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246

2018 #4

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Models shown are a 2008 SUV Allure 1.2L PureTech 110 S & S, 3008 SUV Allure 1.2L PureTech 130 S & S with optional LED headlights, optional Grip Control®, optional Black Diamond Roof and optional Roof Bars. All-new 5008 SUV in the Carbuyer 2018 awards and the all-new 5008 SUV won Best Large SUV in the What Car? Car of the Year 2018 awards. Information correct at time of going to print.



PEUGEOT

47.1 – 65.7 (6.0 – 4.3), Extra Urban 65.7 – 85.6 (4.3 – 3.3), Combined 57.6 – 76.3 (4.9 – 3.7) and CO₂ 114 – 96 (g/km). For the 3008 SUV Range 5008 SUV Range are: Urban 36.2 – 62.8 (7.8 – 4.5), Extra Urban 53.3 – 72.4 (5.3 – 3.9), Combined 46.3 – 68.9 (6.1 – 4.1) and CO₂ 140 – 106 actual on-the-road driving conditions.

Allure 1.2L PureTech 130 S & S with optional Black Diamond Roof and optional Grip Control.* Award logos relate to the following awards: 2008 SUV won Best Small SUV in the Driver Power 2017 New Car Survey, 3008 SUV won Best SUV

M U S T A N G

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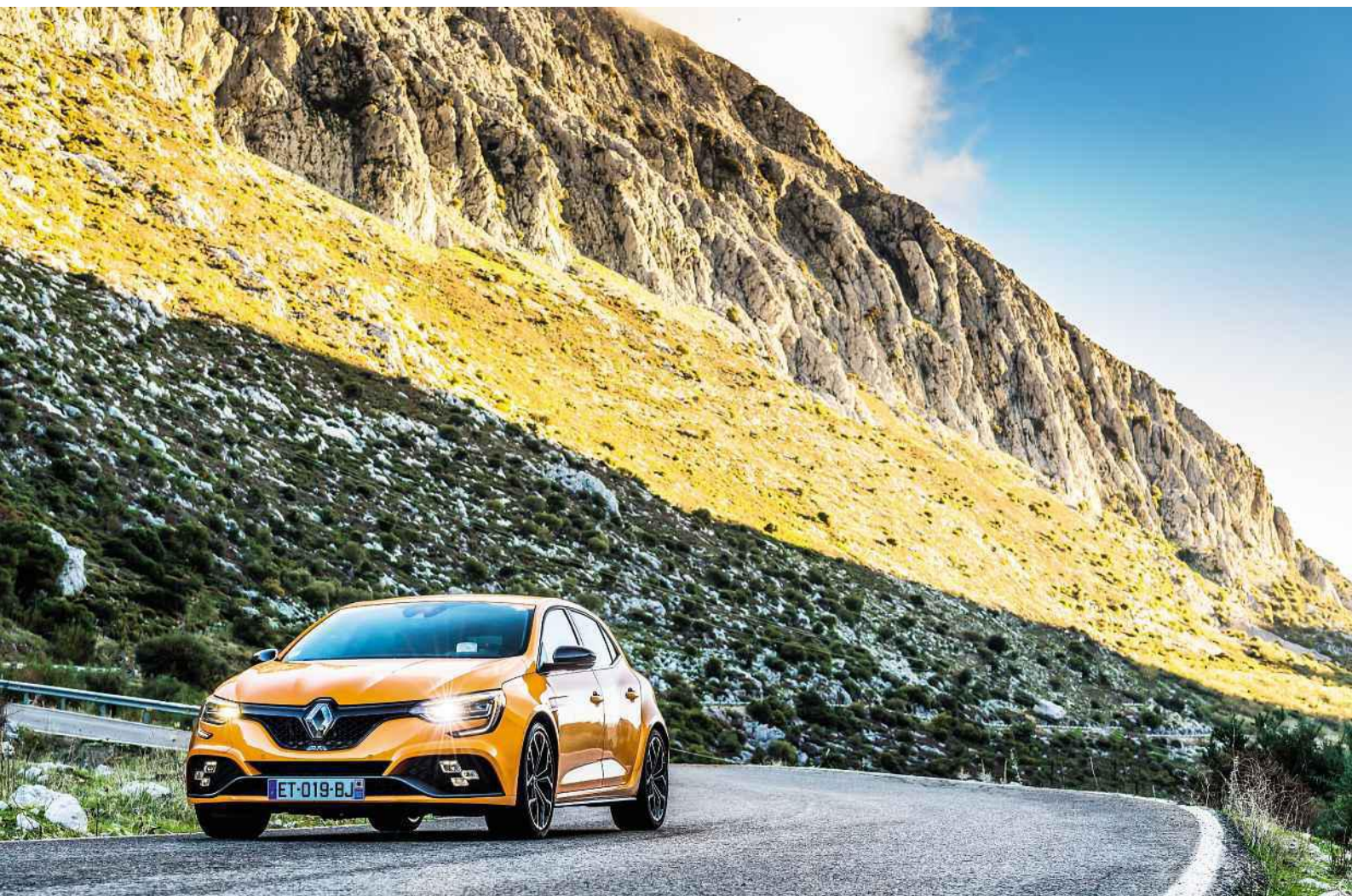
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Porsche 911 Turbo / Turbo S (991.2)

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IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT

Bedford Autodrome, Peter Allen,
Rob Gould



Ed speak

MY FIRST MEMORY OF A FOUR-

wheel-drive performance car is of a Hannu Mikkola-driven Audi Quattro breaking up the

monotony of *Grandstand's* horseracing coverage. The seven-year-old me didn't really understand how this bulky coupe could get the better of the wild Ford Escort RS1800 and the ace looking Opel Ascona 400.

But by the end of the Swedish round of the 1981 World Rally Championship season Mikkola had claimed the Quattro's first WRC victory, and the rest, as they say, is history (and a day lost 'researching' this topic on YouTube).

When it came to performance road cars and four-wheel drive, Porsche was an early adopter, with the 959 in 1987, the 964-generation 911 Carrera 4 in '89, and the 993-gen 911 Turbo in '95. Both Ford and Renault offered four-wheel-drive powertrains, too, on their Sapphire Cosworth and 21 Turbo respectively.

By the time Lamborghini added another pair of driveshafts to the Diablo a little over a decade after Mikkola's success, four-wheel drive was no longer a niche, although two-wheel drive was still considered the purer choice. An argument that still stands today – but only just.

The widespread adoption of turbocharged engines and the torque they deliver is necessitating that more and more performance cars are equipped with four-wheel-drive transmissions. Of the six cars featured in this month's 4WD megatest, we can think of only one that would work better as a two-wheel-drive car (the mid-engined, naturally aspirated Aventador S).

Because, while the idea of a rear-wheel-drive, 600bhp AMG saloon car sounds appealing, you try deploying 627lb ft of torque through rear wheels alone while still making forward progress.

The question now is how long before two-wheel-drive performance cars become the niche?

Not for a long time, I hope.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor @stuartg917



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PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS • DANY BAHAR • NEW METAL • 20 YEARS OF EVO

briefing

WEIGHT WATCHERS



Why the new fuel economy
and emissions test could
lead to lighter, naturally
aspirated performance cars

by JOHN BARKER





“So why can a car that arrives for test weigh-in at 50kg or more in excess of what its maker claims? It doesn’t add up”

WE LIKE WEIGHING CARS here at **evo**. We have a set of calibrated scales that allows us to measure the corner weights to an accuracy of a few kilograms, so, as with performance and economy figures, we can find any significant variance from what a car maker claims. We care about weight because it influences how a car drives, affects all dynamics – acceleration, braking and cornering. It also affects fuel economy and emissions, and that’s about to become much more important for new cars.

So why can a car that arrives for test weigh-in at 50kg or more in excess of what its maker claims? The **evo** Supertest in issue 240 featured the Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe, which has a quoted

kerb weight of 1725kg. That made it the heaviest car present by some margin, but on our scales the test car came in at 1847kg. Optionally, it had a panoramic glass sunroof (circa +15kg) and Burmester stereo upgrade (circa +10kg), but also had the optional carbon-ceramic brakes (circa -20kg). It doesn’t add up.

So why can variances occur? Some car makers have a ‘trim level zero’ that lacks heavy features such as air conditioning and electric seats, but which can’t be requested. Or the kerb weight assumes the fitment of expensive options such as special alloy wheels, carbon brakes, bonnet, roof, etc, or the manual gearbox that has a mere five per cent take-up rate.

Change is coming, though, for car makers and car buyers, with weight

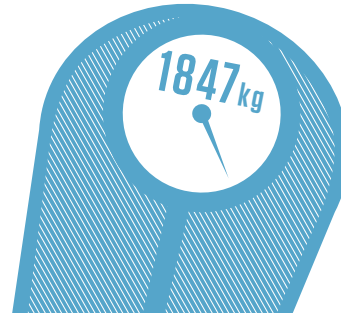
coming under increasing scrutiny. The current fuel consumption and emissions test that car makers self-certify against – the NEDC (New European Driving Cycle) – is about to be replaced. The NEDC was designed in the 1980s and does not reflect fuel economy figures and emissions in real-world use. Its replacement, WLTP (Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicle Test Procedure), has been designed to be more representative; it’s a 30-minute test (ten minutes longer) based on real-world driving patterns, and subsequently includes more speed phases and a higher average and top speed.

In the NEDC test, models were classified within weight bands, and a single model with the lowest kerb weight and lowest rolling resistance would take the test.

MERCEDES-AMG C63 S COUPE OFFICIAL WEIGHT

1725kg

EVO MEASURED WEIGHT



Left: weight of AMG C63 S on our scales came in considerably heavier than that quoted by Mercedes. **Below:** approximate weight implications of common options

PANORAMIC SUNROOF



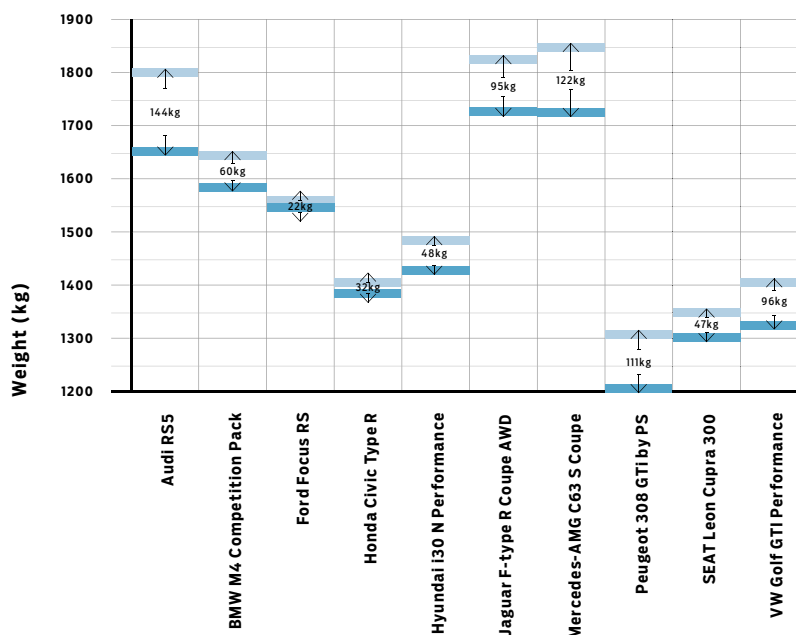
STEREO UPGRADE



CARBON-CERAMIC BRAKES



WEIGHTS – CLAIMS v REALITY



— evo tested weight
— Manufacturer's claimed weight

↑
100kg
↓
Difference



WHAT IS WLTP AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

LABORATORY TESTS FOR PASSENGER CARS MEASURE...

FUEL CONSUMPTION



Measured in miles per gallon or litres per 100km

CO2 EMISSIONS



Which are directly related to fuel consumption

POLLUTANT EMISSIONS



Includes NOx, particulates, etc

ENERGY CONSUMPTION



Of alternative powertrains, including electric vehicles



NEDC

New European Driving Cycle

Designed in the 1980s
Based on theoretical driving
Has become outdated

OLD TEST

NEW TEST



WLTP

Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicle Test Procedure

Coming fully into force in 2018
Based on real driving data
Better matches on-road performance

SOURCE WLTPFACTS.EU

Thus there was no incentive to lower the actual weight of an example sitting in the middle of the band. In WLTP, both the lightest (most economical) and heaviest (least economical) versions are tested. WLTP will also factor in the effect of options that can be specified and produce figures for individual examples. Currently, there is a lot of activity at rolling roads around the world as car makers measure their cars to the new standard and also quantify the impact of options such as wider wheels and tyres.

What will be the effects of WLTP? Claimed fuel economy figures for all cars will drop, and CO2 emissions will rise. Currently, we are in a transition period where figures for new cars can be found for both NEDC and WLTP, but from September this year all new cars sold will have to have a WLTP rating. An equivalent NEDC CO2 rating can still be used for calculating new-car tax but, according to

“Buyers who in the past might have splashed any left-over budget on wider wheels and tyres might think again”

the VCA (Vehicle Certification Agency), ‘at some point’ only the WLTP rating will be used. If at this unspecified point the UK government CO2 tax bands haven’t changed to reflect this, new-car buyers will be paying more tax, even though the car’s emissions have not changed.

There may be more tax to be paid because of options chosen too, as their effect on CO2 emissions will be included

in that car’s rating. Buyers who in the past might have splashed any left-over budget on wider wheels and tyres might think again because they’re a double-whammy, increasing rolling resistance and aerodynamic drag. Options with a neutral or beneficial CO2 effect might become more popular – low-rolling-resistance tyres and aero kits. Remember the Polo BlueMotion?

Perhaps the new test will also produce more realistic economy numbers for turbocharged engines. Currently, they look good in the NEDC test because they can be set up to spend very little of the test on boost. Maybe very efficient, naturally aspirated engines will see a revival, which would be good for enthusiasts because efficiency means more power as well as economy. There is a greater incentive to make cars lighter, too, and as mentioned earlier, that’s good for overall dynamics and, so, good for us enthusiasts.

SO, WHAT DOES 'KERB WEIGHT' MEAN ANYWAY?

LET'S TAKE AS AN EXAMPLE THE BMW Z4 M Coupe of 2006-2009. Conceivably, the quoted weight of the little coupe could vary by as much as 150kg depending on which standard it is measured against.

The kerb weight that we like to quote here at **evo** is the the DIN figure – that's Deutsches Institut für Normung, or German Institute for Standardisation. This is the weight of the car with all the fluids necessary for operation, including a 90 per cent full tank of fuel. For the Z4 M Coupe this is 1420kg.

BMW also quotes an EU kerb weight (sometimes called EEC kerb weight) of 1495kg. This is the DIN figure plus an extra 75kg for 'driver and luggage', and is the weight declared for emissions testing.

There is also a 'dry weight', which has no standard and is open to a number of

interpretations. The most straightforward is the car with an empty fuel tank (as sometimes quoted by Lotus), but there is also a 'shipping' dry weight, historically used by some race car manufacturers and Italian sports car makers. This means no fluids whatsoever – no oil in the engine/gearbox/differential, no coolant, no air con refrigerant, no battery acid – and also no toolkit, spare wheel, handbook, etc.

Quoting a dry weight can therefore make a car's weight, and by extension its power-to-weight figure, appear far more favourable than those of rival cars using DIN or EU figures. This is why we mark dry weights in the Knowledge with an asterisk.

A separate issue is Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW). This is the maximum the vehicle can weigh on the road when loaded with passengers and cargo.

SAME CAR, DIFFERENT WEIGHTS

EU kerb weight	1495kg
DIN kerb weight	1420kg
Dry kerb weight	1379kg
Dry shipping weight	1340kg*

*estimate



Lean, green thrilling machine

Porsche's GT2 RS too wild and the GT3 too mild for you? Try the new GT3 RS

SPECIFICATION

Engine	Flat-six, 3996cc
Power	513bhp @ 8450rpm
Torque	346lb ft
Weight	1400kg (est)
Power-to-weight	372bhp/ton (est)
0-62mph	3.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	194mph (claimed)
Basic price	£141,346
On sale	Summer 2018

1 ENGINE & GEARBOX

The GT3 RS's naturally aspirated 4-litre flat-six is carried over from the previous-generation car (and the current GT3), with power increasing by 20bhp to 513bhp at 8450rpm (200rpm higher than its predecessor) and torque rising by 7lb ft to 346lb ft. There's a new titanium exhaust with 91mm diameter pipes, a revised intake system and a new engine management system that account for the slightest of gains in the sprints (at 3.2 seconds it's a tenth quicker than the old car to 62mph) but will have a bigger impact on the car's as-yet-undisclosed Nürburgring lap time.

Those hoping for the GT3's manual gearbox option will be disappointed to hear the RS will only be available with a seven-speed PDK 'box. The unit is bespoke to this RS, with Porsche going to such lengths because the loads put through the naturally aspirated RS compared with the turbocharged GT2 RS are very different. The shifts are quicker and the throttle response is also improved.

The limited-slip differential is an electronically controlled, torque-vectoring item and there's also rear-wheel steering and dynamic engine mounts as standard.

2 CHASSIS

Underpinning the new GT3 RS are many of the suspension components developed for the GT2 RS. The adaptive PASM dampers have been recalibrated specifically for this flavour of RS, while the spring and damper rates sit between those of the GT3 and GT2 RS, the latter having twice the spring rate of the outgoing GT3 RS. All but the rear-steering joints are rose-jointed; the former have been further modified to improve agility, with comfort sacrificed for increased tactility and precision over a regular GT3.

Running a 265/35 R20 tyre on the front and a 325/30 R21 on the rear, the RS's wheel and tyre sizes are identical to those of a GT2 RS, but the rear tyre's compound is specific to the GT3 RS. Carbon-ceramic brakes are optional and the forged wheels are each 100g lighter than those on the previous GT3 RS.



Above: Lizard Green is likely to be a signature colour for the 991.2 GT3 RS; side decals, like the colour, hark back to the 997.1 GT3 RS

3 INTERIOR & OPTIONS



Carbon-shelled bucket seats? Check. Lightweight door cards, door pulls made from seat-belt webbing, and storage nets in the doors? Check. Alcantara steering wheel? Yes, that too. The no-cost Clubsport package adds a half roll-cage, fire extinguisher and a six-point harness. A Weissach Package will also be available and will add a carbonfibre front bonnet and anti-roll bar, a titanium half-cage and the GT2 RS magnesium wheels. However, high demand for the Weissach kit on the GT2 RS – 90 per cent of customers are spec'ing it – means those ticking the same box for their GT3 RS will have to wait a while longer for their car to be built. And the cost for the basic car, should you be granted a place in the order book? £141,346.

4 BODY

As with the previous GT3 RS and the current GT2 RS, this latest GT model leaves nothing in the pit garage when it comes to aerodynamic addenda. There's a pair of cooling ducts in the front bonnet, the front wings retain the slats cut into their top surface to allow turbulent air out of the wheelarches, and there are air intakes positioned ahead of the rear wheels. Vents in the rear bumper draw air through the rear wheel openings. The fixed rear wing is from the GT2 RS and is positioned higher than the previous GT3 RS's item, generating between seven and eight per cent more downforce but not at the expense of drag, which is said to be lower. Under the car is a new rear diffuser.

The GT2 RS's magnesium roof and thinner rear glass are used and the bumpers and wheelarches are lightweight polyurethane.



EVO COMMENT

Porsche's 911 GT3 RS has evolved into little more than a Cup car with two seats and the provision for satnav and Bluetooth in place of a circuit map graphic stuck to the steering wheel and a car-to-pit intercom system.

What has always blown us away after every

GT3 RS drive is how approachable it is and the scarcely believable thrills and excitement you can extract from it, whether you're Nick Tandy or a Nickelback groupie. Granted, to experience and enjoy its ultimate capabilities you need the skill set of the former and access

to a circuit rather than the B660, but even so, like its turbocharged big brother, the new GT3 RS is set to be one of the purest, most engaging and exciting cars of the year. That first drive in the early summer can't come soon enough.

What Dany did next

Be it a one-off design or a classic car re-imagined, ex-Lotus boss Bahar is determined to transform the art of coachbuilding

ALTHOUGH IT STARTED OUT AS a fairly typical car modification business, Ares Design has undergone a dramatic transformation in the past 18 months to become what its CEO, Dany Bahar, now proudly describes as a coachbuilder.

You know Bahar, of course, he who, after roles at Red Bull and then Ferrari, had a three-year stint at the helm of Group Lotus. It was here that he helped to mastermind the dramatic unveiling of five concept cars at the 2010 Paris motor show, as well as return the Lotus name to Formula 1. Bahar's acrimonious departure in 2012 was eventually settled out of court, but while he has been largely off the radar in the meantime, that's not to say life has been dull.

As much is confirmed as we arrive for the grand opening of Ares's new headquarters, set on an industrial estate on the northern edge of Modena, Italy. The 18,000-square-metre facility is where

Bahar's team will now design and build its cars. So far there have been a pair of two-door Bentley Mulsannes (the original customer wanted a modern interpretation of the Brooklands; his friend liked the idea so much he ordered one, too), the gargantuan Ares X-Raid off-roader, based on the Mercedes G-class (and a hit with clients in the Middle East), and more recently the Project Panther concept, a re-imagining of the De Tomaso Pantera based on the underpinnings of a Lamborghini Huracán.

Coachbuilding is nothing new, of course, and the idea of applying it to modern cars bears a similarity to Ferrari's exclusive Atelier programme. However, Bahar boasts that Ares can move at a faster pace than a car manufacturer, as

“I could have shown you our plan one year ago of what we are doing now. But we decided not to, we had time”

well as allow more freedom to meet a customer's requirements (within technical and safety constraints), and deliver it all at a significantly lower price.

'If you want to have your own car designed, a one-off, you're talking just under 1million euros [c£900,000],' explains Bahar. 'If you want your car to be one of 10 or 15 of a limited-run series it's 700,000 to 800,000 euros [c£615,000 to £700,000].' Customers can also order a classic car with modern underpinnings at around the £360,000 mark, with examples to date being an LS3-based conversion of a 1964 Corvette Stingray, and an extensively modified Porsche 964 Targa with engine, suspension and PDK gearbox taken from a modern-day 911, and a Panamera infotainment system.

Several examples of each of these approaches were unveiled at the opening in an event designed to showcase what the company has already achieved, rather than to outline what it wants to

do – a marked contrast with how Bahar approached the Lotus relaunch. Was this a deliberate move on his part? 'Absolutely. It was a personal decision of mine,' he says. 'I could have shown you our plan one year ago of what we are doing now. But we decided not to, we had time.'

That time has been put to good use, too; to date, Bahar says Ares has completed more than 200 cars, including 11 X-Raids, the two Bentleys, and a 991 'GT3' Targa with RS bodywork, centre-lock wheels and a 567bhp engine upgrade. There's also the small matter of the 53 Land Rover Defenders the company is converting with the help of Coventry-based JE MotorWorks for an unnamed British client.

The pièce de résistance, however, is Project Panther, which is now well into the build process and came about after a client wanted a modern-day equivalent of the Pantera to go alongside his original from the early '70s. This build-to-order approach is typical of how Ares tends to work, although the company does also undertake projects off its own back, such as a shooting brake version of the Tesla Model S that is currently in development.

Bahar hands a card to guests bearing the line 'creating a plan and then delivering it, against the odds, is extremely satisfying'. A suggestion, perhaps, that his strategy for Lotus wasn't as far-fetched as it might have seemed? 'I think the five-car plan would have worked,' he insists. 'Or if it wasn't five cars it would have been three. It doesn't matter whether it's three or five, I just think that the plan, however ambitious or aggressive, was still the right move. I don't know where Lotus will end up today. I still think its place is where we thought it should be, not where it is now.'

As to whether the successful emergence of Ares (Bahar says it is now profitable, and has another £20million worth of investment to increase the size of its site by almost 50 per cent in order to keep up with demand) will silence Bahar's critics, he is less concerned: 'I'm beyond that. We do it for us, for my partners, my shareholders and our clients.'

Ares Design's target is to make coachbuilding more accessible and more affordable than it's been in the past. On the evidence thus far, it might just be on to something.

by CHRIS KNAPMAN



Above: Ares boss Dany Bahar with the firm's 6.2-litre LS3 V8-engined '64 Corvette (also pictured far left). **Clockwise from left:** modified Land Rover Defenders, coupe Bentley Mulsannes and a modern-day Pantera concept are among the firm's other projects

A-class above

All-new luxury compact will take Mercedes' tech fight to its rivals

MERCEDES-BENZ WILL BRING new levels of technology to the family hatchback class when its new A-class (1) goes on sale in the spring. While the company has long dripped technology from its most advanced models down the range a generation or two behind, the latest version of Mercedes' compact luxury car is like an S-class in miniature, from its class-leading aerodynamics to semi-autonomous functions and a stunning new interior.

The exterior styling is an evolution of the old A-class's, albeit less cluttered and punctuated by sharper details. Its drag coefficient of 0.25 is impressive for a hatchback, and the slightly larger structure brings a longer wheelbase and more interior and luggage volume.

The cabin hosts the biggest changes, though, with a wide, flat instrument panel home to a pair of TFT displays and floating ahead of a smooth, wraparound dashboard, with no traditional instrument cowl. The cockpit is brighter than before thanks to thinner padding around the pillars, while various seat options allow customers to tailor the environment to their requirements – as does an optional 64-colour ambient lighting package.



3



1



Above: A-class's twin TFT displays oust traditional binnacle. **Right:** 25 new Jaguar D-types planned

Significant changes abound under the bonnet too, the most interesting being a new 1.4-litre four-pot engine co-developed with Renault. Turbocharged and utilising cylinder deactivation tech and a petrol particulate filter, it makes a sturdy 161bhp with 184lb ft of torque, delivered through either a six-speed manual or seven-speed DCT. A 221bhp 2-litre petrol and a 114bhp 1.5-litre diesel will also be available, and topping the range will be two AMG models – a replacement for the current A45 and a new, Audi S3-rivalling A35.

A tech-heavy spec list includes adaptive brakes that adjust for weight and axle load, attention assist, adaptive cruise control and a new-generation infotainment system, with touch and voice controls and intelligent learning.

All of that makes Jaguar's decision to build 25 new continuation D-types (2) look a bit old-hat, but no less appealing. The 25 hand-built cars will carry on from the 75 examples produced originally back in the 1950s, and also follow on from the nine continuation XKSS and six lightweight E-types built by Jaguar Classic over the past few years.

McLaren will make even fewer of its MSO X (3), a 570S-based special built by McLaren Special Operations for McLaren Newport Beach in California. Each of the ten cars will wear an F1 GTR-inspired



2



4

livery and feature aero components replicating those of the 570S GT4.

Croatian manufacturer Rimac has also revealed its latest supercar (4), the as-yet unnamed follow-up to the Concept One. Teaser shots make the shape difficult to discern, but **evo** will have taken a proper look by the time of the car's debut at the Geneva motor show in March. Its overall shape looks a little more conventional than the Concept One's, but its electric drivetrain is likely to be anything but.

Finally, a new brand will appear from SEAT this year. The Spanish firm is launching Cupra as a standalone marque, and will expand the number of models wearing the badge. A Cupra Ateca SUV will be the first offering, with a Leon and Ibiza to follow. The move comes on the back of strong sales for SEAT and a desire to make better use of the SEAT Sport engineering team.



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**RICHARD
MEADEN**
FOUNDING
EDITOR

This year *evo* celebrates its 20th birthday. To mark the occasion, in this series we're asking key members of the team to recall their most memorable *evo* moments

Tell us your earliest *evo* memory

My earliest memory predates *evo*. I was sitting on a bench on the Great Orme in Llandudno, chatting with Harry Metcalfe during the final *Performance Car* group test. By this time H had become part of the extended *PC* family, so I made sure he was with us for the last test. Of course, there may have been an ulterior motive...

What was the first car you drove for *evo*?

I honestly can't recall, but the first *evo*-related drive was probably in Harry's rather tired Golf GTI. I recall using it to 'liberate' our old magazine archive from the *PC* offices before the cleaners slung it in a skip. That venerable Golf also got us to and from the printers – handily based in Cornwall – for the first few issues. It was a true founding member of the team.

What was your first car launch for *evo*?

Maserati 3200 GT – the cover car of issue 001. It was something of a coup for a start-up magazine to get an invite. I know it put a few of the established titles' noses out of joint! We owe Ferrari/Maserati's then PR

manager, Tim Watson, an enormous debt of gratitude for putting his faith in us.

What's the most memorable *evo* test you have been part of?

For spectacle, 288 GTO v F40 v F50 v Enzo (issue 064). For fun, the 'Five Decades of Hot Hatches' test (issue 195). For never-to-be-repeated commitment between photo locations, the 'Extreme Sports' group test between S2 Exige, Noble M400, 996 GT3 RS and 360 Challenge Stradale (issue 068). Balls 'oot!

And your most memorable *evo* drive?

It's hard to select one. Motor racing adventures are right up there: my first time racing in the N24; competing at Pikes Peak; doing 229mph in a Skoda Octavia vRS at Bonneville Speed Week. All unforgettable. However, for me the heart of *evo* has always been extraordinary drives in fabulous road cars. Of these, retracing the Targa Florio course in a Mk1 996 GT3 for issue 028 is the one I would love to do again.

Tell us about the most disappointing car you've driven while at *evo*

Any Alfa Romeo introduced before the launch of the Giulia Quadrifoglio.

Your worst *evo* moment is...?

The lowest but also funniest-in-hindsight moment was one of Harry M's legendary

Below: Lotus Elise Sport 135 is Meaden's pick for his favourite car launched within *evo*'s lifetime

motivational speeches. We had just completed the third issue – our first *eCoty*. Spirits were high. Then H told us we were skint, issue 2 hadn't sold well and we'd be lucky to get to issue 4. He then wished us a Merry Christmas. We can laugh about it now...

My absolute worst *evo* moments seem to involve undergrowth. And John Barker. There was the time I crashed his *Evo* VI RS Sprint long-term into a hedge. Then I put his wedding car – a white Jaguar S-type V6 – into another hedge. On the night before his wedding. Awkward.

Your favourite *evo* story by a colleague?

Peter Tomalin's story about Dino Ferrari (*evo* 106) was truly fantastic. Thoughtful, original and beautifully written. However, I think my favourite was the late Russell Bulgin's short piece on 'evoness' (see issue 015 or 046). Having something with such personal significance explained better than you could explain it yourself – and by my absolute favourite motoring writer – was very special.

What's the one car you wish you had driven during the last 20 years?

I honestly can't think of one. I've been a bit spoilt over the years.

And finally, what's your favourite car launched in the last 20 years?

Any number of 911s (including a Singer) commend themselves, as does the Ferrari 458 Speciale. However, I think an S1 Elise Sport 135 is my pick.





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Fuel economy figures mpg: Urban 20.6, Extra Urban 35.3, Combined 27.9. CO₂ emissions 234 g/km.
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*Model featured is the Lotus Evora GT430 in Dark Grey Metallic, OTR cost is €115,125.00. Lotus reserves the right to modify prices, specifications and options without prior notice. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing and may not reflect real 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. Errors and omissions accepted. Imagery for illustration purposes only. Actual specifications may vary. Information relating to the designs and patents that are held by Group Lotus PLC are available by visiting www.lotuscars.com/legal-designs-and-patents or by writing to Group Lotus PLC, Potash Lane, Hethel, Norwich, Norfolk, NR14 8EZ, England.

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Alternative eCoty

I would like to present a slightly different viewpoint on this year's **evo** Car of the Year selections (issue 244):

1. Ugliest car of the year: Honda Civic Type R. From certain angles it looks worse than a Fiat Multipla!

2. Worst name of the year: Chiron [pictured above]. In Greek, 'chiron' actually means 'worst'.

3. The most useless option: the Peugeot 208 GTi's two-colour paint job. Rumour has it that next year the French firm will add a third colour to the scheme and rebrand from 'Peugeot' to 'Peacock'.

