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urban 36.2(7.8)–68.9(4.1), combined 28.3(10.0)–68.9(4.1). CO₂ emissions: 234–109 g/km. The new E-Class Cabriolet starts from £38,465.00 Assistance Package at £2,345.00 and 360° camera at £715.00 (on-the-road price includes VAT, delivery, 12 months' Road Fund Licence, number plates, first registration fee and fuel).



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Ed Speak

'You can lean over and file your nails on the road in a Caterham 7 if the mood strikes'

I

IT'S FAIR TO SAY THE TEAM WAS QUEUING AROUND the block to drive the new Porsche 911 GT3 this month. The first person to sample it was Dean Smith, **evo's** photographer. As he disembarked from the GT3, his face said it all. Well, that and the words coming out of his mouth. He must've said 'awesome' more times than a Red Bull-infused skate kid from LA.

I won't give too much away here, but the reason for our excitement was clear. If there is one car that represents all we love about driving – **evo** in car form, in other words – the GT3 would be high on the list. Well, that and the Caterham 7.

Ah yes, the Seven. We've managed to get our hands on the incredible 620R in this issue, although at times it felt like it had its hands around our throats. I drove the Caterham up to Blyton – around 80 miles without a windscreen. Or doors. Or a roof. You can lean over and file your nails on the road in a Seven if the mood strikes, such is your intimacy with the tarmac.

The remarkable thing about this journey was how easy it was. A number of factors conspired to achieve this, i.e. a hot orb in the sky and a lack of rain clouds, but nonetheless I jumped from the flyweight lunatic in North Lincolnshire at the end of the drive feeling remarkably relaxed. Indeed, I felt a post-event tranquility similar to that enjoyed when my wife convinced me to attend a yoga class. I put the latter down to oxygen starvation caused by the amount of hydrogen sulphide emitted during the yoga lesson, but the Caterham experience had me baffled.

Part of this had something to do with the ritual of preparing for the journey. You can't just jump into a Caterham and go: you check the weather, ensure you're wearing the right clothes, have a quick walk around the car, climb in, then strap on the harnesses and switch on. The effect of this is that your mind, body and spirit are eased into the process of driving. I also found the juxtaposition of being exposed to the elements, but muted and protected by earplugs and helmet, uniquely calming. Or is that just me?

I get a similar feeling driving my '82 Porsche (see page 86), which makes me wonder if modern cars with modern safety systems and increased refinement actually act as a lullaby on a driver's senses. I wonder if driving 400 miles in an old Porsche or a Caterham with two rest stops is actually safer than submitting to the temptation to drive the full distance in a modern car without a break?

Nick

Nick Trott Editor



Across the evo universe this month

iPAD EDITION

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evo

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*'The 620R boasts a
power-to-weight ratio to rival
a stick of dynamic...'*



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Save your '2013 *evo* Car of the Year' jibes for now; some dramatic changes to its make-up mean the new 991 GT3 loses its traditional automatic favourite status. We suss it out via its main rival, a superlative predecessor and a bona-fide supercar that's twice its price. GT-R, 997 GT3 RS 4.0 and 12C: bring it on

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Just ask!



Faster future for F-type



Unique view

The concepts that shape upcoming models

Project 7 one-off points to further development
of Jaguar's newest sports car star **Words:** Harry Metcalfe



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CATERHAM
DESIGN SPLIT**

Joint-venture sports car project will produce two different-looking cars



**p18 MONTE
CARLO OR
BUST FOR 458**

Lightweight special is Ferrari's last chance to outdo 12C's figures



**p20 UK SALES
U-TURNS,
PART ONE**

New-spec Subaru WRX could be sold in Britain after all...



**p23 UK SALES
U-TURNS,
PART TWO**

...while Jaguar definitely will bring the 542bhp XKR-S GT to Blighty



JAGUAR IS PLANNING to expand the F-type range at both ends. **evo** has learned that the company intends to price the forthcoming coupe F-type (which has been an inevitable part of the model mix since the original C-X16 concept) cheaper than the current roadster, and is also plotting a high-performance version.

The latter development ties in with the Project 7 concept car that Jaguar created for this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed. It's the biggest hint yet that something special is planned – and we were given a chance to drive it (see below).

Project 7 is the result of a doodle by a young Italian designer at Jaguar, Cesar Pieri. It caught the eye of Alister Whelan, Jaguar's chief sports car designer, who enlisted the company's styling chief Ian Callum to gather enough support to build a one-off in time for Goodwood.

Based on the F-type V8 S, the Project 7 is described as a single-seat F-type racer, inspired in part by the classic Jaguar D-type – the name being a reference to Jaguar's seven victories at Le Mans. The design was digitised and then turned into a full-size clay model prior to production. The concept uses unique body panels, including a rear deck with a single fairing behind the driver and one roll hoop that tapers into the non-functioning boot lid.

The concept doesn't have a roof, saving 20kg, and at the back there's a new fixed wing and a rear diffuser, both fashioned from carbonfibre. These

are matched by a beautifully designed front splitter to help balance the aerodynamics – despite being a one-off, the car got significant wind tunnel time during its development. To complete the racing look, a new front screen surround allows for a shallower windscreen.

Mechanical changes include a boosted version of the V8 S's supercharged 5-litre engine, now with 542bhp and 501lb ft of torque, increases of 54bhp and 40lb ft over the standard car. Project 7 gets a new, freer-flowing ceramic-coated exhaust that adds some more decibels to the standard car's already thunderous soundtrack. The car sits 15mm lower than standard and rests on firmer springs and dampers. Are these precursors for what we can expect to see on a forthcoming F-type RS?

'What Project 7 does is show there's a determination within Jaguar to make the most of the F-type,' Callum told me while at MIRA for our drive. 'For me, it demonstrates our sporting heritage perfectly and definitely gives some insight into where the car could go in the future.'

I then asked Callum if Jaguar could do something similar with the XK. 'No – the XK is a GT car while the F-type is a pure sports car,' he replied. 'You need to keep those two identities separate. A true Jaguar sports car has to offer simplicity and back-to-basics fun. You must enjoy looking at it and then feel part of the machine when you drive it.'

The F-type has got off to a strong start, with over 1000 units sold worldwide in June – well above Jaguar's target. That bodes well for the coupe version, which is due to arrive early next year. Assuming a similar pricing structure to the XK, where the coupe is around 10 per cent cheaper than the convertible, we can expect the entry-level V6 coupe to come in at £53,000 – well below the £71,449 Porsche charges for the base 911. Jaguar insiders have told us that the F-type coupe will be a different car to the roadster and promise us class-leading dynamics and driver enjoyment. We can't wait to drive it. **x**



Driving the Jaguar Project 7

I'm at MIRA with the creators of Project 7, who are kind enough to let me have a go in this unique car (after a lengthy rain delay).

In the metal, Project 7 is even more sensational than the pictures you see here. The low front screen and single flowing pod behind the driver's seat have

me hooked before I've opened the door. As I climb in, I'm struck by how much lower I'm sitting in the semi-race seat (50mm, apparently).

Pressing the starter button brings the 542bhp V8 into life and a few prods of the throttle make the thunderous

soundtrack ricochet off the garage walls. I venture out.

Wow, it feels quick. The steering feels lighter than I remember from the F-type, but it's the effortless grunt and the sound swirling around that grab me. Intoxicating, rewarding and pretty – I want one. **HM**

'Are these precursors for what we can expect to see on an F-type RS?'



Aston-AMG tie-up: what happens next?

The lowdown on how Mercedes' knowledge and resources can help rejuvenate British sports car icon

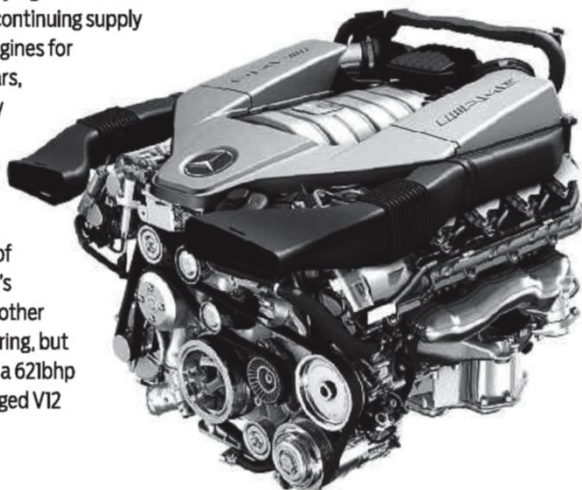
Words: Mike Duff

AFTER A VERY long wait, we now know that Mercedes is set to become Aston Martin's new technical partner. The British sports car maker will use a development of one of AMG's V8 engines, and will have access to Merc's next-generation electronic architecture. The two companies have been flirting for years, but a deal should finally be signed by the end of this year. Unfortunately, no more details have been released yet, so join us for a gaze into the **evo** crystal ball...

Engines

The official statement promises the 'development of bespoke V8 powertrains', which – reading between the lines – almost certainly means a development of the AMG twin-turbocharged 6.2-litre unit. That would mean a motor in the 500-600bhp range that could potentially replace both Aston's current V8 (which currently musters a maximum of 430bhp) and the venerable 5.9-litre V12 (which makes up to 550bhp).

Aston recently signed a deal with Ford to ensure continuing supply of its current engines for another five years, but we'd be very surprised if we didn't see an AMG-engined Aston well before the end of that deal. There's no word on any other powerplant sharing, but AMG does have a 621bhp twin-turbocharged V12 as well...



Transmissions

The official release doesn't mention gearboxes, but any engine supply deal surely must include transmissions, so intertwined are engines and gearboxes on performance cars. Aston's need is pressing, too, given the age and lack of finesse of its current single-clutch Speedshift 'box. AMG's wet-clutch seven-ratio MCT 'box would be an obvious match given its speed and refinement, while the twin-clutch 'box from the SLS is also a possibility.

SUV

Five years ago, Aston and Mercedes came close to signing a deal for a Lagonda SUV to be produced on the Mercedes GL platform. And with Aston still itching for a piece of the growing luxury off-roader segment, it's possible that a similar deal could be made to give Gaydon a rival for the forthcoming Bentley SUV (see page 18); as flexible as Aston's 'VH' architecture is, there's no way it can underpin something as large as a full-sized 4x4.



Electronics

Sharing electricals got less attention, but it might turn out to be the most important part of the deal in terms of getting Astons to the standard of modern rivals. The company feels well off the pace when it comes to gadgets and safety features – and the ability to share tech like Merc's active suspension, collision avoidance systems and even adaptive LED headlamps would all help dramatically sharpen Aston's showroom appeal.

Hybrids

Pretty much every carmaker will have to start offering part-electric cars within five years, and Aston doesn't currently have a partner to help with the expensive development of a hybrid system. Mercedes has several systems on the shelf and more in development, so we'd be surprised if the powertrain link-up didn't end up including ions as well as petrol. And let's hope that such a development helps to quietly euthanise the Aston Cygnet...



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Alpine Caterham plans non-identical twins

Anglo-French sports cars of the future will diverge in design, but will share new RS Clio's 1.6-litre turbo four

Words: Mike Duff Renderings: Jan Kamenistiak



Above and left: our impression of just how different the jointly developed Alpine could be compared to its Caterham sibling

W E'RE STILL NEARLY three years away from driving the new Alpine and Caterham sports cars that are being developed alongside each other. But after some in-depth conversations with senior management at the joint venture company that will be producing them (and some well-informed speculation) we're now able to bring you most of the missing technical details.

As we already knew (*evo* 184), the two models, which will be built side-by-side in Dieppe, will be very closely related. They will share the same basic structure including floorpan, engine, gearbox, suspension components and electrical architecture. Under the surface, both cars will have an identical wheelbase, likely sharing common front and rear bulkheads, and possibly even the same windscreen. 'There is no point making a partnership without common parts,' Alpine Renault CEO Bernard Ollivier told us.

The two cars will be distinguished by styling – contrary to early reports

about design being fully separated, each design team is working with full knowledge of what the other is doing. We're promised that, despite their shared mechanical components, both cars will look clearly different. 'This isn't going to be like the Toyota GT86

'DESPITE SHARED MECHANICAL COMPONENTS, BOTH CARS WILL LOOK CLEARLY DIFFERENT'

and Subaru BRZ,' Ollivier said.

We now believe that the external bodywork will be made from glassfibre rather than alloy, Ollivier having confirmed that the car won't feature expensive lightweight materials like the carbon-tubbed Alfa Romeo 4C. Despite the omission of carbonfibre, he still described a 1000kg kerb weight as a 'realistic target'.

As previously speculated, the shared powerplant will be a mid-mounted transverse four-cylinder engine, which – although yet to be officially confirmed – we believe will be the same 1.6-litre turbo unit as in the recently introduced Renaultsport Clio. Jean-Pascal Dauce, Alpine Caterham's engineering boss, confirmed to *evo* that the car 'could not have less than 200PS' – by happy coincidence, the RS Clio produces exactly 200PS (197bhp).

The cars' transmission will be more controversial. A development of the Clio's twin-clutch 'box is set to be the only option at launch, and may end up as the only option ever made available; we're told that Caterham's expansion plans in Asia made a semi-auto gearbox one of the project's core requirements. 'The case for a manual transmission in any sports car is becoming marginal,' Ollivier told us. 'In three years it will be even harder to make that case.'

Asian demands also mean that both cars will be launched as coupes: Caterham regards a climate-controlled

cabin as vital to selling in hot, humid countries like Malaysia and Singapore. A roadster version is likely to follow, as may other spin-offs. 'We can't do just one car,' Ollivier said. 'The partnership is for a long time and for multiple models.'

The interesting question, not least for Renault and Caterham's accountants, is how the two cars will be priced against their adversaries. Ollivier said he sees the Alfa 4C as a 'baby supercar' rather than a direct rival, and that the Alpine and Caterham will both be considerably cheaper, going as far as to say: 'We won't have a direct rival.' We're expecting somewhere between £30,000 and £35,000 at current prices for the basic models from each manufacturer.

Although we're told that styling will be 'frozen' for both cars by the end of this year, we won't be seeing motor show concepts until 2015 or the cars on sale until 2016. We don't know everything about these cars yet, but there's still plenty of time for the remaining details to come out. **x**



Ferrari plots more hardcore 458

Lightened, 600bhp+ 'Monte Carlo' to sign off current V8 model **Words:** Harry Metcalfe

FERRARI IS SET to launch an extreme road-going version of the 458 Italia ahead of the model's retirement next year. The new car, which **evo** believes will be called the 458 Monte Carlo, will make its debut at the Frankfurt motor show in September.

Ferrari has a fine tradition of producing limited editions of its V8 models, of course – the 430 Scuderia and 360 Challenge Stradale are **evo** favourites – and Maranello is predictably keen to create a car that can put further pressure on the McLaren 12C. We can expect a significant increase in horsepower from the standard car's 562bhp – possibly to beyond 600bhp – and an even higher rev limit, potentially to as much as a stratospheric 9500rpm.

Naturally, weight will be trimmed too, although probably only by 20–30kg – a small amount compared



Top: 458 is set to get a similar treatment to 360 CS (above) and 430 Scuderia (below)



to the Scuderia and Challenge Stradale, which both came in around 100kg lighter than their 'standard' derivatives. In part this is because some of the savings made to the

regular 458's 1485kg kerb weight are likely to be offset by larger, 21in wheels and bigger brake discs and calipers. The rear discs will be larger because the standard items can

overheat during extreme circuit use, the ESP system over-working them when the car is in 'Track' mode.

Other changes will include a revised exhaust with twin outlets positioned higher on the rear valance, allowing for a more aggressive rear diffuser. Extra vents on the front air dam will also improve aerodynamic performance. We won't know pricing until September, but expect a tag of around £200,000 before options.

Next year, we'll also see an all-new Ferrari California. This is set to be fitted with a revised version of the twin-turbocharged V8 that we first saw in the new Maserati Quattroporte, marking Ferrari's first move away from natural aspiration in a road car since the F40. We can expect to see it for the first time at the Geneva motor show in March. The change in engine philosophy suggests the 458's replacement may get a turbo engine, too... ❌

First Bentley SUV gets green light

More reserved version of EXP9F concept slated for 2015 launch

Words: Mike Duff

BENTLEY HAS CONFIRMED that it is to build its first SUV, with the production version set to appear in 2015. The new model will be built at its Crewe factory, generating 1000 new jobs.

The company has been mooted a luxury off-roader for years, with the EXP9F concept that appeared at the 2012 Geneva motor show proving

it was serious. That car was poorly received by critics, and we've been promised that a production version will be considerably less bling-heavy. But Bentley is clearly confident of the business case behind the new model, and is promising to make it a 'true Bentley'. Given the weight and handling of some of the company's historic models, that might not be as

hard as it sounds.

The new car will be spun off the platform that will underpin the next Volkswagen Touareg and Audi Q7, and which we can safely bet will also end up underneath a production version of Lamborghini's Urus concept. Like them or loathe them, ultra-luxury SUVs are here to stay. ❌



Above: the EXP9F's looks are expected to be toned down for production reality

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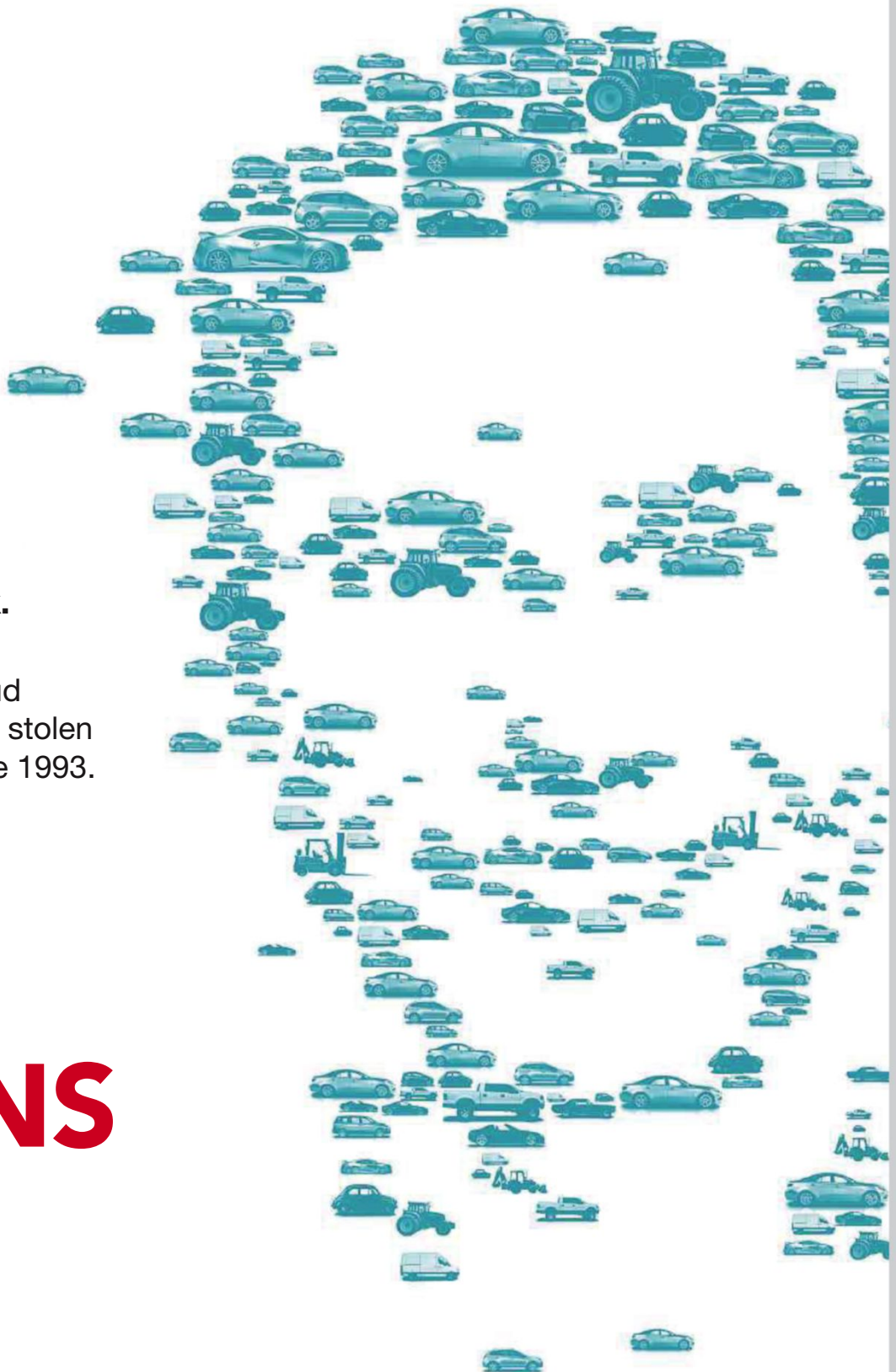
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WRX close to UK comeback

Subaru moots return of its rally hero – if the price is right **Words:** Stephen Dobie

THE SUBARU WRX could be on its way back to Britain. It's something of a U-turn following the withdrawal of the current WRX STI from UK sale, after even a £7000 price cut couldn't boost its appeal in an increasingly running cost-conscious market.

A firm decision will be made in November, with the feasibility of the next-generation car's availability in the UK hinging on how cheaply it can be sold here and how much demand will follow. 'We'll see if dealers are happy with it,' a Subaru spokesman

told us. 'There's currently a positive feeling about it.'

The next WRX is previewed by this concept, which first appeared at the New York motor show in April. It will also star on Subaru's Frankfurt show stand in September, confirming sales in mainland Europe at least.

The Impreza name is resolutely binned from the performance saloon, and the new WRX will be four-door only. The concept is a particularly bold bit of design and we hear its front end is reasonably close to that of the production car. Details on its powertrain are conspicuous by

their absence, but four-wheel drive is a given, while we're told Subaru's traditional boxer turbo engine is far more likely than the hybrid set-up early rumours suggested.

Expect around 300bhp from a flat-four engine, with the potential for more linearity with Japanese-market cars (which have traditionally used different engines) to help on costs. It should have less weight to shift, too, the concept previewing increased carbon use with its roof and diffuser.

CO2 and mpg figures are likely to remain uncompetitive against the WRX's European rivals – S3, M135i, Golf R – though the less premium Subaru ought to undercut them with its price tag. The yen/pound exchange rate, one of the catalysts of the recent Impreza/Evo downfall, will likely have some say in this.

More definite for our shores is the availability of tuning parts for Subaru's BRZ coupe. To help it keep up with its Toyota GT86 twin, which has gained TRD tweaks (reviewed on p48), approved tuner Pro R is to offer a stainless steel exhaust, suspension upgrades, beefier brakes and lighter alloy wheels later in the year. A remap is on the horizon, too. **X**



Top: WRX concept's nose close to production design. **Above:** four-door version only

News in brief



Special-edition Lambo Gallardo

Another special-edition Gallardo has been unveiled, with the Lambo Super Trofeo racer's rear wing adorning its rear deck. The Squadra Corse features extensive carbon and Alcantara, and some tricolore stripes, while the 562bhp engine and six-speed e-gear transmission come from the Superleggera.



Veyron edition of the month

Yet more limited-edition Veyrons have been revealed by Bugatti. Six 'Legend Editions' will pay homage to Bugatti heroes of the past, the first dedicated to Jean-Pierre Wimille. Three 'Wimille Bleu' Grand Sport Vitesses will be made, taking their colour scheme from his Le Mans-winning Type 57G of 1937.



Mercedes S63 AMG revealed

Mercedes' latest S63 AMG gets the 5.5-litre twin-turbo V8 from the E63 (see p46), with power up to 577bhp. A 100kg diet compared to its predecessor helps it to a 4.4sec 0-62mph time; optional 4matic AWD drops this to 4.0sec, but it's only available in LHD markets. Prices should start around £120k.

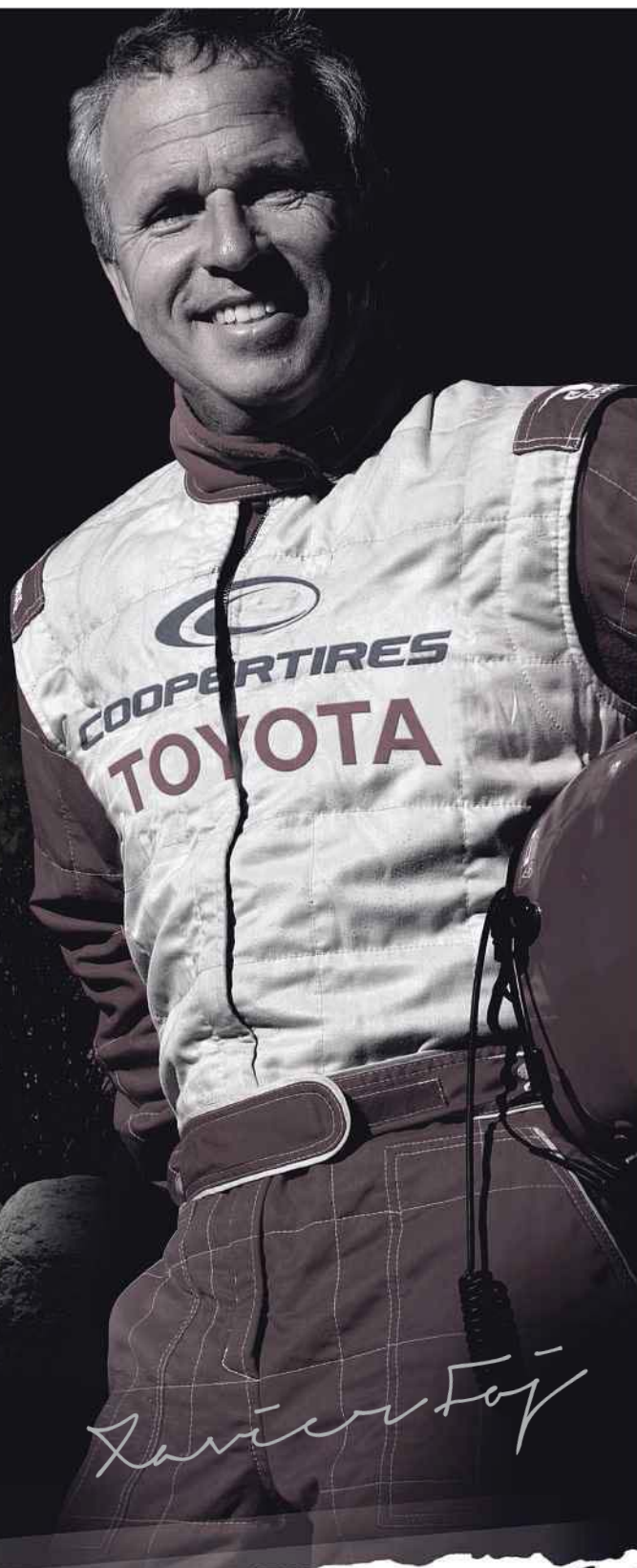


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Go Further

News in brief



Tuned K-Tec Twingo tops 160bhp

Renault tuner K-Tec has tweaked the Renaultsport Twingo. The hot hatch has always had a chassis that handled its 131bhp with ease, and thanks to a sports exhaust, more aggressive cams and an ECU remap, K-Tec has yielded 163bhp and 142lb ft. The package costs £2625, including a year's warranty.



Mini Vision shows hints of new hatch

Weeks after spy shots of the real thing leaked, Mini has previewed its next hatchback with the Mini Vision concept. It suggests a bigger styling change than we've seen before, with a particularly butch rear and bold touches behind the front wheelarches. The real thing will debut before the end of 2013.



BMW i3 prices and specs confirmed

The production BMW i3 has been revealed, after years of similar-looking concepts. The electric i3 (£25,680 after the government's £5000 rebate) has an 80-100 mile range, but you can almost double that with the range-extender for an extra £3150. Both versions make 168bhp and reach 93mph.

Radar

XKR-S GT coming to Britain

Initially a US-only special, Jaguar will sell RHD version of extreme 542bhp coupe in the UK. £135k price tag, just ten to be sold

Words: Mike Duff



JAGUAR IS TO BUILD a limited run of ten right-hand-drive versions of the hardcore XKR-S GT, each of which will carry a very serious £135,000 price tag.

The GT was unveiled at the New York motor show earlier this year, and was originally intended only for sale in the US (*evo* 183). Jaguar relented when it became clear there was demand from Britain and has agreed to the ultra-limited run. Two more right-hookers will also be built for South African customers.

Although based on the standard

XKR-S, the GT has been extensively modified with an extremely aggressive aerodynamic kit and a rear wing claimed to deliver up to 145kg of downforce. It also gets carbon-ceramic brakes, along with springs that are a whopping 68 per cent stiffer at the front and 25 per cent stiffer at the rear. The GT rides on unique 20in forged alloys shod with Pirelli Corsa tyres, and its steering rack and many suspension components have been taken from the F-type.

A pre-production version went round the Nürburgring in 7:40, the quickest-ever time by a Jaguar. **x**



Top: XKR-S GT has extreme racing-style rear wing. **Above:** 20in alloys are unique to GT

evo reader's livery applied to Stoneman 911 racer



OUR COMPETITION TO design a livery for the Porsche Carrera Cup car of racer and *evo* friend Dean Stoneman brought in some brilliant designs – many thanks to all those who entered.

It was the design submitted by Mark Dymont from Somerset that was chosen by Dean and his new sponsor Bike It, with the car wearing its new livery at the Snetterton round of the Porsche Carrera Cup Great Britain held just after this issue closed for press.

'We had some brilliant entries,' said Dean, 'but Mark's was a great combination of retro cool and the perfect colours for my new sponsor.'

Mark will now get to join Dean, his Redline Racing team and Bike It as a VIP guest at a future round of the UK's most exciting one-make race series. **x**



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COMBINED 38.2-67.3mpg (7.4-4.2L/100km), CO₂ emissions 169-109g/km.

and weather conditions may affect the official results). *Only available on models equipped with 4WD 1.6 DIG-T. Model shown is a Juke n-tec 1.6 petrol priced at £16,295 On The Road with optional metallic paint at £500. Models control. Cellular networks not available in all areas. Voice minutes, roaming charges and/or data usage may apply. Nissan is not responsible for any equipment replacement or upgrades, or associated costs that may be required for Denham Way, Maple Cross, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 9YS.

303144/A2

Every new *evo* car that matters, rated
This month

VAUXHALL VXR8 GTS

Australian-born V8 saloon gets power hike and some gadgets

VAUXHALL VXR8 TOURER

Outgoing 425bhp VXR8 spawns an estate version

BMW 435i COUPE

Four is the magic number for BMW's new two-door coupe

AUDI RS7

552bhp Autobahn-muncher comes with hefty price tag

BENTLEY GTC SPEED

Does the W12 Conti still have a place alongside the V8?

SKODA OCTAVIA vRS

217bhp five-door based on same platform as Golf GTI

MERCEDES S-CLASS

Luxury saloon gets more tech and a subtly different look

MOUNTUNE FOCUS ST

Engine specialist boosts sporty Ford to 271bhp

MERCEDES E63 AMG

Mid-range luxury Merc gets updated with 549bhp

TOYOTA GT86 TRD

Can the GT86 be improved without adding power?

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The test team

evo's road testers have driven General Motors-built cars like the VXR8 GTS all over the world. This month, they pick out the favourite GM creations they've tested:



HARRY METCALFE
Editorial director

'The Chevrolet Corvette I drove in 2005. Good looks, punchy 404bhp V8, 186mph, 4.1sec to 62mph and £45,000. Bargain.'



NICK TROTT
Editor

'If pushed, I'd say the current Corvette ZR1. Chassis was average, but it looked mega and the engine was off the scale.'



MIKE DUFF
Motoring editor

'I always had a big soft spot for the first Vauxhall Monaro – a big, unsophisticated dinosaur of a thing, but endless fun.'



HENRY CATCHPOLE
Features editor

'A GM creation with a large dose of input from some chaps in Norfolk – the Vauxhall VX220 Turbo.'



JETHRO BOVINGDON
Contributing editor

'Latest Corvette ZR1 at Milford Proving Ground was ace, but can't match a day near Thruxton with a Lotus Carlton.'



RICHARD MEADEN
Contributing editor

'VX220 Turbo. Strong performance, fun handling – less so in the rain! – and sharp looks. Quite fancy one now...'



DAVID VIVIAN
Contributing road tester

'The Holden Commodore HSV, Phillip Island circuit in Australia, 1994. You get the drift...'

Driven



Test location: near The Gurdies, Australia **GPS:** -38.34906, 145.56953

Vauxhall
VXR8 GTS

Updated version of Vauxhall's halo car gets a supercharger, more standard kit, and lots of technology. Oh, and 576bhp!



A JOURNO FRIEND WENT to Australia recently and was caught speeding in a 60kph (37mph) zone... at a whopping 61kph. Why the Australians feel the need to develop and drive wildly powerful V8s in a country where the roads are so heavily policed is beyond me. But I'm glad they do, because the new HSV Gen-F GTS (or Vauxhall VXR8 GTS, as it will be known in the

UK) is way better than you'd think. Potentially good enough to give an M5 a bloody nose.

First, a little history. HSV (Holden Special Vehicles) was formed in 1987 after Tom Walkinshaw Racing won a General Motors tender to produce special racing and performance versions of Holdens. Today, HSV is still owned by the Walkinshaw family.

To date, 75,000 HSVs have been built, with recent models making it to the UK badged

as Vauxhalls. A great number of races have been won, and an even greater amount of fuel consumed. None of it wasted, it has to be said: HSVs are straightforward and characterful performance cars. They are huge fun too, but rarely cutting-edge in technology terms.

You'll be surprised to hear, then, that the new VXR8 comes with standard-fit torque vectoring, Magnetic Ride Control, automatic parking, a head-up display, electronic power



Specification

Engine	V8, 6162cc, supercharged
CO2	363g/km
Power	576bhp @ 6150rpm
Torque	550lb ft @ 3850rpm
0-62mph	4.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£54,999

Left: VXR8 hits 62mph in 4.2sec – not that that's a good idea in Australia. **Below:** huge 6.2-litre V8 is claimed to achieve 18.5mpg. **Right:** carbon and satin clash inside



steering and a multi-way 'Driver Preference Dial' that adjusts the traction and stability control, steering weight, launch control and the ride and damping. Add a supercharged 576bhp V8 engine (up from the 425bhp of the previous, naturally aspirated model) and things get really interesting.

First impressions are a little disappointing. The VXR8 has visual drama, but it's overly fussy. The design brief (low stance, shallow ramp angles, bold graphics) has been achieved, but if it was my VXR8 I'd spec it in a dark colour to blend away some of the body addenda.

If the bodywork is overly shouty, the engine is, um, whispery. From the outside there's a muted burble on start-up with a faint V8 crackle, but you barely hear it on the inside. A little more theatre wouldn't go amiss, although in fairness the quality of noise does increase when you select one of the sportier modes.

It's hard to fault the interior ergonomics, space and comfort, but the cabin styling is also a little overwrought. Shiny chrome-effect details clash with satin-finish features, while the carbon-effect trim on our test car just looks naff. Best to engage gear and get driving...

Now things are improving. The third-

generation Magnetic Ride Control (pioneered by GM) has three settings: Touring, Sport and Track. The softest of these, Touring, offers good ride comfort and body control.

The Driver Preference Dial, meanwhile, has four modes: Touring, Sport, Performance and Track. Twist it to Sport and the traction and stability controls remain on, with torque vectoring off, while the steering and magnetic ride firm up. There's very little difference between Touring and Sport, although Sport soon becomes my default setting for this test due to its slightly better body control.

Selecting Performance loosens the ESC and TC, and enables torque vectoring, but keeps the steering and ride in Sport (are you keeping up?). On the road you can sense a tightening of line as the vectoring comes into play and torque is redistributed (by braking the inside wheel), but only if you drive through the corner on the throttle – TV doesn't work off-throttle.

The torque transfer from the inside to the outside wheel is noticeable, but the effect is rather odd and, it has to be said, perhaps even unnecessary. With 576bhp and 550lb ft, the VXR8 has enough power and torque to allow the driver to tighten the line with a carefully

metered right foot and a dash of oversteer. The big problem is that you can't disable TV when in Performance or Track. That's a real shame, as the added suspension sharpness and steering weight of those modes would work nicely with a more natural distribution of torque across the rear axle.

Speaking of steering, the VXR8's helm is direct but rather numb – and once again it seems like feel has been mistaken for weight, particularly in Sport mode. Like the torque vectoring, the steering mode cannot be decoupled from the other settings, which is a shame – it would be nice to have the option.

The VXR8 offers better-than-expected traction and lateral grip from its Continental tyres (255/35 R20 front and 275/35 R20 rear). Test driver and former V8 Supercar racer Cameron McConville told *evo* that the Contis, custom-tuned to the VXR8, were one second faster over a lap around Holden's test track and 'far superior overall' to other brands during development tests.

Oversteer is always an option, but perhaps more impressive is the VXR8's reluctance to understeer – even in Touring or Sport when the understeer-cancelling TV is deactivated.



'The Vauxhall VXR8 never feels anything less than supremely rapid, even compared to a BMW M5 or Mercedes E63 AMG'

You feel the VXR8's 1881kg kerb weight, and roads with multiple compressions tend to over-agitate and overwork the magnetic ride into a series of minor-though-noticeable pitch movements, but overall the VXR8 is an inherently well balanced, stable and enjoyable car to hustle. It will be fascinating to see how it behaves on compression-filled UK roads.

Under the VXR8's vast bonnet lies a 6.2-litre, GM LSA engine, as also seen in the Cadillac CTS-V and Chevrolet Camaro ZL1. Fitted with an Eaton four-lobe supercharger and water-to-air chargecooling, it's a monster. Throttle response is strong, overtaking punch relentless and the supercharger integration seamless. Of course, those 576 horses are required to move 1881kg at a meaningful pace, and indeed the VXR8 never feels anything less than supremely rapid – even compared to an M5 or E63 AMG (non-S), neither of which are as powerful.

One major perk the VXR8 has over its rivals is a six-speed manual gearbox – and it has a neat, effective and short-ish shift, too. Heel-and-toeing is simple, and mastering a manual 'box mated to a rear-drive saloon is a rare joy these days. The six-speed automatic is less impressive: shifts aren't particularly fast, there

are no steering-wheel paddles, and while it offers relaxed cruising, the auto never feels anything other than reluctant.

The VXR8 is more enjoyable than I expected. It desperately needs a mix-and-match mode to allow a more driver-tailored set-up, but it's fun and fast, and it'll also be rare. The £54,999 cost will shock, even if you now get over £20k of spec as standard for £5k more than the price of the old model. Vauxhall is expecting UK sales of around 25-30 cars per year.

The obvious rivals are the aforementioned M5 and E63, but the VXR8 is actually closer to a C63 AMG or Audi S6 on price. A market curio then, with as many flaws as qualities. Once the first cars arrive in the UK later this year, a group test is undoubtedly in order. It might just spring a surprise. ✕

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Verdict

✚ Brawn, pace, character, lifetime warranty

✚ Restrictive chassis settings, price

evo rating: ★★★★★

Bargain V8 Vauxhalls



THE EARLIEST 2004 5.7-litre Monaros can now be picked up from around £5000-6000, and for £7000 you could find a slightly more potent VXR model – although the nicest examples are still closer to £12k.

The supercharged and truly overpowered Monaro VXR 500, of which just 20 were built, is now perhaps the most valuable of all Monaros: in the region of £15-20k if you can find one.

The four-door VXR8 is much more up-to-date, but early 6-litre models are now starting to drop below the magic £10k marker. Better specced and more powerful 6.2 LS3 versions start at £17,000, but you can still pay anywhere up to £35k depending on age and mileage.

Given the choice, we'd opt for a late-spec post-facelift Monaro, either in VXR or basic V8 form. Or you could go the full Australian and buy one of the rare UK-spec Maloo pickups...



Test location: B660, Cambridgeshire, UK GPS: 52.39906, -0.37971

Vauxhall VXR8 Tourer

425bhp VXR8 bows out with an estate version, offering a novel alternative to the German sector leaders

Photography: Dean Smith

J

JUMP INTO THE VXR8

Tourer after driving almost any other car on sale in Britain today and you will wonder what on earth is going on.

The first things you touch will probably be the clutch pedal and gearlever. Both are heavy, bordering on agricultural, and the muscles on the left-hand side of your body are left in no doubt that they're moving substantial chunks of metal. This sense of mass is reinforced by the general size of the car, with the seats and steering wheel both having that school-blazer air of something bought to be grown into.

Then there's the 425bhp, 406lb ft engine (this estate is based on the current, naturally aspirated VXR8, which will be replaced later in the year by the supercharged version you've just been reading about). The swept volume and number of pots might be similar to various AMG powerplants, but the character is very different. Like the transmission, there is something basic and unfiltered about the rumbles that emanate from under the bonnet with every prod of the accelerator. Revs build with a certain amount of heavy-hearted inertia, but you're pushed to 62mph in 4.9sec on an inexorable wave of glorious, naturally aspirated 6.2-litre V8 power. There's a suitably butch soundtrack too, forged in the depths of Bathurst battle... although it can be a bit boomy at certain cruising speeds.

The real shock, however, is the steering and handling. After the powertrain's brutish nature,

Specification

Engine	V8, 6162cc
CO2	326g/km
Power	425bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	406lb ft @ 4600rpm
0-62mph	4.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£49,500

you might expect a shoulder-rolling unassisted rack to grapple with through corners, but not a bit of it. Instead, it's incredibly light. The big estate almost feels darty as the 20in rims and low-profile tyres react to initial steering inputs, but then the car rolls on relatively soft suspension and a lolloping vagueness more akin to an old Range Rover takes over. Despite the spec sheet saying that the Tourer has Magnetic Ride Control dampers, it feels more like it has the less supportive passive set-ups I've experienced in some VXR8s in the past.

Like a parsnip and walnut cake, the steering/suspension combo is a curious mixture to get your head around. But if you're brave enough to take the VXR8 by the scruff then you'll discover that its essential balance is easily understood and that it can actually be cajoled through spacious corners quite enjoyably. Turn in hard and wait for the understeer to neutralise, then pick up the throttle and it will transition slowly but predictably into oversteer.



The Tourer is a good-looking car, too, even if the aggressive snout isn't quite matched by the more conventional rear. It's close to an Audi RS6 Avant or Mercedes E63 estate in size, but in price you have to consider it as a very left-field, very analogue alternative to an RS4 (£6025 more) or C63 (£8665 more). Dynamically, it feels heavier, slower and more ponderous than either of those Germans, despite having a very similar 1831kg kerb weight, but it definitely has character. And in an automotive world that sometimes looks increasingly manicured, the VXR8 is pleasingly imperfect. ✕

Henry Catchpole (@HenryCatchpole)

Verdict

⊕ Power to match its character

⊖ A bit rough around the edges

evo rating: ★★★★★



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The new Kia pro_ceed GT is coming soon.
Can't wait? Visit kia.co.uk for more details.

Fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100 km) for the new Kia pro_ceed range are: Urban: 29.1 (9.7) – 67.3 (4.2), Extra Urban: 46.3 (6.1) – 78.5 (3.6), Combined: 38.2 (7.4) – 74.3 (3.8). CO₂ emissions are 171 – 100 g/km. MPG figures are official EU test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. 7 year / 100,000 mile manufacturer's warranty. For terms and exclusions visit www.kia.co.uk or see your local dealer. Model shown is new Kia pro_ceed 'GT Tech' @ £22,495 On The Road (OTR) excluding optional metallic paint at £475.

Test location: Colares, Portugal GPS: 38.79892, -9.44833

BMW 435i Coupe

Sporty successor of the hugely popular 3-series Coupe has a big reputation to live up to

ALL LARGE, PROFITABLE car companies have a 'growth strategy', but few have had to draft in a whole new batch of numbers to avoid muddle and confusion. BMW had to do something, though. Basically, its core model structure – 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7-series – was starting to come apart at the seams with the launch of so many new niche-filling models, not to mention the additional naming burden of those waiting in the wings.

There were logical wrinkles to straighten out, too. Why, for instance, was the coupe version of the 5-series called the 6-series when the two-door 3-series was the 3-series Coupe? Well, obviously, because the 6 looked very different to the 5, whereas the 3-series Coupe was the saloon with a swoopy roof and two fewer doors. A good point, but not good enough to stop the re-think which seeks to put things straight. The current-generation 3-series range now consists of the saloons, the Tourings and the GTs, with what would have been the Coupe morphing into the lower, longer, wider 4-series, which will also form the basis for a convertible and (contrary to early speculation) a Gran Coupe.

'We have a very simple logic now,' says

BMW's Klaus Fröhlich, project leader for 1, 3 and 4-series. 'The emotional and added-value concepts – the coupes, the convertibles and, where appropriate, the Gran Coupes – are even numbers: 6 and now 4, with 2 on the way. For the customer, it's easier. It became more obvious when we were developing the GT and Coupe. We felt it would be too confusing for the customer to have eight 3-series models; this is what made the case for having the 4-series with its extra differentiation.'

That 'extra differentiation' isn't just visual, of course. With its lower centre of gravity, wider track and retuned suspension, the 4-series should trump the already outstanding dynamic attributes of the 3-series. And, as you'll read in a

Specification

Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, turbocharged
CO2	169g/km
Power	302bhp @ 5800-6000rpm
Torque	295lb ft @ 1200-5000rpm
0-62mph	5.4sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£40,795



moment, it does. But it also tees up an intriguing new hierarchy when the M-car equivalents come on stream early next year. The new M3 and M4 will be launched at the same time, with twin-turbocharged straight-six engines more powerful than the E92 M3's naturally aspirated V8. But it's clear that the M4 will take centre stage and assume the mantle of 'core' M-car and icon-in-waiting, leaving the M3 as the marginally less dynamic default choice for those who can't do without four doors.

Hardcore 'car guy' and Nordschleife frequent flyer Fröhlich can hardly contain his enthusiasm for the forthcoming M division coupe. 'The M4 will be the essence of M, the core model, taking over from the M3,' he says. 'Compared to the E92 it's lighter, stiffer, faster. It will be sensational. I drove the prototype car in comparison with the M3 Competition Package on the Nürburgring two months ago and it's a big leap forward. The power is up slightly but



Left: test car was fitted with eight-speed auto; six-speed manual also available. **Right:** Sport mode adds weight to steering and firms-up damping. **Below:** 435i comes with 18in wheels as standard; 19s optional



‘The acceleration is entirely convincing and is present the instant you flatten the throttle’

the weight is down quite a bit. Honestly, you don’t need much more power.’

For now, though, the most potent 4-series is this 435i, and it ain’t slow. It gets the only six-cylinder ‘TwinPower’ petrol engine in the otherwise four-pot launch line-up, developing 302bhp at 5800-6000rpm and, perhaps more tellingly, 295lb ft of torque between 1200 and 5000rpm. All the cars at our disposal in Portugal are fitted with the optional ZF eight-speed paddle-shift auto, which shaves 0.3sec from the six-speed manual’s 5.4sec 0-62mph time. Top speed is limited to 155mph.

If BMW’s intention was to build something of the 6-series’ sleek profile and proportioning

into the 4-series, and thereby establish a clean aesthetic break with the 3-series saloon, it hasn’t done a bad job. If anything, it looks even lower and more planted than the 16mm roofline drop and widened track (by 45mm at the front and 81mm at the back) would suggest. The 4 is just 26mm longer than the 3-series saloon and enjoys the same wheelbase and rear-seat legroom. That wheelbase is 50mm longer than the old 3-series Coupe’s, giving an extra 13mm of rear legroom. Up front, it’s harder to distinguish 4 from 3, but the former does offer more dashboard trim options and has a sportier, lower-set driving position.

Ride height in the 4 is also 10mm lower than



Above and below: 4-series is longer, lower and wider than 3-series, with a more distinctive look than old 3-series Coupe

the 3-series saloon's, giving the 435i the lowest centre of gravity of any current BMW. In line with a strengthened front section that makes the 4-series' body 60 per cent stiffer than the old 3-series Coupe's, the suspension has been tuned to suit, with recalibrated springs and dampers, and tweaked camber angles.

So the 4-series looks like a bigger, lower, lithier 3-series and, for the most part, that's exactly how it drives – news prospective customers will be as glad to hear as Audi and Mercedes won't be, since the 3 already has the best chassis and powertrain line-up in its class by a considerable margin. Sitting that bit lower massages the feeling that you're in a slightly tauter, slightly grippier 3-series. And that's a good feeling.

If there is a disappointment, it comes when you fire up the 435i's 3-litre turbo six. Anyone expecting a toned-down version of the M135i's stirring engine note (such as myself) is in for a disappointment: it's silky and sonorous but without much hair-on-back-of-neck action, even as it rushes toward the 7000rpm red line. And it exhibits a slightly rattly small-end bearing quality under acceleration, reminiscent of some older BMW straight-sixes. No matter. That acceleration is entirely convincing and, thanks to that broad torque band and the pin-sharp marshalling of the magnificent eight-speed auto, it's present the instant you flatten the throttle. It'll be a fast car in a drag race.

But it's on the twistier hillside roads between

Lisbon and the coast that the 435i feels even quicker. Switch from Comfort to Sport or Sport Plus – our car has the optional adaptive suspension and steering systems fitted as standard to the M Sport models – and you lose the subtle, almost subliminal, sense of floatiness. Instead you get an altogether firmer, yet no less comfortable set-up with meatier steering, keener turn-in and, in Sport Plus mode, just enough slackening of the ESP and traction electronics to balance out the chassis under power. In any case, there isn't much understeer and it wouldn't be stretching a point to describe the available grip as prodigious – certainly greater than an E92 M3 can muster.

But it isn't just the extremes that impress. It's the way it all flows and hangs together so transparently, and the way it inspires so much confidence. Although the 435i isn't the sort of car that will constantly goad you into driving faster, it has huge ability should you need it.

The M4? That'll be an itch that's impossible not to scratch. **X**

David Vivian

Verdict

+ Better than the 3-series where it counts

- Engine could sound sweeter

evo rating: ★★★★★





LET THERE BE LIGHT...

CRÉATIVE TECHNOLOGIE





Test location: Ingolstadt, Germany GPS: 48.76653, 11.42575

Audi RS7

Effortlessly fast German saloon packs a 552bhp, 189mph punch – and a price tag to match

Photography: Pete Gibson

A **ANOTHER MONTH**, another new RS model from Audi. It's not that long since the company had a policy of only putting one model from its performance sub-brand into production at a time. No longer: the RS7 joins the RS4, RS5, RS6 and TT RS. So much for exclusivity.

Yet despite its all-new badge, the RS7 is just a four-door sister for the recently launched RS6 Avant. Audi has decided not to do a saloon version of this RS6, instead using the A7's coupe-ish bodyshell for the booted iteration. Both cars are mechanically identical, using the same 552bhp twin-turbocharged V8, eight-speed automatic 'box and torque-biasing four-wheel-drive system. They even post identical official 0-62mph times of just 3.9sec.

The RS7 sticks closely to the recent 'fast, but uninvolved' script for top-spec Audis. The highlight is definitely the engine: the same 4-litre unit that Bentley has recently fitted to junior versions of the Continental, albeit with more power here than offered from Crewe. It sounds good, especially switched to its rortier Dynamic mode, and delivers its towering performance from little more than tickover. It's as happy trickling along as it is on a full red-line mission, and the gearbox works pretty well, too – shifting intelligently when left to its own devices. It's not as quick as a twin-clutcher, but with so much power and torque on tap, it doesn't really need to be.

The RS7 is a remarkable piece of engineering, and a car that delivers massive speed apparently without effort. We tested the car in Germany,

Specification

Engine	V8, 3993cc, twin-turbo
CO2	235g/km
Power	552bhp @ 5700rpm
Torque	516lb ft @ 1750rpm
0-62mph	3.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£83,495

and a quiet stretch of Autobahn gave the chance to confirm that it will blast straight through the 155mph where speed limiters normally butt in, our test car having the optional 189mph 'Dynamic Plus' limiter. But more impressive is the way the RS7 cruises at serious velocities without breaking sweat: at 120mph the engine is doing under 3000rpm in top, with less background noise in the cabin than most cars would have at 80mph.

But at more everyday speeds, the RS7 remains dynamically inert. It feels very similar to the RS6 Avant, the RS7's lower seating position and tighter-fitting cabin being the most obvious differences. And although it might be slightly lighter on its toes than the estate, the differences really are fractional. Both cars have the same enthusiasm-sapping steering, with little feedback whichever of the different modes you opt for. Grip levels are massive, and on dry tarmac, traction is almost total. In slower, tighter corners it's possible to feel the sport differential at the back moving torque as it tries to fight the car's natural understeer tendency. But driven at anything like normal road speeds,



the RS7 just sticks and goes.

Two different suspension systems are offered. UK buyers will get air springs as standard, but can also opt for the no-cost option of steel springs and interconnected 'Dynamic Ride Control' dampers, claimed to reduce pitch and roll under hard use. Even on smooth German tarmac this set-up feels too hard, especially with the dampers in their firmest setting. Similarly, the option of carbon-ceramic brakes seems pointless unless you seriously intend to take the RS7 onto a race track regularly.

Which leaves us with a real 'dog bites man' headline: performance Audi is very fast and slightly dull. When will we get one that breaks this increasingly well-established mould? ❌

Mike Duff

Verdict

⚡ Performance, soundtrack, looks

🚗 Numb driving experience, pricey

evo rating: ★★★★★



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CRÉATIVE TECHNOLOGIE



Official Government Fuel Consumption Figures (litres per 100km/mpg) and CO₂ Emissions (g/km). Highest: DS3 Cabrio THP 155 6-speed manual: Urban 8.0/35.3, Extra Urban 4.8/58.9, Combined 5.9/47.9, 137 CO₂. Lowest: DS3 Cabrio VTi 82 manual: Urban 5.8/48.7, Extra Urban 4.3/65.7, Combined 4.9/57.6, 112 CO₂.



Test location: Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire, UK GPS: 51.77399, -1.00158

Bentley Continental GTC Speed

Mighty W12 twin-turbo convertible produces whopping 616bhp, but is it enough of a step up from V8 version?

Photography: Dean Smith

VERY FEW CARS DO A better job of resisting cynicism than the Bentley GTC Speed. On paper, it's pretty much pointless. It costs £30,000 more than the new GTC V8 and yet the two cars are separated by just 116bhp. In the real world, the W12-powered Speed will only be marginally quicker, has a less appealing soundtrack and has a real thirst for fuel (12mpg on this test).

But since when did rational criteria apply to the purchase of a convertible Bentley? The Speed has 616bhp (just 5bhp shy of the erstwhile Supersports convertible) and the bragging rights that come with being the fastest open-topped four-seater in the world. And when you experience it, it takes no more than five minutes to seduce you into making this the car to have at your house on the Côte d'Azur once your EuroMillions numbers come in.

The key to the Speed's appeal is the effortlessness of the way it combines pace and comfort. Yes, it can crack 200mph – and by a fair way if reports from those who have had it on a derestricted Autobahn are to be believed – but it's not a car that's been compromised to do so. Suspension changes over the standard GTC are limited and aimed at high-speed stability: a 10mm reduction in ride height, firmer springing and fatter anti-roll bars. But with the switchable dampers in their softest setting it's still a supreme waffer, using its 2495kg mass to pummel rough roads into submission, while retaining decent body control. Switching to

Specification

Engine	W12, 5998cc, twin-turbo
CO2	347g/km
Power	616bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	590lb ft @ 1700rpm
0-62mph	4.4sec (claimed)
Top speed	202mph (claimed)
Basic price	£168,000

'Sport' firms the ride noticeably and would probably boost confidence at high speeds, but there doesn't seem much point to it in everyday use. Nonetheless, even with the dampers turned up and the roof lowered, the GTC never wants for extra structural rigidity.

As always, this is a big car, and one that feels all its size. On narrow UK roads the left-hand driving position of our test GTC had it crawling around corners in fear of oncoming traffic. But on wider tarmac it feels imperious, flowing at an effortless six-tenths with massive amounts of performance in reserve. It grips hard when asked to do so and the four-wheel-drive system will transfer torque rearwards to help counter understeer, even if it does without any side-to-side torque vectoring. Like the rest of the Conti range, the Speed has switched to an eight-speed automatic 'box in place of the old six-speeder, and it's deft at shuffling ratios when cruising but still reacts fast when you want to speed up.

Perhaps the biggest surprise is how compelling the W12 still feels in a world that



now contains the more sonorous Conti V8. The 6-litre lump is starting to feel its age, and there's a delay when you suddenly demand full power as the turbos spool up and the internal parts gather momentum. Its bassy multi-cylinder thrum is pleasant enough, but it never harmonises into the yowl of the newer V8.

Still, it's ten years since the W12 engine was introduced and the GTC arguably remains the best way to sample it. Power levels have increased and emissions have fallen, but the unit's character remains unchanged. The new V8 makes more sense, but there's no denying the emotional appeal of the Speed. ✕

Mike Duff

Verdict

- ⊕ Performance, cruising ability, style
 - ⊖ Running costs a tad on the high side
- evo rating: ★★★★★**



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The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Mazda MX-5 range: Urban 25.4 (11.1) - 28.8 (9.8), Extra Urban 45.6 (6.2) - 50.4 (5.6), Combined 35.3 (8.0) - 39.8 (7.1). CO₂ emissions (g/km) 188 - 167.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results obtained through laboratory testing and are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

Retail sales only, subject to vehicle availability for vehicles registered between 01.07.13 and 30.09.13 at participating dealers. T&Cs apply. *0% finance available on all Mazda MX-5 models. At the end of the agreement there are 3 options: (i) Renew: Part exchange the vehicle, where equity is available, (ii) Retain: Pay the Optional Final Payment to own the vehicle or (iii) Return the vehicle. Further charges may be made subject to the condition of the vehicle. Finance subject to status, 18s or over. Guarantee/Indemnity may be required. Mazda Financial Services RH1 1SR. Model shown: Mazda MX-5 1.8i Sport Graphite, OTR from £20,245 including a £750 saving. Model shown includes Free of Charge Mica paint. OTR price includes VAT, number plates, delivery, 12 months' road fund licence, first registration fee, 3-year or 60,000-mile warranty and 3 years' European roadside assistance. Test drives subject to applicant status and availability. Details correct at time of going to print. Not available in conjunction with any other offer unless specified.



Test location: B4011, Buckinghamshire, UK GPS: 51.79237, -1.02996

Skoda Octavia vRS

Latest version of Golf GTI-related sporty hatchback

Photography: Dean Smith

W

WITH PRICES FOR THE new Octavia vRS starting at £22,990, the Skoda hatchback is £3000 cheaper than the identically powered Golf GTI it's

so closely related to. But is that enough to make the Skoda a sensible choice over the Golf?

The latest Octavia is a physically bigger car than the Golf: 380mm longer overall with a 15mm longer wheelbase, which translates into a much roomier cabin and a boot so enormous you could be tempted to convert it into a student bedsit. The vRS sits on sports suspension that is 15mm lower than the set-up of other Octavia models and significantly stiffer. Other features include a new progressive steering rack that quickens the ratio as more lock is applied, and an electronic differential lock (XDS+) that brakes both inside wheels to give the effect of a mechanical locking diff.

Inside, there are excellent sports seats, which are both very supportive and comfortable to sit in for long periods, a nice-to-have three-spoke sports steering wheel, and plenty of standard kit: Bluetooth, intelligent cruise and a pre-collision braking system that should help save you from minor shunts.

Our test car is fitted with the optional six-speed DSG gearbox that pushes the OTR price up to £24,380. The DSG vRS reaches 62mph in 6.9sec and can go on to 152mph, but it's beaten by the 6.8sec and 154mph of the six-speed manual model. Yet DSG suits the car well, with gearchanges barely noticeable when pootling around. As I press on, I find myself using the

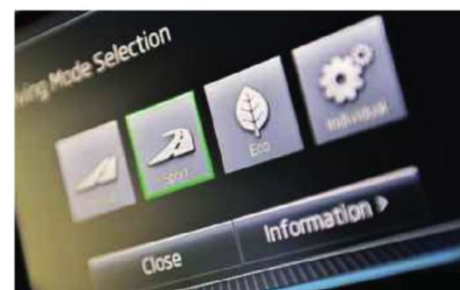
Specification

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbocharged
CO2	149g/km
Power	217bhp @ 4500rpm
Torque	258lb ft @ 1500-4400rpm
0-62mph	6.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	154mph (claimed)
Basic price	£22,990

paddles more than I expected to, as in plain old 'Drive' the 'box sometimes isn't as quick to change down as I would like, while in the more aggressive 'Sport' setting it's annoyingly over-keen to hang on to a gear.

The 2.0 TSI engine delivers plenty of torque, peaking at 258lb ft from just 1500rpm, but it doesn't like to rev much, getting very noisy and breathless well before its 6500rpm limiter. Fortunately, the paddles behind the steering wheel make cog-swapping a pleasure, so it's easy to keep the engine spinning in its sweet spot. That translates to serious cross-country pace that would worry many a sports car.

Like most modern VW products, steering feel is almost non-existent, but at least the quicker rack and subtle braking of an inside wheel give the chassis an agile feel through flowing corners. However, what is less acceptable is the ride quality of the sports suspension, which falls well short of the mark in what is effectively meant to be a family car. OK, the stiffer springs give excellent body control, but even on the standard 18in wheels of our test car (19s are



optional), the ride never settles and is a constant irritant when all you want to do is cruise. All vRS models come with four switchable 'Driving Mode Selection' programs as standard, but because the dampers are fixed-rate, the ride quality remains the same whichever mode is selected. What this vRS desperately needs is the Adaptive Chassis Control set-up from the Golf GTI, because that system delivers excellent ride quality as well as great body control.

So there's much to love about the Octavia vRS: it looks good and offers an excellent mix of pace and space for an acceptable price, but that compromised ride is a problem. For such an otherwise likeable car, that's a real shame. ✖

Harry Metcalfe (@harrym_evo)

Verdict

🏠 Bargain family holdall

🚗 Compromised ride annoying to live with

evo rating: ★★★★★



Test location: Muskoka, Ontario, Canada GPS: 44.91064,-79.57582

Mercedes-Benz S500L AMG Line

All-new version of luxury saloon gets subtly different look and major tech upgrade

MANY OF US HAVE coveted the idea of having an S-class to cruise around in, even one at the bargain basement end of the market. With a couple of notable exceptions, the *Sonderklasse* has never been a pure-blooded drivers' car, but there's an undeniable appeal in its combination of comfort, speed and a slight air of menace.

Recent generations of the S-class have been successful enough to turn their rivals into also-rans, certainly in global sales terms. Which is why we should be unsurprised that, behind lashings of new tech, the new one sticks closely to the recipe of its predecessors. The design has gracefully evolved from that of the outgoing 'W221' version and several of the powerplants are carried over pretty much unchanged. Both the 3-litre V6 diesel that powers the S350 Bluetec and the 4.6-litre twin-turbo V8 in the S500L are only modestly revised (for lower emissions, naturally), and both still drive through the familiar Mercedes seven-speed auto 'box (a nine-speeder comes next year).

Mercedes was keen to talk about the gadgets, but the important news is that behind and underneath them, the S-class is still brilliantly engineered. As always, comfort is at the top of the agenda, and Mercedes has given the new car a full-length acoustic undertray that makes it exceptionally quiet. At motorway speeds you hear more road and wind noise from other cars as you pass them than from the S-class itself. The ride is pliant on standard air springs, with an optional 'Magic Body Control' system using radar to set the dampers according to the

Specification

Engine	V8, 4663cc, twin-turbo
CO2	207g/km
Power	449bhp @ 5250rpm
Torque	516lb ft @ 1800-3500rpm
0-62mph	4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£88,130

road surface. There are numerous standard assistance systems – ominously, Mercedes predicts this generation of S-class will eventually be capable of driving autonomously – but beneath them the steering is good and the S feels respectably agile on twistier roads.

As before, around 80 per cent of UK buyers are expected to opt for the S350 diesel, meaning they will experience an effective but completely joyless engine. The refinement gains emphasise how vocal the powerplant is when worked hard – this being a relative term, of course, as it delivers its peak of 254bhp at just 3500rpm. The 449bhp petrol V8 in the S500L is vastly nicer, with a solid punch, a lag-free response and a crisp exhaust note, but it's £88,130 – £23k more than the diesel. Three hybrids – two petrol-electric and one diesel-electric – will follow shortly, as should 63 and 65 AMG variants.

And the technology? It ranges from the useful, like seatbelts incorporating airbags and all-LED lighting (there isn't a single bulb on the car), to the gimmicky, like the optional Active Fragrance system, which scents the cabin from your choice of four 'mood-enhancing



fragrances'. But then Mercedes has always seen the S-class as a chance to show off.

One mild disappointment is the control interface, and the number of functions that have been relegated to the turn-and-click Comand controller. You can't even change CD track without either navigating through several sub-menus or changing the steering wheel controls to 'Audio'. It's even more confusing in the back, where passengers using the optional rear-seat entertainment system are faced with two screens that look almost exactly like iPads, but which aren't touch-sensitive: very 2005.

Still, on this evidence, we've no reason to assume the S-class won't continue as the barge of choice for the discerning plutocrat... ❌

Mike Duff

Verdict

- Impressive V8 petrol engine
 - Tech overload, predictably pricey
- evo rating: ★★★★★**

DEFY CONVENTION



Advertising promotion



PERFORMANCE ART

A BRILLIANT NEW LIMITED EDITION MAZDA MX-5, AND A CHANCE TO WIN AN EXCEPTIONAL PIECE OF MAZDA MX-5 INSPIRED ART

DEFYING convention – that's always been key to Mazda's thinking. And there's no better example of its bold approach than the Mazda MX-5, now celebrated in a unique collaboration with 'Hyperrealist' artist Paul Cadden.

Back in the 1980s, everyone thought the two-seater sports car was dead. Everyone except Mazda, who set about reinventing the genre.

What they produced was a pure-bred, rear-wheel-drive bundle of unadulterated driving joy. When the original Mazda MX-5 was launched in 1989, it turned the enthusiast motoring world on its head.

What's equally remarkable is that three decades later – and despite several evolutions and a host of improvements – it's still the same pure driving machine it's always been. And there's still nothing else quite like it on the market.

But while every Mazda MX-5 is special, some are just

a little bit more special than others. Which is where the Mazda MX-5 Sport Graphite Limited Edition comes in, combining the pure driving thrills of the Mazda MX-5 with extra exclusivity and unique style.

And because such an icon of cool deserves a fittingly cool launch, Mazda has teamed up with Paul Cadden to capture the Mazda MX-5 Sport Graphite's unique style. Whether working in pencil, pastel or – in this case, appropriately enough – graphite, Cadden's art is so lifelike that it's often mistaken for photographs (visit paulcadden.com and prepare to be amazed).

And now you can own a piece of it. Mazda and evo are giving one lucky reader the chance to win Paul Cadden's stunning original drawing of the Mazda MX-5 Sport Graphite. Go to www.mazda.co.uk/cars/mx-5-sport-graphite/ for full

details of how to enter. And that's not all. Mazda has also commissioned a strictly limited edition of 500 signed prints taken from the original, and 300 of these have been inserted into copies of this month's evo.

So check your copy carefully – you could be in for an unexpected treat. Call it the Thrill of Drawing...

The Mazda MX-5 Sport Graphite is available in three bold colours – Aquatic Blue, Zeal Red or Aluminium Silver – complemented by a retractable hard-top in Meteor Grey, stunning dark 17-inch alloys and black headlamp inserts.

Inside, there are heated black leather sports seats with contrasting grey stitching, and under the bonnet a choice of 126bhp 1.8 or 160bhp 2.0-litre engines, the latter capable of dispatching 0-62mph in just 7.9 seconds.

But then, limited to 500 examples, these Mazda MX-5s are never going to hang about...





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📍 Test location: A444, Warwickshire, UK GPS: 52.60534,-1.47847

Ford Focus ST Mountune

Mountune upgrade delivers 271bhp and 295lb ft without affecting factory warranty

THE LATEST FORD FOCUS ST is already proving to be a bit of a hit: it's good value, well engineered and entertaining. That its £21,995 price tag undercuts its direct rivals is the icing on the cake – and there's even an estate version. We like the car – indeed, we've just added an ST Estate to our Fast Fleet (more next month) – but this Mountune version promises more power and performance with few compromises.

In the standard Focus ST, the 2-litre turbo engine produces 247bhp. The Mountune upgrade takes that to 271bhp. A large-capacity alloy intercooler takes care of the increased cooling needs and revised 'low-loss' ducts and hoses are fitted. A unique K&N filter is installed and the engine management recalibrated.

Perhaps more impressive than the peak power figure is the torque output, now rated at 295lb ft at just 2750rpm (up from 265lb ft at a mere 1750rpm). The result is a seriously quick car: 0-60mph takes 5.7sec, delivered with a strong, seamless wallop rather than a peaky smack in the chops. That's an impressive 0.8sec quicker than the standard car and endows the Mountune ST with enough performance to frighten an Audi S3 or a BMW M135i – cars considered a class higher than the Ford.

The Mountune upgrade doesn't include a suspension rework: not a bad thing because the standard set-up copes well with the extra urge

Specification

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc, turbocharged
CO2	169g/km
Power	271bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque	295lb ft @ 2750rpm
0-60mph	5.7sec (claimed)
Top speed	154mph+ (estimated)
Basic price	£23,220

and the chassis remains supple with strong body control. Indeed, it feels like it could absorb another 10-20bhp without too much trouble. The ST doesn't have the keyed-in feeling of a Golf GTI, or the last degree of chassis finesse of a Renaultsport Mégane, but it's an enjoyable and well-resolved drive nonetheless.

The electric power steering does an acceptable job, but lacks some of the accuracy and feedback of analogue systems. The variable rack sharpens as you apply lock, which allows for a combination of good stability in a straight line and quick turn-in when you get to the twisties. Having said that, a tiny bit more weight and feedback wouldn't go amiss.

The previous-generation Focus RS was fitted with a mechanical limited-slip differential and the torque steer-limiting RevoKnuckle suspension layout. The ST has neither. However, Ford has done a good job calibrating the electronic diff: power is transferred neatly

without too much torque steer or wheelspin. You have to hold the wheel tight on corner exits, but the car doesn't make a lunge for the bushes like most near-300bhp FWD hatches. Mountune claims the upgrade was tested extensively on British B-roads and at the Nürburgring, and contrary to popular belief you can really feel the difference. The car is particularly good on flowing roads with compressions and rises.

So, the Mountune Focus ST is a fine upgrade, good enough to make you wonder why you wouldn't spec the car like this from new. The kit has a minimum 12-month/12,000-mile warranty for parts and defects, and doesn't affect the Ford base vehicle warranty. On top of that, Greenlight Insurance will add the upgrade to your policy without extra charges.

The cost of this upgrade? £1225 plus 90 minutes' labour. And with low-mileage, year-old cars dipping below £19k, add the kit and you could have a very fast, very practical hot hatch or estate for an extremely reasonable £20k. I'm pretty sure we'll be upgrading our ST soon. ✕

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Verdict

- ⊕ Performance, integration, value
 - ⊖ Steering not as feelsome as rivals
- evo rating: ★★★★★**



Test location: B526, Northamptonshire, UK GPS: 52.14921, -0.79804

Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG

Latest version of V8-powered executive saloon gets 549bhp and 531lb ft

Photography: Dean Smith

YOUNG BEN IS A discerning chap. He frequently leans over the garden wall and comments on whatever car I've just parked outside my house. His incisive words always possess that air of unabashed confidence that comes with being eight years old, and he puts his father to shame with his knowledge of the *evo* Database. I'd have got him to write this review, but he had some homework to attend to.

Anyway, the F50 and V12 Zagato have (understandably) been his highlights so far, and consequently I wasn't sure what he'd think about the new Mercedes E63 AMG when it rumbled up to the kerbside. To my slight surprise, it received a rather awed response and even got the nod over a Panamera parked nearby. The menacing black paintjob undoubtedly helped, especially when teamed with no-cost-option black wheels. I think the new face of the E-class looks a bit better too, although its softer, slightly melted-looking jowls are really only different rather than being any fresher than the angular Kryten-like lines that adorned the previous car.

A soundtrack drawn from eight cavernous pots always helps get enthusiasts of any age on side, too, and the noise emanating from the E63's huge exhausts is a wonderfully deep, gurgling growl. If you wanted to try to imitate it, the noise would have to start somewhere near your stomach. At 4.2sec, the 0-62mph time is unchanged, but the V8's voice speaks of 549bhp and 531lb ft of turbocharged torque, up 31bhp and 15lb ft respectively. It sounds like plenty –

Specification

Engine	V8, 5461cc, twin-turbo
CO2	230g/km
Power	549bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque	531lb ft @ 1750-5250rpm
0-62mph	4.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (claimed)
Basic price	£73,745

it's more torque than an M5 or RS6 – but the E63 is also available in 'S' form, which further raises the outputs to 577bhp and 589lb ft.

Not that the E63 feels like it needs any more power, because it requires some serious gumption to deploy 549bhp down a dry British B-road. Some 1770kg and nearly five metres of car travelling at pace, over bumps and cambers and between hedges and verdant summer verges, certainly focuses the mind. But the thing I've always liked about the E63 is that for all its size, the chassis is still relatively easy to exploit. The balance is uncomplicated and the grip at both ends can be easily leant on and played with at less intimidating speeds than in the more hardcore M5. The steering is a little light but is very accurate, and there's some genuine feel so that it's easier to play on the limits of the tyres and then gather everything up smoothly when you step over them. The seven-speed AMG Speedshift automatic transmission actually feels slightly more responsive in this car too.

The trouble I have with a lot of AMG products, however, is that although the engineers will



no doubt say that with each new iteration everything changes, to the casual observer everything actually appears to stay the same. A design language (both inside and out) that's slightly stuck in a rut doesn't help, but the AMG formula of a big V8 and rear-wheel drive is one that somehow just feels awfully familiar for what is meant to be a new car.

Which is why it's good to hear the exclamations of Ben, because to those seeing it for the first time it's not 'just another' Mercedes AMG. It's a big, brooding beast of a car with a stonking soundtrack and enough power to strip the smiles from complacent supercar drivers. And that's very appealing indeed. ✕

Henry Catchpole (@HenryCatchpole)

Verdict

⚡ Power, response and accuracy in spades

⚡ A little lacking in originality

evo rating: ★★★★★

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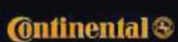
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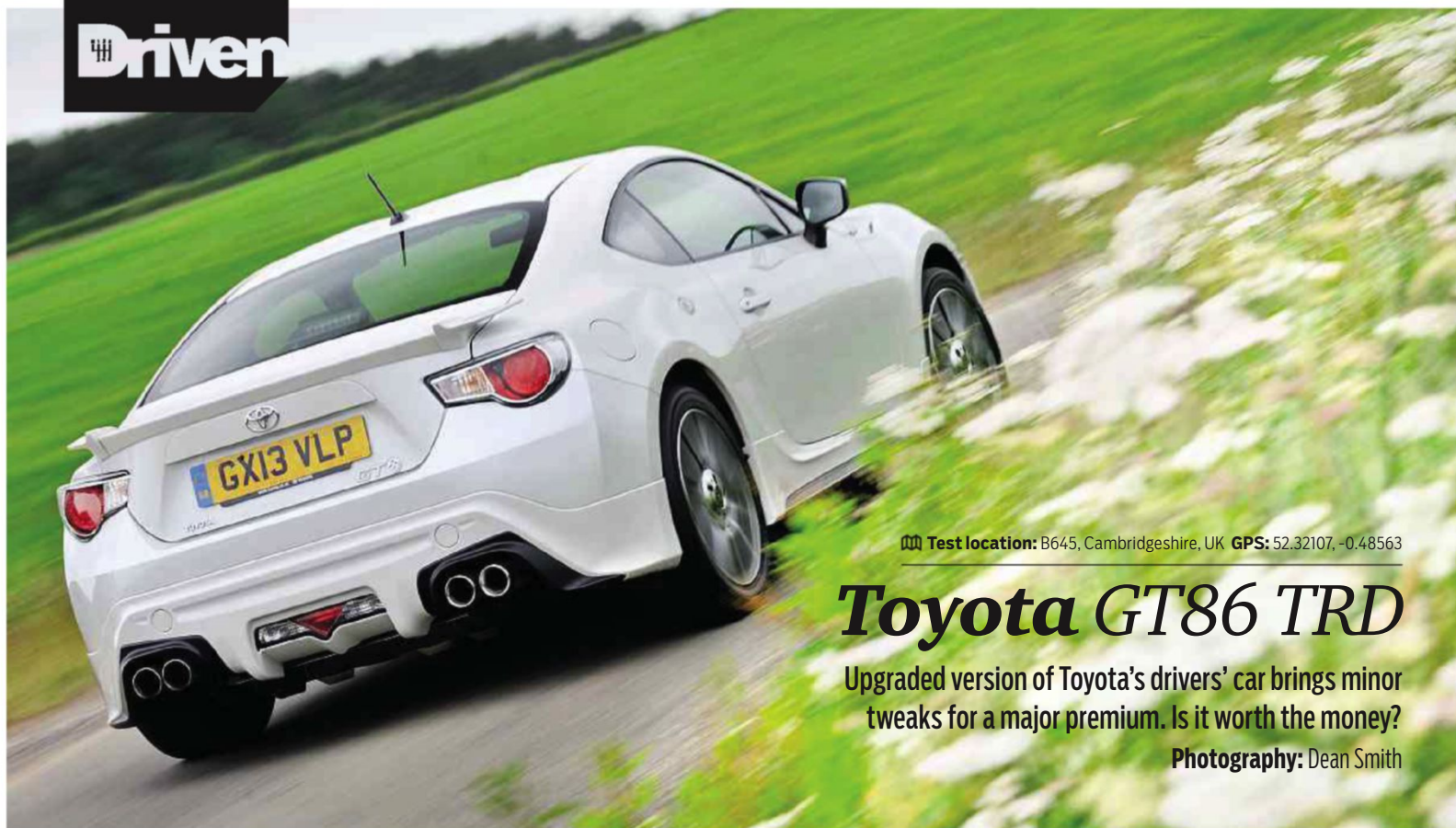


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Toyota GT86 TRD

Upgraded version of Toyota's drivers' car brings minor tweaks for a major premium. Is it worth the money?

Photography: Dean Smith

O **ON THE FACE OF IT, THE** Toyota GT86 TRD might be the worst-value performance variant on sale today. It offers no extra power over the 197bhp standard car and claimed performance remains identical: 0-62mph in 7.6sec and a top speed of 140mph. Of course, the GT86 isn't about straight-line fireworks, so perhaps they've gone to town on the chassis? Nope. Same springs, same dampers, same anti-roll bars, same bushes. Instead this Toyota Racing Development upgrade consists of 18in wheels fitted with high-performance tyres 10mm wider, an aero kit and a slightly rortier exhaust.

For this you will be expected to pay a premium of £6500. The 250 TRDs that are coming to the UK cost from £31,495 each. We wouldn't recommend that you sink all that money into a GT86 that looks a bit worse than the standard car and goes no harder. How could we? But this TRD does allow us to find out how a GT86 fares with 'proper' tyres, i.e. tyres that deliver grip, response and progression instead of low rolling resistance and mega-slow wear rates.

Some cite the tyres fitted to the GT86 as the very centre of its appeal, but here at **evo** we've often wondered if slightly more aggressive rubber might really bring Toyota's coupe to life. The reason? Well, the standard Michelin Primacy tyres that Toyota picked for the GT86 might surrender grip relatively early but they rob the car of some precision and can create a rather forced sense of fun: amusing for a while, but not quite as rewarding as you might hope.

Specification

Engine	Flat-four, 1998cc
CO2	181g/km
Power	197bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque	151lb ft @ 6400-6600rpm
0-62mph	7.6sec (claimed)
Top speed	140mph (claimed)
Basic price	£31,495

What's really incredible about the TRD is how different it feels. After my first run down a familiar road, I had to re-check the press kit. Surely it must have retuned suspension? It seemed implausible that such improved turn-in and an apparent increase in body control – particularly at the front, which rolls early and aggressively in the standard car – could simply be down to a lower-profile tyre with a stiffer sidewall? And yet it is. The ride is compromised by the new 225/45 ZR18 Yokohama Advan Sport tyres, but I'll accept that for the improved turn-in precision and greater front-end bite. On particularly lumpy roads, the heavier wheels occasionally skip where the standard car would breathe, but again there's ample recompense: a newfound edge and aggression to the driving experience that injects an added thrill.

Of course, the GT86 is all about oversteer, right? What good are grippier tyres if the tail-out fun is tamed? Well, the truth is that the GT86 doesn't have the grunt for lurid power oversteer. Without the ability to deliver a clumsy thud of torque, it takes momentum and commitment to



get the tail swinging. I'll concede that the TRD might not wiggle its hips quite as expressively out of a second-gear hairpin as the standard car, but it retains the same ultimate balance on the road and is probably more progressive when it does let go. I didn't have a chance to drive it in the wet but I suspect its improvements across the board would be magnified yet further.

The TRD is heinously expensive but also highlights the inherent rightness of the GT86 chassis and its sensitivity to small adjustments. We may be a little out of step with others here, but a GT86 with a tad more grip, a great deal more precision and the same tail-led balance is right up our street. ☒

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon)

Verdict

⊕ Better precision without loss of balance or fun

⊖ Crazy price premium, questionable styling

evo rating: ★★★★★

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Watches

This month, a limited-edition Senna tribute, a WRX for your wrist, and an Austin Healey-inspired chronograph

Words: Simon de Burton

1 Hublot Masterpiece MP-06 Senna

Price: from £94,000 **From:** marcuswatches.co.uk

This is the fourth Hublot watch to honour the late Ayrton Senna since the company first collaborated with his family to create the 'Big Bang Senna' back in 2007. It is also the most complicated piece to date, featuring a 155-part tourbillon movement with a five-day power reserve. It's available in 'entry level' titanium-cased form at £94,000, rising to £98,000 for a PVD version and £114,400 for the range topper in 'King Gold'. Each of the three models will be limited to 41 examples (representing Senna's 41 race victories and three championship titles) and will be delivered in a case designed to look like a miniature version of the Brazilian legend's racing helmet.

2 Ralf Tech WRX C Automatic

Price: £3320 **From:** pageandcooper.com

Strictly speaking, this is a watch for divers rather than drivers – but dive equipment specialist Ralf Tech does sponsor the French Signatech Nissan endurance racer Nelson Panciatici, and the model in question is called 'WRX'. In this instance, WRX stands for 'World Record Extreme', because the watch celebrates the record 330-metre dive made by scuba expert Pascal Bernabé while wearing one of the first Ralf Tech watches. The WRX uses a modified Valjoux 7750 movement and has proved robust enough to be adopted by Commando Hubert, the French Navy's combat divers. It's available in a variety of styles, but the 47.5mm case is not for the slight of wrist.

3 Frederique Constant Healey Chronograph

Price: £2290 **From:** frederique-constant.com

Good-value watch brand Frederique Constant reinforced its long-standing relationship with the Healey Drivers' Club by sponsoring the Fourth European Healey Meeting, which took place at the end of May in Crieff, Scotland. There the brand unveiled a trio of new watches dedicated to the great British marque, the top model being this 43mm, steel-cased chronograph with a silver, engine-turned dial. All three have an image of an Austin Healey 100 on the case back and are presented with a model of the 1953 'special test' car, NOJ 392, which raced in that year's Mille Miglia and Le Mans events.

Watch tech

Luminosity



When you want to see what time it is in the dark, there's nothing so useful on a watch as decent luminosity – or 'lume' as watch geeks like to call it.

The first radioluminescent paint was invented in 1902 by Thomas Edison's laboratory assistant, William Hammer, who mixed radium with zinc sulphide. It was another man, however – George Kunz – who patented the idea after formulating a mix of radium-barium carbonate, zinc sulphide and linseed.

But during the 1920s it was discovered that the health and indeed lives of dial painters were being endangered by the practice of placing the tips of their radium-coated brushes in their mouths ('tipping') in order to create a fine point with which to accurately apply the mix to watch dials.

Later on, tritium – a radioactive isotope of hydrogen – became the favoured material. The letter 'T' within a circle on the dial warns of the presence of the potentially dangerous material, which can be harmful if inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin.

Nowadays, the favoured material for dial luminescence is SuperLuminova, a strontium aluminate-based, non-radioactive, non-toxic pigment, invented in 1993 by the Japanese company Nemoto.

Brands such as Luminox and Ball Watch Company, however, equip their watches with tiny tubes made from borosilicate glass that contain tritium gas and have a coating of luminescent material. These glow permanently – and brightly – with a light that can last up to 25 years.

Now & Then

NOW Casio Edifice X Infiniti Red Bull Racing Worn by: Mark Webber

Until he abandons F1 for LMP1 at the end of this season, Mark Webber can be seen sporting this special Red Bull Racing edition of Casio's Edifice sports watch, complete with carbonfibre bezel and dial.

The watch allows for instant switching between time zones – and costs just £150.



THEN Gallet MultiChron 12 Worn by: Jim Clark

Scots racing legend Jim Clark was regularly seen wearing a Gallet MultiChron 12 around the tracks at the height of his career. The 37mm, steel chronograph featured both telemeter and tachymeter scales and a 12-hour countdown timer – handy for endurance races.





