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### TWIN TEST: AUDI RS3 v BMW M2

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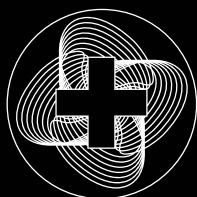
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# 243

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# Ed speak

**PRECONCEIVED OPINIONS CAN BE** dangerous, leading you down questionable routes to numerous wormholes you can't back out of. Porsche's

new 911 GT2 RS nearly had us tunnel-deep underground with no way out this month, and not because of its widow-maker reputation.

Surely this was the 911 with too much? Too much power. Too much aero. Too much focus on a single lap time. Too much of too much, and not enough of what makes a 911 – any performance car for that matter – something to enjoy, something that will stir the emotions we crave when we have the right car on the right road.

The GT2 RS had us concerned the moment it was announced. Porsche has never been a power chaser or headline grabber just for the sake of it. But here it was, quite simply chasing numbers. This couldn't be a good thing, could it?

If you've already absorbed Adam Towler's first drive on page 50 you'll see we had little to be concerned about. It shows it's still possible for the extremities of an engineer's imagination to be interpreted and turned into the most thrilling and intoxicating of drivers' cars.

Unlike Audi's RS3, which still vexes us. It too chases power and numbers, but acceleration is its focus rather than a lap time. And it still misses the mark that we – and we think you – would aim for. For the RS3 too much of one thing (power) is to the detriment of many others (poise, adjustability, enjoyment). It highlights, once again, that nailing the thrill we search out when looking for a great performance car remains the finest of lines upon which those producing such machines need to remain focused.

On a different subject, some of you have asked where our annual eCoty celebration was last month. Worry not, it's coming *next* month, as an end-of-year treat, and will be more comprehensive than ever before. I'm also pleased to announce that **evo** will once again be supporting the London City Concours in 2018. Returning to the gardens of the Honourable Artillery Company in the City of London on 7-8 June, it will feature a display of Le Mans winners and Land Speed Record holders.

**Stuart Gallagher, Editor** @stuartg917

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# briefing

## WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU...

Aston Martin's new Vantage is revealed,  
with DB10-influenced styling and power  
from a 503bhp twin-turbo AMG V8

by STUART GALLAGHER

**T**HERE ARE DAYS WHEN IT CAN feel as if Aston Martin is never out of the news. DB11, Valkyrie, new showrooms, a new factory, submarines, final-edition Vanquish S models and Formula 1 – every news sector covered, no sleep for the product, marketing and PR men and women.

The arrival of the next Vantage is a different story, though. A much bigger story. This is Aston Martin's most important new car for years. The outgoing version sold over 16,000 examples during its 11-year life, more than any Aston that had gone before and a number that is only expected to be eclipsed by the DBX SUV and this, the all-new twin-turbocharged V8 Aston Martin Vantage.



*'The new Vantage's styling, both inside and out, provides a strong topic of conversation'*



Evolution and revolution have been combined in the development of the new Vantage. With a design team led by Marek Reichman, the chassis development spearheaded by Matt Becker, and the whole project overseen by the enigmatic and energetic CEO Andy Palmer, this Vantage is also the first all-new Aston Martin that the latter two have overseen from inception. 'With everything that Aston Martin has on its agenda at the moment and going forward, the Vantage is what I am looking forward to the most,' Palmer told *evo*. 'It's my first Aston Martin. The first car I've been involved with from the beginning.'

It's quite a car, too. Its platform and core structure is a further development of the DB11's aluminium architecture, the replacement for the venerable VH platform that served Aston so well for so long. But the Vantage is more than simply a re-bodied DB11 – 70 per cent of its structural components are new. And a focus on providing better balance, an increase in rigidity and weight efficiency has provided Becker with the blank canvas required to hone the Vantage's handling.

With new front and rear subframes, the latter solid-mounted, there are few like-for-like carry-over parts. Everything

#### AM Vantage (2018)

<b>Engine</b>	V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo
<b>Power</b>	503bhp @ 6000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	505lb ft @ 2000-5000rpm
<b>Weight</b>	1530kg (dry)
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	334bhp/ton (based on dry weight)
<b>0-62mph</b>	3.7sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	195mph (claimed)
<b>Basic price</b>	£120,900







**Below:** compare the new car with its predecessor and competitors and it's clear the Vantage is moving from being a 911 Carrera rival to a new position in the 911 Turbo class

hanging off the structure is new, from bushings to springs and dampers – the latter the latest development of Aston's adaptive system with Skyhook technology – to brake discs and calipers and, of course, the engine and gearbox.

This new Vantage is the first Aston Martin to be powered by a third-party motor since the Jaguar-engined DB7. As with every front-engined sports coupe worth its salt today, the AMG-sourced 4-litre, twin-turbo V8 is positioned as far back in the engine bay as possible. While AM's collaboration with Mercedes hasn't allowed it to ask the engineers at Affalterbach to open the V8 up and add trick cylinder heads or a set of lighter pistons, there are bespoke induction and exhaust systems and the engine management has been reprogrammed accordingly. All in, the results are peak outputs of 503bhp and 505lb ft of torque, a claimed 0-62mph time of 3.7sec and a 195mph maximum.

Power is sent to the rear wheels only

via an eight-speed ZF automatic gearbox and an electronically managed limited-slip differential – a first for Aston Martin. Linked to the ESP, the e-diff can go from fully open to 100 per cent locked as required. At higher speeds, Aston claims it provides an even finer rate of response to improve both straight-line stability and cornering agility. Torque vectoring is also standard, as is speed-sensitive electric power steering.

While the source of its engine will be considered a big departure for Aston Martin, the new Vantage's styling, both inside and out, provides an equally strong topic of conversation. In essence it blends the look of the DB10 (the model created for the James Bond movie *Spectre*, and of which just ten examples were made) with the aggression of the Vulcan – the short-run series of track-only V12 hypercars. 'The connection with the DB10 is straightforward,' explains Reichman. 'When the Broccoli family came to Gaydon to discuss a new car for *Spectre*

## AM Vantage S (2017)

V8, 4735cc  
430bhp @ 7300rpm  
361lb ft @ 5000rpm  
1610kg  
271bhp/ton  
4.8sec (claimed)  
190mph (claimed)  
£94,995



## Audi R8 V10

V10, 5204cc  
533bhp @ 7800rpm  
398lb ft @ 6500rpm  
1595kg  
340bhp/ton  
3.5sec (claimed)  
198mph (claimed)  
£123,330



## Mercedes-AMG GT S

V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo  
515bhp @ 6250rpm  
494lb ft @ 1800rpm  
1570kg  
333bhp/ton  
3.8sec (claimed)  
193mph (claimed)  
£113,260



## McLaren 540C

V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo  
533bhp @ 7500rpm  
398lb ft @ 3500rpm  
1311kg (dry)  
413bhp/ton (based on dry weight)  
3.5sec (claimed)  
199mph (claimed)  
£126,000



## Porsche 911 Turbo

Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo  
533bhp @ 6400rpm  
524lb ft @ 1950rpm  
1595kg  
340bhp/ton  
3.0sec (claimed)  
198mph (claimed)  
£128,692

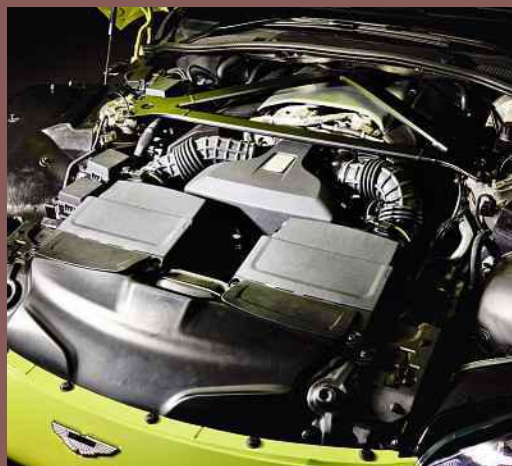


we showed them a handful of products that would be timely for the film, and we agreed on a particular model. But as they were leaving they saw the early Vantage sketches, asked what it was and if it could be ready for the film.

'This was back in 2014 and a production car wasn't possible, so the DB10 was created. It didn't detract from the Vantage's final design; if anything, it provided an additional design phase as we got to see a finished, running prototype on the big screen nearly 18 months before we signed-off the car.'

The new Vantage has a very aggressive design. Its Vulcan influence is unashamedly clear to see from nose to tail, from the trademark AM grille to the function-first diffuser that dominates beneath the rear bumper. The car delivers its aerodynamic requirements via its front splitter, a complex series of underfloor channels that manage both airflow and cooling, and that diffuser. Side gills manage the air pressure in the front wheelarches, and the upswept rear bootlid is a nod to the previous Vantage. This is also the first series-production Aston Martin to generate downforce.

Longer, wider and taller than the outgoing car, the new Vantage disguises its increased dimensions well, although having only seen it within the confines of a design studio we'll reserve judgement



**Left:** twin-turbo 4-litre V8 sourced from AMG. **Above:** bold new interior details

on how it sits on the road until we've seen it surrounded by its rivals. In terms of weight, Aston is currently revealing only a dry weight (with lightweight options fitted) of 1530kg – add at least 75kg to that figure to account for the fluids.

The cabin architecture and design is as focused as the exterior. You sit low, in a seat that feels as if it is located right by the rear axle. There's more interior space than before, despite a wide transmission tunnel that features a number of controls familiar to anyone who has recently been in an AMG-badged Mercedes. There are bespoke rotary and toggle switches, though, with tactile functionality, and

the instruments sit within three separate binnacles – perhaps the least successful element of the interior's design.

There will be a number of option packs, including a Sports Pack (sportier seats and steering wheel), Exterior Black Pack (matt black grille mesh and window surrounds), a Tech Pack (keyless entry, blind-spot indicators, auto park, touchpad, cruise control and an electrically adjustable steering column) and a Comfort Pack (including 16-way adjustable heated seats).

Deliveries are due to begin in the second quarter of 2018, with prices starting from £120,900.

*'This is the first series-production Aston Martin to generate downforce'*







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# Why this is VW's real hot hatch

Input from the chassis man behind the Golf Clubsport S means this should be the most exciting Polo GTI to date

**Y**OU WOULDN'T WANT TO launch a new small hot hatch, not right now. The next Fiesta ST is just around the corner, while Audi's S1, Mini's John Cooper Works and Peugeot's 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport provide stiff competition that you can buy today. The upcoming Polo GTI will have its work cut out, then, and given that previous versions have been rather lacklustre, you might not hold out too much hope for it. But this time it seems there's plenty to be optimistic about.

Firstly, the car's chassis has been signed off by VW's head of chassis tuning, Karsten Schebsdat – the ex-Porsche engineer responsible for the spectacular Golf GTI Clubsport S. We've also been reliably informed that he'll be interrupting his succession of Golf R company cars so he can run a Polo GTI.

So what have Schebsdat and his colleagues done to make VW's (for now) entry-level hot hatch a more tempting prospect than the company's flagship performance model? Although the GTI uses the same layout as the basic Polo, including a torsion-beam rear axle, it sits 15mm lower on springs that are 38 per cent stiffer at the front and 39 per cent stiffer at the rear. New fixed-rate passive dampers are standard, while there's the option of a Sport Select arrangement that offers two modes: Normal and Sport.

The car's suspension also has a better structure to work off than before, the new GTI's shell being 28 per cent stiffer than



**Above:** the famous GTI red stripe on the grille differentiates the hottest Polo from its softer siblings. **Left:** facia dominated by a huge swathe of red plastic; all instrumentation is digital; DSG will be only transmission choice at launch

the old five-door version's. Even more promising is the news that prototype Polo GTIs were tested in the UK on our rough, potholed roads – and against a Fiesta ST.

In 2018, for the first time, VW's GTI family will comprise three models, the

Polo being bookended by the Golf and an Up. The Polo has clearly been engineered to not step on the toes of the top model, as is exemplified by its power output – 197bhp against 227bhp for the Golf GTI that shares its 2-litre, four-cylinder





turbocharged engine. That's on the money in power terms for the sort of car the Polo is, but fairly mild for a forced-induction motor of its capacity. A claimed 0-62mph time of 6.7sec puts the Polo two and four tenths of a second behind the Peugeot and Mini respectively.

The Polo's position in the GTI hierarchy does have its benefits, because where the Golf has to be fast and sophisticated, the Polo can be more frivolous and fun, as Ralf Kölling, VW's director of small car operations, explains: 'The Polo is lighter, it's shorter, it's better. If you'd like more performance on the road, that's a little bit more the Golf. For agility, you need less weight, you need a shorter wheelbase.'

Kölling is also a fan of the Polo GTI with a manual gearbox, so although the car will be launched with a DSG transmission, a six-speed manual will follow. However, despite Kölling's enthusiasm for the manual 'box, he's less optimistic about how it will sell: 'There

“Where the Golf has to be fast and sophisticated, the Polo has been made to be more frivolous and fun”

are some people like me, a little bit more hardcore, who prefer the manual one. But the market is asking for DSG: we don't build the car for me.' A manual gearbox is a vital part of the appeal of the 208 GTI and the recent Fiesta ST, and its absence the downfall of the current Clio 200, so you can draw your own conclusions as to which will be best on the VW.

It may have a relatively short wheelbase, but the Polo still looks big, a perception not helped by the lack of a three-door option. Yet it is good-looking. The traditional GTI red stripe makes an appearance, stretching across the grille and into the lights. There's what appears to be a nod to the tuner scene at the front,

too: the body-coloured section above the grille looks like a tasteful version of the 'eyebrows' and 'badboy bonnets' that adorn so many modified VWs. Inside, a very red dashboard is home to digital instruments and a central touchscreen, while that old VW GTI staple of tartan seats makes an appearance.

The new Polo GTI isn't revolutionary, but if it can capture the spirit of other recent hot VWs in a smaller package, it could be a real contender. It goes on sale in spring 2018, with a price yet to be confirmed. Later we can expect to see a 'Performance' version, and maybe something special to celebrate 20 years of the Polo GTI in 2018.

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# Track beckons for new Continental GT

Sub-1300kg, 550bhp, V8-powered racer revealed hot on the heels of new Bentley road car

IT TOOK BENTLEY A DECADE TO GET its original Continental GT out of the paddock and onto the track, but a GT3 racing version of the new Conti GT (driven on page 28) will line up on the grid at Monza in 2018 within a couple of months of the first road cars being delivered. And it has a lot to live up to.

The original Continental GT3 race car racked up 528 races, 120 podiums and 45 wins during its short, four-year life. And with GT3 racing becoming evermore competitive, the new Bentley contender can't afford the smallest confidence lift on its way into the first corner.

To create their second-generation GT3 racer, Bentley's motorsport engineers and Malcolm Wilson's M-Sport – the race team charged with running the cars –

started out with the new Conti GT road car. Job one was to shed over 850kg to give a sub-1300kg race-ready weight. Ditching the hand-finished interior accounted for most of that mass, but the use of carbonfibre for the non-structural body panels and other body parts (front splitter, rear wing, arch extensions) also contributed to shedding the pounds, as did the loss of the front driveshafts – the racer is rear-wheel drive. Hours in the wind tunnel have dictated its aggressive aero package, which hangs from the road car's new Porsche Panamera-derived aluminium structure.

Rather than the road car's W12, the racer will feature a development of the 4-litre twin-turbo V8 that served the team so well over the last four seasons. Updates

for 2018 include a redesigned dry sump and new inlet and exhaust systems. Bentley claims its unrestricted output is 'in excess of 550bhp'.

Drive is delivered via a six-speed sequential gearbox, a carbon propshaft and a limited-slip differential. The suspension is all-new and so, too, are the six- and four-piston (front/rear) Alcon brake calipers and iron discs.

For 2018 a pair of Continental GT3s will race in the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup as well as the four-round Intercontinental GT Challenge. With the driver line-up yet to be confirmed, *evo* is prepared to throw its Arai into the mix. It's the least we can do while we wait for the GT3-inspired Continental Supersports road car to arrive.





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## Going straight

Compared with the swoopy McLaren 720s, the fussy new TVR, the overwrought Lexus RC F and the somewhat odd XJR575, something about the delightful white Audi Quattro 20V in **evo** 242 struck me: isn't it time car designers picked up their rulers and rediscovered the joy of crisp, tight and perfectly executed straight lines?

Then I looked at the new Volvo Polestar [above] and realised that someone had got there already – and carried it off very nicely.

**Bruce Woodhouse, Skipton, North Yorkshire**

## GT or not GT?

I loved seeing the Ford GT [above right] glowing against the Norwegian skyline in your amazing drive story (**evo** 241) – vicarious thrills indeed. However, I felt the article failed to answer one of the questions it asked: what's the car like over long distances? I'm talking bum-comfort, range, coping with limited luggage space, etc.

I love the idea of the GT, but if you can't even go on a weekend away in it, it does make you wonder what the point of it really is. Not that I'll ever have to worry about owning one, of course, but it's nice to dream...

**Ross Farmer, South Wales**

*The latest Ford GT is noisy, impractical and not especially comfortable or refined over long journeys, Ross. And the boot is worse than pathetic. Plus it eats unleaded like the starving man. But... when the moment comes,*



*and the right road or, better still, track appears in the windscreen, there is nothing else out there quite like it at the moment. Think of it as a modern-day F40, rather than as a wannabe LaFerrari. As a result – and having now spent a fair bit of time in both – I'm pretty sure which one I'd go for in a money-no-object world. And for once it's not the car from Maranello. – Steve Sutcliffe*

## Problem solved

James Bowen (**Inbox**, issue 242) questions whether **evo**'s new Supertest format – with its lap times, acceleration and braking figures and 'as tested' weights – has any place in a magazine with the strapline 'the thrill of driving'. I would argue that it does.

For starters, those numbers hint at what you can expect in raw performance terms when behind the wheel of the cars in question. Being independently recorded, they also reveal if the manufacturers are telling fibs, particularly when it comes to the cars' kerb weights.

However, I can appreciate that charts and tables are not everyone's cup of tea. And if they're not, the solution is simple: enjoy the lengthy road-driving element of the Supertest, with all its subjective reporting on driving thrills, then when the relatively short data section arrives, simply close your eyes and turn the page.

**Mike Young, Barry, Wales**

## A weighty problem

I'm sure car designers put much thought into under-bonnet packaging, but one thing that



## LETTER OF THE MONTH

# The naked truth

## SO THE NEW, 'PURIST' 911 CARRERA T

(Briefing, **evo** 242) is just 5kg lighter than an entry-level Carrera with no options fitted, yet with true Porsche irony is almost £8000 dearer?

I could drive naked and save 5 kilos. Wouldn't it be great if, instead of being offered models like the T, we could specify a rear-wheel-drive 911 'in white', with little more than an engine, and then add only what we really wanted while watching the kg and £ values increase?

Want only one seat, sir? Of course. That will be just 25kg and £600. No leather fusebox cover? Certainly...

That way you could get a truly lightweight 911 – and not pay extra for the privilege.

**John Rose**

## The Letter of the Month wins an MHD watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives an MHD CR1 watch worth £300. Designed by British car designer Matthew Humphries, the CR1 captures the style of '60s and '70s motoring chronographs and is limited to an edition of just 500 pieces.

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## INBOX



seems to get overlooked is component weight distribution.

Your recent hot hatch Supertest (*evo* 241) highlighted this, the right-hand front corner of each car being significantly heavier than the left, in the case of the Focus RS by some 31kg.

I assume this is down to the cars having been initially designed to be left-hand drive, so with a driver (and other components) on the left, the car would be reasonably evenly balanced. But with the driver on the right, the front-right corner of the Ford must be heading towards being 100kg heavier than the front-left.

I'm no master of physics, but with such a weight discrepancy there is no way any of these cars behaves in exactly the same manner in a right-hand bend as it does in a left-hander.

So instead of putting bags of sand in the boot to aid road holding (think Ford Capri 2.8i in the '80s), should we now all be putting bags of sand in the passenger seat?

**Euan Gibson**

### Hubcap corner

Further to Richard Meaden's request for favourite corners (column, *evo* 240), let me take you back to the mid-1960s and the A446 heading north from what is now the very busy Junction 9 of the M42/A446, just past the Belfry Hotel and the PGA headquarters on the right.

My petrolhead friend and I would often visit this great corner on a warm summer's evening in our modified Austin A40 and Morris 1000. Our procedure would be to drop one of us off to stand on the outside of the corner,

positioned as lookout for traffic approaching in both directions. (Remember in the '60s there was probably only around a quarter of the traffic we live with today.)

With the 'all clear' signalled, Tim Collins in his A40 or me in my Morris 1000 would approach from the southerly direction at maximum speed to try and hang the back end out rounding the left-hander – knowing we could safely use the full width of the road. It was an adrenaline-fuelled few minutes of harmless driving fun. We even gave the bend a name – Hubcap Corner – because there were always several hubcaps propped up against the outside wall. In those days a steel wheel would flex and bend enough to spring the hubcap off when cornering!

**George Colman,  
Sutton Coldfield**

### Let it snow...

Richard Meaden is quite right to contend that a Range Rover can be an *evo* car (column, issue 241). I found this out for myself after I also bought a 2007 TDV8 Vogue [above] from a friend.

That winter we were lucky enough to have a heavy snowfall here in the Zurich area. With fresh snow covering even main roads, the Rangie came into its own. Sweeping past traffic crawling at 20mph on tricky uphill stretches, oversteering dramatically when provoked (people waiting at a nearby tram stop had quite a surprise!), it proved it is a truly *evo* car in the right conditions.

So Richard, it's time to start praying for snow this winter.

**Paul Williams,  
Switzerland**





## Rallying wronged

I cannot agree at all with the **evo** team's thoughts on rallying (issue 241). I love the new cars! And let's be fair: in the good old days of Subaru, the one you could buy from the dealer was way off those running in the Welsh mud. So the current situation is nothing new.

Regarding the coverage, yes, it costs extra money, but it's awesome – the shots, the new technology, the whole lot. And for those who want to compare (Mr Beaumont), you can even watch two cars simultaneously, choosing which ones, for the length of the entire stage, and change camera views, too.

The one downside of the modern era is that you know everything from the social networks before you get a chance to watch the event on the site...

**Andy Yefimovich**

## Leap of faith

Following your recent articles on the reborn TVR (**evo** 241 and 242), perhaps I can share my thoughts as someone who, with some excitement, put a deposit down for the new 'Launch Edition' TVR in early 2016.

I eagerly devoured any news that followed until, six months ago, with some trepidation, I went to the presentation to deposit holders of the new (as then un-named) TVR concept car at Gordon Murray's design studios in Guildford. I was not disappointed.

Fast forward to the public reveal – to rapturous applause – at Goodwood, and the sight of the stunningly finished metallic Flame Red Griffith was surpassed only by the brief firing-up of its 5-litre Cosworth V8. I had definitely



made the right decision!

I had taken the same sort of leap of faith when I parted with £1000 for a deposit on a TVR Cerbera at the 1994 London motor show. But this new Griffith is an altogether different beast. It stands out from its predecessors for its superb engineering detail and the promising build quality – all so necessary to convince those doubting-Thomas buyers of 911s, F-types, Vantages and the like to make an equal leap of faith and join the waiting list.

**Matthew Wurr**

## Cheap thrills

Short of a lottery win to fund that McLaren 720S and a second home near some sinuous Italian roads, I suspect most of us have to rely on what's to hand for our motoring pleasures. For me recently that was an Audi A2 TDI [above].

It was -3 degrees outside and the sun was struggling to rise as I rumbled over the cobbles of Alston heading up the A686 for Hartside, but the road was dry and only a single truck lay between Alston and the summit. After a quick stop to revel in the stunning views across to the Lake District peaks in the distance, it was back in the car to indulge in the downhill plunge round the curves to Melmerby, then a return to Hartside and the flowing swoops back to Alston. Magic!

I was driving a low-powered diesel with over 150,000 miles on the clock and typical Audi steering, but for 40 minutes I was in motoring heaven.

The thrill of driving? It's always there – you just have to look for it.

**John Pearson, Sleaford, Lincolnshire**

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# Driven

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# Bentley Continental GT

Bentley was completely in control of the all-new Continental GT's development, and boy has it made a big difference...

**O**K, I'LL COME CLEAN. I WASN'T THE BIGGEST fan of the original Continental GT of 2003, the first all-new car Bentley produced under VW ownership. I thought it was too big, heavy and clumsy to be considered a proper sporting GT. And it was neither smooth nor comfortable enough to be a genuine luxury car. A good first effort, but far from a world-beater.

Over the years the Conti got much better, benefitting from several minor tweaks along the way and one major revamp in 2011. Yet it remained fundamentally the same car launched near the start of the millennium, so basically a Volkswagen with lots of nice bits attached.

Now, though, the Continental GT has been completely re-engineered to the point where it's claimed to be all brand new. It certainly looks very different to before, and this pre-production example – which Bentley says is 99 per cent finished – drives very differently, too.

The big news is that the GT shares its underpinnings not with a humble VW Phaeton but with the Porsche Panamera. And rather than having to work with hand-me-down parts from the VW empire, Bentley's engineers were involved from day one with Porsche during the platform's development, so could dictate exactly what they were going to end up with. And that, explains Bentley's director of chassis engineering, Keith Sharp, has made a massive difference to the end product.

'It's fair to say that we [Porsche and Bentley engineers] worked together on the project right from the word go, at the beginning of the concept stage,' says Sharp. 'And that's made a big difference all the way down the line. It basically means we got what we wanted, not merely what was available.' Which is why Sharp and his team are so confident in the way the new GT drives, even if it does still weigh considerably more than two tons.

'The car is 76kg lighter than before,' counters Sharp. 'But now that we can control everything it does so much more precisely – control its dynamic behaviour – the fact that it weighs what it does doesn't really matter. Because as you'll see when you drive it on the track especially, the

level of control we've managed to instil in the car is in a completely different league from the last model.'

Power still comes from a 6-litre twin-turbo W12 (a V8 will follow, after a hybrid), but the familiar capacity belies the fact that the unit is all-new. Even the firing order is different from the old W12's, because Bentley found that by altering it, and tuning the exhaust valving amongst many other aspects, it could make the engine smoother yet more sporting in feel. And more powerful and economical at the same time. The dual-clutch gearbox to which it's mated is new too, being essentially Bentley's interpretation of the Panamera's eight-speed dual-clutch transmission.

The outputs are impressive. Maximum power is 626bhp at 6000rpm, while maximum torque is 664lb ft, developed between 1350rpm and 4500rpm. These peaks are increases of 59bhp and 148lb ft respectively over the outgoing car, and coupled to a launch-control system are sufficient to fire the 2169kg GT to 62mph in a faintly ridiculous 3.7sec, then on to a top speed of 207mph. The combined

fuel consumption figure of 23.2mpg doesn't seem that horrendous, all things considered; nor does the 278g/km emissions output. Although, as we know, the real-world results can differ somewhat from the lab tests...

The new chassis and suspension are where things really get interesting, though, and represent the biggest departure in philosophy from the original GT. For a start the engine is set around 150mm further back in the chassis, which makes a huge difference to the car's fundamental balance. At the front there are double wishbones, at the rear a multi-link arrangement, but at both ends there is a three-chamber air suspension system teamed with active anti-roll bars, aka Bentley Dynamic Ride. It's these elements, claims Sharp, that provide the most important increase in control.

The brakes are the biggest fitted to any production road car to date, with 420mm cast-iron ventilated discs at the front (up from 405mm, and matching the size of the optional carbon-ceramics on the old car) and 380mm items at the back (up from 335mm). The GT remains four-wheel drive – and needs

**'It somehow manages to disguise its vast weight to a point where, if you were guessing, you might think it weighed 500kg less'**







to be with that much torque available from such low revs. But the way in which the power and torque are deployed has been radically enhanced, and varies as you switch between the three different drive modes.

In Comfort mode up to 38 per cent of torque can reach the front axle (the Conti is essentially rear-wheel drive, only shifting drive to the front when it detects slip). At the same time the maps for the dampers, throttle and gearbox all settle into their most relaxed settings, and the exhaust into its least intrusive, and as such the GT goes properly into waft mode, essentially feeling like a cosseting four-wheel-drive limo. Interestingly, the steering remains the same across all modes, unless you go deep into the menus and select Custom mode, in which you can alter everything to your own tastes.

One up from Comfort is 'Bentley' mode. It's the one the engineers at Crewe believe allows the Conti to give its best on the road. It's a touch more sporting everywhere than in Comfort, yet retains a sizeable dose of soothing, Bentley-like refinement.

There is a delicious, deep-rooted sense of serenity about the way the GT glides across the landscape of our Welsh test route in Bentley mode. It purrs. It floats across uneven

ground with a genuine feeling of majesty. And it's also quiet, whisperingly so if you sit back and really think about it. And then you realise the cabin quality is quite exquisite. It feels more like a million-dollar car inside than one that costs in the region of £160k. The craftsmanship of everything you see and touch and even smell is second to none. An Aston Martin DB11 has a nice enough cabin, but compared with the Conti GT's it seems almost pauper spec.

On the road in Bentley mode the GT feels properly sorted. It somehow manages to disguise its vast weight so well that, if you were guessing, you might think it weighed only 1700kg or so, not nearly 500kg more. That's how crisp its responses are, how nimble it feels, despite the silly numbers on the scales.

And blimey does it feel blisteringly quick in a straight line. The way it summons its energy with such effortless efficiency and simply propels you towards the horizon – as if you've been released from a giant bungee cord at the very extreme of its tension – reminds me of the first time I drove a Bugatti Veyron. The sense of acceleration is total, yet the sense of control – as if everything is going to be just fine, despite the fact you appear to be travelling at Mach 2 much of the time – is also

**Above:** the GT's highly sculpted aluminium body panels are created by heating the metal to 500 degrees Celsius and using high pressure air to shape them.

**Left:** opulent cabin blends traditional craftsmanship with the latest 'connected' tech and touchscreens: it's a truly special place





‘You can harness the weight of the car to put it in places on the circuit, at subtle angles, that benefit the lap time’

all-encompassing. Combined with a gearbox that picks off ratios as quickly and calmly as a pickpocket plundering his victims all the way along Oxford Street, it makes the GT a deeply impressive car to drive, or simply be driven in.

But it's not until you select Sport mode and drive it on a track that you can fully appreciate how far Bentley has gone with the new GT. Its abilities are way beyond anything you might expect of it; so far beyond the previous version of the car that you'd have a job to associate one with the other.

In Sport mode a maximum of only 17 per cent of drive goes to the front axle, and all the various dynamic systems, including the electronic air suspension, are set to deliver maximum sporting thrills, especially the exhaust and throttle maps. Now the new GT feels, well, not quite like a full-blown sports car, but at the very least you could describe it as an extremely sporting GT car.

And if you turn the ESC and traction

control systems off, as Bentley insisted I did at Anglesey Circuit, it will do things and reach angles of slide that a previous GT owner would never, ever believe possible. And it'll slither around with complete and rather beautiful control – you can actually harness the weight of the car to put it in places on the circuit, at subtle angles, that benefit the lap time. That's how adjustable and fundamentally well behaved the new GT is when you take it by the scruff of the neck and throw it around.

Yet at the other end of the scale the Continental GT is more comfortable and more refined on the road than ever before, and its cabin is oh-so opulent. And while looks will be forever a subjective topic, I happen to think that the new styling represents a huge leap forward in allure.

Quite a car is the new Bentley Continental GT. And for around £156,000, you could even consider it something of a bargain.

**Steve Sutcliffe**

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
W12, 5950cc, twin-turbo	626bhp @ 6000rpm	664lb ft @ 1350-4500rpm	3.7sec (claimed)	207mph (claimed)	2169kg (293bhp/ton)	c£156,000

**+** Astonishing agility for such a big, heavy car; raw performance; refinement; cabin quality **-** Thirst, but then at this level, who cares?

**evo rating** ★★★★★





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# Lexus GS F

You won't tell by looking, but Lexus's high-performance saloon curio has been treated to a refresh. It's still no class leader, but there's definite appeal

Photography by Aston Parrott

**L**EXUS – IT'S A BIT OF AN ODD ONE. For the best part of three decades it has been turning out sybaritic saloons and heart rate-lowering hybrids that are beautifully built but as entertaining as chartered accountancy exams. Yet every now and again Lexus takes leave of its senses and rolls out cars such as the M3-rivalling IS F, the unhinged LFA, the LC and this, the GS F, which has been treated to a mid-life refresh.

The changes are very modest and in a line-up you'd struggle to pick out the latest GS F from its predecessor. The updates have been made under the skin, where you'll now find adaptive dampers, or Adaptive Variable Suspension in Lexus speak. This set-up

delivers up to 30 levels of damping force across four pre-set modes (Eco, Normal, Sport and Sport+) to provide greater suspension compliance for the daily drive, but tauter responses when you're hustling.

The rest of the GS F remains largely the same, which means it bucks the current supersaloon trend for downsized turbocharged engines, four-wheel drive and twin-clutch gearboxes. The Lexus's combination of big-capacity naturally aspirated V8, rear-wheel drive and torque-converter auto is refreshingly old school. It's an impression that's reinforced once you're on the move.

In an age of instant turbocharged torque, the GS F's 5-litre takes a little getting used to.

Its headline figures of 471bhp and 391lb ft seem weak-kneed against the German opposition, particularly when you consider the latter figure peaks from 4800rpm, while the claimed 4.7sec 0-62mph time seems lazy when a Mercedes-AMG E63 S dusts the benchmark sprint in under four seconds.

Yet while the Lexus lacks the outright performance of direct rivals, accessing what it does have is a satisfying experience. There's no instant whizz-bang shove in the first millimetre of throttle travel, instead you have to work hard for your rewards because the 32-valve quad-cam unit doesn't really get into its stride until around 4500rpm, at which point it pulls with real vigour. It sounds the part too, with





the ever-so subtle burble at idle transitioning to a glorious metallic howl as the rev counter homes in on its heady 7100rpm peak.

What of those suspension changes? The first thing you notice is the improvement in comfort. Gone is the stiff-legged low-speed ride that marred the old car and instead you're treated to plusher, more supple progress over bumps. There's still some firmness there, but it's now easier to live with on the daily grind.

Twist the Drive Mode Select controller on the transmission tunnel to Sport or Sport+ and you can feel the Lexus tensing up as the dampers prime themselves for some spirited driving. The steering is still quick and accurate but bereft of feel, yet once you discover that there's plenty of front-end bite, the Lexus covers ground at a prodigious rate. Yes it's big,

and quick direction changes betray the hefty 1790kg kerb weight, but most of the time the GS F is planted and poised, with strong body control.

Delve further into the driver modes and you can tweak the torque-vectoring differential with Standard, Slalom or Track settings. The middle of the three aims to boost agility by delivering more torque to the outside wheel to help drive the nose toward the apex of a corner. Neat in theory, but it feels contrived and artificial in practice. Better to stick to Standard or Track, slacken off the stability control and revel in the chassis' balance.

Again, that magnificent engine plays its part here, with the natural throttle response allowing you to alter the car's trajectory through a corner at will. The GS F is big, so

you'll need plenty of space if you really want to play the hooligan, but it's just as satisfying trimming your line by mere millimetres using the combination of throttle and quick steering.

Elsewhere, the Lexus remains brilliant and baffling in equal measure. Though understated, it looks muscular and purposeful, it's beautifully built and the interior is roomy and well equipped. But its thirst for fuel is alarming and the eight-speed auto feels slow-witted compared with the best twin-clutch units.

Yet even these flaws fail to take the shine off the characterful, quirky and engaging GS F. It's not the fastest or most technically accomplished supersaloon, but it's a car that gets under your skin and makes a fine alternative to the default choices.

**James Disdale**

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 4969cc	471bhp @ 7100rpm	391lb ft @ 4800-5600rpm	4.7sec (claimed)	168mph (claimed)	1790kg (267bhp/ton)	£73,375

+ Glorious engine, balanced handling, improved ride quality
 - Thirst, sluggish transmission, frustrating infotainment

**evo rating** ★★★★★



**Top:** red leather is an option, you may be pleased to learn; infotainment system is fiddly and frustrating. **Above:** who needs turbos when you've got a big capacity V8?





# AC Schnitzer ACS8

German tuner develops suspension, wheel and tyre upgrades for the BMW i8 – and a whole lotta carbonfibre add-ons too

Photography by Dave Smith



**B** MW'S i8 HAS GAINED MANY FANS since its launch back in 2014, and while it's not perfect, it has a broad range and depth of talents. Motorway cruiser, back-road blaster – it's equally accomplished at either task. And when you consider this is BMW's first stab at a hybrid performance car, it's hard not to be impressed. But there is still room for improvement, not least at the car's front end, where you'll find slightly lacklustre steering and a tendency to understeer thanks to its narrow, eco-friendly tyres.

