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Ed Speak



I LIKE TO THINK THAT WE take the subject of tyres seriously at **evo**. We dedicate considerable column inches to them every month, hold an annual tyre test and publish up-to-the-minute tyre news and reviews online at evo.co.uk. We've always had a tyre brand supporting **evo** Car of the Year too – for the last three years it's been Michelin.

Regular readers will know why we take rubber seriously. As the only physical connection between car and road (unless you're in the middle of a particularly spectacular barrel roll), tyres can and do define driving dynamics. The best example? Toyota GT86/Subaru BRZ: great chassis, but easily overwhelmed by eco-friendly tyres. Try the car on more performance-orientated tyres and yes, you have more grip, but you also get consistency, clearer feedback and ultimately a more engaging drive.

However, the majority of motorists – be it parents on a school run, reps on the M1 or delivery drivers – don't give a stuff about tyres. When it comes to replacing them, often begrudgingly even though they've been halfway around the world, choices are made on price (cheapness, not value) or whether the retailer has an offer available. Heartbreaking, and often life-changing, isn't it?

'There's one simple way to shock people into taking tyres seriously'

There's one simple way to shock people into taking tyres more seriously, and that's to talk about braking distances. A brand-new set of tyres chosen from the sensible end of the price spectrum can be the difference between braking hard from 30mph and stopping just in front of a child or, well, you know the rest. And these are new tyres remember – not remoulds or aged rubber.

During a recent chat with a leading tyre brand, I was told that one thing it is particularly proud of is that its 'mid-life' tyres tend to perform just as well as new tyres in all the key tests (braking, handling, grip, etc). I found this remarkable, having presumed that tyre performance degrades correspondingly with wear.

I'm talking about this because as the weather turns wintry in the UK, you can guarantee that a huge number of cars are driving around in the worst conditions on old, worn or downright illegal tyres. It scares me – plain and simple. ☒

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RADAR

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ROTARY

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HOW FAST?

Porsche

GT4 RACER

Ambition

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Tech

TURBOS

TEN YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE FIAT last offered an open-topped two-seat roadster, and it has been half a century since the original Fiat 124 Spider first appeared, but last month the Italians revealed a 21st-century remake of that car at the LA motor show.

The last roadster was the Barchetta, based on humble Punto underpinnings and never adapted for right-hand-drive markets, but brimming with enough character to tempt a hardy few from the comforting sturdiness of a Mazda MX-5. With the new Fiat 124 Spider, there may no longer be any need to choose. Thanks to Fiat's joint venture with Mazda, the Spider and its MX-5 counterpart

Fiat 124 Spider

The Italian firm re-invents an icon with more than a little help from Mazda

by ANTONY INGRAM



200,000

Number of original 124 Spiders built
between 1966 and 1985



124



The number of first
edition 'Prima
Edizione' models
to be built



Hiroshima

Where the 124
Spider will be
built, alongside
Mazda's MX-5

RIVAL

Mazda MX-5 SE-L 1.5-litre

The 124 Spider's closest rival is built on the same line in Japan and will have had a year's head start on the sales floor (and 27 years' in the roadster market) when the Fiat goes on sale next summer.

The Mk4 MX-5 hasn't blown us away so far, but by the time the 124 arrives, Mazda will have no doubt released a special edition that will make the 124's job a little harder than Fiat probably expected.



Engine	In-line, 4-cyl, 1496cc
Power	129bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque	111lb ft @ 4800rpm
0-62mph	8.3sec (claimed)
Top speed	127mph (claimed)
Weight	975kg
Power-to-weight	134bhp/ton
Basic price	£19,245

are broadly similar under the skin, differentiated largely by their styling and Fiat's use of in-house powerplants.

Under the heavily sculpted bonnet is the familiar 1.4-litre MultiAir turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine from the Abarth 500. Initially it will be offered in a 138bhp state of tune – splitting the power outputs of the 1.5-litre and 2-litre MX-5s – with 177lb ft of torque. The US market will get a more powerful 158bhp version of the same engine. Power is sent to the rear wheels by way of a six-speed manual transmission specially optimised for the turbocharged Fiat unit. As with the MX-5, the engine and transmission are positioned towards the centre of the car for a 'front-mid' engine layout.

The 124 Spider's construction is a mix of high-tensile steel and aluminium, the latter used mainly to reduce the weight of body panels and bracing. The bonnet and bootlid, front and rear bumper reinforcements, seatback bars, underbody cross-member and the bulkhead panel are all aluminium. The suspension layout is identical to that of the MX-5, with double wishbones up front and a multi-link rear. The steering is electrically assisted.

Viewed from the inside out, there's little to separate the 124 Spider from Mazda's roadster. The MX-5's dashboard architecture has been lifted wholesale, as has its three-spoke steering wheel. Instrument graphics are subtly different – though the Mazda's central tachometer has

“The suspension layout is identical to that of the Mazda MX-5”

2

trim levels

The 124 Spider will be offered in 'Spider' and 'Lusso' specifications

20

bhp

The power difference between US and European-spec 124s



IN DEPTH

1 ENGINE

Initially Europe will get a 1.4-litre MultiAir engine in one state of tune, the US another. But Fiat already offers this engine with up to 187bhp via its Abarth range of 500s, and a 124 Spider Abarth has been confirmed – expect around 200bhp.

2 CHASSIS

Fiat has taken the MX-5's double-wishbone front and a multi-link rear suspension but has reduced body roll and increased toe-in to improve high-speed stability. In theory this should bring a harder edge to the MX-5 chassis.

3 WHEELS

Two wheel and tyre sizes will be offered: 16-inchers with a 195/50 Yokohama Advan Sport V105 and 17s with a 205/45 Bridgestone Potenza S001. Expect the Abarth's wheels to be an inch larger still with a more performance-oriented tyre.

4 BRAKES

Its low weight means Fiat can go easy on the 124's brakes and reduce unsprung mass: 280mm discs are fitted front and rear (with ventilated fronts and solid rears). And praise be! The handbrake is a lever, not an electronic button.

5 BODYWORK

The 124 Spider was designed at the Fiat Centro Stile in Turin (the original was penned by Pininfarina) and takes its inspiration from the 1966 original. The canvas roof opens and closes manually and LED lights feature front and rear.



SPECIFICATION

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1368cc, turbo
Power	138bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	177lb ft @ 2250rpm
0-62mph	8.0sec (est)
Top speed	130mph (est)
Weight	1050kg
Power-to-weight	130bhp/ton
Basic price	£22,000 (est)
On sale	Summer 2016



THE ONE WE REALLY WANT

As the covers were being peeled off the 124 Spider at the LA Auto Show, **evo** was at the launch of Fiat's new Abarth Classiche HQ in Turin. And while the display of glorious classics reminded us of the former greats that once came out

of Turin, it was the confirmation that an Abarth variant of the new 124 Spider is on its way that really got our attention.

More power, less weight and a more focused chassis are the ingredients expected to go into

the Abarth Spider, with a 200bhp MultiAir engine the most likely power option. A limited-slip diff, sticky tyres and a pared-back interior are also earmarked for the model. All with a sub-1000kg kerb weight? Now you're talking.

1233mm (height)

1740mm (width)



4054mm (length)

been retained—and Fiat has eschewed the Japanese car's body-colour door elements for a more traditional combination of cabin-colour plastics.

Equipment levels should be healthy enough, with Bluetooth and USB inputs as standard, while models higher up the range offer a seven-inch touchscreen display with DAB digital radio, a reversing camera and navigation. A Bose premium

sound system will be optional, along with speakers in the headrests and internet radio.

But where the Mazda backs up its technology and cabin with a resolutely modern appearance that deviates from the pseudo-retro look of the previous three generations, Fiat has dipped deep into its heritage with its new sports car's styling. Both the name and proportions are derived

from the original Spider, which debuted 49 years ago and endured until 1985.

That car was the work of Tom Tjaarda at Pininfarina, but the latest effort has been created in-house at Centro Stile in Turin. Fiat's team has done a good job of distancing the Spider from its Japanese cousin, and the finished product also references the original without appearing

slavishly retrospective.

It's sure to divide opinion—the front overhang is uncomfortably long and some details seem more American than Italian—but its appearance in the UK next year will add welcome variety to the roadster segment.

Pricing and full specification details will be announced closer to the 124 Spider's launch in the second half of 2016.

IN THE METAL

You can decide whether you prefer the look of Fiat's reborn 124 Spider or Mazda's latest MX-5, but for the record I thought the Fiat looked fussy and unresolved in the flesh and under the bright lights of the company's show stand in LA.

With its long, straight bonnet, buff nose and small wheels, it looks clumsy compared to the MX-5. And in spite of the promise of Italian

craftsmanship and a plusher feel to the cabin, it felt pretty much the same as the Mazda to me.

However, for Fiat staff in LA there was a clear edict not to mention the M-word. It made for some hilarious Harry Potter-style 'he who must not be named' moments in interviews, but the clear implication was that Fiat has injected a bit more fizz into the 124 Spider's dynamics than

Mazda has with the MX-5.

As Enrico Genchi, the man with overall responsibility for the 124 Spider project, carefully told me: 'Other roadsters have a bit more body roll, but we have reduced that and our engine has more torque, which will improve the driving experience.'

'The original Spider was never a muscle car – it was a balanced

product that was usable but dynamic and sporty. There's a balance of softness and performance to this car, too.'

So it might not have the Mazda's looks, but it sounds like it'll have a sharper drive – some good news at least. Will that be enough for the 124 to fulfil Fiat's promise that it's a car that's 'designed to turn you on'? I'm not so sure.

Steve Fowler

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Mazda bid to revive rotary legend

Tokyo motor show
concept paves way
for Rotary return

MAZDA'S RX-VISION concept was the indisputable star of November's Tokyo motor show. Sleek front-engine/rear-drive proportions, neat detailing and a Wankel rotary engine under the bonnet make it a true spiritual successor to the much-admired third-generation RX-7.

In theory, that is. While Mazda is adamant the rotary will return, the reality of resurrecting such an unusual engine design is fraught with challenges – most pertaining to emissions and fuel economy.

Both are under severe scrutiny from legislators since the Volkswagen debacle, though in reality NOx emissions from rotary engines are typically low, thanks to lower combustion temperatures. Hydrocarbons are another matter, as are the low carbon-dioxide figures required for taxation – a traditional Wankel weak point thanks to a prodigious thirst for petrol.

Mazda managed to correct several of the rotary's inherent issues when it designed the Renesis motor for the RX-8. It moved the intake and exhaust ports from the outside edges of the housing to the sides of the combustion chamber, which cut down on the unburnt hydrocarbons previously expelled as intake and exhaust cycles overlapped. The engines were generally reliable too, albeit

“Resurrecting such an unusual engine design is fraught with challenges”

demanding of expert maintenance.

Some typical rotary issues remained, too. Rotor-tip seals, the engine's equivalent of piston rings, were prone to poor sealing and wear as a result of the large temperature differences between chambers and imperfect lubrication. This not only increased fuel and oil consumption but also the frequency of rebuilds – something modern consumers simply aren't ready to accept.

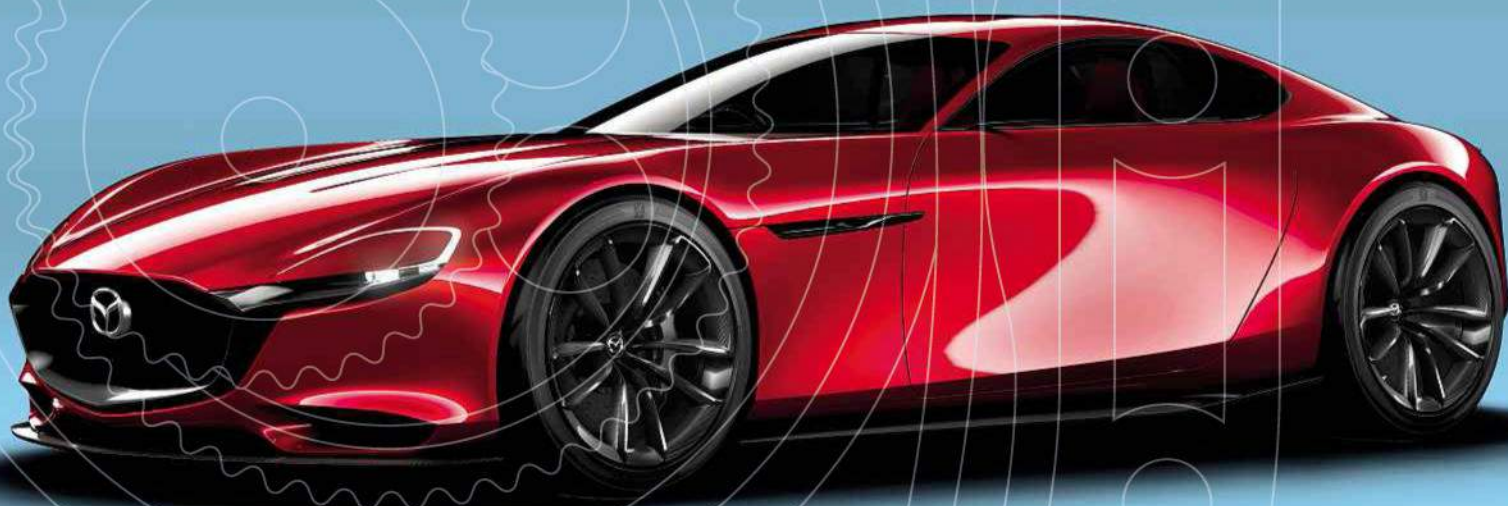
In Tokyo, Mazda confirmed its latest rotary engine will fly under the Skyactiv-R banner, echoing developments made in the company's non-rotary petrol and diesel powertrains. Those Skyactiv petrol engines run high compression – up to 14:1 – and increased injection pressure. This improves thermal efficiency and combustion. A high compression ratio is already a feature of the rotary engine, but Mazda will likely also address the rotary's shortcomings to ensure the engine deserves the Skyactiv badge.

Improved rotor-tip seals are a certainty and some form of direct fuel

injection may be possible – if Mazda can find a way of implementing it, given the unique motion of the rotor within the chambers. There are also rumours of using compression ignition, similar to that of diesels, while turbocharging is likely to return to ensure power goals can be met. Packaging and weight are unlikely to be problematic.

One avenue Mazda could explore is electrification. The brand has already experimented with rotary-and-electric power in a range-extended Mazda 2 EV concept. Running at constant engine speeds, many of the Wankel's negatives are eliminated, and the unit's smoothness is ideally suited to a whisper-quiet electric car. In a full-blown sports car, the possibility of BMW i8-style electric assistance is also appealing, while electric running can bring down those economy and emissions figures.

Mazda has a huge challenge ahead of it, but if it succeeds it will bring back one of the smoothest, lightest and most responsive combustion engines ever devised.





TRACKDAYS

evo 'HOW FAST?'
WITH SKY INSURANCE

fettled by Group B rally and F1-engine mastermind Geoff Page. The Dax ultimately set the fastest ever lap of the revised West Circuit, with Duncan Cowper clocking a scarcely believable 1min 14.9sec. For comparison, the quickest **evo's** stunningly fast Caterham 420R could manage was a 1min 20.1sec in the hands of Red Bull Rookie – and friend of **evo** – Dean Stoneman.

Dean also drove a Porsche 996 CSR built by RPM Technik (pictured below) and set a strong time of 1min 24.3sec, but arguably the star of the show was a 500bhp Audi TT RS-engined Skoda Yeti that consistently lapped at around 1min 26sec.

There are plans for further 'How Fast?' events in 2016 – keep your eyes peeled on evo.co.uk and **evo's** social channels for updates. ✕



Above: a 500bhp Yeti – the ultimate Q-car? **Left and below middle:** **evo's** 420R couldn't get near Duncan Cowper in the Hayabusa-engined Dax



Position	Name	Car	Conditions	Time
1	Duncan C	Dax Rush	Damp	01:14.89
2	David K	Porsche 911 GT3 RS	Dry	01:22.59
3	Mark R	Noble M400 3.0	Damp	01:23.55
4	Dean S	Porsche 996 CSR	Damp	01:24.30
5	Martyn W	Renault Mégane	Damp	01:25.46
6	Phil M	BMW M3	Dry	01:26.10
7	Richard W	Skoda Yeti	Damp	01:26.13
8	Steve G	Porsche 911 GT3 RS	Dry	01:26.42
9	James B	Caterham Supersport R	Damp	01:27.62
10	James R	BMW M3	Dry	01:27.75



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NEW PEUGEOT 308 GTi

MOTION & EMOTION



PEUGEOT

Cayman GT4 goes racing

Clubsport model revealed, but sadly no road version

FRESH FROM CLAIMING *evo's* Car of the Year title, the Cayman GT4 has been taken a step further with the announcement of the GT4 Clubsport. But before you get too excited about a lighter, more focused version of this mid-engined masterpiece, it's our sad duty to tell you that this is a race car only, and that it won't be homologated for road use. Not by Porsche anyway.

Starting with a GT4 road car, Porsche Motorsport sheds 40kg by removing the usual superfluous

road-car trim. In place of carpets and door cards there's a welded-in roll-cage and a fixed race seat.

The 380bhp 3.8-litre flat-six remains untouched from the road car, but the six-speed manual gearbox is replaced with a six-speed dual-clutch unit modified for racing. A mechanical LSD is also fitted.

Suspension is from the 911 GT3 Cup, while the cast-iron brakes – 380mm in diameter with six-piston calipers at the front – get 12-stage adjustment for the ABS. The stability

control has been recalibrated to work with slick tyres. Those tyres are fitted to an 18in forged wheel.

Porsche intends for the GT4 Clubsport to be homologated for the Nürburgring-based VLN series, the SRO GT4 series, the Pirelli GT3 Cup Trophy USA, the Ultra 94 GT3 Cup Challenge Canada and for club races run by the Porsche Club of America, which is why it can be ordered with a 70-, 90- or 100-litre fuel tank. Should you wish to order one you'll need 110,000 euros plus VAT.



866

Weight in kilos of the new Lotus Elise Sport, the replacement for the entry-level Elise model.

V12

Mercedes-AMG's V12 engines are to be hand-assembled in Mannheim rather than Affalterbach due to high demand.

£60,188

The hammer price achieved by Silverstone Auctions for a 1985 Ford Escort RS Turbo S1. No, really.

110

The weight in kilos fitting four-wheel drive adds to a Jaguar XE's weight.

Zenos unleashes 350bhp E10 R

Twelve months after announcing and launching its first production car, the E10 roadster, Norfolk-based Zenos Cars has announced a much more powerful variant. Called the E10 R, it uses a 2.3-litre Ford EcoBoost engine that develops 350bhp – 40 per cent more power than the 250bhp 2-litre unit in the E10 S (which now sits in the middle of the range). Torque increases to 350lb ft, up from 295lb ft in the E10 S.

The engine is managed by a bespoke ECU, developed by Specialist Components, that helps



the E10 R hit 60mph in a claimed 3.0sec and top 155mph. There is also a lighter flywheel and a new exhaust system. The E10 S's six-speed manual gearbox remains unchanged.

The E10 R's chassis has been tweaked, with the adjustable suspension receiving firmer spring and

damper rates, while the ventilated brake discs and four-piston calipers are upgraded.

The fitment of lighter wheels accounts for 10kg of the total 25kg weight saving over the E10 S's 725kg dry weight, and there are also new, lightweight seats among other upgrades. Prices start at £39,995.

HEAD TURNER MEETS HEART STOPPER

The new Lexus RC F



An exhilarating high performance sports car that was born on the race tracks. With a hand built 5.0litre V8 engine and 470bhp, the Lexus RC F is thrilling to drive, fusing muscular looks with leading edge motor-sport technology. Discover more at Lexus.co.uk



RC F



RC F prices start from £59,995. Model shown is RC F £60,620, including optional metallic paint at £625.

The MPG figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results. They are provided for comparability purposes, and may not reflect actual driving experience.

RC F fuel consumption and CO₂ figures: urban 17.5 mpg (16.1 l/100km), extra-urban 36.2 mpg (7.8 l/100km), combined 26.2 mpg (10.8 l/100km), 251g/km CO₂ (37% BIK)

Chris Ruud

Meet Chris Ruud, owner of the first Glickenhaus SCG003 and partner in Scuderia Cameron Glickenhaus. The team's plan? To disrupt the GT status quo in 2016



CHRIS RUUD'S AMBITIONS



To win a 24-hour race outright



To continue to share the passion – by bringing in other drivers and owners



To continue to welcome people to the SCG fanbase via social media



Not to give up on Le Mans



To keep developing, keep pushing – and to race the car around the world

evo's Jethro Bovingdon recently raced the SCG003 at the Nürburgring – follow evo's Facebook and Twitter channels for the dates of publication of the film and the magazine feature.

'MY ACTUAL INVOLVEMENT with Scuderia Cameron Glickenhaus started pretty early, when the car was just a piece of paper and an idea. Jim Glickenhaus had put out some feelers to different people to see what interest there was in the programme, and I looked at it as an opportunity to see a clean-sheet-of-paper race car designed with that ability for endurance.

'There have always been compromises for me in endurance racing – a lot of the other cars just aren't built for it, but we are. We've taken it from the opposite approach: a race car turned street car. And, to be honest, there's the romance of it, too – to be first customer of a new constructor was pretty special.

'I also had a chance to use my experience as a race driver to provide input in the design decisions. Jim doesn't have that from the owner perspective, so working together we are very complementary.

'That's another reason why I got involved in this programme – I thought the SCG003 would be fun to drive. Both to race, and just drive.

'We've had a good first year racing the car and improved a lot. The car is getting a lot stronger, and it's already faster than it was in the Nürburgring 24 hour race. I think that the rivals look at the car itself and are excited by it, but are also scared of its capabilities. Why? Because GT3 cars, for the most part, started as street cars – not the inverse. And while you have the bountiful resources of Porsche or whoever, and you know how to build a car, it's still a car that's converted. I get that, and I get that for marketing they have to build a race car that is a descendent of a road car. But marketing for us is different, marketing for us is about building a pure race car that you can drive on the street.

'When will we start to see the full potential of this car? We're only just beginning. Every time we get to a

“I think that the rivals look at the car itself and are excited by it, but they are also scared of its capabilities”

Ultimately we were looking at a car with the characteristics of an LMP2 car, but to meet the rulebook of a GT3. To take that approach and maximise opportunity was – and is – tremendously exciting.

'I also own a Ferrari 333SP race car from the early '90s. That car is fantastic to drive. It has nothing in terms of aids. It's the last bastion of large tyres, large downforce, large grip, high horsepower. I enjoyed driving that so much, and I wanted to feel that in a GT3.

'I love the purity of mid-engine too. I don't want to go back to driving an SLS or a front-engine car. I'm kinda sold on high grip and high aero. It's a cliché, but a mid-engine car is the only car that feels like it can turn on rails. The cornering capability, the feel, the response, the intimacy and intuition and feedback provided by that type of car... I used to drive front-engine cars competitively but I won't go back.

racetrack, we learn something new and we improve. The downside of starting with a clean sheet of paper is that you don't have 30 years' worth of experience about what's going to work. But you work hard with your suppliers and you build fast. Dunlop, for instance, has been a great supplier – they've always had people with us at the track, trying to work things out, watching the performance and attempting to understand what the tyre is doing.

'Some people wonder if the prototypes – the Porsches, Audis and Toyotas – are making the sport too expensive and moving away from road relevancy. But you can't ignore what LMP1 programmes have done for aero efficiency, or what Audi has done with diesel tech. So many technologies developed for racing have been converted for the road. That all brings a special edge as to why we race – that there are benefits for the road driver.

'However, while I'm OK with prototype racing, racing is getting more and more expensive. I think that there should be a budget-constrained series that doesn't limit anybody, but you can't argue with the fact that innovation comes from where you are allowed to push and invest.

'We currently race in the VLN and we're looking at some Asian rounds, too, but everyone asks about Le Mans. Would it be in the ACO's best interests to have the car run in the 24 hours? We think so, and it would be fun, too! We're not giving up, but at this moment they are getting enough pressure from other sources that are... Well, let's just say we're not invited.'

TAKING ON THE BIG BOYS

You may not have heard of Chris Ruud before, but, as part of the burgeoning SCG programme, you're likely to hear a lot more of him in 2016 and beyond.

A wealthy man, Ruud is a global VP at Cree, a vast LED lighting and semiconductor business, and doubtless fields a constant stream of investment opportunities. But, talking to him, it's clear that the investment in the SCG003 project is at least as much emotion as it is financial. Why? Like Jim Glickenhaus, he's enthralled by the prospect of taking on bigger names as a privateer team – the glint in his eye when he talks about rivals, and the 'discussions' with the ACO, tells a story in itself.

Nevertheless, the most important victories for the SCG003 project will occur away from the racetrack next year. During VLN races this year, a horsepower cap has prevented the car showing its full potential – potential that is undoubtedly enough to give the big rivals from Porsche, Audi and Mercedes serious headaches. Jim Glickenhaus and Chris will need to continue to tread carefully with the lawmakers to ensure the SCG003 is allowed to race competitively.

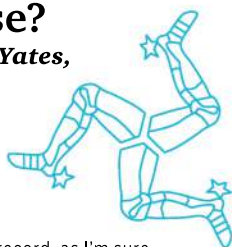
However, GT racing is, and has always been, about the story as much as the racing. Globally, the category will be richer with a competitive Glickenhaus car taking on the bigger teams – and that's what people latch on to. We'll be following the story closely in 2016 and beyond; we suggest you do, too.

Nick Trott

ASK GOODWIN

How fast do you think a car could go around the TT course?

**Edward Yates,
Detroit**



The current record, as I'm sure you know, is held by Mark Higgins in a Subaru Impreza, at 116.40mph – a way off John McGuinness's outright lap record of 132.70mph. A very long way off. Trouble is, the TT course is so bumpy in places and has jumps that would break the back of a Le Mans prototype, let alone a single-seater. Another problem is the narrowness of some of the sections. Kirk Michael, for example.

I've given TT winner Ian Hutchinson a call to see what he thinks. 'I don't think the width of the roads are a problem, even at Kirk Michael,' he says, 'but you're right about the bumps. The section from Ginger Hall to Ramsey would be tough on a car. Downforce wouldn't really work there but it would be a big help over the mountain section because that's smooth. Ballaugh Bridge wouldn't be an issue because we have to take that very gently as well.'

'The Subaru probably had a top speed of around 150mph, which isn't enough because in several places we're at over 190mph on the bikes. I used to have a Mitsubishi Evo and that was so easy to drive fast. I've also had a Porsche Carrera 4 and that was much more challenging.'

Hutchy is right about a car needing plenty of power: more than almost any street-legal Impreza has. A Rallycross car would be quick, but you'd need to set it up well and it wouldn't have the top speed. If racers are out, I wonder if something like a Ferrari 488 wouldn't be a good bet. One thing's for sure, it's going to require someone like Higgins, with his course knowledge and talent, to trouble McGuinness's time.

For more 'Ask Goodwin' columns, visit evo.co.uk

VHRA Pendine Sands

Hot-rodders enjoy a fast day out at the seaside and we're all invited

I'VE ALWAYS LOVED hot-rods. I've never owned one but I've driven a few. Generally they are catastrophically bad to drive, breaking all the dynamic rules and wandering down the road with a freedom of direction shared with the owners who create them. And that's the draw. Hot-rods are all different, no two the same and each one an expression of an individual's passion. They're also a very good way to cart around an extreme engine. Any sort of engine, from a huge big-block with a supercharger on top to an aero engine.

This month's event is for vintage hot-rods from the pre-

1949 era. It's the Vintage Hot Rod Association's annual races on Pendine Sands in west Wales. Next year's event, which will be on the weekend of June 4-5, will be the fourth year that it's been held. I first heard about the event through Peter Stevens, the styling man behind several Lotuses and the McLaren F1. Stevens is a lifetime lover of rods and customs and has a Model T rod. He came back from Pendine raving about the event.

'It's classless and ego-less,' reported Stevens, 'and everyone mucks in. You have to because it's not like turning up for a race and the circuit is all ready for you. At Pendine the tide goes out and





Right: entries are eclectic; this year Christophe Mehault entered his streamliner-class Lakester; the chassis uses a V8 and a three-speed gearbox



everyone has to help clear the beach and prepare the course.

'You get the nicest people taking part and watching, too. A few of my mates from McLaren Automotive come down because they love the simplicity of a car with about five wires compared to the mobile supercomputers that they build at work.'

Stevens isn't the only car designer that I've come across who likes hot-rods. Go into any car company design studio and you'll probably find a model of one on a desk. Ian Callum, Jaguar's top draw-er, likes hot-rods and so do plenty of other big-name designers.

So to Pendine Sands. Pretty easy to get to, if a bit of a slog down the M4 and then on a bit further. If you've been to Pembrey Circuit you've been

pretty close. Most people know a bit about Pendine Sands. Malcolm Campbell was the first person to use the beach for a land speed record attempt, managing 146.16mph in 1924 in his first Blue Bird. In 1927 JG Parry-Thomas was famously killed in a 170mph crash in his car 'Babs'. The car was buried in the sand but was dug up and restored in the early 1970s. Babs is displayed in the summer months at Pendine's Museum of Speed. What a name for a museum.

The Vintage Hot Rod Association, VHRA for short, splits up the entrants into many different classes comprising different engines, body styles and various other definitions, such as supercharged or with a non-OHV engine. Each category has a letter or number so that by looking

at a car you can tell what class it's in: a car with L8/C painted on it has an engine that's post-1954, has eight cylinders and is a closed car. The VHRA is strict with its rules, which keeps everything fair and honest, plus everything looks correct and authentic.

Peter Stevens will be running his 1929 Model A Ford, powered by a four-cylinder flathead, this year. 'It's got a 1925 Model T body on it. That was a common conversion in the day because the T's body was lighter and narrower,' explains Stevens.

The course at Pendine is about a mile long, with a half-mile run-up and a timed flying sixteenth of a mile. The speeds are quite modest. The record stands at 116.03mph, set last year by a Ford Model A roadster pickup powered by a small-block

Chevy. Doesn't sound that quick but I bet it feels like it across the sand in a machine with drum brakes and basic suspension.

Like the Goodwood Revival, the VHRA's Pendine event involves looking the part, though thankfully seems to have less of a military theme than the Sussex event, with more rock 'n' roll than Eighth Army. You can tell by looking at the programmes and the event poster that this is a class event run by people with a strong sense of style.

Spectating at the event is free, and you can get up close and personal with the cars in the museum grounds either side of the racing. Perfect for people like me who love to have a dig around under bonnets. It's an event that I guarantee you will see me at next year.





BRING IT ON!

WRC teams and their tyres have to be prepared for hugely diverse weather and surface conditions. We join Ford M-Sport and Michelin for final testing before the Wales Rally GB, an event that always throws up surprises

A THICK, WHITE BLANKET of cloud sits heavily atop the Cumbrian hills, and from beneath its dense canopy an endless stream of rain tumbles down into the forest below. The tracks through the forest are turning into a gloopy mess of deep standing water and cloying mud that is peppered with gravel and stones. In other words, perfect conditions in which to prepare for the Wales Rally GB, the last round of the 2015 World Rally Championship and traditionally a stern challenge for man, machine and tyres.

Of all motorsport disciplines, the World Rally Championship, or WRC, places the toughest demands on everyone who takes part in it. Long stages and short. Scorching heat and sub-zero cold. Snow and ice, dust and rocks. Dry tarmac and rain-drenched mud. The teams and their cars have to cope with every eventuality.

And so do the Michelin rally tyres, one of four brands officially approved by the sport's governing body, the FIA, for use in the WRC,

and chosen by all the front-running teams. The design and construction of Michelin's rally range has to be versatile enough for the tyres to perform impeccably in vastly different conditions spread around the far-flung corners of the world. By creating tyres that can handle the stresses and strains and diversity of a season of flat-out rallying, Michelin's engineers learn valuable lessons about how to make the company's high-performance road tyres perform to their optimum year-round.

Today's outing to a forest in Cumbria is a chance to watch those Michelin WRC tyres in furious action and marvel at their ability to keep a rally car controllable in typical Wales Rally GB conditions. We're privileged guests of Malcolm Wilson's Ford M-Sport operation as the team tests the setup on one of its Fiesta RS WRC cars, driven today by Elfyn Evans.

But before we're formally introduced we witness the Fiesta bellowing and snorting along the forest track, great rooster-tails of water and mud being flung up behind it. As the broad little Ford thunders towards the sharp left-hand turn where we're standing, the nose



Above: M-Sport Fiesta RS WRC driver Elfyn Evans.
Left and above right: muddy conditions are good practice for Wales Rally GB.
Right: tyres are given a tough time during testing



'THE FIESTA POUNDS AROUND ALL DAY, PUSHING COMPONENTS TO THEIR LIMIT'

suddenly dips as Evans hits the brakes, then the car is sideways and kicking up a tidal wave of stones and orange mud. Despite the speed of the manoeuvre and the slipperiness of the surface, the Michelin tyres simply dig hard into the dirt and keep the Fiesta pointing precisely where Evans is aiming it.

Shortly afterwards at the service area, we ask the young Welshman Evans what he needs most from his Michelin rally tyres. 'I think that the big quality that we have at the moment with the Michelin tyre is strength and durability,' he says. 'The amount of things that we hit and clip and brush with the wheels during a stage, whether it be on gravel or tarmac, well it's very, very rare to have a puncture. Obviously with the field as close as it is now, if you do have a puncture or a problem that maybe costs you two to three minutes, you're basically behind for the whole weekend, and it's very difficult to recover from that. Having a reliable tyre that provides cutting-edge performance for all the crews makes for really exciting racing.'

And what about the tyre requirements on the Wales Rally GB? 'Rally GB is quite a specific

one [event]; normally on a gravel event you try to be as smooth as possible and look for the clean line, but Rally GB flips that on its head, especially if we get what they call a "polished surface" that offers very little grip. In which case you always look for the unused line, which sometimes, of course, involves ditches, which can be a bit risky, but often you will find more grip in those areas.'

Ford M-Sport's rally team engineer, Mark Lowe, gives us some further insights into the importance of understanding the characteristics of the Michelin tyres: 'For Rally GB our tyre choice is dictated by the surface conditions and the weather. If the surface is shiny clay with lots of standing water, what we need is tread depth, and those wetter conditions favour a soft compound.'

'In testing we see what happens when you use the wrong compounds in the wrong circumstances – this is important, because on some of the longer stages you can be faced with very variable conditions. On the Saturday morning of Rally GB, for instance, we have to go for 68 stage miles without a tyre change.

'And if the rally happens to be dry, we might opt to run a mix of hards and softs – that's why we try to amass as much data as possible during testing, so that during the rally we can have an optimum setup whatever we come up against.'

Evans and the Fiesta RS WRC pound around the forest all day in the unrelenting rain, pushing components to their absolute limit. But remaining faithful throughout are the Michelin rally tyres: not a single puncture, the holy grail of rallying.

Durability and high performance in hugely diverse conditions are the qualities Michelin expects from its rally tyres – those are values passed on to Michelin's highly respected road tyres, too.

The eventual winners of the Wales Rally GB were Sébastien Ogier and his co-driver Julien Ingrassia in their Michelin-shod Volkswagen Polo R WRC. Their victory brought Michelin its 288th stage win in world-class rallying. To see highlights from the event, visit www.best-of-rallylive.com

in association with



FOCUS

WHY TURBOS ARE HERE TO STAY

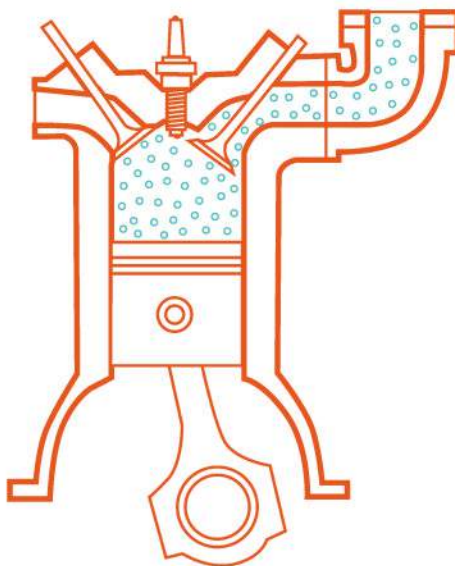
REMEMBER THE FERRARI 348? Its 3.4-litre V8 produced less than 300bhp at the model's launch in 1989. Yet just 20 years later the turbocharged 2.5-litre five-cylinder motor in the Mk2 Focus RS developed similar power, while today there are several hot hatches with even smaller engines that have outputs around the 300bhp mark.

So how have engineers made more power from smaller engines? One of the key considerations for engine designers is the direct relationship between the mass-flow rate of air entering an engine and brake horsepower. In other words, more air means more power. This gives a number of areas where engineers can focus to increase power, but the most important are volumetric efficiency, charge density and engine speed.

VOLUMETRIC EFFICIENCY

Volumetric efficiency is how well the car breathes, and specifically a measure of how much fresh air is entering a cylinder per cycle compared to the swept volume of the cylinder. Engineers strive to improve the inlet and exhaust systems, head design, compression ratio and the cooling system to improve performance and economy. This area is one of the most studied by engine-development engineers.

Right: getting more air into the cylinders is one of the main ways to coax more power from an engine



CHARGE DENSITY

The most commonly used method to increase an engine's charge density is through forced induction. Superchargers or turbochargers – or both – can be used to compress the air before it enters the engine. This also increases volumetric efficiency levels above 100 per cent. The effectiveness of turbo/supercharging is why so many manufacturers are downsizing and 'boosting' their power units.

ENGINE SPEED

Quite simply, if the engine speed is increased there is more 'suck, squeeze, bang, blow' occurring during any given period of time. Unfortunately, we can't run road-car engines at F1-engine speeds (approximately 15,000rpm) due to reliability and NVH (noise, vibration and harshness) concerns. It's fine to run race engines at high revs, as the increased stress is dealt with by utilising very expensive, lightweight and strong materials.

“Engineers strive to improve the inlet and exhaust systems, head design and cooling system”

A road car needs to last a long time and be cheap to produce, so this isn't an option.

As you can see, it's simple engineering that explains why manufacturers are downsizing and using forced induction: it's the most effective way of meeting today's strict emissions targets while maintaining competitive performance. Not great news for naturally aspirated purists, but good for drivers who want cleaner and/or more powerful engines.



