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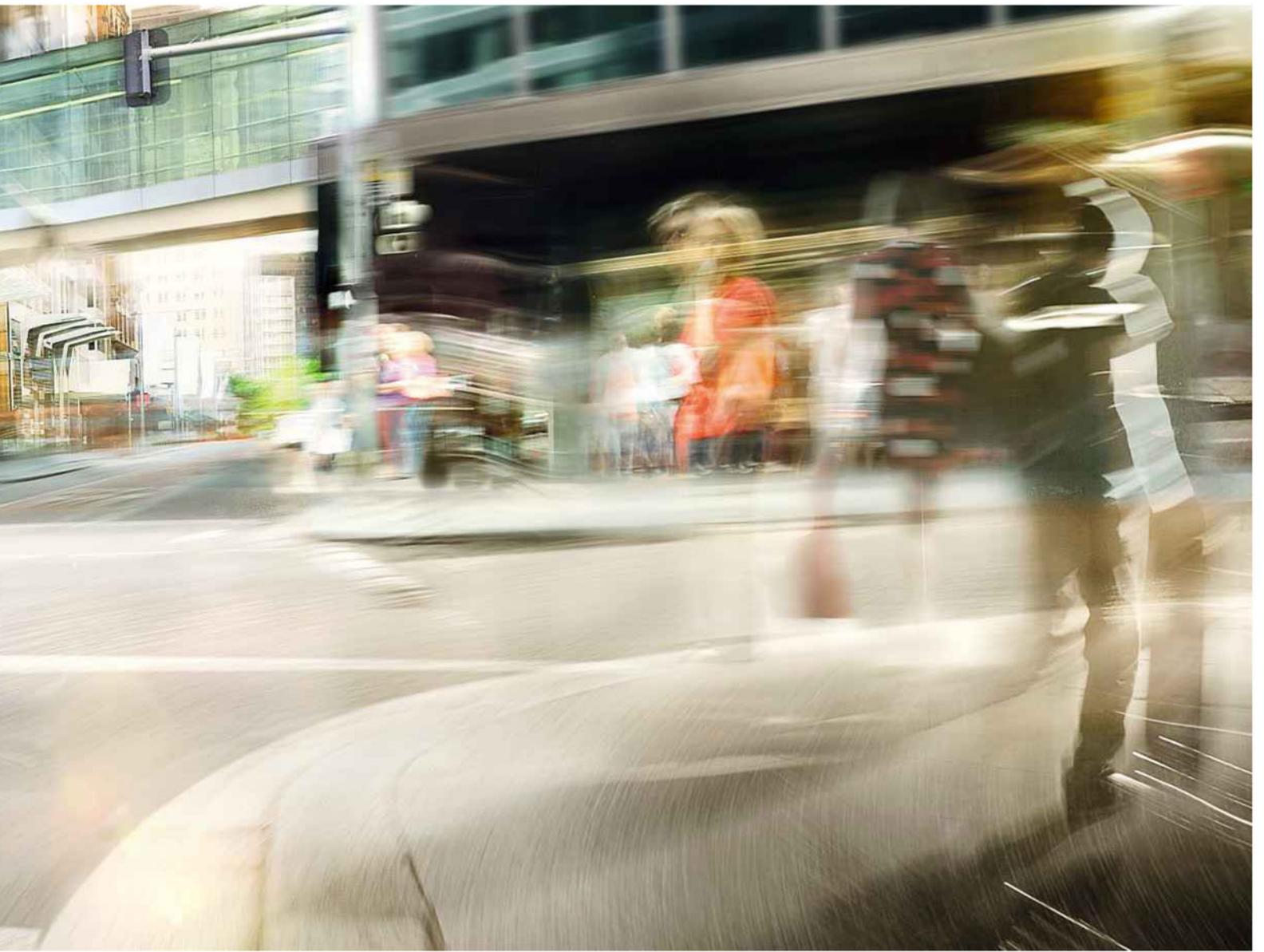
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Ed Speak



QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS. 2014 BEGINS

with a number of questions circling in my head that will need answering in 2014. I'm wondering if we're going to see, for instance, a truly great Audi drivers' car – the new Quattro, perhaps? I'm also wondering if the Lamborghini Gallardo's replacement will be able to take on the Ferrari 458 and whether it will be offered with a single- or a dual-clutch transmission (I'll be amazed if a manual is offered at all).

I'm also questioning if Caterham is spreading itself too thinly with its Moto3 team and its proposed launch of a motorcycle division. I'm wondering if the new V6 hybrid era will be the most technologically fascinating but viewer-frustrating period in Formula 1 history. And as I write this, I've just read that F1 is to award double points for the final round of the 2014 season and I'm wondering if I read that correctly...

What else is floating around in my head? Well, I'm questioning if anything in its price range can take on the Porsche Cayman. I'm wondering if we're seeing the slow recovery of Lotus and I'm wondering if we'll ever see a new Esprit to take on the new Gallardo and the next 458. And speaking of challenges, I wonder if the new BMW M3/M4 will have everything its own way or whether Mercedes' new C-class AMG will be a better steer. Or perhaps Lexus will present a new IS-F that trumps them both?

And now for some even more random questions, like: Will my old 911 SC blow up? Will my 1502 start? Is Stephen Dobie's Clio Williams really being modelled for *Forza 5* or is it an elaborate hoax? Will Porsche sell every 918 Spyder? How will the UK government address the estimated £100million shortfall in road tax revenues caused by manufacturers building more efficient modern cars? At what point will evoTV hit 400,000 subscribers? When will the revolutionary evo digital edition pick up its first awards? When will I stop crowing about it? How long before Ben Bowlby is recognised as the biggest brain in automotive engineering? Will Adrian Newey let us take a forensic look at his GT40? How big are Kenny Bräck's balls? What on earth is Goodwood going to be like in March when Formula 1 cars from the 1970s and '80s lap flat-out at the Members' Meeting? Which rally team is going to give Elfyn Evans the WRC drive he deserves? Will Morgan (the business) ever settle its differences with Morgan (the man)? Which is quickest: GT-R Nismo or Ferrari Speciale? And which is more fun? Questions, questions, questions...

This is my last Ed Speak of 2013, so from all of the evo team, thanks for reading/watching/using and have a safe and happy new year.

Nick Trott Editor
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'Whose life wouldn't an RS4 slip seamlessly into and enhance every single day of?'



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Rad^{ar}

News, new metal, investigations, interviews, technology and more...

Pony car gets some new tricks

First look

Inside story on sixth-generation Mustang



Right-hand drive for the UK, independent rear suspension and a turbocharged four-cylinder engine option... the next Mustang is a bold reinvention of the all-American hero

Words: Andrew English

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Is this the shape of sports cars to come? We take a close look – and drive a prototype



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Kazunori Yamauchi, father of the *Gran Turismo* series, on why *GT6* will blow you away



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Man of the Year, Engine of the Year, Driver of the Year, Disappointment of the Year... All are revealed

Right: although no smaller than the current model, lower, more sculpted lines make new Mustang appear less bulky

W

'WHICH IS MY favourite Ford? The politically correct answer would be "all of them", but my

heart says "always the Mustang". My first car was a Mustang; I've always owned a Mustang and I always will.'

Bill Ford is automotive royalty. Executive chairman of the world's fifth largest car maker, he's also the great grandson of Henry Ford, but often seems most at ease talking blue-collar sports and sports cars. He was certainly at ease at the bash thrown in Barcelona in early December to celebrate 50 years of the Mustang, the launch of a new sixth-generation model and the announcement of the first factory-built right-hand-drive Mustang, which arrives in Britain in coupe and cabriolet form in the summer of 2015.

Pretty good-looking car, too. If the fifth-generation, 2004 model, designed by Sid Ramnarace and engineered by Hau Thai-Tang (he put the 'Tang' in Mustang, joke Ford insiders) reinvented the Mustang franchise in a modern, cool way, this generation brings back some of the charm and style to the original pony car. And while new Mustang is, at 4784mm, 4mm longer than the outgoing model, it's visually a smaller car, with a reduction in rear height, aimed at reducing the sense of it being a 9/8th scale car on European roads.

'We had all the Mustangs lined up at the design studio,' says Gunnar Herrmann, vice president of quality,



'Ford claims the new rear suspension reduces squat, lift and dive by over 50 per cent compared with the live rear axle'

'and picked out what was great about the car, the best bits. When you are asked to redesign a classic, you are sweating before you've even started, but I think this car is far more back to the 1964 original idea than any other Mustang model.'

'You'd be amazed how different it is, but you'd need to see the outgoing model alongside to appreciate it,' says Martin Smith, Ford of Europe design boss. 'But you have to have some Mustang things right as well. If the plan shape isn't right, the enthusiasts just won't buy it.'

Under the mainly pressed steel skin (the bonnet and front wings are aluminium) there are a number of changes, including heavily revised front suspension and a new independent rear, the first time the standard Mustang has been so suspended. The front MacPherson struts get twin

lower links (lateral and tension) and twin lower ball-joints, which allow the fitting of bigger brakes without excessive wheel offsets, which can reduce steering feel. There's also a non-isolated perimeter frame at the front, replacing the old model's twin cross members. At the rear, there's an aluminium H-pattern spring and damper pan, with short and long arms to the hub carriers. Ford claims it has reduced rear squat, lift and dive by over 50 per cent compared with the live rear axle, although, for some, the way the Mustang sits down at the back while wheel-spinning into the opening credits of its own road movie is part of its charm.

'The opposition has moved on a bit,' concedes Joe Bakaj, vice president of product development for Ford of Europe, 'so I don't think it matters that it's gone independent.'

Two engines will be offered, a traditional 420bhp/390lb ft V8 petrol displacing 5.0 litres and a four-cylinder EcoBoost turbo unit displacing 2.3 litres and producing 305bhp and 300lb ft. The EcoBoost lump uses a twin-scroll turbo to improve low-end response. Dave Pericak, Mustang's chief engineer, says: 'It delivers where a Mustang driver expects it to, with a broad, flat torque curve that pours out when you stand on it.'

Transmissions will be a six-speed manual and optional six-speed automatic with the turbo four-pot. There's a new electrically assisted rack-and-pinion steering system, torque-vectoring between the rear wheels and a standard launch control along with selectable driving modes to alter the steering effort, engine response and stability control settings.

This isn't the first right-hand-drive

Mustang as there were factory-approved conversions by Tickford Australia in the late '90s. Nor is it the first four-cylinder Mustang, as the '70s Mark III 'Stang was offered with naturally aspirated and turbocharged four-cylinder engines. There have even been Cobra high-performance Mustang derivatives with independent rear suspension. But the combination of all three, together with the design changes, could be a challenge for Mustang purists.

'I'm not sure the Mustang hardcore enthusiast will welcome a right-hand-drive Mustang,' says Mark Hayden, committee member of the Mustang Owners' Club GB, while also expressing some disquiet at the lack of authentic noise from the V8 engine as the car was driven on stage in Barcelona.

The new car will reach the UK by the end of 2014. There are no prices yet, and even though part of the Mustang's appeal in the US lies in its affordability, Ford staff were softening us up for a number of £30,000-£40,000 models on the way, including the Edge SUV, the Vignale Mondeo – and the Mustang.

It's a long way from the \$2500 a Mustang would cost you 50 years ago.



Above: multi-link rear is a first on a standard Mustang. **Other pics:** design details pay homage to classics

'The combination of right-hand drive and a four-cylinder engine could be a challenge for Mustang purists'



An American icon

LAUNCHED IN APRIL 1964 at the World's Fair and priced originally at about \$2500, the Mustang sold 700,000 in its first nine months on sale – the fastest-selling car the world has ever known. So great was the excitement at the launch that Ford reckoned demand exceeded supply by 15:1. Half a century later, over nine million Mustangs have been sold.

By using the very ordinary chassis parts from the Falcon and Fairlane saloons, with stylish sheet metal on top, Ford spawned a new sort of cheap sports coupe aimed at the post-war baby-boomers: the pony car. It's had songs written about it, such as 'The Fancy Filly From Detroit City' recorded by the Zip Codes on their 1964 album *Mustang* (it's a truly dreadful song), and has become a sort of automotive shorthand for lyricists ever since. 'I've got a 1966, cherry-red Mustang Ford...'

sang Chuck Berry on 'My Mustang Ford'. 'He coughs as he passes her Ford Mustang,' crooned David Bowie on 'Young Americans'. And not forgetting Wilson Pickett's 'Mustang Sally'.

So great is the car's inculcation into American folklore that the US Navy even ran a recruitment advertisement, intoning, 'The Beach Boys. Apple pie. The '67 Mustang. Three things worth fighting for.'

Yet Mustangs have never been exactly great to drive. From the original '64 coupes and '68 Mach 1, even the 1966 Shelby GT350 of which 1000 were put on the Hertz fleet for hire at \$17 a day, right through to the ghastly 'aero' look Mustangs of the '80s and up to the 2001 Bullitt model, the Mustang was a flexing, oversteering monster with sloppy steering, shoddy build quality, cheap fittings, slap-happy damping and questionable dynamics.

Over the years, Ford's designers sold out on its iconic blue-collar coupe, with the Mustang wearing every passing automotive fad, until it had become the joke of corporate American car making. As Ford's general manager at the launch, Lee Iacocca, later mourned: 'Our customers abandoned us, because we'd abandoned their car.'

While the old model was still loved, with the Nashville-based 40th anniversary attended by 100,000 devotees, new sales were falling; Ford's pony looked ready for the glue factory.

It took a radical redesign to rekindle the love affair. The Sid Ramnarace designed Mustang GT concept did exactly that when it appeared at the Detroit show in 2003. It galvanised opinion, with some claiming it to be too trendy, Ford design head J Mays dubbing it 'retro futurism' and the

American public going wild for it. That car renewed the Mustang franchise and while it was sniffily dismissed by General Motors design director Ed Welburn as 'a restoration', the gen-five 'Stang was so successful it forced GM to eat its words and do its own 'restoration' job on its own pony car, the Camaro. In 2005, the Flat Rock plant produced 161,000 Mustangs and, while current sales are around half that, Ford is hoping this new model, together with official European sales, will see a return to Mustang glory days.





Clockwise from left: lovely 1964 original, neutered '80s 'aero' style 'Stang, and the present gen-five car introduced in 2004



M3 and M4 power up

Extra bhp, manual gearboxes and a Smokey Burnout mode... BMW reveals spec details

Words: Stephen Dobie

B BMW HAS CONFIRMED full details of its new M3 and M4 models.

Replacing the old E92-generation M3 saloon and coupe with two separate model lines, they will go on sale in the UK in June 2014, priced marginally higher than before: £56,175 for the saloon M3, the more glamorous coupe M4 commanding an extra £468.

We've already been briefed on much of the new cars' technology (evo 189), but there are plenty of fresh nuggets. The 3-litre twin-turbo six-cylinder engine produces 425bhp and 406lb ft, both figures up on what we were first told. The former arrives at a lowly – by M standards – 5390rpm, but happily is sustained until 7000rpm, 600 revs shy of the engine's limit. The upside of foregoing a V8 with peak power at 8300rpm is the combination of 194g/km CO2 emissions and 34mpg with a 4.1sec 0-62mph time, plus a top speed of up to 174mph if you select the optional M Driver's Package.

Despite fears of a twin-clutch takeover, the new models will come as standard with a six-speed manual gearbox, which weighs 12kg less than its E92 equivalent and features automatic throttle-blipping on downshifts to help fight its

corner against the optional dual-clutch. Eight out of ten E92 M3s were sold with DCT, though, and that figure could rise thanks to even more tech bestowed upon the seven-speed transmission. There's Launch Control as well as the amusingly named Smokey Burnout mode, which allows a degree of wheelspin at low speeds. Stability Clutch Control opens the clutch up when understeer is sensed, tightening the car's line via a controlled clutch-kick effect.

As we've previously reported, the new models get an electronically controlled limited-slip differential, while the electric power steering and Adaptive M Suspension (standard on UK cars) are adjustable between Comfort, Sport and Sport+ modes. Carbon-ceramic brakes are optional, as is a head-up display, while a free

laptimer app for smartphones connects to the car's iDrive.

BMW claims weight savings of over 80kg compared with the cars' predecessors, the M4 the lighter of the pair at 1497kg, down from 1580kg for the old M3 coupe. This is partly thanks to the use of aluminium for the bonnet and suspension components and carbonfibre-reinforced plastic (CFRP) for the driveshaft and the roof, the latter applied to both body styles for the first time.

While M division's head of engineering Albert Biermann previously told us 'they're exactly the same car, just with different numbers of doors', production will actually be separated. The models will be built alongside their standard base cars, the M3 at Regensburg and the M4 at the Munich plant where E30 M3 production began 28 years ago. ☒



BLADE STUNNER!

Tech analysis The cutting edge of car development

Nissan's three-seat electric BladeGlider concept is set for production – but court action could halt its progress

Words: Michael Austin



MORE THAN JUST an experimental green project, Nissan's wild EV, the BladeGlider, could change the world of sports cars.

It has a carbonfibre body, a three-seat configuration and gets propulsion from electric motors housed in the rear wheels. However, what's most striking about the concept is its narrow, 1-metre-wide front track and skinny 100/80 17in front tyres. But, as explained by Ben Bowlby, the BladeGlider's shape is justified by some rational engineering.

Bowlby is director of Nissan Motorsport Innovation and the man behind the BladeGlider's narrow front track, as well as the ZEOD RC and DeltaWing racers that share a similar silhouette. 'It's an extreme case of

form following function,' he says.

The narrow front track was firstly designed to reduce drag, but there are handling benefits, too. When the front wheels are close together, they follow the same arc through a corner, and the sideways load is thus distributed evenly between the tyres without any scrub. The concept puts 70 per cent of its weight on the bigger, 285/35 19in rear tyres, with the centre of gravity located close to the rear axle. 'The control is from the front of the car,' adds Bowlby, comparing it to the way the light end of a sledgehammer changes direction easily.

That light front end can be more softly sprung, and Bowlby says an anti-roll bar there is unnecessary (nor would it do much good, as there's not enough width to gain leverage).

Plus, the rearward weight bias results in accelerative traction that's nearly as good as having four-wheel drive. On the subject of bumps, he says it actually does quite well, as with the car essentially sitting on three points, the tyres are always in the same geometric plane: 'You don't have the problem of the front and rear suspension fighting one another,' he says.

But is there going to be a production BladeGlider? Nissan's chief planning officer and executive vice-president, Andy Palmer, has stated that there will be. And the street-spec BladeGlider wouldn't be a limited-run experiment like VW's XL1: Palmer hints that the plan is to make the car available to anyone who can afford it (without going into details on the price point).

However, Bowlby's former

employers, the DeltaWing consortium, filed a legal complaint in November that states (among many charges) that Bowlby carried trade secrets with him to Nissan from his time at Chip Ganassi Racing, who partnered in building the original DeltaWing, as well as from his time with DeltaWing itself. As such, DeltaWing chief Don Panoz claims it owns the rights on the designs of the ZEOD RC and BladeGlider, requesting that Nissan be blocked from building any vehicles of a similar shape.

Nissan refuses to comment on pending litigation, but the BladeGlider's electric powertrain could mean it's different enough to fend off Panoz's argument. For the sake of innovation, we're hoping the BladeGlider soars into production. ❏



'The narrow front track was firstly designed to reduce drag, but there are handling benefits too'



Above: regular Atom (red nose) was tested against modified version to prove BladeGlider concept. **Below and opposite page:** how the finished BladeGlider might look. **Left:** Ben Bowlby was also responsible for ZEOD RC race concept (top)



BladeGlider prototype driven

NISSAN BOSS ANDY PALMER'S directive to the BladeGlider team was that they couldn't just build something different: it had to be objectively better than what's currently on the road. To demonstrate the concept to executives and gather data for the future production car, Nissan modified an Ariel Atom, mounting a single seat in the centre, building a narrow front track and moving as much weight rearward as possible.

Driving the test mule at Nissan's Arizona proving ground back-to-back with a stock Atom is shocking. You'd never consider the Atom to be unresponsive, but that's what it feels

like after driving the narrow prototype. The modified car is more stable, with the heavier, grippier rear end acting like a rudder when the rear begins to slide. There's no 911-like snap oversteer, though, because the front tyres give up at the same time as the rears.

It's the kind of driving experience that rewires your thinking about how sports cars should handle. The narrow front track allows the seemingly impossible to happen, like getting on the throttle early out of a corner without understeer. Visually it's still hard to grasp that this car works. But to Palmer's orders, the dynamic demo is mission accomplished.



Staying ahead of the game

As his latest work – *Gran Turismo 6* – launches on PlayStation 3, we speak to series creator and occasional racer Kazunori Yamauchi

Words: Stephen Dobie

How has driving racing cars in real life benefitted the game's development?

I've been driving a racing car with lots of different sensors mounted on the car. They record how the ride height of the car changes, how that changes in relation to the aerodynamic effects, and how the steering balance then changes, and we've made a lot of discoveries from this data. It's the first time in motor racing that that's happened. I drove the GT-R GT3 on the Nürburgring. We fed all this data into the game and I drove it exactly the same in *Gran Turismo*.

What's your favourite car to drive?

I prefer front-engine, rear-wheel-drive cars. That's the type of car where the movements are very linear. My favourite new car in *GT6* is the C7 Corvette Stingray.

Ayrton Senna features in the *GT6* opening movie. Are you a big fan?

There are two things that I learnt from Senna: how incredible modern racing is, and his striving for perfection. I was really affected by his perfectionism. I think there was a time when 90 per cent of the things in my mind were related to Ayrton Senna!

I honestly think Senna is someone who should be forever in our history; there's a generation of *GT* players who

don't know who he is. I thought it was our last opportunity to really convey to them who he was.

How keen have manufacturers been to produce Vision Gran Turismo concepts?

Our message to the manufacturers was very simple – for the fifteenth year of *Gran Turismo*, would they be able to make a gran turismo, a sports car, in tribute? At first my expectations weren't that high – if we got three I'd be happy. In reality a lot

'THERE WAS A TIME WHEN 90 PER CENT OF THE THINGS IN MY MIND WERE RELATED TO AYRTON SENNA!'

more [28] came back saying they'd love to do it, showing how much *GT* is loved by the car makers. Each of those projects has well over 100 people working on those cars.

GT6 has perfectly recreated night skies of stars and planets. Why is astrology so important to 'The Real Driving Simulator'?

We're really working to create everything of the environment around the cars, one thing at a time. For example if you're driving on Mount Panorama at night for real, you're going to start seeing the planets and stars, and it's actually part of the racing experience. We wanted to do it right and make sure it's properly represented like the weather already is. And it gives you something extra to enjoy in the replay!

The first *Gran Turismo* launched 15 years ago. Where will it go over the next 15?

The next 15 isn't going to just be about improving the graphics and simulation physics. The real and virtual 'edge effect' activity [real-life collaborations like the GT Academy racing driver development programme] is the part with the real possibilities. ☒





THE FOURTH-GENERATION Mercedes C-class makes its debut at the Detroit show on January 14. Improvements over its predecessor are predictable: it's bigger yet lighter, it features more economical engines, and it boasts a raft of new technologies. The styling holds few surprises, too. Mercedes says it's inspired by nature; we say it looks like a shrunken S-class.

At just shy of 4.7m, the C-class is 95mm longer than before, with 80mm of this in the wheelbase, while it's 40mm wider. All told, it's very similar in size to a late 1990s E-class. Conversely, weight is cut by up to 100kg across the range, with 70kg of the saving achieved by the new, part-aluminium body. A drag coefficient of 0.24Cd makes the C220 Bluetec diesel one of the most aerodynamic cars on sale, though not quite as slippery as Merc's own CLA.

The new C-class will launch with three engines, the most potent of which will be a 181bhp C200 2-litre petrol unit, though the range will expand quickly to include a downsized 1.6-litre diesel and both petrol and diesel hybrid options. Six-speed

Merc reveals new C-class

Bigger, lighter, more aerodynamic and packed with technology, the latest C-class arrives soon, with the C63 AMG set to get a 518bhp twin-turbo V8

Words: Stephen Dobie

manual and seven-speed automatic transmission options remain, with two new versions of the former for four-pot C-classes.

The current C63 is AMG's biggest seller in the UK as well as the performance arm's signature car. The new version is set to inherit the 5.5-litre twin-turbo V8 that's becoming uniform across the AMG line, and we reckon its 518bhp tune would peg a new C63 neatly between current C63 performance levels and those of its E63 bigger brother.

The suspension has been reworked, with a new independent four-link set-

'THERE'S A DIZZYING ARRAY OF TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE, INCLUDING THE OPTION OF A HEAD-UP DISPLAY'

up at the front complementing a five-link independent rear. Steel springs are standard, with three optional set-ups – comfort, sport (lowered by 15mm), and a lowered comfort option that sits between the two. There's a further option, too, in the form of Airmatic air suspension with five driver-selectable modes.

Being a Mercedes, there's a dizzying array of technology available. Highlights include two types of LED headlight, the option of a head-up display for the first time, and collision-sensing autonomous braking that now operates at any speed between 5 and 125mph, Autobahn tailgaters presumably firmly in mind...

Expect UK deliveries by the beginning of summer, with prices starting at around £26,000. ☒



Above: more toys, and more space too, thanks to an extra 80mm in the wheelbase

News in brief



12C Concept

The MSO 12C Concept showcases some of the boldest options the McLaren Special Operations customisation range has to offer. Highlights include a carbon airbrake, TVR Sagaris-style front wing louvres, a roof-mounted air snorkel and a carbon instrument pod with change-up lights. A fifth of 12Cs have some sort of MSO treatment.



Volvo V60 Polestar

Volvo's first Polestar model proper has been revealed. Applied to the S60 and V60 (though only the estate comes to the UK), it features a 345bhp 3-litre turbo straight-six, tuned Haldex AWD system and 80 per cent stiffer springs. It's not quite an M3 or RS4 rival, but a sub-5sec 0-60mph time appeals, as does the undeniable whiff of 850 BTCC...



RIP Gallardo

After ten years and 14,022 sales, the last Lamborghini Gallardo has rolled off the line. Almost half of all Lamborghinis ever built are Gallardos, despite its tenth birthday coinciding with its maker's 50th. A replacement is expected to debut at March's Geneva motor show.

I T'S THAT TIME of year when we reflect on the past 12 months of performance motoring – and what an extraordinarily diverse year it has been.

Inevitably, our first thoughts tend to focus on drivers, and while Robert Kubica deserves special mention for his WRC2 championship win, *evo*'s Driver of the Year is Allan McNish.

In 2013, the Scot won Le Mans for the third time (14 years after his first victory at La Sarthe) and also claimed his first World Endurance Championship. And all this at 44.

What makes McNish so good? Henry Catchpole, who has met and interviewed Allan on many occasions, cites his tenacity, outright speed and his ability to get through slower traffic. 'The next time you watch McNish in a race, count how many corners it takes him to get past slower traffic. If it's more than two corners, I'll be surprised.' Add this to his commitment, his love of competition, his fitness and his totally professional

Highlights of 2013

It's awards time in *evo*'s end-of-year round-up

Words: Nick Trott

approach to all aspects of racing and you have a very deserving winner.

Let's tackle the disappointments next. High on the list is McLaren's reluctance to share the P1's lap time at the Ring. When we broke the story in *evo* 190, the ensuing debate went global. Here at *evo*, we were divided; some thought the lap time irrelevant (as did two P1 owners we spoke to) and others thought that McLaren, having made public its aim to beat the seven-minute target, should have revealed

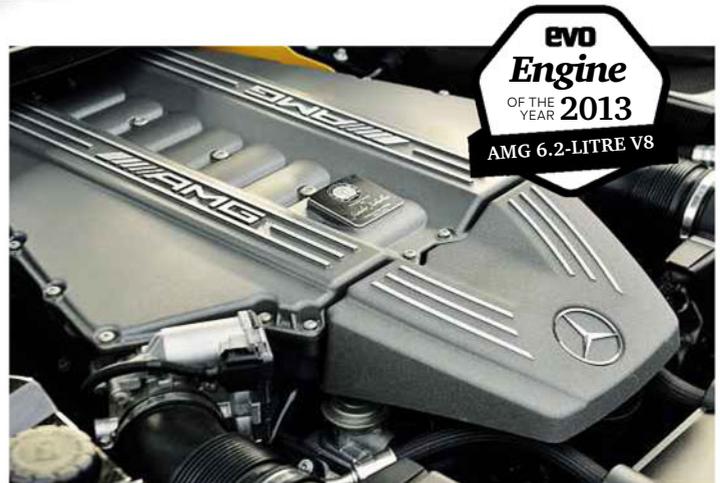
the time and accepted that at some point someone (even Ferrari) might go quicker. After all, nobody is fastest forever. As we write this, McLaren is refusing to budge – meaning the P1's ultimate lap time may never be known.

In terms of the cars we've driven, the Mercedes A45 AMG appears in our disappointments list. We found it wildly fast but completely inert, lacking the spirit and character that so defines other AMG cars. The Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo also frustrated, not

least because Renaultsport is the acknowledged master of the hot-hatch genre and there are glimpses of a great car within. We hope that the Clio receives a swift MY14 update – because as it stands it is only the fourth best hot hatch in its price range and a fast Clio has never featured that low in our rankings.

The Engine of the Year award goes to Mercedes-Benz for the glorious 622bhp, 6.2-litre V8 found in the SLS Black Series. This engine, now coming towards the end of its life, found its ideal companion in the Black Series – a fearsome, angry, characterful racing car for the road. Unusually for a performance engine, it is not compromised in any way whatsoever. It has power *and* torque, it is responsive, it revs (and revs and revs...) and its soundtrack gives you goosebumps. The 911 GT3's engine ran it close, but the SLS Black Series V8 deserves the accolade. It is one of the greatest road car engines ever.

And *evo*'s Man of the Year? Of the people we admired in 2013, three stand



out. Firstly, Turn 10's creative director Dan Greenawalt. As the force behind *Forza Motorsport 5*, you would expect Greenawalt to know a thing or two about cars. When we interviewed him, it turned out that his passion, knowledge and enthusiasm for driving (both real and virtual) are off the scale. Not only that, but his techniques for gathering simulation data on cars have made car and tyre manufacturers reappraise their own methodologies.

Also on the list is Darren Cox – Nissan's motorsport director – for his revitalisation of Nismo in racing, and his innovative approach to successfully nurturing fresh driving talent via the GT Academy. Cox's Twitter description says he is 'trying to make a difference'. We say he is succeeding.

However, Man of the Year 2013 goes to Jim Cameron – and no we don't mean Mr Avatar. Major James Cameron returned from commanding the Armoured Group in Afghanistan in 2011 and threw himself into helping the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded personnel by providing

opportunities in motorsport. Today, Jim and the charity Mission Motorsport provide access to motorsport events, prepare and race vehicles in various disciplines, and offer training and educational opportunities for those affected by military operations. Jim would undoubtedly highlight the group effort by all those involved in Mission Motorsport, but this small award is for the person whose drive and dedication is, and has been, an example to many.

The Concept Car of the Year award goes to Nissan for the IDx Nismo. It was a strong year for concepts, with the **evo** team also nominating the Aston Martin CC100, Pininfarina Sergio, Mercedes-Benz Vision Gran Turismo concept, and the Subaru Cross Sport, but the IDx nabs it for three reasons. Firstly, Nissan took a brave pill and engaged with a focus group of twentysomethings to establish the design parameters for the car, secondly because it's a homage to the Datsun 510 BRE (with a touch of the Hakosuka Skyline thrown in), and

thirdly because it means Nissan is looking seriously at a small, rear-wheel-drive performance coupe.

Highly commended in the Innovation of the Year category was the Alfa Romeo 4C's carbon tub and Volvo's pedestrian and cyclist detection system, but the winner has to be Ferrari and its genius Side Slip Angle Control.

SSC manages the traction, E-diff and stability control systems to such a degree that it allows the car to steer through a corner with a precisely metered amount of oversteer. In its optimum 'CT Off' mode, it provides 65 per cent more acceleration when you exit a corner but with 30 per cent less steering movement. Some have called it a 'drift' mode, which is a little disingenuous. Yes, it does permit some wild, but contained, slides, but most importantly it's one of those rare pieces of 'interventional' electronic tech that actually improves the driving experience. Well done Ferrari.

On to the Rising Star award, and it is the cause of much sadness that one

of the clear contenders for the prize is no longer with us. Sean Edwards lost his life instructing in Australia just a couple of weeks before the finale of the Porsche Supercup championship that he was leading at the time. He also won the Nürburgring and Dubai 24 Hours in 2013 and was well on his way to sportscar greatness. With this in mind, it doesn't seem right to award the title this year – although Kevin Magnussen, Thierry Neuville and Elfyn Evans should all be commended.

Finally, a new award. As regular readers will know, Dario Franchitti became an **evo** columnist at the beginning of 2013. He quickly became a very good friend, and his total love for driving shone through his columns. When he suffered his career-ending accident in early October, the heartbreak was palpable.

Dario wins the Hero award because he is one of the greatest British drivers of the modern era and epitomises the Thrill of Driving. That and the fact he drives a 911 hot rod and a Carrera GT with the silencers removed... ✕



Clockwise from right: McNish scored his third Le Mans win; Jim Cameron helped rehabilitate Army personnel, and Ferrari made it easier to do this...



Every new *evo* car that matters, rated

This month

ALPINA D3 BITURBO

Tuned BMW 3-series comes with 173mph top speed

p20



AUDI S3 SALOON

Booted version of 296bhp, four-wheel-drive hatchback

p24



RANGE ROVER HYBRID

Diesel V6 and electric motor deliver 335bhp and 44.1mpg

p26



RENAULTSPORT CLIO 200 TURBO

Non-Cup turbocharged Clio gets first *evo* test on UK roads

p28



SUBARU FORESTER

Is fourth-generation version of mid-sized SUV a return to form?

p30



NISSAN GT-R

Another round of updates for Nissan's supercoupe

p32



TOYOTA GT86 TRD v VW GOLF GTI PP

Rear-drive newcomer takes on front-drive benchmark

p34



The test team

With the diesel-powered Alpina D3 Biturbo topping the Driven bill this month, our road testers each pick out their favourite oil-burners:



NICK TROTT

Editor

'Loved our Alpina D3 2-litre long-termer. The estate with the classic multi-spoke alloys would be my ideal family car.'



MIKE DUFF

Motoring editor

'I liked the 5-litre V10 VW made ten years ago. Did 25mpg at best, but made the Phaeton accelerate like a Bentley Arnage.'



HENRY CATCHPOLE

Features editor

'Can I pick two? The current BMW 335d M Sport and the old Renaultsport Megane dCi 175 – with Cup chassis, obviously.'



JETHRO BOVINGDON

Contributing editor

'Audi Q7 V12. Terrible car if I'm being brutally honest, but utterly brilliant engine.'



RICHARD MEADEN

Contributing editor

'Le Mans-winning Audi R18 TDI. Totally extraordinary in every way and still covered in grime from the race.'



DAVID VIVIAN

Contributing road tester

'A Scammell Commander tank transporter powered by a 625bhp Rolls-Royce V12. I was young and easily excited.'

Driven

R135
44
248



📍 Test location: B660, Cambridgeshire, UK GPS: 52.33313, -0.40343

Alpina D3 Biturbo

With a 0-62mph time of 4.6sec, this 345bhp tuned 3-series is claimed to be the world's fastest diesel production car

Photography: Dean Smith

**L**

LET'S TRY SOMETHING different here. Let's forget, just for a moment, that the Alpina D3 runs on diesel. Because what you're looking at is still a

highly evolved 3-series created by a top-drawer tuning company and with enough power to dispatch the 0-62mph sprint in 4.6sec and go on to a top speed of 173mph. Yes, the new BMW M3 is half a second quicker to 62mph, but the

Alpina is £9000 cheaper. And it runs on diesel.

This new D3 is very different to the first one, which used a tuned version of BMW's 2-litre four-cylinder turbodiesel engine. The new car has effectively moved up a segment, instead getting a reworked version of BMW's 3-litre twin-turbo straight-six diesel. This gets new intake and exhaust manifolds, a large-volume intercooler and an Akrapovic-designed exhaust with a switchable acoustic flap. There's also

a more permissive ECU, with the total effect being to raise power to 345bhp (versus 308bhp in the standard 335d), accompanied by a borderline obscene 516lb ft of torque available from just 1500rpm.

Yet, unlike some other attempts at high-performance diesels, this isn't a car that's just about delivering its numbers. Yes, it certainly feels fast when unleashed in the real world – seriously fast, in fact. But Alpina has always



'On even gentle throttle applications you can feel the back twitching despite the protection of the stability control'

specialised in making supremely relaxing performance cars, and the D3 Biturbo is quite possibly the most laid-back so far.

Visually, it delivers exactly as you'd expect. Alpina sometimes feels like an uncle who acquired a 'look' in the 1970s and stuck with it irrespective of any subsequent fashions; it's certainly fair to say you've got a good idea what any of its cars will look like well before they actually arrive. As always there's the 'ALPINA'-branded air dam beneath the front bumper and straight-spoked alloys clad with rubber band-profile Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres (19s are standard, our test car wearing the optional 20s). The body kit is reasonably muscular without shouting too loudly and is claimed to cut lift. The cabin is familiar 3-series but for the company's trademark blue dials and the Alpina badge in the middle of the steering wheel.

Everything starts off very civilised. The only transmission option is BMW's familiar eight-speed automatic gearbox, and at lower speeds the engine's vast wave of torque enables the 'box to shuffle its ratios pretty much seamlessly. It doesn't sound like a diesel; indeed from inside the well-insulated cabin at everyday speeds, there's just a distant, generic more-than-four hum as you waft along. Cracking a window

open next to an acoustically reflective surface will bounce back the odd dieselly harmonic.

As always, Alpina's suspension know-how is close to magical. How can something wearing tyres with a profile as ridiculously small as these, and riding on springs 40 per cent stiffer than those of a standard 3-series, ride so well? Recalibrated switchable dampers are a large part of the reason: these are described as being softer in compression and stiffer in rebound, with the default Comfort setting making the Alpina feel considerably more pliant than an M Sport 3-series. Bushes and anti-roll bars are new, the front suspension geometry has been changed slightly with more toe-in and a slight increase in caster, and there's a strut brace to stiffen the front end up further. Software settings for the gearbox, power steering and stability control system have all been changed.

All in all, it's a proper fettle. And it works. The steering is remarkable proof of the ability of small incremental changes to transform something: it's familiar from the standard 3-series yet somehow far better. It's slightly lighter than on the basic car, but reactions are more positive and there's a vastly better sense filtering through the electric power steering of what the front wheels are doing.

It's when you increase your pace that things get really interesting. The engine is definitely a diesel, and if you're an avowed enemy of compression ignition then it's never going to win you over. But it's a very, very good diesel, with a broad powerband, almost instantaneous responses and a sense of unstoppable. The D3 is all about torque, seeming to pull pretty much as strongly at 2000rpm as it does at 4000rpm. And as the reprogrammed gearbox software resists kicking down when left in Drive unless it really has to, you can find yourself attempting overtakes with the car still in sixth or seventh gear, the level of acceleration barely less than it would be if you were a couple of ratios lower.

In fact, revving the engine out to the 4800rpm red line, where the gearbox will change up no matter which mode it's in, actually feels pretty counter-intuitive. Using the manual gearbox mode also means dealing with the slightly odd buttons that Alpina sews into the back of the steering wheel – there's none of those fashionable paddles here. Let's just call the buttons an acquired taste.

The most impressive thing about the chassis is the way it deals with the sheer quantity of torque flowing through the rear axle. You're always aware of its presence: on even gentle throttle applications you can feel the car's rear twitching despite the protection of the stability control. In corners the yellow light flashes before anything more dramatic happens, but switching the DSC into its more permissive Sport Plus mode allows a modest degree of slip and certainly makes the D3 an amusing challenge to hustle down a damp road. Turning it off altogether makes the D3 properly slidey – find a wide, empty corner and it proves itself a tyre-smoking hooligan, although it takes a while to get used to the low engine speeds at which the torque overwhelms the available grip. Our test car came with the optional limited-slip diff, which is probably a decent investment if you're planning to drive it hard or take it on track.

Performance diesels often fall down because they try too hard with narrow power bands and horrible-sounding over-boosted engines to do something that just doesn't suit them. The D3's big appeal is just how effortless it makes everything feel. You would be very hard-pressed to think of another car that manages to cover quite so many bases.

This leaves the big question – fuel economy. Alpina claims an official figure of 53.3mpg for the D3 saloon. We couldn't get close to that, but after 600 hard miles, including performance testing and repeated cornering shots, the trip computer reported 36.5mpg: realistically the worst you'd see anywhere short of Autobahn use. It's a diesel, but it's also rather brilliant. ☒

Mike Duff



Above: blue dials and Alpina badge on wheel are amongst the few changes inside. **Left:** 3-litre twin-turbo diesel straight-six produces 37bhp more than it does in BMW's 335d. **Below:** familiar Alpina alloys are 19in as standard; test car wears optional 20s



Specification

Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 2993cc, twin-turbo diesel
CO2	139g/km
Power	345bhp @ 4000rpm
Torque	516lb ft @ 1500-3000rpm
0-62mph	4.6sec (claimed)
Top speed	173mph (claimed)
Basic price	£46,950

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ✚ Effortless pace, brilliant chassis
- ✚ Auto only, strange steering wheel buttons

📍 Test location: Monte Carlo, Monaco GPS: 43.73970, 7.42720

Audi S3 Saloon

296bhp hatchback gains a boot to create saloon version.
Is it the reincarnation of the original S4?



Above: the S3 Saloon is 206mm longer than its hatchback sibling. **Left:** LED boost gauge is one of few additions to the Saloon's interior. **Right:** Nappa leather seats come as standard



YES, IT SAYS S3 ON THE bootlid. And this is indeed a booted version of Audi's four-wheel-driven hot hatch. But what you're also looking at is probably the best example so far of the motor industry's love of upsizing.

As new cars get bigger and faster, so whole segments shift over successive generations. And, apart from a relative lack of cylinders and an engine turned sideways, the new S3 Saloon has pretty much become a reduced-CO2 facsimile of the B5-generation S4 (the 1997-2001 one, to save you looking).