4. The mechanic's choice of the year: Alfa Romeo Giulia. So reliable that you will need a second car for everyday use...

5. Heavyweight of the year: Bentley Continental GT. At 2169kg, it has a mass 2.5 times that of an Elise!

Maybe you could consider adding these categories to your list for next year.

Keep up the good work!

George Tsapogas, Athens, Greece

Negative Nellies

Just read **evo** 245 and all the negative feedback on eCoty. It's all nonsense. It's much more useful, interesting and fair now. Please don't change it back.

Mark Warren

Back on top

So the old favourite finally toppled the Germans. I'm talking about the Veloce and Quadrifoglio Alfa Romeo Giulias both winning categories in eCoty.

One has to be older to remember when Alfas were last the best affordable sporting cars, the crossover point being the Alfa 75 and E30 3-series.

I can offer an owner's perspective after nine months of running a Giulia in Australia. I needed a workhorse for regular long regional drives and had already decided on a 3-series when I test-drove the Alfa. The way it drove was a revelation, as could be expected from a car developed by Ferrari engineers. This was the clincher for me. Some workhorse, then. To date, it has covered over 10,000 trouble-free, sense-of-occasion kilometres.

evo's reports are spot-on, so I won't add any more except to say that the car's talents are broad – whether doing long distances in comfort, tackling the twisties or crawling in city traffic. Sergio Marchionne should be applauded for making this happen.

Jacobus Pienaar, Adelaide, Australia

Alfa better

I finally did it. After owning a long list of German cars, I bought an Alfa Romeo. Specifically a Brera 3.2 Q4 [above].

Now before I get shot down, let me explain. I'd recently sold a Golf R32, but money was a bit tight and I wanted something with all-weather traction and within budget. After looking around at a few boring Audis that were not a patch on the VW, I came across the Alfa. The Brera Q4 is not the fastest car – it's adequately quick, I would say – but it has



LETTER OF THE MONTH

A tale of two Porsches

AFTER THE EARLIER TEASER SHOTS IN EVO OF the Porsche 911 Carrera T, I was really hoping the model could deliver on its promise of being a modern-day Club Sport. But after reading Adam Towler's verdict from your first drive of the car (**evo** 245) I felt as disappointed as he was at the missed opportunity it appears to be.

Then I read the next page: Adam's drive of the 911 GT3 Touring Package. What a fantastic car! I want one so badly. The 'regular' GT3, in all its winged/caged/stripped-out glory, is one of the best looking and best driving point-to-point cars known to petrolheads. The fact that Porsche now makes a version with all that same power and handling ability but with looks more subtle than the Carrera T is a wonderful thing – not everyone wants road-going race car levels of attention.

This car is a selfish buy. Only true car enthusiasts will know what it's all about, and that's where its magic lies.

The ultimate Q-car? Could be.

Rob Williams

The Letter of the Month wins an MHD watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives an MHD SQ1 watch worth £250. Designed by British car designer Matthew Humphries, the SQ1 is inspired by watches and rev counters of the 1960s and is limited to an edition of just 300 pieces.

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I was only planning to keep it for a year and then buy a new Golf R. The Mk7.5 R is a fantastic car, but is it £25,000 better than the Alfa? With the money saved I could easily afford to keep my BMW E30 fun car for Sunday blasts and the odd trackday.

Am I going mad? Or does this make sense to anyone else?

Andrew Philippou

Fallen M Power

I've just finished reading Adam Towler's drive story with the BMW M4 CS [pictured above] in issue 245 (my word, has it really been 245 issues already?) and felt compelled to write.

I wanted an M-car and an 'evo' car since your first year of publication, and I am now the lucky owner of a delightful E90 M3, the engine of which Mr Towler admits to missing during his drive of the more modern car. In fact, the feature left me with no incentive whatsoever to swap my older car for the newer model, even if I could afford the frankly ludicrous price tag. The more mainstream £60k+ Competition Package (a horrible name) version is admittedly more affordable, but like the CS, it also warranted 'only' four-and-a-half stars, whereas the E90 got the full fist of five.

My local dealer has an M2 in the showroom and I am tempted by that car's smaller dimensions, lighter weight and more sensible price tag. But apart from the modern interior conveniences such as the entertainment system, what aspects would



make me forget the E90? Certainly not that the M2 feels unsettled on broken tarmac.

It would be interesting to see a three-way group test of an E92 M3, F80 M4 and an M2 to see which car best delivers the thrill of driving. But for now – sorry BMW – I fear the M division peaked some years ago and is in terminal decline. What are the chances I will be seduced by a hybrid or even full eco M-car in the future?

C Davies, Crowborough, East Sussex

Torque talk

Interesting to see you have added a BMW M240i [above] to your long-term test fleet, and the comparison in your first report with the E46 M3 (evo 245).

The power and weight figures are indeed similar between the two models, but you didn't compare the torque outputs. The E46 M3 has 269lb ft at 5000rpm, while the M240i has 369lb ft from just 1520rpm!

I look forward to hearing what you have to say about the car over the coming months as I recently bought one, the same spec as yours but without a sunroof, paying less than £30,000 for a pre-registered example with just nine miles on the clock. Performance bargain!

Steve Naylor

Nervous passenger

I don't know about other readers of **evo**, but the thought of being driven at any kind of speed in an autonomous vehicle sends shivers down my spine.

Whereas doing 0-60 in 2.7 seconds in a Nissan GT-R is



hilarious from the driver's seat, switch over to the passenger seat and the sensation is altogether different. The same can be said of a car being driven 'enthusiastically' down a twisty country lane. For most of us this is our idea of fun – as long as we're the one in control. But being driven down the same road by another human being has me reaching for an imaginary brake pedal in the passenger footwell, and I suspect being driven by an autonomous car would feel the same. Driving fast and being driven fast induce two completely different emotions.

Also, surely autonomous vehicles will be required to stick to the speed limits by law, otherwise who would the police send the speeding tickets to? Nissan HQ?

My GT-R will be staying put for the foreseeable future to provide me with the thrill of driving, but every day we draw closer to that inevitable year 2040 **evo** strapline: 'The Fear of Being Driven'.

Adam Freeman

Ugly Aston

How far has Aston fallen? Not in a business sense, as I am sure it is more successful and stable than ever, but in a design sense. Being a child of the '90s I was not around for the likes of the great Miura and E-type, but I do remember the day the DB9 came out. Never have I seen such a perfect car from launch. Its sleek and sophisticated exterior was everything you could want. Even the interior, with the crystal starter and bamboo dash seen on the launch cars, was spot-on.

This was followed by the V8 Vantage – again spot-on – but



now we have this new Vantage [above left], which looks like the failed gene splicing of a Renault Mégane and a Tamiya bodyshell. What a shame.

Mathew Robinson

Beauty in the beast

The new Vantage seems to have inspired much opinion, some of it quite negative. I wonder if those complaining have seen the new car in the flesh? I have been fortunate enough to have done so and thought it looked outstanding – muscular and differentiated from the other models in the Aston range.

Yes, the old Vantages were wonderful (I owned two), but the new one moves the design on and in a great direction. When people start to see them on the roads I am sure opinions will change.

Callum Licence

Insurance scam

This is a message for Richard Porter from his insurance broker. Unfortunately, due to a stratospheric rise in the market value of your limited-addition (sic) Land Rover Defender Heritage Edition [above] (column, **evo** 244), we need to increase your insurance premium, with immediate effect, by 10,000 per cent.

We realise this may come as a bit of a shock, so we are willing to offer you an alternative solution. We'll be happy to take your treasured Defender off you and put it to good use here in Sweden. With a good harsh winter's use, we will only add to the 'patina' and will give it a home it deserves. You know it makes sense.

Andrew Manig

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Ferrari GTC4 Lusso T

Modena's new V8-engined grand tourer offers all the thrills of the V12. If only it sounded a bit more special...

Photography by Aston Parrott

IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT SALES OF THE GTC4 Lusso will take a hit when the Ferrari SUV – or FUV as Modena calls it – joins the line-up. For now, the shooting brake-style Lusso is the only full-size, four-seat Ferrari option, and very fine it is too, powered by the V12. An elegant evolution of the rather brittle FF, the Lusso improves on almost every aspect of the earlier model, especially with its more rounded and convincing dynamics and sleeker styling. Unusually, it is also offered with another engine choice, a version of the twin-turbo V8 in the California T and 488, and is called the Lusso T.

The Lusso T dispenses with the V12's novel four-wheel-drive system – effectively a four-speed gearbox driven off the front of the engine – but not because the T has less torque to deploy. Although the 3.9-litre V8 produces a muscular 602bhp, some 78bhp down on the output of the naturally aspirated 6.3-litre V12, it actually churns out 560lb ft of torque, which is almost 50lb ft more.

The V8 Lusso weighs 55kg less too, most of which comes off the front, shifting the weight distribution rearwards for a 46:54 front:rear split. A look at the performance figures suggests this benefits traction because at 3.5 seconds for the 0-62mph sprint, the rear-drive V8 is only a tenth slower than the 4WD V12. The V8 nails 0-125mph in a storming 10.8 seconds and goes on to a top speed tantalisingly just 1mph short of 200mph, while the V12's extra power pushes it on to 208mph.

Visually, you'd be hard pushed to tell a V8 Lusso from a V12. The V8 costs £200k, about £30k less than the V12 before options, which on this example bring the total to £255k. They include blue brake calipers that match the blue leather interior, though the most significant items are the special order 'Bianco Italia' paint (£15k) and panoramic glass roof (£11.5k). The latter makes a huge difference to the experience of rear-seat passengers; adults will find plenty of room in the back and the glass roof increases the sense of space.

You certainly know which engine the Lusso has when you push the starter button. The V12 has a rich, complex

note, while the V8, which is a flat-plane-crank design that synchronises the firing of its cylinder banks, has a smooth but rather plainer four-cylinder-like sound. And mooching around at low revs, the active tailpipe valves flip between open and closed, between bassy and quiet, so there's a less consistent, less sophisticated sound compared with the V12.

What both models do have in common is a smooth, compliant ride when the manettino dial is set to Comfort. Winter tyres are fitted for our drive, as per Ferrari UK policy in our coldest months, and the Pirelli Sottozeros, which are the same width and profile as the summer rubber, probably add a little more comfort. The V8 gets rear-steer like the V12, and initially steering response feels like it speeds up away from centre, but you quickly adapt and are soon revelling in how naturally balanced and biddable the chassis feels. It's a big car but doesn't feel it when you're pressing on, which is a great compliment.

Equally impressive is that the car works brilliantly in low temperatures. Winter tyres are designed not just for snow but for

temperatures below 8deg C, and a brisk sub-zero cross-country hack is like driving on a warm, dry road. We find snow too, and the Lusso T takes it in its stride (it's like driving on summer tyres on a wet road). Indeed, it goes places that the four-wheel-drive V12 on summers couldn't go.

There's no shortage of urge from the V8, the twin-turbo unit fast to respond, assisted by the snappy, sweet-shifting dual-clutch 'box. It revs smoothly and briskly to the 7500rpm red line, and although not as musical an experience as the V12, the V8 makes the car feel pretty much as quick and has a clean, free-revving urgency to its bark that encourages high revs.

At a motorway cruise the V8's note dies to a murmur. Indeed, true to its intended role as a long-distance GT, the Lusso T is an effortless and comfortable mile-eater. Worryingly, its natural gait seems to be 90mph – that's the speed it seems to want to settle at, when all seems calm. Road noise (even with the winter tyres) and wind noise are low; the seats supportive and cossetting. Adding to its long-distance cruising credentials, the V8 Lusso is



Above: optional 'co-driver' touchscreen can display current drive settings or performance data, or control the infotainment system



‘True to its intended role as a long-distance GT, the Lusso T is an effortless mile-eater’



reckoned to be a third more economical than the V12. We see an average of over 26mpg on a 400-mile motorway trip, which means a 91-litre tankful could put 500 miles under the T's wheels between fuel stops.

As with the V12, it takes a while to learn your way around the infotainment and the switchgear on the steering wheel, which is evolving to be more intuitive. More straightforward are the functions of the manettino, which offers five settings, from a snowflake symbol through Wet to Comfort to Sport and finally ESC Off. The snowflake does not access a drift mode for mucking about in the white stuff, quite the opposite – it softens the throttle and puts the stability control on super-sensitive, with the intention of keeping the Lusso calm and on line.

Sport is a great setting for twisting roads, with the V8 punchy, the gearbox always in the right gear or grabbing it the instant you want it, and the damping more taut for handling that

is crisp and agile. It's involving and rewarding. And we can report that with all electronic safety nets switched off, the Lusso T is eminently driftable on snow on its snow tyres, comfortably poised on opposite lock, with plenty of power on tap to change the angle.

Over two days we rack up over 1000 miles, and the Lusso T proves an outstanding GT thanks to its supple ride, great seats and very low wind and road noise. It also makes light work of twisting roads, feeling every bit as fast as the V12 but even more agile and light on its feet. That said, if I was spending over £200k on a Lusso, I'd still find it hard to not go the whole hog and pick the V12. But only for the richer, classier soundtrack, not the all-wheel drive, because if you really want to go anywhere in the winter months, a set of Sottozeros will do the job better than a four-wheel-drive car on summer tyres. Of course, the ultimate combo would be winter tyres and four-wheel drive.

John Barker (@evoJB)

Below: twin-turbo V8 is down on power and character compared with the V12, but isn't short of torque or outright performance



Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 3855cc, twin-turbo	602bhp @ 7500rpm	560lb ft @ 3000-5250rpm	3.5sec (claimed)	199mph (claimed)	1865kg (328bhp/ton)	£200,165

➤ Effortless, comfortable GT that's light on its feet for its size ➤ Misses the richer soundtrack of the V12

evo rating ★★★★★

Vauxhall Insignia Grand Sport GSi BiTurbo

The GSi badge is back, but Vauxhall's fast flagship struggles to stand out from its cheaper stablemates

VAUXHALL HAS A RICH HISTORY OF high-performance saloons. From its vintage models with surprising vitality and 100mph top speeds, through to the lunatic Lotus Carlton and the Insignia VXR, the British brand's back-catalogue is littered with high-octane antidotes to its more mainstream offerings. Yet when Vauxhall revealed that the venerable Anglo-Australian VXR8 was going to be pensioned off, it looked like there would be nothing left on the firm's books to get people like you and me excited. Well, apart from a couple of VXR hot hatches in the form of the increasingly creaky Corsa and grey-haired GTC. However, that could change with the arrival of the (deep breath) Insignia Grand Sport GSi.

Not only does the newcomer fill the role of fast flagship, it also marks a return of the GSi nameplate after the best part of two decades away. It was last seen on the first-generation Corsa, but more fittingly, it was also used on the BMW-baiting Carlton GSi 3000 of the

'80s. Adding to the anticipation is the fact the Insignia gets a torque-vectoring four-wheel-drive system (the same basic GKN set-up used by the Ford Focus RS), adaptive damping, a 10mm lower ride height, spring rates that are between 35 and 40 per cent stiffer (depending on whether it's a hatch or an estate) and heavily upgraded Brembo brakes. All of which, Vauxhall claims, helps the Grand Sport complete a lap of the Nürburgring Nordschleife 12 seconds faster than the old Insignia VXR. So far, so promising.

Ignore the unmarked-patrol-car white paint of our test car and it's fair to say the GSi looks the part. A deeper front bumper, larger air intakes, some side skirts and a rear spoiler help give the Vauxhall some visual muscle, while the lightweight 20-inch alloys are wrapped in Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres. Inside there are equally big clues to the car's sporting intent, including a pair of heavily bolstered and GSi emblazoned high-backed front

seats, a flat-bottomed steering wheel and aluminium-finished pedals. Prod the starter button, however, and any thoughts of a fine drive are drowned out by the intrusive clatter from under the bonnet. Yes, that's right – this GSi is a diesel. There is a petrol option (a 2-litre turbo four with 256bhp), but Vauxhall doesn't have any on its press fleet because it reckons the BiTurbo will be the big seller. Perhaps the dieselgate scandal hasn't yet landed in Luton...

Still, ignore the cold-start cacophony and the twin-turbo 2-litre diesel's statistics are promising, with a headline figure of 207bhp and a thumping torque peak of 354lb ft at just 1500rpm. As a result, Vauxhall claims the benchmark 0-62mph sprint is dealt with in 7.3 seconds, which is only four-tenths down on the petrol car. On the move, the GSi feels brisk rather than outright fast. With so much twist available at such low revs there's little point in extending the motor, which is much quieter when warmed through but still fairly





Left: GSi makes for a quiet and comfortable cruiser. **Far left:** torque-vectoring four-wheel drive is shared with the Focus RS. **Below left:** 20-inch alloys save 1.5kg per corner; brakes are upgraded Brembos



agricultural sounding. In combination with the reasonably smooth standard eight-speed auto (there's no manual option) it allows you to make effortless and unobtrusive progress.

There's a choice of Tour and Sport modes, and in the former the Insignia simply feels like a slightly quicker version of a regular Insignia. The adaptive dampers serve up a cushioned ride, the transmission slurs the ratios nicely and the lifeless steering is light and fairly precise. It's relatively uninspiring, but as a quiet and comfortable outside-lane express, the Vauxhall does a good job.

It's when you hit the Sport button that the GSi really struggles because, well, it doesn't feel that much different to Tour mode. There's some extra firmness to the dampers, but not much, so while body movements are reasonably well controlled, there's a fair amount of roll. Other changes include a dash of extra sharpness to the throttle and extra heft to the electrically assisted steering. That said, the latter is still too light and offers zero feedback. This isn't such a problem in the dry,



where you can trust the Michelins will grip, but in greasy or wet conditions, turning into a corner requires an act of faith. Another issue is the noise from the engine, which is treated to an electronic augmentation through the speakers that brings to mind racing games available for a late '80s Commodore 64.

Still, there are positives. Once turned in, the Vauxhall grips hard, while the four-wheel-drive system subtly overdrives the outside rear wheel, pivoting the car about its axis and pointing the nose towards the apex. There's also the very subtle hint of power oversteer

on the exit of a bend. It's not as wild as a Focus RS, but it helps the Vauxhall feel more agile and cover ground more effectively.

However, even this can't help the Insignia, which simply doesn't feel as well sorted and engaging as high-powered 4x4 versions of the VW Arteon or Skoda Superb. The GSi is capable, quick, composed and spacious, but it's not very exciting. Its biggest problem is that it doesn't feel much different to lesser Insignias, which deliver many of the same qualities in much cheaper packages.

James Disdale

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1956cc, twin-turbo diesel	207bhp @ 4000rpm	354lb ft @ 1500rpm	7.3sec (claimed)	145mph (claimed)	1772kg (119bhp/ton)	£32,975

🟢 Fine ride, decent refinement, strong real-world pace 🟠 Lifeless steering; doesn't feel different enough from standard car

evo rating ★★★★★

Ford Focus RS Edition

Fitting a Quaife differential to Ford's hottest hatch has transformed it... but it doesn't come cheap

EVER SINCE THE CURRENT FORD Focus RS swaggered onto the scene in 2016, it has been ripe for aftermarket upgrades. Whether it's for more power, tweaked suspension or some garish visual 'enhancements', there is a long line of tuners and tweekers keen to give your Focus more, erm, focus.

Ford, too, has cashed in, with its official Mountune-developed upgrades, and now it has gone further with this new RS Edition model, which is claimed to be aimed at 'hardcore driving enthusiasts'. On paper the changes over the standard car are fairly minor, running to nothing more than a limited-slip differential for the front axle and a host of

cosmetic and equipment upgrades, yet the result is an RS transformed.

Visually, the changes are relatively subtle, which says more about the standard car's pugnacious looks than it does about the Edition's add-ons. You have a choice of Nitrous Blue or Race Red paint, and if you don't opt for the latter, which is making its debut on the Edition and isn't available on the regular RS, the most noticeable difference is the matt black finish for the roof, tailgate spoiler, door mirror caps and 19-inch alloys. Inside, shell-backed Recaros are standard (they're normally a £1145 option) but gain some fairly garish trim inserts, and there's also a smattering of real carbonfibre. So far, so aftermarket.

Mechanically, the big news is that limited-slip diff, a Quaife unit, for the front wheels. It's claimed to improve handling precision and stability under braking and turn-in. In every other respect the car is standard Focus RS, which means the same 345bhp, turbocharged 2.3-litre four-cylinder mated to a six-speed manual gearbox driving all four wheels through GKN's trick torque-vectoring, four-wheel-drive transmission. Also carried over are the adaptive dampers and various driver settings, including the headline-grabbing Drift mode.

From behind the wheel it all feels very familiar, right down to the seating position set a little too high. The sense of déjà vu continues as you prod the starter button then get moving. There's the same burbling exhaust note at idle and the firm ride that has occupants bobbing along in rhythm with the road. Performance is identical to the basic car's, which means it feels indecently rapid once it's rolling and the engine has overcome the inertia inherent in a hatchback tipping the scales at nearly 1550kg. The crackling exhaust note is a bit contrived, particularly when it issues its perfectly precise barrage of pops and bangs as you lift off the throttle between gearchanges, but it all adds to the drama of a car that's clearly out to have a good time.

So, does the Edition feel in any way different to the run-of-the-mill RS? The short answer is yes, and it's all down to that Quaife differential. At low speed the only evidence of its presence



‘The Edition simply hunkers down and fires along the road with arrow-straight precision’

Below: newfound ability means the RS now goes where you point it. **Below left:** cosmetic changes come at a price; seats still set too high

is a subtle tightening of the steering when you lift off the throttle and the diff shifts its loadings. Go faster and its effects are more obvious – and for all the right reasons. For starters, there's greater stability on the way into corners, the diff helping to keep the Focus tracking true even when you're working the Brembo brakes hard. The steering is as meatily weighted and precise as before, and there's the same strong turn-in bite, but pick up the throttle and you'll discover that the torque-steer that blights the regular RS has been banished, even on bumpy and heavily crowned tarmac. Where the standard car's nose would weave around as the four-wheel-drive system frantically shuffled torque around, the Edition simply hunkers down and fires along the road with arrow-straight precision.

This more clinical approach breeds confidence, allowing you to further exploit the Ford's handling balance. You can now really lean on the RS coming out of corners and start working the rear axle to get that subtle

rear-wheel-drive sensation as the back of the car moves gently out, pointing the nose into the apex and allowing you to get on the power earlier and revel in the Focus's newfound ability to go exactly where you point it.

Overall, it gives the RS a more sophisticated and polished feel, and while some drivers will miss the regular car's slightly ragged and raw character, for most, the gains in precision more than make up for it. The question is whether these improvements make the Edition worth the extra £3530 over the normal version. It's a hefty chunk of cash given that everything bar the differential and seats you could take or leave. But for the extra finesse the diff brings to the chassis the price is just about justified. Oh, and there's also the rarity value, because Edition supply in the UK will be capped at 500 blue cars and 300 red. However, the really big question is why Ford didn't fit the RS with this diff from the outset, because it makes it the great car it always should have been.

James Disdale



Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 2261cc, turbo	345bhp @ 6000rpm	347lb ft @ 2000-4500rpm	4.7sec (claimed)	166mph (claimed)	1547kg (227bhp/ton)	£36,295

+ More precise handling, clever four-wheel drive, strong performance - Hefty kerb weight, price, limited run

evo rating ★★★★★

McLaren 570GT Sport Pack

Have you been longing for McLaren's 'grand tourer' with the 570S's sprinkling of chassis magic? Thankfully, Woking has obliged...



LET'S BE HONEST ABOUT McLaren's 570GT: no one has ever considered it to be a bona fide GT car. Certainly not in the sense of a Bentley Continental GT, Aston DB11 or even a Mercedes-AMG S63 or S65. It may have softer spring rates and less direct steering than a 570S, but the 570GT is really a supercar with a small, leather-lined luggage shelf. And a very good supercar at that.

The second bodyline addition to McLaren's Sports Series range, the 570GT arrived in 2016 with its more cohesive and prettier rear half that features a side-opening opening glass hatch reminiscent of a Series 1 Jaguar E-type's. Beneath it and the additional storage area it gives access to is the same 3.8-litre, twin-turbocharged V8 as in the 570S coupe and Spider, producing 562bhp and 443lb ft of torque. Weighing 1486kg (56kg more than the coupe), the GT reaches 62mph in 3.4 seconds

and 100mph in 6.6, and runs out of steam at 204mph. I think you'll agree that it's more supercar than grand touring sports car.

Anyway, while McLaren's customers have been enjoying their GTs with their two per cent reduction in steering ratio and 15 and 10 per cent softening of the front and rear springs respectively, others, **evo** included, have been asking for the GT's looks to be available with the S chassis. And McLaren has obliged with the offering of a Sport Pack for the 570GT.

Designed to align the GT with the S coupe and Spider, the Sport Pack provides the same steering and chassis settings as the aforementioned models. So the steering rack, damper actuators and uprights are now the same as they are on the S, with the adaptive damping and stability control recalibrated to match those of the coupe, too. You can also have the Pirelli P Zero Corsa tyre fitted, and

‘The wheel writhes in your hands, tugging left and right, expecting you to take complete control’

carbon-ceramic brakes are now standard.

The cost of the base GT has recently increased by £3000 to £157,000, and the Sport Pack will cost you an additional £4900. McLaren has also taken the opportunity to offer an MSO-developed electrochromic roof that allows you to adjust the tint level, and five new design packs are available that consist of popular exterior colours matched to ‘By McLaren’ interior design themes.

Drive a 570S coupe and a standard GT back-to-back and what look like minimal chassis changes on paper stack up to be noticeable changes from behind the wheel. Instantly the GT tracks better, mastering poor surfaces where the coupe becomes a little fidgety. The GT’s steering wheel is less active in your hands, too, but at the expense of the smallest amount of feedback and feel.

Drive the GT Sport Pack and all of the aforementioned is replaced with the coupe’s responses. The steering wheel writhes in your hands, tugging left and right, expecting you to take complete control. In today’s world of electrically assisted systems, McLaren’s hydraulic set-up remains an example of steering purity bettered only by Lotus’s Elise.

The Sport Pack returns an edge to the GT’s ride that isn’t there in the standard car, but only to the same level of that of a 570S, which means harsh ridges work the MonoCell II carbon tub harder, where the regular GT absorbs them with more finesse. You’ll need to have regular and Sport Pack GTs to hand to spot the differences in this respect, though, or be a McLaren engineer.

Neither the steering nor chassis changes



Above: glass roof can be adjusted for tint level. **Below left:** Sport Pack chassis really shines on track, but rear end can be tricky at the limit. **Below right:** carbon-ceramic brakes are now standard



dull any of the GT’s shine: it still devours a road with startling competence. The stiffer spring rates eliminate the dive and body roll that a 570GT could exhibit when really pushed, and deliver the confidence and reassurance all of McLaren’s Super Series chassis offer.

On track is where the Sport Pack advantages really take hold. The more solidly controlled chassis and body perform as their coupe counterparts, with slack all but eliminated, and as on the road the nose still refuses to dive under braking or rise under acceleration. Combine this with those carbon ceramic brakes and the 570GT Sport Pack performs to the equal of the coupe.

With no mechanical locking differential, this 570GT, like all McLarens, can be a bit Jekyll and Hyde when you start to take liberties with it. There’s always more front-end grip than you

expect, providing the encouragement to lay on more throttle. Get it right and the GT is yours to balance as you wish. Apply a fingernail’s thickness too much throttle, however, and the V8’s turbos will spool up, and despite their best efforts the Corsas will light up in spectacular fashion as they vaporise some rubber and become the chief suspect in your fall. For all the duality McLaren has engineered into its cars, the 570GT Sport Pack’s supercar credentials still demand a degree of respect at the limit, as they should.

There is much to admire about the 570GT in standard form, but for us, and I suspect many an *evo* reader, the Sport Pack gives it the edge that makes the 570S such a compelling package. The 570GT is still not a great GT car, but in this trim it’s an even better supercar.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo	562bhp @ 7500rpm	443lb ft @ 5000-6500rpm	3.4sec (claimed)	204mph (claimed)	1486kg (384bhp/ton)	£157,000

🟢 All the responses of the 570S 🟡 It should be the standard set-up

evo rating ★★★★★



Audi A7 Sportback

It may hit the style bullseye, but this new five-door coupe's drive is wide of the mark

AUDI SAYS ITS NEW A7 SPORTBACK combines the elegance of a coupe, the functionality of an estate and the prestige of a luxury saloon. It's difficult not to imagine that in trying to combine the qualities of three cars it will end up being slightly worse than each of them at those respective disciplines. So how does it fare?

The original A7 was one of the more successful proponents of the four/five-door coupe genre in terms of its styling, and the latest one is the same. It's still handsome, the sweeping roofline coming to the same abrupt, Kamm-tail halt, and there's now a little more definition to some of the lines along its flanks, while the nose and tail are pure modern Audi.

Functionality? Well, it stands to reason that you'll fit more in the rear of a square-backed A6 Avant than in a slash-roofed A7, and you'd have an easier job getting awkwardly shaped loads into the proper estate too.

Cabin-wise, though, the A7 is a step ahead, thanks to architecture, space and quality inspired by the larger A8. It feels expensively trimmed and immaculately built, and the driving position is beyond reproach. Acoustic glazing and the car's slippery shape mean



the cabin is little louder at speed than at a standstill. Interaction with most minor controls is now through a pair of touchscreens, each augmented by a convincing use of haptic feedback to deliver a button-style feel to every prod. Smartphone-style swipes and pinches work too, and the screens' handwriting recognition is good enough that it's not beyond being useful on the move, unlike some.

Despite all this, it's still the final hurdle over which the A7 really stumbles. In designing a car aimed at luxury buyers, but feeling compelled to imbue it with some sportiness, the resulting compromise doesn't quite hit the spot.

An uncomfortable ride is largely to blame. We tried two different adaptive, air-suspended cars and both struggled with bumps; the

Sport-spec example on 20-inch wheels suffered less, but it still sent vibrations through the cabin, eradicating the A7's refinement. The trade-off is taut body control, but with direct yet reticent steering and a kerb weight of over 1800kg, neither car was involving, nor particularly agile to drive.

The 3-litre V6 engines, one petrol, one diesel (335bhp and 369lb ft for the 55 TFSI, 282bhp and 457lb ft for the 50 TDI) – are better efforts. Both are matched with quattro all-wheel drive but each uses a different gearbox – seven-speed dual-clutch on the petrol, eight-speed ZF auto for the diesel. Both engines are refined, tuneful and hushed at speed, their performance enhanced and economy improved with Audi's 48V mild hybrid technology.

If the new A7 was a little more comfortable, the inert chassis wouldn't be a particular issue, and were it more entertaining, we could live with the sudden ride. With a little more tweaking (we'd be keen to try examples without all-wheel steering and on regular adaptive dampers) Audi's efforts to combine style, practicality and luxury could be much closer to the mark.

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V6, 2995cc, twin-turbo	335bhp @ 5000-6400rpm	369lb ft @ 1370-4500rpm	5.3sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1815kg (188bhp/ton)	£55,140

➤ Exterior styling, interior design, refinement ➤ Poor ride, dull dynamics

evo rating ★★★★★

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Mercedes-AMG S63 L

Newly fettled S-class hasn't lost its air of unruffled superiority

IT'S FAIR TO SAY THE EXPERIENCE most Mercedes-AMG S63 owners will enjoy differs somewhat to that of a meagrely paid motoring magazine staff writer spending a mere week with the car in order to deconstruct its abilities.

Their house will be worth more for a start. And they probably won't have to spend ten minutes driving around looking for somewhere large enough to park their S63, squeezing close enough to a kerb to avoid blocking a narrow road but far enough away so as not to scour a diamond-turned wheel rim.

It always comes as something of a shock just how enormous the S-class feels when doing normal-car things given the rate at which it moves when doing **evo**-car things. Now using AMG's ubiquitous 4-litre, twin-turbocharged V8 in place of the old 5.5-litre unit, and a nine-speed transmission instead of the old seven-speeder, the S63 still returns figures to rival smaller models in the AMG range: 604bhp, 664lb ft, and the ability to hit 62mph in 4.3 seconds from rest.