ASK MIKE

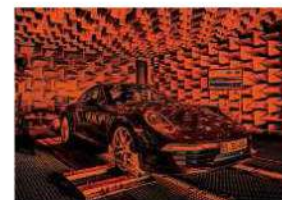
Your tech questions answered

Q On *Building Cars Live* on BBC Two they talked about an anechoic chamber. What is this? – Jo O'Malley

A An anechoic chamber is a room that is designed to absorb all the sound waves from within and is insulated from exterior noises. The idea is to have a room so quiet that highly accurate measurements of sound can be taken. They are often quoted to have an ambient sound level of around -12 decibels. This doesn't mean that there is 'negative' sound – the measurement of sound is logarithmic, so very quiet noises have negative values.

The rooms are often used to discover NVH issues on cars, and even to fine-tune specific sounds such as door shuts.

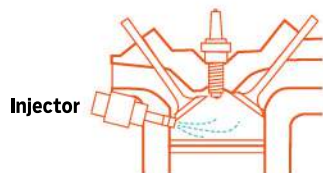
Send your question to experts@evo.co.uk



TECH GAME-CHANGERS

DIRECT INJECTION

Invented by:
Léon Levavasseur When: 1902



Direct fuel injection on petrol engines was invented by the father of the V8 engine, Léon Levavasseur. Originally designed for aeronautic applications, it didn't appear on a car until the early 1950s, when models by the

German brands Goliath and Gutbrod featured a Bosch system. Today, direct injection is commonplace in the automotive field.

The principle is that high-pressure fuel is injected directly into each cylinder of the engine from

a common rail delivery system. The technology used before – multi-point injection – saw fuel injected into the intake piping or cylinder port. Moving the injection point directly into the cylinder itself allows finer control over the amount of

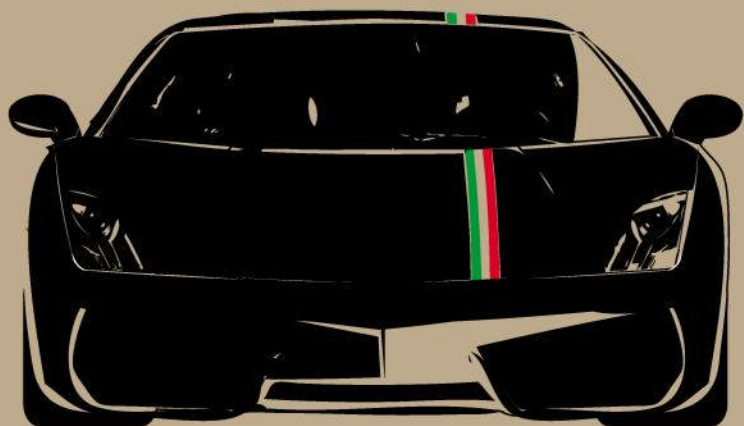
fuel going into each cylinder. And having a finer control over the fuel delivery means that fuel can be injected at any point in the four-stroke cycle and variable timings can be more accurately exploited.

Drawbacks are minimal, the

only one worth mentioning being the build-up of dirt and grime in the intake ports ('carbon build-up') due to fuel, and any detergents it contains, no longer passing through these ports and over the back of the intake valves.



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A TYRE FOR ALL SEASONS?

IF THE LAST FEW YEARS ARE anything to go by, less than five per cent of Brits will equip their car with winter tyres this winter. Those that do don't have a choice – freezing conditions in certain areas mean a siped tyre is essential to stay mobile. But for those who live in parts of the UK that experience just a few sub-zero days, there's little motivation to fit seasonal rubber.

The dangers of running summer tyres in wintry conditions are well documented – many of us have experienced the sheer lack of grip on offer. But fewer of us know what effects running winter tyres in mild, dry conditions (which aren't unheard of in winter) will have. Are we better off sticking with regular rubber to avoid these negatives? Alternatively, could all-season tyres be a better option, or do they simply offer average performance in all conditions?

To find out, we equipped four identical Skoda Octavias with four different categories of tyre and headed to the MIRA Proving Ground and Tamworth Snowdome to test braking, handling and traction in dry, wet and simulated winter conditions.

THE TYRES

All tyres tested were 205/55 R16 94V XL, aside from the Continental, which was only available in 91H. Prices from lovelytyres.com.

WINTER

CONTINENTAL CONTIWINTERCONTACT TS 850



One of the best winter tyres on sale at the moment. We expect this to excel on the slipperiest surfaces, but it could struggle in the warm.

Max speed rating 149mph
Wet grip Grade C
Size range 155/65/ R14 – 225/50 R17
Price as tested £65.99

SUMMER WITH WINTER CERTIFICATION

MICHELIN CROSSCLIMATE



The first of its kind on the mass market, will the CrossClimate live up to its maker's claims of being a viable alternative to all-season tyres?

Max speed rating 168mph
Wet grip Grade A
Size range 185/60 R15 – 225/50 R17
Price as tested £60.36

ALL-SEASON

GOODYEAR VECTOR 4SEASON GEN-2



This new tyre has already impressed in its own class, but we want to see how it compares with the summer-biased CrossClimate.

Max speed rating 149mph
Wet grip Grade B-C
Size range 155/70 R13 – 235/55 R17
Price as tested £75.91

SUMMER

MICHELIN PRIMACY 3



With mild ambient temperatures in its favour, expected to dominate all dry and wet tests and, conversely, struggle on snow and ice.

Max speed rating 186mph
Wet grip Grade A
Size range 195/55 R16 – 245/50 R18
Price as tested £70.68

THE RESULTS

The mild ambient temperatures throughout our testing process favoured the summer tyre, but, as the results table shows, the Primacy 3 was the least consistent tyre across the six tests.

As predicted, it performed best in the dry handling and dry braking tests, braking from 60 to 5mph in 36.2 metres, a significant 6.7 metres shorter than the full winter. And in our snow traction test, the summer-tyre car struggled to find any grip and spent its time wheel-spinning at the bottom of our indoor ski slope, whereas all the other tyres made it to the top – the full winter getting there first. In the snow braking test, the summer tyre took 20.4 metres longer to brake from 30 to 0mph than the winter.

In contrast, the winter's worst result was only 19 per cent off the best – it's that aforementioned extra 6.7 metres it needed to brake from 60 to 5mph on a dry surface. Of course, 6.7 metres is still significant, but it's far better than the summer tyre's efforts on snow.

Our all-season tyre performed well throughout, particularly braking on snow, but perhaps the biggest

surprise came from the CrossClimate – it essentially matched the summer tyre in the dry and wet tests, and only just fell short of the all-season for snow braking. In these conditions it was the best all-rounder. And the summer tyre on snow was so dangerously bad it made running a winter tyre in the warm look safe!

For a full run-down of the test results, visit evo.co.uk/tyres.

	Snow braking 30-0mph	Wet braking 50-5mph	Dry braking 60-5mph	Snow traction	Wet handling	Dry handling
	29.65m	34.82m	42.92m	1st	54.40sec	44.87sec
	36.10m	35.54m	41.65m	=2nd	55.69sec	44.93sec
	39.76m	34.74m	36.88m	=2nd	55.30sec	43.37sec
	50.06m	33.97m	36.20m	4th	56.76sec	43.33sec



GT RADIAL SAVERO SUV

Here's an eye-opening fact for you: one in four cars now sold within the EU is an SUV or crossover. This surging demand for jacked-up hatchbacks and full-time off-roaders has created a highly attractive opportunity for tyre sales growth, and GT Radial is the latest manufacturer to offer a product to the segment.

To meet the demands of most SUV/crossover drivers, the GT Radial's new Saverio SUV tyre is designed to offer competitive on-road performance with respectable off-road and load-bearing capabilities. And minutes into a drive up a treacherous Barcelona mountain trail, it's clear the tyre is noticeably better at dealing with the rough stuff.

Not only is the Saverio SUV surprisingly impact-resistant (our path features several sharply angled ridges), it also offers good traction over gravel and does a commendable job of soaking up vibrations.

Back on dry tarmac the tyre is indistinguishable from normal road rubber, with adequate grip and comparable road noise, though, perhaps unsurprisingly, the tyres can feel a little wallowy when really pressing on.

But for those more concerned with venturing onto grass, gravel and mud than fast driving, they're a great all-rounder. UK sizes range from 215/65 R16 to 235/55 R18, with prices starting at around £60 per tyre.

Kim Adams

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

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PRESENTS FOR PETROLHEADS

Still struggling for that last-minute gift idea? From diecast cars to driving experiences, here are evo's suggestions

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This gift voucher gives you the choice of experiencing a Ferrari F430 or Aston V8 Vantage for eight laps, or a single-seater for 30 minutes.

silverstone.co.uk

2 EVO STEERING WHEEL SWEATSHIRT £34.99

evo doesn't have its own branded steering wheel, sadly, but our Steering Wheel sweatshirt is much cooler than a Christmas jumper.

shotdeadinthehead.com

3 PORSCHE CLASSIC COOLER £450

Keep your Christmas beverage of choice chilled in this bottle cooler made from the distinctive ribbed cylinder of an early air-cooled 911.

shop.porsche.com/uk

4 EPIC: ROADS OF ICELAND £39.90

Last month we featured Stefan Bogner's *Porsche Drive* book. *Epic* sees him capture the spectacular beauty of Iceland.

delius-klasing.de



5 LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO LP600 1:18
£68

This Minichamps Gallardo should stand out on your display shelf. The real car competed in the ADAC GT Masters in 2011.

racingmodels.com

6 MERCEDES-BENZ 300SL 1:12
£190

Even more detailed than 1:18-scale equivalents, Mercedes' most iconic model is recreated beautifully here in 1:12 scale.

racingmodels.com

7 PORSCHE 919 HYBRID JANI/DUMAS/LIEB 1:18
£98

Not the 919 that won Le Mans this year, but a detailed recreation of the 2014 #14 car that finished a strong fifth on its 24 Hours debut.

racingmodels.com

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drapertools.com

10 RICHBROOK THERMO TRAVEL MUG
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richbrook.co.uk

13 MIRABEAU MONACO T-SHIRT
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t-lab.eu

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These Sportline springs lower the Mk7 Golf GTI 30mm at the front and 20mm at the rear. They're available for a huge range of other cars, too.

eibach.co.uk

15 PILOTI COMPETIZIONE SHOES
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These FIA-certified racing boots are constructed from suede and leather. 'Roll Control' heel extends padding to the side of the shoe.

piloti.uk.com

11 BMW M3 E30 DTM 1:18
£110

One of the coolest racing colour schemes ever? Alpina's M3 was campaigned with great success by Christian Danner in the 1988 season.

racingmodels.com



8 ASTON MARTIN ZAGATO N24 1:18
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This TecnoModel recreation of Aston Martin's 2012 Nürburgring 24 Hours contender features a certain Richard Meaden among its named drivers...

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The ultimate gadget machine

From gesture control to remote parking, we get to grips with the technology-fest that's at the core of BMW's new 7-series

THE NEW BMW 7-SERIES might just be the most technologically advanced production car ever to go on sale. From an in-car tech perspective, it most definitely is. The sheer amount of gadgetry on offer, both in terms of driver assist systems and what the latest generation iDrive system is capable of, is truly bewildering.

It's a huge statement of intent from BMW, which has all too often been on the technological back foot to Mercedes and its S-class. Just about every piece of technology found in the 7-series – including its innovative 'Carbon Core' chassis, which mixes carbonfibre components with steel and aluminium parts to help reduce weight – will eventually make its way down to other models in the company's line-up, too.

Let's look at the revamped iDrive first. Touchscreen technology has been added to the 10.2-inch high-resolution display in the centre of the dash, making for a more intuitive, user-friendly experience than you get operating the click-wheel on the transmission tunnel.

Things don't stop there, however, as you can now use gesture control to carry out basic iDrive commands.

For example, rotating your finger clockwise in front of the display will raise the volume. Even better, one of the five gestures recognised by the system can be given a custom function, so you can quickly call home or find directions with a simple hand movement. And while some gesture control systems struggle to recognise commands properly, this one appears to work every time.

For rear-seat passengers, it's possible to option two 9.2-inch HD displays, both of which give access to the core functions of iDrive. The screens themselves boast vivid colours and pin-sharp visuals that are a step above what the competition offers. Integrated into the central armrest between the rear seats, meanwhile, is a 7-inch tablet that can control such things as the climate control and infotainment system.

One place where you don't normally see a screen is on a car's key, but that's exactly what you'll find on BMW's 'Display Key', which comes as standard with the new 7-series. It enables you to remain connected with the car even when you're away from it, allowing you to remotely operate the climate control and check the fuel level and range and the current





Left: Display Key is as big as some phones. **Top:** central display is now a touchscreen. **Above right:** tablet in rear can control the lighting, seats, media, phone and more

servicing requirements. A wireless charger built into the car's storage cubby keeps the key's battery topped up and will also charge compatible Android phones, or iPhones wearing an optional BMW case.

The key's real party piece, though, is the way it allows you to remotely park the 7-series. Step out of the

“Step out of the car with it facing a space and you can slowly move it forwards or backwards using the key”



car with it facing a space and you can slowly move it forwards or backwards using the key. Handy, perhaps, if you've got a garage that will accommodate a 7-series, but which isn't wide enough for you to open the car's doors once inside.

While the many new features of this 7-series are undeniably impressive, you could of course question how many of them you actually need. Perhaps more useful than remote parking would be further simplifying how the ever-growing plethora of functions are accessed. Click-wheels, touchscreens and gestures are all well and good, but a truly honed voice control system that can reliably understand natural speech would be a real step forward, and something we've yet to see in a production car. Perhaps one for the next 7-series, BMW?

Hunter Skipworth

NOW & THEN

Paddleshift transmissions

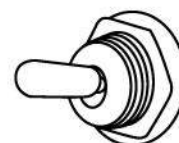


You're flat out, right foot pinning pedal to bulkhead, right fingertips poised to click the paddle behind the steering wheel to engage the next gear. If you weren't driving 68bhp's worth of growling Toyota Aygo with its 'x-shift' automated manual transmission, it might even be exciting...

The Aygo is illustrative of just how widely such transmissions are now available. On road cars the trend started with the Ferrari F355 in 1997 and the 'F1' gearshift – a six-speed electrohydraulic manual that swapped cogs in 0.15sec. As the name suggests, it provided a link between Ferrari's road cars and racing programme. After all, it had been Ferrari that introduced paddleshift gear selection to Formula 1 in 1989.

Steering wheel-mounted gearshift devices were nothing new, though. French engineer Amedé Bollée used them in his vehicles as early as 1901, activating clutchless gearshifts with a ring of aluminium in the centre of the steering wheel.

In modern cars, shift speeds and dual-clutch transmissions have been the biggest advancements. By the Ferrari 599 GTO of 2011, changes took only 0.06sec, while DSG – introduced by VW in the German-market Golf Mk4 R32 in 2003 – made them effectively instantaneous. Which is more than can be said of the Aygo's automated manual.



ON
OR
OFF?

Auto-dimming mirrors

Many cars let you turn this feature off, but James Rock, writing on our Facebook page, would keep it on. 'It's great for retaining visibility at night', he says. Even more useful when paired with auto-dimming side mirrors, too.

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WATCH TECH

Harry Winston
Opus 14
'Jukebox watch'



Back in 2001, Harry Winston instigated its 'Opus' project, which sought to bring together some of the world's most innovative horological designers and engineers in order to create an ongoing series of radical watches offering entirely new – if somewhat frivolous – methods of telling the time. The project has resulted in some decidedly wacky watches, the latest of which, the Opus 14, is no exception.

Inspired by American jukeboxes of the 1950s, the Opus 14 contains four 'discs' that are stacked in a store on the left-hand side of the dial. Each disc shows something different: local time, GMT, the date and a star symbol bearing the signature of Harry Winston. A slider on the left of the case allows the wearer to choose the desired disc, while pressing the push-piece at the four o'clock position causes a moving arm to select the disc and set it on a platform on the right of the dial, where it can be read. This complex watch comprises 1066 components.

Just 50 Opus 14s will be made – each priced at £283,000.



THIS MONTH

**Baume & Mercier
Capeland Shelby Cobra**

Price: For auction, estimate \$10,000+
From: antiquorum.com

We brought you news of the collaboration between Baume & Mercier and US tuning house Shelby American back in *evo* 209 following the launch of two Shelby-inspired versions of the Capeland chronograph. Now the duo has produced this one-off, sky blue model that will cross the block at auction house Antiquorum in New York on December 9, with all proceeds going to the Carroll Shelby Foundation. The winning bidder also gets a visit to Shelby HQ in Vegas, a Cobra driving experience, two race suits and more. Bid online, by phone or in person.



**Rolex
'Striped' Prince**

Price: For auction, estimate £8000-12,000
From: bonhams.com

Another interesting watch appearing at auction is this 1930s 'striped' Rolex Prince that originally belonged to Donald Healey of Healey cars fame. The two-tone gold art deco watch is inscribed on the back 'Donald Healey, Perranporth' and is being sold by a direct descendant of the celebrated engineer, designer and rally driver. It will be offered at Bonhams' pre-Christmas car sale in London on December 6, where you can also bid for the great man's 1953 Austin-Healey coupe and 'SMO 746', the well-known 1959 Austin-Healey 3000 works rally car.



**Breitling for Bentley
GT3**

Price: £8830
From: breitling.com

The latest imposing watch to emerge from the Breitling for Bentley workshops is this chronograph that pays homage both to the marque's return to motorsport in the GT3 category last year and to the sporty, road-going Continental GT3-R. Despite its mammoth 49mm diameter, the watch is deceptively light thanks to the use of titanium for the blackened case and, to a lesser extent, carbonfibre for the dial. Just 500 examples will be available, all on special GT3 rubber straps and with edition numbers engraved on the casebacks.

CHRONO



Read more from Simon de Burton in *Chrono*, the interactive watch magazine for iPad and iPhone, available now from the iTunes Store.

FREDERIQUE CONSTANT HEALEY LIMITED EDITION

As worn by James Knight, European car department head, Bonhams



'In 2011 we were privileged to offer for sale NOJ 393, the Austin-Healey 100 that competed at Le Mans in 1953 and 1955. In the latter race it was struck by Pierre Levegh's Mercedes-Benz 300 SLR, resulting in one of the greatest tragedies

in motor racing. Levegh and 83 spectators lost their lives.

'The Healey was repaired and sold on, and was consigned to us after being kept in storage for 42 years. We achieved £843,000 for the car, which was subsequently restored to

its 1955 Le Mans start-line spec.

'My watch is one of a limited edition made by Frederique Constant to commemorate the restoration. It's very special to me, both because of its links to the sale and because I own a 1954 Healey 100.'



EVERY NEW EVO CAR THAT MATTERS,
REVIEWED AND RATED

BENTLEY BENTAYGA // MERCEDES-AMG C63 S COUPE
MINI COOPER S CLUBMAN // KIA PROCEED GT //
PORSCHE MACAN GTS // AUDI S8 PLUS

 Driven



Test location: A-397, Málaga, Spain GPS: 36.78136, -5.08069

Bentley Bentayga

So here it is, all 12 cylinders, 600bhp and 2.3 tons of it. But is Bentley's first SUV any good, and is it 'Bentley' enough?

WHAT DO YOU THINK of the idea of a Bentley SUV? Not the car itself, or the styling or anything else, but the idea? Do you love it or hate it? Likewise, what do you think of a Bentley based on the same platform as an Audi Q7?

Bentley admits that the purists it spoke to during early research were disgusted at the thought of a big 4x4 wearing the famous wings badge, and the EXP 9 F show car of 2012 did nothing to appease them. Dumpy, frumpy, overwrought with tasteless detailing, it was the kind of car you'd

avoid looking at for too long for fear of turning to stone.

So why, just three years later, are we driving Bentley's first SUV? Business, pure and simple. Owners of Bentleys also tend to own a sporting SUV of some kind, and so after 500 individual customer interviews, intense sector research and multiple business cases, the Bentayga was given the green light. There's also the fact that Bentley likes to 'own' sectors, and it saw an opportunity to produce the world's first high-performance ultra-luxury SUV. Range Rover may scoff at this,



but one look inside a Bentayga will silence the grumbles pretty quickly. The interior is truly magnificent.

Additionally, even before we're handed the keys, we're told that the early success of the Bentayga (some 5500 pre-orders) has imbued it with a messiah-like quality and will enable Bentley to reinvest in purer sports cars and ultra-high-performance SUVs.

So rather than killing the company stone dead, the Bentayga will give it a new lease of life. It's a major raspberry blown in the direction of purists, but

what's Bentley to do? Turn down £850million of investment?

All fascinating stuff, especially if you're into the pink pages, but this is **evo**, so with an open mind we're driving off a beach in southern Spain and up into the hills across to Ronda – hills familiar to **evo** from countless tests in far more sporting cars. Brave, methinks, to let us loose up here.

Pull the weighty door closed, listen to the motors grab it and pull it tight, thumb the starter and move off. Yep, this is a Bentley alright. Every surface has a high-quality

feel, the controls evenly weighted and linear but with a reassuring heft, and there's barely any noise aside from a subtle howl from the all-new W12 engine. And what an engine – 6 litres, 600bhp, twin-scroll turbochargers and 664lb ft of torque at 1350–4500rpm. Smaller engines with fewer horses will follow, but I wonder how they'll cope with moving nigh-on 2.5 tons...

The W12 motor, however, is quite something. Built exclusively in Crewe – now the 'centre of excellence' for all VW Group W12 engines – it combines high-pressure direct

injection with low-pressure injection (for better performance and cleaner emissions, according to Bentley), and features stop-start and cylinder deactivation. We're struggling to best 12mpg (21.6mpg combined is claimed), albeit after some pretty hard driving, but can't fault the refinement, response or grunt.

If you select manual mode (and, say, second gear) then bury the throttle, you'll be shifting through the eight-speed ZF auto gearbox faster than you can think. This is a mightily fast car. Stops well too, with huge front calipers grabbing

The team

If they had to do every journey in the same car for the next 12 months, what car would our road testers choose?



NICK TROTT
Editor

'C63 AMG wagon. Munches miles, scares supercars, big enough for kids, fun on the occasional trackday'



STUART GALLAGHER
Managing editor

'Audi RS6, unless someone wants to adopt a child or a wife for a year, in which case a McLaren 675LT'



HENRY CATCHPOLE
Features editor

'Manual E90 M3 saloon. Perfect blend of practical – bicycles will fit – rear-driven, naturally aspirated V8 fun'



DAN PROSSER
Road test editor

'Two seats is plenty for me, so I'll have a Porsche Cayman GT4, please'



JETHRO BOVINGTON
Contributing editor

'Kids can walk. GT3 RS 4.0, please. Better every time I drive it, so after 365 days it'll be untouchable'



RICHARD MEADEN
Contributing editor

'Would everyone hate me if I said Range Rover? Proper one, not a Sport'



DAVID VIVIAN
Contributing editor

'Porsche 918 Spyder, natch. A very nice, environmentally friendly semi-electric car. Lovely'



ADAM TOWLER
Contributing road tester

'Alpina B5 Edition 50 wagon: a practical estate car that also happens to hit 201mph'



400mm cast-iron discs (carbon-ceramics aren't available yet). The middle pedal does take on a mushy feel and the pads start smoking during a relatively short sequence of straights and tight corners on our test route, however. Stopping power doesn't fade, but our confidence certainly does. Ceramics can't come soon enough.

Much of the on-road feel you get from the chassis is influenced by 'Bentley Dynamic Ride' – an active-roll system controlled not via traditional hydraulics but a 48-volt electrical system. Why electrical? According to Bentley, it counteracts lateral rolling forces at a significantly faster rate than a hydraulic system.

You turn into a corner expecting the yachting feeling you get in big SUVs – a top-heavy list that creates an unnerving, pendulous feeling – but instead there's just a strong

force pulling you horizontally across the seat. It's an odd experience, but you acclimatise quickly.

The body does indeed stay extremely (but not completely) flat during cornering, and there's never a moment when you sense the system tensing up and counteracting the roll. The small amount of roll permitted does help you measure adhesion levels, but quite often the first indication that the car is losing grip is when you hear a fizz from the tyres. So in many ways you 'feel' with your ears. That's a new one for us.

As you'd expect, the Bentley has multiple driving modes (four on-road and four off-road) and each is very well judged. On road, 'Bentley' is the default setting – a blend of Sport and Comfort modes. There's also an individual setting that allows you to adjust ride height, roll control, damping and the stability and

'You marvel at its dynamic prowess but rarely feel inclined to explore it'

traction control systems. It's worth noting that the blend of new tech and traditional Bentley interior design cues is harmonious – all menus and options are easy to access and operate (including a head-up display, radar cruise control, night vision and a fantastic rear entertainment system that includes a pair of optional 10.2in removable tablets). Quality is off the scale.

We take the Bentayga down a rutted but dry track with occasional dips. It isn't the most challenging course, but for occasional dune-bashing and field-traversing, there's little reason to doubt the Bentayga's off-road prowess.

Back on the road, and charging down the mountains into Malaga, the brakes start to grumble again and the pedal goes soft. Part of the reason for this is that the Bentayga is incredibly adept at turning and

braking at the same time, so you tend to slow the car all the way into the turn-in phase and then deep into the apex before simply exploding out of the exits. It means the brakes take an even greater pounding.

The steering offers consistent weighting, even at the extremes of lock where the rack quickens. Being electric and of variable ratio, it could be a disaster, but it works well and even provides a clear, if limited, amount of feel.

Bentley held nothing back with the Bentayga. Every conceivable engineering, manufacturing and technology avenue has been explored (aside from hybridisation, for now) and the result is a car that is the most advanced and highly specified machine to ever roll off the Crewe production line. It even has a 'Trailer Assist' parking mode, which is probably the least **evo** thing ever written on these pages. Sorry.

But the Bentayga has a problem. As impressive as it undoubtedly is, it's also a strangely cold experience. You marvel at its dynamic prowess but rarely feel inclined to explore it – which is surely the point of a hugely capable, all-weather, anytime, anywhere, any-place vehicle. Instead, you find yourself ignoring the process of driving and simply wafting along. Sometimes you even succumb to the, admittedly effective, lane-assist and radar cruise systems and virtually let the Bentayga drive for you.

The Bentley range isn't vast, but the Continental, Flying Spur and Mulsanne are also very capable, very fast, very spacious and better looking. What they can't do is drive off-road, or provide a raised driving position, but their on-road behaviour is more satisfying and the Bentley experience more genuine.

They'll sell a ton of Bentaygas because there's no other SUV that combines ultra-luxury and supercar pace. But on first impressions this is a very hard car to love. ❌

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)



Top: the sumptuous cabin comes in a four- or five-seat configuration; in the former the rear seats are separated by a veneered console with storage and USB ports



Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
W12, 5950cc, twin-turbo	296g/km	600bhp @ 5000-6000rpm	664lb ft @ 1350-4500rpm	4.0sec (claimed)	187mph (claimed)	★★★★★	2347kg (260bhp/ton)	£160,200

➕ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace, capable handling

➖ Inert driving experience, SUV stigma

Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe

Test location: A-397, Málaga, Spain GPS: 36.66070, -5.09988



Mercedes' successful junior super-coupe returns and builds on the impressive C63 saloon, but will it be enough to topple the M4?

I'M NOT SURE ABOUT YOU, but the Mercedes-AMG range leaves me with something akin to snow-blindness, such is the increasing breadth of Affalterbach's portfolio. Maybe that's why it's always reassuring when a freshly minted super-C-Class is released, for this is the heartland of AMG's performance division.

Earlier this year we enjoyed seeing the battle play out between the C63 S saloon and BMW's M3. In the end the BMW nicked it by a whisker – at least as far as we were concerned (see *evo* 211) – but the slugfest was always going to continue when AMG launched a brace of new C63 Coupes. We'll have to wait until next year for

our chance to compare one with the M4, but this first drive will tell us if AMG has come out fighting.

Both C63 Coupes certainly look ready to rumble. Only the roof, doors and bootlid are shared with the regular C-class coupe; the rest of the car's skin is new and, it has to be said, spectacularly muscular. Extravagantly flared wheelarches (64mm wider at the front, 66mm at the rear) transform its stance and presence from that of a rather svelte and elegant small coupe into a real thug. A few years ago AMG could have stuck a Black Series badge on it, it's that pumped and aggressive.

Things are just as serious beneath the bodywork. Most obvious are the

wider wheels and tyres (255-section fronts, 285 rears), but there's also significant structural reinforcement, and AMG has gone to town on the suspension, too, most notably at the rear, which features an all-new multi-link axle that combines a wider track with greater wheel control and increased negative camber.

The front end also boasts a wider track, plus bespoke steering knuckles, and all four corners are controlled by AMG's three-stage adaptive dampers. Both the C63 (£61,160) and C63 S (£68,070) models feature a limited-slip differential as standard, the former running a regular mechanical diff, the latter using an electronically



‘We mourned the passing of the old V8, but it’s impossible not to fall for this new twin-turbo



Left: blown V8 is lifted (albeit without dry-sump lubrication) from the AMG GT and houses its turbochargers within the banks of cylinders

controlled version. The S also has dynamic engine mounts and bigger brakes (390mm at the front, up from 360mm) as standard, while 402mm ceramic discs are optional. This is a hardcore, high-tech machine.

The chassis and bodywork changes are all very impressive, but as ever with an AMG, they are but the supporting cast to the star of the show: in this case AMG’s mighty 4-litre biturbo V8. Yes, we mourned the passing of its naturally aspirated predecessor, but in all honesty it’s impossible not to fall for this engine, especially in S tune – as driven here – with headline outputs of 503bhp and 516lb ft of torque (up 34bhp and 37lb ft on the regular C63), not to

mention a sub-4.0sec 0-62mph time and, if you specify the AMG Driver’s Package, a top speed of 180mph.

Like the saloon, the coupe is a fine place to be, its interior looking and feeling premium, with plenty of brightwork and detailing to lift it above the equivalent M-car. Optional sports seats add some attitude – and support – without compromising comfort, which makes a change in an age where sports seats can often be excruciatingly uncomfortable.

From the moment you start the C63 S Coupe you’re hooked on its soundtrack, urgency and raw energy. Few cars of this type stimulate your adrenal gland so

immediately, but that’s the AMG way. As is the Speedshift MCT transmission. Strictly speaking it’s not a conventional torque converter, but it’s closely related, which accounts for its smoothness and the character of its shifts compared with a double-clutch gearbox. It’s quicker-witted than it used to be and feels great when driven in fully automatic mode. Shift gears yourself and you don’t have the frustration of the fractional delay that used to get in the way of enthusiastic driving, but it still doesn’t quite have the lightness of touch you get from the best DCTs.

To be honest, such is the torque on tap from low revs, there’s little

need to flex your fingertips and work the aluminium paddles. It’s huge fun to simply point and shoot the C63 out of corners, letting the transmission do its thing, and feel the epic, endless rush of the V8 as it hits the meat of its midrange. Work it harder and there’s plenty left at the top end, too. In fact it leaves you feeling slightly giddy. ‘Addictive’ only begins to describe the manner of this car’s performance.

Despite having flown two-and-a-half hours south to the Costa del Sol, we’ve been greeted by decidedly British weather. It’s a great shame, for the roads – particularly the one that winds through the mountains from Marbella to Ronda – are



terrific. There are fleeting moments when we enjoy drying tarmac, but unfortunately the weather gets even worse at the Ascari Race Resort. Sodden conditions are not the best in which to unleash a 503bhp coupe, but they do prove you can put your faith in the assorted stability systems. I'm old enough to remember the days when planting your right foot in an AMG product on a wet road (or a dry one, come to that!) would so completely spook the traction control that the car would barely move. It's fair to say the C63 Coupe remains traction-limited, but the ESP is so well judged you can make extremely rapid (and safe) progress while having fun.

So, the weather puts paid to any definitive assessment of the new C63, but there's still plenty to take from the launch. Firstly that this is a hugely desirable car both in looks and character, where it trumps the



'With such torque at low revs, there's little need to work the aluminium paddles'



M4 just as surely as the saloon edged the M3. Damping-wise it remains a firm car, even in the most compliant setting. Like the saloon it could be too firm to be entirely at ease on UK roads, but AMG says it has tweaked the damper settings for the coupe, so there's hope that vertical fidget will be better controlled. The coupe's new rear axle brings more precision and the wider front track improves the steering response. You can sense that there's more outright grip to lean on, though we need dry roads to

Left: AMG Ride Control offers three-stage adjustable damping, allowing drivers to set the car up for long journeys or full-throttle blasts on kinder roads

discover just how much more.

What we can say is that the two-door C63 S is an immensely potent package, made all the more complete by looks and attitude that embody the very best of AMG's increasingly extreme ethos. If the many hardware changes between it and the C63 saloon yield the promised results, this could be the sweet revenge AMG is looking to exact on BMW's M division. **x**

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo	200g/km	503bhp @ 5500-6250rpm	516lb ft @ 1750-4500rpm	3.9sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1725kg (296bhp/ton)	£68,070

+ Mouth-watering mechanical package, addictive character **-** Suspicion damping could be too firm in UK

evo rating

★★★★★

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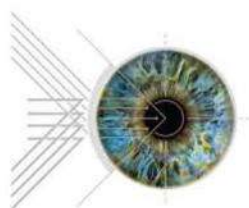
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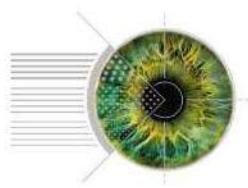
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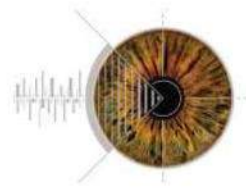
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Mini Cooper S Clubman

Test location: San Sebastián, Spain **GPS:** 43.28595, -2.09100

Bigger than before and with fewer charming quirks, is the Clubman still worth considering over the usual junior-estate suspects?

MODERN MINI'S interpretation of the Clubman has been a Marmite car ever since its 2007 introduction. The majority didn't get its quirks, but for those who did, its split rear doors and suicide side door gave it a more appealing character than the hatch. And Mini didn't hold back on performance either, offering a full-fat John Cooper Works model.

For this, the new Clubman, Mini continues along the same path. The wheelbase is longer than the current Mini hatch's and the car is wider, too. The rear doors still open like a van's, and if you opt for the Comfort Access package a wave of your foot under the rear bumper will save you the trouble of opening them by hand. What hasn't survived is the single side door; it's replaced by a pair of conventional doors. That's a shame, because the new Clubman now looks like a plain Mini estate that's been stretched and pulled in every direction.

Indeed, there's plenty of debate as to whether the Mini is actually mini anymore – this Clubman is as

wide (and taller than) a BMW 1-series and only marginally shorter – but that misses the point. The real issue is that the Mini has outgrown its original Frank Stephenson design and now seems a caricature of itself, with exaggerated features and design elements struggling to fit in.

The switch to conventional doors means it's easier to get in the new Clubman and once inside there's more room and a bespoke dashboard. The dash features Mini's familiar central circular infotainment hub, while the speedo and rev-counter are fixed to the top of the steering column. The changes are subtle (there's a new centre console with more storage) and aim to give the Clubman a more upmarket appeal. Whether or not they succeed depends on how much extra you spend on interior options.

At launch two trim levels are offered – Cooper and Cooper S – with a choice of three engines and two transmissions. There's a 1.5-litre three-cylinder turbocharged petrol for the Cooper and a 2-litre turbocharged four for the Cooper S,



with a 2-litre diesel producing either 148 or 187bhp in the Cooper D and Cooper SD respectively. A six-speed manual gearbox is standard with an eight-speed Steptronic auto available on the Cooper S and both diesel models. The petrol Cooper is available with a six-speed Steptronic. Our Cooper S test car came with three-pedals.

Despite its greater dimensions, the Clubman doesn't feel large. It still has Mini's great driving position, nice control weights and feels unique compared to its rivals. The 189bhp turbo four delivers a linear surge of power and with 206lb ft ready from 1250rpm, the Cooper S always feels on its toes. The claimed 7.2sec 0-62mph time feels well within its grasp and with a good tailwind it will haul itself up to 142mph. The manual

'box doesn't have the sharpest action but you can hurry through the ratios and keep the TwinPower motor on the boil. The engine's quite slow to rev, however, making heel-and-toe downshifts frustrating.

The Clubman has a better ride than its hatchback cousins, with additional suppleness to how it deals with harsh surfaces. The longer wheelbase adds an additional level of body control when the undulations come thick and fast and the corners are long and open. The only issue is from the standard-fit Pirelli Cinturato tyres. As we've found on our JCW long-term, they simply aren't up to the task, relinquishing grip far too early in corners with a sensation of the sidewalls falling in on themselves. It's enough to make you back off and stop enjoying all that the Clubman has to offer.

In Cooper S spec the Clubman is an interesting, enjoyable alternative to the hatchback and small-estate norm. Just make sure the first thing you do is switch those tyres. **✖**

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Specification

+ Usual Mini driving experience **-** Standard tyres hamper chassis' ability to shine

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo	134g/km	189bhp @ 5000rpm	206lb ft @ 1250rpm	7.2sec (claimed)	142mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1435kg (134bhp/ton)	£22,755

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Kia Proceed GT

Test location: B645, Northamptonshire
GPS: 52.32012, -0.49824

One of **evo's** favourite underdogs undergoes a mid-life refresh

REGULAR READERS WILL know that, following an Aston Martin V8 Vantage, a BMW 1M and a McLaren 12C in Fast Fleet, yours truly took delivery of a Kia Proceed GT. Regular readers will also remember I enjoyed it.

We ran the car for a year. The first six months with me, then photographer Aston Parrott piled on the miles in it as his daily. It proved tough, dependable, comfortable and quick, easy to operate and fantastic to look at. As a warm hatch it couldn't muster the outright thrills of a Golf GTI or a Renaultsport Mégane, but it properly announced itself in a group test with better-known rivals (in **evo** 207).

The entire Ceed and Proceed range now gets up an update, with new 1-litre, three-cylinder direct-injection 'ecoTurbo' petrol engines with either 98 or 118bhp for low-end models and revisions to the diesel engines. A dual-clutch gearbox is also now available for the 134bhp 1.6-litre CRDI diesel model.

Across the range, Kia's latest infotainment system, which

includes a seven-inch touchscreen, updated graphics, DAB capability and TomTom Connected Services, is available. It's a brilliantly simple and intuitive system and, increasingly, these things matter.

But what matters most, of course, is the driving, and the top-of-the-range GT model you see here has also been run through the mid-life model refresh programme. It uses the same 1.6-litre turbocharged 201bhp four-cylinder engine as before, but gains a new turbo that increases air pressure and lowers the peak torque rpm by 250rpm and increases the engine's eagerness to rev. The open diff remains, while the suspension and wheel and tyre sizes are unchanged (although there is a new design for the 18-inch alloys). But the brakes are bigger, and brake-based torque vectoring is new.

The new turbo and revised mapping trims a tenth off the 0-62mph time (now 7.3sec) and the larger brakes improve the 62-0mph stopping distance by 1.2 metres.