The S3 Saloon is just 14mm shorter than that S4, so about a finger's width depending how sausage-like your digits are. It's 80kg lighter than its ancestor at just 1430kg (for the manual version), and while the S4 dispatched the 0-62mph dash in an official 5.7sec, the S3 can

do it in 5.3. The optional S-tronic twin-clutch version is even quicker at 4.9sec.

Dig deeper and you encounter some substantial differences. The S3 has a transverse four-cylinder turbocharged four in place of the S4's longitudinal 2.7-litre biturbo V6. And the S3's 'quattro' badging refers to VW Group's familiar part-time Haldex four-wheel-drive system, whereas the S4 had a 'proper' permanent Torsen system channelling drive to each corner. But while the S4 managed a then-competitive 261bhp from its Cosworth-engineered V6, the S3's direct-injection four produces 296bhp, with a 50 per cent increase in specific output.

They even look similar. The S3's hatchback origins are obvious in its shorter rear end, but its low roofline and the shape of its glasshouse have clearly been inspired by its S4 predecessors. More importantly, the S3 Saloon looks far

better than the lumpy five-door S3 hatch. The A3 Saloon might have been created primarily for those parts of the world where buyers still insist on having a boot, but spinning off an 'S' version has created a fine-looking sports saloon. Inside, it's less exciting: from the driver's seat, it's identical to the S3 hatchback. Indeed, apart from an LED boost gauge in the face of the rev counter, and some very subtle 'S' branding, it feels pretty much like any other S3.

The driving experience is predictably close to that of the S3 hatchback, although the slightly laid-back dynamic vibe seems to suit the Saloon better. The engine remains the car's defining feature: it's the most powerful version of the ubiquitous VW Group turbocharged four (it will also power the forthcoming Golf R) and it uses 'dual injection' – both direct and indirect via two different fuel rails – to combine performance and economy. It's docile at low

'Beyond 2000rpm it wakes up, pulls hard and seems to positively enjoy being revved'



revs, if a bit laggy, but beyond 2000rpm it wakes up, pulls hard and seems to positively enjoy being revved. It sounds great, too, exhaling through a sports exhaust that's rorty when you want it to be and quiet when you don't. Our test car has the S-tronic six-speed DSG 'box, which shifts cleanly and seems better able to respond to requests for multiple downshifts in quick succession in manual mode than the old one did, but its steering wheel paddles feel plasticky and lack resistance.

Apologies if this feels familiar – and it's as frustrating for me to keep writing it as it is for you to keep reading it – but the thing that really lets the S3 Saloon down is its steering. The electrical assistance has a nasty synthesised weight to it. It can be adjusted via the different 'Drive Select' programs, none of which give more than a fleeting impression of what the front wheels are thinking. There's a predictable

abundance of grip and the chassis has a nice, neutral balance at higher speeds, but the S3 Saloon follows (most of) its forebears in having absolutely no enthusiasm for exploring the area where adhesion starts to fade. The front runs out of grip and basically that's your lot.

On the super-smooth tarmac of the south of France, the S3 rides well enough in its softer Comfort chassis mode, but previous experience with the hatchback suggests that Dynamic will pretty much weld the suspension up, to the point where it's unuseable on UK roads (the hatch and saloon having near-identical settings).

The S3 Saloon is fast, capable and good-looking, but dynamically it shares its hatchback sister's air of slight detachment. As an all-rounder, it's probably a better car than the Mercedes CLA45 AMG, which is quicker but considerably more expensive (£42,265 basic, versus £33,240 for the Audi). And for a bit of

historical perspective, although the S3 Saloon is £1980 more expensive than the hatchback, it costs £3400 less than the B5-spec S4 did when it went off sale back in 2001. To be perfectly honest, that's possibly the most impressive thing about it. ☒

Mike Duff

Specification

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, twin-turbo
CO2	162g/km
Power	296bhp @ 5500-6200rpm
Torque	280lb ft @ 1800-5500rpm
0-62mph	5.3sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£33,240

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ☒ Sleek looks, energetic engine, relative value
- ☒ Artificial steering of the S3 hatchback remains



Test location: Eastnor, Herefordshire, UK GPS: 52.03258, -2.39014

Range Rover Hybrid

Diesel-electric Rangie delivers TDV8 power, but without the emissions

A FAVOURITE WHIPPING boy of the environment lobby, Land Rover has had an uphill struggle in gaining any eco traction in an increasingly 'green' world. Sure, it has taken baby steps in the right direction with more efficient turbodiesel powertrains, fuel-saving stop-start systems and mass-paring aluminium bodysells. But there hasn't really been much to appease the planet-savers. Until now.

Of course, it was never really a question of if the company would apply electric motor technology to its flagship, but when – the latest Range Rover was designed to incorporate a hybrid system from the outset so that there are no packaging compromises. And on paper, the Hybrid makes a pretty convincing case for itself. It occupies a very comfortable niche in the model line-up, too, and the pitch is compelling: imagine a Rangie as powerful and torquey as the 335bhp, 516lb ft 4.4-litre TDV8 (£71k) but with emissions and economy to shame the entry-level 258bhp TDV6 (£78k). That's the Hybrid in a nutshell. Basically, it's the 3-litre TDV6 with a battery pack and electric motor.

At 2394kg, it's the heaviest Range Rover of all but will sprint to 60mph from rest in 6.9sec and emits just 169g/km of CO₂, 27g/km less than the TDV6. This is reflected in a combined consumption of 44.1mpg, which compares with 37.7mpg for the TDV6 and 32.5mpg for the TDV8. The V8 is still fractionally the quickest oil-burning model, though, hitting 60mph from rest in 6.5sec by dint of weighing 34kg less than the battery-laden Hybrid (the regular TDV6 is



Above: Hybrid version returns 44.1mpg on the combined cycle.

Left: EV mode (bottom-left button) allows for a mile of electric-only driving

234kg lighter). However, those batteries will allow the Hybrid to travel on electric power alone for up to a mile at up to 30mph.

The hybrid system is certainly neat. A 35kW (47bhp) electric motor takes the place of the torque converter within the ZF eight-speed automatic transmission and is fed by a lithium-ion battery pack. Coasting and regenerative braking charges the batteries, with the regenerative system also assisting with stopping. For those keen to explore the outer limits of the Range Rover's extraordinary off-road abilities, the battery pack is protected by boron steel, while approach, departure and break-over angles are unchanged.

To get some idea of the Hybrid's strengths and weaknesses relative to the diesel-only Range Rovers, I took a TDV6 and a TDV8 for a spin first. After this, the Hybrid's most striking subjective advantage seems to be refinement. All right, it's silent on start-up and, if there's enough charge in the batteries, it can glide away from rest in an eerie hush, too. But even when the V6 cuts in, as it quickly does, its contribution to noise

levels is muted. Moreover, rather than shutting down only when you stop, it takes the initiative and cuts out as you coast to a standstill. The transitions are almost imperceptible. And yes, with both motors working together there is near-as-dammit the effortless, broadband wallop of the diesel V8. More than ever, this Rangie goes and sounds like a whispering high-performance limo. That goes for comfort as well: the TDV6 rides well, but with the extra, low-slung weight of the battery pack and electric motors, it upgrades to superb.

The downside is you can feel that additional weight. The Hybrid simply doesn't handle as well as either of its diesel stablemates. It's still remarkably composed and easy to hustle along country roads at a fair lick, but it doesn't feel as agile and wieldy as the V6, or as planted and precise as the V8, which still offers the greatest rewards for the keen driver. It is a remarkable achievement, though – one reflected by its equally remarkable £98,415 price tag. ❌

David Vivian (@davidjvivan)

Specification

Engine	V6, 2993cc, turbodiesel, plus 35kW electric motor
CO₂	169g/km
Power	335bhp @ 4000rpm
Torque	516lb ft @ 1500-3000rpm
0-60mph	6.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	135mph (claimed)
Basic price	£98,415

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ➕ Greenest, quietest, best-riding Rangie
- ➖ Extra weight blunts handling



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Test location: Gretton, Northamptonshire, UK GPS: 52.54274, -0.67071

Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo

Is the controversial French hatch better on UK roads without the optional Cup chassis?

KNOWING HOW TO SPEC a car can be agonising. There are some things that I would always go for if I could afford them, like the best headlights available (be they xenon or LED), while a DAB radio is rapidly feeling like another important luxury to spec (my life being bereft without the options of 4 Extra or Kiss).

It's the dynamic options where things get really sticky, though. Do you automatically go for the spangly upgrades or is base better? For example, choosing between the manual 'box and the eight-speed ZF on the M135i is a nightmare. Meanwhile, knowing whether bigger wheels on a car will kill the ride or add a pleasing edge to the grip is the sort of thorny dilemma to put you right off your eggs and bacon in the morning.

Which brings us to the Clio 200 Turbo and its £650 Cup chassis option. Tick the box and you get 15 per cent stiffer springs and dampers, a lower ride height, bigger wheels (up to 18in from 17) finished in black, and red brake calipers. Until now we haven't had the chance to try the Clio Turbo without the Cup chassis in the UK, and we were intrigued to see how the standard set-up copes with our notoriously tricky tarmac, and also to find out if the Cup chassis is really necessary, particularly as the RS Clio seems to be trying to be a bigger, more grown-up sort of hot hatch these days.

After a quick trip out in *evo's* Cup-spec long-term to refresh the memory, I head back



down the same roads in the non-Cup car. The softer springs certainly don't turn the Clio into a limo, but they do noticeably round off the edges of the smaller bumps so that there is less chatter down fidgety local roads. Turn into a corner and the initial reaction is slightly more muted, with less weight and precision through the steering wheel either side of the straight-ahead. What remains, however, is the fundamental balance of the chassis, which feels superb once the Clio's really loaded up, everything pivoting around the nose of the car beautifully. On slippery winter roads it's remarkably easy to have the car balanced and sliding through bends.

To be honest, though, the chassis has never been a problem with the current Clio. The stumbling blocks are the gearbox and the fact that it's all hidden under what feels like a large, weighty body. The main issue with the 'box is that it's far too unresponsive on upshifts, so progress feels considerably less sparky than it should. The shift paddles (fixed to the steering column) also seem to be set too high in relation

to where your hands naturally sit at quarter to three on the wheel, so when you go for a gear you feel like you're only ever catching the very bottom of the paddle with your index finger.

Conceivably for some, the four doors and extra room of this Clio make it the only viable option from the current hot hatch crop. Likewise the two-pedal layout may well be highly desirable for others. Either way, I'd recommend splashing the cash for the Cup chassis and enjoying the added sharpness that lets you key into the car's talents more readily. After all, if the best thing about the Clio remains its chassis then it's nice to be able to enjoy it to the full.

If you're simply after a hot hatch that rides the bumps better, then look no further than the Peugeot 208 GTI, which has a lovely suppleness to its suspension. Refreshingly, the Pug also has no wheel, chassis or gearbox options to fret over and lose you sleep. ☒

Henry Catchpole (@HenryCatchpole)

Specification

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1618cc, turbo
CO2	177g/km
Power	197bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	177lb ft @ 1750rpm
0-62mph	6.7sec (claimed)
Top speed	143mph (claimed)
Basic price	£18,995

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ⊕ It's cheaper, the fundamental balance remains
- ⊖ We miss the sharpness of the Cup chassis

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The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Mazda6 range: Urban 36.2 (7.8) - 60.1 (4.7), Extra Urban 57.6 (4.9) - 83.1 (3.4), Combined 47.9 (5.9) - 72.4 (3.9). CO₂ emissions (g/km) 136 - 104.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results obtained through laboratory testing. These are provided for comparability purposes only and may not reflect your actual driving results. Retail sales only, subject to vehicle availability for vehicles registered between 01.01.14 and 31.03.14 at participating dealers. T&C apply. *0% finance available on all Mazda6 models with no minimum deposit on Mazda Personal Contract Purchase. 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: Mazda6 165ps Saloon Sport, OTR from £23,495. Model shown features optional Soul Red Metallic paint (£660). 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: near Olney, Milton Keynes, UK GPS: 52.1354, -0.67598

Subaru Forester 2.0 XT

Can the Forester return to being the thinking driver's SUV of choice?

Photography: Dean Smith

N

NOT THAT LONG AGO, THE

Subaru Forester was *evo's* favourite SUV. It was all the things that 99 per cent of this breed are not: utilitarian, understated, characterful, compact, relatively light and enjoyable to drive. We even had one – the Japan-only STI version – on Car of the Year in 2005. This new, fourth-generation version has a lot to live up to, then. Especially as it's bigger, heavier and much more conventional than those that have gone before.

The Forester has never been a looker (it is a Subaru, after all), but it was distinctive and trod its own path... The new model could be any slightly gawky mid-sized SUV. Not a great start. At least the 2-litre boxer engine is sacred. There are three engine options, all horizontally opposed fours: a 2-litre turbocharged diesel with 145bhp and 258lb ft from £24,995, a 2-litre normally aspirated petrol with 148bhp and 146lb ft from £25,495, and the range-topping turbocharged petrol with 237bhp and 258lb ft from £30,995. As if to highlight the Forester's unique attributes, that most powerful petrol engine is set to make up more than 25 per cent of total sales.

Heart-warmed by this news, I should say there are disadvantages to the 2.0 DIT (direct injection turbo) XT model we're driving. It might be powered by the good stuff but it's slightly hobbled by another acronym that is enough to make any enthusiast let out an involuntary groan: CVT. Yes, a braying, slow-witted and heinous continuously variable transmission, albeit with paddle-shifters if you



want to flick between six pre-determined ratios – or eight in the most aggressive S# mode. The CVT 'box also marks a change from the lowlier six-speed manual car's 50:50 torque split to a less-appealing-sounding 60:40 front/rear split.

Inside, the Forester is no Evoque. For some people that will be A Very Bad Thing but I'm rather glad that it retains some of the utilitarian feel. The plastics are a bit shiny and hard, the rubber floor mats look like they could be hosed down and overall the Forester exudes a simple toughness. Or a cheap ugliness, depending on your point of view. What is indisputably terrific is the view out of the vast windscreen and the relatively slim A-pillars. It's like the McLaren 12C philosophy scaled up to IMAX and it is some compensation for the Forester's swelling girth when threading along narrow lanes.

On the move, the CVT 'box is predictably horrid, sitting at constant rpm when you floor the throttle, for example. Fortunately the engine is pretty refined, but you'd never know it was a flat-four, as it emits a thin, tuneless note and only feels 237bhp-strong when worked really hard. Things are slightly better in S#, but even with eight tightly spaced ratios to play

with, the performance feels lukewarm and the shifts are blurred rather than crisply defined.

Dynamically, there's some Forester DNA intact here – the suppleness, the noticeable but ultimately controlled body roll and the lucid sense of weight transfer that it brings, the light but accurate steering and the feeling that this is an SUV that's about more than just tied-down grip and blunderbuss performance. Sadly, the balance is rather option-free understeery in the end, despite the promise of an electronically controlled multi-plate transfer that can apportion more power to the rear wheels.

Overall this bigger, more mainstream Forester lacks the agility, balance and unique appeal of some of its predecessors. Without those ingredients it becomes just another SUV and must woo buyers with fuzzy things like badge appeal, interior inventiveness and perceived quality. Needless to say, it won't be setting the sales charts alight. Your local farmer might be a bit grumpier than usual, too. ☒

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon)

Specification

Engine	Flat-four, 1998cc, turbo
CO2	197g/km
Power	237bhp @ 5600rpm
Torque	258lb ft @ 2400-3600rpm
0-62mph	7.5sec (claimed)
Top speed	137mph (claimed)
Basic price	£30,995

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ☒ It's not an Evoque
- ☒ It's barely still a Forester

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📍 **Test location:** Sodegaura-shi, Chiba, Japan **GPS:** 35.389575, 140.080318

Nissan GT-R

Arrival of hardcore Nismo version leaves revised 2014 GT-R free to play a more refined role. Has it lost its edge?

Photography: Dom Fraser



NOW IN ITS SEVENTH year of production, the Nissan GT-R continues to evolve. Annual updates have come and gone, many of them too subtle to notice, but 2014's is more significant because it marks the moment when the regular model is joined by another (the GT-R Nismo), thus creating a range – albeit a range of just two cars.

With the hardcore and considerably more expensive (by £38,500) Nismo version (evo 191) taking the fight to Porsche's GT3 and Aston Martin's V12 Vantage S, the 2014 GT-R has a new prime directive: to become a more refined and useable machine. Nissan even uses the words 'spirit of a great GT' in the blurb. It would appear the headbanger has donned a silk cap.

To achieve this, Nissan has focused on ride comfort, refinement and overall quality. Chief product specialist Hiroshi Tamura explains that the revised car is more 'multi-dimensional', allowing the driver to enjoy cruising and commuting as much as B-road blasting. Tamura's team have recalibrated the electronic control of the damper valves, modified the front

anti-roll bar and bushes, and revised the spring-rates to 'reduce load fluctuations between the four wheels' – in other words to ensure that the tyres remain in contact with the road more of the time. Of course, this sounds obvious – if the tyre skips across the surface then traction, grip and stability are all compromised. However, part of the GT-R's charm is the manner in which it feels like it is clawing at the tarmac – a sensation heightened by the stiff ride and the fidgety directional stability. Speaking of which, Tamura says his team have also recalibrated the steering for a more relaxed helm, particularly at low speeds, adding that fewer corrections are now needed to keep the 2014 Nissan GT-R keyed into the road.

The revised GT-R is fitted with tyres with the longest name ever: Dunlop SP Sport Maxx GT 600 DSST CTTs. This run-flat rubber (255/40 ZRF20 front, 285/35 ZRF20 rear) has stiffer sidewalls and an inner ridge within two of the central grooves to stop the tread blocks from 'falling over' during hard cornering.

Other changes include multi-LED headlights with a thunderbolt motif – a nod perhaps to



Above: external changes are minimal for 2014MY but include new multi-LED headlight units featuring a 'thunderbolt' motif



setting after driving over a catseye for the first time. There's no noticeable effect, negative or positive, on roll control during our drive, and the car contains pitch and yaw just as well as it ever has. We'll make a final judgment on this when we drive the car in the UK, but first impressions relating to the revised suspension settings are good. Very good.

The speed-sensitive steering feels a touch more fluid, though there's a suspicion that some of the underlying feel has been eroded – again a back-to-back drive in the UK with a MY13 car will reveal all. The GT-R's rack always found a way of telegraphing a decent amount of feel through to the driver, so let's hope it has gained rather than lost in this round of updates.

So there's a degree of compliance engineered into the 2014 car, but the manner in which it makes progress and the general level of feedback are still vivid. All-wheel drive gives you the confidence to exploit the power of the engine, while the dual-clutch six-speed transmission is viceless.

The absolute performance of the engine, and the striking acceleration, remain. The twin-turbocharged 3.8-litre V6 engine is unchanged – power (542bhp), torque (466lb ft) and CO2 are the same. This is a fierce, angry and blunt motor; always has been. Nissan benchmarked

the 911 Carrera and the C63 AMG in relation to the 2014 GT-R and, while neither rival can muster the same power, both the Porsche and Mercedes powerplants are in another galaxy in terms of sonic range and the manner in which they engage the driver on an emotional level.

The danger inherent in this update was that Nissan could have – by accident or design – tuned out or disguised a lot of the activity down at the road surface and left the driver with a numb, sterile driving experience. One not dissimilar to current fast Audis (RS Q3 and R8 excluded). However, the key details (grip levels, steering feel, braking force) continue to find their way to the driver's palms and seat of pants with clarity and information intact.

So, the GT-R remains a performance icon. Ignore those who presume its many layers of technology add corresponding layers of insulation between driver and road – this just isn't true. The GT-R's character has been defined by what some engineers would consider to be flaws – chuntering diffs, hard-edged suspension, the tramlining and the savage power delivery. The only question, and one we'll be able to answer soon, is whether this more compliant GT-R is just as tactile and engaging as the old model. Based on this first drive, we'd bet it is. **✘**

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

'Grip levels, steering feel and braking force still find their way to the driver with clarity intact'

Nissan's new 'director of excitement', Usain Bolt, (I didn't make that up – that's his job title), plus a new Vermillion Red paint featuring a subtle gold flake (pictured). There's also a new ivory leather trim option (not pictured – it's hideous).

As you climb inside with Tamura's claims of a more relaxed driving experience ringing in your ears, fix your seating position and adjust the endearingly odd steering column (one lever for reach, another for rake), you're half expecting Rolls-Royce levels of comfort and refinement. It's all rubbish of course; the GT-R fires up with a familiar *whoomf!* and as you make your first slow-speed manoeuvres the diffs chatter and chunter underneath, just like they always do. Nissan has tried to reduce some of this drivetrain din by repositioning the sound-insulating material and incorporating more of the Anti-Noise tech from the Bose sound system, but the characteristic *chuckachuckachucka* from the drivetrain remains. And that's a good thing.

With the suspension in its default Sport mode, there is indeed a touch more pliancy to the ride. The harder edges have been softened and you no longer make a lunge for the 'Comfort'



Specification

Engine	V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo
CO2	275g/km
Power	542bhp @ 6400rpm
Torque	466lb ft @ 3200-5800rpm
0-62mph	2.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	196mph (claimed)
Basic price	£79,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

✚ Extraordinary acceleration, grip and balance

✚ Thorough UK drive needed to assess more compliant ride



SAY HELLO TO Izumi Shioya, Nobumitsu Gozu, Tsunemi Oyama and Takumi Kurosawa, (left to right). Of the 150,000-plus employees at Nissan, only they are entrusted with building the GT-R's VR38DETT engine. They are known as 'takumi' – a phrase used to describe a master craftsman who has perfected his skills.

GT-R engines are built in a clean room at the Yokohama plant – a room kept at 23 degrees Celsius (plus or minus one degree) with constant air pressure and humidity. The 'takumi' wear dust-resistant fabrics and compressed air tools are banned as they can spread contaminants. At the end of construction, each engine is mounted with a plaque bearing the name of its builder.



Test location: Blyton, Lincolnshire, UK **GPS:** 53.44051, 0.77190

Driven twin test: ***Toyota GT86 TRD v VW Golf GTI PP***

The driver-focused Japanese sports coupe and the very different German hot hatch go head-to-head. Both are in upgraded form, but which comes out on top?

Photography: Dean Smith

Toyota GT86 TRD v VW Golf GTI PP

Left: the rear-driven GT86 TRD offers the most fun of the pair when driven on track



'Once you're in tune with the TRD, it really is a fun car to hustle along'

1500-4400rpm. VW claims it'll execute a launch control-assisted 0-62mph in 6.4sec and run to 155mph and yet it does 44.1mpg on the combined cycle (47.1mpg for the six-speed manual). That's the sort of sensible we can deal with. On paper it eats up the TRD, which manages 197bhp at 7000rpm and 151lb ft at 6400-6600rpm from its normally aspirated 2-litre boxer engine. With a 0-62mph time of 7.6sec and such a torque deficit, the 95kg lighter Toyota probably won't see which way the Golf went on your average B-road.

Then again, that's sort of the point. The GT86 is not a car that chases numbers but instead focuses on the quality of the driving experience. And with the TRD kit, that quality is almost inexplicably raised up a notch. I know we're almost alone in this opinion but having revisited the TRD on road and track over the course of a week, we're sticking to our guns. The bigger wheels and more performance-orientated rubber make a much bigger difference than you'd credit – and for the better. The last time we tried the TRD it was on Yokohama Advan Sport tyres, and the Michelin Pilot Sport 3 tyres fitted this time create the same effect: more turn-in response, greater accuracy and, crucially, more progressive handling at the outer edges of grip.

T **THESE TWO CARS** perfectly represent the rational and the irrational. The Golf GTI, fitted here with the Performance Pack, is probably the most rational performance car on sale today. Constructing an argument to buy a Golf GTI is very simple. It goes like this: 'It's a Golf GTI.' The Toyota GT86 TRD on the other hand, is almost impossible to justify. Now, the basic Toyota GT86 is a fun, laudable car, and at £24,995 it's a pretty convincing package, too. But the Toyota Racing Developments upgrade seems to have been engineered while the engine boys were on holiday, consisting of nothing more than a

body kit of dubious taste, some 18in wheels and a quad-exit exhaust that offers precisely zero bhp benefit. And yet it costs £31,495. In other words, it's all mouth and ill-fitting trousers.

Of course, a life lived by rational decisions alone would be very dull indeed. So here we are, wondering whether a Golf GTI fitted with the DSG gearbox (£1415), Adaptive Chassis Control switchable dampers (DCC, £815) and the Performance Pack (£995, taking the total to £29,350) is more than just the rational choice. The Performance Pack adds an electronically controlled mechanical limited-slip differential, larger front brakes and a 10bhp boost in power to 227bhp at 4500rpm as well as 258lb ft at



That last point might seem counter-intuitive, but we've found the standard Michelin Primacy boots fitted to the regular GT86 don't only lack grip, but also precision and finesse as they give up and howl into slightly fudgy oversteer. With more bite at the front, the 10mm wider 225/45 ZR18s certainly swing the power-to-grip ratio slightly further in favour of the latter, but the chassis remains wonderfully adjustable and feels more controlled and satisfying. In fact the way you can dictate to the chassis with pinpoint accuracy is incredibly addictive. Perhaps the TRD doesn't give up its ultimate secrets quite so freely as the standard car, but we much prefer the consistency of feedback and the challenge of driving it in this precise, tail-led but not dominated style.

Once you're in tune with the TRD, it really is

a fun car to hustle along. The engine is rather flat and needs merciless flogging to deliver its claimed 197bhp, but the short, knuckly gearshift is excellent, the brake feel is nothing short of superb and the steering has a meaty weightiness about it that only heightens your connection with the front axle. The ride is a little stiffer with the bigger wheels, but that just adds an edge to the experience, and in combination with the palpably low centre of gravity and excellent balance, it really feels like a special little sports car. If only the engine revved with more vim and sounded a bit less strained...

Jump straight into the Golf GTI and it feels huge, beautifully appointed and so very fast. It seems odd to describe a 1370kg hot hatch with 227bhp as fast in these days of A45 AMGs and the like, but as has been the case since the

convincing mk5 version, the Golf seems to make each horsepower really count. The smooth and responsive DSG helps, but really it's the damping, body control and traction that stand out. Compared to its predecessor this GTI has taken great leaps forward: it's more controlled, more intense and plainly much better fun, too.

This car is fitted with the optional adjustable dampers but you can also alter steering weight, the aggression of the e-diff and the throttle mapping. There are four preset modes – Eco, Comfort, Normal, Sport – plus an Individual setting should you want to mix the softer suspension set-up with Sport steering and diff actuation, for example.

So while the driving position and the cabin architecture are more conventional than those of the GT86, the sheer mid-range pull

Specification

TOYOTA GT86 TRD

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

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ⊕ Increased precision without sacrificing balance or fun
- ⊖ Crazy price premium, questionable styling additions



Above: GT86's 197bhp flat-four engine is unchanged by TRD upgrades. **Right:** cabin materials not the best





'The whole car works superbly in Sport mode, the engine thumping through the mid-range with a synthesised but aggressive noise'

initially makes the Golf seem more exciting. The variable-ratio steering never feels like the gearing is changing and I think the Sport setting is well judged, lacking the heavy, gloopy feeling you often get with a 'sporty' program. In fact the whole car works superbly in Sport mode, the engine thumping through the mid-range with a synthesised but aggressive noise, damping staying fist-tight and the car flying through direction changes with composure but also with a delicious sense of interaction. In high-speed corners it really does feel alive. It's not a wildly throttle-adjustable car but you can feel the rear helping to maintain your line with a clinical efficiency.

Push really hard and the GTI can be made to feel a bit clumsy. The differential has nothing like the effect of the one in the RS Mégane, for

example, and wheelspin can sometimes catch you by surprise. The car also lacks the sheer dogged resistance to understeer that so defines the Mégane. Having said that, for a Golf GTI it has some real teeth and it's genuinely good fun to punt along your favourite piece of road. Of course, it goes without saying that it is a lovely place to spend time and that the quality of the interior is roughly 684 times more impressive than the TRD's. For around £30,000 or so it covers a lot of bases and I think it's engaging enough not to feel like 'just another Golf' when you're driving in everyday situations, unlike the mk6 version.

On the road, then, these two cars are very different but terrific fun. The Golf is the rational choice but it's also a seriously impressive car to enjoy for its dynamic attributes. The TRD

clearly isn't worth £6500 more than a standard GT86 but the driving experience is top-notch. Which to choose? Well, I suspect the Golf is the one. It's a very good hot hatch indeed. But every time you see a GT86 you might have nagging daydreams about little moments of oversteery bliss and a few pangs of regret.

We also tried the cars on track, and here the GT86 was the clear winner, with much greater precision and a more indulgent balance. The Golf felt heavy and reluctant by comparison and its nannyish ESP can't be fully switched off. Around Blyton Park the TRD recorded a 1:10.7, surprisingly knocking 2.1sec from the standard car's time. The Golf was quicker still with a 1:10.3, but it has to be said that it wasn't even half as enjoyable in the process of doing so. ❌

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon)

Specification

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI PERFORMANCE PACK

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbocharged
CO2	149g/km
Power	227bhp @ 4500rpm
Torque	258lb ft @ 1500-4400rpm
0-62mph	6.4sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (claimed)
Basic price	£27,120

evo rating: ★★★★★

- All the usual GTI qualities but with added bite and precision
- Engine flat at the top end, LSD could be more aggressive still



Above: GTI's 2-litre TSI engine puts out 227bhp with the Performance Pack. **Left:** cabin finish is superior to the Toyota's

Watches

This month, a piece inspired by a Bugatti, a British limited edition and a simple racing watch

Words: Simon de Burton

1 Ralph Lauren Automotive Flying Tourbillon

Price: £50,000 (estimated) **From:** ralphlaurenwatches.com

January's SIHH watch show in Geneva will host the unveiling of this latest piece in Ralph Lauren's high-end watch collection. Said to have been inspired by Lauren's magnificent 1938 Bugatti Type 57 SC Atlantic, it features a similar grain of elm to that of the car's dashboard and a dial loosely based on its instruments. The use of the word 'flying' in the title refers to the fact that the tourbillon cage is almost invisibly attached to the movement, which is housed in a 45mm blackened steel case.

2 Hublot Big Bang Ferrari (UK limited edition)

Price: £19,950 **From:** marcuswatches.co.uk

Hublot recently marked its second anniversary as Ferrari's official watch partner – and also introduced the first Big Bang Ferrari watch to be made available exclusively in the UK. A 50-piece limited edition, it's a flyback chronograph featuring Hublot's in-house 'HUB 124 Unico' movement within a 45.5mm titanium case. The bezel is black ceramic with an anodised red lower section to complement the other crimson touches, among them the stamping of 'Ferrari' on the chronograph push pieces.

3 Armin Strom Racing Chronograph White

Price: £5750 **From:** arminstrom.com

We mentioned Marussia F1 driver Max Chilton's Armin Strom watch in last month's 'Now & Then', which prompted a closer look at the collection overall, which includes the good-looking Racing Chronograph White. Less fussy than most Armin Strom designs, it's a simple titanium-cased self-winding chronograph with a nice vertical sub-dial arrangement and an easy-to-read layout. The red and white Marussia colour scheme might not be to everyone's taste, which is probably just as well, since only 500 examples are being made. The 'complimentary' strap, by the way, is made from rubber-coated leather.

Now & Then



NOW Casio 'RB' chronograph Worn by: Sebastian Vettel

Vettel might now be a four-time F1 world champion – but what does he wear on his wrist? Nothing more exclusive than a £600 chronograph from Red Bull Racing sponsor Casio. Although, if he's anything like most F1 drivers, he'll undoubtedly have a safe of far pricier pieces, too...



THEN LeMania 'Ferrari' Worn by: Joky Maasland

Joky Maasland was the daughter of a Dutch Ferrari importer and a racing driver hospitalised after a crash at Zandvoort in 1954. Enzo Ferrari visited her in hospital and gave her this Ferrari-branded LeMania chronograph, which sold at auction in 2007 for €12,650.



Watch tech

Brevia Weather Watch

As with the wristwatch itself, the relevance of the barometer has long since been surpassed by electronics, to the point that any half-decent smartphone can tell you what the weather is going to be like. Nevertheless the £100,000 Brevia Génie 01 features an aneroid barometer within its 44.7mm case – purely as an expression of the fine art of micro-engineering.

It works by displaying barometric pressure on a sub-dial marked with symbols for sun, cloud and storm. A plain disc beneath contains one of two aneroid capsules (the other is directly below it) that measure changes in air pressure. The capsules were specifically developed for the watch and are made from a non-magnetic 'memory metal', which is lighter and stronger than aluminium and twice as ductile. A lever on top of the capsules transmits their height (as it alters according to the air pressure) via a system of gears and racks to both the barometer indication and the altimeter display marked at the top of the dial.

Because air pressure varies with time and altitude, the accuracy of the barometer relies on setting an altimeter linked to the aneroid capsules. To synchronise the two, a knurled ring at the two o'clock position adjusts the barometric pressure scale, while a push piece corrects the altitude indication.

Another knurled locking ring rotates 90 degrees in order to lock and unlock an air valve. When the valve is unlocked, it allows a small amount of air to pass through to equalise the pressure inside and outside the case, so enabling the capsules to work effectively.

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Simulations

The latest news, kit and reviews from the world of racing sims

Words: Stephen Dobie and Nick Trott



GAME OF THE MONTH

GRAN TURISMO 6

Formats: PlayStation 3 Price: £38.99 From: zavvi.com

SOME EXPECTED THIS to be a headline launch title for the new PlayStation 4 console. Sony, however, took the decision to sell *GT6* to the 80million existing PS3 owners in the run-up to Christmas rather than the estimated two million PS4 early adopters – who are locked out as PS3 games can't be played on the new system.

Expectations should be set accordingly, then. Like a 'gen2' Porsche 911 facelift rather than an all-new model, this is a story of evolution and detail tweaks rather than a complete overhaul. One of the bigger claims is that *Gran Turismo* is now more accessible for first-time players, a move catalysed by updated driver aids. And, just like in real life, you'll need to turn them off yourself

if you're feeling particularly nannied.

Doing so reveals the accuracy of *GT6*'s updated car physics at its highest clarity: the inherent stability of an old-shape Clio 200, the twitchiness of a trail-braked Elise, the lightning-fast reactions you'll need to rescue dropping the wheel of a GT3 racer on the grass. Like we found with *Forza Motorsport 5* last month, there's a spooky recreation of downforce that eggs you on to drive aero-clad cars faster and faster, felt best at Le Mans. Meanwhile, a Goodwood Festival of Speed mode allows runs up the hill in classic cars, with target times but disqualification if you leave the tarmac. The tightrope of driving bravely without binning it in front of the crowd is cleverly mimicked.

Friendlier menus and 25 per cent quicker loading times are touted, but there's clunkiness beyond the slick new home screen, while the ever-more accurately rendered circuits ensure you still need patience before races load.

GT6 has been painstakingly thought out (to curious levels, when you consider the accurate galaxy of stars that fills the sky during night races), and with 100 track layouts and 1200 cars (though still no Porsches!), longevity is guaranteed. Subjectively, though, it isn't a big leap over *GT5* and remains a focused game that never truly allows you to let your hair down and have a giggle. But with a reasonable wait likely before a *Gran Turismo* game hits the PS4, racing sim fans will still lap this up. ❌



Peripherals



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Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



Meaden hopes F1's new regs bring some excitement in 2014, otherwise he's defecting to another form of motorsport

P **POOR SEBASTIAN VETTEL. HE'S THE** most precociously talented driver of his or perhaps any generation, yet he's pilloried for killing his sport. Fair? Hardly. He can't help being brilliant and finding himself in an Adrian Newey car that augments his uncanny ability to win races. Next season's introduction of all-new aero packages and turbocharged V6 engines provides a faint glimmer of hope that glorious chaos will corrupt Formula 1's crushingly predictable order. That's great news for us fans, but a Doomsday scenario for the control freaks within the teams for whom the possibility of Not Knowing What Will Happen is totally abhorrent.

Over the last few years the FIA's decision to all-but ban testing (supposedly to save money – what a joke!) has played increasingly into the teams' hands, for they can now do unlimited virtual testing, using sophisticated simulators to dial-in drivers and hone the cars to the vagaries of each and every circuit well in advance of the race weekends. Consequently, unless there's a sudden plague of frogs midway through Q2, or Felipe Massa remembers he's a racing driver, the grid order – and therefore the weekend – is pretty much a foregone conclusion once Free Practice has validated the computer's predictions.

For some this forensic mindset and dazzling application of technology is the great joy of F1. I do get the whole 'pinnacle of motorsport' thing, but I also cling to the romantic notion that Formula 1 should be a spontaneous, organic, unpredictable spectacle and not the process-led fruition of a strategy simulated a thousand times in a variety of windowless rooms from Milton Keynes to Maranello.

To be fair, the fault doesn't lie with the teams. They just stretch the framework of rules as far as they can. If this means finding an advantage through locking young drivers in simulator rooms until they're sick, or employing people who have never raced a car to sit on a prat perch and tell blokes who've never done anything but race cars, er, how to race cars, then that's what they'll do.

Initiatives like DRS and tyres made from chocolate succeeded in contriving some unpredictability for a while, but with upwards of 500 people employed by each of the big teams they are soon well ahead of the rulemaker's games and restore the status quo. Meanwhile, we sit in front of our televisions more out of a sense of duty than any genuine expectation of excitement.

So what's the answer? Well, if you could vastly reduce the levels of downforce and make cars more reliant on mechanical grip you'd transform the sport – and spectacle – overnight. But then teams wouldn't need a wind tunnel working 24 hours a day and

F1 would surely die of shame.

Perhaps the best plan would be to stop the teams communicating anything other than position, 'Box! Box! Box!' and safety-related messages over the radio. Team orders would be harder to enforce and mechanical failures would be more frequent. Moreover, if the teams are unable to transmit detailed instructions on what mid-race adjustments to make to the car, it would place the emphasis on the driver's ability to read a race – and would bring an end to those ridiculous steering wheels. It might also mean Ferrari would fit the 458 Italia with indicator and wiper stalks. Of course, none of this will ever happen, for it's not in the interests of the big teams to make life easier for the Saubers, Caterhams and Marussias of this world.

Predictable results wouldn't be so bad if F1 cars were inherently

'Watching the fastest cars in the world being pushed to their limits should be spellbinding'

exciting to watch, but once you calibrate your brain to their raw cornering and braking ability it's really rather tedious. That's a travesty, because watching the fastest cars in the world being pushed to their limits by the best drivers should be spellbinding. Instead the apparent ease with which they can be driven belittles the actual skill required. If anything, the cars make fools of the drivers by only highlighting their mistakes.

That's why I find myself increasingly drawn to MotoGP, where the racing and raw skill is gloriously apparent and totally transparent. Overtaking moves are genuine and plentiful, and the battles for position so close the riders can and often do make physical contact. Traction control has reined things in a little bit, but still the sight of Jorge Lorenzo, Marc Márquez and Valentino Rossi dragging knees and elbows while riding out knife-edge slides from apex to exit is captivating, even to someone who has never ridden, nor wants to ride, a motorcycle.

I sincerely hope the new turbo era injects some life into F1, but until the FIA (and teams) accept all we really care about is compelling racing, I'm afraid it will continue to be the soporific effect of a hearty lunch, and not Sebastian Vettel, that triumphs on a Sunday afternoon.

 @DickieMeaden

Richard is a contributing editor of *evo* and one of the magazine's founding team

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Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



The next-generation Mini looks promising, reckons Porter. It's just a pity that the marketing sucks...

LAST MONTH BMW ANNOUNCED THE new, third-generation Mini in a ceremony at the Oxford factory on the day Alec Issigonis would have celebrated his 107th birthday. If he wasn't dead, obviously. The whole thing was profoundly annoying.

The latest Mini itself looks pretty much as it always has in its modern incarnation, save for a more bulbous nose brought on by pedestrian safety rules and detailing that seems to get more cack-handed with every generation. On the day of the announcement, BMW put out an official pic of all three modern Minis next to the titchy original, unwisely highlighting that this isn't a car family that's got prettier over time.

The real news with New Mini 3, however, is that underneath is a brand-new chassis. The mk1 sat on a unique platform largely developed in the UK by Rover and then, when BMW decided its British endeavours were a Longbridge too far, by engineering consultancy Ricardo. The mk2 was built on the same box of bits and continued to provide BMW's Munich-based kommand kentre with a major headache simply because it shared nothing whatsoever with any other car it made.

Small hatchbacks typically operate on stick-thin margins, but they can justify their existence as long as a long list of bits, from engines and gearboxes to switches and door handles, can be shared with some of the other cars the company makes. The Mini enjoys none of these shared economic benefits. It's the only front-wheel-drive car BMW currently makes, which means it needs a unique chassis, a unique gearbox and, for the most part, a unique engine range. At various points BMW has chummed up with Chrysler, Toyota and Peugeot in order to spread the cost of a transverse engine (when all the many other models it sells run a north-south layout) but it's not enough.

This is where the mk3 Mini comes in. It's built on a new front-wheel-drive platform called UKL1, which will be the basis not only of a vast range of new-gen Minis but also of a family of small and – gasp! – front-wheel-drive BMWs. The Mini Cooper gets a three-cylinder engine that will be seen in the 1- and 3-series. It's also fitted to the i8 hybrid. The Cooper S has a 2-litre four from the same modular family, also seen in rear-wheel-drive BMWs.

It's an interesting illustration of how a successful and strongly priced small car can still, in accountancy terms, fail to wipe its own arse without massive economies of scale behind it. The mk3 Mini aims to fix all that whilst maintaining a business-as-usual appearance that will continue to make it popular amongst hipsters, estate agents and people called Emma.

Now this is all well and good, but it pales to nothing next to BMW's continuing idiotic marketing masterclass in clichéd visions of a non-existent Britain that hovers somewhere above 1968. For the official announcement, for example, there was a recreation of a 1960s sitting room on stage, with the host, spherically headed car-fact-o-phobe Dominic Sandbrook, holding a sodding bulldog. At the new car's first motor show appearance in Los Angeles, the Mini stand was decorated with a red postbox and an old-fashioned British phone box, artlessly and meaninglessly plastered with swinging London-sounding words like 'Bond Street' and 'Bayswater'. It's all sugary enough to give your teeth diabetes.