While M235i drivers have a plethora of tuning companies they can turn to for upgrades, if you own an i8, AC Schnitzer is just about the only respected outfit that can help. Its offerings for the petrol-electric coupe can be applied individually, but together they create a model called the ACS8, and as you've probably already noticed, many of the changes are cosmetic.

The i8's futuristic styling – the roots of which go back to the BMW Vision Efficient Dynamics show car of 2009 – may still look

fresh and innovative, but some will always want to personalise things. To this end there's an 'Inferno Red Chrome' wrap to address the limitations of BMW's rather dull standard colour palette, plus a slathering of carbonfibre accessories.

In fact there's carbonfibre pretty much everywhere you look: the three-piece front spoiler, the bonnet vent, the mirror caps, the sills, the three-part rear diffuser, the door-handle panels – and there's no missing that wing on the rear deck. There are even carbonfibre air vents that have been added



behind the front wheels and on top of the rear wings. While the former have a nigh-on factory appearance, we're less convinced by the latter. Overall Schnitzer's additions do complement the car's appearance, although the rear spoiler is a little incongruous given the rest of the add-ons are integrated with the car's flamboyant shape. The choice is up to you, though – if you don't like it, leave it off.

Beyond all of this decoration are other modifications that actually impact the way the car drives. There's no power upgrade as yet – Schnitzer is exploring this possibility, but given the way that the three-cylinder engine and electric motor are so seamlessly integrated, it's proving remarkably tricky. What we do have here, though, are suspension, wheel and tyre changes.

A spring kit lowers the car by 25mm at the front and 20mm at the rear, endowing it with a lower centre of gravity. Schnitzer has also fitted a set of its AC1 forged alloy wheels. These are lighter than BMW's standard 20-inch 'Turbine' items – by 4.4kg overall – despite



‘It adopts a flat cornering attitude without upsetting the original’s ride or balance’



**Above:** carbonfibre vents on the rear haunches don't gel like those at the front. **Opposite page, bottom:** carbonfibre rear wing also looks a little out of place, so won't be to all tastes



being an inch wider and an inch larger in diameter. There's grippier rubber on offer, too, and the 245/35 front and 285/30 rear Michelin Pilot Super Sports are appreciably wider than both the standard (195/50 and 215/45) and optional (215/45 and 245/40s) i8 Bridgestone rubber. By the time the wider tyres have been fitted, the weight of the Schnitzer wheel and tyre combination is the same as the standard car's, but to get that much extra rubber on the road without a weight penalty is a good effort.

These are seemingly small changes perhaps, but do they fundamentally alter the car? When cruising along you'd be hard pressed to tell it's sitting on different springs or that the wheels are an inch bigger, as the ride is still pliant and composed. But let the i8 off the

leash and throw some decent corners into the mix and the ACS8 feels more alive than the standard car.

The extra rubber at the front end adds a little weight to the steering and as you start pushing harder there's significant additional bite, with much less of a tendency for understeer. With appreciably more grip from the rear wheels, too, and still with the standard 228bhp three-cylinder engine driving them, it's very hard to unstick the back end, but as it struggles less for traction the ACS8 can still slingshot you out of corners in an immensely satisfying fashion. The lowered ride height plays its part, the uprated springs giving the car a pretty flat cornering attitude without upsetting the original's ride or balance.

As a way of increasing your i8's cornering performance without giving it any more horsepower, it's very effective.

The upgrades don't come cheap, though, and if you wanted your i8 to look like this one, AC Schnitzer UK will carry out a complete conversion for £34,995 – which doesn't include the wrap. Priced individually the majority of the larger carbonfibre parts cost over £3000 each, and even if you just want the springs plus the wheel and tyre set-up you'll be spending nigh-on £10,000.

Expensive perhaps, especially when added to an i8's £106k on-the-road price, but with used i8s starting at about £60,000, we can see why you might be tempted... ❏

**Bob Harper** (@m5bob)

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
In-line 3-cyl, 1499cc, plus 96kW electric motor	357bhp @ 5800rpm	420lb ft @ 3700rpm	4.4sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1485kg (244bhp/ton)	See text

➤ Genuine dynamic improvements ➤ Price, gawky rear spoiler

**evo rating** ★★★★★

www.evo.co.uk **037**





# Vauxhall VXR8 GTS-R

All Aussie car production has now ceased, and with it goes the Holden Commodore, base for the VXR8. The 587bhp GTS-R is an awesome send-off

Photography by Barry Hayden

**T**HE HOLDEN COMMODORE IS no more. The Australian plant producing it churned out its last car in October, and with it closed the book on Australian automobile production. Not one single manufacturer now builds its wares in the Antipodean nation.

The cold reality is that the rest of the world will shed few tears over this decision. Australia's factories primarily served a Galapagos-like market whose products only really made sense within the continent's confines, and 'world cars' produced at lower labour rates make more unique, lower-volume models economically undesirable.

The exception has always been the Commodore and its derivatives. While never a particularly strong seller overseas, whether in the United States as the Chevrolet SS or in the UK under the Vauxhall banner, it's nevertheless always bustled with a blue-collar honesty and bang-per-buck value that Europe's premium manufacturers have never quite matched. At

£74,500 for the run-out VXR8 GTS-R, perhaps the value aspect is no longer true, but on paper this is the most extreme and probably one of the most appealing VXR8s yet.

Behind the snarling grille sits the familiar General Motors LSA V8 – all 6.2 supercharged litres of it – found elsewhere in the Cadillac CTS-V and Chevrolet Camaro ZL1. Tyres will squeal with more than just terror given its 587bhp and 546lb ft outputs – the former up by 11bhp for the R – all directed through a refreshingly simple six-speed manual transmission. Anachronistic perhaps, but a layer of interaction denied in anything you might consider a rival.

In other respects the GTS-R is more conventional, with a large four-door bodyshell, power to the rear wheels alone, and adjustable Magnetic Ride dampers that, combined with tweaks to the stability control, traction control, power steering assistance and exhaust valves, give the car a different feel in its Touring, Sport, Performance and Track modes.

There's also a comfortable and spacious cabin and an enormous luggage area. If you're used to M-cars and AMGs it'll seem low-rent, and inside and out the proliferation of HSV logos illustrates that Vauxhall's involvement in the car's development amounted to getting it type-approved. But there's still much to like. The driving position is low and figure-hugging, the wheel is chunky, the gearlever feels like it's controlling the machinations of actual cogs, and there's enough weight to everything to propagate a satisfyingly old-school feel.

The starter churns over for a tantalising second or two before the V8 fires into life and settles to a busy cold idle. Switch the Driver Preference Dial to Performance or Track – and you'll want to – and the background burble increases a few decibels, the LSA taking a sharp and audible intake of breath with each blip of the throttle, combusting it with globs of unleaded and exhaling it with an angry growl.

You'll need a firm hand to slot the lever into first, but the clutch has a relatively easy action.



Just as well given how quickly you'll need to start finding extra ratios if you use the right-hand pedal for any length of time. The GTS-R is thunderously fast, even considering the high standards of the class, and while you're working a lot harder than in a turbocharged, self-shifting Mercedes or BMW, the rewards are even greater.

Torque is strong from idle, but as the needle passes 4000rpm it's like a completely different engine takes over. It's like flicking a switch as the V8's tone hardens to a NASCAR-style bellow, the supercharger whines, and whatever used to be in front of you quickly ends up in your mirrors. It's one of the most addictive, exciting drivetrains available today.

It could have been tough for other aspects of the driving experience to match up to such an engine, but HSV hasn't gone halves on its final car. Perhaps most importantly, the brakes are mighty. They're just a little too sharp for smooth heel-and-toe gearchanges at normal braking pressures, but standing on the pedal sucks every bit of grip from the four Continentals to convert the GTS-R's blurry widescreen speed runs into sharp 4K landscape views.

There's ample lateral grip too, and while the steering feels light and unresponsive just off centre (and don't even bother with Touring or Sport, where it's too light everywhere) it's precise thereafter and tickles the palms just enough to let you know when the front tyres are working. You'd have to be trying hard to push them beyond their limits, and the same applies to the rear tyres despite that healthy power output. Corner-exit traction is fantastic, and on dry roads you'd have to do something quite inadvisable to unstick the rear wheels.

Solid body control doesn't come at the expense of a long-legged ride, even in the more boisterous driving modes, and pointing it from one corner to the next the VXR8 belies its kerb weight with an engaging, agile feel. Only its size really limits your pace on tighter B-roads.

The saying goes that you don't know what you've got till it's gone. We've always been aware of the VXR8's appeal, but it doesn't make its passing any less painful. ❌

**Antony Ingram** (@evoAntony)

**Top right:** the view most of us will get of the GTS-R, but at least it'll sound fabulous as it disappears from sight. **Above right:** brakes are a match for the monstrous pace



‘Whatever used to be in front of you quickly ends up in your mirrors’



## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 6162cc, supercharged	587bhp @ 6150rpm	546lb ft @ 3850rpm	4.2sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1880kg (317bhp/ton)	£74,500 (sold out)

🟢 Blistering performance, bursting with character 🟡 You've missed your chance to buy one

**evo rating** ★★★★★

www.evo.co.uk **039**

# Jaguar E-Pace P300

Evoque-based small SUV is depressingly unremarkable

Photography by Otis Clay



**Left:** E-Pace bigger than the Evoque on which it's based, but doesn't look bulky. **Below:** cabin is neat but underwhelming, especially for £45k



**J**AGUAR HASN'T QUITE ATTAINED Porsche-like levels of SUV sales with its recently introduced F-Pace, but it's difficult not to imagine the brand's luxury saloons and sports cars one day becoming a sideline to the seemingly limitless sales of what were once known as 'soft-roaders'.

Exhibit A is 2016's F-Pace sales tally, which at 63,519 accounted for almost 11 per cent of total 2016 sales for Jaguar Land Rover, and nearly 43 per cent of Jaguar sales alone. So this new car, the E-Pace, will surely tip the sales balance in favour of those tall, lumbering vehicles aimed at customers with 'active lifestyles'.

To be fair to the E-Pace, it's less tall and lumbering than many, if not quite the 'Jaguar GTI' you've seen splashed across other mags. It weighs over 1.8 tons for a start, making it more fat GTI than fab GTI, and it's longer, wider and taller than the Range Rover Evoque with which it shares much of its engineering.

The styling does a reasonable job of hiding this size, with details borrowed from the F-type and a more curvaceous, less aggressive look than the larger F-Pace. Wheel sizes range from 17 to 21 inches, and on our test car's 20s the E-Pace looks almost cartoonish from some angles, but it's an attractive package.

Neat inside too, at least on first inspection. The overall design is similar to that of the F-type, right down to the shape of the gear selector and the steering wheel. But our car's black cabin is about as cheerful as a White House press secretary trying to justify a Trump tweet, and some surfaces look unlikely to last much longer either.

Occasional use of probably-not-aluminium fails to lift the mood, and the leather wrapping the steering wheel appears to have come from a plastic cow. Some of it might be easier to forgive on an entry-level E-Pace, but just as top-end F-types don't feel like £100k cars, top-end E-Paces don't feel like £50k ones.

Power comes from a range of Ingenium four-cylinder petrols and diesels, the most potent being this P300 version – shorthand for petrol, 300 PS (296bhp). With 295lb ft of torque, its outputs are identical to those of the four-cylinder F-type. Sadly, the E-Pace doesn't get the coupe's fruity exhaust, so you must suffer the Ingenium's tedious drone.

With 62mph arriving in 6.4sec, there's more than enough performance for most, and the nine-speed auto does an admirable job of smooth and swift cog-swapping, whether left in auto or activated using the fore-aft lever on

the centre console (paddles are only available with the top, R-Dynamic trim level, which seems an oversight). Throttle response is keen at light inputs, giving the impression of quick reactions, something you can make the most of by nudging the car into Dynamic mode and popping the shifter across to Sport.

The chassis is the E-Pace's strongest dynamic characteristic. The steering has quite keen self-centring allied to snappy off-centre response, so there's a lively feel to even the smallest movements. There's good turn-in grip too, and nice balance front-to-rear. Being tall, the E-Pace rolls onto its outside tyres harder than a conventional car, but there's just enough feedback through the steering to relay the car's behaviour.

Apply more power mid-corner, though, and you'll mostly find scrubbing understeer, while lifting off the throttle tucks the nose in and no more. The ride? Not bad for a car on 20-inch wheels and 45-profile tyres, but it lacks the fluency of its conventional saloon siblings. You can sense Jaguar has played it safe with what is sure to become its biggest-selling model. It has developed an entirely unremarkable vehicle as a result.

**Antony Ingram** (@evoAntony)

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo	296bhp @ 5500rpm	295lb ft @ 1200-4500rpm	6.4sec (claimed)	151mph (claimed)	1894kg (159bhp/ton)	£45,660

+ Steering response; grip; balance - Drab cabin; dreary engine; inevitable ubiquity

**evo rating** ★★★★★



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# Porsche Cayenne Turbo

Third-generation version of benchmark fast SUV gets a new engine and handling aids



**I**T'S NEARLY 15 YEARS SINCE THE first Porsche Cayenne Turbo barged its way unceremoniously to the front of many a well-heeled Porsche customer's mind. What a shock that '955' Cayenne was. Was Porsche really serious? Was its SUV really going to look like, well, that?

It was. With a typically Germanic deadpan delivery, Porsche was absolutely, unremittably serious – about all of it, including the bit where the Cayenne, highly proficient off-road, could also put the sweats on many a hot hatch.

Much has changed since: Porsche is now an SUV manufacturing giant that happens to also make sports cars, and today every high-end manufacturer has not just one high-performance SUV, but a range of them.

By and large Porsche has ring-fenced that oxymoronic market niche, the drivers' 4x4, and now there's this Mk3 Cayenne Turbo, which looks a lot like the last one to these eyes, but is longer and lower and nothing like it under the skin. It's based on the same platform that underpins the Bentley Bentayga and the Audi Q7, and under its multi-metal exterior remains a twin-turbo V8 engine, now of 4-litre displacement instead of the previous 4.8. First seen in the new Panamera, it produces a resounding 543bhp with 568lb ft of torque.

The V8 is hooked up to an eight-speed torque-converter Tiptronic S gearbox and then an electronically controlled multi-plate clutch. The unique 21-inch alloy wheels are suspended by a multi-link arrangement, front and rear, with new three-chamber air struts standard on the Turbo. The Turbo also gets Porsche's PTV+ torque-vectoring diff, plus for the first time



the options of electric rear-wheel steering and a new form of the Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control (PDCC) active anti-roll bars. Now electric rather than hydraulically operated, this latest PDCC is the 48-volt system also seen on the Bentayga and Audi Q7.

The Turbo is properly fast. It'll rip to 62mph from rest in just 3.9sec with the optional Sport Chrono pack (£774), or 4.1sec without, then top out at 177mph, a speed at which it must punch a frighteningly dramatic hole through the air. It has a cultured engine, too: reserved on a light throttle, darkly persistent through the mid-range and then capable of a hammer blow when fully extended.

Life aboard the Turbo feels good. It feels built to an exacting standard – not something you can say of all its rivals – and unusually for Porsche, the standard spec is fairly generous. The rear seats move fore and aft and their backrests tilt, while there's 680 litres of storage space even before the rear seats are lowered. Dry stuff, yes, but it's not hard to see why wealthy buyers with their so-called active lifestyles have migrated en masse away from big saloons and GT cars.

**'It's like piloting your living room down a B-road with the footage speeded up'**

Two options you really need are the PDCC and rear-wheel steering (£2315 and £1448 respectively). The former is a revelation, because its ability to slacken things off when the Turbo is mooching along in a straight line eradicates the previously inevitable roll-rock that affects high-performance SUVs. The Cayenne rides really well, and is a refined long-distance cruiser. The rear-steer conspires with the PDCC and the Cayenne's other systems, monitored by a new '4D Chassis' overlord, to provide quite astonishing agility and – amusingly – power oversteer: be aggressive on turn-in, plant the throttle, and you'll need to find some countersteer, smartish.

Driven more sensibly, it makes for an incredibly nimble SUV, one that's exploitable thanks to fine steering and adept body control. Making indecently rapid progress is a bizarre experience, like piloting your living room down a B-road with the footage speeded up.

The new Cayenne Turbo is mightily impressive, then, but a Mercedes-AMG E63 S Estate is also very practical and I'd rather be driving a proper car. **x**

**Adam Towler** (@AdamTowler)

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 3996cc, twin-turbo	543bhp @ 5750-6000rpm	568lb ft @ 1960-4000rpm	4.1sec (claimed)	177mph (claimed)	2175kg (254bhp/ton)	£99,291

**+** Huge performance, surprising agility, refinement **-** It's still a two-ton-plus SUV

**evo rating** ★★★★★



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M4/M3 3.0T » 520+ BHP  
M5 F10/M6 (STAGE 1) » 680 BHP  
M5 F10/M6 (STAGE 2) » 730 BHP  
F10 520D » 240 BHP  
F10 530D » 305 BHP  
335i/135i/X6 » 370+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
123D » 252 BHP

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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MASERATI Ghibli 3.0 DIESEL » 312 BHP  
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# RICHARD MEADEN

*Virtual car shopping is all very well, but there's nothing to beat the second-hand car lot*

**W**HEN DID YOU LAST WALK INTO A CAR dealership? Not one of the glossy manufacturer franchises to look at a brand new 911 Turbo or DB11 you can't afford, but a proper used car lot? Nope, I can't remember either.

Like most things in the digital age, actually going out and looking at cars has been replaced by trawling the online classifieds. No need to travel, no need to talk to the car salesman and no chance of coming home with something you really shouldn't have bought. A harmless and risk-free distraction from the daily grind.

Shame, I say. Don't get me wrong, I love browsing for cars online. Moderns. Classics. Competition cars. Yank stuff. You name it, I've drunk endless cups of coffee looking at it. The funny thing is, all those hours (more like months, probably!) have resulted in only one purchase: my Peugeot 106 Rallye, bought back in 2009. If I had the means to indulge with any frequency I'm sure I'd have a barn full of daft impulse purchases, but there's something about the process that feels a bit empty.

Of course there are old-school dealers out there offering eclectic and unpredictable cars, but because they all have websites there aren't any surprises.

If you're serious, you trawl the 'net, create a shortlist, then head to your favoured dealer or private vendor with your mind pretty much made up. You're going with the purpose of purchasing, unless the car isn't as advertised. Think back to how looking for cars used to be and you'll hopefully see why the modern method is convenient, but coldly detached.

For me, the ritual of looking at – and occasionally buying – cars was one of the great spectator sports of my childhood. I can even recall the smell: a mild waft of petrol fumes mixed with the sweet, solvent-rich aroma of Simoniz wax. And, most likely, a freshly lit cigar. This was the unmistakable scent of my dad's favourite second-hand car dealership – a small independent place in Molesey (on the outskirts of Greater London) owned by a bloke called Johnny Maguire.

This was in the mid- to late-1970s, when I was an impressionable nipper and car dealers were one-man bands, not faceless groups or vast retail supermarkets. Looking back it was something of a Saturday ritual for the Meaden family: go shopping in Kingston

then, by some stroke of navigational cunning and paternal genius, just happen to drive past Maguire's showroom on the way home.

Without question this was my dad's analogue equivalent of browsing *PistonHeads* or *Car and Classic*. The inventory was a bit more limited, but the process and sense of anticipation was certainly the same. Sometimes a cursory drive-by was all that was required, but more often than not the modest showroom frontage contained something that piqued my dad's interest. And doubtless sent a wave of despair rising in my mum's chest.

As a young, car-obsessed kid, walking into that showroom was always special. There was a palpable blokey significance to it, even to the otherwise innocent six-year-old me. Inhaling that unmistakable smell was worryingly narcotic, and while my dad

zeroed-in on his next car, I sat in others – mostly fun old Brit stuff like Triumphs and MGs, and the occasional Jag, or perhaps something exotic like a Fiat 124 Coupe or Bertone Alfa GTV.

The best part was when my dad showed sufficient interest and Johnny offered a test drive. Not the work of a moment, as moving cars around his cramped showroom was akin to playing Tetris, but the opportunity to ride in a new car – or at least an old car new to me – was something to relish. I'm not sure why, but

whenever I think of those test drives it's always a Scimitar GTE that I remember most clearly. It was a cool and quirky car, a mix of shooting brake and sporty coupe built by the same firm that made Del Boy's three-wheeler. Despite my and Mr Maguire's best efforts, Dad didn't buy it, but I do recall a good old hoon along the A3, gruff Ford V6 snarling away beneath the fibreglass bonnet.

Why the trip down memory lane? Well, it's been a very long time since I accompanied Meaden Snr on a mission to a dodgy second-hand car dealer's, though I know he still has the urge. I suspect the recent purchase of 'Kanye' – Mrs M's brilliant but high-jeopardy 140k-mile Range Rover – may also be to blame, the process somehow stirring a regressive Meaden second-hand car gene into life. It's a potentially ruinous development, but one I'm also rather pleased about. Searching for cars has become so slick and impersonal there's something exciting about virtual tyre kickers like us getting out and reconnecting with this once-common and rather wonderful ritual. Just don't hold me responsible for what you drive home in.

**'I can recall the smell: a mild waft of petrol fumes mixed with the sweet aroma of Simoniz wax'**

@DickieMeaden

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



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# RICHARD PORTER

*Mrs Porter's car has been damaged in the street. Mr Porter isn't taking it well...*

**I T WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE BIN DAY.** I went outside to complete the weekly ritual of dragging rumbling carcasses of wheelie plastic onto the pavement when I spotted a note on the windscreen of my wife's car. 'Sorry,' it said. 'I touched your car.' A strange choice of words, especially given what I found upon walking around the other side. While we were out, this note-leaving oaf had firmly smacked into Mrs Porter's ride as it sat immobile at the kerb. Scuffs up the bumper, a big ripple in the wing, more scuffage up the wheelarch trim. If this was a 'touch', I'd hate to see what this man does to his touchscreen phone. Operates it with a hammer, I suspect.

Still, at least he left a note with a phone number on it, rather than one of those 'Screw you, I'm writing this to make your neighbours think I'm being considerate hahahaha bye' messages of popular legend. Better yet, the phone number turned out to be real and the culprit made his apologies with a promise to take care of the repair costs. So all's fair in the rough and tumble world of urban street parking, right?

Not really. I know I shouldn't be so bothered about this. The damage will get mended and the perpetrator will pay for it. The car itself isn't really ours; it's a lease. One day it'll go back and any history of it being de-created will become someone else's problem. Worse things happen at sea. Drowning, for example. Or cruises. But I can't get past the simmering resentment at someone violating our car.

You know when you check your tyre pressures, fill up your screenwash, dip the oil and brim the tank, perhaps even following the example of my colleague Richard Hammond by giving a normal car the occasional 'special treat' of a tank of superunleaded, and when you've done all these things in one go, somehow your car feels better? This is the opposite of that. Thanks to the 'touch' of a careless stranger, my wife's car now feels worse. Just six months ago it was brand new and pristine; today it's forever sullied.

The repair, I'm sure, will be seamless. But I'll know. A while back I went with a mate to look at a used car he was thinking of buying and, because he has an eagle eye for this stuff, he immediately

spotted that down a small section of the rear door, it'd 'had paint'. That'll be our car now. Even though we'll hand back the keys in the accepted ephemeral way of modern consumerism and never have to deal with tyre kickers and time wasters and people who email, 'Is it teh trubo, m8??' it'll sit in the back of my mind that some prospective buyer will mark it down as a car that's been touched up. And while we still have the car, I'll forever know that it's 'had paint'. You hear about people whose houses have been burgled saying their home never feels the same again. Well this is in that spectrum.

There's something else, too. Until the details are worked out with the clumsy stranger's insurance company, we're driving around in a scuffed-up car. It looks like I might have done it.

Which, by extension, makes me look like someone who doesn't look after his own stuff in the most casual, entitled, obnoxious way possible. I'm happy to roll around in a dirty car because I've got better things to do than clean metalwork every weekend, and anyway cars, like sheepdogs, are designed to be left outside and are weatherproofed accordingly. But actual damage pains me. Parking dings bring on a nervous twitch. Kerbing an alloy sends me into a 24-hour fog of fury. Physical damage to a car isn't cool, unless you live in Paris where it appears to be obligatory.

Worse still, running around with a battle scar on an otherwise tidy car might suggest that I'm a blithering idiot behind the wheel. In supermarket car parks I

avoid pulling in next to anything that suggests the owner doesn't know what they're doing. That is to say dented cars and Vauxhall Corsas. But now, through no fault of ours, the family wagon gives the mistaken impression that when it comes to driving I don't know or care what I'm doing. And that won't do.

So the car is going to the bodyshop as soon as possible to take away the scars that blight its front corner. But that will never erase the knowledge that someone dinged it in the first place and that, as a result, it'll never be the same again. You won't spot the mend at a casual glance but I'll know it's there below the blow-over and the polish. A stranger tainted my car. And really took the shine off bin night.

**'If this was a  
"touch", I'd hate to  
see what this  
man does to his  
touchscreen phone.  
Operates it with  
a hammer,  
I suspect'**

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Richard is **evo's** longest-serving columnist and the script editor on *The Grand Tour*



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# TED KRAVITZ

*As it turned out, the 2017 season wasn't quite the battleground that it had promised to be*

**I**T'S ALL OVER FOR ANOTHER YEAR. IN the end, Ferrari's challenge fell apart and Mercedes' Anglo-Teutonic, relentless approach ground out more wins and the team strengthened its vice-like grip on the Formula 1 drivers' and constructors' championships. For his part, Lewis Hamilton joined the great drivers of all time, garnering equal amounts of publicity for both winning a fourth world title and for keeping up the longstanding F1 drivers' tradition of not paying any more tax than you absolutely have to.

What had seemed like the closest of competitions between Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel in the summer finished in a slightly damp squib at the Mexican Grand Prix, with early contact between the two resulting in a recovery drive by Lewis to ninth place. This was enough to clinch the championship as Vettel needed first or second place and he was busy with his own recovery following a pit stop to replace his front wing, broken on Hamilton's rear tyre.

Of course, despite Ferrari's pre-race insistence that 'it's not over', it had realistically been over since the Asian leg of the championship. In Singapore, Vettel was on pole, only to drift left off the start line and crash into Max Verstappen and Kimi Räikkönen. A week later in Malaysia an inlet manifold failed in Qualifying and then a spark plug blew in Japan. This last breakdown was especially frustrating, as there was an abundance of local expertise to consult on the humble spark plug: Ferrari's supplier, NGK, is based just half an hour down the road in Nagoya.

So with at least 50 points dropped over three races, defeat was inevitable. But that didn't make it any easier. There were Ferrari people in tears when it was finally over in Mexico, emotion I hadn't seen since they were last really in with a chance in 2010 and 2012. Italian passion: it's Ferrari's strength and its unfortunate weakness.

Vettel was depressed, too. He knew the unreliability wasn't his fault but the unforced errors (the road-rage side-swipe on Hamilton in Baku that earned him a penalty and the start-line crash in Singapore) were down to him. In a recent interview I asked Sebastian if he felt frustrated about those two lost opportunities. He made the distinction between frustration and

disappointment. In Seb's mind, frustration would have been like some anxiety dream where he was in a position to win but something was holding him back. Whereas because he crashed at the start or the car failed, he wasn't able to race in the first place. Which was why he was disappointed but not frustrated.

'I think I see what you mean,' I said, when the cameras had stopped rolling and Dave the sound man was pulling out the microphones stuck to the inside of our shirts.

'Yeah, and it's fine,' replied Vettel. 'I'm a big believer that things happen for a reason.' Without thinking, I replied: 'Sure, Seb, but you know the old saying about everything happening for a reason? Sometimes that reason is that you're stupid and make bad decisions.' Vettel raised an eyebrow and wandered off

to his next engagement. I like to think that piece of wisdom gave him something to think about. He probably thinks I'm a complete bellend.

Someone else who'll be giving the likes of Vettel and Hamilton something to think about throughout the next few years is Max Verstappen. He won his second GP of the season in Mexico, something that seemed unthinkable earlier in the year when he threatened to break his contract and leave Red Bull unless they fixed their engine problems. With a few exceptions,

Renault has improved reliability and Verstappen has committed to Red Bull-Renault until the end of 2020, by which time F1 might have new engines anyway.

The new engine formula is the talk of the paddock, and as usual, it's a mess. Owners Liberty Media and the FIA are trying to please everyone – manufacturers who don't want change and fans who miss the normally aspirated screamers. They've ended up with a halfway house proposal, which has the inferior fuel efficiency of the current units and none of the enthralling shriek of the old V8s.

What they should do is accept that by 2020 F1 will have near-zero road car crossover and so not even try to be relevant. Go with a non-turbo 3-litre V10 or V12 that is basic by regulation and spec-frozen for a multi-year term, eliminating any scope for expensive development (beside the odd bit of track-specific mapping), which would save the teams a lot of money. But they won't. They'll have a big argument about it, Ferrari will threaten to quit again and everything will stay largely the same.

**'There were Ferrari people in tears when it was finally all over in Mexico, emotion I hadn't seen in years'**

@tedkravitz

Ted is the pitlane reporter for Sky Sports F1



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PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS

by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

# Headbanger

*The GT2 RS represents the return of the rampant, raging turbocharged 911, as evidenced by another Porsche Ring record. But there's also a calmer side to its character that some may see as a flaw*







**IT'S HOMEWORK, HONEST. THE YOUTUBE CLIP STARTS** familiarly enough (I've got it on VHS, too, somewhere). See Stefan Bellof standing there in the 'temporary' pits that the Nordschleife used in 1983. Visor-less GPD helmet already on his head, he contorts himself down into the expectant Rothmans 956 as the clipped commentary of Neville Hay describes the scene. *In-Car 956* doesn't allow us to ride on that 6min 11sec lap; no one but the late Stefan Bellof really knew what it was like to lap the Nordschleife in just over six minutes, in the process achieving a certain immortality that would be sealed upon his tragic death at Spa two years later. Instead the film cuts to inside a sister 956B, and the affable commentary of Derek Bell as he talks the viewer around a lap of his own.

The point is, Bell's camera-laden time was some way off Bellof's ultimate tour. That footage is probably a 6min 40sec lap, or thereabouts. It took a while to work it out, but it's obvious really: when I watch Porsche test driver Lars Kern lap the new 991 GT2 RS in 6min 47sec, it doesn't actually look any slower, because it isn't really. Sure, the circuit is smoother, and altered slightly, but still: one is an 800kg, 650bhp, monocoque-chassis, full 'ground effect' racing car on slicks, albeit more than 30 years older, and the other is, well, simply a 911. A road car for heaven's sake. How can this be, and what sort of weird and wondrous car is this new GT2 RS?

It's a question that has been distracting us for months in the *evo* office, and the general consensus might not be what you expect. Over-powered, under-available, yet another Ring-lap braggart: you name it, the narrative for this story was in danger of writing itself. Perhaps we've simply overindulged on GT-department Porsches. Don't get me wrong, we love every one dearly – who wouldn't?

But the relentless output of hardcore 911s, each one ever-so-slightly faster, minutely lighter and more appealing to the speculator market than the last, has soured what was once a passionate love affair. Richard Porter brilliantly lampooned the situation in his *evo* column recently: 'The next turn-off is the media coverage it'll garner. The helmswright writers, who will imply it can heal the sick, feed the poor, and allow frustrated racing drivers to achieve some sort of climax.' Hmm. Awkward.

**Right:** cooling is a major challenge on the GT2 RS, as evidenced by massive vents in the nose; front compartment is home to a 5-litre water tank for the intercoolers' water-spray system



**'THE POWER CURVE  
TAKES OFF, CLIMBING  
LIKE BONINGTON  
ON BENZEDRINE,  
PEAKING AT 690BHP  
AT 7000RPM'**





Now here we are, in southern Portugal, standing next to a small line-up of GT2 RSs in all the available hues. Andreas Preuninger is here, as is Walter Röhrl and Mark Webber. But the schedule is a disaster, so photographer Aston Parrott and I do the only thing we can: grab the keys to a Weissach Package-equipped white GT2 RS and head independently for the hills and a truly spectacular road; one that writhes, rises and falls over the mountains near Faro. Too heavy? Unusably fast for the road? Time to answer our concerns.

When Kern began his development driving programme with the RS, it was with a GT3 RS hack that had a Turbo S engine squeezed into the tail. He described it over dinner as a real handful, and coming from a man of his iron-clad constitution, that's saying something. So what's changed in the intervening time?

The new-gen engine may still displace 3.8 litres, but it's fed air via a completely new 'expansion' induction system, with twin inlets at the base of the rear window, and a pair of larger turbochargers (9mm larger compressor wheels and 7mm larger turbine wheels) compared with those in the Turbo S. Larger intercoolers with a

27 per cent greater throughput capacity nestle lower in the rear haunches, located by exquisitely designed carbonfibre brackets and cooled via the gaping intakes in the rear arches (these aren't for induction, like on the GT3 RS). A further reduction in temperature is achieved by a water-spray system that's fed via a 5-litre carbon tank in the front luggage area. Quenching the intercoolers in this manner lowers their temperatures by around 20 degrees Celsius, critical in combating the heat build-up from a high-boost turbo engine (1.55bar maximum) and ensuring, for example, that there's no drop-off in power over a long, arduous lap such as the Nürburgring Nordschleife.

The lump itself has a reduced compression ratio via special pistons, yet can rev to 7200rpm. It churns out a maximum 553lb ft of torque from just 2500rpm, and once it falls away at 4500rpm it's the power curve that really takes off, climbing like Bonington on Benzedrine, peaking just shy of the red line with 690bhp at 7000rpm. Those very hot spent gases – they glow red hot, in fact – are disposed of via a titanium exhaust system 7kg lighter than the





'IT'S THE SOUND OF RAW,  
MALEVOLENT TURBO POWER  
THROUGH AN UNSILENCED  
EXHAUST, AND MOMENTARILY,  
IT'S QUITE SHOCKING'



one fitted to the Turbo S, with the shortest route to the atmosphere possible. It's valved, so when the button is pressed, or the throttle generously opened, it bypasses the silencer and effectively goes straight through. Hold on to that thought.

The engine is hooked up to a PDK transmission, the only choice and understandably so unless driving one-handed appeals. It's effectively the 'box used in the 918 Spyder, and a 'PDK Sport' button on the centre console quickens its shifts in auto mode. From there, the GT2 RS really does enjoy the very best of the GT department's toy cupboard.

The rear diff is an electronically controlled, torque-vectoring item and there's rear-wheel steering and dynamic engine mounts. The actual chassis is close to that of a Cup car; in fact, for the first time every joint in the suspension is of the steel uniball type. There are adaptive PASM dampers with helper springs on both the MacPherson-strut front and multi-link rear axles, with twice the spring rate of a GT3 RS at the front and rates similar to that of a Cup car running on the Ring at the rear. Conversely, the anti-roll bar rates are lower than a GT3 RS's. The forged wheels are more than a little generous in the tyres they will accommodate: at the front are 265/35 ZR20s and at the rear 325/30 ZR21s. Behind those wheels lies a set of Porsche's finest carbon-ceramic brakes.

You won't have missed the GT2 RS's extreme aero package, which can produce 340kg at the maximum (limited!) velocity of 211mph, or 450kg if the rear wing's angle of attack is increased. There's a magnesium roof, carbonfibre bonnet and more carbon parts just about everywhere, including the front wings. The rear window and rear side glazing is lighter than normal, while every European-spec RS is a 'Clubsport', with a half-cage, driver's six-point belts and the usual racing prep.

Even so, the final kerb weight of 1470kg is hardly what you'd call a true lightweight. You can knock nearly a further 30kg off that figure by specifying the Weissach Package for, gulp, £21,042, which brings magnesium wheels (saving 11.5kg), and carbonfibre for the anti-roll bars (a first, apparently), roof, steering-wheel trim and shift paddles. The roll-cage is then made from titanium, although doesn't have FIA certification.

Clamber down into the carbon bucket seat and the RS's interior will look very familiar – and possibly slightly underwhelming – to anyone who's driven a 991, especially as this particular car does without a cage (it's US-spec) and has a leather dash with the PCM infotainment system in the middle of it. I twist the standard Porsche key and there's a cough and a boorish boom of immense depth, which quickly vanishes for a quieter, busy idle. Press the little button with the exhaust symbol and the boom returns. It's somehow ugly but wonderfully appealing: layered, rich and thick enough in the air that it feels like you could slice it like a homemade Victoria sponge. It's the kind of noise that burrows deep into your head, makes objects rattle around and fizz; it's the sound of raw, malevolent turbo power through an unsilenced exhaust, and momentarily, it's quite shocking. We haven't even moved off yet and already the GT2 RS has me mentally on the ropes. I grip the wheel a little harder, and brace myself for the challenge ahead.

