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NX 300h Luxury fuel consumption and CO₂ figures: urban 53.3 mpg (5.3 l/100km), extra-urban 55.4 mpg (5.1 l/100km), combined 54.3 mpg (5.2 l/100km), 121g/km CO₂ (19% BIK)



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Ed Speak



SIX YEARS AFTER McLaren Automotive was spun out of McLaren Cars, and four since the first MP4-12C was delivered, it would appear

Woking's most famous car manufacturer has worked out that there is more to making supercars than presenting a spreadsheet of numbers that outshine the competition.

Don't get me wrong: the 12C and the 650S do many things right when it comes to adhering to the supercar rulebook, especially where power and acceleration figures are concerned. When it comes to outright speed both have had the competition licked – few four-wheeled vehicles travel across the ground as quickly as a 650S does. But – there's always a 'but' – unlike rivals from Maranello, Sant'Agata and Zuffenhausen, which always leave us wide-eyed, sweaty-palmed and fizzing with adrenalin, the McLarens have left us impressed but emotionally unattached from the experience. Well, they have for me. But not any more.

The new 675LT demonstrates that McLaren

'The 675LT is something else; something remarkable for a company that has yet to celebrate its first decade'

now gets it. The 675LT has attitude, character and, best of all, a personality that sucks you in and enthralls you across every mile you cover. It wants to entertain you and it wants you to be an integral part of that entertainment. I've enjoyed previous drives in 12Cs and 650Ss and been blown away by their performance, but the 675LT is something else, something remarkable for a company that has yet to celebrate its first decade. If the forthcoming 570S and 540C follow this form, Porsche, Lamborghini and Ferrari will have much more to worry about.

YOU MAY BE ASKING WHY MY FACE for radio is staring back at you this month. Worry not, Nick is taking a well-earned holiday and normal service will soon be restored. ☒

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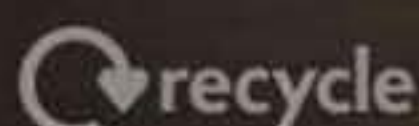
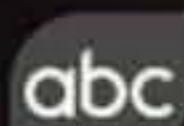
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*'It's one of those engines that you just want
to rev and rev for the sake of it'*

ASTON MARTIN VULCAN p084



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Hackenberg on
AUDI'S FUTURE

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WHY SHOULD YOU TAKE THE CAR ON THESE PAGES seriously? It's unlikely you've heard of it before and the numbers look huge, verging on the preposterous, so what is there to suggest that this isn't just another pie-in-the-sky vanity supercar project that will disappear into the ether as quickly as it appeared? Well, if you look at the power distribution unit on a Koenigsegg Regera, you will see the name Rimac – the same name that is on the nose of this car.

You're probably not familiar with the name, and to be honest, neither were we until recently. However, Christian von Koenigsegg isn't a man who treats the engineering of his cars lightly, so when we received a call from Rimac inviting us to see its 1073bhp electric supercar, the Concept One, we were intrigued.

Founded in 2009, Rimac Automobili is a Croatian company based near the country's capital, Zagreb, and it is now growing quickly. Last year

CONTINUED OVER

Rimac Concept One

by HENRY CATCHPOLE



there were just 20 employees but it is now up to 100, with 60 of them being engineers with an average age across the company of just 29. The Concept One has been shadowing the Formula E Championship and we caught up with it at the final round in London.

Although the overall shape is relatively conventional, with a classic front-engine, rear-drive stance, the roofline is stunningly low, giving the car a very sleek look that draws a lot of admiring glances. Get inside and the low roofline certainly makes itself felt if you are over six feet tall. Some of the fit and finish is what you would expect on a prototype, but you can't help but be impressed by things such as the soft-close doors, the big, iPad-sized touchscreen and all the beautifully wrought aluminium controls. What's even more impressive is that these are all designed and developed by Rimac. In fact pretty

much the whole car, apart from the wheels, tyres (Michelin Pilot Super Sports) and brakes (Brembo carbon-ceramics), is made in-house.

The heart – or rather hearts – of the Concept One lie in the four permanent-magnet synchronous motors that Rimac has developed specifically for the car. On each axle two motors are combined in a common housing, although each acts independently, with its own inverter and reduction gearbox to drive an individual wheel. ECUs then control the delivery of the power to all four corners and each wheel can accelerate or decelerate independently. The end result is Rimac All Wheel Torque Vectoring. In theory this means the car could turn on the spot like a tank if you wanted it to, but in reality the RAWTV allows Rimac to set up the car to handle in an almost infinitely variable way. Want a car that handles

safely with a bit of understeer? Tap a setting on the screen. Want a car that will drift like a WRC car? Just tap the screen again. It's as simple as that.

You might remember that Mercedes had a similar mechanical layout with the SLS AMG Electric Drive (few of which have ever been seen). However, weighing 160kg less and with nearly 50 per cent more power and torque, the Concept One and its performance are of a different magnitude. Undeniably a large part of this car's purpose is as a showcase for what the young company can do. Just eight will be built in total. However, the people behind it are keen that the second model (Concept Two?) should run to a much more serious 500 units. For driving enthusiasts, the sort of torque vectoring that Rimac is championing is arguably the most exciting thing about electric cars, so we'll be watching with interest.



SPECIFICATION

Engine	Four electric motors
Power	1073bhp @ n/a
Torque	1180lb ft @ 0-6500rpm
0-62mph	2.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	186mph+ (claimed)
Weight	1950kg (559bhp/ton)
Basic price	€750,000 (c£530,000)

“In theory you could turn the car on the spot like a tank if you wanted to”

1 ILLUMINATION

Lights are usually the first thing that small companies procure from elsewhere, but the rear 3D tunnel lights with animated indicators are unique to Rimac.

2 TIE MOTIF

This small air inlet and a cover for the electricity plug are both shaped like a necktie, something which itself – like the Rimac – originated in Croatia.

3 GEARBOXES

A single-speed gearbox sits at the front, while there's a carbonfibre two-speed dual-clutch 'box at the rear, which changes ratio at 80mph.

RANGE

300km

Safe figure claimed for the Rimac's range. 500km is possible...

BATTERY

82kWh



Capacity of the battery pack – on par with that of a Tesla Model S



RIVAL

Mercedes SLS Electric Drive



Weighing 560kg more than the regular petrol-fuelled model, Mercedes' SLS Electric Drive used Rimac's hardware for electric propulsion in the form of four 138kW electric motors. With 'only' 740bhp and 737lb ft of torque, it was some way off the Rimac's performance. Range was 155 miles.

TECH CLOSE-UP

BODYWORK

The Concept One's body is, as you would expect, constructed entirely from carbonfibre and sits on an aluminium spaceframe with carbonfibre semi-stressed members.



INTERIOR

High-tech meets traditional craftsmanship inside Rimac's showcase. There's hand-stitched leather trim, and integrated with the touchscreen are beautifully machined aluminium controls.



BRAKES

The brakes feature carbon-ceramic discs, 390mm at the front and 380mm at the rear. The front axle gets six-piston calipers, the rear four-pots, all with ABS. Regenerative technology can charge the battery.



IN DEPTH

1 FRONT DRIVE

The individual motors for each of the front wheels are Rimac's own high-speed, permanent-magnet, oil-cooled units. They produce 400kW (536bhp) and spin at 10,000rpm.

2 CHASSIS

Under the Rimac's carbon body is an aluminium spaceframe chassis featuring double wishbones with fully adjustable, pushrod-operated suspension at both ends.

3 BATTERY PACK

The liquid-cooled battery pack is housed in milled and sheet aluminium. It sits behind the cabin and has a capacity of 82kWh. It can be charged at 22kW through an on-board unit.

4 REAR DRIVE

As with the front axle, there is an individual motor on each rear wheel. Each motor can generate 300kW (402bhp) and they are oil-cooled within their milled aluminium housing.



WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION



The Concept One's battery pack sits behind the cabin

PRODUCTION RUN

8

Six of a total of eight Concept Ones have already been built. Each will be tailored stylistically and mechanically to the owner's individual wishes. These are largely dependent on whether they want it to be more road- or track-orientated.

HOW MUCH?

€750,000

The hefty list price, should you wish to add a Rimac Concept One to your e-hypercar garage...

PULLING POWER

1180 lb ft

From a single rev through to 6500rpm. Even the anti-electric-car brigade must be impressed with this?

TOP SPEED

300+

kph (186mph+), with a claimed 0-62mph time of 2.8sec

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO DRIVE?

Miroslav Zrnčević

According to test driver Miroslav Zrnčević, you can feel the weight of the car if you drive it without the RAWTV, but when you switch on the torque vectoring it's like the car instantly sheds 500kg. As you might expect, you also use far less steering lock with the torque vectoring activated. It's like a Mitsubishi Evo IX on the limit, apparently. Zrnčević is also keen to stick with hydraulically assisted power-steering.

IT ALL BEGAN WITH AN E30...

Rimac Automobili claims to be a company founded by petrolheads that wants to show the world that electric cars can be fun.

That might seem slightly oxymoronic at best and like marketing fluff at worst, but when you discover what the company's original development car was, you might see the truth in the proclamation.

Aged 19, the company's founder, Mate Rimac, was racing and drifting a 1984 E30 BMW. It blew up. So, he set about turning it into an electric

car. At first the car was heavy and therefore slower than required, but within three years Rimac had created the e-M3, or 'Green Monster'. With nearly 600bhp and 664lb ft of torque going to the rear wheels in a car weighing 1150kg, it was capable of covering 0-62mph in 3.3sec and yet also boasted a range of 180km (112 miles).

However, once realising that there wasn't much BMW left in it, Rimac decided the next thing he should do was develop a car from scratch...

Henry Catchpole



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WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

1

Audi will stick with large V-configuration petrol engines 'because they're premium', believes Hackenberg.

2

The new petrol V6s will be turbocharged: a single turbo for the regular range and twin-turbos for performance variants.

3

The supercharged V6 in the S4 is history – the next S4 will have an all-new twin-turbo V6.

4

The next RS4 will lose its V8 for a highly tuned version of the new twin-turbo V6, possibly with electric turbos.

5

Electric turbochargers will make their debut on diesel engines, initially in the SQ7 and next A8 V8 TDI models.

6

Audi is working hard on all-alloy diesel engines. Expect the next-gen 2-litre TDI to be 25kg lighter, with alloy TDI V6s to follow.

7

The twin-turbo 3-litre TDI V6 engine fits in the new A4, but the business case is not currently viable for an 'S4D'.

8

The generation after the new A4 will continue the weight-saving trend, with a further 80kg-or-so reduction.

9

Composites are unlikely to appear on mainstream models soon, due to the seconds they add to build time.

10

Cylinder-on-demand tech will be restricted to small engines; Audi says larger engines are more efficient when all cylinders work at very low revs.

Can this man make *all* Audis fun to drive?

Latest A4 signals the start of a new era for how Audis will drive. And it's for the better



YES, I KNOW, IT LOOKS amazingly similar to the last one, but don't turn the page just yet. Seriously. There has been a quiet revolution taking place at Audi, and a very brisk drive in the company's new A4 through Germany's Black Forest, with a small batch of late pre-production prototypes and a handful of senior Audi engineers, is *evo's* first experience of the ramifications.

If your next company car is due to be a new A4, I can tell you now the prospect is suddenly looking more appealing, and the wider implications for the next generation of Audis are fascinating. Of course, it helps that the new A4 forms a formidably advanced basis on which to work from.

Thanks to a gram-by-gram approach from every engineering department, the new A4 is up to 120kg lighter than the old one. All manner of underside covers, aerodynamic tricks and countless hours fine-tuning in the wind tunnel mean it has an extraordinarily low coefficient of drag, at 0.23. And the rolling resistance has been improved to such an extent that, aided by the aero advancements, should you put the clutch in at 80mph or so, the new A4 will require over a quarter of a mile longer to coast to a halt than the previous model.

None of that, however, explains the precise, linear-rate steering, or the lack of an over-servoed brake pedal, or the absence of a flab-troubling ride: the A4 is tautly controlled, but neither is it averse to using a broad damper stroke if the road topography requires it. For that you need to talk to Audi's incumbent head of R&D, Dr Ulrich Hackenberg. The formidable engineer has been in his role for the

past two years, and the A4 – along with the new Q7 – is the first Audi new-car project to feel his influence.

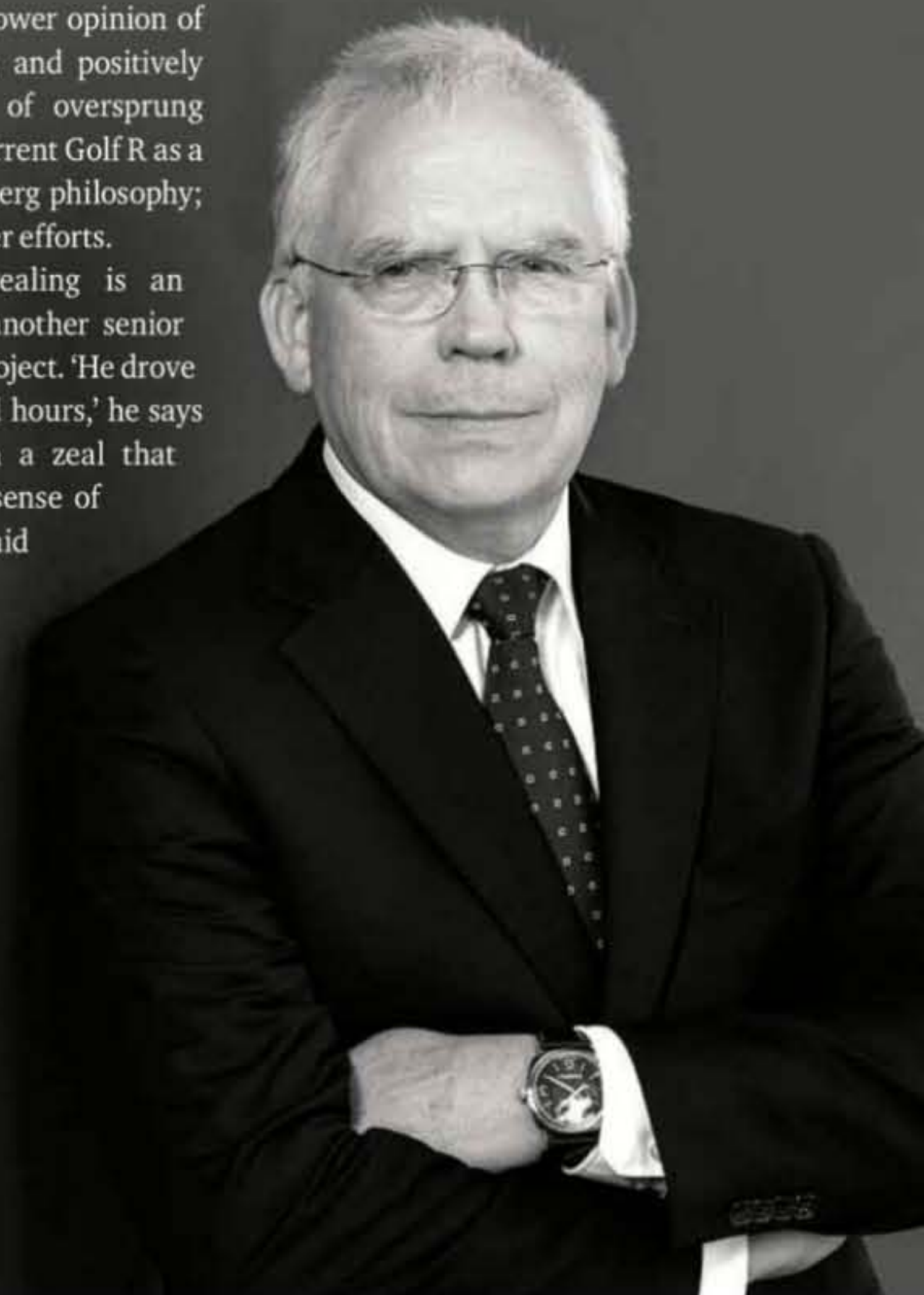
Hackenberg is not a man to mince his words. 'When I started at Audi I took out an S-line A6 and A4 and they made me feel unwell,' he says while making choppy ride movements with his hands. 'So I told the engineers we must make our cars comfortable first, and then sporty. They should roll over bumps, not crash into them; the driver does not need to feel everything.' He delivers this damning assessment with a scowl, which lifts as he clearly warms to his theme. 'Even S and RS models should have comfort. If a wheel is lifting off the ground it is of no use anyway.'

The 'Hackenberg philosophy' is thus: he dislikes steering with a 'sneeze factor', has an even lower opinion of excessive understeer, and positively recoils at the idea of oversprung suspension. Think current Golf R as a guide to the Hackenberg philosophy; it was one of his earlier efforts.

Perhaps more revealing is an informal chat with another senior engineer on the A4 project. 'He drove with us for hours and hours,' he says of Hackenberg, with a zeal that suggests a renewed sense of pride at Audi. 'He said the old setup was "far too stiff"; he says what he wants and he doesn't give up. We don't do all of this in an office, but in the car. I think he's really the best technical head out there, and

he's a really good driver – he's done the N24. I've driven with people in that position who can't even say what they want to change.'

Now some perspective: the above doesn't turn an A4 into an exuberant drivers' car. Nevertheless, the 3-litre TDI on adaptive Sport suspension is a rewardingly precise, calm but agile way to dissect a decent road in very quick order. And if Hackenberg's philosophy can turn the A4 into something this agreeable, just imagine what it could do for S and RS models. The past decade has seen Audi's brilliant (R8) and lacklustre (the first RS3) launched in seemingly random order, with little common dynamic genes between them. That could finally be about to change.





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43%

The portion of the 111 UK-registered Bugattis that were declared SORN in 2014

6

The number of Le Mans 24 Hours-winning drivers already confirmed to race at September's Goodwood Revival

536

The number of laps completed by the Spa 24 Hours-winning BMW Z4 GT3

2.8sec

The claimed 0-60mph time for Tesla's Model S P85D in the new 'Ludicrous' mode

17

The race number withdrawn by the FIA from Formula 1 following the passing of Jules Bianchi. #JB17

Ferrari 488 Spider – faster than an F50

New 661bhp convertible tops out at 203mph

WITH THE INK BARELY dry on the reviews of Ferrari's first turbocharged supercar since the F40, Maranello has been working feverishly to ready the 488 GTB's open-top sibling.

The 488 Spider is claimed to be the most aerodynamically efficient convertible Ferrari yet, its blown rear spoiler and underbody diffuser (both carried over from the coupe) enabling an increase in downforce without increasing drag – no mean feat.

The Spider features a folding metal hard-top similar to that of its 458 predecessor. The car's aluminium spaceframe chassis, meanwhile, uses 11 different grades of the lightweight metal, plus magnesium where

lightness is the top priority. Ferrari claims the Spider has the same torsional rigidity as the coupe.

This is the first turbocharged, mid-engined V8 Ferrari Spider. Its 3.9-litre V8 is carried over from the GTB, which means 661bhp at 8000rpm and 560lb ft of torque at 3000rpm (only in seventh gear, mind). And despite a 50kg weight increase, the 0-62mph time is unchanged at 3.0sec, while 0-124mph is down just four-tenths at 8.7sec. Top speed is 'at least' 203mph, making the 488 Spider faster than the legendary V12-engined F50.

The 488 Spider will make its global debut at September's Frankfurt motor show. Deliveries begin at the end of the year, with the six-figure price tag expected to start with a '2'.

23%

The increase in torsional rigidity over a 458 Spider

5kg

The weight saving of a 488 Spider over a 458 Spider

14sec

The time the 488 Spider's roof takes to fully erect or close



Remote car hacking threat revealed

Given the amount of tech loaded into road cars today, it was only a matter of time before someone managed to remotely hack into one and start messing with its electronics.

What we didn't expect was that they would manage to

switch off the engine, control the brakes and play about with the gearbox. But hackers in the US have managed to do just that, shutting off a Jeep Cherokee's engine at 70mph on the highway from the comfort of their living room – all for an article in *Wired* magazine.

It's a troubling thought. Millions of commutes could in theory be compromised and turned into lethal journeys by a group of hackers sat thousands of miles away.

My background is in technology journalism, and prior to working at *evo* I watched the automotive tech industry play catch-up with smartphones and tablets. Today, even the most entry-level cars are available with some sort of satnav. But while companies such as Microsoft and Apple have spent decades making their software secure, Jeep has not.

I'd always thought a car's ECU was detached from its

other electronic systems – separated not just by a software firewall, but running on completely different wiring looms. But clearly as cars have become more complex, these systems have been integrated in order to deliver a better user experience. And this has enabled a hack to take place wirelessly. Previously any sort of ECU-related tomfoolery required direct access to the OBD port, but now you can access the ECU via 3G.

I imagine the Jeep hack will slow progress a bit when it comes to in-car tech. That, or every single journalist from now on will be asking about security when a new satnav system is presented.

For now, Fiat Chrysler has recalled 1.4million cars to upload a security update to the software, and other manufacturers will also be evaluating the security of their connected cars, too.

Hunter Skipworth

A close-up portrait of Stephan Winkelmann, CEO and president of Lamborghini. He is a middle-aged man with wavy, graying hair, looking slightly to the left with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a dark tie with a red geometric pattern. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an indoor event space with other people and lights.

RADAR

AMBITION

Stephan Winkelmann

As Lamborghini develops its first SUV, the firm's CEO and president talks to evo about the big challenges ahead for the company and all of its models

WINKELMANN'S
AMBITIONS



'As we are growing, we want to keep an atmosphere among our employees that is family orientated'



'Make the brand more visible. Don't make it too big, but make it rock solid'



'Continue to combine what is done with the brains and what we can physically create in-house'



'Surprise our customers. They are used to having the best of the best, so to surprise them is getting more and more difficult'



'The ultimate target of Lamborghini is to thrill our customers'

I THINK IN THE LAST 25 YEARS, and for sure in the last ten, while I have been on board, the third model [the Urus SUV] is the most significant moment, because it means much more than a model line. It's a game-changer. It means increasing the size of the company. We are going to build on our own ground almost as much as we have already, and we are investing hundreds and hundreds of millions of euros into this new project. It took us some time to go for it because we wanted to be absolutely sure that with our size, with the turnover we have, the gain is something we can manage.

'Over the past ten years, the high points were when we had new models coming out. But one of the big challenges we are constantly having is to increase the awareness and image of the brand. This is most important because the brand gives you solidity and consistency.

'We have also worked hard on the sport, the racing. Lamborghini was not founded on and did not have the heritage of racing, but we all thought that this is something that is good for the brand Lamborghini. When you look at our cars, they could be ready to go on the racetrack without being changed a bit, so when we race it's very credible.

'More recently, we now take care of our historic cars [with the recently launched Polo Storico division]. We restore and give a certificate of authenticity to our historic cars. Customer feedback has been very positive.

'I'm very proud of R&D at Lamborghini, but for me it's always been there – the leadership with the naturally aspirated engine, particularly the V12, the knowledge of the four-by-four, and leadership that no one else has, which is combining the development and production of carbonfibre. When it came down to whether to do it [carbonfibre] in-house, there was no other choice, because there was no expertise matching ours. So we decided to build a factory for the production of the monocoque of the Aventador and this was the right choice.

'Hybridisation, as a power step or for emissions, means adding weight. If you do it with the supersports [supercars] it will influence the power-to-weight negatively. Also, the pricing position is serious – you hit a million [euros], you hit a limit, have a special edition, and then

“One way to have a balance in terms of emissions is to have a hybrid SUV”

it's hard to regain what you spent.

'When we ask our customers, "What is it that you need from Lamborghini?" they talk of innovation to perform – not innovation for the sake of innovation. This is a key answer, no? But it might change in the years to come.

'We did this with the Asterion [the hybrid supercar concept – see *evo* 202] in Paris last year, because we wanted to get some solid feedback from customers and prospects, and they said in a nutshell what I told you in one sentence. In my opinion, one way to have a balance in terms of emissions is to have a hybrid SUV. Then you don't need to worry so much about ultimate performance; it's about comfort, it's about drivability, it's about space and roominess. Our customers drive between 2000 and 3000 miles a year. If you want to be honest, emissions is not an environmental concern when it comes to Lamborghini, but we take it very seriously so we have to find a balance in the brand and in the group of Volkswagen.

'The advantage of being in a big group is that you have everything at your disposal. There are disadvantages, but I don't want to talk about this... So one of the advantages is that you can focus on what you are doing and not dilute what you are doing. I'm happy about this. For instance, within the VW group we have Ducati, and they don't need any advice from anybody! I think it's healthy like this.

'We have more competitors in the game than ten years ago – and even five years ago – and this is positive for the customers, but it is getting tough for us because the life cycles are getting shorter, the innovations are getting burned much faster than before, and the investments are much higher. Therefore you have to be really focused on what you do, and when you do innovations they have to be rock solid and prove something.

'How important is the Thrill of Driving? We have in our strategy to become the most desirable supersports

brand. We always want the "wow" effect when you step in the car. However, one of the challenges that is maybe greater than in the past is social acceptance. This is one of the key elements, but an idea you have to combine with absolute emotion and pureness of the brand.

'The biggest challenge ahead of us is to have a successful market introduction of the third model line, which is then able to stabilise the brand and allow us in the next ten years onwards to reinvest in supersports cars. These are going to be state of the art, but match the needs of the legislators and homologators. This is the biggest challenge we have in front of us. But I strongly believe that these types of cars will always be there.'

FUTURE SHOCK

Winkelmann buried a few gems in his conversation with us, but look closely and you'll find them. He refused to rule out hybrids for any future model. Does this mean a plug-in, hybrid-assisted, naturally aspirated V12 Aventador replacement? Don't bet against it.

It's also hard not to read his comments about special editions, profitability and power-to-weight without thinking of the (hybrid) Porsche 918 Spyder – a car that costs three times as much as the Aventador SV but is only two seconds quicker around the Nürburgring Nordschleife.

And while it may seem absurd to name 'brand awareness and image' as a big challenge, Winkelmann is a savvy international player and is conscious that there's no equity in Countachs and Miuras in emerging markets.

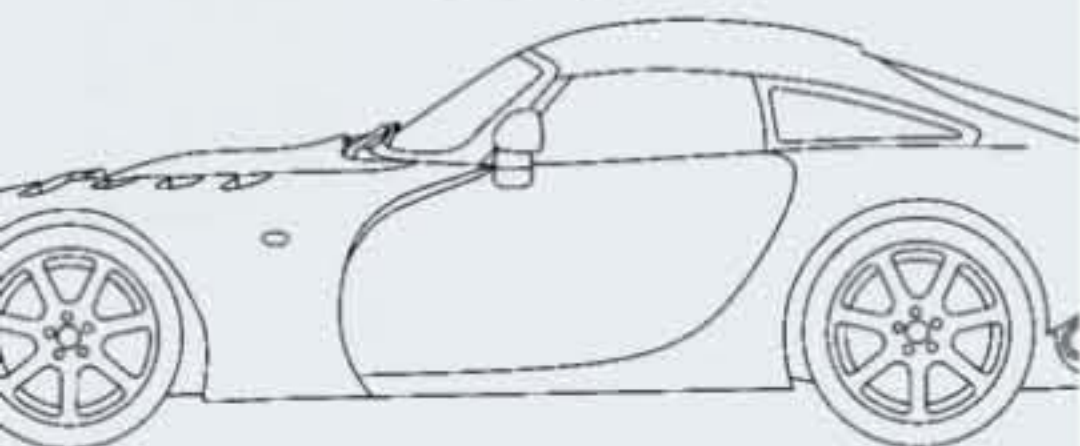
Little was revealed about the Urus – indeed Winkelmann was careful to avoid using this name – but an SUV is confirmed for 2018. Can Lamborghini's unique DNA be injected into an SUV? Time will tell.

Nick Trott

ASK GOODWIN

Will the new TVR 'project' succeed?

**Fred Thallis,
Málaga, Spain**



I've seen many British sports car start-ups crash and burn: Jensen, Strathcarron, GTD, Lea Francis and many more.

However, TVR is a bit different. It was successful in the 1990s because it made cars that a significant sector of the enthusiast market wanted. Those people were baby-boomers who grew up lusting after powerful front-engined, rear-wheel-drive sports cars such as the E-type, the Daytona, Astons and the AC Cobra. The Griffith and the Chimaera were the modern equivalent of those cars.

I think there are enough of us left who still consider raw cars like these the real deal. Gordon Murray, who is responsible for the engineering design of the new TVRs, grew up lusting after cars just like the ones I've described. All good news so far.

The other factors I'm not so sure about. Does the group behind TVR have the money to produce a new sports car from scratch, particularly to a good enough quality and level of reliability? Mind-boggling sums are required; just ask Ron Dennis. That said, getting Cosworth involved is a very good idea. My money is on the motor being a Ford V8 fitted with a flat-plane crankshaft – essentially the powerplant used in Ford's own Mustang GT350R.

Then there's the complicated subject of type-approval and regulations. What are you able to get away with as a low-volume producer these days? Murray and his team will know, and the answers will have a bearing as to which overseas markets will be able to import and sell the cars.

I've got all my fingers crossed for the new venture. I loved driving TVRs, I enjoyed racing them and I very much admired Peter Wheeler.



Mdina Grand Prix

Malta is the balmy setting for a four-day festival of racing that sees historic machines compete on the tight streets of Mdina

THE HOLY GRAILS OF motoring events are those that can be inserted deftly into a holiday. For one thing this makes them virtually free, or at least easy to sell for those with only a D-grade in man-maths. Mrs Goodwin likes her cars very much, especially old ones, but I've always had trouble selling her a week in the Eifel Mountains as a family holiday. This month's subject, however, is a very easy sell. It's called the Mdina Grand Prix and it takes place in a town of that name in the middle of the island of Malta. Been there? It's a fabulous place, ranking for me alongside Sicily as one of best places to visit in Europe.

In fact, I've just come back from an air rally in Malta and spent hours just loping around the stunning harbour in Valletta, spotting interesting cars that in wetter climates would have long since recycled themselves: a mint Fiat X1/9, for example.

The Mdina GP this year takes place over the weekend of October 8-11. I've done the research for you and in that month the average lowest temperature is 19C and the highest is 24C. The format for the weekend is very similar to the Circuit des Remparts event in Angoulême (see *evo* 212).

There's a concours, racing and a

Right: pugnacious Alfa 105s are right at home on the twisting circuit.
Below: a Chevron B16 from 1969 – it used either a Cosworth or BMW engine in period



sprint. The machinery is similarly varied and much of it is owned by locals. A Cobra, for example, is on the entry list among Lancia Fulvias, a Datsun 240Z, and several E-types and XKs, and entries from the UK include a Lotus Elan entered by Lotus guru Pat Thomas, and an Alan Mann replica Escort RS1600. An Alfa Romeo 1750 is being driven by ex-Surtees, Hesketh and March F1 driver Rupert Keegan, who's a regular at the event. Keegan is a real laugh and to meet him would be worth at least half the price of your air ticket.

The event kicks off on the Thursday with a hill climb that takes place on a

closed-off stretch of dual carriageway that's near the coastal town of Mellieha, to the north of Mdina. It is allegedly tight and challenging. Friday is the concours, which features entries from Malta's car-mad residents as well as cars from further afield, and takes place in Mdina's stunning cathedral square. Saturday is when the excitement really begins, with a sprint around the Mdina street circuit. It's essentially qualifying for Sunday's racing and involves a flying lap that, give or take a few metres, includes the whole circuit. A driver's time in the sprint sets his starting position for the races.

Because the circuit that twists and climbs around the ancient walled hill town is so tight and unforgiving, the grids are kept to six to eight cars. Any more and it would be carnage. The races are split into around half a dozen different classes, with each competitor having a race in the morning and a race in the afternoon.

GETTING THERE

Malta is about three hours' flying from the UK and you have a choice between Air Malta, Ryanair and EasyJet, flying from Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton.

If you're going to make a proper holiday of it (and why wouldn't you in October?), there is plenty to see in Malta. Valletta is stunning and has several interesting museums that outline the island's history, which includes a siege during WWII that won the island a George Cross. There's also the Lascaris War Rooms, an underground complex from where Eisenhower, Montgomery and other allied generals directed the invasion of Sicily

in 1943. I've been and they're fascinating. You can rent a car in Malta but the bus service is something else. For around £2 you can get a ticket that is valid for a whole day. Better still, while the GP is on, vintage buses are used to transport spectators up to the circuit.

There are plenty of good hotels in Malta. The Mdina GP is run out of the Corinthia Hotel, which is just outside Valletta itself. Although it's a bit heavy on the wallet, it's perfect and only about a ten-minute bus ride up to Mdina. Talking of which, get off a couple of stops before Mdina and walk to the air museum at the old RAF

Ta' Qali airfield. It's small but interesting and has a Spitfire and Hurricane in it. I haven't been to the Island of Gozo but I've seen it from the air and it looks stunning. It's also a favourite of scuba divers, if you like that sort of thing.

There's a good website at vallettagrandprix.com and on it you'll find contact details for Grant Ford, who's the UK coordinator. Grant will be able to supply you with further info and VIP tickets that'll get you to the best spectating positions. I think I've talked myself into going to this one, so perhaps I'll see you in Malta.

Colin Goodwin





Official fuel consumption for the all-new Volvo XC90 in MPG (l/100km) ranges from: Urban 28.8(9.8) - 45.6 (6.2), Extra Urban 40.4(7.9) - 52.3(5.4), Combined 35.3(8.0) - 134.5(2.1).



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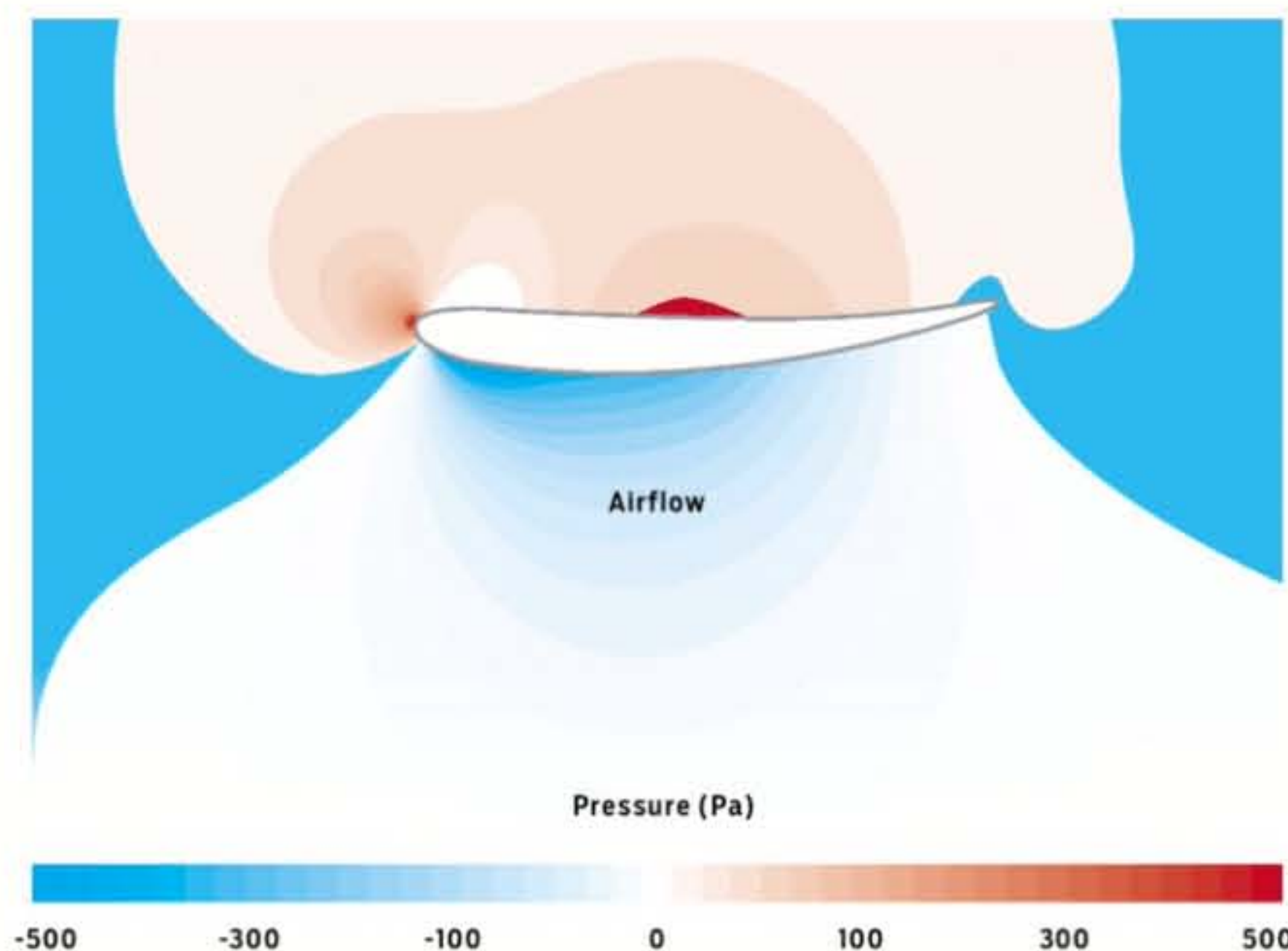
FOCUS

HONDA CIVIC TYPE R AERO

THE AERODYNAMICISTS at Honda had a gargantuan task in producing overall downforce for the new Civic Type R. This is because the car, in its standard form, is inherently lift-inducing. Look at a regular Civic in profile and you'll see the principles of how aircraft stay in the sky. The steady upper curve of the car's silhouette means that air passing over the top travels further and thus faster than air travelling along the flat underbody. A law of physics called Bernoulli's Principle states that the air travelling faster has a lower pressure. This creates a pressure differential, with lower pressure above the car and greater pressure underneath. This is where the dreaded lift comes from.

With this in mind, the aero team at Honda was tasked with reducing the car's lift coefficient to the extent that it became negative. The new Civic Type R is therefore adorned with aggressive spoilers, splitters and diffusers that – according to the company – produce downforce. But how much of this is mere styling and how much of it has a functional benefit?

There is no better place to start than with that rear wing. This must create a (metaphorical) ton of downforce, right? It's not that straightforward. There is no doubt that a rear wing does create some downforce. However, a fine balance has to be made. Too much rear wing without a compensating amount



“How much of the Civic Type R's aero is mere styling and how much of it has functional benefit?”

of downforce on the front axle can ruin a car's handling. To this end, the angle of attack of the rear wing is very shallow on the Type R.

We used computational fluid dynamics to show a basic, 2D cross-sectional estimation of the wing. It's clear that the wing creates downforce – there is higher pressure above the wing than below. However, a high-pressure region is also created at the leading edge of the wing, causing drag. To offset this, other aero additions are used to reduce drag, such as the



spats under the rear lights. These cause the airflow along the sides of the car to separate from the body early. This reduces drag and can even increase stability due to the cleaner flow separation.

Other aero features on the Type R are a little dubious. The large front-wheelarch vents that could be used to cool brakes and reduce high pressures under the wheelarches are mostly blanked. So too are the bonnet vents, which could help draw hot air from the engine bay.

Overall, it's great to see aero-inspired attachments make their way onto the new Civic Type R – even if some are not used to their full potential.



ASK MIKE

Your tech questions answered

Q Why is turbocharging so much more popular than supercharging?
– Malcolm Travis

A Turbos are more common because in isolation they are more adiabatically efficient, which means that they compress air with a lower output temperature than superchargers. Additionally, superchargers are a parasitic loss on engine power as they require a mechanical link to the crankshaft to operate.

However, superchargers are often used on large engines as the load generated is far greater than the loss. In an ideal world, cars would be twincharged – as Lancia's Delta S4 was – with a supercharger for low-rev response and a turbocharger for high-rev boost.

Send your question to experts@evo.co.uk



TECH GAME-CHANGERS

ADAPTIVE DAMPERS

First application: BMW M3 (BOGE adaptive damping system)

When: 1987



Unlike active suspension systems, which can affect both ride height and damping, adaptive suspension changes only the damping force. This means a soft 'bump and rebound' can be had for bumpy roads, then, at the push

of a button, stiffer damping can be had for more aggressive driving.

One of the simplest ways to achieve this is to change the aperture of the opening in the piston head that travels up and down inside the damper body.

A conventional damper has a fixed aperture, through which oil or gas flows when the piston head is depressed. An adaptive system can vary the size of this hole, which in turn varies the damping force.

Sophisticated

systems use electromagnets to vary the viscosity of the oil in the damper. This is possible thanks to magnetorheological fluids, which contain iron particles that stiffen when a magnetic field is applied.

This brings other possibilities. The damping system in the new Ferrari 488 GTB is so advanced, for example, it can even sense if the car is understeering and change the damping force at all four corners of the car to counter that understeer.

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FOCUS

McLAREN'S F1-DERIVED SENSOR TECHNOLOGY

WE SHOULD ALL welcome the fitment of tyre pressure monitoring systems (TPMS) on new cars – if properly maintained, their ability to warn drivers about potential punctures or dangerously low or high pressures can significantly reduce the chances of a tyre failure.

McLaren Applied Technologies (MAT) could be on the brink of making these systems significantly more advanced, by transferring complex sensor technology it has developed for F1 onto the road.

'The first car to use our TPMS was Mika Häkkinen's 1998 MP4/12. I put his championship win down to our sensors,' laughs Richard Hull, MAT's motorsport sales engineer. 'But since then we've added a lot of things to the system. One of our most recent F1-derived developments adds infrared sensors that can accurately monitor the temperature of a tyre's carcass.'



Hull says that as well as the live monitoring of pressures to within 0.1 psi, the system can also measure temperatures of up to 170°C. 'This makes it perfect for F1, where red-hot brakes can lead to incredibly hot wheel temperatures.'

Using this live stream of data to monitor tyres means the chances of a blowout are substantially reduced – something all of MAT's motorsport customers will no doubt appreciate.

'If a tyre goes down on a straight, the driver isn't always aware – centrifugal force means the tyre can appear fine at high speed. But with

TPMS it's a very good advanced safety and warning feature, so drivers don't go barrelling into a corner flat-chat when they've actually got a puncture,' explains Hull.

If MAT's plans to transfer this system into road cars go ahead, drivers could increase the longevity of their tyres by monitoring temperatures on the go. If the system shows that the car's rear tyres are getting too hot, for example, the driver can reduce their workload and stop them from overheating. Just imagine how useful that information would be on a trackday.

There's more. By monitoring carcass temperatures, problems such as tracking issues can be revealed as soon as they arise, because if the front tyres get hot on a straight road, a likely culprit could be alignment.

In short, using MAT's TPMS could help to increase tyre longevity and maximise performance, all while improving safety.

'I can't imagine this temperature tech would be of that much interest to Ford for a standard Focus,' continues Hull, 'but for high-speed cars like the P1, these sensors make sense.'



FALKEN TYRES OPTS FOR UK DRIFTING SHOWCASE

Falken Tyres has chosen the British Drift Championship as the arena in which to promote its latest products.

'Drifting demonstrates that our tyres can survive the harshest of environments,' explains Matt Smith, director of Falken Europe. 'It's also an effective way to reach the youngest generation of new motorists.'

One of Team Falken's most extreme drift cars is Paul Cheshire's Nissan Skyline 350GT (pictured). Its heavily modified 3.5-litre V6 engine produces more than 700bhp – upwards of double what the unit develops in factory form – while the interior is stripped out and the car's front track is widened. Yet, perhaps contrary to popular belief, Cheshire's Skyline wears road-spec Falken Azenis FK453 tyres.

'When we drift through [Silverstone's] Brooklands in fourth gear on the rev limiter, the rear wheels are spinning at about 120mph,' says Cheshire. 'If we ask the tyres to do this twice, they're shot. That's about 40 seconds of running!'

Despite using everyday tyres, Cheshire and his teammates often rank at the sharp end of the UK series.

'We certainly punch above our weight and we make a lot of noise while we're doing it,' says Smith. 'We want to show that this is a premium quality tyre despite its less than premium price tag.'

For more info, visit
evo.co.uk/tyres



TYRE NEWS ROUND-UP

Pirelli test driver Marco Mapelli has told **evo** he won't be setting a Ring lap time in the upcoming Lamborghini Aventador SV Roadster. The Italian is responsible for that scorching 6min 59sec lap in the tin-top Aventador SV (see **evo** 212), but says that attacking the circuit in the convertible version of a car that overheated its tyres after

just a few corners is probably too dangerous to attempt.

Elsewhere, a new survey by TyreSafe has revealed that one in five British motorists have never checked their tyres. The shocking finding has prompted the not-for-profit organisation to predict that nearly ten million dangerous or illegal tyres will

be driven on UK roads in 2015.

Finally, Pirelli has announced that its P Zero Trofeo R track tyre will soon be available at Protyre Pirelli Performance Centres – previously it was available only through motorsport channels by special order. Although heavily track-biased, the Trofeo R is also approved for road use.

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Not just for capturing Russian meteors, dashcams are a useful additional insurance on busy roads...