Now imagine for a moment that, instead of Rover, BMW had bought Citroën and was now busily pushing a re-imagined 2CV at an event featuring men in berets and stripy jerseys holding

'It's an idiotic marketing masterclass in clichéd visions of a non-existent Britain somewhere around 1968'

carefully preened miniature poodles. What if it'd somehow acquired Lancia and had just revealed a new-generation Aurelia by inviting an audience to sit at check-clothed tables and then firing a spag bol cannon at them?

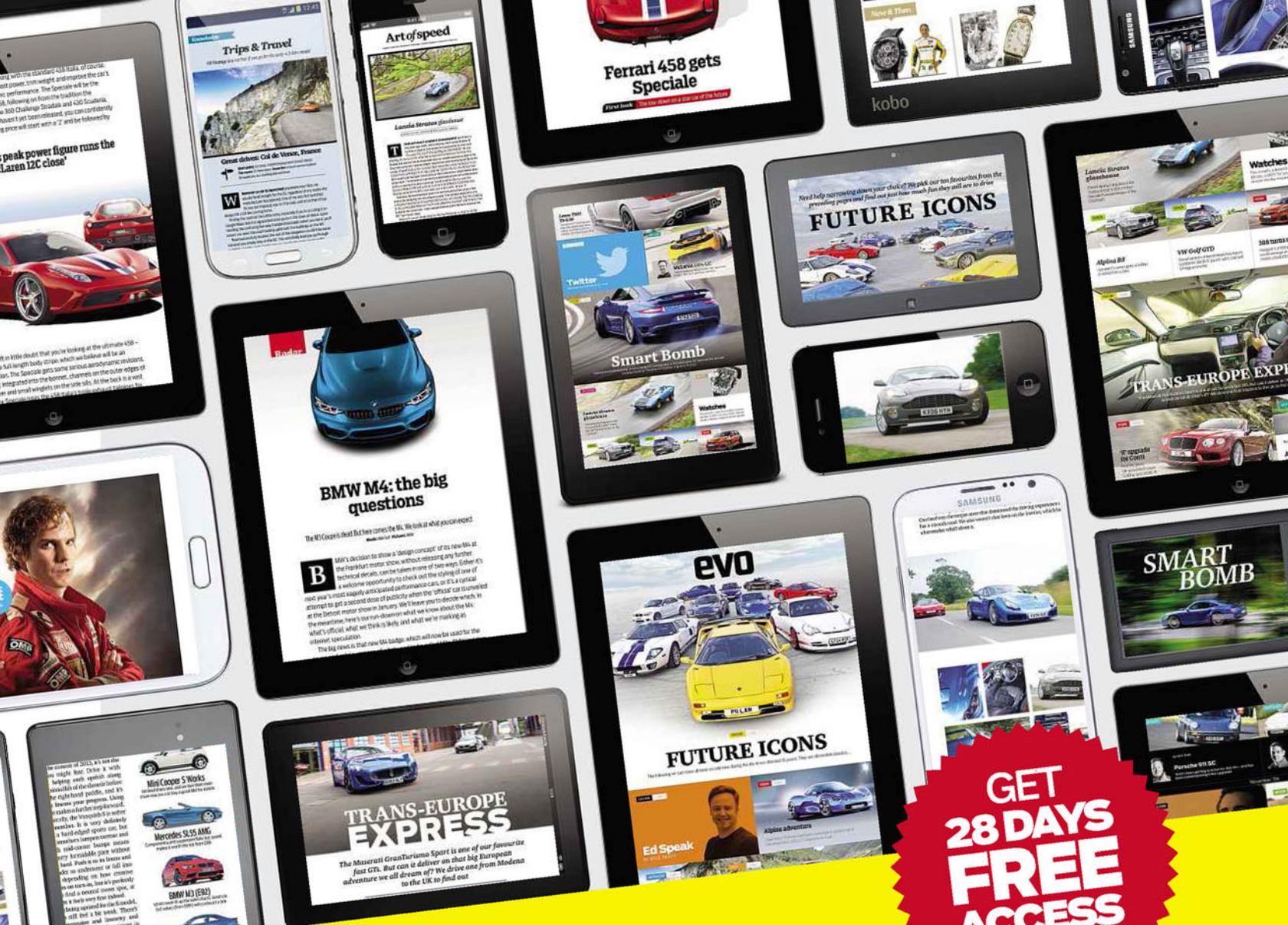
Come to that, what if we inhabited an alternate universe in which it was Rover that had bought BMW. 'Good news chaps,' the plucky Brummies would announce. 'We've just about finished the third generation of the new Isetta bubble car. Someone be a good sport and order up the lederhosen, oompah band and little hats with feathers in them...' I have a feeling in such a situation the Germans would, quite rightly, tell the British to fucken sie off.

So why are we so tolerant of the cloying, outdated imagery and attitude used to peddle the 21st-century Minis? Why aren't we taking the Union flags and postboxes and bowler hats and telling BMW where to shove them? Its continued reliance on these clichéd British elements is just lazy, obnoxious and patronising.

When you read about the new Mini, with its clever new platform and its promising three-pot engines, you start to think it's probably going to be quite good. And when a car is good, the marketing should be rather better than complete and utter crap.

 @sniffpetrol

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



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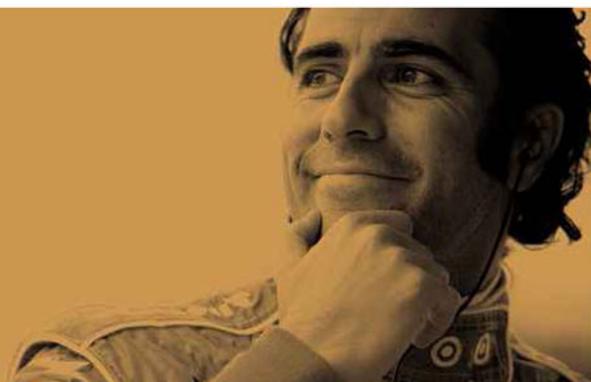
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Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



In his first column since his IndyCar crash, Dario details how he's been filling his time as he recuperates

F

FIRSTLY, SORRY FOR MY ABSENCE recently. As you may know, it's been a tough couple of months following my accident in Houston but I'm on the mend. I've got to thank my brother Marino for stepping in and writing the column over the last couple of months.

Saying that, it was hard to read about him racing at the Ring. I hate him driving there: every time he does the 24 Hour race, it's 24 hours of hell for me. I watch the timing screens but I just can't deal with it. Of course, I don't want anyone to get hurt, but he's my brother, you know? When he did that race in 2004, there was a Mercedes 560SEC bugging around at about 5mph while Marino's all-singing, all-dancing, unrestricted 911 GT2 RSR was flying by. Madness.

As you may have guessed, I've got a lot of time on my hands at the moment. My ankle still doesn't work properly and I'm still recovering from the rather large concussion, so I'm not driving yet. It's getting better but there's limited movement, and I'm going to have to practise my left-foot braking when I get back behind the wheel. This is the first time since I broke my back in 2003 that I haven't been able to drive, so I'm getting through all the things that need doing on the cars. I'm planning all the services (the Carrera GT is about to get the full rubber-glove treatment), shipping some of the cars over from the States, planning some road trips, and – the thing that seems to be occupying most of my time at the moment – spending hours on end looking at cars on the internet!

It all started when I thought it was time to get a replacement for my Mercedes E55 AMG. It's only done 40,000 miles in the ten years I've owned it, and it's been mega. Recently, some niggling things have been going wrong – I've killed the dampers and the keyless-go thing broke – but inevitably the process of fixing the car made me wonder what modern alternatives are available. I've thought of the E63 AMG and the Audi RS6 – in fact Audi loaned me an RS6 and I loved it, albeit from the passenger seat as the doc wouldn't let me drive it. However, with an RS6 or an E63 you're looking at £90k with options, which set me off on another path. For the same money you're looking at a used SLS AMG or an Aston Martin DBS, so I've been thinking: 'Sod it, I'll keep the E55 and buy something else that I can put miles on.'

I've heard some people say that the way a petrolhead's mind works when it comes to buying a car, or thinking about buying a car, is like an addiction. And do you know what? Of course it is! And as with any addiction, the last thing you need is time on your hands, because it then occupies every waking second of your

day. Not only that, but you really feel it when you have to give something up. For instance, I had to give up my new GT3: I got the email saying that my car was on the boat and I had to say: 'I'm sorry, but I'm not going to be spending as much time in the US any more as I'm heading back to the UK.' Gutted.

I've been tempted by some lovely 300SLs that have popped up at auction recently, and I found myself looking at an Aventador the other day and thinking: 'Oh yes!' I recently missed out on a Porsche 964 3.8 RS, mainly because I was unconscious in hospital at the time. I'm really pissed off about that because that is a really rare, special car and the engine was engineered by an old pal of mine, Wolfgang Hatz, who is currently the head of R&D at Porsche. He loved that engine, and with very good reason. It's got individual throttle butterflies, lighter rocker arms, bigger pistons and a vibration damper on the crank. It's a very special

'My ankle still doesn't work properly so I'm not driving yet. I'm going to have to practise my left-foot braking when I get back behind the wheel'

thing, although I'm not sure how it does the miles.

And on the topic of rare Porsches, it's great to see the 911 GT1 in this month's issue – I mean, what a cool thing! I've never driven one but Allan McNish told me that the race car was pretty, erm, 'interesting', although I think with age everything is forgiven. That was such an amazing era of racing cars for the road – when you think back to 1996 and 1997 you had things like the Porsche GT1, the McLaren F1 GTR, the Mercedes-Benz CLK GTR, the Nissan R390 and even oddball stuff like the Lister Storm GT1 and the Viper GTS-R. I hope that that era of cars will be thought of in the same way as the 1950s or '60s, when people like Ferrari were building machines that blurred the lines between race and road cars.

Speaking of which, I've been thinking about those mad VW Beetle Super Saloons of the '70s that were effectively Formula 5000 cars. I did warn you that I've had a lot of time on my hands recently... ❌

@dariofranchitti

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



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Inbox

What's jingled your bells this month?



Letter of the Month

Remember real rallying

I thoroughly enjoyed the Colin McRae picture special in **evo** 191. The photos of battered, beaten-up Subarus and Focuses still being pelted across stages at faintly insane speeds brought back plenty of memories and really did epitomise McRae's motto: 'If in doubt, flat-out.'

Fast-forward through the ten years since McRae lost his last full-time WRC drive and how things have changed. Gone are the big bruisers like the Impreza and the Lancer, replaced by tiddly little DS3s, Fiestas and Polos. Gone are heroic wheelsmiths like Burns, Sainz and Mäkinen, replaced by a seemingly endless stream of blokes called Sébastien and a rotating cast of nondescript Finns. And gone are the real *Boy's Own* adventures like the Safari Rally, replaced by two-and-a-half-day glorified autotests that never venture more than 50 miles beyond 'insert Mediterranean beach resort here'.

Rallying used to be an extreme sport where man and machine were pushed to (and beyond) their limits. To see what the sport has now degenerated to is such a shame.

Stephen Bamford

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.

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P1 falls short

I've been trying to get my head around the McLaren P1. I am a devout worshipper at the altar of Gordon Murray's F1: I own a signed copy of the F1 book *Driving Ambition* and I've seen and heard an F1 in the flesh. I have pored endlessly over countless images of the engineering beauty, the glory of the OCD design approach and its stunning Peter Stevens-penned looks. McLaren created the automotive masterpiece: an endlessly fascinating, truly great icon of a motor car.

The P1, on the other hand, looks like a TVR but without the tension. It looks uncomfortably kit car-esque. In particular, the image of the unclothed P1 in **evo** 190 really disappointed: I know it's a prototype, but what a mess! Nothing like XP5, which had plenty of titillating details. The P1 is resolutely dull and industrial. And then I noticed that the rooftop air intake doesn't appear to feed the engine. Is it a fake? What's going on?

Graeme Kidson

Inbox warriors

As a regular on a small car forum, I must congratulate Richard Porter for his wry view of such places (**evo** 191). I certainly saw myself in it once or twice, but have no problem with laughing at myself. I also think that the word 'artless' (as used about none-too-subtle references to expensive possessions) is underused and I vow to try to set this straight.

Having expressed a view about a car on your letters page in **evo** 189, I notice a rebuttal from an owner of a similar model in **evo** 191. Good luck to the man: I'm glad his experience has been better than I would have expected. Of course, that doesn't mean his experience is the norm, but good luck to him nonetheless.



Above: this image of the P1's cutting-edge technology riled Graham Kidson

However, ending his letter was a decidedly artless reference to a recent and rather expensive car purchase. This did not relate to the subject in hand. Surely the satisfaction inherent in owning such wonderful things is what matters, not feeling the need to shoehorn in a reference to them whenever the chance allows, whether relevant or not?

Returning to the world of the car forum, I'll stand back and await a flaming!

Simon Bartlett

Take a seat

Given the reviews of the Porsche 911 GT3, it was no surprise to see it win **evo** Car of the Year (issue 190). However, your reviews of this phenomenal car have not highlighted one very crucial deficiency: there is no option for four seats. I appreciate it's a 'lightweight' car, but the GT3 RS will be along soon for the real hardcore fans, so the option of four seats in the GT3 would widen the market considerably and would also mean that, after 15 years of depreciation, I may be able to afford one to do the school run with.

James Wyatt

Give me five

Whilst sat in another infuriating traffic jam, my 2013 Mini JCW GP asked me: 'Why has **evo** only given me 4.5 stars when I am the sixth-best car of the year, and the seventh-best car – the Porsche Cayman S – has five stars?' It's a good question. Can you provide an answer for my confused, excellent Mini?

Alex Westworth

It is a good question, Alex. And after the Mini GP's shining performance on eCoty 2013, we've decided to upgrade its rating to five stars – Ed



Above: Alex Westworth was peeved that the Mini GP didn't have five stars. It does now



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Talking Point

GT-R Nismo: is it worth the money?

The new Nissan GT-R Nismo is expected to cost £117,500 when it arrives in the UK. As the regular 2014 GT-R is around £38,500k less, is the Nismo's price justified?

YES It is worth that because of its performance relative to other cars such as 911s and Ferraris, etc.

Mark BT52

NO It is not worth that because of the standard GT-R.

Mark BT52

YES I had a deposit down on the launch GT-R but the looks were just too 'mid-life crisis' for me. With the high running costs of the early cars too, I cancelled my order.

However, the Nismo, with its red trim and other bodywork tweaks, takes the car beyond that to become very desirable. Its recent Nürburgring lap time being within a few seconds of the 918's makes it top of my list of cars that I can afford (with man maths) but won't actually ever buy.

I want one very much.

Eric Pisch

YES Compared to the laughably overpriced SpecV, I think the Nismo is definitely worth it, but if the Williams-developed RS/Track Edition/Time Attack/whatever-they're-going-to-call-it version that actually did the 7:08 Ring lap is vastly more expensive again, then that might not be worth it.

David Yu

NO I suspect that it'll hold its value very well, but not enough to offset the price increase. Plus there will be a better model out next year – ultimate Nismo GT-R-R-R+1 – then the +2 the year after that, the +3 the year after that, then the 'final final honest we mean it this time Nürburgring Special GT-R' at the end of the model life.

Exiled Chris

NO It seems expensive – now that for the same money you can choose

between this improved GT-R and a used Ferrari 458, the performance bargain that the GT-R was is just a memory.

Pilouil

YES As fantastic as the performance appears, my view is that there is only so much 99 per cent of the market is prepared to pay for a Nissan. Much like the VW Phaeton, it may be too good (read: expensive) for its badge.

Carlos

NO To be honest, for £120k near as dammit, I want to be in something that feels special, and in my opinion the Nissan is not that car. The Audi R8 has the looks, the Porsche GT3 has everything, or for me an Aston Martin V8 Vantage: not for top speed or Ring times, but by God they look good!

CCC4U

YES I really like it – special editions of mega cars always float my boat for some reason. It's not a lot of money considering what it can do, either.

Bunta

YES Whether it's worth it or not depends on who you are. In my mind the typical buyer will already have a loaded garage: high-end GT, a luxobarge or Chelsea tractor, a trackday special and maybe even a hypercar. The rarity (135 per year outside Japan) makes it special enough and the trick parts and the Ring time (in a compromised track version or not) add to the lustre. So to a rich enthusiast with a stable of thoroughbreds, the Nismo is worth it.

Marshali86

NO It's a Datsun instead of a Porsche or a Ferrari. For that reason I'm out.

M135i

Next month

The new Corvette (see page 96) is one of the best in the model's history, and will cost £61k in the UK – the price of a well-specced Cayman S. But would you?

Email your thoughts to letters@evo.co.uk, or join the discussion at community.evo.co.uk



From the forums: community.evo.co.uk

Thread of the Month

REVSRUS

'How important is an engine?'

'When I consider all the cars I've driven and owned over the years, the consistent theme for all the ones I've enjoyed the most is having an outstanding engine. My current M3 (E92) and my DC2 Integra both have this quality. A great engine is something you can enjoy every day, all of the time, at any speed. I'd happily compromise on other areas of a package, like handling or steering feel, if it meant I could have a thrilling engine. Anyone else feel the same?'

DJCHOCICE

A car that handles well but with a bad engine gets boring quite quickly, yet a car that handles reasonably well with a great engine is infinitely more enjoyable. That's why if I got an Elise, I would want one with a more powerful Rover/Toyota engine.

MIK

A great engine can be exercised more easily on every drive, even if it's just a short squirt of the throttle. But that too gets pretty one-dimensional if the car can't handle.

BEANY

It's dependent on your definition of a good/bad engine, surely? For example, the 1.3 you can get in the Ford Ka runs out of puff early in the rev range, but has a decent amount of punch up until then, which really suits the snickety gearbox.

ROBINOZ

Having owned cars with more than four cylinders for the last five years, sound is very important!

NOTORIOUSREV

I've bought several engines that had cars attached to them: Imprezas, V8 Soarer, R33 GT-R.

DUNC500

Needs to be the right engine for the right car IMO. Although the engine is probably not as important to me as to others in the whole feel/balance/engine equation.

P7ULG

All a bit subjective, really. Are we talking about power, torque, sound or refinement? Personally, I've learned to look at a car as a package, the perfect car being a car that 'flows'.



Thread of the Month wins a Jorg Gray watch

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Porsche 918 Spyder

918

A drive of a prototype version of Porsche's hybrid hypercar earlier this year left us unconvinced. Can a turn in the finished article on road and track change our minds?

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH
& PORSCHE



D S GO 9181



SOMETIMES THE LAUNCH OF A NEW CAR is as much about the people you meet as the car you drive. The Porsche 918 Spyder press event in Spain is just such an occasion. After an unconvincing drive of a prototype at Porsche's Leipzig test track back in the summer (evo 184) – and having written a few uncomplimentary stories as a result – there's a bit of an awkward moment when the evening's dinner table plan reveals I'm sat with 'Mr 918', Dr Frank-Steffen Walliser. Thankfully, instead of reading my name-badge and shoving my king prawn entrée where the sun don't shine, Walliser smiles, shakes my hand and engages in one of the most candid conversations I've had with a senior engineer in a very long time.

You won't be surprised to learn that Walliser is fully convinced by the concept of hybrids. Not because of the tree-hugging credentials (although they are a factor), but because the 918 is a faster car with the batteries and electric motors than without. What you might be surprised to know is that in the beginning, he and many of his team struggled with the things many of us are struggling with today: the move away from manual transmissions, the adoption of heavy hybrid technology and the need to make the very highest echelon of road car performance as socially acceptable as a city car.

Tantalisingly, he mentions a very early concept for the Carrera GT's successor, which followed a far more conventional approach: a bit lighter, a bit more powerful and a bit faster, but in essence a car born of conventional late-20th-century thinking. The plan for that car now languishes in a drawer, its genesis nipped in the bud by rapid advances in technology and shifts in social and political attitudes. Much as I'd love to know what might have been, it's now clear that if Porsche had fielded that car against the LaFerrari and the McLaren P1 it would have been like engaging in modern warfare with a bow and arrow. Instead Porsche took a deep breath and embarked on building the most sophisticated supercar the world has ever seen.

In return, I confess my concern that in clinging to a purist attitude and questioning the need for a plug-in hybrid hypercar, I'm coming to the 918 Spyder with too much emotional baggage. Is my judgement being clouded by a love of what we've had and a reluctance to accept what the future holds? Walliser nods understandingly, pausing for a moment before offering me a refreshingly simple piece of advice: 'Forget the past. Forget the future. Just drive the car tomorrow and tell me what you think.'

Next morning, those words are ringing in my ears, not least because despite my best efforts to park all prejudicial worship of bygone

'THE SPYDER LACKS THE EXTREME VISUAL DRAMA OF THE LaFERRARI AND THE P1, BUT IT SHARES THE CARRERA GT'S GRACEFUL RESTRAINT'



supercars, the presence of a Carrera GT on display in the pitlane is a painful reminder of what progress is leaving behind. Then I clap eyes on the phalanx of 918 Spyderys and things don't seem so bad. Much like the CGT, the Spyder lacks the extreme visual drama of the LaFerrari and the P1, but in finished form (and without the race-car aping stickers of the Weissach Package specification) it must be said that it shares the CGT's graceful restraint. Whatever you think of the high-tech hybrid powertrain beneath its carbonfibre skin, there's no question that the 918 Spyder is a conventionally beautiful car.

Before we get behind the wheel, there's a press briefing. You already know much of what's discussed: the 6:57 Nürburgring lap time, the 875bhp total power output and 944lb ft of torque, the Veyron-chasing 2.6sec 0-62mph, 7.2sec to 124mph and 19.9sec to 186mph acceleration times, and that Prius-bashing 70g/km CO2 figure. What's most impressive is the buggy-like test mule that sits silently before us in the auditorium: three parts *Back to the Future*, two parts *Mad Max*, with a pinch of *Scrapheap Challenge* for good measure, it's almost inconceivable that this semi-naked prototype was the state of play less than two years ago. A lot of midnight oil has clearly been burnt at Weissach.

Frustratingly, this press event does not allow any time in its schedule to take a car away and explore the excellent mountain roads that lie within an hour of Valencia. Instead we have an intense six-lap track session in which we'll get to drive the Spyder as hard as we dare, followed by a guided convoy drive through the centre of Valencia to showcase the performance and functionality of the electric and hybrid modes.

It's only human nature to immediately want what you can't have, in this case a day to ourselves on fast, challenging roads. But given the media lockdown surrounding the LaFerrari and McLaren P1, the fact we're getting any meaningful access to the 918 Spyder at all is great news. That the order book remains open (around half of the production run of 918 cars has been sold) is undoubtedly a factor, but right now, sat low and snug in a Martini Racing-liveried 918 with Weissach Package (where a full-body film wrap instead of paint, plus magnesium wheels and various extra carbon bits inside and out make for a 40kg saving on the regular car), I'm not complaining.

The Circuit Ricardo Tormo is Valencia's 'other' racetrack. Overshadowed by the dockside street circuit used by Formula 1 for



‘THE PDK IS ANNOYINGLY GOOD, PUNCHING UP AND DOWN THE SEVEN SPEEDS WITH PRECISION’



Above: rear aeroblades are among Weissach Package addenda. **Right:** V8's output goes to the rear axle only and is supported by an electric motor, so oversteer is always an option

five years and now abandoned, it's your typical modern, soulless circuit built in scrubland on the grotty side of town. On the plus side it has a decent straight, big braking areas and some seriously challenging combinations of corners, cambers and radii that somehow manage to flow but that still look more than ready to tie a compromised car in knots.

Our pace car is a new 991 Turbo S, not a machine noted for its lack of speed. As it powers onto the circuit I resist the temptation to bury the Spyder into its wake, instead zipping onto the circuit and negotiating the first few corners in pure electric mode. It's a brilliant sensation, where the whirring of the electric motors, rustling of the slipstream and insistent squeeze of G-force are the fresh sensory reference points for a new kind of supercar driving experience.

The plan is to work through to the more aggressive of the five driving modes, first turning the rotary control from 'E' for E-Power to 'H' for Hybrid and 'S' for Sport Hybrid for a few laps, followed by 'R' for Race Hybrid and finally pushing the little red button that engages Hot Lap for an all-out battery-depleting hoon. As soon as the switch clicks to 'S', the 4.6-litre V8 fires in an instant, its hard, ballsy blare erupting from the top-exit exhausts that protrude through the mesh engine cover. We're already travelling at a proper pace: enough for me to want to work just the throttle and steering, while still letting the PDK 'box make its own decisions on gear selection so that I have more mental capacity free to learn the track. The PDK is annoyingly good, punching up and down the seven speeds with precision and spookily making up- and downshifts exactly at the moment the very same thought crosses your mind.

I can't think of another press drive where I've been encouraged to push such a potent car so hard so soon. Literally within a mile I'm



chasing the balance of the car, feeling it shift from neutral to the faintest hint of stabilising understeer if I turn in too fast, or getting a gentle shimmy of oversteer as the rear Michelins yield to the assault of all that torque. As the pace car driver pushes ever harder and the circuit begins to make sense, I dig deeper into the Spyder's reserves of performance, braking later and harder, turning in with more commitment and getting back on the power sooner and with more insistence. The deeper I dig, the more I unleash, quickly devouring the fresh air between the 918 and the Turbo S ahead.

This is a very accomplished car on track. It's hugely impressive and, to my relief, really enjoyable. It also has far more finesse and fire in its belly than the earlier development prototype I drove. The brakes especially are hugely improved, performing in a manner a world away from the horrible, dangerously inconsistent stoppers that I was disappointed by at the Leipzig test. You can still feel there's more than one thing going on when you press the pedal, but the way the job of slowing the car is switched between regenerative braking (up to 0.5G purely using the resistance of the motors when you back off the power) and the PCCB discs and calipers is pretty miraculous. Brake feel isn't absolutely perfect, but it's nothing you can't compensate for with familiarity and sensitivity. That McLaren chose not to attempt to incorporate regen braking into the P1 hints at the scale of the technical challenge it presents.

The 918 also features rear-wheel steering, much like that on the 991 GT3. It certainly gives you a sense of hyper-agility without the need for super-quick Ferrari-style steering, the Spyder changing direction without hesitation. You get a very slight suggestion of





oversteer through the seat of your pants as you initiate your steering input, but once you learn that that's just a split-second phase, you relax into it and let the car find its own stance and balance. Likewise, you feel the motor on the front axle come into play when you push beyond a certain point in the throttle's travel (there's a motor for each axle, while the V8 drives the rear only), but again it's an almost imperceptible phase and certainly doesn't interrupt your flow or unsettle the car. In fact it's quite the opposite, for with practice you can use it to augment the Spyder's poise and traction from apex to corner exit. It's a feeling reminiscent of the early 997 GT3 R Hybrid race car, and you can certainly see why the 918 is such an effective machine around the Nordschleife. It also feels like a car that will reward those who take the time to get to know it. There are clearly secrets to learn and new techniques to master if you're to get the best from the car and exploit the full capabilities of its drivetrain.

By the time we're in Hot Lap mode, the Turbo S driver is totally 'on it', the 991 dancing through the long, cresting off-camber left-hander that leads into the final 90-degree left prior to the start-finish straight. Throttle pinned, V8 screaming its heart out and electric motors whirring for all they're worth, the 918 lunges out of

the tight corner, catching the Turbo S before the midway point of the 800-metre pit straight like it's a Golf GTI. It's a mind-warping demonstration of relative performance and, if my parched mouth and pounding heart are anything to go by, proof that when it comes to delivering a good old-fashioned adrenalin rush, the 918 Spyder is up there with the best of them.

And that comes despite, or maybe even thanks to, all-wheel drive, PDK and 315kg of batteries and hybrid hardware. When I say as much to Walliser, there's no 'told you so' smugness: just a genuine pride that his car has communicated its ability and appeal more eloquently than any technical or press briefing ever could.

AFTER THE FURY OF THE TRACK SESSION, THE chaperoned tour of Valencia sounds like an all-too-sedate and rather contrived exercise to distract us from the fact that we can't do any proper road driving. True, I'd rather be charging through open Spanish countryside, but as the urban odyssey unfolds we get a fascinating and worthwhile insight into the other side of the 918 Spyder's character. On top of that, we've swapped the Weissach Package-equipped car for a 'regular' 918, although from a driving environment perspective the plusher, less race-biased seats (no six-point harnesses here) are the only significant difference.

With the roof panels removed and stowed in the luggage compartment at the front, the contrast between E-Power mode and the times when the V8 is running couldn't be more marked. This test

Right: hybrid system makes for a claimed 91mpg; huge 410mm discs stop front wheels

Porsche 918 Spyder



Far left: Meaden also drove the non-Weissach 918 Spyder on track, but only for photography, not for hot laps. **Below:** speaking of which... red button on wheel engages Hot Lap mode



'IF MY PARCHED MOUTH IS ANYTHING TO GO BY, WHEN IT COMES TO DELIVERING A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED ADRENALIN RUSH, THE 918 SPYDER IS UP THERE WITH THE BEST OF THEM'





car has its lithium-ion batteries fully charged, making it no problem to power up to 70mph on the motorway and then cruise on into town without using the V8. It's a magical sensation and it also underlines how complete this car's abilities are. The seamlessness with which it can segue from electric to hybrid to pure internal combustion and back again is remarkable. God only knows how hard it's been to fine-tune the calibration of all the different control software to make this possible, but it works brilliantly. If there's an issue, it's that once you've driven on urban roads in near-silence, you rather begrudge the moment when you have to switch the raucous V8 on to generate some more juice. Heresy, I know, but there you are. A fully muffled exhaust mode would help, if only to make the Spyder more discreet in urban surroundings and less like a boisterous drunk shouting outside the pub at closing time.

To be honest, I never thought I wanted or needed a supercar that could drive silently through town, but now I've driven one I'm not sure things will quite be the same again. I love the way a fast, exuberant and noisy supercar stirs your soul and tickles your adrenal glands. But to experience how relaxing it is to cut the engine and surge through a city for up to 20 miles on electric power alone, while watching expressions of wonder and bemusement from passers-by, makes those life-affirming moments when you wind the race-bred V8 to its 9150rpm limit all the sweeter.

How will it feel on a 'proper' road? It's always dangerous to speculate, but there's no doubt the combination of petrol and electric propulsion will make for a pretty epic experience. Go as slow as the car will allow in seventh gear, select Hot Lap mode and floor the throttle and you are treated to the most extraordinary sensation of

'THIS TIME AROUND THE 918 HAS GONE A LONG WAY TO SILENCING SCEPTICS AND CRITICS IN SPARKLING FASHION'

otherworldly acceleration, as if you're being fired down the road by an invisible catapult. This is torque like you've never felt it before, and as we all know, it's torque-to-weight, not power-to-weight, that counts more of the time. It's a big car physically so it'll feel a bit unwieldy on narrower roads, and the limits of grip are so high and the electronic driver aids so honed that it won't feel edgy and alive like a Carrera GT, but thanks to the well-judged steering and rear-wheel steering it shouldn't feel inert. Ride-wise it appears to have all the compliance and control you could wish for – Marc Lieb didn't even use the Sport damping mode for his Ring record – so it should work brilliantly on smooth and bumpy surfaces alike. And when it comes to disguising its weight, the 918 Spyder is a magician, so although the spec sheet quotes a kerb weight of over 1600kg for either version, your brain says it's 300kg lighter.

Our first drive of the production 918 raises more questions than it answers, but this time around it has gone a long way to silencing sceptics and critics in sparkling fashion. Combining blistering performance and dazzling dynamics with hybrid and battery-only modes that genuinely add another dimension to your enjoyment of the car at low and high speeds, it's a fresh and unforgettable experience. It's true that such head-spinning sophistication comes at the expense of old-school purity and it's certainly a very different experience to that which we're used to, but in championing the 918 Spyder, Porsche isn't asking that we renounce our love of cars like the Carrera GT, just that we look forward rather than back.

We need to get to know the Spyder on proper roads to be truly definitive about where it sits in the pantheon of supercars, but it's clearly an absolutely mighty thing. As purists, we can rail against the added weight and complexity, and scoff at the minute contribution its green credentials make to curing the world's environmental malaise, but that rather misses the point. Walliser and his team didn't build the 918 Spyder to save the planet, they did it to save the supercar. Accept that and you'll find solace in understanding that this is a new beginning, not the end. ❌



Right: carbon-clad seats come with six-point harnesses in Weissach Package-equipped cars



Specification

PORSCHE 918 SPYDER

Engine V8, 4593cc, plus 95kW (front) and 115kW (rear) electric motors

CO2 72g/km (70g/km with Weissach Package)

Power 875bhp @ 8500rpm

Torque 944lb ft @ 6600rpm

Transmission Seven-speed PDK gearbox, four-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, PTV

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

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

Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs, 410mm front, 390mm rear, ABS, EBD, PCCB

Wheels 9.5 x 20in front, 12.5 x 21in rear

Tyres 265/35 ZR20 front, 325/30 ZR21 rear

Weight (kerb) 1674kg (1634kg Weissach)

Power-to-weight 531bhp/ton (544bhp/ton Weissach)

0-62mph 2.6sec (claimed)

Top speed 214mph (claimed, 215mph Weissach)

Basic price c.£647,000

evo rating: ★★★★★



by HENRY CATCHPOLE | PHOTOGRAPHY by TOM SALT

TIMEWARP SPEED

The forthcoming 918 Spyder is Porsche's fourth high-end supercar. We revisit its ancestors, starting with the stars of the 1980s and 2000s: the 959 and the Carrera GT



W

WHAT DOES 'G' STAND FOR? 'R' IS FAMILIAR, AND THE numbers one to five ring a bell, but 'G'? That's a novel addition. It's sitting proudly where the '1' would usually be, or in other words, just where I was about to instinctively slot the lever. I only looked down because this is the first time I've driven a 959 and you never know when a dogleg might be in the offing. Lucky I did, or who knows what

might have happened? Time portal? Vertical take-off? It's exciting, though, and exactly the sort of surprise I would have hoped for from the famously tech-laden Teuton. Some 30 years after the first 959 concept was shown, we now have more switchable parameters



‘BY LOOKING AT THEIR SHAPES YOU WOULD ONLY EVER PUT THEM AS VERY DISTANT COUSINS’

on most cars (including the new 918) than you can shake an iStick at, yet the 959 has got me stumped inside ten seconds. Excellent.

I'm only driving round the corner to meet the Carrera GT, so as soon as I stop, I fire up some data roaming to discover that G is for 'Gelände', which essentially means off-road. So it's a creeper gear, shorter than first. I wonder how many owners have used it in earnest? I imagine this car is more likely than most to have had it tested as it's a pre-production example that now resides in the Porsche Museum in Stuttgart, which is where we are today. The Basalt Black Carrera GT that joins it is also from the museum and also a pre-prod car. Together, they represent half of Porsche's eclectic supercar dynasty.

In some ways they make a very odd pairing to compare, but if you look at the full quartet – 959, GT1, Carrera GT and 918 – it's a slightly odd family as a whole, with no terribly obvious thread of inspiration connecting them all. The 959, for example, was initially inspired by Group B regulations before becoming an exercise in demonstrating Porsche's tech know-how. The CGT, on the other hand, was born out of customer demand. The concept shown at the Paris motor show in 2000 was only designed to attract attention, but such was the reaction that the board decided it must be built.

You could argue that there is a motorsport link to both the cars here, particularly in their engines: the 959's 2849cc flat-six with its water-cooled heads (but air-cooled block) is obviously the kin of the 961's motor, which in turn traces its roots through the 956/962 back to Moby Dick and the other 935-type cars. The CGT's 5.7-litre V10 stems from an F1 engine that morphed into an LMP1 engine (via IndyCar) before being plonked into the Carrera GT concept, originally as a 5.5-litre unit. But even this link between

Above: 959's cabin is largely borrowed from the 911 of the same vintage. **Right:** Carrera GT and 959 are separated by 17 years

the two cars feels distinctly tenuous, because the Carrera's engine choice seems fortuitous whereas the 959's was intentionally reasoned through homologation.

As both cars sit quietly in the immaculate underground lair beneath the museum, they look like they could be part of an installation in an art gallery. Again, though, just by looking at their shapes you would only ever put them as very distant cousins. The Carrera GT is very high-waisted and all hunched up, while the bodywork surrounding the 959's delicate glasshouse looks low by comparison, and that amazing, wide rear deck looks incredible.

There's obviously a lot of 911 in the 959, although the appearance is a little like those disturbing Photoshop pictures where a skinny person's head has been put onto a Schwarzenegger body. The colour scheme of this car, with its white centre-locking hollow-spoked magnesium alloy wheels and Guards Red paint, means it also looks like an excellent substitute for some reindeer and a sleigh.

EVENTUALLY THE STATIC PHOTOS ARE done and we can head outside onto the road. So I swing the aluminium door open and get back into the 959, where the interior initially feels slightly disappointingly like a standard 911's. As the gearknob has already alluded, however, the devil's in the 959's details.

An extra stalk sprouts from the right-hand side of the steering column. Nudge it up or down and you change which one of the four lights in the small dial directly above is illuminated, indicating which mode you have selected for the Porsche-Steuer Kupplung (PSK) four-wheel-drive system. Your options are Sunshine, Rain, Ice and fully locked, and there are small needles showing the torque distributed to the front and rear diffs. There is no centre diff as such: the torque split is instead managed by a multi-plate clutch (PSK literally translates as Porsche control clutch), itself controlled by computer.

Down on the transmission tunnel just ahead of the gearlever is a single switch that controls the adjustable damping. If you know your 959s then this will make your ears prick up because most 959s would have two switches here, the other one controlling the adjustable ride height. However, this is a rare 959 S, the S standing for Sport. Just 37 were produced (or maybe 29, or possibly only six – the numbers are sketchy...), with manual window winders, no air con, just one door mirror, manually adjusted cloth seats and no rear seats. The S is claimed to weigh some 100kg less than the standard Comfort car and has 64bhp more – 508bhp, up from 444. It is undoubtedly the version we would have been clamouring to try had **evo** existed in 1987.

Twist the key and the engine starts slightly



Porsche 959 and Carrera GT



Clockwise, from above: floor-hinged pedals in the Carrera GT's carbon tub; CGT's famous wooden gearknob; 959 dampers are electronically adjustable; meter shows current torque split in 959



lazily, almost reluctantly. Towards you and back for first gear, then a healthy number of revs as you bring the clutch up through its relatively high biting point... and we're off. The stop-start traffic outside the museum on this cold but dry November day reveals that the 959 is really no more difficult to drive than a normal 911 of similar vintage. You've got the same airy feeling in the cabin, with great visibility all round, and despite the greater breadth of the Kevlar bodywork, it feels positively small amongst modern traffic.

Initially it doesn't really feel any more potent than a normal 911, either. I'm following the Carrera GT and as I don't know where I'm going, keeping up is imperative, but below 3000rpm the 959 doesn't exactly feel imbued with oomph. Things sound better as you go through 3000rpm, the engine suddenly taking on a more recognisable flat-six timbre, but the pace still isn't particularly brisk. The gaps in the traffic are fleeting during the first few crowded miles but the high tailpipes of the CGT leap forward at every opportunity. Meanwhile, even holding on to second gear in the 959, there doesn't feel like there's ever enough room to do more than tickle the underbelly of its performance.

Thankfully, we soon turn off the trunk road





and the traffic melts away. In front, the black rear end of the CGT squirms a fraction and then yowls off, its rear tyres whipping up a fine plume of dust from the rural road surface. This looks better: second gear, revs building smoothly through the note change at 3000rpm, then continuing until about 4500rpm, where there's a slight hesitation. It's like a mapping glitch as the car pauses just momentarily, its progress stalled for a fraction of a second as though it's stumbled. Then everything changes. The noise switches completely to something much louder, deeper and all-consuming, the roar filling the cabin and resonating in your head. It's physical even before you consider the acceleration...

If you don't immediately lift off the throttle in sheer bewilderment and you're above 4500rpm then you're launched down the road at a mind-boggling rate. I don't say that lightly either, given that I've spent the rest of the week back in the UK being battered by the performance of the latest 911 Turbo. I'd heard that the 959 was meant to deliver its power progressively thanks to its sequential turbocharging, but the kick at 4500rpm is anything but seamless. (If you're wondering how the sequential turbocharging works, it means that initially only the smaller KKK turbo kicks in – while the flow of exhaust gases is too feeble to run two turbos – bypassing the larger KKK until 4200rpm.)

Snatch the gearlever straight back into third and the 959 continues charging like the Light Brigade until the first corners appear and there's a need to lean into the relatively

reassuring brake pedal. The steering is slightly uncommunicative around the straight-ahead and you don't get the lovely talkative sensations you feel in the best Porsche helms, but as soon as you turn into the corner and load up the surprisingly soft suspension, you get more feedback. This may be the lighter variant of the 959, but it still feels like quite a weighty car that needs a bit of effort from your arms to get it turned in. But fundamentally, there's a huge amount of grip available and after a while you find yourself slinging it at corners and getting on the power much earlier than you'd ever dare to in a 911 from the same period.

As confidence increases, so you can feel the nose pushing a fraction if you're aggressive on the way into a turn, but it's a surprise just how fast you're going when this starts to happen. A little lift will tuck the front wheels back on line, or if you've got more room then you can simply open the steering a bit and keep feeding the power on until it drives the rear round more. In tighter corners you can more easily sense that there's still a 911-type balance underneath the 959's grip and there's quite a bit of roll to work with too. Following the Carrera GT through a tightish left-hander, it certainly looks like I've got much more time and room for adjustment than the hyper-alert V10.

Although the chassis' grip and sway are interesting, it's undoubtedly the 959's monster power delivery that makes the biggest impression. You're always looking for a stretch of road that's open enough to stir that number

'YOU FIND YOURSELF GETTING ON THE POWER MUCH EARLIER THAN YOU'D DARE TO IN A 911 FROM THE SAME PERIOD'

Porsche 959 and Carrera GT

Far right: despite coming from different eras, the 959 Sport and Carrera GT clock the same time for the 0-62mph sprint: 3.7sec.