The over-the-shoulder boombox is too much at low revs. Ambling along in Faro traffic both Aston and I wince simultaneously then gasp when the engine revs fall below 2500rpm and the resonance

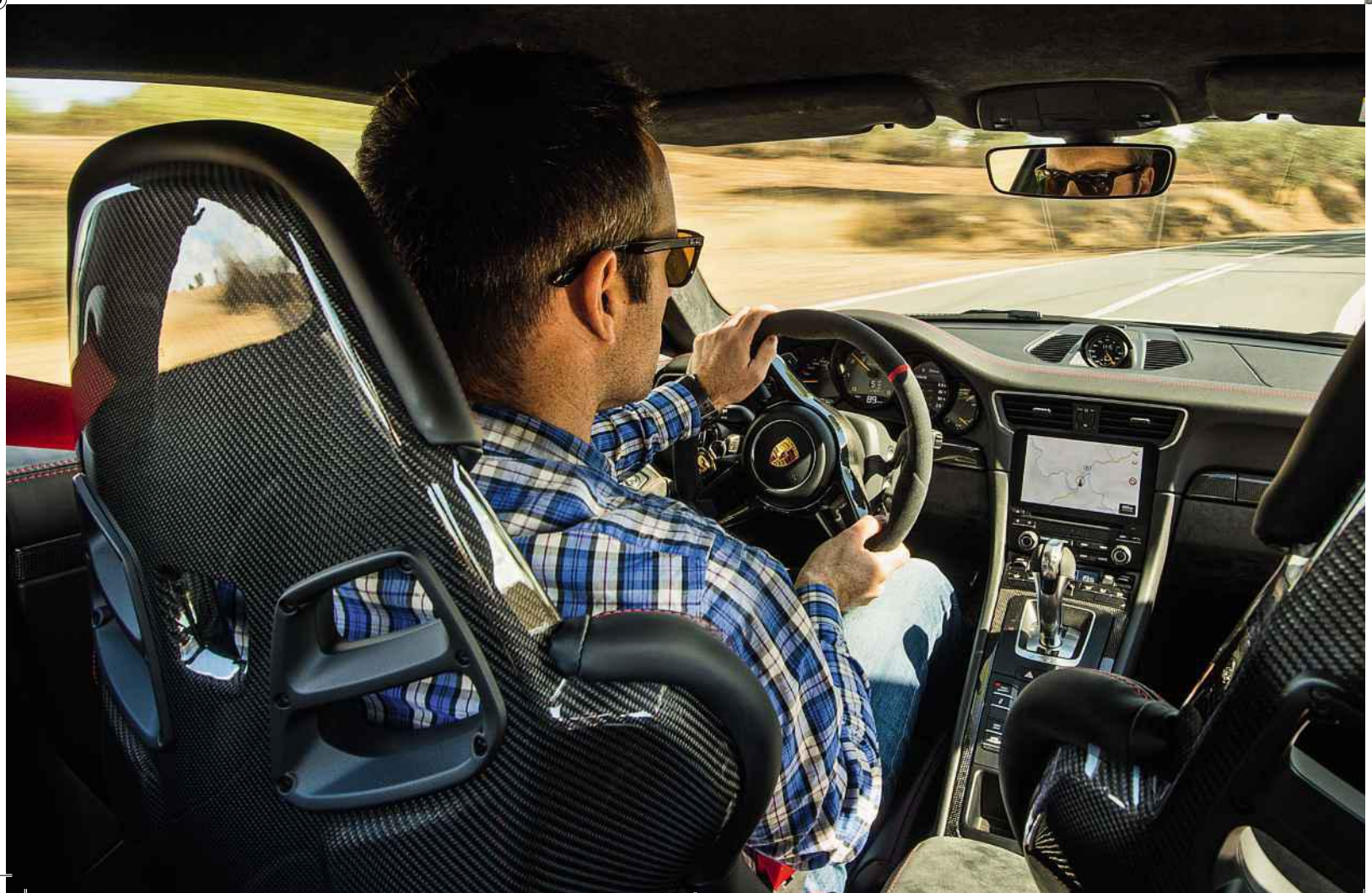
**Left:** with the rear wing at its maximum-attack angle, the GT2 RS produces 450kg of downforce at its (limited!) top speed of 211mph



**Opposite page:** despite its prodigious outputs, sliding the GT2 RS is less intimidating than you might expect. **Below, middle:** tyres are Dunlop Sport Maxx Race 2 or Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 – there's no performance difference between the two, but both restrict the car's top speed. **Bottom:** infotainment system can be deleted to save weight



'WHEN ROUSED, THE GT2 RS SNAPS FORWARD WITH HILARIOUS FORCE,  
REALLY PUNCHING YOU IN THE SMALL OF THE BACK'







makes our heads start to vibrate. In other respects the GT2 RS is easy enough. The ride quality, while firm, is eerily good at dealing with the worst the suburban roads can place in our path.

Finally, after what seems an interminable wait, we find the road we're looking for and suddenly there's not a soul to be seen. And so the rhythm builds, and the GT2 RS starts to reveal itself, and the full magnitude of what we're dealing with here comes crisply, and astonishingly rapidly, into focus. That first lingering foot on the throttle is the exact moment the addiction begins, and what a moment it is. You'll know when a GT2 RS is coming within range. That boom is nothing more than a blunt warning, for when roused the RS snaps forward with hilarious force, really punching you in the small of the back. It's manageable in the hot seat only because there's the wheel to hold on to, but by the grunts, sighs and giggles coming from the passenger seat as the engine goes truly mental between 5000 and 7000rpm, I can tell that the GT2's utterly furious performance is nerve-wrackingly compelling.

Today's light has gone, so we hotfoot it back to the hotel and reflect on a job still largely left to do. As my eyes close, the final thought of the day is whether the expected thunderstorms will have arrived by the morning. No thank you. Please...

Our request to get 'our' car back early granted, it's before dawn when I catch my reflection in the lobby doing a bizarre hybrid of an excitable sprint and a tip-toe creep in the direction of the hotel's car park. There, deep underground, sit six RSs dozing in a million-pound collective as a lone security guard looks forlornly into the middle distance. I wave the keys enthusiastically in his direction while sporting a grin like the proverbial Cheshire cat and then nearly blow my eardrums to shreds as the RS's cold start

soundbomb echoes back off the nearby concrete walls. By the time I've coaxed the big Porsche up the exit ramp, Aston is waiting outside the front doors with his pile of photographic equipment, and in mere seconds we're loaded up and gone, heading rapidly back in the direction of that amazing road as the first shafts of Mediterranean sunlight start to peer over the rocky horizon.

I'm beginning to get used to the power; not taking it for granted, but learning to meter it out exactly where and when I want to deploy it. Two things are now readily apparent beyond its obvious ferocity (this is a rear-wheel-drive car that manages 0-62mph in just 2.8sec...). Firstly, that despite its considerable nod to the great turbocharged flat-sixes of the past, it is remarkably free from turbo lag. Secondly, that the throttle calibration is extraordinarily good. You can keep the car in a perfect state of balance with exactly the right amount of throttle, but at the same time, when you squeeze the pedal more, there always seems to be another layer of acceleration available, and then another one after that.

Yet there's so much more to the RS than its raw firepower. If it feels within itself during normal driving, then its poise at higher workloads is breathtaking. I never question the steering from the first mile. Its accuracy is absolute, and if it doesn't drip with feedback like an early 911, it tells you everything that's important. In the GT2 RS you can brake incredibly late into a corner, feeling the ABS cutting in over undulations in the braking zone, then bleed off the pressure as you trail it into the corner. From that point on, not once do the 265-section fronts ever suggest they might begin to push wide, instead the front end feels nailed to the asphalt, the car already having rotated around part of the turn but without even the suggestion of rear-end nervousness. Now a brush of throttle





## 'SWITCHING OFF THE PSM IN THE GT2 RS FEELS LIKE REMOVING THE MUZZLE ON A MILITARY-SPEC ALSATIAN'

energises the car, settles it, the first 2mm of travel just the perfect amount for the task. Every time you summon it thus, something aft cracks and bangs naturally, repeating itself if you lift off, so that it almost sounds like an anti-lag system. Open the wheel a bit. Once you can see the exit you can get back on the throttle, and because of the RS's immense traction this can be earlier than in almost any other car. Much earlier than you'd expect. Get a little greedy and there's the delicious sensation of torque beginning to ever-so-slightly overwhelm the grip the rears have on the tarmac, teasing those giant rubber bands away from the surface. Learning that sensation is important, for once you know what it feels like, you may feel inclined to push your luck a little further...

Switching off PSM in the GT2 RS feels like removing the muzzle on a military-spec Alsatian. But from talking to Kern, it's obvious that the extraordinary lap time wasn't down to the GT2 RS being a wild animal: it was because he felt confident in the car, dialled in to it, able to adjust it at slower speeds but reassured by a window of understeer in high-speed curves. After all, the final two-second improvement at the Ring came from taking the left kink after the public entrance flat out at 192mph. That's not a car on the edge; that's a car breeding confidence in the most extreme scenario.

And you get to feel just a little bit of that on a road such as this. When the rear does break traction, as it will do easily in a number of forward gears, it is more manageable than you might imagine. Sure, it demands precise inputs at all times, but it's a long way from being frightening.

After a while it's this unflappability that comes to define the GT2 RS. When it takes off, it flies straight and level and lands four-square. Not once does that deep front splitter kiss the tarmac, regardless of this road's uneven surface or the car's velocity. It seems impervious to everything, but not lifeless – there's still a faint nose bob over undulating surfaces, reminding you of the

fundamental weight distribution. It's still a 911.

Our time with the car expires and, heading for the airport, the RS retreats back inside its shell as though I've just pulled the plug out. This is the height of engineering cleverness, I do get that. But perhaps the GT2's only failing is that it's no more taxing and dramatic than a regular Carrera in the sort of driving it'll inevitably spend the majority of the time doing. You could give the GT2 RS to anyone in your family and they'd drive it to the shops with ease. If my new 911 has the performance and soundtrack of a Kremer 935 K3, I want it to blow my mind the moment I open the driver's door, not get me to the office in comfort.

Moreover, I yearn for Clubsport to really mean Clubsport, like back in the days of the original GT2, the 993-based car. It shouldn't still have suit hooks in it: it should have bare metal floors, a simplified dash, carbon doorcards. It should be like a 991 Cup car inside. That would make it so much more of an event even just popping out for some milk – like a Ferrari F40.

I also worry that the RS is too fast for congested British roads, and with that exhaust, it won't be appearing on any trackdays, either. And I worry that you won't be able to buy one unless you've bought more Porsches than most of us have bought takeaways in our lifetime, and that those who do will leave them in their delivery plastic and simply sit back and watch their monetary value climb. Finally, I wonder if it had 300bhp less but weighed 200kg less, would it be a better road car?

And yet it's simply magic. It feels like nothing less than the rebirth of the real Porsche Turbo. The angry Turbo, a match for anything, like the early days. It might not have the homologation cred of the 993 GT2, but it feels like the direct descendant of that car, and the extraordinary Ring time isn't a bad motorsport substitute. At last, the GT2 has emerged from the shadow cast by its GT3 RS brother. It's a beautiful monster. ✕



## Porsche 911 GT2 RS

**Engine** Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo

**Power** 690bhp @ 7000rpm

**Torque** 553lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm

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

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

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

**Brakes** Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, 410mm front, 390mm rear

**Wheels** 9.5 x 20in front, 12.5 x 21in rear

**Tyres** 265/35 ZR20 front, 325/30 ZR21 rear

**Weight** 1470kg (c1440kg with Weissach Package)

**Power-to-weight** 477bhp/ton (c487bhp/ton WP)

**0-62mph** 2.8sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 211mph (limited)

**Basic price** £207,506 (extra £21,042 for WP)

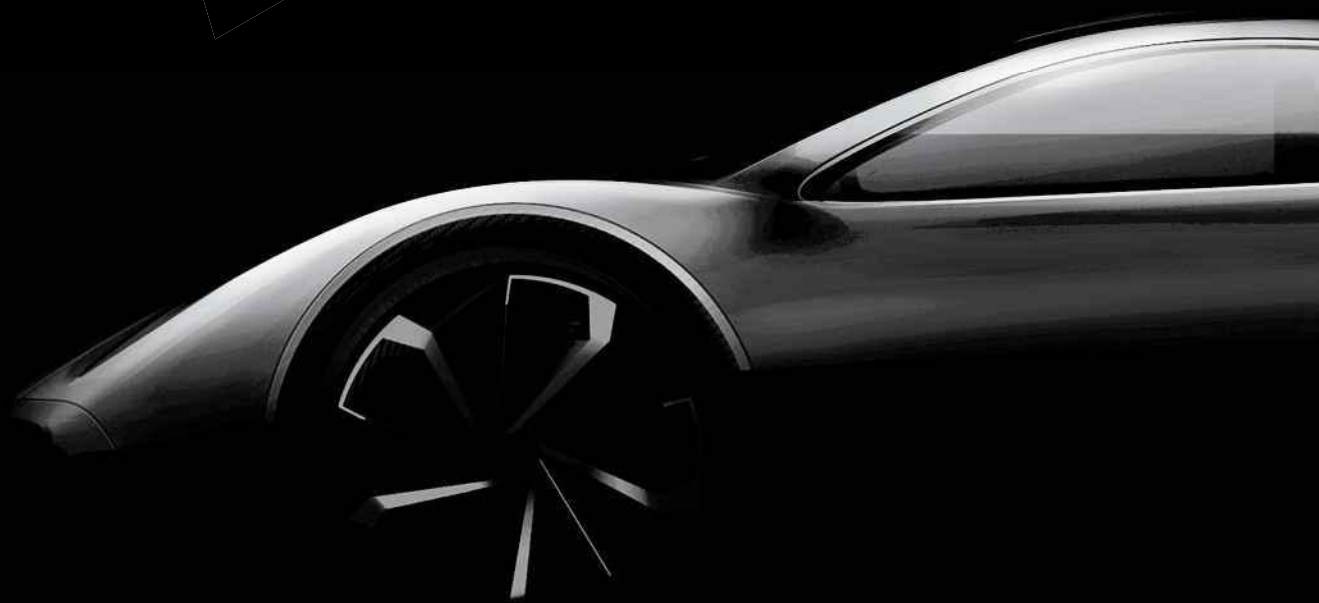
**On sale** Now ('limited availability')

**evo rating** ★★★★★



GORDON MURRAY

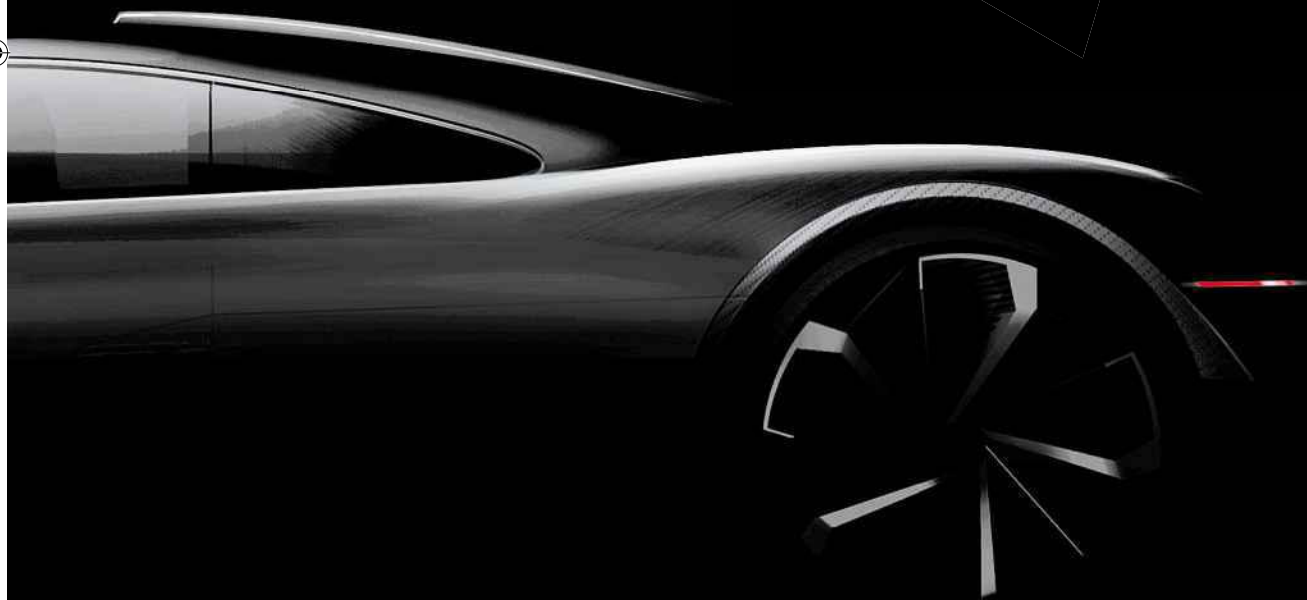
# ACCORDING



*Twenty-five years on from the McLaren F1, Gordon Murray has lost none of his fervour*



# TO GORDON



by STUART GALLAGHER

*for designing light, fast, fun-to-drive cars. We talk to him about his new sports car project*

[www.evo.co.uk](http://www.evo.co.uk) **061**



**Clockwise from above left:** Murray's road car CV is diverse and spans from the groundbreaking McLaren F1 through to the revolutionary iStream T.27 city car concept; there are race cars aplenty too, of course, including the McLaren MP4/4 that took Ayrton Senna to his 1988 F1 title win; Murray's personal collection of road cars are all lightweight and fun to drive



**'I LIKE SPORTS CARS. I COULDN'T LAUNCH MY** first car from my own car company and it be a family saloon. I'd jump off the nearest bridge if I had to do that.' It's a straightforward answer to a simple question: why launch a car company and a sports car now? But Gordon Murray likes the straightforward approach to doing things. What he doesn't like is weight, or unnecessary technology, or complicated manufacturing techniques. And if you're a diesel-powered SUV, good luck with getting his attention.

A quarter of a century on from the launch of Murray's most famous road car, he wants to bring the world a successor to a similar formula: a compact, lightweight mid-engined car in the spirit of the F1. 'I think the industry is losing the plot,' he continues, surrounded by some of the road cars currently in his collection – only one of which weighs more than 1000kg – and a broad selection of the race cars that brought him, Brabham and McLaren so much success in Formula 1 and sports car racing. 'Sports cars, supercars, hypercars – whatever you want to call them – are becoming more difficult for the driver to enjoy and exploit. I want to design and build a sports car that's useable and 100 per cent driver-focused. The F1 was all about the driver and them being able to use its performance. Nothing has changed in 25 years to say

a sports car today can't follow that same philosophy.'

Murray isn't exactly forthcoming with the details when we meet. On the subject of weight he talks of Mazda's current MX-5 and its circa-1000kg kerb weight: 'It has to be under a ton.' When asked about his interpretation of size his reply is quite telling:

'Once governments have finished with emissions legislation they will move on to a car's footprint and regulate this, too. We're running out of space and big cars make no sense. In Tokyo, unless you have off-street parking you can't own a car longer than 3.4 metres. It doesn't matter how much money you have, you can't have one. Is that such a bad thing?'

'Restricting the size of cars doesn't have to mean micro-cars, but we need a better approach to how we design and build cars. Compact cars are very efficient, save space and resources, raw material and weight. They also provide a great opportunity, especially for those of us who enjoy driving.'

On the subject of powertrains he leaves a bit more meat on the bone: 'We've worked on EV, hybrid and petrol engines for some of our previous projects and existing clients. We're close to signing an agreement for our first engine. It's something we could adapt for future models, too. What can I tell you now? It will be exciting, I can guarantee that. It will surprise a few

**'WE'RE  
RUNNING  
OUT OF  
SPACE AND  
BIG CARS  
MAKE NO  
SENSE'**





people too, but importantly, and this is key to the whole car, it will be very pure, very driver-orientated in terms of how it delivers its power and torque.'

It's a similar story with the gearbox. 'I can tell you we've three options for a transmission,' explains Murray. 'It won't be a torque converter or a DSG – they are such a non-event for the driver: the gearchange is quick but in chasing milliseconds we've excluded the driver.'

But back to the power source: 'We've been working on an engine programme for the last 18 months. We need a family of engines for the plans we have to build other models.' You see, Murray wants this first sports car to be a halo project for Gordon Murray Automotive, and for it to be followed by hatchbacks, saloons, trucks, city cars and, yes, if the criteria is correct and it can exist for the right reasons, an SUV. Some will be electric, others petrol and some hybrids. With partners such as Bentley on board and working with Murray's team on future platform development, could his iStream manufacturing concept finally be ready for mass production?

How the car will be built is a subject Murray is more than happy to discuss at length. You will have heard of iStream, the manufacturing method that rips weight and inefficiency from the process of building vehicles,

and adds efficiency, flexibility and possibility. It's been around for some time, primarily in potential city car projects, although the process has yet to be taken on and put into series production. This sports car will be built on what GMD calls its iStream Superlight platform.

Where the basic iStream process uses a steel frame with sandwiched carbonfibre panels to provide the stiffness – as per the new TVR Griffith that Murray's team has recently finished designing – iStream Superlight replaces the steel with extruded aluminium. The result is a structure that's 35 per cent lighter than the original iStream and over 50 per cent lighter than a conventional steel/aluminium structure. 'The problem with building cars from aluminium is that it's not a strong material,' explains Murray, 'so you need more of it and you lose all the weight saving you wanted.'

Weight and efficiency is never far from the conversation when talking with Murray; it's what has driven the designer of multiple F1 winners for the last 50 years. And even at the age of 71, that drive for efficiency continues. This focus also considers technology. Legislation will dictate that ABS and ESP must be fitted to his car, but driver modes and switchable damper, throttle and exhaust settings will be conspicuous by their absence – all part of Murray's pure ethos. However, this same ethos also

## 'WE NEED A FAMILY OF ENGINES FOR THE PLANS WE HAVE TO BUILD OTHER MODELS'



**Above left:** Murray's motorcycle-engined Light Car Company Rocket had just 94bhp but weighed only 385kg. **Above right:** Murray's championship-winning Brabham F1 cars

means that the car may not make it to some markets, such as North America: 'Legislation kills many cars stone dead unfortunately. We haven't looked at all the markets yet, but I won't build a car that's compromised by trying to please every market.'

The car will be badged IGM, for Ian Gordon Murray, initials he first applied to his one-off Lotus Seven-like T1 roadster over half a century ago. In terms of looks, a design sketch (see page 90) reveals a hint of a low-slung mid-engined two-seater with a short rear overhang and little sign of external aero devices. 'Aerodynamics have moved on so much since we did the F1,' explains Murray. 'That car was still so advanced compared with what others were doing. But what we know now is really advanced.'

'Aerodynamics are going to play a key role in this car. Not in a way that we proclaim an unimaginable downforce figure at maximum speed, but they will be the most advanced yet seen on a road car and deliver a genuine benefit to the driver more of the time.'

At this early stage of the project it's as frustrating as it is fascinating to listen to Murray outline his plans, but the absence of specifics leaves you wanting to know more: performance targets, rivals, benchmarking. But we'll have to wait, and with Murray under no time pressures to deliver, the wait could run well into 2019. Which brings us back to the original question: why now?

For Gordon Murray Automotive it's to seize an opportunity; possibly to lead the changes in the auto industry, provide the specialist knowledge that gets absorbed by the big players and diluted into the mainstream when conducted from in-house. The freedom of working externally provides clarity. GMA's ambition is wide-reaching, from building platforms under its own name to working with OEMs to adapt the concept to their needs. The iStream concept has also evolved from its early showings and could be a serious

solution for many established makers and start-ups. 'For every kilo of weight saved you can save 12 euros on an EV's battery cost. Dyson should be talking us,' says Murray when asked who they have spoken to.

It's not only the construction of future cars that Murray thinks is a challenge: 'The ownership model is going to change. Today's kids won't own a car, they won't want to; they'll lease or hire them. How do you establish brand loyalty, then? It's about awareness rather than someone buying into a brand. People buy the best, or the perceived best. That's a huge challenge for car makers who have put so much into building their brands. It's another reason to build an exciting car, to get people excited about driving. It's not all doom and gloom.'

'What powertrains will rise above the current ones? The trouble is petrol is too good! The energy density is so high you only need to carry around 15 per cent of the fuel with you, the rest is all around you. Hydrogen fuel stacks are interesting, but the production costs are too high and the efficiency rate is very low when you consider the energy required to produce it.'

'Electric is only viable for certain situations, the correct scenarios – city cars or large saloons and SUVs where

you can package the motors and batteries to deliver the freedom a petrol engine gives you. But I'd rather be in the position we are now, to have these conversations with OEMs and start-ups and be able to offer solutions and possibilities. It's going to be fun.'

Surrounded by his road and race cars, Murray cuts a relaxed, confident figure. Someone who knows exactly in what direction he needs to steer his new car company. Before we leave there's time for one last question: what's the best car he's ever driven? Without hesitation he fires back: 'The Series 1 Lotus Elan. I've never driven anything better. Including the F1.' Sounds like now is the time to build your own Elan, Gordon. ✕

**'I'VE NEVER  
DRIVEN  
ANYTHING  
BETTER THAN  
THE SERIES 1  
LOTUS ELAN'**



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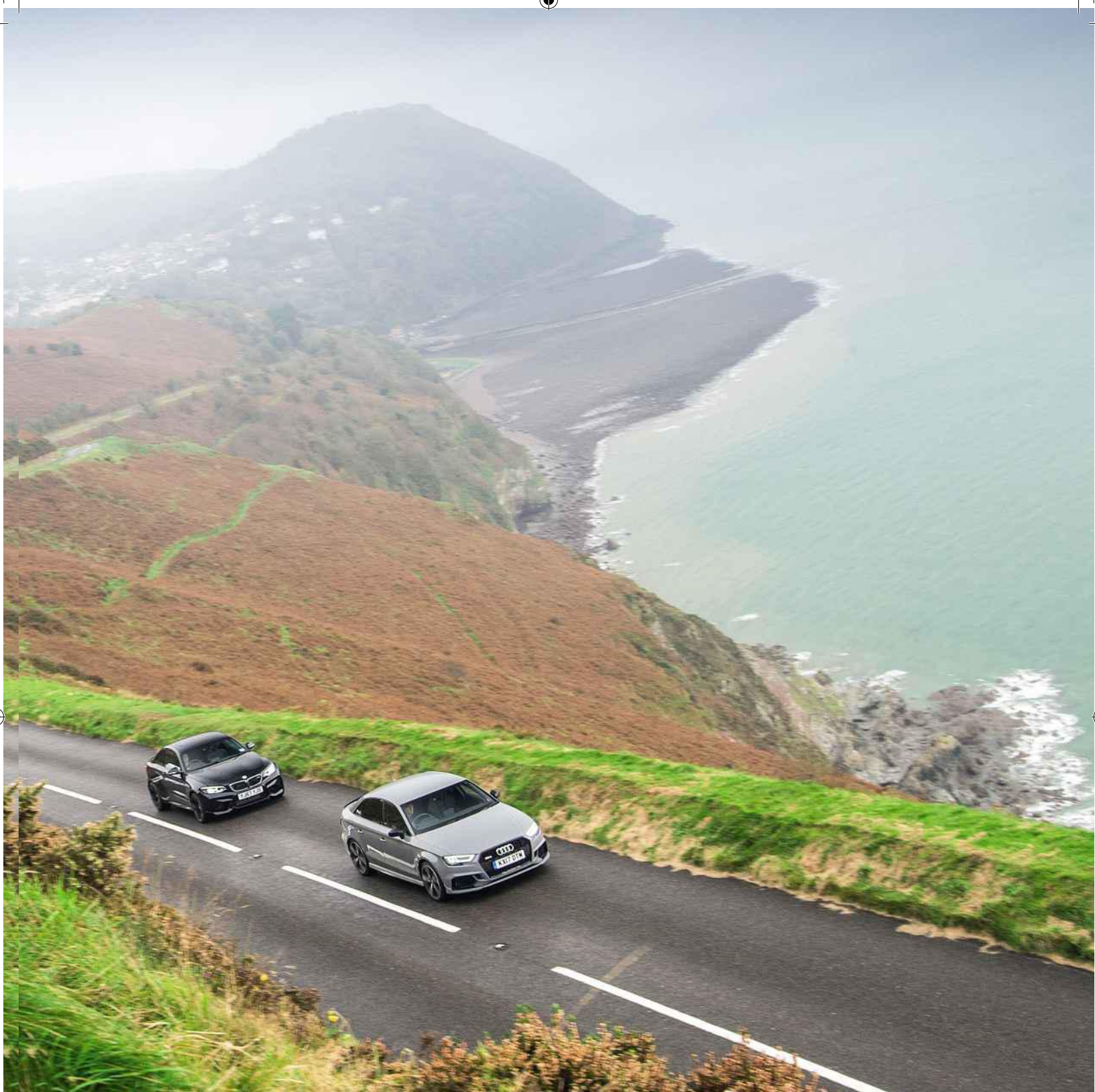


AUDI RS3 SALOON v BMW M2



# CIVIL WAR





*Audi RS versus BMW M – it's the needle match that keeps on giving. This time it's the turn of the new RS3 Saloon, with a heavily revised 394bhp turbocharged five-cylinder, as it takes the fight to the deeply impressive and cosmetically refreshed M2*

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by JAMES DISDALE | PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

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**T**HE MIST IS ROLLING across the landscape, alternately revealing and then hiding the road ahead. In the moments when visibility is good enough you'll see

that the stretch of tarmac rises, falls and twists with the topography. Look closer still and you'll discover the route is littered with hidden crests and wickedly deceptive tightening corners. Adding to the fun is the water-logged surface that's also covered with an alarming mix of fallen leaves and the odd patch of slimy mud. This is Exmoor in autumn. More importantly, this is quattro country.

With hindsight, we couldn't have picked a better spot or better weather to give the new – and first – Audi RS3 Saloon its first proper run in the UK. Underpinned by the

firm's famed four-wheel-drive system, the Audi aims to inject a much-needed dose of driver enjoyment over and above the S3 Saloon, which delivers plenty of all-weather grip and go but not much in the way of grins.

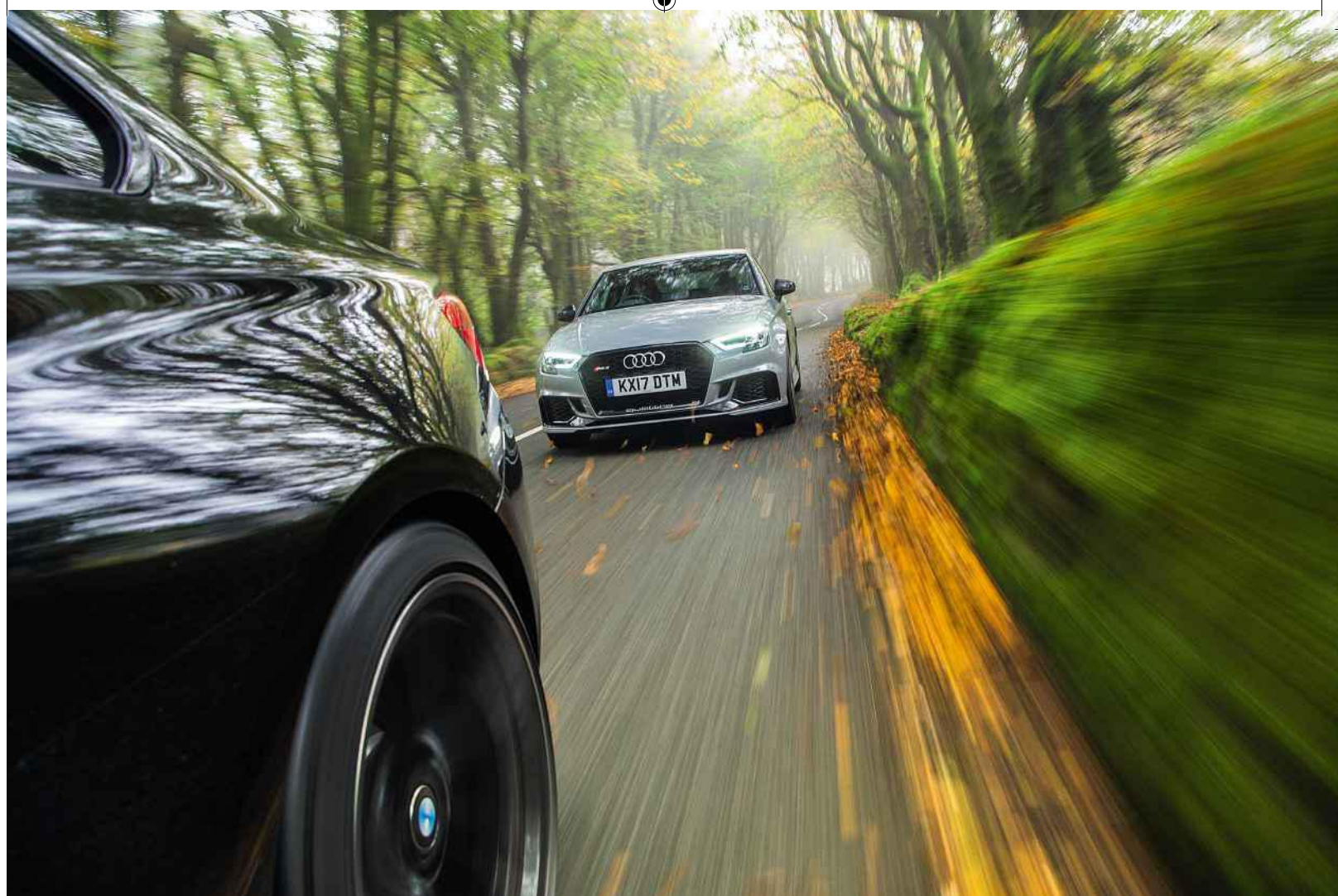
Driving the changes, literally and figuratively, is a heavily revised version of Audi's turbocharged five-cylinder engine. It's the same unit used in the TT RS and RS3 hatchback and it features aluminium construction that makes it 26kg lighter than the cast-iron boat anchor previously used. That's a lot of mass removed from the nose and should go some way to reducing the inert nature of RS3s of old. Better still, despite going on a diet the 2.5-litre five-pot delivers more power, with an increase of 32bhp to a dizzying 394bhp. There's more muscle too, with peak torque swelling from 343lb ft to 354lb ft, all of which is delivered with an

electric motor-like spread from 1700rpm through to 5850rpm.

After it had seen these figures and then peeped out through the curtains and clocked the weather, you'd have forgiven the BMW M2 for hitting the snooze button and staying in bed. Yet the squat, stocky BMW is made of sterner stuff. It's also recently been treated to a bit of a mid-life refresh, but the changes are merely cosmetic, with new LED headlamps and a tweaked dashboard. This means the M2 makes do with the same twin-turbocharged 3-litre in-line six as before, which at 365bhp is down on power compared with the Audi, but can generate a substantial 369lb ft at a ludicrously low 1450rpm. All this poke is channelled through the rear wheels via a limited-slip differential and seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox (a six-speed manual is available, but the DCT makes







**‘Those bulging wheelarches stretch over a wider track to give the BMW a junior muscle-car look – you’ll never confuse it with a more humble 2-series’**

a fairer comparison with the seven-speed S-tronic-only Audi).

It may be the older car and its updates only minor, but there’s so much the M2 gets right. Those bulging wheelarches stretch over the car’s wider track to give the BMW a junior muscle-car look, guaranteeing you’ll never confuse it with a more humble 2-series. Inside, you sit much lower than in the Audi, and while the standard seats look rather flat and featureless, there’s a wide range of adjustment and plenty of support. There’s no escaping the trademark chunky three-spoke M steering wheel, of course, and the lightly revised dash is angled towards you. A neat addition is the new black-panel dial pack, which appears out of the darkness when you thumb the ignition.

By contrast the RS3 is a much more restrained device, particularly in our test car’s battleship grey paint finish. There are some subtle RS add-ons, including unique trim finishers and 19-inch alloys, but in all other respects the Audi looks visually similar to the cheaper S3. The low-key approach continues inside, the RS3 favouring sophistication over

sportiness. The high-backed front seats and colourful air-vent surrounds add some interest, as does the new TFT Virtual Cockpit instrument display, but the Audi feels more like an upmarket executive saloon from behind the wheel, whereas the BMW gives off the air of a purpose-built sports coupe.

This feeling is confirmed the moment you get moving. From the light steering to the hushed refinement, the Audi is a laid-back companion during daily duties. Sure, the standard passive dampers deliver a firm ride, but it never gets jarring.

Even the five-cylinder motor remains under the radar. There’s a flare of revs and a couple of ‘look at me’ pops and bangs from the £1000 sports exhaust as it fires up, but under normal circumstances it delivers effortless and unobtrusive progress. It’s helped on this front by the slick dual-clutch ‘box, which when left to its own devices smoothly shifts up as early as possible to make the most use of the engine’s deep-chested torque.