Inside there's a new, flat-bottomed steering wheel and extra



chrome trim. Oh, and there's a new switchable sound generator, which gives the car a decent, growlier tone.

All mild changes, granted, but ones that remind us that this is a fine car. The Kia GT is a great ownership proposition, too. It's well engineered and comes with Kia's seven-year warranty. And if the extremely hard miles our long-termers endured are anything to go by, the new car should prove pretty much indestructible. Dynamically it has no vices and still steers, stops and handles with the smooth consistency that we enjoyed in the old car. The changes may be small, but they've enhanced an already well-sorted package.

Yes, a limited-slip diff would give the nose a little more bite, and yes, ultimate grip is a little lower than in

the more focused hatches, but the lack of an 'I' at the end of 'GT' tells you everything you need to know. Ultimately, this is an honest car, and it's becoming increasingly hard to say that about modern vehicles.

But could Kia go further still? Sister-brand Hyundai recently launched its 'N' performance sub-brand and a hot i30 has already been spied testing at the Ring. With its motorsport heritage, particularly in WRC, there's logic to Hyundai (instead of Kia) forging ahead with performance models. But with Kia's quite brilliant reinvention in recent years, its world-class design resurgence led by Peter Schreyer and its reputation for delivering show-stopping concepts (see the GT4 Stinger and Provo), I can't help feeling the wrong brand has been chosen to take the Koreans into proper performance cars.

Either way, don't ignore the GT if you're after a warm hatch. In terms of performance, ride and handling it's competitive, and is arguably the best looking car in its class. ✖

Nick Trott (@NickTrott)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1591cc, turbo	171g/km	201bhp @ 6000rpm	195lb ft @ 1500-4500rpm	7.3sec (claimed)	143mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1448kg (143bhp/ton)	£23,605

+ Polished aesthetic, capable chassis - Soft-edged compared to rivals

Porsche Macan GTS

Test location: Tenerife
GPS: 28.259639, -16.615124

New GTS spec helps Porsche's small SUV drive even less like an SUV



WANDERING AROUND the huge halls at the Frankfurt motor show in September I noticed a trend. Like flares in the '70s, it wasn't a difficult trend to notice. Every stand I visited seemed to have given pride of place to a small 'sporty' SUV. Some were ambitious concepts, some worryingly close to production, but all seemed far less practical than a similarly footprinted estate, and despite the frequent addition of wings they all seemed distinctly unsporty with their high centres of gravity. As a breed I disliked them. Which brings me to the Porsche Macan GTS.

Within the Macan range the GTS sits between the S and the Turbo, both in terms of price and power output, with its turbocharged 3-litre V6 dispensing 355bhp and 369lb ft of torque. What sets the GTS apart, however, is the PASM suspension, which is lowered a full 15mm compared to its siblings and retuned for greater aplomb in the corners. Just as the really serious tennis player sports a sweatband, so



the GTS has styling commensurate with its sporty intentions: a more aggressive front end, 20-inch alloys in satin black and other bits of bodywork dark enough to rival Claudia Winkleman's eye makeup. A sports exhaust is standard, and our test car was also equipped with the optional PTV Plus (an electronically controlled differential lock) and carbon-ceramic brakes.

We drove the GTS on the roads of Tenerife – it was on the same launch as the new 911 (see page 98) – and as I got into the car early on a beautiful Saturday morning, the prejudice I was trying hard to professionally ignore was that this was time rather wasted when I could have been getting to know the latest iteration of Porsche's rear-engined sports

car. An hour later I was sitting in the shadow of the island's volcano, writing notes with my perceptions rearranged and my thoughts on sporty SUVs all askew.

Let's begin with the engine, which sounds really very good. Obviously it doesn't have the same timbre as Porsche's more usual configuration for six-cylinders, but it has a lovely aggressive note that reminds me of a slightly less brassy version of Jaguar's supercharged V6. Then there are the gearshifts, which the PDK 'box dispatches with startling precision when you crank up the settings to Sport Plus.

A well-sounding petrol engine and some snappy shifting are perhaps not surprising, but such good weighting of the small, Alcantara-clad steering wheel was definitely unexpected. As was what happened when I turned into the first inviting sequence of bends. Mentally you allow for a certain amount of delay in some cars, generally on a sliding scale with size and weight. The Macan GTS did not meet those expectations. With stunning lateral

grip and almost imperceptible delay, the small SUV sliced into the first bend with all the alacrity of a car half its height. It was really quite shocking.

The surprises just kept coming too, as a Macan GTS with PTV plus will actually power oversteer if you're brave enough. There is perhaps a sense that the car is ruthlessly bludgeoning the laws of physics into submission rather than deftly bending them to its will as a lighter car would, but nonetheless it's a deeply impressive display.

All this and in its normal mode it will potter around with completely seemly manners and a comfortable ride if you're just popping to Lidl.

I'm still not sure about the packaging merits of this type of car, although I accept that some people like to have a more commanding view of the road. What I can't deny any more is that an SUV can be sporty, because the GTS and its slightly freakish talents undoubtedly prove it can. **X**

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V6, 2997cc, twin-turbo	212g/km	355bhp @ 6000rpm	369lb ft @ 1650-4000rpm	5.2sec (claimed)	159mph (claimed)	1895kg (190bhp/ton)	£55,188

+ Handles like an SUV shouldn't **-** Still looks like an SUV

evo rating

★★★★★

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Audi S8 Plus

Test location: Frankfurt, Germany GPS: 50.277932, 8.667071

THE NEW AUDI S8 PLUS is extremely fast. It looks terrific, even on a dull day in Frankfurt, in its satin silver paint finish. Its 4-litre twin-turbo V8 sounds wonderful – a distant rumble so bassy that you feel it as much as hear it. It's beautifully built and when you climb into its understated, elegant interior, suddenly the world seems a much nicer place. These are the things I can be certain about.

Sadly, our time with the S8 Plus at this launch event will be short and confined almost entirely to Autobahns or traffic-clogged secondary roads. So as for the car's dynamics, balance and responses, I wish I could tell you more, but save for some observations on ride quality and steering response, it's impossible to be conclusive.

That's a shame, as the S8 Plus is undoubtedly my sort of car and hopefully yours, too. Okay, so it's not a light, lithe sports car but there's just something inherently appealing about big, relentlessly fast saloon cars. And the *Ronin* connection affords it even greater status, right?

Anyway, in simple terms the Plus is appropriately an S8 with more of everything. The 4-litre TFSI engine features increased boost for its twin-scroll turbos, which have modified inner geometry for greater efficiency, and the exhaust valves have been redesigned too. The result is 597bhp at 6100-6800rpm and 516lb ft at 1750-6000rpm, with an overboost function offering bursts of 553lb ft. That's a chunky 84bhp and 74lb ft more than the regular S8. You pay for the privilege, though. The Plus is £97,700, up from £81,385.

It retains the excellent eight-speed automatic gearbox, which drives all four wheels with a steady-state 40:60 front/rear torque split. It also keeps the 'Sport' torque vectoring rear differential that helps reduce understeer. Despite the car's 1990kg mass, 0-62mph takes 3.8sec and when fitted with the optional £9250 Dynamic Package (which includes carbon-ceramic brakes) the speed limiter is raised to 189mph. The electronically adjustable air suspension has been retuned, mainly to take account of the increased

Upgraded limo gets more power, an overboost function for its twin-turbo V8 and, if you want it, a 189mph top speed



torque, and the variable-ratio Dynamic Steering system is also carried over.

On the Autobahn the S8 Plus is suitably imperious. The drivetrain really is gloriously muscular and the near-infrasound bassiness adds an edge of wickedness to proceedings. The S8 has a series of tiny speakers in its roof lining, which signify active noise cancellation. This technology has huge potential for cutting weight by reducing the need for sound-deadening materials, but here it's an addition rather than a replacement. As such, refinement is superb and road noise negligible, yet the engine's deep exhortations reverberate in the cabin at just the right level.

The S8 Plus pours along the Autobahn with a firm but stable ride, thumping up to 150mph

whenever the outside lane clears. It feels hilariously over-endowed and the ceramic brakes are brilliantly powerful, although a little tricky to modulate when you just want the lightest brush of retardation.

The greatest thing about driving in a straight line in the S8 Plus is that you don't really have to use the Dynamic Steering. We've been critical of this system before but aren't predisposed to hate it for no reason. On the Aventador SV, for example, it's not at all bad. The new R8's setup is also much more intuitive than past applications. Sadly, the S8 Plus system feels more like the bad old days – it's light and overly darty at low speeds and despite gradually improving as the pace quickens, it always feels remote and artificial. The S8 Plus has that lovely air of relentless momentum but the Dynamic Steering does mean you never fully relax on long, fast sweepers, which surely undermines the very thing at which this Audi could and should excel. ❌

Jethro Bovingdon
(@JethroBovingdon)

Specification

+ Fantastic drivetrain, quality, refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
V8, 3993cc, twin-turbo	229g/km	597bhp @ 6100-6800rpm	553lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm	3.8sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	★★★★★	1990kg (305bhp/ton)	£97,700



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Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



Long-term magazine tests are a fundamental link between you, the reader, and us, the journalists. We shouldn't dismiss them, says Meaden

I **IF YOU LOVE CARS THEN THERE'S** no doubt motoring journalism is the ultimate in vicarious living, but what would you imagine to be the best bit? The private 'off-the-record' unveilings? Supercar launches? Life-affirming road trips? The occasional bit of free racing? All of these things can be wonderful, but for me the most consistently special part of the job is arguably the one most grounded in normality. I'm referring to the long-term test car.

When there's an endless succession of cars to test it might seem strange that we run long-termers at all, yet in all the years I've been doing this job, many of my fondest memories are of the test cars I've lived with. Yes, of course it's the jamiest thing you can possibly imagine, but get beyond the 'Ooh, a free car!' euphoria and the true value of testing a car on a long-term basis is far more significant.

I've run a crazy variety of long-termers over the years, and while quite different to my personal car history (which inevitably is somewhat skewed by having access to press cars), it's fun to reflect on the weird and wonderful succession of cars that have straddled my professional and personal life.

My first was a Vauxhall Calibra V6. I know, I know. But it was the '90s. Besides which it taught the twenty-something me a valuable early lesson in highlighting the contrasting – and at times conflicting – priorities of a magazine group test with those of ownership. I'd like to think that some years later, *evo's* unique outlook has been shaped by that lesson, for we have always tried to strike a considered balance between those two extremes.

When I joined *Performance Car* magazine I inherited a red Ford Probe V6. The rest of the team had been avoiding it like the plague and, yes, it was pretty horrid, but it did mean the Mica Green Impreza Turbo that followed it was even sweeter. I loved everything about that car. It was just about the perfect mix of performance, practicality and cult appeal. Even today it's comfortably in my all-time top ten long-termers.

Whenever possible they've been cars I would genuinely want to own, otherwise what's the point? A big part of any new car is the heady excitement and anticipation, followed by discovering whether that becomes satisfaction or frustration. As is the norm, most long-termers are supplied by manufacturers, but on a few notable exceptions we've bought them with the editorial budget. Or Harry Metcalfe's black Amex card. Same thing, really.

That's why Jethro Bovingdon once ran a Porsche 993 Carrera, and how I bounced from a gargantuan 4.6-litre V8 Mustang GT (which we sold on eBay) to a diminutive Fiat Panda 100HP (I was

so ahead of the downsizing curve...). Neither car was exactly my type, but if ever there was a lesson in broadening your motoring horizons, this was it. Especially as it was the fizzy little Fiat that won most friends amongst you, the readership. Even now, some eight years on, I still get contacted by 100HP owners who say they bought one on the strength of those Fast Fleet reports.

Are there any long-termers I genuinely wish I could have kept? Well, I'd dearly love to have the silver Z3 M Coupe (S54) I ran back in 2001. At the time I thought we should have been running the then-new E46 M3, but the Bavarian Breadvan underlined the fact that character can compensate for a certain lack of competence. More recently I was completely bewitched by the manual Audi R8 V10 Plus, which just seemed to get better

'Whenever possible my long-termers are cars I would want to genuinely own, otherwise what's the point?'

and better, and my Mégane Trophy is another that will leave me feeling bereft when it's taken from me in the next few weeks.

Stinkers? The BMW 520d I ran a few years back was less than enthralling. You know you're losing the will to live when you fixate on your average mpg, rather than your average speed. Still, it was a worthwhile foray into the real world.

Some manufacturers don't believe in long-term test cars, their logic being we have nothing meaningful to write about unless something goes wrong. That rather misses the point, not to mention insults you, dear reader, for if there's a more reliable barometer of how connected we are to our readership, and in turn how connected you feel to us, I've yet to find one.

So much about motoring media has changed in the years I've worked in the industry. Much of it for the worse, in my jaded, curmudgeonly opinion, but that's another column. Still, however much of a grumpy old man I become, I take heart from the fact that *evo's* Fast Fleet remains one of the most popular things we do. Perhaps that's because the intoxicating process of deciding upon, acquiring and living with a new car – be it a magazine long-termer or paid for with hard-earned cash – remains golden, and the crux of our collective obsession with four wheels. ✕

 @DickieMeaden

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



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Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



Supercars no longer put the fear of god into their owners. Porter advises remedial action

I **IMAGINE OWNING A SUPERCAR** in the 1970s. Imagine creeping down to the garage and painfully inserting yourself into a driving position designed by a yogic monkey. Imagine silently incanting a thousand Hail Webers as you twist the key and hope the fragile motor won't falter or flood itself. Imagine heading out for a drive, praying it stays dry so the damn thing won't spit you into an oak tree while patiently allowing the fluids to warm through before attempting to use second. Or fourth. Or the steering.

Of course, all this is to assume that you've been able to buy the car in the first place, because chances are the sole UK concessionaire is some gimlet-eyed ex-military indie who can ask you to put away your chequebook and get off his bloody land simply because he doesn't like the look of your shoes.

Owning a supercar isn't like that anymore. The first time I drove a Ferrari 458 the thing that struck me, more than the sweet and sensational talents of every single mechanical part when used at full fury, was how absurdly happy it was to trundle at low speed. It was friendly and flexible and you could imagine using it every day in every way. For usability, however, the 458 turns out to be a badly tuned '73 Pantera compared to the new California T, which is an absolute pussycat. But one of those pussycats that reminds you about birthdays and helps unload the dishwasher.

During a weekend with the entry-level Ferrari, I went to the supermarket, I went to an out-of-town shopping centre to buy a small electrical item, I did normal things in a car that was completely at home in the normal world. The ride is very acceptable, the auto mode on the double-clutch 'box shames the self-shifting on many mainstream hatchbacks, that new turbocharged engine brings a thick, torquey delivery at low revs that makes shuffling through London traffic smooth and relaxing. The 458 and current McLarens have shown us that powerful pedigree stuff doesn't have to be highly strung but the Cali T takes it to a new level. It's better at everyday stuff than some everyday cars. In fact, the biggest problem I have with it is that it's too good at mundane things. Make no mistake, on an empty A-road it's fast and fun, but its greatest achievement is being so fuss-free at boring stuff. It's very far from 1970s-spec.

And that's before you discover that someone at Maranello seems to think they're working for Daewoo circa 1996, because if you buy a new Ferrari today you get a four-year warranty and a free package that gives you seven years' worth of routine servicing for nowt. There's also a roadside assistance package that lasts for

the lifetime of the car and, if you're so inclined, they'll do you a finance deal too. So the cars are easy to drive, they're clearly trying to make them extremely easy to own and, if the superficial quality is any indicator of the engineering underneath, they feel built for the long haul. It all sounds too easy and part of me yearns for when supercars were exotic not just for their looks but for the strange and painful rollercoaster of trying to buy and run one.

Which is where the Alfa Romeo 4C comes in. You'll have read about this car and seen it split the opinions of reviewers with the axe of its awkwardness. By any reasonable measure, it's a patchy and often inadequate machine. The power delivery is lumpy and sudden, the handling can be nervous, it tramlines like a bastard and the steering is most peculiar. In the wet, all of these facets

'That's before you discover that someone working at Maranello seems to think they're working for Daewoo circa 1996'

are amplified and brisk progress becomes so nerve-racking that after four miles you'll have sucked the entire seat squab up your balloon knot. Also, the driving position is bizarre, the build quality feels patchy and the stereo is so baffling and useless that it's clearly only there as an in-joke.

Despite these many problems, I love the 4C, because its massive flaws only highlight its unusual charms. It makes you put in the effort to learn its quirks and then rewards you for working with them or around them as you imagine you would have to in an Urraco or a Bora. And the retro experience might not end there, because last time I was in my local Fiat/Alfa dealer I heard a customer complaining about the amount of time they'd been waiting for a promised test drive, to which the salesman snapped, 'You have NOT been waiting 40 minutes.'

If you think the buying and owning experience of a modern supercar sounds too refined, my advice is simple. For the full 1970s supercar experience, get an Alfa 4C. After all, if all you wanted from a car was an easy drive and a good warranty, you'd buy a Kia. Or, as it turns out, a Ferrari. ❌

📧 @sniffpetrol

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

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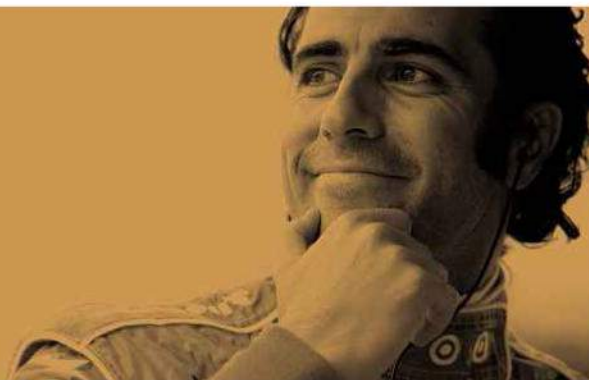
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by DARIO FRANCHITTI



Privileged to drive some truly fine machinery during his long career, Dario lifts the lid on some of his less esteemed steeds

A**AFTER LISTING MY FAVOURITE** racing cars in *evo* 214, it's only fair that I expose the worst. Selection has been a trickier task than you might think, chiefly because the difference between a good racing car and scrap metal is usually perishingly subtle, but here are the finalists.

Acura's ARX-02 – a snake-eyed enduro racer – was a textbook example of a modest outfit overstretching to match the big boys (in this case Audi and Peugeot in the 2009 American Le Mans Series). The ARX-01 developed a couple of years earlier had been one of the most delicious racers you could imagine, but taking the concept from LMP2 to LMP1 didn't come off at all well. The headache for Wirth Research, which built the car, was that there wasn't an engine available that could match the diesel powerhouses of the Europeans. In fact our naturally aspirated 4-litre V8 was so outclassed that the torque shortfall was frankly embarrassing, so to be competitive Wirth developed a chassis with massive downforce and fitted rear tyres to the front axle in the hope they would yield eye-watering traction and grip. Sounds interesting, no?

Alas, it was a sound proposition that fell to pieces because Acura hadn't the monumental budget required to commission Michelin to develop a bespoke rear-sized tyre with front construction and compound. It was a cruel but predictable twist that wrecked the car. A rear tyre doesn't normally have to deal with big slip angles, which meant the ARX-02 couldn't be 'driven' through a corner in any traditional sense of the word. Just imagine, any more than ten degrees of lock and you've got massive understeer.

It meant us drivers had to rewrite our technique, and instead of gradually tightening the lock towards the apex, we'd take bites at the corner, frantically alternating between applying no lock at all and next to no lock at all. Lord knows how, but Scott Dixon did manage to put the ARX-02 on pole at Sebring – I think he managed it only by violently flicking the car sideways through all the bends. Indeed, the sad thing was that had the budget been there for proper tyres we might have had something special on our hands.

That anaemic engine was the cause of so many problems we had driving the car. Where the Audis were dispatching cars in lower classes on the straights, in the Acura we couldn't, so we had to use our superior corner speed to pass mid-corner – but there was only one racing line and usually the slower car was already on it! It made for a long 12 hours.

At least that Acura had some things going for it, though. The Jaguar F1 car I encountered in 2000 was the only F1 car I'd driven since testing an MP4/10 for McLaren in '95. The McLaren, despite

suffering a poor season, seemed pretty well set up, whereas even during the seat-fitting for the Jag the mechanics let on that the car was an absolute handful and nobody in engineering knew why. No wonder Johnny Herbert was leaving.

Still, all I could think was, 'God, it's an F1 car; it's gonna be spectacular.' My expectations were stratospheric and admittedly in the fast corners it was unbelievable compared to my IndyCar. But in terms of straight-line speed it was no match, and there was worse to come. There was simply no grip in the slow corners. The test was at Silverstone and the first time around Luffield I sailed straight past the apex, which set the tone for the entire afternoon. Jaguar also refused to make any mechanical setup changes on the

'Even Jaguar's mechanics let on that the car was an absolute handful'

grounds that the computer software dictated otherwise, so it was all hugely frustrating. Killer looks, desperately poor performance. Incidentally, I was at JD Classics recently, and moping among the E-types was a 2000 Jag F1 car. I asked whether it was for sale and was told yes, it was, then asked what I intended to do with it. 'Throw it off the balcony,' I replied.

By the end of 2007 I'd won my first Indy 500 and first IndyCar championship and fancied something different. That something was NASCAR, specifically defecting to Chip Gnass's team.

Now I realise that there's probably a fair level of scepticism among the *evo* fraternity as regards to NASCAR, but take it from me, the car's drivetrain was astonishing both in power and feel. A 900bhp stock-block V8 that revved to over 9000rpm, a four-speed H-pattern 'box with the sweetest action you can imagine, and the ability to spin the rear tyres at 180mph. *Phwoah*.

The problem was the chassis. The centre of gravity was far too high; I couldn't get used to it and couldn't find the sweet spot in the level of yaw constantly required. The tyres (notice a trend here?) were also awful. On a 1.5-mile oval circuit with four corners they'd hold out for a lap and lose a second per lap thereafter. That meant the balance the driver needed to find between grip and slip was changing by the second. In the end I destroyed loads of poor old Chip's NASCARs, but that's a story for another column. ✕

✉ @dariofranchitti

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

DRIVING THE EVO TRIANGLE

*Last month **evo** reader Mark Reeves had his M3 upgraded with Öhlins Road & Track suspension. Now it's time for him to put it to the test*

THERE ARE SURELY FEW FINER ways to spend a day than exploring the roads of Snowdonia in a powerful, rear-wheel-drive car. If you're **evo** reader Mark Reeves, driving his E92 M3 newly fitted with Öhlins Road & Track suspension, that enviable combination is about as good as it gets.

'I love driving great roads,' he says. 'I'm very lucky to have Cumbria, the Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors all pretty close to where I live. The Castleton and Kirkbymoorside roads are particular favourites. Myself and a few of my mates head out there at weekends when we get the chance. We're all **evo** readers, so it's fun to experience some of the roads the magazine uses. They really are amazing to drive and a proper test of your car, particularly its chassis.'

'My M3 had EDC suspension. When I was on fast, demanding roads I'd always switch straight

from Comfort to Sport, as Normal didn't offer a big enough change. The problem with that was that on roads with lots of lumps and bumps – like those in North Yorkshire – it had much better body control but was too stiff and seemed to be unsettled most of the time. It never felt quite how I wanted, when I wanted, if that makes sense.'

It does, as anyone who has experienced the same frustration with factory-fit switchable damping on their own car will agree. We've come to the **evo** Triangle in north Wales to see how upgrading to Öhlins Road & Track suspension offers a solution to that problem, and how with it you can achieve your ideal balance of handling sharpness and ride comfort with just a few fine adjustments.

The Road & Track kit fitted to Mark's E92 M3 offers simple, combined compression and rebound adjustment front and rear, via Öhlins' unique one-click adjuster. Mark starts with a

baseline setup of ten clicks front and 20 rear – a middle setting that leaves him with options to go firmer or softer, depending on how the M3 feels. Once satisfied that he has a proper feel for the first setup, Mark returns to make some changes before heading out once more to see how it compares. Judging by the time Mark's spending in his car between adjustments, it's an addictive and rewarding process.

'This is the first time I've driven the **evo** Triangle. The roads are brilliant!' he says. 'There's a bit of everything, from fast open corners to tighter, twistier sections with some proper bumps and compressions. I instinctively reached for the EDC button as the car felt too comfortable to work on the fast stuff, but once I'd done a few miles I realised it could up its game when it needed to. I'd hoped it would, but I'm still surprised at how good it feels.'

'We went a bit firmer with the next setup – five clicks front and ten rear – which I preferred, as it sharpened things up without harming the ride. I then tried a more extreme setting, which felt amazing through a few of the fast, smooth corners, but didn't work anywhere near as well overall. I reckon the second of the three setups we tried is perfect for me as it'll deliver the goods when I'm driving for fun, but will be comfortable when I'm just driving. If this is a taste of how good it can be made to go and feel on track, I can't wait to try it at Anglesey!'

Next month: driving on Anglesey Circuit



Inbox

Who's revealed your favourite roads this month?



Letter of the Month

Rings a Bell

I have just received my copy of **evo** 216 with the wonderful photo of the Kylesku Bridge on the cover. It immediately flashed me back to 1986 when Roger Bell of *Car* magazine came up to Scotland to meet me for three unforgettable days in my 288 GTO. The article even featured a similar photo, if not quite so wonderful as your cover!

The NC500 roads are the perfect place to appreciate these cars. I was lucky enough to use them in so many brilliant cars when I had a Ferrari franchise in Scotland in the '70s and '80s. I kept my Daytona for five years and one summer morning at 4am managed to average 100mph from Dunkeld to Inverness. What a sensational trip that was!

evo Car of the Year has never been as spectacular as this year's test. And the winner is truly fabulous. The performance and cost of some of the incredible supercars today have become almost excessive, but the Cayman GT4 has a balance of performance, size, comfort, economy, looks and price that leaves it unbeatable. Not to mention the manual 'box...

Colin Briggs, Cuneo, Italy



The Letter of the Month wins a Christopher Ward watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives a Christopher Ward C70 Belgian GP 1925 Chronometer (pictured), worth £599. Celebrating the inaugural Belgian Grand Prix, held at Spa-Francorchamps on June 28, 1925, its 42mm case contains a Swiss quartz movement and bears the name of the winning driver, Italian Antonio Ascari.

CHR. WARD
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Heavenly highlands

Your eCoty feature on the North Coast 500 brought back very happy memories of a fabulous road trip in two MX-5s on the exact same route. I can vouch for the opinions of your test team that these are some of the finest driving roads anywhere in the world. The stunning scenery, hopefully framed by blue skies, white sandy beaches and turquoise seas, catalyses the experience, but then I am biased, having been lucky enough to grow up in Inverness!

A growing family saw me wave goodbye to the MX-5, now replaced by a Volvo V50 T5 with a few 'choice' upgrades that make it sound like a Mk2 Focus RS, and go almost as well! I regularly enjoy it on these very roads and would urge all of you to head up to Scotland and experience them for yourself – as a bonus you'll find the evening 'craic' a lot more jovial than in the Alps or at the Ring!

Chris Gell

Woking class hero

Despite my age, supercars still have the ability to make me feel like a nine-year-old. Hence my **evo** subscription. Recent all-too-brief drives in an R8 and a 12C make me want to own a McLaren badly. Given a big lottery win, a P1 would grace the dream garage of my new dream home.

The recent launch of the McLaren 570S (**evo** 216), first in the so-called Sports Series, does indeed open up McLaren to a whole new audience. But at £143,250 it is still about £100k outside my price range. Perhaps the lovely people in Woking would consider dropping the turbos as well as the ProActive Chassis Control. After all, a naturally aspirated 3.8-litre V8 with 350–400bhp would be cheaper to produce and probably sound glorious

too. Maybe they could build that MonoCell tub from high-strength steel instead of carbonfibre to reduce costs still further. Steel instead of carbon brakes would also help.

Having done that, how about cutting the engine in half to produce a turbo four-cylinder in a smaller, lighter body? McLaren, the world is your oyster.

Chris Davies, Crowborough

High jinks

A controversy is brewing in our office. I showed a co-worker, who has been lusting after the various flavours of Nissan GT-R, your picture of the GT-R Track Edition with its wheels at least two feet off the ground (Contents, **evo** 216). The response was immediately: 'Oh, that's Photoshopped!' Please set the record straight and tell me it's undoctored – there's an expensive bottle of wine riding on the outcome.

Jon Grannis, Colorado, USA

*Please claim your expensive bottle of wine, Jon. It's not Photoshopped, although even some of the **evo** team thought it had been at first! – Ed*

New adventures

Having made the same trip as a child and as an adult, I identify with Nick Trott's 'not so treacherous journey' to the south of France (Fast Fleet, **evo** 215). The truth is, in modern cars on modern roads, it just isn't that far away any more.

However, consider that in the same two days it took his dad to drive across France, Trott and family could now be in Bosnia, say, or at the Arctic Circle. A sense of adventure is guaranteed at either of these two places, no matter what you are driving.

Bon voyage!

Andy Peace



Above: Chris Gell knows our eCoty 2015 route well, having enjoyed it in an MX-5



Above: real or Photoshop? Jon Grannis wants to know if this shot has been faked



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Talking Point

Dear Santa...

We asked what car or motoring-related goodies you would like to receive this Christmas. Here's what you said. (Generous relatives reading this page, feel free to take the hint!)

A welder, training on how to use a welder, compressor and paint guns, paint, training on how to use them, time in a ventilated paint room, a gearbox, some coilovers, and a supercharger.

Beany

Some dry weather so that I can take the Exige out and drive it properly.

Maurice

A functioning DRC suspension system for my Audi, thanks.

JL

Carbonfibre gearknob and steering wheel.

Alex_

A 2-litre Renaultsport engine for the Kangoo, please. If it fits.

Robby1977

Extra 60bhp for the 968. Extra 45bhp for the M3. Electric drivetrain for the Golf.

Marv

Insurance.

N

A pair of JCW Bucket seats for the Mini and a Lego Ferrari F40.

16vcento

Given that in the last 24 hours I have been almost wiped out twice by lorries jumping red lights on roundabouts and nearly had a car roll back into me at a set of traffic lights, some kind of dashcam.

Delphi

Uncle is getting me some book by some *Top Gear* bloke that apparently talks in great detail about large naans that span a table in an Indian restaurant. Other than that I'm not fussed.

Who

Canon 5D so I can take better pictures of my car. Too tenuous? OK then: roof bars, bike carrier and roof box.

Dinny_G

Several gallons of Red Bull and an IV line to get me through the upcoming three months in a Lexus.

McSwede

GHDs and hair products for my MX-5. Failing that, some individual throttle bodies, cams and a few spare weekends to fit it all, please.

Markcoopers

DMS upgrade for the M5, because everyone needs 730bhp through two wheels.

IanF

I'd like an Autoart 1:18 scale model of a Porsche 930 Turbo.

John Mc

A Road Angel, a Christopher Ward watch and a subscription to *evo* magazine.

Mike1215

Dear Santa. Could you please organise an instant dumping of rubbish into any Evoque Convertible that has the roof down? They look like skips.

Markcoopers (again)

Join the discussion

Keep an eye on evo.co.uk or follow us on Facebook ([facebook.com/evo](https://www.facebook.com/evo) magazine) to participate in our regular Talking Point debates.

The best comments will be published here each month

Thread of the Month

Zonda_

Neglected cars

I was dropping my mate at her mum's a few days ago and spotted a rare shape in next door's drive, a 309 GTI. Apart from the moss growing on the window seals and the flat tyres it looks to be in pretty amazing condition. Apparently it's been parked up for eight years! What's sitting neglected near you?

Two ancient rusty XJSs in the farmer's barn. They'd be worth a fortune if only there was a white background.

Mito Man

There's an Opel GT (think scaled-down '70s Corvette) gently rusting away in the garden of a bungalow near us. It's probably saveable, but sourcing parts would be a nightmare.

PaulJ

Impreza Catalunya. It hasn't moved for two years. I am tempted to knock on the door.

Maccmike

There was an Ur-Quattro on the A228. Last time I saw it the headlights had been removed.

nuttinnew

There's a Countach replica not far from **evo** Towers. It's sitting in a driveway, partly covered by a tarp and some tyres, with one rear three-quarter visible and missing a light.

Ian Eveleigh

All replicas should be sitting neglected somewhere.

mik

Does that include your replica that is wearing the wrong badges?

Orange Cola

I've just corrected the replica that Vauxhall tried to make of an HSV...

mik

Lancia Beta/Montecarlo of some sort. Half under tarp but looking suspiciously like a part-done 037 Stradale kit. If I had a garage, cash and any skills...

Roddamiser

A few blocks away there's a Mercedes Pagoda (a real one, not a convertible) quietly rusting in the street. It seems nobody cares.

pilouil

Mk2 Golf GTI, 1972 VW T2 Dormobile, an E30 M3 and a Rover 200 BRM – all in my back garden.

integrale_evo



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



The originator of the best **evo** forum thread wins a Road Angel Gem+. The Gem+ automatically updates its camera database as you drive and allows users to share the locations of 'live' camera vans.

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W O R T H

by CHRIS HARRIS

T H E

It's been a decade since the last NSX, and New NSX is a portly 1700kg thanks to its hybrid drivetrain. So, has Honda got it right?

W E I G H T ?






IT WAS PROBABLY THE WHITE SOCKS, or perhaps the insouciance of the loafer-and-white-sock combination set against the race circuit. It was certainly the naked aggression of the driving around Suzuka. This was, of course, Ayrton Senna's now near-legendary lap in a development-spec NSX-R, and it is my defining image and memory of the original New Sportscar eXperimental. As a fellow car-obsessive, I'm sure you have yours too. I wonder what they are.

Even the name perfectly captures that essentially Japanese fastidiousness that wrought a sports car that would define all others after the year 1990. Was it really that significant? Of course it was, not necessarily in the way it drove, but in the philosophy of its creation and execution. Now isn't the time to deconstruct the excellence or otherwise of the original NSX (I happen to think its driving dynamics are and were massively overrated) but it served as the most pertinent wake-up call to

the sloths running premises in Zuffenhausen and Maranello. 'What?!' they cried. 'You mean you can make a sports car using contemporary technologies; one that you can see out of, has cogent ergonomics and doesn't break down. Gott in Himmel/dannazione! Tell me it isn't so!'

Without the NSX there would have been no 993, or 355. That statement alone justifies the car's place in the pantheon. But the NSX legend is now so old that it no longer resonates with a good slice of the motoring fraternity. Honda had every opportunity to maintain the legacy, but it chose not to and, to compound matters, it made the disastrous mistake of abandoning the fast-car space the moment the world went wrong in 2008.

Overnight, Honda killed most of its performance car development, including the naturally aspirated V10 NSX that was due to be on sale by 2010. The company found itself in the bizarre situation of being the creator of the when-the-VTEC-kicks-in millions while simultaneously being unable to



offer new customers anything more spicy than the CR-Z. The bloody CR-Z. What a shambles. All was not well.

Internally, the mutterings of disapproval began soon enough. Honda needed to bridge its links from the showroom to motorsport. The blanket rejection of high performance was a mistake and the sports car market not only recovered from the snap recession faster than anyone expected, it then flourished and became more vibrant than at any point in history. Ever the cautious company, even Honda saw an opportunity to relaunch the NSX.

And, ever the cautious Japanese entity, the gestation has been so lengthy that this is a car many of us feel we've been seeing for years – because we have been seeing it for years! First in 2012, and then a slow drip of motor show appearances and will-it-won't-it-happen rumours. Well, it's here now. It exists, it drives, and it was worth the wait.

The new NSX (New Sports eXperience) was developed in the United States by a team from Acura (Honda's US arm) led

by chief engineer Ted Klaus. This was a radical move from a company as proud as Honda, but from what I saw and heard and experienced on a brief trip to California last month, it could well prove to be inspired.

Culturally, Honda's Japanese R&D operations are no longer the best place to make these types of cars. The company has changed beyond recognition from the one that powered Senna to multiple championships and created the original NSX. The fact that Honda's executives managed to put aside notions of pride and tradition to allow this new machine to flourish will be forgotten in the narrative, but it is arguably one of the most significant decisions made by a Japanese car maker in decades.

As mentioned, the first new NSX concept from 2007 was a naturally aspirated V10, but in 2011 Honda began work on a twin-turbo V6 machine with electric motors powering the front wheels. In 2012 the car appeared as a concept with a transverse motor, but anyone who's run a Noble will attest



*'HAS HONDA BUILT
A BABY PORSCHE 918?
I MIGHT REGRET SAYING
THIS, BUT I THINK IT HAS'*



to the issues associated with cooling a turbocharger wedged between an engine block and a bulkhead. So the engine bay was re-engineered to accommodate the motor longitudinally. Not the easiest of tasks, given the space constraints, though a super-compact nine-speed dual-clutch transmission helped the packaging.

The resulting specification is very impressive, and these are now finalised production figures. The 3493cc, 75-degree V6 with twin turbochargers produces 493bhp. The two electric motors acting on the front axle and the single rear motor that nestles between the engine and gearbox add another 72bhp, making 565bhp in total. The torque contribution of the electric powertrain is obviously more significant – a substantial 217lb ft out of the total 476lb ft. Top speed is limited to 191mph and it runs 0-60mph in 2.9sec.

This new-age sports car also tips the scales at 1725kg. The NSX's construction is a clever amalgam of materials chosen specifically because of their individual properties – much of the monocoque is aluminium, but there are special steels in both regular and cast forms. There is also carbonfibre and other exotic materials. Honda won't reveal numbers for twist and stiffness at this stage but claim both are class-leading.

The suspension is just as complicated. The front axle uses struts, but also a double-joint for a lower centre offset and better wheel control. The rear is best described as 'multi-link' but has all the key elements of a classic double-wishbone contained within its complexity. The power steering is electric, the brakes are completely by-wire, there is a mechanical locking differential at the rear and both axles use torque-vectoring.

At this point, are any of you thinking what I'm thinking? Here we have a machine that many people wanted to exist without any complicated electrical equipment. One that has endured a troubled birth, and a sense of public bewilderment that it is so heavy. Yep, we could just as easily be talking about



the Porsche 918, couldn't we? The similarities in layout, perception and, dare I say it, driving dynamics are incredibly similar. Am I saying Honda has built a baby 918? I might regret saying this, but I think it has.

This was a brief introduction to the car, and it began on the road with vehicle test development leader Jason Widmer sitting next to me on some roads that completely destroy European notions that the US doesn't do proper switchbacks. After half an hour my innards needed a break.

From stationary, the NSX pulls silently away in full electric mode. It can run for around two miles like this before the engine cuts in – and it does so with uncanny smoothness. There are four driving modes: Quiet, Sport, Sport Plus and Track. The first really is for trawling residential streets with maximum efficiency. I began this drive in Sport mode.

