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ED SPEAK

NICK TROTT

THIS MONTH I MET TWO STARS OF THE performance car industry: big hitters Mike Flewitt and Jean-Marc Gales, CEOs of McLaren and Lotus respectively. You warm to both straight away; they're engaging characters, who are more likely to talk brake bias than brand. They gaze at sports cars lovingly, their body language electrifies when discussing the intricacies of driving, and they can pinpoint those seemingly obscure moments in automotive history that people like you and me recognise as pivotal.

But is this a good thing, you wonder. Should enthusiasts manage car companies? History is littered with bankrupted enthusiasts who have either owned or controlled sports car firms, or worse – both. Gales and Flewitt, however, are a bit different. A passion for the car may have determined the direction of their careers, but hard graft, intelligence and nous kept them on track.

Flewitt (pictured bottom right) was promoted from chief operating officer of McLaren Automotive to CEO in July 2013, having been with the company for just one year. Prior to McLaren, Mike was vice president, manufacturing, Ford of Europe and held senior manufacturing roles at TWR, Rolls-Royce and Bentley.

His eyes will sparkle when talking about the driving genius of Kenny Bräck, or the joy of racing his old Lotus, or the even greater joy of watching his wife compete at a high level in another classic Lotus. But when the racing's over, he's back in CEO mode – making good on his 'Track22' promise to invest £1billion into R&D between now and 2022, to launch 15 all-new cars or derivatives, and to fund it all from within.

And Gales (pictured top)? He has been chief executive officer of the European Association of Automotive Suppliers, a lobbying strategist at the European Parliament, oh, and president of Citroën and Peugeot between 2009 and 2012. Impressive stuff, but perhaps not as impressive as a piece of news he told me recently: 'For the first time in 60 years we are spending the money we are earning. It means that the current sales are paying for the next cars.' This makes my heart glow more than



any other news I'm likely to sniff out this year, and could finally eradicate the hangovers (perceived and actual) of Bahar-era Lotus.

You'll read more about Flewitt and Gales in the next few issues, as my time with both has led to more insight than I have space for here, but I will share one interesting point that links them. When I asked how they deal with jobs imbued with potentially crippling stress, they both identified the same things: the absolute love of cars, the joy of working with the right people, the history and significance of their brands, and the simple joy in nailing exactly what a customer – or even better, a new customer – wants.

I'd never undermine the legends Chapman and McLaren, but Gales and Flewitt are on the brink of doing what their founders never did. ☒

[evoNickTrott](https://twitter.com/evoNickTrott)

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Renault Sport Clio RS16

Clio gets Mégane Trophy-R
powertrain to create hottest
Renault Sport model ever

by DAN PROSSER

THE CLIO RS16 celebrates 40 years of Renault's performance and motorsport division, Renault Sport, as well as marking the company's return to Formula 1 as a constructor. By shoehorning a 271bhp engine into the Clio bodyshell, Renault Sport has produced its fastest road car to date. Better still, it's considering putting the RS16 into production.



Renault Sport managing director Patrice Ratti is very keen for the Clio RS16 to make production. In fact, you get the impression he'd be gutted if it didn't progress beyond the concept car stage. 'From a technical point of view it is possible,' he says, speaking at Renault Sport's headquarters near Paris, 'but I don't know yet whether the economics will allow it.'

The RS16 concept has been developed with a view to a production version since day one, however, and no other manufacturer has such a rich history of putting its concept cars into

production – the two generations of Clio V6 and the 1996 Spider attest to that. 'We wanted to do another crazy car to celebrate 40 years of Renault Sport,' adds Ratti, 'but we wanted to do something even faster and better than the Clio V6.'

'We arrived at the idea of taking a Clio RS and putting the Mégane RS drivetrain in it. We toyed with the idea of putting the engine in the rear, like the Clio V6, but it would be very heavy. We're better at front-engined, front-wheel-drive cars at Renault Sport anyway.'

Those initial discussions about what to build were held late last year, which means the entire project – from the very first brainstorming session to the unveiling at the Monaco Grand Prix in May – was completed in a matter of months. 'We started thinking about the car in October and in November we did a packaging study,' confirms Ratti. 'We saw it was possible to put the big engine from the Mégane into the Clio and at the end of November we got the go-ahead from Renault. January and February was the development window and in

“The RS16 has been developed with a view to a production version from day one”



IN-DEPTH

1 BRAKES

As well as its drivetrain, the Clio RS16 borrows the 275 Trophy-R's optional Brembo brakes, with 350mm discs and lightweight aluminium bells on the front axle.

2 WHEELS & TYRES

The 19-inch wheels are Speedline Turini items, while the tyres are track-focused Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s, both lifted from the 275 Trophy-R.

3 BODYWORK

To accommodate the bigger wheels, the arches have been trimmed and composite extensions fitted. The rear wing is from the Clio Cup racing car.

SPECIFICATION

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo
Power	271bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque	265lb ft @ 3000rpm
0-60mph	5.7sec (estimated)
Top speed	159mph (estimated)
Weight	c1230kg
Power-to-weight	224bhp/ton
Basic price	c£34,000

200-300

If approved for production the RS16 will be built in limited numbers

15

kg

Weight saved by fitting a lithium-ion battery

224

bhp/ton

The highest power-to-weight ratio of any Renault Sport road car

c£34,000

Target price



CHASSIS

Naturally, the Clio RS16's chassis has been heavily updated. Fitted at the front are 'PerfoHub' double-kingspin struts – taken from the much-loved Clio III RS – so the car can handle the Mégane engine's 265lb ft of torque. The lower suspension arms are also lifted from the previous Clio. A bespoke part has been constructed to marry the struts to the Mégane 275 Trophy-R's hubs, which enables that car's bigger brakes

to be fitted.

The rear beam is the heavily reinforced item from the Clio R3T rally car, which meets the lateral and camber stiffness requirements. Front and rear track widths are increased by 60mm and the one-way adjustable dampers are the Öhlins items from the 275 Trophy-R.

Being both smaller and lighter than the Trophy-R, Renault Sport expects the RS16 to be faster and more agile than the track-focused Mégane.



RIVAL

MINI JCW CHALLENGE



B-segment hot hatches at this (proposed) price point are few and far between, but the RS16 does have much in common with the new Mini John Cooper Works Challenge. Both will only be built in very limited numbers, both have adjustable suspension and both run on Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 rubber. With its transplanted engine and that motorsport-derived

rear suspension, the RS16 is an all-encompassing re-engineering project, whereas the Challenge is an updated version of an existing model. The Renault also outguns the Mini by 43bhp, but both drive their front wheels through a six-speed manual gearbox and a limited-slip differential. See page 100 for a full review of the Mini John Cooper Works Challenge.



POWERTRAIN



The 2-litre turbo unit, which displaces 1998cc, powers the front wheels via a six-speed manual gearbox and a limited-slip differential. The exhaust system, meanwhile, is supplied

by Akrapovic. Although the bigger engine is heavier than the standard RS Clio's 1.6-litre unit, this is offset by the manual gearbox being lighter than the Clio's usual twin-clutch 'box.



March we built the test mule and the show car.'

Ratti pulled together a small commando team – 'the only way to do this kind of project,' he says – made up of engineers from Renault Sport Cars and Renault Sport Racing, plus a designer.

'It seems easy to take the engine from one car and put it in another,' says motorsport engineer Christophe Chapelain, 'but the [dimensions] of the Mégane's engine and gearbox are very different to the Clio's. To adapt that we needed some interface pieces and because the engine has more torque we needed brackets on the top and the bottom, too. We designed a new part on the top and for the bottom we adapted the subframe from the Renault Kangoo. On the racing side this is easy to do, but when you start working with the road car guys – when you need to make it fit on the production line – it gets complicated.'

Once it had been established that the drivetrain would actually fit, the second major problem was the chassis, specifically the far-reaching modifications that would have to be made to cope with the power output. The engineers borrowed components from existing Renault Sport cars as well as out-of-production models,

made bespoke items and even lifted components from competition cars.

The third major challenge and the biggest job of the entire project, reckons Ratti, was persuading the Mégane's drivetrain electronics to communicate with the Clio's chassis electronics, such as the ABS and ESP systems. The solution was to incorporate software from the Dacia Sandero into the engine ECU, which interfaces with the Clio's software.

To date the team has built two RS16s, the Liquid Yellow machine being the show car and a Deep Black example being the test and development mule. The Clio RS16 will make its UK debut at the Goodwood Festival of Speed on 24-26 June. As it considers a small-scale production run, Renault Sport will be monitoring the public response very closely indeed.

Above: RS16 gets a bunch of extra attitude thanks to its wider tracks, wheelarch extensions and that big rear wing; RS flag motif in the lower lights is a neat touch

INTERIOR

The 275 Trophy-R's bucket seats and six-point harnesses have been fitted, and although the show car does without a rear bench seat, Ratti suggests it'll be an option should the car reach production. A roll-cage won't be offered, however, because of the weight penalty, which also explains the deletion of the air-conditioning system.

COMMENT

It's fair to say Renault Sport has been a little lost with the current generation of Clio. Then again, following the run of success it enjoyed with the previous generations, the odds of one missing the mark were getting slimmer by the day.

With Renault Sport looking at what has made its Méganes the hot hatches to beat, and borrowing greatly from their philosophy as well as the parts bin, I'm filled with hope that this Clio will be another hit. It could be the perfect car in which to wrestle the front-wheel-drive Nürburgring lap record back from Volkswagen, too. **Stuart Gallagher**

PASSENGER LAP



Watching the RS16 development mule hammer around Renault's test track doesn't fill me with much hope. It looks like it's riding higher than a bog standard Clio, and the rear end seems very softly sprung, squatting down as the car accelerates.

Then the RS16 pulls into the pits and my concerns fade. It doesn't ride too high, nor is it too soft at the back. It's just that the mule lacks the show car's wheelarch extensions, so the cut-away arches and the abnormal gaps below are left exposed.

Out on track with David Praschl, the RS16's development driver, the car feels very quick. Despite not having the same single-exit exhaust as the Trophy-R, the RS16 makes the same jet engine-like *whoosh* at full throttle. The brakes (still with the DCT Clio's wide brake pedal here, although this would be replaced for production) help the RS16 adopt just the right amount of attitude into a corner, and a mid-corner lift induces some wild oversteer. Typical Renaultsport behaviour. **Will Beaumont**

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New Arrivals

Concepts, limited editions, one-offs and test mules – these are the top five 'evo' cars to break cover in the past month

FERRARI 458 MM SPECIALE

This is Ferrari's latest one-off creation, conceived by the Ferrari Styling Centre for a British customer. Based on a 458 Speciale, the car features a new

aluminium and carbon body with improved aerodynamics brought about by lowering the roofline and improving airflow over, under and through the car.



BMW M3 30 JAHRE

It's 30 years since BMW gave us a box-arched two-door saloon and created an icon. To mark the anniversary, a special '30 Jahre' model based on the M3 Competition Pack has been revealed.

Along with Frozen Silver metallic paint, there are new springs, dampers and anti-roll bars. Power is up to 444bhp from 425bhp, and the price? £82,675. Just 30 are UK-bound.



ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH ZAGATO

The fifth car to come from Aston Martin's collaboration with Italian coachbuilder Zagato is the delightful Vanquish Zagato. The design was led jointly by Aston's chief

creative officer, Marek Reichman, and the Italian design house's Andrea Zagato, and was engineered and developed at Gaydon.

Built of carbonfibre, the concept showcases

potential design and construction ideas for future Aston models, which sadly means that this V12-engined concept is unlikely to venture far from the show stand.



HYUNDAI i30 N PERFORMANCE

May's 24-hour race at the Nürburgring was memorable for many things (aside from the biblical hailstorm that stopped the race for 90 minutes), one being the debut of the first model under

Hyundai's forthcoming N Performance brand.

The Korean firm used the race to test a 2-litre turbocharged version of the i30 that will lead the manufacturer into the hot hatch arena later this year.



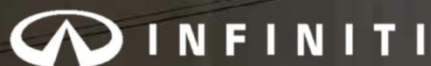
NISSAN GT-R NISMO

The paint was barely dry on the new 2017MY GT-R when Nissan's racing arm, Nismo, pulled the covers off its interpretation of the updated supercoupe.

Power is 592bhp – the same as for the last Nismo GT-R – but the Bilstein dampers have

been retuned and the grille, bumper and aero kit are all made from carbonfibre. Airflow has been improved and downforce increased, with the new Nismo GT-R said to generate more downforce than any Nissan road car ever.

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ZeroLight

evo tries out the digital showroom that's going to revolutionise the car-buying process

GOD IT MUST BE exciting. Panning down Pagani's options list for the £2.2m Huayra BC with the power to dream up almost any recipe and make it real.

The problem with creating something unique, of course, is that you don't really know what it's going to look like. Incredibly potent our imaginations may be, and car configurators the best they've ever been, but when your dream Pag finally arrives (the waiting list is said to be four years long, by the way) and the colour-impregnated carbon bodywork you paid 120,000 euros for isn't what you were expecting...

Well, Arancio Marbella always was a tricky one to judge.

Help is now at hand, however, because 3D-visualisation outfit

ZeroLight is using experience gained in the ultra-competitive world of racing games to create car configurators of quite astonishing detail. By constructing cars on an entirely digital basis, much like a racing sim such as *Forza* would, its cloud-based software is some way ahead of cumbersome traditional configurators, which rely on hundreds of real photos and are limited when it comes to aspect and, crucially, customisation.

ZeroLight's idea is that a Pagani salesperson, armed with a tablet and scant concern for your final bank balance, draws up a 4K ultra-high-definition depiction of your heart's desires. And it really is ultra-high-definition. When we try the software out, the metallic flecks in each of the colours from Pagani's sophisticated palette catch the sun and glint in a truly realistic way as the 'Huayra BC *evoluzione*' revolves on its plinth. The weave of the gloss carbon bodywork is also crystal and you can count at a distance the coils of the push-rod suspension through the Ferrari F50-style rear mesh. In fact, you can pretty much leave your imagination at the door.

The configurator's exquisite intricacy is only properly exploited



“
The VR is so immersive that I'm soon peering down between the twin-turbo AMG V12's cam covers
”

with virtual reality, however. This means donning a chunky headset and leaving the tangible world behind. Your environment, within which sits a gleaming, three-dimensional Huayra BC, is now confined to a small screen strapped to your head. Naturally, this can take a moment to adjust to, and having pointlessly ducked beneath one of gullwing doors, I reach down to steady myself on the tabletop sill of the tub with a view to clambering in. Then comes the realisation. I've fallen for it all quite spectacularly. The ZeroLight guys smile knowingly.

The VR is so immersive, in fact, that I'm soon leaning over the AMG-built V12 and peering down between the cam covers, constantly reminding myself not to do something else stupid. It's a similar story when checking that the contrast stitching on the bucket seats is up to scratch, or inspecting the vast brake discs, which are very obviously of the carbon-ceramic variety.

The detail is mesmeric, and it's just the start. ZeroLight says it will soon be able to create a scenario where customers drive their future car on a road of their choosing, all in the digital realm. And with a deal to revolutionise Audi showrooms already in place, it seems the way we buy cars is going to change dramatically.

Visit evo.co.uk for more photos of the one-off Huayra BC *evoluzione*



BEST MPV. AGAIN.



CITROËN GRAND C4 PICASSO

Why is the Citroën Grand C4 Picasso a winner again? Well, it might have something to do with its 107g CO₂/km emissions which means no road tax for the first year. Or the high-tech BlueHDi 150* engine, which delivers up to 68.9MPG.[□] And the fact that it comes with an ultra-flexible 7-seat interior, 360° Vision Parking,[°] Keyless Entry and Start,[△] and Panoramic Windscreen. Yes, that's probably why it's been voted 'Best MPV' by both What Car? and Auto Express for two years running.



CRÉATIVE TECHNOLOGIE

   citroen.co.uk

Official Government Fuel Consumption Figures (litres per 100km/MPG) and CO₂ Emissions (g/km). Highest: Grand C4 Picasso THP 165 S&S EAT6 Auto Exclusive+ with 18" wheels: Urban 7.5/37.7, Extra Urban 4.9/57.6, Combined 5.8/48.7, 134 CO₂. Lowest: Grand C4 Picasso BlueHDi 100 S&S manual VTR+ with 16" wheels: Urban 4.5/62.8, Extra Urban 3.5/80.7, Combined 3.8/74.3, 99 CO₂. MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only, and may not reflect actual on-the-road driving conditions.

CITROËN prefers TOTAL. Model shown: Grand C4 Picasso BlueHDi 120 S&S 6-speed manual Exclusive+. OTR price £27,130 (incl. Teles Blue metallic paint at extra cost of £520). *Available on Grand C4 Picasso Exclusive and above. [□]Combined Cycle on Grand C4 Picasso BlueHDi 150 S&S 6-speed manual Exclusive with 17" wheels. [°]Optional at extra cost on Grand C4 Picasso Exclusive+. [△]Optional at extra cost on Grand C4 Picasso VTR+ and Grand C4 Picasso Exclusive, available as standard on Grand C4 Picasso Exclusive+.



COLUMN

The Racing Insider

Introducing a new columnist – architect of the Nissan GT Academy and former head of Nismo, Darren Cox. This month, the ladders and snakes of the young driver market...

THE SINGLE-SEATER LADDER IS BROKEN.

The cream of the talent is not rising to the top, and a young driver cannot even buy himself into F1 despite having \$15m in his pocket. Not only that, but I've also heard that there are at least two kids in single-seaters whose dads are buying their lads guaranteed graduation to F1. The money is staggering – even to someone who has seen so much excessive spending in motorsport.

But what about the 'not so rich' rich dads? Well, they are seeing the folly of the 'road to nowhere', as are the reptilian driver managers/advisors and team commercial managers.

Why do I care? Because this is changing the business model of single-seaters and could be about to change the face of sportscar and GT3 racing – the series closest to *evo* readers' hearts.

Sat at home, watching the superb (free) stream from the Blancpain Sprint GT Series, I listed drivers that as recently as last year were on the road to nowhere – or what used to be called the 'single-seater ladder'. They were Sims, Stöckinger, Stevens, Jaafar, Rosenqvist, Dolby, Niederhauser. Added to the longer list from the LMP2 classes at Silverstone that raced later on that month, that's a full grid of converts from single-seaters to sportscar racing.

I saw this trend coming three years ago. With feet in both the single-seater and GT paddock (Jann Mardenborough in singles and 30 per cent of my time overseeing sportscar programmes), I saw it unfold. Then the tipping point: the 'Hartley' effect.

Binned, as many have been and many will be, off the Red Bull driver merry-go-round, Brendon got a drive in LMP2. I briefly met him at a Silverstone European Le Mans Series race. I would guess he was skint and worried about how he would make a living in the future. Next time I saw him, he was in his company car, a new Porsche Panamera with a ski rack on the roof. The picture of a well looked after works driver. And now he is an official FIA World Champion.

Brendon found a supporter in LMP2 team owner Greg Murphy, who stuck him in a prototype and gambled on Brendon having a bright future. The young Kiwi made the most of the opportunity he was given. He literally attempted to get the fastest lap in every session he took part in during that season. His timing was perfect. Porsche were looking for six works LMP1 drivers at a time when there were not six obvious choices. Being 'the man' in LMP2 that year put Brendon on the shopping list. Simple.

Now the Hartley effect is in full flow and most sportscar fans are licking their lips with the prospect of more hot young drivers with big backers filling the grids in their beloved sport. However, the driver market is changing fast and there are going to be further unseen consequences. Next month I'll explain why some snakes might just change the sportscar ladder for the worse.

The most dramatic Nürburgring 24 Hours race ever?

WE THINK SO. MERCEDES DOMINATED this year's race by scoring a stunning one-two-three-four result, but the race will be remembered for a sensational last few laps when Maro Engel chased down teammate Christian Hohenadel and took the lead in a daring move on the final lap. It was the closest finish in the 47-

year history of the event, with just 5.697 seconds separating first and second after 3400.65 kilometres.

The race will also be remembered for a hailstorm on Saturday, shortly after the start. Within just a few moments, the cars couldn't even climb some of the gradients.

Race director Warter Hornung waved the red flag, but it took an hour before all the cars were back in the pits. It took another two hours



before the race could be restarted.

Drama also courted *evo*'s Jethro Bovingdon, competing this year for the Glickenhaus team in the sublime Ferrari-based P4/5C (above). Jethro completed just two laps on a sodden racetrack (on slick tyres) in practice before his team mate crashed the car and bent the chassis in qualifying. Sadly, the car was too badly damaged to start the race and Jethro's N24 ended before it began.

8:35

José María López's epic WTCC pole at the Nordschleife. 'He's the Senna of touring cars,' said rival Tom Chilton.

405

The size in mm of the 2017-spec Pirelli F1 rear slick tyre – an increase of 80mm. The fronts go from 245 to 305mm.

C4

The UK's Channel 4 is now showing 30min highlights of the World Endurance Championship.



THERE ARE MANY reasons to attend a motorsport event held at Spa-Francorchamps. That the Belgian circuit is one of the few left untouched by today's racing administrators, who are obsessed with tarmacking over every gravel trap and installing as many sponsor- and TV-friendly hairpins as possible, is reason enough. That it never fails to produce racing that's nothing short of spectacularly thrilling and rarely fails to deliver an unexpected result are further strings to its bow.

The 4.4-mile circuit also plays host to the most colourful selection of motorsport categories around, many of which are ignored by modern venues that trade on theme parks

and hotels as attractions rather than focusing on the on-track action.

From motorbikes to F1, Spa-Francorchamps has it covered, and we can't recommend a weekend away at the circuit to watch any form of motorsport strongly enough. The 24-hour race at the end of July is a fabulous event to enjoy with some like-minded mates if the 250,000 spectators at Le Mans or the Nürburgring 24 Hours are too much for you. And if you haven't become totally disillusioned with F1 then Spa is the circuit to go and watch the circus at. An F1 car flat-chat up Eau Rouge is mesmerising, no matter how cynical and jaded you have become. There is time to book for this year's race, too, it having reverted to its traditional, last-

weekend-in-August slot. And if you're planning ahead into 2017, the FIA World Endurance Championship visits Spa in May for its second round – the last test before Le Mans.

But the event I try to clear the calendar for is the Spa Six Hours weekend, held each September, where 650 historic and classic race cars come together to produce some of the best racing you could imagine. Think of the Goodwood Members' Meeting and Revival combined, but with the Ardennes forest providing the backdrop and the champagne and cigars replaced with frites and Jupiler. And less fancy dress.

The highlight of the meet is the Spa Six Hours itself, which is held on the Saturday for Touring and GT cars up

Spa Six Hours

16-18 September 2016

Mere hours from the UK, this meeting offers a stunning setting chock full of classic racers with the looks and the noise to match anything modern



“Think of the Goodwood Revival, only with the champagne and cigars replaced with frites and Jupiler”

to 1965 and includes such beauties as the fearsome Ford GT40 (this year you'll spot *evo*'s Dickie Meaden at the wheel), Jaguar's E-type, Porsche's 911, Lola's T70 and Ford's gargantuan Falcon.

Starting late in the afternoon, the race runs into the night, the darkened surroundings adding to the thunderous soundtrack and evocative sight of these glorious racers fading into the twilight until it's left entirely to their headlights to provide the illumination. It's like being an extra in a Steve McQueen movie.

If you're time-poor you can hop on the Eurotunnel early on the Friday and be in the centre of Spa in time for lunch, before heading to

the circuit to watch the afternoon practice session and, at the end of the day, the 90-minute qualifying session for the Six Hours. And, of course, you can drool over the paddock exhibits, too. There are plenty of hotels and guesthouses within a walk, cycle or short drive of the circuit, depending on your budget and expectations. You could even camp (shudder).

Saturday requires a strategy, and you'll need to pace yourself to make it through the day and into the night, so aim to reach the circuit for your first frites and beer at lunchtime and settle in for the afternoon, enjoying the final throws of qualifying for the support races before the main

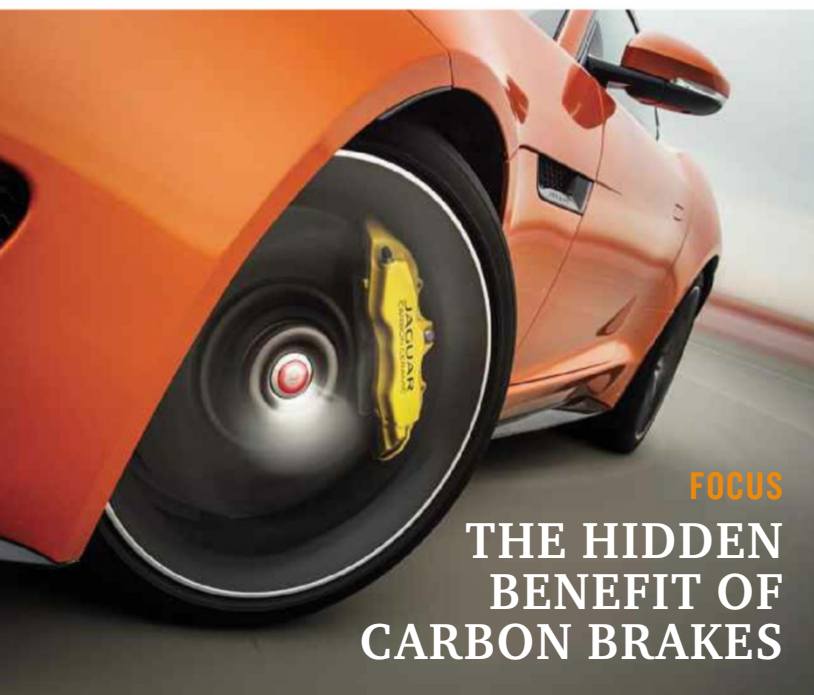
event starts at five minutes to four.

For the start of the Six Hours, find a vantage point at the top of Eau Rouge and use the race time to walk a lap of the circuit, following the action as you go. It should mean you reach the new pits in time for the finish.

The restaurants near the circuit stay open late enough for you to grab a steak before you settle down for the night with the sound of a GT40 still ringing in your ears.

The racing continues on Sunday and is equally enthralling, but depending on your timetable you can be back in the UK by the early afternoon and in time to dose off while watching the highlights of the Singapore F1 Grand Prix. ☒





FOCUS THE HIDDEN BENEFIT OF CARBON BRAKES

BACK IN ISSUE 206, WE conducted a number of tests to compare the performance of carbon ceramic brake discs with regular cast iron items. Our conclusion? That the stopping benefits of carbon ceramics are minimal and that their most significant advantage is in the reduction in unsprung mass that they bring. This result might make you less inclined to tick the option box for carbon ceramics, especially given their typically high asking price, but before you make that call it's worth understanding the advantages of lowering unsprung mass.

Unsprung mass is any part of the car that isn't supported by its springs. That means the weight of the tyres, wheels, brake discs, calipers, etc. Only half of each

spring's weight contributes to unsprung mass, the other half is considered to be sprung, along with the rest of the car.

Unsprung mass can be further divided into two categories: rotational and static. The components that make up rotational mass are, as the name suggests, those that rotate when the car is moving, i.e. the hub, brake disc, wheel and tyre. These actually have a far greater effect on a vehicle's performance than the static unsprung parts. Greg Kirby, general manager at Eibach UK, explains: 'It's generally viewed that a reduction of 1kg of rotating mass is worth 3kg of static mass, so the best gains are to be had by reducing the rotating mass.'

'To accelerate any mass from

one speed to another, you need to overcome its static inertia before it will start to move – inertia is the property that resists movement. A wheel must also rotate to move forward, so in order to move the rotating mass, two forces must be applied: the force in the direction of travel and a torque to begin the rotation.'

Therefore two types of inertia must be overcome before any acceleration occurs: the inertia of the car and the rotational inertia of the wheels and the other rotating components. And the same problem applies for deceleration too.

In this sense, unsprung static mass is just as detrimental to performance as sprung mass. But the entire unsprung mass has a further effect on vehicle dynamics. Kirby elaborates:

“The entire unsprung mass has an effect on vehicle dynamics”

'We need to consider the job of a vehicle's suspension. In its most basic form it has two primary roles: to provide a comfortable ride and to transmit the vehicle load to the road to create grip that can then be used to accelerate the vehicle or change its direction.'

'It is the second premise that is negatively affected by unsprung mass. Imagine a wheel travelling down an undulating road. Each crest in the road causes a force to be applied to the wheel in the “bump” direction of travel. Initially, the

force from the road must build to such a point as to overcome the inertia of the unsprung mass and cause it to move.

'This spike is then followed by a dip in force between the tyre and road as the momentum of the wheel carries it further upwards until the spring stops it moving. During this vertical movement, there is a reduction in the force pushing the tyre toward the road.'

'To create grip, the vehicle load needs to be transmitted via the suspension to the interface between tyre and road. Suspension is designed to seek maximum grip at all times, and this is achieved at an optimum load.'

Any variation above or below the optimum load compromises grip. With less load, the force that pushes the tyre towards the ground is smaller, so there is less grip. But with too great a force you can overload the tyre.

Kirby concludes: 'The lower the unsprung mass, the smaller the inertia and force that will be applied to cause the upward movement. Then there will be less vertical travel as a result of its momentum. And so, more relevantly, the lower the change in force experienced at the tyre and road interface. Therefore there will be greater grip stability, and crucially, less probability of overloading the tyre due to a too excessive change of load.'

So there you have it. Don't dismiss carbon ceramic brakes just because you don't feel you will need their minimal braking improvements, as their benefits could be felt all the time the car is moving – whether braking or not.

GAME-CHANGER

DOUBLE KINGPIN FRONT SUSPENSION

First production application:
Renaultsport Mégane 225

When: 2004

Called PerfoHub by Renaultsport and RevoKnuckle by Ford, double kingpin front suspension is designed to reduce torque-steer. The setup on each side looks much like a conventional MacPherson strut. However, rather than the

entire strut rotating during steering, there's a pivot on the hub carrier to allow it to move independently of the strut. The steering then moves just the hub carrier and the strut remains still.

Double kingpin front suspension allows the line around which the hub

pivots to be more vertical. It also reduces the 'scrub radius', i.e. it brings the steering's pivot line closer to the tyre's centreline. A large scrub radius, although not the most significant factor in torque-steer, does magnify the effect, so any reduction helps.

As the power of hot hatches rises, four-wheel drive is becoming more prevalent and trick front suspension is less necessary. However, the current Honda Civic Type R employs a double kingpin setup to help transmit over 300bhp to the road.



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Official fuel consumption figures for the Abarth range mpg (l/100km): Combined 45.6 (6.2) – 48.7 (5.8), Urban 34.4 (8.2) – 37.2 (7.6), Extra urban 55.4 (5.1) – 60.1 (4.7), CO₂ Emissions: 145 – 134 g/km. Fuel consumption and CO₂ figures are obtained for comparative purposes in accordance with EC directives/regulations and may not be representative of real-life driving conditions. Factors such as driving style, weather and road conditions may also have a significant effect on fuel consumption. Abarth UK is a trading style of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles UK Ltd. The New Abarth 595 range starts from £15,090 OTR. Model shown is an Abarth 595 Competizione at £20,640 OTR with Modena Yellow Pastel Paint at £350.



INSIGHT

JUST HOW COMPLICATED
CAN TYRE STRATEGY BE?

WITH DIFFERENT CARS, on a different track, in different countries, you'd be forgiven for thinking there are very few similarities between the Le Mans and Nürburgring 24 Hours races in regard to tyres. But the philosophies and requirements to suit each race are remarkably similar.

What's required from tyres for both isn't ultimate grip. That helps, of course, but a tyre that a driver can feel up to the limits of grip is significant. This is perhaps more important for the N24, when a driver will spend a significant amount of time 'off-line', overtaking much slower cars.

Tyres for both races also need to have a wide operating window; they need to have similar performance and feel when they are fresh to when they're close to the end of their stint. Each tyre is designed to maintain that optimum grip for the maximum time a driver can stay in the car. A tyre isn't just created to the race regulations, but is a collaboration between tyre manufacturer and team. This makes the relationship between the two invaluable. Allan McNish, who knows a thing or two about endurance racing, has raced solely on Michelins since 1997. And Audi, who McNish is closely involved with, has used

Michelins since 1999.

It isn't just one tyre the team have to choose from, of course. In fact there's a plethora of choices. Gone are the days of Wet, Soft, Medium and Hard. Each option is now suited to certain track temperatures, too.

Judging which tyre to use and when is exceptionally difficult at the either race. Both are long tracks, but the N24, held in the spring, with changeable weather, is the trickier of the two. McNish admits that teams who win at the Ring have people who 'have practically lived there'. The wrong tyre choice, or misjudging when to change tyres, can be catastrophic at the N24. The distance a car can be from the pits could

mean that a set of wet tyres could be destroyed in just one dry lap. Equally, the risk of a driver having an accident on dry tyres on a wet circuit is huge, as those at this year's N24 discovered.

It means the Audi Sport team, which runs cars at both Le Mans and the N24, has an overall philosophy but then two separate crews – one for LMP1 at Le Mans and another for the GT3 class at the N24. Each is made up of people with very specific knowledge of each car and the tracks.

The cars themselves put different demands on the tyres. An LMP1 car reaches higher speeds, but also supplements the engine with electric power through the front wheels. A GT3 car is much simpler but heavier.

The way in which a driver has to manage a set of tyres varies between each car, too. A driver at Le Mans, thanks to the hybrid system, has a number of ways of adjusting the car to affect its balance and therefore change the stress of the tyres on each axle. Should the fronts tyres be wearing more quickly, a driver can adjust the car to work the rear harder. A GT3 car only has a brake-bias control, so there are fewer options, and to change the rate of wear on a certain axle, the driver must change their driving style. **Dan Prosser**

“
The risk of a driver having an accident on dry tyres on a wet circuit is huge
”

NEW SPORTMAXX

Dunlop's new ultra-high-performance tyre, the SportMaxx RT2, has evolved from the SportMaxx RT. Larger shoulder blocks for greater cornering grip and shorter braking distances have been added along with a different compound and tread design. The new tyre also features an ultra-tensile breaker cord that supposedly increases feedback and is inspired from Dunlop's experiences at the Nürburgring.

PIRELLI HISTORICS

Pirelli has collaborated with Porsche to release a range of period-correct tyres for the German marque's older models. The project has seen the Italian tyre manufacturer develop the tyres for the older cars using its very latest compound and construction technology and methods, with the new tyres meeting Porsche's latest N-rating standards.

The new 'old' Pirellis will be available for all models produced after 1959, including the 356B, early 911s, the 914 and the 924, 944, 928 and 968.

Will Beaumont





Go Further

UN



LEARN



Will you be 2017's FIA Gran Turismo World Champion?

Gaming giant looks to make the leap from simulator to 'racetrack'

GRAN TURISMO SPORT might just be the most ambitious racing game ever made. It aims to blur the lines between real-world motorsport and digital gaming with an out-of-the-box FIA-approved racing series that exists entirely within the game.

From its launch in November, *GT Sport* will feature a pair of FIA-recognised 'Cups'. The first Cup will be a manufacturer-based challenge, with the second Cup competed for by nationality. Winners of both Cups will be honoured at the FIA's annual prize-giving ceremony in Paris.

Anyone can enter the Cups simply by competing in daily races and weekend events. *GT Sport* will employ a points system based on sportsmanship and skill and then match players accordingly. Those who rise to the top will be entered into the game's official championship races. These races can be viewed live by any *Gran Turismo* player and will feature commentary and TV-style camera angles and graphics.

Things don't stop there, though.

Gamers will be able to earn an 'FIA Gran Turismo Digital Licence' when they successfully reach a certain level in the game's online mode. This licence will be issued by a country's national motorsport authority and is currently supported by 22 countries.

A detailed livery editor will allow you to create custom designs for your race car. You will also be able to enter your own race team in the game, allowing you to manage a team, drive as lead driver and win a world championship for your country, all broadcast live through the game.

Gran Turismo Sport will apply some artistic licence to the cars available in the game for those who want to drive a particular marque. Genuine GT3 race cars will be joined by a number of concepts modified to GT3 specification. Toyota's FT-1 Vision Gran Turismo makes an appearance, for example, and so does Subaru's WRX and the Corvette C7.

Classes begin with the 'N Series', which includes *evo* favourites such as Ford's Focus ST. That's followed

“Winners of both Cups will be honoured at the FIA's annual prize-giving ceremony”

by Group 4 and Group 3 cars, such as McLaren's 650S GT3. Finally, you have the likes of Audi's R18 Le Mans car in Group 1.

Gran Turismo Sport has already held an inaugural Cup race, played out as part of a 'pre-season test' at the game's launch event in May. You can watch the action on PlayStation's YouTube channel.

If *Gran Turismo Sport* does manage to pull it all off – and *Gran Turismo* has the following to enable it to do so – the racing simulation could make the leap from a gaming simulator to a genuine competition.

Gran Turismo Sport goes on sale in the UK on 18 November 2016.

Hunter Skipworth

TESTED

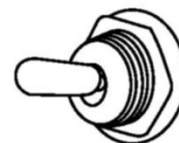
Playing *GT Sport*

Early impressions of *GT Sport* show that the tried-and-tested *Gran Turismo* formula has returned. Handling leans towards the fun side of simulation, with aggressive throttle and steering inputs punished by a loss of control and a trip off the track, but not to the extent that things feel overly difficult.

However, aside from the online element, the game hasn't moved on a great deal. The graphics aren't a huge step ahead of the PS3's *Gran Turismo Sport*, and the new tracks still have that lifeless look to them.

Forza has already seen two full titles released on the Xbox One during its lifespan, both of which have provided huge numbers of cars and tracks to enjoy. *GT Sport* has just 140 – admittedly all hugely detailed – vehicles and 19 tracks. It's a taster of what's to come, but we've had to wait a long time for this first *Gran Turismo* game to arrive for the PlayStation 4.

Hunter Skipworth



ON
OR
OFF?

Exhaust-noise generators

'On,' says Rick Burch via Facebook. 'They get a lot of flak, but it's nice having a bit of sound when you're driving for fun without waking the neighbours every time you start the car.'



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WATCH TECH

Richard Mille
'Airbus' watch

Lightness, strength and efficiency are the goals of any designer of cars, boats or aircraft – and they are also what high-tech watchmaker Richard Mille strives for. But it has seldom made anything quite so extreme as the new RM 50-02 ACJ, which it developed with Airbus Corporate Jets.

The watch combines a tourbillon regulating mechanism with a split-seconds chronograph, and features a torque indicator to show the 'quality' of the energy remaining in the mainspring, which needs to be within a certain range to provide optimum results.

The Airbus link appears in the use of titanium-aluminium alloy for the case, which is held together with aviation-grade Torq-Set screws and shaped to resemble an Airbus window. The part-titanium movement, meanwhile, is treated with a coating used to protect aircraft engine and chassis parts and extensively skeletonised in homage to the weight-saving methods used in modern aeroplane design.

The price is fittingly jet set, too, the watch costing £841,500.



THIS MONTH

Cartier Drive de Cartier

Price: £4500

From: cartier.com

Drive de Cartier is a newcomer to the Cartier line-up and is available in various guises, ranging from a £65,500 pink gold tourbillon down to the more accessible time and date model pictured here. Its actual relationship to driving isn't too clear (it doesn't even have a perforated strap!), but it's an undeniably handsome watch with a 40 x 41mm cushion-shaped steel case containing the maker's own '1904 MC' self-winding movement.

Porsche Design
1919 Chronotimer

Price: c£2950-3400

From: porsche-design.de

The 1919 Chronotimer is Porsche Design's first creation since taking responsibility for its timepieces in-house two years ago. The 42mm watch uses a Sellita automatic movement and can be had in 'pure' or blackened titanium and with a choice of a rubber strap or a titanium bracelet. The black-on-a-bracelet combination is reminiscent of the original PO11 of the 1970s, designed by Ferry Porsche.

Eberhard & Co
Champion V Targa Florio

Price: €2840

From: eberhard-co-watches.ch

This year marked the 100th edition of Sicily's legendary Targa Florio, making it the oldest motoring event of its type in the world. To mark the occasion, official timekeeper Eberhard and Co has created 100 centenary special-edition examples of its Champion V chronograph bearing the event's official logo on a white dial. Inside the 42.8mm case is a trusty ETA 7750 self-winding movement.

CHRONO



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



ROLEX EXPLORER II

As worn by Martin Whitmarsh, CEO Ben Ainslie Racing

'I have always liked mechanical things and I'm interested in everything from shotguns to Leica cameras – and, of course, watches. I have around 40, including a number of TAG Heuers that I collected during my time with McLaren

[TAG was a McLaren partner for 30 years]. My favourite is a TAG Heuer Targa Florio, a limited edition dedicated to one of my heroes, Juan-Manuel Fangio.

'Having said that, the watch I wear most is a Rolex Explorer II. I have one with a black dial and

another with a white dial, and it tends to be one of these that I pick up from the bedside table to wear. They are understated and very functional – and, because I travel a great deal, the second time zone function is really useful.'



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LETTER OF THE MONTH

Toy story

RICHARD PORTER (PETROLHEAD, EVO 223) is not alone in subliminally guiding his young son in automotive taste – or ‘brainwashing’ as my wife calls it.

My four-year-old twin sons love their toy cars and are blissfully unaware that any cars given to them by Daddy have been carefully selected as vehicles to admire and aspire to.

The random handful of battered models that I grabbed from their toy box and photographed ‘evo cover style’ for you includes a 993 GT2, 934 RSR, 917, 356, Countach, Sesto Elemento, 599XX, 8C Competizione, DB5, One-77, Elise S1 and Caterham R500.