The BMW’s DCT transmission isn’t such a smoothie, determinedly hanging on to gears when an upchange is due and then





## 'Sudden crests, big bumps and internal-organ-crushing

delivering occasionally jerky shifts when it does decide to play ball. The straight-six is more vocal for more of the time, its deep baritone a constant acoustic backdrop. The M2 reacts more to the road surface as well, your backside treated to a constant running commentary on the state of the tarmac. Yet as with the Audi, the passively damped BMW never becomes unruly – it's stiff, but the suspension does a good job of rounding off the jagged edges of the worst road imperfections.

Even at cruising speeds the BMW's keener to remind you of its performance potential. On first acquaintance the Audi's no-sweat steering seems aimed at those who want an easy life when parking, but the BMW's meatier affair creates an instant connection – you get the impression that this is a car up for a good time.

Which is just as well because the mist is starting to clear now. I'm back in the Audi, keen to see whether the easy-going nature that made the long haul down to Devon such a cinch will prove a hindrance when you want to pick apart your favourite stretch of road. One thing's

for certain – the RS3 is shatteringly fast.

Squeeze the throttle to its stop in second, third or fourth (it doesn't really matter which, such is the five-pot's brawn) and the car takes off like a bazooka shell. It's helped, of course, by its Haldex-controlled four-wheel-drive system, which allows you to deploy every last ounce of performance, even in these treacherous conditions. When we later strap our timing gear onto the RS3 at an equally wet test track, it fires from zero to 60mph in a jaw-dropping 3.7sec. Three point seven. In the wet! In a saloon car!

What's more, when you work it hard the Audi's lag-free turbo motor starts to find its voice, helped in no small part by that pricey sports exhaust. Yet it's not the warbling war cry of a Group B Quattro, but rather a cultured wail that's not a million miles in timbre, if not volume, from that of the R8's V10.

**Above:** going to extremes to break the RS3's grip; revised five-pot turbo motor is 26kg lighter than previously; cabin comfortable and well-made.

**Right:** M2 happy to play the hooligan; turbo straight-six sounds superb; cabin understated

### Audi RS3 Saloon

**Engine** In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo

**Power** 394bhp @ 5850-7000rpm

**Torque** 354lb ft @ 1700-5850rpm

**Transmission** Seven-speed dual-clutch, four-wheel drive

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

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

**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 370mm front, 310mm rear

**Wheels** 8.5 x 19in front, 8 x 19in rear (option)

**Tyres** 255/30 R19 front, 235/35 R19 rear (option)

**Weight** 1515kg

**Power-to-weight** 264bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 4.1sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 155mph (limited; 174mph optional)

**Basic price** £45,250

**evo rating** ★★★★★



## BMW M2

**Engine** In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo

**Power** 365bhp @ 6500rpm

**Torque** 369lb ft @ 1450-4750rpm

**Transmission** Seven-speed dual-clutch (option), rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff

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

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

**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 370mm rear

**Wheels** 9 x 19in front, 10 x 19in rear

**Tyres** 245/35 ZR19 front, 265/35 ZR19 rear

**Weight** 1520kg

**Power-to-weight** 244bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 4.3sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 155mph (limited)

**Basic price** £46,430

**evo rating** ★★★★★

When the Audi's flat-chat in these conditions the BMW struggles to keep up. Traction is better than you'd expect, the M2's Michelins biting more convincingly than on the larger, standard-spec M4 (the M2 laid down a respectable 4.9sec for its wet 0-60mph run), yet caution is still required. Even with traction control on, the BMW's tail will twitch and writhe over surface changes and through standing water. This issue is compounded by the DCT transmission, which can't match the Audi's seamless shifts and often rams home the next ratio with such a jolt that the rear axle squirms uncomfortably with the torque reaction. The manual gearbox alternative offers far more finesse.

Tread carefully, however, and it's clear the M2 is no slacker. It's six-cylinder lump doesn't rev with quite the zeal of the Audi's unit, but its bassy metallic growl has you chasing the red line whenever the road opens up. And once it's rolling, the BMW accelerates with real purpose, that 369lb ft of torque helping fire the stocky machine along with real conviction.

Even so, with the tarmac still soaked it's an act of folly to try to lock onto

the rear bumper of the Audi, which is devastatingly quick across these sinuous Exmoor roads. This particular RS3 is fitted with optional alloys (£695) that have the unusual distinction of being wider at the front than the rear – 8.5 x 19in and 8 x 19in respectively (the standard wheel is the latter size all-round). As such, the front also gets wider Pirelli rubber – 255-section versus 235. The Saloon's handling is further boosted by its rear track being 14mm wider than that of the Sportback hatch version, which itself has a rear track 14mm wider than the standard A3's (both RS models are broader by 20mm at the front).

As you'd expect, it's a poised, planted and virtually foolproof device. Simply turn into the corner, plant your foot on the throttle and feel the brilliantly effective four-wheel-drive transmission slingshot you down the next straight. Body control is immense, too, with sudden crests, big bumps and internal-organ-crushing compressions failing to knock the Audi off course.

And yet there's something missing here. The steering is quick and precise,

## compressions all fail to knock the Audi RS3 off course'





the optional £4695 carbon-ceramic brakes serve up powerful and progressive stopping power, and the Audi clings faithfully to your chosen line, but it's just not very exciting. For starters, there's precious little feel through the steering, and that grippy chassis is not up for getting expressive. You soon learn that a brush of the brakes or sharp lift of the throttle has barely any effect on the Audi's balance or trajectory.

Yes, the lighter engine means the RS3 is less lazy on turn-in than before, but it's still a hefty old lump hanging over the front axle. And when really pressing on you can feel the torque vectoring nibbling at the brakes in an effort to keep the Audi on your desired line. There are various driver modes that allow you to alter the steering weight, throttle response and the like, but no matter how much you fiddle, the Audi feels just a bit one-dimensional – although there's no denying that it's a brutally effective dimension.

That's not an accusation you can lay at the wheels of the BMW. It demands more concentration and respect, but rewards with greater interaction and excitement. Compared with its overly complicated M4 big brother, the M2 is refreshingly simple to get the best from. There are no multiple modes for the dampers (adaptive units aren't even an option), engine mapping or steering, just the same overarching Eco, Comfort, Sport and Sport+ modes you'll find on most BMWs. For enthusiastic driving it's that last setting that works best, as it delivers a sharper throttle and a more relaxed stability control.

Even in the wet, the M2 benefits from strong front-end grip, and while

#### ACCELERATION (from standstill, in seconds)

Conditions: wet

Audi RS3 Saloon										Speed (mph)	
10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	30-70 (through gears)	
0.5	1.0	1.5	2.1	2.9	3.7	4.7	5.9	7.1	8.8	3.2	

BMW M2 (DCT)										Speed (mph)	
10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	30-70 (through gears)	
0.8	1.6	2.4	3.1	3.9	4.9	6.0	7.3	8.9	10.8	3.6	

## 'As a low-stress way of getting from A to B quickly, the RS3 is arguably without equal'

the steering lacks some feedback, you know the nose will run wide only if provoked. Keep it smooth and there's surprising traction, but get greedy with the throttle and the ESP gives you just enough movement at the rear to play the hooligan using the power. You still need to bring your A-game, however, particularly with the electronic safety net removed completely, because thanks to its short wheelbase the M2 is spiky when you reach its limits, requiring quick and precise inputs to keep it all pointing in the right direction. However, as the roads dry, the M2 becomes far more confidence-inspiring, allowing you to pick up the pace to the point where there's virtually nothing in it between it and the RS3.

The BMW is not without its faults. The brakes are a constant frustration, with an initial deadness at the top of the pedal travel that makes them hard to modulate, while the DCT gearbox feels a generation behind the best – it's never as quick or crisp as the Audi's S-tronic, or as good as the manual BMW 'box.

So where does that leave us? Well, the Audi is a hugely impressive piece of kit, and one that should make lots of sense in a country where the weather and road conditions can be so unpredictable – as a startlingly capable and low-stress way of getting from A to B as quickly as possible, it's arguably without equal. Plus it's home to that magnificent engine, one of the best available in any car. Yet while it's a better machine than all previous RS3s, it's still rather aloof and detached.

By contrast, the BMW feels like a proper bespoke performance car. It's flawed, occasionally frustrating and ultimately not as easy to live with as the Audi, but it draws you into the action and rewards in a way the RS3 can only dream of. If only BMW would develop a Competition Package of the sort that has transformed the M3/M4, the M2 could really ascend to greatness. ✕



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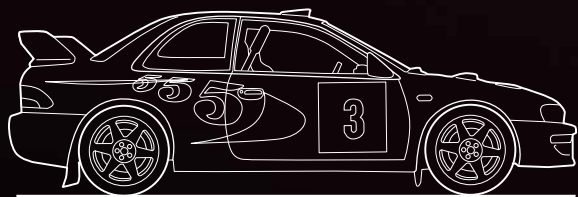
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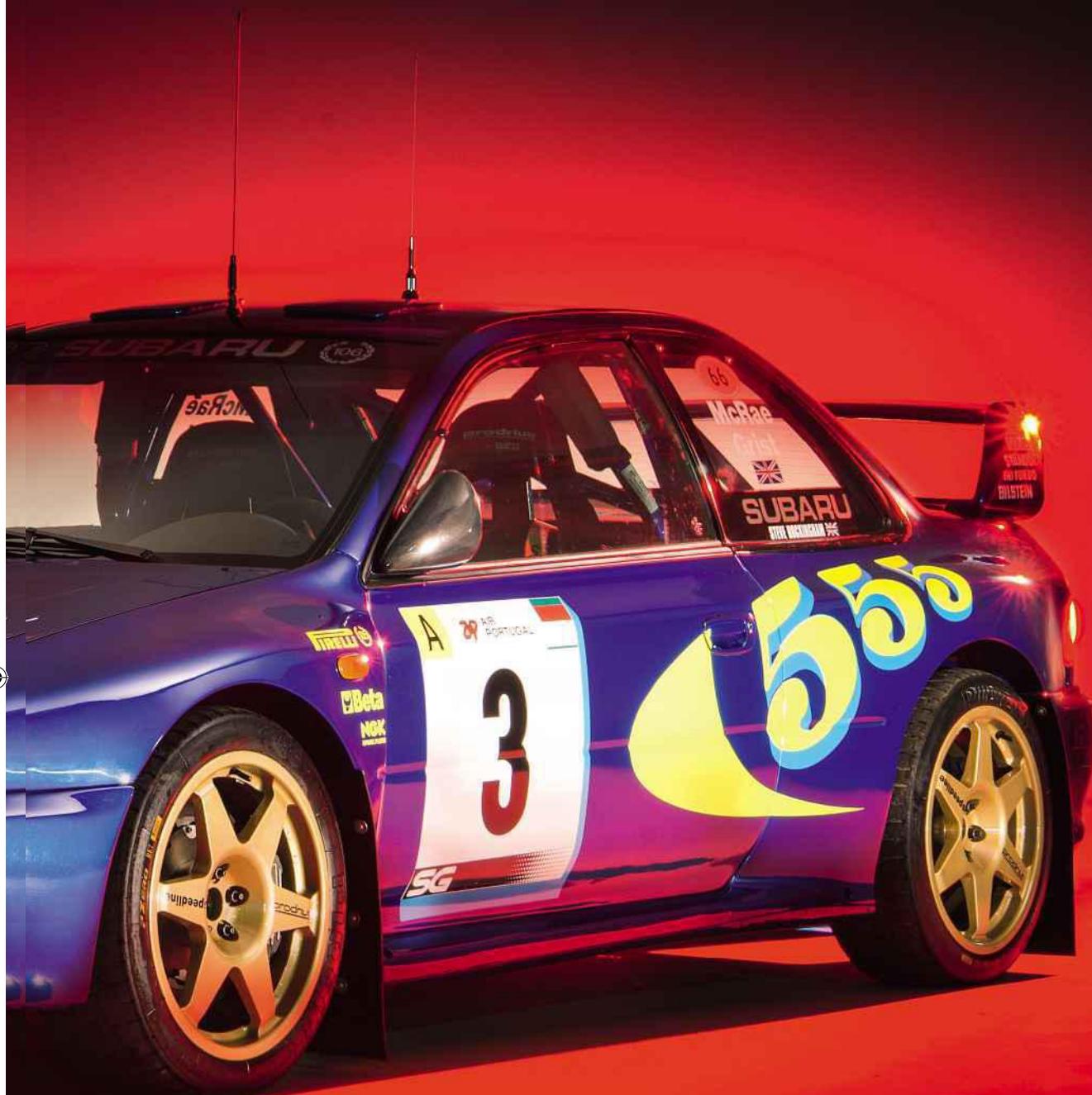
# WRC CAR

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*Radical regulation changes for the 1997 World Rally Championship season were designed to encourage more manufacturers to take part. And they worked – for a while. We look at why they succeeded and ultimately failed, and get up close with one of the era's star cars*







by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by  
ASTON PARROTT

**W**HILE MOST OF us now idolise the Group A homologation specials of the 1990s – the Delta Integrales,

Escort Cosworths, early Imprezas and Mitsubishi Evos – by the second half of the decade the World Rally Championship had a particularly thorny problem.

Although Subaru and Mitsubishi could see a market for producing limited runs of turbocharged, four-wheel-drive performance cars, the European

makers didn't share their optimism. The Delta was long gone; by 1996 the Escort Cossie, too. Toyota, meanwhile, had been banned for a blatant act of cheating, when it flouted turbo restrictor regulations.

Given that 2500 units had to be built to qualify for Group A, and that rally mods were restricted by what was on the road car, a so-called World Championship was in danger of being an all-Japanese affair between just two manufacturers. Something needed to be done to encourage a broader entry list.



## UNDERSTANDING THE 'WORLD CAR'

Confusingly sharing its initials with those for the championship, the World Rally Car, often referred to for simplicity as a 'World Car', was the result of the FIA and manufacturer working groups putting their heads together. The formula was in place for a brave new world that began in January 1997, for the famous season opener in Monte Carlo.

Manufacturers such as PSA and Ford had lobbied hard for a set of rules that allowed them to rally their most popular cars, without the cost of productionising niche high-performance variants. The result was the first time the FIA attempted to control rallying – and the performance of the cars – by a formula, rather than by stipulating the number of homologation cars that needed to be built to gain entry.

Quite simply, the basis of a World Car was a four-seater steel-bodied vehicle, no less than four metres long, built in

numbers greater than 25,000 units a year. What had frightened off Peugeot and the like before was the required turbo engine and four-wheel drive. Now the basic engine had to have appeared in a car that had been built in a quantity of 2500 units or more, while turbos, intake and exhaust systems, the four-wheel-drive system and gearbox, plus the rear suspension, were all allowed to be bespoke.

'The cars were genuine production cars,' says Prodrive's David Lapworth (then technical director, now director of R&D). 'Fifty per cent of the regs were still Group A, but the engine, gearbox and rear suspension were made part of a formula. Now anyone could do it. It's a principle that pretty much holds to this day.'

The maximum width of the cars was allowed to be 1770mm, leading to the enlarged arches so characteristic of the type, while movement of the front suspension pick-up points and the engine was allowed to a small degree (20mm). There were wider-reaching changes that affected the sport, too: the number

## 'THE LIKES OF PSA AND FORD HAD BEEN LOBBYING HARD FOR NEW RULES'





**Left:** iconic two-door Impreza WRC97 was wind-tunnel tested at sideways angles to ensure its efficiency out on the rally stages

of rallies was increased from eight to 14, there was a reduction in the amount of on-event servicing allowed and the maximum stage mileage was reduced to 400km from 600km (Safari excepted). Rallying was morphing for the televisual era, for better or for worse, depending on your point of view.

## ACCOMMODATING ALL

As 1997 dawned, the rallying teams were in different states of readiness. Prodrive had a great basis for its new World Car in the Group A Impreza 555. It was 'a short-term advantage, a long-term disadvantage,' notes Lapworth. 'Over the next couple of years we had to dig deep to catch Peugeot.'

While Subaru hit the ground running, Peugeot had the benefit of a completely clean sheet of paper to design its new 206 WRC, maximising all the advantages hidden in the small print of the rules. By the turn of the millennium the two manufacturers would be slogging it

out for supremacy along with Ford and Mitsubishi. The latter stuck with essentially its Group A Lancer Evo, before debuting the Evo 7-based Lancer Evolution WRC towards the end of the 2001 season

Toyota, meanwhile, fell somewhere between its rivals. Its new Corolla WRC borrowed heavily from the previous Group A Celica GT4 (in ST205 form), particularly in terms of its powertrain, but incorporated all the packaging and size advantages of the new formula. Having been excluded from competition since 1995, there was plenty of time for testing and development.

In many ways the Corolla epitomised everything that was good *and* bad about the new formula: it kept a major manufacturer such as Toyota in the game, and gave the sport a rapid and successful car that was pedalled, in time, by two legends in Carlos Sainz and Didier Auriol. But for enthusiasts, it jarred, even hurt, that the bland-as-white-goods road-going Corolla had nothing even approaching a

mildly sporty variant; a link in the chain between the sport and the hearts and minds of its fans had been severed.

Ford faced a different problem. Strapped for cash, and with the Escort's replacement still over a year away, there was no way on earth it was going to design a new car for the 1997 regulations based on an old design. So it called the FIA's bluff and asked if it could have special dispensation to apply a WRC kit to its Group A Escort Cosworth for the '97 and '98 seasons, before arriving with an all-new Focus WRC in time for 1999. Not wanting to lose a major manufacturer, the FIA and its rivals quickly acquiesced, and the Escort WRC project began in earnest during June 1996.

## THE SUBARU IMPREZA WRC97

As the first World Car to be launched and the first to win a rally under the new regulations, it's fitting that our sample car in the studio is a Subaru Impreza WRC97. This exact car, R19 WRC, made its debut



at Round 10, Rally Finland, in the hands of Kenneth Eriksson, and was also used by the Swede for an ill-fated attack on the 1997 RAC Rally, where problems with the car saw it retire during the first stage. Upgraded to WRC98 spec for the new season, the car rallied three more times for the factory team, with Colin McRae and Nicky Grist winning both the Rally of Portugal and Rally China using it.

Run by Prodrive for French industrialist Freddy Dor in the 1999 WRC, it was then sold off for a varied life as a privateer car in UK national events, before being acquired by rallying enthusiast Steve Rockingham and recently subjected to a meticulous restoration back to McRae's Portugal 1998 spec, including returning the car to the correct left-hand drive.

## ENGINE, SUSPENSION, BODY AND AERODYNAMICS

Although Prodrive already had a turbocharged road car as a basis to work from, the WRC rules allowed for

movement of the engine and freedom of turbocharger choice and intake/exhaust systems. In that first year the Banbury-based team left the engine and turbo pretty much alone, but created a massive airbox in the front wing and replaced the short, siamesed exhaust manifolds for longer equal-length ones. At a stroke, the distinctive rumble of the flat-four was lost. The maze of pipes under the bonnet of R19 also shows how bespoke the engine installations in these cars were.

That year Prodrive switched from the four-door Impreza bodyshell familiar in the UK to the two-door body, sacrificing some structural stiffness (which would then be recovered with a roll-cage), but enjoying a loss of weight and complexity. Prodrive co-founder David Richards was adamant that the new generation of WRC cars should look spectacular, and never more so than his own Subarus. To this end he called on British designer Peter Stevens, who had already worked with Prodrive on other projects.

'We clay modelled on top of a basic two-door body in a Norfolk studio,' recalls

**'WRC CARS  
MOVE AT  
8 DEGREES  
TO THE SIDE  
ON AVERAGE,  
UP TO AS  
MUCH AS 15'**

**Above:** carbonfibre airbox and equal-length exhaust manifolds were instrumental to the WRC97's engine upgrades





Stevens. 'I treated it like a proper industry project, doing a full-size tape drawing, design sketches and then a clay model. Subaru were a startlingly different company to what I was used to: they all just loved it [motorsport]. It wasn't a marketing thing, but engineering.'

'We also did some wind-tunnel work on it. Rally cars spend very little time in a straight line, on average moving at eight degrees to the side, to as much as 15. So we ran it in the tunnel at those angles, and also airborne. We wanted it to fly level, and to check that air would still go through the intakes even at those angles. Once it was rallying, McRae would tweak the wheel just before taking off over a jump and it would land facing in the direction that it had taken off in.'

Subaru arguably already had the best

chassis in the WRC (and probably the weakest engine), and the carry-over to the new regs allowed a wider track and improved geometry, although not all the drivers liked the handling properties of the 'wide' car. Subaru had also been developing active differentials since the early 1990s, and would soon have a rear active diff. Meanwhile, the car still used an H-pattern manual 'box – for now.

## TO 22B OR NOT TO BE

One fact often misreported is that the 22B was the homologation road car for the Impreza WRC. As we've seen from the aforementioned regulations, that's nonsense: the 22B was simply a marketing exercise to sell a road car that looked as similar to the rally car as possible. 'I don't

know why more manufacturers don't do this,' says Lapworth. 'I guess you'd have to ask their marketing directors.'

Peugeot, meanwhile, did do a homologation car: it had to, given the 206 wasn't long enough to meet the four-metre stipulation. The result was the 206 GT, with its bizarrely extended front and rear bumpers. Peugeot got special dispensation to meet the regulations in this fashion. SEAT didn't think to ask the same question, and therefore rallied not the Ibiza but the Cordoba, which was always far too big and ungainly.

## WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

At the turn of the millennium the 2-litre WRC era was at its height, with eight manufacturers fielding works teams in



**Right:** now owned by Steve Rockingham, this beautifully restored Impreza was used by Colin McRae to win the 1998 Rally of Portugal and Rally China



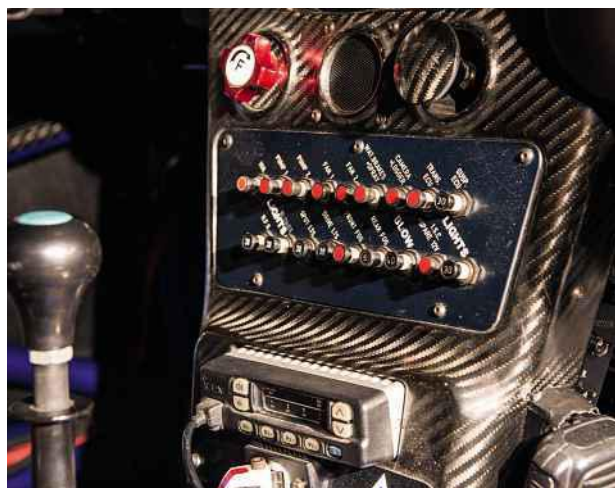
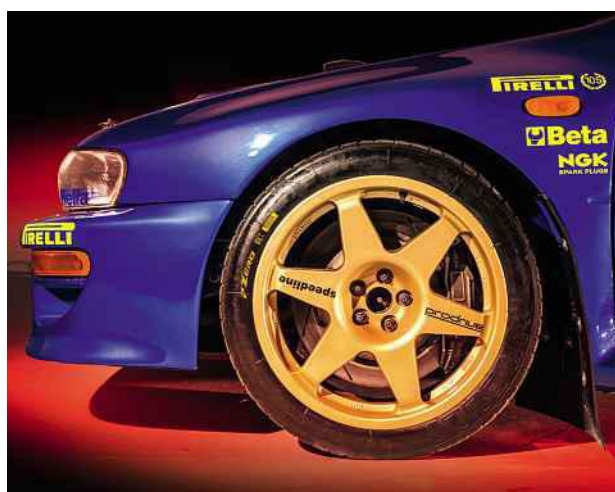
2001. Sadly, as we've seen so many times before, when a championship is at the mercy of the manufacturers' marketing budgets and whims, rather than built on a bedrock of independent teams, and one manufacturer spends a rumoured double the amount of everyone else (that's you, Citroën), it's always going to end in tears.

'I think for the first ten years it was a sweet spot in the history of the WRC,' opines Lapworth. 'On average we had more great drivers, great cars, winners and contenders than we have had before or since. There was also an interesting evolution in the performance of the cars.'

Indeed, those cars progressed greatly in their sophistication. After widespread adoption of semi-automatic gearboxes and three active differentials (front, centre and rear), the technological

## 'SUBARU ARGUABLY ALREADY HAD THE BEST CHASSIS IN THE WRC'





**Clockwise, from above left:** early electronic instrumentation surrounded by a plethora of switches and warning lights; serious seats in a cramped cockpit; iconic gold Speedline wheels became a must-have road car accessory; lot of buttons to learn

evolution towards the end of the 2-litre era in 2010 is described by Lapworth as 'just attention to detail: more and more suspension travel, lower centre of gravity and less friction'. Nevertheless, he also terms them as 'touring cars with sumpguards', an indication, perhaps, of just how bespoken they had become.

So what went wrong? How is it that by 2009 there were just two manufacturers scrapping for the title – Ford and Citroën – and Sébastien Loeb was able to win nine championships on the trot? Sure, he's one of the greatest talents ever to sit behind a steering wheel, but for the sport his domination was a disaster.

'I think the evolution of the regulations in 2008 was very poor,' says Lapworth. 'It was FIA politics at its worst. Lots of people shared a vision for smaller engines, which

is where we got to in 2011, but there was a ridiculous period of politics and some utter nonsense around cost reduction. Laudable, yes, but bullshit. Then there was the debacle of S2000 and the cost cap that was never, ever enforced by the FIA. It's only in recent years they've got their act together with the regs.'

As for Subaru, its WRC98 introduced revisions to the turbo plus lighter engine internals, and saw the debut of the active rear differential in Rally New Zealand. But it was the 1999 car that saw the first major changes, with a new semi-automatic gearbox, more power, an electronic throttle and a larger turbo. The new driver pairing of Richard Burns and Juha Kankkunen achieved some good results, but it was the last World Car based on the classic GC8 Impreza bodyshell,

the P2000 (a name soon dropped for 'S6'), that really brought Subaru back into contention.

Although ostensibly similar from the outside, it was 80 per cent different under the skin, with nearly every component repositioned lower in the car for improved weight distribution. Burns narrowly lost the title to Marcus Grönholm and Peugeot in 2000, but the bones of the car would be rebodied into the 2001 Bugeye-shape S7 in which Burns and Reid would win the World Championship, and refined further for the 2003 'S9' that helped Petter Solberg win the drivers' title, which would be his first and Subaru's last. ✕

*Many thanks to Steve Rockingham for bringing along R19 WRC, David Lapworth at Prodrive, and Peter Stevens.*





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# GALES' FORCE

*Under CEO Jean-Marc Gales, Lotus's cars have gone from strength to strength. Following the company's recent takeover by Geely, we drive the ultimate incarnations of the current line-up*







by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT



**A**UTUMN AT POTASH LANE, Hethel, and the wind still whips across this ex-USAF airfield with defiant ferocity, just as the gnarled tarmac and concrete roadways of the 1940s, still visible in places here and there, are reassuringly familiar. Yet these days it's juxtaposed with a reminder of Lotus's rollercoaster history over the past decade: the modern test track, with its smooth asphalt, and the shadow of an unfinished factory, the building's ghostly structural frame exposed to the elements; reminders, positive and otherwise, of the turbulent 'Bahar era' that promised so much, but ultimately delivered so little.

Today, however, we have three cars before us that define the most recent era at Lotus – the Gales years: three new models that little bit faster, lighter, keener than the previous pinnacles of their respective ranges. For many of you the appearance of the Elise Cup 260, Exige Cup 430 and Evora GT430 will be cause for celebration – a sign that Lotus continues to extract incredible performance from its long-serving models with the kind of budget that wouldn't fund the vending machine in Audi's glovebox design department for a year.

But I also have no doubt that there will be plenty who view these latest models – two out of three that are yet more special editions – as a cynical ploy; Lotus trying to make more hay out of yet another sliver of carbonfibre, another decal set, an extra few horsepower over last month's 'special'. That's not the reality, not in our view, but CEO Jean-Marc Gales' strategy of only building cars to order, and a focus on a relentless pursuit of expensive, low-volume models, has not been without its detractors. Of course, Gales can now point to rising sales, profitability and, most importantly of all, the grand prize of outside investment from Geely



Automotive (as detailed in **evo** last month). For him, the storm has been weathered, successfully, and now the real work starts.

Let's start with the Elise, the Cup 260, a limited edition of just 30 cars. The simple premise of this car is that it has the most powerful Toyota four-pot in the lightest chassis, with the extra benefit of the most extreme aero yet fitted to a modern-era Elise. The supercharged motor produces 250bhp at 7200rpm, which given it weighs only 902kg allows it to reach 60mph from rest in only 3.8 seconds (62mph in 4.2sec) and go on to 151mph all-out. An Elise is about much more than just standing-start acceleration, but this is one very rapid little car. And so it should be at just shy of sixty grand.

What you're really paying for is the lighter materials and the upgraded running gear. The engine's extra 7bhp over the Cup 250 is, after all, simply the result of a remap and a revised induction system, but the 260's star turn on the scales can be attributed to parts such as the splitter, the front access panel, the engine cover and the rear wing all being manufactured from carbonfibre. It saves 15kg over the Cup 250 (already genuinely light), while a 44 per cent increase in downforce makes its own contribution, equating to 180kg of downward force at maximum velocity. Finally, there's the chassis, which has two-way Nitron dampers (with 24 settings for compression and rebound) and the lightest forged wheels the company can supply, shod with Yokohama AD08R rubber.

One thing all three cars have in common – beyond dazzling dynamics – is that they don't feel to the touch, look to the eye or reach the ear like Lotuses did a decade ago. The Cup 260 certainly feels spartan, and the simple instrumentation pod and stalks could only be Elise, but the carbonfibre, exposed gearshift and absence of rattles are a world away from what they once were.

I drive the Cup 260 on the road first, with corresponding settings for the dampers. Naturally, it's still a firm-riding car, but not excessively so by the standards of lightweight hardcore sports cars.

## 'IT DEVOURS A COUNTRY LANE WITH A DYNAMISM VERGING ON NONCHALANCE'

**Above:** Elise 260 Cup's rear wing has more than a hint of the aftermarket about it, but combined with other aero changes gives an increase in downforce of 44 per cent at top speed

Those of a committed nature could still commute in it every day, if so inclined.

With its low kerb weight and sophisticated suspension components, the Cup 260 devours a country lane with a dynamism verging on nonchalance, were it not for the boisterous dialogue that filters back through the steering wheel at all times. It almost floats along, seemingly skimming over the lumps and bumps in the road, unfazed by just about anything.

The Toyota lump is still a fizzy, harsh presence right behind your ears, its progressive torque a world away from the peaky nature of the old 1.8-litre 2ZZ motor. But if there's a slight disappointment, it's that the Cup 260 just doesn't feel as manically rapid as the figures would have you believe. It's only when I check the odometer and realise this car has covered just 400 miles that the tightness makes sense: with use I suspect it will get significantly faster.

Once on track it's really in its element, with notably strong braking power and loads of grip, including at the front end on turn-in. Start to push hard and you can feel that rearward engine mass start to move, particularly if provoked, the Elise finely balanced but vastly more adjustable than almost any other car on sale. It feels as though it









could lap like this all day long. It's a lovely thing, but I wonder if a 1.6-litre Sprint might capture the essence of the Elise in a more affordable, exploitable way.

On to the Evora GT430, the model's ultimate incarnation to date and limited to 60 examples. I remember driving the original supercharged Evora S on the launch in Spain, 2010, and also how much the car had improved by the most recent occasion I drove one: the Evora 400 at eCoty 2015. But the jump to this car is almost unfathomable. At nearly double the price of those early Evoras (£112,500 versus £60,550) it should, of course, be spectacular, but with 430bhp and 325lb ft that shouldn't be an issue. This is the charge-cooled version of the venerable, supercharged, 3.5-litre Toyota V6.

Carbonfibre is everywhere you look: from the jutting front splitter to the tailgate and much more besides. And aerodynamics appear to have a greater influence than ever before, with larger apertures at the front, air blades and, of course, a high-rise rear wing. The GT430's 250kg of downforce compares with 64kg for the Evora Sport 410. It's 26kg lighter, too, coming in at 1299kg.

The GT430 just oozes presence, its wider rims and 295/30 R20 Michelin Cup 2s filling every last spare millimetre of the rear arches. What you can't see are the two-way adjustable Öhlins dampers, the

four-pot AP Racing brakes with 'J-hook' discs, the motorsport traction control set-up with percentage slip adjustment, the single-mass flywheel and the limited-slip differential.

It may be the most extreme Evora yet, but it's the rather more esoteric qualities of material selection and build tolerances that impress when you clamber down into the car. There is a lot of carbonfibre and Alcantara in here, and no sound system, which is fine by me. There's just enough rearwards visibility, but prominent in that over-the-shoulder view is the linkage for the throttle, a visible reminder that you've just summoned more horses from the V6.

For such a focused car it's no surprise that the GT430 rides with the kind of iron-gripped control that suggests it'll be in its element at the Ring, let alone the Snetterton 300 circuit. Yet the obvious sophistication of the damping rounds off the edges of the worst that Norfolk lanes can throw at it. This may be a 190mph Evora but it's the noise that dominates everything: reasonably refined at lower engine speeds, the howl from the titanium exhaust when the engine is revved out is deafening.

Predictably, the GT430 is a ballistic device on the circuit, with fantastic composure through Hethel's infamous high-speed Windsock curve in particular. It's only a short drive, but it's enough

**'THE HOWL FROM THE TITANIUM EXHAUST WHEN THE ENGINE IS REVVED OUT IS DEAFENING'**







to tell us that not much will be coming past on a typical trackday, and there's fabulous immersion here in the driving experience, too, with a much improved manual shift, crisp throttle response and beautifully descriptive steering.

Nevertheless, as is so often the case, it's when a manufacturer puts its most potent engine into the smallest, lightest car in which it will fit that the real fireworks ensue. In essence, imagine what the Evora GT430 might feel like with a further 200kg removed from its mass and you have the latest Exige, the Cup 430. We raved about its predecessor, the Cup 380, recently (*evo* 240 – which shows how frequently these special editions come along), and this should be even better.

Incorporating the bigger Edelbrock supercharger and accompanying chargecooler has added 55bhp and 15kg to the car, but extreme attention to detail and the widespread use of carbonfibre for most of the body (and much else besides) mean this car is even lighter than the Cup 380, by 12kg, at just 1093kg. Pause on that for a moment: given the V6 has 430bhp, this means a power-to-weight ratio of 400bhp per ton, so no wonder it does 0-62mph in just 3.3 seconds, and that with a six-speed manual shift. The Cup 430 is also the fastest road-going

Lotus ever around the Hethel test track, some 1.2 seconds a lap faster than the 3-Eleven. Much of the rest of the spec mirrors the GT430, but the dampers are even more advanced, being three-way adjustable Nitrons (they're adjustable for both low- and high-speed compression as well as rebound).

The Cup 430 has that wonderful sense of weightlessness only achievable by placing a very powerful engine in a very light car. Up the power and the weight and the formula doesn't work. In almost any gear and at any speed the Exige just scoots forward, even with just a touch of throttle. Admittedly, at full throttle it isn't quite as bombastic as I was expecting but, frustratingly, with a total mileage on the clock similar to the aforementioned Cup 260, the engine seems tight.

What it does have is that genuine racing car feel on the road: the single wiper parks in the upright position, and while it's snug in the cockpit, visibility is adequate enough. There's more weight to all the controls than in the Elise, and the cabin is still Elise-simple rather than having the more grown-up surroundings of the Evora. Piloting the Exige down a B-road with just the tips of your fingers, the car working at a fraction of its potential, is a truly special feeling.

**Above and left:** as its appearance suggests, the GT430 is a very different beast to earlier Evora incarnations; it's far more hardcore, but utterly thrilling both on road and track



A quick blast on the circuit is marred by greasy conditions, and uncovers the one chink in the 430's otherwise flawless armour. As with so many Lotuses it doesn't feature a limited-slip differential. Now, with its sophisticated spark-cut traction control system this isn't a hindrance to fast lap times. Neither is it about playing the hooligan – which the Exige can be provoked to do but not under power – but rather the fact that with all that power in a light car, the Exige spins an inside wheel in wet conditions rather easily, and the mellower, smoother transition between grip and slip with a diff would be desirable. Gales isn't against fitting LSDs – witness the Evora – but claims the added work to incorporate one on the Exige would have added a year and significant cost to the project. In the dry I doubt you'd give it a second thought.

More than anything, what really sets the Cup 430 apart from the other cars here is that it's a regular production model, not a limited 'special'. In return



for £99,800 – admittedly a huge chunk of money – anyone can buy this Exige, which represents the model's climax. Gales and his engineers can't realistically hone the Exige any further. And those same engineers are now busy developing the all-new cars we can expect to see over the coming years, starting with a new Elise due in 2022.

