.

Mark Conlin

Hard sell

Something has been niggling me for several years now. *evo* does an absolutely wonderful job at helping us all answer the question 'what should I buy next?' You routinely put the obvious up against the left-fielders, or the old against the new, or the minnows against the sharks. We all make our respective choices and everything is happy in our motoring heaven. Job done.

Well not quite, because you very rarely



Above: Trott still laments selling his Clio V6

help us answer the other question: 'When should we sell?' I've seen hints of this dilemma surface in some of your editorial. I'm sure I read Harry once mention his Lotus 340R as a 'lifer', only to later see it advertised elsewhere. And Nick was so very taken with an old 911 at some point that his gorgeous Clio V6 was threatened with trade-in, but that was just talk... or so it seemed, until he sold said V6. Now we hear his lament for the car he should have kept!

It is without doubt a much harder proposition to sell than to buy. Acquiring is simply fancy, fantasy and expectation,



Above: Cayman gained Porsche new market

but choosing to retain a car is a loaded mix of reality and nostalgia. We know the next service is going to be a big one and that the car has already cost more than it's worth, but remember that last drive to the lake at sunset!

I think you owe us some help here. Perhaps if you don't have that magic equation you could sponsor some PhD students to come up with one.

David Stevenson

Caterham off track?

I love Caterham. I have never owned one of its cars and probably never will, but I love the Britishness of the company, the good old Seven and the fact it has continued to innovate through the years to keep the Seven relevant.

However, I do despair whenever it strays from the Seven theme (anyone remember the 217?) because it seems to miss the mark, and the SP300R (*evo* 178) seems to be about to do the same.

It's not the car itself that is the problem, more the price tag – £80k for a track car? Radical will do the same for considerably less and if you really want, provide the bits to make it road-legal. Who exactly is it that Caterham is aiming the SP300 at? A quick search of the internet with an imaginary (and for me it's very imaginary) budget of £80k for a track-only car comes up with hundreds of options, from something of a similar ilk to an old F1 car with a real live DFV V8 in it, to a cutting-edge hillclimb Gould, Force or Pilbeam single-seater (with a mega-spec bike engine or 600bhp V8 fitted).

Most of what I found will go quicker than the Caterham and leave enough change to buy the trailer and a cheap tow car. None of them will be new, which for some people might be a problem, but then that's where Radical or OMS come into the market.

It's not that I don't want Caterham to innovate, I just want it to be realistic. Perhaps the tie up with Renault will be just what the firm needs to break out of the Seven mould successfully.

Peter Garforth

FROM THE FORUMS: STUPID FEATURES ON CARS



Above: the rear-view mirror in a Lotus Exige offers a 'limited' view of what's following

_Mick_N: On the VW Tiguan, when the lights are on and the speed is under 30mph or so, the corresponding fog lamp illuminates when you indicate. Apparently aids vision when turning into side roads for example. More like hacks off other drivers.

Dinny_G: Golfs have an in-built bottle opener – never understood why.

duncs500: The rear-view mirror in the Exige. Although I have since found that it does reveal slightly more of the passenger-side blind spot when angled correctly.

PaulJ: Caymans and Boxsters are fitted with the same seats as 911s, which have electric reclining as standard. Trouble is, there's nowhere to recline them to as the engine is positioned in the middle.

David_Yu: Most annoying feature, or rather lack of feature, is the exterior temperature gauge on the GT-R. You can select it on the digital gauge beneath the rev counter, but then you lose the digital speedo which I always use instead of the too widely graduated analogue one. And if any warnings

come up, e.g. low outside temp, it flashes on that display too, taking over from the digital speedo etc. You also cannot see what radio station you are listening to or what setting your climate control is on without changing screens.

Si_: I'm struggling to think of anything as stupid as coloured mood lighting in the current crop of Minis.

Caneswell: Merc had 'Auto Dip-Beam', which in practice blinded most people and meant I got flashed five times on every journey until I turned them off and did it myself.

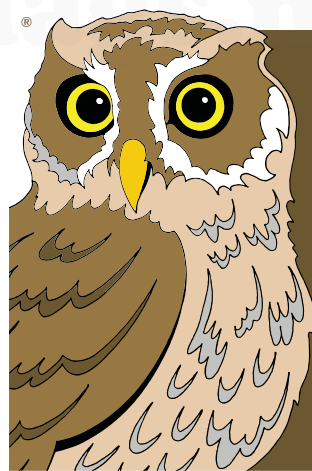
Nuttinnew: Stop/Start where you have to keep your foot on the brake. I get annoyed enough with people doing that at traffic lights/motorway tailbacks/level crossings anyway. Don't encourage them!

Beany: I find the torque restrictor in first gear on the Puma to be irritating – it doesn't give you enough power to launch out of junctions in the dry, but if it's wet, it'll still light up the inside tyre. Meaning you pull away even slower.

Dr. (tbc) Alex: Front parking sensors!

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DIRTY PRETTY THING

We spend 48 hours with the 750bhp, £1.2million Aston Martin One-77, putting it to the test on track and (grimy) roads – and wonder why Aston didn't want us to drive it





DAY ONE MILLBROOK

Words: Jethro Bovington

We've been waiting for this moment since the Paris motor show in 2008, so it's only right and proper that it's starting like this, at the gatehouse of a secure location. The lens of my iPhone's camera is being obscured with a special seal and the uniformed staff are stern and stoic, eyeing my signature with suspicion and then reluctantly sending me on my way through the barriers and on to track control.

The not-at-all-Fat Controller is much jollier but then asks for my permit. 'Erm, I'm pretty sure I have one,' I reply. He checks his system. 'It expired in 2007,' he says, and my heart thumps and throat dries. This is a big day and if my poor housekeeping scuppers it, I may be looking for a new career. 'Oh no, you were issued another one in March, it's OK.' I nod with faux-cool assurance and sign again, this time for a radio called Pogo #707.

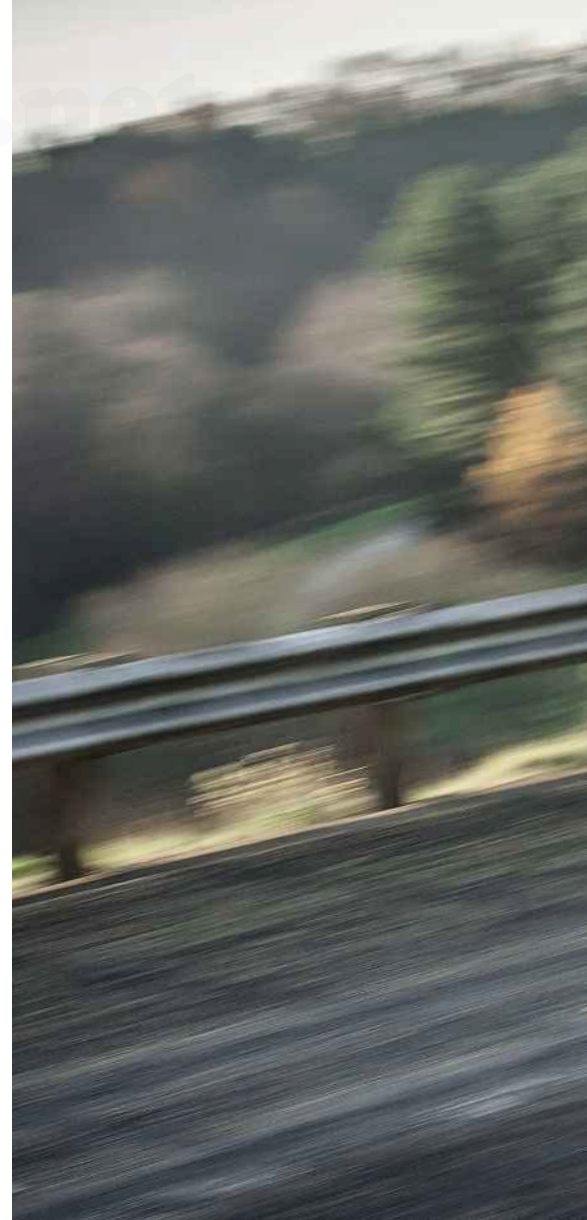
Okay, maybe I'm being a little overdramatic. I've been to the Millbrook Proving Ground in Bedfordshire many times before. It shouldn't feel so illicit. But this vast facility, packed full of tortuous circuits and brutal surfaces designed to shake a prototype to pieces, is just one of those places that makes you feel an irrational, burning guilt. You know, the sort that usually only rushes from your feet to

your crimson cheeks when a police car stops you for a routine check.

Our mission today is pretty undercover too, adding to the tension. By now photographer Jamie Lipman has joined me, looking equally sheepish. His cameras haven't been sealed up, but he does have a security officer in tow to make sure they point only at one car. I have a feeling there won't be anything more exciting pounding the high-speed bowl or various handling tracks today anyway. We've got our hands on an Aston Martin One-77. Number 17, to be precise. A heavily disguised B-segment MPV doing durability testing isn't really going to get a look in, is it?

THE UNREMARKABLE PLAIN white trailer in which the One-77 arrived is already empty by the time we reach Aston Martin's permanent Millbrook hospitality suite. The lovely glass-sided building full of elegant furniture and those coffee-table magazines nobody really reads isn't open this morning. This isn't an Aston Martin press car and the company hasn't helped us to locate a One-77 to test. In fact, the intention was that no media outlet would ever drive a One-77.

But the owner of this car wants to see it used like a supercar ought to be, and for that we owe him an eclipse-inducing debt of gratitude. For the next two days his One-77 is in our custody and we'll drive it here at Millbrook and on sopping wet, bumpy and very real roads. *Top Gear* magazine bagged a drive of a One-77 in Dubai recently so this isn't quite a world exclusive, but the wilds of Wales are a long way from the desert and, I'd wager, a



'This is probably the One-77 as the engineers and test drivers



Above: exhaust pipes exit through carbon diffuser.
Below: Bovington acclimatises to the One-77





always intended it, but I still haven't a clue what to expect'

bit more revealing, too. For now, though, I just want to stare at this sage 'Aston Martin Racing' green One-77. It is hypnotically, brutally and startlingly beautiful.

So what do we know about the One-77? Quite a lot, actually. Aston might not have felt the need to let any journalists drive the car, but it certainly wasn't shy about its supercar's fabulous specification and exquisite construction techniques. And who could blame it? A fully dressed One-77 is jaw-dropping, but the bare rolling carbon chassis that did the rounds at various motor shows was enough to make grown men weep and open very big wallets at record speed. £1.2million? If you had it and you saw the One-77 on one of those stands, it might have been irresistible.

Let's recap, then. The One-77 has a carbonfibre monocoque chassis skinned with hand-crafted aluminium panels. The chassis weighs in at 180kg and is incredibly stiff. Each of those extraordinary front wings, made from a single sheet of aluminium, took one

man three weeks to shape and perfect. *Three weeks* for one wing. It seems only right that Aston's ultimate road car should honour the incredible artistry of the men who hammered and smoothed aluminium at Newport Pagnell for many an uncertain year. A carbonfibre body just wouldn't be the same.

Of course, the basic layout of the One-77 had to honour tradition, too. So it has a front-mid V12 engine driving the rear wheels through a six-speed automated manual gearbox. But the familiar Aston 5.9-litre V12 has been radically re-developed by Cosworth Engineering. Capacity is up to 7.3 litres, weight down by 60kg; it's been given a dry-sump and the compression ratio is up to 10.9:1. Aston claims that this wild, high-revving V12 has 750bhp and 553lb ft. It also sits a full 100mm lower in the One-77's chassis than in the DB9's thanks to the dry sump, and it's way behind the front axle line. It drives the six-speed transaxle via a carbon propshaft that passes through a magnesium alloy torque tube. Then there's the

fully adjustable inboard suspension that allows each customer to tailor their car for the way they intend to use it.

Chief programme manager Chris Porritt said of the One-77: 'Let's be honest, it's going to be pretty hardcore.' I don't know where on the scale of 'pretty hardcore' to 'very hardcore' this particular One-77 sits, but I do know that the owner has some pretty extreme cars in his collection. My guess is that we're dealing with the One-77 at its least compromising. I also know Porritt well enough to surmise that his personal tastes probably align pretty closely with the most enthusiastic of Aston owners. So this is probably the One-77 as the engineers and test drivers always intended it.

I still haven't got a clue what to expect, though. A V12 Vantage could be described as 'pretty hardcore' in most company, but in the rarefied world of Carrera GTs, Enzos, Koenigseggs or Zondas, it's about as intense as a Golf Bluemotion. So where does the One-77 fit? And why didn't they want us to drive it?



Left: tan leather contrasts with black seat bases and carbonfibre; bespoke service was offered for colour scheme inside and out. Right: tackling the Alpine course



'Everything seems to happen quickly. It's a wild, almost rabid ride'

THE DRIVER'S DOOR SWINGS out and arcs gently upwards, just like it might on a DB9 or new Vanquish, but the slow, expensively gloopy motion is gone and instead the door zips away from you like a lost helium balloon. It's skinned internally in shiny carbonfibre with an odd baseball glove-stitched pull, but it's the vivid tan and black trim that demands attention.

The dash is very obviously from the Aston family but the shapes are elongated, teased into elegant teardrops and smoothed and sculpted until the whole cabin seems almost organically formed. It's not a car you simply jump right into and get on with driving, you sort of stand back in reverence. That might sound like romantic nonsense but the One-77 really does exude a specialness that is every bit a match for a Pagani

Huayra, and it has a sense of theatre lacking in the rather staid and serious Veyron.

The deliciously shaped seat is really low, so you collapse into it and then feel that same sense of trepidation that you do when you first jump into a racecar that has its seat positioned to improve the centre of gravity with little care for actually seeing out. The flat, Alcantara-sided steering wheel might look odd, but it feels gorgeous and natural to hold. Beyond it, the graphite instruments are tricky to read but your brain registers that the last mark on the speedo is 220mph and the rev counter reads to eight but has no red line. If you believe Aston's claims, then it should be possible to get the needle somewhere beyond the 220 mark, having passed 62mph inside 3.7sec. (Apparently a 0-100mph

time of 6.9sec was seen during testing. For comparison, we've figured a Koenigsegg CCX at 7.7sec to 100mph, and an Enzo at 6.7sec.)

So you take that awkward hunk of crystal and aim it at the little letterbox cut into the Engine Start button. What happens next is almost worth the £1.2million on its own. The 7.3-litre V12 rips a wicked spit of tight, jagged noise into the cold air. It's sharp and pure and malevolent. Another little blip makes the revs flare and die with the freedom of a Carrera GT or Lexus LFA V10. That word comes back to me: 'hardcore'. Pull the small upshift paddle and the gearbox clunks into first, and my timid application of throttle makes the One-77 chunter and judder away with all the grace of a Corsa driven by a learner in size-12 wellies. It really does feel hardcore and totally intolerant of my respect for its value.

The gearchange is smoother into second but it still has that fragile thump of a single-clutch paddle-shifter, and that sensation is exacerbated by the superlight flywheel and the sheer anger of that V12. It really is a special engine and it's seriously, deliciously loud. Of course, it has effortless torque should you quickly flick your way up the 'box, but you just don't. You want to hear it and feel it get right on cam at 5000rpm, so you almost immediately drive it like you might a VTEC. Within 100 yards you know that this isn't a supercar in the mould of a Veyron. In fact it has the ferocity of something really nutty. A front-engined Koenigsegg, perhaps.

WHY DIDN'T ASTON WANT US TO DRIVE IT?

Initially, Aston Martin wanted all customers to take delivery of their One-77s before the press would be allowed to drive one. This was 2010. In 2011 we heard that Aston still had a number unsold, and so we asked again to drive it. Surely if word got out that the car was as good as our spies had said, some positive press would help sell the last cars? Still it refused.

Then, in early 2012, a customer asked us if we wanted to drive his car. We said yes, but our insurers said no. Shortly after, it was confirmed that

all 77 cars were sold – so we asked Aston again, and again it said no. By this time, we'd heard rumours that the One-77 simply didn't feel like a £1.2million car – more like a modified DBS. We wondered if that was why Aston didn't want us near it...

In early November, the owner of this car got in touch. He didn't think *Top Gear's* review did the car justice and insisted that we test his car, thoroughly, on our favourite roads, so that we could experience what he believes is a truly mesmerising



hypercar to give Veyrons and Huayras a bloody nose. So we did, and it is. The One-77 is brilliant. We just wish we could've said so sooner. **Nick Trott**



Having said that, the One-77 doesn't feel at all flighty or hyper-sensitive. The steering has similar weighting to a V12 Vantage's and its rate of response is deliberate and reassuring. In a Ferrari F12 you constantly have the speed of the rack at the front of your mind, but the One-77's system is more intuitive and it lets you concentrate on getting the most from the chassis and engine. On the tight and slippery confines of Millbrook's infamous Alpine route, that's a very good thing indeed.

Cold P Zero Corsas that are 335mm wide don't really like tarmac that's freezing to the touch, and the traction control constantly cuts into the V12's delivery. It's fighting a losing battle and the Aston is either electronically tethered and grumpy, or fizzing and slithering

with wheelspin. If you want to select DSC Track mode or turn off the DSC altogether, you have to flip up the central cubbyhole lid (light, leather-trimmed carbon) to find an oblong sliver of chrome with a picture of a skidding car above it. Maybe it should be anodised red or protected by a break-only-in-emergencies glass panel. I decide that DSC Track is the sensible option.

Millbrook's Alpine route is basically a tarmac roller coaster, littered with blind brows, nasty cambers and one almighty jump. In a car as wide and as valuable as the One-77, it's pretty much hell on earth. However, after the initial clumsy fumbles, the big Aston starts to feel at home. Harry Metcalfe will discover more about the ride on real roads later, but it's a stiff,

alert and agile car. You don't feel much body roll and you can really lean on the front tyres. They feel a long way away but the benefit is that the engine's mass isn't overly burdening them, so when you expect some mid-corner understeer, the One-77 just keeps on gripping. The DSC snips at the V12's torque mid-corner and as you straighten the car out it sets the engine free, the Pirellis spinning up and the car spitting sideways. Everything seems to happen quickly. It's a wild, almost rabid ride.

It becomes apparent pretty quickly that the One-77 needs a bigger stage and that the Corsa tyres would appreciate a climate more temperate than Bedfordshire in December. The truth is that I can only really enjoy the V12's epic rush to the limiter on Millbrook's



*'Even though it's a bracing -2deg C
out here, I couldn't be more excited.
It doesn't get better than this'*



mile straight, and although I catch fleeting glimpses of the chassis' talent, this is just a taste of what the One-77 has to offer. Eventually I work up the courage to fully disable the DSC and it actually becomes a more predictable car, because the engine gives exactly what you ask for exactly when you want it. Once or twice I even provoke the One-77 mid-corner, feeling it slip easily into oversteer and then using the power to keep the car balanced and sliding. It's a crazy thing to do, but I suspect I might never drive one again.

I'll never forget the sense that you're walking a tightrope when you start to push. The One-77 has a savagery right at its core. Harry, you'll need three Shredded Wheat for breakfast tomorrow...

DAY TWO WALES

Words: Harry Metcalfe

My first glimpse of the One-77 comes at 6.45am in the middle of a spookily dark car park in Betws-y-Coed, north Wales, and even though it's a bracing -2deg C out here, I couldn't be more excited. Lit only by the moon and a streetlight way in the distance, all I can really make out is the outline of the One-77's outlandishly curvaceous aluminium body stretched tight over the extravagant mechanicals beneath. This almost mythical Aston Martin has silently rolled (under the power of gravity) from the covered trailer that delivered it here moments ago. We're trying our best to be kind to the local residents by saving the 7.3-litre, V12 quad-exhaust-pipe pre-dawn chorus until the moment we are ready to leave. And now the delivery driver is handing me the famous Aston crystal key. It doesn't get better than this.

I crack the lightweight driver's door open to climb in. Bare carbon reveals itself everywhere: the sills, the door panels, the floor (where a carefully positioned mat protects the area around the pedals). Even the wall behind the seats is untrimmed glossy carbon. Everything that isn't carbon or leather is black anodised aluminium, apart from a huge hoop of glinting rose gold that rings the centre console as it swoops down from the windscreen, around the handbrake and then back up to the windscreen again. Spectacular seems almost too feeble a word to describe all these interior details.

Time to get down to the business of driving this very special Aston. My plan for today is straightforward: I'm going to spend as much time as is humanly possible driving the One-77 on some of my favourite roads in north Wales. As far as I'm concerned, we're wasting time already. The 'key' slots into place and, as I hold it there, the electrics come to life and the needles on the twin dials do their initial sweep

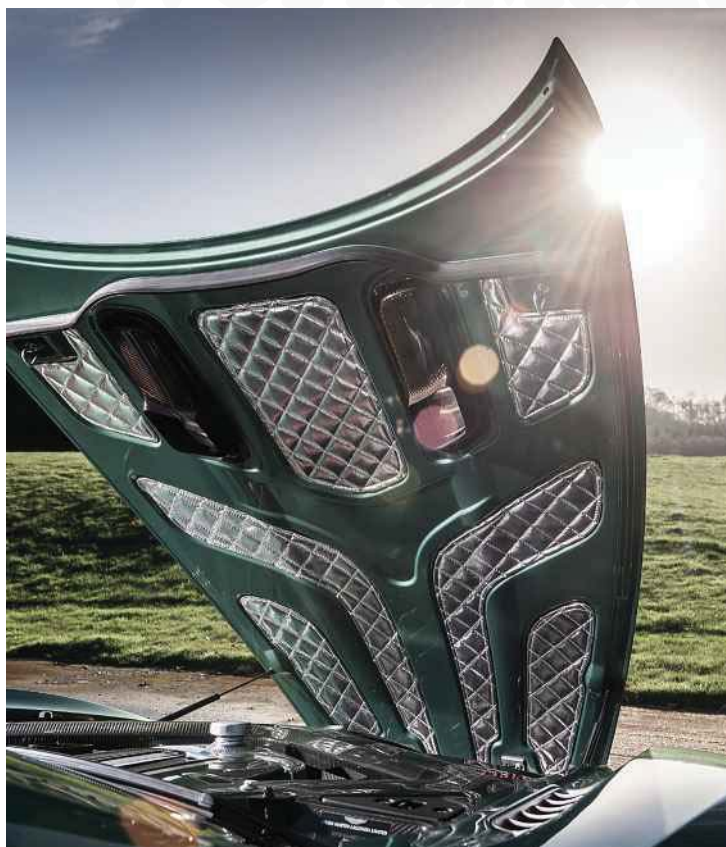
ONE-77 FACTS

Aston initially declared the One-77's 7.3-litre engine as having 730bhp, but upped this to 750bhp (with 553lb ft) after testing. This is the homologated power level, but production engines have been producing 2-3 per cent more, putting peak power closer to 772bhp, the highest-ever power output from a naturally aspirated road engine.

The first service is due at 1000 miles, another at 5000 miles or six months, and then every 5000 miles or annually. A 12-month service costs £1358.08 plus VAT, a 24-month service £2502 plus VAT.

The list price of the One-77 rose from £1.05m to £1.15m in 2011 and the only cost options were for precious-metal switchgear, available in gold (£40,000), dark chrome (£30k) or ruthenium (£15k). Out of the 77 cars built, only nine are right-hand drive. The final One-77 was delivered in August 2012.

All customers were asked what sort of driving their car would be doing, and their cars were then set up individually for the specified purposes. For customers who will mainly be doing trackdays, Aston set their cars up to suit the circuits being used. HM



Above: inside of the front-hinged bonnet is covered with quilted silver sound-deadening material. Below left: just the two pedals. Below right: boot space impinged by chassis supports. Bottom: rear wing rises at 68mph, when the ride height also lowers by 15mm – changes that are reversed when the car drops below 31mph again



before settling down on their pins again, at which point the cabin is filled with the whirl of a high-speed starter motor waking the 750bhp, 553lb ft, 7.3-litre V12 engine from its slumber. It quickly catches and settles into a busy idle. There's much less exhaust blare emulating from behind me than you get from certain Italian marques, but it still sounds fabulous. It's different to all other contemporary Astons, racier, fitter sounding and delivering an instant flare of revs when you blip the throttle, suggesting the One-77 is equipped with little in the way of a flywheel.

We want to get a picture of the Aston high up on the moor as the sun rises, which is only half an hour from now, so there's no time for dawdling. I strap in (conventional three-point seat belts, thankfully), press 'D' and feed in the power to pull away. It's not a great getaway, to be honest. In fact it's so bad I think I must have done something wrong, because just as the twin-plate, semi-race clutch bites, it releases for a moment before biting again, and as a result we stutter our way out of the car park awkwardly. No matter: changing from first into second gear works fine and all I'm thinking of now is keeping up with the camera car to our chosen location.

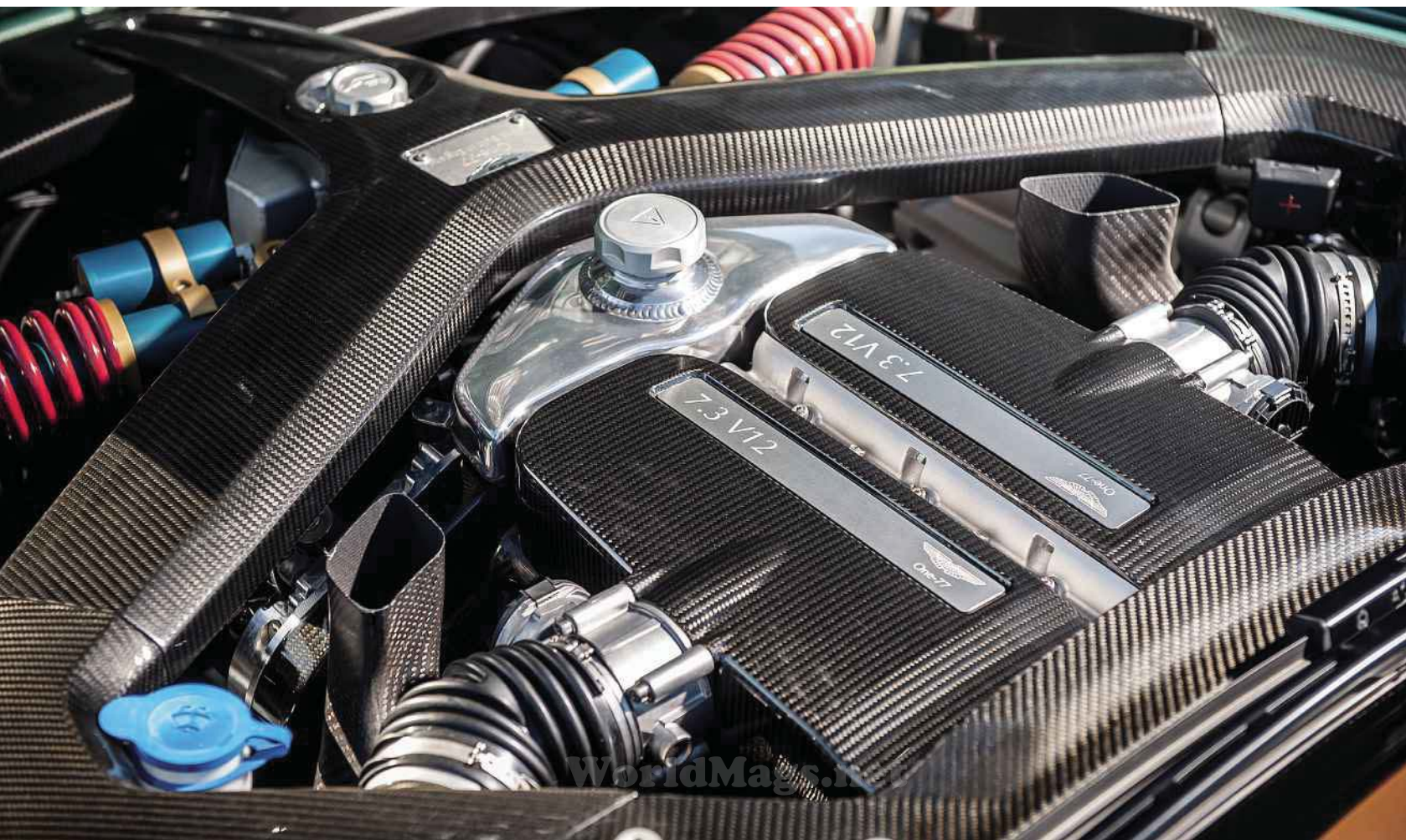
The road surface is wet and there are evil-looking stone walls flashing past my left shoulder. The One-77 feels impossibly wide from where I'm sitting and the huge mirrors look like they've been attached to those extensions so beloved by caravanners, but they work well and need to be positioned that far out so that you can see past the One-77's vast rear wheelarches. I've driven lots of cars over the years, but for a maiden flight this is about as intimidating as it gets, especially as the windscreen washers are frozen up, so the clap-hand wipers are now smearing the screen as they fight through the salt-laden spray being thrown up by the camera car. Great.

I also can't help but notice there's a sprinkling of snow beside the road as we climb higher. The weather forecast for today is good, but this being north Wales in December, my fingers are firmly crossed. At least the seat feels terrific, trimmed in a clever mix of tan leather and fabric, the subtle shape gripping me nicely without me even realising. The One-77's distinctive square steering wheel might look odd, but it turns out to be pretty good to hold. It's early days, but I do wish there was more information filtering through to me as to what grip the front tyres are finding on this dank morning, but maybe it'll all work better in the promised dry conditions later today.

It's still dark as we arrive at our shoot location and, more worryingly, it's turned misty too. But it must be our lucky day because just as we're busy discussing a plan B, the gloomy sky starts to turn a vivid pink as the winter sun begins its slow climb from behind the hills in the distance. Watching as this subtle



'There's nothing quite like a car that can spin its wheels in a straight line at beyond motorway speeds to grab your attention'





'This is a proper old-school, high-horsepower, front-engined supercar that demands proper respect'



Left: the scream of the 7.3-litre V12 echoes around the Welsh countryside. Above left: Harry stops for a pricey fill-up in Bala. Above right: ornate 'Engine Start' button is surrounded by yet more carbonfibre

light grows in intensity, as if being controlled by some studio director, and then falls on the One-77's bodywork is magical. The whole world around us is silent; there's not even a breath of wind up here today and we haven't had anyone pass by for ages. If the locals only knew what they were missing...

Photographs done, I'm free to go off on the first proper stop of the day. As a teenager I spent my formative years pounding rubbish cars on these very roads and one of my all-time favourites is the A4212 that takes you from Bala, around the Celyn reservoir and on towards the west Welsh coast. Wide, open and impossibly scenic, it should suit the One-77 perfectly. Well, it would if there was any fuel left in the tank. I hadn't noticed how empty it was on the way up here but the warning light is now flashing and the trip computer is telling me that over the last 500 miles, this car has averaged 6.2mpg. A trip to Bala for fuel is required before the real fun can start.

As luck would have it (or not), there's a tractor filling up at Bala's only fuel station right by the pump we need, and when manoeuvring around it, the One-77's clutch is again struggling to catch cleanly. I'm quickly learning that the drivetrain hates any sort of manoeuvring, as the rear diff locks up and the resulting locked rear axle seems to give the clutch an even harder time.

Still, it's not long before the tractor has departed and the Aston's tank is being filled with Texaco's finest, and soon I'm finally ready to start stretching this Aston's super-long legs. We leave Bala behind, I get up to speed and the trick gearbox starts to come into its own: it's behaving perfectly, firing in changes up and down the 'box as quick as you'd hope it would and with none of that excessive 'thump' you get on some other ultra-sporting automated manual gearboxes I can think of (Aventador, anyone?). As more miles fly by, I forget all about those low-speed shenanigans.

The One-77's on-board V12 symphony is bewitching from the moment the key is pressed, but poke the 'Sport' button on the

dash and it's enriched even further. Because the exhaust runs inside both sills, I'd swear those travelling in the cabin are rewarded with an almost surround-sound effect. But it's the change in the character of that mighty V12 that's really getting my attention. Not only has engaging Sport mode given me access to the full 553lb ft of torque (without it you get only 75 per cent of the available total), but the engine has also gained an almost VTEC-like top-end howl. From 4500rpm on, it's as if there's a squirt of nitrous finding its way into the engine; it storms through the rev range with no let-up before clattering into the 7500rpm limiter. In fact, it feels like the electronic overlord is being a spoilsport, because the torrent of horsepower is in full flood at that point, such is the relentlessness of the V12 on full song.

All of this means I'm really having to concentrate in the driving seat because the delivery of all that power to the rear wheels is just plain vicious when you approach the top end of the rev range. Even the trick 335/30 20in Pirellis are struggling to cope. But boy, does that make this Aston exciting. There's nothing quite like a car that can spin its wheels in a straight line at beyond motorway speeds to grab your attention. With each millimetre of throttle delivering a further spike in power, this is not a car you can drive with the accelerator welded to the floor in the hope the electronics will sort it all out. No, this is a proper old-school, high-horsepower, front-engined supercar that demands proper respect, especially in the patchy-grip conditions we've got today, and in my book, it's all the better for it. With the carbon brakes nicely weighted with plenty of feel underfoot, it's easy to tell that this car has been built for driving, rather than for sitting in some collection.

AFTER THE FAST SWEEPERS of the A4212, I've turned inland again and onto the tight twists and turns of the A498 that leads up to Snowdonia and the Llanberis Pass. I'm fast discovering that the One-77 is an addictive



mix of racecar drivetrain and suspension with a serious helping of luxury-car accompaniments. Take the multi-function screen in the centre console, for example. It's equipped with satnav, offers iPod and Bluetooth connections, and is linked to lovely Bang & Olufsen tweeters that silently rise out of the far corners of the dashboard each time the car's electronics come to life. The seats are electronically controlled too, as is the steering column, and all this adjustment means you can achieve a



Top: the One-77 stretches its legs through Snowdonia.
Above: thirst explains the need for a 98-litre fuel tank

near-perfect driving position, for which I'm thankful as the front end of this car feels a horribly long way away from where I'm sitting. Even the windscreen seems like it's in another county. But you only need to see how far back the engine is in the chassis to understand why the One-77's nose is so long, and the result of the rearward weight bias this brings is that the front end feels super planted. All I have to focus on is what the rear is up to.

After a glorious run up the A498, the snow-

VANQUISH VARIATIONS



The new Vanquish: a budget One-77?

The new Aston Vanquish (pictured right) takes a number of cues from the One-77. In Aston-speak, the Vanquish has the One-77's 'amplified' look, which means its grille, side strakes, bonnet and arches mimic the cartoonish features of the hypercar. The grooves on the Vanquish's roof that channel air to the rear spoiler are inspired by the One-77, as is the metal 'hockey-stick' motif around the rear side windows. The rear lights, designed to resemble the



capped peak of Snowdon heaves into view, so we pull over for a bit of a breather. It really is stunning here, especially when the roads are as empty as they are today. Each time I step out of the One-77, I can't help but glance back; it's that sort of car. I love the colour of this example too. The owner ordered it in this hue as a homage to his favourite Aston of all time, the DB4 GT Zagato (registration 4 RTA), which is finished in the exact same colour.

