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NICK TROTT

*Where does the thrill go when the engine dies?*

WHEN THE BOSS OF McLaren Automotive says that we're on a path to inevitable all-EV transport, you listen. When he is a helpless car enthusiast, like the rest of us, and is evangelical about racing his historic Lotus, you really listen.

You may not want to hear this – and certainly the urge to throw myself from a first-floor window of the McLaren Technology Centre came over me when I heard it – but the internal combustion engine may, in less than a lifetime, become erased from existence – at least in new cars. The question is, will driving enjoyment be erased with it?

As Mike Flewitt discusses on page 68, the engine creates many of the sensations that we covet in a car: vibrations, good ones; carefully tuned exhausts; the bark of induction. If we remove the engine, we cauterise these sensations. The flow of neural energy may redivert to other senses, and we may find ourselves 'feeling' the road surface more, or 'seeing' with greater acuity – but that glorious connection with the engine will be gone.

Some manufacturers will attempt (and indeed some are doing so already) to replicate the energy created by an internal combustion engine. It is not beyond our technology to create an electric car that has a 'dummy' engine with exhaust headers that glow and a block that rocks, and which emits the noise and vibration that make you spontaneously giggle. It could even be selectable – you could hear and feel a Busso V6, then switch to a BMW V12, then... arghhhhh – stop me now!

But none of this can be truly replicated – and it never should. If legislation forces the internal combustion engine car into retirement, then manufacturers are faced with their greatest challenge: to ensure that their cars continue to excite and thrill. So the search is on to find, augment and amplify new driving sensations, and as much as I want to smash my head against the wall at the thought of the last internal combustion engine car leaving a production line, this fills me with excitement. Don't get me wrong – having been jammy enough to have wrung out a McLaren



'A search is on to find, augment and amplify new driving sensations'

F1 on three occasions (and been close to tears on one of them) I adore the petrol engine. But if hitherto undiscovered driving sensations are to be rooted out during the move to electrification, I for one want to experience them.

I have no doubt that working groups at all the key car makers are currently scratching their heads on this particular conundrum, and while I don't envy their task, these people are shaping the future of the Thrill of Driving. Let's hope they all race classic Lotuses at weekends.

EVO IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE ITS FIRST Great Drives Tour. This five-star event in May 2017 will centre around the Marqués de Riscal hotel in Spain and will include road and track driving. The tour will be documented by evo photographers and attendees will enjoy a 'behind-the-scenes' experience. There's space for only 20 cars, and places are going fast. For more info see page 52.

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

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Top to bottom: Dean Smith achieves new heights in the world of automotive photography; Henry Catchpole keeping on top of things during our McLaren test; Jethro Bovingdon pores over his M6 GT3 drive data; Dan Prosser calls ahead to his hairdresser after P1 drive

evo

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McLAREN MEGATEST

It started with the magnificent **F1**, which was followed by the less-than-marvellous **SLR**, and then came the first modern-day McLaren Automotive road car, the **MP4-12C**. And that came up a bit short, too. But Woking has learned, listened and developed its product line to give us some of the most accomplished, exciting and aspirational road cars for a generation. Now, for the first time, every McLaren, from **F1** to **P1 GTR**, has been gathered together and driven on road and track. We've also spoken to those behind the cars and the company itself. We've pitted the 12C against the new **540C**, discovered if the **675LT** is a cut-price **P1**, explored the differences between the **570S** and its **570GT** sibling and lapped the scintillating **P1 GTR**. Plus we've spoken with CEO Mike Flewitt and formulated a plan for the **650S** replacement. But we start at the beginning, with the **F1** and a **McLaren Edition SLR**

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C43 ESTATE v BMW 340i TOURING



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‘In everything the
675LT does, there is
certified perfection’

page 070



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Renault Trezor

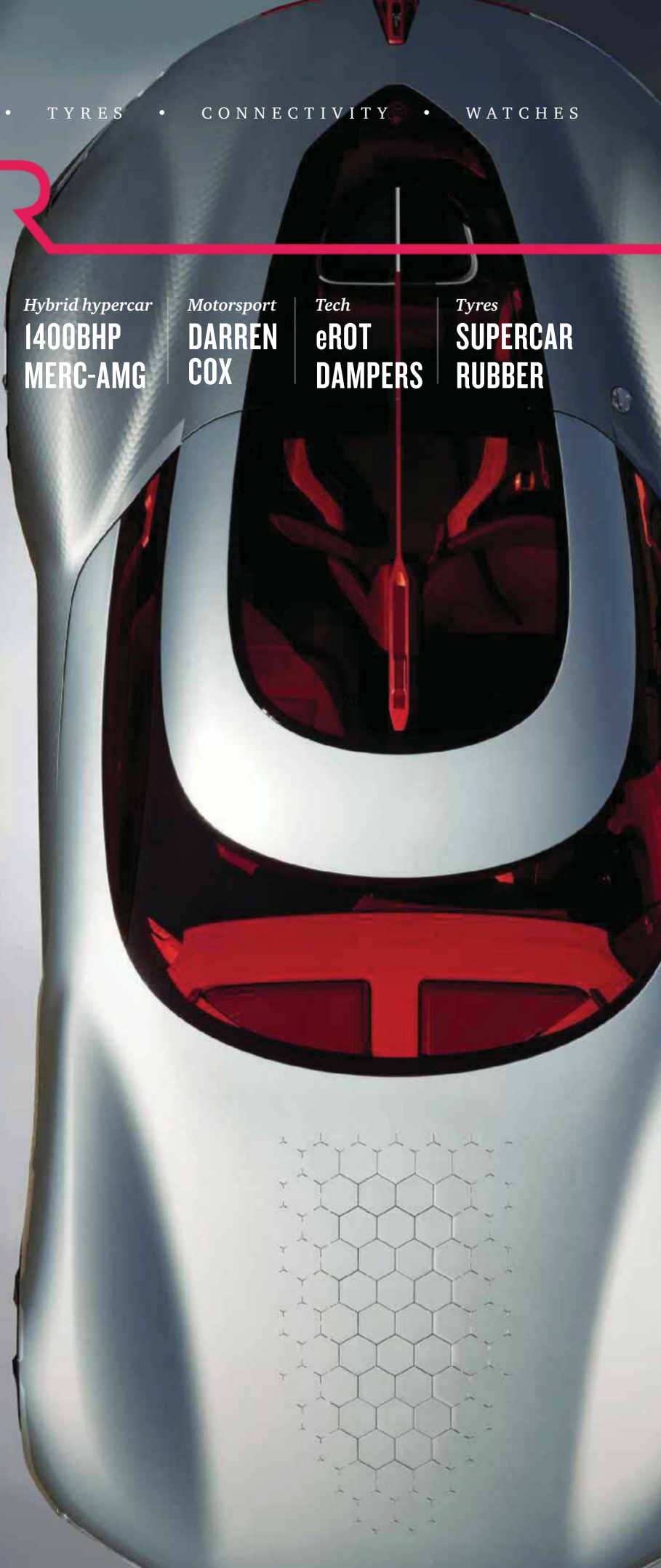
Formula E technology
blends with emotional
design as Renault
points to a bold future

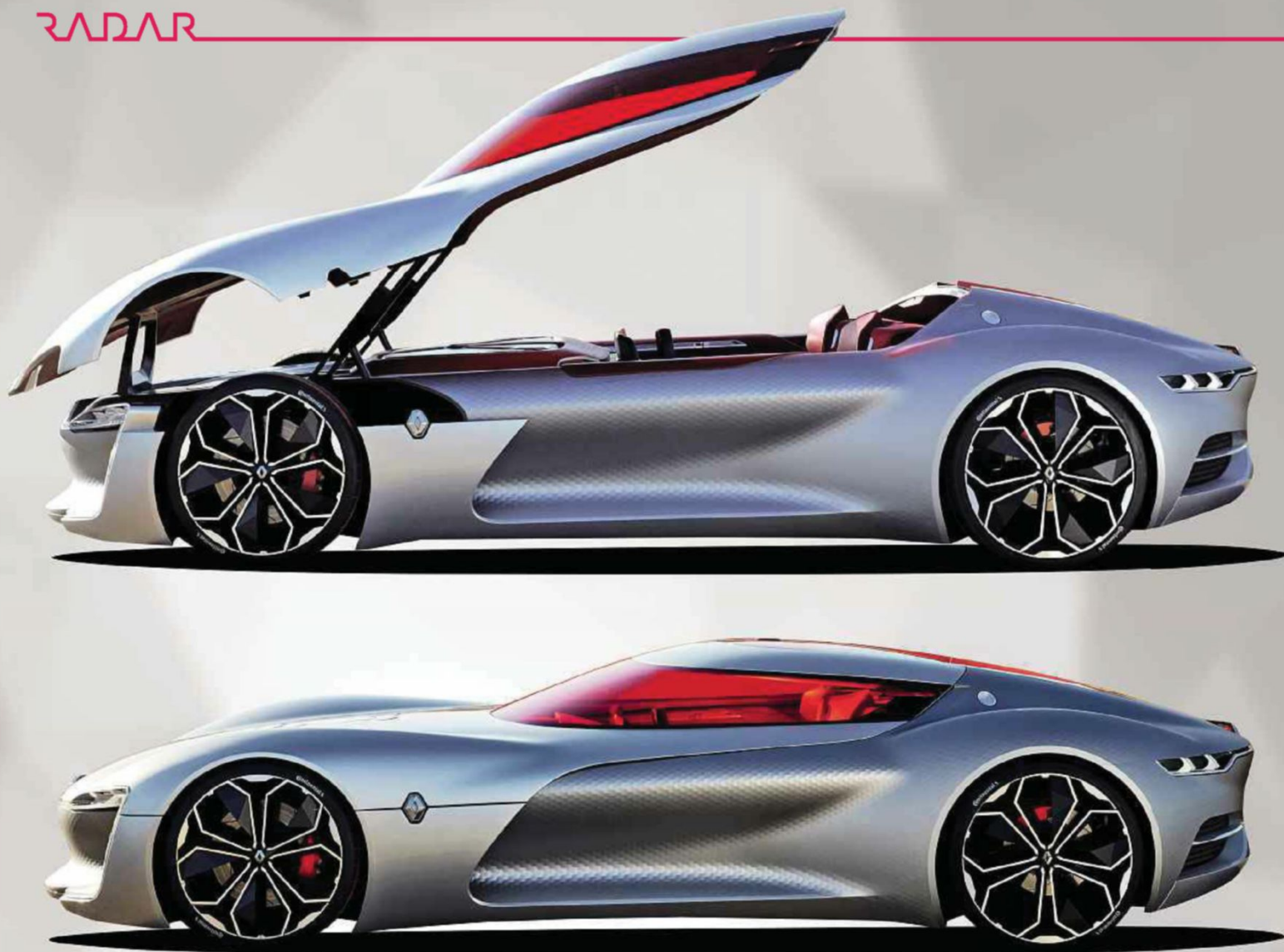
by STEVE FOWLER

RENAULT'S 2016 PARIS MOTOR show star, the Trezor, starts a new cycle of design for the brand, just as the DeZir concept did back in 2010.

Its look may be centred around human emotions such as love and commitment – yes, really – and it may have advanced autonomous driving tech on board, yet the Trezor is a car for drivers. ‘This is not a Google car,’ Renault’s senior vice president of corporate design, Laurens van den Acker, told us. ‘It’s a GT car that needs to be driven.’

And to prove that point, it takes battery and energy recovery tech from Renault’s championship-winning e.dams Formula E team.





Renault has a habit of producing concept cars that appear to be flights of fantasy but end up being grounded in surprising reality. The DeZir turned up with a stunning look that transferred remarkably well to today's Clios and Méganes. It also featured an electric powertrain long before Renault became Europe's biggest seller of electric vehicles. Now the Trezor plans to do the same with a host of tech that, it's hinted, could be coming to a hot Renault sometime soon.

The Trezor is no less striking than the DeZir, but with added imagination. That one-piece carbonfibre roof, with its red-tinted windows, glides upwards electrically to reveal a striking mix of red leathers and similarly coloured woods inside. And the front of the carbon shell is smooth and more feminine,

contrasting with the more masculine rear bodywork that's entirely made of intersecting hexagons.

The car is long, wide and low – with ground clearance of only 25cm – while its two batteries are mounted low in the chassis and split – one at the front, one at the back – to aid weight distribution. The Trezor's motor, powering the rear wheels, is derived from the Renault e.dams Formula E car, as is the RESS (Rechargeable Energy Storage System) brake-operated energy recovery system.

Unlike many concepts, this car drives: Renault quotes maximum power of 345bhp with peak torque of 280lb ft, along with a 0-62mph time of under 4sec. Everything works, too, including the pop-up hexagonal air-intakes on the bonnet, providing cooling for the batteries, and the exquisite fibre-optic rear lights, lit by

“ Unlike many concepts, this car drives: Renault quotes 0-62mph in under 4sec ”

lasers, that twist to alter the effect depending on braking effort.

Inside, you're faced with a wide, curved OLED screen with a lower LED touchscreen in the centre of the car. The rectangular steering wheel widens when the car is driving autonomously, giving the driver the opportunity to watch movies on the screen behind it. The deep wooden dashboard is made of layered ash and produced by French cycle maker KEIM.

The DeZir was Renault design boss Laurens van den Acker's first concept for the brand, which led to 2012's Clio. Given the timings, it's quite probable that elements of the Trezor – notably the exaggerated C-shaped front lights and grille, and the L-shaped dash design – will make it onto the next generation of Renaults, starting with a new Clio in 2018.



SPECIFICATION

Engine	Electric motor
Power	345bhp
Torque	280lb ft
0-62mph	<4.0sec (claimed)
Top speed	n/a
Weight	1600kg
Power-to-weight	219bhp/ton
Basic price	Concept only



345_{bhp}

Maximum power from the electric motor

2

Number of
batteries, each
with a dedicated
cooling system

0.22

Drag co-efficient,
aided by the Trezor's
smooth and ultra-low
bodywork

1080_{mm}

Height of the Trezor, which is 13mm lower
than the original Ford GT40



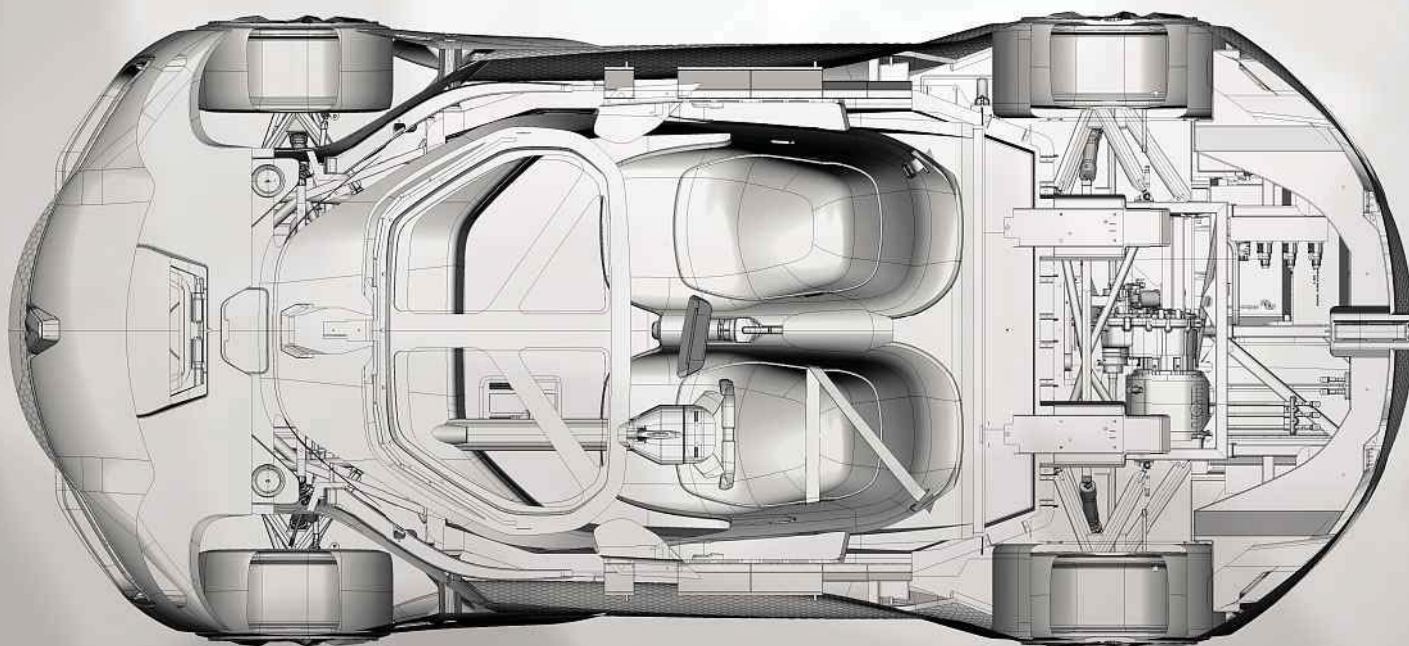
LAURENS VAN DEN ACKER

You could be forgiven for thinking that Renault's design boss was writing a soap opera. 'It all started with the DeZir,' says van den Acker, 'which represented the excitement of a couple meeting for the first time – it was love at first sight.'

'This is still a story of love, but it's more mature. Now the couple have been together a while and he's about to pop the question. So the drama of Trezor's roof opening represents the opening of a ring box and revealing something very special inside.'

The good news is that the evolving story won't mean generations of Renaults to come suffer middle-aged spread. 'There's a magical age of 25,' says van den Acker. 'I'm over 40 and I think I'm 25, while my daughter in her teens also thinks she's 25. So we've got to design cars for all those people.'

There's no doubting the emotion van den Acker has injected into the Renault range and the brand as a whole. His challenge now, he says, is to fuse that with the very latest technologies available, highlighted by the Trezor.





HYUNDAI N CONCEPT RN30

Hyundai presented a concept version of the upcoming high-performance i30 N at Paris. Based on the all-new i30 also making its debut, the motorsport-inspired concept may only bear a passing resemblance to the final production car, which has been seen testing at the Nürburgring in prototype form. You can see more images of the concept at evo.co.uk.



BMW X2

You know the drill here: even numbers in BMW nomenclature refer to coupe and convertible models, and with an X2 badge that means a sleeker-roofed take on the X1 family crossover. Like the X1, it's based on the front-wheel-drive platform of the 2-series Gran Tourer and Active Tourer, but all-wheel drive will be available. Still no sign of the BMW we really want to drive, though: the rumoured M2 GTS.

Paris metal

At this year's Paris motor show, AMG's flagship sports car lost its top and Hyundai's first hot hatch drew closer



MERCEDES-AMG GT ROADSTER

The worst-kept secret within Mercedes-AMG is out as the company revealed the roadster variants of its GT model in Paris. The GT Roadster and GT C Roadster are

powered by AMG's 4-litre twin-turbo V8, rated at 469bhp and 549bhp respectively. These figures are slightly higher than those of the roadsters' GT and GT S coupe counterparts (456 and 503bhp) to compensate for the roadsters' increased weight. The roof is fabric, and the GT C will get the hardcore GT R's wider rear bodywork.

AUDI S5 SPORTBACK

You'd need to see both it and the outgoing model back-to-back to discern any real difference, but the Audi S5 Sportback is indeed a brand-new car, as is the A5 Sportback upon which it is based. The biggest changes

are under the skin, where the Sportback is significantly lighter than before (by up to 85kg in some models). The S5 packs a 349bhp, 369lb ft turbocharged V6 and sprints to 62mph in 4.7sec. Order books open in October.



HONDA CIVIC

Honda's tenth-gen Civic will sit on an all-new platform, utilise two new turbocharged petrol engines – a 1-litre and a 1.5-litre – and will return to independent rear suspension after two iterations of the model using beam

axles. Of course, we're most intrigued by what's in store for the next Type R. It's likely to use the same 2-litre turbocharged four-pot as the current model, though possibly with more than 306bhp. With a longer, wider chassis and more sophisticated underpinnings, it has the potential to both ride and handle better than the model it will replace, too.



AUDI Q5

In SQ5 trim, the Audi Q5 has a curious kind of appeal, but with a new Q5 making its debut in Paris, the current model isn't long for this world. Styling of the new car echoes that of more recent Audi SUVs such as the gargantuan Q7 and the smaller, A3-based Q2, and Audi's beautiful Virtual Cockpit display is also present in higher trim levels. Visit evo.co.uk to see the new Q5 in full.





Mercedes enters hypercar game

Formula 1-engined road car gets green light for 2018

MERCEDES-AMG IS to enter the hypercar sector with an F1-engined, carbonfibre road car scheduled to arrive in time for AMG's 50th anniversary in 2018.

The ambitious plan was confirmed at the Belgian Grand Prix by a Mercedes AMG Petronas team member, who also explained that the project is close to starting its first road tests but that neither Lewis Hamilton nor Nico Rosberg are expected to be involved.

Powered by the 1.6-litre turbo V6 engine that's fitted to this season's F1 W07 Hybrid, the AMG hypercar

is expected to have in the region of 900bhp, with an additional 500bhp produced by four 160bhp electric motors – one fitted to each wheel.

The responsibility of developing the F1 World Championship-winning engine into a power unit that can be used by a road car is expected to be handed to Mercedes AMG High Performance Powertrains in Brixworth, Northamptonshire, and with no FIA technical regulations to adhere to, the engine's capacity could increase. Those responsible for the project will also need to develop a cooling system more complex than that used by an F1 car, a startup

system that doesn't require a man with an air gun to start it externally, and a more conventional gearbox than an F1 car's hydraulic unit.

You've probably already started to draw parallels with the Aston Martin-Red Bull 001 hypercar (see *evo* 225), and like the British effort, AMG's contender will rely on motorsport-derived aero. To this end, expect a design similar to that of today's LMP1 endurance racers, with active aero and systems such as DRS to manage the downforce required to keep the 1000-1300kg car on the ground when it leaves showrooms in 2018.

Ground-effect Atom

FEW PEOPLE EXPOSED TO the rampant acceleration and organ-rearranging cornering forces of an Ariel Atom would want for more, but the Somerset-based firm has taken its spaceframe sports car to a whole new level with its latest concept.

Called the Aero-P Atom, it uses active ground-effect technology not dissimilar to

that of the Gordon Murray-designed Brabham BT46 F1 'fan car' of 1978 and the 1970 Chaparral 2J Can-Am car.

Like those, the Aero-P features an underbody moulding around which is a ground-scraping rubber skirt. A pair of small, high-speed, electrically operated fans then suck air from this area, causing the chassis to be pulled to the ground without the need for external aerodynamic devices.

The nature of Ariel's system means it can be activated rapidly, cutting in to enhance acceleration and braking traction or cornering

grip. At cruising speeds the system remains idle, to the benefit of economy and straight-line efficiency.

The rest of the car looks much the same as any other Atom, illustrating the benefits of the system – it can enhance the car's performance without compromising the styling that defines Ariel's vehicles. It provides downforce without additional aerodynamic drag, too, unlike conventional aerofoils, which in testing have shown to prove only a third as effective

as the Aero-P's ground-effect system.

Development work was carried out by TotalSim in Brackley and testing by Delta Motorsport in Silverstone. There are no plans to put the Aero-P Atom into production in its current form, but Ariel considers this the 'first step' towards production reality in the future.



BIG NUMBERS

168

Top speed of Bentley's diesel Bentayga in mph

1076,320

Price of new Brabus Smart Fourtwo

205

Top speed, in mph, of a 543bhp current-generation VW Beetle at Bonneville Speed Week

15

Number of new Aston Martins registered in August. In the same month, 11,703 new Fords were registered.

INSIGHT



The Racing Insider

The finance kings of Formula 1 are dead;
long live the content kings

I WRITE THIS JUST AS THE TAKEOVER OF FORMULA 1 by Liberty Media has been announced. This is a seismic change at the top of our sport, with potentially both good and bad implications.

The first thing to observe is that Bernie seems to have sold F1 again, gained financially again, and is sort of in charge again. Genius. I'm a massive fan. He has revolutionised and professionalised motorsport. Every other race series and its management base their approaches, commercial model and structures around the one he built from scratch. For that I can forgive most of his well-known 'rough edges'.

CVC – the majority shareholders in the Formula One Group since 2006 – were the worst type of owners. Asset strippers whose only target was short-term revenue gain. Growth in the sport, the fans' opinions and fairness of finances were not even considered. If you want an extreme view by someone who knows them better than I do, please search online for 'Bob Fernley CVC opinion'.

Following CVC's tenure, TV viewing numbers are down, spectator numbers are down (except at Silverstone), sponsor revenues for the teams are down and car-manufacturer involvement is down. So whether it's opinions or facts you judge on, both show that these guys failed our sport. But they did make themselves a ton of money. Well done, chaps.

And now the saviours are here. The headlines are of a media company wanting to grow the sport, to build spectator numbers, to drive eyeballs so their media companies can have more viewers. On the surface, that's great. Fan-finders versus asset-strippers.

Liberty Media sees primary fan growth in Asia and the Americas. To achieve this it will have to do two things: increase the number of races in those locations and dumb down the sport to gain 'casual fans'. You know, like you are a casual fan of tennis. When Murray is in the final two sets of Wimbledon, you look away from your live streaming of a sportscar race from the US. Viewer numbers up. Bingo. You don't care about the percentage of tension increase in racket strings over the last three years, but you are a measurable set of eyes.

F1 is too complex for casual viewers, therefore it will have to be dumbed down. And to fit in extra rounds in Asia and the Americas, Liberty won't want to cut viewers or revenue from existing races. The only solution is more races. Remember, NASCAR has 36 point-scoring races a year. More races will mean more cost for teams, unless the tech is dumbed down towards a single-make series. And, of course, to hit those new eyeballs in Asia and the Americas, the current approach of targeting early Sunday afternoon broadcast slots for us Europeans will not be such a priority.

So, we need to be careful what we wish for. There's a danger this extra access and increased social media could come with a reduction in tech, a grinding calendar, unsociable viewing hours and new tail-end teams with drivers placed there to excite new markets (rather than to stick it up the established stars). Time will tell. **Darren Cox**

Darren is the former head of Nismo and was the architect of the Nissan GT Academy

NEWS



Will 2017 bring us the best GT3 race ever?

WE MAKE NO EXCUSES for our love of Bathurst – the track, the races, the drivers, the fans. It's a motorsport spectacle that matches anything in the northern hemisphere. By the time you read this, you may have caught a feed of the 2016 Bathurst 1000 – the classic race for Aussie V8 Supercars – but you still have time to plan the trip of a lifetime to see the Liqui-Moly Bathurst 12 Hour.

Set for 3-5 February 2017, the event is likely to be the biggest and best ever at the 3.9-mile Mount Panorama circuit. It's set to attract more than 50 cars from 16 different manufacturers – and we're talking pukka GT3- and GT4-spec cars here, from Ferrari, Porsche, Audi and McLaren. Nissan and BMW have already confirmed factory-backed teams with their GT-R and M6 GT3

(driven on page 96) racers. McLaren is also seeking to race its new 570S GT4 as a customer entry – last year the marque won the race outright with a 650S GT3 (pictured).

So how do you go about attending the Bathurst 12 Hour? Well, firstly book a flight to Sydney. Expect to pay around £800 from London if you book sooner rather than later. Flights operate between Bathurst and Sydney and return on a daily basis, but we'd hire a tasty lump of Aussie iron (we suggest a Maloo V8 pickup) and drive the 130 miles to Mount Panorama. There you can camp out in the stunning New South Wales outdoors or find some accommodation at bathurstregion.com.au. For race tickets and more info, go to bathurst12hour.com.au.

One year, **evo** will compete in the race – we're working on it...

BIG NUMBERS

294

Record wait for the 2nd-placed car in a Grand Prix, in seconds. It was at the 1963 Belgian GP. (With thanks to f1fanatic.co.uk.)

919

Porsche is believed to have submitted a tender to supply batteries for Formula E based on those used in its 919 Hybrid racer.

40

Number of NASCAR Sprint Cup races in 2017, including the wonderfully titled 'Bojangles' Southern 500'. F1 will have 18.



NOVAK DJOKOVIC

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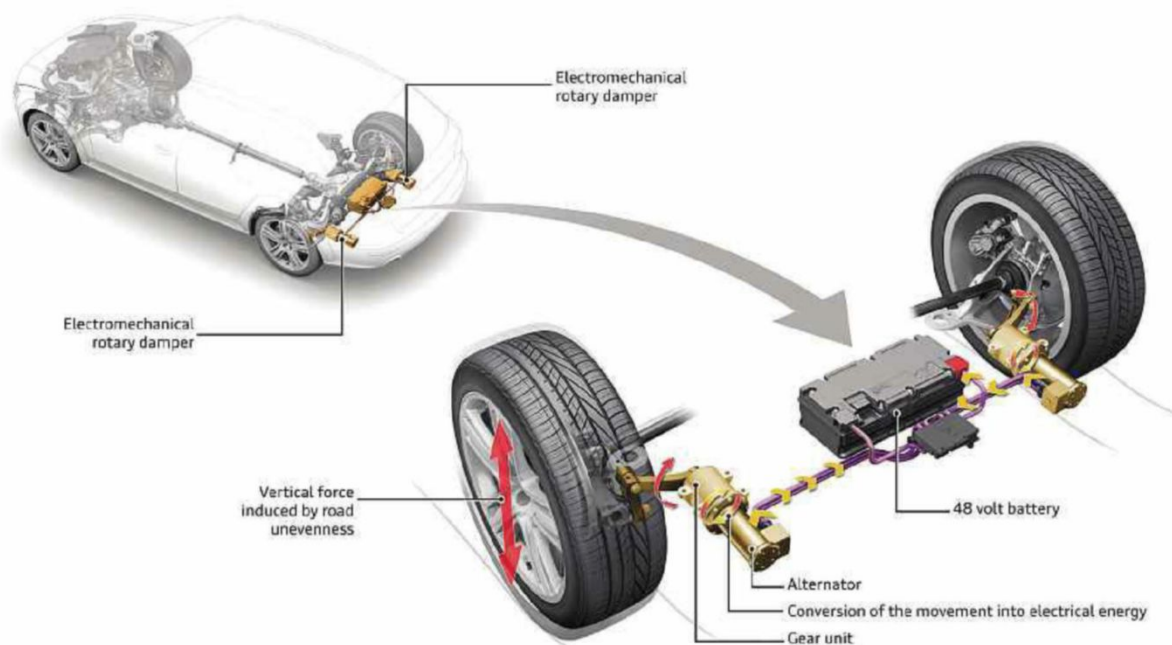


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LEARN



FOCUS

AUDI'S REGENERATIVE DAMPERS

IN EVO 226 WE LOOKED at adaptive and adjustable dampers, exploring the advantages and disadvantages of both. But these oil-filled telescopic dampers look antiquated compared with a new adaptive damper technology recently unveiled by Audi.

The system is called 'eROT' – shorthand for electromechanical rotary dampers. As the name implies, the dampers feature an electric motor, the dual purposes of which we'll get to in a moment, and rather than being tall, telescopic units, the dampers are rotary items. This means each damper is mounted longitudinally – providing a packaging advantage – and is actuated by an arm that spans from the damper end to the wheel-hub carrier. As the wheel moves up and down it moves the arm, which in turn rotates inside the damper unit. The arrangement looks similar to a torsion spring, albeit with a lot more wires.

Audi has developed the system to harness the kinetic energy that is wasted through heat dissipation in conventional dampers. As the arm moves up and down over bumps and when the car is cornering,

“
As well as harnessing energy, the motors control damper stiffness
”

the electric motor converts this movement into electricity that can be used by the car's electrical system. Initial tests have proved the setup to be effective, a car equipped with an eROT system on its rear wheels alone creating a peak of 613 watts on rough roads. Smoother tarmac doesn't generate as much energy, but Audi believes eROT could save an average of 3g/km of CO₂ in typical driving.

The system's economic benefits, no matter how impressive, aren't what interest us most, though. What's fascinating is how the characteristics of the dampers can be altered. As well as harnessing energy, those electric motors can

control the stiffness of the dampers. The level of stiffness can be changed per stroke, allowing a softer compression stroke for comfort and a tauter rebound stroke for control. While the same can be achieved with adaptive telescopic dampers, electromechanical units can switch between different levels of stiffness even more quickly and also offer a far wider range of adjustment.

To increase the stiffness of the damping, more power is put through the motors, increasing the level of resistance they offer. However, as with the similar motors in Audi's adjustable anti-roll-bar system, eROT needs more power to operate than a standard 12-volt electrical system can provide. Instead, a 48-volt subsystem is required, like that in the current Audi SQ7.

How dampers with electric motors compare with oil-filled units in terms of dealing with inputs and maintaining body control we're yet to discover, as eROT is still in the prototyping phase. But as 48-volt electrical systems become more commonplace, it should only be a matter of time before eROT appears on a production model. We look forward to trying it.

GAME-CHANGER

DOUBLE-CLUTCH TRANSMISSION

First production-car application: VW Golf R32
When: 2003

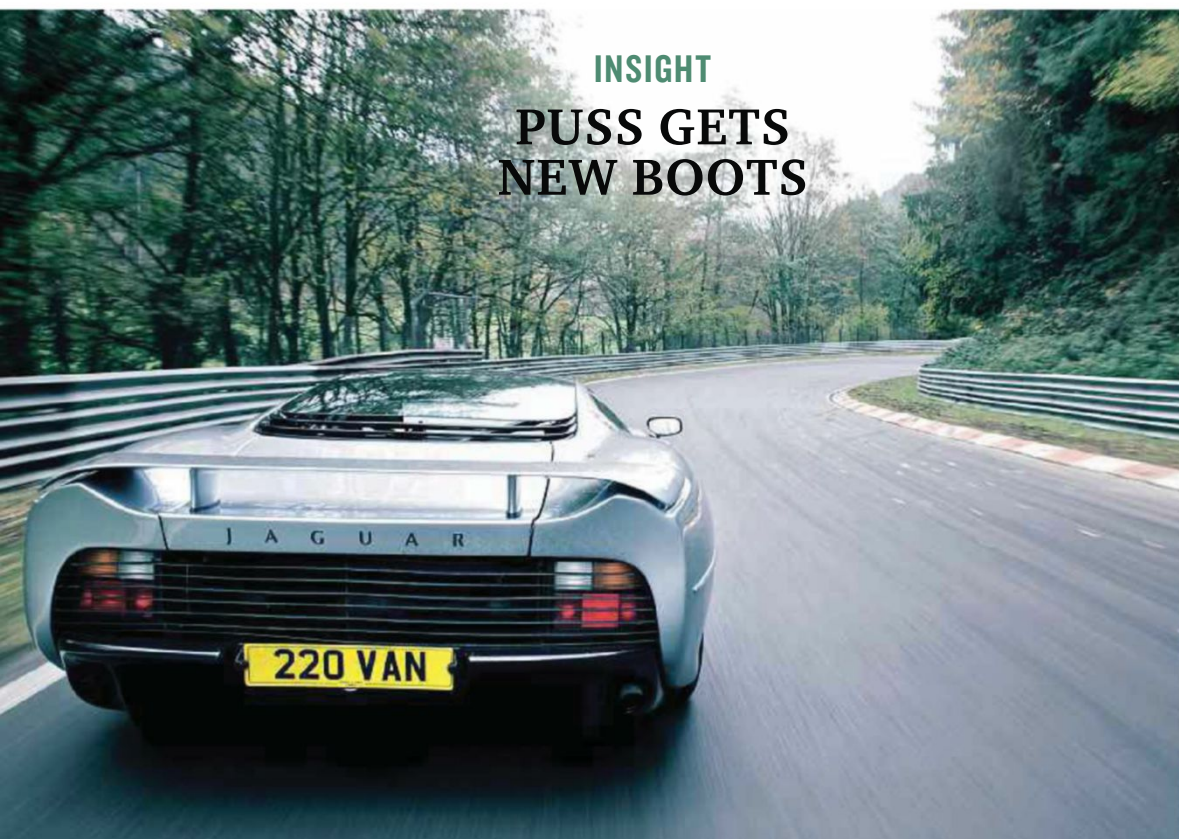


The dual-clutch transmission was conceived shortly before World War II by French engineer Adolphe Kégresse (who also invented the half-track vehicle). However, it wasn't until the 1980s that the first working prototypes were created, by Midlands-based Automotive Products, and it was Porsche that first took advantage of the technology when it equipped its 956 Group C racing car with such a transmission. The first production car offered with DCT was the German-market Mk4 VW Golf R32 of 2003.

Dual-clutch transmissions employ two clutches, each connected to a separate input shaft, with one shaft rotating within the other. One shaft drives the odd-numbered gears, the other the even numbers. During acceleration from rest, the clutch and shaft that deal with the odd gears will drive first gear, while second gear will be selected by the idle shaft. When second gear is required, the first clutch disengages and the other is engaged.

If acceleration continues, the shaft for the odd gears – now idle – will select third gear, ready for an upshift. If the car begins to slow, that shaft will preselect first gear instead in anticipation of a downshift.

This pattern is repeated throughout the gears, and the result is gearchanges that are quicker and almost seamless.



INSIGHT

PUSS GETS
NEW BOOTS

YOU WAIT YEARS FOR new tyres to be developed for your XJ220 then suddenly two different options come along at once...

Next year will see the 25th anniversary of Jaguar's supercar, and Bridgestone and Pirelli want part of the action, with both companies simultaneously working on new tyres designed specifically for the XJ220.

Originally fitted with 255/55 ZR17 front and 345/35 ZR18 rear Bridgestone Expedia S.01 tyres, the XJ220 could accelerate to 60mph in 3.7sec and had a top speed of 213mph. The sleek supercar wasn't just fast in a straight line, though: in 1991 John Nielsen – who won Le Mans the year before in a Jaguar XJR-12 shared with Martin Brundle and Price Cobb – piloted an XJ220 around the Nürburgring Nordschleife in a time of 7min 46.4sec, setting the unofficial lap record for a production car.

The Bridgestone Expedia S.01 hasn't been available in the correct

“The new Pirelli will look similar to the original P Zero launched for the Ferrari F40 in 1987”

size for the XJ220 for some time now, but rather than recreating the old tyre, Bridgestone has teamed up with XJ220 specialist Don Law Racing to develop a new one that can cope even better with the twin-turbo V6 engine's substantial 542bhp output.

The team working on the new tyre not only includes specialists from Don Law Racing and Bridgestone, but also original Jaguar development engineering and test personnel. The crew that

will develop the tyre will also be using the pre-production test car, chassis number 004, which was the first XJ220 to hit 200mph and went on to compete in GT racing before being converted back into a road car.

Pirelli may not have provided the original tyres for the XJ220, but the Italian company has plenty of experience in creating tyres for supercars. It's now constructing a P Zero tyre for the Jag that it says will 'enhance' its rabid performance. The new offering will look similar to the original P Zero that was launched for the Ferrari F40 in 1987, but will have the compound and construction technology of the latest P Zeros.

It might seem odd that Pirelli – which has no existing link to the XJ220 – is creating a tyre for a car that's almost 25 years old, but the brand intends to create a tyre for every classic Jaguar, much in the same way it has for Porsche.

One thing's for sure: when it comes to tyres, XJ220 owners are about to be spoiled for choice.

SWEDE FOR SPEED

Volvo's custom-built truck The Iron Knight has broken two world records using Goodyear tyres. The tractor unit has a 12.8-litre quad-turbocharged six-cylinder diesel engine that produces 2367bhp and 4425lb ft of torque.

Despite its glassfibre cab, The Iron Knight still weighs 4.5 tons, but its huge power and torque mean it covered 1000 metres from a standing start in 21.29sec. For comparison, a Bugatti Veyron Super Sport has been timed at 18.0sec over the same distance. The Iron Knight also set a new record to 500 metres from a standing start with a time of 13.71sec. A top-speed run yielded 171.5mph, which although not a record is still impressive.

