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@evoNickTrott



IN 2016, EVO WILL FEATURE a number of cars that challenge the concept of the Thrill of Driving. And I mean *really* challenge it. You might be

horrified by some of the vehicles we'll be looking at in detail, but I promise that you'll be reaching for the chequebook with some of the others. Either way, we hope to inspire a debate about what the Thrill of Driving is and where it is going.

We are in a transitional period. Urbanisation and the growth of megacities, particularly in China, has seen car manufacturers tackle the elephant in the room: how necessary is car ownership? BMW DriveNow and ZipCar capitalise on the fact that in densely populated areas, where parking and garaging are concerns, car ownership is less important than on-demand car usage.

Or look at it another way: most people use a car for around six per cent of the day yet pay hundreds in monthlies (and more in depreciation) for it. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a smartphone will cost hundreds but you'll be glued to it. These ratios (good-old value for money) are clearly perceived by the next generation of motorists.

So a divergence will occur for future motoring enthusiasts that will see a gulf open between the car as tool and the car as toy. We're fascinated

'Car ownership is less important than on-demand car usage'

by this shift, and will continue to report on the technologies shaping the future of motoring. And yes, that does mean autonomous cars.

However, our main aim in 2016 is to investigate those vehicles that shift the Thrill of Driving into new territories. Henry Catchpole's excellent test on page 98 is a perfect example – on the face of it an excuse for Henry to do what he loves (eat mud), but also an opportunity to explore the off-road as a new terrain for the Thrill of Driving.

And what of the emergence of the performance 4x4 – heavily modified Land Rover Defenders and the like? A challenging subject, but we'll tackle it fairly. And if that puts you off, don't worry, we've got a fascinating line-up of cars, characters and adventures that will knock your socks off. Think tank drivers, Mexican deserts, motorcycle-engined dune-bashers, the world's fastest street cars – and the warring factions that build them. It's going to be a fascinating year. We might even review a Porsche at some point too... ☒

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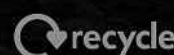
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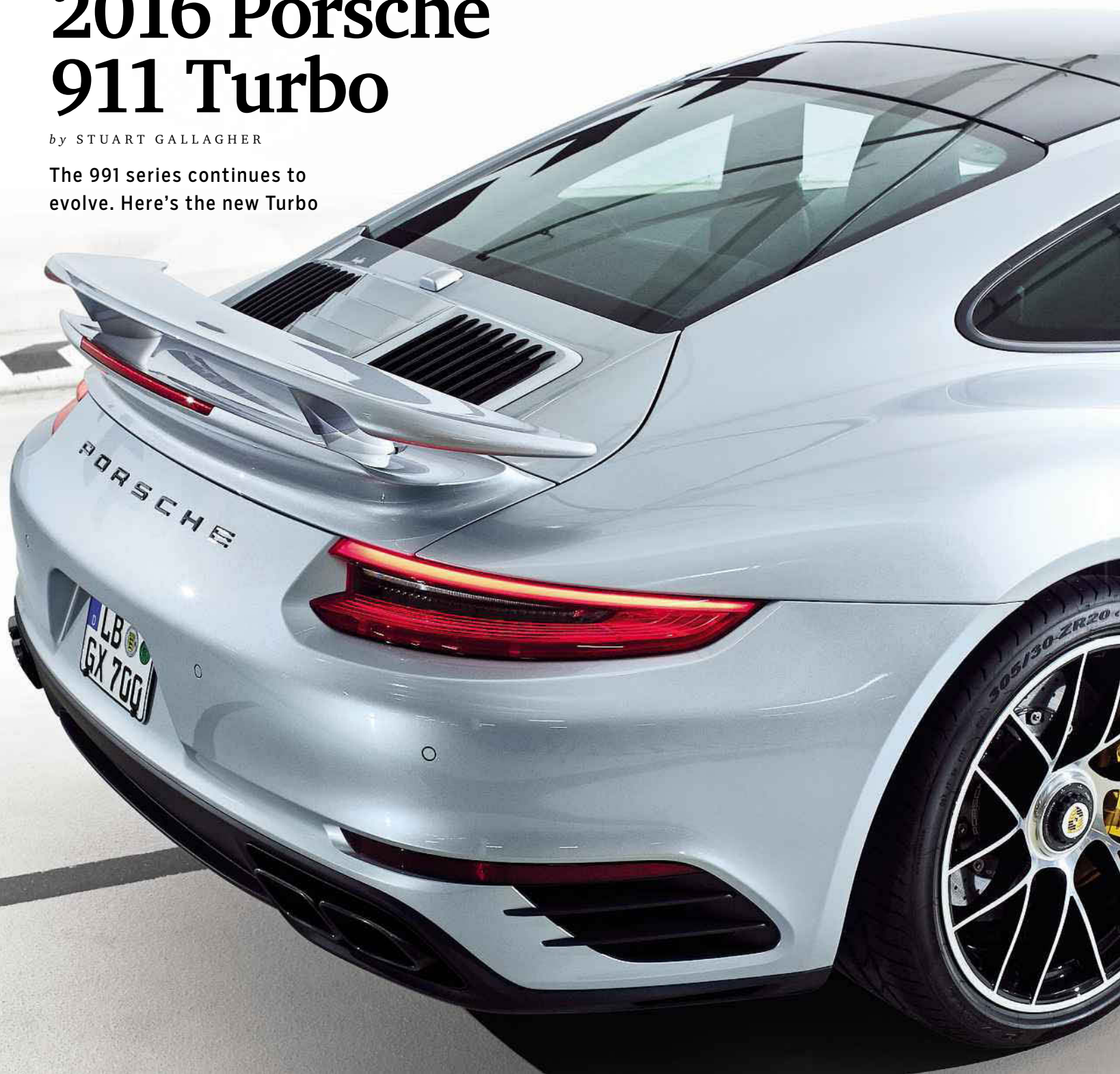
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2016 Porsche 911 Turbo

by STUART GALLAGHER

The 991 series continues to evolve. Here's the new Turbo



What is the point of the 911 Turbo? You know, the proper *Turbo Turbo*? The one that's been in continuous production since 1974 and which in that time has seen its turbo count double (along with the number of driven axles) and its peak power climb by as much as 313bhp.

Today its underling, the once naturally aspirated Carrera, now features a turbocharger on each of its banks of cylinders, and, judging by this month's cover story, it doesn't hold back in how it uses them, either. And then there are the GT cars: the GT3 and its unhinged RS offspring. The 911 line-up has always been tightly packed, but now, more so than ever, is there a risk that perhaps the most famous 911 of them all could be marginalised in an ever-growing super-sports-car segment? Where

once it ruled with no direct rivals, Audi, Jaguar, AMG and McLaren have all rocked up with class winners and compelling alternatives to the once-unouchable 911.

From a driving perspective, we'll find out in a couple of months where the new 991.2 Turbo sits in the 911 range – and the wider super-sports-car sector. For now, this is a chance to remind ourselves just what we can expect when its blown flat-six comes on boost for the first time.

Two examples will be offered – the Turbo and Turbo S – and as before both coupe and cabriolet body styles will be available. The 3.8-litre boxer six has been retained, along with the variable turbine geometry first seen on the 997 Turbo in 2007. Power gains are marginal – up 19 and 21bhp for the Turbo and Turbo S respectively, to 532 and 573bhp – with peak torque

unchanged at 524lb ft and 553lb ft and delivered via the engine's over-boost function. Both versions can now hit 62mph in 3sec or less, and the Turbo S is only the second series-production 911 to crack 200mph.

The seven-speed PDK gearbox has been updated and four-wheel drive is a given (as it has been since the 993 Turbo appeared in 1994) with the Porsche Stability Management system featuring a new Sport mode. PASM active damping remains as standard across the range, but Turbo S models also get Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control as standard, joining the ceramic-composite brakes that have been a standard fit on the range-topping S since the 996 in 2004.

Along with the rest of the second-generation 991 range, the new Turbo has been nipped and tucked inside and out. There are new front and rear

bumpers, new LED lights, new door-handles, new 20in wheel designs and a new engine cover. Inside, there's the latest PCM infotainment system, Porsche's new, 360mm-diameter 918 Spyder-inspired steering wheel, and various quality upgrades across the interior. Steady evolution rather than revolution is the order of the day.

For so long the 911 Turbo occupied a sector of its own. It delivered the performance of supercars from a class above, but on price, space and practicality it pummeled the opposition from the class beneath. However, in the last half-decade or so, the Turbo's grip has begun to weaken as the attacks have come thick and fast from all angles.

Audi's R8, Jaguar's F-type R, the Mercedes-AMG GT and most recently McLaren's new 570S have all taken on the 911 Turbo and left their mark. In

“The new Turbo S is only the second series-production 911 to crack 200mph”



IN DEPTH

1 ENGINE

New variable-geometry turbos with larger compressors are chiefly responsible for the power hikes, along with modified inlet ports for the cylinder heads, new high-pressure injectors and higher fuel pressure rates. There is also a dynamic boost function to improve throttle response and help eliminate turbo lag. It works by maintaining the charge pressure during load changes (a throttle lift, for example): instead of closing the throttle, it interrupts the fuel flow through the injector.

2 BRAKES

Two set-ups are used: iron discs (380mm diameter front and rear with six/four-piston calipers front/rear) on the Turbo, and ceramic-composite discs (410mm/390mm and six/four-pot calipers front/rear) as standard on the Turbo S and available as an option on the Turbo.

3 SUSPENSION

PASM active damping is standard across Turbo and S derivatives and has been recalibrated to work with the new PSM stability settings. The Turbo S also has Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control (PDCC) included. Rear axle steering is standard on both models.

4 CHASSIS

PSM is standard on both models but now includes a PSM Sport mode. More extreme than its predecessor's Sport Plus mode, the thresholds at which the system cuts in are set much higher and are designed for optimum on-track performance. You can still turn all the stability and traction systems off if you desire.



Time the new Turbo S takes to reach 100mph from a standstill

SPECIFICATION (TURBO S IN BRACKETS)

Engine	Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo
Power	532bhp @ 6400rpm (573bhp @ 6750rpm)
Torque	524lb ft @ 2250-4000rpm (553lb ft @ 2250-4000rpm)
0-62mph	3.0sec (2.9sec)
Top speed	198mph (205mph)
Weight	1595kg (1600kg)
Power-to-weight	339bhp/ton (364bhp/ton)
Basic price	£126,925 (£145,773)
On sale	Spring 2016

RIVAL
McLaren 570S

Having had its nose bloodied by the 570S in *evo* 217, the Turbo S will want revenge on the Woking upstart. Where the Porsche will need to up its game is in the purity of its controls, on-limit adjustability and, crucially, allowing the driver to be part of the process of covering ground at absurd speed.

Engine	V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo
Power	562bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque	443lb ft @ 5000-6500rpm
0-62mph	3.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	204mph (claimed)
Weight	1313kg
Power-to-weight	435bhp/ton
Basic price	£143,250

205
mph

Top speed of the Turbo S, the first 911 Turbo to crack the double ton

272
bhp

Horsepower difference between original 930 and new Turbo

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE 991?

We've had the new Carrera turbos, the Carrera 4 and Targa 4 turbo models are on their way, and now the Turbo itself has been updated for 2016, although in comparison to the changes wrought on the Carrera it's a mild makeover rather than a revolution. So what about the rest of the range?

The much-rumoured 911 R will appear in the summer or 2016, but that won't be turbocharged and there's every possibility that it may be the last hoorah for the last naturally aspirated 911. Chances are we won't see a gen2 991 GT3. We will, however, get a new GT2 and possibly a GT2 RS. The previous version of the latter was a 620bhp monster, so think McLaren 675LT levels of power and performance. It will be the wildest 911 of all.

NEW BLOWN BOXSTER AND CAYMAN ON THE WAY, TOO

Porsche's strategy of rolling out turbocharging across its road car range continues with the news that the Boxster and Cayman models are both to receive new flat-four turbocharged engines in 2016. To mark the switch to forced induction, the models will get a new series identification number, switching from the current 981 to 718.

Technical details are light at the moment, but we expect two engine capacities to be offered (unlike the new Carreras, which share a 3-litre capacity) of between 2 and 2.5 litres for the entry model and between 2.5 and 3 litres for the S.

Power outputs will be around 275bhp for the smaller-capacity motors and around 320-330bhp for the S models. A seven-speed PDK gearbox will still be offered, but it's thought the 911's seven-speed manual could replace the current car's six-speeder, a switch that could answer criticism of the 981's overly long gearing.

For the first time the Boxster will also cost more than the Cayman, a move that will bring the mid-engined cars into line with the 911, where the cabriolet models have always commanded a premium over their coupe counterparts.

1595

kg

Weight of the new Turbo

£145,773

List price of the new Turbo S

573

bhp

Output of the S, 41bhp more than the regular Turbo

the case of the McLaren they've left more than a mark, the 570S delivering a thumping knockout in *evo* 217. Meanwhile the likes of Nismo's GT-R continue to goad Porsche at the Ring.

So this new Turbo has multiple challengers – and challenges – to contend with. A Turbo has never left you wanting in the performance stakes; I doubt anyone has stepped out of a recent 911 Turbo S and said: 'You know what that needs? More power.' But they may have walked away wishing there was the detail in its steering and the poise in its chassis that's offered by the GT cars – and, to a lesser extent, the Carreras, too.

The main gripe we can level at the first-gen 991 Turbo is that whatever playfulness and adjustability there is, it's only available at the very extreme of its performance window, a window that's out of reach on the road. Where the new kids from Audi and McLaren engage you on both road and track, the 911 Turbo has increasingly veered

you towards the track in order to fully enjoy and exploit its talents. So we'd certainly like the new car to engage us more at road speeds.

Of course, the Turbo has always been a multi-faceted 911, delivering that crushing performance with GT levels of useability. That's something the 991 in particular excels at, thanks to Porsche eliminating the deafening tyre-roar of its predecessor. But in recent years both Jaguar's F-type R and the AMG GT S have dived into that market, delivering an equally compelling GT proposition.

The 911 Turbo has grown in ability and desirability with each generation, its performance increasing at an almost uncatchable rate. But recent rivals have given Porsche and its customers food for thought, as has the new Carrera turbo. It could just be that this new competition will allow the 911 Turbo to refocus on its role of being, once again, the only supercar you'll ever need.





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Along came the Spider

McLaren confirms 675LT Spider for summer 2016

BEFORE THE VERY FIRST McLaren 675LT coupe was delivered, every one of the 500 that were to be built had been sold. Which was good news for McLaren, not so good for those who wanted an example of the very best Super Series model the company had produced. The £285,450 675LT Spider was never going to be that far behind in the production launch strategy, and this is our first glance at the car and its headline specs.

As with the 675LT coupe, the Spider utilises carbonfibre throughout the body to reduce weight (front bumper, larger splitter and end-plates, front underbody, side skirts, side intakes, lower side intakes, lower rear body, wings and bumpers, rear deck and diffuser and the long-tail airbrake). The 666bhp 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8 is carried over, and McLaren quotes a dry weight of 1270kg, just 40kg more than the coupe despite the addition of a powered folding hardtop.

The cockpit has carbonfibre-shelled seats similar to those first seen in the P1, a Meridian hi-fi and no air-con (it's available as an option but adds 16kg to the total weight). The only other difference between coupe and Spider is that the former's Club Sport Pack (titanium roll-hoop, four-point harnesses and fire extinguisher) isn't available on the latter.

Deliveries are due to start in the summer. Just 500 will be built and we've a feeling they won't hang about.

666/516

the peak bhp and lb ft produced by the 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8

2.9_{sec}

The Spider's 0-62mph time is identical to the coupe's

203_{mph}

Maximum speed – 2mph slower than the 675LT coupe

15_{kg}

Weight saving of fitting P1 carbon-shelled seats

533

bhp/ton: the Spider's power-to-weight ratio

£25,950

Extra cost of the Spider compared with the coupe



Where now for VW?

Dieselgate rumbles on, but what does VW's strategy hold for fast car fans?



BUGHT A NEW DIESEL Volkswagen recently? With UK sales down a fifth year-on-year in November, an affirmative answer may not be as forthcoming as it once was. We're yet to see the full extent of Volkswagen's 'dieselgate' scandal, but the company's statements in a recent VW Group strategy talk suggest future Volkswagen will be a humbler, more honest, more sustainable company than it is today.

A company devoid of interest for fans of performance cars? Don't count on it. With Bugatti Chiron development in the advanced stages, the VW Group's flagship was never likely to be cancelled for reasons other than symbolism, but the scandal may yet even prove beneficial for the Group's more exciting cars.

The reason is restructuring. According to one product specialist, the Group's prestige brands – Audi, Bentley, Bugatti, Lamborghini and bike manufacturer Ducati – will have greater autonomy. Within individual brands, dedicated product teams will

make decisions, each with their own strategy, R&D and finance teams.

Decisions will be made in-house, without having to report back to the VW Group board. The outcome could result in less red tape for new product development and less reliance on shared technology among brands. While engineers and designers are unlikely to be given free rein, it should breed a more agile, creative environment within each manufacturer.

While the assertion of CEO Matthias Müller (above) that 'anything not absolutely necessary will be cancelled or postponed' sounds ominous, he also says that brands will have 'a greater degree of independence' to 'promote entrepreneurial thinking'.

And if you have bought one of the models affected by dieselgate? It might not be bad news for you either – Volkswagen has confirmed that remedial action won't affect your car's performance, and a compensation package is being readied for any drop in your car's residual value.

EVO SAYS

Dieselgate may have knocked public confidence in VW, but it should lead to more independence for individual brands, with freedom to create more interesting cars – provided they make commercial sense. The last part may preclude anything too wild, but the prospect is still mouth-watering.

There's no better excuse for VW to green-light its Ducati-powered

XL Sport, or enliven the budget hatchback market with the stillborn Up GT. Audi could double down on aluminium vehicles – imagine a truly lightweight TT – and might Ducati take on the KTM X-Bow with a compact, mid-engined roadster? Any of these would be welcome additions; hopefully the new VW thinks the same.

Antony Ingram

2

The number of LMP1 919 Hybrids Porsche will enter in the 2016 FIA World Endurance Championship and at Le Mans.

365

The final number of P1 road cars built by McLaren. Production has now ended.

2020

The year Porsche will deliver its first all-electric sports car.

£1,153,000

The value of stolen cars fitted with a Tracker recovered in October 2015.



Formula E-type

Remember Jaguar's last foray into single-seater racing? Jaguar would probably rather you forgot its F1 adventure as it announces its latest endeavour – the 2016-2017 FIA Formula E championship.

The brand will join Audi, DS and Renault in Formula E, as the electric series enters its third season in late 2016. The move should give Jaguar a dash of green kudos – not to mention technical experience – ahead of the launch of a fully electric road vehicle before the end of the decade. Jaguar will work with technical partner Williams Advanced Engineering.

'We looked in detail at alternative ways of returning to motorsport,' explained James Barclay, Jaguar Team Director. 'With our future EV plans, Formula E was the obvious choice and we believe that the benefits are enormous.'

While Jaguar achieved great success in sports car racing and touring cars, its adventure into Formula 1 between 2000-2004 was less than successful. In 85 races Jaguar Racing scored just two podiums, with Eddie Irvine at the wheel. The team has not yet announced its Formula E driver line-up.

Antony Ingram



SLC43 AMG tops SLK replacement line-up

Mercedes has revealed the forthcoming SLK (its new name for the SLK roadster) along with details of a range-topping AMG model – the 362bhp SLC43.

With power coming from the same 3-litre twin-turbo V6 that's found in the company's GLE Coupe 450 AMG SUV, the SLC43 will channel 383lb ft of torque to the rear

wheels via a 9G-Tronic automatic gearbox. A mechanical limited-slip diff will be a cost option. With 54bhp and 15lb ft less than the outgoing SLK55, the new model is a tenth slower to 62mph at 4.7sec, according to Mercedes' own figures.

The new SLC43 will go on sale in March 2016 with prices set to be announced nearer the time of the car's launch.



Dr Frank- Steffen Walliser

He was in the charge of the 918 Spyder project, and now he's head of Porsche Motorsport. Walliser spells out the importance of racing to Porsche, and what we can expect in 2016 and beyond

DR WALLISER'S AMBITIONS



On the road car side, to keep the GT model-line (GT3, etc) healthy and prospering



To retain the character of the GT road cars, despite homologation requirements, new regulations and CO2 targets



Not to look too much to the past and make old cars as a result



To not always look at turbos. Naturally aspirated engines are nice, too



To offer products in customer racing – from Clubsport to R – that people will enjoy driving as well as winning races in

PORSCHE MOTORSPORT covers GT4, GT3 and GT3 RS road cars as well as racing cars up to LMP1 919. The road cars mainly exist, and are bought, because of our success in motorsport. Image is important. But it can't be forgotten that Porsche Motorsport sells cars, on the racing side and the road side. We are the biggest manufacturer of racing cars in the world.

'The technology transfer is important. The "GT" road cars feature the tech from the race cars and they are the ones that take the technology first. Also, they are the homologation basis for our race cars.

'So for sure we have a relatively big customer race car business – starting with GT4 Clubsport. I think we sold out after just three days on sale! We also have the 911 GT3 Cup, the new 911 GT3 R, then the 911 RSR. Of course you have a big organisation for spare parts, and engine and gearbox service – everything you need. We are also involved in more

ten or 12-cylinder engines – we have a small, naturally aspirated V8 plus some hybrid technology with more or less the same as the 919 WEC car and it is the fastest road-legal car in the world for acceleration and track performance.

'The customers at the end of the day ask for performance and driveability – how we do it as the world changes is not getting easier when you consider homologation and regulations. Electric drivetrains? No problem. Also, why not have a V4 turbo in a street car?

'Looking back on the 918 Spyder project, at the beginning it was only ideas. But we had a bunch of people who believed in those ideas. The achievement is that we took the big steps. Nobody knew how the electric motors would affect the driving behaviour.

'My philosophy was that if it was easy to drive, it would be quick. It was an important milestone for Porsche – showing that hybrid can be fun.

“You don't need multi-cylinder engines. Electric drivetrains? No problem. Also, why not have a V4 turbo in a street car?”

than 450 races per year that we organise and support – one-make cups mostly – with customers all over world. It is significant for Porsche...

'The whole LMP1 programme is a challenge – mostly around fuel economy – and we can learn about that for the road car business. The 919 has a 2-litre V4 turbo and the 911 race car has a 4-litre six-cylinder naturally aspirated engine, but the 919 is 18 seconds faster and uses 60 per cent of the fuel. This is the miracle of the LMP1 car.

'For GT cars we have restricted engines – so we have learned a lot about friction reduction. The less friction you have, the more power you have. This technology transfers to the street cars, or even the 919 – this is the big thing we learned from the GT programme.

'Do supercars of the future need to have multi-cylinder engines? We have proved with the 918 that you don't need

'The 918 is the most powerful engine in the world in terms of bhp per litre – we have 132bhp per litre. Nobody thought this was possible. The engine is running with a two-ring piston, not three. Nobody has ever done this before, or thought it was possible.

'Customers have not asked for a "special" track-only 918 Spyder. Maybe they buy a GT3 R – the experience does not get much better than one of these race cars. Mostly, they say: "I take a proper race car."

'The GT4 Clubsport came about late last year when I took on the job and looked at how to grow our business and where we could expand our product range. At the same time, the Cayman GT4 was close to its debut and we said we should make an entry-level race car out of this. Definitely not a Cup car, otherwise it would be the same as the 911 – no, we wanted a genuine

Clubsport racer that was easy to operate, with reasonable costs, with pieces from production line. Also, the main goal was that you could have fun, but also take on some bigger cars.

'We had a stormy four weeks of discussions: product content, talking about manual and PDK, slicks or street tyres... After four or so weeks, we had a clear mission for the project. We put together a team of six or eight people and I said: "I want to have this car in production this year." And now the car is already in production at the factory. We did a lot of testing through the summer. It did not start well because we destroyed the first car after two laps at the Nürburgring – but it happens.

'We have a motivated team making this type of car happen, plus marketing supported it and the board supported it – in fact they said yes after about five minutes! But then we had a nice business case behind it.

'Does this mean a GT4 RS is closer to reality? Normally we don't have a problem with ideas (laughs), but we cannot do everything at the same time!

TAKING ON THE BIG BOYS

At just 44 years old, Frank-Steffen Walliser has already brought the 918 Spyder to life and now heads up Porsche Motorsport. I spoke to him in Bahrain, the day after Porsche cleaned up in the FIA World Endurance Championship, and it was clear that, despite an incredible first year in the job, his eye is very much on the future of Porsche.

Perhaps his most telling comments were about the future of hypercars. He wouldn't be drawn, of course, but after his success with the 919 race car (and the clear respect he has from the Porsche board) I would not be surprised if discussions are already underway for a next-gen 918 Spyder that uses a four-cylinder, turbo-hybrid powertrain.

After all, the current race car reliably delivers over 600bhp and can nudge 1100bhp in qualifying trim. Match this performance with crisp throttle response and a sonorous engine note and a 'Walliser' hypercar successor to the 918 could be something else.

Nick Trott

ASK GOODWIN

You win the EuroMillions and can have any car, bike and 'plane you like. What will you choose and why?

**Sebastian Green,
Inverness**

Fantastic. I'll start with the car because that's the most difficult. If I'm allowed a race car, I'd have the ex-Jackie Epstein/Paul Hawkins Lola T70 that's currently for sale. I'd race it with Meaden, Bovingdon and other mates in classic endurance events. If it's got to be road-legal, I'd build my own classic 911 hot rod along the lines of Dario Franchitti's. About 300bhp and under a ton would do nicely. And if it has to be a modern, I'll have a Cayman GT4 in a non-standard colour.

Now to the two wheels. This is really difficult because I don't like classics and I can't think of a modern that I'd like to own more than the Triumph Tiger 800 that I already have. Again, I think I'll make my own special. Something in the flat-tracker/scrambler style because I'm no longer bendy enough for a café racer. Think I'd buy a written-off modern Triumph Bonneville and start from there. Tune up the engine a bit, shave some weight, keep it really simple.

Now to the aeroplane. Here's where the millions come in really handy because, although the purchase price of most of my favourite aeroplanes is low compared with classic cars, the running costs are outrageous. A Spitfire is an obvious choice. I've flown one and it was the most undisappointing experience of my life. But everyone's got one, so I want something different. After an awful lot of thought, it's come down to a De Havilland Mosquito. There are only two airworthy in the world. Two Merlin engines and tremendous performance, with over 400mph possible. And even room for a passenger.

Any drivers, riders or fliers out there with an alternative trio?



We have a double-header for you this month. A ferry ticket will be required and at least ten days off school if you want to do the job properly. The event we're looking at is the Pau historic festival, which in 2016 takes place on the weekend of May 28/29. The double bit is the modern European F3 championship meeting that runs the weekend before over the same street circuit.

My suggestion is that you drive down to Pau, an attractive city in the foothills of the Pyrenees in south west France, spend a day watching the F3 racing (which I'd rather do than watch F1) and then head off for a few days' driving in the Pyrenees. Jaguar has taken to using the mountain roads around Pamplona for launches and they're amazing. Anyway, after some



Pau Historic Grand Prix

Pau's street circuit is steeped in history, and it's a great destination for classic motorsport



Above: classics like the Cobra provide plenty of spectacle and a striking contrast with the modern F3s that race the weekend before the Historic

city. A Belgian called René de Knyff won it in a Panhard & Levassor. And, excepting breaks for a couple of World Wars, there has been racing at Pau ever since.

The first motor race to be called a Grand Prix was held there in 1930. The GP returned to Pau in 1935 on the same circuit that is used today. In fact, the Pau street circuit is the oldest unchanged track in the world that's still in use for international motorsport. In the 1960s the fabulous Formula 2 championship featured a round at Pau, while F3 and F3000 visited in the '80s and '90s. The FIA's European F3 championship returned last year after a break and, as mentioned, is doing so again in 2016.

The 1.72-mile street circuit is not unlike Monaco but with more greenery. Historic racing started here in 2001. The event would occasionally precede the modern race, and at least one hotshot youngster – Harry Tincknell – managed to blag himself a drive in a historic car the week before to learn the circuit. He blitzed the regular opposition (driving a Lotus 20 Formula Junior) and put a few noses out of joint.

brilliant and unfettered driving, you can return to Pau and spend the weekend watching old machinery thrashing around.

But before we get to the event, first a history lesson – and Pau has some history. The first race in the area took place in 1900, starting in Pau and following a 300km road route before arriving back in the



If, like me, you love old single-seaters, then the Pau historic is not to be missed. The Historic Grand Prix Car Association attends, and there are races for historic F3, historic Formula Ford, which is always great to watch, and for pre-1966 F1 cars. If you prefer wheels to be enclosed, there's a race for saloons with engines under 1300cc, which means lots of Minis, NSU TTs and, of course, plenty of homegrown machinery such as Matra Djets and Alpine A110s. For bigger bangs, there's a pre-1977 GT race, which attracts a predictable crowd of 911s, Mustangs, Corvettes, the odd Morgan Plus 8 and more.

As at most historic racing events, the car park at Pau provides plenty of entertainment between races. Many French car clubs attend the event, so there's plenty to see and

plenty of tyres to kick. All this and a historic city with loads of decent restaurants, too.

No UK airline flies direct to Pau, but easyJet goes to Toulouse, which is about 120 miles away. Or, if you really want to spend some money, Air France flies to Pau from Paris. Don't fly, drive there. Better still, drive there and follow my advice and dip down into the Pyrenees. You've got plenty of ferry options, from a simple Dover to Calais crossing or Portsmouth to Le Havre to get a few miles done overnight. The quick route by car is to take the autoroute the whole way, but that's a waste, too. Avoid the tolls and head south via the Cognac region and then through the Dordogne. I've done that drive a few times but not the last bit to Pau. I'll wager there are good roads down there, too.

GPS 43.293710, -0.362091

Length 1.72 miles

Direction Clockwise



FOCUS

HOW SELF-DRIVING CARS WILL ENTERTAIN US

WE ARE ENTERING A very exciting time for personal mobility. Autonomous cars are creeping out of the realms of futuristic fantasy and are now tangible things thanks to the boffins at companies such as Google, Bosch and Tesla. Within just a few years they could be available to the general public.

But when they've finished marvelling at their car's autopilot abilities, what exactly will occupants be doing with their newfound free time? Mercedes has some suggestions, which it is previewing in its F015 research vehicle. The car debuted at the CES electronics show in Las Vegas in January 2015 and we recently got up close with it in its latest form.

The F015 is intended to be seen as not just as a personal mobility device but more of a mobile living space, with Mercedes placing a large emphasis on augmented reality and virtual reality technologies. We sampled the car on a demonstration rig that showed how an autonomous journey could become more engaging with augmented reality technology. For example, holding your hand up to monuments or buildings as you are driven past them unlocks a world of information about them on the car's windscreen.



Above: the F015's high-tech distractions mean its steering wheel could go unused

“Imagine being whisked through ugly city streets while you enjoy views of racetracks or B-roads...”

This technology is relatively simple, and relies on optical finger tracking, GPS co-ordinates and locally stored data. The displays currently being used are 3D projections such as those you can experience in a cinema today. However, Mercedes suggests that future technologies could project images directly onto the retina of your eye...

Using virtual reality headsets, we were next treated to an experience akin to one which

Mercedes predicts will be possible in the next few decades. It showed how the F015's interior could augment or even block out the outside world, with your own choice of surroundings projected into your headset. Imagine your car whisking you through ugly city streets while you enjoy views of racetracks or B-roads that move perfectly in sync with the car.

Meanwhile, on a much more simple level, six integrated touchscreen displays around the car, including four covering the door panels, offer passengers another way to interact with the connected vehicle.

Autonomous cars may hold limited appeal to petrolheads seeking engaging driver involvement. However, for those monotonous journeys along motorways and in daily traffic, the future that Mercedes is predicting undoubtedly has its place.



ASK MIKE

Your tech questions answered

Q Why do brakes fade under hard abuse? – Johanna Leigh

A There are three main reasons for reduced brake performance under heavy use: temperature, geometric changes and brake debris.

When the temperatures of the materials increase, the friction coefficient reduces, meaning a reduction in ability to slow the car.

Also linked to temperature changes, the shape of the discs and the pads can both become distorted, meaning that the full surface area might not be in use.

Lastly, brake debris can get in the way of optimum braking. Hot gases and parts of the brake pad released during hard use can act as a lubricant, reducing performance.

Send your question to experts@evo.co.uk



TECH GAME-CHANGERS

DISC BRAKES

First patented: 1902 by Lanchester
First used: Jaguar, Le Mans, 1953



We've come a long way since the first systems that pulled horse-drawn carts to a standstill. Back then, a wooden block was pressed against the circumference of the wheel. This method was even used on some of the first cars, with

a block pressed against the outside of the rubber tyre.

Slowly but surely the brake blocks (now known as shoes) were moved closer to the axle and housed inside a metal liner (drum). Drum brakes are still fitted on the rear axle of many

new cars, as the rear axle doesn't convert as much kinetic energy into heat as the front.

However, the front axle needs a setup that isn't prone to overheating and losing efficiency. This is where disc brakes come in.

They feature a disc that rotates with the axle, plus a fixed caliper containing brake pads that can pinch the rotating disc.

The first showcasing of the advantages of disc brakes was by Jaguar at Le Mans in the 1950s.

The reduction in fade due to the open-disc design meant that the cars could brake later and harder than drum-equipped rivals. In the years that followed, disc brakes would become the norm on the front axle of road cars.



2004 Ferrari Enzo Chassis no. 135564

1989 Ferrari F40 Chassis no. 80161; Originally owned by Stefano Casiraghi

1981 Lamborghini Countach LP400 S Series III Chassis no. 1121358

2007 Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren Chassis no. 391

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TRACKDAY TIPS

HOW TO GET THE BEST FROM TRACKDAY TYRES

If you've ever fitted trackday tyres to your road car and ventured out onto a dry circuit, you'll have experienced the increased grip levels such focused rubber can generate. Braking, traction, turn-in, high-speed stability – they all benefit

from a tyre that's been designed specifically for high-speed track driving.

But while many track-tyre users will have seen corner speeds increase, few will truly understand how to maximise their rubber

over the course of its lifetime. To discover a few tricks of the trade, we caught up with reigning BTCC drivers' champion Gordon Shedden and Honda Yuasa Racing technical director Barry Plowman at Dunlop's pre-season tyre test.

WARM UP

Build your pace gradually over one or two laps to avoid overheating the tyre. Shedden explains: 'In an ideal world you would go flat-out from the very first lap, but you don't want to

abuse the tyre because you'll suffer later on.'

The key is to avoid sliding when the tyre is cold. 'It's tempting to just go for it, but really you're trying to

take the tyre to 99 per cent of its capability, not 101 per cent. You want to drive the car through the seat of your pants to minimise the sliding until temperatures are up.'

REDUCE GRAINING

'Graining is when rubber is dragged across the surface of the tyre because it's sliding around,' explains Plowman. 'When a tyre starts to grain, the best thing to do is ease off.' Graining doesn't just shorten the life of your tyre, it can also have detrimental effects on overall performance. A lap or two at half-pace should stabilise temperatures and prevent graining.

AVOID EXCESSIVE WHEELSPIN

Wheelspin is the quickest way to wreck a pair of tyres – as well as making you look like an idiot. 'As you spin up a tyre, you take away the good rubber on the inside of the shoulders,' says Plowman, 'but as you go to turn in, you need that rubber to get the initial grip to start loading up the tyre. Once it's gone, you'll lose grip in all avenues.'

FINE-TUNE

Your car's suspension and tyre pressures are crucial to prolonging the life of your tyres, and maximising their performance too. Fine-tuning pressures and geometry can help you find your optimum setup. 'Be sure to change one thing at a time in small incremental amounts,' advises Plowman. 'Otherwise you can easily end up going the wrong way and doing more harm than good.'



CONTINENTAL WINTERCONTACT TS 860

Continental chose to launch its new WinterContact TS 860 tyre at Finland's Levi Rally Center. With thick snow and sub-zero ambient temperatures to contend with, it made for a near-perfect location to demonstrate the capabilities of this new winter tyre.

The new tyre replaces both the TS 850 and TS 850 P (a performance winter tyre). With one tyre doing the jobs of two, the TS 860 will have to possess a broader range of abilities. For that reason, both the tread pattern and the compound are new. A high proportion of silica helps trim braking distances by as much as five per cent compared with the TS 850, and a flexible polymer matrix improves traction on a wide range of cold surfaces. 3D grooves boost snow handling, and multi-channel sipes help to maximise grip on ice.

To demonstrate the new tyre's abilities, we were provided with two cars: a new BMW 1-series equipped with TS 790s (a design that's nearly 15 years old), and a 60,000-mile-old E36/5 BMW 3-series Compact shod with TS 860s. The old car shone on snow, with more traction, stronger braking grip and a more agile front end. Its tyres were also far more predictable on this surface than those fitted to the 1-series. Winter tyre tech has come a long way in a short time.

The tyre receives a C rating for fuel efficiency and a B for wet braking (up from C and C respectively). Available from autumn 2016 in sizes ranging from 155/65 R14 to 225/50 R17, more sizes will be added in due course.



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DMS 135i (BMW CAR MAY '09) "THE STANDARD CAR IS GREAT BUT DMS HAVE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL"

DMS 997 TURBO 3.6 (EVO SEPTEMBER '08) "IT'S EPIC, HILARIOUS AND ADDICTIVE IN EVERY GEAR, YET DOCILE WHEN CRUISING"

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- 318D/218D/118D » 225 BHP
- 330D E90 » 296+ BHP
- 320D E90 » 215 BHP
- 420i/320i/220i/120i » 275+ BHP
- 435i/ F30 335i » 390 BHP
- 428i/328i » 295 BHP
- 535D / 335D / X5 SD » 355+ BHP
- 640D/335D/535D/435D » 390 BHP
- 730D » 305+ BHP
- X5 4.0D / 740D » 370 BHP
- X5 3.0D » 305 BHP
- X6 X5.0i 4.4 » 500+BHP
- X6 M50D/X5M50D/550D » 450 BHP

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- A220CDi/C220CDi/E220CDi » 215 BHP
- C350/CLS350/E350/S350 » 315 BHP
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- 997 GT3 UP » 436 BHP
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- MURCIELAGO LP640 » 707 BHP
- MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0S PETROL » 470 BHP
- MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0 PETROL » 400 BHP
- MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0 DIESEL » 312 BHP
- MASERATI GT/SPORT » 438 BHP
- MASERATI GT S / MC » 479+ BHP
- BENTLEY 4.0 T V8 » 690 BHP
- BENTLEY CGT / F-SPUR (INC 2013) » 680+ BHP
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- BENTLEY SUPERSPORT » 720+ BHP

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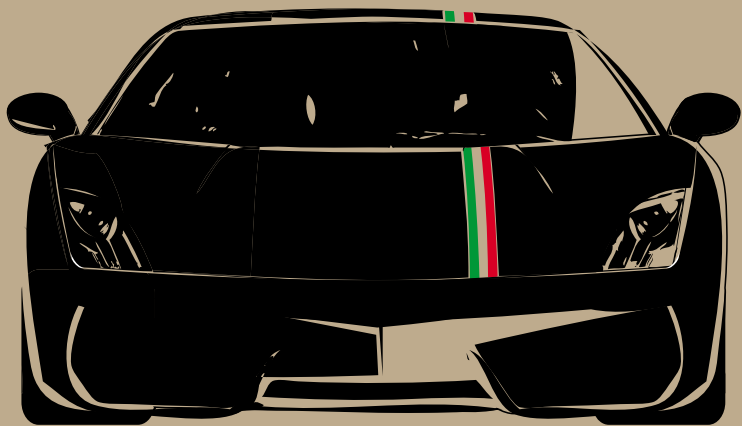
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NO LIMITS: IMPOSSIBLE IS JUST A WORD

Yet to hit general release, *No Limits* is worth waiting for. Produced by the team behind *Adrenalin* (see Essentials, *evo* 205), the story of Alex Zanardi's recovery and rehabilitation following a horrific crash in 2001 is inspiring, uplifting and absolutely unmissable. stereoscreen.de



ROAD: NOTHING TO FEAR, EVERYTHING TO LOSE

The Dunlop family and the Isle of Man TT are inexorably linked – both through the family's dominance of the event over 30 years, and the danger and tragedy of road racing, which claimed Joey Dunlop's life in Estonia in 2000. Liam Neeson narrates the family's emotional story. amazon.co.uk



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THE DRIVER

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The email to *evo* staff was simple: pick a driving film that isn't *Le Mans*, *Grand Prix*, *Bullitt* or *Ronin*. In the end, *The Driver* won out: it has one of the best car scenes ever (with Ryan O'Neal in a car park) and 'dialogue limited to about six words', according to Dickie Meaden. Perfect. amazon.co.uk





You can't hide from the truth

In-car telemetry and data logging has long been a preserve of the aftermarket, but not anymore

ADVANCES IN IN-CAR infotainment have made our driving lives immeasurably easier over the last few decades.

We now have a greater choice of radio stations and internet streaming services. The car recognises our phone as we get in, enabling hands-free calling or playing our favourite music. Satnavs are more accurate than ever, directing us around traffic snarl-ups without any input. And if we really feel the need, we can complain about the glacially slow Honda Jazz in front of us directly to Twitter.

But what if we want in-car technology to serve a higher purpose – making us better, faster drivers, recording our trackday antics or

our car's performance? For taking accurate data for our track testing at **evo**, nothing other than a VBOX will do, but manufacturers such as McLaren now provide solutions more relevant to ownership, too. This is the modern face of in-car data logging.

VBOX

The most important item in a road tester's toolkit is the data logger. We use a Racelogic VBOX Lap Timer, which in my experience is the company's most reliable and intuitive product yet. It doesn't have a straight-line-performance testing function, so we use a separate device for that, but for circuit activity it gives us an invaluable insight.



Above and left: Racelogic VBOX and its antenna. **Far left:** lap timer is part of Porsche's Sport Chrono package. **Below:** McLaren's Video Data Logger includes a camera mounted above the driver's shoulder



With an antenna attached to the roof of the car, the Lap Timer tracks a pair of satellite constellations to record accurate data. During a track session the predictive lap-timing mode is enormously helpful, because you know corner by corner if your current lap is quicker or slower than the best lap in that session. If it shows a positive figure you know you can bail out of that particular lap to give the brakes a rest; if it shows a negative number you know to keep pushing on.

Once we're back in the office we upload the data from the memory card to a laptop and use Racelogic's own software to deep-dive the results. You can get a pretty good impression from behind the wheel of where one

car is quicker than another, but by interrogating the data we can make very detailed, objective comparisons.

One particular test springs to mind. I could tell that the SEAT Leon Cupra Ultimate Sub8 had monstrously powerful brakes, but I hadn't realised that they were actually enabling me to brake a full 40m later for a particular corner than in the Honda Civic Type R in *evo* 215. That's exactly the sort of insight we rely on data loggers for.

Dan Prosser

McLAREN TRACK TELEMETRY

McLaren didn't introduce the concept of data logging to production cars, but it's one of the first to provide such a

comprehensive solution for owners of certain models it makes, such as the 570S or 675LT.

Mixing and matching several features previously available only on the aftermarket, the McLaren Track Telemetry (MTT) app is a custom application through the IRIS infotainment system that records telemetry data. Combined with an optional Video Data Logger (VDL) component, owners can view video footage overlaid with car data.

VDL uses a camera in each bumper to record front and rear images, while one mounted high in the cabin is perfectly placed to catch sloppy steering inputs and panicked corrections. Accompanying data is generated using GPS positioning and timing information, all collated through IRIS.