The green suits the One-77 really well,

'The rearward weight bias means that the front end feels super planted. All I have to focus on is what the rear is up to'

showing off its heavily sculptured body beautifully, as well as linking the car to Aston's historic past. The only bit that jars for me is the way the scoops either side of the nose take in the base of the headlights, but then the extravagant sweep of the tail lights more than makes up for it, as does the brilliantly aggressive crease that runs along the top of the rear haunches. In fact, everywhere you look, the One-77 is dripping in beautiful details. I'm sure there was a budget to work to, but it seems

Aston Martin 'wing' badge, are also similar.

Inside, the centre stack features the One-77's 'waterfall' design, there's an option of the £1.2m car's steering wheel and the infotainment system is an evolution of the One-77's. The Vanquish uses a smaller and lighter exhaust – a direct result of One-77 development – while the V12 engine takes its air intakes and variable valve timing from the more expensive car. The bespoke Brembo carbon-ceramic brakes fitted to the One-77 are modified and fitted to the Vanquish. With all the One-77s sold, the new Vanquish is the closest you'll get to the hypercar – and it's £960,000 cheaper, too.

NT



*'I don't want some easy-driving
machine delivering mind-altering
performance on a plate; if that's all
you want, go buy a Veyron'*



any problem Aston encountered had to be solved with the most elegant solution.

I have to take the One-77 for one more blast before the sun finally sets on this incredible day, and the flowing twists of the Llanberis Pass seem like the perfect place for the finale. The hikers and their cagoules have long gone, so it's just me and the Aston – and perhaps the odd errant sheep to spoil my lines. The key slots home again and the V12 barks into life for one last time, and we pull jerkily away. First, second and third gear are quickly munched in the way only a 750bhp supercar can, and moments later we hit the more challenging section where the mountains close in, squeezing the road tight between their lower slopes. I drop the window to wallow in the sound from those howling quad exhausts bouncing off the slabs of stone lining the route of this wondrous pass. God, I'm loving this car. It's impossibly addictive and I can't stop driving it again and again. Yes, it's demanding to get right and I haven't quite mastered it yet, but I'm desperately keen to learn.

This is exactly the sort of challenge I want from a £1.2million supercar. I don't want some easy-driving machine delivering mind-altering performance on a plate; if that's all you want, go buy a Veyron. With the One-77 there's real work for the driver to do to extract the best from it. I bet some of the original owners won't be up to it and will either abandon their One-77 to gather dust in a collection or sell it on as quickly as possible. But they'd be missing the point, because this is a monster of a car – over-powered yet impossibly charismatic. It's a masterclass on blending low-tech aluminium-forming skills with high-tech carbon technology, and it's shockingly beautiful, making it eye-wateringly desirable.

From the outset, the One-77 was designed to be the ultimate modern-day Aston, and after my day with it I'm very happy to tell you that it hits the bullseye. Big time.

SPECIFICATION

ASTON MARTIN ONE-77

Engine V12, 7312cc

Power 750bhp @ 6000rpm

Torque 553lb ft @ 7600rpm

Transmission Six-speed automated manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD

Wheels 9 x 20in front, 12.5 x 20in rear

Tyres 255/35 ZR20 front, 335/30 ZR20 rear

Weight (kerb) 1740kg

Power-to-weight 438bhp/ton

0-62mph sub-3.7sec (claimed)

Top speed 220mph+ (claimed)

Basic price £1,150,000

On sale Sold out!

evo RATING ★★★★★



BUY YOUR DREAM ASTON

*Can't quite stretch to a One-77? Don't worry – you could be enjoying a V12-engined Aston Martin for as little as £30k. **Peter Tomalin** is your guide*

'HARDENING PRICES REFLECT THE GROWING STATURE OF THE LAST NEWPORT PAGNELL-BUILT ASTON AND ITS RELATIVE RARITY'



'I BOUGHT ONE'

Neil Woodward

'I bought my 2002 Vanquish last year with 44,800 miles on the clock. I'd heard about the gearbox and subframes, but there are solutions to all the known problems and specialists who can fix it at sensible prices. It's not a cheap car to run, but it's not the horror some say it is. I'm an engineer and the deeper I delve, the more I appreciate the engineering. It has never let me down, and I've had some fantastic drives. In fact it has become a way of life.'

CLASSIFIEDS

2002 Vanquish with 'S' upgrades
21,000 miles, Silver Birch with charcoal
hide, paddleshift, heated seats, satnav,
Works-fitted Sports Dynamic Pack

Find it at: forsale.evo.co.uk
(seller: Nicholas Mee)

£64,950

VANQUISH

Price: £50,000 (2001) – £90,000 (2007)

VANQUISH prices are hardening, reflecting the growing stature of the last Newport Pagnell-built Aston and its relative rarity (fewer than 2600 were built). The more powerful 'S' version (up from 460bhp to 520) introduced in 2004 is the most desirable, though earlier cars can be converted to 'S' spec by the Works Service department. Another popular conversion is to replace the automated gearbox with a conventional six-speed manual, while a desirable option is the Sports Dynamic Pack. A 140-point check by a specialist is advisable.

The main points to check are that the automated gearbox shifts reasonably crisply and without excessive clutch slip (the clutch kit alone is over £3k) or driveline clonks. Look in the service book for the upgrade to the magnetic gear position sensor, which eliminates many gear selection issues (standard from chassis 600 onwards). Remove the front undertray and check the steel front subframe for corrosion – it's a known weak spot and replacement will cost over £5000. The V12 is largely bulletproof, the main trouble area being the coil-packs. If these have been replaced with the later, improved items, that's an important box ticked. Avoid high-mileage cars: 3000-5000 miles a year is average.

'THE DB9 WAS A
LEAP FORWARD FROM
THE DB7 IN RELIABILITY
AND INTEGRITY'



'I BOUGHT ONE'

James Edwards

'Mine's an '05 car. I've had it two and a half years, coming from a 360 Spider, and I'm amazed how easy it is to live with. I've done about 8000 miles and apart from fuel – and probably depreciation – it's been relatively inexpensive. Specialists are best for servicing; the dealer network doesn't seem committed to older cars and Works is a tad too pricey even for my cherished car. Would I buy another? Yes, but a later car with the Sport Pack.'

CLASSIFIEDS

2004 DB9 Coupe Touchtronic

21,450 miles, California Sage with Bitter Chocolate, 950W Linn audio upgrade, heated seats, GSM phone prep

Find it at: forsale.evo.co.uk
(seller: Dove House Motor Co)

£39,995

DB9

Price: £30,000 (2004) – £90,000 (2011) **Current list:** £128,150

ALONG with the DB7 Vantage/GT, this is the entry point into V12 Astons. The DB9 was a leap forward in reliability and integrity, though early cars did suffer the odd glitch.

At launch the spec was pretty meagre, but it became well-specced from the 2006MY (satnav, Bluetooth, heated seats, etc). Touchtronic 2 cars with paddles are vastly more popular, but rarer manuals are becoming sought-after. Two-tone interiors add value, as do the 'Premium' and 260W Linn audio systems. The Sport Pack is a must for keen drivers, though some find the ride too harsh, so test it on a variety of roads. Buy the newest you can afford, as upgrades were always being introduced (2009MY had worthwhile chassis tweaks).

Early cars are tempting at around £30K but check *very* carefully for a full history (including service actions) and that there are no electrical issues: door locking, windows, seat controls, rising nav screen, hi-fi – all are expensive to fix. Also check the suspension and transmission for oil leaks. Examine body panels for signs of scrapes and corrosion from stone chips. As with all these V12s, fastidious attention needs to be paid to the oil level. The engine (450bhp on earlier cars, 470bhp later) should be silky, with a step in power at 4000rpm, while Touchtronic should be smooth and responsive on slow-speed take-up.



V12 VANTAGE

Price: £85,000 (2009) – £128,000 (2011) **Current list:** £135,000

INTRODUCED in 2009, the V12 Vantage has among the best residuals of any recent Aston, thanks to a limited supply and strong demand among aficionados.

Equipment levels are high, but the Bang & Olufsen hi-fi and the lightweight seats are sought-after options. Pirelli P Zero Corsas fitted to early cars can make it a handful in the cold and wet; later versions have less extreme P Zeros, which are now generally preferred. By 2009 the Gaydon Astons were generally well-sorted, and there are no major recurring mechanical issues. The V12 (which puts out 510bhp) does use oil, so check the level – if it's a private car, ascertain that the owner has always done the same. Check the condition of the CCM ceramic discs, which are very expensive to replace. Also inspect the vulnerable front splitter – it's £6k for a new one. Battery age and condition are important, as a poor battery can lead to electrical gremlins. Try the gearchange from cold and beware clutch judder or slip on take-off.

'BY 2009 THE GAYDON ASTONS WERE GENERALLY WELL-SORTED'

'I BOUGHT ONE'

John Gladman

'I bought my 59-plate V12 Vantage in December 2011 at 6400 miles – it's now covered 10,200. I had a new clutch under warranty as some early ones made a squealing noise – it didn't have any adverse effect, but it was noisy and not what I expected of a £140,000 car. In fairness, Aston replaced it without any fuss. I love the car and would buy another in a heartbeat. It's monumentally quick, handles well, sounds glorious, looks beautiful and has a presence like no other.'

CLASSIFIEDS

2009 V12 Vantage

9029 miles, Quantum Silver with black leather and grey Alcantara, 2 previous owners, full Aston service history

Find it at: forsale.evo.co.uk
(seller: Amari Supercars)

£84,995

DBS

Price: £70,000 (2008) – £135,000 (2011)

MORE THAN just a bodykitted DB9 – you get more power (510bhp), less weight, adaptive damping, ceramic brakes and 20in wheels – by the time the DBS was launched for the 2008MY most of the early Gaydon quirks had been fixed. It also had the new HDD satnav that went into the '09 DB9 and Vantage. With the new Vanquish pushing values down, the DBS looks decent value.

Early cars were all manuals, and all well specced. An improved Touchtronic 2 was introduced in October '08, which became by far the bigger seller. Ceramic brakes need careful inspection: if they feel like sandpaper it's likely the silicone lining will have carbonised or worn badly (a new set is almost £10k). Some cars have vibrations caused by the brake set-up, so test them on a smooth surface. The bonnet, front wings, splitter, door openings and rear diffuser are all carbon – so check carefully. On the road, make sure the different damping modes work; also the Sport button, which sharpens the throttle and Touchtronic shifts.

'I BOUGHT ONE'

Simon George

'It's a cracking supercar, the DBS. We bought ours in 2009 primarily for our supercar driving experience events and what a solid, reliable beast it's turned out to be. It recently hit 55,000 tough miles, and that's with a myriad of different drivers. It's been just superb. Fabulous V12, excellent ceramic brakes, and it's so bloody well screwed together. Just check the oil level every week, minimum. We didn't and it ate its V12. An £8000 rebuild quickly followed...'

CLASSIFIEDS

2009 DBS Coupe

19,999 miles, Meteorite Silver, black semi-aniline leather, piano black fascia

Find it at: forsale.evo.co.uk

(seller: Austin Owen)

£79,990

2009 DBS Volante

11,100 miles, Quantum Silver with Obsidian, Touchtronic, 1000W B&O audio

Find it at: forsale.evo.co.uk (seller: Romans)

£104,950



RAPIDE

Price: £80,000 (2010) – £110,000 (2011) **Current list:** £149,995

'I BOUGHT ONE'

Steve Page

'I bought my Rapide new in July 2011. I tried the DB9, the Virage and the Rapide – the Rapide was actually nicest to drive. I also loved the looks and the space. In 12 months I had some great drives, but only covered 4000 miles because I kept it for special journeys. It was reliable, with no faults, but then I saw a Ferrari FF and had to have it. It's faster, more "special" and its technology is on a different level. I love Aston, but it does need resources and new tech.'

CLASSIFIEDS

2011 Rapide

4211 miles, Quantum Silver with Phantom Grey leather, heated and cooled sports seats, rear-seat entertainment system

Find it at: forsale.evo.co.uk

(seller: Bramley)

£89,850

THE RAPIDE has not been a big sales success for Aston, and since Astons tend to be mileage/price sensitive, it depreciates heavily if used as a daily driver. Early cars are now looking great value and starting to attract attention, particularly from DB9 drivers starting a family!

It's one of the best-sorted Astons, and well-specced too, with adaptive damping, larger brakes, a new rear subframe, shorter final drive, etc, when compared with the DB9. All Rapides have Touchtronic; there was no manual alternative. Rear DVD screens are a popular option, and standard on the 2010 Rapide Lux special edition, which features a bespoke luggage set too. The reversing camera on later cars is also prized. Early cars were built at Magna Steyr in Austria (production recently switched back to Gaydon) with no adverse effect on quality, although there's still the occasional electrical quirk. Do take a test drive; some drivers find forward vision a little restricted, and pay particular attention to the brakes – this is a heavy car (190kg heavier than the DB9) with 470bhp. As with the DBS, test the damping modes and the Sport button.



'THE UNDERPINNINGS ARE LARGELY JAGUAR-BASED,
AND THAT MEANS A STEEL STRUCTURE, WHICH IS
INEVITABLY PRONE TO CORROSION'



DB7 GT

Price: £30,000 (2002) – £40,000 (2004)

THE BLOXHAM-BUILT DB7 was first to get Aston's then-new 5.9-litre V12 engine with the introduction of the 420bhp Vantage model in 1999. The GT introduced in 2002 was essentially an improved, slightly more powerful (435bhp) Vantage, available in manual or automatic (GTA) guises.

A mesh grille, bonnet vents, bootlid spoiler and optional carbonfibre trim were the visual changes. As with the Vanquish, a 140-point check by an independent specialist is highly advisable for the DB7 – and any 'heritage era' (pre-Gaydon) Aston. This is because parts are more expensive and most jobs take longer, making labour charges high too. Factor any required work into the sale price.

The underpinnings are largely Jaguar-based, and that means a steel structure, which is inevitably prone to corrosion, particularly around the front of the rear trailing arm area. Check for oil and fluid leaks, and also worn suspension bushes, any clunking from the driveline and binding brakes – they're all potentially costly to fix. The GT also suffers clutch problems caused by a crankshaft spigot bearing failure. It's a long list, and all the more reason to engage a specialist to survey any potential purchase, but buy wisely and the GT makes a rare and characterful Aston.

Huge thanks to Grant Neal for his help with the buying information. His book, 'The Definitive Guide To Gaydon-era Aston Martin', packed with facts and buying advice, is available from www.astonmartinreview.co.uk. Thanks also to Aston specialists Bamford Rose and Nicholas Mee & Co for their valuable input.

'I BOUGHT ONE'

Steve Andrews

'I had my DB7 GTA from November 2010 until April 2012. It was a 2003 car and had covered around 16,000 miles when I bought it. Having come from a CLK 320 with loads of tech, it did feel a little retro, and there were a number of "quirks" – like some of the dials being obscured by the steering wheel – while the back seats were pretty useless. However, it was a lot of fun, and never broke down or failed to start first time at any point during the 18 months I had it. I did around 4000 miles in it altogether and loved it to bits. In fact in April, I traded it in to get a DB9 Volante.'

CLASSIFIEDS

2003 DB7 GTA coupe

38,000 miles, Skye Silver with Charcoal (upper) and Parchment, heated front screen, heated seats, satnav

Find it at: forsale.evo.co.uk
(seller: HWM Aston Martin)

£35,950



RARE BREED

The £105,000 BMW M3 CRT combines the 444bhp engine from the hardcore M3 GTS with a saloon body and oodles of carbonfibre. Just 67 were made.

Henry Catchpole
tracks one down

Hire car, new car, courtesy car... You know how it is. You've never noticed a Kia Soul before in your life, but now you're driving one, they seem to be everywhere. It's the same with press cars; before this morning I'd never even clapped eyes on a BMW M3 CRT, let alone driven one, and with good reason – there are only 67 in the world. But now, just an hour and a half after getting behind the Alcantara-trimmed wheel of number 00 (and only an hour and a half before I've got to give it back again), I'd swear there's another one coming up the road towards me. Same Frozen Polar Silver paint, same Melbourne Red touches around the vents, same carbon splitter... definitely a CRT. They're common as muck!

We have been trying to get hold of this exceptionally rare M3 ever since BMW announced its existence over a year ago. The idea of the bigger, more powerful engine from the tangerine M3 GTS (of which a whopping 135 were produced by the way) in the chassis of an E90 saloon (our



Above: you wait ages for an M3 CRT to come along... Catchpole (centre) encounters another CRT on the roads around the Ring. Top right: red details abound

favourite of the current M3s) was simply too mouth-watering to ignore. Even though a price tag of over £100,000 didn't exactly make it a people's champion, it was just a very cool thing. Then it was announced that it would be left-hand-drive only and none of them would be coming to the UK. Somehow this only increased the titillation. Now we *needed* to drive one, but there was to be no press launch and when we enquired about the car, the chaps in Munich claimed not to have kept an example. All sold, nothing to see here, move along please.

Then, after nearly a year of pestering, just when we'd given up all hope, an invite fluttered through *evo's* letterbox: 'Join us at the Nürburgring for a celebration of 40 years of BMW M'. Attached was a list of cars and amongst them were the by now almost mythical letters C, R and T. We weren't quite sure where BMW had 'found' this car,

but frankly we didn't care and instantly asked for a few hours to drive what will probably be the last version of the current M3. Which brings us to this bright November morning. And after all those shenanigans you'll now understand why I'm quite so completely chin-in-the-footwell dumbfounded that we've got another one coming towards us.

The other driver does a similar double take as we pass. We both stop, reverse, park up and despite his English being no improvement on my German, manage to convey our incredulity at the situation. He has number 016, and is jolly pleased with it. He has also decided to add some stickers, which rather spoils the Q-car vibe in my opinion, but each to his own. Then we shake hands and go our separate ways, in slight disbelief.

From the moment you get into the CRT you know it's a bit special, as the hard seat of a fixed-back bucket greets your rump. Look over your shoulder



‘The fully adjustable suspension certainly seems to work. I can’t think of another saloon this side of a Mitsubishi Evo that is so instantly alive to inputs’

and you’ll see that the three rear seats have been reduced to two but with each getting more support. If you’re sitting in the back looking forward then you’ll be able to marvel at the beautiful front seats, which are covered in leather on the front but have naked carbonfibre on the back. It’s not any old carbon either, but a cellular honeycomb similar to that developed for the body panels of BMW’s i3 and i8 concept cars. The bonnet is also made using this technique and it weighs half that of the equivalent aluminium item. The small rear spoiler and front lip are also made of the black weave so perhaps it’s no surprise that CRT stands for Carbon Racing Technology.

Buckets aside, the interior is specced up rather than stripped out, and as a result the CRT only weighs 25kg less than a standard M3 saloon, although BMW claims it is about 70kg better off than an equivalently highly specified car. Whatever the weight savings, the

CRT instantly feels more alert when you set off down the road, with the fully adjustable coilover suspension noticeably firmer beneath you. It’s not just the springs and dampers that have been changed either; a whole new, stiffer rear subframe has been fitted to increase agility. It certainly seems to work too, because I can’t think of another saloon this side of a Mitsubishi Evo that is so instantly alive to inputs.

Although the steering is quite light initially, it is beautifully reactive and full of feedback as soon as you get up to speed, and the best thing is that as the pace increases, it’s obvious the saloon’s slightly friendlier handling balance remains. Where the coupe seems incapable of relinquishing grip at the front, the saloon is a touch more neutral, capable of understeering just a fraction when pushed and thereby giving you more confidence to judge the grip between tyre and road. What



'The CRT is huge fun. It is constantly talking to you, while

it ultimately means is that it's a more engaging car to play with and chuck into corners, particularly medium to fast ones. On this road – the fantastically smooth and flowing L10 heading up towards Hohe Acht from the small town of Adenau – there's a particularly lovely left-right sequence between the golden trees that you can carry speed into, leaning on the front Michelins through the first part then getting on the throttle as you jink back the other way to swing the rear tyres into play on the exit.

I suppose, if we were being picky, to make it our ultimate M3 we would have wanted a manual gearbox, but the M DCT seven-speed twin-clutcher is extremely good. So quick and smooth are the changes that it's hard to believe BMW's claimed 0-62mph time of 4.4sec

isn't a little conservative. (That's the same time quoted for the GTS, which has an identical 444bhp, and 0.3sec quicker than the regular 414bhp M3 DCT saloon.) With titanium silencers and less sound deadening, the distinctively rasping metallic soundtrack from the 4.4-litre V8 pervades the cabin even more than the standard car's 4-litre does, and the DCT is perfect for orchestrating this and keeping the revs nice and high. Yet while a paddle-shift would usually be a boon when it comes to hairpins and dropping to first gear, the CRT has a surprisingly short second gear – to the extent that you end up using third more than you'd think – so there's no need.

As the morning wears on it's clear that the CRT is a huge amount of fun. It is constantly talking to you, while steering,

pedals and paddles are all instantly responsive to any small input. The chassis underneath you seems to be subtly busy and ready to react all the time, yet you can drive this car really smoothly, linking turns and making the weight balance flow through direction changes. It would be interesting to see how the firmer set-up would cope with a bumpy Welsh B-road, as I suspect it might require you to delve into the fully adjustable suspension, but on this road it's perfect.

In the blink of an eye it seems to be quarter to twelve and the CRT's due back by midday. But there's one last thing left to at least try and do before I return it... Sadly, the Nordschleife's public car park is empty, and the gates are shut when I drive past. It's not to be. Then, as I drive slowly through Nürburg, I decide to go

Right: M DCT gearbox is 20kg heavier than a manual, but it's the only transmission available on the CRT.
Left: bucket seats have carbon shells



steering, pedals and paddles are all instantly responsive'



Above: number 00 indicates that this is a press car outside the 67-car run. Right: rear spoiler is carbonfibre





up to the old pits at T13 – just on the off chance. The huge, foreboding metal gate is open, which is promising, so I drive in. Three elderly gentlemen in high-vis jackets are leaning on the Armco having a chat, so I tell them I'm with BMW and ask if I can do a lap of the Nordschleife. Please. They shrug and call over to another slightly less fluorescent, but more rotund gentleman who walks stiffly over. He regards the CRT curiously, prowling round it, stroking his beard, forehead furrowed like a philosophy professor working through some fuzzy logic. All the time I'm trying desperately hard to look calm and confident. Then there's an almost imperceptible nod, the lone cone is removed from the pit exit and before

I know it I'm sweeping down through Hatzenbach as quickly as I dare, a huge grin on my face, trying to put as much distance between them and me before any minds are changed.

It feels like I've broken into school and gone into the staff room when it's empty during the holidays. Despite the sun hanging low in the sky, the tarmac still has an autumnal greasiness to it in places, particularly where the trees crowd in close to the track. The CRT is great, though, its slightly more forgiving front end giving you something to push against and tease through the corners. On track you appreciate the combination of naturally aspirated engine and hyper-alert throttle even more, the lack of spiky

torque giving you confidence to squeeze the pedal harder and earlier in the turns. You only really remember that you're driving a 1580kg saloon when the ground falls away, the wheels momentarily sag and then the suspension has to deal with a big compression such as through Pflanzgarten 1 or 2.

We didn't have time to go to an Autobahn this morning – and that's hardly the point of this car anyway – but the orange needle's hovering around 290kph (180mph) down the far end of the Döttinger-Höhe straight, which I later discover is spot-on what BMW claims as the top speed, electronically limited of course. Then I ease off for the last few corners to make sure I don't have the



‘The naturally aspirated engine’s lack of spiky torque gives you the confidence to squeeze the pedal harder and earlier in the turns’

brakes glowing as I re-enter the pits (like the GTS, the CRT has lighter calipers and bigger discs – interestingly 2mm larger in diameter on the back than the front) and smile at having blagged a lap of a deserted Nordschleife in possibly my favourite M3 ever.

As I turn off the track I’m half expecting to find an irate BMW press officer waiting for me spitting feathers, but it’s only the elderly quarter that I left there, so I wave and head back out onto the road with just enough time to get the car back by midday. Given that it’s clearly my lucky day, I do just wonder if it would be pushing things too far to make a run for the Channel. It’d be fun to try out that suspension in Wales...

SPECIFICATION

BMW M3 CRT

Engine V8, 4361cc

Power 444bhp @ 8300rpm

Torque 324lb ft @ 3750rpm

Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox, rear-wheel drive, LSD, DSC

Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled discs, 378mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD

Wheels 19in front and rear

Tyres 245/35 R19 front, 265/35 R19 rear

Weight (kerb) 1580kg

Power-to-weight 285bhp/ton

0-62mph 4.4sec (claimed)

Top speed 180mph (limited)

Basic price c£105,500 (new)

On sale Sold out!

evo RATING ★★★★★

LANCIA DELTA INTEGRALE EVO 3





WorldMags.net

THE LAST INTEGRALE

*One of the most celebrated hot hatches ever
could have enjoyed a prolonged life had
Lancia backed an independently developed
Delta Integrale Evo 3. **Jethro Bovingdon** tracks
down and drives the only prototype*



'So, erm, do you think this is it?' I'm hoping for some reassurance, but photographer Dean Smith looks equally bemused. 'Er, maybe,' he replies. We're chugging into Limburg, north-west of Frankfurt, in a hired Mégane Scenic on what feels like a wild goose chase. Some geese are worth chasing, though, and a unique prototype of a proposed Lancia Delta Integrale Evo 3 is definitely one of them.

To say I'm excited to see and drive this car is the world's biggest understatement, but somehow I expected more razzle-dazzle. Surely a car of this significance should be in a gleaming cleanroom, surrounded by dazzling GTOs, Sport Quattros and RSRs? So why, I'm quietly wondering, are we rolling into the forecourt of a bizarre and cluttered garage and parking beside a well-worn Citroën DS Safari and an early S-class in sage green. Here? The only Evo 3? It can't be...

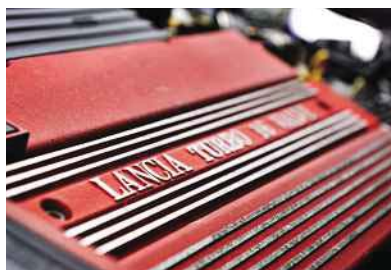
'THIS CONCEPT WAS CREATED TO SHOW HOW A FASTER AND MORE AGILE INTEGRALE – AN EVO 3 – COULD BE. SADLY, IT WASN'T TO BE'

Thankfully, it is. The 'Viola' prototype – so named after the colour of its paintwork – sits under a layer of dust, cowering like a lamb neglected by its mother. Perhaps it's fitting that this car looks so forlorn. It was born out of desperation at the end of the Integrale's life, a project entirely developed by Maggiora, the coachbuilder that manufactured the Evo 2, but quickly rejected by Lancia. The factory had officially pulled out of the World Rally Championship after the 1991 season (although Lancia won another constructors' title in 1992 thanks to cars run by Jolly Club and Martini Racing) and so by the spring of 1994, when

Maggiora presented the car to Lancia in Turin, the Integrale must have felt like history to them already.

Bruno Maggiora, of course, couldn't have felt more differently. He created this concept to show how a faster and more agile Integrale – an Evo 3 – could be, hoping to revive sales and Lancia's commitment to its iconic four-wheel-drive machine. Sadly, it wasn't to be, but today we're going to get a taste of what might have been.

A battery booster brings the Viola instantly to life, and it grows in stature with every rotation of its wheels as it's inched out into the wild. It's a flat, grey morning without a hint of sun to bring



that Lamborghini-sourced colour to life, but the Integrale looks so right. They always do. It's not Pebble Beach-immaculate underneath the grime, but the closer you get, the better it looks. The interior is as wonderfully awful as any other Integrale's, but the beige rear seats have never been sat in and only a few tiny creases on the thick bolsters of Alcantara that frame the driver's seat age it a single day.

Bruno Maggiora might have used the Viola regularly for a time, but he obviously treated it like his baby for the 7000 miles or so that they covered together. I can't help but look in the boot at the pristine Michelin space-saver tyre

with sharply defined little Bibendums etched into the tread. I've never poked around a genuine, unrestored 'time-warp' car before, so it seems right to breathe in every little detail.

It doesn't look very different to an Evo 2, does it? In 1994 a set of 17in MiM TecnoMagnesio wheels would have been the only differentiator, but these have disappeared with the mists of time. But underneath the skin, this car is exactly how Maggiora wanted the Evo 3 to be. The 1995cc four-cylinder engine is largely unchanged, but thanks to a new injection system, a more sophisticated IAW P8 ECU and an increase in boost for the Garrett T3

turbocharger to more than 1bar, power is up from 215bhp to 237bhp at 6000rpm, with 236lb ft of torque between 2500 and 6000rpm. The boost in performance is relatively small, but in combination with a faster-acting GKN limited-slip diff for the front axle, a new clutch for the centre diff, a short-shift gearchange and revised springs and dampers, the overall effect is said to be transformative.

But then the owner of this car, Werner Blaettel, and the bloke trying to sell it on his behalf for £85,000, Nick Johnson of the Nick Johnson Motor Company, would say that. Fortunately, Blaettel is wholly relaxed about us driving this unique Integrale, and although we're not

Top: square shapes of dashboard look basic. Above (from left): 2-litre turbo produces 237bhp; brake pedal is angled towards the throttle for easier heel-and-toeing; odometer indicates just 7000 miles have been covered in 20 years



Right: straight lines and edges still look cool today. Far right: five-speed manual gearbox was given a short-shift action

about to destroy its very hard looking and heaven-knows-how-old 205/50 ZR15 Pirelli P700s, he knows a decent road nearby where we can feel the full power of the engine and, perhaps, get a sense of whether this prototype really moved the game on.

Lancia's all-conquering Evoluzione rally hero might be over 20 years old now and it might not look quite as wild as it once did, but that heaving louvred bonnet, those sharp box 'arches and the 45-degree roof spoiler are deeply evocative. It's still one of those shapes that sets off fireworks in your stomach. It's a people's F40 – there's a pure and beautiful functionality running through every crease, slash and hump. The thin, flat doors betray the humble origins of the Integrale and feel like they're inset a good 6in from the outer edge of those wheelarches. It's a nice reminder that this basic shape dates back to 1979, which suitably lowers your expectations just before you see the interior...

Wow. The instrument binnacle literally looks like it's been made out of a shoebox that's been tightly wrapped in



black, shiny plastic and plonked on top of an equally shiny plastic shelf. But I'm a sucker for the yellow graphics of the dials. The speedo is to the left with 0kph at the 9 o'clock position, sweeping around to 240kph (149mph) at 6 o'clock. On the right, the rev counter runs from 0rpm at 3 o'clock to a big red 9 at the 12 o'clock position. Dead ahead, and right where your eyes naturally fall, is a boost gauge reading up to 1.2bar.

Attached to the horizontal shoebox is a vertical one that drops down to the transmission tunnel, but it's trimmed in carbonfibre. Horacio Pagani might not want to hang this hunk of smudgy-weaved material on his wall, but it was

1994 and Maggiora must have had a tiny budget to make the proposed Evo 3 feel a bit special. I rather like it and can imagine a proud employee gluing it into position and then standing back to admire his bit of carbon jewellery.

The beige velour seats feel fantastic: soft, warm and grippy. And the thick-rimmed Momo Corse steering wheel feels just right despite being canted back. The Viola feels every one of its 18 years at a standstill and even when you fire up that gruff four-cylinder engine and blip the throttle, feeling its sticky inertia that's crying out for a turbo spinning at 100,000rpm, it still feels pretty vintage. The slender pillars only add to that



'ONE THING'S FOR SURE: IT FEELS DIFFERENT. OF COURSE, IT'S STILL AN INTEGRALE AND VERY OBVIOUSLY SO, BUT THERE'S A NEW SENSE OF LIGHTNESS AND RESPONSE'

impression, but as soon as you feel that tight, mechanical short-shift 'box and the vicious paddle clutch, you stop trying to contextualise the experience and just get involved.

One thing's for sure: it feels different. Of course, it's still an Integrale and very obviously so, but there's a new sense of lightness and response. The turbo spools up fast and smooth, zinging the needle around to 6500rpm in a heartbeat. You feel a little torque effect through the steering, but even museum-spec tyres provide assured traction. What really impresses is the steering feel and the way this tiny car darts into corners and fires out of them. To me the Integrale

has always been a tricky car to really hook up, as you tend to run into understeer and then feel a noticeable lag before the four-wheel drive works out how to neutralise the balance. But the Viola resists that turn-in understeer phase and you really appreciate that the torque split is rear-biased as the turbo spins up again. This car shares the 47/53 split of the Evo 2, but you'd swear there was more power channelling rearwards – perhaps the uprated front diff allows the inherent balance to really shine.

It's easy to get swept along by this prototype because it gives so much feedback – the steering wriggling and writhing around under power, weight

ebbing and flowing with the road and your progress through any corner, and the engine providing really accurate response all the way from 3500 to 6000rpm. In terms of outright pace, it's quick rather than scintillating. Even if it punched as hard as, say, a Mégane 265 Cup (it doesn't), it simply wouldn't see which way the modern hot hatch went. It just doesn't have the grip, nor the crazy turn-in response of the best modern hot hatches. It's more relaxed and more fluid over lumps and humps, though, and you surf along in a series of strong waves of torque. I guess it feels more honest but, strangely, less focused. Time really does wait for no man, or

Above: angular rear spoiler remains one of the Integrale's defining features; Viola paint is a Lamborghini colour (think Diablo SV...)



Right: the Viola currently shares garage space with all kinds of unusual classics, including other Integrale



'THE VIOLA, A VISION OF THE EVO 3 REALISED WITHOUT LANCIA'S INPUT, IS A CLASSIC CASE OF UNREQUITED LOVE'

machine for that matter, as Maggiora discovered in 1994.

Perhaps it was the Integrale's time. A new four-wheel-drive hero had arrived on the rally scene in 1993 and its road-car cousin was blowing the minds of media and customers alike. It didn't have the same Italian cool, but its flat-four burr was to become as iconic as the Lancia's wheelarches or the five-cylinder warble of the Quattro. It was called the Impreza and it was cheap and brilliant, and in truth, a mildly tweaked Integrale wasn't going to be able to run with it for long. Even the relatively tame UK-spec Impreza Turbo with 208bhp would leap to 60mph in the mid-fives, and Japanese versions had 250bhp, soon rising to 280bhp. A year after Maggiora presented the Viola in Turin, Colin

McRae won the WRC in the Impreza and its legend was assured.

The Delta Integrale might have grown old disgracefully, getting stronger with every passing year, but Lancia was right to close the book on this amazing car in 1994. So the Viola, a vision of the Evo 3 realised without Lancia's input but with total devotion, represents a classic case of unrequited love. Maggiora went on to build the portly Kappa Coupe for Lancia, but the Viola stood proudly at the end of the production line, and at the factory's edges, boxes were piled high with Integrale components. Bruno Maggiora couldn't let it go. I hope he took satisfaction from creating a faster, more exciting Integrale. It might not have ever officially been the Evoluzione 3, but this car deserves the badge.