Goodyear and Volvo have years of experience working together on original-fitment truck tyres, but the tyres fitted to the Iron Knight aren't just ordinary truck tyres. The bespoke rubber was designed specifically to cope with the extreme forces the high-speed truck puts them through.



NEW PIRELLI APP

Pirelli has released an app to support its new P Zero World. Available for Apple's iPhone and iPad, it allows users to keep up to date about Pirelli tyres and new cars. It also contains information on the entire Pirelli range and will locate the nearest Pirelli dealer for you. There's access to a Pirelli calendar, too, allowing you to see when any Pirelli-related events are happening, including any motorsport and F1 action.

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REVIEW

F1 2016

Has Codemasters delivered a game worthy of the flagship racing series?

F1 2016 (AVAILABLE FOR Xbox One, PlayStation 4 and PC, from £39.99) is not an easy game. It's punishing at the best of times and downright cruel at its worst. But above all else, it is immensely rewarding. This is a game you have to learn and practise at in order to even stand a chance of finishing in the top ten. But when you make that first podium, you've earned it.

There are several reasons for this, the main one being that the balance between aero grip and tyre grip is on such a knife-edge that just keeping the car on the track can be a challenge at first. All that torque from the turbocharged motors in the latest F1 cars means you have to be extremely gentle with the throttle on corner exit, too.

Helping you along this challenging learning curve is a clever car-development structure incorporated into Free Practice in the game's Career mode. You can practise tyre-management strategies, or learn braking zones using on-screen annotations, all of which turns into R&D points to spend on making your car better.



Above and left: detail and realism of the cars is hard to fault. **Far left:** but characters are rather android-like

“This is a game you have to practise at in order to even stand a chance of finishing in the top ten”

Career mode also teaches you how to control and eventually take advantage of the game's superbly developed physics engine.

In terms of graphics, there are moments when things can look a little shoddy, but largely this is a very pretty game. Car and cockpit details are excellent, and the same can be said of the circuits. What aren't so good are the slightly android-like facial expressions of the engineers you encounter.

Speaking of the characters,

adding to the element of realism are pre-race 'phone calls' from your PA explaining targets for each race, as well as updates on rivalries with other drivers and how you're performing compared with them.

Ultimately, *F1 2016* feels like the completion of a path that its developer, Codemasters, has been on for a long time. It's polished and rewarding, striking a balance between simulation and engaging gameplay that isn't easy to achieve. **Hunter Skipworth**

GRAPHIC CONTENT

The pursuit of realism



The lengths to which video games now go in order to deliver extreme levels of realism are far beyond what you might imagine.

Take *Forza Horizon 3*, for example. Its developers used something called 'photogrammetry', where they transformed HD photographs of real-life objects into 3D models inside the game. They also spent months in Australia with HDR camera rigs photographing the skies; the results were then imported into the game.

For *F1 2016* (above) the physics engine emulates just about everything you could possibly imagine. The Mercedes safety car, for example, has the same spring and damper rates as the real thing. The tyre physics engine is also programmed to deliver realistic slip angles with each compound, in different weathers.

Simulation has hit a point on games consoles where the processing power permits incredible levels of realism – but not to the detriment of fun.

ON
OR
OFF?



Start-stop

evo Facebook follower Matthew Bull isn't a fan of start-stop, which is designed to save fuel in traffic: 'I should be able to turn it off permanently, rather than doing so every time I start the car.'

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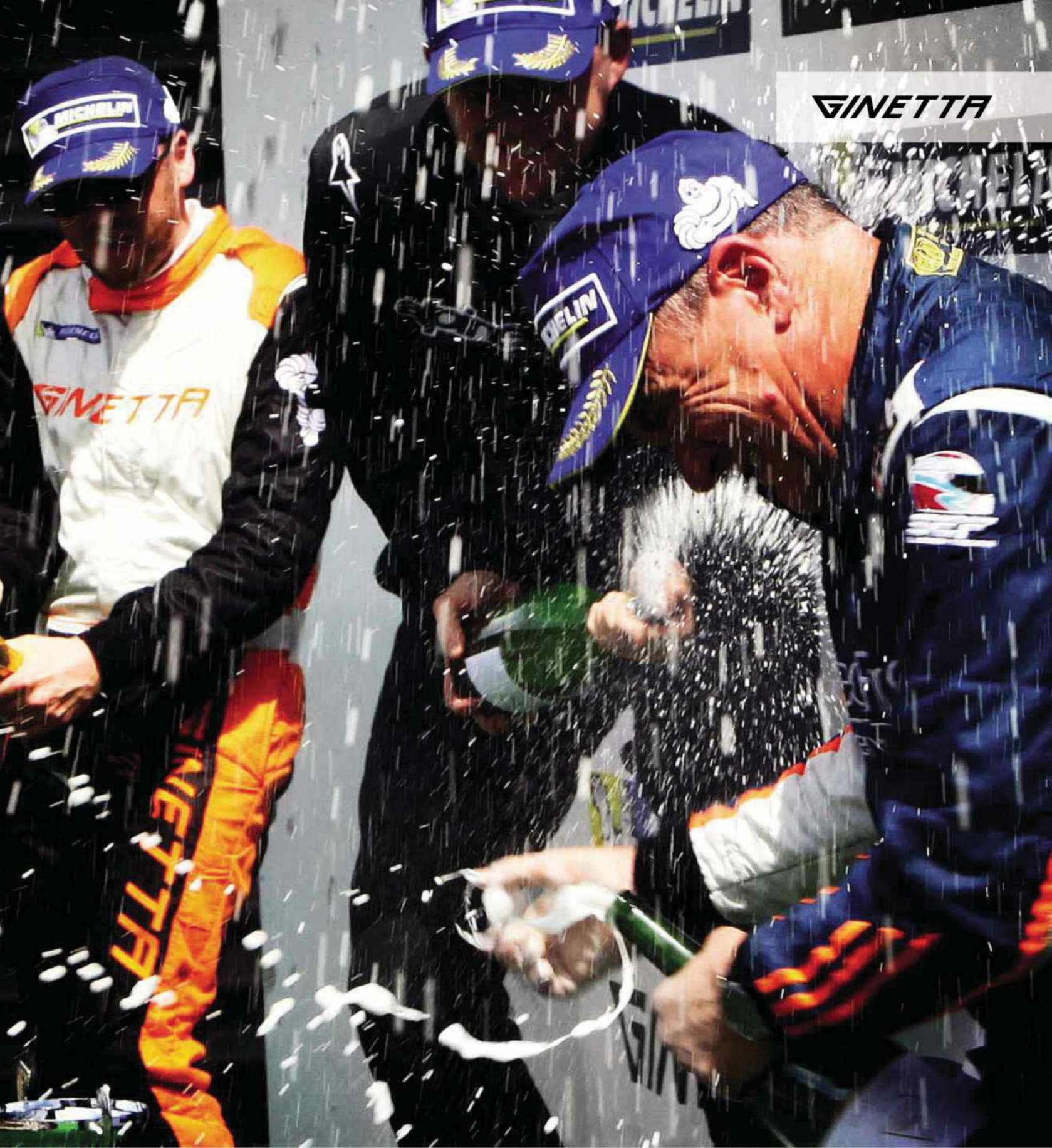


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WATCH TECH



Carousel regulator

Considered a tour de force of the watchmaking art, a tourbillon mechanism counteracts the effect of gravity on timekeeping accuracy. It achieves this by housing the escapement and the balance wheel (the devices that control the release of energy from the mainspring and regulate the speed of the watch) in a cage that continuously rotates on a single plane. Thus the position in which a pocket watch – for which the tourbillon was originally developed – came to rest in a pocket would not influence its accuracy.

Equally esteemed but lesser known is the 'carousel' regulator. This places the same components on a wheel – just like a merry-go-round, hence the name – that is driven by a separate gear (whereas a tourbillon's cage is turned by the same power feed that drives the escapement).

Forgotten for years, the carousel was revived a few years ago by Blancpain, which further refined it by designing the first version to make a complete rotation of the carousel in precisely one minute.



THIS MONTH

Breitling for Bentley
B06 Midnight Carbon

Price: £9680

From: breitling.com

Hot on the heels of Breitling for Bentley's £17,550, carbon-cased GMT B04S (see *evo* 223) comes another all-black number, the more affordable B06 Midnight Carbon, which combines a DLC-treated steel case with a dark, mother-of-pearl dial. The in-house, B06 movement features a 30-second chronograph in which the central seconds hand travels around the dial in half a minute. Just 500 are available.

Lebeau-Courally
Le Baron Zoute Grand Prix

Price: €7950

From: lebeau-courally.com

Founded in 1865 as a maker of high-end hunting guns, in 2010 Lebeau-Courally added fine watchmaking to its portfolio. This limited edition chronograph celebrates the Belgian firm's sponsorship of the annual Zoute Grand Prix car festival. A white dial with racy red detailing and the event's coat of arms contrasts nicely with a 43mm blackened steel case containing a self-winding movement.

Christopher Ward
C9 D-type

Price: £2995

From: christopherward.co.uk

The \$21.7million recently achieved by Sotheby's for a Jaguar D-type confirms that they are well and truly out of reach for most people, but you could at least own a tiny bit of one by buying Christopher Ward's latest C9, the case back of which incorporates a wheel spinner motif laser-cut from a piece of D-type piston. Just 55 examples of the watch will be made, a nod to the year of the D-type's first Le Mans victory.

CHRONO



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



CHOPARD MILLE MIGLIA

As worn by Robert Coucher, founding editor of *evo*'s sister magazine, *Octane*



'My first watch was a Seiko bought for me by my father. It was an automatic with 24 jewels in a plain steel case – but I gave it a military look by painting it black with Airfix enamel.'

'In 1999, I took part in the Mille Miglia and

was presented with a Chopard watch engraved with my competitor number, 35. I drove in the Mille Miglia again in 2014 and was once more allocated number 35. So I now have two Chopard watches carrying the same number.'

'The watch I would never part with is my father's gold Rolex Day-Date, which I inherited on his death last year. I wear it on an inexpensive nylon strap, so it doesn't look at all flash – I think father would have approved.'



The Jaguar D-Type is assured of its legacy in motorsport. A three-time winner of Le Mans, a piece of piston from one of these cars has been cut into the shape of its wheel spinner and sits behind the sapphire crystal backplate of our own **C9 D-Type** – limited to just 55 pieces. £2,995

Swiss movement
English heart



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LETTER OF THE MONTH

Unfair advantage

I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT WHEN AN entrant – the winner, no less – in a hot hatch supertest does away with back seats, it's also not really part of the competition (Golf GTI Clubsport S v Focus RS v Leon Cupra 290 v Civic Type R, *evo* 227).

Volkswagen – just as Renault did before – has removed the Golf's back seats in order to save weight and enable the adding of stiffness, all in aid of a Ring time. But surely the car must now be categorised as specialist or a two-seater for comparison purposes?

The very nature of a hot hatch is that it should be useable: a hyped-up version of the everyday shopper that sells/is leased by the bucketload in cooking spec. Yes, a hot hatch can be a hooligan, but it should be a useful, kids-in-the-back, shopping-in-the-boot kind of hooligan, not a

carry-a-dozen-bungee-cords-so-the-shopping-doesn't-whack-you-in-the-back-of-the-head fruit loop.

So given this difference, isn't it only fair to compare like with like in tests like this?

Gareth Banton, Bedfordshire

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
THE JEWELLER



The future's light

In issue 227, members of the *evo* team revealed what models they would like to see in production in the near future (Radar, 'Tomorrow's World'). As a Lotusholic I like Richard Meaden's idea of a new, sub-750kg Elan, but at the other end of the scale I reckon there is an easier interim Lotus model that could be created by combining two cars that feature in the very same issue as your proposals: take the Exige V6 from the buying guide and swap the engine for the 600bhp twin-turbo Ford V6 from the Radical RXC Turbo 500R in Driven. You'd solve the Radical's embarrassing street cred and save £100k as well!

Gavin Schutte, Perth, Australia

The early bird...

Richard Meaden's column extolling the virtues of a dawn raid (Outside Line, *evo* 227) was spot on. I read it, then read it again, then set my alarm for 5am.

Upon being woken early the morning I consumed some Weetabix and coffee in a semi-stupor, then hit the road for what turned out to be probably the best drive I've ever had. My Clio Trophy was just perfect on the local twisty mountain pass, zinging this way and that, coping with the surface imperfections superbly and carrying huge pace across country. The only other things I met on the road were two cyclists, several hundred sheep

EVO'S MONTH

£17m

Combined value of the 11 McLarens featured on this month's newsstand cover.



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How photographer **Aston Parrott** (@AstonParrott) keeps his hair looking as good as the cars he shoots.

This month's subscribers' cover

Behind the wheel of the McLaren P1, photographed by Aston Parrott. Not a subscriber? Head to subscribe.evo.co.uk for more info and the latest offers.





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INBOX

and what looked like a medium-sized drift team on their way back down the mountain after a hard night of skidding – an observation confirmed by the thick veneer of rubber left on the road.

A great start to the day, and a great way to remind yourself why you bought an **evo** car in the first place.

Maurice Malone, Ireland

Tough love

Reading Ian Eveleigh's Fast Fleet report on his Honda Civic Type R (**evo** 226) reminds me why I love my 2016 Subaru STI. I like cars that are a little tougher to drive fast, cars that their owners have a passion for. Yes, there may be 'better' cars out there for the same price, but do their drivers invest as much effort in them and feel as great a reward as a result? I hope that companies like Subaru, Honda, Porsche, etc remember that 'car people' like the fact that our chosen models perform differently than most other cars on the road. They need to keep the drivers' car alive.

Greg Norman, North Carolina, USA

It's haute so obvious

While I too would love to see more hypercars being made, albeit purely to increase the chances of seeing one as opposed to regulating second-hand values, I think Chris Fox (Letter of the Month, **evo** 226) misses the point of such cars. They are automotive haute couture and a fundamental part of their appeal to collectors is the lack of availability and the exorbitant price.

Furthermore, like a haute couture dress by Galliano or Westwood, they act as a (sometimes hugely loss inducing) halo for the same manufacturer's profit-generating high-street products, be they sports cars or SUVs.

So, yes, it would be nice to see more hypercars being driven, but unfortunately I believe the AM-RB 001 is no more intended to be driven than a £45k Westwood skirt is to be worn to Waitrose.

Ben Armitage, Jersey

Faster front-drivers

I'm usually impressed by the attention to detail and the accuracy of every fact or statement I read in **evo**. In the game of finding mistakes in a mag and pointing them out, when it comes to you I usually score zero. So I almost jumped off my couch and shouted 'gotcha' when I read Richard Lane's Fast Fleet report on his Focus RS in issue 225: 'Back in 2002, 212bhp was (briefly) the most ever bestowed on a front-driven production car.' Erm, no.

Has Richard forgotten the Fiat Coupe 20V Turbo, with 217bhp – and a viscous LSD? Or the Alfa Romeo GTV 3.0 V6 24v, also with 217bhp from way back in the '90s?

There were even more powerful front-wheel-drive cars on sale at the time. If the image of an 850 Estate flying over a kerb during a BTCC race is permanently stored in your brain, it's difficult to forget that Volvo used to make unusually powerful front-drive road cars as well. The pinnacle was the 850 R, with 247bhp.

But the most powerful front-drive production car of the early '00s didn't even have a remotely sporty character. The honour goes to the Cadillac Seville STS, one of the first Cadillacs with EU type approval. The Northstar 4.6 V8 transversely mounted between its front wheels produced 300bhp.

Now, which of the above would I prefer to have in my garage? Oh, that would be the least powerful, the Focus RS. Lucky guy, Richard.

Alex Galanopoulos

Lots of Lotus

I hate to be a pedantic fun sponge, but reading your buying guide for the Lotus Exige V6 (**evo** 227) was painful due to the inclusion of so many uses of 'Lotuses' as the plural for Lotus.

Colin Chapman, when asked by a TV commentary team what the plural for Lotus was (the question triggered by both team cars entering the pits at the same time), reported that the plural of Lotus was, in fact, Lotus.

This aside, I'll be keeping the article for when my numbers come in on Saturday.

Dr Hugh Powell

TRENDING

Hot topics in our inbox this month

A 'Hakosuka' is now in my dream garage

I can see my 308's speedo just fine...

Why no A45 AMG in the hyperhatches test?



Fastest growing YouTube video (YouTube.com/evo)
'Porsche Carrera GT driven' – Richard Meaden rediscovers what made this V10 supercar so special



Most liked Instagram post (@officiallevomagazine)
BMW M4 Competition Package burns rubber in an outtake from our Alfa Giulia group test



Most viewed story at evo.co.uk
'The story of the Out Run Ferrari' – Gianni Agnelli's one-off Testarossa Spider

Twitter poll:
Which hyperhatch would you choose from last month's group test?

13 September • 1248 votes

Ford Focus RS
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S
Honda Civic Type R
SEAT Leon Cupra 290



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Eastern promise

EVO'S ROAD-TEST TEAM has been in the business of reviewing the latest and greatest performance cars for close to 140 years between us, but in all that time not one of us has driven a truly memorable Infiniti. The high-performance and luxury arm of Nissan took 20 years to officially arrive in the UK and only now, several years later, has it threatened to appeal to those of us who really love driving.

The Q60 coupe is a 400bhp rival to

BMW's 440i, if not the full-fat M4, and it features a raft of innovative chassis, powertrain and steering technologies. Staff writer Will Beaumont travelled to San Diego, California, to find out if the Q60 is an Infiniti we can really get excited about.

Elsewhere in Driven this month we sample three heavy-hitting performance cars: the entry-level Audi R8 V10, the revised Mercedes-AMG SL63 and Noble's outrageously fast M600 Speedster.

THE TEAM

This month, we asked our team to recall their most frightening road-test moment:



NICK TROTT
Editor

'Hearing the crunch of carbonfibre on concrete as I tried to negotiate an Enzo out of an underground car park.'



STUART GALLAGHER
Managing editor

'Figuring a 997 GT2 RS and watching a hare run across the track in front of me at 190mph.'



HENRY CATCHPOLE
Features editor

'Sitting next to Meaden in a 997 Carrera S at 170mph on the Millbrook bowl. It all got a bit interesting over the notorious bumps...'



DAN PROSSER
Road test editor

'Getting pulled over by a Nevada state trooper with no paperwork in the car. He wasn't happy.'



JETHRO BOVINGDON
Contributing editor

'Calling Mitsubishi to tell them I'd just stuck an Evo VIII MR FQ-340 into a lamp post at great speed.'



RICHARD MEADEN
Contributing editor

'Attempting to hit 200mph in a Koenigsegg on a wet runway, spinning off, then having to tell Christian von Koenigsegg.'



DAVID VIVIAN
Contributing road tester

'TVR Tuscan S. Through a dry stone wall or splitter falls off at 175mph. Take your pick.'



ADAM TOWLER
Contributing road tester

'Murciélago, MIRA figuring session, winter. Car and performance one size too big for that bit of Warwickshire. Spin, spin spin...'



WILL BEAUMONT
Staff writer

'Calling editor Nick after giving a Toyota GT86's bodywork a new asymmetric look.'



I NFINITI'S INTENTIONS FOR its new Q60S are perfectly clear. This is a two-door, four-seat, four-wheel-drive coupe powered by a twin-turbo 3-litre V6 in a body packed with more tech than any of its rivals. And those rivals, if you haven't guessed already, are from the obvious German brands.

But it's going to take more than a comprehensive spec sheet to drag the masses from their 4-series, C-classes and A5s, so this latest attempt by Nissan's luxury arm needs to be very good.

The Q60S's silhouette is long and elegant, but thanks to a low ride height and slightly nose-down stance, there's more than a hint of aggression, too. The shape isn't that distinctive – the profile could be mistaken for almost any of its competitors – but the details are expressive. The elaborate C-pillar, wide grill and small hump above the front badge work really well together and inject some individuality into the

Q60S's overall appearance.

The UK will get this 400bhp Q60S model along with an entry-level 2-litre four-cylinder Q60 (208bhp, 258lb ft). There will also be a 300bhp model with a detuned version of the V6, but this isn't coming to the UK.

The Q60S outguns rivals on paper, the engine developing 38bhp more than the Mercedes-AMG C43, 51bhp more than Audi's recently released S5 and 79bhp more than BMW's new 440i. There's also 350lb ft on offer.

Like the C43 and S5, the Q60S is only available with four-wheel drive, the Infiniti's system using a viscous-coupling centre differential to distribute torque between the two axles. By default 100 per cent is sent to the rear, but upon detecting a loss of traction up to half can be redirected to the front. Like the Mercedes and Audi, the Q60S is also only available with a torque-converter automatic gearbox, here with seven speeds.

The Q60S has fully adaptive

suspension that promises to change the character of the dampers based on the quality of the road and the driver's style. There are also six drive modes to choose from: Snow, Eco, Standard, Sport, Sport+ and Customise. The 19-inch wheels are 9 inches wide at the front wearing 245-section tyres, and half-an-inch wider at the rear with 265-section rubber. Behind the wheels sit ventilated brakes discs with four-pot calipers up front and two-pot calipers at the rear.

The most remarkable piece of technology hidden within the Infiniti is its Direct Adaptive Steering (DAS). This is Infiniti's steer-by-wire system, so there's no direct mechanical connection between the steering wheel and the front wheels. For safety reasons there is a physical connection as a backup, but it's not used during normal driving.

With no mechanical connection, this steering system is widely configurable. As the feedback to the

Test location: Ramona, California
GPS: 33.03763, -116.87653

Infiniti Q60S

Four-wheel drive and a 400bhp twin-turbo V6 – has Infiniti finally delivered a rival to the Germans?

‘The Q60S
outguns its
rivals on paper,
developing
51bhp more
than Audi’s
new S5’





driver is all created by servos acting on the steering wheel, the level of 'feel' can be altered, along with the steering ratio, depending on the car's speed and the selected drive mode. The Customise mode even includes three settings each for steering effort and response.

Inside, the Q60 is a little fussy and looks slightly dated, especially compared with the ultra-sleek, modern interior of the Audi S5. And despite two touchscreen displays, there are still an awful lot of buttons. One screen is for the satnav, while the other is home to the infotainment system, vehicle submenus and, confusingly, more navigation controls. There's also another dial that allows you to control the map. Thankfully there's a real quality to anything you touch.

The seats, meanwhile, are softly padded as well as having relatively deep side bolsters, and the perfect driving position is easy to find. Initially it feels as if you're sitting too high, but this is because the tops of the doors and windscreen are much lower than expected. Once on the move, you feel nicely nestled within

the car while also having great forward visibility.

First impressions are not of the V6's 400bhp but rather the cabin acoustics. Wind noise barely infiltrates and only the roughest concrete road surfaces generate intrusive tyre noise. And that engine is incredibly polite, too – practically silent when you're cruising and not creating obscene pops and crackles for the sake of it. Instead it sings to its 7000rpm limiter in a pleasant if slightly anodyne way. The gearbox isn't the quickest, whether left in auto or when you use the paddles, and downshifts are noticeably lazy. So, while the engine revs smoothly and without hesitation, the slow gearchanges stall progress.

Despite its strong power and torque outputs, however, the Q60S never feels that quick. Acceleration swells rather than fires you forward, and the Q60S never feels like the 5.0sec 0-62mph car it claims to be.

Sadly the car doesn't ride with the sophistication that its hardware leads you to expect, either. That's not to say it rides badly, it just isn't as refined as the rest of the car.

'There's no unwanted body roll and the Q60S darts into turns quickly and with great accuracy'

There's also very little difference between the chassis' Standard and sportier modes, with the body constantly fidgeting across the slightest imperfection.

This firm chassis does mean the Q60S is well equipped to deal with directional changes at higher speeds, though. There's no unwanted body roll and it remains stable under heavy braking, which, because of a very sensitive brake pedal, happens all too often. It darts into turns quickly and with great accuracy, the

steering allowing you to place the Q60S surprisingly intuitively. There's very little sensation of what the front tyres are dealing with, turn-in requiring a leap of faith as you hope the grip will be there, but the Q60S does loyally follow your inputs and allow you to build confidence.

Active Trace Control, a brake-assisted torque-vectoring system, is designed to keep you on-line. It's effective, but there's not a lot of joy or satisfaction to be had when you really push. With Sport or Sport+ mode engaged there is a palpable sense of the Infiniti sending power to the rear as it pushes you out of a corner, but it never feels as engaging as a bona fide rear-drive car.

Start to explore the limits with the traction control and torque vectoring switched off and the experience becomes distinctly different. A spell of unseasonable rain makes the roads of our California test route treacherously slippery, but it helps paint a clearer picture of the Q60S's dynamics.

Grip is still impressive in the wet and the car's sharp turn-in remains. But once on the power the front

end begins to go AWOL: the front tyres – now receiving torque – are immediately overwhelmed and there's no sense of the four-wheel drive actively distributing power back to the rear. Alarming, none of this is hinted to the driver until it's obvious the car's nose is plotting a course straight ahead. The steering's remoteness may not be a huge issue when the traction control, torque-vectoring and four-wheel-drive systems work with you to guide the Q60S neatly around a corner, but it's practically impossible to manipulate the car with no way of gauging the front tyres' limits and without the help of some driver aids.

Though we criticise electronically assisted power-steering systems for being lifeless, it isn't until you remove the physical connection altogether that you realise just how essential a direct link is, no matter how minimal the feel it allows through. A wet surface may exaggerate the problem – more grip and more force injects some life into the steering

– but it does highlight the Q60S's dependence on electronics.

The Q60S exudes quality but retains a distinctly Japanese character. As a technical feat, it is mightily impressive, too; the steering doesn't provide enough feel but when working with the traction control, torque vectoring, four-wheel drive and the adaptive dampers, the car is able to achieve things beyond what a human could alone. Disappointing as the Q60S is to drive quickly with the electronic assistance turned off, this pales into insignificance next to the frustration of knowing that it is significantly more capable, safer, quicker and simply better with electronic assistance. The German alternatives aren't that much more engaging, but they do go about creating pace and composure without such an obvious reliance on electronic aids. And as a result, they are marginally more satisfying to drive. ✖

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)



Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V6, 2997cc, twin-turbo	208g/km	400bhp @ 6400rpm	350lb ft @ 1600-5200rpm	5.0sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1799kg (226bhp/ton)	c£43,000

+ Refined; impressive technology
 - Lifeless steering and complete dependence on electronic systems

evo rating
★★★★☆

Test location: Lutterworth Road, Leicestershire
GPS: 52.47389, -1.15131 **Photography:** Dean Smith

Noble M600 Speedster

662bhp British supercar now available with an open top and a sequential transmission – but are there compromises?

THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR rattles violently, shaking its image of the road behind to a blur. The windscreen surround shudders, too, and the steering wheel wanders around the cabin like a leaf in the wind. It might be Ferrari's fastest and most technologically advanced drop-top to date, but over a bumpy road surface the 488 Spider (Driven, **evo** 216) feels about as structurally robust as a wet sponge.

The M600 Speedster will feel just the same, I think to myself as I first lay eyes on it at Noble's Leicestershire factory. The carbonfibre-bodied Speedster is the first new model from Noble since the M600 coupe debuted way back in 2010 and it's

tasked with lifting the company's output to 20 units per year. Distributed by Super Veloce Racing (based near High Wycombe), the Speedster is expected to cost £342,000, which is some £100,000 more than the fixed-roof model.

Peter Boutwood, Noble Automotive's managing director, has recognised my pessimism. 'In terms of rigidity, the Speedster's chassis is within tolerance for the coupe chassis,' he says. 'It's very stiff.' Both versions of the M600 are built around a sheet-steel tub with a tubular spaceframe, which gives much of the rigidity of a full carbonfibre tub but at a fraction of the cost. Moreover, decapitating the spaceframe chassis makes little

difference to its stiffness, Boutwood assures me.

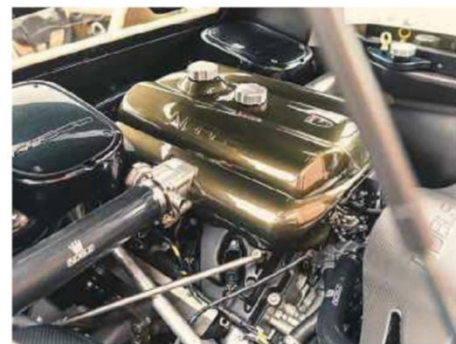
Like the coupe, the Speedster uses a 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 that develops 662bhp, although a switch within the cabin allows you to drop that output to 550 or 450bhp. Weighing the same flyweight 1198kg as the coupe, the Speedster is monstrously quick, recording a 0-60mph time of 3.5sec. Its top speed is an estimated 225mph, just like the coupe.

As standard the Speedster is fitted with a six-speed manual gearbox, which in this day and age puts it in a class of one. With the launch of the Speedster, however, Noble is also introducing an automated gearbox option – a first for the small firm.



Left: Speedster employs a lift-out panel to go topless, but there's nowhere in the car to store it once it's removed.

Right: plenum for the twin-turbo V8 can be matched to the exterior carbon bodywork





‘The M600 is an analogue masterpiece in a world of increasingly digitised performance cars’

It's the same Graziano paddleshift sequential 'box that featured in the Ferrari Enzo – a single-clutch unit, then, albeit heavily updated for 2016. Boutwood, a purist at heart, admits he'd rather not have to offer an automatic gearbox, but he concedes that the sales opportunities in regions such as the Middle East are too great to ignore. The optional 'box is expected to carry a £15,000 price tag.

Noble has long offered the M600 with exposed carbonfibre bodywork, but it can now tint the resin with ink to offer that same exposed carbon but in one of five hues. At £35,000 it's a tremendously expensive option, but the effect is quite spectacular.

With tan hide, flashes of carbonfibre, and precisely engineered

chromework, there's more than a little of the Pagani Zonda about the Speedster's cabin. The roof panel is a single carbonfibre piece, and although there's nowhere to store it within the car, Noble does provide a get-me-home fabric hood should the weather turn unexpectedly. It's an evocative cabin and the seating position is good, although in this early prototype there's nowhere comfortable to leave your left leg and the gearshift paddles are too tight to the steering wheel. The factory is working on solutions to both complaints.

The Noble M600 is a firm **evo** favourite – an analogue masterpiece in a world of increasingly digitised performance cars. It isn't just the M600's pure and honest character

that makes it so beguiling, though, but also the sheer quality of the driving experience and the sensational straight-line performance. Happily – with a caveat relating to this car's automated gearbox – the Speedster is every bit as impressive.

There's a certain tension to the ride quality at low speeds, but over 50mph the car just transforms. The pliant, fluid ride combined with the taut body control that has distinguished Nobles for many years now is present and correct, giving the Speedster the most remarkable composure on even the bumpiest of roads. Combined with huge grip and traction, wonderfully direct and feelsome steering and a sweet, natural balance, the Speedster is spectacularly good to drive.

It's staggeringly fast, too. Relatively long gearing and plenty of throttle-pedal travel giving a sense of relentless, unabating acceleration, the sort that you have to build up to over time. The twin-turbo V8 doesn't have the most electric top end, or the most immediate responses, but it truly is a powerhouse of an engine.

The most remarkable thing about the M600 Speedster, however, is that there's almost no indication from the rear-view mirror, windscreen surround or steering column that the chassis has had a great hole cut out of it. Whereas the 488 Spider feels compromised by having its roof sliced away, the Speedster is close to undamaged.

Boutwood reckons there's still

six months of calibration work to do before the automated gearbox will be ready for sign-off, and as it stands there are some significant issues. Low-speed refinement is poor, for instance, and the only way to smooth out upshifts is to lift heavily off the throttle pedal. This single-clutch transmission will never have the speed or precision of a twin-clutch one, but if there's room for improvement in this gearbox, Noble will surely find it. For our tastes, though, the six-speed manual remains the transmission of choice.

Noble has long been a company that has punched well above its station and in the M600 Speedster it has built one of the world's finest drop-top supercars. ✕

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)



'There's a sense of relentless, unabating acceleration'

Above and below: M600 suits the open-top look, and while the styling may be a little dated, it's guaranteed to still turn heads

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
V8, 4439cc, twin-turbo	333g/km	662bhp @ 6500rpm	604lb ft @ 6800rpm	3.5sec (claimed)	225mph (est)	1198kg (561bhp/ton)	c£342,000

+ Huge performance; uncompromised open-air motoring **- Sequential 'box' – in its current tune – costs it half a star**

evo rating ★★★★★



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BMW

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M4/M3 3.0T » 520+ BHP
M5 F10/M6 (STAGE 1) » 680 BHP
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316D/216D/116D » 160 BHP
318D/218D/118D » 225 BHP
330D E90 » 296+ BHP
320D E90 » 215 BHP
420i/320i/220i/120i » 275+ BHP
435i/ F30 335i » 390 BHP
428i/328i » 295 BHP
535D / 335D / X5 SD » 355+ BHP
640D/335D/535D/435D » 390 BHP
730D » 305+ BHP
X5 4.0D / 740D » 370 BHP
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C400 » 400 BHP
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Test location: Duck's Cross, Bedfordshire

GPS: 52.193552, -0.374515 **Photography:** Barry Hayden

Audi R8 V10

533bhp entry-level model (for now) joins the second-generation R8 range. Is it enough to stop you yearning for the Plus?



SOMEWHERE ONLINE I read that you can fix a broken record with a toothpick. Obviously if you're looking at a record that is so broken that it has the ability to be in several different rooms at the same time then it's probably beyond help. However, if it's just skipping and repeating the same same same section, then the toothpick technique might work on the afflicted groove. I would explain it in more detail here, but this is meant to be a car review, so you'll have to look it up.

Why was I investigating methods of fixing broken records? Well, because I'm getting bored of hearing myself think 'I wish this came with a manual gearbox'. Of course, in the case of the R8 it's not just any old

manual 'box that I'm missing, but that delicious open-gated, knurled-knobbed, *clack-clacking* six-speeder that graced the previous generation of Audi's super sports car. It really was a particularly special gearbox.

I'm sure the same Luddite thought crossed my mind when I drove the Plus version of this car for the first time, but it seems more nagging here. Perhaps it's the fact that with 69bhp and 15lb ft less, the standard R8 V10 doesn't have quite the rabid edge to its acceleration that the Plus does. Some cars are simply so fast now that a paddleshift seems like the only sensible option, but in this 533bhp R8 I feel as though a manual might not seem like such a hindrance to progress. Or it could be that with simple passive dampers rather than

'It allows you to attack B-roads with something approaching the abandon you would in a hot hatch'

Top: 'Virtual Cockpit' display comes as standard. **Above:** naturally aspirated V10 puts out 15bhp more than in the old R8 V10

the adjustable MagneRide setup, steel brakes rather than carbon ceramics, and standard rather than Dynamic steering, this feels like a beautifully back-to-basics car that deserves to go the whole hog and have three pedals in the driver's footwell.

Pushing all such thoughts to the side for a moment, the non-Plus R8 V10 is a very lovely car. The standard seats are comfortable yet supportive and the low, wide view out is both thrilling and liberating in the way it seems to put you right in the nose of the car as you skim down the road. The fixed-rate dampers strike a perfect balance between making the R8 useable every day and keeping everything under control when the pace increases. There is actually a surprising length to the travel,



which gives the car real grace and composure when you're pushing hard down a bumpy road. Combined with phenomenal grip, it allows you to attack B-roads with something approaching the abandon you would in a hot hatch, although the R8's demeanour errs towards secure rather than playfully adjustable.

With the standard steering rack in place the ratio is locked at 15.7:1. This is somewhat slower than the optional Dynamic rack (which varies the ratio and assistance dependant on speed) and it feels it on the road, with the nose not snapping into

corners in quite such a darty fashion. However, it feels easier to place and calmer to drive, more like the previous generation of R8, which is no bad thing. For all my open-gated desires, the dual-clutch paddleshift 'box is also superb. I don't like the little plastic paddles but the shifts they summon arrive as fast as you can move your finger and so smoothly that they never unsettle the car. It's hard to imagine them being bettered in any road or race car.

Some basic interiors (notably the McLaren 540C's) can feel rather bland and cold, but wreathed in black

leather the Audi's architecture looks crisply cool. Add in the Virtual Cockpit display that slickly combines dials and infotainment on one TFT screen and it's a great place to spend time.

The £1800 sports exhaust would seem like a very good box to tick. It's not antisocially loud, it merely sounds how you would expect an R8 to, making the best of that V10, which starts pulling hard around 3500rpm then kicks again at 6500rpm and sounds gloriously angry until it hits the limiter 2000rpm later.

I'm sure most R8 buyers will spend the extra £15k on the Plus, but there's

a strong case for this being more than enough. There are rumours that there might yet be an R8 below this. An R8 Minus, if you will. The current thinking seems to be that it would get the turbocharged V6 found in the current S4 (and likely to be in the new RS4 when it arrives). This of course would give me a chance to bemoan a lack of natural aspiration. Incidentally, I tried using a toothpick on myself, but it didn't work. I just ended up putting a blob of Blu-Tack on the end of it so that it looked like a gearstick. ☒

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Specification

+ All the R8 you really need
 - Some may hanker after a manual gearbox

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
V10, 5204cc	272g/km	533bhp @ 8250rpm	398lb ft @ 6500rpm	3.5sec (claimed)	198mph (claimed)	1595kg (340bhp/ton)	£119,520

evo rating ★★★★★



Test location: Buderscheid, Luxembourg
GPS: 49.937594, 5.947933

Mercedes-AMG SL63

Twin-turbo V8 convertible gets yet more power, but does that make it a better sports car?

MERCEDES' SL IS THE company's equivalent of Porsche's 911 but with less overt hero worship and a little more restraint. It's been in continuous production for a decade longer than the rear-engined Porsche, too, with the first examples leaving Mercedes' Bremen plant in 1954. The first roadster wasn't produced for another three years after that, though, and it took more than 40 years for the first AMG-fettled SL to appear: the 525bhp SL73, complete with the 7.3-litre V12 that would find its way into the back of Horacio Paganí's first road car, the Zonda, no less.

Since 1995 an AMG model has been ever-present in the SL range, and the recently updated 'R231' model continues with a choice of two: the SL65 with a twin-turbo 6-litre V12 or, as tested here, the SL63 with a (slightly) more restrained twin-turbo 5.5-litre V8.

Visually the makeover consists predominantly of a new face to bring the look into line with Mercedes' current corporate style and, if you believe everything that's written in a

press pack, to echo the appearance of the original SL.

Behind that new face resides AMG's 5.5-litre twin-turbo V8, here with 577bhp and 664lb ft of torque – up 47bhp and 74lb ft over the model being replaced. Peak torque arrives at 2250rpm and sticks around until 3750rpm, leaving a 1750rpm window until peak power rocks up. As with other '63' models, the SL continues to make do with AMG's seven-speed wet-clutch Speedshift MCT automatic transmission rather than getting the latest nine-speed auto.

Despite weighing a not inconsiderable 1770kg, the SL63 will reach 62mph in a claimed 4.1sec (a mere tenth slower than the 621bhp, 737lb ft SL65). But is the ability to vaporise a 285/30 rear tyre at the stretch of a right foot enough to justify this SL wearing the famous car badge from Affalterbach?

With the AMG GT now firmly established as the de facto Mercedes-AMG sports car, the SL63 can take a step back from having to appeal to the more sporting driver. So while the engine still dominates, and



despite it being familiar from the likes of the C63 and AMG GT, it has a less rabid nature and a calmer approach to delivering its performance.

The ratios of the seven-speed auto are better suited to a boulevard than a B-road, but select manual mode and use the paddles (bit small, but connected to the wheel so no need to take your hands off) and you can enjoy more of the V8's delights, the highlight being a surging mid-range that feels mighty from 2000rpm right through until you get bored. Even at the 5500rpm power peak the drop-off is marginal. And the SL63 still sounds like thunder, no matter what the throttle opening.