The MTT information can be viewed in-car via IRIS – allowing for immediate feedback after some tuition – while the VDL footage and accompanying speed, throttle and brake-position and gearshift data can be viewed later on a Windows PC.

Video evidence on YouTube suggests users won't quite get beautifully high-definition, GoPro-style footage from their recordings, but if anything, this backs up the system's uses as a training tool, rather than a toy to record heroic moments at your local trackday. As McLaren's vehicle controls manager, Richard Felton, explains, 'Customers enjoy driving on track and MTT enables them to analyse and improve their performance in very precise ways.'

There's enough quality to spot where you've missed an apex or braked too early – driving errors easier to appreciate and digest with an instructor in the paddock, or even sitting at home on the sofa, than they are in the heat of the moment on track. According to Felton, owner feedback has been very positive, with genuine lap-time improvements.

The system is still in its early stages, but McLaren is already planning upgrades – including ways of sharing experiences. Expect to see a lot more McLaren onboard videos on the internet over the next few years...

Antony Ingram

NOW & THEN

In-car navigation



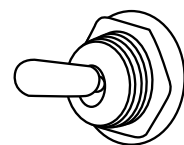
The first experience most of us had with in-car navigation was watching Sean Connery casting his eyes over a small round map screen in the 1964 Bond flick *Goldfinger*. Yet it would be 16 years until any form of navigation aid became standard fitment in a passenger vehicle, when Toyota introduced an 'Electronic Auto Compass' in the Crown saloon.

Toyota was first with a true satnav, too, with a CD-ROM-based system in the 1987 Crown. But it was Japanese rival Mazda that introduced the first GPS-based satnav, in the Eunos Cosmo – a car better known for its three-rotor Wankel engine – in 1990.

In-car navigation devices became popular in the early 1990s, though they were long restricted to manufacturers' range-toppers; Oldsmobile introduced GPS navigation to the US in 1995, while Renault's Safrane did the same for Europe with a CD-based Philips setup the same year.

Satnav usage really blossomed after 2000, when the US opened up more accurate GPS signals – previously reserved for military use – to the general public.

Today's systems are hugely sophisticated, adapting suspension or gearchanges based on GPS data. You can probably guess who got there first: Toyota, with the 2008 Crown.



**ON
OR
OFF?**

Memory seats

evo staffers are all too familiar with adjusting a car's seats. For Tim Burton on *evo*'s Facebook page, memory seats are well worth having: 'A blessing if you share a car,' he explains.

REVIVAL OF A LEGEND

THE NEW **C9 GT40** POWER RESERVE – 40 PIECE LIMITED EDITION



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WATCH TECH

Ferdinand Berthoud FB1 chronometer



The name of Ferdinand Berthoud has not appeared on the dial of a timepiece since the late 19th century, but it has now been revived by Chopard on a small series of ultra high-end chronometers costing €220,000 apiece.

Berthoud was born in 1727 and became a highly celebrated clockmaker who, at the age of 47, was appointed horologist mechanic to George III and the British Navy. In recognition of this, the new FB1's hand-wound movement features a beautifully engineered fusee-chain regulating system – an arrangement that offsets the diminishing force of the mainspring as it unwinds and which was once popular in marine applications for the accuracy it provides.

The chain itself measures 28cm outstretched and comprises 474 minuscule steel links that are held together by 316 pins, each just 0.3mm in diameter.

The case of the watch is fitted with special 'portholes' that enable the regulating mechanism and other bits of the 1120-part movement to be seen.



THIS MONTH

TAG Heuer Connected Watch

Price: £1100
From: tagheuer.com

TAG Heuer's long-awaited 'connected' watch is finally here, complete with computing know-how from Google and Intel. Based on the Carrera drivers' watch, the digital newcomer can show the wearer's choice of a three-hand, GMT or chronograph dial, with information being displayed in touch-activated counters. It can also run Android Wear apps and communicate with Android or iOS phones via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi. After two years, buyers can exchange the watch for a traditional, mechanical Carrera if they wish – provided they also hand over another £1100...



Autodromo Group B

Price: £690
From: pageandcooper.com

New York-based industrial designer and classic car fan Bradley Price has invoked the spirit of the '80s for the latest watch from his Autodromo brand. The 'Group B' features a dial inspired by the tachometer of a Lancia 037 rally car and a case made from titanium and steel. Weighing just 52 grams, the 39mm-wide watch is powered by a Japanese Miyota automatic movement and is supplied with two quick-change 'race harness' style straps – one in grey, the other in colour to match the dial markings and hands, for which the options are yellow, blue, red or white.



Pita Roadster V2

Price: €3975
From: pita.es

If you're looking for a watch that's different, consider the new Roadster V2 chronograph from niche Spanish brand Pita. Just 49 examples of the model will emerge from the Barcelona workshops of 68-year-old independent maker Aniceto Jimenez Pita, who has created a dashboard-inspired design for the dial of this 44mm drivers' piece. The watch features a lightweight 'bullhead' titanium case in a choice of graphite diamond-like carbon or micro-matt finishes. An aluminium version is also available at €3575. The watches are made to order, and delivery time is around three weeks.

CHRONO



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



EUROPEAN WATCH COMPANY FOB WATCH

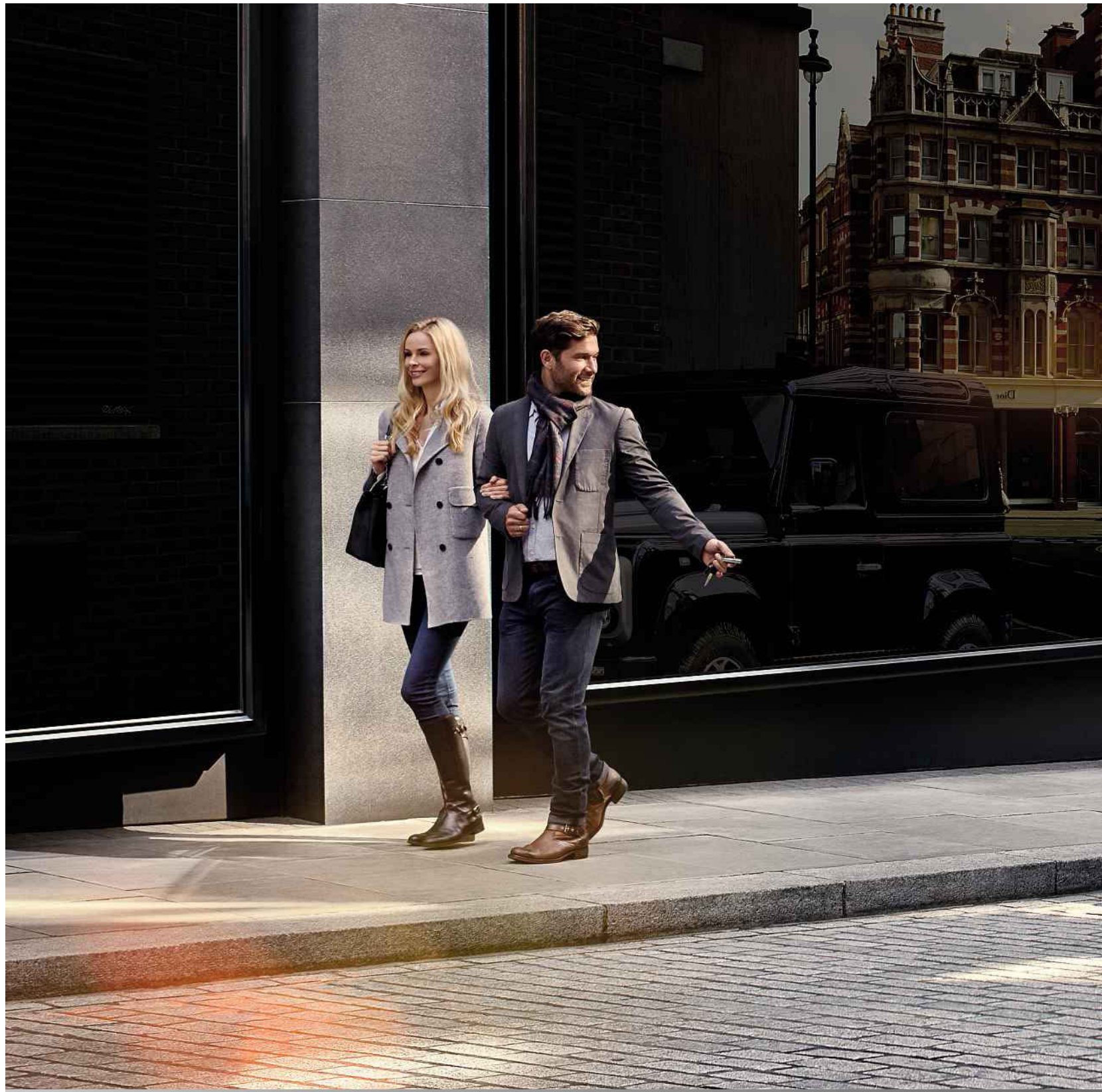
As worn by Graeme Hunt, classic car dealer

'I have worn a fob watch for more than 30 years, and when I was head of sales at Rolls-Royce and Bentley dealer Jack Barclay I used to keep one hanging from a wooden cradle on my desk. Right now, I'm wearing an unusual fob watch made by EWC. It's

made from white gold and features a sweep seconds hand at six o'clock. It hangs from a white gold chain, which also holds a miniature white gold steering wheel to match our company logo.

'I love wristwatches too, and my favourite is

probably my Anonimo Militare [pictured front], but I've also been wearing a white gold IWC Portugueseer chronograph recently. It's fitted with one of the Gentleman's Classic perforated drivers' straps that we sell through the business.'



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ZENOS E10 R // SEAT IBIZA CUPRA
MOUNTUNE FIESTA ST MR320 // ALPINA D4 TOURING
LOTUS EXIGE SPORT 350 // JAGUAR C-X75



Test location: Portimão, Portugal GPS: 37.22892, -8.63162

VW Golf GTI Clubsport

Chassis tweaks, trackday hardware and encouraging nomenclature. Could this be the Golf GTI to take the fight to Renaultsport?

IN 2016 THE GOLF GTI will celebrate the big four-oh. To mark the occasion, Volkswagen has developed the Clubsport, which is the fastest and most focused Golf GTI variant to date. With up to 286bhp – more of which in a moment – a revised chassis setup and the option of super-sticky Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres, the Clubsport is compelling evidence that life really does begin at 40.

The 'Clubsport' moniker conjures up images of door roundels and harnesses, of Perspex side windows

and a latticework of roll-cage. This car, it's fair to say, is a less ambitious interpretation of the theme. Volkswagen isn't targeting the hardcore Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R – a true trackday machine – with this model. Instead, it's supposed to retain the everyday useability of the standard car while being a little better cut out for track and fast-road driving. The price is yet to be confirmed, but Volkswagen says it'll slot in between the GTI Performance Pack and the four-wheel-drive Golf R, which indicates a cost of around £29,000.



The team

This month, we asked our road testers which car they are most looking forward to driving in 2016.



NICK TROTT
Editor

'Lots of rumours floating around about a 911 R. That's my choice'



STUART GALLAGHER
Managing editor

'Just one? BMW M2, Ford GT, Focus RS, NSX, C63 Coupe are all on the list'



HENRY CATCHPOLE
Features editor

'The new Ford GT. If it's even half as good as it looks, it will be amazing'



DAN PROSSER
Road test editor

'I've only got eyes for the Ford GT. Stunning, and such high expectations'



JETHRO BOVINGTON
Contributing editor

'I feel bad for saying it, but Bugatti Chiron. Can't wait for a 1500bhp bear hug'



RICHARD MEADEN
Contributing editor

'I'm hugely excited about the Ford GT. Also intrigued by the NSX and have high hopes for the Aston DB11'



DAVID VIVIAN
Contributing editor

'BMW M2 will be fascinating. After the uneven M3, it simply has to be the nuts'



ADAM TOWLER
Contributing road tester

'Focus RS. Four-wheel-drive fast Ford. It'll be like being back in the early '90s again'

It still uses the familiar EA888 2-litre turbo engine that powers other performance Golfs, but with a curious split power output. Volkswagen quotes peak power as 261bhp – a useful 34bhp gain on the Performance Pack GTI – but for ten-second bursts it'll actually deliver 286bhp. We're used to modern turbo engines having an overboost facility to deliver more torque for short periods, but this two-stage power output is more unusual.

Volkswagen reckons it's a bit of fun, a token of sorts to differentiate the Clubsport from regular GTI

models. Push the engineers a little harder, though, and they will admit that the Clubsport couldn't tread too heavily on the toes of the more expensive, 296bhp Golf R. It's best to consider the Clubsport a 261bhp car that occasionally gives you a bit more power. If you approach it as a 286bhp car that sometimes denies you full power, it makes rather less sense...

'Peak' torque output is 258lb ft, swelling to 280lb ft on overboost. It's developed between 1700 and 5300rpm, which suggests an effortless muscularity throughout

the rev range. A six-speed manual gearbox is standard fit with a six-speed DSG available as an option, while a limited-slip differential – lifted from the Performance Pack – distributes drive between the front wheels. Volkswagen quotes a 5.9-second 0-62mph time for both gearboxes and a 155mph top speed.

To the eye, the Clubsport's aerodynamic devices look very modest indeed, but they actually play an important role. The slightly deeper front splitter, blink-and-you'll-miss-it rear diffuser and the boot spoiler not only take

aerodynamic lift out of the car, they also create downforce. Karsten Schebsdat, VW's head of vehicle dynamics, describes the level of downforce acting on the front axle as being slight, but he says rear-axle downforce is significant.

The Clubsport, then, is the first Golf to generate downforce. It's also the only car in Volkswagen's current line-up that doesn't create any lift. Volkswagen chooses not to quote actual figures, but it would be fair to say that in itself the downforce created by those aerodynamic devices isn't significant enough to be



felt when on the move. What it has meant, though, is that Schebsdat and his team have been able to revise the chassis settings as a direct result.

There's a parallel here with the proliferation of four-wheel-steer systems on modern performance cars. By turning the rear wheels in unison with the front wheels, engineers are able to increase rear-axle stability so significantly that they can actually dial in a much more agile front end. So it is with the Clubsport's aerodynamics: by making the rear end that much more stable, the chassis settings could be revised to make the front end more responsive. Springs rates are up by ten per cent all round and the

dampers have been retuned, but more significantly roll resistance has been moved rearwards. This makes the rear axle more playful and adds more grip to the front axle.

'The car definitely is more precise and stable,' says Schebsdat, whose CV includes the Mk1 Ford Focus, the Mk5 Golf GTI, a number of Preuninger-era GT Porsche 911s and the current Golf R. 'It's more fun to drive with less understeer and it's much quicker in the corners.'

The standard tyres are 18-inch Bridgestones, with the Cup 2s a 19-inch option. The latter is the same rubber that sticks the Trophy-R and (optionally) the SEAT Leon Cupra Sub8 so resolutely to the road, and it could do even more to change

'The balance has certainly been shifted towards oversteer'

the Golf's character than those expansive chassis revisions. The brakes are the uprated items used by the Performance Pack models (340mm discs up front). Dynamic Chassis Control is optional.

The Clubsport's cabin is very familiar from the rest of the range, although the Alcantara-trimmed steering wheel and optional sports seats do set a more sporting tone. The manual gearshift now has a tighter and more mechanical throw, which makes a change from the oily-slick shift action of the regular GTI.

The launch event in Portugal doesn't give us an opportunity to drive the Clubsport on the road, but at least we're able to put that revised chassis to the test



Below left and far left: Clubsport receives subtle front and rear aero changes; 19in wheels are standard. **Left:** interior gets Alcantara trim and Recaro bucket seats



on Portimão Circuit's flowing, undulating corners. Volkswagen may not bill the Clubsport as a pure trackday machine, but it does hope owners will venture out on a circuit from time to time. The extra spring rate is difficult to identify without driving the car back-to-back with a standard GTI, but the chassis does immediately feel more alert and adjustable. The balance has certainly been shifted towards oversteer, which means the front axle holds a line more stubbornly and the

rear end has become a touch more playful. The Clubsport is a more adept and entertaining car on circuit than other quick Golfs, R included, but the rival from Renaultsport is more exciting still on track.

Much of the newfound athleticism is down to the Cup 2 tyres fitted to our test car. They give the Clubsport an enormous amount of turn-in and mid-corner grip, so you spend much less time managing understeer.

The engine is responsive and very linear in its delivery and, crucially,

you're not really aware from the driver's seat when you're getting the full 286bhp and when you're not. It's all very seamless. The limited-slip diff works brilliantly well with the tyres to claw massive traction out of the surface at corner exit and you get a clear picture through the steering wheel and the chassis of how much throttle you can apply.

It's a pity the development budget didn't run to even bigger brakes because they do begin to lose some bite after a few quick laps – the

Cupra Sub8's massively powerful 370mm front discs and huge calipers would have been very welcome.

The more aggressive chassis tune makes the Clubsport a sharper, more engaging steer, but it's the optional tyres that really count. On first impressions this feels like the most exciting Golf on sale, but it remains to be seen how effectively it translates its circuit ability onto the road. If only all 40th birthdays gave such cause for celebration. ☒

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Specification

🟢 Faster, sharper and more entertaining than the standard GTI 🟠 Some of its rivals are even more exciting on track

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo	155g/km	286bhp @ 5350-6600rpm	280lb ft @ 1700-5300rpm	5.9sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1375kg (211bhp/ton)	£29,000 (est)

evo rating





Mercedes-AMG GLE63 S

Big-boned bruiser comes loaded with chassis tech, but is it enough to warrant its consideration over a fast estate?

Test location: B671, Cambridgeshire, UK **GPS:** 52.52596, -0.39534
Photography: Aston Parrott

A ACCELERATING HARD, THE Mercedes-AMG GLE63 S catapults itself towards the horizon. On the Autobahn you scream past the speed-restriction signs, then, suddenly, the squash of immense acceleration drops. What's happened?

You look in the mirror – no smoke. The temperature dials – all fine. Then you look at the speedo... It's reading 160mph – an unruffled, rock-solid 160mph – and you realise there's nothing wrong. All that's happened is that this 577bhp super-SUV has sprinted to the speed limiter (actual speed 155mph) faster than expected. Way faster.

It's not pretty, it's not lithe and it's not the car in which to arrive at a Friends of the Earth reception, but the GLE63 S is fast. The now-familiar 5.5-litre twin-turbo AMG V8 is a wondrous thing to massage and orchestrate. Responsive and refined, it's a sublime engine and utterly dominates this package. But why is it fitted to an SUV?

Well, people are buying big, fast SUVs – perhaps not in the UK, but in certain parts of the US and also

in the Middle East and China, where they are big sellers. The problem, for people like us at least, is that these SUVs generally deliver a one-dimensional experience. You rarely want to explore their limits and when you do it's rarely for very long. Is the GLE63 S the car to make us revise that opinion?

From a chassis perspective, Mercedes has thrown everything at it. There's air suspension, continuously variable dampers and springs that lower the ride height as speed increases. There are also adaptive anti-roll bars and 'Active Curve', a system that stabilises roll. Bentley is making big noises about the anti-roll system fitted to its new SUV, the Bentayga (see Driven, **evo** 217), but Mercedes has been pioneering this technology since the F400 Carving Concept of 2001.

Add this suspension technology to a permanent four-wheel-drive system, a torque split that's 40:60 front to rear (non-AMG GLEs are 50:50), five driving modes (Comfort, Sport, Sport+, Slippery and Individual) plus chunky (and optional) 295/35 R21 tyres all-round



and you have a car that is doing everything it can to govern its 2270kg weight. But oddly enough, it's the overall refinement and noise isolation that makes the biggest initial impression, rather than dynamic performance. This GLE is less than two-thirds of the price of the new Bentley, but I'd wager it's 95 per cent as refined.

When you press on, the GLE's platform remains stable and consistent, with strong overall grip. Steering feel is minimal, which means low-speed understeer tends to signal its arrival via the greater angle of lock you're required to apply rather than the messages through the steering wheel.

However, it's at higher speeds that the chassis systems deliver their best work – as alluded to earlier, this really is an extraordinarily capable

motorway machine. Consumption of 9mpg restricts serious ground-covering, but those moments when the Autobahn is empty are genuinely enjoyable (the speed limiter can be increased to 174mph with the AMG Driver's Package).

And herein lies the problem. The GLE63 S is a quite magnificent high-speed cruiser. But the stability, high driving position, overall grip and sublime engine only truly merge to reveal themselves on very rare occasions, and when you choose to take a path less travelled – a twisty B-road for instance – it takes two corners for you to wish that you were driving an E63 AMG or something with a lower centre of gravity.

Big, fast SUVs continue to impress as technological achievements, and none more so than this one. If brutal ground-covering, mild off-roading and serene comfort and refinement are your bag, there are few rivals. However, remove the ability to go off-road and you gain considerable opportunity to exercise the Thrill of Driving with an equivalent performer, such as the E63 S Estate. **✘**

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Specification

Engine V8, 5461cc, twin-turbo	CO2 276g/km	Power 577bhp @ 5500rpm	Torque 560lb ft @ 1750-5250rpm	0-62mph 4.2sec (claimed)	Top speed 155mph (limited)	Weight 2270kg (258bhp/ton)	Basic price £94,405
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+ Pace, grace (sort of), supreme refinement **-** Feels remote, centre of gravity too high

evo rating ★★★★★

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Test location: Coltishall Airfield, Norfolk **GPS:** 52.754236, 1.356825

Zenos E10 R

The Zenos has already impressed us. Now, in 'R' form, it gets a 40 per cent power hike – and a hefty price increase, too. So is it the car we've been waiting for – or a step too far?



‘The E10 R
really does
fly along
with genuine
supercar pace’

WITH ITS ORDER BOOKS stuffed full for the next five months, British sports car newcomer Zenos has enjoyed an auspicious first year. As the company continues to establish itself on the trackday scene, its model range is expanding: the E10 R becomes the third version, joining the E10 and E10 S, and it's the fastest, most focused Zenos yet.

Still built around the now-familiar carbon composite tub with an aluminium spine, the E10 R swaps out the 2-litre Ford EcoBoost engine for the more powerful 2.3-litre unit. It's essentially the same engine that powers the forthcoming Focus RS and in this installation it's good for 350bhp and 350lb ft of torque from 4000rpm. Zenos got the power it wanted from the engine on the first day on the dyno, says company founder Mark Edwards. 'We could have had even more power, but we didn't want to stress the engine because we don't want owners to have to rebuild them every year,' he says. 'Ford has tested these engines to the moon and back and they've got bags of power.'

The new engine's 350bhp represents a 40 per cent increase on the 250bhp E10 S, with a dramatic effect on straight-line performance. Zenos estimates 0-60mph in 3.0 seconds and 155mph flat-out. Weighing a slimline 700kg (dry) the E10 R has a power-to-weight ratio of 508bhp/ton, which puts it firmly in the performance car big leagues.

The EcoBoost engines are more or less interchangeable, so the new unit dropped straight in on the original mounts (once a revised exhaust system had been fitted, anyway). The six-speed manual gearbox remains, although Zenos responded to criticisms of the early models by reducing the length of the shift action. A lightened flywheel, meanwhile, has improved throttle response.

Chassis development work is ongoing, but the team is reckoning on winding the spring rates up by 10

per cent. Edwards and development driver Chris Weston haven't yet felt the need to fit a limited-slip differential, but they haven't ruled it out. The brake system has been updated and a new brake pad material is also being assessed. Lightweight wheels, meanwhile, have together removed some 10kg of unsprung mass.

Edwards and his colleagues have been pleasantly surprised by the number of owners who use their cars away from the racetrack, so the E10 R has been engineered to work well on the road, too. A windscreen can be specified, although, as with the less powerful models, wet-weather protection is limited to an emergency hood.

At £39,995, the E10 R costs £10,000 more than the E10 S, which still represents strong value for money given the performance on offer. This test car is a limited-run Drive Edition model, which costs an additional £4000 and benefits from adjustable dampers and a graphite-and-black paint scheme with yellow accents. Existing E10 S owners can upgrade their cars to E10 R specification for £9745.

Zenos reckons on selling 20 to 25 of the higher-specification models in 2016, which would represent around 15 per cent of overall production. In the first week after Zenos announced the E10 R, though, it took six orders, so that number might well prove to be conservative. Zenos expects to draw buyers from other lightweight sports car brands, such as Caterham and Ariel, with existing E10 S owners also choosing to switch into the new model.

The chassis tune is yet to be signed-off but it's immediately clear that the standard car's agile, flat-bodied dynamics remain. The new brake pad material has made the pedal much more progressive and braking performance easier to read. The shorter gearshift action, meanwhile, is another major improvement and now befitting of a lightweight sports car.



Above: chassis copes well with 350bhp, even in the wet. **Left and below:** shorter gearshift and updated brakes welcome



It's the engine that makes the biggest difference, though. The 2-litre is strong and responsive, but it can feel quite flat and undramatic in the way it delivers its performance. The 2.3-litre engine not only delivers a massive straight-line hit – the E10 R really does fly along with genuine supercar pace – it's also a much more exciting and characterful power unit. What's more, the chassis

does a very good job of transferring that power and torque to the road with an open differential, even in very wet conditions.

The E10 R is a more intoxicating car than the E10 S, and not just because of its thumping performance. This feels like the Zenos we've been waiting for. ❌

Dan Prosser
(@TheDanProsser)

Specification

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2253cc, turbo	CO2 n/a	Power 350bhp @ 6500rpm	Torque 350lb ft @ 4000rpm	0-60mph 3.0sec (estimated)	Top speed 155mph (estimated)	Weight (dry) 700kg (508bhp/ton)	Basic price £39,995
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➔ New engine brings massive performance and character ➔ It doesn't come cheap

evo rating ★★★★★

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SEAT Ibiza Cupra

Test location: Igalada, Spain
GPS: 41.62635, 1.60847

Updated supermini gets bigger engine, more power and a manual gearbox

H HOT HATCHES COME and go, but the SEAT Ibiza Cupra is part of the furniture. It's been around since 1999 – this is now the fifth iteration – but to this day it still feels like a slightly left-field choice in the company of the equivalent Ford or Renault. This latest version is a facelift rather than an all-new model, although the changes beneath the skin are more significant than the slight styling tweaks might suggest.

The previous version's 1.4-litre TSI engine has been replaced by a more potent 1.8-litre turbocharged four-cylinder. Power is up by 11bhp to 189bhp and torque has risen to a very strong 236lb ft from 184lb ft. With peak torque now available between 1450 and 4200rpm, the Cupra should feel barrel-chested in straight-line performance terms.

Despite its greater displacement, this new engine is actually 7kg lighter than the one it replaces, which is a useful saving over the front axle. The previous Ibiza Cupra was only available with a twin-clutch paddleshift gearbox, but this new

model flips that philosophy on its head and only offers a six-speed manual. Driving its front wheels, the Cupra clocks a 0-62mph time of 6.7sec and a top speed of 146mph. SEAT claims 47.1mpg combined, an improvement of 3mpg.

The hot Ibiza shares its drivetrain and platform with the VW Polo GTI, which we found to be a grown-up but fairly unexciting small hot hatch when we pitted it against its rivals in issue 211. The SEAT gets a slightly more aggressive chassis tune, though, which could go some way to addressing our criticisms of the Polo.

The quality of materials and build within the cabin is very good for the class, showing up the likes of the Ford Fiesta ST and Vauxhall Corsa VXR. The optional VW Group satnav, meanwhile, is among the best.

As Cupra buyers get older and their priorities change, so the cars themselves are growing up, too. Interior quality, mobile connectivity and long-distance refinement have therefore become some of the Cupra's key selling points. It certainly rides in a relaxed and fluid



way, thanks largely to its standard-fit switchable dampers (which, incidentally, cost £245 on the Polo).

Whereas some cars in this class use a mechanical locking differential – notably the Peugeot 208 GTI by Peugeot Sport and the Performance Pack-equipped Vauxhall Corsa VXR – the Cupra instead uses an XDS diff. It's an electronic system that uses the front brakes to mimic the effect of a mechanical limited-slip diff and it does a reasonable job of deploying torque without wastefully spinning up the inside tyre, but it doesn't give you the same urgent drive away from a corner.

The engine is responsive and it pulls with real vigour, but as the power curve flattens off at 4800rpm there are no real fireworks at the

top end. It's an effective power unit without ever being exciting, while the gearshift is slick and precise. One frustration is the proximity of the throttle pedal to the interior trim – on this left-hand-drive test car, at least – which makes heel-and-toe downshifts very tricky to execute.

The steering is a touch spongy in its default mode but improves in Sport, although it doesn't ever drip with feel. Similarly, the chassis becomes much tauter and better controlled in Sport mode – it stiffens the dampers by a useful 20 per cent – but there isn't the same sparkling agility and immediacy that you get in a Fiesta ST or 208 GTI. Driving the Cupra fast is all about keeping it just short of the point of understeer; not much else happens at the limit.

Ultimately, the Ibiza Cupra doesn't distinguish itself enough from the Polo GTI in dynamic terms to mount a serious bid at the best in class. It does offer better value for money than the VW, though, and it's certainly one of the most refined small hot hatches on sale. **✘**

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Specification

+ Quick, competent and refined **-** Not exciting enough to rival the best in class

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1798cc, turbo	139g/km	189bhp @ 4300rpm	236lb ft @ 1450-4200rpm	6.7sec (claimed)	146mph (claimed)	★★★★☆	1185kg (162bhp/ton)	£18,000 (est)



Mountune Fiesta MR230

Test location: B1053, Wethersfield **GPS:** 51.951186, -0.490280 **Photography:** Aston Parrott

The best supermini money can buy gets serious firepower from Ford-favoured tuner Mountune. But is it all too much?

FORD'S LATEST FIESTA ST has been an **evo** favourite since its arrival in 2013, and in that time it has rarely found itself off the top step of the podium in any head-to-head it has entered into.

In the spring of 2015 it did come up – and lose – against its toughest competitor in the shape of Peugeot's return-to-form 208 GTi 30th Anniversary. But it was a close-run thing, and when we pitched the pair into a larger group test in the summer, the ST was the winner once again. However, it did take Mountune's MP215 aftermarket kit for the Blue Oval to claim the number-one spot once more.

Fast Fords, and modified fast Fords, are compelling things, and a reminder of days gone by when a tweak here and a little boost there could turn a good hot hatch into a cracking one. In the case of the MP215 kit, there is also the added security of it having no effect on the Ford warranty. Everyone's a winner.

But, as night follows day, once you've tasted the extra power, improved driveability and sharper

responses, you want more. And of course those lovely Essex boys at Mountune can serve you the extra you need, which in this case is the MR230 upgrade.

The more powerful kit consists of (deep breath) a custom aluminium high-flow airbox with dual cold-air feeds, Mountune's own high-flow panel air filter and a high-flow, three-inch downpipe with a 200-cell sports catalyst with a 2.5-inch cat-back exhaust system. Then there's the high-flow charge-pipe upgrade kit and alloy intercooler, silicone induction hose and an mTune handset loaded with ECU calibration software. The unit also allows monitoring of up to six gauges and has a performance meter, a fault-code reader and a path for future updates or upgrades. There's also a cam-locking tool included to allow for a greater range of cam-advance/retard, which can give a better spread of power and torque, maximising the potential of the standard turbocharger.

It all amounts to the 1.6-litre turbo four producing 227bhp at 5500rpm



(up from 179 at 5700 in standard tune) and 251lb ft at 3000rpm (up from 214 at 1600) and a full second knocked from the 0-62mph time of the standard car (down to 5.9sec).

At £2295, the MR230 upgrade isn't cheap, though if you already have Mountune's MP215 kit, the step up costs £1995. These prices are for DIY conversions – factor in seven hours of labour if you want a specialist to do it for you. Moreover, this time Mountune's upgrade kit may invalidate your warranty.

A near 30 per cent power increase doesn't take long to get noticed, and while there is the smallest amount of lag as you feed in the throttle, once you clear 2000rpm the MR230 kit takes hold. And it's not just the considerable performance increase that makes itself apparent – the

MR230 builds speed quicker than our Henry Catchpole puts his hand up to volunteer to test a rally car – but how strong and relentless the engine has become.

The power increase can dominate if you want it to, and on a road you know well the Fiesta will fly along at a sports car-baiting pace. But there is also a generous amount of driveability, so you can march along on a wave of torque when buzzing Caymans and M3s can wait another day. As a package, the MR230 works across all levels, retaining the useability of the standard car.

There is, however, one small issue. In standard tune the factory-fit Bridgestone Potenza work well with the ST's chassis, and even with the MP215 package they can deliver when asked to, but here, with the performance increases across the board, they are found wanting. A more aggressive, high-performance tyre would instantly rectify this solitary downside of an otherwise hard-to-ignore upgrade. ❌

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Specification + The best small hot hatch on sale, only with more power - At a price, and you'll need to budget for some better tyres

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1596cc, turbo	n/a	227bhp @ 5500rpm	251lb ft @ 3000rpm	5.9sec (claimed)	139mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1088kg (212bhp/ton)	£2295 (conversion)



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Test location: Grendon, Northamptonshire GPS: 52.22277, -0.70544

Photography: Aston Parrott

Alpina D3 Biturbo Touring

Latest 3-series-based estate promises 52mpg, 0-62mph in 4.6sec and 170mph. But is it too good to be true?

C CLIMB INTO THE PLUSH interior of the Alpina D3 Biturbo Touring and you'll immediately notice a high-definition digital display where one of the centre-facing vents should be. It glows readily with the stunningly evocative Alpina logo.

This small screen can display all sorts of information unbecoming of a diesel estate. G-force readings, 0-60mph info, performance data and the like – things that remind you that this is no ordinary diesel estate. So you do the only sensible thing. You zero the meter, find a decent stretch of road – and go for it.

On a damp road, in Sport mode, without launch-control assistance and using auto-upshift, we record an unscientific 5.1sec (and 0.7G) for the 0-60mph sprint. In perfect conditions, Alpina claims 0-62mph in 4.6sec.

So the D3 Biturbo is fast. It's also frugal (claimed 52mpg), extremely comfortable, beautifully screwed together and spacious. It also carries the kudos of being an Alpina – a confident and sincere manufacturer of enhanced BMWs, with whom it shares the same warranty coverage. Yep, you've probably guessed already – we really, *really* like this car.

But let's rewind a little. The D3 is a diesel estate car based on the BMW 3-series. It uses a 3-litre in-line twin-turbocharged six-cylinder engine that produces 345bhp – 36bhp more than BMW's most powerful diesel estate, the 335d.

This is an aluminium engine with common rail direct fuel injection, a bespoke Alpina ECU, a 20 per cent larger intercooler, an additional radiator, a new oil-cooler, a separate thermal management computer plus a unique high-carbon steel exhaust

manifold and a lightweight quad-exhaust system developed with Akrapovic. Much of the work carried out by Alpina relates to temperature control as its cars tend to do large distances at high speed. The upshot is a fantastic cake-and-eat-it engine – one that is only fitted to Alpinas.

Also, torque is a mighty 516lb ft. Or exactly the same as a McLaren 675LT. That's right. This diesel estate pushes out the same torque as McLaren's nuttiest supercar.

On the road, this colossal torque doesn't just punch you in the face, it punches you *through* the face. Acceleration feels like being in a fast elevator – a solid, barely interrupted surge that shrinks distances.

Not only that, but the engine delivers this force in a serene manner; you can meter and exercise it in a linear fashion rather than fight an unruly battle with a huge dollop of

torque. It's also refined, smooth and punchy well into the 5000rpm range. Sure, it can't match an equivalent petrol engine for response, elasticity and reach, but it gets close. Weaknesses? Erm, a feeble, acoustically enhanced growl?

With all that torque on offer, a three-speed gearbox would probably suffice, but the D3 is fitted with the increasingly familiar ZF eight-speed automatic transmission driving the rear wheels only (a manual gearbox is not available). The shifts are well calibrated, very smooth, and while not DCT-fast, the overall synergy between gearbox and engine performance is excellent. Do we miss a manual? Not in this car.

Rather surprisingly, a limited-slip differential is optional. One is fitted to our test car, and such is the natural grip and transparent feeling from the back axle that we



Left: Deko Set a no-cost option. We'd have it.
Top: interior comfortable and well appointed; digital display is optional.
Right: arch-filling 20-inch wheels are optional; 19-inchers are standard

'Acceleration in the D3 Biturbo feels like a fast elevator – a solid, barely interrupted surge'

can't imagine why it isn't standard. Indeed, the combination of that diff with Alpina-tweaked stability and traction control makes for a fantastically stable and secure platform. There is a left-hand-drive-only xDrive version, but not once does it feel like four-wheel drive would improve overall performance and engagement.

The D3 uses bespoke Alpina springs, anti-roll bars and bushes, with softer compression and stiffer rebound worked into the (standard-fit) adaptive damping. Twenty-inch optional wheels are fitted to our press car; 19s are standard.

Body control is excellent, as is turn-in, but occasionally the

damping becomes brittle and creates an odd skimming sensation over uneven surfaces. We'd put money on this trait disappearing with the standard 19s fitted. And while we're nitpicking, the variable steering rack robs you of feel and detail during initial turn-in. It's better than the standard BMW rack, but this is still the biggest dynamic weakness and it's a pity that you can't option a non-variable rack.

Overall, then, this is a hugely likable car, but its price raises eyebrows – £49,950 against £41,665 for a four-wheel-drive 335d xDrive M Sport Touring. Or over £60,000 if you add Merino or Alpina lavalina leather, plus that LSD and some enhanced

infotainment. We'd keep it simple, option the LSD and keep everything else standard.

Your head may steer you towards the BMW 335d, but in this instance you should trust your heart because the Alpina is a better and more engaging car. Rarer, too – Alpina sells around 200 cars in the UK every year.

In summary, the D3's origins are humble, and some will see that as a negative. But Alpina – with more than 70 of its own engineers pouring 55 years' worth of BMW experience into its cars – has transformed a 3-series Touring into one of those tangibly special vehicles that we seek and adore here at **evo**. ✉

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
In-line 6-cyl, 2993cc, twin-turbo diesel	142g/km	345bhp @ 4000rpm	516lb ft @ 1500-3000rpm	4.6sec (claimed)	170mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1655kg (212bhp/ton)	£49,950

➔ Refinement, pace, build, driving enjoyment ➔ Variable steering, no standard LSD

Test location: B1108, Norfolk
GPS: 52.58167, 1.03170
Photography: Aston Parrott

Lotus Exige Sport 350

Lotus claims to have ironed out the imperfections of arguably its best drivers' car. So, less weight, a retuned chassis and a new gearshift mechanism



THE REBUILDING OF Lotus continues under Jean-Marc Gales' stewardship. The work isn't overtly obvious but progress is being made. Publicly there's been a new Evora (the 400), the 3-Eleven track car will be arriving with customers early in 2016 and a number of new dealer appointments were made throughout 2015. But to the eyes of enthusiasts contemplating buying into the company's lightweight philosophy, new product looks thin on the ground.

Dig a little deeper and you'll find good reason for this. Development of the Lotus range all but stopped the day each new car went on sale. There have been minor tweaks here and a few fresh parts there, but beneath the glassfibre panels so

many components on the cars are outdated, expensive to source and, crucially, too heavy. Throughout 2015, Gales made it the Hethel employees' business to examine every part that goes into the cars and ask if they are the best available in terms of quality, weight and cost. It's a process that has led to some extraordinary findings, successful changes and the redesigning of a number of key components.

For the new Exige Sport 350, which replaces the 2012 *evo* Car of the Year joint winner, the Exige V6 S, Lotus has focused its attention on chasing the kilos out of the coupe. The result is that 12kg has gone from the body, mainly down to an improved production process that has eliminated the 4kg variance in weight between 'identical' panels.

The heating/air-con system, first installed in the Elise 20 years ago and seemingly never looked at again, has also been redesigned to be more efficient and is 3kg lighter. The rear subframe has been redesigned to be more compact and stiffer, too, and saves another 3kg. Overall, Lotus has taken 51kg out of the Exige S in creating the Sport 350, dropping the kerb weight to 1125kg.

The 3.5-litre supercharged Toyota engine remains unchanged, developing 345bhp and 295lb ft. Lotus was going to install the Evora 400's more powerful engine but the extra weight brought on by the need to fit larger brakes, longer wishbones, a wider body and additional cooling meant the sub-1200kg target couldn't be met.

The weight loss has allowed for

Top left: workings of the vastly improved gearshift mechanism can be seen in the cabin; shift has a light action and can auto-blip the throttle for seamless downshifts



Specification

+ Improves on all the Exige's good bits - They don't make it easy to get in and out of

evo rating



Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
3456cc, V6, supercharged	235g/km	345bhp @ 7000rpm	295lb ft @ 4500rpm	3.7sec (claimed)	170mph (claimed)	1125kg (312bhp/ton)	£55,900

a comprehensive reworking of the chassis. The stiffer dampers from the Exige Cup have been fitted while the bump-steer, camber and toe settings have all been increased. The toe angle has doubled to preload the tyres to eliminate the nervousness the Exige suffers from when running on less than perfect surfaces. Lotus has also changed the position of the steering rack. This is not just a mid-life facelift then, but a comprehensive going over of components you'll never see.

External changes include a set of ten-spoke lightweight forged alloy wheels and a new one-piece rear diffuser, while the tailgate has been replaced with a louvred item that is not only 3kg lighter but also improves cooling to the engine bay.

Inside, however, the changes are

minimal. Lotus has reintroduced the option of tartan trim, as first seen on the Essex Turbo Esprit in 1980 (it looks far better than it sounds) and some of the Evora 400's switchgear has migrated across.

The biggest change is the open transmission tunnel that displays the manual six-speed gearshift's shiny new mechanism. The reason for this is twofold. One: it's lighter; two: the mechanism has been thoroughly reworked from cast aluminium – and upgraded – and looks very cool.

If you're looking at the nest of linkages and rods, it means you've negotiated the sill and squeezed yourself into the Exige's cabin. You've probably started the V6 too, which despite sounding like thunder from outside, sounds too thrashy and

nondescript from inside. However, from here on it's all good news.

The new gearshift is a revolution. It's tight, precise and slack-free. After only three or four shifts there's no need to consciously stop and think about changing gear, as per Lotus's of old. Ratios slide home, the action is short, the feel pure, mechanical and engaging. This mechanism needs to be in every Lotus.

The chassis changes? Equally impressive. The steering is less nervous, more precise around the dead-ahead, and on poor surfaces, where the old car had constant movement through the wheel as it hunted down every camber, is far calmer and more confidence inspiring. And then there's the ride. This car is firmer than the Exige S, but only at low speeds do you feel

an additional harshness through your backside. As you call on the V6's rabid performance, the car comes alive as one. As much of the old car's mild understeer has been dialled out as is possible, and what's left is unobtrusive and easily metered out with your right foot. In fact, the chassis is so capable, engaging and responsive to the actions of your right foot, the whole car is best driven on the throttle.

There was little to criticise the outgoing Exige V6 for, and in the Sport 350 Lotus has fine-tuned an already highly capable sports car. What this car does show, more importantly, is that Lotus's steady recovery is heading in the right direction. ☒

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)



Jaguar C-X75

Test location: Centro Dinámico Pegaso, Mexico **GPS:** 19.36592, -99.55680

F FOR A CAR THAT NEVER made it into production, the Jaguar C-X75 has had quite a shelf life. Since the original concept was launched at the Paris motor show back in 2010, complete with those terrifically complicated gas turbine generators for its electric powertrain, Jaguar has built two alternative versions.

The first of those was a prototype with a more conventional petrol-electric hybrid powertrain that was due to become the production model until the project was canned in 2012. The second is the one you can see here, and it's a very different sort of beast...