Below: 2.8-litre twin-turbo flat-six puts out 508bhp in 959 Sport



Specification

PORSCHE 959 SPORT

Engine Flat-six, 2849cc, twin-turbo
CO2 n/a
Power 508bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 369lb ft @ 5000rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel drive
Front suspension Double wishbones, two electronic dampers per wheel, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, two electronic dampers per wheel, anti-roll bar
Brakes Vented discs, 322mm front, 304mm rear, ABS
Wheels 8 x 17in front, 9 x 17in rear
Tyres 235/40 VR17 front, 255/40 VR17 rear
Weight (kerb) 1350kg
Power-to-weight 382bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 211mph (claimed)
Price new £150,000 (1987)
Value today c£1million

evo rating: ★★★★★

PORSCHE CARRERA GT

Engine V10, 5733cc
CO2 n/a
Power 604bhp @ 8000rpm
Torque 435lb ft @ 5750rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, ASC
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs, 380mm front and rear, ABS
Wheels 9.5 x 19in front, 12.5 x 20in rear
Tyres 265/30 R19 front, 335/30 R20 rear
Weight (kerb) 1380kg
Power-to-weight 445bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 205mph (claimed)
Price new c£323,000 (2004)
Value today £300,000-400,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

two turbo, because once the second snail's lit and chuffing there's the slightly uncomfortable feeling of everything running away from you, like you've just snagged a passing Eurostar and are now trying to hang on and steer it down a small road. Admittedly, thanks mostly to the 959's traction, there's not the feeling of loopy lightweight craziness you get when an F40's engine comes on boost and tries to kill you, but the 959 Sport's roaring 508bhp feels like it's almost unstoppable and too much for it to cope with as the rear squats, the nose rises and the A-pillars start to look very spindly indeed...

REACH FOR THE HANDLE HIDDEN IN the side of the car and unlatch the Carrera GT's door, but before you get in, have a look for the secret cubbyhole. It's at the top of the door on the end and you access it by a panel that you press so that it springs open. I like details like that. The thinly padded carbon bucket seat feels raw and hard after the relative comfort of the 959's chairs. Twist the key in the dash all the way round to the right and, just for a moment, the engine sounds like it's got a flat battery, doing one lazy turn-over before it wakes up.

A defining feature of the CGT is its ceramic clutch. The diminutive diameter of it allowed



the engine to be mounted much lower, but by reputation you'd wonder if this was worth it as there are numerous stories of them lasting a pathetic number of miles and being incredibly tricky to use. The key to both these issues is to not use the throttle when you're pulling away. Don't even touch it. Even on a hill start, just when you're sure that the revs are fading and the V10's about to fall abruptly and embarrassingly silent, don't touch the throttle. It feels very odd and still takes a sensitive and steady left foot to get it creeping off the line smoothly, but if you trust the clever anti-stall technology then it works a treat and doesn't wear the clutch out.

Once you're up and running you can use the three pedals just as you would normally, but you'll probably use them more than you would normally simply because changing gear is such a joy. The high-set gearlever with its polished birch wood cap can be flashed through the six-speed 'box with incredible speed and you only need to move your wrist to flick it around the gate. It's almost as though the lever isn't connected to anything, so free is the action. Of course that would be no use were it not matched by the response from the engine, but the V10 shows its original F1 roots by revving with the non-existent inertia of a little two-stroke.

It's not just the physical act of pressing pedals and moving your hand, it's the spine-tingling shriek you orchestrate on blipped downshifts that really keeps you swapping cogs as often as possible. The *yeeoww* emitted with every flare of revs is one of the best, most evocative things I've ever experienced in a car, or anywhere else.

Amazingly, these two cars are roughly similar in weight (1350kg for the 959 Sport, 1380kg for the CGT), but the Carrera feels by far the lighter. The engine, gearshift and sparse interior are part of this but there are other things, too. The steering, for example, has less resistance to inputs than that of any 911 I've experienced, yet it possesses the same clarity, precision and feedback as the best I've felt. The chassis adds to the impression of lithe minimalism too, because every lateral twitch is communicated instantly to the seat of your pants, so the whole car feels sensationally alert from the moment you begin changing direction. There's a real edge too, the car reacting like it has an Elise chassis that has tensed its muscles to bursting point.

Ever since trying a CGT with modern Michelin Pilot Super Sports, we'd recommend them wholeheartedly. The newer rubber's greater adhesion just seems to better match the abilities of the carbon chassis, making it easier to lean

on the sidewalls, work the car through corners and use the 604bhp with far greater freedom. The naturally aspirated engine's delivery is obviously the polar opposite of the 959's, with a linear pull all the way through its rev range. And much as that makes it easier to work with – and more glorious for any bystanders to listen to – it also makes it marginally less memorable than the 959's bombastic turbocharged flat-six.

By the time both supercars are back in the museum car park I'm no closer to uniting them with a common theme. The ways they go down the road couldn't be more different. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the 959 feels closer to a rally car thanks to its four-wheel drive, suspension travel and (in spite of its technology) generally tough demeanour, whereas the Carrera GT is taut, searingly responsive and incredibly light on its feet. The trait that is shared by both, however, is how they've stood the test of time. There's been nothing like the 959 and its 'Gelände' gear since it emerged into the world, and ten years on from its launch the Carrera GT remains the only full-carbon road car (right down to its engine cradle) to be produced, and it shows. Each car also remains just as cool as it was the day it was launched and you'd want room for both in any dream garage as a result. ❏

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

GT1

In between the 959 and the Carrera GT, Porsche created the 911 GT1 racer as part of a successful project to win the Le Mans 24 Hours. We drive one of just 23 road-car spin-offs ever made



Right: gear linkage runs exposed between the two seats. **Below:** 1996 and '97 cars were left-hand drive; '98 machines were RHD to help drivers on circuits that ran mostly clockwise. **Bottom:** the later '97 and '98 GT1s, in silver and white respectively



B BEFORE I TELL YOU JUST HOW WONDERFUL the Porsche 911 GT1 is to drive and begin waxing lyrical about the gearbox, chassis balance and the incredible 536bhp twin-turbo flat-six, I need you to cast your mind back to 1996. If your memory is a little hazy, then it might help to know that it was the year when Michael Johnson was in his pomp at the Atlanta Olympics, the Spice Girls clattered onto the UK singles charts and Damon Hill won the Formula 1 drivers' title. I'm sure it's all flooding back now. It was also the year of the 911 GT1's birth and the year when it arrived on the world endurance scene with the aims of winning Le Mans and smashing the McLaren F1's dominance. But the GT1's history, particularly as a road car, isn't entirely straightforward, so I think it needs a recap.

It's well known that the 911 GT1 was designed to take advantage of a loophole in the endurance racing regulations of the time. The general principle was to develop a road car into a race car, but Porsche controversially did it the other way round. It developed the GT1 as a purpose-built race car, and then built two road-going machines, the

'THE PRINCIPLE WAS TO DEVELOP A ROAD CAR INTO A RACE CAR, BUT PORSCHE CONTROVERSIALLY DID IT THE OTHER WAY ROUND'





first of which is the car you see here. These 1996 GT1s were based on a 993 911 front end and had the headlights to match.

After a reasonably successful year in 1996 (they won the GT1 category at Le Mans but only took second overall) the car was updated with an improved aero package. This became the '97 car and is easy to spot because it has the look of a 996 911 at the front end (despite still being the original 993 base underneath) and the rear wing has large, droopy end-plates. However, the new FIA GT Championship required a minimum of 25 cars to be built in order for any model to be homologated for racing. Due to this, and demand from customers, Porsche built 20 of these Straßenversions (German for 'street version'), all in silver as far as I'm aware.

Unfortunately 1997 was not a successful year for the 911 GT1 on the track because the cars got their arses kicked all round the globe by Mercedes' CLK-GTRs, which had beaten Porsche at its own rule-book-exploiting game. So, for 1998 Porsche created a third GT1. While the '96 and '97 cars were essentially the same underneath, the '98 911 GT1 was radically different, ditching the 993 chassis for a full carbonfibre

monocoque that was also 37cm longer in the wheelbase. The bodywork on top was significantly different, too, while just one road car was built, which remains at the Porsche museum and is the white car pictured left.

The three versions of the GT1 actually show the clear path I was looking for on the previous pages between the 959 and the Carrera GT, because the GT1 began life as a bastardised 993 chassis and ended up with a carbon tub that would inspire the Carrera GT's construction. You can also see clear styling influences from the '97 car that are carried over to the CGT, particularly around the front wheelarches. Anyway, when it's all totted up, and if my maths is correct, there are 23 road-going 911 GT1s in existence, spread across three different versions. It also means that we're extremely lucky to be driving one.

I'm pretty sure (and there's a 50/50 chance anyway) that this is the same car that Allan McNish drove and Dickie Meaden passengered in right back in issue 001 of *evo*. It's now in private hands and the Mobil 1/Warsteiner livery that's been added is an exact replica of that seen on the race cars' first outing at Brands Hatch in September 1996. When I arrive at the Porsche Experience Centre at Silverstone, it's cold and



'ALTHOUGH FROM SOME ANGLES IT LOOKS SMALLER THAN I WAS EXPECTING,

there's a biting wind, too. Porsche driving consultant Ben McLoughlin has just been out in the car to shake it down and greets me with the cheery news that the tyres are quite probably the car's first or second set and are almost certainly over ten years old, so they're harder than a lump of ancient parmesan.

Photographer Gus Gregory wants to take some static shots before I drive the car, which gives me a chance to drink it all in. Porsche stipulated that Tony Hatter, who designed the car using CAD, had to keep it recognisable as a 911, which he did... just about. And you might have to squint a bit. It's incredibly low, standing just 1173mm tall (i.e. less than 4ft), something that only serves to accentuate its length. And although from some angles it looks smaller than I was expecting, there is still something very intimidating about its overall stance.

There are some wonderful details too, chief of which are the huge wing mirrors that look like they could hit a golf ball quite a long way if attached to the end of an appropriately sized bit of chassis tubing.

To get to the engine you need to undo and remove a couple of recessed bolts, slide the entire rear clamshell back a few inches, then tilt it up. The carbonfibre clamshell is incredibly light, so before raising it we carefully park the car out of the gusting wind for fear that it might become expensively detached. What is revealed is the non-993 bit of the GT1, where the ducting for the intercoolers is what initially dominates your view. Then as you look further back, you can see the beautiful inboard springs and dampers for the double-wishbone suspension. Almost out of sight is the water-cooled 3.2-litre engine, which sits very low down and, despite the car being called a 911, is sited very much in front of the rear axle. On either side of the motor and right down on the flat floor, you can see the relatively small turbochargers, with the exhaust pipes then extending a long way around the rear of the gearbox and out the back.

Once the rear is back on, it's time to drive. The relatively conventional-looking door is also carbonfibre and also feels like it might be ripped



THERE IS STILL SOMETHING VERY INTIMIDATING ABOUT ITS OVERALL STANCE'

clean off the car in the wind. There's a low 'X' of white roll-cage to climb over, and then the exceptionally comfortable seats from a 993 RS cradle you. It's snug inside, made even more so by the blank black bulkhead immediately behind the seats, the fixed side windows and the intrusion of the air scoop into the top of the windscreen. But just like in any other Porsche, everything falls instinctively under hand or foot. An exploratory prod of the clutch pedal reveals that it's got a race car's heft to the springing, which generally means it's going to be tricky to get off the line. A couple of moments later, with a distinctive, slightly rattling flat-six idle now pervading the cabin, my left leg muscles are tensed as I try to ease the pedal up through the biting point while keeping the revs steady. There's a slight judder as I let in the final bit, but we're off.

The track at the Porsche Experience Centre, on the site of what was Silverstone's old Rallysprint course, is about the width of a normal B-road. It has a similar amount of run-off in many places, but also has some cracking corners and a decent amount of undulation to keep

things interesting. I tread cautiously for the first few laps, anxious to find out just how much grip the old Michelins will yield and also aware that we've insured the car for £1.5million. But even driving at just five- or six-tenths, the GT1 feels wonderful. I'd feared it would be a recalcitrant animal that would need wrestling and cajoling, but it almost instantly makes you feel comfortable behind the wheel.

The steering isn't too fast and has real feel, just like a 993's, so you can easily tell where the limit of grip is long before you reach it. The H-pattern gearshift looks imposing set up high with its thick metal rod exposed, running back through the bulkhead. Yet although tight and relatively heavy compared to most road cars, it's deliciously positive and has none of the baulking tendencies of a 997 GT3 'box. Once you've got it sussed, you realise that there's a real economy of movement to the way you can quickly snick back and forth across the gate. Heel-and-toeing is a joy, too.

As I pick up the pace a bit and stop short-shifting, the engine starts

Porsche 911 GT1



'WITH EVERY LAP THE GT1 IS CLIMBING FURTHER AND FURTHER UP MY LIST OF ALL-TIME FAVOURITE CARS'



Top: inboard suspension sits behind the flat-six (unlike other 911s, the GT1 is mid-engined).
Above left: huge aerodynamic wing mirrors. **Above right:** roof intake cuts into windscreen

to come alive. It's incredibly driveable off-boost, so I imagine you could amble along in traffic without feeling like you were constantly caging an animal, but a whole new world opens up as the needle sweeps past 4000rpm. The hurricane of forced induction ramps up with *just* enough progression, but the shove in the back is mighty and sustained. With 536bhp and 443lb ft, the GT1 falls a little short of a 997 GT2 RS (611bhp, 516 lb ft) in terms of grunt, but the acceleration is equally unsettling and addictive (0-100mph in 7.1sec) because it only weighs 1120kg, resulting in a greater power-to-weight ratio of 486bhp per ton (against 453). What's even better is that gearshifts barely interrupt the flow.

I'm in second gear with the turbos spooling up as I cross the line. There's a surge of freefall, then it's into third briefly as the track dives right and downhill. Brake early for the tight left-hander with a blip of revs to take it back down to second. There's a smidge of understeer building to the apex so I know what the grip level is like, but I hold the throttle steady as the corner opens out then sweeps back right and uphill. I feed in the throttle on the exit, sensing the boost building with the pressure in my back, then I feel the rear tyres struggle to maintain traction as I quickly unwind the lock and fire towards the blind left-hander over the crest. There's a bit of understeer down the hill fighting the camber into a shallow left-hander, then it's right onto the final meandering straight, where that head-lightening rush of boost builds again, pinning me into the seat through third gear and briefly into fourth.

What's incredible is how communicative the chassis is and how easily you can start to work the car and use the power. The GT1 feels small and you're instinctively connected to each corner. There's no roll to speak of, yet it doesn't feel snappy and you always know where you are with the grip, so it feels easy to play with the mid-engined balance. It even sounds great: not Carrera GT great, but the turbos are overlaid with that harder-edged note that racing 911s enjoy.

All too soon I've got to stop, but all I want to do is keep driving and driving. With every lap the GT1 is climbing further and further up my list of all-time favourite cars. I really hadn't expected this. I'd thought that a bewinged monster that was essentially the inconvenient by-product of a race programme would probably be too focused to actually enjoy. I'd thought I might be impressed by the GT1's limits and extremes, but would still be left longing for the nuances of a more humble 911. Not a bit of it. The 911 GT1 is up there with the greats. **x**

Specification

PORSCHE 911 GT1

Engine Flat-six, 3164cc, twin-turbo

Power 536bhp @ 7200rpm

Torque 443lb ft @ 4250rpm

Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff

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

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

Brakes Ventilated and drilled discs, 380mm front and rear, ABS

Wheels 11 x 18in front, 13 x 18in rear

Tyres 295/35 ZR18 front, 335/30 ZR18 rear

Weight (kerb) 1120kg

Power-to-weight 486bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.7sec (claimed)

Top speed 192mph (claimed)

Basic price c£525,000 (1997 model)

Value today c£1.5million

evo rating: ★★★★★



Driving the Le Mans-winning GT1

I I'M SUPPOSED TO be driving a Le Mans-winning Rothmans-liveried 962 (such is the surreal world of the Goodwood Festival of Speed), but with a crash helmet on, I'm just too tall to fit in it. So at the last minute I'm transferred to another victorious Le Mans car: the 1998 911 GT1, no. 26, as driven by Laurent Aiello, Allan McNish and Stéphane Ortelli. Back in '98, the Porsche works team's one-two finish was unexpected, as the Toyota GT-One, Mercedes CLK-GTR and BMW V12 LM were all quicker, but the Porsches were more reliable.

Driving the race car in the summer of 2013, I have no idea that we'll soon be doing a feature on the road car, but I'll later discover there are a lot of things that are in stark contrast to the '96 car. For a start, the conventional doors of the '96/'97 cars have been replaced with small, upward-sweeping access panels and, having clambered across the broad carbon sill, you find yourself sitting on the right,

because Porsche deemed this would give a better view for most of the tracks where the GT1 would race.

The interior is even more snug and the view out is akin to sitting in a postbox. The one thing you want at Goodwood is a manageable clutch, because you're doing rather more slow manoeuvring through scrutinising crowds than you'd like. To my surprise and relief, the '98 car's left pedal is a doddle, but the sequential gearshift (on the right of the seat) is as stiff and uncooperative as a corpse in a call centre. It takes the mechanic two hands and all his body weight to select first gear after I suggest it's bit reluctant...

I'd hurriedly collared McNish and Porsche Carrera Cup racer Dan Lloyd (who'd driven it the previous day) to ask advice. 'Enjoy the boost,' McNish said, while Lloyd suggested that about 7000rpm was required to get it off the line with any aplomb. Sitting under the gantry waiting for the thumbs up I settle for about 4000rpm, as it sounds like plenty through my helmet and I have no desire to break

the thing. Lloyd is proved right as the car bogs down off the line. McNish is also proved right because after driving through treacle for the first few yards, the boost arrives in alarming fashion. I pull back with all my might for second gear and then we're at the first corner, where the last traces of similarity with the '96 road car fade away. The steering is the opposite of the gearshift: light, assisted and incredibly responsive. It also has no feel, so it's almost alarming when the car darts into the bend like an LMP car.

The Goodwood hill is not the arena for a Le Mans car and by the time I reach the top I'm just glad the car's in one piece (which is more than can be said of the 962 I was meant to be driving). It was a huge privilege to drive it, and I'd love another go on a circuit. One with a long straight. But it's so much more focused than the 993-based car that unless there were serious changes, I'm not surprised the lone road car variant of this carbon-chassis GT1 was never sold and remains in the Porsche museum. **HC**



Top: 1998 GT1 racer won Le Mans, but was beaten by Mercedes in every FIA GT race. **Left:** Henry squeezes into the tight cabin; note the gearshifter to his right

20 20 vision

With increasing pressures to save fuel and reduce emissions, the motor industry is set to embark upon one of its biggest changes of approach ever. We evaluate what these new philosophies will mean for 'The Thrill of Driving'

by MIKE DUFF

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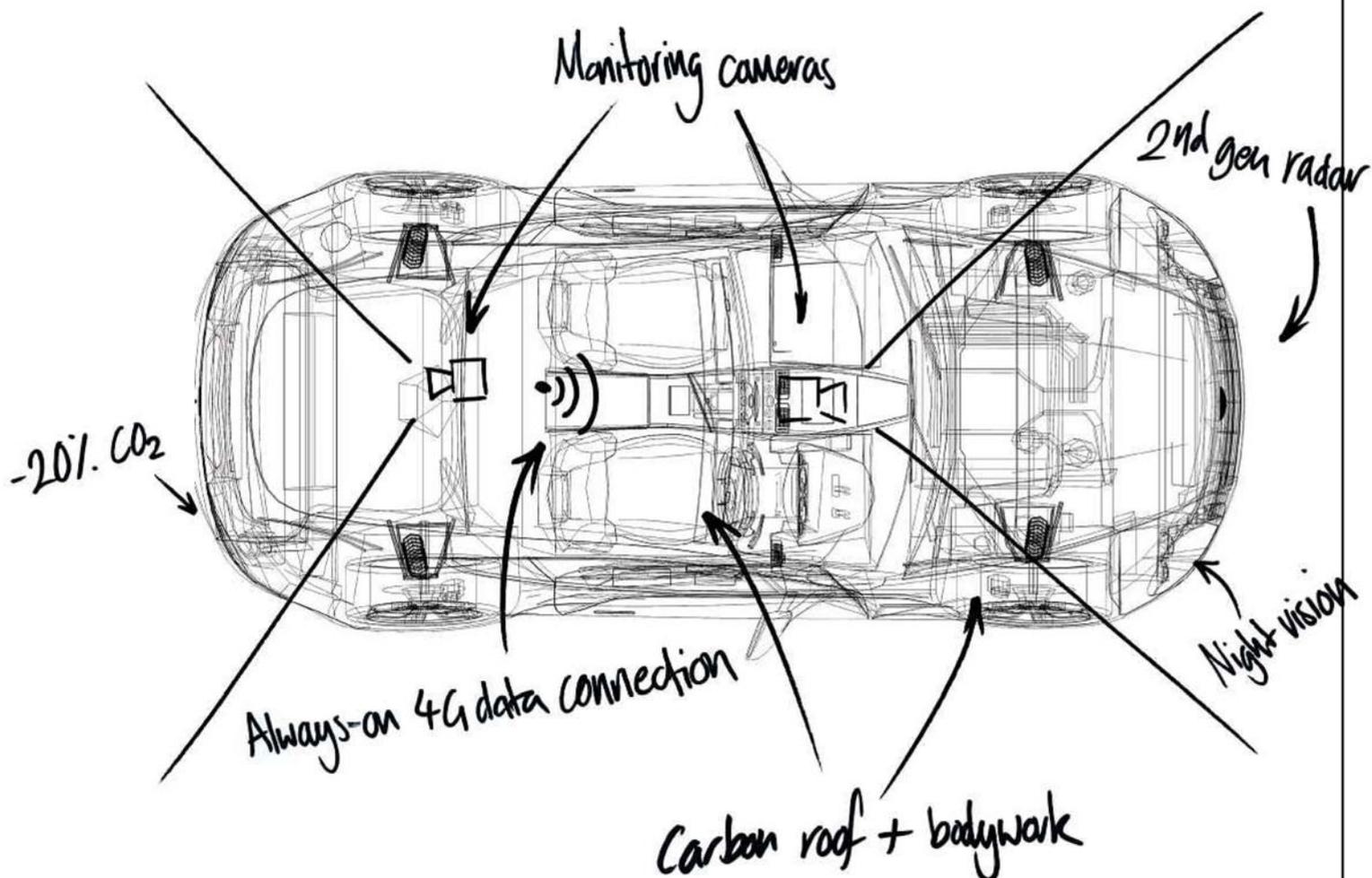
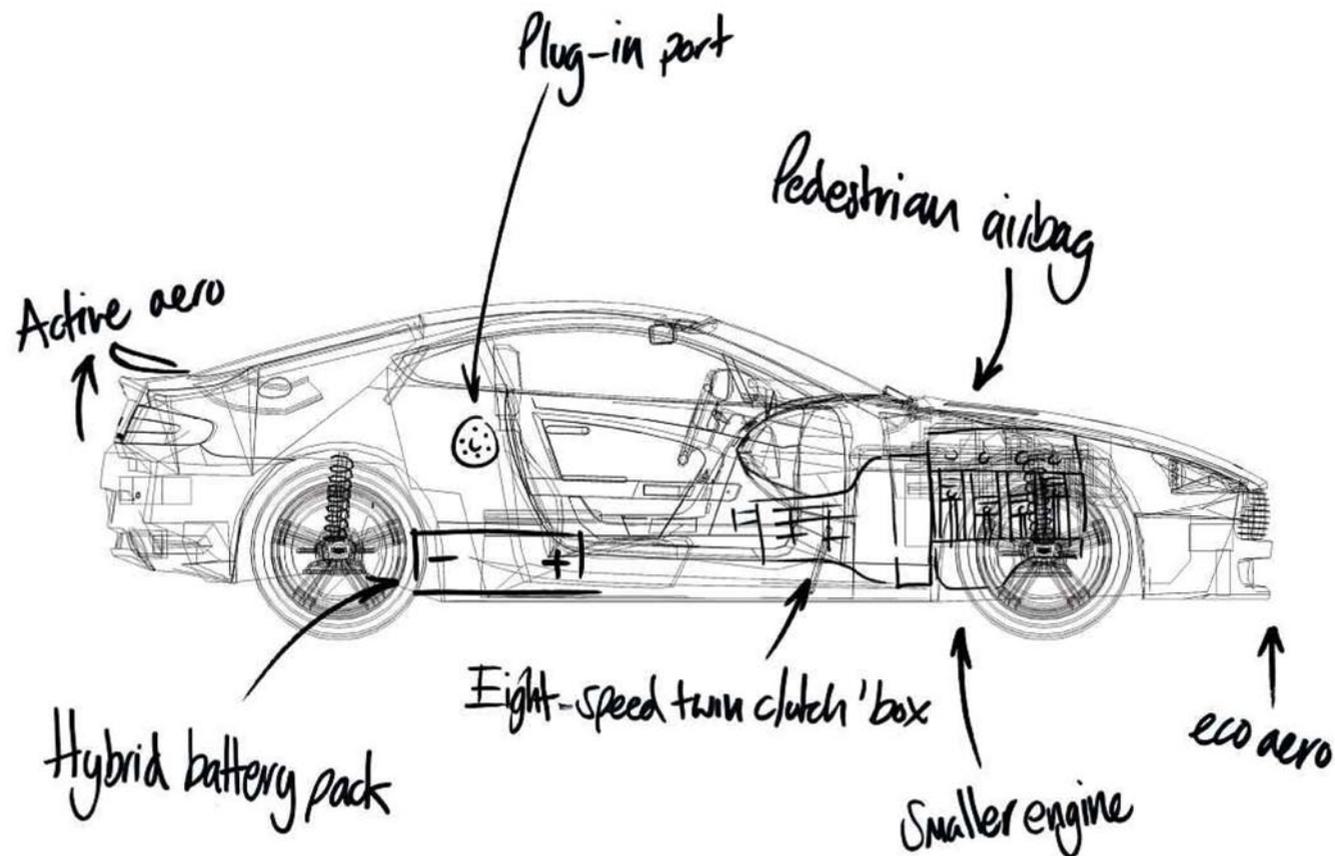
THERE'S AN OBVIOUS RISK

when you try to predict the future – that you'll turn out to be completely wrong. Which is why this isn't an attempt to predict a far-distant future where we'll all drive cars powered by unobtainium fuel cells along glimmering floating expressways.

No, this is **evo**, so we're keeping our feet firmly planted on the ground with our take on what's going to be different about the **evo**-type car in 2020. That's close enough for the motor industry to have a good idea what it will be doing already and for us to cut down on the space-age speculation, but far enough away that we'll still see some genuine and substantial changes.

It's fair to say that the performance car is going to face some serious challenges in the next few years, the enforced reduction in CO2 emissions the most obvious. But there are some reasons to be cheerful too. Cars are set to get lighter, smarter and – thanks to the latest performance hybrid systems – quicker as well.

And although there's obviously some speculation in here – the car industry having failed to make its model plans freely available to us – there's plenty of solid fact, too. We've spoken to Andy Palmer, Nissan's chief planning officer and executive vice-president, about the trends and pressures that are going to change the performance cars of the future.



Engines

The trends that are going to dominate the foreseeable future of the internal combustion engine are both already well underway: downsizing and turbocharging. Engines will become smaller, both in terms of reduced capacity and having fewer cylinders. And, because power outputs will remain broadly flat, turbocharging will be required.

Regardless of their often disappointing real-world economy figures, small turbocharged engines shine brightest when put through the official consumption and emissions tests. Ford and Fiat have already introduced turbocharged two-pots in the lower reaches of their ranges. But in six years' time we can expect that small-capacity engines with fewer than four cylinders will have become commonplace – and will be used to power some surprisingly big cars. We already know that the new Mini's three-cylinder engines will subsequently be used in the rest of the BMW range, meaning that by 2020 we can expect to see three-pot versions of the 3-series and even the 5-series.

The trend will continue further up the tree as well. Porsche is working on a turbocharged four-cylinder engine for the Boxster and the Cayman, although mercifully, Porsche engineering boss Wolfgang Hatz recently told *evo* that the 911 'would always have' a six-cylinder engine. Jaguar insiders also admit the company is considering a four-cylinder version of the F-type.

Indeed, even in the next six years, the naturally aspirated engine is set to become something of an endangered species, one reserved for the cheapest cars (where the additional cost of a turbocharger is



Above: new Mini will get a three-pot motor. **Below:** turbo six replaces naturally aspirated V8 in new M3

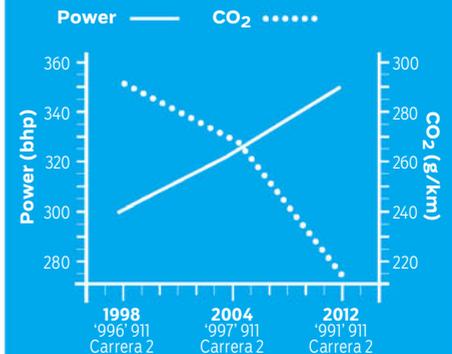
prohibitive) and the most expensive. We know that supercar makers are keen to keep the responses and soundtracks of high-revving non-turbo engines, with Audi sources confirming that the next R8 (and the replacement for the Lamborghini Gallardo) will stick with naturally aspirated engines. But although Ferrari has confirmed that its most expensive models will continue to use self-breathing V12s, we know the company has been working on turbocharged engines for models further down the range.

The pressure of hitting CO2 figures means that engine power outputs have probably peaked already, so performance cars will increasingly be turning to lighter construction or part-electric powertrains to maintain (or increase) pace. 'There's always going to be a space for the muscle car, but the general trend will always be to more power from smaller engines, driven by emissions regulations,' Palmer says. 'Torque and power per cubic capacity is increasing, so the ability to create sports cars continues to exist – but we'll be doing more with less.'



CO₂

Whatever you think of increasingly stringent CO2 targets, they've become a huge driver in car development in Europe – look at the line chart below for just one example. By 2015 all large manufacturers will need to have a 130g/km 'fleet average', reducing to 95g/km by 2020 (well, actually by 2021 after the German car industry did some lobbying). That means in order to continue to produce higher-emitting cars, manufacturers will need to offset them through models that generate less CO2. Smaller manufacturers qualify for a less stringent target of a 25 per cent reduction over 2007 levels. Companies making under 500 cars a year are exempt.



Transmissions

The manual gearbox won't be dead in 2020. But it will be considerably less common than it is now, especially in sports cars where twin-clutch systems are likely to become the norm. And with the evidence suggesting a clear majority of buyers prefer automated transmissions when given the choice, so the argument for offering a manual option will diminish. We know that the new Caterham-Alpine sports car will only come with a twin-clutch 'box, and the trend looks set to grow.

Palmer concurs: 'My honest belief, as much as I'd love to say we're always going to be able to buy a manual transmission, is that there's some point in time when except in very specialist areas, the manual transmission will be a paddle-shift – with what goes on below the surface being a CVT or DCT.'

Hybridisation



Until recently, hybrids were dull appliances best suited to life on a Californian freeway. But as the Porsche 918, McLaren P1 and LaFerrari have shown, part-electric powertrains can also dramatically increase performance. And within the next six years, some of that technology will start trickling down into more affordable models. We know that the next-generation Nissan GT-R, which we'll probably see in 2016, will use hybrid assistance, and other car makers are working on their own systems.

There's an inevitability to the rise of hybrids, largely driven by increasingly tough CO2 emissions standards. Put simply, if we want to carry on enjoying performance cars, it won't be long before electrical assistance becomes an

unavoidable part of the mix.

'The petrol engine is 29 per cent efficient at best, diesels are 35 per cent, fuel cells are about 70 per cent and the electric motor is 90-95 per cent,' Palmer explains. 'So forget the marketing bullshit: when you talk about it purely from an engineering perspective, as you demand lower emissions – or you demand more performance for the same level of emissions – then it's utterly inevitable that you'll have an electric motor somewhere in the system.'

And, of course, nothing other than an electric motor in some cases. Although pure electric cars will still be a minority taste in six years' time, you can bet the level of investment being put into the technology by the motor industry means there will be more of them.

Autonomy

Robot cars. And we said it wasn't going to get too futuristic, didn't we? But we really can expect to see the first generation of autonomous production cars taking to the road by 2020. Mercedes has confirmed there will be a self-driving version of this generation of S-class, and other manufacturers – plus Google – are working on similar systems. The first generation of autonomous cars are likely to be part-time, capable of driving themselves on quiet roads, or in traffic jams, but requiring human input for more complicated situations.

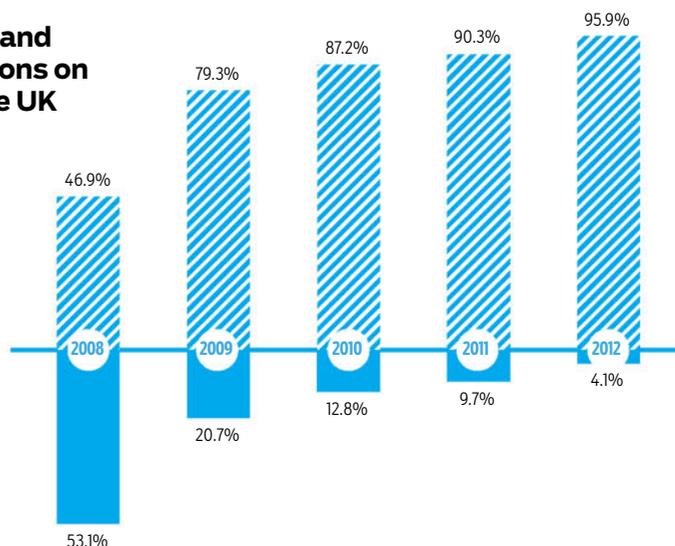
According to Palmer, such systems will also bring dramatic improvements to safety: 'We can't react quickly enough for some situations. The machine is computing ten times as fast as our brain, it's continuously assessing all the escape scenarios. Given the choices, it's going to look for the least harmful. That's how I view it: not having kids killed on the road, but still allowing the enjoyment of driving. One day, just like ABS, it will save your life.'

Above left: Porsche's 918 Spyder derives an extra 282bhp from its brace of electric motors



Split of sequential and manual transmissions on new M3s sold in the UK

 Sequential
 Manual



Left: paddle-shifts will become a much more common sight over the coming years. **Right:** chart shows the rapid decline of the manual gearbox on BMW's M3

Aerodynamics

One of the major growth areas in automotive engineering is set to be aerodynamics, both in terms of efficiency and performance. Until recently, road car aerodynamics meant little more than ensuring stability at speed, and getting a drag coefficient competitive enough for the marketing department to promote.

We've already seen the start of 'eco aero', with things like deployable blanking plates to cover radiator apertures at speed, and odd-looking flaps on bodywork (we're looking at you, Honda Civic). Meeting ultra-tough CO2 targets means

we're likely to see more of the same, including the possibility of details like the rear wheelarch 'spats' of the original Honda Insight.

But it's 'performance' aero where it gets more interesting, with some of the ultra-advanced active systems fitted to cars like the Pagani Huayra (pictured) and the P1 set to filter downwards. Active systems enable cars to trim their aero according to their immediate needs, running as low-drag as possible for maximum straight-line performance, then adding downforce almost instantly for cornering or braking.



Electronics

Have you ever noticed how terribly out-of-date an old satnav system looks? There's no area where cars develop quicker than their electronic architecture, and increased processing power will enable equally dramatic improvements in the next few years.

Manufacturers are already spending far more on the development of what are known as 'user interfaces' than ever before – buyers are increasingly intolerant of a £35,000 car with less functionality than a £350 iPad. By 2020 we can expect that navigation systems will be smarter, with the potential of 'augmented reality' that overlays data onto the windscreen. Navigation systems will also be able to communicate with engines and gearboxes to help make intelligent decisions, such as holding a lower gear if a downhill stretch is approaching, or fully discharging a hybrid battery near the top of an incline.

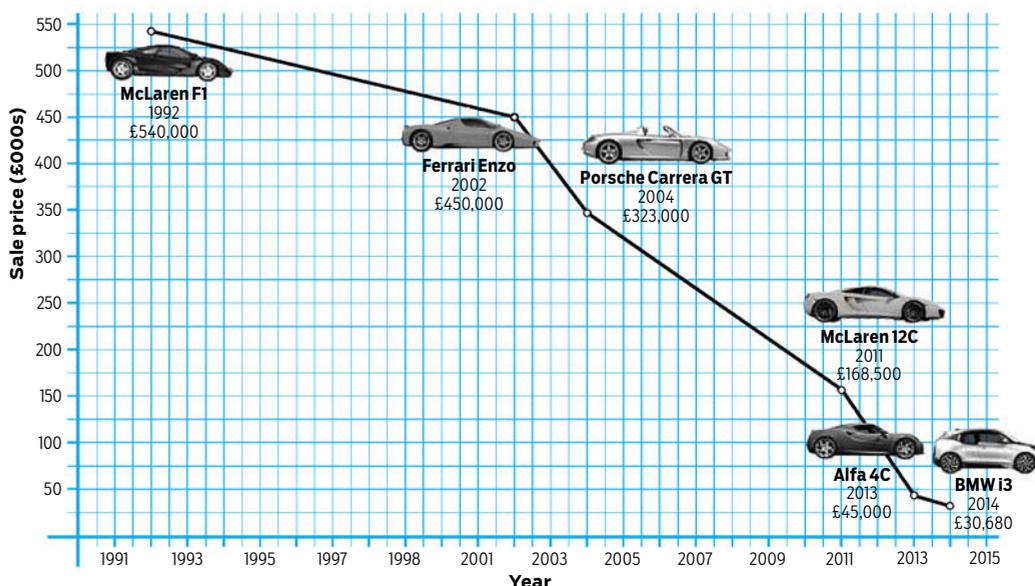
And the active safety systems that have appeared in recent years will also be spreading far and wide, with radar object detection likely to become pretty much standard – or even 'city stop' style active braking systems.

Materials

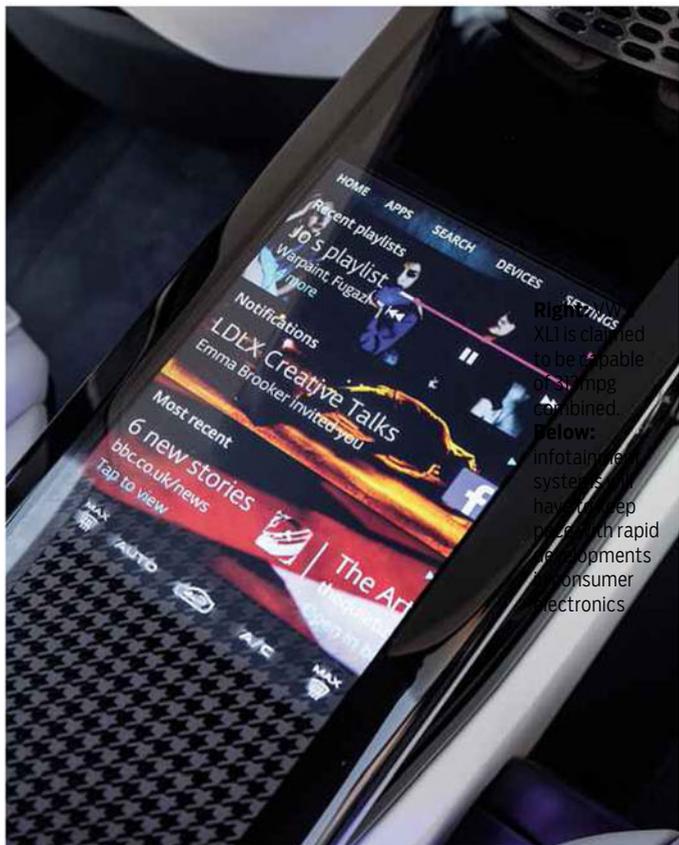
The car of the (near) future will be both lighter and stronger, with composite materials set to move into the mainstream. The rate at which the cost of carbonfibre construction has already fallen has been phenomenal (see graph), and although full-carbon cars will still be rare, part-composite construction will have become commonplace, with even mainstream cars using carbonfibre-reinforced plastic for doors, panels and (through adhesive bonding to metal parts) even structural components.

Developments in metal will play a part, too. Weight reduction targets, again driven by CO2 standards, mean that we will see more aluminium and increasing use of high-strength and ultra-high-strength steels.

Price of cars with carbonfibre chassis



Right: solely the preserve of hypercars as recently as 20 years ago, carbon chassis are now starting to feature on cars the regular buyer can afford



Right: The XL1 is claimed to be capable of 300mpg combined. Below: infotainment systems will have to keep pace with rapid developments in consumer electronics.



So you've read about the changing trends in performance car design and engineering, and hopefully you've got an opinion. If so, we'd love to hear from you because we've joined forces with the Royal College of Arts and Bridgestone to create a template for the **evo** reader's Performance Car of the Future.

How does it work? Visit **evo's** Facebook page and community at evo.co.uk and join the debate – we're looking for your thoughts on engine and drivetrain configuration and type, chassis configuration, number of seats and body style. The brief is relatively open – if you think your ideal performance car of the future should have three seats, an open top and a mid-mounted electric motor driving all four wheels then we look forward to hearing your argument.

evo will aggregate your thoughts and distil these into a brief, then the car design students at the RCA will have two weeks to create sketches that fit this brief. A panel of experts will assess the sketches and interview the students, then the images will be published online. You will then be asked to vote for your favourite designs and the winner will be revealed in **evo** early in 2014...



Volkswagen XL1 driven

WELL, THIS CERTAINLY feels like the future. The Volkswagen XL1 definitely looks like it should be driving through a space-age sky-city, yet this two-seat coupe, created as a proof-of-concept for some of VW's forthcoming eco tech, is set to go into limited production for those who can afford its price tag of around £100,000.

That's a huge amount to pay, even for something that's claimed to be capable of 300mpg, and that price doesn't come close to clawing back the many millions spent to develop it. But up close it feels more like a proper car than an engineering lash-up. Power comes from a mid-mounted two-cylinder 50bhp diesel engine that drives the rear wheels through a twin-clutch gearbox. This works in conjunction with a 27bhp electric motor powered by a rechargeable battery pack.