Sink pedal to carpet as you pass a national speed limit sign and you've just a moment to contemplate what's next before the AMG



Speedshift 'box kicks down and vehicles turn from dots on the horizon to streaks past your side window, like hitting hyperdrive on the Millennium Falcon. On slippery winter tarmac the traction control struggles to contain all that brawn, but the long wheelbase (you can't have this engine with the short wheelbase) endows the S63 with a stable feeling even when the rear end begins to step out.

The brakes are powerful, even if the pedal feels set up more for ease of operation than maximum feedback and modulation. There's also strong grip, though the S63 doesn't hide its size as well in turns as it does under acceleration. You're always aware of how wide the car is for a start – often by the distant 'tuk... tuk... tuk...' of catseyes under your offside

tyres. Select Sport or Sport+ and body control is very impressive for such a large vehicle.

It'd be a push to describe the S63 as agile, and on slippery roads the car's mass and relatively quick steering rack can sometimes overcome turn-in bite, leading to a brief moment of push from the front end. Steering accuracy is hard to fault, though once again isolation has been prioritised over interaction.

But that's just fine. There'll always be the question of 'why?' surrounding a car like the AMG S63, to which the counterargument will forever remain 'why not?' The most impressive thing isn't its performance (barely believable though it is), but that its basic ingredients ensure it remains one of the world's best luxury vehicles in spite of AMG's fettling. The ride shades virtually anything else on the road, while the engine is effectively inaudible unless you wake it up with a heavy right foot or the exhaust button on the centre console.

The S63 is a thrill more for its incongruous speed than anything more tactile, but you're unlikely to begrudge it this when slipping into its cabin with a long journey ahead. Wherever you attempt to park it when you get there...

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo	604bhp @ 5500-6000rpm	664lb ft @ 2750-4500rpm	4.3sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1940kg (316bhp/ton)	£125,690

➕ Performance doesn't come at the expense of luxury ➖ But pure driving thrills do

evo rating ★★★★★



RICHARD MEADEN

Toyota can make white goods models and still be the world's most exciting car brand

WITH THE INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE enduring a slow death by a thousand downsizes, and the art of driving under threat thanks to the wider world's obsession with autonomous cars, you could be forgiven for thinking it's all doom and gloom in our corner of the automotive world.

You'll know I rarely pass up the opportunity for a moan, but despite there being plenty of scope to launch into another of my four-weekly whinges, I'm in uncharacteristically high spirits. In this rare moment of optimism I wanted to explore a concept I've been pondering for a while: which is the most exciting car brand?

My nomination is not one born from great industry wisdom – I'm a huge fan of the products, not a student of the business. Rather, I prefer to look at what a company is doing across the whole spectrum of what's relevant and exciting to me. That means cars I can afford and cars of which I can only dream. It means a commitment to motorsport. It means heart, authenticity and the ability to surprise.

Conveniently ignoring my first tenet of affordability, I initially thought of Aston Martin. Partly because it's a marque I've been a fan of since seeing (and hearing!) an X-Pack Vantage as a kid, but mostly because it hasn't so much weathered the stormy post-recession years of declining sales and an ageing model range as emerged phoenix-like with afterburners lit.

With its range revitalised thanks to the new Vantage and V12, V8 and Volante DB11s, plus an all-new Vanquish poised for launch and the Adrian Newey-designed Valkyrie set to blow every other hypercar out of the water, Aston is nailing it. Factor in a mid-to-long-term strategy that includes an SUV, mid-engined sports cars, hybridisation, electrification and the rebirth of Lagonda, and CEO Andy Palmer's visionary 'Second Century' plan puts Aston Martin on a stratospheric trajectory.

Yet there's another company I believe is more deserving: Toyota. What?! I know. It surprised me, too. Largely because there's a contradiction that leaves me feeling conflicted. After all, how can the maker of countless millions of white goods models qualify to be the most exciting car company in the world? Well, that same company gave us the LFA – arguably the greatest money-no-object expression of pride and passion in modern automotive history. At the other end of the scale it signed-off

the Mk3 MR2 – a brilliantly wrought little sports car and now an everyman Elise on the used market. It also thought deeply enough about driving to step off the 'more is better' merry-go-round and build the refreshing (if not entirely satisfactory) GT86.

And today? Now we have the gloriously named Yaris Gazoo Racing tuned by Meister of the Nürburgring (GRMN to its friends) – a millennial Clio Williams if ever there was one, and the first of a promised family of Gazoo-tuned high-performance models. There's the upcoming Supra – built on a platform shared with BMW's Z4, but delayed because reportedly Toyota boss Akio Toyoda (a 105 RON petrolhead) said it fell short of delivering the driving experience he wanted for Toyota's sporting flagship. And then there's Lexus, which has become a genuine challenger to the established German marques.

When I mentioned all this to *evo's* editor he was unusually effusive. This is highly irregular, for ordinarily Mr Gallagher is a true colossus of contempt, yet he immediately got where I was coming from. Indeed he took the idea and ran with it, suggesting Toyota is one of the few car makers from which you could populate a genuinely appealing and utterly diverse three-car garage. And do you know what, I think he's right. I'd be pretty chuffed to have a Yaris GRMN for

bombing around in, Lexus LC500 for making a statement and a Toyota Hilux for when The Donald or Little Rocket Man leave us with a smouldering post-apocalyptic wasteland to roam.

Fancy something less utilitarian? Swap Hilux for Land Cruiser. Want something small, affordable (at least as new cars go) and rear-wheel drive? Switch Yaris for GT86. Think picking a Lexus is cheating? Wait for the Supra. Feel the LC is a bit softcore? Get yourself an RC F. Or blow the lottery win and buy an LFA and a 2000GT. And then there's Toyota's commitment to motorsport. Whether it's chasing that cruelly elusive Le Mans victory, the factory return to the WRC, Akio Toyoda's fanatical obsession with the Nürburgring N24, or the wider global activity in NASCAR, the Dakar and Japanese GTs, you clearly have a company with heart, passion and an admirable preparedness to chase a dream.

These days it can feel like the car industry is deserting the enthusiast, but when it gets things right it remains a rich source of pleasure. That the world's largest car company can also be the most exciting is inspiring evidence of just that.

'This is clearly a company with heart, passion and a preparedness to chase a dream'

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

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RICHARD PORTER

Sport modes are everywhere... it's a shame most have the subtlety of a sledgehammer

THE FERRARI 250 GTO DID NOT HAVE A SPORT button. Nor did the Lamborghini Countach or the Lancia Delta Integrale. And I'm not sure anyone has ever marked them down for this. Now, however, everything has a Sport mode. Supercars, saloons, hot hatchbacks. Even my dishwasher has one, though it just makes everything faster and therefore even more likely to bake a trace element of Weetabix into a diamond-hard scab you have to smash the bowl to remove.

I'm not sure when the Sport button became a thing, but it was almost certainly in the '80s when increasingly advanced control modules allowed large German saloons to sprout a Sport mode on their automatic gearboxes. You dabbed a button by the selector and the changes got a little less slurring, although only in the same way that a fat barrister might be less slurring if you caught him in the bar at 7.30pm rather than 8pm. And that was it for Sport mode for the '80s and into the '90s. It made automatic 'boxes almost imperceptibly snappier, which is to say not very snappy at all.

However, sometime in the '90s and into the new century, with greater computing power and the rise of adaptive damping, Sport mode became more comprehensive. I remember the first time I noticed this, in a Mercedes E55 AMG. Not the slabby one that always developed crusty arches; the softer shaped one that came afterwards. The W211, if you're a proper Merc nerd. Pushing the Sport button didn't just make a half-hearted stab at taking some slack out of the gearshifts. It sharpened the throttle and firmed the air suspension too. If you dabbed it in traffic you felt the revs rise a little, like the car was tensing itself. The difference between normal and Sport was obvious. Extremely obvious. You might almost say too obvious.

And this brings me to where we are today, in Sport mode Babylon. Even quite ordinary stuff has a Sport option and, by and large, these settings all behave the same, making an immediate and appreciable difference to the superficial feeling of the car. Which is where the problem lies. They're like Victoria Beckham's suit 'n' sunglasses bodyguards. Massive, obvious, not necessarily useful in the circumstances where you'd hope they would shine.

Whereas what I'd like Sport mode to mimic is the security set-up I once saw protecting Prince Harry, which was two people in casual clothes discreetly hanging around in the background, blending in, monitoring the situation but, you could bet, quite able when required to snap someone's arm off. That's the sort of subtle but useful backup I want, yet few car makers do it. Porsche is a notable exception, and Aston's DB11 is pretty good too.

These, however, are the exceptions. Most performance-orientated cars lack this subtlety. They feel as if Sport mode isn't set up as the engineers and test drivers would like it because they've been overruled by the marketing department and market researchers who told them customers don't want a snadge more rebound damping and a whisker of extra response from the throttle. They want a car that *feels* sporty, even if that results in an idiotically stiff ride, pointlessly heavier steering and needlessly brutal tip-in on the accelerator pedal, none of which makes for better or more satisfying progress down a wiggly road. As a demonstration of how the average Sport setting is stiffness over substance, we once conducted an experiment on *Top Gear* in which a Golf GTI was lapped in Sport mode and then in its Comfort setting. It was actually a tenth quicker in Comfort.

Oh but wait, you think, lots of cars now have a programmable setting that lets you choose from a small smorgasbord of functions and blend them to your choice. And sometimes that helps. I've spent a lot of time in cars where you flick it into Sport

mode and then five minutes later start prodding desperately through submenus to stop the damn thing feeling so artlessly leaden, and the solution to this is always, absolutely always, as follows: softer suspension, normal steering, sharper engine/gearbox response. Then later you go back to default normal mode and the throttle feels really flat, so you end up driving it the whole time in your personal configuration and wondering why the car wasn't just sold like that and the bloody Sport mode blanked off.

Which is, I'm afraid, where I'm going with all this. I'm bored of Sport modes and their fake 'sportiness'. The 250 GTO didn't have a Sport mode, nor did the Countach or Integrale. Perhaps because their creators just got the basic set-up right in the first place.

'I'd like Sport mode to mimic the security set-up protecting Prince Harry – casual, discreet, but quite able when required to snap someone's arm off'

@sniffpetrol

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

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TED KRAVITZ

Alonso tackling F1, Le Mans and the WEC in the same season is to be applauded

YOU CAN'T BLAME FERNANDO ALONSO FOR wanting to branch out. His is a ferocious talent, but it has been becalmed these past three years by a woeful Honda engine and a McLaren chassis not yet back at Formula 1's cutting edge. So the news Alonso will compete in this season's Le Mans and the World Endurance Championship for Toyota, at the same time as doing all 21 F1 races for the newly Renault-powered McLaren team, isn't unexpected. He's been trying to make it happen for years.

In recent seasons Porsche held talks with Alonso about joining his friend Mark Webber in the team, but they came to nothing, and while Honda was paying most of Alonso's salary, a Toyota drive was politically out of the question. But with the Honda divorce complete, the only barrier remaining was McLaren, which had to be willing to allow its prize asset to potentially wear himself out driving in both championships simultaneously. Its conclusion was that, as last year proved (and as Ron Dennis can confirm), it's better to employ a happy Fernando Alonso than an angry Fernando Alonso, so following a final 'are you sure you want to do this?' test (racing at the Daytona 24 Hours in January), it concluded that yes, that would be just fine.

It's undoubtedly a risk for both parties – accidents happen – but Fernando's appetite for redefining what a modern Grand Prix driver can do should be applauded. McLaren's unreliability means Alonso hasn't exactly been pushed to the limit physically or mentally in recent seasons, which is just as well, as he's set for a year of horrendous jet lag. His summer schedule is busier than that of a Center Parcs pool cleaner. The Canadian Grand Prix on 10 June is followed on successive weekends by Le Mans, Paul Ricard, Zeltweg and Silverstone; the last three forming F1's first-ever triple-header. The end of the season is no easier, with the Brazilian Grand Prix followed by a long trip across the Pacific to Shanghai and then a further nine-hour flight westbound to F1's finale in Abu Dhabi.

A pretty rosy Airmiles haul ahead, then. Almost as healthy are Alonso's chances of winning Le Mans outright. Toyota is the only manufacturer team left in LMP1, so is unlikely to be challenged for pace by Oreca, Dallara or Ginetta. Sure, the Japanese could

still lose the race through unreliability or silly mistakes, as they've done on their last two attempts, but if both entries do make it to the end in one piece it's likely Toyota would engineer it so that Fernando's car wins. That would chalk up number two of his cherished triple crown (after his Monaco GP wins), leaving only the Indy 500.

That, however, will have to wait, because for as long as Indianapolis continues to clash with the Monaco Grand Prix, McLaren will demand Fernando stays in Europe. For the first time in five years, it has a pretty good shot at winning the race. In fact, this season is looking much better all round for McLaren. Renault still won't have a match for Mercedes' power units when it comes to its special qualifying engine modes, but the McLaren-Renault package should be good enough for a win or two, as long as Alonso isn't too knackered.

The coming season is full of intriguing stories, not least of which concerns grid girls, and how the world's most glamorous sport has decided to end the tradition of having scantily clad women holding the drivers' name boards and flags on the grid and awkwardly applauding the winners as they climb the stairs to the podium.

At hot races grid girls are made to stand for a good hour in the baking sun on the start/finish straight with no shelter or water, in uncomfortable-looking high heels while being told to look happy

and smile. More often than not at least one gets dehydrated or dizzy or actually faints and has to be unceremoniously carried off by a couple of mechanics. Same for the support races earlier in the day.

It's an equally miserable job when it rains. They're holding a sign or a flag and a smile, and that's it – umbrellas are not allowed. When it's cold they freeze and when it's windy they wish they were dressed more appropriately; some outfits they are made to wear would even be deemed too skimpy for the Presidents Club.

So it's goodbye, grid girls. Clearing the agenda nicely for arguably more pressing concerns: the paucity of wheel-to-wheel racing, bland modern circuits, unfair money distribution, soaring costs, over-complicated rules, dull engine sounds and fugly new halos. Little wonder Alonso wants to broaden his horizons.

'He's set for a year of horrendous jet lag. His summer schedule is busier than that of a Center Parcs pool cleaner'

 @tedkravitz

Ted is the pitlane reporter for Sky Sports F1



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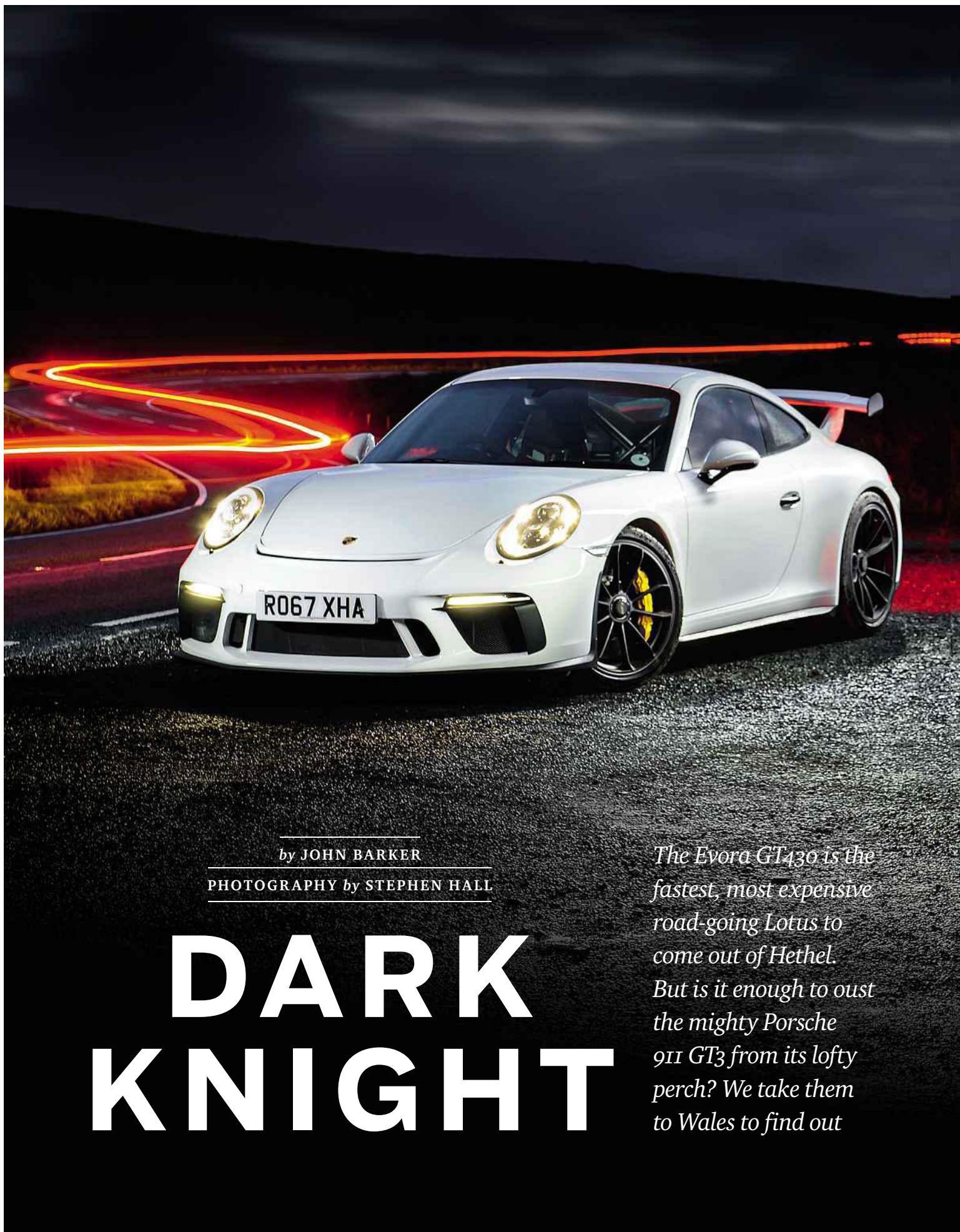
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by JOHN BARKER

PHOTOGRAPHY by STEPHEN HALL

DARK KNIGHT

The Evora GT430 is the fastest, most expensive road-going Lotus to come out of Hethel. But is it enough to oust the mighty Porsche 911 GT3 from its lofty perch? We take them to Wales to find out





IT'S A BIG ASK, BEATING THE 911 GT3, A CAR that's been at the top of its game for nearly two decades, but if there's a Lotus that can, it's the Evora GT430. Like the 911, the Evora has been in a constant state of evolution, getting lighter and more powerful with each new version. The limited-edition GT430 offers the best power-to-weight ratio of any Evora so far and, frankly, we'd be gutted if it didn't, because up close it looks like it's made entirely from carbonfibre... and it comes with a price tag that suggests as much. But we'll come back to that. Right now there's some testing Welsh asphalt to tackle, and the first unexpected discovery to be made.

The sun is out and the temperature is mercifully above freezing, but an ambient of 7deg C means that the Michelin Cups fitted to both cars are just below their operating range. Adding to the challenge, the surface is wet. With senses on high alert I set off in the Lotus and within a couple of corners I'm surprised at the level of traction and grip. The further I go, and the more of this undulating, twisting and difficult road that passes beneath the GT430's wheels, the more impressed I am. Even working the growly V6 hard, I can't seem to unstick the fat rear tyres.

It's so good that I wonder if there's very subtle electronic intervention going on behind the scenes, keeping everything under control. To test that theory, I go through the motions to turn off the traction control, which involves a combination of TC and Race

mode button pushing. A few more miles and the Lotus remains as hooked up and on line as before.

I wasn't expecting that. Nor was I expecting the GT430 to ride as well as it does. It may look like a road-going race car but it clearly takes the 'GT' part of its name seriously. Either that or Lotus's chassis engineers just can't bring themselves to make a car that doesn't breathe with the road. The GT430 glides over tricky surfaces all of a piece, yet the sporty tightness of control you'd hope for is there too in the lack of pitch and roll and the crispness of response. It's a remarkable blend of skills.

The 911 should feel as hooked up as the Lotus in these conditions. It's a modern mystery how its masses can feel so balanced when there's a flat-six-shaped lump of metal hanging out the back, like a burly bloke on the other end of a see-saw. Logic says the engine is in the wrong place, except in conditions like these, when its leverage should help pin the GT3's fat rear Michelins to the road.

After the Lotus, the first things that strike you are that the 911's full bucket seats (optional) are more generously cut and that as soon as you're rolling, there's a chatter of feedback through the slimmer-rimmed but larger-diameter steering wheel. So you know what's happening at the tread blocks of the front tyres, which is handy because the 911 has less traction than the mid-engined (albeit only just) Evora.

I didn't see that coming, and the reason is unclear. The Porsche's rear tyres are slightly fatter – 305/30 R20 versus 295/30 R20 – but they don't have to cope with a chunk more torque; the GT3's 4-litre flat-six delivers 339lb ft at 6000rpm, while the GT430's supercharged 3.5-litre V6 churns out 325lb ft at a more accessible 4500rpm. A few more miles confirm that the 911 has less rear grip, but because it has a front end that lets you know what's going on, it isn't an issue; you feel informed, engaged in the process, confident that you know what's going to happen.

Parked beside each other, these two hardcore drivers' cars look quite different, both in proportions and theme. In all white, with its centre-lock wheels and visible half cage, the 911 looks like it could be one of a batch of identical homologation cars awaiting a set of slicks, sponsor's livery and the first shake-down test of the season. On the other hand, with its swathes of exposed carbonfibre and mid-engined proportions, the Evora looks like a miniature supercar embodying recent GT race car aerodynamic thinking. Its nose is made up of multiple sculpted components, there are wing-top slats for venting the front wheel wells and ducts for

'The 911 looks like it's awaiting a set of slicks, some livery and the first shake-down test of the season'

the rears, plus a high-mounted rear wing. While the standard Evora profile gives it a push-me-pull-me look, the GT430's aero addenda, deleted rear side glass and bigger rear wheels and tyres give it a dart-like profile.

This dark, stealthy example is number one of a limited edition of 60, all of them sold despite a list price before options of £112,500. That makes it the most expensive Lotus ever, and it claims a number of other Lotus records too, including most powerful production model (430bhp) and fastest top speed (196mph). Impressive stuff, though there are a couple of caveats. In 2012 Lotus made the even more limited edition Evora GTE (just 25 made) to homologate its GTE-class racer, and that had a claimed 438bhp. Meanwhile, the fastest top speed goes to the 'Sport' version of the GT430, which makes do without the bold rear wing and has less drag.

Left: no PDK here for once – this GT3 has the manual 'box, and it's a good 'un; engine is way out back, but you wouldn't know it from behind the wheel



‘A 1299kg kerb weight for a car of this scale and performance is a fine achievement and true to the Lotus philosophy’



The bewinged car goes to ‘just’ 190mph, but the extra downforce it creates – 250kg at max speed compared with 100kg for the Sport – helps lop a second off its Hethel lap time and means that the GT430 matches the 1min 25.8sec set by the stripped-back 3-Eleven.

The Sport is the lighter of the two versions, too, by 10kg, but if you’re spending over £100k on an Evora you might as well go the whole hog. This example has optional metallic grey paint that from a distance disguises just how much carbonfibre there is on show. The front and rear bumper aprons are carbon but mostly painted, but the front ‘bonnet’, the roof and the engine cover are all in lacquered carbonfibre, and it’s beautifully done, particularly the roof with its centre-line join giving a herringbone effect.

Some of these panels were first seen on the previous lightest Evora, the Sport 410. The big contributors that make the GT430 26kg lighter still are an even greater use of carbonfibre (-4.7kg), a titanium exhaust (-10kg), new adjustable Eibach/Öhlins spring/damper units (-10kg), and a number of detail savings (-10.3kg).

Offsetting that 35kg by 9kg is the new rear wing plus wider wheels and tyres.

Mind, whichever way you cut it, a 1299kg kerb weight for a car of this scale and performance is a fine achievement and true to the Lotus philosophy. Porsche might not use such obviously lightweight materials for the GT3 but its body is a clever fusion of high-tensile steel and aluminium and, like the Lotus, its rear seats are deleted. The GT3 is no heavyweight but at 1413kg, it gives away 114kg to the GT430.

There’s no impression that the Lotus has been stripped out, either. The interior has come a long way since the Evora’s 2009 launch. It’s now a neat confection of Alcantara and perforated and smooth leather with contrasting stitching, and the instruments are much more convincing than the originals, with clear white-on-black faces and red needles. The Sparco seats do look small and minimalist though, their carbon shells trimmed with just enough padding and material to offer comfort and durability. The fixed backrest angle is a fraction too upright for me and it seems it can’t be adjusted beyond sliding it fore and aft, even if you’re handy with an





Left: Evora's 370mm ventilated front brake discs sit within Michelin Cup tyres. **Above:** GT3 is made from more conventional materials compared with the Lotus's generous use of carbonfibre

Allen key. The driving position is all pretty square, the aluminium pedals decently spaced, the clutch light.

Fire the engine up and it gives a characteristic V6 growl before settling to a steady idle. Snick the lever into first and you sense the improvements to the gearshift: the action is tighter, firmer, more positive. The gearing still seems quite tall, though, with second gear stretching to 70mph and therefore more than enough for the cut and thrust of B-roads. Even so, there's a real and very appealing sense of a lightweight car propelled by a torque-rich engine. The response of the Toyota-derived V6 is enhanced by a low-inertia, single-mass flywheel, and even the roll-on in fourth is impressive, the engine digging in from 2000rpm and trumpeting its enthusiasm through the central pipe.

It's pretty vocal, though not as painfully loud as the example Adam Towler tried in *evo* 243, probably because among the options fitted to this car is the sound insulation pack. It costs £500 and when added to the others – metallic paint (£1200), 'premium' infotainment head unit, sub-woofer and amp (£2400), air

'It feels like you're sitting on the floor, but the superb all-round visibility of the 911 helps put you at ease'

con (£1500), black machined-rim forged wheels (£900) – brings the total to £119k, and presumably adds a few kilos, too.

The Porsche also has some options, bumping its price from a list of almost £112k to £130k. They include LED headlamps, front-axle lift, carbon-ceramic brakes, leather interior and those bucket seats. They're fixed-back, like the Lotus's, but with electric cushion height/tilt adjustment allowing the backrest angle to be trimmed. On the lowest setting it feels like you're sitting on the floor but, as ever, the superb all-round visibility of the 911 helps put you at ease. In contrast, rear visibility in the Evora is compromised

by the slatted engine cover and the lack of rear side windows, especially at oblique junctions.

Their power-to-weight ratios say the two cars should feel equally quick. The lighter Lotus weighs in with 336bhp per ton, the more potent Porsche packs 355bhp per ton, its naturally aspirated flat-six making 493bhp at 8250rpm. They do seem similarly rapid, but in different ways. The Evora's delivery is punchier low down and overall more linear, its gutsy supercharged V6 really starting to push on at 4000rpm but then seemingly cut off in its prime by the abrupt limiter soon after 7000rpm. After a relatively less gutsy start, the 911 is also digging deep by 4000rpm and by 6000rpm is really starting to wind up. Just as the Evora engine heads for the buffers, the 911's makes that magical, thrilling move of fully hitting its stride, crazily escalating both the power and the sound to 8000rpm and beyond. It's electrifying, nape prickling, and for the full-on experience you need to hold it from tickover to 9000rpm in one gear.

We've mostly driven the 991.2 GT3 in PDK form, but the six-speed manual, as fitted here, makes for a better, more nuanced experience. Forays into the upper realms of the rev range are less frequent and more special because you lean on the engine's torque more, when the PDK would have dropped a couple of cogs and ripped on to the red line. A beneficial side-effect is that you encounter the uncomfortable 7000rpm resonance less

'You get into a satisfying groove with the Lotus. There's much to enjoy and admire, not least the finesse displayed by its ride'

often. The shift is darned good, too. The Evora's 'box has a lovely, positive, mechanical feel, but the 911's feels tighter and even more slick, and the clutch weight feels more in harmony with the other controls.

In all cars, time behind the wheel allows you to acclimatise to their controls and foibles, then adapt to them. However, when you then swap into a car that has better control weights and more linearity of response, you notice right away. After the Evora, the GT3 is such a car. You can get into a satisfying groove with the Lotus, and there is much to enjoy and admire, not least the finesse displayed by its ride, which smooths away small imperfections and delivers great control over the bigger stuff for remarkably poised, calm progress, with fantastic grip, too.

Then you get into the Porsche and, although it's not perfect, so much of it is so right, and it starts with the steering. It's not as sharp as the Lotus's but it's

Below and right: GT430 combines a poised, calm ride with fantastic levels of grip, even in these conditions; it's the only Lotus that comes with a limited-slip differential





‘The weight, smoothness and directness of the steering are spot on, but it lacks that crucial amount of feedback that gives confidence’

Above right: Evora cabin much improved; Toyota-sourced V6 punchy low down, but is stopped in its stride by the rev limiter

connected and talkative and paints a clear picture of what's happening that puts you at ease. Not so long ago, electric power steering, such as the 911 has, was judged inferior in feel to hydraulic power steering (now rare), which the Lotus has. This was certainly the case when the first generation 991 was new, but Porsche has been working hard on closing the gap. The sportiest 991s benefit from rear steering, sharpening initial response, but equally impressive and harder to deliver is detailed feedback. The GT3 has it in spades.

The next day starts frosty. You get a warm feeling being in the GT430; it's the best built of all the Evoras I've tried, with such a reassuring sense of quality and integrity. However, heading east on the A5 out of Betws-y-Coed, up the twists between the stone walls, I'm feeling for icy patches, which again highlights the Lotus's lack of feel. The weight, smoothness and directness of the steering are spot on, but it lacks that crucial amount of feedback that gives confidence. Further out, pressing on, the weighting becomes a

fraction light and inputs reveal a light front, heavy rear balance of masses that tempers your pace a little.

Getting into the 911 again confirms this. Its steering is more natural, authentic – the response you get for the input you make is spot on. But it's also the overall balance that makes a difference. The Porsche feels lower slung, and although its engine is way out back, it doesn't feel like it; the car turns like all the masses are gathered between the axles. It's quite some feat of engineering.

The contrast becomes even sharper through the wet bend we choose for some cornering shots. I take the GT3 first, which is in itself an indicator of confidence. I do a run with all the aids on, to sense the grip, then go again with ESC and TC off. The front catches the apex, the rear slips out under power, and I back out and neutralise. Next time through, I stay with the slip and hold the power steady for a few moments. It feels nicely poised, comfortable with the attitude; and you as the driver have control and options.

The Evora is, well, less good. In fact, all that has been hinted at over the miles we've covered crystallises here. First, the front doesn't want to bite and the rear doesn't want to let go, so next time through, I'm more patient and let the front hook into the turn and then power up the rear. It slips wide but the breakaway is too quick, too sudden. Back off and the momentum-loaded rear regains grip abruptly and the tail bounces back into line. Not smooth, not calm, not reassuring. This is much

'The 911 takes the level of engagement to another plane, delivering rewards at all speeds'



PORSCHE 911 GT3 (991.2)

Engine Flat-six, 3996cc
Power 493bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque 339lb ft @ 6000rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
Tyres 245/35 ZR20 front, 305/30 ZR20 rear
Weight 1413kg
Power-to-weight 355bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 198mph (claimed)
Basic price £111,802
On sale Now

evo rating ★★★★★

like the behaviour you'd expect of a full-scale mid-engined supercar. Sure, there's a six-position traction control allowing you to dial in rear-tyre slip values between one and 12 per cent, but essentially the Evora does not feel as poised or balanced at or over the limit. In fact, the Lotus feels more like a 911 than the Porsche does.

What makes it more of a challenge is that lack of steering feel. Feelsome steering used to be one of the most rewarding aspects of the Evora, and the GT430 shows why it is so important. Without it, it's difficult to feel the bite that the front has and thus what the rear might do if you

LOTUS EVORA GT430

Engine V6, 3456cc, supercharger
Power 430bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 325lb ft @ 4500rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
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
On sale Now

evo rating ★★★★★

push harder. And given that the balance isn't there and the rear feels like the tail wagging the dog, that's a crucial loss.