Given that the driver's only real connection to the NSX is that of sitting within it, the synthesised feeling of connection is good. The steering weight and speed immediately make sense of the vehicle's dimensions and ability to turn. The brake pedal is especially impressive given how complicated the system is, and the throttle response is good. I say good, but I was initially a little disappointed by the car's step-off thrust. For me one of the great tricks that these hybrid machines can deploy in the face of flat-Earth criticism is absurd initial surge and acceleration. This car isn't quite as bombastic as expected. Yes, it's very fast, and Honda is claiming standing-start acceleration better than a 911 Turbo, but I expected a little more Tesla P85d-style silliness.

The noise is good – this is piped intake noise, not some speaker-fakery – and the performance potential is way beyond anything I can actually use on the public road. But the abiding impression for me is of snaking for mile after mile, snicking manually up and down the gearbox and not being able to square the response of the chassis to the claimed kerb weight. I am one of those people who is going to have

to accept that my medieval adherence to the rule that states lighter is always better is going to be tested to destruction in the post-torque-vectoring age. Put simply, with its clever adaptive dampers and ability to adjust torque to individual wheels, the NSX cheats physics just like the 918 does. It feels like a 1400kg machine on these roads. And I'm really enjoying the experience.

Not everything is good. The seating position is too high for me and there is no height adjustment, but the biggest omission is not being able to isolate the damper function from the overall 'character' setting. It's that old chestnut again – I want the powertrain in Sport Plus, but with slacker damping. But I can't have it, so I run with the lazier powertrain and enjoy a supple chassis. I gather Honda is considering making a change for the production cars in 2016.

Gearshifts are crisp and quick in Sport Plus, but not quite in the same league as a 991 GT3's. Overall performance is frankly huge – as with its rivals, the NSX really needs to be judged in terms of how it makes you feel using whatever percentage of what's available until you approach custodial-sentence numbers, and I think the team has done a really good job. It feels special, alert and it adds some turbo *wheesh* and low-speed electrical noise to remind you of the complexities lurking under your bottom.

The destination after this short drive was Sonoma Raceway, a place so twisty, unforgiving and lacking in run-off it isn't wise to contemplate what happens when the NASCAR fraternity rock-up to race there. Honda was keen to swap the street Continental rubber for the Michelin Cup 2s it will offer as an option, but I selfishly wanted to try both so kept the Contis on, and went off to play.

In Track mode the dampers are at full stiffness and the powertrain uses all the electricity available. The car is fast and accurate and its cornering behaviour is pretty neutral. The ESC allows a decent push of understeer and a small amount of yaw at the rear before it starts trimming, using both brakes and throttle. And this makes sense because we're not dealing with a GT3 rival here – this is a road car that deploys its technology in such an effective way that it can pull very surprising speed from a circuit using a supposedly normal set of tyres.

The brakes deserve special mention here, too: in this virtual world, the development team had to find a way of giving the driver a sense of fade coming from the carbon-ceramic discs, and they've done a very good job. The best thing I can say about them is that if I hadn't been told anything, I'd have assumed this was a conventional braking system. Sonoma is hard on brakes and I could do five fast laps without any reduction in performance.

The powertrain comes alive here, too – you punch through the electric torque so quickly that you then savour the petrol section for longer as the car wants to rev to its limiter. Traction is predictably impressive, but the mind games really begin when you switch all the clever traction control off and see what happens when you provoke the NSX – or, more specifically, you try to find out if this is a car that hides behind electronics and exists as a nine-tenths machine.

The search uncovers only good things. You can play with this car – allow the front to push, use that mid-engined layout to alter the line and rotate the rear. It's not as easily playful



HONDA NSX

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Above and left:

aluminium spaceframe cradles a mid-mounted all-aluminium dry-sumped twin-turbo 3.5-litre V6 petrol engine supplemented by three electric motors, two on the front axle, one between the engine and DCT gearbox

HONDA NSX

Engine V6, 3493cc, twin-turbo, plus three electric motors

CO2 TBC

Power 565bhp (combined total)

Torque 476lb ft (combined total)

Transmission Nine-speed dual-clutch, four-wheel drive, LSD, torque vectoring, ESC

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

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

Brakes Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, brake-by-wire, ABS, EBD

Wheels 8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 20in rear

Tyres 245/35 ZR19 front, 305/30 ZR20 rear, Continental ContiSportContact (Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 option)

Weight 1725kg

Power-to-weight 333bhp/ton

0-60mph 2.9sec (claimed)

Top speed 191mph (claimed)

Basic price c£140,000 (est)

evo rating: ★★★★★



as a 488 or an R8 because those pesky front motors always ultimately want to drag the car straight again. But it is way more fun than I'd imagined it would be and, most importantly, it demonstrates the depth of chassis development that has been undertaken to make this car worthy of the NSX badge. Clearly, only when the fundamental dynamics were good did the calibration of the anti-skid and slip systems begin.

And it just didn't feel like a 1700kg car on the track either. Switching to the Michelin Cup 2, it becomes even more impressive because the torque-vectoring has even more tyre performance to lean on. The result is even more speed, composure and enjoyment – and less front axle push, too.

As with the 918, this is a car that uses technology to alter your perspective of what might be possible. Like the 918, it can at times feel like rank sorcery that is scooting you through complicated sections of track at speeds the kerb weight suggests aren't possible. Oh, and the front motors de-couple above 125mph (just like a 918). Of course this is not a perfect driving device: those looking for a GT3-style experience will feel a little short-changed on excitement, interaction and, I suspect, the ability to pound-out dozens of laps at a time.

Perhaps the biggest problem with the NSX for me is in its personality. And I'm not talking about the slightly uninspiring cabin or the exterior styling that I happen to think is very attractive but others feel resembles the aftermath of a Photoshop session, an Audi R8 and a set-square. No, for me there has always been something inextricably appealing

about very-high-performance Japanese sports cars – from the visual detailing to the ubiquitous madness that lurks somewhere in the powertrain or the chassis. This doesn't feel like a Japanese car because essentially it isn't one. The powertrain was developed in Japan, but the rest is American and you can tell. How much that matters to potential customers remains to be seen because, judged on this initial exposure and knowing that production volumes will not be large, Honda is going to sell every one of these it can make.

This is a clever piece of engineering that I think will find a neat niche in the marketplace because it perfectly dissects the conventional R8/911 Turbo offering beloved by people who love driving and the BMW i8 that has so perfectly ensnared those who care less about tactile thrills. The NSX can do the silent electric thing, it can pull smokey slides and to my eyes it looks superb. And I love the fact that, as with the 918 and its 1990s namesake, it's a technology statement for what might come from Honda in the future, which is exactly what the company needs.

There is no price quoted yet, but think 911 Turbo S money (£140k-150k) and you probably won't be far wrong. For that you'll have a car with the same performance but one that is infinitely more interesting mechanically and capable of nipping to the shops without burning a thimble of fuel. You'll curse the lack of luggage space but hell, just thank whoever it is you thank at times like these that Honda has made a new NSX, and it's a very good car. ☒

Would you buy an old NSX?



*evo's road testers assess potential NSX
ownership. We've all been there...*

Henry Catchpole

Perhaps it's because I've just come back from Japan, but I've got a real hankering for an NSX at the moment. That long, belly-scrappingly low shape seems so pure and uncluttered and has only improved with age. The big lightbar at the back still looks futuristic and above it the integrated rear wing doesn't spoil the lines. The pop-up headlights obviously increase the desirability of the whole thing.

The first time I drove one I remember being very surprised (and slightly worried) how easily it oversteered, the long tail swinging round behind me with only the slightest provocation on a wet roundabout. But I also remember this wonderful fluidity and a terrific gearshift. I'd want an early car, non-PAS. As I'd want to drive it and not store it I wouldn't be too worried about mileage, as long as it had been looked after. Some of the best cars seem to be coming in from Japan where they are generally fastidious in their care for sports cars. The weak Yen helps too. Starting at about £30,000 and given the relative rarity, I can't see an NSX losing value, so even if they don't appreciate quite as rapidly as some are predicting (hoping!), an NSX seems like a safe and very desirable bet to me. Just wish I could actually afford one.

Richard Meaden

I was a road tester in my first full-time position when the NSX was new, so I've got very fond memories of it. Red with that little turret roof in black, manual transmission and unassisted steering, it was a proper Senna-spec car, so naturally I was beside myself with excitement at having it for the weekend. Actually it was the first mid-engined exotic I ever drove. We've become blinded by ever-increasing power outputs and ever-decreasing acceleration times, but on the few occasions I've driven an NSX since, the sheer quality of that beautiful V6 engine and sweet-shifting gearbox still shines through, even if the performance is now within reach of a good hot hatch.

I certainly love the idea of owning one, but it would have to be perfect: factory standard with fresh suspension, bushing and alignment. It's one of those rare cars that relies on the sum of the driving experience being greater than simply having crazy power or massive grip. A tired example would be a terrible disappointment.

You have to appreciate the wider significance of an original NSX to really 'get' them, but if you do, even at today's values I still think it's a special car for the money.

Jethro Bovingdon

I have a deep, deep desire for an NSX-R, but funnily enough I have zero emotional connection to the standard car. Don't get me wrong, I think they're beautiful things and the sweet howl of the V6 and precise short-throw gearbox are two of the wonders of the motoring world, but they just don't get me on that deep, instinctive level.

To be honest – and this sounds ridiculous – I've spent more time in the NSX-R, a car with such focus, accuracy and balance that you just want to drive it faster and faster. My memories of the standard car are of a much spikier animal. I guess my formative experience was at Oulton Park. We were shooting a Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale and Porsche 996 GT3 RS amongst traffic on a normal trackday. I was a mere child back then, so Dickie Meaden patted me on the head and told me to go and practice in the NSX we just happened to have along as a support vehicle (bizarre, but true).

It was cold and damp and the NSX – a later, bubble-headlamp car – just didn't want to play. The electric power steering had no feel, the engine seemed to want to overtake the front wheels every time I hesitated and I don't think I strung a clean lap together all day. So if you don't mind I'll put my imaginary NSX fund elsewhere, please.

‘They’re beautiful things, but they just don’t get me on that deep, instinctive level’

Dan Prosser

I must have been 12 or 13 years old. The Honda NSX, I remember, was a complete pain to drive. I would spend hour after hour trying to get the blasted thing around Trial Mountain without spinning, but I'd always back it into a rock face or crash it into a barrier. I grew to hate that red taillight strip.

I don't remember reading about the NSX in period, but I have read a fair amount since and spoken to several colleagues who have driven them. All of that has led me to believe that they're fantastic to drive, with much sharper handling than the contemporary Ferrari, the 348, and a sonorous, rev-happy V6.

Flicking through the classifieds today I'm drawn in by the clean, distinctly Japanese styling and the impossibly long rear deck. They really do look lovely. The early cars probably feel deathly slow by modern standards with 270bhp and a rather slim 210lb ft, but I'm not sure I'd be too bothered about that. I could build a pretty solid case for an NSX, then, if it wasn't for the fact that it caused me so much stress on *Gran Turismo 2* as a schoolboy.



AUDI R8 V10 PLUS v JAGUAR F-TYPE R AWD v McLAREN 570S v PORSCHE 911 TURBO S





EVERY DAY HEROES

The 911 Turbo S defines the everyday all-weather supercar, but now it's challenged by the brilliant new McLaren 570S and Audi R8 V10 Plus and the fearsome Jaguar F-Type R AWD

by DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

PART 1

p78

Our contenders' all-weather ability is tested to the limit on (very) wet Welsh roads

PART 2

p85

Dry roads – and the Bedford Autodrome – reveal which delivers the biggest thrill



—
TO WET WALES...
Part 1.



LITTLE BITTY STINGIN'

rain. Big ol' fat rain. Rain that flies in sideways. Even rain that seems to come straight up from underneath. And all of this before we've eaten breakfast. If we could only know how spectacularly wrong the forecast for tomorrow will prove to be, we'd cut our losses and run right now. But with the weather apps on our phones telling us the rain will ease off this evening, we decide to persevere.

On we drive through Snowdonia. The peaks that surround the Llanberis Pass form a sort of enormous geological funnel, collecting vast quantities of water and depositing every drop, it seems, directly onto the A4086. The road is laced with streams so I lead our convoy with some degree of caution, but hopefully not so much that my colleagues will think I've gone soft. I see another stream up ahead and make note of it, but as I get closer it seems to grow. It's more of a river. It's deep. I realise just in time just how deep it really is, so I stand on the

brakes to shed as much speed as possible, point the McLaren down the middle of the road and release the brake pedal an instant before hitting the river.

The Pirelli P Zero Corsa is not designed to displace water. The four tyres start to plane the moment they hit the river. Great sheets rise up either side of the car as it skates across the road towards a stone wall. It probably looks quite dramatic from the outside, but the sheep don't seem to notice. I suspect Henry Catchpole behind me definitely does.

The river runs dry just in time, so the tyres find enough purchase on the road surface to keep me out of the wall. I decide to slacken the pace. I have clearly gone soft. The conditions are supposed to be improving, but if I knew right now that the rain will actually fall unabated for the next two days I'd continue on along the A4086, pick up the A5 at Betws-y-Coed and drive home.

Slowly, we splash on towards Bala. It's frustrating to be learning so little about the 570S, particularly when time is already tight, but, given that each of the cars on this test bills itself as an everyday ride, perhaps wet-weather ability should be part of the discussion.

The 911 Turbo S has long been the definitive daily-use, all-weather supercar, although the R8 V10 Plus has challenged for that title in recent years. Priced at £142,120 and £134,500 respectively, they are the heartland at which the £143,250 McLaren is targeted. The Brit is on the money for power output, too: 562bhp plays the Porsche's 552bhp and the Audi's 602bhp.

Jaguar's F-type R Coupe is here as the value proposition. In All Wheel Drive form, it costs £91,660 – some £52,000 less than the most expensive car on test – but with 542bhp it should have the firepower it needs to keep pace with the competition. Certainly, like the Porsche and Audi, its four-wheel-drive system gives it a wet-weather advantage over the 570S.

Sure enough, the McLaren is hamstrung by the weather, but it isn't all bad. For one thing the hydraulically assisted steering is wonderfully detailed on these textured roads. On the smooth, glassy surfaces of the Portuguese launch route (*evo* 216), I found the steering to be short of any meaningful feel in similar conditions, but here it gives you a clear indication of grip levels. The traction control system, meanwhile, does a good job of maintaining control at the rear axle without completely cutting drive. After turn-in, the outer pair of tyres really dig hard into the road surface, too, which means you can actually lean on the chassis. So you find yourself carrying reasonable speed down a road with confidence, short-shifting to avoid asking too much of the traction control.



Ultimately, the 570S is limited by its aggressive Corsa tyres. Push a little harder into a corner and you'll soon feel – with real clarity, it must be said – the front axle wash wide. McLaren offers a non-Corsa P Zero for the 570S and during the winter months it's surely the sensible option.

That's the tyre Porsche uses on the 911 Turbo S and the advantages over the Corsa are pronounced. Being a 911, there is still an understeer window through which to drive, but that's in the chassis rather than the tyre. Trail-brake into bends and the P Zero finds good turn-in bite through the layer of slickness. Mid-corner grip is stronger, too, and under power at corner-exit the four-wheel-drive Porsche finds better traction, but there is actually a propensity for the rear axle to be overwhelmed if you try to deploy the full 553lb ft in these conditions. There's a surprising amount of yaw with the stability control system left on, but never beyond a certain point. The Turbo S does slither down a wet road, then, but it clips along at a faster rate than the McLaren nonetheless.

For wet-weather dynamic ability, the Porsche has met its match in the R8. On its Continental SportContact 6 rubber, the Audi finds equally impressive turn-in grip, but with a little

less understeer. It also grips hard mid-corner, but its traction under power is more resolute – a result not only of its very quick-witted four-wheel-drive system but also its less demanding 413lb ft. On the few occasions that you do ask too much of the four contact patches away from a corner – perhaps if the tyres are still dealing with the cornering force – the R8 is very lively, snapping into oversteer quite suddenly if you've dared to remove the electronic safety nets. In this moment, the car feels as though it has a wide track and a short wheelbase, as though it sits square on the road.

The Porsche, Audi and McLaren all bite hard into the road surface at the mid-corner point to give you a degree of confidence in these treacherous conditions. The Jaguar, however,

Above: new R8 V10 Plus packs a mighty 602bhp, but also a super-sophisticated 4WD system to keep it in check on days like this. Jaguar has 4WD too, but struggles to find the same bite, as does rear-drive, P Zero Corsa-shod McLaren



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does not. Rather than sense the F-type’s weight settle onto the outer edge of the car, it feels as though its P Zeros are right on the edge of letting go and sending the car into a slide. It isn’t very often that it actually happens, but that impression, corner after corner, does erode your confidence. The remote, elastic-feeling steering also self-centres so aggressively after turn-in that you lose all sense of the grip levels across the front axle.

This All Wheel Drive car does at least make vastly better use of the supercharged V8’s power and torque than the rear-wheel-drive version does in such weather. That car is so severely traction-limited in the rain that you tend to give up any notion of driving quickly at the first sight of a threatening cloud, but in this model you can continue pressing on. There is still a reasonable amount of exit oversteer if you stand on the throttle early, but you immediately feel drive being sent forwards and the car being hauled straight again. It’s actually rather a lot of fun.

‘I normally wouldn’t venture anywhere near the F-type’s wet weather mode, but it really is that wet today,’ says Henry. ‘It does a great job of softening the throttle response and generally making the car more driveable.’



With the rain showing no sign of easing, there's absolutely nothing to be learnt about the dry-weather behaviour of the cars, so to pass the time I begin to consider their day-to-day merits. They do, after all, tend to be an only car rather than part of a bigger fleet. That's certainly the brief McLaren set itself for the 570S, and a number of measures were taken to make it more agreeable in everyday use than the more expensive 650S. There's more stowage space in the cabin, for instance, and the carbon tub has been modified to improve access. Lowering the sill by 80mm at the point where your feet pass over it has made some difference, but the rest of the sill is still high and the showpiece butterfly doors do require you to stoop down low to clear them.

The quality of the materials and build within the cabin is very good, though, and the sculptural dash shows real design flair. The brightly coloured leather door panels of this particular test car won't be to all

tastes, but at least the cabin is in no way dour. With all the navigation, stereo and ventilation controls nestled within the IRIS touchscreen system, there is inevitably a period of familiarisation during which time the simplest operations can be quite baffling, but you do soon learn them.

The Jaguar's cabin immediately gives it the impression of being a much bigger, weightier car, which isn't helped by the annoyingly doughy steering wheel. The second impression is of slightly patchy material quality in some places, although it's worth remembering that the cheapest derivative of the F-type is a £51,000 car.

Being a less exotic sort of creature, the Jaguar does seem a more likely everyday machine, although, once you've folded yourself into the 570S's cabin, there's no real reason why the McLaren should be any more taxing day to day. It actually has a more relaxed and cushioned ride quality than the Jaguar, which can feel brittle over a rough road surface.

The Porsche's cabin feels very understated compared with

*'UNDER POWER AT THE
CORNER-EXIT, THE 911
FINDS BETTER TRACTION'*







*'I REMIND
MYSELF
NEVER TO
TRUST
ANOTHER
WEATHER
FORECAST'*

the McLaren's and, to a lesser extent, the Jaguar's, almost to the point of being functional and no more. At least the quality is very good. The Turbo S rides with some of the harshness of the F-type, feeling quite tight-limbed over certain road surfaces. Those small rear seats are a massive boon for anybody with young children, though.

On optional Audi Magnetic Ride (£1600) dampers the R8 rides with some of the fluidity of the McLaren. Add to that the highest quality cabin here and the R8 is probably the most amenable everyday car (for those who can do without the 911's rear seats, at least). Despite this test car having a very dark cabin, it feels like a tremendously exciting place in which to sit, while the infotainment functions are all pretty intuitive.

These are not the usual observations of an *evo* supercar test. Still the rain falls, so we scrap around to bag a few more photographs before calling it a day. We'll awake in the morning to much sunnier scenes, I reassure Henry and the others.

We do not. I don't know if my fading sense of humour is just getting the better of me, but it feels even darker, wetter and colder this morning. With all the foolhardiness of the few Snowdonia hikers who laced up their boots this morning, we press on with the photoshoot, adding whatever we can to yesterday's fairly paltry haul of pictures. Then the Audi suffers a minor electrical fault after being launched through a big puddle (hopefully that'll unravel the mystery of the colour-changing R8), photographer Aston Parrott declares the whole thing a waste of time, and Henry and I decide we're learning nothing of any real value. We take refuge in a small café and scramble plan B.

Leaving rainpocalypse behind us, we head home that afternoon. We'll meet next morning at the Bedford Autodrome. Not only does that give us the best opportunity to finish the photoshoot in the limited time we have left, we'll also be able to test the cars on dry and familiar roads close to the circuit. I remind myself never to trust another weather forecast.

TO THE TEST TRACK!

Part 2.





T

TWO OF THESE CARS ARE so tremendously exciting at low speed, albeit for very different reasons, that you could fall for them without ever driving with any great purpose. To sit in the McLaren's driving seat is to feel as though you're piloting a Le Mans prototype. The seating position places your legs way

out in front of you with your body reclined slightly and the steering wheel offered to your chest. The wheel itself is small, with a thin rim and slender spokes. You feel as though you're sat right over the front axle with the weight of the car behind you, placed low in the carbon tub with a cinematic view forward over the low scuttle. It's just so evocative. 'I adore the driving position in the 570S,' agrees Henry. 'Those optional bucket seats are absolute marvels that let you sink right down into them, giving great lateral support. The fact that the steering wheel comes so far out makes the seating position perfect.'

Then you start to drive and even at town speeds you enjoy the tactility of that wonderfully detailed steering and the balance and low-slung centre of gravity of the chassis.

The R8 also has an evocative driving position – this time you're sat right in the middle of the chassis with the windscreen way out ahead of you, more like a DTM racer than a Le Mans car – although it's the naturally aspirated V10 that steals the show. Somehow just knowing that it's over your shoulder, with its near-9000rpm red line and hummingbird responses, is enough. But, when you do wind it all the way out, the immediacy, the energy through the rev-range and the fury of the soundtrack right at the top end floods you with adrenalin.

The F-type's blood-and-thunder V8 is enormous fun in its own way, especially now we're on the thankfully dry roads

of Bedfordshire and getting to use more of its full potential, but it feels crude compared with the Audi's V10. In Dynamic mode, the Jaguar's throttle calibration becomes so aggressive that you seem to get a full throttle opening at half pedal travel. Combined with the immediate response of a supercharger, it means you spend the first few miles deploying too much power far too early in the corner, which can upset the chassis. Soon enough, though, you learn to tickle the throttle pedal initially to modulate the input.

It's one example of the F-type's hyperactivity, which, it seems, has been engineered-in to disguise the car's weight. Jaguar quotes 1730kg, but, given that we weighed a rear-wheel-drive V8 R Coupe at 1800kg, it seems likely that the All Wheel-Drive model is closer to 1900kg (the four-wheel-drive system adds 75kg, according to Jaguar). The initial steering response is very sharp, too, and the front axle darts into an apex with an almost jumpy immediacy. The rear axle, meanwhile, feels very stiff in roll, so it's always on the edge of sliding. For the most part that strategy does make the F-type feel very lively and agile indeed, but, when the direction changes come thick and fast and one undulation rolls into another, the realities of 1900kg travelling at speed do tend to come to the fore.

Body control has been much-improved compared with the pre-facelift cars, though, so this model feels more tightly tied-down and less wayward than earlier F-types. Once you've tuned in to the car's slightly artificial rates of response, it does begin to entertain, the chassis digging hard into the dry surface where it skated across it in the wet. Ultimately, however, it doesn't have the intuitive, engaging on-road dynamic quality of the best cars here, which is perhaps to be expected of a GT in the company of supercars.

In complete contrast to the Jaguar, the Porsche places you right at the front of the action, rather like the McLaren does. Its steering feels meaty but rather inert in normal driving; once up to speed, it does begin to patter away just a little,





Above: Henry introduces the McLaren to the Bedford Autodrome. The driving position and the view out are pure Le Mans racer

although not with any of the clarity of a 911 GT3's helm.

Over the past few years, during which time most manufacturers have switched to turbocharged engines, we've grown accustomed to the kind of boosty, torque-rich slingshot acceleration that has been the hallmark of turbocharged 911s for so long. This car still feels frantically quick in a straight line, but to my mind it isn't as shocking as it once was. With more torque and stronger traction, it feels more urgent than the McLaren in the mid-range, although that car does sustain its accelerative push over a wider rev-band. The 911 has slightly sharper throttle response than the 570S at low engine speeds, but there's no musicality to the way the flat-six revs out.

Whereas in the wet the 911's four-wheel-drive system would favour the rear axle just enough to get the car squirming around, in the dry the car is completely locked down. The front end still feels a touch light, but there's no real understeer to speak of, while mid-corner grip and traction are both mighty. In fact, the Turbo S's limits are so high that it's rare that you ever feel as though you're close to approaching them. One issue is that there's so little body and chassis movement, even in hard cornering, that the car just seems completely unimpressed by your efforts. No matter how hard you fling it down a road, it's composed to the point of being lifeless. It's biblically quick across the ground, but it never feels as though that's because of your efforts as the driver. You feel enormous confidence in the 911 Turbo S, but there's just no sign of playfulness or engagement at the limit of what it can do.

This is where the McLaren really shines. There's so much to enjoy about the chassis at low and medium speeds, even well within the limits of grip, but when you do start to press a little harder the car just comes alive. Despite wearing a relatively slim 225-section front tyre, the car carries good speed into a corner. The steering is both very direct and natural in its rate of response at the front axle, and it's deeply communicative from initial turn-in right the way through the corner. In this day and age of

electric steering systems, the McLaren's helm feels like a rare treat. The kickback over bumps can be quite violent, but I'm happy to accept it as a consequence of the detailed feel.

There's just enough roll in the body to give a clear indication of how hard the car is being worked, but it's the relationship between the driving position and the chassis loadings that makes you feel as connected as you do to the 570S. You're hardwired into the car, downloading its messages and uploading your inputs on intuition.

Nudge the chassis right up to its limit of grip and the car settles into this slight, perfectly balanced window of four-wheel drift on the way into an apex. Entering a corner with a fraction of the slip of a classic sports car on cross-ply tyres in a modern supercar is unspeakably exciting. At corner-exit there's enough poise in the chassis that the car can be persuaded to drive away on the slightest turn of corrective lock in the middle of the three stability control modes.

McLaren has understood that a performance car will be judged not only on its technical ability, but also on the way it involves and rewards the driver. The R8 has its work cut out. As I've already mentioned, the Audi exists on an entirely different planet in drivetrain terms. Its 5.2-litre V10 is one of the great modern performance engines, while the twin-clutch gearbox shifts so quickly the new gear engages even before

the paddle has completed its short travel. It's as though the gearbox read your mind.

This new R8 has that same sense of lightness and pliancy, with tight control across the road that made the original such an *evo* favourite. The Dynamic Steering system (£1200) feels incredibly direct and responsive with no slackness whatsoever, but it doesn't load and unload as consistently and intuitively as the McLaren's hydraulic rack, and nor does it stream back the same detailed messages.

It's no real hindrance, however, because the chassis itself is so easy to read. There is a trace of understeer on turn-in, but the biggest point of difference to the original model is the car's behaviour mid-corner. The key to getting the best out of the R8 is rotating it using a weight transfer at the apex, which allows you to exit

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***‘GET THE
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with a sweet, neutral stance. If you don't get the car rotating, though, the four-wheel-drive system and suspension now find so much purchase that you can't persuade the car to exit in anything other than gentle understeer. The R8 has the 570S licked in drivetrain terms, but the McLaren counters with a more rewarding chassis.

With just four hours or so until sunset, we head to the circuit. There are occasions in this line of work when you find yourself making bold statements that could set you up for a titanic fall. This is a good one: the Jaguar is unspinnable. With so much weight up front, it enters corners with a meaningful amount of understeer. At the apex it pays to dab the brakes, because this neutralises that understeer and gets the car set up for the exit phase. Even if you stand on the throttle fully the car will only oversteer to a certain point because the four-wheel-drive system just pulls it back into line.

Even when you're trying to be neat and tidy, that's more or less the way in which the F-type wants to be driven on circuit: it'll always push on the way in, you'll always need to dab the brakes at the apex to beat the understeer and it'll always settle into some degree of slip the moment you touch the throttle.

The 911 also understeers on the way in, but for the exact opposite reason to the F-type. The key to enjoying the Turbo S on circuit is defeating that understeer, which you do simply by trail-braking and getting the heavy rear axle swinging around. The moment you've beaten the push, the 911 is yours. You can do as you please. These cars somehow got a reputation for being point-and-squirt machines on track, but that's so far

from the truth. Properly set up on the way in, the Porsche settles into this enormous, soft-edged window of playfulness. You can either drive away from the apex in a neutral stance, or stand on the throttle and pull off the most lurid slides. It's a pity that this enormous window of fun and adjustability is just out of reach on the road. In longer corners, those that don't require a brake input, the four-wheel-drive system will take care of any understeer if you simply stay on the throttle.

The Audi, too, will slide like the best of them, reaching enormous angles of slip that the four-wheel-drive system somehow manages to recover. 'It's a curious feeling when it first oversteers,' says Henry, 'as you can feel the sudden stabilising transfer of power to the front axle. Once you're aware of this, however, it means you can drive it almost like a mid-engined Nissan GT-R or a WRC car.' With an incredibly sharp turn-in and a neutral mid-corner balance, the R8 is fun when you're not driving like a hooligan, and the drivetrain is as intoxicating as ever.

The most eye-popping car of the foursome, though, is the McLaren. It lift-off oversteers like a front-wheel-drive hot hatch on the way into a corner. You can have it fully crossed-up at the apex, then ride the slide all the way out to the exit kerb on the power. The key is to not let it go too far off-throttle, because then the first sniff of power will send the car into a spin. As with the Turbo S, if you get the 570S set up properly, it presents itself to you and more or less allows you to do as you please. The shifts in balance are always so beautifully telegraphed through the chassis and steering, too.

As on the road, the McLaren is the most engaging car on circuit. There are very good reasons, not least its everyday appeal and spectacular drivetrain, why the R8 should win this test. Indeed, for some members of the road test team, that wailing V10 seals the deal. Offer me the keys to any of these cars for one drive over a great road, though, and it'll be the carbonfibre pendant with the distinctive speedmark on it that I'll pluck from your palm. The McLaren 570S is a very special car indeed. ☒

AUDI R8 V10 PLUS

Engine V10, 5204cc

CO2 287g/km

Power 602bhp @ 8250rpm

Torque 413lb ft @ 6500rpm

Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, four-wheel drive, LSD, ESP

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

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

Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs, 380mm front, 356mm rear, ABS, EBD

Wheels 8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 19in rear

Tyres 235/35 ZR19 front, 295/35 ZR19 rear

Weight 1555kg

Power-to-weight 393bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.2sec (claimed)

Top speed 205mph (claimed)

Basic price £134,500

evo rating: ★★★★★★

JAGUAR F-TYPE R AWD

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharged

CO2 269g/km

Power 542bhp @ 6500rpm

Torque 501lb ft @ 3500rpm

Transmission Eight-speed automatic, four-wheel drive, LSD, torque vectoring

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, 380mm front, 376mm rear, ABS, EBD

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

Tyres 255/35 ZR20 front, 295/30 ZR20 rear

Weight 1730kg

Power-to-weight 318bhp/ton

0-62mph 4.1sec (claimed)

Top speed 186mph (claimed)

Basic price £91,660

evo rating: ★★★★★★

McLAREN 570S

Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo

CO2 258g/km

Power 562bhp @ 7500rpm

Torque 443lb ft @ 5000-6500rpm

Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, torque vectoring

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

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

Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs, 394mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD

Wheels 8 x 19in front, 10 x 20in rear

Tyres 225/35 ZR19 front, 285/35 ZR20 rear

Weight (dry) 1313kg

Power-to-weight (dry) 435bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.2sec (claimed)

Top speed 204mph (claimed)

Basic price £143,250

evo rating: ★★★★★★

PORSCHE 911 TURBO S

Engine Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo

CO2 227g/km

Power 552bhp @ 6500-6750rpm

Torque 553lb ft @ 2200-4000rpm

Transmission Seven-speed PDK, four-wheel drive, electronic rear diff lock, PTV Plus

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, 410mm front, 390mm rear, ABS, EBD

Wheels 9 x 20in front, 11.5 x 20in rear

Tyres 245/35 ZR20 front, 305/30 ZR21 rear

Weight 1605kg

Power-to-weight 349bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.1sec (claimed)

Top speed 197mph (claimed)

Basic price £142,120

evo rating: ★★★★★★





Tyrone Johnson is the man responsible for the new, Mk3 Ford Focus RS. You'd like him. He doesn't suffer fools and his F1 and WRC background means a zero-compromise approach to the new RS

NONE MORE FOCUSED

by DAN PROSSER

‘PEOPLE ASK ME ALL THE TIME WHAT THE car’s Nürburgring lap time is,’ says Tyrone Johnson. ‘I’m not interested in that at all. If an owner takes his Focus RS to the Ring and somebody tells him his car is ten seconds slower than the Mercedes or the Audi, I want him to say, “I don’t give a fuck. I’m going to go again.”’

Johnson doesn’t so much toe the corporate PR line as kick seven shades out of it. As vehicle engineering manager for Ford Performance in Europe he’s responsible for the Fiesta and Focus ST models, and more recently the third-generation Focus RS. He discusses his latest creation with a forthrightness and an honesty that speaks of unflinching confidence, both in the brief he set out for his engineers and in the quality of their work.

Having studied mechanical engineering in his native United States, Johnson started working at Ford straight out of college. ‘It was 1985,’ he says. ‘This was a time when nobody had a computer at their desk. We had one computer for the whole department, but nobody knew how to use it. My very first assignment at Ford was to put a Thunderbird on a flat plate and put external forces into



Above: Johnson (right) with *evo*'s Prosser.
Above, middle: new RS will be home to lots of bespoke hardware.
Right: power oversteer will be its party piece

the suspension to see how it deflected. I had a million dial gauges all over the place and I had to read them all and write down the numbers. I used the computer to plot the data – I had used computers at school – and that got me into a big argument with my boss. He said, “You’re wasting the company’s time. Just do it all by hand. It’s a lot quicker.” That was just the time.

‘After about four years I joined a small group within Ford called Advanced Chassis. Most of the guys in the group were young engineers, so we were still gung-ho and not burned out yet. We worked on advanced projects that may or may not go somewhere. They weren’t necessarily new projects from the ground up – we’d take existing vehicles and modify them, try to improve upon them. It was good fun. I’ve always been a car nut so being able to play with things like that was fantastic.’

Johnson’s work within Advanced Chassis got him noticed. He was offered the opportunity to lead the development of a new Ford saloon car in Europe, which would be called Mondeo. Working closely with handling authority Richard Parry-Jones, Johnson played a major role in forging Ford’s enduring reputation for class-leading vehicle dynamics.

‘In 1996 I had an offer to become the chief engineer of racing in Europe, responsible for Formula 1 with the Stewart Grand Prix team and the World Rally Championship programme. At the time the WRC regulations mandated that you must use body-in-whites off the production line, but like everything there are tolerances. I arranged to build a number of bodies with panels that were right at the lower end of the tolerances, so they were lighter. They were still legal, but they made the car 30 kilos lighter. People will kill for 30 kilograms.

‘It sounds easy to make that happen, but believe me, it’s very complicated. You don’t do that sort of thing during the week, you have to do it on a Sunday afternoon. I had to convince the plant manager to get his whole crew in to build these things on a Sunday afternoon. That only happens with goodwill, with enthusiastic people who want to see the Ford name being successful.’ Johnson didn’t know it at the time, but he had just learned a lesson that would prove to be critical to the development of this Focus RS.

‘Motorsport was a new school of thought,’ he says, ‘because money was no object. If, as a road-car engineer, you’ve designed a part that’s better, but it costs ten cents more, you’ll be thrown right out of a cost meeting. Ten cents doesn’t sound like very much, but multiplied by a million cars every year it becomes a lot of money.

‘That mindset was actually one of the problems we had on this Focus RS project. The engineers had learned that every cent counts, that you don’t even ask for another cent more until you can categorically justify it.

‘We decided, for instance, that we wanted to fit a bigger anti-roll bar. The component engineer, who works for mainstream engineering, kept saying it was impossible because we didn’t have brackets for that size bar. He said they didn’t exist and we’d have to do the tooling. I asked what that would cost and he said \$20,000. I said, “And you’ve been messing us about for three weeks for that?!” He didn’t mean it in a negative way. It’s just what he’s been taught. It was down to me to decide to spend that money.

‘The RS is very low-volume and everybody in the company is interested in it. The previous models have been such successes that everybody wants to help. The manufacturing community has been so helpful on this project because they all want to be a part of it. This kind of car does not get made with nine-to-five engineers. You have to have a little bit of gasoline in your blood.’ Just like

the rally programme, the goodwill and enthusiasm of countless individuals gave the RS project the momentum it needed.

Unlike the two versions that came before it, this latest Focus RS uses a four-wheel-drive system. ‘The first thing I said when I came on board was, “It’s got to be all-wheel-drive.” That was the summer of 2012,’ says Johnson. ‘One of my guys agreed with me, but he said it’s got to be a proper all-wheel-drive system, one that could make the car handle the way we wanted it to handle.

‘The system we use allows us to direct torque to the wheel we want to direct it to. It’s proper torque vectoring. It was more complicated and more expensive, but that was one of the things we were not backing down on. We didn’t want a typical all-wheel-drive unit. We actually built a prototype with a Haldex all-wheel-drive system, and we said, “We’re not having that, it’s boring.” The Golf Rs and Mercedes AMG’s of this world are nice cars, but in terms of dynamics we’re in a different category.’

THE PROOF OF THAT, OF COURSE, WILL BE IN THE driving. *evo* won’t get behind the wheel until the new year, but I do get the opportunity to experience the Focus RS from the passenger seat at Ford’s Lommel proving facility in Belgium.

It’s a grey and wet October day, so the tarmac of the roller-coaster test road is slick with the morning’s rainfall. At the exit of a tight second-gear corner my driver stands abruptly on the power. Despite the stability control system still being active, the rear axle swings around in a progressive and balletic powerslide. I’ve never felt a hot hatch behave in this way before.

The four-wheel-drive system uses GKN-developed hardware with Ford’s own software. Unlike a Haldex system, which only sends drive rearwards once the front tyres have lost traction, the RS has permanent four-wheel drive (the exception being when it decouples the rear wheels during motorway-style driving to save fuel). On average it sends around 70 per cent of torque rearwards. It then has two clutch packs on the rear axle to distribute torque between the rear wheels, and it’s capable of sending 100 per cent

‘Johnson and his team have been able to finely direct torque to achieve the driving dynamics they want’



to either wheel. As Johnson says, it's proper torque vectoring. The technology isn't new, but this is the first time it's been applied to a rear axle in this sector of the performance-car market.