The producers of the latest James Bond film, *Spectre*, cast the C-X75 as the villain car. For Jaguar, still peddling the 'Good to be Bad' tagline, it was a golden opportunity. Just two of the hybrid-powered prototypes exist, though, and they're worth so much money that neither the producers nor Jaguar itself fancied launching them off ramps or rattling them – rather brutally – down stone steps for the

movie's car-chase sequences.

This is where the third version of the C-X75 comes in. Although this car looks exactly like the prototype and concept models, it has nothing else in common with them. It's built around a tubular space-frame chassis, rather than the more exotic carbonfibre tub of its namesakes, and instead of a hybrid powertrain it has the supercharged 5-litre V8 from the F-type R, with drive being sent to the rear wheels only.

While the two prototypes, with their neat panel gaps and trimmed cabins, were used for the low-speed and close-up shots, the space-frame cars – of which five were built – performed the stunts and high-speed action. They were built specifically to withstand all the abuse a stunt driver could throw at them for week after week on a film set and they are, consequently, enormous fun to drive.

If you're going to jump a car, it's worth thinking about how you're going to land it. This car is suspended by double wishbones all round and it uses the same

Looks like a hybrid supercar; isn't. Technological tour de force turns bare-bones thrill machine for its role as *Spectre's* other star car



long-travel struts as a Porsche 911 rally car, so it lands softly. It also has a hydraulic handbrake, absolutely zero drivers aids – not even anti-lock brakes – and it's tough. The steel tubing used for the space frame is so thick you could crash through a cathedral and come out the other side in pretty good shape.

With the V8 engine mounted amidships there was no room within the chassis for the F-type's eight-speed automatic gearbox, so Williams Advanced Engineering – to whom Jaguar contracted the build of the five stunt cars – used the same sequential gearbox as in the McLaren 650S GT3 racing car. Engine torque is limited incrementally in the first three gears because the stock 501lb ft proved far too brutal for the off-the-shelf driveshafts.

The cabin is completely untrimmed and totally functional. It's also very hot and noisy, but in every other sense the C-X75 stunt car is remarkably easy to drive. The gearshift is crisp and doesn't require you to use the clutch pedal at all once on the move, the assisted steering is direct and well weighted and visibility is very good. The guys who look after the car describe the balance as 'massively snappy', but even in persistently wet conditions it is progressive and very easy to hold in a slide, albeit at low speeds. Given the sort of precision-driving this car was used for, it was important that it wasn't too much of a handful or spiky at the limit, and what impresses most is just how cohesive and well resolved the whole driving experience is.

In a world of increasing complexity – of hybrid powertrains, of multitudinous drive modes, of digitised controls – this C-X75 is a throwback to a purer, much simpler time. Stunt drivers have never had it so good. 📧

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Specification

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharger	CO2 n/a	Power 542bhp @ 6500rpm	Torque 501lb ft @ 3500rpm	0-60mph <4.0sec (est)	Top speed 190mph (est)
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➕ Pure, stripped-back fun ➖ You can't buy one

evo rating ★★★★★	Basic price Rather a lot
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Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



The cornering shot used to be a source of education and inspiration, but its currency has been devalued in recent times, reckons Meaden

A **AS SOMEONE WHO HAS SPENT MORE** time than is sensible or healthy charting a tangential course through the side window of countless cars, you might expect me to be a staunch supporter of the cornering shot, but I'm sad to say my love of the lockstops is on the wane. Not because sliding a car has ceased to be fun, but because the once noble pursuit of informative and evocative dynamic imagery has been hijacked by hoonery. In short, the world has overdosed on oversteer.

In the dim and distant days before the Internet and its exponential obsession with a fortysomething merchandise salesman, the sight of a sliding road-car really was something to savour. Without an endless stream of online videos on which to gorge, photographs and video footage (VHS, natch) of road cars being driven with real verve was a rare treat indeed. That's why for car nuts of a certain age, the breathtakingly raw, borderline certifiable efforts of Stefan Roser in Ruf's ferocious Yellowbird around the Nordschleife ensure *Faszination* will always outclass Ken Block's colossally successful Gymkhana series, and why black loafers will always be faster than trainers.

What's the point of a cornering shot? Well, in the good old days it was primarily used as a graphic indication of body-roll and a car's composure (or lack of) while being driven at or just beyond the limit. As tyre and suspension technology improved to make cars far less roly-poly, dramatic black-and-white pictures of cars on their door handles and front tyres almost peeling off the rims became a thing of the past, but a shot capturing a hard-driven car mid-corner remained a compelling source of detailed info, at least to the trained eye. To be fair it still can, but only when the goal is trying to show how a car feels and behaves, and not how much smoke or steering angle you can generate.

Sadly, the sheer performance of today's high-performance cars, their willingness to go sideways, the need to shoot YouTube-pleasing videos and an increasing mindfulness towards the laws of the land conspire to marginalise the cornering shot. Remove a road car from the road and, unfortunately, all on-limit context and relevance is lost. Yes, the handiest 'hands' will still deliver the most dramatic shots (mainly because the photographers and videographers have the confidence to stand well within the morbidly tagged 'kill zone'), but clever editing and the low-risk environs of an airfield or race track can conceal a multitude of ham-fisted sins. Anyone can skid a car when the stakes are low.

Strip away the worthy stuff and, inevitably, cornering shots have always been fuelled by ego, the challenge of pushing a car beyond its limits providing road testers with the perfect excuse to

impress you lot and score points back at the office. In the '80s and '90s the highlight of any magazine test was the grainy images of bearded men grappling with hair-trigger hot hatches, ungainly GTs and snappy supercars. As an impressionable reader, those pictures captured my imagination just as readily as the words that accompanied them, for together they confirmed that driving fast cars fast was a career path I wished to follow. Preferably sideways, though not necessarily sporting manly facial hair.

As a fresh-faced tester, returning from my first overseas launch with a credible cornering shot was imperative. I embraced the challenge as if my very job depended on it, callow youth blinding me to the irony that this was indeed the case, but only if I stuffed the Clio into an unyielding Corsican rock face in the attempt.

'I'm reluctantly wondering whether I've actually become a power-sliding parody of myself'

The fact I'm still earning a crust as a road tester confirms I didn't bin it, but I can still recall the tension back in *Carweek's* London office as an expectant huddle gathered around the lightbox to look at the frames of transparency film. Colin Goodwin (then staffer on *Carweek's* sister title, *Car*) immediately zeroed-in on the cornering shots. After an agonising silence, Goodwin gave his verdict. 'Yep, he's got the inside rear wheel way off the ground,' uttered as though I wasn't in the room. 'It appears to be oversteering a bit, too.' Sage nods from gnarly veterans like Brett Fraser and Gavin Green confirmed this was a good thing, and everyone went back to work, safe in the knowledge that if given a dog and a soapy stick the rookie road tester wouldn't need instructions on what to do. I'd passed the test.

The better part of 25 years later, I'm still trying to perfect the art of steering one way while the car slews gracefully in the other, but these days I'm reluctantly wondering whether I've actually become a power-sliding parody of myself. Only you have the answer to that conundrum, so until you – or dulled reflexes – dictate otherwise, I'll continue to slay tyres, even if only in the name of clickbait. Besides, whether it's cigarettes or tyres, there's nothing more sanctimonious than a reformed smoker. ✕

✉ @DickieMeaden

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



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Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



There's disappointment, and then there's the disappointment of the new Fiat 124 Spider. Porter's head is in his hands

I **IT STARTED WITH A LEAK. I STARED FOR** a while at what the leak had brought, trying not to set too much store in its fuzzy vagaries. Then something more concrete appeared and it didn't seem any more promising. Finally, the truth arrived. Actual proper pics, officially sanctioned and depicting the finished item, polished and preened and properly lit. I wasted a long time looking at them, hopefully flicking between shots, going back to the best ones, taking a break to unload the dishwasher and then coming back to have another stare. It was no good. After what seemed like half a day spent squinting and sideways glancing at a computer screen, there was only one conclusion: I don't like the look of the new Fiat 124 Spider.

In theory this thing should have so much promise. It's small, it's a sports car, it's got some backwards nods to its heritage. It should be the grooviest roadster since the boat-tailed Alfa Spider. But it's not. The nose is contrived, the haunch on the side starts in the wrong place, and the back is a bland bore with Dodge Viper tail lights drawn from memory by someone who's only seen a real Viper once. Worse yet, it suffers from the ultimate, unfixable car design sin: bad proportions. Look at the profile shot on page 14 of the last *evo* and try to suppress your disappointment at the artless and inelegant length of the overhangs. The rear one is especially terrible, making the wheelbase look too short and the rear wheel appear too far forward in a cack-handed manner not seen since the Jaguar XJS.

I wouldn't care, but this is an Italian roadster and the one job of an Italian roadster is to look pretty. Sadly, that's not a word I'd apply to the new 124 unless followed by the word 'disappointing'. I stared so hard and so endlessly at the first pics of the Spider because I wanted it to be good. I wanted it to wrap its tiny little Latin fingers around my heart from first glance and not let go until I'd blown the new kitchen fund on getting one in my life. That's not happened because the Spider has fallen at the first hurdle of being a textbook Torinese sports car; it's not nice to look at. Mind you, as we know, it's also not really Italian either. There's an MX-5 under there and that's weird because the Mazda actually is quite pretty and does have good proportions. Which means Fiat has taken some wholesome basics and messed them up.

This doesn't bode well for the rest of the car. The suspension, for example, has Spider-specific changes and that's a worry as the Mazda is probably set up just right for the majority of buyers of this kind of car (if not *evo* road testers) and I'm struggling to remember the last truly good chassis to come out of the Fiat Group.

I know we had a fondness for fighty little funbags such as the 500 Abarth and Panda 100HP, but those were flawed gems with an urban ride quality that made you wonder if the springs had been deleted. I suspect Fiat had to change the Spider's settings because their car is 75kg heavier than Mazda's, not least due to a more complicated, turbocharged engine, which is itself a cause for concern. One of the joys of the MX-5 has always been its simple, revvy nature. Stuffing a force-fed motor in the nose is going to change that character and not necessarily for the better because the one thing a good roadster doesn't need is great blobs of low-down torque.

These, however, are simmering concerns that may come to

'The rear overhang is especially terrible, making the wheelbase look too short and the rear wheel appear too far forward in the cack-handed manner not seen since the Jaguar XJS'

nowt when we finally get a go in the 124. The bigger, overarching issue I have with this car is that, from the contrived styling to the insistence on adding a lumpy Italian sauce to Mazda's delicate recipe and then passing it off as their own, Fiat are making something inauthentic. I know the original MX-5 was basically a crib from British sports cars of the 1960s, but over four generations Mazda have made it their own. Fiat are simply copying someone else's homework.

I want to love the 124 Spider. I want to find that Fiat have added European style and finesse to an already brilliant formula. Yet, on first impressions, all they're doing is spoiling it, adding overhangs and overboost where neither are needed. This could have been the car we all needed, instead it feels like a car none of us will want. Although, of course, there is a solution. If you want an authentic, pretty, old-school roadster, just buy an MX-5. Because, unlike the 124 Spider, it feels like the real deal. ❌

✉ @sniffpetrol

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

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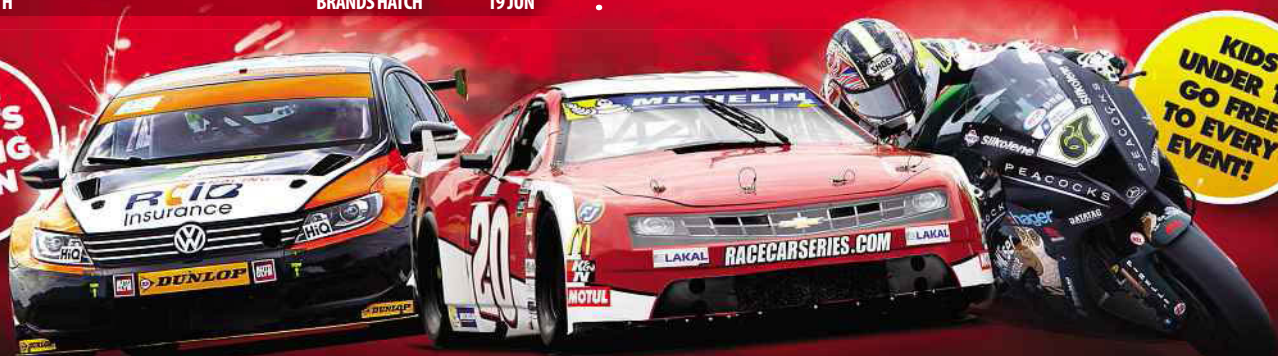
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BRITISH GT AND BRDC F4 CHAMPIONSHIPS	BRANDS HATCH GP	16/17 APR	TUNERFEST NORTH	OULTON PARK	09 JUL
MODIFIED LIVE	CADWELL PARK	24 APR	DUNLOP MSA BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP	SNETTERTON	30/31 JUL
MCE INSURANCE BRITISH SUPERBIKE CHAMPIONSHIP	BRANDS HATCH	30-2 MAY	MCE INSURANCE BRITISH SUPERBIKE CHAMPIONSHIP	BRANDS HATCH GP	05-07 AUG
BLANCPAIN GT SPRINT SERIES	BRANDS HATCH	07/08 MAY	BRITISH GT AND BRDC F4 CHAMPIONSHIPS	SNETTERTON	06/06 AUG
MCE INSURANCE BRITISH SUPERBIKE CHAMPIONSHIP	OULTON PARK	20-22 MAY	MCE INSURANCE BRITISH SUPERBIKE CHAMPIONSHIP	CADWELL PARK	27-29 AUG
MASTERS HISTORIC FESTIVAL	BRANDS HATCH GP	28/29 MAY	MCE INSURANCE BRITISH SUPERBIKE CHAMPIONSHIP	OULTON PARK	09-11 SEPT
BRITISH GT AND BRDC F4 CHAMPIONSHIPS	OULTON PARK	28/30 MAY	RETRO KINGS IN ASSOCIATION WITH RETRO RIDES	SNETTERTON	25 SEPT
DUNLOP MSA BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP	OULTON PARK	04/05 JUN	DUNLOP MSA BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP	BRANDS HATCH GP	01/02 OCT
AMERICAN SPEEDFEST IV	BRANDS HATCH	11/12 JUN	MCE INSURANCE BRITISH SUPERBIKE CHAMPIONSHIP	BRANDS HATCH GP	14-16 OCT
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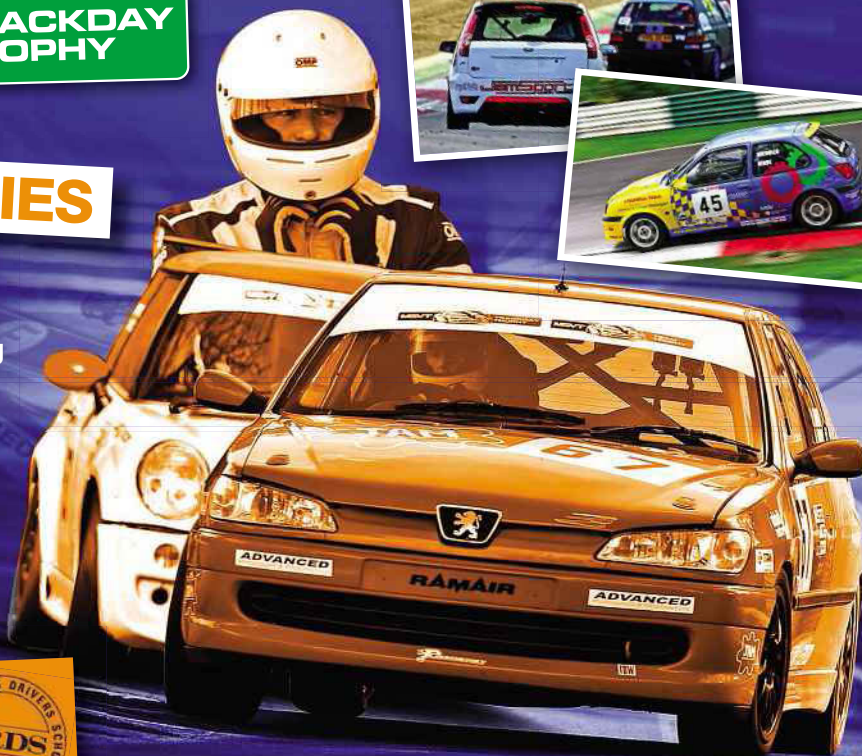
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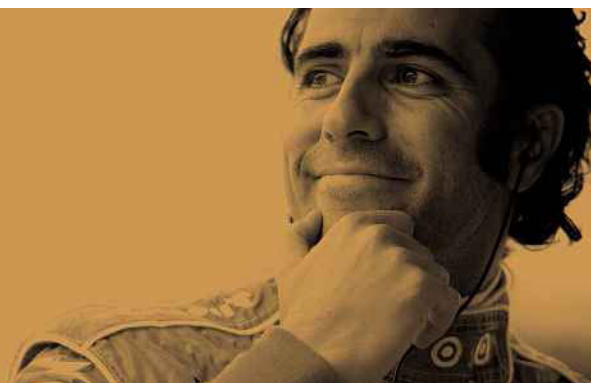
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Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



A love of cars offers the potential to experience events that live long in the memory, says Dario, who recalls his most surreal moments of 2015

YOU'RE WELCOME TO DISAGREE with me on this one – in fact I absolutely insist on it if you think you can do better – but I reckon I've a pretty good contender for the perfect **evo** day. And the perfect **evo** drive, too. Both are moments from this year when I've thanked a higher power that I'm a petrolhead (and I know I'm not the only one who does this).

First, the day. It started with a chat and ended with a drive. The subject of the former was Gordon Murray, a hero of mine whom I was interviewing for Goodwood, while the latter was a certain F1 GTR chassis no. 06R. The Harrods McLaren. Yeah, a proper pinch-yourself moment. And quite apart from driving a machine that led Le Mans for 13 hours before finishing third, the very notion of conversing one-to-one with arguably the greatest automotive engineer of a generation and then firing up his philosophy made metal was enough to send shivers down my spine. To sit in that central driving position, to ignite the 6.1-litre BMW V12, lifting the security plate at the base of the gearlever for reverse...

It didn't disappoint. Of course it didn't. The engine's deliciously tractable disposition and frankly epic acceleration combined with a soundtrack – both for induction and exhaust – that was one of the best I've ever heard. And *beautiful* handling. This is a race car, so obviously there are compromises and it's quite stiff. However, there's just enough grip – some, but not so much that a quarter-turn of opposite lock is a hand-in-mouth experience. The precision of the steering and the response of the chassis is also breathtaking, and there's no flywheel, so the throttle response is... again, simply breathtaking. An F1 is a car that you have to take control of in the most literal sense; you've got to be authoritative with the contact points. It was, in many ways, perfection, yet the most ridiculous thing of all is that it wasn't even my favourite drive of the year.

What if I told you the drive that somehow outglammed Harrods was undertaken in a similarly mid-engined machine, also with a six-speed 'box? Twenty years separate the two cars and both have, to a greater or lesser degree, bona fide motorsport genes floating around in their sumps. One is a fraction more valuable, granted, but both are sought after not only as drivers' cars but also – in one case controversially – as investments. You've probably guessed by now, and it's with depressing inevitability that I can reveal the Cayman GT4 played a starring role in a drive I'll never forget.

The Scottish roads that make up the North Coast 500 will bring close to the best out of most cars and we all know just how spectacular the scenery is, ergo, throwing something of the Porsche's grace, receptivity and athleticism into the mix is going

to prove rewarding. And so it did after a day's testing alongside the Aventador SV and Evora 400 on eCoty 2015. I didn't realise just how rewarding it would be, however. Keys in hand, I bolted.

On the route back to the hotel in Gairloch I passed maybe three cars during the entire drive and the GT4 felt unbelievably special. And unbelievably special at all stages of commitment, too, whether that was at maximum attack, which I sustained for about a mile, 80 per cent or even at 60 per cent. This quality, as many of you will know, is rare. There were all types of corner, from stomach-in-mouth passes over crests that time and again flowed into a gorgeous vista, to one particularly long, 180-degree right-hander where the car took a stance and then just powered

'You've got to be authoritative with the contact points in an F1 GTR'

through. Transitioning over bumps in the road, the chassis would get up on its toes, yet come turn-in it would snap towards the apex and once again assume that decisive stance. The engine note, the prehistoric landscape, even the auto-blipped shifts – it just came together in one drive. Eliciting laughter from the driver's seat (seriously), the car made such an impression that – and remember this was against the backdrop of testing many of the year's most desirable drivers' cars during eCoty – I actually tried to buy it from Porsche.

Believe the hype, then, about both the GT4 and the roads of the Highlands. More than that, believe that a drive can surpass the brilliance of its component parts if your head's in the right place.

Neither the drive in the Porsche nor the day with Murray and the McLaren take the top spot in my own little **evo** Moment of the Year contest, however. That would be driving Jim Clark's Indy 500-winning 1965 Lotus 38/1 minutes before this year's event. The car raced once, with Jim at the wheel, won, naturally, and was then retired. It's so original that when it was 'conserved' in 2009 it still had its race-day engine oil. It's pure history, and its originality permeates your senses. And nursing the two-speed gearbox between ratios while lapping the circuit on which it was built to be raced, four-cam Ford V8 screaming? Nirvana.

I'm going to stop myself at this point. It's your turn, readers. ✕

✉ @dariofranchitti

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



DRIVING ANGLESEY CIRCUIT

evo reader Mark Reeves has found the perfect road setup for his new Öhlins suspension. Now he gets to try it on – and fine-tune it for – the track

IN THE PREVIOUS INSTALMENT WE joined Mark Reeves as he got to grips with his M3 and its newly upgraded Öhlins Road & Track suspension on the sensational roads of the *evo* Triangle in north Wales. Now, in the final stage of his test, Reeves heads to Anglesey Circuit, home of *evo*'s 'Leaderboard' track tests. Anglesey is a spectacular venue and a thrilling place to drive a car like his E92 BMW M3, but it's also a challenge, especially when you're experiencing the place for the first time.

Driving a powerful rear-wheel-drive car on an unfamiliar circuit places maximum emphasis on confidence, feel and consistent handling. Having arrived at a setup he's happy with on the road, it's logical for Mark to keep his Öhlins Road & Track suspension in the same settings (five clicks front, ten rear) for his first track session. How does it feel? Over to Mark...

'I'm not a hardcore trackday driver – I suppose you could say I'm an occasional but enthusiastic trackday goer. It's good to be able to push your car that bit harder and really get a feel for it. I've been steadily learning the M3, but I always treat it with respect, so I'm surprised how connected I feel to it here. You can only commit so much on the road, but here

I can really lean on the suspension and feel it working. I'm feeling like I want to push that bit harder. I'm learning with every lap.'

From the passenger seat it's clear he's comfortable with how the M3 tackles the circuit, and more importantly that he's enjoying how it feels. At least that's what the smile on his face is telling us! It's also interesting to note that Mark is feeling increasingly in-tune with the handling of his car and thinking about how it's responding to his inputs. With such a range of suspension adjustment it's no surprise that we return to the pitlane once more so he can apply a more extreme track-biased setup (zero clicks on the front and seven on the rear), before heading back out on track once more for a back-to-back comparison.

Mark immediately carries more speed into the braking zones and turns in with more commitment. He's chasing the throttle sooner, too, and clearly being drawn deeper into the driving experience. It's great to see. No wonder Mark is buzzing with excitement when we complete a cool-down lap and return to the pits.

'Wow, that was magic!' he says. 'It feels like a different car. You can feel the steering's more responsive to inputs, but it's also finding a bit

more bite and precision. I love the way you can really push it into the corners knowing it has some grip and stability in reserve. I think I even got the tail moving a few times, so I know I'm feeling happier to go for it. That was great fun.'

It's been fascinating to see a driver learn more about their car, and to see how its character and ability can be changed with just a few small adjustments to its suspension. For Mark the road and track testing has been little short of a revelation.

'I'm thrilled with the road setup,' he says. 'It delivers the body control I was after, but also manages to round off the sharp edges that the standard EDC suspension had in Sport mode. This is the perfect everyday setup that I can live with, no question. That said, I love the track setup, too. It makes the car so responsive, but also more controlled. I really feel like I can get so much more from the car and myself, which is really exciting. In the past my mates and I have hired the sprint circuit at Curborough. I still have my old competitive urges from my motocross days, so driving against the clock always gets my blood pumping. I'll definitely have a go in the M3, though my mates will say I'm cheating now I've upgraded to Öhlins!'



Inbox

What's exceeded your wear indicators this month?



Letter of the Month

Missing character

It was great to finally read a review of the eagerly awaited new Honda NSX (evo 217). I'm now extremely keen to see the car in the flesh. I think the styling is a notch above that of the new R8, but a kerb weight of over 1700kg? Wow. That is some tech to carry in its belly, especially when you consider another of its rivals, the McLaren 570S, is around 300kg lighter.

The original NSX proved that supercar performance needn't be strangers with useability and reliability. However, this new version faces much stiffer competition, with Audi, Porsche and McLaren all offering daily drivers that will bend your mind with their performance while also being happy to take you to the shops for some milk.

If the new NSX offers all but the same in performance as its rivals but, as your review suggests, lacks any Japanese character, I can't help feeling it was an exercise, not a true dream to create something that represents Honda. A bit like the 2015 Formula 1 season, the nostalgia is nice, just a shame about the execution.

James Goodman

The Letter of the Month wins a Christopher Ward watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives a Christopher Ward C60 Trident Pro 600, worth £599. Water resistant to depths of 600 metres, this divers' watch features a 42mm case made from marine-grade stainless steel and a zirconia ceramic bezel for fracture and scratch resistance, while inside is a Swiss-made self-winding movement.



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Out of place?

It's difficult to know how to begin this letter without using that modern acronym favoured by the Facebook generation – OMG. Possibly OMFG. Yes, I am currently looking at the Bentley Bentayga review (evo 216).

Apart from the obvious questions about this leviathan, the main one that comes to me is why is it in *evo*? It seems to be about as far removed from the average *evo* car as a Dacia Sandero (not yet featured, as far as I know), but at least the Sandero is honest, value-for-money transport.

I would suggest that Bentley has lost its mind, but I suspect the kind of Americans, premiership footballers and Arab sheiks who made the X6 such a success will be queuing up to buy the Bentayga when they look for an upgrade. My own personal wish is never to have to see one in the flesh.

Peter Garforth

We know fast SUVs aren't popular with all of our readers, but, like them or loathe them, they are part of today's wider performance car landscape, so it would be remiss of us not to review them, Bentayga included. – Ed

Safety first

Having read Nick Trott's thoughts about tyres (Ed Speak, evo 217), I couldn't agree with him more.

In my motoring life the one thing I have not scrimped on are those infuriatingly necessary rings of rubber. Consequently I have never had a problem apart from the odd puncture and some steel belting coming through on a Pirelli CN36. That was years and years ago on a Manta GTE, if my memory serves me correctly!

I'm convinced that most accidents you hear about on traffic reports, especially when it's a trifle damp, are

down to people buying those really, really cheap Chinese things they call tyres. Probably not too bad in the dry, but in the wet, forget it.

Mike Hiscocks

Pricy Porsches

It's impossible to overlook how the recent buzz around new top-of-the-line Porsches (GT3 RS, Cayman GT4) is driving up the prices of other sought-after models. Looking in the classifieds, even 2011-2012 Cayman Rs are over £40,000, which could be deemed expensive for 'just a Cayman', as a lot of people would say. But the R offers such a pure driving experience (with a manual gearbox) that it makes you question if a GT4 – currently going for £100,000-plus – is worth so much more for a similar experience, albeit faster, but with less steering feel. Or are these cars simply going to investors and people trying to cash in and deprive true petrolheads of the driving experience we crave?

My 2007 Cayman S manual is still so crisp, sounds glorious and has such a fine balance, along with the same everyday useability. It's worth half what a Cayman R is, but does it offer only half the thrills? I'm not sure that it does... On that note, I'm just going to take my 1994 Mk1 Mazda MX-5 for a lovely winter drive. Potentially the most fun £1500 can buy.

Will Rowlands

Mystery solved

'It's a curious road, as there doesn't seem to be any reason for its existence,' says Nick Trott of the Applecross Pass in his introduction to eCoty 2015 (evo 216). As any fule kno, in Gaelic the pass is called Bealach na Bà, which means Pass of the Cattle. It was a drovers' road. Moo!

Jamie Buchanan



Above: Peter Garforth thinks *evo* should ignore cars such as the Bentley Bentayga



Above: Will Rowlands wonders who exactly is paying £100k for a Cayman GT4

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Talking Point

Fiat 124 Spider v MX-5

Fiat recently revealed its 124 Spider, which shares its platform with Mazda's latest MX-5. We asked which you prefer...

Without a doubt, the Fiat. I think the current MX-5 is irredeemably ugly, but the 124 Spider looks like a mini-Maserati. Plus, unlike the painfully inefficient naturally aspirated 2-litre MX-5 engine that can only wheeze its way to 158bhp, the 500 Abarth-sourced 1.4-litre turbo unit in the Spider is just a remap (and maybe an exhaust) away from 190bhp.

David_Yu

The Mazda. It's the real deal: less weight, no lag, a true drivers' car. You could also give it the BBR treatment if it's more power you're after.

Jamie Kingaby

The Fiat. Purely for the perceived *joie de vivre*.

Tim

I want to want the Fiat, but I'm not sure about its looks; it's too 'American'. I hope the modifications to the damping give the 124 the edge in terms of driving and that the Abarth version will look sharper.

AntoineBretzel

The Fiat looks like Dodge trying to design a Jag XKR. The new MX-5 looks like Mazda trying to design an F-type. It pains me to say it, but I might even prefer a TT.

Si_

The Mazda is pert and efficient of line. It looks like delicate origami. It's contemporary and exciting and the wheel-at-each-corner stance looks purposeful. The design looks to be driven by engineering, not stylists. The Fiat looks bloated and has

clack-handed quasi-retro pastiche styling trowelled on. It looks like an aftermarket bodykit produced by someone who didn't have access to the actual car but instead had images of one faxed over and some important dimensions were lost.

Ste

MX-5, all day long. The Fiat's looks are very contrived, with the retro styling features less well integrated than Fiat achieved with the 500. The MX-5 is a truly lovely thing – so small, squat, modern, delicate and forward looking. It makes the Fiat look pretty clumsy, the front overhang and bulkier rear boot-line in particular unbalancing the rest of the car.

Bishopwasahero

The Mazda, because I like cars that work when you turn the key.

Lee Fairclough

Definitely the 'Fiata' for me, especially in Abarth trim.

dguilder

I'd prefer the Subaru BRZ.

NotoriousREV

Mazda for me. Mazda have stuck with the roadster for over 25 years and know what a driver wants. Fiat, on the other hand, are masters of small hire cars where the drivers don't know what they want.

Markcoopers

If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck and looks like a duck then it's a duck. On that basis, I'd take the Mazda.

Robert Tickner

Join the discussion

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

The best comments will be published here each month

Thread of the Month

Nutty

TVR v man maths

My dear TVR T350 has stretched my idea of man maths to the very edge of any rational reason over the past month. My service and 'jobs' bill just came to four grand. Nothing was 'wrong' with the car, just bits I couldn't ignore. And only 11 months ago, prior to me buying the car, there was a bill for three grand!

It was definitely a brave purchase! I'm not overly surprised by the size of the bills from what I've heard about them. But just look at it – It's gorgeous! To have something else that looks and sounds as awesome as that you'd have to spend a lot more in the first place and still probably have the big bills anyway. So chin up, old bean.

duncs500

Ultimately, if you get to the point where what you're spending on the car greatly outweighs the enjoyment, then it's time to sell. I know they're expensive to run, but £7k in a year is... excessive? When I looked at them my major concern was a Speed Six rebuild. Still bloody love them, though.

MattyB_

Spending £10k or 25 per cent of a car's value in a year on maintenance seems too expensive. The worrying thing is I don't believe you've been sold a lemon or have been over-paying. TVRs are off my want list.

IanF

I know a lot of people judge reasonable running costs by reference to the car's value, but I don't see it that way. To me the question is what else would you rather do with the money? If you're spending X per year, what new car could you finance for X/12 per month? What else could you buy/run on that budget? If owning a TVR is top of your list, then the answer to 'What's it worth?' might be 'Every penny.'

Samoh

In my eyes, it's worth it. Yes, I complain, but ultimately I'm lucky to be able to just about afford it. For the £20k-30k used price I can't see a replacement of the same order.

Nutty

My theory is that any given car will always cost the same, whether you're paying off the purchase price of a new one, paying a monthly finance amount or paying the running costs of an older version. I have no science to back this up, but I just know I'm right.

JL



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The new, turbocharged 911 Carrera's £76,000 price tag pitches it against some seriously hard-hitting rivals, including Nissan's mighty GT-R, Jaguar's ballistic F-type R and BMW's feisty M4. Here it takes on its new-car rivals, while on page 72 it squares up to some tempting second-hand alternatives

by DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

Killer blow?





N

O OTHER SPORTS CAR ENGENDERS

the same protective instinct among car enthusiasts as the Porsche 911. Perhaps it's because so many of us own one now, have done so in the past or aspire to in the future. Maybe it's because the 911 has been around in one form or another for more than five decades. Whatever it is, the mournful cry of the purist in response to yet another raft of irreversible changes – be it the switch from air- to water-cooling, from hydraulic to electric power steering or, most recently, the turbocharging of all mainstream models – has become almost a part of the car's fabric.

The facelifted 991-generation Carrera models now use twin-turbocharged, 3-litre flat-sixes, which brings to an end 53 years of robustly guarded tradition. Whether you consider it the end of days for a once great car or you find the frenzied outcry entirely laughable, we can surely all agree that this is a significant moment in the ongoing narrative of the sports car.

A great deal has been made, not least by Porsche itself, about the fuel efficiency improvements that have been achieved. The factory reckons on ten per cent reductions in consumption for both Carrera and Carrera S, which hardly seems like a significant enough return to outweigh all the mudslinging. There is another reason that Porsche took the decision to turbocharge, though, and it's illustrated very neatly by the collection of cars you see on these pages. The 911's rivals all use powerful turbo or supercharged engines, and given that the unique architecture of the 911 rules out a bigger motor with more cylinders, Porsche had to turbocharge simply to stay on the pace. Those naturally aspirated 3.4 and 3.8-litre engines that

powered the pre-facelift models had nothing more to give and, while you and I might agree that they were far from underpowered, we must also accept that the game just isn't played that way.

After the event, though, it only really matters how well the job has been done. If Porsche has set new standards for forced induction

and broken new ground for the turbocharger, the frenzy could all be for nothing. The Guards Red 911 you see here is a plain rear-wheel-drive Carrera, rather than the more powerful S version. Apart from its PDK gearbox and sports exhaust, it's more or less as basic as new 911s come, which will give us the best opportunity to not only understand this new power unit, but also to assess the updated car's dynamics without the added complications of rear-wheel steering and variable anti-roll bars – both options on the Carrera S.

The numbers are 365bhp, 0-62mph in 4.6sec and 183mph flat-out (4.4sec and 182mph with PDK). They're strong figures, but at £76,412 basic the Carrera is positioned alongside some much more powerful cars, with cheaper alternatives also offering considerably more power.

The Nissan GT-R costs just £1600 more than the basic Carrera, but, with 542bhp and a startling sub-3sec 0-62mph time, it exists on an entirely different planet to the 911 in performance terms. The Jaguar F-type R Coupe, too, is vastly more potent than the Porsche. It matches the GT-R for power output and will hit 62mph in 4.2 seconds, although, at £86,810, it is £10,000 more expensive (we've opted for the R model because it's closer in price to the Carrera than the £62,000 V6 S).

The BMW M3 – or M4 these days, to the detriment of pithy references – has long been a screw in the tread of the Carrera. It has always been both more powerful and significantly cheaper than the base model 911, and so it is with these latest versions. The M4 is the better part of £20,000 cheaper, but with 425bhp it has a 60bhp advantage and gets from 0 to 62mph in 4.1sec.

I'm yet to lose any sleep over the 911's switch to turbocharging, but I can't help but feel a tinge of trepidation the very first time I apply any meaningful pressure to the Carrera's throttle pedal. What if the car's been completely ruined? Second gear, 2000rpm, foot down. Response is good. The rev-counter needle sweeps around quickly and in a completely linear manner. There's no sudden surge as the boost arrives. The needle swings around to 7000rpm, the exhaust note hardens a little and I change up with a tug of a paddle. It all feels so... familiar.

I repeat the process a number of times and, soon enough, a question forms in my mind. If Dr Wolfgang Hatz – the now former head of R&D who oversaw the development of these new turbo engines – were to call my mobile right now and explain, while laughing hysterically at the brilliance of his hoax, that the whole turbocharging thing was just a hilarious wind-up that everybody fell for and that, obviously,



*'IN PERFORMANCE
TERMS, THE
GT-R EXISTS ON
AN ENTIRELY
DIFFERENT PLANET
TO THE 911'*



911s will always be naturally aspirated, you idiot, would I have grounds to doubt him? What exactly is there to tell me that this engine is being boosted by a pair of exhaust-driven turbines?

A few hundred miles later, and with no missed calls from Dr Hatz, I have my answer. You would need to have become very familiar with the earlier engines, I reckon, to notice that this new unit is more muscular from low down, that it doesn't fizz with quite the same energy throughout the rev-range, that it doesn't have quite the reach right at the top end and that the exhaust note is just a little flat. I've never come across a turbocharged engine that disguises its manner of induction as effectively as this one. It just does not feel turbocharged. But when I think back to the old atmospheric motors, it just isn't as soulful or as exciting, either.

With one hand Porsche giveth, with the other hand it jabbeth in the ribs. It was always inevitable that these new engines would be better in some ways and worse in others and, overall, the trade-off seems reasonably fair. The added flexibility at lower revs is useful – undoubtedly even more so with a manual gearbox – and fuel economy has improved slightly in normal driving. But there isn't the effervescence of old, nor the soundtrack. As Colin Goodwin notes: '911s always made a wonderful range of noises. This one is just a bit monotonous until you get it right to the top end.'

'But what would Porsche have to do to completely ruin the 911? It's such a great car that even turbocharging hasn't done it,' Goodwin continues, before muttering something derisory about water-cooling.

***'NOBODY HAS
EVER EXPLAINED
THE CONCEPT OF
UNDERSTEER TO
THE FRONT AXLE
OF THE M4'***



Therein lies the crux of the matter: Porsche has implemented turbocharging with such skill and sympathy that the net loss is pretty minimal. As it turns out, though, 911 purists have an entirely different reason to be concerned...

Unlike the Carrera, the GT-R is supposed to feel distinctly turbocharged. It's a big part of the car's character. No matter how many times I drive a GT-R, I'll never grow accustomed to the rate of acceleration it's capable of. In fact, I'm surprised by it at every corner exit. In contrast to the 911's smooth linearity, the Nissan's 3.8-litre V6 is sleepy at low revs, starts to pull really hard from around 3000rpm, then snaps up to its limiter with a scary ferocity. It's a very different approach to turbocharging and, although it does demonstrate that a blown motor can be a thrilling thing, there's



911 CARRERA v BMW M4 v JAGUAR F-TYPE R v NISSAN GT-R





'RATHER LIKE THE CARRERA, THE M4 ALSO TRIES TO DISGUISE ITS TURBOCHARGING'

nothing the Carrera can learn from it.

Even after all these years, the GT-R driving experience is an utterly intoxicating one. The hydraulic steering – unique in this test – is feelsome and surprisingly delicate, which seems to sit at odds with the overall brutishness of the rest of the package. It's like finding out Tyson Fury reads Romantic poetry. It also means you can place the big Nissan with real precision on the road, and you get a clear picture of how much grip there is

to lean on, although regardless of the prevailing conditions that never seems to be anything less than 'chuffing loads'.

You can have the GT-R heavily loaded up mid-corner, feeling as though you're really pushing it hard, and yet, if you were to dial in another 20 degrees of steering lock and stand hard on the power, the car would just snap into a new trajectory without fuss. It has agility to burn, but despite its enormous reserves of grip there's a real liveliness to the chassis balance, too, both in the entry phase to a corner and under power. The GT-R is so much more than a grippy, point-and-squirt machine; once you get it up on its toes it's incredibly malleable and adjustable. Combine that playfulness with its outrageous straight-line performance and you have a machine of unrivalled excitement and intensity.

I have a theory that the patchy quality of the GT-R's cabin and its heavily dated switchgear is a running joke at Porsche. 'Reinhard's new briefcase is so cheap,' they might laugh, 'it must have been made by Nissan!' Yes, the GT-R's cabin is completely outclassed by the modern German offerings, but that does nothing to diminish what is one of the highest quality driving experiences at



any price. 'It isn't really my sort of car,' says Colin, 'but it is incredible to drive. I think it could be the best four-wheel-drive performance car ever.'

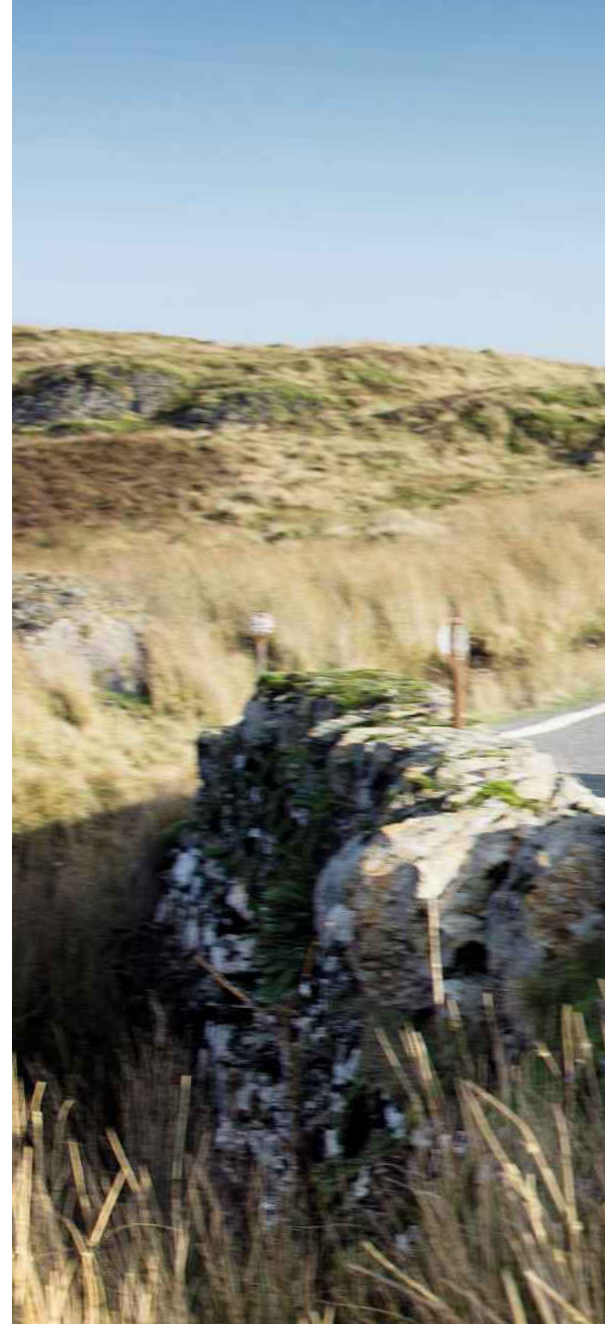
The magazine group test isn't necessarily an environment in which the F-type thrives. Being a bigger and heavier car than its rivals, it can feel a bit wallowy and floaty in direct comparison. Never dim-witted or leaden, though, because it has so much grip, such a keen front end, such immediate steering response – to the point of being contrived, in fact – and so much raw performance that it always feels like a livewire.