There are a few other aspects that rattle: the shut lines are large, as if drawn with a crayon, where the Porsche's are drawn with a Rotring 0.5mm fine pen, and the ignition key and column stalks are inexpensive Ford parts, circa 1983.

That said, in many more important respects, this is a deeply impressive car. The standard of the carbonfibre work is very high, there's a real sense of quality and integrity, and the engine and gearbox have character and purpose. And, as ever,

the ride quality is exceptional and allied to superb body control.

In the end though, as with most other rivals that have strayed onto its patch, the GT3 comes out on top. It's not as special to look at, it isn't made from obviously exotic materials, it's not as rare and it isn't even the top of the 911 tree. It is also somewhat unobtainable, with significant premiums being sought right now.

Whether it's worth almost £200k is debatable, but there's no question it is a very finely honed, very satisfying drivers' car. It has superb steering feel and thus gives a better sense of connection with the road at all times, but especially when you're pressing on and feeling out the limits. And, against expectation, at and beyond the limit it is better balanced and more exploitable than the Evora. Equally importantly, though, the slick, short-throw shift of the manual gearbox transforms the experience compared with the PDK car, making it much more a tool of the driver rather than just a crazy-fast ride.

It takes the level of engagement to another plane, delivering rewards at all speeds, not just when the spectacular flat-six is keening for the 9000rpm red line, and ultimately helps ensure that the GT3 still sets the sports car standard. ✕

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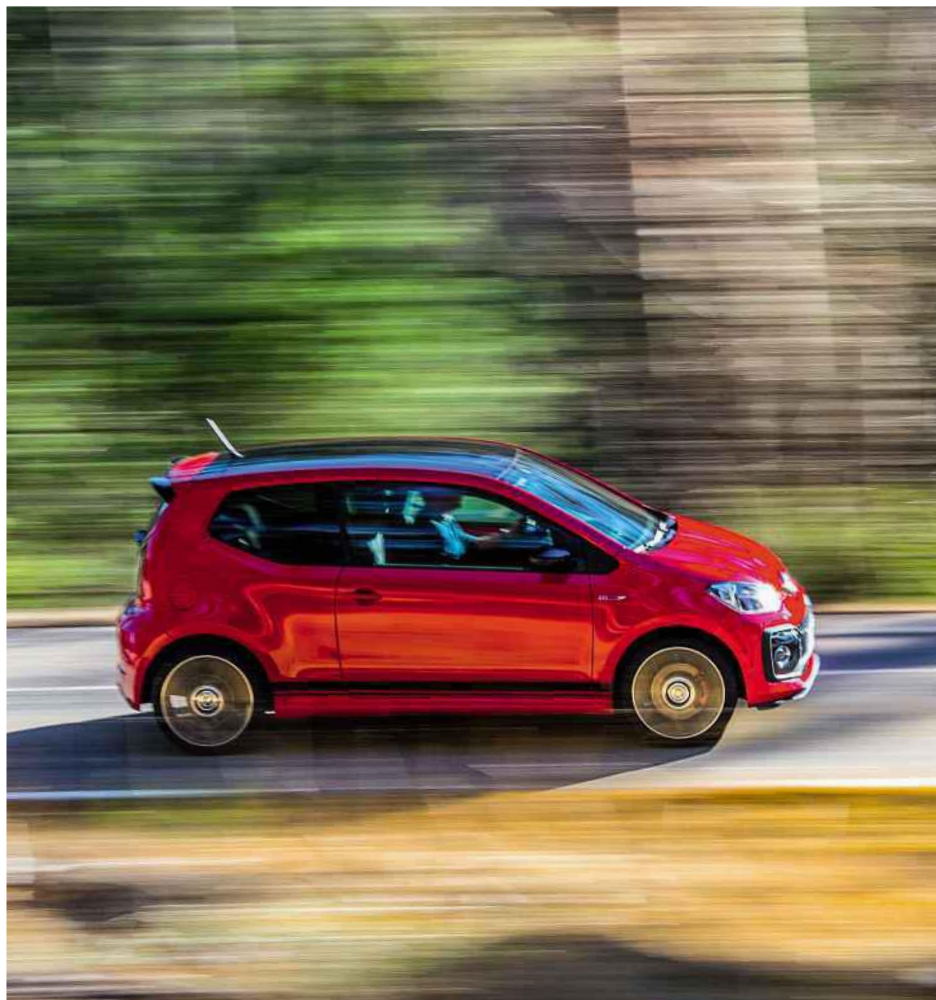
ON THE UP

by JAMES DISDALE

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

*VW's eagerly anticipated
mini GTI looks the part,
but does it have the
depth of talent to deliver
where it matters?*







Above: Up GTI goes performance car baiting on the Côte d'Azur's finest twisties. **Left:** steering wheel is lifted straight from the Golf. **Below left:** seats look good but offer little support

ON PAPER THE RAW statistics don't look all that appealing – 113bhp, 999cc, 0-62mph in 8.8 seconds and a top speed of 122mph. These aren't figures to get the adrenal gland working overtime. Yet despite the humble numbers it's fair to say that the car they belong to, the VW Up GTI, is one of the most hotly anticipated arrivals of 2018.

Why? Well, there are a couple of reasons. Firstly, the tiny VW promises to be a timely antidote to a modern motoring landscape dominated by stories of draconian variable speed limits, crippling congestion and the rapid consumption of the earth's resources. Secondly, the Up's power and performance figures are uncannily close to those of the VW Golf GTI Mk1, which delivered the sort of unfiltered driving thrills every subsequent generation of GTI has arguably struggled to recapture.

Parked up in the wintry sunshine just outside Nice airport there's no denying the boxy Up GTI looks the part. It plays the classic hot VW game of perfectly blending visual aggression with classy, understated appeal. All the GTI calling cards are there, from the ever-so-subtle bodykit to the front grille's red pinstripe.

Now, it would have been all too easy to make this a cynical marketing exercise by slapping some big wheels and go-faster stripes onto any old Up, but VW has tried to do this properly. The compact engine bay means no room for four cylinders, but the turbocharged triple has been massaged with more boost pressure and an intercooler to deliver 113bhp and 147lb ft – gains of 24bhp and 29lb ft over

the cooking TSI model. That should be enough given the GTI tips the scales at 995kg. Power is transmitted to the front wheels via a six-speed manual gearbox (earlier Ups have made do with a five-speed manual) with closer stacked ratios.

Like the humdrum version, suspension is by independent struts at the front and a torsion beam at the rear, but on the GTI the ride height is 15mm lower and the springs and dampers have been stiffened. Other tweaks include tougher top mounts and redesigned rear trailing arms, plus heavily modified versions of the Polo's steering rack and ventilated front brake discs. All very promising.

VW's people have planned a route that saunters along the autoroute to the overpoliced tax haven of Monte Carlo, before taking in some twisty rural roads on the return leg to the airport. However, as we're in the shadow of mountains that are home to driving playgrounds such as the Col de Turini and Col de Vence, it takes photographer Aston Parrott and me about three nanoseconds to decide to splinter off from the group and head for the hills.

As we make our way through the suburbs of Nice it's fair to say the GTI doesn't feel that much different to a standard Up. Yes, there's the chunky three-spoke wheel from the Golf and that car's natty Jacara tartan trim, too (although the seats themselves are the same flat-looking items you'll get in any Up), but like its lower-powered relatives the GTI is uncommonly quiet and composed for such a small machine, while the major controls have the sort of slick, easy-going precision that mark out VW's

'The Up GTI's power and performance figures are uncannily close to those of the Mk1 Golf GTI'





‘Find a twisty stretch and the Up will hang on to the tail of much more powerful cars like a hyperactive terrier’

larger models. Yes, the ride is firmer, but it never becomes brittle and does a fine job of filtering out the worst imperfections.

It's the engine that's most noticeably different, and not necessarily for the right reasons. In an effort to give the three-pot more gravitas, a sound symposer has been added to augment the off-beat thrum. Unlike similar systems that use the car's speakers, this one uses acoustic resonators for a more natural sound, but at low speeds and low revs the slightly boomy backbeat is a little off-putting.

There are positive signs, though. The combination of low mass and a torque peak of 147lb ft from just 2000rpm means the GTI accelerates with the sort of effortless elasticity of all the best hot hatches, while roundabouts are dispatched with the low inertia, low roll eagerness that marks out all lightweight specials.

As the suburban landscape turns to sparse and rocky hillside it's possible to give the GTI its head. It's brisk rather than genuinely quick, but there's enough poke to keep things interesting, plus you're able to wring every last drop of performance potential from it without risking life and licence. As the roads open out, third gear is all you really need, with the triple pulling throatily from 25mph and spinning merrily to 6000rpm and around 80mph – more than enough on roads peppered with blind exits, rocky outcrops and steep drops. Happily, the soundtrack improves with exercise, the engine note taking on the cry of a 911 flat-six that's taken a lungful of helium.

The modified Polo brakes scrub the speed off efficiently, while the pedal action is better weighted and more progressive than the standard car's. The steering is slower and lighter than you'd expect, but it's precise enough and

the 195-section Goodyears bite hard. Factor in dinky dimensions and you can fling the GTI along these roads with real abandon, playing the old, wheel-at-each-corner Mini game of trying to maintain momentum through each bend. Find a consistently twisty stretch and the Up will hang on to the tail of much more powerful cars, like a hyperactive terrier snapping at the heels of a fleeing postman.

It's this David versus Goliath point-to-point pace that creates the real magic, because as a true drivers' car the VW falls a little short. There's not much in the way of feedback through the steering, while any attempt to adjust the car's mid-corner balance using the steering and throttle elicits a well-calibrated but firm response from the stability control, which can't be switched off – this is a car that has to work for complete novices rather than hardened track heroes.

Push really hard and the Up's city car roots are cruelly exposed, with bumps sending the slightly too soft suspension into occasional bouts of discombobulating bounciness. It's enough to convince you that the VW is more fun plaything than serious road warrior. Another hint is given by those flat seats, which look the part but fail to truly support on the many hairpins around these parts.

Yet to castigate the Up for these flaws is to miss the point. No, it's not the fastest or sharpest tool in the box, but at this price there's currently no other new car that delivers the same infectious appetite for fun. If you're a youngster starting out on your performance car journey, or even somebody trying to recapture their youth, then the Up GTI has been worth the wait. I reckon it'd be a great base for a harder and faster Clubsport version too. Over to you, VW. ☒

Volkswagen Up GTI

Engine In-line 3-cyl, 999cc, turbo **Power** 113bhp @ 5000rpm **Torque** 147lb ft @ 2000-3500rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive **Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, passive dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** Torsion beam, coil springs, passive dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** 288mm ventilated front discs, drums rear **Wheels** 17in front and rear **Tyres** 195/40 R17 front and rear **Weight** 995kg **Power-to-weight** 115bhp/ton **0-62mph** 8.8sec (claimed) **Top speed** 122mph (claimed) **Basic price** £13,750 **On sale Now** **evo rating** ★★★★★



by JAMES DISDALE

PHOTOGRAPHY by DAVE SMITH

HATCH TRICK

With four-wheel steer and a clever suspension set-up, the latest Mégane RS is a welcome return to form for Renault Sport. Look out, Civic Type R...





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MOVING AMONGST THE SMALL GATHERING OF journalists and photographers, Renault Sport boss Patrice Ratti gives off the impression of being confident and relaxed, but there's a palpable sense of tension in the room. It's July 2017 and we're at Renault Sport's HQ in a nondescript collection of buildings on the outskirts of Paris. We're here for an audience with the new Mégane RS – months before its official debut at that year's Frankfurt motor show – and also the people behind it, all of whom appear to be at great pains to explain that this car will be a good 'un.

This isn't a simple unveiling followed by a quick Q&A and some canapés, this is a proper deep-dive, nuts-and-bolts, four-hour-long forensic examination of every aspect of the hotly anticipated hot Mégane. Reading between the lines it's not hard to imagine what's really being said is: 'Yes, we messed up the Clio RS, but don't worry, we won't make the same mistake twice.'

The other reason for being ushered across the Channel way before the car's public debut is revealed by the '4Control' badges on each C-pillar. That's right, this Mégane features four-wheel steering. Of course, there's also lots of talk about the new 1.8-litre engine, the availability of a twin-clutch transmission for the first time, the hydraulic bump-stops and even the LED headlights, but it's clear that 4Control is the main subject of 'education'.

The hardware is largely the same as that used on the Mégane GT, but the tuning is pure Renault Sport. Essentially, the electronically controlled set-up features actuators that can turn the rear wheels up to 2.7 degrees in the opposite direction to the fronts, then as speeds rise this switches to up to 1 degree in the same direction as the front wheels. This changeover happens at 37mph in all modes other than Race, where the switch occurs at 62mph. According to Renault, steering response is 20 per cent faster than on the old car, while high-speed stability is in a different league.

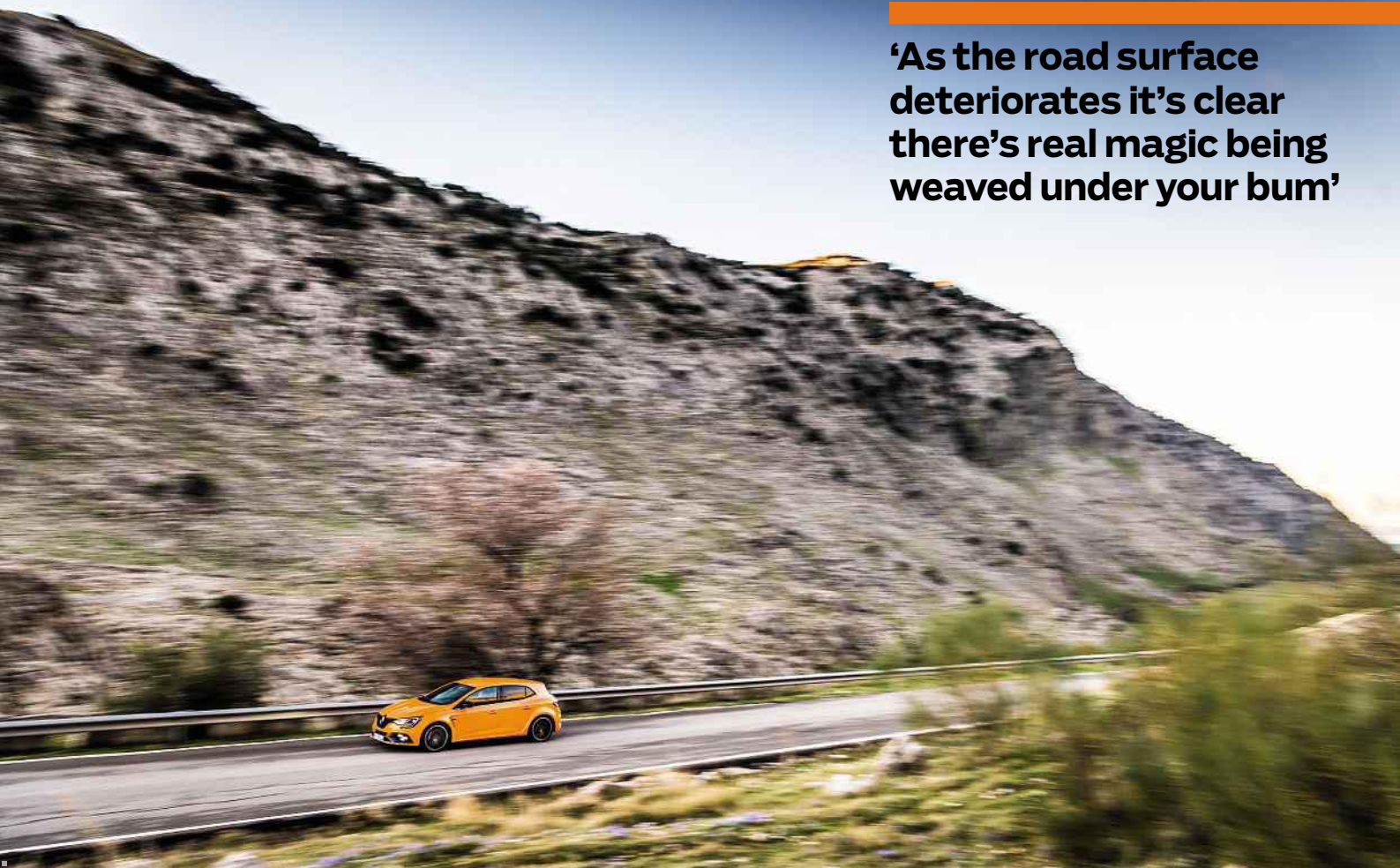
Yet after all the graphs, statistics and technical explanations, it's the parting shot of chassis engineer Antoine Frey that is most intriguing. 'Ultimately with this new system,' he says, 'you shouldn't be able to tell that the car has four-wheel steering.' We'd have to wait over six months to find out if he was right.

Fast forward to the present day, and photographer Dave Smith and I are in Jerez, Spain, where we're confronted with a long line of Volcanic Orange Méganes glinting in the sun. Putting the car's

Top right: Mégane RS is incredibly poised through both fast and slower bends.
Top left: interior a step up in quality. **Left:** 18-inch alloys are standard



**'As the road surface
deteriorates it's clear
there's real magic being
weaved under your bum'**





novel underpinnings to one side for a moment allows me to take in the styling, which treads a beautifully judged line between subtlety and aggression. The first thing you notice are the bulging wheelarches that cover tracks stretched by 60mm at the front and 45mm at the rear, while an aggressive diffuser is claimed to generate enough downforce to negate the need for a Civic Type R-style spoiler on stilts. Sitting on standard 18-inch alloys the RS looks hunkered, purposeful and bursting with muscular intent.

It feels right on the inside, too. You sit just low enough in a high-backed and heavily bolstered seat that's squishy and soft in the finest French tradition, while ahead of you is a three-spoke wheel complete with de rigueur 12 o'clock marker. There are also aluminium pedals, a configurable TFT screen for the dial pack and – what's this? – a pair of gearshift paddles. Yes, all the cars here are fitted with the six-speed EDC (Efficient Dual Clutch) transmission, because that's what Europe gets first. (We'll have to wait until later in the year for UK cars, but we'll get a six-speed manual, too.) In all other respects it's standard Mégane, which means the sort of tight build and soft-touch plastics that are a huge improvement over the slightly cheap and cheerful ambience of the old car.

Thumb the starter button and the engine fires quickly before settling to a bassy, burbling idle. The turbocharged 1.8-litre has been seen in the Alpine A110, but for the Mégane it's been treated to a few choice upgrades. The cylinder head's been breathed on by Renault's Formula 1 boffins, while there's also a new, faster-acting twin-scroll turbo, a higher capacity, dual-intake air filter and the same mirror coating of the cylinder bores as the Nissan GT-R's V6. Serious stuff, but the resulting power and torque figures of 276bhp

and 288lb ft are class competitive rather than class leading.

Selecting Drive and moving away, the sense of trepidation is almost overwhelming. Porsche has proved that when four-wheel steering is done well it enhances performance without detracting from the driving experience, but can Renault pull off the same trick? Guiding the Mégane over the first roundabout my heart sinks in unison with the oddly lazy sashay from the rear axle as it swings left-right-left a fraction of a second behind the front wheels. A little further up the road are a series of quicker bends where I find myself having to open the meatily weighted steering a little after turn-in as the rear wheels' eagerness to get in on the action has the nose pointing at the apex sooner than I anticipate.

However, there's little time to dwell, as our mountain road destination has switched from breathtakingly beautiful to barely visible. Low clouds obscure the views, while rain combines with the dusty tarmac to create ice-like conditions. Any attempt to push the Mégane now would be foolhardy and risk a red-faced call to Renault explaining that its pride and joy is parked in a granite rock face. With the light fading we call it quits for the day.

While I'm disappointed not to get the measure of the RS or its trick steering, the return trip reveals plenty of reasons to be cheerful. The engine is better than expected, feeling much stronger than its small capacity and average power and torque figures would suggest. It pulls hard from low revs and spins enthusiastically and rortily all the way to the 7000rpm cut-out. The experience is enhanced by the clever design of the exhaust back box. As engine speeds rise, the change in pressure causes gases to bypass a longer silencer tube and head for a shorter exit pipe, which results in a



satisfying rasp when the engine's extended and a muffled fusillade of pops and bangs on the overrun. It's sporty without getting irritating and ostentatious: I'm talking about you, Ford Focus RS.

Yet it's the damping that really steals the show, because as the road surface deteriorates it's clear there's real magic being weaved under your bum. Our car is on the standard suspension (a ten per cent stiffer Cup set-up will be an option) but on these poorly surfaced Spanish roads it strikes just the right balance between control and comfort. There's some firmness at low speed, but also an incredible plushness to the way the RS rides broken tarmac. Over really bad dips and crests I expect a sickening crash and shudder as the springs hit the limit of their travel, but instead the Mégane simply shrugs off the compression and continues at unabated speed. This incredible composure is largely down to the hydraulic bump-stops. With the ability to be tuned for a wider array of stroke and load, this neat addition has allowed Renault Sport to avoid the need for costly and complicated adaptive dampers.

If there's a weakness it's the EDC transmission. The column-mounted paddles are too small and set too high, meaning manual shifts are an uncomfortable finger stretch away. The 'box also shifts up automatically even when manual changes are selected in Sport mode. Race mode gives full control, but here the changes are delivered with a jolt clearly designed to hint at race-bred sportiness but which actually prove a little irritating. At least EDC is smooth and unobtrusive enough when left to its own devices, making the motorways and a crawl through suburbs satisfyingly effortless.

It's still dark when we set off the following morning, but the star-filled sky and dry roads suggest the weather will be on our side.

'On 18-inch alloys it looks hunkered, purposeful and bursting with muscular intent'



'The RS can pick apart roads with phenomenal dexterity and pace'

Before long the sun is up and we're bearing down on our destination road, the A-374 that wriggles its way through the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park. A mix of tight hairpins and fast sweepers, it's hemmed in by vertigo-inducing cliff faces and perilous drops. It's here that the Mégane and I click.

The dry tarmac allows me to exploit the prodigious grip and lean harder on a chassis that's up there with the very best. The trick is to be more measured and economical with your inputs and allow the four-wheel steer to do its thing. Worked like this the Mégane comes alive, slicing through quick corners with incredible poise and stability, while slower stuff is dispatched with uncanny agility.

The 4Control makes most sense in Sport or Race, where the system reacts faster and, in the case of the latter, continues to turn the rear wheels in the opposite directions as the fronts at much higher speeds to deliver the sort of angle of attack that usually happens when the rear has come unstuck and is gently rotating just a degree or so. It's eerie at first, but trust it and the Mégane can pick apart roads with phenomenal dexterity and pace.

Yet there's also genuine interaction and throttle adjustability, giving you options on entry, mid-corner and on exit. Renault Sport's Frey is right about it not feeling like a four-wheel-steer car, but it doesn't feel like it's two-wheel steer either; instead, it delivers unique sensations and abilities that mark it out from the crowd. The only cause for concern is the slight squirm and wriggle of torque-steer on some bumpy and heavily crowned surfaces, but hopefully this will be cured by the Torsen differential on the Cup cars.

Speaking of which, before we board the plane home there's a chance to have three laps of Jerez in a pre-production Cup-chassis car with a manual gearbox. The glassy smooth surface means it's impossible to tell what effect the stiffer springs and dampers have on the ride, but there's enough time to discover that pushed hard the Mégane RS is pointy, expressive and endowed with just enough feedback to make things interesting. This short stint also highlights that the Brembo brakes are as effective and strong as you'd hope, and confirms that the six-speed manual's precise and short throw will make it the transmission of choice.

So, has Renault Sport rediscovered its mojo? It's clear the Mégane RS is shot through with real magic, and in terms of its chassis dynamics it's up with the best. Factor in the impending arrival of a hardcore 296bhp Trophy model and it's clear there's plenty to be excited about. Of course, we'll have to wait to get the RS in the UK and put it chin spoiler to chin spoiler with the Civic Type R before we can grant it champ status, but all the signs suggest it'll be one of the closest and most thrilling battles of 2018. ✕

Renault Mégane RS

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1798cc, turbo **Power** 276bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 288lb ft @ 2400-4800rpm **Transmission** Six-speed twin clutch (option), front-wheel drive **Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, passive dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** Torsion beam, coil springs, passive dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** 355mm ventilated front discs, 290mm solid rear discs **Wheels** 18in front and rear **Tyres** 235/40 R18 front and rear **Weight** 1430kg **Power-to-weight** 196bhp/ton **0-62mph** 5.8sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (claimed) **Basic price** c£29,000 (est)

evo rating ★★★★★

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by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

WHY THE FASTEST DRIVERS ON EARTH NEED THIS MAN'S APPROVAL

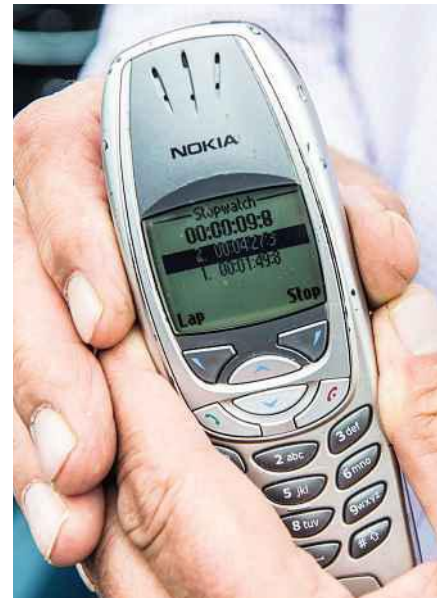
Having finessed the skills of many of the world's top racing drivers, Rob Wilson demonstrates the art of speed... in an Astra

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A DEFINABLE MOMENT when everything changed, but no matter how many times I repeat those brief seconds in my head, I just can't detect any discernible shift in body language or concentration, or any variation in driving style. It was completely, utterly, quite wonderfully seamless.

Picture the scene: Rob Wilson driving, me in the passenger seat, driving sedately around Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground in an unsuspecting and humble 1.4-litre Astra, deftly navigating Rob's own time-served 'circuit'. He's talking lines, technique, all in a constant but measured stream of consciousness. And then *BAM!*

Rob is still talking in his quiet, 50-a-day voice, still finessing the controls as though he's trying to cajole a petrified mare back into a stable. But the Astra, oh the poor Astra – it now appears to have been booted up the backside by a runaway elephant. We're entering the long right at the end of the runway at a velocity – a level of raw determination – I don't think I've ever seen or felt before, and my right foot instinctively starts to compress the carpet. Nails dig pathetically into plastic.

But the Astra's will is ruthlessly under Rob's command, and continues to be so for the next couple of laps, at a ferocity matched only by the lack of effort shown by its driver. This is truly the art of speed, and I'm here, like over half the current F1 grid have been, or currently do, to try to learn how on earth the man does it.



Rob started his full-time life with cars as a road tester on New Zealand's *Hot Rod* magazine in 1970. He subsequently had a long, varied and successful career as a racing driver, followed by a move into driving tuition. But this isn't just tuition of the kind available at racing circuits; this is much more than that. Rob doesn't preach from the conventional textbook, he's developed his own unique style to an extent that learned observers can detect his tutoring in the current crop of Formula 1 stars and professional racers around the globe. Whether it's the F1 debutant son of a billionaire, helicoptered into a bleak airfield, or the tutoring of World Champion Nico Rosberg in the early stages of his career, the Wilson Way is the favoured way. But what is it all about?

Listening to Rob talk about driving isn't like listening to a driving seminar, or being coached in any sense you might imagine. Rob uses a 1.4-litre Astra because it's not about fast cars, or being 'flash', or thinking you're quick with the proper gear. You could turn up in a new GT3 RS but I guarantee you'd be humiliated by the Astra.

In fact, Rob talks about driving like an art historian might critique a painting by a great master, or how a music scholar might dissect a symphony. He communicates with his hands, extols subtlety, looks for the grey in a harsh black and white environment. It's about smoothness, understanding, empathy. And it starts with tea.

'Imagine you're carrying a cup of tea upstairs,' he says in his husky, jovial tone, a homeland twang still apparent. 'If you jar the tea, your body reacts to cushion the tea so it doesn't spill. The shock absorption is in the bones. But if you put a newspaper under your arm, it spills, the absorption isn't there. That's like our relationship with the road's surface: you set up an unwanted resonance if you're abrupt with the controls. But if you do it correctly during that first five per cent [of input] – a 'soft introduction' – you're transferring the weight through to the wheel progressively, whether via the steering, or the brakes, or the throttle. You can sort of measure it up to a point, but it's hard to properly measure that first five per cent. Do it right and there's no



'Learned observers can detect his tutoring in the current F1 stars. The Wilson way is the favoured way'

join, and magically, the car stops, turns and even accelerates better.'

Think like Rob and you will quickly become obsessed with 'the surface'. You will analyse, contemplate and try to absorb every last tiny morsel of information you can about what's happening down at road level. Surface, weight distribution and what the tyres are doing will become your overwhelming focus. Braking, too, comes under the same examination.

'Say we have a static brake bias of 60:40 front-rear,' says Rob. 'That's probably more like 70:30 on the move, and if you're harsh on the brakes it's actually more like 75:25 initially. The rear brakes will get the message slightly later than the fronts [unless they're F1 electronic brakes], but if you're more progressive they'll start to get the message while they're more in touch with the ground [the rear will rise up as the weight moves forward under braking]. You might be a millisecond slower to reach maximum braking pressure, and that maximum might be 10bar lower, but you'll stop quicker overall.'

It's in the corners that Rob's approach really requires a new way of thinking. He wants to shorten the corner, and isn't particularly concerned about looking for a higher minimum speed through it. He's looking for a great rotation of the car, in effect, making a slight diagonal across

the bend that shouldn't be visible to the naked eye, and searching for a better exit onto the straight, where you can make up more time. The term 'flatter car' will ring in my ears when it's my time to drive, reducing tyre scrub, 'removing' weight from the outer front, forcing the car straight early on at the exit so as to not waste any forward momentum.

Even once we've left the right-hand corner, Rob stops me from making my way across the track in preparation for the left at the end of a long straight because, as he says, that's potentially 300kg of drag I've just put into the outside front tyre that we'll pay for all the way down the straight. Move across later on, like they now do leaving the Ascari chicane at Monza. I don't need to tell you now who they got that idea from...

With so much to learn, there isn't the space here to touch on more than just a glimmer of Rob's philosophy – but he'll be sharing more of his techniques in the pages of *evo* over coming months. They require extensive study. 'You've got to live it,' reflects Rob. 'You've got to practise it, and after years and thousands of times you'll think, "Yes. I'll go this way." Some people will "see" it, but not everybody.'

Make no mistake, that Astra certainly 'saw' it, and it, like me, may never be the same again. ❌

Top left: Rob Wilson explains the subtleties of his cornering technique to our man Towler. **Left:** Astra gets a workout at Bruntingthorpe. **Above left:** lap and split times are tracked on Wilson's old Nokia



by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

STORM FOURS

Wales unleashes its worst weather – perfect for putting the diverse four-wheel-drive systems of six very different cars to the test as we ask the question: is the future of the performance car all-wheel drive?



IT'S PITCH DARK, distressingly early, and unremittingly wet as I settle the invoice at our less than salubrious overnight accommodation. John Barker suddenly appears alongside me at the reception desk. 'Look,' he says, rotating his laptop to reveal the video he's playing. 'I've found this film that shows how Honda's SH-AWD set-up works.' It's probably one of the more savoury pieces of content that's been streamed within these yellowing, dank walls.

We are momentarily absorbed by this animation, because understanding the layout and workings of modern four-wheel-drive systems isn't straightforward, steeped as they are in technology, mythology and oft-repeated untruths. Four-wheel drive performance cars have evolved considerably over the years, from all-weather one-trick ponies, through those wonderful – and sometimes frisky – Mitsubishi Evos, to machines with the in-vogue tech of the moment. Four-wheel drive can now be a very active ingredient in a broad and dynamic handling repertoire, and is available in a multitude of forms that offer very different outcomes.