These things are important. Although when I showed my wife your article to prove that I was not alone in my toy-buying preferences, she just said, ‘Oh, another nutter.’

My only worry is that I am setting my sons up for a fall

when they grow up and can buy real cars. The fact that I still can’t quite afford the full-size version of the 1976 Martini Porsche 935, which was burned into my subconscious thanks to the Tamiya RC model that I built as a child, is a constant source of irritation.

Chris Roberts, North Devon

The Letter of the Month wins an Aviator watch

The writer of this month’s star letter receives an Aviator MIG-29 Chrono, worth £465. With a design inspired by the cockpit instruments of a MIG-29 fighter jet, it has a 45mm case, a Swiss-made quartz movement, and SuperLuminova indexes for outstanding legibility.



Peter Jackson



Astra addict

Back in the day I had eight Astras: Mk1s, 2s and 3s; lowly cooking models, SRIs and GTEs, even a Belmont saloon!

The Mk1s were by far the most playful, as Richard Meaden found out recently (*evo* 223). They had an exuberance that the Escort of the time lacked and their party trick was a wonderfully accurate tuck-in when the throttle was lifted entering a corner.

You steered them as much with the throttle as the wheel, but as Mk1 morphed into 2 and 3, like a teenager reaching middle-age, the hot Astra was gradually watered down to a mere shadow of its former self, leaving a competent but not exciting car. Such a shame.

Lee Thickett, Sheffield

Numbers game

I wasn’t sure whether to applaud the new Bugatti Chiron or roll my eyes when I read the headline figures for its engine (‘Forcing the issue’, *evo* 222). I can fully appreciate the engineering achievements in producing a car with such staggering power, but I believe Bugatti has missed a huge opportunity to evolve the Veyron into a lighter, nimbler, more intelligent machine.

To these eyes, the Chiron is the kind of tick-sheet product dreamt up by both a multinational corporation and an eight-year-old child, and doesn’t seemingly move

EVO’S MONTH

12

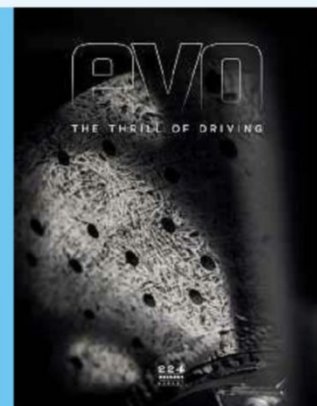
hours

Flight delay endured by Will Beaumont when returning from driving SEAT’s Ateca

‘First time in a 718 tonight. Who at Porsche thought making a car sound like a Beetle was a good idea?’

Stuart Gallagher
on Twitter (@stuartg917)

This month’s subscribers’ cover
Lamborghini Huracán carbon-ceramic brake disc, photographed by Aston Parrott.
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INBOX

the game on much over the Veyron except for pumped-up vital statistics.

Instead of expending its energy finding tyres to handle that utterly irrelevant top speed, I'd be more impressed if Bugatti had engineered 400kg out of the car, lost the front driveshafts and showed gurning test drivers backing it into corners in the promo material. I fail to see the point of a hypercar that sticks like glue and can go everywhere faster than anything else but with less involvement and adjustability.

Ultimately, I'm quite sure that I, and many others, would have more fun driving through Snowdonia in a mid-range Caterham than a Chiron. I'm sure VW would call it progress though.

Paul Haynes

Turbo temptations

Like many *evo* readers, I'm sure, I've been searching for the perfect garage combo for years. In relation to this, your stories on turbocharged cars (*evo* 222) really struck a chord.

Our current fleet includes an Octavia vRS estate putting out 250bhp (load-lugger covered), a Mountune-tuned Fiesta ST (hugely capable handling) and a 996 911 (our latest acquisition).

What blows me away is that the 911 wouldn't see which way the Fiesta had gone down a B-road. The Ford is incredibly characterful, hissing and puffing its way down the road, it returns 35mpg regardless of how it's driven and it has every option you're ever likely to need. It's also a car that really gets under your skin.

Dream garage covered, then? Maybe. But, gosh, an Impreza Turbo looks tempting doesn't it? Back off to the classifieds!

Jack Simpson

F40 overrated

Having read your recent drive in a Ferrari F40 (*evo* 222), I'm writing this from the USA, where a friend owns one of the last F40s built – a car with just 12,000 miles covered and which has attracted an offer of over a million pounds in cash as an investment.

For me it's the most overrated car of all time. I've driven 600bhp Lancer Evos with under 2 litres of engine but less annoying lag. The gearchange is like an early American truck. The ratios are so spaced that it's tough to sidestep that lag. The noise is harsh and unbeautiful. The ride is akin to a funfair bronco. The fit and finish is second-rate kit-car.

On boost with 100 per cent concentration, it thrills. But give me a 458 and a nice detached house instead. Or get an Ultima. The one I drove had an easy 750bhp and weighed a metric ton exactly. Now *that* is a power-to-weight ratio!

Ian Neal, Pennsylvania, USA

Maserati's mistake

I can understand why Maserati has chosen not to import the V6 petrol Levante SUV to the UK, but I disagree with its decision for two reasons.

Firstly, the choice of large, petrol-engined SUVs in the UK is small – even smaller if you don't want a full-house X5 M, AMG or SVR. And there will be private buyers out there who don't want a diesel, particularly when it's a Maserati.

Secondly, Maserati has always been defined by the quality of its petrol engines. Surely it should be encouraging buyers to choose a petrol Maserati, not putting barriers in the way to prevent that. It's like leaving your best player on the bench.

Mike Spencer

Stop press: Maserati has just confirmed that it will now import a petrol V6 Levante into the UK.

Priced out

I couldn't agree more with Steve Newell (*Inbox*, *evo* 222). There's many a time I have wandered around my local Porsche dealership looking at overpriced 'pre-owned' exotica only to be told: 'You can't order a new one in the spec you would like, as they are all sold!'

Bloody Porsche. Just as well I can't afford one...

Paul Ruane, Leeds

TRENDING

The hot topics in our inbox this month:

Crazy premiums on Cayman GT4s

An Astra GTE? In evo?

The pros and cons of turbos



Fastest growing video at YouTube.com/evo
 'Porsche 959 driven': editor Nick Trott samples the classic '80s supercar on track



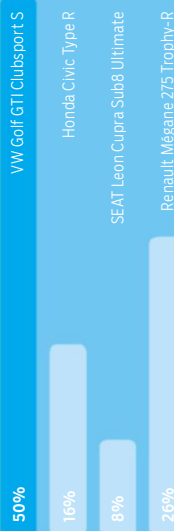
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 'Lego announces Technic Porsche 911 GT3 RS complete with working PDK gearbox'

Twitter poll: Which hardcore hot hatch would you most like to own?

May 18th - 998 Votes - Final results



Father's day gift guide

evo PROMOTION



Nextbase

This Father's Day the hot gift for any motorist is a Dash Cam, so we've picked two of the best deals from market leader, Nextbase. The multi award winning Nextbase 402G is available with an accessory pack at a price of just £119.99, a saving of £45. Or if you're looking at a lower budget there's the new Nextbase 212 with its Powered Click&Go mount at just £59.99, including accessory pack, a saving of £25. Both are available from Halfords from 9-20 June. www.nextbase.co.uk



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Driven

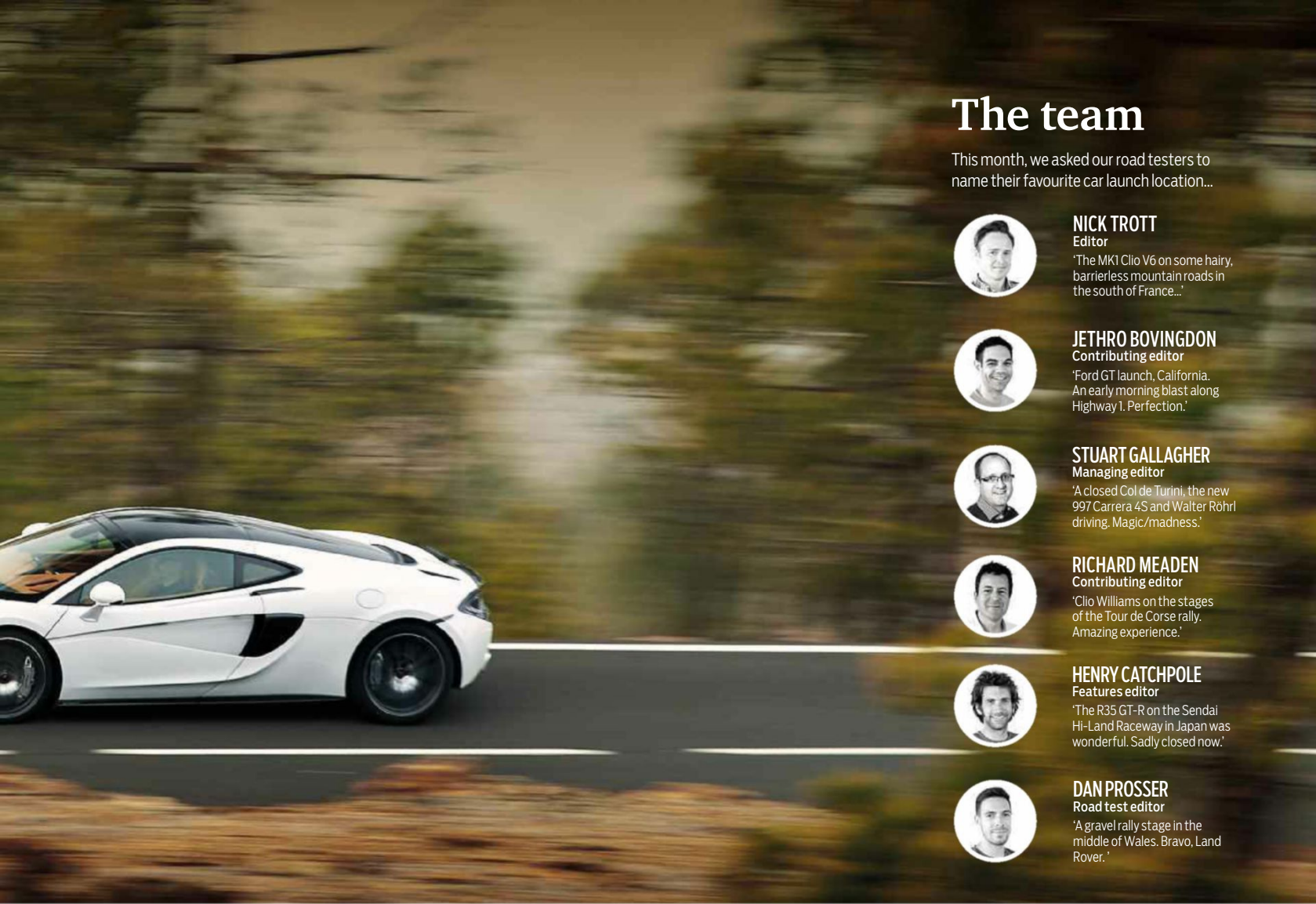
McLAREN 570GT // **JAGUAR** F-TYPE SVR // **AUDI** RS6
PERFORMANCE // **NISSAN** GT-R 2017MY // **PORSCHE** 718
BOXSTER // **ASTON MARTIN** V12 VANTAGE S MANUAL //
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DRIVEN SPECIAL

Britain's 200mph Club

Two very different manufacturers with two very different
approaches to building a 200mph super sports car





The team

This month, we asked our road testers to name their favourite car launch location...



NICK TROTT
Editor

'The MK1 Clio V6 on some hairy, barrierless mountain roads in the south of France...'



JETHRO BOVINGDON
Contributing editor

'Ford GT launch, California. An early morning blast along Highway 1. Perfection.'



STUART GALLAGHER
Managing editor

'A closed Col de Turini, the new 997 Carrera 4S and Walter Röhrl driving. Magic/madness.'



RICHARD MEADEN
Contributing editor

'Clio Williams on the stages of the Tour de Corse rally. Amazing experience.'



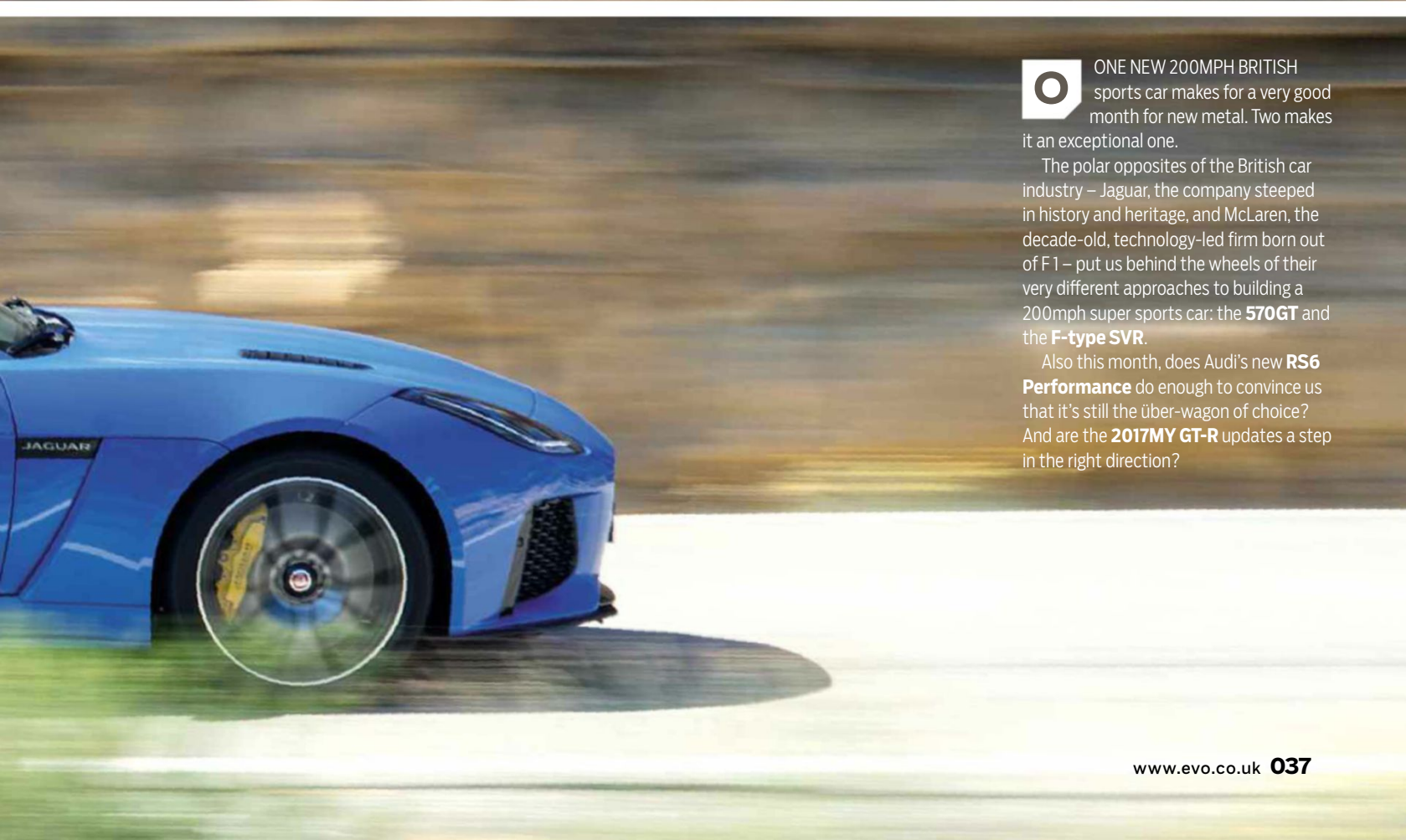
HENRY CATCHPOLE
Features editor

'The R35 GT-R on the Sendai Hi-Land Raceway in Japan was wonderful. Sadly closed now.'



DAN PROSSER
Road test editor

'A gravel rally stage in the middle of Wales. Bravo, Land Rover.'



ONE NEW 200MPH BRITISH sports car makes for a very good month for new metal. Two makes it an exceptional one.

The polar opposites of the British car industry – Jaguar, the company steeped in history and heritage, and McLaren, the decade-old, technology-led firm born out of F1 – put us behind the wheels of their very different approaches to building a 200mph super sports car: the **570GT** and the **F-type SVR**.

Also this month, does Audi's new **RS6 Performance** do enough to convince us that it's still the über-wagon of choice? And are the **2017MY GT-R** updates a step in the right direction?

M McLAREN IS HAVING A laugh. That's your first impression as you steer the new 570GT through a series of fast sweepers. You've read the press pack, stroked the new leather trim and stuffed a bag and a few jackets into the trick side-opening rear hatch. Everything you've been told (and touched) leads you to believe that this is a GT car, that it will waft you serenely to your Princess 60 moored in Cannes.

But this series of fast sweepers is telling you something else. That this is still a McLaren. A sports car. A performance car. And a damn fast (and fine) one at that.

But let's rewind. The 570GT is the newest 'Sports Series' McLaren. It sits below the Super Series cars (650S etc) and joins the more focused 570S (see **evo** 216) and the cheaper 540C in the range. As yet, there is no convertible Sports Series model – expect that next year.

The 570GT is 'practical enough for everyday use' says McLaren, with a 'day-to-day usability and long-distance comfort' and 'increased levels of practicality'. The grand-piano-style glass rear hatch is the most talked about design modification (the 540 and 570S have buttresses), but perhaps the most dramatic – on our test car, at least – are the body-coloured panels inside the 'floating tendon' side air channels. They're black on

the other Sports Series cars, but here they take some fussiness out of the overall design, revealing a shape that's closer to the F1 than any other new-era McLaren. To my eyes, the 570GT is stunning – juxtaposing contemporary with classic and technical with refinement. It makes the Ferrari 488 GTB look lumpen.

Technical changes from the 570S include suspension and steering tuning, bespoke 'noise-cancelling' Pirelli P Zero tyres and an extended,

Test location: TF-21, Pico del Teide, Tenerife
GPS: 28.47115, -16.24737

McLaren 570GT

It's the sports car that's a supercar that's a grand tourer. Confused? So are we, but it doesn't matter, because the 570S's more relaxed relation is mind-blowingly good



fixed rear spoiler. Inside there's a glass panoramic roof, eight-way adjustable leather seats and a 220-litre stowage space known as the 'Touring Deck'. There's another 150 litres under the bonnet.

The price? £154,000 before options, which makes it £10,750 more than the 570S and £28,000 more than the entry-level 540C. For comparison, a Ferrari California T is £155,460, an Audi R8 V10 Plus £134,500 and a 911 Turbo S £145,773.

You're left in no doubt from the moment you climb in that McLaren has finally delivered an interior to match the quality and style of any rival. The only letdown is the infotainment system, which remains recalcitrant, unintuitive and has clunky graphics. And while we're on the negatives, some customers may want their GT with radar cruise control and cooling seats, neither of which are options.

The panoramic roof is a treat – it

is just the right opacity and gives the cabin an extremely airy feel. It's the same glass used on the P1, which means it incorporates a film that absorbs solar and sound waves. Overall, the cabin is excellent – you even have an armrest and bottle-holders hidden inside the doors.

Superb visibility and strong clutch actuation make low-speed driving easy, but it's when you're on the highway that you initially notice the GT's talent. It first reveals itself via

'The shape is closer to the F1 than any other new-era McLaren'





the steering – the electro-hydraulic rack is no less feelsome than that of the 570S, but a slightly reduced ratio means fewer deflections when cruising. You start to wonder how this will affect the driving experience when you hit the switchbacks, but we'll return to this later...

The ride is very good, although the early 12C rode better (if without the 570's body control). The Sports Series cars do not use the hydraulic suspension of the 12C and 650S Super Series cars, instead employing coil springs and adaptive dampers. McLaren has reduced the stiffness of the GT's springs by 15 per cent at the front and ten at the rear compared with the 570S, and the damper rates have also been tweaked. You can adjust the chassis and powertrain settings through Normal, Sport and Track modes via an 'Active Dynamics' panel on the centre console.

The biggest improvement in ride quality is in Normal, which is where McLaren has dialled-in the biggest change in damping calibration. Damping in Sport and Track modes are closer to the more focused 570S, albeit not identical, due to the GT's greater weight.

In short, the GT has long-distance cruising licked. The tyres, cabin and overall refinement are excellent. And the Bowers & Wilkins hi-fi is superb. The thing is, you're never fully isolated from the road – and that's a good thing. The sense of connection between skin and road, while



‘McLaren’s V8 has never been the most stirring of motors, but boy is it effective’



Above: theatrical yet practical; the GT gets a side-hinged rear window for easy loading. **Left:** glass roof is taken from the P1 and gives the cabin a superb ambience



reduced, always tingles, so you look at every motorway exit and wonder if there's another, twistier route.

Select Sport for both powertrain and chassis and the mild porpoising sensation you can feel in Normal mode flattens without any real effect on ride comfort, and the GT feels more urgent and poised. Taking bigger and wider throttle openings, you notice some turbo lag before a surge of power as the rev counter passes 8000rpm. McLaren's 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8 has never been the most musical or stirring of motors, but boy is it effective. It may have GT sensibilities, but this 570 can still outspurt 95 per cent of road cars thanks to 562bhp, 443lb ft and a

fast-shifting twin-clutch gearbox. The shift speed doesn't feel quite as telepathically quick as a 488's, or as smooth as a Porsche 918 Spyder's, but it is still more than a match for the demands of the engine.

And how fast is the 570GT? Very: 0-124mph takes 9.8sec; 0-62mph just 3.4sec. The 570S is two tenths quicker to 62mph, not that you'd feel it. Indeed, just 55kg separates the heavier 570GT from the S.

The brakes – cast-iron discs rather than ceramics – more than cope with fast road driving, and the firm pedal gives true reassurance. On the release phase, they need a delicate touch; the GT can feel like a submarine suddenly surfacing

unless you learn to finesse the middle pedal.

Keyed into the braking and acceleration, you start to lean on the handling. The chassis doesn't suddenly contract as you wind up through Normal, Sport and then into Track. Instead, each phase is measured and consistent.

Has the reduced steering ratio affected the 570GT's cornering abilities? Not a jot. You're conscious that you're applying more lock, and you may confuse this for understeer, but in reality the GT bites strongly into corners. With this in mind, you tend to drive it on its nose – committing very hard to a corner on the brakes, then turn,



power – and go. Rear stability is impeccable. In fact it's almost too good (sometimes you'd like the rear to dance a little), but that sense of indomitability that all GTs should have – when cruising or sprinting – is present and correct.

It's hard to be definitive on a launch event, but we sense the 570S is a little more expressive and feelsome – and certainly grippier – than its GT brother. We put that down to the tyres, as the S wears more focused Pirelli P Zero Corsas.

As you start to breach the limits, the GT remains consistent and talkative. ESC Dynamic mode gives you more to play with, and unless you select this mode, the stability and traction systems can feel a little nannying. As with all McLarens, the 570GT uses an electronic limited-slip diff rather than a mechanical one, but you wouldn't notice. When you break traction at the rear, the

feeling across the back axle is always consistent, and nicely synchronised with the level of lock required to correct the slide. Fun, direct, honest and vice-free, then.

If you haven't guessed it already, McLaren has nailed the 570GT, which is the most complete car it has ever built and mixes refinement and speed with no noticeable compromises. The build quality is a match for rivals', and from a design perspective the Sports Series range has carved out a unique identity that separates it from the competition. I can think of only one reason why you wouldn't pick this car over its rivals, and that's the number of seats. If you absolutely have to have rear passengers, squeeze them into a Porsche 911 Turbo S or a Bentley Continental GT V8 S instead.

In fact, perhaps the 570GT's biggest problem is its sibling, the 570S. Not one person I've spoken

'That sense of indomitability that all GTs should have is present and correct'

to who has seen the GT and the S in the flesh (or pictures) prefers the looks of the S, but of those who have driven both, it's the S – for its sharper dynamics – they would pick.

I agree, but there's another option. McLaren doesn't offer a GT with an 'S' pack, but you could, thanks to the McLaren Special Operations division, have a GT-bodied 570S – at a price. And it's here that I realise that the beguiling 570GT has got me hook, line and sinker, because I've already started to daydream-spec my perfect 570GT, which, if you're asking, looks like this: Pearl White 570GT body with contrast white and black leather for the dash and seats, the B&W stereo, Pirelli P Zero Corsa tyres, a sports bucket seat for the driver (and the normal electric adjustable seat for the passenger), a sports exhaust and the faster rack from the S. Now, where did I leave my bank manager's phone number? ✕

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Specification

✚ Blurs the line between grand tourers and supercars to astonishing effect 🚫 No rear seats; 570S more involving

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight (dry)	Basic price
V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo	249g/km	562bhp @ 7500rpm	443lb ft @ 5000-6500rpm	3.4sec (claimed)	204mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1495kg (382bhp/ton)	£154,000



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JAGUAR KNOWS ALL about the Porsche 911 GT3. It knows how good it is and how highly regarded the car is among enthusiasts and the motoring press. It knows how much goodwill the GT3 generates for the Porsche brand, too. But Jaguar is not at all interested in squaring up to it – for the time being, at least.

It's almost impossible to discuss a lighter, faster, more focused version of an existing sports car without allowing your mind to wander towards Porsche's ear-splitting track weapon. And although this new SVR clearly is a lighter, faster and more focused F-type, it categorically is not Jaguar's answer to the 911 GT3. That's why the boot hatch and seats are still powered; it's why there's no roll-cage, no fire extinguisher and no track-biased tyres. It's why the suspension architecture is unchanged, why there isn't a specific

powertrain. So if 'SVR' doesn't denote a single-minded track car, what does it stand for?

Those initials were introduced on the Range Rover Sport SVR last year and this is the first time they've been applied to a Jaguar. According to Mark Stanton, director of Jaguar Land Rover's Special Vehicle Operations division, 'SVR is about everyday usability. It's about taking the basic traits of a Jaguar or Land Rover and amplifying them appropriately. When we talk about Jaguars, we talk about handling, steering precision and performance, but also ride comfort. With SVR we wanted to dial that performance up without losing the duality.'

Accordingly, the revisions made to this F-type SVR over the F-type R AWD upon which it's based are detail rather than wholesale. The 5-litre supercharged V8's output has been bumped up from 542bhp to 567bhp,

with torque rising three per cent to 516lb ft. Jaguar quotes a 3.5-second 0-60mph time and a 200mph top speed, but those figures are said to be on the conservative side.

The chassis has been revised with new dampers and anti-roll bars and the tyres are wider. The 20-inch wheels are also lighter and the rear uprights, or 'knuckles' in Jaguar speak, are stiffer.

'We started at the rear of the car with new knuckles and bearings,' says Stanton. 'They're significantly stiffer, which means the toe and camber effects as you start loading the car up are reduced because there's less flex in the knuckle. That gives us a more stable contact patch and more mechanical grip. We then made the turn-in sharper by moving the roll stiffness backwards, although the overall roll stiffness is unchanged, and we've increased the bias in the four-wheel-drive system

Test location: Serrania de Cuenca, Spain
GPS: 40.22187, -1.96151

Jaguar F-type SVR Coupe

Latest F-type derivative gets yet more power and a retuned chassis, but is there still more to come from Jaguar's fastest sports car?



Left: plush SVR interior still some way off being described as 'hardcore'.

Below: optional carbon-ceramic brakes save 21kg in unsprung mass and help contain the SVR's heavy weight



towards the rear axle by a small amount.' Special Vehicle Operations also retuned the electric steering, torque vectoring and stability control systems to give the SVR sharper, more responsive dynamics.

The roof panel, meanwhile, is now available in lightweight carbonfibre and the new aero package – incorporating an active rear wing, rear venturi, front splitter and a flat underfloor – manages the airflow around the car to reduce lift. It also lends the SVR a much more aggressive look than the standard model, while the titanium and Inconel exhaust system gives

a 'harder-edged' sound, according to Jaguar, as well as trimming away 16kg. The overall weight saving compared to the F-type AWD is 25kg, but the same again can be saved by specifying the carbon roof, carbon-ceramic brakes and the carbon styling pack. The cabin, finally, gets bespoke seats and upholstery options.

Priced at £110,000 and £115,485 respectively, the Coupe and Convertible SVRs carry £18,000 premiums over their F-type R AWD counterparts. Value is an SVR strong suit: the Porsche 911 Turbo S, just 5bhp more powerful, is some

'In sweeping bends you can tease the gentlest drift from the car'

£35,000 more expensive.

Beneath the bright Catalan sun, the SVR is arresting in Ultra Blue, the base car's clean, handsome lines interrupted by stabs of wing and contrasting carbon war paint. It's a good job the SVR is so readily distinguishable from the rest of the F-type line-up in visual terms because, as we'll find out, there are important areas, not least performance and dynamics, in which the SVR's gains are modest at best.

F-types have always felt surprisingly stiff at low speed, resolute springs and dampers causing the body to drop heavily





into little depressions and skip over bumps, but above 40mph or so the ride quality settles markedly, meaning it never becomes uncomfortable in daily use. The SVR's spring rates are unchanged, so it also feels quite rigid at a crawl, but with speed the ride actually settles further than it does in the base car, feeling ever so slightly more pliant and relaxed. It's a slim improvement, and one that takes no small amount of familiarity with the base car and plenty of time in the SVR to appreciate, but it's there.

The steering takes a while to get used to because it can feel quite

jumpy and hyperactive initially, but with time you tune into the rapid rate of response and begin to appreciate the precision and immediacy. The rim never courses with natural, grainy feel, though. That alert steering is tied into a very grippy, responsive front end, which means the SVR dives for an apex like a hawk after a rabbit. Body control is taut and the quality of the damping as the car hits a compression is very good, while outright grip and traction are vast. Indeed, it was the quest for traction, and the all-weather ability it lends the car, that explains why the SVR is based on the

four-wheel-drive F-type.

With 567bhp and a rear-biased four-wheel-drive system, the SVR can be persuaded to move around at corner exit, but it'll only adopt a meaningful angle in very tight corners. In sweeping bends you can tease the gentlest drift from the car, throttle pedal buried deep into the carpet, all the while perfectly confident that the four-wheel-drive system will straighten the chassis out long before it gets anywhere near swapping ends.

That means you can drive at speed with real abandon, although a rear-wheel-drive chassis would offer

up much more of a challenge.

Every single one of those things is also true of the F-type R AWD, however. The advantages the SVR finds over that model are marginal; the steering is slightly more communicative, the body is a touch better controlled, and the car is ever so slightly more playful away from a bend.

Regardless of the 50kg weight saving (this test car was specified with all the lightweight optional extras), the F-type SVR is still a relatively corpulent car, saddled with 105kg more flab than a 911 Turbo S. The SVR actually disguises that



'The throttle response is still sharp enough to draw blood'

weight very well for the most part – again, fractionally more effectively than the base car manages – but there are times when physics overcomes clever engineering and the SVR feels its weight. Leave your braking late into a downhill hairpin, for instance, and it'll give you a fright. Jump clumsily off the brake pedal before turning in hard and the sudden weight transfer will trip the car into a scruffy momentum-induced yaw moment.

You're unlikely to notice any newfound straight-line performance, but throttle response is still sharp enough to draw blood and the engine still pulls with real force all the way to the limiter. The eight-speed automatic gearbox remains outclassed in an age of dual-clutch transmissions, but it doesn't spoil the experience. The new exhaust sounds much the same as the old item – that's to say tremendously loud and exciting, but not particularly tuneful and with no variation – although the pops and cracks on the overrun are now crisper and sharper.

The many detail changes all add up to make a useful overall improvement and this is certainly the best the F-type has been to date. The SVR is a tremendous grand tourer and huge fun on a twisting road, too, but it isn't suddenly capable of doing things that have until this point been out of reach of the base car.

It still feels as though there's more to come from the F-type, then. Will we ever see a stripped-out, track-ready version? 'If we can make a business case for it,' says Stanton, 'nothing is out of the question.' ❌

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Specification

➕ Sharper, quicker and lighter than ever... ❌ ...but only by fractions

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight (dry)	Basic price
V8, 5000cc, supercharged	269g/km	567bhp @ 6500rpm	516lb ft @ 3500-5000rpm	3.5sec (claimed)	200mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1705kg (338bhp/ton)	£110,000

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hankooktire.com/uk

Test location: Broadbottom, Tameside
GPS: 53.439265, -2.000828



Audi RS6 Avant Performance

Benchmark super-estate gets even more desirable with upgrade to nearly 600bhp

THERE ARE BIG, FAST estate cars and there's the RS6 Avant 'Performance'. Boosted from the standard RS6's already ample 552bhp to as near as dammit 600bhp, the new ultimate estate will hit 62mph in 3.7sec (down from 3.9) and – if specced with £10k-worth of carbon-ceramic brakes – headbutt into an electronic speed limiter raised to 189mph.

£86k (£7000 more than the regular RS6) is a lot to drop on an estate, let alone the £98k for this particular test car, with its ceramic brakes and RS Sport suspension, yet such is its presence and quality you don't question the price tag. Looks-wise there's no other estate to touch its muscled physique.

The hardware is just as impressive. Audi's 4-litre biturbo V8 is mated to an eight-speed torque-converter auto with paddleshift, while the RS Sport suspension (£1000) is designed to counteract roll and pitch by linking diagonally opposed dampers hydraulically. A central valve

varies the dampers' characteristics according to steering inputs and lateral and longitudinal loads, and like the standard air suspension this setup retains Comfort, Dynamic, Auto and Individual modes.

At a smidge under 5 metres long, the 1950kg RS6 is a big lad, but it hides its size and mass well thanks to a spot-on driving position and deft control weights. There's not a huge amount of feel from the steering, but it's not completely numb. There's certainly enough to know how much remains in reserve, though of course the simple answer to that is always 'lots', both in terms of grip and acceleration, for in normal and even reasonably committed use the RS6 barely breaks into a sweat. It feels flat and unfazed by long, fast corners or rapid direction changes, but we'd need to back-to-back it with the standard air-suspended car to give a detailed comparison.

Uncensored full-throttle romps are short but very sweet in any 600bhp car. Even those with five doors and

weighing two tons. That said, the RS6 isn't an explosive, hang on to your gizzards kind of car. Rather it squeezes you with increasing insistence, compressing you into the seat with the overwhelming combination of 553lb ft of torque (when on overboost between 2500 and 5500rpm) and Audi's unshakeable quattro all-wheel drive. Even when fully lit it imparts a sense of authority and control. The balance is resolutely neutral, fading to mild understeer if your turn-in speed is overly optimistic or you're greedy with the throttle before the apex. You can turn off the ESP and lob it at a corner if you want to, but that's to miss the point completely.

At less than warp speeds it's refined and mild-mannered, with a rich soundtrack from the V8 and, in Comfort mode at least, damping that's just about supple enough to smother the worst lumps and bumps. The fat Pirellis do generate some road noise, though, which is amplified a little by the load space.

Dynamic mode puts a tangible tension through the car, as if in some adrenalin-fuelled 'fight or flight' behaviour. The gearbox snaps into the most responsive ratio, the suspension stiffens and the steering gains weight and sharpness. It's impressive in small doses, but too contrived for me. Better to explore Individual mode and settle on the combination that best suits your own idea of what Sport should feel like.

The RS6 Avant Performance is one of those cars that's impossible to justify, yet impossible to resist. It's hardly discreet, but it is a stealthier and less inflammatory choice than something like a Cayenne Turbo or Range Rover Sport SVR. More practical too, thanks to its vast load area. Most importantly it's a better machine to drive, with absurdly accessible performance. As an all-weather, all roads, all day and everyday supercar, it exists in a class of one. **X**

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Specification

+ Beefy looks, towering performance, brilliantly practical **-** Firm ride, stern test of self-control

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 3993cc, twin-turbo	223g/km	597bhp @ 6100-6800rpm	553lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm	3.7sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1950kg (311bhp/ton)	£86,420

evo rating

★★★★★



Test location: Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium
GPS: 50.43691, 5.97204

Nissan GT-R

With the biggest update to the R35 since it was launched in 2007, has the GT-R gone a bit soft?

A ALTHOUGH WEISSACH might not admit it, I'm sure the R35-gen Nissan GT-R and its monster performance was the car that forced the 911 Turbo to become a more aggressive, grip-obsessed machine. As a consequence of the Nissan's arrival, Porsche took a little of the everyday out of the everyday supercar in the 997.2 Turbo. Now we have this: the new, 2017MY R35 GT-R. A car Nissan wants to be more mature, more refined... more everyday. How ironic.

It feels like the engineers have never really stopped tinkering with the R35 since it was launched in 2007, but this is the biggest wholesale update to the GT-R since then. There is a stiffer bodyshell and various aero tweaks to the bodywork, many of which are recognisable from the 2014 GT-R Nismo. Some alterations are very subtle indeed, but others, such as the stiffer, more channelled bonnet, instantly set the new car

apart. Much of the aero work has actually been focused on improving cooling with no additional drag, rather than increasing downforce. Power from the V6 twin-turbo engine is up a fraction, too, from 542bhp at 6400rpm to 562bhp at 6800rpm.

The biggest point of differentiation, however, is the interior of the new car. The changes are focused around the centre console, which now has a larger, flusher touchscreen and a lower switch count. There is also some attractive matt carbonfibre covering the transmission tunnel and leather is lavished upon more of the dash. One alteration I would question is the decision to move the paddles from their previous position fixed to the steering column and onto the back of the wheel. I know it ensures you're never left crossed up without a paddle, but I liked the static ones.

Creeping out of the parking space at Düsseldorf Airport with the steering on full lock, I notice that

the slightly agricultural graunching from the diffs has gone. Onto the Autobahn, straight up to 150mph, and two more things are instantly obvious. One, the GT-R is still ferociously quick, the engine pounding through its six ratios like a sumo wrestler charging through plasterboard walls. Two, while it still sounds like a GT-R, it would be a more pleasant, less aurally tiring car on a long journey. Over the next hour or so, it's also clear that while the car remains stable and confidence-inspiring at big speeds, the ride is just a little mellower (particularly in Comfort) and the tyres don't seem to slap so loudly over joins in the surface.

We're heading for Spa, and once we're across the border into Belgium we're quickly off the multi-lane roads and onto more twisting tarmac. Once again, it's obvious that the GT-R is still formidable at covering ground, but the front end feels softer. It doesn't feel like ultimate grip has lessened, just that the car isn't as

alert on turn-in. Where we're used to the chassis' eagerness to point the nose into a corner and oversteer out of it, now it feels a little more inert. Commit to a corner with the VDC turned off and you can still easily get the tail swinging wide on the throttle, electronics juggling the torque in a familiar fashion so that steering inputs are minimal. But it doesn't feel quite as edgy or eager.

Perhaps the clearest indication of how this GT-R has subtly shifted its character is that on a bumpy, twisting piece of Belgian B-road, I find myself using the R setting for the Bilstein DampTronic suspension to keep everything tied down and free from float. In previous iterations of the R35, the R mode was the preserve of silky smooth, freshly laid circuits, and in some cases Comfort mode was all you needed for quick road driving.

The increased calmness is actually a bonus through the high-speed corners of Spa-Francorchamps. I only have six laps of the wonderful circuit and I'm thoroughly enjoying the GT-R. The familiar balance of the ATTESA E-TS four-wheel-drive system is still there, and with trail braking it is more obvious than on the road, but it's definitely not as aggressive as before.

'Commit to a corner with the VDC turned off and you can still easily get the tail swinging'

Above right: V6 twin-turbo engine has an extra 20bhp and 4lb ft of torque. **Below:** the biggest change to the 2017MY GT-R is the new interior



This makes the car calmer mid-corner but also a little less instantly adjustable than some previous GT-Rs.

If you think it sounds like there is now a bit more of the 'GT' and a little less of the 'R' in this version of the GT-R, you're right. But things have changed since the R35 was launched. Back then there was just the one version to rule them all; now there are three different iterations on sale. This is the standard GT-R, which can be purchased in several different trim levels (from the £79,995 'Pure' up to the £83,495 'Prestige'). Then there will be a Track Edition available for £91,995 with enhanced body rigidity, 20-inch

Rays alloys, uprated suspension and a carbon rear spoiler. At the top of the tree will sit a new Nismo GT-R (see p16). This clear three-pronged attack is a reflection of how the R35 has been developed and tweaked in recent years, teasing out and magnifying various facets of the original.

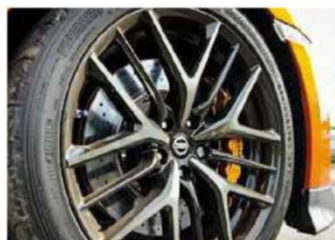
In some ways it makes sense to allow customers to choose the type of GT-R they want, but there is a slight feeling that the Swiss Army knife has been split up into a rack of individual tools. Still, it'll be fun deciding which one is our favourite. ☒

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo	275g/km	562bhp @ 6800rpm	470lb ft @ 3300-5800rpm	2.7sec (claimed)	196mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1752kg (326bhp/ton)	£79,995

+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - We're looking forward to trying the Track Edition





Test location: B660, Cambridgeshire GPS: 52.31981, -0.40718
Photography: Aston Parrott

Porsche 718 Boxster

Entry-level Boxster gets more power and torque – from an engine that's hard to love

PORSCHE'S DECISION TO remove its sonorous flat-sixes from the Boxster and replace them with turbocharged flat-fours was a controversial one. More power and more torque softened the blow, but when we drove the new 718 Boxster S (evo 222), we still found its engine disappointing.

Then again, the naturally aspirated 2.7-litre six was never really a highlight of the 981-generation non-S Boxster. Yes, it sounded great and there was a real intensity as it reached its red line, but it wasn't potent enough to worry the rear tyres and it didn't allow for much adjustability via the throttle.