What it doesn't have is the Porsche's or the Nissan's rock-solid body control, both in terms of roll and also over crests and undulations. If you take the time to tune into it, though, rather than jumping from one car to another, as tends to be the way on group tests, you soon learn how to get the best out of it.

The trick is to be smoother and more fluid with your inputs, allowing the car to settle on its springs on initial turn-in before really committing to a bend. Nonetheless, there is still a disconnect for me between the strong self-centring effect of the steering and the manic rate of response at the front axle. The car will dart into an apex with



‘THE REAR-WHEEL-DRIVE F-TYPE IS CLEARLY VERY TRACTION-LIMITED IN THE WET... BUT IT’S A GREAT DEAL OF FUN’



immediacy and laser-like precision, but the lifeless, elastic helm leaves you feeling removed from it all.

Ultimately it isn't a major hindrance to your pace or enjoyment down a winding stretch of road, once you've grown accustomed to its ways. This rear-wheel-drive F-type R, rather than the All Wheel Drive models we've tested on a couple of occasions in recent months, is clearly very traction-limited in the wet – supercharged V8s do tend to overwhelm two contact patches in greasy conditions – but in the dry it is more engaging. With so much power on tap, you can provoke the rear axle under load alone, not needing momentum as well to feel the back end of the car sliding away from a corner. It's a much simpler and more timeless driving style than the GT-R's and, although the F doesn't have that car's outright dynamic ability, it is a great deal of fun. It has character, too, thanks in no small part to that 5-litre engine and a comically flatulent exhaust note.

'Some days I would want the insane sense of



Above: new Carrera stays remarkably flat through corners – unless there's a bump mid-turn... **Left:** turbocharged M4 chases supercharged F-type R. Both cars are fast and fun but also flawed

grip, turbocharged punch and diff-controlled agility that you get in the Nissan,' says Henry Catchpole, 'and other days I'd long for the on-demand fun of the Jaguar's simple front-engine, rear-drive oversteer and the crackling, over-endowed V8. I can't choose between them.'

We've criticised the latest-generation M3s and M4s in the past for feeling rather run-of-the-mill in the cabin, but this particular test car's leather-lined dashboard – a £1075 option – does an enormous amount to lend it a sense of occasion. The seating position remains just-so and the seats themselves are terrific, too.

Within a few hundred metres, you can detect the M4's saloon-car underpinnings. It's the cheapest car here by a huge margin precisely because it's a derivative of a mainstream model, rather than a ground-up sports car. We should forgive it for falling short of its rivals here in certain ways, then, but as we'll discover, there are one or two aspects of its behaviour that are difficult to excuse.

Rather like the 911, the M4 also tries to disguise its turbocharging. The M3/M4 committed the Carrera's forced-induction sin – if you choose to look at it that way – the best part of two years ago, bringing to an end almost 30 years of naturally aspirated tradition. The twin-turbo, 3-litre straight-six is a responsive and potent thing, but, like the Carrera's flat-six, it lacks energy through the rev-range, a vibrant top end and a spine-tingling soundtrack. It's more evidently a blown motor than the Porsche's, though, its boosty, torque-rich delivery leaving you in no doubt about how all that power is being made.

In dynamic terms, the M4 is a car of two halves. In sweeping, flowing bends and over an undulating surface – the sort of road where you're not really cornering but you still need body composure – it's loosely controlled and wayward. It can feel as though it might pogo off the road. It never does, of course, but that's not the impression you want when you're pressing on.

In tighter corners, though, it's really very good. The key difference is that you can really load the chassis up, work through that phase of floatiness at the very beginning of the suspension travel and sit the weight of the car on its outer edge. Set that way, it then digs in and slices through corners like a real sports car. Nobody has ever explained the concept of understeer to the front axle and the optional carbon-ceramic brakes (£6250) give massive stopping power.

Rather like the F-type, though, the M4's rear axle is often overwhelmed by the engine's torque, which can make it feel edgy and spikey on low-grip surfaces. What's frustrating is that the slightly wayward body control hampers your pace, simply because you have to allow the chassis to recover from one input before making another. You have to drive with patience, noting with every hesitation that the other cars are gradually getting away.

'For me, an M-car should be able to provide most, if not all, of the honed polish and precision of the Porsche, just in a front-engined package,' comments Henry. 'It shouldn't feel so much chubbier. I still enjoyed my drive over the Llanberis Pass with Goodwin chasing in the GT-R, but I felt like I was having to be pretty brave, taking a few risks to get it up on its toes where it comes alive. I just want it to be a bit more lithe and transparent.'

What else of the new boy? I had hoped this updated 911's steering would have benefited from following in the tracks of the GT3 and GT3 RS, both of which steer with so much more of the texture and feel of previous generations. Unfortunately the new car's helm is still pretty untalkative. I love the sensation of a steering system loading up just as the car squats down in hard cornering, and that's not something this 911's rack ever does, though it is very direct and keenly weighted.

*'OTHERS MAY BE
FASTER, BUT THE
911 REMAINS
THE PUREST
SPORTS CAR
EXPERIENCE'*



What is very impressive, though, is how positive the front axle feels on turn-in on both dry and greasy roads, even without trail-braking. It just seems to snap into an apex despite being naturally unloaded. There is abundant body control, very cleverly combined with pliancy over bumps and an easy smothering of ruts and cambers. The Carrera just finds its way down a road with real quality and so little fuss.

Were it not for the fact that the engine noise comes from a few feet away rather than just behind me, I might well believe that this was a mid-engined car. I don't feel as though I'm managing a very light front end or a pendulous rear axle – at road speeds, at least.

There's a parallel here with the turbocharged engine: the chassis is so hard to fault in objective terms, but the distinctive 911 character has been eroded a little further once more.

Certain diehard 911 fans will find that regrettable, but it's not enough to cost the Carrera the group test victory. Others may be faster and more characterful, but, in spite of everything, the 911's remains the purest sports car experience in the sector.

'The 911 is the worthy winner, despite not really driving like a 911,' reckons Henry. 'It's just a very, very good sports car. The neutrality of the balance is almost Cayman-like and the flatness that it retains in corners is very un-911, but somehow you don't care about that when you're driving. The only real vestige of the rear-engined nature is the traction on the way out of corners.'

For the disappointed purist, Henry offers a grain of hope: 'Interestingly the Carrera S that I drove on the launch did still feel very much like a 911...'

With thanks to Anglesey Circuit and RPM Technik.

BMW M4

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo
CO2 194g/km
Power 425bhp @ 5500-7300rpm
Torque 406lb ft @ 1850-5500rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch (option), rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, ESP
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs (option), 400mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 9 x 19in front, 10 x 19in rear (option)
Tyres 255/35 ZR19 front, 275/35 ZR19 rear
Weight 1537kg
Power-to-weight 281bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.1sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Basic price £57,055
On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

NISSAN GT-R

Engine V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo
CO2 275g/km
Power 542bhp @ 6400rpm
Torque 466lb ft @ 3200-5800rpm
Transmission Six-speed dual-clutch, four-wheel drive, rear limited-slip differential, ESP
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated cross-drilled discs, 390mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 9.5 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear
Tyres 255/40 ZR20 front, 285/35 ZR20 rear
Weight 1740kg
Power-to-weight 316bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 196mph (claimed)
Basic price £78,020
On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

JAGUAR F-TYPE R COUPE

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharger
CO2 255g/km
Power 542bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 501lb ft @ 3500rpm
Transmission Eight-speed automatic, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, ESC
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated cross-drilled 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 1650kg
Power-to-weight 334bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.2sec (claimed)
Top speed 186mph (limited)
Basic price £86,810
On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

PORSCHE 911 CARRERA

Engine Flat-six, 2981cc, twin-turbo
CO2 169g/km
Power 365bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 332lb ft @ 1700-5000rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch (option), rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, PSM
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated cross-drilled discs, 330mm front and rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 8.5 x 19in front, 11.5 x 19in rear
Tyres 235/40 ZR19 front, 295/35 ZR19 rear
Weight 1450kg
Power-to-weight 256bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.4sec (claimed)
Top speed 182mph (claimed)
Basic price £76,412
On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★



Turbo

D6 GTB

Round two...

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

The latest 911 has met its new-car rivals head-on. Now it squares up to three second-hand alternatives: BMW's formidable M6, Aston Martin's glorious V8 Vantage N430 and the stupendous 997 Turbo. Ding ding!



YOU CAN ALMOST imagine the 911 standing in the middle of some illicit boxing ring, panting slightly but still remarkably light on its feet as the readership, I mean crowd, cheers and boos in equal measure. The Porsche surveys the carnage around it, having seen off the best of its rivals in its own division (I reckon Super Middleweight). For a brief moment, it allows the euphoria of victory to sweep over it, but then the announcer gets on the tannoy. Down the aisles, out of the shadows, come three more challengers. Not any old protagonists either, but a couple of Light Heavyweights and one you'd have to mark down as a Cruiserweight given its 319bhp per ton. None of them quite in the first flush of youth, but still very dangerous. Do the 911's broad shoulders sink? Not a bit of it. Seconds out, round two.

The issue of what second-hand car you could get for the same price as a new one is tricky. Clearly you can get better value for money if you're prepared to buy pre-owned, but it generally skews a test horribly unfairly against the new car. It's a mark of how highly we rate the 991.2, then, that we're prepared to do it in this instance. Never let it be said that we give the 911 an easy ride.

In no particular order, the trio we've picked starts with an F13 BMW M6, complete with twin-turbo V8 and an original price tag of £93,860 (before inconsequential little options like the £6000 leather dashboard on this car). Next up is a second-generation 997 Porsche 911 Turbo, a car originally listed at just over £100k and which we've included for obvious – and intriguing – reasons of comparison between familial forced induction. Finally, there is the seductive temptation of an Aston Martin N430, which, although based on a car now a decade old, arguably already looked good value at its full price of £89,995.

We also wanted to pick cars that were new enough to have some of their manufacturers' warranties intact or, in the case of the older 997.2 Turbo, could be picked up at the right money through the official Porsche Approved Used network with a freshly minted two-year warranty. This in turn takes away one of the potential downsides of buying second-hand rather than new. More pressure on the this new Carrera.

Despite the occasional hailstorm and winds strong enough to give sheep the gift of flight, we've decided to stay in north Wales for this part of the test. With the weather so wild, it's a nice feeling to shut a door on the elements with a thud and settle into the interior of a car like the M6. Joe Robinson was actually considering a first-generation 991 when he bought this San Marino Blue example, but one of the major reasons for plumping for Munich's finest over Stuttgart's was the quality

of the BMW's interior. Trimmed in soft, light-coloured leather contrasting against deeply glossy carbonfibre on the doors and centre console, with a monstrous 10.2in screen for the iDrive and a head-up display, it certainly feels like a thoroughly pleasant place to be. I also still love the small teardrop gear selector that first appeared on the V10 M5. This car might have covered 21,000 miles, but it looks like new and I almost feel guilty for taking it out while the weather's like this. At least Joe is getting to see how beautifully the water beads on the paintwork...

Heading down one of my favourite stretches of road, the M6 initially feels very big, especially compared with the new Carrera, which seems to shrink around you in a way that I haven't felt with a 991 before. The rim of the M6's steering wheel is a much more pleasing size than that of little brother M4, though, and the first straight delivers a big-league thump of performance from the 552bhp V8. As ever in modern BMWs, a quick fiddle with the settings for steering, suspension, engine, transmission and stability control is required to find a setup that works. The steering feels unnatural to me in anything other than its comfort setting, but the M Dynamic Mode for the ESP is an excellent halfway house, especially in the wet, and you'll certainly be lighting up the rear tyres if you select the most aggressive setting for the throttle, which is exciting but requires a sensitive right foot. The gearshifts are best left one notch down from maximum attack, where they're fast enough without feeling like they're trying to thump their way through the floor of the car.

The trickiest adjustment to make is for the suspension. Initially I go for the middle Sport setting, but, after feeling a bit too much float from the rear axle over the lumpier bits of road, I opt to tie it down and go for maximum control with Sport Plus. Inevitably this means the M6 is firmer and livelier over bumps, but I prefer the greater feeling of connection, and the rear then matches the surprisingly keen front. It turns the M6 into a car that you really have to grab by the scruff and drive with some purpose, accepting that it will be eager to oversteer a lot of the time when you get on the throttle. If you're happy with this, however, the M6 is a very entertaining car.

Of course, the other trick the M6 can pull is playing the grand tourer. And if you need seats in the back, then the BMW's are the most capacious and the only ones capable of holding an adult in comfort for any distance. BMW claims 28.5mpg on the combined cycle, compared with the 991.2's staggering claim of 38.2mpg. Joe reckons he sees more like 24mpg on a run, although he admits he only really uses the M6 when he wants a car for more than just transport. We know that 911s (especially with PDK) can easily do over 30mpg, but on my three-and-a-half-hour night-time run

BMW M6

Engine V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo
Power 552bhp @ 6000-7000rpm
Torque 501lb ft @ 1500-5750rpm
Weight 1850kg
Power-to-weight 303bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.2sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Price today from £50,000

evo rating: ★★★★★



back from Wales in the 991, I'll average 24mpg in a mix of enjoyable 'road testing' on the A5 and more mundane cruising once I hit the M54.

Ultimately, I suppose the question we have to ask with all of these used cars is whether you feel like you're actually getting a lot more car for your money compared with the new 991. In the case of the M6 I feel like it is an alternative, rather than a step up. The furnishings in the cabin might feel slightly nicer and the interior real estate is obviously greater, but while there is a thrill to the way the V8 delivers its thumping performance, the M6's size and damping make that performance hard to extract down a twisting road. In sports car terms, the 911 has it covered, and then some.

The argument for the 997 is easy and, on paper, compelling: why settle for a 365bhp Carrera turbo when you could have a full-fat, 493bhp, capital T Turbo for the same money? As I walk towards the example we have here today, it looks squat, menacing and fantastically purposeful. The smaller 997 bodysheet seems to exaggerate the size of the swollen rear arches in a way that makes the red car look dainty by comparison. First points to the 997.

I drop into the driver's seat, with owner Richard Lane (not to be confused with *evo*'s identically named subeditor) taking up

residence on the passenger side. An initial twist of the key to light up the instruments shows just over 37,000 miles on the clock, yet the interior has worn well. However, the switchgear, graphics and technology feel further removed from the standard 991 (now with added Apple CarPlay) than I'd expected. The 997's roots were planted in 2004 and they are showing.

We splash off towards Ffestiniog and, after a few miles, I start to settle into a rhythm as my brain gradually recalls previous drives in 997 Turbos and something like muscle memory starts to click into place. Sometimes when car companies quote improved shift-times for gearboxes I do wonder how tangible tens of milliseconds will really be, but the difference between 997 and 991 is obvious from the first pull of the paddle. There is a slight hesitancy in the older car, and the action of the paddles is softer, like biting a slightly over-ripe apple compared with a crisp, fresh one.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with the 997's power delivery, though. It is demonstrably turbocharged compared with the almost imperceptible puffing of the new Carrera, but, when the boost arrives in a lump, it pins you to the seat in formidable fashion. It is terrifically exciting, sensing the hurricane build behind you, then feeling it sweep 1600kg down the

road like a leaf in a storm. If you want genuinely giddy turbo performance, there is no substitute. The downsides are that the soundtrack in the Turbo is all harsh gas-rush and the 3.8-litre motor is done by just after 6000rpm compared with the 991's 3-litre, which will spin to over 7500rpm and sound much more like a naturally aspirated flat-six in the process.

The Turbo was never the most tactile car in the 997 range, but the underlying sensations from its hydraulic steering still beat the 991's EPAS. It's surprisingly close, but there is just a richness to the movements, particularly around the straight-ahead, that the electric system can't match. The Turbo's four-wheel-drive system, on the other hand, is a mixed blessing, for while it provides the astounding traction that makes 479lb ft deployable even on a road that resembles a river, it also locks the car down dynamically in the corners. Outright grip is favoured over adjustability. In some ways the new Carrera is very similar – yes, the 991 feels purer because it's rear-wheel drive, but it also feels remarkably tied-down. It is precise and enjoyably nimble with a huge amount of front-end grip, but, like the Turbo, it's not a car you will unsettle without some real commitment. Even the rides are not dissimilar, both best left in their normal PASM damper settings.



PORSCHE 911 TURBO (997.2)

Engine Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo

Power 493bhp @ 6300rpm

Torque 479lb ft @ 1950rpm

Weight 1570kg

Power-to-weight 319bhp/ton

0-60mph 3.2sec (tested)

Top speed 193mph (claimed)

Price today from £60,000

evo rating: ★★★★★





ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE N430

Engine V8, 4735cc
Power 430bhp @ 7300rpm
Torque 361lb ft @ 5000rpm
Weight 1610kg
Power-to-weight 271bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 189mph (claimed)
Price today from £75,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

Perhaps it shouldn't be a surprise that these two are so closely matched, but which you would prefer will come down to the importance you put on an interior and how you like your performance delivered. Do you crave the heady rush of a single big hit, or the sharper responses and more linear delivery of the new engine? The old car certainly highlights how un-turbo-like the new car feels, as though the turbocharging is really just there to subtly torque-fill the lower end.

However, as an aside (and just to throw a spanner in the works!) the Turbo that I've found myself lusting after recently is a late-gen-1 997, with the second-generation Porsche Communication Management and a manual gearbox. It was a more malleable car dynamically and the manual gearbox, although hefty, gave it a lot of character. They're quite rare, but that just adds to the appeal. Richard is in agreement, but confesses that the PDK of this generation was a must for him for its ease of use, as he's not the only one who drives the car. Talking of manual gearboxes...

Even before you pull open a swan-wing door, the Aston Martin is an easy car to fall head over heels for. I'm not sure you would ever get bored of seeing that compact yet graceful shape parked up outside your house. This car has the subtlest of the available paint options on an N430, with the white lipstick and A-pillar highlights blending coolly into the overall silver colour scheme.

Settle into the comfy and beautifully trimmed driver's seat and you find yourself in an elegant if not tech-heavy environment, but there is Alcantara on the steering wheel, which makes up for any fiddliness in finding a Bluetooth connection. The glass 'Emotion Control Unit' also seems slightly less silly these days with all the chunky keyless keys. Sinking it into the dash, the starter spins briefly before the exhausts split the cold air with a mighty eruption of V8 noise, dislodging a squirrel from a nearby tree in the process. The N430 has always sounded good, but not this good.

The owner of this car, James McAllister, has had a full Bamford and Rose exhaust fitted to his N430 and, although it costs £6000, it releases an extra 41bhp and 33lb as an added bonus on top of the glorious soundtrack. Even better, you can simply turn the Sport button off and it's as though the conversion never happened, allowing you to slink along almost covertly. Tuning like this is obviously appealing, particularly on a second-hand car, and I'm sure plenty would also think about a DMS upgrade for the 997 or a set of AC Schnitzer springs and dampers for the M6.

I've been a big fan of all the 'N' variants of the V8 Vantage, and the 430 is the best of the lot. The manual gearshift has always felt as though it's set a touch high, but it's so nice to have the

interactivity of three pedals that any minor ergonomic foibles are easily overlooked. A blip of the throttle requires a more concerted lean on the accelerator pedal than you might expect, but again you quickly get used to it.

The suspension doesn't quite have the incredible damping capacity of the new 991's, but the balance it strikes between soaking up the bigger Welsh bumps and providing support and precision in the corners is pretty much spot-on. What's more, the steering is possessed of a greater tactility than the Porsche's. Some of this is simply due to the extra weight of the steering in the Aston, but its hydraulic assistance also gives you more feedback about what the surface of the road is like under the tyres. As a consequence, the Aston is an easy car to push hard but also a very rewarding one.

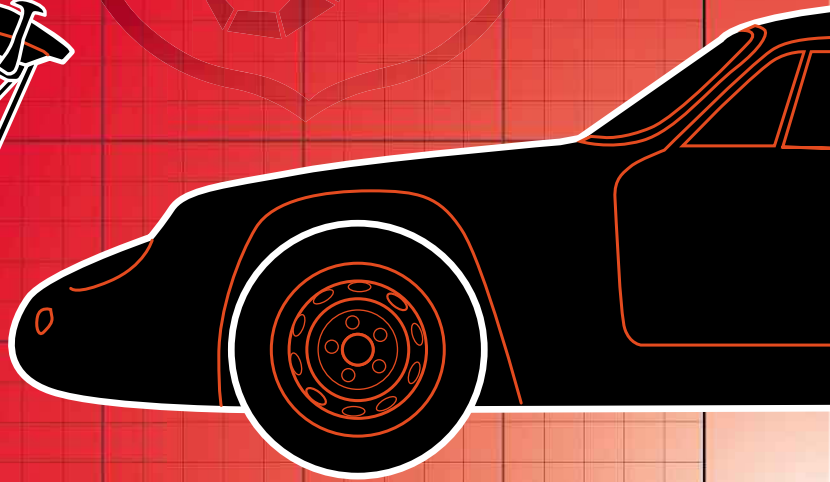
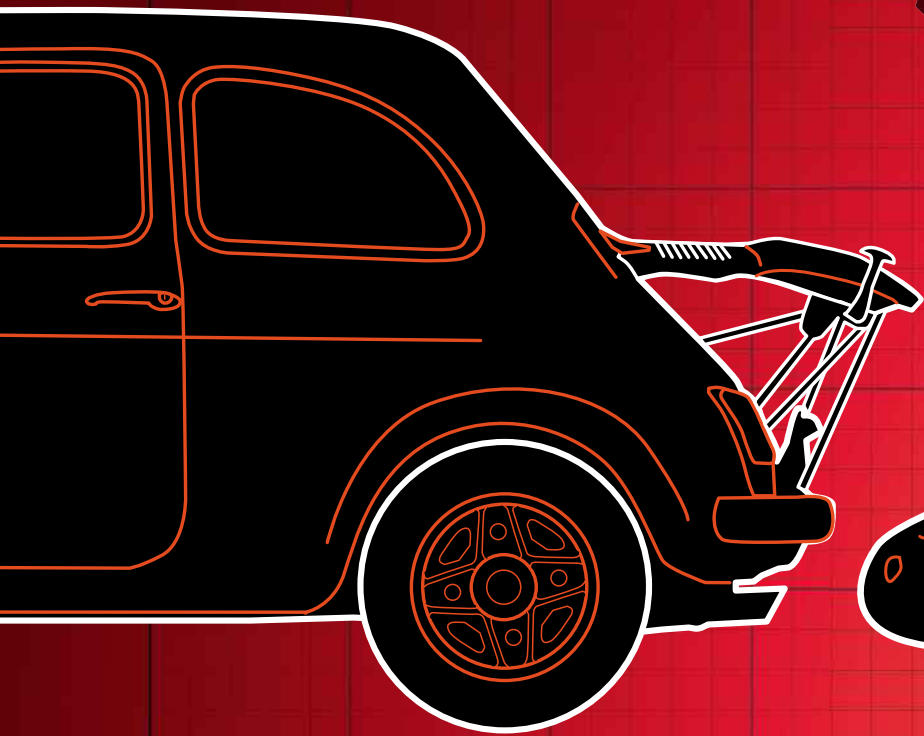
A front-engined rear-drive balance feels so right and, although the Vantage can feel a little reluctant to tuck into the tightest corners, for the most part it is just beautifully balanced. You can play with the grip at both ends, subtly pushing the car into almost imperceptible slides as required by the situation. It all adds up to a beautiful flow through the bends and, of course, if you want to indulge and corner with a bit more of a flourish, the Aston is happy to oblige, remaining stable and easy to read at remarkably big angles.

It's not a particularly fast car in the modern scheme of things (photographer Dean Smith's long-term Audi RS Q3 does a worryingly good job of filling my mirrors on the sodden roads) but to be honest it feels fast enough from behind the wheel. And if you have to wring out the revs from each gear to keep the pace brisk, well, that's not really a hardship – the thunderous soundtrack just gets more and more spine-tingling.

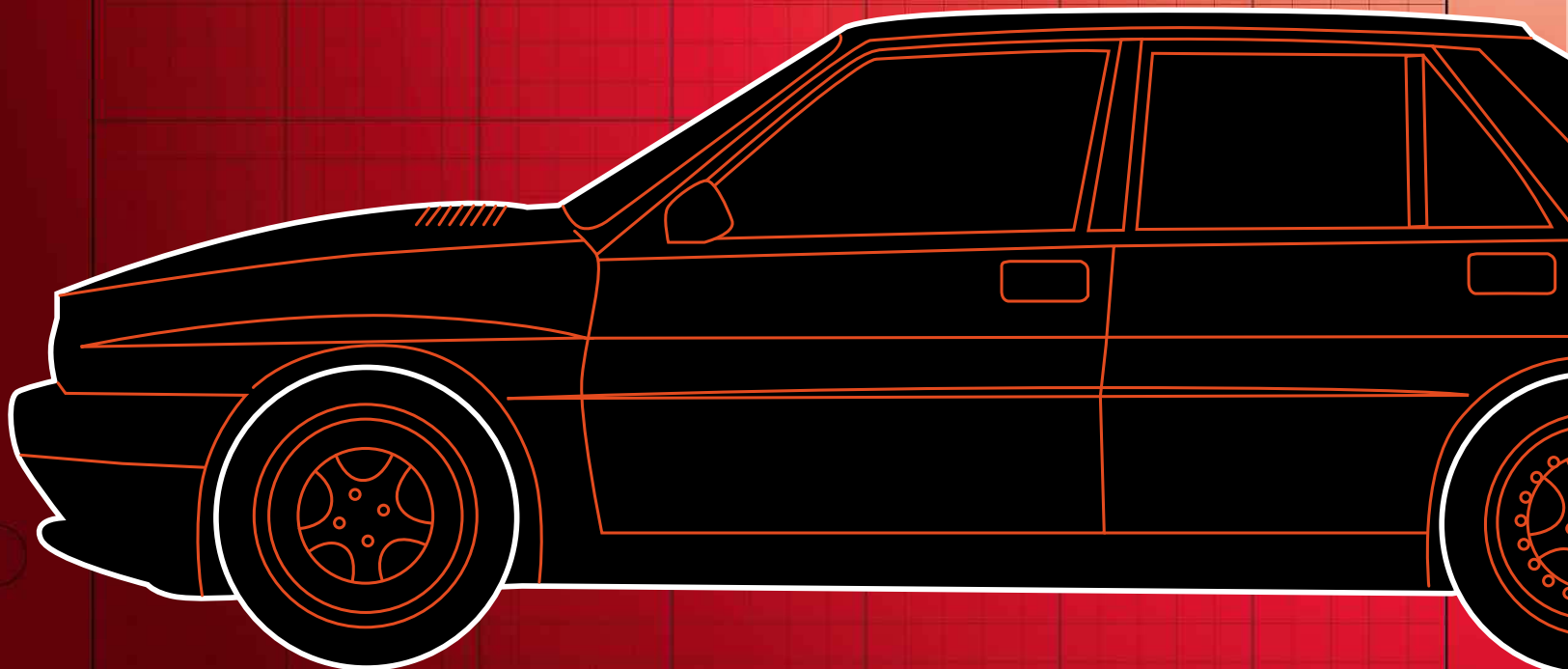
Of all the cars in this section of the test, the Aston is the one that, for me, provides the most compelling reason not to get into the 991, given the choice of keys. It is the most old-fashioned but, like seeing a Sunday roast on the menu in a pub, its simple mix of traditional ingredients is very tempting. Although the metrics of depreciation are not the most precise, you would have to say that a limited-run, special-edition Aston is probably the safest bet for clinging on to its value, too.

For my money, it would be the Aston by a whisker. I really, really like the new 911, and objectively it is the more technically accomplished of the two, but it's also a car that will no doubt be bettered again by a future iteration. The Aston, on the other hand, feels like it is at a sweet spot in its development. It's a car with qualities that will stand proud through the test of time.

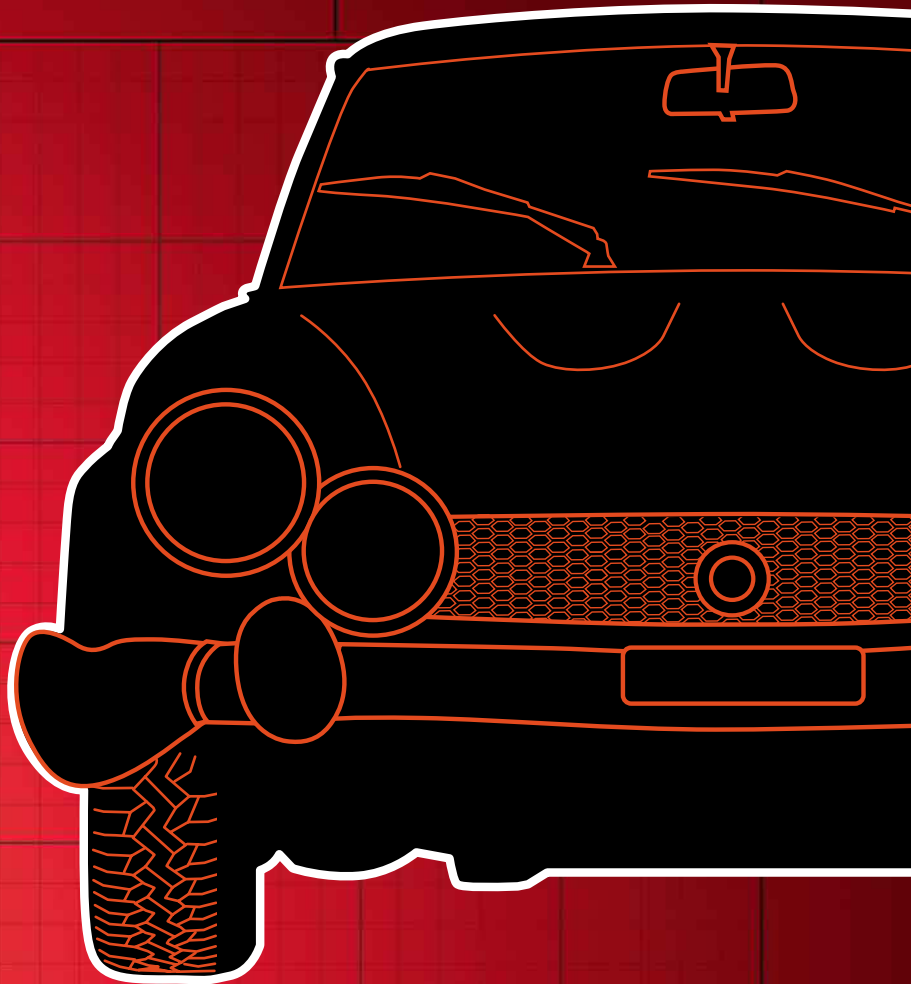
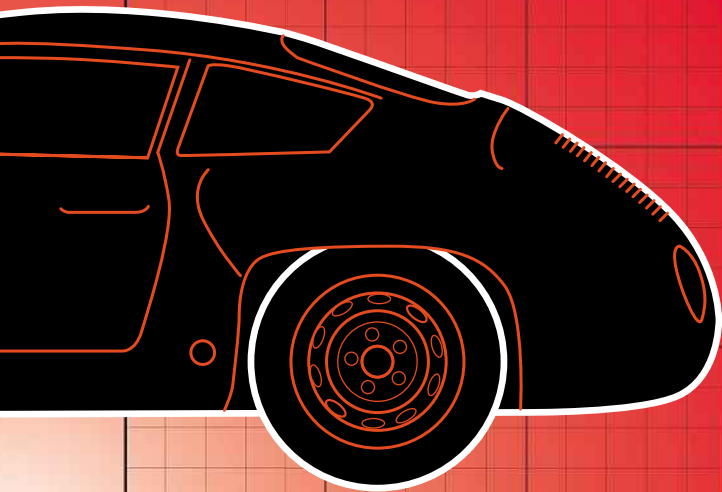
With thanks to Joe Robinson (M6), Richard Lane (997 Turbo) and James McAllister (N430).



SCORPION

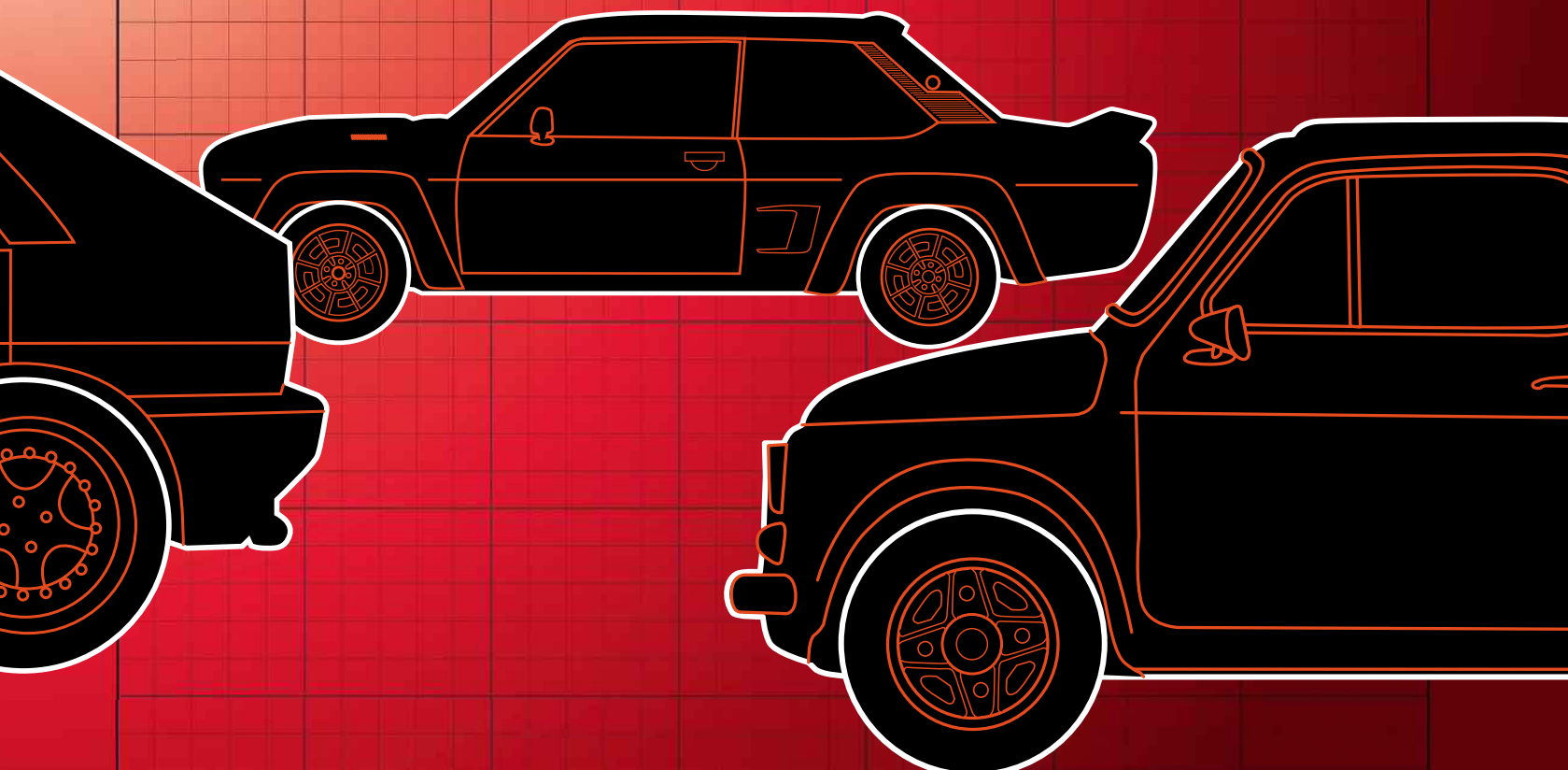


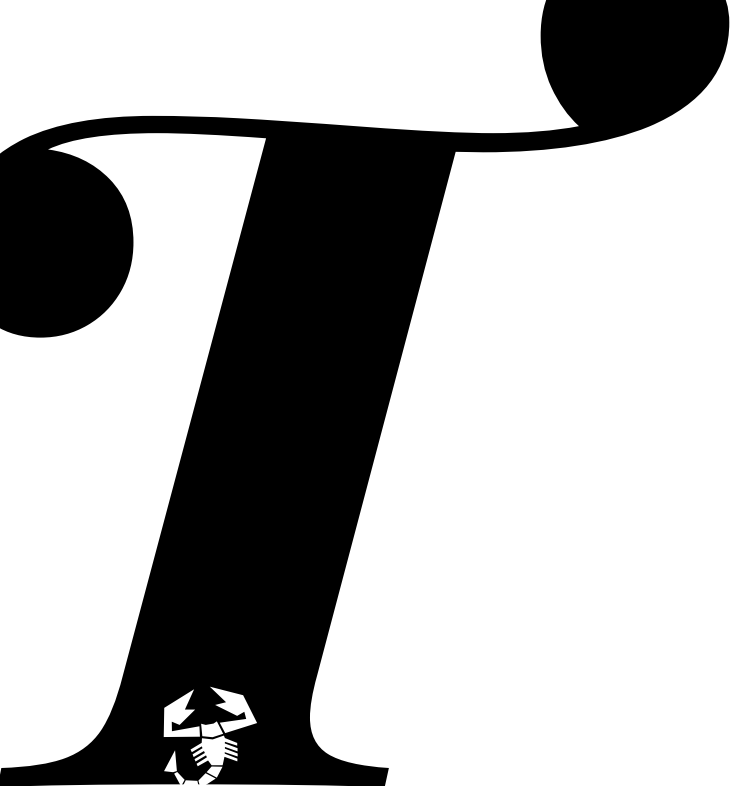
Abarth is preparing a resurgence, with an eye-catching new Classiche facility and exciting new products on the way, including its own take on the forthcoming Fiat 124 Spider. We paid a visit and spoke to the boss



RISING

by HUNTER SKIPWORTH





THERE'S AN ARGUMENT TO BE MADE for Carlo Abarth as the founding father of the hot hatch. While he first came to public attention as sporting director of the Cisitalia racing team in the late 1940s, it was his work on the original Fiat 500 of the 1950s and '60s that really made his name. Doubling the horsepower, flaring the wheelarches, revising the suspension, propping the engine covers open for added cooling... Abarth transformed the cute but toothless Fiat 500 into a unlikely winner on the race track and a cult hero on the road.

With the exception of the 695 Biposto, modern Abarths have generally fallen short of recapturing the magic of Carlo's early creations, lagging behind rivals when it comes to dynamics and performance, and lacking the bespoke feel that the originals had. However, a recent visit to Abarth's newly opened Classiche facility and a 'state of the union' chat with worldwide head of operations Paolo Gagliardo revealed a brand with renewed direction and, in the form of the just-unveiled Fiat 124 Spider, the potential to do something genuinely exciting.

Classiche itself is like a specialist garage tacked on to the Abarth factory. So you wander down the production line, witnessing brand new Fiat 500s having their insides ripped out to be replaced with bucket seats and dog-ring gearboxes, before finally arriving in a room filled with classic Abarth cars. Dotted about are Fiat 124 Abarths, several freshly restored original 595s, and even a few ultra-rare SS and Assetto Corsa versions of the same car. Set in what used to be a car park in Fiat's iconic Mirafiori complex in Turin, the new facility provides Abarth with a genuine base for its operations and, crucially, brings all the elements of the brand together under one roof.

Indeed, it has all the staples of a baby Maranello, with an entrance stacked full of *cassetta di trasformazione* – essentially Abarth parts in fancy crates – and more than enough merchandise to clean out the pockets of any 500 fan.

'We have a beautiful structure here and all of our technicians in one place,' says Gagliardo. 'It was a very easy equation to solve. We are growing, we are planning

'IT'S A BRAND WITH RENEWED DIRECTION AND, IN THE FORM OF THE FIAT 124 SPIDER, THE POTENTIAL TO DO SOMETHING GENUINELY EXCITING'

on growing even more, but we were missing that link, we were missing our roots.

'This is us bringing it all together and it makes sense. We already have in-house records and we receive a constant stream of material, complete with technical descriptions, from classic car lovers. This is being digitised and used to make sure a car is original.' Gagliardo insists it's all about performance certification and verifying authenticity, but there's also a degree of brand-building at work here. While Classiche promises to provide every skill-set required for restoring Abarth cars of old, the marketing opportunities for new models are not being missed.

Plentiful scorpion badges coupled with what looks like a pretty restricted workshop, and the fact that new Abarth owners will soon be able to collect cars from the new facility, suggest it's a heritage-building exercise as much as anything. Similarities with Porsche's customer collection, museum and restoration centre are easy to identify. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, of course, and if Abarth can offer a similar ownership proposition but at a much lower price-point, then chances are they will keep customers coming back.

Top right: fabulous Fiat 124 Abarth shares 595 floorspace with classic 595 in new Classiche facility.

Right: gorgeous Fiat Abarth 1000 Barchetta (foreground) with superb 2000 SP endurance racer

ABARTH





‘WHAT CARLO ABARTH DID WAS TO TAKE THE DREAM THAT FERRARI OWNERSHIP OFFERS AND MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO REGULAR PEOPLE’

Left: Abarth is really playing the heritage card with its new facility – and with cars such as the 2000 SP in its back catalogue, that’s fair enough. Now it needs the modern product to recreate the old magic

What was even more telling of our time at Abarth was just how limited in scope things were for the brand with only the Fiat 500 to work with. Seeing a production line stacked full of nothing but 500s makes for a stark contrast with a visit to Affalterbach – AMG’s home. AMG has the ‘hot vee’ turbo V8 motor found in the C63 and GT – an engine designed and built entirely in-house by Mercedes AMG. It has researchers, designers, engineers and the ability, should it so desire, to produce a road car all of its own. Abarth does not, and it’s this, coupled with a lack of exciting platforms to work with, that represent the biggest barrier to its growth.

In order to expand, Abarth needs a product line on which to showcase its abilities. Hence why we only needed to utter the words ‘124 Spider’ at the Classiche opening to be surrounded immediately by excited engineers. Unlike the 500, the 124 (like its MX-5 cousin) is a sports car from the ground up, meaning Abarth will finally have a much-needed platform on which to establish itself as a proper performance brand alongside the likes of BMW M or Mercedes-AMG.

evo has spent a lot of time with the new MX-5 and is well versed in its shortcomings. Soft on turn-in and with a fairly flat and unexciting engine, there’s clearly a great chassis there, but the execution isn’t quite right. Abarth could rectify this, bringing some of the character found in the 500 alongside setup tweaks that transform the 124 into an out-and-out drivers’ car. Engineers already speak of stiffer springs, bigger brakes and the promise of a more aggressive chassis setup.

We anticipate the 178bhp 1.4-litre four-cylinder turbo ‘T-Jet’ engine found in the top-of-the-line Abarth 595 will also be making its way across to the Abarth 124. According to sources at Classiche, there’s even talk of running the motor at a higher power output. It is this Abarth 124 Spider that will embody Gagliardo’s overarching vision for the brand – that is, selling affordable performance to all, while leveraging a little bit of the heritage that’s being fostered through facilities like Classiche.

‘What Carlo Abarth did, what his innovation was,’ continues Gagliardo, ‘was to take the dream that Ferrari ownership offers and make it available to regular people. This is exactly what we are doing with the 595 and 695. Our job is to take something and make it a performance car, but still make it useable.’