1 COBRA CDR 900
£229.99

Cobra's CDR 900 is suitably small and sleek, so shouldn't look too out of place in a modern car interior. The 160-degree viewing angle is one of the widest on the market, while the unit can record in up to 1296p HD. Footage can also stream to cloud services via Wi-Fi.

cobra.com

2 BLACKVUE DR650GW-1CH
£369.99

This BlackVue is another unit that should take up minimal space in your windscreen – in fact, the instructions suggest you attach it to the back of your rear-view mirror. The DR650GW-1CH has a 129-degree viewing angle and records in 1080p at 30 frames per second, with GPS. There's also a BlackVue app so you can use your smartphone to watch what you've recorded.

blackvue.co.uk

3 NEXTBASE 402G
£149.99

A wide, 2.7-inch screen, f/1.6 aperture for low-light conditions and a GPS data logger are the 402G's biggest selling points. It also records in 1080p HD and prioritises ease of use. An extra £30, meanwhile, will get you Nextbase's just-released 512G, which adds more features, including an anti-glare polarising filter and a parking mode, which detects motion and automatically records while your car is parked.

next-base.com

4 CRASH CATCHER CC3
£179.99

There's no confusing where you're supposed to mount the Crash Catcher CC3 – it fits over your rear-view mirror and acts as a mirror itself. Images from the camera are displayed within that space, while two cameras allow you to capture pictures both outside and inside the car.

crashcatcher.co.uk

5 TRANSCEND DRIVEPRO 220
£129.99

Another of the more compact units, yet despite the Transcend DrivePro's diminutive size, it covers a wide view – 130 degrees – and can simultaneously record MP4 video and still images. Wi-Fi allows you to watch footage even when you're away from your parked car.

transcend-info.com



Looking forward to go back

As manufacturers seek to meet ever-tougher emissions regulations, designers are looking at the most innovative aerodynamic solutions

IT'S A RARE PRIVILEGE TO climb inside a concept car. Normally found rotating on motor show turntables, tantalisingly close but ultimately out of reach, concept cars are automotive pin-ups – one may look, gawp wide-mouthed even, but one can never touch.

Among the most gawp-worthy features of the Divine DS concept from Citroën's upmarket DS Automobiles brand are the scales that cover its roof. They start near the top edge of the windscreen as opaque glass, then further back switch to diamond-shaped metal facets that form part of the car's active aerodynamics. DS suggests they 'optimise aerodynamic performance', though on the concept they're deployed with a button press rather than opening at speed.

There is no rear window,

conventional glass having been swapped for a rear-vision camera beneath one of the facets. The image from this is relayed to a screen inside the car, integrated into a moulded section of the roof and located roughly where you'd find a traditional mirror. With no rear window, the rear cabin has a cossetting feel, though some might call it claustrophobic.

On any other concept car, we'd be quick to dismiss such a flourish as form over function. However, Damien Fressard, exterior designer

of the Divine, suggests it's much more than that, and it's one of several elements of the concept that the team is keen to transfer to production – if not in the exact same form.

Realistic? It's far from impossible, but DS may endure legal wrangling to convince rule-makers that live images are a suitable substitute for reflective glass. Several endurance racing teams already use a rear-view camera in place of a mirror as proof of concept, but the last automaker to try such a system, VW with its XL1

eco car, had to fight hard to get it legalised for limited production.

The potential for new in-car technology to influence exterior design and engineering is intriguing, though. Active aerodynamics is already widely used in the automotive industry, so the Divine's trio of small spoilers don't present a huge engineering challenge. In a car this size – a hot hatchback, say – the benefits may be negligible for downforce but potentially useful for reducing drag to help meet tight economy and emissions regulations.

And in a supercar, where rear visibility is often minimal in the first place, eliminating the rear screen in favour of a camera setup could be the path to more advanced aerodynamics, more efficient cooling and innovative aesthetics.

“There is no rear window, conventional glass swapped for a rear-vision camera”

by ANTONY INGRAM

**1 FACETS**

Diamond-shaped 'facets' are a pattern repeated throughout the car. The ones on the Divine's rear extend to change the car's aerodynamic profile, but they also hide a camera.

2 REAR-VIEW

The image from the camera is displayed on a screen mounted where you'd normally find a mirror. The driver's view through the windscreen is not as impeded as it appears here.

3 HEAD-UP

The head-up display and, below that, an almost mesmerising 3D, holographic instrument panel relay information including navigation, car status and speed.

CAMERAS IN ACTION**Corvette C7.R**

Spare a thought for drivers at the Le Mans 24 Hours. Retina-searing LED and laser headlamps are adjusted for the maximum spread and intensity of light. To combat the distracting dazzle – the cause of more than one accident in recent years – teams are turning to rear-view cameras.

Corvette Racing's system is particularly clever. Images from a rear-facing camera are displayed on a dashboard screen. This eliminates dazzle, as headlights can be no brighter than the screen's maximum output, but software also decides whether a pursuing car is catching up or dropping back. It then indicates the car accordingly with a red or green arrow, and if a faster car is about to pass, the arrow points to the side the car is heading.

It's easy to see this technology reaching the road, to cut glare, to notify drivers of vehicles moving into blind spots, and to warn you of a car that is approaching faster than you might be expecting.

**THE DRIVE**

It's almost impossible to take away definitive information on a car's behaviour when driving a concept. While often beautiful, few concepts are designed with motion in mind. Chassis components and body panels are pieced together not on a production line but in a prototyping studio. For the few concepts that can move under their own steam, drivetrains are often parts-bin specials.

Still, it could be worse. Rather than a chuntering diesel, the Divine uses the



Peugeot RCZ R's 266bhp turbocharged four-cylinder. Less appealing is PSA's automated manual transmission. Rarely a model of smoothness, it's recalcitrant and

only semi-operational here, and fills the cabin with the aroma of burning clutch when driving slowly.

The 20-inch wheels, minimal suspension travel and liquorice-

thin tyres send some nasty shudders through the cabin. And there's no brake servo. But it's easy to overlook all that when you're in such a stunning cabin.

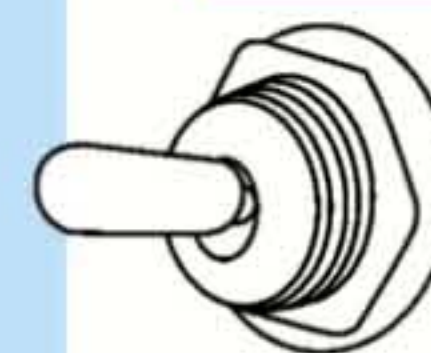
NOW & THEN**Touch-sensitive controls**

There'll always be something satisfying about the click of a physical control, but most of us are now familiar with smoothly gliding our fingers against the glassy surface of a smartphone screen or in-car satnav system.

Things weren't always that sophisticated. Aston Martin's Lagonda was the first car to use touch-sensitive buttons, while the Buick Riviera introduced an actual touchscreen display (pictured) in the mid-80s.

From there, the technology snowballed, spurred on by portable satellite navigation devices. Typically, these use resistive touchscreens, which are low-cost and durable. Capacitive screens, like those in iPhones, are becoming more common – the Tesla Model S's enormous 17in screen uses capacitive technology.

But touchscreens haven't taken over: the trackpad-style scroll wheel in the new Audi A4's centre console also responds to smartphone-style swipes and pinches.

**ON
OR
OFF?****Lane departure warning**

Turn it off, says **evo** website editor Hunter Skipworth: 'It doesn't always work, and when it does it's irritating. If I can't keep a car between two straight lines on a motorway, I shouldn't be driving.'

Speed. Courage. Glory.



C70 D-TYPE – LIMITED EDITION

Sir William Lyons designed Jaguar's legendary D-Type Long Nose racing car with one purpose in mind – to win at Le Mans. In 1957 the non-works Ecurie Ecosse team's resplendent Flag Metal Blue D-Type, driven by Ron Flockhart and Ivor Bueb, completed a stunning hat-trick of victories for the marque.

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WATCH TECH

Audemars
Piguet Royal
Oak Concept
Laptimer



Back in Issue 211, we brought you news of Audemars Piguet's new Laptimer chronograph, the result of a long-term project embarked upon more than five years ago with Michael Schumacher. This month we thought we'd throw some light on just how clever it is.

Imagine you want to record the lap times of a car travelling around a circuit. Press the top-right button to start the AP's chronograph and the central seconds hand will start to sweep around the dial. So far, so like a regular chronograph.

However, as the car passes the start/finish line, press the button on the left-hand side of the case and you'll discover there were actually two seconds hands – one directly beneath the other. One of them will now freeze, so you can note the lap time, while the other will fly back to zero and start timing the next lap.

When that lap (and every subsequent lap) ends, press the same button again and the moving hand will stop – allowing you to see the new lap time – while the stationary hand will return to zero and start timing the next lap. Genius!



THIS MONTH

Breitling for
Bentley B06S

From: breitling.com
Price: £7830

Despite the ongoing trend for making watches smaller (if not actually small), few people would have expected Breitling to downsize the traditional wrist-draggers that it creates through its partnership with Bentley. But that's exactly what has happened to the B06S, which has been shrunk from the original 49mm version to a more manageable 44mm. The watch retains the 30-second chronograph function – in which the central hand sweeps the dial in half-a-minute – and the knurled bezel and stamped dial based on the pattern of a Bentley grille.



BRM Corvette
Racing C7.R

From: brm-manufacture.com
Price: £6070

French car and motorcycle enthusiast Bernard Richards – founder of Bernard Richards Manufacture, or BRM – has forged partnerships with several motorsport teams during the course of the brand's 13-year history, the latest being with Corvette Racing. Marking the tie-up are two numbered, limited editions – a chronograph and a three-hand model, both automatic – which feature custom-painted hands, dial details and strap perforations in classic C7.R yellow. The same pieces are also available without the yellow highlights, in separate runs of 100 each.



Eberhard and Co Tazio
Nuvolari Édition Limitée 336

From: chisholmhunter.co.uk
Price: c£2800

This watch honours Italian racer Tazio Nuvolari's world speed record attempt behind the wheel of a twin-engined Alfa Romeo 16C on the Florence-Mare motorway in June 1935. In recognition of the top speed in kilometres per hour that he achieved on the day, the watch will be made in an edition of 336 examples (that's 209mph, in case you're wondering). It features a 45mm, stainless steel case, a second time display at the 12 o'clock position and a power reserve indicator at six. The case back, meanwhile, is engraved with the watch's individual number.



ROLEX DAYTONA (AND MORE...)

As worn by Mark Higgins, rally champion and James Bond stunt driver.



'I became interested in watches about 15 years ago, when the rally car I was driving was sponsored by Sector, which supplied me with a watch. But the one I wear most of the time these days is a TAG Heuer Carrera.

'I also have the Omega Seamaster

limited-edition watches from the two previous Bond films I've worked on – *Quantum of Solace* and *Skyfall*. I think I'll probably buy the *Spectre* watch, too.

'I have a couple of Rolex Daytonas [pictured], too – one with a white dial, the other black. I guess I

have around ten decent watches in total, but I still regret missing out on winning a Breitling for the fastest run at the Cholmondeley Pageant of Power four years ago. I was in a Subaru Cosworth STI CS400, but I came second to a guy in a Lamborghini.'

CHRONO



Read more from Simon de Burton in *Chrono*, the world's leading annual watch magazine. Available now for iPad and iPhone from the iTunes Store.

Audi R8 V10 Plus

Test location: Portimão, Portugal **GPS:** 37.21010, -8.61138

Audi has a hit and miss reputation with its high-performance models. Has this all-new R8 managed to retain the magic of the original? Fingers crossed...

Photography: Malcolm Griffiths

THE AUDI R8 HAS come an awfully long way. When the original version arrived back in 2007 it was powered by a 4.2-litre V8 pushing out 414bhp. With a list price a shade under £80,000, it was aimed squarely at the sports car heartland, a direct rival to the Porsche 911 Carrera 4S. As it happened, this magazine judged the Audi to be the superior car (see *evo* 106).

Two years later the V10 model arrived, then the V10 Plus. The R8 was coming of age, but with the introduction of this new, second-gen model, it now occupies a more grown-up space. With in excess of 600bhp and a top speed beyond 200mph, the range-topping model qualifies as a big-league supercar, no questions asked. That list price has come rather a long way, too. Before options, the V10 Plus costs £134,500.

But perhaps the biggest point of difference between this generation and the last is that there is now no V8 option. The range starts with the non-Plus V10 model, which, with 533bhp and a list price of £119,500, is itself a much more potent and expensive device than the old V8. Suddenly, the R8 entry point is more Porsche 911 Turbo than 911 Carrera.

Regardless of specification, the R8 has always been an *evo* favourite,

so the new model arrives under the weight of great expectation. You'll reach your own conclusions about the looks, but to my eyes the angular design language works better in the real world than it does on the page or a motor show stand, although the pointed black grilles that prop up the front and rear lights look clunky, as though they'll age badly. However, in fetching Ara Blue and with the carbonfibre side blades and



rear wing that come as part of the Plus upgrade, this R8 does not want for presence.

The big news in technical terms is the structure, which now incorporates carbonfibre for reduced weight and added rigidity. The engineers have used the lightweight material in those areas where strength was needed in one direction only (otherwise the weight saving benefits of carbonfibre are

lost), such as the rear bulkhead and transmission tunnel. In total, 13 per cent of the base structure is carbonfibre, the rest aluminium. Audi claims it is 40 per cent stiffer than the old structure and 15 per cent lighter, too, which has contributed to a modest weight saving of 15kg over the old car.

The technological improvements extend to the drivetrain, too, with a new quattro four-wheel-

Above: where the standard R8 V10 gets a retractable spoiler, the V10 Plus sports a large fixed wing similar to that of the old R8 GT and LMX (but, alas, no diveplanes... yet); sideblades no longer run up to the roof of the car

This month

AUDI R8 V10 PLUS
New 602bhp, 205mph R8 steps firmly into supercar territory

p36



PORSCHE BOXSTER SPYDER
An *evo* favourite returns, but can this more practical Spyder still thrill?

p42



LOTUS EVORA 400
Evora gets serious with 400bhp, a revised chassis and a £72k price tag

p46



MERCEDES-AMG GLE 63 S COUPE
BMW X6 M too brash? Meet Mercedes' 577bhp alternative

p50



JAGUAR XE S
It's our first taste of the new Jag in the UK. Can it pass the British B-road test?

p53



LEXUS RC F CARBON
470bhp, V8-engined M4 alternative gains weight-saving carbon panels

p54



ALPINA B6 EDITION 50
205mph 6-series that outguns BMW's M6 Competition Package

p56



The team

With the quattro-equipped R8 our lead Driven this month, we asked the *evo* road test team to name the best four-wheel-drive car they've driven.



NICK TROTT
Editor

'Not driven the SV yet, so the Aventador Roadster will have to do for now...'



STUART GALLAGHER
Managing editor

'Subaru Impreza R85 – they don't make 'em like they used to'



HENRY CATCHPOLE
Features editor

'Tarmac-spec 2005 Ford Focus WRC car. Last of the active-diff generation and freakish in its agility'



DAN PROSSER
Road test editor

'Nissan GT-R – exactly how I want a four-wheel-drive system to behave'



JETHRO BOVINGDON
Contributing editor

'Mitsubishi Evo with Active Yaw Control. Doesn't try to ape rear-drive but instead creates a uniquely aggressive experience'



RICHARD MEADEN
Contributing editor

'Hard to beat 991 Turbo S for explosive all-wheel-drive traction. Totally mind-bending in all respects'



DAVID VIVIAN
Contributing editor

'If for no other reason than its rocket-sled take-off, the Tesla SP85D'



ADAM TOWLER
Contributing road tester

'Ford RS200. Hot, harsh, a clutch straight from hell, but absolutely brilliant'



‘In dynamic terms the biggest point of difference between new car and old is sheer grip’

drive system that can distribute all of its torque to either axle in extreme conditions. Drive is further apportioned between the rear wheels by a locking differential. The seven-speed dual-clutch S-tronic gearbox – now the only transmission option – has been tweaked to return quicker, sharper gearchanges. Carbon ceramic brakes are standard on the V10 Plus but a £7700 option on the regular V10.

There are a handful of significant optional features – all specified on this test car – which are worth mentioning, too. The first is Dynamic Steering, which caused such consternation when the Lamborghini Huracán – with which this R8 shares

the technology – arrived last year. The system adjusts the steering ratio to switch between offering low-speed manoeuvrability and high-speed stability. Next there is Audi Magnetic Ride, which gives the driver a choice of damper settings. This is accessed via the Drive Select function, which also adjusts the gearbox, four-wheel-drive, steering, engine and exhaust parameters. Finally, there's a new Performance Mode function (standard on the V10 Plus), which offers three settings for the stability control system – Dry, Wet and Snow.

The cabin quality is very good indeed and the driving position would be perfect but for the seat

being mounted fractionally too high. In Comfort mode the ride quality is just about as cossetting as you could expect of a mid-engined supercar, and with the gearbox in automatic mode and the exhaust knocked back into its quieter setting, the R8 is relaxed and refined. If you need no more than two seats and the reasonable storage space offered by the front boot, there's no reason why you couldn't use an R8 daily, as our own Richard Meaden found with his previous-gen V10 Plus long-termer.

The technical details of the 5.2-litre, ten-cylinder engine are mouth-watering: 602bhp at 8250rpm, 413lb ft of torque at 6500rpm and a maximum crank



speed of 8700rpm. Similarly, the performance figures speak for themselves: 0-62mph in 3.2 seconds and 205mph flat-out.

This engine is an utter joy. At a time when rivals are switching to turbocharging, the naturally aspirated V10's instant response, rich, serrated bark and top-end intensity are something to savour. The level of performance is alarming and the S-tronic gearbox now shifts with the immediacy of the very best transmissions.

Our misgivings about Dynamic Steering remain, though, because when you nudge the R8 up to the limit of its dynamic abilities, there's very little useful interaction

between car and driver. Quite often during our test drive I find the front axle washing wide without having had any indication that it's about to let go. Short of the limit it actually does a good job of linking man and machine. On initial turn-in there is no slack in the steering whatsoever and the response from the front end is absolutely immediate, as though the steering input and response is a single, cohesive action. It gives the car a sense of precision and agility, but I do hope the conventional system is more communicative when you really need to know how much is in reserve.

The suppleness of the old car over an uneven surface remains,

although on the few broken sections we find during the launch in Portugal there's reason to believe the stiffer suspension mode will be too much for many of the UK's back roads. Nonetheless, the R8 is still tautly controlled in its relaxed damper setting, with the body diving and rolling enough under braking and in cornering to paint a clear picture of how hard the chassis is working. Steering aside, this is a natural and intuitive car to thread down a road.

In dynamic terms the biggest point of difference between new car and old is sheer grip. The R8 travels through a series of phases as you push harder and harder. Initially, the car feels as though it'll grip infinitely,

Top left: 12.3-inch 'Virtual Cockpit' TFT display can switch between prioritising dials and navigation. **Top right:** carbon ceramic brakes are standard on the Plus. Pictured wheels are optional 20-inches; 19s are standard. **Above:** exhaust and stability control settings can be changed from the steering wheel



then it settles into a window of understeer as you approach the limit. The trick to smashing through this window is weight transfer. Enter a corner hard on the brakes and the weight moves forward, which shifts the point of balance forwards. This helps provoke the rear end and trim out understeer. With the car rotating about the apex it then pays to reapply the power very early indeed, which will just about get the rear axle over-rotating to sling the car away from the corner in a neutral shape, rather than in a frustrating mess of power understeer.

Much the same was true of the original R8, but the issue now is that the four-wheel-drive system and chassis are so effective that you really do need to be motoring along very hard indeed to access that lovely window of adjustability and engagement. The old car would invite you in at more reasonable speeds. If you don't drag the new car onto that plane, you might be left thinking it a touch aloof and distant.

'You need to be motoring very hard indeed to access that lovely window of adjustability'

On track, however, where the chassis loadings are naturally much higher, the R8 still feels sweetly balanced and hugely adjustable, both on and off the throttle.

There is still a great deal to be learnt about this R8, not least how it feels without Dynamic Steering, on standard suspension and on UK roads. Until such a time as it proves itself to be fun and involving at more accessible speeds and more communicative through its steering, it is denied the full five stars.

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)



Above: with the V8 gone, the R8 is now available exclusively with Audi's 5.2-litre V10; cylinder deactivation makes for 24.8mpg combined.

Right: carbonfibre rear diffuser very much worthy of Audi's first 200mph+ production car



Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	★★★★★
V10, 5204cc	287g/km	602bhp @ 8250rpm	413lb ft @ 6500rpm	3.2sec (claimed)	205mph (claimed)	Weight	Basic price
						1555kg (393bhp/ton)	£134,500

+ Timeless drivetrain, huge performance, usability - Needs to be driven hard to really engage

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Porsche Boxster Spyder

Test location: Oberau, Germany
GPS: 47.56100, 11.13309

Porsche is on a roll with its sub-911 models, so with added power, less weight and a new roof, is the Spyder an even better Boxster than our current fave, the GTS?

A ABOUT NOW THERE would probably have been a sound akin to a hurricane denuding a small campsite if I'd been in the old Boxster Spyder. I'm on the Autobahn and have breached 125mph, which, while not a phenomenal rate of knots, is nonetheless the maximum permissible speed of the old Spyder with its 'shower cap' roof in place.

This 2015 Spyder has no such issues, however, and although the new roof above my head still looks rakish and saves a useful 10kg, it can be used all the way up to the car's top speed of 180mph. Traffic on the Autobahn won't let me reach quite those heights today, but I push on to 166mph (the old Spyder's top speed) just to ram the point home.

This time the Boxster Spyder was





Left: steering wheel is a smaller diameter than the regular Boxster item; manual gearbox is mandatory – there's no PDK option. **Below:** don't be fooled by the roof buttons – raising or lowering the top is a largely manual affair

designed from the outset with a roof and, as a consequence, that roof is much more integrated. There is a button-operated motor to attach it securely to the header rail, but the rest of the stowage or erection is done manually. It's relatively simple once you've got used to a couple of quirks (the trickiest part is finding the button beneath the canvas that releases each of the 'fins' attaching it to the rear deck) and by the end of

my time with the Spyder I'll be able to complete the whole process in around 30 seconds if I do my very best running-round-the-car-Le-Mans-pit-stop impression.

As for the rest of the car, well, on paper at least it has clearly usurped the already wonderful GTS at the top of the 981 Boxster tree. With the 3.8-litre flat-six from the 991 Carrera S (and the Cayman GT4) mounted amidships, the Spyder puts

out a healthy 45bhp more than the Boxster GTS (but 10bhp less than the GT4). Torque is up on the GTS by 37lb ft too and the 0-62mph time has dropped by 0.5sec, to 4.5sec. In addition to the largely manually operated roof, some 918-inspired seats plus a lack of air con and radio as standard help to drop the kerb weight by 30kg to 1315kg.

For reasons that will be explained in a future issue, I'm driving a large number of miles in a Spyder across a seasonally hot and sunny stretch of Europe, and as a result I'm rather pleased that this particular car was spec'd with air con and PCM infotainment. It's a slightly tricky conundrum, however, because obviously the purist in me thinks that potential owners should spec their Spyders to be pared-back paragons,



‘The Spyder changes direction with simply beautiful composure’



yet the realist in me admits that a Spyder is likely to be used much more if you add in a couple of little luxuries so that long motorway journeys to the mountains are much more pleasurable. I believe it's what is known as a 'first-world problem'.

The speedster-looking rear and the much more aggressive front end suggest that this is going to be a very different sort of Boxster to drive. However, initially there doesn't feel like there is a stark leap in performance over a GTS. The culprit is the Boxster's tall gearing, which masks the greater power if you're only driving at a moderate six-tenths. Up the pace, though, and the extra urge really starts to make itself felt, with the flat-six getting into its considerable stride above about 5000rpm, where the peak torque plateau begins.

The 20mm-lower Sports chassis that's an option on the GTS is standard here, and although the low stance of the Spyder suggests an uncompromising ride, the

suspension is actually surprisingly compliant over some extremely broken sections of road.

What is new to this Boxster is the steering, which is taken from the 991 Turbo (which has a quicker rack), and the lovely, smaller, 360mm-diameter steering wheel also seen in the new GT3 RS. As a result there is more weight in your hands and a greater economy of movement as you guide the car through corners. Although the steering doesn't have quite the liveliness of the GT4's (this is not a full 'Motorsport' car, remember,



so it doesn't have the 911 GT3 front end that the ultimate Cayman has), the Spyder nonetheless changes direction with increased agility and simply beautiful composure. The extra grunt also means it's easier to unhitch the rear tyres, although the mechanical LSD could lock more aggressively, if we're being picky.

With the roof and windows down, the buffeting is more than a zephyr but no stronger than a stiff breeze, and when you throw in the beautiful six-speed manual complete with stubbier lever, and a soundtrack that has more snap, crackle and pop than a Kellogg's factory, the driver's seat is a pretty wonderful place to be.

Rather than any single stellar trait, it is more a subtle coalition of small improvements that lifts the Spyder driving experience just above that of the GTS, but overall the Spyder is worthy of its place at the top of the 981 range. At £60,459 it seems like something of a bargain too. ✖

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
Flat-six, 3800cc	230g/km	370bhp @ 6700rpm	310lb ft @ 4750-6000rpm	4.5sec (claimed)	180mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1315kg (286bhp/ton)	£60,459

+ The fastest, most rewarding Boxster yet; price - Tall gearing still an issue; feedback trails Cayman GT4's



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Lotus Evora 400

Test location: Hethel, Norfolk GPS: 52.56300, 1.18112

On paper this new Evora is perhaps the only rival capable of taking on and beating the Porsche Cayman GT4. At a soaking wet Hethel, are the first impressions encouraging?

THERE'S NOTHING wrong with a bit of good old-fashioned cynicism. However, there are times when cynicism is simply a euphemism for prejudice and all the ugly things that come with it. The sheer distrust that swirls around Lotus for many these days feels like it's heading down that path. Of course, we have good reason to question Lotus: the wounds created by the Bahar years will take time to heal. Talk of an SUV when we're all crying out for a period of stability and great sports cars before Lotus embarks on its next great adventure doesn't help, either.

Yet, for all the uncertainty, there's no question that Lotus still has the capability to build what we all

love: cars with a purity of feel and response; cars that involve and excite. The last all-new Lotus was the Evora, which won eCoty in 2009, while the fabulously rorty Exige S shared the title with the Pagani Huayra in 2012. Hopefully that magic is still deep within the fabric of the company, even after the turmoil of recent years. Which brings us to the new Lotus Evora 400, a thorough reworking of the Evora S, with more performance, less weight, improved quality and a new edge to the dynamics. At £72,000 it is priced in line with the Porsche 911 Carrera, but the burning question is whether it can shade the Cayman GT4.

After what feels like weeks of warm, dry weather I arrive at Lotus to a deluge. The local roads are

flooding and the sky is a leaden grey. These aren't ideal conditions by any means, but perhaps they'll play to the Evora 400's skill set. When the going gets tricky you want clear lines of communication, a predictable balance and linear, intuitive controls – that almost sounds like an Evora mission statement.

Dynamics aside just for a moment, perhaps what's most important over the next few months is that the 400 draws people into Lotus dealerships, and despite the rain and wind the bright orange shape punches out of the gloom and looks lean, sharp and aggressive. It's a good start. Just as I climb out of the Cayman GTS I've arrived in, another 400 is about to be shifted into position and starts with a



gorgeous whoop of revs. The noise is smoother and purer than the dirty Exige S cacophony and has a lovely clarity of tone. For showroom appeal the Evora 400 is already miles ahead of the Evora S.

After that tantalising introduction, it's hard not to be excited at the prospect of limbering up and then contorting myself to get behind the 400's steering wheel. Thanks to a new charge-cooling system, the supercharged 3.5-litre V6 produces 400bhp and 302lb ft. Coupled to a 41kg weight saving and a new Quaife torque-sensing limited-slip differential, the 400 can cover 0-60mph in 4.1sec and reach 186mph. That's just the start, as Lotus claims over two-thirds of the 400 is new, including new

'There's a sense of occasion that Evora S owners won't recognise'

Top: the 400's red line is set encouragingly high, at 7000rpm, while maximum torque is developed between 3500 and 6500rpm

suspension geometry and steering rack location, larger AP Racing brakes, new engine mounts, a significantly revised gear linkage, new and lighter seats, a completely redesigned interior, a new heating and ventilation system, new traction and stability control calibration in conjunction with Bosch, and a sharp new exterior that produces 32kg of downforce at 150mph.

Yet perhaps the single biggest change that will count for prospective owners is that the chassis itself has been revised and the huge sills have been cut away dramatically. I need not have limbered up and I certainly don't need to contort myself. Just swing open the door and get in just as you might with a Cayman. Praise be! The

sheer inconvenience and discomfort of getting into an Evora is no longer an issue. The driver's Sparco seat is set a little high but otherwise all feels and looks good. Can the 400 match the fit, finish, design and control interface of a GT4? No, but it was ever thus with low-volume sports cars. Apart from the aftermarket feel of the Alpine touchscreen, the 400 is more than passable.

The engine really does sound terrific and it picks up all 1415kg with a wicked intent, spitting out pops and bangs on the overrun in the Sport and Race driving modes and providing a sense of occasion and performance that an Evora S owner wouldn't recognise. They'd barely recognise the shift quality of the six-speed gearbox, either.



The loose, rattly sensation is gone, replaced with something requiring a little more effort but rewarding with much greater precision. Even so, the 'box remains frustrating at times, refusing to deliver fast shifts from second to third gear without a nasty graunch. It's way behind the pure joy of a Cayman's manual, for example.

The Evora claws back plenty of points in other areas, though. The stunningly detailed steering is a thing of wonder in these days dominated by electric assistance and it really connects you to the much-revised chassis. Lotus wanted to create greater agility with the 400, so completely recalibrated the Bilstein dampers and upped the spring rate at the rear as well as increasing front camber and the fitting that LSD. The car still rides with superb composure, but there's a bit more physicality to the experience and I like the new sense of aggression and more responsive



'The Evora remains a car that pours feedback the driver's way'

Above: Evora 400 boasts new forged alloy wheels shod in Michelin Pilot Super Sport rubber

setup. On sodden roads the chassis conveys every lump, bump and puddle without kicking back through the steering or throwing the car off-line – it's a match for the composure of the Cayman GTS, no question. It also has much greater traction than the Porsche, which in combination with an intuitive ESP setup means the 400 manages to feel alive and super-alert but also nicely reassuring.

On a similarly soaking but much smoother Hethel test track the 400's impressive dynamics shine just as brightly. There's a bit more body roll than you might expect but grip and traction are superb and the balance is as sweet as you could wish. Slow corners can see the 400 push gently into understeer but it's so easy to turn in off the power, feel the tail swing wide and then balance it with just a trace of oversteer. The ESP deserves a mention again here too, as Race mode allows you to get

some angle and then lean on the system to hold it there but not swing any further. Turn it off altogether and the 400 remains a beautifully balanced car beyond the limit.

Our time with the Evora 400 is short and compromised by the weather, but the fundamentals feel excellent. It remains a car that pours feedback the driver's way with amazing detail. Traction is vastly better with the new LSD and the engine sounds so much more exciting than it does in the Evora S. The chassis retains that feeling of innate poise and control but adds just enough edge to create an experience that's more special and exciting. Climbing into the Evora has never been easier and the rewards that await have never been more appealing. I'd say that's job done. And a slot at eCoty and a date with a Cayman GT4 is assured... ✕

Jethro Bovingdon
(@JethroBovingdon)

Specification

➕ Performance, noise, grip and sense of excitement all take a leap

➖ Gearbox still not perfect, punchy pricing

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
V6, 3456cc, supercharged	225g/km	400bhp @ 7000rpm	302lb ft @ 3500-6500rpm	4.2sec (claimed)	186mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1395kg (291bhp/ton)	£72,000



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Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 S Coupe

Mercedes has joined the coupe-SUV club with its new GLE, and the range-topping, V8-powered 63 S model is aiming to steal sales from BMW's successful X6 M

Test location: Kitzbühel, Austria **GPS:** 47.445182,12.392272

A ANYONE WHO STILL thinks coupe into SUV doesn't go may want to take a peek at BMW's calculator.

So far 300,000 X6s have been sold, which isn't bad going for a car that looks as if it's strayed from the back lot of a children's sci-fi movie. That's a little unkind. There's no denying the big Beemer's bombastic styling has tons of presence, especially as the now pretty handy second-gen X6 M (in *evo* 212), but the arrival of Mercedes's GLE Coupe, and particularly the AMG 63 S range-topper driven here in the Austrian Alps, suggests that if you really do want a monster 4x4 with a swoopy roof, a little subtlety goes a long way. The photos don't do it justice. It has X6 levels of swagger without the cartoonish exaggeration.

That Mercedes has taken the opportunity, with the refresh and renaming of its stalwart ML-class SUV, to gatecrash BMW's party is clearly a strategically savvy move. The deadly German rivals love a bit

of carpet tugging. Why GLE? Why indeed. If it doesn't remind you of a mid-'80s mainstream saloon with velour upholstery, you're probably not as old as I am. Merc's reasoning is that 'G' should be the root letter for all its off-roaders and not just the current G-class, thus forging a solid link with the iconic Geländewagen of yesteryear. 'E' means its size roughly equates to that of an E-class saloon. 'L'? That's anyone's guess.

It's still no excuse for giving a car a name as long as the Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 S 4Matic Coupe's. The good news is the thing thunders from rest to 62mph in about the same time it takes to say it, which seems about right considering that its slightly old-school biturbo 5.5-litre V8 pumps out 577bhp and 560lb ft in its marginally hotter 'S' form. With the assistance of 4Matic four-wheel drive and the massively shod optional 22-inch alloys, this GLE emphatically denies its elephantine kerb weight much say in the matter.

Like the big-capacity twin-turbo V8s that power the X6 M



and Porsche Cayenne Turbo S, the Merc's is a thing of wonder, rendering 'effortless' an inadequate descriptor of the way the car performs the everyday tasks of merely moving quickly and overtaking. Burbling deeply and surging serenely, it elevates the idea of 'making progress' to another, altogether less stressful level. It seems to have so much in reserve, checking what's left is more an act of curiosity than necessity. Even then, when you put your toe down, it's hard to credit just how savagely the horizon rushes up. Thing is, when the big V8 opens its lungs, its previously muffled sonority hardens to a proper quasi-race-car yell – complete with ballistic crackles on the overrun if you select the sport

modes for engine or transmission – and that's plain addictive.

The chassis copes well considering the GLE Coupe's bulk and lofty stance. Mercedes has thrown in just about everything it knows to keep the big car on the island at speed while retaining a decent slice of comfort and refinement. The springs automatically lower the ride height when you're going fast and, as well as adaptive dampers, there are adaptive anti-roll bars to resist body roll. The almost comically wide 325/35-section tyres at the rear have a big say in the way the 63 S handles on the limit. In tighter turns, and there are plenty of those in the Austrian hills, it's the front end that inevitably lets go first, and quite suddenly. On longer curves, though, grip seems almost limitless.

No, the Merc doesn't feel quite as precise and fluent as the X6 M or Cayenne Turbo S, but it manages its mass extremely well and is good fun if you're in the mood. **X**

David Vivian (@davidjvivan)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
V8, 5461cc, twin-turbo	278g/km	577bhp @ 5500rpm	560lb ft @ 1750-5250rpm	4.2sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	★★★★★	2275kg (258bhp/ton)	£96,555

+ Subtler than an X6 M; performance; comfort - More force than finesse

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Jaguar XE S

Test location: A428, Northamptonshire
GPS: 52.19666, -0.71891

Mightily impressive when **evo** first drove it in Spain, does the V6-engined Jag XE deliver on tougher UK tarmac?



G'REAT CHASSIS WITH a strong powertrain and a good design' was the short-form verdict awarded by David Vivian to Jaguar's new XE S in issue 210, following his first drive on the car's international launch in northern Spain. But now we've swapped the sweeping roads of Navara for the gritty reality of Northamptonshire. Oh the glamour.

The Italian Racing Red XE in question is as per our Spanish launch car: a 3-litre supercharged petrol V6 'S', which as standard features torque vectoring and Adaptive Dynamics, the latter continuously measuring acceleration, braking, cornering forces and throttle response in order to adjust the steering and damping effect to suit. Our test car is also fitted with £800-worth of 20-inch, ten-spoke 'Propeller' alloy wheels in place of the standard 19-inch items.

In the **evo** office the XE's styling divides opinion. Some feel it looks too much like a scaled-down XF, others think it's too Audi-like, with a Jaguar leaper replacing the Teutonic four rings. For what it's

worth, I like it. On roads flooded with the C-class, 3-series and A4, the Jag has enough individuality about it to stand out. And crucially it doesn't need the big wheels and a bodykit to do so.

Inside, it's a similar story. With the new kid on the D-segment block having been in a position to learn from its rivals' errors, Jaguar has delivered an ergonomically successful cabin that's as comfortable to be in as it is pleasing to look at. Granted, some of the switchgear looks a little less than premium and the touchscreen infotainment display is more functional and straightforward than cutting-edge, but it all works with refreshing simplicity.

What immediately strikes you is that Jaguar has focused on the driver's needs first, most importantly by designing a driving position that doesn't require lengthy fiddling with the adjustments only to settle on a 'that will do' position – something some of its rival suffer from. It *feels* good, too: the touch-points are high quality and their actions are nicely weighted. It's all very premium,



without a hint of 'Germany'.

At 1590kg, the V6 XE is not as light as you'd expect a car constructed largely from aluminium to be (BMW's new 321bhp 340i weighs 1530kg), but the excess weight doesn't hinder the performance. The calibration of the Adaptive Dynamics system is impressive to say the least. The damping is well resolved, cushioning you on poor surfaces and providing an unfussy and quiet ride, yet when needed it delivers the control and balance to match a quicker pace or more challenging course – or, more than likely, both. The steering has a nice linearity to it, and while there's not much feedback, the weighting is progressive as you lean on the chassis and tyres. Push the XE S and there's mild understeer before it settles and feels, as it should, like

a purebred rear-drive chassis. The steering's not as crisp as BMW's, but Mercedes' and Audi's engineers will need to return to the test track to be on a par. In terms of the chassis, it's a tough call between the Jaguar and an equivalent 3-series.

In fact, the only issue is the engine. The numbers look impressive – at 355bhp and 332lb ft – but the supercharged unit doesn't have the low-down response you expect, and as a consequence the (very good) eight-speed auto 'box can be busy shuffling between ratios, looking for the right one. It's not an engine that delivers more the more you ask of it, either, rather it tails off as the revs climb. That means you either thrash the life out of it to extract the last drop of performance, or you back off. Either way, you're probably better off with the less powerful but newer and more refined turbocharged four-cylinder 'Ingenium' petrol motor.

Thankfully, overall the XE S performs up there with the very best and Jaguar has delivered a great foundation to build its future on. ❏

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V6, 2995cc, supercharged	194g/km	335bhp @ 6500rpm	332lb ft @ 4500rpm	5.1sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1590kg (214bhp/ton)	£44,865

➕ Driver focused; high-quality, neat design ➖ V6 loses appeal in the real world

evo rating

★★★★★

Lexus RC F Carbon

Test location: A507, Bedfordshire
GPS: 52.025074, -0.316210

Extroverts with an aversion to the turbocharging frenzy in the performance coupe arena should look this way



EVEN THOUGH I HAD not driven the Lexus RC F, I thought I knew it. Like you, I had read the reports, absorbed the 'too heavy and showy, not sharp or fast enough' verdicts and consigned it – reluctantly – to that purgatorial 'Not a BMW M4' pigeonhole inhabited by all apparently sub-par fast coupes. Then I drove it.

It's not that all the carefully argued criticism is misguided. Even in this *Fast & Furious* 'Carbon' spec – with lightweight panels – the RC F is too heavy and lacks the alertness and agility of its German rivals. The 5-litre V8 has to work too hard to overcome the inertia of 1765kg, yet there's something (many things, actually) that I find hugely appealing about this Lexus.

I'm sure many of you will screw up your faces at what I'm about to say, but I think it looks terrific. Edgy, original, unapologetic and very definitely sharing some genetics with the magnificent LFA, the RC F has real presence. Not to all tastes, certainly, but like the driving experience, that's kind of the point.

The interior is equally impressive. The ambience is one of quality, clarity and technology. There's real flair in the design of the instruments and the basic architecture of the

dashboard. It feels brilliantly solid too, so while there's a penalty at the scales, compared to the relatively flimsy feel of the equivalent BMW or Mercedes, the RC F has a Bentley-like thunk when you close the door. While this won't shave tenths off a Nürburgring lap time, it surely adds to the ownership experience.

As you can plainly see, the RC F Carbon features an exposed carbon bonnet, roof and tailgate spoiler. Together they save around 15kg. That's small beer in a near 1800kg coupe, but worthwhile nonetheless. For the record, I was deeply uneasy about the exposed carbon when I first saw the car, but by the time it went back I rather liked it...

This range-topper costs £8000 more than the standard RC F, but it also gets a torque-vectoring limited-slip diff as standard, plus a thumping

Mark Levinson hi-fi system, heated Alcantara seats and a new design for its alloy wheels.

Despite the way it looks, there remains something of the reluctant sports car about the RC F. Perhaps it's a symptom of modern motoring that the milder of the multi-mode driving dynamics systems soften things to a frustrating degree, but if you skip Eco and Normal modes and instead treat Sport and Sport+ as your default settings, the RC F feels far more energised and enthusiastic.

Without forced induction the 470bhp, 391lb ft V8 doesn't have the instant, tyre-fizzing strength of an AMG Merc, so you have to be prepared to work through the eight-speed auto 'box. The extra weight doesn't help at lower revs, but when it's working hard the engine sounds mighty. It's also smooth as silk. The

transmission isn't as immediate as the best double-clutch offerings, but unless you're absolutely giving it everything, the shifts rarely get in the way of your enjoyment.

Damping-wise it rides firmly enough to never let you forget you're in a sporting car, and there's control and great stability. Traction is strong – no doubt thanks to the car's mass and lack of instant turbocharged torque – and the balance is reassuringly neutral. The RC F is not as aggressive as its rivals from BMW or AMG, but you can still take months off the life of the rear tyres through tighter corners should you wish. Ultimately it's not as rapid point-to-point as the M4, but this is still a near-170mph car that'll crack 62mph in 4.5sec. In the real world that's more than fast enough.

There's no question that when judged against the class leader the RC F still falls short in some areas, but allow subjectivity to trump objectivity and you'll find this car compensates for its shortcomings with a rich character and offers a different take on what has become a crushingly Germanic sector of the market. It's not for everyone but, for those who 'get' it, the RC F Carbon is a genuinely fine machine. ☒

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)



Specification

Individual styling; great quality; characterful V8; decent performance Weight blunts outright agility and response

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
V8, 4969cc	251g/km	470bhp @ 6400rpm	391lb ft @ 4800-5600rpm	4.5sec (claimed)	168mph (limited)	★★★★☆	1765kg (271bhp/ton)	£67,995



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Alpina B6 Edition 50

Test location: near Buchloe, Germany GPS: 48.040292, 10.785411

Celebratory 6-series gets M6-beating power and torque outputs, and a 205mph top speed. Now, where's the nearest Autobahn?

ALPINA'S 'EDITION 50' models are 50th anniversary specials, offered as a limited run of 50 B5s (saloon or Touring) and 50 B6s (coupe or convertible). They're part-homage to the company's first limited-edition models, the B7 S Turbo saloon and coupe of the early '80s (based on the E12 5-series and E24 6-series respectively), and also a way of signing off the F10/F13 era with 100 vicious, tearing, cacophonous heavyweights, capable, in the B6 Coupe's case, of punching a hole through the air at 205mph. Yes, I did say 205mph.

Based on the 533bhp B6 Biturbo, the B6 Biturbo Edition 50 receives a number of modifications to elevate it to anniversary specification. Chief amongst these is the power increase, courtesy of new turbine wheels within the standard turbocharger housings of the 4.4-litre twin turbo V8, plus a larger-diameter and optimised air intake system, increased fuel pressure and a slight increase in boost. The result is 592bhp and 590lb ft of torque, which comfortably eclipses the

552bhp and 501lb ft generated by BMW's M6, and matches the power of the M6 Competition Package (see Driven, **evo** 211) while trumping its torque by 74lb ft.

Then there are the wider, forged, 20-inch wheels, which ape the classic Alpina multi-spoke design. They're inspired by those fitted to the Alpina B6 GT3 racer and save a total unsprung mass of 15.6kg per car. Perhaps fortunately, there is also now the option of specifying giant 395mm Brembo front discs to nestle behind the delicate spokes of those alloys. An Akrapovic titanium exhaust saves another 17kg.

Alpina's creations tend to combine luxury and performance with a less aggressive character than BMW's M-cars, and while the Edition 50 is not short on drama, it also has a demure aspect to its personality. There's a natural, sinister gurgle from the V8 at idle and low crank revolutions, but it's certainly no hooligan. Only when the car is placed in Sport mode does the exhaust allow the V8 to sing, overlaid with a devilish crackle on the overrun. In Comfort the steering



feels light to the touch and the dampers allow a surprising amount of gentle body movement. This is a low-effort sort of car.

Alpina's horsepower is of the meticulously homologated German variety, or in other words, during normal ambient temperatures those imposing numbers are a minimum. Under full throttle this B6 stampedes through second gear and deep into third with a fury that has the rear axle fidgeting under sufferance. The 100mph mark is swatted aside with disdain, 150mph is tantalisingly accessible, and 180mph is almost absurdly attainable on the Autobahn until I'm forced to lift for rapidly approaching traffic. Ultimate velocity has always been an important asset to Alpina, which engineers its cars to 'go

as fast as they can go', devoid of any limitation.

Away from the Autobahn, it's effortlessly easy to unstick the rear tyres with a brush of throttle mid-corner, although while this is entertaining, it does make you wonder how effective the car might be on a cold, wet, cambered and rutted British B-road. Unlike the M6, the Edition 50 never really accomplishes the trick of shrinking the big 6-series body around you, and hence there's not the same incentive to drive it hard. It feels happier notched back a few tenths from the maximum, then periodically unleashed with a sudden frenzied lunge up to very high speed. That's either a flaw, or by design, but it doesn't make this car particularly captivating at saner velocities. This is a supremely capable long-distance GT, but much of the M6's remote personality remains.