SPECIFICATION

LANCIA DELTA INTEGRALE 'EVO 3'

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1995cc, turbocharged

Power 237bhp @ 6000rpm

Torque 236lb ft @ 2500-6000rpm

Transmission Five-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel drive

Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension MacPherson struts, trailing links, coil springs, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated discs, 281mm front, 251mm rear, ABS

Wheels 7.5 x 16in front and rear (7.5 x 15in as tested)

Tyres 205/45 ZR16 front and rear (205/50 ZR15 as tested)

Weight (kerb) 1340kg

Power-to-weight 180bhp/ton

0-60mph 6.1sec (est)

Top speed 140mph (est)

Basic price n/a

evo RATING ★★★★★



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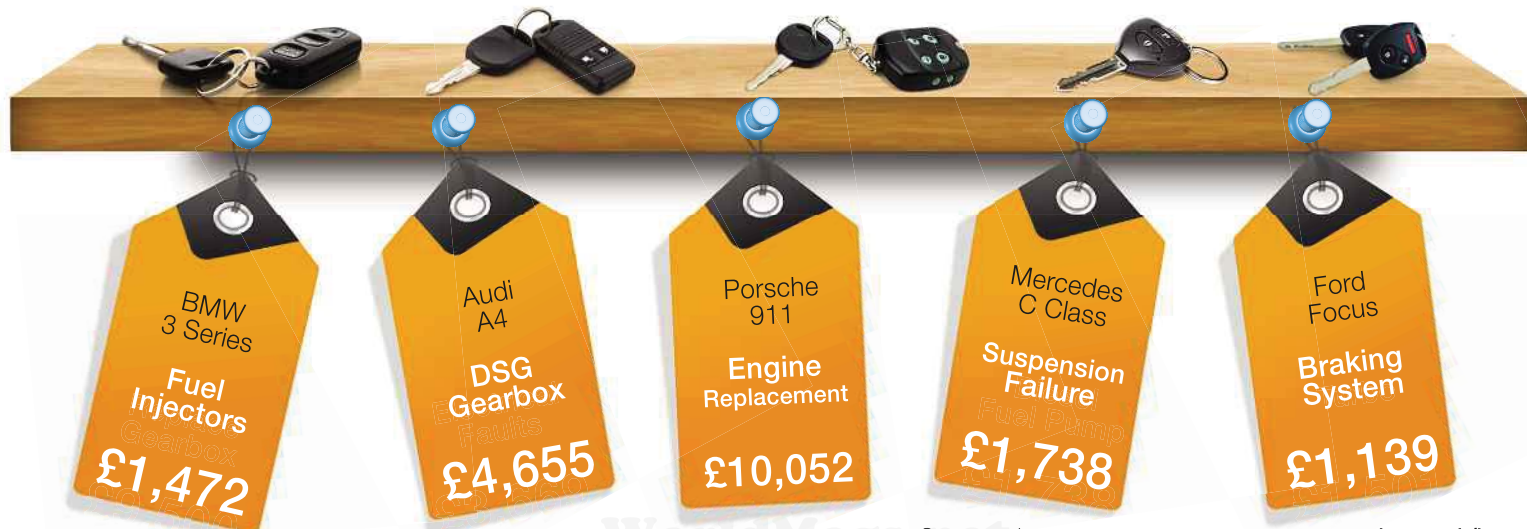
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End of Days

*As new technology and changing demands impact on our favourite performance cars, **Jethro Bovingdon** celebrates four greats from the soon-to-be old school: the Porsche 997 GT3, Renault Clio 200 Cup, BMW M3 and Subaru WRX STI*

There will be no surprises today. No revelations or moments of clarity, no secrets to unlock. We're on the sort of roads where we usually go in search of the substance behind the hype, the steel and sinew that you can't glean from a spec sheet or even a glossy press launch on perfectly manicured, sun-drenched roads. If a car feels great here, in December, with the temperature hovering around 3deg C and the wind whipping through trees stripped to the bone, then it's guaranteed to join the top table as one of our heroes. But today isn't about that. It's a celebration of genuine **evo** Hall of Famers, one final triumphant drive into the heart of our favourite stomping ground, one final plea to the people who have crafted these extraordinary cars to never forget what made them so special...

These cars are united by their tight focus and sublime execution, united by a dedication to thrill the lucky blighter behind the steering wheel. I've met some of the engineers behind each of these cars over the years and, believe me, it's you they're trying to excite. Of course their bosses want anybody's money, but the engineers, they just want to see how their baby makes real enthusiasts feel. So these cars are what they are to make people like us happy. Which is pretty cool, right? Sadly, they're also united under a dark cloud of recent or imminent death. Of course there will be another GT3, another M3 and another Clio Cup, but they won't quite be the same. The cars that replace these machines will each lose something at the burning core of their appeal. Worse still, extinction looms large for the Subaru WRX STI. There's already a new Impreza in Japan and the US. Did you know that? Me neither. Probably because the fastest version has 148bhp. Tragically, there's no STI on the horizon.

So our line-up might be familiar but we'll make no apologies for that. This group and their predecessors have defined this



'This is one final plea to the people who have crafted these

very magazine throughout its 15-year history. The Subaru Impreza captured the imagination and reignited the passion of thousands of buyers and dreamers as it tore-up rally stages and ripped the pride from supercars on the public roads in the nineties and early noughties. The world has changed since then and the Impreza has been left behind in some respects, but the latest and possibly final WRX STI suddenly seems a bit more relevant, offering 296bhp, 300lb ft and four-wheel drive for a hot hatch-rivalling £26,995. Take that, BMW M135i.

The Clio 200 Cup is, well, unstoppable. The Renaultsport Clio's evolution from the light, flimsy 182 to the heavier 197 was initially painful. But since then it has quickly rediscovered the old magic and now it stands head, shoulders and torso above its rivals if you get your kicks from driving and couldn't give a damn about ambient lighting or forced 'funkiness'. We love this car as much as we do any Lamborghini or Ferrari and, on the brink of its replacement, it still feels incredibly exciting and fearfully uncompromising.

Which brings us nicely to the 997 GT3 3.8. What's left to say about this extraordinary machine, the culmination of over a decade of hardcore water-cooled Porsche 911s that have thrilled us like nothing else? Not much, which rather presents me with a problem. I'll think of something, I hope.

The final car of our quartet is the BMW M3. The M3 may have started life as a homologation machine pure and simple,





but those who pine for the old days neglect just how fantastic the newer cars have become. The E46 was fantastic and despite some lukewarm reviews in the early days, the E92 V8 M3 remains the benchmark fast, practical coupe by a country mile in my opinion. Anyone who tells you it isn't hasn't driven one or has forgotten just how exceptional this car is. Our M3 is actually a 2007 car owned by Adam Walker, **evo** reader and my new best mate since he's letting me drive his pride and joy as much as I like and at any angle that seems appropriate.

IT'S THE WRX STI (they've dropped the Impreza name in the UK) that intrigues me most. I remember well the RB5 and P1, cars that John Barker and Dickie Meaden wanted me to experience when I was still serving my apprenticeship at **evo**. They were light, agile and crazily fast but with almost magical body and wheel control. John and Dickie knew these were landmark cars and knew I'd need them as reference points for many years to come. Beneath the spoilers and splitters and graphics they were small, ordinary cars, but they seemed like superheroes to me. To everyone, I guess.

Then came the 'bug-eye' and the 'hawk-eye' – heavier, clumsier, and starting to feel old even a decade ago. But then we were introduced to that mad breed of JDM Imprezas by the likes of Litchfield Imports – the S202s, the Spec Cs: cars that kept that soulful Subaru character but ramped up the speed and involvement and brought a new hyper-agility more often associated with their deadly rival, the Mitsubishi Evo. They were as focused as any Porsche RS and some of that fresh enthusiasm filtered into UK models, too. Fittingly, the RB320 was the best of the bunch. Richard Burns would have loved it.

That was 2007, but it feels like ancient history. I've probably only driven three or four new Imprezas since and, to be honest, they haven't even been close. Meanwhile, the rebirth of the hot hatch and the increasing importance of CO2 emissions and spiralling fuel costs seem to have made the Impreza

extraordinary cars to never forget what made them so special'



redundant. However, there are signs that this WRX STI might have turned that around. In 2010, the rather woolly UK-spec STI adopted the stiffer, lower and more responsive Spec C suspension, and now the price is more competitive too, perhaps the STI finally makes sense again. This particular car has the optional £1599 340R package, so power is up to 335bhp at 5400rpm, torque to 361lb ft at 3600rpm.

You never lusted after an Impreza for its interior quality and the STI is no different. The plastics feel hard and cheap and the swoopy design is heavy-handed at best. However, the seats are superbly supportive, the big central rev counter looks serious and the small, leather-topped gearshifter is perfectly positioned. Down on the transmission tunnel there's an 'SI-Drive' controller that alters the throttle response and you can manually adjust the centre differential to wind more of the power rearwards or lock-up the diff completely. You don't get that in a hot hatch.

The bassy, offbeat *dugga-dugga-dugga* of the flat-four is back in full effect having disappeared for a few years, and it's something special. The noise and the bluff, brutal shape leads you to expect a deeply mechanical driving experience, all grinding diffs, stiff ride and heavyweight controls. The tight, muscular gearshift mirrors those expectations but the ride is a little softer than you might think and the steering is disconcertingly light with no discernible feel or texture at all.



Right: Clio is best at high revs. Below left: Power button adjusts M3's throttle map. Below right: Dobie reconsiders use of 'woolly' to describe STI's steering



In combination with an engine that doesn't get going until about 3500rpm and is all done by 6000rpm, it makes for an initially jerky, unresponsive experience.

What's never in doubt is that the STI can still cover ground at an incredible rate and has huge reserves of grip and traction. To be honest it feels like it could handle 400bhp or more without any trouble at all. It also has tremendous brake feel. The Alcon set-up requires a good shove to really get it working, but the progression is superb and you can literally get right up to the point of ABS actuation, back off a smidge and then hold them right on that threshold. However, you never really get used to that twirly-light steering and it seems incredible that a system so devoid of feel is almost ripped out of your hands if you hit a bump mid-corner.

To be honest I'm struggling to fall for the STI. It feels grippy and sends you down the road in a series of heavy turbocharged punches, but the lack of feel is an issue. It's lost some of the RB5's amazing poise and there's none of the previous Spec C's alert adjustability. But then comes the rain and the STI comes alive. Suddenly you can feel the chassis working to its limits, you can sense the understeer build and then counter it with a spike of boost to flick the rear wide, exiting corners with just a hint of oversteer and the engine thumping through its

power band. Yes! It's still got it! The STI might have a narrow operating window but it can be truly spectacular, and when it's in the sweet spot it'd take a very special hot hatch to be even half as thrilling or characterful.

'Incredible. Brilliant, brilliant car.' Andy Wallace is talking to himself. He's stood next to the Clio Raider – a special edition with lots of toys, matt paint, the Cup chassis with new 18in wheels and the same trick Bridgestone RE050s fitted to the Mégane Trophy – and seems to be patting it like a small child who's just won the 100m sprint at sports day. He snaps out of it as I clamber out of the STI. 'How do they make a turbocharged engine with such a narrow power band?' he says, gesturing towards the Subaru. 'The diff settings don't seem to have any real effect except at parking speeds, do they? Grips and goes though, seriously fast on these roads...' I'm already climbing into the Clio.

Unlike the STI, the Clio is still a regular in group tests, so it feels familiar. The thin, firm Recaro seat is set a bit too high – just as it always was. The chunky-rimmed steering wheel is coarsely stitched for grip and there's a red band at top dead centre. Behind it, the silver-faced rev counter goes red at eight and you'll want to be at 5000rpm or more to really get the best from the 2-litre four-cylinder motor. It produces its 197bhp at



'What's never in doubt is that the STI can still cover ground at an incredible rate and has huge reserves of grip and traction'



Clockwise from top left: GT3 stars in bends; local Welsh delicacies; convoy on snaking mountain roads; manual gearbox on Porsche is endangered



7100rpm and 159lb ft at 5400rpm. Fortunately the six-speed 'box is quick and the chassis gives you ample opportunity to use every last rev in all conditions.

The road is streaming wet now and the Clio is just utterly, dreamily brilliant. The tenacity of those Bridgestones is almost shocking and it's a match for even the Impreza on turn-in. Keep the engine above 6000rpm and of course you can push the nose into understeer, but it seems a bit more tail-happy than previous Cups that I've driven and so you have plenty of options. On poorly sighted corners you simply drive in with a good margin for error and use the fizzy top-end power as it straightens out. If the nose does start to wash away, a little lift of the throttle will re-establish grip at the front and you can once again use the power freely. Chance upon a wide, clear-sighted corner and a bit of left-foot braking as you start to turn brings the tail around and you can slowly reduce the angle with the throttle as the road straightens again.

It's so responsive and so fluid that any or all of these approaches are equally satisfying. The only real negative is that the ride is very firm indeed. For some people it will be too much – particularly those who regularly commute on crappy urban roads – but the way it occasionally beats you up is all part of the charm for me. When that engine is howling away at 7000rpm and the tyres are gliding just at the limit, the steering is bobbling away in your hands and you're leaning on the side bolsters of those Recaros, it's a vivid and totally absorbing place to be. The new Clio, turbocharged and only available with a twin-clutch gearbox, will need to be extremely special to fill these boots.

It's a mark of the Clio's intensity that in stepping straight out of it and into the GT3, you find yourself in a kindred spirit. Of course you sit much lower in the 911 and the clutch is heavier, the six-speed manual needs a stronger hand and the performance is of a different magnitude, but the sense of involvement and absolute focus is all but identical. Both are fantastic adverts for normally aspirated engines and manual

'The new Clio, turbocharged and only available with a twin-clutch

WHAT'S NEXT?

So what about the cars that will replace these icons? The Clio is the easiest – we've already seen the forthcoming third-gen Renaultsport Clio, which we'll be driving in the spring. Renault has made the almost inevitable switch to forced induction, as it's the only way to combine decent power with tax-friendly CO2 numbers. It gets a development of the 1.6-litre turbo engine seen in the Nissan Juke, boosted to 197bhp and 177lb ft of torque. More controversial is the move to a six-speed twin-clutch as the only transmission option: the joy of swapping your own cogs has always been one of the highlights of thrashing an RS Clio.

Porsche is still keeping its cards close when it comes to the next GT3, although we're expecting to see it towards the end of 2013. As

before it will be lighter and more dynamically focused than the standard 911, but it won't get the old 'Mezger' engine, which has been forced into retirement. Instead we're anticipating a reworked and boosted version of the 991's 3.8-litre flat-six, with power between 450bhp and 470bhp. We're also expecting a standard PDK twin-clutch 'box, although it's possible a seven-speed manual will be offered later.

The new M3 – or M4, as the coupe is likely to be branded – comes later: we'll have to wait until 2014 before it's in showrooms. Like the 1M and M5, we're anticipating a switch to forced induction, likely with a more powerful version of BMW's twin-turbo six-cylinder motor. Power will be close to the V8 M3's 414bhp, but economy

and emissions figures will be vastly better. As with the Clio and the 911, it's likely that a twin-clutch gearbox will be the only transmission option, certainly at launch. A senior BMW exec recently admitted to us that 'manual transmissions aren't essential to the M brand'.

As for Subaru, there are currently no plans to STI-ise the new Impreza, and the firm recently announced the car won't be coming to the UK in any form. MD



Above: next RS Clio gets a turbo engine and twin-clutch gearbox

gearboxes, and both demonstrate that trackday thrills don't have to be at the expense of real dynamic polish on tough roads. Like the Clio, there are occasions when the GT3 hops and skips over nasty bumps but for the most part it's incredibly composed, and even on Cup tyres it generates astonishing grip on damp surfaces. Understeer isn't an issue, unless you hurtle into a downhill hairpin with gay abandon.

Even in this company, the GT3's 429bhp engine is a class apart. It has a busy, gravelly tone at low revs and then tightens into a ball of pure energy as you chase down the rev limiter, power building in a dizzying, almost endless crescendo. This old 'Mezger' unit has been pensioned off for the new GT3, which will also get a PDK transmission (optional, we hope), but it feels so fresh and so fierce here that it could still be in the first flush of youth. It's one of the greats, no question.

The chassis matches it move for move. As I said, the grip is astonishing, but the damp surface helps to uncover the GT3's amazing balance. It should be the trickiest car here, but in fact it's the most intuitive. Drive it neatly and you'll only ever feel a little smudge of understeer and maybe an easy, graceful mini-slide as you exit a corner and let the engine free. With practice though, there's so much more to enjoy. Lift and turn



gearbox, will need to be extremely special indeed to fill these boots'



BUYING GUIDE

The great thing about the stars of this group test is that you can buy one from just £9000. That's enough to secure an early Renault Clio 200 Cup, though it'll still be a 2009 car and most wear less than 30,000 miles. Its Clio 197 predecessor (3bhp lighter and not quite as revered) can be bagged from £5k; there's a full buying guide for both in *evo* 178.

Prices for Subaru STIs start similarly low, with 2008-vintage Imprezas costing from £12,000, though this is the era of the unloved hatchback Scoobys. Prices for 2011-onwards cars – with improved suspension, the return of the classic four-door shape and the dropping of the Impreza name – begin in the early 20s, while we spotted one of the 75-off, 396bhp Cosworth editions (pictured below) for £32,950. Original, mid-1990s Impreza STIs start at a considerably more attainable £2500.

Good V8 BMW M3s start at £20,000; that buys you a coupe with a manual transmission, while we spotted saloons, cabrios and DCT-equipped cars from £23,000. There are a number of special editions, but all offer different specs rather than more power, bar the extraordinary M3 GTS. Bored out to 4.4 litres and boasting 444bhp, this stripped out alternative to a 911 GT3 is scarce – just 15 in the UK – and we saw one for £89,990.

If you want the real thing, however, 911 GT3s dip as low as £35,000 for the original 996 iteration. Gen1 997s (409bhp) start at £50k, their hardcore RS cousins kicking off just shy of £70k. The same can buy a gen2 997 GT3 (429bhp), like the car tested here. RS versions of the 997.2 GT3 demand north of £90k, while the only GT3 RS 4.0 special edition we found on sale was an eye-watering £190k. It is the greatest modern 911, though. **SD**





'The grip is astonishing, but the damp surface also helps to uncover the GT3's amazing balance'



Above: the BMW M3 easily cuts beautiful arcs of oversteer, helped by its mighty 414bhp 4-litre V8 engine (below)

in sharply to break the rear tyres loose, pick up the throttle as the steering seems to magically fall onto perfect corrective lock, then use all of that rev range to dance the GT3... It really does feel like the most natural thing in the world.

Of course, the M3 plays the same trick, offering a similarly broad repertoire and a phenomenal engine of its own. It's also the bargain of the moment. This 40,000-mile '07 example is worth around £22,000. Yet it has a 4-litre V8 with 414bhp at 8300rpm and hits 100mph in 10sec, it's beautifully built and sweats a brooding aggression that hasn't dated a day since its launch. In keeping with our purist theme, this car has a manual 'box and does without the adjustable EDC dampers.

On the very worst sections of road, you do miss EDC just a little as the car bounces where the slightly softer Comfort mode of the adjustable set-up might let it breathe. Having said that, there's no escaping the M3's inherent qualities. The engine takes centre stage. It's incredibly sharp and revs with the manic appetite of a supercar. The M3 is often said to have 'no torque'. This, my friends, is hogwash. OK, so it doesn't have the mambo of a 6.2-litre V8 made by AMG, but 295lb ft at 3900rpm isn't so bad. More importantly, it pulls hard from 2500rpm and if you were to restrict yourself to just 5000rpm you'd still make seriously quick progress. And you'd still have another 3500rpm to go...

The V8 is also the perfect match for the chassis, allowing it to really hook-up even out of second-gear corners and giving you a progressive and vast power band to play in should you overwhelm the rear tyres. And you will. I mean, why not? The M3 has sublime balance and although it can snap away pretty quickly initially, once you've caught that first spike you're plum in the middle of the sort of oversteer you like to daydream about. Matching this progression and the M3's natural ability to indulge will be the M division's biggest challenge for the next M3. Can it make a turbocharged engine as intuitive to modulate so precisely? I hope so. It might also want to improve the braking system's resilience (nothing

wrong with the feel), give the damping slightly more control on bumpy surfaces and dial more feel into the steering. If it manages all that, the next M3 will be quite something. Quite something indeed.

Fittingly, a blue sky breaks right at the end of the day and then turns a deep, rich purple as the sun sets. We haven't learnt anything new today but as the cars click and ping furiously in the freezing air, all of us feel lucky to have been here to be reminded how fantastic these cars really are. The GT3 has everything, but its everything is underpinned by that engine. An engine that we won't see again in a road car. The Clio is a riot because it makes you work so hard to exploit it. Its replacement will have paddle-shift only and a turbo for instant gratification. BMW's M3 is another car defined by its engine and how that engine allows the chassis to work with absolute precision, and it's another car soon to switch to forced induction. And the STI? Well, it's the last symbol of a dying breed. It's not as brilliant as the other cars here nor some of its illustrious predecessors, but we'll miss it hugely nonetheless. These could be the halcyon days. Let's pray those engineers who are motivated by people like you are finding ways to make sure the long summer isn't over just yet.



SPECIFICATIONS

| | PORSCHE 911 GT3 (997.2) | SUBARU WRX STI 340R | RENAULTSPORT CLIO 200 RAIDER | BMW M3 (E92) |
|-------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Engine | Flat-six, 3797cc | Flat-four, 2457cc, turbocharged | In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc | V8, 3999cc |
| CO2 | 314g/km | 243g/km | 190g/km | 290g/km |
| Power | 429bhp @ 7600rpm | 335bhp @ 5400rpm | 197bhp @ 7100rpm | 414bhp @ 8300rpm |
| Torque | 317lb ft @ 6250rpm | 361lb ft @ 3600rpm | 159lb ft @ 5400rpm | 295lb ft @ 3900rpm |
| Transmission | Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel-drive, LSD, PSM | Six-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel-drive, ESP | Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel-drive, ESP | Six-speed manual, rear-wheel-drive, M-diff, ESP |
| Front suspension | MacPherson struts, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar | MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar | MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar | MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar |
| Rear suspension | Five-link, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar | Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar | Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar | Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar |
| Brakes | Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 350mm rear, ABS, EBD | Ventilated discs, 326mm front, 316mm rear, ABS, EBD | 312mm ventilated front discs, 300mm solid rear, ABS, EBD | Ventilated discs, 360mm front, 350mm rear, ABS, EBD |
| Wheels | 9 x 19in front, 12 x 19in rear | 8.5 x 18in front and rear | 8 x 18in front and rear | 9 x 19in front, 10 x 19in rear |
| Tyres | 245/35 ZR19 fr, 325/30 ZR19 rr | 245/40 R18 front and rear | 215/40 R18 front and rear | 245/35 ZR19 front, 265/35 rear |
| Weight (kerb) | 1395kg | 1505kg | 1204kg | 1580kg |
| Power-to-weight | 312bhp/ton | 226bhp/ton | 166bhp/ton | 266bhp/ton |
| 0-62mph | 4.1sec (claimed) | 4.7sec (claimed) | 6.9sec (claimed) | 4.8sec (claimed) |
| Top speed | 194mph (claimed) | 158mph (limited) | 141mph (claimed) | 155mph (limited) |
| Basic price | £81,914 (2009) | £28,594 | £21,695 | £54,720 |

evo RATING

★★★★★

★★★★★

★★★★★

★★★★★

'As the cars click and ping furiously in the freezing air, all of us feel lucky to have been reminded how fantastic they really are'



HOME RUN

*The new 911 Carrera 4S is the latest Porsche to be equipped with four-wheel drive. **Henry Catchpole** takes one to Austria on a journey to the birthplace of the marque's first, little-known 4wd creation*





Think of a four-wheel-drive Porsche and, if you're like me, you'll probably conjure up images of Rothmans-liveried 959s skipping across the desert on their way to victory on the Paris-Dakar Rally. Alternatively, you might think of that iconic red stripe across the wider-arched rump of the brilliant 996 C4S, a car which so nearly won *evo* Car of the Year in 2003. Or perhaps it's the time when 911 Turbos gained more traction and morphed into mighty all-weather supercars that instantly flits into your mind. If anyone says Cayenne...

What I didn't realise until recently is that nearly 40 years before the 959 there was another Porsche with four-wheel drive. A racer called the Cisitalia 360, it was built in 1947, a year before the 356, making it the very first car

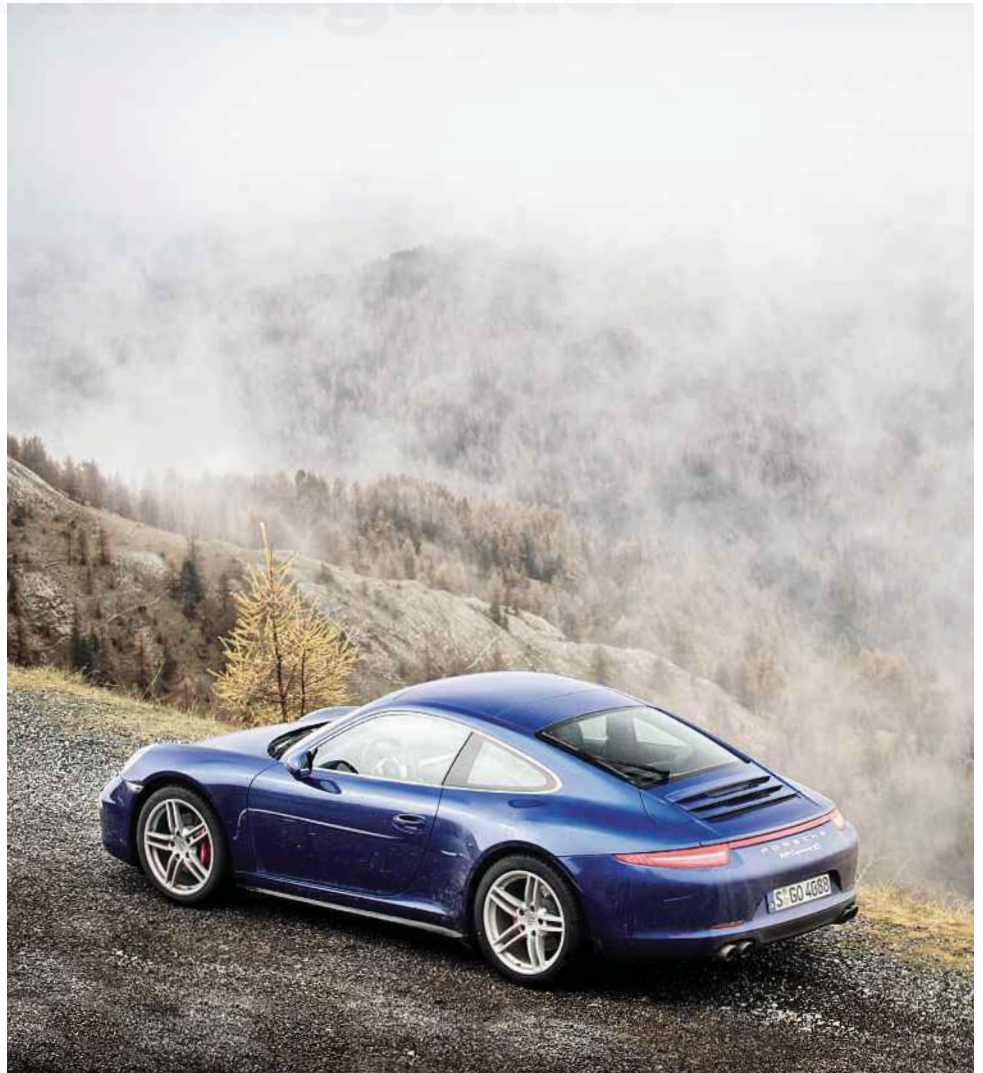
to come out of Porsche as we know it today. At the time of its design, the Porsche family had moved from Germany (thus avoiding the attention of Wellingtons and B-17s) to Gmünd in Austria, which is partly why we're in a new 991 C4S splashing in that general direction down the motorway from Graz airport – we're going ancestor-hunting.

However, there is another other good reason, apart from looking up the family tree, for heading this way. It's to find a particular stretch of tarmac nearby that I've got a longing to go and drive after finding suitably mouth-watering photos of it online. It's a toll road called the Nockalmstrasse and appropriately, it's an old Porsche test route, which seems like an excuse too good to ignore.

As we only landed in Austria after lunch, there's no hope of getting to the road to do any photography before nightfall today, so

there isn't a great rush. For now the Aqua Blue Carrera 4S is settled into a relaxed lope along a very quiet stretch of motorway. It's a good place to be; with its high, cocooning central transmission tunnel, its perfect placement of the pedals, the clear dials, a touch screen that works intuitively and an overarching hewn-from-solid sensation that stands at odds with so much of today's disposable world, the 991 really does have one of the best interiors of any car on the market. The only things I'd swap are the optional 18-way adjustable sports seats, which seem plumper in the backrest and less comfortable than the standard ones.

There's a full complement of buttons behind the gearlever on the transmission tunnel and a closer look at the spec sheet in the glove box reveals that in addition to the standard PASM active suspension and PTM (Porsche Traction Management – Stuttgart-speak for four-wheel-



'Mist and cloud is constantly evolving in the folds of the valleys and melting through the trees'

ROUTE MAP



drive) most of the optional toys have also been thrown at this car. Thankfully there's no Power Steering Plus, but we have got a PDK gearbox, torque vectoring, dynamic engine mounts, the body roll-limiting Dynamic Chassis Control (which we haven't been convinced by to date) and a sports exhaust. All of which will be very interesting once we get to the Nockalmstrasse tomorrow. But for now, as we mooch along the motorway, the only thing I'm using is the radar-adaptive cruise control.

Progress is all rather stress-free and there's plenty of time to idly admire the landscape we're passing through. This is nice, because I love Austria. It has some of the most unspoilt and dramatic scenery anywhere in Europe, and there's a neat, uncrowded calmness to the way it's all presented that is captivating. It's all so tidy – a bit like Switzerland, but without the associated smugness.

We're staying in a small resort called Katschberg, at the top of a pass that was also used as a Porsche test route back in the 1940s on account of its steepness (it used to have sections of 32 per cent). However, as it's that dead season when the energetic summer ramblers have packed away their walking poles and the skiers haven't yet unpacked theirs, everything appears to be shut when we arrive... including our hotel. After stumbling around in the dark, we eventually discover that we've been 'upgraded' to the hotel round the corner and pile in just in time for supper, after which we agree on a horribly early start the following morning and head to bed.

A SENSE OF SILENCE is not something you find on roads very often. Not for very long at any rate; there's always another car just around the corner, or a trunk road in the distance



creating a background rumble like the hiss on a vinyl record before the music itself starts playing. But it really is utterly peaceful up here – quiet enough to notice any residual ringing in your own ears. We paid our 15 euros at the hut and watched the barrier go up just after breakfast this morning and we won't leave this magical toll road again until after darkness has firmly descended, yet fewer than half a dozen cars will have passed us all day. We've got the place to ourselves – all 21 miles of it.

The C4S is parked in a lay-by next to me, metal innards still gently pinging after the drive up to this summit, and a green and pumpkin-orange patchwork of cone-topped evergreens and larches is spread across the

landscape in front of me. Mist and cloud are constantly evolving in the folds of the valleys and melting through the trees, the white gaseous cotton wool revealing then hiding different sections of road as you watch. It's constantly teasing you like some meteorological dance of the seven veils.

It had been a good day even before we stopped to be mesmerised by the view. Adding a couple of driveshafts to the front axle really seems to have improved the 991. There's definitely a touch more weight to the C4S's steering but without it being in any way corrupted, and there also appears to be none of the slightly unnerving momentary slackness on turn-in that we previously noticed in cars

'You really can lean on the more tenacious front end of the Carrera 4S, the wheel feeding back extra information to your hands'



Top: steering has improved with driven front wheels. Left: risk of marmots on the Nockalmstrasse. Above: Alpine altitude. Right: oversteer is easier to manage with 4wd; display shows torque distribution



fitted with PDCC. You really can lean on the more tenacious front end of the C4S, the wheel feeding back extra information to your hands. When the grip does start to run out it does so more progressively and then regains grip more swiftly, meaning you can play with it through a corner, judging how hard you're pushing.

The roads are cold and filthy wet – just the type of slippery conditions where I've really struggled with the lack of feel in the steering of the rear-wheel-drive 991, so they're a perfect testing ground. So far I've certainly driven faster and (much more importantly) with vastly more confidence than I would have done in a C2S. It's worth mentioning that the power, torque and 0-62mph figures (394bhp, 324lb ft

and 4.1sec – with PDK and the Sport Chrono Package) are all exactly the same as for the Carrera S, so it really is the chassis that you're paying the extra £6717 for.

There are a few unusual things about the Nockalmstrasse. For a start, instead of just going up one side of a mountain and then falling down the other, it seems to undulate over several different summits during its length, which is rather wonderful. Also, despite the 2000-metre-plus altitudes carved into various wooden signs outside chalets and refuges, it doesn't actually look or feel very high or mountainous. I think it's the lack of crags and towering peaks that does it. Finally, the road itself is surprisingly immaculate.