With the Exige Cup 430 Lotus has reached a thrilling conclusion to the present. The future may be yet more exciting. ✕

**Above:** Exige Cup 430 is the fastest Lotus road car around the Hethel test track, beating even the pared-back 3-Elven; it's blinding on the road, too

### Elise Cup 260

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1798cc, supercharger  
**Power** 250bhp @ 7200rpm  
**Torque** 195lb ft @ 5500rpm  
**Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, EDL  
**Suspension, front and rear** Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Brakes** Two-piece ventilated discs, 288mm front and rear  
**Wheels** 7 x 16in front, 8 x 17in rear  
**Tyres** 205/45 R16 front, 235/40 R17 rear  
**Weight** 902kg  
**Power-to-weight** 282bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 4.2sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 151mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** £59,500  
**evo rating** ★★★★★

### Evora GT430

**Engine** V6, 3456cc, supercharger  
**Power** 430bhp @ 7000rpm  
**Torque** 325lb ft @ 4500rpm  
**Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, Torsen limited-slip differential  
**Suspension, front and rear** Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bars  
**Brakes** Two-piece ventilated discs, 370mm front, 350mm rear  
**Wheels** 8 x 19in front, 10.5 x 20in rear  
**Tyres** 245/35 R19 front, 295/30 R20 rear  
**Weight** 1299kg  
**Power-to-weight** 336bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 3.8sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 190mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** £112,500  
**evo rating** ★★★★★

### Exige Cup 430

**Engine** V6, 3456cc, supercharger  
**Power** 430bhp @ 7000rpm  
**Torque** 325lb ft @ 2600-6800rpm  
**Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive  
**Suspension, front and rear** Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, adjustable anti-roll bars  
**Brakes** Two-piece ventilated discs, 332mm front and rear  
**Wheels** 7 x 17in front, 10 x 18in rear  
**Tyres** 215/45 R17 front, 285/30 R20 rear  
**Weight** 1093kg  
**Power-to-weight** 400bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 3.3sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 180mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** £99,800  
**evo rating** ★★★★★





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MPG figures will be published on [lotuscars.com](http://lotuscars.com) as soon as available. Performance results may vary depending upon the specification of the particular vehicle, environmental conditions, driving style and other factors.

MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing and intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect driving results. Published MPG figures and performance results are intended for comparisons between vehicles only. Verification of performance results should not be attempted on public roads. Lotus recommends that all local speed and safety laws must be obeyed and safety belts worn at all times.







ICON: HONDA S2000

ICON

# HONDA S2000

*Considered flawed in its day, has the passage of time seen the appeal of the high-revving, naturally aspirated Honda sports car grow?*

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

[www.evo.co.uk](http://www.evo.co.uk) **093**

**T HONESTLY FEELS LIKE** yesterday. The hot sun of the Côte d'Azur, the zig-zag tarmac staircase of the Col de Braus clambering up sun-bleached crags. Echoing off the rocks is the keening of the then-new Honda S2000, while tucked into its wake are three of the best late-'90s sports cars – Porsche Boxster, TVR Griffith 500 and Lotus Elise.

That feature – 'The Hunter and the Hunted' – was one of the defining group tests from the early days of *evo* (issue 009 to be precise). Long days, fabulous roads, many miles of hard, fast driving and a typically uncompromising verdict: the S2000 missed the mark. So why are we celebrating it in our Icons series? Because now as then, the prospect of a light, powerful, ultra-high-revving two-seater rear-drive sports car is something to get the juices flowing.

Still, when editor Gallagher – who was also on that original test – asked me if I'd like to revisit the S2000, it felt like we were going to give a beaten dog one last kicking. That said, the passage of so many years can alter the context by which you judge a car. And the Honda surely deserves a shot at redemption.

One thing is for certain: in these days of forced induction and twin-clutch transmissions, the S2000's specification reads like the stuff of dreams. You'll struggle to find anything close to its absolute banshee of a naturally aspirated four-cylinder motor, with its stratospheric

red line and scarcely believable specific output. Let alone one mated to a six-speed manual transmission that, as any car bore will tell you, is an all-time benchmark for the stick-shift.

The classic front-engine, rear-drive sports car recipe was one we had grown used to Mazda owning with the MX-5, so when Honda muscled in with a considerably more potent and advanced interpretation to celebrate the company's 50th anniversary, we really sat up and took notice: its promise was considerable and compelling. The wrapping wasn't half bad either – a sharp dagger of a profile with aquiline features that borrowed little from existing rivals but didn't try too hard. It's still a handsome car today, though its stance and modest wheels have less impact than they did, which betrays its age somewhat.

As does its size. It's pleasingly small from the outside, and actually on the cramped side once you get in, with the shallow dash and skinny door cards

emphasising your proximity to the windscreen and the outside world. The seats are comfortable and locate you well, but you're perched a little too high, so you look down on the non-adjustable steering wheel rather than at it.

The pedals are offset slightly to the right but nicely spaced. The brake pedal is firm, with enough give in it for finessing downshifts with a heel-and-toe blip whether you're working the pedal with maximum pressure or just rowing along at moderate pace.

I'd forgotten about the digital dashboard – what motoring journalists before my time would have quaintly described as 'Tokyo by night' – and its lo-fi whiff of Atari or Texas Instruments. In an age of retina displays and OLEDs it could look embarrassingly dated, but to be fair the instrument pack still looks surprisingly good and works well.

The overall build quality is impressive, too, just as you'd expect from a Honda. There are a few squeaks and rattles, but these tend to go with the territory in small, light convertible sports cars. Handy switchgear – extended, soft-contoured toggles that actually operate like rockers – sprout from the dash, while a big red starter button (a novelty in those days) takes pride of place on the far right. Pleasingly, there's something reminiscent of the early NSX about the clear ergonomics and white-on-black typeface used to label everything. The cockpit of an S2000 is a good place to be.

**'The six-speed manual is, as any car bore will tell you, an all-time benchmark'**







[www.evo.co.uk](http://www.evo.co.uk) 095



## 'You look forward to the moment the hot cam profiles come into play'

The 2-litre in-line four-cylinder engine has always been the star of the show with the S2000, but it takes a while to warm to it. Start it up and it sounds a bit tinny and resonant, both at idle and moderate revs; that's in complete contrast to the uncanny smoothness and ferocity it displays as you hunt the red line.

The vital stats remain exceptional: 237bhp at 8300rpm from 1997cc. In Japan, where the F20C engine ran with a higher compression ratio (11.7:1 compared with 11.0:1) it gave 10bhp more for a world-beating specific output of 124bhp per litre. And all without the aid of turbo- or supercharging. Torque is in short supply, with just 153lb ft at a whopping 7500rpm. Red line? 8800rpm. Rev limiter? 9000rpm. Back in 1999 this was the exclusive realm of supercars.

Below 5000rpm it feels hollow – in the context of 2017, almost empty, with that void in the power and torque curves only filled out once the VTEC system has woken and starts to work its magic. As a consequence you initially wonder what all the fuss is about. You can easily drive it for ten or twenty minutes and never get anywhere near the VTEC zone. Depending on your outlook this is either hugely frustrating and a bit of a waste of time, or simply an extended period of foreplay before the real fun begins. Whichever way you slice it, you most definitely look forward to the moment you can feel and hear the hot cam profiles come into play, revs building and building until the VTEC takes effect and illuminates the performance like a light switching on.

This zone is the nub of the S2000 experience and the root of the VTEC's cult following. If anything it feels so much more special these days, because although turbocharging has given us far more accessible and abundant performance, nothing else has that purity of concept or singularity of experience.

It's not all down to the engine, though. We've banged the manual gearbox drum for years now, but very few, if any, of the manual cars we've celebrated compares to the S2000. Its shift has a terrific sense of mechanical connection – boosted by

the tactility of the cold metal ball that tops the gearlever – combined with the speed and binary consistency of a switch.

The real beauty of it is you can snick it through nonchalantly at low speeds or snap it through as fast as your wrist can punch it through the narrow yet precise gate. It's a perfect mate for the engine, which needs keeping at a rolling boil if you're to drop into the VTEC zone with each upshift. Steely, sharp and apparently bulletproof, it's a marvel of tight tolerances and endless fine-tuning by engineers and drivers obsessed with speed and precision.

With its motor sitting way back in the nose, the S2000 is very much front-mid-engined, with most of its 1260kg mass centred within the wheelbase. Later 'AP2' models introduced from 2004 benefitted from 17-inch wheels, revised spring/damper tuning and tweaked geometry in an effort to tame the transition to oversteer and tone down the twitchiness. (North American AP2s also got a larger, 2.2-litre engine with a touch more torque but a lower red line.) Our test car is a GT Edition 100, built at the end of the S2000's life, so benefits from these mid-life dynamic changes.

It's been too long since I drove an early car to give a detailed appraisal of how the AP1 and AP2 compare, but what I can say is this car offers more connection and less twitchiness than admittedly faded memories had me expect. On a warm, dry road you've got plenty of reassurance that the car will stick, even if you still haven't got truly detailed steering feel. However, there are times – mainly in cool, damp conditions – when there are hints of the spiky original. It's best to treat the S2000 with care on slippery tarmac.

Much of this is because there's a slight resistance to the steering, like a piece of elastic being slowly stretched. It's quick-witted, but there's a slight stickiness to the initial inputs, and because of that lack of feel at the point of turning in, you often put more load into the front end (the outside front in particular) than you intend or realise. With less margin left than you think, any subsequent use of the throttle mid-corner to adjust the attitude

### Honda S2000 (AP2)

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1997cc

**Power** 237bhp @ 8300rpm

**Torque** 153lb ft @ 7500rpm

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

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

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

**Brakes** Ventilated discs all-round, 300mm front, 282mm rear

**Wheels** 7 x 17in front, 8.5 x 17in rear

**Tyres** 215/45 R17 front, 245/40 R17 rear

**Weight** 1260kg

**Power-to-weight** 191bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 6.2sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 150mph (claimed)

**Price when new** £28,600

**Value now** £6500 to £23,000 (AP1 & AP2)

**evo rating** ★★★★★











## 'You'll be shocked by the intensity that comes with such high revs and its furious work-rate'

of the car brings a greater change than you're expecting.

What it requires you to do is build a sense of what's happening where tyres meet tarmac. But you can only do this by combining the fragmented and sometimes patchy feedback you get from the front wheels, the steering wheel, the rear wheels and the seat of your pants. For a while it's a bit like making a jigsaw without the benefit of a picture to work to, but stick at it and slowly the S2000's intentions become more clear, at which point you can explore the limits of grip and traction without feeling like you're one step behind the car.

What you come to appreciate is that the S2000 relies on the right road for the driving experience to crystallise into Honda's vision of what a no-nonsense sports car should be. Awkwardly paced traffic ruthlessly exposes the lack of torque – overtaking slower cars requires much forward planning, patience and effort – but if you get a clear run the S2000 enters a zone few cars can get close to. There's a race car focus and steely resolve

about the way it chases revs. Second, third and fourth gears have tremendous reach, certainly enough to string most corners together, and the noise that engine makes when working fit to burst is something otherworldly. If you've never been in an S2000 before you'd be shocked by the intensity that comes with such high revs and its furious work-rate.

If, like me, you look for a sports car to have a complete and well-matched skill set, it's regrettable that Honda blessed the S2000 with an engine and gearbox that are so clearly at the top of their games while the steering and chassis lack the same level of detail development, finesse and absolute precision.

Still, you'd have to be a cold-hearted soul not to concede that there's much to be said for a car that aims for the highest highs in one or two areas, even if that pursuit results in other areas of arguably equal importance falling short. How much value you place on the unquestionably stand-out areas depends on how long you're prepared to wait for those fleeting, crazy, full-on moments that define the

S2000. For some that rush is priceless, for others it can never compensate for the dynamic shortfalls or the all-or-nothing performance of the engine.

So the S2000 remains a work of flawed genius. One capable of delivering moments of absolute inspiration, but laced with spells of abject frustration. Same as it ever was, then, except the passage of time has only served to intensify those facets of its character that have never been anything less than electrifying, while softening the impact of the chassis' shortcomings.

For diehard fans it matters not that the planets rarely align perfectly enough to experience the full ferocity of that high-altitude VTEC zone, at least for sustained periods. What matters is that, when they do, there's nothing quite like the way the S2000 homes in on 9000rpm. Or how it connects you so completely to the process of wringing-out every last drop of performance. For that alone we have to salute Honda's single-minded sports car. There never was, and never will be, anything else quite like it. ✕



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# Market DEEP DIVE



## SUBARU IMPREZA: THE SPECIALS

Do you dream of being Colin McRae or Richard Burns with a flat-four warble ringing in your ears? Then join us as we plunge into the world of first- and second-generation Impreza UK special editions

by Bob Harper





**AS ONE OF SUBARU'S BIGGEST** markets, the UK received its fair share of 'special' Imprezas. The first of these was the Series McRae, introduced in 1995 to celebrate Colin McRae's victory the year before on the RAC Rally, which made him the first Brit to win the event since 1976. Based on the original 208bhp Impreza Turbo, the Series McRae was fettled by Prodrive to give better mid-range torque. All 200 examples were in Mica Blue with gold 16-inch Speedline alloys and had Recaro front seats with unique cloth upholstery. Uprated springs, dampers and anti-roll bars featured, too.

Subaru claimed its second WRC manufacturer title at the Rally of Spain in 1996 and so in 1997 launched the celebratory Catalunya. Again, 200 were made, this time based on the facelifted

first-generation Impreza with 215bhp. All were in Black Mica with standard running gear and suspension, gold 15-inch alloys, Recaro front seats, bespoke Catalunya trimmings and a quickshift gearchange.

The Terzo (Italian for third) was a limited run of 333 cars in 1998, marking 1997's championship success. Mechanically it was again standard, but it gained Terzo Mica Blue paint, 16-inch gold alloys, air conditioning and black upholstery with Alcantara highlights.

The next special edition, the 22B STI, was based on the two-door, JDM-only STI Type R model, but with the wide body of the WRC cars and a large rear wing. Officially there were just 16 cars for the UK, but many JDM examples were personally imported. It delivered 276bhp and 268lb ft from its 2.2 litres (up from

the standard car's 2.0) and had Eibach springs, inverted Bilstein dampers and a carbonfibre front strut brace. All were in Sonic Blue Mica and had 18-inch gold BBS rims; UK cars had longer gearing.

The 1999 RB5 was named to celebrate Richard Burns (and his race number). All 444 examples had Blue Steel metallic paint, 17-inch Speedline alloys and an STI-type rear spoiler. The boxer engine could be upped to 237bhp with an optional Prodrive Performance Pack. A Prodrive suspension kit was offered, too.

The swansong for the first generation of Imprezas in the UK was the P1, of which 1000 were produced. Developed by Prodrive and based on the JDM STI Type R two-door shell, it had bespoke body styling designed by Peter Stevens, Sonic Blue Mica paint and 17-inch OZ



## SUBARU IMPREZA TIMELINE



June 1995  
Series McRae



March 1997  
Catalunya



April 1998  
Terzo



November 1998  
22B STI



June 1999  
RB5



March 2000  
P1





**Left:** rare 22B is highly sought after. **Above left:** later P1 makes a more affordable substitute. **Above:** P1 interior had Prodrive buckets and white dials.  
**Top left and opening image:** WR1 was amongst the most powerful Imprezas, with 316bhp from its 2 litres

alloys. Power was via an STI-spec 276bhp version of the 1994cc unit and the suspension was uprated to match.

The second-generation Impreza may be slightly less iconic than the first but it still spawned a plethora of special editions, the first of which was the UK300 of 2001. It featured the standard 215bhp 2-litre engine, although there was the option of a 245bhp Performance Pack. All had WR Blue Mica paint, 18-inch OZ wheels and blue Alcantara upholstery.

In 2004 came the WR1, to celebrate Petter Solberg's WRC title the year before. Based on the facelifted 'Blobeye' WRX STI and further modified by Prodrive, it offered 316bhp and 310lb ft, and a 4.3sec 0-60mph time. Available in the UK only, all 500 were Ice Blue and had a Driver Controlled Centre Differential (for the first time in the UK), a special exhaust, Prodrive springs and 18-inch wheels.

The 300-strong WRX 300 debuted in 2005 with 261bhp thanks to a Prodrive Performance Pack. World Rally Blue paint and gold 17-inch alloys were standard; sports suspension, uprated brakes and 18-inch wheels were options.

In 2006 a less extreme-looking WRX STI arrived in the form of the Spec D. It still had 276bhp but came in Crystal Grey paint and with smaller spoilers. Black leather, climate control and extra sound insulation also featured.

Following the tragic death of Richard Burns in 2005, Subaru honoured his name with the launch of the RB320 in 2007. Based on the 'Hawkeye' WRX STI, the 320 referred to its output (in PS – 316bhp from 2457cc) and also the number produced. It had Obsidian Black

paintwork, anthracite 18-inch alloys, a quickshift gearchange, Prodrive Eibach springs and Bilstein dampers.

The final UK special edition before the arrival of an entirely new type of Impreza was the GB270, of which 300 saloons and 100 Sports Wagons were produced. Based on the standard WRX and named after its output (again in PS, so 266bhp), it came in World Rally Blue (saloons) or Urban Grey (wagons), sat lower on 18-inch Prodrive alloys and featured Alcantara and leather upholstery.

## FIRST AND LAST

### SERIES McRAE

Engine	Flat-four, 1994cc, turbo
Max power	208bhp @ 6000rpm
Max torque	214lb ft @ 4800rpm
Weight	1235kg
Power-to-weight	171bhp/ton
0-60mph	5.8sec [claimed]
Top speed	137mph [claimed]
Number built	200
Price new	£22,999 [1995]

### WRX GB270

Engine	Flat-four, 2457cc, turbo
Max power	266bhp @ 5700rpm
Max torque	310lb ft @ 3000rpm
Weight	1410kg
Power-to-weight	192bhp/ton
0-62mph	5.2sec [claimed]
Top speed	143mph [claimed]
Number built	400
Price new	£22,995 [2007]



May 2001  
UK300



January 2004  
WR1



May 2005  
WRX 300



March 2006  
WRX STI Spec D



November 2006  
RB320



August 2007  
GB270

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## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT... ENGINE OIL

You can't run an internal combustion engine without it, but how much do you know about your car's oil?

by Bob Harper

### WHAT IS IT?

A viscous liquid, insoluble in water, that's used as a lubricant.

### WHY DOES MY ENGINE NEED IT?

So components pass each other with as little friction as possible, preventing power loss and minimising wear. It also has cleaning and cooling properties.

### ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES?

Yes: mineral, synthetic and semi-synthetic.

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MINERAL AND SYNTHETIC?

Mineral oil is distilled from crude oil and refined; synthetic oil is made through a chemical process. However, some synthetic oil is manufactured from crude oil by refining, distilling, purifying and breaking it down into its basic molecules. This process not only removes more impurities but also enables individual molecules in the oil to be tailored to modern engines. A semi-synthetic oil is a blend of mineral and synthetic oils.

### ARE THERE ANY OTHER INGREDIENTS?

Yes, several, generally additives to improve the oil's performance and longevity. A typical engine oil may in fact be made up of 80 per cent actual oil and 20 per cent additives. These can include oxidation inhibitors (to prevent the oil ageing prematurely), detergents (to carry dirt to the oil filter), viscosity improvers and anti-foaming agents, among others.

### WHAT'S A MULTIGRADE OIL?

Virtually all modern engine oils are multigrades, and this refers to their ability



'A typical engine oil may in fact be made up of 80 per cent actual oil and 20 per cent additives'

to be used in both summer and winter. In the past it was the norm to use thinner oil in winter and a thicker oil in summer.

### WHAT DO ALL THOSE LETTERS AND NUMBERS ON MULTIGRADES MEAN?

If we take a 10W-40 oil as an example, the '10W' refers to its maximum viscosity at low temperatures, with the 'W' standing for winter. The lower the number, the thinner the oil. (So in particularly cold environments a lower 'W' number, 5W or 0W say, may be desirable, because the oil will flow more easily upon a cold start and protect the engine sooner.) The '40', meanwhile, refers to the viscosity at normal running temperatures; the higher the figure, the higher the viscosity. An oil that is too thin may not protect effectively, one that is too thick may harm efficiency.

### WHY CAN'T ALL ENGINES JUST USE THE SAME VISCOSITY OIL?

Manufacturers specify different viscosities depending on the engine's fuel type,

design features, oil pump capacity and manufacturing tolerances, and also the ambient temperatures the vehicle will be exposed to.

### WHAT ARE THOSE OTHER NUMBERS AND LETTERS ON A CONTAINER OF OIL?

You may see API (American Petroleum Institute) and ACEA (Association des Constructeurs Européens d'Automobiles), which mean the oil has passed the standards set by those organisations.

### WHICH IS BETTER, MINERAL OR SYNTHETIC OIL?

As synthetic oils have fewer impurities, they tend to degrade far slower than mineral-based oils and offer superior protection. But the best advice is to stick to what your car's manufacturer specifies and change it at least every 12 months.

### USEFUL CONTACTS

halfords.com

opieoils.co.uk

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eurocarparts.com

castrol.com

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shell.co.uk/helix

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# Buying guide

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## BMW M3 2007-2013

It has one of the greatest naturally aspirated engines ever made – and the chassis to exploit it. Today this could all be yours from just £15k  
by Peter Tomalin



**WHEN THE E92 M3 WAS LAUNCHED** in the autumn of 2007, BMW's baby M-car had made quite a journey in the 21 years since the original E30. From a delicate 2.3-litre four-cylinder 200bhp road-racer, it had evolved into a 4-litre eight-cylinder 414bhp monster. What we didn't realise at the time was that it would also be the last naturally aspirated M3.

And what an engine. Unique to the M3 and drawing on BMW's F1 experience (the block came straight from its F1 foundry at Landshut), it had individual throttle butterflies for each cylinder, double-VANOS valve timing, a pair of oil pumps for the twin sumps, and incredibly low masses that allowed it to rev to a searing 8400rpm. We'll probably never see its like again.

There was a choice of a six-speed

manual or seven-speed dual-clutch transmission (an extra £2500), while all cars got an M Differential and driver-programmable modes for throttle response, stability control, steering weight and suspension stiffness (EDC, or Electronic Damper Control, was a £1295 option, later standard).

The two-door coupe (E92 in BMW-speak) came first, with a basic price of £50,625, though few were sold like that. It was subtle, almost understated in appearance, especially on the standard 18-inch alloys (most had the optional 19s), though there were enough visual clues – the unpainted carbonfibre roof, the four tailpipes, the 'powerdome' in the bonnet – to signal its M-division origins.

The saloon (the E90) followed in 2008. Though it did without the carbon roof, it

was only marginally heavier and every bit as good to drive – in fact we rated it even more highly than the coupe.

There were a number of variations. The M3 Edition, launched in 2009, was largely a cosmetic exercise but did include a 10mm drop in ride height, which gave the chassis even more poise. The Competition Package, released in 2010, had the lowered springs but also revised stability control, a new Sport setting and revised damper rates within the now-standard EDC, plus 19-inch CSL-style alloys.

The ultimate was the stripped-out, roll-caged 444bhp GTS version of the coupe and its CRT (for Carbon Racing Technology) saloon sibling, but they were rare and fantastically expensive – and still are. It's the regular coupe and saloon we're focusing on here.

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## CHECKPOINTS

### ENGINE

The high-revving, naturally aspirated V8 is unique to the E90-series M3 and one of the great BMW M engines, but it's not without issues, as Munich Legends' Stuart Draper explains.

A common issue is failure of the throttle actuators. 'It happens to them all at some point,' says Stuart, 'usually after about 30,000 to 40,000 miles, either electronic failure or the nylon gears wear out. But rather than replace them, most people now have them overhauled, which costs about £400 for the pair rather than £1400 for new ones, plus about three hours' labour. Once they've been uprated, they shouldn't give any problems.'

Less common but potentially far more serious, as V8 M3s reach higher mileages (generally 80,000-plus) specialists are seeing an increasing number of bottom-end engine failures where a bearing shell has been spun, in the worst cases

requiring a rebuild with new crankshaft, rods, etc, which can cost as much as seven grand.

'How carefully the car was run-in and how meticulously it's been serviced play a part,' says Stuart, 'but driving the car hard from cold seems to be the main culprit. There's a reason why M-cars have an oil temp gauge, and it's the most important gauge in the car.'

'At every V8 service, we send an oil sample to a lab to check for metallic contaminants. If it comes back clean and if you're a careful driver and warm the car up before driving it hard, then you're unlikely to suffer any issues. For a high-performance engine, it is actually remarkably reliable. I've got a customer with a car that's done 130,000 miles and there's no sign of an issue, but he's a really careful owner.'

'It is becoming more of a problem and people tend to be wary of high-

mileage cars unless they've had a shell replacement. A lot of people now budget to have the shells replaced – about £1700 – then you know it'll be totally reliable.'

A warranty could be a good investment. BMW charges around £100 a month for full coverage, and more affordable alternatives are available.

### TRANSMISSION

The manual 'box isn't the sweetest. 'It tends to be particularly notchy from cold,' says Stuart, 'and you have to be very precise with it, otherwise you can mis-select a gear. That said, it's a totally reliable gearbox.' If the clutch needs replacement it's a five-hour job. Including a flywheel, reckon on about £1400 all-in.

'The DCT is a good system and incredibly reliable,' says Stuart. 'We've never done a clutch on a DCT and we look after hundreds. Check underneath though – the one thing they do suffer





with is oil leaks from pipes and gaskets. It can be a problem if they run low on oil, but most people notice well in advance.

'Prop joints can wear and become noisy, but usually it's cars that have been tracked. We've also seen the odd diff failure on high-mileage cars. Both are expensive if they fail. Listen for constant rubbing noises from the prop; a failing diff will graunch on tight turns or make a humming noise like a wheel bearing.'

## SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES

No real issues here. 'The EDC suspension is incredibly robust and most people find the non-EDC ride too harsh for everyday use,' says Stuart. As is often the case with M-cars, the brakes are not this M3's strongest suit; AP Racing discs and calipers, Pagid pads and braided hoses are all common upgrades. OE tyres were either Michelin Pilot Super Sports or Conti Sport Contact 3s.

**Above left:** V8 engine not without its problems, so go into any purchase with your eyes open. **Above:** carbonfibre roof on the coupe only. **Below:** E90/92 introduced a host of driver-configurable settings



## INFORMATION

### SPECIFICATION (E92)

Engine	V8, 3999cc
Max power	414bhp @ 8300rpm
Max torque	295lb ft @ 3900rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual (DCT option), rear-wheel drive
Weight	1580kg (266bhp/ton)
0-62mph	4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Price new	£50,625 (Sept 2007)

### PARTS PRICES

Prices from [munichlegends.co.uk](http://munichlegends.co.uk). Tyre price from [blackcircles.com](http://blackcircles.com). All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges.

Tyres	£199.60 front, £256.10 rear (each, Michelin Pilot Super Sport)
Front pads	£182.35 (set)
Front discs	£520.00 (pair)
Damper	£432 (EDC, single, front)
Clutch	£360 (manual)
Flywheel	£480
Spark plugs	£148.40 (set)
Oil filter	£23.75
Air filter	£55.09

### SERVICING

Prices from [munichlegends.co.uk](http://munichlegends.co.uk), including VAT. Variable intervals, but every 2 years minimum.

Service 1	£286.80
Service 2	£346.80
Service 3	£682.80

### WARRANTY

Repair bills for the V8 M3 can be huge – one recent engine repair came in at £20k. The table below shows the average repair costs for the top five major faults alongside the price of buying peace of mind with a warranty from Warrantywise.

Average engine repair	£3800
Average gearbox repair	£2100
Average suspension repair	£487
Average electrical repair	£740
Average brake repair	£1965
Warranty (per month)	£42.51

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## WHAT TO PAY

High-mileage (generally 90k-plus) coupes start at around £15k from specialists, though you can find privately advertised cars for less. Average-mileage cars with solid histories are generally £17k-18k, while lower-mileage examples (60k and less) start at around £20k. Equivalent saloons often fetch £2k-3k more, simply because there are far fewer of them and people have cottoned on to the fact that

they lose nothing dynamically while being considerably more versatile and every bit as handsome, if not more so.

At the top end, late, low-mileage one- or two-owner cars can be as much as £30k. The Competition Package can add a couple of grand. The other key thing that adds value is the EDC suspension, which most have, while desirable options include extended leather.

## 'I BOUGHT ONE'

### JASON CROSS

'I've had my E92 M3 for three years and 40,000 miles now. I bought it privately as an immaculate four-year-old example with the DCT transmission and EDC suspension.

'Compared with the E46 I owned before, the E92 is an upgrade in almost every sense: more refined, more comfortable, faster and, to my ears at least, better sounding. That said, when hustling along B-roads the E92 does feel its weight. It definitely prefers fast A-roads to tight, twisty lanes.

'Some feel the E92 is too torque-light and it's true that if you put your foot down in the wrong gear at 1500rpm it'll take time to wake up, but it's certainly poky enough from 3000rpm upwards and gets steadily more urgent through to the manic 8k red line. I still tend to shift up early most of the time as the mid-range is lovely, but it is satisfying to wait for the change-lights and really stretch its legs occasionally.

'Drawbacks? Not many. It likes a drink: 22mpg on average and a litre of oil every 3000 to 4000 miles. Road noise is inescapable,

especially on poor surfaces. The throttle actuators on my car failed at about 60,000 miles and I had them replaced with an upgraded set by rebuild.co.uk for a fraction of the BMW price. The driver's side seat-belt extender, which passes you the belt, broke recently but was fixed easily for less than a fiver with some Araldite and instructions from YouTube. Apart from that, it's all good; an almost perfect all-rounder.

'For my next car I've been considering a 911, but they don't seem especially good value in comparison, costing nearly twice the price for a car of similar age, mileage and performance. I'm not really taken with the F80 M3/M4 so I've started looking at the F10 M5. Maybe in the spring...'



## WHAT WE SAID



### ROAD TEST, SEPTEMBER 2007

'The undoubted highlight of the new M3 is the engine. Every gear presents you with the opportunity to enjoy a seamless, savage surge from tickover to the red line. This is a 4-litre V8 that spins with the hunger and ferocity of Honda's finest four-cylinder VTEC units.

'It feels plenty quick enough if you shift up at around 7500rpm. However, it's only when you've felt the intoxicating rush continue for another 900 blissful revolutions that you can claim to have experienced the V8 M3 in all its glory. How often you'd work it this hard is debatable, but, when you can, it makes this car very special indeed.

'It's not quite feelsome enough or focused enough to be a truly inspirational drive in the purest sense – there's a CSL on the way, though [*what would actually become the GTS – Ed*] – but there's no doubting that this new M3 is everything it needs to be. Tremendously quick, consummately capable and, when you're in the mood, highly entertaining, it maintains the M3's position as BMW's best drivers' car.' – **evo** 108

## RIVALS

### AUDI RS4 (B7)

A 4.2-litre V8 gives an M3-matching 414bhp and 0-62mph in 4.7sec. It's closely matched on the road too – hugely capable and rewarding, with the added security of 4WD. There's even an estate. From c£15k.

### MERCEDES C63 AMG (W204)

Monstrous pace from a 6.2-litre, 451bhp V8 (0-62mph in 4.5sec) and an engaging drive, if maybe lacking the ultimate finesse of the M3. Coupe, saloon or wagon options, with prices from c£20k.

### LEXUS IS F

Can trade blows with the M3 (0-62 in 5.2sec and an unlimited 173mph all-out) thanks to a 5-litre, 417bhp V8, while its rear-drive chassis has a playful side, too. Rarity keeps values strong. From c£20k.



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# BUYING JOURNEY

**evo** reader Tony Corlett shares his varied and ever-changing car ownership history

## THE CARS

Riley 4 1.5

Chrysler Alpine

Vauxhall Cavalier (Mk2)

Ford Escort XR3i

Lotus Esprit Turbo

Porsche 911 Carrera (G-series)

BMW 735i (E23)

Volvo 850 T5

BMW 330i (E46)

Honda Civic Type R (EP3)

Subaru Impreza WRX PPP ('Bugeye')

Audi S8 (D2)

Saab 9-3 Convertible Vector

Honda NSX

Nissan 350Z

Mercedes-Benz CLK55 AMG

Nissan GT-R

Alpina B10 (E39)

Vauxhall Astra VXR

SEAT Leon FR

Honda Accord Type R

Skoda Superb Estate

**TONY DOESN'T HANG ON TO CARS FOR VERY LONG – IN FACT THE LIST** here shows merely the highlights. This same attitude has rubbed off on his son too, who after just four years of motoring has already gone through five cars himself.

Of the many models Tony has owned, several have been big, executive saloons and estates, but he also has a real appetite for trackdays and trips to the Nürburgring, so the calibre of drivers' cars is high.

In between the practical German and Swedish metal lie some real Japanese treats. From a Prodrive-modified Impreza to a Nissan 350Z and GT-R, there's been a varied selection of different body styles and drivetrains, but Tony has been consistently impressed with the Hondas he's owned. He describes the VTEC engine and dash-mounted gearlever in his EP3 Civic Type R as 'motoring heaven'.



### Lotus Esprit Turbo

'Previous promotions at work had put me into some really boring cars, including that Mk2 Vauxhall Cavalier, but when I became group sales director for the company I was at, I was given an Esprit Turbo. Rather typically, it was sent back five times in just nine months for fixes. A three-year-old Porsche 911 Carrera replaced it.'

### Honda Accord Type R

'I bought the Accord purely to have fun on trackdays. It might not be as good as the GT-R – the most awesome car I have owned – but I loved it so much I ended up using it for daily transport. The engine was incredible, especially after I had it modified to ensure it stayed in its VTEC range when on track. One of my best memories in it was when I took it to the Isle of Man in 2015; I had a ball.'

### Honda NSX

'When Jenson Button exchanged his second company NSX for an NSX-R in 2006, I bought the former off Honda UK. I loved it and it got me hooked on Honda's VTEC engines, but my wife hated it and just saw it as a deposit on a buy-to-let house whenever she opened the garage door. The CLK55 replaced the NSX, but it was horrible and I only kept it for eight weeks and suffered heavy depreciation.'



## WHAT NEXT?

'I am now calming down and don't expect I'll have anything as wild as the Nissan GT-R again, although you never know. However, I am definitely going to get either a Honda S2000 or another Accord Type R as a project car that I can enjoy on the road and do a few trackdays in. That'll see me into retirement nicely.'

Email your buying journey with a selection of images to [eds@evo.co.uk](mailto:eds@evo.co.uk)





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# I WANT TO BUY A... FOUR-WHEEL-DRIVE SUPERCAR

It may be slippery outside, but that's no reason to leave the supercar at home.

The **evo** team choose some suitable used all-wheel drive options



**James Disdale:** If you're going to have a four-wheel-drive supercar, you should really go the whole hog. So a Bugatti EB110 (above) it is, then. There's something about its combination of 3.5 litres, 12 cylinders and four turbos that I find impossible to resist. Not to mention the square-edged styling that's a pure slice of '90s heaven. Finally, and perhaps crucially, it has illuminated EB110 logos set into the B-pillars, and that makes it perhaps the coolest supercar ever. They're not cheap, though: expect to pay well over half-a-million pounds for one...

**Adam Towler:** I'll swerve the exotic stuff and go for a tidy 996-generation Porsche 911 Turbo (above middle). It's not, perhaps, the bargain it once was, but with prices starting below £30,000 it's still decent value for money. Why a 996? Because it's the last really subtle 911 Turbo, able – in the right colour – to still

blend relatively easily into traffic thanks to the lack of anything too aggressive on its body. It's also still modern enough to drive every day without compromise, but refreshingly bereft of all the electronic in-car stuff that's supposed to make our lives easier. There's a 'Mezger' slung out back, too, which if looked after should be capable of 200,000 miles plus, and its more linear torque delivery makes it an easier car in slippery conditions than its 997-based successor, aided by plenty of traction and fine brakes.

**Richard Meaden:** Hmm, an all-wheel-drive supercar you say? Forget the Italian stuff, especially if the plan is to use it outside of spring and summer. They just don't like bathing in road crud. No, I'd go for an Audi R8. Most likely a V10 Plus (above right). Amazingly there was one of the nine stick-shift cars to come to the UK for sale when I had a quick trawl,

but it's much easier to find a regular R8 V10 manual. The motor is stonking and the chassis is so sweetly balanced you'd swear it was rear-drive. Yet there's tons of traction when you need it. Around £60k would buy you a cracker.

**Stuart Gallagher:** It's mad, bad and, in the wrong circumstances, dangerous to know, but the draw of a Lamborghini Aventador SV (top) is impossible to ignore. The seven-speed gearbox may not be the latest piece of technological cog-swapping wizardry, but it does have a 6.5-litre naturally aspirated V12, 740bhp and 509lb ft of torque to deal with.