But there should be more to a sports car than just monstrous grunt. The SL63's throttle response

isn't crisp enough and the gearshifts aren't quick enough in manual mode, nor intuitive enough if left to their own devices in Sport mode: get greedy going into a corner and the downshifts won't always be on the same wavelength to you.

Mercedes' Active Body Control and a mechanical locking rear diff give the SL63 a chassis that's responsive and has an unexpected accuracy to the way it steers and controls its mass while also taming the performance. Slacken off the stability control as far as it will go and the '63 can be made to move around with a degree of accuracy and enjoyment unexpected of its kind. More keenly spirited drivers will prefer Jaguar's more focused F-type, but the SL feels as special, if not more so, than Bentley's Conti GT, and it certainly drives better.

The SL63 is far from a sports car, then, and only just justifies its AMG nomenclature, but in this market the driver demographic is more concerned with cruising while knowing they have plenty in reserve, and that's something the SL63 excels at. ✖

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
V8, 5461cc, twin-turbo	234g/km	577bhp @ 5500rpm	664lb ft @ 2250-3750rpm	4.1sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1770kg (331bhp/ton)	£114,115

➕ Effortless performance; interior quality ➖ Lacks involvement to go with the pace

evo rating ★★★★★



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08:30 Briefing
09:00 One hour of practice lapping
10:00 Timed lapping begins
11:00 Event ends

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10:00 Arrive and sign on
10:30 Briefing
11:00 One hour of practice lapping
12:00 Timed lapping begins
13:00 Event ends
Lunch break on circuit: 1-2pm

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Mountune Focus RS M380

Tuner upgrade brings more power (naturally) but also enhances the character of the engine. Money well spent, then?

PERFORMANCE FORDS and aftermarket tuning are such natural companions that it's hard to be sure where one ends and the other begins. In the case of Mountune, a kind of semi-official tuning arm to Ford in the UK, the line is even blurrier. What's clear, though, is that the new Focus RS is ripe for modification.

In the same way that the Nissan GT-R spawned its very own tuning industry, the Focus RS is certain to become the darling of tuning companies across Britain and beyond. Many will surely be tempted into chasing vast power increases, the car's four-wheel-drive system

finally unshackling them from the limitations of a front-wheel-drive configuration.

Mountune has taken a more restrained approach. Rather than pursuing headline figures, the Essex-based outfit has focused on reliable power increases that are consistent in all ambient conditions. Its M375 upgrade, which is endorsed by Ford and does not affect the manufacturer warranty, includes an ECU remap with an upgraded intercooler and rear exhaust silencer for £899.

Mountune quotes 370bhp and 376lb ft of torque for the kit, which equates to gains over the standard car of 25bhp and 29lb ft. Dig a little

deeper, though, and Mountune will admit those power and torque figures are somewhat conservative.

For those who want a little more, there's the M380 upgrade, which includes a revised ECU map and Mountune's mTune handset. This device allows you to switch maps and adjust the volume and character of the exhaust, and includes other features such as data-logging, performance timing and an 'anti-theft' mode. The kit, which isn't Ford-endorsed, costs £1050 and lifts power to 375bhp and torque to 391lb ft.

This demo car also runs 19-inch OZ Racing wheels (£379 apiece), grooved brake discs (£245 front and £185

rear), an uprated intercooler (£629), a new axle-back exhaust (£1050), exterior graphics (£104), a Mountune leather gearlever gaiter (£59) and branded floor mats (£49). The company will soon also offer a Quaife limited-slip differential to replace the standard, open item in the front axle, and for those owners who want to achieve really significant power increases, Mountune also markets a strengthened gearbox rated to 500bhp, for £3295.

There's a tinny, raspy quality to the engine note that immediately distinguishes this upgraded car from the factory-specification version. Rather than add noise and aural



‘The reports from the exhaust are completely natural rather than being engineered-in’



drama for the sake of it, though, Mountune actually deletes the exhaust pops and cracks in Normal mode to make the car feel more civilised. From Sport mode onwards, meanwhile, the reports from the exhaust are completely natural rather than being engineered-in, as they are on the standard car.

One of our main criticisms of the base car is the lack of energy and vibrancy in the 2.3-litre engine as it nears the red line. Whereas the best

Above right: M380 upgrade includes a high-flow induction kit and an uprated recirculation valve. Along with an ECU remap, these take power up to 375bhp

turbocharged performance engines find another surge over the final 1000rpm, as standard the RS's unit starts to fade at 6000rpm then limply nudges into the limiter. The upgraded Mountune engine isn't a night-and-day improvement, but it does feel more energetic.

In terms of acceleration, the Mountune car does have a slight edge over the stock model, but you'd need to drive them back-to-back and perhaps consult a stopwatch to

really appreciate the gains. Mountune quotes a sub-4.5sec 0-62mph time for the M380. By comparison, the best time we've recorded in the standard car is 4.7 seconds.

Countless tuners will be working on big-power modifications for the Focus RS as you read this – you can read about one on page 149 – but for now this is a mature, high-quality upgrade that makes one of today's hottest hatches even hotter.

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Specification

+ Upgrade adds performance and fizz to the engine... **-** ...but this remains an underwhelming hot hatch power unit

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
In-line 4-cyl, 2261cc, turbo	n/a	375bhp @ n/a	391lb ft @ n/a	<4.5sec (claimed)	165mph (est)	1524kg (250bhp/ton)	See text

evo rating ★★★★★

Test location: Shingay cum Wendy, Cambridgeshire
GPS: 52.108881, -0.086133 **Photography:** Aston Parrott

Mercedes-AMG C43 Estate v BMW 340i Touring

Which of these performance compact estate rivals delivers the fullest package?



IT'S GOING TO TAKE A while for us to get used to this new breed of AMG-lite. We've come to expect that cars from Affalterbach will be slightly unhinged, wild, tyre-smoking hooligans. The new C43, however, feels like it's been created by a different branch of AMG, one run by engineers who value speed and grip over enjoyment, engineers who haven't had one too many steins of Weissbier. Engineers who created the A45 AMG.

But perhaps we shouldn't get too hung up on that, because by forgoing

an exotic V8 engine in favour of a 362bhp twin-turbo 3-litre V6, the C43 brings an AMG C-class within reach of a wider audience. In estate form it costs £45,250, which is around £3600 more than BMW's new 340i Touring.

The 340i replaces the 335i in the 3-series line-up, and uncharacteristically for a BMW, it isn't adorned with a plethora of 'M' badges. It isn't even part of BMW's semi-hot 'M Performance' range. It's just a normal car, albeit quite a powerful one. The 340i's new 3-litre, twin-scroll single-turbo engine produces 321bhp

and 332lb ft of torque, which make it good for a 0-62mph time of 5.1sec. Not bad for a non-M model.

Its supple, cossetting ride quality certainly doesn't make it feel much like a performance car, and when trundling down the road with the driving mode set to Comfort, the 340i is a very pleasant place to be. On the move the chassis feels noticeably sharper when you select either of the Sport or Sport+ driving modes. Thanks to a more aggressive throttle map, the engine feels more urgent too. Some of the

ride quality diminishes, but the 340i now reacts more eagerly to steering inputs thanks to less body roll. The engine also makes more noise, but while the exhaust emits a deep but subtle growl for those outside, the soundtrack inside the cabin is mostly breathy. Stretch the engine to its lofty – by today's standards – 7000rpm rev limit and it begins to emit a more satisfying timbre, although it's still far from spine-tingling.

The eight-speed automatic gearbox slots each gear into place almost instantly, but despite the



‘An incredible amount of grip means the C43 can dispatch B-roads with disconcerting ease’



speedy changes the drivetrain never feels that urgent, even when cranked up to its highest setting; stand on the throttle and you have to wait momentarily for momentum to build before there's a reaction. Once the power has found its way to the rear wheels, though, you can really feel them helping the back of the car around a corner. These transparent and innately rear-drive characteristics are so delightful to exploit that the BMW encourages you to push harder and drive faster.

Sadly the chassis begins to show its humble, estate-car roots the quicker you go. The front-end doesn't possess the sort of grip we've come

to expect of a modern performance car, and unless you're very careful and measured with your steering inputs the 340i readily stumbles into understeer. Proportionally, there's more rear-end grip than front, but that means the influence the throttle has on the back axle rarely escalates into anything very exciting. Try really hard to induce a slide and the rear feels very heavy, leaning considerably over the outside wheel. Then once grip has been lost, the body roll and lack of a limited-slip diff mean the resulting slide is scruffy, making you feel ham-fisted.

The BMW runs on a Bridgestone Potenza S001, a tyre we've been

'The BMW's transparent rear-drive characteristics encourage you to push harder and drive faster'

impressed with on other cars. However, whether it's the weight of the 340i or the alterations BMW has made to the tyre (the star on the sidewalls denotes it has been specifically adapted for BMW), these Potenzas feel less like an ultra high performance tyre and more like a summer touring one.

This new AMG C43 shares its spangly grille with lesser C-classes, so it looks pretty sober. Only the four exhausts give the game away that this is no ordinary estate. Inside there's hardly an abundance of AMG cues, either, but the car's intentions are clear from the moment you drive off. The chassis is much firmer than

Specification

BMW 340i Touring

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 6-cyl, 2998cc, turbocharged	158g/km	321bhp @ 5500-6500rpm	332lb ft @ 1380-5000rpm	5.1sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1615kg (202bhp/ton)	£41,635

+ Feelsome rear-drive chassis - Easy to drive it beyond its comfort zone

evo rating ★★★★★

that of the BMW, even in its more comfortable modes, and the steering, although light, is very quick.

On paper the Mercedes has the BMW covered, with that 362bhp supported by 383lb ft of torque, resulting in a 0-62mph time of 4.7sec. This is reflected by an eagerness to the C43's drivetrain that the 340i could only wish for – the rev-counter needle dashes around the dial as if on a vacuum – although the twin-turbo V6 doesn't rev as high as the BMW's straight-six. The nine-speed auto gearbox is quick, with sharp, crisp changes that better those of a lot of double-clutch systems. Sadly, to avoid confusing the drivetrain and causing a long pause before the power comes back in, you need to change up by around 6200rpm.

The C43's chassis doesn't change dramatically between each of its drive modes. However, the dampers can be softened off separately should you want the slightly more pliant ride

with the more immediate throttle map. Keep the engine, gearbox and suspension in their sportiest settings and there's almost no slack in any of the controls. The C43 changes direction instantly, the chassis more than capable of keeping up with the quick steering.

But as taut and responsive as the Mercedes is, it's the sheer speed of the car that's most remarkable. The 4Matic four-wheel-drive system contributes to an incredible amount of grip that means B-roads can be dispatched with disconcerting ease. You can throw anything at the C43 and it remains unruffled, but this incredible competence comes at the expense of any real interaction. The throttle doesn't change the attitude of the car: a lift is as ineffectual as standing on the accelerator mid-corner, the C43 staying glued to its original trajectory. Only a lot of speed and some tactical left-foot braking will eventually induce some reluctant

movement from the rear axle. The AMG's incredible capability goads you to drive faster and faster in an attempt to instigate some sort of reaction, but it's near impossible to maintain the speeds needed for the C43 to come alive on the road.

Having such performance available in small estate cars is, in itself, fantastic, and both the BMW and AMG are talented in their own ways. The BMW doesn't purport to be a performance car and it doesn't quite have the power and pace to match the overtly sporty AMG, but it certainly holds its own in this test, being involving and rewarding to drive if kept within its limits. By contrast the C43 can be aloof. With unrelenting grip and composure it never shows a playful side, making it difficult to fall for. Its sheer competence means it wins this test, but it wins few friends in the process. **X**

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)



Below: C43 has the performance to dispatch the 340i, but is less involving. **Bottom left:** the BMW's looks are in contrast to how it drives



Specification

Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Estate

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V6, 2996cc, twin-turbo	181g/km	362bhp @ 5500-6000rpm	383lb ft @ 2000-4200rpm	4.7sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1660kg (222bhp/ton)	£45,250

+ Incredibly fast and composed **-** Difficult to engage with

evo rating ★★★★★



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Outside Line

RICHARD MEADEN



Car makers are missing out on the incredible power of the silver screen and should try harder to engage with car culture, says Meaden

THE YEAR IS 2018 AND HOLLYWOOD has released a remake of *Bullitt* to mark the movie's 50th anniversary. Desperate to remind audiences that Steve McQueen's gritty character, Frank Bullitt, drove a Mustang in the original film, Ford's product placement marketers have paid millions to ensure YouTuber Shmee150 – in his debut movie role – also rides in a Stang. Only this time, in a contemporary twist aimed at showcasing the Blue Oval's commitment to a self-driving future, the Mustang is autonomous.

Like the original, the redux's pivotal moment is the car chase. But instead of stalking our hero in a black Dodge Charger, the baddies summon a driverless Uber and shadow McQueen, sorry, Shmee150, around San Francisco absolutely on the (speed) limit. The 'chase' climaxes when a pedestrian steps into the road, triggering the Uber's moral algorithm and sending the baddies to a high-voltage end as they veer helplessly into a Tesla Supercharger station.

I'm joking (kind of), but my dystopian vision of future Hollywood chases highlights the car's diminishing role in pop culture. Thinking back to my childhood, so much of what I watched on TV contained cars. Cool cars driven with abandon, more often than not by criminals, drug-addled beatniks or psychopathic cops. And it was all good, clean fun. Apart from Daisy Duke's shorts, which were filthy.

Denim cut-offs and the somewhat dubious habit of skinny-dipping with first cousins aside, *Dukes of Hazzard* probably played as important a part in influencing my future as any maths or English lesson. What's more, instead of spending my Saturday evenings watching shop assistants with desperation in their eyes subject themselves to humiliation for the benefit of Simon Cowell, I was weaned on the righteous sight of Bo and Luke powersliding the dirt roads of Georgia in the General Lee.

A true right of cinematic passage came aged seven, when I went to the cinema with my dad and best mate to watch *Smokey and the Bandit*. The sight and sound of Burt Reynolds hooning his Pontiac Trans Am made a big impression, and while I've never managed to fulfil my dream of jumping a car across a river, I do secretly lust after a Screaming Chicken. Likewise,

I fondly recall late nights spent watching old movies such as *Vanishing Point*, *Mad Max* and *The Driver* on BBC2, for they fuelled my obsession and opened my eyes to the joys of cream-coloured Dodge Challengers and massive superchargers.

Where have all the cars gone? Bond movies still feature them heavily, but I'm not sure that counts because it's so predictable and commercialised. What I miss is the authentic inclusion of cars. Not just in blockbuster franchises, but in edgier, more left-field productions like those old road movies, and in mainstream TV. There was a time when you could rely on a cop show for quality four-wheel action, but these days you're more likely to see an Avensis than a Testarossa, though to be fair, Sonny

Crockett never left Miami to solve a murder in Midsomer. More's the pity.

Bodie and Doyle in their 3.0 Capri. Magnum, PI, in his Ferrari 308 GTS. Morse in his Mk2 Jag. Even Sergeant Bosco Albert 'Bad Attitude' Baracus in his customised GMC van. Each played their part during my formative years, but it was the metal they drove, and the way they drove it, that set me on a path to professional petrolhedonism. Likewise, movies such as *The Italian Job* (not the Mini advert), *Gone in 60*

Seconds (not the Nic Cage cheesefest), *Le Mans* and *Grand Prix*.

In more recent years there have been few films to slake our thirst. The chases and car choices in *Ronin* were glorious (who can forget the inclusion of an E34 M5 on turbine alloys?), but that's because it was directed by John Frankenheimer, who also directed *Grand Prix*. Likewise, the casting of an Austin Mini Cooper for a spectacular chase in *The Bourne Identity* told me the director (Doug Liman) knew his stuff. Sadly, unlike in the '70s and '80, these films are the exception rather than the rule.

Knowing how easily influenced I've been in the past, I think Hollywood and the car industry are missing a trick. It could even be the key to convincing me autonomous cars are a good thing. So, General Motors, here's my suggestion. Resurrect Pontiac, relaunch the Trans Am, employ Hasselhoff as a brand ambassador and get the Knight Industries Two Thousand to market sharpish. I may hate the idea of being a passenger in my own car, but I've always fancied being Knight Rider. ✕

'The casting of an Austin Mini in *The Bourne Identity* told me the director knew his stuff'



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RICHARD PORTER



Didn't go for air con? The only time you'll notice is when you're sweating rivers, says Porter, who doesn't buy into all this options-list machismo

T

THE TWO GREATEST SCAMS OF THE LAST

20 years are that chap in Nigeria who wants to put vast cash sums into your bank account and the Peugeot 306 Rallye.

The Nigerian email con you'll probably know. You might even have wondered why it seemed to run and run before realising with a chill that the perpetrators wouldn't have done it if it didn't work at least once, which in turn means there must be some very dumb people out there.

Since you're reading **evo**, you probably know about the 306 Rallye, too. In case you don't, it was a version of the sensational 306 GTI 6, stripped of its air conditioning, electric windows and sunroof to deliver a 16-kilo weight saving. Buying a Rallye was a way of saying, 'I'm quite prepared to be sweaty and inconvenienced because I truly care about driving.' In all mechanical ways, the Rallye was identical to its better-specced sister and if you claim you can feel the dynamic difference brought on by that slight reduction in mass I'm afraid you're talking bollocks. Although Peugeot at least had the good grace to charge less for the 'hardcore' version, it remained an artful scam designed to trap people who thought they should suffer for their helmsmithery whilst steadfastly pretending they could detect a weight difference that would be cancelled out by having a fat toddler in the back.

The 306 Rallye was only sold in the UK and we Brits seemed to fall for the scam, earnestly believing this was the pick of the range. But it wasn't. The full-spec GTI was a terrific car and suffered not one bit from having modern conveniences. The advice for anyone considering both cars should have been: don't be a hero.

See also, anyone thinking of spec'ing a hardcore Porsche without air con and a stereo. Such order-form bravado might make you feel like you love driving more than the next man in slender racing booties, but I can be pretty sure you'll never feel one iota of difference in the car's dynamic range because of the bits you left off. But you will feel hotter and more bored in traffic. Tempting though it is to show off your furrow-browed wheelman's credentials, and goodness knows Porsche encourages you on certain models by replacing the nose badge with a sticker as if that makes a damn bit

of difference, it's really not worth trying to be a hero.

See also, people who instinctively stick multi-mode suspension into the Sport setting even though a) in many cars it only makes everything worse and b) they're driving to Sainsbury's. Such misplaced heroism is surpassed only by a former **evo** staffer I once saw disabling the stability control on a small BMW even though he was only driving it 500 yards from one car park to another. I know we like to think we could all flick out the tail at a moment's notice and then catch it with a minimalist twitch of the wrists, but if you're doing mundane stuff there's really no need for such faux heroics.

Which brings me to one of the hardest don't-be-a-hero moments in modern cars – the manual gearbox. I like a manual gearbox, you probably like a manual gearbox. A good manual gearbox is a very lovely thing. The do-it-yourself shift in the latest Porsche Boxster, for example, is so precise and so mechanical that you could feel no more connected to a vital piece of the car if you plunged your hand into the 'box itself and moved the cogs around with your fingers. And yet, if I was ordering a Boxster I'd have to think very, very hard about which gearbox I went for. I like driving and I like the feeling of changing gears myself, but if I was going to use

the car in every circumstance, including the coagulated shuffle through the arteries of a city and those late-night, gummy-eyed drives home when you just don't feel like playing, I'd remember that there's no need to be a hero about this. So I'd mumble and procrastinate and then I'd order the paddleshift. Sorry.

In a mythical world where every journey is completed on open, flowing roads I'd have the manual. I'd firm up the dampers and disengage the ESP. I might even try to convince myself that I should have deleted the air con and the stereo and ordered some sports seats so aggressive every trip feels like being hugged by a skeleton, and that I would be able to feel the benefits of these decisions, but even then I'd be deluding myself. Cars are often nicer if you don't try to be such a hero about it.

Of course, you may disagree. And if you do, my cousin in Nigeria would love to have a word with you. ✕

'It remained an artful scam designed to trap people who thought they should suffer for their helmsmithery'



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recommend you practise a few swift getaways in advance...

It's been a pleasure to work with Ray Bellm in planning the first **evo** Great Drives Tour. Ray, a former sportscar world champion and Global GT champion at the wheel of a McLaren F1 GTR, has had a long and varied racing career and has numerous automotive business interests. We both look forward to welcoming you at the Marqués de Riscal in May for what promises to be an unforgettable few days enjoying **evo's** mantra – the Thrill of Driving.

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Plenty of you wrote in with your sub-£150,000 dream restomods following Dario's column in evo 225. Here he picks his favourites



A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO I SET YOU ALL

a challenge. It wasn't the easiest task (probably up there with picking the perfect two-car garage, in fact) and I'm sure there was plenty of head-scratching, but I thought £150,000 would be more than enough to, in theory, buy and restomod a suitable car in a similar way to what Singer does with 964-generation Porsche 911s.

The response, dear readers, was excellent, and ranged from a DB7 (the straight-six model, only with the crappy Ford switchgear ripped out and the chassis dynamics brought up to date – lovely choice Bryan McCavour: Ian Callum's a genius and it's no secret that Astons of that era could do with a nice rebuild!) to a Ferrari Mondial inspired by the PPG IndyCar pacer of 1987 (as suggested by Bart Garvelink; I can just about see the appeal, but for me the Mondial is beyond redemption – maybe try a 400i, which is similar in price). Indeed, the response was so enthusiastic that I've had to whittle the replies down to my favourites, so bearing in mind that one man's dream is another man's nightmare, the top three are as follows.

Number one: Broadspeed Jaguar XJ12. Yes! One-hundred per cent yes. Ever since I watched *The Avengers* as a kid, I've always loved that thuggish shape of a coupe, and reader Chris Biesty's insistence that the project car would be finished in the same dark metallic green as the star of the TV series is just the icing on the cake.

Can't say I agree with the decision to fit a Corvette LS7 V8, though: kills the character of the car. Why not simply put some straight pipes on the original 5.3-litre V12? It would sound like one of Jag's Group C cars, and in my opinion would be well worth the weight penalty. I've no qualms with the dark red leather and grey Alcantara interior, though, or the coilover suspension. Fantastic idea, Chris.

Number two: MkII Ford Escort. This is another very attractive suggestion, so thanks for sending it in, David Moore. It's tempting to think that the restomodded Escort has been done to death, but actually most of the restored cars you see are racing on rally stages. I don't see too many heavily modified road cars, but maybe that's because I'm just not on the scene. David's inspiration would be the 1980 Escort Harrier he used to own, which was fitted with a 1650cc crossflow engine, an uprated camshaft and a Janspeed exhaust (yeah – loud). The problem

was that the headlights were poor and the bodyshell kept cracking, so there would certainly be room for modern improvements. Stick a Millington in the engine bay, I reckon, and you'd have a classic Ford with massive appeal. Personally, I'd also go for the look of Klaus Ludwig's DRM car from 1976. A guaranteed **evo** car!

The Porsche 928 suggested by Jonny Horsfield would be a lot of fun, but Jonny's other dream restomod – and my third favourite – is even more intriguing, and brings me on to my third choice.

The thing with the Giugiaro-designed Alfa GTV6 (the one from the early-'80s) is that it's such a stunning car you tend to look back at it through rose-tinted glasses. Drive one, though, and despite the

excellent weight distribution and rear-wheel drive, you quickly notice it's a flawed machine, not least because of the gearbox – finding the next ratio is akin to driving around the Paris Périphérique without a satnav. All of which, of course, means it's begging to be restomodded. In fact, you could probably buy one, overhaul the suspension and give the wonderful Busso a useful tickle for less than £40,000 all-in. A mad idea, with no hope of a return on investment for years to come, but tempting all the same.

Notable mentions go to Richard Fiennes for his BMW M635i restomod proposal. I have to say, Richard, that the detail was staggering, right down to the preference for a six-speed 'box as opposed to a five-speeder (which as standard gives 24mph per 1000rpm in top, apparently

– not great for motorway cruising). The overall notion of fitting this particular generation of 6-series with the latest BMW 4.4-litre V8 is not without merit, either – just look at the benefits that engine brings to Morgan's cars. But wouldn't you just have to go for the S54 straight-six from the E46 M3? They're only about £2000 on eBay...

Another suggestion, this one well intended but in my experience a bit misguided, was a TVR Griffith with ultra-sticky Michelin Cup 2 tyres. These tyres would lift the level of grip so much that any eventual breakaway would be very hard to catch. The grip would probably snap the TVR chassis when you turned in, too. Imagine the flex – the doors would pop open! Sort the driving positions and the brakes, though...

Me? It's cheating a bit given the price of the car, but I'd have something like Joe Macari's Daytona Spider. Looks original but it's completely revised underneath. Automotive perfection. ☒

'You could buy the car, overhaul the suspension, restore the interior and give the Busso a useful tickle for less than £40k'

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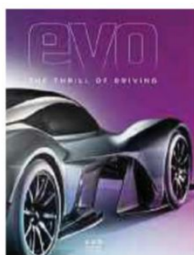
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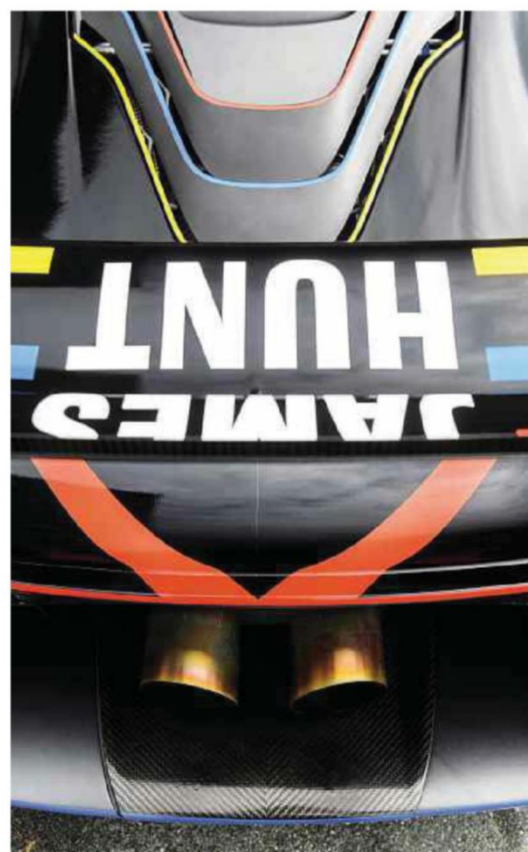
by NICK TROTT

PHOTOGRAPHY by
DEAN SMITH, ASTON PARROTT
& JAMES LIPMAN

*From F1 to P1 GTR, via
SLR, 12C, 675LT and
more. We've brought
together every McLaren
road car for a world
exclusive test*

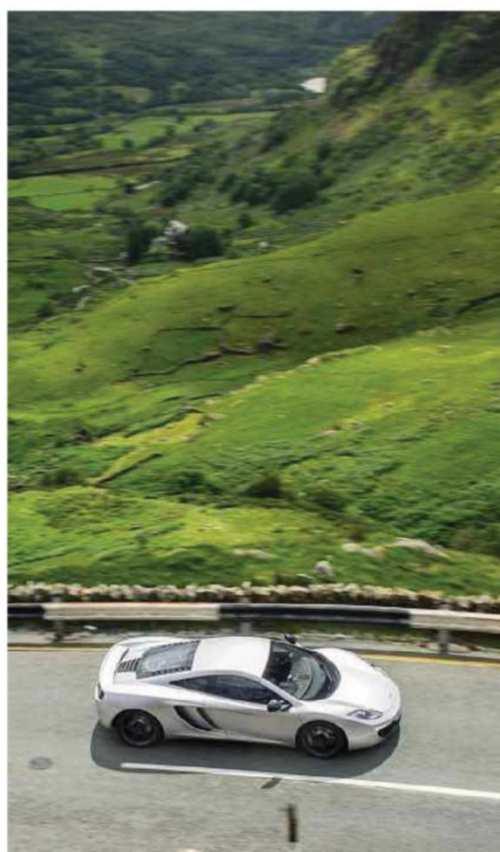


M c L A R E N





MEGATEST



McLAREN'S ROAD CAR AMBITIONS

nearly ended that tragic day in 1970 when Bruce McLaren lost his life testing a Can-Am racer at Goodwood. His daily driver was a prototype McLaren road car – the M6GT – which used a tuned Chevrolet V8 engine. It weighed less than a Mini, and had ten times the power. It also had manually operated pop-up headlights that were raised or lowered by hooking your finger inside the light pods. Can you imagine that getting signed off for production today?

Sadly, Bruce's plan to build 250 cars died with him. Just three were made, but the ethos of the M6GT remains today. The kiwi wanted to build the fastest, quickest accelerating and highest-spec road car ever, and unusually for the era, the safest too. The same elements all feature in today's range of McLarens. We sense Bruce would approve.

Here we assemble every series-production McLaren road car – plus the company's track-only special – for a world-first test. Enjoy.



McLAREN MEGATEST: F1 v SLR



F1 v SLR

McLAREN MEGATEST

Before 2011 McLaren had built just two road-going production models, and they could hardly have been more different. Neither could their reputations...

by NICK TROTT

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* DEAN SMITH
& JAMES LIPMAN



BLACK-SHEEP McLARENS. SERIOUSLY. THAT'S what these two are, and that's how they feel today. Sitting in the Anglesey sun, the McLaren F1 and the Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren stand out visually, acoustically and, as we'll discover, dynamically against the latest McLarens.

In many respects they don't feel like McLarens at all – certainly not the McLarens we've become familiar with since the Woking marque returned to road-car manufacture in 2011. They lack the indomitable cohesiveness of the modern Macs, the feeling that a similar amount of blood, sweat and (engineering) tears was poured into the indicator-stalk function as the high-speed DRS activation. Take the styling. The F1's profile – all Hawk-fighter rake – is a lesson in profile design. But its rear lights? Round. Boring. Taken from a Bova coach. And yes, I'm aware of the tooling costs associated with making your own lights for a low-volume car, but can you imagine a modern McLaren with Bova coach rear lights? And the interior? High-art titanium pedals juxtaposed with a smattering of lowbrow Ford switchgear? Well, it's a bit rubbish.

But, of course, you soon forget this when you fire up that BMW V12. You instantly feel plugged into a place where every synapse is overwhelmed and you feel giddy, excited, terrified, faint even. The legend of the F1 contributes to this feeling – I mean, this is a McLaren F1 for

godsakes, and you're driving it – but so does the tangible experience. You sit in the middle, your back aligned with the crankshaft and your ears inches from the overhead air intake. It is, and remains, the perfect – and I mean *perfect* – driving position.

You engage first gear with the stubby lever then clutch-out from idle, yet no McLaren since 2011 has had anything other than a twin-clutch semi-auto gearbox. Of course, you gorge on it, shifting more times than is necessary in a car that weighs 1137kg and has 479lb ft. The F1 yelps at clumsy shifts or asynchronous heel-and-toe efforts. It takes a little while to adjust your inputs, to finesse. You soon discover that the F1 responds better with speed, with more load on its axes. You learn to accelerate harder, to feel the surprisingly soft suspension compress the tyres into the road. You learn to increase your apex speed and feel the grip gently blend into understeer. This happens at a much lower speed than you were expecting, too – a 540C on its modern tyres would murder an F1 for ultimate grip – but again it doesn't really matter, because the F1 is engaging you in the process at every step of the way.

As grip turns to slip, you notice another contrast with modern McLarens – the unassisted steering is heavy and slower to respond. The load on your arms and the lazier response forces a more disciplined approach to driving. You



‘The fanfare surrounding the McLaren F1 is justified, but in many ways the car is wildly bipolar’

don't want to throw the car in and adjust your trajectory multiple times during a corner as you can in a modern Mac, because you're unlikely to rescue any big slides. So you tend to drive it like a big GT (ironic, huh?), with smooth, deliberate and precise inputs that in turn generate a deeply satisfying feeling of carving. This, combined with the central seat and the wide canopy, conjures a sense of being a fighter pilot on a low-level canyon run.

During acceleration it's different. Very different. The engine pushes so much power against so little weight, and does so with such startling immediacy, that gearshifts are required with incredible frequency. Fast ones, too, because if you fumble a shift, you lose the magic inherent in wringing out an F1, that of precisely orchestrating multiple mechanical interactions within the car with minimal and deliberate actions from your limbs. Also, the thought of mis-shifting in an F1 is, well, let's move on...

With 560bhp per ton the F1 is bettered only by the twin-turbocharged, electrically assisted P1 for power-to-weight in a McLaren road car (658bhp per ton). But crucially, the P1 doesn't feel faster – merely different. The F1's sense of speed is defined by the pause-bang moment during the gearshift, the P1's by a ceaseless feeling of G-force. Consequently, the P1 feels more impressive and the F1 more satisfying.

The fanfare surrounding the McLaren F1 is justified, but the car is not perfect, and in many ways is wildly bipolar. It handles like a GT car and yet goes like a Can-Am racer. Its throttle response is electric but its brakes are lazy. It handles safely and securely but it is not an expressive, chuckable and exploitable car – not on the road, at least. None of these characteristics erode the essential magic of the F1, but they do provide a lingering impression as you jump from the first McLaren production road car to the SLR – a car seemingly defined by its bipolarity.

First shown in 1999 as the Vision SLR concept, it looked like an ultra-GT but promised supercar performance and theatre. The styling remains as brutally dramatic as it was before the new millennium rolled in. Long of nose and short of tail, with cues from Formula 1 cars and a dash of Moss's 300 SLR, it looked fantastical – steampunk, even, as if Jules Verne had a hand in its creation.

At the time, Mercedes owned a 40 per cent stake in the McLaren Group and the car was handed to Woking's technical boss at the time, Gordon Murray – arguably the greatest automotive imagineer of the 20th century – to

productionise. The process took more than four years, and the collaboration was not without conflict.

Today, from a styling perspective, the SLR still looks extraordinary – more so with updated looks from McLaren Special Operations. The car we're driving is the McLaren Edition SLR, one of 25 SLRs with carbonfibre bumpers, improved underfloor aero, a larger rear diffuser, a new airbrake, lightweight carbon side panels and engine-cooling vents, and wheelarch air vents. Nothing, not even a P1 GTR, drops jaws quite like it.

The doors open as a supercar's should: up and out. You then climb over a wide sill – part of the carbon chassis construction – and settle in a cockpit that's pure GT. But while comfortable and ergonomically sound, if a little cramped, the interior is not befitting of a car that cost more than £300,000 when new. The MSO carbon cladding does a good job of softening the original SLR's overwrought silver flashes, but the interior remains unspectacular and dated. You do wonder, however, if like with the F1 your criticisms will fade when you start the engine...

The starter button, under a flip-up cover, glows red. And when you press it, your ankles then your shins, knees, chest and ears are subjected to a domino-ing explosion of noise and vibration. If you're left underwhelmed by the interior appointment, the rumble from the engine immediately lifts your spirits. Side-exit exhausts rule. All sports cars should have them. You feel closer to the combustion – the kind of thudding combustion that happens within 5.4 litres

Top left: F1's engine bay famously uses gold as a thermal insulator.
Below: SLR's V8 sits well behind the front axle; cooling gills are for the short exhaust





Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren Edition

Engine V8, 5439cc, supercharged **Power** 617bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 575lb ft @ 3250rpm **Transmission** Five-speed automatic, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, ESP **Weight** 1643kg **Power-to-weight** 382bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.8sec (claimed) **Top speed** 209mph (claimed) **Price new** £320,000 (2003) **Value today** £200,000+ (non-Edition)

evo rating: ★★★★★☆

McLaren F1

Engine V12, 6064cc **Power** 627bhp @ 7500rpm **Torque** 479lb ft @ 4000rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential **Weight** 1137kg **Power-to-weight** 560bhp/ton **0-60mph** 3.2sec (claimed) **Top speed** 240mph+ (claimed) **Price new** £635,000 (1994) **Value today** £10,000,000+

evo rating: ★★★★★★

of swept volume in the SLR's supercharged V8. You don't feel the level of connection you do with in the F1, but it's an increasingly rare and joyous feeling to be so close to the fire inside the engine. The modern McLaren V8 (smaller, turbocharged, significantly more advanced) disguises most of this combustion activity (not in the 675LT, though, which delivers a satisfying rifle-shot during the gearshift when Sport mode is selected).

Does the 617bhp V8 feel like a supercar engine? Not quite. The supercharger screams, but you'd rather it was revs making the histrionics; you'd have more bandwidth to play with. Instead you shift earlier and ride the torque – like in a big GT. That's not to say the SLR isn't fast. It is. Back in 2004, our own Richard Meaden coaxed a 0-100mph time of 8.5sec – in the wet. Today, in the dry, it feels as rapid as the F1 and almost as quick as a 675LT. And that's where the similarities with modern McLarens end...

This is the best SLR, no doubt. MSO has softened the overly darty steering that blighted the early cars and locked the hinge that seemed to link the front and rear axles. The SLR had a very good ESP system, but it needed it because when deactivated the car was continually out of sync fore and aft. The hyperactive steering would never relax enough for you to measure out appropriate corrections, so corners became serrated and you'd saw at the wheel like a child playing at being a rally driver. Combine this with the frankly preposterous level of torque reaching the road via the rear wheels and you could never homogenise steering

and propulsion, the pair often being indistinct from one another. With this version, MSO has tamed this to the point where it remains a characteristic but one that isn't as frustrating or as terrifying as it once was.

But, unsurprisingly, as a package the SLR is a world away in terms of philosophy and delivery not only from the modern McLarens but from the F1, too. You can actually feel the tug of war between McLaren (and Gordon Murray) and Mercedes in the dynamic behaviour, which may score curiosity points (and can be defined as 'character'), but it makes for an unusual beast. Today the SLR remains an oddball – misunderstood, but understandably so. It has, however, established a following, and with 1400 or so built, MSO's improvements and upgrades make decent business sense and even better practical sense if you're an owner. I mean, why wouldn't you? What MSO has done is to round-off the car's edges and blend the SLR's GT and supercar sensibilities in a way that the original team never did. The result is a terrifically and fiercely unique driving experience – one that we're unlikely to see again.

A fascinating postscript is that the car Gordon Murray originally envisaged the SLR to be was mid-engined, naturally aspirated and more than 200kg lighter than the SLR. A totally different car, then. Aside from the breathing, the first of the modern McLarens, the 12C, was 200kg lighter and mid-engined. It combined the GT and the supercar in a way the SLR never did – and over the page it meets Woking's latest supercar.

A high-angle photograph of a red McLaren 12C driving on a winding asphalt road that curves through a lush green, hilly landscape. The road is bordered by a low stone wall on the left and a metal guardrail on the right. The car is positioned on the right side of the road, moving away from the viewer. The background shows rolling green hills under a clear sky.

12C v 540C

McLAREN MEGATEST

Explosive power or exquisite communication skills? For £126,000, the choice between the first modern McLaren and the current entry-level car is a tough one

by DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY by
JAMES LIPMAN &
ASTON PARROTT



JUST LIKE THE P1 AND THE MIGHTY F1 LONG

before it, the 540C breaks new ground for McLaren. Far from being the fastest or most expensive car to come from Woking, though, the 540C is actually the slowest. And the cheapest. It's also the least powerful, and the first to have a sub-200mph top speed. At £126,000, it's the entry point to the world of McLaren Automotive.

It is of the current line-up, anyway. If you look towards the classifieds you'll find early, higher-mileage 12Cs trading for a little less than that. The cheapest cars dip below £110,000, but for the cost of the 540C you could snag a more recent example with fewer than 10,000 miles behind it. That rather begs the question: is your £126,000 better spent on a new 540C or a used 12C?

Of the 11 cars we've gathered for this McLaren megatest, the 540C and 12C certainly aren't box-office. In fact, rubbing wheelarches with the likes of the F1 and P1 GTR, they are supporting cast at best, but when we slip away from the star-studded group and park the two nose-to-tail in the shadow of Mount Snowdon, I'm reminded that they remain hugely exciting and very special performance cars in their own right.