You might expect a piece of tarmac this high and remote to be treacherously narrow and wearing the scars of harsh winters, but not a bit of it. Yes, you have to tread lightly because clumsiness will not be readily forgiven by some of the drops over the side, but there is plenty of room along the road's entire length for two cars to pass and there's hardly a ripple or dodgy camber anywhere, so there's a certain freedom to attack it. Apart from marmots, which today are no doubt burrowed deep in the mountainsides sheltering from the rain, the only real obstacles are a few unsettling cattle grids, which shimmy through the chassis like you've hit a strip of ice. Oh, and at this time of year there's a carpet of larch needles on



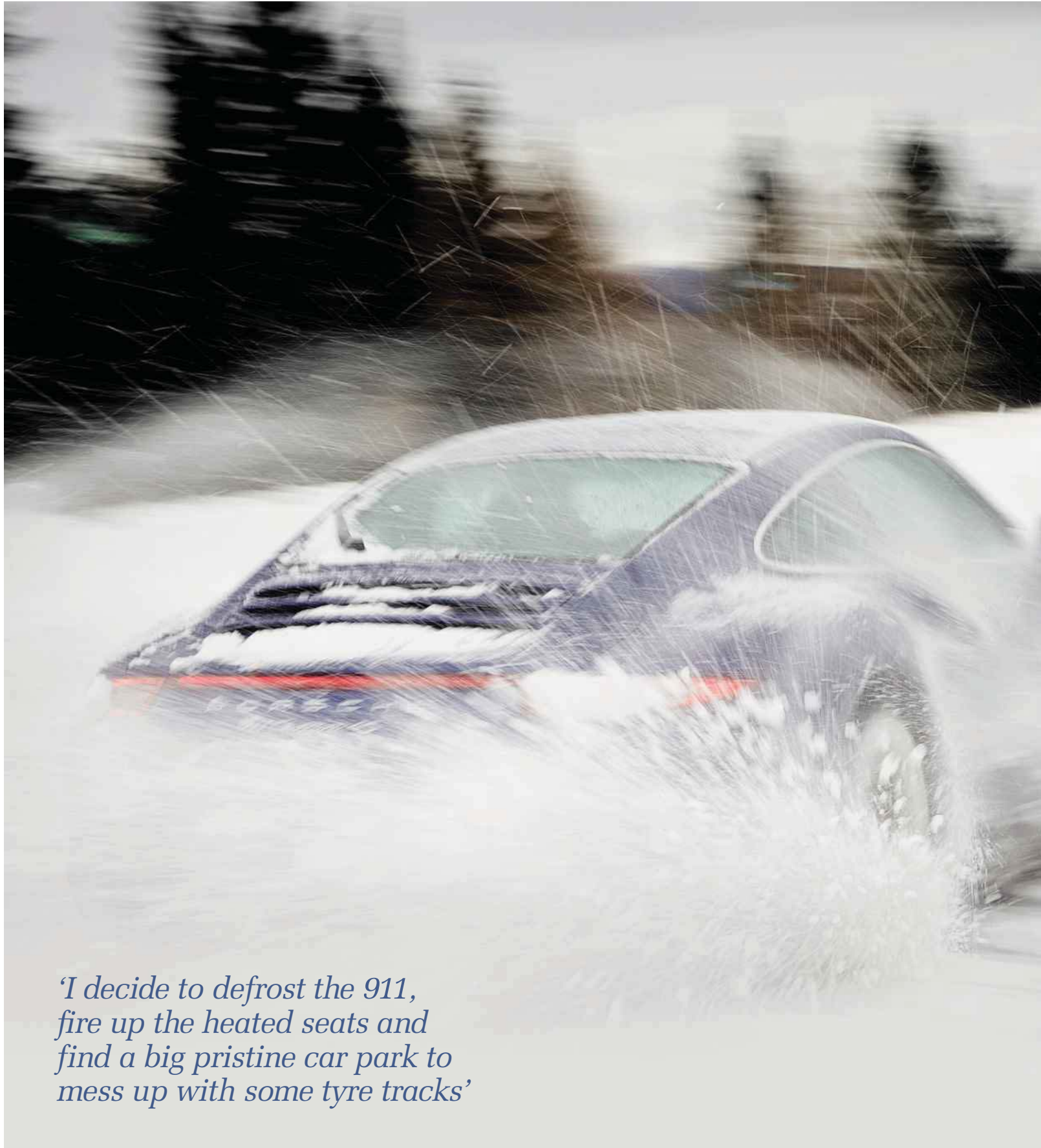
the outside of some corners, which can make you feel like you've strayed onto the marbles on a race circuit, with a similar reduction of grip.

The PDK 'box is faultless in its cog-swapping, beautifully smooth whether you're pottering along in auto admiring the view or wringing it out in full Sport Plus mode. However, the smallish silver paddles attached to the back of the steering wheel still aren't my favourite. They work faultlessly, but there's something slightly too soft-touch about their action. I'd just like a more definite tipping or biting point in their travel that lets you know for sure that you've sent the electronic message for the next gear. The brakes are standard steel discs on this car, and are as powerful and full of feel as ever, encouraging you to squeeze them harder and later with each application. When combined with PDK, which unlike some systems (Mercedes) never seems to refuse a request as you rattle down the 'box into a hairpin, it is a truly immersive experience because you're never left uncertain.

And then there's the noise. If you're going to be the only thing shattering a heavenly silence, then you don't want to be so much a voice crying in the wilderness as a solo aria that makes the pine needles tingle. The C4S delivers. I'm not sure if 'must create goosebumps' was in the task list for whoever tuned the current generation of Porsche sports exhausts, but if it was they've succeeded. I'm a

An aerial photograph of a dark asphalt road winding through a dense forest. The trees show autumnal colors of yellow, orange, and green. A small, light-colored house with a chimney is visible on a grassy patch to the left of the road. A dark-colored car is driving on the road, leaving a spray of water or dust behind it. The overall scene is misty and atmospheric.

*'If you're going to be the
only thing shattering a
heavenly silence, then you
want to be a solo aria that
makes the pine needles
tingle. The C4S delivers'*



*'I decide to defrost the 911,
fire up the heated seats and
find a big pristine car park to
mess up with some tyre tracks'*



Above: the pass around the Katschberg ski resort was also used as a test route in the early days of Porsche

particular fan of the over-run that crackles like petrol-powered popping candy, but the wail from the flat-six as it climbs is equally spellbinding. For this reason I almost prefer the smaller 3.4-litre engine to the 3.8 of the 'S' models, simply because, although you miss the extra torque, you tend to access its 7000rpm flourish more frequently.

As we travel further it becomes clear that the Nockalmstrasse is draped almost luxuriously over the landscape. Much of the time it's in no rush to wend its way up or down; it doesn't switchback furiously like the Stelvio. Instead you find it varying the radii of its corners, with some bends so long that you seem to be applying lock almost until you think the circle must be complete. At other times there are long straights that seem to traverse entire mountainsides so that you keep pulling gears until the spray behind is rooster-tailing high into the air. You never quite know what sort of corner is next, let alone what's around it.

Out of the hairpins there is most definitely oversteer available if you want it, and the nice thing is that although it might not be quite as pure as in a rear-wheel-drive car, it is easier to manage because once the rear end has broken free, the power will transfer imperceptibly to the front wheels (as long as you don't back out of the throttle entirely), which helps stabilise the slide. You still have to put in opposite lock to stop the swing, it just makes it easier to catch and hold the oversteer as you drive out of the corner. Most of the time, however, as in an R8, you would think the C4S was rear-wheel drive if you were blindfolded. On the TFT screen to the right of the rev-counter, you can bring up a real-time graphic that displays the

distribution of torque in little orange bars, and it's surprising to see how sparingly the central clutch sends power forwards.

Although sliding out of wet hairpins is fun, it's the chassis balance through quicker stuff that is so enjoyable and where you really appreciate the extra confidence instilled by the four-wheel drive. On such slippery roads I doubt I would have been brave enough to turn off the PSM in a C2S, but when grip starts to run out in the C4S and you feel the front start pushing, you know you can work with it and ride the car on its limit of grip. Stepping over the edge doesn't feel so intimidating.

At intervals throughout the day the rain returns and breaks across the mountains in great waves, ensuring the slickness of the roads stays somewhere between an oil spill and Roger Moore in a dinner jacket. Frequently the downpours are accompanied with high winds that at least carry away the curses of snapper Tom Salt and videographer Sam Riley as they get soaked again. In between, the mist returns, tantalising with mesmerising vistas one second, hiding the hand in front of your face the next. It's fine for me – this driving nirvana might be spoiled by hordes of bikers if the weather was nice – but it couldn't be much more difficult for Tom and Sam capturing the images. And then, mid-afternoon, the light disappears entirely. Which really pleases them.

WHEN I OPEN THE curtains in the morning, it looks like a ski resort outside. Assuming the same rules apply in Austria as in Great Britain, I decide to defrost the 911, fire up the heated seats and find a big pristine car park to mess up with some tyre tracks.



It's utterly childish but huge amounts of fun sending plumes of snow into the freezing air from all four wheels. Turn the traction and stability controls off and it couldn't be simpler to make yourself dizzy doing slow doughnuts.

After a suitable amount of time looking like a dog chasing its own tail, we load all the kit up and head off down the steep, slippery road towards the valley, trying to ignore its

resemblance to a bobsleigh run. Once the snow has retreated a bit, we head south along the merely damp valley road towards Gmünd and it strikes me that the 4S's even wider track, combined with the optional engine mounts and PDCC, make this possibly the flattest-cornering 911 ever. It hardly rolls at all, and those classic 911 handling traits are subtler than ever. No real waiting for the nose to settle,

no real caution about the engine being slung out pendulously behind you. It almost feels like a well-balanced mid-engined car and you drive it with much more positivity as a result, especially on turn-in. The smooth-shifting PDK only adds to the sense of invincibility. That's not to say the C4S is boring, but it's more normal in the way it behaves.

The Pfeifhofer Porsche museum in Gmünd is a family-run concern set up in 1982, but it is sufficiently regarded that it has links to the main Porsche museum in Stuttgart, which loans some exhibits. Gmünd is a lovely small town on the border with the Czech Republic, with a castle and a wide high street. The museum is on the outskirts, in a half-timber building that used to be stables. Inside, amongst other things, is a wonderful collection of scale models, a line-up of early boxer engines, a gorgeous Martini-liveried 935, a 996 police car and a fascinating cutaway of a 968.

There are also some pictures of the Cisitalia on the wall, with a few details. The bodywork looks quite delicate with a slightly duck-bill slant to the nose, but round the back you can





Above: the first Porsche factory; originally a sawmill, this is where the Cisitalia was built, along with early Porsche-badged cars. Below left: wide-tracked C4S shows barely a hint of roll from the chassis

A LOST F1 CHAMPION?



Cisitalia was founded in 1944 in Turin by wealthy industrialist Piero Dusio. There is some debate as to whether the 360, which he commissioned Porsche to build (and the funds from which paid the bail for Ferdinand Porsche's release from a French prison, where he'd been since the war ended), could have revolutionised

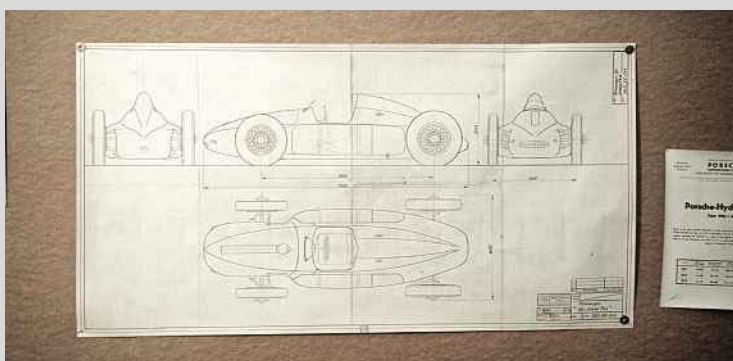
Grand Prix racing. The thinking is that ten years before Jack Brabham shook up the order in his Cooper, the Cisitalia was a fully formed mid-engined Grand Prix car with independent suspension.

Sadly, we'll never know what might have been as Dusio didn't have the money to develop the innovative machine. It was

'The Cisitalia was a fully-formed mid-engined Grand Prix car'

transported to Argentina where president Juan Peron was wooed as a potential backer for the project, but to no avail. Then the Grand Prix regulations changed for 1952, with Formula Two-spec 2-litre supercharged cars ruling the roost, and the Cisitalia 360 was effectively dead in the water, its promise unrealised. The one and only 360 now resides in the Porsche Museum in Stuttgart, but Cisitalia reappeared at the 2012 Geneva motor show with a concept car...

HC



Above: the prototype Cisitalia never made production, but its blueprints remain in the old Porsche factory (left)

SPECIFICATION

PORSCHE 911 CARRERA 4S PDK (991)

Engine Flat-six, 3800cc
Power 394bhp @ 7400rpm
Torque 324lb ft @ 5600rpm
Transmission Seven-speed twin-clutch PDK gearbox, four-wheel drive, LSD
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated discs, 340mm front, 330mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 8.5 x 20in front, 11 x 20in rear
Tyres 245/35 ZR20 front, 305/30 ZR20 rear
Weight (kerb) 1465kg
Power-to-weight 273bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.3sec (claimed, 4.1 with Sport Chrono)
Top speed 184mph (claimed)
Basic price £90,346
On sale Now

EVO RATING ★★★★★

also see hints of the Auto Union C-types that Porsche worked on before the Second World War. The Cisitalia had a 1.5-litre supercharged flat-12 engine that produced 385bhp at 10,500rpm and was attached to a sequential gearbox. Bafflingly, the four-wheel drive could be manually engaged or disengaged.

As we move to leave, Tom, who speaks excellent German, has a chat to Helmut Pfeifhofer, who set up the museum and is manning the ticket desk. Tom explains what we're doing and Helmut asks if we'd like to see the original factory. If so, his son Christoph will be along in a minute and can take us there – it's only a few minutes away. It turns out that Helmut has bought the original factory to save it from being demolished and has restored it to what it would have been like in the late '40s.

Sure enough, Christoph turns up and we follow his A6 the couple of miles to what was originally a sawmill. The gate is unlocked and we're allowed to park the C4S in front of the shuttered building to take a few photographs.

'Would you like to see inside?' says Christoph once the camera has stopped clicking. Cue

much smiling and nodding from us.

As you walk up the steps and through the main door, it's like you've gone through into Narnia. The smell is slightly musty and there's an overriding sense that you really have stepped back 65 years. You're in a narrow, dark hallway with a row of hooks where an old white mechanic's jacket is hanging, complete with threadbare VW patch on the breast pocket. Off to the left is a large room that was the canteen, but turn right and you're in the main reception where workers clocked on and off. It's incredible to think that this is what everything in Zuffenhausen grew from. Walk across the wooden floor and through another door and you are in Ferdinand Porsche's office, complete with large drawing board. You almost expect him to come wandering through the door and take up a pencil.

And what is pinned to the wall? Technical drawings of the Cisitalia. It's impossible to stop a shiver running down my spine. I'm glad Porsche still does four-wheel-drive cars, not just because I think the C4S is the best current 911, but because it's led me here.



WINTER TYRE TEST 2013

*Now is the time to fit winter tyres. But which ones should you go for? **John Barker** is your guide to the best – and the worst*

The Scandinavians have a saying: 'Winter tyres first, four-wheel drive second.' In other words, if you want to go places in the snow, a two-wheel-drive car fitted with winter tyres is better than a four-wheel-drive car on regular 'summer' tyres. That's hard to believe until you've driven on winter tyres; they transform the ability of front- and rear-drive cars, offering grip levels on snow that far exceed those of any car shod with summer tyres, even a 4x4. Winter tyres make snow-covered roads feel like wet roads do on summer tyres.

A more accurate description of winter tyres is cold-weather tyres, because they are designed to work in merely cold conditions, too. They use a different compound to summer tyres, one that is designed to be optimum at 7deg C and below. This is why our test includes three elements – snow, cold wet and dry. We've travelled to Sweden, to Continental's base at Arvidsjaur, close to the Arctic Circle, to put our nine tyres through their paces on the white stuff

THE TYRES



1. CONTINENTAL CONTIWINTERCONTACT TS 850 205/55 R16 91H £83

2. DUNLOP SP WINTER SPORT 4D 205/55 R16 91H £83

3. GOODYEAR ULTRAGRIP 8 205/55 R16 91H £86

4. LINGLONG WINTER-HERO RADIAL 650 205/55 R16 91H £46

5. MICHELIN ALPIN A4 205/55 R16 91H £98

6. NOKIAN WR D3 205/55 R16 91H £82

7. PIRELLI SNOWCONTROL SERIE 3 W210 205/55 R16 91H £87

8. VREDESTEIN SNOWTRAC 3 205/55 R16 91H £80

9. CONTINENTAL CONTIPREMIUMCONTACT 2 (SUMMER) 205/55 R16 91V £72

SNOW Handling

On a snowy 1.5km course like a forest stage on Rally Sweden, we tested the tyres with anti-lock on but stability control disabled. The Continental winter and the Dunlop top the table. 'Confidence inspiring,' we said of the Conti, which got the nod by just a tenth of a second. 'Good under power, good rear grip, moves a little but progressive and controllable.'

Although essentially as fast, the Dunlop didn't share the Conti's composure, with a more mobile rear end that helped turn-in but wasn't predictable. Close behind this pair was the Michelin, which wasn't as keen into the turns as them but was stable and progressive.

The Goodyear and Linglong recorded the same time, some 1.4sec behind the best. Like the Dunlop, the Goodyear was quite easily provoked into understeer but would slip into oversteer if the front tyres hooked up strongly. The Linglong was less predictable. It felt floaty, as if it wasn't biting into the surface, and so the grip was hard to judge. A slow, gentle entry to corners was needed to get the lap time recorded here.

Just over two seconds off the pace of the best was the Vredestein, which



Above: our tests in Sweden replicated the most extreme winter conditions a tyre will be expected to handle

SNOW CIRCUIT & SLALOM

| LAP TIMES | sec | % |
|------------------|-----------|------|
| 1. CONTINENTAL W | 104.6 | 100 |
| 2. DUNLOP | 104.7 | 99.9 |
| 3. MICHELIN | 105.3 | 99.3 |
| 4= GOODYEAR | 106.0 | 98.6 |
| 4= LINGLONG | 106.0 | 98.6 |
| 6. VREDESTEIN | 106.8 | 97.9 |
| 7. NOKIAN | 107.3 | 97.4 |
| 8. PIRELLI | 107.9 | 96.9 |
| 9. CONTINENTAL S | 157.2 | 66.5 |
| SLALOM | lateral G | % |
| 1. DUNLOP | 0.474 | 100 |
| 2. CONTINENTAL W | 0.471 | 99.3 |
| 3. MICHELIN | 0.463 | 97.7 |
| 4. VREDESTEIN | 0.448 | 94.5 |
| 5. PIRELLI | 0.446 | 94.1 |
| 6. NOKIAN | 0.443 | 93.5 |
| 7. GOODYEAR | 0.442 | 93.3 |
| 8. LINGLONG | 0.416 | 87.8 |
| 9. CONTINENTAL S | 0.169 | 35.7 |

and then to the Contidrom in northern Germany for the wet and dry tests, running at night to get the necessary low temperature for the wet tests.

Swap your 17in wheel and low-profile tyre combo for a winter-tyre set-up and you'll probably find yourself on a 16in rim with a taller profile tyre, something like the 205/55 R16 we have chosen here, which is a very popular size. There are eight winter tyres in our test and, for reference, a summer tyre.

As in previous tests, the tyre that performs best in each discipline gets a score of 100 per cent and the rest get a percentage of this. Objective tests in snow, wet and dry account for 25 per cent each of the total score, while subjective scores for wet handling, dry handling and road feel and refinement comprise the final 25 per cent. The winning tyre is the one with the highest percentage score.

Once again, our test team is Kim Adams, who coordinated the test and did the snow driving, and editor-at-large John Barker, who took on driving duties at the Contidrom. Our test cars were both front-drive, 1.4 TSI petrol Volkswagens, a Golf and Tiguán.

was OK into the turns but needed more steering lock and then struggled to get the power down on the exit. A further half second behind that was the Nokian, which also made heavy work of getting out of the corners but was better balanced overall.

Slowest of the winters, over three seconds behind the Conti, was the Pirelli. Straight-line traction was fine but as soon as lock was applied it was much less effective. Even so, it was 50sec faster around the lap than the summer tyre, which was 'scary at 10mph'. There was so little traction and lateral grip it was a matter of keeping it out of the snow banks rather than setting a lap time.

Slalom

The Dunlop continued its strong performance on snow with a table-topping result in the slalom, which measures lateral G averaged from runs through a wide-spaced set of cones on consistently graded snow. Close behind was the Continental winter, with the Michelin just a few points adrift in third. The rest are closely matched apart from the Linglong, though that still delivered over 0.4G, compared with a mere 0.169G for the summer tyre.

Braking

You hit the brakes, nothing much happens and you're sliding down the road with the anti-lock jittering ineffectively. That's what it's like on a summer tyre, which here takes over twice the distance needed by the Conti winter to stop from 40kph (25mph).

The Dunlop level pegs with the Conti on 18.2m and the rest of the winters aren't far behind, all bar the Nokian getting within a metre of the benchmark. Our budget tyre, the Linglong, is a strong fourth, just behind the Vredestein and ahead of the Goodyear, Pirelli and Michelin. Even the Nokian, last of the winters, stops in under half the distance taken by the summer tyre.

Traction

This is a measure of the tractive force each tyre generates. Rolling along in second gear at tickover, the test car is accelerated fully and the tractive force up to the point of slip is measured. Two sets of 15 runs are averaged for the final figure. As in the braking test, the winter

SNOW BRAKING & TRACTION

| BRAKING | metres | % |
|------------------|--------|------|
| 1= CONTINENTAL W | 18.2 | 100 |
| 1= DUNLOP | 18.2 | 100 |
| 3. VREDESTEIN | 18.5 | 98.4 |
| 4. LINGLONG | 18.6 | 97.9 |
| 5. GOODYEAR | 18.8 | 96.8 |
| 6. PIRELLI | 19.0 | 95.8 |
| 7. MICHELIN | 19.1 | 95.3 |
| 8. NOKIAN | 19.4 | 93.8 |
| 9. CONTINENTAL S | 40.6 | 44.8 |
| TRACTION | deN | % |
| 1. CONTINENTAL W | 316.0 | 100 |
| 2. GOODYEAR | 314.8 | 99.6 |
| 3. DUNLOP | 313.8 | 99.3 |
| 4. LINGLONG | 310.7 | 98.3 |
| 5. MICHELIN | 309.0 | 97.8 |
| 6. PIRELLI | 304.7 | 96.4 |
| 7. VREDESTEIN | 303.1 | 95.9 |
| 8. NOKIAN | 301.4 | 95.4 |
| 9. CONTINENTAL S | 134.2 | 42.5 |

tyres are closely grouped, the Conti again coming top, with Goodyear and Dunlop next and Linglong fourth once again. Michelin, Pirelli and Nokian are also in the lower half of the table again, while the summer tyre once more shows the huge difference in ability; it generates little more than two fifths of the drive of the best winter tyre.



Above: pressures were set carefully throughout tests.

Below: relative performance of the summer tyre on snow was revealing



'THE SUMMER TYRE GENERATES LITTLE MORE THAN TWO FIFTHS OF THE DRIVE OF THE BEST WINTER TYRE'



WET Handling

Winter tyres work brilliantly in snow, offering massively more traction and grip than a summer tyre, but they are also designed to perform well when it's cold and wet – the sort of conditions seen frequently in the UK in the dark months. The compound of most winter tyres is optimised for temperatures below 7deg C and their grip in such conditions is enhanced by the use of silica. We tested all our tyres in such conditions on the twists and turns of the recently resurfaced Contidrom wet handling circuit, ranking the tyres by lap time – an indicator of outright performance – and also subjectively to give a picture of how the car steered and the level of precision and confidence given. Stability control was disabled but anti-lock enabled.

Perhaps surprisingly it's the Continental summer tyre that records the fastest time by a few tenths. There are a couple of reasons why, the first being that the surface of the wet handling circuit had not quite weathered in to the appropriately low level of friction targeted. Another is that the compound of a summer tyre will benefit from this more as it needs heat in its tread to deliver best performance – the over-grippy surface would have helped produce this. Its first lap was rather too exciting, the car slipping into strong understeer and then lairy oversteer in the same corner, though by the third lap it felt well hooked up. It remained a knife-edge performance, mind, grip dropping away dramatically at the limit, requiring swift driver reactions. On the proper, less grippy surface we would expect it to rank mid-field at best.

Fastest winter tyre, on 86sec dead, was the Conti winter, which we also ranked second highest subjectively too: 'So exploitable; very neutral, very stable. Not the most nimble-feeling, perhaps, but very progressive, which is a great asset.' A half-second down was the Pirelli, with the Dunlop just a tenth further back, and both had a lighter, brighter steering feel. Of the Pirelli we said: 'Stable, very good in steady-state cornering. A bit looser, not as feelsome but grip ebbs away more progressively,' while the Dunlop felt as well rounded in its abilities as the Conti winter but with slightly lower limits.

A further half-second behind came the Michelin, which was considered the best tyre subjectively: 'Excellent steering feel – grainy grip – and very stable. Not sure where it's losing out to the faster tyres – can push right to the edge without fear. Could recommend it to anyone.' Just four



'MOST WINTER TYRES ARE OPTIMISED FOR TEMPERATURES BELOW 7 DEGREES C'

WET CIRCUIT

| LAP TIMES | sec | % |
|------------------|-------|------|
| 1. CONTINENTAL S | 85.4 | 100 |
| 2. CONTINENTAL W | 86.0 | 99.4 |
| 3. PIRELLI | 86.5 | 98.8 |
| 4. DUNLOP | 86.6 | 98.7 |
| 5. MICHELIN | 87.1 | 98.1 |
| 6. GOODYEAR | 87.5 | 97.6 |
| 7. NOKIAN | 87.8 | 97.3 |
| 8. VREDESTEIN | 87.9 | 97.2 |
| 9. LINGLONG | 98.1 | 87.1 |
| SUBJECTIVE | score | % |
| 1. MICHELIN | 52.5 | 100 |
| 2. CONTINENTAL W | 52.0 | 99.1 |
| 3. CONTINENTAL S | 51.5 | 98.1 |
| 4. PIRELLI | 49.5 | 94.3 |
| 5. DUNLOP | 48.5 | 92.4 |
| 6. VREDESTEIN | 46.5 | 88.6 |
| 7. NOKIAN | 46.0 | 87.6 |
| 8. GOODYEAR | 43.0 | 81.9 |
| 9. LINGLONG | 24.0 | 45.7 |

tenths behind was the Goodyear but it was a long way behind in feel: 'Need to be very gentle. Feels loose, with lots of rear movement on turn-in.' Nokian and Vredestein were next up, both getting on for two seconds slower than the Conti winter. The Nokian felt grippy mid-corner on a steady throttle but washed out when further loaded, which made it hard to relax with, while the Vredestein was a bit more progressive but was not as stable through the left-right sequences.

Dead last, both objectively and subjectively, was the Linglong. It was over 12sec a lap slower than the Conti winter and felt even worse than that. 'They make it feel like the surface is suddenly soapy,' we noted. 'There's woeful grip, traction, stability and predictability. How you'd expect slicks to feel on ice. Treacherous.'

Braking

When we tested lower-profile, wider tyres last year (evo 163), the winters held a useful wet-braking advantage over the

summer tyre. With these 205/55 R16s, the Conti summer takes just two metres longer to stop from 80kph (50mph) than the best winter, which is the Conti again. The Pirelli and Michelin are close behind – within a metre – but the Nokian, Vredestein and Linglong take longer to stop on the cold, wet surface than the summer tyre.

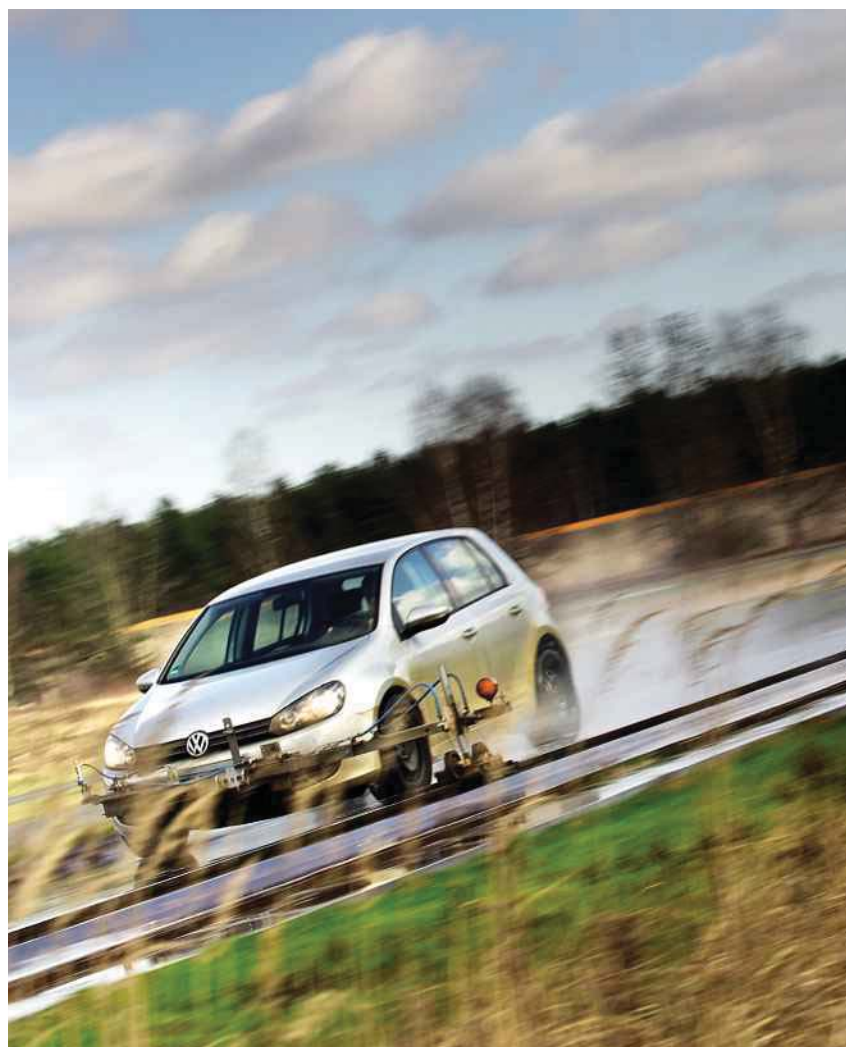
Aquaplaning

Last year the summer tyre, with its distinct, water-clearing annular grooves, finished ahead of all the winter tyres. This year, the less sporty Conti summer is in the mix. Top in both the straight-line and curved aquaplaning tests is the Goodyear, with the Conti winter a little way off in second. Vredestein and Nokian score well but the Pirelli is off the pace while the Linglong is very poor in the curved test, managing to generate only about half the lateral acceleration of the Goodyear.

Right: curved aquaplaning results are in m/s/s, or metres per second per second, a measurement of resistance to side-slip

WET BRAKING & AQUAPLANING

| BRAKING | metres | % |
|------------------|--------|------|
| 1. CONTINENTAL W | 38.6 | 100 |
| 2. PIRELLI | 39.1 | 98.7 |
| 3. MICHELIN | 39.3 | 98.2 |
| 4. GOODYEAR | 39.9 | 96.8 |
| 5. DUNLOP | 40.1 | 96.3 |
| 6. CONTINENTAL S | 40.6 | 95.1 |
| 7. NOKIAN | 41.2 | 93.3 |
| 8. VREDESTEIN | 41.8 | 92.5 |
| 9. LINGLONG | 50.2 | 79.9 |
| STRAIGHT AQUA | kph | % |
| 1. GOODYEAR | 83.6 | 100 |
| 2. CONTINENTAL W | 79.7 | 95.3 |
| 3. CONTINENTAL S | 79.3 | 94.9 |
| 4. VREDESTEIN | 78.1 | 93.4 |
| 5. NOKIAN | 76.9 | 92.0 |
| 6. MICHELIN | 74.6 | 89.2 |
| 7. DUNLOP | 74.0 | 88.5 |
| 8. PIRELLI | 70.0 | 83.7 |
| 9. LINGLONG | 62.5 | 74.8 |
| CURVED AQUA | m/s/s | % |
| 1. GOODYEAR | 4.13 | 100 |
| 2. CONTINENTAL W | 3.83 | 92.7 |
| 3. NOKIAN | 3.74 | 90.6 |
| 4. VREDESTEIN | 3.67 | 88.9 |
| 5. CONTINENTAL S | 3.63 | 87.9 |
| 6. DUNLOP | 3.56 | 86.2 |
| 7. MICHELIN | 3.46 | 83.8 |
| 8. PIRELLI | 2.91 | 70.5 |
| 9. LINGLONG | 2.11 | 51.1 |



'THE DIFFERENCE IN FEEL BETWEEN SUMMER AND WINTER TYRES IS GREATER THAN THE TIMES SUGGEST'

DRY Handling

Naturally it's the summer Continental that tops dry handling, both on time and subjective score. As we've described before, the difference in feel between summer and winter tyres is even greater than the time suggests: the crispness of response, the precision in corners and, most especially, the stability and confidence under heavy braking, are all significantly better on a summer. All bar one of our winters gets within two seconds of its time over the 2km, 70-odd second lap, but even the best falls well short of its positivity.

Leader of the tightly bunched pack is the Goodyear, which puts in a decent performance subjectively, too. It gives



Above: sound level meter was used to monitor road noise from each tyre; its readings were considered during the dry road test



a nose-led balance, which makes it reassuringly predictable. Close behind are the Conti winter and the Dunlop, though neither was rated as highly. Both were deemed to be fairly average in all respects, the Conti getting a bit looser after three laps while the Dunlop never quite matched its turn-in and mid-corner grip but felt a little better under braking.

Very close behind them came the Michelin, Pirelli and Vredestein, all on virtually the same lap time. The Michelin demonstrated good front-end bite, which made its loose tail containable and exploitable at moderate speeds, and the same went for the Vredestein, which was more stable in the faster sweeps and was as highly rated overall: 'Strong front end... good balance

and adjustability.' There was some tail swing on the Pirelli, too, but without the front end to help use it, and it didn't find as much traction either, dropping it down the subjective order.

Four tenths down on the fastest winter was the Nokian, which gave the best all-round feel of all the winters: 'Feels nicely hooked up and adjustable without being wayward or too oversteery. Good on the brakes and holds a line reasonably well. A good performance.' That contrasts keenly with the slowest and also lowest rated tyre, the Linglong. Nearly 1.3sec adrift of the Goodyear, it was reluctant to lock onto a line and once pushed wide was slow to recover: 'Get too enthusiastic and the rear slides lazily wide and the car feels sloppy. Not pleasant'.

DRY CIRCUIT

| LAPTIMES | sec | % |
|------------------|-------|------|
| 1. CONTINENTAL S | 70.72 | 100 |
| 2. GOODYEAR | 72.23 | 97.9 |
| 3. CONTINENTAL W | 72.43 | 97.6 |
| 4. DUNLOP | 72.44 | 97.6 |
| 5. MICHELIN | 72.54 | 97.5 |
| 6. PIRELLI | 72.56 | 97.5 |
| 7. VREDESTEIN | 72.59 | 97.4 |
| 8. NOKIAN | 72.63 | 97.4 |
| 9. LINGLONG | 73.51 | 96.2 |
| SUBJECTIVE | score | % |
| 1. CONTINENTAL S | 50.5 | 100 |
| 2. NOKIAN | 39.0 | 77.2 |
| 3= MICHELIN | 38.5 | 76.2 |
| 3= VREDESTEIN | 38.5 | 76.2 |
| 5. GOODYEAR | 38.0 | 75.3 |
| 6. CONTINENTAL W | 35.0 | 69.3 |
| 7. PIRELLI | 34.5 | 68.3 |
| 8. DUNLOP | 34.0 | 67.3 |
| 9. LINGLONG | 32.5 | 64.4 |

Above: laps of a handling circuit enabled the performance and feedback levels of the tyres in the dry to be compared



'SUBJECTIVELY, THE BEST WINTER IS NOT FAR BEHIND THE SUMMER TYRE ON DRY ROADS'

Braking

The summer Continental is significantly better at braking from 80kph (50mph) in the dry than the best winter tyre here, the other Conti, stopping no less than 6.5m shorter. That's the equivalent of a car and a half. The Pirelli and Goodyear are a little off the winter pace, the

Linglong a little more so.