The good news is that this new 2-litre engine, with 280lb ft (a 74lb ft increase) from as little as 1950rpm, allows you to properly work the chassis with the throttle. However, that advantage does come at a cost, the turbo four being as unpleasant as the old six was a delight – and it needs even more work than its predecessor to come alive.

At idle, the 296bhp (up 35bhp) 2-litre has more than a hint of tired, air-cooled VW Beetle about it. Once into its mid-range the noise

transforms into a thrumming sound reminiscent of an old, abused Subaru Impreza. It's slightly masked by a breathy whooshing from the turbo, but it's still not great to listen too.

Activate Sport mode (which comes as standard) to get a sharper throttle map and quicker shift speeds for the optional PDK transmission, and the valves in the optional Sports exhaust open to make a noise that dominates rather than enthrals. Along with the increased volume comes a cacophony of bangs and crackles on the overrun, as if to compensate for the lack of any actual character or charm. Thankfully, you don't need the exhaust in its loudest setting to benefit from the sharper engine responses – it can be quietened via its own button.

This new engine possesses all the natural traits of a blown engine, but not all of them are positive. The power delivery isn't particularly linear, with a significant surge at 3500rpm and then another near 5000rpm (peak power arrives at 6500rpm), but the engine does rev to a un-turbocharged-like 7500rpm limit. At higher revs the sound improves, too,



but it still doesn't have the drama or intensity of the old 2.7. It also feels more natural to keep the revs below 6000rpm, but the engine works the 718's chassis better the higher the revs, which makes for a frustrating, sometimes infuriating drive.

Which brings us to the optional (£1922) PDK 'box. When left in auto mode it's not a natural fit and is far too eager to change down with the smallest opening of the throttle, resulting in the gearbox dropping one or even two gears. This over-zealous calibration feels like an attempt to eradicate any traces of turbo lag, but it actually works against the torque-biased nature of a turbocharged engine. So it's best to push the gearlever to the left and use the paddles. This way you get the gear you want and can benefit from

the quick shifts while enjoying the paddles' perfect weighting.

What the Boxster has always had, irrespective of engine, is fluid yet precise handling, and the 2-litre 718 is no different. It glides down the road soaking up all but the biggest impacts, yet retains a sense of supreme control and immediacy. The steering is quicker on the 718 than it was on the 981 and is all better for it, despite not transmitting masses of information to your palms. Combined with the urgent chassis it makes the car extremely agile.

If you're too eager with the throttle in a long corner the nose does lift and the front will push, but switch the (optional) PASM dampers to their firmer setting and the body remains flatter, the front-end more inclined to hold its line as the engine's strong top-end allows you to manipulate this Boxster more than any of its predecessors. It's just a shame that to experience this 718 at its best you must drive it so hard and endure that inescapable, tuneless din. It makes the car hard to recommend. ❌

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed
Flat-four, 1988cc, turbo	158g/km	296bhp @ 6500rpm	280lb ft @ 1950-4500rpm	4.7sec (claimed)	170mph (claimed)

+ Chassis as good as ever - Earplugs not on the options list

evo rating	Weight	Basic price
★★★★☆	1365kg (220bhp/ton)	£41,739



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*** Performance results may vary depending upon the specification of the particular vehicle, environmental conditions, driving style and other factors. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing and intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results. Published MPG figures and performance results are intended for comparisons between vehicles only



Test location: Box, Gloucestershire GPS: 51.706013, -2.208995

Aston Martin V12 Vantage S manual

Most potent Vantage gets even more driver-focused with a new seven-speed manual gearbox

THE NICE MAN WHO heads Ferrari's European PR tweeted the other day that, after 11 years in the job, he had finally driven a Ferrari with a manual gearbox. Naturally he thought the 512M in which it was installed was amazing. And of course, it was, because there is something incredibly special about the open-gate shift of any Ferrari, no matter its vintage. Which is why there's a part of me that hopes Maranello soon follows Porsche and now Aston Martin in offering at least one of its products with a manual gearbox.

Yes, I know this return to the past doesn't offer the lightning-quick shifts of the most sophisticated double-clutch units, but seriously, odd blast on a deserted road at an ungodly hour aside, how often do you benefit from a millisecond shift speed? On track those shift speeds come into their own, but on the road we've thought for a long time that they should be sacrificed for interaction. The kind of interaction only a manual shift can provide. Driving, in other words.

Porsche (finally) gets it, and the

GT4 and 911 R are not handicapped one bit by making you change gear yourself. Lotus gets it too, having thoroughly reworked the shift mechanism of its manual gearbox. And now Aston Martin has followed suit, offering its Vantage V12 S with a new seven-speed manual gearbox.

Some may remember that the first time Aston shoehorned its V12 motor into the diminutive Vantage shell it too was fitted with a manual gearbox, a six-speed unit. But, with the arrival of the V12 S in 2014, the manual was dropped for the automatic Speedshift III transmission and manual V12 Astons were no more. Well, no more until CEO Andy Palmer asked his engineers to investigate the possibility of a manual gearbox for its sportiest series-production car.

The solution is not too dissimilar to the one Porsche employed when developing the 991-series 911, where it converted its seven-speed PDK into a manual. Aston has done the same by converting its paddleshift gearbox into a seven-speed manual.

Marking the Aston 'box out is its dog-leg layout, first being left and



down of neutral. The first couple of shifts require a little extra processing power from your brain, not because first's positioning is flummoxing, but because the shifts up the box and back down take a little practice. First to second is straightforward enough, but it can be too easy to find fifth when you're looking for third. And on the way down from fifth to third you can overcompensate and try to slot first, which would be a very costly mistake. A return spring less biased to fourth and fifth, plus a lock-out mechanism preventing you selecting first unless you are already in second would be ideal solutions.

A combination of time and not thinking about the shifts is the best way to acclimatise yourself with the 'box and you'll soon have the confidence to shift up and down

as you would with any manual shift connected to a large-capacity motor. If you're feeling really brave you can hold down the Sport button to activate the AMShift feature, which allows upshifts without lifting out of the throttle and provides beautifully timed blips of the throttle on the way back down. The flat upshifts are hard to get your head around on a road car, though, and the pedal spacing is spot-on, ensuring you receive more satisfaction from executing the perfect heel-and-toe downshift yourself.

Of course, relying on the V12 S's mammoth 565bhp and 457lb ft of torque eliminates any remaining concerns. The car will pull away cleanly from a standstill in second and you can short-shift through every other ratio without really slowing your progress.

It may not be the greatest manual gearbox ever offered but it's light years ahead of Aston's regular auto and perfectly suits the big-power nature of the V12. And it's further evidence that the latest technology isn't always the best. **X**

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Specification

+ V12 performance, manual gearbox interaction **-** Not the sweetest of shifts, nor the quickest

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
V12, 5935cc	n/a	565bhp @ 6750rpm	457lb ft @ 5750rpm	3.7sec (claimed)	205mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1665kg (345bhp/ton)	c£140,000

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Increased
return of
£19,995

Ferrari 599 GTB

Part exchange valuation	£100,000
Guaranteed buy price in 30 days	£110,995
SOLD FOR	£119,995
Returned customer (less fee)	£118,495



Increased
return of
£12,995

Porsche GT3

Part exchange valuation	£67,000
Guaranteed buy price in 30 days	£72,000
SOLD FOR	£79,995
Returned customer (less fee)	£78,495

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Porsche Panamera Turbo S
£89,995



Porsche 911 Carrera 4S
£106,995

Test location: Bushey, Hertfordshire
GPS: 51.646545, -0.367827

Dream Automotive Civic Type R

Finding the new Type R too tame performance-wise? How about an upgrade to 380bhp?



O F ALL OF THE LATEST generation of hot hatches, the Honda Civic Type R has always looked the most like a product of the tuning industry. The stance, wings, exaggerated details and, well, being Japanese all combine to create a distinctly *Fast & Furious* vibe. The driving experience, though, is surprisingly rounded, so for some who buy in, the performance doesn't quite live up to the looks.

Step forward Dream Automotive and the company's proprietor, Phil Crafford. Dream are well established in the UK Honda tuning scene, and this is the firm's first crack at the new model. It's an impressive effort. Look beyond the graphics and you'll find a comprehensively uprated car that's had engine, suspension, wheel, tyre and brake upgrades aimed at creating a sharper and more potent machine for fast road and trackday use.

It's always a good sign when you find a Nürburgring lap card in a car's door pocket. The chaps at Dream clearly practise what they preach. As

a rolling test-bed, this CTR features a package of upgrades, but all are available individually. The engine is very much a Stage 1 kit, i.e. ECU work with intake, exhaust and cooling improvements. Peak output is lifted to 380bhp, which is 74bhp above the claim for the standard car.

The intake (£780) in particular is an interesting addition. From the outside all you see is a small scoop duct at the base of the windscreen, but beneath the bonnet lurks an E46 CSL-style carbonfibre chamber that force feeds air into the engine for a dyno-tested 18bhp uplift. The ECU remap (£726) makes the biggest single contribution with 35bhp, while a bigger intercooler (£756) and a new exhaust downpipe and sports catalyst (£995) make up the remaining power gains.

The result is a much punchier and more responsive motor that really hits hard yet doesn't feel too brutal when the boost comes in. It's perfectly tractable at low speeds, but infinitely more exciting and impressive when

you give it some. Downsides? The Mongoose exhaust is pretty boomy, but Crafford is about to try a valved Remus system, as he's conscious of the need to offer something closer to OE. Prior experience of Remus tells me it should deliver what he – and we – are after.

The suspension is a combination of OE adaptive dampers and shorter Eibach springs (£252) made to Dream's specification. That's to say 20mm lower, but retaining the factory spring rates. It undoubtedly helps the stance of the car, but it doesn't address our criticism that the standard suspension is too stiff for UK roads in R+ mode. That said, if you're committed enough to tune your CTR, you're likely to (literally) take the rough with the smooth for the benefit it brings when driving on track. It's hard to be sure, but it feels like there is a slight deterioration in ride comfort at lower speeds, but this most likely comes from the track-biased Toyo R888R rubber (in the same 235/35 ZR19 size as the OE

Continental SportContact 6 tyres) fitted to the Rota alloy rims.

The brakes are worthy of particular praise, the combination of OE Brembo calipers gripping Tarox two-piece floating discs (£828) with Project Mu HC800 pads (£167) delivering progressive, squeak-free low-speed manners with a firm, feelsome pedal at more enthusiastic road speeds. We can't comment on their track performance, but Crafford says they were great at the Ring. Judging by the heat-discoloured calipers, he isn't lying!

Much like the Civic Type R itself, aftermarket tuning isn't for everyone, but Dream Automotive's work on the latest Type R brings out the latent lunatic within the factory car. And, given you can pick and choose your upgrades, it's entirely possible to gain a significant boost in performance without shouting about it. If you think your CTR lacks fizz, it's well worth considering. ✕

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Specification

Engine	CO2
In-line 4-cyl, 1996cc, turbo	n/a

Power
380bhp @ 6750rpm

Torque
410lb ft @ 3400rpm

0-60mph
5.2sec (est)

Top speed
170mph (est)

evo rating

Weight
1378kg (280bhp/ton)

Basic price
See text

+ Significant performance gains add welcome spark to CTR's character - Exhaust needs to be less boomy

★★★★★

ROAD TESTING THE FLEET



A COLLECTION OF RARE and iconic modern sports cars is now available for hire. The 11-car fleet offered by Sportscarhire in Shropshire spans many five-star cars – from a Caterham Seven via a Cayman R up to a new McLaren 570S – all available for a day or more without the need to join a scheme or pay for club membership. It's simply arrive, hire and drive.

The team of Liam, Matt and Scott enthusiastically ensure each car is in perfect condition and its controls are fully explained before you drive off, with a comprehensive FAQ sheet in every car for reference (pretty essential when configuring the McLaren's setup menus on three different screens). Sportscarhire is also pleased to have been selected as the sole hire partner in England and Wales for the Zenos E10 S, which has fared well in track tests against the more established opposition.

To help customers relax overnight, Sportscarhire has selected spa hotels across the midlands and Wales to offer exclusive discounts or free upgrades. You can also tempt a friend to come along and share the driving pleasure, as extra

drivers can be insured for a minimal fee – or you can book several cars for diverse experiences of the Welsh mountain roads and passes. There are plenty of other great driving routes across the area, too, especially away from main traffic routes, early or late. Just be careful of suicidal sheep and speed camera zones!

A professional in-house detailing service is also available, so if you're feeling guilty about your own car while you're out road-testing, you can treat it to a premium wash or even a machine polish from www.perfectpolish.co.uk.

The hire costs are rather lower than city hire prices – for a weekend the new right-hand-drive Mustang is £440, including VAT and insurance. The McLaren is rather more, but then you are treating yourself to a top-drawer supercar!



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Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



As the fans turn on Formula 1 against a backdrop of surging popularity for other disciplines, Meaden mounts a heartfelt defence

F

FORMULA 1 IS IN THE DOCK. IT stands accused of dereliction of duty: a failure to deliver us the spectacle, sport and scintillating action expected from the pinnacle of motor racing. The case for the prosecution is strong, the body of evidence apparently overwhelming.

Exhibit A is one B Ecclestone Esq. While any sane person would have stopped digging, Ecclestone continues to excavate an even larger hole, his bizarre and increasingly provocative comments suggesting he actually relishes being so apparently out of touch, yet in a position of such absolute power. But then you know what they say about absolute power...

Exhibit B is the sport itself. Between Ecclestone, the teams and the FIA, F1 appears to be tying itself into a constrictor knot. The gulf between manufacturer teams and the independents continues to grow, contrived tyre and aero regulations make us forget what real racing is about, and the engineers and strategists appear to have more control over the racing than the drivers. And then there was the qualifying debacle.

Unsurprisingly, everyone is queuing up to give F1 a kicking. Even the drivers felt compelled to make their case. Yet still the sport seems in turmoil, unable to do anything except lurch from one clumsy crisis to the next. This makes me sad. Not because I disagree with the consensus that F1 has disappeared up its own diffuser, but because I still believe in F1.

So, as an F1 fan, I'd like to make 32 cases for F1's defence: Giuseppe Farina. Juan Manuel Fangio. Alberto Ascari. Mike Hawthorn. Jack Brabham. Phil Hill. Graham Hill. Jim Clark. John Surtees. Denny Hulme. Jackie Stewart. Jochen Rindt. Emerson Fittipaldi. Niki Lauda. James Hunt. Mario Andretti. Jody Scheckter. Alan Jones. Nelson Piquet. Keke Rosberg. Alain Prost. Ayrton Senna. Nigel Mansell. Michael Schumacher. Damon Hill. Jacques Villeneuve. Mika Häkkinen. Fernando Alonso. Kimi Räikkönen. Lewis Hamilton. Jenson Button. Sebastian Vettel.

If that roll of honour doesn't send a shiver down your spine, you're reading the wrong magazine. The cream of 66 seasons of intense competition between the greatest drivers in the fastest and purest of racing cars. So much history, so many heroes, so much exceptional talent and so much racing.

Many of you will say the World Endurance Championship puts F1 to shame. It's certainly a lesson in how complex technical regulations can create spectacular cars and flat-out racing. You might not care about what all the megajoules-per-lap stuff means, but it doesn't matter because the racing speaks for itself. And yet, despite its increasing popularity, WEC is not F1. At least not to me,

and here's why: I'd bet my shirt that if you asked most people who won Le Mans in recent years, the answer would be 'Audi' or 'Porsche', not 'André Lotterer, Marcel Fässler and Benoît Tréluyer' or 'Nick Tandy, Earl Bamber and Nico Hülkenberg'. Ask the same people who won the last Grand Prix and they'd say 'Nico Rosberg' or 'Lewis Hamilton', not 'Mercedes AMG Petronas'.

F1 has always been as much about the politics, brinkmanship and egos as it has the racing. The cars play their part too, of course, but it's the drivers who make F1 the benchmark of wheel-to-wheel combat. Whether they're the kind who drive their hearts out in good cars and bad – heroes such as Jean Alesi – or those blessed with political acumen to match their lightning skills – Senna, Schumacher and Alonso to name but three –

'If that roll of honour doesn't send a shiver down your spine, you're reading the wrong magazine'

Grand Prix cars allow them to shine like no other.

Looking back, F1 has been a part of my life for almost as long as I can remember. Whether it's fond memories as a five-year-old, sitting up in bed peering at scratchy images on a tiny portable television; the thrill of being given a pair of general admission tickets to the 1991 British GP and driving back and forth from home to Silverstone for Friday practice, Saturday qualifying and the big race on Sunday; or standing amongst the Tifosi at Monza. Throughout my life, F1 has gripped my imagination.

That '91 British GP remains the highlight, Nigel Mansell winning in front of his home crowd at the height of Mansell mania. I was there when Senna retired his McLaren, then when Mansell stopped to give him a lift on his sidepod after taking the chequered flag. I was too much of a coward to invade the track like everyone else, but I knew I was witnessing history. Not all races are like that, but when they are there's nothing like it.

Yes, F1 needs to change. Or rather the way F1 is governed, promoted and shared with its fans needs to change. And soon. Do that and the drivers will look after the rest, just as they always have. And us? We need to keep the faith. Those 32 legendary names tell me this sport of sports deserves that much. **X**

E @DickieMeaden

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

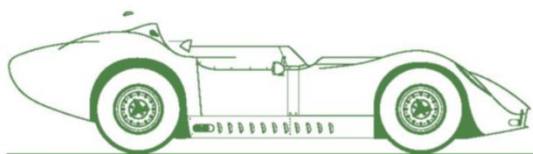
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BHL 152 is the first of ten continuation Lister Jaguar Knobblys built to celebrate Lister's 60th Anniversary. Completed in 2014, BHL 152 was retained by the Lister Motor Company for press use and as a factory demonstrator. It has featured prominently in various shows and publications worldwide and was the very first Lister Jaguar to emerge from George Lister Engineering since 1961. It is also particularly special as it was the first and only continuation Lister to be taken to Brian Lister's Cambridge home for his seal of approval following its completion. Brian was filmed inspecting the car and gave a 30 minute interview talking about BHL 152, and his time making some of the most successful racing cars of the 1950's. Unfortunately, Brian died just 10 days after inspecting the car, making this the very last Lister that Brian saw in person. A full-length, never seen before video of Brian's interview will be included for the new owner.

BHL 152 is finished in Masons Black with Oxblood Hide, has covered just 130 miles from new and is in immaculate condition throughout. It features the iconic Jaguar 3.8 D Type Engine with Wide Angle Cylinder head, complete with Jaguar D Type gearbox. The bodywork has been hand crafted from aluminium using the same body bucks as the original Listers from the 1950's and even some of the original mechanics assisted in its build. Complete with Historic Technical Passport, BHL 152 is ready to be prepped for race or would be equally at home in the most revered car collection. All ten of the 60th anniversary cars were sold within a matter of months of their release, so this is a rare opportunity to purchase a genuine and original Lister continuation car built to the exact 1958 specification.



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Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



Rich? No more than a passing interest in cars? If you answered 'yes' twice, then the hypercar world doesn't need you, says Porter

A

A MATE OF MINE IS VERY EXCITED

by the prospect of the new Aston Martin/Red Bull AM-RB 001. He's so excited, in fact, that he wants to pull together a cabal of wealthy friends and use their combined largesse to order one. You'd think

buying a car as a collective is a tricky idea. Who gets to use it on which days? Whose garage does it live in? What if two of you want to show off at a wedding on the same weekend? But that's not a problem in this case, because their theoretical purchase won't be used on high days and holidays and occasions when you want to make ex-girlfriends believe things are going very well for you. It won't be used at all. They would be buying it as an investment.

Twenty-odd years ago I'd have cautioned against such a thing. Remember what happened to all those XJ220 buyers who lost the limited edition branded shirts off their backs. From a distance, the rash of current and forthcoming ultramegacars could spell disaster with a capital D. And we know what else starts with a D. It's depreciation. But times have changed. Where once any new car was a guaranteed way to shed those pesky pounds, top-end stuff seems to be following the insane numbers attached to any half decent classic and only heading upwards. So buying an AM-RB 001, what with its melding of two velvet-rope names, its Adrian Newey connection and its strictly limited production run, seems like a decent investment.

If my friend gets his minted chums into gear, they'll buy it only for the theoretical cash bonus upon flogging it and, until then, they'll hide the car away waiting for the return to get plump enough. They won't be alone in this, I'm sure. I bet lots of people will be laying down their half-million-quid deposit, eagerly waiting for their 001 to arrive, and then sliding it quietly into the selected storage facility to silently wait for its own worth to rocket. And you know what? A pox on the whole bloody lot of them.

With many things bought as investments, it doesn't matter that the world never gets to see them. A Picasso can be locked in a vault but you can still find a decent quality print of it somewhere. A big pile of Petrus '55 was never going to yours to slam down your throat anyway. But cars are different. A real supercar isn't just about giving thrills to the owner with brain-squashing acceleration and cornering Gs to make the knees bleed. The job of a supercar is also to bring joy to the rest of us from the pure excitement of seeing it in the flesh. We need the electrifying experience of happening upon one in the street, spotting one rumbling around the streets of a strange town, even just glancing one going the other way on the M40. Supercars are like lions. No still photo or footage can quite capture the brilliance of a chance encounter in the wild. And, as

the owner of a supercar, it's your duty to bring delight to the world by roaming free about the land. Keeping one locked away is as cruel and morally bankrupt as caging a big cat.

It's not just cruel on us who can't see the car, either. It's cruel on car itself. A dimly lit, climate-controlled room is probably the best place for an old painting. Likewise a case of vintage wine. But it's not the best place for a complicated piece of engineering. Cars need to be used, otherwise oil coagulates, tyres harden and greasy bits seize. An unused car becomes trapped in perpetual infancy, paintwork uncannily clear and leather unnaturally smooth, denied the chance to grow a backstory and develop a history more interesting than the numbers on its spec sheet.

If you want to see the results of big-money investors moving

'It promises to be a phenomenal machine and the world deserves to revel in its majesty'

into things that should be used and then wilfully not using them, take a drive down The Bishops Avenue in north London, frequently claimed to be Britain's most expensive street. It might be the primo address in the capital but the often ghastly mansions along its length are, by and large, unoccupied. As a result, it's the most ghostly and unattractive road you could possibly hope to live on. Except you wouldn't live on it. You're a Russian gas magnate and you live in an underwater lair or something. The house near Hampstead Heath is just there for the financial return.

I fear the same fate for the Aston/Red Bull hypercar. There they are, slaving away to make it look gorgeous and drive like a ground-borne fighter jet and yet neither of these things will matter to many of its eventual owners. They might as well make the damn thing out of platinum for all that it matters. That's the modern, investable hypercar world. But how I wish it wasn't. How I wish every AM-RB 001 owner was up for driving their car as often as possible rather than thinking of their ROI. It promises to be a phenomenal creation and the world deserves to revel in its majesty. So, to my friend and anyone else already measuring up the correct size of Carcoon, please, please, *please*, reconsider. If you want a nice investment, just buy a bloody painting. ✕

✉ @sniffpetrol

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



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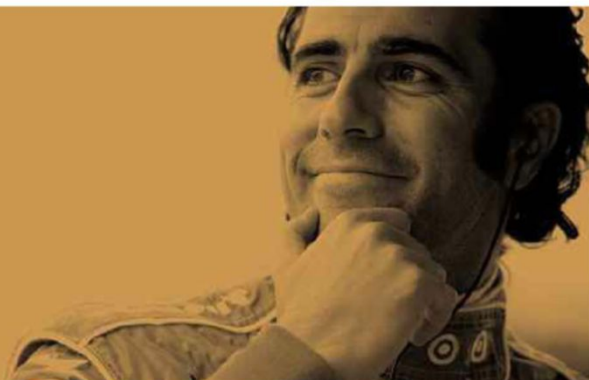
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Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



After a spell in DTM in the '90s, Dario made his mark in the US, winning four IndyCar titles. But what if it had all played out differently?

SOMEONE RECENTLY ASKED ME WHAT series and events I would have loved to have raced in if I hadn't devoted the best part of my career to IndyCar. Wow, I thought. That is some question. Mainly because there's a never-ending list of potential options. Motorsport is a bit of a freak show, with regularity rallies (not for me) to drag racing (okay, maybe) and everything in between, and if you're someone who just loves cars and loves going fast, it would be great to try nearly all of them!

The best way to find an answer is probably to make a list of all the disciplines that blow your mind; driver skill, format, environment – whatever. For me, two series immediately crop up: MotoGP and the World Rally Championship. My awe for the latter stems from the era of Colin McRae and Richard Burns. We were so, so very lucky to have them racing at the same time, along with the likes of Carlos Sainz and Tommi Mäkinen. The cars they were driving were also phenomenal and linger in the mind – Colin's Group A Impreza 555 and Richard's Impreza WRC2001 in particular.

I remember flying down to Australia in 2003 to watch the Champ Car final and having dinner with Colin, Robert Reid – Richard's co-driver – five-time 500cc motorcycle road-racing world champ Mick Doohan, and Barry Sheene, another utter fiend on two wheels who sadly died later that year. It was quite a cast, and after a few bottles of the local red, conversation naturally moved on to the topic of: 'So, who's the craziest out of all of us?'

Mick glanced my way and told the table that he thought racing wheel-to-wheel around an oval at 240mph was pretty crazy. 'You're the one who almost lost your leg racing those rabid two-stroke bikes!' I replied. 'And Colin, you drive a rally car through the trees at insane speeds and barrel-roll down ravines!' All true, but somebody then pointed out that the craziest man at the table was actually Rob, because at least the rest of us had some control over the machine we were in, or indeed on (with the two-stroke superbikes it really was like lighting the fuse on a firework). Nobody could argue with that assessment.

Is there anything that could possibly combine the savagery of WRC with the eye-watering pace of MotoGP?

Well, yes, and so if I had to pick one event to race in I think it would be the Isle of Man TT. I've no skill on bikes, so it's an unrealistic choice, but watch the footage Bruce Anstey kissing the kerb at the top of Bray Hill at last year's meet – or John McGuinness doing literally anything – and you'll understand why there simply isn't anything else like it, not even MotoGP. Those boys are made

of different stuff – and they're so normal off the bikes! The TT is definitely at the top of the list.

I think IndyCar, and especially Indy 500, would also be right up there if I hadn't already done it. For many it's a lifetime's dream just to get on the grid at Indy. Go back through the history of the sport and there are guys who strapped themselves into cars that had no chance of making the field and weren't safe – some paid with their lives just in attempt to qualify. That's what it means to people, but as a driver you're so absorbed in doing your job that you don't necessarily realise what you're part of. It was only when I drove the safety car the year after I retired that I realised just what a colossus of motorsport culture the 500 really is.

'Just watch the footage of Bruce Anstey kissing the kerb at the top of Bray Hill at last year's TT'

Am I allowed a third option? If so, it's the V8 Supercars at Bathurst. Firstly because it's an epic track and secondly because there is always a great cast of characters at the wheel. The cars are also hilarious – 650bhp from naturally aspirated 5-litre V8s guarantees that – and Mount Panorama really is the Nürburgring of the southern hemisphere. For anyone who grew up watching BTCC at a soaking Snetterton, it's simply another world – a faster, more exotic but no less ferocious world – of touring cars.

There is, of course, one notable omission here. Along with the Monaco GP and the Indy 500, the Le Mans 24 Hours is arguably *the* race in international motorsport – it's a cast-iron monument of the racing calendar and I was *this* close to getting there! I actually went to Weissach and met the Porsche guys back in 2013 with a view to racing the new LMP1 car – the 919 Hybrid. The programme was in the germination phase and there was a handshake-agreement that we'd work towards me driving the car in 2015. Unfortunately my career-ending crash at Houston put paid to that, and it was bittersweet watching Earl Bamber, Nick Tandy and Nico Hülkenberg taking the win last year. Still, along with the TT and Bathurst, it gives me something to dream about at night, and that's very much part of being a petrolhead. ✕

✉ @dariofranchitti

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

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PURE FUN

By focusing on feedback and stripping away filters between driver and tarmac, these five cars are designed to deliver the most satisfying and downright fun driving experiences possible. Join us as we look at why they exist – and find out if they deliver on the promise

by NICK TROTT

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT



PURE FUN

LET US LOOK INTO YOUR MEMORIES.

Let's find a moment from your past, your childhood, when you first discovered the thrill of controlling a machine. Was it a bicycle? Thought so. Ours too.

Can you remember those delicious feelings that rose up through the bike and soaked into your skin? Small changes in the surface texture, rippling up through the frame perhaps. Or the lightness in the handlebars as the front wheel floated above the ground. Or the gentle over-rotation of the pedals as the rear tyre struggled to contain the torque applied directly by your muscles.

The fearlessness of youth and a vehicle so pure; it was a blissful combination, right? You could judge every input, every control movement, to absolute perfection. It felt like you were clawing at the earth with your bare hands, generating speed as if there was nothing – no machine – between you and the ground. And that's a feeling we may never experience again.

Is it a coincidence that as we move towards an age where the responsibility of driving is migrating from human to computer, car manufacturers are building a seemingly endless supply of 'pure' cars? Perhaps the current generation of automotive engineers want to go out with a bang.*

No. Car manufacturers are building the kinds of cars you see on the left because despite recession, despite austerity, despite misdirected environmental concerns, you never stopped asking for them. For this, we thank you.

But there's a 'but'. These types of cars are becoming a genuine commodity, and thus barely a day passes without a manufacturer revealing another new 'pure' performance


variant, eager to cash in. But like all valuable commodities, people will try to fake it – they will try to sell you something that's packaged, stickered-up and sold as 'pure' but is nothing of the sort. We suggest you discover this 'new dawn of pure' while carrying a hipflask of cynicism.

We spent some time discussing this in the *evo* office (and drawing random doodles, see above). We discussed who means it, who is selling snake oil and who can put their hand on their heart and say: this is pure driving. It's this that led to the seemingly diverse selection of cars that we drive over the next few pages. Is a Huracán a more honest car with two fewer driven wheels? Can Aston Martin's GT8 really impose track feelings on a road driver? What happens when a bunch of pathological driving enthusiasts (including, erm, us) develops a Mini? And what's the result when Lotus, the Emperors of Pure, build the ultimate Elise?

Finally, arguably the biggest question. We know what Porsche has *tried* to do with the 911 R – the most hyped car of the year – but has it *achieved* it? This is a car engineered from the ground up to connect the driver with the road like no modern-era 911. It has to be spectacular, right?

If these cars deliver on their promise, they will conjure up old feelings. Perhaps not quite the pure joy of feeling the road through a few millimetres of rubber, some air, a few steel tubes, a thin rubber grip and a crappy foam seat, but a feeling that's equally rarefied and increasingly priceless. Of course we want more of these cars, but only if they're good. So over to you Aston Martin, Porsche, Lotus, Mini and Lamborghini, please be good. Please.

* Other conspiracy theories are available.



*What happens when Porsche
allows its engineers to build the
car they want? This.*

EVERYONE SAY 'R'

by JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* BARRY HAYDEN





S

OMETIMES YOU

have to remember to let the panic and chaos wash over you and savour the moment. This is one of those times. I've been at Knockhill Racing Circuit for the past couple of hours. My mission is to collect the 911 R at around midday, head south via the fantastic roads in the Scottish Borders region, and then deliver the car to the **evo** office in Northants early tomorrow. Features editor Henry Catchpole and staff writer Antony Ingram will then take up the baton and drive it home to Weissach (after the small matter of a cover shoot).

It sounds simple enough, but there's a barrage of calls and emails whizzing around about when the car needs to be in Germany, how we can squeeze in a full photo shoot on those brilliant roads, plus a cover shoot, and still make the deadline. It's not exactly life-and-death stuff, but on any other day it would feel fraught and stressful. Today? I couldn't care less. There's a Porsche 911 R with my name on it and, one way or another, I'm driving over 500 miles in it in the next 18 hours or so. That feels pretty momentous. When I finally lower myself into its carbonfibre driver's seat, trimmed in brown leather with houndstooth cushion sections, I'm determined to enjoy every second. With involuntarily held breath, I twist the key.

I'm excited. Of course I am. But even as I'm waiting for the 4-litre flat-six to catch, I do have worries of my own. I mean... what if I don't like it? What if the car that's been billed as the saviour of all things good and holy in 911s doesn't do it for me? I know it should be brilliant. I understand and cherish that it has a brand new manual gearbox, the most sublime normally aspirated engine, and that it's been honed to deliver its best on the road rather than on track. I love that it doesn't carry ridiculous downforce figures around its neck or deal in lap-time boasts. But what if all this stuff – this amazing stuff that we hold dear – doesn't quite add up to create the car we all think that the 911 R should be?

I sense some guffaws at this point. 'Of course it will,' you're thinking, right? But hear me out. The 997-generation GT3 RS, GT2 RS and, perhaps the finest of them all, the RS 4.0, were all 'ultimates'. They were the very best that Porsche knew how to build from the raw ingredients. Every gram was shaved, every ounce of grip extracted from the tyres, every micron of slack chased out. The feedback, the balance and the way they moved with the surface was natural, authentic and



inherent – a by-product of making the 911 better and faster. Just as Porsche has always sought to do.

Now things aren't so simple. The 991 GT3 RS is the best they know how to build. The R is something else. A deliberate step away from chasing minute gains and instead an exercise to imbue some of the classic 911 traits into the 991 platform. Porsche calls it a car for the purist, but I wonder if by dipping the new 911 in the goodies that used to define the breed, it might have created something a little less palatable. Could the car descend into some sort of pastiche?

The engine chunters three or four times and then ignites. The noise is deep and dirty and the single-mass flywheel rattles like the chest of a 60-a-day smoker. To the untrained ear it might sound like something's about to go horribly wrong, but to me it's a sign that things might be

perfectly right. My brow begins to unfurrow.

IT TAKES LESS THAN 100 yards to know this car is not simply a GT3 or GT3 RS fitted with a manual gearbox. The steering is so light and the ride a little smoother, but somehow the whole car feels busier and less locked-down. Compared to the RS in particular – which feels ten-feet wide in terms of its stability, or like the wings and splitter are working from 1mph – the R has a narrower, almost flighty feel. There's no question it feels the lightest and shortest of all the 991s I've driven, which should be useful when the opportunity arises to uncork the 4-litre engine.

This agility is, of course, no surprise. The 911 R is some 50kg lighter than a GT3 RS, at 1370kg, and the four-wheel-steering system has been recalibrated to deliver even greater

response. In fact, the detail work here is typically comprehensive: the PASM dampers are retuned, there are new carbon front wings, the magnesium roof from the RS, plastic rear and side screens, carbon-ceramic brakes as standard and a new titanium exhaust system. The gearbox uses the same casing as the PDK unit and the seven-speed manual found in the Carrera and Carrera S, but has six ratios... Don't be surprised to see it appear in the next-gen GT3 and RS. But what's really important about the R is the philosophy it adopts rather than the components used to realise the final vision. According to Porsche Motorsport, it's all about feedback, purity and driver involvement. That it has an engine that produces 493bhp at 8250rpm and 339lb ft at 6250rpm, does 0-62mph in 3.8sec and can hit 200mph is, presumably, just a bonus...



'It takes
less than
100 yards to
know this car
is not simply
a GT3 RS
fitted with
a manual
gearbox'





As it turns out, Knockhill is surrounded by some pretty mighty roads. This had passed me by on the taxi ride earlier, transfixed as I was by the driver's complete inability to master the manual gearbox on a car I assume he drives all day, every day. The irony. Anyway, I get to pin the R's throttle to the stop pretty much immediately (don't worry, the car's fresh from the track and nicely warmed through). The engine sounds different to the RS's, strangely; perhaps the result of a further 4.5kg of sound deadening being removed. It's a deeper, snarlier noise at low revs and you feel its rhythm through your back. It's not a sensation you can savour for long, though. Whether in second, third or fourth gear, the R responds to a wide throttle opening with astounding ferocity from low speeds, the bassy purr stretching and growing into an intense metallic rush that tears up the air into fragments as sharp as splintered carbonfibre. Wow. The R is *angry*.

Maybe it's the relatively subtle looks that makes the R's performance feel shocking. The RS has the ability to leave you awestruck, too, but in that car you tend to just enjoy the rabid final 1500rpm or so, *click-clicking* away on the paddles for an instant upshift. The R can provide that rush, too, but the manual 'box changes the way you operate the engine. I find myself leaving the manic top end for special moments and instead enjoy the vast breadth of performance. That means sticking in a single gear, usually third, and letting the revs rise and fall with the topography, the drama of the engine scaling its power curve washing over every nerve ending.

The gearbox itself? Sweet. Not too short in throw but economical, a nice meatiness to its weighting and a really satisfying precision. It's not quite as good as a Cayman GT4's 'box, but it's close, and miles better than the seven-speeder found in other 911s. More importantly,



Above: interior is beautifully simple; don't be fooled by the houndstooth trim on the seats, though – they're carbon-shelled and straight out of the 918 Spyder

**‘The R’s
bassy purr
grows into
an intense
metallic
rush’**



it does exactly what I'd hoped it might: it draws you deeper and deeper into the process of making the R unpick what's ahead and rapidly being sucked towards the windscreen.

We're soon spearing down the busy but well sighted A68 towards Jedburgh, picking off lorries and daydreamers happy to sit in their sooty wake. If I bother with a downshift before overtakes, the upshift requires care to smooth out and isn't even half as quick as the PDK. But that's okay – I'm in control and happy to accept the odd clunker if there's a peachy shift to cancel it out. I could select Sport to activate a downshift throttle blip, but it doesn't feel right. This is very much a do-it-yourself car. So I do.

It's nearly 3pm when we arrive in Jedburgh and brim the pared-back R with the inelegantly

named V-Power Nitro+. I'm even more excited about how the R will perform on the tumultuous roads beyond, but – and I hesitate to say this – I'm still wearing a slightly furrowed brow. Such is the weight of expectation on the R that I keep waiting for it to do something amazing. I'm not sure quite what that is but so far it hasn't happened. The engine and gearbox combine to spectacular effect, the steering's lightness takes some getting used to but then feels really natural and certainly has an ebb and flow not found in the RS's super-precise (but still slightly lifeless) setup, and the damping feels subtle but imperiously controlled. Yet I'm not getting that eureka moment that arrives within minutes of driving an RS 4.0, for example.

That nagging 'when's it going to happen?'

feeling doesn't go away as we head to roads only ever used by logging trucks, the odd tractor and maybe a heroically shabby Defender from time to time. So much so that I find myself going faster and faster in search of the magic. I'm only mildly offended when photographer Barry Hayden suggests he'd like to get out while I scour every scrap of tarmac and every last rev in my increasingly frantic quest. 'Perfect. Even less weight to worry about,' I mutter with a forced smile, before heading off again, hitting the limiter clumsily in first and second.

The next 30 minutes reveal the depths of the 911 R's ability – the magnificent control it exhibits in every situation despite that hyper-alert, almost wayward feel that initially separated it so clearly from the GT3 line, and

also the majesty of that engine and gearbox. Porsche may have stripped back some of the grip and downforce, but the R remains a car of staggering potential. Steer assertively into the lightness and the front Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s bite and push back at you, the car pivots, and then you can pick up the throttle really aggressively with no fear of a spike of oversteer. As each corner unwinds and entry speeds spiral upwards, the R continues to grip and dart with absolute accuracy. Only when you push way beyond what's comfortable on the road does the front finally start to slip away by a matter of a few degrees. A good lift stabilises the grip and brings the rear into play – just as it always has – but to my surprise the R is perhaps not as easily provoked as the GT3 RS, which uses its wider front track and bigger contact patches to almost kill understeer entirely and encourage a tail-led stance. Instead the R just howls along this fantastic road, utterly composed, hooked-up and the very vision of composure.

I've got a death grip on the wheel, though. Still waiting for that moment. Still can't define what I'm dying to experience. My mind wanders back to the RS 4.0, which seems the

perfect benchmark as a modern, hugely capable 911 that's still alive with feedback and seems to thrive on a driver working it hard. The R matches its speed and adds plenty more on top. Where the old RS would skip and leap along this road with wheels occasionally contacting the inner arches, with the cooling ducts and various other bits of protruding plastic being shaved by the raggedy surface, and the car generally more susceptible to being bumped off line or pushing into understeer and then oversteer, the R remains true, accurate and unfazed by even the most ferociously pock-marked sections. It's not even close to inert – there's real flow here – but it isn't as physical, demanding and enthralling as the 4.0. And the steering feel – wonderful as it is for an EPAS system – isn't even close.

It's right when I'm thinking these slightly depressing thoughts, when I slow down just a bit and relax at the wheel, that the R suddenly clicks. The steering does jiggle and wiggle with the surface and the front end feels light and the rear more pendulous; the whole 911 experience suddenly seems to intensify. I've been waiting for a dramatic 'ta-dah!' moment through gritted teeth and instead the R has ever so slowly crept

up on me. The death grip and crazy eyes have gone and the R is dancing the old 911 dance right underneath my seat. Suddenly every corner is an opportunity to let the car's balance subtly shift. Turn in and feel the front respond quickly and then start to lighten into understeer, back off to pull it back towards you and then squeeze on the power and get that sense that the throttle is steering the car as effectively as that lovely little hollow-spoked steering wheel. The R is good. The R is great. The R delivers.

The sunset doesn't. And as grey cloud becomes black sky without much of anything in between, we realise just how tired we are after a horribly early start at Luton airport. The emails have been boinging onto my phone as we've floated in and out of signal all day. I've studiously ignored them for fear that one might say the car needs to be back in Northants at 5am in order for Henry and Antony to make the deadline in Stuttgart, but now seems a natural time to see what's been decided. Much to my relief we have a reprieve and won't need to plod south on the M6 in the middle of the night.