Not that UK buyers will get to experience its qualities, however. Although two B5 Edition 50 saloons are coming to the UK, there are no B6s allocated here. Shame. **x**

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo	219g/km	592bhp @ 6000rpm	590lb ft @ 3500-4500rpm	4.2sec (claimed)	205mph (claimed)	1870kg (322bhp/ton)	€133,800 (c£95,000)

+ Monstrous performance, refinement, quality **-** Still a touch aloof to drive

evo rating

★★★★☆

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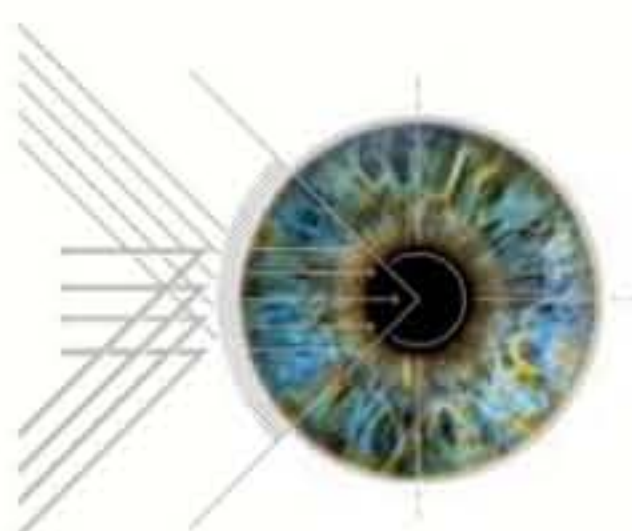
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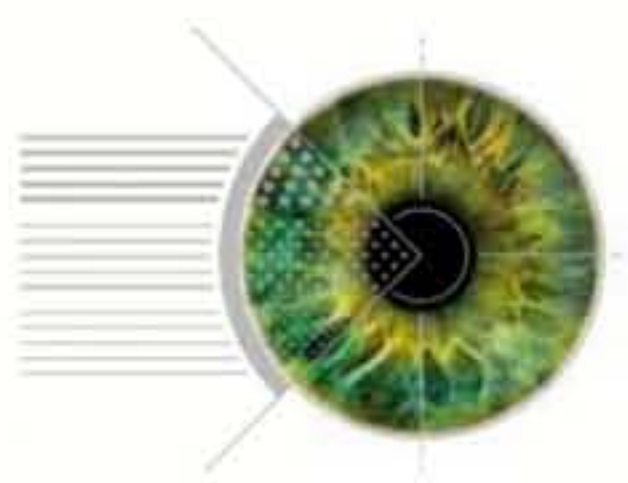
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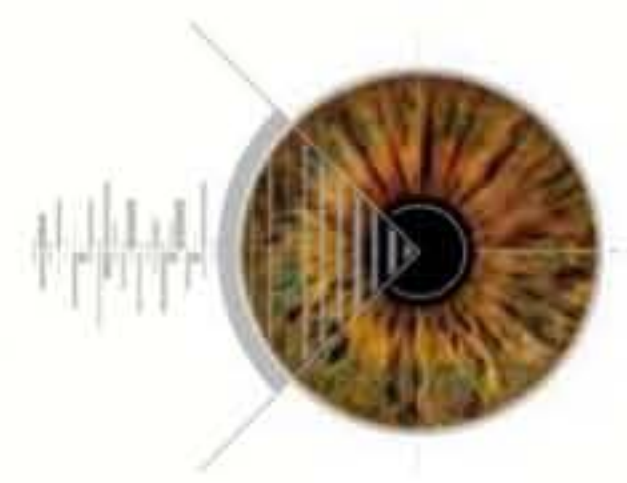
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Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



There's a natural antidote to the crushing ability of modern performance cars, says Meaden, just keep an eye on the Met Office

HIGH SUMMER MIGHT SEEM LIKE AN odd time to ponder the merits of driving in the rain, unless of course you're British, in which case it's perfectly normal. But wherever you're from and whatever the season, far from putting a literal and metaphorical dampener on things, I reckon it's true to say a bit of precipitation enhances the driving experience.

Of course there are exceptions, such as the time you collect your brand new, roofless, doorless and windscreen-less Caterham Fireblade and get caught in a biblical thunderstorm and hellish traffic jam on the M25. However, freak instances of public humiliation aside, you'd have a hard job convincing me that anything other than good things come from a reduction in the coefficient of friction.

Think about it. With every passing generation of high-performance car, be it hot hatch, coupe, sports car or supercar, we all marvel at the increases in power, traction, road-holding and point-to-point pace. Yet in the next breath we bemoan the fact that these relentless leaps in competence and capability only serve to give us more performance we can't fully access on the road, while further distancing us from the involvement and sense of connection we crave.

The beauty of rain is it unfailingly brings those tactile, sensory things nearer to our grasp. I'm not talking deluges, for there's nothing fun about the pucker factor of aquaplaning on standing water, but anything less than that – from light drizzle to heavy rainfall – brings an endlessly variable and invariably rewarding string of challenges to tackle. In short, wet roads engage your brain and senses far more completely than dry roads ever can.

Slippery roads force you to think about how hard you brake, how insistently you lean on the front end's grip and how greedily you chase the throttle. With mechanical grip at a premium those clever but otherwise unchallenged ABS, stability and traction control systems are suddenly called into play more readily, at which point your car comes alive beneath you. The safety net's still there, but your inputs assume a more critical and influential role in the process of making swift, safe and satisfying progress. Lean on the electronics gently and you know you've found the limit. Fall into them clumsily and you know you need to be less of an oaf. It's an addictive, constructive and enlightening process.

I haven't always loved driving fast cars in the rain, but with time, effort and no little thought I've come to relish it. Now, when I look back, some of the most memorable drives I've had have been when the heavens opened. In racing, rain has always been regarded as a the great leveller – the opportunity for those blessed

with the natural talent, but perhaps cursed with a less than race-winning car, to shine. Were it not for a red flag bringing the race to a premature end, Ayrton Senna's first GP win would have been in 1984, driving a Toleman in appallingly wet conditions round the Monaco street circuit. He eventually took his maiden win in a Lotus at an equally sodden Portuguese GP the following year. Both performances were brilliant and prescient, but when he drove in his first ever wet race as a young karter he was, by his own admission, clueless. Yet instead of resenting and fearing wet conditions, he embraced them, heading to his local kart circuit whenever the rains came so that he could develop and hone his skills to a point of preternatural brilliance.

I'm not suggesting any of us possess the latent genius of a nascent Senna, but there's a lesson for all of us in what he achieved and how he achieved it. There's no question – if you

'Enjoying rain is as much about your head as it is the seat of your pants'

work on your wet-weather driving not only will you enjoy your car more during the less clement seasons, but come the summer your dry-weather driving will also have improved immeasurably. It's not easy, though. Enjoying the rain is as much about your head as it is the seat of your pants.

As soon as windscreen wipers set about their slightly frantic cadence, we all fight the urge to tense up. Allow anxiety to froth your state of mind and nerves will overwhelm your ability to interpret what your car is telling you. The trick is not to overreact at the slightest nervy twitch of oversteer or insidious slew of understeer, but instead develop the sensitivity to let the car flow. Nudge towards the limits, read the sensory signs and log them for future reference and you'll be well on the way to making safe, swift progress. That's particularly relevant to road driving, but it's also the key to enjoying a wet trackday when everyone else hides in the paddock cafe or, ultimately, revelling in the unique challenges and thrills of a wet race.

Whatever you drive, whatever your level of experience and wherever you're driving, when it comes to honing your skills and enjoying your car, far from stopping play, rain is most definitely where the fun begins. ✕

 @DickieMeaden

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



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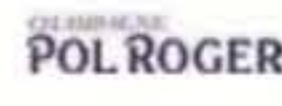


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Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



Web-enabled distraction is a worrying phenomenon of the modern world, and it's so much worse for people like us, says Porter

FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS I'VE BEEN trying to write a rather wordy book. As anyone who's ever attempted to apply themselves to something at a computer will know, what this actually means is fighting the constant urge to disappear down the distraction wormhole of the internet.

Crack on with a new chapter? Why yes, but first I simply have to quench an irrelevant yearning to look up how an oil rig works. But then it really is time to get writing. Although only after popping onto YouTube and taking a thorough canter through five or six tracks from the late-'90s UK garage boom. Then, work time. Or 40 minutes looking at pictures of stealth bombers.

The book, by the way, is about none of these things. They're just troubling illustrations of how dangerous it is to combine a wandering mind with a broadband connection in the face of a looming deadline. And these idiotic rambles through the online long grass of sub-pub-quiz trivia are nothing to the time vacuum of my favourite distraction, which is, inevitably, looking up car-related stuff.

The more pressing the work, the more likely it is that I'll be searching to find out how much Alfa SZs cost these days. And then maybe texting my mate Chris about it. The answer seems to be around £30,000, by the way, and maybe £40,000 for the RZ convertible, though both can go higher and lower. I know, I thought they'd be more too. Maybe the increasingly insane classic car market doesn't have a fondness for fugly. Or perhaps it's something to do with plastic bodies.

A thought which leads the mental pinball, naturally, on to the Reliant SS1 and a quick flick through the back story of this strange 1980s sports car and the unsightly ridges above its wheelarches that were, fact fans, the result of using pressed plastic panels and the need to give them a certain amount of rigidity.

Scuffing down the dusty path signposted 'Reliant and plastic' leads, of course, to the Ford RS200, because why wouldn't it? And why wouldn't you want to know how much these bug-eyed Group B leftovers fetch on the open market these days? Well, there aren't many around but you seem to be looking at £150,000 minimum and quite a lot beyond. The real burning question, however, is why some come with a lever next to the gearstick and others don't. Thanks to extensive work avoidance and full access to the internet, I can tell you the lever adjusts the torque split but the basic road cars were delivered with the system locked in a 37/63 split and the control blanked off. In a supplementary discovery, if you had the lever and shifted all the way back, the RS200 ran rear-drive-only. If you want to go really deep-dive on this one, the owners' manual

is available online and contains wiring diagrams, a guide to the timer hidden in the clock and a fantastic section entitled 'Driving methods' in which Jackie Stewart gives some tips on getting the most from your RS200, noting that the transmission is designed with competitions in mind and 'will never feel as sweet, and easy to use, as that of a Sierra'. I've driven an RS200. Jackie Stewart is right. If you're looking up this stuff, take the time to find the picture of a mock RS200 police car pulling over a whale-tail Sierra Cosworth on some Essex dual carriageway. It's such a perfect and delightful mid-'80s period piece that just looking at it made me crave a glass of Vimto and a Raleigh Griter.

Still, probably time to do some work now. Or is it time to

'Crack on with a new chapter? Why yes, but first I simply have to quench an irrelevant yearning to look up how an oil rig works...'

tumble inexorably and without reason into an hour or so of reading about *The Dukes of Hazzard* and engaging in a quest to find out how many Dodge Chargers they wrote off in the course of filming. The internet struggles to agree on this point, bandying around numbers of between 150 and 250. Some claim at least one car carked it for each episode made, and there were 145 of them, but then some episodes reused old footage and by the final series, as ratings dropped and budgets were slashed, the trademark car jumps were created using dodgy scale models. What you really want to look up is the heart-warming story of how, long after the show was cancelled, a secret stash of trashed Chargers languishing on a studio backlot was sold to a select band of hardcore fans.

This tale is worth a read. But then if you're taking a diversion into the petrol-scented underbelly of the internet, you might also want to swot up on the development history of the Triumph TR7 or look at how much Aston Lagondas cost these days, or see if you can find a Cizeta V16T for sale.

Just remember not to do this when you have a lot of work on. Or maybe, more realistically, when you have. ✕

 @sniffpetrol

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

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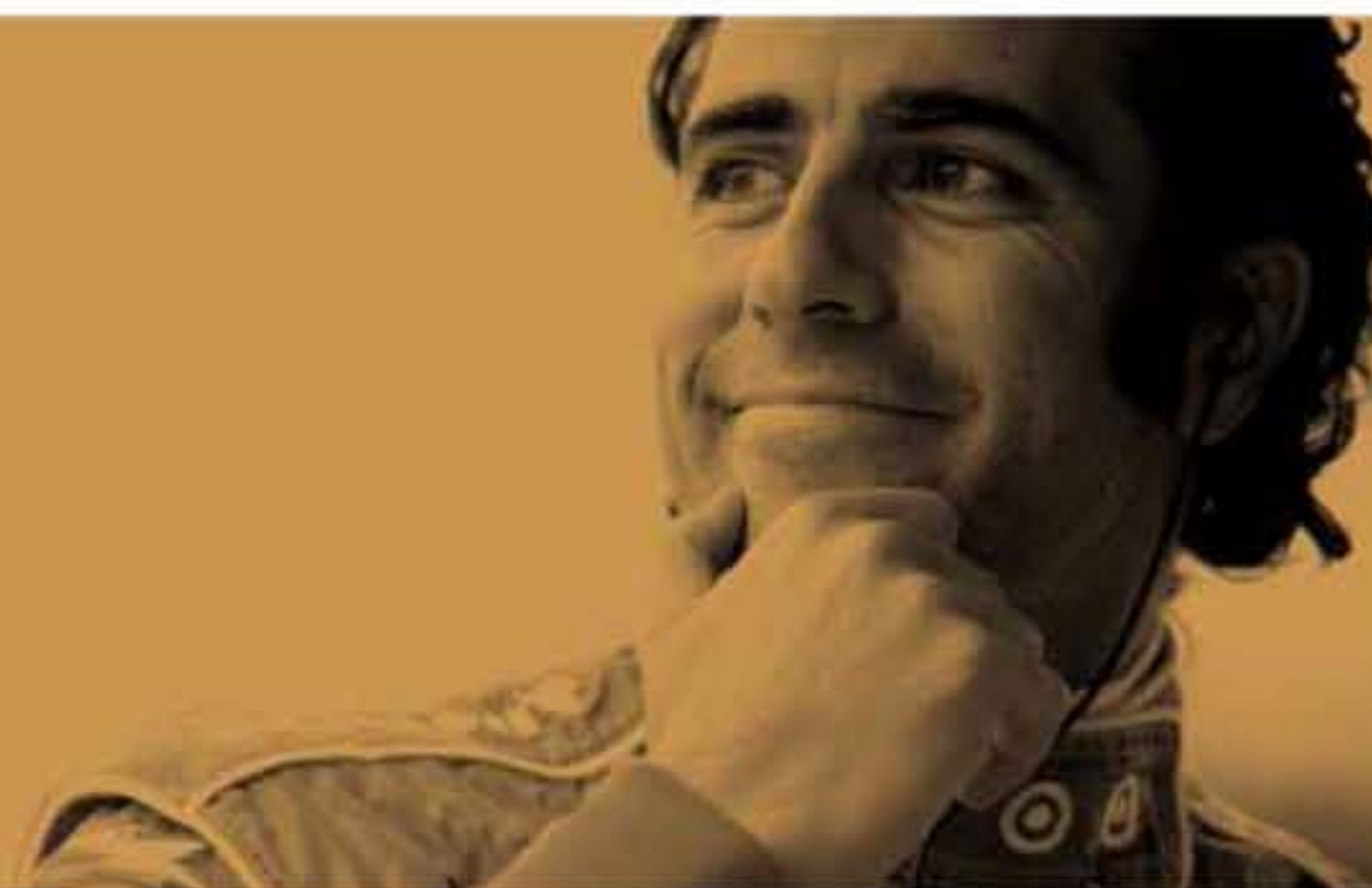


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Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



Fresh from the Silverstone Classic, Dario reckons we're in a belle époque for experiencing the racing cars we used to dream about

APOLOGIES IF I COME ACROSS AS slightly manic, but as I write this I have just returned from the Silverstone Classic. It was my first time at the event and it seemed to reinforce my sense that we – nostalgic petrolheads, that is – are living in a golden age right now. *What an occasion.*

I'd flown into Gatwick that morning, picked up the '73 911 hot-rod following its general keep-on-top-of-things fettle with the guys at Parr, and headed straight for Northamptonshire. Not the most exciting drive, but it was super to squeeze in some quality time with the Porsche before it's freighted up to Scotland. It might be far from its original spec, but I really don't think I could do without that car.

Despite previous visits to Pebble Beach and the Goodwood FoS and Revival – all of which regular readers will know I love – I had no idea of what to expect at Silverstone, although getting stuck behind a Lamborghini Jarama, a proper oddball which itself was nose-to-tail with a Countach, in the queue outside was a pretty accurate indicator of what lay in store. (Yes, there's still some pretty dodgy traffic management at the circuit, but in this case time passed quickly...) What I did know was that the place had been in the grip of a monsoon on the Friday, which conjured up some images of wayward Group C cars that were amusing and alarming in equal measure.

Inside the grounds was what can only be described as combustion-engined nirvana. The doctor's orders currently prevent me from racing at these kinds of events but it hardly mattered. Everywhere you turned was something to demand your attention and put a smile on your face. Owners' clubs from Ferrari and Lamborghini to MG and the Historic Lotus Register – and even the De Tomaso Drivers Club – were out in force in an atmosphere that allowed, nay, *invited*, anybody to get close enough to the cars to smell the patinated leather and see their own reflection in the paint. Porsche Club GB even managed to bring a Kremer K3 and 3.0 RS, amongst other treasures both classic and modern – the weekend is not solely about historics, far from it.

There was also a personal aspect of the day for me. In the historic sportscar race my brother Marino and *evo's* own Dickie Meaden were behind the wheel of an irresistible Broadley T70 that was wearing the indigo Sunoco livery of Roger Penske's Lola T70 from the 1969 Daytona 24 Hours. What a stunning piece of kit this car is – 520bhp from eight cylinders, curves to die for, *the noise*. In fact I've been wondering if Broadley will homologate one for the road for me. I've been led to believe it's very much possible. I'll

keep you updated. The boys eventually finished in second after battling from way back in fourteenth – a sensational effort.

Going back to this golden age I mentioned... We've got to consider ourselves very lucky indeed, because get-togethers like the Silverstone Classic give any one of us an opportunity to see cars that are approaching mythical status racing as hard as is reasonable to expect. I mean, what a privilege it is to see something like a GT40 going wheel-to-wheel with a Can-Am McLaren M1B. Standing on the roof of The Wing complex at dusk with Marino as the Silk Cut Jag XJR-14 went past at flat-chat, V8 wailing into eternity... That's pretty special. And after that there was even a Status Quo concert, if you so fancied it!

'What a privilege it is to see a GT40 going wheel-to-wheel with a Can-Am McLaren M1B'

Much credit has to go to the owners of these racers. There's a lot of concern about cars being squirreled away as investments, but clearly many of the best are still being used – and not just in the sense of being rolled across the lawn at some glamorous concours d'elegance. I saw cars getting dinged on the circuit. That level of commitment always impresses me.

I think there's an understanding that these cars were designed to be raced and repaired back in the day, and that ethos is often respected. The ability to survive the odd shunt or two is part of these cars' DNA. Not that you'd find me racing my Jim Clark Lotus Cortina, but that's for different reasons entirely. And aside from the monetary value, these cars were dangerous in the 1960s and they haven't got any safer with age! Hats off to all the racers.

Events such as the Silverstone Classic make this a really exciting time all of us, even if you don't own a Miura, Sauber C9 or any other 'special' car, classic or modern. The noise, the vibrations, the sheer adrenalin hit just from witnessing a rolling start – it's all the stuff of powerful memories and it's open to anyone at all, regardless of whether you show up on a bicycle, in a Boxster or at the wheel of a Bizzarrini! Next year I'm going to take a motorhome and get something fun trailered down. ✕

 @dariofranchitti

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

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Inbox

What's lowered your speed limit this month?



Letter of the Month

Subtler Civic

I read your Civic Type R group test (evo 212) with interest. I agree with your test team that the new Type R's styling is on the aggressive side of bold – too much so for my tastes. Perhaps Honda should consider a 'low wing' option alongside the current design. Those with long memories will recall Ford offered a 'whale tail' delete option on the Escort Cosworth (like hens' teeth, apparently) and Honda itself sold the Accord Type R in the UK with both high and low rear spoilers.

I realise this wouldn't be the work of a moment, but it would be worth it, complementing the standard car well. I'll have one like that in black, please.

And if Honda is tempted to get out the spanners again, could I suggest separate chassis and powertrain modes, or at least a 'bumpy road' button (like Ferrari). Sadly, British B-roads aren't quite as smooth as German racetracks...

Mike Spencer

The Letter of the Month wins a Christopher Ward watch

This month's star letter writer receives a Christopher Ward C70 D-Type (pictured), worth £499. Christopher Ward is a British watchmaker with a simple aim – to put premium watches within everyone's reach. The C70 D-Type chronograph, one of a limited edition of only 500, is a fine watch with an illustrious motoring pedigree.



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The problem?

I wonder why Nick Trott thinks that the disappointment of the Alfa 4C is down to it 'being signed-off by marketers' (Ed Speak, *evo* 212). It seems unlikely to me that someone charged with maintaining and hopefully even developing such a powerful brand would make the mistake of building up customer expectations only to dash them, once more, on the Armco of product under-delivery.

It seems even more unlikely that anyone in marketing would be given the responsibility of signing off any vehicle in the first place. The responsibility for such a mismatch lies with the most senior managers in the business, who should be making sure that what 'marketing' promises the world and what the world receives are one and the same thing.

It's not at all easy, but as Bob Lutz would endorse, when it happens, it is hugely powerful.

Edward Mason

The answer

evo 212, page 18, the new Alfa Romeo Giulia: the angst, the concern that yet another beautiful Alfa won't have the handling and driving pleasure to match the visuals.

Turn to page 24 and there's the answer: Matt Becker.

I'm sure there's a lot of work to be done by him at Aston, but wouldn't it be great if he had a few weekends away in Italy to help another icon? Now that would be an industry collaboration to be applauded.

Neil McDonald

H2Old technology

Regarding whether the M4 MotoGP's water injection technology (Technically Speaking, *evo* 210) will ever make it to road cars – it already

has! And in fact a long time ago. Both the 1962 and '63 Oldsmobile Starfire used what Oldsmobile called 'Turbo-Rocket Fluid' to cool the intake charge of the turbocharged, 10.25:1 compression-ratio aluminium 215 CID engine. This Turbo-Rocket Fluid was made up of distilled water and methyl alcohol.

Back in the late-'70s/early-'80s, high-octane gasoline quality was so bad here in the US that I had to add water injection to my 1965 Corvair Corsa Turbo to stop the early detonation. I purchased a kit from Spearco, and after fiddling with the various nozzles and pump speeds I finally got it correct and was able to drive my Corvair to all of its potential.

In the winter I used windshield washer fluid, which worked fine.

Walter Gomez, USA

Projectile vomit

Sorry to rant, but Jethro Bovingdon's review of the Project 7 (*evo* 212) deserves it. It was just way too... nice.

I mean, come on, just look at it! It looks like the motoring equivalent of a Kardashian vajazzle shot – there are flaps, wings and stripes everywhere, and goodness knows what that rollover hoop represents given my current analogy...

I had massive hopes for Jaguar and its new SVO division, but on this evidence it seems to be doing little other than milking the people who know a little about cars and a lot about Louis Vuitton handbags.

Anyway, man up, all of you! You lot need to call Jaguar out for charging a £50k premium over the F-type R for some stickers, a silly hoop and a 25bhp power increase – and Jaguar needs to do something serious if it wants to contend with AMG and the M division.

Daniel Seal



Above: Neil McDonald thinks Alfa's Giulia needs input from Aston Martin's new hire



Above: Daniel Seal reckons we went too easy on Jaguar SVO's F-type Project 7



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Talking Point

Fixing the new MX-5

Last month we tried the new Mazda MX-5 and found it somewhat underwhelming when driven hard. So we asked: how would you make the Mazda MX-5 a better drivers' car?

More power.

Alex_

158bhp from 2 litres? It's not the 1990s any more. This sort of lame number will make people embarrassed and defensive about driving the car, rather than proud.

Rich B

A 158bhp 2.0 just seems like such a lazy heap of 'meh' of an engine. If they don't want to go the turbo route then they could at least put an interesting naturally aspirated engine in. They go on at great lengths about the chassis engineering and weight saving; why not give it an engine it deserves?

integrale_evo

I'm not really that bothered about the output. For me the problem is that an MX-5 needs to really excel in steering, balance and damping. It needs to be truly enjoyable and rewarding to drive. But it sounds like the new one isn't the best it could possibly be in some or even all of these categories, and if it isn't amazing at those things, it becomes pretty pointless, like a base-spec Z3 or a diesel TT.

duncs500

A lot has changed in 25 years, yet Mazda seems to think offering a similar product in 2015 as it did in 1990 will still work. But when a Mégane with 217bhp is deemed a 'warm hatch' and the GT86's 197bhp just adequate, 158bhp is plain pathetic. It doesn't matter if the chassis is great, when I put my foot down I do expect something to happen. Today's MX-5

needs to be able to compete with the Boxster on performance terms and be offered at Mondeo money.

Holley

As a seasoned open-top two-seater motorist, looking for fast-road and track thrills, this is my recipe:

1) Weight between 850 and 1000kg. Too low and the car will feel a bit harsh, too heavy and the weight will start to blunt performance and add to running cost with tyres, brakes, etc.

2) Power about 200bhp, but more than 150bhp if it's a high-revving naturally aspirated four-pot. That said, a supercharged, more torque-filled engine may be more MX-5. However, a must is exhaust and induction noises that work together and mirror the effort being put in. Blend with a six-speed manual 'box.

3) Drop the wheel size to unfashionable 15-inchers and the tyres to 185 or 195 section. Basically, less mechanical grip, more lightness.

4) Rear-wheel drive, with a torque-biasing or viscous LSD.

5) Soft springs with a progression at the end. Must resist roll oversteer.

6) Sharp initial brake feel but no need for massive anchors – the tyres are small, remember.

7) No stereo, thin carpets, no air con, but a bloody good heater. £18k for this spec. Offer a heavy, metal-roof version with toys for £25K if you want.

So not a Caterham in terms of rawness, or a TVR for power, but faster than a GT86, with the engine eagerness of a Honda Type R unit. That should do it.

Markcoopers

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The best comments will be published here each month

From the forums: community.evo.co.uk/forums

Thread of the Month

Rich B

In the classifieds...

I'm continually drawn to E90 M3s, but the more I look at them, the more the E60 M5 starts to look ridiculously good value. What is tickling your fancy at the moment?

GT2 RS.

Mike1215

Would love an Alfa GT Junior. And a Corrado [pictured].

integrale_evo

Next year's garage will probably be a 944/Cayman and the Saab. I'm struggling to justify buying a 944 now Caymans are so cheap. Basic one, sports seats, grey or dark blue and 17in wheels would be perfect. I also keep thinking about getting a new Cooper S but I can't get over the looks.

16vcento

E28 M5s and 911 SCs. I nearly bought an SC in a fit of lunacy a while ago. I'm glad I didn't as it would've almost certainly bankrupted me.

zedleg

An E46 M3. Not a CSL just yet, but everyone is advising me to stay away from the SMG 'box.

27Gilles

I was looking at the E60 M5s and associated M6s thinking they look like

terrific value or possible time bombs. I also like the idea of a proper AMG V8 in E-class estate or SL form. Back in the real world, though, a Honda S2000 is more likely.

clio200

Since seeing one at auction I have a longing for an E34 M5. A Touring would bring out much more massive amounts of want!

McSwede

A dealer has me down as interested in an M2. Loving the Evora 400, too – but probably too much.

Holley

A late Maserati 4200GT manual, circa '05/'06. They are pretty much a manual Gransport but £10k less. Hopefully a bit of man maths will get me in one after Xmas...

carlos

Merc AMG GT, but I'm slightly put off by the interior. And the price. And the lack of luggage space. Actually, scrap that. Alfa Romeo Giulia QV.

Wilspeed



Thread of the Month wins a Road Angel safety camera & blackspot alert device worth £159.99



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FASTER

by DAVID VIVIAN

BETTER?

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* DEAN SMITH

FAST-TRACK evolution seems to be McLaren's thing. Applying the same adapt-to-compete techniques demanded in Formula 1, the Automotive division's genetic re-engineering of the 2011 MP4-12C, via the current 650S, to make the new 675LT seems no less dazzling and remarkable than a merely athletic Hollywood A-lister buffing up for a clingy Spandex superhero role. And in essence it boils down to much the same thing: more muscle, less fat and an extra dose of aero. Read 666bhp and a best-in-class power-to-weight ratio of 510bhp per ton.

It helps, of course, that McLaren found the time to erect a 'hyper' benchmark with the P1 and trickle down certain elements for the betterment of the 675LT's road and track performance. Well, it could be something more than that. Intriguingly, McLaren describes the LT as 'the most track-focused, yet road-legal, McLaren series production model to date'. Wild. And to make sure the statement sticks, I'm booked in for six laps of Silverstone's International Circuit at 9am.

But first, and doubtless of some importance to the 500 customers who've committed £259,500 to owning McLaren's latest, instantly sold-out supercar, there's the appearance. It's hard to overstate this. Trim and overly prim has given way to pumped and seriously purposeful. Finally, the shape that launched more than a few embarrassed yawns around *evo* Towers four years ago has become a borderline jaw-dropper – purely through functional necessity, according to McLaren. In short, the 675LT looks like a proper supercar should. Even the 650S GT3 racer seems only marginally more butch. As one interested bystander will ask while we refuel the LT at our regular Betws-y-Coed petrol station, 'Is that a P1?' No, but future owners will be glad you asked.

As ever, it's the additions and subtractions that make all the difference. True to its name, the LT (Longtail) is longer than a 650S, but by just 34mm of extra pop-up airbrake and not the vast, tapering tracts of rear-end bodywork needed to keep racing F1 GTRs competitive when the GT rules changed in 1997. Owners and fans shouldn't feel too cheated, though. The remodelled, full-width active airbrake is 50 per cent larger than the one fitted to the 650S, fractionally lighter and, together with the 80 per cent larger front splitter and the rear diffuser, makes a telling contribution to the 40 per cent increase in overall downforce (measured at 186mph, incidentally). Below the wing, twin-exit and emphatically circular

tailpipes are part of a new forged titanium crossover exhaust system that saves another 1.1kg of weight in the meticulously executed dive to minus-100kg overall. The only additions here, unsurprisingly, are raw, skinned-back decibels.

The dialled-up aero package isn't just about pressing the LT more firmly to the blacktop. Turbulent air generated by the car's front arches is cleaned up as it passes along new side skirts before being channelled into the 675LT's gulping engine air intakes, feeding twin radiators that have been angled forward four degrees for more efficient cooling, in turn necessitating slightly eased out flank panels – all to the aesthetic good. To help evacuate hot air from the engine bay, McLaren has left the rear deck exposed and added ventilation slats to the polycarbonate engine cover. Again, it looks properly exotic, shaves off a further 1.7kg and, along with the escaping hot air, has the added benefit of liberating a harder-edged mechanical note to the slipstream where it can blend with the guttural blare of the exhaust.

More function dictating form is evident at ground level. While the tailoring of the chassis to cope with hardcore track work is most obviously reflected in the lower ride height and 20mm wider track, it's the stuff you can't see that makes it count. Springs that are stiffer by 27 per cent at the front and 63 per cent at the rear work with the more direct steering – quicker even than the P1's – to sharpen response at the helm, while the optional 'Ultra-Lightweight' ten-spoke alloys and super-sticky Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R tyres are the lightest wheel/tyre set ever offered by McLaren.

Like all models in the 'Super Series' – McLaren's marketing category for the 675LT and 650S, with the P1 and P1 GTR occupying the 'Ultimate' slot above and the forthcoming 570S and 540C models the 'Sports Series' entry level below – the 675LT has Normal, Sport and Track modes that can be set independently for powertrain and chassis. This means you can have the most extreme powertrain configuration with the least aggressive suspension setup if you want, or vice versa, or any combo in between. Or, as I suspect will be the case come track time, both rotary knobs on the 'floating' centre console wound right round to 'T'.

For the 675LT, as McLaren's chief test driver, Chris Goodwin, explains, this ProActive Chassis Control system (first seen on the 12C) has been recalibrated across the board but, for the benefit of trackday supercar users, with extreme prejudice in Track mode: 'We've improved roll stiffness, damping and pitching and it is slightly edgier, more raw and slightly more harsh. That's intended.' Engineering director Carlo Della Casa goes further, emphasising the value of having

Right: a weight of 1328kg – 100kg lighter than the 650S – gives the 675LT absurd agility. **Below right:** titanium roll-cage part of the Club Sport Pack; it weighs just half what a steel cage would. **Bottom right:** engine bay is a carbonfibre feast; rear window is polycarbonate





uprights and wishbones derived from the P1's: 'We wanted to replicate some of the dynamic drama of the P1. The uprights, hubs, castor, kingpin angles and toe-in/toe-out all contribute to a more extreme, driver-focused geometry. In many ways this feels like a track car, and has been engineered with a track mindset.'

As with the 12C, all this is possible because the dampers are connected hydraulically and linked to a gas-filled accumulator, providing adaptive responses depending on road conditions and the mode settings. The system virtually

eliminates body roll in corners, while decoupling the suspension in a straight line for better wheel articulation and compliance. It doesn't have or need conventional mechanical anti-roll bars, saving weight and improving ride comfort, especially at low speeds.

I haven't mentioned carbonfibre yet. To be honest, it would be easier to list the parts that aren't. But as McLaren's head of vehicle design and engineering, Dan Parry-Williams, says, carbon is an integral component of the 675LT's 'technical sculpture'. As well as the famed carbon MonoCell tub, the front bumper and splitter with its F1-style endplates, front underbody, side skirts, side air intakes, lower rear flanks, rear bumper, rear deck, rear diffuser and airbrake are all made from the material, saving some 35kg over the same parts made in aluminium. In three of the four paintjobs bespoke to the 675LT (Silica White, Delta Red and the distinctly Lamborghini-esque Napier Green), the exposed carbon splitter, side scoops and skirts have a striking graphic emphasis. In the fourth colour, Chicane Grey, the carbon merges less contrastingly into a vaguely militaristic whole.

Some customers, however, have gone for full-on menace and ordered the Club Sport Professional Pack's unique Storm Grey hue, which really is as dark as thunder and presages the driver's intent with acres of extra exposed carbon (front wing endplates, sill-level side air intakes, rear bumper centre section, wheelarches, wing mirrors and, best of all, airbrake wing) to contrast with the Bruce McLaren-orange brake calipers and detailing. The Pro pack also gets the regular Club Sport Pack's lightweight titanium roll-hoop with four-point harness plus fire extinguisher and, to finish off the 'Armageddon approaching' look,

stealth-finished Ultra-Lightweight ten-spoke forged alloy wheels with Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R tyres. Spectacular.

But back to the serious stuff: the figures. The 675LT weighs just 1328kg, which is 100kg less than the already almost absurdly rapid 650S. Its twin-turbo 3.8-litre V8 develops 666bhp at 7100rpm, 25bhp more than the 650S and 5bhp more than the heavier Ferrari 488 GTB's twin-turbo 3.9-litre V8. Torque outputs are similar – 516lb ft at 5500-6500rpm for the McLaren, 560lb ft at 3000rpm for the Ferrari.

Straight-line performance figures initially appear little fiercer than those of the 650S: 0-62mph is 0.1sec down at 2.9sec and top speed is a claimed 205mph (actually 2mph less than the 675LT's less aerodynamically clamped down sibling). But once rolling, the LT is a different and more brutal proposition. It accelerates to 124mph in 7.9sec – half a second quicker than the 650S and four tenths faster than the 488 GTB. Breathtaking stats all, but bragging rights owned.

The McLaren's comprehensively uprated engine features new, more efficient turbos, detail design changes to cylinder heads and exhaust manifolds, new camshafts and lightweight connecting rods, and a more powerful fuel-pump and delivery system. In fact, some 50 per cent of the engine components are new, justifying its newly minted designation – M838TL. The SSG seven-speed dual-clutch transmission is carried over from the 650S but with optimised calibration and F1-style ignition cut tech to halve shift times (now an eye-watering 40 milliseconds and with the promised reward of an accompanying aural ballistic 'crack' to ricochet around grandstand or hillside).

9AM. FAST CARS DON'T ALWAYS FEEL that fast on proper, big-boy race circuits. The 675LT does. It frankly makes mincemeat of Silverstone's Hangar Straight, pulls back speed with the kind of conviction that constantly forces you to reassess braking points, and changes direction at speeds that hardly seem credible, especially into the heart-stopper that is Stowe. And it just does this, the double-clutch transmission's phenomenal prescience in auto mode nailing the shift points so precisely it's genuinely scary and makes the paddles effectively redundant. No sweat, either figuratively (the car) or literally (the driver).

At the end I feel elated but strangely calm. Has it been a life-enhancing ten minutes? Absolutely. Was it, as Vinnie Jones might say, emotional? Not really. Am I dazed and confused by the wide-throated gulp of shattering pace without much discernable skill-related consequence? A little. Is the Porsche 911 GT3 RS about to be overwhelmed by a car that, as Chris Goodwin has admitted, 'is a lot closer to the P1 than it should be'? I honestly don't know. But I'm about to find out.

Left: airbrake is 50 per cent larger; it helps increase downforce by 40 per cent and gives the 675 its longtail credentials – by an extra 34mm

WHAT WAS THE tagline for that old Guinness TV ad with galloping white horses

emerging from the sea's rolling surf? 'Good things come to those who... wait.' Yeah, tick follows tock and all that. But however much the serene interior of Porsche GB's Reading HQ conspires to soothe the passage of time, too much caffeine and a fast-spooling imagination have got me pacing the floor like an expectant dad. I'm not sure I've ever wanted to snatch a set of car keys from someone's grasp before, but when PR Nick Perry finally rolls up from the backlot (probably delayed by the application of a final coat of grime-repelling wax that we'll thank him for later) I might do just that.

Actually, I don't. I'm a little too rooted to the spot. It isn't just the Lava Orange paintwork (admittedly, some retinal adjustment required) or the gruff clatter of the drivetrain – a sound that evokes memories of the previous-generation Rennsport GT3's race-derived Mezger engine. No, it's because, in the metal, the 991 GT3 RS looks so unbelievably 'track'. It's as if the guys from Weissach signed it off without ever venturing beyond the proving ground's perimeter. That lofted rear wing, almost the width of the wide-bodied shell's distended and vented haunches, is a fixture no one should misunderstand. It doesn't have the kinetic fascination of a multi-element active airbrake. It doesn't need it. The same goes for the shallower, re-sculpted carbon bonnet and the deep-set jawline with its leading edge splitter and huge, rectangular, meshed air ducts.

But mostly it's the primal motorsport stance. Finding a way to fit the enormous wheels and tyres from the 918 Spyder hypercar apparently kept Porsche's engineers awake at night. The result looks impossible. The 21-inchers at the rear sit so snugly in the arches there isn't even room to poke a little finger between the 325/30 Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres and the bodywork. The 265/35s on 20-inch rims at the front can be glimpsed topside through the slatted gashes in the bodywork above the arches. These are essentially the same as those found on the GT3 Cup racer and are claimed to reduce lift by 30 per cent at the nose, thus helping the splitter do its 110kg thing on the way to an overall downforce tally of 345kg at 125mph. That's a punchy 80 per cent as much as the Cup car. In light of which, and a host of other weight- and lap-time-saving measures, the 7min 20sec it took the GT3 RS, driven by Timo Kluck, to circulate the Nürburgring's Nordschleife on just his third lap – and by which time the track had

IN



THE



CLUB?

When it comes to the thrill of driving, few cars surpass the Porsche 911 GT3 RS. The latest model is a phenomenal machine, and a benchmark against which to measure the new McLaren's ability to astound and excite...



‘WHAT A DRIVE LIES AHEAD. THE FINEST ROADS IN NORTH WALES ARE OUR PLAYGROUND’

already begun to dampen – doesn’t seem quite so freakish. Just think, nearly nine seconds quicker than the Carrera GT could manage in the dry.

How do I know this stuff? I’ve spent the last hour and a quarter reading about it between visits to the coffee machine. The next four and a half will tick by at distinctly sub-light speed via the satnav’s ‘fastest’ route to Beaumaris on Anglesey, where the plan is to meet up with managing editor Stuart Gallagher and designer Will Beaumont – plotting their way from Woking in the 657LT – for a late evening pint at the bar of the Bulkeley Hotel, though no one’s betting against snapper Dean Smith’s legendary thirst, transported by Range Rover Sport, getting there first. I know that this part of the journey is destined for the cutting room floor and that, with 493bhp at 8250rpm itching for release, it will inevitably be a journey shot through with frustration. But they say the best sort of gratification is deferred. Besides, despite the frequent bouts of cacophonous tyre roar, the resolutely firm (but fair) ride and the lumbar-support-lite, ready-to-race driving position prescribed by bucket seats pinched from the 918 Spyder, there are plenty of warm reminders I’m in a Rennsport 911 and, however long the drive and abraded the senses, that’s always a good feeling.

HERE’S A (PERHAPS NOT SO) STRANGE thing. The mild stir I’d caused when I parked up the previous evening is completely eclipsed by the attention the McLaren is receiving 12 hours later. It’s as if the Porsche, admittedly tucked away in a corner by the hotel’s dining room, has donned Harry Potter’s invisibility cloak. Not too many 911 aficionados taking the morning air, then. But, then again, why should children licking their ice cream cone breakfasts care when there’s an orange-and-carbon riot of slinky curves and peer-down ducts barely taller than they are to run into and scream at? And never underestimate the pulling power of scissor doors. Even the parents seem to get a kick out of their majestic arc skywards.

My turn to attempt an effortlessly graceful limb-dump into the 675LT’s carbon-and-Alcantara-swathed cabin. Fortunately, I had some practice at Silverstone, and although my bum doesn’t exactly glide towards the pit of the P1-cloned bucket seat on the far side of the broad sill, I feign a kind of Simon Cowell-esque half-smile and insincere wave to disguise the less than pillowy landing. But, oh my, it feels good to be back in the taut embrace of the Macca’s immaculately precise driving environment – surely one of the best thought-out ever. Although the 911’s easier-to-enter cabin has been licked into shape over the years with all the idiosyncrasies carved and buffed away, the advantages of a clean-sheet approach were immediately evident with the 12C and seem just as sublimely sussed now in the 675LT. The cabin

is lean and functional, with forward sight lines and control relationships that simply seem more compatible with the human form than most other supercar ‘architectures’ and instantly feel more natural and efficient.

Door down and we’re away with a crowd-pleasing bark of revs and... ah, a little trouble here. There are some tight-ish turns needed to exit the car park, turns the 911 swings through with metres to spare and the Range Rover breezes. The McLaren doesn’t or, rather, can’t. There’s no easy way to put this: it has a truly lousy turning circle. For the further entertainment of the now slightly quieter and more confused onlookers, I thumb the ‘R’ button down on the console between the seats, back up, reassess my trajectory and, exhaust gargling gently, roll sheepishly out of the car park. Not even Cowell can save me now.

What a drive lies ahead. The finest roads in north Wales are our playground, the source – depending on cloud cover – of Dean’s delight and despair and, ultimately, a silent witness to who makes the greater track-massaged supercar for the road. On paper, it looks like an ask too far for the naturally aspirated 4-litre flat-six Porsche, which gives away 173bhp and 177lb ft to a car that costs £128,000 more. Both in acceleration and top speed it’s on the back foot, trailing the McLaren’s 2.9sec 0-62mph time by 0.4sec, its 7.9sec 0-124mph time by three seconds and its 205mph top speed by 12mph. For straight-line thrust, Ferrari’s 488 is a closer match for the McLaren, lagging by mere fractions all the way through to an identical top speed. And Porsche’s own 911 Turbo S, with four-wheel drive and 552bhp, is more than capable of giving the Macca a bloody nose at the lights.

But even McLaren will admit that, as a pure expression of motorsport philosophy for the road, against-the-clock performance metrics aren’t what defines the 675LT. It knows the only comparison that really matters is Porsche’s A-game on truly testing roads such as those that soar and swoop through the hills and valleys between Bala, Llanberis and Ffestiniog. The violently coloured melange of wing and CinemaScope derriere filling the McLaren’s screen as we stop ‘n’ slow through roadworks on the outskirts of Beaumaris is precisely that car. You know where we’re heading.

We’re not there yet. This morning’s first impressions reveal the McLaren’s slow-traffic chops to be softer and more benign than anything I experienced in the GT3 RS on the way up. With the powertrain portion of the ProActive Chassis Control system dialled back to Normal, initial throttle response is sluggish to the point where the 675LT feels almost sleepy, the seven-speed double-clutch transmission extreme short-shifting to the resonant drone of the McLaren’s lightweight titanium exhaust system behaving like a rapidly stepped tone-generator heading for the basement.

There's enough low-down torque to indulge the software's laid-back approach and you know all 666bhp is waiting at the end of the throttle travel should you need it, but the built-in torpidity feels a little contrived all the same.

That said, the McLaren really can do passive and painless to a degree that belies its true intent. Over breakfast, Will confessed to falling asleep in the passenger seat on the slog over from Woking. Not a great advertising slogan for McLaren's second most focused road and track weapon, maybe, but a telling demonstration of its dual personality and potential as a long-distance cruiser.