As they sit together in the summer sunlight, I can hardly believe the 12C (McLaren wisely dropped the 'MP4' part of the name in 2012) is smaller than the 540C. I check the spec sheets over and over. The 12C gives away a little in width and length, but there's something about its distended arches that makes it appear a good bit bigger. In fact, those bulging arches and the wide, guppy-mouth grille give it the look of a squatting toad, which seems like a terribly unkind thing to say about a car whose styling I actually rather like, but I spotted the similarity this morning when it was hopping along in my rear-view mirror and I haven't been able to shift the thought since.



Top: 540C lacks the cohesive design of the original 12C (above left), which is ageing well. **Below:** the newer car also gives its driver more confidence – useful when you're hunting down 616bhp



I'm still not sold on the 540C's styling. It's the fussiness of the rear deck that troubles me – the purer, simpler 570GT that sits atop the Sports Series line-up is in a whole different league looks-wise – but at least the shape leaves you in no doubt that this thing has the performance to land you a custodial sentence in six seconds flat.

The slowest McLaren it may be, but in absolute terms it remains a quick car. With 533bhp and 398lb ft, it clocks 62mph in 3.5sec and runs on to 199mph. Rated at 616bhp and 442lb ft, the 12C is massively more potent than the 540C, and with a 3.1sec 0-62mph time and a 207mph top speed, it's usefully faster, too. As a Super Series car – the next level up from the Sports Series – so it should be.

McLaren calls this particular 12C 'Job 1'. As chassis no. 0001 it was the first production car to roll out of the McLaren Production Centre and it's recently been added to McLaren's heritage fleet. With the fast and flowing A4086 snaking its way through the Snowdonia National Park just a short hop and a skip from our base, I raise its elegant dihedral door and drop into the cabin, eager to drive a 12C again for the first time in four years.

The cabin architecture is instantly familiar from the 650S that replaced the 12C in 2014, but, somehow, it feels ten years old. There's something about the sheen and sag in the brown leather that smothers the seats, and something about the smooth, perforated hide that wraps the steering wheel that really date this car. Worryingly, I'm put in mind of the 2002 VW Passat I used for a few months a couple of years ago.

The thought doesn't linger, though, and within a few rotations of those big, spindly wheels, any unflattering comparisons with leggy German workhorses couldn't be further from my mind. It's the engine that stands out first. This 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8 serves in one guise or another in every McLaren Automotive car, but here it feels particularly sweet. Typically, it needs 3500rpm before anything significant starts to happen, but from there it rips hard through the mid-range before coming to life in the final dash to the 8500rpm red line. The 12C feels monstrously quick in a straight line, but it's the energy and fizz of the engine at the top end that steals my attention. There's some character to the soundtrack, too – a sharp edge that tears through the air behind you.

The second trait that stands out is the car's remarkable ride quality. The 12C, along with every other Super Series model, uses McLaren's ProActive Chassis Control system. It features conventional double wishbones and coil springs with hydraulically interconnected dampers, but no anti-roll bars. The idea is to decouple ride from handling, giving both a comfortable car and an agile one.

The ride quality really is impressive, but even when you ramp the chassis into Sport or Track mode, you're left isolated from the road surface. The consequence is that you always feel as though the car is floating above the road rather than keying itself into it. It can be spooky at times. Later Super Series cars make much better use of the ProActive Chassis Control system, sacrificing a little ride quality to give a much more connected feel, but this early 12C can be unsettling at times.

That's compounded by the very light, similarly disconnected steering. The 12C is fantastically fast along a road and it grips very hard, too, but it always keeps itself at arm's length. That all makes it feel quite like a



‘The shape leaves you in no doubt that this thing has the performance to land you a custodial sentence in six seconds flat’



McLaren 540C

Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo
Power 533bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque 398lb ft @ 3500-6500rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, Brake Steer
Weight (dry) 1311kg
Power-to-weight (dry) 413bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 199mph (claimed)
Basic price £126,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

McLaren 12C

Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo
Power 616bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque 442lb ft @ 3000-7000rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, Brake Steer
Weight 1434kg
Power-to-weight 435bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.1sec (claimed)
Top speed 207mph (claimed)
Price new £168,500 (2011)
Value today £110,000+

evo rating: ★★★★★

Above: 12C highlights where McLaren has made significant engineering gains in a short time, but its engine could teach the 540C's a thing or two

mid-engined GT car, one that makes a priority of comfort over that instinctive, indefinable faith that a really great supercar imparts upon its driver.

All Sports Series cars use an anti-roll bar arrangement and for my taste that gives the 540C a more intuitive sense of connection to the road. I find myself second-guessing the car far less often, which makes it much more rewarding to drive quickly than the 12C. The 540C has a less aggressive chassis setup than the brilliant 570S (see right), having been tuned to be more comfortable in everyday use. It rides every bit as well as you could ever need a car of this type to ride, then, but the trade-off is that it gives something away to the faster, more focused model.

Unlike the older car, the 540C steers brilliantly. In fact, the 12C and 540C bookend modern McLaren's journey through steering feel, from light and vague to direct and detailed. The 540C gives the impression of being a much more evolved machine than the 12C in just about every meaningful way, which demonstrates the meteoric rate of progress achieved at Woking in just a few short years.

Naturally enough, the 540C feels like the much newer car from within – its cabin feels more tautly screwed together – but this particular car's interior spec really

betrays the fact that it's an entry point. Covered entirely in rough black leather, the cabin feels dour and uninviting, but we know from the 570S and 570GT that this cockpit can be one of the most attractive in the business.

Where the older car really shows the 540C up, however, is in the engine bay. The 540C's V8 is rather flat at the top, with a much less exciting soundtrack. If the 12C's motor makes us realise that turbo engines don't have to be uninspiring, the 540C's reminds us they very often are.

In the greater context of McLaren Automotive, what defines the 540C is that it's the cheapest and slowest model to date. Those are not things you'll hurry to brag about at the pub. The 12C, however, will always be remembered as the first car of the McLaren Automotive era and there's something quite significant – almost poignant – about that. It's a significance that will only be compounded as the company's heritage grows richer and more illustrious.

With the shadows lengthening at the end of an intriguing day, I've got a very clear preference between the two cars. The 12C's story is the better one. But, engine aside, the 540C's driving experience is more immersive, and in the case of the mid-engined supercar, that really should be all that matters.

570S v 570GT

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

McLAREN MEGATEST

They share many a component, but the difference between the 570S and GT is all in the detail

Despite this being the first time I've driven a 570GT, I've got an uncanny sense of déjà vu. Ever since I first sat in a car, I have like most people assimilated through hands, feet, backside, nose and inner ear all sorts of sensations relating to different cars. And right now my brain is slowly going through the filing system, checking the microfiche, looking for a match. It doesn't take long.

The 570GT has plenty of the same sensations that the original MP4-12C had. Although the 12C had the novel ProActive Chassis Control suspension setup and the 570GT has a more conventional arrangement with anti-roll bars, the GT's ride in its Normal chassis mode feels very similar to the 12C's. There's a familiar suppleness, particularly over larger bumps.

Since the 12C, every new McLaren has been more focused and more sporting than that original (probably in an effort to combat the cars from Maranello). However, what plenty of people – both those building the car and those buying it – really loved about the 12C's approach to the mid-engined supercar was its usability and comfort.

I can attest to the 12C's GT credentials having spent days at a time driving one across both France and Morocco (evo 173). The 570GT has that same sense that you could do big miles very easily, stepping out relatively unruffled at

the end. The glass roof and extra space behind your head add to the already airy feeling of the cockpit. There isn't actually that much more useable luggage space than in a 570S, but the side-hinged hatch does make it more accessible.

Turn the chassis to Sport and things become a touch more focused but still very usable. As the miles disappear, I'm starting to wonder what the S can offer to make the 570 a more desirable car (other than giving you the same 562bhp for £143,250 to the GT's £154,000), so at the next petrol station I swap with Dan Prosser and duck under the door of the orange car.

Start it up and you notice that you're slightly less insulated from the noises behind you, but barely past the last fuel pump it's also obvious what the S gives you over the GT dynamically. The whole car feels tighter. Not aggressively or unpleasantly so; it's just more alert, in a higher state of readiness. A two per cent quicker steering ratio doesn't sound like much, but combined with spring rates that are 15 per cent stiffer at the front and ten per cent firmer at the rear, the S feels like its reactions have been given a pleasing half-dose of adrenalin.

Driving both cars round Anglesey Circuit later in the day, the differences are clear at the limit, too. In the GT you tend to lean on the front end more, working the outside tyre through long corners. This mild natural understeer through

faster sections will appeal to some drivers as it's a less intimidating limit to push against and easier to manage. If you're confident, however, then the S has the more appealing balance. In fact, it has one of the most pleasing balances of any current car available, bleeding into oversteer sweetly through fast corners.

Of course, the subjective elephant in the room is the styling of the two cars. For some people that I asked, the looks alone were a deal-breaker in terms of which they would choose, and opinions were always in favour of the light blue corner. The GT looks like the car that was originally penned – the purer, sleeker shape – while with the S gives the impression of having had to compromise on the GT's shape.

Both cars are very appealing, but at the end of the day, everyone I spoke to agreed that their perfect spec of 570 would have the GT's body with the chassis and steering from the S. I'd also add the full, fixed-back bucket seats to that list because I think they make the most of that incredible driving position and, despite appearances, don't really compromise on comfort. Others went the whole hog and said the P Zero Corsa tyres were a must-have too, but I'd be less fussy about those. Which just leaves us with the question of what to call this hybrid. Might I suggest a 570GTS would be a terrific addition to the Sports Series line up?



INTERVIEW

MIKE FLEWITT

McLAREN MEGATEST



McLaren Automotive's CEO discusses the company's future, and explains where hybrids, full EVs and autonomous vehicles fit in

by NICK TROTT

How many McLarens will utilise hybrid powertrains in the near future?

We know where we're going with our powertrains year on year for the next seven, eight, nine years. We know when we're bringing hybrid in and we can see ourselves going to a mix of hybrid and eventually full hybrid across the range. So, I expect something like 50 per cent of the range to be hybrid by 2022.

Are full-electric powertrains, at some point, an inevitability?

I do think it's a journey – but we believe the world will go to full EV. However, it's still got to provide a compelling driving experience. What will then continue to evolve is the power source, whether it's batteries or hydrogen or whatever.

What was the view from the McLaren board on the 'inevitability' of EV?

We got into the usual debate: 'Well you know what, can you imagine an EV being as compelling as a P1 or an LT?' and frankly, the answer was, 'No, I can't.' We said, 'Well we've

got to resolve this. There's got to be a way to resolve this.'

We did it with P1. P1 changed everybody's mindset in here, from the concept of a hybrid being a vehicle that was done for environmental reasons, efficiency reasons, fuel economy reasons, to making the character of the powertrain quite a compelling part of the vehicle.

I can fully understand someone having an F1 and a P1 and loving them both despite their differences – and to have a debate about which is better is almost irrelevant. They're different but they're both absolutely glorious. We've got to make an EV that's absolutely glorious. I'm convinced we'll be able to do it but we've got to work on what are the emotional touch points of it.

So the most significant task ahead is not generating the speed, it's engineering the 'Thrill of Driving' into an EV?

Making it fast enough isn't a challenge. Tesla are building vehicles weighing two, two-and-a-half tons that have got phenomenal acceleration, and building an EV is actually probably more straightforward than a conventional powertrain. Packaging an electric vehicle is more flexible and getting great ride and handling isn't such a challenge in its own right. No, pure performance isn't such an issue, it's the feedback you get.

Have you learnt anything from developing the current range that will help solve this problem?

A 675LT is immediately exciting, almost from just pulling away. Chris [Goodwin, McLaren's chief test driver] said it very early on when we were developing that car: at 30 miles an hour that car feels exciting. How? We changed the way the powertrain was damped so there's powertrain vibration coming through to the customer, we changed a little bit on steering feel, we reduced the NVH, we changed the way the noise was allowed in. It's not generated noise but we do choose what we let in and what we don't let in, so exhaust noise and intake noise. All of that is much more than the fact that it's got 25bhp more than the 650S, which frankly you have to be doing something pretty special to notice.

So how does that translate to an EV?

Noise is clearly a question. You've got lots of road noise. Road noise becomes probably the dominating factor because if the vehicle is well designed, wind noise and such shouldn't be an issue. You've got very little powertrain noise of any description so you've got road noise coming through. What do you do about

vibration? Well you've got nothing from the powertrain but there's nothing to stop you having vibration and feedback from the road.

So with noise diminished, your other senses need to feel amplified?

Yes. The thought process around this is all going to be around the feedback that you get from the road. What can you do about sensation of speed? That I think is quite a challenge because in a sense most of what you do dumbs that down. It's like if you drive an old car. If I drive my old Elan, I feel like I'm going twice as fast as I'm going in a McLaren. As we make the car more and more and more refined, you can isolate the driver from the experience and that's actually not what we want to do.

How will your next hybrid use electrification to augment performance?

If you never plug it in, you will still have sufficient battery to drive and pull away, albeit how far you go will diminish significantly. You'll get the torque fill and you'll get the low-end boost. The battery will never run below I think it's around 20-something, 22 or 23 per cent, so that you've always got that characteristic and the battery is charging through the use all the time.

There will be a battery-charge mode again, as there is with P1, so that if it's never plugged in you can run a cycle that is putting charge back into the battery. If you want everything full on then the most efficient way to use it is to plug it in.

When we do a hybrid vehicle, we will probably only do a hybrid vehicle. You won't be able to come along and say, 'Can I have a 570S or a 570S hybrid?' We will develop the concept of that vehicle as a hybrid and therefore the offering has to be one that satisfies the whole customer base with that powertrain solution.

If you plug it in or if you don't plug it in, it will work. For track use we've actually looked at how long people go out on tracks and typically 20 or 30 minutes at a time is a good use, then you come back in and put it on a rapid charge. You'll get it back up very quickly to about 80 per cent battery and then go out, use it and enjoy it.

But you've plugged it in to get 80 per cent.

We need batteries to get better, we need charging to get better, but you'll get the full driving experience of the car so it will still be a very useable, very practical proposition, even if you've never plugged it in.

When and how do you see autonomous driving as part of the motoring landscape?

First of all, I see it as an inevitability. On a

'The one thing I can't bear is the thought of having a boring car. I love driving'

very personal level, I don't have any problem driving but that's kind of irrelevant because it is where I see the world going and it does drive safety and it will drive efficiency as well. A world where there's autonomous EVs – certainly inside cities – is coming. I don't know how quickly. I see the introduction being incredibly complex.

How do you blend the human- and the machine-operated vehicle? How do they share the same road?

Unless you had a city state with a dictator who could ban all vehicles bar autonomous electric vehicles then integration with all the vehicles that are out there today needs to occur. I think that is a particularly complex proposition. The issues around social acceptability, around legislation and around accountability and responsibility if something happens, they're going to be enormously difficult to resolve. Nonetheless, I can see it coming. I think it will come into things like taxis and public service vehicles and so on early on.

What does this mean for McLaren?

I can see us almost going back a cycle. Either we will have an autonomous capability in the car that enables you to use it like that where it's mandated to do so, and where it's not mandated to do so you can take over and drive it. Or our cars will become purely leisure, entertainment propositions, and day-to-day driving will become just transport, which an autonomous vehicle will take care of. They'll separate, which when you get back into the personal bit, that's a crying shame. The one thing I can't bear is the thought of having a boring car. I love driving. I like driving, whether I'm driving to work or whatever else. The thought of trading that to have something that just ferries me to work, I mean it would take something away from my life.

675LT v P1

McLAREN MEGATEST

*Almost all the performance but
for a fraction of the price – is the
675LT really special enough to give
the brain-scrambling P1 a fright?*

by DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON
PARROTT & DEAN SMITH

IT'S EVO CAR OF THE YEAR 2015. THE FINAL DAY.

We're in Scotland, so far north that it feels lawless. Any further north and it becomes godless. We've been blessed with bright sunshine for three days straight, but fog is hiding the scenery this morning and photography is off the agenda. Thankfully visibility is good at road level, which means we can at least drive.

There's just one car I haven't tried yet: the McLaren 675LT. Its key has been like a ticket to the chocolate factory all week – damned hard to get hold of. But I've got it. I drop into the McLaren's cabin, swing my feet into the footwell, pull the steering wheel towards my chest and, in that moment, completely fall for the LT. The seating position makes me feel like a Le Mans driver.

There's a bona fide Le Mans driver just ahead of me, in fact. I slot into the line of test cars behind Marino Franchitti, who's snared the Porsche 911 GT3 RS for this morning's first run. My palms sweat with excitement for what I know is about to unfold.

Over the next 30 miles or so, following in Marino's tyre



tracks, I drive with more commitment than ever before on the road, trusting his entry speeds and his lines through the corners. In everything the LT does – the way it grips, steers and brakes, the way it accelerates and corners and the way it sounds – there is certified perfection. If I fell for it at a standstill 30 miles ago, I'm a zealot for it now.

That blast through the far north of Scotland was the single most memorable and exciting drive of my life. I've thought about the 675LT, all 666bhp of it, every six seconds since that morning last September, and whenever I replay sequences from that drive to myself, I always arrive at the same question: how the hell can the P1 be any more exciting than that?

IT'S TEN MONTHS LATER. I'M AT ANGLESEY Circuit on a grey day. We've spent the past hour or so photographing the P1 on track and with the job done the car's carbonfibre pendant of a key has been tossed my way. I suddenly find myself with a P1, an empty racetrack and licence to do more or less as I please.



‘The P1 feels absurdly fast, with such outrageous levels of grip and such unparalleled stability, control and precision’

The jaded car hack, too seasoned to be impressed by it all. Unflustered. That's the impression I should be trying to give. But I feel bloody nervous. I've been waiting several years to drive a P1 and I'd sort of written off ever getting the chance to do so. But with the key in my hand, lots of fuel in the tank and the most picturesque circuit in the country at my disposal, the moment is here.

So I get in, swinging my feet into the footwell. Just like the LT, the P1 has that prototype-racer seating position, but even more reclined. The low scuttle, the panoramic view through the windscreen. Racetracks kill all sense of straight-line acceleration, so even the likes of the Audi R8 V10 Plus or Nissan GT-R just don't feel that fast on circuit. The first time I bury my right foot in the P1 through second, third and fourth gears, though, I'm stunned. With 903bhp the rate of acceleration is furious, with a runaway-train sense of panic.

The enormous grip through the banked hairpin, the sheer power of the brakes. The surprisingly playful and adjustable balance. Within two laps my brain is scrambling to keep ahead of the car, ahead of the corners

THE CHAIN

How do you define the 'driving signature' of modern McLarens? Chief test driver Chris Goodwin explains

'Firstly you need a good amount of immediate steering feel, so that you know exactly what you put into the steering and so you get a measured, consistent and appropriate response back – that's going to tell you you're in a very fast sports car.

'We then have to make sure that the rest of the car can deal with this, and chassis stiffness is key. With all of our cars the carbonfibre MonoCell is without a shadow of a doubt the answer to giving immediate response in the suspension system. Also, I recommend you sit in a carbon tub when you're driving that fast...

'We've been a bit bold with the adaptive damping and hydraulic roll circuit system that we use on some of our cars. We don't use it on all the cars – we use anti-roll bars for the Sports Series – but the philosophy for all is to generate massive performance into the apex of the corner. I think if you measured most of our competitors, that's where we gain a huge amount. It's where you gain on a racetrack, it's where you feel the car, and it's where the most

fun is. We have a range of different levels of sophistication from our suspension technology but making it "invisible" is key – the driver doesn't really want to feel it operating.

'We talk about being a data-driven company – using science to generate performance – and that is absolutely true. But once we've done the data, we want it to go into the background because there's an area of subjective work that we need to do to tie it all in.

'We've got active aerodynamics on a lot of our cars and spend a lot of time developing the basics of the passive-aero shape of the car. It's not all about big downforce, it's about a useable amount of downforce that helps you do your job, which is to brake, get some speed out of a car, turn it into a corner, change direction and get back on the gas. To have a useable aero envelope is a good example of where we're different. Our brake and turn-in phase is our strength – the stability and speed you can carry into a corner with one of our cars – that's where we throw everything at it.'



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BATTERY
CHARGE
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‘Two seconds later I have to lift off. I just can’t deploy this level of performance on the road’

that keep on arriving so suddenly. But I have to stop because there’s real work to be done: out on the road, 675LT behind me, inferior in every single way.

I don’t know what else I was expecting of the P1, but I can’t quite believe how raw it feels. Stones ping loudly into the underside of the carbon tub and tyres slap noisily into the road surface. The soundtrack from behind is the uncultured, tuneless din of industrial turbocharging: whooshes under load and piercing whistles from the wastegate. The car feels rigid over these bumpy roads in north Wales, dropping heavily into potholes, suspension just about rounding off the edges enough to keep it the right side of useable.

Eventually the traffic thins and the road begins to meander invitingly between hedgerows. The surface is damp with shallow rivers in places. But when else am I going to drive a P1? Rolling along at a gentle pace, I start with third gear. Hesitantly prod the throttle, then lift off again. Wimp. This time I’ll keep it pinned. With the slightest squeeze, the car launches forwards, the giant, tensioned bungee cord that connects the P1’s bumper to the horizon having just been released.

Two seconds later I have to lift off. I just can’t deploy this level of performance on this road. Not just yet, anyway. I can’t remember ever having driven a car that demands so much forethought and consideration to simply drive it in a straight line.

Over the course of the afternoon my confidence grows, more because the road surface has dried than me having got any sort of a handle on the P1’s performance. It still feels absurdly fast, with such outrageous levels of grip and such unparalleled stability, control and precision.

Amidst the frenzy of it all, one or two fully formed thoughts do crystallise. The steering is feelsome and ultra-direct, but it has very little self-centring effect, which means I have to consciously unwind lock away from every apex. And while the torque fill from the electric drivetrain (the function that uses the motor’s instant torque delivery to disguise the low-down lag of those enormous turbos) is very impressive, once you’ve got the engine spinning above 4000rpm this technology just isn’t a factor – on the road, at least.

I have no doubt this is the fastest point-to-point car I’ve ever driven on the road. Nothing else has the same ability to cut through bends and to slingshot along straights.



675LT ON TRACK

McLAREN MEGATEST

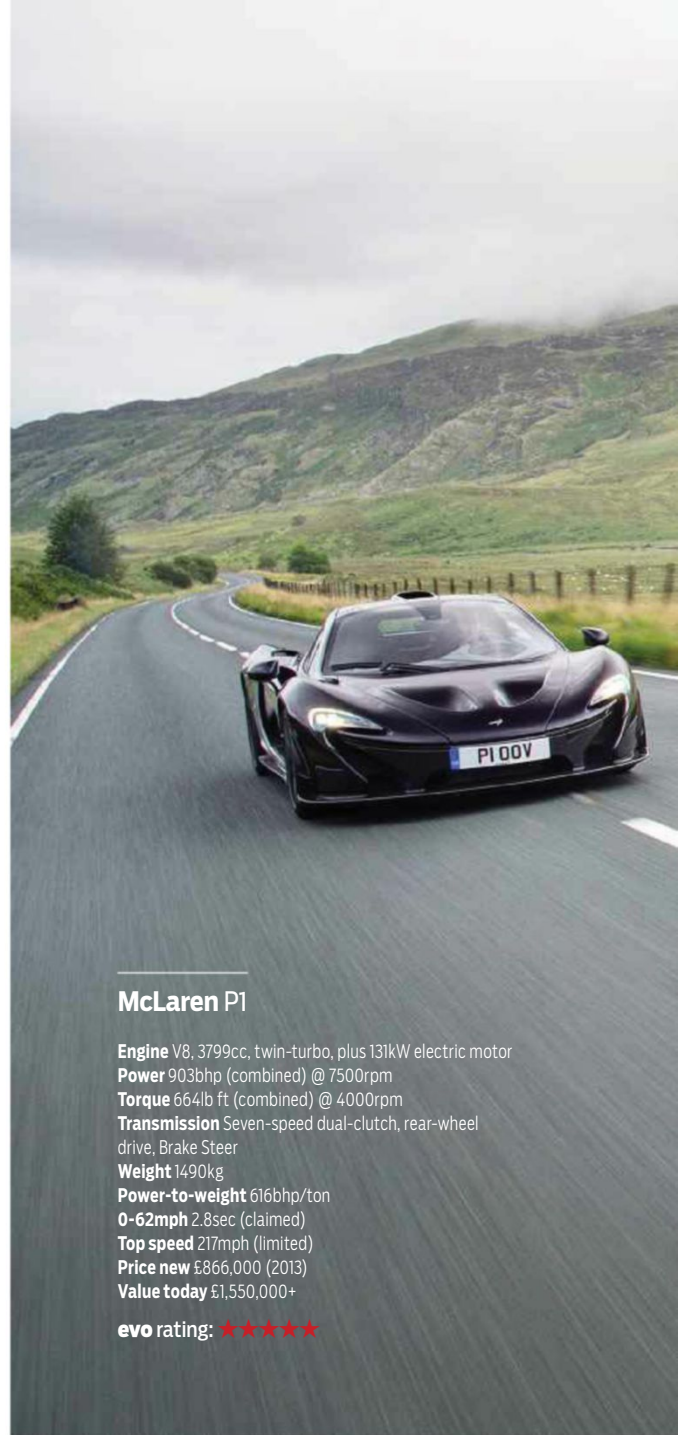
'The 675LT changes direction so well,' says Jethro Bovingdon. 'It also finds so much grip from its Pirelli Trofeo R tyres. That encourages you to turn in on the brakes to get the rear to step out just a bit. The rock-solid body control makes the rear of the car and the throttle feel totally connected. It's also lunatic fast at the top end, even if the engine can still be caught off-boost at times – you need to be right up above 5000rpm to get the response you need.'

'I love the pedal positioning – the brake pedal falls perfectly in line with where your left foot naturally sits and so you feel it's your duty to exercise it. Do so and the slightly longer travel than you'd expect feels natural,

just like the whole experience. Unnaturally fast, but totally natural to exploit.'

'Compared to the P1, the LT really is like a not-so-mini-me. It delivers 85 per cent of the experience. The P1 feels even stiffer and more direct in Race mode but even the torque fill can't quite disguise the turbo delivery and you can get mid-corner understeer as you wait for the real meat of the power to arrive. On the less aggressive Pirelli P Zero Corsa it also has a little bit of turn-in understeer, but that disappears easily and then it's all about just keeping the tail a few degrees wide – under power but driving.'

See the 675LT lap Anglesey at [YouTube.com/ev0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ev0)



McLaren P1

Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo, plus 131kW electric motor

Power 903bhp (combined) @ 7500rpm

Torque 664lb ft (combined) @ 4000rpm

Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, Brake Steer

Weight 1490kg

Power-to-weight 616bhp/ton

0-62mph 2.8sec (claimed)

Top speed 217mph (limited)

Price new £866,000 (2013)

Value today £1,550,000+

evo rating: ★★★★★

I'm so unsettled by the whole encounter that I find myself drawing not on previous driving experiences to try to make sense of it, but on the time I flew in a stunt plane and the time I fired an assault rifle – the two experiences in my adult life that have left me jabbering and incoherent.

So I was right. The 675LT is going to feel completely pedestrian. I'm almost remorseful for it, for that drive we had in Scotland. I still like the seating position, though. And its cabin feels much better appointed than the P1's. Pull away, one gearshift, two and three. Oh *my*, this thing sounds good. Sensational, in fact. A crisp, razor-edged note, wicked cracks from the exhaust tips on upshifts. A stirring, thrilling soundtrack that shows up the P1's flat, noisy blare.

Damn, this LT feels fast. The engine needs 3500rpm, but from there it shoves the car down the road at a ballistic rate. It hardly feels any slower than the P1. I must have



McLaren 675LT

Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo
Power 666bhp @ 7100rpm
Torque 516lb ft @ 5500-6500rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, Brake Steer
Weight 1328kg
Power-to-weight 510bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 205mph (claimed)
Basic price £259,500

evo rating: ★★★★★

Above: McLaren's Super Series range-topper may lag behind its Ultimate Series sibling by some 237bhp, but on the road they're virtually inseparable in terms of pace

misremembered how quick this thing really is. Its steering is more intuitive, too, with a natural self-centring effect, and the chassis is better able to deal with big bumps and deep holes in the road.

It has the same flat-bodied, instantaneous chassis response as the P1 and the same way of digging both axles equally hard into the tarmac so that you feel suspended perfectly between them. In fact, with each steering input and with each reaction from the chassis, I become more convinced that this LT is a tauter, more cohesive and less disjointed machine than the P1.

But I'm talking fractions. Only in a back-to-back comparison to this LT can I find any real fault with the P1 dynamically and I'm willing to bet a lot of what makes the hypercar feel a touch loose is the fact that this one has covered 20,000 merciless miles in two years.

Across a weaving, cresting Welsh moorland road, the

P1 doesn't have the performance to drive away from the LT. In fact, it takes a racetrack to tease out the difference between the two, and even then it's minimal (see left). The LT gets so close to covering the P1's strides, and in strictly objective terms, and in deference to the huge difference in cost between them, that probably makes the less powerful car the more persuasive one.

But I can't ignore the fact that the P1 has had such a dislocating effect on me. No other car has made me feel the way the P1 does. I'm sure some of that sense of awe comes from within me, from my own understanding of what the P1 is and how valuable it is, but there's no denying that it delivers a truly formative experience over and above the LT's merely memorable one.

I often get asked what my favourite car is, and since **evo** Car of the Year 2015 my answer has always been the McLaren 675LT. But not anymore.





P1 GTR

McLAREN MEGATEST

*The fastest car we've timed at
Anglesey Circuit is the Radical RXC
Turbo 500 with a lap of 1:10.5.
Can the P1 GTR go faster?*

by JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* DEAN SMITH
& ASTON PARROTT



‘Trying to extract the last little bit of time isn’t easy, but not because the car is scary, more that its capabilities are so high’

THERE’S NOTHING MORE EXCITING THAN

an invitation to drive something ludicrously fast, sophisticated and far beyond the realms of even a normal supercar. Something that gives you a glimpse at the outer edges of what’s possible shy of a big-budget single-seater racer. But the elation is usually strangled when you realise you’ll be allowed just three laps in the car on a circuit you’ve never seen before. You might get a flavour of the car, but nothing you can really get your teeth into. Today is different. In fact, it’s not just today. We’ve got a P1 GTR for two full days on a track I know as well as an old friend. Incredible.

A few months ago I drove Andy Bruce’s road-legal P1 GTR on the lanes around Goodwood (*evo* 225), so I think I know what to expect. This is different, though. I’ve got to set a lap time. I’ve got slick tyres.

I need to push this GTR as hard as I dare. The McLaren boys will be very upset if the lap time doesn’t come...

For the first lap I do the whole warming-tyres weave. It always feels slightly like you’re pretending to be an F1 driver (which you are), but it also builds the anticipation. The noises, even through my Arai, are extraordinary. The turbo setup puffs, hisses and spits, the electric motor whines and the V8’s deep, hammering note holds it all together and gives it a relentless energy. It’s not a beautiful sound, but the chaos makes even considering pushing this car to its limits feel very heroic.

Trying to extract the last little bit of time isn’t easy, but not because the car is scary,

more that its capabilities are so high in some areas. The straight-line performance is fantastic – the torque-fill works more effectively than in the P1 road car and the GTR has another 83bhp too, taking the total to 986bhp. I’m in the slightly mad position of having driven a few GT3 race cars, and the P1 GTR blows them away in a straight line. However, it can’t match their almost spooky levels of grip, so for the first few laps I find myself understeering mid-corner (pretty terrifying in the quicker stuff!).

Reprogramming your brain to account for just how fast you arrive at the turns and then the slightly lower corner speeds than a full-on racer doesn’t take long. And then I enjoy the very same things about the



THE STORMTROOPER

McLAREN MEGATEST

Scourge of the Rebel Alliance? Not quite. Although this McLaren Special Operations 12C has had a very eventful life. It started out as a pre-production prototype – number 19 to be precise. It then travelled the world's motor shows and eventually became a press car. When its press duties ended, it was assigned to MSO as a blank canvas for the division to tweak and modify. It was used to develop a roof snorkel, the MSO front bumper, carbonfibre sill tops – and has generally been the rolling demo car for MSO.

MSO admits that the black and white colour scheme isn't to everyone's taste, but its purpose is to highlight the contrasting MSO features. However, despite its challenging looks, the men and women of MSO have become rather attached to it and visibly wince if you suggest that, like most pre-production cars, it will be scrapped at the end of its useful life. No, this Stormtrooper is likely to live on...

GTR as the P1 on track – its wonderful sense of agility, the superb feeling you get of exactly how much rear grip you have left, and the balance that allows you to brake deep into corners to eliminate understeer and then point the car with laser precision under power. There's less steering lock, more steering weight and the slicks and camber settings mean the GTR isn't a car you slide with abandon, but it's at its best with the rear moving. Getting a lovely arc of oversteer on corner exit and upshifting to the next gear to maintain that little angle as the speed builds is a truly unforgettable experience.

Funnily enough, the lap time hardly seems to matter, but the GTR does a 1:08.7 – 2.5sec faster than the road P1 (issue 200), 1.8sec faster than the Radical, and a new **evo** record at Anglesey. ✕

Above: one-off livery inspired by James Hunt's crash helmet is to celebrate 40 years since Hunt won his only Formula 1 world championship; Bovington (right) is hoping it'll gain him a few tenths



WHAT NEXT?

McLAREN MEGATEST

Next year McLaren will unveil the replacement for the 650S. Here's what we think the car – currently known by the codename P14 – needs to be a hit



WHILST ONE PERSON CHILDISHLY suggested that the replacement for the 650S should fly, others had more sensible suggestions. Here are the thoughts, hopes and desires of the **evo** team and regular Fast Fleet contributor the Secret Supercar Owner (who has owned both a 12C and a 650S) about what 2017's new Super Series car should be.

ADAM TOWLER

I don't want the P14 to be too lairy. The 12C came in for criticism at launch for not looking or sounding 'special' enough, but I think the core McLaren should be a vehicle for all seasons and every occasion. As time has passed I value more and more the pure functionality of the 12C; leave the real fireworks to the Long Tails.

DAN PROSSER

Where the current 650S is starting to fall behind the competition is the drivetrain. The Ferrari 488 GTB's twin-turbo V8 has the immediacy and flexibility of a normally aspirated engine, which shows up the 650S's laggy, less responsive motor. The Ferrari's twin-clutch transmission is also much sharper and more responsive than the McLaren's.

RICHARD MEADEN

I think McLaren's cars are maturing nicely in dynamic and design terms. They now have a bit of personality, which was lacking in the 12C. The one major frustration I have with

the range is the commonality of hardware. There's a certain breadth of character between models in the way they look and drive, but in all other respects it's a bit too modular for my liking. It's hard to imagine Aston, Ferrari and Lamborghini without V8 and V12 models. McLaren lacks that variety and sense of true progression from entry model to flagship.

HENRY CATCHPOLE

It feels like the 570 range is now doing the 650S's job better than a 650S, so the new car needs to significantly distance itself from its lesser siblings. The obvious starting point for differentiation would be to have a totally new engine, preferably with more than eight cylinders. What I'd really love is for them to discover a clever way for it to have a naturally aspirated engine, but that's probably too much to ask. Of course, they could put the engine in front of the driver...

NICK TROTT

Dynamically, McLaren is beginning to listen to its inner child. The 675LT and the 570S are playful and exploitable – it's imperative this trend continues with the P14 and the car does not become a demonstration of speed and numbers. Indeed, I don't feel the car will need to be any quicker – I'd take five per cent more driver involvement over ten per cent more performance any day.

I'm also hoping for a little more 'song' in

the exhaust note (which a nicely tuned V6 could deliver – if indeed that's the engine), a more immediate downshift with a sharper rev-match, and a slightly more transparent feeling across the rear axle as the electronic differential 'locks'.

From a design perspective, the future is bright. In chief designer Robert Melville McLaren has a real star, and the 570GT in particular shows that the company can blend supercar theatre with true beauty. I hear that the 650S's replacement will demonstrate a significant step in the evolution of McLaren design. I can't wait to see it.

SECRET SUPERCAR OWNER

In terms of the qualities I want to see carried over into the P14, first and foremost is the everyday usability. The 650S is just not a car I worry about driving in any type of weather or traffic, or to any destination. However, there are improvements that would make it an even better daily driver. It needs to have a larger petrol tank, longer paddles, programmable aero (i.e. the ability to set it to automatically engage/disengage at a certain speed), front lift as standard, a 21st-century IRIS/infotainment system (phone calls are still horrible) and doors that require less space to open. A slightly narrower sill to make getting in and out would also be appreciated, as well as more in-car storage and another 12V outlet. ☒



ALASTAIR BOLS

Fine Modern and Classic Road and Race Cars



McLaren P1 - Year 2014

Price - £1,550,000

Miles - 2800

Colour - Titanium Silver with Black Leather & Alcantara, Harissa Red stitching.
Options include: MSO Rear Wing visual Carbon Fibre underside, Visual Carbon Fibre to external areas, snorkel, bumpers, door inserts, mirrors. Alcantara steering wheel & dash tops, Meridian system, Stealth alloys with Red calipers, Car Charger and maintainer Spare set P1 alloys fitted with new tyres.



McLaren Mercedes SLR 722 year 2007

Price - £599,000

Miles - 4900

Colour - Antimony Silver Grey with Black Leather & Alcantara, Red stitching.
Options include: Original EU Supply with 1 owner from new. 722 Badging, Carbon Fibre Race Seats with red seat belts, Carbon Fibre floor, Carbon Fibre Front Splitter, Carbon Fibre Rear Diffuser, Super Light Alloys - Black centres with Ball polished rims, BOSE Sound system.



McLaren 675LT Coupe - Year 2015

Price - £344,950

Miles - 545

Colour - Silica White with Black Leather, McLaren Orange stitching.
Options include: MSO Roof Snorkel finished in glass like jet black, Carbon Fibre Wing louvres, Electric Sport seats with memory & heating, Ultra Light Stealth alloys with McLaren Orange calipers. Carbon Fibre Extended Interior, Carbon Fibre Exterior, Carbon Side Intakes, Carbon Fibre Branded sill panels, Carbon Fibre Wheel arches, Lifting system, Meridian sound system Parking sensors front & rear with Reverse camera and Paint protection film - fitted to a large majority of the car's bodywork.



McLaren 650S Spider - Year 2016

Price - £193,950

Miles - 3000

Colour - Mantis Green with Black full Alcantara, black stitching.
Options include: Electric seats with memory & heating, IRIS 2 system with Navigation & Bluetooth, Meridian Surround system Carbon Fibre Interior Upgrade, Carbon Fibre Mirrors, Carbon Fibre Side intakes, Lifting system, Sport Exhaust. Diamond cut Sport alloys with Polished metal calipers, Alloy oil & water caps, Volumetric alarm upgrade



McLaren 12C Spider 50th ANNIVERSARY - Year 2014 **Price - £179,950**
Miles - 1970

Colour - Carbon Black with Black Leather & Alcantara, Silver Grey stitching.
Options include: MSO Carbon Fibre Downforce front bumper, 50th Carbon Fibre sill panels, 50th Carbon Fibre Turning vanes, Carbon Fibre interior, Carbon Fibre rear diffuser, Carbon Fibre mirrors, MSO Seat & Steering wheel silver stitched. Sport exhaust, Lifting system, IRIS 2 system, Satin Black Superlight 50th Design alloys & Logo caps with Silver ceramic brake calipers 50th Branded Floor mats, 50th Edition Silver Carbon Key, 50th Edition Car Cover with logo, 50th Edition Heritage McLaren bonnet badge



McLaren 12C Coupe - Year 2011

Price - £116,950

Miles - 9100

Colour - Volcano Orange with Black Leather & Alcantara, McLaren Orange stitching.
Options include: An early MTC production car, swipe door model that has the launch specification. The original & legendary IRIS 1 system, Meridian surround system, Electric Seats with memory & heating, Carbon Fibre Interior upgrade, Carbon Fibre Engine Covers, Carbon Fibre Sill covers, Carbon Fibre Wheel arches, Sport Exhaust, McLaren Heritage style bonnet badge, Parking sensors front & rear, Volumetric alarm upgrade.