In terms of rolling resistance, the Linglong is top of the table, ahead of its nearest rival by a good six per cent – the equivalent of 1mpg better on a car that manages 50mpg. The Continental summer is at the bottom, some 13 per cent worse than the Linglong.

Road

Unsurprisingly, the responsive summer Conti tops this table, although the best winter is not that far behind in this subjective test. That tyre is the Michelin and it's there mostly for its steering, which is crisp and direct at road speeds and delivers good feel, too. It's also reasonably quiet and comfortable.

Level pegged behind the Michelin are the winter Conti and the Goodyear. The Continental offers probably the best refinement over challenging surfaces and steers well until you put it under pressure, while the Goodyear has better steering, with a good, firm response, but is rather noisy on rough asphalt.

The Pirelli is very close behind. It rides smoothly and quietly and steers well,



Above: objective tests produced mountains of data that needed to be crunched into the results you see here

with crisp responses, though it lacks some feel. The same goes for the Vredestein, which copes well with tricky surfaces and steers well mid-corner but feels light and lacks directness on initial inputs. It does at least offer decent refinement, which is something that is less evident with the Dunlop. The steering of the Dunlop is also light and rather imprecise.

Having been a good performer at the limit on the dry track, the Nokian is a little disappointing on the road, with rather soft steering responses and little feel plus a rather noisy ride. It was better than the Linglong, though, which was reasonably quiet but offered slow-witted, feel-free steering.

DRY BRAKING & ROLLING RES.

| BRAKING | metres | % |
|------------------|--------|------|
| 1. CONTINENTAL S | 37.4 | 100 |
| 2. CONTINENTAL W | 43.9 | 85.2 |
| 3. NOKIAN | 44.2 | 84.6 |
| 4. DUNLOP | 44.5 | 84.1 |
| 5= MICHELIN | 44.8 | 83.5 |
| 5= VREDESTEIN | 44.8 | 83.5 |
| 7. PIRELLI | 45.3 | 82.6 |
| 8. GOODYEAR | 45.4 | 82.4 |
| 9. LINGLONG | 46.2 | 81.0 |
| ROLLING RES. | coeff | % |
| 1. LINGLONG | 0.857 | 100 |
| 2. CONTINENTAL W | 0.910 | 94.2 |
| 3. NOKIAN | 0.925 | 92.7 |
| 4. PIRELLI | 0.939 | 91.3 |
| 5. MICHELIN | 0.941 | 91.1 |
| 6. DUNLOP | 0.953 | 89.9 |
| 7. GOODYEAR | 0.964 | 88.9 |
| 8. VREDESTEIN | 0.980 | 87.5 |
| 9. CONTINENTAL S | 0.987 | 86.8 |

ROAD NVH & STEERING

| SUBJECTIVE | score | % |
|------------------|-------|------|
| 1. CONTINENTAL S | 38.2 | 100 |
| 2. MICHELIN | 35.7 | 93.5 |
| 3= CONTINENTAL W | 34.0 | 89.0 |
| 3= GOODYEAR | 34.0 | 89.0 |
| 5. PIRELLI | 33.9 | 88.8 |
| 6. VREDESTEIN | 33.2 | 86.9 |
| 7. DUNLOP | 32.7 | 85.6 |
| 8. NOKIAN | 32.4 | 84.8 |
| 9. LINGLONG | 29.2 | 76.4 |

Verdict

A winter tyre – even an inexpensive one – will keep you moving in snowy conditions well after a summer tyre has slithered to a halt. Our lowest scoring winter, the **Linglong**, substantially outperforms our summer tyre on the white stuff. But as our test results show, it's not a great performer when the roads are wet and cold, or dry, and its feel is poor too, being described as 'floaty' in snow, 'treacherous' in the wet and 'sloppy' and 'slow-witted' in the dry.

The other seven winter tyres have much more rounded abilities. Equal sixth are the **Pirelli** and **Nokian**. The **Pirelli** scores reasonably well across the board but isn't outstanding anywhere, its strongest results being a second in wet braking, a good wet lap time and a decent subjective wet handling score. It's a similar story with the **Nokian**, its high spot being the best subjective dry handling score of all the winters, thanks to its neat and tidy responses and good traction. The **Vredestein** was just ahead of them in fifth, a solid result in the snow backed up by an OK performance in the wet and a less good display in the dry. It felt better than this, though, offering turn-in bite and adjustability in the dry and good on-road refinement, too.

In fourth is the **Goodyear**, which scored highly in the wet – clear wins in the aquaplane tests helped it to third overall objectively. It was strong in the snow too, and was the fastest winter on the dry track, but it was let down by a poor subjective score in the wet, where it felt too delicately balanced.

The **Dunlop** finished a whisker off the top step in the snow tests and delivered well in the wet, too, both objectively and subjectively. Its chances of winning outright were weakened in part by a less than sparkling on-road performance, which revealed a noisy ride and light, imprecise steering.

Second overall was the **Michelin** Alpin A4. A strong,

Below: the Continental is a clear winner, with strong objective and subjective results throughout our test

FINAL SCORE

| TYRE | % | SNOW | WET | DRY | SUBJECTIVE |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------------|
| 1. CONTI W | 93.3 | 99.9 | 98.5 | 88.9 | 85.6 |
| 2. MICHELIN | 92.5 | 97.5 | 95.8 | 87.0 | 89.7 |
| 3. DUNLOP | 91.3 | 99.8 | 95.6 | 88.1 | 81.6 |
| 4. GOODYEAR | 91.2 | 97.8 | 97.8 | 87.5 | 81.7 |
| 5. VREDESTEIN | 90.7 | 97.1 | 94.3 | 87.8 | 83.8 |
| 6. NOKIAN | 90.4 | 95.3 | 94.7 | 88.5 | 83.1 |
| 6. PIRELLI | 90.4 | 96.1 | 94.4 | 87.5 | 83.6 |
| 8. CONTIS | 84.9 | 49.7 | 96.6 | 93.9 | 99.3 |
| 9. LINGLONG | 82.9 | 97.2 | 79.8 | 93.4 | 61.5 |

'IT'S RESPONSIVE, STABLE AND PREDICTABLE IN ALL SCENARIOS. WINTER TYRES COME NO MORE CAPABLE OR REASSURING THAN THIS'

consistent set of objective scores show that the Michelin has no real weaknesses – it performs well whether the road is dry, wet or covered in snow – and what secures it second place is that subjectively it's easily the best winter tyre here. Of its wet handling we said: 'Excellent steering feel – grainy grip – and very stable. You could recommend this tyre to anyone.'

But it was beaten by the **Continental** ContiWinterContact TS 850, which finished in the top three in every objective test and backed this up with the second highest subjective rating of the winters. So while it might not deliver the Michelin's steering feel, it delivers everything else and is responsive, stable and predictable in all scenarios. Winter tyres come no more capable or reassuring than this.



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HARRY'S GARAGE ALFA ROMEO MITO TWINAIR

Date acquired December 2012 Total mileage 1120 Mileage this month 1120
Costs £0 mpg this month 36.3



Above: Harry collects his new Mito from Meridien Milano, Bournemouth.
Top right: 84bhp turbo two-cylinder. Above right: six-speed manual 'box

Yes, I've gone and bought an 875cc, two-pot Alfa Romeo. And before the jokes start, it's designed to be like that, because this little Alfa is powered by Fiat's clever TwinAir engine.

I'd been hoping to replace my Honda Insight with something more modern and fun to drive but still exempt from the London Congestion Charge, but I found most of the cars that qualified (Euro 5 engines emitting less than 100g/km of CO₂) were a bit dull. So when Alfa announced it was to fit the TwinAir engine from the Fiat 500 in its Mito, I thought it was worth a closer look.

It got even more interesting when I learned there would be a new 'Sportiva' spec that would add a sports interior, sports seats in black Alcantara, 18in Quadrifoglio wheels and satin exterior trim. The Mito TwinAir package is already pretty tempting, with Alfa offering a five-year warranty and zero per cent finance, and there's 100 per cent capital allowance for business buyers, due to its low CO₂ rating (which also brings its road tax down to nothing). But the clincher for me was the Sportiva's incredibly low insurance rating (group nine, three lower than the 500 TwinAir), making it the perfect car for my 17-year-old twins to learn to drive in.

They had visions of putting L-plates on the Maserati, but my insurance company soon put a stop to that, so the hunt was on for something more insurance-friendly. Aon swapped my Insight for the Mito on the policy for no extra charge, the only change being the excess increasing from £250 to £1000 when the kids are driving it under instruction. It's once they've passed their

tests that the cost rockets, but £1900 for the first year still seems good value to me.

The Sportiva isn't cheap, though. It lists at £16,100, and I added Biancospino white paint (£425), an electric glass moon-roof (£720) and the excellent Bose sound system (eight speakers, an extra amp and a subwoofer for £650), bringing the total to £17,895. Alfa is offering buyers a £500 'contribution' at the moment and after a bit of haggling I ended up paying a deposit of just under £3k, to be followed by 24 monthly payments of £299 and a final payment of £7740.

The car came with Alfa's clever 'Blue&Me-TomTom 2 Live' satnav fully plumbed in, so there are no wires trailing around the cabin and you can control the nav via speech recognition or the buttons on the steering wheel. The Bluetooth phone connection seems excellent and the system reads out texts you receive on the move.

But what my kids care about most is that it's a cool car. And having lived with the Sportiva for a month now, I have to agree. It's got a slick six-speed gearbox that you need to work in order to get the best from the tiny engine and it feels almost luxurious inside, thanks to that sound system, the supportive seats and a soft-touch leather steering wheel. I just wish it rode better.

It's a bigger car than you'd imagine, the Mito, and that's probably why the mpg is nowhere near as good as you'd like it to be (I'm currently averaging 36.3mpg), but I'll happily trade that for the character its twin-pot engine delivers. In fact, if I continue to enjoy driving this car as much as I have so far, the kids might not be seeing it as much as they hoped...

Harry Metcalfe

*'WHAT MY KIDS
CARE ABOUT MOST
IS THAT IT'S A COOL
CAR, AND HAVING
LIVED WITH IT FOR A
MONTH, I AGREE'*

This month: Alfa Romeo Mito TwinAir Jaguar XKR-S Convertible Ferrari 458 Italia Audi A6 Avant 3.0 BiTDI Lamborghini Murciélago LP640 Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe Renaultsport Twingo 133 Audi RS4 Avant Jaguar XF 2.2D Vauxhall Astra VXR Mazda MX-5 1.8i Ford Capri V8 Range Rover Evoque Nissan Navara





JAGUAR XKR-S CONVERTIBLE

Date acquired September 2012 **Total mileage** 4216 **Mileage this month** 1274 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 19.7

Nearly three months in and I'm really getting to know the soft-top XKR-S. It does some things exceptionally well. The calm ride, tremendous torque and soothing refinement ensure it chomps through long distances in a very grown-up fashion. And when you stray from motorways, that same torque means it can punch by slower traffic in one decisive lunge, making for safe, rapid progress.

Unfortunately, it quickly begins to lose its composure in wet conditions, especially on give-and-take A- and B-roads. It simply doesn't have the traction to cope with its monumentally muscular supercharged V8 and also gets deflected by standing water. Even taking things relatively steady, you regularly feel it slip-grip-slip-gripping its way round corners and down sodden straights. It's not a very nice sensation, because it means you never relax, even with the stability control firmly engaged.

I had plenty of time to contemplate the R-S's twitchy wet-weather handling on the way down to Goodwood on a torrentially wet Monday morning recently. The reason for the trip was something very special: the

chance to drive one of the XKR-S's illustrious forebears, a gorgeous racing C-type. It was accompanied by D-type and E-type racers, all run by JD Classics on behalf of Jaguar Heritage Racing.

Prior to the event I'd been asked to pick which of the three I wished to drive. I'm not sure I've had to make many more tricky decisions, but in the end I plumped for the C, mainly because I'd not experienced a racing car of that age, but mostly because Juan Manuel Fangio had once owned it.

With the rain coming down in sheets and the lethally unforgiving Goodwood circuit

Above: the XKR-S met up with some of its racing ancestors at a Jaguar Heritage event at Goodwood

equalled plenty of fun.

Then, my turn. The driving position was low and upright, the steering wheel huge. The clutch and gearshift were lighter than I expected (doubtless thanks to some modern fettling), the steering dead at low speeds but light and feelsome once up and running. The motor – a 3.4-litre version of the XK straight-six – was brilliantly revvy with a real bark, despite some extra silencing.

Believe me, 325bhp and 283lb ft is plenty in a car weighing 991kg. Straight-line traction was surprisingly good, but upon turning the wheel those skinny front tyres didn't offer much bite. Thanks then to the tail, which slipped to the rescue and immediately restored handling balance, enabling me to tickle it out of shape on the throttle, then gently guide it with the steering. It was huge fun, though the lack of feel and stopping power from the drum brakes give me the willies. Perhaps that's no bad thing given the (many) millions 70 XKV is worth.

I clambered out soaked and buzzing, and headed home in the R-S. It might be spiky in the wet, but compared to its 61-year-old relative it was as if the roads were dry. That's positive progress, but I'd love to swap some of the R-S's modern pace for the C-type's old-school progression. I'd keep the heated seats though. **Richard Meaden**

'I'D LOVE TO SWAP SOME OF THE R-S's MODERN PACE FOR OLD C-TYPE PROGRESSION'

dotted with deep expanses of standing water, I fully expected the guys from Jaguar to pull the plug. But much to my amazement they beckoned me to jump in instead. I asked for a passenger lap first, just to get a sense of what to expect, and I'm bloody glad I did. The cross-ply tyres and drum brakes delivered what appeared to be zero grip or retardation, but with the ultra-committed Alex Buncombe at the wheel, that quickly

FERRARI 458 ITALIA

Date acquired May 2011 **Total mileage** 31,333 **Mileage this month** 2555 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 15.1

Last time WX11 appeared in these pages (evo 177) we were pedalling around southern France, but what with the appalling wet weather I decided to cut the trip short and hot-foot it the 830 miles north to Cherbourg in 12 hours to catch a ferry back home.

But this wasn't before I discovered a fair bit of water sloshing about in the 458's front boot and a rather loud ticking emanating from the engine bay. Up until then the car's behaviour had been impeccable and fortunately the ticking didn't seem to affect its performance.

Passing through Lyon a few hours later, I spotted two gendarmes on motorbikes parked up chatting on a roundabout. Glancing in the rear view a few seconds later, I saw them pulling on their helmets, so it was pretty certain what was coming next. Sure enough, I'd travelled half a mile or so on a dual carriageway before 'Chips' pulled down both sides of the Ferrari indicating the obvious.

Parked in a lay-by, these chaps were intent not on searching the 458 (unlike the customs officers the previous week) but meticulously checking every bit of paperwork relating to it – even cross-referencing the chassis number. After establishing I was also carrying the two required breathalyser kits, these much



more polite gendarmes waved me on my way, but not before asking for photos of both of them sat behind the wheel. (Unfairly they refused point blank my request to have my photo taken on one of their bikes; 'It is forbidden!' as they put it.) If you're thinking of taking a conspicuous supercar over to Le Mans this year, it's worth remembering that you can't carry too many documents.

Brittany Ferries operates the Cherbourg to Portsmouth service and very supercar-friendly it is too. Hitting the French port about 40 minutes before the 11pm

'UNTIL THEN, THE 458 HAD BEHAVED IMPECCABLY'

Above: George's 458 was safely loaded onto the ferry returning it to Britain

departure, the Ferrari was waved onto a separate ramp that didn't risk detaching its front spoiler.

This 458 is a jack of all trades, but day-to-day it can annoy with its gizmos. I still haven't worked out the on-board computer after 18 months. And as for loading a CD... don't get me started. **Simon George**

LAMBORGHINI LP640

Date acquired August 2007 **Total mileage** 62,311 **Mileage this month** 1004 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 13.0

It's been a while since LP07 appeared in these pages, but with calamity befalling its orange older brother (evo 178) plus the young upstart 458 Italia vying for attention, the big white Lambo has been shoved to the back of the grid.

I'm pleased to report, however, that the old soldier is battling on gracefully. With the 60,000-mile mark having been breached, one might have thought the LP640 would feel a little woolly these days. Not a bit. True, the slots of the open-gate shift have worn a little jagged, taking chunks out of the lovely aluminium lever in the process, and the bright yellow seats are finally starting to show signs of wear. The 'check

'THE OLD SOLDIER IS BATTLING ON GRACEFULLY'

engine' lights also flash on and off, but there is often a solution for this, and it's as simple as popping the engine lid, flicking the main power bus on and off and, hey presto, more often than not they disappear.

Over the winter, the LP640 is taking a much-needed rest inside a York shopping centre, doing some PR work. Driving it the 300 metres down a very narrow access tunnel then through the shopping centre itself is always fun – but not when one manages to catch the wing mirror on a wooden bench when cruising past Starbucks. That's £1200 I guess I'll never see again... **Simon George**

Right: LP640 was manoeuvred into a York shopping centre – but at the cost of a broken wing mirror



evoFast Fleet



END OF TERM AUDI A6 AVANT BiTDI

Date acquired June 2012
Duration of test 5 months **Total test mileage** 12,121 **Overall mpg** 35.7 **Costs** £212 (service)
Purchase price £61,345 **Trade-in value** £45,000
Depreciation £16,345

It's easy to see why we were looking forward to taking delivery of this diesel estate: with more torque than editor Trott's C63 AMG, the A6 Avant 3.0 BiTDI promised exciting real-world performance but with diesel economy. Although it was only with us for five



Above: Smith found the A6 Avant's load space ideal for outdoor pursuits.
 Below: quattro four-wheel-drive traction out of corners was a strong point



months, having to chase all manner of silly cars across Europe while loaded with photography equipment meant OV12 HNG racked up a whopping 12,000 miles in that time. Other than a gearbox malfunction caused by a corrupt key fob and the odd gremlin with the dashboard's fold-out screen (resolved by switching the ignition off and back on again), there was nothing from an ownership position to complain about. The oil service at 9000 miles was a reasonable £212 with the usual high standard of customer service from Hitchin Audi.

Unfortunately our car was specced with

everything you never needed and pretty much nothing that you did. I will admit that the parking cameras came in handy and the radar cruise control was great on motorways, but we'd much rather have had the sports diff and air suspension given the chance. And who on earth specs a car like this without heated seats?!

As our A6 had the S-line package, with it came the sportier S-line suspension. Mated to 19in wheels, this wasn't as firm or harsh as you'd expect, but the damping wasn't brilliant and with the V6 hanging out over the front axle, a slight 'nodding dog' feeling was apparent on less-than-perfect roads. Upon upping the pace it started to feel like the car was floating on a cloud rather than making rapid progress at ground level. There was little to no feedback through the wheel or chassis, inspiring little confidence and thus hampering progress. Under braking you could feel all of the 1855kg kerb weight and the ABS would always kick in early, but once settled, the brakes were more than adequate, with great power. Unusually for an Audi, they weren't over-servoed either.

Powering out of corners, the quattro

MERCEDES C63 AMG COUPE

Date acquired April 2012 Total mileage 15,954 Mileage this month 576 Costs this month £0 mpg this month 20.6

*‘TO DRIVE IT
LIKE YOU
STOLE IT IS TO
MISS THE POINT
OF THIS CAR
ENTIRELY’*

The protracted story of which car I should buy following the sale of my Clio V6 has taken another turn. If you follow me on Twitter (@evoNickTrott), you'll be bored of my indecision. I know I certainly am. I've considered virtually every car available for around £20k, including a Honda NSX, an Alfa Romeo SZ, a Porsche 911 or Cayman, and even another Clio V6.

Part of my indecision is caused by the brilliance of my everyday driver – the C63 AMG coupe. Immensely characterful, fast, stylish and edgy, it ticks pretty much every box for me except one – it's not mine. Prices for secondhand C63s remain solid – £50k for the cheapest cars against £57,775 new – but that's still way out of my price range. So what to do?

I've learned to love the

practicality of the C63 – it seats four and has a decent boot – so I've become increasingly interested in BMW's M3 CSL. Like the C63, it's a two-door/four-seat coupe with track sensibilities and a storming engine (albeit with wildly different characteristics), and I admit to going weak at the knees at the raised rear spoiler and the single intake vent. I'm sure you understand...

In a remarkable act of generosity, BMW picked up on my Twitter musings about the CSL and offered me five days in their immaculate heritage car. I've driven CSLs before, but never with a mind to buying one – which changes your perspective somewhat. Could I live with the stiff ride? Would the SMG gearbox frustrate? Would the fixed buckets kill my dodgy back? Would the C63 make it feel a little slow and rubbish by comparison?

I had a list of sensible questions already formulated in my head when I drove off in the CSL. And then I hit the Sport button. And then I wound it through to maximum revs. The CSL's operatic induction roar silenced every concern. And now I spend every waking minute searching for my perfect CSL. Nick Trott

*‘NOW I
SPEND EVERY
WAKING
MINUTE
SEARCHING
FOR MY
PERFECT CSL’*



Above: M3 CSL could be the answer to Trott's fast coupe conundrum

drivetrain hooked up fabulously. Understeer would materialise if you were too eager with your right foot, so you had to be pretty patient before getting on the throttle (presumably the sports diff would give a more neutral to oversteer stance). But once you started straightening the wheel, you could release all of the biturbo engine's monster torque, and even on greasy roads the traction was immense.

The stand-out feature was without doubt the absolutely stonking engine – 458lb ft of

torque on tap from 1450 to 2800rpm, then peak power of 309bhp taking over from 3900 to 4500rpm. It made the A6 properly quick; overtakes were effortless and revving the engine out to 4500rpm was genuinely enjoyable as it sounded awesome from the driver's seat – and outside too thanks to some clever exhaust tinkering.

Ultimately the A6 fell short in dynamic terms when hustling it down a B-road, but to drive it like you stole it is to miss the point of this car entirely. Rather it is a car designed to annihilate long journeys with your wife, 2.4 children and dog along for the ride. With the exception of a few options and the lack of RGB in the paint finish, this was the ideal everyday car for my needs. Sure, I'd want an Exige S for the odd thrill or two but the BiTDI covers all bases adequately.

But an A6 specced like ours would set you back £61,345. For that money you could buy an RS4, which has only a little less space, a thrilling V8 running on the right kind of fossil fuel, better dynamics and presumably better residuals. And you'd have enough change for a year's motoring. Maybe that's why we've swapped our A6 for one... Dean Smith



Above: parking cameras handy; biturbo diesel V6 'stonking'. Below: steering lacked feedback



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| 5/6/7 April | Brands Hatch | MCE Insurance British Superbikes |
| 20/21 April | Brands Hatch | British Truck Racing Championship |
| 20/21 April | Cadwell Park | Historic Wolds Trophy |
| 4/5/6 May | Oulton Park | MCE Insurance British Superbikes |
| 17/18/19 May | Brands Hatch | DTM (German Touring Cars) |
| 25/26/27 May | Brands Hatch GP | Masters Historic Festival |
| 8 June | Cadwell Park | Vintage Sports Car Championships |
| 8/9 June | Brands Hatch | American Spectacular |
| 8/9 June | Oulton Park | British Touring Car Championship |
| 15/16 June | Snetterton 300 | British F3 and GT Championships |
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| 9/10/11 August | Oulton Park | MCE Insurance British Superbikes |
| 10/11 August | Brands Hatch GP | British F3 and GT Championships |
| 24/25/26 August | Cadwell Park | MCE Insurance British Superbikes |
| 24/25 August | Brands Hatch GP | Lotus Festival |
| 25/26 August | Oulton Park | Oulton Park Gold Cup |
| 25/26 August | Snetterton 300 | British Truck Racing Championship |
| 29 September | Snetterton 300 | Vintage Sports Car Championships |
| 12/13 October | Brands Hatch GP | British Touring Car Championship |
| 18/19/20 October | Brands Hatch GP | MCE Insurance British Superbikes |
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VAUXHALL ASTRA VXR

Date acquired July 2012 Total mileage 10,277
Mileage this month 1355 Costs this month £0
mpg this month 26.7

Since our Astra VXR's arrival, Vauxhall's arch-rival, Ford, has released its new Focus ST. With an extra pair of doors and costing £5000 less in basic trim, it plays a very competitive hand.

So how does the Griffin-badged car respond? Well, I reckon it looks the part. It's one of those cars you can't resist glancing back at after blipping it locked, and I reckon it far more resembles a crayon-crazy designer's sketch than it does a rep car with a chavtastic makeover.

Its Drexler mechanical limited-slip diff is also an impressive bit of kit; you can stamp on the throttle spookily early in corners, and exit them tightly, accurately on line. Oh, and it's got 29bhp more.

However, the Focus feels keener, more agile and more engaging. And that's not the Astra's only worry; as specced, our VXR is more expensive than BMW's new £30k M135i, which finished impressively high in eCoty 2012. I think a rather fun face-off beckons... **Stephen Dobie**



Above: Dobie loves the Astra's diff system



RENAULTSPORT TWINGO 133

Date acquired August 2012 Total mileage 6460
Mileage this month 1255 Costs this month £0
mpg this month 34.1

Although my age doesn't begin with a 4 yet, it's probably safe to say that I'm older than the target customer Renault has in mind for its Twingo RS. I should be driving a Mégane, or at least a Clio.

But I'm glad to be in the littlest Renaultsport, not least because of the way it encourages you to put maximum effort into your driving to get the best from the car. You have to work the engine and choose your gears carefully rather than relying on a surfeit of low-down torque to pull you out of a turn. Maintaining momentum is important, too, which forces you to plan your progress along a road in meticulous fashion.

It reminds me of the hot hatches that my friends and I used to run around in 15 or so years ago. In fact with



'YOU HAVE TO WORK THE ENGINE AND CHOOSE YOUR GEARS CAREFULLY'

127bhp per ton, the Twingo has the same power-to-weight ratio as a mk2 Golf GTI 16v or a 205 GTI 1.6. It's a much, much sharper tool than the hot hatches of that era, of course, but the kind of fun it serves up has a remarkably similar feel.

Good news for 20-somethings who missed out on those '80s icons, then. And for those of us who want to recapture the spirit of those exciting days. **Ian Eveleigh**

AUDI RS4 AVANT

Date acquired September 2012 Total mileage 5634
Mileage this month 3133 Costs this month £0 mpg this month 22.3

Barely ten seconds into my first drive of our new Audi Fast Fleeter and something didn't feel quite right with the front end. But I put the slight knocking noise down to the bumpy car park at Evo Towers and continued on my merry way home to Deanton Abbey with a grin from ear to ear, knowing that I'd be the RS4's custodian for a while.

But the next morning, whilst surfing across some speed bumps, I noticed the knocking again. Surely Audi wouldn't deliver a car with only 1000 miles on its clock and a knocking from the front end? I needed

a second opinion, but eCoty started that evening, so I wasn't able to get the RS4 to a dealer as quickly as I would have liked.

After covering 4000 miles over the next three weeks, the knocking became more apparent. It happened over bumps at all speeds but was exaggerated at low speeds over large drops – you could feel it through the pedals and it even managed to filter through to the steering wheel.

The master technician at Hitchin Audi took it for a drive and although they (or any other dealer for that matter) hadn't even seen the new RS4 before, he could confirm that there was definitely a knocking, but said they would need to book the car in to have a proper look.

At the time of writing, it's still there being



Above: playing with the RS4's damper settings couldn't stop the knocking

stripped, and I'm slightly anxious that, like on previous RS4 and RS6 models, Audi might have an issue with its Dynamic Ride Control damping system. **Dean Smith**

END OF TERM JAGUAR XF 2.2D

Date acquired December 2011 **Duration of test** 11 months **Total test mileage** 21,413
Overall mpg 37.0 **Costs** £935 (summer tyres), £193.09 (service) **Purchase price** £42,830
Trade-in value £27,500 **Depreciation** £15,330

I'd be the first to admit that a big-winged Porsche would sit more comfortably in this section than a four-cylinder diesel repmobile. Prod the Jaguar XF's pulsating starter button and the Massey Ferguson soundtrack ensured it sounded far less 'fast' than it did 'fleet'. But in penny-pinching times, the XF is potentially ideal plush everyday transport, and something that sits at the more desirable end of company car lists.

Ours arrived at the end of 2011, already wearing 10,000 miles from its trying role on Jaguar's press fleet. You can buy a 2.2-litre XF diesel for less than £30k, but it'll be a 161bhp SE. Our amply trimmed Premium Luxury, with a more potent 187bhp engine, standard satnav and optional extras including 20in alloys, a brilliant Bowers & Wilkins stereo and a digital TV, neared £43,000. (This engine has since been boosted a further 10bhp and a Meridian unit is the current posh audio option.)

My first acquaintance with our XF came when its first keeper, Peter Tomalin, agreed to a car swap when I needed more luggage space than my cosy Mini Coupe provided. I wasn't a fan – underpowered, grumbly diesel soundtrack, no fun – and it went against the praise Mr T had lavished upon it. 'Perhaps not a great Jaguar, but a very fine car nevertheless,' he reckoned. 'Good-looking, seemingly well made and a nice way to be part of the warm glow that everyone's



'OUR JAG'S BIGGEST STRENGTH WAS LONG-DISTANCE CRUISING'

Above: engine was uninspiring; handling was the opposite. Below: Dunlop Sport Maxx summer tyres lasted well



currently feeling towards Jaguar.'

Put like that, I felt a bit 'bah humbug', so I endeavoured to spend more time in the XF. What I discovered was a comfortable, classy car that was willing and able when an interesting stretch of road turned up. With an underpowered, grumbly diesel engine. The XF is an agile and well-balanced car, something proved throughout the range (especially the eight-cylinder petrol models), but predictably, a Mondeo-related diesel isn't its most desirable engine.

The XF proved easy to live with, though. Thanks to its arrival on winter tyres, its 'summer' Dunlop Sport Maxx rubber still had plenty of life remaining when the car left us, and with servicing required every 12 months/16,000 miles, it needed only

a 'Service A' while with us. Carried out by Guy Salmon Jaguar in Northampton, it cost an entirely reasonable £193.09 including delivery and collection within the day. An indicated 40mpg average – which turned out to be 37 after some receipt crunching – lagged behind a claimed 52.3mpg, but our BMW 520d ED fell similarly short of its published numbers, as do most eco-minded cars when pressed into mixed (and occasionally quite enthusiastic!) driving.

Our Jag's biggest strength was its long-distance cruising ability. A number of times I battled camcorder-man Sam Riley for it as we each headed on weekend pilgrimages up north. At one point I spent a solid two weeks in OE11 FTZ and despite my youthful nonchalance towards both diesels and automatics, I didn't actually long for another car. This feeling culminated while waiting for a delayed mate in a train station car park, where I enjoyed a full episode of *The Crystal Maze* on its digital telly. Try doing that in a GT3 RS.

Stephen Dobie





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NISSAN NAVARA

Date acquired July 2012 **Total mileage** 9024
Mileage this month 1584 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 27.1

The styling of the Navara has grown on me lately. Heading up to and around the Lake District, sightings of yet more Navaras were commonplace, and after a day in the area it became clear to me why the Navara is so popular.

I really wanted to get off the beaten track and away from the tourists, so I packed my gear into the pick-up and headed for the mountains. On the steep (33 per cent gradient), narrow, winding road from Duddon Valley through to Eskdale known as the Hardknott Pass, the Outlaw came into its own. In four-wheel-drive mode it cruised easily up and down Britain's steepest road on our way to Wast Water.

As I reached for my camera, peering through the lens, framing the Navara sat by the lake, it dawned on me. A lot of cars would totally ruin this view, but the Navara soaks up its surroundings and sits proudly as the king of the Lake District... until another one shows up.

Sam Riley



Above: Navara suited rugged Lakes terrain



Left: top mounts are adjustable. Above and below: dampers carry three settings



FORD CAPRI V8

Date acquired October 2001 **Total mileage** 1847 **Mileage this month** 0 **Costs this month** TBC **mpg this month** n/a

'Some very sexy suspension has just arrived!" texted Quentin from QPrep. He wasn't wrong. After a few weeks away at Proflex, the Capri's damper struts were back and genuinely 'better than new', because they had the latest valve technology and offered more tuning potential. The

original two-way adjustables (bump and rebound) had become three-ways (low-velocity bump, high-velocity bump and rebound). They had also been engineered with adjustable top mounts, allowing greater front suspension geometry tuning.

So not only do we now have much more travel to use, we have a huge range of damper and geometry adjustments to play with too. It's all back on the car and there's just a minor modification to the front anti-roll bar to make before the Capri is back on its wheels. Not sure when we'll start tinkering with the set-up, though; I'm a bit reluctant to take it out on cold, salted roads on its semi-trackday Yokohama Neovas. I haven't had the bill yet but I suspect this might be my Christmas present from Mrs B – and anyone else who was thinking of buying me something...

John Barker

'THERE'S JUST ONE MINOR MOD TO BE MADE BEFORE IT'S BACK ON ITS WHEELS'

RANGE ROVER EVOQUE

Date acquired March 2012 **Total mileage** 15,602 **Mileage this month** 676 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 34.5

Idon't envy whoever has to try and sell our Evoque when it turns up on a forecourt in a few months' time. For one simple fact: it has a manual gearbox.

The basic eco-Evoque comes with a standard six-speed manual, but the vast majority of buyers choosing posher versions – like our Dynamic Coupe – opt for the automatic, which is also claimed to boost economy and improve acceleration.

But after 15,000 miles, I don't regret my choice for a moment. This is a really nice gearbox, with an action that's smooth, accurate and with the right amount of weighting for quick-but-unhurried changes. It's just a shame few people will realise how well this 'box suits this car.

Mike Duff

MAZDA MX-5 1.8i

Date acquired April 2012 **Total mileage** 110,970 **Mileage this month** 212 **Costs this month** £14.20 **mpg this month** 32.8

Foggy mornings and dark winter evenings mean the MX-5's monthly mileage is shrinking, partly because of its tendency to steam up inside, presumably because some of that dampness is permeating the canvas hood. I'd seriously considered getting a hard-top for it, but even scruffy ones seem to fetch at least £300 on eBay. That's a lot of petrol, or perhaps a couple of refurbished alloys, so I decided against it. Besides, it's nice to have the option to have the hood down on a crisp, bright November afternoon.

But without a garage or cover of any sort, I knew I really should give the hood a little extra protection. Autoglym's hood maintenance kit seemed to get plenty of good notices on Amazon, so I coughed up £14.20 and waited for the next dry day. You get two spray-bottles in the kit – a cleaner to lift out stains and general grime, and the waterproofer itself. The whole job took about 45 minutes, the hood looked considerably smarter



Above: waterproofing worked a treat on MX-5's soft-top

afterwards and, best of all, when the next shower struck, it was immensely pleasing to see the water form into beads and race down the fabric.

The car is going better than ever. I knew it hadn't been used much for a couple of years when I bought it, and I'm sure it's benefitted from being run regularly. There's now a real zip to the VVT unit above 4000rpm and it pulls hard to 6000 and beyond – a trait of which many owners are, I suspect, blithely unaware.