You get in through gullwing doors and find yourself sitting low in the cabin, acutely aware of the cockpit's narrowness. Driving is as easy as pushing the 'on' button, selecting 'D' and pressing the throttle. The XL1 moves off silently on pure electric power: the motor only kicks in if you make a big throttle push or the battery charge falls too low. It's thrummy when called into action, but not unpleasant. The car feels respectably quick at urban speeds, but the surprises are the weight and chunky feedback of the unassisted steering.

We only got a brief, chaperoned drive in the car but on emptier roads it never felt short of pace. Grip levels are kept considering the pram tyres at the front. Lifting off the throttle puts the car into its 'sail' mode, where it declutches and coasts along to maximise efficiency even further. Light pressure on the brake pedal then adds regenerative braking to recapture otherwise wasted energy.

It isn't a sports car, but it's an interesting car nevertheless. And my final score? Just over 100mpg, without really trying. **MD**



Audi RS4 Avants

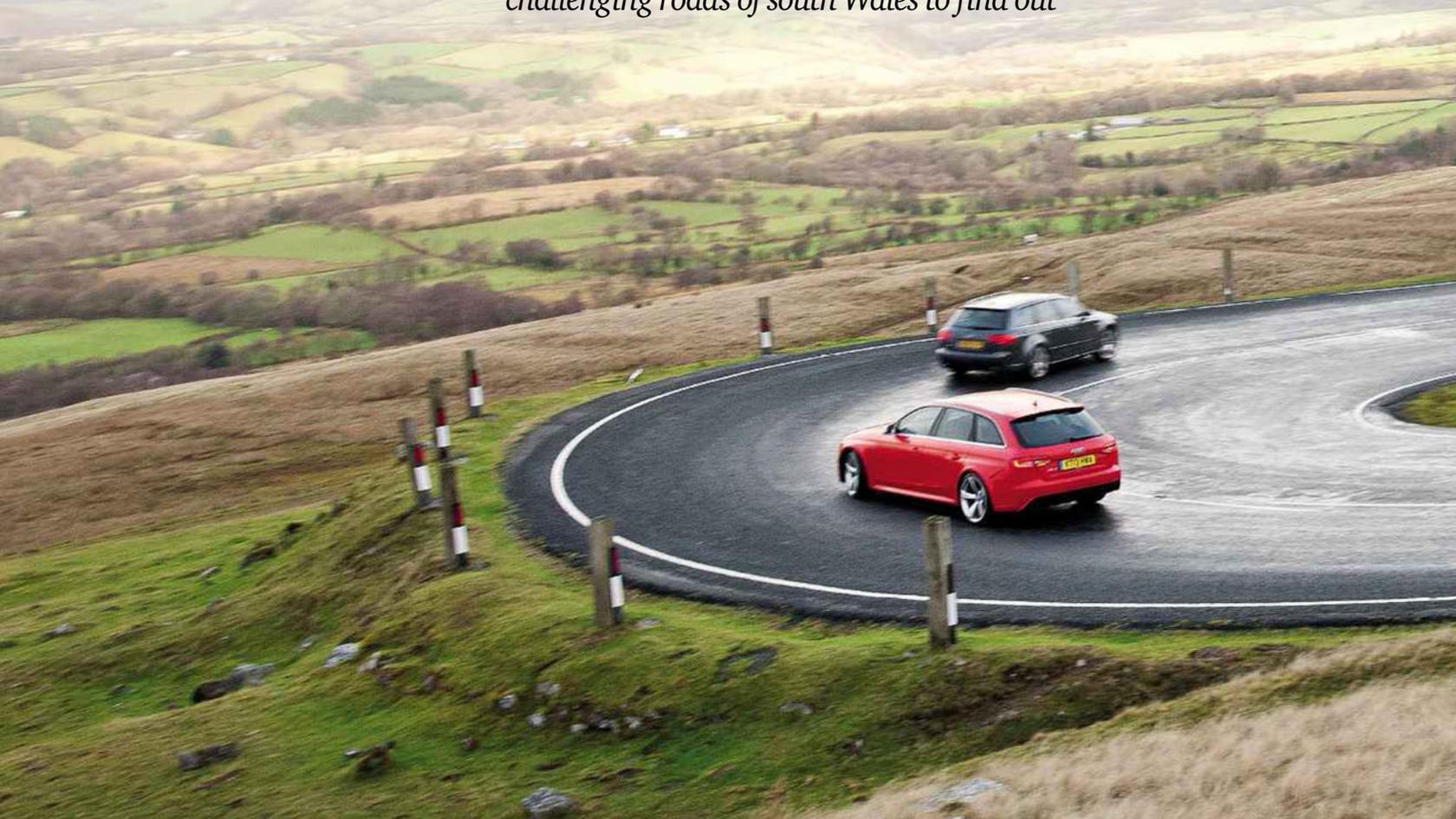
AVANT

by JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY by STUART COLLINS

HARD

Over three generations, the Audi RS4 Avant has become famous for its blend of brute force, all-weather ability and estate practicality. But which is the best model? We take all three to the challenging roads of south Wales to find out



L

LIFESTYLE. A WORD THAT HAS BEEN CLAIMED

by people who work in marketing and talk a lot about 'moving forward'. Or magazines that tell you the only life worth living involves daily trips to Savile Row, long weekends perusing markets in obscure cities just a three-hour flight and two-hour donkey ride away (what better way to soak up the culture?) and many, many spa treatments. It is a word not much used around here. But today I'm going to use it, because I reckon the Audi RS4 might just be the ultimate lifestyle vehicle. Strip away all that fluffy marketing nonsense lazily spooned onto every product ever devised and get to the nub of the L-word, and you get a product that facilitates the way we go about our lives. And whose life wouldn't an RS4 slip seamlessly into and enhance every single day of? I bet each and every one of us has, at one time or another, quietly recognised that we 'could really do with an RS4'. So we all *need* an RS4. But which one? Today – grey, cold, damp, Welsh, perfect – we'll find out.

The Audi RS4 story started in 2000 with the B5 version and it set a template that remains as compelling now as it was over a decade ago: sure-footed quattro drivetrain, relentless performance, a quietly sinister aesthetic and the sense that 100 years from now, this car will still perform with the same deadly combination of speed, stability and sheer grip. In an inspired move, the original RS4 was only available as an estate, and when you see its flared arches, gorgeous nine-spoke alloys (which at the time had a reputation for



'THE TEMPLATE
REMAINS AS
COMPELLING NOW
AS IT WAS OVER A
DECADE AGO'



bending at the mere sight of a pothole) and clenched-fist stance, you can understand why the world fell in love with the formula. And that's before you factor-in a 2.7-litre twin-turbo V6 with 375bhp and 325lb ft...

The second-generation car could scarcely have been more different in many respects. Out went the estate-only configuration, the heavily turbocharged engine and a bit of the sense that the RS4 was just a skunkworks project. However, those changes were resoundingly offset by the star feature of the B7 RS4 when it was launched in 2006: a normally aspirated 4.2-litre V8 that revved to 8250rpm and produced 414bhp. It was as if some rogue BMW M engineers had seen into the future and decided to get out before the turbos arrived, infiltrating quattro GmbH and living out their

wildest engineering dreams. One or two might have even made it into the chassis department, because Audi's usual 50:50 torque split was tweaked so that 60 per cent of drive went to the rear wheels. Saloon or Avant, this RS4 was something special, with a sensational six-speed manual gearbox and a chassis that coupled Audi's usual stability-first DNA with some real fluency, adjustability and entertainment. It cemented the RS4's legendary status, showed us that Audi had the ability and desire to take on BMW head-to-head in dynamic terms and plain just made us happy.

The latest B8 RS4 positively ripples with intent: box arches scribed confidently onto its sides, a grille that's bigger and more imposing than ever and xenons that can melt skin at 300 yards. It has the same wondrous 4.2-litre V8, now with 444bhp, while the 40:60 quattro drivetrain is now supplemented by a faster-acting crown-wheel centre differential. On top of this is an optional torque-vectoring rear Sport differential that can accelerate the outside rear wheel to minimise understeer and maybe, just maybe, even create a little bit of yaw (that's oversteer to you and me). Throw in a seven-speed twin-clutch S-tronic gearbox, Dynamic Steering variable-ratio rack (optional) and the latest version of Dynamic Ride Control, which debuted on the B7 and links diagonally opposing dampers with an oil line and a hydraulic valve and counters pitch and roll, and you have one hell of a way to cover ground quickly. Which is sort of what an RS4 is all about.

Which brings us neatly onto another bit of marketing speak: the elephant in the room. In this case it's an agitated bull that's just stubbed its toe, namely: why is **evo** celebrating the RS4 line? You see, the RS4 isn't your typical **evo** hero car. In fact the B5 version came fifth in a test of,

erm, five all the way back in issue 031 (my very first issue as staff writer) and even the mighty B7 (in saloon form) lost out to the supreme BMW M3 CS in issue 088. I guess that was the problem: the competition. The original RS4 didn't really have any genuine rivals so it found itself up against some pretty tasty metal come group test time. The other four cars in that test were an E46 M3, a Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34 vintage), a Porsche 996 Carrera and, believe it or not, a TVR Tuscan. That the RS4 wasn't as sharp, exciting or agile as cars much more focused is hardly a surprise... and it was just bad luck that the V8 version ran into the M3 CS, a car with a rare balance and searing drivetrain all of its own. I'm not going to pretend that any RS4 is the last word in feedback, involvement and fun, of course. But today I suspect they might shine a little more brightly.

In Imola Yellow, the original RS4 looks

nothing short of sensational, and this car, from Audi UK's historic fleet, is completely as new. In fact, with just 2251 miles showing when I drop into its gorgeous, slim-hipped Recaro and reach out for the rough Alcantara steering wheel, it effectively is a new car. And if you popped down to your local Audi dealer and this was waiting for you, even today you'd be very happy indeed. The seats are just superb and instead of great big 'sporty' chairs that move every which way and have adjustable side bolsters and squabs and weigh about 75kg, they have a beautiful minimalism. There are slivers of carbonfibre arcing across the elegant dash, soft black leather and Alcantara are liberally applied and even the centre console controls – typically the first thing to age – look pretty fresh.

It feels small, this RS4, and those lovely seats are set a little too high, so the scuttle feels low and you just want to snuggle down a bit to feel

Opposite page (from top):

B8 tackles Black Mountain road in south Wales; B5 chases B7 in conditions that play to the RS4s' strengths; B7's 414bhp 4.2-litre V8.

Below: B7 can be induced into oversteer, especially on damp surfaces



Audi RS4 Avants

Right: B7 had a six-speed manual – the last gearbox of its kind in an RS4. **Middle right:** B5's simple leather buckets are comfortable, if set a little too high



**'YOU FLING IT AROUND,
WAIT FOR THE NOSE TO
BITE, THEN STOMP ON THE
THROTTLE AND FEEL ITS
FAIRGROUND TOP-END
DELIVERY ONCE AGAIN'**

more of a part of the car. It's a feeling that soon disappears but it's a bit disappointing after the anticipation of the hunkered-down exterior. Twist the key and the twin-turbo V6 catches with a deep boom, and as it settles into an idle the car shuffles with the heavy beat of the motor. For an Audi there's a proper hot-rod vibe to this thing, and catching a glimpse of the ballooning arches in the mirrors just adds to the drama. The lever for the six-speed manual 'box is covered in the same Alcantara as the big, squishy-rimmed steering wheel and although it has a long, loose throw, I'm just happy to be in a compact, grunty machine with three pedals and a stick that needs stirring around.

First surprise: the ride is pretty supple and the slightly slow steering has some genuine feedback wriggling back through it. It's funny, back in 2000 we found the steering to be too weighty and rather numb, but in these days of electric power assistance and variable-ratio racks, it actually feels quite natural. That's progress for you. Anyway, the next shock comes in the form of the engine, which might be turbocharged but just loves to rev. It's a fantastic motor, pulling hard from 2500rpm and then

getting a second wind over 5000rpm, from where it hauls to 7000rpm with ever-increasing ferocity. It feels every one of those 375bhp. What's really nice is that it's got plenty of torque if you just want to make effortless progress but there's still reward if you decide to work the engine hard, with pace, noise and excitement ramping up alongside your work rate.

The balance of the chassis itself is less of a shock because this RS4 ultimately slips into the grasp of understeer and hasn't got the adjustability to snap itself back out. However, because it feels a relatively small car and because there's some suppleness to work with, it takes on a kind of super hot hatch feel. You fling it around, wait for the nose to bite, then stomp on the throttle and feel its fairground top-end delivery once again. It might not be the last word in crisp response or agility, but it feels pretty exciting and typically indomitable.

It's only undone on very bumpy surfaces, when the nose-heavy architecture can have the front crashing and heaving uncomfortably and have you looking for a button to switch to a stiffer damper setting to get the weight back under control. There isn't one, so you just have



to dial back your commitment and enjoy the B5 at a slightly less frenetic pace. Okay, it's no TVR Tuscan, BMW M3 or 911 Carrera at maximum attack, but it's a mighty fine way to cover ground and age has blessed it with a warm charm, too.

If that sounds patronising, then no such allowances are required for the B7 RS4. We've always been huge fans of this car at *evo* and these roads and this test only serve to heighten our enjoyment of this subtle sledgehammer of a car. Compared to the original model, it feels incredibly responsive, supremely controlled and also has a capacity for interaction and entertainment that its predecessor couldn't muster. All in all, it's pretty damn superb.

Sadly, the grippy Alcantara wheel is gone but as soon as the 4.2-litre V8 starts with the twist of a key and a prod of the starter button located on the transmission tunnel, it hardly seems to matter. It positively explodes into life and has that gorgeous heavy-metal-smashing-into-more-heavy-metal sound that is unmistakably V8. The six-speed manual 'box has a slightly shorter throw and a light, almost hollow feel to it, but in combination with the faster steering rack it seems a perfect fit. Within two gearshifts

you just know this RS4 is going to be a bit special and after 20 miles you will find yourself reaching for your phone and scrolling through classified ads for a very fast Audi estate car. Or if you're in Wales, cursing your lack of 3G signal.

So what makes it so special? Well, the engine has a terrifically weighty punch in the mid-range but then zings to 8250rpm with a perfectly judged mix of aggression and honey-coated smoothness. What's really impressive, though, is that the engine's precision and reach are matched move for move by the chassis. It has an always-present tension and agility but never feels artificially pointy or contrived. There's real subtlety to the way this car operates: the damping is supremely controlled and the balance itself has a real adjustability – both on and off the power. Turn in too quickly and there's some understeer, but a simple lift of the throttle will snap the nose back into line. You might even sense a trace of mild oversteer if you're going really quickly. With practice you'll nail the entry speed to avoid any push, allowing you to commit to the throttle and feel the car shift into a neutral to tail-led stance. You might even need a tiny bit of corrective lock if

the surface is damp, but that's hardly the point. The real satisfaction comes from feeling the car respond to your inputs and its mix of efficiency and indulgence.

The B7 stands up to this scrutiny with ease. This particular example is fitted with the optional (and rare) ceramic brakes, which are both more progressive and much more resilient than the early car's cast-iron set-up, and the car just seems to shrug off everything you can throw at it. Okay, so if you're feeling especially keen to lose your licence you will eventually unravel its composure – particularly when braking hard on a poor surface, where the car weaves around quite surprisingly. And sometimes you feel the hammer up front thumping down at the road surface and into its bump-stops. But for the most part it melds iron-fisted control with a real appetite to change direction like no other front-engined Audi we know.

So the new B8-spec RS4 has much to live up to. It looks the part and sounds even better, V8 breathing deeper and howling much more vociferously than in the B7. It's also thunderously fast – thanks in part to the incredibly smooth S-tronic gearbox – and even

Audi RS4 Avants

more responsive. But whereas the last car's intrinsic tension translated into linear response and an assured calmness at any speed, the new B8 model seems so flooded with energy that every control is corrupted with a jumpiness that disconnects you from the car and the road passing beneath its monster (optional) 265/30 ZR20 tyres. Compared to its beautifully resolved predecessor, it simply feels clumsy.

Chief culprit is the Dynamic Steering system, which provides the on-paper dream combination of a super-fast steering rack at low speeds for agility and accuracy, and a slower, more stability-minded rack at higher speeds. In practice, it's just awful. Such is its variance in weighting and response that you never really know what will happen at the next corner. In slow turns it's super-light and incredibly nervous, while in faster turns the ratio feels natural but such is the increase in weight



Above: B5 handles well but can feel less stable than its successors, largely due to a less stiff bodysell. **Below:** box arches on latest B8 are less pronounced



'HERE WAS A CAR THAT DEMONSTRATED THAT SAFETY AND STABILITY CAN GO HAND-IN-HAND WITH EXCITEMENT'

that it feels like the steering has locked solid, making for mild panic rather than reassurance. Thankfully the system is optional but as it's bundled up in the appealing-sounding Sports Package (including 20in wheels, Dynamic Ride Control and a sports exhaust), I expect 99 per cent of RS4s will be thus afflicted.

The sense of adjustability has also been lost in this new car despite the promise of faster-acting four-wheel drive and the clever Sport differential. It's odd because in the S4 the Sport diff replicates the B7 RS4's ability to shift its balance under power, but this RS4 displays little in the way of adjustability at all. For the most part it just grips and grips. Odd milliseconds of understeer are quickly eliminated and there's never a moment when the rear axle alters its line even a fraction. The adjustable dampers provide control, but the sense of the car working with the road has been sacrificed and none of the car's damper settings (Comfort,

Auto, Dynamic) feels quite right. Comfort lacks outright control and Dynamic is simply wrong-footed by all but the smoothest of surfaces.

It's a deflating end to the day. There's no question that the latest RS4 is faster, even better built and just as well suited to life in general as its predecessors. Yet it's a great shame that the direction taken by the B7 RS4 has seemingly been abandoned. Here was a car that demonstrated that Audi's traditional strengths could be integrated into a genuinely engaging drivers' car and still shine incredibly brightly. That safety, stability and traction can go hand-in-hand with excitement and adjustability. It's a lesson that we can only hope will be remembered when the next RS4 is developed.

Until then we await the next legendary RS4 with relish and take comfort from that fact that somebody somewhere within the walls of quattro GmbH understands what separates a great car from a good one. ✕

Specifications

AUDI RS4 AVANT (B5)

Engine	V6, 2671cc, twin-turbo
Power	375bhp @ 6100-7000rpm
Torque	325lb ft @ 2500-6000rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive
Front suspension	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Ventilated discs, 360mm front, 312mm rear, ABS
Wheels	8.5 x 18in front and rear
Tyres	255/35 ZR18 front and rear
Weight (kerb)	1620kg
Power-to-weight	236bhp/ton
0-62mph	4.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	170mph (claimed)
Price new	£46,500 (2000)
Value today	£8000-12,000
Rating	★★★★☆

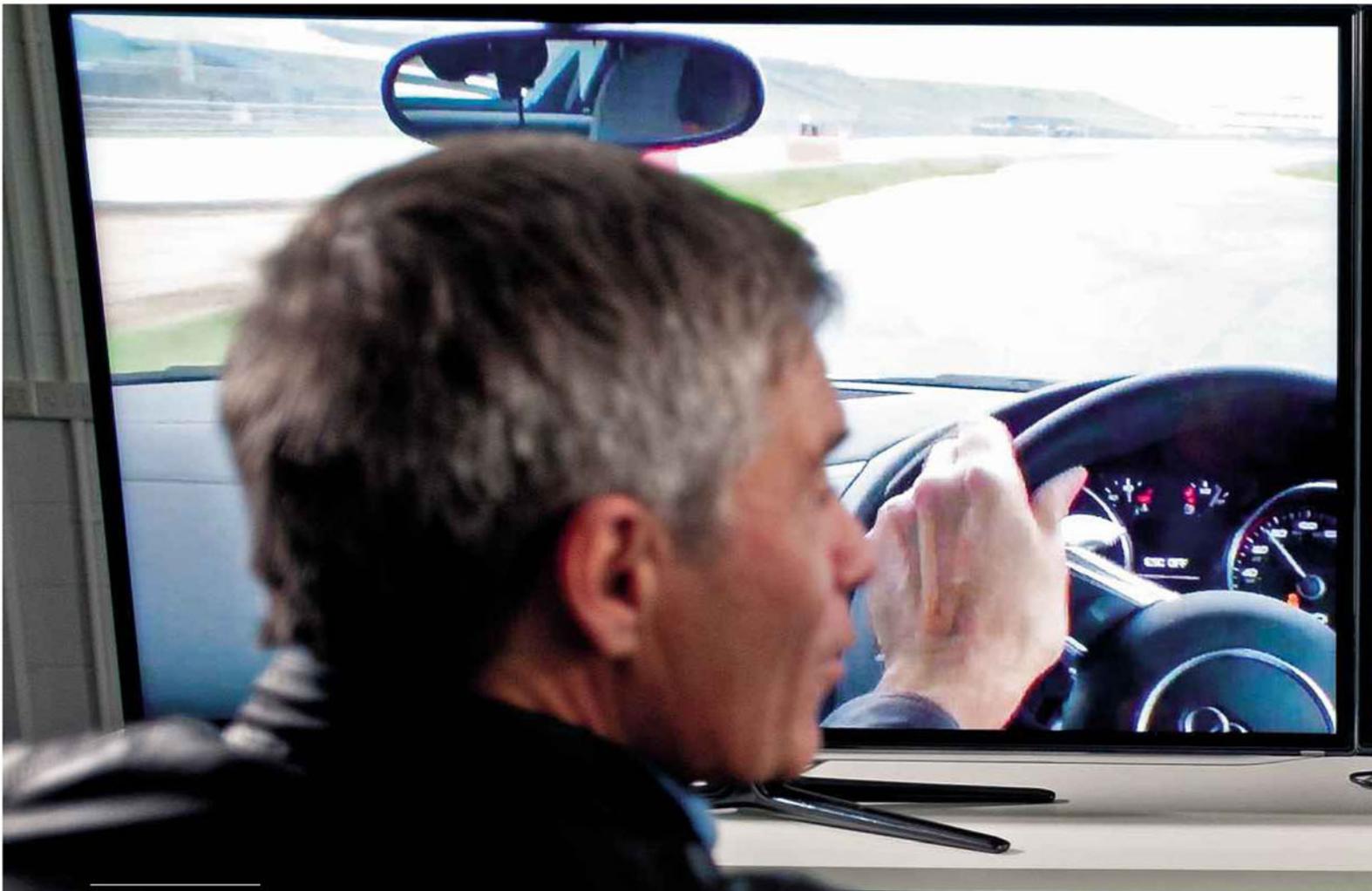
AUDI RS4 AVANT (B7)

Engine	V8, 4163cc
Power	414bhp @ 7800rpm
Torque	317lb ft @ 5500rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive, electronic diff lock, ESP
Front suspension	Four-link, coil springs, DRC dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, DRC dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Ventilated discs, 365mm fr, 324mm rear, ABS, EBD (ceramics optional)
Wheels	8.5 x 18in front and rear
Tyres	255/40 R18 front and rear
Weight (kerb)	1710kg
Power-to-weight	246bhp/ton
0-62mph	4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Price new	£51,255 (2007)
Value today	£15,000-25,000
Rating	★★★★☆

AUDI RS4 AVANT (B8)

Engine	V8, 4163cc
Power	444bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque	317lb ft @ 4000-6000rpm
Transmission	Seven-speed S-tronic DCT, four-wheel-drive, Sport differential
Front suspension	Five-link, coil springs, DRC adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Trapezoidal link, coil springs, DRC adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Ventilated discs, 365mm front, 324mm rear, ABS
Wheels	9 x 20in front and rear (optional)
Tyres	265/30 ZR20 front and rear (optional)
Weight (kerb)	1795kg
Power-to-weight	251bhp/ton
0-62mph	4.7sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited, 174mph optional)
Price new	£54,925
Value today	On sale now
Rating	★★★★☆





by NICK TROTT

PHOTOGRAPHY by STUART COLLINS

PIXEL AND MR PERFECT

Tiff Needell and Henry Catchpole take part in a very unusual race at Silverstone: Tiff in an Audi R8, and Henry in the same car via the wonders of Xbox One and Forza Motorsport 5. Who wins?



W

WE'VE BEEN WORKING WITH TIFF

Needell for a couple of years now and it's been a revealing and memorable time. Watching him take a Pagani Huayra by the scruff of the neck on a slippery track at Blyton Park in early winter was a highlight, as was witnessing a twin drift in an Alpina B3 GT3 with Dickie Meaden in a C63 AMG Black Series just inches apart on eCoty 2012. His skill level is off the scale, as is his total professionalism.

Not only that, but even in his seventh decade there's nothing that's off-limits. He returned to racing his 1971 Formula Ford in 2013 and will jump at any and every opportunity to drive a fast car on a fast track. We've never seen Tiff shirk a responsibility, or even look in the slightest bit fazed at a challenge. Except possibly now, that is.

It's late November and we find ourselves at a greasy Silverstone National Circuit with two Audi R8s, one of which is digital (we'll explain in a bit). Tiff has just returned from a sighting lap in the real R8 with his eyes on stalks: "The track is like ice. Ice!" he exclaims before disappearing off to find a coffee. Or a Valium.

I've just filled in a risk assessment form that explains how Tiff has never experienced an incident in 27 years of track and road testing

‘IN A SLIGHTLY SURREAL MOMENT, TIFF EGGS HIMSELF ON’

for camera, which settles Silverstone’s nerves somewhat. Two corners into his first lap, Tiff has a half-spin under the circuit’s CCTV cameras. I mentally scream: ‘No! No! No! Not after I just handed over that form!’ Tiff, though, as he tends to do, rescues the spin and carries on. The next time past the pits, he’s flat-out.

Above the pits, Henry Catchpole is racing the digital R8 via the wonders of *Forza Motorsport 5* with far fewer consequences: indeed, he’s tucking into a KitKat and reversing the game every time he spins. Which is often. The bizarreness of the situation is difficult to ignore: we’re at the home of the British Grand Prix racing the virtual against the reality. And while Tiff exercises his considerable talent keeping the real R8 on track, Henry exercises his jaw with another KitKat. How does he stay so slim?

Once the circuit has dried enough to give equal conditions for our two contenders, we film an in-car hot lap of Silverstone with Tiff at the wheel, before showing it on a secondary screen next to the one Henry is using for *Forza 5*. The aim is not so much to beat Tiff’s time, but to witness just how close *Forza* is to reality by studying racing lines, steering, throttle and braking application, and by watching the trackside environment, revs, gearchange points and overall sense of speed. We’ve aligned the settings on the cars as best we can, with stability

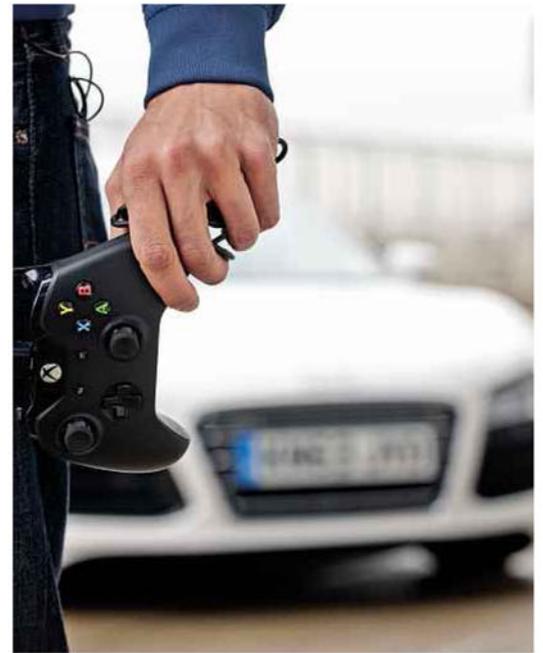
systems switched off on both and all other assists (racing line, auto-correct, etc.) disabled.

It starts well. Studying the TV screens for a point on the track where we can align the cars, we notice that on the pit straight both the *Forza R8* and the real thing are pulling exactly the same revs, in exactly the same gear, at exactly the same point on the track. We pause both the video replay of Tiff’s lap, and Henry’s *Forza* lap, then release simultaneously. The race is on.

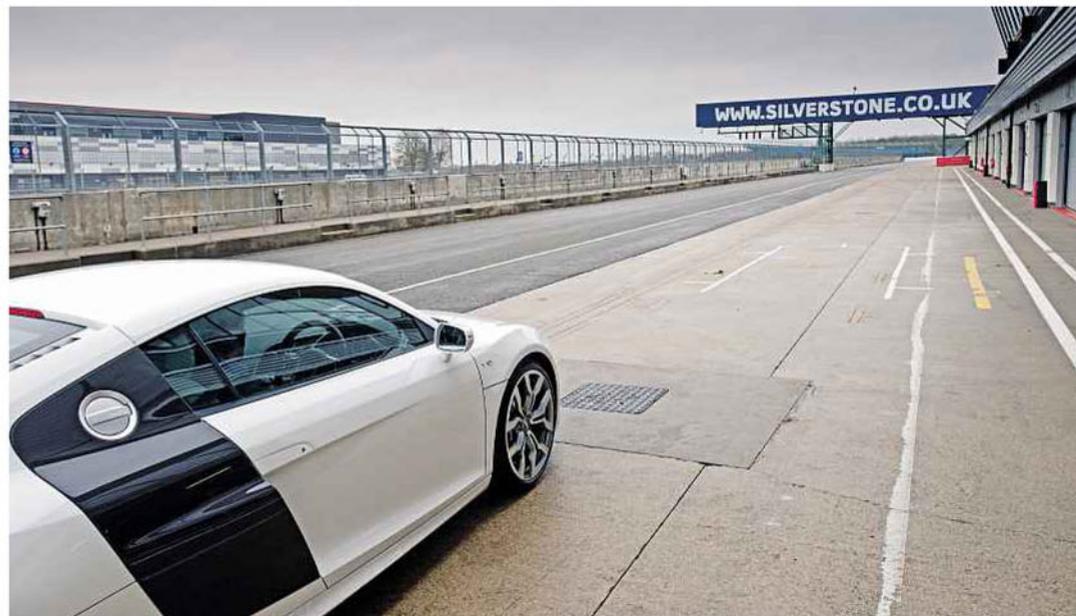
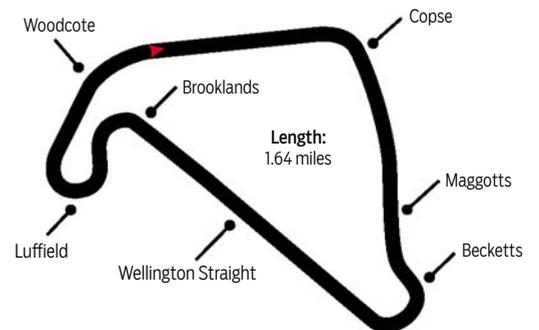
Henry and Tiff immediately hit the braking area for Copse. It’s clear Tiff is still feeling for grip, with a cautious approach on turn-in but a hard application of throttle when the quattro four-wheel drive hooks up. It results in a clean trajectory and a strong exit towards Maggotts and Becketts. It’s a binary approach that reflects what Tiff is feeling through the steering wheel and the seat of the pants. When he senses grip, he goes for it. When he doesn’t, he’s patient.

Henry is more flamboyant. He brakes later for Copse, with the ABS buzzing through the controller. The front struggles to hook up into the corner, so Henry trims the line with a lift. Suddenly, it switches to oversteer and Henry has to let the car ride the corner out in a spectacular four-wheel drift. We’re all impressed – even driftmeister Tiff applauds – but having to wait for the *Forza R8* to hook up means Tiff enters the braking zone for Maggotts a car-length ahead. In a slightly surreal moment, Tiff, ever the competitor, eggs himself on.

However, he might be celebrating too soon. Henry has nailed Maggotts and, more importantly, the exit of Becketts onto the Wellington Straight. Tiff struggles with understeer and has to wait a *loooooong* time before getting on the power. Henry grabs the advantage with a clean exit and charges



Silverstone National Circuit





Left: Henry tries to shut out a distracting Needell.
Below left: Nick and Tiff compare notes on Silverstone grip levels



under the bridge halfway down the straight neck-and-neck with the real R8. Then Henry brakes later and deeper into Brooklands. Tiff goes quiet. This is going to be close.

Luffield proves a fascinating corner, one which highlights the differences between the virtual and the real. Tiff, with his senses receiving far more messages than Henry's, is patient through this long, painfully slow corner. There's no point hurrying it as a good exit is required to get the best possible run to the finish line. Tiff waits until those subtle messages from the tarmac sink in, then nails it.

Henry is more exploratory, pushing the

car and the steering with rapid jabs on the controller to 'feel' for grip. Tiff doesn't need to do this as the grip levels make themselves clear through his fingers and the seat. He exits Woodcote with all four wheels hooked up and charges for the line... but Henry's approach has also worked. Perhaps more by luck than judgement, and undoubtedly because the consequences are far less painful should he overcook it, Henry is on the throttle earlier out of Woodcote and is clawing back time. Tiff goes quiet. Again. Tiff is never quiet. He's worried.

The cars charge over the line. Tiff records a 1:07.9, just a tenth quicker than Henry. We're

amazed that such a small margin separates the virtual from the reality, so later on, when the cameras aren't rolling, we try again. Tiff laps in 1:06.4. Henry, with far more confidence, practice and KitKats in his belly records 1:06.0. Then Tiff goes out again and nails a 1:05.2. With darkness falling, we call a halt to proceedings, but not before someone suggests repeating the exercise at Spa next year... ❌



VIDEO
 See Tiff and Henry go head-to-head online
 Visit youtube.com/evotv or evo.co.uk



Forza Motorsport 5: car highlights



Alfa Romeo 8C
 Sublime styling, wonderful soundtrack. Alfa at its best



LaFerrari
 Drive it now on *Forza 5* and you drive it before real customers take delivery



BMW 1M Coupe
 Turbocharged power, locking diff, short wheelbase – what's not to like?



Ford Sierra RS500
 An *evo* favourite and arguably the most desirable Ford since the GT40



Lotus Esprit V8
 Lacked the exotic flair of its Italian rivals, but few cars steer better



Aston Martin Vanquish
 V12 soundtrack and supercar-rivalling pace make this a favourite

A

A RED CHEVROLET CORVETTE sits in the sun beside a lonely diner in the desert, right next to Route 66. It feels like a film set – or a horrendous cliché. In truth, it's a bit of both. And barring the sudden arrival of a

squad of cheerleaders, or a marching sousaphone band playing 'Louie Louie', the scene could hardly look more stereotypically American. It feels like the Fonz will show up if we hang around for long enough.

The reality is different. This bit of Route 66, reputedly the 'dark desert highway' of 'Hotel California', has long been bypassed by Interstate 40. Now the sparse traffic is a mixture of nostalgic tourists, US Marines being acclimatised to desert warfare at the vast Air Ground Combat Center – and film companies looking for locations. Despite the promise implicit in its neon sign, Roy's Motel and Café can't offer a bed for the night or even a hot meal. These days, other than selling souvenirs, its main purpose seems to be as an all-American location for filming and photo shoots.

But it's the Corvette, the all-new seventh-generation version of America's original sports car, also known by its brought-back 'Stingray' name badge, that is probably





by MIKE DUFF

PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDREW YEADON

AMERICAN IDOL

The Corvette is one of US motoring's most famous names, but its appeal to British audiences has always been limited. We travel to California to find out if the new, seventh-generation version can change all that



Corvette Stingray

the thing in this image that has diverged furthest from your expectations.

A preliminary scan of the spec sheet for the C7 Vette is likely to highlight the similarities to its predecessors rather than its differences. Under the bonnet sits a big 6.2-litre V8 that, somewhat improbably now we're well inside the second decade of the 21st century, still operates its valves via pushrods. This works with a rear-mounted transaxle to give near-optimal 50:50 weight distribution – another familiar character trait. And yes, before you ask, the rear suspension does still use that infamous transverse leaf spring.

But keep digging and you find there's plenty of new tech here as well. The V8 boasts both direct injection and selective cylinder shut-down. The bodyshell is aluminium, with

Opposite page: sequences of corners are a rarity in the Mojave Desert. **Below right:** interior finish is vastly improved, but UK cars will still be left-hand drive. **Bottom:** oversteer is tough to generate on dry surfaces – unless they're dusty, too

plastic panels and a carbonfibre bonnet and roof. Multi-mode stability control (including an aggressive Track mode) and switchable dampers are standard across the range, too.

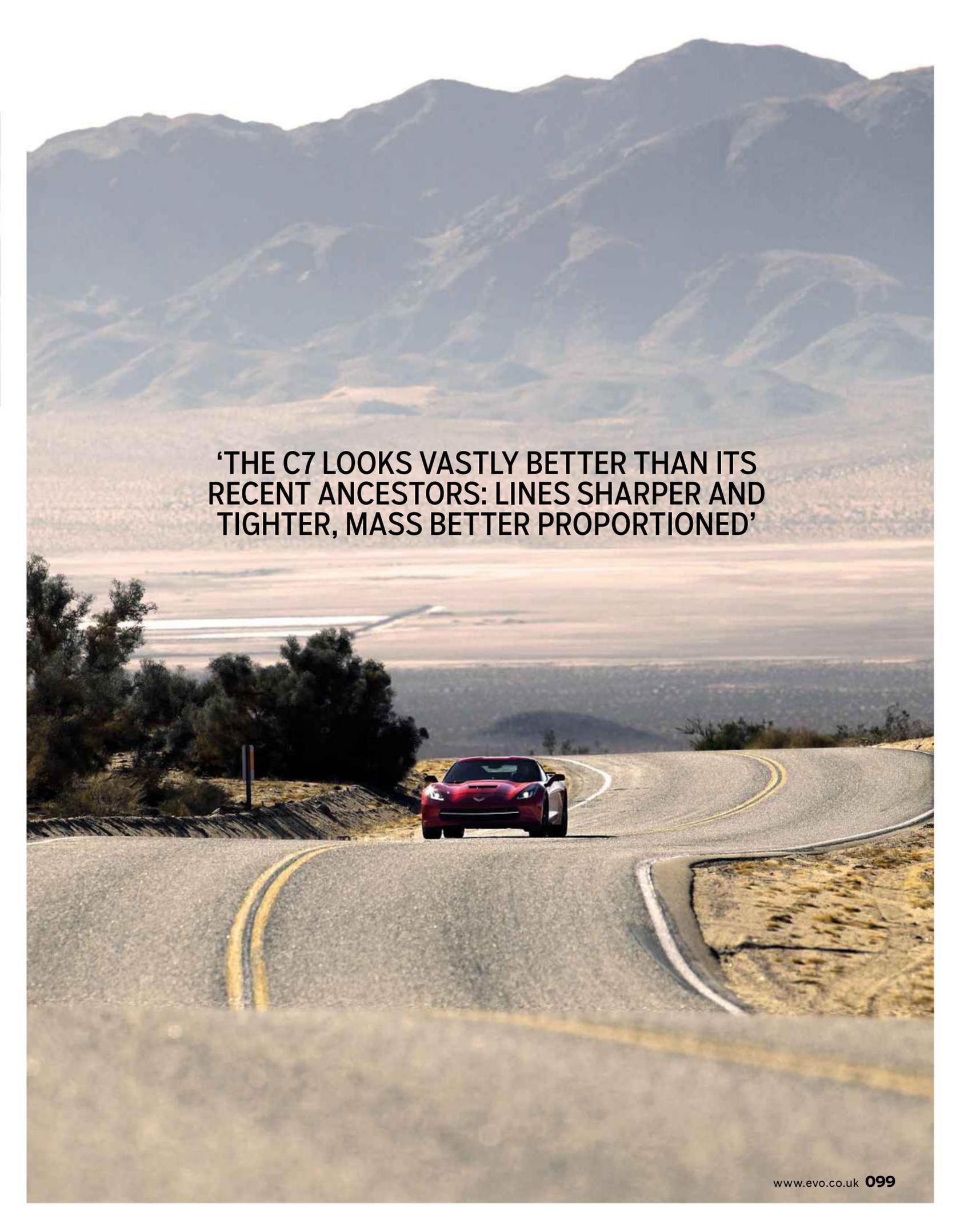
But the real jaw-dropping moment comes when you see the price tag. Admittedly it's artificially deflated by the pound's uncharacteristic strength against the dollar, but our test car's basic \$53,800 works out at around £33,000. Even with pretty much every option box ticked, including the one for the sports exhaust that brings power up to 465bhp, the car GM has provided us with is \$62,085 – around £38,000 at current exchange rates.

Of course, those numbers don't matter. When Corvettes cross the Atlantic their price tags swell as much as their relevance shrinks. We already know the official EU-spec car will cost £61,495 when it gets here, and that's with a steering wheel on the wrong side for us Brits. But in the US, the Stingray is \$30,000 (c£18,500) less than a base Porsche 911 and



has a better power-to-weight ratio. It's enough to get me considering how to get a green card.

BEFORE TODAY, I'VE ONLY SEEN THE Stingray on show stands. But now I'm staring at this Torch Red example in bright Californian sunlight, and it looks good. Indeed, it pulls off the neat trick of looking both new and instantly familiar. For my money the C7 looks vastly better than its recent ancestors: lines sharper and tighter, mass better proportioned. Parts of it have clearly drawn inspiration from elsewhere: the front end bears a distinct resemblance to the Ferrari 599 and there's a hint of Nissan GT-R in the side view and the shape of the glasshouse. And yet it's still instantly recognisable as a Corvette. During our time together the car is correctly identified by almost everyone we meet, including (and I promise I'm not making this one up) a one-eyed grandmother.

A red sports car is driving on a winding asphalt road that curves through a vast, mountainous landscape. The mountains in the background are layered and hazy, suggesting a high-altitude or desert environment. The road has double yellow lines and a white edge line. The car is positioned in the lower center of the frame, moving towards the viewer. The overall scene is bright and clear, with a focus on the car's sleek design against the rugged natural backdrop.