Consequently, Johnson and his team have been able to finely direct torque to achieve the driving dynamics they want, namely a rear-wheel-drive character. 'Haldex is good for traction,' says Johnson, 'but in terms of handling and the way it manages understeer it's quite boring.'

Where a front-driven hot hatch would scrabble frustratingly for traction on this surface and a Haldex-equipped car would exit with a completely neutral and lifeless attitude, the RS feels alive and engaging. On this test route and the sprawling skidpan I can clearly sense drive being sent to the outside rear wheel, which will sustain a powerslide. Of course, the car does still drive its front wheels, so it won't slide exactly like a rear-wheel-drive car can, but from the passenger seat it feels terrifically exciting.

The RS has a Drift mode, which manages the stability control and four-wheel-drive system to achieve a controllable, progressive slide, but in the various other drive modes the powertrain is programmed to minimise understeer on turn-in and deliver a driven-from-the-rear sensation in normal cornering. There's little else to be learned about the RS's chassis during today's ride, although it does feel agile and tautly controlled.

With 345bhp the new RS is a rapid car, but from the passenger seat it lacks the explosive performance of a Mercedes-AMG A45 (355bhp) or Audi RS3 (362bhp). That might be a consequence of the six-speed manual gearbox, which is the only transmission option... for now. Press Johnson on a twin-clutch option in the future and he refuses to rule it out.

The engine is the same 2.3-litre, four-cylinder turbo unit that drives the latest Mustang, but it's been upgraded with a

'Press Johnson on a twin-clutch option and he refuses to rule it out'

new cylinder head, cylinder liners, turbo and a revised cooling system. The result is a 35bhp increase on the Mustang, with a peak torque figure of 347lb ft on overboost. The engine note is quite tuneful for this sort of engine configuration and on the overrun the exhaust spews forth wicked pops and crackles.

A Michelin Pilot Super Sport is the standard tyre, although a bespoke Cup 2 will also be available. 'The Cup tyre is just unbelievable,' says Johnson. The brake setup includes 350mm discs on the front axle with four-piston calipers. Along with the four-wheel-drive system and engine, the brakes are one of the three aspects of the car that really define the way it drives, reckons Johnson.

The recipe is a very compelling one, which is precisely why 1600 UK orders have already been taken for the new Focus RS. If the reality lives up to the promise, it'll be the real-world performance hero of 2016. **✎**

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PORSCHE 991.2 CARRERA S

by HENRY CATCHPOLE
PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

Blown away?

*Porsche's latest 911 Carrera
has sprouted turbos. Controversial?
Certainly. Surprising? Perhaps not. The
right move? We're about to find out...*



PORSCHE
911 Carrera S

S GO 4045

FORGET ABOUT THE turbocharged engine for a moment. It's late in the afternoon and we've just landed in Tenerife, where the launch of this latest iteration of Porsche's most famous car is being held. We're following the prescribed route in the new Porsche Communication Management (PCM) system by driving up the dual carriageway towards the hotel. Sitting at 120kph, sun visor down, shielding eyes from the setting glare, the new 360mm-diameter steering wheel is gently moving in my hands.

Having criticised, bemoaned and generally disliked the lifeless electrically assisted steering of the first-generation 991-series 911, this constant stream of quiet but tangible chatter in the 991.2 is a very good thing. Admittedly, the first gen's steering did improve gradually, but this feels like another step on to reducing the air of detachment. Sensing the road like this is akin to a conversation you can hear going on behind closed doors in another room. You don't (for the moment) need to know the detail of what's being said, but the tone of the happy voices is reassuring, letting you know that people are where they should be and all is well.

After a while the navigation leads us off the motorway, onto a long, curling slip-road and to a small roundabout. Neither of these is taken at more than four or possibly five on the

tenths scale of driving intent, but again the car enters into a dialogue, this time dynamic. The weight shifts are subtle but the roll and pitch in the suspension is enough to let you know that this is a rear-engined car. Photographer Gus Gregory, sitting in the passenger seat, can feel it too. This is not a car trying to iron out all the individualities of its engine placement and that's a very good thing.

We spot the right turn at the last moment and swing smartly off the main thoroughfare through a village. The lady in the dash politely asks us to make a U-turn but we respond by switching her off (as your hand approaches the new touchscreen, more options materialise like fish rising from the deep). We're going to be late for supper, but after a day in airports we're making a bid for freedom, however fleeting, and heading for the glorious evening light and open roads of Tenerife's volcanic uplands.

Despite the fact that Porsche probably thought *evo* would like (or should have) a fully loaded car with such toppings as Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control (PDCC), carbon-ceramic brakes (PCCB) and the new-for-Carrera option of rear-wheel steering, we have in fact plumped for a very standard Carrera S. We'll no doubt test all those add-ons in the coming months, but it seems only right to start at base camp rather than parachuting onto the summit. So, the 20-inch wheels are standard,





‘This is not a car trying to iron out all the individualities of its engine placement’

the seven-speed manual gearbox is standard, our car has even got the normal S exhaust, with its two wide-set pairs of pipes rather than the two more centrally mounted cans of the Sports exhaust. Oh, and it's Miami Blue – a stunning hue that partly looks like it needs a dash of orange and the word ‘Gulf’ and partly looks like it's been pinched from a brochure for scuba diving in the Seychelles.

Tortured by the ravages of wildly fluctuating temperatures up at nearly 2000 metres, the dark black tarmac of the road around Mount Teide is so bumpy that even a neglected British B-road could learn a thing or two from it. However, Porsche Active Suspension Management (PASM) is now standard on both Carrera and Carrera S and in the softer of its two settings it is coping well. ‘Soft’ perhaps isn't quite the right adjective, because the Carrera S is firmly sprung; indeed spring rates have increased slightly over the old model to cope with the

heavier engine. However, it isn't uncomfortable and seems well judged for a sports car.

And what of the engine? Of the turbocharging there is certainly evidence, most obviously the pause then gentle exponential surge in acceleration when the throttle is deployed at low revs. Aurally it is accompanied by a relatively quiet *shhhh*, like a wave breaking on a shingle beach. The interesting thing is that a more naturally aspirated sound then takes over at about 5000rpm and instead of feeling all puffed out by the time the torque is dropping off, the revs keep rising and the sound keeps hardening until it crescendos at a rather lofty-feeling 7600rpm limiter. Peak power is 414bhp at 6500rpm, compared with 394bhp at 7400rpm in the old naturally aspirated S.

This is not an overtly boosty engine, like in a current McLaren or an F40 of old. There is no big explosion of hurricane-force fury. Rather it feels as though the turbocharging has been



Right: slats on the rear are now vertically arranged to improve airflow. **Below:** smaller steering wheel is inspired by the 918 Spyder's; driving modes are selectable via a dial beneath the spokes



used more to torque-fill the lower reaches of the rev-range. As such, the Carrera S's maximum of 369lb ft arrives at a claimed 1700rpm (to me it feels a few hundred revs later, but it's early nonetheless) and is sustained until 5000rpm. By comparison, the old naturally aspirated car didn't reach its maximum of 324lb ft until 5600rpm. A look at the graphs of the two torque 'curves' shows that the old engine lags between 110 and 90lb ft behind the new engine all the way from 2000 to 4000rpm.

The effects of this are several. Firstly it means you can now drive the 911 hard in two different ways. You can rely on the low-down torque, or you can rev it and use the power higher up. Whereas previously I would have felt obliged to go back-across-back for second gear when tackling this corner that we're coming into, now I have a choice. With either second or third gear I know I am still going to be accelerating hard when I get back on the throttle. This means that I can work the rear axle much harder more of the time, which is crucial in a 911 because it is its prodigious traction out of corners (thanks to that weight distribution) that is arguably its most defining feature – particularly now there

is so much turn-in grip from the front end.

This greater choice has another knock-on effect, namely that you can enjoy changing gear more of the time. With the first-generation 991, the stretch of road that we're on would have been tackled solely using the first three of its rather tall gears, and realistically only two of those. Now at least one more gear has become an option and possibly two, because short-shifting isn't a huge detriment to pace. You can surf along on ample waves of torque, enjoying snicking up and down the 'box, or you can hang on to gears and enjoy the full extent of the revs. Arguably, of course, what we would really like is a naturally aspirated engine with shorter gearing, but emissions legislation dictates otherwise and no amount of ECU cheating would disguise that sort of mechanical setup...

If you've never been to Tenerife and purely consider it a rock crammed with package-holiday sunloungers, then you really should reconsider. The views from the interior are some of the most amazing I have seen anywhere. When cool trade winds rise up as they reach the island, they hit the warmer air above and a bank of cloud forms at about 1000 metres, but

never rises higher. We're above the cloud now and it's like we're perched on a warm island in the middle of a white Arctic tundra. With Gus's Nikon occasionally clicking and the cooling metal internals of the 911 gently pinking in sympathy, the sun slowly melts into the cloud, spreading orange across the horizon. Time to go and see if there's any supper left.

SATURDAY IS SPENT WITH A MACAN

GTS in the morning (see p50) and then getting photographs of the 911. It's a good day, but by the end of it I feel there is still more to be learnt, so the stars are still out as I walk towards the car early on Sunday morning. Blipping the key summons up the 911's own attempt at starlight as the bright white quad-LEDs in the headlights pierce the darkness. Dawn is still just far enough away that no wildlife is stirring yet and the distinctive metallic clank of a Porsche bootlid opening echoes loudly in the cold silence. The flat-six comes to life in a slightly huffing, breathy way, settling to a more muffled version of the off-beat idle of generations past.

We've got a good few hours to get some final impressions and do a spot of videoing (visit



**‘The grip
that the new
Carrera S can
generate is
astounding’**



PORSCHE 911 CARRERA S (991.2)

Engine Flat-six, 2981cc, twin-turbo
CO2 199g/km

Power 414bhp @ 6500rpm

Torque 369lb ft @ 1700-5000rpm

Transmission Seven-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, LSD, PTV

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

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

Brakes Ventilated discs, 350mm front, 330mm rear, ABS, EBD

Wheels 8.5 x 20in front, 11.5 x 20in rear

Tyres 245/35 ZR20 front, 305/30 ZR20 rear

Weight 1440kg

Power-to-weight 292bhp/ton

0-62mph 4.3sec (claimed)

Top speed 191mph (claimed)

Basic price £85,857

On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

youtube.com/evotv for the results), so we're heading back to the roads to the southwest of Teide. Climbing up through the cool pre-dawn air, the flat-six seems happier than ever. Curiously, at low-to-medium revs, under the relatively light initial loads that I'm subjecting it to, there is a soft featheriness to its burble that makes it sound almost like an old air-cooled 911. Strange, but quite comforting.

What I haven't mentioned yet is just how blindingly fast this new 911 is. With a full PDK/Sport Plus setup it will crack 60mph in just 3.7sec. According to the back of this magazine, that is faster than a Carrera GT. This car also laps the Nordschleife in 7min 30sec – four seconds quicker than a 997 GT2. That's a 523bhp, 501lb ft car with a nearly identical kerb weight, so it's not all about the engine either; the mechanical grip that the new Carrera S can generate is astounding.

From my initial impressions I had thought the 991.2 would slide quite easily. The gentle sensations of roll suggested that if you pushed a bit further, the tyres would gently release and begin to smear across the asphalt. What actually happens is that as you push harder, so the Pirellis bite into the road surface, finding new reserves of tenacity. Particularly at the rear, just as you think a firm application of throttle must surely unstick the hold of the 305-sections, peeling the treadblocks from the road like a baddie lifting the fingers of a hero hanging to a cliff edge, so the axle suddenly seems to squat a little more and dig the outside tyre into the tarmac. This newfound purchase then fires you out of the corner like the proverbial cork out of the bottle. Sometimes you get little slides, but

they're the sort that hardly require any opposite lock, the car almost sliding to a neutral position as quickly as a corner opens out.

We have our chosen road almost entirely to ourselves this morning and there is a long stretch of nearly a kilometre where I can see the Armco snaking up the rocky headland and nothing coming the other way. Driving a 911 or any of Porsche's sports cars is generally satisfying on a basic level because of the weighting of all the controls and the 991.2 is thankfully no different. The seven-speed manual gearbox still isn't quite as nice as the Cayman's six-speed (it's a touch lighter in action), but the whole car feels responsive and mechanically connected. The feel underfoot of the middle pedal as you brake hard into corners, the reaction without any slack of the steering around the straight-ahead, the feel through the seat of your pants as the suspension deals with but doesn't detach you from the road surface beneath: it all adds up to an involving and enjoyable driving experience.

It will be interesting to try the 991.2 in the UK and see how the steering feel stacks up when the tarmac is coated in the slippery sheen of winter. But the crucial thing is that the new forced-induction engine hasn't ruined the 911. The 3-litre flat-six seems to cleverly tread a delicate line, adding torque where it is needed but not giving a blatantly turbocharged delivery with a big kick that needs constant managing. The sound, although quieter, is better than we feared, too, and the Sports exhaust will no doubt help matters. Purist it might not be, but at the end of the day, if turbocharging the Carrera like this means we can keep the naturally aspirated GT cars, then I'll take it. ☒

Less is more?

There is far less differentiation between the standard Carrera and the S in this second generation of 991. With no wider body on the S and essentially exactly the same 3-litre flat-six in the back of both, the main variation comes down to differing boost pressures of 0.9 and 1.1bar respectively (thanks to larger compressor wheels in the turbos of the S). The end result is that the standard Carrera puts out 365bhp at 6500rpm and 332lb ft at 1700-5000rpm: 49bhp and 37lb ft less, but still good enough to propel it to 60mph in just 4.0sec with a full PDK and Sport Chrono setup or 4.4sec with the standard manual.

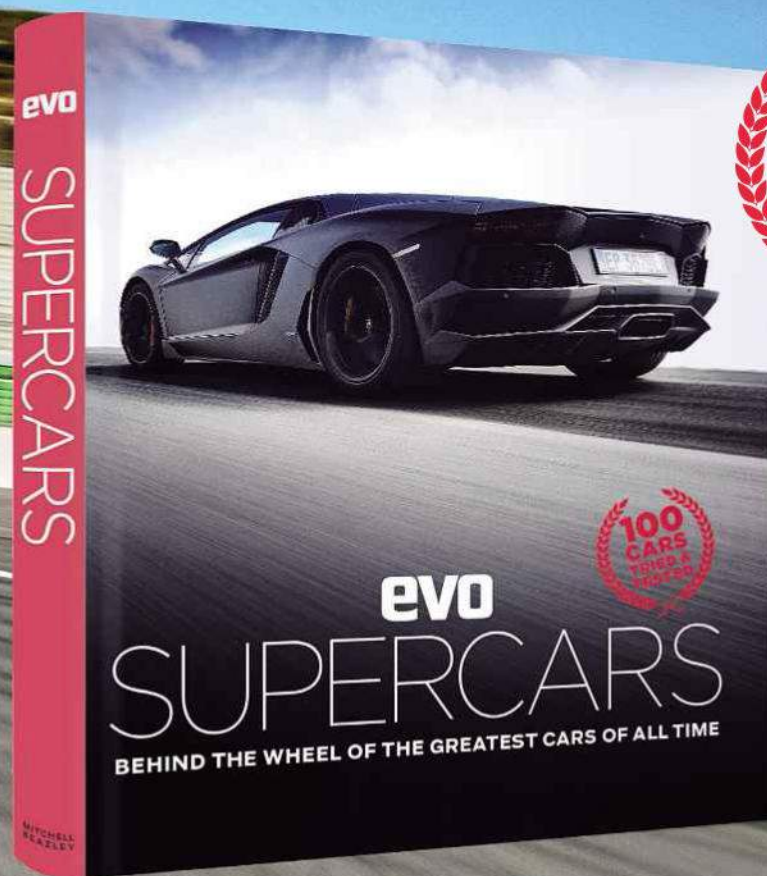
Dynamically, the Carrera now comes with PASM as standard, but it runs on smaller 19in wheels out of the box (although like the S's 20s they are 8.5in wide at the front, 11.5in at the rear). The front brake discs are also slightly smaller in diameter, measuring 330mm as opposed to 350mm on the S, while rear-wheel steering isn't available on the base model.

We managed to grab a Carrera for a brief drive on the launch and it felt very good indeed. The S certainly has a bit more punch when the turbo comes on stream around 2000rpm, but the standard car is hardly lacking, accelerating with real urgency and a similar willingness up towards the red line. The car we tried had PDK, and the shifts were every bit as fast and crisp as we've come to expect, arguably bringing the performance completely into line with the manual S. The metal paddles are also things of rather sculptural beauty.

Although the drive was only short, the non-S did leave me wondering whether the Carrera (perhaps with a Sports exhaust) wouldn't be all the 911 you actually need. It was certainly our feeling with the original 991. Given that leather trim and the new PCM (including satnav) are standard, it also looks rather good value when you consider that the asking price of £76,412 is £9445 below that of the S.

evo SUPERCARS

The Book



Available 3 September 2015

MITCHELL
BEAZLEY

by ANTONY INGRAM

The **ART** *of* **NAVIGATION**

*Road book to hand, **evo** ventures to the dunes of Dubai to discover first-hand what it takes to be a (reasonably useful) co-driver on the Dakar Rally*





I'VE ALWAYS BEEN VERY GOOD AT colouring within the lines. Not metaphorically, but literally, especially in my childhood. The glee of receiving a new box of crayons and carefully skimming away their waxy tips between the untouched lines in a colouring book, or popping the top off a felt-tipped pen and casting perfect, even swathes of colour over a freshly scribbled drawing.

As it turns out, the pursuit is similarly satisfying as an adult. I may even once have filled in a desert scene as a child, much as I'm doing now – though my seven-year-old self might have demanded apparatus less limiting than the fluorescent greens, blues and oranges of highlighter pens.

The stakes are higher now, of course. An errant marking here or inappropriate shade there would have caused much consternation as an ankle-biter, along with a hasty attempt to rectify or hide the mistake. Today, accidentally marking an obstacle as blue or a caution mark as green might land us in a ditch. Or upside-down. Or upside-down in a ditch.

Three things will hopefully minimise the chances of such a scenario. The first is my expert colouring-

in ability, something my peers at St Joseph's primary school (class of '92) would corroborate.

The second and perhaps almost as important factor is that I will later co-drive for Dakar expert – and 2014 Dakar Rally winner – Nani Roma. The Spanish ace, I suspect, knows the course already, lest he be at the mercy of a throng of journalists whose sense of direction generally extends to navigating between a luxurious bedroom and an open bar. If my 'flat over crest' call has us heading for a hidden tree, Nani will already have graciously ignored it. I hope.

Factor number three is Michel Périn, French rally navigator and Roma's regular off-road co-driver. Périn is the man tasked with making sure I select the right pens, colour within the lines (way ahead of you, Michel) and can identify my sand from my chott. Périn has had a long and varied career, starting as a racer in 1977 and hopping over to the passenger seat in 1984.

Since then, he's called the notes for drivers such as Carlos Sainz and Bruno Saby, as well as spending six years in charge of Citroën's motorsport activities.

His last Dakar victory came alongside Roma in the Mini All4 Racing car in 2014 – a typically gruelling event in which fewer than half of the 431 starters crossed the finish line in Chile.

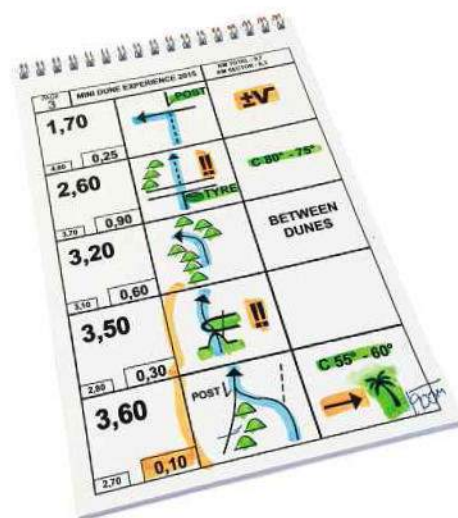
He's now explaining, with great patience and in great detail, every single one of the dozens of pictographics we're likely to encounter in a typical Dakar road book. These pictographics are necessary because, unlike traditional stage rallies or even regularity rallies where 'tulip' diagrams are used, there is no defined course on the Dakar. While it's tempting to make a beeline from stage start to stage finish, the reality is that deep ruts, foliage, rivers, lakes and villages all get in the way, so navigation becomes the art of indicating not speed or corner severity, but carving a line of least resistance through the landscape. Routes must be indicated by what you can see, by compass directions between GPS beacons and by pictographics, rather than a string of corner-by-corner notes.

It's made doubly difficult by the timescale over which route books are constructed: rally officials scout the course months beforehand, but in the wilds of South America – where the rally has been held since 2007 – it's entirely possible that a whole new river has sliced a road in two during the intervening months and floods have washed away previously prominent topographical features.

Driver and co-driver pairings thus receive the route again a few days before the rally itself takes place, amending the organiser's diagrams as necessary – sometimes adding or removing entire pages from the road book. It is this dog-eared, heavily scrawled set of notes – complete with studious highlighting to pick out dangerous sections and obstacles, and handwritten notes to expand the navigator's lexicon ready for the rally – that must then be used to brave some of the most inhospitable terrain in the entire motorsport world. It's far from perfect, but the best driver and navigator pairings are those most able to match speed with an ability to adapt.

That's if the conditions don't exert their toll first. Thick dust, searing temperatures and, in the Atacama Desert, extreme altitude make cockpit conditions a living hell. Over dinner the night before, 2015 Dakar winner Nasser Al-Attiyah described in graphic detail the folly of forgetting to take his altitude-sickness pills. The scoop of hummus I'd just gathered didn't seem so appealing all of a sudden, but the risk of hypoxia-induced cerebral edema is even more terrifying than losing your lunch mid-stage.

Cockpit temperatures can climb into the 70s – that's Celsius, not Fahrenheit – on the hottest stages. All teams equip their vehicles with rudimentary air conditioning systems,



The road book

The large numbers show the total stage distance at the end of the corresponding sequence. The smaller numbers show the sequence length. '±V' refers to the post/turning being 'more or less visible'. 'c80°-75°' indicates the ideal heading, as per a digital compass. The fourth instruction means 'Danger – bump, then keep left through sand spit'. Orange brackets indicate short distances between instructions – 100m, here.



Left: Périn instructs the rookies, including our man Ingram (above, right). **Above, top:** the co-driver's instruments, including compass and tripometers



which shaves maybe ten degrees from the ambient temperature.

This is all quite concerning. If I were to list three things I dislike most in the entire automotive world, it would include uncomfortable cockpit temperatures, passengering other drivers at speed, and attempting to read while a vehicle is in motion. While Périn's instructions are sinking in with surprising ease and my pristine road book is now meticulously highlighted, I'm not entirely sure my mollicoddled brain and hummus-fed physique will be up to the task of navigating a professional rally driver through the deserts of Dubai.

Oddly, a drive in the car calms my nerves. The heat, initially stifling, fades into the background as the adrenalin begins to flow. The Mini All4 Racing is something of a pussycat by rally car standards – tractable, easy to steer and relatively quiet. All are desirable qualities in a car designed to cover hundreds of miles of uninviting wilderness every day, and hugely appreciable qualities for someone setting foot into a £900,000 competition car for the first time.

‘Some Dakar co-drivers barely read the route book, simply calling out particularly dangerous sections’

There are some unusual sensations, all the same. The six-speed Sadev sequential gearshift requires a strong arm and changes smoothest on full throttle, though its pull-for-up, push-for-down action is natural to someone who grew up with racing videogames. Less natural is the constant thumping sensation to my head. After a few minutes of confusion, I realise it is the sides of my open-face helmet pinballing between the prominent wings of the Recaro driver's seat over rough ground.

Shotgun time. The co-driver's pew is as comfortable as that of the driver and still offers a relatively useful line of sight. Unlike stage rallying, where co-drivers rely heavily on their accurately noted calls, an off-road navigator spends a great deal of time observing what's ahead, ensuring the route is accurately described by the notes. As Périn tells me, some Dakar co-drivers barely read the route book, simply calling out particularly dangerous sections before the driver approaches them. Périn adds, with a grin, that he is not one of those co-drivers. 'I make detailed notes and expect drivers to follow my directions,' he explains.



In front, an array of electronic readouts are haphazardly mounted to a roughly cut rectangle of carbonfibre. There are two seemingly identical tripmeters, each modified with a custom-made sunshield. Between them is a more sophisticated tripmeter that not only records distance but heading, pointing towards the GPS waypoints that crews must navigate between.

On the floor, my right foot is covering a small, innocuous black switch that resets one element of the trip each time we reach the interim distance designated on each instruction in the road book. From above, a long, flexible hose blows air at my face. With an intercom helmet, sunglasses and balaclava on, it adequately cools my nose and cheeks a few degrees below ambient temperature.

For the first one, maybe two kilometres, all is well. My expertly coloured road book seems to be describing the road ahead. I confidently inform Roma of a turning just after a post, then a crest, then to aim to the left of a tree. I prod the trip reset button, ready to call the distance to the next instruction.

Unfortunately, my next instruction is completely wrong. Fortunately, Roma knows this, and as he's 'asking' me which direction we should actually be going, he's already taken the correct path and negotiated another corner. I'm now a few notes behind and the rough terrain is curtailing my attempts to keep up.

By the time I've deciphered one squiggle, another is already upon us, and the constant punishment is making a mockery of my attempts

'For three kilometres I make half-hearted attempts to describe non-existent sand dunes'

to call 'double caution' at the required intervals. I involuntarily shout a four-letter Anglo-Saxon word down the intercom as we hit a bump, just in time for us to swing unexpectedly sideways around a dune. I remember the dune from my own drive, but the velocity and angle of attack is foreign to me. A vast plume of sand obscures my view through the passenger window.

It's then I remember I've not reset the trip in a while, so for the next three kilometres I make half-hearted attempts to describe non-existent trees and sand dunes that all look the same from my vibrating perch, while stabbing at the reset button like someone trying to stop an errant penny from rolling away. The stage is only ten kilometres long, but after five I'm reduced to a passenger, mere dead weight in a car that already breaks the scales at 1952kg.

Roma doesn't seem to mind – he does after all know the course, and I'm enjoying the ride much more without the pressure of navigating. At the same time, it's sobering to think of the consequences of similar inaction during an actual rally. Missing one note could end your chances of success, breaking a wheel on a hidden rock or approaching a dune from the wrong angle and tipping the car onto its roof. Miss several notes and you could become stranded dozens of miles from civilisation, with rescue crews hours and even days away as they try to retrace your steps.

Périn's position in the team is probably safe. And at least I've got a beautifully coloured-in road book to show for it. 📖







V I V E

by JETHRO BOVINGDON
PHOTOGRAPHY *by* DEAN SMITH

L E

*An F12 Berlinetta with more power,
less weight, sharper responses and a
whole heap of extra attitude... that's the
F12 Tour de France. What's not to like?*

T O U R



WE'VE BEEN LOOKING for 17 years now for the car that perfectly encapsulates the Thrill of Driving. If anything, the search has shown that the feedback, excitement, balance and sheer joy that we crave can be found in all sorts of places, from hot hatches to supercars via lightweight track cars, focused coupes and bruising saloons. From cars with no power assistance or driver aids to those that put technology at their very core and yet still value and encourage the fleshy bag of skin, bones and human error at the wheel.

The search has been fun, uplifting, hilarious at times and very definitely better than finding 'a real job', as I'm often reminded by friends and family (and by *evo*'s publisher, come contract renegotiation time). But on the flight out to Bologna, then whilst queuing for the Insignia hire car (see, it's not all glamour) and on the

drive towards Maranello with photographer Dean Smith, I fear that the search might end with the F12tdf and the unthinkable may be inevitable. *A real job.* I hate this car already.

Despite myself, there's grudging excitement bubbling away on the plane and on the drive to Maranello. Damn you Ferrari and your naturally aspirated V12s! The next day, as the gate to the Fiorano test track slides agonisingly slowly open, I feel almost giddy at what lies ahead. 'It can't be *that* good,' I tell myself, but it's no use. 6.3 litres, 769bhp, 8900rpm... an F12 lightened, refocused on absolute response and agility... It's going to be epic, isn't it? Oh well, better to forget about tomorrow and enjoy today. November in the Modena region is usually shuddering under fog and drizzle, but this is the F12tdf launch, so of course it's sunshine, wispy clouds and a warm breeze.

There are some things that aren't perfect

about the F12tdf, that much I know already. Firstly, it costs £339,000, which is around £100,000 more than a standard F12. Secondly, all 799 have already been sold. So it's not exactly accessible. However, delve into its technical make-up and the price becomes easier to swallow and the demand very simple to understand. Everything, and I mean *everything*, has been re-engineered to increase performance and reduce response times.

The engine has all-new intake and exhaust systems, mechanical tappets coated with DLC (diamond-like carbon), and new cam profiles to take the rev limit to 8900rpm and lift peak power by 39bhp to 769bhp at 8500rpm (250rpm higher). The seven-speed twin-clutch 'box has six per cent shorter ratios and snicks between them 30 per cent faster on upshifts and 40 per cent faster on downshifts. (What's 30 per cent of imperceptible?) The magnetic



dampers have been retuned and the new springs are around 20 per cent stiffer. Ferrari has saved 110kg by using carbonfibre for the front and rear bumpers, the extended side-sills, the entire underbody and diffuser and extensively for the interior. Downforce has increased by 87 per cent to 230kg at 124mph and the 'Extreme Design' braking system borrowed from the LaFerrari improves braking performance while reducing weight. The figures say that the F12tdf will reach 62mph in 2.9sec, 124mph in a scarcely believable 7.9sec and a top speed of 'over 211mph'.

Of course, this stuff, impressive though it is, is arguably no more than you'd expect from a special series F12. What's really fascinating is the adoption of four-wheel steering for the first time on a Ferrari. Of course Ferrari doesn't call it anything so mundane. Oh no, the F12tdf benefits from 'Virtual Short Wheelbase'. It's been introduced not so much to aid agility, but rather to bring stability by mitigating the newfound turn-in response created by increased mechanical grip – a corollary of the front tyres growing from a 255-section to a 275-section. It does so by turning the rear wheels by up to one degree in the same direction as the fronts, with electromechanical actuators acting on the toe links to create the steering force. The tyres are P Zero Corsas, the first time we've seen the new generation from Pirelli. So in effect the F12tdf is inherently unstable due to its turn-in capabilities but the potentially vicious oversteer is tamed by the four-wheel steering system. At least that's the theory.

I'm two corners from the end of my third and final lap of Fiorano. It's a wickedly fast

Left: tdf is monstrously fast, but also far stiffer-riding than the regular F12. **Below left:** there are tweaks to the aero everywhere; this flick apparently helps promote downforce

**‘THE
FIGURES
SAY THAT
THE F12TDF
WILL REACH
62MPH IN
2.9SEC AND
124MPH IN
A SCARCELY
BELIEVABLE
7.9SEC’**





Left: changes to V12 include variable geometry intake system and race-style mechanical tappets.
Below: rear wing vents help aero, look gorgeous



fourth-gear left-hander that always gives me the heebie-jeebies, and the F12tdf is oversteering. Not a lovely, big, easily-held angle nor a deliciously accurate sliver of slip to pin the front wheels to the kerb, but little jagged spikes of terror, one followed by another, followed by another. The exit kerb hangs out wide to the right initially but then guides you firmly left again towards the following straight. The red and white line feels suffocating when you've got an F12tdf grip-slip-grip-slipping beneath you.

And the edge is lined with cones. They're not big (thankfully) but they're getting bigger and bigger and... I grimace and wait for the *thunk-thunk-thunk* and the rainbow of orange plastic arcing into the sky, but amazingly I *j-u-s-t* miss them. I'm elated but it's the first time since we arrived at Fiorano. The F12tdf is not a car that you just jump into and feel immediately comfortable with. In fact it's a tricky, sometimes unnerving car to drive quickly. The bright yellow paintwork of our track car remains unblemished when I head to the pits but I'm perplexed. Have I forgotten how to drive or has Ferrari somehow undone the F12's transparent balance with its intense focus on absolute agility, grip and performance?

With so little time to acclimatise, it's tricky to unpick exactly what's going on but I do know I'm making every corner feel like negotiating a giant 50-pence piece. The tdf has amazing turn-in but the rear of the car seems to instantly want to break loose. You feel it happening and it's coming quick so you throw in a correction. As it turns out, an over-correction. The rear-steer has already acted to increase stability and reduce the yaw and hence your steering input is unnecessary. I can break that down now with some time to digest what's going on, but when it's happening live, that ferocious V12 shrieking at you and what feels like a big snap of oversteer right on your shoulder, it's very difficult for your

**‘THE ENGINE
IS JUST SO
POWERFUL,
SO SHARP,
SO UTTERLY
MAGNIFICENT
IN EVERY
WAY’**

brain and backside to compute.

After a 30-minute photography session following those initial clumsy forays, we're allowed to sneak in one more fast lap. I twist the manettino to CST Off but keep ESC lurking in the background. Instead of trying to drive as fast as I dare, I commit to driving as smoothly as I can: tiny steering inputs, gradual throttle inputs to take account of the unbelievably aggressive response, just everything as honey-coated as I can manage.

The F12tdf isn't transformed but it does start to make sense. It carries phenomenal speed into an apex, then there's the unnatural feeling of yaw building fast and then stabilising – try not to dial-in an instinctive correction before it does so – and only then can you drive out of the corner hard and let the rear tyres start to slip under power. By now you know exactly where the car is and what it's doing, so the lovely flicks of oversteer feel absolutely intuitive. Phew. I



can still drive a car! I'm absolutely in love with the drivetrain, too. Such sweet violence.

The time at Fiorano is all a bit of a blur, to be honest. Ferrari admits that the F12tdf takes time to really understand and demands incredibly delicate inputs to reveal its true potential, but didn't deem it necessary to allow us much time to make that discovery... Doesn't make much sense to me, but I guess I would say that.

On the road it's a similar story. We're sharing a car with another magazine, who will drive and shoot first, then we'll swap at 4pm for Dean to grab some images and so I can see how the tdf feels on the road. Sunset is at 4.45pm so it's almost impossibly tight. At least I get the drive back to the factory, too.

The designated road is narrow, unbelievably twisty and has a horrendous surface. It should ably demonstrate the virtues of Virtual Short

Wheelbase but it's also a big test for the chassis' composure. It's certainly not a place to test the absolute limits but that's no bad thing. If the tdf feels as artificial and spiky here at representative road speeds as it did initially on the track, then Ferrari might have actually got its sums wrong for once.

The first few miles are all about the engine. Enhanced with lightweight (but also noisier) mechanical tappets, continuously variable-length inlet ducts and the new intake and exhaust systems, it's just so powerful, so sharp, so utterly magnificent in every way. Throttle response is perhaps a shade too sharp if you select Race on the manettino – which you really need to in order to slacken off the traction control so it's not impeding progress – but the delivery is so savage and so precise that it's almost impossible not to let out involuntary





FERRARI F12TDF

Engine V12, 6262cc
CO2 360g/km
Power 769bhp @ 8500rpm
Torque 520lb ft @ 6250rpm
Transmission Seven-speed DCT, rear-wheel drive, E-diff 3, F1 Trac, ESC
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar, rear-wheel steer
Brakes Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 10 x 20in front, 11.5 x 20in rear
Tyres 275/35 ZR20 front, 315/35 ZR20 rear
Weight 1520kg
Power-to-weight 514bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 211mph+ (claimed)
Basic price £339,000 (sold out)

evo rating: ★★★★★

sighs of approval: 'Oh wow', 'my God', 'ho-lee shiiiiii...' This, along with the shattering howl of V12, is the soundtrack to any time spent in the F12tdf. The 'box is stunning, too, firing in upshifts with sickening speed and teasing the rear axle to the very point of locking-up on downshifts. The drivetrain is deeply fabulous and makes any turbocharged engine you care to mention feel cheap and lazy.

What of the chassis? Well, it's aggressive in the extreme. The ride is pretty tough by modern Ferrari standards and the fluidity retained even by the hardcore Speciale is replaced by a more combative way of conquering a road. It rattles over broken tarmac and bounces over big bumps. However, that physicality is understandable when you feel the control of this 1520kg car as it flashes from one direction to the next. Now we're some way shy of the P Zero Corsa's limits and that unnerving sensation of the rear of the car wanting to overtake the front is gone, replaced with quite startling agility and unflappable body control. The steering is heavier than the standard F12's thanks to those wider tyres and more aggressive camber settings, and although it's still very, very fast, you soon start to pick up messages through the wheel and feel encouraged to really lean on that amazing front-end grip.

Traction is much improved over the regular F12 and the tyres seem better able to tolerate a bit of slip without overheating. In the standard car it's all too easy to overwhelm the tyres, get them too hot and then all traction

is lost until they cool right back down again. The Corsas can still be torn-up by all that torque but, even in CST Off mode when you allow the wheels to spin up and use a bit of tail-slip, you'll still find strong traction on the following corner-exit. In fact you can really throw the F12tdf along this hellish piece of road, using that astonishing turn-in, driving deep into the excellent electronic driver aids that let you balance the car on the throttle, and it stays with you all the way. Faster, more controlled, with much greater traction, while resisting the F12's usual habit of simply melting its rear tyres into a smokescreen, the F12tdf is a mightily impressive car.

Sunset is upon us all too quickly and the drive back to the factory is a race to meet Ferrari's 6pm curfew. Traffic is heavy on the major roads and although the F12tdf is a killer overtaking machine we elect to head cross-country. It skims across the ground at alarming speed, a ball of near-deafening V12 noise and relentless energy. Life, you reason, doesn't get much better.

It's not perfect, though. The F12tdf doesn't flow with the same amazing suppleness nor the on-limit composure of, say, a 458 Speciale. It doesn't scream feedback with its every fibre like a 997 GT3 RS 4.0 and, despite the complex challenge it offers, the rewards for getting it right aren't as rich as those offered by Zonda, Carrera GT or F50. Time with the F12tdf was short, the road compromised, but it never quite blew my mind as I'd expected. In other words, the real job can wait. ☒

**'IT SKIMS
ACROSS THE
GROUND AT
ALARMING
SPEED, A
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NEAR-
DEAFENING
V12 NOISE
AND
RELENTLESS
ENERGY'**

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by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH, ASTON PARROTT & MAX EAREY

NO RETREAT,





NO SURRENDER

Built to compete in one of the most exciting race series ever, this Ferrari F40LM was left to quietly rot. Its restoration was fraught with pitfalls, but now, after three years of work, a legend has been brought back to glorious life

T

HERE ARE FERRARI F40s and there's the F40LM. Built to do battle in the GT classes at Le Mans and the BPR Global GT Series (forerunner to today's Blancpain Endurance Series), the F40LM took Ferrari's wildest supercar and turned it up to 11.