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Insider

by HARRY METCALFE



Harry finds the hill climb at the Goodwood Festival of Speed frustrating, but he's thought of a way to improve it

A

ACCORDING TO MOST OF THE REPORTS

I've read, this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed was the best ever in the event's 20-year history. Really? Perhaps if you were one of the very lucky invited VIPs or media, who get to enjoy mingling with the stars in the private Driver's Enclosure, or if you attended the infamous Goodwood Ball, but for the average punter buying an entry ticket, I'm not sure the FoS is always as good as it's cracked up to be.

Now let's get one thing straight: there's no question that Lord March has created potentially the greatest motoring festival in the world. I've been to other similar events across the globe and what makes Goodwood stand out is its sheer diversity. No other gathering can mix American dragsters with Le Mans-winning D-types or current F1 cars with such aplomb. Then there's the brilliant, unexpected twists Lord March introduces each year. Who will forget 12-time world trial-bike champion Dougie Lampkin's spectacular ride around Goodwood House, for example? Goodwood mixes and matches the extremes of our octane-powered landscape better than any other event, but it's what's at the core of the Festival that I believe needs a serious rethink, and that's the hill climb.

Wind the clock back to the first Goodwood Festival of Speed in 1993, when 25,000 people rocked up to enjoy the spectacle of some of the world's greatest cars blasting up Lord March's private drive with just a rope between them and a snorting race car. How times change. Today, attendance over the three days is capped at 150,000 and surrounding the course is a myriad of other brilliant attractions that includes everything from a forest rally stage to manufacturer stands big enough to dwarf many a major dealership. But the result of all this is that the cars running up the hill can sometimes feel like a secondary event.

Making matters worse, the timetable nearly always runs behind schedule, so getting your timing right to watch a particular car do its run is next to impossible. It got even worse this year when the programme got so far behind schedule on Saturday that the afternoon's Supercar Run got cancelled completely. If I'd paid £57 for an entry ticket (or worse, £113 for an entry ticket plus grandstand seat and programme) then I'd be more than a little bit miffed that I didn't get to see some of the world's greatest supercars in action on the hill.

The reason it was cancelled was because of the 6pm cut-off time for hill activities, which the supercar batch would have overrun. The supercars are seen as sacrificial for some reason, even though Goodwood's own research tells it that they're the second most

important draw after the F1 cars. It doesn't make sense to me, especially as most of the cars are road-legal, so shouldn't be making enough noise to upset the neighbours...

I simply don't understand how the running of the hill climb has got so shambolic when Lord March is astonishingly good at getting the rest of the Festival so right. At the moment it works like this: Batches of cars are herded out of their respective paddocks by marshals and gathered in line by the side of the track, where they wait while the cars in earlier batches complete their runs. After the last car in each batch has reached the top, a course car will drive up the hill and the next batch of cars will be released to the start line, where they queue up and wait as each car in the batch takes its turn to tackle the climb. When this whole process has been repeated for two or three batches, it's the turn of a course car cavalcade to drive up to the top, get in

'One journo told me it was over four hours between the marshal asking him to start his car and him arriving back in the paddock'

position and lead all the collected cars back down the hill at a safe speed, after which they return to their paddocks.

It all takes forever. One journo doing the Supercar Run on the Friday this year told me it was over four hours between the marshal asking him to start his car and him arriving back in the paddock. All for around a minute's driving on the hill! That's why I think twice before accepting an invite to drive anything up the hill these days, because the amount of hanging around drives me nuts. It's also why there were no Veyrons at this year's Festival – Bugatti decided not to attend because it finds the way the Supercar Run operates unacceptable.

After 20 years of the Festival, surely it's time to put in a separate return route back to the paddocks. Doing that would massively reduce the downtime between batches (peaking at an infuriating 45 minutes this year) and keep the paying spectators far better served by allowing the timetable to run to schedule. Only then would the Goodwood Festival be the 'perfect' motoring event so many commentators seem to think it is already. ✕

@harrym_evo

Harry is **evo's** editorial director and a serial supercar buyer



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Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



Porter finds that when it comes to buying a cheap, practical used car, you need a different set of priorities

T

THERE ARE MANY REASONS TO BUY A car. Speed. Handling. Pop-up headlights. These are all nice, exciting things that might lead you to empty your savings account. Practicality, on the other hand, is not. Practicality is a bit of a bore.

Unfortunately, after buying a very small puppy which rapidly became an unexpectedly large dog, I found myself in a position where all car desires, up to and including the pop-up lights, had to give way to the need to get a hairy, panting animal in the boot.

In case you didn't know this, dogs grow fast. It's ridiculous. If humans grew at the same rate, the average ten-year-old would be over six feet tall. But you can still cram a six-foot-tall person into the back seat of a small hatchback. An ever-expanding dog reaches a point where it doesn't want to do this any more. And since she seems to get another inch taller every night, she soon develops the strength to make this displeasure well-known with a pantomime of twisting and pulling against the lead that will cause you to call the obstinate oaf a 'knob' just as one of the neighbours walks past. At least, that's what happened to me. And that's what prompted me to look for a more practical car.

I'm sure this could have been made into an exciting event if I'd bought something grunty like an Audi RS6. But this would have only been made possible by selling the dog for medical research, rather defeating the object of the exercise. So, in a bid to spite practicality, I wanted to spend as little as possible on a mutt wagon. A budget of a grand ought to do it. Any more would be eating into the household fund for tennis balls, which seems to have rocketed since the dog arrived. I'm not sure what she's doing to make them disappear so rapidly but I'm starting to suspect she's secretly opened a second-hand tennis ball shop.

If you spend your spare time pinging around the usual websites idly looking at cars for sale, you'll know that there are many different cars available for £1000. You'll also know that most of them aren't very interesting, especially amongst the things that could fit a woofing moron in the boot. The old-shape Mondeo estate, for example, was a perfectly fine car when it was new and really not a bad thing to drive. But in the £1000-and-under world, it's lost whatever small appeal it might have had. Rationally speaking, it might still have some spring in its step, or at least as much as the knackered dampers and supermarket own-brand tyres will allow, and it's a Ford so you can probably keep it running with very little hassle or expense. But somehow it's just not interesting. The same is true of almost any creaky mass-market estate you can think of that costs a double-monkey.

The Volvo 850, on the other hand, does have something going for it. I don't know what that something is, but it just does, especially if it's a T5. Technically it would be worse to drive than a Mondeo and it'd cost more to keep going, but somehow it would be more satisfying to fall into its sagging but Swedishly supportive driver's seat and trundle about the place behind a faint five-cylinder burr.

The reason for this, I suspect, is because when you need a lot of practicality for not a lot of money, you might as well give up on the normal ways in which we might enjoy cars. In the sub-grand estate world, you need to find small crumbs of comfort to match the small crumbs of unidentified organic matter that will almost certainly lie under the front seats: an amusing sound, a stout sensibleness, a warm feeling of having paid less for a once-pricey car than you did for your last holiday. And once I'd worked this

'When you need a lot of practicality for not a lot of money, you might as well give up on the normal ways in which we might enjoy cars; you need to find small crumbs of comfort'

out, it was quite liberating. The relentless pursuit of tremendous performance or wonderful steering feel is only going to lead to disappointment. Far better to accept that these things will never be yours and actively look for the opposite, for a car that never claimed to offer such treats.

Which is why, for just 850 British pounds, I have bought a 1999 Jeep Cherokee. It smells a bit, there's moss growing in the gutters and the passenger window is broken. But the 4-litre straight-six is remarkably lusty, the general standard of the controls is so approximate as to be hilarious and it's got room enough in the boot for an enormous bundle of fur with a nose on the front. It's a great thing because, in a way, it is wilfully and cheerily a bit crap. And all for a winningly low price. The dog, annoyingly, doesn't seem to like it much so far. But she'll learn to love it in time. I know I have. ☒

@sniffpetrol

Richard is **evo's** longest-serving columnist and the keyboard behind sniffpetrol.com

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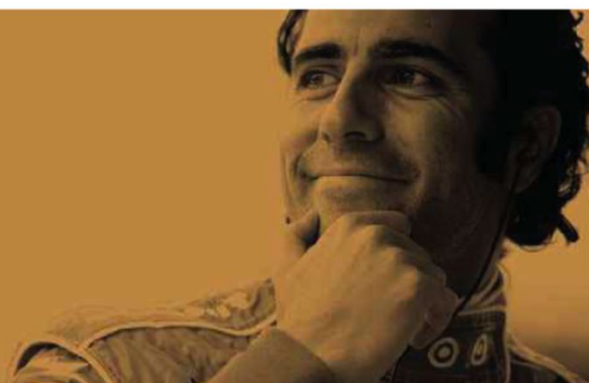


Teutonia II Chronograph

The Teutonia II Chronograph is ticking evidence of how an elegant watch can be given a sporty touch. This is, of course, first and foremost due to the timekeeping function, as the totalizers of the hour and minute counters give the face its own special dynamics. The diagonal displays for the date and the weekday also contribute to this effect.

Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



After recalling his first motors last month, Dario brings his car history up to the present day

I

IN MY LAST COLUMN, I STARTED OUT ON a wee tour through my car history, explaining amongst other things why I bought a Fiat Uno Turbo. By the end, we were haring around in a Mercedes C36 AMG. This is what happened next...

After the C36, things started to ramp up and I became more influenced by the Dino and 911s that my dad had when I was a kid. The first big thing I bought was a 1989 3.2 Speedster. I fell in love with the shape the moment I saw it. The chassis flexed and it wasn't particularly powerful, but in my opinion at the time it was the best-looking 911 and I loved it. Like the Fiat and the Merc before, it taught me a lot about driving a car. Getting used to the engine hanging out the back and using that to turn it into a corner was fantastic fun, and although it was tough for a Scotsman, I learned to keep the tank full of fuel so it turned in better. I eventually sold it to a friend of mine who still owns it, but if I'm honest, it's the car I wish I'd never sold.

Then I made the mistake of getting a Ferrari 348. I hadn't driven one, but I bought it because I'd always dreamed of owning a Ferrari. I really should have driven it first. It wasn't that quick, the rear brakes would overheat, which meant the pedal would eventually start to go really long, and it didn't handle at all. To top it all off, it was a GTS, so every time you wanted to store the targa top you had to put the seats forward, which meant you had to sit with your legs bent like a praying mantis. It wasn't a highlight.

Then I swapped the 348 for a Testarossa, which might seem a bit odd given what I've just said, but I was willing to persevere with Ferraris. By then I'd been lucky enough to drive an F40 at Knockhill, which opened my eyes to what was possible – I just couldn't afford it, though. So I bought the Testarossa and on the right road it was great, but anything too tight was a complete waste of time and on a road that had too many quick flowing corners, the roll oversteer came into play, at which point it wasn't so much the thrill of driving as the thrill of wrestling.

After that I signed a deal in America with Team Green for the 1998 CART season and my signing bonus went straight into a 355 (still couldn't afford the F40). I bought a Spider (I do like a convertible) and I chose left-hand drive because there seemed to be much less of an offset with the pedals and a more natural driving position resting your left foot on the wheelarch. Plus with the exchange rates, it worked out £30,000 cheaper! It was the first of the Ferraris that I've owned that really did everything it was supposed to, and I've done some cracking road trips in it. I still own it and it's a bit like Trigger's broom now, and although a well-driven hot hatch or Subaru will see it off, I don't really care.

The noise is so much better than that of modern V8 Ferraris, too: both the 430 and 458 that I've owned since seemed to have lost something of that high-pitched scream that the 355 emits, especially when you take the silencers off.

I had an Audi RS2 for a while, but although it looked stunning with all the Porsche parts on it, the dream was better than the reality. It had turbo lag like I've never experienced anywhere else in my life. If you tried to sneak out into a gap in the traffic, you'd be full-throttle, waiting with a bus behind all over the back of you... and then the boost would kick in and all four wheels would spin. When I was trying to sell it, someone broke into the dealership and used it in a ram-raid on a jeweller's. I like to think the ram-raid was unintentional and they just misjudged the lag.

Since then, my practical cars have been two E55s, one of which I still own and is my daily driver in Scotland. When I first

'I think it ended up with 600bhp on 14in front brake discs and it was hilarious'

had it, it went to AMG to have F1 safety car-style wheels added. I think they did a bit of fettling, too, because I've chickened out on the Autobahn at 185mph with it still pulling like a train...

I did have one other oddball as a daily driver: a Techart Magnum. Tony Kanaan already had one and I wanted something to go to the airport with, so I bought a Cayenne Turbo (ugly thing, but pretty capable) and a mate of mine working at the Techart place in Beverly Hills did the body kit and gradually put more power in it. I think it ended up with 600bhp on 14in front brake discs and it was hilarious. It didn't handle particularly well to say the least and anybody that followed you down the street thought you were drunk because you were dodging potholes, but when you got on the throttle it went like a turd off a trowel. It was fun to have for a while, but I eventually got over that phase.

Probably the craziest thing I have is a Plymouth Sport Fury pace car from 1965, the year Jim Clark won the Indy 500. I drove it for the first time the other day. It's on drum brakes, it's got a 383 cubic-inch (6.3-litre) V8 and it's 20 feet long. It's a hoot.

And yes, I did eventually get an F40. It makes me smile every time I drive it. ✕

@dariofranchitti

Dario is a three-time Indy 500 winner and four-time IndyCar champ

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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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Who's been living in your airport this month?



Letter of the Month

Size matters

Just after I enjoyed three days of life-affirming analogue driving with a friend in Wales, you uncannily anticipated that exact subject and location with your Analogue Supercars feature (*evo* 186). However, you omitted one critical point from the 'then and now' story – size.

For more than half of the miles I drove in Wales, it was the ability to drive the narrower roads quickly and with vigour that opened up a new love affair with our 25-year-old 'supercars'. The 328 and the 964 we were driving are both smaller and (crucially) much narrower than their modern-day equivalents, and trackday speeds are not required to be able to exploit these cars' chassis and handling. What a huge difference these factors make to driving engagement.

The other benefit is that of the world's truly great roads where the driver still makes a real difference, many more are open to us than to most current supercar protagonists.

Ian Payne

The star letter wins a Road Angel Gem safety camera & blackspot alert device worth £129.99



The Road Angel Gem automatically updates its safety camera database as you drive and allows users to share the locations of 'live' camera vans and changed speed limits.

ROAD ANGEL™

Last line of defence

Dear simple creatures at *evo*: if you believe feel is under threat, as suggested in the Analogue Supercars story, then it's up to you guys, the motoring media, to influence the people who build such machinery. You are the last line of defence.

You have enjoyed the privilege of driving these supercars and I have enjoyed the privilege of reading about them. Long may that continue, but the sad fact is the Noble M600 is the only new car currently on sale out of the seven tested. Furthermore, it didn't get a single mention in the 'indelible memories' of Richard, Jethro, Nick, Harry or Henry, where the accolades went to the F1 and the F50. Nor did it get into the star trio of cars in the conclusion, where the Porsche Carrera GT joined the aforementioned McLaren and Ferrari.

It was a landmark gathering of landmark cars. Hopefully it's not the end of an era.

Peter Hassett

Too fast for some

I read Harry's column in *evo* 186 with great interest. He explains that sports car sales are down dramatically, but he fails to ask the question why. Sports cars do not make much financial sense but I don't think that's the crux of the issue.

I have used sports or performance cars as daily drivers for 20 years, from a Fiat Coupe Turbo through to a Ferrari 360, several 911s and a GT-R. But now I drive a BMW 1-series. Financial considerations played a part in my decision, but the main reason for not buying another 350bhp-plus performance car is that you just can't use them any more.

Manufacturers seem obsessed with making ever-more rapid cars

without thinking whether they can be used on the public road in countries that have ever-more draconian road laws. Take the GT-R, a car in which you can comfortably lose your licence in second gear and a car that will easily put you in court without even wringing its neck. Bring costs into the mix and it gets even harder to justify buying one.

As a petrolhead, it saddens me to say that modern performance cars are becoming pointless. If manufacturers want to sell more sports cars, perhaps they should soften their prices and build cars that excite at sub-supersonic speeds rather than cars that mercilessly chase performance.

Philip Turner

A farmer's rant

I couldn't help but disagree with Richard Porter's observations in *evo* 186 on Land Rover's refusal to move on with its Defender model. He suggested that 'real off-roadists' had moved on to Toyota Land Cruisers years ago. This is absolute rubbish.

The Defender has a cult following as it is a massively capable towing vehicle with go-anywhere capabilities and unrivalled durability. Us farmers have depended on the Defender for years, as few cars have the same towing capacity, simple and effective interior, off-road capability and all-round toughness. Farmers have a real need for a simple vehicle where optional extras stretch as far as an adjustable ball hitch, rather than the heated leather massage seats in other 4x4s.

As for suggesting changing the Defender to another expensive soft-roader, the world is already full of them, and there are only so many Evoques Land Rover can make for city-living Victoria Beckhams and their 2.2 children. Leave our Landie alone!

Rhys Owen



Above: Rhys Owen insists that the Land Rover Defender is just perfect as it is



Above: Philip Turner found it impossible to make the most of his Nissan GT-R



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

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Above: André Torgal loved his KTM X-Bow drive as it represented modern technology



Above: Greg Thomas is joyous at marques like AMG boosting the hot hatch market

Don't stop progress

I'm 32, and I can't stand people going on about the good old days. Not long ago **evo** was bracing itself for the disappearance of the manual gearbox, then articles started appearing where the lack of a manual option wasn't even mentioned. In some articles it was actually admitted that a manual gearbox would add nothing to the experience. But every now and again, you can't resist crying about the past.

Was the world a better place before we had smartphones or the Internet? No. Do you miss the clicking you got every time you hit a key on your old Nokia (manual gearbox) when you text someone on your shiny smartphone (paddle-shift)? Well, some will, as there will always be someone stuck in the past, the kind of people that write for classic car magazines. But that isn't **evo**, which is supposed to be about the thrill of driving.

I have never driven any of the incredible machines on **evo**'s supercar tests and I probably never will, but the one crazy thing I have driven was on a two-lap driving experience. I could have gone for a Lambo, a Ferrari or a Porsche, but I chose a KTM X-Bow because I wanted the thrill of driving, and I wanted a paddle-shift so I could concentrate on enjoying everything else. Time moves forward and there is nothing you can do about it.

I'm pretty sure that back in the day, you guys at **evo** would have complained about the loss of the non-synchromesh gearbox and the end of the carburettor. But look at cars now, with turbocharging, direct injection and so on. The future is not as bad as you think.

André Torgal

Mercedes Martin?

So Aston Martin will be procuring its engines from Mercedes. This may be necessary to ensure development of future cars, but it is definitely not a good move. It looks like either an act of profiteering or one of pure desperation due to a lack of finance.

A top sports car marque that cannot manufacture its own engines – the heart of the car, if you will – is no longer a top sports car marque. It's as simple as that. What will it read across the engine when we lift the lid? 'Mercedes Martin'?

I'm afraid that this looks like the beginning of the end of Aston, at least in its current guise. When will the motor industry learn that management buyouts and acquisitions of car manufacturers by consortiums, venture capitalists and individual business persons don't work?

It costs vast sums of money to develop new vehicles, which these outfits just do not have. Even Ford didn't have pockets deep enough to support product development at Aston, and it's taken the might of Tata and a cost of billions to energise Jaguar Land Rover.

James Mousley

Proud of Turin

As a seasoned Turinese, I fully concur with Richard Porter's column from **evo** 185. Our scantily clad women in Turin are a real concern and any devices able to mitigate the risk of small-speed impact is a very good news for the male, heterosexual motorist.

But there are other equally attractive distractions in Turin: Maserati Ghiblis and Quattroportes revving their V8s along our tree-lined boulevards, or the disguised matt black Alfa Romeo 4C downshifting with bangs and cracks at the traffic lights ahead of me on my way to work.

So thank you, Sergio Marchionne, not only for improving the safety on our cars but also for keeping alive the spirit of this motor town that once used to shine.

Andrea Chiampo, Turin, Italy

Hooray for hatches

As a Mégane R26.R owner and hot hatch enthusiast, I think we should congratulate motor manufacturers for giving Mr Average the chance to own a sporty little number.

It's amazing how many are actually available, from Kia through to Abarth. Five years ago, at the start of the recession, there were only a couple of models from a few of the usual marques, but now we have AMG with its supercar-baiting shopping trolley A45, while Ford has got not just one hot hatch but two!

Let's give them a small ripple of applause before they try and redefine the market segment and put up the price beyond our reach.

Greg Thomas



From the forums: community.evo.co.uk

Thread of the Month

TWINTURBOT

'Mercedes partners Aston Martin'

Mercedes has partnered with Aston Martin to develop new models with V8 engines, taking a five per cent stake of AM. Although I'm glad that it'll help the brand compete with JLR & VW, I'm a little wary after Mercedes' last attempt at a partnership with Chrysler. Anyone who has any interest in business will know how much of a failure that was, due to the stubbornness of each brand.

ERIC PISCH

It could be good news and maybe a lifeline for Aston in the long-term, giving it access to expensive-to-develop technologies such as KERS if Mercedes increases its stake.

P7ULG

I think Aston Martin, as the company most people associate with the name, has more or less disappeared. It is no longer the quintessentially British purveyor of hand-built sports cars, but more a volume producer of luxury goods exploiting the new-found wealth of emerging nations. Somehow you feel that Aston Martin has lost something in this quest.

CANESWELL

Being a 'British purveyor of hand-built sports cars' is not a viable business plan any more. It barely was back then. Building beautiful, quality British cars equipped with some of the best engines

in the world sounds like a winner to me.

DJCHOCICE

Agreed, Caneswell. Good to see a bit of future security for the company. I eagerly await the first 'proper' car built between Aston and AMG, i.e. a car that's not another DB9/DBS/Rapide/Vantage re-hash.

JOBBO

They'll probably just use two A45 AMG engines stuck together.

SISU

I think most people don't really give a monkey's about the oily bits or electronics if they're good. But it can detract from the car if they're bad - TVR went down with that ship. The current ZF 8-speed gearbox is the best example of something rising above cultural prejudices because it works, while the old Aston Martin Vanquish automatic 'box was something to forget.



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Thread of the Month wins a Jorg Gray chronograph

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New

PORSCHE 911 GT3

by JETHRO BOVINGDON, MIKE DUFF & RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by TOM SALT & DEAN SMITH

It's finally here, and we're putting it straight into the toughest test imaginable, against three rivals, on road and on track. Does the new 991-gen GT3 deserve its badge? It's time to find out...

p64

New GT3 v
Nissan GT-R

p72

New GT3 v
997 GT3 RS 4.0

p78

New GT3 v
McLaren 12C

Porsche 911 GT3



A high-angle, wide shot of a mountain valley. In the foreground, a dark, jagged rock formation juts out from the right. Below it, a steep, green mountain slope descends towards a winding asphalt road. A small red car is visible on the road. The background features towering, dark mountain peaks with patches of snow under a cloudy sky.

CHALLENGE #1

GT3

V NISSAN GT-R

by JETHRO BOVINGDON | PHOTOGRAPHY by TOM SALT

First things first: the new GT3 must see off a quicker, more powerful and cheaper opponent from Japan on the stunning Alpine roads of Austria



I

IT'S NO EXAGGERATION TO say that we'd go to the ends of the Earth to drive the new 991 GT3. Right now our destination feels about as far away. It's holiday season in Germany and the forecast says it'll be 35 degrees Celsius by

lunchtime. It seemed like a good idea then, to head to the cool of the mountains in the Tirol. Our Guards Red 991 GT3 shattered the peace of sleepy Ödenwaldstetten at 5:30am and the roads ahead were blissfully empty. Then we hit Austria. Oh dear. On any normal day the Fern Pass might seem quite beautiful. However, stuck behind an endless stream of caravans when you're driving a new GT3 to a spectacular destination with a Nissan GT-R in waiting, it's about the most frustrating place imaginable.

Gradually and mercifully, the traffic thins and the GT3 starts to stretch its legs. Then we hit The Road. It climbs steeply through a wooded section, smooth and fast. I'm happy. Then the trees vanish and it clings to a mountainside, hairpins easing the ascent before blending into faster third-gear corners until we're delivered onto a kind of icy, sun-drenched moonscape. After the tedium of our 190-mile journey from the launch venue (sorry Porsche!), this alien scene feels like heaven.

By the time we reach the summit, some 2800 metres above sea level, I can't help wondering if we've brought the wrong rival car. I decide it's best not to concede as much to

Henry Catchpole and Stephen Dobie, who arrived here in the Nissan at 4:00am after an 850-mile drive. This GT3 feels really special, like it's stepped up to take the fight to cars like the Ferrari 458 and McLaren 12C. Strangely though, it also manages to feel like an authentic GT3 within 100 yards. It might not have the 'Mezger' engine any more, it might not have a physical six-speed H-pattern gearbox and heavy clutch, it may even have electric power steering, but the 991 GT3 feels like a GT3. Only faster, more agile and with quite astounding grip. I scan around the empty ski resort for 458s, unsurprisingly to no avail.

But we've learnt over the years never to underestimate or dismiss the Nissan GT-R. In 2013 spec, it remains a formidable beast, producing 542bhp at 6400rpm and 466lb ft at 3200-5800rpm from its mighty 3.8-litre twin-turbo V6. And in spite of its portly 1740kg, the GT-R does things that seem impossible. It's thrilling, characterful, slightly terrifying at times and seems to compress time and space like nothing else. And in some respects, now more than ever, it does seem like the car against which the GT3 should be measured.

Once pared back with almost puritanical ardour, the GT3 has evolved in giant strides and adopted a great deal of new technology along the way. The 991 GT3 is the most technologically advanced GT3 ever, and by some margin. It features electronically adjustable dampers (like the 997), and more controversially, a PDK twin-clutch gearbox, an electronically controlled limited-slip

Porsche 911 GT3 v Nissan GT-R



Above: evo team went to 2800 metres – high enough that there was still snow on the ground at the height of summer. **Below:** Catchpole was mesmerised by the Porsche's ease of use. **Right:** GT3 feels incredibly agile in the corners



‘What we’re hoping to discover in Austria is whether the GT3

differential and rear-wheel steering. And to think there was outcry when the 997 GT3 dared to feature simple traction control back in 2006...

The adoption of PDK and active rear-steering aren't the only controversial aspects of the £100,540 GT3, for the celebrated Mezger engine is gone. In its place is a dry-sumped 3.8-litre direct-injection flat-six based on that of the Carrera S. Let's not get too upset, though, because the new engine produces 468bhp at 8250rpm, 324lb ft at 6250rpm and revs to a stratospheric 9000rpm. It might be based on a Carrera S engine, but with forged internals, rocker-arm actuation for the valves to reduce internal friction and inertia, and hundreds of unique components, it's effectively an all-new motor. It's 25kg lighter than the celebrated 3.8-litre Mezger, too. Porsche claims that the new GT3 will cover 0-62mph in 3.5sec, 0-124mph in less than 12sec and hit 196mph. It also laps the Nürburgring in 7:25 – faster even than the 997 GT3 RS 4.0...

But this isn't the Nürburgring, and we haven't brought any stopwatches. Here in Austria, what

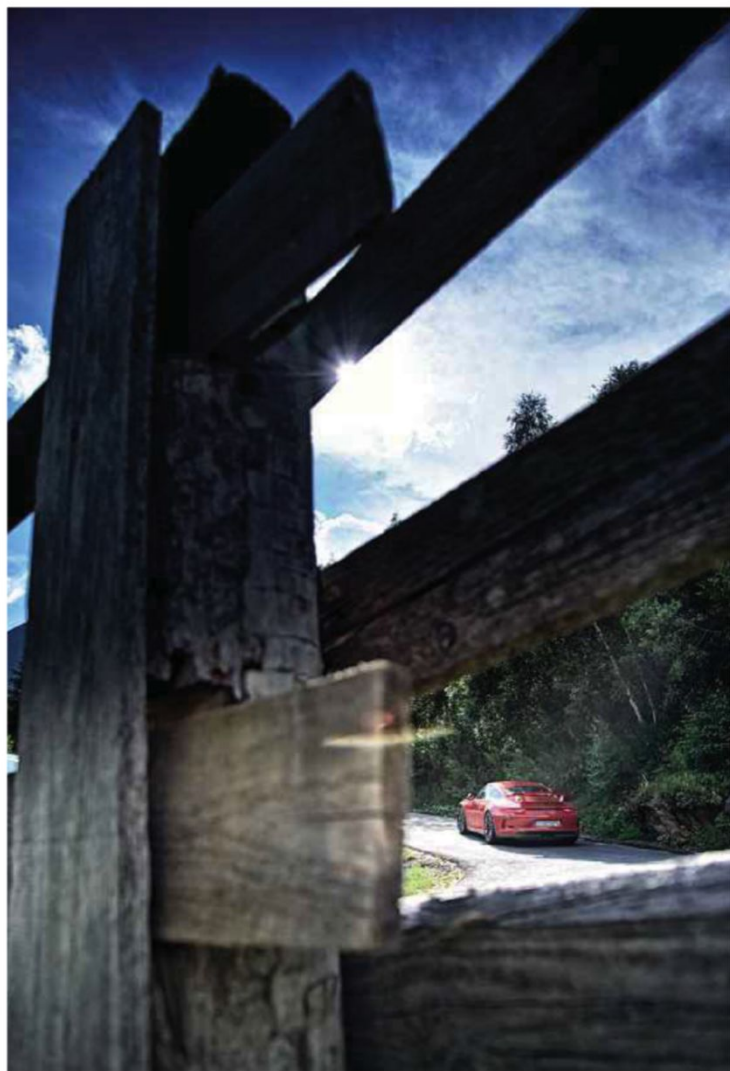
we're hoping to discover is whether the GT3 still pulsates with the feedback that has always been at its core, still involves the driver and rewards those willing to immerse themselves in the process of unlocking the car's potential. Put simply, we want to know if the tech has come to define a new sort of GT3 or been artfully absorbed to enhance the recipe we know and love.

Alcantara-trimmed wheel pulled in tight and seat wound down low, the new GT3 feels familiar. From the Autobahn and the hellish crawl along the Fern Pass, I know that this car is quieter and more supple than the 997 version and that the heavily revised PDK 'box is refined but so much more positive than the standard system. The new engine doesn't rattle and fizz quite as much as the Mezger and its clattery single-mass flywheel, and perhaps due to the slight increase in the car's overall weight (up 35kg to 1430kg) it doesn't feel quite so strong in the low- to mid-range. However, the steering – electric or not – is amazingly accurate but also positively humming with feel. No 991 to date has had this level of

clarity or sense of connection. Now it's time to find out whether it's flattering to deceive.

The steep climb through the woods gives only glimpses of the new engine's top end because visibility is limited and the corners come thick and fast. Even when hemmed in, though, the GT3 delivers savage performance once wound over 5000rpm, and in the fleeting moments that the engine spins up close to 9000rpm with a hard-edged, resonant howl, the rabid acceleration is something to behold. We're going to talk about this engine a lot in the coming years. It's going to need a name. 'The Screamer' sounds about right.

The PDK 'box with 'Rack Track' mode selected (as opposed to the default of 'Sport') is instantly responsive, hitting with the speed of a Ferrari 'box and the lovely, engineered thud of the M DCT in an M3 GTS. Left to its own devices, it makes the right up- and downshifts every single time, but I'm not really interested in driving a GT3 in auto, so I switch to the weighty, short-action paddles. Do I feel involved? Yes. Involved and free to really concentrate on the balance of the car, the braking



still pulsates with the feedback that has always been at its core'

zones and, of course, to seek out 9000rpm again. Once you've tasted that mad rush to the limiter you'll want to live your life between 8000 and 9000rpm. The noise is pure Le Mans.

Up above the trees and into the hairpins, and with the shock of the ferocity of the drivetrain gradually easing, it's the way that the GT3 changes direction that takes and holds your attention. Combining rear-steering with an e-diff that can be fully open on turn-in creates precision that you wouldn't believe. In fact, you expect the pendulum out the back to start swinging around just from the sheer speed of response of the front Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres. Active engine mounts ensure that it doesn't, the instantaneous steering response matched by supreme mid-corner stability and then melding into typically spooky 911 traction. The 991 might be the biggest 911 ever, but this GT3 feels tiny on the move, changing direction so quickly that it scrambles your brain. The Road has yielded to The Car. Surely the GT-R can't match this thing?

The Nissan feels gigantic after you've climbed

up and out of the GT3 and then climbed up again and into the driver's seat of the GT-R. It also feels heavy and mechanical, the diffs grinding and juddering, the big engine chirruping and snorting, the ride thumping and the heavy steering tugging into cambers and grooves that you can only imagine the car is simultaneously creating and being affected by. After the litheness and rigid connection you sense with the GT3, the Nissan feels more than a little clumsy.

And yet for all that, the GT-R is irresistible when it's rolling on. The mid-range bite is outrageous, the six-speed twin-clutch 'box is a match for the GT3's seven-speeder, and even though you feel the Nissan's weight every time you hit the brakes, the way it dismantles a road is quite breathtaking. And the reason it's so addictive is that it gets better and more thrilling the harder you go, peeling back layers of its character, demanding confidence and decisiveness. Sure, the GT-R will go pretty bloody fast without you so much as changing gear for yourself, but if you want to get the best out of it, you need to work for it.



Porsche 911 GT3 v Nissan GT-R

There's more body roll than in the freakishly controlled GT3, a tad more understeer in really tight corners, and when the rear tyres do let go, they do so quickly. Back off now and you're in trouble, as 1740kg tends to go where it pleases once the limits have been breached, so commit to the throttle, wind on a bit of corrective lock and let the turbos and the four-wheel drive do their things. When you squeeze everything out of the GT-R, it's like a force of nature: unstoppable and brutal.

This frenzy of boost and power, managing the weight and the often-spiky on-limit balance, working with the four-wheel drive... this process might not seem a very 'pure' experience in theory. But the reality is demanding, physical and thrilling enough to send your pulse rate into uncharted territory. It seems we did bring the right car. In fact, against expectations, the GT3 could be accused of being a bit clinical and refined next to the snorting GT-R.

Henry is still in that state of quiet awe after his first turn in the GT3. 'The agility and grip is quite shocking, isn't it?' he whispers in reverence (he could be triumphantly shouting, but it's hard to tell with Henry). 'It's funny because the GT-R feels much more hardcore in some ways – it's so stiff, it tramlines, and the diffs make all sorts of noises. By comparison the GT3 would be so easy to live with and yet the way it goes down the road is, um, extraordinary.' Porsche talks a lot about the new GT3's 'bandwidth' being widened, and it's absolutely right. Henry's conclusion also resonates: 'extraordinary' is a word that crops up a lot with the new GT3. Having tasted its pure speed and locked-down composure, the only question that remains is whether the raw involvement of the GT3 remains intact. It's a complex issue but thankfully we've got plenty of time here to explore this over and over again.

The short answer is that the 991 GT3 still has the magic. The chassis is truly a thing of wonder. The front end is hyper-responsive but somehow the jumpiness of something like the Ferrari F12 doesn't materialise. I guess that's because the steering's rate of response is so in tune with the chassis and because the engine's power is delivered so accurately. The subtle interplay of all the control weights and responses is so expertly mixed that the GT3 just never springs a surprise. On the one hand, that means it's a much easier car to drive pretty quickly than the more demanding 997 – which is good or bad, depending on your point of view. But it also means that there are still great rewards both when you're flat-out on a crazily beautiful Alpine road or cruising gently along in the real world. The depth of its talent and the quality of its controls easily shine through.

For now, we're going to keep going as fast as we can, because the new GT3 is almost impossible to rein in on roads like these. The defining feature of any great 911 is how it reacts to the driver's



'Against expectations, the GT3 could be accused of being a bit clinical and refined next to the snorting GT-R'





'The GT3 is near-as-dammit as fast in a straight line as the

inputs, and here the new GT3 immediately joins the top table. OK, so you don't have to manage the peculiar weight distribution at all any more – the e-diff, rear-steering system and active engine mounts seem to take care of that – but the chassis is never, ever inert. In fact, because it turns in and then grips so hard at the front, the rear of the car feels surprisingly keen to gently move around behind you when you start taking liberties. Should you really light up the rear tyres, the GT3's driveability is simply sublime.

Of course, more often than not you're working within the GT3's broad limits and the gorgeously progressive zone where the car just starts to creep

beyond. It really does feel like you have the GT3 on a string and can do whatever you please with it. That's a measure of the confidence granted by the supple but controlled suspension (although Sport mode still feels like a track-only setting), the excellent steering and the intuitive, almost invisible rear-wheel-steering system, too.

I'm aware that I've barely mentioned the shorter-ratio and much-improved PDK gearbox. It is superb and it certainly contributes to both the GT3's more relaxed character at low speeds and its unerring focus and accuracy in full flight. It gives you scope to experience that searing top-end power delivery regularly and it makes

the GT3 faster, but it also removes a certain something. The GT3 feels less demanding without that heavy, short-throw manual gearbox and just sometimes less satisfying, too. The 'involvement' issue isn't just about whether you flick a paddle or move your arm and leg. When you operate a manual 'box, you have to read the road ahead more accurately and think more about the braking zones, the optimum time to execute a downshift, matching engine revs to wheel speed and how your timing will affect the balance of the car. Remove all of that and it's indisputable that you feel less involved and a less crucial part of the machine. I understand why the



Top: GT-R can suffer from understeer in tight turns. **Above middle:** the Nissan has 390mm cast-iron discs up front; our test GT3 came with optional carbon-ceramics measuring 410mm

Specifications

PORSCHE 911 GT3 (991)

Engine	Flat-six, 3799cc
Power	468bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque	324lb ft @ 6250rpm
Weight (kerb)	1430kg (1448kg as tested)
Power-to-weight	332bhp/ton
0-62mph	3.5sec (claimed)
Top speed	196mph (claimed)
Basic price	£100,540
On sale	Now

NISSAN GT-R

Engine	V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo
Power	542bhp @ 6400rpm
Torque	466lb ft @ 3200-5800rpm
Weight (kerb)	1740kg (1786kg as tested)
Power-to-weight	316bhp/ton
0-62mph	2.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	196mph (claimed)
Basic price	£76,610
On sale	Now



GT-R and murders it on the brakes and through the corners'

new GT3 has PDK and I think it's a great system, but more than a little part of me will miss the old gearbox. Just call me T-Rex.

What about the old steering? The old engine? To be honest, up on The Road I felt like I had all the tools to drive the GT3 as fast as I'd ever want to go. Porsche has nailed the electric power steering. It's not quite as lucid as the 997 GT3's hydraulic system, but it's still pretty damn exceptional – although Henry reported that in damp conditions later on it still struggled to transmit a full picture of the front-end grip available.

I don't much miss the Mezger, either. When you're right on it, The Screamer sounds fearsome

and delivers a unique, intense hit. However, in the mid-range and when just pootling around, I still pined for the rattles and resonances of the old engine just a couple of times, and the sense that it's a thinly disguised race motor. Even so, the GT3 is a more exciting and more immersive car than the GT-R. It's near-as-dammit as fast in a straight line and murders it on the brakes and through the corners. It just has more grip, better body control and is a more rewarding car to tease and work to its limits. By comparison, the Nissan – as much as I love it – feels slightly binary.

So the GT3 is, well, a GT3: dazzling, agile and uncompromising. It's also a triumph for Porsche

Motorsport, which has taken the bigger, more refined and deliberately more inclusive 991 and created a car of stunning focus and control, but one endowed with the sort of feedback and interactivity that purists crave. The technology has been used to enhance the driving experience, not just the lap time.

I guess for us that's the crucial point. Is it as exciting and endlessly challenging as its most illustrious predecessors? Well, if I had to guess, I'd say... in fact, I won't guess at all. Dickie Meaden has driven the new GT3 back-to-back with the 997 GT3 RS 4.0 on UK roads. I suggest you turn the page. Now.



Above left: GT-R rumble reverberates through Alpine tunnels. **Above right:** GT3's 310kg weight advantage helps through the corners and under braking compared to the hefty Nissan

CHALLENGE #2

GT3

v 997 GT3 RS 4.0

by RICHARD MEADEN | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

*Porsche claims the 991 GT3 is faster around the Ring than the 997 GT3 RS 4.0. But do those two seconds a lap make it a better drivers' car on UK roads than the former **evo** Car of the Year?*



D

DEPENDING ON HOW OBSESSIVE YOU ARE

about 911s, this pairing is either utterly pointless or totally compelling. Pointless because the ultra-rare and consequently über-appreciating 997 GT3 RS 4.0 is a hardcore road racer only slightly more common than rocking horse droppings. Compelling because pitching the new GT3 against the finest water-cooled 911 ever, and one of the all-time great 911s full stop, is surely the ultimate emotional and tactile benchmarking exercise for this, Porsche Motorsport's first stab at the controversial 991-generation 911.

This leg of our multi-faceted test begins by collecting a different GT3, this one white and right- rather than left-hand drive, from the Porsche Experience Centre at Silverstone. Just the day before, it had been driven by Mark Porsche, son of the original 911's creator Ferdinand 'Butzi' Porsche, as lead car in the record-breaking parade of more than 1200 911s at the Silverstone Classic historic race meeting. It's impossible not to wonder what the father of the 911 would have made of this GT3 and the half-century of evolution that has seen it not only grow in scale, stature and performance, but also remain steadfast in its rear-engined layout and remarkably practical, instantly recognisable design.

To be honest, I'm not sure what I'm expecting from it. Something quite different from the outgoing 997 GT3 certainly, but knowing chief engineer



‘THE GT3 KEEPS ALL FOUR
WHEELS ON THE GROUND
ACROSS BUMPS THAT HAVE
THE 4.0 SKIPPING FROM
CREST TO CREST’



Top: 991 GT3 refuses to yield grip over undulations. **Above:** new GT3's PDK paddle-shift is huge departure from 4.0's six-speed manual (right)



Andreas Preuninger's unflinching dedication to the creation of uncompromising and expertly focused 911s, it's impossible to underestimate what he and his team might have achieved with the 991's all-new powertrain and chassis.

It certainly has the unmistakable look and stance of a GT3, with purposeful but reasonably restrained aerodynamic addenda and sufficient attitude to shift the 991's stylistic emphasis from elegance to aggression. Inside it's a muted mix of dark leather and Alcantara. No harnesses or half-cage in this test car, which means it lacks a little sense of occasion, but that gives a hint at its aspiration to be a more useable everyday car.

Jethro has already gone into great detail about the 991's dynamic behaviour, so I won't go over the same ground. Suffice to say this is a GT3 like no other: civilised and refined where the previous models have been righteously riotous, and blessed with an engine and a PDK gearbox that are stunningly sharp and synaptic in their instantaneous responses, yet silky



smooth in their delivery. One all-out charge down a challenging road I know like the back of my hand is all it takes to convince me that this is a 911 beyond compare when it comes to composure, steadfast balance, and sheer point-to-point pace. It's also night-and-day different to a 991 Carrera in terms of excitement, engagement and clarity of feedback. In short, it has taken huge, heartening strides towards making a 911 out of the 991.