Instead, I get another run along the same stretch of road and even Hayden seems more at

'It's a sort of factory hot-rod that feels crazily potent but with a real sense of humour'





Porsche 911 R

Engine Flat-six, 3996cc

CO2 308g/km

Power 493bhp @ 8250rpm

Torque 339lb ft @ 6250rpm

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

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

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

Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs, 410mm front, 390mm rear, ABS, EBD

Wheels 9 x 20in front, 12 x 20in rear

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

Weight 1370kg

Power-to-weight 366bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.8sec (claimed)

Top speed 200mph (claimed)

Price £136,901

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evo rating: ★★★★★

peace as the 911 R pours towards Newcastleton, a lamb shank and a cold beer. 'It's just so sorted,' he says, feeling the car's absolute security and infallible damping. At the same time, I'm being drawn in with subtle signs that grip might soon fall away, trying to master perfect downshifts and being reminded that 911s have always been about the detail, not big, obvious gestures. In that respect the R really does recapture some of the magic that's been swallowed up by raw grip and downforce in the 991 GT3 and GT3 RS.

THE NEXT MORNING IT'S COLD, bright and the road is sodden from a big dump of rain overnight. Once again, the 911 R impresses. It feels so agile and has phenomenal levels of grip, but also communicates clearly enough that you feel submersed in the experience even at half speed. The engine and 'box are nothing short of magnificent, the brakes astonishingly communicative and the car has an intense energy that means you just want to keep driving it, to keep learning more about its character, its capabilities and because it's pretty cool just to spend time in the company of that engine. Even on the M6 it feels special. 'Raw' is the wrong word, because the car rides beautifully at speed, and although the flat-six growl is ever-present, it's never tiresome. It just feels honest.

For me that's the most exciting thing about the R. It isn't a 991 with a dash of 997 added here, a splash of 993 there and the essence of '73 RS used to tie it all together. It's distinct, its own car. A sort of factory hot-rod that feels

crazily potent but with a real sense of humour. It respects all the great 911s that have gone before it but doesn't try to blindly copy anything. The result is as fast as you could wish, as useable as a Carrera S and has that edge that makes the new GT3 RS so incredibly thrilling when you push it right to its limits. It's a beguiling car in every sense. When I hand the key to Henry, I've half a mind to snatch it away again.

The 911 R swims around my head for the next few days and all the natural questions bubble up. Is it more fun than the GT3 RS? Will it be revered in years to come as the moment Porsche rediscovered what made 911s so special in the first place? Can it match the involvement – the specialness – of the old RS 4.0?

The answers aren't simple. Yes, the manual gearbox creates interactivity that the new RS does miss, but that car's ruthlessly focused character is arguably ample recompense. Had Porsche ever really forgotten what makes the 911 unique? Of course not, it's just the parameters have shifted ever further upwards and so those qualities have become less accessible. The 911 R does, however, prove beyond doubt that it's possible to skilfully balance supreme capability and lucid feedback.

Now, the big one. The RS 4.0. Is the R the car to eclipse it? For me, the answer is 'no'. Nothing will dim the brilliance of the previous greats. But after a few days to ruminate, I realise the really important issue is whether the 911 R is a great 911 in its own right. The answer to that, I'm pleased to report, is a resounding 'yes'. ☑

PURE FUN: PORSCHE 911 R

A16/440 DUKINGEN
N225/A25 LILLE (B42)
A27/A16/842 MONS
A2/EM/A7 CHARLEROI
E42/A15 LIEGE
E42/A27 DRUM
F29/42/80 WITTICH
E44/TRIER/LUXEMBOURG
E422/C2 BIRKENFELD
6/ES0 MANNHEIM
87 PIRMASENS
10 427 KARLSRUHE
8/BS2 STUTTGART
WEISSACH

Rendezvous

So determined were we to spend as much time in the 911 R as possible, we offered to deliver it back to Weissach personally. Anyone have a European atlas?

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

AROUND PRÜM, JUST ACROSS THE GERMAN BORDER, THE satnav gets rerouted. It's not a difficult task – I just unstick the piece of paper. Instead of following the direct route, we're going to take a detour onto the L16 across country. It doesn't really matter if we reach Weissach at 11pm or 1am and driving all the way there on motorways in this car would be a waste.

The L16 wriggles and writhes through shady forests and sunlit fields. It's wonderful to be released after the last few hours in Belgium. This feels like a sleepy part of the Eifel but that means no hubbub to disguise the R's yowling on the approach to villages. The beautiful free-revving sound is irresistible and having three pedals and less sound deadening gives you every encouragement to exploit it. The lightweight flywheel rewards quick shifts and the short throw on the six-speed 'box is happy to help. Nailing a downshift in an R, hard on the brakes, is a spine-tingling experience. Two in quick succession is even better.

Having said it's not a car for motorways, Autobahns aren't just any old motorways. A snappy refuel in Eifel West, then it's straight out onto two derestricted lanes weaving south at dusk. With fewer losses in the drivetrain thanks to the manual 'box, the 4-litre motor feels stronger than ever. With no rear wing you need to tread with more care through three-figure sweepers, but less downforce also means less aerodynamic drag and the result is a car that rips through its rev-range, even in fifth and sixth gears. Traffic is sparse and as a long empty stretch opens up we run all the way up to the magic double-ton. It may be the R's claimed top speed, but it feels like there is rather more to come. Perhaps we'll make it to Weissach before 1am after all. ☒



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PURE FUN: ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE GT8

by HENRY CATCHPOLE
PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

RACE

*Born of the sublime V8 Vantage but corrupted
by the altogether more extreme Le Mans race car, is
Aston Martin's new £165,000 Vantage GT8 the perfect blend?*

RELATION



RECARO

PURE FUN: ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE GT8





SOICHIRO HONDA SAID that racing improves the breed. Slightly ironic, given the big H's recent track record in F1, but it's a good statement and one that applies to plenty of other car manufacturers, too. Some of the greatest ever road cars have been homologation specials; creations that would never have seen the light of day were it not for a specific set of racing regulations. The Ferrari 250 GTO, the BMW E30 M3, the 993 GT2, the Integrale, the RS200... all were built as a direct result of competition.

Sadly these days we don't really see homologation road cars, but we do see plenty of inspiration taken from motorsport. We see it in carbon-ceramic brakes, we see it in the front arch vents of a GT3 RS, we see it in the laser lights of an Audi R8, we see it in the steering wheel of a 488 GTB, we see it in every inch of a Radical. Racing is shot through the double helix of many of *evo*'s very favourite cars. Why? Because racing is the ultimate expression of so many qualities that we crave in the best road cars.

Racing requires lightweight solutions, it requires the best damping, it requires the strongest engines, it requires a car to have balance in its handling. But perhaps above all these, racing requires a car to strive for the highest levels of interaction between man and machine. When your foot hits the brake pedal in a racing car, you need not just response and power, but also the feel to allow you to ease off as aero decreases, or avoid locking up right on the limit when it's wet. When you're deep in a corner with warm slicks clinging to the tarmac, you need to be held securely in a seat that makes you feel like an extension of the chassis. You also need to be able to tell when those same slicks are dipping out of their ideal operating window.

All of which brings us to the Aston Martin Vantage GT8. Not many road cars look at home in a genuine factory racing workshop, but I think the GT8 manages to blend in pretty well. In fact, if you painted it white or Gulf colours and slapped a number on it, I think it would remain incognito long enough to slip past security and out onto a grid. The inspiration for the limited-edition GT8 is Aston's Vantage GTE race car. The classes are confusing, but that's the V8 that races in the World Endurance Championship (and therefore at Le Mans), not the V12 GT3 that was the inspiration for last year's GT12 road car. The race car that's being prepped in the workshop when we visit is a GT8 that will compete in the SP8 class at the 2016 Nürburgring 24 Hours...

Compared to a GTE car, the road-going GT8

actually looks like the more elaborately aerodynamic proposition from the front. The additional carbon pieces that appear to hang the splitter from the red bodywork have small fins, while the splitter itself is more sculpted than the completely flat item on the green race car. It's what happens behind the GT8's front wheels that really makes it stand out among other road cars, though. Like the GTE car, there are significant cut-outs in the arches, allowing high-pressure air to escape. Regardless of the performance benefits, it's a gorgeous styling detail, exposing the minimalist tread of the Cup 2 tyres. At the back is where the race car reasserts its authority, with a significantly larger wing and diffuser, but the GT8's items are hardly small and I love the way the wing reaches backwards from the boot lid. The GTE regulations for this year allow the race car's items to be extended 100mm further than before, resulting in the wildly distended carbon confections it now has.

Over and above looks, however, I always think that what makes racing cars really intimidating initially is the noise they make. Unencumbered by muffling, the best race cars resonate in your chest and sound resolutely, threateningly angry. When they start up, however much you love the noise that emanates from the exhaust pipes, I swear the natural inclination is to take a step back. It must be something primeval (and sensible) in our make-up that renders us instinctively nervous around loud, furious sounds.

There's no question that the GT8 has the intimidation factor when it starts up. A new, big-bore titanium exhaust exits just above the rear diffuser (sadly not out of the side skirts like the race car) and Aston has taken out the secondary cats so it is megaphone loud. You actually need to be careful who is around when you fire it into life because it is capable of giving people the fright of their life. I know this because at one point during the test I inadvertently (and rather embarrassingly) manage to elicit screams from three women in a car park purely through plunging the glass key into the dash at the precise moment they walk past the rear diffuser. I literally couldn't have timed it better if I was trying and it is only because their shocked squeals chime in at a totally different register to the gruff Aston that I hear them at all.

If you want the full effect from the driver's seat, then I recommend parking backed up against a wall overnight. That first cold start in the morning is always the best anyway, and with the brick or stone to contain and reflect the sound it is just fabulous. The starter motor spins briefly and then there is a slight metallic crack as the V8



explodes into life, settling to a wonderfully deep rumble. Thankfully, after the initial eruption the way it idles isn't too anti-social, but this is not a car for shy retiring types or those with early morning commutes and neighbours they wish to remain friends with.

Of course, looking and sounding like a racing car is all well and good, but the GT8 needs to be more than just a poseur's trinket. It has something of a head start in this department, because the V8 Vantage (particularly in N430 spec) is already a rather wonderful thing, so if it is an amplified version of that then it should be onto a winner. So, after settling into the largely Alcantara and carbon interior, photographer Aston, the Aston and I all head out into the very leafy lanes of Oxfordshire.

There are two gearbox choices: a seven-speed Sportshift II paddle-operated automated manual or, as fitted to our car, a six-speed H-pattern manual. The gearknob looks a bit ordinary, but the short, relatively light throw of the stubby lever feels good. Given that the race car has a paddle-operated sequential, you might think the Sportshift 'box would be the racier option, but somehow the extra interaction between driver and drivetrain that you get with three pedals seems to make the manual feel like the more appropriate choice.

The fixed-back bucket seats are as supportive as you'd hope, although I'd want to get the Allen keys out and tilt them back a degree or two more if they were mine. What I wouldn't want to change is the simple, uncluttered steering wheel. The carbon door cards also deserve a special mention as they are sumptuously sculptural and look good enough to mount on a wall or plinth in a gallery.

I've said it before, but I'll say it again for those at the back – I like driving in the wet, especially when a car communicates as well as the Vantage GT8. And that's just as well, because nothing but rain and grey clouds are forecast for the next 24 hours. For the photos, we're heading to a section of road that I know relatively well. It's not the Nordschleife, but the way the road steeply climbs makes it feel like we're on the way up to Hohe Acht. And with the tightly packed trees in full spring get-up, it is certainly Grüne, if not exactly Hölle.

The GT8's Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres are indisputably designed for warm, dry conditions, but thankfully they are progressive enough that you can still push them to the limit and beyond when water is filling the limited tread. As soon as you begin to turn into a corner, the tyres filter subtle information back up through the hydraulically assisted steering so that you know how much more lock you can add and how quickly.

With the front balanced on the edge of breaking away, you can almost tease the front tyres through longer corners at times, just making tiny, quick adjustments with the steering as the weighting of the wheel flutters subtly. The fun thing is that while you're driving it on the nose, the rear is always

Right: Bluetooth and DAB as standard are amenities in stark contrast with the GT8's endless bare carbon and the ever-present howl of that 4.7-litre V8 engine



‘The
soundtrack
that fills the
cabin is pure
motorsport,
with a real
hardness above
6000rpm’

ready to be called into action. Either a little lift or prod of the throttle depending on the situation can have the rear of the car moving, and such is the beautiful poise of the V8 Vantage, with its engine tucked all the way back under the dash, that it feels like an easy, fluid transition of the load from front to rear. The ideal is to get the front tyres to the point where they are just sliding, then pick up the throttle a little more so that the rears break away too. Then, right there, balanced, you have the GT8 gliding in a genuine four-wheel drift.

Of course, if you're over-eager with the power in the wet then it's easy to find yourself travelling at a big angle very quickly, trying to look through an A-pillar as you chuck lock at the situation to keep things pretty. That's if you've decided to turn the DSC off, which doesn't really feel necessary when the semi-slack Track setting is so well judged.

A straight section of road bisecting a forest allows for a clear run up through the first few gears. Watching the gunmetal rev counter, with the curious anticlockwise sweep of its silvery needle, confirms what I thought I was feeling earlier when I was concentrating on where the road went next. There is a definite surge in power at 4000rpm and then another kick at 5000rpm. Even in a straight line the rear tyres want to light up if you're on full throttle as you go through these increments, and it feels like there is more than the quoted 440bhp. However, because the engine is naturally aspirated, it makes the Vantage GT8's power delivery and traction much easier to manage than the similarly Cup 2-shod BMW M4 GTS. Yes, the GTS has a bit more power and torque, but it's the turbocharged delivery that specifically makes the BMW feel spikier and harder to drive in the wet.

The 4.7-litre engine is hearty, rather than flighty and instantly responsive, the revs building and dying with a little more lethargy than you might expect. However, the soundtrack that fills the cabin is pure motorsport. It is sensationally loud, building from a rich burble at low revs into something with a real hardness once the V8 spins beyond 6000rpm and reaches for the 7500rpm limiter. The nice thing is that in the dry, the power is of a magnitude that you would find it easy to constantly visit the thrilling upper reaches of the rev range. Providing your eardrums could take it, of course.

With the photos done and photographer Aston off to catch a plane, I roam around middle England, diverting to favourite stretches and snippets of road. As you might imagine, the suspension gets a good workout, yet impressively the splitter doesn't once catch and although firm, the damping retains a pliant edge that means you never feel beaten up. The passive setup is obviously calibrated to work better above 40mph limits, and with pace you feel the car riding the road more contentedly, soaking up bumps in that transparent way that only fixed-rate dampers seem truly capable of.

Just occasionally, over bigger lumps, I think





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quickly’

that either a little more control is needed or the GT8 could do with losing even more weight. A saving of 100kg (with all the options ticked) over a standard Vantage is good, particularly given that things such as air con and satnav have been retained, but at 1510kg it is still no lightweight and it tips the scales some 265kg heavier than the minimum permissible weight for a GTE car.

Interestingly, one area Aston could have saved weight is in the brakes. The unsprung weight at each corner has been reduced by 2kg thanks to rather attractive magnesium centre-lock wheels, but the discs behind them remain steel, not carbon-ceramic. Presumably this was done to keep the cost of the GT8 down whilst mimicking the steel brakes that FIA regulations dictate the WEC car has to use. Brembo supplies the brakes for both the race and road cars and, although the weather means I can't really give them the toughest fade-inducing workout, the pedal feel is superb with a lovely progressive feeling through the travel as you increase the pressure.

I approached the GT8 with the aim of seeing how much of the feeling of a race car Aston had managed to give it. But of course, what it has tried to achieve, what anyone like Porsche with the GT3 RS or Mercedes with the SLS Black is trying to achieve, is far more nuanced than that. Creating a road-racer is a tricky business, because you have to instil those race car feelings of intimacy with the chassis and rawness of performance while maintaining enough pliancy in the suspension to tackle something even bumpier than the Nordschleife and enough usability to make it desirable to drive for more than half an hour.

I think Aston Martin has done a very good job. We will obviously have to get the GT8 back and drive it on dry roads and on track, but with greater friction between tyres and tarmac the feedback through steering and seat should only increase. It certainly possesses enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series, and the sopping-wet conditions have showed that none of the standard V8 Vantage's wonderful natural balance has been sacrificed in pursuit of increased lateral G. In this case, racing has definitely improved the V8 Vantage. ✖



Aston Martin Vantage GT8

Engine V8, 4735cc

Power 440bhp @ n/a

Torque 361lb ft @ n/a

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

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

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

Brakes Ventilated discs front and rear

Wheels 9.5 x 19in front, 10.5 x 19in rear

Tyres 255/35 ZR19 front, 295/30 ZR19 rear, Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2

Weight 1530kg

Power-to-weight 292bhp/ton

0-60mph 4.4sec (claimed)

Top speed 190mph (claimed)

Price £165,000

On sale Now

evo rating ★★★★★

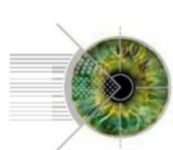
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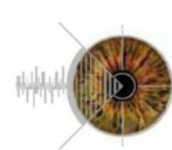
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S E R E N G E T I®

A red sports car, likely a Lamborghini Huracán, is shown from the rear three-quarter view, driving on a dark asphalt racetrack. The track has a red and white painted curb on the left. The background features a green grassy embankment under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The title 'BULL WHIPPED' is overlaid in large white letters.

BULL WHIPPED

by DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

It may be slower than its four-wheel-drive brother, but is the rear-drive Lamborghini Huracán LP580-2 the purer option, and a more satisfying drive for it?



GET IT UNDERSTEERING

a touch on turn-in. That's the key, because it means the car is poised and carrying just the right amount of speed. Then you open the throttle. In this car it needs to be a sharp, precisely measured input. The next step is to throw the corrective lock in. Strangely, you can't just allow the wheel to slip through your fingers; you really have to chuck it around. That should follow immediately after the throttle input, almost in tandem but just about distinct, like the two thuds of a heartbeat. Then you're sliding...

I suppose the rear-wheel-drive configuration is the purest of all because it does less of the work for you. It's the most demanding. And while a front-wheel-drive car can corrupt its steering under power and a four-wheel-drive car can do all sorts of unusual things as it shuffles drive fore and aft, a rear-drive car will only ever do one thing when you stand on the power mid-corner: try to spin. It's up to you what happens beyond that point.

The Lamborghini Huracán LP580-2 is an interesting case study in the discussion around drivetrain configurations because we can compare it directly to the four-wheel-drive version. It shares the LP610-4's

aluminium and carbonfibre structure, of course, as well as the screaming normally aspirated 5.2-litre V10. The engine has been detuned a touch for the two-wheel-drive car, though, so it develops 572bhp rather than the full 602bhp, but some of that deficit is offset by the 33kg weight saving that comes with binning a propshaft and a pair of driveshafts. There is therefore little in it between the power-to-weight ratios: 418bhp per ton for the rear-wheel-drive car, 430bhp per ton for the LP610-4.

The LP580-2's 0-62mph time is quoted as 3.4 seconds, two-tenths off the pace of the four-wheel-drive car, and its top speed is 199mph, compared with 202mph, which is a bit annoying. At £155,400, though, it undercuts the LP610-4 by a useful £30,000.

The transmission is a seven-speed twin-clutch unit with a limited-slip differential, and this particular car also has carbon-ceramic brakes and MagneRide adaptive dampers, but no Dynamic Steering. It happens to quite like a Lamborghini in bold red – it feels provocative, like a two-finger salute in the direction of Maranello – and in the metal the Huracán looks superb. There's a front three-quarter angle that makes it look impossibly low and wide, too, more fighter jet than road car.





We first sampled the LP580-2 on the international launch late last year (**evo** 218). Having driven it for a limited number of laps at the Losail circuit in Qatar, Jethro Bovingdon found a great deal to love, not least its wild drivetrain and exploitable chassis, but he concluded that we needed more time in it, especially some road miles, to deliver a full verdict. This is our opportunity.

The Huracán's cabin is an evocative place to find yourself because the view through the windscreen is pure supercar. The optional bucket seats are mounted a touch too high and they're as luxuriously padded as a monk's naughty step, but with the steering wheel offered right out to your chest, the seating position is pretty good overall. The layout of the cabin is dramatic, too, with acres of dashboard real estate between you and the base of the windscreen. For my tastes the interior is over stylised, though, like it's trying a little bit too hard to be the slightly off-the-wall cousin to the more restrained Audi R8 with which it shares its underpinnings. The quality of the plastics used for some of the minor controls actually falls short of the much cheaper Audi's, too.

Heading out onto Northamptonshire's back roads it quickly becomes clear that, in wet conditions, the four-wheel-drive car would

be better in just about every respect because you can still hustle it, whereas in the rear-driven car you're more inclined to flick it into Strada mode – which puts everything from the exhaust note to the stability control into its least interesting setting – and turn the radio up. If you do press on, though, you'll find that the LP580-2's traction is actually pretty good in the wet, which makes sense given that the weight distribution is heavily rear biased and the V10 is not a torque monster, but that does mean that when traction does finally give in, it does so at very high engine speeds. If you've deactivated the stability control system, you'll soon be needing new trousers.

But what if it's dry? The four-wheel-drive car remains the more approachable and it would be the easier one to extract performance from. But there are occasions when the rear-driven car is ever so slightly more exciting away from a corner.

The electrically assisted steering is overly light and rather vague, but that aside the LP580-2 really is tremendously entertaining on the road, with the taut body control, flat-bodied responses and masses of performance. You don't really find yourself dealing with the car's in-built understeer on the road because you're generally within the limits of grip; you'd have

Right: steering is a weak point, being too light and lacking feedback. **Below:** it may be a rear-driven Lambo, but it's still set up to understeer slightly in the interests of 'usability'





‘If you’ve
deactivated
the stability
control
system,
you’ll soon
be needing
new
trousers’

to be taking some enormous liberties to find the front axle short of turn-in bite.

This lower-powered V10 delivers its peak output at 8000rpm, rather than the full 8250rpm, so it doesn’t quite have the same ear-splitting fireworks as the 602bhp version, but it remains a very special engine indeed. The dual-clutch transmission is rapid, too, although I’m sure the R8’s is more immediate still, despite the hardware being identical.

In Strada mode the dampers feel quite relaxed and imperfections in the road surface are well isolated from the cabin. Flick the ANIMA (Adaptive Network Intelligent Management) switch on the steering wheel through Sport and Corsa and the dampers tense up and some pliancy is lost, but in all modes the quality of damping as the car lands into a compression really is superb. The LP580-2’s front end feels lighter than the AWD car’s, too, which gives an impression of heightened immediacy and response. The LP610-4 is probably the more complete road car overall, but the LP580-2 delivers greater highs.

A damp Bedford Autodrome is probably not the best setting in which to further explore the virtues of two driven wheels over four, but thankfully the warm ambient temperature and

occasional flashes of sunshine steadily clear away the moisture.

Let’s not concern ourselves with Strada mode here. According to Lamborghini, Sport is the fun mode, while Corsa is all about performance and brings a more neutral, less oversteery balance. In reality the differences feel quite subtle, and your own driving style has a much more profound effect on the car’s behaviour.

There are two main surprises relating to the LP580-2’s dynamic characteristics on circuit. The first is that, regardless of the ANIMA mode, there’s a fair amount of body movement, as though the springs have half an inch of marshmallow at the top of their travel. The Huracán doesn’t lurch and roll like a saloon car by any means, but looking at the thing you’d expect it to have the rock solid body control of a competition car. It isn’t a huge problem, but it does mean that the car can trip itself up a little when you really load it up through a corner; a sudden body movement or a small bump at the mid-corner point can cause the chassis to collapse into oversteer just when you think you’ve got it keyed into the track surface.

The second surprise is the understeer window. I’m not going to claim the LP580-2 pushes like an overloaded oil tanker, but there

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, LSD

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 carbon-ceramic discs (option), 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)

Price £155,400

On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

Right: rear-driven Huracán not as fast or competent as the AWD version, but for driver involvement rather than ultimate pace, it would be our choice both on road and track



is a definite understeer phase on the way into a corner. You're aware that the front end isn't quite holding the line you had anticipated and it's not unusual to sail wide of the clipping point. Soon enough you learn to trail brake and check entry speeds to keep the front axle on a line, but this Huracán would be a more entertaining car on circuit if that push could be dialled out.

It's there for a particular reason, though. Lamborghini has designs on being a leading player in the global supercar game, and it has concluded that to achieve its sales targets its cars must be accessible to all drivers. The Sant'Agata marque has a reputation for building fearsome, intimidating supercars, which is all well and good until you're trying to persuade a retired dentist from Florida that the Huracán isn't going to launch him into the clubhouse lobby at the first tickle of the throttle pedal. Hence the understeer. It feels safer. It is safer. And the rear-driven car has a slightly broader window of understeer built in than the AWD model because it will naturally be spikier at the limit.

Ultimately, there is enough grip front and rear that you can carry good speed and there's colossal straight-line performance, too, so the LP580-2 is hugely quick on track and it is very entertaining. But there's so much untapped potential. A more focused version with grippier tyres – the new Pirelli P Zero Corsa, perhaps – tauter body control and a more neutral chassis balance would be nothing short of spectacular on circuit.

Thankfully, there's a great deal more to a corner than the entry phase alone. The two-wheel-drive car really starts to make sense from the apex onwards, because it's just that much more engaging than the four-wheel-drive model. Naturally, the LP610-4 would be faster away from a corner because it has much better traction. However, the need to measure throttle inputs and respond to any yaw moments with the steering wheel makes the rear-driven car much more of a challenge – and therefore more rewarding – than the AWD car, in which you simply mash the accelerator away from a corner and leave the systems to do their thing.

And then there's the small matter of powersliding. It will never be big or clever, but neither will it ever cease to be really, really good fun. The four-wheel-drive Huracán will do it, in a sense. Approach a corner too fast, brake heavily on the way in to unsettle the rear end, let the car rotate, then stand on the power. You might need to dial in a small amount of corrective steering lock, but the four-wheel-drive system will do most of the work. That is still fun, but it's a very

prescriptive sort of oversteer that doesn't actually require a great deal of skill. The car does the work. It's not very pure.

It's a different matter in the LP580-2. As I've said, the key is to get the car understeering slightly on the way into the corner, because that sets your approach speed and means the car is balanced. If you go in too slow or too fast you'll either not turn the car around enough or it'll simply be impossible to control when you open the throttle.


So you've got the car pushing. The initial throttle input has to be so precisely measured because the Huracán is a square sort of car, all short wheelbase and wide tracks. Too little throttle and you won't unstick the rear; too much and you'll spin violently. The margin between the two is a hair's breadth.

The moment the rear tyres begin to over-rotate and the mechanical locking diff starts to tighten, you have to throw in the corrective lock. Normally, the caster effect spins the steering wheel automatically in your fingers, but if you wait for the Huracán to do the work, you'll drop it. You really have to kick the steering around if you're to collect the slide, which is an unusual sensation.

Now that the car is sliding and the diff's hooked up, feeding in the throttle with absolute precision is essential – too much and you'll power through the diff's sweet spot, too little and both rear tyres will find traction and hook up with all your hard work gone to waste. Now adjust the steering angle again and ride out a sweet, perfectly poised powerslide as the torque is shuffled between the Pirellis as the diff opens and closes to the commands of your right foot. It's at this point that you're prepared to sacrifice the turn-in understeer generated by the car's LSD for the greater control and precision it offers on the way out of a corner when you want to enjoy every last drop of power available to you.

This is a fiendishly difficult car to slide neatly because its oversteer operating window is so narrow. It's just so easy to get it wrong, as I do. A lot. It's like walking a tightrope, but when you get it right there's no sensation to beat it. And that's why, for my money, the LP580-2 is more entertaining on circuit than the LP610-4.

When we consider the anatomy of a drivers' car, we can be misty-eyed idealists. That means we can discard breadth of ability and all-weather performance and all that stuff, instead focusing on pure driving thrills in perfect conditions. Rear-wheel drive isn't always the best solution, but when everything falls into place it is, categorically, the most entertaining and rewarding means of deploying power to the road. 📌

A high-speed photograph of a red sports car, likely a Ford Focus RS, driving on a racetrack. The car is shown from a low front-three-quarter angle, emphasizing its aerodynamic design, including the honeycomb grille and dual exhausts. The background is blurred to convey speed, showing a green field and a cloudy sky. The car is positioned on the right side of the frame, with a white track line visible in the foreground.

‘It’s like
walking a
tightrope,
but when
you get
it right
there’s no
sensation
to beat it’



SOME LIKE IT HOTTER

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

*With the current John Cooper Works missing the mark for people like us, Mini has created a more focused version, the JCW Challenge. And **evo** had a hand in its development. So, did we get it right?*

TUNED MINIS HAVE ALWAYS been a part of my life. In fact they were imprinted on my DNA well before I was born, thanks to my dad having an early Mini in the mid-'60s that he tweaked to look, go and sound the part. I can remember looking at fuzzy Kodak photos of that car – Old English White with a black roof and black Minilites – and knowing that I too would have a snorty Mini one day.

When that day came – or rather when I talked my mum into selling me her nearly new Mini and then spent all my money on hotting it up over a period of years – I couldn't have been happier, or driven it with more enthusiasm. Anything that puts a premium on handling over straight-line performance is a drivers' car, right? And no car enjoys corners more than an original Mini.

Those formative years mean I've always had a bit of a soft-spot for the BMW Mini. I've run a couple as **evo** long-termers and enjoyed many memorable drives in them on road and track. There's just something about them that gets under your skin, a kind of infectious enthusiasm that unfailingly eggs you on. The car may have changed beyond all recognition since the Issigonis-designed original, but something of that car's energy has been passed down through the ages.

Two generations of Mini GP have proved what potential



can be released – plenty, as it transpires – but this new JCW Challenge goes several steps beyond anything we’ve seen before. It’s not as extreme a proposition from a usability standpoint, as it retains the rear seats, but in drawing from experience gained in the Mini one-make race programme, and partnering with specialist component suppliers, the limited-edition Challenge is Mini’s most concerted effort to bring race-car edge and attitude to a road-going car.

If you’ve been following the development story of the Challenge, you’ll know that **evo** has a vested interest, with road test editor Dan Prosser and contributing editor Jethro Bovingdon both having hands-on roles at key stages in the programme (see **evo** 223). Knowing their taste in cars, and knowing how good a well-sorted Mini can be, I’m unusually excited to be the first to try the finished article.

First impressions are very encouraging. People like you and me will recognise there’s something special about the Challenge, but its signals are subtle enough to pass by the casual observer. A nudge of camber here, 40mm off the front ride height, 20mm from the rear, 17-inch wheels with a bit of extra width, and tyre sidewalls bearing the same Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 legend as a Porsche 991 GT3 RS. It looks the part without having to draw attention to itself.

The big news with the Challenge is the chassis, which has new springs, adjustable Nitron dampers, thicker anti-roll bars and those lighter, wider Team Dynamics rims wearing Cup 2 tyres. Two settings for the manually adjustable dampers are recommended by Mini – one for road, one for track – but owners can experiment for themselves. This





‘The exhaust unleashes a fusillade of snaps, crackles and pops when you back off’

Left: interior is more basic than the regular JCW's as standard, with kit omitted to help save weight. Besides, air-con is so overrated, right?

Above left: Nitron dampers are manually adjustable through a series of 'clicks', allowing you to fine-tune the setup to your tastes

car is running the suggested road settings and the low-speed ride is unashamedly jiggly. You're left in no doubt that this is a serious car, but there's enough give to soften the sharpest edges. At speed the Challenge remains lively, especially on less than smooth roads. The wheels don't leave the ground, but the car can get itself into a bit of a pogo motion through awkwardly spaced bumps.

If you happen to be accelerating hard you also have torque-steer to contend with, courtesy of the new Quaife limited-slip differential. It takes a bit of hanging on to, but there's no doubting its effectiveness. You can get on the power really early in tight corners, putting every scrap of power and torque into the road, and you know you've got the whole thing singing when the car tightens its line as the diff really starts to work. On a fast, twisting, bumpy road you'll be working hard, but if you're prepared to roll up your sleeves and get stuck in, the rewards are there for the taking. There's plenty of grip and the balance is inherently neutral, but it's nicely throttle adjustable, so you can tweak your line mid-corner, or back it in with a lift on turn-in.

The engine remains unchanged from the regular JCW. That's to say 228bhp and 236lb ft of torque. Given the Challenge weighs 1215kg, that's a lively power-to-weight ratio and means a 0-60mph time in the low 6s, but the turbocharged motor is typically linear in its delivery, with a modest red line. In fact it's pretty much done and dusted

by 6000rpm, which is the way of the world these days, and a little disappointing. The tall gearing doesn't help the cause, either. Extend fourth gear to the red line and you're doing a good 115mph (where safe and legal to do so, obviously), so if you want to feel like you're working the car hard and not relying on mid-range torque, your fun is confined to the first three gears of the manual 'box.

Fortunately there are Sport and Track modes to add some zip. Personally I think a car like the Challenge should be in Sport mode as a default, with the option of switching to Normal or Eco, for it's what the car is all about. In truth you'll always want to drive in Sport. Actually I think you'll want to drive in Track mode, though this will mean ignoring the little dog-tag hanging from the natty remote switch that you have to press to engage the most aggressive mode. The tag warns you that Track is not approved for road use, though I can only assume this is because it makes the exhaust louder and unleashes a fusillade of snaps, crackles and pops when you back off the throttle. It really does transform the Challenge into a little firecracker.

The uprated brakes (330mm discs and four-piston Brembo calipers with bespoke Mintex pads) are palpably sharper and stronger than those they replace. There's immediate bite and a ton of stopping power, so you always have utmost confidence in your ability to wipe off speed quicker than you can gain it. If there's a criticism it's that



‘On a great road it comes together to raise its game in a way no other Mini does’

while they clearly have the power to stand the Mini on its nose, they don't have an abundance of feel. Coupled to a firm pedal that's slightly mismatched to the height of the throttle pedal, this means it's trickier than it should be to execute smooth heel-and-toe downshifts. There is an auto-blip function, but that's not the point!

So the JCW Challenge isn't perfect, but by definition a car with this set of priorities is not meant for everyone. By shifting the focus from all-round competence to sharply focused capability, it's inevitable some qualities are sacrificed along the way. The Challenge is just such a car. The ride is never less than busy, and can be combative on bumpy A- and B-roads. The brakes are sharp, the diff tugs and pulls on cambers, surface changes and white lines and the engine only really gives its best in Track mode. If that paints a picture of a car that can be hard work to live with then you've read me correctly. But. When the planets align and you find a great piece of road with no traffic, it really comes together to raise its game in a way no other Mini does. It gives you moments to savour and puts a smile on your face.

Yes, it's boisterous, but it has an energy and intent that's very clearly aimed at those of us who are prepared to give a little, or even a lot, in terms of daily civility for a gain in aggression, response, ability and enjoyment. I'll

Mini John Cooper Works Challenge

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo
CO2 155g/km

Power 228bhp @ 5200-6000rpm

Torque 236lb ft @ 1250-4800rpm

Transmission Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

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

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

Brakes Ventilated 330mm front discs, solid 280mm rear discs

Wheels 17in front and rear

Tyres 215/45 R17 front and rear

Weight 1215kg

Power-to-weight 191bhp/ton

0-62mph 6.3sec (claimed)

Top speed 152mph (claimed)

Price c£32,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

have to wait to drive the Challenge on track, but rather like an RS Renault, or even an RS Porsche, I don't feel the need to drive it hard, or indeed drive it on track, to fall for what it does, how it does it, what it represents and what making that choice says about me.

If there's a general criticism to level at BMW's Mini it's the overt marketing and non-threatening, female-friendly image. It's a strategy that's worked brilliantly for the brand, but rightly or wrongly it has also got in the way of the JCW's credentials as a bone fide drivers' car. OK, a bone fide blokes' car. The GP special editions offered a more extreme driving experience, but their overwrought styling has proved a distraction.

The JCW Challenge feels like a departure from that. A more authentic, no nonsense, no excuses, drive-it-to-the-Nürburgring-and-kick-ass kind of hot hatch. A £30k-plus price tag is big money for a Mini, but true special-series cars built in relative handfuls (only 100 Challenges will leave Plant Oxford) don't come cheap. The development team – including Prosser and Bovingdon – wanted to create a road car with the feel and character of a race car. They wanted to give us a Mini with motorsport pedigree, fit to stand alongside today's breed of hardcore hot hatch. I'm pleased to say they've delivered. The boys done good. ☑



C70 Brooklands 1926 Chronometer

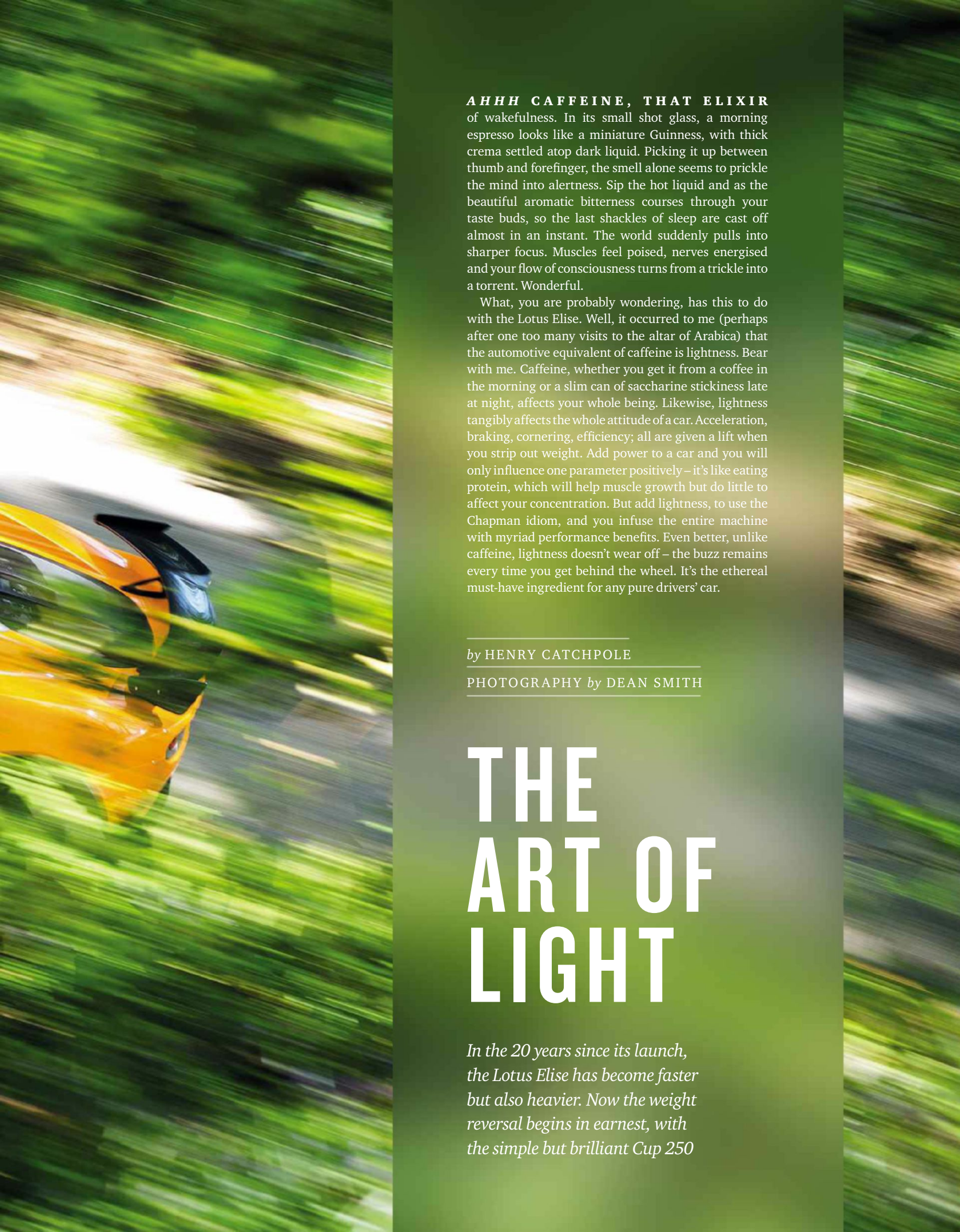


Christopher
Ward



LOTUS ELISE CUP 250





AHHH CAFFEINE, THAT ELIXIR of wakefulness. In its small shot glass, a morning espresso looks like a miniature Guinness, with thick crema settled atop dark liquid. Picking it up between thumb and forefinger, the smell alone seems to prick the mind into alertness. Sip the hot liquid and as the beautiful aromatic bitterness courses through your taste buds, so the last shackles of sleep are cast off almost in an instant. The world suddenly pulls into sharper focus. Muscles feel poised, nerves energised and your flow of consciousness turns from a trickle into a torrent. Wonderful.

What, you are probably wondering, has this to do with the Lotus Elise. Well, it occurred to me (perhaps after one too many visits to the altar of Arabica) that the automotive equivalent of caffeine is lightness. Bear with me. Caffeine, whether you get it from a coffee in the morning or a slim can of saccharine stickiness late at night, affects your whole being. Likewise, lightness tangibly affects the whole attitude of a car. Acceleration, braking, cornering, efficiency; all are given a lift when you strip out weight. Add power to a car and you will only influence one parameter positively – it's like eating protein, which will help muscle growth but do little to affect your concentration. But add lightness, to use the Chapman idiom, and you infuse the entire machine with myriad performance benefits. Even better, unlike caffeine, lightness doesn't wear off – the buzz remains every time you get behind the wheel. It's the ethereal must-have ingredient for any pure drivers' car.