HOT



*The Ferrari 488 GTB's long-awaited lap time for the evo
Leaderboard has finally been set. So, how quick was it?*





by RICHARD MEADEN

VIDEO STILLs by GUY LAMBERT



FEZZ



ATTEMPTING TO SET A LAP TIME IN A FERRARI press vehicle is the stuff of legend. There was a time when you'd get an articulated lorry full of engineers, laptops and assorted tyres, and an oppressive weight of expectation resting on your shoulders after several days' testing and a target time set by one of Ferrari's in-house hot-shoes.

These days it's a bit different. You still get a few engineers and testers, but they smile a lot more than they used to, and the car is delivered in a modest lorry. You get a few sets of tyres to play with, too, but that's as much a reflection of the need to cremate at least one set in the pursuit of 'views'. Nevertheless, the pressure is on. Not least because the challenge of firing a 661bhp supercar as fast as you can make it go around Anglesey's dramatic Coastal circuit is one of the more serious parts of an otherwise silly job.

We start on a set of part-worn tyres to get dialled into the track, and then get the gratuitous video footage. The more sophisticated cars get, the more choice you have on traction

and stability aids, but even though the 488 GTB's Side Slip Control 2 lets you hang the tail out on the power, there are moments where you feel it's not quite letting the car wring the most from tyres and drivetrain. 'CT off' it is, then.

Besides, if it was all down to computers, there'd be no point in testing. We'd just get Ferrari to do some kind of simulation and publish the resulting lap time. Of course, these *evo* Leaderboard tests focus on lap time, but it's the manner in which the time is delivered that's as fascinating as the raw figures achieved. Driving without aids enables us to peel back that final layer to reveal a clear picture of a car's on- and over-the-limit behaviour. Putting a stopwatch on our efforts adds focus and gives us hard facts to support – or confound – the subjective elements.

Going for a lap time in a car like the 488 is as close to a qualifying lap as you can get. Your hands prickle with perspiration, your mouth dries and your heart beats more insistently in your chest. You feel the pressure because



LOUIS JOEL SHAW

‘The tyres will only give their absolute best for the first lap or two’



LOUIS JOEL SHAW



much like in a race car, and just like in a 675LT or any upper-tier supercar, you have to nail the best lap you can straight out of the blocks, as the tyres will only give their absolute best for the first lap or two.

The 488's engine might not be the naturally aspirated banshee of the 458 Speciale, but it has unbelievably good throttle response and a beautifully measured delivery. I can't think of another turbocharged engine that allows you to be so precise when you're just squeezing the rear tyres to the point where they begin to run out of traction.

The front end is sensational – never a hint of understeer, super-agile, yet not so jumpy that the rear can't keep up. Consequently you have huge confidence with your first steering input and every chance of placing the car with millimetre precision. It's so intuitive that once you become at one with the machine, it's as though the car is controlled by your eyes: look to the apex and the car goes there.

Braking and turn-in speeds are critical. Stamp on the middle pedal without feeling or finesse and such is its effectiveness you'll more than likely overbrake the car. Then you try to compensate by getting on the power too early or too greedily, which will lead to lots of oversteer. Better to take a breath, relax your grip on the steering wheel just a fraction and let yourself feel the car. Turns 1 and 3 reward smoothly melding the point where you release the brake and pick up the throttle, the 488 dancing delicately along the edges of longitudinal and lateral grip with the need for only small inputs of corrective lock.

The trickiest part of the lap is the quick approach and uphill compression that leads to Rocket – a super-tight left-hander with a really tricky braking area that transitions from a helpful gradient to a hellishly difficult plateau. The crazy thing is that the 488 smashes through the right kink and compression with the most momentary of lifts, but you're carrying so much speed up the hill that you can't get

Above left: Ferrari technicians check the 488 is in perfect condition for its run against the clock.

Top right and above right: then it's all down to our man Meaden to get the time

Ferrari 488 GTB

Engine V8, 3902cc, twin-turbo
Power 661bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 560lb ft @ 3000rpm (in seventh gear) **Transmission** Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, E-Diff3, F1-Trac, SSC2 **Weight** 1475kg
Power-to-weight 455bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.0sec (claimed)
Top speed 205mph+ (claimed)
Price £183,984

evo rating ★★★★★

the car stopped. Better to give a little on the way in, make a more emphatic braking effort, bat down the gears (god, the 'box is good!) and get the nose tucked into the kerb on the left before taking the fiddly right-hand hairpin.

If quick corners are characterised by the nailed-down nose and immaculate balance, and tight corners defined by the need to spot your braking and be disciplined with early applications of throttle, then medium-speed corners are all about keeping the tail in check as you turn in. It's here the 488's agility comes closest to upsetting its composure. Dither and the tail will start to slide, but get on the gas too soon and you'll also invoke oversteer. The trick is to be calm on turn-in and collect the throttle early – just enough to settle the car and get the diff working its magic. Then you can use the lag-free response and bottomless well of progressive torque to propel you through the corner in one subtle, unbroken slide. It's a fabulous sensation – all about speed and drive and nothing to do with showboating.

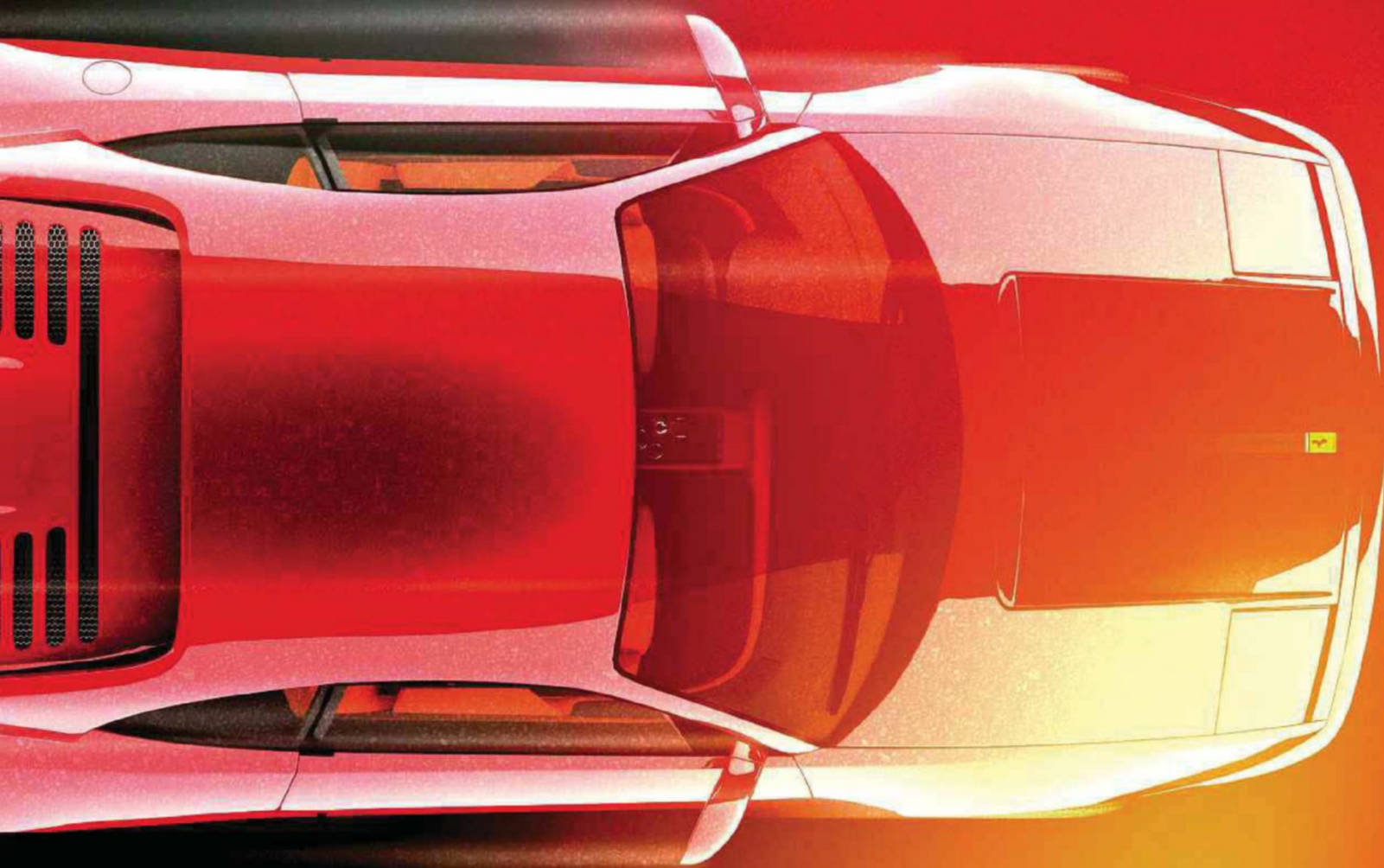
After four flyers and a cool-down lap, I head back to the pits and scroll down the VBOX display. It felt like there was a good lap in there – committed, but with the requisite control to make it count. Those ephemeral few tenths on fresh rubber are clear to see – the best lap is the first clean flyer – but the subsequent laps, though a little slower, are consistent. The Ferrari boys seem happy, too. Job done.

What was the 488's best? A very, very impressive 1:12.8. I send a text to Jethro Bovingdon, driver for our McLaren 675LT lap this month (see page 70), to see what time it did. His reply? '1:12.8.' To give some perspective, that's Ferrari's series-production 488 matching McLaren's limited-run, ultra-aggressive, track-optimised special. When it comes, the lighter, sharper, more powerful and more downforce-rich 488 Speciale will be mind-boggling. ☒

Watch the 488 GTB's lap at [YouTube.com/evo](https://www.youtube.com/evo)



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U N S U N G



HERO

Overshadowed by the extrovert Countach and built in perishingly small numbers, the little-known Silhouette of 1976 could be the car that saved Lamborghini

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

THE BATHROOM SUITE, resplendent in a shade of sludgy avocado, was probably the thing that most obviously dated the cottage, but the colour scheme in the rest of the rooms was redolent of a different era, too. A Neapolitan theme to interior decorating saw a mocha brown hallway fading into a primrose yellow kitchen, while the floor-to-ceiling pink bedroom was like sleeping inside a marshmallow. The oven next to the steel sink had one of those high grills above the hob and there should have been an Apple II on a desk. If I'd turned on the television (Trinitron, obviously), I would have expected to see Gilles Villeneuve wrestling a 312, or the Jam on *Top of the Pops*.

If you haven't guessed, the first time I set foot in my house five years ago, it really was like stepping back into the 1970s. And when I walked back outside the dilapidated time warp, I wouldn't have been surprised if this Lamborghini Silhouette had been parked up at the kerb. Apart from being in far better condition than the house, it would have fitted in perfectly because I really can't think of a more '70s car.

For a start there is the colour: Rame Colorado simply couldn't be more perfect for the period that gave us *Saturday Night Fever*. And yet perhaps surprisingly, this is the only Silhouette known to have been painted this hue; most were Rosso Siviglia (red) or Bianco Labrador (white). This might also be only the third occasion in the history of the motorcar where gold wheels have looked good. In fact, I would go so far as to say that these are not only some of the best gold (the actual colour is Perlgold, which is German for Pearl Gold) wheels, but just some of the best wheels ever. The way the rears dish so deeply is gorgeous and I love the contrast between the overtly curvaceous



design of the telephone-dial holes and the straight lines on the rest of the car. Campagnolo might be better known for making iconic components for racing bicycles, but these 15-inch alloys must be some of its best work.

The interior is arguably even better. It just needs a glitter ball swinging from the rear-view mirror. But we'll get to that in a minute, because I'm getting ahead of myself. I should really explain what the Silhouette is before we go any further.

The mid-'70s were not the happiest of times for Lamborghini, and indeed 1977, when this car rolled out of Sant'Agata, was a time of distinct unrest for the whole of Italy. The Left were revolting and there were riots as close to home as Bologna, where one man was shot. Perhaps more pertinent to a manufacturer of supercars (although the genre was still in its infancy) was the oil crisis that had hit sales hard.

With all his companies struggling, Ferruccio Lamborghini had sold his final shares in Automobili Lamborghini in 1974, giving control to Georges-Henri Rossetti and René Leimer. Bob Wallace, Lamborghini's famous test driver, had also left in 1975. The product line-up consisted of the Countach and the Urraco (of which more in a moment), neither of which was homologated for the huge US market. In short,

Lamborghini was a small independent company with something of a cash-flow problem.

The board of directors looked at the lucrative targa market being exploited by Porsche and Ferrari in America and decided that they needed to add Lamborghini's first open-top car to the line-up. The obvious car to convert was the Urraco, a 2+2 coupe that had debuted at the Turin motor show in 1970. The Urraco's shape was created by Lamborghini's go-to designer, Marcello Gandini at Bertone, while its sheet-steel platform chassis was built in Modena by Marchesi. The initial Urraco P250 wasn't great, with its L240 transverse V8 feeling underpowered and displaying a propensity for breaking timing belts. However, the subsequent P300 that arrived in 1975 fixed this with a more powerful, 247bhp 3-litre V8 complete with timing chains. This was the engine that would be used for the Silhouette.

Now, it might seem like a relatively short, even cheap development process to simply lop the roof off a Urraco P300, and in some ways it was, as the Urraco chassis didn't need much strengthening, but the Silhouette, or P118 as it was known internally, had a crucial difference. The chassis development was masterminded by Gian Paolo Dallara (who was on the board of Lamborghini) and much of the focus was directed towards the new Pirelli P7 tyre.

Above: mid-engined Silhouette is an incredibly rare sight on the road, and this one generates prodigious grip on its modern Yokohama tyres. **Right:** fabulous interior could only be from the '70s – that it's such a comfortable environment also comes as a surprise



*‘AS IT GOES
PAST THERE’S
SOMETHING OF
THE LOW-FLYING
MUSTANG P-51
ABOUT IT’*

Dallara actually said at the time that the P7 was ‘the greatest single component breakthrough in the history of the car’. The tyre’s new low-profile design allowed a bigger contact patch and larger diameter rims. For comparison, the contemporary LP400 Countach has 215/70 tyres mounted on 14-inch rims at the rear, while the Silhouette (a car much the Countach’s junior) has 285/40 tyres mounted on 15-inch rims.

The distinctive flat-top arches (attached to existing Urraco pressings to save money) were a direct result of the new tyres, as these were not only wider but their low profile also gave the car a significantly different look. Initially the Silhouette, which had MacPherson struts all round, was very sensitive to bump-steer on the new tyres, but modifications were made to the steering arms and the lower suspension arms. The lost ground clearance was also compensated for with spacers above the top mounts. Interestingly, at the same time as Lamborghini and Dallara were developing the Silhouette, they were also creating the BMW M1 around the same P7 tyres (although of a more conservative size). The Silhouette is even named after the Group 5 racing cars Dallara so loved and which the M1 was being designed to compete with.

On 25 September 1976 the first Silhouette was completed, but during its four-year production run just 52 would be built and the company would go into receivership. Prospective



buyers had to be pretty keen on the car, too, as cash-strapped Lamborghini asked them to pay up front. Around 40 are still thought to exist today and this car, one of only two known Silhouettes on the road in the UK, is owned by Richard Head (who also has other interesting things such as a BMW 3.0 CSL). The car originally left the factory about a week before Christmas in 1977 and went to Hubert Hahne, a dealer in Germany. By the mid-'80s, however, it was in a collection in the USA and painted red. It's worth noting that despite the Silhouette being partly built to cash-in on the convertible-hungry American market, the car was never sold over there because the V8 didn't meet Californian emissions regulations – partly explaining the small production run. Anyway, this car was eventually liberated from the collection in 2007 and, via a few other owners, arrived back in the UK in 2010. Richard had it repainted in its original colour earlier this year.

With the grey summer skies threatening but not promising rain, we decide to risk removing the targa top. It's a two-person job, and the single panel goes in a large pouch behind the seats. There is actually a surprising amount of storage space and the boot behind the engine is plenty big enough for a few squashy bags. The door handles are shared with a Fiat X1/9 (the Fiat also had MacPherson struts all round), but to be honest your eyes are looking elsewhere as you get in.

'I assume those aren't really speakers in the headrests of the seats?' I ask Richard incredulously.

'Oh yes they are!' he replies with a grin.

I'm almost tempted to question the identity of the round thing in front of me as I drop down onto the tech-packed driver's seat, because the hugely dished four-spoke steering wheel looks like it's been stretched during the last jump to hyperspace.

Twist the key while holding the throttle open a touch and the



'CRACK OPEN THE THROTTLE LOW DOWN IN SECOND



Right: pop open the rear deck for access to the transversely mounted, 247bhp 3-litre V8 – and the fuel filler, which is perilously close to the engine





OR THIRD GEAR AND YOU GET INSTANT RESPONSE'

engine comes to life. Richard suggests that double declutching might be necessary when things are cold and I give the left-hand pedal a couple of exploratory prods before sliding a small metal barrier across the northwest prong of the open gate and selecting reverse on the dog-leg five-speed 'box. There's plenty of torque from tickover, so manoeuvring is relatively easy, although the big buttresses obscure your rearward vision a bit.

The first few gearchanges are tentative, but the 'box actually proves very sweet, with a lovely positive shift around the gate. The pedals have that pleasing resistance that you no longer find in anything modern, and soon my slight trepidation has melted into a much more relaxed enjoyment of all the weights and sensations. The cabin feels quite comfortably spacious and, despite the roof being off, there is almost no buffeting. So often you get into older cars and feel that a short journey is all that you could manage, but the Silhouette instantly feels like it wants to settle in for a long haul. Undertaking a trip to Le Mans or even further down through France and into Spain feels like something it was born to do.

The biggest surprise is the engine, which is an absolute joy. A 3-litre V8 seems just right somehow: large enough to have decent torque but small enough to rev quickly and sweetly. And that's exactly how it feels. Crack open the throttle low down in second or third gear and you get instant response that then builds and builds with the revs rising so cleanly and quickly

that you feel like it will just keep going. Richard says 7000rpm is where he generally shifts up (500rpm before the limiter), but it's easy to go beyond that if you're not concentrating because there's no sense of the V8 tying up. It's one of the sweetest engines I've ever experienced and a real surprise.

Despite the open roof, the best place to actually hear the engine is from a following car, or standing at the side of the road. In this day and age of manufactured pops and crackles on overrunning engines, it's nice to hear the genuine article. The best sound, however, is when the engine is under load. It has the deep growl of a much larger V8 and there's that slight rawness that you never get with modern cars. If you're on the verge or pavement as it goes past then there's something of the low-flying P-51 Mustang about the experience and you can't help but smile.

The engine is not without its foibles, though, as the row of spare spark plugs in the engine bay attests. Richard says that Lamborghini decided that the cheaper option of providing a place for spare plugs was preferable to building a better, more reliable engine. Of course, the transverse layout means that it's easy enough to change the plugs on the rear bank of the V8, but the ones facing the bulkhead are a bit more of a pain to get at. And while we've got the louvred cover open, you might notice that the fuel filler cap is under here. For a start, this makes it look like you've broken down every time you go to fill up with

Lamborghini Silhouette

Engine V8, 2996cc **Power** 247bhp @ 7500rpm **Torque** 195lb ft @ 3500rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Wheels 8 x 15in front, 11 x 15in rear **Tyres** 195/15 VR15 front, 285/40 VR15 rear **Weight** 1200kg **Power-to-weight** 209bhp/ton
0-60mph 6.4sec (claimed) **Top speed** 162mph+ (claimed) **On sale** 1976-79 **Value today** £150,000+

evo rating: ★★★★★



petrol. It also seems rather inadvisable to have to slosh petrol around quite so near hot metal...

As I increase the pace while repeating a few bends for the sake of Dean Smith's Nikon, it becomes clear that the cornering grip from those big tyres (Yokohama now rather than Pirelli) is prodigious. In fact, it has the sort of tenacity that makes you wonder what would happen if it ever got away from you... I imagine a lot of space would be required. That's not to say you can't finesse the Silhouette through corners, because you can really alter the weighting of the steering depending on how you tackle things, and there is a lovely sense of connection through that slightly bonkers-looking wheel. It all feels remarkably stiff in the body, too.

By today's standards, it's not quick (although all that traction would no doubt help it get close to its claimed 6.4sec 0-60mph time), but the Silhouette is a very lovely thing. I had expected it to be incredibly cool to look at and then rather flimsily disappointing to drive, but that engine is something else, and I could happily imagine taking a Silhouette on a big trip. Perhaps a tour of 1970s architecture...

Valuing the Silhouette is tricky because it's rare that one ever comes up for sale. Richard reckons they are probably similar in value to glassfibre-bodied Ferrari 308s, which would put them at upwards of £150,000. The value that the Silhouette has to Lamborghini, however, is much harder to gauge. Although it had a very limited production run, it brought in much-needed funds during a period so lean that the company eventually went bankrupt. On the far side of that bankruptcy, the Silhouette also provided the basis for the Jalpa, which would help to drag Lamborghini on through the '80s until it was sold to Chrysler. In short, without this car's input it is entirely possible we wouldn't have Lamborghini with us today. ✕

Above: low angle shows just how wide the rear tyres are – wider even than the Countach's of the same period



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ON A BIG
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Big and very brash, the 6-series is back as a factory-developed race car. To discover why it's such a successful GT3 racer, we drive it

by JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY by
ASTON PARROTT

HIT FOR SIX



I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A SUCKER FOR A BIG bruiser of a race car. Be it a Ford Galaxy hoovering up Mini Coopers at Goodwood, Volvo's Flying Brick bouncing off kerbs on two wheels or the Broadspeed Jaguar XJ12C cooking its water-cooled brakes, there's just something irresistible about these massive, incongruous machines. So the BMW M6 GT3 had me from the moment it was launched. When I saw it up close at the Nürburgring earlier this year, the effect multiplied. The sheer scale of it, the side-exit exhausts, the almost rudimentary-looking straight-edged rear diffuser that's so at odds with the smooth, super-inflated shape. It doesn't have the intricate aerodynamic artistry of the Audi R8s against which it competes, but for sheer impact it's unbeatable. I can also tell you that when it's filling your mirrors on the Nordschleife, they're *really* full.

The presence of the M6 GT3 hits even harder when you know you'll get a chance to drive it. When I arrive at the Bilster Berg circuit in Germany there are two M6 GT3s waiting and one of them has my name on it. Well, sort of. The rear quarter window has a Union Jack and 'JET' written beside it, with 'Jethro' just below. I wonder if the new nickname will be quickly revoked after my stints in the M6 GT3. Probably.

So why are we driving it at all? And why is the M6 the chosen model for BMW's international sportscar racing activity? The

first question is pretty easy to answer: because they asked us to and any chance to experience a top-flight factory race car should never be passed up. Aside from the sheer fun they provide, it's fascinating to chart the speed with which their electronics systems evolve and to experience the aerodynamic development, too. The cornering speeds, stability and driveability of these remarkable machines appears to take a great leap with each generation, and as supercars and sports cars slipstream behind on the same rapid path, the GT3 racers give a glimpse of what lies ahead.

But why the M6 when the M3/M4 sells in higher quantities and has a rich motorsport pedigree? Even more tantalising, why not an i8 with a V8? After all, the old Z4 GT3 car used a normally aspirated 4.4-litre V8 derived from the E92 M3 rather than anything seen in the road car.

Well, partly it's because the M4 is already utilised in DTM and the whole BMW i/motorsport relationship is still being thought through, but mostly it's because the M6 is a very good fit for endurance racing. The 'P63' twin-turbo V8 offers strong torque, good efficiency and is very much within its comfort zone in circa-585bhp tune. The long wheelbase ensures predictable handling – crucial for customer racing – and the dimensions also offer a superb platform for aerodynamic development.

It's also quite a nice reminder that the M6 actually exists. The almost forgotten road car is an impressive machine, too. Whenever anyone asks me if they should buy an M4 or Mercedes-AMG C63 Coupe, I always suggest a nearly new M6 is a hell of an alternative.

The M6 GT3 debuted earlier this year and so far the results vindicate the decision to go with the big, unloved coupe. It scored a 1-2-3 at the Nürburgring in VLN 3 and the no. 18 Schubert car led the 24-hour race in the early stages before a spectacular engine failure. Its sister car was taken out on the Sunday morning while in third place. The pain of these

incidents was eased by victory at the 24 Hours of Spa for the no. 99 ROWE Racing M6 GT3 of Maxime Martin, Alexander Sims and Philipp Eng. The M6 GT3 had some highly publicised problems during its development (cooling was an issue and BMW had more than one expensive bonfire), but the result is a car the drivers love and that gets results.

The format for today is simple. Do two stints in an M235i Racing to get a feel for the circuit, then hop in the M6 GT3 for half a dozen laps or so, take a quick peek at the data and then go again for a final stint. I'm relieved to be able to refamiliarise myself with Bilster Berg in the relative sanity of BMW's smaller endurance racer. It's an undulating and unforgiving place, and although somewhat emasculated because we're only running half the circuit, it's still not the place where you'd want to jump blind into an M6 GT3. But after half an hour howling around in the M235i Racing, I feel as confident as is possible when surrounded by race engineers and factory race drivers. Let's put it this way... I don't want to hide in the loo.

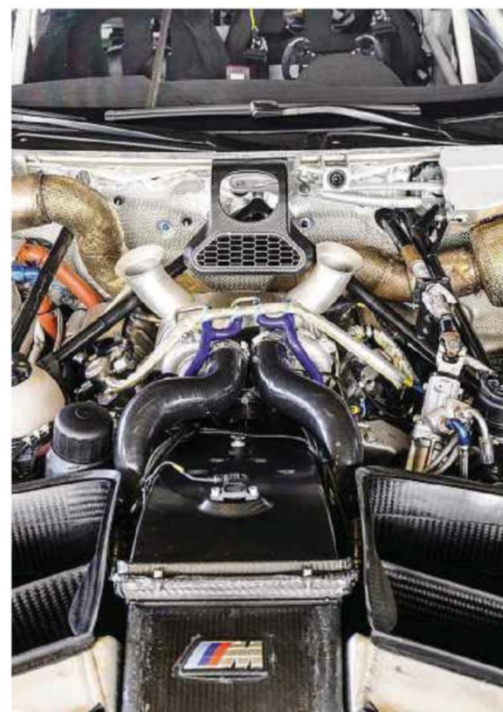
If the exterior is pure brutalism then the inside of the M6 GT3 is strangely beautiful. Open the flyweight carbonfibre door and the roll-cage's tentacles extend almost everywhere, but somehow the sense you get is one of space. There's the most gorgeous carbonfibre steering wheel, a bank of buttons set into a carbon panel to the right of the driver, a deep, high-winged seat and little else. The pedalbox is carbon and looks tiny in the vast footwell, but actually it feels perfectly generous. When you fold yourself behind the wheel and then relax, it's unbelievably comfortable, intuitive and even visibility is decent. You could sit here for a long time without stressing your body at all. It's all strangely becalming.

Flick the ignition switch down on that control panel and then press the standard-issue BMW start/stop button and instantly the calm becomes chaos. The M6 GT3 might have a mighty great 4395cc V8, but

'IT'S AN INCREDIBLY FRIENDLY CAR, BUT TO EXTRACT



Left: M6 GT3 is hard to miss – only the Bentley Continental matches it for size on the grid. **Below:** twin-turbo V8 taken from the road car, though here it's dry-sumped with engine management by Cosworth





BMW M6 GT3

Engine V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo **Power** 585bhp **Transmission** Six-speed sequential transaxle, adjustable differential, ESP
Weight 1300kg **Power-to-weight** 457bhp/ton **0-60mph** 4.0sec (estimated) **Top speed** 185mph (estimated) **Price** €379,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

ALL OF ITS PERFORMANCE REMAINS A MASSIVE LEAP'

with modern race cars the noise on the inside rarely matches the engine configuration. Instead of a bassy, uneven idle, a cacophony of whines and whirs drill into the cabin as diff coolers, fuel pumps and the Ricardo six-speed sequential transaxle compete for the ugliest-noise prize. Give it plenty of revs to avoid the embarrassing stall and then roll away. The almost painful whining increases with speed, but listen carefully and you can just about hear the V8's smooth, deep voice.

It takes less than a lap to realise that the engine's response and linear delivery aids you in so many ways and is a part of a package that feels incredibly natural. But despite pushing out over 500bhp and weighing just 1300kg, the car's straight-line performance is a sideshow to the main event. In fact, such is the traction, grip and braking performance that the power output seems almost disappointing. That's the wrong word because you can't be disappointed when driving this car, but the raw horsepower is certainly put in the shade by the steering response, agility, mid-corner grip and exit traction. And by the braking. The M6 GT3 has incredible stability on the brakes and perfectly tuned ABS, so the way you can drive deep into corners on the brakes, front tyres locked on-line and the rears just starting to push wide but never snapping away, is quite incredible.

Only once do I feel like I've outbraked myself, into the tight, uphill Turn 1 hairpin. I get that heart-thumping 'oh shit, this will be embarrassing' feeling as soon as I hit the brakes at 135mph. The M6, for the first time, starts to move nervously from left to right and the drivetrain chunters as I furiously downshift. I make the turn. Easily, actually, and looking at the data, I could have braked a few metres later and still got the thing slowed down. It's a small but telling insight into getting the very best from a GT3 car at every corner of every stint. The M6 GT3 is an incredibly friendly car, but to extract all of its performance remains a massive leap and the

thought of nailing every braking zone at Spa or the Ring is sobering.

Turns 5 and 6 ram home the point and show off one of the M6's real strengths – high-speed stability. You approach Turn 5 along an undulating straight at 140mph at the top of fourth gear. As the track starts to bend to the left and drop away, you need a sharp stab of brakes and then you roll the car into the turn at what feels like near-suicidal speed. Of course, it snaps onto line without understeer and you're forced against the side bolster of the seat. Hold the throttle steady for a moment and then start to pour all that torque onto the surface as you spot the exit and ride out onto the kerbs. Keep it pinned, upshift to fifth as a blind crest approaches, then brake, turn right and fall into the fast chicane of Turn 6, the track catching you as you do so and allowing full throttle once again. It's a sensational feeling and a demonstration of stability, braking power and aerodynamic balance that's completely addictive and pretty awe-inspiring.

It's difficult to put the M6 GT3's capabilities into perspective, but perhaps a comparison with the P1 GTR does it best. The McLaren has far more power (986bhp) and weighs just 140kg more, yet over the course of a lap on most tracks their performance is almost exactly the same. Just imagine the ground the P1 makes up on the straights (it's also considerably more aerodynamically efficient than a GT3 car) and then contemplate the M6 GT3 eating it up under braking and carrying so much more speed in the corners that it relentlessly makes up that deficit. And the P1 GTR has slick tyres too, don't forget, and produces 660kg of downforce at 150mph. These new GT3 racers really are amazing machines and the M6 GT3 is definitely the most comfortable, polished and easiest to drive of the ones I've been lucky enough to experience. It also makes me think that an M6 GTS road car could be very, very exciting. And another great reminder that the M6 exists at all. ☒

MAZDA MX-5 v FIAT 124 SPIDER

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

P L A T F O R M



S O U L S

They share much of their architecture, yet go their own way with styling, engines and suspension tune. But which is the more rewarding roadster, Mazda's MX-5 or the new Fiat 124 Spider?





‘IN THE MX-5 YOU’VE GOT TIDY,
ENTERTAINING, SLOW-SPEED OVERSTEER
ON TAP WHENEVER YOU FEEL THE URGE’





ONCE UPON A TIME, small two-seater sports cars were the proud preserve of British and European marques. From the delectable Lotus Elan, gutsy six-cylinder Triumph TRs and fruity-sounding MGBs to the exquisite, exotic Spiders from Alfa Romeo and Fiat, relatively affordable roadsters were thick on the ground. Then along came the hot hatch, at which point enthusiasts rapidly fell for a new breed of performance car. One that offered weekday practicality and weekend fun in one neat, reliable package. The world, it seemed, had fallen out of love with the roadster.

Then along came Mazda with the MX-5, a car that rekindled the romance of affordable, open-top sports cars so successfully it rapidly became the world's biggest-selling roadster, with more than a million cars built since 1989. Fast-forward to 2016 and the story has come full circle, with the European-inspired MX-5 spawning a new Japanese-built Fiat 124 Spider built on the same platform but using an Italian engine. You really couldn't make it up.

Whether or not this global brand and engineering mash-up jars your sensibilities will depend on how fondly you regard Fiat. If your knowledge of this proud Italian brand extends far enough back to recall the rorty twin-cam 131 Mirafiori, Strada Abarth or original 124 Coupe and Spider, the thought of a Fiat made

in Hiroshima is all wrong. Then again, if you're happy to think of your iPhone as the product of California when it's actually made in China, perhaps a Japanese Fiat matters not one jot.

Whatever, there's considerable irony in the fact the MX-5 is the more authentic car, but that authenticity is richly deserved, for it was Mazda's commitment and foresight in recreating the classic two-seater drop-top that reminded European marques of the heritage and legacies they squandered.

Given the unexpected and most likely inconvenient union of Fiat and Mazda (at least from a marketing perspective), it's perhaps inevitable – or even essential – that from the outside you'd barely know these two cars are related, such is the stark difference in styling. Where the Mazda is a clean, compact collection of crisp lines and tight curves, the Fiat is a more traditional and, sadly, rather slabby shape. It looks back longingly to Fiat's past glories, and to its far prettier forebear, whereas the Mazda confidently fixes its gaze on the future. Each to their own, of course, but to our eyes it's the Japanese car that looks more cohesive.

Inside, the two are almost indistinguishable, both sharing the same dashboard and instruments, not to mention the same windscreen and roof mechanism. It's a functional, comfortable place to be. Neat analogue dials are easy to read and suit the simple sports car recipe, while the roof is an absolute cinch to drop or raise. So easy, in



Top left: the MX-5 gets a limited-slip differential as standard (the Fiat does without), and as a result is much more of a precision tool beyond the limit of grip. **Left:** the Mazda's cabin is compact but comfortable



‘THE FIAT STEERS CLEANLY THROUGH
FASTER CURVES, BUT THE LACK OF FRONT-
END BITE LIMITS YOUR OPTIONS’



Above: thanks to turbocharging, the Fiat's performance is a little more accessible, but it doesn't take to fooling about as readily as its Japanese twin. **Left:** cabin is all but identical to the MX-5's, bar the badges and, in this case, leather in a more Italianesque hue

fact, that you can do it with one hand from the driver's seat. Simply unclip the single latch on the windscreen header, throw back the roof and push down until it clicks securely into place, or to raise, just release the retaining lock, pull the roof up and over your head, pop the hooked latch into the header rail and push the over-centre handle until it clicks. In an age of unnecessary complexity, this brilliantly simple manual mechanism is a welcome antidote. It also helps keep the weight of these two pared-back roadsters to a ton or thereabouts, which brings its own reward out on the road.

As you'd expect, much of the pair's hardware is shared – gearbox, brakes and basic suspension – but when it comes to engines they couldn't be more different. While Mazda sticks to its old-school guns with a naturally aspirated 2-litre in-line four-cylinder unit (a less powerful 1.5-litre four is also available), Fiat has elected to go with its turbocharged 1.4-litre MultiAir motor. The on-paper outputs of each are equally different – the Mazda good for 158bhp and 147lb ft of torque compared with 138bhp and 177lb ft for the Fiat – yet the claimed performance figures are extremely close, the MX-5 managing to hit 62mph in 7.3sec and a top speed of 133mph versus the Fiat's 7.5sec and 134mph. A well-matched pair, then.

I start with the Mazda, both because the MX-5 is the established class leader and because I've heard so many good things about this latest, Mk4 model yet have spent very little time with one prior to this test. It's fair to say the MX-5 is a divisive car amongst enthusiasts. Some are passionate to the point of evangelism, others are so disparaging that you question whether they actually enjoy driving at all. Personally, I've always sat somewhere

in between, enjoying the simplicity and purity of the previous generations (and trying not to fall into the trap of fixating on its relative lack of straight-line performance) yet readily acknowledging that a similarly priced hot hatch offers far more pace and intensity.

It's a warm day, so the first thing I do is drop the roof. Not much point having a soft-top car if you're not going to enjoy the fresh air, is there? The engine starts with an encouraging rasp before settling into an unassuming idle. All the controls are light, but once you get your head around the lack of weight, you also appreciate there's a welcome amount of feel, together with an energy and effervescence that pervades the whole car. The lack of mass is immediately evident, the MX-5 responding well to steering and throttle inputs without being aggressive or sharp-edged in any way.

The engine enjoys being revved, which is just as well, for you need to work it reasonably hard if you're to bring the MX-5 to life. That's not to say it's unhappy when asked to pull a higher gear at lower revs – the engine is smooth, tractable and happy to lug – but the fizz and fun comes between 5000 and 7000rpm. This is where you'll feel the car really come to life: the engine sounds more purposeful, the gearshifts snap home with more conviction and the whole car really begins to sing. It's as infectious as you'd hope.

The chassis is equally adept at raising its game and drawing you in with modest grip levels and damping supple enough to work on bumpy roads (even with the upgraded suspension, including Bilstein dampers, of the Sport Nav trim level, as fitted here). This ensures you can enjoy the car and exploit its performance most of the time. It's not remotely aggressive setup-

wise, but it has that special something that only a well-sorted rear-wheel-drive car can give: the clarity of uncorrupted steering, an even division of labour between each end of the car, and a delicate, readily exploitable balance.

It's swift enough on the straights, but you need to point it at some corners to discover what the MX-5 is all about. If you're new to rear-wheel drive, it'll take you a while to gain the confidence to chuck the Mazda around. Likewise, if you're more used to powerful rear-wheel-drive machinery with enough grunt to slide on throttle application alone then you too will need to learn some new tricks. Funnily enough, it requires a mix of front- and rear-drive skills to get the most from the MX-5: a lift on turn-in to get some forward weight transfer and agitate the tail, then some measured throttle work to sustain the slide. It's at this stage that the 2-litre MX-5's standard-fit limited-slip diff becomes your best friend, for it gives you finer control and precision. Then all you need to do is apply some corrective lock with the well-judged steering (2.5 turns lock-to-lock) and you've got tidy, entertaining slow-speed oversteer on tap whenever you feel the urge.

At higher speeds the MX-5 is reassuringly neutral. It flows freely along bumpy roads, absorbing lumps and cambers that would deflect a more firmly suspended car. You feel connected to the car but not distracted by the road beneath it. In the higher gears you can thread it through sweeps and kinks with a gentle squeeze of the steering wheel, enjoying the way it readily settles into an unfussed flow. Simple pleasures, but ones you don't need exceptional roads, skills or excessive speeds to enjoy.

Step from the Mazda towards the Fiat and the first thing that strikes you is how much





bigger and heavier it looks. In profile it's thick round the middle with excessive overhangs, while from head-on its headlights look too far apart. Once behind the wheel you get that MX-5 level of intimacy – and frustration at a non-adjustable steering column – but the view out over the huge, table-like bonnet reinforces the sense you're in a bigger car.

In common with the latest breed of turbocharged small-capacity in-line fours, the 124 Spider's 1.4-litre MultiAir engine belies its lack of displacement with surging low-rev torque, which peaks at just 2250rpm. Mated to the shared, sweet-shifting six-speed manual transmission, it makes for easy progress as you stroke through the gears. Unfortunately, the flipside is a rather one-dimensional engine that feels a bit soft-edged in the mid-range and lacks the Mazda's appetite for revs. It never feels or sounds like it works towards a crescendo, so you don't form much in the way of an emotional bond with the car. It's workmanlike and just a little bit dull, when it should be full of zing.