I'm still mildly punch-drunk from the GT3's extraordinary demolition of a road that regularly ties cars in knots when I drop behind the Alcantara wheel of the Mexico Blue 4.0. For a comical moment, my right foot dabs the brake and my fingers reach out for a paddle as I go to twist the ignition key and spark the last iteration of the legendary Mezger flat-six into life. Mildly embarrassed, I gather my senses, wiggle the gearlever to check for neutral, depress the clutch pedal and turn the key.

As soon as the engine fires, the difference

between these two cars is apparent. The 4.0 chunters and pulses, the gearbox clattering at idle unless you hold the clutch pedal down. It feels like you're wearing the motor in a rucksack, such is the uplift in noise, vibration and harshness. Yes, this is the ultimate 997 RS, but there wasn't really such a big difference in the essential character of this and the regular 3.8 GT3, for that too was a Porsche Motorsport 911 through and through.

All the main points of connection with the 4.0 require more physical effort. The steering (hydraulic, remember) isn't overly heavy, but it has a far greater density that makes the 991 GT3's feel a little hollow. There are layers to the 4.0's feedback that peel away with speed and lateral loading to reveal more and more of what the car is doing. You need this information because compared to the ultra-precise and effortlessly pointable 991, the 4.0 requires some teasing and cajoling to make it turn in with the urgency and bite you crave.

Sometimes you need to encourage the rearward weight distribution into working for you, a small, decisive throttle lift getting that mass rotating to point the nose into the corner. Sometimes your timing is fractionally out, or your nerve wavers, and the nose does that bobbly thing and scrubs a little wide of where you wanted to place it. Then again, there are times when your timing and commitment are perfectly judged and the 997's polar moment plays ball, nudging the tail into play just enough to help the front end into the apex and allowing you to use the throttle and steering to balance your trajectory. You'll curse the times you get it wrong, but equally you'll cherish the corners where you get right, for only by understanding the car and employing the right combination of inputs can you unlock its magic.

Crucially – and perhaps surprisingly – we're not talking about crazy speeds and showboat levels of opposite lock. On the contrary, you can enjoy the 4.0's inspirational balance and

adjustability within the slightly relaxed confines of the stability control's Sport setting, edging closer to the limit and then just beyond it without ever triggering the electronics.

By comparison, the 991 is virtually impossible to unstick through the same corners, even when carrying silly speeds and making increasingly abrupt attempts to crowbar the rear into oversteer. It's a sensational achievement to make a rear-engined car remain so resolutely neutral, and it certainly gets your heart pounding when you try and push the GT3 towards its limits. But it also underlines the GT3's newfound status as a car that challenges a McLaren 12C at its own game, and one that consequently has a level of performance that enables you to travel at absurd speeds for sustained periods. It keeps all four wheels on the ground across bumps that have the 4.0 skipping from crest to crest, revs flaring as you try to put power and torque into lumpy tarmac. In the 991, the only limit is your willingness to drive at speeds that could make you the lead story on *News At Ten*.

'THE GT3 PROVES THE 991 CARRERA COULD AND SHOULD BE SO MUCH BETTER THAN IT IS'

God (or rather Herr Preuninger) only knows what extremes the 991 GT3 RS will go to. Something tells me it'll make fewer concessions to on-road manners and everyday capability and instead probe the boundaries of what it's possible to attach registration plates to and still call a road car. Part of me rejoices at that notion, for if that's the direction Porsche Motorsport decides to take the next 911 RS, it will be a gobsmacking machine. But another part mourns the passing of the old GT3: a car with track-proven, race-winning provenance, but that was still useable every day.

I'm not sure what it is about the new GT3 that doesn't sit right with me. It's not any lack of pace or ability. Nor does it want for desirability. It also seems churlish to complain that this GT3's engine – spectacular though it is – has not yet found its way into a racing 911. Then again, that direct connection between road and race versions should be a given in any car bearing the GT3 badge. Can a GT3 truly be a Motorsport car without such pedigree?

Ultimately, the thing that bugs me most is that the GT3 proves the mainstream 991 Carrera could and should be so much better than it is. I'd go as far as saying that if you fitted this GT3 with the regular 3.8-litre engine, you

could sell it as the Carrera S, so polished and civilised is it. It's almost as though Preuninger has taken the opportunity to right the wrongs of his colleagues on the mainstream road car development team, creating a 991 that has much-improved steering, sharper and more transparent dynamics, a brilliant PDK transmission and blistering pace, yet makes no greater demands of the driver. That's a great achievement, but it leaves me with a nagging sense that the 991 GT3 is a Motorsport car for people who felt previous Motorsport cars were too challenging to drive. If the 991 RS goes to the opposite extreme, it's arguable the decision to refine the base GT3 will be balanced out, but in that case neither car will tread the fine line that made the previous GT3 so special.

In direct comparison with the regular 991 Carrera, the 991 GT3 is unquestionably a more feelsome, connected and convincing drivers' car. Driving it with the 4.0 is perhaps comparing apples with oranges, but it also throws a spotlight on just how different the 991 is from any previous 911. Even in GT3 spec

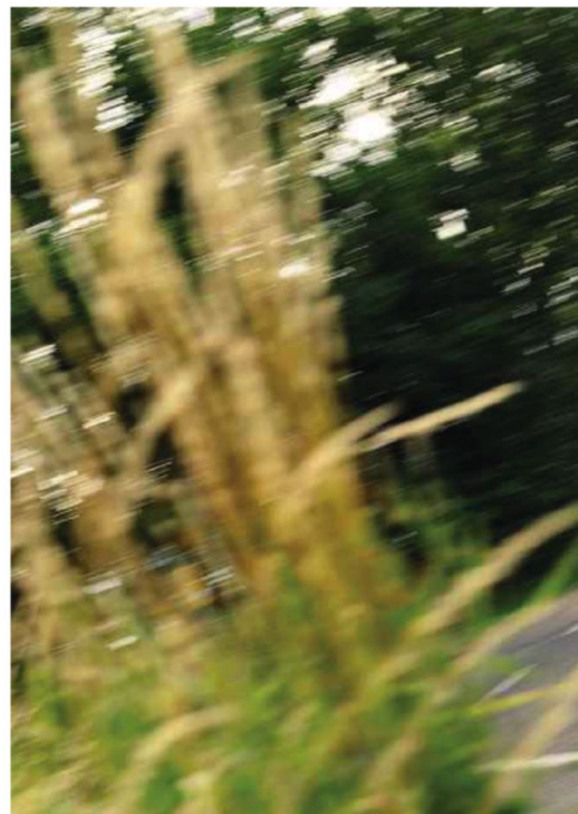
it lacks a degree of feel and connection, and brilliant though the PDK 'box is, like all paddle-shift transmissions it gives you less to think about and makes extracting performance too easy and a little one-dimensional.

Point-to-point on tricky British B-roads, the 4.0 has its pants pulled down so readily by the new GT3 that it's almost embarrassing. Like the last generation of piston-engined fighter planes flying into battle against the first of the jets, just a few years separate the two cars, yet they are an age apart in every respect. But when you're in the 4.0, you just don't care.

The bad news is that even though I know the new car is in another league, I'm certain I'd derive greater long-term pleasure from owning and driving a 997 GT3. That doesn't make the new car bad – I suspect it'll be a tremendous success – but it does hint at a group of disenfranchised 911 drivers who have been left behind by such a giant evolutionary step.

The good news is I'd rather have the new GT3 than a Ferrari 458 or a Nissan GT-R. Or a McLaren 12C. Although perhaps Mike Duff will disagree with me on that last one. Keep reading to find out...

Huge thanks to Steve for the loan of his 4.0.





Specifications

PORSCHE 911 GT3 (991)

Engine	Flat-six, 3799cc
Power	468bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque	324lb ft @ 6250rpm
Weight (kerb)	1430kg (1448kg as tested)
Power-to-weight	332bhp/ton
0-62mph	3.5sec (claimed)
Top speed	196mph (claimed)
Basic price	£100,540
On sale	Now

PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997)

Engine	Flat-six, 3996cc
Power	493bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque	339lb ft @ 5750rpm
Weight (kerb)	1360kg (1463kg as tested)
Power-to-weight	368bhp/ton
0-62mph	3.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	193mph (claimed)
Basic price	£128,466 (2012)
On sale	2011-12

Above: cornering ability of the new GT3 is hugely impressive. **Left:** 4.0 isn't as quick point-to-point, but the rewards for exploiting its balance through turns are higher

CHALLENGE #3

GT3 v McLAREN 12C

by MIKE DUFF | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

*For its final test, the GT3 takes on
a true supercar – the 616bhp, £176,000
McLaren 12C – both on UK roads and
against the clock on track*





SO WE KNOW THAT the 991 GT3 is good. Possibly good enough to be one of the greats. The question now is whether it stands a chance when thrown against a genuine supercar. So, while we've got ourselves a GT3 in the UK, we've opted to put it up against one of the fastest and most capable supercars money can buy: the McLaren 12C.

This isn't a fair fight. The Porsche doesn't cost much more than half as much as the McLaren, which is a cool £176,000 before you've ticked a single option box. But the McLaren should also be in a different performance league. Its twin-turbocharged 3.8-litre V8 produces 616bhp – 148bhp more than the GT3's naturally aspirated flat-six. And with today's face-off including timed laps for both cars on the track at Blyton Park in Lincolnshire, where the Macca ran within a third of a second of the million-pound Pagani Huayra in last year's eCoty test, you'd be justified in expecting a bloodbath.

Despite arriving at Blyton considerably before most people have got out of bed, boss-man and circuit owner Richard Usher is already on hand to welcome me and the McLaren,

which has time-warped the journey north by cruising the empty motorways at the sort of speed normally associated with light aircraft rather than cars. I only have to wait ten minutes before the GT3 arrives with photographer Dean Smith. He admits he got up extra early to take the scenic route here – several times, to judge from the number of dead insects smeared over the 911's front air dam. But who can blame him? In the soft morning light the GT3 looks absolutely brilliant: muscular and taut, clearly based on the standard 991 but radiating intent. Even parked next to a bright orange McLaren, I have difficulty in looking anywhere else.

I can't wait. I make a feeble excuse about needing to recce the local roads and head straight out in the GT3. And head into what is, for the first few moments, something close to a sensory overload. The first thing to get used to is the engine's appetite for revs. My ears are telling me to change up at around 7500rpm, by which point the direct-injected flat-six is already properly in its stride. Getting used to the fact there's another 1500rpm to come, and that most of the performance is right at the top of the rev range, takes some mental readjustment, especially after several hours of

the McLaren's effortless turbocharged wallop.

The lack of a clutch pedal takes less getting used to. Before today I thought the PDK transmission would be this GT3's defining characteristic. It's the exact opposite: the new gearbox just *is*. It does what you want pretty much when you want and leaves you to get on with everything else. And the part of your mental bandwidth that would have been engaged in working the gearbox and clutch and blipping the throttle finds some other part of the experience to latch on to. Of course, when you stop and get out and actually catch your breath, you find yourself wondering what the car might be like with three pedals rather than two, but it's not something that impinges on the driving experience. One strange characteristic I do pick up on, almost by accident, is that despite its PDK 'box the GT3 still allows itself to be heel-and-toed: blipping the throttle while downshifting sees the engine give a little flare of revs to smooth the change out.

More important is the way the GT3 deals with British tarmac. This car is an early pre-production version, which we've been warned is in not-quite final spec (although Jethro, who drove the finished car in Austria, says he can't

Right: unlike in other 991s, the GT3's shifter works the 'correct' way round: pull for an upshift, push for down.
Below: wheels are centre-locking



'THE McLAREN IS A GUN IN A KNIFE FIGHT AND, FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, IT'S DEFINITELY GOT THE LEGS'





tell the difference). Nevertheless, it copes with the crestier B-roads around Blyton without breaking sweat. The ride is naturally firm, but leaving the switchable dampers in their softer setting gives decent body control with acceptable ride comfort – and the GT3 is one of those cars that seems to sit smoother at speed.

The revised electric steering stays good when asked to deal with the bumps and cambers of a B-road, with vastly more feel than the over-anaesthetised set-up of the standard 991. And the optional carbon-ceramic brakes are perfectly suited to road use too, with instantaneous responses and a solid pedal with lots of feel, regardless of whether the discs are hot or cold. Even on tight, poorly sighted roads you can use the GT3 hard – placing it inch-perfectly and feeling the back end squat ever so slightly under power to maximise traction.

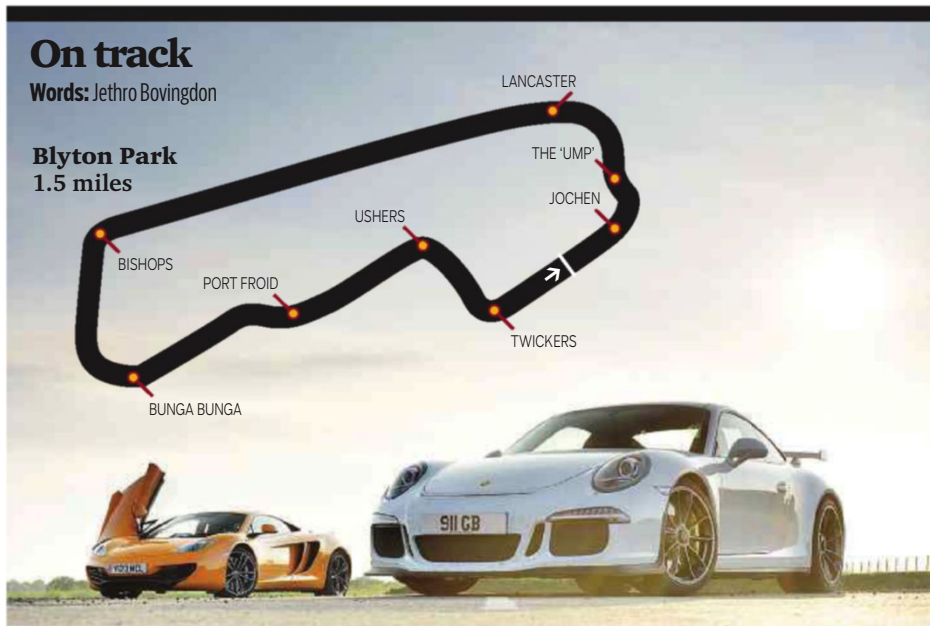
Two hours later and I'm still in the GT3, and still wearing an inane grin. But now the 12C is

Porsche 911 GT3 v McLaren 12C

On track

Words: Jethro Bovingdon

Blyton Park 1.5 miles



IF THE ON-PAPER advantages held by the 12C suggest that the GT3 getting anywhere near it on track is implausible at best, the first time you pin the throttle in the McLaren leaves you with little doubt. The 616bhp 12C is just incredibly fast. It rips along Blyton Park's straight and up to over 150mph in a sustained and furious lunge, and although the very stiff front end can skip into a bit of understeer in the slower corners, the way it attacks this tricky circuit leaves you breathless. It is intense, almost shocking. Our film-maker, Sam Riley, is in the passenger seat and asks incredulously: 'How can any road car be faster than this?'

We lapped a 12C here at eCoty 2012, and our long-term test car shows all the same traits: relentless acceleration, great stability in the braking phase and strong traction. There's knife-edge snap oversteer through the fourth-gear Port Froid esses, but it's still a mighty showing by the McLaren. It feels best with the Handling and Powertrain dials wound up to Track but the stability control left on – without it traction is compromised and the car swings from under- to oversteer very quickly indeed. It manages a 1:02.7 lap – a tenth quicker than the eCoty machine and within two-tenths of a Pagani Huayra.

Immediately the GT3 feels a chunk slower and somehow each corner seems to unravel much more smoothly. It has simply astonishing braking power

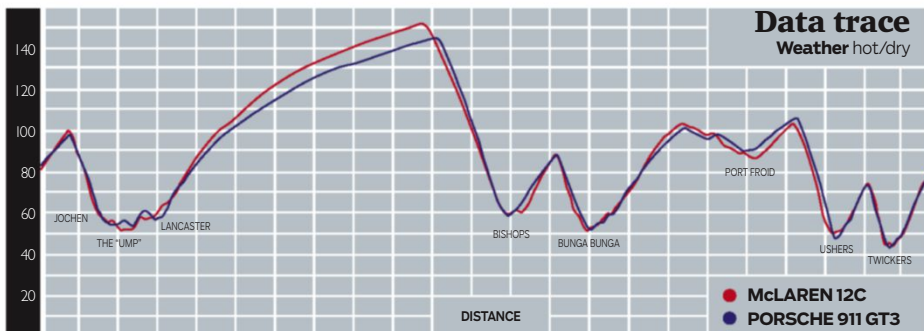


and stability (this car, like our 12C, has optional ceramics fitted), and the front end stays nailed to your chosen line. Of course, the naturally aspirated engine has sweeter throttle response, too. In the 12C you sort of hang on, eyes wide and knuckles white, but the Porsche is calmer and gives you more options, its balance more adjustable and more predictable.

Lap 1 is an impressive 1:03.7, the next a 1:03.5 and the third a 1:03.0. PDK is in Sport mode, the chassis in its stiffer setting and ESC off. It feels like a good lap but I decide to do one

flyer with traction control disabled as well. Into Jochen the GT3 takes time out of the 12C because it tolerates aggressive braking into the apex with no understeer. Its peak speed along the straight of 144.6mph pales next to the 12C's 151.7mph, but you can brake later and right to the apex of the following Bishops left-hander.

However, it's most impressive into and out of Bunga Bunga (superb turn-in, astonishing traction) and then through the high-speed esses that unsettle the 12C. It crosses the line and the lap time flashes up: 1:02.6.



McLAREN 12C 1:02.7 (151.7mph peak) PORSCHE 911 GT3 1:02.6 (144.6mph peak)



Above left and top right: GT3 and 12C tackle the Blyton Park circuit in very different ways, but their lap times are still incredibly close



Specifications

	PORSCHE 911 GT3 (991)	McLAREN 12C
Engine	Flat-six, 3799cc	V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo
Power	468bhp @ 8250rpm	616bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque	324lb ft @ 6250rpm	442lb ft @ 3000-7000rpm
Weight (kerb)	1430kg (1448kg as tested)	1434kg (1466kg as tested)
Power-to-weight	332bhp/ton	435bhp/ton
0-62mph	3.5sec (claimed)	3.1sec (claimed)
Top speed	196mph (claimed)	207mph (claimed)
Basic price	£100,540	£176,000
On sale	Now	Now

filling the Porsche's rear-view mirror as editor Trott gives chase. In a straight line – not that there are many of these in rural Lincolnshire – there's little contest. The McLaren is a gun in a knife fight and, for what it's worth, it's definitely got the legs. The Porsche is properly quick once the engine is revving hard, but it can't match the sheer breadth of the 12C's powerband as its turbos fill pretty much every part of its rev range with instant urge.

But swapping places with Nick also proves the McLaren doesn't feel anything like as at home here as the Porsche does. It continues to deliver extreme pace, even on roads that are clearly a fair bit narrower than it would like. The 12C's clever interconnected dampers help it magic away bumps and imperfections, and the fast-acting steering stays deadly accurate. But you have to be travelling seriously quickly in the 12C just to wake it up; it always feels slightly inert at real-world pace – the carbon brakes lack bite at low speed, and the engine sounds more industrial than spiritual.

When the opportunity presents, the 12C is blindingly quick – the engine devouring the

'THE PORSCHE SEEMS FAR HAPPIER TO BE HERE THAN THE DYNAMICALLY ALOOF McLAREN'

transmission's lower ratios pretty much as quickly as you can deliver them. But on these roads, there's nothing like the space necessary to make the chassis come alive. On track, Jethro is quick to prove that the 12C can be steered convincingly on the throttle. But on road, you almost never get beyond the slight understeer that marks the approaching limits.

Later I realise the difference between the two cars is most obvious in the way you treat their assistance systems. In the GT3 I had no qualms about turning off the stability and traction control, so close was the balance between grip and power (at least on dry tarmac), and

so happy is the car to shuffle its mass to order. You can drive it both hard and safely with nothing standing between you, the engine and the chassis. But in the McLaren I had little desire to shift the powertrain from its medium-aggressive Sport setting into Track, such was the frequency with which the stability control light flashed on the rougher road surfaces. And I had absolutely no inclination to undertake the prod-this, twist-that process necessary to turn everything fully off. The 12C's electronic systems are an integral part of the devastatingly effective way it does its thing. But they don't add to the driving experience.

On track, it was closer than any of us were expecting (see panel). But on the road this was a clear victory to the 911, the car that just seemed far happier to be here than the dynamically aloof McLaren did. Even by the standards of what's gone before during our time in Austria, that's a proper bit of giant-slaying. The question it leaves me with is whether there's any current production car, regardless of badge and budget, that can offer a driving experience as connected as the one delivered by the new GT3.

'ITS COMBINATION OF USEABILITY AND DEVASTATING DYNAMICS TRULY IS A NEW BENCHMARK'



The conclusion

by JETHRO BOVINGDON

S **SO AFTER FOUR DAYS OF** intensive testing that took in the mountains of Austria, the flatlands of Lincolnshire, a racetrack, a GT-R, a 12C and a 997 GT3 RS 4.0, what conclusions can we draw?

Well, first and foremost, the GT3 is very fast and very, very capable. On dry roads in Austria, the GT-R just couldn't live with the GT3's braking stability and cornering speed, the GT3 RS 4.0 didn't see which way it went here in the UK, and the 12C – perhaps the only car in our tests that can claim to be faster than the GT3 on the road – was just pipped on the track. If you get your kicks from numbers and driving around like your hair's on fire, the GT3 looks like a positive bargain at £100,540.

Having driven the 991 Carrera S, we'd suspected that might be the case. What we didn't know was whether the GT3 would remain an authentic and highly interactive drivers' car. Here things are less clear-cut. For me the chassis – so controlled yet so inherently adjustable – is supreme. I love the way it

changes direction and how small and light the car feels. The electric power steering is also vastly improved, to the point that 'transformed' might be a better description. Combined they make the GT3 intuitive to drive quickly and help it feel special even at relatively low speeds – always a defining GT3 trait.

However, the chassis' crazy ability to change direction and its vast reserves of grip mean that to make this GT3 feel truly alive, you need a clear road and an unhealthy disregard for your driving licence. Inevitably the sweet, punchy PDK 'box only pours fuel on the fire, giving easy access to the new engine's wild top-end and allowing you to use every last drop of the car's stunning composure to good effect. To criticise a car for such qualities might seem odd, but as Dickie discovered, its predecessor's physical manual 'box, short-travel suspension and gritty engine provides greater engagement and excitement at lower, more accessible speeds. The same could be said of many model-line evolutions, but in a GT3 you have to highlight anything and everything that erodes the sense

evo rating

Porsche 991 GT3

★★★★★

Nissan GT-R

★★★★★

Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0

★★★★★

McLaren 12C

★★★★★

of connection and involvement.

Despite this, the new GT3 is a remarkable machine. Its combination of useability and devastating dynamics truly is a new benchmark, and although it marches into new territory – face-to-face with the likes of the Ferrari 458 and McLaren 12C – it retains enough character and excitement to proudly wear the GT3 badge. And on track it is just gobsmackingly brilliant. To a man, we're all desperate to have another go in this latest chapter of the GT3 story... which is just the way it should be. **x**



VIDEO

See the new Porsche 911 GT3 driven to the limit online

Visit youtube.com/evotv or evo.co.uk



KEEP ON SHINING BRIGHT

Armor All® Shield's groundbreaking formula delivers unmatched paint protection for your car – lasting for up to 10 washes

MANY new car valeting products claim to be easier and quicker to use than existing ones, but few manage to combine this with superior performance.

Armor All's Shield paint protection is the exception, as it not only takes less time to apply than conventional waxes, but it also gives better results.

Key to its success is Shield's innovative formula, which forms a tough, molecular bond with your car's paint, and rapidly beads water. Unlike waxes – where even from the first wash, the protection deteriorates – washing reactivates Shield's highly water-repellent surface. This enables it to keep protecting your paint, sheeting away rain and grime.

Tests have shown Shield keeps working for up to 10 washes. Resilience to regular washing is critical for paint-protection durability. It is no accident chemists developing new waxes and sealants

use repeated washes to test longevity. This reflects real-world use – as few of us wax our car each time we wash it.

Mind you, with Armor All Shield, reapplying protection couldn't be easier, as you simply wipe on and wipe off – there's no working in overlapping circles, no waiting for it to dry, no lengthy buffing and no chance of dust sticking to your paintwork. Plus, you're not reliant on the weather either, as it can be used in sunlight or low temperatures. It's quicker, easier, better – what's not to like?

And Armor All is applying this technological breakthrough to other areas of the car in need of protection. Armor All Shield for Wheels brings the patented innovative formula to alloy rims, where the build-up of brake disc dust is a major problem. Shield for Wheels is a rim protector that really

works, providing a tough, water-beading finish that sheets away road grime and brake dust.

As with Shield, applying is easier and quicker than with a conventional wheel wax – you simply spray on and leave to dry for the ultimate protection. Shield for Wheels lasts for up to four weeks, and when it comes to cleaning, the grime will slide off with ease.

And just launched is Shield for Glass – which has the effective water-repellent technology for your windows!

So what are you waiting for? Armor All Shield is £18.99, Shield for Wheels is £8.99 and Shield for Glass is £6.99. If it sounds too good to be true, Armor All's no quibble money back guarantee means there's no reason not to try this great new technology.

See it in action at:
www.armorall.eu



Shield for Wheels is easy to apply and provides long-lasting protection – with a money-back guarantee too.



TAKING THE PLUNGE

by NICK TROTT | PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

*You don't have to spend £100,000 on a new GT3 to enjoy an authentic 911 experience. Three **evo** writers explain why they bought three very different versions, and what makes 911s so special to own...*



THE NINE ELEVEN

is fifty. You'll know that from countless magazine stories over the past few months and, of course, the 911 celebration at the 2013 Goodwood

Festival of Speed, which was seen by hundreds of thousands of people at the event itself and millions more online.

We haven't been ignoring the milestone; we just wanted to mark the occasion with a slightly more personal story of why three blokes bought three different types of 911, and why they covet a car that, in engineering terms, should've been euthanised shortly after its birth...

It just so happens that the three 911s in question are owned by three **evo** writers: Richard, Jethro and me. None of the cars are new, or even close to being new, and none of their keepers have any motivation for owning them other than a deep passion for how they drive and what they represent.

Let's start with Dickie's 911.

THE FIRST THING THAT STRIKES YOU

is the stance. Has there ever been another road car that achieves a more perfect ratio of tyre-to-wheelarch gap and bumper-to-floor height?

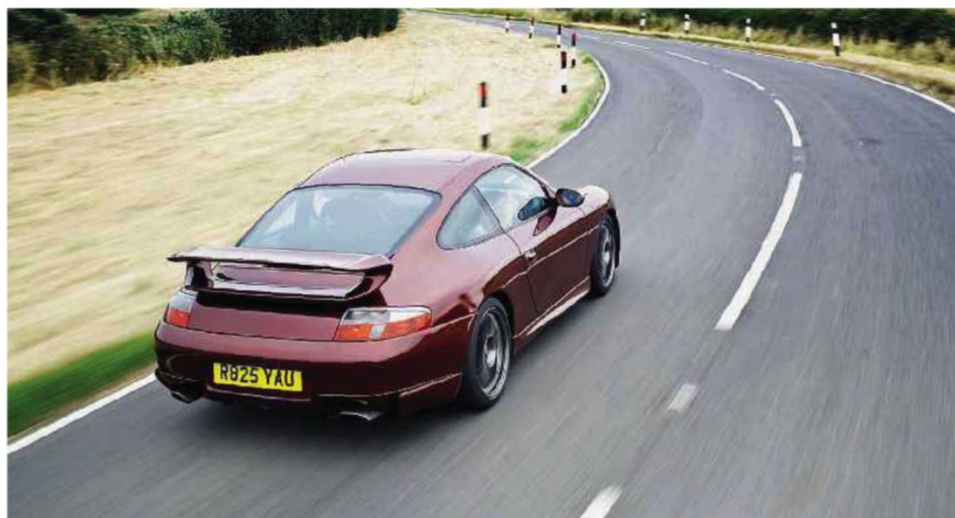
Stare at it long enough and it actually looks like an inky black paw with claws extended, digging into the tarmac. Or was that just the heat on the day we took these pictures?

The aesthetic appeal of Dickie's 964 RS is cemented by its authentic motorsport credentials. It's based on the 1991 Carrera Cup racer, with a revised 256bhp engine (up from





Above: still sideways after all these years. And the same goes for the RS... **Right:** Momo Prototipo wheel on Trott's SC. Also, notice anything odd about the speedo? **Below:** Jethro's 996 is an incredible B-road weapon. Fantastic value too





247bhp), a lightweight flywheel, LSD, closer ratios, lower ride, stiffer springs, stripped-out interior, a seam-welded chassis, thinner glass and magnesium wheels. All left-hand-drive cars did without power steering. Simply put, it more than qualifies for the coveted RS badge.

'I bought the car in 2007,' explains Dickie. 'I'd wanted one for a long time, but had never spent that much money on a car before, and had very little experience of the 964 RS. I spent a month or so looking online, and saw "my" car quite early on in that search, but it took a few glasses of red wine to summon the Dutch courage to contact GT Classics and arrange to view the car.'

Having written countless buying guides in his long and distinguished career as a motoring journalist, Dickie ignored his own advice and offered the asking price as soon as he climbed out after the test drive. 'As it turns out,' explains a rather relieved Dickie, 'it was the best car buying decision I've ever made.'

It's Lord Mexborough – passionate 911 collector and friend of *evo* – who Meaden holds responsible for his yearning for and eventually buying an RS. 'I love his 2.7 RS more than any

it. That's true of late, what with The Meaden Project house build taking up time and money, but I did drive it a lot in the first year or so I owned it. I went to the Ring and Cadwell Park for trackdays and drove it to work every week or so. I promise to use it more in the future and take it on a few proper road trips...'

AS I'M THE ONE WRITING THIS STORY (and I edit the mag), you won't be surprised to hear that the 1982 Porsche 911 3.0 SC you see on these pages is by far the most superior of the three Porsches here, despite its age...

I joke, of course. In performance terms my car would get eaten alive by a modern Golf GTI, let alone Jethro's hot-rod 996. And while it's arguably the purest car here from an aesthetic point of view, it isn't on the same page of desirability as Dickie's RS. However, the SC is mine. It's my first 911, my first Porsche, and I absolutely love it.

Regular readers will know that I owned a pristine Clio V6 before the SC. The two cars are linked by my obsession with owning cars that, dynamically speaking, are the polar opposite to

'HAVING WRITTEN COUNTLESS BUYING GUIDES IN HIS LONG AND DISTINGUISHED CAREER AS A MOTORING JOURNALIST, DICKIE IGNORED HIS OWN ADVICE...'

other car I've ever driven,' says Dickie, 'and though I know I'll never own one, the prospect of having my own slice of RS history was something that egged me on to sign the finance agreement. I drove my RS with his 2.7 a few years back. It was quite an experience and one that made me appreciate my car all the more.'

'It's a special car,' says Jethro of Dickie's RS. 'I love the noise, the torque and the physicality of it. The only downsides are that the hard ride never really smooths out at speed and the steering is heavy, which makes you drive perhaps a bit more cautiously than you otherwise might. But overall it's a brilliant thing and I'm quite jealous... Can we stop talking about it now?'

There's little doubt that the RS is the star of this group, but dynamically the three cars offer similar sensations, despite the oldest (my SC) and the newest (Jethro's '98 996) being separated by 16 years. 'It's the noise, the steering feel and the fact that you have to unlock the best of the car with technique,' explains Jethro. 'And that they get better and better the faster and harder you drive.'

The problem with the black RS you see on these pages is that it doesn't get used enough, not that we don't remind its owner of this fact at every opportunity... 'I know, I know!' cries Dickie. 'It's a standing joke that I never drive

the machines that I drive every day in this job. The SC is exactly that.

I looked at a number of 911s before deciding on an SC. I looked at the extremes of ownership propositions too – from remortgaging the house to own a 996 GT3 RS to buying an engineless 3.2 to backdate and turn into a 2.7 RS rep. In between, I even looked closely at a 996 Turbo and a 997 Carrera.

Specialist RS Technik offered to find me an SC, having convinced me that they are the peachiest of all the impact-bumper cars. My uncle had an impact-bumper 2.7 Lux, which I have vague memories of as a toddler, but if I'm honest I didn't desire an SC that much. Even when I bought this one (unseen – once again ignoring all advice), I was unsure.

That's all changed now. Every time I drive it I wonder why the hell I didn't buy one sooner. I maintain I've never driven a road car with a more responsive throttle pedal, or more talkative steering. The engine is a joy – more responsive and revvier than a 3.2, even if the 915 gearbox is a little imprecise compared with the later G50 unit – and the handling a real delight to explore. Yes, the SC is a challenge to drive hard, but the reward when you set the car up into a four-wheel drift (always at moderate speeds) is off the scale.

'Fantastic things, aren't they?,' says Jethro



Why we bought 911s

Right: Bovington's 996 in a familiar pose. All these cars get driven hard. Well, two of them...

Bottom: sublime magnesium wheels on Meaden's 964 RS



of my SC. 'The engine is so revvy, the chassis sweetly balanced and playful at sane speeds and the damping still feels quite modern. I love the size, the sense of driving a classic but one with useable and exploitable performance.'

There's always a debate among impact bumper fans with regards to whether the 3.0 SC or the later 3.2 Carrera is the better car, but the lighter flywheel, revvier engine and sweeter balance tipped it in the favour of the 201bhp SC when Dickie pitted the generations of 911s against each other in issue 175. And I'm not going to disagree with that! A word of caution, though – while the big 16-inch Fuchs look great on my car, SCs drive better on the original 15-inch wheels. Which is why I'm on the lookout for a set of 15-inch 'cookie cutters'...

'It would definitely be improved with smaller wheels to decrease steering effort and increase the lovely feel we found in the car we drove last

year,' says Jethro. 'But overall there's not much to complain about dynamically.' Not bad for a 31-year-old car, even if I do say so myself.

LIKE DICKIE AND ME, JETHRO DIDN'T exactly follow the acknowledged advice before buying his 996 Carrera 2. 'I think I must have broken every rule in the book,' he says.

'It is highly unoriginal, has a sketchy history with some notably scary chapters and I replaced "buy on condition" with "buy on gut instinct". In fact it's a wonder I ever bought it at all.'

Jethro likens the experience to looking at the survey on your house a few years after you bought it and wondering how the dilapidated shed came to be your home.

'I'm rather glad I did buy it, though,' he says. 'I'd all but given up on a 996 – the cheap ones seemed to be disappearing and my mum's Targa had just gone pop with the dreaded scored



bores. I decided instead to buy an Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen or an R32 GT-R and was tracking a couple of each, but with one final browse of Pistonheads I saw this car...'

The advert 'read well' according to Jethro: engine rebuilt with Autofarm Silsleeve block, Bilstein PSS10 suspension, GT3 seats, recent gearbox. 'It had obviously had a very hard life,' defends Jethro, 'but I rather liked the honesty of it, and the Silsleeve block meant no bore-scoring issues.' Bovingdon contacted the owner, who explained how he ran a race team and competed in the VLN with a 997 Cup. Undeterred, Jethro bought it. 'I remember thinking: surely he'd have looked after it,' laughs Bovingdon.

'It's an absolute bargain and will look fabulous when the paint is tidied,' says Dickie. 'It's a proper Jethro-spec car too, which I think is great. He's going to love taking it to the Ring or Spa.'

Bovingdon's 996, in pure driving terms, is an

absolute gem. The exhaust noise from a very trick Cargraphic system (with 200-cell cats) is every bit as evocative as the sound from the older air-cooled units in my 3.0 SC and Dickie's RS, and the 296bhp 3.4-litre motor sings like it's blueprinted. 'It turns out the engine was rebuilt to strengthen it for a supercharger,' says Bovingdon. 'That made alarm bells ring furiously initially, but RPM Technik – who also sourced Nick's SC – looked after the car for a while, removed the supercharger and generally gave it a good pasting. The last owner did going on for 20,000 miles in it on road and track and it survived. I hope it survives me...'

OK, so Jethro's OE Aerokit is a little tatty, but the driving experience is as polished as can be. That he bought a genuine 174mph 911 for less than the price of a brand new Ford Fiesta 1.2 is the stuff of dreams, right? 'Well, I haven't regretted it... yet,' says Jethro.

'EVERY TIME I DRIVE MY 3.0 SC I WONDER WHY I DIDN'T BUY ONE SOONER'

Why we bought 911s



YOU'LL HEAR MORE ABOUT OUR 911s in Fast Fleet over coming months, but we hope this gives you a flavour of why we sunk our hard-earned into Porsche's rear-engined marvel.

If there's one thing that's a crucial factor in why we own these cars, it's the unique driving experience a Porsche 911 – any Porsche 911 – offers. Over to Dickie to explain...

'They take patience, skill and empathy to get the best from. You always learn something from them, and the look, feel and sound are totally unique. They have a functionality and simplicity that you won't find in any other sports car, plus they're robust, practical and easy to live with. Also, the classic models will always look after you money-wise.

'They're only special to buy if you've been bitten by the bug. Some people simply don't "get" 911s – that's fair enough. But if you rate them highly, the moment you have the chance to own one, that feeling is very special, and that feeling won't go away.' Amen to that. ☒

**'THEY TAKE PATIENCE, SKILL AND EMPATHY
TO GET THE BEST FROM, AND THE LOOK,
FEEL AND SOUND ARE TOTALLY UNIQUE'**

Specifications

	PORSCHE 911 3.0 SC	PORSCHE 964 CARRERA RS	PORSCHE 996 CARRERA 2
Engine	Flat-six, 2994cc	Flat-six, 3600cc	Flat-six, 3387cc
Power	201bhp @ 5900rpm	256bhp @ 6100rpm	296bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque	197lb ft @ 4300rpm	240lb ft @ 4800rpm	258lb ft @ 4600rpm
Weight (kerb)	1160kg	1220kg	1320kg
Power-to-weight	176bhp/ton	213bhp/ton	228bhp/ton
0-62mph	5.8sec (Autocar test)	5.3sec (claimed)	5.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	146mph (claimed)	161mph (claimed)	174mph (claimed)
Price new	£10,870 (1982)	£64,540 (1991)	£55,950 (1998)
Value today	£20,000	£80,000+	£12,000
evo rating	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

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The 911 isn't the only performance car with its engine in the 'wrong' place. From the 1960s through to the mid-'90s, French carmaker Alpine produced a line of similarly rear-engined sports coupes



LATE LAST YEAR, RIPPLES of excitement spread across the motoring universe as an announcement was made about a new Anglo-French collaboration in the world of sports cars. The venture was called, rather splendidly,

'Société des Automobiles Alpine Caterham'. Obviously, the British half of this partnership requires no introduction, but to many the history of the Gallic portion (pronounced to rhyme with bean) is at best a touch hazy. For example, did you know that just four manufacturers have won both the World Rally Championship and Le Mans and that the quartet is made up of Peugeot, Ford, Audi... and Alpine?

Anyway, a slight haziness was all the excuse we needed to have a drive through the Alpine archives. The four cars you can see here represent the main protagonists in the company's history, and from oldest to youngest they are an A110 (pronounced 'A one ten', but sometimes also called the Berlinette), an A310 (the other, rather more angular blue one), a GTA (in burgundy), and an A610.

Alpine was founded in the 1950s by Jean Rédélé, a Renault dealer in Dieppe who had spent his spare time modifying a 4CV and then piloting it to various class victories, including at the Mille Miglia and the Coupe des Alpes. Many claim it was the latter victory that inspired his choice of name for the company, although Rédélé himself said: 'I chose the name Alpine for my firm because this adjective represented for me the pleasure of driving on mountain roads. It was by navigating the Alps in my 4CV that I had the most fun. It was this enthralling sense of control that I wanted customers to find at the wheel of the car I wanted to build'.

The first car to emerge was the A106 in 1955. It was based, unsurprisingly, on a 4CV chassis. This was followed swiftly by the A108, which in turn developed into what is arguably Alpine's most famous car – the A110. Around 7500 A110s with various different engines were produced over an incredible 16-year lifespan between 1961 and 1977. The car we've got here today belongs to Peter Ellens and I think you'll agree it looks absolutely stunning. And petite. Absolutely tiny, in fact. As Nick Trott says: 'For all the world it could be a 8/10ths model.' This could be a problem, because I'm 6ft 5in not including my barnet and the general

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

French

COLLECTION



consensus is that I won't fit in. Thankfully all my height is in my legs (which conveniently bend in the middle) and I also stoop a bit, so, looking only slightly like a giraffe in one of those cheap hotel baths, I manage to fold myself inside.

Whatever your height I suspect you would feel cosy and contorted inside an A110, because not only is the roof low, but the pedals are also offset a comically long way towards the car's centre. As you might have guessed from the stickers, Peter sprints and hill climbs this car, so there's a bit more contortionism involved to do up the five-point harness before twisting the key and hearing the gruff four-cylinder come to life behind you. I should probably mention at this point (just in case there is any uncertainty) that all Alpine road cars are rear-engined, so if you lift up the rear bonnet of any of the four cars here, you will find their blocks mounted resolutely behind their rear axles. Whether they deserve their nickname of 'the poor man's 911', we're about to find out.

Peter's 1967 A110 originally left the factory in Dieppe with a 1300cc engine, but this has subsequently been replaced by a 1550cc Renault 18 block with a Renault 5 Gordini head. It produces around 130bhp, which is comparable with the 1600cc period rally cars, and with only

630kg to haul around (and mated to a four-speed 'box geared specifically for sprints and hill climbs) it is surprisingly quick. The other initial surprise is just how light the steering is. The resistance of the pedals and gearshift make you expect that the muscles in your forearms will have to work to move the steering, but it is beautifully delicate and instantly imbues the whole car with a feeling of helium-filled buoyancy. Strangely there aren't the same

'It is beautifully delicate and the whole car has a feeling of helium-filled buoyancy'

sensations of a bobbing nose and a heavy arse that you get in a 911, but there is a much more friendly balance that actually feels exploitable.

What's more, with such a small car you have a newfound amount of space on the road and you're low enough to get a different perspective on the verges. I can instantly see why the A110 was so successful rallying on the tight and twisting stages above Monte Carlo.