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

THE ART OF LIGHT

In the 20 years since its launch, the Lotus Elise has become faster but also heavier. Now the weight reversal begins in earnest, with the simple but brilliant Cup 250



‘The whole car changes direction without protest’

And of course, if you have to pick a car company for which lightness is the leitmotif, then Lotus is still the one that springs to mind. In recent years, however, this accolade has begun to look a little less well deserved, with the kerb weight of an Elise straying ever further from its original late-'90s headline figure of 731kg. The Elise Cup 220 that this new Cup 250 replaces had crept up to 952kg. Admittedly, some of the additional weight was inevitable or simply beyond the control of the engineers in Hethel. Airbags were not a feature of that original car, for example, and while supercharging brings more power, inevitably it also brings some weighty hardware. Likewise more aero, bigger wheels, wider tyres and larger brakes all add performance, but generally at some cost on the weighbridge.

However, when Jean-Marc Gales arrived as CEO at Lotus in 2014, he also perceived areas where weight had snuck in unnecessarily. He demanded that an Elise be stripped down and every component scrutinised to see if it was doing the best possible job (not just in terms of weight, but also cost and efficiency of construction). I suspect we will see more evidence of this approach in the future, but the general weight-watching drive within the company has already yielded results in the

car you see here. The headline savings for the Cup 250 come in the form of a smaller lithium-ion battery (10kg), lighter forged alloy wheels (1.5kg) and carbonfibre seats (6kg). However, other things such as the deletion of the engine beautification cover (1kg) and a redesign of the engine air-intake duct (1kg) arguably highlight Lotus and Gales' attention to detail even more readily. Overall, 21kg has been shaved off compared to the Cup 220, and a further 10kg can be consigned to the ether if you spec the aero kit in carbonfibre (as it is here).

DRIVING ACROSS TO WALES IN THE ELISE

Cup 250 early on a sunny May morning, all the requisite sensations of a lightweight car are very much in evidence. The car is alive and constantly reactive to inputs. I'm not travelling that quickly, yet there is delight in the deftness with which the Elise tackles roundabouts. It's not flighty, but the whole car changes direction without any protest. You think, it does.

There are of course downsides, too. For a start, I'm not sure I could hear a radio even if there was one, because the bare aluminium tub combined with near-slick tyres transmits a lot of road noise into the cabin. And while you're sheltered from the elements with the

roof up, you are nonetheless very acoustically aware of the wind. If our car weren't fitted with the (sacrilegious, but secretly welcome) option of air conditioning, I would be gently simmering in the heat of the summer sun, too. But somehow these inconveniences all add to the experience of driving, even enhance it due to the extra layers of information being relayed. I think it's nice to feel that little bit closer to the environment you're driving through – especially when you reach roads and views as good as those in the Elan Valley.

It's all very beautiful as we climb a deserted single-track road. The bluebells are in their last hurrah and my peripheral vision is azure in hue as the banks blur past. Meanwhile the sun filtering through the tall trees is throwing a keyboard of shadows across the road. The nature of the sightlines means that it's a series of short sprints between corners and once again the lack of mass means the Elise responds eagerly to every throttle input. The flyweight gearshift fits the lightweight

theme, too, the aluminium lever flicking easily through its throw, making a slightly clattery noise as it goes.

It's a shame that the engine isn't more characterful. There is a hint of supercharger whine and the overall sound isn't unpleasant. Likewise, the way the 1.8-litre Toyota unit delivers its 243bhp and 184lb ft is linear and incredibly effective, but I do yearn for some of the old spirit of a VHPD K-series. A bit more crescendo to the delivery, a smidgen more bark to the soundtrack.

Leaning heavily on the brakes is probably the most obvious indication of a car's mass or lack thereof. As always in Elises, there is a slightly annoying loose bit of travel at the top of the brake pedal before you meet any proper resistance, but the actual retardation once the pads bite the 288mm discs is addictively strong and you never feel like you're in danger of triggering the ABS. I'm not one for particularly late braking on the road, but the way the Cup 250 inspires confidence means you will inevitably brake later and harder and still feel



Right: supercharged 1.8-litre Toyota unit delivers 243bhp to the rear wheels; carbonfibre wing contributes to 155kg of downforce at top speed



safely within your personal acceptable margins.

I was preparing to write something about the Elise not being the right car for lots of aero addenda, with the Exige being the one more suited to the 'track refugee' look. But when I park it up in the sunshine on the mighty Claerwen dam with the roof off, wider tyres filling the arches, splitter and diffuser drawing it closer to the ground, the Cup 250 looks fantastic. Perhaps it's just me, but I can't help thinking there's something of the mid-'60s Targa Florio cars about it.

After a brief pause to enjoy the warmth, we head off back down towards the Garreg Ddu dam and then on to the beautiful Ystwyth valley. Some cars do a very good job of giving the *impression* of lightness, but it is a road like the one that runs along this valley that will eventually pull back the curtain on the charade. Body control will eventually be lost as mass can be contained no longer. Conversely, this is the sort of road that lets a good lightweight shine. The way that the Elise tackles the bumps and even occasional yumps with such aplomb, never crashing through its travel yet remaining supple enough for the tyres to retain constant contact, is something only a lightweight car could manage. Even over a vicious jump that I fear might be the little

Lotus's undoing as it kicks up the rear, it rejoins the tarmac with the soft sensation of a tired head sinking into a plump hotel pillow.

A few times I have to recalibrate, upping my own expectations of the speed that is comfortably possible through a section of bumpy bends. The Elise is hardly ever deflected from its line and has surprising amounts of travel to lean on. Although it feels busy underneath you as its suspension deals with the rapid-fire lumps of the B4574, there is an overriding sense of composure. It's like a dancer with feet working overtime while the core keeps the topline perfectly still.

If there were one thing I would change, it would be the tyres. When I drove the Cup S last year, it was wearing Yokohama's Neova rubber. Now, however, Lotus has upgraded the tyres to the distinctive tread of the Yokohama A048. The result must surely account for a large proportion of the four-second improvement in lap time around the Hethel test track, but I think it prioritises grip over adjustability just a little too much. Even on the Neovas it was a car for clean lines rather than constant adjustment, but there was just a bit more malleability. On the tenacious A048s there is almost no unsticking the 250 on the road. When I do find the



Above: Alcantara-trimmed carbon seats not only look great but also save 6kg. **Left:** Cup 250 fizzes down B-roads but never feels crashy – even when landing



‘Although it feels busy underneath you, there is an overriding sense of composure’

Lotus Elise Cup 250

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1798cc, supercharged
CO2 175g/km

Power 243bhp @ 7200rpm

Torque 184lb ft @ 3500-5000rpm

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

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

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

Brakes Ventilated and cross-drilled discs, 288mm front and rear, ABS

Wheels 16in front, 17in rear

Tyres 195/50 ZR16 front, 225/45 ZR17 rear
Weight 931kg

Power-to-weight 265bhp/ton

0-60mph 3.9sec (claimed)

Top speed 154mph (claimed)

Price £45,600

On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

limits during a few repeated runs for Dean Smith's Nikon, the breakaway is thankfully progressive and well telegraphed, but due to the high lateral G you are pushing when it happens, it's not something that feels especially comfortable on the road.

Better to keep things just below the limit and revel in the fact that the modest kerb weight means the Elise's steering can do without any power assistance. You are never in any doubt about how much load is on the sidewalls of the front tyres. The small steering wheel is constantly busy, moving with the cambers and bumps, letting you know exactly what the front wheels are dealing with. It doesn't feel like a fight, or even distracting – it's just background information that you assimilate through your hands and almost unconsciously use to inform other inputs. With more load through the corners, the smaller, busier movements diminish and the weighting of the wheel comes to the fore as you feel how hard you're pushing the Yokohama rubber on that outside front wheel.

The steering is matched by the three aluminium pieces of sculpture hanging in the footwell. Pedal position is one of those things that should be so simple,

yet is rarely done well. In the Elise there is room so that your feet don't feel cramped, but the spacing is such that you can move across the three quickly and efficiently.

It helps when the sun's out, you're in a deserted mid-week Wales and you've got one of your best friends taking the photographs, but I loved driving the Cup 250. In my eyes it's not quite the best Elise there's ever been, but according to Lotus it is the quickest. In order to get nearer to the former accolade, I would risk sacrificing the latter boast and run the car on marginally less aggressive tyres; trackday addicts might disagree.

Yes, lighter cars exist, but you're into the much more compromised world of Caterhams and Atoms. What the Elise remains a shining example of are the benefits that those unshackled, low-inertia, buoyant sensations that lightweight brings to the thrill of driving. And it would be great to see other manufacturers trying to produce something in the sub-1000kg bracket. Alfa should be applauded for trying with the 4C, but I want to see Porsche, BMW, Mercedes et al being a bit radical (no pun intended) and having a go, too. Let's see Ford bring its hot hatches back below the ton. Come on designers, have a coffee and then pick up a pencil. ✕

CONCLUSION

by RICHARD MEADEN

PURE THRILLS COME IN MANY SHAPES and sizes, and at a wide range of price points. If the ingredients are right, there are no barriers or boundaries to where you might find an exceptional driving experience.

Pure thrills don't rely on raw power. And though clearly none of the cars we've driven are exactly sluggish, pure thrills don't depend on searing pace, either. Sometimes it's simply the *idea* of a car that creates that elusive frisson we crave. A manual, dewinged Porsche GT3 might leave some people scratching their heads, but for us the 911 R is intoxicating catnip. A fizzy hot hatch with racing genes has the same effect, too – we're hooked before a wheel is turned.

What else have we learned? That pure thrills rely on a level of interaction. You can get an adrenalin rush from most high-performance cars, but it's those built with the human component in mind that engage us most completely. This connection doesn't have to be via a clutch pedal and gearstick, though of course it does help. Sometimes it's simply a matter of removing a layer or two of

technology, perhaps paring back the comfort and refinement and almost certainly taking a step back from the pursuit of mainstream goals and crushing capability for a sweeter and more fleeting source of satisfaction.

Drive a 991 GT3 RS and you're guaranteed a kind of pure thrill, but it's one married to the notion of laser-guided precision and electric immediacy. Similarly, when you're behind the wheel of a regular all-wheel-drive Huracán the challenge is how brave or foolish you're prepared to be in probing the extraordinary limits of its chassis. Both are sensational and, yes, thrilling cars, but in leaving you awed they also leave you craving a less binary experience. The finest drivers' cars are about nuance. Shades of grey, not black or white.

The 911 R, rear-drive Huracán and Vantage GT8 deliver that because they rely on more of your inputs. They let you get closer to the process of making them work. Inevitably that means not every up- and downshift will be perfect, nor will every corner be taken in a flurry of wheelspin and opposite lock. But when they

are, the thrill, and the satisfaction, is deeper and more lasting because we've played our part.

The Porsche, Lamborghini and Aston may be fantasies for most of us, but cars such as the Lotus and Mini are more realistic aspirations. To drive a car as light and finely honed as the Elise is to experience something otherworldly. Minimal mass, maximum poise. A deftness that leaves heavier, gripper and more powerful cars feeling excessive and ham-fisted. A great Lotus is an epiphany. And the Mini? Well, as I discovered, that plugs you into an entirely different kind of purity. That where you lose yourself in the simple, naive thrill of chucking a feisty little car around just for the hell of it.

We are drivers, not machine operatives. It's what separates us from the dead-eyed, disengaged zombies that ply our roads, and what shapes our taste in cars. So celebrate the fact there are still brands and engineers out there willing and able to indulge us. So long as they continue to build such captivating cars, we'll continue to seek and crave the pure thrills that only they can deliver. ✕



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STREETS





FASTEST STREET CAR

AHEAD

Passed up that GT3 RS because it didn't fit your definition of a 'daily driver'? Pathetic. Step inside the contradictory, political world of street-legal dragsters and the machines that take the notion of a 'road-racer' to the extreme...

by JONNY SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHY by MATT HOWELL,
MATT WOODS & JULIAN HUNT



M

MEET LARRY LARSON.

Since 1988 the Missouri-based race car builder/driver has been 'proving a lot of philosophies' in his twin-88mm-turbo 9.2-litre 1966 Chevy II Nova. How? Well, driving across America within a week whilst setting quarter-mile records at the end of each gruelling driving day *and* carrying all his necessary belongings, for example.

He's won that event, called Drag Week, five times. More important (to Larry, at least) is that he's always finished it, and not needed to tow a trailer-full of parts. The Nova has wind-down windows, DOT-approved tyres, runs on 'pump gas', satisfies suspicious highway cops and yet serves up strip numbers beyond the reach of many pure race cars. 'I put 3500 miles on it in a year once,' says Larry. 'Doesn't sound much, but for a car this fast, in this state of tune, that's a lot.'

And just how fast is Larry's two-ton Chevy? It has run numerous seven-second quarter-miles, but has a best of 6.93sec at 211mph. We hear that a LaFerrari has managed 9.70sec at 149mph on the drag strip...

'When it runs at 210mph it sits so high up it's a little spooky. I don't want to go faster in it, because it'll turn into a plane. It's already in the sixes. That's enough. It'd be cool to have a new supercar, but practicality wise I'd probably wear it out. I wouldn't drive it like most owners do.'

It's not just the North Americans who are pushing street-legal boundaries. Thanks to our more accepting MOT regulations on older cars, the 'world's quickest street car' typically ends up being a two-way scrap between the Brits and the Americans.

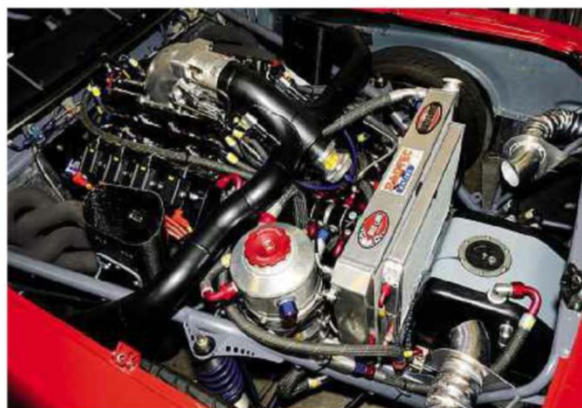
Steve Pateman, a mechanic from Hitchin, built a normally aspirated 11.6-litre Vauxhall Calibra in the '90s. Why a Calibra, one of the most unloved performance cars ever?

'I raced a Mk1 Escort but needed something longer, more stable – Calibras were very aerodynamic for their time. The intrigue for me is how to make a 1250bhp, 1250lb ft car work with a road tyre. It was the first car into the eights [seconds over a quarter-mile] on a true block-tread tyre. I raced 13 years non-stop and won five championships, but it was more about pushing the car quicker with as simple a setup as we could.'

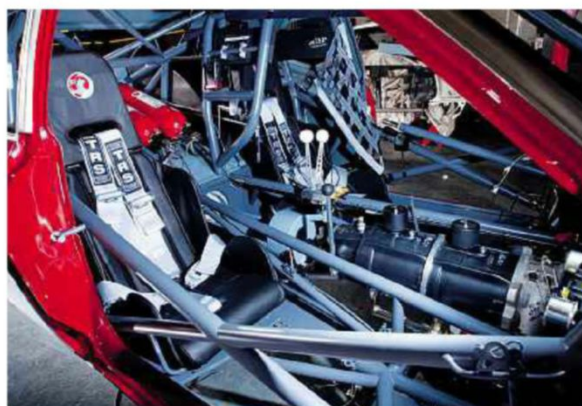
Left, from top: Larry Larson's 9.2-litre Chevy II Nova; Rod Saboury's 1963 Corvette Stingray lays down 2400bhp; Steve Neimantas recouped some of the cost of building his drag-racing Conti GT by selling the original drivetrain; the famous Red Victor 3, which now boasts an unhinged 3000bhp (also shown on opposite page)



**“AFTER EVERY RACE
I HAD TO LITERALLY
HAMMER THE
FLOORPAN BACK
INTO SHAPE”**



Left: small-block V8 with 88mm turbos needed for a sub-seven-second quarter-mile run.
Right: Saboury's Vette still runs on road-legal tyres, though, and indeed is fully road-legal



In the early 2000s, Pateman's Calibra was Europe's quickest street-legal car. His engine, a carb-fed ex-Pro-Modified-class unit with reduced compression for longevity, has remained in this form for over a decade. He and three Brits shipped their cars to Louisiana for a huge street race event in 2005. They wanted to prove the strength of this little island. Steve won. The world's fastest street car was a Calibra. Some Americans were not pleased... and neither were some Brits.

Step forward Wolverhampton's Andy Frost, who's probably enjoyed the most column inches for 'World's Fastest Street-Legal Car' (see *evo* 151). Andy's creation is based upon another Vauxhall – a 1972 Victor. Evolving over 30 years, 'Red Victor 2' eventually became a 2200bhp, 2000lbft 9.3-litre ultra-Vaux whose quarter-mile peaked with 7.4sec at 197mph. The sprint to 153mph took 4.8sec – roughly the time it takes a V8 Vantage N430 to hit 62mph.

Like the majority of the breed, Andy's Victor uses a twin-turbo and electronic fuel injection recipe atop its V8. Laptop mapping allows the engine to either deliver colossal boost or act docile for component longevity and 'streetability' – a key word in this context.

But what is 'streetable'? This is where it gets contentious. Is it the raw MOT certificate and tax disc that defines a street car? Or a car that can drive for hours without mechanical failure?

'That's a conversation that will never get settled,' laughs Larry Larson. 'Everyone has their own vehicle and idea. Some want air con, heater etc. Bottom line: if it's legal in the state you live in, then I guess it's a street car. They're all race cars, but it's degrees of race car! In my twisted mind they still need to resemble a real car. Not some kind of hacked up clown car.'

Here in Britain, the Street Eliminator drag series acts as both a benchmark for road-legal drag cars and a catalyst to speed addiction. 'Whilst there is no limitation for engine size, competing cars must attend a mandatory 20-mile road cruise – come rain or shine – before they can qualify,' explains Jon Webster, revered race car builder and driver of a subtle 1964 Mercury Comet that reaches 187mph in 7.42sec.

In other words, if you break down, you can't race. If your horn doesn't work, you can't race.

'In Street Eliminator, we have to cruise on the same road tyres we race with. The US Drag Week is amazing, but different. They're allowed to run slicks and wheelie bars now, so more power can be put down. The most common issue with these cars is not lack of power but

traction. Another vital factor is chassis control.'

Besides satisfying scrutineers at tracks and cocooning your skeleton, converting to a tubular chassis also sheds weight and allows better tie points for reworked suspension and engines. Andy Frost's Red Victor 2 ran nines in the '90s, but the brutality of the launch rippled the chassis. 'After every race I had to literally hammer the floorpan back into shape.'

Every racer treasures their own accolades. John Sleath claims that in 2005 his Audi 80 was the first street car into the 8.0sec bracket, but Steve Pateman was the first car into the eights. Sleath reportedly was the first to break the 180mph mark on pump petrol; Andy Frost claims he was first to hit 190mph. Sleath was first in the UK to run a seven. Andy was first to run a backed-up seven. You get the idea...

Predictably, people tailor arguments to suit themselves. 'The proclamations are always self-proclaimed,' says Webster, 'because everyone cannot meet in the same country on the same day on the same track. Until there's a universally agreed condition then the street car definition will eternally be argued.'

In 2010, Frost, keen to claw back his title, completely re-imagined his Vauxhall to create Red Victor 3 (see *evo* 167), this time as an all-out, FIA-approved Pro Modified race car. Think

“ON TRACK IT’LL SPIN THE TYRES ALL THE WAY TO 190MPH IF GRIP’S NOT THERE”

3000bhp of composite-bodied, tax-exempt, methanol-burning anger, but with indicators. Never before had this been achieved. With the envelope not so much pushed but dynamited open, Frost's streetability became a token gesture as he went headlong into the sixes, reclaiming the 'world's fastest' title in 2012 with a PB (on slicks) of 6.40sec at 229mph.

'To run these numbers and compete in a class, I had to comply with Pro Mod rules but with street trim in mind,' says Frost. 'I don't really give a shit about Drag Week or its organisers. I've been to race in the States twice and it nearly bankrupted me. I don't need to go there to prove myself. I drive here where I live. Drag Week's unlimited class is literally a competition you have to build a car for.'

Frost had snatched the crown from Larson and drag-race veteran Rod Saboury, who has a long affinity with making old Vettes rapid.

Maryland-based roofer Saboury purchased the personal license plate 'INTHE6S' and, in his own words, 'spent two years strictly planning before building'. His 1963 Stingray is as much a show car as a drag car, featuring everything from cup holders to a cooling system incorporated within the chassis tubes.

Ever innovative, Saboury went against the grain with a small-block V8 (a mere 6554cc) and fed it 88mm turbos. In September 2009, his 2400bhp Vette lived up to its registration plate with run of 6.75sec at 209.7mph – more than three seconds faster than a Veyron.

'I always say it's not how fast you go, it's how you go fast. The Vette was on street tyres, with pump gas. I had to run a Plexiglass windshield and 'chute for safety, otherwise they wouldn't let me go so fast on the track. I'd have kept the glass personally, and 6.75sec was with 1.7bar of boost. We built the motor to withstand 2.6bar, so the car could go faster, but counter-steering at 200mph is no joke.

'Everyone has their own idea and there will never be a universal decision,' says Saboury. 'I built a car that could go fast – consistently – and not change anything to race. I've driven many cruises and it sits in traffic just fine, but a 30-mile cruise is more attrition for a six-second car than you think. I'm not taking anything away from the guys who explore the rulebook. If Drag Week allows slicks, then you can use them.'

None of the world's quickest cars are off the shelf. Every car has endured an evolutionary journey of working-man's R&D. Many are happy accidents. And there are new happy accidents emerging every year, capitalising on technological progression and a terminal acceleration addiction.

Steve Neimantas from Halifax is the newest Street Eliminator contender. Instead of starting with trad US muscle or another average Vauxhall, he bought a leggy Bentley Conti GT and made two-thirds back from selling the drivetrain, then commissioned a 3082bhp V8 twin-turbo tubular chassis'd masterpiece. Like all of the fastest drag machinery, it is now rear-driven as, according to the Conti's builder, Jon Webster, AWD doesn't translate to the strip so well, the weight transfer making it less efficient.

'The body is all stock, still with double-glazed windows,' Neimantas assures me. 'I've a dash switch for a street [ECU] map and it tootles about quite gently. But on t'track it'll spin the tyres all the way to 190mph if grip's not there.'



The sprint to 208mph takes 7.30sec. Thrice the horses of a Veyron. Keeping a low profile en route to Londis is clearly out of the question.

'I run 1000bhp off the line and then feed in another 1000bhp – that's how I've had my fastest times. I know it's a car that's only fast on one straight piece of track in Northamptonshire – at Santa Pod Raceway – but it's like being on drugs. Once you're in this sport, you can't get out. You have to find a way of going quicker. And it's better value than a supercar to me.'

Of course, when piloting a sub-one-second to-sixty car, there are winky bottom moments. Tyres breaking grip and causing the car to rear-steer, losing oil, engine parts going airborne (there's a 'ballistic diaper' around the engine block to contain mechanical grenading)...

'I've had the Calibra steering wheel come off at the launch,' chuckles Pateman. 'It flew off and hit the roof.'

It was in Red Victor 3 that Andy Frost had oil escape a cork rocker gasket and end up on one of the slicks. 'Dab of oppo' barely describes his reaction, which almost ended in deploying the 'chute to stop the car veering into the wall. I know, because I was in the car too.

As time and technology progresses, numbers tumble. Nines were seen in the '90s, eights

in the early noughties and sevens in the mid-2000s. Fewer than ten cars have broken into the sixes. Only one has conquered five seconds.

Arguments reignite when race rules change, but few people would go to the trouble of building a whole new car as retaliation. The current fastest street car in the world is actually a truck. A 1998 Chevy S-10. With a 10.1-litre engine and a pair of 98mm turbos. Larry Larson had some explaining to do.

'I built this as a protest to the organisers of Drag Week, to show them how far you can stretch the unlimited class rules.

'Sure it's got a VIN, but it's a full stinkin' race car. The only reason I built it was to set the bar so high and make people come to their senses and rein it back in a bit. Unfortunately my protest backfired. People liked it. I did Drag Week, towed a permitted size trailer, switched fuel systems to methanol, steel doors to carbon doors and tyres to slicks for the run.'

Larry initially ran low sixes and then later broke his own record to become the first person in the fives... 5.95sec at 244.4mph. But his truck, beautifully executed and undeniably quick though it is, doesn't possess the sentiment or pure 'streetable' appeal to its maker. The trusty, 800bhp-deficient Chevy

Nova 'that you don't need to transform for every race' will always be the apple of his eye.

So Larson is the king of the street. For now. Frost firmly states his thoughts: 'My opinion? Larry's truck just isn't the way to go. I understand why he did it – the protest thing – and immediately congratulated him on doing the big miles, but I won't have a car that needs so much transformation from street to race.'

Frost has removed Red Victor 3 from Pro Modified competition, but the Union Jack towel isn't being thrown in yet.

'I've got the bulldog spirit. I'm not prepared to give up. I set-up a crowd-fund called "Red Victor 5 Second Club". Within 10 days £20k was pledged to buy parts. I want to run fives with nothing more than a change of tyres, fuel switch and the addition of wheelie bars.'

Would he take it to the US to settle the long-running feud? 'If the organisers pick up my every expense – including loss of earnings – then I'd take Red Victor 3 to Drag Week.'

We can get bogged down in details, or just revel in the fact that blokes like Jon, John, Steve, Steve, Larry, Rod and Andy have gone to the effort of building cars to cunningly juggle the race and road rulebooks to catapult *evo's* mantra to another solar system. ☒



RIDING SHOTGUN

THROUGH TV FEATURES IN THE LAST DECADE, I AM the only person to have ridden shotgun in four of these cars, on both road and track. Nothing equips you for the experience, not even drives in McLaren-Mercedes SLRs, Nismo GT-Rs or Ariel Atom V8s. Nothing can match the outright power, grip and feeling of wide-eyed vulnerability.

Cruising around Wolverhampton's badlands in Andy's Red Victor 2 was my first foray into the street dragster. The unfurnished cabin is no place for even the shoutiest of conversations. Mechanical noise – especially valvetrain – is deafening. It's all flickering gauges and rows of toggle switches.

Like Andy's car, John Sleath's Audi took to the road with turbo boost backed right off. You're tickling the lion's chin, idling around. What struck me with both cars was their comfort. I'd braced myself in the various configurations of the roll-cage tubing, yet thanks to suspension setups and tall, chubby rear radials, in each car the ride was more compliant than, say, in an AMG Merc in Sport mode.

On track, I ran high-seven-second quarter-mile times in both Andy's Red Victor 2 and John's Audi. Suited up and tethered tight into your seat, the burnout smoke makes its way into the car. Then we 'staged' for the race. Eyes on the Christmas-tree start lights. Transbrake engaged and throttle on the mat. Turbos cackling and flaming. The amber light disappears and then it's the feeling not of an engine, but travelling in a trebuchet. Totally un-car like.

The grip off the line and subsequent weight transfer were forces of strength my body never had to deal with until then. The acceleration didn't relent. No pauses for transmission shifts. I remember not being able to focus my vision. Of course, everything was over in seconds, and then the G-force shifts as the parachute brake is deployed, making the car dive and shimmy. My mind was crème brûlée, yet I hadn't even been the driver. Guys like Andy and John drive one-handed!

For the ultimate juxtaposition, we went to Waitrose for a prawn sandwich in the 3000bhp Red Victor 3. The sweet pungency of methanol enveloped the car, and exhaust condensation danced up the side windows on idle. Visibility dictated Andy's chin-up driving posture.

In Saboury's Vette we cruised past idyllic farmland and Amish ladies. He nodded at a piece of paper taped to the window (a tiny timing slip to remind passengers of what they're sitting inside), cracked a smile and gave it a smidge of the throttle...

When the turbo dump valves ditched excess boost it sounded like a pair of CO2 fire extinguishers had been let off next to my face. Rod was grinning. I'd had a sample sensory battering of what a 0-210mph-in -6.75sec car does. We then went to the police station to meet Rod's friends. No joke.

Top right: Smith chats to John Sleath.

Above left: Steve Pateman's Calibra makes for a very unlikely drag-strip hero. **Above right:**

Audi 80 Coupe belonging to Sleath runs 1550bhp and is claimed to be the first street car to crack the quarter-mile in eight seconds.

Right: Red Victor's 3000bhp somewhat wasted on the weekly Waitrose shop

WOLFSBURG



by ANTONY INGRAM

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

CALLING

The VW Golf GTI is 40. To celebrate, we drive an original Mk1 version 850 miles back to its birthplace to meet the very latest addition to the GTI family



Y

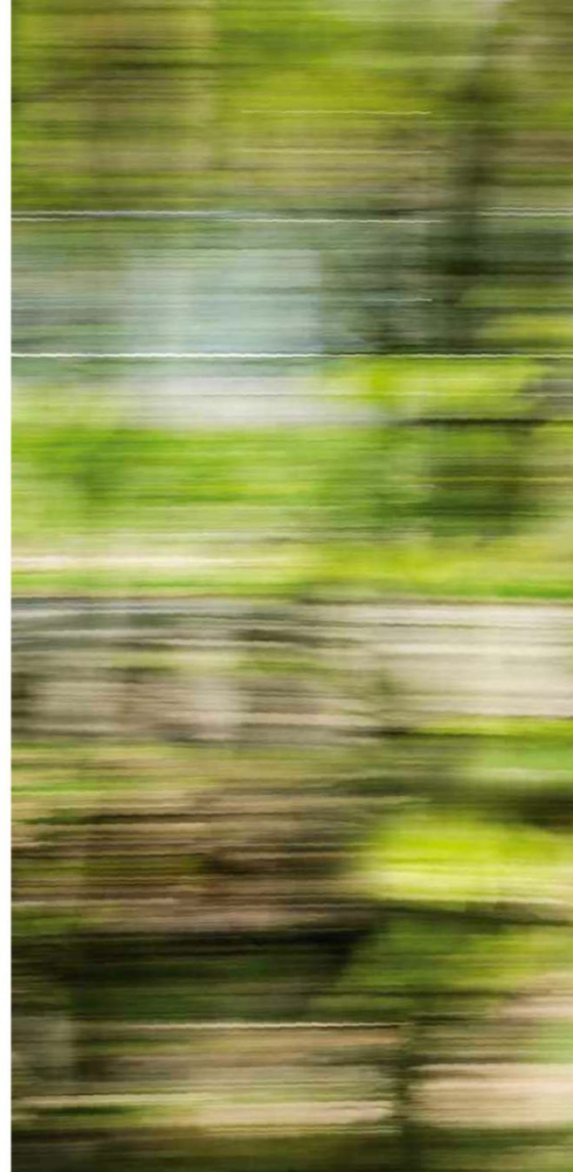
YOU SHOULD NEVER BUY A CAR

with the intention of making money, but it's long vexed me that various cars that have at one time or another resided on my shopping list have inexorably risen in value, while those I've actually bought have evaporated value like petrol spilt on a forecourt.

This first-generation Golf GTI is a painful reminder of this. In around 2009 my shortlist for a characterful, fun car was narrowing, and a Mk1 Golf GTI was one of the few remaining candidates. The reason for this wasn't any specific love of Volkswagens, more the fact I could pick up a very tidy example for about fifteen-hundred quid, which seemed like a bit of a bargain.

Predictably, values of '70s and '80s icons are now rising sharply and today you'd be lucky to get a ropery project Mk1 for that. Around five grand seems a more common starter figure, and there's an ever-growing maximum above that. Okay, it would hardly have been a windfall, and I'm certain the cost of upkeep in the intervening years would have matched any gains. I've never really thought about it since, but with a box-fresh GTI at my disposal, it's put a new spin on the next few days and poses my first question: did I miss out?

Right: by today's standards the Mk1 Golf is more Polo-sized, making it perfect for back roads. **Below:** VW UK's own GTI is immaculate within





‘It’s easy to see the Mk1’s influence in today’s hatches’

Over the next 850 miles or so there’ll be plenty of time to ponder that question. This particular GTI, from Volkswagen’s UK heritage fleet and seen before on these pages, is a 1984 example, making it a late very Mk1. The first Mk2 GTIs landed in the UK in March that same year, but a series of subtle tweaks had kept the Mk1 fresh enough to overlap its replacement at dealers. Our mission is to drive this one to Wolfsburg – home of Volkswagen – and pick up the very latest Golf GTI, a Mk7 in Clubsport form. My second question writes itself: can a GTI from 1984 make the journey as easily as an example built over three decades later?

We needn’t deconstruct the GTI’s conception here (to summarise: originally a skunkworks ‘Sport Golf’ project built after-hours by Golf engineers, picked up by the board, launched to great acclaim), but a history of the GTI is ostensibly a history of the hot hatchback itself. Simple in the early days, gradually putting on weight and losing precision, subsequently turbocharged and then benefitting from tyre and engineering improvements that turned

the concept into the immensely talented all-rounders we have today. Question three: does the original GTI still feel like a proper hot hatchback in a modern context?

By the time ‘our’ GTI was rolling off the production line, the Golf was under fire from all angles and the concept of the ‘hot hatch’ was in full swing. Virtually all followed the simple formula of dropping a potent engine into an otherwise standard production hatchback shell, spritzing it up with some visual fripperies inside and out and tuning the suspension for greater cornering prowess.

It’s easy to see the Mk1’s influence in today’s hatches – performance that punches above its weight, practicality, precision, a wieldy size, and relative affordability. A modern Golf GTI is to something like the Mazda MX-5 what the original was to an MGB – a car that offers more in performance and usability than it sacrifices from an unremarkably square-edged silhouette. To my eyes, it looks great: four-square stance, pristine Pirelli P-slot alloys and that red stripe around the grille – broken

only by the outer pair of headlights, this later car sporting an extra pair of driving lights over early models. My fourth and final question: does the boxy little Golf have the visual clout to attract attention, as any good GTI should?

Having collected photographer Aston Parrott from Hertford on the way to the Channel Tunnel, the Mk1 is already demonstrating its abilities as an all-rounder. The boot has swallowed all but one item of luggage, Aston’s car-cleaning gear having to reside on the back seat, and the Golf cruises happily along the motorway at an indicated 3500rpm and 80mph. No wanton speeding here though, officer – my ageing satnav highlights the Golf’s wildly optimistic speedometer (source of much amusement later in the trip), and we sit on the nail of 70mph until our exit appears.

Speeds climb through France. The GTI laps it up. Being a later car, this example uses a 112bhp, 1.8-litre engine rather than the original 108bhp 1.6. It’s a long way from being powerful by modern standards, but in

its day there was enough punch to see off the more traditional sports car choices, and even today its 8.1sec 0-60mph dash would see off a Suzuki Swift Sport and snap at the heels of a Mini Cooper.

What's more surprising from a modern perspective is how smoothly the eight-valve four-pot revs. The 1.8 develops 109lb ft at 3500rpm (compared to a less relaxed 103lb ft at 5000rpm from the 1.6), and while there's a bit of spluttering at very low engine speeds as the Bosch K-Jetronic injection struggles to meet the fuel-air ratio required for progress, it pulls with admirable strength all the way to the red line. Light weight helps: at 840kg, the GTI is 14kg lighter than a VW Up.

At idle the Golf's age is betrayed by the tick-tick-tick of noisy tappets and there's an ever-present background whirr at higher speeds from the belt-driven valve gear. On wide throttle openings it's accompanied by a sporty blare from the exhaust, but no aspect of aural accompaniment is particularly tiring or intrusive. The greatest din is wind noise against the upright screen and A-pillars, but tight panel fit means rustle is subdued to tolerable levels.

Our first stop is Circuit Zolder. The track's tight infield does little to impress Aston as we hunt for picturesque photography locations, but this malaise is ended abruptly by the sight of an Ariel Atom with a camera rig built onto its nose for fast tracking shots. However, we soon conclude that it might be difficult to sneak this through in our monthly expenses.

With no track time booked, Zolder is little more than a convenient point at which to stop for lunch, but I have bigger plans for our next destination. I've never been to Spa-Francorchamps before, and while we'll once again be denied track time (something called the WEC is in town and they've inconsiderately occupied the circuit), the Ardennes roads have their own challenges. Many are quite narrow, but so too is the Golf and the view through its extensive fenestration means you can skim along millimetres from verges and hedges with total confidence.

Were the helm as sharp as Giugiaro's lines then slicing through the forests and fields would be easier still, but this is one area in which hot hatches have certainly advanced. Not in terms of feel, necessarily: there's a wonderfully garrulous sensation through the steering wheel rim once you're past the first few degrees of springy, old-car slack, as changes in resistance telegraph scrub and surface changes through the 185-section Pirelli P600s. It's in precision and speed that the steering loses out. Anything but the gentlest of turns requires significant steering angle and the yawning ratio and considerable



HEADING HOME IN THE CLUBSPORT

After the old-world charms of the Mk1 GTI, how does the Mk7 GTI Clubsport compare on the return journey from Wolfsburg?



Left and above: 1984 GTI 1.8 has the charm, but with 286bhp, the 2016 GTI Clubsport has the pace. **Right:** latest GTI happy to cruise at over 120mph all day

I I'LL LET YOU IN ON a secret: I actually find hot hatches a bit boring. Modern examples may defy the laws of physics with their handling, and they can offer spectacular fun on the right kind of road, too. But that which makes them brilliant all-rounders also makes them dull: a hot hatch is ultimately still just a family hatchback.

The Golf is a particularly good family hatch and, coincidentally, a car I find very dull indeed. I'll begrudgingly concede that both GTI and R are irritatingly talented and sharply styled, with cabins crafted like the proverbial cliché, but the thought of owning one has never crossed my mind.

The trip to Wolfsburg did at least prove that, by virtue of its vintage, the Mk1 GTI would be

interesting to own. It's still 'just a family hatch', but so different is a family hatch from the '70s that driving it is an event in itself.

Maybe the GTI Clubsport can sprinkle a little magic dust on the staid Golf range. Road test editor Dan Prosser has already rated it highly on track (*evo* 218), saying it's more fun than the R.

Perhaps it's unfair to the Clubsport that we've spent the last few days driving around in the Mk1, because few modern cars could provide such an all-encompassing sensory assault as one conceived four decades earlier. But as we sneak out of Wolfsburg before its residents awake on a German public holiday, it feels... much like any other Golf.

Certain parts betray it as something special: a tactile

Alcantara steering wheel, a pair of bewinged Recaro seats (striped rather than tartaned). The twin exhaust tips emit an ever-present growl, which remains regardless of driving mode. One further detail is missing from our test car, though: as a DSG-equipped model, VW's natty golf-ball gearknob makes way for the default DSG lever.

The exterior changes are more apparent. The Clubsport is undoubtedly a handsome car, with its exaggerated bumper strakes, side stripes and spoilered bootlid.

Once the familiar striped sign presents a chance to stretch the car's legs on the Autobahn, there's definitely a little more pep than with the standard GTI and a little less than in an

R. Acceleration is brisk up to around 120mph, but we don't find a stretch clear enough; neither does the Clubsport seem interested enough, to reach the 155mph limiter. We manage 140mph, but a Mk1 GTI-matching 120mph is our cruising speed and we shave 90 minutes off the satnav's ETA by the time we reach the Netherlands.

Our Dutch jaunt is slower, but Belgium proves our undoing, adding two hours to the journey. The Clubsport goes back to feeling like a regular Golf in traffic. Still dull, in other words. The Alcantara wheel is the sole reminder that it's not a 1.6 TDI.

We crack on towards the Chunnel. A few motorway slip roads provide a workout for the chassis. It's definitely a bit sharper than a normal GTI. The

limits are high, and you still need to drive a bit like a lunatic to truly call it 'fun'. There's not the tactility you get in an RS Mégane, or the theatre of a Civic Type R. Or those sensations in the Mk1 GTI that remind you as a driver that you're responsible for more than just the direction of progress.

The UK's approach to road maintenance means the M20 seems ten decibels louder than any road we encountered on the Continent and the firmer ride jars slightly more. But the Clubsport is still relatively tame compared to some. It's quite liveable, actually. And, like most modern hot hatches, there's still fun to be had on proper roads.

Has it changed my mind on Golfs? Not yet. But there's always the Clubsport S...





weight (there's no power assistance) mean extra inputs or corrections are difficult to achieve with precision.

Then there are the brakes. Contrary to what you might have read elsewhere, they aren't ineffective – apply significant pressure and you'll stop in short distance. But the convoluted network of pipes 'twixt pedal and nearside-mounted master cylinder results in a significant region of dead travel before the pads bite, and the stoppers never feel less than spongy in their application. The result is that you drive the GTI in a completely different way to modern hatches: the emphasis is less on late braking, aggressive turn-in and encouraging the rear end to share cornering duties, and more on smooth inputs and maintaining momentum. Those shots of three-wheeling GTIs show a more aggressive approach is possible, but the satisfaction in adopting this driving style is low, because the Golf doesn't punch out the other side with as much vigour as a modern equivalent.

Where no modern hatch can compete is the sense of constant interaction. I don't want to invoke the curmudgeonly cliché that modern cars drive themselves, but they tend not to complain if you let your concentration slip. Journeys can pass by unmemorably with no greater concern than setting your 'climate' just so and making sure you don't miss *The Archers*.

Conversely, you're a vital component in the Mk1. Gearchanges must be undertaken with deliberate movements from the shoulder, and perhaps a little brutality when the car heats up and the shift becomes obstinate and sticky. Stay a gear too high or too low and you'll be alerted by extra noise or lack of progress respectively. Heel-and-toe shifts are not only necessary to enact the smoothest downchanges but also require considerable contortion of the lower body thanks to the sinking brake pedal and unusually high throttle position.