Just how many of these cars are sold in the form of the £30,000-plus Biposto isn’t divulged, but Abarth tells us it’s selling more cars – 60 per cent more than in 2014, apparently, though it won’t disclose what this figure amounts to. ‘We don’t think in terms of market share and we don’t think in terms of competitors,’ says Gagliardo. ‘We think in terms of customers. Right now that means an individual aged between 25 and 60 years old and with a near 50/50 split between genders.’

‘These are people who want to experience adrenalin in their day-to-day lives. We just want to bring them that in an affordable way.’ Our guess is that the clear majority of sales relate to the sub-£20k Abarth 500s that compete with the similar in spirit, but different in price, Mini Cooper S and JCW models.

While there’s no denying that Abarth, on the evidence of this visit, is a big step forward from the badge-engineering days of the Punto, all the talk of heritage does leave us slightly anxious. Ferrari built its name on great cars and earned its heritage through the strength of its products. Modern-era Abarth doesn’t have the product to build that heritage on yet. When we put this to him, Gagliardo’s reply is that Abarth isn’t just a badging exercise, adding that it takes performance testing and racing as seriously as any of its competitors, citing Renaultsport as a company with a similar approach.

‘For us, racing activity is definitely not a marketing tool, it’s our university,’ he contends. ‘We have to ensure there is a link between our 500 race series and the character of our cars. We constantly migrate things between the two. Take the Biposto, for example – it’s a racing car made for the street and is designed really only for those who have ultra-specialist needs.’ We’re not so sure. Simply put, the nature of a regular Fiat 500 doesn’t allow you to simply take racing tech and add it to a road car. If you do, it comes in the form of expensive components such as the £8000 dog-ring gearbox available on the Biposto.

So all the foundations of an emerging performance brand are there in Turin, but Abarth has so far been held back by the products it has been given to work with, and no amount of clever marketing was ever going to change that. In order to really re-establish itself and enter a new golden age, it’s the 124 Spider that needs to be special. Over to you, Abarth. 🚗

Is this Britain's toughest rally driver?

*Harry Hunt hopes to win motorsport's most gruelling event within five years. Joining the team that won the last four Dakars has just brought him a step closer to that goal. **evo** meets the man and his X-raid teammates to discover the challenges they face*

by HENRY CATCHPOLE





JOHN COOPER
WORKS

KG TOOLS

MINI
new dimension Xraid

‘Can you hear the change in noise?’

We all lean a little closer.

‘Listen,’ says the engineer as he plugs in and unplugs a cable in the engine bay, ‘to the note of the turbo.’ There are some seriously furrowed brows around the oxymoronically huge Mini ALL4 Dakar car, with its Union flag livery splashed down the side. Dakar debutant Harry Hunt looks across from the other side of the group and we both shrug our shoulders because neither of us can hear any discernable change in the sounds coming from the 3-litre diesel race engine. It doesn’t really matter for me, standing here in a spotlessly clean, dry workshop on an industrial estate outside Frankfurt. But right about now (depending when you’re reading this in January) Hunt could be knee-deep in sand in some remote part of South America, tired beyond anything he has previously known, desperately trying to listen for this same subtle but crucial change in pitch that could signify an impending terminal engine failure.

This is the headquarters of X-raid, the hugely successful team that has built the cars that have won the last four Dakar rallies, and we’re here to see some of the final preparations for the 2016 event in which they will be running a staggering 12 cars. All the competitors spend a couple of days here in the preceding weeks, being taught and then tested on the mechanical workings of their machines. Hunt has already been headfirst in engine bays and wheelarches for a few hours, changing belts, brakes and bars. Now there is a run-through of what all the dashboard warnings mean and how you need to react to each one if you want your two-and-a-half-ton machine to stay in the rally.

Tomorrow morning there will be a medical (I’ll skip that) to see whether there are any major concerns about anyone exerting themselves for two weeks at altitudes of up to 5000m and in temperatures that can have all the confusing variance of a ready meal cooked from frozen. Then there is a bit of filming for the official press pack, some logistical planning, kit collection, and one final test with the spanners, this one timed. At some point in all this I sit down with Harry and a few key X-raid team members to chat about Dakars past and imminent.

HARRY HUNT

Rookie driver

Hunt is a likeable fellow. Well spoken, owns a Mini Moke and an Audi RS2, has a slightly scraggly beard, but is clearly fit after months of training (some of it in a heat chamber) to ready himself for the challenge ahead. Despite being just 27, he has already done a lot of stage rallying, including winning the Intercontinental Rally Challenge 2WD Cup, but his dream since he was a nipper has always been the Dakar, so when Mini UK approached him with a two-year plan he leapt at the chance.

He has set himself very sensible goals for the 2016 event. ‘My aim is just to finish and get round and get the car home,’ he says. ‘Obviously I would love to do well but my aim is to concentrate on getting the experience of every aspect of the event.’ His main concerns are how he will cope with the endurance and how he will manage to get vitally important sleep in the bivouac with hammers and nut guns shattering the peace.

The actual driving seems less of a concern to Hunt, perhaps not surprisingly given that he finished a very impressive third in his first rally in the dunes earlier this year. He rather nicely suggests that his podium might have been beginner’s luck, before highlighting another more valid reason. ‘A huge amount of that result goes to Andy [Andreas Schulz], the navigator. He’s so experienced and he brings so much. I can just follow his lead.’ Schulz is a two-time Dakar winner, but has also spannered for Walter Röhrl and Carlos Sainz in the WRC. He’ll be quite useful if any of those warning lights come on in the Mini. Hunt is under

Right: Hunt has a lot to learn off Nani Roma, the 2014 Dakar winner, perhaps including how to operate a nut gun. **Far right:** chief mechanic Miguel Moriera

‘HUNT IS UNDER NO ILLUSIONS HOW LUCKY HE IS TO HAVE ANDY SCHULZ ALONG FOR THE RIDE’

no illusions how lucky he is to have him along for the ride in South America, but nonetheless everyone I speak to at X-raid is extremely impressed with Harry and how quickly he has learnt.

I ask him what the car is like to drive. ‘It’s odd when you first get in,’ he says, ‘because despite the size, it doesn’t feel that big inside. You’re quite close together and it’s quite tight. It is fast as well. People think: “It’s a diesel and it weighs two tons,” but it’s fast and it handles really well. You can slide it and when you do the Bajas some of them are very much like WRC stages with gravel roads and it’s really fun to drive. The only thing I noticed when I first got in was that it doesn’t pitch under braking, so you’re coming into a corner and you’re braking and it just stops flat with hardly any movement. It’s a weird sensation.’

Harry isn’t swaggeringly ambitious in any way, but he has admitted that he has his own five-year plan to win the Dakar. I point out that if that came to fruition he would not only be the first British winner but, at 31, he would also be the youngest ever winner, by some margin. ‘Yeah, it would be brilliant,’ says Harry, beaming, ‘but being the youngest isn’t really a big thing for me. It would be nice, but just winning Dakar would... it would overshadow everything else I’ve ever done in my life.’

NANI ROMA

Dakar winner on two and four wheels

‘Ninety-nine per cent of it is in here,’ says Roma, tapping his right temple just above a dark, bushy sideburn. He’s not saying it’s all to do with intelligence or experience either, but about attitude. His advice to Harry Hunt is to enjoy the Dakar: ‘The more you are enjoying, the more good results you find.’

It’s easy to believe that Roma follows his own advice because



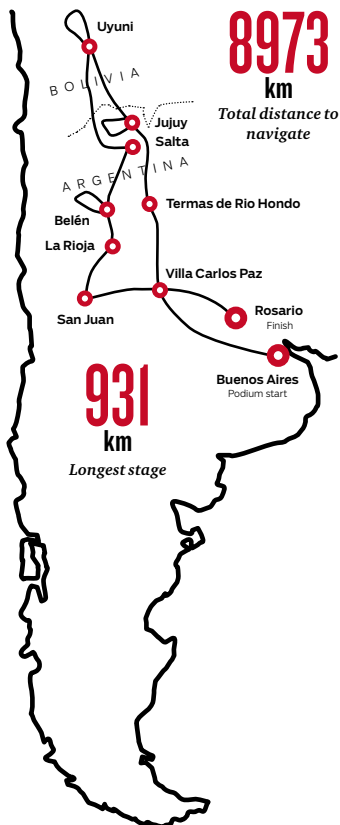
THE DAKAR 2016

556
competitors
of 60 nationalities,
in 354 vehicles

4900
metres
Maximum
altitude

0-45
Celcius
Ambient
temperature range

13
hours
of driving on
longest days



MINI ALL4

2993
cc
turbodiesel

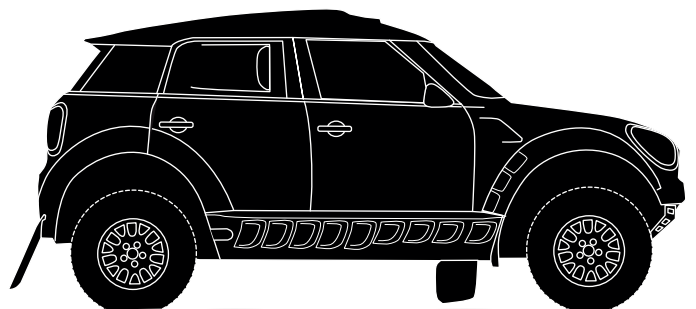
590
lb ft
peak torque

111
mph
top speed

385
litres
fuel capacity

320
bhp
peak power

1952
kg
weight



he always seems to be smiling and relaxed during the two days training, and there is not a trace of arrogance despite his wealth of experience. I imagine there isn't any place for haughtiness on the Dakar. He retains the obvious strength he must have needed when he was riding a bike, with forearms like small tree trunks. But, again, it is the mental strength that he recalls first when I ask him about his years doing the Dakar on two wheels. 'You put on the helmet and you feel alone,' he says. 'You put on the goggles and you feel even more alone. Today [in South America] it is different, but in Africa you feel totally alone. You learn something about yourself and feel lucky to be alive. It's much easier in a car with someone else.'

Unlike most high-level racing drivers I have met, he is not completely results-driven. Yes, he is a competitive person and when he starts he will be focused on winning, putting in maximum effort. But he says that whatever the result, at the end of it, 'I will feel happy'. Again he says it's not quite such an intense feeling now that they are travelling through somewhere that isn't as wild and deprived as Africa. Nonetheless, it seems just the achievement of finishing something as physically and mentally gruelling as the Dakar rewards you with the sort of totally life-affirming feeling that other motorsports can't match.

MIGUEL MOREIRA

Chief mechanic

After ten Dakars, Moreira's best piece of advice is: 'At the end of the day, even when you are tired, take a shower. Even if it is cold, it's good because your body changes completely – you are really tired and then *boof!*, you start smiling again!' With a day that will start at 5am and frequently finish at 1 or 2am in a tent on the roof of a truck, anything to keep you going is important.

When a car comes into the bivouac at the end of the day, it is usually serviced in under an hour, but occasionally, if the car has rolled or the engine is damaged, they will have to work on it much, much longer. In fact, with no parc fermé, the only limit to how long they work is the start of the following day's stage.

'If you work all night long during the first five days then you are completely destroyed,' says Moreira. 'Even a shower won't help. You pass the complete Dakar, I don't want to say like a zombie, but you are always sleeping. Sometimes you get in the service car and before we even get out of the service area I am already sleeping.'

A routine 40-minute service for Miguel and his team goes something like this: put car on stands, check for play on the wheels, put the big belly plates down, do a spanner check, check for small chassis cracks and then perhaps do a bigger job, such as the front diff, or gearbox or steering rack, just to get ahead. 'Afterwards is cleaning. Most of the time you lose is on cleaning outside and inside the car because when the car is clean every morning the driver feels... it's like having a shower!'

TOBIAS MEDERER

Race engineer

Mederer worked with VW during its three Dakar victories with

Right: Hunt brushes up on his spanning skills. **Below left:** race engineer Tobias Mederer. **Below right:** fleet manager Siegfried Gronkowski

the Touareg and has been with X-raid for its four victories with the Mini, so he knows a thing or two about rally-raid success. He went and did DTM with AMG last year, but came back to the dirty side because he missed it too much. His task in the race is to manage the mechanics and car chiefs and liaise with the crews to keep everything running.

'We've tried to make it like in the aerospace industry,' he says, 'to work with checklists, because on Dakar you can imagine a mechanic has two hours' sleep and he should be paying attention to the car. But he doesn't use his brain, he is only working. So, he has the list and he initials that, yes, I changed this; yes, I checked this; yes, I cleaned this. So he cannot forget it. And my job is to check that he has done everything.'

Between the stages Mederer then has to drive with three mechanics as passengers in the car (a BMW X6 last year and an X5 this year). 'I drive because the mechanics need sleep,' he says. When I say that surely he needs sleep too, he just smiles and says, 'Yes, but it is only two weeks...'

Although the driving between the bivouacs isn't as technically tough as it used to be in Africa, when even the support cars were built like race cars, it still has its challenges. 'Driving is difficult because you have a maximum speed of 110kph [68mph] and you are logged by a GPS, so if you are faster you have to pay 200 euros per kilometre-an-hour over the limit, and that's from my pocket. You have to look out for the other drivers on the road, too, and if you go over the Andes then you can get tired from low oxygen. But everybody has to do it. We have Trippy, which is like normal GPS but not with a map, only with arrows. You have to follow this and if you go away it will log you and you



'WHEN A CAR COMES INTO THE BIVOUAC AT THE END OF THE DAY, IT IS USUALLY SERVICED IN UNDER AN HOUR'



get a penalty. And if it's too close to the special stage, the fastest race car of the team gets a penalty. So you are always under pressure to do nothing wrong.'

SIEGFRIED GRONKOWSKI

Fleet manager

The final person I speak to is Siegfried Gronkowski: fleet manager and problem solver. His job title could probably also be cat herder, such is the tricky nature of his duties. Perhaps of all the people I speak to, he best conveys the craziness of the Dakar, with a stream of examples from his years of experience. A lot of his challenges come from the sheer number of people he has to oversee. As he says, '150 persons is 150 problems!'

Some of the issues are pure man-management. Whether it's sending out the word to make sure people don't jump down from the trucks and twist ankles in the soft sand or the fact that after five or six days everyone is tired and the team is potentially an emotional powder keg that he has to keep

running harmoniously. 'You have to be mother and father and grandmother and grandfather in one person to deal with everyone,' he says. It's not only the team he has to man-manage: being friendly with the locals can pay big dividends when you're trying to get things done. Apparently a free team T-shirt can open a lot of doors, so he always has a big stock with him.

Other headaches are purely logistical. For example, they need three big generators to power everything. He is constantly working out how to save power yet he also has to keep a daily consumption of 1500 cans of drink cool. Then there is the problem of where to buy those cans of drink in the first place. 'I buy not off the shelf at supermarkets,' he says, 'but from the storerooms and they bring big pallets out the front.' When he goes to the fuel station it's a nightmare. With 12 service trucks each needing 2000 litres, it's not a small bill and once when his credit card was blocked by the bank back in Europe he was promptly arrested. 'I have guns in my face and they want my money. This you don't have in a circuit race!'

And despite Gronkowski's wealth of experience, he is still kept on his toes. 'You think we are here seven years and it's familiar,' he says, 'but no. Everything is new this year because we have El Niño. It has rained like hell. We have snow.'

CONCLUSION

The danger, endurance and plain adventure of the Dakar is the stuff of boyhood dreams, even before you add in the excitement of the machinery. The move from Africa to South America has undoubtedly changed the nature of the race, but my two days at X-raid reassure me that it is still a monumental undertaking. They also bring home the truly team nature of the event. I can only imagine the combination of nerves and excitement that will be bubbling away inside Harry Hunt as he waits on the start line with two weeks and over 5500 miles ahead of him. ✕

Follow Harry Hunt's Dakar adventure on evo.co.uk







by JETHRO BOVINGDON

Shooting from the hip

Could a rear-drive chassis give Lamborghini's Huracán the edge it needs to challenge the very best supercars in dynamic terms? The new LP580-2 will reveal all

WE'RE IN A SMALL, DARKENED room listening to a presentation about the new Huracán LP580-2. Well, I say 'listening'. I get the impression most are already daydreaming about the neat row of red, white, grey and green Huracáns parked just outside on the unblemished pitlane of the Losail International Circuit in Qatar. For all we care, the presentation could consist of one slide: a black background with a simple message screaming out in big, bold white lettering, 'IT'S A REAR-DRIVE HURACÁN! ENJOY IT.' Instead we hear about the car's positioning, the company's recent remarkable success and how the upcoming Urus SUV will mark a vast expansion of the Lamborghini operation and the sales it achieves.

The underlying message should gift Lambo a brash confidence, the sort of confidence that gave us the genre-defining Miura and the outrageous Countach. But when they speak about the new rear-wheel-drive Huracán, you can almost sense the soul-searching. We hear about safety, that in Strada mode the car deliberately understeers and is a bit of a pussycat. That may well prove to be true. It might even have decent visibility and I'm sure this new entry-level model will be built with a reassuringly Teutonic quality. But I don't care about that. Not now. I want to know that it'll deafen me before biting my head off in Corsa mode; that it's sharp, precise; that it'll spin-up its rear tyres for fun; that this is the Huracán we've all been waiting to see.

However, mostly that message is lost. It's like the guys at Lamborghini just can't quite bring themselves to say this stuff. It's odd, as I've never been in a Porsche or Ferrari presentation that mentions understeer (other than to say it's been eradicated). Neither have

I been given the impression that the teams behind the latest GT3 or mid-engined Ferrari have worried too much about making the car easy to handle on a dusty, broken road with an oligarch's 17-year-old son off his head on god knows what at the wheel. They just build the best car they can. I hope the sense of hand-wringing hasn't infected what should be an extraordinarily exciting car. It's a rear-drive Huracán, what more do you need to know...?

Okay, so there is more. You've already guessed that power from the direct-and-indirect-injection 5.2-litre V10 engine is down, from 602bhp to 572bhp at 8000rpm, and that torque is similarly reduced, from 413lb ft to 397lb ft at 6500rpm. To make up for that the rear-drive Huracán is lighter by 33kg and the weight distribution has shifted a couple of points from 42:58 to 40:60.

The changes run deep with the LP580-2, with everything from new spring rates, retuned dampers and thinner anti-roll bars to a brand-new P Zero tyre. The net effect of the suspension revisions is that the front axle is around ten per cent softer, and although the rear setup is also revised, the overall balance is said to have favoured front-end grip and agility over the four-wheel-drive car's more stability-orientated setup. Options include 'MagneRide' magnetorheological dampers and the variable-ratio Dynamic Steering system, whilst that magical V10 drives through the same seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox and a mechanical limited-slip differential with a 45 per cent locking ratio. The eagle-eyed will also notice that the LP580-2 has revised front styling, with bigger air intakes to increase air pressure over the front of the car plus a new rear bumper and unique alloy wheels. Sitting in the white





Above: LP580-2 can be distinguished by new front and rear treatments and a different wheel design; behind the wheels are cast-iron brake discs rather than the 4WD car's carbon-ceramics. **Left:** V10 motor still mighty with 30bhp less

light of a Qatar winter's day it looks almost indecent. Even better, this new Huracán will cost from around £160,000, compared to £186,760 for the LP610-4. It will undercut the admittedly more powerful Ferrari 488 GTB and McLaren 650S by £25,000 or more.

It takes from the green light that marks the end of the pitlane to merging with the circuit itself a hundred metres or so later to know that 572bhp pushing 1389kg (dry) still provides a proper supercar hit. On paper the Huracán does look a little off the pace of rivals from McLaren and Ferrari, even in LP610-4 guise, but in reality it feels savagely fast. Let's just say that the horses at Audi's Győr plant in Hungary (where the engine is built before final assembly at Sant'Agata) are particularly feisty. Lamborghini claims 0-62mph in

3.4sec, 0-124mph in 10.1sec and a top speed of 199mph. I suspect the acceleration figures are very much on the conservative side.

Despite ditching the front driveshafts, the first few laps in the LP580-2 are all about that drivetrain. We were recently slack-jawed at the 488 GTB's 3.9-litre twin-turbocharged V8 in terms of its power and instantaneous response, but this 5.2-litre V10 serves as an unequivocal reminder that you just can't beat a big high-revving normally aspirated engine for excitement, noise and that final hard-edged rush to the rev-limiter. In these days of ubiquitous turbocharging, having access to this smooth brutality is almost worth the entry price alone. The seven-speed 'box is also superb, easily a match for those fitted to the 675LT or that ballistic Ferrari. Sadly we won't



**'Its sense of fury
shoots equal
parts terror
and excitement
through your
system'**

get to try the Huracán on the road today, but I know from experience that the V10's intense sharpness and ever-present crackling exhaust note also greatly enhance the sense of occasion, even when you're crawling around at 20mph.

We've got just four track sessions of four laps to get to know the LP580-2, all behind an instructor determined that we drive swiftly rather than flat-out. And we've been instructed to leave the stability control alone. However, I've not travelled all the way to Qatar to drive a new rear-wheel-drive Huracán on an empty circuit with traction control nipping away every time the car starts to move around. That would do you a disservice, of course. I'll wait at least a couple of laps before risking incurring the wrath of our good hosts, though.

Strada mode lasts a couple of corners. The ESC is set very conservatively and the car pushes easily into understeer. I can't imagine many owners ever using this mode other than to sneak away quietly if they're leaving home very early indeed. Sport is where things get more interesting, as it adjusts throttle response, dampers (we have the optional MagneRide setup) and the traction-control settings to

create 'sporty and emotional driving fun with slight oversteering behaviour'. For sure.

In Sport it's apparent that this rear-drive Huracán is less uptight than the LP610-4. I'm a fan of the four-wheel-drive car but there's no question it puts eye-popping pace and stability ahead of pure fun. The LP580-2, in Sport mode, has a little more body roll but cleaner steering response and the grip balance front to rear has been redressed to eradicate, or at least greatly reduce, turn-in understeer. The result is that it feels more agile and less like the chassis is trying to exert control over your actions and mistakes. Instead, the more intuitive rear-drive setup works with you, the front tyres locking on line and the rears gradually coming into play as you commit to the throttle. Annoyingly, the ESC still doesn't want to indulge, reining the car in assertively when it's just beginning to float over the limit. The systems developed by Ferrari and McLaren enhance your ability to steer the car on the throttle rather than cut it off at source, and it's a shame the LP580-2 can't fully express itself while still offering a degree of security.

So to truly enjoy the Huracán's newfound adjustability, you disable the ESC. And it still

nips at the front wheels when you turn in hard to a corner, easing off the power as you do so to get the tail swinging. It's an odd sensation and it robs the car of real fluidity, not to mention undermining the driver's confidence. For me, the fact that the Huracán changes up a gear automatically near the rev-limiter in Sport mode – even when you're in manual – is also a fatal flaw. This is the 'fun' mode, yet the ESC insists on interfering, and even when you do defeat its efforts and get the car sliding, the gearbox often pops in an upshift, ending the slide abruptly and unexpectedly. The body control is also a little unnerving in Sport and I find it almost rolling into oversteer in the quicker fourth-gear kinks. So that's two out of three modes that don't seem fully resolved.

Praise be that the full-on Corsa is better. Much better. We've been told this is the 'lap time' mode: less oversteer, more stability, a neutral balance to extract everything from the bespoke P Zero tyres. On this racetrack and on this day it feels like the mode in which the LP580-2 finally makes sense. The car has the amazing grip and stability that I love in the LP610-4, but it provides more options – a platform that's

LAMBORGHINI HURACÁN LP580-2

Engine V10, 5204cc

CO2 278g/km

Power 572bhp @ 8000rpm

Torque 397lb ft @ 6500rpm

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

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

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

Brakes Ventilated discs, 365mm front, 356mm rear, ABS, EBD

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

Tyres 245/35 R19 front, 305/30 R19 rear

Weight (dry) 1389kg

Power-to-weight (dry) 418bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.4sec (claimed)

Top speed 199mph (claimed)

Basic price c£160,000

On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

Above left: LP580-2 gets a mechanical diff rather than an e-diff, which Lambo says doesn't work quickly or effectively enough to offset the weight penalty it incurs

easier to bend to your will. Perhaps it lacks the turn-in precision of Sport mode and introduces a shade of understeer if you try to punch in a steering input rather than roll the car into the corners, but the increased body control, having the gearbox fully under your control and the ability to fully disable the ESC more than make up for that. Suddenly I'm not driving around little niggles but exploiting what's beneath me with confidence. Suddenly it's just, well, a rear-drive Huracán. And I'm happy.

The leading instructor is still circulating at a frustrating 80 per cent or so and as I'm driving in close proximity with two other cars it's tricky to allow the car to really cut loose. Even so, there are glimpses of real brilliance. The car doesn't react in the turn-in phase with the sheer energy of a 488 GTB but it does feel light and agile, the rear of the car keen to help steer its sharp jaw to the apex. Mid-corner you can lean on serious grip and keep the car fully hooked-up or start to play with its balance. Either way it's a seriously enjoyable experience. I love how angry it feels when you keep it pointing more or less straight, that mighty engine thudding and crackling on the overrun and then howling out of turns, maybe a spike of revs as the tyres spin up over the kerbs.

Later I get three laps solo to record a bit of in-car video for the *evo* YouTube channel. No instructor leading the way and the circuit to myself. It's a tricky few minutes as I'm trying to discover how the car reacts beyond the limit

and describe how it's behaving at the same time, but after some slightly clumsy exchanges I soon get the hang of it and go from enjoying the LP580-2's thunderous performance to unpeeling its boisterous, extrovert side. And it definitely has one, happy to enter corners with the tail already sliding if you're prepared to assertively throw the car at the apex with a sharp lift of the throttle. Thanks to the vast rev-range, it'll cut and hold wild angles for huge distances, too. In short it's big, noisy and exploitable fun but retains a sense of fury that shoots equal parts terror and excitement through your system. Just the way it should be.

And that's it. Our time in the LP580-2 is over and soon I'm back at the huge new airport at Doha. On the flight home I keep thinking about the car. That engine. Those moments when rear grip bled away and it felt almost weightless, the car's balance effortlessly controlled with the V10's heavy hit of delicately measured torque. They were so good that the initial doubts, the slightly odd impression that Lamborghini didn't feel liberated to allow the car to be all that it could be, started to fade. But even now, a week later, they linger on. The Huracán is fearsomely effective as an LP610-4 and even more seductive as an LP580-2, but it feels like there's much more to come. I hope Lamborghini finds the confidence to really uncork it. If it does then the next Superleggera or, even better, the rumoured rear-drive GT3-derived model could be truly inspirational. ✕



PLAYING

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

FAST

AND

LOOSE



1300bhp, some deserted Welsh countryside and not a lot of traction... Welcome to evo's first off-road group test

W

WHO HASN'T FOUND THEIR right foot twitching when presented with a big gravel car park? As soon as I sense the coefficient of friction between rubber and planet

Earth brought down a few notches, I admit that it is generally too much for me to resist. I adore the feeling of floating along on a loose surface, the car constantly light on its tyres and so easily unsettled. For me it is the most fun you can have behind the wheel. And after the launch of a certain car at the beginning of 2015, it seemed the perfect time for the first **evo** gravel group test.

When the Ariel Nomad was unveiled I think even the chaps from Somerset were surprised by the rampant enthusiasm with which it was received. But the truth is that it opened up the driving landscape in a lot of peoples' minds. The thrill of driving has never been restricted to a narrow world of tarmac, but the Nomad provided a mainstream (I bet that's the first time anyone has used that word about Ariel, but everything is relative) gateway to the sort of thrills that might lie off the beaten track. Driving on gravel was back in the public consciousness and cool again.

You may well ask where it's actually possible to drive off-road. Plenty of countries around the world have extensive gravel roads in one shape or another, but the UK not so much. There are greenlanes, of course, but speed is very much restricted there. Rallying is the expensive option, but if you know a friendly farmer then all you need is a field and some jumpers for apices. Failing that you could club together with a few friends and host your own gravel trackday at somewhere such as Walters Arena in south Wales, which is what we've done. Walters is a huge, 3500-acre site with seemingly endless possibilities, but for today we are using a newly acquired section of land, and the **evo** special stage that we've mapped out has plenty of variety to test both cars and driver.

It begins with a fast sweeping gravel section (not unlike Finland, although without the jumps) where the cars can stretch their legs. Then it dives sharp left into a much tighter, darker, forested segment. Inevitably the ground beneath the trees is muddier and room for error in here is limited, with plenty of cambers and surface changes. There is a final slippery mudbath under the trees and then it's back into the open on slightly rougher gravel for a flat-out charge uphill to a big braking zone and a wide left-hander back into the woodland. A few big bumps signal the start of the final descent, which then settles into a wide forest-fire road through some great corners back to our makeshift service park. Each lap takes about three wide-eyed minutes and we've brought together five very different cars that represent a snapshot of the gravel spectrum. Let the fun commence...

POLARIS RZR



T

THERE'S A BIT MORE JEOPARDY in our stage than there is in your average field, so the Polaris RZR is the perfect place to start because it is the simplest to drive. You may not be very familiar with American company Polaris, but the chances are that you've seen the odd farmer going about his daily chores in a rather more prosaic version of the RZR, even if you haven't realised it at the time. Open the small plastic door and you climb up into the rudimentary cabin to find just two pedals. The steering wheel sits at a slightly odd angle but, as is so often the way, you forget about this fairly quickly once you're up and running. Rather thoughtfully, there is also an adjustable grab handle on the other side of the cabin for anyone brave enough to be a passenger...

There are a couple of versions of the RZR, but this is the XP 1000 EPS with a proprietary 999cc four-stroke DOHC twin-cylinder engine putting out 110bhp through all four wheels (although you can switch to rear-wheel drive if you want) and weighing 621kg dry. The buttons are reassuringly chunky and there is an indestructible quality about the RZR, compounded by a handy sticker detailing what to do if you roll it. Apparently this one has been over a couple of times in its life, so no drama if I invert it. I check the chinstrap on my Stilo is done up nice and secure.

The RZR (pronounced 'razor') sounds, unsurprisingly, like a big trail bike at idle, but as soon as I floor the throttle heading into the stage it takes on the persona of a monstrous chainsaw (which is at least consistent with the location – you can almost see the trees wincing

'THE SHORT, SQUARE STANCE DOES MEAN THAT THE BREAKAWAY INTO OVERSTEER CAN FEEL QUITE SNAPPY'

on approach). What's slightly disconcerting is that it has a CVT-type transmission, so under full throttle the sound stays constant with no gearchanges varying the tone.

With the seat relatively high and the bodywork equivalent of a red-carpet dress slit to the hip to reveal a lot of leg (or monster springs in this case), I had instinctively formed a few expectations about the RZR and what it would be like to drive. I had thought the long travel – 40.6cm at the front, 45.7cm at the rear – would make it very capable over big bumps but quite vague in the steering department, with plenty of roll to cope with in the corners. It's quite a surprise then to get to the first corner and find that the RZR is very well supported as it leans on its suspension. It's not exactly





flat and you still have the ability to take some ridiculously big cuts across the inside of a few corners, but the speed of response and the overall composure certainly belie its looks.

Another surprise is that the greatest instability comes on the way into the corners, as you lift off the throttle or brake, rather than on the exit under power. This is of course exactly how you want it to be on gravel, with the car taking some attitude and getting itself turned in nice and early, well before any sort of apex, so that you are then lined up and in a position to maximise traction as you pour on power for the exit. It's a totally different technique to the one you use on a racing circuit, but even more satisfying when you get it right, in my opinion.

You really can grab the RZR by the scruff

and charge into things, something that I regret slightly after hurtling headlong into the one big boggy puddle and receiving a minor drenching through the non-existent windscreen. The steering is very direct and you can really feel the short wheelbase working for you. This short, square stance does mean that the breakaway into oversteer can feel quite snappy, but when you're on the power the four-wheel drive is quick to pull the car straight out of any slides and it's only on the exit of the hairpin where there is a danger of reaching the lockstops.

All in all the RZR is a huge amount of fun, and with the whole thing (complete with number plates) costing £20,999 it feels like a bit of a bargain. It's certainly rather more attainable than the next car...

Engine In-line 2-cyl, 999cc
Power 110bhp @ 9000rpm
Torque 70lb ft @ 7500rpm
Weight (dry) 621kg
Power-to-weight (dry) 180bhp/ton
0-50mph 5.3sec (claimed)
Top speed 77mph (claimed)
Basic price £20,999

Above: four-wheel-drive, generous ground-clearance and vast suspension travel mean the RZR begs to be thrown about

FORD FIESTA RS WRC



A

AS THE DOOR SHUTS AND I'M LEFT alone in the Fiesta RS WRC, I still can't quite believe this is happening. M-Sport has sent down the car Ott Tänak was driving at the start of the season and in which Juho Hänninen finished sixth at Rally Finland only days ago. Cameron, the engineer accompanying the car unloaded it from the trailer when he arrived this morning and talked me through the basics of the switchgear and the temperatures to watch out for, but then he just told me to have fun. There is no one from M-Sport in the passenger seat to tell me not to drive too fast through a forest in their half-a-million quid's worth of WRC car; they've just decided that they trust me...

Two tiny toggle switches on the control panel

between the seats need to be lifted and flicked down. Things light up and whirr. Then it's just a case of pressing probably the only part that this car has in common with a Fiesta ST road car – the starter button. Once it's idling you need to press the little clutch pedal and then find the small button on the back of the single big carbon paddle that mirrors the curve of the right-hand side of the steering wheel. Press the button and pull the paddle towards you at the same time and the small display perched on the naked steering column switches from 'N' to '1'. The clutch is not as fierce as I feared, but it still requires a steady foot and a keen balancing of the revs with the sharp throttle to get smoothly under way. It sounds so loud too, but you mustn't be timid. Be bold, enjoy the noise, you

can't drive a car like this quietly...

I floor the throttle as we pass the stage-start boards, the tyres scrabble, the angry bluebottle sound intensifies tenfold and I find that I've instinctively changed up four times before I've even drawn breath. Estimated figures of 300bhp and 350lb ft might not sound much, but with only 1200kg to push around and short gearing, it feels like plenty.

The first corner is a fast right, off-camber with a small boulder on the inside and a couple of really big boulders on the outside, but it could be worse. I nudge the paddle away with the back of the fingers on my right hand to change down to fourth, then turn the car in early and it responds instantly. We are now drifting. I get back on the throttle and drive the car out of the



**'UNDER BRAKING
THE CAR HANGS YOU
IN THE BELTS MORE
STRONGLY THAN
PLENTY OF ROAD
CARS DO ON TARMAC'**

slide and with even more confidence do the same through the long left at the bottom of the hill. This is really happening.

I spend the first laps getting used to the balance and the eerily light steering. It's perhaps the remotest car I'll drive all day as it almost glides over the loose surface, its incredible dampers tracking the ground, ensuring that the expensive rubber retains maximum contact with the mud and gravel. Straight away it feels fantastically pointy considering we're on a loose surface and this ability to get the nose turned into a corner so quickly means it feels really easy to drive.

Then I switch from Road mode (which is already phenomenally fast) to Stage mode, with its aggressive ALS (anti-lag) settings,



GRAVEL GROUP TEST

Left: just the one paddle for WRC cars; pull towards you for an upshift and flick away with the back of your hand to drop a cog

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1600cc, turbo
Power 300bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 350lb ft @ 3000rpm
Weight 1200kg
Power-to-weight 254bhp/ton
0-60mph 3.9sec (estimated)
Top speed 125mph (estimated)
Basic price c£400,000



and the car gets tangibly angrier in an instant. When you get it right, you find that you have the wheel straight for most of a corner, with only minimal corrections. The reason for this is that if you get the entry to the corner right then the car arcs around gracefully behind you on the momentum you've harvested on the way in. Your right foot and the four-wheel drive then help maintain this slide, the end result being that the car is accelerating out of the corner pointing straight and deploying maximum traction as early as possible. As you would expect, the Fiesta is a good chunk quicker than the other four cars in this test, but its freakish adjustability also makes it huge fun.

After a few laps I realise that the only way I'm going to go any quicker is to take unnecessary

risks, so I settle into a blissful rhythm. The area for biggest improvement, but also inevitably the one with the biggest associated risks, would be braking. Using your left foot to brake feels completely natural and it's easy balancing the car this way, but only occasionally do I leave the stopping as late as I should. When I do hit the pedal with all the force I can at the end of the two big straights, the way the car dives into the surface and hangs you in the belts feels stronger than plenty of road cars do on tarmac. It's mind-scrambling yet also so wonderfully accessible that after a while I start to feel really at home.

For the final few runs through the stage I give a few passenger rides, as it seems a shame not to share the experience. Everyone steps out awestruck by the car. What a privilege.

PORSCHE 911 SAFARI

A

AS CONTRASTS GO THEY DON'T GET much bigger than jumping straight into Tuthill Porsche's classic Safari-spec 3.0 911 RSR. I want to say that it seems very bare after the Fiesta, but that's not exactly right. Less cluttered perhaps; simpler. Certainly smaller, with the windscreen right in front of my nose by comparison with the Ford. Like all the cars here, you feel instantly at home because of the racing armchair, which embraces you in a wonderfully secure and reassuring hold.

In front of me are three familiar dials in three familiar round holes, but the two on the outside have been replaced with air vents. Along the rest of the dash is a neat row of toggle switches, a rainbow bank of fuses and then the co-driver's paraphernalia. The three pedals are offset slightly towards the centre of the car, each with a bit of glasspaper on top to stop soles slipping. The wheel is a medium-sized Momo with a yellow band at 12 o'clock – something that will probably be useful, as unlike in the Fiesta I suspect I won't be keeping my hands locked in the quarter-to-three position.

I go for a ride with Richard Tuthill first to see how it should be done. He's arguably the best exponent of how to drive a historic rally 911, so it's an entertaining and very useful few minutes. He explains that there are essentially three phases to every corner in a 911 on gravel: an aggressive first phase setting the car up for the corner where you're hard (really hard) on the brakes, throwing the weight forward to get the grip for the front tyres so you can turn in and get the pendulum behind swinging. Then there is a passive phase where the car should be balanced. Finally there is another aggressive phase with lots of throttle, using the 911's traction with the weight over the rear wheels to propel you up the road as soon as you see the exit. Simple...

Flick the toggle halfway down for the ignition, then press it all the way down for the starter motor, releasing it once the flat-six has caught. It's a wonderful sound from the air-cooled engine and it only gets better as the revs rise on our way to the first corner. The gearshift, with its long lever, needs a little care going from second to third but is otherwise lovely, and my first impression is just how quick the Porsche is. Despite relatively modest figures of 290bhp and 229lb ft, there is this lovely big torque feel (as opposed to a Torquay feel, which would presumably end up with the car parked on a pavement and the driver giving it a damn good thrashing) to the motor that breezes through the gears effortlessly.

Of course, while the 911 might look several decades behind the Fiesta, what's hiding in the arches is anything but. The monster travel is controlled by Exe-TC dampers, a name that was



Engine Flat-six, 2994cc
Power 290bhp @ 5800rpm
Torque 229lb ft @ 5200rpm
Weight 1250kg
Power-to-weight 212bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 125mph (claimed)
Basic price £180,000

Top left: designed for Africa, Tuthill's 911 waltzes our Welsh stage. Soon after our test this very car, with Stig Blomqvist at the wheel, would win the East African Safari Classic



'OVERSTEER FEELS WONDERFUL, WITH THE OUTSIDE REAR OF THE CAR SQUATTING IN AN EXAGGERATED FASHION'

seen in the arches of Citroën's WRC cars not so long ago. Although the relatively lofty setup might not be ideal for some sections of our stage today, when it comes to the big hits (and there are a few) the 911 simply shrugs them off, practically pulling a wheelie out of one small mud-filled ditch every time. It's wonderfully incongruous what it can cope with and you can instantly understand why they do so well in the unpredictable rough and tumble of East Africa.

Despite the jacked-up look, there is much more turn-in grip than I expected, but it's tricky judging the commitment needed to carry you into the passive phase of the corner. Once this 911 is oversteering, however, the wheel running easily through your hands with the yellow band spinning round the circumference as it almost naturally dials in the opposite lock,

it feels wonderful, with the outside rear of the car squatting down in an exaggerated fashion.

For every corner I get right I feel like I get at least two wrong (or if not actually wrong, then they could be a lot better) and there's a sense that a full day is required to get to grips with the 911, because you really need to dial yourself into the balance of the machine. It's a bit like juggling, when you initially feel like you're struggling to keep up with the catch-throw process. Yet as you gradually get accustomed to the weight of the thuds, you relax and time seems to expand. So in the 911 you have to concentrate and slowly tune into the way it dives, squats, rolls and swings its weight about, because for all that driving on gravel is a very fluid sensation that seems to give you a lot of time, you still need to drive very sensitively, just

with quite a bit of lock. And slightly confusingly, the less precise the car (and the 911 is inevitably less precise than the Fiesta), the more precise you need to be as a driver.

With gravity helping, I find the final downhill corners the easiest in which to get the weight moving in the 911 and arguably that's where the car feels at its best for me, but it's not the stretch I will really remember. There is one long straight about a kilometre into the stage where a long plume of dust hangs in the warm air, the particles dancing and twisting as they gradually fall back to Earth, ready to be disturbed again on the next lap. From the photos it could almost be the Rift Valley... if you ignore the pine trees. And by the time I step out of the 911 I have made it one of my life's ambitions to go to Kenya and do the Safari in one. You should too.

ARIEL NOMAD



M

MY BIGGEST FEAR WHEN I KNEW THE cars that we would be assembling for this day was that the Nomad would be shown up. Everything else here wears its number plate in a much more casual fashion and I feared Ariel's beautifully bonkers creation, the car that had inspired the whole test, would be out of its depth. Given the day I've had so far I'm more nervous than ever as I clamber in through the roof, dropping down past the impressive row of lamps. As I settle in I can't help but notice the nice big bar jutting up in front of the tiny gearlever. I knew there was rumour of Ariel fitting a proper hydraulic handbrake, but I hadn't realised they had made it reality.

The car feels tiny and, despite the windscreen, it feels even more exposed than the Polaris, but I love seeing the ground rushing past next to me as I head off into the stage. It's immediately obvious that this is a far more direct car than anything I've driven so far, with firmer suspension and a much greater feeling of connection to the front wheels through the steering. If I wasn't sure before where the bumps were on the stage, I certainly am after one lap in the Nomad. With a fair bit of kickback through the steering on the rough section through the trees, it's a really physical experience, with the little wheel needing to be held much more firmly to stop it wrestling itself out of my grip.

Because it's so easily done (all it takes is a couple of turns on the adjusters on the dampers with your fingers), I soften the rear suspension a touch after a few runs because on the smoother sections it's bobbling a bit too much under acceleration; this should also make the car a bit more predictable in slides. There is already a big grin on my face though, and I'm surprised at how well the Nomad is coping with the bigger hits given its diminutive size. Although the heightened levels of feedback were initially a shock to the system, it is actually very nice having so much information. If a Nomad was your first foray into the world of gravel driving,

**'SO MANAGEABLE
IS OVERSTEER
THAT EVEN IF YOU
YOU APPLY A BIT
OF HANDBRAKE ON
CORNER-ENTRY
THE CAR IS
EASILY CAUGHT'**



Above: Nomad is the car that inspired this test. **Left:** an enormous hydraulic handbrake is a welcome addition on a gravel course



I can imagine that would be a real reassurance.

Perhaps the best surprise, however, is the balance of the car. With the engine out the back and even less weight than the 911 over the front wheels, I wondered whether it might be a bit of a struggle on the way into corners, but the Nomad is incredibly friendly. Outputs of 235bhp and 221lb ft in 750kg feel plenty, but the Yokohama Geolander tyres find surprising grip and so manageable is the oversteer that even if you need to apply a bit of handbrake as you enter the corner, you know that it will be easy to catch the rear and hold the slide.