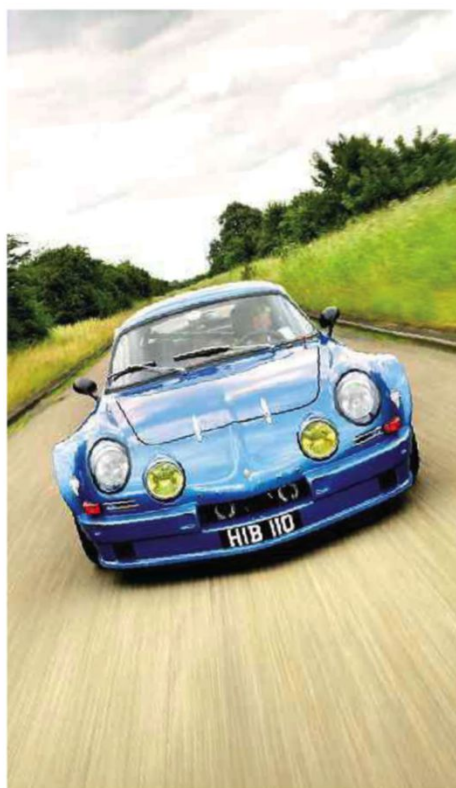
In the same year (1971) that Alpine first

secured all three steps of the podium in the Monte, the new A310 was unveiled at the Geneva motor show. The two cars look so totally different that it seems hard to believe Alpine produced them side-by-side for six years. But although they differ in looks, both cars share the same fundamental concept of a tubular-steel backbone chassis with a glassfibre body and the engine in the back. It wasn't until 1976, however, with Alpine now under the ownership

of Renault, that the A310 gained a V6 engine, and that is the model we have here. Interestingly, you can easily tell a four-cylinder A310 from a six-cylinder because the four-cylinder cars have six headlights and the six-cylinder cars have four headlights. Obviously.

It's thought there are only three or four A310s on the road in the UK at the moment, so we are very lucky to have one here, but I'm so glad we do because it is absolutely wonderful. The interior couldn't be more 1970s if it tried, decked out almost entirely in brown velour and set off by the luminous orange script of the Veglia dials (all the other Alpines have Jaeger dials). The seats are squishy, minimalist works of art, yet they hold you beautifully.

I'm not going to beat about the bush – I love the 310. The steering is a transparent delight,



Opposite page and above middle: A110 looks tiny, but its size has advantages out on the road. **Top:** A310 that followed was a larger car with very different styling. **Details, clockwise from above left:** A110 engine is a four-cylinder; interior is cosy; GTA's cabin is a riot of squares; V6 in A310 is carburettor-fed

the responsive carb-fed 2.7-litre V6 sounds great and the chassis wears its rear-engined heart on its sleeve. Through longer and faster corners you can feel slight understeer build on a constant throttle as you're pushed from behind. In the tighter corners you need patience to start with, but you can then use the huge rear traction to drive you satisfyingly out of the bend. There's quite a bit of roll and it would be interesting to see how the car reacts to even more provocation on a track, but it feels friendly and encouraging.

The shift of the five-speed gearbox is light but long, so the ample time you have while stirring it between ratios and matching revs means you can savour every change. With just 149bhp the A310 is not a rocketship, but as it only tips the scales at 1018kg it doesn't feel slow either. (Later cars with the wide-arched GT Pack and triple Webers had 190bhp.)

There is a lot of 911 about the 310, more so than any of the other three cars, and to be honest it's all good. You might be wondering why there aren't more of them in the UK, to

which the answers are that they're all left-hand drive and they tend to fetch a much higher price in their native France than they do here. That said, for around 20,000 euros they seem like a bit of a bargain next to a '70s 911.

After the A310 there's a break in the numerical run of names with the GTA. Launched in 1984, this began life with a continuation of the naturally aspirated PRV V6 (PRV being Peugeot, Renault and Volvo, who developed the engine together), now with a capacity of 2849cc. But it was the 2.5-litre V6 Turbo that arrived a year later that really stirred things up. Here we've got one of just 26 right-hand-drive Le Mans special editions that were built in 1990. The Le Mans got wider arches and three-piece BBS-style wheels, and while it looks much more aggressive it was mechanically identical to the standard V6 Turbo apart from the addition of a catalytic converter, resulting in 182bhp.

The interior is another period masterpiece, with the seats again worthy of mention. They are slim, almost waspish in design, but

bolstered perfectly so that you feel wonderfully secure as they grip your rib cage. Their angular theme is carried through the rest of the cabin architecture too, with even the steering wheel having a square block at its centre.

Just like in the earlier cars, the pedals are floor-hinged and seem to fan out almost from the same central point in the carpet like a deck of cards. This means they have the distinctive feeling of arcing away from you when you press them, and also means they're quite close together, so you need to be sure you're wearing reasonably narrow shoes. Another distinctive Alpine trait – one which we don't see much of on this beautifully sunny day – is the method of wiping the windscreen: the wipers come together in a sort of lopsided handclap, which is rather fun.

Heading back along the same B-road, the GTA isn't as instantly engaging as the A310. The steering remains unassisted, but is heavier and doesn't dance in your hands with the same delicacy as the older car's. As if it was made to match, the gearknob is a much stubbier,

'When the turbo wakes up it fires the needle towards the red line with almost disproportionate haste'



chunkier item, although the actual shift action as it engages the ratios remains very tactile. There's more grip from the chassis too – as you'd expect – so the rear-engined balance is less noticeable initially.

But what the GTA does have is some forced induction. Lag is undoubtedly an issue, with the turbo seemingly taking an age to wake up, but when it does it fires the rev needle towards the red line with almost disproportionate haste. The powerband feels quite narrow, and although that can make it tricky to access, I suspect that over time there would be real satisfaction from learning to deploy the throttle early and anticipating the lag, because when the punch arrives, it's surprisingly meaty.

Just a year after the Le Mans edition of the GTA, the new A610 was launched. Sitting in the sunshine wearing a suitably summery paint job, it is recognisably a derivative of the GTA, but the addition of pop-up headlights (amongst other things) gives it a much cleaner look from the outside. Inside it's a bit disappointing and lacking in kitsch after the others, but it's still a genuine 2+2 and the floor-mounted door releases in the sills are a quirky addition.

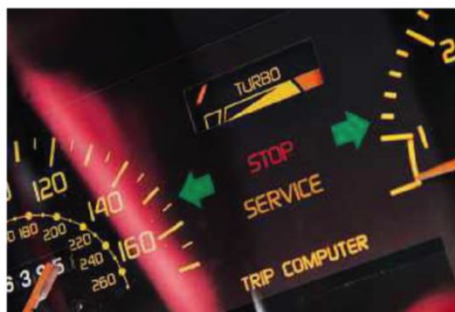
Although the A610 received a healthy 65bhp increase over the catalyst-equipped turbo GTA, it also has an extra 240kg to haul around (1420kg in total), so the performance increase doesn't feel as great as you might expect. But what is instantly noticeable is how much smoother the surge of its 3-litre turbocharged V6 is. There's still a healthy pause while the turbo takes a breath, but the power delivery feels much more sustained once it's into its stride. It can't compete with the earlier cars' soundtracks, but the chuffs and whistles of the turbo provide some entertainment.

Power steering was added to the A610 and, perhaps even more than the engine, it is the defining change over the GTA. It makes the car feel much more wieldy, particularly through tighter sections of road, but curiously the 610 is very neutral in the way it handles, despite the weight distribution, and the grip is huge. When a certain John Barker took one to Land's End for *Performance Car* back in 1992, he not only described it as sticking to the road 'like a boiled sweet to a blanket' but was so enamoured with the Alpine that he made this shocking statement: 'I admire the Carrera 2 greatly, but the sprint over Dartmoor en route to the crinkly Cornish peninsula makes it clear that the A610 handles better.'

Although not pictured here, there is actually a second A610 present at our test, this one with suspension set up for track sprints and hill climbs. It's arguably the more fun car to drive, because the nose is more incisive and the tail more mobile, so you can really work with the weight distribution. Turn in fast and the nose



Left: A310 chases GTA. **Above:** A310 interior is boxy but good. **Below left:** turbo gauge in GTA. **Bottom left:** GTA's turbo V6 had 197bhp, or 15bhp less in cat-equipped Le Mans edition. **Bottom right:** 3.0 turbo V6 in A610 has 247bhp





dives for the apex so hard that you instantly feel the engine behind you swing the rear axle into line with the front. Then all you have to do is pick up the throttle and drive it through using the lovely traction, perhaps playing with fluctuations in throttle angle to subtly adjust things if it's a longer corner.

WITH ALL THE CARS BACK TOGETHER, I feel like a newly signed-up member of the Alpine Appreciation Club. I confess that I was one of the many who knew only the bare minimum about Alpines before this test. But what is obvious after even a very short amount of time with some of them is that they are wonderfully individual cars. They have quirks of design that make you smile, and that's rare. There was a great moment when we went to fill up with fuel and I looked across the forecourt to see all the Alpines with their front bonnets up, which turns out to be the only way to access their petrol tanks. Apparently they're even quite good on fuel economy.

No one knows what the future will hold for the Alpine name. It's certainly pleasing that it

Specifications

	ALPINE A110	ALPINE A310 V6	ALPINE GTA V6 TURBO	ALPINE A610
Engine	In-line four-cyl, 1550cc	V6, 2664cc	V6, 2458cc, turbo	V6, 2975cc, turbo
Power	130bhp @ n/a rpm	149bhp @ 6000rpm	197bhp @ 5750rpm	247bhp @ 5750rpm
Torque	n/a	150lb ft @ 3500rpm	210lb ft @ 2500rpm	258lb ft @ 2900rpm
Weight (kerb)	630kg	1018kg	1180kg	1420kg
Power-to-weight	210bhp/ton	149bhp/ton	170bhp/ton	177bhp/ton
0-62mph	6.0sec (est)	7.6sec (claimed)	7.0sec (claimed)	5.7sec (claimed)
Top speed	120mph (est)	137mph (claimed)	155mph (claimed)	166mph (claimed)
Production years	1961-77	1976-84	1985-90	1991-95
Number built	7500	9276	4964	818
evo rating	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

hasn't been consigned to the annals of history, but I can't help thinking that if the new cars that emerge from the Société des Automobiles Alpine Caterham are anything other than rear-engined, it will be an opportunity lost. I suspect Caterham and Alpine will end up meeting in the middle as far as engine placement is concerned, yet if they kept the cylinders slung behind the rear axle then I'm sure it would create a more

interesting car. It is such a distinctive layout, with the propensity to bring so much character to a driving experience. It would be wonderful if they were to prove me wrong...

Thank you...

...to Stephen Dell, Pete Ellens, Tony Law, Paul Sage, Joe Salama, Vince Santini, Trevor Skedge, and the Renault Alpine Owners' Club

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Sunday 25th August Knockhill
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Sunday 15th September Rockingham
Ticket hotline: 0871 220 0260 www.rockingham.co.uk

Sunday 29th September Silverstone
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Sunday 13th October Brands Hatch GP
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With a higher power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron Grand Sport for four per cent of the price, the 620R is Caterham's maddest Seven ever

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by
DREW GIBSON



OVER THE LAST

few years, much has changed at Caterham. An ambitious foray into Formula 1 has seen brand awareness raised to an all-time high, while

the new alliance with Renault Alpine to create an all-new sports car proves Caterham has aspirations that extend way beyond the Seven. Talk of an SUV project suggests some of those plans might not sit comfortably with people like us, but when you're stood next to a bright blue and dayglo orange 620R, quite frankly you'd forgive Caterham anything.

This is the most extreme of a long and illustrious line of bonkers Sevens. Powered by a supercharged 2-litre Ford Duratec engine developing 311bhp and 219lb ft of torque, the 620R boasts a power-to-weight ratio to rival a stick of dynamite. In keeping with its hardcore brief it also features a six-speed sequential transmission with flat-shift, so you can keep your right foot pinned as you pull through the gears. Wide-track front suspension, a De Dion rear axle and adjustable motorsport dampers all round provide the optimum chassis with which to make the most of that mouth-watering powertrain.

As first glance the 620R is just like any other Seven, but delightful geeky details abound. The nose cone features an extra intake, complete with an array of small, serrated, tooth-like fins along the opening's leading edge. A pair of dive planes mounted to the sides of the nose cone

make an effort to reduce lift, while the wing-section wishbones reduce drag. Magnesium wheels wrapped with super-sticky 13in Avon ZZR rubber give the 620R the look and stance of a race car, as does the extreme camber angle of the front wheels. This particular car comes equipped with an aeroscreen, seats and interior panels in carbonfibre, so it's about as full-on as a Seven comes. That's perfect for track driving, but not so hospitable for road driving. Not that you'll find us complaining.

Our plan is to head up to Blyton Park for some timed laps then have a bit of a hoon on the excellent country roads that criss-cross the wide-open space of North Lincolnshire. Before we can do this, there's the small matter of an 80-mile blast to get there, much of it on the A1. With no windscreen, a crash helmet is essential if you're to avoid getting your face peppered with stones and bugs. The four-wheeled motorcycle analogy is well-worn, but the ritual of getting togged up, then sliding down into the carbon seat and driving a thinly disguised racer amongst regular traffic is surely akin to the same anarchic buzz you get from riding a superbike.

The sense of connection with the car is intense and immediate. Once you've slithered down into the seat you really are part of it, and because the seat embraces you so tightly, and because you're sat right by the rear axle, you feel every buck and twitch the car makes. The steering is physical, but at just 1.93 turns lock-to-lock, a roll of the wrists sees you round most corners. The sequential transmission demands positive inputs, but there's something totally addictive



Above: loud exhaust may cause problems with some trackday noise limits. **Below:** driver is well and truly exposed to the elements



'The sense of connection with the car is intense and immediate.'





Once you've slithered down into the seat, you really are part of it'



about the *crack-crack-crack* as you work up and down the 'box. It really gets you in the zone and the shifts come literally as fast as you can move your arm.

The engine is an absolute belter. The throttle is super-sharp, but beautifully measured, so although the car is hyper-responsive, once you've got yourself dialled in you can be exceptionally precise in applying the power. You need to be too, for it's more than capable of lighting up the rear tyres in the first three gears if you're greedy. The gearing is long – very long, with first gear good for 62mph and second 82mph, at least according to the digital dash readout. The rate at which those gears are devoured speaks volumes for the extraordinary acceleration the 620R delivers.

Caterham claims it'll hit 60mph from a standstill in 2.79sec, and an impromptu experiment on a quiet country lane suggests this is a conservative figure. Traction is the limiting

factor all the way through first gear, especially as there are no electronics to tame the wheelspin. We hope to obtain a full set of acceleration figures soon, but there's no doubt that the 620R is one of the most accelerative production cars in the world.

On an averagely surfaced British B-road,

Above: despite huge power, typical Caterham oversteer remains easily managed. **Below:** tiny aeroscreen means helmet is a necessity



'If you are prone to addictions, a 620R will turn you into a G-force junkie'

the 620R is a missile, catapulting down the straights and yelping through the corners with demented, crazy urgency. Full throttle in second gear has the tyres rotating *just* faster than your road speed right the way through to the rev limiter. Do the same in third and the revs stab and flare over bumps as the tacky Avons claw at the tarmac. The suspension is perhaps a little too stiff for bumpier roads, but there's a level of

compliance that rounds off the sharpest edges, so the wheels stay on the ground admirably well for such a flyweight car.

There's no denying that you can hit silly speeds at will, but because you reach them in the blink of an eye you can grab your fun in an opportunist manner denied to bigger, longer-striding cars like GT-Rs or GT3s. And because the Seven is so small, you can enjoy it on a greater

variety of roads, scribing a neat, smooth line on faster sweeping roads or slithering and sliding your way round tighter tangles of corners.

The side-exit exhaust is about two feet from your ear, which is another good reason to wear a crash helmet, as the noise is unbelievable. This will doubtless restrict the venues at which you can unleash the 620R (rumour has it we still tripped the noise meters at Bedford Autodrome,

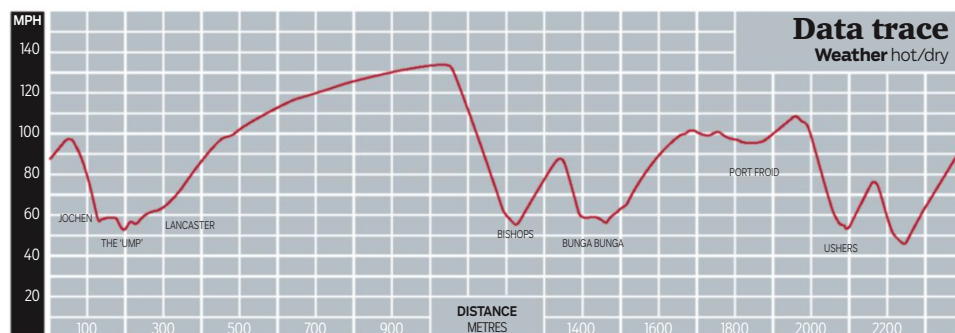
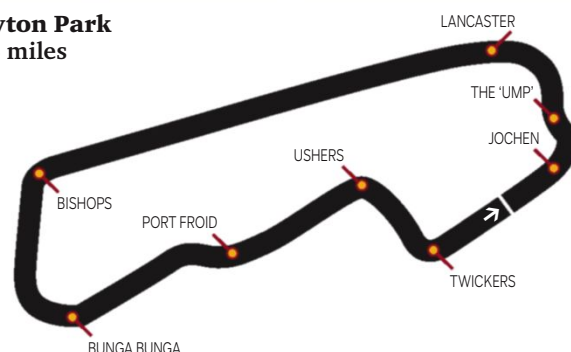


A fast lap of Blyton Park

It's tricky to get your braking spot-on for Jochen, as the radius encourages you to brake late and deep. The 620R's unloaded tail begins to slide wide, but it's possible to balance it with throttle and steering to get a clean line through the tricky second-gear chicane that follows. Short-shifting to third gear to find some traction, the 620R still powerslides beautifully out of the long Lancaster left-hander, then rips through fourth and fifth gears down the long straight, peaking at 134mph. The nose turns into Bishops brilliantly and you're soon balancing power oversteer with the super-sharp and accurate throttle response. Bunga Bunga requires patience to minimise wheelspin, while the scary fourth-gear right-left-right at Port Froid tests the 620R's poise. Another big stop into the 90-degree right at Ushers has you in awe of the brakes and speed of the sequential gearbox. One last wild rush of oversteer at Twickers completes a sensational lap of 1:02.5 – 0.1sec quicker than the new 991 GT3 (p82).

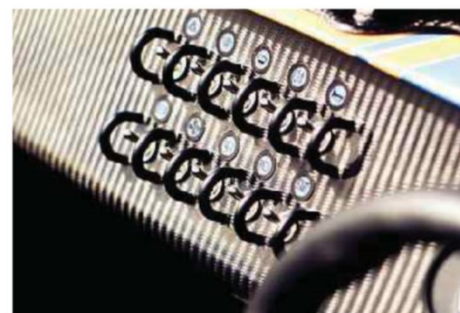


Blyton Park
1.5 miles



CATERHAM 620R 1:02.5 (134.0mph peak)

Below, from far left: front 13in wheels are just 6in wide (rears are 8 x 13in); 620R name derived from doubling the car's bhp output; 2-litre Ford Duratec engine is supercharged to 311bhp; tiny lever operates six-speed sequential 'box; Caterham badge has never been on a Seven this powerful before; simple toggle switches operate lights, etc.



despite being at Blyton), but boy, does it sound good. Imagine the snort of a Ford Escort BDA rally car spliced with the percussive sharpness of a BTCC car, plus some steely supercharger whine for good measure, and you'll have some sense of the riotous soundtrack that accompanies full-throttle progress. Apparently Caterham can do you a quieter silencer, if you really must.

By the time we arrive at Blyton, I'm itching

to try the 620R on track, for this is surely the only place you can truly experience its full performance for sustained periods of time. With VBOX attached, a tank of 98 octane to burn, fine weather and the circuit to ourselves, it's about as close to a perfect scenario as you could wish for. Despite the rampant power and torque, the 620R remains an intuitive machine to drive. It's totally transparent, not only telling you what



'This is a car built and set up by people who understand what a driver craves'

it's doing, but why it's doing it, so you can adjust your inputs to get the best from it.

Of course, with so much power and torque, the throttle has a just as dramatic and immediate effect on your trajectory as the steering, so respect is most definitely due. That said, the set-up feels immediately exploitable, with plenty of front-end bite and surprisingly strong traction if you're disciplined with your throttle inputs. The long gearing and muscular engine give you plenty of options too, with third gear pulling strongly where you'd expect to take second, but with second gear stretching further than you'd think if you want to hang on to it. The brakes are immensely powerful and supremely feelsome, so you can hit them hard and late, yet still have the finesse to deal with any momentary lock-ups without drama. This is a car built and set up by people who understand what a driver craves.

I did have concerns that this sledgehammer of an engine would prove too much for the Seven, overwhelming its legendarily finely adjustable handling and turning it into a car that is happier on the straights than it is through the corners. I'm pleased to say those fears are misplaced, and that if anything the 620R is a more finely honed

Specification

CATERHAM 620R

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc, supercharged
Power 311bhp @ 7700rpm
Torque 219lb ft @ 7350rpm
Transmission Six-speed sequential manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension De Dion axle, lower A-frame, Watts linkage, coil springs, dampers
Brakes Ventilated discs, 254mm front and rear
Wheels 6 x 13in front, 8 x 13in rear
Tyres 185/55 R13 front, 215/55 R13 rear
Weight (kerb) 545kg
Power-to-weight 580bhp/ton
0-60mph 2.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (claimed)
Basic price £49,995
On sale Late 2013

evo rating: ★★★★★

car than I ever thought possible of a Seven putting out more than 300bhp. The acceleration is intoxicating, the rush of adrenaline leaving your hands shaking with raw, tingling excitement. If you are prone to addictions, a 620R will turn you into a G-force junkie within your first ten miles of driving it.

What I find most appealing about the 620R and what makes it so special is that unlike other specialised track-focused road cars, it allows you to go totally banzai on track yet still feels relevant, enjoyable and suited to being driven on the road. Equip it with a windscreen, doors and a roof and you could quite happily drive it to and from a trackday, sprint or hill climb, or stuff a few clothes in a bag, strap a tent to the roll-hoop and take it on a proper road trip. That's the beauty of a Seven versus something like an Ariel Atom, Radical or BAC Mono: Sevens manage to be totally focused, yet surprisingly versatile.

Nevertheless, before I drove the 620R, £50,000 seemed like a lot of money to ask for a Seven, but having spent a day with it on road and track, that asking price now seems like a bargain. If ever there's a car that defines **evo's** mantra of the Thrill of Driving, this is it. ✕



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£4000 heroes



BARGAIN HUNT

by MIKE DUFF

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

Some of the most thrilling cars of yesteryear can now be picked up used for less than £4000. We assess the capabilities of five of the best





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WE'VE ALL HAD those 'how much?' moments when it comes to the sudden affordability of used performance metal. But in recent years they've

been coming ever faster.

The internet is definitely the key. Two decades ago, if you wanted a specific model you'd have to hope to find one in the smudgy ink of your local *Auto Trader* magazine. Fine if you were looking for a 1.1-litre Ford Fiesta, less so if you were lusting for an Alfa Romeo SZ. But now you can find out the quantities of any car available for sale in Britain. So what if the one with your favourite wheels and the colour that works best with them is in Aberdeen? Throw in the additional risk of alcohol-assisted bidding on eBay and it's entirely possible to wake up with both a hangover and a new car you don't remember buying the night before.

Although this story began with the realisation of the sheer quality of car that's out there for less than the price of a two-year-old supermini, it's grown into a celebration of what might be a vanishing generation. When it comes to mainstream performance cars, we may well have passed the summit – the days when we find a new model that's noticeably better than the car it replaces are few and far between. The cars here have all been chosen because they offer something that more modern rivals lack.

Of course, coming up with the shortlist was a bigger challenge than actually tracking down the chosen cars. We could easily have nominated 20 worthy of a place here, although that would have meant no room in this issue for the new 911 GT3, which we figured was a sacrifice too far. It still took a fairly heated debate, and even a few contributions to the office's newly installed swear jar, to come up with the cars you see here: four established favourites and one compelling oddball.

IT TURNS OUT WE'VE PICKED ONE of the hottest days of the year to get the cars together, meeting up at the Bedford Autodrome before heading out for a blast around some of the surrounding roads. It's already scorching by 10am, with forecasters promising we'll be in the mid-30s by the afternoon. I arrive to find a bright blue Renaultsport Clio 182 already waiting. And the first thing owner Sam Sheehan does is apologise for the fact his air con isn't working. Despite that, and his having just driven from London to Bedfordshire through the morning rush hour, he's still grinning.

It's not hard to see why. The Clio 182 has

always had a visual rightness to it, with its big alloys and low stance. And as successive generations of hot hatches have grown fatter, so the Clio has come to look small and almost dainty. The French Racing Blue of Sheehan's example works particularly well. This is a standard 182 with the optional Cup chassis, rather than the stripped-out Cup model, meaning there are still a decent number of creature comforts (including the non-functioning climate control). Sheehan bought it two years ago for £3800, but admits that they're already quite a bit cheaper now.

I'm starting to geek out, reminiscing about the Clio's early-2000s switchgear, and the strange, back-to-front left-hand-drive windscreen wipers, when a new noise arrives to distract us. A six-cylinder snarl that makes it clear a proper sports car is arriving.

Except, when I look up, there's nothing but an Alfa 147. Okay, so it's a slightly wider 147 with an ultra-subtle body kit, but only the cognoscenti will clock the fact that this is the 147 GTA, the slightly improbable range-topper that Alfa created by stuffing the 156 GTA's 247bhp 3.2-litre V6 under the bonnet of its Golf-sized hatch. Apart from the soundtrack, few people will realise they're looking at anything special – this one doesn't even wear a GTA boot badge. Owner Nick Peverett bought the car just two months ago after falling in love with a colleague's similar example. He spent just £3600 on it. And he loves its near-anonymity: 'You have to know what it is to realise how special it is – most people just see another old Alfa.' Quite.

There's no doubting what's approaching next, well before it enters visual range. An off-beat warbling harmonic, the soundtrack of my motoring youth – a Subaru flat-four. But when the actual Scooby heaves into view, it's something a bit special: a grey first-gen Impreza with extra driving lamps nestling under its headlights and a chunky wing on the bootlid. Yes, it's the RB5: the version inspired by, and named after, Subaru's then-star WRC driver, the late Richard Burns. Yet despite its once-iconic status, the RB5 is now as inexpensive as deep-fried potatoes; when owner Rob Allen admits that he spent just £4300 on this near-immaculate example, I almost stop the shoot to go and try and find one for myself.

It takes the fourth car to bring me back to reality, and not least because it turns up with the familiar visage of Jethro Bovingdon behind the wheel. The third-generation Toyota MR2 has always been a storming little car to drive, but now depreciation has made with its scythe and left them temptingly close to banger territory.



'THE CLIO FEELS BOX-FRESH, ATTACKING THE ROAD WITH JOYFUL VERVE'



Left: Clio is 67bhp down on the 147 GTA, but enjoys a 270kg weight advantage. **Below:** Celica cost almost £30k new in 1994, but Matthew Hayward bagged his for just £2500. **Below left:** Clio twin exhausts; RB5 celebrated Richard Burns joining Subaru WRC team





‘THE 147 GTA PROVES WHAT A GOOD IDEA HAVING SLIGHTLY TOO MUCH ENGINE CAN BE’

Too tempting for Bovingdon to resist, clearly. He bought this facelifted six-speed version a few months ago for just £3000 (while you can read about his other recent car purchase on page 86). In the metal, it's practically perfect, in gleaming black with an unmarked red leather interior and plenty of toys.

Which brings us to the odd one out, a car that we just couldn't resist bringing along. It shares its bonnet badge with Bovingdon's MR2, but otherwise it's about as different as it's possible to be. It's a Toyota Celica GT-Four, recently purchased by our website staff writer Matthew Hayward. It's definitely not as well preserved as the other cars, with a few minor dings, some strange aftermarket wheels and an exhaust that was turned down by *The Fast and the Furious* for being too loud. But Hayward paid just £2500 for it. Two-and-a-half grand for a proper mid-1990s homologation special, a four-wheel-driven rally replica – a car that instantly makes anyone of a certain age think of Juha Kankkunen or *Sega Rally*. For that, we'll forgive it a few scratches.

I OPT TO DRIVE THE 147 GTA FIRST, largely because it's such a long time since I last had a go in one. The GTA tended not to fare too well in comparisons when it was new, having the misfortune to have been launched at almost exactly the same time as the mk1 Ford Focus RS

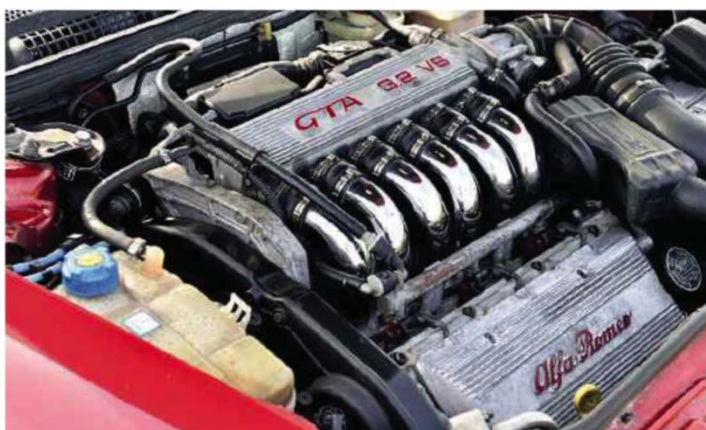
and mk4 VW Golf R32. But the one thing that's stuck with me for the last decade is just how great the engine seemed back then.

And it still seems great. The days of putting big engines into small cars are behind us, manufacturers turning to small-capacity turbos in their endless quest to trim CO2 numbers. But the GTA proves what a good idea having slightly too much engine can be. It's a brilliant recipe for a fast, relaxing car. Now, as then, this is a car that's defined by its engine. At low revs it's smooth but a bit anaemic, but it starts to pull well from 3000rpm and gets snarly around the 5000rpm point. From there to the 7000rpm red line it still feels impressively rapid, even by modern standards.

On Bedfordshire's bumpier B-roads, another part of the distantly remembered GTA driving experience reacquaints itself – relatively soft dampers that can struggle to keep up with the need to cancel out high-frequency bumps. The 147 never feels wayward or dangerous, but the floaty sensation gives a definite slow-down vibe. So I do, slightly, and discover a car that's relaxed and impressively pliant when asked to deliver a rapid eight-tenths pace. There's more steering feel than I remember, too – likely an indication of how numb everything has got since – and definitely more front-end grip, despite that heavy engine over the front axle.



Opposite page: RB5 and Celica share WRC heritage. **Left:** Alfa is fitted with six-speed manual 'box. **Below left:** 147 GTA's huge 3.2-litre V6 was taken from 156 saloon. **Below:** overlooked MR2 can be found from just £1000



That's because this car has been given the later-spec Q2 limited-slip differential at some point. The rest of the car has held up well to nine years and 73,000 miles, with no knocks through the suspension or rattles in the cabin. It's a solid riposte to all those jokes about Italian cars.

Time to swap. And while the Alfa has definitely improved with time, the Clio is as great as it was when new. It takes off down the B660 with sufficient enthusiasm to get me asking Sheehan, who is sitting next to me and undergoing the unnerving experience of being driven by a virtual stranger in his own car, what he's had done to it. The answer being, apart from an aftermarket exhaust and some earlier 172 Cup wheels (which are the same size as the standard 182 items), nothing.

It feels box-fresh, attacking the road with joyful verve. I'd forgotten just how rev-happy the old 2-litre engine was: a perfect antidote to modern small-capacity turbos. The new

exhaust adds a zingy top-end soundtrack too, although it's not too intrusive. The gearchange has a relatively long travel, but it's sweet once you've tuned into it and the pedals are set perfectly for heel-and-toeing your way down through the gears.

But it's the Clio's chassis that really impresses. The damping is absolutely spot-on, killing bumps and filling compressions without ever making the ride too firm; it's softer than more recent Renaultsport products but definitely not lacking in body control. The steering is alive with feel and the front end is utterly faithful. I'm sure the 182 doesn't generate as much outright grip as more modern hot hatches, but it doesn't need to, so finely balanced are the levels of adhesion produced by each end – it's both easy and instinctive to sharpen the cornering line by easing the throttle. Or, with the standard-fit stability control switched off, you can even persuade it into mild oversteer.

I'm sure the driver of a Clio 182 wouldn't see which way a new Clio RS Turbo went over a fast road. But I'm equally sure which car I'd rather drive or even own, the slightly rattly trim and comedy seating position of the older car notwithstanding. In terms of hot Clios, I really do think this is the high water mark.

How to top that? I don't know if I can – but with Bovingdon's MR2 bathing in the sun with its roof down, it's time to try something completely different. The Toyota is an odd one. It always seemed to do well when it was new, certainly when compared against its rivals. But it's also one of those cars that enjoyed a brief heyday and then went completely out of fashion, and history now seems to regard it as inferior to the second-gen Mazda MX-5 of the same era.

History, in this case, is bunk. There really is nothing like the MR2 – a simple, inexpensive sports car that offers a proper mid-engined



**‘IN THE MR2
YOU CAN CARRY
ENORMOUS
SPEED, THE
RELATIVE LACK OF
ACCELERATION
BECOMING
PART OF THE
CHALLENGE’**





Above: alloys fitted to this 182 are 172 Cup items with a dark finish, giving a Clio Trophy-like look. **Left:** Jethro needed to drop to second gear to slide his otherwise-planted MR2. **Below left:** only 444 RB5s were made

driving experience. The 1.8-litre four-cylinder that sits transversely under the rear clam cover isn't in much more than Corolla shopping spec – 138bhp didn't sound like much even when the car was new. But the crucial number is the one on the other side of the power-to-weight ratio, as this little roadster weighs just 975kg.

Jethro's busy, car-filled life means his MR2 has been left standing for some time and the brakes produce a wince-inducing graunching noise at low speed (although they still seem to work fine). But otherwise this eight-year-old car feels barely used, with the cabin's indelible black plastics unblemished and the driving controls feeling tight and accurate.

What it doesn't feel is fast. In part this is because the lack of inertia makes acceleration so drama-free. But it's also because it's just not very fast. The MR2 was claimed to cover 0-62mph in 7.2sec back in the day, but to wake it up to that extent you have to absolutely cane it. The engine pulls cleanly and finds some extra urgency as the revs rise, but it never delivers the sort of cam-shifting moment that you're subconsciously waiting for. The other slightly confusing dynamic cue is the long-travel throttle, which seems to deliver about 80 per

cent of its effect in the first couple of inches of travel, leaving you feeling short-changed when you press harder and find there's nothing left.

But the chassis is still brilliant. Toyota always used to boast about the MR2's low polar moment – most of its mass sitting close to the centre of the car – and you can feel it in its enthusiasm to turn and to go from lock-to-lock through a sequence of bends. There's huge mechanical grip, and the steering is super-direct – the car turns pretty much as quickly as you can think, with the rear wheels faithfully following the fronts. It's not a slider – at least, not until later when Jethro finds a slow corner to show off some spectacular second-gear drifting. But you can carry enormous speed, the relative lack of acceleration becoming part of the challenge.

I'M STILL A BIT STAR-STRUCK IN THE presence of the RB5, which has always been my favourite first-generation Impreza. Actually, thinking about it, my favourite Impreza. The big hope for today is that it lives up to my memories of how good it was.

Despite its hallowed status, the basic RB5 was just a cosmetic pack on the standard UK-spec Impreza Turbo, with unique grey metallic paint and a Prodrive rear spoiler. Fortunately, almost all were also ordered with the optional Prodrive suspension and performance packs, the latter boosting power to 237bhp and torque to 258lb ft. Doesn't sound like much by modern standards, does it?

Climbing into Rob Allen's RB5 is like meeting an old friend after a prolonged absence. Everything is as I remember it – the white dials,

the blue suede trim, even the sticker that warns me: 'When stopping the engine after heavy highway driving, allow it to idle for one minute.' This one is so original it's still got the Subaru-fit cassette stereo with the tiny pop-off front that most owners lost within a few months. Firing up the engine and listening to the flat-four idle is pure time warp stuff: I'm 24 again and sitting in what was, back then, my dream car.

The Impreza driving experience was never big on finesse. The big steering wheel is almost tractor-sized, and attached to a low-geared rack, while the gearchange has a correspondingly long travel. The seating position is both high and upright, your view forward framed by both the narrow A-pillars and the industrial-sized air intake that sits in the middle of the bonnet.

But despite its age, the RB5 still goes hard. The engine feels laggy low down – it always did – but it gathers momentum quickly as you add revs. The exhaust note hardens into the familiar wail and the Impreza still delivers a properly forceful shove in the back. This one has a slight hesitancy at higher revs, which turns into a misfire later on in the day, but it still feels quick.

One thing I had forgotten was just how soft the first-gen Impreza was. It's definitely a car that flows over a road rather than battling its way down it – if anything, it feels slightly under-damped at speed. But it's still brilliant at cornering thanks to a chassis that never seems to run out of answers. Go into a corner too keenly and the front starts to run wide; get on the power and you feel the torque transfer rearwards as the transmission tries to help you out. Alternatively, you can just brake late and



turn in hard, confident that – even if it does go sideways – the Impreza will find traction to pull itself straight.

Which leaves the beast until last. Hayward's GT-Four is completely new to me – the first Celica I drove was this car's edgy-looking successor – so I've no idea what to expect. It's clear within minutes that this is a seriously hardcore piece of kit.

The engine is a proper old-school turbo, firing with a lumpy idle and plenty of whooshing induction noise, plus a proper wastegate flutter. The aftermarket exhaust sounds like a swarm of robot killer bees have taken up residence in the back box. Apparently the road-going GT-Four had most of the piping in place for a full anti-lag system, so it could be even louder...

Setting off demonstrates some serious turbo lag – floor the throttle anywhere below 3000rpm and you can pretty much count 'one thousand, two thousand' before anything happens. But beyond that the Celica pulls as if it should be wearing full Castrol livery and have a chap called Sainz behind the wheel. This is a Japanese-spec ST205 WRC, which should have

had 251bhp when it left the factory. It feels like it's got at least another 100bhp now, something Matthew confirms is entirely possible given this car's clearly colourful past.

The suspension is brutal, stiff springs and firm dampers giving a pounding ride. But it works: even running on old, unbranded tyres, the GT-Four produces plenty of grip and the high-gear steering is both accurate and communicative. Somebody has fitted a quick-shift gear linkage at some point in the past – meaning about an inch of travel between ratios – which adds to the frenetic pace. It's definitely the quickest car here cross-country.

The Toyota's rallying origins are also demonstrated by a spectacular, if unexpected trick: some proper power oversteer. In slower turns the rear-biased power distribution sends more torque to the back axle, where a limited-slip diff seems determined to smear as much of this as possible across the road surface. At first it's slightly alarming, especially as the almighty turbo kicks in, but you soon learn to trust the four-wheel-drive system to help get it pointing in the right direction.

STANDING SURROUNDED BY TICKING

metal as the sun starts to descend, there's a common thought running through everybody's heads. Maybe this generation of cars was as good as it got in terms of raw driver appeal, the products of an era when dynamics could still overrule CO2 outputs and NCAP scores. Cars have become greener, faster and safer since then, but few have also been better to drive. That's something we should probably mourn more than we do.

But in the meantime, make the most of it. There's a whole generation of accessible performance cars out there in decent numbers and at bargain prices. Get them while they're hot and all that. Although this is a celebration rather than a competition, I still feel I should pick a winner from today's gathering. If only I had a garage, I'd be more than happy to give space in it to any one of these five. But if I had to select one to drive everyday, then it would have to be the Clio 182 – a car that manages the neat trick of feeling fresher and more fun than the new Clio 200 Turbo: the car that replaced the car that replaced it. ✕

Specifications

	RENAULTSPORT CLIO 182 CUP	ALFA ROMEO 147 GTA	SUBARU IMPREZA RB5	TOYOTA CELICA GT-FOUR	TOYOTA MR2
Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc	V6, 3179cc	Flat-four, 1994cc, turbo	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo	In-line 4-cyl, 1794cc
Power	180bhp @ 6500rpm	247bhp @ 6200rpm	237bhp @ 6000rpm	239bhp @ 6000rpm (UK)	138bhp @ 6400rpm
Torque	148lb ft @ 5250rpm	221lb ft @ 4800rpm	258lb ft @ 3500rpm	223lb ft @ 4000rpm	125lb ft @ 4400rpm
Weight (kerb)	1090kg	1360kg	1235kg	1496kg	975kg
Power-to-weight	168bhp/ton	184bhp/ton	195bhp/ton	162bhp/ton	144bhp/ton
0-60mph	6.5sec (claimed 0-62)	6.0sec (tested)	5.0sec (claimed)	5.2sec (claimed)	7.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	139mph (claimed)	153mph (claimed)	143mph (claimed)	143mph (claimed)	130mph (claimed)
Price new	£13,800 (2004)	£22,750 (2003)	£27,545 (1999)	£29,235 (1994)	£17,145 (2000)
Value today	£2000-5000	£3500-9000	£2000-5000	£1200-5000	£1000-6000
Why I bought one	Sam Sheehan: 'Very much because of the reviews, especially the ones in <i>evo</i> . I was a student at the time, so I was looking for something I could afford to buy and run on a limited budget, but which would also be really good fun to drive.'	Nick Peverett: 'My boss has one. Hers is dark blue, and when I drove it once I knew I had to have one. I had a Cupra R at the time, which was fast but so boring. What I love about the GTA is how much character it's got – it's the sort of car you're never going to get bored of.'	Rob Allen: 'I've always wanted one of these. I've got an Impreza Sport as well, the one that doesn't have a turbo on it, but I wanted something properly quick as well. I think the RB5 is the best Impreza of the lot, so I'll be keeping this one "for best".'	Matthew Hayward: 'It was a spur-of-the-moment thing when I got a call asking me if I wanted to buy a Celica GT-Four. I'd been looking at Imprezas but they were all far too expensive to insure, so I jumped at the chance to get a fast, off-beat alternative.'	Jethro Bovingdon: 'I've had loads of Clios and I was thinking of buying myself another when this absolute gem came up. For the money I just couldn't turn it down – I've always loved them and I really can't believe just how cheap they've got.'
The good bits	'Running costs are very sensible, I get 37mpg out of it. You can trundle around in it all day, but it's also a proper hot hatch.'	'They're cheap to run and you can still find parts. They do need work doing, but if you keep on top of them, you should be OK.'	'People look at it twice: they know there's something a bit different about it. This one's in top condition, too.'	'Everything on the car still works – even the air con. I'll eventually bring the car back to standard spec over time.'	'This is the facelift version, meaning it gets the six-speed gearbox and it's a bit softer – better for everyday stuff.'
The bad bits	'The interior rattles and you find yourself trying to track down noises, and the seating position has always been dreadful.'	'Front wishbones are a weak spot and fuel economy is poor – I get around 12mpg in town and 25-ish on a long run.'	'I'm going to have to sort out the misfire, and those alloy wheels look a bit too low-profile for me as I live on a farm.'	'There's steering vibration at about 80mph and the synchromesh on third gear is getting a bit crunchy.'	'I wish the steering column was adjustable for reach. That's pretty much it – apart from that, it's perfect.'
evo rating	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★



'THERE'S A WHOLE GENERATION OF ACCESSIBLE PERFORMANCE CARS OUT THERE AT BARGAIN PRICES'

S

by HENRY CATCHPOLE | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

EXPRESS

With 542bhp and a 186mph top speed, the new XFR-S is the most powerful and fastest Jaguar saloon ever. We put it through its paces on the challenging roads of east Cumbria







YOU'RE LEFT bewildered, scratching your head and looking up at a many-arrowed signpost. Lost, as some would say.