As the morning commuters reach their destinations and intrepid tourists meander towards tea shop adventures, the roads open up and so does Stu in the RS. For a few moments I hang back, click the centre console rotaries round to Sport to wake things up and just look at the thing go. Maybe because the McLaren's lightweight windscreen is 1mm thinner, I can hear it, too, and it sounds properly stoked and mighty. Pretty sure Stu's giving it everything. But, and this isn't entirely unexpected, in the 675LT I don't have to. On the first decent straight the shrinking orange blob is comfortably hauled back to widescreen with no more than 80 per cent throttle. Extraordinary. The engine doesn't feel turbocharged at all, just stupefyingly energetic with a superbike-like appetite for revs sliced up by those 40-millisecond ignition-cut gearshifts.

Truth is, and I'm beginning to think that 666bhp claim is distinctly conservative, the LT feels a whole layer of manic quicker than a 650S and more like a 99th percentile P1. A little quieter with a more linear delivery and not so much wastegate *pissshhh* and flutter. But from memory on these very roads, there can't be much in it. If anything, the LT's performance, if not easier to access, is easier to exploit. Whichever way you want to slice it – and even if, as seems to be the case, the RS wings it for sheer cornering and braking power – the German car simply doesn't have enough under its engine cover to hurt the McLaren.

Stu returns the favour when we switch cars and head for our favourite stretch of Bala blacktop. No doubt about it, with a spectacular road winding out to the far horizon and a plan to waste not a single metre of it on part-throttle out of respect to what might be the greatest race-honed road car on the planet, the last thing you want behind you is a McLaren 675LT. Even if its driver isn't channelling Fangio, it will be a haunting experience. Stu isn't Fangio, or even channelling him, but try as I might to exert every last track-tautened sinew of the RS, the ground-sucking snout of the LT remains a permanent fixture in the rear-view mirror.

It shouldn't matter, but brand egos are at stake here and at least one score has been settled early.



Right: 675LT feels closer to the P1 than the 650S on the roads of north Wales. That said, so focused is the Porsche that it develops 80 per cent of the downforce of the GT3 racer. Game on...



*‘THE 675LT
REMAINS A
PERMANENT
FIXTURE IN
THE REAR-
VIEW MIRROR’*





If that was the only thing we were here to establish, it would be game over for the RS. Fortunately for the Porsche, the more exhilarating and memorable flipside of speed is sensation and engagement, and here there's still everything to play for. After experiencing the mind-bending feats of the McLaren, Stu's initial doubts have been blown away. 'It's so addictive and fast that the only gamble is how fast you dare to go,' he says, but, intriguingly, it's the GT3 RS we both feel we want to know better, and over the following hours, as surely as tick follows tock, the Porsche's surfing stallion moments start to come thick and fast.

Like a supercomputer taking on a grandmaster at chess, the McLaren seems to have an answer to any move the Porsche cares to make. But, if you could, it's the human thoughts you'd want to read. And that's how it is with the RS. It isn't that the McLaren's pursuit of sector-humbling pace is an end in itself – by now I'm in no doubt the 675LT is hugely more malleable and less prescriptive than the original 12C – but in the RS it's the very process of acquiring speed, what it does with it and how it makes you feel that sets it apart. Every strand of its being fizzles and bristles with tactile and aural information, from the tiniest nuance of steering feel to the final malevolent twist of its searing engine note as it soars towards 8800rpm. For all that the 675LT doesn't feel turbocharged, it can't quite emulate the fine throttle modulation gifted the RS by its un-blown flat-six. It adds to the feeling that the 911 possesses extra precision, clarity and detail where it matters. Despite a level of chassis electronics similar to the McLaren's, it feels more naturally mechanical and more physically connected. In margin-scrawled detail, it shows every last scrap of the method as well as providing the answer.

Stu sums it up nicely. 'Forty years of RS philosophy distilled in a 21st century package. It's the first of the 991s that feels like an old-school 911. There isn't a single area that dominates, the whole car works as one. The steering is easier to read than the McLaren's,

the detail more accurate and when you need to make adjustments mid-corner there are no surprises. It changes direction better than any other 991, too, and you can feel the front tyres grab a solid purchase on the road the moment you turn in. Even better, you can turn in on the brakes and it doesn't become unsettled, just remains poised and connected at each corner.'

The McLaren's behaviour on the Llanberis Pass exposes telling contrasts. If a chassis can have good posture, the 675LT's definitely does. It scythes through the series of smooth, high-speed bends with staggering elan and composure. The suspension and damping make it feel as if the road's sharp edges are smothered with a cushioning layer of silicon that draws the sting, pulls the punch of what would be harsh single-wheel inputs. The 911 is more nuggety and resolute and has steering – a revelation by previous 991 standards – that relays how the road and front wheels are interacting without getting too excited. The LT's is less disciplined and feels like it's trying too hard to deliver masses of feedback. As Stu remarks as we break for another breather while Dean composes his final setup, it's very busy around the centre and the tyres have a bad habit of sniffing out cambers, forcing you to make constant small corrections, especially under braking. Yes, you can lean on the front and it responds faithfully and cleanly to your inputs, but ultimately you can't feel precisely what's going on and you need a dose of faith that the car is as good as you think is.

It is, of course. For me, it's the best McLaren since the F1 and asks questions of the P1 that McLaren probably didn't intend. It asks questions of the GT3 RS, too. Objectively, the McLaren is the better car. It's faster, more comfortable and has a wider span of talents. Given its price and power, that shouldn't come as a great shock. But that it matches the latest GT3 RS punch for punch in the pursuit of driving fast on a great road with a richness of feedback that nails all your senses and a pulse-quickenning intensity *does*. Welcome to the road-racer club, McLaren. ☒

McLAREN 675LT

Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo
CO2 275g/km
Power 666bhp @ 7100rpm
Torque 516lb ft @ 5500-6500rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, Brake Steer
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, roll control
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, roll control
Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs, 394mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 20in rear
Tyres 235/35 ZR19 front, 305/30 ZR20 rear
Weight 1328kg
Power-to-weight 510bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 205mph (claimed)
Basic price £259,500

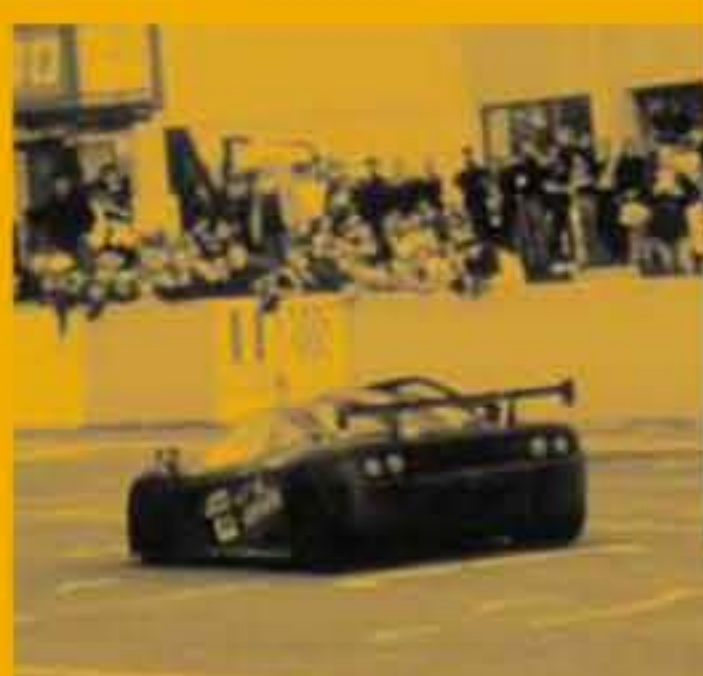
evo rating: ★★★★★

PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS

Engine Flat-six, 3996cc
CO2 296g/km
Power 493bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque 339lb ft @ 6250rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, PTV
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs (option), 410mm front, 390mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 9.5 x 20in front, 12.5 x 21in rear
Tyres 265/35 ZR20 front, 325/30 ZR21 rear
Weight 1420kg
Power-to-weight 353bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.3sec (claimed)
Top speed 193mph (claimed)
Basic price £131,296

evo rating: ★★★★★

by RICHARD MEADEN



PORSCHE v McLAREN: ON TRACK

Above, middle: Porsche's 917/30 Can-Am car was a monster – it boasted 1500bhp in qualifying trim. **Bottom:** after a famous win in the 1995 race, McLaren's F1 GTR was surpassed at Le Mans by the insectoid Porsche GT1 (below)

MOTORSPORT HISTORY IS littered with intense rivalries, but few have simmered for so long, or spanned so many categories of racing, as the apparently endless war for supremacy waged by McLaren and Porsche. We recall the old enemies' pivotal battles and a unique period of cooperation.

Can-Am

The closest motor racing has ever come to an 'anything goes' category, Can-Am cars were wild creations that pushed the limits of design, technology and sanity. It's here McLaren and Porsche's rivalry began.

McLaren dominated the series for years with its fearsome big-block-V8-powered machines. Between 1967 and 1970, Bruce McLaren and fellow Kiwi Denny Hulme took the Can-Am title, with the American Peter Revson comfortably beating Porsche's 917/10 to secure a fifth consecutive Can-Am title for McLaren in 1971.

For 1972 Porsche developed the 917/10K with the help of Roger Penske. The resulting turbocharged 5-litre flat-12, 900bhp machine won six of the nine Can-Am races in the hands of Mark Donohue and George Follmer to steal the title from McLaren. In 1973 Porsche struck another hammer blow

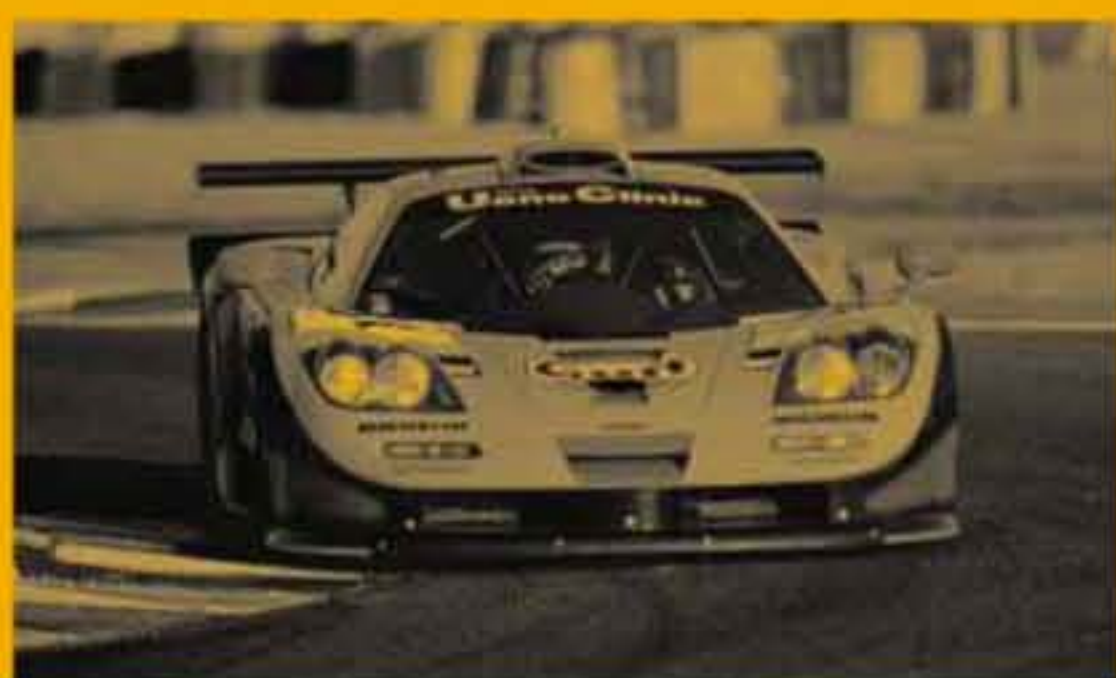
with the remarkable 917/30, which had more downforce and a 5.4-litre evolution of the turbo'd flat-12 that gave 1100bhp in race trim and more than 1500bhp in qualifying spec. It won six of the eight races to take the title with ease, and was then outlawed.

Formula One

Porsche entered F1 as a manufacturer in 1962, some years before McLaren even existed. The flat-eight-powered 804 was a simple machine compared to the opposition, but enjoyed a win at the French GP. Still, Porsche withdrew at the end of the season due to the high costs involved.

Porsche returned to F1 in 1983, ironically as engine supplier to McLaren. The TAG-Porsche turbo V6 powered McLaren to Constructors' titles in 1984 and 1985, and Drivers' title in 1984, 1985 and 1986. This is the only time the two have worked together.

The rivalry resumed in 1991, with Porsche supplying its new V12 '3512' engine to the Footwork Arrows team. The project was a disaster, the engine being too heavy, underpowered and unreliable. Meanwhile McLaren enjoyed its greatest period of success, with Alain Prost and Ayrton Senna as drivers and Honda as engine supplier. Porsche has yet to return to F1.



'THE BPR GLOBAL GT SERIES SAW THE McLAREN F1 GTR RACE AGAINST THE PORSCHE 993 GT2'



Le Mans

Think of Le Mans and you inevitably think of Porsche, and with good reason, given the marque's remarkable 17 outright wins. Perhaps that's why when McLaren went to Le Mans in 1995 with the road-based F1 GTR, no one expected the new supercar to stand a chance against the purpose-built prototypes, amongst them the fancied Porsche-powered Courage. Yet not only did the F1 GTR win on its Le Mans debut, but McLaren's also took 3rd, 4th, 5th and 13th.

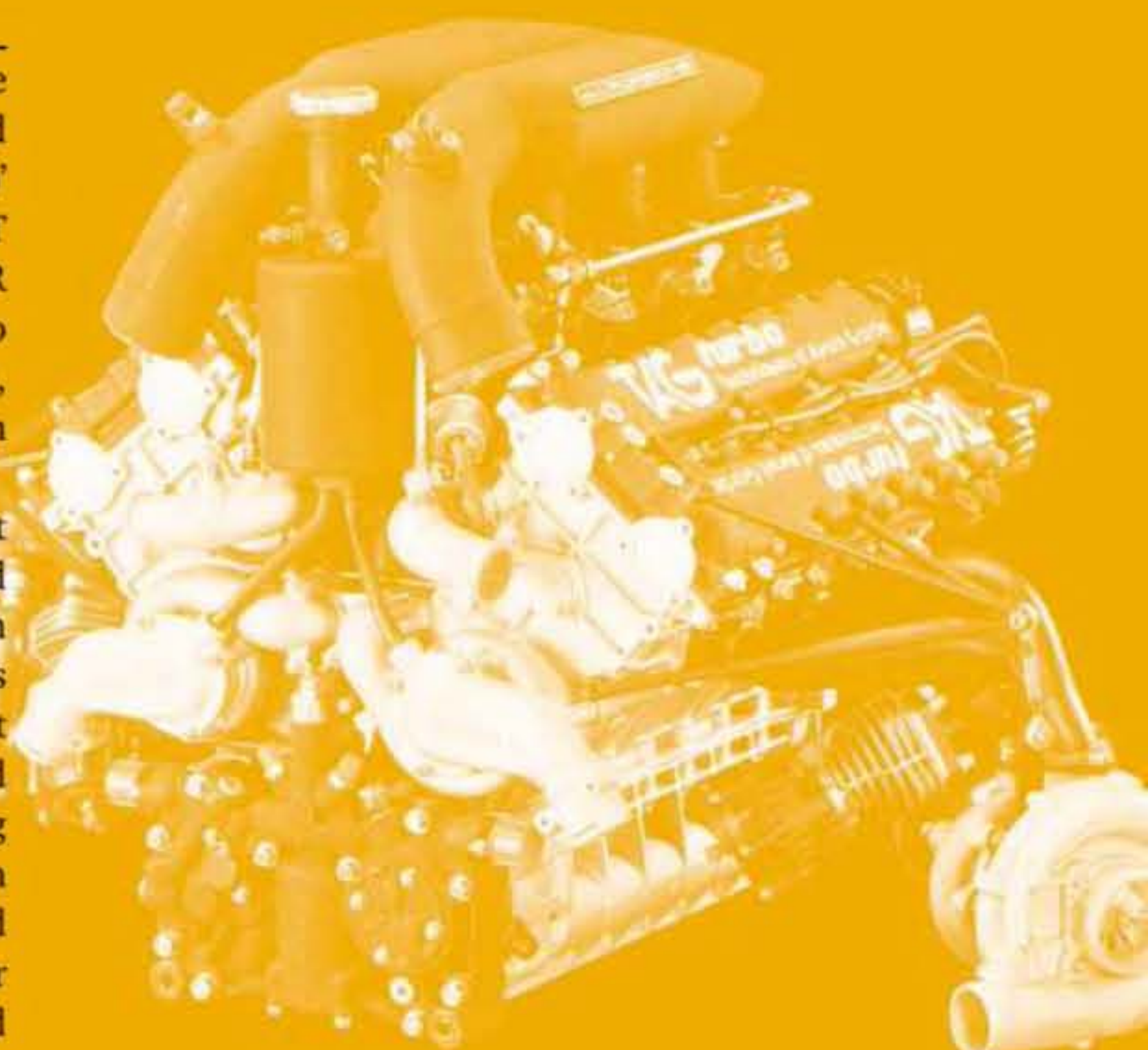
The Woking marque returned in 1996 to face a two-pronged Stuttgart attack, with the 911-based GT1 and the Porsche-powered LMP sports prototype. The German cars proved too strong, the LMP car taking the overall win and a pair of GT1 911s finishing in 2nd and 3rd positions, ahead of the pursuing McLarens in 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th, 9th and 11th places!

In 1997 McLaren came tantalisingly close to another win, only beaten into 2nd and 3rd places by repeat winner, Porsche's LMP car. In 1998 Porsche again took the outright win, this time with the 911 GT1. A privately entered McLaren F1 came home in 4th. With the GT1 class abandoned for 1999, this would be McLaren's last showing at Le Mans.

GT racing

In addition to Le Mans, McLaren and Porsche have a long-standing rivalry in national and international GT racing. The most 'evo' series of all must surely be BPR Global GT Series, which ran from 1994 to 1996. BPR saw F1 GTs race against 993 GT2s, not to mention Ferrari F40 GTEs, Lotus Esprits, Callaway Corvettes and Venturis. McLaren won the 1995 and 1996 titles.

Today Porsche and McLaren slug it out in the myriad GT3 championships and endurance races around the world, though GT3's 'Balance of Performance' regulations mean the performance of all cars, not just Porsche's 991 and McLaren's 650S-based racers, is manipulated to foster close racing between the multitude of marques, which include Audi, Bentley, BMW, Nissan and Lamborghini. McLaren is unlikely to enter a 650S into the GTE class of the World Endurance Championship (WEC) against Porsche's 991 RSRs, which is a great shame. Sadly, given the team's woeful performance in F1, it's also unlikely to diversify into WEC's hugely fast and sophisticated LMP1 category, but as its road-car portfolio grows and matures we predict McLaren's ambition and hunger for competition might see it make another tilt at the Le Mans 24 Hours.



Top: McLaren's latest sportscar, based on the 650S, chases a Porsche 911 GT3-R in the Blancpain GT Series. **Above:** TAG-Porsche's TTE PO1 engine powered McLaren to multiple F1 titles – the twin-turbo V6 was good for 1059bhp during qualifying



*Aston Martin is busy developing its answer to the Ferrari FXX K and McLaren P1 GTR – the £1.8million, 800bhp-plus, V12-engined Vulcan. **evo** meets the crew and catches a ride in the prototype*

TEST

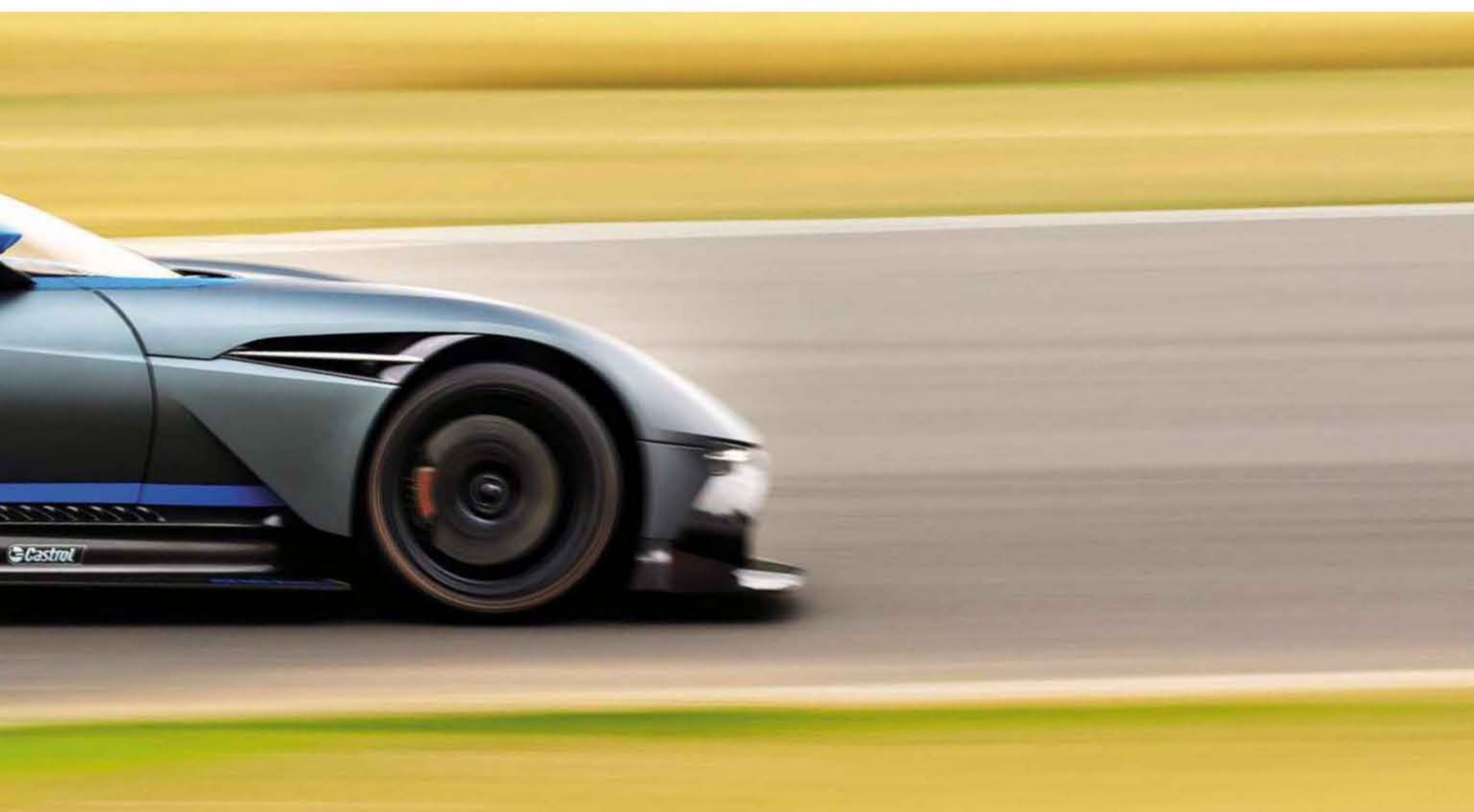


ASTON MARTIN VULCAN



FLIGHT

by JETHRO BOVINGDON



I **LOVE SUPERCARS, HYPERCARS,** whatever you want to call them. I love their absurd performance, the way they make you feel before they even turn a wheel, and I especially love it when they bend your perception of what's possible. Last year, driving the LaFerrari, 918 Spyder and P1 was an incredible privilege and I was staggered

at their collective ability and seamless integration of technologies that should be in their clunky, frustrating infancy. And yet if you asked me to tell you the power output of the Ferrari FXX K or the benefits of a P1 GTR over its humble road car brother, I wouldn't have a clue. They look pretty cool, sure, but the concept of a faux race car built out of a compromised road car design, and which isn't homologated for any race series and is to be driven only on special trackdays with other faux race cars of the same ilk? It just leaves me cold. Give me an R8 GT3 or 911 RSR any day of the week. I mean it. Please?

So arriving at Snetterton Circuit to see the first proper test of the Aston Martin Vulcan, I feel a bit of a fraud. I didn't see it, hear it or choke on the acrid smoke pouring from its rear tyres at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, so my only contact with the Vulcan has been under the bright white lights of the Geneva motor show in March. Back then it was one of those strange show cars with inky-black painted 'windows' and it looked like it had just popped out of a giant plaster-of-Paris mould. It didn't get my juices

Right: huge rear wing helps Vulcan develop its own weight in downforce as it approaches 200mph; rear tyres are 345/30 x 19 race-spec Michelins



'WE ASKED WHAT A TRACK-ONLY CAR THAT DIDN'T COMPLY TO A GIVEN RACING CLASS WOULD LOOK LIKE'

Fraser Dunn, chief engineer for Vulcan project

flowing. Especially as it was parked beside a very real aluminium-and-carbonfibre Vantage GT12 that I could prod and sit in. The Vulcan just seemed a bit of a nonsense.

Of course, Snetterton on an overcast Tuesday morning is a long way from Geneva. In fact it's a long way from anywhere, and this is set to be a very different encounter. I'll meet the team behind the Vulcan, speak to factory driver Darren Turner about the development programme and what he's hoping to help create, and get a ride as they work through the car's early testing programme. I'm not expecting full-blown, maximum-attack laps with 800bhp-plus – these are incredibly early days – but it'll be fascinating to experience Aston Martin's take on the track-only hypercar breed nonetheless. I'm a little tentative as I've no doubt these guys have lived and breathed the Vulcan for the last few months and my healthy cynicism could feel like a real kick in the knackers.



It could. If only I could cling to it when wandering into the pit garage and seeing the Vulcan up on air jacks, bonnet removed to replace a power-steering hose, rear wing standing tall and proud, and those trick rear LED lights seeming to bleed out of the car. It looks sensational. It's not just the menace of the design, it's the whole setting. There's a Michelin engineer with tyre temperature probes buzzing around, that smell of a racing car pit box, the calmly executed but frenetically paced work of the mechanics and engineers. If you lifted this garage up and dropped it at Le Mans or Sebring amongst prototypes and GT3 or GTE racers, it would fit perfectly. By the time the 7-litre V12 erupts into a jagged idle and Darren Turner exits the garage against a stuttering pit-lane limiter, I really want to know about the Vulcan. Actually I want to drive it, but for now a bit of background will have to do.

Fraser Dunn, chief engineer for the Vulcan project, is

'ALL THE CUSTOMERS ENCOURAGED US TO MAKE THE VULCAN AS HARD AND AS FAST AS POSSIBLE'

Dave King, director of special projects and motorsport

'THE CAR NEEDS TO BE BENIGN FOR GENTLEMEN RACERS – IT NEEDS TO BE TOLERANT OF MISTAKES'

Graham Humphrys, chief engineer at GT 1 design



a familiar face and I know him to be a top bloke from a race weekend out in Spa in a Vantage GT4 many moons ago. He's also the bloke who plummeted into Lake Garda in a DBS during the filming of *Quantum of Solace*, sunk 150ft to the bottom and somehow lived to tell the tale (sorry Fraser, but you won't shake that one any time soon). He looks quietly anxious but his face lights up when discussing anything to do with the Vulcan.

'It all started around July last year,' he says. 'We wanted to take all the learnings from One-77 and ask: if we decided to make a track-only car that didn't comply to a given racing class but did comply to FIA safety standards, what would it look like? So we sat down working around a One-77 tub with a V12 engine with a similar installation and looked at what the targets would be. We came up with a 1300kg car, you'd want 800bhp-plus, 800Nm [590lb ft] and GT3 to GT1 levels of downforce.' It all sounds so matter of fact, but the grin says that even Dunn finds the notion quite amusing when saying it aloud.

Then the hard work began. Recruiting Graham Humphrys was pivotal. He's another familiar face – the last time I saw him was at M-Sport in Cumbria as he led the Bentley Continental GT3 race programme (see *evo* 210). He's an incredibly knowledgeable and enthusiastic chap and, like Dunn and everyone else, is buzzing around the Vulcan today. He looks like a man content in his work. The Bentley GT3 project and specifically the need to

make it an easy car to drive was invaluable experience in realising the Vulcan.

'For me it was very, very similar to the Bentley in that the customers will be gentlemen racers and with Vulcan we're addressing the same issues,' says Humphrys. 'The car needs to be benign. Aerodynamically you do that by keeping the centre-of-pressure shift to a minimum, to make the car so that it isn't pitch sensitive or ride-height sensitive. That's where the gentleman driver might be a bit less adept – they might come into a corner and upset the car, so it needs to be tolerant of mistakes.'

Right on cue the Vulcan howls past us, brakes hard, bangs in an explosive downshift and peels into the first fast right-hander. From here it looks fearsome, intimidating, anything but benign. Dave King, head of motorsport – and special projects – must be a mind-reader: 'One thing all the customers were absolutely of one mind about was to encourage us to make the Vulcan as hard and fast as possible.' It seems Aston Martin listened intently.

Before my time in the passenger seat, Dunn prepares me with a brief rundown of the mechanical package, and despite growing out of the One-77 programme and starting life as a 'One-77 R' project, the Vulcan is a very different beast in many respects.

'One-77 is a variable-valve-timing 7.3-litre Cosworth engine, this is a 7-litre fixed-cam – essentially an evolution of the GT3 and Le Mans Prototype engine,' Dunn explains. 'There was a big weight saving to be had and it was more of a known entity in terms of durability.'

The engine will also run in three different power programmes, so customers can acclimatise gradually. 'The top output is yet to be confirmed as we're still undergoing final calibration,' says Dunn, 'but we think it'll be 820 to 830 brake. The middle setting will be 650 and the lower setting around 550. It revs to 8000rpm.'

The carbon tub is fundamentally similar to the One-77's but it's modified for the Vulcan: 'The tub, chassis and body is all done by Multimatic, who we worked with on One-77. The gearbox is Xtrac and the drivetrain and electronics are by Prodrive. It drives through a six-speed Xtrac 'box that's essentially the same as the GT3 cars'. The suspension is inboard. The rear end is very similar to One-77, the front end is similar in that it's inboard, but on the One-77 the pushrods are directed laterally whereas now they're longitudinal, which saves weight and gives us a better path for air ducts to the engine. The dampers use Multimatic's Dynamic Spool Valve system and the brakes are a new Brembo carbon-ceramic race setup.'

I have to admit to being slightly agog at the whole operation. The spec is obviously ridiculous and wonderful, the team seem absolutely committed to creating something extraordinary and the car itself is already finished to a standard I hadn't expected. Folding myself through a roll-cage feels familiar, but the design, finish and materials inside are something else. Part-racer, part-sci-fi and with exquisite detailing, it's like nothing else I've ever sat in. The three-sided steering wheel is genuinely a work of art; the seats are simply fabulous and immaculately tailored. Turner gives me the thumbs-up, the V12 erupts and settles to a fast idle, the air jacks retract and we're away.

If the aesthetic polish is unexpected, the Vulcan's basic rightness is even more surprising. This car had an initial

Top right: interior is a cut above that of a race car.

Below right: the Vulcan runs 380mm carbon-ceramic brake discs at the front with Brembo calipers; ABS will be driver-adjustable.

Below far right: unusual rear LEDS are a work of art





'STICK ON NEW TYRES AND WE'D HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO BE ON THE FRONT ROW OF A GT3 GRID'

Darren Turner, Aston Martin factory driver

a great big atmospheric V12. It's one of those engines that you'd want to rev and rev just for the sake of it.

The next few laps aren't in the least bit scary and the Vulcan seems balanced and predictable. Of course, that could just be the driver, but certainly the long wheelbase and front-engine, rear-drive layout would appear to work as it would on a road car. It seems to smoothly edge over the limit. The high-speed corners are just completely addictive, and although the power steering is juddering markedly through left-handers, there's nothing else to suggest that the Vulcan is a million miles away from being finished. The 24 lucky owners are going to adore driving this thing no matter my prejudices about £1.5million (plus local taxes, of course) track-only, non-race cars.

Turner is clearly loving everything about the project. 'It's completely different from what I usually do, so sitting down with the design boys was really interesting' he says. 'From the outside there's so many good angles – for me the rear of the car is spectacular – but once you get inside... Quite often racers are minimal, functional and not much to look at. This one is as exciting to be in as it is to look at.'

Creating the base chassis characteristics is something Turner is more experienced with and, despite my surprise at how far along the Vulcan is, there's still plenty to do. 'It's the fundamentals today. The downshift, the upshift – they're not quite on par with the race cars but they're getting close,' he explains. 'Once we've got all the basics done then we can start looking at performance. The key will be to find a performance window that is fast to drive and useable for the type of owners we'll attract. If I look for the last tenth it'll become edgy, so we've got to get a comfortable setup that'll work on most circuits without too much of a change and put driveability into the car.'

The whole 'driveability' theme has been at the forefront of every conversation today, but these guys are racers and it's refreshing to see everyone reach for their iPhones to have a little look at the lap times every time Darren exits the pits. He's pretty clear on where the performance is going: 'Everything is here for this car to be significantly quicker than the best GT3 car out there. Already we're close. Looking at the times, we'd be mid-field in a GT3 grid, and that's on old tyres and we're not looking for ultimate performance as yet. Stick on a set of new tyres and we'd have the potential to be on the front row right now.'

Tantalising, isn't it? Wouldn't you just love to see this thing race? You're not alone. I ask Humphrys if he'd like to see it compete and his answer is refreshing, simple and delivered with a broad grin. 'Obviously.' It will happen, somehow, somewhere. Watch this space. ✕

Watch the on-board ride at evo.co.uk. Search: 'Aston Vulcan'

ASTON MARTIN VULCAN

Engine V12, 7000cc

Power c800bhp

Torque c590lb ft

Transmission Six-speed sequential gearbox, rear-wheel drive

Suspension Pushrods, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar (front and rear)

Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs, 380mm front, 360mm rear

Wheels 19in front and rear

Weight c1300kg

Power-to-weight c625bhp/ton

0-60mph 3.0sec (est)

Top speed 200mph+

Basic price c£1.8m

shakedown at Turweston Aerodrome on the Wednesday and Thursday prior to Goodwood – all straight-line running – and was at Snetterton last week for perhaps 30 laps. That's it. And yet it's clear that the fundamentals are all there or thereabouts. Does it feel like 820bhp pushing 1300kg? Not today, but the acceleration is probably on a par with a GT3 racer already and the traction and grip feel surreal for somebody used to road car forces.

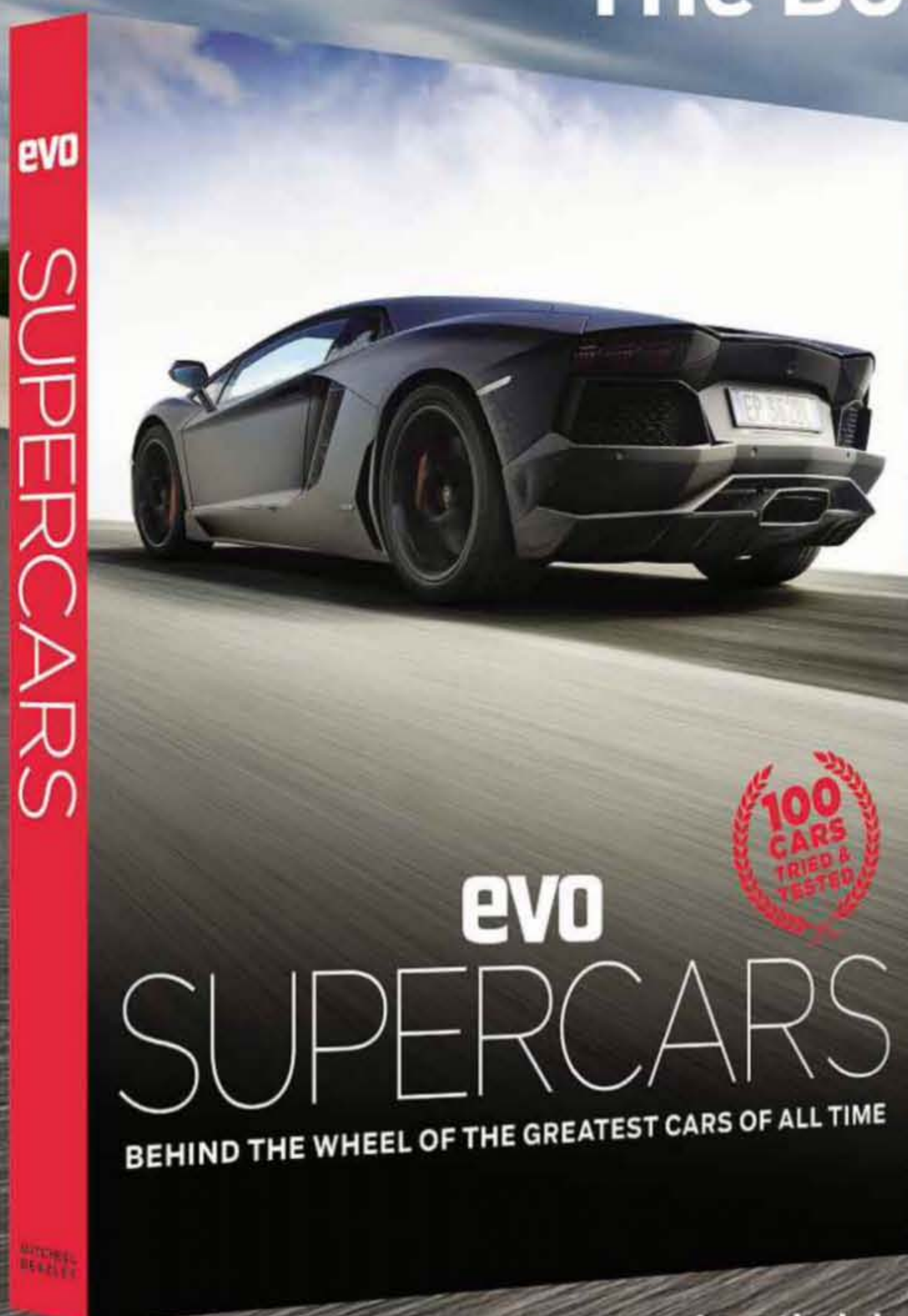
It's fantastic to watch Turner smoothly dissect Snetterton, and that high downforce feeling through the fast right called Riches is sensational. It's a really weird feeling from the passenger seat as I can't benefit from the feedback he's dialled into through the steering. So when he aims right, my brain says 'nope', but the car takes the load and then he's straight back on the power. The Vulcan produces 1360kg of downforce at 200mph, so even at lower speeds the G numbers are big and you feel them as your body strains against the harnesses.

The next corner is a really slow hairpin right and here the searing engine takes hold of the slicks and spins them up on exit. The traction control is cutting in but Turner makes a big correction, too. The noise, heavily silenced for today, is extraordinary: an angry howl that could only be



evo SUPERCARS

The Book



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3 September 2015

MITCHELL
BEAZLEY



by JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

Having fallen out of favour with the hot hatch fraternity, Renaultsport's Clio is back with more power, greater intensity and heightened aggression. So can the new 220 Trophy topple the current leader of the pack?

BACK IN ANGER

I CAN STILL REMEMBER DOZENS OF DRIVES in the last-gen Clio Cup with crystal clarity. After a slightly disappointing start with the Clio 197, the second generation of Renaultsport's baby hot hatch evolved with an ever tighter focus. First the 197 R27 arrived in 2007 with Recaros, a heavily revised Cup-spec chassis and tweaks to the electric power steering, then the car received shorter gearing to reinvigorate the performance, and with the launch of the 200 Cup in 2009 this bigger, heavier Clio finally rediscovered the screaming excitement of its breathtaking predecessor. Rabid, relentless and ultra-precise, it remains a car of searing intensity.

The third-gen RS Clio? Erm, not so much. In concept it is deeply divergent from its heroic brethren, the engine downsized from 2 litres to 1.6 and turbocharged, the bodyshell bigger and only available in five-door form, and – perhaps most controversially of all – fitted with a twin-clutch paddleshift gearbox as standard. None of these things are necessarily a deal-breaker. In fact, the thought of an aggressive, agile hot hatch with a lightning-fast 'box and plenty of mid-range power is very enticing. Sadly the

raw ingredients combine to deliver a dynamic pudding. The chassis shows moments of magic but they're always corrupted by a gearbox that's slow-witted and slushy, and the engine has none of the sharpness of those of earlier RS Clios – nor indeed of rivals also utilising forced induction, such as the Mini Cooper S and Fiesta ST.

It's the Ford that's most relevant because the brilliant ST shows that the attributes once owned by Renaultsport's creations can be nurtured in a new-age hot hatch with a turbocharged engine. Keen, lithe, supremely adjustable and bubbling with enthusiasm, the ST has become a hero. They're also flying out of showrooms while Clios grow roots. However, the story is far from over because, like the 197 before it, the Clio Renaultsport 200 Auto (as it's now officially called) has evolved. Or rather it has been joined by a sharper version to address its dynamic shortcomings. The Clio Renaultsport 220 Trophy has arrived, and if history repeats itself it may just be the car to put our French friends back at the top of the heap. Ragged roads, some hard laps of Bedford Autodrome and a Fiesta ST fitted with the Mountune package will provide all the answers.



‘THE TROPHY LEAVES NO STONE UNTURNED IN ITS QUEST TO REASSERT THE CLIO AS THE HOT HATCH OF CHOICE’



Top: Trophy's chassis is stiffer than both the regular and Cup setups on the 200. **Above:** 18-inch alloys are standard; front brake discs are 320mm items – up from 312mm

I know the styling of the Clio is a divisive issue, but to my eyes the Trophy looks fantastic. It's a pretty big car but there's an innate leanness to the shape that lends it an athletic stance. Finished in a matt-effect Frost White hue and with wheelarches bursting with diamond cut 18-inch alloys, the 220 Trophy really does crackle with promise.

Already the Trophy's unique chassis settings have made an impact. That stance is courtesy of a 20mm drop in ride height at the front and 10mm at the rear. The dampers have also been retuned and the rear springs are a whopping 40 per cent stiffer than on a standard Clio 200, and around 25 per cent stiffer than on Cup chassis-equipped 200s. Combined with a ten per cent faster steering rack, aggressive Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres, up to 50 per cent quicker shifts from the paddleshift gearbox, a 20bhp hike in power to 217bhp and an overboost function in fourth and fifth gears delivering up to 206lb ft, the Trophy leaves no stone unturned in its quest to reassert the Clio as the hot hatch of choice for the discerning enthusiast.

Boy does it need to be good, though. The Fiesta ST is something special, especially when fitted with the Mountune performance upgrade. It gives away just 5bhp to the Trophy, counters with 236lb ft and at 1088kg it's got 116kg less to lug around. However, it's not the raw performance that shines through with the ST, but rather the sheer finesse of the chassis and the tingling feedback

that enriches every journey. It really does feel like the ghost of the old Clio 182 Cup lives on in the ST – it's small, light and positively bursting with energy and excitement.

Things don't start especially well, though. The ST's interior isn't very inspiring, with its centre console that seems to have been designed by Sony in the late-1980s, slightly crummy materials and a driving position that feels a good three inches too high. However, as soon as the wheels start rolling, the quality starts to shine out of all the bits you can't see but can feel. At low speeds the ride is very, very firm – unexpectedly so if you're used to hearing about the calm fluidity of Ford suspension – but the relationship of each and every control is finely in tune with the next and the 1.6-litre engine has turbo-rich torque yet the rev-hungry nature of an old twin-cam. It also sounds terrifically eager, with a deep, clean tone that goads you on.

It's the clear lines of communication and the balance of the Fiesta that really set it apart from most of its rivals. The steering is excellently judged and works in unison with the chassis' rate of response. This isn't a rabid, super-aggressive car, so it doesn't dive for each apex, rather you pour it into corners, feeling for every bit of grip its Bridgestone tyres can offer. Despite the tough ride, the ST exhibits a fair bit of body roll but that provides yet more information for you to process and manipulate to bring the car to life. It three-wheels into turns, gently floats into understeer and can



Above: Trophy gets heated leather sports seats with integrated headrests as standard. **Left:** Clio's interior is a cut above that of the Fiesta ST

**RENAULTSPORT
CLIO 220 TROPHY**

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1618cc, turbo
Power 217bhp @ 6050rpm
Torque 206lb ft @ 2000rpm
Weight 1204kg
Power-to-weight 183bhp/ton
0-62mph 6.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 146mph (claimed)
Basic price £21,780

evo rating: ★★★★★☆

**FORD
FIESTA ST MOUNTUNE**

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1591cc, turbo
Power 212bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 236lb ft @ 3000rpm
Weight 1088kg
Power-to-weight 198bhp/ton
0-62mph 6.4sec (claimed)
Top speed 140mph (estimated)
Basic price £18,144

evo rating: ★★★★★★



then be tweaked and balanced on the throttle any which way you choose. More than anything, the ST seems to have boundless energy for this sort of behaviour and you just can't help but give it a pasting every time an empty road stretches out ahead. The hot hatch tradition is alive and well right here and it's all the better for having a manual 'box to hook you ever deeper into the driving experience.

The Trophy immediately feels bigger and more grown-up. Its interior won't give Audi designers any worries but it's a nicer place to be, although it shares the slightly lofty seating position that hampers the ST. The 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine starts with a hearty boom but then dissipates until it seems remote. The car doesn't quite share the ST's sense of being infused with spirit. So disappointing was the 200 that I spare myself the slow reveal of ramping through the three driving modes and head straight for Race, activated by pressing the RS button down for a few seconds to bypass the Normal and Sport modes. Race also disengages the traction and stability control, which might be a mistake on Renault's part. Surely there will be times when you want the angriest gearshift but the reassurance of a watchful electronic assistant?