'THE C7 LOOKS VASTLY BETTER THAN ITS RECENT ANCESTORS: LINES SHARPER AND TIGHTER, MASS BETTER PROPORTIONED'



'WITHIN A COUPLE OF MILES ON
CHALLENGING TARMAC, THE VETTE
PROVES ITSELF GENUINELY IMPRESSIVE'

Corvette Stingray

Get close and it stays good, which isn't something you could say for any other recent Vette. Knowing how popular **evo** is in certain parts of the US where the Corvette is still held in almost devotional regard, I'm not going to say anything too rude about previous ones. Let's just say I know someone who once traded a C5 Corvette against a TVR Griffith because he wanted something that was better-assembled. To get picky, it's clear that the Stingray's paint quality isn't up to premium European standards, with slight 'orange peel' distortion on the lower panels obvious in the Californian sun. But the shutlines are impressively tight and details like the Stingray badges on the front wings stay classy up close.

The interior is good, too. Even a diligent fingertip inspection of the lower reaches of the cockpit doesn't turn up any areas of obvious cheapness – earlier Corvettes often felt like they were going to come to pieces in your hand. The instrument panel has a central TFT rev counter with crisply rendered fonts and a respectable refresh time, although the speed, fuel and temperature gauges that flank it are conventional. You could quibble with the light weighting of some of the switchgear, while the decision to release the doors electrically via

buttons rather than having simple catches feels like a gimmick. But overall this is a Corvette you don't have to apologise to passengers for.

The biggest and most welcome surprise, however, is finding a proper gearshift protruding from the centre console. America might be the land of the automatic, but people who buy sports cars here tend to prefer exclusive responsibility for shifting their own gears. The C7 gets a seven-speed manual 'box as standard, with a six-speed torque-converter auto an option – none of your fancy double-clutches here.

Of course, there are some good reasons why the majority of Californians prefer to just stick their cars in Drive. Leaving Los Angeles on congested freeways gives both the gearbox and my left leg a proper workout. The engine is tractable and happy to rumble along in stop-start traffic, and even at low speeds it feels great. But the clutch is heavy and its biting point isn't the easiest to judge. The gearshift has a short throw and what feels like a slightly artificial weight to it, making it heavier than it should be. I'm also struggling with seventh gear, both physically and as an idea. Unlike the new 911, there's no inhibitor when you change up from fourth to ensure you go straight into

fifth, making it hard to slot fifth neatly. And as sixth shows less than 2000rpm at an 80mph freeway cruise, there really doesn't seem to be any point having an even taller ratio on top of it. There aren't many Autobahns in North America, after all.

Our test car is fitted with both the Z51 performance pack and the \$1195 option of a multi-mode sports exhaust, with the total 465bhp making this the most powerful C7, at least until the Z06 and ZR1 versions arrive. That's a respectable output in anybody's book, but initial impressions are that this car doesn't feel that quick. Maybe I'm getting too used to turbocharged low-down torque and fast-reacting automated gearboxes. Despite the promise of its vast capacity, the V8 isn't a low-rev slugger and needs to be pushed to deliver. It starts to pull properly above about 3000rpm, and only really comes on song with 4500rpm showing. Not the sort of behaviour you can get away with for long on a Californian freeway, where it feels like there's a police interceptor every couple of miles.

I'll be meeting photographer Andrew Yeadon in Palm Springs, and we'll be heading into the desert tomorrow morning to take some pictures on what I'm promised are some of California's





‘THE CORVETTE FEELS AT HOME, TRACKING ARROW-STRAIGHT AT SPEED, DEVOURING THE SUN-DRENCHED LANDSCAPE IN A CASCADE OF V8 NOISE’

quietest roads. But Yeadon has already warned me that this means there isn't going to be a huge amount of steering input: apparently I'll be getting to see what a 26-mile straight looks like. So today's mission, via some internet-assisted photo reconnaissance, is to find some corners. Google Maps suggests that turning off Interstate 10 at Banning and heading south on Highway 243 will bag me more bends than the rest of southern California put together.

Part of me is expecting that, despite the praise that's been heaped on the Stingray in the US, it's going to struggle when asked to deal with something resembling an Alpine pass. On the freeway it feels like a nice enough place to spend time, but there can be few roads less well suited to stretching a car than an American interstate. Yet, within a couple of miles on some properly challenging tarmac, the Vette proves itself genuinely impressive.

The C7 feels both smaller and lighter on

its feet than any of its forebears. In terms of physical dimensions it's a very similar size to its immediate predecessors, but it's in better control of its mass. The dampers feel relatively soft in their default Touring mode, and there's noticeable lean in corners even with these turned up to Sport. But the chassis doesn't let Highway 243's ridges and imperfections throw it off course: it stays on line even as the figures on the slightly gimmicky G-meter that's built into the (optional) head-up display start to rise: 0.8G, 0.9G – and this is without really trying.

As for the transverse leaf spring, a fixture on Corvettes since the 1963 C2, its main purpose is to make the rear suspension as compact as possible. It still acts via double wishbones at each corner, and has no role in locating the rear suspension, just springing it. On the road, it's a complete non-issue.

The steering takes a while to get dialled into. While the rack is quick, the weighting is light

and you need a few turns to build trust in the front end's responses. Assistance is electrical, but it feels more like an old-school hydraulic set-up, so much of the 'noise' that gets filtered out by most electrical systems – bumps and camber changes – still comes through to the thick-rimmed wheel. Behind the lightness, feedback is muted but it is still there, with a perceptible lightening in longer turns as you accelerate the front tyres close to the edge. The sheer level of grip generated by the Michelin Pilot Super Sports, however, means you're carrying serious speed before sensing the edge is approaching.

In fact, the Corvette feels over-tyred at first, a sensation exacerbated by the engine's relative lack of low-down torque. In anything above second gear you have to wring the engine to feel any influence on the back end. You suspect that, when rear-end grip does run out, it will be sudden. The flip side is that, with the stability control doing its thing, you quickly

Corvette Stingray

Below: seventh speed of manual feels like one too many. **Right:** venerable 6.2-litre V8 puts out 465bhp when optional sports exhaust is fitted



build a confidence that on warm, dry tarmac, the Stingray's raw adhesion will enable you to unleash the glorious-sounding V8 pretty much everywhere. Forget pushrods (officially still used to enable the engine to be built lower): it never feels old-fashioned from the driver's seat. Throttle response is clean and accurate, and although the 6500rpm red line isn't that high, the Stingray's enthusiasm to get there and the noise it makes doing so is addictive.

I'm still not sure about the gearbox. In truth, a tall final drive means you aren't too taxed by changing ratios on a road like this: third runs out beyond 100mph. But there's still a hesitation in shifting across the transmission's planes that's at odds with the speed of the steering responses. The manual Corvette also comes with an automated throttle blipper to match revs on downchanges – although it has to be activated each time you turn the ignition on via one of what would, in the six-speed automatic version, be a steering wheel gearchange paddle. It works cleanly and, as the distance between the brake and throttle pedals defies most attempts to bridge them when you want to heel-and-toe, it's a good addition. The brakes themselves are strong and resist fade well.

I reach Palm Springs after my circuitous detour feeling more positive about this Corvette than any of its ancestors, but still wondering just what happens when you pass beyond its towering limits.

THE NEXT MORNING BRINGS A rendezvous with Yeadon, and then the Mojave Desert proper. There are going to be fewer

'THE C7 FEELS DIFFERENT: MORE INTERNATIONAL IN OUTLOOK AND BETTER TO DRIVE'

Specification

CHEVROLET CORVETTE STINGRAY Z51

Engine V8, 6162cc
CO2 TBC

Power 465bhp @ 6000rpm (with sports exhaust)

Torque 464lb ft @ 4600rpm

Transmission Seven-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, electronic limited-slip diff, ESP

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers

Rear suspension Double wishbones, transverse leaf spring, adaptive dampers

Brakes Vented discs, 345mm front, 338mm rear

Wheels 8.5 x 19in front, 10 x 20in rear

Tyres 245/35 R19 front, 285/30 R20 rear

Weight (kerb) 1499kg

Power-to-weight 315bhp/ton (with sports exhaust)

0-60mph 3.8sec (claimed)

Top speed 190mph (claimed)

Basic price £61,495 (EU version)

On sale Late spring 2014

evo rating: ★★★★★

corners today, but undoubtedly higher speeds too. Indeed, Yeadon promises that the road that connects Twentynine Palms to Amboy, where Roy's Café and Motel is waiting, is more than 40 miles of pretty much nothing. It's a road that goes from literally nothing to almost nothing, one so quiet that even California's notoriously keen police patrols tend to ignore it.

The Corvette, unsurprisingly, feels at home in this scenario, tracking arrow-straight at speed, devouring the sun-drenched landscape in a cascade of V8 noise. Even the sky-high gearing starts to make sense at the sorts of velocities encouraged by the road's utter emptiness. We stop to manhandle the removable roof panel off the car for a picture – the boot is full of cameras, so we just leave the roof lying at the side of the road for 20 minutes. And with the Corvette targafied and the warm wind rushing past, it really does feel like I'm driving through my own B-movie. I half expect to find a 1970 Dodge Challenger heading the other way.

But there's little out here to challenge the Corvette. This was the sort of journey that earlier Vettes were built for: great American road trips of straight lines and inexpensive gas. But after yesterday, I know that this one can stand up to tougher challenges as well. If only this desert landscape could deliver a few medium-speed corners as well...

Then we find some – a road to nowhere just past Amboy heading towards a vast volcanic crater, but boasting some actual bends. The surface is dusty, but the Corvette takes the challenge in its stride. And, as grip levels fall, so the chassis improves. With everything switched off, the Stingray has both a neutral balance and an easy driftability on the sandy surface. It's hardly a scientific test. But it is fun.

I once heard the Corvette being likened to an alligator, in that it is a highly effective predator that hasn't had to evolve for several millennia. The C7 feels different: more international in outlook and better to drive. I can't promise that it's going to make much sense over on our side of the Atlantic, what with a £60k price tag, wrong-hand drive and all. But in America, it's simply brilliant. ☒





In the 1980s, Tom Walkinshaw took Jaguar's luxurious, V12-engined XJS and turned it into the king of touring car racing. Three decades on, we revisit this British-built motorsport great

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

THUNDER CAT

W **WE DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE. SUBJECTED** to the full force of a completely unsilenced race-tuned Jaguar V12, the Oulton Park noise meter leapt to 126dB before the bloke attached to the end of it retreated with a look of genuine disgust and a bad case of tinnitus. For context, the average human pain threshold is 110dB, a military jet at take-off with full afterburner around 140dB. It was the most spectacularly unapologetic failure of a circuit noise test I've ever witnessed, and despite it meaning we would have to rearrange our test at a more tolerant venue, it absolutely made my day. God, I love this car.

Even if you don't know the historical significance of this 1984 TWR Jaguar XJS, you can surely appreciate its magnetism and charisma. Like all cars built to Group A regulations, it looks tougher than a knuckleduster, a perfect blend of subtlety and brutality that preserves the identity of the showroom model yet is every inch the hardcore racer in stance and intent. Dunlop racing tyres and 17in Speedline



Left: Meaden lives out his dream at Blyton. **Below:** five-speed dogleg manual is slick and precise. **Right:** TWR XJS looks brilliantly purposeful in action

wheels barely contained by the bodywork, Perspex windows, stubby sidepipes jutting from beneath the sills and greedy fuel fillers that protrude through the bootlid make for an incongruous juxtaposition with the genteel chrome bumpers. In short, it's perfect.

This is chassis TWR JC/84-A-007, the last of the Group A XJSs built to compete in the European Touring Car Championship (ETCC). Having convinced Jaguar boss John Egan to go racing for the 1982 season, TWR team principal Tom Walkinshaw (sadly no longer with us) endured two successful but ultimately frustrating years in which his potent XJS racers had the pace to win races, but failed to secure the ETCC title against the might of BMW. For 1984, TWR built three new cars, which were driven by a crack team that included a young Martin Brundle. They featured a raft of major

improvements such as thinner-gauge steel bodywork, a five-speed Getrag gearbox, a more powerful evolution of the 5.4-litre V12 complete with Cosworth-designed cylinder heads and pistons, and water-cooled front brakes.

It's well known that Walkinshaw's interpretation of the rules could politely be described as opportunist, but how he managed to get these updates approved by the governing body is anyone's guess. Probably in a similar manner to the way Volvo convinced the FIA it had built 500 road-going examples of the rampantly quick Group A 240 Turbo, but that's another story. Whatever skulduggery was involved, there's no arguing with the result: a fabulously potent machine with an engine conservatively rated at 450bhp (more likely closer to 500), less weight, more grip and better brakes. Resplendent in a patriotic white and

British Racing Green livery with Jaguar writ large, 'Tom's Cats' dominated the 1984 ETCC with seven victories, amongst them a pair of 1-2-3 finishes and a win in the Spa 24 Hours, Jaguar's first in a twice-round-the-clock race since a D-type won Le Mans in 1957.

Chassis 007 was Walkinshaw's own car, in which he shared driving duties with Hans Heyer and Win Percy for the '84 season. Together they scored four victories (including the blue-riband event at Spa), one second and two thirds en route to Walkinshaw winning the ETCC drivers' championship. It was a genuinely momentous occasion for British car enthusiasts, not least your humble scribe who was an impressionable 13-year-old at the time. I can't begin to tell you how exciting I found this car and how much I loved Jaguar as a result. Walkinshaw too was a hero to me, both for his driving skill



'THIS CAR HAS AN ENERGY AND SPIRIT THAT LOGIC SUGGESTS A MACHINE SIMPLY SHOULDN'T POSSESS'





and later for his subsequent success with the incredible Silk Cut-backed Group C cars. I can distinctly remember sacrificing a bedsheet to cobble together a homemade TWR Jaguar banner, which my friend Nick and I waved proudly at Silverstone. When we bumped into Walkinshaw in the paddock and he stopped to give us autographs and thank us for our support, I couldn't believe it.

TWR's purple and white cars are undoubtedly more famous, but it was this XJS that provided the springboard for Jaguar's historic victories at Le Mans and in the World Sportscar Championship. I've harboured a dream to drive it for 29 years, and now, after our brush with the Oulton Park noise police, that dream is finally coming true thanks to the ever-accommodating Blyton Park and the generosity of the Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust. The JDHT bought the car at auction when TWR went into administration in the summer of 2003 after the collapse of the Arrows Formula 1 team, which

Walkinshaw also owned, the previous year.

The JDHT has a fabulous collection of historic Jaguars that includes the marque's most significant competition cars. They aren't raced but are actively demonstrated at events like the Goodwood Festival of Speed and the Mille Miglia. This means they're kept in good running order, but not subjected to the continual refreshes, rebuilds and non-original performance enhancements most historic racers undergo. In the case of TWR XJS 007, this means the car is absolutely as it was when it finished the 1984 ETCC season, even down to the sun-bleached, sweat-stained Recaro driver's seat.

Such authentic patina is rare indeed and adds another layer of magic to this captivating old warhorse. If you're the sort of person who feels a connection with the atmosphere and history in an old house, then you'll know precisely what I mean when I say this car has an energy and spirit that logic suggests a machine simply

shouldn't possess. To drop into the seat then reach out and grasp the big four-spoke steering wheel is to plug yourself into something very evocative indeed.

The cockpit is a rather basic affair by today's standards. Directly ahead of you is an array of half a dozen analogue dials set into a flat metal panel. To your left are another trio of gauges, the ignition kill switch and some warning lights. Below them, sprouting from the transmission tunnel, is the gearlever, which operates in a dogleg H-pattern, first being left and back. Alongside this is an auxiliary control panel with switches for the starter, fuel pumps, ignition and lights, plus more for assorted gearbox and diff coolers. In the passenger footwell sits a huge black plastic jerrycan, which in period would have contained 25 litres of water to feed the cooling system for the front brakes. Clearly this Jag took some stopping.

It's with some trepidation that I flick through the toggles and press the starter. When the



V12 catches, it makes everyone around the car wince, but with each prod of the throttle the frowns stretch into involuntary smiles. It has a frantic, crackling idle that's not so different from the angry sizzle of a highly tuned Mazda rotary, and the throttle response is sensationally sharp, revs leaping at the slightest tickle. As you'd expect, the clutch is properly heavy and requires a steely left leg to operate, but the gearbox is a very pleasant surprise, immediately feeling free and light as you tug the lever across and back into first. As this car predates snappily intolerant carbon clutches, it's not too tricky to get moving, but at low speeds the steering feels ominously heavy. Walkinshaw was a broad, beefy bloke and clearly this car – his car – was conceived before lean, whippet-sized drivers took over the sport.

The track is cold and damp after a night of rain, so I'm glad of the Dunlop wets. The JDHT only runs it on wets, even in the dry, so as not to encourage lapping at ten-tenths. For these first

few exploratory tours they certainly give a greater sense of reassurance and an easy, transparent connection to the car and its responses. That's just as well considering this precious piece of Jaguar's racing heritage has no ABS, traction control or any other form of electronic driver aid. There's not a lot to hit at Blyton, but I don't want to be the one to park this perfectly preserved legend in a Lincolnshire turnip field.

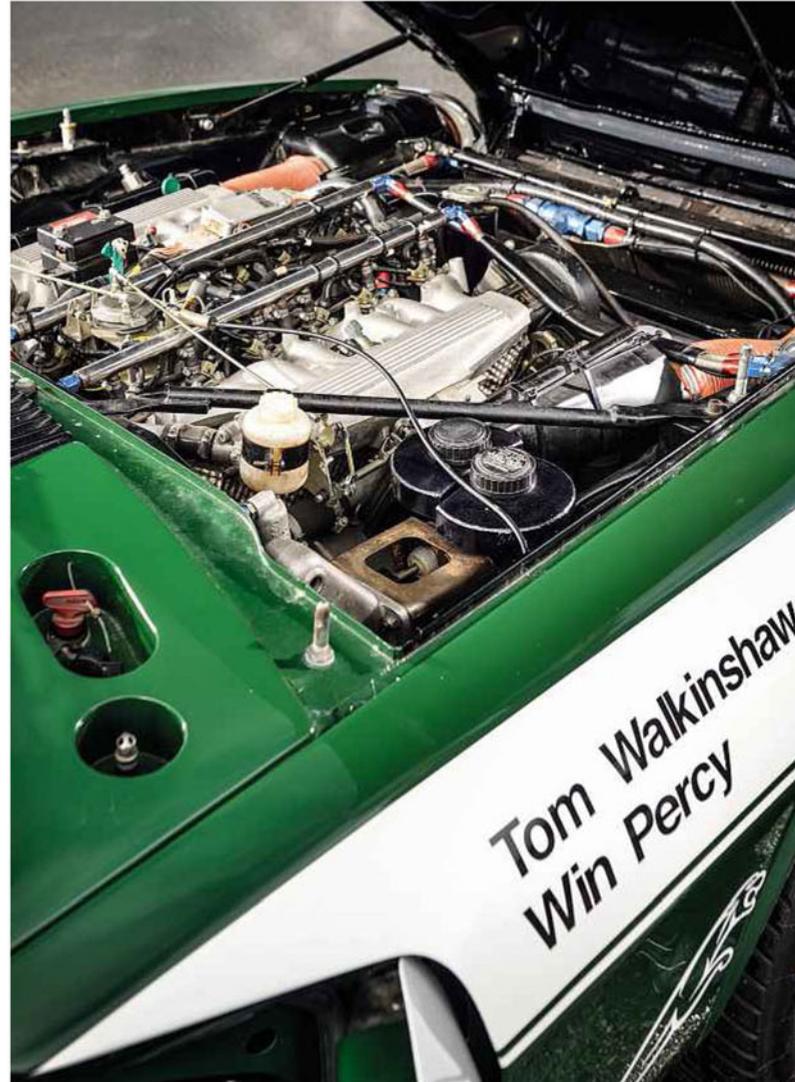
Even at modest revs, the engine dominates the experience, its brittle, urgent note resonating round the cockpit and urging you to stop mucking about and open the taps. As first impressions suggested, the gearbox is an absolute gem, the stick slicing through the gate as fast as you can move your hand and slotting home perfectly every time. It's a joy to operate such an analogue machine. It's a challenge too, but one that's so much more rewarding than flipping a paddle and relying on electronics to finesse your inputs.

It's a relief to find that, far from being

impossibly heavy, the steering lightens with speed. You still need to drive with your shoulders as well as your forearms, but there's a deftness and precision I wasn't expecting and it doesn't take long before you feel you're beginning to get to know the XJS sufficiently to push a little harder. Stretch the V12 further and the noise intensifies to a truly feral scream, each upshift producing a sharp exhalation through the big-bore sidepipes before the shriek builds once more. It's an extraordinary engine with a spread of power and torque that fires the XJS down Blyton's long back straight with intoxicating violence.

The brakes feel spongy and need respect, but I'm pretty certain that's because the car hasn't been run hard and not because they were especially weak in period. The longish pedal makes heel-and-toeing a bit of a stretch, but as this test is more about capturing memories than chasing a time, it really isn't an issue. Besides, there's more than enough fun to be had

‘STRETCH THE V12
FURTHER AND THE
NOISE INTENSIFIES TO A
TRULY FERAL SCREAM’



Top right: 5.4-litre V12 was reputed to produce as much as 500bhp after TWR's tuning.
Right: rear-mounted fuel fillers were accessible without opening the boot; ideal for the 500km touring car races of the era

‘EVEN AFTER THREE DECADES OF WAITING, IT’S EVERY BIT AS GOOD AS I’D HOPED’



leaning on the grip from those fat 17in Dunlops and feeling the XJS begin to come alive. Even with my limited exposure it’s obvious this Jag needed hustling, but not hooning, to get the best from it. There’s loads of front-end grip and the balance feels pretty neutral until you start working the throttle a bit harder a bit earlier, at which point the rear has as much influence over your trajectory as the front.

If you’re smooth with the throttle, traction is pretty good, even as the track dries and the wets begin to chew up a bit, but once the tread blocks start to squirm, the rear end submits earlier and earlier to the yelping V12. Down the long straight the revs flare ever so slightly in fourth and fifth as the XJS catches the occasional bump, and for a few spine-tingling moments the soundtrack in my head matches that from the sensational YouTube footage of Walkinshaw skimming like a pebble down Mount Panorama’s Conrod Straight, en route to securing pole in the 1985 Bathurst

1000 in one of 007’s sister cars. I’m nowhere near matching Tom’s record-setting top speed of more than 180mph, but it feels pretty bloody rapid nonetheless.

I can honestly say there’s no racing car I’ve ever wanted to drive more than this one. Starting what I know is my last lap, I resist the temptation to continue at pace, instead easing back and drinking in the view, the sounds, the feel and the smell of this amazing car as I reluctantly return to the paddock. It’s almost 30 years since I stood shivering at a cold, grey Silverstone watching this very car compete – and uncharacteristically retire from – the 1984 Tourist Trophy. To be strapped into the driver’s seat, ears ringing from that animalistic V12 and forearms burning slightly from the exertion of tackling Blyton Park’s challenging mix of corners, is totally surreal and utterly unforgettable. Even after three decades of waiting, it’s every bit as good as I’d hoped.

As I kill the engine and sit in blissful silence for a few contemplative moments, it strikes me that this was the last production-based Jaguar to race successfully with the blessing and backing of the factory. That seems ridiculous to me, especially as I know my lingering affection for Jaguar is still based upon the impression this car and the Group C legends that followed it made on me. The ill-fated F1 programme always seemed like an uncomfortable fit and has doubtless contributed to the brand’s reticence towards making an official return to racing in the nine years since, but a serious GT3 effort built around the new F-type Coupe would have Jaguar racing against several of the world’s best premium and luxury sports car brands.

Jaguar, the time to captivate a new generation has come. ❌

With thanks to Tony O’Keeffe at Jaguar, Richard Mason from the JDHT and all at Blyton Park.

Right: huge side-exit exhausts are nemesis of circuit noise testers; TWR chassis plate identifies this as car 007; steering wheel is refreshingly devoid of buttons, paddles, etc.



Specification

TWR JAGUAR XJS

Engine V12, 5434cc

Power 500bhp @ 7300rpm (estimated)

Torque n/a

Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive

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

Rear suspension Lower transverse links, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated discs

Wheels 17in front and rear

Weight 1400kg

Power-to-weight 363bhp/ton (estimated)

0-60mph 4.5sec (estimated)

Top speed 180+mph

evo rating: ★★★★★



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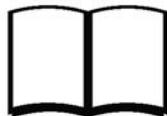


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Fast Fleet

Living with evo's long-term test cars

From GT-Four to GT86, evo's Fast Fleet is the biggest and most comprehensive long-term section in the business. Featured this month...

TOYOTA GT-FOUR by Matthew Hayward

Staff writer (website) **NEW**

What was the first car you bought? 'Citroën BX 14TGE. I wanted the GTi 16v, but could only afford the 72bhp 1360cc-engined version. Good fun, though.'



ALFA GIULIETTA by Rob Gould

Art director **OUT**

'Rover 800 Vitesse. It was cheap, massive and fast.'



VAUXHALL VXR8 by David Vivian

Road test contributor

'A left-hand-drive, 430cc Citroën 2CV with a suspension list to the left. Formerly owned by a Belgian midwife.'



BMW M6 GC by Nick Trott

Editor

'A yellow Mini 1275GT. It had been in a crash that bent the rear subframe... that itself was rotten. Exhibited frightening rear steer. The car cost me £85; the insurance £475 TPFT.'



MERCEDES 190E 2.5 by Mike Duff

Motoring editor

'Vauxhall Cavalier 1.6 GLS. Because it was metallic gold, had a sunroof and – as a 17 year old – I could just about afford to insure it.'



TOYOTA GT86 by Henry Catchpole

Features editor

'2001 Mini Cooper. Red with a white roof and white 15-inch telephone-dial wheels. Very rare lightweight edition without air con...'



BMW 2002 by Will Beaumont

Designer

'Rather embarrassingly, a 1967 VW Beetle. Why? Because I was 13 and didn't know any better.'



JAGUAR F-TYPE V6 S by Jethro Bovingdon

Contributing editor

'Shamefully, mine was an E36 M3. Although my teenage years were spent in my older brother's Capri Laser and various other old sheds.'



MAZDA MX-5 by Peter Tomalin

Contributor

'1975 Vauxhall Cavalier 1.6, from an England women's hockey international, in 1980. To be honest it was just a relief to be out of the Morris Minor I'd been gifted by my parents.'



FERRARI F50 by SSO

Contributor

'A 1986 BMW M535i. Decision came down to a choice between the M535i and a 928. Went for the more practical car. Haven't made that mistake again.'



RENAULT CLIO TURBO by Richard Meaden

Contributing editor

'I had budget of £750 and wanted a Mini, but they were all crappy. Bought Metro van instead. Then crashed it!'



MINI JCW GP by Ian Eveleigh

Production editor

'Mk1 Golf GTi, 1.8, red. They were just approaching classic status in 1995, so I figured it was then or never. Ran it for eight years and 70,000 miles. Didn't depreciate a penny.'



FORD FOCUS ST by Dean Smith

Staff photographer

'A 2001 Audi S3. My "realistic" dream car at the time. Good in all seasons, big enough boot for the bikes, and my dad worked at Audi for cheap parts and labour.'



RENAULT WILLIAMS by Stephen Dobie

Staff writer

'A '99 SEAT Ibiza. I could insure a 1.4 Ibiza for the same cash as a 1.0 Corsa or suchlike. And as we all know, there's no replacement for displacement...'



AUDI RS6 AVANT by Mike Duff

Motoring editor

See Mercedes 190E 2.5, above right.



PEUGEOT 208 GTI by Sam Riley

Film-maker

'A 1-litre 1989 Ford Fiesta with Escort XR3i wheels that were too big for it. Why? In 2001 it was practically the law to have a shitty Fiesta at 17. And it was only 400 quid.'



Also on the evo fleet:

Aston Martin DBS, Ferrari F40, Ferrari 430 Scuderia, Ferrari 458 Italia, Ford Escort RS2000, Jaguar XJR-15, Lamborghini Murciélago, Nissan GT-R, Peugeot 106 Rallye, Porsche 911 SC, Porsche 996 Carrera

Coming soon:

McLaren 12C Spider, Volkswagen Golf GTI

Toyota Celica GT-Four WRC

NEW ARRIVAL

The GT-Four WRC is a rarely spotted, oft overlooked and perhaps underrated '90s homologation special. Matthew Hayward introduces his

HAVING HAPPILY owned a string of French hot hatches, I'd been contemplating something slightly lairy and Japanese for some time. Despite the undeniable draw of a bargain Impreza and the life-long ambition to own an Integra Type-R, the offer of a tip-top Celica GT-Four at an irresistibly low price of just £2500 swung it.

The GT-Four is a bit of an odd car. It doesn't attract the same sort of reverence as an Integrale, Impreza or Escort Cosworth, even though it's very much of the same ilk. The ST205 (Toyota's codename for this generation of GT-Four) was produced for Group A rallying at a time when manufacturers were required to build 2500 road cars for homologation. A special WRC edition GT-Four took care of this. Almost mechanically identical to the rally cars, it included a few parts used for rallying, such as water injection and an at-the-time groundbreaking anti-lag system. Due to reliability issues, they're left disconnected on the road cars. Totally pointless, then? Well, pretty much, but undeniably cool if you like that sort of thing...

My car is one of those 2500 WRCs. It was originally sold in Japan and imported into the UK in 2007. Unlike many, this one seems to have escaped the Japanese tuning scene largely unscathed – a loud exhaust, a Momo steering wheel and non-standard Speedline alloy wheels are the only obvious changes.

Thanks to its scoops, vents, intakes and the mother of all rear wings, the GT-Four is worlds apart from the bland-looking standard '90s Celica. Without the body kit of later cars, and with a very plain interior, it's instantly clear that this car is all about no-frills performance.

Everything feels unbelievably well engineered, and with a little over 75,000km (46,600 miles) on the clock it feels incredibly tight for something approaching 20 years old. Mechanically it's spot on too, largely due to its previous owner being Warner Lewis, the owner of Lewis Rally Sport – one of the few places specialising in Toyota rally cars.

Regular readers will recognise the

car from our £4k Heroes feature a few months back (**evo 187**), where it surprised seasoned tester Mike Duff with its tail-happy balance. It's deceptively quick too, with the turbocharged 2-litre four-pot engine providing a claimed 255bhp. That's definitely a conservative claim. And despite its 50:50 four-wheel drive system, it demands utter respect in the wet on its current tyres. More on that next time... **X**

Matthew Hayward
(@evoMatthew)

Driver's log

Date acquired	August 2013
Total mileage	46,649
Mileage this month	450
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	18.0



Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf

Rob Gould looks back on 12 months and 15,000 miles with Alfa's hottest hatch

END OF TERM



AFTER 12 MONTHS and 15,320 miles in the Giulietta, it was time to hand the key back and bid it farewell. In many ways I'll be sorry to see it go. With 232bhp on tap, it was plenty quick enough, capable of overtaking lorries and long lines of traffic with ease. It also proved very reliable, gobbling up the miles, taking us to Cornwall, the Cotswolds and the Derbyshire Dales among other places, all without a hitch. And not once in that year of (hard) motoring did it require a single drop of oil.

So what would I have changed if I could? Well, first there was the dull-sounding engine note – so disappointing for a sporty Alfa.

Then there was the constant road noise – even on the very smoothest tarmac – and the lack of suspension travel. It perhaps wasn't as bone-shaking as production editor Ev's old Renaultsport Twingo 133, but it was hard-riding nevertheless.

But one of the most frustrating aspects of the Cloverleaf was the rev limiter. It cut in abruptly even if you gently brushed the red area with the lightest of touches of the throttle. It started (and ended) at 6000rpm; a buffer zone of a few hundred rpm would have been very welcome.

I was also disappointed by the fuel economy. For a turbocharged 1.7-litre four-cylinder it seemed pretty poor. Rarely would I see 30mpg, and overall

'The Giulietta certainly divided opinion. A bit like Marmite, it seemed you either loved it or hated it'

I averaged 28.4. Compare that to our BMW M135i, which managed 30.4mpg over six months despite having two more cylinders and an extra 84bhp. How ludicrous is that?

With so much torque on offer – 251lb ft – you had to be careful not

to allow the torque-steer to wrench the steering wheel out of your hand, but the lack of composure over rough B-roads and nervousness under braking that Stephen Dobie reported when he tried the Giulietta last month didn't really bother me. I think once I'd learnt what the car could and couldn't do I subconsciously drove around its shortcomings and got on with enjoying the car within its own limits. But it's safe to say the Giulietta divided opinion (in the *evo* office at least). A bit like Marmite, it seemed you either loved it or hated it.

During its time with us, the Alfa had a replacement windscreen and two new tyres. Not a massive expense for a year of motoring, but depreciation



was getting on for £10,000. Our Cloverleaf was a tad expensive to start with, though, costing £28,080 – up from a base price of £25,530 – once specced up with metallic paint, satnav and a Bose sound system. For comparison, just over a grand more than that basic price would get you an un-optioned five-door Golf GTI. Or for two or three thousand more than our specced-up car cost, you could pick up an M135i or an Audi S3.

After a year with the Giulietta, and after initial reservations about it, I must admit that it grew on me. As an alternative to the Golf GTI you had to look past its weaknesses and embrace its foibles, safe in the knowledge that you weren't blindly

following the herd. For some, though, it just didn't quite work. On paper the figures compare quite favourably with its rivals, but it seemed that in the real world, it just didn't quite cut the mustard. ☒

Rob Gould (@RobGould72)

Driver's log	
Date acquired	December 2012
Duration of test	12 months
Total test mileage	15,320
Overall mpg	28.4
Costs	£75 (windscreen), £160 (tyres)
Purchase price	£28,080
Trade-in value	£18,185
Depreciation	£9895



Vauxhall VXR8 Tourer

The big estate has gained a supercharger and another 185bhp, taking the total to over 600...

A ALLOW ME AN apology. If, at any juncture, I've given the impression that having a mechanical blower fitted to a 6.2-litre Corvette V8 already producing 425bhp and 406 lb ft of torque was a frivolous indulgence, I take it back. Big Blue has returned from its £7500 visit to Walkinshaw Performance with a dyno-tested 610bhp and 586lb ft, and the difference the supercharger makes to the way this Aussie-built XXL estate goes and sounds – indeed, the way it transforms the entire personality of the car – is little short of shocking and nothing short of thrilling. I liked the VXR8 the way it was before. Now I'm a hopeless addict and on first-name terms with the staff at my local petrol station.

Fortunately I haven't yet had to sell my Panda (or next door's cat) to fuel the addiction as the nice people at Shell, keen to promote the performance-enhancing properties of its V-Power Nitro+ super unleaded petrol, have stumped up a nominal month's worth of the stuff so I can judge for myself. Claimed to be a close relative of the formulation Ferrari uses in its Formula 1 cars, it has a higher octane rating than most super unleaded – 98 rather than 97 – that's claimed to ease the

burden on the engine management system to prevent pre-detonation (or 'knocking'). It also has a special detergent said to de-gunk the engine, plus a lubricant intended to reduce piston friction and therefore improve the transfer of combustion energy.

As I've only run the Walkinshaw-pumped V8 on Nitro+ so far, I can't give you a subjective before-and-after for the VXR8 at this time. But I did treat the Panda to a brief rest from its usual diet of supermarket regular unleaded and it's fair to say the gains in smoothness and, er, 'go' are marked.

Perhaps the best news I can report at this stage is that, rather as I hoped, a 610bhp supercharged VXR8 isn't appreciably thirstier than a 425bhp normally aspirated one. Big Blue's bonnet now lifts by a good three inches when I give it the beans and its fourth-gear acceleration is a thing of wonder. I'm well and truly hooked.

David Vivian (@davidvivian)

Driver's log	
Date acquired	Sept 2013
Total mileage	11,059
Mileage this month	1504
Costs this month	£7500
mpg this month	20.1



BMW M6 Gran Coupe

The big Beemer's oil consumption is worrying editor Trott

OIL IS ON my mind this month. The M6 Gran Coupe has asked me, politely but firmly, to pour another litre into the engine – bringing the total to three litres in 3365 miles. There's no sign of smoke or anything else that indicates excessive oil burning, and the car certainly isn't leaving a puddle of oil underneath, so I've asked BMW to take a closer look. It may be me being paranoid, or it may

be that the car is still burning a little extra due to its relative lack of miles, but neither of my previous long-termers, the McLaren 12C and the Merc C63, drank this much oil in 10,559 and 18,004 miles respectively.

The third month of ownership is always a crucial time in relation to the bond you develop with a car. The first couple of months are filled with the big issues: in terms of the M6 these were the eye-widening pace, the sheer

size of the thing and the divisive looks. But now attention turns to the smaller details, both positive and negative.

On the positive side, the engine is loosening up nicely: it feels like a couple of kilos have been skimmed from the flywheel. You notice this most in M Dynamic mode, when the rears spin and the engine hits the red line in what seems like a microsecond. And I have to admit the rears have been spinning rather a lot recently

Toyota GT86

News of a rally version of the sports coupe brings back fond Toyota memories for Catchpole

IT'S NOT OFTEN that a press release makes me see a car in a whole new light, but the announcement of an R3 rally version of the GT86 really stirred some emotions.

When I was about 11 years old, I sat mesmerised by the image of a white car with pop-up headlamps and some green and red squiggles.

Its wheels were about three feet off dusty ground and yet a snowy Kilimanjaro was in the background. Juha Kankkunen was not a name I was familiar with but it stuck in my head. I remember earnestly telling my father all about how this fellow had made a car leap and slide like nothing I'd seen before in the worlds of F1 or Le Mans. That 1993 Celica GT-Four is my first

vivid memory of rallying and I've been hooked ever since.

I'm not sure the Safari would be the ideal arena for a GT86 somehow, but I think some bumpy Irish tarmac would suit it. Whatever, it will just be nice to see a modern RWD car on special stages, and it's fuelled my imagination for a few drives home down the autumnal lanes of Bedfordshire.

Of course, if GUI3 ERO ever breaks down inconveniently (which I think highly unlikely) then I might be forced to re-enact one of my other very clear Toyota rally memories: Luis Moya, Carlos Sainz's co-driver, stoving in

the rear window of a WRC Corolla with his helmet in Margam Park, after its engine had gone kaput just 500 metres short of winning the 1998 World Rally Championship. I'll keep my Stilo lid in the boot just in case...

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Driver's log

Date acquired	May 2013
Total mileage	9027
Mileage this month	1095
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.5

thanks in part to the greasy roads, cooler temperatures and my growing confidence in M Dynamic. As I write this, I'm looking at winter tyre options.

Also on the positive side, the M6's hi-fi is exceptional – and it's one of the few standard-fit items on the car, rather than being the £3750 Bang & Olufsen optional upgrade. Continuing the interior trend, the 10.2in screen gets a thumbs-up for its clarity and effective infographics, but the low roof line at the rear makes inserting child seats and the kids that fill said seats a back-breaking exercise. I am, however, warming to the light beige BMW Individual Merino leather – it helps lift an otherwise drab interior – even though it does seem to be absorbing the indigo dye from my jeans. Can anyone recommend a decent leather cleaner?

The problem at the moment is that no matter how much the M6 Gran Coupe impresses me – and overall it's certainly doing that – I can't get the price of the thing out of my head. £118,050 is a not insubstantial amount of money. Not only that, but as I write there are three M6 GCs available on the BMW Approved Used programme – all highly specced and with very few miles on the clock – for between £75,000 and £78,000... ❌

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Driver's log

Date acquired	Sept 2013
Total mileage	5200
Mileage this month	943
Costs this month	£16
mpg this month	18.5

Mercedes 190E 2.5-16

After being enchanted by the mere sight of it at the Ring, Duff gets to drive Senna's Cosworth at Nardo



YOU'VE SEEN THIS car before, most recently back in *evo* 185 – it's the 190E that Ayrton Senna drove to victory in the inaugural race at the 'new' Nürburgring in 1984. As such, it's probably the coolest car in Mercedes-Benz Classic's 900-strong collection.

Back in May I couldn't actually drive it as it had been parked in a museum for a decade. But with the 30th anniversary of the famous race coming up, MB Classic got it running again. And, at the Nardo test track in Italy, I finally got behind the wheel.

The restoration was purely mechanical, so the cabin felt pretty much exactly as Senna left it, complete with 1984 race

harnesses and even the original fire extinguisher bottle. The engine was in rude health: happier to rev than my 2.5's and pulling keenly through the shorter 'sprint' gearing the 20 identical race cars were given. An indicated 100mph on Nardo's high-speed bowl translated to 6000rpm in fifth. Not bad for an irreplaceable museum exhibit.

The race cars were lowered and had firmer springs, and even on Nardo's super-smooth tarmac, Senna's 190 felt pretty edgy. But the steering was standard and the gearshift action of the dogleg as bad as on every other 'Cosworth' 190. From behind the wheel it didn't feel like a racer, not least as it's still got a sunroof and even a radio-cassette.

But it did feel very special.

Mercedes also laid on other significant 190Es, including one of the cars that set the still-unbeaten 50,000km speed record at Nardo in 1983 (it took eight days, the average being 154mph, including pit stops), plus an immaculate last-off-the-line 2.6 with just 300km on the clock. Only the lack of angels told me I hadn't died and gone to heaven. ❌

Mike Duff

Driver's log

Date acquired	May 2012
Total mileage	159,661
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	n/a



Above: news of a rally GT86 reminded Catchpole of Juha Kankkunen's Celica GT-Four on the Safari Rally in 1993 (it won, of course)



BMW 2002

Beaumont's taken his classic BMW on a 2000-mile European road trip

Mazda MX-5 1.8i

The special-edition mk2 MX-5's unique alloys have been refurbished, while a leak has been traced and cured

NOTHING IMPROVES THE appearance of a car like a smart set of wheels, and with the MX-5 there was certainly room for improvement. The handsome 16in Enkei alloys, unique to the 'Euphonic' special edition, were in a frankly awful state – pitted, flaking, extensively kerbed (by previous owners, I hasten to add). I wasn't even sure they were capable of being restored, but Keith at Wheel Genie in Huntingdon was confident, and sure enough when I returned a few days later, they looked absolutely superb.