Nostalgia plays its part, of course, but these were surely the glory days of modern road-based GT racing. How could you think otherwise when BPR grids pitted F40LMs against Porsche 993 GT2s, McLaren F1 GTRs and Callaway Corvettes, not to mention a weird and wonderful array of rare groove machinery, including quick and quirky cars such as the Lister Storm, Marcos LM600 and Lotus Esprit Turbo.

All F40LMs started as road cars, but the first 19 were pulled from the production line and taken to Ferrari's trusted race-car developer, Michelotto. Ferrari being Ferrari, more cars (another 27 to be precise) would be sold to go racing, but these weren't built by Michelotto, instead going to privateer teams who in some instances used kits of Michelotto-supplied parts.

The car you see here (you can stop drooling, by the way) is chassis no. 84326. It wasn't one of the 19 'factory' cars, but it was one of that later 27, bought by a privateer race team and built to LM/GTE specification with some Michelotto parts. Of those 27 privateer-built cars, no. 84326 was one of 19 that went on to enjoy international racing careers, when it was acquired and further developed by German team Hamann Motorsport for the 1996 season. As ever with small outfits,

Above right: chassis no. 84326 in its '90s racing heyday. **Below:** chasing a Marcos LM600, Porsche 993 GT2 and an F40 GTE at the Nürburgring



funding was tight, but Hamann engaged the services of a certain Peter Sauber, who developed the motor to use twin KKK turbos and twin wastegates – a unique spec that boosted power to 720bhp in race trim and top speed to a claimed 230mph. A lap record at Hockenheim backed up the boasts, but reliability proved as patchy as the funding. Two outings in the 1996 BPR series yielded a DNF at the Nürburgring and a 26th-place finish at Spa.

No. 84326 continued to race until the end of the 1998 season, in the Kumho Ferrari-Porsche Challenge, after which it was retired and converted back to road-legal specification, albeit with most of the racing modifications still in place. And that's how it remained – tired, unloved and for a period stored in a barn – until a true enthusiast and lover of Ferrari heard about the car in 2012. Having done his research he arranged a viewing and then took the plunge, but not before convincing himself the car would only need a bit of a refresh and tidy-up. A full three years later the car has just been finished.

This tells you all you need to know about the reality of what he had purchased, but to fully appreciate the passion for Ferrari and the blood, sweat and tears it's taken to return no. 84326 to as-new condition, you need to hear it from the man himself. 'My love affair with Ferrari started in 1967, when as a kid I was given a lift in a 330 GTC,' he explains. 'We'd driven down on our family holiday in a Hillman Minx, so riding in the Ferrari was like something out of *Star Trek*. From that moment I was hooked.

'My bond with the F40 dates back to the year of its launch. I wasn't fortunate enough to have secured an allocation, so I decided to write to Enzo and ask him if he might be able to help. This was only shortly before he died, but amazingly he bothered to pick up his pen and reply to say I could have a car. I've still got the letter today, complete with his signature in fading purple ink.

'I sold that car in the mid-'90s, but almost from the moment I did so it was always in the back of



*‘A unique spec boosted
power to 720bhp and top
speed to 230mph’*



my mind to get another. They get you like that. Purely by happenstance – rather expensive happenstance, as it turns out – I came across no. 84326 being sold in the north of England. After some research I found that it wasn't an original Michelotto car but one of the subsequent privateer cars. And it had competition history – international competition history. Having owned and loved my F40 road car I thought a proper race car could be an interesting progression, so I arranged a viewing.'

What he found was a rather sorry-looking car that had been languishing in a barn: 'There was mould on the seats and a pungent smell of petrol. The vendors wouldn't let me drive it – in retrospect I'm very grateful as it would have caught fire! – but they did start it for me. It sounded okay, so while it was obvious the car was somewhat past its best, it didn't seem unreasonable to think we could refresh the brakes and suspension, give the engine a service, fit new fuel tanks, give it a general clean-up and go do a few trackdays.'

A deal was duly struck and the proud new owner arranged for the car to be transported to F40 restoration experts Mototechnique in Surrey, where proprietor Kevin O'Rourke (an old friend who had restored a Daytona Spyder for him some 30 years previous) unloaded the car and spares to determine just what he had to work with. His answer was 'not a lot'.

'So far as Kevin was concerned I'd bought a rather fetching red plastic box containing parts, history and a chassis number,' explains the LM's owner. 'The bad news simply didn't stop coming. It was like unpeeling an onion, and a rotten one at that! When the first layer came off we wondered what we were going

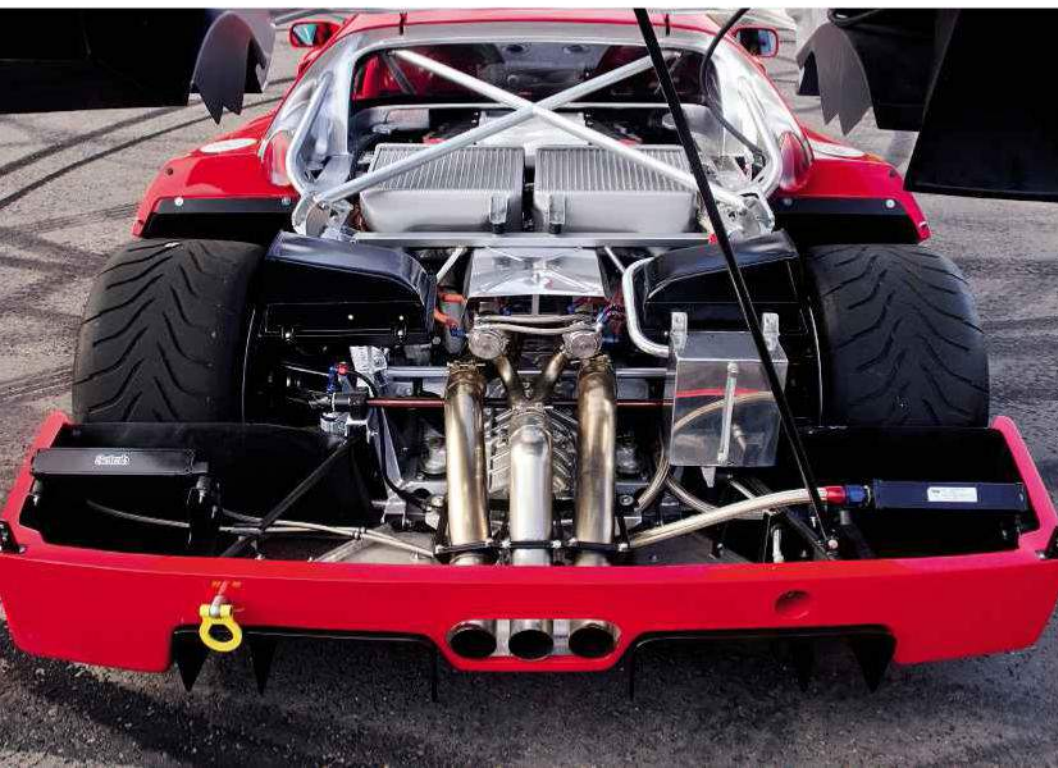
Right: no. 84326 shot for *evo* at Anglesey Circuit and (previous page) Longcross Proving Ground; its post-restoration shakedown was at Donington Park

to do about the suspension. The answer was all-new suspension. It was the same with the brakes. Then we took the fuel tanks out. They were in terrible shape. Then we found evidence of an electrical fire from an arcing cable located beneath one of the fuel tanks...'

At this point a few of us would have been tempted to rekindle that fire, but our hero was made of sterner stuff. The autopsy continued.

'When we got to the engine we found endless leaks and other issues. The more it came apart the more it was clear this was a race car that had lived a tough life, with race teams that never really had the money to properly look after it. Consequently it had not had the constant care it should have had, and this showed in everything we inspected. Where work had been done it was to change or evolve things, so the front and rear bodywork had been altered considerably. By this point we knew we had a big job on our hands, so the big question was whether we restored the car to original or restored and evolved it with 21st century knowledge.'

'We knew it wasn't a truly significant car race-wise. It hadn't finished first at Le Mans or second at Daytona or anything like that, but it did have some rather unusual modifications and it was a very quick example in period. It didn't have reliability on its side because it had been pushed to the max by underfunded teams. We decided to remain true to the car and



'The only way they could hope to get the job done was to secure the support of Michelotto'



follow the restore-and-evolve route. Somehow it seemed to deserve another chance.' Opting for the evolution route also meant that the car could remain road-legal...

By this stage it was clear no. 84326 would need to be taken back to its bare chassis. No mean undertaking considering the F40LM was extensively modified over the road car and fitted with bespoke components. The only way they could hope to get the job done was to secure the support of Michelotto, so the owner sought out the man himself: Cristiano Michelotto.

'Attempting to contact Signor Michelotto was the start of a long and mysterious process. Bizarrely, I would only ever seem to get hold of him at his office between the hours of midnight and 2am. The good news was he remembered no. 84326 and wondered what had happened to it. Best of all he then agreed to collaborate with us and provide the correct parts. That started with four new corners – suspension, brakes, the

lot. As you can imagine, it took months to finally secure the parts, then more months as the parts were hand-fabricated from the original blueprints. Nothing was off the shelf. The whole process took a good six months, but when the parts finally arrived they were sensational. The quality of the fabrication was glorious, all these wonderfully welded and machined pieces of Avional, magnesium, and titanium.'

Another part of the onion-peeling process was learning just how extensive the differences were between F40 and F40LM. Fundamentally they look pretty similar, but as the owner and O'Rourke discovered, when you get under the skin you find a huge array of detail changes and endless tiny differences. He may have been hard to track down, but without Michelotto's knowledge and co-operation the project would have been nigh on impossible.

With the car completely stripped, O'Rourke finally had some good news: the chassis was

the straightest they'd ever had on the jig, which is saying something given the number of F40s Mototechnique has rebuilt. Buoyed by the first chink of light at the end of a long, dark tunnel, the engine was given a precautionary bore scope. What they found gave enough cause for concern to remove the cylinder heads, which led to more concern and further investigation. When they looked at the big-end bearings, scoring was found on the bearings and the crankshaft itself. The engine would need nothing less than a full rebuild. The chink of light had been brutally snuffed out, yet still no. 84326's owner refused to despair.

'I consoled myself with the knowledge that we were down to the bare bones. If it was going to be done, it was going to be done properly. No corners cut, no compromises made. I suppose you could say I now had the excuse to go back to the beginning, and when I go back to the beginning I have to make things perfect.



'The actual restoration was a relatively easy process because we had all the parts. Okay, so most of them were broken or worn out, and the new ones cost a ferocious amount of money, but we weren't trying to track down missing pieces. Well, apart from discontinued oil filters, Scuderia shields for the front clam – finally sourced from Australia – and a reverse gear, which had to be manufactured at huge expense by Crosthwaite & Gardiner. The major thing was the amount of hours it was clearly going to take to complete the build. Things like fuel tanks and suspension were mounted and dismounted countless times to perfect the fit, both pre- and post-paint. I'm not complaining – it's the only way Kevin and his team work, and that's why I put the car in their hands – but the right way to do things is the long way to do things. I think we stopped counting at 6000 man-hours...'

As you'd expect of a race car, the bodywork had been through the wars. Where it had been repaired or modified, it was done so in

glassfibre, not carbon-Kevlar. The front clam was particularly bad and was much heavier than it should have been, so Mototechnique remade it in carbon-Kevlar. The other panels were better, but still needed years of paint removing. That you can now see the carbon weave grinning through the fresh paint, as on factory-fresh cars, is testament to Mototechnique's skill.

With the engine down to nothing, Crosthwaite & Gardiner were enlisted to go through it from top to bottom. It was another painstaking process, but the consolation was that once the components were back at Mototechnique the engine could be reassembled with 100 per cent confidence in its soundness. It was decided to run the engine with a Motec management system, calling on the knowledge of Simpsons Motorsport and Nathan Sanders at Race Data Systems to dial in the electronics and arrive at the three switchable power modes for maximum reliability and drivability.

And so, after three years of extraordinary

dedication, heartache, expertise and expense, no. 84326 is ready to run in anger once more. Not only is **evo** here to capture the moment, but thanks to the owner's remarkable faith and generosity, we're actually here to drive it. Before he does. If ever there was a time to use the word 'privileged', it's now.

THERE'S A WORSHIPFUL SILENCE

when the unmistakable slice of scarlet rolls out of its transporter. Even those who have done little else but slave over it for the last 36 months stare as though seeing it for the first time. But when a car looks this good, is it any wonder? Noticeably wider at the front than a regular F40, the LM's stance is jaw-dropping. Those beautifully simple magnesium starfish wheels fill the wheelarches to perfection, making it seem as though the aero kit is pushing the chassis into the ground even at a standstill. The wide-eyed headlights, smattering of NACA ducts and larger vents accentuate the



Far left: interior not hugely dissimilar to the road car's.
Left: traditional open-gate gearshift makes for proper driver involvement



*'After three
 years of
 extraordinary
 dedication,
 this F40LM is
 ready to run
 in anger
 once more'*

cartoonish appearance. From every angle it looks sensational.

Everything about no. 84326 is pristine. It's been driven, but only gently and not for long. The slick tyres are unscrubbed, the huge discs yet to feel the savage bite of those brick-sized calipers, the turbos still waiting to boost the V8 to its full 720bhp fury. Even as I pull down the harness – tight, then tighter still – I still can't believe the owner is yet to drive this car in anger. Reaching for the starter, the weight of responsibility adds to the pressure of the shoulder straps. My heart thuds.

The funny thing about this car is the ease and simplicity with which you can get in and drive. There's no fuss, no laptop, no befuddling array of switches or start-up protocols. Instead you *click-click* on a few toggles and push the starter. The engine fires readily, settling into a busy, boosty idle overlaid with a distant whirr of gently simmering turbos that chatter like a pair of steampunk crickets hidden deep within

the engine bay. It almost sounds lazy, such is the mellow tone, but a prod of the throttle bares the V8's teeth, a gnashing punch of sound smacking from the exhaust and wastegate with a bark and crackle. My mouth goes dry.

Rolling out onto a track in an F40LM is as close to being royalty as you can get. No matter what else is out on circuit at the same time, this car bestows an inherent superiority. It has a regal swagger that garners respect and reverential gazes in equal measures. Professional race teams can be a choppy bunch, but as I head down the pitlane at Donington then come by the pit wall to complete an installation lap, the assorted GT and BTCC teams who are also here testing forget themselves, poking their heads through the catch fencing to get a better look.

The LM's gearing is superbike tall, each ratio offering an increasingly indulgent stride even when just stroking along while everything comes up to temperature. This is one car you want to take your time with, not least because

there's so much drama and occasion to enjoy simply being sat in the thing. I'm fortunate to have driven a number of road F40s. Each one has made me realise that some are much better than others. When they're good they're very, very good, but when they're bad they really are horrid. Early impressions suggest this car will put the very best of those firmly in the shade.

Apart from the Motec display and race-car switches, the cockpit of the LM is very similar to that of the road car. There are swathes of that grey-blue felt-like material on the dashboard, and your head feels perilously close to the windscreen header rail. Three drilled alloy pedals sit proudly in the footwell, a spindly chrome lever sprouts from the classic open gate, topped with a plain white plastic ball where a road F40's would be black with the H-pattern in white. Ancillary controls are few and far between, but the one switch I'm itching to play with is the three-stage engine map controller that steps from 550bhp to 650 and then, finally, to the full 720bhp. Apparently it was tempting – and entirely feasible – to run considerably more power, until Michelotto warned running anything beyond 750bhp means a mandatory crankshaft replacement every 5000km. Keeping power at 720bhp gives the owner the reliability and historical symmetry he desired.

To be honest, Stage 1 feels pretty darned lively, a big swell of early shove growing in intensity as all that torque and horsepower get on top of each gear. Hardly surprising when you consider this base level is around 80bhp more than an F40 road car. With some heat in the tyres, the brake pads bedded-in nicely and a quick once-over in the pits to check there are no silly leaks, I'm given the OK to head back out and try Stage 2.

I'm sure if you could see my face at the moment I first begin to squeeze the throttle pedal, I'd have my tongue poked out and a look of focused apprehension, but as the revs rise and the turbos fill the V8's lungs, the feared explosion of boost actually comes as a rapid, ever-increasing squeeze, like a bear hug of longitudinal G-force. The acceleration is much more intense – *much* more intense – but unlike the road F40's nothing-nothing-EVERYTHING! delivery, this car has thoroughly modern manners.

Yes, part of me wishes it had the Tasmanian devil-spec character it surely possessed in period, but we shouldn't forget it was the owner's wish to continue no. 84326's evolution and allow it to benefit from some contemporary thinking without erasing the essence of what this car is. It might not bite your hands off when it hits boost, but this is a sub-1100kg car being thrown towards the corners by an unholy amount of power. The laws of physics never lie.

Of course, the motor dominates your first impressions – and to be honest you wouldn't want it any other way – but once you get beyond the fantastical reality of being let loose in an

The RESTORATION



Left: with scored cylinder walls and big-end bearings, the engine needed a full rebuild.

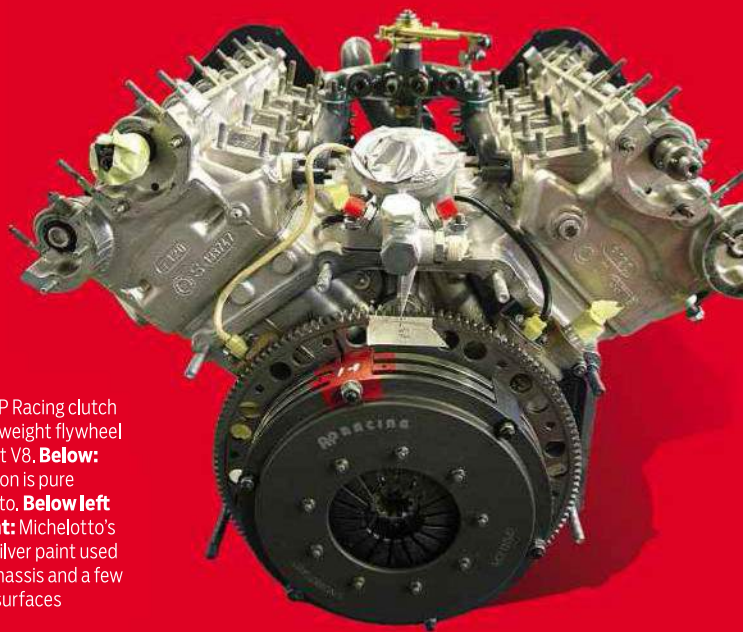
Below left: wiring was described as 'a deathtrap in waiting' and showed signs of an earlier fire.

Below: carbon-Kevlar wheelarch linings were remade from scratch



Above: modern Motec display replaces the road car's analogue dials in the binnacle. **Right:** five-speed 'box was rebuilt; the cogs for first and second gears were replaced to avoid potential problems from the stresses of racing





Right: AP Racing clutch and lightweight flywheel for rebuilt V8. **Below:** suspension is pure Michelotto. **Below left and right:** Michelotto's 'secret' silver paint used for the chassis and a few internal surfaces



*'It feels like
riding a
firework, right
down to the
flames that
belch from the
exhausts in
braking zones'*

FERRARI F40LM

Engine V8, 2936cc, twin-turbo

Power 720bhp @ 7500rpm

Torque 520lb ft @ 7000rpm

Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

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

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

Brakes Ventilated discs, 355mm front and rear

Wheels 11.25 x 18in front, 13 x 18in rear

Tyres (slicks) 305/645-18 front, 335/645-18 rear

Tyres (road) 305/30 ZR18 front, 335/30 ZR18 rear

Weight 1050kg

Power-to-weight 697bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.1sec (est)

Top speed 230mph (est)

Basic price >£1million

evo rating: ★★★★★

F40LM you begin to appreciate the rest of the car. The chassis is perfectly balanced, all that power kept in check by wider front rubber, and the unassisted steering has just enough physicality and a sharp yet measured rate of response. The shift quality of the rebuilt gearbox puts even those of the sweetest examples of the road car to shame. The way that slender stick slots through the gate is a joy. Perfectly weighted with just enough resistance to know you're moving reciprocating cogs but never a hint of a snag or tight spot, each shift slots home with absolute precision.

Downshifts come with their own rewards, too, never better than when you're approaching the end of a straight and you charge into the embrace of the colossal brakes. Roll your ankle across from brake to throttle so as to punctuate each gearshift with a helping snap of revs, then begin to chase the throttle as the corner opens out, feeling for traction as tyres and turbo boost engage in an arm-wrestle. This is the lost art of race-car driving; feet dancing on the pedals, hands working independently between steering wheel and gearlever. Potent machine played like a musical instrument. You might hit a bum note or two along the way, but that's what makes it so sweet when gears, revs and hand-eye co-ordination mesh to perfection.

Do I try Stage 3? What do you think? As you'd expect, 720bhp means there's even more performance to call upon. In fact it feels like riding a firework, right down to the flames that belch from the exhausts in every braking zone, filling the cockpit with an orange glow in broad daylight. The time between upshifts is shorter, the rush of acceleration even more vivid. I'd love to offer more incisive feedback, but by now I'm drunk on adrenalin and falling increasingly under the seductive spell of this siren-like supercar. It takes every scrap of self-control I can muster to fight the urge to brake that bit later and light the touchpaper that bit earlier in the corners. Better to exhale, back off to give the LM a lap or two to cool down and me a chance to reflect on what I've just experienced.

Cars like no. 84326 are rare indeed; enthusiasts like its owner rarer still. Together they encapsulate the thing we call 'evoness' to perfection. It would have been easy – forgivable, even – for him to have cut his losses and run from the heartache and expense of bringing this thoroughbred back to life, but he dug deep and did what he knew he had to do. 'It was never the intention for it to be such a monumental project,' he says, 'but when you start a project like this and you get to the point we did – that's to say, conceding pretty much everything needs doing – there's only one route you can take. The cost of doing it has been horrendous, but what's the alternative? I'd like to think the end result speaks for itself.' It certainly does. Cars come no more intoxicating than this. **x**

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// MAZDA 6 TOURER // MAZDA MX-5 // CATERHAM SEVEN 420R // VAUXHALL CORSA VXR //
RENAULTSPORT MÉGANE 275 TROPHY // FORD FOCUS ST DIESEL // PORSCHE 996 GT2

END OF TERM

Audi S1

Hard to fault and easy to love, **evo's** all-weather hot hatch leaves us impressed

TAKING DELIVERY OF A new long-term test car that's recently slugged it out at eCoty gives you a very warm glow. It means your new wheels are some of the most desirable and exciting on sale.

The S1 arrived way back in December 2014 and last year's biggest test was still fresh in the memory. It was an awesome few days dominated by a very special(e) yellow Ferrari and a 2-litre turbocharged four-wheel-drive hatchback of exquisite dynamic polish and eye-watering cross-country pace. Yep, the Golf R really did blow our minds...

So the S1 was overshadowed. I really enjoyed it on those Scottish Borders roads and we were all excited about a small Audi hot hatch

that offered adjustability and thrills as well as the usual stability and quality, but the Golf R went further still, summoning an almost mini-GT-R impregnability. It was certainly the hot hatch of the moment at eCoty 2014.

Even so, I was pretty excited about the S1. I'd had one magic drive on that test in the little Audi and the thought of running one for a significant period of time was seriously enticing. I'm extremely lucky in this job to drive all sorts of wonderful cars, but for everyday use in the UK it's tough to beat a small hatchback with an unfeasibly powerful engine stuffed under its bonnet. They just fit our roads and they certainly fit in with my life.

I expected the honeymoon period to go pretty well just because the

S1 has all that feel-good Audi stuff nailed – the quality, the ease of use and the quietly aggressive aura of toughness. Sure enough, those early days were pretty idyllic. The bigger question was whether the S1 had the character to sustain its appeal when it was filthy dirty and carrying me on another monotonous run to an airport or just plugging the motorways at 50mph in the endless roadworks that have taken root.

Gladly, I can report that the S1 just got better and better. In fact, I was shocked by just how much I enjoyed being in it day after day, whether on motorways, blasting across to the **evo** office or just nipping to the shops. The reason? That word, 'character'. I know it's a bit of a vague term but in the case of the S1 it fits perfectly. The beauty of





Below and right: electronic issues arrived at the most inconvenient time of the year. **Left:** quality of the cabin is textbook modern-era Audi and helps justify the S1's price



this car isn't how cool it looks (very), nor the gorgeous interior, but that it feels special. Special because it's incredibly compact and yet thumps along with the power of a much bigger hot hatch. It feels sub-Fiesta ST in size and yet hits as hard as something like a Golf R. That tiny car/big engine sensation is almost gone from the market now, as cars such as the Clio have got bigger, so the S1 offers a unique flavour.

What's great is that Audi seems to have embraced the S1's wilder side and instead of polishing the delivery until it's bland or completely within itself, they've tuned the car to be hyper-agile to make the most of its short wheelbase and big hit of torque. Don't get me wrong, the S1 isn't some sort of crazed hot hatch in the mould of an old Clio 182 Cup, but due to the sheer torque available (273lb ft at 1600-3000rpm) and a really adjustable balance, it certainly keeps you busy and entertained. The sweet six-speed manual 'box helps, too. You can't just sleepwalk through a journey but have to get involved.

On circuit the agility felt on every empty roundabout was

'If somebody asked me if the S1 felt twice as expensive as the Ford Fiesta ST, I could honestly say that it did'

exaggerated, and binging the S1 in on a trailing throttle, letting it flick sideways and then pinning the throttle to pull it straight was huge fun. Dial back the hooliganism and the S1 still worked well: there was some understeer but a gentle lift created a lovely neutral phase that allowed you to use the power to good effect. It wasn't a trackday car, but for the odd little adventure onto a circuit it really worked well.

As time went on, the tyres obviously started to show the strain of my fondness for the car. It's fascinating to feel cars changing with tyre life and these days many

cars are incredibly dependant on fresh rubber. Drive an M4 on new tyres and it feels right on the edge; drive it on part-worn in the damp and it's a huge challenge – not always in a good way. The S1's transformation wasn't as marked, of course, but it did get a little more unruly as the outer edges textured-up and the tread wore down. I actually enjoyed the new-found edge – a bit more torque-steer out of turns coupled to a bit more throttle adjustability mid-corner. It enhanced the sense of excitement that's really integral to the S1.

Okay, I'm aware I'm gushing now. The S1 isn't perfect by any means. The steering is too light in anything other than Dynamic mode, the ride can be brittle, it's pretty tight in the rear seats, even for my young kids, the boot is tiny, I rarely got much more than 30mpg and it's *expensive*. Very. The basic car costs £25,555 but with a few tasty options our car came in at £31,497. Set against something like a Fiesta ST, that's a huge ask. But if somebody asked me if the S1 felt twice as expensive as the much-loved Ford, I could

honestly say that it did. It's a quality item, that's for sure.

The S1 had one minor meltdown at the very worst time. Just as snow started to fall, the ESP completely failed. Northampton Audi sorted it but did leave me to drive the car without driver aids in the snow for a couple of days. I didn't have a problem with that but it seemed an odd decision given the conditions.

Despite that little wobble, and my neighbour reversing into it a couple of months ago, my time with the S1 was overwhelmingly positive. It goes back with a scuffed wheel, a little dent in the rear wing, an interior that's still like brand-new and real regret. It was a much-loved part of the family. It will be sorely missed. ✖

Jethro Bovingdon
(@JethroBovingdon)

Date acquired	December 2014
Duration of test	10 months
Total test mileage	16,233
Overall mpg	29.1
Costs	£0
Purchase price	£31,497
Trade-in value	£24,500
Depreciation	£6997

MUCH TO THE DESPAIR of **evo**'s overworked photographer, Aston Parrott, I've added another grey car to our fleet to sit alongside the Focus ST, Caterham and MX-5. Add our dark blue Golf R (I was also responsible for its choice of colour) and I can understand Aston's reluctance to make me tea.

My justification for the Octavia vRS's Quartz Grey is that this will be my daily for the next six months and, spending 200 miles a day commuting, there are times when blending into the daily grind has its benefits. As fun as it can be to commute in a lime-green Huracán or Java Orange GT3 RS, there are days and journeys when you don't want to draw attention to yourself.

This is the third Octavia vRS we've run (after a first-gen estate and, more recently, a third-gen hatch, both of which had a petrol engine and manual gearbox), but it's the first that drinks the devil's fuel and has what some will call the 'wrong' gearbox. The reason for diesel is obvious, given my daily mileage, and I'm hoping the potential 500-mile range will cut back the forecourt visits to two a week. As for the six-speed DSG gearbox, the justification here is threefold. One, we've only ever run vRS models with manual gearboxes; two, double-clutch 'boxes are becoming more popular, so we thought we'd better give it a go; and three, if you've ever crawled down the M1 and round the M25, you'll understand how tedious changing gear can be after a long day waiting for Dickie Meaden to file his copy.

The rest of the spec is pretty much as you'd expect from someone not picking up the bill. There's a heated windscreen (£300), 'sunset' (i.e. privacy) glass (£200), adaptive cruise control (£765), rear side airbags (£285), black roof rails (£60), vRS leather (£675), the Black design package (£150), Columbus satnav (£1550), Bluetooth and Wi-Fi (£250), heated and electrically folding auto-dimming door mirrors (£175), front and rear heated seats (£400), Crew Protect Assistant (which tensions the seatbelts and closes

NEW ARRIVAL

Skoda Octavia vRS Estate

Yes, it's another diesel estate on the Fleet, but hear us out...



'The spec is pretty much as you'd expect from someone not picking up the bill...'

the windows if it thinks a crash is imminent, £150), an electric tailgate (£400), an uprated Canton stereo (£500), and SmartLink (£150), which allows your smartphone to function through the infotainment system. All in, it's a £33,160 Skoda. Hunt around and you can lease one for around £200 a month.

First impressions are very good. I think the estate looks better than the hatch we ran and the ride on the regular 18in wheels is more settled than our last vRS was on 19s.

My concerns that the DSG

gearbox would be mismatched with the 181bhp turbodiesel engine have so far been unfounded, and as a car to get into before the slog to and from the office, it's proving to be a faithful companion even in these early days. Long may it continue. ☒

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Date acquired	October 2015
Total mileage	2434
Mileage this month	2409
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	45.0



VW Golf GTI Mk2

Some carbonfibre panels and lighter seats edge Parrott's classic Golf towards a 900kg kerb weight

THE MK2 IS OFFICIALLY on a diet. After I won a recent auction, it now has two Recaro Profi SPG race seats that are bolted to custom-made subframes. The advantages of these are a lower driving position, better support and a combined weight saving of around 8kg.

This, however, has not been the only weight saved on the GTI of late, and what you are about to read might shock you.

Casually browsing the internet – a very dangerous pastime for a petrolhead – I came across LWS Design, a company that specialises in carbonfibre parts for a selection of car makes. One of them is Volkswagen and, to my surprise, available were carbon parts for the Mk2 Golf. It was as if I had found a

'Already doomed, I spent the next half-hour looking at pictures of a full carbonfibre bonnet'



hidden trove of race parts, with a list of treasures including options such as a full carbonfibre roof skin.

Already doomed, I spent the next half-hour looking at the pictures, eventually ordering a full carbon bonnet and carbon-glassfibre tailgate. Soon after, I experienced a sizeable pang of buyer's remorse; I could not *believe* what I'd done. It's only a bloody Golf, not a GT2 RS! But then you only live once...

Two-and-a-half weeks later came a knock at the door and a man holding two large boxes. I didn't waste any time opening them, and was pleasantly surprised – shocked, even – by the quality of the parts.

As far as I am concerned, the bonnet is a work of pure art. The carbon weave is perfect and the underside copies the original's



Date acquired	April 2012
Total mileage	176,443
Mileage this month	144
Costs this month	£640 bonnet, £475 tailgate, £1000 seats, £90 rear screen
mpg this month	29.2

structural supports, only in raw carbonfibre. The tailgate boasts the same level of detail, and arrived with imprints in the carbon to show where I would need to cut it for the registration-plate lights and the lock. The bonnet weighs just 3kg and the bare tailgate 2kg: roughly a 20kg saving over the original bonnet, tailgate and rear window.

Ah yes. The window... Having saved so much weight, I couldn't bring myself to install the heavy original glass, so I had a chat with motorsport plastics experts ACW Motorsport. They recommended a Lexan Margard polycarbonate rear window, as these are UV-protected and have a higher level of scratch resistance than standard polycarbonate. In some cases the material is used for windscreens and won't show any signs of scratching even after using wiper blades.

Altogether, total savings in the pursuit of lightness amount to over 25kg. The plan now is to get the carbon parts sprayed Tornado Red to match the rest of the bodywork, with only the undersides revealing the naked carbonfibre. ☒

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Volkswagen Golf R

The Mk7 R is easy to like, but is it a car you can love?

THERE ARE SOME WHO are drawn to the Mk7 Golf R and others who simply cannot understand the appeal.

Before I'd spent a meaningful amount of time in one I probably fell into the 'don't get it' camp. For a car that did precisely nothing new or innovative – its basic formula was unchanged from the largely unloved Mk6 version, after all – the Mk7 R had somehow made itself the darling of the real-world performance car set.

What was even more baffling was that its very close relative, the Audi S3, hadn't garnered half the praise the VW had. It all felt like some sort of Wolfsburg-sponsored love-in that had snowballed out of control...

It's true that the latest Golf R doesn't do anything new, but it does do what it does better than anything else that has come before it.

I was reminded of this during my first drive in our R after a fortnight apart. Whether you like our car's Night Blue paint or not,

you'll probably agree that it's a handsome machine in a restrained, subtly menacing sort of way. It also has a high-quality cabin and a certain degree of badge appeal. What separates this Golf R from its predecessor and the four-ringed alternative from Ingolstadt, though, is its startling on-road dynamic behaviour.

Rather than being wooden in the way it steers and leaden-footed in the way it handles, the Golf R is crisp, sharp and fleet of foot. It feels a quarter less than its 1476kg on a quick run, being responsive and agile where the Mk6 R and S3 can feel as though they're coming around from a general anaesthetic. It treads such an expertly judged line between refinement and excitement, serving up just enough of both and not too much of either.

So a month into Golf R ownership and I'm more drawn to it than ever. But let's assume that's the honeymoon effect. I'm not yet



convinced that it has the character and charm that really makes you fall for a car. Am I going to bond with the Golf R, or will it just be nice to have it around?

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Date acquired	September 2015
Total mileage	3224
Mileage this month	1006
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.9



McLaren P1

This month: garage feng shui, and the SSO discovers the P1 has a stealth mode

I I'VE BEEN FORTUNATE TO have had some very special cars in my garage. The P1, however, has taken this to a whole new level. I've actually 'car-proofed' the garage for it. Anything that could have possibly fallen onto or been knocked into the McLaren has been moved. I also measured the various bays to ensure the P1 would live in one where both of the car's doors could be fully opened. Not even the F50 got this treatment.

The other major consideration was how and where to set up what I've nicknamed 'life support'. This is essentially a large block of steel that connects, via a massive cable, to a port under a flap on the top left side of the car. It keeps the P1's batteries topped up but also generates a huge amount of heat. In fact, I even put a fan next to it during the summer, but given the potential high-five-figure bill if the batteries go dead, avoiding overheating was critical.

I'm starting to become more comfortable in the P1's driver's seat, although I've only begun to scratch the surface of the car's capabilities. While the controls are very similar to those of the 650S, what happens when you use them can be quite different. Everything is just that much faster and more intense.

That said, my only close call so far was when a large pickup tried to move over onto a piece of tarmac I was occupying. My guess is the driver didn't see me as the P1's roof was lower than the top of his tyres. Each country has inherent risks – megatrucks are a clear and always present danger here in the States.

Secret Supercar Owner
(@SecretSupercarOwner)

Date acquired	July 2015
Total mileage	205
Mileage this month	70
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	12.0



END OF TERM

Mazda 6 Tourer

Photographer and badge snob Dean Smith says hello *and* goodbye to an impressive diesel estate

W WHY IS A DIESEL MAZDA gracing the pages of Fast Fleet? It's a fair question. One I myself asked when I knew I'd be running it for a short while.

A few months back, when looking for a replacement for the petrol Octavia vRS I had been running, I at first dismissed the Mazda 6 for no real reason other than having never tried one and wanting a car with more 'prestige'. Yes, I am a badge snob. But the thing is, a lot of us live in the real world, where we need a car with a large boot, decent fuel economy and good comfort levels, and, if it's not too much to ask, one that is also relatively interesting to drive, reliable, easy on the eye and reasonably priced.

On paper, the Mazda 6 Tourer 175PS Skyactiv-D Diesel Sport Nav (just rolls off the tongue, doesn't it?) meets many of those requirements.

In Sport Nav trim it comes pretty much fully loaded. Highlights include a head-up display, keyless go, adaptive headlights, parking sensors, a reversing camera, DAB, Bose speakers and heated seats. The only options on our car were Jet Black Mica paint (£540) and 'Stone' (pale grey) rather than black leather (£200). These took the total to £28,335, which compared with German rivals in a similar spec is in the region of £7000 cheaper.

You only ever see 6 Tourers in 'OAP red' or 'resale silver', but in black and on the Sport Nav's 19-inch alloys, it really looked the part. The pale leather really lifted the interior, too, although it was a dangerous choice for someone who lies in puddles at the side of the road for a living.

With no shortage of steering reach adjustment and the ability to sit really low, the driving position

'The driving position was pretty much perfect. And things were good on the move, too...'

was pretty much perfect. Things were good on the move, too. The six-speed manual gearbox was typical Mazda in feel and that's certainly no bad thing. Being diesel and having 173bhp, the engine was never going to stir the soul but it was punchy enough to make good progress and felt far less diesel-like in its delivery than I had expected. And the ride was really impressive: just soft enough to be comfortable but firm

enough to withstand extreme roll in cornering. In fact, once hooked onto a line, the car felt really good in the corners, aided by steering that was positive and direct. I was genuinely surprised.

I was gutted to give the key back. Whilst the Mazda 6 wasn't the most exciting estate car, it was very easy to live with and not once did I dread taking it on a long journey. It also almost eradicated my badge snobbery. I'd thoroughly recommend you try one. ☒

Dean Smith (@evoDeanSmith)

Date acquired	May 2015
Duration of test	5 months
Total test mileage	8640
Overall mpg	48.6
Costs	£0
Purchase price	£28,335
Trade-in value	£22,000
Depreciation	£6335

NEW ARRIVAL

Mazda MX-5

Too soft around the edges was our initial Mk4 MX-5 verdict. Skipworth settles in to either confirm or dispute that

EVER SINCE THE LATEST-generation MX-5 was announced, I've wanted to spend lots of time with one. Small, compact, affordable and promising a back-to-basics approach to driving thrills, it sounded right up my street. When I heard we were getting a long-term, I was desperate to run it.