On top of this there's that common miscomprehension that four-wheel drive gives you more outright grip, whereas traction is a far more accurate description, and even that most famous four-wheel-drive marketing brand, quattro, isn't as simple as it first appears. We have two quattro systems in this story alone – the Haldex arrangement in the S1 and the Crown Gear set-up in the RS4.

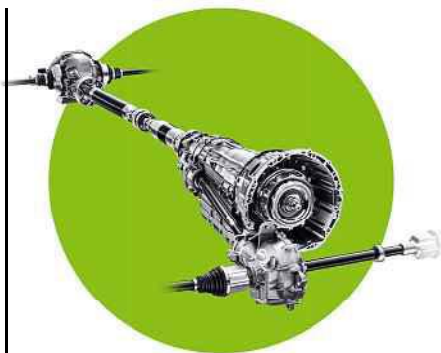
While it's one thing to describe how the systems work – which we will throughout this piece – it's another to actually feel what they do and how they impact upon the driving experience. Which is why **evo** is in Snowdonia, in January, with six intriguingly diverse cars – each with both axles driven in some form – and two days and a fair few miles ahead of us.

As I glance out into the car park, I see photographer Aston Parrott has already





'It's one thing to describe how the systems work, it's another to actually feel how they impact the driving experience'



MERCEDES-AMG E63 S

Drift mode puts control purely in the hands of the driver

THE E63 S AND NON-S BOTH HAVE THE LATEST iteration of 4Matic+, Mercedes' all-wheel-drive system, which instead of being predominantly rear-biased as it was before, is fully variable all of the time. On the higher-powered S, 4Matic+ also features a Drift mode, allowing power and torque to be fed to just the rear wheels.

The E63 always sends drive to the rear, and selectively to the front, with an electromechanically controlled centre coupling (a compact, multi-plate clutch) shifting drive forwards in a continuously variable way. The amount of torque sent to the front axle – if any – is determined by a complex look-up chart within the all-wheel-drive controller, which receives information from multiple sensors, including those measuring wheel speeds, steering input, throttle position and road speed. The parameters of the torque split are also determined by the drive mode selected.

Shifts between rear- and all-wheel drive are intended to be seamless and invisible, with all-wheel drive apparent only when required. One such scenario is the standing start: In any mode, simply press and hold the brake, then the throttle, then release the brake. 4Matic+ will recognise the situation and the E63 S will set off with total traction, even in the wet.

For the brave/confident, the centre coupling can be deactivated completely, so the E63 S is purely rear-drive. As part of the process to access this Drift mode, the stability control system must be disabled. Control of the E63 is now entirely in the hands of the driver, unlike with the Focus RS's Drift mode, which retains some electronic intervention. In the E63, it's your right foot, the mechanical limited-slip rear diff and the grip of a pair of 295/30 R20 tyres that determine grip or slip angle. **John Barker**

Engine V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo **Power** 604bhp @ 5750-6500rpm **Torque** 627lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm
0-62mph 3.4sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited)
Weight 1880kg (326bhp/ton) **Basic price** £87,375
evo rating ★★★★★

fired up the quattro (S1 flavour) and is waiting pointedly at the exit, impatient to try to catch that precious light of sunrise that's catnip to all snappers.

In fact, any hope of some ethereal dawn light will be completely in vain. Instead, none of us will be able to remember seeing so much rain as over the next 48 hours, as Wales is hit by a deluge of meteorological madness. That said, while this might make for one of Parrott's toughest assignments ever, we did want a stern test of the current all-wheel-drive performance car set, and mother nature has certainly provided that.

I jump into the Audi RS4 Avant first, a car we've so far only driven close to its Ingolstadt home. If ever a car was made for getting around ludicrously swiftly in these conditions, it's the RS4 – indeed, it was my choice last night when we all converged on our meeting point. As the miles passed with just the slightest flutter of wind around the Audi's wing mirrors, I thought about how Barker might be getting on in that 16th century Spanish instrument of torture that Lamborghini

often likes to fit as a bucket seat, or what the NSX's garish blaze of dashboard illumination might look like somewhere on a dark Welsh night. Now we're all in one convoy, the big AMG up front, then the Audi S1, the Ford Focus RS, the NSX, the Aventador S, and finally the RS4. Two days getting from north Wales to south, in atrocious weather, is go.

Right at this very moment, climbing the Llanberis Pass, I'm pretty glad to be snug inside the RS4. Wipers on their fastest setting, an outline of looming mountains just becoming visible in the murk and first light, I track the Aventador in front, a bow wave of water shock-blasting from its wheels and onto the slate walls, their jagged surfaces perilously close to extravagant Italian flanks like gladiatorial spikes ready to impale the careless. SW1 this is not, and

**'If ever a car was
made for getting
around swiftly in
these conditions,
it's the RS4'**

yet the Lambo appears to be holding its head high, singing its inimitable tune as only it can. I had forgotten, perhaps, the sheer depth, volume and sweet tonality of the V12, but here it is, a yowl, a real animalistic, yearning yowl that reaches right down into your soul and reaffirms why big, naturally aspirated V12s and supercars really are some of the finest things in life. When we reach the top, the Lambo's driver looks reasonably unruffled: would he be quite so cool had the Lambo been a rear-drive model?

Tempted as I am by the Avantador's beckoning scissor door, I nevertheless decide to take refuge from the rain and wind in the E63 S. On the way, I jog past James Disdale, newly vacated from the Merc, who shoots me a look from underneath the dripping leading edge of his anorak that suggests the mean Mercedes has made a considerable impression. The twin-turbo V8 *ka-booms* into life and, for me at least, the sheer violence of the E63's acceleration never wanes. What seems inconceivable pace for a large, upright, two-ton saloon never becomes mundane, never loses its shock

Above right:
Aventador S holds its
head high in appalling
weather. **Below:** RS4
can be surprisingly
tail-happy





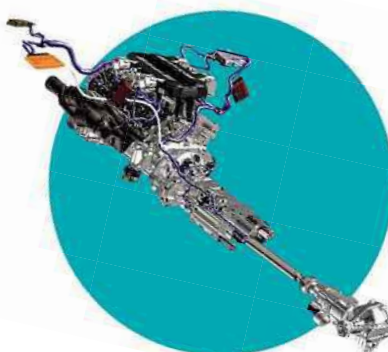
value. Whereas the RS4 had flowed down the road, occasionally distracted by standing water, the AMG feels like piloting a Royal Navy destroyer down the Thames. It bludgeons its way through puddles, clawing furiously at the road's surface to keep everything moving forwards with a manic determination not to be deflected off line. Arguably, the E63 has the most to gain from being capable of distributing torque to all four corners, because the implications of deploying 604bhp to just two rear wheels in these conditions are pretty obvious.

The AMG finds tremendous traction, but all of us find that what it can't do is disguise its bulk. Dizzy describes its exit from slow-speed corners as 'untidy' (oversteer followed by a rapid deployment of drive to the front axle to pull the car straight), which is inevitable given the physics at work. The firm, rather brittle ride (not shared by the non-S E63, it must be said), particularly in the car's more aggressive settings, and its very quick steering ratio feel like devices to disguise the weight. Having said that, stick to a slow-in, fast-out approach and the E63 S is sheer dynamite across the ground, and a fine example of what adding four-wheel drive to a traditional recipe can achieve. Quite simply, it's hard to imagine Mercedes making this car without 4Matic+. With 627lb ft of torque it would be a slave to the ESP system if rear-drive only; as it is, you can have extraordinary confidence in it.

Back in the RS4 and some food for

LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR S

Italian thoroughbred's unusual set-up has its pros and cons



IN SOME WAYS, THE AVENTADOR IS ideally configured for the addition of drive to the front axle. Since the Countach, Lamborghini has used the unusual layout of having the V12 mid-mounted, but rather than having the gearbox beyond it at the very rear of the car, it is in front, poking into the transmission tunnel.

This has its pros: masses are more centrally located, and the manual gearshift – when there was one – went directly into the gearbox rather than by remote linkage. There are cons too: mechanical complexity, additional hardware and weight. There is an extra pro, though: you can very easily take a propshaft off the end of the gearbox to take drive to the front wheels.

In the earliest all-wheel-drive Lamborghini (not counting the LM001), the Diablo VT, torque was delivered to

the front differential via a viscous coupling, a device that began working only when slip was detected. The Aventador has permanent, constantly variable four-wheel drive, the front: rear torque split based on what's happening at the wheels and which drive mode is selected. The fitment of rear-steering to the S, helping to rotate the car into turns, has helped increase the torque capacity of the rear axle, so the split can be more rear-biased than before.

The chosen drive mode alters the default torque split to suit the sort of driving and roads that the selected mode is likely to be used for. In Strada (street), the suspension is compliant and the all-wheel drive at its most front-biased – 40:60, front:rear. Sport mode, intended for enthusiastic road driving, gives the greatest agility, using a firmer damper set-up, rear-steer and a maximum of 90 per cent of torque to the rear to deliver agility and even a little oversteer before stability control intervention.

Perhaps unexpectedly, more drive goes to the front wheels in Corsa (track) mode than in Sport, the assumption being that on a circuit the driver will want the fastest lap times and thus maximum traction. The dampers are wound up, the stability control is backed off more, and the V12's torque output is split 20:80 front:rear. **JB**

Engine V12, 6498cc **Power** 730bhp @ 8400rpm **Torque** 509lb ft @ 5500rpm **0-62mph** 2.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 217mph (claimed) **Weight (dry)** 1575kg (471bhp/ton) **Basic price** £271,146 **evo rating** ★★★★★

‘Water blasts onto
the slate walls, their
jagged surfaces ready
to impale the careless’







FOCUS RS

'Twinstar' allows Ford's hot hatch to chart a different route

WHAT MAKES THE FOCUS'S ALL-WHEEL-DRIVE system different is that, when drive to the rear is engaged, a small difference in gearing between the front and rear axles (less than two per cent) overspeeds the rear wheels. They turn a little faster, loading the rear and giving a rear-drive feel.

The key part in all this is the GKN 'Twinstar' device that takes the place of the rear differential. The propshaft to it is always spinning, but the Twinstar is only engaged when required, at which point its twin wet clutch packs – one for each rear wheel – are activated. In steady-state running they are open, disconnecting the drive to the rear wheels, aiding economy but also essential because the difference in gearing would constantly try to rotate the rear wheels faster than the fronts.

The Twinstar also delivers one of the holy grails of drivetrain function: pure torque vectoring. The electronically controlled, hydraulically activated clutch packs send the appropriate torque independently to each rear wheel based on inputs such as steering wheel angle, lateral acceleration, yaw and speed. The moment the system senses rear-drive can help, torque is sent to the outer rear wheel. This speeds it up, rotating the Focus into the turn. Up to 100 per cent of the torque available at the rear can be sent to one wheel.

Electronic stability control systems typically manipulate a car's balance by braking individual wheels, whereas the Focus's system is enabling rather than restricting, adding positive torque rather than braking force. The degree of torque delivered to the rear wheels, and thus the attitude created, depends on the selected drive mode, from neutrality in Normal, to appreciably rear-drive in Track, and ultimately generous power oversteer in Drift. **JB**

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2261cc, turbo **Power** 345bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 347lb ft @ 2000-4500rpm
0-62mph 4.7sec (claimed) **Top speed** 166mph (claimed)
Weight 1547kg (227bhp/ton) **Basic price** £32,765
evc rating ★★★★★



thought: Audi offered us two cars for this test, one with and one without the Dynamic Ride Control adaptive damping that was fitted to that first new RS4 we tested in Germany (*evo* 244). We tried the one without this £2000 option and it was a serious disappointment. Its unsettled ride was at odds with the car's erstwhile ability to play the serene GT-car on demand, and more than a few of my colleagues questioned where I'd left my marbles on that trip to Ingolstadt. With DRC, the RS4 is transformed, thankfully, so if there's one thing to remember, don't, whatever you do, buy a new RS4 without ticking that box. Needless to say, it's the DRC-equipped car we have here.

After his first stint at the wheel, Barker begins his RS4 love-hate relationship: 'It's very appealing, initially. Sounds pretty good – growly and characterful – goes very well, and it all feels very polished and grown-up inside. It's not very distinct though, is it? The arches are square-cut but quite subtle, and the corporate nose

is hard to make much more aggressive, although they have tried.'

Remember the one about four-wheel-drive Audis understeering? Was that the nature of the original quattro system, with its crude, fixed torque split, or the fact that Audi slung the entire engine block north of the front axle? Or both, perhaps? It wasn't long ago that I had the opportunity to drive a B7 RS4 again – that first V8-engined version – and while it was a lovely thing, I'd forgotten just how nose-led the handling balance was once the car settled into a corner. Fast forward to today, and the latest RS4, with its Crown Gear system, is nothing of the sort. Like its RS5 relative, you can sense the rear axle playing a greater part as the corner opens out.

What really sets this RS4 apart from its forebears is the rear Sport Differential,

'You tend to drive the Aventador hard up to a certain point, but always with a good margin in hand'

Top left: hogging the pumps. **Middle left:** Italian's cabin is a mix of high-tech and a previous era







Above: weight counts against the Focus RS, off the line and in terms of ride quality. **Bottom left:** Barker has a love-hate relationship with the RS4

which is standard on UK cars. With this set to Dynamic, the RS4 feels appreciably more neutral and often surprisingly tail-happy. The drawback is that in extremis you're never really sure what you're going to get. Sometimes there's an initial phase of understeer to work through, another time just a hint of oversteer. Yet on a third occasion it's easy to find the tail swinging so wide that a full armful of lock is required, and, very soon afterwards, a determined winding back of the steering if the front wheels aren't to bite and spit the car off the road the other way.

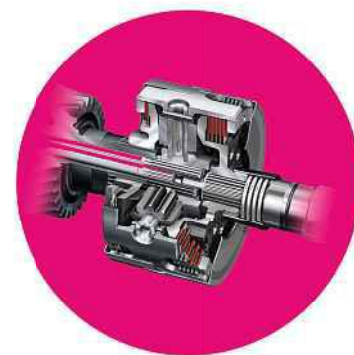
Our convoy is moving in a southerly direction now, and the roads are opening out into fast, sweeping curves spanning bleak-looking moors barely visible in the mist. I think I'm setting a reasonably swift pace until I check the rear-view mirror and spot a small, red car flitting impatiently around behind me. Sure, Barker is a legendary pedaller, but that little S1 has clearly got some serious pace about it, and while I'm constantly on edge worrying about the omnipresent patches of standing water, the S1's driver seems completely unfazed. When we come to a halt, I find out why. 'Chasing you in the RS4, I could see the allowances you were making for the lack of turn-in bite, the avoiding of standing water, the early braking,' says JB. 'The S1 felt

lithe, responsive, planted, with great ride, composure, grip and traction.' Essentially, the benefits of a light car, as ever, are not to be underestimated.

The ubiquitous 'on demand' Haldex system allows the S1 to deploy all of its considerable torque with almost no drama – there's none of the wheel twitching and scrabbling a front-driver would be displaying in these conditions, and while Haldex remains one of the more pragmatic systems, shunning tail-out theatrics, its reactions have come a long way since its early days. So much so that Barker is after more power, as if 228bhp in such a small car isn't enough. Nice six-speed manual 'box too, and the cabin remains tactile and tasteful, even if the exterior is blink-and-miss-it mild.

Talking of manual gearboxes, a stint in the Focus RS follows. About to go off sale, it remains an enigma. On paper it has everything we've ever wanted from a Ford hot hatch: the power figure, the badge, all-wheel drive, Recaro seats, a manual gearbox – torque vectoring with the ability to drift, for heaven's sake... And yet, for a hatchback, it is also a bit

'When the roads get really slippery, the Focus can start to feel surprisingly edgy at times'



AUDI RS4

Crowning glory of Audi's all-wheel-drive system

AUDI'S PERMANENT ALL-WHEEL-DRIVE systems were, for many years, built around the Torsen (torque sensing) centre differential. It was the defining quattro system.

When the first RS5 launched in 2010, it introduced a different device for distributing torque, called the Crown Gear Differential. This is a compact unit built into the output end of the gearbox housing, where it splits the drive 40:60 front:rear, but this can automatically adjust to 15:85 or 70:30.

The unit comprises two crown wheels, one taking drive to the front axle and one to the rear, with a set of smaller differential gears between them. Drive from the engine comes into the centre of the unit and is transmitted to the front and rear crown gears via the differential gears. The diameter of the mating faces of each crown wheel to the differential gears gives the steady state-torque split, the rear being the bigger gear by a ratio of 60:40.

On the back of the rear crown wheel is a multi-plate wet clutch, and on the front crown wheel a slimmer version. When one axle loses traction and spins, there will be a difference in the speeds of the two crown wheels and this will cause the differential gears to rotate. This in turn will activate the clutch plates, which will try to match the speeds of the crown wheels, transferring torque to the non-slipping axle.

While the maximum split the unit can give the front or rear is less than 100 per cent, the RS4 can also use its stability control to slow the wheels on the slipping axle, sending even more drive to the axle with grip and increasing the drive on that axle to 100 per cent. Stability control-induced torque vectoring also takes place across the axles in cornering. **JB**

Engine V6, 2894cc, twin-turbo **Power** 444bhp @ 5700-6700rpm **Torque** 442lb ft @ 1900-5000rpm **0-62mph** 4.1sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Weight** 1790kg (252bhp/ton) **Basic price** £62,175 **evo rating** ★★★★★

porky (we've seen nearly 1600kg on our scales) and has a ride quality that even in the softest setting is aggressively firm. But the Focus needs that spring rate to support its considerable mass on a challenging road.

What really sets the Focus apart from its four-wheel-drive hatchback rivals is that it makes it very obvious it's an all-wheels-driven car – in fact, it often feels more rear-wheel drive than front. A Golf R feels front-driven much of the time – because it is – and neutral at most, but even a gentle flick through a fast curve has the Ford's rear axle beginning to rotate around a central axis, and when the roads get really slippery it can start to feel surprisingly edgy at times, coupled with the front tyres torque-steering over uneven surfaces. The winter tyres on this particular car probably exaggerate that characteristic further still, offering an extra degree or two of squidge to any given input.

'It's hugely entertaining, if ultimately rather an overly contrived machine' is Disdale's lukewarm verdict as we shelter within one of the cars. The RS is a car, as ever, that really splits opinion, because Barker is much more of a fan, finding it 'confidence inspiring' and enjoying

the 'grittiness' of the feedback through the wheel, albeit wishing too that it had more 'give' to allow it to breathe with the road in a more effective fashion. I get that side of it too, so we settle on an amicable difference of opinion as, outside, Parrott looks increasingly like a drowned rat and his cameras start to give up the ghost.

It's time to decamp to mid Wales, and at last the rain eases off and the puddles begin to become less lagoon-like. Time for the Lamborghini. We are around an hour from our final photographic location of the day, and it's almost dark. While the rain has subsided to little more than a drizzle, murky brown water streams over the Aventador's roof and A-pillars at speed, occasionally swatted aside by the swipe of a giant windscreen wiper. Heading swiftly to the Elan Valley, I feel like I'm leading a rebel alliance formation

in the Millennium Falcon. Periodically, I catch a glimpse of five pairs of dazzling lights behind, partially obscured by the Aventador's engine bay slats and the active rear wing, which rises up and blocks much of the rearwards visibility at speed. Clearly you're not expected to be overtaken at the wheel of an Aventador S.

A rational mind can pick a great deal of holes in this car. The squeaks and rattles inside the cabin of this 6000-odd-mile press car are hardly confidence inspiring, and the design of the dashboard is not ageing well, certainly to these eyes. The infotainment system appears to have come from an Audi of the previous millennium, while the crudeness of the USB socket has us in stitches of laughter. At this precise moment, what I'd really value is a pair of effective headlamps, but while the dipped beam is crisp enough, main beam would be amusingly ineffective for a supermini, let alone a 200mph-plus car. Then there's the single-clutch automated gearbox, a relic of a supercar era two or three generations back – its shifts in Strada mode are infuriatingly leisurely, although the subtle throttle lift required even at full pelt is at least some form of car-driver interaction.

But come on: you don't expect me to

**'The NSX
accelerates like
a Buccaneer off
the Ark Royal's
catapult'**





Clockwise from top left: winter tyres exaggerate Focus's torque-steer; NSX's V6 works in perfect harmony with three electric motors; Dynamic Ride Control an essential RS4 option; E63 finds ample traction on summer rubber; S1's manual 'box increases driver involvement; flip-up cover protects Lambo's starter button

AUDI S1

Smallest Audi keeps things simple to deliver its thrills

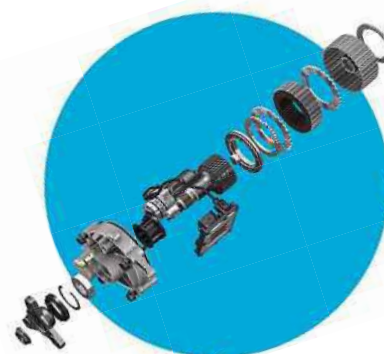
THE S1 HAS THE SIMPLEST OF AUDI'S QUATTRO systems. In format, it's very similar to previous on-demand, all-wheel-drive set-ups fitted to essentially front-wheel-drive Audis, and is commonly referred to as a 'Haldex' system. This is the name of the device that engages drive to the rear wheels. It is a compact, multi-plate wet clutch incorporated into the nose of the rear differential housing, and is activated by hydraulic pressure.

Early iterations of the system were reactive – slip had to be detected for them to operate. Also, the hydraulic pump was mechanically driven and low pressure, so the units were slow to respond. The S1 uses the fourth-generation Haldex, as seen in the previous-generation TT. Gen four and five Haldex use an electric pump that builds pressure from the moment the car

is started, and run much higher pressure too, for a faster, finer response.

Unlike other versions, the S1's system always sends some drive to the rear wheels. Also, fuller activation does not depend on seeing slip at the front wheels; there's a predictive element, the controller analysing inputs from various sensors – throttle position, steering angle, etc – to recognise situations when all-wheel drive may be required and pre-emptively send more torque to the rear wheels. The amount of pressure applied to the clutch determines how much torque goes to the rear, and a maximum of 50 per cent of the engine's available output can be sent there.

At both ends, torque is fed to the wheels through an open differential. However, the S1 has a stability control function called ELD – Electronic Locking Differential – which is a virtual limited-slip differential. Conventionally, if one wheel on an axle is slipping, the torque will bleed away through that wheel. ELD applies the brake on the slipping wheel, which results in torque being sent to the opposite wheel.



It's not sophisticated, but it is a simple and effective solution. Indeed, that's a description that applies to the Haldex all-wheel-drive system, too: it's a relatively simple, satisfactory system for delivering enhanced traction and stability. **JB**

Engine in-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo **Power** 228bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 273lb ft @ 1600-3000rpm **0-62mph** 5.8sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Weight** 1315kg (176bhp/ton) **Basic price** £27,125 **evo rating** ★★★★★

'If the NSX is the future of four-wheel drive, it looks considerably brighter than the skies above us today'

judge a car with a V12 that revs out to 8500rpm on such a mundane basis, do you? Frankly, I couldn't care less if the Aventador S came with a dog-eared road atlas for a satnav and the entire dashboard disintegrated when you so much as looked at it – this car is a reminder of what it is to have a passion for cars. I absolutely adore it. Everybody, and I mean everybody, loves the Lambo. Some, like supercar-averse Disdale, aren't converted until they drive it, then sort of glow quietly with deep-set satisfaction; others, like the cashier girl when we stop for fuel (the Lambo loves a drink, unsurprisingly) have their day made merely by its presence. In Pearl White with quite exquisite tobacco-coloured leather trim, it's like a superstar soprano from the Milan opera singing in a local Welsh inn, charming the locals and mucking in by making the sandwiches. Its voice is strong, but its spirit is even stronger.

A V12 Lambo needs that initial intimidation factor, and through its size, power and sheer volume, the Aventador S certainly possesses that. But it doesn't last long. Natural, accurate steering, well-judged damping and a sense of agility bolstered by the S's rear-wheel steering soon breed a guarded sense of confidence, which all-wheel-drive traction fosters. The individual Ego mode is best, with dampers and steering set to Strada, and the drivetrain to its noisy, most responsive,

Corsa setting. So configured, you can hustle the Aventador more than you'd imagine, listening to its feedback, but all of us are clear on how you tend to drive it hard up to a certain point, but always with a good margin in hand. No one wants to feel the weight of that giant engine begin to move, the ashen-faced moment when a tank slapper gathers momentum...

We convene, eat, drink and dry out at our pub digs for the night, and the conversation is – funnily enough – 90 per cent about the glorious Lambo. Much of that is spent laughing about its foibles, the remainder how it might be the best tonic ever invented for a miserable January. The NSX is also winning fans at a rapid rate. Dizzy reckons it accelerates like a Buccaneer off the Ark Royal's catapult, while reflecting that it's 'a fine example of what electric motors properly done can do for true drivers' cars'. Barker agrees, while deliberating between ham and eggs or lasagne with chips, although his stint in the Japanese supercar didn't begin too well: 'We didn't get off to a great start: I turned sharply out of the car park and the rear stepped out! It did it again soon after, though this time swinging keenly into a soaking right-hander onto a cattle grid. That second time it felt like the rear was too soft. Later on I discovered the mode dial, and with the sportiest setting dialled up, all such concerns vanished.'

Overall, though, he's a big fan: 'The new NSX is a fine thing, a lovely blend of internal combustion and electric, mostly because it's a very sorted and appealing junior supercar.' I only had a brief drive in it today, but after initially worrying it all felt rather synthetic, I began to warm to it immensely, and not just because Dizzy left the heated seat on full blast.

The weather has not improved by the next morning. It seems like an odd comment to make about a £145,000 supercar with such towering performance, but the NSX is a slow-burner. Once you've got past the rabid low-down acceleration, for me at least, there's a sense of 'what's really going on here?' Some people never really get beyond this stage, surmising it as soulless, as happened in some quarters on eCoty 2016. But stick with it and the car underneath begins to emerge. Having got over the mismatched and generally fairly unappealing interior, you start to notice how comfortable and supportive the driver's seat is, the prone driving position that feels just right, and the lovely slim-rimmed wheel, so precise in altering the trajectory of the car. The NSX has terrific ride composure, a sense that each corner of the car is perfectly supported, but most of all, it's the integration of the various drive systems that really impress.

One uphill right-hander sticks in the mind, because it tightens after what initially appears to be the apex and the NSX begins to scrub very slightly wide. The steering lightens, though, warning of slip, but while there must be thousands of electronic pulses and algorithms going on every second to distribute drive, it doesn't feel like a binary process. A slight





Above left: photographer Parrott braves the elements as the heavens open.

Top right: Aventador's rear-view camera reduces the stress of reversing this £270k supercar



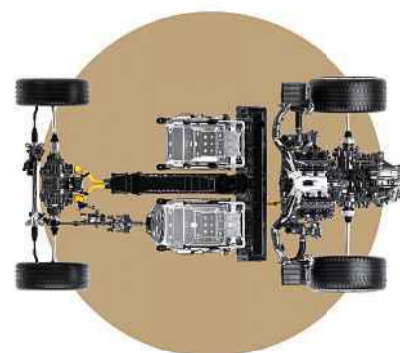
lift rotates the car by a degree or two, and then there's terrific drive out of the corner, the electric boost giving the impression that the twin-turbo 3.5-litre V6 is at least a third bigger in displacement.

What's really noticeable is how deft the entire process is: the NSX gives the impression that it's merely a very well sorted mid-engined car, and perhaps that's the biggest compliment we can give it. If this is the future of four-wheel drive, it looks considerably brighter than the skies above us today.

I take the RS4 for the drive home, for the time-honoured reasons that road testers have always, when there's the

option, chosen powerful, four-wheel-drive cars on wet, dark nights: there's a long way to go and I want to get there quickly and securely. Truth is, the S1, E63 S and NSX would all be brilliant for this role, too. Their low- and mid-range torque delivery combined with fantastic traction makes them unbeatable for 20-60mph lunges, and they meld all of this with ride and refinement that allows you to cover long drives in the shortest of times, no matter what the conditions.

Four-wheel drive was once viewed with suspicion by the enthusiast, but what these cars clearly demonstrate is that, today, we've little to fear.



HONDA NSX

Electric motors bring an extra dimension to Japanese supercar

THE NSX HAS WHAT HONDA SNAPPILY TITLES Sport Hybrid SH-AWD, or Super Handling All-Wheel Drive. The mid-engined NSX supplements its twin-turbo V6 with three electric motors: one driving each front wheel and a third 'direct-drive' motor slotted between the engine and gearbox. The latter also acts as the starter motor, eliminating the need for the 12V starter and ring-gear system, saving weight.

Largely, the masses of the electrical system are centrally located, the controller managing battery charge and discharge filling what would be the transmission tunnel, while the lithium-ion battery pack sits transversely behind the seats. The output of the electric motors totals 119bhp, and they have a significant impact on getting the 1776kg NSX to 62mph in just 2.9 seconds – electric motors produce their maximum torque from zero revs, don't forget. Meanwhile, the front-axle motors deliver torque directly and precisely to each front wheel, which is pure torque vectoring.

Each motor can act independently, so for, say, turn-in agility, the motor of the inside front wheel could be unpowered, effectively braking that wheel, while the outer is under full power. The NSX's electric motors positively power the front axle to influence the handling, rather than braking it. At the rear, tuned to match the front, is a torque-sensitive, multi-plate-type limited-slip differential that maximises the drive from the V6 and also offers stability under braking.

The third motor, sandwiched between the engine and gearbox, acts directly on the output shaft and, along with the front-axle motors, gives an initial kick that masks any turbo lag. And, because an electric motor is an alternator when driven, the motors recharge the battery on the overrun, taking a load off the brakes. **JB**

Engine V6, 3493cc, twin-turbo, plus 2 x 36bhp front electric motors and 47bhp rear electric motor **Power** 573bhp (combined) **Torque** 476lb ft @ 2000rpm (combined) **0-62mph** 2.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 191mph (claimed) **Weight** 1776kg (328bhp/ton) **Basic price** £144,765 **evo rating** ★★★★★



4WD ON TRACK

Can the E63 S hang on to its own coat-tails in two-wheel-drive mode? Time to find out...

by JAMES DISDALE

THE TRACK SURFACE AT Bedford Autodrome is glistening with freshly fallen rain, while the temperature readout on the Merc's dashboard is hovering around 7deg C. We aren't going to be setting any lap records today. Yet while conditions are far from ideal for establishing ultimate performance, they are spot-on for what we do have in mind.

The idea is fairly simple. Having appreciated the benefits of four-wheel drive over the past two days on our rain-lashed road trip, it's now time to strap on the timing gear and hit the circuit to find out what the raw numbers have to say. How will we do that? As you know, the E63 S has the ability to run as either four-

or rear-wheel drive, which means we can compare lap times for a car that is, to all intents and purposes, identical, apart from how many axles are being powered at any one time.

We go out for a few sighting laps first, just to see what we're up against. It only takes a handful of corners to realise that this is going to be, erm, entertaining. The exits to most of the corners are slippery, while the entries to the quickish kinks of Club and Pif-Paf reveal black-ice levels of grip.

It's four-wheel drive first. To keep things as fair as possible for both runs, I toggle the car into Race mode and disengage the stability control. Turning into the first corner, it's clear the E63's mass is going

to require some careful management, as the nose struggles to keep the car hooked up to the apex. Getting hard on the power delivers the first surprise, as the AMG snaps into sudden power oversteer – this is not meant to be in the four-wheel-drive playbook. Apply corrective steering lock and keep your foot in, however, and torque is quickly, and slightly scrappily, sent to the front axle, allowing the E63 to thunder along the next straight.

Through the flick-flack of Club, the tail sways this way and that as it tries to deal with the combined demands of trail-braking and a quick direction change. Once again, you have to manage power oversteer on the exit, but only while the transmission composes itself.



‘The exits of the slower corners require a tiptoe approach’

Through the fast right-hander of Palmer Curves, with drive now being shared between all four wheels, the E63 feels stable and secure, allowing you to mash the throttle. The exit to the tight Bank left-hander once again brings the dance of a quick powerslide with rapid torque reshuffle, but is followed by a full-commitment blast down the next straight. After a couple of laps, we record a best of 1min 32.2sec.