Peter Tomalin



911 Carrera 2 S (997) £48,995
Guards Red
Black Leather Seats
GEN II PDK
18,000 miles
2009 (59)



911 Carrera 4 S (997) £43,995
Cobalt Blue
Black Leather Seats
19" Sport Design Wheels
11,000 miles
2009 (59)



Cayman S (6-Speed) £23,995
Basalt Black
Black Leather Seats
19" Sport Design Wheels
49,000 miles
2008 (58)



911 Carrera 4 S (996) £22,995
Arctic Silver
Black Leather Seats
18" Turbo II Wheels
61,000 miles
2002 (02)



Boxster S (6-Speed) £12,995
Lapis Blue
Blue Leather Seats
Facelift
38,000 miles
2002 (52)



911 Carrera Supersport Targa £39,995
Jet Black
Black Leather Sport Seats
16" Fuchs Wheels
13,000 miles
1989 (F)

911 Carrera 2 S (997 GEN II PDK) £51,995
Basalt Black, Black Leather Seats, 33,000 miles

911 Turbo Coupe (997 6-Speed) £49,995
Basalt Black, Black Leather Seats, 23,000 miles

911 Carrera 2 S (997 GEN II) £44,995
Meteor Grey, Black Leather Seats, 35,000 miles

911 Carrera 2 S (997 6-Speed) £33,995
Basalt Black, Black Leather Seats, 44,000 miles

Boxster S (987 GEN II PDK) £33,995
Basalt Black, Black Leather Seats, 7,000 miles

Boxster S (987 GEN II 6-Speed) £31,995
Meteor Grey, Black Leather Seats, 16,000 miles

911 Carrera 2 S (997 6-Speed) £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

Boxster 2.9 (987 GEN II 6-Speed) £24,995
Jet Black, Black Leather Seats, 30,000 miles

911 Carrera 4 S (996) £22,995
Seal Grey, Black Leather Seats, 68,000 miles

911 Carrera 4 (996) £19,995
Basalt Black, Black Leather Seats, 61,000 miles

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Basalt Black, Black/Grey Seats, 58,000 miles

Boxster S (987, 6-Speed) £19,995
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Boxster S (Tiptronic S) £14,995
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ASK THE EXPERT

Q What would you recommend as an 'evo' car that's exempt from the London Congestion Charge? It needs to produce less than 100g/km of CO2 and (if registered after 1/1/2011) be Euro 5 standard. I'm very fortunate to be the proud owner of something with ten cylinders and 500bhp, but at 344g/km it doesn't quite qualify for that discount! I'll keep that car for the weekend.

Nathan Luckey



Above: 500 TwinAir escapes congestion charge, but engine is an acquired taste

A There's not a huge selection of cars that qualify for exemption and are fun to drive, but there are a few.

The Ford Fiesta 1.0T 125 EcoBoost has class-leading dynamics but it isn't the last word in urban chic. That prize goes to the Fiat 500 TwinAir, thanks mainly to its 'characterful' engine, but you need to try one first because although the 875cc twin-cylinder unit is turbocharged and has more grunt than the figures might suggest, it feels like it's got a flywheel made of lead.

I bought the Alfa Mito TwinAir (see p122) because I prefer it to the Fiat 500. Also try the Mito 1.3 JTDm, as it's got twice as many cylinders and does spectacular real-world economy too. Finally, there's the Mini Cooper 1.6D. Yes, they're everywhere, but that's only because they're very good. **HM**

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MARKET WATCH



RESIDUAL SUPERSTARS

SUVs and Volkswagen's 'R' models are holding their values best

The question I'm constantly asked is which new car will lose the least amount of value by the time it comes to trade it in in three years' time? You might not like the answer, but your best bet is a family-friendly SUV.

Glass's Guide recently published the top ten residual value winners for 2012 and the top spot goes to the Toyota Land Cruiser 4.5D (retaining 73.4 per cent of its value after three years), followed by Audi's Q5 2.0TDI (73.2 per cent) and one of *evo*'s oddball heroes, the Skoda Yeti 2.0TDI (72.5 per cent). The first proper *evo* car on the list is the VW Scirocco R in sixth, with only it, the Fiat 500 1.2 in eighth and the tenth-placed VW Golf R preventing an SUV clean sweep. All three sit at around the 65 per cent mark.

Looking at today's new cars, you'd have to guess that the Range Rover Evoque has all the right qualities to score well in depreciation terms come 2015, as do the Audi A1 and Volkswagen Up. But I suspect the Toyota GT86 could score well too, because there's a huge pool of

people hungry to buy one for a lower price. They might be shocked by how much they'll have to pay, as the number sold new is tiny. The BMW M135i looks another sure-fire hit on the second-hand forecourt – it's German, relatively good value new and there will never be too many of them around because most people will only buy diesel.

The big trend over recent years has been downsizing; BMW's Mini kicked it all off and both the Evoque and M135i have moved it on to the next stage, so my tip for working out which cars will have strong residuals in the future is to look for cars that offer big-car qualities in a small-car package. Get that right and you have every chance of it being a depreciation winner.

Harry Metcalfe
Editorial director



Auction watch



Above: one-off Maserati 150GT Spider features lightweight aluminium bodywork by Fantuzzi

Seven-figure sales expected in Arizona for one-off Maserati and Ferrari supercar lots

Those who keep an eye on the auction scene will know that there are two major events in the US guaranteed to produce huge prices. The Monterey sales in August often grab the headlines, but for sheer quantity, the immense Scottsdale bonanza in January is hard to beat.

Gooding and Company has a number of interesting cars up for sale, and one of the most expensive lots

at Scottsdale week will undoubtedly be the one-off 1957 Maserati 150GT Spider, which has an estimate of \$3-4million (£1.9-2.5m).

For the dedicated Ferrari collector, there's a 2003 Ferrari Enzo, and the car that it succeeded, a 1995 Ferrari F50. With the Enzo's replacement on the horizon, and a continued rise in top-end Ferrari values, it wouldn't be hard to imagine the Enzo easily



Above: Ferrari Enzo, now a decade old, is expected to fetch more than \$1million

smashing its \$1.3m (£807k) top estimate, while the F50, with its F1-derived V12 engine, is estimated to sell for \$800,000-£1million (£496-621k).

Matthew Haywood

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'Over-engineered for its purpose and overpriced for its market, we'll remember the Z8 not for what it was, but for what it could have been.' That's how we concluded our road test of the Z8 back in December 2000 (evo 026). It got just three stars, disappointing dynamics and retro looks making its £80k list price look a little silly. Especially when the M5 it was based on cost £28k less.

Fast forward a decade, though, and the story is far rosier. With fewer than 100 Z8s apparently left in the UK, they're rare old beasts, and prices for really low mileage cars can touch a ludicrous £180,000. Settle for a more heavily used (but still well below average mileage) Z8, like this 36,500-mile example for sale at The Supercar Rooms, and you pay a price closer to – but still north of – that original RRP. Contemporary M5s average £8000...

It's aged well, the Z8; its retro looks and interior appear to work better and better as time goes on. It's still not a sharp sports car, feeling more like an American hot rod with its long bonnet, rumbling eight-cylinder engine and left-hook driving position. But in the current market, this example – in great condition and with a winter-friendly hard-top – looks like it could be a sound investment. And a cool-looking one, at that.

Stephen Dobie



Above: unusual looks make the Z8 a divisive classic, but a highly sought-after one nonetheless. Below: left-hand drive only



SPECIFICATION

- » Year 2001
- » Mileage 36,500
- » Engine V8, 4941cc
- » Max power 400bhp @ 6600rpm
- » Max torque 369lb ft @ 3800rpm
- » 0-60mph 4.8sec
- » Top speed 155mph (limited)

SUMMARY

- » **Exterior** Styling will divide opinion, but there's little as bold available new
- » **Interior** Left-hand drive not to all tastes
- » **Mechanicals** Not as competent as the M5 it's based on, but the V8 is still pleasing
- » **Verdict** Chances to pick up a Z8 are few. And this one's priced very well

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Porsche Cayman 2.7 £20,995

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The all-new, second-generation Porsche Cayman is available to order now, but with an entry-level 2.7 costing nearly £40,000 sans options, does a lightly used mk1 make more sense? It's arguably purer, missing out on electric power steering and stop/start, though its 2.7-litre engine's 241bhp does fall 30bhp short of its successor.

This example was upgraded from the standard five-speed gearbox to the optional six-speed manual when new, so doesn't feel old-hat. And being a former dealer demonstrator – with just one owner since – the rest of its spec is similarly desirable. Guards Red paint with black leather is about as cool as you can make a Cayman look, while there's also a set of 19in Sport Design alloys, PASM adaptive dampers, climate control, heated seats and an upgraded steering wheel and gearknob.

The Cayman S may be widely regarded as the more appealing drivers' car, but there's a lot to be said for the thriftier model, its howling flat-six engine relishing the thrashing you'll hand it if you want to travel quickly. It's a bit of a forgotten gem, and this gorgeously specced, below-average-mileage example is one of the best of its breed. Especially for £20k less than new. **Stephen Dobie**



Above and left: Cayman looks the part in Guards Red. Below: seats are heated; steering wheel and gearknob have been upgraded



SPECIFICATION

- » **Year** 2008
- » **Mileage** 31,080
- » **Engine** Flat-six, 2687cc
- » **Max power** 241bhp @ 6500rpm
- » **Max torque** 201lb ft @ 4600rpm
- » **0-62mph** 5.9sec (claimed)
- » **Top speed** 160mph (claimed)

SUMMARY

- » **Exterior** Guards Red with special 19in wheels looks mega, and it's in great nick
- » **Interior** Nice condition in here too
- » **Mechanicals** 2.7 Cayman isn't brutally fast, but that doesn't stop it being fun
- » **Verdict** If you aren't set on a Cayman S, this is a desirable, well-priced Porsche

ALSO FROM THIS DEALER

- Porsche 964 Carrera 4**
£22,995 1990, 53,990 miles
- » Silver, Marine Blue leather, former Porsche motor show stand car
- Porsche 996 GT3**
£39,995 2000, 40,123 miles
- » Speed Yellow, half cage, well maintained

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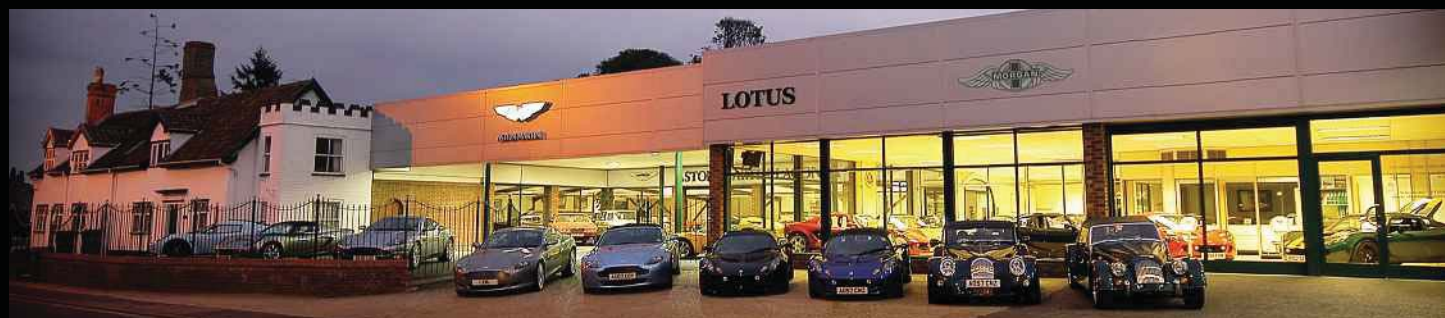
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'MATTHEW IS NOW SERIOUSLY LOOKING AT BUYING AN IMPREZA FOR REAL'

After Henry ran amok with our Fantasy Garage budget last month, I've given evo.co.uk web writer Matthew Hayward a much tighter total of just £25,000 to find a road-going rally icon, a big-engined GT and a cheap trackday toy. All the cars chosen are available at the time of writing, via **evo** Cars for Sale, the fastest car search engine around.

This month's selection really does go to show how much car you can buy for a reasonable amount of cash. Although it started out as a simple used-car fantasy, Matthew is now seriously looking at buying an Impreza in real life, after his startling realisation that such an icon is so affordable.

Let us know what you'd have chosen on the forum thread (details below). And it's not all about buying, either – don't forget you can sell your car using Cars for Sale, too!

Nick Trott
Editor



THE RALLY ICON SUBARU IMPREZA TURBO

Bargain original Scooby caught Matthew Hayward's eye

My first thought was an Integrale, but budget constraints and all the talk of Imprezas in the office this month made this 1995 Turbo 2000

too much of a bargain to miss, even if it's a bit mild compared to some of the later special editions.

Unlike many Imprezas, this official UK car is completely

original – even down to the wheels and exhaust. These early cars are shockingly cheap at the minute, and you'd be hard pushed to find one as clean as this.

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FROM THE FORUMS

We put the same challenge to the users of the **evo** forum. Duncs500 picked a 2003 Impreza WRX for £6k, a classy Maserati 3200GT at £12,995 and a £4k BMW 318Ti Compact for cheap rear-wheel-drive fun on track. Pilouil selected three Brits: an original Mini Cooper S for £12k, a V12 Jaguar XJS for £4995 and a £2500 MGF Trophy for track use (because you won't be too upset when you crash it!)

JonathanE had similar designs on an Integrale as Matthew, but selected an even rarer HF Turbo for £6995 then a Porsche 928 GTS for £15,995. £1995 on an Alfa 147 left £10 for some go-faster stripes. To see more choices, look for the 'Fantasy Garage' thread on the **evo** forums (under 'evo magazine').

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THE GT MILE-MUNCHER JAGUAR XKR

Older, higher-mileage XKR's start from about £6k, but this immaculate, fully specced-up 69,000-mile 2005 model would be my choice. It's surely the perfect tool for a fast and comfortable thrash across the continent, and although the supercharged 4.2-litre V8 will be undeniably thirsty, it does make one hell of a great noise by way of compensation.

FOR SALE

Mileage 69,000
Price £15,995
Search 'Jaguar XKR'
From Arun Ltd at
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THE TRACKDAY TOY PORSCHE 944 S2

Maybe not quite what Nick had in mind when he said 'cheap', but front-engined Porsches have become very popular track cars in recent years. Gutting out such an original 944 would be a shame, so I'd probably stick with some minor brake, suspension and tyre upgrades. Besides, it'll make a good backup when the XKR and Impreza's fuel bills have bankrupted me...

FOR SALE

Mileage 97,000
Price £6995
Search 'Porsche 944 S2'
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Magazine

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MILLTEK SPORT NISSAN 370Z PERFORMANCE EXHAUST £1525 WWW.MILLTEKSPORT.COM

Release more power from the Nissan 370Z's V6 with this new exhaust system from Milltek Sport. Made from non-magnetic stainless steel, Milltek says the system not only improves power and torque but, crucially for a road car, doesn't create any cabin resonance. There is also a choice of 115mm tailpipes, which come in titanium, black and mirror-polished stainless steel.

KW FORD FOCUS ST MK3 SPRING KIT FROM £175

WWW.KWAUTOMOTIVE.CO.UK

It may have only been launched a few months ago but spring specialist KW Automotive has already produced a lowering kit for the latest Focus ST. The set of four springs, released initially in a limited-edition KW blue, lowers the hot hatch by 20mm all round. KW says the kit improves handling without compromising ride or drivability.



ATS WINTER WHEELS FROM £114.95 EACH WWW.WOLFRACE.COM

If our winter tyre test has persuaded you to buy an extra set of rims, German wheel maker ATS has a range aimed at performance cars. All the rims are suitable for winter use, with a five-year warranty and a tough, painted finish. The range starts with the Radial (16-20in, price above), while the Streetrace starts at £139.95 (17-20 inch). The Street Rallye (above right, 17-18in) starts at £162.95 and the range-topping Racelight (above left, 18-20in) is available from £362.95.



PRESTONE WINTER RANGE FROM £2.99 WWW.PRESTONE.UK.COM

US giant Prestone has been adding to its winter range following its debut last year. It now offers a trigger de-icer pack (500ml) which works at even -40deg C. It has also tweaked its aerosol de-icer (600ml) so that it is now good down as far as -36deg C, reducing the risk of refreezing. It has launched a screenwash booster (250ml), too, which gives protection for screenwash down to -5deg C.

ASK THE EXPERT

Q There are quite a few cars with cylinder deactivation these days, but how does it work in practice? Is it simply a matter of not feeding fuel to that cylinder?
Eric Mensinger



Left: worm gears on VW's TSI petrol engine allow it to reactivate cylinders almost instantly

A The principle is that when there is a low torque demand on an engine, for instance when it is running at low rpm or cruising on a light throttle, using its full capacity can be inefficient. Tailoring the correct capacity to meet torque demand by closing down cylinders gives a better combustion process.

Cylinders are deactivated by closing inlet and exhaust valves so that the exhaust gases from the last combustion stroke stay in them. This sounds inefficient but cylinders are usually deactivated in pairs and the gases act as a spring, so while one is compressing, another is expanding, balancing the forces. There are still frictional and crankcase pumping losses from the non-firing cylinders but there is a gain in economy and lower emissions.

On VAG's 1.4-litre petrol TSI, worm gears on the camshafts above the middle two cylinders wind the cam lobes away from the valve stems in half a cam rotation. And it's hard to tell when it's running on four or two cylinders.

John Barker

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR EXPERT?
email experts@evo.co.uk

TRIED & TESTED

THULE EASY-FIT CU-9 SNOW CHAINS £260 (SET OF 2) WWW.THULE.COM

» You'll need snow chains if you're heading for the pistes this winter, and they don't come any easier to use than these from Thule. Fitting chains usually involves reaching around deep in the wheelarch in sub-zero temperatures, but these Easy-Fits really live up to their name. You simply loop the retaining ring over the tyre, then use your foot on the tensioner to tighten in seconds. As the car drives off, it tightens further and there was no flapping on our test BMW 5-series. To remove, you merely release the slider and pull the chain off. Good instructions are printed on the tough storage bag that can also be used as a kneeler. They're not cheap, but they'll be worth the money.

Kim Adams



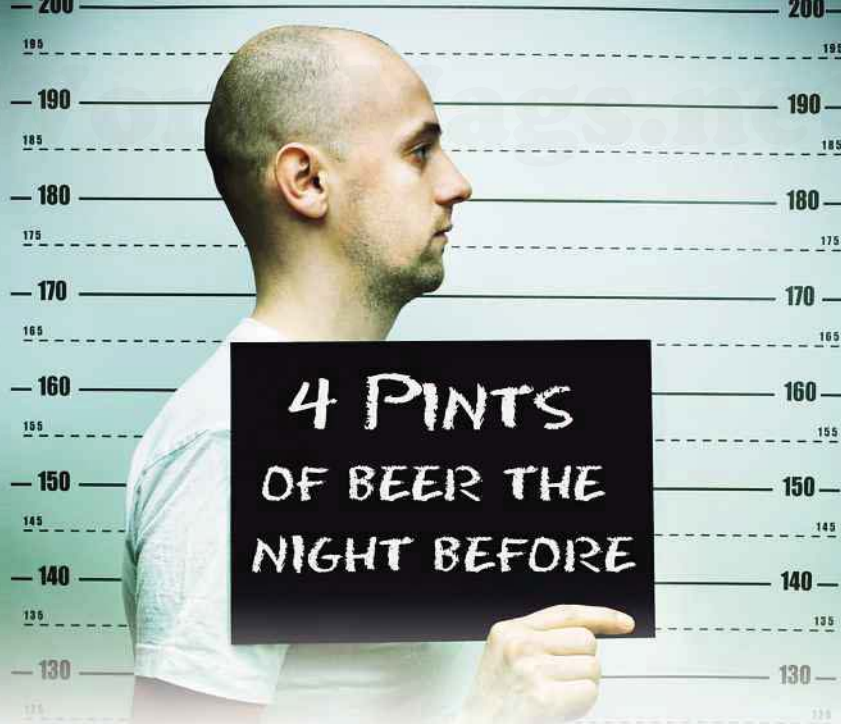
Above: foot tensioner minimises scrabbling around in the snow

TUNER PROFILE

SHAUN HOLLAMBY, MD AMD TUNING WWW.AMDTUNING.COM

» 'AmD Technik started 25 years ago and we took it over in 2006. My family businesses were Volkspares and Big Boy's Toys and it was a good way of us taking a step forward. Now we've got five ramps, a four-wheel-drive rolling road and run a Golf in the British Touring Car Championship. About half of what we do is normal servicing, but we are moving into other things; the other half is remapping and Milltek exhausts. We do go further in depth than the usual bread and butter. What I like about what we're now doing is people are coming in and going away happy. In a normal garage you pay £500 for a clutch, go away and the car drives the same. You come here and spend £500 and the car's transformed.'

HAVE A PRODUCT FOR US TO REVIEW? CONTACT TRIED&TESTED@EVO.CO.UK



If you drank 4 pints between 9pm and midnight, you may not be sober until noon the following day*. That's why almost 1 in 5 drink drive accidents happen the "morning after"**. AlcoSense quickly and accurately shows your blood alcohol level, so you know when you're clear.



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Recommended waiting time between tests: 1 hour



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Clear
Results in seconds. Alerts you when close to or over the drink drive limit.



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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.



1:18 LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR LP700-4
£167.98 WWW.PAGEANDCOOPER.COM

Not many cars could pull off wearing such an eye-catching shade of orange, and even after more than a year of full-scale production (and over 1000 units) the Aventador still looks as fresh as ever. This Autoart model features an opening luggage compartment, doors and engine cover – with accurate reproduction of the engine bay and pushrod suspension. Build quality is good, as we've come to expect from Autoart's limited-edition Signature model range.

1:18 VENTURI 300 ATLANTIQUE
€44 WWW.OTTO-MODELS.COM

A bit of a forgotten hero, the Venturi Atlantique was France's more luxurious alternative to the Lotus Esprit. Originally powered by a 210bhp 3-litre V6 engine taken from the Citroën XM, the French manufacturer later offered a 310bhp twin-turbo version, with some fairly spectacular results. As with all Otto Mobile models, the detail is exceptional for the price, and it's a fine tribute to one of France's last great independent sports car makers.



T-SHIRTS



GENERAL LEE
£20

WWW.PETROLTHREADS.CO.UK

»The Dodge Charger from *The Dukes of Hazzard* is the strongest image of American muscle for many a petrolhead this side of the pond. This tee features the machine in all its orange glory, with a backdrop of the Confederate flag that adorned the car's roof.

'LEAVE ME ALONE. I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING'
Kimi Räikkönen

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WWW.SNIFFPETROL.COM

»Kimi Räikkönen's on-air verbal mauling of his race engineer en route to winning the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix was one of the highlights of the 2012 Formula 1 season. It's also one of the longest sentences the muted Finn has ever uttered in public.

CALENDAR



GUY MARTIN 2013 CALENDAR

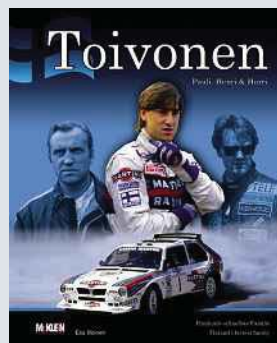
£13 WWW.REDTORPEDO.COM

»Guy Martin may be a motorbike racer, but he's also a full-on petrolhead regardless of the number of wheels attached to his vehicle, something which his 2013 calendar ably illustrates.

The mutton-chopped hero has commissioned artist John Hancox to create a series of beautiful drawings of the important mechanical things in Martin's life, including a Scania truck, a Ford Transit and a Volvo Amazon. Printed on high-quality paper, this calendar would look classy hung in an office and equally down-to-earth on a garage wall.

Given that most 'celebrity' calendars normally feature the subject posing in the usual setting of a recording studio/beach/farm (delete as applicable), this one makes for a refreshing change. Fifty pence from each sale will be donated to Spinal Research, too.

BOOK OF THE MONTH



TOIVONEN: FINLAND'S FASTEST FAMILY

£49.90 WWW.RALLYANDRACING.COM

»Published by McKlein, the World Rally Championship's top photographic agency, this huge coffee-table book celebrates the Toivonen motorsport dynasty of three men who enjoyed highly successful careers.

Pauli Toivonen, a European rally champion in the 1960s, went on to support his two sons: Harri, who enjoyed success in rallying and sportscar racing, and most famously Henri, who was well on course to become World Rally champion before his tragic death in Corsica in 1986.

The book's author, Esa Illionen, spoke to all the major players involved with the family, including team bosses, rival drivers and even Henri's widow. As is always the case with McKlein, the pages are laced with stunning photographs, and the way the story is told makes this something to treasure.



MADE IN THE 80s

£41.99

WWW.LIVE2RACE.CO.UK

»This creation is a hoodie rather than a T-shirt, and offers a somewhat subtle celebration of the Ford Sierra Cosworth, one of the premier hatchbacks of the 1980s and, for a long time, the dominant car of the British Touring Car Championship in the hands of Andy Rouse.

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HEIRS TO THE THRONE

Drivers from all three teams could succeed the retired Sébastien Loeb as WRC champ, says **Dan McCalla**



2013 CALENDAR

MONTE CARLO

» January 17-20

SWEDEN

» February 8-10

MEXICO

» March 8-10

PORTUGAL

» April 12-14

ARGENTINA

» May 3-5

GREECE

» May 31-June 2

ITALY

» June 21-23

FINLAND

» August 2-4

GERMANY

» August 23-25

AUSTRALIA

» September 13-15

FRANCE

» October 4-6

SPAIN

» October 25-27

WALES

» November 15-17

CITROËN (DS3 WRC)

For the last decade, Citroën has firmly been Loeb's team, but his two loyal deputies now have a chance to emerge from the shadows and stake a claim for team leadership.

Finn Mikko Hirvonen performed strongly in his first season for Citroën last year. Although devastatingly fast on his day, he has twice previously come up short in title deciders.

His team-mate is Spaniard Dani Sordo, who returns to the team after two years of toil with the cash-strapped Prodrive Mini project. Sordo is the fastest driver in the field on tarmac, but is yet to win a WRC rally despite 31 podium finishes, so he'll need a win early on to remove that monkey from his back.

However, there are question marks over Citroën's WRC future: parent company PSA's financial woes mean the firm may not put as much cash into rallying as before.



M-SPORT (FORD FIESTA RS WRC)

Ford pulled its official works backing of the M-Sport operation at the end of 2012, but WRC regular, Dakar Rally winner and Olympic shooting bronze medallist Nasser Al-Attayah has brought bags of cash from Qatar to keep the Blue Oval (unofficially) in the sport.

Mads Østberg will lead the team on the back of a breakthrough 2012 season, in which he took his first WRC win and beat Petter Solberg to fourth in the points, an effort that led in part to Solberg missing out on a drive for 2013.

VOLKSWAGEN (POLO R WRC)

VW has been planning its big-money entry into the WRC for almost two years, and it'll be fascinating to see how fast the Polo R WRC is after its intensive development (with help from double world champion Carlos Sainz).

There's certainly no shortage of pace on the driver front. Sébastien Ogier is many people's tip for the title (including evo's own rally sensation Henry Catchpole) after pushing Loeb hard during their time as team-mates at Citroën in 2011. He's also the only proven star in the field on both tarmac and gravel.

Jari-Matti Latvala has come on leaps and bounds to improve his relatively weak tarmac pace and joins Ogier at VW after leaving Ford, but there are still concerns over the Finn's propensity for throwing cars at the scenery. Double IRC champion Andreas Mikkelsen will also contest selected events for VW.

THE CONTENDERS



MIKKO HIRVONEN



Age 32

WRC starts 137

Rally wins 15 Podiums 61

Best finish 2nd ('08, '09, '11, '12)

+ Only Loeb could get the better of him last year

- Has struggled under pressure in the past



DANI SORDO



Age 29

WRC starts 98

Rally wins 0 Podiums 31

Best finish 3rd (2008, '09)

+ The fastest in the field on tarmac now Loeb has gone

- Failure to win a rally remains a mental millstone



MADS ØSTBERG



Age 25

WRC starts 52

Rally wins 1 Podiums 5

Best finish 4th (2012)

+ Getting quicker and quicker at every rally

- Hasn't shown consistent rally-winning pace yet



SÉBASTIEN OGIER



Age 29

WRC starts 58

Rally wins 7 Podiums 14

Best finish 3rd (2011)

+ Already as fast as Sébastien Loeb on gravel

- Brand-new Polo is an unknown quantity



JARI-MATTI LATVALA



Age 27

WRC starts 117

Rally wins 7 Podiums 32

Best finish 2nd (2010)

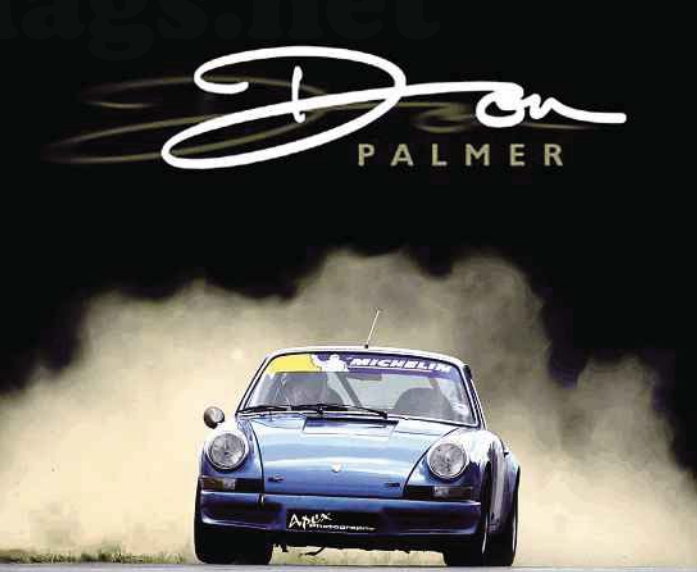
+ When everything is right, he's utterly unbeatable

- Still prone to crashes, errors and mental meltdowns

THE LEADERBOARD

| 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) | 1:21.0 | 118.2 | 160 | Dry |
| Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV | 1:21.3 | 121.1 | 134 | Dry |
| Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged | 1:21.5 | 113.6 | 119 | Dry |
| KTM X-Bow (300bhp) | 1:21.5 | 112.7 | 138 | Dry |
| Ferrari 430 Scuderia | 1:21.7 | 117.2 | 121 | Dry |
| Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (3.8) | 1:21.9 | 116.8 | 150 | Dry |
| Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4 | 1:22.5 | 119.1 | 122 | Dry |
| Brooke Double R | 1:22.5 | 113.2 | 119 | Dry |
| Lamborghini Murciélago LP640 | 1:22.9 | 116.7 | 143 | Dry |
| Porsche Carrera GT | 1:23.3 | 115.2 | 119 | Dry |
| Porsche 997.2 GT3 | 1:23.3 | 114.5 | 138 | Dry |
| Porsche 997 Turbo S | 1:23.5 | 117.5 | 146 | Dry |
| Porsche 997 GT2 | 1:23.5 | 115.1 | 119 | Dry |
| Nissan GT-R | 1:23.6 | 113.1 | 119 | Dry |
| Porsche 997 Turbo | 1:24.1 | 113.5 | 136 | Damp |
| Lotus 340R (190bhp) | 1:24.2 | 110.0 | 135 | Dry |
| Caterham Superlight R300 | 1:24.3 | 101.5 | 138 | Dry |
| Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale | 1:24.5 | 115.1 | 160 | Dry |
| Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG | 1:24.6 | 115.7 | 146 | Dry |
| Porsche Boxster Spyder | 1:24.7 | 107.7 | 167 | Dry |
| Ferrari California | 1:25.0 | 111.8 | 134 | Dry |
| KTM X-Bow | 1:25.0 | 105.0 | 123 | Dry |
| BMW E92 M3 Coupe | 1:25.1 | 109.1 | 162 | Dry |
| Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black | 1:25.2 | 108.6 | 131 | Dry |
| Audi 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 | 168 | 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.



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------|---------|--------|----------|----------|--------|-----|-------------|-------------|-----|-----|------|--|-------|
| 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 Esseeese 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 1.4 MultiAir | 144 D | £20,505 | 4/1368 | 168/5500 | 184/2500 | 1290kg | 134 | 7.8 | - | 135 | 134 | 48.7 | + Has the equivalent VW Golf covered - An Alfa for your head, not your heart | ★★★★☆ |
| Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf | 144 D | £25,510 | 4/1742 | 232/5500 | 251/1900 | 1320kg | 179 | 6.8 | - | 150 | 177 | 37.2 | + Shows signs of deep talent... - But should be more exciting | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | 150/6200 | 138/4000 | 1200kg | 127 | 8.0 | - | 129 | - | 32.1 | + Fiery engine, individual appeal - Ape-like driving position | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin Cygnet | 159 D | £30,995 | 4/1329 | 97/6000 | 92/4400 | 920kg | 107 | 11.8 | - | 106 | 116 | 56.5 | + Necessary - Evil | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi A1 1.4 TFSI S Line | | £21,270 | 4/1390 | 182/6200 | 184/2000 | 1190kg | 155 | 6.9 | - | 141 | 139 | 47.9 | + Audi's Mini rival is an accomplished thing - But not a hugely fun one | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | 332/1400 | 1425kg | 225 | 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 325i Compact | 031 D | '01-'05 | 6/2494 | 189/6000 | 181/3500 | 1480kg | 130 | 7.1 | - | 147 | - | 31.7 | + Terrific engine, chassis, price - Looks a bit geeky | ★★★★☆ |
| Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo | 126 F | £7995+ | 3/998 | 68/6000 | 68/3600 | 790kg | 87 | 14.2 | - | 98 | 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 | 152/1750 | 1155kg | 117 | 8.5 | - | 127 | 129 | 50.4 | + Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 Mk1'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 C'ship White | 126 D | '09-'10 | 4/1998 | 198/7800 | 142/5600 | 1267kg | 158 | 6.6 | - | 146 | - | 31.0 | + Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on standard car... | ★★★★☆ |
| Honda Civic Type-R | 102 R | '07-'11 | 4/1998 | 198/7800 | 142/5600 | 1267kg | 158 | 6.8 | 17.5 | 146 | 215 | 31.0 | + Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance | ★★★★☆ |
| Honda Civic Type-R | 075 R | '01-'05 | 4/1998 | 197/7400 | 145/5900 | 1204kg | 166 | 6.8 | 16.9 | 146 | - | 31.7 | + Potent and great value - Looks divide opinion, dull steering | ★★★★☆ |
| Lancia Delta Integrale | 011 F | '88-'93 | 4/1995 | 210/5750 | 220/3500 | 1350kg | 158 | 5.7 | - | 137 | - | 23.9 | + One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only | ★★★★☆ |
| Mazda 2.1 S Sport | 132 F | £12,995 | 4/1498 | 102/6000 | 101/4000 | 1030kg | 107 | 10.4 | - | 117 | 135 | 48.7 | + Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini | ★★★★☆ |
| Mazda 3 MPS | 137 R | £23,395 | 4/2261 | 256/5500 | 280/3000 | 1385kg | 188 | 6.3 | 14.5 | 155 | 224 | 29.4 | + Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-Benz A250 'by AMG' | 173 D | £28,755 | 4/1991 | 208/5500 | 258/1200 | 1445kg | 146 | 6.5 | - | 149 | 148 | 46.3 | + Mercedes builds a proper hot hatch - But denies it a manual gearbox | ★★★★☆ |
| MG ZS 180 | 035 D | '01-'05 | 6/2497 | 175/6500 | 177/4000 | 1235kg | 144 | 7.3 | - | 139 | - | 29.7 | + Well-sorted chassis, characterful engine - Image looks like a 45 | ★★★★☆ |
| Mini One | | £13,460 | 4/1598 | 97/6000 | 113/3000 | 1070kg | 92 | 10.5 | - | 116 | 127 | 52.3 | + Perfect power-to-grip ratio - HUGE speedo, slow car | ★★★★☆ |
| Mini Cooper | 167 R | £14,900 | 4/1598 | 120/6000 | 118/4250 | 1075kg | 113 | 9.1 | - | 126 | 127 | 52.3 | + Still desirable - Steering has lost a little feel | ★★★★☆ |
| Mini Cooper S | 149 F | £18,180 | 4/1598 | 181/5500 | 177/1600 | 1140kg | 161 | 7.0 | - | 142 | 136 | 48.7 | + New engine, Mini quality - Lacks old car's direct front end | ★★★★☆ |
| Mini Cooper SD | 158 D | £18,870 | 4/1995 | 141/4000 | 225/1750 | 1150kg | 125 | 8.0 | - | 134 | 114 | 65.7 | + A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative | ★★★★☆ |
| Mini John Cooper Works | 154 R | £22,455 | 4/1598 | 208/6000 | 206/2000 | 1140kg | 185 | 6.5 | - | 148 | 165 | 39.8 | + A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly | ★★★★☆ |
| Mini John Cooper Works Coupe | 164 R | £23,800 | 4/1598 | 208/6000 | 206/2000 | 1165kg | 181 | 6.3 | - | 149 | 165 | 39.8 | + The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof... | ★★★★☆ |

A NEW YOU

We believe in celebrating individuality. So if you're looking for a hatchback that's a touch less predictable and a lot more 'you', the All-New Volvo V40, now available with 3 years' servicing for £300, could be the perfect choice to start your year.