When I drove the Nomad on the road in *evo* 210 I felt the 2.4-litre engine still needed driving like the 2-litre in the Atom, but on gravel you really appreciate the extra low-down torque and very quickly get used to throwing

gears at it. In fact, one of my favourite things about driving the Nomad on the loose is the juxtaposition of the free, expansive feeling of the car moving around and the supremely tight throw of the gearbox (it feels like the gate must be no bigger than a matchbox).

Yes, the Nomad reacts to bumps and cambers more than the other cars here, requiring stabs of lock where others sail through, but it also telegraphs the ground more obviously to the driver. Combined with your proximity to your surroundings, thanks to the open sides and relatively low ride height, this makes it a wonderfully involving car to drive. Physical, but involving. If it's tough on me then it's certainly tough on the car, but one of us looks considerably less tired after an hour of thrashing around the stage. Probably rattles less too.

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2534cc
Power 235bhp @ 7200rpm
Torque 221lb ft @ 4300rpm
Weight 750kg
Power-to-weight 318bhp/ton
0-60mph 3.9sec (estimated)
Top speed 120mph (estimated)
Basic price £33,000

BOWLER DEFENDER 110 V6



I

IF THE TRANSITION BACK THROUGH the decades from the WRC car to the 911 was quite a jump, then Nomad to Bowler is arguably even bigger. Climb in over the roll-cage and you find yourself with a view that's even higher than in the Polaris, albeit with a bit more weather protection this time. There is some familiarity to the very upright cabin layout as I did a hill rally in a Defender in *evo* 207, and jolly good fun it was too. That was a shorter wheelbase '90', whereas this is a 110, and while that had a four-pot turbodiesel, this has something considerably fruitier. Under the bonnet in front of me is a 3-litre supercharged petrol V6.

We'll get to the numbers in a minute, but all you really need to know is that the first time the

Defender and I head off into the stage, everyone stops and stares. I'm even more gobsmacked inside. Not only does it get off the line like no Defender has any earthly right to, it sounds like Group B regulations have returned. The mellifluous yet savagely primal roar that is left in the Bowler's dusty wake is magnificent and I can't help but laugh as we charge like a four-wheeled rugby prop towards the first corner.

The engine is putting out about 390bhp and 339lb ft of torque. There are bespoke Bilstein remote-reservoir dampers keeping 300mm of travel in check and there is a Watt's linkage at the rear. The gearbox is a ZF eight-speed automatic and on Drew Bowler's suggestion I pop the lever (recognisable from an F-type)

across into manual. Upshifts come in rapid succession, each one accompanied by suitable acoustic fireworks. There's a slight delay between the request and implementation of each downchange, but you quickly get used to pre-empting the ideal shift point and nudge the lever a moment ahead of time accordingly.

Tackling something other than a straight line in a Defender is an interesting process. It is certainly the trickiest of our assembled quintet to get smoothly and quickly round a corner, but it is hugely rewarding when you get it right. To begin with you tackle corners in a more conventional and track-like fashion, coping with a bit of understeer as you turn into an apex but then using the tremendous traction



**'IF THE DEFENDER
DOES BEGIN TO
OVER-ROTATE,
YOU'D BETTER
HOPE THAT YOU
CATCH IT EARLY'**

(it's amazing what a beam axle can do) to fire you out the other side. However, as you get bolder you realise that you can provoke the Bowler more than this. For a start, the brakes are surprisingly good, and with all that weight pitched over the front axle, forcing the tyres into the ground, you've got tremendous grip to lean on during the slowing phase. This means you can brake later than you think, and once you're doing that you begin trail-braking into the corner so that the unweighted rear begins to swing. If you get this right then you don't really need any lock to correct it; you just get on the throttle as the momentum of the slide peters out and launch the snarling V6 up the next straight.

The tricky thing is that sliding a Defender



Left: bespoke Bilstein remote-reservoir dampers sit inside springs with 300mm of travel. **Below:** trail-braking neuters understeers and gets the rear axle swinging



Engine V6, 2995cc, supercharger
Power 390bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 339lb ft @ 4500rpm
Weight 1875kg
Power-to-weight 219bhp/ton
0-60mph c5.0sec (claimed)
Top speed 130mph (estimated)
Basic price c£100,000

feels like a bit of a knife-edge. You're always aware of the high centre of gravity, so it feels constantly up on tiptoes. And if the car does begin to over-rotate so that you need corrective lock, you'd better hope that you catch it early and don't need too much steering input, otherwise you can find yourself grappling with armfuls of the stuff trying to keep up!

As I said with the 911, the less precise the car, the more precise the driver's inputs need to be as you balance it through the corners. It's not for the faint-hearted, but the Defender and its ludicrous soundtrack do provoke some of the biggest grins from everyone in the service area, and that's on a sunny day when there is generally a lot of grinning anyway.



GRAVEL GROUP TEST

CONCLUSION

IT'S A MEASURE OF HOW much fun these cars are that today ranks amongst the very best I've had in a decade in this job. The driving experiences this brilliant selection of cars offer are all so different and the budgets needed so wide-ranging that it is not easy or perhaps even fair to pick a winner, so I won't.

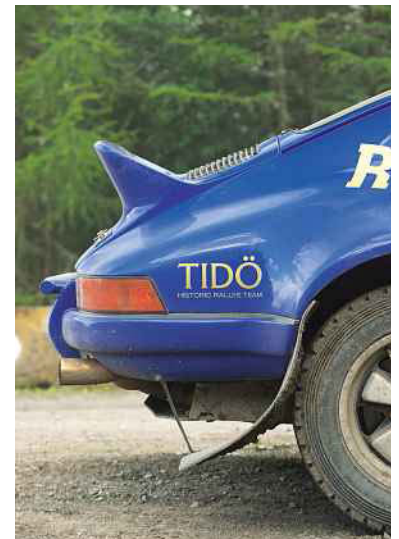
The Polaris is a brilliant entry point to this potentially rough and tumble world. The fact that you can use it for anything from having fun mucking about in a field to doing a full hill rally makes it fantastic value for money. Talking of hill rallies, the V6 Defender is one of the silliest, most terrifying and yet also brilliant things all in the space of one corner. Its soundtrack needs to be taken as some sort of blueprint for the next generation of WRC cars that are due to arrive on stages in 2017.

Not that the current crop of WRC cars aren't insanely impressive, as the M-Sport Fiesta proves. Its speed and agility combine intoxicatingly to make you feel like a superhero behind the wheel and that's the reason I would want one in my dream garage.

One other way to live out your superhero dreams is to drive a car with Stig Blomqvist's name on the side. Much like the very best road 911s, the Safari car was something that I felt would be an ongoing learning experience as I worked out how to get the best from its defining and beguiling weight distribution. An Escort of similar vintage is much easier to jump into and get the best from throughout a stage, but the trickier 911 is arguably more rewarding when you nail a corner from entry to exit.

Which leaves the Nomad, the newest car but also the one that kicked off the idea for this whole test. The fact that it isn't overshadowed by the competition machinery here is huge credit to the engineers behind it. In fact it's arguably the most pleasingly balanced of all the cars, with an engaging rear-driven setup that feels easily exploited. If you bought one of these and only ever drove it on the road you would have a great time, but you would undoubtedly be missing out, because in my mind to feel one of these shimmy through a long corner on a surface of nature's own ball bearings is to feel something close to motoring perfection.

This might have been *evo's* first gravel group test, but I hope it won't be the last. ❌





*There's racing, and then there's racing a \$2million Scuderia Cameron Glickenhaus SCG003C at the Nürburgring in the closely fought VLN race series. **evo** takes the hot seat. No pressure...*

by JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY by JOCHEN VAN CAUWENBERGE



INTO THE WILD

Cursed telemetry.

After what feels like days of waiting, looking nervously at the flat grey sky and the glistening racetrack, and hearing drivers disappearing into the gloom with throttles wide open, it's my turn. And I just want to be alone. To relax into the car, learn to trust what it's doing and feel how the traction control activates. Just to drive with no pressure and a bit of freedom. Of course, there's no such thing, not with telemetry. Not with Jim Glickenhaus in the pits with a watchful eye on the monitors. Not with this particular car's owner, Christopher Ruud, at his shoulder. It actually feels almost oppressive. I disappear into the gloom. Lifting just a bit. They'll know.



THIS WHOLE SLIGHTLY ABSURD ADVENTURE started on September 15 at 10.40am. One of those innocent little bleeps from my phone and a simple message: 'Er, do you want to do VLN9 in the Glickenhaus?' How do you respond to that? I mean, who wouldn't want to drive the SCG003C? It's one of the coolest projects in motor racing, while the VLN series is run exclusively at the Ring, a place I love dearly. In the dry. But it's September already; I'm assuming that the ninth race of the season is still a good few weeks away in order to get all the necessary entry forms, licence upgrades and testing sorted, so by my calculations it'll be some time in October. From experience I know that October at the Ring can mean hail, snow, fog, sleet, frogs, swarms of locusts... anything goes. Except sunshine. Hmm. I settle for: 'Erm, when is that?'

And so it begins. A mad dash of upgrading my race licence to an International, lobbying the DMSB authority in Germany to grant me a Nordschleife A licence, and organising and trying to fund an FIA 8860-compliant crash helmet (I've bought cheaper cars!), all while up in Scotland for eCoty with almost zero phone signal. And all the while battling a swelling sense of panic that I might just be hopelessly out of my depth. The quickest thing I've ever raced at the Ring is the brilliant but relatively tame M235i Racing at the 24-hour race in 2014. It was an amazing experience, in no small part because it gave me the perfect seat from which to witness the sheer ferocity of the top-level GT3 cars at ten-tenths on the old circuit. At times the drivers' commitment, the cornering speeds and the way

the cars leapt around, belching flames and throwing up great shot blasts of rubber marbles was actually pretty frightening to behold. And now I'd be in one of the 'big' cars. In October.

Confidence hits an all-time low on a miserable Wednesday afternoon at Blyton Park. The SCG003C is a part of our Track Car of the Year test (coming soon) but it's only available for a single day – the day that it rains and rains and then rains a bit more. It feels terrific on wet tyres, but with a tiny window at the end of the day and the track drying fast, we decide to try to set a time on slicks. We hook the car up with all the cameras and I'm mic'd up so I can do the talking stuff before attempting to knuckle down and set a lap time. If it works, we'll have salvaged something from a pretty torrid day. It's freezing cold and getting dark and, somewhat predictably, I outbrake myself and sail off the end of the long straight, spinning across the run-off but mercifully stopping short of the fields beyond. There's no damage but with Jim and his race team watching on it is soul-destroying to say the least. I think I want to cry.

A CLOAK OF THICK WHITE FOG CREEPS ALL over the track. It's Friday morning and my first taste of the car since 'the incident' is on the Nürburgring GP circuit. At least last night's snow has cleared. Yes, snow. The huge, threatening Nordschleife will remain closed until the second test session this afternoon. I've vowed not to 'do anything stupid' after Blyton's ignominy but I'm actually in a really tricky situation. Drive too slowly and I've been given the distinct impression



Right: Jeff Westphal (right) offers some encouraging words to Bovingdon. **Below:** with a roll-cage, a huge race seat and a restrictive HANS device, the already modest cabin makes for a claustrophobic but secure environment



'It's just so fast. You almost have to detach yourself

that they'll pull my seat for the race. Fall off trying too hard and they'll do the same. The pressure is oppressive and makes my feather-light carbonfibre Arai GP-6 RC feel like an anvil pushing down on my shoulders.

Fortunately the SCG003C's balance and demeanour slowly unfurrow my brow. Despite its sci-fi looks and massive potential, it actually feels predictable and friendly. It's weird watching a 997 Cup car locking brakes, fighting snap-oversteer on corner exit and generally making an awful lot of fuss when you're stroking along trying to get a feel for a car. I decide to pass before he crashes and 15 minutes later I'm back in the pits. I get a big bear-hug from Jim and feel, finally, like I might just get to race this car on Saturday. And that it might even be fun.

Scuderia Cameron Glickenhaus has two cars running in VLN9. 'Macchinauno' is Jim's car, running with drivers Manuel Lauck, Franck Mailleux and Andreas Simonsen. My car, 'Macchinadue', is owned by Chris and will be driven by Thomas Mutsch, Jeff Westphal and, well, me. It's fascinating seeing how the team operates; the limitations of being an independent organisation but also the freedoms that allows. The car itself is the ultimate expression of the Scuderia Cameron Glickenhaus mentality. Namely to build something competitive, unique and exciting and to bring an LMP-style concept in terms of aerodynamics, materials and construction to a GT3-category car. As such, it's an all-carbon structure.

Suspension is inboard and the aerodynamic efficiency – the calculation of drag versus aero – is said to be way beyond a GT3 car's and edging towards LMP1 numbers. With a 3.5-litre twin-turbo Honda Performance Development V6 engine and a six-speed sequential Hewland gearbox, it weighs 1350kg. It also has that fascinating surfacing intricacy that makes current LMP cars so achingly cool.

I could drool over it all day long but the session on the Nordschleife is approaching fast and I need to get my head around the recently enforced speed limits. You may remember there was a spectator fatality at the Ring earlier in 2015 when a Nissan GT-R GT3 took off at Flugplatz and flipped backwards over the barriers at great speed. To prevent a repeat, a 200kph (124mph) limit is enforced from the preceding Hocheichen corner until you clear the crest at Flugplatz. As the track then veers right, the limit is increased to 250kph (155mph) before you plunge downhill and then up over another crest into a left-hander called Schwedenkreuz. There's also a 250kph limit for the long Döttinger-Höhe straight towards the end of the lap. Plus, if there are double waved yellow flags at any section of the track (there usually are) then you must stay at 60kph (37mph) until you're level with the next green flag.

Sound relatively straightforward? Yep, I thought so, too. But it's not so simple. As you'd expect, Macchinadue has a speed-limiter button on the steering wheel, but it imposes different

Above: car number 702 tackles the Karussell; rain and snow thankfully stay away for the duration of the race



from the speed of the track coming towards you'

limits depending on what gear you're in. So in first it's set for 50kph for the pitlane, in second and third it's set to 60kph, then in fourth and fifth it's 200kph, and finally in sixth it's 250kph. So that speed-limited section feels like you're juggling gears and buttons constantly. Leave the left of Hocheichen in third and rip right through to the rev limit. But as you shift to fourth you must hit the limiter button for a 200kph limit. Keep the throttle pinned and stay flat over the crest. Peel right and you almost immediately see a 250kph board, so you need another prod on that button to release the 200kph limiter. Stay flat on the power through fourth, flick the right-hand paddle for fifth and then sixth, hitting the limiter button again so that you're held at 250kph over the crest. Brake and turn left into the terrifyingly fast Schwedenkreuz, then release the limiter mid-corner. Now pick your braking spot for the following second-gear right-hander and try to get the car slowed. If you've forgotten to release the limiter you'll be pegged at 60kph, lose time and generally feel a bit of an idiot. Oh, and while all this is going on you're in a crash helmet, HANS device restricting your movement, there are other cars around and such is the downforce that you're going *miles* quicker than you'd believe possible. Can this be safer than just *driving* the car? No way. Thankfully the limits will be gone in 2016.

My stint on the Nordschleife is short and manic. Car 702 is just so fast. Not in a straight line, because the SCG003C is

restricted to around 480bhp. In the corners, though. Wow. You really have to breathe, almost try to detach yourself from the speed of the track coming towards you and concentrate on each element of each corner. If you just drive on instinct, try to push and hustle like I might have in the M235i Racing, things run away from you and mistakes don't so much creep in as string together until you're continuously way behind the car and way beyond your comfort zone. I get a lap in the bag. Nearly. But the transmission lets go near Pflanzgarten 2 and I pull over to the right of the track. It's around 5.30pm, the session finishes at 6 and Macchinadue is finally recovered at something like 7.30. It's pitch black and so cold it hurts. Tomorrow, assuming the car can be fixed, we race.

OF COURSE IT CAN BE FIXED. I HAVE TO SAY, THE team are absolutely committed to this project. They take great pride in it. They really felt some pain last night when both cars were towed back to the paddock by the same truck (Macchinauno ingested an intake trumpet and had a small fire) and come qualifying they're living and breathing every lap, transfixed by the timing screens. Fog means qualifying is pushed back and back from the 8.30am schedule. Eventually, at just before 10am, the track goes green. Nobody is sure why, as the fog remains and looks as opaque as ever. Nevertheless, an endless stream of cars *wap-wap-wap* on their pitlane



‘The first half-lap I don’t think I breathe and

limiters and are swallowed up almost as soon as they cross the green lights on pit exit.

The pace is ferocious. Despite poor visibility and the speed limits, the pole time, set by the Black Falcon Mercedes SLS AMG GT3, is an 8:01.443. That means a Nordschleife lap of 6:30 or thereabouts. Cars 701 and 702 aren’t quite on that pace but Manuel puts Jim’s car in ninth with an 8:13.340, and my car, hampered by traffic and without the latest-spec Dunlop slicks, manages an 8:30.171 to qualify 14th overall out of 135 entries. And I finally get to complete a lap of the whole track – running on intermediate tyres and with yellow flags everywhere – so the team is happy and I feel like I’m just about getting my head around the car, its capabilities and the speed-limited sections.

Still, going into the race with just one full lap under my belt is less than ideal and there are niggles with the car that all the drivers are reporting. The Bosch traction control is inconsistent, sometimes almost stopping you dead out of turns even when you have plenty of grip, other times failing to step in when you’re dialling in a big correction and would love a bit of help. Throttle response is also not quite right, so feeling around at the limits isn’t so easy. You ask for a little and get a lot. Manuel in particular is very critical of the car, but then I guess that’s what he is paid for – to keep the development moving. For me, car 702 still feels fantastically composed, the steering response at high speed when the downforce is working is beautiful and I

can put up with a little bit of mid-corner understeer and the odd moment of frustration when the traction control gets confused. Even better, it looks like the rain might just stay away.

The race runs for four hours. Sadly, car 701 lasts about four seconds before Manuel has a rush of blood to the head and decides the first hairpin is actually a fourth-gear sweeper. An Audi R8 acts as his brakes but the car is badly damaged. That superb qualifying performance has come to nought, although the team, as ever, works tirelessly and quickly to get the car out again. My teammate Thomas Mutsch is flying, though. He’s up to second very quickly and keeps it there with lap times as low as 8:12.30. *Second.* I do wonder if things stay this way whether they’ll even put me in the car, but owner Chris is clear: I’ll be in the car last so I can finish the race and will get three or four laps. I wish it was six but understand why he wants Thomas and Jeff to run the majority of the laps.

So I wait. I do what you always do in these situations. Watch the screens, nip to the toilet, get updates from our car’s race engineer, Dario Pergolini, go to the loo, eat pasta, pop to the toilet... And so it goes on. Gradually the very fastest GT3 cars pass Macchinadue but we hold position in tenth, Thomas giving way to Jeff and then my turn getting closer and closer. Chris calls me over. Jeff needs to get out a lap earlier than expected so I’m in for five laps in about three minutes. Dario warns that if I stall, the car won’t restart (there’s no on-board

Above left: our SCG003C hunting down a Porsche 911 GT3 RSR. **Above:** a pensive Bovingdon awaits his race stint in the SCG003C; it will arrive sooner than he expects



SCUDERIA CAMERON GLICKENHAUS SCG003C

Engine V6, 3500cc, twin-turbo

Power 480bhp @ n/a

Torque 527lb ft @ n/a

Transmission Hewland six-speed sequential, rear-wheel-drive

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

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

Brakes Ventilated discs, 378mm front, 355mm rear

Wheels 12 x 18in front, 13 x 18in rear

Tyres 300/680 18 front, 310/710 18 rear

Weight 1350kg

Power-to-weight 361bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.0sec (est)

Top speed 190mph (est)

Basic price \$2million

the car feels like it's running away from me'

starter motor) and the team will have to bump me down the pitlane. The frenzy of the driver change is clumsy and feels slow, but I'm ready in plenty of time as the car needs fuel. Jeff tells me: 'The track is dry and green, so go and enjoy it.' It's a nice moment and reminds me to relish every second. It might be the last time I'm in such a car on this magnificent track. Dario gives me the signal to start the engine and I roll away with about a million revs. I ain't stalling, no way.

The first half-lap I don't think I breathe and the car feels like it's running away from me. It's just so fast into corners and carries so much speed. Picking off slower cars is easy but you get to them so quickly that judging whether or not they've seen you isn't. A GT4-spec V8 Vantage squeezes me right to the edge of the GP circuit as I pass, which is a nice reminder before heading onto the Nordschleife to err on the side of caution.

Pretty soon it's clear that all is not perfect with Macchinadue. There's a 'low fuel rail pressure' warning blinking on the dash and out of most corners the car hesitates and stutters. Dario tells me to lift completely off the power and then reapply, but even that doesn't work at times and I have to lift, short-shift and then gently push on the throttle to avoid more stuttering. It's frustrating but also takes a bit of pressure off. I don't feel like I have to push like mad in the fast corners or take huge risks diving past slower cars on the brakes. It's about trying to be smooth and as quick as the car will allow me to go.

A lap later I break the speed limit despite having activated the limiter. I've changed engine maps on a dial on the steering wheel in an attempt to cure the fuel-pressure issue and suspect that's sent the speed limiters haywire. Next time over Flugplatz I check the speedo and it creeps over 200kph with no sign of the limiter, so I give up on the electronic tether and decide I'll just have to judge the speeds myself. It's not easy as I have to lift myself up against the belts to see the readout and naturally I err on the side of caution by 5kph or so.

But you know what? It doesn't matter. Dario tells me 'one more lap' over the radio and I just soak it all in: the Lexus RC F ahead of me absolutely on the ragged edge, the way the SCG003C is pinned to the track at higher speeds, the steering kickback through the downhill miss-hit-miss corner, the way you can push into the gentle entry understeer but commit to the throttle and feel the car neutralise then drive hard out of corners. There are many moments when fuel pressure dies, and keeping to the speed limits is so, so tricky, but I feel like I'm doing an okay job, all things considered. My last lap is nine minutes flat and I know I'm losing time hand over fist every second or third corner. I'd love one clean lap to know how my pace really stacks up, but crossing the line in this extraordinary car, feeling a part of this passionate team, led with such commitment by Jim and Chris, is awesome. We finish tenth. What a weekend. ☒

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NEW ARRIVAL

Nissan GT-R

A 45th Anniversary
GT-R joins the fleet.
Bovingdon has the
key – and is made up

HAPPY. BEAMING. OFTEN to be found staring out of the window looking at the driveway with a glazed expression. This has been my state since the Champagne Gold Nissan GT-R 45th Anniversary arrived. I'm a big, big fan of the GT-R – how it looks, what it represents and, of course, how it drives – so to have one to use every single day for the next six months or so feels very much like several Christmases have come at once.

First, that colour. To be honest I couldn't care less if this car was screaming pink with purple wheels and yellow stripes, but I know the golden hue is a bit divisive. It's

actually the same colour used on the R34-gen Skyline GT-R M-spec. That's 'M' for Kazutoshi Mizuno, who led its development and then went on to devise and engineer the GT-R as we know it today. And I suppose even though the GT-R has yet to reach the full 50-year milestone, gold isn't a bad colour to mark an anniversary. Personally I think it looks great, in a JDM-crazy sort of way.

The 45th Anniversary is no more than a badge and trim special, featuring that paint, Premium Edition trim and a pretty unremarkable plaque on the centre console. Just five have made it to the UK, priced at £79,780.

So, there are no Nismo goodies, no tweaks to the boost or suspension. It is essentially a standard GT-R. Just the 542bhp, 466lb ft, 0-60mph in sub-3.0sec and a top speed of 196mph, then. I think that will suffice. Although for the vast majority of owners it doesn't seem to be enough, so it'll be interesting to see if I develop a sudden and overwhelming desire to have 750bhp in the coming weeks and months.

Right now I'd guess not. The GT-R feels unbelievably fast. Maybe it hasn't quite got the fierce initial punch of a 991 Turbo S or the wild top end of something like a McLaren 675LT in a straight line, but



Above and right: all-new GT-R is due in 2018, but the current model still cuts an imposing figure on British roads. Anniversary models get delicious alloy wheels



the performance still feels vast and relentless. Add in the car's mechanical grip and agility and the results are mind-bending. I wonder if a nagging sense of frustration at not being able to use the GT-R's full potential will become more of a long-term issue than the idea of wanting to go faster still.

For now though, I'm just enjoying having the GT-R around. It's a pretty civilised beast these days. Okay, so the diffs still chunter and grind at parking speeds, the interior is best described as 'functional' and the lack of DAB radio is a bit annoying, but in terms of ride quality and comfort it's actually lovely to live with. The GT-R doesn't much like severe speed bumps and is a bit thumpy at crawling speeds, but the dampers soon find their range and, combined with the superbly

comfortable seats, it's a great car in which to cover long distances. And I rather like the way it snatches into gear when it's cold and shunts uncomfortably around until the oil warms through. It feels alive.

The 45th arrived already having done 11,535 miles, god knows how many launch-control starts and probably quite a few laps of various circuits, and having satisfied any number of journalists during its early life on Nissan's press fleet. Even so, it feels tight and super-fit, although a few scratches on the harder interior plastics do age it a little. I look forward to many more miles, maybe one or two launch-control starts (I've actually never tried this on a GT-R) and hopefully a few dozen laps of my favourite circuits. It's going to be a blast. ✘

Jethro Bovingdon
(@JethroBovingdon)

'Will not being able to use the GT-R's full potential become an issue?'

Date acquired	December 2015
Total mileage	13,024
Mileage this month	1489
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	20.8

Porsche 996 Carrera

The pseudo-GT3 embarks on a 1000-mile road trip to the Ring and back

T THE GOLDEN GT-R HADN'T arrived and I needed to be at the Nürburgring. The 911 needed a run, I reasoned, and where better to take it? Preparation was light, confidence heightened by my ADAC membership and the fact that the 996 had never, ever let me down. Just recently though, its always slightly lazy starting pattern had started to worry me. It always fired but churned over scarily slowly at times, and when it was hot it sometimes took three goes before the flat-six fired. I took a battery booster and crossed my fingers.

Some 994 miles and a few days later, the booster remained undisturbed and the 996 rolled back onto my driveway filthy, missing some exterior trim but triumphant. It'd been a helluva weekend for me

Mazda MX-5

Practical issues arise a short time into our stewardship. Surprised?

D DAILY-DRIVING THE MX-5 has left me questioning exactly what it is I want from a car. I don't have any kids to transport about, so really two seats, four wheels and a motor should be ample for me in terms of pure functionality.

But the MX-5 is just so restricted in terms of space that a few things have started to niggle. For one, there really is absolutely no storage in the cabin aside from a small cubby between the seats. It can hold an instruction manual and a few cables, and that's about it. It's also blocked



(racing the Glickenhaus SCG 003 at a VLN round – see p112) and the 996. I didn't think I could love the Porsche any more, but a European road trip always strengthens those bonds and it continues to astound me just how good this car is to drive.

The GT3-style seats concerned me. Would I regret taking the 996 by the time I boarded the Channel Tunnel? As it turned out, they were fine. Better than fine, actually: no aches and plenty of support. The ride too was excellent at speed and the car sat at a comfortable 'European cruising speed' quietly and feeling completely relaxed. Even in the pouring rain and later the gloppy sleet (rather scary considering what I'd be racing the next day) the Carrera just howled along with easygoing composure.

It was raining when I hit the derestricted Autobahn and I was tired, so a V-max attempt was out. Even so, only the hurriedly fitted and not-quite-correct new wipers

caused me to slow as they started to lift from the screen at 143mph. At one point I heard a mighty crack that sounded like the mother of all stone chips, but nothing appeared to have hit the screen... The next morning, I discovered the roof-rail trim had been sucked into the night – annoying, as I knew it was loose and had intended to gaffer it in place in anticipation of the higher speeds in Germany. Oh well.

The return journey was even better. At 8.30 on Sunday morning I stopped for fuel at the filling station on the road that runs parallel to the Döttinger-Höhe straight and a trick-looking M3 V8 saloon pulled up behind me. A few seconds later a new GT3 RS rolled in. I love the place.

It was tempting to stay and do a few laps during the public sessions but I needed to get home and was worried my brain would attempt to drive at SCG 003 speeds...

Heading back, the weather was fine and the 996 wound itself around to 173mph (with a bit more to come) before relaxing and cruising home, achieving around 32mpg. I'm glad I took the Porsche. ☒

Jethro Bovington
(@JethroBovington)

Date acquired	May 2013
Total mileage	145,021
Mileage this month	1022
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	29.2

Mazda MX-5



by two cupholders, which means you can't really get into it if you've brought a coffee with you.

I also repeatedly find myself knocking drinks out of the shallow holders with my elbow when I change gear, which has made for a few trips to the dry-cleaners. Then there's the boot aperture, which isn't really big enough to fit anything substantial through. In short, you're going to be making big sacrifices in terms of useability if you decide to run an MX-5 over a hot hatch.

But then again, this car has also really started to get under my skin. Yes, it's definitely too soft in the corners, but the combination of a low weight, rear-wheel drive and a fairly free-revving naturally aspirated motor does feel spot-on. It's also not too fast, which means you feel like you're properly working the car even on more restrictive routes.

I'm even starting to question the need for a full-fat, high-spec MX-5 like ours over a 1.5-litre model with nothing on it. For me, the lower the price, the even better value the current MX-5 feels, and having driven both the 1.5- and 2-litre cars extensively, I don't think I'd miss the extra performance the bigger motor brings. That said, I might miss our car's surprisingly good upgraded sound system. The wind and tyre noise at motorway speeds don't do it any favours, mind, but given the price and weight of this car, I guess that's forgivable. ☒

Hunter Skipworth
(@HunterSkipworth)

Date acquired	October 2015
Total mileage	2809
Mileage this month	1158
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	37.6

NEW ARRIVAL

Audi RS Q3

This is not your usual Audi RS Fast Fleeter, but could it be the one to stop photographer Smith from moaning?



I'VE SPENT A LOT OF TIME in the latest Audi RS3 and I reckon it's an absolute riot. So I simply couldn't believe my luck when I heard I'd be running one long-term. You will understand, then, why I was ever so slightly disappointed when the car you see pictured here crunched its way into the *evo* car park. Rather than a handsome RS3, it was in fact its slightly awkward-looking, taller brother, the RS Q3. I must have misheard.

But all is not lost. The RS Q3 still has the same 2.5-litre five-cylinder engine that makes the RS3 so outrageous, albeit with the 335bhp found in the 2011-12 version of the hot hatch rather than the 362bhp of the current model. Also, members

of *evo*'s road test team have stated that the RS Q3 is one of the better RS models of recent years. It should also prove more useful for a photographer than an RS3, as it can be parked off-road while out on a shoot.

The RS Q3's basic price is £45,810. Our car has a smattering of both useful and less useful optional extras, namely 'Rotor' wheels (£195), Bose surround sound (£690), Comfort Package Plus (£670 and including high-beam assist and a parking camera and sensors), a panoramic glass sunroof (£1125), the Technology Package (£1010, including satnav and online services), LED interior lights (£245), electric folding auto-dimming mirrors (£250) and the extended matt aluminium styling package

(£100). This brings the total price to a not inconsiderable £50,095.

Typically, the RS Q3 spent most of its first three weeks in a multitude of Luton airport's rancid car parks, the 20-minute journey between them and home only enough to highlight that, despite this car being made in 2015, it has no USB socket!

The only other bugbear is the driving position – although this could be specific to me. To avoid upsetting my bad back I have to drive with a more reclined seat than is optimal, and in the Q3 I find either my legs are too close to the pedals or my arms are too stretched at the wheel.

My fears that the ride might be too harsh on the 20-inch wheels have been unfounded. Damping

on the standard, non-adjustable suspension is genuinely impressive and the car only ever feels over-wheeled and under-tyred on the harshest of pothole thumps.

Meanwhile, that engine feels as strong as an ox and I'm hoping it will only get better with miles. Despite sounding purposeful, the exhaust note hasn't quite got the raucous pops and bangs of the RS3's, but I'm hoping that, given time, that will get a little louder too. ✉

Dean Smith (@evoDeanSmith)

Date acquired	October 2015
Total mileage	1498
Mileage this month	1453
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	25.8

Skoda Octavia vRS Estate

The vRS hasn't been treated with respect. And Gallagher's not happy

I KNOW THE vRS AND I have bonded for a number of reasons. First, I miss it when someone asks to borrow it. It can be Jethro just nipping across to Belgium to sit in a Focus RS, or Aston for last month's soggy group test with the McLaren 570S and new Audi R8. More frequently I miss it when I take something else home and feel guilty within 15 minutes of leaving the vRS at the office. Apparently you're meant to feel like this when you leave a child overnight for the first time, too...

Then I have the guilt of seeing the car covered in grime. The rear window having that telltale sign of a clean arc swept through a couple of thousand miles of road spray, the front wheels covered in brake dust and the Quartz Grey flanks looking

flat rather than shining brightly in the winter sun. And then, finally, there's the anger. Not at getting back in, sinking into its high-backed driver's seat and watching the needles do their pre-start sweep of the dials – these are reassuringly comforting. No, the anger comes from seeing muddy footprints on every surface and the uneaten sausage rolls on the floor that serve as a reminder that the vRS hasn't been treated to a high enough standard. Photographers, you can't take them anywhere.

So this answers the question as to how the vRS and I are settling in. Very well, in case you hadn't guessed. It's one of those cars that gets on with the task in hand with no fuss, no bother, but crucially you can also settle on a rhythm and a pace that is totally unexpected of a diesel

estate with an auto 'box. It's best to use the paddles (fixed to the back of the steering wheel) and switch the drive mode to Sport for the sharper throttle response, but when you do, the vRS will sprint between and through corners with unexpected pace. Engaging? No, that's pushing it, but there's character in the chassis that adds far more to the experience than it takes away and one I'm keen to learn more about. If only I can keep hold of the key long enough to do so. **X**

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Date acquired	October 2015
Total mileage	6109
Mileage this month	3675
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	43.1



Caterham Seven 420R



Caterham Seven 420R

It may be fun in winter sun, but will the novelty wear off as the weather turns?

Date acquired	August 2015
Total mileage	3550
Mileage this month	231
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	32.1

A AS I TYPE THIS, IT'S A Monday afternoon, the day after the clocks went back. The moment we wind an hour off our watches each year usually portends shorter days and colder, wetter weather, but right now the skies are clear and the sun is shining brightly. I may have only driven the 420R 30 miles down the M1 this morning, but I did so with a smile. On days like these a Caterham can make an event of the most mundane journeys.

But the weather forecast says this unseasonably pleasant weather is not going to last, and over the coming months it will only get worse. It's the winter-time aspect of Caterham ownership that intrigues me the most because, inevitably, the case for a car like this one gets a little weaker as the temperatures drop. Yes, I know, a decent coat and a woolly hat should see me right, but – dammit – sometimes you just need a heated seat and a roof that seals properly.

We all knew the 420R would be a great deal of fun throughout the

summer, but with the nights drawing in, would your £33,990 (including factory build) be better spent on a conventional performance car? I'd find it hard to see the value in the Caterham if it is only really enjoyable for two-thirds of the year. Let's see how it plays out over the coming few months.

This morning's drive wasn't the most thrilling I've had in our Seven, but it was enough to convince me that we got the specification right. We opted for the cushioned leather seats over the moulded composite alternatives and they make the car massively more amenable over a long journey. I go numb in places you don't want to read about after more than 30 minutes strapped into the solid plastic seat, although I can appreciate its lower-set position over shorter distances.

We also did well to specify the less aggressive Avon ZZS tyre over the ZZR, I reckon. The latter is worth a second or two on circuit, but on both road and track the car is less snappy and more playful on the ZZS. **X**

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

NEW ARRIVAL

Chevrolet Camaro Z/28

You saw it on eCoty, now it's joining our fleet, where this 505bhp 7-litre V8 muscle car will face its toughest test yet: a Swiss winter

T THE STAR OF EVO CAR OF THE Year 2015? Aside from the winner (Cayman GT4), it was unquestionably the Chevrolet Camaro Z/28 that owner David Price decided to ship over from the States specifically for the test. David has taken on a bit of a legendary status in the *evo* office for doing this, and it has been cemented by him allowing us to keep the Z/28 for a few weeks after eCoty – not least so that we could include it in a mega track test (coming soon) – and also agreeing to run the car in Fast Fleet over the next six months. What. A. Hero.

So, David picked up the Z/28 after eCoty, then did our Highlands test route with his son just to experience it himself. He then dropped the car off at Blyton Park, where Jethro and Dickie explored its absolute limits – and enjoyed every second. Then yours truly had a couple of weeks with the car on the road.

I didn't drive it much, as the standard Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R tyres were pretty much on the minimum tread level, but when I did memories

of eCoty 2015 came flooding back. I said it on the test and I'll say it again – it's the best muscle car I've driven, and arguably in the top five of all time. Why? Its sheer thrill factor. It's got a ton of pace, but the grip, braking and suspension can cope with it and its controls are so transparent that you're never afraid to really lean on it, even on Britain's tightest and most twisting tarmac.

Eventually the tyres wore out, but not before we tried a few different pressures. The Z/28 would appear to be pretty sensitive to tyre pressures, with even mildly under-inflated tyres exaggerating the rigidity in the springing and the bounce in the dampers. The plan was to replace the Trofeo Rs like for like, but David was keen to take the car back to his place in Switzerland to drive throughout the winter (as I said, what a hero), so we started to look for more treaded options.

We eventually decided on a set of Yokohama Advan Sports in the requisite 305/30 ZR19 size. These are the second most extreme tyre

in Yokohama's range, and promise strong grip but good performance in rain too. A glance at the tread shows that the grooves wrap over the edges, promising decent water expulsion. Sure enough, the first time I drove the car with the Yokis fitted was in heavy rain – and sure enough they worked very well. With 305s all round, I was expecting a lot of aquaplaning, but the Advans coped admirably.

Sadly, David collected the Z/28 before I had a chance to try the tyres in the dry, but then I suppose it is his car! As I write this, he's halfway through France on what's sounding like a fun drive to Geneva. David will report on his adventures in a muscle car during the Swiss winter in the coming issues. It promises to be an entertaining read... ✉

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	June 2015
Total mileage	4737
Mileage this month	311
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	16.4





I IT WAS NOT WITHOUT apprehension that I climbed back into the Range Rover after a day in Bentley's Bentayga (Driven, *evo* 217). Would the Bentley, with an absurd 600bhp and an interior to rival a luxury yacht's, render the Sport – though admittedly half the price – a little bit crap? Yes and no is the answer.

Firstly, the Sport's more utilitarian

interior doesn't wow like the Bentley's, but on the other hand it's got a considered, natural style that isn't too showy and doesn't clash with the exterior. I like it.

In dynamic terms, the Bentayga would murder the Sport on any given road. It's faster in a straight line and handles with more precision – if not outright grip. They both weigh around 2.3 tons, but the Bentayga's

Range Rover Sport SDV8

Time in Bentley's SUV highlights the Rangie's strengths

anti-roll system works particularly well containing the mass and stabilising the car during cornering and over ridges and compressions.

It's tricky to compare engine performance, because the Bentley has a 600bhp 6-litre twin-turbo petrol W12 and the Sport a 334bhp 4.4-litre twin-turbo diesel V8. The Bentayga also has a whopping 664lb ft of torque to the Rangie's 546. But the Sport never wants for performance on the road – its torque takes you to motorway speeds in a blink and it doesn't need heavy throttle openings to do so. I think this is one of the reasons why we're averaging close to 30mpg – the Bentley struggled to achieve 15mpg during similar driving.

So, was I corrupted by the Bentayga? Perhaps a little in terms

of ultimate handling and straight-line pace, but it also reminded me just how competent and natural-feeling the Sport is. It doesn't try too hard, and subtly gets on with the job of being a quite magnificent, if not ultimately thrilling, large SUV.

I've yet to try the SVR version, but I've driven the Cayenne Turbo S and the Mercedes-AMG GLE63 – mighty cars both. Or in other words I've got a feeling the Bentayga is going to have more rivals than it thinks in the luxury/sporting SUV sector – rivals that cost a chunk less too. **X**

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	December 2014
Total mileage	28,266
Mileage this month	2211
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.1

Porsche 911 SC



Porsche 911 SC

The verdict is in – Trott is facing an engine rebuild. But to upgrade or not to upgrade?

R RPM TECHNIK HAVE NOW stripped down the SC's engine, uncovering the cause of its power-loss problem: six bent exhaust valves, the likely result of an over-rev. I'm pretty sure I did it too, during a missed downshift on a trackday. Dammit.

RPM has given me a three-page list of parts required for the rebuild. You might be thinking that I should just replace the valves and have the engine put back together, but RPM aren't bodgers and the opportunity

to give the engine a full rebuild with refreshed parts can't be missed. That way, unless I fluff another shift, I can expect to get at least another 100,000 miles from it.

Naturally, it's tempting to tweak the motor during the rebuild. There's an extraordinary amount you can do to the air-cooled six, but I like the character of the 3-litre engine (free-spinning, torquey, responsive) and would rather enhance these characteristics than create a whole new type of engine. Also, Porsche got so much right with the 3.0. Many think it's a better engine than the later 3.2, chiefly due to its responsiveness, so I'm resisting the urge to increase the capacity.

At present, my thinking is to fit a lighter flywheel, port and flow the heads, keep the cams (the factory profile is pretty much spot on for fast road use) and effectively blueprint the engine. It won't give me huge power, but the joy of driving an old 911 was never about power anyway. Saying that, I'd love a set of PMO carbs – for the noise and even greater response they bring –

but that may have to wait until the finances recover!

I've already got a very good SSI exhaust system installed, so that will stay, but I'm very tempted by some parts from Windrush Evolutions (or WEVO) – a Californian company that's extremely highly regarded in Porsche circles. They make a 'gate-shift' kit, which takes the slack out of the standard '915' gearbox and creates a much more positive feel. This combined with a WEVO-developed fast-road clutch and lighter flywheel sounds perfect for me – and will undoubtedly minimise the chances of another (expensive) missed shift.

Sounds great, doesn't it? I'll admit I'm excited by the prospect of a really fizzy 3-litre engine – but the bill is expected to be chunky to say the least... **X**

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	March 2014
Total mileage	90,993
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	n/a

Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy

The 275 is leaving soon, so Meaden takes it for one last drive to remember

A AS I WRITE THIS REPORT, the 275 Trophy is still in my possession, but by the time you read it, the Renault bogeyman will have taken my beloved Mégane away. Just in case he arrives a little earlier than I'm expecting, I've taken HK64 VKH on a farewell thrash.

Now you might expect me to say I've headed for some fabulous far-flung tarmac, but in keeping with the Mégane's

everyday-hero status, I decided the roads in question would be some of my local favourites. That's because when I think back on the Mégane in years to come I'm almost certain what I'll remember will be its ability to serve up truly special moments on demanding, but entirely typical real-world A- and B-roads.

There's no ceremony or ritual to driving the Mégane. Taking it for a gratuitous thrash is no different to nipping round the corner to get some milk and newspapers, but

as soon as you point it down a promising road it unflinchingly sniffs-out the challenge and raises its game.

That tends to ensure every journey has flashes of fun, no matter how menial.

The Sport button makes the throttle too sharp for low-speed work,

but once on the open road it gives you instant access to the Trophy's last ten per cent of performance. Turbo lag is minimal, so you've got all the response you need to punch out of corners and zip by the occasional tractor or lorry with maximum safety and minimum fuss. That Sport also adds some crackle and pop to the exhaust note is an admittedly juvenile pleasure of which I'm yet to tire.