A cooling-down lap, then it's two-wheel-drive time. Engaging Drift mode requires you to simultaneously pull both aluminium gearshift paddles towards you, before tugging at the right-hand paddle to confirm your choice.

On the short run to the first corner it's clear this is going to be trickier, as even in a straight line there's heart-pounding wheelspin in fourth and fifth gears. The exits of the slower corners require a tiptoe approach, as even with a light throttle the AMG's tail swings quickly sideways. It's hilarious fun and fairly straightforward to control once you've caught the initial and sudden spike of oversteer, but it's not fast.

After a couple of laps you discover that it's best to take advantage of the E63's prodigious torque and simply go a gear higher into and out of every corner than you would with all four wheels sharing the load. You still need to be on your guard, and through the ultra-slippery Pif-Paf and Bank it's almost impossible to avoid oversteer from entry all the way to exit. It's only through the fast sweeps of Palmer and O'Rouge that two-wheel drive isn't at a disadvantage, with the car carrying similar speed regardless of transmission mode.

As you'd expect in these conditions, the two-wheel-drive lap is slower, the Merc crossing the finish line at 1min 35.3sec – more than three seconds slower.

In fairness, the E63 felt smoother and more natural in rear-wheel-drive mode, but against the clock, there's no doubting the efficiency of four-wheel drive when the surface turns slippery. **x**



Circuit

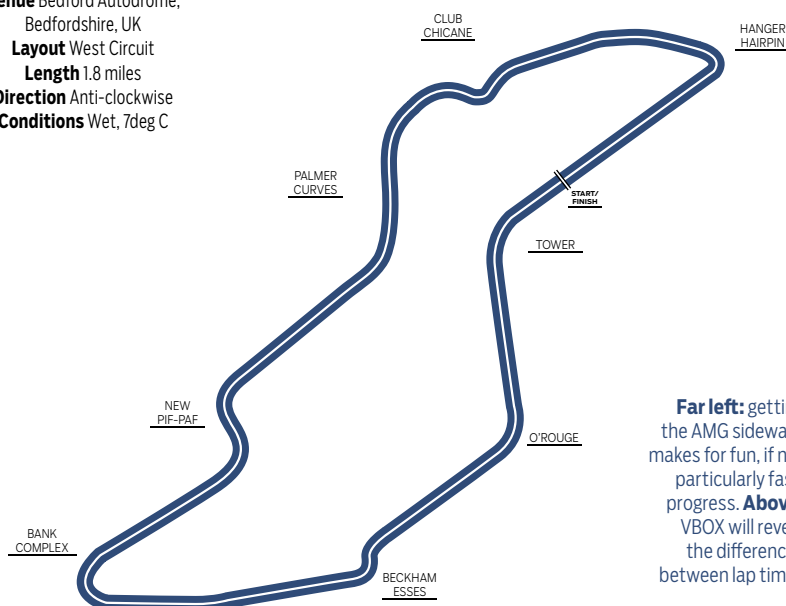
Venue Bedford Autodrome, Bedfordshire, UK

Layout West Circuit

Length 1.8 miles

Direction Anti-clockwise

Conditions Wet, 7deg C



Far left: getting the AMG sideways makes for fun, if not particularly fast, progress. **Above:** VBox will reveal the differences between lap times

THE ANATOMY OF A



SUPER TOURING CAR

This year the BTCC turns 60, but one of the series' most exciting periods was the 2-litre 'Super Touring' era of the 1990s. Audi's A4 quattro dominated in '96 – we take a closer look and find out why





by ANTONY INGRAM

PHOTOGRAPHY by
ASTON PARROTT

WHETHER YOU watched it from the sidelines at the time, caught the coverage on the telly, or are only now absorbing it from grainy YouTube videos, the Group A era of touring car racing was quite a sight: the Sierra Cosworth RS500s that dominated its later years were as dramatic and thunderous

as you could hope for from a racing car.

But their death also spawned one of the most exciting formulae the motorsport world has ever seen. The 2-litre formula, or Super Touring as it became known, was a response to the spiralling costs of homologation and the changing needs of the car industry at the time. And when it ended little more than a decade later, its enduring appeal had been assured.



THE 2-LITRE FORMULA

The British Touring Car Championship was in full swing by the late 1980s, following its rebranding from the British Saloon Car Championship in 1987. Audiences were large, and the series enjoyed healthy coverage on the BBC's *Grandstand* programme.

But a problem was brewing. The four-class system was confusing, with John Cleland winning the 1989 title in his Astra despite the RS500s dominating the overall race results. Also, the RS500 was nearing the end of its homologation period. When they exited, the series faced the prospect of just one or two Nissan Skyline GT-Rs – then relatively unknown in the UK – taking their place at the top.

The sport's biggest players, including driver and team owner Andy Rouse and David Richards from Prodrive, proposed a 2-litre touring car formula. Engines would have no more than six cylinders, with drive sent to two wheels only. Turbocharging was suggested, but

opposition from BMW nudged things in favour of natural aspiration.

There was an 8500rpm rev limit and, initially, standard engine mounting positions were used. The choice of unit remained fairly free, however, allowing for a motor from anywhere within the same manufacturer's range to be fitted to a car, provided it complied with the 2-litre rule. 'The cars cost a similar amount to build as those of the Group A era,' explains Rouse, 'but for manufacturers it was much cheaper as they didn't have to specially homologate a car.'

The new formula ran alongside Group A in 1990, and on its own from '91. Early participants included Toyota with its Carina – built by Rouse – as well as BMW, Nissan and Vauxhall, and the series grew fast. By 1992 Peugeot and Mazda were in (with BMW replacing its 2-litre version of the E30 M3 with the new E36 318is) and in 1993 Renault and Ford joined the fray.

Performance increased, too. 'Initially I wasn't that impressed as a driver,' Rouse recalls. 'Going from a 500bhp rear-wheel-drive car to a front-driver with less than

300bhp was a step down... But the cars had better brakes, they were lighter, and had more grip.' It wasn't long before they were achieving lap times better than those of the old Cosworths, and as the rules developed, the new cars became faster and more sophisticated still.

Alfa Romeo's well-publicised dabble with adjustable aerodynamic devices in 1994 (spurred by a relatively low minimum homologation of 2500 cars, later raised to 25,000) opened the floodgates to full aero, which became legal in 1995. That same year the FIA – which had taken on the formula for the Touring Car World Cup in 1993 – adopted the term we're familiar with today: Super Touring.

AUDI A4 SUPER TOURER

Audi had been an early participant in 2-litre series throughout Europe with the 80 quattro, taking three consecutive drivers' titles in the French and Italian championships, and scoring several



victories in the ADAC Tourenwagen Cup in 1994 with Frank Biela at the wheel. With four-wheel drive permitted in the European series, progression to a quattro version of the new A4 for the 1995 season was a natural move, and the new car picked up where the 80 left off, securing the Italian title and taking more victories in the German and French touring car championships, against strong opposition from BMW and Peugeot.

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich, then head of Audi Sport, made the decision in mid-1995 that the company should be represented in the British Touring Car Championship – a series rapidly developing a reputation for exciting racing and intense competition, with no fewer than nine factory entries that year. After several avenues had been explored, David Ingram and Richard Lloyd formed Audi Sport UK with the blessing of Audi UK. Like all of Audi's touring car efforts, and indeed its motorsport activities to this day, the team would be run autonomously, but the cars themselves would be developed and built by Audi Sport at its base in Ingolstadt.

Above left: naturally aspirated and longitudinally mounted four-cylinder engine was down on power compared with rivals and sat a long way forward. **Above:** Frank Biela won the 1996 BTCC drivers' title from this chair. **Right:** brake balance and anti-roll bar settings can be altered from inside the car



'WHAT THE A4 LACKED IN STRAIGHT-LINE SPEED IT MADE UP FOR IN RELIABILITY'

John Wickham was drafted in to manage the team, which for 1996 seconded the considerable driving talent of Biela, alongside newcomer John Bintcliffe, who had seen some success in single-make tin-tops. Crucially, the A4 would be allowed to keep its quattro all-wheel-drive system for the BTCC.

ENGINE, SUSPENSION, BODY AND AERODYNAMICS

The A4 provided Audi Sport with some immediate benefits over the 80, including a shorter overall body length, longer wheelbase and wider tracks, as well as a shorter front overhang. Suspension was similar to the 80's, with double wishbones at all four corners, while springs were provided by Eibach, dampers by Koni.

Like its rivals, the A4 sported 8.2 x 19-inch forged magnesium wheels, with Audi opting for tyres from Dunlop. The

bodyshell required significant alterations to fit wheels of that size – plastic archliners marked the boundary between wheel wells and the engine compartment – and the resulting stance was an iconic part of the Super Touring era, with so little gap between tyre shoulder and arch lip that you'd struggle to slip a credit card between them.

The A4 was also aerodynamically efficient, and Audi Sport's homologated aero package was extremely effective. Roger King, Biela's race engineer during the 1996 and 1997 seasons, describes the A4's aerodynamics as 'perfect', adding: 'It reacted to the smallest changes – we'd notice a difference with a 3mm adjustment of the front splitter.'

The advanced aero helped overcome one of the car's weaker areas: its engine. Based on the same in-line, 16-valve four-cylinder used in the 80, it was always underpowered next to the competition. 'We were limited by the size of the



Right: the A4 had superb aerodynamics that responded very well to adjustment; big (back then) 19-inch wheels stuffed the arches and helped create the distinctive Super Touring 'stance'

valves compared with the cylinder bore,' explains King, 'and probably never made more than about 290bhp in 1996.' While that's more than the 255bhp being produced early on in 1993, Audi still lagged behind on power during its dominant season – Renault was making 300-plus bhp and Ford's V6 was rumoured to put out over 310bhp.

Like other engines of the era, it still represented the peak of naturally aspirated tuning for the time, outfitted with individual 44mm slide throttle bodies fed by an enormous carbonfibre intake, upgraded with 85mm Mahle pistons and utilising dry-sump lubrication. Some sources quoted power as high as 296bhp at 8250rpm, and 188lb ft of torque at a screaming 7000rpm. In 1997, further modifications lifted power to around 316bhp – though some rivals were by then estimated to have more than 320bhp.

The position of the engine proved

difficult too. The four was mounted as far forward as in the road cars, a symptom of the all-wheel-drive layout. In contrast, it wasn't unknown for rivals to fit their engines as low as possible and right against the cabin bulkhead. The Mondeo's Mazda-sourced motor was famously mounted so low that the engineers ran the driveshafts through the V of the V6.

What the A4 lacked in straight-line speed it made up for with its four-wheel-drive traction, ease of use and reliability. The Audi Sport factory tightly controlled the development of the car throughout its life, and while this denied local squads the opportunity to change the car to suit national circuits (beyond suspension or differential settings), it meant no competitor could match the A4's longevity.

'We finished every single race in the 1996 season' says King. 'Not a single breakdown. It was our fundamental advantage, and the A4 was beautifully

engineered – every component was "lived", so after a set mileage it would be changed regardless of condition.' A suspension upright would last 3000km, engines would be rebuilt after two races.

The quattro system gave the A4 astonishing traction, braking stability and balance, though the engine layout did make it slightly nose-heavy, tending towards mild understeer. Drivers did experience oversteer at Snetterton's dramatic Coram curve, but King says this was quickly dialled out with toe adjustments. Viscous front, centre and rear differentials allowed the team to vary the torque split, sending more power to the rear on circuits with faster corners and even running a locked rear diff where traction was a priority. Unlike its front-drive rivals, the Audi ran similarly sized brakes at both ends to take advantage of its even balance, with 343mm discs at the front, 330mm at the rear.

Biela has to take some credit for Audi's



1996 dominance, too – his significant quattro experience made him a natural choice to lead the UK team's BTCC charge.

'Frank was a machine,' recalls King. 'We did some testing one weekend at Knockhill. We ran the car for eight hours, non-stop, and he just kept going.' Biela was perhaps the perfect driver for the car: King tells of his ability to drive to 90-95 per cent of the car's capabilities for lap after lap, but never over-driving like some of his contemporaries.

Biela's experience with the car gave him an undoubted advantage over Bintcliffe, and King notes that while the A4 would naturally wear its front tyres a little more heavily, in-cockpit adjustment of the front and rear anti-roll bars meant the German ace would finish a race with perfectly equal wear levels all round.

Ultimately the A4's disadvantages began to overwhelm its inherent benefits. It was hit with significant weight penalties from the start, carrying 95kg more than the 975kg front-drivers, and the amount of ballast grew further in 1997 until Audi decided it was being unfairly penalised. 'In 1997, John Wickham finally went to [BTCC director] Alan Gow to contest our weight penalty,' explains King, 'and we scored five wins in the last five rounds.' The organisers had given the A4 a 30kg respite and Biela finished the season second to Alain Menu's Renault Laguna.

By the time all-wheel drive was banned in 1998, Audi had entirely lost its advantage. Biela had gone, and Yvan Muller scored the now front-drive A4's

best result that year with a second place at Knockhill. 'We had so much weight over the front wheels in 1998 that the car would lift its rear tyres under braking,' remarks King.

But the A4 had done its job. By the time it was retired in 1999, it had 15 global drivers' championship victories to its name, taking seven in 1996 alone in Australia, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Spain and South Africa.

THE FALL OF SUPER TOURING

Super Touring lasted 11 years in the BTCC. What had started as an inclusive, uniform set of regulations to encourage manufacturers to compete had grown so sophisticated and expensive that few could stomach the budgets required to put their cars on the top step of the podium.

'It started with Volvo,' opines Rouse. 'TWR discovered that they could mount their engine pretty much against the bulkhead, entirely behind the front axle, and everyone else followed. In 1995 Williams turned up with F1-scale resources and by the late '90s Prodrive was re-engineering the cylinder heads of the [Ford] V6 at huge cost to convert them from direct-acting cams to rockers.' Ford won the drivers' title with Menu in 2000, but reportedly spent more than £10million on its three-car attack.

From a peak of ten factory-supported squads in 1994, participation fell to

six teams by 1999. In 2000, Super Touring's final year in the UK, just three manufacturer teams – Honda, Ford and Vauxhall, plus a handful of independents – made up the pack. So short on numbers was the series that grids had to be bolstered by over a dozen 'Class B' cars running to Super Production regs, similar to rallying's Group N specifications.

It was out of this environment that the subsequent BTC regulations grew. The cars were slower, but the formula was much better at keeping costs in check. A typical BTC car cost under £100,000 to build, a third to a quarter of the cost of a late 2000s Super Tourer. This brought back some of the variety that had disappeared towards the end of Super Touring, with works teams from Vauxhall, MG, Peugeot, Honda and even Proton over the first few years.

By 2002, however, the writing was on the wall even for BTC, as the European Touring Car Championship debuted the FIA-sanctioned Super 2000 formula. The BTCC soldiered on with a mix of BTC and Super 2000 cars from 2004, and some BTC cars lasted until 2011 in the hands of privateers – the first year that the current Next Generation Touring Car (NGTC) cars hit the track. Standardised components and tight cost control mean NGTC will never have the mechanical intrigue we enjoyed in those glory years of Super Touring. Given all-wheel-drive remains illegal, it's unlikely we'll ever see dominance on the scale of Audi's remarkable A4 Super Tourer, either. ☒

Below: a 4.2-metre minimum length rule was introduced by the time the A4 arrived; the Audi's comparatively long wheelbase and quattro four-wheel drive generally gave it a good handling balance



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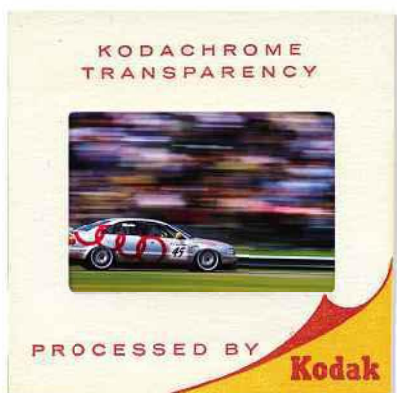
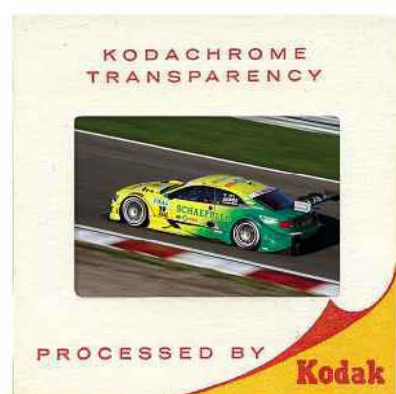
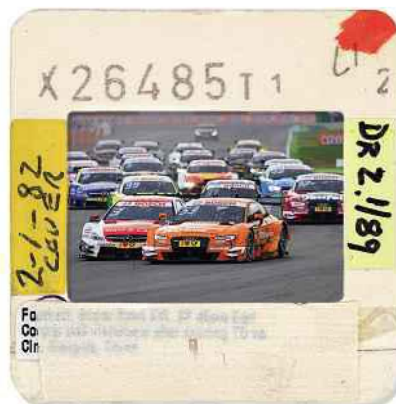
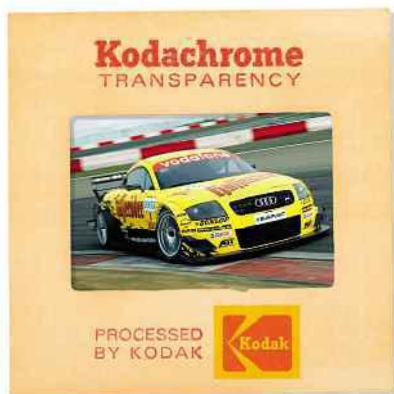
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 by ANTONY INGRAM

...BUT WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF TOURING CARS?

The crowds may still be there, but with the focus on the drivers, and little to differentiate the cars on track, the sport has lost much of its allure. Can a return to the Super Touring glory days ever be realised? Let the discussion begin...

FOR DECADES TOURING CAR racing has provided some of the closest and most exciting competition you'll find in the world of motorsport. The formula is simple – cars based upon, or inspired by, road-going models and a blind eye turned to the occasional panel-rubbing pass – and it's one that works whether you're pitching the latest silhouette racers against one another or dropping professional drivers into Minis, MkII

Jags and Mustangs in front of a crowd of jauntily dressed Goodwood-goers.

Unlike some of the other motorsports we've covered recently in this series, the appeal of touring cars seems to be enduring, and discussing the topic with **evo's** Stuart Gallagher, Richard Meaden, John Barker, Adam Towler, James Disdale and Will Beaumont resulted in perhaps the most positive of our chats so far – though David Vivian chipped in only to dismiss the entire genre with a yawn...

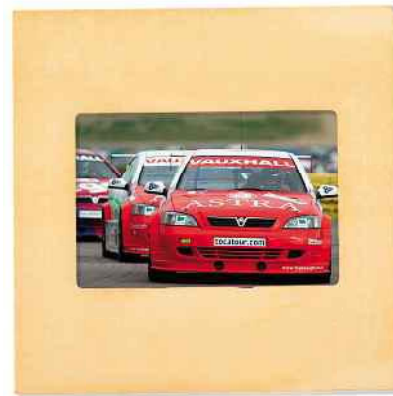
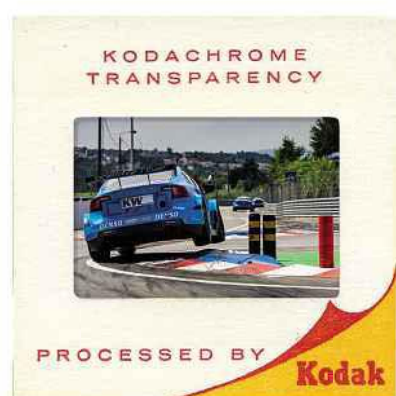
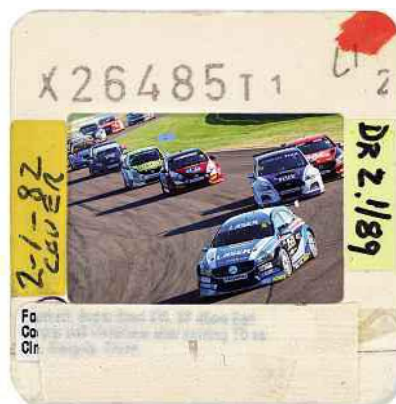
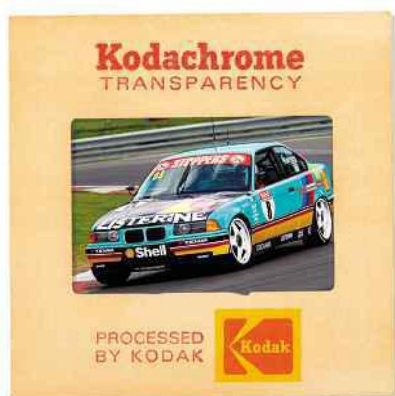
You can't mention touring cars without referencing the British Touring Car Championship, one of the few modern series that arguably matches its historical predecessors for excitement, in pure racing terms at least. Trackside attendance backs this up: in its Super

Touring heyday, trackside crowds regularly reached the 40,000 range; remarkably, similar numbers still turn up today. It's affordable to attend and easy to watch on TV thanks to comprehensive coverage with ITV, while at the circuit, open pitlane sessions let fans get close to their heroes.

BTCC drivers have also missed the memo that modern racing drivers should be dull. Barker cites the championship's personalities as a big part of its appeal. Even at its lowest points, BTCC has been essential watching simply for some of the driver battles – Muller and Plato, Giovanardi and Plato, Neal... and Plato. Some individual teams (notably Vauxhall and Honda) may have dominated recent decades, but the battles have been fierce and names like Cleland, Biela and Menu have gone down in BTCC folklore.

Meaden thinks the focus on personalities and rivalries may be at the expense of the cars themselves, though – an area that several of us agree needs some work. 'BTCC cars share so many common components they are no longer the stars,' explains Dickie. 'It's now more about the drivers, which is a shame.'

Barker suggests that 'identifiable cars' should be a touring car strength, while Gallagher references the old 'win on Sunday, sell on Monday' adage, rueing the lack of similarity between the cars you see on track and those in the car park: 'Even during the Super Touring



‘Even during the Super Touring era the 155s, Mondeos and 318s resembled the punters’ cars’

era the Alfa 155s, Ford Mondeos and BMW 318s still resembled the punters’ road cars, even if the engines and aero stretched the link a bit too far.’

While BTCC still has large grids and varied cars (11 different shapes in 2017), very few feature any official works backing; compare this to the Super Touring days when distinctive silhouettes carried official factory colours and teams were typically run by the official importer or a dealer group. With one or two exceptions, indistinct liveries make it difficult to pick out your particular five-door, two-box hatchback in the modern-day pack. Beaumont is another who thinks it’s a shame that so much of the grid shares similar componentry, from subframes to whole engines, and suggests that touring car racing ‘is at its best when there’s a real desire for manufacturers to be involved’.

‘I hate to say it,’ adds Towler, ‘but I’ve had very little interest in the BTCC since the demise of the Super Touring formula – as the cars have become more uniform under the skin, so my enthusiasm for it has fallen.’ Disdale comes to the same conclusion: ‘The modern era of the British series delivers plenty of different manufacturers, but under the skin I

know they’re all using the same components, which makes it essentially a silhouette formula.’

Meaden and Gallagher both think the solution is homologation. ‘Group A touring cars were great to watch and a true reflection of the road products,’ notes Dickie. ‘To be competitive, manufacturers had to make the effort and build special cars. Just look at the more modern end of historic racing – Group A Cossies, M3s, Rovers and so on are hugely popular.’

That road relevance diminished throughout the Super Touring years as the cars became more technologically advanced, but actually improved slightly with the otherwise unloved early BTC regulations from 2001 – BTCC car parks were full of Astra Coupes, MG ZSs and Honda Civics not dissimilar to those that were trading paintwork on track.

Still, the BTCC is healthier than the DTM or WTCC. ‘Current DTM is like a one-make, single-seater championship,’ says Beaumont, ‘except the cars have slightly different-shaped lids to make them look a bit like touring cars.’ DTM has always been impressive for its engineering, but the race cars are now so distant from their road-going counterparts that it’s difficult



to become enthused. 'It's so aero-dependent that the races are as processional as those of F1,' notes Disdale. That series stalwart Mercedes-Benz will pull the plug at the end of 2018 – in favour of Formula E – is a grim indicator of DTM's long-term health.

WTCC has a different problem – it's simply not that good to watch. Like the BTCC, works teams are few, but the independent entries aren't diverse enough to make up for it. There are only five different shapes on the grid, and most of those are difficult to get excited by – unless a booted Chinese-market Citroën C3 or Chevrolet Cruze gets your juices going. Big names like Huff, Tarquini and Muller should bring some excitement, but the racing and the circuits are a shadow of their former selves. The recent introduction of rallycross-style joker laps is appropriately farcical.

If there's a saving grace, it's that from 2018 the WTCC will adopt TCR regulations, effectively taking it back to a proper production car series not unlike the old Group A days. TCR is still in its infancy but a huge number of models are already homologated and eligible. The majority of those are hatchbacks, which doesn't solve touring cars' aesthetic issues (see also: WRC and WRX), but it does mean you can go to your local dealership and buy a Golf GTI or Hyundai i30 N not a million miles removed from the racing version.

Beaumont is cautiously optimistic about the new rules: 'TCR has shown that there's still an appetite for

manufacturers to be involved in touring car racing, even if it's to sell race cars rather than to promote road cars.' Towler agrees, and adds that the production-based formula and GT3-style balance-of-performance regulations should put a cap on costs. But is the emotional appeal of Group A or Super Touring there? 'Unfortunately, it'll probably never connect with me like bespoke racing machines being pushed to the limit by the best teams and drivers in the world,' says Adam.

TCR does bring production relevance back to touring car racing, but in terms of pure excitement it's yet to prove itself as the ultimate solution. Starting with more exciting cars might help, suggests Gallagher – Alfa Giulia Quadrifoglio, AMG C63s and BMW M3s would immediately bump up the desirability factor.

Group A, Super Touring and ITC-era DTM might have outgrown their original ambitions, but they burned very brightly while they lasted – and it'll take something very special to bring back that golden-era combination of great action, vibrant personalities and amazing racing cars.

Failing all that, there's always V8 Supercars – something everyone aside from Disdale managed to forget: 'Yes, there are only three manufacturers and the regulations enforce quite a lot of parts sharing, but you can forgive all that for the V8-engined, rear-drive brilliance of it all. And they race around Bathurst's roller-coaster Mount Panorama circuit...' ❧



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Buying guide



SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT 2012-2017

This bulletproof pocket rocket offers naturally aspirated thrills aplenty – from just £5000

by Peter Tomalin

TOUGH NUTS, THESE SUZUKIS.

The first-generation Sport was a great little car (buying guide, **evo** 192) and the Mk2 – which has only just gone off sale – looks every bit as good as a used buy. We couldn't find an owner or a specialist with a bad word to say about them. And if you still need convincing, consider that Nürburgring car rental company Rent4Ring has a whole fleet of them, having previously run three Mk1s. If they're up to being thrashed around the Nordschleife every day, it's a pretty good bet they'll cope with anything the North Circular can throw at them.

We loved the first Swift Sport so much that it made the shortlist for **evo** Car of the Year in 2006. Derived from Suzuki's Junior World Rally Championship car, it had a peppy 123bhp, 1.6-litre VVT

twin-cam engine with high-lift cams, forged pistons and strengthened valve springs. This was mated to a slick five-speed manual and an addictively playful chassis, all wrapped up in a chunky three-door body. Underneath was uprated suspension, 17-inch alloys, disc brakes all round, and switchable stability control. With well-bolstered sports seats and plenty of standard kit, including air con, it was a proper little junior hot hatch.

Its replacement, which went on sale in the UK in January 2012, was more of the same. There was a largely new 1.6-litre engine with slightly more power – 134bhp – and a new, longer-striding six-speed gearbox. Five doors were now an option, and there was an extra sprinkling of standard kit, too, with climate control, Bluetooth, seven airbags and tinted rear

glass all standard. And it weighed just 15kg more than the old model. While it was a slightly more refined, grown-up, less playful proposition than the original, it was still a hoot to drive.

A few well-chosen mods can make it even more fun. There are two active owners' clubs with lively and helpful forums, and specialists such as CTC Performance who can provide performance parts. Even without modification, a Swift Sport is good for the occasional trackday, if that's your bag.

There's a new model about to go on sale, of course, with more electronic gadgetry and the now-ubiquitous downsized, turbocharged engine. But for fans of old-school hot hatches, these naturally aspirated Swift Sports tick a heck of a lot of boxes.



CHECKPOINTS

ENGINE

The second-generation Swift Sport (ZC32 in Suzuki-speak) may look similar to the original, but underneath it was extensively re-engineered. Floorpan, suspension, brakes, transmission – everything was different, including most of the 1.6-litre engine and its ancillaries. ‘The only things carried over were the block, crank and con rods,’ says Chris Cooke of specialists CTC Performance.

Happily, what didn’t change was the robustness. The Mk1 engine was pretty much bulletproof, and this one’s proving a paragon of reliability, even at high mileages (a well-known car on the SSOC website has done over 100,000 miles without missing a beat). Some owners don’t like the ‘rev hang’ designed to help smooth out downchanges, but most are happy to live with it. So once you’ve checked the car’s been serviced on time – every year or 9000 miles, whichever

comes sooner, and with the correct 0W-20 oil – there’s nothing that need detain you here.

Being naturally aspirated, there aren’t the same gains to be made from remapping, but more mid-range torque and a little bit more top-end power (up to around 145bhp) can be released. Intake kits and freer-flowing exhausts are other popular mods, liberating a few extra horses and a rortier backing track. Add a turbo or supercharger kit, uprate the clutch and some other hardware and the sky’s your limit. ‘200bhp is easy, even 250bhp isn’t a problem,’ says Chris.

TRANSMISSION

Gearbox issues were a bugbear of the Mk1 Swift, with input shaft bearings a weak spot, but the Mk2 Sport’s six-speeder hasn’t suffered the same problem.

The gearshift can be a tad sticky from cold, but should be fine once warmed up.

‘It’s not the smoothest shift,’ says Chris, ‘but you have to keep in mind this is a cheap car, and you can’t expect it to feel like a Porsche. Changing the gearbox oil generally improves things.’

‘There has been the odd clutch failure, where the disc has disintegrated perhaps earlier than it should,’ he adds.

A few owners of early cars have complained of a rattling noise from the transmission – possibly clutch-related or from the gearbox itself. However, according to Chris, no cause has been identified. That said, if the car is driven enthusiastically, replacing the gearbox oil regularly – Chris recommends every other service – is worthwhile.

SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES

No serious issues here, just normal wear and tear. ABS pump failures on the Mk1 have not reappeared on the Mk2. There was a recall in 2016 to change a



Top: kit levels are good; plastic trim stands the test of time. **Above left:** heavily revised 1.6-litre unit proving reliable. **Below:** some owners fit wider 205-section rubber as original-spec 195-section options are limited



potentially faulty batch of rear brake calipers, so check this was done.

BODY, INTERIOR, ELECTRICS

No serious corrosion issues, but do check for untreated stone chips – the paint isn't the thickest... Interior plastics are one area where the Swift feels its budget price, but they actually wear pretty well.

Do check the needles for the rev counter and speedometer are illuminated when you turn the lights on – they're known to fail, meaning at night you can see the numbers on the dial but not the needle. It's not yet repairable, so if one of them's gone and the car's out of the three-year manufacturer warranty, you'll either need to find a salvaged set of dials on eBay – Chris recently did this for a customer, paying £100 for a set – or buy a new set from Suzuki for considerably more. You'll also have to pay an electronics pro to have the mileage reset.

INFORMATION

SPECIFICATION

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1586cc
Max power	134bhp @ 6900rpm
Max torque	118lb ft @ 4400rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive
Weight	1045kg [130bhp/ton]
0-62mph	8.7sec [claimed]
Top speed	121mph [claimed]
Price new	£13,499 [2012]

PARTS PRICES

Prices from levoissuzuki.co.uk. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges.