For such a physically big car it's not as unwieldy as you'd expect, and there are times when you get so in the flow with an Aventador that its bulk is forgotten as you're sucked into the intoxicating mix of thrills, excitement and the ever-so terrifying nature of Lambo's beast.



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**1967 PORSCHE 912 COUPE**  
1.6L LHD 69,918 miles

**£ 39,950**



Originally a US car and imported to UK in 2014, its 1.6 litre flat 4 produces 89bhp through a 5 speed manual gearbox. LHD. Finished in Polo red with race decals. There has been weight reduction inside as well as a dog leg racing gearbox and racing steering wheel.

**1969 PORSCHE 911E**  
2.2L LHD 74,580 miles

**£ 150,000**



This exquisite 911E remained in its first owner's possession for 40 years where every service item from new has been meticulously documented. It is finished in Tangerine with original Fuchs alloys and chrome still in perfect order. The factory upgraded leather seats and all parts inside are original and in great condition.

**1970 PORSCHE 911T**  
2.2L LHD 88,720 miles

**£ 89,950**



Our 911T is finished in silver metallic with black leatherette seats, including upgraded 911S dials and oil tank. Other options include the 5 speed manual gearbox with stunning Fuchs alloys. Extensive service and invoice history as well as original handbook, maintenance record etc.

**1989 PORSCHE 930 TURBO**  
3.3L LHD 49,818 Km

**£ 109,950**



This example presents beautifully in its original factory ordered colour of metallic black. Typical of the customizing work performed by Porsche in the late 1980's, note the option deep lip front skirt. The original genuine Fuchs forged alloy wheels show in near perfect condition and have the correct Pirelli Cinturato P7 Tyres. The uprated 3.3 litre Turbo brakes gave this later example huge stopping power.

**2003 PORSCHE 911 TURBO TIPTRONIC (996)**  
3.6L RHD 48,235 miles

**£ 47,950**



Our 996 Turbo is in fantastic condition and a credit to its previous Keepers. This example presents well finished in Arctic Silver Metallic with black perforated memory leather seats and Alcantara headlining. The car also has the extended leather to the dashboard and doors and has the desirable and rare sunroof option.

**2003 PORSCHE 911 TURBO MANUAL (996)**  
3.6L RHD 46,424 miles

**£ 52,950**



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**2004 PORSCHE 911 CARRERA GT3 (996 MK2)**  
3.6L RHD 40,600 miles

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Since its launch in 1999, enthusiasts recognised immediately that the GT3 reignited the flame of the much missed RS model. Named after the FIA Group GT3 and built to homologate the 996 for the Porsche cup, this new high performance Porsche variant was virtually a turn-key racer yet flexible enough to be used as a daily driver.

**2012 PORSCHE 911 CARRERA (991)**  
3.4L RHD 15,835 miles

**£ 59,500**



Our 991 Carrera is presented in White with contracting black leather seats and Alcantara headlining and is suspended on the 20" Carrera Classic alloys which have been freshly refurbished and diamond cut. These wheels have the Porsche coloured crested centre caps and have a matching set of Pirelli Pzero N rated tyres.

**2013 PORSCHE CAYMAN 2.7L (981)**  
2.7L RHD 36,940 miles

**£ 34,500**



Our 981 Cayman 2.7 is finished in Guards Red and is suspended on the 20" Carrera Classic Alloy wheels with Porsche coloured crested centre caps. These are shod with a matched set of Pirelli Pzero N rated tyres and look stunning. The Vehicle also has the Cayman S twin exit sports exhaust that finishes off the looks of the car.

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# Fast Fleet

## THIS MONTH

PEUGEOT 208 GTi by PS // NISSAN GT-R // FORD MUSTANG V8 CONVERTIBLE //  
SEAT LEON ST CUPRA 300 // LEXUS RC F // SKODA SUPERB // DS 3 PERFORMANCE //  
MAZDA MX-5 RF // AUDI RS5 // ALFA ROMEO GIULIA QUADRIFOGLIO // VW GOLF GTE

## NEW ARRIVALS

# Porsche 911 Carrera (996) & Peugeot 205 GTi 1.9

Deputy editor Adam Towler introduces his modern-day classics, and explains why they're his perfect duo







ONE OF THE MANY GREAT THINGS about working at **evo** is that you're surrounded by genuine car enthusiasts, and this is never more obvious than when you look at the older, journalist-owned cars that appear in Fast Fleet from time to time. From Dickie Meaden's Porsche 964 RS – remember that? – to Antony Ingram's Mk1 Mazda MX-5 and Peugeot 106 Rallye, and many more besides, it's an eclectic mix of cars that says plenty about those who own them.

So it is with more than a little pride that my own fleet makes its **evo** debut this month. As way of an introduction, I'll try to explain the reasons behind owning these two cars in particular. After all, there's an almost limitless list of cars I'd like to own – I'm sure you're the same. Dreaming, plotting and fantasising about owning the models on my giant, constantly evolving list is regretfully one of my favourite past-times, a sanctuary tucked away in the brain's inner corridors, reliable for its pleasant distraction whether enjoyed verbally down the pub or inwardly when stuck in a lengthy airport check-in queue.

Some cars rise to the top of that list for mere hours – objects of desire that burn brightly then fizzle away almost immediately; some last for days, some weeks; some ignite single-minded quests for as much information on them as possible; some lead to concrete plans starting to form. Almost all wreck on the unyielding rocks of not enough time or money. However, from that list there are two cars

'There's an almost limitless list of cars I'd like to own, but at the core of my fleet, if at all possible, will always be some form of 911 and a 205 GTI'

that are always present – always have been. So while I'm now lucky enough to own both of them, and while the list still taunts and tempts me most hours of the day, the core of the fleet, if at all possible, will always be some form of Porsche 911 and a Peugeot 205 GTI.

Let's start with the 911. I've wanted one since I was about five years old. Like millions of people, I've long had a strange affinity with the rear-engined sports coupe from Stuttgart, which in its more focused forms often encapsulates my own beliefs on what makes cars and driving great. When I was a kid I wanted a 3.2 Carrera, or a 930 – the original Turbo – but in later years my obsession grew to include the delicate early cars with their chrome decoration, up to the primary-coloured motorsport 964s and 993s of the 1990s. Note one central theme here: they're all air-cooled. Yet the car you see here is water-cooled.

This is because I didn't see the classic car boom coming. I assumed, like so many had before me, that I'd start my 911-ownership years with a ratty SC, then move on to the object of my early-911 desires – a 'safety colour' 2.2 S, costing around £20,000 – in due course. I didn't realise that I'd need to add another nought to the end of that figure within a few years. So rather than park the dream in disgust as prices of air-cooled cars got out of reach, I looked to the early water-cooled era – the first 911 I'd driven professionally, a car I had loved, and one that I'd not so much fallen out of love with but had simply slightly forgotten about through overfamiliarisation. Now, of course, everyone is talking up the 996 market – cars many of the same people wouldn't have given pocket change for a few years earlier. I don't care either way: I think the 996 is a masterpiece and I adore mine – a 2002 3.6 – for reasons I will be expanding on in later reports.

So, what of the little red French car? Little, yes, but overflowing with vibrancy, charisma, spirit; sometimes truculent, often fiery – both metaphorically and, tragically, literally, all too commonly back in the day. I bought mine a few years ago when prices had started to move but had yet to get as ridiculous as they are today.

Small sporting Peugeots are the bedrock of my enthusiasm for cars and I'd own one of every type, every niche variant, if I had the money and space. Why? A combination of the 1:43 scale 205 T16 model car (who says motorsport doesn't work?) being pushed around the carpet, a friend's parents buying a new 205 XS, and most of all the aura of the GTI. I can still remember my parents muttering about how 1905cc was too big an engine for such a small car. Well, that was it. A red rag and all of that. In an instant it appeared massively fast, desirable, dangerous. Perfect. Nostalgia, of course, also plays its part. It's a simple car from a simpler time; the time of my youth, and a bit later on, those formative days when I'd drive the wheels off my ailing 205 1.6 GTI and rue the 'impossible' insurance on a 1.9.

My 205 isn't in perfect condition – neither is the 911, to be fair – but what's going on with it, and how it might be made better is, I suppose, partly what subsequent reports are all going to be about. More soon.

**Adam Towler** (@AdamTowler)

#### PORSCHE 911 CARRERA (996)

Date acquired	May 2016
Total mileage	83,900
Mileage this month	150
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	24.9





#### PEUGEOT 205 GTI 1.9

<b>Date acquired</b>	October 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	117,500
<b>Mileage this month</b>	0
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	n/a

**Opposite page and below left:** underrated 996 came to the rescue when earlier 911s became too pricey for Towler. **Left:** he was luckier with his 205, bagging it before values shot up. **Above:** hot hatch seats, '80s style





## NEW ARRIVAL

# Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport

A modern Peugeot hot hatch has joined the Fleet, too, and its custodian is very pleased indeed

**I** 'M NOT GOING TO TRY TO PLAY THIS down: I adore modern hot hatches. I love how focused and dedicated they can be in the pursuit of driving thrills. So with our JCW Challenge heading back to Mini (full end-of-term report next month), the opportunity for me to switch into another small, intense three-door hatchback couldn't be more welcome.

Especially when the new car is the Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport, as it's my favourite hot hatch currently on sale. And I don't just mean my favourite pocket rocket: I'm more of a fan of the compact French hatch than any of the bigger, 300bhp-plus superhatches. The new Civic Type R is exceptionally talented, the Focus RS is undoubtedly aggressive, the Golf R fast and refined, but none expresses the same fizzing, excitable energy that the 208 does. Okay, it doesn't have the repertoire,

sophistication or even pace of a Golf GTi, and it isn't as luxurious on a motorway or main road, but I know which I'd rather be driving when the tarmac gets twisty.

You might think the £23,385 Peugeot could seem a bit lacklustre after the £32,000 Mini, with its fancy Nitron dampers, super-sticky tyres and Quaife limited-slip diff. But other than an interior featuring a lot of plastics – something I think every hot hatch should have anyway, so you're reminded of its humble roots – the 208 GTi is hardly any less serious. That's thanks to the work of the engineers at the Peugeot Sport division, because although the standard 208 GTi was a more than acceptable hot hatch, Peugeot Sport found plenty of areas it could improve upon.

Firstly, they massaged the 1.6-litre turbo engine's output from 197bhp and 203lb ft to 205bhp and 221lb ft. Along with lower gear ratios, and a Torsen limited-slip diff to improve traction, that dropped the 0-62mph time by 0.3sec to 6.5sec. To help slow the car down again the single-piston front brake calipers were replaced by four-pot Brembos, while inside there's some chunky-looking, heavily bolstered seats and a set of red mats. (The tiny, dial-obscurer steering wheel of the standard car is completely unchanged.)

Welcome changes, undoubtedly, but it's what PS has done to the chassis that really makes a difference. The front track is 22mm wider, the rear 16mm, and although the tyres remain 205-section items, they are now grippier Michelin Pilot Super Sports. A softer front anti-roll bar alters the car's balance (the rear remains the same), as do 30 per cent stiffer front springs and 80 per cent rears. The



<b>Date acquired</b>	September 2017
<b>Total mileage</b>	478
<b>Mileage this month</b>	306
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	35.1

ride height is 10mm lower, the dampers have been uprated, and the entire geometry has been significantly altered, too – you can tell by the noticeable amount of negative camber on the front wheels.

Options on our car include satnav (£750), Active City Brake (automatic emergency braking to avoid low-speed collisions; £250) and the two-tone, gloss black and matt blue 'Coupe Franche' paint scheme (£945). But all these are superfluous as far as I'm concerned. All the significant parts – those which make this 208 lively yet predictable, and so rewarding to drive – come as standard. It might not claw away at dry tarmac like the Mini, but the car's natural, pointy balance is so much more accessible. As such, my time as custodian of this super little hatch should be very enjoyable. Once I've run it in, that is.

**Will Beaumont** (@WillBeaumont)







# Nissan GT-R

Our 2017 GT-R is proving to be a skilled performer on track, but it's even better on the road

**H**OW MANY TIMES, OVER THE YEARS, have I got up with the sparrows and climbed into a car to drive it west from my home on the south coast, specifically in the direction of Wales? It has to be somewhere in the high hundreds.

Yet when I did this just recently in the Nissan to get to Anglesey for 9am, I *still* got that same slightly juvenile feeling of excitement about doing so – because I don't care how old and cynical and world-weary I get, driving a GT-R early in the morning, when there's almost no one else around, is still something that makes my heart thump faster.

And the thing I'm finding about the GT-R is that it feels faster and madder than ever when it's nice and cold outside – when it's 4.30-5.00am in other words – especially when there's a tankful of 97- or 98-octane unleaded on board, rather than 95. Put those three things together and the GT-R really does go to another place dynamically.

When the ambient temperature is nice and chilled, the throttle response gets even sharper and even crisper somehow, and the car basically feels like it has another

**'It might not have been quite as ridiculously quick as the 720S, but in isolation the GT-R still felt pretty tasty'**

100bhp. Not that it ever feels exactly slow, no matter what the temperature is outside, as I discovered when I eventually made it to Anglesey Circuit and did a few laps in it, just to see. It might not have been quite as ridiculously quick as the McLaren 720S that was there that day (see *evo* 242), but in isolation the GT-R still felt pretty tasty.

But for me the 2017 GT-R is actually a better road car, I think, than it is a track car. At Anglesey it felt seriously quick, yes, and its traction, grip, poise and control were all exceptional for a car with number plates. Ultimately, though, the GT-R feels quite big

and heavy on track, and as Nissan has asked me not to turn the traction control off under any circumstances because it invalidates the mechanical warranty, I couldn't really throw it around and have a giggle in it either.

So when I drove it away from Anglesey at the end of the day, I reached the very clear conclusion that the latest GT-R is actually more fun, more exciting and just better to drive on the public road, period, than it is to drive on a track.

Since then I've done many more miles in the car and I continue to fall for its numerous charms. It is definitely more refined than the previous versions, and is far easier to live with every day as a result. I love this thing fundamentally, although its fuel consumption – and its relatively small fuel tank and range – I'm trying my hardest to ignore.

**Steve Sutcliffe**

<b>Date acquired</b>	July 2017
<b>Total mileage</b>	7208
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1057
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	19.1



NEW ARRIVAL

# Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT Convertible

A drop-top muscle car joins the *evo* fleet, bringing with it a few surprises



**M**Y FIRST WEEK WITH THE MUSTANG was full of surprises, most of them good. The first was discovering that it was a V8, the second that it was a manual. I have history here, as some of you will know. Less thrilling was that it was a convertible but, as Meat Loaf would have it, two out of three ain't bad.

Then, even before I got in, it endeared itself again by unlocking. Somehow, keyless entry doesn't fit with my idea of America's perennial bargain performance car, but that's far from the end of the technology delights, illustrating that the Mustang isn't as cheap and cheerful as it has traditionally been. The ratio of 'bang for your buck' is still pretty good too: the coupe costs a tad over £38k, the convertible £41,595, and the 5-litre V8 pumps out 410bhp.

I reckon there's a bit of Elvis in his later days about the looks. All the characteristics and details of the original '60s Mustang are there, it's just that they're on a shape that has filled out a bit. Lopping the roof off seems to make it appear even more chunky, though it still looks

pretty tasty finished in optional Ingot Silver paint (£595). Our car also has the Custom Pack (£1795), the highlights of which are the 'Shaker Pro' premium audio, plus satnav, climate seats and reverse parking sensors, but there's a load of good stuff that comes as standard, including a reversing camera.

I'd been steeling myself for a spell without DAB radio, but there was no need because it's there. As is Apple CarPlay, which my boys quickly had up and running so they could stream thumping, bass-heavy tunes as we cruised Cleethorpes promenade with the roof down. Kids eh? Me, I'd have been happy enough to listen to the mellow woofle and burble of the big V8. Big kids, eh?

Another welcome surprise was that the Mustang is a proper four-seater, with space even for adults in the back. Mind, even children who were hitherto enthusiastic, nay, insistent that the roof be lowered will concede within a couple of miles that, even on a mild autumn day, it does get a bit chilly in the back.

That the Mustang is a bit of a drinker is



'Once you've got comfortable with the Mustang's dynamic character, the speed you can carry is remarkable'





**Left:** big Mustang meets the more compact Brit coupe its ancestor inspired. **Above:** puddle lights one of the modern touches you might not expect

less welcome but not unexpected. There is payback, of course. The noise it makes from cold is wonderful, being just loud enough and serious but not coarse. It's just the sound I wanted from my Capri's 5328cc Rover V8, and which BTB Exhausts managed to conjure up when they created its amazing system. The Mustang has more power from less capacity – 410bhp versus 300bhp – but while the stripped-out and (relatively) teeny Capri weighs about 1000kg, the Stang is hauling just shy of 1800kg according to our scales.

Still, it goes well and the engine's obviously substantial flywheel helps smooth out any clumsiness you might induce with the clutch and six-speed manual shifter. This, too, is well judged, with a pleasingly mechanical action. The foolproofing extends to the chassis: the car can feel a bit busy on your typical gnarly B-road, and the flex in the open-top body adds a bit to this, but there is astonishing traction and grip, even in the wet.

The limited-slip differential and now-independent rear suspension keep the rear hooked up and driving the Mustang forwards unless you are seriously determined. Add in strong lateral grip from the P Zeros and you have a car that feels heavy and a bit wobbly and which rolls a fair bit, but hangs on more tenaciously than Theresa May. Once you've discovered this and got comfortable with the Mustang's dynamic character, the speed you can carry is remarkable. And it stops, too, the big front discs and their six-pot Brembo calipers being as effective as they look.

So, it's been interesting getting to know the Mustang, and mostly positive. Next month another member of the team will take custody, and we'll see if they feel the same.

**John Barker** (@evoJB)

<b>Date acquired</b>	September 2017
<b>Total mileage</b>	7009
<b>Mileage this month</b>	2121
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	21.1

## SEAT Leon ST Cupra 300 4Drive

Further investigation into the Cupra's worrying vibration reveals the cause of the problem

**I** MENTIONED IN MY LAST report on the Leon that it had dropped a wheel into a roadside hollow in Wales. The massive thump and subsequent wobble suggested an instant puncture, but a quick inspection showed that the tyre was still up. However, there was mud in the rim. With this cleared, the death wobble went away but ever since then there has been a mild shimmy through the steering wheel at speeds over 50mph. Although mild, I didn't want to travel too far with it because I always fear such vibrations will eventually loosen some important fixing, or jigger the damper by overheating the fluid, or result in something equally unexpected.

So I got a trolley jack under it and had the wheel off to see if there was anything obvious. As you can see from the picture, there certainly is. The tyre rim protector of the P Zero has done its best but clearly couldn't protect the alloy from such a big hit, so the rim is significantly dented. I expect both wheel and tyre will need replacing. Looking at the amount the alloy has deformed, I'm amazed that the vibration isn't greater.

It's always interesting to imagine how easy it would be to change a wheel on

a dark, rainy night. I was a bit confused by the Leon because it has the optional ten-speaker stereo with an additional subwoofer that sits inside the well of the space-saver spare. Having undone the large plastic nut that holds it and the spare in place, I was expecting to find the tools beneath in a polystyrene carrier. But no. A scan of the side panels showed no hidden cubbies where they might be lurking and the handbook stated that they'd be with the spare wheel. So I had another look and found they *were* there, underneath the spare, in what would be the cellar if this was a house.

'Tweezers' for the caps on the bolt heads, an extra bolt for the locking wheel nut, and then surprise at how little force it takes to loosen the bolts on alloy wheels. But the hardest part is always offering up the replacement wheel and getting the first bolt in and started. It's no wonder you see so many wheel changes being left to the likes of the RAC and AA...

**John Barker** (@evoJB)

<b>Date acquired</b>	May 2017
<b>Total mileage</b>	9790
<b>Mileage this month</b>	769
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	33.2





## Skoda Superb SportLine 4x4

Few long-termers work as hard as a photographer's car, as a week with our staff snapper shows

**L**EADING A CONVOY ACROSS THE North Pennines at night, a pair of 911 GT3s in the rear-view mirror, was an incredible experience. The roads were like something from a driving fantasy, with insane blind crests followed by the kind of long downhill sections that really get your adrenaline pumping. The Skoda held its own that night – on the way to a shoot for last month's cover story – as the wet roads and inky blackness played into the hands of its four-wheel drive and adaptive headlights.

It also helped that I've been playing around with the Superb's driving modes recently. The Comfort setting has impressed me most, as it flattens the very worst surfaces and makes this Skoda possibly the best car I have ever used for taking tracking shots from. When I want to drive for pleasure, Normal mode is pretty good, but it lacks the punch of Sport. Sadly, though, Sport is a little too firm when I've got a load area full of photography equipment. It feels like it would probably work best on track. Imagine that: a Skoda Superb at a trackday. Now there's a thought...

The Individual setting is therefore the one I use most. In my old Octavia vRS long-termer my preferred configuration for this was Sport power delivery, Comfort damping and Normal

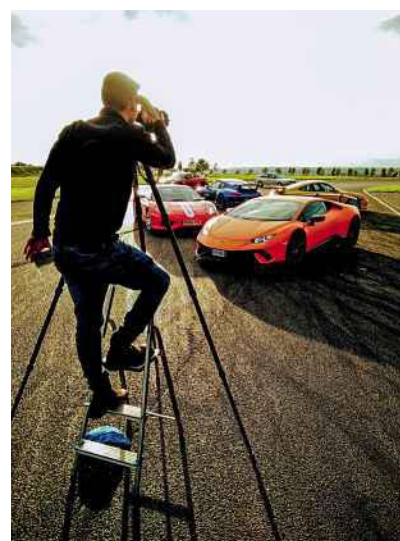
steering weight. Interestingly, the Superb bounces all over the place if driven in a spirited fashion with the same set-up, so instead I've put its suspension in Normal. I guess this suggests the bigger Skoda model leans more towards comfort than the Octavia does.

I've also discovered that it's necessary to operate the twin-clutch gearbox manually to get the best out of the 276bhp 2-litre engine. Left to its own devices the 'box is all too keen to change up a gear when you lift off at high revs for an approaching bend, which instantly destroys your corner-exit acceleration.

Exmoor was next on my list of photoshoots, this time with a BMW M2 and Audi RS3 Saloon (see page 66). The four-hour journey there gave me plenty of time to appreciate the Superb's cockpit, with its comfortable seat with lots of adjustment, the latest Skoda entertainment system, cruise control and lots of storage space for drinks and Haribo.

Upon returning from Exmoor it was straight over to the Bedford Autodrome with a stepladder and a bunch of cleaning stuff to shoot last month's cover image. It was the last job of another busy week that demonstrated that, whatever I ask of the Superb, it has the ability to adapt to all of my needs.

**Aston Parrott** (@AstonParrott)



**Above:** Parrott captures last month's cover image. **Top:** his trusty Superb only seems to stop moving when he's got his eye up to a viewfinder

<b>Date acquired</b>	September 2017
<b>Total mileage</b>	4750
<b>Mileage this month</b>	3112
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	29.6



# Lexus RC F

With a twist here and a prolonged prod there, the RC F's wild side gets unlocked

**I** 'VE REALLY CLICKED WITH THE RC F since the last report, and it's all down to an inoffensive-looking button on the transmission tunnel. Marked 'TVD' it controls the settings for the optional torque-vectoring differential. Give it a prod and it switches from Standard to Slalom. Press it again and you engage Track mode. Each setting brings up a small pictogram on the main instrument cluster, rather like toggling through modes on *Gran Turismo*.

Adjacent to the TVD button is one for the stability control. Press it once and it gives you plenty of slack, press and hold and, as long as the main dynamic mode (controlled by a rotary controller just ahead of the TVD button), is set to Sport+, you enter 'Expert' mode.

As it suggests, this means you're driving on talent alone. Well that and the RC F's abundant reserves of traction and mechanical grip. In the milder modes the RC F plays its cards quite close to its chest, but if you crank

it up to its most aggressive settings everything goes a bit banzai.

This split personality is something the Japanese do very well with sportier models. One minute the RC F is as mild-mannered as a steady Toyota executive saloon, the next it's a bellowing beast that's up for burnouts and tailslides. It really is quite a transformation.

The best bit is the RC F still feels together and sorted, even when you grab hold of it and chuck it around. Don't get me wrong, you could wang yourself through a hedge if you push your luck too far, but it's surprisingly adept when being hooned. Some of this is down to the naturally aspirated V8 that needs to be revved before delivering its best, but it's also evidence that Lexus has some keen development drivers with a feel for how a fast, heavy road car should

behave when driven to and beyond its limits.

Bonfiring the rear tyres isn't something you do on a daily basis. Or even a weekly basis, for that matter. Yet there's something fun just knowing that you can.

In other news I've got to the bottom of the vexatious satnav system. As I said in an earlier report, the user interface and menu terminology is quite different from your usual European kit, so I'd initially got confused by the lack of an option to enter a full postcode. Much to my relief I've since found it in a sub-menu, so all is good.

Another source of joy is the Mark Levinson hi-fi. I love a premium sound system and this one is rich and potent without sounding too subwoofery. With 835W of amplified power and 17 speakers, the Surround Sound effect is truly immersive and more than man enough to compete with the V8's beefy bellow. It even looks handsome, with its black brushed grain anodised faceplate and tactile rotary controls.

One thing I'm not so sure about is the silver carbon weave fillets that run round the interior. They're a bit bling for my taste, but in a funny kind of way I rather like their incongruity. It's yet another quirky, but rather endearing element of the RC F. It might not be everyone's cup of tea, but I'm liking it just fine.

**Richard Meaden** (@DickieMeaden)

'Bonfiring the rear tyres isn't something you do on a daily basis, yet it's fun just knowing that you can'



**Left and above:** engaging the well-hidden Expert mode allows the 470bhp RC F to really cut loose; just don't expect the rear tyres to last too long...

<b>Date acquired</b>	August 2017
<b>Total mileage</b>	4356
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1055
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	22.3



## DS 3 Performance

It doesn't quite gel on the road, so how would the DS 3 fare on track?



OUR LAST TRACK EVENING OF THE year and the first opportunity to take our DS3 Performance onto a circuit. I'll admit I was excited at the prospect, and an uncharacteristically balmy autumn evening and a challenging track configuration at Rockingham provided the perfect backdrop for what promised to be the DS 3's most exacting test to date.

It's no secret that up to this point the car hasn't proven the most confidence-inspiring. As I've mentioned before, the ingredients are all there but the final package ultimately disappoints... on the road, that is. Then again, there ain't no traffic lights or crossings on a trackday. So on that note it was towing eye in, helmet on and circuit here we come!

The issues I have had with the car's fiddly controls and poor ergonomics immediately faded with nothing else to focus on but the racing line and the GT3s and 4s filling my rear-view mirror. A little heat in the Michelin Pilot Super Sports went a long way to restoring my faith and confidence and, a few laps of familiarisation later, I was ready to push on and see what the car could really do.

I found an instant connection with those brilliantly placed pedals, heeling and toeing my way into the first tight left-hander. Turn-in has always been one of the DS 3's strong suits and it didn't disappoint here, more than holding its own with a Golf R, GT86 and M235i.

For me, the DS 3 has just the right level of performance for track driving. Unless you're massively experienced, you generally want something that you can evolve with, without feeling as though you're constantly on the edge of control. In the right hands, as colleague Will Beaumont showed, the DS 3 could keep up with the best of them and prove its worth as a nimble and – crucially – fun trackday car. And while we're singing some praises, the brakes were a revelation, seemingly unfazed by lap after lap of punishment.

But the DS still frustrated in parts. Yes, it was fun, but then anything with a bit of poke and a quality diff would have been. Just as on the road, I couldn't help thinking that it was the bite of those Super Sport tyres combined with the limited-slip diff that was almost entirely responsible for it feeling as good as it did. It just doesn't give you the level of



'Given it wasn't designed with trackdays in mind, it gave a pretty good account of itself'





**Above and below:** track evening at Rockingham was a chance to see if the so-far-underwhelming DS 3 Performance could redeem itself on a circuit

interaction, balance and precision you would get from, say, a Clio 200 Cup. The oversized steering wheel frustrated in the same way it does on the road. And the feeling of being on the car, rather than in it, was still there, although those PSA racing seats keep you firmly in place for tight direction changes.

Overall I was impressed with the ability of the DS 3 on track – but that’s largely because it’s pretty clear it wasn’t conceived and designed with trackdays in mind at all. Given that, it gave a pretty good account of itself.

Ultimately, though, the DS 3 Performance lacks the sharp focus of the very best hot hatches, and that’s as true on the track as it is on the road. So we find ourselves pondering the same familiar questions once again. For what purpose and – more to the point – what customer was this car really designed?

**Louis Shaw**

<b>Date acquired</b>	May 2017
<b>Total mileage</b>	5533
<b>Mileage this month</b>	968
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	38.1

## Mazda MX-5 RF

Our RF shone brightly at Rockingham, but also revealed one or two areas for improvement

**M**Y COLLEAGUES HAD ALREADY driven the RF at an earlier **evo** Rockingham track evening and, as seems to be a recurring theme with this car, returned full of praise. The MX-5 had been easy on its tyres and brakes, and the biddable chassis apparently made it as fun for more experienced drivers as it was for those with a little less track-work under their belts.

With another Rockingham date in the diary, it was the perfect time to have a go myself. I’ve spent plenty of time behind the wheel of MX-5s but the circuit itself was new to me, so I built up the pace gradually while I figured out the lines and braking points. The RF’s great for this sort of thing, with keen, linear responses and the useful safety net of a stability control system that remains fairly unintrusive until things actually go awry.

It’s by no means the quickest car in a straight line, but there’s just enough oomph that on a relatively twisty circuit you’re not having to constantly survey your mirrors for quicker traffic. It helps that the RF drives predictably up to its grip limits, too, so you feel confident carrying high corner speeds.

The highest of all are at the banked first turn, which is taken at between 90 and 100mph in the RF and is just bumpy enough that the aforementioned stability control felt the need to nibble at the brakes a couple of times. The rest of the circuit is a lot of fun, with flowing

sweepers and gentle undulations through which you feel the RF working its tyres.

If I were to take the RF on track more often, though, I’d make a few changes. The first (and most important, since it would improve the on-road experience too) would be the substitution of a pair of bucket seats, in lieu of the extra couple of limbs I needed to brace myself most of the way around the track as I slid about in the unsupportive leather seats.

Next would be a set of uprated brake pads and perhaps some high-temperature fluid to improve pedal feel just a tad after repeated lapping. Only after those two upgrades would I look into ways of curtailing the MX-5’s roly-poly body movements, which are fine in quick sweepers but make the car feel a little imprecise and wallowy in slower corners, such as Rockingham’s hairpins.

The RF continues to impress me, though, and played its retractable roof party trick to perfection as the heavens opened the minute on-track activity stopped. Fresh from batting around the circuit as an open-topped targa, it transformed into a good-natured coupe for the journey home.

**Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)**

<b>Date acquired</b>	February 2017
<b>Total mileage</b>	11,503
<b>Mileage this month</b>	946
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	40.2





## Audi RS5

It's a big thumbs up for the RS5's drive modes, but be careful with those tyre pressures...

**L**AST MONTH I TOUCHED UPON THE subject of the RS5's Drive Select modes, and particularly their effect on our car's optional (£2000) adaptive dampers. More recently it has occurred to me that this is the only car I can think of where I've frequently used all the available drive modes and haven't been disappointed by any of them. Each one lives up to its name and is so well judged that I don't find myself continually flicking between it and its neighbouring mode, wishing there was another option somewhere between the two, or that the car had passive dampers, thus removing the temptation to try to seek out a non-existent sweet spot.

Comfort mode is genuinely comfortable

while being refreshingly free of floatiness – great for in town, on motorways and whenever you're carrying passengers; Dynamic is nice and taut for fast road work, but not so over-firm that you never go near it; and Auto is just the ticket for all other circumstances. There's also an Individual mode so you can create your own mix of damping, steering weight, exhaust volume, etc, and refreshingly there's no pointless, token Eco mode.

As the modes work so well, it's a shame the buttons to switch between them are not only on the far side of the centre console – presumably to the benefit of left-hand-drive cars – but also tucked away somewhat apologetically on that strip of buttons that you rarely, if ever, use (parking sensors, stop-start, etc). It's the complete opposite of the 'falling to hand' that editor Gallagher described with our Giulia's DNA dial last month and makes Drive Select look like an afterthought. Yes, you can program the asterisk button on the steering wheel to call up the Drive Select screen and then cycle through the modes with successive presses, but it can still take up

to four prods to get the mode you're after – hardly ideal when you want to quickly summon up your preferred maximum-attack settings. A smarter solution would be if the button could be programmed to select a mode of your choice with a single push, then revert back to whatever mode you were in beforehand with a second push – like BMW's M1 and M2 buttons.

While I'm on the subject of ride and handling, I discovered recently that the RS5 is particularly sensitive to tyre pressures. When our car went back to Audi UK a couple of months ago to have its pigeon-damaged grille replaced, the team there also stuck a new pair of Hankooks on the front of the car. Upon first driving it equipped thus, I couldn't help but think it didn't tackle corners quite as tidily as it had done previously. It was as if the front and rear end were operating independently – just a little bit – rather than working together.

Initially I put this down to the combination of box-fresh rubber on the front and part-worn on the rear, but after a few days I checked the tyres' pressures. It turned out the new fronts had been set for travelling over





## VW Golf GTE

What use is a plug-in hybrid when you struggle to find somewhere to plug it in?

**E**LECTRIC CARS ARE THE FUTURE, aren't they? That's certainly what we're being told by both governments and manufacturers. And on the face of it, the message is getting across, the roads filling up with ever increasing numbers of pure EVs and plug-in models such as our Golf GTE. What isn't changing as quickly, however, is the infrastructure that supports these machines.

I've been custodian of the GTE for four months as I write, and do you know how many times I've plugged it into a street-side, public-access charging socket? Not once. This was highlighted recently on a family week away that involved a dash to North Yorkshire followed by a long drive south to Devon to visit my parents. Once I'd unplugged from the socket at my Hertfordshire home, the next time the Golf got a shot of electricity was over 500 miles later when I hooked it up to one of the 13-amp plugs in my parents' garage.

Now, that's not to say there weren't any charging points on our route, it's just that they were few and far between. In central Harrogate there were two chargers highlighted by the online charging location finder Zap-Map, both of which were suitable only for a Tesla. Down in Plymouth there were a few more spots to

**'If the electric car really is the future then the infrastructure needs to catch up, and quickly'**

top-up according to the VW's satnav, yet when we plotted a route for the charger nearest our destination we arrived to find no trace of it. Frustrating in a plug-in hybrid, but potentially disastrous in a pure EV.

There was more success of sorts on the motorway. For example, Hopwood Services on the M42 just outside Birmingham had 16 Tesla Superchargers (of which just three were in use), plus a pair of Ecotricity charging stations. This was good news, because the Golf had been delivered with an Ecotricity charging card, meaning I could top-up the cells while we had a spot of lunch. Except it didn't work out like that. For starters, I had to download an app to my phone before I was able access one of the four available plug fittings. Yet once it installed I discovered the Golf wasn't compatible with the choice of CCS, AC or DC

fast chargers on offer. The VW only works with a medium-speed charger, of which Ecotricity has just 16 across the country.

The whole process was confusing and irritating in equal measure. Can you imagine turning up at a filling station in an internal combustion engined car and discovering you can't access any fuel because this particular brand of petrol used pumps with a nozzle that isn't compatible with your car's filler neck?

If the electric car really is the future then the infrastructure needs to catch up with the device it services. And quickly. That doesn't just mean more charging points, it means a universal charging system and a simple payment method.

In the meantime the GTE remains an effortless and occasionally entertaining hatchback to live with. Albeit one whose fuel economy has suffered as it has essentially spent the last month carrying around 200kg of virtually useless batteries and electric motor.

**James Disdale**

<b>Date acquired</b>	August 2017
<b>Total mileage</b>	7088
<b>Mileage this month</b>	2192
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	49.8



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# NEXT MONTH

ON SALE SATURDAY 23 DECEMBER

## CAR OF THE YEAR

evo's top ten cars revealed



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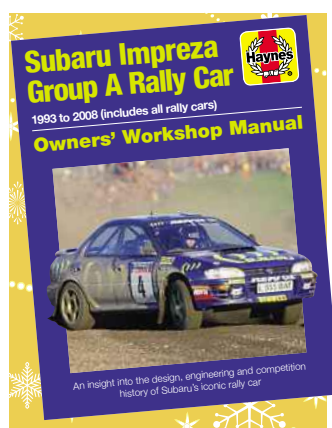
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## GTECHNIQ Crystal Serum Ultra

Christmas is all about special treats and this recently launched Crystal Serum Ultra, from paint protection specialist, Gtechniq, is the ultimate indulgence. It's a ceramic paint protection that its maker says outshines and outperforms anything else on the market, helping to maintain a car's as-new finish. Don't worry about standing out in the cold to apply it yourself – Crystal Serum Ultra coating can only be applied by a Gtechniq Accredited Detailer.