You can pick up a new MX-5 with the entry-level 1.5-litre engine for £18,495, but this one, with the more powerful 2-litre motor and in top-level Sport Nav trim, came in at £23,835. Standard on the 2-litre Sport Nav are 17-inch wheels, Bilstein dampers, rain-sensing wipers, adaptive LED headlights, cruise control, rear parking sensors, keyless entry, a 7-inch touchscreen display, satnav, DAB and a nine-speaker Bose sound system. The bigger-engined cars also have a limited-slip differential. The only option box we ticked was for the Meteor Grey Mica paint (£540).

So far I've actually spent more time with the new MX-5 in 1.5-litre form (975kg, 129bhp), so it'll be interesting to see how our 2-litre version (1000kg, 158bhp) compares. In its more basic, non-Sport forms, the MX-5 is quite a soft car, so I'm also intrigued to see what difference the Bilsteins make. Initial impressions are that roll on turn-in is less pronounced, but it's too early to say definitively if they change things significantly or not.

The performance stats for the MX-5 are a touch behind those for the current crop of similarly priced hot hatches. The 0-62mph dash takes 7.3sec in the 2-litre car (a

'Are rear drive and a soft-top enough to justify the compromises in space and pace?'

second longer in the 1.5), while the top speed is 133mph. The biggest differences compared with a hot hatch, of course, are that the Mazda is rear-driven and has a soft-top roof. Whether or not these things are enough to justify the compromises in terms of space and pace is a question I'm sure I'll find an answer to over the coming months.

It may not have been here long, but just about everyone in the **evo** office has already driven 'my' car.

Most have returned feeling fairly lukewarm about it, but I'm much more positive. I reckon the MX-5 is going to be a good car to live with. It's a tiny little thing, which makes my commute through London traffic fairly unintimidating. It also appears to be economical, returning above 37mpg no matter what sort of driving I do.

I'm yet to do serious miles in the MX-5, but it already strikes me as a great road-trip car, European

jaunts are already being planned. Thankfully, the heated seats are excellent, so any roof-down runs to the Route Napoléon in the coming months should be fairly cosy. **X**

Hunter Skipworth
(@HunterSkipworth)

Date acquired	October 2015
Total mileage	1651
Mileage this month	560
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	38.1

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Caterham Seven 420R

The Seven shines on track (twice) and suffers a mysterious reliability blip

I IT WAS THE END OF A long day testing at Blyton Park. The Caterham had, as ever, proved fabulous on track. Adjustable, immensely fun, fast; pretty much perfect.

It was getting cold and dark, but I was looking forward to popping in some earplugs, pulling on a hat and gloves and driving home. Once every nook had been stuffed with race suits, helmets and timing gear, I nestled into the snug cabin, buckled the harness, turned the key and...

Nothing. Dead. Kaput.

Bugger.

Fuel? Check. Must be electrical, then. Luckily, we had another car at the circuit, so I decanted all the kit and left the Seven to be recovered



Lee Marshall

the next day. Typically, when the AA arrived it started first time. Huh?

The car was taken to Caterham Midlands, but they could find nothing untoward. And it's started fine ever since. Double huh?

The next outing for the Caterham was an *evo*/Sky Insurance 'How Fast?' event at Bedford Autodrome. The track was greasy all day, but such is the total transparency of the Seven's controls you never feel like it's getting away from you. When it rotates into oversteer, it's a cinch to

catch and ride out. Likewise, if you lock a front wheel, the tiniest release of brake pressure brings it back.

The 'How Fast?' day was brilliant (see p18). We held four sessions, each comprising an hour's practice then two timed flying laps. At the end of the fourth session our friends from Sky asked if we could give them a ride in the Seven – but the only session left was the timed run. Adding another human to a Seven considerably increases the weight, but how could I refuse? So off we

went, and even with a passenger on board we set the fastest time of the session – against R8 V10s and some other hot metal. Of course, I'd love to claim the time was a result of the driver, but the Caterham really does flatter. What a car. **x**

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	August 2015
Total mileage	3319
Mileage this month	341
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	32.1

Mini John Cooper Works



Mini John Cooper Works

The JCW's grip shortage has been addressed with a set of new, different tyres

I IT'S TAKEN A WHILE, but this month it finally happened: I 'clicked' with the JCW. Tackling a fast, twisty B-road – proper Mini territory – I caught myself revelling in the experience rather than being frustrated by not being able to get into a rhythm with the car.

I've had several similar moments since. The key to all this has been the switch from the car's original Pirelli P7 Cinturato tyres to a set of Dunlop Sport Maxx RTs (pictured). As I'm sure you've read many times now, the Pirellis are not that grippy. It turns out Mini doesn't fit them in an attempt to generate some low-grip fun, GT86-style, but because they are a 'global solution'. My solution to that global solution has been to move to the other, more sporty tyre approved by Mini for the JCW.

As I've found before when fitting fresh Sport Maxxes, I had to cover quite some distance on them – a few hundred miles, in fact – before they felt like they were fully scrubbed in and delivering their maximum grip, but once that point was reached, things really started to come together. Gone is the squealing around roundabouts and tight bends that I had with the Pirellis, replaced by proper bite on turn-in and a confidence to commit to corners in exactly the way you should be able to in a performance car. The constant annoying ABS intervention has disappeared, too, as has the nagging doubt that braking distances might not be quite as short as they could be in the event of an emergency stop.

In the wet, meanwhile, the car feels considerably less edgy and

'There's proper bite on turn-in and a confidence to commit to corners'

unsettled, which makes for a more relaxing drive – something that will be very welcome as we head into the wetter months.

In summary, then, it's a change for the better. Should've done it months ago. **x**

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired	May 2015
Total mileage	9248
Mileage this month	1542
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.3



Vauxhall Corsa VXR

How does the lively Corsa match up to Catchpole's old (but loved) Fiesta ST?

I KNOW I SHOULD TAKE one to the supermarket, yet still I frequently find myself standing at the till with my heart sinking as the person behind the checkout asks: 'Would you like a 5p bag?'

The same feeling has washed across me every time I've got into the Corsa over the last few weeks, when I realise that yet again I've forgotten the can of WD40. Settle into the embrace of the Recaro, turn the ignition key and watch the clear

white-on-black dials come to life, then dip the clutch and... *squeeeeeeak!* There aren't many ways in which I'd liken the VXR to a haunted house, but the left-hand pedal is certainly doing a good impersonation of a spookily creaky door hinge.

Thankfully other things have been less annoying during my brief tenure of the little Vauxhall. With the seats down it passes the bike-carrying test admirably (alternatively there's space to scatter loose supermarket shopping in there – obviously I

refuse to buy a new plastic bag). The gearshift seems to be a pleasant improvement over the baulky item in the last Corsa VXR. Also, unlike some supposedly small cars (Clio, ahem), the Corsa feels narrow and nimble, nipping through traffic and down lanes as a hot hatch should.

Would I have one instead of the Fiesta ST I recently ran as a long-term? No. While this Corsa VXR is a definite improvement on the old one, compared to the Ford it still feels rather crude both in terms of

everyday refinement and dynamics, with its slightly crashy suspension and jumpy LSD.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm just off to the shops without a plastic bag to forget to buy some more WD40. ✕

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Date acquired	July 2015
Total mileage	6998
Mileage this month	876
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.0



Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy

A pensive Meaden prepares for life without his exotic French hatch

WITH JUST A MONTH OR so left of the Mégane's year-long loan, I'm in a reflective mood. The point of Fast Fleet is to report on what it's like to live with these cars. Driven thus, faults and niggles that slip through the net of a short-term road test loan quickly come to the surface, but ironically, prolonged exposure to one car can sometimes make you blasé about the things that are really

exceptional. Not so in the Mégane – its most impressive qualities are so central to the concept of the car you could never take them for granted.

I love the way it goes about its business. Its focus is absolute – something you see from its Brembo brakes, Akrapovic exhaust and Cup 2 tyres, and then feel as soon as you drop into the businesslike yet comfortable Recaros. That promise is backed-up by the weight and directness of the steering and the fantastic control and precision of the (optional) Öhlins damping.

Of course, the manual gearbox speaks volumes, too, for a stick and clutch demand you are committed to being the central component in the driving process, whether you're up for larks or just want to knock your brain into neutral and get home after a tough day at work.

Such honesty and authenticity ensures nobody buys a Renaultsport Mégane without knowing exactly

what they're getting themselves into. It's a very particular car. Hardcore, manual transmission, three-door hot hatches are certainly not for everyone, which explains why you don't see many on the road, especially compared to the ubiquitous (and mighty) Golf R.

However, when you do see a Trophy, you know the owner has made that commitment in the knowledge they will be rewarded with performance and handling that's every bit as considered and crafted as any dedicated sports car at pretty much any price point. It's going to be a wrench when the time comes to hand its key-card back. ✕

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired	Nov 2014
Total mileage	16,710
Mileage this month	863
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	30.8

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Porsche 996 GT2

A high-tech protection treatment brings new life to the 911's paintwork

I I GET TO WITNESS SOME pretty spectacularly prepared cars in this job. I've stroked concept cars saturated with paints rich in glass to exaggerate the shine, and I've seen hypercars lavished with thousands of pounds worth of carnauba wax. In many ways, that's why I've never indulged too much in the world of detailing – I'd never reach those levels, so why bother? That was until I bought the GT2.

The Polar Silver paint on the GT2 was pretty good but as I'm not prone to Sundays with a toothbrush



and some polish, and the car is approaching 14 years old, I was conscious that it should have some kind of protective finish. Richard Tipper of perfectiondetailing.co.uk suggested Crystal Serum – a paint protection treatment from Gtechniq.

Crystal Serum promises carnauba wax levels of gloss and finish with a ceramic protective coating. It's not, however, something you can apply yourself, so Tipper – an accredited detailer – was booked and my friends at restoration specialists The Splined Hub in Oundle (thesplinedhub.co.uk) offered a clean and dry corner of their workshop for him to do his magic. It's important that no water drips onto the car during the treatment, that the temperature of each panel is between 5 and 30 degrees Celsius and that the car is away from direct sunlight. Not something to slap on



Above: Tipper (right) at work, with a little help from a man from Gtechniq. **Below middle:** Gtechniq products were used outside and in



while sipping a cup of tea on a lazy Sunday afternoon, then...

Preparation involves cleaning the car to remove any contaminants and polish residues. Then it's a case of carefully applying the serum over areas no larger than half a wing, or a quarter of the roof. The coating reacts almost immediately with the surface, so any residue needs to be cleaned off straight away. However, 'buffing' the serum away is to be avoided at this stage because you're only looking to remove excess product rather than create a shine.



This is also where the detailer's 'eye' is required, because Gtechniq recommends viewing the surface from 'several oblique angles' with a 'medium intensity flat light source' in order to spot any residues. Having been born impatient, I'd probably have just squinted and used my iPhone's torch...

The next stage is the buffing process, which involves rotating the cloth so that the serum does not 'cure' in it. Unlike some lacquers or waxes, you cannot remove the serum with a cutting compound, so if you fail to remove the residue and it fully cures on the paint then you've got no choice but to wet sand the affected panel. Yikes!

Richard also treated the interior with Gtechniq protection products, so he spent pretty much a whole day working on the car. But by heavens what a finish! I was truly

gobsmacked by the shine, depth and even the tactility that the Crystal Serum had brought out in the paint. It also revealed the blues that lurk in the Polar Silver, and to my eye at least made a relatively tame colour look absolutely extraordinary. Observing my dropped jaw, Richard said: 'You wait until it rains...'

A few days later it did just that and perfect globules of water formed on the car's flat surfaces. I even spent a good ten minutes standing in the rain watching the water run like mercury down the bonnet and onto the floor. And yes I guess that does make me a bit of a weirdo, but it has to be seen to be believed.

Care from now onwards involves jetwashing any grime away, washing with pH-neutral products and drying with a microfibre towel – and that's it. To summarise: not cheap, but I've never seen a better finish away from a concept car on a motor-show stand. **✎**

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	June 2015
Total mileage	27,144
Mileage this month	311
Costs this month	£1200
mpg this month	23.1

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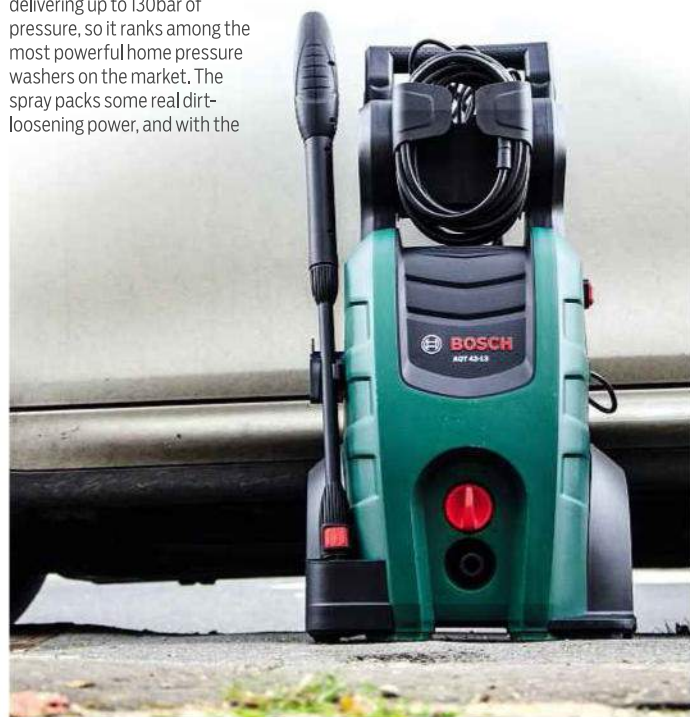
Petrol-station jetwashes are great, aren't they? Well, except for the inevitable race against limited time and the concern of paint-scratching debris left in the foaming brush by the previous user. (I once saw a farmer clean out a livestock trailer with one...) Far better, then, to recreate that jetwash experience at home, where you can have total control over how the kit is used and how long you use it for.

The Bosch AQT 42-13 features a 1900W motor capable of delivering up to 130bar of pressure, so it ranks among the most powerful home pressure washers on the market. The spray packs some real dirt-loosening power, and with the

optional (£9.99) brush attached and the detergent tank topped-up, it really is like being at the jetwash. Rinsing off a whole car takes but a minute or two, and because you're at home you don't need to feel embarrassed about whipping out a microfibre cloth to dry the car down afterwards.

Yes, you could use a bucket, sponge and hosepipe to get the same result, but it wouldn't be as quick or as enjoyable.

Ian Eveleigh



AND ON THAT BOMBSHELL: INSIDE THE MADNESS AND GENIUS OF TOP GEAR by RICHARD PORTER

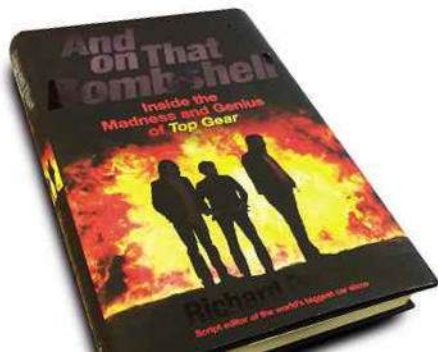
£20 orionbooks.co.uk

Some say that this is the least funny car-related book you'll read this year and that the author is incapable of oversteer. We wouldn't, obviously. Having said that, we were disappointed by the lack of actual bombshell stories contained

in its pages, having assumed at first glance that it was a script for a sequel to *The Hurt Locker* (which, incidentally, is what Clarkson apparently called the BBC canteen).

Seriously, though, Porter's turn of phrase is as smooth as butter melting over hot new potatoes and wonderfully soporific as a result. Perfect bedtime reading. Best of all, if you want to inflict this upon someone as a desperate last gasp Christmas present, you'll struggle to buy it anywhere at full price.

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)



ENDURANCE 2016 CALENDAR by DREW GIBSON

£24.99 drew-gibson.co.uk

Spending days at the side of the world's greatest race circuits photographing some of the world's most exciting racing cars is Drew Gibson's day job – he shoots group tests for *evo* when he wants genuine excitement.

A specialist in capturing the magic of endurance racing, Gibson has produced a new calendar for 2016 – entitled *Endurance* – presenting some of his favourite images from his year on the road following the World Endurance Championship around the globe. The results are simply stunning.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)



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Slip on a pair of great driving shoes and suddenly you can nail every heel-and-toe downshift (well, maybe...), but step out of the car and the thin soles can make walking on rough surfaces akin to crossing a bed of nails. The complete opposite is often true for regular shoes or trainers, so finding something to wear on a day that contains lots of driving and walking can be difficult.

Perhaps unintentionally, Adidas and

Continental have created a shoe that mixes the best of both worlds – the Adizero Adios is both comfortable when walking and effective when driving.

Not only is the sole thin and grippy (thanks to the use of tyre technology), the shoes are also very light – a size 8.5 weighs just 228 grams. There's also plenty of cushioning.

Overall, a great all-rounder.

Sam Sheehan (@evoSamSheehan)

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example making it a great investment.
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BMW Z4M Coupe 3.2 (S54)

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existence. Sold by Hexagon from new.
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Market

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ANALYSIS: BLUE OVAL LEGENDS

Rapid, rare and often bombastic, fast Fords are fetching big money. So, should you buy one?

by Adam Towler

IF A TRIBAL PASSION FOR THE CARS IS A DEFINING characteristic of the 'Fast Ford' scene, then these days investment value is not far behind. Outside of the blue chip marques such as Ferrari and, more recently, the Porsche 911 phenomenon, it's the products of Ford's sporting and competition departments that have seen some of the most prodigious growth in value. If you already own one that's largely good news; if you're thinking of joining the club, here's what you need to know. And if you haven't got £100,000 to spend, fear not: there are still some more affordable options available, especially if you're prepared to look at more recent machinery.

The spotlight falls first on the oldest car in our selection: the ultimate rear-drive Escort, the BDA-powered Mk2 RS1800. This is one ship that hasn't just already sailed, it's steamed out of the harbour and south of the equator.





'An affordable route into a sporting Ford is to go for a newer model'

Dave Robinson has been the RS1800 registrar at the RS Owners Club (rsownersclub.co.uk) for 25 years and possesses an encyclopaedic knowledge of the 109 cars built.

'Prices have never fallen in all the years I've been a registrar,' he says. 'At the moment they're at £50,000-75,000, though insurance companies are taking on higher-priced cars – some online guides are topping out at £92,000. Demand is very high. On my list I currently have 11 serious buyers but the problem is they are not out there; nothing is for sale.'

Neil Arnold at Auto Restoration (auto-restoration.co.uk) specialises in rear-wheel-drive Escorts. He's restored seven RS1800s in the last five years. 'It's very rare for a car to come out of the woodwork now that Dave Robinson hasn't heard of,' he

confirms. 'They have the same issues as any other Mk2 Escort: watch for rust on the suspension mounts front and rear, on the bulkhead, chassis rails and rear arches. Finding one now that hasn't had any rust repairs is almost impossible. The rare items are the standard bits that were junked in the '70s: the airbox and inlet, for example. For years you couldn't buy spares. Parts are being remade now.'

Matching, if not exceeding, the RS1800 for financial headlines is the Sierra RS500 Cosworth. This colossus of Touring Car racing has quadrupled in price in the last five years, with the very best cars now pushing the £100,000 marker. For a full run-down read what our expert Paul Linfoot (right) has to say, but beneath the RS500, the standard

three-door Sierra RS Cosworth is being dragged up. Rough examples ripe for restoration start at £10,000, with average-condition cars now in the high teens. The really nice cars are in the mid-£20,000 bracket.

It has taken longer for the Sierra's offspring, the Escort RS Cosworth, to achieve the same financial status. However, it's catching up fast now, with significant rises in the past few years. 'Prices seem to go up every day,' says RSOC Escort RS Cosworth registrar Dave Lee. 'A typical £12,000 car of two years ago is now £20,000. Escorts never suffered the same price-drop as Sierras, but then they never went up when the other things did. Now £20,000-24,000 gets you a useable car, but the best are over £35,000 – you can almost name your figure.'

NOW BUY ONE

ESCORT RS COSWORTH £28,995

An early example of the 'smaller turbo' Escort RS Cosworth, fitted with the T25 Garrett unit that makes it a lot more responsive for road driving than the earlier cars. Blue with grey 'Hexagon' cloth Recaro seats and 72,000 miles from new, complete with plenty of service history.

classicandperformancecar.com
01536 201398



SIERRA RS COSWORTH £34,995

Pretend you're Ari or Stig in the 1987 World Rally Championship with this black Sierra Cosworth that's travelled just over 10,000 miles since 1986. Yes, £34,995 is strong money for one of these, but it's a long way short of its RS500 big brother. All you need now are a few 'Texaco' stickers.

classicandperformancecar.com
01483 274347



FOCUS RS (Mk2) £29,995

With a mere 500 miles on the odometer, this Ultimate Green example is probably the closest you're going to get to a brand new Mk2 Ford Focus RS. A high spec includes the Luxury Packs 1 and 2, plus colour satnav. The only trouble is, dare you drive it?

rs-direct.co.uk
01454 300077



FOCUS RS (Mk1) £15,995

A beautiful Mk1 Focus RS, with only 40,000 miles recorded and one owner since new. Recently serviced, with a full Ford service history at that. Standard specification apart from an aftermarket dump valve. A touch pricey for this mileage, perhaps, but the provenance is spot on.

essentialcars.co.uk
02380 641066





Dave makes a good point about the effect this is having on the traditional Fast Ford scene: 'Fast Fords weren't meant to be like this, they were the blue-collar performance cars bought by people who loved them. Today, some buyers are simply safeguarding their finances; that's not so good for the younger fans coming through.'

The affordable route into a sporting Ford is to jump forward a generation. That means a front-driven hatch rather than a rear- or four-wheel-drive homologation special. Nevertheless, both the Mk1 and Mk2 Focus RS models are very memorable cars, and with the imminent release of the Mk3 there's sure to be even more interest surrounding the back catalogue.

Clayton Borg is our man on the Mk1 (see above right), values of which are already beginning to rise strongly. For the growling thug that is the Mk2, prices for nice low-mileage cars are virtually back to list. Accordingly, cars with over 40,000 miles and poor modifications are now dipping below £20,000, and falling fast.

OPINION

'I BOUGHT ONE'

MARTIN HOLLAND

Escort RS Cosworth

'There's nothing I don't like about it. Even after ten years it makes me tremble when I drive it. Sometimes I'll just go into the garage, pull the cover off it and sit in it for ten minutes. Parts are expensive but I've not had any terminal failures.'

SUMMARY

There are two recurring themes with our featured cars this month. Firstly, there's the unfortunate number of write-offs and cars with dodgy provenance that exist. From RS1800s to the Focus RSs, it's a case of 'buyer beware'. Many cars have been broken for parts, but the bodyshells can then resurface and live on. This is not necessarily a bad thing, and Cat D cars are still in demand, but if the identity is faked then there's a major issue. With authenticity being a major factor in, say, the value of a RS1800, any mistakes here could prove very costly. Thankfully, there's a vast wealth of information available.

Secondly, the buzzword at the moment is 'standard'. For decades the scene has been heavily immersed in tuning and modifying, but today buyers want factory-original cars and will pay a premium for them. The focus may be shifting, but interest in the cars remains as strong as ever.

THE SPECIALIST

ADRIAN THOMPSON

RS Direct

'Right now, colour makes no difference to the price with the Mk2 Focus RS. However, blue is the rarest colour, then white, while the majority are green. Buyers are frequently looking ahead to future values and going for the rarest colour.'

Expert view



CLAYTON BORG

mk1focusrsoc.com

If you want to know about the Mk1 Focus RS, you speak to Clayton Borg. For 12 years he's worked tirelessly to keep track of as many of the 4501 Mk1s built as he can, and believes he has info on over 3000 of them.

'The current price range is £5000-22,000,' he says. 'Some dealers are getting greedy and trying to get more than that by pumping up the prices. I would say with less than 10,000 miles you can look for at least the list price – £19,995. For under 30,000 miles and a really clean car, at least £14,500. A 40,000-mile car might be £13,500, while reasonable 80,000-milers start at £9500. If it's a 100,000-mile Cat D example then they're from £5000. Not many have fewer than 30,000 miles.'



PAUL LINFOOT

RS500OWNERS.COM

Paul's knowledge of RS500s has led to him not only being the RSOC registrar for the type, but to running a business restoring them.

'They range in price from £20,000 for a restorable basket case to over £80,000 for a completely original, unrestored car,' says Paul. 'I have known them change hands for £100,000. Useable high-mileage cars are £35,000, average cars £40,000 and anything low-mileage is at least £60,000. Moonstone Blue is the most valuable colour – there were only 52 of them – and then white. People are buying them and putting them back to standard – I'm restoring one a month now like that. Most run with a little more power, but we disguise any mods under the bonnet.'



SCANDAL BOOSTS ELECTRIC SALES

The recent VW emissions scandal may well end up contributing to a surge in electric car sales in Britain. Independent research by car leasing company flexed.co.uk has found that both private and company car buyers have become increasingly concerned about their car's pollution levels, with many turning to EVs for the first time.



FERRARI STOCK VALUE DOWN

Ferrari's share price fell by around \$10 in just ten days after its initial public offering. Experts say the change was the result of fading excitement in buying into the famous supercar maker. Ferrari also posted figures showing that exports to the Far East, and China in particular, had fallen in the three months to the end of September.



TOYOTA ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Toyota has overtaken Volkswagen to become the world's best selling car maker once again. The Japanese firm sold 7.49million cars in the first three quarters of 2015, which is down 1.5 per cent on the 2014 figure but enough to beat VW's 7.43million and General Motors' 7.2million from the same period.

EVO ROAD TESTER

STUART GALLAGHER

The RS500 has huge appeal, but the values put me off – a £100,000 Sierra? I'd go with the original three-door winged wonder: the Sierra RS Cosworth. With cars of this age the performance differential is negligible and there's something special about owning the original and the first of an icon.



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USED RIVALS: SPORTS-SALOON SHOWDOWN

by Adam Towler



AUDI RS4 (B7)

Engine
Power
Torque
Weight
0-62mph
Top speed
evo rating

V8, 4163cc
414bhp @ 7800rpm
317lb ft @ 5500rpm
1650kg
4.8sec (claimed)
155mph (limited)

★★★★★

'I BOUGHT ONE'

'It's my first Audi – I always had RS Fords before. It's a beautiful car and a great package. I love the handling, performance, four-wheel drive, comfort and build quality. It's pricey to keep on the road, so buy a car that's been looked after, but every time I hear that V8 it's all worth it.' **Steve Mackenzie**

EXAMPLES



2006 £24,000

Hollybrook Sportscars

Just 38,000 miles and hence top money. Has the optional Recaro seats and new brake discs and pads.



BMW M3 (E46)

In-line 6-cyl, 3246cc
338bhp @ 7900rpm
269lb ft @ 5000rpm
1495kg
5.1sec (claimed)
155mph (limited)

★★★★★

'I loved my E46 M3. It was comfortable and practical, yet when the right road opened up in front of you the mechanical appeal of the car was just brilliant. Finding a good specialist to look after it meant I didn't worry about driving it. It ate tyres but was worth every penny.' **Iestyn Davies**



2005 £17,995

4 Star Classics

A low-mileage M3 built late in the production run. SMG automated manual gearbox might not be to all tastes.



MERCEDES-BENZ C55 AMG

V8, 5439cc
367bhp @ 5250rpm
376lb ft @ 4000rpm
1635kg
5.2sec (claimed)
155mph (limited)

★★★★☆

'My C55 was remarkably easy to own, with that lovely big, woolly V8, a good ride and being surprisingly economical on a long journey. Mine had the brakes, suspension and exhaust upgraded, so it was also a superb trackday car. I can't think of a single thing that went wrong.' **Charles Morgan**



2005 £11,995

BCL Cars

A rare car in Cubanite Silver (very pale gold) with black leather. With 46,000 miles from just two owners.

RUNNING COSTS

'They're actually very reliable. Problems with the DRC suspension needn't be a horror story, but you need the right equipment to set the hydraulic pressure. Over 40,000 miles they'll benefit from a carbon clean-up of the heads' inlet tracts. Consumables are expensive, and watch for the pipes to the oil cooler corroding. Maintenance and an understanding of the cars is key.'

Martin Adams at unit20.com

'The cracking rear subframe issue is well known: beware cars where BMW dealers have filled them up with expanding foam – it attracts moisture and eventually a new floor will be required. The problem tends to be more on SMG-equipped cars; normally only welded-in reinforcements are required. VANOS problems can be prevented, diffs die, and I'd check the valve clearances at every service.'

Raikku at waffzuff.co.uk

'There are really no issues with these Mercedes C55s in terms of both the V8 engine and the automatic gearbox. As long as they're well maintained they're great. The only things that the cars can suffer from are worn suspension arms on the front axle and rust appearing on the doors. The estate model is the most sought after, and as a result they do hold their value really well.'

Olly Stoner prestigecarservice.co.uk

THE EVO CHOICE

Mercedes' C55 was near the end of its life when we pitted it against this month's other used rivals for issue 088's cover story. Back in 2006 the small AMG felt less of a honed thoroughbred and more of a run-of-the-mill C-class with a monstrous V8 fitted. Against the then new B7 RS4 and soon to be

replaced E46 M3, it felt out of its depth.

The RS4 was a big step up from previous fast Audis, the B7 demonstrating that quattro GmbH could deliver a drivers' car despite its many false starts. The V8 engine felt mighty, the sure-footed quattro drivetrain less leaden and more direct

than before. Only the car's on-limit dynamics prevented it from taking the victory.

Today the M3 is still our choice; its chassis is unmatched, its straight-six one of the best. It needs more care when buying and running, but the rewards are worth it.



BUYING JOURNEY

From Spitfire to Spider, this **evo** reader has never shied away from a courageous buy



TIM GOSLING

1979

1st 1972 Triumph Spitfire

'For £500 it was this or an Austin 1100. Many hours of top-down fun and the chance to learn about lift-off oversteer and rust treatment.'



1985



2nd 1983 Alfa Romeo GTV6

'Beautiful thing, and 8.5sec to 60mph was quite quick then. But... it started to fall apart, and at under three years old sprouted rust. Written off by an errant caravan.'



1991

3rd 1979 Ferrari 308 GT4

'If your wife says, "Yes you can buy a Ferrari, as long as there's room for the baby too," you're not going to argue!'



2012

4th 2008 Ferrari F430 Spider

'Just brilliant. Wobbliness is never noticeable and if you think your F430 coupe sounds good, it's a shame you can't hear that V8 for real!'

2015

5th 2015 Jaguar XE S

'Agile, flat in the corners and a soulful supercharged soundtrack into the bargain. I've only had it a month but still arrive home grinning every time.'



What's next?

'The XE is still effectively brand new, and I find the F430 such a beautiful thing that it won't be leaving us any time soon. However, Mrs Gosling has been idly speculating on what she'd like after her Mini Cooper S. She'd need something practical, certainly, but small and fun too. JCW?'

Tip

Have a change from the Mini: how about a Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport?

evo view

Tim's car history is too extensive to illustrate in full. Having learnt to drive in a Mk1 Escort, he discovered Italian cars and Alfa Romeo in 1981. His Alfasud Sprint Veloce was 'a beautiful thing with such a sweet engine', which makes it all the more tragic that rust was coming out of the seams by the time it was just six years old. After the GTV6 also gave plenty of grief, it's understandable that Tim became a BMW convert in the late 1980s, adopting two silky straight-six examples one after the other. His next purchase after an E34 525i was a landmark moment: his first Ferrari. The 308 was a ballsy move with a young family. He who dares wins, however, and it led to a Mondial T and then the F430. Commuting cars have included a brilliant Peugeot 106 XSi and a return to Alfa in the form of a 166, which was brave.

Tell us about your buying journey.
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 2014/64 Range Rover Sport Autobiography, £78,995	 2014/64 Audi RS6 Avant, £69,995	 2014/14 Maserati Granturismo Sport V8, £68,995	 2010/10 Aston Martin DB9 Volante, £68,995
 2000/X Ferrari 360 Modena F1, £64,995	 2012/62 Porsche 911 Carrera 991 PDK, £59,995	 2009 Audi R8 V8, £54,995	 2014/14 Jaguar F-Type Supercharged V6. £48,995
10 10 Aston Martin DB9 Touchtronic £71,995 11 61 Porsche 911 Carrera 2S 3.8 PDK 991 £63,995 13 13 Audi RS5 Cabriolet £46,995	13 13 Range Rover Revere £69,995 14 64 Porsche Macan S PDK £59,995 01 51 Porsche 911 Turbo 996 £39,995	13 13 Mercedes SL63 AMG £66,995 15 15 Porsche Cayenne Diesel £58,995 04 54 TVR T350c 3.6 £29,995	

BUYING GUIDE: SKODA OCTAVIA vRS 2005-2013

It's like a Golf GTI with more space and a bargain price. So are there any catches to owning a used Octavia vRS?

by Peter Tomalin



THE OCTAVIA vRS WILL ALWAYS HAVE a special place in **evo's** affections, and not just for its combination of practicality, build quality, great value and surprising pace. Actually, surprising pace has quite a bit to do with it. Back in the summer of 2011 (**evo** 162), a team from Skoda UK took a vRS to the salt flats of the Bonneville Speedway with their sights set on the production-class speed record for a 2-litre car. In the driving seat was a certain Richard Meaden.

It's fair to say that the definition of 'production' was a tad malleable. The rules allowed the fitment of a monster Garrett turbocharger, longer gearing, and skinny wheels with special salt tyres. Oh, and a parachute. The 2-litre TSI engine was pretty much standard, though, as was the bodywork.

When Dickie hit 227mph and Skoda obliterated the old record, it even hit the national media.

If that made the Octavia a little more exciting to the general populace, those who'd driven any of the vRS versions already knew this was a car with genuine petrolheaded credentials.

The first-gen Octavia had arrived in 1996, initially a worthy but dull range of hatches and estates based on the Mk4 Golf. Things got more interesting when the first vRS appeared in 2001 with VW's familiar 1.8-litre 20v turbo petrol engine, tuned to 178bhp.

The Mk2 Octavia came in 2004, now with Mk5 Golf underpinnings, and this time the vRS version – the one we're concentrating on here – arrived just a year later. It was the same basic recipe, but

now with a choice of engines: 197bhp 2-litre TFSI direct-injection turbo-petrol or 168bhp 2-litre TDI (the famous PD, or Pumpe Düse) turbodiesel. Both drove the front wheels through a traditional six-speed manual gearbox, and both were strong performers, the diesel's extra torque and extra mpg helping it win the lion's share of sales.

For 2009 there was a facelift, embracing a new grille and lights and a more upmarket interior. The engine range was also revamped, with the latest TSI petrol and CR (common rail) diesel, though both retained the same peak power figures, while the DSG 'box was now available for the first time.

The Mk2 vRS ran to the beginning of 2013, when the current third-gen Octavia appeared. Here's what you need to know to bag a good 'un.

CHECKPOINTS

ENGINE

Basically these are sound engines as long as they're serviced on time (experts like APS of Brackley advise every 10,000 miles or 12 months) and, as far as is currently known, none of them is affected by any emissions shenanigans. But there are a few issues you need to be aware of.

The 2-litre TFSI occasionally suffers

premature wear of the fuel pump cam follower, potentially causing serious scoring to the camshaft. Replacing the follower is an inexpensive service item and well worth it for peace of mind.

Whereas the TFSI has a cambelt, the TSI that replaced it in 2009 has a timing chain, and failure of the tensioner can result in a crippling expensive rebuild. If you hear

noisy rattling there's a chance the tensioner is failing. Getting it replaced with the latest improved design (as fitted to 2011MY cars onwards) will cost around £500 from an independent.

The other engines have belts, which most agree should be renewed every four years or 60,000 miles and the water pump replaced at the same time. Budget around

£300, or c£400 from an official Skoda agent.

The PD diesel engine is notoriously fussy about oil spec. It needs to be 505.01, which has additional anti-wear properties to protect the cams and lifters. It's worth checking it's been used, especially if the car's been serviced outside the network.

TRANSMISSION

The manual 'boxes are generally robust. If you feel a juddering when

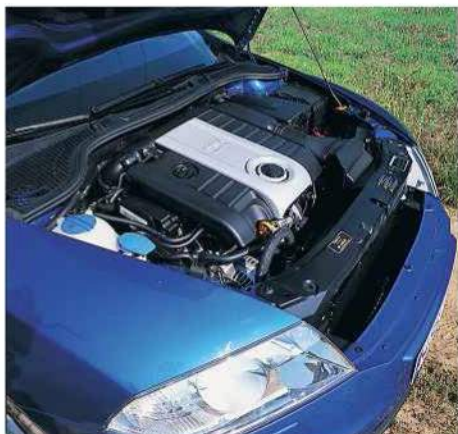
moving off it's probably the dual-mass flywheel on the way out. It makes sense to get the clutch replaced at the same time, so the total bill could be as low as £500 from an indie or as high as £1000 from an official agent.

If the car has DSG, it's vital the oil and filter are changed every 40,000 miles to avoid overheating or the clutches burning out. On the test drive, check

both automatic and manual shifts for speed and smoothness.

SUSPENSION, STEERING & BRAKES

As ever, listen for any clunks over bumps – in the vRS it'll probably be worn anti-roll bar bushes. The Octavia's huge boot means many are used for serious load-lugging, so don't neglect the rear springs and dampers. The 18-inch wheels look



Left: a pre-facelift Mk2 vRS. **Above:** engines (early TFSI pictured) generally reliable. **Right and below:** interiors are proving hardy



cool, but they don't do the ride or handling any favours; the 17-inch alloys are arguably the smarter choice.

If the ABS light and/or the ESP light is illuminated, beware. It could be a fault with a sensor (not too expensive to fix) or it could be the ABS pump control unit that needs replacing, which will cost hundreds at best, potentially five figures if you buy an official replacement.

BODY, INTERIOR & ELECTRICS

Some pre-facelift cars have surface rust on the sills, so check it hasn't taken hold. Interiors wear well, though the light cloth is hard to keep looking clean. Check the air con – the pump has been known to fail and even a non-OE replacement is c£450. The rear wash/wipe is a common failure: check the wiper and the washer work.