They'd successfully recreated the original 'Mesh Titanium' finish

(dark grey to you and me) and even rechecked and rebalanced the wheels after I noticed a slight vibration at 70mph. It wasn't cheap – £350 for a full refurb of all four – but I can't fault the finish. Unfortunately that wasn't the end of the expenditure this month.

When the MX-5 was originally launched, an oft-repeated line was that it recreated all the fun of the traditional British sports car but without the rust, the breakdowns and the oil leaks. We'll draw a veil over the rust thing for now, but MX-5s tend to run like clockwork and are rarely known to sully your driveway. So what was that dark, oily patch?



Above: MX-5's alloys were badly kerbed and corroded... **Below:** ...but a refurb has got them looking like new again



Turned out one of the pipes for the power steering had rusted through. Further investigation revealed not one but three separate pipes were badly corroded. Replacements cost a total of £94.29 and my local garage charged another £96.00 to fit them – and apply liberal amounts of grease to the remaining original parts of the system to keep any further perforations at bay.

So another expensive month for the MX-5 – enough to put the next stage of the suspension upgrades on hold for the time being. I'll keep you posted. ☒

Peter Tomalin

Driver's log

Date acquired	April 2012
Total mileage	115,524
Mileage this month	300
Costs this month	£490.29
mpg this month	32.5

WITH AS LITTLE planning as possible. That's how I like my holidays. So at six o'clock one Friday

after work, I set off for mainland Europe – with no tunnel crossing booked and only a very vague idea of how I'd spend the week ahead.

The first half of the week included going to an '02 show in Holland (complete with sprint course) and visiting the Mercedes and Porsche Museums in Stuttgart before heading for the German/Austrian border.

By this point I was beginning to think that I had ruined my car with the most recent modifications. The harsh engine mounts meant that driving over 60mph on the motorway was intolerable and the vibration through the steering made my hands and forearms go numb after about 20 minutes. But I had only used motorways on my holiday up until then, so I decided to steer clear of autoroutes and Autobahns until I had to head back to England.

The next day I drove across the Alps, taking the most scenic and exciting route I could find. I crossed the border from Germany into Austria, then headed through Liechtenstein, across Switzerland and back into Germany before ending up in France. I didn't do any of the famous passes;



Clockwise from above: on the Eurotunnel; at a 2002 show in Holland; lapping the Nürburgring; on the stunning Furkajoch in Austria



Michael Schrock

instead I found roads that were even better suited to my car. The highlights were the Furkajoch (L51) in Austria and the L135 in Germany, just before you get into France. Had I been in something that wasn't as small, thin



and light, the roads might have been a bit too narrow. As it was, the little BMW was in its element, and any worries I had about having ruined my car completely evaporated.

My route back to the UK – still

not using motorways – went via the Nürburgring. I did a couple of laps of the Nordschleife, of course, the 2002 feeling underpowered but performing excellently. After that I stopped off at the Classic Spa Six Hours, before finally switching to motorways for the slow, numbing trip back home.

You might expect that driving an old car for over 2000 miles in a week – including laps of the Nordschleife and many timed attempts at a sprint course – would lead to constant mechanical problems, but in fact there were only two very minor issues. First, the passenger-side wiper broke, but I managed to reattach it with lots of insulation tape. Secondly, the end of a fuel pipe to one of the carbs had perished and cracked, and so started to leak fuel. But all I had to do here was take off the pipe, cut the perished end off and reattach it.

With no major dramas but lots of great driving, that's what I call a successful holiday! ☒

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)

Driver's log

Date acquired	July 2008
Total mileage	145,000-ish
Mileage this month	2200-ish
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	18-ish

Jaguar F-type V6 S

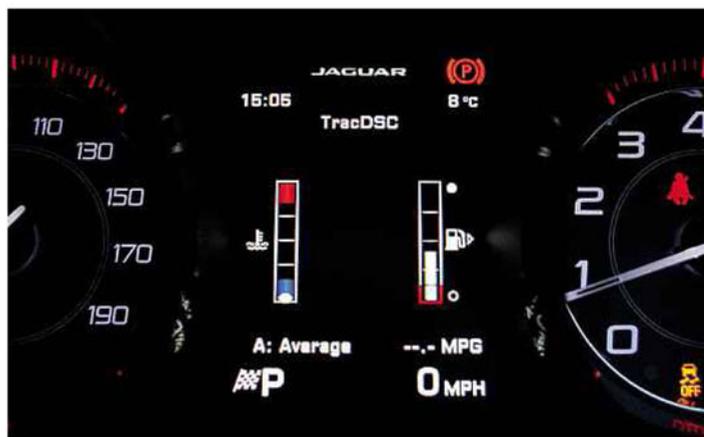
The roadster's playful side has been impressing Bovingdon, as has the way the car will look after you

LAST MONTH I mentioned the F-type's superb TracDSC setting, which just gets better as the weather gets worse. On the road it's perfectly judged, giving the V6 S enough scope to express itself and then reining things in really cleanly if you require a bit of help. Many cars have a lenient stability control setting, but few are so well judged and so subtle when they do finally step in.

The chances are you won't need the electronics to wake up very often, though, as the F-type has a progressive and transparent balance. There's almost zero understeer – certainly on the constraints of the

public highway – and the engine's smooth power delivery and the limited-slip differential combine beautifully to let you dictate the car's balance with real accuracy. In slow- and medium-speed corners it's a very satisfying car to drive because you always feel really involved in the way it's going down the road.

Through faster corners and in the sort of damp, wintry conditions we've had of late the F-type doesn't communicate quite so clearly. Somehow the sense of connection can start to disappear, so I'm still working up confidence in the car when gently guiding it into sweeping corners



tackled in, say, fourth gear. Hopefully that will come, because otherwise I'm enjoying the V6 S. It's a real character – half hot rod, half sophisticated GT, and wholly addictive. ☒

Jethro Bovingdon
(@JethroBovingdon)

Driver's log

Date acquired	Sept 2013
Total mileage	7672
Mileage this month	1348
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.5

Ferrari F50

Values for the '90s icon are going up, but that hasn't stopped the Secret Supercar Owner enjoying his to the full in 2013



AS THE FERRARI F50 exits those awkward teenage years, the market appreciation for the car seems to be taking an upward turn. After years of modest increases, values of F50s have shot through the roof and your chances of finding a mint one for sale are low to say the least.

When I bought mine, the common perception was that the F50 was the ugly duckling of the modern limited-edition Ferrari supercars. Recent history has been kinder and if anything the Enzo, with its hard, angular lines, has taken the F50's place as the least attractive 'supermodel'.

Two other factors have also

played a major part in the turning of opinions: the brilliant gearbox and the 12-cylinder, 60-valve engine. With the death of the clutch pedal in the current crop of supercars, the recognition and appreciation for the best of the manuals has jumped considerably, and in the world of six-speed manuals, there is no finer gearbox than the one fitted to the F50. It is simply a work of engineering art and hugely rewarding to navigate.

The 4.7-litre engine is in a league of its own as well and has its roots in the powerplant that powered the 1992 Ferrari F92A Formula 1 car. Nothing else revs, sounds, feels (it is bolted directly to the carbonfibre tub) or produces power like it. And given

current emissions laws, it's highly doubtful it will ever be replicated.

By the standards of the last few years, my F50 has got a lot of use in 2013. The miles have come in bunches, with the first few months of the year being very light followed by a very busy May, June and July. August through to October was very quiet but better weather in November led to another couple of good runs.

One of my goals for this year was to take the car on a continental trip, but that will now have to wait until 2014. A recent check of the date codes on the tyres indicated that four new ones will be advised at the next service early in 2014, but I'm pleased to say that, as usual, the F50 has not needed top-ups

of oil or coolant since the last service.

I had a good debate recently with a friend and fellow F50 owner on the merits of putting the roof on for the winter. He has fitted his, believing it will allow for more use over the colder months. My roof will stay in its box and, come the spring, we'll compare mileages and numbers of outings. ✕

Secret Supercar Owner
(@SupercarOwner)

Driver's log

Date acquired	July 2007
Total mileage	9411
Mileage this month	70
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	Don't ask!

Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo

ANOTHER MONTH, another couple of thousand miles in the Clio. And, it has to be said, some entertaining cross-country drives amongst the motorway schleps. It's taken a while – too long, truth be told – to warm to the 200 as a drivers' hot hatch, but in these last few weeks I've consistently enjoyed its poise, balance and pace. It does scabble a bit out of tighter corners, and you can feel it torque-steering on awkwardly cambered roads, but once you're carrying some speed it really is a formidable point-to-point machine.

The brakes are progressive and

strong, which always boosts your confidence, and the steering has a similarly well-judged rate of response. In greasy conditions you can feel the tail begin to slide through faster corners, but the stability control system catches it early with impressive subtlety. Damping-wise, it's nicely rounded with enough depth to cope with bumpy roads and keep all four wheels on the ground. The only criticism is the pace you need to drive at to get the sense you're in any way stretching its abilities.

A punchier engine and a quicker-witted gearbox would make the 200



a more vibrant proposition, but it's reassuring that although it marks a complete change from its ancestors, this new-age Renaultsport still has dynamic sparkle. ✕

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Driver's log

Date acquired	August 2013
Total mileage	7478
Mileage this month	1919
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	32.8

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AUDI A5 2.0 TFSI S-LINE QUATTRO 5 DOOR SPORTBACK 211PS 9-TRONIC AUTO 59 REG. Brilliant Black with Black Leather / Alcantara Trim. 34,000 Miles with F/A/S/H. Spec Inc HDD Sat Nav, Climate Control, Cruise Control, Electric Seats, AMI Audi Music Interface, CD Player, Xenons, Park Distance Control, Piano Black Wood, T/P Monitor, Full S-Line Styling and 19" 5 Segment Spoke Alloys.
£19,995



BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT COUPE AUTO 54 REG. Ultramar Red Metallic with Ochre Main and Beluga Secondary Hide. 58,000 Miles with 11 Annually/S/H - Recently Serviced. Spec Inc Sat Nav, Phone Prep with Phiskey H/Set, Keyless Entry Push Button Start, Coming Home Function, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/ Massage Seats, Multi CD, Xenons, PDC, Adjustable Suspension, F/Mirrors, M/F/S/Wheel inc G/S/Paddles, Extended Wood Trim and 19" Split Rim Alloys. Optional Upgraded Speed Alloys Available at Additional Cost.
£31,995



BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT COUPE AUTO 54 REG. Silver Tempest with Full Beluga Hide. 34,000 Miles with S/History. Spec Inc Sat Nav, Keyless Entry, Push Button Start, Coming Home Function G/D/Opener, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/Massage Seats, Multi CD, Xenons, PDC, Adjustable Suspension, Extended Burr Walnut Trim, T/P/Monitor, F/Mirrors, M/F/S/Wheel inc G/S/Paddles and 19" Chrome 5 Spoke Alloys.
£30,995



BMW M3 4.0 COUPE WITH EDC 09 REG. Jerez Black with Extended Black Nappa Leather. 33,000 Miles with F/B/M/S/H. Spec Inc EDC Electric Damper Control, Carbon Roof, Professional Sat Nav, Bluetooth Prep, Voice Control, BMW Assist, BMW Online, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/S/Seats, Multi CD, Xenons, PDC, S/Glass, Carbon Look Trim, F/Mirrors, S/ Suspension, M Sport Styling and 19" M Double Spoke Alloys. Optional 19" Black Alloys Available at Additional Cost. Optional Upgrade Carbon Front and Rear Splitter Package for £495 plus Vat.
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BMW M3 CAB DCT AUTO 61 REG. Alpine White with Black Novillo Leather. 36,000 Miles with F/B/M/S/H. Spec Inc Professional Sat Nav, Bluetooth, Voice Input, Extended BMW Online, BMW Assist, Climate, Cruise, H/ Seats with Back With Adjust, USB Audio Interface, HIF Speaker System, Xenons, Daytime Driving Lights, PDC, P/Hood, Titanium Shadow Trim and M Double Spoke Alloys. Bal of 5 Year Service Pack. Bal of Man Warranty. Optional Upgrade Carbon Front and Rear Splitter Package for £495 plus Vat.
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£31,995



MERCEDES E350 CDI BLUE EFFICIENCY SPORT CAB 7G-TRONIC AUTO 2011. Black with Tan Leather. One Owner. 46,000 Miles with F/W/S/H. Spec Inc Sat Nav, AirScarf Heating, Climate Control, Cruise Control, Electric Heated Memory Multi Contour Seats, CD Player, Xenons, Park Distance Control, Power Hood, E/S/Column, F/ Mirrors, Full AMG Body Styling and 18" AMG Alloys.
£26,995



MERCEDES S350 BLUETEC BLUE EFFICIENCY CDI AMG SPORT SALOON 7G-TRONIC AUTO 61 REG. Palladium Silver Metallic with Full Black Leather. 38,000 Miles with F/A/S/H. Spec Inc Factory Rear Screen Entertainment, Split View Command APS, Sat Nav, TV, Reverse Camera, Keyless Go, Blind Spot Assist, Active Lane Keeping Assist, Climate, Distroic Cruise, E/G/S/R/FC, EM Multi Contour Comfort Seats, Media Interface, DAB Radio, Adaptive Main beam Assist, Bi-Xenons, Daytime Driving Lights, PDC, Power Boost, T/P/Monitor, Black Ash Wood Trim, Full AMG Styling and 20" AMG Alloys. Bal of Man Warranty.
£36,995



PORSCHE 997 3.8 C4S COUPE 2006. Seal Grey Metallic with Black Leather. 31,000 Miles with F/P/S/H. Spec Inc PCM, Sat Nav, Climate, Electric Sports Seats, Guards Red Seatbelts, CD Player, IPOD Connection, Xenons, Switchable Sports Exhaust, PASM Suspension, Computer, PSM, T/T/Screen, Red Callipers and 19" Carrera Classic Alloys.
£29,995



PORSCHE 997 C2 CARRERA 2 GEN 2 2009 MODEL PDK AUTO 08 REG. Guards Red with Stone Grey Leather. 33,000 Miles with F/S/H. Spec Inc Sport Chrono Pack Plus, PCM 3.0, Extended Touch Screen Sat Nav, Bluetooth Phone Module, Climate, Cruise, Sports seats, Guards Red Seat Belts, Multi CD, Universal Audio Interface, Bose Sound, PDC, PASM Suspension, Rear Wiper, PSM, T/T/Screen, Aluminium Trim and 19" Shadow Chrome Alloys. This Launch Car was Specified by Porsche in 2008 to Showcase the Upcoming 2009 Model.
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AUDI Q5 2.0 TDI QUATTRO S-LINE PLUS 177 S-TRONIC AUTO 63 REG. Glacier White with Black Fine Nappa Leather. Delivery Miles. Sat Nav, SD Card Reader, Bluetooth Prep, Deluxe 3-Zone Climate, Cruise, H/Seats, 40GB HDD Music Storage, AMI Music Interface, Audi Sound System, LED Daytime Running Lights, Xenons, Audi Parking System, S/Glass, Electric Tailgate, Auto Dim Mirrors, Auto Lights, Auto Wipers, Computer, Full S-Line Body Styling and 20" 5 Spoke Segment Alloys. VAT Q. We Can Supply Vat Free for Export - Admin Fee Applies. Manufacturers Warranty Due In Soon.
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AUDI Q7 3.0 TDI QUATTRO S-LINE 8 SPEED AUTO 11 REG. Circa Black with Black Venano Leather. 36,000 Miles with F/A/S/H. Spec Inc 7 Seats Tech Pack High, Sat Nav, 3 Bluetooth Prep, Voice Control, E/H/S/Seats with Lumbar, AMI Audi Music Interface, Multi CD, Xenon Plus, Advanced PDC, Power Tailgate, S/Glass, Adaptive Air Suspension, R/Borders, 3 Spoke M/F/S/Wheel, R/Rails, Matt Brushed Aluminium Trim, S-Line Styling and 20" 10 Spoke Alloys. Bal of Man Warranty.
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RANGE ROVER 4.4 TDV8 VOGUE 8 SPEED AUTO 11 REG. Ipanema Sand, Full Duo Tone Jet / Ivory Oxford Leather. 32,000 Miles, F/ LRS/H, Surround Camera, Touch screen Sat Nav, TV, Blind Spot Monitor, Autobiography Styling Pack, Climate, Adaptive Cruise, E/H/Seats, H/ Rear Seats, E/G/S/R/FC, USB IPOD Connectivity, Multi CD, DAB Radio, Harman Kardon, Xenons, High Beam Assist, Remote Park Heating, S/Glass, Grand Black Lacquer Trim, Terrain Response, Adjustable Suspension, H/M/F/S/Wheel inc G/S/Paddles and 20" Alloys.
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RANGE ROVER 5.0 SUPERCHARGED AUTOBIOGRAPHY AUTO 10 REG. Alaska White with Duo Tone Ivory Jet Black Semi-Aniline Leather. One Owner. 36,000 Miles, F/LRSH, Factory Rear Screen Entertainment, Surround Camera System, HomeLink, G/D/Opener, Climate, Adaptive Cruise, E/H/M/Coating Seats, E/H/CRear Seats, E/G/S/R/FC, Blind Spot Monitoring, DAB Radio, Harman Kardon, Adaptive Bi-Xenons, High Beam Assist, Remote Park Heating, Extended Burr Maple Wood Trim, Autobiography Styling and 20" Alloys. Optional 22" Alloys Available at Additional Cost.
£39,995



RANGE ROVER SPORT 3.0 TDV6 HSE AUTO 11 REG. Fuji White, Full Ivory Leather. 14,000 Miles, F/LRSH, Factory Rear Screen Entertainment, Touch Screen Sat Nav, TV, Rear View Camera, Personal Telephone Integration, Voice Input, HomeLink, G/D/Opener, Passive Entry Push Button Start, Cool Clubby Box, Climate, Cruise, E/G/S/R/FC, H/M/Seats, H/Rear Seats, Ebony Contrast Stitching, Portable Audio Connectivity, DAB Radio, Harman Kardon, Adaptive Bi-Xenons, High Beam Assist, PDC, S/Glass, F/C Cooled, Ambient Lighting, E/S/Column, Piano Black Veneer, Terrain Response, Adjustable Suspension, H/M/F/S/Wheel, F/Mirrors and 20" Alloys. Bal of Man Warranty.
£41,995



RANGE ROVER SPORT 3.0 TDV6 HSE AUTO 11 REG. Fuji White, Full Ivory Leather. Delivery Miles. Panoramic Glass Roof, Touch Screen Sat Nav, Rear View Camera, Bluetooth, Voice Control, Passive Entry Push Button Start, Cool Clubby Box, Start/Stop System, Climate, Adaptive Cruise, E/H/M/Coating Seats, H/Rear Seats, Portable Audio Connectivity, DAB Radio, Meridian 825W Sound System, Xenons, PDC, Daytime Running Lights, Power Tailgate, S/Glass, Terrain Response, Adjustable Suspension, F/ Mirrors, Duo Tone H/M/S/Wheel inc G/S/Paddles, Red Callipers, Full Autobiography Styling and 22" Style 6 Alloys. Bal of Man Warranty Available Now.
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Mini JCW GP

Mini JCW GP

Eveleigh gets the chance to test his second-gen Mini GP against its seven-year-old predecessor

ONE OF THE reasons why I was so keen to run a Mini John Cooper Works GP is that I have some very fond memories of its forebear, the Mini Cooper S Works GP of 2006. Having not driven the older car for several years, I was curious to see how it would stack up against the new one, so this month I got the two together for a back-to-back comparison.

I was surprised to discover that the GP1 feels every bit as quick as the rabid GP2. But checking the two cars' vital statistics, so it should: both have 215bhp, but the earlier GP is 70kg lighter (1090kg versus 1160). Of course, the GP1 is supercharged rather than turbocharged, and while I'm not a fan of the prominent supercharger whine, there's no arguing with the way the engine feels more responsive than the

turbo unit as a result, especially lower down the rev range.

With less torque (184lb ft plays 206), the GP1 has less torque-steer, too, which combined with the more compliant suspension helps it feel more at home down narrower B-roads. Put simply, you don't feel like you need a couple of feet spare either side of the car in case it gets distracted by imperfections in the road surface. That's not to say the GP1 is soft, however. Its ride is still firm – indeed, its 18in alloys are an inch bigger than the wheels on the newer car – but it doesn't have that

final degree of stiffness that makes you wince in anticipation of being deflected from your line.

The GP1's killer feature, though, is its mechanical limited-slip differential. Get on the power early in a corner and it pulls you round without any hint of understeer. In fact, in some faster turns the front end sticks to its line so tenaciously that the rear feels like it's being flung into a smidgen of oversteer, helping to point the nose into the turn. It's a fabulous sensation, and one the GP2, with its electronic faux diff, just can't match.

But if anything, the GP1 shows

where the GP2 may have taken things a little too far, gone a touch too extreme. Where you fight with the GP2, the GP1 *flows*. And ultimately, for me, that makes it a fractionally more satisfying road car. I can't wait to see which way the GP3 goes... ❌

Ian Eveleigh

Driver's log

Date acquired	July 2013
Total mileage	11,430
Mileage this month	730
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	36.3

Ford Focus ST Estate

Snapper Smith is becoming increasingly irate with a lack of front grip from his Blue Oval load-lugger



MMUCH LIKE THE front tyres on the ST, my patience with the lack of traction from the car's front wheels is wearing thin. On dry roads it's easy to work around the way the inside wheel scrabbles and spins up on corner exits, and the challenge can be quite enjoyable if the mood catches you. However, as UK temperatures have dropped and the sun's faint rays fail to dry our crumbling road network, the lack of traction has become a real issue.

Just the faintest whiff of boost and both front wheels will merrily spin away until the traction control takes rein – and it's a fight that continues from standstill all the way to third gear. Pulling out onto a busy wet roundabout can be nerve-wracking,

as there's nothing quite like sitting in the middle of a roundabout, spinning your wheels, with an articulated lorry bearing down on you rapidly...

I'm sure that a fresh set of the original-spec Goodyear Eagle F1s would improve things. But with winter setting in, I think I might just have to try my first set of winter tyres in the hope of gaining some much-needed traction. ❌

Dean Smith (@evoDeanSmith)

Driver's log

Date acquired	August 2013
Total mileage	12,336
Mileage this month	418
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.6



Renault Clio Williams

With winter fast closing in, the classic French hatch was given a dose of underbody protection

Y'OU'VE DRIVEN it in *this* weather?' He may have swept his model cars and alpaca photographs into a box and left months ago, but I can still hear the shrill questioning of former boss Harry Metcalfe each time the Williams appeared at work on a slightly wintry day.

Hazza meticulously applied Waxoyl rust protection to the underside of his older cars and was flabbergasted that I used my unprotected Renault when salt had been peppered on our roads. He probably had a point, and 'Waxoyl' had sat on my clumsily handwritten to-do list since autumn 2010. But trackdays always appealed more, and so my budget was spent elsewhere.

The Clio was dormant for much of last winter, and the rattly, recalcitrant sensations that greeted me once spring had begun (and the battery had been recharged) made me vow to use it properly over the chilly months from then on. And that meant fully preparing it for the wrath of local council gritters.

My internet search was quick: the most highly rated place local to me for Waxoyl treatment is Peterborough-based Land Rover specialist Nene Overland. The smallest vehicle on its

Waxoyling price list is a Defender 90 at £478.80, but I figured a wee French hatch would be welcome too, and the same price was quoted.

It's a two-day process, beginning with an underside health check (which happily only turned up a mildly corroded fuel tank support) followed by the treatment. Inner arches and underbody shields are removed, allowing the chassis and crossmembers to be thoroughly washed. After drying, the Waxoyl is applied, dried and any excess substance cleaned away.

I can't really review the treatment itself until a few tortuous winters have passed, but I can tell you that the service was excellent. The car currently emits a mild whiff of shoe polish, but it's evidence the job's been done and I'm certain it'll disappear after a few miles: as good an excuse as any to rack them up this winter... ❌

Stephen Dobie

(@evoStephenDobie)

Driver's log

Date acquired	August 2010
Total mileage	95,175
Mileage this month	196
Costs this month	£478.80
mpg this month	32.0

Audi RS6 Avant

Duff finds he's moving in very different circles with his twin-turbo estate

R S6 OWNERSHIP IS a club, and a pretty exclusive one. Ever since I became the custodian of our car I've been meeting owners of previous-generation ones, several of whom are considering an upgrade to the V8. And although I haven't asked to see bank statements, it's clear that your typical RS6 owner is, in a word, absolutely minted. I've even learned that there are at least two former FIA



Above: RS6 enjoys a drink. Frequently world champions (one Formula 1 and one WRC) who run 'civilian' RS6s that they've bought with their own money.

The fuel economy isn't really going to matter for a typical owner, then. It does for me, though – and I've learned that, although the RS6 can be eked out to over 25mpg when trundling along, using any significant percentage of its twin-turbocharged performance sends that number tumbling down into the teens. I love having the RS6 as my everyday car, but I don't think my bank balance can take much more of it... ❌

Mike Duff

Driver's log

Date acquired	July 2013
Total mileage	7805
Mileage this month	1168
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	19.6

Peugeot 208 GTI

LAST WINTER, I borrowed a Peugeot 208 for a couple of weeks. A 154bhp THP 156 petrol model, it was the fastest available until the GTI arrived.

In family-friendly language, I thought it was a bit rubbish. Nasty, over-keen steering, uncouth suspension and a slipshod media system all grated on me and I was rather pleased to hand it back. My expectations for the GTI declined.

But now, after a couple of nights in Sam Riley's long-termer, I'm happy to report that I'm still cleaning the egg from my face. I'm slightly dumbfounded that it shares components with that 156 (save for the turbo 1.6-litre engine, that is, which is punchy low down yet happy to rev, regardless of power output). The go-faster 208 is as chuckable as



Above: GTI's fun factor surprised Dobie

Driver's log

Date acquired	Sept 2013
Total mileage	9977
Mileage this month	911
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	35.1

a wee hot hatch ought to be, and the RS Clio could relearn some lessons in fun here. The steering is still very eager, but with a chassis that reacts accordingly and a more cohesive ride, it makes far more sense. ❌

Stephen Dobie

(@evoStephenDobie)

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TRIDENT'S TIME?

Why now could be the moment to buy a used Maserati

I WAS ALWAYS surprised that Maserati relinquished the Bora name to VW in order that it could be attached to the back of one of the world's most nondescript saloon cars – but at least the Trident marque managed to hang on to the equally evocative Ghibli (which refers to one of those African winds that carmakers used to be so fond of).

Now the third-generation Ghibli is about to hit the streets and we are told we can look forward to Maserati having a far stronger presence in the world than ever before thanks to the annual production target for the new car being something in the order of 25,000.

If that proves to be the case, it seems likely that the raised awareness of the brand resulting from more Maseratis being seen on the road is going to have an impact on the demand for older models – and I don't just mean the traditional 'classics' such as the Ghiblis, Meraks, Mistralis and Boras of the '60s and '70s, but the 3200GTs, Coupes (as pictured) and Spydors of the '90s and 2000s that preceded the GranTurismo.

The later cars, in particular, are worth consideration as prices look to be down as

low as they can feasibly go for a thoroughbred Italian sports car with a Ferrari-derived engine. Right now on forsale.evo.co.uk, for example, you could pick up a 2003 Coupe with the Cambiocorsa automated-manual gearbox and a reasonable 65,000 miles on the clock for £13,800 from Surrey-based Autofficina, while a 31,000-mile '03 example is on offer at Hoffmans of Henley for £16,450, complete with full history and the desirable 'Skyhook' suspension.

With 385bhp and 170mph potential, this strikes me as a lot of car for the money. Just look out for clutch issues with Cambiocorsa models that have been incorrectly driven (used properly, the clutches should last well) and hunt around for a well-maintained, 2003-onwards car. There's no doubt that there are as many bad ones as good ones out there, but buy right and, if you can swallow the running costs, Maserati's hoped-for expansion could potentially be to your gain.



Simon de Burton

Auction watch

Big collection of Porsche racers to go under the hammer at Paris auction

THERE ARE A few auctions surrounding February's Retromobile event in Paris, but one that particularly caught our eye is RM Auctions' sale of the Harburg Collection, which includes a fantastic selection of Porsche competition cars from the '60s, '70s and '80s. The collection will go on sale, along with many other classic and motorsport cars, on 4-5 February.

The Porsche 956 was a force to be reckoned with in endurance racing throughout the 1980s. The car offered here is chassis 004; built in 1982, it was one of three works 956s entered in the Le Mans 24 Hours that year, taking third in a 1-2-3 Porsche victory. Complete with period Rothmans livery, it offers a rare chance to buy a car with such fantastic competition history. The current estimate for this Group C machine is a tentative £2million-plus.

Another rather special Porsche offered in the sale is a 917/30. Not only is the 917/30 the most powerful 917 ever produced, it's also the most powerful circuit racer ever. Built in 1973 to compete in the North American Can-Am series, it's powered by a 1100bhp twin-turbocharged 5.4-litre flat-12 engine. In qualifying trim, Porsche could boost power to more than 1500bhp. Performance was staggering, with a 0-200mph time of 10.9sec and a top speed of over 260mph. This is one of six produced, although it never saw racing action in period. Like the 956, it is expected to fetch in excess of £2million.

It's not just Porsches, though. Built up by Peter Harburg, an enthusiast from Australia, the collection also houses a 1955 Jaguar D-type, a 1955 Ferrari 750 Monza Spider, the ex-Briggs Cunningham 1950 Aston Martin DB2, a 1969 Lola T70, and the ex-John Coombs 1971 Ferrari 365 GTB/4 Daytona, all of which will be going under the hammer.

Matthew Hayward (@evoMatthew)



Top: this Porsche 956 finished third at Le Mans in 1982.
Above: 917/30 puts out 1100bhp; its estimate is £2m

Market Watch

Knowledge

Insights into the used-car market

Ask the expert



Q I'm looking at a 1996 TVR Chimaera 5.0 for £9k, a 2005 Porsche 996 Turbo S for £35k, a 2007 997 Turbo for £50k at an Official Porsche Centre, or a 2010 Mercedes C63 AMG for £30k. I'd appreciate your thoughts on these. Minimum depreciation is preferred or appreciation even better. I want sub-4.5sec 0-60, 150mph+ and 400bhp+.

Andrew Gardner, Pontefract

A You have three very different cars on your list and, judging by your hoped-for appreciation, I'd guess that you intend to keep whatever you choose for quite a while. On that basis, I'd discount the TVR – you'll love the sound and power initially, but then the novelty will wear off and you'll be faced

with its impracticalities, not to mention high running costs.

The C63 will give you more performance, better delivered. It will also be more reliable and more practical – but the value is still tailing off.

Which leaves the two 911 Turbos.

The 997 is a fabulous car and, at £50k from an OPC, the one you have found is reasonably priced. But I would go for the 996 Turbo S (as pictured), assuming it's a manual coupe in standard condition, ideally with a factory aero kit. It meets all your performance criteria and, because many people associate 996s with engine problems, they'll often mistakenly steer clear of the Turbo – which has a completely different, ultra-tough engine. In five years' time, £35k for a 996 Turbo may well seem ridiculously cheap... **sdb**

Trader chat



Dominic Lee, sales executive, Caterham Cars
uk.caterhamcars.com

'SHOWROOM TRAFFIC CALMS down at this time of year, but we see an upsurge in the number of well-informed buyers. Many have decided to buy kits, which if they're ordered now will be delivered in March or April, just in time for them to be built for the new season.

'The Caterham market is not at all seasonal in the way that it is for "normal" convertible cars, because people have often been planning their purchase for years, if not decades, and decide to go ahead when their circumstances are right. It's a very emotive buy.

'The strong residual values also make it relatively easy to get financing on new or used cars. Unfortunately, it's not available for kits. If it were, I think it would be very popular indeed.

'We don't try to push people towards a new car or a used one. It's all about them getting the right car. In some cases, that means ordering new to their exact specification, or buying a low-mileage used example that is close to what they were looking for.

'There are occasions when wives will buy a car for their husband, usually as a surprise birthday present. We had one of those a few weeks ago. And, historically, we'll always take at least one order on Christmas Eve.'

Just looking

The pick of the classifieds this month



Subaru Impreza 'Project STI'

£42,995

Revolution, Tyne & Wear

www.revolution247.com

0845 0023012

Regular readers will have seen Project STI before. It received four stars in issue 182, two months before stopping the clock at 7:53.08 to become the fastest Impreza ever recorded around the Nordschleife.

Revolution's mods extend far beyond the binning of a pre-2008 Impreza STI's rear doors. A heavily upgraded JDM-spec engine is stroked to 2.2 litres and produces a 911 Turbo-troubling 520bhp at full boost.

There's also a carbon bonnet and aluminium boot, plus in-car-adjustable dampers.

It takes Revolution four months to build a car like this, and new you'll be charged nearly £72,000. With 5500 miles and mild celebrity status to its name, Revolution's record-breaker is on sale for considerably less, at £42,995. But a serious offer in the high 30s could be enough...

Stephen Dobie (@evoStephenDobie)

Ruf CTR3 Club Sport

£POA

Bob Forstner, London

www.bobforstner.co.uk

0207 629 7020



Ruf found fame in the '80s when its Porsche 911-based Yellowbird was piloted around the Nürburgring by Stefan Roser, creating one of the car world's most iconic videos.

The original 691bhp CTR3 launched in 2008, and wowed David Vivian in *evo*'s first drive (issue 126). Our seasoned road tester described it as 'far and away the best 911 Porsche never made'.

The CTR3 still tops the Ruf range, but

it's been updated for the current supercar market courtesy of a Club Sport edition. A 766bhp twin-turbocharged version of a 3.8-litre Porsche flat-six yields a 3.1sec 0-62mph time, while the top speed is quoted at 230mph.

Having covered just 750 miles, this example is barely used, and will command a price tag firmly in six-figure territory.

Cameron Hill

Fantasy garage: £100,000 challenge

This month, we found three British classics for a fictional £100,000, all from the classifieds at forsale.evo.co.uk



1
Aston Vanquish
£63,000

With a production run of just four years and fewer than 1500 cars, the original Vanquish has all the hallmarks of an up-and-coming classic.



2
Mini Cooper S
£17,950

Still one of the most fun cars you'll ever find. This late 1960s mk2 Cooper S has a 1275cc engine and has been restored from the ground up.



3
Morgan 4/4
£17,750

As British as you like, with reliability and minimal depreciation thrown in. This one's finished in an elegant combo of Indigo blue with maroon leather.

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Magnesium Wheels Jota Edition Unique Limited Edition 21,875 miles 1996 **£300,000**



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Ceramic Brakes Carbon Fibre Driving Zone Carbon Racing Seats 12,000 miles 2010 **£124,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo LP560
Cordelia Alloys Ocuitura Stitching Lifting Gear 5,000 miles 2011 **£112,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo LP560 Bicolore
Skorpius Alloys Clear Engine Bay Cover Lifting Gear 7,000 miles 2011 **£107,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Spyder HIGH SPEC
Calisto Alloys, Branding Pack, Heated Seat, 36,000 miles, 2008 **£69,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago
Hercules Alloys Egear Lifting Gear 15,000 miles 2005 **£94,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago
Hercules Alloys SV Spec Bicolour interior 62,000 miles 2004 **£89,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo LP560
Colour SatNav Calisto Alloys Electric Seats 29,000 miles 2010 **£79,990+ VAT**



Lamborghini Gallardo
Lifting Gear Reverse Camera Egear 21,000 miles 2008 **£79,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo
Colour SatNav 20 Inch Alloys Reverse Camera 30,000 miles 2006 **£66,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo
Branding Pack Matt Black Cassiopea Alloys Sportivo Interior 11,000 miles 2007 **£74,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo
Calisto Alloys, Branding Pack, Reverse Camera 16,000 miles 2007 **£72,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Coupe LHD HIGH SPEC
Lifting Gear, Clear Engine Bay Cover, Yellow Brake Calipers, 14,000 miles, 2005, **£59,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo
LHD Reverse Camera Calisto Alloys 8,000 miles 2009 **£71,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo
Calisto Alloys Special Edition Colour SatNav 59,000 miles 2005 **£54,990**

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A rare, Verde York Limited Edition Integrale Evo 1



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A striking Silver Arrow with 48k miles.



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Buying Guide

Knowledge

Your indispensable resource when buying used

Suzuki Swift Sport 2005-2011

Overview



One of the best junior hot hatches of recent years makes a great second-hand buy – if you know what to watch out for **Words:** Peter Tomalin

FERRARI 599 GTB Fiorano, Lamborghini Murciélago LP640, Porsche 997 GT3... Suzuki Swift Sport?! As you may recall, all were contenders for *evo* Car of the Year in 2006. Funnily enough, the little Suzuki didn't win (and for all you cynics out there, neither did the Porsche, for 2006 was the 599's year), but it certainly wasn't disgraced, finishing above the then-new Audi TT and rabid Impreza Type 25. As Richard Porter put it: 'It's the smallest, the least powerful and the cheapest car here, but it never feels outclassed in this company. In fact it's been more fun than many of them.'

Derived from Suzuki's Junior World Rally Championship contender, the Swift Sport, launched in the UK in autumn 2006, had proper *evo* credentials. Its 1.6-litre VVT twin-cam engine featured high-lift cams, forged pistons and strengthened valve springs. While 123bhp at 6800rpm is hardly the stuff of dreams, with just 1030kg to punt along it felt feisty enough, so long as you kept the revs up – no chore with the slick five-speed manual, while the chassis revealed an addictively playful streak.

Outwardly, the Sport got a neat bodykit for its three-door bodyshell and twin exhaust pipes. Inside were red and black sports seats and a decent level of kit, including CD player and air con. Underneath there was stiffer suspension, front and rear disc brakes inside 17in alloys and switchable stability control. It was a proper little junior hot hatch and subsequently built quite a following. The mk2 Sport that replaced it in late 2011 was more of the same: a touch more power, an extra ratio in the gearbox and a little more grown-up, but also a tad less engaging for some.

Virtually unchanged throughout the production run, mk1 Swift Sports are generally robust and reliable (with a couple of caveats) and receptive to well-chosen mods, including supercharger conversions that can squeeze over 200bhp from that tiny four-pot. Even as standard, they're a hoot on trackdays, while specialists like CTC Performance can provide parts and servicing at excellent rates if you're not too fussed about having a Suzuki dealer stamp in the service book.

Checkpoints

Engine

The fact that Nürburgring rental company Rent4Ring has a fleet of three Swift Sports being roundly thrashed day-in day-out tells you everything you need to know about the M16A twin-cam. 'It really is virtually bombproof,' says Chris Cooke of specialists CTC Performance. 'Just look out for an engine management light: it could mean the O2 sensors need cleaning or replacing or it could mean the cat is breaking down. A new manifold with cat from Suzuki is around £600, so get the fault code checked.'

Transmission

Gearbox issues are the chief bugbear with the mk1 Sport. 'The 'box doesn't like abusive treatment,' says Chris, 'and it needs regular oil changes – we recommend every other service. It's usually the input shaft bearings that go, and it's a £700 job to replace them. On a test drive, make sure all the gears engage smoothly and easily, and listen for a whining sound like you're driving in reverse. That's the single biggest clue that expensive bills lie ahead.' Clutches, on the other hand, are robust, easily lasting up to 70,000 miles.

Suspension, steering, brakes

If the ESP warning light is on, it's likely the ABS pump has failed – a relatively common issue. 'The ABS itself is probably still functioning OK but the ESP is affected,' says Chris. A new pump from Suzuki is around £1200, but companies like ecutesting.com offer a refurbishing service from around £165. The brakes themselves are pretty good: even standard discs with decent pads can cope with the odd trackday. On the test drive, listen for knocks from the front – that'll be the bearings in the suspension top mounts, happily not expensive to replace.

Body, interior, electrics

Chris says he's never seen serious corrosion on a mk1 Sport, and while the interior is plasticky, it seems to hold up well. Replacement body parts can be expensive: a new front bumper costs about £650, for example, which is why many crash-damaged Sports are written off. And evaluate the owner as much as the car: a well-cared-for Swift should give years of trouble-free service.



1: revvy 1.6-litre engine is unlikely to give any cause for concern.
2: cabin materials match the original price of the car, but have proved hard-wearing

What we said November 2006



'The 1.6-litre twin-cam VVT engine spins into life with a light zizz before settling to a busy idle. It puts out 123bhp at 6800rpm and 109lb ft at 4800rpm, and, as you might guess from those figures, it does its best work at the top end of the rev range. Indeed, it's typically Japanese in that it wants to be thrashed...

'Set off and there's a Mini-like wheel-at-each-corner feel. The ride is much better than a Mini's would be on 17in wheels, however, the Swift Sport soaking up some truly appalling roads. Turn-in is seriously lacking bite, and although the steering is well-weighted, it offers no detail about what the Eagle FIs are doing. It's unnerving at first, but take the time to learn how the Swift wants to be driven and it can be huge fun.

'Faster corners are easy – just turn in a bit earlier and the Swift stays flat and poised throughout. In tighter corners it takes more bullying. Don't take the initial signs of understeer as the end of play; instead add more lock and stay with it, because then the chassis really starts to dig in, finding much more grip than you thought possible. And once you're really leaning into the corner you can play with the throttle.' (evo 097)



Above: body should be rust-free; be aware that body parts are expensive to replace



Above: Swift is playful in the corners, once you've worked past the initial understeer

Specification

Suzuki Swift Sport (mk1)

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1586cc
Max power 123bhp @ 6800rpm
Max torque 109lb ft @ 4800rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive
Weight 1030kg
Power-to-weight 121bhp/ton
0-62mph 8.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 124mph (claimed)
Price new £11,499 (2006)

Parts prices

(Prices from LeVoi's Suzuki; all genuine OE parts. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting)

Tyres (each) £84.23 (Goodyear Eagle F1)
Front pads (set) £57.47
Front discs (pair) £139
Damper (front, each) £114.24
Clutch £281
Exhaust £944 (front, incl cat), £483.35 (front, excl cat), £250.66 (rear)
Spark plugs (set) £83.80 (every 63,000 miles)
Air filter £17.58
Oil filter £12.18

Servicing

(Prices supplied by LeVoi's Suzuki, including VAT)

1st service (9000 miles) £164.66
2nd service (18,000 miles) £271.37
3rd service (27,000 miles) £259

'I bought one' Pete Hunter

'I've always had an interest in small cars with just enough power to entertain. The original Honda CRX 1.5i and Suzuki Swift 1.3 GTI were a couple of my previous preferred rides and the only modern car that seemed close in concept was the Swift Sport.