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Dashcams are now nearly as ubiquitous as satnavs. The multi award-winning NextBase 312GW has received great reviews thanks to its full HD video recording and simple mount, and is available in Special Edition White and Rose Gold. It's a good time to buy because right now there's up to 20 per cent off NextBase's range.

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## AlcoSense

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[thebeardedmancompany.com](http://thebeardedmancompany.com)

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# The Knowledge

## RATINGS

★ = Thrill-free zone ★★ = Tepid ★★★ = Interesting ★★★★ = Seriously good ★★★★★ = A truly great car

⊕ = new entry this month. Cars in *italics* are no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, F = feature). Call 0330 333 9491 for back issues. **Engine** is the car's combustion engine only – electric motors aren't shown. **Weight** is as quoted by the manufacturer for the car in basic spec, e.g. with a manual gearbox. In most cases this is to DIN standards (i.e. with fluids but without a driver), but where the manufacturer only quotes a 'dry' weight (i.e. without fluids) this is indicated by \*. Note that a dry weight will make the car's power-to-weight ratio (bhp/ton) appear more favourable. **0-62mph (claimed)** is the manufacturer's 0-62 figure, with a manual gearbox where offered. Our **0-60mph** and **0-100mph (tested)** figures could be with either a manual or automatic/DCT gearbox.

## SUPERMINIS / HOT HATCHES



### OUR CHOICE

**Honda Civic Type R.** Building on the promise shown by the short-lived FK2 version, the new FK8 Type R is a more rounded proposition – and is all the better for it. It's outrageously fast on all kinds of roads, edges ahead of its rivals on track, offers oodles of interaction and is practical to boot.



### BEST OF THE REST

If you can't stomach the Civic's styling, the classy **VW Golf R** may be more up your street – there's even a handy estate version. The new **Hyundai i30 N Performance Package**, meanwhile, makes a intriguing – and impressive – alternative to the usual suspects. From the smaller hatches, we'd choose the **Peugeot 208 GTI by Peugeot Sport** (left).

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Abarth 595 Competizione	196 D	£19,890	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1035kg	175	6.8	-	-	140	★★★★★
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 F	£33,055	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg	191	5.9	-	-	143	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 F	'09-16	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1145kg	149	7.5	-	-	136	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Veloce/QV	199 D	£29,635	4/1742	237/5750	251/2000	1320kg	182	6.0	-	-	152	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	'10-14	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	-	150	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 F	'03-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.3	6.0	15.5	153	★★★★★
Audi S1	211 F	£25,940	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	-	155	★★★★★
Audi A1 quattro	181 F	'13	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	-	152	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	240 D	£44,300	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1510kg	265	4.1	-	-	155	★★★★★
Audi S3	188 F	'13-16	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.2	5.4	12.5	155	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 F	'15-16	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	4.3	3.6	-	155	★★★★★
Audi S3	106 F	'06-12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.7	5.6	13.6	155	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 F	'10-12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.6	-	-	155	★★★★★
BMW 125i M Sport	176 D	£28,940	4/1997	221/5200	229/1400	1400kg	160	6.1	-	-	155	★★★★★
BMW M140i	-	£32,205	6/2979	335/5500	369/1520	1445kg	236	4.8	-	-	155	★★★★★
BMW M135i	212 F	'12-15	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	228	5.1	5.2	-	155	★★★★★
BMW 130i M Sport	106 F	'05-10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.0	6.1	15.3	155	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	'10-15	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.3	-	-	133	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	'11-12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	-	146	★★★★★
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 F	'97-03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	8.7	7.6	22.6	127	★★★★★
Citroën AX GT	195 F	'87-92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	120	9.2	-	-	110	★★★★★
DS 3 Performance	222 D	£21,415	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1175kg	177	6.5	-	-	143	★★★★★
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 F	'06-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	-	115	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	207 F	'13-17	4/1596	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	184	6.9	7.4	18.4	137	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	213 F	'13-17	4/1596	212/6000	236/2750	1088kg	198	6.4	-	-	140	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST200	225 F	'16	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	198	6.7	-	-	143	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	'08-13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	-	120	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 F	'08-13	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	-	120	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	'05-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	-	129	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 F	'08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	-	129	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate (Mk3)	219 D	£26,195	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	-	135	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk3)	207 F	£25,095	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	-	154	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune (Mk3)	187 D	£25,595	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	-	154+	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	119 F	'05-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.8	6.7	16.8	150	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	241 F	£32,265	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	227	4.7	4.9	12.6	166	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 F	'09-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	5.9	14.2	163	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2)	181 F	'10-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	5.6	12.7	165	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	207 F	'02-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	6.7	5.9	14.9	143	★★★★★
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 F	'92-96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	179	6.2	-	-	137	★★★★★
Ford Racing Puma	128 F	'00-01	4/1679	153/7000	149/4500	1174kg	132	7.9	7.8	23.2	137	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	241 F	£30,995	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1380kg	233	5.8	5.9	12.6	169	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	227 F	'15-17	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.7	5.4	12.4	167	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 F	'07-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	6.8	17.5	146	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Championship White	126 D	'09-10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	-	146	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2)	195 F	'09-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	-	155	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	075 F	'01-05	4/1998	197/7400	146/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	6.8	16.9	146	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EK9)	210 F	'97-00	4/1595	182/8200	118/7500	1040kg	178	6.8	-	-	135	★★★★★
Hyundai i30 N Performance Package	241 D	c£28,000	4/1998	271/6000	279/1450	1429kg	193	6.1	-	-	155	★★★★★
Kia ProceeD GT	217 D	£23,310	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1359kg	143	7.3	-	-	150	★★★★★
Lancia Delta HF Integrale Evoluzione	194 F	'91-92	4/1995	207/5750	220/3500	1300kg	162	6.0	-	-	134	★★★★★
Mazda 3 MPS	137 F	'06-13	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.1	6.3	14.5	155	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG A45	221 F	£40,695	4/1991	376/6000	350/2250	1480kg	258	4.2	3.9	-	155	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 F	'12-15	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.6	4.3	10.6	155	★★★★★
MG Metro R4R Clubman	181 F	'84-87	6/2991	250/7000	225/6500	1000kg	254	4.5	-	-	140	★★★★★
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£15,775	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	-	130	★★★★★



MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (s)	0-60MPH (s)	0-100MPH (s)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Mini Cooper S (F56)	196 D	£19,130	4/1998	189/4700	206/1250	1160kg	166	6.8	-	-	146	+ Still has that Mini DNA - Expensive with options	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 F	£23,305	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	193	6.3	-	-	153	+ Fast, agile, nimble - Chassis lacks sparkle found in previous JCWs	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works Challenge (F56)	237 F	£32,000	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1215kg	191	6.3	-	-	152	+ A more hardcore JCW, honed with help from evol - Just 100 being built	★★★★★
Mini Cooper (R56)	185 F	09-14	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	-	126	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (R56)	149 F	06-14	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	7.0	-	142	+ Like the Cooper, but with added shove - Google 'Mini death rattle'	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works (R56)	184 F	08-14	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182	6.9	7.2	16.7	148	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	231 F	13-14	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	188	6.3	-	-	150	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe (R58)	164 F	11-15	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	180	6.3	-	-	149	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But wearing a backwards baseball cap	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (R53)	077 F	02-06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.2	7.8	19.9	135	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R53)	144 F	06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	-	149	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★★
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	£22,905	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	166	7.0	-	-	137	+ Quirky character and bold styling - Still not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★★
Nissan Juke Nismo	184 F	£20,495	4/1618	197/6000	184/2400	1306kg	153	7.7	-	-	134	+ More than the sum of its parts - Not enough to add up to a pukka hot hatch	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	-	97-98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	-	121	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	94-96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	10.6	-	-	118	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 GTi 16v	034 F	97-04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	7.4	-	-	127	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport	225 F	£23,550	4/1598	205/5800	221/1750	1185kg	176	6.5	-	-	143	+ The most focused small hatch on sale - Fiesta ST Mountune is thousands cheaper	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi	184 F	12-16	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	6.8	6.8	17.9	143	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving	★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTi 19	195 F	88-91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	1145 kg	156	7.6	-	-	124	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	★★★★★
Peugeot 308 GTi (270) by Peugeot Sport	238 D	£28,950	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224	6.0	-	-	155	+ Strong performance, agile handling, everyday refinement - Tiny steering wheel	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTi 6	020 F	93-01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.9	7.2	20.1	140	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this anymore	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	98-99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	142	7.8	6.9	19.2	137	+ Essentially a GTi 6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours	★★★★★
Renault Twingo GT	231 D	£13,755	3/898	109/5750	125/2000	1001kg	111	9.6	-	-	113	+ Nippy performance - Less fun than a rear-engined Renault Sport-fettled car should be	★★★★★
Renault Sport Twingo 133	175 F	08-13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.7	-	-	125	+ Renault Sport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 200 Auto	184 F	1991-25	4/1618	197/6000	171/1750	1204kg	166	6.7	6.9	17.9	143	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy NA engine and manual 'box	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 220 Trophy	229 D	£22,425	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	183	6.6	-	-	146	+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 200 Cup	195 F	09-13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.9	6.6	16.7	141	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make it anymore	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 197 Cup	115 F	07-09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	-	134	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182	066 F	04-05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1101kg	165	7.1	6.6	17.5	139	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182 Cup	187 F	04-05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.9	-	-	139	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio Trophy	231 F	05-06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.9	6.6	17.3	140	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Just 500 were built	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 2)	034 F	01-03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1101kg	156	7.2	7.1	20.0	138	+ Poised, predictable, fast - Lacks aggressive edge	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 Cup	048 F	02-03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1101kg	171	6.9	6.5	17.7	138	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 1)	146 F	00-01	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1035kg	167	7.2	6.6	18.2	138	+ Brilliantly accomplished - Imperfect driving position	★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	233 F	93-96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.8	7.6	20.8	134	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile	★★★★★
Renault 5 GT Turbo	195 F	87-91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140	7.3	-	-	120	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6 255	231 F	03-05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	6.0	-	-	144	+ Super car drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6	029 F	99-02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1410kg	164	6.6	5.8	17.0	145	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Cup-S/Nav 275	223 D	16	4/1998	217/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	-	158	+ The same engine as the Trophy-R - They don't make it anymore	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 265 Cup	195 F	12-15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	6.4	14.8	158	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 F	14-15	4/1998	217/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200	5.8	-	-	159	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	231 F	14-15	4/1998	217/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212	5.8	-	-	158	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 250 Cup	139 F	09-12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	6.1	14.6	156	+ Fantastic chassis - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 F	07-09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	8.3	23.5	137	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 230 F1 Team R26	195 F	07-09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.5	6.2	16.0	147	+ The car the R26.R is based on - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane R26.R	231 F	08-09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	6.0	5.8	15.1	147	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows	★★★★★
SEAT Mi	-	£9655	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.4	-	-	99	+ Like VW's Up but more expensive - Still predictably slow	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	225 F	£18,465	4/1798	189/4300	236/1450	1185kg	162	6.7	-	-	146	+ 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	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement, DSG only	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 300	241 F	£30,155	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1300kg	231	5.7	6.2	12.7	155	+ Already potent Cupra gets yet another 10bhp - The Mk7.5 Golf R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 290	227 F	16-17	4/1984	286/5900	258/1700	1300kg	224	5.9	6.4	13.4	155	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTi money, now with an extra 10bhp - The Mk7 Golf R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	220 F	14-15	4/1984	276/5600	258/1750	1300kg	216	5.8	-	-	155	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTi money - The Mk7 Golf R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	07-11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.4	-	-	153	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have the adjustability of the old Cupra R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 F	10-12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	6.2	6.1	14.0	155	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival megahatches	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 F	03-06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	-	150	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some	★★★★★
Skoda Citigo	-	£8275	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.4	-	-	101	+ Like VW's Up, but 2mph faster flat out - 101mph isn't something to boast about	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	10-14	4/1990	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	-	139	+ Clever twincharged engine and DSG box - Do your homework on the reliability of the engine	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 F	03-07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	-	127	+ Fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	£24,885	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	164	6.8	-	-	154	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS 230 (Mk3)	215 D	£25,130	4/1984	227/4700	258/1500	1345kg	171	6.7	-	-	155	+ Limited-slip diff makes for a sharper steer - It could handle more than the extra 10bhp	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS TDI 4x4 (Mk3)	223 D	£28,050	4/1968	181/3500	206/1750	1475kg	125	7.6	-	-	142	+ Four-wheel drive tightens the vRS chassis - Diesel and DSG only	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 F	05-13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	-	149	+ Drives like a GTi but costs much less - Green brake calipers?	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX	125 D	08-10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	-	130	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STi 330S	124 F	08-10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	-	155	+ A bit quicker than the regular STi - ...but not better	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 F	£13,999	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	-	121	+ Still a great pocket rocket - Not quite as adjustable as the original	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	132 F	05-11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	-	124	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 F	£19,245	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.8	-	-	143	+ Begg to be wrong out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 F	07-14	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	7.2	-	-	140	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring/Clubsport	164 F	11-13/14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.8	-	-	143	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra/GTC VXR (Mk2)	207 F	£29,665	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	6.0	-	-	155	+ Loony turbo pace - Lacks the Renault Sport Mégane's precision	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 F	05-11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.4	6.7	16.7	152	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision	★★★★★
VW Up	171 F	£8995	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.4	-	-	99	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - ...but predictably slow	★★★★★
VW Lupo GTI	034 F	01-04	4/1598	123/6500	112/3000	1038kg	120	8.2	8.9	30.1	127	+ Looks, performance, chassis - Lacks the fizz of the 106 GTi	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI	211 F	£19,430	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1197kg	160	6.7	-	-	146	+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI	154 F	10-14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	7.4	-	-	142	+ Modern-day Mk1 Golf GTi gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk7.5)	233 D	£27,865	4/1984	227/4700	258/1500	1289kg	179	6.4	-	-	155	+ Still the most capable all-round hot hatch - Should be more thrilling	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI Performance (Mk7.5)	236 F	£29,280	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1312kg	187	6.2	-	-	155	+ A GTi with an extra 15bhp and an LSD - Could still be more thrilling	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk7.5)	235 D	£32,310	4/1984	306/5500	280/2000	1408kg	221	5.1	-	-	155	+ Outrageous yet accessible performance - Manual gearshift isn't the best	★★★★★
VW Golf GTD (Mk7)	200 D	13-17	4/1968	181/3500	208/1750	1302kg	141	7.5	-	-	143	+ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTi	★★★★★
VW Golf GTe (Mk7)	236 F	15-17	4/1395	201	258	1524kg	134	7.6	-	-	138	+ The most enjoyable plug-in hybrid in its price range - Golf GTi still quicker and more fun	★★★★★
VW Golf GTi (Mk7)	236 F	13-17	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1276kg	173	6.5	-	-	153	+ Brilliantly resolved - Lacks the punch of newer rivals	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40 (Mk7)	230 D	16-17	4/1984	286/5350	280/1700	1300kg	224	6.3	-	-	155	+ A faster, sharper, more entertaining GTi - Some rivals are more exciting on track	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S (Mk7)	229 F	16	4/1984	306/5800	280/1850	1285kg	242	5.8	5				

# BOTB



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## SALOONS / ESTATES / SUVs



## OUR CHOICE

**Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio.** At last, an Alfa Romeo we can love not just for its badge, for the noise it makes and for being Italian, but because it's a great car. In fact, the Giulia Quadrifoglio is a saloon car that feels like a sports car – and thankfully that sports car isn't a 4C.



## BEST OF THE REST

If you prefer your fast saloons German, consider the **Mercedes-AMG C63 S** or its more focused rival, the **BMW M3**. Moving up a size, the **Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+** (left) is relentlessly rampant but has finesse too, while the **Porsche Panamera Turbo** runs the E63 close and feels good for its 7min 38sec Ring time.

## MAKE &amp; MODEL

Alfa Romeo Giulia 2.0 Turbo Super	234 D	£31,180	4/1995	197/5000	243/1750	1429kg	140	6.6	-	-	146	+ Keen engine, enjoyable handling - Firm low-speed ride	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	237 F	£61,300	6/2891	503/6500	443/2500	1620kg	315	3.9	-	-	191	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Stelvio	234 D	£43,690	4/1995	276/5250	295/1750	1660kg	169	5.7	-	-	143	+ Agile feel, quick steering, attractive cabin - Engine not truly inspiring	★★★★★
Alpina D3 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£47,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	-	173	+ 173mph from a 3-litre diesel! Brilliant chassis, too - Auto only	★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (F30)	188 D	£3-16	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1630kg	252	4.3	-	-	190	+ Understated appearance, monster performance - E90 M3 is better on the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	201 D	£147,950	12/5935	552/6650	465/5500	1990kg	282	4.4	-	-	203	+ Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	£10-13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.3	-	-	188	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More of a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★★
Audi S3 Saloon	192 D	£35,405	4/1984	306/5500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	-	155	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Saloon	235 F	£45,250	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1515kg	264	4.1	-	-	155	+ Mini RS4 looks; stonking pace - Not the most involving driving experience	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B9)	225 D	£44,600	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1630kg	218	4.7	-	-	155	+ Strong response and delivery from turbo engine - Chassis feels softer than before	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B8)	166 D	£8-16	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1650kg	202	5.0	-	-	155	+ Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	216 F	£2-15	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.7	4.5	10.5	174	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	231 D	£5-08	8/4163	444/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.7	4.5	10.5	155	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 F	£0-02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.9	4.8	12.1	170	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility; bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi RS2	214 F	£4-95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	4.8	13.1	162	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★★
Audi S5 Sportback	233 D	£44,000	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1660kg	214	4.7	-	-	155	+ More capable than you think; strong V6 engine - Gearbox frustrating in auto mode	★★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	£6-11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.5	-	-	155	+ Fast, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 F	£81,355	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.9	3.6	8.2	155	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant Performance (C7)	224 D	£88,270	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1950kg	311	3.7	-	-	155	+ The extra power is no hassle for the chassis - But it is a stern test of your self-control	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 F	£8-10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	4.3	9.7	155	+ Was the world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	052 F	£2-04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.6	4.8	11.6	155	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi S7 Sportback	171 D	£65,950	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	-	155	+ Looks and drives better than the S6 it's based on - Costs several thousands more	★★★★★
Audi RS7 Sportback	208 F	£86,985	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1930kg	291	3.9	-	-	155	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience	★★★★★
Audi S8 Plus	217 D	£100,510	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1990kg	305	3.8	-	-	155	+ Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial	★★★★★
Audi RS Q3	206 D	£13-16	5/2480	331/5500	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	-	155	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity	★★★★★
Audi SQ5	237 D	£51,200	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1870kg	190	5.4	-	-	155	+ Fine chassis; deceptive pace - Lacks excitement	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£132,800	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	5.2	-	-	183	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporting	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8 S	230 D	£142,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2342kg	226	4.9	-	-	190	+ Old-school approach to comfort and luxury - Old-school tech	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£154,900	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2400kg	261	4.6	-	-	199	+ For those who still want their Flying Spur with a W12 - Car feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Bentayga	217 D	£162,700	12/5950	600/5000	664/1350	2365kg	258	4.1	-	-	187	+ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.3	-	-	184	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	235 D	£252,000	8/6752	530/4000	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.9	-	-	190	+ Extravagant; effortless performance - Passengers have more fun than you do	★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£38,590	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	-	155	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★★
BMW 340i M Sport Touring (F31)	228 D	£42,055	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1615kg	202	5.5	-	-	155	+ Feelsome rear-drive chassis - Easy to drive it beyond its comfort zone	★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	£11-15	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	6.1	-	-	155	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★★
BMW 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	£74-16	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	-	155	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 F	£57,355	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1560kg	277	4.3	4.1	8.6	155	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80)	237 F	£59,595	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1560kg	289	4.2	-	-	155	+ The car the F80 M3 should have been from the start - Less refined at low speeds	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 F	£8-11	8/3999	444/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	4.9	10.7	165	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 F	£11-12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	-	180	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10)	208 F	£11-16	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.4	-	-	155	+ Twin-turbocharging suits M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	£04-10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	-	-	155	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	110 F	£9-03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	5.3	4.9	11.5	155	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nitpicking	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	£2-96	6/3795	335/6900	295/4750	1725kg	197	5.8	4.9	13.6	155	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	182 F	£8-88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.1	-	-	156	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190 D	£95,665	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	-	155	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price looks silly next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★★
BMW M760Li xDrive	233 D	£132,310	12/6592	602/5500	590/1550	2180kg	281	3.7	-	-	155	+ More capable than you'd think; strong engine - Too much of a limo to be genuinely exciting	★★★★★
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£67,220	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	174	5.3	-	-	155	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	212 D	£95,430	8/4395	567/6000	553/2200	2265kg	254	4.2	-	-	155	+ Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	134 D	£09-15	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	-	171	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS	226 D	£69,990	6/2997	411/5700	409/2500	1950kg	214	5.7	-	-	149	+ Caddy's S-class rival scores on comfort - But not on driver involvement	★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012 F	£9-03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	7.2	6.1	17.4	142	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Convincing your friends of that	★★★★★
Infiniti Q50S Hybrid	195 D	£41,450	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1762kg	207	5.4	-	-	155	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals	★★★★★
Jaguar XE 2.0d AWD	227 D	£35,335	4/1999	178/4000	317/1750	1615kg	112	7.9	-	-	140	+ Great chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished	★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	237 D	£48,045	6/2995	375/6500	332/3500	1655kg	230	5.0	-	-	155	+ AMG-beating power; handling - Expensive; cabin quality and space lags behind rivals	★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	213 D	£5-17	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1635kg	208	5.1	-	-	155	+ Neat handling, neat design - V6 loses appeal in the real world	★★★★★
Jaguar XF S	214 D	£51,100	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1710kg	223	5.3	-	-	155	+ Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal	★★★★★
Jaguar XF S Diesel	219 D	£50,100	6/2993	296/4000	516/2000	1750kg	172	6.2	-	-	155	+ Great chassis, good looks, better engine than V6 petrol - It's still a diesel	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	£09-15	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.7	4.8	10.2	155	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	208 F	£13-15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.6	-	-	186	+ XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	£91,755	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1875kg	294	4.6	-	-	174	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR575	242 D	£93,710	8/5000	567/6250									



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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMDED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Mercedes-AMG C63 (W205)	209 D	£62,180	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291 4.1	-	-	155	155	+ Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate (W205)	216 F	£63,380	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1710kg	279 4.2	-	-	155	155	+ Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S (W205)	211 F	£68,930	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309 4.0	-	-	155	155	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG (W204)	151 F	08-14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277 4.5	4.4	9.7	155	155	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG (W203)	088 F	04-08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228 5.2	-	-	155	155	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	89-92	4/2498	204/6750	177/5500	1300kg	159 7.5	-	-	146	146	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E43 4Matic (W213)	236 D	£57,275	6/2996	395/6100	383/2500	1765kg	227 4.6	-	-	155	155	+ Some of the E63's looks and performance - Not enough of its performance	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+ (W213)	237 F	£88,295	8/3982	603/5750	627/2500	1880kg	326 3.4	3.4	7.4	155	155	+ Fast, refined, effective and fun - At nearly two tons, it's not 911 nimble	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	187 D	13-16	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315 4.2	-	-	155	155	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG S (W212)	208 F	13-16	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327 4.1	-	-	155	155	+ Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Sluggish auto box	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	165 F	11-13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298 4.4	-	-	155	155	+ Turbo engine didn't dilute the 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	155	+ Indulgent chassis, brilliant engine - Steering still vague	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	096 D	06-09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292 4.5	-	-	155	155	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 F	03-06	8/5439	469/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271 4.7	4.8	10.2	155	155	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG L	191 D	£124,910	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294 4.4	-	-	155	155	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	£89,130	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327 4.1	-	-	155	155	+ Quick and characterful - Dated gearbox, no four-wheel-drive option in the UK	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 F	11-14	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293 4.4	-	-	155	155	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 F	06-11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1830kg	281 4.5	-	-	155	155	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GL63 AMG S	218 D	£96,950	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258 4.2	-	-	155	155	+ Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GL63 AMG S Coupe	213 D	£96,575	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258 4.2	-	-	155	155	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 F	12-15	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232 4.7	-	-	155	155	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - Same money buys a Boxster and an ML350...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£135,025	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220 5.4	-	-	130	130	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	08-14	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185 4.5	5.2	13.9	155	155	+ First Evo with a twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as its predecessors	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	08-14	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207 4.4	-	-	155	155	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	08-14	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231 4.0	-	-	155	155	+ Ridiculously rapid Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 F	09-10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262 3.8	-	-	155	155	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... ..about X grand too much when new	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 F	05-08	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250 4.2	4.3	10.9	157	157	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 F	05-08	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266 4.0	-	-	157	157	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	03-05	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1400kg	199 5.1	-	-	157	157	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 F	03-05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221 4.9	-	-	157	157	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	02-03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206 5.1	5.0	13.0	140	140	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Makinen Edition	231 F	00-01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205 4.6	-	-	150	150	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera 4S Diesel	232 D	£91,788	8/3956	416/3500	627/1000	2050kg	206 4.3	-	-	177	177	+ Sharp chassis, impressive tech - Performance doesn't meet expectations	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	237 F	£115,100	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	1995kg	276 3.6	3.4	8.3	190	190	+ Searing pace with body control that's a real step up; superb rear wing, too - Still very heavy	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo Sport Turismo	239 D	£118,828	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	2035kg	271 3.8	-	-	188	188	+ Looks great; drives better than its weight would suggest - Not exactly a load-lugger	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 F	11-16	8/4806	434/6700	383/3500	1925kg	229 4.4	-	-	178	178	+ Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Can feel light on performance next to turbocharged rivals	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 F	10-16	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254 4.2	3.6	8.9	188	188	+ 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 3.8	-	-	190	190	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★★
Porsche Macan S	205 F	£48,287	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183 5.4	-	-	157	157	+ No less compelling than the Macan Turbo - Although lacks its ultimate speed and agility	★★★★★
Porsche Macan GTS	217 D	£55,158	6/2997	355/6000	369/1650	1895kg	190 5.2	-	-	159	159	+ Handles like an SUV shouldn't - Still looks like an SUV	★★★★★
Porsche Macan Turbo	207 D	£63,981	6/3604	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208 4.8	4.5	11.1	165	165	+ Doesn't feel like an SUV - Not a match for a proper sports saloon	★★★★★
Porsche Macan Turbo Performance Package	236 D	£69,505	6/3604	434/6000	442/1500	1925kg	229 4.4	-	-	163	163	+ Staggeringly quick and hugely capable - Do you really need this much power?	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	£76,430	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2100kg	209 5.2	-	-	163	163	+ 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 5.7	-	-	162	162	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	£96,193	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239 4.5	-	-	173	173	+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	£121,550	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255 4.1	-	-	176	176	+ More power and torque than a Zonda S 7.3 - In an SUV	★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe S4	160 D	£44,545	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144 7.0	-	-	135	135	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only	★★★★★
Range Rover Velar P380	239 D	£70,210	6/2995	375/6500	332/3500	1884kg	202 5.7	-	-	155	155	+ A more advanced, opulent alternative to an F-Pace - Its weight ultimately limits its agility	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£87,680	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219 5.0	-	-	155	155	+ Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport SVR	212 D	£97,780	8/5000	542/6000	501/3500	2335kg	236 4.5	-	-	162	162	+ Characterful drivetrain; genuine off-road ability - Not a match for its rivals on the road	★★★★★
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	£83,900	8/4367	334/3500	516/1750	2360kg	144 6.5	-	-	140	140	+ Lighter and more capable than before, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	£223,368	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242 4.7	-	-	155	155	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 F	£318,120	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180 5.7	-	-	149	149	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st century - The roads are barely big enough	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	201 F	£31,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196 5.2	-	-	158	158	+ Fast Subaru saloon soldiers on - Without a power increase	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	10-13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200 5.2	-	-	158	158	+ Fast Subaru back as a saloon - Without the blue paint and gold wheels	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI ('Hawkeye')	090 F	05-07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188 5.3	-	-	158	158	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza GB270	109 D	07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1490kg	192 5.2	-	-	143	143	+ Fitting final fling for the Impreza badge on a fast Subaru - End of an era	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 F	07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215 4.8	-	-	155	155	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP ('Blobeys')	073 F	03-05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207 5.4	5.2	12.9	148	148	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo ('Classic')	011 F	93-00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177 5.8	5.4	14.6	144	144	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5	187 F	99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195 6.1	5.0	14.1	144	144	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza P1	200 F	00-01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219 4.7	4.9	13.3	150	150	+ One of our favourite Imprezas - Doesn't come cheap	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B STI	188 F	98-99	4/2212	276/6000	268/3200	1270kg	220 5.3	5.0	13.1	150	150	+ The ultimate Impreza - Prices reflect this	★★★★★
Tesla Model S P100D	235 F	£129,400	-	595	713	2108kg	287 2.4	2.9	7.7	155	155	+ Killer RWBY performance - Can take 30 minutes to warm up for a Ludicrous+ launch	★★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia Grand Sport 2.0T 4x4	237 D	£27,710	4/1998	251/5300	295/2500	1649kg	158 6.9	-	-	155	155	+ A more spacious and stylish Insignia - Still lacking the performance gene	★★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR SuperSport	189 D	13-17	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1825kg	179 5.6	-	-	1			

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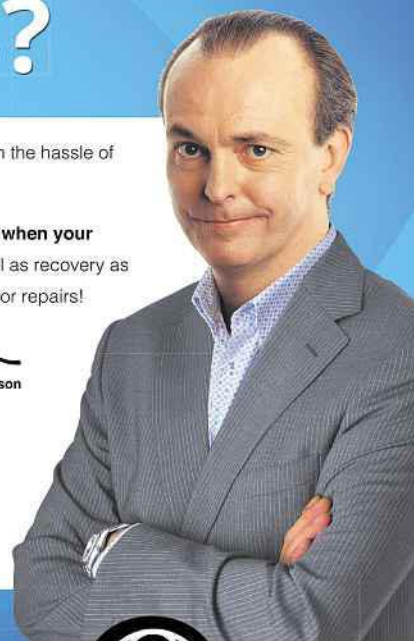


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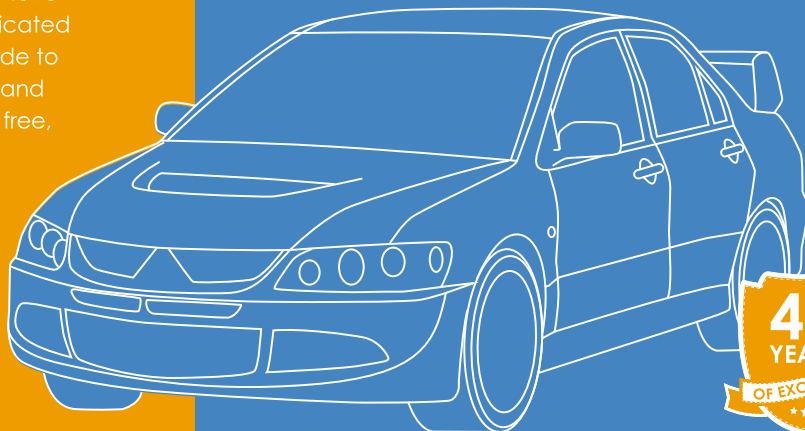
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## SPORTS CARS / CONVERTIBLES



## OUR CHOICE

**Lotus 3-Eleven.** It may not be groundbreaking but it is hugely exciting. The 410bhp supercharged V6 sounds fabulous and the open linkage on the manual gearbox looks fantastic. A circuit is its natural habitat but it has surprisingly civilised road manners, so you could happily drive it to and from a trackday.



## BEST OF THE REST

The **Abarth 124 Spider** (left) is capable of putting a big smile on your face at sane speeds, and we'd defy anyone not to be charmed by an **Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster**, in V8 or V12 form. Unsurprisingly, you won't find a duffer in the **Lotus Elise** and **Exige Roadster** ranges, and the same goes for the **Caterham Seven**.