It's a car of contrasts. There's noise, feedback, weight and mechanical sensations to nearly every control, yet you luxuriate in soft, squashy seats – with greater bolsters than those of the regular Golf – and a cabin of remarkable airiness. It feels rough and ready to drive fast, but also remarkably relaxing when you're travelling at a cruise – tall tyres absorb minor road zits far better than any modern hatch and their narrow section does wonders for reducing road roar.

We stop for fuel in Spa town and a chap with an old Polo strides over. 'What year is it?' '1984.'

I've never actually seen someone's jaw drop, but his does. 'But it's perfect!' Around this point I'd normally break the illusion and mutter with a kind of reserved English embarrassment that it isn't really mine, but for some reason, I don't.

There's a chill in the air as we point the squared-off snout towards Duisburg. Shortly outside Belgium, we reach the first stretches of derestricted Autobahn. At 80-odd the GTI feels quite happy, engine whirring away like a sewing machine with plenty in reserve. Any faster and a wobble creeps through the steering column, but a few exploratory runs further up the speedometer suggest the wobble stops at an indicated 110mph or so.

The exploration continues as orange sky turns to purple and commuter traffic slowly dissipates from the roads. 115mph. 120mph. Here the markings stop, but the needle keeps circumnavigating the dial. Had VW's engineers had the foresight to daub '130mph' on the dial we'd have hit that too, but the satnav gummed to the windscreen suggests those engineers would also have been optimistic – a nav-verified 115mph is where I lift.

WE ATTEMPT THE RUN AGAIN THE next day on the stretch between Duisburg and Wolfsburg. Aston installs himself in the back seat – surprisingly easily, reaffirming the Golf's family-car billing – and aims his lens over my shoulder. It's busier today and the three-lane Autobahn is if anything more intimidating than yesterday's two-laner. With just two lanes to play with you can be more decisive. If there's traffic overtaking in front,



Far right: VW's plant at Wolfsburg spans 5 square kilometres and processes 1500 metric tons of sheet metal every day.
Below: classic Mk1 design was penned by Giorgetto Giugiaro





VW Golf GTI (Mk1 1.8)

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1781cc

CO2 n/a

Power 112bhp @ 5800rpm

Torque 109lb ft @ 3500rpm

Transmission Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

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

Rear suspension Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated 239mm front discs, 180mm rear drums

Wheels 6 x 14in front and rear

Tyres 185/60 R14 front and rear

Weight 840kg

Power-to-weight 135bhp/ton

0-60mph 8.1sec (claimed)

Top speed 112mph (claimed)

Price now £7500+

evo rating: ★★★★★

‘The Mk1 is fun, though hot hatches have moved on a great deal’

you slow down. With three, who knows? Will that car overtake the car overtaking a lorry? Or will they remain in single file?

I find myself erring on the side of caution – 1984 braking technology and ’70s crash structures are best left untested – but still match the previous day’s speed. Indeed, the GTI does so up a slight incline. There’s more to come, but with commuter traffic and several restricted sections, no further opportunities arise.

The lower pace does give me a chance to survey the many instruments strewn around the GTI’s cabin. Speedometer and tach are located front and centre, the latter housing a coolant temperature gauge alongside the one for fuel – another detail separating it from a cooking Golf of the day. Even in nose-to-tail traffic, the coolant needle seems happy to sit around the middle point and the warning light never illuminates.

Between the two main dials sits a bank of domed idiot lights and a liquid crystal trip-computer display. It’s one of few items on the car showing any real age, a black smudge between its layers rendering half of it unreadable. Above the warning lights is a hint at the early days of the GTI’s post-fuel-crisis conception: an mpg

gauge with a change-up light that indicates when you could get the same rate of acceleration in the next gear, thus saving fuel.

A bank of non-standard VDO gauges low in the centre console complement the main instruments: a clock, a voltmeter and an oil-pressure dial. The voltmeter comes to illustrate the term ‘ignorance is bliss’ over the course of the trip, and I become transfixed by its dive into the red zone whenever I dare to use any of the Golf’s auxiliary functions. I’d seriously doubted the car’s ability to restart shortly after picking up Aston, as the last stretch had required main beams and sidelights – a process that had the orange needle hovering around the ten-volt mark. Other functions that have the gauge seeing red include ventilation, indicators, braking, and using the original Blaupunkt stereo. I can live without the stereo, as efforts to awaken it result only in heart-stopping bursts of static or brain-melting pop songs, but I’m rather partial to cool, flowing air, and braking, despite the hardware’s general disinterest.

The volts hold, and we roll into Wolfsburg around lunchtime. The city is quite compact, but without the sprawling VW plant it would be little more than a small town. Driving in

from the west, Volkswagen’s operations stretch as far as the eye can see, with white factory buildings, slim chimneys and parking lots full of polythene-covered cars ready for delivery across Europe. Despite VW’s occupancy, it’s far from the dystopian industrial landscape I was somehow expecting, and beyond the factory buildings the city even seems quite leafy.

We pull up in front of the Autostadt towers in the heart of the city, joined by the Clubsport. A gaggle of the park’s two-million yearly visitors immediately gathers and smartphones emerge. Most snap photos of the Mk1. I join them, and ponder answers to my original questions.

Do I regret missing out on Mk1s when they were cheap? Ultimately, probably not. Which is fantastic, as I can now avoid spending much greater sums on one today. It wasn’t a chore to complete 850 miles in the GTI, though. This old hot hatch is every bit as useable as it was back in the day, it seems. And fun, too, though hot hatch performance has moved on a great deal and the experience the Mk1 offers lacks the intensity, if not the interaction, of its modern counterparts. But as a crowd of admirers continues to shun Clubsport for Mk1, you could argue that in some respects, the original is still the best. ☒



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NISSAN JUKE NISMO RS // PORSCHE 911 SC // BMW E46 M3 // CATERHAM SEVEN 420R //
AUDI RS Q3 // BMW 730Ld M SPORT // MAZDA MX-5 // JAGUAR F-TYPE R COUPE AWD

END OF TERM

Nissan GT-R

A games console with four wheels? Nothing could be further from the truth



A 'AND LIKE THAT... HE'S gone.' Then hollow, desolate silence. OK, so maybe I wasn't quite as crestfallen when the GT-R disappeared out of sight and its booming V6 faded into nothingness as Agent Kujan was as he realised Keyser Söze had slipped through his fingers. It hurt, though.

I'd grown used to smiling every time I opened my front door to find the GT-R waiting, to the mind-bending speed it could deliver when you needed to get past a lumbering lorry or a line of the 45mph-everywhere-including-outside-a-school-at-8.50am brigade. Most importantly, I'd come to prize the way

it could make any mundane journey way more exciting than it had any right to be. Will I miss it? Like a limb.

Our GT-R arrived well used but still gleaming in that divisive Champagne Gold paint scheme, which along with a half-hearted interior plaque was the only detail that marked it out as a 45th Anniversary car. Just five

of these made it to the UK, priced at £79,780. Ours had covered 11,535 hard miles and had been the star of many drag-race videos and group tests in various magazines. The use showed where it always does in GT-Rs: on the hard plastics around the gearlever, which were pretty low rent for such an expensive car.



In fact, the dated, blocky interior was a deal-breaker for some, but I rather liked the hilariously OTT sub-menus showing everything from gearbox temperature to steering angle, lateral G, lap times and what the driver had for breakfast that morning. It was unique and unapologetic, just like the car itself. The big, almost over-stuffed seats were great, too, providing decent support but also incredible comfort over long distances.

If you're new to GT-Rs, the first thing that surprises is the noise. Not the deep, brawny holler of the V6 at speed, but the chunter, clatter and rattles at low speed. On a cold morning it's actually quite disturbing and sounds very much like the transmission has eaten itself overnight. Tickle the throttle and the engine revs rise but nothing happens. Instinctively your ankle flexes a bit further and then *bang!* – the clutch engages and you surge away. Combine that jerky movement

'You need to engage with and understand the GT-R to get the best from it. But when you do, it's heart-thumpingly exciting'

with dampers that feel frozen solid at a crawl and you get hilariously ragged low-speed manoeuvring on a winter's morning.

This phase never lasts too long, though, and it's great to feel a GT-R gradually limber up, like it's coming to life after a strong coffee. The clonks, grinding diffs and general mechanical din when cold are unique GT-R characteristics and I'd hate to see them refined away. I'm always surprised when the same people who describe a 911 Turbo as 'boring' suggest that the GT-R's deeply mechanical feel should be buffed and polished to anonymity. Besides which, the GT-R is a lovely car in which to travel. The ride relaxed nicely above 40mph or so in our 2015-spec car and it had that relentless, effortless aura as the miles disappeared.

Sadly, my dream of long European adventures – a trip to the Ring and Spa or along the Route Napoléon – never materialised. Winter in the

Eifel or at 1200 metres above sea level in the Dauphiné Alps wasn't very realistic, so instead the GT-R took me to airports, over to Wales on shoots and was even used for school runs or trips to the tip. My eldest isn't hugely into cars and getting in the back of the GT-R led him to describe it as 'the worst family car ever' on several occasions. It's not really meant to be a family car, of course, but he had a point. Considering it took up so much road space, it was pathetically impractical.

On those trips to Wales this hardly dented my enjoyment, but there's definitely a case for saying that the GT-R is just too big. God it can change direction and pick apart a bumpy road with razor accuracy, but its sheer width is an issue on narrower sections and its agility would be even more accessible if the whole package was slimmed down a bit. Compared to a 911 Turbo, a GT-R feels vast.

There are things the Nissan does

that the Porsche has forgotten all about, though. Its steering is alive with gritty, detailed feedback. That noisy, mechanical feel at low speed translates to a sense of connection at higher speeds that the brilliantly competent Porsche never quite matches. The GT-R isn't for everyone, but it's an intensely involving experience. You really have to drive it. On those cold days, this is even more critical. The tyres need a bit of temperature to work and also don't like standing water. Try to deploy all of the GT-R's power (ours delivered 559bhp at 7065rpm and 481lb ft at 3825rpm on the Litchfield dyno) and you quickly find a nasty spike of oversteer or that horrid feeling of the car floating over the surface water.

So you need to engage with and understand the GT-R to get the best from it. But when you do, it's devastatingly fast and heart-thumpingly exciting. Managing editor Stuart Gallagher was shocked by how our car balanced its speed with crystal-clear feedback, and editor Trott handed back the keys with a broad grin and a little shake of

his head (the universal sign of being exposed to a GT-R at full flight). Dan Prosser drove it for the group test for the new 911 Carrera (*evo* 218) and found it less rounded than the Porsche and the rest of the rivals, but also way more exciting.

For me, what will live long in the memory is the sheer scale of everything the GT-R does. From the 3.8-litre twin-turbocharged engine's booming performance, to the chassis' startling agility, grip and adjustability. Perhaps the biggest surprise was finding that, as supercars become ever more refined and rounded, the GT-R reconnects the relationship between driver input and reward. It isn't perfect, but it does make me wonder if perfection is slightly overrated. ☒

Jethro Bovingdon

(@JethroBovingdon)

Date acquired	November 2015
Duration of test	6 months
Total test mileage	3511
Overall mpg	19.8
Costs	£0
Purchase price	£79,780
Trade-in value	n/a
Depreciation	Not a lot (five made)



Above: dyno test put to bed any notion that our press-spec GT-R was somehow 'different' to normal ones; its 559bhp was a little more than the official 542bhp, but this isn't unusual



Kia Proceed GT

Our Kia does all the important things right, says Antony Ingram



Y YOU MIGHT HAVE NOTICED an absence of Yellow Flame paintwork in Fast Fleet last month. That's because, through circumstances beyond my control, it's only very recently I've been able to climb back into the wedgy Kia. First our publisher nicked it for two weeks, then I was away on various events, and more recently a diverse collection of vehicles – from Peugeot Sport 208s to Mustangs and Mk1 Golf GTIs – meant even the Proceed's searing hue wasn't able to grab my attention.

But you know what? I've rather missed it. While my colleagues have done their best to turn the Kia into a rolling skip over the past month (perhaps they were confused by the colour), it's been quite nice to drop back into the bolstered seats each morning and evening and rediscover some of the Kia's talents.

I've mentioned before that Kia seems to have benchmarked the Golf GTI in developing its own GT,

and I still stand by that. Despite the wide talents of modern cars, it's still very rare to hop into a car after a long absence and feel instantly in tune with all its controls, but the GT manages that trick. And after driving several automatic cars recently, the snickety gearbox (topped by a spherical gearknob – take note, other manufacturers) adds welcome tactility to Proceed proceedings.

It's still running like clockwork, too, without chewing through its tyres or developing electrical gremlins like some of the other cars on the fleet. In fact, its only real problem seems to be our propensity to neglect it. My solution: a jolly good spring clean and a run on some of our favourite local roads over the next few weeks. ☒

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Date acquired	December 2015
Total mileage	8062
Mileage this month	1244
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.5



McLaren 650S Spider

The drop-top McLaren is doing just fine, but that hasn't stopped the SSO from lining up an upgrade

W WHAT ARE MY BASIC expectations for any daily driver? Well, reliability is one, and also comfort from both a ride quality and internal ergonomics standpoint. Also important are a decent stereo, boot space for at least a couple of bags, and the ability to deliver the thrill of driving should the opportunity arise.

Against these expectations, the McLaren 650S Spider continues to perform with distinction. In fact, it and the 12C Spider that came before it are the first supercars I have used as daily drivers for which I have not had to make any compromises. The terror of nervously checking the temperature gauge every 30 seconds while crawling in traffic is a distant memory. Maintenance after almost a year with the 650S has been limited to topping up tyre pressures. My only niggles are the small gas tank

(72 litres), the IRIS system, which doesn't play your music from where you left it, and gearshift paddles that should be larger (the ones on the P1 are perfect).

At this point I'm pretty blind to mobile-phone cameras being pointed at the 650S. However, the Fire Black Mac does generate a significant number of petrol station conversations. Without exception, these have been quite positive. The 650S seems to have a certain cool factor that generates a large number of spontaneous compliments. I have also been surprised at the number of people who recognise the car instantly as being a McLaren and know the brand.

Given the brilliance of the 650S, it was not a difficult decision to sign on the dotted line when I was offered a build slot for a 675LT coupe. While I was never officially told that there

would later be a Spider version too, I made an educated guess that an open-air LT would follow after the coupe and so indicated up front that the Spider would be my preferred option should it just happen to appear. With the help of my local McLaren dealer, we were able to move my coupe build slot over to the Spider as soon as the official announcement was made in December last year. In March we locked in the specification on the car and I'm now expecting delivery in June.

The only bummer was not being able to arrange for a factory collection, as it is a US-spec car. The original plan was to use the 675LT on a European road trip this summer before having it shipped to the US, but sadly that can't happen. ☒

Secret Supercar Owner
(@SupercarOwner)

'The terror of nervously checking the temperature gauge every 30 seconds while crawling in traffic is a distant memory'

Date acquired	July 2015
Total mileage	2018
Mileage this month	163
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	17

Honda Civic Type R

It may be an attention-seeker, but that attention is proving to be all good

M 'MID-LIFE CRISIS?' ASKED Catchpole upon seeing me emerge from the Civic one morning. Very funny. Although I can understand why making such a comment was impossible to resist. This latest Type R is rather in yer face and perhaps not the obvious choice of transportation for a folically challenged bloke in his 40s. With its jutting front splitter, widened arches, extra vents, the pinstripes, the diffuser, more vents, those spats beneath the rear lights and, of course, that whopper of a rear wing, this is one hot hatch that definitely doesn't operate under the radar.

One *evo* reader recently suggested that the Type R's somewhat outrageous styling makes it the hot hatch equivalent of a Pagani Huayra (Inbox, *evo* 221). I

don't think he was too far wide of the mark, either. Driving the Civic, you do feel like you're in a mini exotic.

Initially, I did feel a bit too conspicuous getting out of it at petrol stations and the like. (The extremely well hidden release for the fuel filler flap only added to that awkwardness the first time I stopped for fuel.) But as the weeks have passed, I've got used to the attention the Civic garners. In fact I've come to admire its head-turning abilities, not least because, so far, all of the reactions have been entirely positive: a holler from across the forecourt of 'Serious bit of equipment you've got there, bud!'; the *Fast and Furious*'d 'breadvan' Type R literally screeching to a halt as its driver tried to get a better look; the guy in the local chip shop wanting the full low-down on how this latest CTR compares with the previous one – not least with regards to that newly turbocharged engine. Something tells me you don't get this with a Golf R.

It all adds to the feel-good vibe of running the Civic, and probably explains why recently, having not seen the car for a couple of



days, I caught myself grinning as I approached it.

A hot hatch that puts a smile on your face before it's even turned a wheel? Honda must be doing something very right. ✕

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired	January 2016
Total mileage	6952
Mileage this month	1176
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	29.7

Bentley Continental GT V8 S

Yes, it's heavy, but the Conti's mass is not the hindrance you might think

B BENTLEYS HAVE ALWAYS been big-boned machines, right from the glory days when Ettore Bugatti so memorably described WO Bentley's racers as 'the fastest lorries in the world'. I rather like the fact that present-day Bentleys remain true to their DNA, despite the accepted engineering doctrine that weight is the enemy.

Weight certainly defines the Conti GT experience, but I have to say

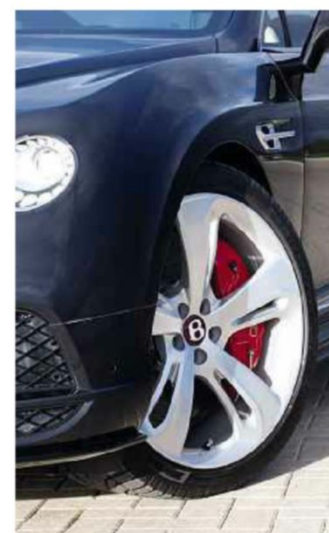
its effects are more positive than negative. From the moment you swing open the driver's door, you know this is a car of extraordinary substance. The way it makes progress is imperious, its mass smothering road imperfections that unsettle, or at least agitate, lighter machines. It feels steadfast. Rock solid. Hewn rather than assembled.

Downsides? Well, no, you're not going to take your 2200kg Bentley on a trackday, but you are going to relish every road mile in a way you wouldn't in a big GT car with misguided racetrack pretensions. As such, the V8 S is a car sublimely fit for the purpose of refined and effortless road use. And don't be fooled into thinking that mass swamps the 4-litre twin-turbo V8. Stuff the throttle into the carpet and 502lb ft and 521bhp fire you between the corners like an artillery shell.

With AWD, adaptive damping, four fat contact patches and those colossal 420mm carbon brakes, the S has the tools to keep the physics in check, and while that control does isolate you from a lot of what's going on, the car is far from flat-footed and there's enough feel to keep you engaged. On the few occasions I've really popped the Conti's cork, I've been genuinely shocked by the scale of its performance. It's a GT-R with manners and breeding.

Now that the winter tyres have been swapped for summer rubber (thanks to the nice man at Bentley Leicester for the collection and delivery service), I'll have even more grip and traction to enjoy. The V8 S is proving to be a mighty machine. I just hope Bentley offers some kind of counselling when it goes back. ✕

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)



Date acquired	February 2016
Total mileage	5271
Mileage this month	830
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	23.6

Bentley Continental GT V8 S



Porsche 911 SC

Trott gets technical in the pursuit of power

T THE SC'S ENGINE BUILD continues. RPM Technik, who are doing the work, inform me that all the machining has been completed, including the 'boat-tailing' of the cylinder cases (see **evo** 221). The next step I'm considering is the porting and flowing of the cylinder heads.

We hear little about the science of flowing a cylinder head these days. Apologies if you know this already, but the objective is to allow more air into the engine. This increases the amount of air and fuel atomisation within the cylinders and creates more power. The best way I've heard it described is that your engine is like a pair of lungs, and the fewer impediments between the mouth and the lungs, the better the engine will breathe.

Where the expertise of the engineer really makes a difference is in flowing the heads so that the engine produces the power where you need it. The airflow needs to be tailored to produce an appropriate forcefulness of combustion at the right moment in the rev range for the engine in question, which in the case of the SC's (formerly 204bhp) flat-six is between 3000 and 6000rpm. There's no point in creating maximum combustion at 7000rpm

Nissan Juke Nismo RS

The Nismo plays stand-in for some **evo** cover stars, while the niggles are starting to add up



I I ALREADY HAVE A feeling that the Juke and I are going to have some issues when it comes to usability. I am a big fan of simplicity and well-thought-out design, something that was highlighted by the car I ran prior to the Nismo – a SEAT Leon Cupra 280 estate, which was brilliantly functional in its design.

This is not so much the case with the Nismo. It feels that wherever I look there is a compromise in its design. Lots of little things have started to annoy me, such as the messy layout of the dials, the fuel filler cap release inside the cabin that I always forget to use before jumping out of the car, and the fact that the fuel tank itself seems very small (at just 46 litres, fuel stops

are frequent). Also, the lid for the lower level of the double-layer boot would work much better if it was hinged rather than a loose panel, as currently every time I lift it, it falls into the lower part of the boot.

What I really can't forgive, though, is the terrible driving position, which just kills any excitement or confidence I have when driving along a good road – not exactly what you want from a car wearing Nismo badges. It seems to be a common problem with modern cars that they don't provide enough adjustment in the steering or seating position. Is it really that difficult to factor in?

Recent activities with the Juke have included numerous long drives across the UK to various shoots. The Nismo also filled in for everything

'There's no point in creating maximum combustion at 7000rpm as the crank will never spin that quickly'

with this engine as the crank will never spin that quickly.

The risks? Well, if the ports are oversized, the 'flow speed' can actually decrease, meaning fuel and air don't mix as comprehensively as they should and you get a dip in power, usually in the mid-range.

The thing is, to get the maximum 'flow' effect from the SC I'd need bigger valves – and that means more cost. It's a real dilemma because, as you can see from the picture, now's the time to do the work... ❌

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	March 2014
Total mileage	90,993
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	TBC
mpg this month	n/a

Nissan Juke Nismo RS

from a GT-R to a Caterham 420R as we tested locations for last month's ten-car news-stand cover shot. (You can see one example here.) Then on the actual 'Giant Killers' shoot it took on the likeness of a crowded Indian train, shuttling drivers from car park to track and at one point carrying no less than seven members of the **evo** team.

So it's proving useful, the Nismo, but enjoyable? I'm not so sure. I really want to understand why the Juke is such a popular car, but so far it's not been easy to do so. ❌

AstonParrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired	March 2016
Total mileage	6995
Mileage this month	1210
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	32.0



Volkswagen Golf R

Think the manual gearbox option is always the right option? We're having our doubts

AFTER THE BETTER PART of 19,000 miles, our Golf R has had its first service. I think the days of a car coming back from an oil change and general check-up feeling fitter than before are long gone – I certainly didn't notice any difference with the R, but it did at least look a lot better for having had a thorough clean inside and out. The cost was £329, which is a fixed price for a major service for all Volkswagens up to 2 litres.

What really has made a useful difference, though, is a fresh set of tyres. The originals were down to their wear indicators after six months of reasonably hard use. The standard-fit Bridgestone Potenza S001s are really well suited to the Golf R so I've stuck with them. They're not ultra high performance tyres, but they have just the right blend of dry and wet-weather grip, refinement and ride comfort for the Golf R, which has a much broader remit than something really focused, such as a Renaultsport Mégane 275 or a Honda Civic Type R.

While our car was with VW, I got to try a Golf GTI with the DSG gearbox. I've driven plenty of quick Golfs with the twin-clutch transmission in the past, but the timing here was particularly interesting because it came just a couple of weeks after I

'Given our time again, I think I would specify our car with the DSG option'

had a bit of a moan about our car's manual 'box in issue 223. Even after all those miles, I still struggle to execute quick and smooth manual gearchanges, both on the way up and down. Given our time again, I think I would specify our car with the DSG option. Strangely, the recently facelifted SEAT Leon Cupra – with which the R shares a drivetrain – has a better shift quality.

With manual gearboxes being increasingly marginalised in favour of automatics and twin-clutch units, it all serves as a reminder that it isn't the manual gearbox that we should cherish per se. Instead, it's tactile, intuitive manual gearboxes that we should celebrate. ❌

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Date acquired	September 2015
Total mileage	18,150
Mileage this month	2844
Costs this month	£329 major service £359 four tyres
mpg this month	33.4

BMW E46 M3

Ownership of the third-generation M3 brings with it inevitable repair work

GOOGLING HAS INFORMED me that if I so much as look at the throttle pedal of my E46, the entire rear subframe will collapse and the world will end.

For those who don't know, the issue is that the E46 M3 can develop hairline cracks around the subframe mounting points. Fail to address the problem and the subframe can work loose, so a fix is crucial.

I got in contact with BMW specialist Ergen Motorsport, near Southampton, after coming across its bonkers E30 creations. Ergen sourced a Redish Motorsport rear subframe reinforcement kit and set about doing the work, also fitting a set of SuperPro bushes. It's a serious job, with pretty much all of the car's rear-end underpinnings coming off, so a wheel alignment is required afterwards.

If you need to get your E46 M3 sorted, Ergen has kindly agreed to give **evo** readers a discount. Just mention it when you're booking your car in. Reinforcement complete on my car, it's on to the next big job – the brakes. ❌

HunterSkipworth (@HunterSkipworth)



Date acquired	February 2016
Total mileage	81,677
Mileage this month	442
Costs this month	£1440 (see text)
mpg this month	25.2

evo's 420R took the weekend off as we went racing in a different Seven in one of Caterham's in-house series

Caterham Seven Roadsport

N NOSE CONE SKEWED, registration plate worn away at one corner, radiator spewing fluid. My first weekend in the Caterham Roadsport Championship was more eventful than I'd have liked. It wasn't a complete disaster, though.

If you read 'Climbing the Racing Ladder' last month, you'll know that I'm racing with Caterham this year, taking a closer look at the company's various race series. Over the course of five weekends – the first being the aforementioned Roadsport Championship race at Brands Hatch back in April – I'm working my way up the ladder until I reach the terrifying R300-S series in September.

The Roadsport car is a fairly stock 1.6-litre Seven, which makes it an unintimidating introduction to the unique discipline of Caterham racing. It only has 125bhp or so, it runs on road-legal Avon ZZS rubber and the transmission is a five-speed manual with an open differential. As I progress through the series, I'll

be upgrading the car with uprated suspension and more power, but for the time being it's more or less in road specification.

The car itself may not be intimidating, but any form of competitive motorsport is daunting. In fact, every time I find myself in an assembly area before a qualifying session or a race I'm so wracked with nerves that I wonder why on Earth I'm doing it to myself. I always want to get out and go home.

Qualifying at Brands Hatch was all the more troubling because the weather was foul, rain falling throughout the session. In fact, it was so persistent that water would coat the inside of the windscreen, so all I could see was the rain light of the car in front of me. I slipped and slithered my way around the short Indy Circuit without too much drama, but I couldn't do any better than 16th out of 28 cars.

The first race was much better. The rain had cleared and the track was mostly dry by now, so I could

have a bit of a push. It may be basic, but the Roadsport car is brilliant fun to drive on circuit. A couple of the leaders tangled with one another early on and I pulled off the odd overtake, so by the time the chequered flag dropped after 20 minutes, I was in sixth position.

Buoyed by that result, I started the second race the following day full of confidence. My start was okay and I held position through the hilarious Paddock Hill Bend, but I ran wide at Druids and slipped back to eighth. I started to move forward again during the opening laps, but I soon found myself stuck behind the fifth-placed car, which was defending rather well. Going into Graham Hill Bend on lap eight, I got a little too close and nudged into the back of it. Video footage shows how gentle the impact was – barely enough to knock over a picket fence, I reckon – but it dislodged my car's nose cone and put a hole in the radiator. I continued for a few corners, but when coolant started to soak my

'It may be basic, but the Roadsport car is brilliant fun to drive on circuit'

windscreen I thought better of it and retired to the pits.

So a sixth and a DNF was the return on my first weekend in a Caterham. The next round is at Anglesey, which is more or less evo's home circuit. I'll be competing in the Roadsport series again, so I reckon it'll be my best opportunity to bag a decent result. **✉**

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Date acquired	August 2015
Total mileage	5125
Mileage this month	90
Costs this month	n/a
mpg this month	n/a

Ford Focus ST TDCi

Our ST looks a little like the new RS, so should Ford make it go like an RS, too?

WITH THE NEW RS BEING less, er, chavvy than before and more like a fast Q-car version of the Focus, I think my diesel estate ST and the fire-spitting four-wheel-drive range-topper look surprisingly similar.

I know my car is painted in a bit of a lifeless colour, but has adding the £575 'ST Black Style Pack', with its black wheels and red calipers, made it look a bit like an elongated RS?

Maybe, maybe not, but the one thing the two cars do have in common is price. Our ST estate, with all its extras, comes in at almost £30,000, and with the RS starting from £31,000, it makes you question who will now buy the ST.

Well, I do love the space in the estate. I often have to carry a ton of gear and having that huge (with the rear seats down), flat load area is perfect. And the diesel is fantastic on fuel. I'm getting mid-40s mpg, which is a lot less than Ford's 67.3 claim, but better than the 20mpg some of our long-termers get.

But who am I kidding? I'd have the RS in a flash. I suppose comparing the ST diesel to the new RS is a little silly, but it's left me pondering: what if Ford did an RS estate? **X**

Sam Riley (@samriley)

Date acquired	August 2015
Total mileage	16,978
Mileage this month	1048
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	44.0



Audi RS Q3

The surprise star of Ingolstadt's RS range isn't without its drawbacks

ONE PARTICULARLY impressive aspect of the RS Q3 experience is that, despite the lofty seating position, when you're driving with some level of commitment the car doesn't feel enormous. I find this particularly pleasing because, when combined with the bubbly five-cylinder turbocharged motor and positive steering feel, it means you're getting a car that's genuinely thrilling to drive as well as being practical.

Except that you're not. Well, not to the extent that you might think. The reason I say this is because while the RS Q3 might seem to pull off that neat trick of 'shrinking' around the driver in the same way motoring journalists say the Porsche Panamera can, it doesn't. Not properly, at least, because it's not actually that big to start with.

In fact, it's pretty small for an SUV. I know this because unless my knees are tickling the indicator stalks, my son's Isofix seat won't fit properly behind the driver's seat,

which is where I'd prefer him to be. And his buggy only just squeezes into the boot, leaving precious little space for the other important commodities in our lives, such as his nappies and my mountain bike. You'd think a car like this would swallow such items with ease.

Indeed, I always thought the reason you bought an SUV (even a 'junior' one like this Audi) was to neatly sidestep these kinds of everyday problems. Then again, the RS Q3 is built on the same platform as the A3 hatch, so perhaps I've been a little naive. It simply doesn't have the wheelbase to match something like, say, a BMW X5.

Either way, the bottom line is that, even though the RS Q3 is quite brilliant in several areas (most notably the way it blends refinement and sheer speed), it isn't quite the all-conquering family-cum-drivers' car it might initially appear to be. Time for another niche-filling Sportback version, Audi? **X**

Dean Smith (@evoDeanSmith)

'You'd think a car like this would swallow such items with ease'

Date acquired	October 2015
Total mileage	10,466
Mileage this month	616
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	23.9

BMW 730Ld M Sport

Another month, another driver aid to switch off

A ANOTHER MONTH OF getting sucked into the 7-series' numerous driver 'assist' systems. I feel like Tron.

Let's look at the 'Approach Control' warnings first. Like many cars today, the 7-series will give you a warning flash on the mirror if you attempt to move into the path of a car approaching from behind. However, if after a safe overtake you don't indicate to return to the inside lane, the 7 will attempt to keep you in the current lane by resisting your steering movement. I found this flipping annoying, and have switched off the steering intervention.

The 7 also has camera and radar-based systems that warn of impending collisions with vehicles or pedestrians, and will brake for you if it recognises an emergency. In nearly 7000 miles, the 'Person Warning with City Braking' function has only triggered once – at low speed when the car spotted a cyclist



approaching from the front as I attempted a reverse park.

The thing is, I had already spotted the cyclist and the cyclist had already spotted me – he gave me more room and I ensured that our paths wouldn't cross. However, the car couldn't 'read' this, so it applied the brakes and left me stranded mid reverse-park with traffic backing up behind.

Since then I have disabled the brake function but have kept the audible and camera alerts switched

on. The camera alert is particularly useful when trying to edge the 7's long nose out of a tight T-junction where visibility is restricted.

I hate to sound like a Luddite, especially as I've already declared my general positivity towards the advent of autonomous driving (stands back... again). I'm generally enjoying exploring the 7's assist functions – especially as BMW claims that the 7's brain is capable of 'driving the vehicle independently' and only legislation prevents it. That

said, I'm beginning to realise that I'm not prepared to accept automation until a car can match a human brain and senses for response time and problem solving, and humans have 200,000 years of evolution on the modern car.... ✖

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	December 2015
Total mileage	11,838
Mileage this month	904
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	34.2



Mazda MX-5

Service booked, tyres ordered, so where to?

A AFTER A COUPLE OF trackdays, being subjected to my daily commute and an altercation with a kerb, the MX-5 has finally run out of tyre tread.

It's the rears that have bought it, the nearside rear having kissed a kerb while in the custody of

someone who has yet to own up to their crime. The alignment will also need looking at, then, to avoid accelerated wear on the new tyres. And all this coincides with the first service, which is now due.

The need for new rubber means I can try a more high-performance tyre in a bid to extract a little more from the MX-5's chassis. To this end, I've ordered a set of Dunlop SportMaxx to arrive in time for *evo*'s track evenings this summer.

The OE Bridgestone Potenza only struggled for grip in the wet, but the car had a tendency to be a little unpredictable when pushed hard in the dry, too. However, it's the body roll and stiffness that bother me most, two areas that are unlikely to be transformed by some new rubber, but I have some other plans to deal with this. Watch this space.

I'm hoping the Dunlops will have a positive effect on tyre noise, too. The majority of the time the refinement is fine, put on poor surfaces the tyre noise can become intrusive, especially on longer drives.

The MX-5 continues to be oh-so useable, though. I've helped a friend move house with it, had some excellent roof-down drives and it will average 45mpg on a motorway run. But it now feels time for a road-trip. Any suggestions? I'm thinking less maximum-attack B-road and more open-top cruise. ✖

Hunter Skipworth (@HunterSkipworth)

Date acquired	October 2015
Total mileage	14,558
Mileage this month	617
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	36.5

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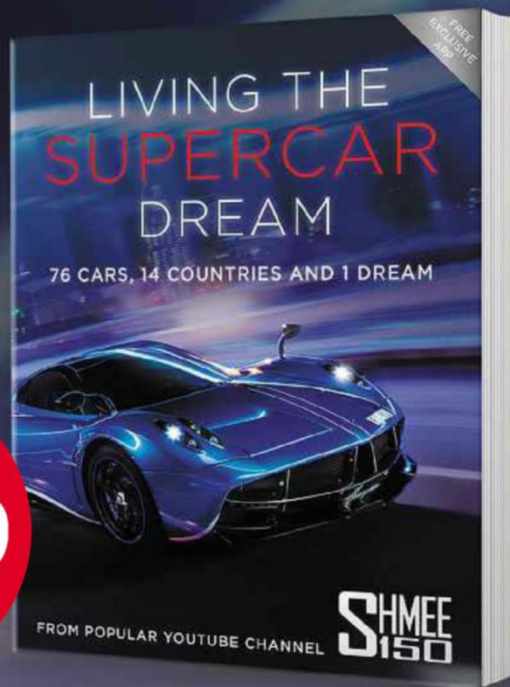
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Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD

The Jag's much-improved satnav has a small wobble

P 'PLEASE TURN LEFT IN three-hundred metres,' said the nice, slightly prim lady inside the satnav. It was in a part of the country with which I only have a passing familiarity, so although I was sceptical, I made preparations for the imminent turn. The little green bar shrank and shrank until, with about 50 metres to go, I finally spotted a small break in the verge. Surely not? For once, I wasn't in a particular rush, so I decided to indulge the whims of my electronic co-driver.

The small lane was pretty, but the grass down the middle gradually grew higher and the pothole count got larger until it eventually petered out into a chalky, rutted track that ran up towards some woods. 'Unsuitable for motors' read the small blue sign on the wonky pole.

I like a challenge, our Jaguar has AWD and I did once do a little light roof-down rallying in an F-type R in Romania, but on this occasion the sign seemed to be speaking sense. The sump breathed a sigh of relief. Were I in one of the Jag's Land

Rover stablemates, I would have barely broken stride. As they use the same infotainment system, I briefly wondered if a mix-up had occurred in build. Perhaps a Range Rover owner was currently staring at a different sort of Copse, wondering why they'd been directed onto a circuit.

Apart from this one ambitious detour, the nav has actually been pretty good. Although it's not the fastest to respond, the mapping is a vast improvement on what Jags had until very recently, and on a rainy Friday night in London it spirited me around all sorts of mayhem as though it had grown up eating jellied eels and listening to the chimes of Bow Bells. I'm still not convinced by touchscreens, as on an even mildly bumpy road it's all too easy to miss-prod, but again the newer layout of the Jag's screen has minimised the risk of this. Old habits die hard, though, and I'll keep my Philips map, just in case the nice lady forgets herself again and confuses the R with a Camel Trophy Discovery. ❌

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)



Date acquired	January 2016
Total mileage	6544
Mileage this month	896
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	25.9

Skoda Octavia vRS

Quietly fantastic wagon proves fit for purpose



W WHAT'S THE SIGN OF AN **evo** Fast Fleeater that has integrated seamlessly into your life? Answer: when from the moment you close your front door to the first metre of travel is an intuitive sequence that requires no thought whatsoever. The vRS achieves this.

Pull the house door shut, unlock the car (no keyless entry on the Octavia, sadly), open the rear door and launch the laptop (or the child) onto the back seat and open the driver's door as the rear clicks shut. Slide onto one of the most comfortable seats on our fleet, insert key, left foot on brake, left hand reaching for gearlever, wait for that first sign of life from the engine. 'D' selected, brake released, drive.

Henry's F-type has more drama and you can't help but wait and soak it all in – the turn of the crank, the firing of the V8, that crackle from the exhaust. Speedy getaways are not the F-type's thing, until you deploy all 542bhp, of course. Dickie's Bentley? There is always a moment of appreciation between the driver's door quietly closing and the twin-turbo V8 coming to life. Nick's

7-series? The first few moments are always, without fail, spent turning every driver aid off.

This may all sound like the vRS has no sense of occasion about it, and compared to the others, that's the case. But it's also designed to be a daily driver that's focused on getting you about with as little intrusion as possible, and that's what the Octavia has delivered during every one of its 14,988 miles with us. I like its honesty, and the straightforward approach it takes to doing pretty much everything I need it to do. ❌

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Date acquired	October 2015
Total mileage	14,988
Mileage this month	1047
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	41.4



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FOCUS

CAR WAX

Get your pride and joy gleaming – and keep it that way – with a good quality wax. Here are our top picks...



IF YOU THOUGHT CAR CLEANING was the work of a quick soap'n'hose on a Sunday afternoon or something best left to those blokes in the corner of the supermarket car park then you've much to learn. Car cleaning is a multi-billion-pound worldwide industry and increasingly sophisticated products are now widely available to consumers.

You might balk at paying £20 for a

70g tub of 'Über Wax' from **Muc-Off** (muc-off.com), but its formulation of pure Brazilian carnauba wax and oils has had more care lavished over it than most cosmetics. Muc-Off says it's safe for use on all colours, paint types, metals and carbonfibre, and it's strong too – it'll even protect against 'industrial fallout' and acid rain, all while looking and smelling like bubblegum.

Dodo Juice's Supernatural Hybrid wax (£29.95 for 100ml, dodojuice.com) is similarly effective, previously winning industry awards as both a wax and a sealant. Apply it to clean bodywork with a foam applicator pad, allow to cure for 5-15 minutes and then buff – for several months of protection.

You're likely familiar with Simoniz and Autoglym already, and between

them they illustrate the breadth of products in this market. A 150g tin of **Simoniz** Original Wax is just £7.99 (halfords.com), while **Autoglym's** High Definition Wax is £45.99 for 150g (autoglym.com) and includes two applicators and a microfibre cloth for polishing.

If you want to keep your car looking perfect, one of these waxes should be a part of your armoury.

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ESSENTIALS

THE ROUND-UP

The new motoring products that have caught our eye this month



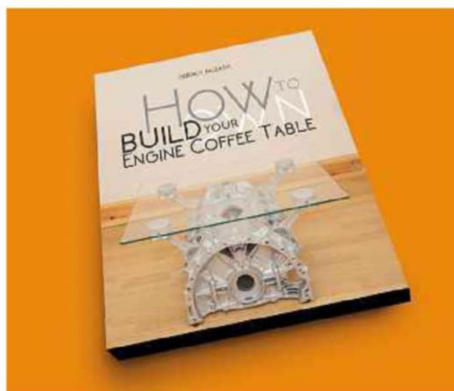
CAR COVER

Classic Additions Super Soft Stretch Indoor Cover

£123.60

classicadditions.co.uk

CA's British-made covers really cling to your car thanks to a Lycra-blended fabric. The upshot is they look the business and save you the expense of a bespoke cover. They're also incredibly soft, reassuringly robust and fully breathable.



BOOK

How to Build Your Own Engine Coffee Table

£9.99

veloce.co.uk

Building an engine-based coffee table will be the easy part if you buy this book. More difficult will be convincing your better half that a big-block V8 should take pride of place in your living room...