You're not entirely sure how you've come to be here and your destination has momentarily escaped you. It's a predicament, and only the possession of all your clothes and the lack of a headache or fluffy handcuffs tells you that you're not the survivor of a particularly successful stag do. If, however, by some crazy happenstance of fortune, one of the options on the guiding black and white fingers above you says 'Alston', then that's the direction for you. No need for further faffing. Simply head back to the car and make a beeline for this small town's cobbled streets. Why? Because whether you're approaching from north, south, east or west, you're guaranteed that a great driving road will lead you there.

Dean Smith and I are not lost (at the moment). We're on the M6 and following the satnav in a brand-new, £79,995 Jaguar XFR-S that is receiving quite a lot of attention. Twice we've parked up in petrol stations and twice we've returned to find people taking photos of it. The French Racing Blue paintwork is undoubtedly a large contributor to this, as it not only looks stunning, but also stands out in a car park like a Flake in a 99. The large rear wing, side skirts, bigger wheels and new nose all add to the more impressive image too, an image topped off by a menacing gloss black finish everywhere there used to be chrome.

It's nice to see such overt styling on a saloon, because with the demise of Imprezas and Evos, the four-door area of the performance market looks, for the most part, remarkably Q-car these days. The M5 and E63 look impressive, but only in a heavyweight boxer in a sober suit in court kind of way. By comparison, the XFR-S has more of the swagger and bravado of a Merc 190E Evo II, and while that might not be everyone's cup of tea, I think there's something rather fun about a saloon that's nearly as shouty as a supercar. What's more, all the aero addenda are functional too, with Jaguar claiming a 68 per cent reduction in lift.

This R-S version of the XF isn't just a body kit, however. For a start, the venerable supercharged 5-litre V8 has been tweaked to produce 542bhp and 502lb ft of torque. This cuts the 0-60mph dash to 4.4sec, while top speed is 186mph – limited. But if we're honest, the normal XFR (503bhp, 461lb ft, 4.7sec, 155mph)

Right: Alston is an ideal base for the excellent A-roads that criss-cross hilly eastern Cumbria. **Far right:** XFR-S handles admirably for a 1912kg car. **Bottom right:** Jag is big, but still easy to guide through urban settings



never struggled with the ability to bonfire its rear tyres, so the more interesting changes are those made to the chassis. It starts in the arches, with wheels half an inch wider at the front and an inch wider at the rear, and some new P Zeros developed with Pirelli. But behind the six-spoke alloys lie the front suspension uprights from the XKR-S, revised knuckles and firmer springs all round, stiffer bushes at the rear, new wheel bearings at the front, revised damper settings, a recalibrated active diff and a steering valve taken from the F-type. It's a proper job.

After leaving the M6 at Penrith, we stop for fuel as a precaution before heading up towards the Pennines looming in the distance. The interior of the XF is starting to show its age now, but the pulsing red starter button, the rising gear selector and the synchronised rotating of the air vents are all still childishly pleasing. Curiously, the driver's seat in our car feels rather high (higher than the passenger seat), which is a touch annoying, and the addition of an R-S

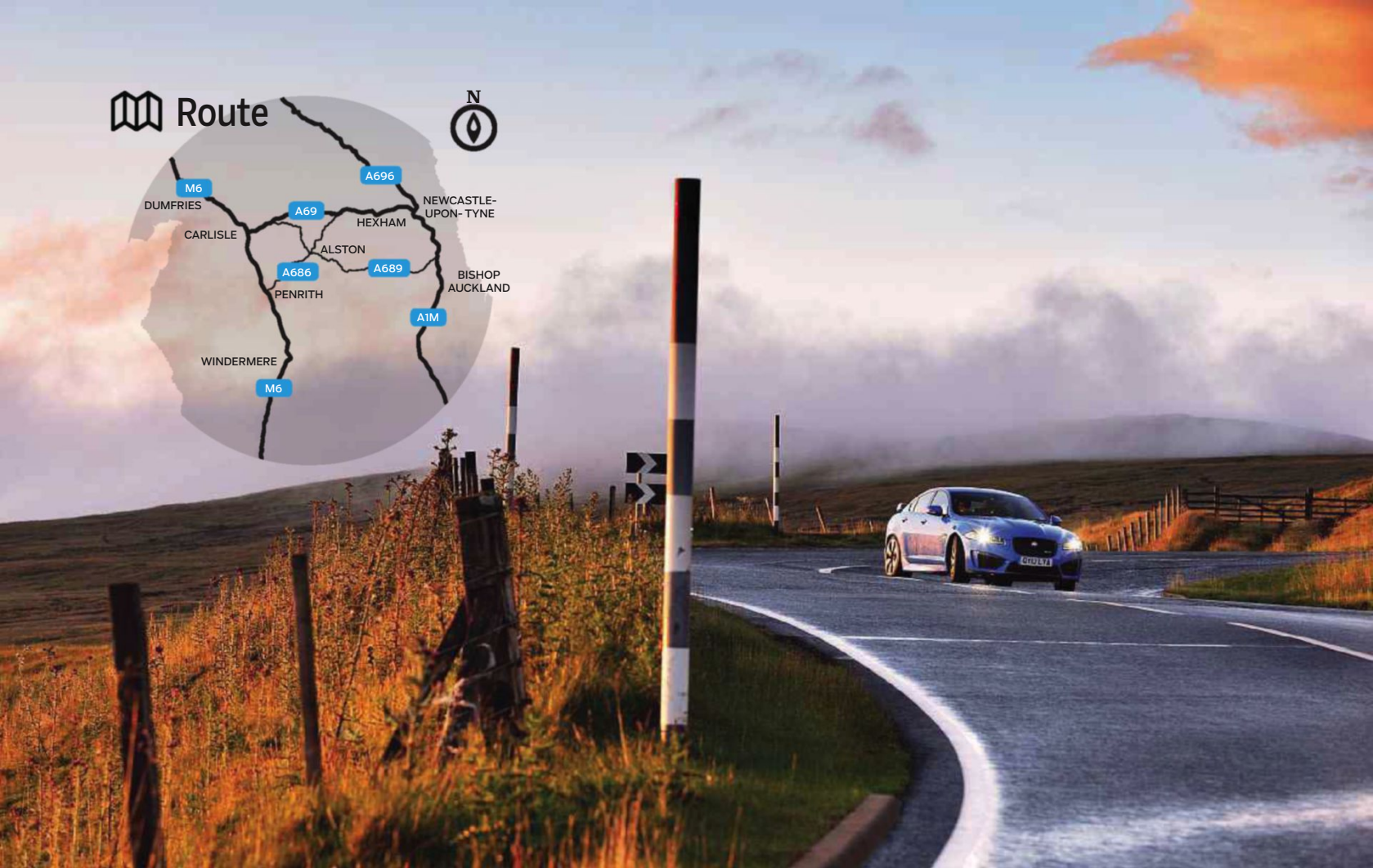
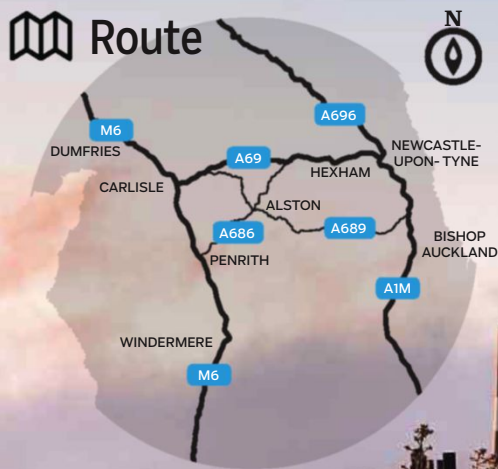
badge to the steering wheel doesn't make it feel any sportier, although the blue stitching and piping on the leather is a nice touch.

As soon as you set off down the road, the chassis changes are palpable. First you notice the added weight and precision to the steering: it's not alive with talkative feedback, but it's beautifully direct and the big blue car feels easy to place as you guide it amongst the traffic. At low speeds the ride is noticeably firmer: it's not uncomfortable because it remains well damped, but you can feel pimples and ruckles in the surface below you. What worried me the first time I felt this was that the XF's legendary ability to crush motorway miles with a soothing serenity might have been lost. Thankfully, though, as speed picks up, so the suspension smoothes the imperfections ever more seamlessly. Our journey up the motorway was as quiet and cosseted as it would have been in a standard XFR.

We don't live on that big an island, but just when I think I must have driven every good road in the UK, another one seems to appear and leave me dumbfounded. It's very reassuring. Hartside Pass (more prosaically the A686) climbs to a height of 1904ft (580m) and was designed in the 1820s by none other than the Scot John McAdam, whose method



‘The French Racing Blue paint not only looks stunning, but stands out in a car park like a Flake in a 99’



‘The alacrity with which you can throw its considerable mass one

for constructing roads originally used water, then later tar, leading to the name Tarmacadam (I imagine he must have been a little annoyed about the extra ‘a’ creeping in there). Anyway, the 57 corners and smooth surface of the pass remain a fitting tribute to him as they wind up from the valley floor.

A friendly *bong*, which sounds remarkably like the *bong* on a plane telling you to buckle up in anticipation of turbulence, signals that the DSC is fully off. Yet it’s clear within a couple of corners that the R-S is a much harder car to unstick than the R. Not in a bad way – it’s still perfectly possible to draw long black lines up a road out of a hairpin – but in the dry, you have to apply a lot more lateral load to get the tread blocks to relinquish their hold.

When the rear does step out of line, it does so more smartly than before, but the steering’s so quick and accurate that it’s easy to catch, and if you want to continue the slide then the electronically controlled diff now seems to remain locked up much more tightly and satisfyingly. It’s not all about the rear end, though. There are several quick right-left-right combinations on the A686 and it’s startling how much grip the R-S’s front end has. The alacrity with which you can throw the car’s considerable

mass one way then another is enough to put serious strain on your neck.

We pull up at Hartside Top (the café situated there has been doing business for over 75 years) and contemplate doing some photos, but we decide the light might get better later in the day, so we press on for Alston. There’s a choice of three A-roads to explore once you’re there. You can stay on the A686 to Hexham, or head north or east on the A689 to Carlisle or Bishop Auckland. There’s even quite a nice B-road to try as well. I’m baffled that the parking in the town centre doesn’t resemble *evo*’s Database pages come to life...

Choosing to stick with the A686 first, we head back out onto the moors and another wonderful road that seems to unravel and get faster the further away from civilisation you get, culminating in a long straight that feels like it’s on top of the world. The familiar, almost ubiquitous eight-speed ZF automatic ‘box is in residence and feels quicker than ever. It’s a seriously impressive auto, particularly on upshifts, which really fire through with purpose. Be optimistic with a downshift and you can find a slight delay, but it’s very hard to fault. The only thing I’d really like are some better paddles, because the small, lightweight

plastic ones attached to the back of the wheel don’t give the nice tactile experience you want.

At Bearsbridge we turn round and head back to tackle the A689. We head east first, and after a roller-coaster climb, drop steeply down into a valley road that fires dips, yumps and compressions at you in breathtakingly quick succession. It’s a real test for a car that weighs 1912kg, but the resilience of the suspension is quite incredible. Several times I wince preemptively, feeling sure that the nose must make contact with tarmac or that the bump-stops will be tested to destruction, but although you can feel the inherent mass in the car, it’s all contained and controlled stunningly well.

As the road smoothes a little and everything relaxes, I realise that the one thing the R-S is missing is a really rousing soundtrack. The exhaust has supposedly been retuned, but strangely for a Jag, the noise is never more than a slightly distant background accompaniment.

Finally we head onto the A689 heading north, which although great to drive, turns out to be the least picturesque road. There are also dozens of cyclists heading in the other direction, so we decide to cut back down to the Hartside Pass via another B-road. A plan that goes swimmingly right up until we find our way

Left: accurate steering helps make slides easy to manage. **Right:** Henry yearned for weightier shift paddles. **Below, from left:** 20in front wheels cover huge 380mm brake discs; discreet R-S badging; rather less discreet carbon rear wing



way then another is enough to put serious strain on your neck'



Specification

JAGUAR XFR-S

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharged

Power 542bhp @ 6500rpm

Torque 502lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm

Transmission Eight-speed Quickshift automatic, rear-wheel drive, electronic active diff, DSC

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

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

Brakes Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 376mm rear, ABS

Wheels 9 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear

Tyres 265/35 R20 front, 295/30 R20 rear

Weight (kerb) 1912kg

Power-to-weight 288bhp/ton

0-60mph 4.4sec (claimed)

Top speed 186mph (limited)

Basic price £79,995

On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

barred. Five-barred, to be precise, as a farm gate is blocking our way. Hedges are brushing both wing mirrors so there's a bit of reversing involved in a driveway (at least helped by the standard reversing camera). Thankfully the farmer who wanders out to have a look at the twit in the big blue saloon is very friendly and acknowledges that the dead-end sign has indeed dropped off...

Eventually we find ourselves crunching slowly across the gravel of the car park up at Hartside Top, but the view isn't what we were hoping for. Dark, grumpy clouds are rolling in, and as I switch the engine off and the gear selector recedes like a Wurlitzer at the end of a show, the first heavy drops of rain begin to fall. The moorland in front of us looks bleak and ripe for a Sherlock Holmes mystery, but it isn't going

to be very enticing in photos. Reluctantly, we retrace our tyre marks down the road towards the Cumberland Hotel in Alston, where we're staying, and check in, convinced that there's nothing more to be done this evening.

A selection of framed CAMRA awards is promising and Dean and I have just ordered pints of Tyneside Blonde and begun to peruse the bar menu when I happen to look out of the window. At the far edge of the clouds there's a shaft of light as golden as the beer in my hand.

'Um, Dean... You know how hungry you said you were?'

'Yes, it's definitely the deep-fried Brie wedges to start with for me and then I'm thinking a pie, or possibly a burger or maybe even bo...' His voice trails off as he raises his eyes from the leatherette-bound book of food and slowly

follows my gaze out through the west window. We don't even need to speak. We both know what has to be done. He takes the stairs two at a time in a charge for the Nikon in his room while I run to retrieve the XFR-S from the car park.

It might seem odd, but this job isn't just brilliant because of the cars. Both Dean and I get a real kick out of trying to come back with the very best set of photos we can to create a feature. Every job is a challenge to bring back something that hopefully someone might get pleasure from when it's printed and even remember in the future. We both know that light like this doesn't come around often and doesn't last long, so we're not going to miss the opportunity to trap it on a memory card.

As we hammer up the long straights and I try to dance the car through the cambered



'It feels like a huge privilege to have such a backdrop all to ourselves'

chicanes that are now glistening from the rain, a rainbow appears in the vast valley to our left. I stop the car. It's as vivid an arching spectrum as you'll see anywhere and too good to miss. Five minutes later we're sliding out of corners again as I desperately try to put down as much of the 502lb ft as I dare in our race to the top of the moor. The Jag might have found a chunk more grip in the dry (30 per cent, according to the spec sheet), but in the wet it is as much of a lairy challenge as ever and the car will oversteer for Britain if you let it.

In all honesty, this is the time of day when we should have been up on this wonderful stretch of road anyway. Despite being school holidays, the traffic was relatively quiet during the day, but now there's no-one here at all. It feels like a huge privilege to have such a breathtakingly

beautiful backdrop all to ourselves. It makes you want to do it justice with your driving, nailing every line between the snow poles, letting the car flow through the well-sighted sections, using all the road unhindered and gathering up the slides smoothly.

Back up in the empty café car park, while Dean makes the most of the sun that's now disappearing behind the Lake District, I conclude that the XFR-S is a cracking car. It doesn't feel as technologically up to date as an M5 and I wish it had a bit more of the RS4 or E63's soundtracks about it, but it is hugely impressive the extent to which Jaguar has sharpened the chassis. There really aren't many cars, particularly big saloons, that could tackle every road around Alston and come out unscathed, but that's what it's done. ☒

Fast Fleet

Living with evo's
long-term
test cars

From 2002 to 12C, evo's Fast Fleet is the biggest and most comprehensive long-term section in the business. This month...

FERRARI F40 by 'SSO'

Contributor

This month: An Italian road trip. **What would the SSO change about his F40?** 'The wing mirrors. The current ones are completely rubbish. The only thing you can see in them is the rear wing'



BMW M135i by Henry Catchpole

Features editor

This month: Catchpole ponders the M135i's discreet styling. **What would Henry change about his long-termers?** 'I'd like a limited-slip diff in the BMW and a BDA engine in my Escort. Please'



RENAULT TWINGO 133 by Ian Eveleigh

Production editor

This month: It's bye-bye Twingo. **What would Ev change about the Twingo?** 'I'd remove all the seats apart from the driver's. Less weight and no passengers to complain about the bumpy ride. Win-win'



MAZDA MX-5 MK2 by Peter Tomalin

Contributor

This month: The dreaded rusty sills get some attention. **What would Peter change about his car?** 'I'd love to lower the base of the driver's seat, so that you feel you're sitting *in* it rather than *on* it'



TOYOTA GT86 by Jethro Bovingdon

Contributing editor

This month: Wet track, take two. **What would Jethro change about the GT86?** 'I'd swap it for the SSO's F50, please. If that's impossible then a turbocharger for a bit more mid-range would be lovely'



BMW 2002 by Will Beaumont

Designer

This month: Will fits stiffer anti-roll bars, then tests them on track. **What would Will change about his car?** 'More power – but I'm on that case. I'd like a stiffer shell, too. Maybe a full cage with door bars...'



AUDI RS4 AVANT by Dean Smith

Staff photographer

This month: The RS4's paint is showing some battle scars. **What would Dean change about his long-termers?** 'I'd change the specification to remove the awful Dynamic Steering'



ALFA ROMEO GIULIETTA by Rob Gould

Art director

This month: Gould's been admiring the Alfa's Italian design flair. **What would Rob change about the Alfa?** 'It's just missing that lovely Italian V6 soundtrack...'



McLAREN 12C by Nick Trott

Editor

This month: Nick's having second thoughts about the 12C's bright hue. **What would Nick change about his long-termers?** 'A reliable infotainment system would be good, as would a different colour'



HYUNDAI VELOSTER TURBO by Stephen Dobie

Staff writer

This month: A weekend in Belgium. **What would Stephen change about the Veloster?** 'I wish it had an exhaust note that better backed up the car's briskness. Oh, and a fourth door would be nice!'



LAMBORGHINI COUNTACH by Harry Metcalfe

Editorial director

This month: Harry contemplates the fate of the cars in his collection. **What would Harry change about his Countach?** 'Working air-con and speedo would be nice, but for a 26-year-old car, that's a short list!'



FERRARI 458 ITALIA by Simon George

Contributor

This month: After a long period of reliability, the Ferrari has developed a couple of minor problems. **What would Simon change about his 458?** 'A manual 'box and a personality, please'



RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS by Adam Shorrock

Senior designer

This month: Some TLC for the Willy. **What would co-owner Dobie change about the Clio?** 'I wish it would always work when I go to drive it. Must get that intermittent starting issue looked at...'



JAGUAR XKR-S by Richard Meaden

Contributing editor

This month: A pair of punctures. **What would Dickie change about the Jag?** 'I've developed a hatred of the chrome "pork pie" rotary gear selector. It looks tacky and doesn't feel satisfying to use'



SKODA SUPERB OUTDOOR by Sam Riley

Film-maker

This month: Riley has his best drive yet in the Superb. **What would Sam change about the Skoda?** 'I'd lose that silly plastic cladding that runs around the doors and the bumpers'



Also on the evo fleet: Nissan GT-R, Escort RS2000, Maserati GranTurismo S, Ferrari F50, Peugeot 106 Rallye, Mercedes 190E 2.5-16, Jaguar XJR-15, Lancia Delta Integrale, Lamborghini Murciélago, Ferrari 550 Barchetta, Renaultsport Clio Trophy, Ferrari 430 Scuderia. **Coming soon:** Mini JCW GP, Audi RS6 Avant, Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo

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END OF TERM

Vauxhall Astra VXR

It was unexpectedly entertaining and often sideways.
Jethro Bovingdon looks back on his time with 276bhp hatch



THE ASTRA VXR'S final moments in my possession were pure perfection. We were at the Bedford Autodrome and it was raining and bleak; just another early summer's day in the UK. My new Toyota GT86 was busy firing seasoned journalists into the boonies (see last month's GT86 report for the full humiliating debrief) and Henry's M135i was proving a spiky, uncommunicative machine in those horrible conditions, too. However, the much less celebrated Astra VXR was intensely wonderful: wildly agile, hilariously

forgiving and about as much fun as any car could be on an empty track with plenty of run-off. It was the car Dickie, Henry and I were squabbling over and I wondered if life without it was about to get a lot more ordinary.

So let's recap. I inherited the VXR from our outgoing art editor, Paul Lang. My experience of the VXR was pretty extensive already and I thought I had it all figured out. It was fast and had plenty of character, but the rampant 276bhp and 295lb ft was dulled by a hefty 1475kg kerb weight, and Vauxhall had played it pretty safe with the chassis: plenty of grip, not much in the way of adjustability or

interactivity. It turned out I was way off – this car was a raving oversteery lunatic. Want proof? Go to evo.co.uk and look up the Track Battle between this very VXR and a Focus ST, carried out in wet conditions. The VXR looks like a particularly overpowered rear-driver. Could a bit of wet weather really so transform a car?

This car's hyper-agility will always be my abiding memory of it, but when it wasn't reversing around roundabouts, the VXR could be a frustrating car to live with. I never got used to the jumpy low-speed throttle response, which was annoying every single time I pulled away from a





Above: Bovingdon found our VXR was particularly tail happy – but others he's tried haven't been...
Below left: dials turned red when VXR mode was selected. **Below middle:** gearknob was a distractingly awkward shape



standstill. I never found the controls for the infotainment system even approaching intuitive; in fact after six months with the car I would still just follow my instincts rather than try to program the satnav. And little details like the huge and awkward-feeling gearknob just seemed badly thought out – different for different's sake and actually a barrier to enjoying the car. However, the quality of the VXR deserves praise because it never emitted so much as a squeak or rattle, nor used a drop of oil.

One other issue was the doors, which were *huge*. Car parks required a sort of sideways limbo dance to extract yourself from the excellent seats. It sounds trivial but it was actually a massive pain. Other three-door hatches are similarly afflicted, but the Astra seemed to be especially awkward (I barely noticed the inconvenience when I ran a Mégane RS for a similar period).

So the Astra VXR is far from the perfectly honed hot hatch... It makes the little things too much like hard work and dynamically there are nagging problems, too. The engine's power curve looks great on paper but feels like it has real holes in it on the road. The mechanical LSD should be superb but somehow it doesn't hook the nose into an apex under power as well as a Mégane's, and the gradual ramping up of damping force, throttle response and steering weight with Normal, Sport and VXR modes just doesn't offer enough flexibility. It'd be great to be able to mix and match the settings.

However, I'll forgive it all that for its roughneck character, the blast-furnace noise when the engine is given its head and that wonderfully and precisely adjustable balance. The only problem is that, having driven other Astra VXRs, I now know that our car really was unique. Every

other example I've driven *did* play it safe in terms of set-up. And a VXR with a more neutral to understeery balance just wouldn't have been anywhere near as exciting to live with as ours. Did we get lucky? Was there something 'wrong' with our car? We're still not sure. But if you fancy a used Astra VXR then start scanning the classifieds and remember this car's registration plate... front-drivers come no more hair-raising. ✕

Jethro Bovingdon
 (@JethroBovingdon)

Driver's log

Date acquired	July 2012
Duration of test	11 months
Total test mileage	13,610
Overall mpg	27.3
Costs	£0
Purchase price	£30,455
Trade-in value	£21,000
Depreciation	£9455

Ferrari F40

The SSO joins some fellow Ferrari owners for an Italian road trip

O NCE OR TWICE a year, I get together with a small group of friends to drive some of the best roads in Europe. This year we decided to go back to Italy. Given the destination, it seemed only appropriate to take the F40. The F40 last went to Italy in 2007. That trip was a wonderful experience, with terrific receptions everywhere we went, including from the police, who on several occasions provided extra encouragement to shorten our journey times. It was probably the closest I will ever get to being a celebrity.

This year's trip took place over seven days, starting from a small, dark, wet road in Surrey. The F40 covered a total of 2200 miles, crossed eight countries, used 0 litres of oil, stopped for petrol eight times, and killed an uncountable number of bugs. It drove through heavy downpours and fog, sat in traffic jams, crossed the Alps twice, survived a couple of roads that resembled lunar surfaces, and even enjoyed a few days of Tuscan sun. Despite all these challenges, it didn't put a single foot wrong.

BMW M135i

T WITCHERS CAPABLE of spotting, and getting excited about, the difference between a great- and a lesser-spotted woodpecker are not so very different from us. For example, you, I have no doubt, would be able to pick out at a hundred paces an M135i from a 118i M Sport. The silver wing mirrors are as much of a glaring giveaway as the red flash near the great-spotted's tail. But to the untrained or uninterested, it's



Above: on the Eurotunnel. **Left:** Ferraris in convoy. **Below:** following a Daytona



We had several highly memorable drives that week, including one up the Alps to the St Bernard Tunnel, where we were greeted with snow flurries as we neared the tunnel entrance at 1900 metres. But the best was the day spent crossing the spine of Italy from Florence to San Marino on the SS67. This truly breathtaking road consists of 70 miles of winding tarmac across the top of the Apennine Mountains. In the F40, the entire road is driven in second and third gear, with as little use of the brakes as possible. Getting into the flow of the road is critical and it becomes a dance of downshift, turn in, back on the throttle, upshift, back

off the throttle, downshift again, turn in... and repeat for several hours.

You might not expect the F40 to be the best car for this sort of driving, but its steering is outstanding, it's a very easy car to place precisely on the road, and the constant stream of unfiltered feedback means you know exactly what is going on around you.

We were very lucky that day as there was almost no traffic on the pass. One of the few cars we encountered was an Alfa that we ended up behind at a red light for some roadworks. With the light still red, the Alfa went shooting off and disappeared up the mountain. About

five minutes later, we came around a corner and found it parked at the side of the road with its driver standing on a large rock waiting for us with both a video and stills camera in hand. Clearly we had a fan!

On the subject of fans, one thing that stood out was the reception that the F40 received this year compared to 2007. This time around it was much more subdued, and while we had a few police officers smile at us, we did not get the waves or the encouragement to proceed of the past. The last few years have not been kind to the Italian economy and it does show in a number of different ways.

Driving in a small convoy of Ferraris across Italy is always an event and being in the F40 made it more special still. The car never failed to impress or handle any of the multiple different challenges thrown at it. I was left more impressed with it than ever. ✕

Secret Supercar Owner
(@SupercarOwner)

Driver's log

Date acquired	Nov 2006
Total mileage	43,670km
Mileage this month	2200 miles
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	18.0

not that easy. And I like that.

Anyone can tell a Pagani from a Punto or a buzzard from a blue tit, but it takes a bit more to know whether you're looking at a regular Ferrari 360 or a Challenge Stradale. It makes me even more delighted to stop and chat when someone wanders over to have a look at NTU, because I know that despite its wonderfully under-the-radar clothing they have singled it out from amongst the mundane masses and realised the multi-cylinder

goodness that lies beneath. In short, I think the M135i has the potential to be a bit of a cult car, like an E30 318iS. ✕

Henry Catchpole
(@Henry Catchpole)

Driver's log

Date acquired	January 2013
Total mileage	10,416
Mileage this month	1011
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.1



END OF TERM

Renaultsport Twingo 133

One year and 13,000 miles on, the 133 has gone. Ev recalls the highs and lows

Photography: Ian Eveleigh, Dean Smith and zzzzone.co.uk



Mazda MX-5 1.8i

The MX-5's makeover continues. This month, it was the turn of the dreaded rotten sills to get some attention

GREAT LITTLE CARS, MX-5s, but boy do they rust.

Weirdly, the mid-noughties Mk2.5s like mine seem to have even less rust-proofing than earlier versions. The bubbling on the outer surface of the sills was only ever going to be the tip of this rust-berg; MX-5 forums

are full of horror stories of dissolving inner sills, so it was with no little trepidation that I handed the car over to Northants-based Paul Manning Panelcraft and waited for a call.

The outer sills were as bad as they looked, rotten from the inside, so Paul cut the rear third away on both

I

IT MAY NOT have had several hundred horsepower, rear-wheel drive, or the kind of 0-60 time

that would make for a killer *Top Trumps* card, but nevertheless I was genuinely excited about running a Twingo 133 as a long-termer. Some of my best drives ever have been in Renaultsport-badged cars, and after a run of 300bhp-plus sports cars and coupes as long-termers, I thought it would be good to spend some time in something a little less well endowed in the power department and re-acquaint myself with the art of maintaining momentum.

HK12 OJV arrived in August 2012 with just shy of 700 miles on the clock. Painted Capsicum Red – a perfect hot hatch colour – it had just two options fitted: the £700 Cup chassis (17in Gloss Black wheels, stiffer springs and dampers, lower ride height) and the £125 Renaultsport Monitor (which could show all kinds of performance data on the dash display). These took the on-the-road price of our 133 from the basic £13,565 up to £14,390.

First impressions were dominated by the Cup chassis. Its firmness left me in no doubt that this was one serious small hot hatch. For a brief while I wondered if it would be too much to live with on a daily basis, especially with my 85-mile round-trip commute. But while the ride was never particularly pleasant for passengers, as the driver, I soon acclimatised. All it took was one good corner, or an empty roundabout attacked on three wheels, and I'd be glad I'd ticked that option box.

Having such a keen chassis helped make the most of the Twingo's



Clockwise from above: Twingo felt at home on British B-roads; white trim livened up a simple interior; Cup chassis lapped up track work; avoiding spilt fuel took care



naturally aspirated 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine. An output of 131bhp doesn't sound like a great deal in this day and age, but when combined with a kerb weight of just 1050kg, you get a power-to-weight ratio to rival a mk2 Golf GTI 16v or 205 GTI 1.6. Perhaps not coincidentally, I found the kind of carefree entertainment dished up by the Twingo reminded me very much of those '80s icons, albeit with considerably sharper responses.

Economy was a bit ho-hum, the overall average being 33.3mpg. Having only five gears probably didn't help, but the 133 is also one of those

cars that seems to constantly egg you on to extract every last gram of performance from it. That said, the Twingo could cruise quite happily – with a fair bit of road noise, mind – as editor Trott discovered when he took it down to Spa for a trackday. I also did a trackday, on the Brands Hatch Indy circuit, and had an absolute hoot hanging on to the tails of Clio 197s. Yup, with a bit of commitment, it really was that quick.

Fuel aside, the Twingo didn't cost a penny to run. The original tyres were still legal (just!) when the car left us with nearly 14,000 miles on the

clock, and the first and only service, performed at 12,500 miles by Wests of Bedford, was covered by the '4+' package (four years' warranty, servicing and roadside cover) that's included with every new Renault.

HK12 wasn't entirely without problems, though. The fuel filler would sometimes spit petrol back at me when the tank neared full while filling up, the alarm would go off sporadically (until I covered the volumetric sensors with Blu-Tack), the clutch pedal made an irritating clicking noise every time you pressed it, and there was an occasional gritty noise from the steering that came and went every few weeks. However, all these issues could no doubt be sorted under warranty. One that perhaps couldn't was the annoyingly obstructive gearshift action from fourth to fifth – another 133 I tried was the same, so I assume they're all like that.

Sadly, as I write this, the RS Twingo has just gone off sale. Its successor, whenever it arrives, has a tough act to follow. The 133 may have had less than half the power of some of my previous long-termers, cost half as much, and turned fewer heads, but I'm absolutely certain that I had more fun, more of the time in the little Renault. There's a lesson in there somewhere. ☒

Ian Eveleigh

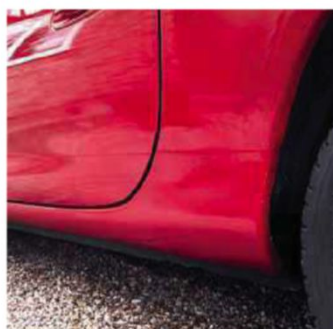
Driver's log

Date acquired	August 2012
Duration of test	12 months
Total test mileage	13,299
Overall mpg	33.3
Costs	£0
Purchase price	£14,390
Trade-in value	£9500
Depreciation	£4890



Driver's log

Date acquired	April 2012
Total mileage	114,331
Mileage this month	317
Costs this month	£250
mpg this month	32.1



Far left: inner sills were corroded, but rescuable. **Above:** new outer sills were primed, then sprayed Velocity Red

sides, right back to the rear wheelarch. Mercifully, although this revealed extensive surface corrosion on the inner sills, they were still sound. So after they'd been wire-brushed and treated with a rust converter, all that was required was to weld new outer panels into place, smooth with filler, prime and respray. The final job was to Waxoyl the inner surfaces.

The finished job looks very neat and at just £125 a side I reckon that's extremely good value. If you'd like Paul to do the same for your MX-5, give him

a call on 07967 598595.

In other news, with summer having finally deigned to put in an appearance, I've been reminded just what a joy it is to fling back the 5's hood and head off for a drive through the countryside for the sheer fun of it. I've been seeking out stone walls just to hear the exhaust parping fruitily and changing gear far more often than is strictly necessary to enjoy the chunky little gearshift, recently rebooted and feeling better every mile. ☒

Peter Tomalin

Toyota GT86

The 197bhp coupe has been out on a wet circuit again.
And this time it stayed on the grey bit



SO AFTER THE ignominy of last month's spin-fest at the Bedford Autodrome, I approached a drizzly **evo** track evening with something approximating dread. In fact the GT86 sat in the bustling pitlane for the first hour or so, nobody too keen to take on the might of its 197bhp engine and 215-section tyres. In retrospect, that's pretty ridiculous, isn't it? Anyway, after much prevarication, I decided to give it a go.

And you know what? It was brilliant. I completed six laps in full drift mode without even getting

close to a spin, the GT86 poised and controllable. Maybe on that fateful day last month the track was uniquely slimy. Whatever the truth, the Toyota suddenly felt like a different and much more tolerant car.

I'm really warming to the GT86, in fact. On the road, I love how it feels so agile and how that super-low c-of-g is tangible every time you change direction. The flat-four engine has really freed up over the last 500 miles or so and our GT86 is now by far the quickest we've driven, which was highlighted when we tried the TRD version this month (see Driven).

OK, it's still pretty weedy in

the mid-range compared to a turbocharged hot hatch, but it zings nicely around to the cut-out now, and once it's wound up on a good piece of road you hardly miss the torque because you can carry lots of speed.

The electric power steering is also very good indeed for such a set-up and the gearbox and brakes are just right, too.

All this has led me to wonder if we were a little harsh on the GT86 on **eCoty** last year. On balance, I think we were about right – the high-speed artificial-feeling yaw is still odd, the engine noise piped into the cabin sounds artificial and thrashy and I still believe the yen/£ exchange rate has

taken it into uncomfortable territory price-wise. However, when you live with it day-to-day, the GT86 does feel like a proper little sports car, and with 'small' hot hatches growing ever bigger and more refined, that's very refreshing indeed. **X**

Jethro Bovington
(@JethroBovington)

Driver's log

Date acquired	May 2013
Total mileage	3697
Mileage this month	1201
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	32.1



Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf

TAKE SOME TIME to admire the lines of the Giulietta and it's obvious that its designer had a serious curve fetish when they penned it. Just follow those sharp creases down the side of the car as they change to smooth sweeping curves and back again. In fact, I couldn't find a single straight line on the car anywhere (if you exclude the sills). And that rear

three-quarter view of the car hunkered down on its 100mm lower-than-standard suspension doesn't half look the business.

The thoughtful design isn't just skin-deep, though – the chassis incorporates magnesium supports and aluminium suspension pillars for lightness, while the meaty steering feel makes the Cloverleaf a delight to



Audi RS4 Avant

THERE AREN'T MANY things in life as annoying as having to drive through a muddy puddle after spending two hours cleaning your car – other than finding damage to your car whilst cleaning it.

With the kind of mileage I do and the RS4's performance as ballistic as it is, I guess it's inevitable that our Audi would pick up a stone-chip or two in its time on *evo*'s fleet. What I wasn't expecting was to find the gorgeous crystal-effect Prism Silver paintwork absolutely littered with them. In fact some are so bad that whole chunks of paint have been taken off right down to what looks like the primer.

Thankfully the RS4's nose is only seen in the rear-view mirrors of dawdlers' Jazzes for a matter of seconds before they're staring at its rear haunches disappearing off in front of them. ☒

Dean Smith (@evoDeanSmith)

Driver's log

Date acquired	Sept 2012
Total mileage	21,604
Mileage this month	1201
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	22.1

live with. If anything it needs a more aggressive engine note to go along with those purposeful twin pipes. ☒

Rob Gould (@RobGould72)

Driver's log

Date acquired	December 2012
Total mileage	13,399
Mileage this month	1048
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.9



BMW 2002

Designer Beaumont has been working on his car's suspension – and testing it at the Bedford Autodrome

Above: steering from the rear. **Below left:** fitting the new anti-roll bars. **Below right:** sliding clamp mounts on the rear



SOME OF MY recent upgrades to the 2002 have been more successful than others. A full set of matching polyurethane engine mounts to replace the mix 'n' match set of standard rubber and 'urethane items has stopped the exhaust and gearbox hitting other parts of the car they shouldn't touch. The new mounts have slightly improved throttle response too. Unfortunately they have also created a lot of vibration within the car. They might be too harsh, even for my tastes for aggressive, uncompromised road cars. I'll use them for a bit and hopefully they'll soften up slightly.

More successful were the suspension upgrades. Firstly, I managed to achieve some more negative camber on the front. Some wear on the outer shoulder of the front tyres and a wheel alignment session that said I had a stone-cold zero degrees of camber meant I

had to do something more than just tweak the adjustment plates at the top of the struts. I've now added some plates at the bottom of the struts to push them out and give me a little bit of negative camber. Front-end grip has now noticeably improved.

Next up, I replaced the standard anti-roll bars with some thicker, adjustable items. The front bar has two options: stiff and really stiff. The drop links on the rear have sliding clamp mounts and so are infinitely adjustable. Given my inclination to constantly tinker, I thought that 'infinitely adjustable' would essentially be the end of my social life. With the first *evo* trackday of the year imminent, I thought it would be a perfect place to fine tune the anti-roll bars. I was prepared to take a jack and some spanners with me so I could fettle between sessions. Thankfully, for the sake of my social life and my dignity, the

adjustment on the rear is tiny. So I've made it as stiff as possible to match the front. There's now no unwanted roll and the ride comfort has only marginally changed.

So I was thoroughly looking forward to that trackday. But then, on the very day of the trackday, after a gloriously sunny week, it rained. Which meant rather than relishing the new front-end grip and reduced body roll, I faced driving around trying not to get black-flagged for 'prolonged drifts'. But thanks to the marshals' relaxed attitude, this turned out not to be a problem... ☒

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)

Driver's log

Date acquired	July 2008
Total mileage	140,800-ish
Mileage this month	800-ish
Costs this month	£450
mpg this month	15-ish

McLaren 12C

Is McLaren Orange
the best colour for a 12C?
Trott's not too sure...



THE McLAREN F1 that we drove in last month's epic group test has got me thinking about the colour of our 12C. That F1, McLaren's own XP5 development car, was painted a stunning dark metallic green. Still lustrous after 20 or so years, it subtly highlighted the car's form, reflected light evenly and imbued the F1 with a refined class that mirrored its personality. The hint of Racing Green topped off the appeal – a reminder that the car is British, and that the car is fast.

Having lived with the 12C for a while now, I'm beginning to feel that its McLaren Orange paint – while loaded with Can-Am, Bruce-and-Denny symbolism – does not suit the car's character. It's not a wild, angry, barely disguised racing car – it's an astonishingly capable, genuinely useable GT. For the everyday role

that it occupies in my life, orange is just a bit too shouty. As much as I love speaking to people at petrol stations, or giving rides, two downsides are beginning to grate: drivers weaving all over the road to get a cameraphone pic of the car, and halfwits who try to race you, or attempt to prove that their car is in someway comparable to arguably the most sophisticated supercar you can currently buy.

One instance recently terrified me. Driving along a dry, clear dual-carriageway, I noticed in my mirror a car approaching, then accelerating hard. He'd spotted the McLaren.

It was a Mk1 TT Roadster, driven by a man with presumably his wife or girlfriend in the passenger seat. As the road narrowed to a single carriageway, the TT passed me at around 120mph – twice my speed – the driver jumping up and down in his seat as if celebrating a victory.



Above: other 12C colours are available

As he pulled in sharply, the TT destabilised and narrowly missed two cyclists minding their own business just ahead of us. It weighed on my mind heavily that had the 12C been a subtler hue, Mr TT Bellend wouldn't have spotted it from so far

back and wouldn't have attempted to demonstrate just how virile he was by whooshing past. I understand you can't take responsibility for other people's actions, but I couldn't help feeling like I was somehow an accessory in this situation.

There are still occasions when I love McLaren Orange – especially when kids clock the car and fawn over its styling. But I also find myself increasingly lusting after a subtler BRG paint. The solution? Someone needs to invent a chameleonic paint finish. And soon. Or I could get the car wrapped. Mmm, I wonder... ☒

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Driver's log

Date acquired	March 2013
Total mileage	13,639
Mileage this month	891
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	17.1

Hyundai Veloster Turbo

FACED WITH A 500-mile round trip to Bruges for **evo** snapper Dean Smith's stag do, I immediately asked Henry if I could borrow his M135i and booked it onto the Eurotunnel the second his head began to nod. With days to go, though, an A45 AMG arrived at the office with clenched fists, dragging the Beemer into impromptu battle.