Tyre	£114.52 [195/45 Continental Sport Contact 5] or £103.34 [205/45 Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 3]
Front pads	£58.85 [set]
Front discs	£152.93 [pair]
Damper	£139.67
Clutch	£244.66
Manifold/catalyst	£971.46
Exhaust centre section	£234.06
Spark plugs	£73.36 [set]
Air filter	£21.19

SERVICING

Prices from levoissuzuki.co.uk, including VAT. Service at 9000 miles or annually, whichever is sooner.

1st service	£160
2nd service	£270
3rd service	£220
4th service	£360 [incl spark plugs]

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WHAT TO PAY

Expect some movement in the market with the imminent arrival of the new Mk3 Swift Sport and some owners looking to trade up. This might cause Mk2 values to weaken in the short term, although enthusiasts believe the naturally aspirated cars will maintain a following.

As for how much, right now you might be lucky and find a high-mileage 2012 car

for as little as £5k. As we've seen, high miles shouldn't put you off, provided the car you're considering has been well looked after. Examples from 2012/2013 are generally £5.5k-7k depending on mileage. Average-mileage 2014/2015 cars are £7.5k-9k, with late, low-mileage examples (less than 10,000 miles) currently around £10k.

'I BOUGHT ONE'

PAUL DINGWALL

'I bought my Swift Sport new in 2015 and it's now covered more than 26,000 miles. I chose it because it would be cheap to run and reasonably practical. It's loaded with kit that's normally extra, it outhandles many more expensive machines, it looks smart, and it shifts – if you're willing to rev it. It genuinely makes you want to go for a drive just for the hell of it. My Auris never did that, despite the mountain of torque it had!

'What's it not so good at? The boot's small, there aren't a lot of modifications available for modest money and it has an annoying "engine on hold" restrictor while it warms up. But that's about it. It doesn't suffer from any glaring faults, it doesn't cost an arm and a leg at servicing time and insurance is only Group 9. I see an average of around 40mpg during winter, 44mpg in summer, though a spirited drive will see that drop into the mid-30s.



'Garage bills have been very reasonable. I have my servicing done at Inverness dealer Dicksons to keep the warranty intact. The first service was £138, the second £235, but that included a front brake strip and clean. The only thing that's needed attention was a sticking rear brake caliper: a cheap fix at £43.

'I run my car on Goodyear Eagle Asymmetric 3s, as do other SSOC forum members, on a slightly upsized 205/45 x 17. The only modification I've made is a change of back box. It's now running an Ulter that has a nice little growl at idle and is a bit more vocal under acceleration.

'There's a strong following for the sporty Swift. Most owners are considering another or are already on their second. The new turbocharged Sport is very controversial – not just because it's going to cost more, but the fact it's forced-induction.'

WHAT WE SAID



DRIVEN, DECEMBER 2011

'Spring rates have been increased and there is noticeably less roll, which means you get a car that handles direction changes with a flatter stance and more precision than before, but you also lose a bit of adjustability at the rear.

'It's still a hugely fun car, however, and it seems happiest being grabbed by the scruff and chucked around in true Early Learning hot hatch fashion. This slightly more aggressive approach suits the steering, too, as it lacks a bit of weight and feel around the straight-ahead but loads up encouragingly once you've got some lock on and the tyres working.

'The engine rewards a committed attitude to the throttle as well. Try not to let it dip under 4000rpm because below that it struggles, but above and all the way to the pillowy-soft limiter just beyond 7000rpm it is tremendously eager to spit out its 134bhp. The shift action retains the positive, short-throw feeling of the old five-speeder, although it doesn't relish being rushed through the gate.

'Verdict: still a great pocket rocket.'

– **evo** 164

RIVALS

RENAULT SPORT TWINGO 133

Renault Sport's baby, built 2008-13, is cheap to insure and a blast to drive. Nat-asp 1.6 makes 131bhp, enough to propel the car's 1050kg to 62mph in 8.7sec. From £3500 (post-2012 facelift from £5k).

MINI COOPER (R56)

Ubiquity puts some off, but the second-gen Cooper is still fun, if not quite as feisty as the Swift and Twingo. Another nat-asp 1.6 but with just 120bhp, so 0-62 takes 9.1sec. From £5k for 2010/11 cars.

FORD FIESTA ZETEC S

The sensible alternative but still a rewarding steer, the 2008-13 Zetec S has just 118bhp, so 62mph arrives in a so-so 9.9sec, but the upside is a great little chassis. From £5k for 2010/11 examples.

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TUNING COMPANIES: FLY-BY-NIGHT

operations offering stick-on tat, or proper engineering firms making worthwhile and demonstrable improvements? In the BMW world one name stands firmly in the latter category: AC Schnitzer. Fastest road-legal BMW around the Nordschleife? That's the AC Schnitzer ACL2, the bonkers M235i equipped with a 562bhp M4 engine. Past Schnitzer records include fastest LPG-powered car (V10-engined 3-series, 197.6mph), fastest diesel (tuned 335d, 179.4mph) and fastest road-legal BMW (V10 M6, 206.2mph). The firm has been fettling BMWs for over 30 years now so it knows its double-kidney grilles, but can it sprinkle its magic on the latest 5-series, specifically the 540i?

For many owners it's the looks that are most important, so Schnitzer has a range of styling additions – front spoiler extensions, a front splitter, sill extensions, spoilers for the top of the rear screen and bootlid, and a rear diffuser. The wheels are 20-inch AC1 items with Michelin Pilot Super Sports tyres and are matched with a suspension drop (25-30mm front and 20-25mm rear) thanks to new springs.

The car has the firepower to back up its looks as Schnitzer has added an auxiliary



Above: ACS 540i pulls harder than the standard car at higher speeds thanks to power upgrade

control unit that monitors and massages criteria such as air mass, boost pressure and fuel-rail pressure to give 394bhp at 6000rpm and 398lb ft at 3500rpm, gains of 59bhp and 66lb ft. This car also features a rather fruity exhaust – an export version that's significantly louder than the German-market offering.

AC Schnitzer claims its 540i will knock off the 0-62mph sprint in 4.9sec – 0.2sec quicker than standard – and cover 50-112mph (80-180kph) in 8.8sec, a 1.9sec improvement. These figures are for the rear-drive 540i, as tested here but not offered by BMW in the UK, but you can expect similar gains with a 540i xDrive.

The overriding impression on starting this 540i is that it feels like it's going to be a naughty companion. It erupts into

an angry cacophony that settles to a note that's acceptable but significantly more aggressive than standard. Inside, the sound is perfectly liveable with in Comfort mode, but ask for full throttle or switch to Sport and the exhaust flaps open to expose an angry alter ego.

The Schnitzer pulls appreciably harder than a normal 540i when nudging 80mph or so and it'll romp up to its 155mph limiter on the autobahn. At these speeds the ride's fine, as it is on other roads, yet when you do push harder there is less body roll than on the standard car, and more clarity to the steering, too.

The downside is, of course, cost. That engine upgrade is £3264, the exhaust is £2560, and the wheel and tyre set is over £4k. The springs are £463 and the styling comes in at over £4000 if you go the whole hog. And this is for parts only, without any fitting and painting charges.

Cherry-pick the parts that suit you, though, and Schnitzer's upgrades can be worthwhile – if you're going to be driving a car for three years or so you might as well make the most of it. Schnitzer's 540i won't be breaking any speed or lap-time records but it's a very satisfying steer.

Bob Harper

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BUYING JOURNEY

Forced induction and convertibles have dominated reader Alex Chester's car choices



THERE HAVE BEEN TWO FACTORS that have influenced Alex's buying habits. Firstly, his Renault 5 GT Turbo got him hooked on forced-induction engines, which is why he followed up the French hot hatch with a trio of turbo coupes, including the unloved Mitsubishi 3000 GTO and the bonkers Fiat Coupe 20V.

But after a holiday to California, where he hired a drop-top Mustang, his new passion became convertibles and he has

owned one ever since. His first was the very un-turbocharged Honda S2000, with its relatively tiny torque output and 9000rpm red line. The engine's lack of twist didn't faze Alex though, as he was smitten with being exposed to the elements and the limitless headroom. He's since worked his way through hot rod-style roadsters from TVR, AMG and BMW, and on to the sharper Porsche Boxster and then some bigger, GT-like convertibles.

MITSUBISHI 3000 GTO

'This car was fantastic despite all the negative reviews. Come on, it had two turbos! Mine was an import and had been lowered and fitted with bigger wheels. The engine had been modified too. I'm not sure exactly what had been done but it made lots of sucking and whooshing noises and went very fast. I then fitted a very loud HKS exhaust. The GTO is an underrated car to drive, but mine proved unreliable and expensive to maintain, at a time when dealers were snooty about servicing imports, too.'

THE CARS

Renault 5 GTL (Mk1)

VW Golf Driver (Mk1)

Renault 5 GT Turbo (Mk2)

Nissan 200SX (S13)

Mitsubishi 3000 GTO

Fiat Coupe 20V Limited Edition

Honda S2000

TVR Tamora

VW Golf TDI (Mk5)

VW Golf GTI (Mk5)

BMW Z4 M Roadster

Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG

Porsche Boxster S (987)

Maserati Spyder

Jaguar XKR Convertible



TVR TAMORA

'After my first drop-top, a Honda S2000, I bought a Tamora. I loved the unique looks and interior, and the performance, the sound – especially after I fitted a louder exhaust – and its compact size. What I didn't like was the roof mechanism: the hard panel barely squeezed into the boot. The seats were also surprisingly unsupportive. But what I absolutely hated was the reliability. The Speed Six engine needed a major rebuild soon after I bought it, and then a second one later. There were numerous other small problems, too.'



MASERATI SPYDER

'A friend took me for a ride in a 4200 Coupe and I was so impressed I looked for one, but in Spyder form, of course. I found one with a very loud Larini exhaust, so I was sold on it immediately. In the end it proved to be poorly made, unreliable and expensive to maintain. I did love the engine, though. While the technology behind it was clearly old, I found the Cambiocorsa transmission a lot more engaging and involving than Porsche's PDK gearbox. Like the TVR, it felt like something was about to fail every time you drove it or opened the roof.'

WHAT NEXT?

'I probably won't think about changing my car for a while now – I'm very happy with the Jaguar. However, ever since doing a Bedford Autodrome trackday I've loved the idea of a Caterham, but that would have to be my third car and that's very tricky to justify.'

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PEUGEOT 208 GTi by PS // MAZDA MX-5 RF // FORD MUSTANG V8 CONVERTIBLE //
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NEW ARRIVALS

Lamborghini Aventador Roadster,
Aston Martin DBS Volante, **Porsche** 911 GT3 RS 4.0,
Ariel Atom & **McLaren** 720S

Five different cars, one owner's mission: to drive them like they were meant to be driven



T HERE IS SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL about new car day. Not necessarily brand new, just new to me, and it's likely you've experienced this too since you're reading this magazine. Those days are often the culmination of hours of research, poring over old copies of **evo** and reading again the articles that were first read with interest, but are now read intently with the eyes of an information-hungry prospective owner.

I've been lucky enough to have quite a few of those days over the years, with the subsequent reality of owning and running supercars on a day-to-day basis. I'm looking forward to sharing some of those experiences with you in my Fast Fleet reports.

I'm John Black – car enthusiast, avid **evo** reader since the magazine's launch and fortunate owner of several wonderful cars. My current fleet includes a McLaren 720S Launch Edition, a Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0, a Lamborghini LP700 Aventador Roadster, an Aston Martin DBS Volante Carbon Black, and a gloriously mad Ariel Atom.

I don't like to use the word 'collection' to

describe my cars, since that conjures up the wrong idea of why I own them. Each one has been bought to drive and enjoy on road and occasionally track, by me and also some friends, with whom I take the cars away on driving trips each year. The cars are not mollycoddled, wrapped in cotton wool or tucked away in dehumidified tents. Owning these cars is lots of fun, and driving them is a massive part of the enjoyment for me.

I have tried to ensure that the cars in my garage don't have too much crossover in purpose or the thrills that they can offer, so that each has its ideal day and moment. Over my next few reports I'll try to explain why I have the cars I do, and what niche they each fill in the stables.

The most recent addition to the Black fleet is the Azores Orange Launch Edition 720S. For me, it fills the role of the modern-day turbo supercar. I wanted to experience something bang up to date, something born of the significant developments in materials, turbocharging and aero in the last few years. I like the way the McLaren shape has evolved

from the original MP4-12C through to the 675LT, so the 720S was on my shortlist.

I rarely buy cars new, even more rarely cars I've never seen, so when a McLaren-owning friend offered me his build slot on the car known then as the P14, it was a leap of faith. The deposit was duly paid on a Launch Edition model with full carbon and the track camera pack. (I've more recently put down a deposit on an Ariel Hipercar, so I've clearly not been put off buying a car blind by my McLaren experience. The Ariel will fill the newly defined niche in the stables of 'electric hypercar'.)

The launch pictures of the 720S from Geneva were a great relief and I love the way the car looks, even more so in the metal now that it's finally arrived. There's a hint of Pagani from certain angles and I love the unconventional airflow through headlights and doors. On the move the way the car gathers pace is unlike anything else I own; it's a properly rapid technological wonder.

On delivery day the McLaren handover man explained that the car would 'redefine fast' compared with my Aventador, my other



‘The Aventador plays the part of A-list celebrity – a wonderful car in which to tackle the tunnels and viaducts along the Italian Riviera’



Above: Ariel Atom, soon to be joined on the Black fleet by the battery-powered Ariel Hipercar

700bhp car. He was partly right. It's more about the way the 720S creates its speed, as even when short-shifting at 4000rpm it feels like it's on a drag-strip record attempt. By comparison, the Aventador saves its party tricks for the top end of the rev range, where the fireworks and associated awe kick-in for driver and passenger alike. The Lamborghini feels at times more exciting as a result, even if it's not 'redefining fast' as clinically as the



Far left: Lamborghini Aventador Roadster, Aston Martin DBS Volante and Ariel Atom offer very different open-top thrills. **Left:** Alcantara abounds in the McLaren. **Below:** John Black loves the lines of his recently acquired McLaren 720S



McLaren. That said, the 720S is a wonderful addition to the fleet and I'm looking forward to exploring its undoubted breadth of talent.

In my fleet the Aventador Roadster plays the part of A-list celebrity, and occasional high-maintenance diva, but it's a wonderful car in which to tackle the sweeping tunnels and viaducts along the Italian Riviera. I've had the pleasure of taking the Aventador and some Ferraris I've previously owned on road trips with pals to Italy, where these cars are positively revered and celebrated. I love the noise of this Lamborghini, the drama, the pace and the smiles it attracts. Whilst definitely not an ownership prospect for the shy and retiring, for me it's worth all of its compromises and the occasionally painful running costs.

The 997 GT3 RS 4.0 is a car I've owned for two years now, the writers on this magazine having fuelled a huge appetite for it, not least with its *evo* Car of the Year win in 2011. It is the scalpel to the Aventador's sledgehammer, and in spite of the power on offer it never feels like it's trying to bite. The mountains near where I live are the perfect habitat for this car and on

the Route Napoléon it shines like I doubt few others could. I'm planning to take it on track at Paul Ricard soon, where it will do battle for thrills with my Ariel Atom. I can't wait.

By comparison, the Aston Martin DBS is the consummate classy GT – roof up or down. It's the car to take Mrs Black to dinner in, and yet it still turns its hand so capably to a blast on the roads around Gorges du Verdon. I had always longed for a four-seat supercar and this was for some time the pinnacle of my car ambitions. It has been all I'd hoped for, too. It hasn't missed a beat and it makes simply the most glorious sound; another keeper for now.

I've several trips planned for 2018. The 911 and Atom will return to the Route Napoléon; there's a group trip to the Col de Turini in the 720S, 911, DBS and Aventador; the Lamborghini and McLaren are going to Sant'Agata in the summer; and three cars are going to the Best of Italy Race in Emilia Romagna.

I look forward to sharing these and various other supercar-owning moments with you in my future reports. Until next time...

John Black (@john_m_black)



'It allows the driver to enjoy rear-wheel drive even if they're new to this layout'

BMW M240i

Selecting Sport+ mode has transformed the daily drive

I 'VE RECENTLY BEEN PONDERING the pros and cons of the high level of configurability offered by many modern performance cars – adaptive dampers, different engine maps, etc – and it got me thinking about how I use the BMW and its multitude of settings. I can't argue with the benefits of being able to tease out better mpg or select a more relaxing ride for longer distances, but can such flexibility detract from a car's abilities rather than enhance them?

In older performance cars you can't simply change their dynamics to suit your situation. You have no choice but to experience them pure and unfiltered every time you drive them, and I feel that this keeps you more alert and involved in every journey – even a simple daily commute. Yet when you have options, I find it's all too easy to become a lazy driver. This was the case on my drive home one evening not long ago, where I switched the M240 to Comfort mode and the gearbox to auto to make the journey as effortless as possible.

Not so bad as an occasional thing, I

suppose, but I actually kept these settings selected for the following couple of days. Then, perhaps inevitably, I eventually found myself a little underwhelmed by this 335bhp coupe. So using my old-car theory, I decided to put the BMW into its sportiest settings – selecting Sport+ for the driving mode, which also relaxes the traction control, and putting the gearbox into full manual mode – to see if this could make any change to my mood.

Upon completing my usual 75-minute commute to the office the next morning, I had a smile on my face. It was 6deg C and had been raining, so you can imagine how lively the BMW was on the more interesting sections of my route in – all the better for keeping me engaged in proceedings. Also, when you only shift manually, the engine flirts with you, using its noise to keep you on the throttle all the way to 7000rpm.

The shifts themselves are ridiculously harsh: the thump of torque as the new gear hits home causes the rear wheels to spin briefly on damp roads, bringing a slight slip angle even when you're driving in a straight line. But because you know it's going to happen, you can start to have fun with it.

Second gear, 6300rpm, blipping up to third while exiting a tight corner, feeling the back step out and then powering all the way



Above: taking full manual control of gearshifts with the paddles brings plenty of reward

through the gear is pretty exciting. I like the way you can do this at relatively low speeds, too. Wet roads help, but torque is the main cause, allowing the driver to enjoy rear-wheel drive even if they're new to this layout.

It certainly stops you from zoning out. My plan now is to keep the BMW in Sport+ for as long as possible. Let's see what happens.

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired	November 2017
Total mileage	4102
Mileage this month	1243
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.6



Lexus RC F

A novel modification puts a little extra lead in the coupe's pencil

I KEA. HOME OF THE BILLY bookcase, meatballs and free modifications for the Lexus RC F. You what? Allow me to explain.

A month or so back I received an email from a loyal **evo** subscriber and Lexus RC F owner called Andrew, who wanted to share a rather neat tweak he's come across for the RC F. His note went like this: 'Dear Dickie, it's great to read your reports on the RC F and to find you are liking it as much as I do. I've now owned mine for 27 months and can't see anything to replace it with; it's a keeper. I'm writing to offer a 20-pence modification for GY17 OBF, courtesy of the Lexus RC F forum.'

'Under the bonnet, on the front offside, is a square box with a small flexible pipe about as thick as a pencil. Pull the pipe off the box and insert a golf tee (long plastic type) up the pipe.

Personally, I've got better things to do than play golf so I saved 20p on a tee and used a pink pencil instead.

'The box has a flap which normally opens at around 4000rpm under heavy throttle. With the golf tee/pencil inserted into the flexible pipe the flap remains open at all rpm. Its adds extra joy when you just want to amble around.'

Intrigued, I did something I never normally do — had a rummage beneath the RC F's bonnet. There, as described, was the flexible pipe, which detached easily, and a freebie IKEA pencil proved to be the perfect size and length, with a small zip-tie securing it neatly to the adjacent pipe. Job done.

The childish bit of me was hoping for some kind of C63 AMG-style bellow when I started the engine, so I was a little disappointed that the 5-litre V8 remained its polite-yet-

purposeful self. However, a quick blat round the block revealed that the IKEA pencil had indeed effected a welcome gain in engine sound when on the move. It hasn't changed the note or increased the volume, but whereas the RC F's bellow kicked in like a switch around 4000rpm under wide throttle openings, it now arrives more freely and sounds far less contrived as a result. Organic, almost.

It's still not animalistic in the manner of an AMG Benz or Jaguar SVR, which is a shame as I'd love to know what the Lexus would sound like properly uncorked. That said, it's the RC F's performance and maturity that's a big part of its appeal. The pencil mod does nothing to detract from that, but does add a little spark to brighten your journey.

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired	August 2017
Total mileage	6827
Mileage this month	825
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	23.5



Mercedes-AMG C43 Estate

NEW ARRIVAL

It may not shout quite as loudly as the C63, but then our latest Fast Fleet addition is all about going 'under the radar'

SAY HELLO TO THE NEWEST MEMBER of the **evo** Fast Fleet, and possibly one of the most useful, too.

Compact yet spacious, fast whatever the weather, smart but at the same time rather discreet – yes, the Mercedes-AMG C43 Estate has an awful lot to offer.

Naturally, who wouldn't desire the drama, performance and soundtrack of its 469bhp, V8-engined C63 bigger brother? But in the real world you'd also have to be willing to put up with the sub-20mpg fuel consumption, and while lighting up the rear tyres is entertaining, so the thought of the C43's effective four-wheel-drive traction is also very appealing. In fact, the C43 Estate feels like it could be a real sweet spot in the AMG line-up, and that's what we're looking to confirm or quarrel over during

our upcoming six months with the car.

Anecdotal, it seems the C43 family of models are selling well, with reports from dealership floors suggesting an increasing number of customers who would have chosen a large-engined diesel C-class turning to the C43 as an alternative. With its official combined fuel consumption of 34.9mpg, the C43 doesn't appear too thirsty on paper (time will tell on that one) and the lure of 362bhp and a stonking 383lb ft from the twin-turbo 3-litre V6 is certainly a draw in itself.

Ordering time was, frankly, exciting, because when is spec'ing a new car, real or imaginary, not? For our car, I wanted it to look as discreet as possible. After all, a daily workhorse estate armed with more than 360bhp – that's a car ideally suited to

being under the radar while going about its potentially very fast business.

So I went for metallic black – I’m always a bit unsure about black estates for their funereal qualities, but the choice is limited – and did without the window tints and bigger wheel options to tone down the aggression and improve the ride quality. Essentially, I wanted it to look like a humble diesel-engined ‘AMG Line’ model but with a real sting in the tail, and having seen one of those in the same colour the other day I can confirm it fooled me. Sadly, I wasn’t allowed to de-badge our car, but that would have completed the subterfuge.

Mercedes were keen for us to try the £1695 Driver Assistance Package, but I have to say, I’d rather keep that sort of cash in my pocket. You probably won’t be surprised to hear it includes much of the latest safety tech, such as Blind Spot Assist and steering assistance. I’ve switched much of it off so far; maybe I’ll be converted over the coming months.

We’ve got the Premium Plus Package (£2995) on there as well, which includes the Burmester surround sound system and a panoramic roof, but I’m more interested in the stuff we really wanted: the £825 head-up display, the £545 LED Intelligent Light System and the £1000 AMG sports exhaust.

The head-up display is simply a nice thing to have, but the LED lamps are wonderful. Not only are they piercingly bright, but they can also morph their beam according to oncoming traffic and the road itself. Normally I’d instinctively shy away from anything that took away from a driver’s inputs, but I have to admit that once you’ve used this particular piece of tech it seems pointless going back.

As for the sports exhaust, there’s a bit more to that particular tale. Before our definitive

‘I wanted it to look like a humble diesel-engined “AMG Line” model with a real sting in the tail’

Fast Fleet C43 turned up, I had the use of a virtually identical car for a period. Identical, that is, apart from the absence of the sports exhaust. If you’d asked me then as to whether that was a box worth ticking, I’d have said ‘keep the grand and attract less attention at the same time’. However, not only do the AMG pipes give you a laughably rude exhaust note with the valves open, but with them shut the

tone is much sweeter than the bland tone of the standard backboxes. I’d now say don’t buy a C43 without it.

For more pearls of AMG-based wisdom, and to see how we get on, look out for further reports in the coming months. In the meantime, if you’re running a C43 let us know how you’re getting on via the usual channels.

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)



Date acquired	January 2018
Total mileage	1660
Mileage this month	1474
Cost this month	£0
mpg this month	25



Peugeot 208 GTi by PS

The feisty 208 trumps its bigger brother... until the going gets tricky

A ROUND A YEAR AGO I WAS RUNNING a Peugeot 308 GTi, another product of Peugeot Sport, which is a department I am becoming quite evangelical about. I often preach about the holy trinity – the 208 GTi by PS, the 308 GTi (270 version) and the sadly discontinued RCZ R – to anyone who will listen. So when we were discussing last month's test to pit the new Hyundai i30 N against a Golf GTi and, importantly, a 308 GTi, I made sure I was there to spread the good word of Peugeot Sport.

I can't say I'm a fan of the 308's 2017 facelift; its new pedestrian-friendly bulbous nose makes it look like a sperm whale. Thankfully, what I really love about the 308 – how it drives – hasn't changed. It feels like the archetypal front-wheel-drive performance car. Its passive dampers, mechanical LSD and torsion beam rear axle mean it behaves exactly how you'd expect a hot hatch to.

What I'd forgotten was just how similar the

308's interior is to that of the 208. The steering wheel is identical, the dials still aren't properly visible, the driver's seat – although a little fancier-looking – feels the same, and because the engine and gearbox are pretty much the same too, the car makes a similar noise and the gearshift is eerily familiar. Even the way the two cars accelerate is alike. The 208's 1.6 is down 61bhp but the whole car was 121kg lighter when we weighed them both on our scales, and that helps make up for the power deficit.

What does feel different is the chassis – disappointingly so. After driving along motorways and straight roads for some time, the familiar environment meant I'd completely forgotten I was in the 308 and not my 208. Then I got to a slip road – essentially a long, wide, quiet one-way corner, so a great opportunity to indulge in some committed driving. I trail-braked into the late-apex banked left-hander, but when I turned the steering wheel I was served up a less immediate front



Top: 208 is the more exciting GTi in the dry.
Above: 308 feels more secure in the wet

end and more body roll than I was expecting. I was also ready to quickly apply some corrective lock to catch the excitable rear-end if required as I skitted and scrabbled towards the apex. But there wasn't any of that, and I was rather disappointed by the 308's general lack of vigour compared with the 208.

Then, later in my journey, the temperatures dropped and the rain came, and I discovered that the extra roll and added compliance that sap away at the 308's enthusiasm make it that bit more predictable when the going gets slippery. This was emphasised further



when I swapped back into the 208 on a grim, wet evening a couple of days later. I found myself teetering around, being gentle with the throttle and delicate with the steering so as not to scare the front tyres into losing grip. I couldn't lean on the front end as confidently as I could the 308's, so I couldn't make the most of that more mobile rear end. The 208 does surprise you with how much traction it can find – on the exit of a sodden corner it hooks up impressively – but the 308 keeps you in the loop the entire time, always communicating how much grip is available, helping you enjoy every aspect of a corner.

I still prefer the 208 over its bigger brother; its feisty attitude and focused chassis suit me more and it's so entertaining when it's dry that I can put up with its wet-weather behaviour. But in an ideal world I'd have a 208 for dry days and a 308 for when it's wet and grimy.

Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)

Date acquired	September 2017
Total mileage	6558
Mileage this month	1575
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	37.1



Mazda MX-5 RF

A stint off the road upsets the RF's delicate electronic sensibilities

WE'VE ALL PERHAPS BECOME A BIT complacent about the reliability of new cars. I'm old enough to remember walking to school every time my mum's old Citroën Visa failed to proceed in the late '80s and early '90s, and neighbours' cars had similar problems, yet I'm also young enough that it's never been a real concern with any of the cars I've owned myself.

The only thing that's hobbled me on occasion is letting a battery run down. In the past this was through inattentiveness – it's amazing how easy it is to leave your lights on if the dashboard lighting is dim and there's no buzzer to warn you. More recently, long periods of inactivity for my Eunos, thanks largely to driving long-termers such as the MX-5 RF instead, have meant I've twisted the key to the sound of silence on more than one occasion, so I now keep a battery tender in the boot ready for such occasions.

Still, it came as a bit of a surprise when recently I walked up to the RF, pushed the keyless entry button and found no reaction whatsoever. The Mazda's fob contains an actual, physical key, which opened the door – with a little more effort than usual, since the auto-dropping window didn't auto-drop – but predictably, there wasn't a peep upon pressing the starter button.

Thankfully, Matthew Hayward from *evo*'s sister title *Octane* came to the rescue with one of those tiny but mighty jump packs

and the RF quickly fired back into life. It wasn't particularly happy about it, though, throwing up all manner of warning lights for the first few minutes and, more worryingly, intermittently losing power assistance to the steering and illuminating an ABS light on an exploratory drive around the car park.

Both fixed themselves quickly, but clearly even some modern cars aren't predisposed to sitting still for long periods, particularly during a cold snap like the one the RF had endured. I felt rather guilty, as a succession of test cars had diverted my attention from the otherwise likeable RF, and without really noticing it, it had languished in the car park for around a month, with only the occasional run out in the hands of colleagues.

I've made up for that indiscretion by taking it on a few longer runs since, and it's now returned to its old, faultless self. Well, apart from the handbrake light glowing at random intervals and an irritating squeak emanating from the retractable roof. The RF will have been for its first annual service by the time you read this, so I'll see if the dealership can find answers to either issue.

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Date acquired	February 2017
Total mileage	12,474
Mileage this month	774
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	45.7



VW Golf GTE & Ford Mustang V8 GT Convertible

Cutting-edge tech meets old-fashioned muscle, and each has a place in the modern motoring landscape

YOU COULDN'T FIND A GREATER contrast on *evo*'s Fast Fleet if you tried. With its hairy-chested 5-litre V8 the unapologetically gas-guzzling Mustang is the very four-wheeled antithesis of our efficiency-is-almost-everything Golf GTE. One of these cars represents the future of motoring (so we're told), the other is a dinosaur whose time is very quickly running out (so we're told).

I've spent the last six months racking up the miles in our GTE, and it's fair to say the hybrid hatch has won my respect, if not my heart. Its ability to do a fair impression of a hot hatch when the mood takes, then switch to a near silent and hassle-free commuter is not without appeal. Then there's technology. Whether it's a twin-clutch gearbox, adaptive matrix LED headlamps, gesture-control infotainment, TFT dials or radar-guided cruise control, the goody-two-shoes Golf has all the cutting-edge bases

covered. Yet while having all this stuff is well and good, and some of it is genuinely useful, every now and then you need a digital detox – and this is where the Mustang comes in.

Like Ian Eveleigh (*evo* 245), I'd somehow avoided any time in the big Ford – not out of choice; it was just one of those wrong place, wrong time situations – but I was keen to sample its more, erm, simplistic charms. The first thing you notice is the noise. After months of hearing nothing more than an electronic bong when prodding the ignition, the churning starter motor and woofly V8 idle brought an instant smile to my face. Then there's the fact you have to make an effort to change gear, pushing a pedal and moving a lever that benefits from a surprisingly precise and mechanical action. In fact, 'effort' is a good word to describe the Mustang – and not in a bad way.

The steering is heftier than the Golf's, and because the full-fat Ford was designed for larger-than-life America it takes greater care to thread down the UK's tight and twisty secondaries. It's not as hushed, either. The canvas roof does an impressive job of cutting wind rustle, but road roar and engine noise (admittedly of the good, throbby V8 kind) are both more intrusive than in the vault-like VW.

Yet despite this I didn't arrive home any more tired than I would have done in the Golf. In many respects I was more energised, because on the last few miles of back roads I was able to get involved with the Mustang in a way the clinically efficient GTE simply doesn't invite. Sure, the substantial 'Stang isn't the last word in scalpel-sharp precision, but the combination of rear-wheel drive and thundering V8 means it certainly holds



Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio

Snow stops play for our 503bhp rear-wheel-drive supersaloon

THE UK HAS BEEN HAVING SOME weather recently. Weather that shouldn't really stop a near £70,000 car from going about its business, but weather that the Giulia's Pirelli Corsa tyres had zero interest in working with. In fact, anything below 7deg C combined with a damp surface has the Italian rubber over-rotating at less than heroic speeds (we're talking sub 20mph here), including when pulling away from a junction or manoeuvring off my drive. Being honest, it's gone beyond frustrating and when it snowed a while back, the Alfa and I had our first tiff.