Today, though, it's dry and bright and I'm keen to experience the Trophy unfettered. Those beefed-up spring rates sound a little extreme but the Clio remains relatively supple. The quicker steering does create an impression of latent agility but there's almost zero feedback through the wheel itself, while the engine feels pretty anodyne in the low and medium rev ranges. It would be deflating but for a few glimmers of hope, the biggest of which is that the gearbox feels so much better than before, certainly in Race mode. Don't expect the nape-prickling speed and intensity of something like a GT3's PDK, but the way it whips

through upshifts finally starts to live up to the promise of a cutting-edge hot hatch that puts technology right at its centre, Ferrari-style.

You need to be right on it to feel the benefit, though. The engine has some attitude and it gets better the harder you work it, but it's a shame that 5500rpm is required before it shakes off a gloopy character and sings. Similarly the chassis can provide moments of magic but they're fleeting and require commitment that's not compatible with road driving 90 per cent of the time. In that rare zone where the Trophy is fully dialled-in, there's a level of body control and agility that's a match for the ST, with greater grip and an appealing aggression. It turns in flatter, resists understeer with more resolve and finds more bite and more speed. The Trophy also has an adjustability on the edge that avoids 'oh-my-god' lift-off oversteer but can give deliciously wicked heartbeats where the tail snaps out to the perfect angle of attack, hangs there for a millisecond or two and then swings precisely back on line as you pin the throttle.

Those moments are pretty intoxicating, and they have the stamp of Renaultsport all over them. However, they are rare and still mostly hidden by a whole heap of frustrations. The engine gives up so little enjoyment unless it's close to the limiter; the 'box is now pretty convincing but because it's hooked up to a mostly boring engine it will never be a source of real pleasure. So the paddleshift doesn't light up the experience, even in this vastly improved form, but instead continues to remove you from the action. With so little feedback from the steering and a jumpiness to the brakes, that's a trait the Trophy can ill afford. Grippy, balanced and fast across the ground as the Trophy is, it feels big, heavy and just a bit ordinary too much of the time. The ST remains the hot hatch to beat. ✕

On track

If the ST's combination of superbly resolved damping, detailed feedback, malleable balance and an entertaining drivetrain eclipse the Trophy on the road, on track it's the Clio's body control, grip and sharp top-end response that dominate. Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit feels a size too big for the Fiesta, and although the car is easy to balance through the quicker corners and is pretty neat and tidy through the slow stuff, the engine's 236lb ft feels too hot for the front wheels to handle. With plenty of roll and even more wheelspin, things quickly become scrappy if you try to really bully it. On its way to a time of 1:29.5, it never feels truly at home.

The Trophy feels altogether more suited to track work. There's greater turn-in response and more mid-corner composure, and although the lack of a limited-slip differential is still an issue, the Clio gets out of corners much more cleanly. Rain scuppers a proper time halfway through the lap, although the French car is already 0.7sec up on the ST... No matter what the watch says, the difference in track capability feels significant and it's in the Trophy's favour.



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TYRE TEST

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2015

The best performance tyres can make your car faster, safer and more enjoyable to drive. Which should you be fitting? Our test of ten popular brands holds the answer

by DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT



A

ANGLESEY CIRCUIT, SUMMER 2014.

A McLaren P1 and a Porsche 918 Spyder are lapping Britain's most picturesque racetrack at speed, with one very big question to be answered. The VBOX data shows the P1 has covered Anglesey's 1.6 miles in 1min 12.6sec.

To the moderate surprise of the onlooking crowd, myself included, the 918 betters it by two-tenths of a second.

Ordinarily that would be that, but the P1 has one more card to play. As standard it's delivered on Pirelli P Zero Corsas, but customers can specify Trofeo Rs if they so choose. The McLaren technicians bolt on a set of the super-sticky Pirellis, the P1 heads back out on track and it lowers the benchmark to 1min 11.2sec.

It's a vivid demonstration of the role those four bands of rubber play in the overall performance of a car. Of course, you don't need a hypercar and an empty circuit to appreciate the benefit of a decent set of boots. This year, we've tested 225/40 R18 tyres from ten different manufacturers. In contrast to some other magazine tyre tests, subjective performance is a significant factor in our results, accounting for some 40 per cent of the final score. The results have also been weighted in favour of the tests that determine outright performance, such as lap times and braking distances, over matters of convenience, such as road noise and cost.

THE CAR

Consistency is the most important thing in tyre testing, so it was necessary to use a car with a stable, predictable chassis, approachable limits and crisp, communicative steering. The VW Golf GTI has all of those qualities and it would stand up to a full day of track testing without wilting, too.

Our particular test car was a Performance Pack model with a limited-slip differential and DSG gearbox. In dry testing the paddle-shift 'box removed the risk of a fluffed manual gearchange that would skew the data. During the wet handling tests we used third gear only, which removed one more variable from the test and further ensured our data was accurate and comparable.

THE TRACK

Pirelli's Vizzola test facility near Milan was our base for most of the week. Here, we could test each tyre's wet handling performance, wet and dry braking ability and aquaplaning properties. We also used the public roads around Vizzola to judge ride comfort and tyre noise.

For the dry handling tests we decamped to the Circuito Tazio Nuvolari, an hour south of Milan. The 1.8-mile track features a combination of tight, second-gear corners and fast, open sweepers. The high-speed left-right sequence halfway around the lap was particularly revealing – on the grippiest tyres this section could just about be taken flat out.

TYRES

The tested tyres were all 225/40 R18; speed and load ratings shown in brackets. Prices are from BlackCircles.com and are per tyre, including VAT but excluding fitting. Each set was independently sourced and scrubbed-in before testing began. The same sets were then used throughout, with the less destructive (i.e. wet) tests conducted first.



**Bridgestone
Potenza RE002**
(Y 92) – £72.74



**Continental
ContiSportContact 5**
(Y 92) – £81.44



**Dunlop
Sport Maxx RT**
(Y 92) – £76.20



**Goodyear
Eagle F1 Asymmetric 2**
(Y 92) – £74.35



**Hankook
Ventus S1 Evo 2**
(Y 92) – £67.87



**Michelin
Pilot Sport 3**
(Y 92) – £84.02



**Pirelli
P Zero**
(Y 92) – £71.40



**Toyo
Proxes T1 Sport**
(Y 92) – £64.26



**Vredestein
Ultrac Vorti**
(Y 92) – £74.12



**Yokohama
Advan Sport V105**
(W 92) – £66.23



WET HANDLING

THE THREE-QUARTER-MILE wet handling circuit at Vizzola is roughly a figure of eight in shape, with a mix of tight chicanes and medium-speed bends. A sprinkler system keeps it covered in a layer of standing water rather than it just being a bit damp, but nonetheless it's surprising just how much bite a good set of tyres can find through the water. By removing the correct fuse we fully disabled the GTI's stability control system but kept the ABS on.

There were two corners in particular that revealed a great deal about the relative merits of each set of tyres: a tight left-hander with a demon downhill approach that demands effective braking performance, and a more open right-hander that only the very best tyres could hold a tight line through. I completed six laps in each car, taking an average lap time from the run. We used a reference tyre three times throughout the test – at the start, in the middle and at the end – in order to monitor the

evolution of both the circuit and me. The times were then adjusted accordingly to ensure they were directly comparable.

As well as recording lap times using the circuit's in-built timing loop, I also rated each tyre in subjective terms for turn-in, mid-corner grip, traction, steering feel, confidence and braking. Reassuringly, the correlation between subjective and objective rankings was strong, with two exceptions. The Dunlop scored well for traction and braking, so it ranked second overall in subjective terms, but its lap time was only the seventh fastest because the tyre lacked mid-corner grip. The Goodyear, meanwhile, set the fourth fastest time but ranked down in seventh in subjective terms; I had to brake much earlier on the Goodyear to shed enough speed to make the slower corners.

The best tyre, however – and by no small margin – was the Continental. It would carry much more speed into corners than many of the others, hold a tighter line in the long corners,

'IT'S SURPRISING JUST HOW MUCH BITE A GOOD SET OF TYRES CAN FIND THROUGH STANDING WATER'

resist wheelspin very effectively and allow me to brake later with less ABS intervention.

In contrast, the Toyo was treacherous. Its best lap time was some seven seconds down on the benchmark set by the Continental and it was the only tyre to consistently fail to slow the car sufficiently for the tight left with the downhill approach. It would also trip into understeer in the long corners. The Pirelli, meanwhile, performed well in both subjective and objective terms, setting the second quickest lap time, while the Yokohama also performed strongly to finish third overall in both rankings.

WET STEERING PAD

VIZZOLA'S 40-METRE-radius steering pad was a useful indicator of outright lateral grip. I completed six laps on each tyre and we took an average lap time from the run – this was an objective test only. The technique involved accelerating to a point where the car would no longer hold a line, then dropping back a touch and maintaining a steady speed. As well as being a good test for the tyres it was demanding on both car and driver; during a sustained run the GTI would eventually cry enough and cut engine power, while my breakfast threatened to make a reappearance on more than one occasion.

Just as it did around the wet handling track, the Continental went quickest in this test. Similarly, the Toyo – which ranked last around the wet handling track – was also the slowest around the steering pad.

Left: wet handling circuit had constant standing water. **Below right:** one of countless wheel changes

WET LAP

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Continental	100
2	Pirelli	99.4
3	Yokohama	99.1
4	Goodyear	98.7
5	Michelin	98.3
6	Vredestein	97.6
7	Dunlop	96.9
8	Hankook	96.4
9	Bridgestone	96.2
10	Toyo	92.4

WET HANDLING – SUBJECTIVE

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Continental	100
2	Dunlop	93.8
3	Yokohama	92.6
4	Vredestein	91.4
5	Pirelli	90.4
6	Michelin	90.1
7	Goodyear	85.2
8	Bridgestone	82.7
9	Hankook	77.8
10	Toyo	70.4

WET STEERING PAD

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Continental	100
2	Goodyear	98.9
3	Yokohama	98.6
4	Pirelli	97.8
5	Bridgestone	97.1
6	Vredestein	97.0
7	Dunlop	96.5
8	Michelin	95.9
9	Hankook	95.6
10	Toyo	92.1



BRAKING AND ROLLING RESISTANCE

THE DRY BRAKING TEST was conducted from 100kph (62mph) and the wet test from 80kph (50mph). This was an objective assessment only, based purely on stopping distances. Generally the correlation between dry and wet results was strong, although, notably, the Dunlop ranked fourth in dry braking, but only seventh in the wet test.

The Continental, Pirelli and Goodyear emerged as joint victors. Despite the Continental's overall superiority in other wet tests (wet handling, aquaplaning, etc), it finished behind both the Pirelli and the Goodyear in the wet braking test. It did, however, win the dry braking test. Conversely,

the Pirelli finished first in the wet and third in the dry, just behind the Goodyear.

Curiously, the Vredestein – which generally performed strongly throughout the various tests – managed only eighth in both the wet and dry braking assessments. The Toyo brought up the rear in both tests.

A tyre's rolling resistance indicates the amount of energy that is required to roll it along the road. High rolling resistance equals reduced fuel economy. This particular test counts for only a very small amount in our final reckoning as we're much more concerned with outright performance, but for the record the Goodyear scored its only victory here, while the Yokohama ranked in last position.



WET BRAKING

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Pirelli	100
2	Goodyear	99.6
3	Continental	99.3
4	Michelin	98.5
5	Yokohama	94.1
6	Hankook	93.3
7	Dunlop	92.0
8	Vredestein	91.9
9	Bridgestone	89.8
10	Toyo	81.7

DRY BRAKING

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Continental	100
2	Goodyear	98.8
3	Pirelli	98.4
4	Dunlop	98.2
4	Michelin	98.2
6	Yokohama	97.7
7	Bridgestone	96.4
8	Vredestein	95.1
9	Hankook	94.4
10	Toyo	91.1

ROLLING RESISTANCE

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Goodyear	100
2	Dunlop	92.7
3	Hankook	90.6
4	Toyo	90.5
5	Michelin	84.5
6	Bridgestone	83.7
7	Pirelli	81.8
8	Continental	81.3
9	Vredestein	80.1
10	Yokohama	76.0



AQUAPLANING

I F YOU'VE EVER HIT standing water on a motorway and felt your car twitch, the steering go light and your heart rate rocket, you'll understand the importance of this test.

A tyre aquaplanes when it meets more water than its channels can clear at the given velocity. We tested aquaplaning performance both in a straight line and around a gentle curve, with a water depth of 7mm.

The Continental performed best in a straight line, but it was beaten by the Michelin in the curved test. Curiously, however, the Michelin actually ranked last in the straight-line test, behind even the Toyo, which did lose the curved aquaplaning test.

STRAIGHT AQUAPLANING

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Continental	100
2	Dunlop	99.1
3	Hankook	98.8
4	Yokohama	98.2
5	Vredestein	98.0
6	Goodyear	97.9
7	Pirelli	97.4
8	Bridgestone	96.5
9	Toyo	96.0
10	Michelin	95.5

CURVED AQUAPLANING

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Michelin	100
2	Continental	97.5
3	Yokohama	91.2
4=	Goodyear	89.0
4=	Hankook	89.0
6	Dunlop	87.9
7	Pirelli	86.2
8	Vredestein	83.6
9	Bridgestone	82.8
10	Toyo	81.3

DRY HANDLING

C IRCUITO TAZIO Nuvolari folds tightly in on itself to pack a surprising mileage into a very small plot of land. It's used primarily for motorcycle racing and car testing, but it's also a good venue for testing a tyre's dry handling properties.

It's worth noting that our tyres do not bill themselves as trackday rubber, but a controlled environment such as this is the only way to test tyre performance in a safe and repeatable manner. We took an average time from two laps with each tyre and rated them subjectively and against the clock.

The first corner is an endless right-hander after a 700-metre straight, which made it a stern test of turn-in grip and outright lateral grip, too. The numerous tight hairpins put the traction of each different tyre model under scrutiny, while the fast left-right sweeper was a good test of transient stability and mid-corner grip – the best tyres enabled me to drive through here without lifting.

First up was the Bridgestone, which seemed to return slightly better turn-in and mid-corner grip than the reference tyre. This was borne out by it going two-tenths quicker. However, the Continental was two-tenths quicker still, which is pretty impressive given that it dominated the wet handling tests. It also scored well for steering feel and turn-in.

Lap times would continue to fall, with the Dunlop setting the quickest time so far on its first lap. Steering feel was lacking, though, and the tyre went off markedly during its

second lap, dropping it below the Bridgestone on the two-lap average. The Goodyear went even faster still, but it also sustained that performance into the second lap, dropping just a tenth of a second compared to lap one.

The Hankook couldn't match the Goodyear or Continental's times, but it was quicker than the Bridgestone. It scored well for mid-corner grip and confidence, but the traction levels fell dramatically during the second lap.

A lack of outright lateral grip saw the Michelin set the slowest time so far (only one tyre would go slower still) and I had to be patient before reapplying the power, but turn-in grip was reasonable. Stepping directly from the Michelin to the Pirelli was instructive – the latter returned very good traction and turn-in and lateral grip to set the quickest time so far. I also scored it highly for steering feel and confidence.

Slowest of the bunch was the Toyo. Initial turn-in response was good, but mid-corner grip levels were poor and traction weak. The car also felt unsettled in the quick left-right sweeper, and the Toyo's sidewalls were very heavily worn after just two laps. It ranked last in subjective terms, too.

The Yokohama and the Vredestein were the only two tyres to take the quick sequence flat out and both came within hundredths of a second of matching their initial lap times on the second lap. They were the only tyres that felt really cut out for circuit driving and I rated them first and second in subjective terms respectively.

DRY LAP

	Tyre	Percentage
1=	Vredestein	100
1=	Yokohama	100
3	Pirelli	99.9
4	Goodyear	99.6
5	Continental	99.4
6	Hankook	99.2
7	Bridgestone	99.1
8	Dunlop	98.9
9=	Michelin	98.5
9=	Toyo	98.5

DRY HANDLING – SUBJECTIVE

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Yokohama	100
2	Vredestein	98.7
3	Pirelli	97.5
4	Continental	96.2
5=	Dunlop	94.9
5=	Goodyear	94.9
7	Bridgestone	93.7
8	Hankook	92.4
9	Michelin	87.3
10	Toyo	83.5



'THE NUMEROUS TIGHT
HAIRPINS PUT THE TRACTION
OF EACH DIFFERENT TYRE
UNDER SCRUTINY'



ROAD ROUTE

THE ROAD ROUTE WAS AN entirely subjective test, scoring each tyre for noise and comfort. In fact, I actually used Vizzola's various surface strips – smooth asphalt, concrete and cobbles – to compare each tyre's noise suppression properties because I could be certain of consistency for each run. I drove

over the strips twice on each tyre, once at 60kph (37mph) and again at 100kph (62mph), and then used the public roads around Vizzola to consider ride comfort. It is worth noting that the differences between the tyres were marginal for both comfort and noise, so no one tyre either really excelled or bombed in this test.

Nonetheless, the Hankook did come out

on top in both assessments, scoring highly for noise suppression and for its relaxed and well-damped ride quality. The Goodyear, Pirelli, Vredestein and Yokohama all finished fractionally behind the Hankook. I noted that the Goodyear's ride quality improved markedly as the speeds rose, that the Vredestein's noise suppression was good at motorway speeds



apart from a high-pitched pinging sound over drain covers, and that the Yokohama made a dull thudding noise over such intrusions.

The Dunlop finished second to last in this test, mostly due to its sharp ride over ridges. However, it was the Toyo that came in last, due to its unsettled ride quality, a boominess over rougher surfaces and the curious ringing sound it made over drain covers.

ROAD ROUTE

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Hankook	100
2=	Goodyear	95.8
2=	Pirelli	95.8
2=	Vredestein	95.8
2=	Yokohama	95.8
6=	Bridgestone	91.7
6=	Continental	91.7
6=	Michelin	91.7
9	Dunlop	87.5
10	Toyo	75.0

RESULTS

10th Toyo Finishing last in nine of the 12 tests, it's little surprise the Toyo ranks tenth overall. In previous years we've included budget tyres that have performed woefully; the Toyo shouldn't be considered in those terms, but it does fall short of very strong competition. It is the cheapest tyre here, however.

9th Bridgestone The Bridgestone didn't perform badly in the dry tests, but during the wet handling tests it did feel very short on grip and traction. On the road route it also had a sharper edge over ridges than most.

8th Michelin A strong showing in the wet tests wasn't enough to earn the Michelin a decent overall result. In the dry handling tests it was markedly down on mid-corner grip compared to the best tyres. It scored its only victory in the curved aquaplaning test.

7th Hankook Let down by its performance in the wet tests, the Hankook ranks seventh overall. It was competitive in the dry, although it beat only the Toyo in dry braking. It won the subjective road route test, though.

6th Dunlop The Dunlop performed consistently throughout to score a respectable result. A second place in the straight-line aquaplaning test stood out, but points were

lost in both the wet and dry handling tests for traction levels, which were short of the best.

5th Vredestein The Vredestein shared first place with the Yokohama for its dry lap time. In fact it performed well throughout the dry tests, but a mediocre showing in the wet denied it a stronger overall result. Its braking performance was particularly disappointing: it finished eighth in both the wet and dry.

4th Goodyear The Goodyear is a very strong all-rounder – it finished third overall in the objective dry tests and matched that in the wet. Its performance throughout was more than respectable, but ultimately it was denied a podium position by a slim margin.

3rd Pirelli Having narrowly bettered the Goodyear in the final reckoning, the Pirelli scores the first of the podium places. Its one victory came in the wet braking test, although it also performed well in the dry. Only the Vredestein and Yokohama set a quicker time around the dry handling circuit and it was competitive in the wet, too.

2nd Yokohama The margin between the top two tyres in the final reckonings couldn't have been narrower. Ultimately the Yokohama gives best to the Continental because it didn't back up its exemplary dry-weather performance

with really competitive wet-weather ability. If you leave your car firmly in the garage when it rains, the Yokohama is your winner.

1st Continental The Continental managed to pull off a remarkable trick by performing superbly in both the wet and the dry tests. Tyres are typically best suited to one or the other, but the Continental proved its unparalleled breadth of ability. It wasn't the quickest tyre around a dry lap, but nonetheless it is the winner of *evo*'s 2015 summer tyre test. **X**

FINAL RESULTS

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Continental	96.3
2	Yokohama	96.2
3	Pirelli	95.9
4	Goodyear	95.5
5	Vredestein	94.9
6	Dunlop	94.2
7	Hankook	93.3
8	Michelin	92.9
9	Bridgestone	92.3
10	Toyo	86.3





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MERCEDES-AMG GT S IN NORWAY





by HENRY CATCHPOLE
PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

HUNTING FOR TROLLS

The Norwegian outback possesses geology so ferocious it's a match for the local folklore. Against such a magnificent backdrop, we needed a car with an abundance of both beauty and power. Step forward Mercedes-AMG GT S



Top: the £110,500 Mercedes-AMG GT S. **Above:** our route heads south along 55 miles of Norway's County Route 63
Right: each turn of the switchback-laden Trollstigen – meaning 'Troll's Ladder' – is named after the civil engineer who was in charge of building it

FROM DOWN HERE YOU feel like an ant. Not one of those big soldier ants either, but a really diminutive civilian one. Walls of dark, foreboding rock are looming all around and I'm really struggling to take in the rugged scale of it all. Actually it's more brutal than merely rugged. The whole scene looks as though some huge meteorite has smashed into the mountains, tearing into the planet with unimaginable force and gouging out this hole, leaving it exposed, like a massive natural wound in the landscape.

At first it's hard to fathom how you'd get to the top of the distant ridge with ropes and a full rack of climbing gear, let alone in a car. But then you pick out what looks like a thin, pale, continuous fissure zigzagging across the rock. Look closer still and you see the tiny bridge spanning the huge, tumbling white waterfall that splits the face. Slowly your eyes adjust and, like suddenly realising that the pile of earth you're sitting on is actually crawling with insects, so you start to pick out the apparently tiny coaches and miniscule 4x4s working their way up or down the rock face.

We're in western Norway, standing at the bottom of the 11 hairpins that make up the Trollstigen, or Troll's Ladder – one of the most spectacular and undoubtedly the best named road


I've ever visited. The exact origin of trolls seems lost in the mists of time. All that anyone seems to agree on is that they are elusive mountain dwellers, living amongst rocks that they then occasionally hurl at people. And everyone agrees that trolls are ugly. Not 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' ugly like a Z3 M Coupe either, but seriously ugly, like a Ssangyong Rodius.

Given that photographer Dean Smith and I are in the worst possible place if mythical Norse creatures do start lobbing down chunks of metamorphic, I decide that it's time to see what the view is like from the top. The Mercedes-AMG GT S has been ping-pong quietly next to me, metal cooling after the run along the valley to get here. Getting in, I'm immediately pleased with one particular feature of this car – its roof. The view out of the windscreen has a touch of the letterbox about it and while it's perfectly adequate for driving, it can feel a little restrictive when you want to drink in all the scenery. It might not be the full roadster I max but, like an inverted glass-bottom boat, the panoramic top on this car means that I can glance up and see the incredible view of the peaks above me (and any troll-thrown rocks).

The V8 rumbles into life with the hollow growl of a Viking gargling firewater. It feels completely in keeping with the surroundings. Notch back the small gearlever, feel a subtle change in the demeanour of the car as the first of seven gears engages, ease off the brake pedal and we're away. The road isn't the narrowest I've driven on by any means, but there's certainly no white line down the middle and you need to use the fantastic visibility of what's approaching so that you don't end up in a stand-off with a tourist coach. With every hairpin the angry rock and an increasingly yawning drop switch sides and neither is to be trifled with. The mighty Stigfossen waterfall punctuates our path up the mountainside, reappearing as often as every second hairpin as it makes its way down a 320m vertical drop. The raging, pure white torrent adds to the furious feeling of the place and you get the impression it could be pouring down into the earth to cool the fires of Hell itself. As we cross the bridge a gust of wind flings spray over the car.

Although tackling the Trollstigen is mostly a case of accelerating in a straight line up through a couple of gears, braking, changing down, climbing through a tight, 180-degree turn and then repeating, there are a couple of stretches nearer the top that wander slightly more and the GT S dispatches the direction changes in a manner that feels like the car weighs considerably less than the advertised 1570kg. There is one section with really fast, shallow bends that you can't quite straight-line, requiring you to hover on the throttle while launching the big bonnet one way then the other, the whole car staying breathtakingly flat through the fast transitions.





Accelerating out of the last of these bends, I find myself hammering up towards the next hairpin. I've been building speed greedily but now this switchback looks for all the world like a dead end hanging in the air with just sky beyond. It suddenly feels like I'm rushing headlong up a launch ramp and the realisation that an endless drop is waiting to embrace me if I don't start braking hard makes my heart stand still. With a firm push on the left-hand pedal the big nose dives fractionally, the tyres dig reassuringly, my ribs squeeze against the seatbelt and just enough speed is thankfully wiped off in time to turn in.

At the top of the Ladder is a very angular and rather beautiful building that was opened in 2012 and houses a visitor centre, shop and cafe. But it's not the first place I want to head after parking up. Instead I walk over a small bridge, skirt round a warning sign half-heartedly blocking the path and scramble across the snow to reach a rusty-looking construction jutting out from the mountainside. This is the Trollstigen's famous viewing platform. The wind is attacking over the ridge in sporadic but violent gusts, making the promontory seem even more precarious as I walk slightly tentatively

towards the edge. Clutching at the barrier and with blood definitely pulsing a little harder, I steel myself to look down into the yawning abyss. My head swims slightly at the scale. If you have even mild acrophobia you'll feel your stomach do a terrified little backflip too.

From up here you're so high that it's almost like being in a helicopter, the elevation playing tricks on your eyes, foreshortening the massive drop so that the steepness of the hairpins beneath you is slightly lost, the scene below appearing slightly surreal and detached. Serpentine in its back-and-forth layout, the road is mesmerising. What is it about the switchback that is so bewitching? We all know that they aren't the best corners to drive, merely the most extreme in terms of lock required. Yet standing here, the Ladder looks aesthetically amazing, the automotive equivalent of a turquoise sea that begs you to dive in.

I spend quite some time watching the clouds folding themselves around the mountain tops (apparently it frequently has to be explained to Chinese tourists that these low clouds aren't the sort to require the donning of face masks) before shivering as the wind whips up again and forces

**'WALLS
OF DARK
ROCK ARE
LOOMING
ALL AROUND
AND I'M
STRUGGLING
TO TAKE IN
THE SCALE
OF IT ALL'**

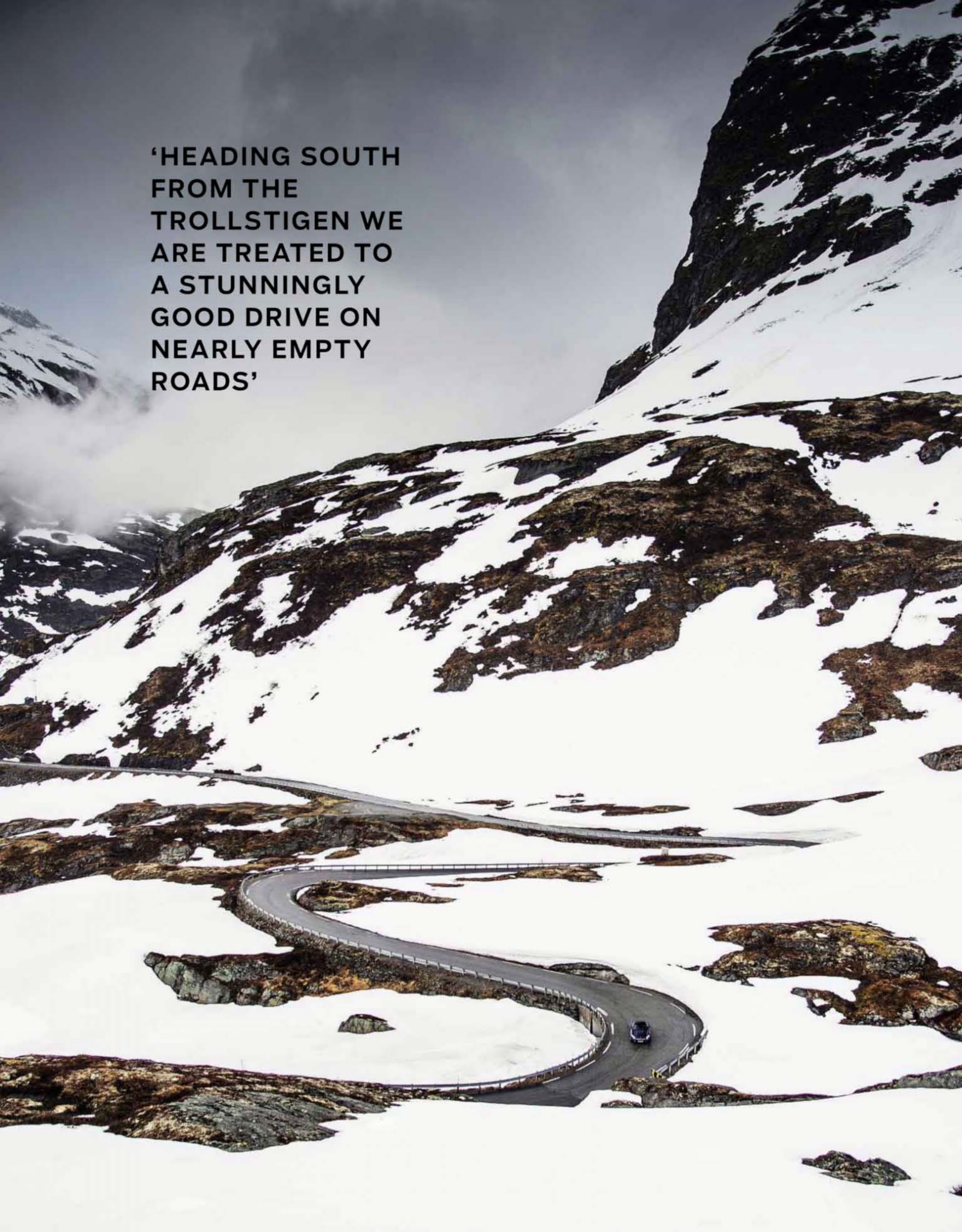
a retreat to the grandly designed cafe at the top of the road. Whilst waiting for a restorative mid-summer hot chocolate, I wander around the exhibition showing the history of the Trollstigen. There have been trails between the Valdalen and Romsdal districts throughout history (it was called the Cleavage Trail before the Trollstigen), but it was only in 1916 that the Norwegian Parliament (the Storting) granted permission for a road to be attempted. The actual mountain pass was begun in 1928 but because of the weather, construction was only possible between the months of May and October. The project was also hampered by frequent landslides and until 1935, when the bridge was completed, a sort of coffin on ropes was the only way to cross the huge waterfall. The road was finally opened on July 31, 1936, by King Haakon. The surrounding mountains are called the King, the Queen, the Bishop and the Trollveggen (the eastern side of which has the highest vertical rock face in Europe). However, slightly disappointingly, they only got these names with the opening of the road, as a marketing ploy to make them sound more impressive.

You might have been wondering how we spirited

ourselves to the Trollstigen, and the answer is that yesterday we drove the six or so hours north-west from Gardermoen airport in Oslo, where we'd picked up the Mercedes. Apart from the optional sports seats being a bit wooden on a long journey, the AMG amply fulfilled the GT part of its name on the trip. The day was interesting because it was a new country to drive through and marvel at and Norway is achingly beautiful, but from a driving point of view it was pretty dull. Initially there was some dual carriageway with automatic tolls (don't worry, they will simply send you a bill back in the country where the car is registered) but then we were reduced to single carriageway roads that felt remarkably busy given that Norway only has five million people. Actually, the sense of congestion had nothing to do with the sheer volume of traffic and everything to do with the fact that, despite the open and flowing nature of the roads as they sweep past sparkling lakes and through mighty forests, the speed limit is 80kph (50mph) and everyone sticks religiously to it (which at least helps our average fuel economy stay above 25mpg). Some people are keen to make progress, and overtaking is generally easy if it's a single car in front, but



**'HEADING SOUTH
FROM THE
TROLLSTIGEN WE
ARE TREATED TO
A STUNNINGLY
GOOD DRIVE ON
NEARLY EMPTY
ROADS'**



sometimes you will find yourself at the back of a long snake where everyone has settled in for the duration and the feeling is that so must you. On the main roads there are speed cameras in the form of beige cylinders on sticks, but there are always warning signs before you reach them.

Although the Trollstigen is far from empty, there are no such frustrations today, and leaving the warmth of the cafe and heading south we are treated to a stunningly good drive on nearly empty roads. We're heading this way because, good as the Ladder is, I knew that we didn't want to come all the way to Norway simply for one road. So back in the depths of winter and with the aid of some digital maps I started looking at what else might be of interest to the motoring tourist in the county of Møre og Romsdal. The Atlantic Road is the other obvious route up here, but John Barker went there in 2010 (*evo* 147) in an SLS Electric, so that was discounted. Besides, I wanted to explore something slightly less well known. There is quite a lot to choose from, but eventually I settled on an interesting looking piece of road at the eastern tip of the Geirangerfjord (pronounced *guy-rang-er*).

In order to get there we are heading to the settlement of Valldalen, which sits on the northern shore of the Norddalsfjorden. The road is fast but the corners are just the right speed to keep things constantly interesting and at one point it tracks the line of the Gudbrandsjuvet (you're on your own with that pronunciation!) gorge, with its spectacular rapids bubbling away on our left. Once in the town of Valldalen we follow the water's edge to Linge and beyond to a small jetty where the sun finally comes out as we settle down to wait for the ferry. Even through the accumulated road grime of the day, the Merc's brilliant blue paintwork comes alive in the sunshine and I immediately christen the colour Norwegian Blue, muttering 'beautiful plumage' in my best Palin (Michael not Sarah) impersonation. Sadly it seems no one else watches *Monty Python* these days and just as I'm trying to explain the failed palindrome of 'Notlob' a ferry mercifully arrives, opening its bow like a feeding whale and accepting the half-dozen cars waiting to cross to Eidsdal.

Once we're safely across the water, County Road 63 begins rising. Occasionally there is a hairpin, but mostly it's a gradual wandering upwards for a few miles. The view is nothing exceptional but



Left: GT S exhibits superb control through fast direction changes on the roads of Møre og Romsdal county.

Above right: the region is littered with sculptures of trolls, many of which couldn't look happier...

this is merely a lull, as suddenly the scenery seems to part majestically like the curtains in an opera house and we find ourselves in a huge valley high up in the mountains. We curve around a small lake and then the road heads arrow-straight for over a mile before disappearing round a shoulder of rock and plunging inside yonder mountain. The light makes it all look so filmic that you would almost swear it was CGI.

When we emerge into the daylight again (it's now early evening but it could be midday, such is the arc of the sun up here at this time of year) there is a fast run to another breathtaking viewpoint over the Geirangerfjord. According to the guidebooks this is Norway's most picturesque fjord and it's immediately obvious why. The massive cliffs rise up nearly vertically from the water, utterly dwarfing the cruise ships beneath. The MSC Splendida anchored over half a kilometre below weighs a monstrous 138,000 tons and measures 333m from prow to stern, making it one of the largest cruise ships in the world, yet it looks like nothing more than a toy boat in a bath tub from up here.

Several days a week, floating cities like the Splendida decant thousands of selfie sticks onto coaches, which then do whistle-stop tours of the region's highlights. Thankfully it's blissfully peaceful now. But it's not quiet. Everywhere we have stopped there has been the sound of gravity-fed water. Whether the noise is thunderingly close or more of a distant background hiss, it seems as though we are always within sight of at least three magnificently tumbling waterfalls. Looking down the fjord we can just see the huge Seven Sisters waterfall. Zoom out a bit to see the wider view and you notice three clear layers of colour in the landscape, with green vegetation at the bottom moving into dark grey rock that is then capped with sparkling white snow. The mountains look like huge rotten teeth pushing up through gangrenous gums.

This slightly grotesque simile is trumped by the slightly queasy thought that the people here live under the permanent shadow of potential disaster. Further up the Sunnysfjorden lies a mountain called Åknes and there is a large (50-million-cubic-metres large), unstable chunk of it that may well fall off. If it does, the residents of nearby Hellesylt and Geiranger will have just minutes to get out of the way of the ensuing tsunami that will rage down the fjord below us.

It's hard to tear ourselves away from the view, but after 20 minutes of gobsmacked reverie we continue on our way and start the descent to Geiranger itself. Having thought that the Trollstigen was hairpin heaven, the next four miles of the Ørnevegen, or Eagle Road, begs to differ. It packs its 11 switchbacks in even more tightly, pouring them down the precipitous slope


until you're level with the water. Because this road travels through lush vegetation it doesn't have the visual drama of the Trollstigen, but it's every bit as sinuous, a fact that's reinforced by the view looking back from the far side of the fjord.

Despite the disconcertingly light sky we decide that it must be suppertime when we reach Geiranger, so we find the one place that is open and Dean decides to bankrupt the **evo** expenses account by ordering more than one beer (it's about £6 for a stingy metric pint). Then, after locating our old-fashioned but unexpectedly picturesque hotel, it's time to draw the blackout blinds and try to get some sleep with dreams of disaster movies dancing in our heads.

NOW YOU SEE IT. NOW YOU DON'T. THE car in front disappears completely, hidden from view by a violent flurry. Snow at the side of the road I had expected, but I didn't think the stuff would be falling from the sky. Not in June.

Driving along the top of the Geiranger Pass the following morning it feels like we've landed on another planet. Huge, three-metre-high white walls are marking the edge of the road and it seems like we're driving down an endless, cold corridor. When the wind whips up, the loose snow from the top of the snow banks is added to the chunky flakes falling from the sky and it's then that the view forward is reduced to the end of the AMG's prominent bonnet. The only sensible thing to do is slow to a crawl and press the heated-seat button (located up on the roof, making you instantly feel a little bit like a pilot).

Eventually we emerge from the wintery maze at the top of the pass, but the visibility is still atrocious and the snow has simply turned to heavy rain. We find out later that 2015 is the worst summer weather Norway has

A wide-angle landscape photograph of a Norwegian fjord. In the foreground, a large white cruise ship with orange accents is docked at a small pier on the left side of the water. The water is a deep, calm blue-grey. The surrounding mountains are steep and covered in lush green forest. The upper peaks of the mountains are covered in patches of snow and partially shrouded in mist or low-hanging clouds. The sky is filled with heavy, dark grey clouds, with some light breaking through near the horizon. The overall mood is majestic and serene.

**‘WHEN WE
EMERGE INTO
DAYLIGHT AGAIN
THERE IS A
BREATHTAKING
RUN DOWN
INTO THE
GEIRANGERFJORD’**

experienced in living memory. Dean (still wearing a T-shirt) takes some shots just to record the madness, and we spend a while looking at some houses with grass (purposely) growing on their roofs, but after a couple of hours we admit defeat and retreat to the safety and warmth of the hotel, hoping for better weather the next day. The expenses account groans once more...

UNDER MERCIFULLY CLEARER SKIES

we set out early the next morning, and as the coaches full of Pac A Macs haven't yet grumbled into life I get a clear run at the Geiranger Pass. Instantly it is on another level in terms of driving compared to the Trollstigen. Wider, faster and much more varied, it is a proper test of the AMG. A long right-hander loads up the GT S, the rear tyres leaning, teetering on the edge of adhesion with the cold morning tarmac. A fraction more throttle and the treadblocks will release, sending the tail wide, but as the corner opens you can tease the pedal ever further, chasing the power as the steering lock reduces. Then we're into a series of shallow, not quite flat-out bends, meandering gracefully up the side of the valley. This is where the car shines, changing direction one way then the other with absolute authority, the nose reacting instantly as the car jinks through the linked chicanes. The steering is very light, but so quick and precise that it requires only the smallest movement of your wrists to get a reaction. It's quite Ferrari-esque.

The first hairpins arrive and with the ESP slackened it's easy to slide the GT S – all too easy if there's any residual damp in the shadows under the rock faces, so care is needed, but the quick steering helps. The 503bhp V8 remains the best turbocharged engine out there, in my opinion. It has stunning throttle response and the bombastic noise seems to suffer none of the muting or muffling that others are afflicted with. Here the GT S simply charges up the road.

**'AS THE SNOW
BANKS BEGIN
TO APPEAR, SO
TOO DO SIGNS
WARNING CARS
NOT TO STOP,
FOR FEAR OF
AVALANCHES'**





Climbing further up the pass, it's fascinating travelling through the various coloured strata that we noticed when looking down the fjord. The green is now receding as the grey takes over with the white snow still to come. The bends are more tightly stacked here but there is a real mix of radii; some require caution as they tighten unseen, while others are open and can be attacked with the car up on its toes from entry to exit. There are also plenty of straights long enough to let the V8 run, chasing up through the gears, each one popping home quickly and satisfyingly.

As the snow banks begin to appear, so too do signs warning cars not to stop, for fear of avalanches. Down here the rather grubby, wet, heavy snow looks like it has the consistency of a Slush Puppie and it's no surprise the waterfalls are so loud with such a supply of melting water. Gradually though the temperature drops as the altitude increases and the slush hardens until we are back in the frozen white corridor. With your view restricted it's like being in one of those early computer driving games, the road feeling a little more constricted, although I'm pretty sure the width is the same as it was lower down. With the sun out, you can catch glimpses of the beautiful

MERCEDES-AMG GT S

Engine V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo

CO2 219g/km

Power 503bhp @ 6250rpm

Torque 479lb ft @ 1750-4750rpm

Transmission Seven-speed dual clutch, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

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

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

Brakes Ventilated discs, 390mm front, 360mm rear

Wheels 9 x 19in front, 11 x 20in rear

Tyres 265/35 ZR19 front, 295/30 ZR20 rear

Weight 1570kg

Power-to-weight 326bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.8sec (claimed)

Top speed 193mph (claimed)

Basic price £110,500

On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

blue ice buried beneath the snow and it seems to glow with a clear, jewel-like inner luminescence.

At the top of the pass is an empty hotel, with a road up to a viewing point (closed because of the snow, but beyond is arguably the most stunning view yet). Yesterday the most I could see was a bleak monochrome beauty stretching out into an infinite whiteness that played with my depth perception as bafflingly as the height of the Trollstigen. Today, however, the scenery is coming alive around me as the sun and the crystal-clear air combine to bring 4K clarity to the landscape. Contrasted against an azure blue sky, the perfectly flat expanse of the snow-covered Djupvatnet lake cupped in the mountains is startling. Once again, just as I did at the base of the Trollstigen, I feel like Gulliver in Brobdingnag as the scale of my surroundings sinks in. And bordering the lake, snaking away towards a gap in the peaks, is the rest of the Geiranger Pass waiting to be driven. As I drop down into the GT S, pull the door shut and press the glowing starter button, I know that although I might have been lured to Norway by the Trollstigen, there is no doubt that this less travelled part of the County Road 63 is where you should come to drive. ✕

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Built on a shoestring to undercut Porsche's 924, the original Mazda RX-7 was a rare sight on British roads. That's a shame, because beguiling balance and rotary power meant it was sensational to drive


by DAVID VIVIAN

Rotary club

mazda

04Y

B 1st Gen Series 2



THE MAZDA RX-7 AND I started our careers at around the same time, in 1978; the svelte, rotary-engined two-seater as Japan's prettiest and most radical sports coupe, me as a cub road tester on the weekly car magazine, *Motor*. It was kind of inevitable our paths would cross sooner or later but, as good fortune would have it, there wasn't long to wait at all.

Motoring magazines were very different 37 years ago. The office I worked in had a persistent faint whiff of something called Cow Gum, a gelatinous glue that layout designers would use to fix bits of paper to sheets of card, sometimes rolling the excess into rubbery Cow Gum 'bogies' to flick at the hard-working journalists. Our typewriters, in turn, generated a vaguely reassuring soundtrack of randomly spaced *clacks* and there was a heady aroma of Tipp-Ex correction fluid, which for the more habituated hacks meant filing stories in 3D with miniature snowy mountain ranges peaking over the smudged words.

Perhaps strangest of all, people bought car magazines, even weekly ones, in their many tens of thousands. This being a favourable state of affairs publishers wanted to preserve and nurture, editorial budgets were unimaginably generous by today's standards. In *Motor's* case, it meant that the editor didn't have to waste days schmoozing PRs for the loan of a long-term test car, rather he could devote his energies to lambasting staff slackers for their pitifully limp grasp of complex technical concepts. This was because there was enough money in the kitty to buy – that's *buy* – entire long-term fleets outright. Naturally, they'd be sold on (possibly auctioned off) end of term, but the depreciation hit alone would be enough to put some of today's mags out of business. And all because it allowed us to pose anonymously as pukka punters and get the cars serviced without fear or favour.

All right, maybe this wasn't quite the nirvana it might seem. We couldn't all drive round in Mercs and Porsches. As the newest and most junior member of staff I had to start at the bottom and, just a few days into my tenure of a Chrysler Sunbeam 1.3 GL, surmised that I must be involved in a test of my gratitude for being given a 'company car' at all. Possibly the most ironically named hatchback of modern times, my metallic green Sunbeam was 'powered' by a horrible engine that sounded like 100 poorly coordinated people having a knitting-needle fight. And although it struggled to approach corners at anything that could be described as speed, it still managed to breezily miss any apex



I aimed it at with a pathetic squeal of tortured rubber. It made good copy – folks, there were truly bad cars to write about back then – but from a driving standpoint it had me seriously wondering if I'd chosen the right job.