Chassis-wise there are equally significant differences, the Fiat feeling the softer and less biddable machine. It flows well enough and steers cleanly through faster curves, but in tighter corners where, let's face it, you'll want to feel like you're in a rear-wheel-drive car, the Spider runs out of ideas. It's the lack of front-end bite that limits your options. That and the absence of the MX-5's limited-slip diff. Where you can place the Mazda with precision and tease its trajectory into entertaining angles, the

‘NEITHER CAR IS A TEN-TENTHS HOOLIGAN, BUT THE MAZDA WILL RAISE ITS GAME’

Fiat feels reluctant to stray from a resolutely neutral-to-understeer stance, even with a more generous reserve of torque to test the rear tyres' purchase on the tarmac.

The harder you push, the more stubbornly it settles. Indeed, the only way to induce any kind of rear-end slip is to lob the Fiat into the corner (preferably in second gear) and make oafish applications of throttle. It's a hit-and-miss process that only serves to highlight the 124's lack of enthusiasm for the kind of hijinks the MX-5 happily delivers.

Neither car is a ten-tenths hooligan, but the Mazda will raise its game and still deliver some sparkle at eight or nine tenths. The Fiat feels like a six- or seven-tenths car, more of a cruiser, which is a shame and something of a missed opportunity, for surely the intention of this car is to remind enthusiasts of what past

generations of motoring journalists used to describe as 'Italian brio'.

It's true both these cars stray from *evo's* hardcore heartland, but that's the point of them. That's also why, when presented with a mild-mannered rear-drive two-seater, those of us weaned on *Gran Turismo* immediately stray towards thoughts of stiffer suspension and a bit more power. Yet if you can fight those urges and take a step back, you'll appreciate the brilliance of a basic recipe that's brimming with promise. One which allows you to shed all the baggage, frustration and weight of expectation that comes with driving faster and more aggressive high-performance cars and replaces it with a blend of modest power, sweet balance and supple suspension that delivers a different kind of connection. Fun without the jeopardy.

Sadly, despite sharing many of the same ingredients, only one of these cars delivers on that promise. That car is the MX-5. It's more energetic, boasts the more memorable, responsive and potent engine, and has that limited-slip diff which really brings the chassis to life when you push that little bit harder. And, while styling is subjective, the Fiat's bulky profile and wide-set headlights are clumsy compared with the lithe MX-5's compact, clean and contemporary shape. The Mazda looks and feels like the definitive affordable roadster where the Fiat merely seems derivative and a bit half-hearted. Proof that when it comes to the world's favourite sportscar, ubiquity doesn't have to mean mediocrity. ☒

Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Nav

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc
CO2 161g/km

Power 158bhp @ 6000rpm

Torque 147lb ft @ 4600rpm

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

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

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

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

Wheels 7 x 17in front and rear

Tyres 205/45 R17 front and rear

Weight 1000kg

Power-to-weight 161bhp/ton

0-62mph 7.3sec (claimed)

Top speed 133mph (claimed)

Basic price £23,695

On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

Fiat 124 Spider

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1368cc, turbo
CO2 148g/km

Power 138bhp @ 5000rpm

Torque 177lb ft @ 2250rpm

Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, ESC

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

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

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

Wheels 7 x 17in front and rear

Tyres 205/45 R17 front and rear

Weight 1050kg

Power-to-weight 134bhp/ton

0-62mph 7.5sec (claimed)

Top speed 134mph (claimed)

Basic price £19,545

On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★



40 YEARS OF AUDI FIVE-CYLINDER ENGINES

FAMOUS



by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDY MORGAN



FIVE

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Audi's glorious relationship with the in-line five. We chart the alliance and drive its latest beneficiary – the 394bhp, £51,800 TT RS



From top: Sport Quattro S1's engine made around 470bhp; carbonfibre timing-belt case for the 710bhp IMSA GTO engine (also pictured right); the lightweight camshaft from the new TT RS; and the 315bhp unit from the RS2, co-developed with Porsche



STANDING IN ONE OF THE pit garages at Jarama Circuit, near Madrid – location for the launch of the new TT RS – there is a display of various engine parts for the latest Audi five-cylinder engine, demonstrating just how the company has cut 26kg from the unit's weight (it saved 18kg with a new, aluminium crankcase). Behind it is a pictorial timeline taking the viewer through 40 years of Audi in-line fives.

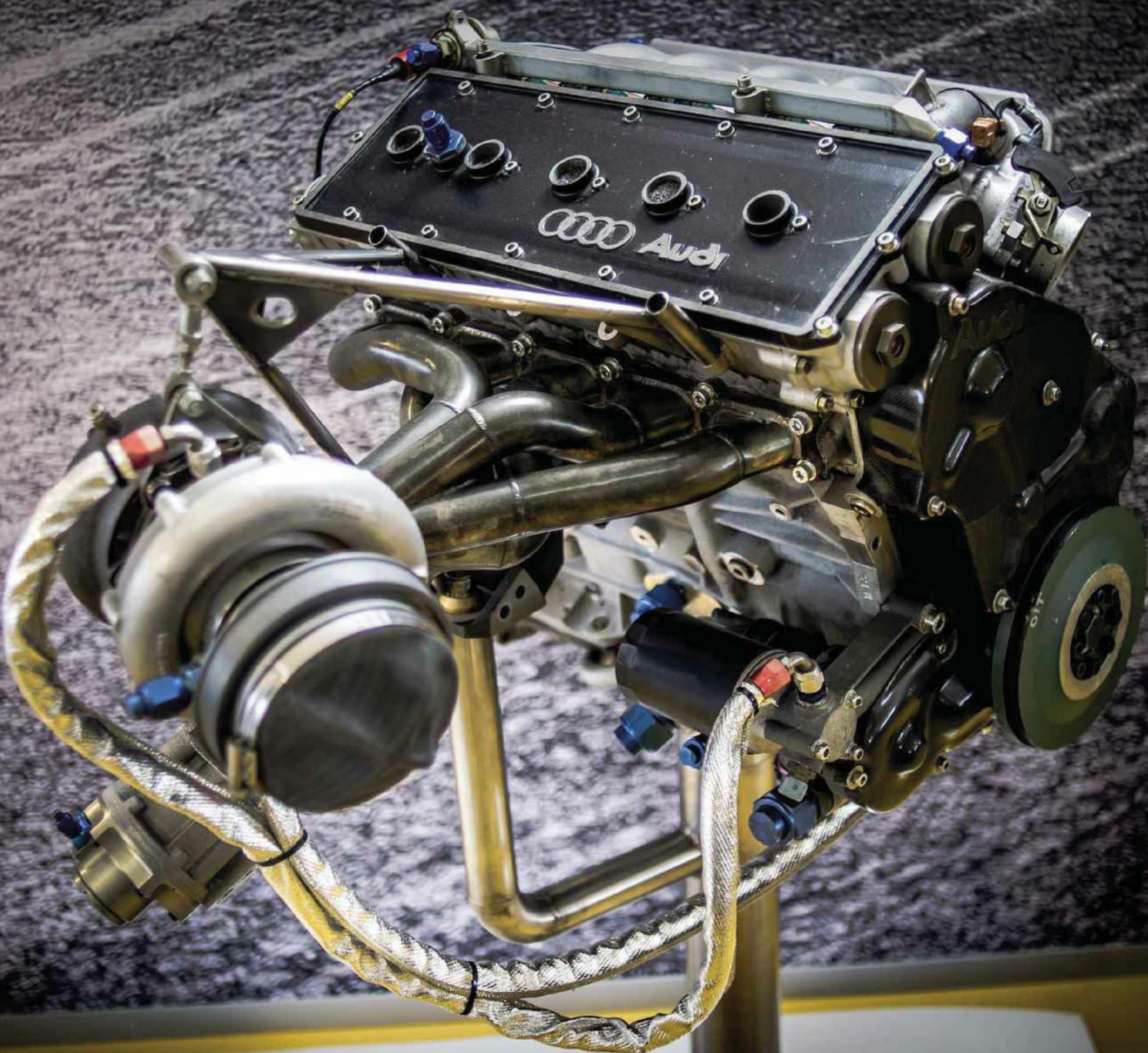
'I had one of those as my first car,' says a voice behind me. It's Stephan Reil, the amiable head of Quattro GmbH and therefore the man in charge of Audi's RS models. He's pointing at the Audi 100 way over on the left-hand side of the chronologically ordered photos. He tells me that although the engine was good, the three-speed auto gearbox it was attached to was terrible. Nonetheless, I can imagine how much the 18-year-old Reil would have appreciated having this impressive car to run around in, the quintet of pots doing just what Audi intended and lifting it above all the four-cylinders in status.

Mercedes actually put a five-cylinder engine into a production car two years before Audi, and Lancia had a five-cylinder engine in a truck back in the 1930s, but those were both diesels; Audi was the first to bring a petrol five-cylinder engine to market. The main reason that this configuration hadn't been used before this was the difficulty of getting the fuel into the cylinders with carburettors. Use one carb and the outer cylinders would be much further away than the middle cylinders, meaning uneven fuelling. Use two carbs and things were equally tricky because one carb would be supplying three cylinders and the other only two. Diesel engines obviously don't suffer from this issue as they have always used fuel injection, but it wasn't until fuel injection in petrol cars became more widespread in the 1970s that the petrol five-cylinder became a more viable option.

Audi was looking at a five- or six-cylinder engine to take its cars upmarket and a six was deemed too bulky (plus the competition in Munich had rather made the straight-six its own). The new 2.1-litre naturally aspirated five-cylinder unit was based on the EA 827 four-cylinder (that had already appeared in the Audi 80 and Audi 100) and arrived in the Audi 100 5E in 1977, putting out 134bhp. A naturally aspirated diesel followed in 1978, but things really got interesting a year later when the first turbocharged five-cylinder petrol arrived.

With 168bhp and 195lb ft, the Audi 200 5T was initially the top model, but then came the Ur-Quattro. From here we have the line of legendary rally cars that everyone is familiar with, from the 300bhp car that Hannu Mikkola piloted to a win in Sweden in '81 to the mighty Sport Quattro S1 (E2) that Walter Röhrl took up Pikes Peak in 1987. There were the racing cars, too, most notably the incredible IMSA GTO, which produced 710bhp from not much more than two litres.

On the road there was the wonderful RS2, but after that the five-cylinder largely faded from Audi's line-up until 2009.



**‘THINGS REALLY GOT INTERESTING
WHEN THE FIRST TURBOCHARGED
FIVE-CYLINDER ARRIVED’**



Above: RS gets a 10mm drop in ride height, and while magnetic dampers are an option, the passive setup is impressive enough in its own right. **Right:** five-cylinder engine is of course a highlight, but so is the R8-style cabin

In the interim there was, of course, the rather lovely Volvo/Ford in-line five, which kept the fire burning. When a five-cylinder re-emerged in an Audi, it did so under the bonnets of the TT RS, RS3 and RS Q3 and the engine has since gone on to win seven consecutive Engine of the Year awards.

But what makes a five-cylinder attractive to a manufacturer? Well, if there was a marketing department for fives, it would tell you that they are smoother than fours but not as bulky as sixes. Which is largely true. The reason a five is smoother than a four is all to do with secondary-order vibrations (feel free to skip to a couple of paragraphs at this point). A four-stroke engine fires all the cylinders once in every 720 degrees of rotation of the crank. In a four-cylinder engine that means four powerstrokes, and 720 divided by four equals 180, which means there is a powerstroke within every 180-degree rotation of the crank. A powerstroke can last no longer than 180 degrees, so if there is an even firing order, there can be no overlap between powerstrokes. Intuitively this sounds like something that should be balanced, but because the acceleration of a piston is greater

**‘YOU MIGHT SAY
THAT MATCHING
A FERRARI 458
IS NOTHING
UNUSUAL THESE
DAYS, BUT THIS
IS AN AUDI TT’**

at top-dead-centre than bottom-dead-centre, they don't cancel each other out in the way you might expect.

Add an extra cylinder, though, and there is now a powerstroke every 144 degrees, meaning there's overlap between the power phases. Basically the crank is always under load, so the engine runs more smoothly. There are still primary-order imbalances – those caused by forces that occur once per rotation of the crankshaft – but these are countered with weights on either end of the crankshaft. A firing order of 1-2-4-5-3 also produces the least primary imbalance, so is the one preferred in road cars.

Of course, the most common reason for people falling in love with the five-cylinder engine over the last 40 years is because of the sound. Whether it's a Quattro ripping through a gravel stage or an RS2 starting up in the street, a five produces as distinctive a war cry as any engine, and Audi plays it to perfection. Apparently the sound can be represented by the musical interval 5:2, but that really is beyond my understanding.

Perhaps with all the downsizing of engines that is going on, we will see more five-cylinders appearing in performance cars. I certainly hope so, but I suspect whatever they appear in, the first instinct on hearing a five-cylinder burst into life will be to think it is an Audi. Anyway, now to find out what that latest, lightest five-cylinder turbo is like...

LEFT FOOT ON THE BRAKE PEDAL. DRIVE SELECT mode to Dynamic, gearbox and ESP in Sport. You can probably guess what's going to happen next. Press the throttle pedal all the way through the kickdown button to the carpet. Hear the revs rise and then settle at 3500rpm with a rapid-fire pulse reminiscent of a WRC car as the clock counts down at a stage start. Brace head against headrest. Sidestep the brake pedal.

Corks out of bottles, stabbed rats, Dennis the Menace's catapult: all the usual similes apply as the TT RS launches itself from its coiled position on the start/finish straight at Jarama. There is the faintest scrap of wheelspin, just a few degrees of useless rotation on one, maybe two of the wheels, but otherwise all 354lb ft is deployed without fuss. And around three-and-a-half seconds later, the car is travelling at a mile a minute. The





Left: cross-country pace has always been the forte of the TT RS, but this one takes things to extraordinary new levels. Has Audi managed to bring out the entertainer in the TT, though?

app that is loaded into the car actually registers a 0-100kph time of 3.4sec, which is astonishing. You might say that matching a Ferrari 458 is nothing unusual these days, with 911 Turbos popping out sub-three-second times with the regularity of a teenager posting on Instagram, but this is an Audi TT. Yes it's the £52,000, top-of-the-range TT, but it's a TT nonetheless.

For some, that sort of acceleration will be enough of a lure. But for others it's almost an irrelevance if the car does nothing interesting in a corner. Later we'll come back to the circuit that saw Gilles Villeneuve's last victory, but for now we're heading to the spectacular roads around the El Atazar Dam about an hour north of Madrid. The journey on the dual carriageway gives a chance to appreciate the very red but very beautifully appointed interior of our car. If you simply held the flat-bottomed steering wheel with its red start/stop button and looked through the upper portion at the virtual cockpit screen then you could be in an R8, such are the similarities. One thing that does need to go, however, is the gear selector, which looks at least ten years out of date. Audi will allow you to lose the fixed rear wing if you

**'GET ON THE
POWER EARLY
AND YOU CAN
FEEL THE REAR
SQUAT AND A
SUBTLE CHANGE
IN BALANCE'**

want (replacing it with an automatically extending item) and I spend some miles pondering whether this might give the TT RS the same attractively understated aggression as a 911 R.

When we're off the slip road and heading towards the dam, the traffic disappears, as do all idle thoughts of rear-wing deletion. Press the exhaust button and the engine goes from unobtrusive to pleasingly present, though it wakes up automatically if you scroll from Comfort through Auto to Dynamic on the Driver Select modes. For the first time, switching to Dynamic also changes the way torque is shuffled around by the quattro system, with more impetus going to the rear.

If the TT RS felt fast executing a standing start, it arguably feels even faster point-to-point down a twisting piece of road. The steering isn't brimming with feedback and I would even like a little more weight, but the accuracy of it inspires huge confidence. Likewise the grip that the RS displays just seems to encourage you to drive it harder and harder. After a ten-mile unbroken run, it's hard to imagine what sort of car would have been able to stick with the relentless pace of the little Audi. A measure of just how hard the car has been driven comes from the smell and sound of the brakes, which despite having optional carbon-ceramic discs at the front, clamped by imposing eight-piston calipers, have started to wilt a little.

As an option you can also specify adjustable Magnetic Ride dampers, but I'd be more than happy to stick with the standard passive setup that's on our test car. It doesn't crash or jitter over imperfections at low speed, but rather retains a pleasing sense of travel. Just enough roll and pitch is retained to give the driver a satisfying sense of how the car is behaving, too.

The initial reaction of the front end as you turn into corners is better than any other TT that I can remember, no doubt helped by having less weight slung ahead of the front wheels. Equally impressive is the unwavering traction out of corners, which means you simply deploy maximum force on every exit. Ironically, as we near the dam, with its unfinished bridge jutting out like a prop from a film set, there's a Nissan 200SX practising some drifting on a hairpin.

Perhaps surprisingly, you really need to keep on top of the

RS's engine. It sounds torquey low down, but it really needs to be above 4000rpm to provide the response that you expect. Luckily, the seven-speed dual-clutch S-tronic 'box makes life fairly easy in this regard, and although a manual would be nice, the efficiency of the paddleshift suits the character of the car.

And it's a wilder character that the handling balance is really lacking. What happens between the turn-in phase and the acceleration phase of the corner is where the TT still feels frustratingly one-dimensional. Turn in hard with the brake-based torque vectoring assisting and there is a sense that the rear is beginning to edge round nicely, pointing the car tightly in towards the apex, but the car never allows this to blossom and always reverts to a nose-led attitude. Similarly, if you get on the power early in a corner you can feel the rear squat and you can sense a subtle balance change, but the chassis never allows you to really open the steering early or feel like the throttle is something you can change the angle of the car with.

Back at the circuit, the RS feels delightfully nimble through the more flowing corners, jinking lightly between the kerbs of

the quick Ascari chicane and inspiring confidence through the fast Varzi right-hander. Mostly, however, it remains a paragon of speed through stability.

I actually enjoy the TT RS most when I'm not driving flat-out. For a start, when you're not eking the last tenths from the tyres, you can more readily revel in the terrific sound from that five-cylinder (perhaps the TT RS Roadster is the one to have...). The deep warble that rises to something harder but still distinctive as it homes in on 7000rpm is a major reason to favour this car over a four-cylinder Cayman. The trouble is that the TT RS always feels bursting with energy, so you really want to drive it hard. And while it would certainly be wrong to blithely brand it with the 'boring Audi understeer' badge, it's simply not as balanced and beguiling in the corners as the Porsche. I can't help feeling that it's tantalisingly close to being really engaging and that a proper torque-vectoring rear diff like the one in the Focus RS would help. If it could unlock the attitude that the TT RS so nearly has then it would turn it into a real hero car, like many of its five-cylinder ancestors. ✕

Audi TT RS

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbocharged

CO2 189g/km

Power 394bhp @ 5850-7000rpm

Torque 354lb ft @ 1700-5850rpm

Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, four-wheel drive, Torsen differential (rear), ESC

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

Rear suspension Four-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated carbon-ceramic front discs (option), 370mm, solid cast-iron rear discs, 310mm, ABS, EBD

Wheels 19in front and rear

Tyres 245/35 R19 front and rear

Weight 1440kg

Power-to-weight 272bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.7sec (claimed)

Top speed 155mph (limited; 174mph optional)

Basic price £51,800

On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★



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**THIS
MONTH**

CATERHAM SEVEN 420R // **MAZDA** MX-5 // **MINI** JCW CHALLENGE // **JAGUAR** F-TYPE R AWD //
AUDI RS6 PERFORMANCE // **VAUXHALL** VXR8 GTS // **HONDA** CIVIC TYPE R // **PORSCHE** 911 SC //
NISSAN JUKE NISMO RS // **BMW** E46 M3 // **VW** GOLF R // **BENTLEY** CONTINENTAL GT V8 S

NEW ARRIVAL

McLaren 675LT Spider

Arguably the greatest
convertible car currently
in production arrives
on the Fast Fleet





C COLLECTING THE McLaren 675LT Spider was the most excited I have been about picking up a new car since the arrival of the Ferrari F40 back in 2006. And where the McLaren P1 was a major, serious acquisition, the 675LT falls far more into the 'fun' column.

The configuration we decided upon is anything but subtle, combining rather bright Tarocco Orange paintwork with an orgy of carbonfibre. As our 675LT Spider will see far more road than track use, we opted for the more comfortable electric heated seats, electric steering column adjustment, the vehicle lift (for speed bumps) and the full leather interior. I would have preferred to tick the box for racing buckets, but Mrs SSO was fairly prescriptive when it came to the seats, referencing a not-so-pleasant ten hours she once spent in the F40...

Having owned several McLarens now, the question is, where does this one fit in the line-up? I've heard it said that the LT (which, to recap, has 666bhp and 516lb ft) is on a par with the P1 for real-world pace, so on day two of ownership, I drove them back-to-back.

'It feels much more useable than the P1 and doesn't have the same intimidation factor'

The 675LT is very, very good. Performance is immense and quite accessible – it feels much more useable than the P1 and doesn't have the same intimidation factor. Where the P1 separates, though, is in its ability to warp time and rearrange your brain cells. The way it moves, reacts to inputs, and sounds is unique. That having been said, there is something about the 675LT that puts a smile on my face every time I drop into the driver's seat. When I take the P1 out, I always map in advance where I will be going. Every drive is very much planned. My time with the LT so far has been much more spontaneous – we just get in and go!

The difference between the 650S and the 675LT is actually what I found to be more surprising, given that they share so much.

Unlike the Maranello specials, the 675LT does not feel like a 650S that has been turned up to 11 and had the carpets ripped out. It feels like a completely re-engineered car. The powerband is very different, the engine revs more freely and the handling is sharper and more responsive. Overall, the 675LT is a more focused driving machine, which is hugely impressive given how competent the 650S already is.

Our plans for the 675LT Spider are a bit different from the rest of the fleet. It will be living up north in ski country, close to several of the best driving roads in the US. Its destiny for the next several years is long weekend-morning drives across the mountains on roads it is designed to devour. The big debate right now is do we drive it the 1600 miles up north or ship it and save the wear on the crappy interstate highways? ✕

Secret Supercar Owner
(@SupercarOwner)

Date acquired	September 2016
Total mileage	364
Mileage this month	324
Costs this month	\$0
mpg this month	16.0

Caterham Seven 420R

Sevens usually take trackdays in their stride. So what have we done to deserve this?

R RECENT EXPOSURE TO Caterham's new Seven 310R (Driven, *evo* 227)

has helped confirm that the spec of our Caterham is close to perfect. If you're going to endure the 'quirks' of a Caterham – the impracticality, an interior designed for people without elbows, the overall kit-car vibe – then you don't want to feel short-changed in terms of performance. But although Caterham has billed the 310R as the sweet spot of its range, its abundance of grip with only the performance of the 152bhp 1.6-litre motor means it just isn't as exciting or as involving as our ballistic 210bhp, 2-litre 420R.

The 420R's individual throttle bodies make a noise appropriate for a performance four-cylinder, too. The wailing induction note overwhelms the rear-exit exhaust

Mazda MX-5

The Mk4 MX-5 isn't the complete package, reckons web editor Skipworth, but it's pretty darned close

A ANOTHER TRACKDAY THIS month saw the MX-5 doing its lightweight thing just as well as it has always done. Amazingly, despite nearly four hours of track time with just a few relatively short rests, the brakes held up excellently. I've no doubt that this is due to the MX-5 weighing just 1000kg, making it one of the lighter production cars you can take to a track.

A knock-on effect of this is that I've become obsessed with the idea of driving lightweight sports cars. With my E46 M3 out of action for some



'As the 420R accelerated onto a straight there was a bang so severe I could feel it with my feet'

brilliantly. The 310R's more modest engine and side-pipe mean all you hear is characterless exhaust noise.

The 420R was in its element at a recent *evo* track evening. Jethro entertained a few readers with passenger rides and upset a few people in more expensive, but ultimately slower machinery. Towards the end of the session I took the Caterham out and for the first half-lap it felt as at home

as it always does. However, as I accelerated onto the back straight there was a bang so severe I could feel it with my feet. Then smoke billowed from the engine bay. I carefully pulled over, knowing there'd be a bunch of cars I'd just overtaken that now wouldn't be able to see much through the cloud of burnt oil.

The car hadn't burnt all the oil, though, as it had also left a trail down the straight and was still

dripping once I'd stopped. Game over. A hole in the block indicated big trouble, and Caterham is now investigating what went wrong. ✕

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)

Date acquired	August 2015
Total mileage	6334
Mileage this month	91
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	n/a

time (see last month's Fast Fleet), an Elise has become tempting. Then again, the MX-5 has started to feel like all the car I could ever need. Well, almost. One issue that has come to light at trackdays is that while the MX-5 loves to rev, the way it makes its power at the top end of the range means I'm sometimes left wanting a few more revs to play with. Maybe it's bad driving on my part, but I've found myself needing to change up on corner exits more often than I'd like.

But the Mk4 MX-5 still feels just a few small steps away from true greatness. Now, after thousands of road miles and several trackdays, I have arrived at a shopping list for my dream MX-5: I'm happy with the Dunlop Sport Maxx RT2 tyres, but just a little more power, some stiffer anti-roll bars and a slightly more exciting exhaust and I really can't see myself wanting any more car. I must

'After thousands of road miles and several trackdays, I have arrived at a shopping list for my dream MX-5'

pay a visit to tuner BBR to try one of its Mk4 MX-5s. I have a feeling they might be utterly brilliant. ✕

Hunter Skipworth
(@HunterSkipworth)

Date acquired	October 2015
Total mileage	12,141
Mileage this month	686
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	26.9



Mazda MX-5 160PS



WWW.TOURIFOTOS.DE

Below: a few clockwise clicks to firm up the JCW Challenge's adjustable Nitron dampers before its workout on the undulating Nordschleife (left)



Mini JCW Challenge

Hardcore hot hatch drives 500 miles to hardcore racetrack. A match made in heaven? Or a journey from hell?

I I'M DETERMINED THAT our Mini John Cooper Works Challenge will be used exactly as its maker intended, which explains why it spent its first weekend in my care at the Nürburgring. Staff writer Will Beaumont, a couple of friends and I had planned a weekend trip to the Ring, which seemed like the right way to introduce the Challenge to life on *evo's* Fast Fleet.

With the car's adjustable Nitron dampers set to their softest mode, we hacked down to the Channel Tunnel from London late on Friday morning, crossed at lunchtime and settled into the long schlep through Belgium. We managed a full 40 minutes before Will wanted to stop for an ice cream.

The Challenge is a stiff car even with its dampers in their softest setting, so I was curious to see how it would deal with a really long journey. The ride is jiggly, no doubt,

but I don't think it's unreasonable for a car that's designed to perform on circuit.

Having crossed over the border into Germany – many snack and toilet stops later – I did the polite thing and went for a top-speed run. The Autobahn was busy, but after a few aborted runs I did see 150mph flash up on the digital speedo. Pretty impressive for a small hatchback, I reckon, and the guys in the Honda Civic Type R behind us said the Challenge pulled surprisingly hard over 100mph.

The next morning we got to the circuit in good time for the start of the 'tourist' session. The Nordschleife is famously bumpy for a racetrack, so rather than going into full track mode with the dampers, I went ten clicks firmer at the front and 15 firmer at the rear (each damper has 26 clicks from full soft to full hard).

I always feel tense with excitement



'The guys in the Honda Civic Type R behind us said the Challenge pulled surprisingly hard over 100mph'

whenever I head out onto the Ring. There's nothing quite like it, but on this occasion the traffic was so heavy that my laps were fairly stop-start. When the circuit was clear, however, the Challenge was really good fun. It has the pointy, agile balance and resolute front-end grip that a hot hatch needs in order to be entertaining on circuit, without ever being unpredictable or unsettling.

I'm not sure there's a sterner test of a performance car than a road trip to the Nürburgring. The long drive there and back and the challenging nature of the circuit demand such disparate capabilities, but I'm pleased to report the Mini JCW Challenge did us proud. **X**

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Date acquired	July 2016
Total mileage	3200
Mileage this month	1840
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	30.3

Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD

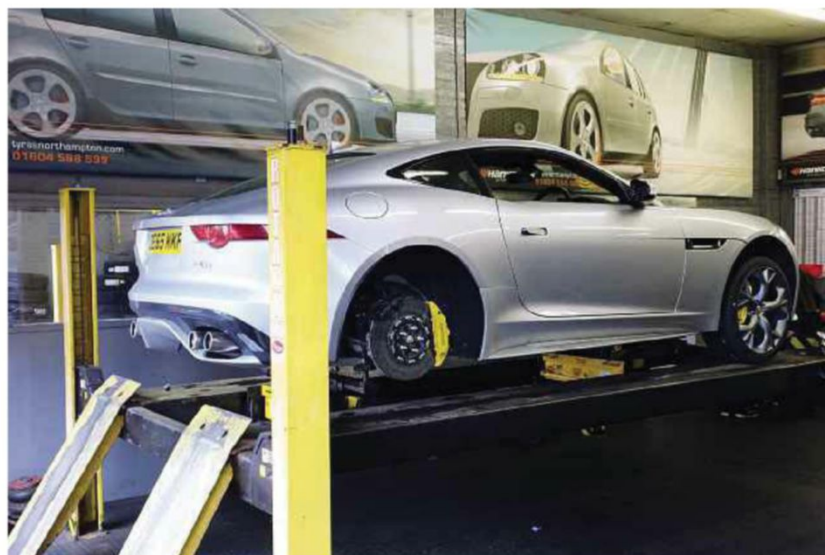
Sporting superficial war wounds and desperate for new tyres, the Jag was in need of considerable TLC

YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. You lend someone a book and it comes back with the corners of pages turned down. A neighbour borrows the lawnmower and returns it with the cambers all out. It's devastating, but being British means that you can't say anything. You internally seethe whilst thanking them profusely and asking if they'd like to borrow anything else. Like your PIN number.

Which brings us to the Jaguar, which returned from a group test a couple of months ago with nearly bald tyres and a selection of nasty scratches along its beautiful flanks. It looked as though someone (someone like a road test editor...) had dragged it through a hedge backwards, although in fact we narrowed it down to an exfoliating gravelly soap brush at a car wash.

The rubber was an easy fix as Tyres Northampton is a Pirelli Performance Centre (meaning, amongst other things, that it has to pass two 'secret shopper' inspections every year). A few F-types have apparently passed across their ramps in the last few months but mine was the first they'd seen in silver and much comment was made on the size of the ceramic brakes that barely fit inside the wheels. The fresh P Zeros immediately eliminated the unwanted lateral play that I'd been feeling at the rear on the old tyres, which was pleasing.

As for the scratches, to be honest I thought they were too bad to be removed entirely without a respray, but after a couple of hours with Richard Tipper (@perfectionvalet) they were gone. Not even a hint



of where they once were. Tipper explained how he worked his magic: 'I measured the depth of the scratches then machine-polished the clear coat by that amount with a rotary polisher using a cutting paste. Then I hand-polished and protected the surface. Sounds frightening but only a tiny bit of the clear coat was removed so there's still plenty on the

car.' Abracadabra indeed. Now, if he could just get folds out of paper... ✕

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Date acquired	January 2016
Total mileage	10,877
Mileage this month	727
Costs this month	£819.52 tyres
mpg this month	25.5

Audi RS6 Performance

It's not the unfathomable tech-fest that you might expect it to be

CHOICE. WE DEMAND IT. Are surrounded by it. Can't live without it. And despite being old enough to remember when the only choice a car gave you was which frequency band to tune the radio to, I now expect to be able to alter all aspects of a car's character, no matter its price or performance.

Which makes the RS6 a bit old-school. And it's a good thing. Don't get me wrong, the infotainment system is packed with options (I'll come to these another time, once I've worked out how to use them), but the drive systems and powertrain are



refreshingly straightforward, and it's one of the big appeals of the Audi.

When ordering our RS6, I decided to swap the standard air suspension for fixed-rate springs and option a limited-slip diff. These changes cost £1000 and I haven't regretted them.

Ride quality had the potential to be an issue, especially as the Performance model is only available

with 21-inch wheels and 35-profile tyres, but not only is the ride on the right side of acceptable for comfort and controlled enough to manage 1950kg of Audi, but the chassis also feels tighter and better resolved than with the air-suspension setup.

Within Audi's MMI control there are still a few decisions to be made, with Comfort, Auto and Dynamic

Audi RS6 Avant Performance

Date acquired	June 2016
Total mileage	9275
Mileage this month	1795
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	23.9

modes altering the steering, engine and gearbox, suspension (dampers only in this case), differential and engine sound. Or there's the configurable Individual mode. Here I've settled on Dynamic for the steering (most natural weighting and rate of response for a car of this size), engine/gearbox to Auto, Auto for the dampers (an excellent compromise) and Dynamic for the exhaust (well you would, wouldn't you?). The diff is left in Auto until I leave the motorway and switch it to Dynamic.

Tellingly, whenever I get back in the car after someone else has drained the fuel tank, the settings have been left untouched, so I must have made the right choices. ✕

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate

Our diesel ST comes into its own on a mammoth European road-trip



I I'M NOW BACK FROM my six-week sabbatical driving around Europe: autobahns, dirt tracks, mountain passes, driving on and off trains and ferries... Through rain, snow, wind and scorching heat, the ST has been truly put to the test.

Fifteen countries in six weeks took its toll on me and the car – some driving stints saw two or three countries in a day over hugely varied terrain. When spending hour upon hour in a car, your bond with it is either enhanced or diminished dramatically. Luckily, I began to notice a lot of positives that I wouldn't normally discover during my regular driving, and I have to admit, I totally fell for the ST as a cross-continent cruiser. I've said it before, but the Recaro seats, despite looking a little chavvy, are amazing on long journeys.

With 182bhp and 295lb ft, the ST's diesel engine is pokey enough,

and fantastic on fuel economy, something that is only enhanced by the price of fuel steadily dropping the further east into Europe you drive. Sure, the ride is a little stiff, with this generation of Focus ST having firmer dampers than the one that went before it, but that's forgiven when you're on a twisty alpine road. Overall the handling is commendable, and complements the fantastic steering feel.

It's not all positive, though. I gave up on the built-in satnav and opted for Google Maps on my phone (which is hard to fault when searching for accommodation at 2am in Slovakia). I also had a couple of setbacks, including having my rear driver-side quarter window smashed on the first morning in Paris! The culprits must have spotted the tinted glass and suspected I was stupid enough to leave the ST with all my valuables in. Instead, nothing was taken and it was just an

annoying inconvenience having to order new glass and wait around for it to be fitted at a Ford dealership at Lake Annecy, just south of Geneva. (At least with a Ford you have dealerships everywhere in Europe, so if the worst happens, getting a part ordered and fitted during a road trip isn't too painful.)

This sabbatical tour has given me the bug to want to drive around Europe every summer. The freedom

'Knowing you have a car that can deal with everything Europe can throw at it is such a blessing'



Vauxhall VXR8 GTS

From long hauls to trackdays to family duties, the big Vauxhall seems to have them all covered

THE VXR8 GTS EATS miles like nothing else. It's a big, comfortable and effortlessly fast car and, save for perhaps more road noise than you might expect, it's an amazing place to while away hundreds of miles at a time.

Recently it transported editor Nick Trott, senior film-maker Sam Riley and I back from the Nürburgring and I don't think I've ever felt so fresh after the journey. I ended up driving the whole 450 miles as, by a weird twist of circumstance, Nick and Sam had only just arrived at the track from the UK when we had to head back. It was a very long day for them and both were grateful for the soft yet supportive seats and the way the VXR8 strolls along at three-figure speeds with rock-solid composure. You can tell this car is made in a *big* country.

Since then it's been to Wales a

couple of times, to North Yorkshire and back in a day to help out on the shoot for last issue's Hakosuka GT-R feature, and to and from airports several times. It's an unbelievable workhorse and has a huge boot, too. I'm really enjoying its versatility – one minute howling along the best roads I can find, the next soaking up a 300-mile drive with ease and the next being pressed into action as a family car. Only the horrendous fuel consumption dents its do-anything, all-action-hero status. It rarely gets above 18mpg.

On track it's much, much worse. I'm glad to say I now know this for certain after sneaking in several laps of Anglesey Circuit during a brief downpour that interrupted us shooting another Leaderboard film (look out for this on our Youtube channel). Surprisingly, the VXR8 GTS is not just a comedy drift machine, even in streaming wet conditions.

Of course, you can choose to hoon it around at silly angles, but it naturally wants to find drive and grip. I was really shocked at its speed, the way its Continental tyres seemed to find excellent bite and by how exciting it felt on track.

The VXR8 GTS really is a car with hidden depths and I'm really enjoying peeling back the layers day by day. Maybe we should have taken it down to Italy for the hotly contested Alfa Giulia Quadrifoglio group test in issue 226. I know for sure we'd all have been fighting over the keys for the long journey back from the Alps. **X**

Jethro Bovington
(@JethroBovington)

Date acquired	June 2016
Total mileage	14,658
Mileage this month	1730
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	17.7

of having your own car is a-mazing. It's great to know you can make a decision on a whim, whether it's to stay in Chamonix for an extra night or get to the Matterhorn by sunset. Knowing you have a car that can deal with everything European roads and changeable weather can throw at it is such a blessing.

I've covered 9917 miles since my last report, so I suspect when Ford reads this they'll be begging me to send the ST back. That'll be a shame, because while the Focus ST diesel estate isn't the best *evo* car in a lot of respects, as a long-distance tourer, I simply can't fault it. **X**

Sam Riley (@samriley)

Date acquired	June 2016
Total mileage	28,450
Mileage this month	3431
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	42.3



Honda Civic Type R

Production editor Eveleigh has finally experienced the highs – and uncovered a curious low – of driving the Type R on track

THE STARS ALIGNED THIS month as the Type R and I were finally both available at the same time to attend an **evo** track evening. Dickie Meaden said all you need to know about the Michelin Cup 2-equipped Civic's on-track abilities in last month's 'hyperhatches' group test, so I won't waste valuable column inches repeating what he said here, but suffice to say that the Honda

'There was one small fly in the ointment, and it relates to the Honda's climate control'

felt totally at home on Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit – like it wanted to be there rather than like a road car that was slightly out of its depth and needed coaxing round. In short: huge fun.

There was one small fly in the ointment, though, and perhaps unexpectedly, it relates to the climate control. I'd noticed before that if the system needs to drop the cabin temperature significantly on a hot day, it automatically engages the air-recirculation function to help speed things along. Makes perfect sense. However, after a long burst of hard acceleration you can sometimes feel a small amount of warm, humid-feeling air make its way into the cabin – even with the recirculation setting engaged and the air con on. This isn't a problem

on the road, but on track, where there's a burst of hard acceleration every few seconds, this combination leads to too much moist air getting trapped in the cabin. The next thing you know the windscreen goes from clear to completely misted up within just a couple of corners and you're left fumbling with the climate controls while slowing down and trying not to get in everyone's way. So apologies again to the Mk2 MX-5 driver who I overtook and then immediately held up. Twice. And lesson learnt: ensure the air-recirculation function is switched off before leaving the pitlane.

A few days after the track evening, the Civic went for its first service. With variable servicing intervals this was due at 10,891, and although we missed this by a few hundred miles, getting the Type R refreshed considerably sooner than most modern cars request a pit stop was strangely comforting.

The service was carried out by John Banks Honda in Cambridge at Honda's fixed price for petrol cars of £195. That seemed reasonable enough as these things go, and the service process was all efficient and satisfactory. They even rotated my wheels (to help the Cup 2s wear out as a set) for no extra change.

They also delivered a warning that the front brakes – pads and discs – are in the final stages of their life. Hmm. I think I'm beginning to see one downside to putting 300bhp in a hot hatch... ☒

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired	January 2016
Total mileage	11,677
Mileage this month	1280
Costs this month	£195 service
mpg this month	27.3

Caterham Seven Tracksport

Another weekend in one of Caterham's in-house racing series proves a tough one

MY FOURTH WEEKEND of Caterham racing was comfortably my least impressive and most demoralising so far. Last in qualifying, a DNF in race one and 12th out of 17 cars in race two. 'Forgettable' is the word.