This Mégane might not be the freshest, or indeed the absolute fastest hot hatch around, but I'm convinced that, whichever way you slice it, it remains the coolest and most capable, despite its advancing years. The optional Öhlins suspension broadens its operating range and ramps up its cult appeal still further, and the fact it still seems impervious to what now amounts to more than 18,000 miles of hard driving makes this a truly special car on every level. ✖

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired	November 2015
Total mileage	18,201
Mileage this month	1491
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.1



Ford Focus ST Diesel



Ford Focus ST Diesel

Time in a hot hatch hero taints Riley's first impressions of the ST

I I HAD JUST ABOUT THE worst introduction to our long-term Focus ST as is possible. Two weeks in a VW Golf R will ruin your enthusiasm to jump into pretty much anything else. I love that car. It's so perfect in so many ways... But I'm getting sidetracked.

The Focus ST felt a million miles

away from the Golf R. In fact I was on a bit of a downer on my first drive home in it. It didn't seem very quick, it handled nothing like the Golf and it felt like it was bigger than my old Amarok pickup (see right). The infotainment system, although massively improved on the one in the last Focus ST, was still dangerously annoying, and even though the ridiculous button count had reduced, I still found myself longing for one of those scrolling wheel things you get in BMWs and Audis. Then there was the heavy clutch, which was annoying in town, and despite the positive things Anthony Ingram said about the diesel engine's sounds after he spent time with the ST a couple of months ago, there was still too much rattle for my liking.

As a couple of weeks passed, my anger towards the ST for not being a Golf R began to fade. But then, just as I was ready to start embracing its strengths, the electric movement on the passenger seat stopped working. Given that the fuse for the driver's seat has blown for pretty much everyone who has driven the car so far, I suspect the passenger seat now has the same problem.

I'll investigate soon, but first I'm just going to see if our Golf R long-term is available this evening... ✖

Sam Riley (@samgriley)

Date acquired	August 2015
Total mileage	7661
Mileage this month	1011
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	43.1

S SIX MONTHS SEEM TO have flown by. In what feels like the blink of an eye it's winter again and our trusty pickup has made its way home to VW Commercial Vehicles.

Our 'Rok' (as I liked to call it) went on some amazing adventures during its time on our fleet. From clambering around north Wales to Euro-tripping across to Germany, France, Italy and Switzerland, it was the workhorse of the office. And it seems we managed to save our best adventure until its very last couple of weeks with us – eCoty.

Driving all the way up to Inverness, around the amazing North Coast 500 and then back down south would be a real test for any car, but the Amarok took it all in its stride, despite being fully loaded with filming kit. There were even occasions when it kept up with the supercars. The Amarok may only have a frankly tiny 2-litre turbodiesel engine producing 178bhp, but when the big boys were struggling along narrow single-track roads, the Rok's high vantage point, cushioning ride and almost unkerbable wheels really came into their own.

Our Amarok was in 'Ultimate' spec, which really did take away the commercial-vehicle feel inside and give it more of a 'jumbo Golf' vibe. Heated Alcantara seats, satnav,

'The Amarok went on some amazing adventures during its time on the fleet'

Date acquired	March 2015
Duration of test	6 months
Total test mileage	17,335
Overall mpg	29.9
Costs	£109.30 window, £374 spare wheel
Purchase price	£37,164
Trade-in value	£28,900
Depreciation	£8,264

END OF TERM

VW Amarok

Our film-maker's pickup has returned to VW. Riley looks back at its achievements



Bluetooth, parking sensors and a reversing camera certainly made you feel like you weren't missing out on the creature comforts. The parking sensors were particularly useful: the Amarok is the biggest pickup you can buy in the UK and when faced with our tiny parking spaces, even a trip to Tesco's would be a real palaver without them. Probably my favourite Ultimate feature, though, was the bi-xenon headlights, which were truly amazing at night, and with their LED daytime running-light strips looked pretty cool too.

I opted for the eight-speed auto gearbox (£698) rather than the six-speed manual as it makes for slightly quicker acceleration, 0-62mph taking 11.3sec. It still wasn't easy to get the Rok moving at a decent speed, though. Compared to, say, our Range Rover Sport TDV8 long-

termer, it really needed working: your right foot seemed to be on the floor most of the time. The turbo lag from a standing start was pretty terrible, but once up to speed the Amarok could maintain a decent pace. The handling was a bit wobbly, but you have to expect that from a two-ton pickup.

It was reasonably good in terms of running costs. We averaged around 30mpg against a claimed combined figure of 35.5mpg, and even with nearly 19,000 miles on the clock it still didn't need a service. So our only cost, other than fuel, was for a replacement spare wheel (£374) after the original was stolen, and a new rear side window (£109.30) to replace the one broken by the thief so he could access the tools needed to release said wheel.

Only 500 'Ultimate' Amaroks

were produced and all of them are now sold. At £36,466 for the manual version they were over ten grand more expensive than the basic car. Was the price justified? It probably depends how much time you spend in your Amarok, but after living with all the luxuries, I would find it very hard to go back.

I really enjoyed working with and cruising around in the Rok and I was sad to see it go. I never did manage to sort a load-bay cover, which was a rookie mistake on my behalf. I didn't get a chance to really test its off-road abilities either, but I guess if you are going for something like the Ultimate edition, greenlaning wouldn't be your priority. But if you're in the market for a cool pickup, it's pretty hard to beat a well-specified Amarok. ❌

Sam Riley (@samgriley)



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Vehicle Diagnostic Check

- Battery state
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- Fault codes Stored
- Temperature sensors
- EGR function
- VIN number
- Mass air flow
- Fuel mixture



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Ferrari Scuderia Spider 16M

Ferrari Scuderia Spider 16M

SSO braces himself as his 16M goes in for a thorough service

I T BEING OVER A YEAR since I acquired the 16M, it was recently time for its first service under my ownership. I like to have all my cars serviced at least once a year, so despite the meagre mileage covered by the 16M during the last 12 months, off it went to the local Ferrari dealer.

As this was the first time the car had been serviced at this dealer, the first step was to get the service history and understand exactly what work had been done immediately prior to the car's delivery last year. With this in hand we could properly decide what work was due.

We soon learnt that the pre-delivery service was limited to a rather light changing of the fluids, so



this time around we would need to do a much more extensive service along with a full check on all the key components. As such, the work took several days and the final bill was almost two-thirds labour.

The good news is that the gearbox, clutch, brakes and engine are in great condition. The bad news is that Ferrari labour charges in the US are even higher than in the UK. Compared with McLaren, servicing costs are considerably higher.

The drive home from the dealer was one of the most enjoyable yet in the 16M. I took the long way down an almost empty highway, and while not the most interesting of roads, the lack of traffic did allow for the opening up of the V8. With the top down and the engine pushing towards its red line, the soundtrack is spine-tingling. Thankfully a few of the interchanges on the route allowed me to push the car a bit in something other than a straight line

as I navigated across multiple on- and off-ramps. It's drives like these that remind me just how special a car the 16M is and why it deserves a long-term spot in my garage. ☒

Secret Supercar Owner
(@SupercarOwner)

Date acquired	November 2014
Total mileage	2760
Mileage this month	45
Costs this month	\$2450 service
mpg this month	14-ish

Volkswagen Golf R

Prosser gets a taste of configuration remorse and our Golf gets frugal

I FOUND MYSELF SITTING opposite a chap called Karsten Schebsdat over dinner recently. Karsten is a vehicle dynamics engineer with a varied and glittering CV – the Mk1 Ford Focus, Porsche 997 GT2, Porsche 997 GT3 3.8 and Mk7 VW Golf R were all his. As a body of work that really does take some beating.

I met Karsten during the launch of the VW Golf GTI Clubsport (see page 32) in Portugal. Since I'm running a Golf R as my everyday car, I took the opportunity to quiz him on his preferred specification for the car. Turns out he reckons it's best

on 19-inch wheels with Dynamic Chassis Control. My car is on 18s with no DCC. Ah.

He says the car rides better on the bigger wheels in Comfort mode than it does on the smaller rims and passive dampers. I'm not going to argue with his assessment for one moment, but I will point out that those options add more than £1700 to the cost of the car. With my road tester's hat on I will say that our car can be a touch choppy over a typical UK road surface, but in all honesty I've barely thought twice about the car's ride quality. For my tastes it's a long way short of being uncomfortable.

As the miles roll past, our R's fuel economy does seem to be improving slightly. I'm now seeing more than 30mpg on average, rather than something beginning with a '2'. When the car first arrived I was worried it was guzzling fuel at a silly rate, because the fuel gauge needle

seemed to drop so quickly. Then I realised this was because the needle moves through a full 300 degrees rather than the normal 120. At least I worked it out eventually...

Is 30mpg enough for this sort of car? VW claims close to 40mpg for the Golf R on the combined cycle, but given that I hardly drive it with the lightest of right feet I reckon 30

is reasonable. I'd be interested to know if any owners out there are seeing anything better... or worse. ☒

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Date acquired	September 2015
Total mileage	1899
Mileage this month	893
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	30.5



Volkswagen Golf R

SEAT Leon ST Cupra 280

Our Cupra estate meets its more powerful Volkswagen Group rival

OUR ALOR BLUE LEON IS back from being repaired following a kerbing incident (for which I wasn't at the wheel) and is looking as good as ever, even after six months of hard graft and over 15,000 miles covered.

Shortly after its return the SEAT performed amazingly as a camera car on our 2015 Car of the Year test, providing comfortable seating for the 1600-mile round trip, brilliant handling on the tighter Applecross roads and ample spare space for the antlers that art director Rob Gould found and wanted to bring home. It's hard to not love this car with such an array of positives to its name. Only knocking the undertray loose while parking off-road (thanks, Rob!) spoiled things slightly, but that's not really the car's fault.

After a week at eCoty, the Cupra was back to reality: sitting in traffic

on the M1. British motorways sometimes make me rethink my fondness for manual gearboxes. After an hour in slow-moving traffic and with a left calf muscle nearly as big as Robert Förstemann's, I'm about ready to jump into an auto.

I got the chance to sample that dark side recently when a Golf R estate – the ST Cupra's closest rival, and only available with DSG – arrived for a brief test. My first impressions upon getting into the VW were that its interior is a nice place to be, but it felt a little less driver-focused, with its higher driving position and fussier

dash. The seats also looked cheaper than the SEAT's, but their sides actually gave better support.

With 296bhp – 20 more than the Cupra – and four-wheel drive, the Golf is an incredibly fast car across country. Selecting the Race driving mode sharpens the handling nicely and adds an aggressive soundtrack – more vocal than the Leon in its equivalent 'Cupra' setting. The noise is addictive, though, so you have to be careful where you rev out the long gears if you value your licence.

And the twin-clutch gearbox? With this engine there is a little lag

between your foot going down and the power arriving, and the paddles make it easy to improve on its response. The full auto mode was also welcome in traffic. But I can't help feeling that some will feel the Golf R estate is let down by only being offered as an auto. Long live the manual gearbox! ☒

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired	May 2015
Total mileage	15,234
Mileage this month	2241
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	331



Mini John Cooper Works

Great engine, but which 'box suits it best?

AAS THE ADVERTS POINT out, the current JCW is the most powerful Mini ever. Production Mini, anyway. Its turbocharged 2-litre engine puts out 228bhp – Performance Pack Golf GTI power, in other words, but in a smaller, lighter package.

The JCW's engine really is a highlight of the car. The turn of

pace it can provide feels spot on for this sub-GP Mini, making for rapid progress and easy overtaking, while falling short of overwhelming the car's lively chassis.

It also sounds the business, being nicely burbly at idle and suitably fruity on the move, especially when you engage Sport mode, which adds an extra layer of bass as you chase the red line, plus some amusing pops from the exhaust on the overrun and under braking. (Pity it also turns the first centimetre of throttle-pedal travel into an on-off switch. Remind me again why selecting a sportier driving mode means you're no longer interested in making finely measured throttle inputs.)

The engine works perfectly well with our car's optional and, it must be said, excellent six-speed auto gearbox, but having tried the manual alternative recently, I now know

for certain that I prefer the JCW with a manual 'box. As suspected, it adds a welcome extra element of involvement, and confirms my thought that the JCW isn't quite fast enough for you to feel like you need the both-hands-on-the-wheel convenience/security that paddles can offer when pressing on.

The manual car also has a neat rev-matching function on downshifts and, unless I'm mistaken, emits a few more pops and bangs than the auto. Throw in a tidy shift action too and there's nothing not to like. If you're spec'ing a JCW for driving fun, it's a no-brainer. ☒

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired	May 2015
Total mileage	10,939
Mileage this month	1691
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	34.4

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Market

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ANALYSIS: JAPANESE IMPORT SCENE

Are these idolised evo cars
now a very shrewd buy?

by Adam Towler

IT HAD TO HAPPEN SOONER OR LATER: AN entire era of Japanese performance cars, beloved by a generation of youngsters who saw them as an alternative to the established four-wheeled objects of bedroom-wall idolisation, are now rapidly joining the classic-car mainstream.

At the core of this phenomenon lie the favourites of the 1990s: the Honda NSX, Nissan Skyline GT-R, Toyota Supra, Subaru Impreza and Mitsubishi Evo. If you were lucky enough to experience them first time around it seemed as though the sun would never set on the continuous evolution of faster, ever more focused drivers' cars that emanated from that island, and yet by the mid-2000s the era was rapidly drawing to a close. Today, fuelled by the memories of a certain computer-game series, motorsport exploits and Hollywood films, values for many of them are rocketing. 





‘American collectors are now buying up R34 GT-Rs, even though they can’t yet be driven’

This is a relatively new trend. Speak to any of the established importers of Japanese domestic market models in the UK and they’ll soon confirm as much, whether that’s Torque GT (see Expert View), JM-Imports (jm-imports.co.uk) or SVA Imports (svaimports.com), to name just a few. Where once a flood of Mazda roadsters, Toyotas and WRX Imprezas arrived in the UK every month, often of wildly varying quality, these days the market is much more selective – and exclusive.

Jurgen Vallons at JM Imports has been in the business since 2002, and has witnessed plenty of changes: ‘The MR2s, MX-5s and Silvias. there’s not much demand for them now,’ he says. ‘You’ll have £3000-4000 import “costs” on top of what are cheap cars, and in any case it’s

hard to find nice ones over in Japan. The interest is now in limited-edition cars – the R34 Skyline V-Spec and V-Spec Nur models, for example.’

A key reason for this is that cars over 25 years old being imported into America are exempt from emissions and safety laws that they might otherwise have fallen foul of. After the success of *Gran Turismo*, *The Fast and the Furious* and other franchises, there is massive pent-up demand in the States for Skyline GT-Rs and other Japanese modern classics. To illustrate the point, the R32 GT-R recently became legal in the USA, and whereas £6000-8000 would have once secured a decent example, this year prices have easily doubled due to increased demand. American collectors are now buying up R34 GT-Rs, even though they currently

have to be stored away and can’t be driven. The R34 GT-R has never been cheap, but is now experiencing an inexorable rise in value. The best cars can command over £35,000, with V-Spec examples above £40,000 and the very finest examples of rare special editions over £50,000.

‘I sold a lovely R34 GT-R M-Spec in rare Millennium Jade four months ago for low-£40,000s,’ says Jurgen. ‘That car today is probably worth mid-£50,000s.’ As an aside, while the GT-R is a partial exception when it comes to performance tuning, the desire for original, unmodified cars is becoming as strong as it is in any branch of the classic-car world.

Nevertheless, the R34 is still only valued at half of what a Mk1 Honda NSX-R can command. Up to £80,000 is the current rate for one of these



Top left: R34 and R32 Skyline GT-R in growing demand. **Above:** original (EK9) Civic Type R; Impreza 22B. **Above right:** facelifted Honda NSX-R can fetch £200k

NOW BUY ONE

SUBARU IMPREZA 22B £49,995

The ultimate Scooby for many, the 22B was the only classic-shape Subaru Impreza to have a wider body and an enlarged engine – a longer stroke taking the total displacement to 2.2 litres. Just 400 were made, and this is number 275, with one owner and a low mileage.

svaimports.com
01304 211965



HONDA NSX £39,990

Honda’s genre-redefining supercar is worshipped by a generation, despite originally struggling for sales in the UK. This early example is the quintessential NSX for the purist, finished in Formula Red with contrasting black superstructure. A manual model with only 37,000 miles.

torque-gt.com
01364 64 2810



NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R (R32) £16,500

A largely original R32 GT-R in desirable V-Spec trim, this Crystal White example has more than a hint of Group A Touring Car homologation-special about it. N1-spec vents and a Nismo twin-plate clutch are among the few upgrades, and service records support the mileage of 73,000.

jm-imports.co.uk
01670 738513



MITSUBISHI LANCER EVO VI £26,985

Top money for a ‘Tommi Mäk’, but this 44,000-miler at DCY Europe looks exceptionally clean underneath, is finished in popular red and features the factory motorsport decals kit for the ‘just exited a special stage’ look. Own the car that smashed the Subaru WRC stronghold.

japaneseimportspecialists.com
01347 878539





very rare lightweight specials, with the significantly rarer facelifted variant realising up to £200,000. By way of a comparison, Torque GT has a nice early red NSX in stock for £40,000 (see Now Buy One).

The mighty A80 Supra, especially in six-speed-manual guise, is also in high demand, with prices for the best easily into the late teens and a manual-gearbox conversion for the more numerous automatic cars now costing £5000 (parts prices have recently doubled). Another example is the Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen Edition – arguably the ultimate homologation Evo – that only recently could be picked up for under £10,000. The best are now climbing to over £20,000 if red, although other colours are significantly cheaper.

Another explanation for rising prices is the lack of supply. Raef Davis at SVA Imports highlights three reasons why that might be so: 'Drifters did for a lot of the rear-wheel-drive cars, and cars such as Evos were worth more in pieces until recently,

so many have been broken up. Most of the importers in the old days never bothered with undersealing the cars when they brought them in, and as JDM cars tend to not be protected, a couple of winters here and they're rotten through.'

The market for mainly left-hand-drive European classics sold new in Japan has been buoyant as well. The Lancia Delta Integrale Evo and various iterations of RS Porsche 911s are proving especially popular, although the supply tap is running dry on the former and competition from Germany on the latter is affecting prices and availability over here.

If you have missed out on an R34 Skyline GT-R, there are still some cars that can be bought now for realistic money and with an eye on the future. The R33 Skyline GT-R is only just beginning to pick up, while the Honda Integra Type R has seen a mild increase in value over recent months. Whatever strata of the market you intend to buy into, it would be wise to get in sooner rather than later.

OPINION

'I BOUGHT ONE'

BEN McDERMOTT

Honda Integra Type R (DC2)

'I had a UK Integra before, but sold it in 2010. I decided to get another, and wanted at most 60,000 miles, no rust and a good spec. Bought in the UK it would have cost me more. The wait was agonising, but it was well worth it: this one's staying.'

THE SPECIALIST

JURGEN VALLONS

JM-Imports

'We've just started buying Nissan R33 Skyline GT-Rs again, and the Americans have started to take an interest in them, too. Toyota Silvia S15s and Nissan Pulsar GTI-Rs are also a good bet for the long term; Mitsubishi GTOs and FTOs less so.'

Expert view



TRISTAN LONGDEN

Torque GT

'The really popular cars are the icons of the '90s. R34 Skyline GT-Rs have seen a real spike in value, while NSX-Rs are the very top of the market – the very best will go for up to £200,000.

'The money is in OEM-condition, limited-edition models, with modifications only really desirable on GT-Rs. That's where we see the future, and prices are going up every month at the moment.

'Other cars to keep an eye on are EK9 Civic Type Rs, and the DC2 and DC5 Integra Type Rs. The classic GC8 Impreza is resurgent too, particularly the two-door Type R models. As for the 22B, they're £50,000 now.'

torque-gt.co.uk 01364 642810



ALEX KINRADE

Sky Insurance

'Buying a Japanese Import is an exciting prospect – they tend to be rare cars not originally intended for the UK, but you need to keep this in mind when insuring them. Always confirm that the insurer is covering the exact imported Japanese model – some non-specialist insurers will only be able to cover the UK equivalent and you should avoid these as you don't want to risk having the wrong model on cover.

'For higher-valued Imports, an agreed-value policy could be beneficial, and request like-for-like cover on any modifications, that way your pride and joy will be put back to your spec, not the original spec.'

skyinsurance.co.uk 03303 331250



CATERHAM OFFERS FINANCE ON KITS

For the first time in the company's history, Caterham will offer finance packages on its self-build Seven kits. The entry-level Seven 160 is the cheapest model, and with a deposit of £3099, the flat-pack Seven will cost £279 per month, with a final payment of £6399. The loan is offered with a rate of 19.5 per cent APR.



RENAULTSPORT DEALERS LAUNCHED

Renault UK has announced it is to roll out a specialist dealer network dedicated to its Renaultsport models. The 26-strong network will offer both new and used sales and will be staffed by dedicated teams catering for models such as the Clio 220 Trophy and Mégane 275 Cup-S. The specialists will be located within existing Renault dealers.



PORSCHE CLASSIC CENTRE OPENS

Porsche has stepped up its heritage operations, announcing a series of Classic Centres, the first of which recently opened in the Netherlands. The new operations will be devoted to the sale, service and restoration of Porsche's older models. Some existing dealers will also join the scheme under 'Classic Partner' branding.

EVO ROAD TESTER

STUART GALLAGHER

It just has to be an R34 GT-R. Its launch coincided with the early days of *evo* (see issue 009) and it left a huge impression on us all. Its squared off, muscular look and the violence of that blown straight-six and all-drive chassis made Europe finally take notice of the Skyline.

JM-IMPORTS



1992 NISSAN PULSAR GTiR
5 Speed Low KM,
£6,995



1996 MAZDA RX7 TYPE R
Veilside Fortune (Genuine kit),
£25,000



1999 MITSUBISHI LANCER EVO 6 RS
(USDM Style),
£11,000



1999 MITSUBISHI LANCER EVO 6
Manual 5 Speed,
£8,500



2002 HONDA INTEGRA DC5 TYPE R 6
Speed, £9,000 (Pay 50% Deposit
for reduced price scheme)



1993 Nissan Skyline R32 GTR Vspec
5 Speed Manual, £16,500 (Pay 50%
Deposit for reduced price scheme)

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USED RIVALS: £20k-25k BRITISH SPORTS CARS

by Adam Towler



TVR CERBERA SPEED SIX

Engine	In-line six-cyl, 3996cc
Power	350bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque	330lb ft @ 5000rpm
Weight	1130kg (315bhp/ton)
0-60mph	5.0sec (tested)
Top speed	160mph+ (claimed)
On sale	1998-2004
evo rating	★★★★★

'I BOUGHT ONE'

'A hot-blooded sports car with room for the kids and practical enough to take for a weekend away. They need maintaining by a specialist but are far more reliable than they're given credit for. If components are upgraded there's nothing fundamentally wrong with the engine.' **Tony Cottrell**

EXAMPLES



2002 £24,000
Str8six

Yellow with blue leather, this 2002 car had one of Str8six's stronger engine builds in 2008. Just 3500 miles since.

RUNNING COSTS

'Buy as late a production model as you can: the chassis protection, electrics and engines were much improved. Early cars are a false economy – they'll cost a lot more to restore. Chassis outriggers are the main rust point, and the early engines were terrible – in contrast, I know of original 2004 engines that are still going with over 100,000 miles on them. The parts supply is improving all the time.'

Jason Clegg, str8six.co.uk



LOTUS ESPRIT V8

Engine	V8, 3506cc, twin-turbo
Power	350bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque	295lb ft @ 4250rpm
Weight	1364kg (261bhp/ton)
0-60mph	4.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	175mph (claimed)
On sale	1996-2004
evo rating	★★★★★

'I've had it for four years, after a Ferrari 360. The Esprit is a more involving car, although not quite as modern in feel, and there's more theatre to it – it really does feel like a supercar. I've gone through quite a few cars, but the Esprit V8 has stayed for a reason.' **Trevor Skedge**



1998 £25,395
KGF Classic Cars

A V8 GT in British Racing Green, this 35,000-mile car has recently had new turbos, clutch, belts and brakes.

James Webb, thelotuscentre.com



CATERHAM SEVEN R400

Engine	In-line four-cyl, 1796cc
Power	200bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque	150lb ft @ 5750rpm
Weight	490kg (415bhp/ton)
0-60mph	3.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	140mph (claimed)
On sale	2003-2006
evo rating	★★★★★

'I had specced an R300, but with the track extras I wanted it made sense to go for an R400. The Tillett seat is so comfortable, even without padding. My car gets limited use, but on a mix of road and track is awesome. You can take it out in any conditions and return with a smile on your face.' **Nigel Mitchell**



2003 £23,995
BCL Cars

A 2003 R400 in Dodge Viper Blue. Spec includes digital dash, adjustable suspension and plenty of carbon parts.

Andy Noble, sevensandclassics.com

THE EVO CHOICE

None of these cars is going to be a daily driver; they are special cars for when you require complete escapism from the daily grind. Nothing does this better than a Caterham, and an R400 couldn't be more **evo** if it tried. On this occasion, however, there's a risk we wouldn't find enough excuses to

use it for more than trackdays and very occasional road trips. Another time, perhaps.

This leaves the TVR and Lotus. Both are sorely missed on today's roads. The Cerbera is like nothing else. It has that sense of occasion, frenzied performance and a chassis that takes time, skill and

courage to get the best from, with huge rewards when you do. Yet, the Esprit does everything the TVR manages but with a higher level of finesse. Its chassis is sweeter, its engine less highly strung, and its performance more accessible. It's the one we'd take. **Stuart Gallagher**

BUYING JOURNEY

From Cooper to Carrera, an *evo* reader charts his admirably dogged car ownership history



MARCUS CARTWRIGHT
HERTFORDSHIRE



5th Porsche 968 Sport

'An accidental yet brilliant purchase. Noticed the car in the yard of a specialist, and after a drive the rest was history. Sublime, and addictive.'



1st Mini Cooper

'Damask Red. Bought from my sister-in-law for £250 in 1980 straight after passing my test. A great car to practise mechanics on; stripped down the SU carbs and all sorts.'



4th Porsche 964 Carrera 4

'A seven-month bare-metal resto was doomed four days after completion when I stuffed it on the way to Le Mans. Bought another and swapped the best bits over.'

2nd Ford Capri Mk2 3.0 Ghia

'A very rare four-speed manual Ghia. I loved this car, especially as it replaced a Datsun Sunny Estate. Would light up the rears on exits from junctions. Awesome.'



3rd Ford Focus ST170

'Went shopping for a used Focus diesel, came away with a brand new ST170 and still have it. Love it so much I've bought another recently for peanuts as a station hack.'



What's next?

'I think I might renew the dampers on the ST and I've a black interior to fit into the 964. I did actually think about buying another 964 as a track car, perhaps a C2, or even a 930, but the prices are just crazy now. For the same money I could get a 2007 Aston Martin Vantage, but I need to do my homework – it would be an investment.'

Tip

Go on – go for the Aston, Marcus. And read Market in *evo* 214 for a steer on prices.

evo view

Marcus certainly got his hands dirty with his Cooper. Consider, for example, this tale: 'When the top engine mounting bar let me down on the M5 to Cornwall, in the rain, I ran into a field, took apart a hay bale for the orange twine and then lashed the starter motor back to the chassis to stop the engine wobbling during our Cornish holiday.'

A rotten Anglia with Dulux gloss paint replaced the Mini, and then there was the Sunny Estate. Things picked up markedly though with the rowdy Capri, driven with considerable verve around the Wiltshire countryside. This eventually blew up and was swapped for an in-car graphic equaliser and a 14-inch black-and-white TV!

In 1989 Marcus purchased a nearly new Renault 5 1.7 GTX and revelled in the point-and-squirt potency of this period warm hatch. After stints in a Mk4 Cortina and a Saab 900 – and the horrors of a Volvo 340 – came the Focuses and Porsches. His current 964 features many RS parts and 292bhp.

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BUYING GUIDE: McLAREN 12C 2011-2014

Blisteringly quick and wonderfully useable, the 12C also looks good value right now compared with its Ferrari rival

by Peter Tomalin



WHEN THE MP4-12C WAS LAUNCHED in early 2011, expectations weren't just high, they were vertiginous. And, at first sight, the 12C met them all.

Its core was a carbonfibre tub, or 'MonoCell', vastly strong but weighing just 75kg, which helped keep the kerb weight to a trim 1434kg. Power came from a 3.8-litre twin-turbo flat-plane-crank V8, delivering a fierce 592bhp at 7000rpm and a tidal 442lb ft of torque from 3000 to 7000rpm.

It drove the rear wheels through a seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox with 'Pre-Cog', and the combination was electrifying. When *evo* attached a VBOX, we found it hit 60mph from standstill in 3sec dead and 100mph in a scarcely credible 6.4. It simply trounced its rivals, 458 Italia included.

It was smarter, too. The 'ProActive' chassis had no anti-roll bars; instead the adaptive dampers at each corner were interconnected hydraulically, side to side and front to rear, to limit roll and pitch as and when required. The resulting ride quality broke new ground for a supercar. Then there was Brake Steer, which braked the inside rear wheel in corners to reduce understeer (no limited-slip diff), an active rear spoiler/air brake, switchable programs for both powertrain and chassis...

So far, so very McLaren. So it was a bit of a surprise to discover that the 12C was, in the early days, something of a work in progress. The IRIS infotainment system could handle only one function at a time. The touchpad door releases took a practised hand (they were later replaced by

buttons). The shift paddles required a surprising amount of finger effort. The engine noise being piped into the cockpit was less than inspiring...

But, over the coming months, McLaren introduced upgrades that addressed virtually all of these things – and threw in some extra power, gratis. What's more, it gave existing owners the chance to have the upgrades retrofitted, in most cases free of charge (see Checkpoints). And in late 2012 came the excellent Spider version, which sacrificed none of the coupe's dynamic excellence.

By spring 2014, the 12C had been superseded by the 650S. Today, a 12C looks well-priced and a decent long-term investment bet. It also remains one of the fastest and most sophisticated sports cars ever built.

CHECKPOINTS

ENGINE AND TRANSMISSION

Our guide to the 12C is Alastair Bols, ex-McLaren Knightsbridge, now an Essex-based independent. The M838T engine, he says, is so far proving extremely reliable with no serious recurring issues, even with cars that have covered over 30,000 miles.

'There were early gremlins with various aspects of the car, but

McLaren worked hard to eradicate them,' he says. 'The biggest update was at the end of 2012, when there was a free performance upgrade from 592 to 616bhp, along with upgrades to gearbox mapping, throttle mapping and the Intake Sound Generator. There really shouldn't be any cars now that haven't had these upgrades.'

The M838T is dry-sumped, but there's no faff with checking the

oil level – it's displayed on the dash. Servicing isn't cheap, averaging £1500–2000 per year.

The other outlay you might want to consider is a warranty. A McLaren warranty is £3400 a year (the first year is included if you buy through 'McLaren Qualified'). As an independent, Bols can provide a year's comprehensive warranty for £2000 a year; all his cars come with a six-month

warranty included.

The Graziano twin-clutch gearbox is generally resilient, but a few cars have suffered leaking internal seals, necessitating a new 'box, so look underneath for leaks.

'Clutches don't wear out like old automated systems,' says Alastair. 'The dealerships don't even have a measuring system for clutch wear. It's simply not an issue.'

SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES

'The hydraulic system works brilliantly, and suffers very, very few faults,' says Alastair of the suspension. 'On a test drive you might hear a thump through the carbon tub when wheels hit potholes, but it's a characteristic rather than a fault.'

'Because of Brake Steer, the front and rear pads and discs

all wear at a similar rate. Carbon brakes look great, but are very pricey. Only 10 to 15 per cent of UK cars had them. Combined with the air brake, the steel brakes do everything and more that you would want.

'Tyres should be Pirelli P Zero MC1s, specifically developed for the car and stickier than standard P Zeros but no more expensive. The car really should have them.'



Left: interiors are hard-wearing; later IRIS 2 system is worth having. **Below:** trick chassis with three modes is proving reliable



BODY, INTERIOR, ELECTRICS

The bonnet and front wings are aluminium, other panels SMC (sheet-moulded composite). Check for poor panel alignment or paint mismatching. Also check for scrapes under the chin and chipping on the side intakes.

Inside, leather and Alcantara was the most popular trim (part leather was standard, full leather another

option). 'All wear well,' says Alastair.

The original IRIS had software updates at the end of 2012, but at the same time IRIS 2 was introduced on new cars, and (crucially) this included a hardware change, offering fully functioning satnav and Bluetooth. It's a big improvement and can be retrofitted for around £2700.

If a car isn't used weekly, it must be kept on a trickle charger.

RIVALS

FERRARI 458 ITALIA

Closest rival to the Macca, the 458 all but matches its performance (562bhp, 0-60 in 3.2sec) and trumps it for sheer exuberance. You pay for the badge though – RHD cars are £130k-plus.

LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO LP560-4

Slightly off the pace of the 12C and 458, but with its 552bhp V10, 0-60 in 3.7sec and 202mph top speed, still an event. Wide choice of 2010/11 cars from around £100k.

PORSCHE 911 TURBO S (991)

With its 552bhp twin-turbo flat-six, PDK box and four-wheel drive, the Turbo S is phenomenally quick (0-60 in 3.1sec) and the original useable supercar. Yours from around £105k.

INFORMATION



McLAREN MP4-12C COUPE

Engine	V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo
Max power	592bhp @ 7000rpm
Max torque	442lb ft @ 3000-7000rpm
Transmission	Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, Brake Steer, ESC
Weight	1434kg
Power-to-weight	419bhp/ton
0-60mph	3.0sec [tested]
Top speed	205mph [claimed]
Price new	£168,500 (2011)

PARTS PRICES

(Prices from McLaren. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges)

Front tyre	£257.66 (Pirelli P Zero MC1, 235/35 R19)
Rear tyre	£374.77 (Pirelli P Zero MC1, 305/30 R20)
Front brake disc	£2195.55 (carbon) £460.29 (cast-iron)
Brake pad kit	£495.95 (carbon) £215.00 (cast-iron)
Damper	£828.98
Headlamp	£1949.95

SERVICING

(Prices are average EU servicing prices, including VAT, supplied by McLaren. Service due every 12 months or 15,000km, whichever is sooner.)

12 months/ 15,000km	£348.24
24 months/ 30,000km	£899.06
36 months/ 45,000km	£625.01
48 months/ 60,000km	£905.05
60 months/ 75,000km	£348.27
72 months/ 90,000km	£1175.81
84 months/ 105,000km	£348.27



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'I BOUGHT ONE'

MICHAEL BLAIZE

'I have had sports cars as my daily drives for the last 15 years. After an Elise, Noble 3R, several Porsches, Gallardo and Aston V12 Vantage, I was firmly decided to get a Ferrari 458. A trip to the local dealership left me very disappointed with the build quality and I could not see how such a car would cope with daily useage. However, in the corner of the Italian supercar dealer was a McLaren 12C. I only had to sit in it for five minutes to know this was the car I wanted.

'It took a couple of months to find my ideal spec – subtle colour, sports exhaust, carbonfibre interior and super-lightweight wheels. I settled for a dark blue 12C with less than

6000 miles on the clock. After 14 months of ownership and a further, virtually trouble-free 15,000 miles, including a trip to Le Mans, I have been thoroughly impressed by the 12C's unique blend of talents. It is as fast as anything road-legal, and yet comfortable and practical enough to be a true daily-use car. I just love the driver-centric cabin. The quality of the materials and the purity of the design make it a very special place to be.

'Minus points? IRIS 1, which was originally on my car, cannot do two things at once and drove me crazy. Software upgrades don't help and you have to invest in the IRIS 2 hardware. Servicing and especially the

extended warranty are very expensive, even more so than with a Ferrari. And I have found myself having to argue to get things covered.

'But the reaction to the car is incredible and you can sense the respect for McLarens in the UK. I also think the 12C is a much more timeless design compared with the 650S, and will become a true McLaren icon in years to come. I usually change my cars every two years, but I might well keep this one for much longer!'



WHAT WE SAID



FIRST DRIVE, APRIL 2011

'The MP4-12C operates in a different speed zone to virtually every other car out there. The 442lb ft available from 3000 to 7000rpm leaves you slack-jawed at the car's ability to fashion crazy speedo numbers from the most innocent jabs of right-hand pedal.

'Within three laps of McLaren's test track my mind is comprehensively blown. To feel the different levels of roll stiffness in Normal, Sport and Track configurations, to experience the freakish speed the car will carry into slow, technical turns – actually, make that any braking zone that requires some steering angle – is to realise that McLaren has altered the fundamentals of sports car dynamics.

'We move to flooded Welsh moorland roads. The conditions would tax an Audi RS4, so I just can't believe the way this car dismisses the mayhem. Its P Zeros slice through deep water and the ride comfort is superb – only an E-class on air suspension and small wheels could match it.

'What the 12C trades in traction to four-wheel-drive machines, it more than claws back through its resistance to cambers, its vast wheel travel and its spooky indifference to any flavour of bump. This truly is a car built to excel on UK roads, and we should be hugely grateful; you can use so much of that 442lb ft of torque so much of the time.' (evo 155)



IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

2011 12C £104,950

32,500 miles // Volcano Orange/black // one owner // IRIS 2/Meridian hi-fi // all updates // kust had 4th service // warranty
alastairbols.com



2012 12C £109,850

25,983 miles // Carbon Black/black // one owner // IRIS upgrade with satnav/Meridian hi-fi // carbon interior upgrades // warranty
london.mclaren.com



2011 12C £114,950

5710 miles // Volcano Orange/black // IRIS satnav/Meridian hi-fi // carbon interior pack, engine cover, sills, etc // sports exhaust
romansinternational.com



WHAT TO PAY

£?
£100k-130k

Prices for early 12Cs have levelled out. 'People are waking up to the fact that it has investment potential,' says specialist Alastair Bols. 'I reckon there are 250-300 coupes in the UK, and around 100 Spiders, so not a huge number. About ten per cent of those are on the market.' Pay £100k-105k for an early car with a fairly standard spec. A 2012 coupe could be as much as £115k, or up to £125k if it's got lots of carbonfibre extras, IRIS 2, etc. Top money for a 2013/2014 coupe is £135k-140k. Spiders start at £130k.



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McLaren 12C Coupe Year - 2012 Price - £124,450
Colour - Carbon Black with Custom Orange & Black Leather, Orange stitching
Miles - 9500
Options include: Sports Exhaust, Superlight alloys in stealth, McLaren Orange calipers, Electric seats and IRIS system. Carbon Fibre to the Interior Upgrade, Wing Mirrors, Rear diffuser, Engine covers, Engine bay panels



McLaren 12C Coupe Year - 2012 Price - £119,950
Colour - McLaren Orange with Black Alcantara & leather, Orange Stitching
Miles - 8900
Options include: Sport Exhaust, Lightweight 1 Alloys diamond cut, Iris system, Electric seats, TPMS, Stealth pack Carbon Fibre to Interior Upgrade, Engine Covers and full Engine bay panels



McLaren 12C Coupe Year - 2011 Price - £124,950
Colour - McLaren Orange with Black Full Leather, Orange stitching
Miles - 9,000
Options include: McLaren Special Operations (MSO) options. MSO Front wing Louvres, MSO Stealth paint to roof, mirrors, turning vanes & GT3 style rear bumper, Electric seats, IRIS 2. Carbon Fibre to the Interior upgrade, Rear Diffuser, Engine covers and Airbrake. Stealth pack & alloys



McLaren 12C Coupe Year - 2012 Price - £123,950
Colour - Supernova Silver with Black Full Leather, Orange stitching
Miles - 6,200
Very low miles and only 1 owner. Options include: Iris 2 system Lightweight Stealth alloys, Black Calipers, Tyre pressure system, Cobratrak. Carbon Fibre to the Interior Upgrade and Engine Covers



McLaren 12C Coupe Year - 2012 Price - £123,950
Colour - Carbon Black with Alcantara & Leather, Black stitching
Miles - 13,400
Options include: McLaren Special Ops "High Downforce" Carbon Fibre front bumper. Sport Exhaust, Iris 2 system, Reversing Camera, Electric seats, Superlight Stealth alloys, Black Calipers & Carbon effect to full engine bay. Carbon Fibre to interior upgrade, MSO High Downforce Front bumper, MSO Extended Paddle Shifter and 650S style door sill



McLaren 12C Coupe Year - 2012 Price - £122,450
Colour - McLaren Orange with Black Alcantara & Leather, Orange stitching.
Miles - 11,600
Options include: Sport Exhaust, Lightweight Stealth alloys and stealth pack, Electric seats, IRIS 2 system, Parking & TPMS. Carbon Fibre to the Interior Upgrade, Engine Covers, Mirror casings and the MSO Mirror Arms



McLaren 650S Spider Year - 2014 Price - £181,250
Colour - Volcano Red with Black Alcantara & Leather with red stitching.
Miles - 5,200
Options include: Huge specification & beautiful McLaren 650S SPIDER with 1 owner. IRIS 2 with Nav & DAB Radio, Meridian, Sport Exhaust, Lifting system, Parking & reverse camera Carbon Fibre to the Interior Upgrade, Wing Mirrors, Air Brake, Exterior Upgrade with Rear Bumper, Front Splitter, Door blades & Side Intakes



McLaren P1 Year - 2013-2015 Price - TBC
Colour - TBC
Miles - 100
I am delighted to be able to offer a McLaren P1 for sale. The details of the car are available upon request and please don't hesitate to call me to discuss

MODEL FOCUS: FERRARI 550/575M

A maturing design, a hand-built V12, a manual option – and rapidly climbing prices

by Adam Towler

FERRARI'S LATE-'90s V12 GT WAS UNTIL recently a relative bargain. Often described as a modern-day Daytona, it started the trend for user-friendly Ferraris, coming after the mid-engined flat-12 era. However, 550s have shot up in price recently: a very low-mileage right-hand-drive car can now command £200,000.

'The market has certainly changed,' says Mike Wheeler at Rardley Motors (rardleymotors.com). '550s and 575s tended to be bought new by people who were actually going to drive them. It's one of the few Ferraris where I'll see one with over 100,000 miles on it.' Nevertheless, as with all the cars from Modena, mileage does play a significant part in valuing the car. Mike puts a tidy 50,000-mile, right-hand-drive 550 at 'at least' £125,000,

Expert view

MATTHEW HONEYSETT at SIMON FURLONGER

'A lot of people are bringing over left-hand-drive cars from Europe and trying to get right-hand-drive prices, but I don't think they will. Consider the numbers: there were 3083 550s made, but only 457 for the UK. You'll pay £120,000-200,000 for a right-hand-drive car depending on mileage, condition and specification, while one of the ten 550 WSR versions would probably exceed that.

'Ferrari sold fewer 575s, and their values are behind the 550. There were only 251 cars in the UK, and just 69 of those were manual as opposed to the F1 transmission, so they're sought after. They were under £100,000 six months ago.

'Barchettas and Superamericas are more mileage-sensitive – there were 448 of the former and 559 of the latter – but both cars have slowed down a bit. Even so, the best Barchettas in right-hand drive would be £400,000, and if you could find a manual right-hand-drive Superamerica, that could be as much as £500,000 – it's virtually the last of the V12 manuals.

'I'd put aside £3000 a year to run one, but they're very reliable and the engine is tried and tested. Yellow is difficult to sell, but a good contrast between exterior and interior is the key – think TdF Blue with Crema, or black with tan.'



while Matthew Honeysett at Simon Furlonger (see 'Expert view') puts good 30,000-milers at up to £150,000. Barely driven cars can hit really high prices, but these are now seen as investments.