Then, some six months after having, as Petula Clark's advertising jingle so cruelly put it, a Chrysler Sunbeam in my life, everything changed. Peter Dron, who would go on to become editor of a new monthly called *Fast Lane*, was granted a shiny new long-term, thus liberating his not-yet-ready-for-the-knackers-yard Mazda RX-7 – a sleek red missile I'd admired in the car park on a daily basis since joining *Motor* – to the tender mercies of another keeper. If I was prepared to take it on, it was mine. If? Were they kidding? Several people reported seeing a blurred shape, similar to the artistic depiction of the DC Comics superhero The Flash, heading towards the car park that evening. It drove off in a red Mazda RX-7.

Mazda had done 'out there' before. Predating the RX-7 by a decade, the extraordinary Cosmo coupe, as its name suggested, was a nod to the early years of the space race and looked like the sort of car Dan Dare would drive. As the first Wankel-powered Mazda, it planted a flag for the company's new forward-thinking strategy and beat, by a whisker, NSU's Ro80 to the rotary engine punch for a production car. In a bid to establish compact, lightweight spinning rotors as a viable alternative to reciprocating pistons and make the technology synonymous with the Mazda brand, the Hiroshima-based car maker decided to enter a pair of Cosmos in the ridiculously gruelling 1968 84-hour Marathon de la Route at the Nürburgring. One retired with axle damage just two hours from the finish, the other made it to the end in fourth place overall.



Above: this car is a top-spec SDX model – identifiable by the spoiler.

Left: pop-up headlights (when down) made for a low drag coefficient of 0.36. **Top left:** Japanese-spec first-gen RX-7s would eventually boast a healthy 160bhp – Vivian's old long-termer made do with 100bhp at 6000rpm, while this Series 2 has 115bhp

More a publicity stunt than the beginning of the Cosmo's racing career (it ended there and then), the car's audacious sci-fi style and promise of the future today fired the public's imagination and laid the foundations, via models like the R100 and RX3, for the RX-7 – the first Wankel-engined car to take the world, and the USA in particular, by storm.

By the late '70s, having sold almost a million rotary-engined cars and trucks, Mazda reckoned it had put to rest the ghost of the Ro80's rotor tip failures and flaky reliability. But nothing it had done before clicked with the prevailing automotive zeitgeist like the RX-7. Its sleek European look was an artful fusion of Lotus Elan Plus 2 and Porsche 924 that nevertheless seemed fresh and original. And with an aggressive pricing initiative (at around \$7000 it cost about half as much as the Porsche in the US), plus impressively light weight, a low centre-of-gravity and a 51:49 chassis balance achieved by tucking the small, freakily smooth twin-rotor motor behind the front axle line, the RX-7 flew out of showrooms at a rate the factory couldn't keep up with. It even led to a black market in the States, with early examples changing hands for \$3000 over list.

As fitted to the RX-7, Dr Felix Wankel's contraspinning masterpiece was a somewhat evolved proposition, boasting better lubrication and harder-wearing rotor tip seals than the units in previous R and RX models. Weighing a mere 142kg, the '12A' motor displaced just 573cc in each combustion chamber, though this was equivalent to 2.3 litres of conventional piston engine. In Euro spec, peak power was quoted at a bewilderingly modest 100bhp. Bewildering because – no fanciful boast in the brochure – the car really could crack 9.2sec to 60mph and therefore kick sand in the more powerful Porsche 924's face. This was all the more remarkable when you consider that torque peaked at a pitifully sub-burly 105lb ft.

Even so, there's something that chimes distinctly modern about the way the Mazda extracted more from less. With just 1099kg to haul around, the RX-7 was lighter than a 924 and made Datsun's 1272kg 280ZX look like the victim of a chronically sedentary lifestyle.

Yet, apart from the engine, there was nothing very exotic about the nuts and bolts of the spec. Reflecting the need to sell the RX-7 at a price that made the Porsche look cynically expensive, the suspension was pretty conventional fare. A

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live rear axle located by a Watt's linkage and trailing arms sourced from the Mazda parts bin stood in for a fully independent rear end, with MacPherson struts rather than more desirable double wishbones making do at the front. Steering was by recirculating ball instead of a crisper rack and pinion setup and the rear wheels were braked by drums and not discs. So, hardly the most sophisticated chassis ever to turn a wheel, but arguably the front-mid layout, even weight distribution and low-slung engine mass counted for as much.

Cost-paring also scuppered the original design plan to give the RX-7 a one-piece, steel-framed tailgate. It ended up with a rather less robust, though lighter, all-glass hatch with external hinges. Making the best of economic necessity, Mazda remarked in the RX-7's original brochure that the 'aerodynamically designed' rear window assembly resembled 'a jet canopy with its wraparound expanse of tinted glass for better visibility'. Nice catch.

Then again, the brochure also called the cabin 'mission control'.

I might as well have called it 'home'. It wasn't that I didn't have a new wife or domestic life to get on with, just that any evening I had the RX-7 after work I chose the long and winding road back to my front door. After the suffocating sloth, feeble grip, under-bonnet knitwear machinations and wholesale soggy of the Sunbeam, the Mazda could have been a Lamborghini Miura and I was totally in its thrall. There were a few unintended consequences. Growing familiarity with the turbine-like smoothness and revvability of its engine began to recalibrate my still embryonic powers of assessment. Any test car with a four-cylinder engine that turned up at the office was irreconcilably crude, noisy and uncouth by comparison. Small-capacity V6s I'd previously been apt to describe as 'silky' suddenly seemed as silky as hemp underpants. Somewhat absurdly, given the engine's meagre power and

*'THE THING COULD
BE HUSTLED WITH
VIRTUAL IMPUNITY,
SURFING A BENIGN
RATHER THAN
RAGGED EDGE'*



torque, I started to have delusions that I was the 'owner' of a junior-league exotic (the engine would spin to 'crazy' heights and blow flames out of its exhaust after all). A nasty scrap with a BMW 325i put paid to that.

I couldn't help thinking I'd have had the better of the German if the road had been twistier, though. Even back then, the unassisted recirculating ball wasn't great, exhibiting a distinct slackness about the straight-ahead. More weight than genuine feel, too. But the cornering balance really was blissfully neutral and gave the 185/70 HR13 tyres every chance to hang on without any unseemly squealing. The thing could be hustled with virtual impunity, surfing a benign rather than ragged edge. Ride comfort wasn't bad either, save for the occasional live-axle thud and judder over transverse ridges. Otherwise, body movement was well controlled and nicely damped.

Anyway, these are the things I remember most vividly about 'my' RX-7. Yes, it was horrendously

thirsty, seldom returning above 20mpg. And, no, it wasn't terribly practical, with possibly the most tokenistic '+2' rear seats ever fitted to a car, though my 4ft 10in mum did manage to sit in the back for an emergency dash to the Kent & Sussex Hospital in Tunbridge Wells when my dad was suddenly taken ill at work. Remarkably, she got out again without requiring any medical attention herself. Tellingly, it was the only occasion a passengering member of my family had told me to drive faster when I was already going as fast as I dare. But then the RX-7 was deceptive in that way, preserving a level of hush and decorum in the cabin that was frequently at odds with its speed across the ground. He was OK by the way.

I'd love to believe that red RX-7 was still rolling, but it would have done a zillion miles by now – it was closing in on 100,000 when I finished with it – and, as history has shown us, Wankel engines, even ones extensively developed over many years by Mazda, simply

don't do that sort of thing. That being said, it felt sweet and fit for every day of its time with me and I've little doubt some genuine owners subsequently enjoyed its company before whatever fate eventually befell it.

The sober reality is, you just don't see first-generation RX-7s on UK roads anymore. By the time production ended in 1985, Mazda had sold nearly half a million, making it the best-selling rotary-engined car of all time and one of the most successful sports coupes. But age and waning Wankels have retired most, the better runners residing in the kinder climes of America's sunny West Coast. Not before time, however, Mazda's UK operation has managed to track down a sound first-gen RX-7 and add it to its fledgling heritage fleet. For its first corporate outing it's come to Blyton Park, basically because there hasn't been time to sort the paperwork to let it out on the road. As I never took my long-termers anywhere near a circuit, this should be a fitting coda to my education.





According to Mazda's Owen Mildenhall, the previous owner was at a loss to explain why, as a Series 2 – by which time Mazda had begun to adorn the beautifully pure bodywork with rubber spoilers and plastic rubbing strips – this particular car has the plusher Series 3 interior. I can't really remember anything about the cabin of my long-term car beyond it being black, plasticky and broadly functional. This one has velour upholstery with beading round the edges, so I guess that's the difference. It also has a choke, which, I later recall, used to be a way of life, but I neglect to use this one as I crank the engine briefly into spluttering life before it quits in protest of my ignorance.

Out on track, the RX-7 is more fun than I ever would have expected. Choke-nourished Wankel warmed and the steering's manoeuvring-speed heaviness shed, it feels far brisker than 100bhp should down the straights, the soft *whoosh* of the twin rotors sailing into the rev-limit warning buzzer so frequently I have to keep reminding myself this is one of the smoothest and most

free-revving engines ever made. The steering doesn't actually feel that bad, a bit vague and low-gear'd maybe, but more feelsome than I remember – possibly because most of today's electrical systems are feedback-free zones.

Wearing tyres so 'budget' no one has heard of them, it's surprising this RX-7 feels so secure and grippy. Well, up to a point. Despite the lack of torque, the rear end can be brought into play more or less at will on any of BP's tighter turns simply by going in hot and backing out of the throttle at the right moment. A subtle tightening of line or full-on, old-school lift-off oversteer, the choice is yours. I would say, 'Ah, the memories,' but trackdays as we know them today hadn't been invented in the late '70s.

Rumour has it that Mazda will launch a new RX-7 in 2017 to mark the 50th anniversary of its first rotary-engine car, the Cosmo. Following the RX-7's three-generation drift towards overblown *Fast & Furious* debauchery, let's hope it's as remarkable and clear-sighted as the original. ☒

MAZDA RX-7 SA22C (SERIES 2)

Engine Twin-chamber rotary, 1146cc

Power 115bhp @ 6000rpm

Torque 112lb ft @ 4000rpm

Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive

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

Rear suspension Live axle, Watt's linkage, trailing arms, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated front discs, solid rears

Wheels 5.5 x 13in front and rear

Tyres 185/70 HR13 front and rear

Weight 1050kg

Power-to-weight 111bhp/ton

0-60mph 8.6sec (claimed)

Top speed 120mph+ (claimed)

Price when new £8750

Value now c£3000

On sale (in UK) 1979-1985 (Series 1-3)

evo rating: ★★★★★



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Fast Fleet

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

SUBARU WRX STI

by Stuart Gallagher

Managing editor

OUT

The somewhat unloved Subaru has left our fleet. Gallagher lists one or two reasons why he won't be missing it



SEAT LEON ST CUPRA

by Aston Parrott

Staff photographer

It's great to drive and great for carrying photography equipment – our estate Cupra is a big hit with Parrott



MINI JCW

by Ian Eveleigh

Production editor

Does an automatic gearbox have a place in a fast Mini? After a month with one, Eveleigh delivers his verdict



SKODA OCTAVIA vRS

by Dean Smith

OUT

Contributing photographer

Our second departure this month gets a considerably more positive farewell than the first



FORD FIESTA ST

by Henry Catchpole

Features editor

Last month, Jethro said the ST was better than the ST. Now Catchpole says the opposite. Handbags at dawn



FORD FOCUS RS

by Richard Lane

Subeditor

He's only just fitted a new exhaust to his Integrale, but now Lane's other car is requesting similar attention



RENAULT MÉGANE 275

by Richard Meaden

Contributing editor

Meaden reflects on last issue's hot hatch group test and how the Mégane stacked up against the new Civic Type R



VW GOLF GTI MK2

by Aston Parrott

Staff photographer

It's **evonomics** in action as some worn top-mount bushes lead Parrott to buy a complete set of new coilovers



RENAULT CLIO 182

by Sam Sheehan

Staff writer

Some lower-set seats should dramatically improve the Clio's driving position. There's just one small problem...



McLAREN 12C SPIDER

by SSO

Contributor

OUT

It's a hat-trick of farewells this month as the Secret Supercar Owner also parts with his third (and probably final) 12C



VW AMAROK

by Richard Lane

Subeditor

After a big road trip in our 'Rok, Lane confesses to an unexpected love of pickups – and country music



LAMBO MURCIÉLAGO

by Simon George

Contributor

The anticipation runs high for George as the big Lambo's big accident repairs inch closer to completion



AUDI S1

by Jethro Bovingdon

Contributing editor

This month the S1 has been damaged and been on track, but the two events are not connected



PORSCHE 996 GT2

by Nick Trott

Editor

Summer is ticking on, but the GT2 has yet to turn a wheel – because it needs some new rubber to go around them



Also on the evo fleet:

Caterham 420R, Kia Procede GT, Porsche 996 Carrera, Range Rover Sport SDV8, Ferrari Scuderia Spider 16M, Maserati GranCabrio Sport, Ferrari F40, BMW 2002, Ferrari 458 Italia, Porsche 911 SC, Ford Escort RS2000, Toyota Celica GT-Four WRC, Mazda MX-5 Mk1, Peugeot 106 Rallye, Lancia Delta integrale

END OF TERM

Subaru WRX STI

The sun has set on our time with the controversial Subaru. Gallagher's report is less than glowing

LIFE WITH THE WRX STI has come to an end. Six months and nearly 7000 miles in the not-an-Impreza has left me with mixed feelings about Subaru's 296bhp, four-wheel-drive hot saloon.

The bad bits? The interior was from a time I thought had left us a decade or so previously. It was a comfortable place to sit, and had plenty of room, but the touch points were all hard plastics so brittle that when the winter frosts arrived there was a worry that some could snap if your digit applied too much force.

Another downside? The R&D team had clearly forgotten to visit the department responsible for ride quality. It was truly brutal and would never settle; even freshly laid tarmac could make your eyeballs

rattle. Frankly, it seems astonishing that such a poor ride quality could be signed off. I wasn't expecting Rolls-Royce Ghost levels of comfort, but the STI was shocking when it came to rolling down a road.

The not-so-bad bits? The 2.5-litre flat-four was willing, and when the SI-Drive throttle map was switched to Sport Sharp mode it was more than able, too. But in Normal or Sport you'd struggle to convince yourself that the WRX had the firepower to worry a Golf R.

To get the best from the 296bhp available you needed to spend every journey above 4000rpm to keep the power delivery coming and get the best of the 300lb ft produced. Get the mix right and the WRX turned back the clock and threw itself down the road like an Impreza of old. It

found traction out of a corner a front-drive hot hatch engineer could only dream of, offered limpet-like grip on turn-in and could haul itself through the apex and out the other side without breaking sweat. But take your eye off the tacho and it could slam into the rev limiter, and if you let your concentration slip when it came to the six-speed manual gearbox you'd snag a shift on one of its many notches.

The manual gearbox was both one of the WRX's high and low points. It was notchy and reluctant to move around the gate both when cold and if you rushed a change, and the clutch was switch-like, which made you either lurch between shifts or fill the cabin with the distinctive pong of hot clutch. Sometimes you got both, which was nice. But when the

oil was warm and the road required quick, precise shifts, the stick sprouting from between the front seats was a welcome companion.

There were times when I absolutely had to get somewhere as quickly as a friendly constable would allow and the WRX would do the job, performing faithfully and diligently, responding to my every command. But there was never any spark. The interaction was one dimensional. The Subaru was quick across country, surefooted, confidence-inspiring and... that's about it. This was not a car you bonded with. You got in, you drove, you got out. If it wasn't for the poor ride, pretty much every journey would have been forgettable. A colleague suggested I should experiment with the active centre diff, before I pointed out – as





Left: cornering grip was a strong point. **Below left:** SI-Drive dial could bring the engine to life, but the switch for the diff made little difference. **Bottom:** STI wasn't a patch on its Impreza forebears



'I wanted to forget every journey in the WRX. It did nothing remarkable to warrant putting up with its faults'

did others who had tried the same – that it had as much effect on how the car drove as the EU does telling Greece to pay its debts.

The WRX's biggest problem is that the circuit layout has changed. It's no longer a rally stage that crests and dips and wraps itself around a mountain and threads through a forest. The circuit is now home to the likes of Renaultsport Méganes, Leon Cupras and, yes, the bloody Golf R. These are now the cars that thrill and entertain where once Subaru, and Mitsubishi, dominated. I can remember every last detail of a drive in our Mégane Trophy long-termer, but equally all I wanted to do was forget every journey in the WRX. It did nothing remarkable to warrant putting up with its faults.

Running costs weren't a shock, though. It returned between 25 and 30mpg on a run, and the Dunlop SportMaxx tyres only started to approach their wear indicators towards the end of our time with the car (at just over 13,000 miles), although some of that can be put

down to the STI only ever finding itself on track in the rain. The one service we had, at 11,000 miles (1000 late), cost £221.48 and was the only expenditure.

As a postscript, we had another WRX STI delivered after our long-termer returned to Subaru. And it was better. It was sharper, more responsive across the whole dynamic spectrum and suffered less driveline shunt. It had also covered a similar number of miles. Had our car been a duffer? Possibly, but even considering the improvements the second test car showed, it would still be hard to recommend a WRX STI to all but a committed fan. **x**

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Date acquired	December 2014
Duration of test	6 months
Total test mileage	6888
Overall mpg	26.3
Costs	£221.48
Purchase price	£28,995
Trade-in value	£23,995
Depreciation	£5000

SEAT Leon ST Cupra 280

Our new Cupra is racking up the miles – and Parrott is enjoying every single one of them



I IT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN here long, but I have already clocked up over 5000 miles in my new workhorse, and I couldn't be happier – as a photographer's car, the Cupra 280 is simply brilliant.

Given the size of the Leon estate, I initially had worries that it might not provide me with the same level of excitement as, say, a hot hatch. But I needn't have worried, as once I'd set the electric driver's seat to my perfect driving position (OK, the ability to go a little lower would be nice) and set off for a long drive, I instantly forgot about the extra booty on this Cupra 280. The car feels composed, with hardly any sign of understeer through corners, and the strength of the in-gear acceleration is addictive.

The feedback is also impressive – not just through the steering wheel, but also the seat. The last two cars I drove that gave me this kind of feedback were the Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R and my Mk2 Golf GTI, which are both fitted with race seats.

Driving across Wales and having some fun on the Brecon Beacons roads while shooting last month's SUV triple-test demonstrated just how useful the Cupra estate is. For example, when using our Kia Proceed GT as a camera car, the back seats would have been full of equipment that would drive me insane with knocking noises on motorways and then prevent me from driving properly on A- and B-roads because things would be moving around in the cabin.

The Cupra, on the other hand, allows me to fit a hard case, tripod, cleaning kit and camera bags all in the boot without impacting on the car's performance or the way I have to drive. This is without doubt the best camera car I've had the chance to drive to date.

Aston Parrott
(@AstonParrott)

Date acquired	May 2015
Total mileage	6811
Mileage this month	4351
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	33.2



Mini John Cooper Works

A month in, and Eveleigh's come to a decision about our 228bhp JCW's automatic gearbox

S SO, THAT AUTOMATIC gearbox. I'll admit I was a little apprehensive when I first heard that our long-term JCW would be thus equipped. But a month in, I'm relieved to report that I'm much more relaxed about it, because as auto 'boxes go, this one is a good one.

Left to its own devices it's perfect for pottering around, shifting up and down pretty much as you'd hope. Perhaps the only niggle with auto mode is how keen it is to resume control when you've used the paddles to briefly override it. Hold a steady throttle for more than a couple of seconds in this state and the 'box will start slipping back up through the cogs – usually just as you're about to squeeze the throttle to take advantage of the gear you've manually selected.

You can work around this, though. Not least by nudging the lever to the left to select full manual control. Here things get even better. For a start, you really do get full manual

control: the 'box won't upshift if you hit the limiter, and it won't downshift if you push the accelerator to the floor and past the little kickdown click at the end of its travel. So it's entirely down to you and the paddles (or the lever, which operates in the correct pull-for-up, push-for-down manner). And the shifts themselves are quick and slick, so you're not left wondering why Mini didn't go for a dual-clutch transmission instead.

The 'box has a couple of neat little tricks in manual mode, too. Want to select the lowest possible gear without having to click the left-hand paddle three or four times? You could pull and hold the paddle (this works when you're in auto mode, too), but even quicker is to floor the accelerator and click the paddle once. Nice touch.

The other trick is the launch control. To engage it, with the 'box in manual you select Sport mode, switch the stability control to its middle 'Dynamic Traction Control' setting, hold the brakes with your

left foot and floor the accelerator with your right. This will cause the revs to rise to around 2400rpm (peak torque stretches from 1250 to 4800rpm in this new JCW). Now just release the brake and away you go. Yes, it's almost entirely pointless in a front-drive car with 228bhp, but it's a fun addition nonetheless. The result is a claimed 0-62mph time of 6.1sec, down from 6.3sec with the conventional manual 'box.

So would I choose the auto? Erm, no. For me, the JCW isn't *quite* rapid enough to justify a paddleshift, so I'd rather have that third pedal and a lever to stir around to top-up the involvement levels. That said, if you particularly wanted a paddleshift and specced it on your JCW, I wouldn't think any less of you for it. ☒

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired	May 2015
Total mileage	3805
Mileage this month	1810
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	33.5

END OF TERM

Skoda
Octavia vRS

Smith bids farewell to his 'thinking man's Golf GTI' – a car that impressed so much a friend bought one

AFTER NINE MONTHS, THE time has come to wave goodbye to our Octavia vRS Hatch. During this time it's shared some of the most hallowed asphalt in Wales with some seriously exciting hypercars, seen the local recycling centre more times than I care to remember, and has been the subject of many conversations with friends and strangers contemplating buying one. It's also been a tricky car to report on each month, as it neither does anything outstandingly exciting nor shockingly offensive. I therefore started to nitpick, which isn't entirely fair on what is a perfectly fine automobile.

My 'ownership' wasn't without issue, though. A squeaking sunroof took two trips back to Skoda to resolve, the problem traced to a lack of lube on the seals. The technician I spoke to said they've not experienced this with any other cars, and from my own experience of driving several Octavias with the same panoramic roof, I've no reason not to believe this.

It's worth stating again that the ride on the optional 19-inch wheels was too harsh on bumpy UK roads. With 18s it was far better, even if the car did then look slightly under-wheeled. But in Race Blue, with the black grille and mirrors, our vRS still looked the part. Others seemed to agree, too, as I received more

'On a day-to-day basis, in the real world, the vRS felt genuinely special'

positive comments about it than for the Focus ST Estate I ran before.

While it was never going to set your pants on fire in the handling department, with a 2-litre turbo petrol engine developing 217bhp, the vRS was certainly quick enough to be entertaining, and with the six-speed manual 'box there was enough to make you feel involved in the process of driving, unlike so many other cars in this category. On a day-to-day basis, in the real world, the vRS felt genuinely special, inside and out.

The bucket-style seats looked the business and were comfy, too, although they perhaps lacked a smidgen of lateral support. I loved the red piping around the seats, which matched the stitching on the three-spoke sport steering wheel (lifted almost straight from the Audi RS range). The build quality and materials were up there with those

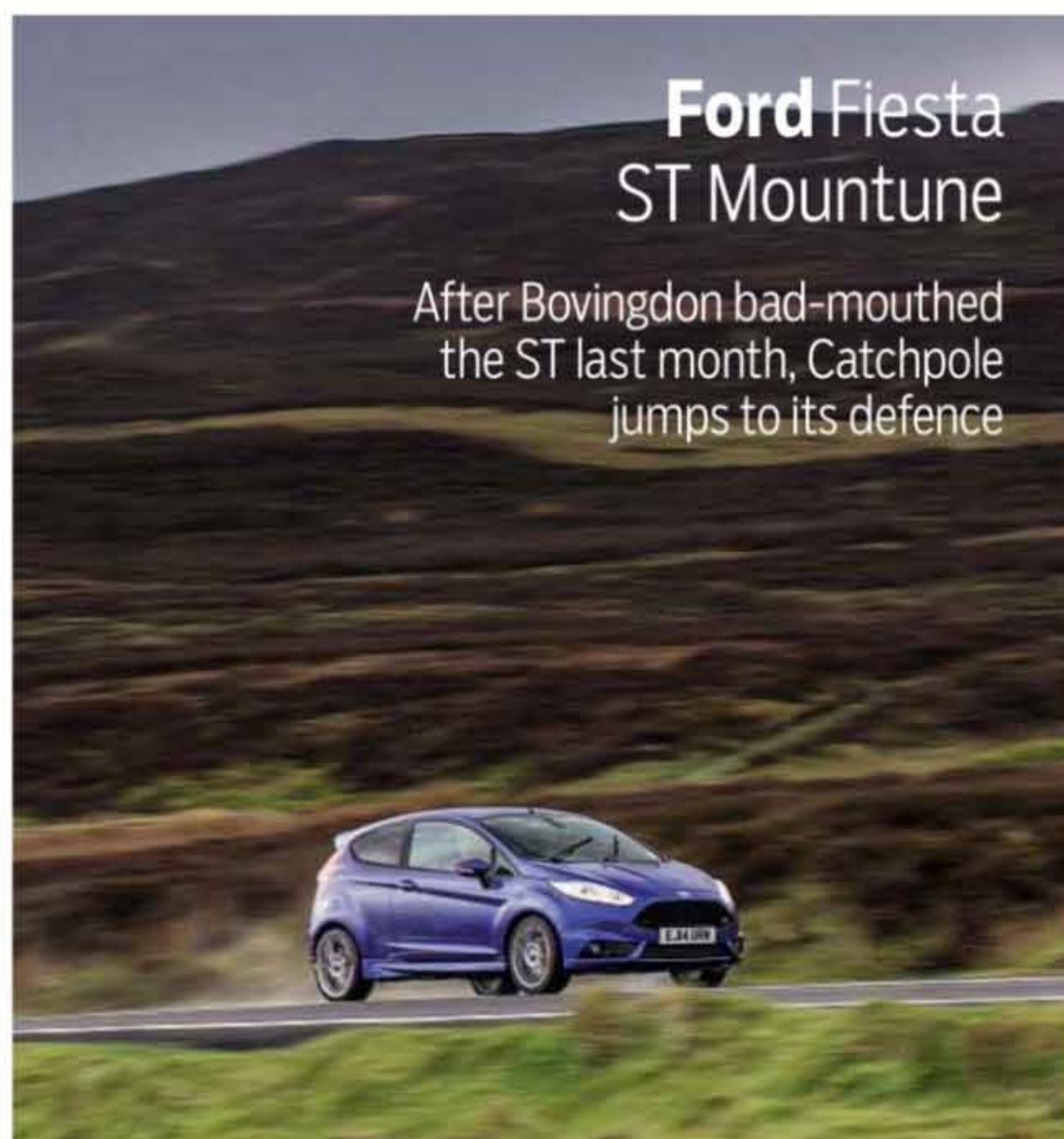
of modern VWs. Talking of which, while our vRS cost £28,595 with options (up from £23,755 basic), a similarly specced Golf GTI would set you back around £36,000. The vRS, then, is the thinking man's GTI: same power, related chassis, considerably cheaper, and with far more rear legroom and a much larger boot.

So the big question, I suppose, is would I recommend the vRS? The answer is a very resolute yes! Cheap, frugal, easy to run, easy to look at, interesting up to a point – it's got an awful lot going for it. In fact, after experiencing our vRS first hand and chatting at length with me, my good friend Will went and spent his hard-earned on a Race Blue estate. Judging by the smile on his face each time I see him in it, I think it's fair to say that he's pretty pleased with his purchase. And so he should be. ✉

Dean Smith (@evoDeanSmith)

Date acquired	September 2014
Duration of test	9 months
Total test mileage	16,982
Overall mpg	34.1
Costs	£555.92 (four tyres)
Purchase price	£28,595
Trade-in value	£18,600
Depreciation	£9995





Ford Fiesta ST Mountune

After Bovingdon bad-mouthed the ST last month, Catchpole jumps to its defence

A AT THE RISK OF TURNING the Fast Fleet pages into a war of words akin to the letters page of the Daily Telegraph, I feel I need to exercise some sort of right of reply. Last month Jethro was rather churlish about the ST and claimed that his Audi S1 was clearly the best hot hatch in the group test in *evo* 211, despite the result suggesting otherwise.

Now, the Audi is a very fine and thoroughly enjoyable car. It is certainly faster than the Fiesta, but I don't think it's more fun than the adjustable little Ford. Jethro also overlooked one crucial fact – the car with the four-ringed badge costs nearly 40 per cent more than the one with the blue oval.

I know that Jethro has had his hands full with Greece's financial woes (has anyone seen Bovingdon and Alexis Tsipras in the same room? No, thought not) but, unlike with supercars, say, I think price is a

rather important point to consider with hot hatches. Yes, the Audi is undeniably more premium, but I'll wager my fully laden £20k ST has more kit than even his optioned £31k S1. After all, even a basic ST comes with a USB port, unlike the Audi.

Regardless of price, I love the Fiesta and would gladly drive it instead of plenty of much more expensive machinery. Sadly, however, its year with us is coming to an end, so in its absence the S1 will rule the hot hatch corner of the *evo* car park for the next little while. There will be a full end of term report next month. Yours sincerely, Disgruntled of Wollaston. ✕

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Date acquired	July 2014
Total mileage	18,629
Mileage this month	811
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	38.1

Ford Focus RS

The classic Ford develops its first problem under Lane's ownership, and goes up against a modern descendent

O OH IT WAS ALL GOING A little bit too well, wasn't it? Burly engine purring with metronomic reliability, fuel consumption tolerable, furious appetite for expensive rubber unexpectedly absent...

Then *clonk*. A triplet of rapid-fire clonks, in fact, reverberating not from beyond the bulkhead – sweet relief – but from beneath the

floorpan (and somewhere near the rear of the car and to the passenger-side, if the backs of my thighs weren't deceiving me).

I was relieved because clamour in the chassis is usually straightforward to diagnose and you can get on with a fix. In this case part of the Focus's exhaust plumbing, being what Ford would probably label 'cost effective' but the rest of

us would term 'cheap', had corroded so badly that the rear hangar had sheared. The consequence was that the tubing from the resonator back was thumping the undercarriage in the manner of Nicko McBrain at the Hammersmith Apollo. Except sounding nowhere near as good. The solution will have to be a new exhaust. Wrought entirely of stainless steel this time.

I recently spent some time in Henry's Mountune-fettled Fiesta ST before it goes back to Ford. That will be a sad day, because what a car it is. With 212bhp it's an exact match for my 12-year-old RS in power terms, but turn it up and key dissimilarities reveal themselves.

The taut Focus is the more extreme of the pair, no surprises there. Its leading axle is viciously agile and there's an electrifying sensation of your hands hovering just above the wheels, pulling the strings as you bury the tread blocks into the road under late braking then turn in with almost telepathic precision. Then it's a case of frantically feeding in turbocharged torque as the diff hooks up and you're away. Given its reputation as a

wayward rebel, the original Focus RS is actually very clinical.

The Fiesta, meanwhile, does without a limited-slip diff and is much more softly sprung, but is that to its detriment? I don't think so. The moment needed for the body to take up slack in the suspension gives the driver time to recognise and quickly react to any stance the car is taking. Once settled, the same compliancy means the tyres stubbornly bed into the road in a way that the comparatively skittish Focus doesn't always allow. The upshot? A powerful temptation to drive this car on the ragged edge absolutely everywhere.

Do I think the ST is faster than the RS? On the road, yes, it probably is. The Mountune kit means its power-to-weight ratio monsters the veteran's. But is the newer car more thrilling? I honestly can't say. Both are brilliant. ✕

Richard Lane (@_rlane_)

Date acquired	January 2015
Total mileage	70,455
Mileage this month	1217
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	26.8





Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy

Meaden reflects on a scorching group-test victory for the Trophy against the new Civic Type R and other rivals

I IF YOU READ OUR CIVIC Type R group test last month, you'll know the Trophy pipped some very tough opposition to emerge as the winner. Of course, as custodian of the Renault, this success brought me a kind of paternal joy, but it was also a unique opportunity to appreciate the Trophy's brilliance afresh.

What struck me – and everyone else on the test – was the Renault's simplicity and purity. Everything about it is honest and organic. There's nothing contrived about the way it goes or looks. The weights of the controls are solid and consistent, the style of delivery lively and physical. I even like the fact you actually have to get down on the floor and manually adjust the excellent Öhlins dampers, though I'm happy to concede that most people would prefer the convenience of pressing a Sport button and settling for whatever they get setup wise.

Of the five cars in the test, I'd always regarded the Civic as the Mégane's biggest threat. In the end

the Honda fell short of expectations, but I still think it's the closest in spirit and attitude to the Renault. Okay, so its OTT styling is divisive, but attack a great stretch of road in it and you will lose yourself in the experience. It's not perfect, but it's unashamedly hardcore and I like the fact that Honda has come out all guns blazing.

In truth, I was surprised the Mégane was only a tenth off the Type R's lap time at Anglesey Circuit, for the Honda has a chunky power

advantage, feels every bit as grippy and has better brakes, too. You can drive it with more aggression, place it with more precision and have a bit more fun while you're at it. For the record, the Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 was half a second quicker than the Mégane, posting a seriously impressive lap time, but there's something about the SEAT that makes it hard to connect with on an emotional level. No such trouble for the Renault or Honda, which wear

their hearts on their sleeves. I still prefer the former, but the more I drove the latter, the more I liked it.

We often describe the Mégane as the 911 RS of hot hatches. Two days on the UK's best roads and one of its best racetracks, against newer and more powerful rivals, did nothing to diminish that assertion. It might be getting long in the tooth, but the Trophy still has plenty of bite. ✕

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Above: Mégane met Civic in last month's test. **Right:** Meaden tweaks his Öhlins

Date acquired	November 2014
Total mileage	11,525
Mileage this month	1311
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	29.0



Volkswagen Golf GTI

Loose top mounts result in a comprehensive suspension overhaul for Parrott's classic VW

THE ONE THING I FIND myself doing a lot with my Golf is tinkering. It's normally just a case of making things fit better or tightening screws, but I recently discovered that my front top-mount bushes were on their last legs and allowing the struts to move up and down fairly dramatically.

So I started trawling internet forums for solid top mounts to fit my Weitec Hicon GT coilovers. After many dead ends I came across the XTA coilover kit from ST (a sister brand to KW), which comes with camber- and caster-adjustable top mounts, and has rebound-adjustable damping. I decided to go for it and replace the whole lot.

Opening a box of new coilovers makes any true petrolhead feel like a 16-year-old girl meeting a member



'The new coilovers went straight in and I was soon adjusting the damping'

of One Direction. I was very excited. With yellow springs and jet-black top mounts, the kit looked superb and the build quality seemed top-notch, too. Most importantly, the adjustment settings looked reassuringly simple to use.

For the fitting I took the Golf to R-Tec Auto Design in St Albans. They've been modifying cars for longer than I've been on this planet, and after owner Adrian Ripp had shown me around his dazzling showroom and workshop, he introduced me to Alan, the suspension technician who would be fitting my shiny new hardware.

The first step was to remove the old coilovers, which can sometimes be a pain, with seized or rounded-off bolts causing grief. Luckily for Alan, the kit seemed to fall out of the Golf's wheelarches within minutes.



Above: old Weitec coilovers (in green) have been swapped for new ST setup

The new coilovers went straight in with no problems, too, and I was soon using an Allen key (inserted into the top of each coilover) to adjust the damping – I'm going to start on the middle setting and work my way through the firmer ones. Within two hours the car was on the wheel alignment machine.

Alan had measured the car's ride-height on the old kit and replicated it with the XTAs, so I can make a fair comparison between the two. I'll let you know my verdict next time. ✕

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired	April 2012
Total mileage	175,909
Mileage this month	35
Costs this month	£1095 (suspension) £180 (fitting)
mpg this month	30.2

Renaultsport Clio 182

Sheehan's quest for the optimum hot hatch driving experience continues

SSOME 11 YEARS AGO, IN *evo* 066, Richard Meaden wrote: 'Climb into the 182 and the first thing you notice is that the seating position isn't brilliant.'

I think he was being kind to the then brand new version of the Clio. Yes, it won the group test, beating the likes of the R53 Mini Cooper S and EP3 Honda Civic Type R, but had Meaden spent more time behind the 182's wheel, I'm pretty sure he'd have grown weary of its bus-like ergonomics. I certainly have.

While the driving position isn't uncomfortable (the seats are in fact very supportive), it feels like you are being robbed of the chassis' most

intricate messages by having your bum so unusually high up.

I've resisted buying new seats for four years, but recent experience of the almost infinitely adjustable chairs in a Porsche 911 reminded me just how magical a good posterior position feels. The tipping point came when I sampled a Clio Cup race car as a passenger. It felt like I was an integral part of the chassis, sat just millimetres off its floor.

So now, having bought a pair of black vinyl Sparco R100 reclining sports seats and some sliders and OMP subframes from sportseats4u.co.uk, I'm hoping to shrink the gap between the road and

Right: the 182's heavily bolstered seats aren't uncomfortable, but they are too high



my backside. It's all ready to go in, but there's a problem: I have nothing to fasten the seatbelts into as the clips are bolted directly into the standard seats. Any ideas? ✕

Sam Sheehan
(@evoSamSheehan)

Date acquired	May 2011
Total mileage	114,069
Mileage this month	1102
Costs this month	£398 (seats) £140 (frames) £71.80 (sliders)
mpg this month	33.4



END OF TERM

McLaren 12C Spider

After almost a year together, the SSO says goodbye to his third, and probably last, 12C

T

THE END CAME SUDDENLY and was not expected.

The 12C Spider had been dropped off for its first annual service a few days before the call came. The basic message: a car with the spec you have been looking for is coming in next week. Details and an offer sheet have been emailed.

I was at an airport, so scampered to a spot with Wi-Fi and downloaded all the details. Two phone calls later, a deal was done and the Spider was history. This was in line with a

strange trend that I seem to have developed: parting with cars while they are off being serviced. It started with the Ferrari F50, continued with the Jaguar XJR-15, and has now been repeated with the Spider.

I have now owned three 12Cs: one coupe and two Spiders. The coupe was a 2012 car, the right-hand-drive Spider a 2013, and the left-hand-drive Spider a 2014. In terms of build quality, they got better every year, with the last car definitely the best. The only issue I had with it was one minor sensor that failed, and it was replaced in less than an hour. The other two both had more than one unplanned trip back to a dealership to have niggles sorted. Other than that sensor, the 2014 12C was completely reliable and well up to the task of being used daily.

In fact, as a daily driver it was brilliant. I drove it in rain, sun, blistering, brain-boiling sun, and on freezing roads. It never put a foot wrong, and on slippery roads the use of Winter mode kept the rear firmly planted. With the nose lift deployed,

it could handle speed bumps and badly angled driveways without scraping. The car got left in the garage on a battery conditioner for weeks at a time but always started on the first prod of the button.

Fuel consumption was very reasonable and there were no other costs. Not even a drop of oil was used. As the car was both purchased and sold in multi-car deals (more on the latter soon), it's difficult to give an exact depreciation figure, but typically you'd be looking at around \$50k (c£33k) on a car like this.

Each of the 12Cs I've owned has had a slightly different spec. The coupe was fitted with ceramic brakes and the other two had cast-iron discs. While the latter are excellent, I did prefer the ceramics as they were brilliant on the Autobahn. The first two 12Cs had IRIS v1 fitted originally and it was about as useful as a brick. The IRIS v2 that came with the 2014 Spider (and which I had retrofitted to the 2013 Spider) was a significant step forward – albeit from a very low base.

Two of the 12Cs had full leather seats and one had leather and 'Space' fabric. I definitely preferred the latter as it is a bit cooler and holds you better when you push the car hard. The only other difference between the three was the 'swipe' door handles on the coupe. While theoretically a very cool feature, I was never able to master the technique and almost always used the key fob to open the doors.

It feels like I have now closed my McLaren 12C era. If I had to drive from New York to Miami, or London to Rome, I would not have a single concern about taking a 12C Spider. It has the ability to handle everything thrown at it effortlessly. As a daily driver my last one was brilliant, and made the start and end of each day a bit more special. 📧

Secret Supercar Owner

Date acquired	August 2014
Duration of test	11 months
Total test mileage	1580
Overall mpg	18.0
Costs	£0

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-9 kg

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Volkswagen Amarok

Medieval Italy gets acquainted with an unlikely road-trip hero

T HIS, PEOPLE, IS WHERE working with **evo** designer Will Beaumont gets you.

Because beyond the odd Johnny Cash record and a furtive curiosity in NASCAR, I never really saw myself as a truck kinda guy.

It should also be noted that I dislike dungarees, have no interest in coal-rolling and didn't until very recently know that 'heli-hogging' is a thing. So why, then, did I recently find myself pressing our VW pickup along a baking Italian autostrada, enthusiastically slapping the steering wheel and nodding my head like a loon to Luke Bryan's hilariously terrible but aptly named hit album *Tailgates & Tanlines?* Where the hell did it all go so wrong?

Beaumont's unhealthy love of country music and his faraway dream of pickup ownership have played a big part in this, methinks. Could it be that his questionable outlook on life somehow invaded my subconscious? I can't honestly say otherwise, because the moment it



became clear our Subaru was going to be out of action on the required dates for a boys' trip to the charming mountain-top *villaggio* of Monte San Martino, I started badgering **evo**'s film-making double-denim specialist, Sam Riley, for his thuggish new long-term. In no time at all, I'd secured perhaps the most inappropriate machine in Fast Fleet history for a 1500-mile jolly across Europe.

Yet, over ten days in the divine foothills of the Sibillini mountains and on Europe's expressways, the Amarok was never particularly unsuitable. At all. There was almost two feet of emptiness between me and the guy riding shotgun, which I liked because personal space is a

luxury on a road trip. The back-seat bandits also had reason to be chuffed, because the rear of the cab is huge and airy, too. But the best thing about this particular truck is its manners. In terms of wind noise and tyre roar it makes a mockery of my Focus RS, and size aside, inside it's just like being in a Golf, which is excellent. Factor in a high driving position and comfortable seats and this car is a strong everyday proposition, if, that is, you can put up with JCB proportions and leaf springs (don't even think about hustling this thing).

The Amarok, of course, is a poor substitute for a Ford F150 if your aim is to scratch some hillbilly itch.

It might be just about the biggest truck you can currently buy in the UK – not to mention the most curious thing to leave Wolfsburg since the Golf Plus – but it's a functional being to its core. That means no V8 (just a 2-litre twin-turbo TDI) and no lairy tailpipes. Very much of the Japanese school of utility and not, alas, the infamous American one, then. Even so, there's no going back now. I really do like trucks. ✕

Richard Lane (@_rlane_)

Date acquired	March 2015
Total mileage	8971
Mileage this month	4226
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	271

Lamborghini Murciélago

Lamborghini Murciélago

George's V12 supercar is almost whole again and has 300,000 miles in its sights

I T'S BEEN SOME TIME since my last update on the Murciélago's rebuild. The car is now in the capable hands of Lamborghini Manchester, and it needs only its dash re-covered in grey Alcantara and a few fairly straightforward mechanical jobs before the sparkling new windscreen is finally fitted.

After its disastrous front-end smash back in November 2012, the Murciélago spent three months at accident repair specialists Chartwell, in Derby, having its banana-shaped

chassis straightened on a giant, custom-made jig. It then returned to 6th Gear Experience's HQ, where our technicians took over, in their spare time bolting together the many new parts and replacing the suspension, brakes and much of the drivetrain.

Once a rebuild of this magnitude begins, it's easy to fall into the trap of widening the goalposts and replacing or refurbishing almost every component. Well, I'm guilty as charged, which accounts for the extended delay in returning the Murciélago to the tarmac.

Fortunately, since the V12 and gearbox were rebuilt shortly before that violent argument with an oak tree, these don't need touching. This means the car should reach the 300,000-mile mark within a year.

There's no doubt that its big, aluminium gear gate will be quite a change from the Gatling-gun shifts of the 458, and the Tubi exhaust will tax the ears even further. Still, I'm not complaining. I'm sure next door will be though... ✕

Simon George
(@6gearexperience)



Date acquired	September 2004
Total mileage	258,098
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	I wish

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2010/10, 27,000 miles, Auto, Storm Black, Black, Bang and Olufsen Sound, Wind deflector..... £92,999

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GTC MULLINER



2011/61, 9,900 miles, Hallmark Silver, Red Quilted leather, Black hood, Reverse camera £99,999

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2012/62, 25,000 Miles, 27,800 Miles, Platinum Silver, Seashell cream, Starlight headlining £179,999

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2013/63, 3,500 Miles, Onyx Black, Linen, Black wood £114,499

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Bentley Azure, 2006/56, 41,000 Miles, Diamond Black, Black leather, Piano Black wood	£89,990
Bentley Continental GT V8, 2013/63, 2014 Model, Glacier White, Black.....	£99,990
Bentley Continental GT Mulliner Coupe W12, 2012, 15,800 miles, Extreme Silver, Black, Reverse camera.....	£87,999
Bentley Continental GTC, Choice of ten in stock, from	£54,990
Bentley Continental GT Coupe, Choice of 8 in stock from.....	£26,999 - £99,990
Range Rover 3.0 Vogue SE, 2015/15, Delivery Miles, Black, Black, Rear screens	£88,990
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Porsche 996 GT2

There's much grinding of teeth as the only thing keeping Trott's supercar off the road is its tyres



FIRST, THE BAD NEWS. I haven't driven the GT2 since I bought it. The tyres are kaput. There's lots of tread, but at over five years old the rubber looks like it's been peeled off that table tennis bat you found in the shed. I'm not risking it.