MODEL

Ariel Atom V8 1:18

€129.95

soulmodelsweb.com

Few die-cast model makers have dared to tackle the complex tangle of tubing that is an Ariel Atom, but Soul Models in Spain have turned out a spectacular replica. Only 1500 will be made.



POSTER

Le Mans '95

\$14.95

8380labs.com

We love the modern class of high-tech LMP racers, but there's still something very special about the mid-'90s GT racing period of McLaren F1s, F40s, Skyline GT-Rs and Venturis. This poster is the perfect celebration.



DASHCAM

Thinkware X550

£169

thinkwaredashcam.uk

The X550 pairs a 1080p camera (recording at 30fps) with speed-camera information, forward collision and lane departure warnings and a facility to back up videos should an incident occur. A rear view camera adds £50.



SUNGLASSES

Serengeti 4500 24 Le Mans

£145

serengeti-eyewear.com

Serengeti, makers of arguably the best drivers' eyewear in the world, have joined up with the Le Mans 24-hour race to create a range of new special-edition sunglasses. Exceptional lenses and top quality frames pervade.



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Market



WANT IT. BUY IT. OWN IT. LOVE IT.

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ANALYSIS: WHY YOU SHOULD BUY AN ITALIAN V12

Exquisitely irresistible, twelve cylinders in a V have formed the heart of many a supercar. But the breed faces extinction, so buy now – while you still can

by Adam Towler

THE ITALIAN V12 HAS ALWAYS BEEN special. Extravagant and decadent, the 'twelve' is the blue-blooded prince of engines, far removed from the humble daily consumption of miles.

The V12 gets to look down through its ornate exhaust manifolds at other engines because it is naturally better, or more accurately, naturally balanced. Essentially, it's two straight-six engines on a common crankshaft, and given the six is perfectly balanced, so is the 12. Moreover, a V12 delivers its power pulses more often thanks to triple overlap (at any given moment three cylinders are at different stages of a power stroke), which reduces the gaps in the power delivery. Its rotating parts can also be lighter than those for an engine of the same displacement but with fewer cylinders, so it's no surprise that V12s





‘There’s an aura around cars with a naturally aspirated V12’

tend to be beautifully smooth and often keen to rev. The rarity of the V12 also adds to its appeal, and that applies to the new car market, where, Aston Martin aside, the two main proponents of the type are old rivals Ferrari and Lamborghini.

Enzo Ferrari’s first car under his own name was powered by a V12, and the type has been at the heart of the company’s most successful and revered cars on road and track ever since, including the LaFerrari. The marque’s ‘new V12 era’ began in 1992 with the 456 GT, continuing from 1996 with the 550 Maranello, a car we looked at closely only recently in a Model Focus (evo 218). Well-used 550s were once available for bargain prices under £50,000 (the

456 even fell into the £20,000s), but you can now pay £200,000 for a right-hand-drive Maranello if it has very low, ‘investment grade’ mileage. The 575M that succeeded it has been dragged upwards, with rare manual examples particularly sought after. Presently, even a 456 with average miles can exceed £50,000.

If you’re thinking that snapping up the 575M’s successor – the mighty 599 GTB – might be a good investment move, you’re already behind the first wave. As Neil Vas comments (see Expert View), these went as low as £70,000 not long ago, but anything with low mileage tends to be at least £120,000 now.

We’ve recently also looked at the 599’s more practical relation, the FF

(evo 222), and prices of those are holding firm around the £150,000 mark – although it remains to be seen what effect the new GTC4 Lusso will have on those values. Don’t discount its predecessor, the 612 Scaglietti, either, although these have seen significant growth in values, too.

As for the brutal F12, values have hardened, with none of the grisly depreciation that was once an accepted norm of the V12 supercar: you’ll need around £225,000 for a 2013 car on, say, 7000 miles.

Of course, the other marque so closely associated with the V12 is Lamborghini. The V12-engined Lambo remains the archetypal supercar: broad of beam, impossibly low and utterly commanding.



Above: Ferrari F12’s V12 boasts a staggering 730bhp. **Top left:** Aventador values are solid. **Top right:** 550 and 575 prices on the up

FOUR TO BUY



LAMBORGHINI MURCIÉLAGO LP670-4 SV
£379,990

In Grigio Telesio with 5000 miles on the clock, this SV’s highlights include gloss-black alloys and full carbon options, while those graphics mean there’s no ambiguity about this being the ultimate of its type.

vvsuk.co.uk
01580 714597



FERRARI 599 GTB
£114,990

A 2007 car that’s now travelled 26,000 miles, this massive portion of V12 Ferrari-ness feels like strong value. A Rosso Corsa/black colour scheme may be predictable, but it’s desirable, while options include the carbon driving zone.

vvsuk.co.uk
01580 714597



LAMBORGHINI DIABLO SV
£199,995

This 28,000-mile former motor-show car is claimed to be the only one painted in Blu Speciale. As an SV, it loses the VT’s four-wheel-drive system and also features 510bhp, which should be enough to focus the mind.

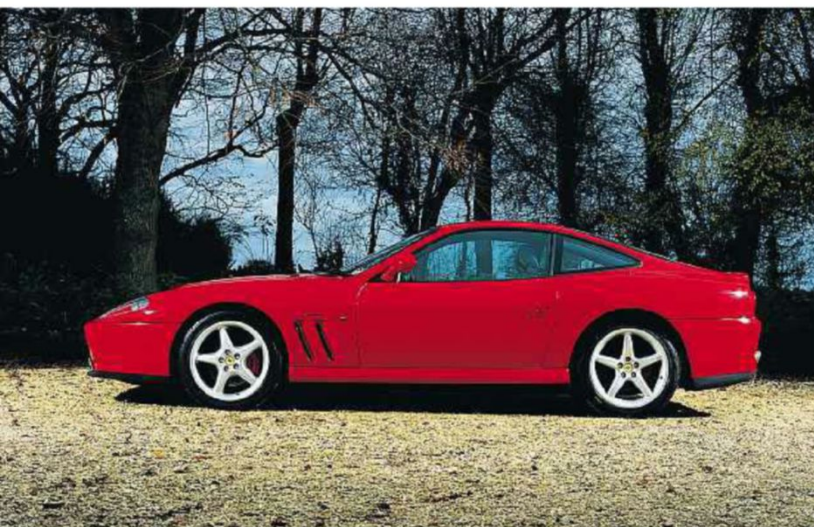
classicandperformancecar.com
01244 529500



FERRARI 550 MARANELLO
£157,950

This 2001 550 Maranello is not only right-hand drive, but is also fitted with a manual gearbox. Finished in Nero Daytona with Crema hide, it’s covered 35,300 miles, has been serviced every year and is one of 457 UK right-hand-drive cars built.

slades-garage.co.uk
01494 812115



Predictably, perhaps, values of Lamborghini's 1990s hero, the Diablo, have followed the earlier Countach in enjoying a surge. Early Diablos remain where the value is, but they're not the easiest to own or drive, whereas the Audi-fied 6.0 VT can now command £200,000 for a 20,000-mile example. Models such as the five right-hand-drive Jotas can exceed £325,000.

The Diablo's replacement was of course the wonderful Murciélago, the final home for the long-serving

Bizzarrini-developed V12. These start at around £100,000 for an early car from 2002, rising to £120,000 for a 2005 car, and they're very mileage-sensitive. Roadsters are a touch more, while the LP640 'facelift' cars hover around £140,000 on approximately 15,000 miles. The sensational SV is more like £350,000, a healthy rise over its original list price. Aventadors, meanwhile, start at around £210,000 for an early one, rising to £240,000 for a revised, '13-spec car, with Roadsters worth up to £300,000.

Expert view



NEIL VAS

Vas Vehicle Solutions

'I've normally got 20 Lamborghinis in stock, and I own 90 per cent of the cars – you could say I live and breathe this market! They've steadily increased in value, but I think they're still good value compared with the equivalent Ferraris.

'Early Murciélagos are better with a manual 'box, but LP640s are very sorted and the SVs are to be tucked away. I think that's a wonderful car, the last with the Bizzarrini engine, and it feels light. For me it's better than an Aventador – it's a bit mad, but really composed. We're selling them immediately as they come in, and recently sold the last one built, with just 700 miles, for £500,000.

'Lamborghini has been really sensible with how they've released the Aventador. Years ago these

cars would halve in value, but I think they've done well. The manufacturers have finally understood the importance of residuals, helped by the reliability, the numbers released and people viewing these cars as art.

'The number-one colour for a V12 Lambo for resale is orange. Yellow is OK, but has fallen off. Black is very good but hard to find. They've got to be dramatic.

'The Ferrari 599 has to be the bargain supercar of the decade – it's a wonderful car, but they're expensive to maintain. They had to go up in value, but I still think there's more movement in them, when a GTO can be £700,000 but a HGTE-equipped 599 only £150,000.

'I have a couple of '07-plate cars in stock at the moment at £105,000 to £115,000. Manual-equipped 599s are extremely rare – I remember turning one down at £120,000, but that car is £240,000 now.'

SUMMARY

In an era when downsized turbo engines abound, there's an aura around cars with a naturally aspirated V12, and never more so than when they originate from Maranello or Sant'Agata. Given that such cars are becoming ever more anachronistic, there's a certain reassurance from investing in one now. With the values of Ferrari classics such as the Daytona arguably overheated, the younger generations seem a better bet. And given the low numbers in right-hand drive, it's the outlandish Lambos that look particularly appealing, as they have arguably further to climb.

It's fair to say there won't be another car like the Murciélago SV anytime soon, and you're not going to see too many on the road: both good omens for future values. None of our featured cars can be run on a tight budget, but the rewards both from behind the wheel and, increasingly, financially, are very appealing.

OPINION

'I BOUGHT ONE'

DEAN SAVAGE

FERRARI 550 MARANELLO

'I've had my 550 for eight years. It was always my dream but although it seemed a risky buy at the time, I only paid a third of what it's worth now. I've had very few issues, and driving it gives you a special feeling.'

THE SPECIALIST

LUCAS HUTCHINGS

Image Automotive

'I think the 599 GTO is an unbelievable car, the way it steers and the noise it makes. We've sold a few here and I think it does deserve those three letters. There's a massive jump in prices over the standard 599, and they start at £475,000.'

EVO VIEW

STUART GALLAGHER

A V12 Ferrari is impossible to ignore, isn't it? So much charisma, and the brilliance of the 599 is so appealing. So too its predecessor, the 550 – manual, naturally – while the 612 and FF have an off-menu appeal. But Lamborghini is, well, different, and for all the right reasons. We'll take a Murciélago.



FORD RACERS GO UNDER THE HAMMER

RM Sotheby's is to auction off a collection of Ford, and Ford-powered, race cars. The group of cars, owned by collector Jim Click, span from 1964 to 1970 and include a GT40, two Shelby Cobras and two Trans Am Boss Mustangs (one of which is pictured above). The auction will take place in Monterey, California, on 19-20 August.



DIESEL MARKET SHARE DECLINES

Diesels have lost market share throughout Europe following the VW scandal. Until recently, diesels accounted for over half of new car sales in the EU. However, in April diesels made up only 49.7 per cent of the market, a drop of 3.1 per cent compared to March. In the UK, the market share of diesels only dropped 0.7 per cent.

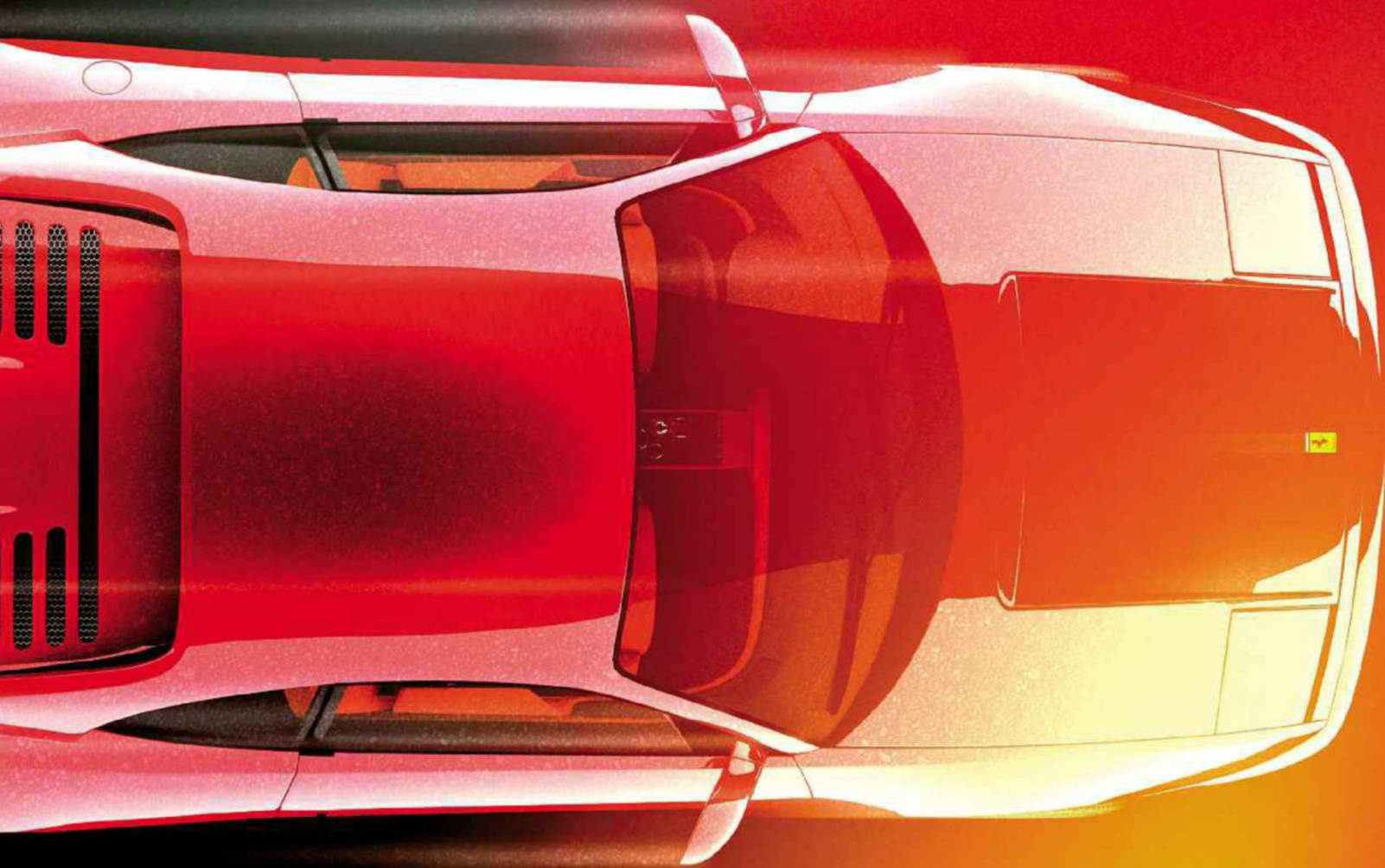


SMMT MEMBERS OPPOSE BREXIT

Seventy-seven per cent of members of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) would like to stay in the EU. According to an independent survey, SMMT members believe that EU membership provides better access to a skilled workforce, more influence on industry standards and regulations, and a more stable economy.



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USED RIVALS: MID-ENGINE SUPERCARS

by Adam Towler



AUDI R8 V10

Engine	V10, 5204cc
Power	518bhp @ 8000rpm
Torque	391lb ft @ 6500rpm
Weight	1620kg [325bhp/ton]
0-62mph	4.1sec [claimed]
Top speed	196mph [claimed]
On sale	2010-2015
evo rating	★★★★★

'I BOUGHT ONE'

'I ended up having four R8s at the same time: a V8 coupe, a V10 coupe and Spyder, and a GT. I could drive across to see friends in Sweden no problem, even in the GT. With the R8 you get a nice balance between a car that you can park in the supermarket and still have a good day out on a trackday.'

Mark Higson

EXAMPLES



2009 £68,990

Dick Lovett

A manual R8 V10 with 15,000 miles on the clock. Sports seats and Alcantara headlining feature inside.



LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO

V10, 5204cc
552bhp @ 8000rpm
398lb ft @ 6500rpm
1500kg [374bhp/ton]
3.7sec [claimed]
202mph [claimed]
2003-2013 (spec is for LP560-4, 2008-2013)
★★★★★

'My 2008 Gallardo e-gear is probably the most fun car I've ever owned to drive slowly. Others have been easy to go fast in – 911 Turbo – but you can't go fast on roads these days. The Lambo is very visceral to drive and I love the looks, the noise. I drive it most days, but I've not had an issue in 18 months.'

Chris Lemon



2004 £65,000

Autoficina

An early coupe in yellow with black leather interior, and 27,000 miles. Comes with a Tubi exhaust.



FERRARI F430

V8, 4308cc
483bhp @ 8500rpm
343lb ft @ 5250rpm
1449kg [338bhp/ton]
4.0sec [claimed]
196mph+ [claimed]
2004-2010
★★★★★

'The engine is fantastic; I love it to pieces. There's the joy of the manual gearbox, too, with my car. The sharpness of the steering can surprise – it's great when you're pressing on, but it does need concentration to drive at all times. Only the quality of the steel brakes doesn't quite match up.'

Al Melton



2006 £85,995

Nick Cartwright

Nero Daytona exterior, with a matching interior featuring silver stitching. Has the F1 gearbox.

BUYING ADVICE

'These are great cars – the only real problem is with them not being used enough. The brake discs rust on the inner edges, and the suspension can knock if the car is only used occasionally. Also, oil pipes corrode where moisture is sucked up off a wet driveway onto a hot car. The V10 will need a de-coke at higher mileages. Check the service books, too – even if mileages are low, some things like plugs still need doing.'

Andy McLeish, autops.co.uk

'Gallardos can be reliable if you get a good one. But beware the shiny ones that are in an appalling state underneath and are falling apart: a lot have been used as hire and track cars and they suffer from all sorts of engine and gearbox issues that can easily cost £20,000 to fix. I'd say 70 per cent of the cars are like that, and a lot have accident damage, too. They're certainly not the kind of car you can run on a budget.'

Roberto Grimaldi, grimaldiengineering.co.uk

'Used and maintained properly, these are very strong. Most of the wear is on the suspension, with ball joints and track control arms, although you can buy them individually so they're reasonably priced. There's no cambelt to worry about, and clutches last for 15,000 to 20,000 miles. Manifolds are known to blow on early cars, but I've changed them on post-2008 cars as well, and replacing the valve on the E-Diff is a common procedure.'

John Greateorex, gtcarschester.co.uk

THE EVO CHOICE

That we are even considering an Audi in the company of Ferrari and Lamborghini shows how highly we regard the R8. We'd track down one of the few V10s with a manual gearbox, but the paddleshift-equipped V10 looks a relative bargain in today's world of silly prices for supercars.

The F430 appeals for many reasons, but mainly because it was such a beautifully well-rounded machine. It also still allows us entry to that searing V8 engine and stunning balance, where the later 458 Italia is still a step too far for many financially.

Then there's the Gallardo. In production longer

than perhaps was healthy (it was eked out for a full decade), the junior Lamborghini evolved into a compelling supercar that, especially in rear-wheel-drive form, is irresistible to the kid in us all. It's our choice.

Stuart Gallagher

BUYING JOURNEY

From R5 to GT4, an **evo** reader shares his superb ownership history



JONATHAN PHILLIPS



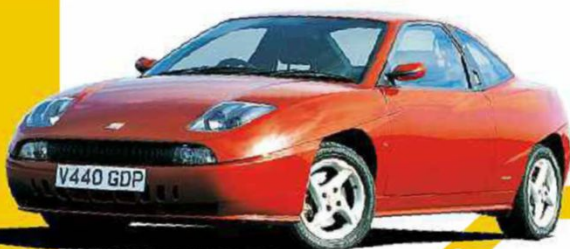
1st Renault 5 GT Turbo

'I passed my test late – at 26 – to accept a job. The first miles I drove on my own were when I collected the Turbo that came with the job.'



2nd Alfa Romeo 33

'The first car I purchased, which unfortunately developed a second-gear synchromesh problem before I sold it to my father, who became a life-long Alfa fanatic.'



3rd Fiat Coupe 20v Turbo LE

'Oddly, this came with a very Tom Cruise/*Risky Business*-style jacket. The wonderful Pininfarina exterior and the black and red leather interior don't look dated, even today.'



2003



4th Mazda RX-7 Mk3

'I bought it from a specialist importer. It was completely unmolested. It was also the first car that I took to Le Mans, in 2004. Le Mans is now an annual pilgrimage with my closest friends.'

5th TVR Cerbera 4.5

'I terrorised quiet Suffolk lanes in this, with its sports exhaust. The car had previously been owned by BBC Radio 2 DJ Steve Wright.'

6th Porsche Cayman S (987)

'I moved to Germany, so bought something appropriate for the daily Autobahn commute. When I moved back to the UK in 2012, I replaced it with an 18-month-old Cayman R.'



2009



7th Porsche Cayman GT4

'I feel very lucky to have this. There's a fantastic stretch of road near me and the car just comes alive on it; it's so balanced and connected to the driver.'

2016



evo view

What must it have been like to drive your first ever solo miles in a new 5 GT Turbo?

'I had to collect it from the Barnet Renault dealership in north London and drive across to south-east London where I lived at the time,' says Jonathan. 'I was so nervous that I stalled the car **twice on the forecourt**, much to the amusement of the dealership staff.' How times have changed in the company-car market...

A Corsa GSi followed on from Jonathan's troublesome Alfa, and after the Vauxhall came a purple Toyota Celica GT **before the switch to the Fiat**.

More recently it's been a trio of mid-engined Porsches, with our subject surely the envy of many in securing **earlier this year** our current eCoty champion, the brilliant Cayman GT4.



Tip

How about some retro hot hatch fun with the acquisition of a freshly restored Renault 5 GT Turbo?

What's next?

'That's difficult,' says Jonathan, 'as I also run a Range Rover Sport, and my wife has a 2013 Mazda MX-5. I'll keep the GT4 for two years or so and then see what Porsche does next, but if I were to go into the track-car space it would have to be a Radical RXC Turbo 500. **evo's** footage at Anglesey was quite spectacular.'

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£19,995

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Part exchange valuation	£100,000
Guaranteed buy price in 30 days	£110,995
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Returned customer (less fee)	£118,495



Increased
return of
£12,995

Porsche GT3

Part exchange valuation	£67,000
Guaranteed buy price in 30 days	£72,000
SOLD FOR	£79,995
Returned customer (less fee)	£78,495

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£279,995



Ferrari California
£108,950



Aston Martin Vanquish
£159,995



Bentley Continental GT V8
£96,995



Porsche Panamera Turbo S
£89,995



Porsche 911 Carrera 4S
£106,995



BUYING GUIDE: PORSCHE BOXSTER (987) 2005-2012

It's one of the greatest drivers' cars of the last decade, but it does have one or two 'issues'. Here's what you need to know

THE ORIGINAL BOXSTER, THE 986, had been a huge hit, so Porsche was never going to reinvent the wheel with the 987. More power, fresher tech and a bit more attitude were the order of the day. Looks-wise it was a careful evolution of the original – new lights, bigger air intakes on the flanks, more of a flare in the rear wheelarches. Underneath, the mid-mounted flat-sixes had grown in both capacity and output. The basic Boxster now had a 236bhp 2.7, the Boxster S a 276bhp 3.2. As with the 986, there was a choice of a manual gearbox (five-speed on the basic car, six-speed on the S) or a five-speed Tiptronic auto. For the first time, PASM active dampers and PCCB ceramic brake discs were among the options. The manual S was the one to have: 0-62mph in

5.4 seconds and a top speed of 166mph.

For 2007MY both models received revised engines featuring VarioCam Plus, boosting output to 241bhp in the base model, while the Boxster S went from 3.2 to 3.4 litres and 291bhp. The sprint to 62mph remained at 5.4sec for the manual S, but top speed rose to 169mph.

The second-gen model (987.2) arrived at the end of 2008 for 2009MY. It looked sharper still, with Carrera GT-style headlights and larger front air intakes incorporating daytime running lights, while inside there was the option of a revamped PCM infotainment system with touchscreen.

For the gen2, the base model now had a 252bhp 2.9-litre engine. The S was still nominally a 3.4, but in fact this was a new

unit featuring direct fuel injection (DFI) with power up to 306bhp. Both models now had the option of Porsche's seven-speed PDK twin-clutch gearbox as well as a conventional six-speed manual. The PDK was the quickest, taking 0-62mph down to just 5.0sec, while both managed to hit around 170mph. There were also a handful of special editions, the most desirable variant being the stripped-out Boxster Spyder of 2010 – 80kg lighter than a Boxster S and with a 316bhp version of the 3.4-litre DFI unit.

All are first-rate drivers' cars, but they've become dogged by tales of engine woes, which in some cases have kept values depressed. So if you do your homework, you can make that reputation work to your advantage. Here's where your homework begins...

CHECKPOINTS

ENGINE

Two things always crop up in any discussion about 987 Boxsters (and Caymans, and early 997 911s for that matter). The first is scoring of the cylinder bores. The second is IMS failure – that's the bearing at the end of the intermediate shaft that drives the camshafts. Either could require an engine rebuild, which can cost up to £10k.

But not all engines are affected, says Grant Pritchard of leading independent Hartech: 'Of the gen1 cars, the 2.7 and 3.2 are both strong engines. It was when they moved to the 3.4 that they became prone to bore-scoring and cylinders cracking. It was a poor choice of cylinder material.'

Clues can include excessive smoke on start-up and

blackened tailpipes. A number of specialists offer checks by endoscopes, which would hopefully spot early scoring, but it could start to develop at any time. So if you're looking at a gen1 3.4, either buy one that's had a rebuild by a top specialist, or keep funds in reserve. The cost will depend on how many cylinders you replace – it can be

£9000 if you replace all six and do the crank bearings and chains at the same time.

'Some people fit steel liners, but we recommend aluminium alloy,' says Grant. 'You can reduce the risk by installing a low-temp thermostat and using high-quality low-friction oil. Gen2 cars seem to be generally OK.'

IMS failures are rarer and, again, not

all 987s are affected. There are two types of bearing: the weaker, smaller bearing appears in early gen1 cars. A rattle at idle could indicate it's on the way out, but often there's little warning. Some specialists offer an upgraded replacement, which will reduce the chances of a future failure, though Hartech believe the only guarantee is to rebuild

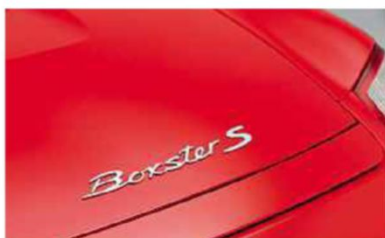
the engine with the later bearing.

'From 2006MY onwards, a later version of the shaft was introduced, which had a much larger bearing. We've never seen a failure with the larger bearing.'

You might also spot an oil leak from the rear main seal (RMS), but this is not a big deal, just something to sort when the clutch is replaced.



Left: gen1 987 distinguished by absence of LED DRLs in the front vents. **Above and right:** interior holds up well, with no common faults



TRANSMISSION

'The gearboxes are very strong,' says Grant. 'We rarely see a problem with a 987. If it's a Tiptronic or PDK, plugging it into diagnostics will show any problems.'

SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES

'No big issues here, either. The suspension's strong

and the brakes are reasonably priced. On higher-mileage cars you can feel and hear any wear in the control arm bushes and rose joints – it just starts to lose its precision – but it's generally a case of refreshing everything.'

BODY, INTERIOR, ELECTRICS

'The electric-window regulator occasionally fails, which is a couple of hundred quid to fix.'

RIVALS

LOTUS ELISE 111S/R

There are loads of S2 Elises from £10k. The 111S (156bhp, 0-60mph in 5.1sec) is around £14k, and the hardcore 111R is a bit more.

HONDA S2000

Post-2004 facelift cars had improved handling and performance (237bhp, 0-60mph in 6.2sec). Porsche-matching quality and refinement. From around £9k, but the very best command £15k.

TVR CHIMAERA

TVR is back in the news, so it could be a good time to buy a Chimaera. Even the base 4.0 has a thunderous V8, and dispatches 0-60mph in 5.1sec. Pay at least £11k.

INFORMATION

PORSCHE BOXSTER 987.1 3.2 S (987.2 3.4 S in brackets)

Engine	Flat-six, 3179cc [3436cc]
Max power	276bhp @ 6200rpm [306bhp @ 6400rpm]
Max torque	236lb ft @ 4700-6000rpm [265bhp @ 5500rpm]
Transmission	Six-speed manual/five-speed Tiptronic [six-speed manual/seven-speed PDK], rear-wheel drive
Weight	1345kg [1355kg]
Power-to-weight	208bhp/ton [229bhp/ton]
0-60mph	5.4sec [5.3sec] [claimed]
Top speed	166mph [170mph] [claimed]
Price new	£38,720 in 2005 [£41,250 in 2009]

PARTS PRICES

Prices for 3.2 S, from hartech.org. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges.

Tyres (each)	£163.55 front, £172.98 rear (Michelin Pilot Sport 2)
Front pads (set)	£90
Front discs (pair)	£216
Damper (passive/PASM)	£216/£444
Clutch kit	£456
Exhaust catalyst	£1140
Spark plugs (set)	£72

SERVICING

Prices from hartech.org, including VAT. Service every 10,000 miles or annually, whichever sooner.

Minor service	£300
Major service	£480
Spark plug replacement	£96

USEFUL CONTACTS

FORUMS, ADVICE, EVENTS

rennlist.com
boxa.net

INDEPENDENT SPECIALISTS

hartech.org
paragon.gb.com
rpmtechnik.com
porscheinspections.com

CARS FOR SALE

classicandperformancecar.com
porsche.com/uk/approvedused



'I BOUGHT ONE'

DAVID GREEN

'I bought my 987 S 3.2 about a year ago, an early manual on an 05 plate. I'd owned a number of Porsches before – 928 GT, 944 Turbo, 3.2 Carrera – and initially I was looking for a 996 3.6 Carrera 2, but I saw probably 15 cars and couldn't find one without some issue or another, including one 18,000-mile car – for £18,000 – with an engine death-rattle.

'By chance I came across a 987 and realised it was a car I could really enjoy. Then I found out about the problems with the early 3.4, so for me it had to be a 3.2. They don't bore-score and you can uprate the IMS bearing simply by taking the flywheel off. It's a service item, as far as I'm concerned.

'So soon after I got the car, I had the uprated bearing from LN fitted. At the same time it made sense to have a new clutch and also have the air/oil separator replaced – because if that goes, the engine produces huge amounts of blue smoke – and new engine mounts. The whole lot was about £2000, but well worth it for the peace of mind.

'The car had just under 70,000 miles on it when I bought it, so it was no garage queen, which was fine by me. We've done about 4500 since. I've got an E-class and my wife's got a Golf for daily use, so it's very much a third car. I'm getting it serviced

twice a year – it's supposed to be a two-year service interval, but there's no way I'm running it for two years on the same oil! A decent independent will do an oil change for £150 to £200: it's 8.5 litres of synthetic oil so it's not cheap.

'So far I've had no issues whatsoever. And it's just brilliant to drive; the engine, the gearbox... and the feedback and purity of the handling is just surreal. It's a great all-round package.'



IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



2006 (06) 2.7 MANUAL £11,989

49,000 miles, Midnight Blue, full tan leather, 19-inch Sport Design alloys, rear parking sensors, full service history, private plate included
lakesidecars.com



2005 (05) 3.2 S MANUAL £15,995

24,000 miles, Basalt Black metallic, Terracotta hide, 18-inch S alloys, Bose upgrade, sports steering wheel, rear park assist, one owner
finlaygorham.com



2009 (59) 2.9 PDK £23,975

20,000 miles, Meteor Grey metallic, black leather, heated seats, 19-inch Turbo alloys, park assist, cruise control, bi-xenon headlights
stratstone.com

WHAT WE SAID



FIRST DRIVE, DECEMBER '04

'I bag the manual, ceramic-disc Boxster S to start the drive route. Climbing in, the first thing that's apparent is how much better the driving position is. A deeper note percolates through to the cabin; not any louder but somewhat more cultured and still unmistakably Porsche.'

'Over the first few miles any worries that the new, variable-rate steering rack might feel weird disappear. The steering feels marginally heavier and disappointingly inert for a Porsche at cruising speeds, but I reckon a lot of that's down to our car's optional 19-inch wheels, wrapped in 235/35 front and 265/35 rear Michelin Pilots.

'No complaints about the grip, though. Even if you up the speed dramatically, I doubt you'll edge into the Boxster's outer limits of grip on the public road. Fortunately there's still pleasure to be had on the way up to that point thanks to the way the car engages you in the driving process. The shorter-throw gearbox deserves a mention here, too – even more of a pleasure to use than the old one, encouraging you to swap ratios just for the hell of it.

'The revised 276bhp engine is magnificent. Palpably more powerful, it purrs contentedly through the mid-range before howling up to the 7200rpm red line. And there's stonking torque low-down, significantly ahead of the old unit's. I reckon this is as close to perfection as you can get with a normally aspirated engine.' – **evo** 074

WHAT TO PAY

£?
£10,000+

An early Boxster 2.7, privately advertised with high-ish miles, can now be had for under £10k, while a good 3.2 S with history and average miles starts at around £12k for a private sale, or £14k and upwards from a dealer. These 3.2s haven't moved much in the last 12 months and you shouldn't lose much, if anything, over a year or two. Gen2 S models start at around £22k, and if you can stretch to around £30k, you should be able to bag a very nice 2010/11 car.

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MODEL FOCUS: ARIEL ATOM

Purer than a Lotus and faster than a Ferrari? That'll be the sensational Ariel Atom...

by Adam Towler

IT'S UNUSUAL THAT WE SHOULD SEEK the advice of a manufacturer about the used values of its products, but then Ariel isn't a normal company. It keeps a close eye on its cars, knows where most of them are, and services them.

The first Atoms, made in 2000-2002, started with a 125bhp Rover K-series engine and are rare. Only 100 were made, according to Ariel's Tom Siebert, and many were exported. You'll pay £15k for a scruffy one, maybe £20k for something good.

The Atom 2 of 2003 is more recognisable as the car we know today. These were the first Honda-powered Atoms, with an entry-level 160bhp car using a Civic Type S engine, a 220bhp car with the Type R engine, and the same motor supercharged

for the 275bhp option. A good 160 commands £20k, while 220s start in the low-£20k bracket and 275s can reach £30k. In 2005 the power outputs on the R engine changed to 245bhp and 300bhp, and you'll need £5k more for these. 'Condition is more important than age and mileage,' reckons Siebert. 'And if it's cheap, there's usually a reason.'

The Atom 3 arrived in 2007 with a smoother engine from the FN2 Type R. Again, it was mostly new, even if it seemed the same. You'll pay £30k for a 245 and £35k for a 300. The current Atom 3.5 is stiffer with new steering and bodywork, and commands £5k more. Given the new 310bhp 3.5 Supercharged costs £45k with options, the glacial depreciation of the Atom is clear to see.

Expert view

LEE CUNNINGHAM, SVR.UK.COM

'I won the Atom Cup Sprint Championship last year, so we have lots of insight with them on road and track. We're always happy to give advice to people. There have been lots of changes to them over the years, but the 2005-onwards cars are the most desirable – the earlier ones needed that extra development. The supercharged car is not necessarily that much better – you can't always get traction.

'You need to look for a good history with them. Looked after by the factory is ideal. If it's out of their hands, it does devalue the car a bit, as will anything high-mileage and in poor condition. If they're left out in the rain they'll have corrosion in the rose joints, but because the car is so "visual", you can see everything. Even so, ideally get an inspection report done.

'The majority are used for trackdays, but even non-road-registered cars can be converted quite easily at the factory. The factory knows nearly every car, and they're the only place you can get parts from, so if there's some non-standard fabrication on the car, think carefully about it. Watch the oil level on the Honda VTEC engines and the gearbox synchros will wear if abused, but otherwise they're very strong cars.'



'The glacial depreciation of the Atom is clear to see'



SERIAL BUYER

PAUL YARSLEY

'My first Atom arrived in 2010, just in time for Ariel's tenth anniversary. It was quite something: I'd owned some beautiful cars before, but this was a much more intimate experience. They are special cars, and nothing is too much trouble for Ariel – there's never been a car buying experience like it.

'That first car – an Atom 3 300 – gave way to a 3.5R in 2015. Tom Siebert and I had long talks about getting the gearbox from the R in my car, but it looked very expensive to do so we started on a new car. I've got very, very carried away with this one, with "aero" wishbones, paddleshift steering wheel and custom LED rear lights – whatever I've asked of them, they've done it, and it's made the whole ownership experience so special. It feels like you're part of the Ariel family.

'The Atom has taught me how to drive, rewarding me but also showing up where I was poor. It wasn't until the fourth year of owning the first car that I felt really ready for it. I've tried to buy other sports cars but they're so disappointing after the 3.5R: it's so rewarding, but it does require phenomenal concentration. They are expensive, but the resale is fair – I lost around 17 per cent on a private sale, and could probably have done even better.'



Dick Lovett

est. 1966



2005 Porsche Carrera GT

- Just 619 miles, UK supplied car
 - GT Silver with Terracotta interior
 - Complete with suit carrier and luggage
- £699,990**



2011 Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 LHD

- 10,028 miles
 - Red brake calipers and seat belts
 - One of just 600 worldwide examples
- £279,990**



2013 Aston Martin V12 Zagato

- 2,500 miles
 - One of just 67 cars produced
 - Alloro Green with black interior
- £550,000**



2004 Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale F1

- 8,629 miles
 - Right hand drive
 - Rosso Scuderia with Tricolour Stripes
- £264,990**



1999 Ferrari 550 Maranello

- 32,177 miles
 - Rosso Corsa with Crema interior
 - Manual transmission
- £159,990**



1999 Ferrari F355 F1

- 19,311 miles
 - Race seats with road legal roll bar
 - Full Ferrari main dealer history
- £124,990**



2010 Ferrari F430 Scuderia

- 5,526 miles
 - Nero Daytona with Nero interior
 - Grigio Corsa NART Racing Stripe
- £234,990**



2014 Aston Martin V8 Vantage

- 2,926 miles
 - Cobalt Blue with black interior
 - Six-speed 'Sportshift' manual transmission
- £79,990**



2015 Mercedes-Benz AMG GT S

- 1,546 miles
 - Polar White with black roof and mirrors
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SHOULD YOU KEEP IT?

Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)



Relight the spark that made you buy your car in the first place by treating it to some choice upgrades and accessories **by Antony Ingram**

THE OCTAVIA vRS'S TALENT LIES in mixing strong performance with the utmost ease of use and a level of practicality that shames most other cars – especially in estate trim. The second-gen cars are also dropping in value and out of warranty, making them ideal platforms for modification.

With turbocharged petrol and diesel engines, ECU tuning is an obvious starting point. Superchips' Bluefin (£399) adds as much as 41bhp and 40lb ft to the standard 197bhp and

206lb ft in the petrol model, and 28bhp with 44lb ft for the TDI.

Next is handling. Owners recommend starting with anti-roll bars. H&R supplies front and rear units (£334 from awesomegti.com) that reduce roll and improve cornering without sacrificing ride quality. New wheels are worth a look too: the standard 18-inch pieces are around 13kg each. Neuspeed RSe07 wheels weigh 8.8kg each in 18 x 8in. You can find them at awesomegti.com for £250 apiece.

Aftermarket news



120 YEARS OF ABT

Abt Sportsline is – perhaps surprisingly – 120 years old this year. To celebrate, it has created three new models based on the Audi TTS, Q3 and VW Transporter T6. The TT jumps to 365bhp and the Q3 to 207bhp, both with a striking bodykit. The van gets 232bhp.



MOUNTUNE Mk3 FOCUS RS UPGRADES

It hasn't taken long... Respected Ford specialists Mountune have already set to work on the Focus RS, with a new 'Phase 1' package. Various new bits include a short-shift kit (£159), air filter (£59), Quaife LSD (£726) and a branded gearknob (£59).



LIBERTY WALK 360

Fresh from turning Nissan GT-Rs and Lambo Huracáns into wide-body monsters, Japanese bodykit firm Liberty Walk has now created a kit for the old Ferrari 360 Modena. It's available in GRP and carbon – and will require some cutting up of the original car...



MOPAR GIULIA

Mopar is a name better associated with Chrysler and Dodge, but in the Fiat-Chrysler empire, Alfa Romeo is now part of the action. There are no 'Hemi' V8s though – Mopar's accessory list for the Giulia merely includes sill plates, alloy wheels and carbonfibre trim.

NEXT MONTH

ANALYSIS

How to buy your next performance car: cash, finance, PCP or loan? We help you decide.

USED RIVALS

Supermini hot hatches: Vauxhall Corsa VXR v Ford Fiesta ST v Renaultsport Clio 200.

MODEL FOCUS

Mitsubishi Evo IV: how is this rally car for the road performing on the second-hand market?

BUYING GUIDE

BMW M6 – the coupe that thinks it's a supercar. Find out all you need to know to buy a good one.

'Why I've kept it'

GAVIN SCHUTTE

LOTUS ELISE 111R



'I was a serial Alfa owner and started doing the odd track event. I realised I needed a proper tool for the job, but I still wanted a special car for road use, so in 2006 I bought a one-year-old Elise 111R. A year later we emigrated from South Africa to Australia, and the Elise made the trip with us after I chose not to sell it to a guy who, on handover day, tried to haggle the price down from what we had agreed previously. It turned out to be the biggest favour anybody has done for me.