I competed in the Tracksport series once again for my fourth outing – the same category I raced in last time out at Snetterton. I also squeezed in a day of testing at the circuit where the race was held this time around – Oulton Park – albeit in rather soggy conditions.

The race weekend itself was dry and I could do no better than

the back of the grid in qualifying. Determined to make amends in the first race, I got a good start, cleared a handful of cars in the opening few corners and found myself in 13th position after half a lap. But then I left my braking a bit late into the first chicane, ran into the back of another car and bent a steering arm, ending my race.

That put me right to the back of the grid for race two. The objective was just to have a clean race and get to the finish. I came home in 12th, but what really frustrated me was my lack of pace compared with the quick guys. From qualifying third and racking up a podium in the Roadsport series, I'm woefully off the pace in Tracksport.

I'm giving it everything I have inside the car, but I'm just not that fast. I don't know what it is that I'm not doing, which probably means I need tuition. There's clearly some technique that I'm not understanding, and in a series as competitive as the Caterham Tracksport Championship, that

basically means I'm knackered.

This whole exercise has made me realise how effective the Caterham racing ladder is. The guys at the front of the Tracksport grid are generally only in their third year of racing, but because they've worked their way up year on year in the Academy, they have learnt the craft and they're now spectacularly quick.

I'm stepping up to the R300-S

category next time out at Croft Circuit, so the competition should be even tougher. I have precisely zero expectations for myself. ✖

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Date acquired	April 2016
Total mileage	5415
Mileage this month	90
Costs this month	n/a
mpg this month	n/a



Nissan Juke Nismo RS



Nissan Juke Nismo RS

One *evo* staffer comes to the defence of our beleaguered Juke, but is it beyond redemption?

SO FAR PHOTOGRAPHER Aston Parrott hasn't been all that impressed with his Juke. And I agree with him when he says it isn't a particularly satisfying car to drive quickly: the excessive roll thanks to the tall ride height seems to fight with the limited-slip diff and makes corners, especially the exits, feel chaotic.

Aston isn't much of a fan of the car's interior either, and in pure objective terms it's hard to argue with him. But the slightly naff cabin actually adds to the Juke's most appealing aspect for me. You see, I love its unapologetically Japanese-performance-car aura. The disregard for soft-touch plastics and ultra-clean, minimalist graphics that are so typical of current German cars make the Juke feel quirky and exotic.

A standard Juke could hardly be considered good looking, but the Nismo version, with its more prominent front lip, wider arches, bigger wheels and red door mirrors,

makes much more sense. It looks pugnacious and, despite its mini-SUV proportions, rather appealing. The only other car I can think of with the same 'I shouldn't like it but I do' aesthetic appeal is a Pulsar GTI-R.

Maybe I've spent too much time watching *Initial D* and *Best Motoring* videos on YouTube, and I want to like the Nismo because its daring styling would look good in anime. I can imagine it having a following, like a modern-day Suzuki Ignis Sport. But to gain cult status, the appeal has to be more than skin deep, and sadly this Juke is just too cumbersome to drive. I doubt anyone will yearn to own a Nismo RS in the way some yearn to own, say, a Corolla Levin. ✖

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)

Date acquired	March 2016
Total mileage	15,255
Mileage this month	839
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.1

PART OF THE DEAL WITH long-term test cars is you know they have to go back to the manufacturer. For the first few months you don't give that day much consideration, but as time and miles pass by, you can't help but look ahead to the moment you have to bid farewell. Sadly, as I write this, that day has come for the Bentley.

Ego plays its part with cars like the Continental GT, so you know I'd be lying if I said custodianship of a £200k V8 S didn't pander to the latent show-off in me by bestowing a certain quasi-celebrity status. Nevertheless, it's not the sudden, forced return to reality that I'll found upsetting about the Bentley's repossession.

What I will miss, more than anything, is the all-pervading sense of wellbeing I got from being in and around the car. Big, friendly and unfailingly welcoming, there was always something special about spending time in the Bentley, which is just as I'd hoped it would be. It even took the tedium and stress out of crappy, congested commutes to catch early morning flights. Given these are surely the worst journeys of all, that's saying something.

And then there's the breadth of its performance. When I just wanted to get somewhere, it was the

Bentley Continental GT V8 S

The Conti is leaving our fleet, so what will Meaden miss most about it?

consummate cruiser, effortless yet always engaging. But when I wanted to get some adrenalin pumping, it could make mincemeat of some of the best driving roads I know, in a manner quite unlike any other car I've driven.

I'll expand on the experience of six months and nearly 10,000 miles with the Conti GT in the next issue of the magazine. For now, I'll just mourn the fact I'm unlikely to ever have

daily access to quite such a fast, fastidiously finished and supremely crafted car. Whatever I live with next has an impossible act to follow. **X**

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired	February 2016
Total mileage	9635
Mileage this month	1182
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	18.4



Kia Proceed GT

This month, a service, and the bumper-bending culprit is identified

I'M FEELING A LITTLE guilty this month, and it's nothing to do with the terrible cars lurking in my eBay watch list. I do have to apologise to the good citizens of Wellingborough, though, as it turns out they weren't the ones responsible for the damaged rear bumper mentioned in issue

226. Instead, all signs (and fingers) currently point to **evo's** publisher, Geoff 'Oh Christ, has he taken the keys again?' Love. Word is he reversed it into something, which I didn't think was possible in a car with parking sensors *and* a rear-view camera.

The other reason I'm feeling guilty is because last month's track shenanigans took place before I'd had a chance to book the GT in for a service, despite it being around 1500 miles after Kia's recommended 10,000-mile interval.

I've never owned a brand-new car before, so dealership servicing is fairly new to me, but the friendly staff at Bells Kia in Bedford, a clean car and a modest £128 bill made it an entirely painless experience.

I've not actually seen the Kia much since its service, as it was almost

immediately whisked off to assist with **evo's** forthcoming Track Car of the Year story (despite its performance last month, I can confirm it wasn't itself competing) and has since served as the office dogsbody, replacing broken-down vehicles and serving as a removal van.

Unsurprisingly – for me, at least – everyone has come back from their spell behind the wheel praising the GT's neat handling and fantastic cabin. If there's one thing I don't feel guilty about this month, it's that I've been saying that all along... **X**

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Date acquired	December 2015
Total mileage	12,595
Mileage this month	1288
Costs this month	£128.28 (service)
mpg this month	34.1



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Left: the well-worn original first-gear input shaft (left) beside its replacement. **Below:** new crown wheel and pinion set will bring a lower final drive. **Bottom:** one of the graphs that helped Trott decide which ratio to plump for



Porsche 911 SC

A source for more-affordable parts for the gearbox rebuild also proves to be a source of temptation

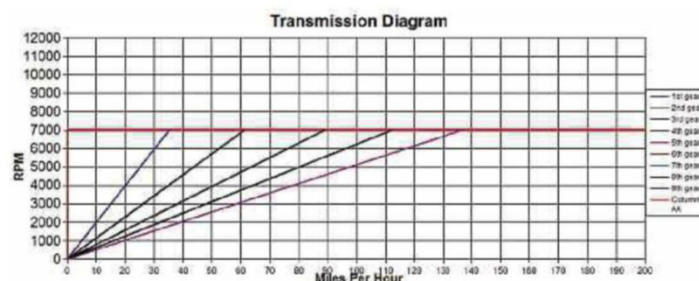
WITHOUT WISHING TO go all mushy on you, I have to say that the **evo** readership truly are a wonderful bunch. Whether it's via social media, email or good-old paper letter, the correspondence we receive is always positive, polite, informed and helpful. This month, one reader in particular stands out for me.

Having read about the rising number of issues (and cost) involved in rebuilding my SC's gearbox, and specifically the difficulty in sourcing affordable transmission parts, Dave Warner got in touch. His email said: 'Hi Nick. Just read your report on the 911 SC gearbox issues. There are some other sources for your gearbox parts other than Porsche direct, and I'd recommend a chat with Albins in Australia (albinsgear.com.au). Hope this helps.' Well, Dave, you've just saved my gearbox, Christmas, and quite possibly my marriage.

Albins Performance Transmissions came good, in particular with a first-gear input shaft. This was a part I was expecting to buy from Porsche for £1852, but Albins charged £887, with VAT and duty on arrival in the UK adding around £150.

Also, while Ollie from RPM Technik was speaking to Albins, he enquired about a crown wheel and pinion set. Sure enough, the Aussies could supply the parts – and a version that'd lower the final drive, thus improving the SC's acceleration.

'I didn't necessarily need a new crown wheel and pinion set, but as the gearbox was cracked open...'



Now, I didn't necessarily *need* this set, but with the gearbox cracked open, now was the time to fit one and Ollie insisted the effect would be equal to any element of engine tuning bar turbocharging. Ollie sent me the drive ratios in graph form and my inner geek studied and was ultimately seduced by them...

So sure enough, an order for the 8:35 set (the factory SC final drive is 8:31) was placed, amounting to £1043 plus £196 VAT/duty, and as I write this the parts are on their way from Victoria in New South Wales to Long Marsden in England, where RPM Technik are based – a 10,529-mile journey. And all thanks to Dave. ✕

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	March 2014
Total mileage	90,993
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	£2276.51
mpg this month	n/a

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Volkswagen Golf R

Our hot Golf gets a new custodian – one who is immediately impressed

A ALTHOUGH I CAN'T HELP but respect the Golf R – its sheer pace and quality are hugely impressive – I've never really bonded with it. I've experienced enough Golf Rs to know I prefer it with a manual gearbox, and I've had some fast and spirited drives in them, but we've never really clicked.

So when Dan abandoned his subtle VW for something louder with stickers and Cup 2s (see p120), I jumped at the chance to run it for a few months. Because the thing is, I want to love the Golf R, I really do. I like the way it looks and I can't think of another car that everyone, from die-hard Golf fans to people with no interest in cars, simply just gets.

Just belting up there's already a problem, though. The stiffly mounted buckle protrudes so far above the seat that the belt doesn't touch the left-hand side of my body. That's actually not the issue, though. What is is that whenever I turn left, my left



Date acquired	September 2015
Total mileage	25,122
Mileage this month	1233
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	30.1

elbow presses on the taught belt (which isn't touching my torso) and occasionally hits the buckle. It's not the worst thing in the world, but it makes the otherwise pleasant interior feel cramped. I haven't heard anyone else on the **evo** team complain about this, mind, so maybe I just need to eat a few more pies.

Having now tested our R on some familiar roads, I have realised where I was going wrong before. Because

the R looks like a Golf and feels like a Golf, I had been treating it just like a regular, front-wheel-drive performance Golf. Expect to get a lot out of the R with a tactical lift here and some careful throttle there, and you'll be left unimpressed. However, stand on the throttle early in a corner and you can feel the 4WD system send power to the rear. From apex to exit, the R now squats on its outside rear tyre as it digs into the tarmac,

pushing you round the corner.

There's a bend on my way to the office that has a small crest before it; it's awkward to judge in most cars, but not in the Golf R. Time your throttle just right, moments before the car settles after the rise, and the R glides round the bend almost without you needing to move the steering wheel. Now I get it. ❌

Will Beaumont

(@WillBeaumont)

BMW E46 M3

With his M3 still being repaired, web editor Skipworth looks back to happier times

I I KNOW YOU'RE ALL desperate to find out just how broken my M3 is – and believe me, it's *really* broken – but it isn't fixed yet and I'd rather tell the whole depressing story of the repair in one go. So in the meantime I have some more positive news to report from before things turned sour...

The E46's straight-six is, as stock, already one of the best-sounding engines BMW has ever built. I love its tinny rasp, but I wanted more. As such, I made a trip to Evolve Automotive in Luton to have an Eventuri carbonfibre intake system fitted. It's significantly cheaper than a full CSL-style carbon airbox, but it sounds just as good. Having spent a while with the new airbox before the car broke down, I think it also improved throttle response a little, too.

I wanted even more volume, though, so I decided to also fit a

full Supersprint Race backbox and resonated centre-pipe. My biggest concern was that, thus equipped, the M3 would sound boomy and drone on the motorway. However, having driven to the Nürburgring with this setup (see last month's Fast Fleet), I can tell you that it's exactly what I was looking for: the Supersprint kit is fairly restrained, but brings an added edge to the M3's rasp. (If you'd like to get an idea of how it sounds, you can listen to it on Evolve's Facebook page.)

The slightly bigger Supersprint pipes also take away the peashooter look of the M3's stock exhaust tips, and combined with the carbon intake, the M3 is sounding and feeling superb. Or rather 'was'. Yes, you'll get the full story on the big repair next time. ❌

Hunter Skipworth

(@HunterSkipworth)



Date acquired	February 2016
Total mileage	83,356
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	£744 intake £1972 exhaust
mpg this month	n/a

evo NEXT MONTH

ISSUE 229

ON SALE WEDNESDAY 2 NOVEMBER



2016

CAR OF THE YEAR

THE 12 BEST PERFORMANCE CARS GO HEAD-TO-HEAD

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ESSENTIALS

THE ROUND-UP

New motoring products that have
caught our eye this month



ART PRINT

Fuji Speedway
\$21.99

japanesenostalgiccar.com/shop

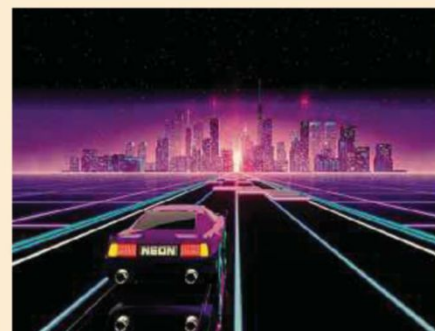
Enjoy our Hakosuka GT-R story in issue 227? Here's a novel print of the race versions that made the car a legend. It's by Japanese cartoonist San Mamiya, and as well as featuring the Skyline itself, it's rich in pop culture, from a 'bosozoku' spectator car to Japan's own 'rising sun'.



ALLOY WHEEL

Wolfrace Eurosport Classic
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wolfrace.com

Mesh-spoke alloy wheels are a style that has never really gone out of fashion. This is Wolfrace's interpretation, available in a suitable size for modern cars – 8.5 x 18in – in offsets from 20 to 45 and PCDs of 98 to 120mm. Perfect for a VW, Audi, BMW or similar.



VIDEOGAME

Neon Drive
£6.99 (PC and Mac)
store.steampowered.com

As the oh-so-'80s graphics might suggest, there's nothing traditional about this racing game. It's more a combination of racer and *Guitar Hero*, navigating your sports car between obstacles in the road to the beat of various synth tracks. Fast-paced and beautiful visuals.



T-SHIRT

Jordan 191
£24.95

retrogp.com

With one of the best liveries of the 1990s, the Jordan 191 was the car that ignited Michael Schumacher's F1 career. It's Gachot and de Cesaris whose names can be found on these T-shirts though, complete with a profile of the 191 and the iconic 7Up logo.



BOOK

Chapman – The Comic Strip Biography
£20

shop.classicteamlotus.co.uk

Not new, but undoubtedly essential. Similar in style to the Michel Vaillant comics in France, this book tells Colin Chapman's story, from his first F1 race as a driver in 1956 to his death in 1982, and through the joys and hardships along the way. Wonderfully illustrated throughout.



CAR CARE

Dodo Juice Clearly Menthol Glass cleaner
£7.95 (500ml)

dodojuice.com

Do you need glass cleaner to smell like mint? Probably not, but it's better than it smelling of chemicals, and the alcohol-based formula is claimed to leave a streak-free finish. It can be used over existing glass sealants, if you've previously detailed your car, and it's not badly priced, either.

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- Shaun Goff, Optimum Motorsport



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Market

WANT IT. BUY IT. OWN IT. LOVE IT.

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THE HOMOLOGATION CAR IS very much a thing of the past these days, and more's the pity, because there are few cars that get both evo staffers and readers more excited than those with the purpose of succeeding in motorsport.

Perhaps of all the different classes, it's the Group A cars that are the easiest to identify with, with 5000 road cars (latterly 2500) needing to be built in order to qualify for racing. Much like other classic car markets, the Group A niche has fractured in recent years on the wave of the general

ANALYSIS: GROUP A ROAD CARS

Motorsport pedigree and built in limited numbers, these homologation cars span nearly all budgets **by Adam Towler**



classic car boom. This phenomenon applies when comparing different marques, but also to the standard of cars within the same model line, and hence the values they can command.

At the top of the pile are the Evolution E30 M3s, the Integrale Evos and the RS500 Sierra. The very best examples of these cars are now pushing the £100,000 barrier, but poorer examples and earlier iterations (with a lower perception of desirability) can be a lot less.

However, as a generalisation, the Japanese marques are a long way behind in monetary terms. Some may point to the 22B and P1 Imprezas, but of course neither were actually Group A cars. The highest climber is the Tommi Mäkinen Lancer Evo VI (incidentally, the last car to compete in the WRC under Group A rules) at around £30,000. Meanwhile, early homologation Subarus and Toyota Celica GT-Fours – multiple rally championship winners – can all be had for well under £10,000.

Steve Smith owns Integrale specialist Walkers (walkersgarage.com). 'Prices are really difficult,' he says of the Lancias. 'Good ones are fetching a lot of money, so everyone thinks they're all worth a fortune. You'll pay £25,000-50,000 for a decent Evo 1 or 2, with nice 8v and 16v Integrales available between £10,000 and £20,000.'

Most of these cars will have had some work over the years, as with most classic cars, but collectors seem to want perfect, sub-10,000-mile cars, of which there aren't many left.



'At the top of the pile are the Evolution E30 M3s, the Integrale Evos and the RS500 Sierra'

Independent dealer Mark Donaldson (markdonaldson.com) says he's been involved with three such Lancias in the past year, and all went for £70,000+. 'They don't age well, and can be expensive to put right,' he says. 'E30 M3s have also gone off the clock in terms of values, but I think they've peaked for now: many of the best have reached long-term homes.'

For Steve, his phone rings frequently with buyers searching for a perfect car. Back in the real world, and surely to the relief of many, he's also producing Delta repair parts for when the corrosion is cut away.

It's a similar story in the world of the RS Cosworth. Paul Linfoot runs North Yorkshire RS Spares (cosworthrsspares.co.uk) and is also the RSOC RS500 registrar (see expert view). He sees both sides of the collector gold-rush: 'There are no RSs on track now at club days. If it's too sunny, it's too dusty; if it's too wet, it's too mucky. It's spoiling things. The serious collectors want nearly new cars and they'll pay whatever it takes to get them, but this is a small market of buyers and there are even fewer cars. It's causing a fragmentation in the lower price range.'

FOUR TO BUY



1987 FORD SIERRA RS500
£100,000

This 9100-mile RS500 is probably about as original as you're going to get for one of these cars – unless you look at the 8830-mile black car also being sold by the same vendor. A touring car racing legend.

cosworthrsspares.co.uk
01944 738092



1993 LANCIA INTEGRALE
£49,995

An Evo 2 model from 1993. 'Iconic' is not too strong a word to describe an Evo when finished in yellow. This car has 75,000 miles on the clock and is described as having very good history, arriving in the UK in 1997.

walkersgarage.com
01609 777221



1998 TOYOTA CELICA GT-FOUR
£8595

With factory-uprated suspension and OZ Racing WRC replica wheels, this late ST205 GT-Four stands out. It has 65,000 on the clock and the cambelt was recently changed. Said to be in excellent condition.

neweraimports.com
02071 933979



1990 BMW M3
£49,995

A cat-equipped car in red with black leather interior, originally registered in Munich but imported into the UK in 2001. With 78,000 miles on the clock and the original service booklet.

avantgardecars.co.uk
01827 288177



Refreshingly, these factors don't come into play when you're talking Impreza Type RA and Celica GT-Four. The early GC8 Impreza Type RA formed the basis of Colin McRae's 1995 title-winner. Dean Wilson of type-ra.com says: 'It's a changing ownership profile now; more people are buying the cars to put back to standard. Over the last couple of years the prices have risen. There's a realisation that the cars are disappearing. Loads went for 50p back in the recession, but older buyers now can afford to insure and run them. Type RAs are £2000-4500, with STI models from £4500. They do rust, though – they're terrible for it in the rear arches.'

It's a similar story with the mighty Toyota Celica GT-Four (see expert view). Nice examples of the Carlos Sainz model can be had from £7000, although there aren't many around.

SUMMARY

Cars of this type are just not seen today and were built in low volumes, so it's hardly surprising that Group A favourites are now commanding big prices. Yet while this rise means increasing numbers of cars are being saved not scrapped, it is also pushing them beyond the reach of traditional buyers. The new group of buyers at the top of the market demand the best, but these were cars bought to be driven hard, so the supply of box-fresh examples is small. Below that niche, there is turmoil over prices.

Nevertheless, while most of us would love a wide-arched Integrale in the garage, there is still value to be found in later Group A specials from Japan, even if that market is also beginning to evolve. Whether they will achieve the same status as the European marques is open to debate, but they certainly don't lack the competition pedigree.

Expert view

FREDDY GOTTSCHALL

GT-Four Sociale
gtfour-sociale.uk

'Prices of GT-Fours have firmed up in the past few years – so many have disappeared through rust. A good example of the "Carlos Sainz" ST185 will be £7000-9000, while the standard ST185s are £3000-4000 for a really good one.'

'Later ST205 models can be bought relatively cheaply as they're expensive to put right. Many buy cheap then break them, but nice, unmodified cars can be had for £5000-6000. ST205s with forged engines and up to 500bhp can be as much as £12,000, as long as they have the right paperwork.'

'UK cars are worth more than imports, but there are far more imports available.'

PAUL LINFOOT

cosworthrsshspares.co.uk
01944 738092

'While the best RS500s can fetch £100,000, the average guy just can't justify spending more than £50,000, so there's a void in the market. The trouble comes when people think they have a £50,000 car and it's really a £20,000 one – they don't understand, or rather they don't want to hear it. An honest RS500 should be £40,000, but sellers want £60,000 – and they'll never sell it. The cars are getting tossed from dealer to dealer, not selling, and then people say the bubble has burst. It hasn't: the car is simply overpriced.'

'There's a car for everybody out there, but the seller's expectations aren't always realistic.'



THE SPECIALIST

STEVE SMITH
Walkers Garage

'Lots of Integrals came in from Italy during the '90s, and you just don't know what the true mileages are. We've also had a lot of Evos from Japan come through the workshop recently. Structurally they tend to be good, but most have been modified in some way.'

'I BOUGHT ONE'

RICHARD ETHERRIDGE
Subaru Impreza WRX STI Type RA

'I've owned my Type RA on and off for 11 years, only buying it back recently. I competed regularly in this car in hill-climb events, and will do so again next year. It's about the way it makes you feel: it's incredibly flattering to drive fast; a raw experience.'

EVO VIEW

STUART GALLAGHER

If we could find an honest RS500 for £40k it would be tempting, but it would have to be exceptional for us to ignore an M3; Group A specials don't come much better. Right now, though, it would have to be something from Japan – for the money nothing ticks so many boxes as an Impreza Type RA.



993 GT2 ACHIEVES £1.8m AT AUCTION

A 1995 Porsche 911 GT2 has sold for £1.8m. The Riviera Blue 993 was estimated to sell for £750,000-850,000. Instead it fetched exactly £1,848,000, including fees. In the same RM Sotheby's auction another 911, a 964 Turbo S Lightweight, reached £974,400, while an Audi Sport Quattro sold for £403,200 and a Lancia Stratos for £308,000.



LUXURY CAR DEALER OPENS IN BRISTOL

Rybrook Specialist Cars has opened a new showroom in Bristol, with facilities to sell cars from Rolls-Royce, McLaren, Bentley and Lamborghini. Production models will rub shoulders with several special examples of each manufacturer's cars, including a P1 GTR, Bentley GT3-R, a Huracán GT3 and a Rolls-Royce Black Badge.



MODERN CLASSICS UNDER THE HAMMER

Brightwells' third auction of modern classic cars will be held on 8 December 2016 in Leominster, Herefordshire. Highlights so far include a 1983 phase 1 Audi Quattro (estimated to sell for £17,000-19,000) and a 66,000-mile 1986 E28 BMW 535i (pictured; £3500-4500). If you have a modern classic to sell, entries are still being accepted.



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- Low Miles



Porsche 911 2.2

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Porsche 911 2.4T

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Porsche 964 RS

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Porsche 911 2.7

- MFI Targa
- 1 of 2 UK RHD's
- Magenta



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- Low Mileage



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- Basalt Black
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Porsche 996 Turbo

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- Arctic Silver
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www.specialistcarsltd.co.uk

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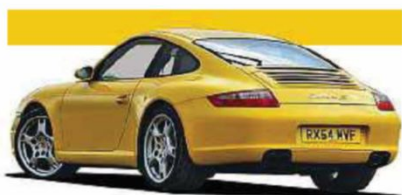
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USED RIVALS: SPORTS COUPES OF THE 2000s

by Adam Towler



PORSCHE 911 CARRERA S (997.1)

Engine	Flat-six, 3824cc
Power	350bhp @ 6600rpm
Torque	295lb ft @ 4600rpm
Weight	1420kg (246bhp/ton)
0-62mph	4.6sec (claimed)
Top speed	182mph (claimed)
On sale	2004-2008
evo rating	★★★★★

'I BOUGHT ONE'

'It's like a modern classic to look at – I wish I could see it when I drive it. I love the way the interior wraps around the driver, which makes me feel safe in the car. I absolutely adore the acceleration, the never-ending power is massively addictive, but the car's limits scare me a bit – I have a lot of respect for the 997 Carrera S.' **Kimberly Nolan**

EXAMPLES



2005 £26,995
Christopher Jackson Ltd
Black, 63,500 miles, manual 'box and optional 19in wheels. Also has the Sport Chrono pack.

BUYING ADVICE

'Check the front of the car carefully – not just the rads and condensers, but also for evidence of debris collecting in the intakes and also the condition of the coolant pipes. Leaking oil from a worn intermediate-shaft bearing tends to go in three stages – misting, dripping and pouring out – but we've never seen one fail on a 997. Regular coolant changes are a must on these and check for corrosion on the back panel above the catalytic converters.'

Robin McKenzie, classicporscherepairs.co.uk



ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE

Engine	V8, 4280cc
Power	380bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque	302lb ft @ 5000rpm
Weight	1630kg (237bhp/ton)
0-62mph	5.0sec (claimed)
Top speed	174mph (claimed)
On sale	2005-2008
evo rating	★★★★☆

'The Vantage is great everywhere and with not too many visits to the petrol station, either. A good independent specialist will help you to keep running costs manageable. People fear the clutch [see below], and it is expensive, but budget, or keep a contingency, for a quality twin-plate replacement – it transforms the car.' **Jamie Nicholson**



2007 £37,995
Nutley Sports & Prestige Centre
V8 Vantage in timeless Tungsten Silver; 4.3-litre model with 29,000 miles.

'The biggest money item is the clutch failing, but it's very dependent on the driver: anything from 20,000 to 80,000 miles, whether manual or Sportshift. The parts alone are £2250. There's no reason to fear the Sportshift – there is no premium for repairs. Springs can break at their bottom, rear brake pads wear quickly due to the ESP and the flexi-pipes corrode, but these cars are great – I'd buy one. They're reliable, with strong engines and they don't rust.'

Peter Martin, martinsastonservices.co.uk



MASERATI 4200 GT

Engine	V8, 4244cc
Power	385bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque	333lb ft @ 4500rpm
Weight	1670kg (234bhp/ton)
0-62mph	4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	177mph (claimed)
On sale	2001-2007
evo rating	★★★★★

'I wanted something different – I'd been involved with Astons for decades. The GranTurismo was too big, but when I first saw my 4200 GT, I knew it was going home with me. I quickly got used to the Cambiocorsa 'box – it's so smooth, and it's been reliable. The car is so well put together and very beautiful. I'm in love with it.' **Tony Christie**



2003 £16,995
Performance Car Co.
With 53,000 miles, this 4200 GT coupe comes with the Cambiocorsa 'box and red leather.

'The vast majority of 4200s have the Cambiocorsa gearbox and it's vital to get a diagnostic printout of the clutch condition when you buy the car. The computer allows for wear and adjusts, but you want to know the percentage of life left. It's £3000-4000 to replace. Make sure the engine oil is changed often, and with the correct oil. The oil pressure can drop, and adverts that say "misfire" are usually indicative of something more serious.'

Mike Roberts, maseratished.co.uk

THE EVO CHOICE

The Maserati is the bargain here, but for many it's too much of a curio to risk taking a punt on. Its V8 is the star of the show and the 4200 GT certainly has the performance to match those looks and that badge. A slice of Italian exotic for the price of a Fiesta ST is tempting, even if it could be financial suicide.

Aston's V8 Vantage evolved into a fine sports car and in N430 guise finally received the performance it looks and noise deserved. There are also a number of tuning options now available for all versions of the junior Aston that make this earlier 4.3 model a very tempting proposition.

And so to the Porsche. Predictable, yes, but the 997 is the last of the 'analogue' 911s and in first-generation guise it has all the makings of a classic while still offering very modern Porsche performance. For this reason, it's our choice.
Stuart Gallagher

BUYING JOURNEY

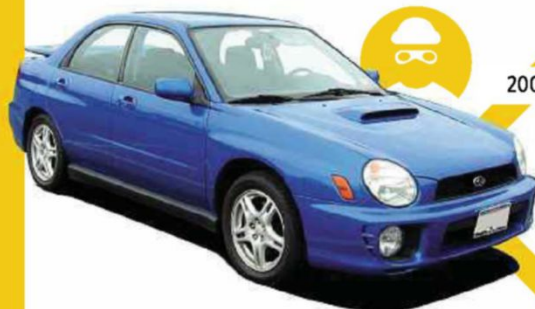
From Magna to Mustang, an **evo** reader Down Under shares his car history



CLARKE WILKINS

4th Subaru Impreza WRX

'Put a deposit down early after driving a friend's older WRX, but although this was still a great car, it was really where Subaru started losing the plot. Eventually someone else decided they wanted it more than me...'



2001

1st Mitsubishi Magna

'A pretty unglamorous start but I needed something to tow the ski boat with and it was cheap to run as a student. Also surprisingly quick on a trackday.'



1989

2nd Ford Falcon XP coupe

'This was the Mustang equivalent for the Australian market. Pillarless, '80s CD player, bench seats and no safety belts – the perfect recipe for any cruise. Not a true **evo** car, but oh so cool.'



1990

3rd Alfa Romeo GTV

'This had a lovely velour interior. You can't be a true car enthusiast without owning an Alfa so I got this one out of the way early. The way the 2-litre motor revved was intoxicating.'



1991

evo view

It's a fair assumption that many **evo** readers won't have heard of a Mitsubishi Magna. It's not exactly a classic, being effectively a larger fifth-gen Galant built for Australia. So full marks to Sydneysider Clarke for taking it on trackdays, even if a 100mph blowout led to an 'interesting' off-track excursion.

Clarke describes selling the 911 S as a 'massively stupid decision', given what they're now worth. (Wonderful thing, hindsight...) Still, the 'raw hot-rod' RS rep that replaced it must've been just the job for trackdays, especially once a 3.2-litre engine was fitted (after a missed downchange), while a 930 Turbo is a highly desirable Porsche in its own right.

5th Ford Mustang

'This replaced the stolen WRX. A custom exhaust meant a fabulous burbling V8 noise and being a convertible it was perfect for the Sydney weather. Shame about the chassis flex.'

2004



7th Porsche 911 2.7 RS replica

'The Porsche bug had bitten so there was a brief time when the '73 S was joined by a very light RS replica powered by a 3-litre SC engine. A great car for trackdays and also sold at a profit.'



2009

6th Porsche 911 S 2.4

'The Mustang was joined by a 1973 911 S that was bought to do trackdays in before I realised that there is a big difference between a sports car and a track car.'

2008



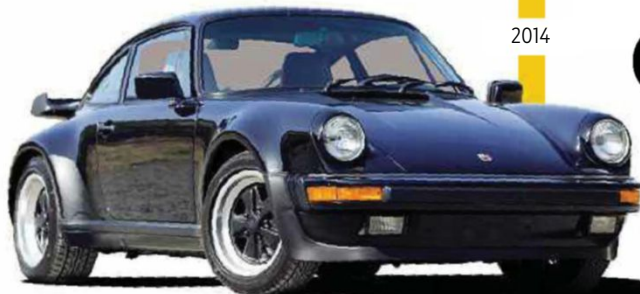
What's next?

'Before I indulge in my illogical desire for a classic Range Rover – don't ask – and the need to scratch the Italian itch again via a Maserati 4200 GT, the better half wants a Merc 280SL. If only I'd bought one instead of the Mustang. Doh!'

8th Porsche 930 Turbo

'Young kids and work travel made trackdays more infrequent, so the "RS" was replaced with a 1987 Turbo bought just before air-cooled prices went nuts.'

2014



Tip

Maserati 4200 GT, you say? See this month's Used Rivals, Clarke – and make sure you do your homework before buying!



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BUYING GUIDE: RENAULTSPORT MÉGANE III 2009-2016



For seven years it's been our hot-hatch benchmark, and now you could be driving an RS Mégane III for as little as £10,000

THE PREVIOUS GENERATION had gone out on a high with the hardcore R26.R, so it was hardly surprising that the first of the new RS Mégane IIIs, the 250, should feel a tad polite by comparison, even in Cup form with its firmer suspension and limited-slip diff. In fact, the new RS Mégane was another fine machine, with a fizzing turbo engine and a chassis of rare talents. The 250 and the variants that followed would quickly emerge from the R26.R's shadow and now, with production at an end, it's the perfect time to assess these brilliant all-rounders as a second-hand buy.

At launch there was the £21,995 250 Cup and, for a grand more, the better-equipped Sport (keyless go, climate control, electric leather seats, etc). But the Cup was the one. As well

as the LSD, it had bespoke dampers, chunkier anti-roll bars, uprated Brembos, and Michelin Pilot Sport 2s in place of the Sport's Dunlop Sport Maxx TTs (or Conti SportContact5s if you specced the 19in wheels – a £500 option). Just to confuse things, you could also spec a Sport with the Cup chassis plus Recaro front seats for £1950. Since the Recaros were otherwise an £850 option, that was pretty good value.

All of the hot Mégane IIIs – 250, 265 and 275 – used versions of the 1998cc turbo four-cylinder 'F4Rt' engine (no sniggering at the back), carried over from the Mégane II. The figure in each car's name refers to the power output. So the 250 had 250 PS, or 247bhp in old British money, enough to take it from 0 to 60mph in 6.1sec and on to the far side of 150mph.

The 265 Trophy of 2011 was noteworthy for setting a new front-drive lap record at the Ring (8min 8sec, eclipsing the 8min 16.9sec set by the R26.R). Increasing the boost liberated an extra 14bhp, and the Trophy featured the Cup chassis plus 19in Speedline alloys and Bridgestone RE050As. The £27,820 Trophy was a limited edition of 500, just 50 of which came to the UK, but the £24,825 265 Cup was basically the same car and there are plenty of those around.

The 265 was succeeded by the 275. The £23,935 Cup-S was particularly good value, but the ultimate evolutions were the £28,930 275 Trophy and £36,430 Trophy-R, both released in 2014. The latter was a son-of-R26.R trackday special that set a new Ring record of 7min 54sec. Going out on a high, again...

CHECKPOINTS

ENGINE

Mike Mardlin at specialist Rentech is a big fan of the latest RS Méganes – in fact he ran a 250 Cup himself until recently. 'Really good car,' he says. 'A clear notch up in quality and refinement over the old one.' The turbo engine was essentially carried over from the RS Mégane II, so it's well known to all the specialists. 'It's a tough engine,' says

Mike, adding that even tuned examples give few problems if they're serviced on time.

It's critical the cambelt is replaced at six years or 72,000 miles, so early cars are now becoming due. It's a labour-intensive job – Rentech charges £675, which includes the water pump and auxiliary belts, too – but the alternative is a potentially engine-wrecking failure. From 2012 these cars had

a four-year warranty from new, so any remaining balance is well worth having.

TRANSMISSION

Mike is yet to come across any recurring issues with either the gearbox or the limited-slip diff fitted to cars with the Cup chassis. Clutch life is, as always, dependent on how the car's been driven, but in normal use it should be good

for up to 60,000 miles. 'They seem to be good as gold,' says Mike. 'My car had a noisy clutch release bearing, but it had done 65,000 miles!'

SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES

On higher-mileage cars, listen out for knocks and clonks from the front suspension on the test drive. Swivel-hub ball-joints

are a weakness and potentially a costly one, as it's usually the whole hub assembly that gets changed: these cost around £250 each from Renault – though cheaper aftermarket alternatives are now available – plus around three hours per side for labour, so up to around £500 a side.

Brake discs are around £300 a pair – including labour, you're looking at around a

grand to replace a full set of discs and pads, so check they've plenty of life in them, or use it as a bargaining tool. Tyre condition is also well worth checking, as good replacements will cost £150+ per corner.

BODY, INTERIOR, ELECTRICS

These Méganes are not yet old cars – in fact with a polish most could pass for being brand new off the



forecourt – so there are no major rust issues as yet. You're mainly checking here for any signs of accident repairs – uneven panel gaps, mismatched paint on adjacent panels, etc.

Inside, the materials are a cut above the previous generation, but the cars are not immune from occasional dashboard rattles or squeaks from the door seals. The outer bolsters on the seats do wear,

particularly on the Recaros – leather versions are better here.

The electrics are generally reliable (even the electric window regulators!) but check the daytime running lights, the tyre pressure monitoring system if it's fitted, and also the condition of the keycard, which is a not insignificant £180 if you have to order a replacement from Renault.

RIVALS

SEAT LEON CUPRA R

Not quite as involving as the Mégane, but the 2010-12 Cupra R is still an invigorating drive, with 261bhp and 0-60 in around six seconds. Good examples start from around £12,000.

FORD FOCUS RS (Mk2)

Not for shrinking violets. The Mk2 Focus RS ('09-'11) offers a fiery 300bhp from its 2.5-litre turbo five, 0-60mph in under six seconds and a properly wild front-wheel-drive ride. From around £17,000.

VW GOLF R (Mk6)

Great all-rounder. With 266bhp and 258lb ft plus AWD, the original Golf R ('10-'13) blitzes 0-60mph in 5.5sec. From around £15k.

INFORMATION

RS MÉGANE 250 CUP

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo
Max power	247bhp @ 5500rpm
Max torque	251lb ft @ 3000rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, LSD
Weight	1387kg
Power-to-weight	181bhp/ton
0-60mph	6.1sec (evo test figure)
Top speed	156mph (claimed)
Price new	£21,995 (2009)

PARTS PRICES

Prices from ren-tech.co.uk. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges

Tyres (each)	£157.37 (Michelin Pilot Sport 2)
Front pads (set)	£131.16
Front discs (pair)	£317.50
Damper (single, front)	£196.36
Clutch kit	£285.28
Dual-mass flywheel	£896.39
Catalyst	£573.52
Exhaust system	£617.38
Spark plugs (set)	£73.12

SERVICING

Prices from ren-tech.co.uk, including VAT.

12,000 miles	£185
36,000 miles	£250
72,000 miles	£975 (including cambelt and water pump)

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classicandperformancecar.com



WHAT WE SAID



250 CUP DRIVEN, NOV 2009

'The cabin is nicely built, the driving position has been lowered 20mm and the gearchange has a tighter, more satisfying gate, even if the lever is rather long. The brakes are superb, sensitive and precise but never grabby. It's an easy car to get on with, its abilities hidden until called on to perform. It's immensely taut yet beautifully damped, and wheel control is exceptional – not once does the suspension crash.