Finding suitable tyres in the correct size has not been easy. Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s are in short supply and I'm not prepared to drive the car on more road-biased tyres from unfamiliar brands. As I write this it looks like there's a Pirelli

P Zero Rosso available – and I have good memories of my McLaren 12C performing well on Pirellis – but again availability in the sizes I need isn't great. The fronts (235/40 ZR18) seem to be pretty easy to find, but the chunky rears (315/30 ZR18)? Less so. The upshot is that the car still lives at specialist RPM Technik and almost every week they call me to ask, 'Are you going to collect that car you bought from us?'

And the good news? Considering its reputation and value, the GT2 has proven to be pretty reasonable

to insure. Using Sky Insurance, with 3000 miles and five trackdays annually and secure, locked storage, the premium came in at £745. If I'm completely honest, I didn't get a quote before I bought the car then had a sudden panic that it would be in the thousands. Indeed I had flashbacks to a day when Harry Metcalfe came to the office looking rather grey. I asked him what was up and he showed me the insurance renewal on his Zonda. It had tripled.

The GT2, while not comparable on price with a Zonda, is not far off

in terms of performance. It also has fewer traction aids. A Pagani-type premium would've meant a 'For Sale' sign appearing in the window...

So, the car is fuelled, taxed, insured, has just had a major service, is sparkling clean and the sun is shining. But I can't drive it. Grrrr. ☒

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	June 2015
Total mileage	26,015
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	£745 (insurance)
mpg this month	n/a

Audi S1

Bovingdon's junior hot hatch takes a walloping

I WAS STANDING ON my driveway when it happened. Dickie Meaden had popped over and parked his Mégane, so the S1 was temporarily usurped and sat on the side of the road. He was ready to leave, engine running and reverse selected. I was about to turn and walk back inside when a Punto came careering backwards out of the opposite driveway and crunched into the poor little Audi. Ouch.

The damage wasn't too bad and the other driver was profusely apologetic, but I felt more wounded than I'd expected to see the S1

battered and bruised. Fortunately, and despite the impact affecting the rear bumper and a rear wing and taking a good chunk out of an alloy wheel spoke, there was no suspension damage and the S1 is still as sweet as ever to drive. It's currently with Henry, though I expect it'll soon be snaffled away for repair and perhaps it won't return...

So I'm adjusting to life without the S1 already and I miss it quite a lot. It's been one of the most illuminating long-term loans I've had because it just gets better with exposure. Often the cars you expect to be 'great to live with' are actually just a bit boring, but the S1's big engine/little car formula is so enticing, and a great big helping of Audi quality and intuitiveness just adds to the appeal.

The S1 has also been to the recent **evo** track evenings at Bedford



Autodrome, so the tyres are a little ragged but it's nice to see the fronts and rears sharing the load almost evenly. Though the S1 feels like a front-driver most of the time, there's no doubt it's much more balanced than fast Audis of old. On track its appetite for being pitched into corners almost backwards is huge fun. It'll be a hard car to replace. ☒

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon)



Date acquired	December 2014
Total mileage	10,242
Mileage this month	2309
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.6

Audi S1



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Extra Urban 38.7 - 39.8 (7.3-7.1) Combined 29.1 (9.7) CO2 emissions 225 g/km*

*Fuel and CO2 Emissions subject to confirmation by end of August 2015



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VAUXHALL VX220 TURBO

Built by Lotus to boost the Griffin's brand cachet, these lightweight specials are now fast appreciating

IT SOMETIMES FEELS AS IF THE world has forgotten about the Vauxhall VX220. Launched in 2000, this little sports car bears suspiciously similar proportions to the second-gen Lotus Elise, and with good reason.

Vauxhall wanted a sporty roadster to build a bit of a buzz around its performance models and Lotus welcomed the opportunity to share the cost of developing a platform for the S2 Elise. The VX220 was the result. However, other than sharing a basic aluminium tub, the two cars are quite different – Lotus claims just nine per cent of the VX220's components are shared with the Elise.

Understandably, Vauxhall wanted to use its own engine, initially a 145bhp, 2.2-litre four-cylinder unit. Larger, 17-inch wheels and softer suspension also changed the car's character significantly from that of the Elise.

Then, in 2003, the VX220 Turbo arrived. With the 197bhp 2-litre turbo engine from the Astra GSi, it was a much more exhilarating prospect on a greasy British B-road – especially with no traction or stability control. Weighing 930kg, the VXT offered supercar-matching performance, with a 0-60mph time of just 4.7sec.

Lotus built just 1940 VXTs (against 5267 regular VX220s), so supply is relatively limited. Second-

hand prices dipped below £10,000 for a time but have now started moving the other way, with good cars selling for around £15k today. If you're after something really special, then try finding one of the 65 VXR220s (220bhp) built to mark the end of production, but you'll have to budget £20,000.

Finding a standard VXT can be difficult, but you shouldn't be afraid of upgrades, especially new exhausts and ECU remaps, which can easily liberate 30-40bhp safely. Just make sure the car is wearing some grippy tyres and start enjoying some depreciation-free weekend motoring.

Matthew Hayward

Found on classicandperformancecar.com



'04 Vauxhall VX220 Turbo

£14,995 romansofstalbars.co.uk

24,000 miles, grey with a black/red interior, great service history, sports seats with adjustable lumbar support



'03 Vauxhall VX220 Turbo

£15,800 lotushardtops.com

38,000 miles, Petrol Blue, supplied with hard-top, extensively modified, quickshift gearlever, Toyo R1R tyres



'03 Vauxhall VX220 Turbo

£16,500 jct9.com

11,200 miles, silver with red roof, superb condition, never used in winter or wet weather, 230bhp remap

Or consider...

Lotus Exige S2

Built on the same site as the VX220, the character of this Lotus is very different. It's a more engaging and extremely hardcore choice – £25k secures a good one.

Renault Sport Spider

Slower and more expensive than the Vauxhall, but there's still something special about this rare, 148bhp French fancy. Good examples start at £18k.

Westfield SEi

This British kit-car uses many engines, but a popular choice is Vauxhall's XE 'Redtop', which is capable of developing more than 200bhp. A well set up example would give the VXT a run for its money.

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Ask the expert

Your buying questions answered



Q I am fortunate enough to own a Ferrari F430 Spider but, with two small children, rarely get to drive it. Rather than simply selling the car, I had the idea of swapping it for something that now costs around the same but may soon appreciate (or will not lose value). That will at least be some consolation for the low amount of use the car will get. I was thinking of a 997 GT3 or possibly a Ferrari 599, since these seem to be good value at present. Another option could be an Aston Martin V12 Vantage. Do you have any other suggestions, or should I just keep the F430?

Paul Williams, Switzerland

A You've certainly got a conundrum on your hands. The F430 is a great car and with values on the rise (they currently sit between £75k and £90k) there's a very strong argument for hanging

on to it. Trading to the larger 599 GTB (pictured) would probably put you in the same position, as their values are climbing too, with prices starting around £100k and rising to £250k for one of the six RHD manual cars built. But 599 running costs will be greater than the F430's.

As with the Ferraris, the 997 GT3 is also enjoying a rise in values at the moment. GT3s are currently fetching very strong money for a number of reasons, chiefly because of the driving experience and because anything with a GT3 badge on it is hot property. However, they also offer relatively affordable running costs compared to the two Italians.

That said, we'd hang on to the F430 for the time being. Its value will rise along with those of your other suggestions, its history is known to you and the F430 is still one of the *evo* greats. And *that* engine... **MH**

Email your question to experts@evo.co.uk

Just looking

The pick of the classifieds this month



Alfa Romeo 156 GTA

£10,950

TCS Group, Manchester

tcsgroup.co

01706 527162

The announcement of the new Giulia has turned our thoughts to hot Alfa Romeos of yesteryear. In many ways the new car is a spiritual successor to the 156 GTA of 2002 – both are V6-endowed saloons, both wage battle with the BMW M3 of their respective generation and both feature quintessentially Italian styling.

Unlike in the new Giulia, though, the GTA's V6 is naturally aspirated – the 3.2-litre 'Busso' engine is arguably the defining feature of the car, singing sweetly towards 7000rpm and producing a peak output of 247bhp (and the front-wheel-drive chassis can handle it, too).

This 62,212-mile, 2002 example is an attractive proposition. With power, looks and (some) luxury, it's a potential future classic at a tempting price.

Sam Sheehan (@evoSamSheehan)



Porsche 911 GT3 (991)

£144,995

Amari Supercars, Preston

amarisupercars.com

01772 663777

Sitting next to the new Porsche 911 GT3 RS, the standard 991 GT3 might seem a little tame. It lacks the RS's wide-arched Turbo body for a start, but while the Rennsport car is ultimately sharper, the GT3 is still exceptionally talented. 'The whole car displays incredible precision melded with a fluency and poise,' said Jethro Bovingdon (*evo* 206). 'It all feels so easy and intuitive.'

This example at Amari Supercars has covered a modest 3097 miles since its 2014 registration. It's also well equipped, coming with the Sport Chrono Package, cruise control and a lifting front axle.

The order book for new 991 GT3s is now closed, but such is the continued demand for the model that used values have comfortably surpassed the original £100,540 list price. This is far from the most expensive example out there, though, which should earn it a place on any prospective 991 GT3 buyer's shortlist. **SS**

Trader chat

Jörg Banzhaf Westside Cars, Hamburg

Caterham recently announced that it had opened a new showroom in Germany, so we thought we had better talk to Jörg Banzhaf, the manager at Westside Cars in Hamburg, to find out who will be buying these British sports cars in the land of the Autobahn.

'Westside Cars will celebrate its tenth anniversary in 2016 and today we are one of the biggest specialists for classic and sports cars in northern Germany.'

said Banzhaf. 'Our main expertise is the sourcing, restoration and sales of classic cars. However, since 2011 we've been selling Lotus cars and now we have the new Caterham operation.'

'We are thrilled by all kinds of cars – as long as they are not really useful but only fun! Everybody who ever sat in a Caterham knows it's not easy to find a car that offers more fun, and it's impossible to find one that offers more smiles per euro.'

'As we have started late in the season, we would be happy to sell four or five cars this year. For 2016 we are targeting over ten. Surprisingly, we find enthusiasts range between 18 and 80 years old. Of course, a Caterham is typically car number three – or usually more – in the owner's garage, so it's clearly for the more affluent part of the population. And surely I cannot imagine somebody in a Caterham who is not an ambitious driver...'



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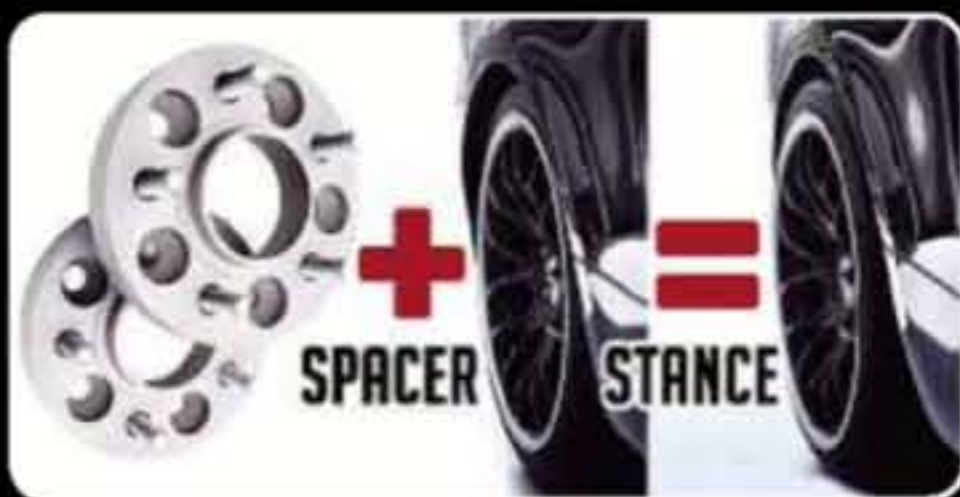
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Buying Guide

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Audi RS4 (B7) 2005-2008



Overview

The supercar-baiting RS4 was a hot favourite when new, and it still is as a used buy today

Words: Peter Tomalin

T HIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME WE'VE CARRIED A BUYING guide to the B7 RS4. Back in January 2010 (*evo* 139), the estimable John Simister declared it a sound second-hand buy as well as a top-drawer drivers' car. 'R8 aside,' he concluded, 'no other recent Audi gets under you skin like this one.'

This RS4's appeal to keen drivers remains as compelling as ever, but how is it stacking up as an ownership proposition a further five years down the road? Is that high-revving, naturally aspirated V8 still a source of undiluted joy, or a high-maintenance liability? And what about the sometimes troublesome Dynamic Ride Control? We spoke to fast Audi specialist APS and also caught up with Darren Gee, our original 'I bought one', who's still clocking up big miles in his beloved RS4, to find out.

The B7-gen RS4 first appeared in summer 2005, though UK sales didn't get into full swing until early 2006. It was available as a saloon and estate (Avant) and also as a rather unhappy cabriolet (best avoided). It bowed out barely two years later when the B8 version of the A4 appeared. Given such a short production run, it's surprising just how many you can find in the classifieds, but that's enduring proof of the way it gripped the petrolhead imagination. The B7 RS4 was simply the best drivers' Audi since the Ur-Quattro.

Beneath the flared arches and aluminium front wings and bonnet, the spec remained essentially unchanged throughout the run: 414bhp 4.2-litre all-aluminium V8 (basically the same unit that would propel the mid-engined R8 that followed soon after), six-speed manual gearbox only, rear-biased four-wheel drive, those DRC reactive dampers to provide added tautness in corners, and a Sport button to sharpen throttle response and open bypass valves in the exhaust. There was an optional Sport pack, which made the car sit a little lower and ride a little more firmly and which added 'active' side bolsters to the front seats.

The B7 RS4 still enjoys a strong following and prices have levelled out, meaning there's plenty of support while depreciation is no longer an issue. Running costs can be, though, so be aware of the potential for hefty bills and take care to find a car that's been well maintained.

Checkpoints

Engine and transmission

The good news is that no new issues have come to light since we last reported on the RS4. The bad news is that it still suffers the same old problem – build-up of carbon around the inlet valves. Not every car is affected, but Andy McLeish at specialist APS says it's a common problem after around 60,000 miles.

'You get oil from the breather system in the inlet tract. Direct injection means there's nothing to wash it off the back of the valves,' he explains. 'It's basically a good day's work to decoke the heads.'

Telltale signs? An engine light on the dash; embers coming out of the exhaust (noticeable from a following car at night). Anything you can do to stop it building up? 'Avoiding lots of short journeys will delay it,' says Andy.

The V8 is otherwise reliable, but some ancillaries can need attention. The two side water radiators are vulnerable to corrosion. Look through the ducts in the bumper for seeping pink antifreeze. If you can get the car on a ramp, also check the oil cooler and pipes for corrosion and seepage. Replacement means taking the front of the car off, and parts alone are over a grand.

Service intervals were officially every 19,000 miles, but APS recommends

10,000 miles or annually. Drivetrains are robust but beware a heavy clutch – replacing it takes around eight hours.

Suspension, steering, brakes

The Dynamic Ride Control dampers are prone to leaking. 'You can keep replacing them,' says Andy, 'but many owners go for Bilstein coilovers, which retain the standard ride height.'

'Bushes and ball joints in the suspension last pretty well but may need replacing around 80,000 miles, depending on the life they've had, so listen out for knocks and bangs from front and back, while bouncy suspension means the DRC's gone. There is a drive-train clonk, but that's just Audi AWD.'

'The brakes are massive – 365mm vented and drilled discs at the front with eight-piston, four-pad calipers. A full set of discs and pads is around £1500 just for the parts, so if they've been recently replaced, that's a big tick. Vibrations through the pedal mean a bill's looming.'

Body, interior, electrics

The driver's seat outer bolster may show signs of wear, while the swollen arches are prone to stone-chipping.



1: robust cabin can hide mileage well – check electronics. **2:** bumper gills an RS4 giveaway.

3: V8 begs to be revved, just avoid frequent short journeys – the inlet valves can coke up fast



What we said



Driven, November 2005

'The V8 catches instantly and bursts into life with a spirited flourish. The gearshift has a delicious precision to it and a genuinely short throw, the Servotronic steering is a shade too light but has none of the finger-twirling slack of cooking A4s.

'The engine isn't quite what you expect, though. The sheer grunt available from as little as 2000rpm might lead you to believe that quattro GmbH had secreted a couple of turbos under the bonnet... It really is a league above an M3 in terms of neck-straining punch from low speeds.

'Audi's DRC suspension system ensures body control is a match for the stupendous performance. Stability is the RS4's overwhelming quality.

'Which, as you may have guessed, means the RS4 is no tail-out hooligan. However, dial out the stability program and it's less doggedly understeery than Audis of old, and through quicker corners you can use a lift on turn-in to bring the rear into play. When you do use the RS4's full arsenal of power, braking, grip and traction, it's devastatingly rapid. An M3 driver wouldn't stay in touch for long on an unfamiliar road.' – **evo** 085



Above: RS4's generous traction can be overcome with brute force, especially in the wet



Above: even today, few large cars cover ground with the excitement of the 414bhp B7

'I bought one' **Darren Gee**

'It's five years since I first reported on my RS4 in **evo**. It now has nearly 75,000 miles on the clock and has proven faultless in the main, serving for daily transport as well as the odd Euro trip and trackday. Other than routine maintenance and consumables, it's only thrown up a couple of warning lights – for an oxygen sensor and a broken solenoid on an inlet manifold valve.

'That said, the clutch pedal went to

the floor at about 45,000 miles – the only time the RS4 has ended up on a tow truck. But, after a new clutch and flywheel, the pressure plate went 8000 miles later and then again after only 4000 miles. Audi UK claimed there were no other reports of faults, but my main dealer in Norwich replaced both plates free of charge. I know many owners wouldn't bother with main dealers, but mine has been wonderful.

'I had the car on a rolling road not that long ago and it produced 389bhp and 295lb ft of torque at the flywheel, which is about right according to those in the know. It's also still on its original DRC dampers, though the oil cooler has been replaced because of corroding pipes. The interior and exterior have held up well, and the car is a superb daily companion, despite the high consumable costs and an 18-20mpg petrol habit!'

In the classifieds



2007 (56) RS4 Avant

- + 141,400 miles
- + Black/black
- + Bose upgrade + Nav Plus
- + Front/rear park assist
- + parkwaymotorgroup.co.uk

£15,450



2007 (56) RS4 Avant

- + 53,500 miles
- + Misano Red/black + FSH
- + Just had major service
- + New discs/pads all round
- + tanyardmotors.co.uk

£19,985



2006 (56) RS4

- + 17,200 miles
- + Avus Silver/black + FSH
- + One owner
- + Sport pack
- + parkwayspecialistcars.co.uk

£34,500

The rivals

BMW M3 (E46)

Rather outgunned by the RS4, the 338bhp M3 still set the dynamic benchmark. CS version is superb. £15-20k buys the best.

Mercedes C55 AMG (W203)

Overshadowed by the RS4 and M3, the subtle C55 still has a 5.4-litre, 367bhp, nat-asp V8 good for 0-60mph in around 5.0sec. A bargain today at around £10k.

Audi RS6 (C5)

If it's an estate you want, the RS6 Avant is worth a look. With 444bhp and 413lb ft, 0-60mph is under 5.0sec. At £10-13k.

Specification

Audi RS4 (Avant in brackets)

Engine V8, 4163cc
Max power 414bhp @ 7800rpm
Max torque 317lb ft @ 5500rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive
Weight 1650kg (1710kg)
Power-to-weight 255bhp/ton (246bhp/ton)
0-62mph 4.7sec (4.9sec, both claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Price new £49,980 (£51,255)

Parts prices

(Prices from autops.co.uk. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges)

Tyres (each) £143.04 (Pirelli P Zero)
Front pads (set) £313.68
Front discs (pair) £762.55
DRC damper (single) £255
Bilstein PSS10 coilover kit £1694
Clutch kit (inc. bearing) £320.86
Flywheel £965.73
Exhaust centre box £418.60
Exhaust back boxes £753.20
Catalytic converter (each) £1059.19

Servicing

(Prices from autops.co.uk, including VAT)

APS recommends services every 10,000 miles or annually, whichever is sooner

Minor service £291.07
Major service £614.89

What to pay

Scan the classifieds and you'll find a vast range of prices. At the bottom end there are high-mileage cars with multiple owners – usually private sales – for as little as £15,000. Don't necessarily be put off by a high mileage, but an inspection by a specialist is likely to be money well spent. At the very top end, pristine, low-mileage, one-owner cars are advertised for as much as £35,000. But around £20,000 gives you a fantastic choice of average-mileage cars with only one or two owners and excellent service histories, and that's where we'd be looking. It's worth noting that you'll pay £250 less road tax a year on cars registered before March 23, 2006.

Useful contacts

- + audi-sport.net (forums, advice)
- + rs246.com (forums, advice)
- + autops.co.uk (independent specialist)
- + fountain.co.uk (independent specialist)
- + mrctuning.com (independent specialist)
- + unit20.com (independent specialist)
- + nickjohnsonmotorco.co.uk (sales)
- + classicandperformancecar.com (ads)



Lamborghini Murcielago LP670-4 SV
Ceramic Brakes High Level Rear Wing Small
Decal option 4,000 miles 2009 **£379,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago LP670-4 SV HIGH SPEC
High Level Rear Wing, Ceramic Brakes,
Colour Sat Nav, 5,000 miles, 2010, **£379,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago LP670-4 SV Colour
SatNav, Ceramic Brakes, High Level Rear Wing,
7,000 miles, 2010, **£379,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago LP670-4 SV
Ceramic Brakes High Level Rear Wing
Larini Sports Exhaust 5,000 miles 2009 **£314,990+VAT**



Lamborghini Diablo 6.0 VT Final Edition
Carbon Fibre Driving Zone, Carbon Fibre Inserts,
Carbon Fibre Engine Bay, 20,000 miles, 2000, **£164,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago V12 LP640 Coupe VAT QUALIFYING
Ceramic Brakes, Carbon Fibre Inserts, Carbon
Fibre Driving Zone, 6,000 miles, 2008 **£149,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago V12 LP640-4 Coupe
670 SV Body Upgrade DPE 20 Inch Forged Alloys
TUBI Exhaust 5,000 miles 2008 **£134,990 + VAT**



Lamborghini Murcielago LP640 Roadstar LHD
Titanium Hercules Alloys Yellow Brake Calipers
Lifting Gear 10,000 miles 2008 **£134,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4 Spyder LHD
Lifting Gear Reverse Camera Full Electric
Heated Seats 8,000 miles 2009 **£104,990**



Ferrari 599 GTB F1 LHD HIGH SPEC
Full Electric Daytona Recaro Heated Seats, 20 Inch Monolithic
Alloys, Yellow Rev Counter, 24,000 miles, 2006, **£78,990**



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Ferrari F430 Spider F1 HIGH SPEC
Carbon Racing Seats, Carbon Fibre Driving Zone,
Colour SatNav, 22,000 miles, 2008 **£79,990**



Ferrari California F1 2+2 4.3 LHD HIGH SPEC
Colour SatNav, Yellow Brake Calipers,
Scuderia Shields, 18,000 miles, 2009 **£85,990**



Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano F1
HGTE Alloy Wheels, Ceramic Brakes,
Bose, 29,000 miles, 2007, **£109,990**



Ferrari 458 Spider LHD VAT QUALIFYING
20 inch Diamond Finish Sport Alloys, Colour SatNav,
Scuderia Shields, 5,000 miles, 2012 **£136,990 + VAT**

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Market Watch

Knowledge

Insights into the used car market

in association with

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Auction watch

Classic Car Auctions' August event to field a cross-section of blinding Italian exotica



LOOKING FORWARD TO CLASSIC CAR AUCTIONS' CHARITY SALE on August 29, we are yet again faced with a great selection of classic and modern performance cars. Auction prices have been strong for the last couple of years, but this sale is held at the CarFest South charity event, with some of the proceeds (in a couple of cases the cars have been donated in full) going to Children in Need. Prices, then, are likely to be high for some lots, but at least it's going to a good cause.

The Pininfarina-styled Ferrari F355 (above right) is one of the prettiest cars from the 1990s, and the 'Giallo Fly Yellow' Spider offered in the sale is really quite special. It's a 1997 model imported from Switzerland quite recently, with the added bonus of featuring a six-speed manual gearbox. Having covered just shy of 40,000 miles, with a service history to back it up, this left-hand-drive 355 is conservatively estimated to sell for £45,000-50,000.

There's another Italian thoroughbred on offer at the sale, although this one is a little bit more unusual. The 1997 Lancia Delta HF Evo HPE Turbo (top) is a car that was never officially sold in the UK, as it was launched after the manufacturer pulled out of the market completely in 1995. It might not have the iconic status of the Integrale, but this is one of just 500 Evo models produced and it features the same engine and four-wheel-drive system. Offered with no reserve, it might just be a bit of a bargain.

If you're after something BMW-shaped then you have a choice of two Estoril Blue Z3 M Roadsters. The earlier, 1998 model (above left) is the better example, having covered only 61,000 miles. Thanks to a full history and great overall condition, it's expected to sell for £12,000-15,000.

Other interesting lots include an immaculate 1990 Corvette ZR-1 (£18,000-20,000) and a V12-engined 1995 Mercedes-Benz SL60 AMG (£12,000-14,000). Both are muscle cars, only from different sides of the Atlantic.

Matthew Hayward (@evoMatthew)

Auction results



Artcurial, Automobiles sur les Champs, June 23

1989 Lamborghini Countach Anniversary
€274,160
1991 Ferrari F40
€1,013,200
2004 Porsche 996 GT3 RS
€226,480

Bonhams, Festival of Speed, June 26

1997 Ferrari 550 Maranello
£119,100
1987 Ferrari Testarossa
£74,300

1998 Mercedes CLK GTR Roadster (pictured)
£1,513,500

1979 Range Rover Classic
£74,300
1984 Porsche 911 SC
£51,750
1983 Porsche 911 Turbo
£102,300
1996 Porsche 512M
£181,666
2006 Ferrari 599 GTB
£124,700
2004 Ferrari Enzo
£897,500
2005 Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren
£203,100

1986 Audi Sport Quattro
£236,700

Coys, Blenheim Palace, July 15

1989 BMW Z1
£26,550
2014 Ferrari 458 Speciale
£225,800
1992 Porsche 964 Carrera RS Lightweight
£113,800
1970 Ferrari Daytona
£765,640
2003 Porsche 996 Turbo
£52,200
1999 Lamborghini Diablo VT Roadster
£178,760

Auction calendar

August 22
Anglia Car Auctions
King's Lynn, UK
angliacarauctions.co.uk

August 29
H&H Auctions
Buxton, UK
classic-auctions.co.uk

August 29
Historics at Brooklands
Weybridge, UK
historics.co.uk

August 29
Classic Car Auctions
Hampshire, UK
classiccarauctions.co.uk

September 4
Silverstone Auctions
Blenheim Palace, UK
silverstoneauctions.com

September 5
Bonhams
Beaulieu, UK
bonhams.com

September 5
Bonhams
Château de Chantilly
bonhams.com

September 6
Coys
Castle Hedingham, UK
coys.co.uk

September 7
RM Auctions
Battersea, UK
rmauctions.com

Fantasy garage

Three angular '80s icons for around £50,000 in total.
All can be found in the classifieds at classicandperformancecar.com



Lancia Delta Integrale 16v
£24,995

It doesn't get much cooler than an Integrale with Martini stripes. This is a one-owner car, too.



Fiat X1/9 1500
£14,995

This mid-engined Bertone design looks totally unique today. That two-tone paintjob...



Ford Escort RS Turbo
£9995

A lot of performance Escorts from the '80s found the crusher, hence the elevated prices today.

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GOODRIDGE BMW E36 BRAIDED BRAKE LINES

£119.80 goodridge.co.uk

On the road the difference between these Goodridge braided lines and the BMW's standard rubber ones is almost imperceptible. Single-piston calipers with rubber guides, albeit reconditioned ones, probably aren't the best setup with which to detect every nuance of brake feel, but had my car been blessed with some machined billet, six-pot calipers with floating discs then I am sure the braided lines would help me feel every last bit of detail...

On track, however, where my brakes were getting much hotter, the new lines allowed me to maintain braking force once the fluid warmed. Before, the pedal

would rapidly go very soft and eventually be easily pushed into the carpet; it now only goes soft up to a point.

If you don't go on track, or you're not likely to be the target of a 1950s-style revenge attack where someone might want to cut your brake lines, is there much point in going braided? If you're upgrading any other part of your braking system or even just replacing the lines, I can't see why not. They're excellent quality and good value. It might seem like overkill, but I'd rather have a belt-and-braces attitude to my brakes than any other part of my car.

Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)



PCL DIGITAL TYRE GAUGE

£17.42 amazon.co.uk

Your tyres are the only contact patch between your car and the road, so monitoring their pressures and tread-depths is immensely important. Despite its pocket size, PCL's digital tyre gauge can take care of both of these variables.

Pressures can be measured in four different units to within a claimed 1.5 per cent accuracy, and tread depth can be measured in either millimetres or inches to within a quoted 0.2 per cent accuracy.

Powered by a 3-volt lithium cell battery (which automatically powers off after 90 seconds), it's quick and easy to use, and even comes with a built-in LED torch and backlight so you can use it on the roadside in the dark. It's a handy glovebox companion for any safety-conscious motorist.

Sam Sheehan (@evoSamSheehan)

GARMIN NÜVI 68LM 6-INCH SATNAV

£149.99 garmin.com

It is, believe it or not, possible to part with £300 for one of Garmin's portable satnavs, and a useful purchase it would likely prove. Yet we're increasingly using our sizeable smartphones for directions, which is a trend the industry heavyweights are desperate to halt.

Garmin's answer is a range of basic systems. These 'Essential' satnavs are available with five- or six-inch screens and the 68LM is the most generously equipped piece in the range. It notably features lifetime European maps and provides directions to searchable shops, restaurants and businesses courtesy of a deal with Foursquare (which means these places will actually exist when you get there). For the most part it does a



commendable job (six inches is also the perfect size for a windscreen-mounted device) although ours often took time to triangulate its location on start-up.

What you don't get is live traffic data, which would prove a hugely useful feature. Because of this, and despite the Garmin's competence, quality and undeniably reasonable price, it's hard to recommend wholeheartedly.

Richard Lane (@_rlane_)

VIBE SLICK 5 V5 CO-AXIAL SPEAKERS

£39.99 halfords.com



Such is the rate of progress of car audio systems that listening to music in a ten-year-old supermini can sound like you've just started up an '80s bedside radio. Vibe's Slick component speakers are a plug-and-play fix for this and are available in a range of diameters up to 6.25 inches.

We tested the 5.25-inch-diameter components, which manage a peak output of 70 watts and a wide frequency response range of 60Hz-25KHz. While high frequency sounds are well catered for, those looking for more bass would be better off opting for the larger speakers (if they fit in your car, that is).

With a polypropylene cone, sound quality is clear and resistance to distortion impressive for such a small speaker. And (thankfully) those chrome surrounds can be removed...

SS

WHO CAN FIX MY CAR

Free whocanfixmycar.com



With my wife's R56 Mini Cooper S exhibiting the 'death rattle' (see Buying Guide, **evo** 210), we knew it needed its timing chain tensioner replacing. But finding someone prepared to do the job for less than main dealer prices proved curiously difficult. Our preferred local

mechanic wasn't equipped to tackle it, and a nearby engine specialist reckoned a simple oil change would stop the noise (it didn't).

To find someone willing and able to do the work, I gave whocanfixmycar.com a try. You simply log in, describe the job you want doing and say when you want it done by, then you wait for garages to reply with their bids. We received two offers, and went with a place we weren't previously aware of, but which turned out to be very knowledgeable on the problem in question and reasonably priced.

whocanfixmycar.com might not turn up a result for every job, but if you're struggling to find a suitable garage, or even if you just want to get a competitive price for routine work, I'd say it's worth a shot.

Ian Eveleigh



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Knowledge

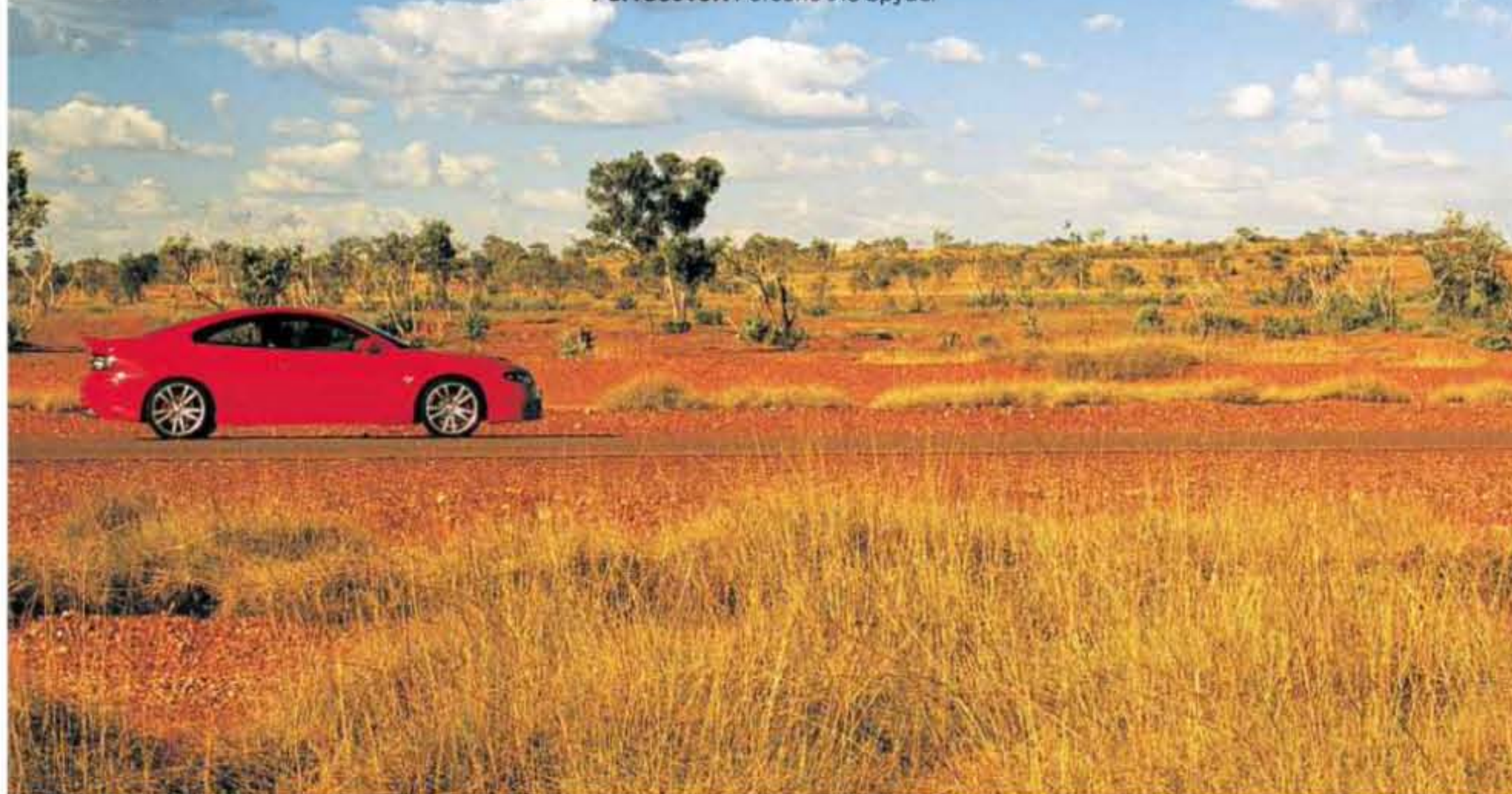
The best destinations to visit in your car

Great drives: Stuart Highway, Australia



Start point: -12.454328, 130.839346, Stuart Park, Darwin **The roads:** Highway 1, National Highway 87

Perfect for: Porsche 918 Spyder



SIX TIMES BETWEEN 1858 AND 1862, A SMALL MAN IN his 30s from Fife, a place not known for its raging temperatures, ventured into the Australian outback. He was trying to find the centre of Australia. Then, once he had achieved that, he wanted to cross all the way from south to north. Over the years he endured scurvy, near blindness and attacks by boomerang. Eventually, however, he succeeded, which is why the road that runs from Darwin to Port Augusta is named after John McDouall Stuart.

The primary reason for driving this epic road today is a 120-mile stretch between Alice Springs and Barrow Creek that has no speed limit. Far more of the 1761-mile route used to be derestricted. However, in 2007 an 81mph speed limit was imposed on the Northern Territory section and a 68mph limit was introduced on the South Australia stretch. Only in 2014 was a trial length of derestricted highway reintroduced.

In 2005 (*evo* 080) Richard Meaden and photographer Andy Morgan drove the northern half (the better half) of 'The Track', as the locals call it. In their 6-litre Monaro they sat for hours at big speeds. At one point a mind-boggling 11 minutes were spent with the throttle pinned to its stop at a steady 155mph. Bizarrely, it frequently felt as if it was the red-soiled scenery that was slowly moving rather than the car. Despite the sparse traffic and monstrous straights, overtaking is best done carefully. The reason is that shimmering mirages can easily hide lorry-sized dangers.

The Stuart Highway might not be quite the temple of speed it once was, but any place where you can drive unfettered by restrictions is still hallowed ground. Porsche certainly thinks so, as it went there recently with a 918 Spyder and five-time Carrera Cup champion Craig Baird. They recorded a mighty top speed of 217mph.

Henry Catchpole
Features editor



The route



Start **Finish**
Distance: 1761 miles Time: 30 hours

Where to stay

There are plenty of good places in Alice Springs, which is your midway point.

Watch out for

Wildlife. Arguably the biggest danger is a kangaroo hopping across your path. Adults can weigh 100kg and hitting one will not improve your day. Particular care should be taken at night. Road trains – lorries with up to four trailers – also need to be given due respect. Nearly 200 tons travelling at 60mph is not something to be messed with. Fuel stations are reasonably frequent, but you need to be mindful of your fuel range (particularly before you start gulping unleaded at big speeds), so fill up frequently. Finally, take plenty of drinking water and apply sun cream to at least your outboard arm...

For more driving destinations, visit:
evo.co.uk/track-and-travel

Reader road trip

Motorsport pilgrimage

Having just got back to Blighty, I'm coming down after what must have been pretty close to the perfect week-long road trip.

Me, in an Exige S 240, and mates Craig (in a similar Exige but in bright orange, which the Italians seemed to love) and Alex (370Z Nismo) started our journey with some pictures at the hugely atmospheric former GP circuit in Reims. After an excellent dinner in Dijon, we then set off down the Route Napoléon, where we were surprised by the pace of the locals, with one lady in particular showing some excellent pedalling skills!

We stayed on the Côte d'Azur, heading up



and down the northern side of La Turbie before dropping into Monte Carlo for one of the slowest ever laps of the Monaco GP circuit.

The surprise road of the trip was the E74 from Monaco, which heads north to Cuneo in Italy. Passing twice across the Franco-Italian border, it has a great mix of radii, and the sound of unburnt fuel in the exhaust crackling against the cliff faces during 8250rpm gearchanges was nothing short of epic.

From here we made our way over a snowy Gotthard Pass to some friends in Andermatt. However, the passes we planned to tackle next were closed, so we spent a rather metrosexual day in a spa waiting for the snow to clear.

Sure enough, we woke to six inches of powder, and as the least hungover of the group I duly set off to dig the cars out and recce the route down the mountain.

We spent the next day heading up through the Black Forest in Germany to the Nürburgring, where we smashed out ten laps. Then on our last day we arrived at the superb Spa Classic event in Belgium to see some proper cars and some real driving skill.

Other than the terrible German food, we had a fantastic week, meeting some great people along the way and experiencing numerous fantastic driving roads.

Tom Pontin

Email your story to henryc@evo.co.uk



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). Call 0844 844 0039 to order a back issue. **Price** is on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. **Engine** is the car's main motor only – additional hybrid tech isn't shown. **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 595 Competizione	196 D	£18,960	4/1368	158/5500	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.4	-	130	155	43.5	★ Spirited engine, still looks great - Favours fun over finesse	★★★★☆
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 R	£32,990	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg	191	5.9	-	143	-	-	★ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Desirable extras make this a £50k city car	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 R	£18,870	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 QV	199 D	£28,120	4/1742	237/5750	251/2000	1320kg	182	6.0	-	151	162	40.3	★ Still looks good, and now it's got the 4C's engine - Pricey, and it has more rewarding rivals	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	10-14	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2	★ Shows signs of deep talent... - ...but should be more exciting	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	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 S1	211 R	£24,900	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	155	162	40.4	★ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options	★★★★☆
Audi A1 quattro	181 R	13	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	£30,640	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 RS3	210 D	£39,950	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	4.3	-	155	189	34.9	★ Addictive noise, lighter on its feet than its predecessor - Still a shade sensible	★★★★☆
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	£26,020	4/1997	218/5000	228/1350	1420kg	156	6.4	-	155	154	42.8	★ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW M135i	212 R	£31,325	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	228	5.1	-	155	188	35.3	★ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD on its options list	★★★★☆
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	£8095+	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 AX GT	195 R	87-92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	120	9.2	-	110	-	-	★ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 R	£17,475	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	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	115	154	43.5	★ Most fun per pound on the market - Optional ESP can't be turned off	★★★★☆
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£13,355	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	★ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	207 R	£17,545	4/1596	179/5700	214/1600	1088kg	167	7.4	18.4	137	138	47.9	★ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	211 R	£18,144	4/1596	212/6000	236/2750	1088kg	198	6.4	-	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're 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	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	★ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate	206 D	£23,295	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	135	110	67.3	★ Performance not sacrificed at the altar of economy - Interior design still jars slightly	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	207 R	£22,195	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	154	159	41.5	★ Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed	★★★★☆
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 (Mk2)	195 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 - Body control is occasionally clumsy	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS500	181 R	10-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	12.7	165	225	-	★ More power and presence than regular RS - Pricey	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	207 R	02-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	5.9	14.9	143	-	-	★ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★☆
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 R	92-96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	179	6.2	-	137	-	-	★ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Unmodified ones are rare, and getting pricey...	★★★★☆
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 - The standard Puma does it so well	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R	212 R	£29,995	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.7	-	167	170	38.7	★ Great on smooth roads - Turbo engine not as special as old NA units; styling a bit 'busy'	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	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 Champ'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 the standard car	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R Mugen	195 R	09-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	155	-	-	★ Fantastic on road and track - There's only 20, and they're a tad pricey...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	075 R	01-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	16.9	146	-	31.7	★ Potent and great value - 'Breadvan' looks divide opinion, duff steering	★★★★☆
Kia Proceed GT	207 R	£20,200	4/1591	201/6000	195/1750	1448kg	143	7.4	-	143	171	38.2	★ Fun and appealing package - Lacks sharpness and control at its outer edges	★★★★☆
Lancia Delta Integrale	194 R	88-93	4/1995	207/5750	220/3500	1300kg	162	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	06-13	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 A45 AMG	194 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	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£15,300	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	130	105	62.8	★ Punchy three-cylinder engine, good chassis - Tubby styling	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (F56)	196 D	£18,665	4/1998	189/4700	206/1250	1160kg	166	6.8	-	146	133	49.6	★ Still has that Mini DNA - Expensive with options; naff dash displays	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 R	£23,050	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	193	6.3	-	153	155	42.2	★ Fast, agile, super-nimble - OE tyres lack outright grip	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe (R58)	164 R	£23,805	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 Cooper (R56)	185 F	09-14	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 (R56)	149 R	06-14	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	-	142	136	48.7	★ New engine, Mini quality - Front end not quite as direct as the old car's	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper SD (R56)	158 D	11-14	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 (R56)	184 R	08-14	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 GP (R56)	195 R	13-14	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 (R50)	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	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R50)	144 R	06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	★ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★☆
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	£21,650	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	166	7.0	-	137	165	39.2	★ Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)		97-98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	121	-	34.0	★ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★☆



Ratings

★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★★ A truly great car



Our Choice

Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy. This generation of Mégane has got better and better with every update, and the 275 is simply sublime. Optional Ohlins dampers and Cup 2 rubber (taken from the Trophy-R) aren't essential, but improve things even further.