## MAKE &amp; MODEL

Abarth 124 Spider	238 F	£26,920	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	161	6.8	-	-	143	+ A little car with a big soul - Vague and lifeless front end	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	223 F	£59,505	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg*	256	4.5	-	-	160	+ Stunningly beautiful; better steering than coupe version - Still has the coupe's other foibles	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 F	£9,111	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.4	-	-	181	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	£30,573	4/1998	245/8600	177/7200	520kg*	479	3.1	-	-	145	+ Even better than its predecessors - Can still be a bit draughty	★★★★☆
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 F	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg*	647	2.6	-	-	155	+ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 F	£9,111	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg*	554	3.3	-	-	155	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 F	£12,134	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg*	499	2.9	-	-	150	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made	★★★★☆
Ariel Nomad	220 F	£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 S Roadster	161 F	£103,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.8	-	-	189	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 F	£147,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	-	201	+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - Let down by a frustrating automated manual gearbox	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 F	£9,111	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.8	-	-	180	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Feels dated compared to contemporaries	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 F	£12,134	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.5	-	-	190	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	105 F	£9,111	8/4280	380/7000	302/5000	1710kg	226	5.0	-	-	174	+ Still looks and sounds fabulous; drives great too - You'll want the later 4.7-litre engine	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£10,134	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1890kg	274	4.5	-	-	183	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★☆
Audi TTS Roadster	207 D	£42,565	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	-	155	+ A serious proposition, ranking close behind a Boxster S - Coupe still looks better	★★★★☆
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	£28,600	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	-	155	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question	★★★★☆
Audi TTS Roadster	133 D	£9,111	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	-	155	+ Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it	★★★★☆
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	£11,715	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	-	187	+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better	★★★★☆
BAC Mono	189 F	£165,125	4/2261	305/7700	206/6000	580kg*	534	2.8	-	-	170	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	186 D	£13,117	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	-	155	+ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	£6,299	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	-	155	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 F	£6,299	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	5.0	-	-	155	+ Exhilarating and characterful; that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★☆
BMW M Roadster	002 F	£8,111	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.1	-	-	155	+ M3 motor; hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★☆
BMW Z8	026 F	£10,134	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.7	4.8	11.1	155	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's most fun to drive	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 160	239 F	£19,495	4/1660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg*	166	6.9	-	-	100	+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 270	219 F	£23,995	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 310	227 D	£25,495	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 F	£27,495	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 F	£30,495	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	381	3.8	4.0	10.3	136	+ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 420R Donington Edition	240 D	£47,500	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	381	3.8	-	-	136	+ One of the best Sevens we've driven - Only ten are being made	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven CSR	094 F	£46,495	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg*	460	3.1	3.8	-	155	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£50,495	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg*	516	3.4	-	-	155	+ Lucidous, near-620R pace, with added habitability - Well, 'habitable' for a Seven...	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 620R	239 F	£50,490	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg*	551	2.8	-	-	155	+ Banzi on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 F	£7,111	4/1596	125/6100	120/5350	539kg*	235	5.9	-	-	112	+ Great debut for Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 F	£11,714	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	£13,114	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 F	£9,111	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 F	£8,111	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 Seven R300	068 F	£2,016	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 F	£9,111	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg*	510	3.4	3.6	8.8	146	+ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★☆
Elemental R1	238 D	£98,700	4/1999	320/ n/a	332/2000	630kg	516	2.7	-	-	165	+ Sensational, explosive, captivating, exploitable - Price will test your level of commitment	★★★★☆
Ferrari California T	229 D	£155,254	8/3855	553/7500	551/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	-	196	+ Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily usability above outright thrills	★★★★☆
Fiat 124 Spider	228 F	£21,050	4/1368	138/5000	177/2250	1050kg	134	7.5	-	-	134	+ It's an affordable Italian(ish) sports car - Lacks Italian brio	★★★★☆
Honda S2000	118 D	£9,111	4/1999	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	-	150	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Convertible 3.0 V6 340PS	186 F	£57,750	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214	5.7	-	-	161	+ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably the junior F-type	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Convertible 3.0 V6 380PS	183 F	£68,500	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.5	-	-	171	+ A more rounded F-type than the V8s - We like V8s	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type R Convertible	-	£92,345	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331	4.1	-	-	186	+ Pace, characterful engine - Costs nearly £25k more than the hot V6	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type SVR Convertible	230 D	£115,485	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1720kg	335	3.7	-	-	195	+ Huge performance - Unpleasant soundtrack; unsettled on bumpy roads	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 F	£13,117	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.5	-	-	171	+ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is cheaper	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 F	£15,000	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	363	3.9	-	-	186	+ Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR Convertible	130 F	£9,111	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.8	-	-	155	+ Fantastic 5-litre V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 F	£11,714	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.4	-	-	186	+ 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	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★☆
KTM X-Bow R	165 F	£87,480	4/1984	296/6300	295/3300	816kg	369	3.9	-	-	144	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★☆
KTM X-Bow	138 F	£8,111	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	-	£32,300	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	856kg	159	6.5	-	-	127	+ 1.6-litre Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sprint	-	£37,300	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	830kg	164	6.2	-	-	127	+ Even lighter version of the 1.6 Elise - It'll cost you nearly £200 per kilo saved	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sport 220	-	£39,300	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	904kg	244	4.6	-	-	145	+ Epic grip and pace - A bit short on creature comforts	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sprint 220	236 D	£44,300	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	878kg	251	4.5	-	-	145	+ Makes the most of its lightness - Heavyweight price	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Cup 250	238 D	£47,400	4/1798	243/7200	184/3500	917kg	269	4.3	-	-	154	+ Quickest Elise yet - Prioritises grip over adjustability	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Club Racer	183 F	£11,715	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.5	-	-	127	+ Even lighter, even more focused than a standard 1.6 Elise - Are you prepared to go this basic?	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	£13,115	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.6	-	-	145	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise R	068 F	£8,111	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.4	5.6	13.9	138	+ A most thrillsome Elise - Blaring engine note	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise SC	131 F	£8,111	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.6	4.5	11.4	145	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise S	104 F	£6,110	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.1	6.3	18.7	127	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise IIS	049 F	£2,016	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	-	131	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	£3,016	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 F	£3,016	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.5	4.7	12.1	135	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise (S1)	235 F	£9,111	4/1796	118/5000	122/3000	731kg	164	5.9	6.1	18.5	126	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Sport 350 Roadster	221 F	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	145	+ An Exige with added sunny-day appeal - A Boxster would be more practical	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Sport 380 Roadster	231 F	£67,900	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1110kg	343	3.7	-	-	178	+ Like the 350 Roadster, but faster and even purer - A Boxster would still be more practical	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 F	£13,115	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	4.0	-	-	145	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - 981 Boxster S is a better all-rounder	



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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl./Cv	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (s, AME)	0-60MPH (0-60)	0-100MPH (0-100)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Lotus 340R	126 F	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	701kg	275	4.5	4.5	12.5	126	+ Hardcore road-racer... that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£104,565	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.0	-	-	177	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,400	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	-	179	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.5 (Mk4)	230 F	£18,795	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	134	8.3	-	-	127	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0 Sport Nav (Mk4)	228 F	£24,195	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	161	7.3	-	-	133	+ Brilliant basic recipe - The desire for stiffer suspension and more power	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 RF 2.0 (Mk4)	234 F	£23,395	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1045kg	154	7.4	-	-	134	+ Drives just like its soft-top brother - Significant wind noise with the roof down	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 F	'09-15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	-	138	+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less-than-macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 F	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	-	122	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s; dubious handling	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 F	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.5	-	-	123	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	8.8	-	-	114	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SLC43	222 D	£47,600	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1520kg	242	4.7	-	-	155	+ Twin-turbo V6 well-suited to baby roadster - But also highlights the chassis' age	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	186 F	'12-'15	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1615kg	262	4.6	-	-	155	+ Quicker and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 F	'05-'10	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	-	155	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black Series	110 F	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.5	4.9	11.2	174	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted auto 'box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL63	228 D	£116,430	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1770kg	331	4.1	-	-	155	+ Effortless performance - Needs more involvement to go with the pace	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT Roadster	239 F	£111,360	8/3982	469/6000	465/1700	1595kg	299	4.0	-	-	188	+ An AMG GT with added fresh air - Ride and handling go slightly to pieces on UK roads	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT C Roadster	235 D	£140,660	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1660kg	336	3.7	-	-	196	+ As above but with more shove - Road noise can get wearing on long journeys	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	'12-'16	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1770kg	255	4.6	-	-	155	+ Wafty performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	'12-'16	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	-	155	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy; steering lacks consistency	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	183 D	'13-'16	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	-	155	+ 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	+ 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	4.2	-	-	155	+ Gob-smacking performance - Costly to run	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 F	'12-'14	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	3.7	-	-	197	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 F	£31,140	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg*	159	6.0	-	-	115	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8	171 F	£85,461	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg*	334	4.5	-	-	155	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8 Speedster	202 F	'14	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1000kg*	368	4.2	-	-	148	+ Fantastic old-school roadster experience - Gets unsettled by big bumps; only 60 were made	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	£94,665	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1180kg*	312	4.5	-	-	170	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 F	'10-'11	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg*	312	4.2	-	-	170	+ It's an Aero 8 with a V8 and targa top - Limited edition, costing proper supercar money	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 F	'10-'14	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	-	155	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster	224 D	£44,758	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 F	£53,714	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	4.4	9.8	177	+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (981)	238 F	'12-'16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.8	-	-	164	+ Goes and looks better than the 987 Boxster - Shame about the electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 F	'12-'16	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	-	173	+ 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	+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	223 F	'15-'16	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	-	180	+ An even faster, even more rewarding Boxster - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (987)	161 F	'05-'12	6/3436	306/6400	266/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	-	170	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	188 F	'10-'12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	4.9	-	-	166	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not the most practical	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 F	'99-'04	6/3179	256/6200	229/4600	1320kg	200	5.7	-	-	164	+ Added power over the non-S Boxster is seductive - Very little	★★★★★
Radical SR3 SL	174 F	'11-'14	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 F	'09-'12	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg*	687	3.2	-	-	168	+ Held the Nordschleife road-car lap record for eight years! - Convincing people it's road legal	★★★★★
Renault Sport Spider	231 F	'96-'99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	-	131	+ Rarity; unassisted steering - Heavier than you'd hope; disappointing engine	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Dawn	222 D	£264,000	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2560kg	223	4.9	-	-	155	+ Effortless driving experience - Driver involvement not a priority	★★★★★
Toyota MR2 (Mk3)	187 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	8.0	7.2	21.2	131	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1060kg	335	4.2	-	-	175	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 F	'93-'03	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.4	-	-	167	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1040kg	274	4.4	4.8	11.2	155	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 F	'93-'01	8/4997	320/5500	320/4000	1060kg	307	4.1	-	-	167	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 F	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.9	-	-	136	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 F	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.9	-	-	151	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Vuhl 05	220 F	£59,995	4/2000	285/5600	310/3000	725kg	405	3.7	-	-	152	+ Impressive pace and quality - You can get a more thrills from a Caterham at half the price	★★★★★
Zenos E10 S	214 F	£30,595	4/1999	250/7000	295/2500	725kg*	350	4.0	4.2	-	145	+ Neutral and exploitable - Prescriptive balance	★★★★★

## COUPES / GTs



## OUR CHOICE

**Porsche 911 Carrera GTS.** Adjustable, playful, communicative and with top-class body control and damping, the 991.2-generation Carrera GTS is everything a 911 should be. It even has the best steering yet in a 991 Carrera. Just make sure you order the two-wheel-drive, manual coupe version.



## BEST OF THE REST

Lower down the 991.2 range, the **Porsche 911 Carrera** and **Carrera S** haven't been ruined by the addition of turbos, while among their rivals we'd take a **BMW M4 Competition Package** over an **Audi RS5** or a **Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe**. Elsewhere, the **Lotus Exige** and **Evora** continue to offer sublime handling in all guises.

Alfa Romeo 4C	209 F	£51,505	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg*	269	4.5	-	-	160	160	+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 F	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.2	-	-	181	181	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - Cost more now than they did new	★★★★★
Alpina D4 Biturbo	206 F	£50,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	-	173	173	+ Fifth-gear oversteer - Sounds like a diesel; fuel economy not as good as you might hope	★★★★★
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 F	'14-'16	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1615kg	254	4.2	-	-	188	188	+ More fluid than the M4; better traction, too - Not as precise as the M-car over the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 F	£94,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	190	190	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage GT8	229 F	£165,000	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	292	4.4	-	-	190	190	+ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 being made	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	109 F	'05-'07	8/4280	380/7000	302/5000	1630kg	237	5.0	5.2	12.0	175	175	+ Gorgeous; awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match a 911 dynamically	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7)	169 D	'08-'16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.8	-	-	180	180	+ Still feels special - But also a little dated	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N4.30	218 F	'15-'16	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	189	189	+ Malleable, involving - Never feels rampantly quick	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	238 F	£138,000	12/5935	563/6650	457/5500	1665kg	344	3.9	-	-	205	205	+ Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box (so get the manual)	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 F	'09-'13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.2	4.4	9.7	190	190	+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty?	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	214 F	'15-'16	12/5935	592/7000	461/5500	1565kg	384	3.5	-	-	185	185	+ The GT3-style Vantage we waited so long for - Only 100 were made	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11 V8	241 D	£144,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1760kg	290	4.0	-	-	187	187	+ Potent and characterful engine; sharper chassis than V12 - Do we still need the V12?	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11	235 F	£157,900	12/5204	600/6500	516/1500	1875kg	325	3.9	4.0	8.1	200	200	+ An excellent GT - Suffers in outright handling terms as a result	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 GT	214 D	'15-'17	12/5935	540/6750	457/5500	1785kg	307	4.5	-	-	183	183	+ More power; still has bags of character - Needs an eight-speed auto 'box	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	178 F	'04-'16	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	-	183	183	+ A great start to Gaydon-era Astons - Automatic gearbox could be quicker	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS	142 F	'07-'12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.3	-	-	191	191	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey; can bite the unwary	★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	204 F	£31,685	4/1984	227/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	-	155	155	+ Desirable, grippy and effortlessly quick - Still not the last word in interaction	★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	£34,895	4/1984	227/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	-	155	155	+ Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement	★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk3)	209 F	£40,840	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1365kg	228	4.9	-	-	155	155	+ Dynamically interesting (for a TT) - Still not as interactive as a Cayman	★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk3)	230 F	£52,100	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1440kg	278	3.7	3.4	-	155	155	+ Soundtrack; tremendous point-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run	★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	193 F	'08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	-	155	155	+ A usefully quicker TT, with a great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game	★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 F	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.7	4.4	11.1	155	155	+ Sublime five-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Plus (Mk2)	185 D	'12-'14	5/2480	355/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	-	174	174	+ Stonkily fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT	★★★★★

  
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## MAKE &amp; MODEL

Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	-	155	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering	★★★★☆
Audi S5	233 F	'05-'06	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	220	4.7	-	-	155	+ Chassis rewards commitment... - ...but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too	★★★★☆
Audi RS5	240 F	'06-'07	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1655kg	273	3.9	3.6	9.0	155	+ Lighter, quicker; makes green paint look good - Lacks the character of the old V8	★★★★☆
Audi RS5	206 F	'10-'16	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	263	4.5	-	-	155	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering	★★★★☆
Audi R8 V8	201 F	'07-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.6	4.1	9.9	188	+ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 F	'14-'16	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.8	-	-	188	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	'14-'16	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.5	-	-	192	+ An even better drivers' Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	'15-'16	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.5	-	-	198	+ Near 200mph in utter comfort - Weight; W12's thirst	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT Speed	230 D	'15-'16	12/5998	633/5900	620/2000	2245kg	286	4.1	-	-	206	+ Desirability meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental Supersports	234 D	'15-'16	12/5998	700/6000	750/2050	2205kg	323	3.5	-	-	209	+ Massive performance, surprisingly agile - Styling and soundtrack far from discreet	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	'15-'16	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.8	-	-	170	+ The best-handling Continental ever - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg	★★★★☆
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 F	'11-'12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.9	-	-	155	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick	★★★★☆
BMW M240i Coupe	229 D	'15-'16	6/2998	335/6800	369/1520	1470kg	232	4.8	-	-	155	+ Adjustable and plenty of fun - Lacks finesse and precision	★★★★☆
BMW M235i Coupe	225 F	'14-'16	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.0	5.2	12.7	155	+ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard	★★★★☆
BMW M2	230 F	'15-'16	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	248	4.5	4.5	-	155	+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac	★★★★☆
BMW 440i M Sport Coupe	233 F	'14-'16	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1540kg	212	5.2	-	-	155	+ Almost-too-powerful engine - Doesn't feel special enough to drive	★★★★☆
BMW M4	218 F	'15-'16	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1560kg	277	4.3	-	-	155	+ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads	★★★★☆
BMW M4 Competition Package	240 F	'15-'16	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1560kg	289	4.2	4.4	9.2	155	+ The car the M4 always should have been - Not so good on 20in wheels	★★★★☆
BMW M4 CS	237 D	'15-'16	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1580kg	292	3.9	-	-	174	+ The first M4 you could enjoy on any road, in any conditions - It ain't cheap	★★★★☆
BMW M4 GTS	237 F	'16	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	332	3.8	3.7	8.0	190	+ Best improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be, given its price	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E92)	196 F	'07-'13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.8	4.3	10.3	155	+ Fends off all of its rivals... - ...except the cheaper 1-series M Coupe	★★★★☆
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	232 F	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.4	-	-	190	+ Highly exclusive; one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E46)	066 F	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	5.1	12.3	155	+ One of the best BMWs ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel	★★★★☆
BMW M3 CS (E46)	219 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	-	-	155	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car	★★★★☆
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	200 F	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	4.9	5.3	12.0	155	+ Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a bit... sluggish	★★★★☆
BMW M3 Evolution (E36)	148 F	'96-'98	6/3201	317/7400	258/3250	1515kg	212	5.5	5.4	12.8	158	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E30)	165 F	'89-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1655kg	185	6.7	6.7	17.8	147	+ The best M-car ever - Prices have got out of hand	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	-	155	+ A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in	★★★★☆
BMW M Coupe	005 F	'98-'03	6/3246	321/7400	261/4900	1375kg	237	5.3	-	-	155	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse	★★★★☆
BMW M6 (F13)	218 F	'09-'10	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	-	155	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade, too	★★★★☆
BMW M6 (E63)	106 F	'05-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.2	4.8	10.0	155	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace	★★★★☆
BMW i8	210 F	'16	3/1499	357/5800	420/3700	1485kg	244	4.4	-	-	155	+ Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	220 F	'14-'16	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 F	'14-'16	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1496kg	312	4.2	4.4	9.4	180	+ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 F	'14-'16	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.7	-	-	196	+ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed	★★★★☆
Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost	222 D	'13-'14	4/2261	313/5500	319/3000	1655kg	192	5.8	-	-	155	+ Ninety per cent as good as the V8 - Missing ten per cent is what makes the Mustang	★★★★☆
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	225 F	'13-'14	8/4951	410/6500	391/4250	1711kg	243	4.8	4.8	11.6	155	+ Looks, noise, performance, value, right-hand drive - Comes undone on rougher roads	★★★★☆
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	200 F	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.7	6.2	17.9	145	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some	★★★★☆
Infiniti Q60S Sport 3.0T	228 D	'14-'15	6/2997	400/6400	350/1600	1799kg	226	5.0	-	-	155	+ Impressive tech - Electronic systems reduce feeling of involvement	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Coupe 2.0 i4 300PS	239 D	'14-'15	8/4999	296/5500	295/1500	1525kg	197	5.7	-	-	155	+ Turbo four-cylinder engine sounds good - But it lacks top-end verve	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Coupe 3.0 V6 340PS	204 D	'14-'15	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1567kg	217	5.7	-	-	161	+ Drop-dead looks, brilliant chassis, desirability - Engine lacks top-end fight	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Coupe 3.0 V6 380PS	211 D	'14-'15	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1584kg	241	5.5	-	-	171	+ Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrappy on the limit	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	227 D	'14-'15	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1730kg	318	4.1	3.5	8.1	186	+ Better than the rear-drive R in the wet - Less involving in the dry	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type SVR Coupe	224 D	'14-'15	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1705kg	338	3.7	-	-	200	+ A marginally better drive than the AWD R - Not by enough to justify the extra outlay	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type R Coupe (RWD)	218 F	'14-'17	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.2	-	-	186	+ Looks, presence, performance, soundtrack - Bumpy and boisterous	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR	168 F	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1753kg	292	4.8	-	-	155	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR-S	168 F	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1753kg	314	4.4	-	-	186	+ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe	★★★★☆
Lexus RC 200t F Sport	225 F	'13-'14	4/1998	242/5800	258/1650	1675kg	147	7.5	-	-	143	+ Fluid ride - Lacks body control and outright grip	★★★★☆
Lexus RC F	226 F	'16-'17	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.5	-	-	168	+ Great looks, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting	★★★★☆
Lexus LC 500h	241 D	'16-'17	6/3456	354	n/a	1985kg	181	5.0	-	-	168	+ Excellent comfort and refinement; fine chassis - Hybrid system hurts the fun factor	★★★★☆
Lexus LC 500	231 D	'16-'17	8/4969	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	247	4.7	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis for a GT car - Numb steering, messy ergonomics	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Sport 350	221 F	'15-'16	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	170	+ Further honed Exige, with vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Sport 380	231 F	'15-'16	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1110kg	343	3.7	-	-	178	+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Cup 380	240 D	'15-'16	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1105kg	345	3.6	-	-	175	+ An absolute riot; feels worth the high price tag - Limited build numbers	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige S (V6)	209 F	'12-'15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	-	170	+ Breath-taking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige S (S2)	105 F	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.3	-	-	148	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 F	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	-	136	+ Looks and goes like an Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement	★★★★☆
Lotus Evora 400	216 F	'12-'13	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.2	-	-	186	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing	★★★★☆
Lotus Evora Sport 410	230 F	'13-'14	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1325kg	314	4.2	-	-	190	+ Even lighter and sharper Evora - Engine and gearbox behind the best at this price	★★★★☆
Lotus Evora	138 F	'09-'15	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.1	5.6	13.6	162	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 Car of the Year - The Evora S	★★★★☆
Lotus Evora S	168 F	'10-'15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.8	-	-	172	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spurs with the Porsche 911	★★★★☆
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 F	'13-'14	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	-	186	+ A real sense of occasion to drive; wonderful engine - Rather long in the tooth	★★★★☆
Maserati GranTurismo MC	239 D	'14-'15	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1873kg	246	4.7	-	-	187	+ As above but with knobs on - Those knobs don't make it feel any younger	★★★★☆
Maserati GranTurismo	114 F	'07-'17	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.2	5.5	12.7	177</		

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Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe (W204)	162 F	71-74	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.5	4.4	10.3	155	+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series (W204)	171 F	12-13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	-	186	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy; not as fiery as Black Series cars of old
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series	106 F	07-09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	-	186	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party
Mercedes-Benz E400 4Matic Coupe	234 D	£50,775	6/2996	328/5200	354/1600	1770kg	188	5.3	-	-	155	+ Good looks, classy cabin, relaxed performance - Not much here in the way of real thrills
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe	205 D	£130,680	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.2	-	-	155	+ Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	209 D	£188,550	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	2110kg	299	4.1	-	-	186	+ Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63!
Mercedes-AMG GT	227 D	£99,960	8/3982	469/6000	465/1700	1540kg	309	4.0	-	-	189	+ A true sports coupe that also does luxury - Takes time to reveal its talents
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 F	£113,260	8/3982	515/6250	494/1800	1570kg	333	3.8	-	-	193	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker
Mercedes-AMG GT C	241 D	£129,260	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1625kg	343	3.7	-	-	196	+ As good at being a GT as it is a sports coupe - Difficult to drive fast and smoothly
Nissan 370Z	204 F	£29,180	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219	5.3	-	-	155	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer
Nissan 370Z Nismo	209 F	£39,375	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	-	155	+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle
Nissan 350Z	107 F	03-09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.6	5.5	13.0	155	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Muscle-car vibe not for everyone
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	242 F	£82,525	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1752kg	326	2.7	-	-	196	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	£93,875	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	327	2.7	-	-	196	+ GT-R regains its sharpness - Getting pricey these days
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2017MY)	232 F	£150,875	6/3799	592/6800	481/3600	1725kg	349	2.7	-	-	196	+ Incredibly focused - Still too firm to be at its best on UK roads
Nissan GT-R (2012MY-2016MY)	238 F	12-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.7	3.2	7.5	196	+ Quicker and better than before - Stopping your Porsche-owning friends calling it a Datsun
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2016MY)	223 F	15-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.7	3.4	7.7	196	+ Recreates much of the Nismo's ability, without the rock-hard ride - Interior feels dated
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2014MY)	205 F	14-16	6/3799	592/6800	481/3200	1720kg	350	2.6	-	-	196	+ Manages to make regular GT-R feel imprecise - Compromised by super-firm suspension
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 F	10-12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	-	194	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 F	08-10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	-	193	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year - You won't see 20mpg often
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	241 F	99-02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.8	4.7	12.5	165	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 F	97-99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	4.9	5.4	14.3	155	+ Early proof that Japanese high-tech could work (superbly) - Limited supply
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 F	09-15	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.6	7.3	18.1	147	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting
Peugeot RCZ R	209 F	14-15	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	-	155	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel
Porsche 718 Cayman	229 D	£42,897	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis remains a dream - Sounds like a Toyota GT86
Porsche 718 Cayman S	230 F	£51,853	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	4.4	-	177	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Bring earplugs
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 F	13-16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	5.0	4.5	10.5	175	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm...
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	219 F	14-16	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	253	4.9	-	-	177	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	221 F	15-16	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288	4.4	-	-	183	+evo Car of the Year 2015 (even though the 991 GT3 RS was there!) - Second-hand prices
Porsche Cayman S (987)	231 F	06-13	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	-	172	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too
Porsche Cayman R (987)	158 F	11-13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	5.0	-	-	175	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2)	218 F	£77,891	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1430kg	259	4.6	-	-	183	+ Forced induction hasn't ruined the Carrera - Purists won't be happy
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2)	217 F	£87,335	6/2981	414/6500	369/1700	1440kg	292	4.3	-	-	191	+ Blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (991.2)	238 F	£95,795	6/2981	444/6500	406/2150	1450kg	311	4.1	-	-	193	+ In rear-drive coupe format, it's everything a 911 should be - Not all GTs are rear-drive coupes
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1)	201 F	12-15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	283	4.5	4.3	9.5	188	+ A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991.1)	179 F	13-15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.5	-	-	185	+ More satisfying than rear-drive 991.1 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991.1)	208 D	15	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293	4.4	-	-	189	+ The highlight of the 991.1 Carrera lineup - Pricey for a Carrera
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 F	08-11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	-	188	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 F	04-08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	-	-	182	+evo Car of the Year 2004 - Tech overload?
Porsche 911 Carrera (996, 3.4)	008 F	98-01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	231	5.2	-	-	174	+evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough
Radical RCX Turbo 500R	227 D	16	6/3496	600/6700	465/4200	1070kg*	561	2.8	-	-	185	+ Immense accessible performance - Fit, finish and detailing lack finesse
Radical RCX Turbo 500	209 D	15	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1000kg*	490	2.6	-	-	185	+ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	£240,768	12/6592	624/6500	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	-	155	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down
Subaru BRZ	204 F	£22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	-	140	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised
Toyota GT86	234 F	£26,410	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	161	7.6	6.9	16.5	140	+ More fun than its Subaru BRZ cousin - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality
Toyota MR2 (Mk1)	237 F	84-89	4/1587	122/6600	105/5000	977kg	127	8.2	-	-	124	+ Mid-engined fun comes no more affordable - Finding a good one will take time
TVR Sagaris	097 F	05-07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	-	185	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 F	05-07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1000kg	369	4.0	-	-	185	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 F	98-04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	4.4	5.0	11.4	160+	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI / GTS	155 F	£26,050	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158	6.5	-	-	153	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair
VW Scirocco R	200 D	£30,690	4/1984	276/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187	5.7	-	-	155	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some

## SUPERCARS



## OUR CHOICE

**McLaren 720S.** The looks take a little getting used to, but there's no arguing with the driving experience, which blends scalpel-sharp precision with mind-boggling pace and suspension that works with the road to make it all useable. And it's faster than a P1 on track, too. An electrifying experience.



## BEST OF THE REST

The **Ferrari 488 GTB** is clearly the work of a team at the top of its game, while the **Lamborghini Huracán Performante** (left) makes an appealing alternative. The **Audi R8 V10** remains a corking entry-level supercar, and the latest **Porsche 911 GT3** is sublime to drive - if you're lucky enough to be able to get your hands on one...

Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 F	£192,995	12/5935	568/6650	465/5500	1739kg	332	3.8	-	-	201	+ Much better than the DBS it succeeds, especially in 2015MY form - It's no Ferrari F12	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2)	235 F	£199,950	12/5935	595/7000	465/5500	1739kg	348	3.5	3.9	8.3	201	+ Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 F	05-07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.8	4.9	10.1	200	+ Vanquish joins the supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin One-77	179 F	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	234 F	£123,330	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1595kg	340	3.5	-	-	198	+ All the R8 you really need - Some may hanker after a manual gearbox	★★★★★
Audi R8 Spyder V10	239 F	£132,020	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1720kg	315	3.6	3.2	7.2	197	+ Open top even better for enjoying that V10 - Being mistaken for a posier, cramped seating	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	229 F	£138,330	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1555kg	393	3.2	-	-	205	+ 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	4.1	3.9	8.4	194	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	190 F	13-15	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351	3.8	-	-	198	+ 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 F	15	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1595kg	358	3.4	-	-	198	+ More of everything that makes the R8 great - S-tronic transmission not perfect	★★★★★
BMW M1	110 F	78-81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.9	-	-	161	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days	★★★★★
Bugatti Chiron	235 F	c£2.5m	16/7993	1479/6700	1180/2000	1995kg	753	2.5	-	-	261	+ Backs up the numbers with feel and emotion - Limited top speed(!)	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	05-11	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1888kg	531	2.5	2.8	5.8	253	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 F	09-15	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1990kg	504	2.7	-	-	253	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans roof - Ridiculous brolly/roof thing	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport	151 F	10-11	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	-	258	+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse	185 F	11-15	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1990kg	604	2.6	-	-	255	+ Was the world's fastest convertible - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	91-95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1618kg	347	3.6	-	-	213	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 F	09-13	8/6162	638/6500	640/3800	1528kg	424	3.4	3.8	7.6	205	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 GTB	228 F	£183,984	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1475kg	455	3.0	-	-	205+	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 Spider	216 D	£204,411	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1525kg	440	3.0	-	-	203+	+ All the usual 488 thrills, but with the wind in your hair - See left	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	221 F	09-15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.4	3.2	6.8	202+	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	203 F	14-15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	-	202+	+evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing	★★★★★



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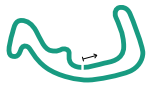




MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB-FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (s/0-100)	0-50MPH (s/0-50)	0-100MPH (s/0-100)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Ferrari F430	163 F	04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	-	196+	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 F	07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.6	3.5	7.7	198	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F	99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	-	-	183+	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	242 F	03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	-	186	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer - Automated single-clutch 'box dates it	★★★★★
Ferrari F355 Berlinetta	231 F	94-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg*	281	4.7	-	-	183	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?	★★★★★
Ferrari 812 Superfast	238 F	E253,004	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1630kg	492	2.9	-	-	211	+ Over-delivers on your expectations - Not a classic beauty	★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	190 F	12-'17	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	-	211+	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste	★★★★★
Ferrari F12tdf	230 F	E340,051	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	514	2.9	-	-	211+	+ Alarming fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 F	06-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1690kg	368	3.7	3.5	7.4	205	+evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 F	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 F	02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1688kg	298	3.7	4.2	9.6	205+	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 F	96-'02	12/5474	478/7000	420/5000	1690kg	287	4.4	-	-	199	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari GT4C Lusso	225 D	E230,430	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	360	3.4	-	-	208	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 F	11-'15	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	-	208	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti	090 F	04-'11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1875kg	289	4.0	4.3	9.8	199	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	★★★★★
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 F	13-'15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1574kg	613	3.0	-	-	217+	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	203 F	02-'04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485	3.7	3.5	6.7	217+	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	186 F	95-'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 F	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	241 F	E450,000	6/3497	647/6250	550/5900	1385kg*	475	2.8	-	-	216	+ Everything it does on track - Too many of the things it does on the road	★★★★★
Ford GT	200 F	04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.9	-	-	205	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - Don't scalp yourself getting in	★★★★★
Hennessy Venom GT	180 F	11-'17	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	233 F	E144,765	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	328	2.9	3.0	6.9	191	+ Blisteringly quick and brilliantly engineered - Limited range on a full tank	★★★★★
Honda NSX (NA2)	188 F	97-'05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.7	-	-	168	+ The useable supercar - 276bhp sounds a bit weedy today	★★★★★
Honda NSX-R (NA2)	100 F	02-'03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	-	168	+evo Car of the Year 2002 - Hard to find in the UK	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	157 F	92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	-	213	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - until McLaren built the F1	★★★★★
Koenigsegg One:1	202 F	E252,0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	-	273	+ One of the most powerful cars we've tested - It's sold out. We couldn't afford one anyway	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 F	11-'14	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 CCXR Edition	118 F	08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg*	797	2.9	-	-	250+	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spiky power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán RWD	229 F	E155,400	10/5204	572/8000	397/6500	1389kg*	385	3.4	-	-	199	+ More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Feels like there's more to come	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán	209 D	E186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1422kg*	430	3.2	-	-	201+	+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Performante	242 F	E215,000	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1382kg*	464	2.9	-	-	201+	+ The realisation of the Huracán's ever elusive potential - Kitchen-worktop carbonfibre	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	08-'13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg*	398	3.7	-	-	202	+ Still a missile from A to B - Feels a little dated next to some rivals	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 Balboni	138 F	09-'10	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg*	399	3.9	-	-	199	+ Mad, rear-wheel-drive Lambo - Limited numbers	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	152 F	10-'13	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg*	426	3.4	3.5	-	202	+ Less weight and more power than original Superleggera - LP560-4 runs it very close	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP570-4	094 F	03-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1430kg*	364	4.0	4.3	9.4	196	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104 F	07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg*	373	3.8	-	-	196	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador	194 F	E260,040	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg*	445	2.9	-	-	217	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Can feel a little clumsy	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador S	240 F	E271,146	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1575kg*	471	2.9	-	-	217	+ A more agile, more connected Aventador - Synthetic steering	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador SV	216 F	E321,723	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg*	493	2.8	-	-	217+	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 F	06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	467/6000	1665kg*	385	3.8	-	-	211	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200 F	09-'11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg*	429	3.3	3.2	7.3	212	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	01-'06	12/6192	572/7500	479/5400	1650kg*	351	4.0	-	-	206	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo VT 6.0	019 F	00-'02	12/5992	543/7100	457/5500	1625kg*	343	3.9	-	-	208	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 F	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 F	04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	-	205	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren 540C	234 F	E126,000	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg*	413	3.5	-	-	199	+ An excellent junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive	★★★★★
McLaren 570S	229 F	E145,305	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1440kg*	397	3.2	-	-	204	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar!	★★★★★
McLaren 570S Track Pack	235 D	E159,750	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1415kg	404	3.2	-	-	204	+ Feels like a 675LT that's been dialled down a couple of notches - Engine response lacks edge	★★★★★
McLaren 570S Spider	239 F	E164,750	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1498kg	381	3.2	-	-	204	+ Even more fun and engagement than hard-top 570S - Industrial engine note	★★★★★
McLaren 570GT	228 F	E154,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1495kg	382	3.4	-	-	204	+ Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving	★★★★★
McLaren 720S	242 F	E188,020	8/3994	710/7250	568/5500	1283kg*	562	2.9	2.9	5.6	212	+ Astonishingly, effortlessly fast - Favours precision over emotion	★★★★★
McLaren 650S	196 F	14-'17	8/3799	647/7250	500/6000	1428kg	456	3.0	-	-	207	+ Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Which all comes at a price	★★★★★
McLaren 675LT	228 F	15-'17	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	510	2.9	-	-	205	+ Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag	★★★★★
McLaren 675LT Spider	222 D	16-'17	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1368kg	495	2.9	-	-	203	+ Spectacularly fast; involving, too - Might mess up your hair	★★★★★
McLaren 12C	228 F	11-'14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.3	-	-	207	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating	★★★★★
McLaren P1	228 F	13-'15	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1490kg	616	2.8	-	-	217	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track	★★★★★
McLaren F1	228 F	94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1138kg	560	3.2	-	-	240	+ The most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT R	236 F	E143,260	8/3982	571/6250	516/1900	1555kg*	377	3.6	3.3	7.1	198	+ Fun and blisteringly fast; a true rival for the 911 GT3 - A touch showy, perhaps	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 F	10-'15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	3.9	4.1	8.4	197	+ Great engine and chassis (gulling doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	204 F	13-'15	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	-	196	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	228 F	03-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.8	-	-	208	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	★★★★★
Noble M600	186 F	E200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg*	551	3.5	3.8	7.7	225	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	185 F	E31m	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg*	542	3.3	-	-	224	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 F	E15m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg*	630	3.3	-	-	217+	+ One of the most extreme Zondas ever - One of the last Zondas ever (probably)	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda S 7.3	096 F	02-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1280kg*	441	3.7	-	-	220	+evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	186 F	05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg*	497	3.6	-	-	214+	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	09-'10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1210kg*	562	3.4	-	-	217+	+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifications often	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	242 F	E111,802	6/3996	493/8250	339/6000	1413kg	355	3.9	-	-	198	+ Almost impossible to criticise - Not the easiest car to place an order for	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.1)	206 F	16-'16	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333	3.5	-	-	196	+evo Car of the Year 2013 - PDK only	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	223 F	15-'16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353	3.3	3.0	7.1	193	+ Sensationally good to drive - The Cayman GT4 is even better	★★★★★
Porsche 911 R (991.1)	229 F	16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1370kg	366	3.8	-	-	200	+evo Car of the Year 2016 - Limited availability	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 F	09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.1	4.2	9.2	194	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	200 F	10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	-	193	+ We named it our favourite car from the first 200 issues of evo - For people like us, nothing	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187 F	11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	-	193	+evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride; crazy used prices	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2)	204 F	10-'13	6/3600	611/6500	516/2250	1370kg*	453	3.5	-	-	205	+ More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 F	07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	4.3	9.4	192	+ Runner-up at evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 F	07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	-	193	+evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the already brilliant GT3	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	221 F	03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	4.5	4.3	9.2	190	+evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis a bit too track-focused for some roads	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 F	04-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1360kg	280	4.4	-	-	190	+ An even more focused version of the superb GT3 - Limited supply	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (996.2)	072 F	04-'06	6/3600	475/5700	472/3500	1420kg	338	4.0	-	-	198	+ Revisions made it even more of a star than the 456bhp 996.1 GT2 - Care still required	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	242 F	99-'01	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.8	4.5	10.3			

## TRACK TIMES

+ = new this month. Red denotes the car is the fastest in its class on that track



### ANGLESEY COASTAL CIRCUIT

LENGTH 1.55 miles

Car	Lap time	issue no.	YouTube
BAC Mono 2.5 (fastest sports car)	1:07.7	229	Yes
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
McLaren 720S	1:11.5	242	Yes
Porsche 918 Spyder	1:12.4	200	Yes
McLaren P1	1:12.6	200	Yes
Ferrari 488 GTB	1:12.8	228	Yes
McLaren 675LT	1:12.8	228	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	1:13.4	236	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo S (991.1)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Ferrari 458 Speciale	1:14.2	198	Yes
McLaren 570S	1:14.5	-	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo (991.1)	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 (991.1)	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 R8 V8 (Mk1)	1:20.1	201	-
BMW M135i	1:20.4	212	-
Nissan 370Z Nismo	1:20.5	209	-



### BEDFORD AUTODROME WEST CIRCUIT

LENGTH 1.8 miles (reconfigured May 2015; earlier times not comparable)

BMW M4 Competition Package (F82, 2017MY) (fastest coupe)	1:23.4	240	-
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio (fastest saloon)	1:23.6	237	-
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S (fastest hot hatch)	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	-
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80, 2016MY)	1:24.7	237	-
Audi RS5 (F5)	1:25.0	240	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	1:25.1	227	-
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe (W205)	1:25.6	240	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	1:26.2	241	-
Ford Focus RS (Mk3, on standard tyres)	1:26.9	241	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 300	1:27.8	241	-
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	1:29.5	213	-
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4) (fastest sports car)	1:29.8	-	Yes
Toyota GT86 (fastest coupe)	1:29.9	-	Yes



### BLYTON PARK OUTER CIRCUIT

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)	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)	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
Vuhti 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 M235i	1:08.7	-	Yes
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	1:08.7	181	-
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:08.9	181	-
VW Golf GTI Performance Pack (Mk7)	1:10.3	192	-
Toyota GT86	1:12.8	177	-

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Official fuel consumption for the New SEAT Leon Cupra R 2.0 TSI 310PS in mpg (litres per 100km): urban 28.5 (9.9), extra-urban 48.7 (5.8); combined 38.7 (7.3). CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 170g/km. Standard EU Test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results.