'On the smooth stuff the Mégane is blistering. You turn in, prepare yourself for body roll that never arrives, and soon find yourself out the other side of the corner, knowing you could have nailed the power earlier. Start to work the front end harder and you realise how active the rear is, but it moves so progressively, telegraphing its every move, that deploying it is second nature. On the rough stuff the Mégane is perhaps even more impressive. It never bites or snaps, it just serenely takes everything in its stride. The Focus RS can't pull this off.

'Two things could make the Mégane feel even more immediate: sharper steering and a better engine. Stephen Marvin, Renaultsport's technical director, tells me that sticking with the 18s and Michelins would be his personal choice. "They're more aggressive and help sharpen up the turn-in," he says.

'You have to dig deep to unearth this Renault's treasure, namely its superb chassis and suspension setup. It's that, as always, that lifts the 250 above the also-rans.' – **evo** 138



'I BOUGHT ONE'

MARK FISHER

'I've had my 265 Cup for over three years – the longest I've owned a car. It was bought to replace a Mk3 Toyota MR2. I'd test-driven a Focus ST Mk3 and a GT86 and was left a bit cold by both, but after a drive in a 265 RS I knew I'd found my next car. Obviously it's a fair bit heavier than the MR2, but I felt much more connected to the car than in anything else I'd driven.

'I ordered mine with the Renaultsport Monitor and 18-inch wheels – the 19s on the test car were a bit too firm. The seats, despite being the standard non-Recaro items, are still some of the best I've sat in. The monitor is brilliant, not just for the readings for boost, oil temp, water temp, brake

pressure, G-force, etc, which satisfy the nerd in me, but for the ability to adjust the throttle mapping. It may sound odd but for me the best mode by far is "Snow", which makes the car very docile for normal use yet still allows the full 261bhp – or 274bhp according to a dyno test! – under full throttle.

'In 34,000 miles it's been faultless, only needing a set of brake pads and tyres. Against the advice of everyone, I went with the less extreme Pilot Sport 3s, which although perhaps not as grippy as the PS2s in the dry are just as effective in the wet and are wearing very well, plus they smooth off the ride a bit further. Build quality feels top-notch, on a par with what

the Germans punt out. Fuel consumption is high-20s commuting and mid-30s on a longer run. It uses about a litre of oil between services.

'I'm planning to replace the car once the warranty has expired next year but it's going to be a difficult choice. I'm looking at convertibles again but I think only something like a Caterham or Boxster is going to top the Mégane.'



IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



2010 (59) 250 CUP £11,495

30,700 miles

Sport Yellow/black cloth
Recent service and cambelt
New brakes and tyres
ktrcarsales.co.uk



2012 (62) 265 CUP £14,450

24,124 miles

Glacier White/black cloth
Parking sensors
Still in Renault warranty
silverleafcars.co.uk



2015 (65) 275 NAV £20,999

1285 miles

Flame Red/grey cloth
R-Link multimedia
Rear parking camera
lookers.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

£?
£10k–30k

Higher-mileage 250s have just started to drop below £10k, but generally you're looking at £11k–13k for a 2010/11 car with low to average miles. £13k is the starting point for 265 Cups, with £14k–15k bringing in 2013 cars with high specs and low miles. £17k–18k will get you a 2014 car, £20k–22k an end-of-line 275 Cup, or with a little more, a 275 Trophy. There are still a few delivery-mile 275s at around £25k; the super-rare Trophy-R is £28k+.



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MODEL FOCUS: JAGUAR XKR

With supercharged V8 power and elegant Jaguar lines, the XKR is a true brute in a suit

by Adam Towler

FOR MORE THAN 15 YEARS THE XKR was Jaguar's performance hero, only recently disappearing from the brochures. More GT than hardcore coupe, it majored on strong performance delivered in easy-going comfort.

There are two generations of XKR. The original, all-steel cars are known as X100s (pictured bottom), and have the retro-styled 'fuselage' body. Early cars ('98-'02) featured a 4-litre V8 and five-speed auto 'box, while the facelift cars ('03-'06) had the much better 4.2-litre engine and six-speed auto. In 2006 the all-alloy X150 XK appeared (above), with a 4.2 XKR on sale from the start. This model ran until 2009, when a 5-litre V8-powered version, ending production in 2014, replaced it.

Although there were a few special editions on the X100, such as the 4-litre-based 'Silverstone',

Expert view

GARY ROBINSON, SWALLOWS-JAG.CO.UK

'The early cars are appreciating in value now, and regarded as a classic. However, it's not worth renovating one; you're much better off buying a good car to start with. The early 4-litre XKR had problems with the Nikasil liners in the engine and with the timing chain, plus the usual XK corrosion issues, particularly in the floorpan and wheelarches. The 4.2-litre models are a big improvement. Expect to pay £10k for a good early car and up to £15k for a nice 4.2. Early 4.2-litre examples of the all-alloy car are great value. They don't rust, but look carefully for a reaction under the paint between steel and aluminium.'

NIGEL THORLEY, JEC.ORG.UK

'Prices of these are up and down like a yoyo. When Ford bought Jaguar, most of the money went into the new V8, so a sports car had to use the existing XJS architecture, therefore the X100 has corrosion issues. An XKR can be nice and shiny on the top, but it's about what lies underneath. Convertibles used to be worth more, but that's levelling out. The later 4.2-litre models have more torque but also a six-speed 'box that's better than the five-speeder. The later X150 models are exceptionally reliable, and most issues concern the electronics.'



there were many on the X150, the XKR-S, XKR-S GT and Portfolio editions to name but a few: some were little more than colour and trim, whereas the GT turned the XKR into a real trackday hooligan.

Nigel Thorley (see expert view), an author on the subject, believes XKR are now being bought as investments, as well as by enthusiasts: 'At the moment Jaguar has no plans to produce another XK, and the F-type is not satisfying the traditional XK buyer, so XKs are being hung on to and are particularly sought-after by buyers.' That can only mean positive things for values, with decent XKR starting from £10,000.



SERIAL BUYER

JOHN DUNN

'I've had two XKR. My first was a 4-litre coupe I bought new in 2000, which I then replaced with a new X150 4.2-litre XKR in 2008. I still have the latter, but like the older one I use it mainly as a weekend car and the mileage is kept low. This one has done only 20,000 miles so far.

'Both have been used for European holidays, and while the performance is fantastic they're also very comfortable cars that you can drive all day. I go to a lot of club – jec.org.uk – events as well, and the XKR are getting very popular now.

'I never had any trouble with the X100. There was always the threat of Nikasil cylinder issues, but that never happened. It really did cost very little to run. The bodywork was good, too, but then I tend to take them off the road in the winter and use my XJ. The only issue I've had with the X150 was when the satnav packed up.

'There's little difference in performance between the two cars. I can't understand why Jaguar has stopped making the XK – the F-type is no use to me as there's not enough luggage space for touring. If they were still making XKs I'd buy a new one.'

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£129,995

UPGRADES: HENNESSEY FOCUS HPE400

American tuner developing 405bhp upgrade for Ford Focus RS

by Antony Ingram

HENNESSEY, THE AMERICAN FIRM best known for its attempts to dethrone Bugatti from its title as builder of the world's fastest road car (advantage: still Bugatti with the 258mph Veyron Super Sport, according to Guinness World Records), also has a knack for squeezing high outputs from regular production cars.

For the Focus RS, that means the HPE400 package, which lifts the hot Ford's 345bhp standard output to 405bhp, with peak torque up from 347lb ft to 425lb ft.

While development of the upgrade isn't yet complete, Hennessey has revealed the modifications involved. There's a high-flow air filter in place of the standard item, a stainless steel exhaust mid-pipe with an electronic dump valve, and an ECU tweak to extract more power from the 2.3-litre four-pot motor. A series of Hennessey badges add bragging points to the power upgrades.

No performance figures have been confirmed, but we'd expect the 4.7sec 0-60mph time that we recorded with the standard car to



drop into the low 4s with the upgrade, with a small increase to the 165mph top speed, too.

What's surprising is that the power output isn't higher still, with 60bhp a fairly modest increase – as standard, the 2-litre four-cylinder in Mercedes-AMG's A45 develops only 29bhp less than the Hennessey Focus. However, in line with Hennessey's reputation for squeezing huge numbers from already-quick cars, further improvements are set to follow – the company says that it'll soon offer upgraded intercoolers, turbochargers and exhaust downpipes, as well as further ECU tweaks.

Pricing details for the HPE400 package will be revealed when it has been fully developed.

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MODEL FOCUS

The low-down on Porsche's 997.1-generation Carrera and Carrera S

BUYING GUIDE

BMW 330d and 335d: practical, economical and fun, but should you buy one?

Aftermarket news



NOVITEC ROSSO 488

The Ferrari 488 is not a car in need of greater performance, but German tuner Novitec can provide it anyway. A range of modifications for the GTB and Spider include a new three-stage package taking power to as much as 754bhp (from 661bhp), with torque up to 655lb (from 561lb ft). Styling options, including 21-inch wheels, also give the 488 some Speciale-style aggression.



ABT GTI CLUBSPORT

Bavaria-based Abt has managed to extract 335bhp from the Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport (which has 286bhp as standard), eclipsing even VW's lighter, 306bhp Clubsport S. Also available are new alloy wheel designs in 18, 19 or 20-inch diameters, a four-exit exhaust system, springs, dampers and anti-roll bars, and meaty six-piston front brake calipers.



SHELBY GTE

Legitimate uses for bonnet stripes are few, but any car developed by Shelby can be considered a just cause. The Mustang GTE is available as both V8 and EcoBoost, the former adding 46bhp to the standard GT's 410bhp, the latter lifting the 2.3-litre turbocharged car from 313bhp to a useful 340bhp. A Ford Performance exhaust and handling pack are also included in the \$17,999 upgrade price.



BBR MX-5 SUPER 200

BBR's latest upgrade for Mazda's 2-litre MX-5 adds billet steel intake and exhaust camshafts, upgraded valve springs, a 4-into-1 exhaust manifold, a cold air intake and StarChip ECU tuning. Together they lift power to 205bhp from 158bhp, and torque to 179lb ft, a 26lb ft gain on BBR's dyno. A Super 200+ package, with quiet and louder exhaust options, takes that to 214bhp and 183lb ft.

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Titanium Hercules alloys, Parking Camera, 10,000 miles, 2008, **£164,990**



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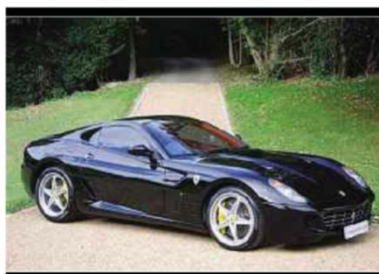
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Carbon driving zone, Ceramic brakes, VIP
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Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano F1
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Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera LHD
Skorpius Alloys, Alcantara Sports Seats, Carbon
Driving Zone, 25,000 miles, 2009, **£91,990**



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Lifting gear, branding pack, colour sat nav, full electric
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Alloy wheels, Colin Clarke Engine, Re-Build,
100 miles, 1973, **£89,990**



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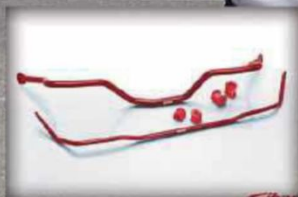


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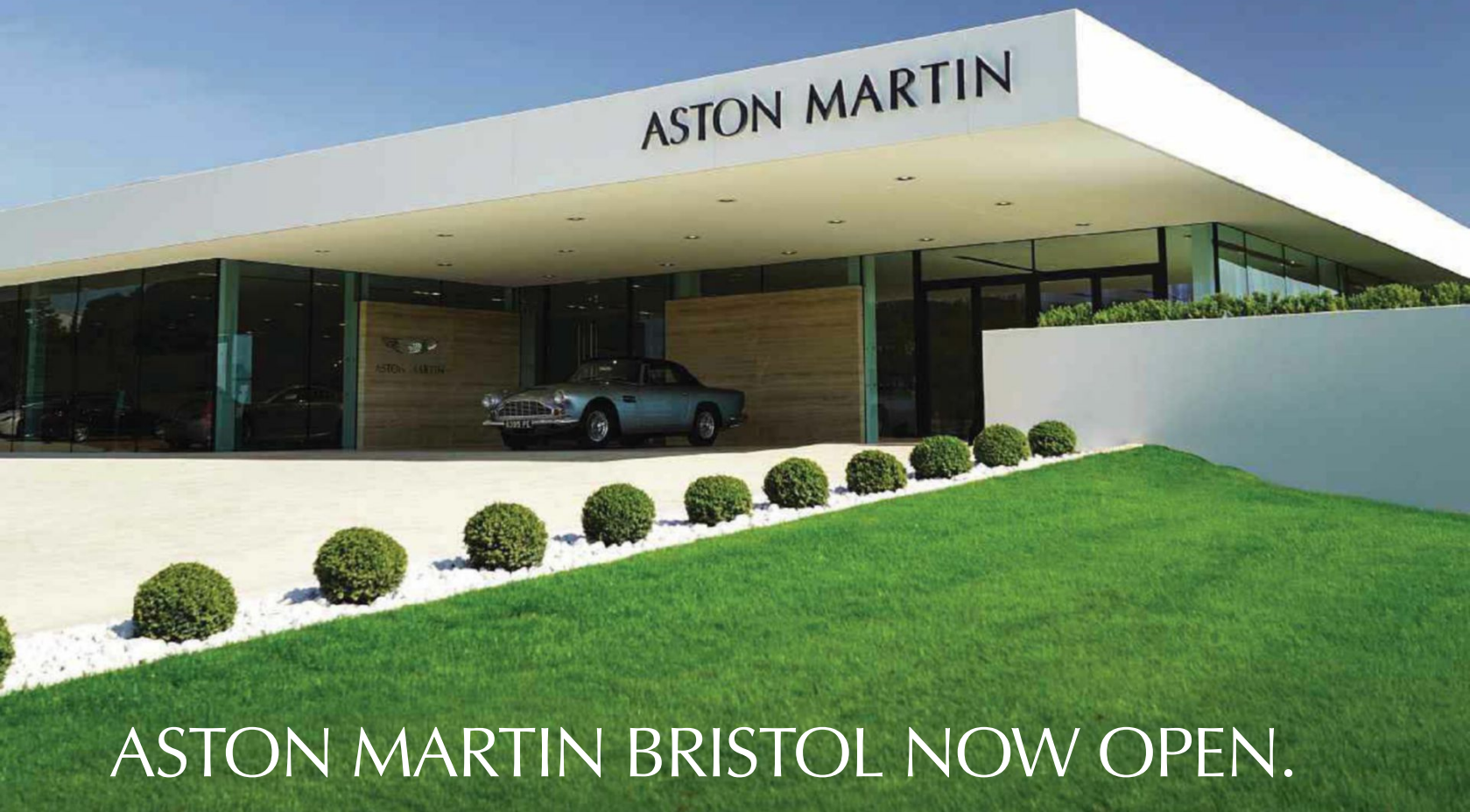
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THE KNOWLEDGE

🔴 = 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, FF = Fast Fleet). 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	★★★★☆
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 Al quattro	181 R	13	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi S3	188 R	£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	3.6	-	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	5.2	-	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	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	184	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 ST200	225 R	£22,745	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	198	6.7	-	143	140	46.3	+ Massive fun - Mountune version offers the same power for considerably less	★★★★☆
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 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 RS (Mk3)	227 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 - Needs to be driven hard	★★★★☆
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	227 R	£30,000	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.4	12.4	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 S Sport	132 R	£15,995	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tiny 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	3.9	-	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, nimble - Chassis lacks sparkle found in previous JCWs	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Challenge (F56)	224 R	£32,000	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1215kg	191	6.3	-	152	155	42.2	+ A more hardcore JCW, honed with help from evo! - Just 100 being built	★★★★☆
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 Salternative	★★★★☆
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	225 R	£21,995	4/1598	205/5800	221/1750	1185kg	176	6.5	-	143	125	47.9	+ The most focused small hatch on sale - Nearly £4k more than a Fiesta ST Mountune	★★★★☆
Peugeot 308 GTi 250 by Peugeot Sport	223 R	£26,855	4/1598	246/6000	231/1900	1205kg	207	6.2	-	155	139	47.1	+ A very capable hot hatch... - ...that lacks the sheer excitement of the best in class	★★★★☆

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Icon: Porsche Carrera GT driven



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 Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport S (left) is our favourite hyperhatch, with the four-wheel-drive Ford Focus RS close behind. VW's Golf R is also brilliant if you're looking for something a little more mature. Of the smaller hatches, the Fiesta ST Mountune just edges the Peugeot 208 GTI by Peugeot Sport.

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 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 1.6	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	271/5500	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	271/5500	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 FI Team R26	195 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ The car the R26.R is based on - FI Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	200 R	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	5.8	15.1	147	-	-	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	225 R	£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	227 R	£28,380	4/1984	286/5900	258/1700	1300kg	224	6.4	13.4	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	£19,125	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1197kg	160	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	£26,955	4/1968	181/3500	280/1750	1302kg	141	7.5	-	143	114	64.2	+ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTI	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	207 R	£27,495	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1276kg	173	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved - Mégane 265 beats it as a pure drivers' car	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40 (Mk7)	218 D	£30,935	4/1984	286/5350	280/1700	1300kg	224	6.3	-	155	162	40.4	+ A faster, sharper, more entertaining GTI - Some rivals are more exciting on track	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S (Mk7)	227 R	£33,995	4/1984	306/5800	280/1850	1285kg	242	5.8	12.8	165	172	38.2	+ Blends vast performance with relative usability - Could look more special	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk7)	220 R	£31,685	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1401kg	215	5.2	12.4	155	165	39.8	+ 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)	224 R	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one	★★★★★
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto	★★★★★

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OUR CHOICE

BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the current M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's a brutally fast car, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. The '30 Jahre' special edition, which has an extra 40bhp, is especially worth a look.



BEST OF THE REST

Mercedes' E63 AMG (pictured) pips BMW's M3 for us, although Alfa Romeo's Giulia Quadrifoglio is hugely tempting, being the first Alfa in a long time that's a serious threat for its rivals. 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	226 R	£59,000	6/2891	503/6500	443/2500	1524kg	335	3.9	-	191	198	40.3	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals	★★★★★
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	1630kg	252	4.3	-	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 DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★★
Audi S3 Saloon	192 D	£33,540	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	155	162	26.4	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B9)	225 D	£44,000	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1630kg	218	4.7	-	155	166	38.7	+ Strong response and delivery from turbo engine - Chassis feels softer than before	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B8)	166 D	108'-16	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1705kg	195	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4	★★★★★
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	105'-08	8/4163	444/7800	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	100'-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	106'-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	223	29.4	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant Performance (C7)	224 D	£86,420	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1950kg	311	3.7	-	155	223	29.4	+ As above, but with even more power - A stern test of self-control	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 R	108'-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	102'-04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi RS7 Sportback	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 Sportback	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	108'-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	111-12	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	104'-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	98'-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	109'-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	★★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 R	£330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 R	£67,030	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - The novelty might wear off	★★★★★
Cadillac CT6	226 D	£69,990	6/2997	411/5700	409/2500	1950kg	214	5.7	-	149	223	28.2	+ Caddy's S-class rival scores on comfort - But not on driver involvement	★★★★★
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 2.0d AWD	227 D	£33,825	4/1999	178/4000	317/1750	1615kg	112	7.5	-	140	123	60.6	+ Great chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished	★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	213 D	£44,865	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1635kg	208	4.9	-	155	194	34.9	+ Neat handling, neat design - V6 loses appeal in the real world	★★★★★
Jaguar XF S	214 D	£49,945	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1710kg	223	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	1750kg	172	5.8	-	155	144	51.4	+ Great chassis, good looks, better engine than V6 petrol - It's still a diesel	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	109'-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	113'-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 XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148 D	£58,690	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1835kg	150	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	1875kg	294	4.4	-	174	270	24.4	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★
Jaguar F-Pace 3.0 V6 Supercharged	222 D	£65,275	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1884kg	202	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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	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-'65	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-'66	6/2979	404/5500	406/4500	1810kg	221	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-'11	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	177	242	27.2	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum	★★★★★	
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	226 D	'10-'10	4.05	6/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	193	250	26.4	+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically	★★★★★
Maserati Levante Diesel	221 D	'15-'15	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	'14-'20	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	'14-'15	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	'15-'16	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	'16-'16	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	'16-'16	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	'14-'15	8/5461	549/5500	531/1770	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	'16-'16	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	'11-'13	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1995kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel	★★★★★	
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	'16-'16	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	'14-'15	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	'16-'16	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	'10-'10	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 S63 AMG	172 D	'12-'12	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 Turbo	227 D	'11-'13	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	1995kg	276	3.6	-	190	212	30.4	+ Searing pace with body control that's a real step up; superb rear wing, too - Still very heavy	★★★★★	
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 R	'11-'16	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	'10-'16	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	'14-'14	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	'15-'15	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	'15-'16	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	'17-'17	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2100kg	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	'13-'14	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	'11-'13	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	'14-'16	6/2997	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	222 FF	'14-'16	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	'14-'16	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	'16-'16	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	'10-'10	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	'12-'16	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	'12-'12	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	'12-'12	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	158	242	27.2	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns (again) - Without a power increase	★★★★★	
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns - Without the blue paint and gold wheels	★★★★★	
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era	★★★★★	
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	★★★★★	
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 R	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?	★★★★★	
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP	073 R	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg									

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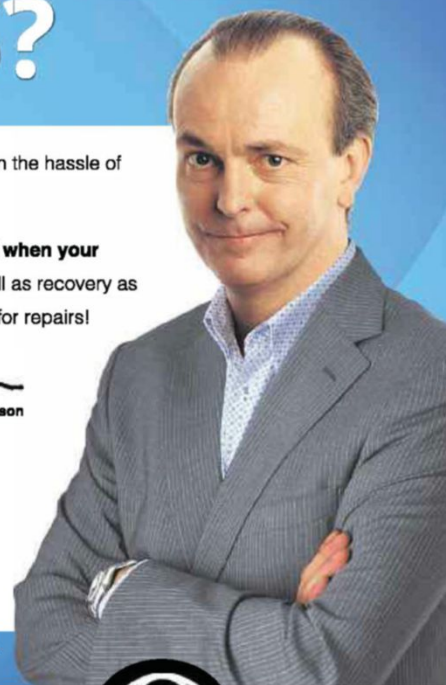


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OUR CHOICE

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 718 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	
Abarth 124 Spider	225 D	£29,850	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	161	6.8	-	143	148	44.1	+ Predictable and fun rear end - Vague and lifeless front end	★★★★★
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	£99-111	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	★★★★★
Alpina B4 Biturbo Convertible	227 D	£62,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1840kg	223	4.5	-	187	186	35.3	+ A great GT - Not as exciting to drive as the numbers may suggest	★★★★★
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	£98-112	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	£99-112	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	451/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	201	343	19.2	+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - ...let down by a frustrating gearbox	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	£12-14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£95-115	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	£99-121	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	£98-114	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	£99-114	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 RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	£96-108	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	122	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	£37,100	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1600kg	204	5.2	-	155	199	33.2	+ Neat styling; great drivetrain - Loss of dynamic ability compared with coupe	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	186 D	£43,005	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces	★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	£96-109	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	£96-109	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	£98-102	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 Z8	026 R	£90-103	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	4/1596	135/6800	122/4100	540kg	254	5.0	-	122	-	-	+ Feisty engine, sweetly balanced, manic and exciting - The temptation of more power	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 310R	227 D	£24,995	4/1596	152/7000	124/5600	540kg	286	4.8	-	126	-	-	+ Intense and exciting - Sticky tyres limit the amount of throttle adjustability	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 360	209 R	£27,795	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg	327	4.8	-	130	-	-	+ Extra power is welcome - You'll need the six-speed gearbox to make the most of it	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420	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	£97-114	4/1596	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	4/1596	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	+ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	£13-14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg	342	4.8	-	130	-	-	+ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 R	£99-112	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	£98-114	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	£99-110	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	£92-106	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	£99-106	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★★
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 useability above outright thrills	★★★★★
Ferrari California	171 D	£98-114	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	£99-109	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Convertible	186 R	£56,745	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	+ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably junior to the V6 S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 R	£65,745	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	+ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is £20k cheaper	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Convertible	-	£92,295	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	+ Pace, characterful V8 - Costs £25k more than the S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 R	£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	£99-114	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	£98-112	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Mad looks; real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 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	★★★★★

PAST
MASTER

PORSCHE 911 GT2 (996.1)

456bhp, rear-wheel drive, and no traction control. That was the 996.1 GT2, and the reason Richard Meaden took a brave pill before trying it

'Drop into second gear, grip the steering wheel a smidge harder, squeeze the throttle to the floor and hang on tight. The engine hits its stride early, every last one of the 457lb ft hitting the road hard. For a moment the Michelins can't cope and the tail slithers to the left as the differential

struggles to bring things under control. Punch into third and the whole thing happens again, the acceleration verging on the uncomfortable, each successive gear prolonging the stomach-churning rollercoaster sensation. It's a devastatingly fast car. 'With so much low-end torque

you have to be mindful of the tail stepping out, but you always have the option of letting the tail hunker down before flooring it. When it does slide you need to be ready to catch it, but assuming you get the corrective lock dialled-in quickly enough, the GT2 is surprisingly friendly.'



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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 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 Cup 250	224 R	£45,600	4/1798	243/7200	184/3500	931kg	265	3.9	-	154	175	37.7	+ Quickest Elise yet - Prioritises grip over adjustability	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	183 R	£11-15	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	108/3500	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-AMG C63 S Cabriolet	226 D	£68,115	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1850kg	276	4.1	-	155	208	31.7	+ A born hooligan - Body flex takes away some control	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	£81,915	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Wafty performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£112,510	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	183 D	£170,815	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	155	270	24.4	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	£08-13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	£04-10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 R	£12-14	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 R	£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	224 D	£41,739	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	170	168	38.2	+ Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with	★★★★★
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-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 R	£92-93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	£93-01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Griff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	£00-04	4/2198	154/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	£03-05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Vuhl 05	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	★★★★★

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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

Lower down the 911 range, the 991.2 Carrera and Carrera S haven't been ruined by the addition of turbos. Elsewhere, Jaguar's F-type R Coupe (left) is a real hoot, and we'd take a Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe over BMW M4, while Lotus's Exige and Evra continue to 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	£7-09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	★ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold ★★★★★
Alpina D4 Biturbo	206 R	£50,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	★ Fifth-gear oversteer - Sounds like a diesel; fuel economy not as good as you might hope ★★★★★
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 R	£58,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1615kg	254	4.2	-	188	177	37.2	★ More fluid than the M4; better traction, too - Not as precise as the M-car over the limit ★★★★★
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 Vantage GT8	224 R	£165,000	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	292	4.4	-	190	-	-	★ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 being made ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	224 D	£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 (so get the manual) ★★★★★
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	£9-13	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 DB11	226 R	£154,900	12/5204	600/6500	516/1500	1770kg	344	3.9	-	200	333	19.8	★ An excellent GT - Suffers in outright handling terms as a result ★★★★★
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 DB9	178 R	£04-16	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	183	368	18.2	★ A great start to Gaydon-era Astons - Automatic gearbox could be quicker ★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS	142 R	£07-12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	★ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey - Can bite the unwary ★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	204 R	£29,915	4/1984	227/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	155	137	47.9	★ Desirable, grippy and effortlessly quick - Still not the last word in interaction ★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	£32,860	4/1984	227/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	155	149	44.1	★ Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement ★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk2)	209 R	£38,790	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1365kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	★ The most dynamically interesting TT yet - Still not as interactive as a Cayman ★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk3)	158 R	£09-14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	209	31.4	★ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it ★★★★★
Audi TT RS Plus (Mk2)	185 D	£02-14	5/2480	355/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	174	209	31.4	★ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT ★★★★★
Audi S5	225 D	£43,795	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	220	4.7	-	155	166	38.7	★ Sweeter chassis than previous S5 - Still not engaging enough ★★★★★
Audi RS5	206 R	£59,870	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	263	4.5	-	155	246	26.9	★ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering ★★★★★
Audi R8 V8	201 R	£07-15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.1	9.9	188	332	19.9	★ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price ★★★★★
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 - V12 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	£11-12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.8	-	155	224	-	★ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick ★★★★★
BMW M235i Coupe	225 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	£57,055	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	226 R	£60,065	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	499/6250	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	£07-13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	★ Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M ★★★★★
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	171 R	£00-11	8/4361	444/8300	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	£00-07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	★ One of the best BMWs ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel ★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (E46)	219 R	£05-07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	-	155	-	23.7	★ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car ★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	200 R	£03-04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	★ Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a bit... sluggish ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E36)	148 R	£93-98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1460kg	223	5.4	12.8	157	-	25.7	★ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	165 R	£06-10	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	17.8	147	-	20.3	★ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only ★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 R	£06-09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	155	-	23.3	★ A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in ★★★★★
BMW M Coupe	005 R	£08-10	6/3246	321/7400	258/4900	1375kg	237	5.3	-	155	-	25.0	★ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse ★★★★★
BMW M6 (F13)	218 R	£93,150	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155	231	28.8	★ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade too... ★★★★★
BMW M6 (E63)	106 R	£05-10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	★ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace ★★★★★
BMW i8	210 R	£99,590	3/1499	357/5800	420/3700	1485kg	244	4.4	-	155	49	134.5	★ Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up ★★★★★
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28 *	220 R	£71,750	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	£62,470	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1496kg	312	4.4	9.4	180	279	23.5	★ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 R	£89,620	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.7	-	196	291	23.1	★ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed ★★★★★
Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost	222 R	£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	225 R	£34,995	8/4951	410/6500	391/4250	1711kg	243	4.8	11.6	155	299	20.9	★ Looks, noise, performance, value, right-hand drive - Comes undone on rougher roads ★★★★★
Ginetta G40R	165 R	£35,940	4/1999	175/6700	140/5000	795kg	224	5.8	-	140	-	-	★ A race-compliant sports car for the road - Feels too soft to be a hardcore track toy ★★★★★
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	200 R	£96-00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	★ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some ★★★★★
Honda NSX	188 R	£90-05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.5	-	168	-	22.8	★ The useable supercar - 270bhp sounds a bit weedy today ★★★★★
Honda NSX-R *	100 R	£02-03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	168	-	-	★ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe	204 D	£51,260	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1567kg	217	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	★ Drop-dead looks, brilliant chassis, desirability - Engine lacks top-end fight ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type S Coupe	211 D	£60,000	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	227 D	£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 F-type SVR Coupe	224 D	£110,000	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1705kg	338	3.5	-	200	269	25.0	★ Sharper, quicker and lighter than ever - But only by fractions ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 R	£09-14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	★ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	£11-14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1678kg	328	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	★ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe ★★★★★
Lexus RC200T F Sport	225 R	£36,495	4/1998	242/5800	258/1650	1675kg	147	7.5	-	143	168	39.2	★ Fluid ride - Lacks body control and outright grip ★★★★★
Lexus RCF	226 R	£59,995	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.5	-	168	251	26.5	★ 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 ★★★★★
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 ★★★★★



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What to look out for

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check the dipstick and look for exhaust smoke. Ensure the gears engage smoothly – the synchro on fifth especially can wear, and a rebuild is c£800. Check for rust, particularly on the bulkhead between engine and cabin – look in the engine bay and the driver footwell. (Full guide, [evo 222](#).)

SPECIFICATION

Years 1998-2003
Engine in-line 4-cyl, 2157cc
Power 209bhp @ 7200rpm
Torque 158lb ft @ 6700rpm
0-60mph 6.1sec
Top speed 142mph
Rating ★★★★★

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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 - Paddleshift only	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	203 R	'14-'15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	202+	275	23.9	+ <i>evo</i> 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 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	+ <i>evo</i> 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 GTCA Lusso	225 D	£230,430	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	360	3.4	-	208	350	18.8	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris	★★★★★
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 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	542/7200	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	£2.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	273	-	-	+ The most powerful car we've ever tested - It's sold out; we couldn't afford one anyway...	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCRX Edition	118 R	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	250+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - <i>Spidey</i> power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán LP580-2	224 R	£155,400	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	1406kg	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 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 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 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 Diablo 6.0	019 R	'00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 R	'10-'12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 R	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren 540C	227 D	£126,000	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg	413	3.5	-	199	258	25.5	+ A very good junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive	★★★★★
McLaren 570S	217 R	£143,250	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1440kg	397	3.1	-	204	249	26.6	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar(!)	★★★★★
McLaren 570GT	224 D	£154,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1495kg	382	3.4	-	204	249	26.6	+ Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving	★★★★★
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	1490kg	616	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	'03-'07	8/5439	617/6500										

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 Pirelli 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 GT3 (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	Yes
BMW M4	1:19.2	199	Yes
BMW i8	1:19.4	210	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	1:19.5	212	-
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy 275	1:19.6	212	-
BMW M5 Competition Pack (F10M) (fastest saloon)	1:19.7	-	Yes
Audi TTS (Mk3)	1:19.9	209	-
Audi R8 V8 (Mk1)	1:20.1	201	-
BMW M135i	1:20.4	212	-
Nissan 370Z Nismo	1:20.5	209	-
Alfa Romeo 4C	1:20.7	209	-
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	1:21.4	-	Yes
VW Golf R (Mk7)	1:21.6	212	-
Toyota GT86 TRD	1:23.7	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
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon	1:24.0	211	Yes
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S	1:24.1	227	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 290 (on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.2	227	-
Ford Focus RS (Mk3, on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2, on Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	1:25.1	227	-
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

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	Yes
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
Vuhi 05	1:06.5	220	Yes
Zenos E10 S	1:06.6	214	-
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	1:06.9	177	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R (fastest hot hatch)	1:07.3	205	Yes
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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Jaguar XJ220 headlight covers

THERE'S AN ELEMENT OF THE LOST SUPERCAR ABOUT the Jaguar XJ220. Nothing to do with the McLaren F1, more something related to the way it looks, which is too benign and maybe even a bit vacant for a car of such terrifying speed. Perhaps this is because at a glance the XJ220 appears to have no eyes, which in tandem with the gills at the base of its flush-glazed windscreen give it an otherworldly presence.

The 213mph XJ220 does have headlights, of course, but so rarely do you see them in action that it's easy to forget Jaguar went to the trouble of fitting a pair. And they really were trouble. The tail lights might have been filched from the Rover 200 without much fuss, but the headlights had to be deeply recessed within the long aluminium bodywork of the car's nose and this made them a bugger to angle when it came to providing lighting through tight bends. There was also the small matter of how they might be presented, and given that the XJ220 was a car conceived and manufactured in the shadow of the '80s...

One shudders to think of the havoc pop-up headlights would have wreaked on designer Keith Helfet's fabulously supple lines, but it could well have happened. In fact, it's exactly what the Saturday Club – an unofficial, out-of-hours band of passionate Jaguar engineers and designers who had seen the Ferrari F40 and thought, 'Yeah, think we can beat that' – were left to nervously contemplate when regulations prohibited the use of traditional transparent covers. But there were concerns that pop-ups

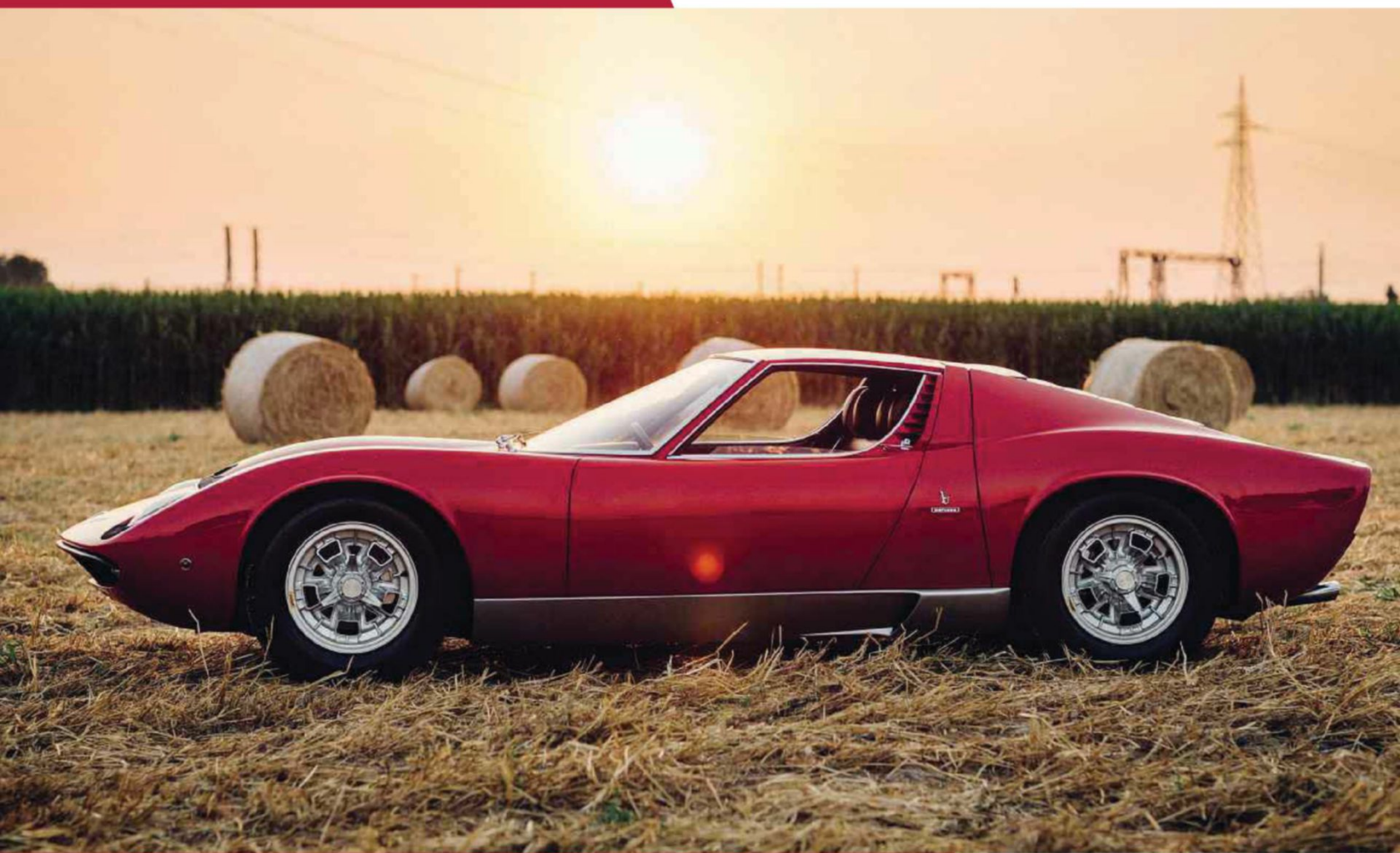
would be slow to operate and unreliable – characteristics at odds with what was intended to be the fastest, most powerful and most expensive production car the world had seen. And in a car with minimal drag to complement its ground-effect aerodynamics, popping the headlights at any decent speed would have felt like re-entry. In the end, pop-up lights were a line the Club simply wouldn't cross.

The eventual solution was beautifully simple, consisting of small body-coloured cover-panels hinged at the front that fell flat when the headlights were switched on. Helfet had come up with the idea for the long-running XJ41 project (the original F-type, some say, and certainly a basis for the supercar's front-end design) and protracted fiddling eventually made it work, a small electric motor raising the covers once the headlights were switched back off.

It wasn't perfect, mind. With the covers down, the XJ220's sculpted nose is left with two deep gouges, like when a pebble is lifted from damp sand. However, the mechanism itself is as slick as you like and, according to XJ220 experts Don Law Racing, reassuringly reliable. You can witness it in slow-motion during the music video for 'Knock Yourself Out' by Jadakiss, the defining moment arriving just as the Grammy-nominated rapper leaves a garden party with what we can assume is his new girlfriend. It's well worth a watch, the XJ220 being a refreshing choice of car for this kind of stunt (step aside, Lamborghini) and possibly enlisted on the basis of its inventive headlight covers alone. ✕



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