PERSONAL CONTRACT PURCHASE REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE: V40 D2 ES

| On the road price £19,995.00 | 36 monthly payments (duration 37 months) £259.00 | Customer deposit £3,306.00 | Total amount of credit £16,689.00 | Interest charges £2,352.50 | Total amount payable £22,347.50 | Mileage per annum 10,000 | Excess mileage charge 14.9p per mile | GFV (Guaranteed Future Value) £9,717.50 | Fixed rate of interest (per annum) 3.04% | Representative APR 5.9% |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|---|-------------------------|
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|---|-------------------------|

Fuel consumption for the All-New Volvo V40 range in mpg (l/100km): Urban 25.0 (11.3) – 70.6 (4.0), Extra Urban 47.1 (6.0) – 83.1 (3.4), Combined 35.8 (7.9) – 78.5 (3.6). CO₂ Emissions 185 – 94g/km.

KEY: » New entries this month. Issue no: our most recent major test of the car (R = Road test or group test with figures, D = Driven, F = Feature article). You can order back issues where still available - call 0844 844 0039. Entries in italics are no longer on sale. Prices are on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. Weight is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. Bhp/ton is the power-to-weight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. 0-60 and 0-100 figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. CO2 is the official EC figure and EC mpg is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent. * = grey import. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of entries, some errors may have crept in. Please send comments/corrections to stephend@jevo.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 John Cooper Works GP | 178 D | £28,790 | 4/1598 | 215/6000 | 206/2000 | 1140kg | 192 | 6.3 | - | 150 | 165 | 39.8 | + Sophisticated and satisfying on track - We've yet to try it on the road ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 215/7000 | 184/4600 | 1090kg | 200 | 6.5 | 14.9 | 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 Ralliart | 132 F | £14,229 | 4/1468 | 147/6000 | 155/3500 | 1060kg | 141 | 7.4 | - | 131 | 161 | 40.9 | + Price, handling, performance - Its looks are a little odd ★★★★★ |
| Nissan Sunny GTi-R | | 92'-93 | 4/1998 | 220/6400 | 197/4800 | 1269kg | 176 | 6.1 | - | 134 | - | 25.1 | + Nissan's Escort Cossie - Make sure it's a good one ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2) | | 97'-98 | 4/1587 | 103/6200 | 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 caning to extract full potential ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot 106 GTi 16v | 034 R | 97'-04 | 4/1587 | 120/6600 | 107/5200 | 950kg | 128 | 7.4 | 22.2 | 127 | - | 34.9 | + Fine handling supermini - Looks its age ★★★★★ |
| 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 1.6 | 020 R | 93'-01 | 4/1998 | 167/6500 | 142/5500 | 1215kg | 139 | 7.2 | 20.1 | 140 | - | 30.1 | + One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot 306 Rallye | 095 F | 98'-99 | 4/1998 | 167/6500 | 142/5500 | 1199kg | 141 | 6.9 | 19.2 | 137 | - | 30.1 | + Essentially a GTi-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot 309 GTi | | 89'-92 | 4/1905 | 130/6000 | 119/4750 | 985kg | 134 | 8.3 | - | 124 | - | 28.2 | + 205 GTi in drag, cheap - Who wants a cheap drag queen? ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Twingo 133 | 175 R | £13,565 | 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 | + Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Most have been thrashed ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup | 154 R | £17,120 | 4/1998 | 197/7100 | 159/5400 | 1204kg | 166 | 6.6 | 16.7 | 141 | 190 | 34.5 | + The hot Clio is back to its best - Why the long face? ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup | 115 R | 07'-09 | 4/1998 | 194/7250 | 158/5550 | 1240kg | 161 | 6.9 | - | 134 | - | 33.6 | + Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Clio 182 | 066 R | 04'-06 | 4/1998 | 180/6500 | 148/5250 | 1110kg | 165 | 6.6 | 17.5 | 139 | - | 34.9 | + Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup | 074 D | 04'-06 | 4/1998 | 180/6500 | 148/5250 | 1090kg | 168 | 6.5 | - | 139 | - | 34.9 | + Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Clio Trophy | 095 F | 05'-06 | 4/1998 | 180/6500 | 148/5250 | 1090kg | 168 | 6.6 | 17.3 | 140 | - | 34.9 | + Most fun you can have on three wheels - Just 500 were built ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup | 048 R | 02'-04 | 4/1998 | 170/6250 | 147/5400 | 1011kg | 171 | 6.5 | 17.7 | 138 | - | - | + Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Clio V6 255 | 057 R | 03'-05 | 6/2946 | 255/7750 | 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 D | £21,690 | 4/1998 | 178/5500 | 222/2250 | 1320kg | 137 | 7.1 | - | 139 | 178 | 36.7 | + Rides & steers well - Not much cheaper than car below, lacks its sparkle ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup | 173 R | £24,825 | 4/1998 | 261/5500 | 265/3000 | 1387kg | 191 | 6.0 | - | 158 | 190 | 34.4 | + More power than before, chassis still superb - Not a lot ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy | 170 R | £27,820 | 4/1998 | 261/5500 | 265/3000 | 1387kg | 191 | 6.0 | - | 158 | 190 | 34.4 | + Hot Mégane gets more power and fwd Ring record - A pricey upgrade ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup | 139 R | 09'-12 | 4/1998 | 247/5500 | 251/3000 | 1357kg | 181 | 6.1 | 14.6 | 156 | 190 | 34.4 | + Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Mégane R26R | 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 R26R - FI Team stickers in dubious taste ★★★★★ |
| R'sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup | 119 R | 07'-09 | 4/1995 | 173/3750 | 265/2000 | 1470kg | 119 | 8.3 | 23.5 | 137 | - | 43.5 | + A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Mégane 225 Cup | 087 F | 05'-09 | 4/1998 | 222/5500 | 221/3000 | 1345kg | 167 | 6.5 | - | 147 | - | 32.1 | + Good value and plentiful - You gotta like big backseats ★★★★★ |
| Renaultsport Mégane Trophy | 087 F | 05 | 4/1998 | 222/5500 | 221/3000 | 1355kg | 166 | 6.7 | 17.3 | 147 | - | 32.1 | + Mega grip and traction - Steering needs a touch more feel ★★★★★ |
| SEAT Ibiza FR 2.0 TDI | 144 F | £16,340 | 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 | £17,905 | 4/1390 | 178/6200 | 184/2000 | 1172kg | 154 | 6.9 | - | 140 | 148 | 44.1 | + Funky (especially in Bocanegra trim), economical - The FR's a better drive ★★★★★ |
| SEAT Leon FR+ | 163 D | £21,940 | 4/1984 | 208/5300 | 206/1700 | 1334kg | 158 | 7.2 | - | 145 | 170 | 38.7 | + As quick as a Golf GTi 5dr but £4K cheaper - Misses the VW's completeness ★★★★★ |
| SEAT Leon Cupra R | 139 R | £25,995 | 4/1984 | 261/6000 | 258/2500 | 1375kg | 193 | 6.1 | 14.0 | 155 | 190 | 34.9 | + Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches ★★★★★ |
| 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 | + Terific value - Lacks sparkle of very best hatches ★★★★★ |
| SEAT Leon Cupra R 225 | 067 R | 03'-06 | 4/1781 | 222/5900 | 206/2200 | 1376kg | 164 | 6.9 | - | 150 | - | 32.1 | + Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some ★★★★★ |
| Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2) | 146 D | £16,915 | 4/1390 | 178/6200 | 184/2000 | 1218kg | 148 | 7.3 | - | 139 | 148 | 45.6 | + Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering ★★★★★ |
| Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1) | 077 F | 04'-07 | 4/1896 | 180/4000 | 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 | £20,330 | 4/1998 | 197/5100 | 206/1700 | 1395kg | 143 | 7.3 | - | 149 | 175 | 37.7 | + Drives like a GTi but costs much less - Green brake callipers? ★★★★★ |
| Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk1) | 032 D | 01'-05 | 4/1781 | 178/5500 | 173/1950 | 1354kg | 135 | 7.9 | - | 146 | - | 35.3 | + Remarkably fun and capable - Cabin quality ★★★★★ |
| Smart Fortwo Brabus | 110 D | £15,000 | 3/999 | 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 | £49,995 | 4/2457 | 395/5750 | 400/3950 | 1505kg | 267 | 4.6 | 10.7 | 155 | - | - | + Cosworth kudos, Fastest hatch we've tested - Pricey, Lifless 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 | £13,499 | 4/1586 | 134/6900 | 118/4400 | 1045kg | 130 | 8.7 | - | 121 | 147 | 44.1 | + The Swift's still a great pocket rocket - But it's lost a little adjustability ★★★★★ |
| Suzuki Swift Sport | 132 R | 05'-11 | 4/1586 | 123/6800 | 109/4800 | 1030kg | 121 | 8.9 | - | 124 | 165 | 39.8 | + Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback ★★★★★ |
| Vauxhall Corsa VXR | 154 R | £18,900 | 4/1598 | 189/5850 | 192/1980 | 1166kg | 165 | 6.8 | - | 140 | 172 | 38.7 | + Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals ★★★★★ |
| Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring | 164 R | £22,295 | 4/1598 | 202/5750 | 206/2250 | 1166kg | 176 | 6.5 | - | 143 | 178 | - | + VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But it's over £3K more expensive ★★★★★ |
| Vauxhall Astra GTC 1.6T SRi | 164 D | £20,215 | 4/1598 | 178/5500 | 169/2200 | 1393kg | 130 | 7.8 | - | 137 | 168 | 39.2 | + Three-door Scirocco rival looks good, drives well - Pre-VXR petrol engines lack zing ★★★★★ |
| Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2) | 173 R | £26,995 | 4/1998 | 276/5500 | 295/2500 | 1475kg | 190 | 5.9 | - | 155 | 189 | - | + Better than the car it replaces. Loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision ★★★★★ |
| Vauxhall Astra VXR | 102 R | 06'-11 | 4/1998 | 237/5600 | 236/2400 | 1393kg | 173 | 6.7 | 16.7 | 152 | 221 | 30.7 | + Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision ★★★★★ |
| VW Up/SEAT Mi/Skoda Citigo | 171 F | £7630+ | 3/999 | 59/5000 | 70/3000 | 854kg | 70 | 14.1 | - | 99 | 105 | 62.8 | + Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - but predictably slow ★★★★★ |
| VW Lupo GTi 6-sp | 036 D | 00'-05 | 4/1598 | 125/6500 | 112/3000 | 978kg | 128 | 8.3 | - | 127 | - | 38.2 | + Looks, performance, snappy gearshift - Lacks fizz of 106 GTi ★★★★★ |
| VW Polo GTi | 154 R | £18,935 | 4/1390 | 178/6200 | 184/2000 | 1184kg | 153 | 6.8 | - | 142 | 139 | 47.9 | + Modern-day mki Golf GTi gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland ★★★★★ |
| VW Golf GTD (Mk6) | 133 D | £24,650 | 4/1968 | 168/4200 | 258/1750 | 1329kg | 128 | 8.1 | - | 138 | 134 | 55.4 | + Punchy performance and good economy - Not as much fun as the GTi ★★★★★ |
| VW Golf GTi (Mk6) | 172 R | £25,650 | 4/1984 | 207/5300 | 207/1700 | 1318kg | 160 | 6.4 | 16.5 | 148 | 170 | 38.7 | + Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more ★★★★★ |
| VW Golf GTi Edition 35 | 168 F | £27,560 | 4/1984 | 232/5500 | 221/2200 | 1318kg | 179 | 6.5 | - | 154 | 189 | 34.9 | + The pick of the Golf hot hatch range - Nearly £28K before a single option... ★★★★★ |
| VW Golf R (Mk6) | 140 D | £31,435 | 4/1984 | 266/6000 | 258/2500 | 1521kg | 178 | 5.5 | - | 155 | 199 | 33.2 | + Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional ★★★★★ |
| VW Golf GTi (Mk5) | 102 R | 05'-09 | 4/1984 | 197/5100 | 207/1800 | 1336kg | 150 | 6.7 | 17.9 | 145 | - | - | + Character and ability: the original GTi is back - Lacking firepower? ★★★★★ |
| VW Golf R32 (Mk5) | 087 F | 06'-09 | 6/3189 | 246/6300 | 236/2500 | 1510kg | 165 | 5.8 | 15.2 | 155 | - | 26.4 | + Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTi ★★★★★ |
| VW Golf R32 (Mk4) | 053 F | 02'-04 | 6/3189 | 237/6250 | 236/2800 | 1477kg | 163 | 6.4 | 16.3 | 154 | - | 24.6 | + Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome ★★★★★ |
| VW Golf GTi 16v (Mk2) | | 88'-92 | 4/1781 | 139/6100 | 124/4600 | 1111kg | 127 | 8.0 | - | 124 | - | 28.8 | + Arguably the best all-round Golf GTi ever - We'd be splitting hairs ★★★★★ |
| VW Golf GTi (Mk1) | 095 F | 82'-84 | 4/1781 | 112/5800 | 109/3500 | 840kg | 135 | 8.1 | - | 112 | - | 36.0 | + The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one ★★★★★ |
| Volvo C30 T5 R-Design | 122 R | £22,125 | 5/2521 | 227/5000 | 236/1500 | 1347kg | 165 | 6.6 | 16.9 | 149 | 203 | 32.5 | + Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto ★★★★★ |



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AUDI Q7 V12 TDI, ISSUE 124

evoKnowledge

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.



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----------|---------|----------|----------|--------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|------|--|-------|
| 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 | 1700kg | 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 RS6 Avant | 116 F | '08-'10 | 10/4991 | 572/6250 | 479/1500 | 2025kg | 287 | 4.3 | 9.7 | 155 | 333 | 20.2 | + The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS6 Avant | 052 R | '02-'04 | 8/4172 | 444/5700 | 413/1950 | 1865kg | 242 | 4.8 | 11.6 | 155 | - | 19.3 | + The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi S7 | 171 D | £61,695 | 8/3993 | 414/5000 | 406/1400 | 1945kg | 216 | 4.6 | - | 155 | 225 | - | + Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs £8000 more | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi S8 | 164 D | £77,900 | 8/3993 | 513/5800 | 479/1700 | 1975kg | 264 | 4.1 | - | 155 | 237 | 27.7 | + Quicker and much more economical than before - But still overwhelming to drive | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi S8 | 088 D | '06-'10 | 10/5204 | 444/7000 | 398/3500 | 1940kg | 232 | 5.1 | - | 155 | - | 21.4 | + V10 engine, ceramic brakes, fantastic gearbox - Light steering | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi Q7 V12 TDI | 124 D | £100,370 | 12/5934 | 493/3750 | 731/1750 | 2635kg | 190 | 5.1 | 12.2 | 155 | 298 | 25.0 | + Undeniably quick, relatively economical - A tad ostentatious | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Continental 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 Continental Flying Spur Speed | 141 F | £150,900 | 12/5998 | 600/6000 | 553/1750 | 2440kg | 250 | 4.6 | - | 200 | 396 | 16.6 | + 600bhp, surprisingly fun handling - Could look a bit more like it goes | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Mulsanne | 178 F | £225,900 | 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 3 Series 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 | £73,040 | 8/4395 | 552/5750 | 501/1500 | 1870kg | 300 | 4.3 | - | 190 | 232 | 28.5 | + Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M5 Touring (E60) | 105 F | '07-'10 | 10/4999 | 500/7750 | 383/6100 | 1780kg | 285 | 4.8 | - | 155 | - | 19.3 | + Brilliant at ten tenths - Feels slightly clumsy when pottering | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M5 (E60) | 129 F | '04-'10 | 10/4999 | 500/7750 | 384/6100 | 1755kg | 289 | 4.7 | 10.4 | 155 | - | 19.6 | + Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 handfulls in the wet | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW X5 xDrive 40d SE | | £47,440 | 6/2993 | 302/4400 | 442/1500 | 2110kg | 145 | 6.6 | - | 147 | 198 | 57.7 | + 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 | 1965kg | 220 | 4.9 | - | 168 | 337 | 20.2 | + Looks, supple ride, composed chassis - Too much understeer, slow 'box | ★★★★☆ |
| Chrysler 300C S7 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 | 265/5200 | 1765kg | 182 | 6.2 | - | 155 | 235 | 27.7 | + Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals | ★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Diesel S | 145 D | £41,855 | 6/2993 | 271/4000 | 443/2000 | 1695kg | 162 | 5.9 | - | 155 | 159 | 47.1 | + Sweet handling plus diesel economy - But we'd still have the R | ★★★★☆ |

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| | Issue no. | Price | Engine cyl/cc | Bhp/rpm | Lb ft/rpm | Weight | Bhp/ton | 0-60mph | 0-100mph | Max mph | CO2 g/km | EC mpg | evo rating |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------|------------------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|--------|---|
| Jaguar XF Sportbrake 3.0 V6 Diesel S | 177 D | £44,355 | 6/2993 | 271/4000 | 443/2000 | 1695kg | 153 | 6.1 | - | 155 | 163 | 46.3 | + Looks and drives better than the saloon - Pity there's no Sportbrake R...★★★★☆ |
| » Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Supercharged | 178 D | £47,550 | 6/2995 | 335/6500 | 332/3500 | 1695kg | 201 | 5.7 | - | 155 | 224 | 29.4 | + Fast, comfortable, refined - Bland engine, poor economy compared to diesel V6★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XFR | 165 R | £65,380 | 8/5000 | 503/6000 | 461/2500 | 1800kg | 284 | 4.8 | 10.2 | 155 | 270 | 24.4 | + Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is★★★★☆ |
| 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 | £56,260 | 6/2993 | 271/4000 | 442/2000 | 1700kg | 162 | 6.0 | - | 155 | 167 | 46.3 | + A great Jaguar - But not as great as the Supersport...★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XJ Supersport | 163 F | £91,735 | 8/5000 | 503/6000 | 461/2500 | 1795kg | 285 | 4.7 | - | 155 | 270 | 24.4 | + 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 | 387/3000 | 1775kg | 211 | 5.6 | 13.5 | 155 | - | 21.9 | + Matchless grace, extraordinary pace - Not much space★★★★☆ |
| Lamborghini LM002 | 016 F | 86'-89 | 12/5167 | 450/6800 | 369/5200 | 2700kg | 169 | - | - | 130 | - | - | + Craziest 4x4 ever, Countach V12 - Craziest 4x4 ever...★★★★☆ |
| Lexus IS-F | 151 R | £58,350 | 8/4969 | 417/6600 | 372/5200 | 1714kg | 247 | 4.7 | 10.9 | 173 | 270 | 24.4 | + Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too★★★★☆ |
| 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 Quattroporte Sport GTS | 113 D | 08'-08 | 8/4244 | 396/7000 | 339/4250 | 1930kg | 208 | 5.5 | - | 167 | - | - | + Best Quattroporte chassis so far - More power wouldn't go amiss★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5 16 | 079-92 | 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 | - | - | + Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG | 052 R | 03'-06 | 8/5439 | 476/6100 | 516/2650 | 1760kg | 271 | 4.8 | 10.2 | 155 | - | 21.9 | + M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG | 98'-02 | 8/5439 | 354/5500 | 390/3000 | 1642kg | 219 | 5.5 | - | - | 155 | - | 23.0 | + Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG | 148 D | £112,890 | 8/5461 | 536/5500 | 590/2000 | 2155kg | 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 | 178 F | £81,800 | 8/5461 | 518/5250 | 516/1700 | 1870kg | 281 | 4.4 | - | 155 | 231 | 28.5 | + Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston★★★★☆ |
| 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 - E85K 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-340 | 088 F | 05'-07 | 4/1997 | 345/6800 | 321/4600 | 1400kg | 250 | 4.3 | 10.9 | 157 | - | - | + Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360 | 103 F | 05'-07 | 4/1997 | 366/6887 | 363/3200 | 1400kg | 266 | 3.9 | - | 157 | - | - | + Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo VIII | 055 F | 03'-04 | 4/1997 | 276/6500 | 289/3500 | 1410kg | 199 | 5.1 | - | 157 | - | - | + The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo VII MR FQ-300 | 057 R | 03'-05 | 4/1997 | 305/6800 | 289/3500 | 1400kg | 221 | 4.8 | - | 157 | - | 20.5 | + Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo VII | 031 F | 02'-03 | 4/1997 | 276/6500 | 282/3500 | 1360kg | 206 | 5.0 | 13.0 | 140 | - | 20.4 | + Terrific all-rounder - You tell us★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint | 041 D | 02'-03 | 4/1997 | 320/6500 | 327/6200 | 1260kg | 258 | 4.4 | - | 150 | - | - | + Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo VI RS Sprint | 011 F | 99 | 4/1997 | 330/6500 | 323/3000 | 1255kg | 267 | 4.5 | 11.8 | 145 | - | - | + Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo - A little uncompromising★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo VI FQ-340 | 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 GTS (Mk2) | 173 D | £67,147 | 8/4806 | 414/6500 | 380/3500 | 2085kg | 202 | 5.6 | - | 162 | 251 | 26.4 | + Dynamically the best SUV on sale - At two tons, it's still no sports car★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Cayenne Turbo (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 (Mk1) | 104 F | 06'-10 | 8/4806 | 494/6000 | 516/2250 | 2355kg | 213 | 4.7 | 11.4 | 171 | - | 19.0 | + Appears to defy physics - Still cracks mirrors at 50 paces★★★★☆ |
| Range Rover Evoque Si4 | 160 D | £39,995 | 4/1999 | 237/6000 | 251/1900 | 1670kg | 144 | 7.0 | - | 135 | 199 | - | + Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only★★★★☆ |
| Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged | 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 SDV8 | 177 F | £78,095 | 8/4367 | 334/3500 | 517/1750 | 2360kg | 144 | 6.5 | - | 140 | 229 | 32.5 | + Lighter, more capable, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert★★★★☆ |
| Range Rover V8 Supercharged | 134 D | 09'-12 | 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 E8K 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 WR | 067 R | 04'-05 | 4/1994 | 316/5800 | 310/4000 | 1470kg | 218 | 5.3 | 13.1 | 155 | - | - | + Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 - Spec C is better★★★★☆ |
| Subaru Impreza Turbo | 011 F | 98'-00 | 4/1994 | 215/5600 | 214/4000 | 1235kg | 177 | 5.4 | 14.6 | 144 | - | 27.2 | + Destined for classic status - Thirsty★★★★☆ |
| Subaru Impreza Pi | 067 F | 00'-01 | 4/1994 | 276/6000 | 260/4000 | 1283kg | 219 | 4.9 | 13.3 | 150 | - | 25.0 | + Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this★★★★☆ |
| Subaru Impreza RBS (PPP) | 011 F | 99 | 4/1994 | 237/6000 | 258/3500 | 1235kg | 195 | 5.0 | 14.1 | 143 | - | - | + Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers★★★★☆ |
| Subaru Impreza 22B | 011 F | 98'-99 | 4/2212 | 276/6000 | 265/3200 | 1270kg | 220 | 5.0 | 13.1 | 150 | - | - | + On paper, the ultimate - On the road, too uncompromising★★★★☆ |
| Subaru Forester STI * | 087 F | 05'-08 | 4/2457 | 320/5800 | 330/3500 | - | - | 4.8 | - | 150+ | - | - | + Undercover fun, gutsy engine - Lacks ultimate edge of an Impreza★★★★☆ |
| Vauxhall Insignia VXR | 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 | 326/5500 | 262/1800 | 1580kg | 177 | 6.1 | - | 161 | - | 27.4 | + Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride★★★★☆ |
| Vauxhall VXR8 GTS | 160 F | £49,550 | 8/6162 | 425/6000 | 406/4600 | 1831kg | 236 | 4.9 | - | 155 | 320 | 20.9 | + Oversteery and characterful. Available as a pick-up tool - Very nearly M3 saloon money★★★★☆ |
| Vauxhall VXR8 Supercharged | 113 R | 07'-11 | 8/5967 | 533/6000 | 568/4400 | 1831kg | 296 | 4.5 | - | 180 | - | - | + The Lotus Carlton reinvented - Doesn't have polish of best Europeans★★★★☆ |
| Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S | 148 F | 09 | 8/6162 | 564/6000 | 527/4000 | 1866kg | 307 | 4.6 | 10.7 | 155 | - | - | + A tauter VXR8. Bunkers pace, brilliant noise - Gearchange still rubbish★★★★☆ |
| VW Phaeton W12 | 046 D | 02'-11 | 12/5998 | 444/6050 | 413/2750 | 2240kg | 201 | 6.1 | - | 155 | 348 | 19.5 | + Techno masterpiece that works - Seventy-eight grand for a VW!★★★★☆ |

evo POCKET BUYING GUIDE

BMW M3 (E46)

WHY WOULD YOU?

It's an iconic sports coupe with the coveted 50/50 weight distribution and a 338bhp straight-six. It feels just at home on the track as it does on the road, so for around £10K, it's not so much a question of 'why?' but 'when?'

WHAT TO PAY

Prices start at around £7000. Expect a well-maintained example in good condition to cost £10,000 or more.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Be cautious with lower-priced M3s -

cheaper cars may mean the service history is lacking. Pre-June '03 engines were prone to crankshaft big-end bearing failure; oil supply upgrades should have been sorted under warranty. The 19in alloys are easily kerbed and costly to repair. (Full guide, evo 174)

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evoKnowledge

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.



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|----------|---------|------------|----------|--------|------|-----|------|------|-----|------|--|-------|
| AC MKVI GT | 135 D | £93,500 | 8/6162 | 437/4800 | 431/4800 | 1000kg | 444 | 3.9 | - | 162 | - | - | + Cobra charm with a modern twist - It's priced against some strong rivals | ★★★★☆ |
| Alfa Romeo 8C Spider | 161 R | 09-11 | 8/4691 | 450/7000 | 354/4750 | 1675kg | 273 | 4.5 | - | 181 | - | - | + Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Good luck trying to buy one | ★★★★☆ |
| Ariel Atom 3 245 | 113 D | £29,954 | 4/1998 | 245/8200 | 155/5200 | 500kg | 498 | 3.2 | - | 150 | - | 33.0 | + The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty... | ★★★★☆ |
| Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged | 138 F | £42,000 | 4/1998 | 300/8200 | 162/7200 | 550kg | 554 | 3.3 | - | 155 | - | - | + It's brilliant - It's mental | ★★★★☆ |
| Ariel Atom Mugen | 165 F | £55,000 | 4/1998 | 270/8300 | 188/6000 | 550kg | 499 | 2.9 | - | 150 | - | - | + Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten being made | ★★★★☆ |
| Ariel Atom V8 500 | 165 F | £146,699 | 8/3000 | 475/10,500 | 284/7750 | 550kg | 877 | 3.0 | 5.8 | 170 | - | - | + An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150K for an Atom | ★★★★☆ |
| Ariel Atom 2 300 Supercharged | 123 R | 03-09 | 4/1998 | 300/8200 | 162/7200 | 550kg | 554 | 3.3 | - | 155 | - | 28.0 | + Makes your face ripple... like Clarkson's | ★★★★☆ |
| Ariel Atom 1 | 015 F | 99-03 | 4/1796 | 125/5500 | 122/3000 | 496kg | 256 | 5.6 | 18.0 | 115 | - | - | + Amazing styling, huge fun - As practical as a chocolate teapot | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster | 130 F | £98,995 | 8/4735 | 420/7000 | 346/5750 | 1710kg | 250 | 4.7 | - | 180 | 328 | 20.4 | + Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Lacks real teeth | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster | 161 R | £110,700 | 8/4735 | 430/7300 | 361/5000 | 1690kg | 258 | 4.6 | - | 189 | 299 | 21.9 | + Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin 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 TTS Roadster | 122 D | £37,715 | 4/1984 | 268/6000 | 258/2500 | 1455kg | 187 | 5.6 | - | 155 | 189 | 34.9 | + Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question; not cheap either | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi TT RS Roadster | 133 D | £47,820 | 5/2480 | 335/5400 | 332/1600 | 1510kg | 225 | 4.7 | - | 155 | 212 | 31.0 | + Terrific engine... - is the best thing about it | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi TT Roadster (Mk1) 225bhp | 016 R | 00-06 | 4/1781 | 225/5900 | 206/2200 | 1395kg | 164 | 6.9 | 20.0 | 150 | - | 30.4 | + Winner on the King's Road - Trails Boxster on the open road | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi S5 Cabriolet | 130 D | £45,895 | 6/2995 | 328/5500 | 325/2900 | 1875kg | 178 | 5.6 | - | 155 | 199 | 33.2 | + Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS4 Cabriolet | 094 D | 06-08 | 8/4163 | 414/7800 | 317/5500 | 1845kg | 228 | 4.9 | - | 155 | - | - | + That engine - Wibble wobble, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi R8 Spyder V8 | 161 R | £96,595 | 8/4163 | 424/7900 | 317/6000 | 1660kg | 259 | 4.8 | - | 186 | 337 | 19.6 | + Dynamically outstanding, sounds terrific - V10 sounds even better | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi R8 Spyder V10 | 152 F | £117,710 | 10/5204 | 518/8000 | 391/6500 | 1720kg | 306 | 4.1 | - | 194 | 349 | 19.0 | + Looks and sounds sensational - It's the most expensive Audi ever | ★★★★☆ |
| BAC Mono | 176 R | £89,940 | 4/2261 | 280/7700 | 206/6000 | 540kg | 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 | 12/5938 | 621/6000 | 590/2000 | 2395kg | 263 | 3.9 | - | 202 | 388 | 17.3 | + Fast, capable and refined - Coupe does the Supersports thing better | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Continental GTC Speed | 131 D | 09-11 | 12/5938 | 600/6000 | 590/1750 | 2485kg | 245 | 4.5 | - | 200 | 396 | 17.0 | + A great convertible just got better - Optional carbon brakes a necessity | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Azure T | 140 D | 09-11 | 8/6161 | 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 | 06-09 | 6/2996 | 265/6600 | 232/2750 | 1310kg | 205 | 5.7 | - | 155 | - | 32.9 | + Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW Z4 M Roadster | 091 R | 06-09 | 6/3246 | 338/7900 | 269/4900 | 1410kg | 244 | 4.8 | - | 155 | - | 23.3 | + Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M Roadster | 002 F | 98-02 | 6/3246 | 325/7400 | 258/4900 | 1375kg | 240 | 5.3 | - | 155 | - | 25.4 | + Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW 335i SE Convertible | 102 D | £41,710 | 6/2979 | 302/5800 | 295/1300 | 1735kg | 177 | 5.8 | - | 155 | 205 | 32.1 | + Looks good, great to drive, fantastic engine - A bit shaky | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 Convertible (E93) | 119 D | £58,785 | 8/3999 | 414/8300 | 295/3900 | 1810kg | 232 | 5.3 | - | 155 | 297 | 22.2 | + M DCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 Convertible | 035 D | 01-06 | 6/3246 | 338/7900 | 269/5000 | 1655kg | 207 | 5.3 | - | 155 | - | 23.3 | + That engine - Gets the wobbles on British B-roads | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M6 Convertible | 098 D | 06-10 | 10/4999 | 500/7750 | 384/6100 | 1930kg | 264 | 4.8 | - | 155 | 352 | 19.2 | + Composure, grip, power, comfort - Steering lacks feel at low speed | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW Z8 | 026 R | 00-03 | 8/4941 | 400/6600 | 369/3800 | 1585kg | 256 | 4.8 | 11.1 | 155 | - | 14.4 | + M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive | ★★★★☆ |
| Brooke 260 Double R | 094 F | £34,995 | 4/2261 | 260/7500 | 200/6100 | 550kg | 480 | 3.9 | - | 155+ | - | - | + Fast, dynamic, well built - No roof, looks not for everyone | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham 7 Classic | 068 F | £16,650 | 4/1397 | 105/6000 | 95/5000 | 540kg | 198 | 6.5 | - | 110 | - | - | + The Caterham experience starts here - It's pretty raw | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham 7 Roadsport 125 | 105 F | £21,650 | 4/1595 | 125/6100 | 120/5350 | 539kg | 235 | 5.9 | - | 112 | - | - | + New Ford-engined model is just great - Bigger drivers need SV model | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham 7 Supersport | 165 F | £22,995 | 4/1595 | 140/6900 | 120/5790 | 520kg | 273 | 4.9 | - | 120 | - | - | + One of the best Caterhams is less than £20K... - ...if you build it yourself | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham 7 Roadsport SV 175 | 140 D | £28,850 | 4/1999 | 175/7000 | 139/6000 | 555kg | 321 | 4.8 | - | 138 | - | - | + The Caterham for everyday use, R300 engine - Loses intensity of R300 | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham 7 Superlight R300 | 150 F | £30,000 | 4/1999 | 175/7000 | 139/6000 | 515kg | 345 | 4.5 | - | 140 | - | - | + Possibly all the Caterham you need - Factory-built cars top £30K | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham 7 Superlight R400 | 105 F | £34,300 | 4/1999 | 210/7800 | 152/5750 | 525kg | 406 | 3.8 | - | 140 | - | - | + R400 reborn with (lots of) Ford power - Slightly hesitant low-rev pick-up | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham 7 Superlight R500 | 123 R | £41,000 | 4/1999 | 263/8500 | 177/7200 | 506kg | 528 | 2.9 | - | 150 | - | - | + Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham CSR 260 Superlight | 094 F | £43,800 | 4/2261 | 256/7500 | 200/6200 | 565kg | 460 | 3.8 | - | 155 | - | - | + Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham Levante | 131 F | £115,000 | 8/2398 | 550/10000 | 300/8500 | 520kg | 1074 | 4.8 | 8.2 | 150 | - | - | + Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham 7 R300 | 068 F | 02-06 | 4/1796 | 160/7000 | 130/5000 | 500kg | 325 | 4.7 | - | 130 | - | - | + Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham 7 R400 | 068 F | 03-06 | 4/1796 | 200/7500 | 150/5750 | 490kg | 415 | 3.9 | - | 140 | - | - | + Race-car with a number plate - Your missus will leave you | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham 7 R500 | 068 F | 99-06 | 4/1796 | 230/8600 | 155/7200 | 460kg | 510 | 3.6 | 8.8 | 146 | - | - | + Fine for the Nürburgring - Hard work around the Bullring | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham 7 R500 Evolution | 069 F | 04 | 4/1998 | 250/8000 | 190/4000 | 460kg | 552 | 3.9 | 8.1 | 150 | - | - | + Maddier than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad | ★★★★☆ |
| Chevrolet Corvette C6 | 083 D | £56,186 | 8/6162 | 430/5900 | 424/4600 | 1460kg | 300 | 4.3 | - | 186 | 316 | 21.2 | + Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics | ★★★★☆ |
| Ferrari California | 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 | 99-09 | 4/1997 | 237/8300 | 153/7500 | 1260kg | 191 | 6.2 | - | 150 | - | 28.2 | + An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better | ★★★★☆ |
| IFR Aspid | 126 D | £130,000 | 4/1997 | 398/8600 | 240/7800 | 740kg | 451 | 2.8 | - | 155 | - | - | + Imagine a Caterham crossed with a Zonda - It's a bit pricey | ★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XK 5.0 | | £71,430 | 8/5000 | 380/6500 | 380/3500 | 1621kg | 238 | 5.3 | - | 155 | 264 | 25.2 | + Basic XK gets extra power... - ...but loses some of its GT refinement | ★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XKR | 130 F | £84,930 | 8/5000 | 503/6000 | 461/2500 | 1725kg | 296 | 4.6 | - | 155 | 292 | 23.0 | + Gains Jag's fantastic new V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes | ★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XKR-S | 167 F | £103,430 | 8/5000 | 542/6500 | 502/2500 | 1725kg | 319 | 4.2 | - | 186 | 292 | 23.0 | + Loud and mad, most exciting Jag in years - It's also the most expensive in years | ★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XK | 089 F | 06-09 | 8/4196 | 294/6000 | 303/4100 | 1635kg | 183 | 6.6 | - | 155 | - | 25.0 | + Every bit as good as the XK coupe - 294bhp still only just enough | ★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XKR | | 06-09 | 8/4196 | 414/6250 | 413/4000 | 1705kg | 247 | 5.0 | - | 155 | - | - | + First Jag sports car for years - Overweight detailing | ★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XKR | 004 F | 97-06 | 8/3996 | 370/6150 | 387/3600 | 1750kg | 215 | 5.4 | 12.8 | 155 | - | 15.6 | + Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to toupees everywhere | ★★★★☆ |
| KTM X-Bow | 138 F | £49,482 | 4/1984 | 237/5500 | 229/2000 | 790kg | 305 | 3.8 | - | 137 | - | - | + Mad looks, real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than we'd hoped | ★★★★☆ |
| KTM X-Bow R | 165 F | £64,850 | 4/1984 | 295/5500 | 295/3300 | 790kg | 379 | 3.6 | - | 144 | - | - | + Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper | ★★★★☆ |
| Light Car Company Rocket | 104 F | £46,000 | 4/1002 | 143/10500 | 77/8500 | 406kg | 358 | 4.4 | - | 145 | - | 35.0 | + Single-seater style, speed - Old Formula Fords cost £5K | ★★★★☆ |
| Lotus Elise 1.6 | 144 D | £29,050 | 4/1598 | 134/6800 | 118/4400 | 876kg | 155 | 6.0 | - | 127 | 149 | 45.0 | + New 1.6 Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off | ★★★★☆ |
| Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer | 159 R | £28,450 | 4/1598 | 134/6800 | 118/4400 | 852kg | 160 | 6.0 | - | 127 | 149 | 45.0 | + Even lighter, even more focused Elise - A touch pricey for a stripped-out Elise | ★★★★☆ |
| Lotus Elise S | 172 R | £37,150 | 4/1798 | 217/6800 | 184/4600 | 924kg | 239 | 4.5 | - | 145 | 175 | 37.5 | + New supercharged Elise boasts epic grip and pace - £37K before (pricey) options... | ★★★★☆ |
| Lotus Elise R | 068 F | 04-11 | 4/1796 | 189/7800 | 133/6800 | 860kg | 223 | 5.6 | 13.9 | 150 | 196 | 34.4 | + Most thrillsome Elise yet - Blaring engine note | ★★★★☆ |
| Lotus Elise SC | 131 F | 08-11 | 4/1794 | 218/8000 | 156/5000 | 870kg | 254 | 4.5 | 11.4 | 148 | 199 | 33.2 | + All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle | ★★★★☆ |