'I then started to do more trackdays and the durability of the car was proving incredible. It was also cost effective as I lost the urge to constantly change my daily cars for the newest model. Like most Elise and Exige owners doing trackdays, I started "improving" the car. Wider wheels with R-compound tyres were the biggest change, but harnesses, race seats, adjustable dampers and brake upgrades have also been added.

'The car has now, a decade later, morphed into such a personalised vehicle; it suits me perfectly. I have kept most of the useable original bits in case I ever want to return to using the car on the road only.

'I've driven an Exige V6 and loved it, but there would be many aspects of the Elise I'd miss. I don't see myself ever selling it. It is truly like my second child and the best thing I've ever owned by miles.'

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1972 PORSCHE 911S 2.4
LHD, Sepiabrown, desirable Recaro seats, excellent maintenance record including recent engine-out service by Autofarm



1999 MV AGUSTA F4 ORO
Only 7kms from new, number 300 of 300 built. The bike retained personally by Claudio Castiglioni. Recently serviced, as-new



2007 LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO SPYDER
LHD, E-gear, carbon upgrades, sports exhaust, front lifting gear, only 16,000 miles.



2010 ALFA ROMEO 8C SPIDER
LHD, one of only 500, Alfa Red with black leather, under 3,000 miles, recently serviced.



2011 PORSCHE 997 GRAND-AM
Built at huge expense by Paul Miller Racing (USA) for 2012 24 Hours of Daytona, massive specification including RSR upgrades

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Est: £18,000 - £22,000



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Lamborghini Murcielago LP670-4 SV Colour SatNav, Ceramic Brakes, High Level Rear Wing, 7,000 miles, 2010, **£379,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago LP670-4 SV colour Satnav, Ceramic Brakes, High level Rear Wing, Grey, 5,000 miles, 2010, **£199,990**



Lamborghini LP550-2 Superleggera Singapore Transparent engine cover, Skorpius Alloys, Carbon Driving Zone, 25,000 miles, 2011, **£139,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 High Spec Gloss Black Calisto Alloys, Branding Pk, Reverse camera, 13,000 miles, 2011, **£104,990**



Ferrari F430 LHD Scuderia Delivery Miles Ceramic brakes, Carbon driving zone, VIP Pk, 100 miles, 2009, **£269,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago LP670-4 SV Ceramic Brakes High Level Rear Wing Small Decal option 4,000 miles 2009 **£369,990**



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Ferrari F12 BERLINETTA
Ferrari F12 BERLINETTA JBL sound upgrade, LED and Carbon steering wheel, 8,000 miles, 2013, **£213,990**



Lamborghini AVENTADOR V12 Coupe Huge Spec Transparent engine cover, Sports exhaust, Carbon fibre engine bay, 2,800 miles, 2014, **£269,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago LP 640 Coupe High Spec Parking Camera, Titanium Hercules alloys, Carbon racing seats, 19,000 miles, 2007, **£149,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera LP570-4 Rear Lifting Gear, Rear Camera, High level rear wing, 25,000 miles, 2010, **£124,990**



LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO COUPE E GEAR Calisto Alloys, Lifting Gear, Parking Camera, 34,000 miles, 2006, **£74,990**



FERRARI 599 GTB
HGTE Alloy Wheels, Ceramic Brakes, 2007, 29,000 miles, **£104,990**

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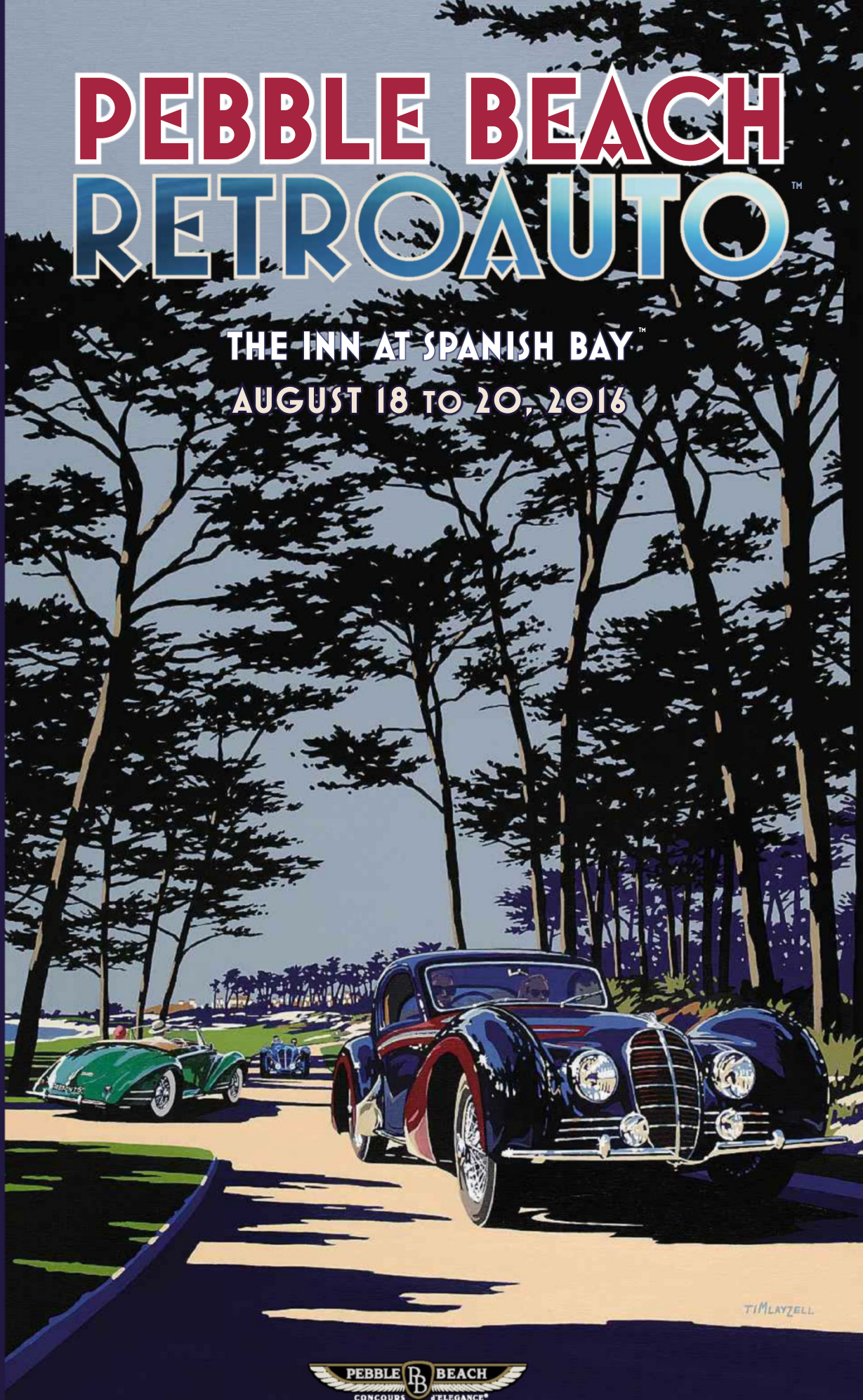

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THE KNOWLEDGE

● = 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.

MAKE & MODEL	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	£19,090	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	£33,055	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 Giulietta QV	199 D	£28,330	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	£25,595	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	155	162	40.4	+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options	★★★★☆
Audi A1 quattro	181 R	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	£31,230	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.4	12.5	155	162	40.4	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 R	£40,795	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	4.3	-	155	189	34.9	+ Addictive five-cylinder noise; monster pace - Chassis not exactly playful	★★★★☆
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	£27,060	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	£32,010	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	228	5.1	-	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD on its options list	★★★★☆
BMW 130i M Sport	106 R	05-10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.1	15.3	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★☆
Citroën 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	10-15	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	★★★★☆
DS 3 Performance	222 D	£20,495	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1175kg	177	6.5	-	143	125	50.4	+ All the right ingredients - Undercooked	★★★★☆
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	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	207 R	£17,545	4/1596	179/5700	214/1600	1088kg	167	7.4	18.4	137	138	47.9	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	213 R	£18,144	4/1596	212/6000	236/2750	1088kg	198	6.4	-	140	138	-	+ One of the best mid-sized hatches made even better - Badge snobbery	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	08-13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Grown up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 R	08-13	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - ...if you're 12 years old	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	05-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate	219 D	£23,295	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	135	110	67.3	+ Performance not sacrificed at the altar of economy - Gets ragged when really pushed	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	207 R	£22,745	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	154	159	41.5	+ Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	187 D	£23,940	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	154*	169	-	+ Great value upgrade - Steering still not as feelsome as that of some rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	119 R	05-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.7	16.8	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	137 R	08-11	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	5.8	14.3	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	223 R	£31,000	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1524kg	230	4.7	12.4	165	175	36.7	+ Torque-vectoring 4WD brings new sensations to hot hatch sector - Engine isn't thrilling	★★★★☆
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 (Mk2)	181 R	10-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	12.7	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than regular Mk2 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	+ Revvy engine, sparkling chassis, bargain used prices - Rusty rear arches	★★★★☆
Ford Racing Puma	128 R	00-01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.8	23.2	137	-	34.7	+ Exclusivity - The standard Puma does it so well	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R	216 R	£29,995	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.7	-	167	170	38.7	+ Great on smooth roads - Turbo engine not as special as old NA units; styling a bit 'busy'	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 R	07-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.8	17.5	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R Champ'ship White	126 D	09-10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	146	-	31.0	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on the standard car	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (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	£20,205	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1359kg	143	7.3	-	150	170	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 1.5 Sport	132 R	£15,995	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-AMG A45	221 R	£39,995	4/1991	376/6000	350/2250	1480kg	258	4.2	-	155	162	40.9	+ Tremendously fast - But not a true great	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 R	12-15	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	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£15,485	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	£18,840	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	11-15	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 (R53)	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 (R53)	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	£21,995	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	★★★★☆
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	223 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	★★★★☆



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OUR CHOICE

Renaultsport Mégane 275. This generation of Mégane has got better and better with every update, and the 275 is simply sublime. Optional Öhlins dampers and Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 rubber (taken from the Trophy-R) aren't essential, but improve things even further.



BEST OF THE REST

The latest Ford Focus RS (left) is our favourite super-hatch, with the more grown-up Golf R close behind. The SEAT Leon Cupra 290 (which replaces the 280 and has an extra 10bhp), is a real buzz, especially with the Sub8 pack and sticky tyres, while the Fiesta ST Mountune is our pick of the smaller hatches.

MAKE & MODEL	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 308 GTI 250 by Peugeot Sport	223 R	£26,855	4/1598	246/6000	243/1900	1205kg	207	6.2	-	155	139	47.1	+ A very capable hot hatch... - ...that lacks the sheer excitement of the best in class
Peugeot 308 GTI 270 by Peugeot Sport	215 D	£28,250	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224	6.0	-	155	139	47.1	+ As above - As above
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	£20,445	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	1110kg	165	6.6	17.5	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	187 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	200 R	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.6	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Just 500 were built
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.5	17.7	138	-	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 R	'99-'02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1335kg	173	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky
Renault Clio Williams	195 R	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.6	20.8	134	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile
Renault 5 GT Turbo	195 R	'87-'91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140	7.3	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Cup-S	223 D	£23,935	4/1998	217/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ Cup chassis, LSD, the same engine as the Trophy-R - Could be too hardcore for some
Renaultsport Mégane Nav 275	-	£25,935	4/1998	217/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ A more luxurious 275 - Cup chassis is an option
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	195 R	'12-'15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.4	14.8	158	174	37.7	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 R	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200	5.8	-	159	174	37.7	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	215 R	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power
Renaultsport Mégane 230 F1 Team R26	195 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ The car the R26.R is based on - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	200 R	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	5.8	15.1	147	-	-	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	218 D	£18,100	4/1798	189/4300	236/1450	1185kg	162	6.7	-	146	145	45.6	+ Quick, competent, refined, and manual only - Not exciting enough
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	183 D	'10-'15	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1259kg	144	6.9	-	142	139	47.9	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement, DSG only
SEAT Leon Cupra 290	221 D	£28,375	4/1984	286/5900	258/1700	1300kg	224	5.8	-	155	156	42.2	+ As below, but with another 10bhp - As below
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	220 R	'14-'15	4/1984	276/5600	258/1750	1300kg	216	5.8	-	155	149	44.1	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTI money - The Mk7 Golf R
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 R	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	'10-'12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	6.1	14.0	155	190	34.9	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 R	'04-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	£24,230	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	164	6.8	-	154	142	45.6	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car
Skoda Octavia vRS 230 (Mk3)	215 D	£26,350	4/1984	227/4700	258/1500	1345kg	171	6.7	-	155	142	45.6	+ Limited-slip diff makes for a sharper steer - It could handle more than the extra 10bhp
Skoda Octavia vRS TDI 4x4 (Mk3)	223 D	£27,590	4/1968	181/3500	206/1750	1475kg	125	7.6	-	142	129	57.7	+ Four-wheel drive tightens the vRS chassis - Diesel and DSG only
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 R	'05-'13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake calipers?
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 R	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ A bit quicker than the STI... - ...but not better
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 R	£13,999	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	121	147	44.1	+ The Swift's still a great pocket rocket - But it's lost a little adjustability
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	132 R	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 R	£18,125	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.5	-	143	174	37.7	+ Begs to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	'07-'14	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals
Vauxhall Corsa VXR N'ring/Clubsport	164 R	'11-'13/'14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	207 R	£27,850	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	184	34.9	+ Better than the car it replaces; loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'05-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.7	16.7	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision
VW Up/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£8275+	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - ...but predictably slow
VW Polo GTI	211 R	£18,900	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1280kg	150	6.7	-	146	139	47.1	+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging
VW Polo GTI	154 R	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland
VW Golf GTD (Mk7)	200 D	£26,570	4/1968	181/3500	280/1750	1377kg	134	7.5	-	143	109	67.3	+ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTI
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	207 R	£27,135	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1351kg	163	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved - Mégane 265 beats it as a pure drivers' car
VW Golf GTI Clubsport (Mk7)	218 D	£30,875	4/1984	286/5350	280/1700	1375kg	211	6.0	-	160	155	40.9	+ A faster, sharper, more entertaining GTI - Some rivals are more exciting on track
VW Golf R (Mk7)	220 R	£31,120	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1476kg	204	5.1	-	155	165	40.9	+ A VW 'R' model you can take seriously - Mégane 275 just edges it as a pure drivers' car
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	172 R	'09-'13	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	148	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	195 R	'04-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	6.7	17.9	145	-	-	+ Character and ability: the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower?
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 R	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	5.8	15.2	155	-	26.4	+ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 R	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.4	16.3	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	195 R	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	129	-	26.6	+ Still feels everyday useable - Very hard to find a standard one
VW Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)	095 R	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto



There's another reason to visit, too. evo has joined forces with TOTAL – the leading international oil and gas company and technical supporters of Aston Martin Racing – to hold the 24hrs of evo. The best car to visit the Hotel de France during the 24hr Le Mans weekend will win its owner 2-nights accommodation at the famous hotel, and exclusive TOTAL motorsport gift and a 12 month subscription to evo. There will also be a limited number of exclusive gift packs available to evo readers who visit the Hotel de France during the Le Mans 24h weekend.

HOW TO ENTER

You will need to visit the hotel between 12 noon on Friday 17th and 12 noon on Saturday 18th. First place is 2-nights off-season free accommodation at the Hotel de France, an exclusive motorsport gift from TOTAL and a one-year subscription to EVO. Second and third places will receive a gift pack with products from TOTAL, Hotel de France and EVO. For more information, follow evo on Facebook and Twitter.





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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 Jaguar's F-Pace or Porsche's Macan Turbo, Macan GTS or Cayenne GTS.

	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 Giulia Quadrifoglio	223 D	c£59,000	6/2891	503/6500	443/2500	1524kg	335	3.9	-	191	198	40.3	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - We've only driven it on track so far	★★★★★
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 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 D89 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	12'-15	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.5	10.5	174	249	26.4	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	088 R	05'-08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 R	00'-02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility. Bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi RS2	214 R	94'-95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	06'-11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 R	£77,995	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.6	8.2	155	229	28.8	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 R	08'-10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	052 R	02'-04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi RS7	208 R	£84,480	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1920kg	292	3.9	-	155	229	28.8	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience	★★★★★
Audi S7	171 D	£63,375	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	155	225	-	+ Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs £8000 more	★★★★★
Audi S8 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 RSs - High centre of gravity	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£142,800	8/3997	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	4.9	-	183	254	25.9	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporting	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£153,300	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2400kg	261	4.3	-	200	343	19.0	+ More power than old Flying Spur Speed - Feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley 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	223 F	£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 M5 (F10M)	208 R	£73,960	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	155	232	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 R	04'-10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	10.4	155	-	19.6	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	110 R	99'-03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	4.9	11.5	155	-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 R	92'-96	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	182 R	86'-88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190 D	£98,145	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price tag looks silly next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★★
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£64,525	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	155	5.3	-	155	173	42.8	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	212 D	£93,080	8/4395	567/6000	553/2200	2265kg	245	4.2	-	155	258	25.4	+ Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	134 D	09'-15	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	325	20.3	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★★
BMW 750i	174 D	£71,575	8/4395	449/5500	480/2000	2020kg	226	4.7	-	155	199	-	+ Well specced, impressively refined - Lags far behind the Mercedes S-class	★★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 R	c£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	★★★★★
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	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 XF S Diesel	219 D	£49,945	6/2993	296/4000	516/2000	1675kg	180	5.8	-	155	144	51.4	+ Great chassis, good looks, better engine than V6 petrol - It's still a diesel	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	09'-15	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	13'-15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.4	-	186	270	24.4	+ XF gets turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S Sportbrake	203 R	14'-15	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	£58,690	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	£91,755	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1805kg	302	4.4	-	174	270	24.4	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★
Jaguar F-Pace 3.0 V6 Supercharged	222 D	£65,775	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1861kg	205	5.1	-	155	209	57.7	+ A match for Porsche's SUVs - Supercharged V6 needs to be worked hard	★★★★★
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 GS F	221 D	£69,995	8/4969	471/7100	391/4800	1790kg	267	4.6	-	168	260	25.2	+ Superb engine, exploitable chassis - Gearbox is off the pace	★★★★★

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Bought, Sold & Exchanged

	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	
Lexus IS F	151 R	'07-'12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too	★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out	★★★★★
Maserati 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 Levante Diesel	221 D	£653,000	6/2897	271/4000	442/2000	2205kg	125	6.9	-	143	189	39.2	+ Impressive blend of ride and handling - Diesel performance is mild for a Maserati	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
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 - Pricey 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 - Overshadowed 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	577/5500	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 1lbhp 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 S63 AMG L	191 D	£119,835	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	£86,500	8/5461	577/5500	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 CLS63 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 CLS63 AMG	099 R	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLE63 AMG S	218 D	£94,405	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258	4.2	-	155	276	23.9	+ Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLE63 AMG S Coupe	213 D	£96,555	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2275kg	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	4.7	-	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	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'08-'12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - about X grand too much when new	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 R	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen 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	24.6	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★★
Porsche 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	210kg	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 SDV8	-	£84,350	8/4367	334/3500	546/1750	2359kg	144	6.5	-	140	219	33.6	+ A brilliant long-distance machine - Doesn't live up to the 'Sport' branding	★★★★★
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 F	



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Lotus 3-Eleven. It may not be groundbreaking but it is hugely exciting. The V6 sounds fabulous and the open linkage on the manual gearbox looks fantastic. A circuit is obviously its natural habitat but it has surprisingly civilised road manners, so you could happily drive to and from a trackday in it.



BEST OF THE REST

Porsche's 781 Boxster S (left) has lost some character and desirability with the switch to four cylinders, but its performance and handling are still exemplary. Jaguar's F-type also impresses in both V6 and V8 forms, while an Ariel Atom or Caterham Seven offer an even more extreme alternative to the 3-Eleven.

	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	223 R	£60,255	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	205 R	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	647	2.6	-	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	08-12	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 R	09-12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + It's brilliant - It's mental
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 R	12-13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 R	10-12	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150K for an Atom
Ariel Nomad	210 R	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg	365	3.4	-	134	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 R	£89,994	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Starting to feel its age
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£108,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 R	£147,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	201	343	19.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A brilliant two-seat roadster... - Jet down by a frustrating gearbox
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	12-14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£141,995	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	09-12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A feelgood car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight
Audi TTS Roadster	207 D	£41,085	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	155	169	38.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A serious proposition, ranking close behind a Boxster S - Coupe still looks better
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	08-14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	09-14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Terrific engine... - Is the best thing about it
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,770	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull
Audi RS5 Cabriolet	179 D	£69,505	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1920kg	235	4.9	-	155	249	26.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Pace, looks, interior, naturally aspirated V8 - Not the last word in fun or involvement
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	06-08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1845kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + That engine - Wibble wobble, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	11-15	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	187	337	19.6	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better
BAC Mono	189 R	£124,255	4/2261	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...
Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible	168 R	£150,200	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2395kg	212	4.7	-	187	254	25.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + One of the world's best topless GTs - Still no sports car
Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible	194 D	£160,500	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2395kg	221	4.5	-	191	258	25.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A true drivers' Bentley - Excessively heavy; feels like it could give more
Bentley Conti GT Speed Convertible	187 D	£181,000	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2420kg	263	4.1	-	203	347	19.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Effortless performance, style - Running costs a tad on the high side
Bentley Continental Supersports	147 D	10-12	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2395kg	263	3.9	-	202	388	17.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Fast, capable and refined - Coupe does the Supersports thing better
BMW M235i Convertible	207 D	£37,000	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	320/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	06-09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	06-09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension
BMW M Roadster	002 R	98-02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better
BMW 435i Convertible	194 D	£45,680	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1740kg	176	5.6	-	155	190	34.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Impressive chassis, smart looks, neat roof - Extra weight, not as composed as coupe
BMW M4 Convertible (F83)	202 D	£61,145	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1750kg	247	4.6	-	155	213	31.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + As good as fast four-seat drop-tops get... - but still not as good as a coupe or saloon
BMW M3 Convertible (E93)	119 D	08-13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1810kg	232	5.3	-	155	297	22.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + M DCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge
BMW M3 Convertible (E46)	035 D	01-06	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1655kg	207	5.3	-	155	-	23.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + That engine - Gets the wobbles on British B-roads
BMW Z8	026 R	00-03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive
Caterham Seven 160	205 R	£19,710	4/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg	166	6.5	-	100	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options
Caterham Seven 270	219 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 420S	223 R	£30,795	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg	381	4.0	10.3	136	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£44,995	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg	516	3.4	-	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Ludicrous, near-620R pace, with added habitability - Well, 'habitable' for a Seven...
Caterham Seven 620R	187 R	£50,795	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg	551	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	373	4.9	-	120	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	13-14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg	342	4.8	-	130	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 R	09-12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 R	08-14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver
Caterham Levante	131 R	09-10	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly
Caterham Seven R300	068 R	02-06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps
Caterham Seven R500	200 R	99-06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders
Donkervoort D8 GTO Performance	185 R	£120,000	5/2480	375/5500	350/1750	695kg	548	2.8	-	168	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + There's nothing else like it - Pricey for a car with a five-cylinder engine
Ferrari California T	212 D	£154,460	8/3855	552/7500	551/4750	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	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + 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	15	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

SUBARU IMPREZA PI WR

The first-gen Impreza went out with a bang thanks to Prodrive's 'WR' package for the mighty P1. Richard Meaden tried it

'Throbby and enriched with beefier bass tones thanks to a new exhaust (power is unchanged at 276bhp), the P1 WR has a voice fit to echo around the forests of Wales. Get moving and the chassis, though unchanged apart from larger wheels and tyres, feels firmer.

'As you'd expect, there are immense amounts of grip and traction. But there's also adjustability and, in classic Prodrive fashion, the P1 WR can be set up into corners with a lift of the throttle and then powered through in a wonderfully predictable, controllable drift.

'Plump for the whole WR package and you're looking at an Impreza that stands you in for the thick end of £40,000. That's a helluva lot of money, but in the sweaty, adrenalin-spiked moments after you then from the P1 WR's cockpit, it still seems positively good value.'



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	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 Sport	-	£35,880	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	866kg	157	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ 1.6-litre Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 220	-	£43,800	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.2	-	145	173	37.7	+ Epic grip and pace - £43k for an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	183 R	71-15	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused - Are you prepared to go this basic?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	13-15	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 R	068 R	04-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrilling Elise yet - Blaring engine note	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC	131 R	08-11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 R	06-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S	049 R	02-04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 190	044 R	03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (SI)	126 R	96-01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 350 Roadster	-	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.7	-	145	235	28.0	+ An Exige with added sunny-day appeal - A Boxster would be a better everyday bet	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 R	13-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	3.8	-	145	235	28.0	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - 981 Boxster S is a better all-rounder	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 R	£82,500	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg	450	3.3	-	174	-	-	+ A fantastically exciting Lotus - If not exactly a groundbreaking one	★★★★★
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 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	07-11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 R	09-11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 R	00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Lotus Elan SE	095 R	89-95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,940	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.2	-	177	337	19.5	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£104,535	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.0	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,370	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	179	337	19.5	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4)	219 R	£22,505	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	161	7.3	-	133	161	40.9	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 R	09-15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	138	181	36.2	+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less than macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 R	05-09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s; dubious handling	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	98-05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	89-97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SLC43	222 D	£45,950	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1520kg	242	4.7	-	155	178	26.2	+ Twin-turbo V6 well-suited to baby roadster - But also highlights the chassis' age	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG	186 R	12-15	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 7G-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	£81,915	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Waffy performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£112,510	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	183 D	£170,815	12/5980	621/4800	731/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	155	270	24.4	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	08-13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	070 R	02-07	8/5439	493/6100	516/2650	1955kg	256	4.6	10.2	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murielago - 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 price	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 R	12-14	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 R	£31,140	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg	159	6.0	-	115	215	30.3	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8 Speedster	202 R	£71,140	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1000kg	368	4.2	-	148	282	23.3	+ Fantastic old-school roadster experience - Gets unsettled by big bumps	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8	171 R	£86,345	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	256	25.7	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★★
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 R	£128,045	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and targa top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 R	02-08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 R	10-14	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	155	262	25.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 R	£50,695	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.4	9.8	177	184	34.9	+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (981)	172 R	12-16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.4	-	164	192	34.5	+ Goes and looks better - Shame about the electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 R	12-16	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	14-16	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)	2123 R	15-16	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	180	230	28.5	+ The fastest, most rewarding Boxster yet - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster 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 - As above	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Radical SR3 SL	174 R	£69,840	4/2000	300/6000	265/4000	775kg	393	3.4	-	161	-	-	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm	★★★★★
Radical SR8LM	138 R	09-12	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal	★★★★★
Renault Sport Spider	183 R	96-99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	131	-	-	+ Rarity, fabulous unassisted steering feel - Heavier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Dawn	222 D	£250,000	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2560kg	223	4.9	-	155	330	20.0	+ Effortless driving experience - Driver involvement not a priority	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	187 R	00-06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 R	01-07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	05-07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	93-03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 R	92-93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	93-01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	00-04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	03-05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Vuoli 05	220 R	£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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RATINGS ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car



OUR CHOICE

Porsche 911 GT3 RS. The 911 GT3 RS may only have finished third at eCoty 2015, but it is, of course, still fabulous. Its naturally aspirated flat-six is mesmerising as it revs to its manic top end, while the chassis mixes colossal grip with a dreamy balance and incredible composure.



BEST OF THE REST

If you fancy something less hardcore than the GT3 RS, the 911 Carrera (left) and Carrera S haven't been ruined by the addition of turbos. Aston Martin's Vantages remain thoroughly entertaining and Jaguar's F-type R Coupe is a hoot, while Lotus's Exige and Evora offer sublime handling in all guises.

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Alfa Romeo 4C	209 R	£51,500	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg	269	4.5	-	160	157	41.5	+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 R	£77,009	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	★★★★★
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	218 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	£133,495	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	£97,12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary	★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	204 R	£29,915	4/1984	227/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	155	137	47.9	+ Desirable, grippy and effortlessly quick - Still not the last word in interaction	★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	£32,860	4/1984	227/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	155	149	44.1	+ Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement	★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk3)	209 R	£38,790	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1365kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	+ The most dynamically interesting TT yet - Still not as interactive as a Cayman	★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk2)	193 R	£38,790	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	355/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	174	209	31.4	+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT	★★★★★
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	£5,006	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.9	-	155	-	-	+ 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	£77,15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.1	9.9	188	332	19.9	+ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 R	£140,300	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	£149,800	8/3933	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.3	-	192	250	26.4	+ An even better drivers' Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£150,500	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.3	-	197	338	19.5	+ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	212 D	£168,300	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2245kg	283	4.0	-	206	338	19.5	+ Desirability meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	£237,500	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.6	-	170	295	22.2	+ The best-handling Continental ever - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg	★★★★★
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 R	£11,712	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	223 R	£35,225	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.2	12.7	155	189	34.9	+ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard	★★★★★
BMW M2	223 R	£44,070	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	248	4.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ More progressive chassis balance than M4 - Engine isn't inspirational	★★★★★
BMW M4	218 R	£57,005	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1515kg	285	4.3	-	155	204	32.1	+ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads	★★★★★
BMW M4 Competition Package	221 R	£60,005	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1515kg	298	4.3	-	155	204	32.1	+ Better tied-down than the regular M4 - Torque delivery still rather abrupt	★★★★★
BMW M4 GTS	222 R	£120,500	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	332	3.7	8.0	190	199	34.0	+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be at this price	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	196 R	£77,13	8/3999	444/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M	★★★★★
BMW M3 GT5 (E92)	171 R	£10,71	8/4361	414/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	190	295	-	+ Highly exclusive, one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	066 R	£10,007	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)	219 R	£10,007	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	£13,004	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	£13,98	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	£16,90	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	£16,009	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	£18,002	6/3246	321/7400	258/4900	1375kg	237	5.3	-	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)	218 R	£93,150	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155	231	28.5	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade too...	★★★★★
BMW M6 (Mk1)	106 R	£10,4999	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 *	220 R	£17,750	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 (C7)	197 R	£62,450	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	£87,860	8/6156	650/6400	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.2	-	186	-	-	+ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost	222 D	£30,995	4/2261	313/5500	319/3000	1655kg	192	5.8	-	155	179	35.3	+ Ninety per cent as good as the V8 - Missing ten per cent is what makes the Mustang	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	223 R	£34,495	8/4951	410/6500	391/4250	1749kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	299	20.9	+ Looks, noise, performance, value, right-hand drive - Comes undone on rougher roads	★★★★★
Ford Mustang Shelby GT350 *	221 R	£48,695	8/5162	526/7500	429/4750	1715kg	312	4.3	-	180	-	-	+ Engaging when driven fast - Doesn't flatter half-hearted commitment	★★★★★
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	£16,900	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	£10,005	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	£12,003	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	218 R	£85,010	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	+ Looks, presence, performance, soundtrack - Bumpy and boisterous	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	223 R	£91,660	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1730kg	318	3.5	8.1	186	269	25.0	+ Better than the rear-drive R in the wet - Less involving in the dry	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 R	£99,14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	£11,74	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 Elise S Cup	207 D	£15	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	★★★★★



McLAREN 12C

Why would you?

Because it's blisteringly quick and wonderfully useable, and also looks good value compared with its Ferrari rival, the 458 Italia.

What to pay

£100k-150k for an early car with a fairly standard spec. Top money for a 2013/2014 coupe is

around £135k-140k. Spiders start at £130k.

What to look out for

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. Check for poor panel

alignment or paint mismatching. Also check for scrapes under the chin and chipping on the side intakes. IRIS 2 was introduced at the end of 2012 and, crucially, it included a hardware change. It's a big improvement and can be retrofitted for around £2700. (Full guide, evo 218.)

SPECIFICATION

Years 2011-2014

Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo

Power 592bhp @ 7000rpm

Torque 442lb ft @ 3000-7000rpm

0-60mph 3.0sec (tested)

Top speed 205mph (claimed)

Rating ★★★★★

PAINT)(SHIELD

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For the best paint protection in the Galaxy drop in to planet earth and contact our specialists on 01733 390777, or fire up the Intergalactic net and warp to www.paintshield.co.uk and they will get you protected and on your way in next to no time (theory of relativity applies).



PAINT)(SHIELD

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RATINGS ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING
Lotus Exige Sport 350	221 R	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.7	-	170	235	28.0	+ Further honed, and with a vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of
Lotus Exige S (V6)	209 R	12'-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	170	235	28.0	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest
Lotus Exige S (S2)	105 R	06'-11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack
Lotus Exige (SI)	200 R	00'-01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+ Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement
Lotus Evora	138 R	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options
Lotus Evora S	168 R	£63,950	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911...
Lotus Evora 400	216 R	£72,000	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.1	-	186	225	29.1	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£82,890	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.5	12.7	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 R	£91,420	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	185	331	19.7	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 R	£110,740	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	256	4.5	-	188	360	18.2	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to
Maserati Coupe	064 R	03'-07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering
Maserati GranSport	073 R	04'-07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little
Mazda RX-8	122 R	03'-11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+ Never mind the 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	1725kg	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	1655kg	277	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	171 R	12'-13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	186	286	-	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092 D	06'-09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series	106 R	07'-09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe	205 D	£125,595	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.2	-	155	237	28.0	+ Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	209 D	£183,075	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	2100kg	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
Nissan 370Z	204 R	£27,445	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219	5.3	-	155	248	26.7	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer
Nissan 370Z Nismo	209 R	£37,585	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	155	248	26.6	+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle
Nissan 350Z	107 R	03'-09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling
Nissan GT-R (2012MY onwards)	218 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	223 R	£88,560	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	3.4	7.7	196	275	24.0	+ Recreates much of the Nismo's ability, without the rock-hard ride - Interior feels dated
Nissan GT-R Nismo	205 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 exotica - Notchy gearchange can spoil the flow
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£27,150	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.3	18.1	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting
Peugeot RCZ R	209 R	£32,250	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	155	145	44.8	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel
Porsche Cayman (981)	209 R	16'-16	6/2706	271/7400	214/4500	1330kg	207	5.7	-	165	195	33.6	+ Very enticing for the money in basic spec - You might still want the power of the 'S'
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 R	16'-16	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)	219 F	14'-16	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)	221 R	15'-16	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288	4.4	-	183	238	27.4	+evo Car of the Year 2015 (even though the 991 GT3 RS was there!) - Second-hand prices
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)	218 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 - Pricey for a Carrera
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 R	08'-11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 R	04'-08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	+evo Car of the Year 2004; like a junior GT3 - Tech overload?
Porsche 911 Carrera (996 3.4)	008 R	98'-01	6/3387	296/6800	258/4600	1320kg	228	5.2	-	174	-	28.0	+evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough
Porsche 911 GT3 (991)	206 R	£100,540	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333	3.5	-	196	289	23.0	+evo Car of the Year 2013 - At its best at licence-troubling speeds
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991)	223 R	£131,296	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353	3.0	7.1	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 ofevo - 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 evocar of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 R	07'-09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	221 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	223 R	£22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	161	6.9	16.5	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'
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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DATES

Friday 17th June 2016
Friday 22nd July 2016
Friday 19th August 2016

PRICE

£125 per car, with up to 2 drivers*

WHERE

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RATINGS ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car



OUR CHOICE

McLaren 675LT. The 'long-tail' is the step forward we've been hoping for from McLaren's super-series cars, adding a real sense of involvement to the incredible pace that's been building since the 12C. In fact, the 675LT is so intense it might even make you question if you need a P1.



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.

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/HPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 R	£192,995	12/5935	568/6650	465/5500	1739kg	332	3.6	-	201	298	22.1	+ Much better than the DBS it succeeds, especially in 2015MY form - It's no Ferrari F12	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 R	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.9	10.1	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin One-77	179 R	'10-'12	12/7312	750/6000	553/7600	1740kg	438	3.7	-	220+	-	-	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	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	'10-'15	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	3.9	8.4	194	346	19.0	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	190 R	'13-'15	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351	3.8	-	198	346	19.0	+ An R8 fit to take on the 458 and 12C - Firm ride may be too much for some	★★★★★
Audi R8 GT	169 F	'10-'12	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	199	-	-	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted	★★★★★
Audi R8 LMX	208 R	'15	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1595kg	358	3.4	-	198	299	21.9	+ More of everything that makes the R8 great - S-tronic transmission not perfect	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 R	'05-'11	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	596	11.4	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 R	'10-'14	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	12.2	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 R	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
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	222 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	221 R	'09-'15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.2	6.8	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement - Paddle-shift only	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	203 R	'14-'15	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 F430	163 R	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	196	-	18.6	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 R	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	9.0	183	-	17.0	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	-	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud	★★★★★
Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta	163 R	'97-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg	281	4.7	-	183	-	16.7	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?	★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	190 R	£241,053	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	211	350	18.8	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste	★★★★★
Ferrari F12tdf	217 R	£339,000	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	514	2.9	-	211	360	18.3	+ Alarmingly 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	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 R	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 R	'11-'15	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	'13-'15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1255kg	769	3.0	-	217+	330	-	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	203 R	'02-'04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485	3.5	6.7	217+	545	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	186 R	'96-'97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg	424	3.9	-	202	-	-	+ A better drivers' Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	222 R	'87-'92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg	437	4.1	-	201	-	-	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'	★★★★★
Ford GT	200 R	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - Don't scalp yourself getting in	★★★★★
Hennessey Venom GT	180 R	£900,000	8/7000	1244/6500	1155/4000	1244kg	1016	2.5	-	270	-	-	+ 0-200mph in 14.5sec, and it handles too - Looks like an Exige	★★★★★
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 XJ220	157 R	'92-'94	6/3498	642/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	213	-	-	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - ...until McLaren built the F1	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 R	£109m	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	£52.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	273	-	-	+ The most powerful car we've ever tested - It's sold out; we couldn't afford one anyway...	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCRX Edition	118 R	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	250+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spike power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán LP580-2	218 R	£160,000	10/5204	572/8000	391/6500	1389kg	418	3.4	-	199	278	23.7	+ More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Feels like there's more to come	★★★★★
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	481/5500	1445kg	347	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren 570S	217 R	£143,250	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1440kg	397	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 675LT Spider	222 D	£285,450	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1368kg	495	2.9	-	203	275	24.2	+ Spectacularly fast; involving, too - Might mess up your hair	★★★★★
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	'13-'15	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1395kg	658	2.8	-	217	194	34.0	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track	★★★★★
McLaren F1	205 R	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	6.3	240+	-	19.0	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 R	'10-'15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	4.1	8.4	197	308	21.4	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	204 R	'13-'15	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	196	321	20.6	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	073 R	'04-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3						

TRACK TIMES

● = 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 TT S (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
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	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
Porsche Cayman GT4	1:03.6	221	Yes
Lotus Exige S (V6)	1:04.4	177	-
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	1:05.1	177	-
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	1:05.1	220	-
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	1:05.7	220	Yes
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	1:06.5	-	Yes
Vuhti 05	1:06.5	220	-
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
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8	1:07.6	220	-
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	-
Toyota GT86	1:12.8	177	-

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Art of speed



Mercedes 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II bodykit

by RICHARD LANE

THERE ARE HOMOLOGATION CARS, AND THEN there are homologation cars. Aston's DBR9 might have two Le Mans class wins to its name, but the luxurious road cars are hopelessly neutered by comparison. The DB9 was also a huge commercial success and you could even buy one with an extended warranty. Hardly the stuff of the legend, is it? Lancia, meanwhile, screwed together 200 Delta S4 Stradales through gritted teeth because that's what it took to compete in a series so unhinged it was quickly banned. Extended warranty? Er, yeah...

The Mercedes 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II sits somewhere in between. Sure, it's rare, but with 502 examples built by AMG in 1990, it doesn't qualify as 24-karat unobtainium. Relative to the championship-winning DTM bruiser whose existence it sanctioned by acting as a homologation base, it was also depressingly tame, weighing 1340kg with 232bhp at 7200rpm. That sounds quite promising, until you realise the racer weighed 980kg and made 367bhp at a skull-numbing 9500rpm. The road car's wood-trimmed interior was also incredibly plush – way too plush to be cool.

The brilliant thing about the Evo II, though, is that you wouldn't know any of this by looking at it, because it shared the race car's whopper of a

bodykit. Group A aero homologation rules and Mercedes' determination to slap down the BMW E30 M3 Evo made sure of that, and the result was not only a very good touring car, but a level of malevolence hitherto unseen in the marque's subdued showrooms. Hands tied, AMG had been given no choice but to build arguably the most frightening road car in history. Painting it black – Blauschwarz, to be precise – was purely gratuitous.

Concocted by the (possibly) mad genius Professor Richard Eppler at Stuttgart University, the glassfibre bodykit was far more nuanced than its oil-slick cubism suggested. The front splitter, so precariously low but mitigated somewhat by the car's changeable ride height, was adjustable. The upper portion the rear window also wore a plastic bracket designed to corral air towards a wing with a manually adjustable trailing edge, and the spoiler beneath was similarly adjustable.

What weren't adjustable were the wheelarch extensions, which tapered at the rear and framed 17-inch Speedline wheels to brutal effect. They were, and still are, crucial to the enormous appeal of the Evo II, because without them the wing would look ridiculously overbearing. And without the wing, well, what you're left with is an Evo I – an impressive but altogether less awe-inspiring homologation beast. ☒

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1989 Aston Martin V8 Vantage X Pack (ex-Geneva Motor Show) ● 1997 McLaren F1 GTR (ex-Le Mans)

2004 Porsche Carrera GT

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