Veloster it was, then. It could have sulked at my plans of infidelity, but



Above: Veloster perfect for Belgium trip

instead it proved I should never have considered straying.

It was a refined motorway chum, its pumping stereo and punchy climate control excelling as it transported me to a toasty Belgium without issue. (Far more traumatic was cycling behind our

hairless snapper while he wore a polka-dot dress and ginger wig...)

Annoying ergonomics aside, the Hyundai's satnav worked well outside the UK and the car's mpg seems to be improving slightly as the total mileage swells. Most gratifying of all, though, the Lobster played the role of both dining room and bedroom when I arrived at Calais homeward bound to find a fault had delayed Chunnel crossings by *eight* hours. I didn't pine for my M-badged mistress once. ☒

Stephen Dobie
(@evoStephenDobie)

Driver's log

Date acquired	February 2013
Total mileage	11,927
Mileage this month	1102
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	34.5

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Ferrari 458 Italia

S SO IN A LITTLE over two years, WX11's Michelins have covered over 40,000 pretty tough miles. Sod's law, then, that in the last report I mentioned how reliable she'd been recently. No sooner had that piece appeared than a few irritating issues arose.

First off was a message on the multifunction dash display saying 'Electrical failure: Go to dealer' every time that lovely V8 was cranked up. That said, there's been no difference in performance whatsoever. Puzzling. So a trip to Graypaul Nottingham is on the cards to sort that out, along with an odd intermittent whirring noise coming from behind the dash.

Also into the pot goes a rapid loud ticking from the engine bay – again intermittent. A little bird tells me Ferrari has no fix for this at the time of writing. It's all to do with more ridiculous European regulations that now require fumes from the fuel tank to go through some sort of charcoal filter that incorporates a pump – which is responsible for the racket.

I'm still enjoying the 458, though. Its sheer pace continues to astonish. Interestingly, I had a current BTCC driver try it on track recently. He returned with a grin and commented how he'd never driven a road car with more grip. Praise indeed. ✕

Simon George
(@6gearexperience)



Above: 458 has a few bugs needing fixes

Driver's log

Date acquired	May 2011
Total mileage	1776
Mileage this month	40,009
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	15.5

Harry's Garage

Which cars are just visiting and which are here to stay? Harry ponders his current collection



HOW MANY CARS do you need to own to be really happy? It's a question I ponder regularly, but even with twelve cars and two bikes littering my garage, I still don't know the answer.

Some cars in the collection I know are simply visiting, while others are long-term keepers. When a new purchase first arrives, you always think you're going to hang on to it forever, but as time marches on, your mood towards it can change.

For me, the car putting down the strongest roots right now is the Countach. Whether it's the design, the noise or the driving challenge that makes it so appealing I'm not sure, but what I do know is it's the one I want to keep forever. I also love the fact that mine is nicely original but not in such amazing condition that I can't drive it in anything but perfect conditions. I don't care how many miles it does a year, I just drive it whenever I feel like it; it's here to stay and who cares what it might be worth in a few years' time.



Left: Countach looks like a keeper. **Above:** it's too soon to say for the Delta

Next in the list of residents is the Ferrari 550 Barchetta. I enjoy its combination of rarity and practicality, and being based on one of my favourite Ferraris of all time really helps too. But would I rather own an Alfa 8C Spider or 599 Aperta? I might try and find out one day.

The Lotus Elan Sprint seems to have taken up permanent residence status, too. Occasionally, I think it should be sold, but having owned it for around 20 years, I've forgotten how to sell it, and Lord knows where all the paperwork is. The Clio Trophy's fun/£ ratio is off the scale, so that looks like it's getting permanent status too.

Others like the Lancia Integrale, Lamborghini Espada and Ferrari 308

GTB are still in the romantic getting-to-know-you stage, so I can't comment on their potential longevity status yet, but one car that had a wobble recently was the Maserati GranTurismo 4.7 S MC. I should sell it purely because I don't use it enough, but when I recently lined up a deal to part with it, the family discovered what I was up to and went nuts. It seems the kids love the noise it makes, while my wife reckons it's the most beautiful car in existence and has taken to driving it whenever she can, to help justify it staying put.

So if you see a Maserati offloading at our local recycling centre or collecting chicken feed from Countrywide, you now know why. ✕
Harry Metcalfe (@harrym_evo)

Renault Clio Williams

The Willy has been given a mechanical and cosmetic spruce-up for the summer

BACK IN ISSUE 181, Willy co-owner Stephen Dobie mentioned an ever-growing to-do list for our car. Well, I'm pleased to report that we have finally crossed off a few jobs. We've also added a new one to the list, but I'll get to that later.

The first job was to get the Clio mechanically fighting fit for the summer. Its coolant was browner than the worst toilet you've ever had the misfortune to urgently use. So the coolant flask was drained, cleaned and filled with lovely red antifreeze. Next was an oil change, as it had been roughly 10,000 miles since the last. We also decided to trial some Slick 50 additive for the power steering fluid.

As well as the engine now feeling and sounding happier to rev, the steering is weightier too. Before, it was oddly light and slightly vague, but it always made sense when you were 'on it'. The introduction of the additive has tightened the slack and



Above: before (top row) and after (bottom row) shots reveal how the years have been taken off Shorrock and Dobie's '90s hot hatch

brought weight at all speeds.

Next, cosmetics. The rear spoiler had been shedding its lacquer finish since last winter, so a local paint shop sprayed it back to its former glory for a very reasonable £50.

I wanted to have a crack at restoring the exterior plastics. Gtechniq C4 Permanent Trim Restorer came recommended on internet forums. Once ordered, I couldn't wait to try it out (very sad, I know). The Williams has two different types of exterior plastic. Most is rough textured, but some, like the tailgate trim, is really smooth.

The rough plastics were reborn, most notably the door handles and the heavily bleached scuttle plate. However, the C4 could only do so much for the smoother stuff like the tailgate trim, but it improved it nonetheless. (See Tried & Tested in *evo* 185 for a full review.)

Unfortunately, there was a slight hiccup in an otherwise a well-done job. It transpires that the Sports Blue paint isn't stuck to the colour-coded plastics as well as it is to the metal bodywork. So when it came to peeling the masking tape off the painted bumpers once the exposed

plastic trim had been treated, some chunks of paint came off with it! Long strings of Richard Pryor-like swearing ensued, but eventually I calmed down and, with a heavy heart, added 'front and rear bumper re-spray' to the to-do list. ✕

Adam Shorrock

Driver's log

Date acquired	August 2010
Total mileage	93,958
Mileage this month	301
Costs this month	£207
mpg this month	34.1

Jaguar XKR-S Convertible

PUNCTURES, IT SEEMS, are like buses. You go years without having one, then two come along in the space of a week. Fortunately both were slow deflations, so the compressor that comes with the Jag's puncture repair system kept the tyres inflated, and the XK mobile, without me resorting to the mousse canister. A trip to my helpful local dealer, Marshall's of Peterborough, saw the rear puncture repaired (free of charge!); the subsequent front puncture was fixed by my equally commendable local tyre centre, Concorde, for £14.95.

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)



Driver's log

Date acquired	Sept 2012
Total mileage	13,877
Mileage this month	1370
Costs this month	£14.95
mpg this month	22.9

Skoda Superb Outdoor

PICTURE THE SCENE. After shooting the cover for issue 186 on the beach at Porthmadog, we were in a hurry to get two of the supercars back to their overnight shelter. As I hurtled down the twisty B-roads, the last of the light twinkling off mirrored lakes, F40 screaming behind me, F1 not far behind, it dawned on me that this was a pretty unique drive. The Skoda was fantastic in the corners and only really lacking – mostly in power – on the straighter bits. It was by far the best drive I've had in the Superb. Actually, it was one of the best drives I have had in any car. ✕

Sam Riley (@samgriley)



Driver's log

Date acquired	March 2013
Total mileage	8203
Mileage this month	1501
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	43.1

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Market Watch

Knowledge

Insights into the used-car market. Edited by Harry Metcalfe

Market watch



LEASE IS THE WORD

Does leasing now make more sense than bangernomics?

I USED TO be a huge fan of bangernomics: buying a (once classy) motor for a few grand then running it into the ground, believing you were putting two fingers up at the accepted rules on the cost of motoring. But I'm beginning to wonder if this is still the best approach to cheap motoring today.

The obvious downside of buying a leggy big exec today is the amount of vehicle excise duty (VED) you have to fork out each year, particularly if it's a post-2006 car. An annual bill of £490 does bugger up the man-maths somewhat. Add a bigger-than-expected service bill to that and your bargain-basement motoring quickly goes AWOL.

What's also changing my mind is some of the ridiculous lease deals on offer these days – many have never been cheaper. Plus most new cars only need servicing every two years (or 20,000 miles) and first-year VED is zero for any car puffing out less than 130g/km.

To give you an idea of what's on offer, Albion Vehicle Contracts will supply you a brand new Mini Cooper for a £1074 deposit, followed by 35 monthly payments of £179

on a 10,000 miles/year deal. With no VED to pay for the first year, 50mpg potential and long service intervals, that's cheap, hassle-free motoring in a car you might actually be prepared to be seen in.

If you want to move up a class then the new Golf 2.0 GTD (109g/km) is available for a £2253 deposit followed by 23 monthly payments of £250.34 from Fleet Prices. Meanwhile, Flexible Vehicle Contracts are offering the new Golf GTI for a £1647 deposit and 23 monthly payments of £274.57.

Fiat always has great lease deals and Neva Consultants is offering the Fiat 500 TwinAir for £143/month (with a deposit of £863) on a three-year contract. With zero VED and 18,000-mile service intervals, acceptable motoring doesn't get much cheaper.

So next time you're contemplating a bargain runabout, make sure you check out the latest lease deals first. It's how they've been buying their cars in the US for years and it's starting to catch on here too. No wonder at these prices...

Harry Metcalfe
Editorial director



Auction watch

Sought-after Italians are amongst the lots to watch at this year's Monterey Car Week

America's Monterey Car Week is nearly upon us once again (August 13-19), and although the big shows like Pebble Beach, Quail and Concorso Italiano are the main attractions, there are a huge number of smaller events and classic car auctions throughout the week.

RM Auctions' headline car this year is the Ferrari 375 MM Spider, a unique early '50s racer. It might well be the most valuable car of the sale, as 'estimate available on request' usually signals, but it's another Ferrari competition car that's caught my eye. The 333 SP was conceived to take on the US IMSA GT championship in the 1990s, and has a V12 engine closely related to that of one of last month's **evo** cover stars: the F50.

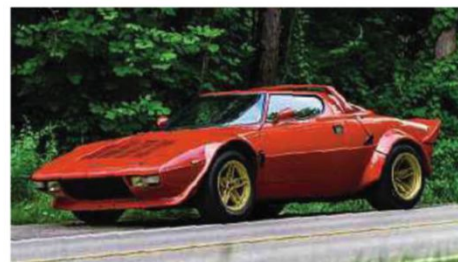
To comply with the regulations, and to make the car more appealing to privateers, the F1-derived five-valves-per-cylinder engine was detuned (although enlarged from 3.5 to 4 litres) to produce a still-not-too-shabby 650bhp at 12,000rpm. The racer did relatively well, and this particular Evoluzione model from 1996 features the later-spec six-speed Xtrac gearbox, larger brakes and 18in wheels – the full ALMS trim. It is expected to sell for \$1,250,000–1,550,000 (£815,000–1,010,000) and is currently serviced, Ferrari Classiche certified and ready to enjoy.

RM is also offering one of Marcello Gandini's finest creations: a Lancia Stratos. Powered by a cracking Ferrari Dino V6 engine, both road and rally Stratoses are highly sought after, as is reflected in the \$275,000–375,000 (£180,000–245,000) estimate for this road-going example – one of the 492 Stradale versions built to homologate the rally car. This particular 1975 example was changed from its original lime green to red at some point in the early 1980s, when it also got the rally-inspired body kit.

Matthew Hayward (@octaneMatthew)



Above: Ferrari 333 SP racers enjoyed success in sports car racing in the '90s; this example should fetch £815k+



Above: Stratoses are in demand right now; this road-going car with rally-style addenda should go for £180k+

Market Watch

Knowledge

Insights into the used-car market. Edited by Harry Metcalfe

Ask the expert



Q I drive a Volvo C30 D3 because it can tow my Clio 172 track car. I now want something a little more exciting to drive but which can also tow at least 1500kg. I do have a Boxster Spyder as my weekend car to enjoy when weather permits!

Alastair Winner

A A good tow car doesn't easily translate into a great drivers' car because the attributes you're looking for are entirely different. For example, the heavier the tow car, the more stable it's likely to be when towing, and as you're pulling 1500kg+,

I'd want to see a car weighing 1770kg+ towing it (the general rule of thumb is that the trailer weight shouldn't exceed 85 per cent of your tow car's kerb weight). Good torque is another requirement, so that points towards diesels...

All this leads to a bigger car than your C30 – something like an Audi A6 Allroad or Porsche Cayenne Diesel, perhaps. Alternatively, you could look at getting a lighter trailer. Drop down to a 1300kg tow weight and a C250 CDI AMG Sport estate or BMW 325d or 330d M Sport Touring might make a more enticing plan. **HM**
Email your question to experts@evo.co.uk

Trader chat

James French, Land Rover specialist
www.james-french.co.uk



'The first six months of 2013 have been the best we've ever experienced in the 25 years we've been in business. Interest in Land Rover product seems to be at an all-time high, particularly in the Defender, which I believe is because people are realising it's about to go out of production. Part of its appeal is that it's relatively affordable, and buyers love the fact they hold their value so well.'

'With the new Range Rover being a fair bit more expensive than the outgoing model, we've seen late L405 Range Rovers start to increase in value over the past six to eight months too. I expect the same will happen with the Range Rover Sport now the all-new model has been introduced.'

'We've yet to see many Evoques come through. I expected their values to drop this year but demand still seems to be high enough to keep prices strong. They seem to appeal to a different kind of buyer to the rest of the models in the range. Land Rover seems to be moving increasingly upmarket, with pricing of the cars increasing accordingly; it's a very different brand to what it was ten years ago.'

Just looking

The pick of the classifieds this month



Porsche Cayman R

£43,950

Hofmann's, Oxfordshire

www.hofmanns.co.uk

01491 848800

In 2011, a Porsche won our Car of the Year contest. No great shock, and neither was the fact it wore a 'GT3 RS' badge on its rear. But another Stuttgart sports car also shone that year. The Cayman R's character was described as 'a mesmerising combination of superb steering weight and feel, exquisite balance, and the lucid sense of mechanical grip at each corner. Lovely, lovely, lovely.'

Like its Boxster Spyder relation, it's also

clinging on to its value compared to other Caymans. This 2012, 4791-mile example is just 20 per cent shy of its original RRP. It's a desirable manual too, while options include 911 Turbo alloys, carbon seats, sports exhaust, Sport Chrono and a Bose stereo.

So, a new Cayman S with no options, or this and £5k spare for trackdays? I know which spikes my interest most...

Stephen Dobie (@evoStephenDobie)



Renaultsport Clio V6

£10,450

Independent Motor Company, Berkshire

www.imc-bmw.com

0118 9713 939

It may look more cute and cuddly than its successor, but the phase one Clio V6 is actually the more fearsome car. With a zany power-to-weight ratio, the engine's mass behind you and the wheelbase of a roller skate, it's known for spinning if you so much as look at it when the roads are greasy.

Nevertheless, the V6 ought to be on every car nut's 'must drive' list: it provides such a curious experience, requiring commitment

to discover why it has icon status (you'll just face an inert front end if you aren't pushing on). And then there's that gorgeous, multi-cylinder growl directly by your left ear, the 230bhp 2.9-litre V6 perched where there'd usually be baby seats and shopping.

At a smidge over £10,000, this 2002, 32,000-mile example looks superb and costs less than a 74bhp Twingo. It's probably not as L-plate friendly, though. **SD**

Fantasy garage: £120,000 challenge

This month, *evo* designer Will Beaumont had an imaginary £120k to find something Italian, something German and something French from the ads at forsale.evo.co.uk



Alfa Romeo GTAM
£44,995

It's a fake, but it doesn't matter when it looks this good. And it's got gold wheels – worth the asking price alone.



Porsche 911 L
£69,950

Even to someone who values old German cars, this 911 seems expensive, but it's an early SWB version, with steel wheels and lovely gold badges.



Peugeot 106 Rallye S2
£2100

Small, light, hot and French. Sadly nothing on this car is gold, but it has some garish '90s stickers to make up for it instead.

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• 44,700 Miles
£44,995
Stock Number - 398



Ferrari 550 Maranello

• Tour De France/ Sabia trim
• 26,000 Miles
£57,995
Stock Number - 14610



Ferrari F430 Coupe

• Rosso Corsa/ Crema trim
• 16,661 Miles
£77,995
Stock Number - 14613



Ferrari 430 Spider F1

• Rosso Corsa/ Crema trim
• 6,913 Miles
£82,995
Stock Number - 14540



Maserati Ghibli SS

• Chairo Blue/ Black trim
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HIGH SPEC
£83,995



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Buying Guide

Knowledge

Your indispensable resource when buying used

Lamborghini Murciélago 2001-2011

Overview



Able to trace its roots directly to the Miura, the Murciélago is a fabulous supercar from the old school. But could you live with one?

Words: Peter Tomalin

ASTONISHINGLY, IT'S 12 YEARS since the Murciélago burst into our lives. Unlike the new-from-the-ground-up Aventador that replaced it in 2011, the Murciélago was very much a development of the Diablo – and indeed the Countach – that had gone before. In fact its V12 engine could be traced right back to the Miura. Beneath the jaw-dropping and largely carbonfibre panels (only the doors and roof were steel) was the Diablo's tubular steel frame. The V12, too, was from the Diablo, now expanded to 6.2 litres and good for 570bhp, and the VT four-wheel-drive system was also inherited.

There was a smattering of new technology though, including electronic traction control, a drive-by-wire throttle, and 'active' air scoops over the rear haunches, along with numerous engineering refinements.

In late 2004 there was a round of detail improvements, most notably to the brakes. The Murciélago had also inherited its stoppers from the Diablo; just about adequate for road use, they were found seriously wanting on track. The adoption of the superior calipers from the Gallardo transformed stopping power. The original five-hole alloys were dropped for roomier 'Hemera' or 'Hercules' spoked wheels to accommodate the new brakes.

Another significant event around this time was the introduction of e-gear paddle-shift transmission as an option – it used the same gearbox internals as the manual, but the changes were robotised.

In 2006, Lamborghini relaunched the Murci as the LP640, now with a 6.5-litre 631bhp (640PS) V12 (0-60mph in 3.4sec, 211mph) and truly superb carbon-ceramic brakes. In 2009 came the even more extreme LP670-4 SV, with even more power (661bhp), even more ferocious performance and a £270k price tag. It remains the ultimate pre-Aventador Lambo, but our focus here is on the more affordable end of the Murci market. Just how 'affordable' – or not – you can decide for yourself, as we explore the reality of buying and running one of these extraordinary machines...

Checkpoints

Engine

We spoke to a number of specialists and owners, including our own Simon George, and the general view is that the V12 is reliable if correctly maintained. Listen for timing chain rattle – the tensioner guides are prone to wear around 20-30,000 miles, and a top-end rebuild including new chains will set you back £10-12k. The throttle bodies can be temperamental, leading to an erratic idle, but this can be cured by adjustment and cleaning. Check for leaks from the crank oil seals.

Transmission

The clutches in manual gearbox cars have an undeserved reputation for frailty. The three golden rules are never to ride it, always use the full pedal travel, and avoid reversing up inclines. Fail to follow these rules and you could be looking at a new clutch after just 3000 miles; follow them and you could see 30,000-plus. 20k miles is common, but generally halve that for e-gear. A heavy manual clutch means it's worn; a main dealer can tell you how much e-gear clutch life is left. The 'box itself is robust, but if it's a high-mileage car (60k miles plus), listen for synchromesh drone in third gear, which could herald a looming rebuild – a £5k job.

Suspension, steering, brakes

The standard brakes on early cars were weak; a popular upgrade is Pagid racing pads. 05MY cars onwards are much better. Check the operation of the suspension lifting system, designed to clear sleeping policemen – if it rises then drops again, it's usually a pressure switch fault. A suspension warning light could well mean a damper needs replacing. Non-original spec wheels and tyres can upset the 4wd system so are best avoided. Check the rear tyres – a pair of 335/30 R18 Pirellis will set you back the thick end of £700.

Body, interior, electrics

Corrosion shouldn't be an issue, though fuel tanks can leak from the top on early cars, so have a good sniff around the driver's side rear of the car. The carbon body panels are very expensive. The electrics aren't particularly problematic, but the rear spoilers and air scoops can stick and need resetting. The 'check engine' light often pops up, but turning the main battery switch off and on often cures the problem! Door actuators occasionally fail, but are fairly cheap to replace.



1: V12 is generally reliable – if you look after it. 2: LP640 swapped the twin tailpipes of earlier cars for a single huge exit. 3: Gallardo calipers of later cars improved braking

What we said December 2001



Above: we first drove the Murci in 2001

'The door comes down, I twist the key, the high-pitched starter motor whirrs and the V12 growls into life, same as it ever was: complex, rich, guttural, bloody marvellous. It's now hooked up to a six-speed gearbox whose shiny ball-topped lever is taller than the Diablo's, presumably to give more leverage and lessen the shift weight.

'As the rev-counter needle gets to 2000rpm, the V12 takes on a nape-prickling urgency and the Lambo thumps forward with a strength that, even in a straight line, makes you grateful for traction control.

'Out of the tightest corners, TCS reacts very quickly, catching the tail before it swings more than a few degrees. Later I was able to confirm the assertion that the Murciélago is more stable [than the Diablo] thanks to its engine's lower centre of gravity. It could be sensed through the left-right-left at one end of the track, though more so once TCS was disabled... The Murciélago slides and recovers much more cleanly than any Diablo I've driven.

'The Murciélago is still very much a Diablo at heart. Easier to handle, more dynamically poised but still a challenge to drive well.' (**evo** 038)



Above: Audi acquired Lamborghini in 1998, and Murciélago cabin quality reflects this



Above: Murciélago LP640 arrived in 2006, its revised V12 producing an extra 61bhp

'I bought one' **Simon George**

'As soon as I set eyes on the Murciélago in 2001, I decided I had to have one, whatever it took. By early 2004 I'd cobbled together 30 grand for the deposit, with literally no idea how I'd raise the other £156,000, but on September 4, 2004, I stepped through the doors of the newly opened Lamborghini Manchester to pick up a shiny Arancio Atlas Murciélago.

'Some 258,000 miles later, the old

girl is still here. Regular **evo** readers will know SG54 LAM has spent more time on track than on the road, but she's been surprisingly reliable. Throttle bodies have needed adjustment. Other minor issues include the rear spoiler refusing to lower, the "check engine" light appearing for no apparent reason and a rusty earth strap causing the starter motor to turn slowly. I reckon in normal use you'd need to budget

three to five grand a year for upkeep.

'Intoxicating is a strong word, but the Murciélago does have an aura about it that few other supercars do. Performance? It's not violent like an F40 or Pagani, it's a lazy sort of power that points to the understated nature of the V12.

'I'm about to use SG54 as a daily driver again. The target is to hit 300,000 miles in 24 months. It's definitely achievable.'

In the classifieds



2003 Murciélago

- ✚ 10,672 miles
- ✚ Balloon White
- ✚ Blue Delphinus leather
- ✚ sports exhaust
- ✚ Pioneer satnav, etc
- ✚ www.specialistcarsltd.co.uk

£84,995



2004 Murciélago

- ✚ 62,000 miles
- ✚ SV livery, Arancio Argos with matt black details
- ✚ Hercules alloys
- ✚ retrimmed FLSH
- ✚ www.vvsuk.co.uk

£89,990



2008 LP640

- ✚ 11,247 miles
- ✚ e-gear Grigio Telesio
- ✚ Nero Alcantara
- ✚ Hercules alloys
- ✚ transparent engine cover
- ✚ www.sytner.co.uk

£134,850

The rivals

Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano

The Murciélago's front-engined nemesis has more modern underpinnings and a 611bhp 6-litre V12. Now from £75k.

Lamborghini Gallardo

The Murci's V10-engined baby brother is also worth a look. £75-80k gets you a huge choice of '07-'08 coupes and Spyders.

Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)

If pure driving thrills are what you crave, then £75-90k will buy you a GT3 RS, **evo**'s 2010 Car of the Year.

Specification

Lamborghini Murciélago

- ✚ Engine V12, 6192cc
- ✚ Max power 570bhp @ 7500rpm
- ✚ Max torque 479lb ft @ 5400rpm
- ✚ Transmission Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive
- ✚ Weight 1650kg
- ✚ Power-to-weight 351bhp/ton
- ✚ 0-62mph 4.0sec (claimed)
- ✚ Top speed 205mph (limited)
- ✚ Price new £160,000 (2002)

Parts prices

(Prices supplied by Lamborghini Manchester. Prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges)

- ✚ Tyres (full set) £1794.94 (Lamborghini-spec Pirelli P Zero Rossos)
- ✚ Front pads (pair) £2451.74
- ✚ Damper (front, single) £3083
- ✚ Clutch kit (pre-LP640) £2944.46
- ✚ Clutch thrust bearing £2023.29
- ✚ Front bumper (pre-LP640) £11,898.84
- ✚ Air filters (pair) £39.02

Servicing

(Prices supplied by Lamborghini Manchester, including VAT)

Every 7500 miles or 12 months, whichever comes sooner, alternating between minor and major services. The latter includes valve clearance checks.

- ✚ Minor £930
- ✚ Major £2500-£3200

What to pay

Bargain basement for an early Murciélago with average miles is around £75,000. Quite a high number of UK cars have been shipped abroad in recent years, so the pool isn't huge, which in turn keeps values healthy for the best cars. Be patient and £80-90k should buy you a good example of an early Murciélago. LP640s start at around £120k, SVs from £200k. The number of owners isn't critical – these cars tend to change hands quite frequently – but mileage does play a big part in values, and a detailed service history is vital.

Useful contacts

- ✚ hrowen.co.uk/lamborghini sales and service
- ✚ topgear-cars.co.uk independent specialist
- ✚ bhpmports.com independent specialist
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1

Artwork

Lion Tamer

from £79.25 action-art.co.uk

1 Renowned motorsport artist Fran Richley has just finished work on this stunning painting of Juha Kankkunen's Peugeot 205 T16 rally car. The image depicts the Finn's charge to victory on the 1986 Acropolis Rally, en route to winning his first of four WRC titles. The run for this piece is limited to 150 large prints (priced at £147.25 each) signed by Kankkunen, his then-co-driver Juha Piironen and Richley, plus 75 small prints (£79.25 each) signed by Richley. **evo** has a large print to give away to one lucky reader. For your chance to win, email comp@evo.co.uk with the answer to this question: which set of FIA regulations was the 205 T16 designed for? Competition closes September 11, 2013. See evo.co.uk for terms and conditions.

Accessory

Pure Highway H240Di and H260DBi

from £129.99 halfords.com

2 Pure and Halfords are amongst the biggest names in digital radio and the aftermarket respectively. Now they have combined to produce a pair of head units to meet the growing demand for DAB on the move. Alongside DAB, FM and AM tuners, these Pure units – exclusive to Halfords – can also play from and charge iPods and iPhones and play music stored on a USB stick. They also have an auxiliary socket plus a RW and ROM-compatible CD player. The £149.99 H260DBi (pictured) adds hands-free calling and Bluetooth music streaming. Expect to pay £60 for fitting and an aerial.



2

3

evo Essentials Top 3: T-shirts



Heuer Chronograph

£16.99 hotfuel.co.uk

Race and sponsor graphics from the 1960s are among the finest of any era, so having them on a T-shirt seems a perfectly natural choice.



evo Art of Speed

£15.99 shotdeadinthehead.com

Our new range of **evo** T-shirts includes designs based on our Art of Speed series. The first is this Porsche 911 2.7 RS ducktail spoiler, as featured in **evo** 180.



John Cleland Cavalier

£20 petrolthreads.co.uk

It's a T-shirt with an old Vauxhall on it to some, but to BTCC fans a white and yellow Cavalier bouncing off a kerb epitomises the most exciting era in the series' history.

Accessory

Trafficmaster Trackstar TM470

£407.50 (plus subscription) trackstar.co.uk

3 A GPS tracker is an insurance requirement for some expensive cars, but finding where to fit one can be a problem on sports machines, which is why Trackstar has developed the TM470. It's the size of a cigarette packet, making it easy to fit and hide. Cars are tracked globally and once a stolen car is located, Trackstar works with police to recover it. The price includes fitting, and the subscription is £147.50 for one year or £399 for three years.



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Tried & Tested

Knowledge

The best motoring products, put through their paces by the *evo* team

TomTom Go 600

from £229.99 tomtom.com

There has been a stream of portable satnavs from TomTom over the years, with a range of mix-and-match features, but this is the first with a radically revised interface.

It's focused around the map, which appears on start-up and will give local traffic info if web-connected. Setting a destination is quick and you get a route preview. The system works well, with fewer options and quicker navigation between functions, and on the road you get masses of easy-to-read information on the big, pinch-to-zoom 6in screen.

But it isn't all good. The screen is prone to reflections and the mount is very stiff to adjust, while an even bigger problem is that traffic information comes via Bluetooth from your smartphone. It works well when connected but not once did the TomTom pair with our iPhone 4S without some prompting, and you have to ensure



you have enough data allowance on your phone to fetch the traffic data.

There's no subscription for the traffic and maps are free, but the speed camera alerts are £24.99 a year after the free three-month trial.

Kim Adams (@cargadgetguru)



Hitech Tailored Car Mats

£28.99 (set for Skoda Superb) ukcarmats.co.uk

I admit that I wasn't too sure about trying moulded rubber car mats in my Skoda Superb Outdoor long-term, but they've proved better than I expected.

These tailored Hitech mats, available for a huge number of different makes and models, are weighty, so there's no chance of them moving around underneath your feet or catching the pedals. Just to be sure they stay solidly in place, the mats have fasteners in the correct places to match those on the car's floor.

Being summer, it's hard to give these mats the toughest of tests, but they feel heavy-duty enough to withstand

the mud, rain and snow of a harsh British winter. They should be perfect for people with an outdoors-y lifestyle and all the muddy footwear that brings.

I wasn't too happy about the look of them to begin with: the blue trim on this test set doesn't really suit the interior of the Outdoor. But a quick check on the UK Car Mats website showed that a range of other colours are available.

In summary, I've used these mats for a month and I've got so used to them that I've not even thought of reverting to the old carpet ones, so they must be good.

Sam Riley (@samriley)

Holts Radweld Plus

£7.99 (250ml bottle) halfords.com

When my radiator started spewing out water, I thought there was no hope of fixing it. A new radiator for a BMW 323i is a dizzying £50, so I turned to Radweld to fix my existing one.

You pour Radweld into your radiator or expansion tank, start the car, turn it off again once the engine is warm and then wait for the system to cool. The Radweld should plug any leaks, but initial signs weren't encouraging. With only the 'allow your car to cool down and check water level' steps of the instructions to go, the radiator was still hissing and spitting away.

I shouldn't have been so pessimistic. It worked! I haven't yet dare drive for longer than 20 minutes at a time before stopping to check the water level, but every time I do, I stare at the expansion tank in sheer disbelief that the coolant hasn't dropped a millimetre.

I'm not sure what Radweld has done for the long-term health of my cooling system and I would only really recommend it for use in an emergency or to someone who is particularly tight-fisted. But I can confirm that it definitely does work.

Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)



Beaver Care Alloy Cleaner

£6.50 (250ml bottle) beavercare.co.uk

There's no missing this wheel cleaner from Beaver Care, with its shiny alloy-look bottle, lads' mag name and bikini logo. But is it any good? I tried it against a known top performer to find out.

While the pack catches the eye, it's not that informative. We had to contact Beaver Care to check it was OK for uncoated, chromed and anodised surfaces. It is, which is great, but it should say so on the pack. It was also only on the website that I discovered it could be diluted with up to two parts water, which makes more sense of the price given that you only get 250ml.

Use was no problem: spray on 'copious' amounts, leave for ten minutes and hose off. It certainly made progress on our dust-coated rim without the help of a brush, leaving just a thin film to take off with a sponge or mitt. But our comparison cleaner was a step more effective and better value.

Kim Adams (@cargadgetguru)



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Trips & Travel

Knowledge

The best destinations to visit in your car

Great drives: Old Military Road, Scotland



Start point: 56.59957, -3.33915 (Balmoral Road, Blairgowrie)

The route: A93 and A939 via Ballater

Great for: a Ferrari F12 (as long as it's dry)



T

TOP GEAR TV, tongue firmly in cheek, recently claimed that its shots of a Ferrari F12 on the Old Military Road near Glenshee in Scotland were taken in Hertfordshire. I actually suspect they were just trying to divert attention away from the fact that they had pinched the location from the pages of *evo* 181...

You could make a very good argument that this road through the Cairngorms is the best stretch of driving road in the UK, and at over 80 miles long, it's certainly the most sustained. To get there you need to head towards Perth and then pick up the A93 towards Blairgowrie, where the road starts to get interesting. At first it's a lovely relaxed cruise on a lightly trafficked, fast-flowing A-road, but as you reach the Bridge of Cally the scenery starts to rise up around you and, depending on the time of year, snow will begin to appear.

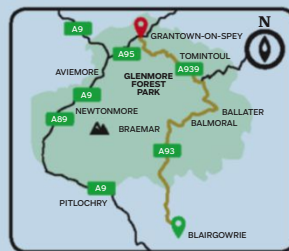
The next section is a real rollercoaster of a road, with lots of yumps to catch out the unwary as you head to Glenshee ski station. Once there, you're faced with the most spectacular stretch, which follows the path of the river down through a long valley towards Braemar. Fill up with fuel here if you're running low, because you're back out into the wilderness thereafter as you head for Balmoral. Here you can either take the narrow B976 up over the moor, which is lovely in good weather, or continue a little further towards Ballater and then turn left onto the A93. Both options take you to the same place.

After these narrower sections, the road reverts to comfortable two-lane fare and you keep following the A939 and signs to Grantown-on-Spey. There are some steep hairpins to be enjoyed up towards the second ski station at Lecht, followed by a wonderful plunge down the other side. Just when you think it must be all over as you crawl through the predominantly grey town of Tomintoul, there is a final stretch of (slightly) less scenic but wonderfully engaging driving that spits you out in Grantown-on-Spey.

Henry Catchpole
Features editor



The route



Start **Finish**

Distance: 83 miles

Time: 2 hours 15 minutes



Where to stay

The Angus in Blairgowrie does a good plate of food and reasonable rooms. If you're on a budget, then try The Royal, also in Blairgowrie. Meanwhile, if you fancy driving the route in a Caterham, give Boyd at Highland Caterham Hire a call on 01343 842657 or visit www.highlandcaterhamhire.co.uk



Watch out for

There is wildlife aplenty up here to watch out for (deer, snow rabbits, grouse). There are also a few distilleries, so if you like whisky, allow time and budget to visit them. Royal Lochnagar is just off the route at Balmoral, while you'll see signs to the Glenlivet and Glenfiddich distilleries around Tomintoul. If you want to visit the Balmoral estate, it's open to the public between late March and the end of July.

Reader road trip South Africa

My friend Marco and I went on an incredible road trip in South Africa in January, via the Garden Route. Located in the Western Cape province, it starts at Storms River in Tsitsikamma National Park and winds west along picturesque coastline to Cape Town. The roads were new and wide, and the



towns dotted along the N2 were beautiful. Knysna was a must-see, as were Plettenberg Bay, George and a hidden beach called Noetzie (just outside Knysna). From Swellendam we drove to the southern tip of Africa, Cape Agulhas, and if you carry on for three hours towards Cape Town you pass other beautiful towns including Hermanus and Gordon's Bay and end up on Chapman's Peak Drive, one of the most breathtaking roads in the world.

The Hideaway B&B in Knysna was a good base to explore the first part of the route. Colleen was a great hostess and suggested some superb places to dine at. The serviced petrol stations were superb, too: you tip the attendant two rand (13p) to do it all.

But if you do go out there, watch out for baboons: don't feed them and don't leave your windows open when stationary.

Rhett Roberts

Email your road trip story to henryc@evo.co.uk

Events calendar

AUGUST

August 23-25

Belgian Grand Prix, Spa-Francorchamps
www.spagrandprix.com

August 24-25

BTCC, Knockhill
www.knockhill.co.uk

SEPTEMBER

September 4-6

Salon Privé, Syon Park, London
www.salonprivelondon.com

September 6-8

Italian Grand Prix, Monza
www.monza.net.it

Database

Key + = new entry this month. * = grey import. Entries in italics are for cars no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, R = Road test or group test, F = Feature). You can order back issues where still available – call 0844 844 0039. **Price** is 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. **0-60mph** and **0-100mph** figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. **CO2 g/km** is the official EC figure and **EC mpg** is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent.

Knowledge

Superminis / Hot Hatches

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cc/cyl	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Abarth Punto Evo	149 R	£16,852	4/1368	161/5500	184/2250	1155kg	142	7.9	-	132	142	47.1	+ Attractive and fun - Needs the Esseesse power upgrade ★★★★★
Abarth 500 Esseesse	129 R	£17,207	4/1368	158/5750	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.2 20.4	131	155	43.5	-	+ A properly fun, old-school hot hatch - Limited numbers being imported ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 R	£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 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 GTA	053 R	'03-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0 15.5	153	-	23.3	-	+ Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy ★★★★★
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	181 R	£41,020	4/1984	253/6000	232/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price ★★★★★
Audi S3	183 D	£30,500	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.2	-	155	162	40.4	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical ★★★★★
Audi S3	106 R	'06-'12	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 R	'11-'12	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	186 R	£30,555	6/2979	316/5800	332/1300	1425kg	225	5.1	-	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - Ordinary styling; a limited-slip diff would be nice ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 R	£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	-	-	+ 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 R	£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	'11-'12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	146	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests ★★★★★
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 R	'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 Fiesta SE	084 R	'03-'08	4/1597	94/5500	100/4250	934kg	102	9.5	-	108	-	-	+ Big fun in a little package - Could handle even more power ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta 1.0T EcoBoost 125PS	181 D	£15,445	3/999	123/6000	125/1400	1091kg	115	9.4	-	122	99	65.7	+ Three-pot engine is surprisingly feisty - Struggles to justify the premium price ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	184 R	£16,995	4/1596	179/5700	214/1500	1088kg	167	7.4 18.4	137	138	47.9	-	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	'08-'13	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 R	'08-'13	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 ST	075 D	'05-'08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	-	+ 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 Fiesta Zetec S	020 R	'00-'02	4/1596	102/6000	107/4000	976kg	106	10.2	-	113	-	-	+ Better than you'd ever believe - No-one else will believe it ★★★★★
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 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 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 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 RS500	181 R	'10-'11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6 12.7	165	225	-	-	+ More power and presence than regular RS - Pricey ★★★★★
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 R	'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 R	'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	128 R	'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	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 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 Mugen	144 R	'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	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, diff steering ★★★★★
Kia Proceed GT	186 D	£19,995	4/1591	201/6000	195/1750	1448kg	141	7.4	-	143	171	29.1	+ Good chassis, appealing price - Thrashy engine ★★★★★
Lancia Delta Integrale	011 R	'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 R	£13,495	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	£23,995	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	£29,025	4/1991	208/5500	258/1200	1370kg	154	6.5	-	149	148	46.3	+ Mercedes builds a proper hot hatch - But denies it a manual gearbox ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	186 R	£37,845	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.6	-	155	161	40.9	+ Strong performance - Frustratingly unresponsive twin-clutch gearbox ★★★★★
MG Metro 6R4 Clubman	181 R	'84-'87	6/2991	250/7000	225/6500	1000kg	254	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ The most extreme hot hatch ever - Engine noise, heat soak, five mpg ★★★★★
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	185 F	£14,900	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Brilliant ride and composure: could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S' ★★★★★
Mini Cooper S	149 R	£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	184 R	£22,460	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182	7.2 16.7	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	1175kg	180	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof... ★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works GP	181 R	£28,790	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	188	6.3	-	150	165	39.8	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes ★★★★★
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk2)	111 R	'07-'08	4/1598	189/6000	199/750	1130kg	170	7.6 18.0	145	-	-	-	+ Cracking hot Mini - Expensive with option packs included ★★★★★
Mini Cooper S Works GP	144 R	'06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements' ★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (Mk1)	077 R	'02-'06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.8 19.9	135	-	33.6	-	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Colt Ralliart	132 R	£14,229	4/1468	147/6000	153/3500	1060kg	141	7.4	-	131	161	40.9	+ Price, handling, performance - Its looks are a little odd ★★★★★





Our Choice

Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup. You'll struggle to find a front-drive chassis more sublime than the 265 Cup's. Poised, flattering and entertaining too, when combined with the 261bhp turbo engine it enables the Mégane to set a searing cross-country pace.



Best of the Rest

BMW's M135i feels like a bargain at £30k, and it's rear-wheel drive too, of course. At close to half the money, the mid-sized Fiesta ST (left) is an absolute riot, while if it's a junior hatch you're after, the Suzuki Swift Sport and Renaultsport Twingo 133 are belters.