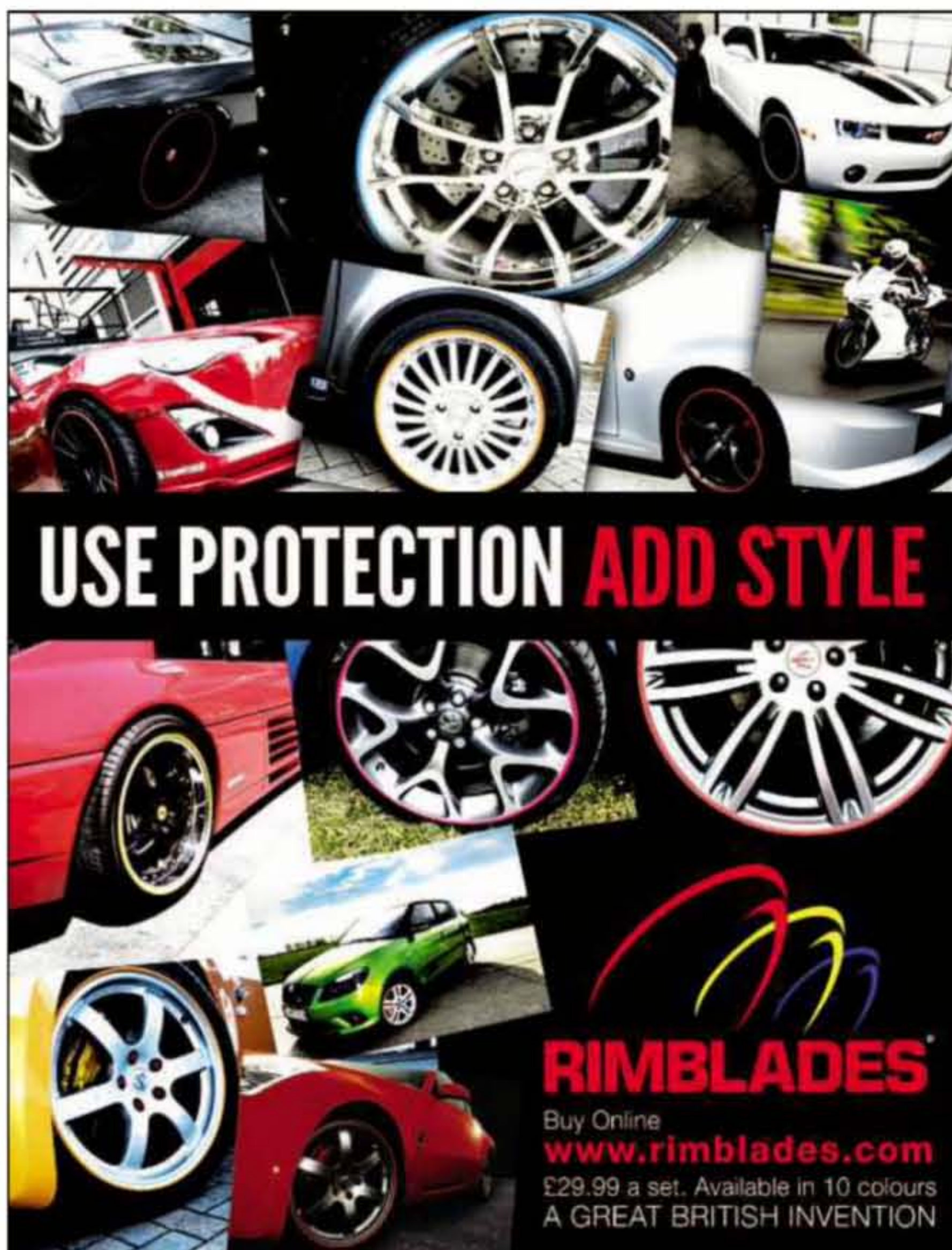
Best of the Rest

The Golf R provides a more grown-up but still hugely entertaining alternative to the Mégane, while its relative, the SEAT Leon Cupra 280, is a real buzz, especially with the Sub8 pack (left) and sticky tyres. The Fiesta ST Mountune is our pick of the smaller hatches.

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	
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 R	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	10.6	-	118	-	35.6	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 GTI 16v	034 R	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	7.4	22.2	127	-	34.9	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi	184 R	£18,895	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	6.8	17.9	143	125	47.9	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi 30th Anniversary	211 R	£21,995	4/1598	205/5800	221/1750	1185kg	176	6.5	-	143	125	47.9	+ The most focused small hatch on sale - Nearly £4k more than a Fiesta ST Mountune	★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	195 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	142	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 Auto	184 R	£18,995	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	166	6.9	17.9	143	144	44.8	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asp engine and manual 'box	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	195 R	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	141	190	34.5	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make it anymore	★★★★★
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	200 R	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.6	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) 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	251/7150	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	227/6000	221/3750	1335kg	173	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	195 R	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.6	20.8	134	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile	★★★★★
Renault 5 GT Turbo	195 R	'87-'91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140	7.3	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left	★★★★★
Renaultsport Megane 275 Trophy	212 R	£28,930	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200	5.8	-	159	174	37.7	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling	★★★★★
Renaultsport Megane 275 Trophy-R	203 R	£36,430	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey	★★★★★
Renaultsport Megane 265 Cup	195 R	'12-'15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.4	14.8	158	174	37.7	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned	★★★★★
Renaultsport Megane 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 Megane 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 Megane 230 F1 Team R26	195 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ The car the R26.R is based on - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Renaultsport Megane R26.R	200 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	£17,445	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	£18,765	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	£22,255	4/1968	181/4000	280/1750	1350kg	136	7.5	-	142	112	64.2	+ Performance, sweet chassis, economy, comfort - Boorish engine	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	212 R	£27,210	4/1984	276/5600	258/1750	1300kg	216	5.8	-	155	149	44.1	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTi money - The Mk7 Golf R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon FR+	163 D	'11-'12	4/1984	208/5300	206/1700	1334kg	158	7.2	-	145	170	38.7	+ As quick as a Golf GTi five-door but lots 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 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	£17,150	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	£23,260	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	£15,375	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 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	£13,749	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	211 R	£17,995	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.5	-	143	174	37.7	+ Begs to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	'07-'14	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 N'ring/Clubsport	164 R	'11-'13/14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	207 R	£27,315	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	184	34.9	+ Better than the car it replaces; loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Megane's precision	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'05-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.7	16.7	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision	★★★★★
VW Up/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£7990+	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - ...but predictably slow	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI	211 R	£18,850	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1280kg	150	6.7	-	146	139	47.1	+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI	154 R	'10-'14	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)	200 D	£25,765	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)	207 R	£26,580	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1351kg	163	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved - Megane 265 beats it as a pure drivers' car	★★★★★
VW Golf GTE (Mk7)	202 D	£28,000	4/1395	201	258	1524kg	134	7.6	-	138	35	188.0	+ The most enjoyable plug-in hybrid at this price - Golf GTI still quicker and more fun	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk7)	212 R	£29,900	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1476kg	204	5.1	-	155	165	40.9	+ A VW 'R' model you can take seriously - Megane 275 just edges 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 anymore	★★★★★
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)	195 R	'04-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	6.7	17.9	145	-	-	+ Character and ability: the GTi's return to form - 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	+ Traction'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)	195 R	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	129	-	26.6	+ Still feels everyday useable - Very hard to find a standard one	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)	095 R	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one	★★★★★
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto	★★★★★

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Our Choice

BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the 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. The '30 Jahre' special edition, which has an extra 40bhp, is especially worth a look.



Best of the Rest

Mercedes' E63 AMG offers intoxicating performance, especially with the S upgrade (pictured). BMW's M3 is an appealing all-round package, but its C63 AMG rival has more approachable limits. If you must have an SUV, take a look at BMW's X6 M or Porsche's Macan Turbo or Cayenne GTS.

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	
Alpina D3 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£46,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	+ 173mph from a 3-litre diesel! Brilliant chassis, too - Auto only	★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (F30)	188 D	£54,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1610kg	255	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	1920kg	282	4.5	-	198	244	26.9	+ Big performance and top-line luxury - Driver not really involved	★★★★★
Alpina B7 Biturbo	134 D	£98,800	8/4395	533/5200	538/2800	2040kg	265	4.6	-	194	230	28.5	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	201 D	£147,950	12/5935	552/6650	465/5500	1990kg	282	4.2	-	203	300	21.9	+ Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back	★★★★★
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 S3 Saloon	192 D	£33,540	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	155	162	26.4	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B8)	166 D	£39,610	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 (B7)	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 (B8)	192 R	£56,545	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.5	10.5	174	249	26.4	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Harsh ride, unnatural steering	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	088 R	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility. 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 (C7)	203 R	£77,995	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.6	8.2	155	229	28.8	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	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 (C5)	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	208 R	£84,480	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	£63,375	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	£80,690	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	206 D	£45,495	5/2480	335/5300	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	155	203	32.1	+ Surprisingly characterful better than many RSs - High centre of gravity	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£142,800	8/3997	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	4.9	-	183	254	25.9	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporting	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£153,300	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2400kg	261	4.3	-	200	343	19.0	+ More power than old Flying Spur Speed - Feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.1	-	184	342	19.3	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	210 D	£252,000	8/6752	530/4200	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.8	-	190	342	19.3	+ Characterful; superb build quality - A bit pricey...	★★★★★
BMW 320d (F30)	168 R	£29,475	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 (F30)	165 D	£30,470	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 (F30)	180 D	£36,975	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 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	£41,865	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	155	174	34.9	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 R	£56,590	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1520kg	284	4.1	8.6	155	204	32.1	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
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 528i (F10)	164 D	£36,570	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ Four-pot 528i is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	★★★★★
BMW 535i (F10)	141 D	£44,560	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)	208 R	£73,960	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 (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	£98,145	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	£64,525	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	155	5.3	-	155	173	42.8	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	212 D	£93,080	8/4395	567/6000	553/2200	2265kg	245	4.2	-	155	258	25.4	+ Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	134 D	'09-'15	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	£71,575	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 Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4	141 R	'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	-	-	+ Road-going Group A racecar - Don't shout about the power output!	★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012 R	'98-'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 Q50S Hybrid	195 D	£39,995	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1750kg	208	5.1	-	155	144	45.6	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals	★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	210 D	£44,865	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1590kg	214	4.9	-	155	194	34.9	+ Great chassis, strong powertrain - Tight in the back	★★★★★
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Diesel S	145 D	£46,615	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1695kg	162	5.9	-	155	159	47.1	+ Sweet handling plus diesel economy - But we'd still have the R	★★★★★
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Supercharged	178 D	£48,510	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	£65,440	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	208 R	£79,995	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.4	-	186	270	24.4	+ XF gets turned up to 12 - Starting to feel its age	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S Sportbrake	203 R	£82,495	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1892kg	291	4.6	-	186	297	22.2	+ Looks fantastic, huge performance, nice balance - Not as sharp as the saloon	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148 D	£56,870	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	£92,395	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1805kg	302	4.4	-	174	270	24.4	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★

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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 XJR	054 R	'03-'09	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1665kg	244	5.0	-	155	-	23.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Land Rover Discovery Sport	205 D	£32,395	4/2179	187/3500	310/1750	1863kg	100	9.8	-	117	159	46.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Lexus IS F	151 R	'07-'12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Lotus Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£52,615	6/2979	325/5000	406/1750	1810kg	182	5.6	-	163	223	29.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Maserati Ghibli S	198 D	£63,760	6/2979	404/5500	406/4500	1810kg	227	5.0	-	177	242	27.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	£80,115	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	177	242	27.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	179 D	£108,185	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	190	274	23.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	18.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 R	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	113 D	'07-'08	8/4244	396/7000	339/4250	1930kg	208	5.5	-	167	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	201/6700	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG	186 D	£42,270	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.6	-	155	161	31.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	205 R	£44,595	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.8	-	155	175	37.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-AMG C63	209 D	£59,800	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	155	192	34.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S	211 R	£66,545	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	155	192	34.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	151 R	'07-'14	8/6208	442/5000	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-AMG E63	187 D	£74,115	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-AMG E63 S	208 R	£84,710	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	229	28.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	165 R	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	134 D	'09-'11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	155	295	22.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG L	191 D	£119,835	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	'10-'13	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2040kg	267	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	£86,500	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	231	28.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 R	'11-'14	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293	4.2	-	155	231	28.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 R	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 R	£86,920	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£124,000	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	130	322	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	'08-'13	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'08-'13	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'08-'12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 R	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Mäkinen Edition	200 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Porsche Panamera 4S	186 D	£86,080	6/2997	414/6000	383/1750	1870kg	225	4.8	-	177	208	31.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 R	£93,391	8/4806	434/6700	383/3500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	178	249	26.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£108,006	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	270	24.6	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Porsche Macan S	205 R	£43,648	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	157	204	31.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Porsche Macan Turbo	207 D	£59,648	6/2997	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208	4.5	11.1	165	208	30.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	£72,523	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	209	5.2	-	163	228	28.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8)	173 D	'12-'15	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.6	-	162	251	26.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	£93,574	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	173	261	25.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	£118,455	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	176	267	24.6	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe Si4	160 D	£46,660	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£84,350	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219	5.0	-	155	298	21.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Range Rover Sport SVR	212 D	£95,150	8/5000	542/6000	501/3500	2335kg	236	4.5	-	162	298	21.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	£80,850	8/4367	334/3500	516/1750	2360kg	144	6.5	-	140	229	32.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	£216,864	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 R	£310,200	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru WRX STI	201 R	£28,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	158	242	27.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C *	084 D	'05-'07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 R	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP	073 R	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.2	12.9	148	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru STI Type RA Spec C *	067 R	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	4.3	11.1	160	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 R	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru Impreza PI	200 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	187 R	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	5.0	14.1	143	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Subaru Impreza 22B	188 R	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.0	13.1	150	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Tesla Model S P85D	208 D	£79,080	515kW	691	687	2239kg	314	3.2	-	155	0	n/a	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Tesla Model S Performance	196 R	'14	310kW	416	442	2100kg	201	4.2	-	130	0	n/a	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR SuperSport	189 D	£29,824	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1825kg	179	5.6	-	170	249	26.6	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	161	-	27.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	208 R	£54,499	8/6162	576/6150	545/3850	1834kg	319	4.2	-	155	363	18.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Volvo V60 Polestar	197 D	£49,775	6/2953	345/5250	369/3000	1759kg	199	5.0	-	155	237	27.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

POCKET buying guide

Mercedes E63 AMG

Years 2006-2011 Engine V8, 6208cc
Power 507bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque 465lb ft @ 5200rpm
0-62mph 4.5sec Top speed 155mph
(spec is for W211)



WHY WOULD YOU?

Because it contained AMG's first truly bespoke engine, a mighty, naturally aspirated 6.2-litre V8 producing 507bhp, rising to 518bhp in the later 'W212'. With the restrictor removed it can nudge 200mph. It's available as an estate, too.

WHAT TO PAY

Early W211s start around £14k, but tread carefully. W212s (cars from summer 2009 on) start at £30k.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

A tappety noise when the engine is warm means the hydraulic lifters are sticking, causing wear to the cam lobes. Ensure the auto 'box' has had fluid changes every 40,000 miles. Listen for clonks from the front over bumps – a sign the ball joints are past their best (this is a heavy car). Check the brakes have plenty of life left – a full set will cost around £2000! (Full guide, *evo* 207.)



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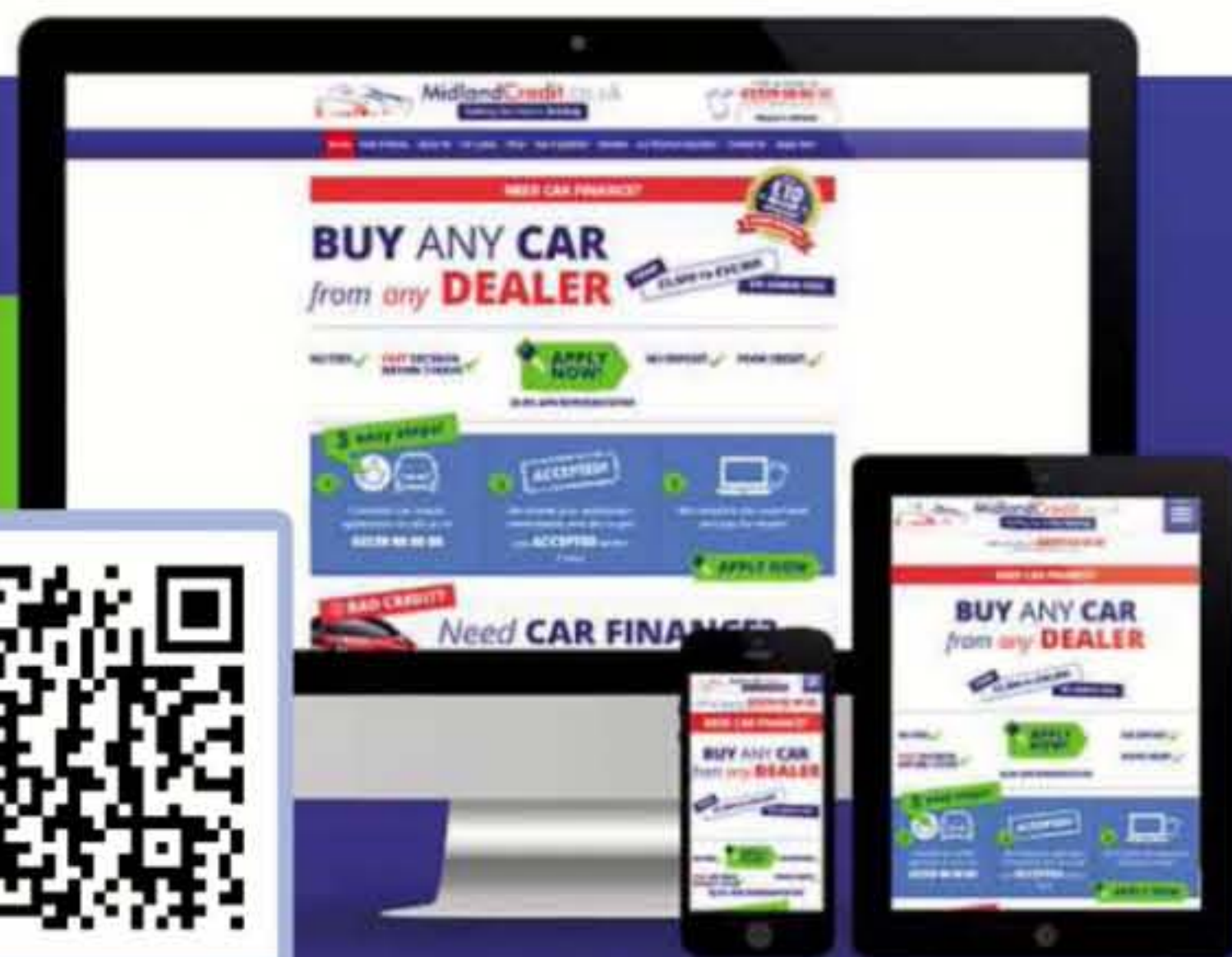
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Our Choice

Porsche Boxster GTS. The Boxster is the benchmark in its class for a good reason: it's simply a fabulous all-rounder. The GTS – with a smidge more power and some choice extras from the options list as standard – would be our pick, but the S it's based on or even the basic 2.7 are true five-star cars, too.



Best of the Rest

Lotus's Exige S Roadster counters the Boxster with a more focused driving experience, while the more-affordable Elise continues to defy its age. Jaguar's F-type also impresses in both V6 (left) and V8 forms, but for the ultimate thrills, get a Caterham 620R, Ariel Atom or Radical.

Sports Cars / Convertibles

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	211 D	£59,500	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg	256	4.5	-	160	161	40.9	★ Stunningly beautiful; better steering than coupe - Still has the coupe's other foibles	★★★★☆
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	★★★★★
Alpina D4 Biturbo Convertible	212 D	£54,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1815kg	193	5.0	-	171	156	47.9	★ As much torque as a 997 Turbo - A diesel convertible wouldn't be our choice of Alpina	★★★★★
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 3.5R	198 R	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	647	2.6	-	155	-	-	★ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey	★★★★★
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 Mugen	165 R	'12-'13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	★ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made	★★★★★
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 R	'10-'12	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 Nomad	210 R	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg	365	3.4	-	134	-	-	★ Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 R	£89,994	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	£108,995	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 S Roadster	212 R	£147,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	201	343	19.2	★ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - let down by a frustrating gearbox	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	'12-'14	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	£141,995	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	207 D	£41,085	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	155	169	38.7	★ A serious proposition, ranking close behind a Boxster S - Coupe still looks better	★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	'08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	★ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	★ Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it	★★★★★
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,770	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	£69,505	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, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate	★★★★★
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	'11-'15	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	'10-'15	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	£124,255	4/2261	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	★ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible	168 R	£150,200	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2395kg	212	4.7	-	187	254	25.9	★ One of the world's best topless GTs - Still no sports car	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible	194 D	£160,500	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2395kg	221	4.5	-	191	258	25.4	★ A true drivers' Bentley - Excessively heavy; feels like it could give more	★★★★★
Bentley Conti GT Speed Convertible	187 D	£181,000	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2420kg	263	4.1	-	203	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	★★★★★
BMW M235i Convertible	207 D	£37,710	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1600kg	204	5.2	-	155	199	33.2	★ Neat styling; great drivetrain - Loss of dynamic ability compared with coupe	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	186 D	£43,005	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	★ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces	★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	'06-'09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	★ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	★ Excilarating 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 435i Convertible	194 D	£45,680	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1740kg	176	5.6	-	155	190	34.8	★ Impressive chassis, smart looks, neat roof - Extra weight, not as composed as coupe	★★★★★
BMW M4 Convertible (F83)	202 D	£61,145	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1750kg	247	4.6	-	155	213	31.0	★ As good as fast four-seat drop-tops get... - but still not as good as a coupe or saloon	★★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible (E93)	119 D	'08-'13	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 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	198 R	£19,330	4/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg	166	6.5	-	100	-	-	★ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 270	209 R	£22,995	4/1595	135/6800	122/4100	540kg	254	5.0	-	122	-	-	★ Feisty engine, sweetly balanced, manic and exciting - The temptation of more power	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 360	209 R	£26,995	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg	327	4.8	-	130	-	-	★ Extra power is welcome - You'll need the six-speed gearbox to make the most of it	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420	209 R	£29,995	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg	381	3.8	-	136	-	-	★ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620R	187 R	£49,995	4/1999	311/7700	219/7350	545kg	580	2.8	-	155	-	-	★ Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR	094 R	£46,495	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	★ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 R	'07-'14	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	★ Great debut for new Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 R	'11-'14	4/1595	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	★ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	'13-'14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg	342	4.8	-	130	-	-	★ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	★★★★★
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 Superlight R500	123 R	'08-'14	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 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 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 R500	200 R	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	★ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★★
Donkervoort D8 GTO Performance	185 R	£120,000	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 T	212 D	£154,490	8/3855	552/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	196	250	26.9	★ Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily useability above outright thrills	★★★★★
Ferrari California	171 D	'08-'14	8/4297	483/7750	372/5000	1735kg	283	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	£56,745	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	★ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably junior to the V6 S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 R	£65,745	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	★ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is £20k cheaper	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Convertible		£92,295	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	★ Pace, characterful V8 - Costs £25k more than the S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 R	£135,000	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	363	3.9	-	186	-	-	★ Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type V8 S Convertible	183 R	'13-'14	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 XKR Convertible	130 R	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	★ Fantastic 5-litre V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 R	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	★ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It was also the most expensive in years	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£95,880	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	144	189	34.0	★ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	165 R	£87,480	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	23737										

PAST master

The 276bhp P1 was the ultimate original-shape Impreza. John Barker drove the prototype

Subaru Impreza P1 Issue 013, November 1999

'The first thing that strikes me is how smooth and refined the engine is. It revs to 8000rpm, charging on through the red paint with a frantic, enthusiastic bark that contrasts sharply with its bassy, mellifluous low-speed throb.

'The P1 dishes up clean, precise and drama-free cornering, and its demeanour doesn't change when the heavens open.

It feels tight and responsive, exploitable but not risky.

'Prodrive fits its short shift, which gives the lever a deliciously crisp and positive action. In fact, this car feels like a package of perfectly complementary parts that have been honed and lapped together to create a deeply satisfying whole.'



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„For me KW suspension gives me the most success and confidence when driving the Nürburgring.“



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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	£30,900	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	£30,900	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	£37,200	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	£37,200	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 Cup	207 D	£43,500	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	932kg	237	4.2	-	140	175	37.5	★ Rewards precision like no other Elise - You can't remove the roof	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 R	£55,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	3.8	-	145	235	28.0	★ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - Boxster S is a better all-rounder	★★★★★
Lotus Elise R	068 R	'04-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	★ Most thrilling 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 111S	049 R	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	★ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 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 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-'01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	★ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	★ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 R	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	★ evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 R	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	★ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 R	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	★ Hardcore road-racer... - ...that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Lotus Elan SE	095 R	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	★ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,940	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.2	-	177	337	19.5	★ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£104,535	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.0	-	177	377	19.5	★ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,370	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 2.0i Sport (Mk4)	212 R	£22,695	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1047kg	153	7.3	-	133	161	40.9	★ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 R	'09-'15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	138	181	36.2	★ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less than macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 R	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	★ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s; dubious handling	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	★ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	★ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK350 Sport	161 R	£44,605	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	£55,345	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 Series	110 R	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	★ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted 7G-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL 500	169 D	£81,915	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	★ Wafly performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£112,510	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	£170,815	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	155	270	24.4	★ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	'08-'13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	★ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	070 R	'02-'07	8/5439	493/6100	516/2650	1955kg	256	4.6	10.2	155	-	-	★ As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	★ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 R	'12-'14	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	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 R	£25,950	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg	159	6.0	-	115	215	30.3	★ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8 Speedster	202 R	£71,140	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1000kg	368	4.2	-	148	282	23.3	★ Fantastic old-school roadster experience - Gets unsettled by big bumps	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8	171 R	£86,345	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	256	25.7	★ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★★
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 R	£128,045	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	★ As above, with a V8 and targa top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 R	'02-'08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	★ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 R	'10-'14	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	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (981)	172 R	£38,810	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.4	-	164	192	34.5	★ Goes and looks better; cleanest Boxster ever - Steering now electric to help cut CO2	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 R	£47,035	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 electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster GTS (981)	203 D	£52,879	6/3436	325/6700	273/4500	1345kg	246	5.0	-	174	211	31.4	★ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm	★★★★★
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 2.7)	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	£82,169	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1470kg	238	5.0	-	177	216	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	£92,204	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1485kg	270	4.7	-	187	228	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	£81,300	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 RXC Turbo 500	209 D	£143,400	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1100kg	490	2.6	-	185	-	-	★ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
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 Griffon reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	★ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling 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?	★★★★★



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Our Choice

Porsche 911 GT3 RS. With Porsche's Motorsport department seemingly infallible at present, an evolution of the 991-generation GT3 could only be something really, really special. And it is. A shoo-in for the eCoty trophy in 2015, then? Don't be too sure – we're lining up some very strong competition for it.



Best of the Rest

Mercedes' AMG GT S (left) is deeply satisfying on every level – we prefer it to the Porsche 911 Turbo and Nissan GT-R. Meanwhile, Aston's V8 Vantage N430 and V12 Vantage S are incredibly entertaining, the Cayman GT4 is as good as the hype suggests, and Jaguar's F-type R Coupe is a hoot.

Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Alfa Romeo 4C	209 R	£51,500	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg	269	4.5	-	160	157	41.5	★ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 R	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	★ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold ★★★★★
Alpina D4 Biturbo	206 R	£50,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	★ Fifth-gear oversteer - Sounds like a diesel; fuel economy not as good as you might hope ★★★★★
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 R	£58,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1615kg	254	4.2	-	188	177	37.2	★ More fluid than the M4; better traction, too - Not as precise as the M-car over the limit ★★★★★
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	'12-'13	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	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	★ 2012 upgrades keep the V8 Vantage on song - Starting to feel a little dated, though ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430	210 R	£89,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	321	20.5	★ Malleable, involving, can still hold its own - Never feels rampantly quick ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 R	£94,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	★ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	190 R	£138,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1665kg	345	3.7	-	205	343	19.2	★ Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box ★★★★★
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 Zagato	181 F	'13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.2	-	190	388	17.3	★ The looks, the noise, the way it drives - It's several times the price of a V12 Vantage ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	178 R	£133,495	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 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 ★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	204 R	£29,915	4/1984	227/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	155	137	47.9	★ Desirable, grippy and effortlessly quick - Still not the last word in interaction ★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	£32,860	4/1984	227/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	155	149	44.1	★ Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement ★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk3)	209 R	£38,790	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1365kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	★ The most dynamically interesting TT yet - Still not as interactive as a Cayman ★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk2)	155 R	'06-'14	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	6.3	15.7	152	154	42.8	★ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game ★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk2)	193 R	'08-'14	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 (Mk2)	158 R	'09-'14	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 (Mk2)	185 D	'12-'14	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	5.9	-	155	-	30.3	★ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering ★★★★★
Audi S5	189 D	£43,665	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	206 R	£59,870	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	263	4.5	-	155	246	26.9	★ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering ★★★★★
Audi R8 V8	201 R	'07-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.1	9.9	188	332	19.9	★ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10	181 D	'10-'15	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	3.9	8.4	194	346	19.0	★ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	190 R	'13-'15	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 R8 LMX	208 R	'15	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1595kg	358	3.4	-	198	299	21.9	★ More of everything that makes the R8 great - S-tronic transmission not perfect ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 R	£140,300	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	★ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	£149,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.3	-	192	250	26.4	★ An even better drivers' Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£150,500	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.3	-	197	338	19.5	★ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	212 D	£168,300	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2245kg	283	4.0	-	206	338	19.5	★ Desirability meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8 ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	£237,500	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.6	-	170	295	22.2	★ The best-handling Continental ever - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg ★★★★★
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 M235i Coupe	209 R	£34,535	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.0	-	155	189	34.9	★ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard ★★★★★
BMW 435i M Sport Coupe	189 D	£42,365	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 M4	206 R	£57,050	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1497kg	288	4.3	-	155	204	32.1	★ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	196 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 GTS (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)	200 R	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	★ Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a bit... sluggish ★★★★★
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	£62,295	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)	211 D	£92,350	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 ★★★★★
BMW i8	210 R	£99,590	3/1499	357/5800	420/3700	1485kg	244	4.4	-	155	49	134.5	★ Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Z51 (C7)	197 R	£69,810	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1539kg	304	4.4	9.4	180	279	23.5	★ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7) *	206 R	c£88,000	8/6156	650/6400	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.2	-	186	-	-	★ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed ★★★★★
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	211 D	£33,995	8/4951	415/6500	391/4250	1720kg	245	4.8	-	155	-	-	★ Looks, noise, performance, value, right-hand drive - Image not for everyone ★★★★★
Ford Shelby GT500 *	178 R	c£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 G40R	165 R	£35,940	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 ★★★★★
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	200 R	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	★ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some ★★★★★
Honda 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	-	-	★ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK ★★★★★
Hyundai Veloster Turbo	176 D	'11-'15	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 ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe	204 D	£51,260	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1567kg	217	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	★ Drop-dead looks, brilliant chassis, desirability - Engine lacks top-end fight ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type S Coupe	211 D	£60,260	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1584kg	241	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	★ Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrappy on the limit ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe	203 R	£85,010	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	★ Looks, presence, performance, soundtrack - Bumpy and boisterous ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 R	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	★ Fast and incredibly powerful, Jag - The kids will have to stay at home ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1678kg	328	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	★ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S GT	193 R	'14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1638kg	336	3.9	-	186	292	23.0	★ The most exciting XKR ever - Very limited numbers ★★★★★
Lexus RC F	206 R	£59,995	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.5	-	168	-	-	★ Great steering, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting ★★★★★

POCKET buying guide

Renaultsport Mégane

Years 2004-2009 **Engine** In-line 4-cyl.
1998cc, turbo **Power** 227bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 229lb ft @ 3000rpm
0-60mph 6.2sec **Top speed** 147mph
(spec is for 230 F1 Team R26)



WHY WOULD YOU?

Because after a lukewarm start, the original Mégane RS developed into one of the hottest – and most rewarding – of hatches.

WHAT TO PAY

Regular 225s (221bhp) start at £3k, but we'd pay the extra for a Trophy, Cup, 225 F1 Team or 230 F1 Team R26 (227bhp). The R26 starts at £5k, but the sought-after R26.R sits at around £20k.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

It's critical that the cambelt is changed at 72,000 miles or five years, whichever is first, so ensure this has been done. A slight cough at idle could indicate blocked injectors. Front wheel hub bearings are prone to wear – listen for clonking noises or a reluctance for the steering to self-centre. Check the condition of the keycard – replacements are £180. (Full guide, [evo 208](#).)

PAINT)(SHIELD

Protect yourself from the Asteriod Belt

Generation 2 Self Healing Protection has Arrived.

Having brought the first Generation of Self Healing Film to the UK two years ago, our Technicians have added the latest Second Generation self healing Protective technology to our Inventory.

In your intergalactic travels protecting yourself from those micro meteor impacts has never been more important. We all know respraying your ship in some far off location is a bit of a pain, much better to not have to. Best of all though wear and tear from scratches picked up in your travels is very disconcerting to the Locals; abductions go much easier when you have a scratch free shiny ship when visiting Earth.

For the best paint protection in the Galaxy drop in to planet earth and contact our specialists on 01733 390777, or fire up the Intergalactic net and warp to www.paintshield.co.uk and they will get you protected and on your way in next to no time (theory of relativity applies).



PAINT)(SHIELD

Paintshield Ltd · Unit 4 · Morley Court · Morley Way · Peterborough · Cambridgeshire · PE2 7BW
t: 01733 390777 · f: 01733 390778 · web: www.paintshield.co.uk · e: info@paintshield.co.uk

stone chip protection
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protect from -

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Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Lotus Exige S (V6)	209 R	£54,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	170	235	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest
Lotus Exige S (S2)	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 Exige (S2)	068 R	'04-'08	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	875kg	219	4.9	-	147	-	32.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Highly focused road and track tool - Lacks visual impact of S1
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 R	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement
Lotus Evora	138 R	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	217	30.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options
Lotus Evora S	168 R	£63,950	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...
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£82,890	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	188 R	£91,420	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	185	331	19.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 R	£110,740	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	256	4.5	-	188	360	18.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to
Maserati Coupe	064 R	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering
Maserati GranSport	073 R	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little
Mazda RX-8	122 R	'03-'11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	'11-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	171 R	'12-'13	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	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series	106 R	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe	205 D	£125,595	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.2	-	155	237	28.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	209 D	£183,075	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	2110kg	299	4.1	-	186	279	23.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63!
Mercedes-AMG GT S	210 R	£110,495	8/3982	503/6250	479/1750	1570kg	326	3.8	-	193	219	30.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Gorgeous to look at, fantastic chassis, huge grip - Downshifts could be quicker
Morgan AeroMax	120 R	'08-'09	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Weird and utterly wonderful - Only 100 were made
Nissan 370Z	204 R	£27,445	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219	5.3	-	155	248	26.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer
Nissan 370Z Nismo	209 R	£37,585	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	155	248	26.6	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle
Nissan 350Z	107 R	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling
Nissan GT-R (2012MY/2013MY/2014MY)	210 R	£78,020	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	3.2	7.5	196	275	24.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But costs over £20K more than its launch price
Nissan GT-R Nismo	199 R	£125,000	6/3799	592/6800	481/3200	1720kg	350	2.6	-	196	275	24.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Manages to make regular GT-R feel imprecise - Compromised by super-firm suspension
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 R	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	194	279	23.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 R	'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)	196 R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 R	'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 M12 GTO-3R	200 R	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The ability to humble exotica - Notchy gearchange can spoil the flow
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£27,150	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.3	18.1	147	155	42.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting
Peugeot RCZ R	209 R	£32,250	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	155	145	44.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel
Porsche Cayman (981)	209 R	£39,694	6/2706	271/7400	214/4500	1330kg	207	5.7	-	165	195	33.6	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Very enticing for the money in basic spec - You might still want the power of the 'S'
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 R	£48,783	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	4.5	10.5	175	206	32.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The Cayman comes of age - Erm...
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	203 R	£55,397	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	253	4.9	-	177	211	31.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	208 R	£64,451	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288	4.4	-	183	238	27.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The Cayman we've been waiting for - Waiting lists
Porsche Cayman (987)	131 R	'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)	132 R	'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)	158 R	'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)	199 R	£73,509	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1400kg	250	4.8	-	179	211	31.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + 911 becomes cleaner and cleverer - But some of its character's gone AWOL
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	201 R	£83,545	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	283	4.3	9.5	188	223	29.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + As above, but with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991)	179 R	£88,400	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.5	-	185	233	28.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + More satisfying than RWD 991 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (991)	204 R	£91,098	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1425kg	302	4.4	-	190	223	29.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The best RWD 991 Carrera - Optional active anti-roll bars rob feedback
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991)	208 D	£95,862	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293	4.4	-	189	233	28.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The highlight of the 991 Carrera line-up - Pricey for a Carrera
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 R	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 R	'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 (996 3.4)	008 R	'98-'01	6/3387	296/6800	258/4600	1320kg	228	5.2	-	174	-	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)	206 R	£100,540	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333	3.5	-	196	289	23.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + evo Car of the Year 2013 - At its best at licence-troubling speeds
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991)	211 R	£131,296	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353	3.3	-	193	296	22.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Sensationally good to drive - They won't all be painted Ultra Violet
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 R	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	200 R	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Our favourite car from the first 200 issues of evo - For people like us, nothing
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187 R	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride; crazy used prices
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 R	'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)	082 R	'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)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Track-biased version of above - Limited supply
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182 R	'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
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	£229,128	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	155	327	20.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down
Subaru BRZ	204 R	£22,495	4/1998	197/7000	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	174 R	£22,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1257kg	157	7.6	-	140	181	36.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality
TVR Sagaris	097 R	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	5.0	11.4	160+	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155 R	£26,125	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair
VW Scirocco R	200 D	£32,580	4/1984	276/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187	5.7	-	155	187	35.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some

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Noble's M600 supercar is hand built in England, carbon bodied, rare and exclusive. It delivers an exhilarating driving experience, unfettered by gratuitous electronics and is guaranteed to put a large grin on your face, whether driving to work or the French Riviera. A twin turbo Yamaha V8 delivers 650bhp @ 6800rpm catapulting the M600 from 0 - 120 mph in 8.9 seconds (Autocar). Heat dissipation and cooling efficiency is maximised through the use of Evans PowerCool 180°. Noble are the latest manufacturer to partner with Evans Waterless Coolants. Others include; Eagle Jaguar, Honda, Kubota, Rotax and Polaris. For more information on the unique benefits of waterless cooling please call us on 01792 572299 or visit www.evanscoolants.co.uk

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Our Choice

Ferrari 458 Speciale. The regular 458 Italia was amazing enough, but the Speciale follows in the tradition of the 360 Challenge Stradale and 430 Scuderia and makes the car it is based on even more, well, special. Our 2014 Car of the Year. It's equally brilliant in open-top 'Speciale A' form, too.



Best of the Rest

Porsche's 918 Spyder (left) pips the McLaren P1 on the road, and vice versa on track. The LaFerrari is an incredible drive, too. Maybe get all three.... Meanwhile, Pagani's Huayra was our joint 2012 Car of the Year and Lamborghini's Aventador offers true supercar drama, especially in SV form.

Supercars

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
9ff GT9R	127 D	c£450,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 R	£192,995	12/5935	568/6650	465/5500	1739kg	332	3.6	-	201	298	22.1	+ Much better than the DBS it succeeds, especially in 2015MY form - It's no Ferrari F12	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 R	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.9	10.1	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin 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	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 R	'05-'11	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	596	11.4	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 R	'10-'14	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	'13-'14	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1990kg	604	2.6	-	254	539	12.2	+ The world's fastest convertible - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 R	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Caparo T1	138 R	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	'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 488 GTB	211 R	£181,849	8/3902	661/8000	560/3000	1475kg	455	3.0	-	205+	260	24.8	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	183 R	'09-'15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.2	6.8	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Spider	185 R	£198,996	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	203 R	£208,090	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	202+	275	23.9	+ evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale A	204 D	£228,682	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1445kg	420	3.0	-	199	275	21.2	+ Same dynamics as the coupe but less shouty - Some chassis flex on bumpy surfaces	★★★★★
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 Scuderia Spider 16M	133 D	'09	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1440kg	355	3.7	-	196	360	18.0	+ A hardcore soft-top Ferrari - Earplugs recommended	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 R	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	9.0	183	-	17.0	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	-	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud	★★★★★
Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta	163 R	'97-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg	281	4.7	-	183	-	16.7	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?	★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	190 R	£240,083	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	200 R	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 R	£227,168	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 LaFerrari	203 R	c£1m	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1255kg	769	3.0	-	217+	330	-	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	203 R	'02-'04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485	3.5	6.7	217+	545	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	186 R	'96-'97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg	424	3.9	-	202	-	-	+ A better drivers' Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	199 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 288 GTO	064 R	'84-'85	8/2855	394/7000	366/3800	1160kg	345	4.9	-	189	-	-	+ Painfully beautiful, rarer than the F40 - You are joking?	★★★★★
Ford GT	200 R	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - Don't scalp yourself getting in	★★★★★
Hennessey Venom GT	180 R	£900,000	8/7000	1244/6500	1155/4000	1244kg	1016	2.5	-	270	-	-	+ 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	c£1.09m	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2700	1435kg	796	2.8	-	273	-	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money	★★★★★
Koenigsegg One:1	202 R	c£2.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	273	-	-	+ The most powerful car we've ever tested - It's sold out; we couldn't afford one anyway...	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCX	094 R	'06-'10	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	3.9	7.7	245+	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCKR Edition	118 R	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	250+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spike power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán LP610-4	209 D	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1532kg	399	3.2	-	202+	290	22.6	+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	'08-'13	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	'10-'13	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg	426	3.5	-	202	325	20.6	+ Less weight and more power than original Superleggera - LP560-4 runs it very close	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 R	'06-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	4.3	9.4	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104 R	'07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg	373	3.8	-	196	-	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4	194 R	£260,040	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 LP750-4 SV	211 D	£321,723	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg	493	2.8	-	217+	370	17.7	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - Inconsistent gearbox	★★★★★
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	200 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 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	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 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				

Track Times

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
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	1:23.9	-	YouTube	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
Porsche Cayman S (981)	1:24.5	109.2	202	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	1:24.6	115.7	146	Dry
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	1:24.7	107.7	167	Dry
Caterham 7 Supersport	1:24.8	101.6	YouTube	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
Jaguar XKR-S	1:25.7	-	YouTube	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
Jaguar F-type S Coupe	1:26.2	106.3	202	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
Audi RS6 Avant (C7) (fastest estate)	1:26.5	-	YouTube	Dry
BMW M135i	1:26.6	-	YouTube	Dry
Jaguar XJ220	1:26.7	111.7	131	Dry
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (fastest 4x4)	1:26.8	106.1	YouTube	Dry
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	1:26.8	104.9	165	Dry
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	1:26.9	107.4	158	Dry
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	1:26.9	-	205	Dry
Lotus Evora	1:27.1	104.2	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z	1:27.1	104.0	158	Dry
Jaguar F-type V6 S	1:27.2	105.0	YouTube	Dry
Porsche Panamera S	1:27.3	102.4	165	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	1:27.3	-	YouTube	Dry
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	1:27.7	111.0	162	Dry
Lotus Elise SC	1:27.7	104.6	131	Dry
Audi S3	1:27.7	-	YouTube	Dry
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	1:27.8	106.1	131	Dry
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1:27.8	105.4	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:27.8	103.3	-	-
Audi RS6 Avant (C6) (fastest estate)	1:27.9	111.0	121	Dry
Jaguar XFR	1:27.9	108.1	137	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	1:28.0	-	YouTube	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
Porsche Macan S	1:28.3	-	205	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
Vauxhall VXR8 Clubsport Tourer	1:29.9	-	YouTube	Dry
Honda NSX	1:30.1	101.3	145	Dry

TRACK MAP



- Location Bedford Autodrome
- Length 1.85 miles (2.98 kilometres)
- Direction Anti-clockwise

Note: West Circuit reconfigured in May 2015. The above times are from before this date. Newer times are not comparable.

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Art of speed



Pontiac GTO hood tach

by RICHARD LANE

P

PORSCHE PUTS IT DEAD CENTRE, BENTLEY at times turns it upside down and Pagani has been known to embed it within the steering wheel boss. Yet almost all tachometers share one common and perhaps obvious principle: they don't form part of a car's exterior.

For the 1967 GTO, newly available with a V8 bored out to 6549cc and 355bhp, Pontiac had other ideas. By then the 'Goat' was a fast-selling hit. A machine cleverly marketed as a drag-strip warrior, it celebrated partnerships with popular suppliers such as Hurst (for the floor-mounted four-speed shifter) and championed ram-air intakes, a wide track, big displacement and as little weight as was reasonably possible.

Pontiac, nevertheless, hadn't conquered the rev counter. Where to house it without sacrificing aesthetics or the clock with which it competed for dashboard real estate? Back then the ability to observe and act upon the number of times your crankshaft revolved every minute was regarded in the same way as monitoring boost pressure is today. Nice – and fashionable to some – but non-essential. On early GTO models, where a tach was optional, the driver was even obliged to set their own red line using a central stud! It was, simply, an afterthought. A trinket.

Pontiac initially opted for the far right binnacle of a traditional cluster, which was a mistake. 'The instruments are all well-placed and legible, except for the tachometer, which is terrible,' was the verdict from *Car and Driver* in 1964. 'It's too far to the right to be glanced at during a hard run.'

One solution was to bolt a pod onto the steering column – a common aftermarket addition – but this would tarnish the handsomely pared-back interior while forcing the driver to look down too far (not a very good idea in something so shockingly potent but appallingly under-tyred).

Pontiac's idiosyncratic and arguably even less practical answer was part no. 6468453, which was a hood-mounted tach costing \$63.19. Pop-riveted on and standing approximately three inches tall, its backlit dial showed a red line starting at 5200rpm – the torque of Pontiac's High Output engine was absurd – and optimistically running to 8000rpm.

A prototypal head-up display predating digital examples by decades, this tach was flamboyant and flawed, chiefly because it was susceptible to being knocked out of calibration if the hood was slammed shut. To other drivers it appeared merely as an alien lump a few inches from the GTO's either twin (non-functional) or single (genuine) air intake. But to the owners who squinted so hard to read them? A masterpiece. ✕

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Official fuel consumption for the SEAT Leon ST CUPRA in mpg (litres per 100km); urban 32.1 (8.8) - 33.6 (8.4); extra-urban 50.4 (5.6) - 49.6 (6.6); combined 42.2 (6.7) - 42.8 (6.6). CO₂ emissions 157 - 154 g/km.