The 550's replacement, the 575M, had a shaky start in the press when new, and values currently trail its predecessor – although they are closing the gap. Values are now £100,000-150,000 for F1-gearbox cars, and manuals more.

The 550 Barchetta and its successor, the trick-roofed 575M Superamerica, are rapidly becoming investment Ferraris. One of the 42 RHD Barchettas is likely to command £400,000 in the present market, while an 11,000-mile Superamerica recently fetched £611,900 at auction, helped by it being one of just 43 with the manual gearbox.



SERIAL BUYER

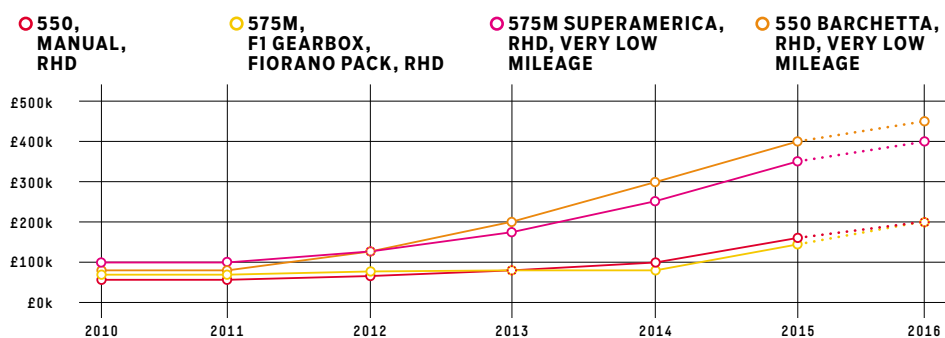
HEATH GRAY

'I had my first 550 Maranello manual for six years and it was a fantastic car to drive. As long as it's serviced regularly, the engine is bulletproof, and I loved the manual gearbox. It was a very practical car and ideal for going from one side of Europe to the other – it'd sit at 120mph all day. A friend owns that car now and it's done 40,000 miles. I'd say don't be put off by a car having done 60,000, as long as it's been looked after. If you can, try and find one that has the Fiorano handling pack, the leather parcel shelf, the wing shields and the roll-cage.

'More recently I had a 550 "World Speed Record", with the Fiorano pack on it, although I couldn't really tell on the road. That's gone, but I have a 550 Barchetta, which I think is a great car. I'll take it out on a sunny winter's day, with the heater on full blast. It's a pretty car, with the smaller windscreen, and I think a better investment than the 575 Superamerica, long-term. I've also got a beautiful 575 HGTC, which has the full HGTC specification unlike many, although that's for sale. It's in a different league for performance, but as an everyday drive you can't go wrong with a manual 550.'

Trends

Data supplied by Simon Furlonger Specialist Cars





FERRARI 550 MARANELLO

A unique 550 with only 2500 miles from new and with full Ferrari service history. First delivered to the UK in 2000 and finished in a classic combination of Tour de France Blue with Bordeaux leather Daytona seats with dark blue piping and dark blue carpets. A very rare opportunity to buy such a low mileage 550. **Price on application.**



FERRARI 575 MANUAL

Finished in Nero Daytona with Nero Black leather interior and red calipers. This spectacular left hand drive 575 with manual gearbox was first delivered to Germany in 2004. Now UK registered and with only 9000 miles and full Ferrari Service history this is probably the best example in the world. **Price on application.**

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FERRARI 575 F1 MARANELLO

2005, 16,121 MILES

The Ferrari 575M Maranello, successor to the 199 mph Ferrari 550, featured a number of mechanical upgrades alongside minor styling changes to its predecessor. It had a renewed interior and a larger bonnet air opening to help cool the larger and more powerful V12 engine. The weight distribution was changed, aerodynamics refined and an adaptive suspension system installed. The four independent suspensions, controlled by the gearbox, help minimise pitch during the 200ms of shift time.



FERRARI 550 BARCHETTA

2001, 12,422 MILES

Ferrari introduced this convertible version of the 550 at the Paris Motor Show in 2000. A total of 448 Barchettas were produced, four more than initially planned due to concerns of superstition in the Japanese market but only 42 examples were produced in right hand drive. This 550 Barchetta is finished in Rosso Corsa with Nero Hide. Factory options include Aluminium Brake Calipers, Ferrari Spare Wheel Kit, Original Barchetta Crash Helmets Hard Top. A complete example and a sure investment.



365 GTB/4
1971, 24,580 miles
£624,990



599 Fiorano
2007, 19,878 miles
£119,990



Superamerica
2007, 6,131 miles
£354,990



550 Barchetta
2001, 21,227 miles
£299,990



599 GTO
2011, 10,000 miles
£724,990

SHOULD YOU KEEP IT?

Aston Martin V8 Vantage



If you can't face selling your car, take a look at the latest options to upgrade and improve it instead **by Antony Ingram**

JUST STEPPING INTO YOUR GARAGE each morning should give you enough impetus to keep your Aston Martin V8 Vantage – a decade on the road has done nothing to dull the appeal of this car's lines.

That considerable length of time has, however, seen rivals far surpass the V8's performance, so if you're craving more urgency, there are a few avenues down which you can turn. A good first stop is Bamford Rose, whose sports exhaust system is a

hit with owners for its glorious sound and power gains of up to 40bhp over the restrictive standard system. The full kit costs £5998.98 (including VAT and fitting) and saves 18kg over the standard setup.

With the extra performance, extra braking power would also be welcome – David Appleby Engineering, whose founder worked alongside Prodrive developing the Vantage rally and GT4 cars, sells performance front and rear brake disc kits for £1703.09 and £1936.97 respectively.

Aftermarket news



MTM AUDI RS3

Ever wanted to do 186mph in a hot hatch? MTM will oblige with its latest Audi RS3 tuning package. It gives the car's 2.5-litre five-pot engine 429bhp and 446lb ft of torque, while the 155mph speed limiter is removed. A set of 19-inch Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres puts power to tarmac.



HENNESSEY CADILLAC CTS-V

Power-obsessed American tuner Hennessey has taken Cadillac's CTS-V – a BMW M5 rival – to 1000bhp at 6300rpm, up from the standard 640bhp at 6400rpm. Almost every engine component is upgraded and there's even a 12,000-mile warranty.



FUGU Z

The Fast and the Furious star Sung Kang unveiled his modified 1973 Datsun 240Z at the recent SEMA show in Las Vegas. Built with tuner GReddy, the widebody restomod uses a later Nissan engine tuned to over 300bhp. You'll can drive it virtually in an upcoming *Gran Turismo* video game.



AC SCHNITZER 1-SERIES

In a long-running tradition of cramming ludicrously big engines into small cars, AC Schnitzer has dropped BMW's M50d engine into a 1-series to create the ACS1 5.0d. The triple-turbo 3-litre diesel motor develops 394bhp and 590lb ft, for a 4.5sec 0-62mph sprint.

NEXT MONTH

ANALYSIS

Supercar values: can prices of our favourite **evo** cars continue to climb in 2016?

USED RIVALS

Hot hatches: VW Golf GTI Mk5 v Vauxhall Astra VXR v Ford Focus ST. Where's your money going?

BUYING GUIDE

Toyota GT86/Subaru BRZ: why the 197bhp rear-drive coupe twins make a smart used buy.

MODEL FOCUS

Renaultsport Mégane: all you need to know about some of the greatest hot hatches ever made.

'Why I kept it'

MARC BELL

FORD SIERRA SAPHIRE RS COSWORTH

'I bought the Sapphire in 2004. I'd always wanted an RS Cosworth but either couldn't afford the car or the insurance, normally both! I wasn't really looking to buy one when a Flint Grey example became available. At the time I was still dreaming of three-door Sierras and Escort Cosworths, but despite their relatively low values they were still too expensive for me. A colleague mentioned a family member had an original rear-wheel-drive Sapphire Cosworth for sale and asked if I knew anyone who would be interested. I didn't and nor was I interested myself, but I was curious to see it. I ended up buying it.

'It cost me £3000 and while it wasn't standard – something I had wanted – the modifications were all reversible: wheels, exhaust, air filter, mapping and so on.

'Initially I used it as my only car – for work and for trips to places like Le Mans, the Nürburgring and Spa – but in 2009 I changed jobs, got a shiny company car and the Sapphire was put away with the plan that I'd bring it out for the odd road trip. Three years later it was still sat in my parents' garage when they said they were moving and I needed to collect it.

'I was in two minds whether to sell it or start using it again. I decided on the latter as it still wasn't worth much more than I paid for it and I'd need to spend money recommissioning a few perishable bits before a sale anyway. I ended up restoring the car. There weren't any horrors: a few bits of rust, I had the engine stripped and rebuilt and finally found a factory exhaust and original wheels. This summer I taxed it for the first time in six years and now can't stop driving it, much to the wife's dismay and my son's delight.'

Own an 'evo' car you can't bring yourself to sell? Email your story to eds@evo.co.uk



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2011 Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4
Metallic Grigio Altair



For more information on any of these cars, please contact either
Matthew or Aimee on 01327 320338 or Info@lotussilverstone.co.uk
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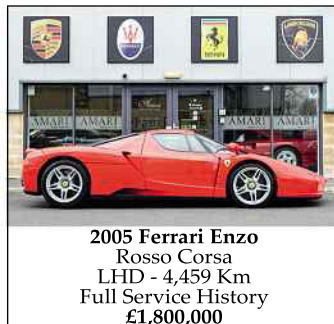
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Rosso Corsa
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LHD - 29,450 miles
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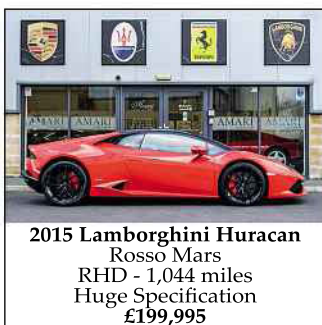
2014 Ferrari California T
Tour De France Blue
RHD - 1,220 miles
Very Low Mileage
£171,995



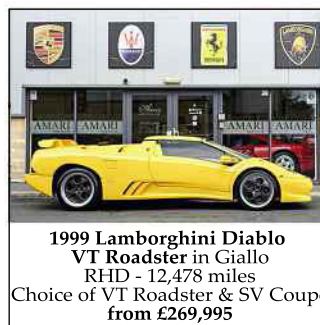
2001 Ferrari 360 Modena
Rosso Corsa
RHD - 18,507 miles
High Specification
£76,995



1971 Lamborghini Miura P400
Blu Notte
RHD - 28,731 Km
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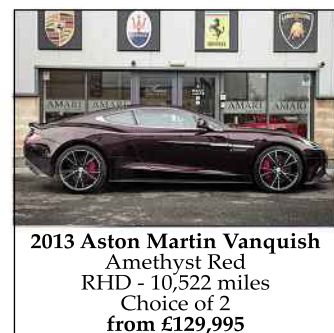
2015 Lamborghini Huracan
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RHD - 7,145 miles
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RHD - 10,522 miles
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 2013 Bentley Continental Coupe W12 Speed, Black, Leather, Only 5,000 Miles £109,995
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Lamborghini Murcielago LP670 SV
High level rear wing, large decal, ceramic brakes, 2010, 12,000 miles, **£369,990**



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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 Roadster 5.7
Sports exhaust, Full leather interior, 30,000 miles, 1997, **£179,990**



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, bicouleur 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 LHD
Glass engine bay cover, Rear Camera, 25000 miles, 2008, **£87,990**



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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Database

Key ■ = new entry this month. * = grey import. Entries in italics are for cars no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, R = Road test or group test, F = Feature). Call 0844 844 0039 to order a back issue. **Price** is on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. **Engine** is the car's main motor only – additional hybrid tech isn't shown. **Weight** is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. **bhp/ton** is the power-to-weight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. **0-60mph** and **0-100mph** figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. **CO2 g/km** is the official EC figure and **EC mpg** is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent.

Knowledge

Superminis / Hot Hatches

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Abarth 595 Competizione	196 D	£18,960	4/1368	158/5500	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.4	-	130	155	43.5	+ Spirited engine, still looks great - Favours fun over finesse	★★★★☆
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 R	£32,990	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg	191	5.9	-	143	-	-	+ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Desirable extras make this a £50k city car	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 R	£18,870	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1145kg	149	7.5	-	136	139	47.1	+ Great MultiAir engine, impressive ride - Not as feisty as we hoped	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta QV	199 D	£28,120	4/1742	237/5750	251/2000	1320kg	182	6.0	-	151	162	40.3	+ Still looks good, and now it's got the 4C's engine - Pricey, and it has more rewarding rivals	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	10*-14	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2	+ Shows signs of deep talent... - but should be more exciting	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 R	03*-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0	15.5	153	-	23.3	+ Mk1 Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★☆
Audi S1	211 R	£24,900	4/1984	228/6000	213/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	155	162	40.4	+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options	★★★★☆
Audi A1 quattro	181 R	73	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi S3	188 R	£30,640	4/1984	296/5500	280/1900	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	106 R	06*-12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.6	13.6	155	198	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 R	11*-12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	212	31.0	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above...	★★★★☆
BMW 125i M Sport	176 D	£26,020	4/1997	218/5000	228/1350	1420kg	156	6.4	-	155	154	42.8	+ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW M135i	212 R	£31,325	6/2979	321/5800	1430kg	228	5.1	-	155	188	35.3	33.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD on its options list	★★★★☆
BMW 130i M Sport	106 R	05*-10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.1	15.3	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★☆
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 R	£8095+3	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	103	61.4	+ Full of character and insurance-friendly - Insurance friendly power	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	97*-03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	7.6	22.6	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★☆
Citroën AX GT	195 R	87*-92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	120	9.2	-	110	-	-	+ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 R	£17,475	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	133	155	42.2	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	11*-12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	146	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests	★★★★☆
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 R	06*-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	115	154	43.5	+ Most fun per pound on the market - Optional ESP can't be turned off	★★★★☆
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£13,355	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	+ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	207 R	£17,545	4/1596	179/5700	214/1600	1088kg	167	7.4	18.4	137	138	47.9	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	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 - Growth up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 R	08*-13	4/1596	138/6750	150/4500	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - if you're 12 years old	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	05*-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST TDCI Estate	206 D	£23,295	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	135	110	67.3	+ Performance not sacrificed at the alter 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 - Scrapy when pushed	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	187 D	£23,220	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	154+	169	-	+ Great value upgrade - Steering still not as feeful 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 Championship 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	217 D	£23,605	4/1591	201/6000	195/1750	1448kg	143	7.3	-	143	171	38.2	+ Fun and appealing package - Soft-edged compared to rivals	★★★★☆
Lancia Delta Integrale	194 R	88*-93	4/1995	207/5750	220/3500	1300kg	162	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★☆
Mazda 2.1 S Sport	132 R	£13,495	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	★★★★☆
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	06*-13	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.3	14.5	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 R	£37,845	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.3	10.6	155	161	40.9	+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals	★★★★☆
MG3 Style	190 D	£9999	4/1498	104/6000	101/4750	1155kg	91	10.4	-	108	136	48.7	+ Decent chassis, performance and price - Thrashy engine, cheap cabin	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£15,300	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	130	105	62.8	+ Punchy three-cylinder engine, good chassis - Tubby styling	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (F56)	196 D	£18,665	4/1998	189/4700	206/1250	1160kg	166	6.8	-	146	133	49.6	+ Still has that Mini DNA - Expensive with options; naff dash displays	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 R	£23,050	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	193	6.3	-	153	155	42.2	+ Fast, agile, super-nimble - OE tyres lack outright grip	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe (R58)	164 R	£23,805	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	180	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof...	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (R56)	185 F	09*-14	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the S'	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R56)	149 R	06*-14	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Front end not quite as direct as the old car's	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper SD (R56)	158 D	11*-14	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (R56)	184 R	08*-14	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182	7.2	16.7	148	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	195 R	13*-14	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	188	6.3	-	150	165	39.8	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R50)	077 R	02*-06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.8	19.9	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R50)	144 R	06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★☆
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	£21,650	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	166	7.0	-	137	165	39.2	+ Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	-	97*-98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	121	-	34.0	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★☆



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Our Choice

Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy. This generation of Mégane has got better and better with every update, and the 275 is simply sublime. Optional Ohlins dampers and Cup 2 rubber (taken from the Trophy-R) aren't essential, but improve things even further.



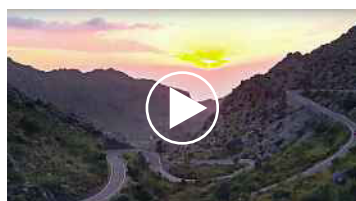
Best of the Rest

The Golf R provides a more grown-up but still hugely entertaining alternative to the Mégane, while its relative, the SEAT Leon Cupra 280, is a real buzz, especially with the Sub8 pack (left) and sticky tyres. The Fiesta ST Mountune is our pick of the smaller hatches.

Superminis / Hot Hatches

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 R	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	10.6	-	118	-	35.6	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential
Peugeot 208 GTI	184 R	£18,895	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	6.8	17.9	143	125	47.9	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving
Peugeot 208 GTI 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	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	142	6.9	19.2	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTI-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours
Renaultsport Twingo 133	175 R	'08-'13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.6	-	125	150	43.5	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride
Renaultsport Clio 200 Auto	184 R	£18,995	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	166	6.9	17.9	143	144	44.8	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asp engine and manual 'box
Renaultsport Clio 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	1100kg	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	+ Fantastic chassis... - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	200 R	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.6	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.5	17.7	138	-	-	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Just 500 were built
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 R	'99-'02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1335kg	173	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior
Renault Clio Williams	195 R	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.6	20.8	134	-	26.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky
Renault 5 GT Turbo	195 R	'87-'91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140	7.3	-	120	-	28.4	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 R	£28,930	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200	5.8	-	159	174	37.7	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	215 R	£36,430	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	195 R	'12-'15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.4	14.8	158	174	37.7	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	195 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	190	34.4	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	-	43.5	+ Fantastic chassis... - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity
Renaultsport Mégane 230 F1 Team R26	195 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	200 R	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	5.8	15.1	147	-	-	+ The car the R26.R is based on - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste
SEAT Ibiza FR 2.0 TDI	144 R	£17,445	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	60.1	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	183 D	£18,765	4/1990	178/6200	184/2000	1259kg	144	6.9	-	142	139	47.9	+ More fun than the petrol FR, manual gearbox option - The Cupra's not much more
SEAT Leon FR TDI 180	184 D	£22,255	4/1968	181/4000	280/1750	1350kg	136	7.5	-	142	112	64.2	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	216 R	£27,210	4/1984	276/5600	258/1750	1300kg	216	5.8	-	155	149	44.1	+ Performance, sweet chassis, economy, comfort - Boorish engine
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 R	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTI money - The Mk7 Golf 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	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	£17,150	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 R	'04-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	£23,830	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	164	6.8	-	154	142	45.6	+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel
Skoda Octavia vRS 230 (Mk3)	215 D	£26,350	4/1984	227/4700	258/1500	1345kg	171	6.7	-	155	142	45.6	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 R	'05-'13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Limited-slip diff makes for a sharper steer - It could handle more than the extra 10bhp
Subaru Impreza WRX	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	130	270	-	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake calipers?
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 R	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 R	£13,749	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	121	147	44.1	+ A bit quicker than the STI... - ...but not better
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	132 R	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ The Swift's still a great pocket rocket - But it's lost a little adjustability
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 R	£17,995	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.5	-	143	174	37.7	+ Enter taining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	'07-'14	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Begs to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nring/Clubsport	164 R	'11-'13/14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	207 R	£27,315	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	184	34.9	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'05-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.7	16.7	152	221	30.7	+ Better than the car it replaces; loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision
VW UP/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£7990+	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision
VW Polo GTI	211 R	£18,850	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1280kg	150	6.7	-	146	139	47.1	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - ...but predictably slow
VW Polo GTI	154 R	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging
VW Golf GTD (Mk7)	200 D	£25,765	4/1968	181/3500	280/1750	1377kg	134	7.5	-	143	109	67.3	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	207 R	£26,580	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1351kg	163	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTI
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	202 D	£28,000	4/1395	201	258	1524kg	134	7.6	-	138	35	188.0	+ Brilliantly resolved - Mégane 265 beats it as a pure drivers' car
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	212 R	£29,900	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1476kg	204	5.1	-	155	165	40.9	+ The most enjoyable plug-in hybrid at this price - Golf GTI still quicker and more fun
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	172 R	'09-'13	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	148	170	38.7	+ A VW 'R' model you can take seriously - Mégane 275 just edges it as a pure drivers' car
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	195 R	'04-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	178	5.7	17.9	145	-	-	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 R	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	5.8	15.2	155	-	26.4	+ Character and ability: the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower?
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 R	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.4	16.3	154	-	24.6	+ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	195 R	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	129	-	26.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome
VW Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)	095 R	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ Still feels everyday useable - Very hard to find a standard one
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one
													+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto

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Our Choice

BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the current M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's a brutally fast car, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. The '30 Jahre' special edition, which has an extra 40bhp, is especially worth a look.



Best of the Rest

Mercedes' E63 AMG offers intoxicating performance, especially with the S upgrade (pictured). BMW's M3 is an appealing all-round package, but its C63 AMG rival has more approachable limits. If you must have an SUV, take a look at BMW's X6 M or Porsche's Macan Turbo, Macan GTS 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	-	-	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility. Bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi S6	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 RS2	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 Plus	217 D	£97,700	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1990kg	305	3.8	-	155	229	28.2	+ Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial	★★★★★
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 RS's - 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 sporting	★★★★★
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 Bentayga	217 D	£160,200	12/5950	600/5000	664/1350	2347kg	260	4.0	-	187	296	21.6	+ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace, capable handling - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.1	-	184	342	19.3	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	210 D	£252,000	8/6752	530/4200	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.8	-	190	342	19.3	+ Characterful; superb build quality - A bit pricey...	★★★★★
BMW 320d (F30)	168 R	£29,475	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	120	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new Three is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy	★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	£30,470	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£36,975	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	155	129	57.6	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★★
BMW 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	£41,865	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	155	174	34.9	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 R	£56,590	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1520kg	284	4.1	8.6	155	204	32.1	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	10.7	165	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 R	'11-'12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	180	295	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★★
BMW 528i (F10)	164 D	£36,570	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ Four-pot 528 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	216 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	★★★★★

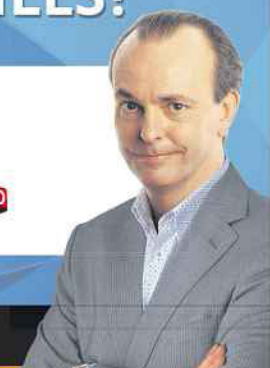
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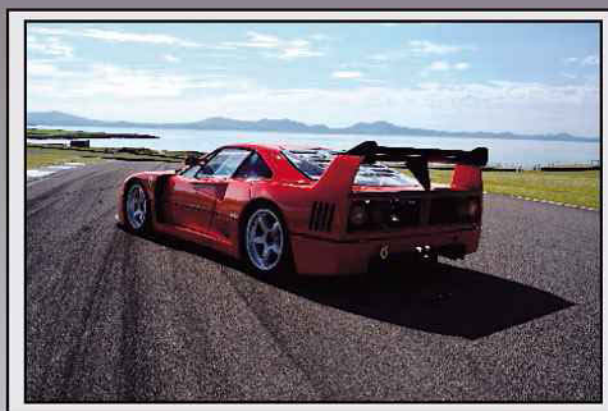
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Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Jaguar 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	★★★★★
Land Rover Discovery Sport	205 D	£32,395	4/2179	187/3500	310/1750	1863kg	100	9.8	-	117	159	46.3	+ Style, packaging, refinement - Will need to prove Sport tag in UK	★★★★★
Lexus IS F	151 R	'07-'12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1744kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) UK four-door too	★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£52,615	6/2979	325/5000	406/1750	1810kg	182	5.6	-	163	223	29.4	+ Bursting with character, good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli S	198 D	£63,760	6/2979	404/5500	406/4500	1810kg	227	5.0	-	177	242	27.2	+ Stands out from the crowd; sounds good too - Chassis lacks finesse, engine lacks reach	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	£80,115	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	177	242	27.2	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, secondary ride lacks decorum	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	179 D	£108,185	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	190	274	23.9	+ Performance, sense of occasion - Lacks the charisma and edge of its predecessor	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	18.0	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 R	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	+ Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	113 D	'07-'08	8/4244	396/7000	339/4250	1930kg	208	5.5	-	167	-	-	+ Best Quattroporte chassis so far - More power wouldn't go amiss	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	201/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG	186 D	£42,270	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.6	-	155	161	31.0	+ Strong performance, classy cabin - Priced compared to A45 AMG hatchback	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	205 R	£44,595	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.8	-	155	175	37.7	+ An aggressive and focused sports crossover - Low on driver interaction	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63	209 D	£59,800	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	155	192	34.5	+ Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate	216 R	£61,260	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1710kg	279	4.2	-	155	196	33.6	+ Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S	211 R	£66,545	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	155	192	34.5	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	'07-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overhadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63	187 D	£74,115	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 S	208 R	£84,710	8/5461	571/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	229	28.8	+ Effortless power, intuitive and approachable - Dim-witted auto 'box	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	165 R	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Turbo engine doesn't dilute E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	134 D	'09-'11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	155	295	22.4	+ As below, but with an extra 110bhp and squarer headlights - Steering still vague	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG L	191 D	£119,835	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG S	199 D	£86,500	8/5461	571/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	231	28.5	+ Remains quick and characterful - Dated gearbox, no four-wheel drive option in the UK	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	178 R	'11-'14	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293	4.2	-	155	231	28.5	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	099 R	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG S Coupe	213 D	£96,555	8/5461	571/5500	560/1750	2225kg	258	4.2	-	155	278	23.7	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 R	£87,005	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.2	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - £85K buys a Boxster and an ML350...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£124,000	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	130	322	-	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	'08-'13	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'08-'13	4/1998	344/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox!	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'08-'12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - About X grand too much when new	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 R	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points, Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Mäkinen Edition	200 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera 4S	186 D	£86,080	6/2997	414/6000	383/1750	1870kg	225	4.8	-	177	208	31.7	+ Strong performance and typically fine Porsche chassis - Misses characterful V8 of old 'S'	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 R	£93,391	8/4806	434/6700	383/3500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	178	249	26.4	+ Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Can feel light on performance next to turbo'd rivals	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£108,006	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	270	26.4	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★★
Porsche Macan S	205 R	£43,648	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	157	204	31.4	+ No less compelling than the Turbo - Although lacks its ultimate speed and agility	★★★★★
Porsche Macan GTS	217 D	£55,188	6/2997	355/6000	369/1650	1895kg	190	5.2	-	159	212	30.7	+ Handles like an SUV shouldn't - Still looks like an SUV	★★★★★
Porsche Macan Turbo	207 D	£59,648	6/3604	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208	4.5	11.1	165	208	30.7	+ Doesn't feel like an SUV - Not a match for a proper sports saloon	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	£72,523	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	209	5.2	-	163	228	28.3	+ The driver's Cayenne... - but why would a driver want an SUV?	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8)	173 D	'12-'15	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.6	-	162	251	26.4	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	£93,574	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	173	261	25.2	+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	£118,455	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	176	267	24.6	+ More power and torque than a Zonda S 7.3 - In an SUV	★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe Si4	160 D	£46,660	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£84,350	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219	5.0	-	155	298	21.7	+ Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport SVR	212 D	£95,150	8/5000	542/6000	501/3500	2335kg	236	4.5	-	162	298	21.7	+ Characterful drivetrain; genuine off-road ability - Not a match for its rivals on the road	★★★★★
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	£80,850	8/4367	334/3500	516/1750	2360kg	144	6.5	-	140	229	32.5	+ Lighter, more capable, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	£216,864	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 R	£310,200	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st Century - The roads are barely big enough	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	201 R	£28,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	158	242	27.2	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns (again) - Without a power increase	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns - Without the blue paint and gold wheels	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 R	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP	073 R	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.2	12.9	148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 R	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza PI	200 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this	★★★★★

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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 Evija 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 - Pricy
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	'08-'12	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 R	'09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 R	'12-'13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 R	'10-'12	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150K for an Atom
Ariel Nomad	210 R	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg	365	3.4	-	134	-	-	+ Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 R	£89,994	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Starting to feel its age
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£108,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 R	£147,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	201	343	19.2	+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - let down by a frustrating gearbox
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	'12-'14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£141,995	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	'09-'12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feel-good 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	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engine... - is the best thing about it
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,170	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 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 driver's 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	+ That engine - Gets the wobbles on British B-roads
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 M3 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	395/3900	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 - Pricy for a car with a five-cylinder engine
Ferrari California	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

Richard Meaden found out what happens when you take Elise underpinnings and add lightness and power

Lotus 340R Issue 018, April 2000

'As you fire the 340R up with a starter button, the 190bhp 1.8-litre K-series fires in typically brash, tuned four-cylinder style. Out on the road, the first decent burst of acceleration confirms the 340R is much punchier than an Elise. In fact it's seriously quick compared with anything else you might encounter on the road, and you can really

exploit the brakes on the way into roundabouts and clearly sighted corners. It also sounds good and angry under hard acceleration, and you can't help but bask in the quizzical wonderment that every other road user expresses when you pull up alongside. Judged by any normal standards, it's a fantastic car.'






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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 (S1)	126 R	'96-'01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 R	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ Evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 R	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 R	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Lotus Elan SE	095 R	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninviting	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,940	8/4691	434/7000	323/4750	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	4/1998	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
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	4/1797	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 TG-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	£81,915	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	115	212	31.0	+ Warty performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£110,510	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	4.2	-	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smacking pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL55 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	82/6200	62/5250	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	-	145	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 target top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 R	'02-'08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 R	'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 GT4s	★★★★★
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 (991.1)	183 R	'12-'15	6/3436	365/7400	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 (991.1)	171 R	'12-'15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1485kg	270	4.7	-	187	228	29.1	+ 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	460/10500	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-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 R	'82-'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	+ Griff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Vuhl 05	215 D	£59,995	4/2000	285/5600	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 cy/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	eVO rating
Alfa Romeo 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 BC Competizione	129 R	£70,000	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	£12,73	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	201 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 Vantage	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 (Mk2)	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	£98,14	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	£12,74	5/2480	335/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249 4.3	-	174	209	31.4	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	£05,06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173 5.9	-	155	-	30.3	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering
Audi S5	189 D	£43,665	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1675kg	199 4.9	-	155	190	34.9	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Supercharged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Poor body control
Audi RS5	206 R	£59,870	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	263 4.5	-	155	246	26.9	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering
Audi R8 V8	201 R	£70,15	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	21.0	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A proper drivers' Bentley with decent engine - 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, thurst
Bentley Continental GT Speed	212 D	£168,300	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2245kg	283 4.0	-	206	338	19.5	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Desirability meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	£237,500	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274 3.6	-	170	295	22.2	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The best-handling Continental ever - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 R	£11,72	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228 4.8	-	155	224	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick
BMW M235i Coupe	209 R	£34,535	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224 5.0	-	155	189	34.9	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard
BMW 435i M Sport Coupe	189 D	£42,365	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1510kg	203 5.4	-	155	169	35.8	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Better balance than 3-series saloon - Can feel characterless at lower speeds
BMW M4	206 R	£57,050	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1497kg	288 4.3	-	155	204	32.1	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads
BMW M3 (E92)	196 R	£07,13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266 4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	171 R	£10,11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295 4.3	-	193	295	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Highly exclusive, one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one
BMW M3 (E46)	066 R	£00,07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230 5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + One of the best BMWs ever, Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel
BMW M3 CS (E46)	088 R	£05,07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230 5.1	-	155	-	23.7	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	200 R	£03,04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260 5.3	12.0	155	-	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a bit... sluggish
BMW M3 (E36)	148 R	£93,98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1460kg	223 5.4	12.8	157	-	25.7	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original
BMW M3 (E30)	165 R	£86,90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185 6.7	17.8	147	-	20.3	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 R	£06,09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242 5.0	-	155	-	23.3	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in
BMW M Coupe	005 R	£98,03	6/3246	325/7400	258/3250	1375kg	240 5.1	-	155	-	25.0	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse
BMW 640d	165 D	£62,295	6/2993	309/4400	465/1500	1790kg	175 5.5	-	155	144	51.4	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Great engine and economy, excellent build - Numb steering, unsettled B-road ride
BMW M6 (Mk2)	211 D	£92,350	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303 4.2	-	155	232	28.5	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade too...
BMW M6 (Mk1)	106 R	£05,10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311 4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace
BMW i8	210 R	£99,590	3/1499	357/5800	420/3700	1485kg	244 4.4	-	155	49	134.5	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up
Chevrolet 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 *	100 R	£02,03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221 4.4	-	168	-	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK
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	217 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	£09,14	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 RC F	206 R	£59,995	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271 4.5	-	168	-	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Great steering, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting
Lotus Exige S (V6)	209 R	£54,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298 3.8	-	170	235	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest
Lotus Exige S (S2)	105 R	£06,11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238 4.5	-	148	199	33.2	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Light weight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack
Lotus Exige (S2)	068 R												

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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 Evija (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	162	217	30.3	-	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricy 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 quirkiness, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe	217 D	£68,070	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1755kg	296	3.9	-	155	200	24.8	+ Mouth-watering mechanical package - Might be too firm for UK roads
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	'11-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1625kg	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	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker
Morgan AeroMax	204 R	'04-'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	1452kg	205	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling
Nissan GT-R (2012MY onwards)	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 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 exotics - 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	217/7400	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	1300kg	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 (991.2)	217 R	£76,412	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1430kg	259	4.6	-	183	190	34.0	+ Forced induction hasn't ruined the Carrera - Purists won't be happy
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2)	217 R	£85,857	6/2981	414/6500	369/1700	1440kg	292	4.3	-	191	199	32.5	+ As above, but blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1)	201 R	'12-'15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	283	4.3	9.5	188	223	29.7	+ A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991.1)	179 R	'13-'15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.5	-	185	233	28.5	+ More satisfying than rear-drive 991.1 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991.1)	208 D	£95,862	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293	4.4	-	189	233	28.5	+ The highlight of the 991.1 Carrera line-up - Pricy 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 GTB
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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Best of the Rest

The Ferrari 488 GTB (left) has a stunning turbocharged engine and the chassis to exploit it. Lamborghini's Aventador offers true supercar drama, especially in Superveloce form, while the Pagani Huayra rivals it for theatre (albeit at four times the price) and was our joint 2012 Car of the Year.

Supercars

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine c/y/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
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	£183,964	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	£134,500	10/5204	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	217 R	£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	£105,204	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	£134,500	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	£105,204	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	£105,204	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	£05-'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	★★★★★
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	£145,000	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	£145,000	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	-	-	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the press point?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	£07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 R	£09-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	9.0	183	-	-	+ 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	£07-'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 F12tdf	217 R	£339,000	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	514	2.9	-	211	360	18.3	+ Alarming fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale	★★★★★
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	445/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 R	£02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	£07-'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	£135,000	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	£06-'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	£07-'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	-	-	+evo 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	★★★★★
Honda NSX	217 R	£140,000	6/3493	565	476	1725kg	333	2.9	-	191	-	-	+ Like a baby Porsche 918 - Lacks typical Japanese character	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ120	157 R	£02-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	213	-	-	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - until McLaren built the F1	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 R	£109,000	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	£12,000	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 CCR Edition	118 R	£08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	250+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spike power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán LP610-4	209 D	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1532kg	399	3.2	-	202+	290	22.6	+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	£08-'13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg	398	3.7	-	202	325	16.0	+ Still a missile from A to B - Starting to show its age	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	152 R	£10-'13	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg	426	3.5	-	202	325	20.6	+ Less weight and more power than original Superleggera - LP560-4 runs it very close	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 R	£06-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	4.3	9.4	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104 R	£07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg	373	3.8	-	196	-	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4	194 R	£260,040	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.9	-	217	370	17.7	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Erm... expensive?	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador LP750-4 SV	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	1565kg	429	3.2	7.3	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 R	£00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 R	£10-'12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 R	£04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	484/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren 570S	217 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	£145,000	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	£105,204	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	£135,000	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	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	★★★★★
Noble M600	186 R	£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg	551	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	185 R	£1m	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-pricking as the Zonda's	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 R	£1.5m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg	630	3.3	-	217+	-	-	+ One of the most extreme Zondas ever - One of the last Zondas ever (probably)	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda S 7.3	096 R	£02-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	197	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then	★★★★★
P														

Track Times

Key + = new this month. **Red** denotes the car is the fastest in its class on that track.



ANGLESEY COASTAL CIRCUIT

LOCATION Anglesey, UK
GPS 53.188372, -4.496385
LENGTH 1.55 miles

Car	Lap time	issue no.	YouTube
Radical RXC Turbo 500 (fastest coupe)	1:10.5	-	Yes
McLaren P1 (on P Zero Trofeo R tyres) (fastest supercar)	1:11.2	200	Yes
Porsche 918 Spyder	1:12.4	200	Yes
McLaren P1	1:12.6	200	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo S (991)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Ferrari 458 Speciale	1:14.2	198	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo (991)	1:15.2	210	Yes
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	1:16.0	214	Yes
Nissan GT-R (2014MY)	1:16.9	210	Yes
Mercedes-AMG GT S	1:17.0	210	Yes
Porsche 911 Carrera S Powerkit (991)	1:17.6	201	-
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	1:17.8	199	Yes
Porsche Cayman (981)	1:18.9	209	-
Aston Martin N430	1:19.1	210	-
Lotus Exige S (V6)	1:19.1	209	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	1:19.1	212	-
BMW M4	1:19.2	199	Yes
BMW i8	1:19.4	210	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	1:19.5	212	-
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy 275	1:19.6	212	-
BMW M5 Competition Pack (F10M) (fastest saloon)	1:19.7	-	Yes
Audi TTS (Mk3)	1:19.9	209	-
Audi R8 V8 (Mk1)	1:20.1	201	-
BMW M135i	1:20.4	212	-
Nissan 370Z Nismo	1:20.5	209	-
Alfa Romeo 4C	1:20.7	209	-
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	1:21.4	-	Yes
VW Golf R (Mk7)	1:21.6	212	-
Peugeot RCZ R	1:22.0	209	-
Toyota GT86 TRD	1:23.7	193	-
Jota Mazda MX-5 GT (Mk3) (fastest sports car)	1:24.6	193	-

BEDFORD AUTODROME WEST CIRCUIT

LOCATION Bedfordshire, UK
GPS 52.235133, -0.474321
LENGTH 1.8 miles (track reconfigured May 2015; earlier times not comparable)



SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Ultimate Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	1:23.1	215	-
BMW M3 (F80) (fastest saloon)	1:23.3	211	Yes
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	1:23.6	215	-
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon	1:24.0	211	Yes
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	1:24.9	215	-
VW Golf R (Mk7)	1:26.1	-	Yes
Audi RS3 Sportback (2015MY)	1:26.6	-	Yes
Renaultsport Clio 220 Trophy	1:29.5	213	-
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4) (fastest sports car)	1:29.8	-	Yes
Toyota GT86 (fastest coupe)	1:29.9	-	Yes

BLYTON PARK OUTER CIRCUIT

LOCATION Lincolnshire, UK
GPS 53.460093, -0.688666
LENGTH 1.6 miles



Ariel Atom 3.5R (fastest sports car)	0:58.9	205	-
Radical RXC Turbo (fastest coupe)	1:00.4	205	Yes
BAC Mono	1:01.4	189	-
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2) (fastest supercar)	1:01.8	204	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 (991)	1:01.9	205	Yes
Caterham Seven 620R	1:02.1	189	-
Nissan GT-R Nismo	1:02.1	205	Yes
Mercedes SLS AMG Black Series	1:02.5	204	Yes
Pagani Huayra	1:02.5	177	-
McLaren 12C	1:02.7	187	-
Radical RXC	1:02.9	189	-
Ariel Atom 3.5 310	1:03.4	189	-
Audi R8 V10 Plus (Mk1)	1:03.4	-	Yes
Lotus Exige S (V6)	1:04.4	177	-
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	1:05.1	177	-
Porsche 911 GT3 (997)	1:05.2	-	Yes
Porsche Boxster S (981)	1:05.5	177	-
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	1:05.5	-	Yes
Porsche Cayman S (981)	1:05.5	189	-
Caterham Seven 420R	1:05.8	214	-
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	1:06.5	-	Yes
Zenos E10 S	1:06.6	214	-
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	1:06.9	177	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R (fastest hot hatch)	1:07.3	205	Yes
Litchfield Subaru BRZ Spec S	1:07.5	189	-
Alpina B3 GT3	1:07.7	177	-
BMW M135i	1:07.7	177	-
Porsche Cayman (981)	1:07.7	-	Yes
BMW M235i	1:08.7	-	Yes
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	1:08.7	181	-
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:08.9	181	-
Ford Focus RS500	1:09.4	181	-
VW Golf GTI Performance Pack (Mk7)	1:10.3	192	-
Audi A1 quattro	1:11.2	181	-
Toyota GT86	1:12.8	177	-
Caterham Seven 160	1:17.6	205	Yes



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Art of speed



Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano flying buttresses

by RICHARD LANE | PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

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THE BEAT OF LUCA DI MONTEZEMOLO'S brogued Oxfords pauses. Ferrari's disarmingly debonair chairman has been circling a scale model of a proposal for the company's new-for-2006 GT supercar and has detected a not-so-subtle buttress cascading from the roofline.

Also in the room are Jason Castriota and Lorenzo Ramaciotti of Pininfarina. The former is apprehensive because as exterior designer he penned that buttress, rather likes it, and doesn't want it scrapped. The latter is more relaxed. He's been in the business since 1972, before young Castriota was born, and as Pininfarina's design director has every Ferrari since the 456 GT under his belt. Eventually di Montezemolo asks the inescapable question: 'What is it, and does it work?'

The two designers have prepared for this moment. Several months earlier the buttresses started out as little more than an element of artistic flair designed to alleviate some of the visual weight at the back of the car. Castriota had recognised that they also offered a disguise for the teardrop glasshouse he wanted to employ and in the process lent the coachwork of F141 – as the model was codenamed – an elegant fastback silhouette it wouldn't otherwise have.

His boss at Pininfarina knew all this, but experience told Ramaciotti that without any true functionality the extra aluminium bodywork would be a nigh impossible sell to Ferrari. Promisingly, Castriota had a healthy suspicion that the buttresses might also yield substantial aerodynamic benefits at high speeds. He just needed proof.

Step forward Luca Caldirola, working first with a smaller representation of F141 in Ferrari's wind tunnel, and later, when the car had matured into the 599 GTB Fiorano replete with the Enzo's humdinger of a V12, using a life-size model in Pininfarina's tunnel. The Ferrari aerodynamicist, glad to see innovation driven by his profession, soon gave the designers what they had hoped for – evidence that compressing and accelerating the airflow between the buttresses and the cabin created a vortex over the bootlid that developed downforce without generating drag. 'Presumably Luca was impressed,' Castriota tells us a decade later.

In hindsight it's clear Pininfarina's design signalled a change in the way Ferrari thought about front-engined cars. The buttresses in particular are emblematic of a pivot in philosophy where the designers and engineers began the difficult art of incorporating science into the styling. More importantly, from precisely the right angle they look sensational. ❧

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1966 Maserati Mistral Spyder • 1971 Ferrari 246GT Dino
2004 Ferrari Enzo 'The Devil's Enzo' (delivery mileage) • 2012 Aston Martin V12 Zagato (delivery mileage)
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