Superminis / Hot Hatches

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cy/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Maxmph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Nissan Juke Nismo	184 R	£20,395	4/1618	197/6000	184/2400	1306kg	153	7.7	19.5	134	159	40.9	+ More than the sum of its parts - Not enough to add up to a pukka hot hatch	★★★★☆
Nissan Sunny GTi-R	'92-'93	4/1998	220/6400	197/4800	1269kg	176	6.1	-	134	-	25.1	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	34.0	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 R	'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 208 GTI	184 R	£18,895	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	6.8	17.9	143	139	47.9	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving	★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	095 R	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.9	-	124	-	36.7	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTI-6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.2	20.1	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 R	'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	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo	184 R	£18,995	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	166	6.9	17.9	143	144	44.8	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asp engine and manual 'box	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	154 R	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	141	190	34.5	+ The hot Clio at 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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 5GT Turbo	123 R	'87-'91	4/1397	120/5750	122/3750	831kg	146	7.8	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Most have been thrashed	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	181 R	£25,245	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	-	158	190	34.4	+ Same power as limited-edition Trophy; chassis still superb - Not a lot	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 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 Trophy	087 R	'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	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 230 R26	102 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ Best hot Mégane... until the R26 R - FI Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	181 R	'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	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza FR 2.0 TDI	144 R	£16,715	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	60.1	+ More fun than the petrol FR, manual gearbox option - The Cupra's not much more	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	183 D	£18,575	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1259kg	144	6.9	-	142	139	47.9	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement	★★★★★
SEAT Leon FR TDI 184	184 D	£22,075	4/1968	181/4000	280/1750	1350kg	136	7.5	-	142	112	64.2	+ Performance, sweet chassis, economy, comfort - Boorish engine	★★★★★
SEAT Leon FR+	163 D	'11-'12	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	'10-'12	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 R	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 20v T	020 R	'00-'06	4/1781	178/5500	173/5000	1322kg	137	7.7	-	142	-	33.2	+ Terrific value - Lacks sparkle of very best hatches	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	£16,915	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 R	'04-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 R	£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	3/1999	91/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	96	119	54.3	+ Telling people you drive a Brabus - Them realising it's not a 720bhp S-class	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STi CS400	146 R	'10-'12	4/2457	395/5750	400/3950	1505kg	267	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ Cosworth kudos. One of the fastest hatches we've tested - Pricey. Lifeless 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 R	'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 - Non-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 (Mk1)	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 Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£7630+	3/1999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - but predictably slow	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI 6-spd	036 D	'00-'05	4/1598	125/6500	112/3000	978kg	128	8.3	-	127	-	38.2	+ Looks, performance, snappy gearshift - Lacks fizz of 106 GTi	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI	154 R	£18,935	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTi gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland	★★★★★
VW Golf GTi (Mk7)	186 D	£25,845	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1351kg	163	6.5	-	152	138	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved; feels faster than 217bhp suggests - You can't brag about the power	★★★★★
VW Golf GTi (Mk6)	172 R	'09-'13	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 R	'12-'13	4/1984	232/5500	221/2200	1318kg	179	6.5	-	154	189	34.9	+ Mk6 GTi gets the power it craves - Expensive compared to the standard car	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	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 R	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	5.8	15.2	155	-	26.4	+ Tractor's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTi	★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 R	'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	28.8	+ Arguably the best all-round Golf GTi ever - We'd be splitting hairs	★★★★★
VW Golf GTi (Mk1)	095 R	'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	'08-'12	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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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 a brutally fast car, 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 now-turbocharged E63 (left), which is only narrowly shaded by the M5. Lexus's tail-happy IS-F remains a wonderfully alternative choice too.

Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cy/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Alfa Romeo 156 GTA	045 R	'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		'08-'12	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	£75,150	8/4395	533/5200	538/3000	1920kg	282	4.5	-	198	24.4	26.9	+ 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	£98,800	8/4395	533/5200	538/2800	2040kg	265	4.6	-	194	230	28.5	+ 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 S	182 D	£149,995	12/5935	550/6000	457/5000	1990kg	281	4.9	-	190	332	19.9	+ Performance, soundtrack, looks - Small in the back, brakes lacking	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 R	'10-'13	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		£31,220	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	£39,020	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	£55,525	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 R	'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 R	'07-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1710kg	246	4.6	-	155	-	20.6	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! - Everyone thinking you're married with kids	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (Mk1)	024 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Lacks finesse. Bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi RS2	101 R	'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 RS6 Avant	183 D	£76,985	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.9	-	155	229	28.8	+ A mighty ground-coverer - Is that all you want?	★★★★★
Audi RS6	124 D	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	-	155	331	20.3	+ Looks and drives better than estate version - M5 still looks tempting	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant	116 R	'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	£62,330	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	£78,225	8/3993	513/5800	479/1700	1975kg	264	4.1	-	155	237	27.7	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still underwhelming to drive	★★★★★
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	'08-'12	12/5934	493/3750	737/1750	2635kg	190	5.1	12.2	155	298	25.0	+ Undeniably quick, relatively economical - A tad ostentatious	★★★★★
Bentley Continental Flying Spur	185 D	£140,900	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2475kg	253	4.3	-	200	343	19.0	+ More power than old Flying Spur Speed - Feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Continental Flying Spur	080 D	'05-'12	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 R	'08-'12	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	8/6152	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 T	096 D	'06-'08	8/6151	500/4200	737/3200	2585kg	196	5.2	-	179	-	14.5	+ Still able to impress - Something of an anachronism	★★★★★
BMW 320d	168 R	£28,410	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	120	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new Three is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy	★★★★★
BMW 328i	165 D	£29,400	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 330d M Sport	180 D	£36,610	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	155	129	57.6	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★★
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 M3 CRT (E90)	179 R	'11-'12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	180	295	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport (E90)	134 R	'05-'11	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1555kg	200	5.6	-	155	196	31.0	+ Stunning drivetrain, controlled chassis - Looks a bit steady	★★★★★
BMW 528i	164 D	£34,020	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ Four-pot 528 is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	★★★★★
BMW 535i	141 D	£39,370	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	£73,375	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	155	232	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★★
BMW M5 Touring (E60)	105 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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)	182 R	'86-'88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	184 D	£97,490	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price tag looks silly next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★★
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	£58,420	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	£86,220	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	£71,355	8/4395	449/5500	480/2000	2020kg	226	4.7	-	155	199	-	+ Well specced, impressively refined - Lags far behind the Mercedes S-class	★★★★☆
Bowler EXR S	180 R	£186,000	8/5000	550/6200	461/2100	1800kg	310	4.2	-	155	-	-	+ Outlandish all-terrain supercar - Vast suspension travel takes some getting used to	★★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 R	£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 R	£67,030	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	★★★★★
Ford Mondeo 2.0 EcoBoost Titanium X		£28,115	4/1999	237/ n/a	251/ n/a	1569kg	153	7.5	-	153	179	36.7	+ 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 racecar - Don't shout about the power output!	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type-R *	108 D	'07-'10	4/1998	222/8000	158/6100	1525kg	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	£45,225	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1765kg	182	6.2	-	155	235	21.7	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals	★★★★★

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Ferrari 360 Modena	400 bhp add + 35 bhp
Land Rover Range Rover Sport 3.0 SDV6	255bhp add +33bhp
Porsche 996 Turbo	420bhp add +45 bhp
Vauxhall-Opel Vectra VXR (255PS)	251 bhp add +46 bhp
Volkswagen Golf Mk5 GTI 2.0T FSI (200PS)	197 bhp add +41 bhp



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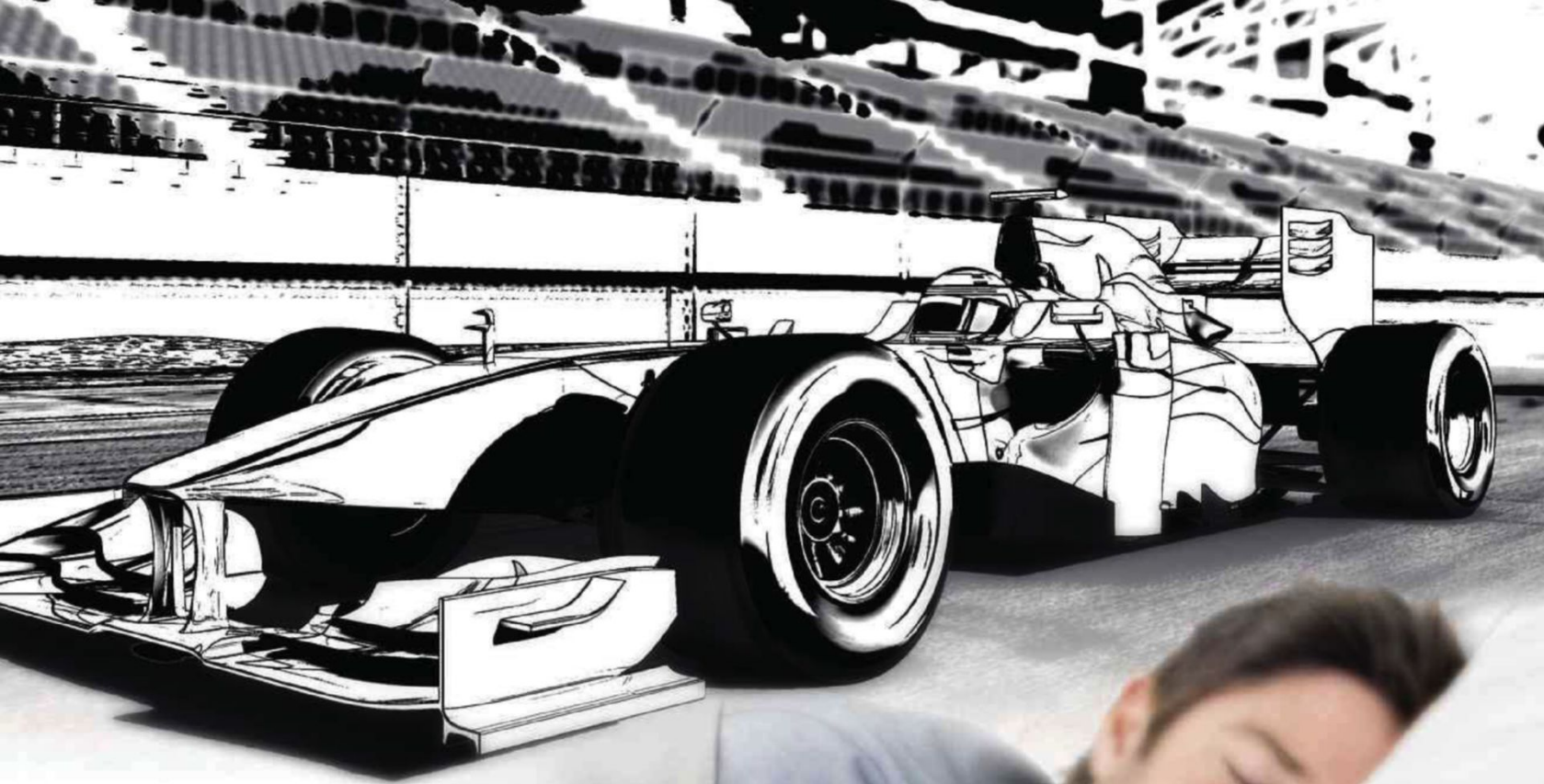
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Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

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	
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Diesel S	145 D	£41,860	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	★★★★★
Jaguar XF Sportbrake 3.0 V6 Diesel S	177 D	£44,360	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	£47,570	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	181 D	£65,415	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	£56,265	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 R	£91,770	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	★★★★★
Lamborghini LM002	016 R	'86-'89	12/5167	450/6800	369/5200	2700kg	169	-	-	130	-	-	+ Craziest 4x4 ever, Countach V12 - Craziest 4x4 ever...	★★★★★
Lexus IS-F	151 R	£58,416	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	170 R	'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	184 D	£80,095	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.3	-	177	242	26.9	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, secondary ride lacks decorum	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte V8	179 D	£108,160	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	191	274	23.9	+ Performance, sense of occasion - Lacks the charisma and edge of its predecessor	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	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 R	'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	'07-'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	186 F	'89-'92	4/2498	201/6750	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	£56,965	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - M3's just a little better...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz DR520	148 D	'10-'11	8/6208	513/6800	479/5000	1730kg	301	4.1	-	187	-	-	+ C63 AMG goes feral - Just try finding one: only 20 were made	★★★★★
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	£73,745	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	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	1765kg	292	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	'98-'02	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	1642kg	219	5.5	-	155	-	23.0	+ Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills	★★★★★	
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	£113,765	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2040kg	267	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	098 R	£165,120	12/5980	604/4750	737/2000	2185kg	281	4.4	-	155	334	19.8	+ God's own supersaloon - Unholy price and thirst	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 R	£81,905	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293	4.4	-	155	231	28.5	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 R	'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	£83,655	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2205kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - £85K buys a Boxster and an ML350...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£123,140	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	130	322	-	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	£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	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'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	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - About X grand too much when new	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 R	'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	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'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 R	'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 Mäkinen Edition	181 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera 4S	186 D	£85,721	6/2997	414/6000	383/1750	1870kg	225	4.8	-	177	208	31.7	+ Strong performance and typically fine Porsche chassis - Misses characterful V8 of old S'	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	168 D	£91,239	8/4806	434/6700	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	£104,758	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	£123,776	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne S Diesel (Mk2)	185 D	£59,053	8/4134	377/3750	627/2000	2195kg	174	5.7	-	156	218	34.0	+ Supercar levels of torque; impressive all-round performance - GTS drives better	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2)	173 D	£68,117	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	£89,324	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 S (Mk2)	184 D	£107,784	8/4806	542/6000	553/2250	2215kg	249	4.5	-	175	270	24.6	+ Near-identical power and torque to a Zonda C12S - In an SUV	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk1)	104 R	'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 Coupe Si4	160 D	£41,510	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	186 D	£81,550	8/4999	503/6000	460/2500	2310kg	221	5.0	-	155	298	22.1	+ Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	135 D	'09-'12	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	180 D	£78,120	8/4367	334/3500	516/1750	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	186 D	£200,500	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 R	£276,275	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st Century - The roads are barely big enough	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	£26,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon is back (now with £8K off) - Blue paint and gold wheels aren't	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX 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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 WRI	067 R	'04-'05	4/1994	316/5800	310/4000	1470kg	218	5.3	13.1	155	-	-	+ Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 - Spec C is better	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 R	'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 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1235kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	011 R	'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 R	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.0	13.1	150	-	-	+ On paper, the ultimate - On the road, too uncompromising	★★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR SuperSports	163 R	£30,020	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1810kg	180	5.6	-	170	249	26.6	+ A 170mph Vauxhall - Not as exciting as the figures suggest	★★★★★
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	161	-	27.4	+ Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride	★★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	160 R	£49,615	8/6162	425/6000	406/4600	1831kg	236	4.9	-	155	320	20.9	+ Oversteery and characterful. Available as a pick-up too! - 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 R	'09	8/6162	564/6000	527/4000	1866kg	307	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ A tauter VXR8. Bonkers pace, brilliant noise - Gearchange still rubbish	★★★★★
Volvo S60 Polestar	179 D	£40,160	6/2953	324/5250	354/5250	1716kg	192							



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Our Choice

Audi R8 Spyder. The Spyder boasts supercar looks, presence and performance, yet you really could drive one every day. The V8 has a sweet engine and great dynamics, but if money's no object, we'd be seriously tempted by the equally brilliant V10.



Best of the Rest

The mk3 Porsche Boxster is brilliant, especially in 'S' form, while the new Jaguar F-types have really hit the spot, with both the rounded V6 S (left) and lively V8 S impressing us hugely. The Mazda MX-5 is best for budget rear-drive fun, but for the ultimate thrills, choose a Caterham R300 or an Ariel Atom.

Sports Cars / Convertibles

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	
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 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	£38,000	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	573	2.7	-	155	-	-	+ As mad as ever - Rain	★★★★★
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 R	£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 R	£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 3 245	113 D	'08-'12	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 R	'09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★★
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 R	'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 R	£95,080	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Starting to feel its age	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£105,080	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 R	£151,080	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£143,080	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	'09-'12	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	£38,025	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	£48,140	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	£46,500	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 RS5 Cabriolet	179 D	£68,985	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1920kg	235	4.9	-	155	249	26.4	+ Pace, looks, interior, naturally aspirated V8 - Not the last word in fun or involvement	★★★★★
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 V8 Spyder	186 D	£101,360	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	187	337	19.6	+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Spyder	185 R	£122,460	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1720kg	306	4.1	-	194	349	19.0	+ Sensational for the money - Not quite a rival for the 458 and 12C Spiders	★★★★★
BAC Mono	176 R	£101,940	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 R	£136,250	8/3933	500/6000	481/1700	2470kg	207	4.9	-	187	254	25.9	+ Arguably the world's best topless GT - Still no sports car	★★★★★
Bentley Continental Supersports	147 D	'10-'12	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2395kg	263	3.9	-	202	388	17.3	+ Fast, capable and refined - Coupe does the Supersports thing better	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GTC Speed	131 D	'09-'11	12/5998	600/6000	590/1750	2485kg	245	4.5	-	200	396	17.0	+ A great convertible just got better - Optional carbon brakes a necessity	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 20i (Mk2)	164 D	£29,715	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)	186 D	£39,935	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces	★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	'06-'09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 R	'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	£40,580	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	£59,075	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1810kg	232	5.3	-	155	297	22.2	+ MDCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge	★★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible (E46)	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 R	£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 R	£17,495	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 R	£22,995	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 Roadsport SV 175	140 D	£28,495	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	555kg	321	4.8	-	138	-	-	+ The Caterham for everyday use, R300 engine - Loses intensity of R300	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Supersport	165 R	£24,495	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 Supersport R	180 D	£27,995	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg	342	4.8	-	130	-	-	+ The best road-and-track Seven yet - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Superlight R400	105 R	£35,995	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	£42,495	4/1999	263/8500	171/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★★
Caterham CSR 260 Superlight	094 R	£44,995	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★★
Caterham Levante	131 R	£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 Superlight R300	150 R	'09-'12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap	★★★★★
Caterham 7R300	068 R	'02-'06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps	★★★★★
Caterham 7R400	068 R	'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 7R500	068 R	'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 7R500 Evolution	069 R	'04	4/1998	250/8000	190/4000	460kg	552	3.9	8.1	150	-	-	+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette C6	083 D	'04-'13	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1460kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics	★★★★★
Donkervoort D8 GTO Performance	185 R	£130,000	5/2480	375/5500	350/1750	695kg	548	2.8	-	168	-	-	+ There's nothing else like it - Pricy for a car with a five-cylinder engine	★★★★★
Ferrari California	171 D	£152,154	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	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type V6	186 R	£58,520	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1597kg	213	5.3	-	161	209	31.4	+ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably junior to the V6 S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type V6 S	183 R	£67,520	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1614kg	236	4.9	-	171	213	31.0	+ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is £20k cheaper	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type V8 S	183 R	£79,985	8/5000	488/6500	461/2500	1665kg	298	4.3	-	186	259	25.5	+ Wilder than the V6 S - Could be too exuberant for some	★★★★★
Jaguar XK 5.0 Convertible		£71,465	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 Convertible	130 R	£84,965	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 Convertible	167 R	£103,465	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 R	'06-'09	8/4196	294/6000	303/4100	1635kg	183	6.6	-	155	-	25.0	+ Every bit as good as the XK coupe - 294bhp still only just enough	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR		'06-'09	8/4196	414/6250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Overwrought detailing	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	004 R	'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 GT	183 D	£274,000	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	144	189	34.0	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	165 R	£64,850	4/1984	296/5500	295/3300	818kg	368	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow	138 R	'08-'12	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Mad looks; real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Light Car Company Rocket	104 R	£46,000	4/1002	143/10500	77/8500	406kg	358	4.4	-	145	-	35.0	+ Single-seater style, speed - Old Formula Fords cost £5K	★★★★★

PAST master

The original Exige offered the ultimate in organic driving thrills, as Richard Meaden found out

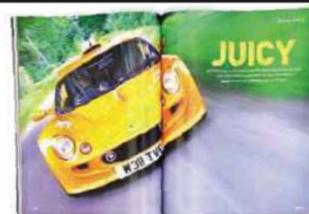
Lotus Exige S1 Issue 023, September 2000

'Standing next to the bright orange Exige, it has me utterly smitten before I've even got the keys. It exudes no-nonsense attitude and high-octane excitement.

Threading the car from corner to corner is an addictive and completely absorbing process. I'd go as far as to say only a 911 Carrera offers the same level of cornering satisfaction

when you hit the sweet spot. It really is that good.

If you like your cars with an equal quotient of power and poise, a harmony of grunt and grip that enables you to exploit every ounce of forward motion and wring every last drop of mechanical grip from the chassis, then the Exige has your name written all over it.'



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Best in class doesn't even begin to describe this new film check out the online videos for yourself or pop round and we will show you the scratch test undertaken in the video for you. We guarantee you won't believe your eyes!

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Sports Cars / Convertibles

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	
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	183 R	£28,450	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused - 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 Exige S Roadster	186 R	£52,900	4/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	4.0	-	145	236	28.0	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - Boxster S is a better all-rounder	★★★★★
Lotus Elise R	068 R	'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 R	'08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 R	'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 R	'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 R	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S1	126 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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	£98,315	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	£103,910	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.1	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£111,710	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	179	337	19.5	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i SE		£18,495	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	£21,595	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 v1)	091 R	'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 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	'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	£44,600	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	186 R	£55,335	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1615kg	262	4.6	-	155	195	33.6	+ Quicker and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 R	'05-'10	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 R	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted TG-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	£83,490	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Watfy performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£110,785	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	183 D	£168,285	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	155	270	24.4	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	'08-'13	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 R	'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-smacking pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 R	£176,985	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	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 R	£24,950	4/1598	208/6000	269/1850	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	£30,000	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	£85,200	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 R	£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 R	'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 R	£36,495	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	155	262	25.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z Roadster		'04-'09	6/3498	309/6600	264/4800	1600kg	196	5.8	-	155	-	24.8	+ Drives just like the coupe - But doesn't look as good	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (981)	172 R	£38,237	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 (981)	186 R	£45,384	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	173	206	32.1	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing new steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (987)		'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 (987)	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 (987)	140 R	'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 (986)	049 R	'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 (986)	070 R	'99-'04	6/3179	260/6200	228/4700	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera Cabriolet (991)	183 R	£82,072	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1450kg	242	5.0	-	178	217	30.7	+ Brilliant engine - Doesn't quite have the 'magic at any speed' character of previous 911s	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S Cabriolet (991)	171 R	£92,108	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 Turbo Cabriolet (997)	139 D	'07-'12	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 Turbo Cabriolet (996)	060 R	'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 R	£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 R	'09-'12	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's the road legal	★★★★★
Renault Sport Spider	183 R	'96-'99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	131	-	-	+ Rarity, fabulous unassisted steering feel - Heavier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Tesla Roadster	131 R	'08-'12	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	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	078 R	'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 R	'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 Chimera 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 R	'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	★★★★★
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 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	★★★★★

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Our Choice

Porsche 911 Carrera 4S. It's taken a while for the 991-generation 911 to win us round, but the C4S has done it, thanks largely to its weightier steering and sweeter balance. Don't hesitate to be tempted by the Powerkit option – it's pricey, but worth it.



Best of the Rest

The new Cayman S is right up there with its 911 bigger brother – put simply, it's sensational. The Lotus Exige S (left) is a proper road racer for £53K and our joint 2012 Car of the Year. Audi's R8 is another gem, especially in supercar-rivalling V10 Plus form. And, of course, there's always the Nissan GT-R...

Coupes / GTs

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
Alfa Romeo Brera 3.2 V6	120 R	'08-'09	6/3195	256/6300	237/4500	1532kg	170	6.9	-	155	260	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Brera made better for UK roads - Steering lacking some feel
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 R	'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 R	£50,745	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	£66,950	6/2979	402/6000	398/4500	1535kg	266	4.4	-	186	224	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Alpina's M3 alternative - Auto gearbox frustrates when pressing on
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7)	169 D	£84,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + 2012 upgrades keep the V8 Vantage on song - Starting to feel a little dated, though
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 R	£102,500	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	£135,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The best series production car that Aston Martin makes - Erm, a tad thirsty?
Aston Martin V12 Zagato	181 F	£396,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.2	-	190	388	17.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The looks, the noise, the way it drives - It's three times the price of a V12 Vantage
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	109 R	'05-'08	8/4281	380/7300	302/5000	1630kg	237	5.2	12.0	175	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Gorgeous, awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match 911 dynamically
Aston Martin DB9	178 R	£131,995	12/5935	510/6500	451/5500	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 R	£180,812	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary
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	£27,140	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	6.3	15.7	152	154	42.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game
Audi TT S	119 D	£35,905	4/1984	268/6000	258/12500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	155	184	35.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Usefully quicker TT; great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game
Audi TT RS	158 R	£46,160	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 RS Plus	185 D	£49,245	5/2480	355/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	174	209	31.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	155	-	30.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering
Audi S5	163 D	£42,790	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1675kg	199	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Supercar-charged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Pricey once you add options
Audi RS5		£59,150	8/4163	444/8500	317/4000	1715kg	245	4.5	-	155	246	26.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Still not as exciting as you'd hope
Audi R8 V8	168 R	£92,710	8/4163	414/7800	317/4500	1560kg	270	4.1	9.9	187	332	19.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price
Audi R8 V10	181 D	£113,810	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	3.9	8.4	194	346	19.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Brilliant supercar feel - The V8 is £20k less, and still superb
Audi R8 V10 Plus	183 R	£128,710	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351	3.8	-	198	346	19.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + An R8 fit to take on the 458 and 12C - 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 R	'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 R	£123,850	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2295kg	221	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - V12 suddenly seems pointless
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£135,760	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2320kg	248	4.6	-	198	384	17.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst
Bentley Continental GT Speed	177 D	£151,100	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 R	£170,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2240kg	282	3.7	-	204	388	17.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A thoroughly impressive car... - rather than a fun and involving one
Bentley Continental GT Speed	115 R	'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 R	'08-'12	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1455kg	211	5.3	-	155	198	33.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Fast, fun, £20K cheaper than an M3 - You really want the 1-series M Coupe
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 - Came and went too quick
BMW 335i M Sport	095 D	£39,145	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1525kg	201	5.2	12.2	155	196	33.6	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Eager engine, exploitable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling
BMW M3 (E92)	162 R	£54,720	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 R	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel
BMW M3 CS (E46)	088 R	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	-	155	-	23.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	060 R	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Stripped-down road-race M3 - Standard brakes barely adequate
BMW M3 (E36)	148 R	'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 R	'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 R	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	155	-	23.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in
BMW M Coupe	005 R	'98-'03	6/3246	325/7400	258/3250	1375kg	240	5.1	-	155	-	25.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse
BMW 640d	165 D	£62,080	6/2993	309/4400	465/1500	1790kg	175	5.5	-	155	144	51.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Great engine and economy, excellent build - Numb steering, unsettled B-road ride
BMW M6 (Mk2)	178 R	£93,820	8/3995	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	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace
Chevrolet Camaro	148 R	£35,025	8/6162	426/5900	420/4600	1769kg	245	5.1	-	155	329	20.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks like a Transformer made real - We'd prefer it in robot mode
Chevrolet Corvette C6	116 D	£49,033	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1461kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A Corvette with no apologies needed - Still left-hand drive only
Chevrolet Corvette Z06	099 R	£66,403	8/7011	505/6300	469/4800	1418kg	363	3.9	8.5	198	350	19.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + 8.5 to 100, brakes, price - Not quite the road-racer we expected
Dodge Challenger *	122 D	£40,000	8/6059	425/6200	420/4800	1877kg	230	5.2	-	160+	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Effortlessly cool... - ...if you live in Hazard County
Ford Mustang Boss 302 *	162 R	£45,430	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 R	£60,000	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 R	£29,950	4/1999	175/6700	140/5000	795kg	224	5.8	-	140	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A race-compliant sports car for the road - Feels too soft to be a hardcore track toy
Ginetta G60	165 D	£68,000	6/3721	310/6500	288/4500	1080kg	292	4.9	-	165	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Reborn Fabio GTS boasts great engine and good looks - The ride still needs work
Honda CR-Z GT	144 R	£20,820	4/1497	122/6100	128/1500	1198kg	103	9.9	-	124	117	56.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The first hybrid with sporting intent - No match for a good diesel hot hatch
Honda Integra Type-R (DC2)	095 R	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7000	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some
Honda Integra Type-R (DC5) *	037 R	'01-'06	4/1998	217/8000	152/7000	1250kg	176	7.1	16.7	140	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Sharp looks, massive grip - Lost a little of the DC2's magic
Honda NSX	043 R	'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 R	'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 370Z 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	408/3500	1735kg	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	3.8	-	170	236	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Doubts over Lotus's future
Lotus Exige S	105 R	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7000	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

POCKET buying guide

TVR Tamora

Years 2001-2006 **Engine** In-line 6-cyl, 3605cc **Power** 350bhp @ 7200rpm
Torque 290lb ft @ 5500rpm
0-60mph 4.5sec **Top speed** 160mph



WHY WOULD YOU?

With 350bhp to propel just 1050kg, this entry-level TVR is exhilaratingly rapid. At the time of its launch in 2001 we said it was the best-sorted TVR we'd experienced. It's rare too – only around 350 were built.

WHAT TO PAY

£17-18k buys you a well-cared-for, low-mileage example. Over £20k gets you the very best.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

The Speed Six engine isn't a problem as long as it's been regularly serviced (every 6000 miles, with tappet clearances set every 12,000). Watch out for clutch slip or judder – a replacement costs £1000. Check the square-section chassis for fatigue around the catalytic converter, and look for pixel lines on the LCD display, as a replacement costs £300. (Full guide, evo 183)

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Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Lotus Evige (series 2)	068 R	'04-'08	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	875kg	219	4.9	-	147	-	321	★★★★★
Lotus Evige (series 1)	067 D	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	★★★★★
Lotus Evora	138 R	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	217	30.3	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	168 R	£61,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	★★★★★
Lotus Europa SE	127 R	'08-'10	4/1998	222/5600	221/4000	995kg	227	4.9	-	146	-	28.8	★★★★★
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	005 R	'99-'00	8/3506	350/6500	295/4250	1299kg	274	4.3	9.9	175	-	22.0	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£82,190	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.5	12.7	177	330	19.8	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	178 R	£90,750	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	185	331	-	★★★★★
Maserati GT MC Stradale	160 R	£110,045	8/4691	444/7100	376/4750	1770kg	255	4.6	-	187	337	19.6	★★★★★
Maserati Coupe	064 R	'08-'10	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	★★★★★
Maserati GranSport	073 R	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122 R	'03-'11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	£57,165	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black	171 R	£98,765	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.1	-	186	286	-	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black	106 R	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	150 D	£115,660	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2010kg	271	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	★★★★★
Morgan AeroMax	097 D	£110,000	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	180 R	£26,995	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1520kg	218	5.4	-	155	248	26.7	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Nismo	186 D	£36,995	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1535kg	224	5.2	-	155	248	26.7	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z	107 R	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2012MY/2013MY)	184 D	£76,610	6/3799	542/6400	464/5200	1750kg	316	2.8	-	196	275	24.0	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 R	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/5200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	194	279	23.5	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 R	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	193	-	-	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	009 R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	019 R	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0	★★★★★
Noble M400	089 R	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185	-	-	★★★★★
Noble M12 GTO-3R	070 R	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman (981)	185 F	£39,694	6/2706	271/7400	214/4500	1310kg	210	5.7	-	165	192	34.4	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	181 R	£48,783	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	5.0	-	176	206	32.1	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman (987)	131 R	'11-'13	6/2893	261/7200	221/4400	1330kg	199	5.8	-	165	221	30.1	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (987)	132 R	'06-'13	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman R (987)	158 R	'11-'13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	29.1	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	168 R	£71,449	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1380kg	254	4.7	-	179	212	31.4	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	168 R	£81,242	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1395kg	287	4.4	-	188	224	29.7	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 (991)	177 D	£77,924	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1430kg	245	4.5	-	177	219	30.4	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991)	179 R	£87,959	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1445kg	277	4.5	-	185	234	28.5	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (997.2)	'08-'11	6/3614	341/6500	288/4400	1415kg	245	4.9	-	180	225	29.4	-	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 R	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 R	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (996)	051 R	'02-'05	6/3596	316/6800	273/4250	1470kg	218	5.1	-	174	-	-	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996 3.4)	008 R	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	230	4.6	-	173	-	28.0	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (993)	'94-'97	6/3600	285/6100	251/5250	1372kg	211	5.2	-	168	-	25.0	-	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 R	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)	152 R	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	164 R	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	082 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	4.3	9.2	190	-	-	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182 R	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	★★★★★
Porsche 911 RS (993)	036 R	'95	6/3746	300/6500	262/5400	1270kg	240	4.7	11.2	172	-	-	★★★★★
Porsche 968 Club Sport	019 R	'93-'95	4/2990	240/6200	225/4100	1335kg	183	6.1	15.7	149	-	-	★★★★★
Renault Alpine A610	'92-'96	6/2975	250/5750	258/2900	1420kg	179	5.4	13.8	160	-	21.0	-	★★★★★
Subaru BRZ	170 R	£24,995	4/1998	191/7000	151/6400	1202kg	166	7.5	-	143	159	40.9	★★★★★
Toyota GT86	174 R	£24,995	4/1998	191/7000	151/6400	1240kg	162	7.5	-	140	181	36.2	★★★★★
TVR T350C	057 R	'03-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.7	10.0	175	-	-	★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	099 D	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	★★★★★
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	5.0	11.4	160+	-	-	★★★★★
Vauxhall Monaro VXR 6.0	079 D	'05-'07	8/5967	398/6000	391/4400	1677kg	241	5.1	-	180+	-	-	★★★★★
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155 R	£24,705	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1373kg	153	6.1	15.8	149	172	38.2	★★★★★
VW Scirocco R	181 R	£31,135	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1352kg	196	5.8	-	155	189	34.9	★★★★★
VW Corrado VR6	095 R	'92-'96	6/2861	190/5800	180/4200	1237kg	156	6.2	-	143	-	29.5	★★★★★
Wiesmann GT MF5	127 D	£150,000	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1380kg	368	3.9	-	193	-	-	★★★★★



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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

Pagani's awesome Huayra (left) is our reigning joint Car of the Year. Ferrari's fastest-ever road car, the F12, is on a whole new level to its rivals technologically, but Lamborghini's Aventador has it licked for visual drama. The updated McLaren 12C, meanwhile, remains tantalisingly close to greatness.

Supercars

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	
9ff GT9R	127 D	c£450,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	182 R	£189,995	12/5935	565/6750	457/5500	1739kg	330	4.1	-	183	335	19.6	+ A much better car than the DBS it succeeds - Shame it looks little different, then	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 R	'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 600	131 R	'98	8/5340	600/6200	600/4400	2020kg	302	4.6	11.0	190	-	-	+ A proper, full-fat Aston Martin - Running costs will be equally 'proper'	★★★★★
Aston Martin One-77	179 R	'10-'12	12/7312	750/6000	553/7600	1740kg	438	3.7	-	220+	-	-	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made	★★★★★
BMW M1	110 R	'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 R	'05-'11	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	596	11.4	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 R	c£1.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	596	11.4	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous brolly/roof thing	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 R	c£2.0m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	12.2	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse	185 R	c£1.7m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1990kg	604	2.6	-	254	539	12.2	+ The world's fastest convertible - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 R	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Caparo T1	138 R	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	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	183 R	£178,526	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	185 R	£198,971	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 F430	163 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'97-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg	281	4.7	-	183	-	16.7	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?	★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	182 R	£239,736	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	211	350	18.8	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - We'd rather have an Aventador (just)	★★★★★
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 599 GTO	161 R	'11-'12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	169 R	'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 R	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari Testarossa	185 R	'84-'91	12/4942	385/6300	361/4500	1506kg	260	5.8	-	171	-	-	+ The ultimate '80s supercar - Intimidating handling; needs big roads	★★★★★
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 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	156 R	'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	186 R	'96-'97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg	424	3.9	-	202	-	-	+ Still the best drivers' Ferrari - The F40 looks better	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	186 R	'87-'92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg	437	4.1	-	201	-	-	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'	★★★★★
Ferrari 288GTO	064 R	'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 R	£275,000	8/4163	690/6300	675/4000	1200kg	584	3.0	-	220+	-	-	+ Stupendous performance, Apollo - High price, 'Gumpert'	★★★★★
Hennessey Venom GT	180 R	£900,000	8/7000	1244/6500	1155/4000	1244kg	1016	2.5	-	275	-	-	+ 0-200mph in 14.5sec, and it handles too - Looks like an Exige	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	157 R	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	213	-	-	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - ...until McLaren built the F1	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 R	£1,080,000	8/5000	1140/7100	885/2700	1435kg	807	2.9	-	273	-	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCX	094 R	'06-'10	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	3.9	7.7	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCRX Edition	118 R	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spikekey power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2	176 F	£166,784	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg	399	3.9	-	199	315	16.0	+ The mad rear-driven Lambo is back! - Gallardo not feeling as fresh as the 458	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	£164,444	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg	398	3.7	-	202	325	16.0	+ Still a missile from A to B - Starting to show its age	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	152 R	£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	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 R	'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 R	'07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg	373	3.8	-	196	-	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4	182 R	£247,000	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.9	-	217	370	17.7	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Erm... expensive?	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador Roadster	184 R	£294,665	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1625kg	431	3.0	-	217	370	17.7	+ Sensational engine and styling - A wee bit on the thirsty side	★★★★★
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 Murciélago LP640	093 R	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg	385	3.3	-	211	213	-	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	186 R	'09-'11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg	429	3.2	7.3	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo GT	016 R	'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 Diablo 6.0	019 R	'00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lamborghini Countach 5000 QV	164 R	'88-'91	12/5167	455/7000	369/5200	1488kg	311	4.2	10.0	182	-	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 12C	183 R	£176,000	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating	★★★★★
McLaren 12C Spider	177 R	£195,500	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	186 R	'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 R	'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 SLS AMG Black	182 D	£229,985	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	196	321	20.6	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Appetite for expensive tyres	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	073 R	'04-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	★★★★★
Noble M600	186 R	c£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg	551	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	185 R	£820,000	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 R	£1.5m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg	630	3.3	-	217+	-	-	+ The most extreme Zonda ever - The last Zonda ever (probably)	★★★★★
P														

Track Times

Knowledge

Key + = new addition this month. Red denotes the car is the fastest in its class.

Car	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 (2008MY)	1:23.6	113.1	119	Dry
Porsche 991 Carrera	1:23.6	112.5	182	Dry
Porsche 991 Carrera Cabriolet	1:23.9	112.3	183	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo	1:24.1	113.5	136	Damp
Lotus 340R (190bhp)	1:24.2	110.0	135	Dry
Porsche Boxster S (981)	1:24.2	109.3	183	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 (987)	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
Jaguar F-type V8 S	1:25.2	111.2	183	Dry
Audi RS5	1:25.4	108.8	162	Dry
Audi R8 Spyder V8	1:25.5	107.0	167	Dry
Porsche Cayman R	1:25.5	106.8	158	Dry
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	1:25.6	109.1	183	Dry
BMW M5 (F10) (fastest saloon)	1:25.7	112.0	165	Dry
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1:25.8	110.9	146	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	1:25.9	107.5	138	Dry
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1:25.9	106.4	158	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X RS 360	1:26.1	106.6	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy (fastest hot hatch)	1:26.1	105.3	166	Dry
Audi TT RS	1:26.3	107.2	149	Dry
Aston Martin DBS	1:26.4	109.5	143	Dry
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1:26.5	109.2	137	Dry
Jaguar XJ220	1:26.7	111.7	131	Dry
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	1:26.8	104.9	165	Dry
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)	1:26.9	107.4	158	Dry
Lotus Evora	1:27.1	104.2	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z	1:27.1	104.0	158	Dry
Porsche Panamera S	1:27.3	102.4	165	Dry
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	1:27.7	111.0	162	Dry
Lotus Elise SC	1:27.7	104.6	131	Dry
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	1:27.8	106.1	131	Dry
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1:27.8	105.4	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:27.8	103.3		
Audi RS6 Avant (fastest estate)	1:27.9	111.0	121	Dry
Jaguar XFR	1:27.9	108.1	137	Dry
Lexus IS-F	1:28.1	106.4	151	Dry
Porsche Boxster S (987)	1:28.1	105.4	120	Dry
Subaru WRX STI	1:28.3	101.6	157	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
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
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	1:32.4	99.3		

TRACK MAP



West Circuit facts

- Location Bedford Autodrome
- Opened 1999
- Length 1.85 miles (2.98 kilometres)
- Direction Anti-clockwise
- Left turns 9
- Right turns 6



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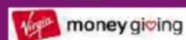


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Camera: Nikon D800. Focal length: 29.0mm. Exposure: 1/160 sec at f/8 (ISO 100)

BMW 5-series E34 M-System wheels

by DAVID VIVIAN | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

A

ALLOY WHEELS DON'T USUALLY HAVE 'HUB CAPS'.

You might say it's rather missing the point. From 1988 to 1992, the wheels on BMW's E34 M5 did, though, and they looked fantastic. They had a purpose, too. They were the M division's first 'M-System' alloys but were quickly dubbed 'turbine wheels'. The reason was fairly obvious.

The wheel came in three parts. First, there was the actual rim, a fairly conventional 8 x 17J design with five black-painted spokes. Quite tasty in itself. But it was obscured almost in its entirety by a pressure die-cast magnesium disc with turbine vanes, handed for the left or right side of the car, and designed to blow air onto the brakes. Lastly, there was a small central cap that concealed the fixing bolts, which themselves could only be tightened by a BMW dealer strictly observing the 2.2lb ft torque limit, according to the handbook.

Despite their functional nod to racing practice – a concept BMW felt warranted the protection of a patent – press reaction to the M-System wheels was mostly critical, pointing out that the slight gap between the edge of the disc and the main rim made the M5 look as if it had white-wall tyres. Yet the turbine

effect increased airflow over the brakes by 25 per cent, thus delaying (maybe even eliminating) the onset of fade on a circuit or, say, a long alpine descent. Whatever the style critics may have thought, it was hard to argue against the dynamic benefits.

The turbine wheel's aero element was developed in BMW's wind tunnel. It's more complex than it looks, consisting of two concentric sets of fins that generate an 'axial-radial blower action', drawing air in and aiming it directly at the brake rotor. The main alloy wheel was clever, too, featuring an asymmetric 'hump' designed to prevent a deflating or deflated tyre rolling off the rim.

In 1992, BMW replaced the turbine with the M-System II wheel, widely known as the 'throwing star' design, much to the delight of fans of kung fu movies. On the surface it looked to be a much more conventional affair. In construction, however, it was very similar, with a five-spoke alloy main wheel and a removable outer cover. In fact, the covers were interchangeable, leading some M5 owners to swap between the two depending on mood or season. Indeed, many consider the E34 M5 to be a better-looking car with the throwing stars fitted. No doubt to the delight of the minority who know what cool really looks like. ✕

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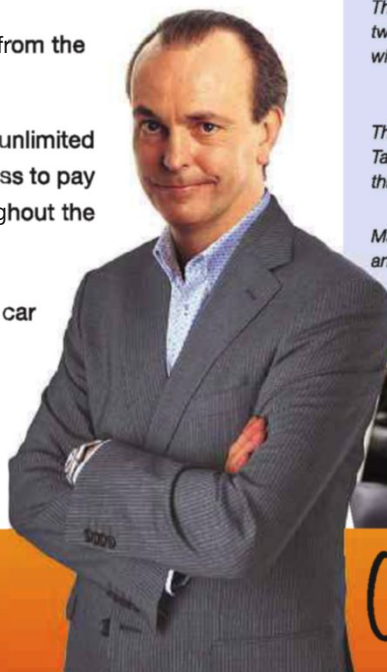
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