RIVALS

GOLF GTI MK5

They're twins under the skin, and £5-6k buys you an '06/'07 Mk5 GTI with the 197bhp TFSI engine and DSG 'box: 0-60 in 6.7sec, 145mph, and a great chassis, too.

BMW 320D TOURING (E91)

Not as roomy as the vRS, and not as quick either (0-60 in 8.5sec) but it's a good steer, and it's got the right badge on the nose. Decent examples start around £7k.

AUDI A4 AVANT 2.0 TFSI/TDI

You'll probably need to pay a couple of grand more for an A4 Avant of the same year and mechanical spec as a vRS. You'll get a better interior, but not necessarily a better driving experience.

INFORMATION



SKODA OCTAVIA vRS TFSI

Engine	In-line four, 1998cc, turbo
Max power	197bhp @ 5100rpm
Max torque	206lb ft @ 1800-5000rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive
Weight	1375kg
Power-to-weight	146bhp/ton
0-62mph	7.3sec (claimed)
Top speed	149mph (claimed)
Price new	£17,500 (December 2005)

PARTS PRICES

(Prices from autops.co.uk. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges)

Tyres (each)	£84.76 (Michelin Pilot Sport 3)
Front pads (set)	£71.64
Front discs (pair)	£145.56
Damper (single)	£91.04
Clutch kit	£369.76
Spark plugs (set)	£62.16
Oil filter	£13.68 (housing £54.44)
Air filter	£21.14
Pollen filter	£19.47

SERVICING

(Prices from autops.co.uk including VAT)



Major service
£240

Minor service	(Every 12 months or 10,000 miles) £119
Major service	(Every 24 months or 20,000 miles) £240
DSG oil and filter change	(Every 40,000 miles) £160

USEFUL CONTACTS

FORUMS, ADVICE, EVENTS
briskoda.net
skodaforum.co.uk

INDEPENDENT VAG SPECIALISTS
autops.co.uk
quattro-tech.co.uk

TUNING, UPGRADES
revotechnik.com
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sharkperformance.co.uk

CARS FOR SALE
skoda.co.uk/used-cars
classicandperformancecar.com



'I BOUGHT ONE'

CARL KAMBITES

'We needed a new car to sit alongside my Elise. It would be primarily for my wife's short commute but also with an eye on planned family expansion and practical enough for lugging stuff to the tip while we built a house extension. With its manageable dimensions, enormous boot and well-proven mechanicals, we were quickly drawn to the Mk2 Octavia, and after a few false-starts, we finally spotted and bought a high-mileage but generally sound five-year-old TFSI vRS from a local garage.

'Four years and 18,000 miles later? Well, it's like a Golf really... The TFSI lump has a commendably low boost threshold. Replacing the

original 18-inch wheels with a set of 16s for winter tyres significantly improved the ride and handling at the cost of a bit of turn-in sharpness. I suspect a set of good 17s would be the best compromise. The chassis overall feels well resolved in that slightly inert, slightly understeery manner of modern VAG cars. There's a fair bit of road noise – I think sound-deadening is where Skoda saved most of their money compared with the Golf.

'In terms of reliability, it certainly hasn't been perfect. Immediately after we bought the car it had a fuel pump failure. A year later the air-con compressor failed. Shortly after that, I noticed an intermittent

knock from the engine but thankfully that doesn't appear to be getting any worse. Then recently the idle went haywire, which turned out to be a failed valve in the evaporative emissions control system.

'All in all, it has done what it was bought to do and, bar a few ancillary failures and niggles, has been pretty solid. And to be fair to Skoda, all of the failures have been in generic VAG parts. Not a remarkable car, then, but certainly a capable one.'



WHAT WE SAID



DRIVEN, NOVEMBER 2005

'The Octavia's interior quality is the equal of any Golf's, with plenty of padded surfaces and some neat dials with bevelled faces and delicate needles. The steering wheel feels good, the gearlever shifts tightly and crisply through its six gears, the black-and-silver seats grip you snugly.

'For all its sporting-up, including a new spoiler on the hatch and some nice chrome tailpipes, the Octavia is not a looker. But then, maybe it's good not to flaunt your car's dynamic presence. The fact is that the vRS is a fine drive, its engine smooth and crisp and revvy and full of lovely turbo torque without the usual downside of turbo lag and a soft throttle response. It sounds crisp, too, but the note is never intrusive.

'Like the Golf GTI, then. Same goes for the handling, amusingly throttle-steerable but ultimately foolproof, and the steering, well-weighted and accurate with convincing feel for an electrically assisted system. The brakes are progressive and snatch-free, and like the Golf the vRS has a ride that manages to be both taut and compliant. We had a terrific time flinging the Skoda along great Czech backroads with surfaces much like the UK's.

'This car could be the answer to many a car-nut's needs. But would you actually *desire* one? That's between you and your self-image.' (evo 085)

IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

2007 (56) vRS TFSI ESTATE £5985

80,000 miles // petrol // one owner
// black // excellent service history
// 17in alloys
greenwingmotors.co.uk



2009 (09) vRS TSI DSG £7495

69,800 miles // petrol with DSG //
two owners // full service history //
new cambelt // 19in Zenith alloys
canfieldgarage.co.uk



2011 (11) vRS TDI DSG £10,490

43,800 miles // turbodiesel with DSG
// one owner // Sprint Yellow // full
black leather // full service history
john-clark.co.uk



WHAT TO PAY

£?
£4k-9k

Early, high-mileage Mk2s, privately advertised, have started to appear for around three grand, but check that service history extremely carefully. Well cared-for cars with average miles start at around £4k.

£5000-6000 provides a really good choice of '06/'07 cars with average miles and a good history, both trade and private, petrol or diesel. Post-2009 facelift cars with high miles start around £6k. A low-mileage 2010/2011 car with impeccable history and just one or two owners will be around £9k.

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MODEL FOCUS: LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO

Italian style and a mighty V10. What's not to like about Lamborghini's junior supercar?

by Adam Towler



WITH THE GALLARDO, LAMBORGHINI went from being a tiny firm building V12 supercars to shifting cars by the thousand. The model also had a long production life (2003-2013), so there are many varieties and, in particular, numerous special editions.

Carlo McCrindle at Top Gear Specialist Cars (topgear-cars.co.uk) reckons you'll need £60,000 for an early car with 40,000 miles. 'But I'd spend £70,000 to get a 2006-on car, probably a manual; e-gear then wasn't great,' he says. Around £90,000 should secure a nice 2008 LP560-4, while £100,000-120,000 provides lots of choice.

'I'd buy the highest spec manual coupe I could find for up to £80,000, or for the best investment, a manual LP550-2 Balboni,' says Carlo.

Expert view

NEIL VAS, VAS VEHICLE SOLUTIONS

'We usually have around 20 Lamborghinis in stock,' says Neil, 'and ten to twelve of those are normally Gallardos. The early cars are problematic unless they're super-low mileage, so I'd say start with the 2006 cars. They're much more robust.'

'A manual Balboni is the one to lock away as an investment. Very few came to the UK. We just sold an orange example with 19,000 miles and made £125,000.'

'A 2011/2012 Spyder is terrific value at £100,000-110,000, and it's a well-sorted, bombproof car. In fact, the later, third-gen cars are not so well regarded – it's the second generation that has the long-term appeal.'

'Gallardos were on their knees after the recession, but they're pulling up now. They are very useable, but you will damage the residuals if you do a lot of miles. Clutches are better on later cars, but it's all down to how the car is driven.'

What about manual versus e-gear? 'It's down to personal preference,' says Neil. 'No one would touch a manual and few were sold, but now people are starting to come around to it.'

The Superleggera is another special that's in demand. 'The Mk1 has rocketed in price. If you want drama, buy a Superleggera.'

Any Lamborghini is going to be expensive to run. Roberto Grimaldi runs Italian supercar specialist Grimaldi Engineering (grimaldiengineering.co.uk) and sees plenty of Gallardos. He cautions against pre-2006 cars, but says don't discount them: 'I think the early ones are fine if you get a good one. Around 70 per cent have been used as hire or trackday cars and they're in an appalling state. They can suffer from all sorts of problems; many are clocked. We're seeing a lot of accident-damaged ones, and they do eat oil. Later cars at least indicate when they're getting low, on early ones the light means it's too late. Front driveshafts wear out and clutches are over £3000. I'd say keep £20,000 in your bank just in case: these are not cars to run on a tight budget.'



SERIAL BUYER

ALASTAIR WEATHERSTONE

'I've had two Gallardos now: a yellow 2007 Spyder e-gear, which I then sold for my current 2013 LP560-4 Spyder e-gear. I've not had any trouble from either of them, apart from the cost of tyres and servicing, of course.'

'I did a trip to southern Spain in the LP560 only the other week and the car was amazing on the long journey. I thought it would be horrific, but it wasn't at all – the worst problem was the lack of luggage space. Or perhaps the fact that I averaged about 22mpg on the trip.'

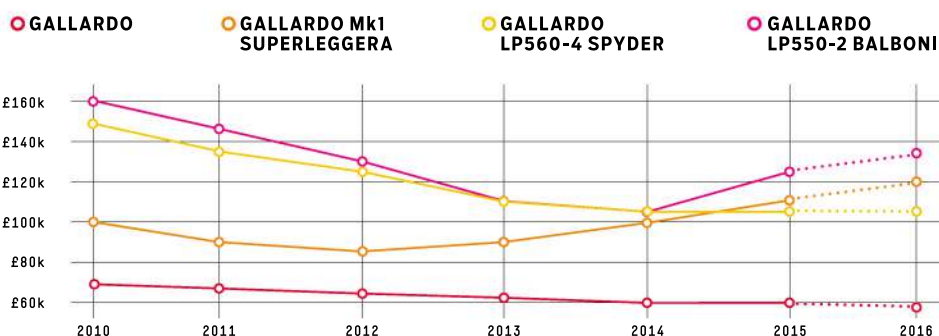
'Neil [Vas, see left] tells me my 560 is completely different to my old one, but although I know the e-gear is much improved, I don't notice a huge difference in terms of the handling and performance. I've used the 560 more on track than the old one, but the rear-view camera and phone integration make day-to-day driving easier as well. It really is a useable supercar and it's easy to drive quickly, too.'

'I'd buy another Gallardo. I'm not in love with the Huracán – it's too Audi, too soft, I think. The Gallardo was and is a dream car to me, and I just think they're great. I haven't even lost a lot of money on it.'

Trends

Values from 2010

Data supplied by Neil Vas at VVS





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 Colour
SatNav, Ceramic Brakes, High Level Rear Wing,
7,000 miles, 2010, **£379,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago LP670 SV
High level rear wing, large decal, ceramic
brakes, 2010, 12,000 miles, **£369,990**



LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR
2013, Semi Auto, 11,000 miles, sports
exhaust, premium sound system, **£254,990**



Lamborghini Diablo 6.0 VT Final Edition
Carbon Fibre Driving Zone, Carbon Fibre Inserts,
Carbon Fibre Engine Bay, 20,000 miles, 2000, **£189,990**



Lamborghini Diablo SV
TUBI Exhaust, Alcantara Sports Seats, 26,000
miles, 1996, **£169,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago V12 LP640 Coupe VAT QUALIFYING
Ceramic Brakes, Carbon Fibre Inserts, Carbon
Fibre Driving Zone, 6,000 miles, 2008 **£149,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago LP640 COUPE
Ceramic brakes, Hercules alloys, bicolour interior
2008, 13,000 miles, **£149,990**



LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO LP560-4 Spyder
Lifting Gear, Gloss Black Calisto Alloys,
Lifting Gear, 2011, **£119,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo LP560 - 4 Spyder
Lifting Gear, Reverse Camera, Electric Heated Seats,
15,000 miles, 2010, **£109,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 HIGH
Skorpius Alloys, Lifting Gears, 11,000
miles, 2011, **£106,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4 Spyder LHD
Lifting Gear Reverse Camera Full Electric
Heated Seats 8,000 miles 2009 **£101,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4 Coupe
Glass engine bay cover, Rear Camera,
7000 miles, 2008, **£99,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Spyder
Manual, Lifting Gear, Reverse Camera,
27,000 miles, 2007, **£74,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder
Calisto Alloys, Lifting Gear, 33,000
miles, 2006, **£71,990**

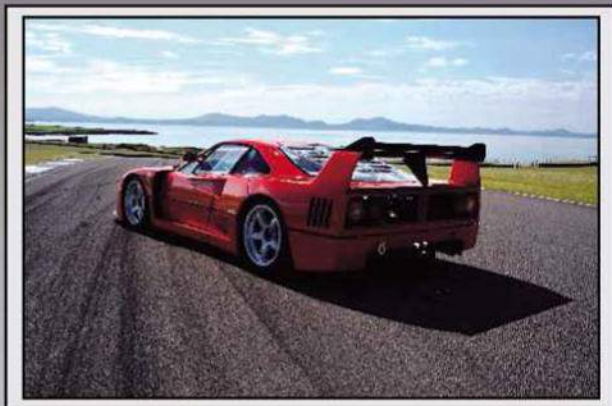
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SHOULD YOU KEEP IT?

Mazda MX-5 (Mk3)



If you can't face selling your car, take a look at the latest options to upgrade and improve it instead **by Antony Ingram**

THE LATEST MAZDA MX-5 IS SMALLER than the model it replaces, lighter, sharper-looking and feels special. If you own a Mk3 MX-5, it's enough to give you itchy feet.

However, the Mk3 is a blank canvas for affordable improvement. We'd start with a good set of tyres, followed by a full wheel alignment – MX-5s are hugely sensitive to both. A set of Toyo Proxes T1-Rs (popular with owners) in 205/45 R17 costs £256.24 delivered from blackcircles.com.

Next, we'd get a pair of Delrin door bushings (\$65 from garagestar.com). The Mk3 is torsionally stiffer than our bushing-equipped Fast Fleet Mk1 MX-5, but these bushings' ability to cut down on even minor squeaks and rattles is remarkable.

The standard stoppers should be fine unless you plan heavy trackday use, but a sharper chassis wouldn't go amiss. Owners rave about MeisterR coilovers (from £749, meister.co.uk), which are adjustable and pliant enough for everyday use.

Aftermarket news



HOONIGAN FORD ESCORT

American rally superstar Ken Block has teamed up with Japanese widebody designers Rocket Bunny to create his latest gymkhana car – a Mk2 Ford Escort. Developed by Quick Motorsport in the UK, the Escort uses a 2.5-litre, four-cylinder engine developing 328bhp with a 9000rpm rev limit.



2016 HENNESSEY VENOM GT

Tuner Hennessey has shown the latest iteration of its Venom hypercar at SEMA in Las Vegas. Power climbs to 1451bhp – a full 207bhp more than the previous car – while the car can now be run on E85 Flexfuel. Top speed is quoted as 280mph+. 'Being fastest matters,' explains John Hennessey.



HAMANN PORSCHE MACAN S DIESEL

Frugal and wieldy, the Macan S Diesel still has room for improvement. Hamann tweaks the V6 diesel's ECU for 306bhp (up from 254bhp) and 502lb ft, a gain of 74lb ft. There's a bodykit, new springs, new wheels and an app-controlled quad-exit exhaust. Collective cost? Over 28,000 euros.



HAMANN BMW M2

Hamann has also begun to conceptualise the latest BMW M product, the 365bhp M2 (Radar, *evo* 216). Without getting its hands on the new car, there's no official program yet, but Hamann is drip-feeding images onto its Facebook page – this car wears Edition Race wheels and sits on lowered suspension.

NEXT MONTH

ANALYSIS

Japanese imports: is the Far East still the place to go for a performance bargain?

USED RIVALS

British sports cars: TVR Cerbera, Lotus Esprit V8 or Caterham. We help you decide.

BUYING GUIDE

McLaren 12C: why now is the time to buy Woking's first affordable(ish) supercar.

MODEL FOCUS

Ferrari 550 and 575 Maranello: why you'll want to consider these two V12-engined Italian legends.

'Why I kept it'

TONY COLLINS

2004 NISSAN 350Z

It's *evo*'s fault that I bought a 350Z. I went halves on a new one with my brother in 2004 after the initial first-drive reviews and group tests. It was exciting and different to rivals, although we never really got as far as working out what would happen if one of us wanted to sell it. In the end, when it was about three years old I bought it from him when he had sensible things such as weddings and kids to pay for.

It was initially used as a second car for road trips to Le Mans and weekends away with mates. However, in the lead-up to me taking full ownership I started using it for more regular trips and journeys, and eventually started to commute 90 miles a day in it, which is when I did the honourable thing and bought my brother out.

'Since then it's been my only car and I can't think of a reason to change it. It's quick enough to enjoy on the road without being silly and its front-engined rear-drive layout is classic. Compared to newer BMWs with identical drivetrain layouts that I've tried, the 350Z makes you feel part of the car, instrumental in how it performs. It's a bit old school in that respect, which is why I like it so much.

'Until 18 months ago I still had it serviced by a main dealer, but a friend recommended a local Japanese specialist who is not only cheaper – by around half! – but picked up on a number of items that were overdue replacement that the main dealer had missed.

'Occasionally I have a look online for a replacement, but ignoring a 370Z, to get a new six-cylinder, manual rear-drive two-seater sports coupe with similar levels of fun and performance would cost over five times the value my 350Z!

Own an 'evo' car you can't bring yourself to sell? Email your story to eds@evo.co.uk



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LAMBORGHINI SUPERLEGGERA £129,950
2007, 19,994 MILES

In 2007 Lamborghini debuted the Gallardo Superleggera at the Geneva motor show. Named after the first production Lamborghini the 350 Superleggera the car was built with weight saving in mind. Many panels were replaced with Carbon fibre including the engine cover, door cars, central tunnel, seats and wing mirror. The car also had a 10 horse power increase over the stand Gallardo. Just 172 example were built world-wide with only 10 finding their way to the UK. This lovely example finished in Nero Osiris with Nero Alcantara, Verde calipers, reversing camera and Sat-Nav.



LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO SPIDER £69,990
2006, 11,000 MILES

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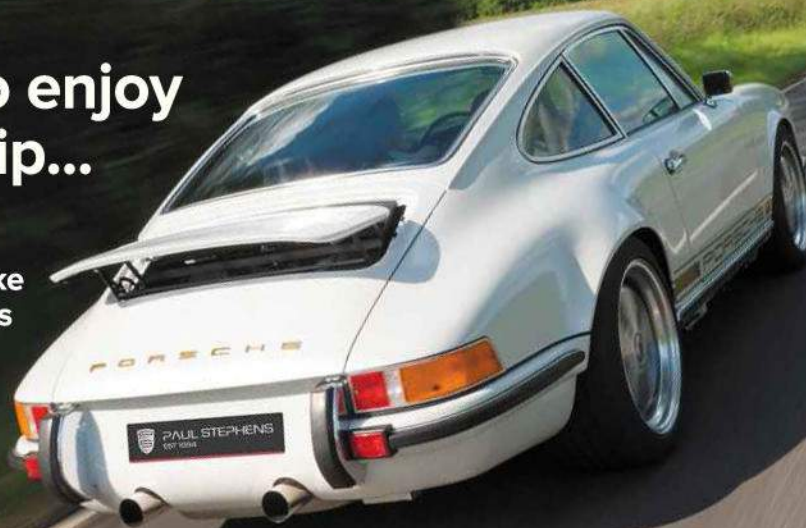
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Key ■ = new entry this month. * = grey import. Entries in *italics* are for cars no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, R = Road test or group test, F = Feature). Call 0844 844 0039 to order a back 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	237/5500	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	187R	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	211R	£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	181R	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	188R	£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 Sportback	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	106R	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	156R	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	106R	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	171/1400	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	213 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	715 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 - Scappy when pushed	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	187 D	£23,220	4/1999	271/5500	295/2150	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	216 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 1.5 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	★★★★☆



Official fuel consumption for the Volvo V40 T2 R-Design (manual) in MPG (l/100km): Urban 38.7 (7.3), Extra Urban 62.8 (4.5), Combined 51.4 (5.5). CO₂ Emissions 127g/km. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results.

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 Sub 8 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 208 GTI	184 R	£18,895	4/1598	191/5800	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 by Peugeot Sport	216 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 308 GTI 270	215 D	£28,250	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224	6.0	-	155	139	-	+ A very capable hot hatch... - that lacks the sheer excitement of the best in class	★★★★★
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	'88-'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	191/6000	177/1750	1204kg	166	6.9	17.9	143	144	44.8	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asp engine and manual 'box	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 220 Trophy	213 R	£21,780	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	183	6.6	-	146	135	47.9	+ Improves on the 200 Auto - Still not a match for previous-generation Renaultsport Clios	★★★★★
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 Mégane 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 Mégane 275 Trophy-R	215 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 Mégane 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 Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 230 FI 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 - FI Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 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	216 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 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	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 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	£23,830	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	164	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 230 (Mk3)	215 D	£26,350	4/1984	227/4700	258/1500	1345kg	171	6.7	-	155	142	45.6	+ Limited-slip diff makes for a sharper steer - It could handle more than the extra 10bhp	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 R	'05-'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?	★★★★★
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 (Mk1)	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 Mégane'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 Mi/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	4/1998	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 - Mégane 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 - Mégane 275 just edges it as a pure drivers' car	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk6)	172 R	'09-'13	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	148	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more	★★★★★
VW Golf 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 1.5 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 several (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 RS4	★★★★★
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)	216 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 - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	088 R	'05-'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	214 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	27.1	+ 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	334/3750	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	213 D	£44,865	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1590kg	214	4.9	-	155	194	34.9	+ Great chassis; neat design - V6 loses appeal in the real world	★★★★★
Jaguar XF S (2015MY)	214 D	£49,945	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1635kg	233	5.0	-	155	198	34.0	+ Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	054 R	'03-'09	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1665kg	244	5.0	-	155	-	23.0	+ Genuine 7-series rival - 2007 facelift didn't help middle-aged image	★★★★★

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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	'04-'08	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	201/6750	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	31.7	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63	209 D	£59,800	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	155	192	34.5	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate	216 R	£61,260	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1710kg	279	4.2	-	155	196	33.6	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S	211 R	£66,545	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	155	192	34.5	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	'07-'14	8/6208	451/6800	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	571/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	229	28.8	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	165 R	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	134 D	'09-'11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	155	295	22.4	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	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	571/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	£86,500	8/5461	571/5500	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 GL63 AMG S Coupe	212 D	£96,555	8/5461	571/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258	4.2	-	155	278	23.7	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 R	£87,005	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.2	-	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 MR FQ-360	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	6/3604	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	331/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 R	'07	4/2457	316/6000	339/4000	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	★★★★★
Vauxhall N 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	215 D	£54,499	8/1662	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

Jaguar XKR & XKR-S

Years 2006-2014 **Engine** V8, 5000cc, supercharger **Power** 503bhp @ 6000-6500rpm **Torque** 461lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm **0-60mph** 4.6sec **Top speed** 155mph (spec is for 5.0 XKR)



WHY WOULD YOU?

The second-gen XKR/XKR-S is thrillingly fast, effortlessly elegant and temptingly good value. Starting out with 420bhp, power rose to 503bhp when the supercharged V8 grew from 4.2 to 5.1 litres in 2009. The S upped this to 542bhp.

WHAT TO PAY

£20k-25k gets a 4.2, £30k a 5.0 or a small choice of XKR-Ss. Low-mileage XKR-Ss can top £70k.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

The engine and gearbox (a ZF auto) are both reliable. Warped front discs point to cheap aftermarket replacements or just bad driving. Fault codes displayed on the dash often point to a failing battery – a good quality replacement should make them disappear. A wet carpet in the passenger footwell points to a blocked drain pipe for the air-con condenser. (Full guide, [evo 211](#).)

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Our Choice

Porsche Boxster Spyder. The Boxster is the benchmark in its class for a good reason: it's simply a fabulous all-rounder. The new Spyder, which gets the 3.8-litre engine from the 911 Carrera S, would be our pick, but the 3.4-litre GTS and S, and even the basic 2.7, are all true five-star cars, too.



Best of the Rest

Lotus's Elise 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 3.24S	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	+ Consume a 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 TT S 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 TT S Roadster	122 D	'08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/1500	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	\$66,770	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 - Wibble 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	★★★★★
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	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 R	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★★
BMW 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	£19,710	4/1660	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	\$23,795	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	\$27,795	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	214 R	\$30,795	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg	381	4.3	-	136	-	-	+ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620R	187 R	\$50,795	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	545kg	578	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR	094 R	\$47,295	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	\$154,460	8/3855	552/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	196	250	26.9	+ Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily usability 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	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Mad looks; real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than you'd hope	★★★★★
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	★★★★★

PAST master

Back in 2000, David Vivian drove the 534bhp, 204mph Chevy V8-engined British supercar to Le Mans

Ultima GTR Issue 017, March 2000

'Feed in the heavy, competition clutch too abruptly and cold-rubber wheelspin is available in any of the first three gears. But, on the N158, the GTR is no trickier to drive quickly than a 911. In some ways it's easier. Grip is so astonishing, I can push the pace without remotely approaching the chassis' limits. 'With only pristine blacktop ahead, I drop the hammer.

And the GTR's hammer is so very heavy. Three lunges of sustained savagery send the speedo needle twanging into three figures. Pulverising push.

'Never mind the new 911 Turbo, be unconcerned about any Ferrari, F50 included. The only road car swifter than the Ultima is the McLaren F1, and then not by much.'



AS FEATURED IN

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CAR of
the YEAR
2015

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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 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 (SI)	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	197/7000	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	197/7200	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	1000kg	161	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 SLK 350 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 SLK 55 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 SLK 55 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 SLK 55 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 GT-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	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	077 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smacking pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 R	'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 Spyder (981)	215 F	£60,459	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	180	230	28.5	+ The fastest, most rewarding Boxster yet - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Radical SR3 SL	174 R	£69,840	4/2000	300/6000	265/4000	775kg	393	3.4	-	161	-	-	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm	★★★★★
Radical SR8LM	138 R	'09-'12	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal	★★★★★
Renault Sport Spider	183 R	'96-'99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	131	-	-	+ Rarity, fabulous unassisted steering feel - Heavier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	187 R	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 R	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR 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?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/3950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Vuhl 05	215 D	£59,995	4/2000	285/6000	310/3000	725kg	405	3.7	-	152	-	-	+ Impressive pace and quality - You can get a more thrills from a Caterham at half the price	★★★★★
Zenos E10 S	214 R	£30,595	4/1999	250/7000	295/2500	725kg	350	4.2	-	145	-	-	+ Neutral and exploitable - Prescriptive balance	★★★★★

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Our Choice

Porsche Cayman GT4. Porsche's Motorsport department has finally been let loose on the Cayman and the result is exactly what we all hoped for. In fact it's so good it won our 2015 **evo** Car of the Year test – even despite the 991-generation 911 GT3 RS also being in attendance. Who saw that coming?



Best of the Rest

The 911 GT3 RS is still fabulous, of course (it came third at eCoty 2015). If you fancy something less hardcore, Mercedes' AMG GT S (left) is deeply satisfying on many levels, Aston Martin's V8 Vantage N430 and V12 Vantage S are thoroughly entertaining, 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	£72,000	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 GT3 (E92)	176 D	£12,13	6/2979	402/6000	398/4500	1535kg	266	4.4	-	186	224	-	+ Alpina's M3 GTS alternative - Auto gearbox frustrates when pressing on	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage	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 Vantage GT12	214 R	£250,000	12/5935	592/7000	461/5500	1565kg	384	3.5	-	185	-	-	+ The GT3-style Vantage we've been waiting for - Only 100 being made	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Zagato	146 R	£99,13	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 DB9 GT	214 D	£140,000	12/5935	540/6750	457/5500	1785kg	307	4.5	-	183	333	19.8	+ More power; still has bags of character - Needs eight-speed auto 'box	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS	142 R	£72,12	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 TTS (Mk2)	193 R	£88,14	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	£99,14	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	£5,06	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	£72,15	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	★★★★★
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	2255kg	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	£72,13	8/3999	444/8300	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	£72,07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	+ One of the best BMWs ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel	★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (E46)	088 R	£72,07	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	£33,04	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	£72,06	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	£72,05	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 Camaro Z/28 *	216 R	£72,000	8/7008	505/6100	481/4800	1732kg	296	4.2	-	175	-	-	+ Scalpel-sharp engine, great chassis (really) - Feels very stiff on UK roads	★★★★★
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	£80,000	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	£12,15	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	£92,03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	168	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK	★★★★★
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 boistrous	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	214 R	£91,660	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1730kg	318	4.1	-	186	269	25.0	+ Better in the wet - Less involving in the dry	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 R	£99,14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	£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 RCF	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	★★★★☆
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	£6,11	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	£4,08	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	875kg	219	4.9	-	147	-	32.1	+ Highly focused road and track tool - Lacks visual impact of S1	★★★★★

POCKET buying guide

TVR Tuscan

Years 1996-2006 Engine In-line 6-cyl.
3996cc Power 360bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 310lb-ft @ 5250rpm
0-60mph 4.4sec Top speed 180mph
(spec is for 4.0 Mk1)



WHY WOULD YOU?

Because there's nothing quite like the Tuscan on sale today: properly powerful, rear-wheel drive, serious power-to-weight ratio, and nothing to get you out of trouble if you get it wrong.

WHAT TO PAY

Tidy early cars are £15k-16k, but get an inspection. Properly sorted cars with (probably) a rebuilt engine are mid to high-20s.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Early engines suffered valvegear wear, oil starvation and other woes. By 2005/06 the engine was sorted, so the later the car, or the more recent the rebuild, the better. Meticulous servicing is essential: every 6000 miles, with tappet clearances set every 12,000. Look out for oil leaks, signs of overheating, and excessive noise on start-up. (Full guide, **evo** 212.)

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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 (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...	★★★★★
Lotus Evora 400	216 R	£72,000	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.1	-	186	225	29.1	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing	★★★★★
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 quirks, 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	571/5500	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	731/2300	2110kg	299	4.1	-	186	279	23.7	+ Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63!	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 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 Track Edition	216 D	£88,560	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.7	-	196	275	24.0	+ Recreates much of the Nismo's ability, without the rock-hard ride - Interior feels dated	★★★★★
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 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)	216 R	£64,451	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288	4.4	-	183	238	27.4	+ Evo Car of the Year 2015; 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	£83,455	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 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 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)	216 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	★★★★★
Radical RXC	189 R	£94,500	6/3700	350/6750	320/4250	900kg	395	2.8	-	175	-	-	+ A real trackday weapon - Can't match the insanity of a Caterham 620R	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo	205 R	£129,000	6/3496	454/6000	500/3600	940kg	491	2.6	-	185	-	-	+ Eats GT3s for breakfast - Might not feel special enough at this price	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo 500	209 D	£143,400	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1100kg	490	2.6	6.8	185	-	-	+ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use	★★★★★
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	1275kg	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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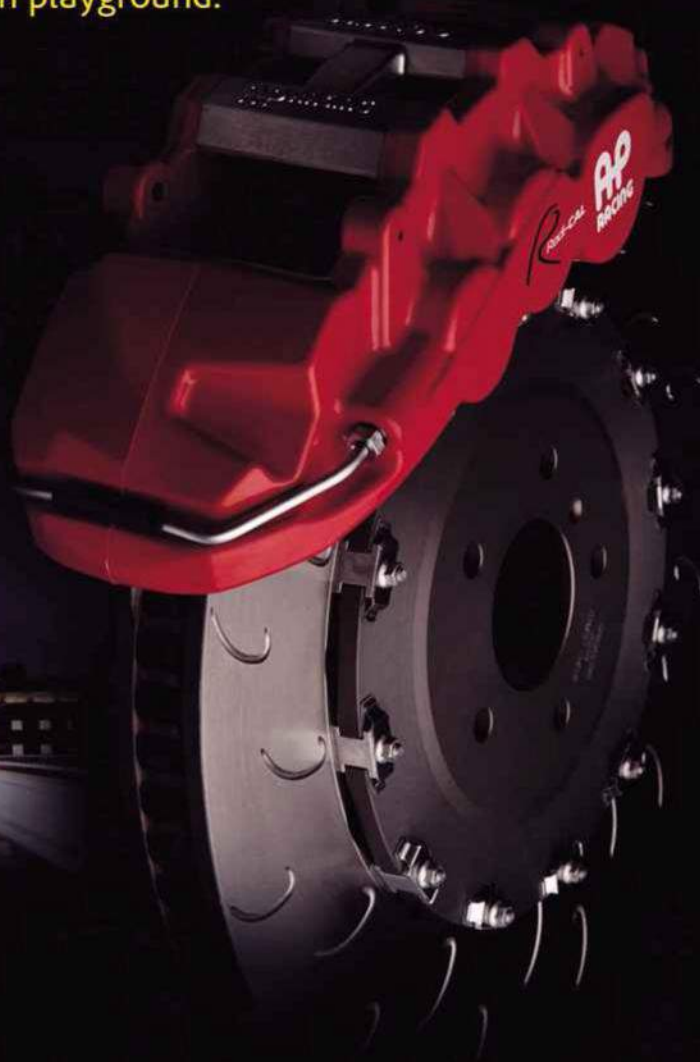
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Our Choice

Ferrari 458 Speciale. 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. It was our 2014 Car of the Year and is equally brilliant in open-top 'Speciale A' form. Grab one while you can!



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.... McLaren's 675LT might make you wonder if you need a P1, however. Meanwhile, Lamborghini's Aventador offers true supercar drama, especially in Superveloce 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	
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	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	213 D	£134,500	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1555kg	393	3.2	-	205	287	23.0	+ Timeless drivetrain, huge performance - Needs to be driven hard to really engage	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
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 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	216 R	£183,964	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1475kg	455	3.0	-	205+	260	24.8	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 Spider	216 D	£204,400	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1525kg	440	3.0	-	203+	260	24.8	+ As above, but with the wind in your hair - See left	★★★★★
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 Speciale	203 R	£208,100	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	£241,053	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 car 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	£238,697	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'	★★★★★
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	8/3498	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 CCRX Edition	118 R	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	250+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spikey power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán LP610-4	209 D	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1532kg	399	3.2	-	202+	290	22.6	+ Defines 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	216 R	£321,723	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg	493	2.8	-	217+	370	17.7	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent	★★★★★
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	1655kg	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	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren 570S	216 R	£143,250	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1313kg	435	3.1	-	204	258	25.5	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar(!)	★★★★★
McLaren 650S	196 R	£195,250	8/3799	641/7250	500/6000	1428kg	456	3.0	-	207	275	24.2	+ Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Costs an extra £19k	★★★★★
McLaren 675LT	216 R	£259,500	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	510	2.9	-	205	275	24.2	+ Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag	★★★★★
McLaren 12C	187 R	'11-'14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating	★★★★★
McLaren P1	205 R	£866,000	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1395kg	658	2.8	-	217	194	34.0	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track	★★★★★
McLaren F1	205 R	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	6.3	240+	-	19.0	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 R	'10-'15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	4.1	8.4	197	308	21.4	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	204 R	'13-'15	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	196	321	20.6	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	073 R	'04-'07	8/5439	611/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	★★★★★
Noble M600	186 R	c£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg	551	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★

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 TTR S	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

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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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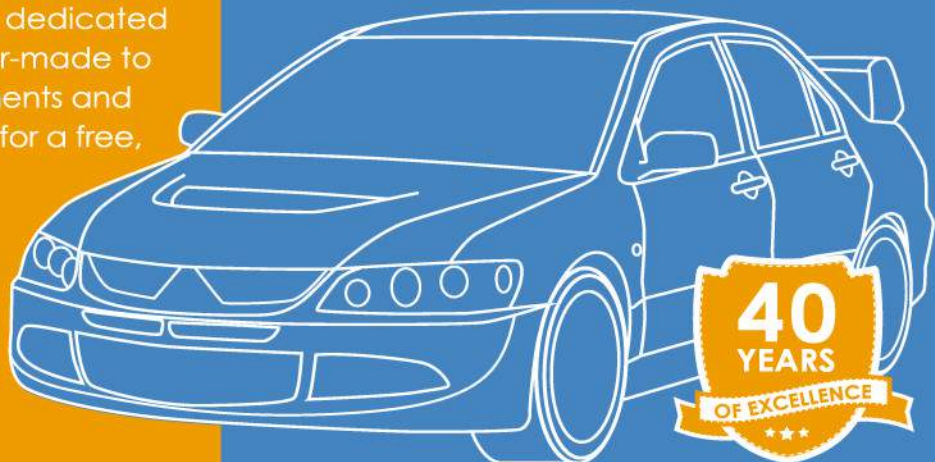
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Art of speed



Koenigsegg One:1 active wing

by RICHARD LANE | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

K KOENIGSEGG. TWENTY-ONE YEARS OLD and mixing it with the big boys at the bleeding edge. Damn impressive. And it doesn't try to be them, which is part of the appeal. So, no elements of single-seater in the bodywork (legitimate for Ferrari or McLaren, contrived for almost anybody else) or imitation of any sort. The cars have a laconic design but intense performance, like a fast-forward Nordic noir.

This month's art is part of a *mästerverk* that starts with the cartoonishly quick Agera R and adds speed. Indeed, if you ever wanted to know what happens when your factory is at an airfield and you have 24/7 access to the runway, the One:1 is the answer. Naturally, its wing is huge; a proper whaletail, as curvaceous as it is shockingly broad. And like almost everything else on the car, its two tiers are made of carbonfibre.

The One:1's wing is conspicuously held from its upper surface to keep the downforce-generating underside smooth. The tapering buttresses that it hangs from may seem an extravagance but their *raison d'être* is a functional one. If the support stalks sit just in front of the wing, as is standard practice, they create small disturbances in the airflow. As such, the wing doesn't realise its true potential.

This might suffice for GT3 or DTM cars, but it won't do for a machine that somehow has to harness 1341bhp and has a theoretical top speed of 273mph (limited by the wing itself). So the buttresses extend straight back from far in front of the wing and are cut away underneath to leave space for the airflow to reform before it gets sliced up. They also act as rudders, stabilising the chassis at speed.

Overall it seems an immaculate solution, and everything, wing included, weighs just nine kilos. For a system that helps develop 610kg at 174mph (remarkably similar to the McLaren P1) that's scarcely believable.

Sitting up at 25 degrees during braking (an angle that best balances drag and downforce) and lowering to minus six for big speeds, the wing is also mobile, or 'active'. This might seem odd at first, as the thick pylons that manipulate wing angles on rivals such as the P1 and Veyron are absent. Why doesn't Koenigsegg need such hardware? Because hydraulically actuated hollow-carbon pushrods fixed to the rear bulkhead are hidden within the buttresses and generate just enough force to overcome the mammoth pressures acting on the wing and alter its angle.

Just another reason why the company's motto is The Spirit of Performance, not Posing. **x**

EVO NEXT MONTH **New 911 Carrera meets its rivals**

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