'I test-drove a used mk1 about 18 months ago and loved it. I didn't buy that one but I convinced my sister-in-law to buy a tidy 2007 model, which I bought

from her a few months ago. It's been totally reliable whilst in our respective care, and it's in amazing condition – not a spot of rust anywhere. I'm a keen home mechanic, so I've given it a full service myself. Parts supply is plentiful and running costs are reasonable: £200 road tax and 30-40mpg depending on use. OEM tyres are 195/45 17s at about £90 each. Some owners fit 205s to improve choice and reduce costs.

'The Swift is a blast to drive. The engine thrives on revs and the gearchange is fast and slick, but with an old-school mechanical feel. The steering has decent weight and no slack: you turn the wheel, the car moves instantly. It grips like a limpet, though it can be adjusted mid-corner with the throttle. The low gearing means it's a bit busy on motorways, but most owners just turn the stereo up to compensate!

What to pay

At the time of going to press, the cheapest Sport we could find was £3250, though the owner freely admitted the car had various parking dings and scrapes. Entry level for a tidy, late-2006 or early-'07 car is £3500; cars in good condition with a full service history start at a whisker under £4k. Around £4-5k there's a very decent choice of '08 and '09 cars with average miles and just one or two owners. At the top end of the market, £7k buys a 2011 car with fewer than 20,000 miles on the clock.

In the classifieds



2008 (08) Sport
 ⚡ 69,047 miles
 ⚡ Two owners ⚡ Silver
 ⚡ Black/red cloth
 ⚡ Bluetooth hands-free
 ⚡ www.williamsmotor.co.uk

£4695



2009 (09) Sport
 ⚡ 30,302 miles
 ⚡ Two owners ⚡ Silver
 ⚡ Black/red cloth
 ⚡ Full service history
 ⚡ www.drivebenfield.com

£5861



2011 (61) Sport
 ⚡ 15,339 miles
 ⚡ Silver ⚡ Black/red cloth
 ⚡ CD, aircon, etc
 ⚡ Full service history
 ⚡ www.evanshalshaw.com

£7091

The rivals

Mini Cooper

The regular second-gen Cooper (post '06) has 120bhp. Plenty available from £5k and they hold their value well.

Ford Fiesta Zetec S

The 118bhp Zetec S that was introduced for 2009MY is a genuinely entertaining supermini. Prices start from £6k.

Skoda Fabia vRS

The mk1 Fabia ('04-07) is an interesting alternative, its 130bhp diesel combining fine performance with 50mpg economy.

Useful contacts

⚡ ssoc.co.uk
 owners' club, forums, advice, etc
 ⚡ swiftowners.co.uk
 owners' club, forums, advice, etc
 ⚡ ctc-performance.co.uk
 tuning, parts, servicing
 ⚡ monster-sport-europe.com
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 ⚡ pistonheads.com
 cars for sale, forums
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1



Model

BMW E30 M3 Group A
€56 (c£47) otto-models.com

1 This Group A-spec rallying M3 was the last BMW to win a round of the World Rally Championship, Frenchman Bernard Beguin securing the first-ever WRC victory for David Richards' Prodrive organisation on the Tour de Corse in 1987. This 1:18-scale model comes with exceptional detailing, both inside and out, of the car Beguin ran in Corsica. Its maker, Ottomobile, is limiting production to 2250 examples.

Track driving

Silverstone Experiences
From £79 silverstone.co.uk

2 If you've got a bit of Christmas money going spare, then you could do much worse than using it to drive a supercar around the home of the British Grand Prix. A range of driving experiences are available, involving the likes of the Aston Martin V8 Vantage, Ferrari 360 Modena, Mercedes C63 AMG, Lotus Evora and Nissan GT-R. Rally courses are also available.



3

Sunglasses

Autodromo Stelvio
£225 pageandcooper.com

3 Named after one of the most famous passes in the Alps, these sunglasses are ideal for the continental touring driver. Hand-made in Japan, the lenses are polarised to minimise the glare that comes from low sun, or from light reflected off snow. A leather case and cloth is included with the specs, and there is a choice of three different colours of frames.



2 4



Satnav

Garmin Nüvi 2797 LMT
£269.99 buy.garmin.com/en-gb/gb

4 Ever had problems reading the labelling on tiny satnav screens? If so, you'll be interested in this unit from Garmin. It has a simply massive 7in display – the biggest that we've ever seen on a satnav – so if you can't read what it has to say, you probably shouldn't be driving. The 2797 comes equipped with detailed maps of Europe, and the not-inconsiderable price also gets you free map updates every three months for the lifetime of the device.

evo Essentials Top 3: T-shirts

Ford RS200
£20 petrolthreads.co.uk



From its stubby round headlights to the huge air intake on the roof, the RS200 epitomises '80s fast Fords.

Henry v Enzo
£20 slickattire.co.uk



Le Mans in the 1960s was a fight between Ford and Ferrari, and in the 1966 race this shirt 'promotes', Ford came out on top.

Curva Parabolica
£20 slickattire.co.uk



A long, fast right-hander with minimal room for error, Monza's final corner is one of the most famous in Formula 1.

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TomTom GO 6000

£299.99 www.tomtom.com/en_gb

The TomTom GO 6000 boasts a new and radically different user interface to the cheaper 'Start' series and comes with a 6in high-resolution gloss screen.

On first encounter the new operating system seems slightly baffling, fiddly and unintuitive to use, but after your first journey you'll wonder how you ever lived without it. Browsing the new interactive maps is wonderfully easy if you don't have the address to hand, and searching for points of interest by typing in the name without having to go through the rigmarole of selecting what type of POI you're after is utterly joyous.

TomTom Traffic info is free for the lifetime of the device, and the latest data is constantly downloaded using built-in

connectivity with no associated costs, even when abroad. The traffic info is then displayed on the 'Route Bar', pinpointing where the jam starts. Clever stuff.

The 6000 also comes with free map updates for the lifetime of the unit, so you can ensure it's kept up to date.

The gloss screen has a premium feel, but it does reflect more than the matt versions of old. It's not bad enough to be distracting, though. An RRP of £299.99 does seem pretty steep just to have a woman named Serena shout directions at you, but when you consider that you can keep the maps, addresses and POIs updated for a lifetime at no charge at all, it starts to look like a bit of a bargain.

Dean Smith (@evoDeanSmith)



Uniroyal RainSport 3

From £51.01 (plus fitting) www.uniroyal-tyres.co.uk

Uniroyal's RainSport 2 has finally been pensioned off after more than ten years in production, to be replaced by the all-new RainSport 3. The arrival marks renewed interest in the brand by owner Continental. In fact a new Uniroyal winter tyre – the MS Plus 77 – was also unveiled at the launch in Valencia, Spain.

Uniroyal's core values remain the same – best in wet. Key to this is an asymmetric, directional tread, which is said to combine strong water-shifting abilities, good handling properties and low noise. It's the first time Uniroyal has employed an asymmetric pattern on a car tyre, and the RainSport 3 also has what its maker calls 'shark skin technology'. 'Scales' are moulded into the bottom

of the main circumferential grooves to speed water flow in much the same way as competition swimsuits copy the surface of a shark's skin.

Not surprisingly, all tyres in the range, which will cover 14-21in rims, have the top A wet-grip label rating and most get a C for fuel economy – a 14 per cent improvement over the RainSport 2.

So does it work? With no comparison it is hard to draw firm conclusions, but the newcomer felt well balanced on our brief track tests and very secure through the soaked sections. It was particularly impressive in deep water, so maybe Uniroyal is on to something with the shark-skin concept.

Kim Adams (@cargadgetguru)



Ventus Mini Magic Torch

£14.99 www.ventusfreeenergy.com

A torch in the glovebox is a good idea only if the batteries are fit for that late-night breakdown. One way to ensure you always have light is a wind-up torch – a few cranks and you get enough light to change a wheel. The best can also power other kit like mobile phones, and this just-released version of the Mini Magic Torch from Ventus even works with the electrically fussy iPhone 4 and 5.

Ventus has gone for a three-LED light rather than a single-LED one, to give a power-saving option. Even the maximum beam is no match for the best conventional LED rivals, but it has a tightly focused bright centre – ideal for walking – with a fair spread of less intense light, although there are darker lines in this area. A minute's winding gave around 30 minutes of useable light and the torch is fully charged after three.

A cable for charging the torch from a USB socket – increasingly handy in-car – is included, along with a lead and adaptors for topping up your phone. You need a little patience as the charging can drop out, requiring you to start again. It does work, though, as an emergency solution, and a minute's winding should give up to 120 seconds' talk time. At £15 it's a small price to pay for knowing you always have a working torch.

Kim Adams (@cargadgetguru)

Rain-X Anti-Fog

£6.99 (200ml) www.halfords.com

There are many benefits of replacing your normal three-point seat belt with a race harness, but they come at the expense of practicality. As I know only too well, the most frustrating thing about a harness – more annoying than the amount of time it takes to belt-up – is how difficult it is to de-mist your windscreen.

You might be lucky enough to be able to reach the heater controls so that you can gradually clear the screen with warm air, but you almost certainly won't be able to reach the glass itself to wipe off any condensation. So to save me having to wriggle out of my harness to wipe the screen, I thought I'd try applying Rain-X Anti-Fog, which promises to stop the misting up happening in the first place.

The instructions sound simple: apply to clean glass with a dry cloth. Unfortunately, the nozzle on the bottle means that the fluid is fired out much quicker than you'd expect. So you miss the cloth you were aiming for and get it all over the interior of your car, or all over you. It smells like a concoction of highly corrosive chemicals, so I can't imagine it's very good for your car's interior or your skin.

The instructions suggest multiple applications for the best results, and I had to apply Anti-Fog twice for it to work, but the condensation in my car beforehand was significant. Now, though, it's no longer a problem.

Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)





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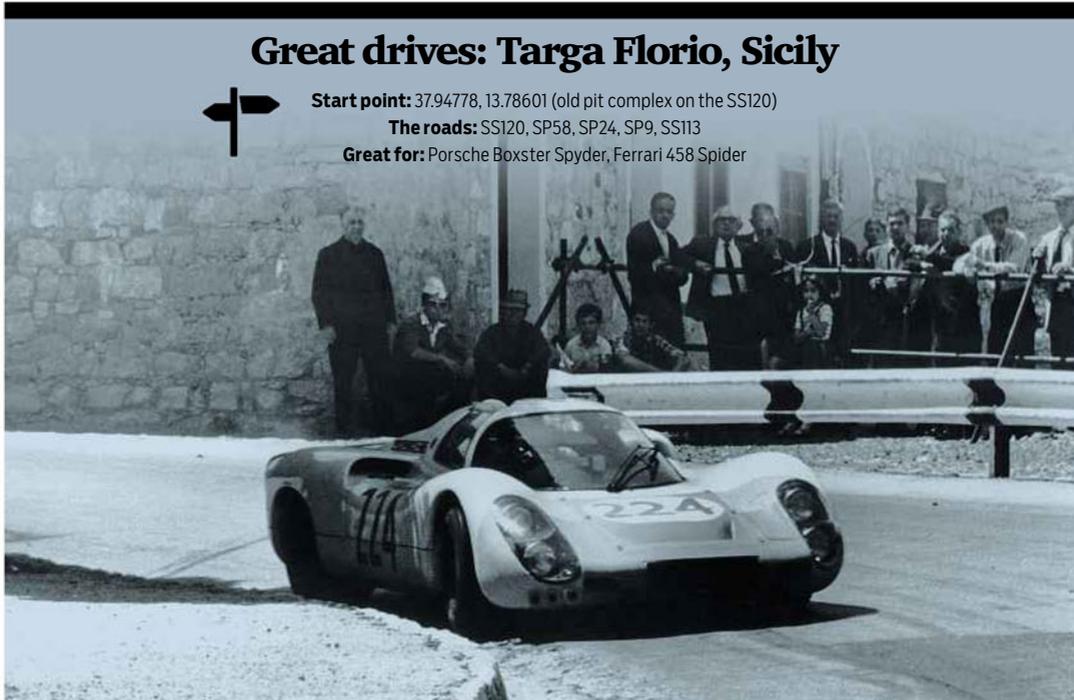
Great drives: Targa Florio, Sicily



Start point: 37.94778, 13.78601 (old pit complex on the SS120)

The roads: SS120, SP58, SP24, SP9, SS113

Great for: Porsche Boxster Spyder, Ferrari 458 Spider



D

DRIVING ON A public road used for racing or rallying always adds to the experience, I think. If you do a bit of research before you go, then the place comes alive with the ghosts and heroes of years gone by.

Driving in Italy is always special, too: the weather helps, but there's just something about the country's love of cars and its attitude towards life in general that adds to the feeling of wellbeing. All of which means that the route of the Targa Florio could just be the perfect driving destination...

There were several routes used for the Targa over the years, including one that was basically a lap of the entire island of Sicily. The Piccolo Circuito delle Madonie described here was the shortest but also the most frequently used – and is the one being tackled in the picture above by the Porsche 907/8 of Vic Elford and Umberto Maglioli, on its way to victory in the 1968 race. The course was run in an anti-clockwise direction and the start/finish line is about four miles north of the town of Cerda, close to Sicily's northern coast. The old pits are still there, complete with faded writing and enough patina to drown you in nostalgia.

The southern half of the circuit is the more spectacular and enjoyable to drive. Richard Meaden took a 996 mk1 GT3 there way back in issue 028 and it remains one of my all-time favourite *evo* features. 'I can't remember ever driving a road as satisfying as this,' he wrote. 'It's quiet, tranquil almost, and yet far from wanting to slow, you feel compelled to push on as hard as you dare as a mark of respect... The route is a merciless stream of head-spinning twists and turns, gut-wrenching fresh-air drops and spine-pummelling lumps and bumps. These, it soon transpires, are Targa constants.' And if that small eulogy doesn't make you want to drive there then I don't know what will.

Henry Catchpole
Features editor



The route



Start **Finish**
Distance: 45 miles
Time: 1 hour 40 minutes

Where to stay

If you're planning a general holiday to Sicily with Targa tourism only being a part, then you could try the Hotel Villa Ducale in Taormina. It's a couple of hours from the route, but the reviews are excellent. Nearer to the route, in Campofelice di Roccella (on the coast just to the north of the long straight) is a B&B called Sosta dei Garibaldini, which also gets terrific reviews.

Watch out for

There is a Targa museum in Collesano, and it would be a shame not to visit. If you've got the time, then exploring the extra 22 miles of the circuit used between 1919 and 1930 would be worthwhile. Mount Etna is also stunning, with some interesting stretches of tarmac on the approach. You do need to watch out for subsidence on roads on Sicily, however, as well as some narrow sections on the Targa route.

Reader road trip Applecross in May

Living in the south of England, the west coast of Scotland seems a million miles away, but then it may as well be with the contrast in scenery, weather, traffic and, importantly, roads. Through the power of social media I was invited to join a group of fellow driving-loving guys on one of their regular pilgrimages to the far north-west. An eclectic mix of Porsches (GT3, Boxster, 964), a Mercedes (C63), a SEAT (Ibiza Cupra) and an Ariel (Atom Supercharged) rendezvoused on the shore of Loch Lomond for three days of road-running fun, based at the Applecross Inn (food and atmosphere highly recommended).



More than ten years ago a group of us from the *evo* forum did a similar trip, but I was really looking forward to stretching the legs of my Porsche 964 C2 this time. Ten years ago in my Peugeot 106 Rallye I found some of the roads just too big and fast. In the 964 I had a particularly memorable run along the A832. It's a challenging mix of twisting, lumpen tarmac, with tight bits in the trees and open stretches overlooking the sea.

Following a well-driven Boxster on the A87 was a thrill too, and of course heading over the Applecross Pass is always fun, even in the snow – in May! I wouldn't hesitate to go back for the scenery, the traffic and most of all the roads. The changeable weather? Well that just adds a dramatic backdrop...

Ben Bradley

Email your road trip story to
henryc@evo.co.uk

Events calendar JANUARY

January 9-11
Dubai 24 Hours
www.24hdubai.com

January 9-12
Autosport International, NEC, Birmingham
www.autosportinternational.com

January 13-26
North American International Auto Show, Detroit
www.naias.com

January 16-18
Rallye Monte Carlo
www.acm.mc

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 cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft /rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Abarth Punto Evo	149 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 - Favours fun over finesse ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Miito 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 I47 GTA	187 R	'03-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0	15.5	153	-	23.3	+ Mk1 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	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price ★★★★★
Audi S3	188 R	£31,260	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.4	12.5	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	4.8	12.9	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 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 ★★★★★
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 R	'06-'11	4/1368	99/6000	99/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	115	154	43.5	+ Most fun per pound on the market - Optional ESP can't be turned off ★★★★★
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£14,500	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	+ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name ★★★★★
Ford Sportka SE	084 R	'03-'08	4/1597	94/5500	100/4250	934kg	102	9.5	-	108	-	37.2	+ Big fun in a little package - Could handle even more power ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta 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 ST Mountune	188 D	£17,594	4/1596	212/6000	236/2750	1088kg	198	6.6	-	140	138	-	+ One of the best mid-sized hatches made even better - Badge snobbery ★★★★★
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've 12 years old ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	'05-'08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	'08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1176kg	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	-	38.2	+ 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	188 R	£21,995	4/1999	247/5500	265/1750	1362kg	184	6.5	16.8	154	169	-	+ All-round cracking hot hatch. Good value, too - There's a bit of torque-steer ★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune	187 D	£23,220	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	154+	169	-	+ Great value upgrade - Steering still not as feelsome as that of some rivals ★★★★★
Ford Focus ST	119 R	'05-'10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.7	16.8	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling ★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune	137 R	'08-'11	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	5.8	14.3	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS ★★★★★
Ford Focus RS	188 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	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, duff 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	188 R	£37,845	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.3	10.6	155	161	40.9	+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals ★★★★★
MG3 Style	190 D	£9999	4/1498	104/6000	101/4750	1155kg	91	10.4	-	108	136	48.7	+ Decent chassis, performance and price - Thrashy engine, cheap cabin ★★★★★
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	190 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	155/3500	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

The Fiesta ST (left), is now the default affordable hot hatch choice. We'd have ours with the Mountune upgrade. The £29k Mini GP may sound expensive, but you won't find a more focused front-driver. BMW's rear-drive M135i, meanwhile, feels like a bargain at £30k.

Superminis / Hot Hatches

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	
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	1269kg	176	6.1	-	134	-	25.1	+ Nissan's Escort Cossie - Make sure it's a good one	
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)			'97-'98	4/1587	103/6200	865kg	121	8.8	-	121	-	34.0	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)			'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	805/400	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	191/5800	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	'08-'13	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	191/6000	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	'04-'06	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	141	190	34.5	+ The hot Clio at its best - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	
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	187 R	'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	+ Super car 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	833kg	146	7.8	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Most have been thrashed	
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	188 R	£25,245	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.4	14.8	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 sticks 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 Cupra	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 (Mk3)	187 D	£22,990	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1350kg	163	6.8	-	154	142	45.6	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car	
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 R	'06-'13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake calipers?	
Smart Fortwo Brabus	110 D	£15,000	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	96	119	54.3	+ Telling people you drive a Brabus - Them realising it's not a 720bhp S-class	
Subaru Impreza STI CS400	146 R	'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. Lifesless 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 (Mk1)	173 R	£26,995	4/1998	216/5500	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 (Mk2)	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! Polo GTI	171 R	£7630+	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - but predictably slow	
VW Golf 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 GTD (Mk7)	188 D	£25,285	4/1968	181/3500	280/1750	1377kg	134	7.5	-	143	109	67.3	+ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTI	
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	188 R	£25,845	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1351kg	163	6.5	-	152	138	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved - Mégane 265 beats it as a pure drivers' car	
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	960kg	147	7.9	-	129	-	26.6	+ 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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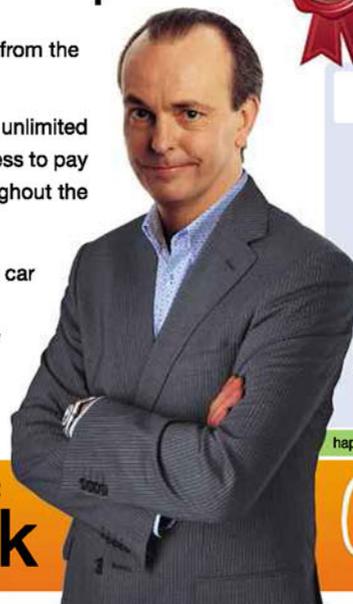
Miss Royburn

Many thanks to Lynne and Gemma for their help, and in changing me from a pessimist to optimist.

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Our Choice

BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the current 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 E63, which is now in its second turbocharged iteration. Jaguar's showy XFR-S (left) has a particularly impressive chassis, while Lexus's tail-happy IS-F remains a wonderfully alternative choice.

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	
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 B3 Biturbo	188 D	£54,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1535kg	267	4.2	-	190	177	37.2	+ Understated appearance, monster performance - E90 M3 is better on the limit	★★★★★
Alpina D3 (E90)	120 R	'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	538/2800	1845kg	293	4.5	-	198	244	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 Biturbo	134 D	£98,800	8/4395	533/5200	538/2800	1965kg	276	4.6	-	194	230	28.5	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	182 D	£149,995	12/5935	550/6000	451/5000	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	189 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 RS7	190 D	£83,495	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1920kg	292	3.9	-	155	229	28.8	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience	★★★★★
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 RS Q3	190 D	£43,000	5/2480	306/5200	310/1500	1655kg	188	5.5	-	155	206	32.1	+ More enjoyable than many RS Audis - Used Cayennes and ML63s are similar money	★★★★★
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	178F	£225,900	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2585kg	198	5.1	-	184	393	16.7	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
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 E92 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	1535kg	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 dazzling 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	190 D	£97,700	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 X5 M50d	191 D	£63,715	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	155	5.3	-	155	177	42.2	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge	★★★★★
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	£58,420	8/4395	408/5500	442/1750	2190kg	186	5.4	-	155	292	22.6	+ Stuningly 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	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
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 reprobable 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	1252kg	180	5.9	-	150	-	-	+ Screaming engine, razor-sharp chassis - Specialist import only	★★★★★
Honda Accord Type-R	012 R	'99-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image	★★★★★
Infiniti M37S	150 D	£45,225	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1765kg	182	6.2	-	155	235	27.7	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals	★★★★★
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Diesel S	145 D	£41,860	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	★★★★★

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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 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 XFR-S	187 R	£79,995	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1912kg	288	4.4	-	186	270	24.4	+ XF gets turned up to 12 - Except for the soundtrack ★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148 D	£56,865	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1700kg	162	6.0	-	155	167	46.3	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the XJR... ★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	£92,370	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1805kg	302	4.4	-	174	270	24.4	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - 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	177	-	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	361/4200	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	361/4200	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	185 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 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	187 D	£73,745	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	165 R	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Turbo engine doesn't dilute E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction... ★★★★★
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	1750kg	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 L	191 D	£119,575	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	'10-'13	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	'06-'13	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	+ Owner 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	177 R	£83,655	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - E85K buys a Boxster and an ML350... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£123,340	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	327/2600	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 uncommensal ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen 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	403/6700	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	'11-'13	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	371/3750	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	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns - Without the blue paint and gold wheels ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1490kg	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 P1 - Lost its throbby flat-four voice ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WR1	067 R	'04-'05	4/1994	316/5800	310/4000	1470kg	218	5.3	13.1	155	-	-	+ Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 - Spec C is better ★★★★★
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	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	187 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	188 R	'98-'99	4/1994	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.0	13.1	150	-	-	+ The ultimate Impreza - Doesn't come cheap ★★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR SuperSport	189 D	£29,749	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1825kg	179	5.6	-	170	249	26.6	+ A 170mph Vauxhall - Should be a more engaging steer ★★★★★

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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 S is a brilliant all-rounder, while the Lotus Evija S Roadster counters with a more focused driving experience. Jaguar's F-type also impresses in both S (left) and V8 S forms. Mazda's MX-5 is best for budget rear-drive fun, but for the ultimate thrills, get a Caterham 620R or 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	CO2g/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 - Boot is useless for touring
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 - Wobble wobble, wobble 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	189 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	487/1700	2470kg	207	4.9	-	187	254	25.9	+ Arguably the world's best topless GT - Still no sports car
Bentley Conti GT Speed Convertible	187 D	£168,000	12/5998	616/6000	590/1700	2495kg	251	4.1	-	202	347	19.0	+ Effortless performance, style - Running costs a tad on the high side
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	199/1520	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	-	23.9	+ 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	+ M DCT 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
Caterham Seven 160	190 R	£17,995	4/1660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg	166	6.5	-	100	-	-	+ Looks good, great to drive, fantastic engine - Your missus will leave you
Caterham Seven 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 Seven Roadsport SV 175	140 D	£30,995	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	555kg	321	4.8	-	138	-	-	+ The Caterham for everyday use, R300 engine - Losses intensity of R300
Caterham Seven 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 Seven 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 Seven 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 Seven Superlight R500	123 R	£42,495	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver
Caterham Seven 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 Seven 620R	187 R	£49,995	4/1999	311/7700	219/7350	545kg	580	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Banjai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?
Caterham Levante	131 R	'09-'10	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 Seven 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 Seven R300	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 Seven R400	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 Seven R500	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 Seven R500 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 - Pricey 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 Convertible	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 S Convertible	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 Convertible	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	171 R	£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	£83,965	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	£104,465	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	004 R	'97-'06	8/4196	414/6250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Overworked 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	£674,000	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	144	189	34.0	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a 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

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Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione Issue 120, August 2008

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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	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ New supercharged Elise boasts epic grip and pace - £37k before (pricey) options...
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	£35,600	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment
Lotus Elise S Roadster	186 R	£52,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	4.0	-	145	236	28.0	+ Like the hard-top Elige 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 IIIS	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	128 R	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	650kg	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 uninvolved
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 (Mk3 v2)		£18,495	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1075kg	117	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 (Mk3 v2)	170 R	'09-'13	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	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 ragtop doesn'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	+ Warty 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	731/2300	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-smackingly pricey
Mercedes-Benz SL55 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	206/1850	1230kg	172	6.9	-	146	169	38.7	+ A manlier Mini cabrio. As hardcore as the hatch... - which is still better
Morgan 3 Wheeler	177 R	£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 target 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)	188 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 the most 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 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	187 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



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Our Choice

Porsche 911 GT3. You might think that the GT3's win at *evo* Car of the Year 2013 was a foregone conclusion, but believe it or not, it's the first GT3 to claim an *eCoty* title. And it did so in a vintage year to boot (Ferrari F12, Mercedes SLS Black, Mini GP...). Yes, it really is that good.



Best of the Rest

Aston's V12 Vantage S (left) is a deeply well-sorted drivers' car. Audi's updated R8 is still a real gem, especially in V10 Plus form. Porsche's second-gen Cayman S is a truly great all-rounder, while for similar money the Lotus Evige S is a proper road racer and was our joint 2012 Car of the Year.

Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine c/y/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-'11	6/3195	256/6300	237/4500	1532kg	170	6.9	-	155	260	-	+ Brera made better for UK roads - Steering lacking some feel ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 4C	120 R	£45,000	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg	269	4.5	-	160	157	41.5	+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-super-car looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 R	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1855kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold ★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (E92)	108 R	'07-'13	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	29.1	+ Alpina's M3 alternative - Too refined for some ★★★★★
Alpina B3 GT3 (E92)	176 D	£66,950	6/2979	402/6000	398/4500	1535kg	266	4.4	-	186	224	-	+ Alpina's M3 GT3 alternative - Auto gearbox frustrates when pressing on ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage	169 D	£84,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1610kg	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	1600kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	'09-'13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty? ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	190 R	£138,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1665kg	345	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ The best car Aston Martin currently makes - Old-school automated 'box ★★★★★
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 DB9	178 R	£131,995	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	183	368	18.2	+ Better than the old DB9 in every respect - Automatic gearbox could be quicker ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	146 D	'10-'12	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1760kg	271	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Ride & handling improved for 2010 model - Rapide makes 2+2 seating pointless ★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS	142 R	'07-'12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey, Can bite the unwary ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB7 Vantage	010 R	'00-'05	12/5935	420/6000	400/5000	1770kg	241	4.9	11.2	185	-	18.6	+ DB7 with near-super-car 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	£39,905	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	155	184	35.8	+ Usefully quicker TT, great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game ★★★★★
Audi TT RS	158 R	£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	189 D	£43,395	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1675kg	199	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Supercharged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Poor body control ★★★★★
Audi RS5	188 R	£59,150	8/4163	444/8250	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	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.1	9.9	188	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	+ Real super-car feel - The V8 is £20k less, and still superb ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	190 R	£125,810	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 - W12 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 ★★★★★
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	188 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 435i M Sport Coupe	189 D	£41,435	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1510kg	203	5.4	-	155	169	35.8	+ Better balance than 3-series saloon - Can feel characterless at lower speeds ★★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport Coupe (E92)	095 D	'06-'13	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1520kg	201	5.2	12.2	155	196	33.6	+ Eager engine, exploitable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	162 R	'07-'13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M ★★★★★
BMW M3 GT3 (E92)	171 R	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	193	295	-	+ Highly exclusive, one of the most focused M-cars 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)	191 D	£93,820	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade too... ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★
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	181/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some ★★★★★
Honda NSX	188 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	-	-	+ <i>evo</i> Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK ★★★★★
Hyundai Veloster Turbo	176 D	£22,120	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	168 R	'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 Evige 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 Evige V6 Cup	191 R	£62,994	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1110kg	316	3.7	-	170	-	-	+ Half a roll-over cage short of being a race car - Regular Evige S is better for road work ★★★★★
Lotus Evige S	105 R	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack ★★★★★
Lotus Evige 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 Evige ★★★★★
Lotus Evige (series 2)	068 R	'04-'08	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	875kg	219	4.9	-	147	-	32.1	+ Highly focused road and track tool - Lacks visual impact of S1 ★★★★★

POCKET buying guide

Aston Martin DB9

Years 2004- Engine V12, 5935cc
 Power 450bhp @ 6000rpm Torque
 420lb ft @ 5000rpm 0-60mph 5.0sec Top
 speed 186mph (spec is for '04-'07 model)





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Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/vcc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max.mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Lotus Evige (series 1)	067D	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+ Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement	★★★★★
Lotus Evora	138R	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	168R	£61,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911...	★★★★★
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	005R	'99-'00	8/3506	350/6500	295/4250	1299kg	274	4.3	9.9	175	-	22.0	+ Designed for track work but brilliant on the road - Limited edition	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo	114R	£82,190	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.5	12.7	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188R	£90,750	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	185	331	-	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	160R	£110,045	8/4691	444/7100	376/4750	1770kg	255	4.6	-	187	337	19.6	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - No rear seats	★★★★★
Maserati Coupe	064R	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering	★★★★★
Maserati GranSport	073R	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little	★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122R	'03-'11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+ Never mind the quirks, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162R	£57,165	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	+ Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black	171R	£98,765	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	186	286	-	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK63 AMG Black	106R	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	150D	£115,660	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2010kg	271	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition	★★★★★
Morgan AeroMax	097D	£110,000	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Weird and utterly wonderful - They're all sold	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	180R	£26,995	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1520kg	218	5.4	-	155	248	26.7	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Nismo	186D	£36,995	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1535kg	224	5.2	-	155	248	26.6	+ More controlled, more polished, more fun - More expensive	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z	107R	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2012MY/2013MY)	187R	£76,610	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.8	-	196	275	24.0	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But over £20K more than its launch price	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152R	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	194	279	23.5	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125R	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	193	-	-	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year, now from just £35K - You won't see 20mpg often	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	009R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Very firm ride	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	019R	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0	+ Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply	★★★★★
Noble M400	089R	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185	-	-	+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior	★★★★★
Noble M12 GTO-3R	070R	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	+ The ability to humble exotica - Flawed driving position	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155R	£26,635	4/1598	191/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.3	18.1	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ R	191D	£31,995	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1355kg	199	5.9	-	155	145	44.8	+ The best RCZ yet - 1.6-litre engine needs to be worked hard	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman (981)	185F	£39,694	6/2706	271/7400	214/4500	1310kg	210	5.7	-	165	192	34.4	+ Very enticing for the money in basic spec - You might still want the power of the 'S'	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	190R	£48,783	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	5.0	-	176	206	32.1	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm...	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman (987)	131R	'11-'13	6/2893	261/7200	221/4400	1330kg	199	5.8	-	165	221	30.1	+ Extra power, just as involving - Still lacks the desirability of other Porsches	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (987)	132R	'06-'13	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman R (987)	158R	'11-'13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	29.1	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	168R	£71,449	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1380kg	254	4.7	-	179	212	31.4	+ 911 becomes cleaner and cleverer - But some of its character's gone AWOL	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	168R	£81,242	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1395kg	287	4.4	-	188	224	29.7	+ As above, but with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4.0 (996)	177D	£77,924	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1430kg	245	4.5	-	177	219	30.4	+ A touch more engaging than 2wd 991 - Still stand-offish compared to 997	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991)	179R	£87,959	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1445kg	277	4.5	-	185	234	28.5	+ The best 991-generation Carrera - Choose your spec carefully	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (997.2)		'08-'11	6/3614	341/6500	288/4400	1415kg	245	4.9	-	180	225	29.4	+ Faster and greener than the mkl 997 - Lost a little of the 911 magic	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121R	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070R	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	+ evo Car of the Year 2004; like a junior GT3 - Tech overload?	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (996)	051R	'02-'05	6/3596	316/6800	273/4250	1470kg	218	5.1	-	174	-	-	+ Second best 996 only to the GT3 - Very little	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996 3.4)	008R	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	230	4.6	-	173	-	28.0	+ evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (993)		'94-'97	6/3600	285/6100	251/5250	1372kg	211	5.2	-	168	-	25.0	+ More character than 996 - Harder work at speed	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991)	190R	£100,540	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	332	3.5	-	196	289	23.0	+ evo Car of the Year 2013 - At its best at licence-troubling speeds	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182R	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)	152R	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2010 - Looks and noise are slightly OTT	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187R	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	082R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	4.3	9.2	190	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182R	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	+ evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough	★★★★★
Porsche 968 Club Sport	019R	'93-'95	4/2990	240/6200	225/4100	1335kg	183	6.1	15.7	149	-	-	+ One of the all-time greats - Lots have been driven very hard	★★★★★
Renault Alpine A610	187D	'91-'95	6/2975	247/5750	258/2900	1420kg	177	5.4	13.8	166	-	21.0	+ Overlooked, bargain-price French 911. Try one - RS interior	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Wraith	189D	£237,111	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	269	4.4	-	155	327	20.2	+ Brilliant at waffing; quicker than you'd expect - Not the most engaging drivers' car	★★★★★
Subaru BRZ	170R	£24,995	4/1998	191/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	140	181	36.2	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised	★★★★★
Toyota GT86	174R	£24,995	4/1998	191/7000	151/6400	1275kg	157	7.6	-	140	181	36.2	+ More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality	★★★★★
Toyota Celica GT-Four ST205	187R	'94-'99	4/1998	239/6000	223/4000	1496kg	162	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Criminally overlooked homologation special - Finding one	★★★★★
TVR T350C	057R	'03-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.7	10.0	175	-	-	+ Looks, engine - Unsupportive seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish	★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	099D	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'	★★★★★
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004R	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	5.0	11.4	160+	-	-	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion	★★★★★
Vauxhall Monaro VXR 6.0	079D	'05-'07	8/5967	398/6000	391/4400	1677kg	241	5.1	-	180+	-	-	+ Improved chassis and steering, 180mph - Looks a bit snouty	★★★★★
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155R	£24,705	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1373kg	153	6.1	15.8	149	172	38.2	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	★★★★★
VW Scirocco R	181R	£31,135	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1352kg	196	5.8	-	155	189	34.9	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some	★★★★★
VW Corrado VR6	095R	'92-'96	6/2861	190/5800	180/4200	1237kg	156	6.2	-	143	-	29.5	+ One of the great all-rounders - A little nose-heavy	★★★★★

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Our Choice

Ferrari 458 Speciale. The regular 458 Italia is amazing enough in itself – in fact it used to occupy this very space – but the Speciale follows in the tradition of the 360 Challenge Stradale and 430 Scuderia and makes the car fit based on even more, well, special. The supercar to buy.



Best of the Rest

Pagani's awesome Huayra (left) was our joint Car of the Year in 2012, while Ferrari's incredible F12 was runner-up in 2013. The Mercedes SLS AMG Black also surprised by being an impressively adept machine. Lamborghini's Aventador still has it licked for visual drama, though...

Supercars

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine c/yc	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	€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	£95-07	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 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 Grand Sport	133 R	€1.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	596	11.4	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous broly/roof thing	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 R	€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	€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 Veyron 16.4	134 R	'05-'11	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	596	11.4	+ Superly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 R	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superly 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	'09-'13	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 183 R	183 R	£178,526	8/4497	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	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1530kg	373	3.3	-	198	275	23.9	+ A 458 that sounds and feels more organic - Er, 4mph slower than the Italia?	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	191 R	£208,000	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	202+	275	23.9	+ Makes the regular 458 feel outmoded - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing	★★★★★
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 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	-	-	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as inoving 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	190 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 - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste	★★★★★
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	'99-'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 288GT0	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	188 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 CCXR Edition	118 R	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spike 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	£178,550	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. Clunky - 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	-	21.3	+ 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	184 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/Nürburgring	161 R	'10-'12	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	187 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	185 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	190 R	£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	€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	€1m	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-pricking as the Zonda's	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 R	€1.5m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg	630	3.3	-	217+	-	-	+ The most extreme Zonda ever - The last Zonda ever (probably)	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda C12S	096 R	'01-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	214	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 - Values have gone up a fair bit since then	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	186 R	'05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg	497	3.6	-	214	-	-	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	'09-'10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1400kg	485	3.4	-	217+	-	-	+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often	★★★★★
Porsche														

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 VX88 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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Camera: Nikon D3. Focal length: 55.0mm. Exposure: 1/160 sec at f/4.5 (ISO 200)



Pagani Huayra's wing mirrors

by DAVID VIVIAN | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

I IN NAMING THE SUCCESSOR TO HIS COMPANY'S Zonda hypercar, Horacio Pagani elected to invoke the ancient legend of an Andean mountain god who could command the breezes, winds and blizzards, and was able to lift the waters from Lake Titicaca and rain them down on his wife, Pachamama, goddess of Mother Earth. The god was called Huayra-tata. Maybe to avoid a lawsuit from India's largest carmaker, he simply called his new car Huayra.

Perhaps more than any living car boss, Pagani warrants the description 'automotive artist'. It has never been possible to point to any element of the Zonda or the Huayra and call it 'generic'. But Pagani isn't interested in making a hypercar that's considered better-looking, in a conventional way, than a Lamborghini Aventador or a Bugatti Veyron – he has much loftier ideals and wide-ranging influences. So, as its name very much suggests, the core design of the Huayra is inspired by 'the eternity of the element air'. And by that he doesn't just mean that the Huayra spent a lot of time in a wind tunnel, but that the power of air – its ability 'to erode even the toughest of materials, giving birth to distinctive shapes known in nature' – is the defining theme.

More intriguing still is the way Pagani then finds and exploits, via subtle nuances, correlations between shapes. The Huayra's wing mirrors are a perfect example of this. They're probably the single most controversial aspect of the Huayra's design – adored and abhorred in equal measure, extending some 20mm beyond the widest point of an already wide car – but they reflect the Huayra's form language while performing an obviously vital function for a car with such limited rearward visibility.

From the perfect alignment of the striped carbonfibre weave to the elliptical shape of the mirror housings, they maintain the meticulous attention to detail Pagani is famed for while also supplying another potent aero motif. The gracefully bowed carbon stalks look like the wings of a gull in flight, which in turn mirror the arch of the car's gullwing doors. The housings themselves have been variously described as 'teardrops' and 'soya beans' but, according to Pagani himself, they provide a coherent link with the elliptical frame that surrounds the Huayra's four central exhaust pipes and, for those who want to look a little more closely, have been gently reworked to mimic the shape of a beautiful woman's eyes. What an old romantic. 📷

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1951 Aston Martin DB2 Vantage ● 1957 Maserati 200Si (ex-Franco Cornacchia/Carroll Shelby)
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1992 Ferrari F40 (one owner from new) ● 2008 Pagani Zonda Clubsport F Coupé
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Official fuel consumption for the New SEAT Leon range in mpg (litres per 100km): urban 36.7 (7.7) – 61.4 (4.6); extra-urban 57.6 (4.9) – 85.6 (3.3); combined 47.9 (5.9) – 74.3 (3.8). CO₂ emissions 137 – 99g/km.

Standard EU Test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. Model shown is the New Leon 1.2 TSI 105PS SE at £16,790 RRP with optional electric sunroof at £695 RRP, 17" Dynamic alloy wheels at £350 RRP and full LED headlights at £995 RRP. Offer may be varied or withdrawn at any time. Retail Sales only. ¹Payable with first payment. ²Payable with optional final payment. 4.4p per mile excess mileage charges apply. †£1,000 deposit contribution is available to customers who purchase their car with Solutions personal contract plan. Terms and conditions apply. Finance examples include technology pack. Further charges may be payable if vehicle is returned. Indemnities may be required. Subject to vehicle availability. Subject to status. Available to over 18s in the UK from participating dealers only. SEAT Finance, Freepost SEAT Finance. Subject to each model specification and cost option fitment. Pricing and finance valid from 1st January to 31st March 2014. **Offer available on SE and FR models when ordered before 31st March 2014 from participating dealers only. *£1,915 RRP refers to optional specification if priced individually.



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