evo PAST MASTER

VAUXHALL VXR220 - ISSUE 070, AUGUST 2004

This tweaked VX220 Turbo headed up the launch of Vauxhall's VXR performance brand back in 2004:

'This is the fastest-ever VX220, and just 60 of these £30k, track-focused specials are due to be built. Although it's related

to the Elise and Exige, the VXR220 has more power, its 2-litre turbo Vauxhall engine producing 217bhp compared to the 189bhp of the Lotus' normally aspirated Toyota VVTLi unit.

The higher performing engine makes the VXR feel more potent than the

standard (197bhp) VX220 Turbo, with real punch right across the rev range. Once you've attuned to the more reactive steering, the pace and grip the car conjures up are simply superb. The VXR220 sends a clear message that Vauxhall means business.'

driven



The VXR220 sold out almost as soon as it was launched - and driving it, it was easy to see why

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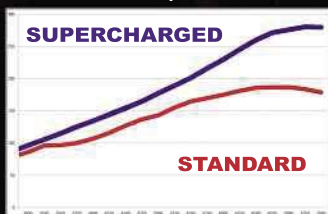
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+Sensational chassis, properly quick
-Affording a mint one
LOTUS ELAN SPRINT, ISSUE 126

| | 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 111S | 049 F | '02-'04 | 4/1796 | 156/7000 | 129/4650 | 860kg | 197 | 5.1 | - | 131 | - | 40.9 | + A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise? | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Elise S2 Sport 135 | 040 D | '03 | 4/1796 | 135/6200 | 129/4850 | 726kg | 189 | 5.4 | - | 129 | - | - | + One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Elise S2 Sport 190 | 044 F | '03 | 4/1796 | 190/7800 | 128/5000 | 710kg | 272 | 4.7 | 12.1 | 135 | - | - | + Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 376/4750 | 1980kg | 228 | 5.1 | - | 177 | 377 | 19.5 | + Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper | ★★★★★ |
| Mazda MX-5 1.8i 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 ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin | ★★★★★ |
| Mazda MX-5 1.6i (Mk1) | 131 F | '89-'97 | 4/1597 | 115/6500 | 100/5500 | 971kg | 120 | 9.0 | - | 114 | - | - | + The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz SLK350 Sport | 161 R | £44,725 | 6/3498 | 302/6500 | 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 | £180,000 | 8/4663 | 429/5250 | 516/1800 | 1800kg | 242 | 4.6 | - | 155 | 212 | 31.0 | + Wacky performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG | 171 D | £112,000 | 8/5461 | 530/5500 | 590/2000 | 1770kg | 304 | 4.3 | - | 155 | 231 | - | + Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency | ★★★★★ |
| 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 SLS AMG Roadster | 167 F | £176,895 | 8/6208 | 563/6800 | 479/4750 | 1735kg | 330 | 3.7 | - | 197 | 308 | 21.4 | + Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors | ★★★★★ |
| Mini John Cooper Works Convertible | 130 F | £24,850 | 4/1598 | 208/6000 | 206/1850 | 1230kg | 172 | 6.9 | - | 146 | 169 | 38.7 | + A manlier Mini cabrio. As hardcore as the hatch... - Which is still better | ★★★★★ |
| Morgan 3 Wheeler | 177 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 | 104-09 | 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 (Mk2) | 140 F | '05-'12 | 6/2893 | 252/6400 | 214/4400 | 1335kg | 192 | 5.9 | - | 163 | 221 | 30.0 | + Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Boxster S (Mk2) | 161 R | '05-'12 | 6/3436 | 306/6400 | 265/5500 | 1355kg | 229 | 5.3 | - | 170 | 223 | 29.7 | + As above, but with more power - Lighter steering than before | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Boxster Spyder (Mk2) | 140 F | '10-'12 | 6/3436 | 316/7200 | 273/4750 | 1275kg | 252 | 5.0 | - | 166 | 221 | 29.1 | + Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not practical | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Boxster (Mk1) | 049 F | '99-'04 | 6/2687 | 228/6300 | 192/4700 | 1275kg | 182 | 6.3 | - | 155 | - | 29.1 | + Still an impeccable sports car - Very little | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Boxster S (Mk1) | 070 F | '99-'04 | 6/3179 | 260/6200 | 228/4700 | 1320kg | 200 | 5.5 | - | 164 | - | 26.9 | + Added power is seductive - As above | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera S Cabrio (991) | 171 R | £89,740 | 6/3800 | 394/7400 | 324/5600 | 1465kg | 273 | 4.6 | - | 187 | 229 | 29.1 | + All-new open 911 drives just like the coupe - Which means the same artificial steering | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera GTS Cabrio (997) | 161 R | £85,249 | 6/3800 | 402/7300 | 310/4200 | 1515kg | 270 | 4.7 | - | 190 | 242 | 27.4 | + The best 911 drop-top you can buy - Lacks glamour of an R8 Spyder | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 402/7300 | 310/4200 | 1540kg | 265 | 4.4 | - | 189 | 242 | 27.0 | + Rarity, quality, head-turning styling - More collectors' than drivers' car | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (996) | 060 F | '03-'05 | 6/3596 | 414/6000 | 413/4600 | 1700kg | 250 | 4.7 | - | 185 | - | - | + Faster than you'll ever need it to be - Just the image thing again | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | + Gruff diamond - A few rough edges | ★★★★★ |
| Ultima GTR | 017 R | £45,500 | 8/6300 | 534/5800 | 528/4800 | 990kg | 548 | 3.9 | 8.2 | 204 | - | - | + Turns the M1 into the Mulsanne - You'll have to build it yourself | ★★★★★ |
| Vauxhall VX220 | 023 R | '00-'04 | 4/2198 | 145/5800 | 150/4000 | 875kg | 168 | 5.6 | - | 136 | - | 34.4 | + Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge? | ★★★★★ |
| Vauxhall VX220 Turbo | 066 R | '03-'05 | 4/1998 | 197/5500 | 184/1950 | 930kg | 215 | 4.7 | - | 151 | - | - | + Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability | ★★★★★ |
| Westfield Megabusa | 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 SEIGHT | 068 F | '92-'94 | 8/3900 | 270/6000 | - | 622kg | 441 | 4.4 | 9.4 | 144 | - | - | + Snarling, fire-breathing V8, ferocious pace - Spits fuel at you | ★★★★★ |
| Wiesmann Roadster MF3 | 077 D | £65,000 | 6/3246 | 338/7900 | 269/4900 | 1180kg | 291 | 4.9 | - | 158 | - | - | + Engine, ride, build quality, exclusivity - Um... '50s styling? | ★★★★★ |

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+Glorious V6 makes it a mini-Ferrari
- So-so chassis

ALFA ROMEO GTV 3.0 V6, ISSUE 010

evoKnowledge

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: The new supercharged V6 Lotus Exige S (right) is a proper road racer for £53K and our joint 2012 Car of the Year. The 991-gen 911 has lost a little character but gained true all-round ability, while the Nissan GT-R mixes practicality with supercar pace.



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|----------|----------|--------|-----|-----|------|------|-----|------|--|-------|
| 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-'12 | 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 | 1535kg | 266 | 4.4 | - | 186 | 224 | - | + Alpina's M3 GTS alternative - Auto gearbox frustrates when pressing on | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 S | 168 R | '10-'12 | 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 | '05-'08 | 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 V8 Vantage N420 | 147 F | '10-'12 | 8/4735 | 420/7000 | 346/5750 | 1630kg | 262 | 4.7 | - | 180 | 328 | 20.4 | + One of the best Vantages yet - Also one of the most expensive | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin DB9 | 178 F | '03-'06 | 12/5935 | 510/6500 | 457/5500 | 1785kg | 290 | 4.6 | - | 183 | 368 | 18.2 | + Better than the old DB9 in every respect - Automatic gearbox could be quicker | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin DB9 | 146 D | '10-'12 | 12/5935 | 470/6000 | 443/5000 | 1760kg | 271 | 4.6 | - | 190 | 368 | 18.2 | + Ride & handling improved for 2010 model - Rapide makes 2+2 seating pointless | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin DBS | 142 F | '08-'12 | 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 | '08-'11 | 4/1984 | 208/4300 | 129/1600 | 1295kg | 163 | 6.3 | 15.7 | 152 | 154 | 42.8 | + Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TT's - Steers like a computer game | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi TT S | 119 D | '08-'11 | 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 | '08-'11 | 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 | '08-'11 | 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 | '08-'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 | '08-'11 | 8/4163 | 444/7800 | 317/4500 | 1560kg | 270 | 4.1 | 9.9 | 187 | 332 | 19.9 | + Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi R8 V10 | 146 R | '10-'12 | 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 V10 Plus | 177 D | '10-'12 | 10/5204 | 542/8000 | 398/6500 | 1570kg | 351 | 3.8 | - | 198 | 346 | 19.0 | + More power and aggression, less weight - Firm ride may be too much for some | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi R8 GT | 169 F | '10-'12 | 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 | 178 F | '08-'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 | '10-'12 | 12/5998 | 567/6000 | 516/1700 | 2320kg | 248 | 4.6 | - | 198 | 384 | 17.1 | + 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Continental GT Speed | 177 D | '10-'12 | 12/5998 | 616/6000 | 590/2000 | 2320kg | 258 | 4.0 | - | 205 | 338 | 19.5 | + 205mph in utter comfort - Feels nose-heavy in slow corners | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Continental Supersports | 137 F | '10-'12 | 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... | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW 135i M Sport | 113 F | '10-'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 | '08-'11 | 6/2979 | 302/5800 | 295/1300 | 1525kg | 201 | 5.2 | 12.2 | 155 | 196 | 33.6 | + Eager engine, explicable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 (E92) | 162 R | '08-'11 | 8/3999 | 414/8300 | 295/3900 | 1580kg | 266 | 4.3 | 10.3 | 155 | 290 | 22.8 | + Fends off all of its talented new rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 GTS (E92) | 171 R | '10-'11 | 8/4361 | 444/8300 | 324/3750 | 1530kg | 295 | 4.3 | - | 193 | 295 | - | + Highly exclusive, most focused M-car ever - Good luck trying to find one | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 (E46) | 066 F | '00-'07 | 6/3246 | 358/7900 | 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 | 358/7900 | 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 | 358/7900 | 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 | '08-'11 | 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) | 178 F | '08-'11 | 8/4395 | 552/6000 | 501/1500 | 1850kg | 303 | 4.2 | - | 155 | 232 | 28.5 | + Mighty ability, pace, technology - There are more exotic badges at this money | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M6 (Mk1) | 106 R | '05-'10 | 4/1999 | 500/7750 | 384/6100 | 1635kg | 311 | 4.8 | 10.0 | 155 | 342 | 19.8 | + Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMC gearbox now off the pace | ★★★★☆ |
| Chevrolet Camaro SS | 148 F | '08-'11 | 8/1662 | 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 | '10-'12 | 8/1662 | 580/6100 | 556/3800 | 1900kg | 310 | 4.0 | - | 180 | - | - | + The most powerful Camaro yet - UK sales yet to be confirmed... | ★★★★☆ |
| Chevrolet Corvette C6 | 116 D | '08-'11 | 8/1662 | 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 | 8/1662 | 505/6300 | 469/4800 | 1418kg | 363 | 3.9 | 8.5 | 198 | 350 | 19.2 | + 85 to 100, brakes, price - Not quite the road-racer we expected | ★★★★☆ |
| Dodge Challenger * | 122 D | '08-'11 | 8/1605 | 425/6200 | 420/4800 | 1877kg | 230 | 5.2 | - | 160+ | - | - | + Effortlessly cool... - if you live in Hazzard County | ★★★★☆ |
| Ford Mustang Boss 302 * | 162 R | '08-'11 | 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 * | 178 F | '08-'11 | 8/5812 | 662/6500 | 631/4000 | 1747kg | 385 | 3.5 | - | 202 | - | - | + Huge performance for the money - Putting it to use takes nerve | ★★★★☆ |
| Ginetta G40 R | 165 F | '08-'11 | 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-'11 | 6/3721 | 310/6500 | 288/4500 | 1080kg | 292 | 4.9 | - | 165 | - | - | + Reborn Fabio GTS boasts great engine and good looks - The ride still needs work | ★★★★☆ |
| Honda CR-Z GT | 144 F | '10-'12 | 4/1999 | 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 (DC3) * | 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 | ★★★★☆ |

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MAZDA RX-8, ISSUE 122

| | | 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 |
|---------------------------------|---------|-----------|----------|------------------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|--|------------|
| 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 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 370ZS delivers sharp-driving swing at the Germans - Bland looks | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar XK 5.0 | 130 D | £65,430 | 8/5000 | 380/6500 | 380/3500 | 1585kg | 244 | 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 | £78,930 | 8/5000 | 503/6000 | 461/2500 | 1678kg | 305 | 4.6 | - | 155 | 292 | 23.0 | + Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar XKR-S | 168 R | £97,430 | 8/5000 | 542/6500 | 502/2500 | 1678kg | 328 | 4.2 | - | 186 | 292 | 23.0 | + The most exciting XKR ever - It's nearly £100,000 | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar XKR | '98-'06 | 8/4196 | 400/6100 | 400/3500 | 1737kg | 234 | 5.2 | - | 155 | - | 22.9 | - | + Extra grunt of 4.2-litre motor - Lacks feedback | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Exige S (V6) | 171 R | £53,850 | 6/3456 | 345/7000 | 295/4500 | 1176kg | 298 | 4.0 | - | 170 | 236 | - | + Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - 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 | £52,500 | 6/3456 | 276/6400 | 258/4700 | 1382kg | 203 | 5.6 | 13.6 | 162 | 217 | 30.3 | + Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Evora S | 168 R | £61,500 | 6/3456 | 345/7000 | 295/4500 | 1430kg | 245 | 4.6 | - | 172 | 229 | 28.7 | + A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911... | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Europa SE | 127 F | '08-'10 | 4/1998 | 222/5600 | 221/4000 | 995kg | 227 | 4.9 | - | 146 | - | 28.8 | + More of a Lotus than before - Still overshadowed by the Exige and Evora | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Esprit Sport 350 | 005 R | '99-'00 | 8/3506 | 350/6500 | 295/4250 | 1299kg | 274 | 4.3 | 9.9 | 175 | - | 22.0 | + Designed for track work but brilliant on the road - Limited edition | ★★★★★ |
| Maserati GranTurismo | 114 R | £82,190 | 8/4244 | 399/7100 | 339/4750 | 1880kg | 216 | 5.5 | 12.7 | 177 | 330 | 19.8 | + Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911 | ★★★★★ |
| Maserati GranTurismo Sport | 178 F | £90,750 | 8/4691 | 454/7000 | 383/4750 | 1880kg | 245 | 4.8 | - | 185 | 331 | - | + The best everyday GranTurismo yet - 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 | 28/1308 | 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 | 162 R | £57,165 | 8/6208 | 451/6800 | 442/5000 | 1730kg | 264 | 4.4 | 10.3 | 186 | 280 | 23.5 | + Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black | 171 R | £98,765 | 8/6208 | 510/6800 | 457/5200 | 1710kg | 303 | 4.1 | - | 186 | 286 | - | + The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old | ★★★★★ |
| 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 (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 Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply | ★★★★★ |
| Noble M400 | 089 F | '04-'06 | 6/2968 | 425/6500 | 390/5000 | 1060kg | 407 | 3.5 | - | 185 | - | - | + Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior | ★★★★★ |
| Noble M12 GTO-3R | 070 F | '03-'06 | 6/2968 | 352/6200 | 350/3500 | 1080kg | 332 | 3.8 | - | 170 | - | - | + The ability to humble exotica - Flawed driving position | ★★★★★ |
| Noble M12 GTO | 023 R | '00-'03 | 6/2544 | 310/6000 | 320/3500 | 980kg | 321 | 4.1 | 10.2 | 165 | - | - | + Gives GT3 drivers a fright - Styling could be more cohesive | ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200 | 155 R | £23,595 | 4/1598 | 197/5500 | 202/1700 | 1421kg | 141 | 7.3 | 18.1 | 147 | 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 | 237 | 5.2 | - | 172 | 223 | 29.7 | + Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too (even though it's the best Cayman yet) | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Cayman R | 158 R | £51,728 | 6/3436 | 325/7400 | 273/4750 | 1295kg | 255 | 4.7 | - | 175 | 228 | 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 4 (991) | 177 D | £77,924 | 6/3436 | 345/7400 | 288/5600 | 1430kg | 245 | 4.5 | - | 177 | 219 | 30.4 | + A touch more engaging than 2wd 991 - Still stand-offish compared to 997 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 GTS (997.2) | 152 D | '11-'12 | 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 S (997.1) | 070 F | '04-'08 | 6/3824 | 350/6600 | 295/4600 | 1420kg | 246 | 4.6 | 10.9 | 182 | - | 24.5 | + 'S' is like a junior GT3 - Tech overload? | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (996) | 051 F | '02-'05 | 6/3596 | 316/6800 | 273/4250 | 1470kg | 218 | 5.1 | - | 174 | - | - | + Second best 996 only to the GT3 - Very little | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera (996 3.4) | 008 R | '98-'01 | 6/3387 | 300/6800 | 258/4600 | 1320kg | 230 | 4.6 | - | 173 | - | 28.0 | + Beautifully polished 911, now from just £12K - Some like a bit of rough | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera (993) | '94-'97 | 6/3600 | 285/6100 | 251/5250 | 1372kg | 211 | 5.2 | - | 168 | - | 25.0 | - | + More character than 996 - Harder work at speed | ★★★★★ |
| 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 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 (997.1) | 103 R | '07-'09 | 6/3600 | 409/7600 | 298/5500 | 1395kg | 298 | 4.3 | 9.4 | 192 | - | - | + Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1) | 105 F | '07-'09 | 6/3600 | 409/7600 | 298/5500 | 1375kg | 302 | 4.2 | - | 193 | - | - | + evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money, than the brilliant GT3 | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2) | 066 F | '03-'05 | 6/3600 | 375/7400 | 284/5000 | 1380kg | 272 | 4.3 | 9.2 | 190 | - | - | + evo Car of the Year 2003 - Looks softer than previous GT3 | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2) | 068 R | '03-'05 | 6/3600 | 375/7400 | 284/5000 | 1330kg | 286 | 4.2 | 9.2 | 190 | - | - | + Track-biased version of above - Limited supply | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 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 RS (993) | 036 R | '95 | 6/3746 | 300/6500 | 262/5400 | 1270kg | 240 | 4.7 | 11.2 | 172 | - | - | + Barking engine note, gearchange - Not quite hardcore enough | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 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 | | | |

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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: Paganì's awesome Huayra (right) is our reigning joint Car of the Year. Ferrari's fastest-ever road car, the F12, could pip the mid-engined 458 when we try it in the UK, while the updated McLaren MP4-12C remains tantalisingly close to greatness.



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|----------|---------|-----------|-----------|--------|-----|-----|------|------|-----|------|---|-------|
| 9ff GT9R | 127 D | £450,000 | 6/4000 | 1120/7850 | 774/5970 | 1346kg | 845 | 2.9 | - | 260 | - | - | + Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin 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 broly/roof thing | ★★★★★ |
| Bugatti Veyron Super Sport | 151 F | £2.0m | 16/7993 | 1183/6400 | 1106/3000 | 1838kg | 654 | 2.5 | - | 268 | 539 | - | + The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals | ★★★★★ |
| Bugatti EB110 | 078 F | 91-'95 | 12/3500 | 552/8000 | 451/3750 | 1666kg | 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 | 8/6162 | 638/6500 | 603/3800 | 1528kg | 424 | 3.8 | 7.6 | 205 | 355 | 18.8 | + Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain | ★★★★★ |
| 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 430 Scuderia | 121 R | 07-'10 | 8/4308 | 503/8500 | 347/5250 | 1350kg | 378 | 3.5 | 7.7 | 198 | - | 15.7 | + Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 360 Modena | 163 F | 99-'04 | 8/3586 | 394/8500 | 275/4750 | 1390kg | 288 | 4.5 | 9.0 | 183 | - | 17.0 | + Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 1716kg | 287 | 4.3 | 10.0 | 199 | - | 12.3 | + Everything - Nothing | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 599 GTO | 161 R | 11-'12 | 12/5999 | 661/8250 | 457/6500 | 1605kg | 418 | 3.4 | - | 208 | - | - | + One of the truly great Ferraris - Er, the air con isn't very good | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano | 101 R | 06-'12 | 12/5999 | 611/7600 | 448/5600 | 1688kg | 368 | 3.5 | 7.4 | 205 | 415 | 15.8 | + evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 612 Scaglietti F1 | 090 R | 04-'11 | 12/5748 | 533/7250 | 434/5250 | 1840kg | 294 | 4.3 | 9.8 | 199 | 470 | 13.8 | + Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari Enzo | 149 F | 02-'04 | 12/5998 | 650/7800 | 485/5500 | 1365kg | 484 | 3.5 | 6.7 | 217+ | - | - | + Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1 | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari F50 | 064 F | 96-'97 | 12/4968 | 513/8500 | 347/6500 | 1229kg | 424 | 3.7 | - | 202 | - | - | + The best drivers' Ferrari - Lines lack tension | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari F40 | 157 F | 87-'92 | 8/2936 | 478/7000 | 425/4000 | 1100kg | 441 | 3.7 | - | 201 | - | - | + The shape that launched a thousand posters - Er... | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 288GTO | 064 F | 84-'85 | 8/2855 | 400/7000 | 366/3800 | 1160kg | 350 | 4.9 | - | 189 | - | - | + Painfully beautiful, rarer than the F40 - You are joking? | ★★★★★ |
| Ford GT | 087 R | 04-'06 | 8/5409 | 550/6500 | 500/3750 | 1583kg | 353 | 3.7 | - | 205 | - | - | + Our 2005 Car of the Year - JC had one. Reckoned it didn't handle... | ★★★★★ |
| Gumpert Apollo | 110 F | £275,000 | 8/4163 | 690/6300 | 675/4000 | 1200kg | 584 | 3.0 | - | 220+ | - | - | + Stupendous performance, 'Apollo' - High price, 'Gumpert' | ★★★★★ |
| 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 CCR 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 Sleggera | 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 | 1665kg | 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 | - | 21.3 | + Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Murciélago | 089 D | 01-'06 | 12/6192 | 570/7500 | 479/5400 | 1650kg | 351 | 4.0 | - | 205 | - | - | + Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Diablo 6.0 | 019 F | 00-'02 | 12/5992 | 550/7100 | 457/5500 | 1625kg | 343 | 3.8 | - | 200+ | - | - | + Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 442/3000 | 1434kg | 435 | 3.1 | - | 207 | 279 | 24.2 | + Staggering performance, refinement - Lacks design flair | ★★★★★ |
| McLaren 12C Spider | 177 R | £195,000 | 8/3799 | 616/7500 | 442/3000 | 1474kg | 425 | 3.1 | - | 207 | 279 | 24.2 | + No discernible dynamic compromises - Requires commitment to come alive | ★★★★★ |
| McLaren F1 | 145 F | 94-'98 | 12/6064 | 627/7500 | 479/4000 | 1137kg | 560 | 3.2 | 6.3 | 240+ | - | 19.0 | + Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black | 131 F | 09-'10 | 12/5980 | 661/5400 | 737/2200 | 1876kg | 358 | 4.0 | 8.1 | 199 | - | - | + Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers £250K price | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG | 159 R | £168,395 | 8/6208 | 563/6800 | 479/4750 | 1620kg | 335 | 4.1 | 8.4 | 197 | 308 | 21.4 | + Great engine and chassis (gulling 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 | 178 F | £200,000 | 8/4439 | 650/6800 | 604/3800 | 1198kg | 551 | 3.8 | 7.7 | 225 | - | - | + Leicestershire's unbelievably good attack on the supercar class - It's a bit pricey | ★★★★★ |
| Pagani Huayra | 172 F | £820,000 | 12/5980 | 720/5800 | 573/1250 | 1350kg | 542 | 3.3 | - | 224 | - | - | + Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-pricking as the Zonda's | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | £110,232 | 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) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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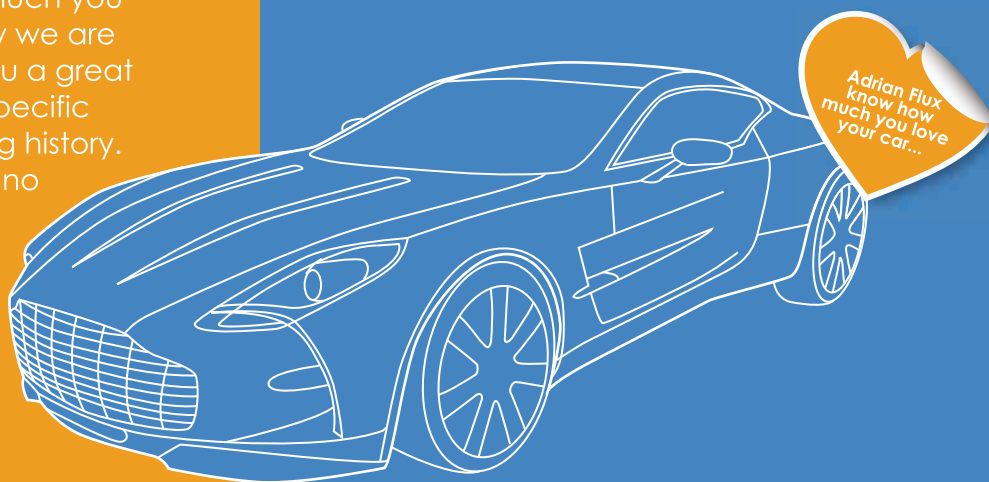
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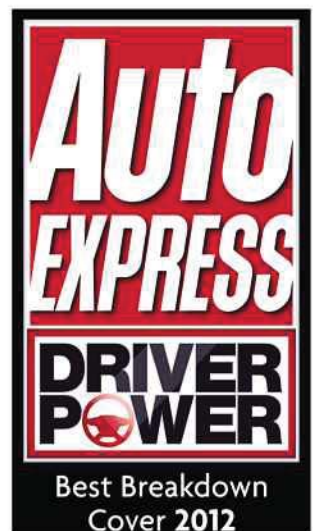


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Alan Faulkner & his 2008 Shelby GT

The restorer of muscle cars and the model that celebrates his love of hot rods

I bought my first muscle car when I was 19. While my friends were down the pub getting drunk, I was driving a 1966 289 Mustang! American cars were readily available when I was young. We used to get *Exchange and Mart* on a Thursday for 20p and it was full of every kind of muscle car you could think of; they were plentiful in this country and affordable in the late '70s for an ordinary working lad just starting out.

Everything gravitated around London's Chelsea cruise at the time – we used to go down there on a Saturday night and it was just brilliant. There was a guy who had a 1970 GT500 that I was just in awe of, and it started my love affair with Shelseys. I'd never seen performance like it.

I was trained in the aircraft industry and that taught me a lot about attention to detail and getting things right. If you do a design drawing on an aircraft you need to make sure everything's accurate, because the guy on the shop floor will follow it exactly. If an aeroplane fell out of the sky and it was your part that failed, you'd have a couple of military policemen turning up at your door!

I spent four years designing at Aston Martin, joining during its 'new beginning' in 1986. I worked on updating the Lagonda, scaling up a

quarter-scale model in the old-fashioned way. But Aston badly needed a new model to take it forwards as the V8 didn't meet any safety or emissions legislation. I was part of a small team of guys who worked on a completely new car that Aston could sell in every country – the Virage.

It just didn't have enough development time spent on it, and it got a right hammering from the press. They had no idea how small our team was, how tight the budget was or just what a big leap it was to have a car that was legal all over the world.



Above: airbag lid is signed by Carroll Shelby, Jack Sears and Jack Roush

'HAND-BUILT CARS HAVE FOIBLES – NO TWO ARE THE SAME AND THAT'S WHAT GIVES THEM SUCH PERSONALITY'

I then started my restoration company [www.dragonwheelsrestorations.co.uk] with a concours job on John DeLorean's Corvette, with which we won a lot of competitions. I enjoyed it, but I wanted to go back into Shelseys.

Why do I like them so much? Carroll Shelby. For me he was the ultimate hot-rodder. He got something, found a bigger engine, and produced something great from it. I never met him; I had an opportunity and I bloody missed

it! I'm very good friends with Jack Sears, the Cobra racer from the 1960s and the first BTCC champion, and he's my direct link to Carroll, so I guess it's as good as. God, can Jack drive, even in his 80s!

Shelby stopped working with Ford in 1970 but they wanted him involved with the new Mustang. So he started up a facility in Las Vegas and started hand-building these GTs in 2006, just like he did in the beginning. He'd get a stock Mustang from Ford and alter the bodywork, suspension, engine and axle.

That direct link with his work is what attracted me to this car. The GT500 is a more powerful car and everyone knows it, but it's mass produced by Ford. Hand-built cars have foibles; no two are the same and that's what gives them such personality. The only thing I wanted was a bit more go, so I fitted a Roush supercharger to it, pushing it up to 450bhp and 400lb ft of torque. I've never measured its performance, but it's quick enough to get you busted, and that's all I need to know!

Carroll Shelby would sign anything you wanted if you made a donation to his heart trust, so I sent him my airbag cover. I also got Jack to scribble on it then when I had my supercharger fitted, I wrote to Jack Roush in America and he agreed to sign it too. So that lid's got more air miles than my car!



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*Model shown is a SEAT Toledo 1.2 TSI 105PS SE at £16,350 OTR in Cappuccino Beige Metallic (£420) with optional 17" Dynamic alloy wheels (£250).