There's another reason why the Quadrifoglio struggles in low-grip conditions. In theory its torque-vectoring limited-slip differential should send torque to the rear wheel with the most traction. In theory. In reality the diff's electronic brain doesn't intervene at manoeuvring speeds, so the wheel with the least traction rotates at will. The problem is compounded by the engine always sending torque to the rear of the car, even when it's stationary, which can make it difficult to modulate at low speeds. Add snow or ice and the shallowest of inclines and you have a stuck Giulia and a driver having to call a colleague and ask for a lift.

Of course, all of this could have been avoided had I ordered a set of winter tyres before the country ground to a halt for a day. But I didn't. However, you should if you have the key to a Giulia Quadrifoglio.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired	May 2017
Total mileage	18,460
Mileage this month	1101
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	23.3



your attention. It's more capable than you'd believe too: that independent axle finds surprising traction and the steering is quicker and more trustworthy than the arm-twirling action of Hollywood car chases would have you believe. There's no escaping its size, weight and the scuttle shake over even moderately rippled surfaces, or the fact it's really no quicker than the Golf over give-and-take roads, but the Ford's charm soon wins you over.

So where's the progress? Well, as always in these financially turbulent and ecologically aware times, it comes down to the bottom line and the environment. Where the Golf will easily travel 50 miles on a gallon of unleaded, the Mustang will get less than half as far on the same amount. And the VW's claimed CO2 emissions of 40g/km are far more palatable

'The rear-wheel drive and thundering V8 certainly hold your attention'

than the Ford's figure of 306g/km (although that ignores the thorny subject of where the electricity to charge the Golf comes from).

Neither machine is perfect, but they are proof that the basic template of what constitutes a car is hugely versatile and can be stretched in vastly different directions. Whether you want something that's quick and capable but soothes your conscience, or something unashamedly old school and unrepentant, the automobile has it covered.

James Disdale

FORD MUSTANG V8 GT CONVERTIBLE

Date acquired	September 2017
Total mileage	8602
Mileage this month	411
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	21.4

VW GOLF GTE

Date acquired	August 2017
Total mileage	8512
Mileage this month	712
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	49.6



Skoda Superb SportLine 4x4

Stealthy saloon gets the school-run thumbs-up, but damper settings fail to impress

IT MAY HAVE SIMILAR RUNNING gear to my recently departed SEAT Leon ST Cupra 300 4Drive (end-of-term report coming soon) but the big Skoda is a very different beast. As James Disdale noted in *evo* 245, the platform and hardware sharing at the Volkswagen Group is a vast enterprise. I imagine in Wolfsburg there is a vast computer program, a massive look-up sheet, listing all the brands and models and components, and containing all the permutations – and, crucially, the expected relative attributes of those models. That's to say how much performance each model is allowed, what its refinement targets are, what level of infotainment is permitted, etc, so there aren't too many duplications. The sort of thing British Leyland should have had in the '70s. Perhaps.

Despite shared running gear, there's clear water between the Leon and the Superb. For starters, the Superb is vast in comparison. Kinda snuck up on me that, because the dark paint and dark wheels disguise its size and, happily, from behind the wheel it doesn't feel huge. My boys certainly noticed the space in the back, though. There would always be a fight to avoid the middle seat in the SEAT,

'My youngest son asked if it was an Audi. Good work, Skoda engineers'

but with the Skoda embarkation was stress free, the journey good humoured, with lots of positive remarks as to the space and refinement. On arrival at school, Reuben, the littlest one, who hadn't seen the back of the car because the tailgate was already up when he slung his schoolbag in, asked if it was an Audi. Good work, Skoda engineers.

Will Beaumont was grudging with his praise in issue 244, which perhaps shows he's not the Skoda's target customer on that vast VAG spreadsheet. I probably am and appreciate the subtle looks and the cavernous boot. That said, as with the SEAT, the adaptive damping optionally specified for our car is an imperfect thing. Staff photographer Aston Parrott praised its Comfort setting for offering a featherbed platform for tracking shots, but I find even the Normal mode is a bit loose; over speed humps the nose bobs before settling.

Select Sport and the big-bump control is there but you have a load of naddety detail too.

To my mind, Normal should be the chassis engineer's best shot at a one-tune-fits-all-scenarios setting. In other words, as like the standard non-adjustable set-up as possible but with the extra scope and greater control adaptive dampers brings. If the customer then wants more waft (one man's waft is another's wallow) or firmer, sportier control (unyielding, busy), so be it.

It may be bigger and a smidgen less powerful, but compared with the SEAT, the Skoda's throttle pick-up seems keener and more progressive, its engine sounds more authentic and its performance is strong enough. Downsides? Not unexpectedly, it's returning 3 or 4mpg less and even in its sportiest settings it doesn't respond as keenly to steering inputs. But overall I'm a big fan.

John Barker (@evoJB)

Date acquired	September 2017
Total mileage	7823
Mileage this month	1723
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	29.5

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EVO PARTNERSHIP

FAST & FURIOUS LIVE

*The four-wheeled stars of the hit movie franchise are coming
— to a city near you in a new live-action arena show*



I F YOU'RE A FAN OF anything on four wheels, chances are you have been exposed to at least a little bit of the fanfare generated by the *Fast & Furious* franchise. There is no denying that the institution has brought with it a whole new generation of car fans, and now *Fast & Furious* has jumped off the big screen and into a spectacular arena show. It's playing at various locations around the UK and Europe, and **evo** recently attended the spectacular opening night at London's O2 Arena.

Masterminded by Rowland French, *Fast & Furious Live* has been developed to give fans of the series a taste of the action in a live format. In development for nearly five years, the production team had to break new ground in live-action special effects to bring together a show able to recreate some of the movies' most iconic scenes.

Digital projection mapping was one such innovation, with overhead projectors filling the show floor with environments relevant to each scene. One such use was in the recreation of the opening race from *2 Fast 2 Furious*, in which Paul Walker's silver Nissan Skyline GT-R is pitched against rivals. In this layout, the drivers not only recreated the



action live, but did so in LED-clad cars, virtually creating each respective livery, all while interacting with the overhead projections. The effects were developed specifically for *Fast & Furious Live*, and provided one of the most thrilling scenes of the evening.

The action takes place within a 50 x 25 metre stage set, with each of the



Top: jet-powered Ice Charger starred in the eighth film in the franchise, *The Fate of the Furious*. **Left:** LED-clad Nissan Skyline GT-R battles rivals

sequences played out by expertly trained drivers from a background in stunt driving or the professional drift circuit. Ultimately, the compact stage size does limit the action, but it also fosters an impressive combination of car control and innovative choreography.

If you're a fan of the films, you'll find plenty to like in *Fast & Furious Live*, with all the thrills, spills and army surplus vehicles that make the movies such a hit with audiences.

The tour visits Sheffield, Newcastle, Manchester, Birmingham, Belfast and Glasgow, between 27 April and 13 May. For tickets (from £42), head to fastandfuriouslive.com.

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 FK8 Type R is a more rounded proposition – and is all the better for it. It's outrageously fast on every kind of road, 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), while the **Hyundai i30 N Performance Package** is as intriguing – and impressive – alternative to the usual suspects. From the smaller hatchbacks, we wouldn't hesitate to 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	£27,125	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 106i 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	£32,765	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 Puma 1.7	095 F	'97-'02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	9.2	8.6	27.6	122	★★★★★
Ford Racing Puma	128 F	'00-'01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.9	7.8	23.2	137	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	244 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	145/5900	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	245 F	£27,995	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	316/6000	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 6R4 Clubman	181 F	'84-'87	6/2991	250/7000	225/6500	1000kg	254	4.5	-	-	140	★★★★★

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CV/L CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMPED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£15,775	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	-	130	+ Punchy three-cylinder engine, good chassis - Tubby styling	★★★★☆
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	244 F	£23,550	4/1998	205/6000	221/3000	1160kg	180	6.5	-	-	143	+ The most focused small hatch on sale - Odd driving position; obscured dials	★★★★☆
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 1.9	195 F	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.6	-	-	124	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	★★★★☆
Peugeot 308 GTi (270) by Peugeot Sport	245 F	£28,590	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224	6.0	-	-	155	+ A great entertainer with a cracker of an engine - Tiny steering wheel obscures the dials	★★★★☆
Peugeot 308 GTi 250 by Peugeot Sport	223 F	'15-'16	4/1598	246/6000	243/1900	1205kg	207	6.2	-	-	155	+ A very capable hot hatch... .. that lacks the sheer excitement of the best in class	★★★★☆
Peugeot 306 GTi 16	020 F	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.2	20.1	140	140	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more	★★★★☆
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	'88-'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 bouncyness	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Clio 200 Auto	184 F	£19,725	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	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	1011kg	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	+ Supercar 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	233 D	'16	4/1998	271/5500	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	271/5500	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	271/5500	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 250 Cup	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 R	244 D	£34,995	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1378kg	226	5.8	-	-	155	+ Sharper handling and better body control - High price and limited availability	★★★★☆
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	4/1390	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 WRXS	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	'12-'17	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	★★★★☆
Toyota Yaris GRMN	245 F	£26,295	4/1798	209/6800	184/4800	1135kg	187	6.4	-	-	143	+ Appealingly feisty supercharged supermini - Artificial steering; they're only making 400	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 F	£19,245	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.8	-	-	143	+ Begs to be wrung 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	216/5500	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	244 D	£21,500	4/1984	197/4400	236/1500	1280kg	156	6.7	-	-	147	+ Decent performance; mature ride and handling - Lacks driver involvement	★★★★☆
VW Polo GTi	211 F	'15-'17	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)	245 F	£29,820	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							

KW coilovers



- Racing technology of the 24h winner
- Separate and independent damper force setting for rebound and compression stage
Twin Valve Rebound Adjustable Technology (TVR-A)
Twin Valve Compression Low/High Adjustable Technology (TVCLH-A)
- Basic tuning ex works with adjustment range in + (firmer) / - (softer) direction
- Rebound stage damping: convenient adjustment with 16 precise clicks
- Low-speed compression stage: with 6 precise clicks
- High-speed compression stage: with 14 precise clicks
- With adjustable aluminum top mounts, depending on application

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CV/LCC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAM)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1466kg	170	6.5	5.8	15.2	155	+ The traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI ★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053F	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6200	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.6	6.4	16.3	154	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome ★★★★★
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	195F	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	123/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	-	129	+ Still feels everyday useable - Too many have been modified ★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)	224F	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	860kg	132	8.2	-	-	149	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one ★★★★★
Volvo V40 T5 R-Design Polestar	242D	'236,010	4/1969	250/5500	295/2000	1507kg	169	6.2	-	-	114	+ An intriguing alternative to the norm - Rivals offer more for less ★★★★★
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122F	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.7	6.6	16.9	149	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatchbacks; avoid the auto version ★★★★★

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.

Alfa Romeo Giulia 2.0 Turbo Super	234D	£31,180	4/1995	197/5000	243/1750	1429kg	140	6.6	-	-	146	+ Keen engine, enjoyable handling - Firm low-speed ride ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce	244F	£38,260	4/1995	276/5250	295/2250	1429kg	196	5.7	-	-	149	+ Supple and satisfying - Engine reluctant to rev ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	237F	£61,595	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	234D	£43,690	4/1995	276/5250	295/1750	1660kg	169	5.7	-	-	143	+ Agile feel, quick steering, attractive cabin - Engine not truly inspiring ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio	244D	£65,000	6/2891	503/6500	442/2500	1830kg	279	3.8	-	-	176	+ Rivals the Macan GTS - Needs optional P Zero Corsa tyres to give its very best ★★★★★
Alfa D3 Biturbo (F30)	192D	£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)	188D	'13-'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	201D	£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	141F	'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	192D	£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	243F	£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)	225D	£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)	166D	'08-'16	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1650kg	202	5.0	-	-	155	+ Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4 ★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B9)	244D	£62,175	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1790kg	252	4.1	-	-	155	+ Very 'real world' fast - Some may feel it lacks character and drama ★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	216F	'12-'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)	231D	'05-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.7	4.5	10.5	155	+ 444bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking ★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192F	'00-'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	214F	'94-'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	233D	£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	091D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.5	-	-	155	+ Fast, and discreet with it - Very muted V10 ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203F	£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)	224D	£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)	116F	'08-'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)	052F	'02-'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	171D	£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	208F	£86,985	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1930kg	291	3.9	-	-	155	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience ★★★★★
Audi S8 Plus	217D	£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	206D	'13-'16	5/2480	335/5300	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	-	155	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity ★★★★★
Audi SQ5	237D	£51,200	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1870kg	190	5.4	-	-	155	+ Fine chassis; deceptive pace - Lacks excitement ★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200D	£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	230D	£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	185D	£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	217D	£162,700	12/5950	600/5000	664/1350	2365kg	258	4.1	-	-	187	+ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma ★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178F	£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	235D	£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)	180D	£38,590	6/2993	254/4000	432/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	-	155	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel ★★★★★
BMW 340i M Sport Touring (F31)	228D	£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)	165D	'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	203D	'14-'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)	211F	£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)	237F	£59,595	6/2979	444/7000	460/1850	1560kg	289	4.2	-	-	155	+ The car the F80 M3 should have been from the start - Less refined at low speeds ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123F	'08-'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)	179F	'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 (F90)	244F	£89,640	8/4395	592/5600	553/1800	1855kg	324	3.4	-	-	155	+ Fun in two- or four-wheel drive - Insufficient steering connection and engine character ★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10)	208F	'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)	129F	'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)	110F	'99-'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)	110F	'92-'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)	182F	'86-'88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.1	-	-	156	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks ★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190D	£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	233D	£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	191D	£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	212D	£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	134D	'09-'15	8/4395	541/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	-	171	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor ★★★★★
Cadillac CT6	226D	£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 ★★★★★
Cadillac CT6-S	148F	'08-'15	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	-	191	+ Standing out among M-cars and AMGs - The novelty might wear off ★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012F	'98-'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	195D	£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 Awrd	227D	£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	237D	£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	213D	'15-'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	214D	£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	219D	£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	181D	'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	208F	'13-'15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.6	-	-	186	+ XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap ★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191D	£91,755	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1875kg	294	4.6	-	-	174	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks ★★★★★
Jaguar XJRS75	242D	£93,710	8/5000	567/6250	516/3500	1875kg	307	4.4	-	-	186	+ Big performance, genuine sporting spirit - Unfashionable package; depreciation ★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148D	'10-'16	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1835kg	150	6.6	-	-	155	+ A great Jaguar - But not as sporty as the XJR... ★★★★★
Jaguar E-Pace P300	243D	£45,660	4/1998	296/5500	295/1200	1894kg	159	6.4	-	-	155	+ Decent grip and balance - Dreary engine; heavier than a V6 F-Pace ★★★★★

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CV/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62 MPH (2.0-6.0)	0-60 MPH (1.0-6.0)	0-100 MPH (1.0-6.0)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Jaguar F-Pace S	222 D	£53,365	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1884kg	202	5.5	-	-	155	+ A match for Porsche's SUVs - Supercharged V6 needs to be worked hard	★★★★☆
Kia Stinger GT-S	242 D	£40,495	6/3342	365/6000	376/1300	1780kg	168	4.9	-	-	168	+ Playful handling, deep-chested performance - Engine lacks soul, steering lacks feel	★★★★☆
Lexus GS F	243 D	£73,375	8/4969	471/7100	391/4800	1790kg	267	4.7	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, balanced handling - Gearbox is off the pace	★★★★☆
Lexus IS F	151 F	'07-12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1744kg	247	5.2	4.7	10.9	173	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too	★★★★☆
Lotus Carlton	245 F	'91-'93	6/3615	417/6600	419/4200	1658kg	231	5.4	4.8	10.6	176	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive is a work-out	★★★★☆
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£53,590	6/2979	325/5000	406/1750	1810kg	182	5.6	-	-	163	+ Bursting with character, good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car	★★★★☆
Maserati Ghibli S	198 D	£64,510	6/2979	404/5500	406/4500	1810kg	227	5.0	-	-	177	+ Stands out from the crowd; sounds good too - Chassis lacks finesse, engine lacks reach	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	£82,750	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	-	177	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	226 D	£115,980	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	-	193	+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte	085 F	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.6	-	-	171	+ Redefined big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 F	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.4	5.1	12.1	174	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 F	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	-	177	+ The most stylish of supersaloons - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★☆
Maserati Levante Diesel	221 D	£54,335	6/2897	271/4000	442/2000	2205kg	125	6.9	-	-	143	+ Impressive blend of ride and handling - Performance is mild for a Maserati	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG	186 D	£43,245	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.6	-	-	155	+ Strong performance, classy cabin - Pricey compared with A45 AMG hatchback	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	205 F	£46,875	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.8	-	-	155	+ An aggressive and focused sports crossover - Low on driver interaction	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Estate	228 D	£46,985	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1660kg	222	4.7	-	-	155	+ Incredibly fast and composed - Difficult to engage with	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 (W205)	209 D	£62,180	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	-	155	+ Fast and feilsome - 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ Some of the E63's looks and performance - Not enough of its performance	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG E63 4Matic+ (W213)	242 D	£78,675	8/3982	563/5750	553/2250	1875kg	305	3.5	-	-	155	+ More rounded than the E63 S - Could be a little too discreet for some tastes	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+ (W213)	237 F	£87,375	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	1880kg	326	3.4	3.4	7.4	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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz GLE63 AMG S	218 D	£96,950	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz GLE63 AMG S Coupe	213 D	£96,575	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258	4.2	-	-	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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	'03-'05	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	-	157	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 F	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.9	-	-	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	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen Edition	231 F	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	-	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	+ Sharp chassis, impressive tech - Performance doesn't meet expectations	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera Turbo	237 F	£115,100	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	1950kg	276	3.6	3.4	8.3	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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan S	205 F	£48,287	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	-	157	+ No less compelling than the Macan Turbo - Although lacks its ultimate speed and agility	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan GTS	244 F	£55,158	6/2997	355/6000	369/1650	1895kg	190	5.2	-	-	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	+ 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	-	-	-	+ Staggeringly quick and hugely capable - Do you really need this much power?	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk3)	243 D	£99,291	8/3996	543/5750	568/1960	2175kg	254	4.1	-	-	177	+ Huge performance, surprising agility - It's still a two-ton-plus SUV	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	'15-'17	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2100kg	209	5.2	-	-	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	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	'10-'17	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	-	173	+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	'10-'17	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	-	176	+ More power and torque than a Zonda S7.3 - In an SUV	★★★★☆
Range Rover Evoque Coupe Si4	160 D	£44,545	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	-	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	+ A more advanced, opulent alternative to an F-Pace - Its weight ultimately limits its agility	★★★★☆
Range Rover Sport SDV8	-	£87,350	8/4367	334/3500	546/1750	2359kg	144	6.5	-	-	140	+ A brilliant long-distance machine - Doesn't live up to the 'Sport' branding	★★★★☆
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£87,680	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219	5.0	-	-	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	+ 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	+ 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	515/2500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	-	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	+ 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	+ 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	+ 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	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	-	143	+ Fitting final fling for the Impreza badge on a fast Subaru - End of an era	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza RB230	105 F	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	-	155	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP ('Blobeys')	073 F	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.4	5.2	12.9	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	+ 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	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza PI	200 F	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.7	4.9	13.3	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	+ The ultimate Impreza - Prices reflect this	★★★★☆
Tesla Model S P100D	235 F	£129,400	-	595	713	2108kg	287	2.4	2.9	7.			

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SPORTS CARS / CONVERTIBLES



OUR CHOICE

Lotus Elise Sport 220. Delivering just the right amount of power from its supercharged 1.8-litre engine to make the most of its low kerb weight, the Sport 220 is gutsy, grippy, accurate and enthusiastic. And, of course, it rides beautifully. It's the sweetest spot in the already-very-sweet Elise range.



BEST OF THE REST

For even more precision and outright performance, a **Lotus 3-Eleven** is hard to beat, while the **Caterham Seven** remains an exemplar of sports car purity in all its guises. More habitable and everyday useable, the **Abarth 124 Spider** (left) is capable of putting a big smile on your face even at sane speeds.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMER)	0-80MPH (CLAMER)	0-100MPH (CLAMER)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
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	'09-'11	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	'09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg*	554	3.3	-	-	155	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 F	'12-'13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg*	499	2.9	-	-	150	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made	★★★★☆
Ariel 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 Roadster (4.7)	130 F	'09-'16	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 V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 F	'11-'17	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 Roadster	175 F	'12-'14	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 V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 F	'14-'17	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	-	201	+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - Let down by a frustrating automated manual gearbox	★★★★☆
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	'08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	-	155	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	-	155	+ Terrific engine... - Is the best thing about it	★★★★☆
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	'11-'15	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-'17	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	'06-'09	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	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	5.0	-	-	155	+ Exhilarating and characterful; that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★☆
BMW M Roadster	002 F	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.1	-	-	155	+ M3 motor; hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★☆
BMW Z8	026 F	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.7	4.8	11.1	155	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 160	239 F	£19,495	4/660	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	£45,495	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg*	516	3.4	-	-	155	+ Ludicrous, near-620R pace, with added habitability - Well, 'habitable' for a Seven...	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 620R	239 F	£50,490	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg*	551	2.8	-	-	155	+ Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 F	'07-'14	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-'14	4/1596	140/6900	120/5790	520kg*	273	4.9	-	-	120	+ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	'13-'14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg*	342	4.8	-	-	130	+ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 F	'09-'12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg*	345	4.5	-	-	140	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 F	'08-'14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg*	328	2.9	-	-	150	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven R300	068 F	'02-'06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg*	325	4.7	-	-	130	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven R500	200 F	'99-'06	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 Rpl	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 useability 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	243 F	'99-'09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	-	150	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - A 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	561/6500	516/3500	1720kg	335	3.7	-	-	195	+ Huge performance - Unpleasant soundtrack; unsettled on bumpy roads	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 F	'13-'17	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	8/5000	561/6500	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	'09-'14	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-'14	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	'08-'12	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294	3.8	-	-	137	+ Mad looks; real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than you'd hope	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise 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	244 F	£39,300	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	904kg	244	4.6	-	-	145	+ Perfect power-to-weight ratio - 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	+ Elise gets quicker again - Prioritises grip over adjustability	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Cup 260	243 F	£59,500	4/1798	250/7200	195/5500	902kg	282	4.2	-	-	151	+ Quickest Elise yet - Just 30 being built	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Club Racer	183 F	'11-'15	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-'15	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.6	-	-	145	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightweight, option-free spec requires commitment	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise R	068 F	'04-'11	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	'08-'11	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	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.1	6.3	18.7	127	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise 111S	049 F	'02-'04	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	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	-	129	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise (S1)	235 F	'96-'01	4/1796	118/5500	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-'15	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	★★★★☆
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 F	£82,500	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg	450	3.4	-	-	174	+ A fantastically exciting Lotus - If not exactly a groundbreaking one	★★★★☆
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.5	-	-	140	+ Not far off the supercharged 2-Eleven's pace - You want the supercharged one, don't you?	★★★★☆
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 F	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	745kg	344	4.0	-	-	150	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★☆
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	444/70/7									

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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	£9,195	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	£9,195	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	£98-105	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.5	-	-	123	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5.1.6i (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	£95-10	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	£97-08	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	1710kg	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	731/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	-	155	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	£98-13	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	£94-10	12/6080	604/4800	731/2000	2035kg	302	4.2	-	-	155	+ Gobs-smacking performance - Costly to run	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 F	£12-14	8/2988	563/6800	497/4750	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	£95-12	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-broly 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	★★★★☆
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	£90-06	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	£7-07	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	£90-04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.9	-	-	136	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 F	£93-05	4/1998	197/5500	148/1950	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

BMW M4 Competition Package. It's taken a while to get there, but the Competition Package is the car the M4 should have been from the start. Less spiky, more trustworthy, and above all fast and fun, it feels like it has been developed with the driver's best interests at heart.



BEST OF THE REST

The **Alpine A110** (left) is, at last, a true rival for Porsche's Cayman. The **911 Carrera GTS** – in two-wheel-drive, manual spec – is our favourite Porsche coupe, however, though the basic **911 Carrera** and **Carrera S** run it close. The **Audi RS5**, meanwhile, has an impressively wide bandwidth of abilities, as does the **Bentley Continental GT**.

Alfa Romeo 4C	209 F	£51,505	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg*	269	4.5	-	-	160	+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 F	£97-09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.2	-	-	181	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - Cost more now than they did new	★★★★☆
Alpine A110	244 F	£50,000	4/1798	249/6000	236/2000	1103kg	229	4.5	-	-	155	+ Fun, playful and deceptively fast - If only it had a manual gearbox	★★★★☆
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 F	£50,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	-	173	+ Fifth-gear oversteer - Sounds like a diesel; fuel economy not as good as you might hope	★★★★☆
Alpina B4 S Biturbo	245 D	£63,000	6/2979	434/5500	487/3000	1615kg	273	4.2	-	-	190	+ Stonking engine, stealthy speed - Steering is slow and lacks feel	★★★★☆
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 F	£14-16	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1615kg	254	4.2	-	-	188	+ More fluid than the M4; better traction, too - Not as precise as the M-car over the limit	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	109 F	£95-07	8/4280	380/7000	302/5000	1630kg	237	5.0	5.2	12.0	175	+ Gorgeous; awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match a 911 dynamically	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7)	169 D	£98-16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.8	-	-	180	+ Still feels special - But also a little dated	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 F	£11-17	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	190	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430	218 F	£14-16	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	189	+ Malleable, involving - Never feels rampantly quick	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage GT8	229 F	£16-17	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	292	4.4	-	-	190	+ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 made	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 F	£99-13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.2	4.4	9.7	190	+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty?	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	238 F	£13-17	12/5935	563/6650	457/5500	1665kg	344	3.9	-	-	205	+ Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box (so get the manual)	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	214 F	£15-16	12/5935	592/7000	461/5500	1565kg	384	3.5	-	-	185	+ The GT3-style Vantage we waited so long for - Only 100 made	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB11 V8	241 D	£144,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1760kg	290	4.0	-	-	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	+ 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	+ More power; still has bags of character - Needs an eight-speed auto 'box	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB9	178 F	£94-16	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	-	183	+ A great start to Gaydon-era Astons - Automatic gearbox could be quicker	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DBS	142 F	£97-12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.3	-	-	191	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey; can bite the unwary	★★★★☆
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	204 F	£31,685	4/1984	221/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	-	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	221/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	-	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	+ Dynamically interesting (for a TT) - Still not as interactive as a Cayman	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS (Mk3)	230 F	£52,100	5/2480	394/5800	354/1700	1440kg	278	3.7	3.4	-	155	+ Soundtrack; tremendous point-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run	★★★★☆
Audi TTS (Mk2)	193 F	£98-14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	-	155	+ A usefully quicker TT, with a great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 F	£99-14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.7	4.4	11.1	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	+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT	★★★★☆
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	£95-06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	-	155	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering	★★★★☆
Audi S5	233 F	£47,875	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	220	4.7	-	-	155	+ Chassis rewards commitment... ..but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too	★★★★☆

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P26 CML
P123 CMW
P24 COT
K7 CPE
L111 CPW
R333 CRB
N25 CRL
P21 CRO
P21 CRY
R24 CSB
P29 CUN
P21 CUT
CXZ 737
N121 DAC
Y14 DAF
R28 DAG
P321 DAH
M471 DAL
OX06 DAV
R29 DBS
R28 DCH
R6 DCN
P27 DCS
P24 DDS
DF05 DEC
P25 DEX
H8 DFH
P28 DGE
R29 DJE
N29 DJF
P123 DJG
P31 DJL
N121 DJT
P26 DLB
P28 DLM
P121 DMB
R121 DMH
R121 DMJ
M90 DMT
T888 DOB

N99 DOL
P31 DOW
T222 DRB
P27 DRC
P26 DRH
N24 DRM
S800 DRS
P28 DSC
P24 DSM
L11 DTP
P29 DUF
L2 DUM
DXZ 474
P29 EAM
P24 EAR
T99 EAS
P21 EAT
ECZ 494
A7 EDH
J6 EDP
P24 EDS
P21 EES
EFZ 616
N28 EJB
P31 EJC
R24 EJM
R29 EJM
P21 EJS
N55 EJV
EJZ 464
P26 ELM
P11 EMR
A16 ERP
N618 ERT
M900 EST
R25 EVA
P26 EVS
N90 FAT
FBZ 717
M2 FCH
P26 FDB
P25 FER
FEZ 8872
FFZ 656
FIG 6423
FJZ 141
P11 FMB

A19 FMR
P800 FOS
P70 FRA
M11 FRB
P6 FSR
FXZ 252
P26 GAM
A15 GCG
R11 GCR
R11 GDB
P28 GET
GEZ 4534
H9 GFC
GFZ 525
R26 GJB
R31 GJH
R23 GJS
C19 GMS
L11 GPD
L111 GPH
N123 GTS
GXZ 949
P28 HAD
R29 HAD

N33 HES
N27 HEW
HFZ 303
P31 HLL
JD56 HOG
Y121 HOT
HRZ 787
P26 HUG
HXZ 212
IDZ 383
IFZ 393
IHZ 878
IXZ 949
P21 JAA
R33 JAE
Y29 JAF
R31 GJH
R23 GJS
V28 JAL
V53 JAT
W748 JAW
N900 JBS
P24 JCD
E9 JCE
S888 JCH

P31 JEC
P88 JEP
P26 JER
R121 JER
M99 JFM
E18 JFS
T111 JFW
S30 JGM

S11 JNW
P21 JOB
L777 JOR
P121 JPC
P29 JPD
P28 JPH
V700 JPM
N31 JPR

P27 JWH
JXZ 737
P25 JYM
P29 KAB
P27 KAS
R2 KBP
D7 KDW
KFZ 525

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R26 OLD
N26 OLF
V444 OLY
Y15 ONE
N121 ONG
P31 OSS
T8 OWD
N21 OWE
P400 OWL
T11 PAE
P21 PAK
P31 PAN
C6 PBB
R7 PBG
T11 PBW
W6 PCG
S13 MSG
P24 MSH
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VW59MUM
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T28 NAR
P26 NCH
NDZ 353
P23 NED
R27 NEE
R29 NEW

L13 PRS
N11 PSF
P31 PSW
T2 PTD
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S503 RAC
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K888 RES
N400 REX
Y15 RFC
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RHZ 1200
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R11 9443
P24 RJA
P121 RJC
P121 RJP
H9 RKC
L9 RLR
R27 RMA
P121 RMC
P26 RMH
G12 RMW
L2 RNB
P8 RNW
P14 ROL
L11 RPT
T321 RRR
P121 RRS
N31 RSH
P29 RSM
T11 RTD
P31 RTS
V400 SAC
P25 SAD
SH02 SAN
A19 SBD
R121 SCH

P29 SCM
R121 SCO
P77 SCW
M99 SDH
R27 SDM
N99 SDP
R28 SDS
N777 SEC
P26 SEL
P321 SER
P121 SES
H7 SFM
R321 SHW
SHZ 3591
SIB 4470
P29 SJA
P23 SJE
P31 SJF
BH53 SJH
S11 8333
H9 SKC
P123 SLR
P123 SMA
P321 SMG
W13 SMM
Y300 SMO
AS10 SON
L2 SOW
N29 SPH
P26 SPM
N25 SPS
S23 SPT
N28 SPW
P123 SPY
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P333 SRH
R28 SRM
X11 SRN
N31 SRS
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P25 SSY
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P24 STO
R26 STW
R321 SUN

R121 SUS
R25 TAB
N900 TAF
P24 TAJ
P27 TAL
N700 TAP
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TFZ 252
THZ 1829
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SUPER 190



SUPER 200

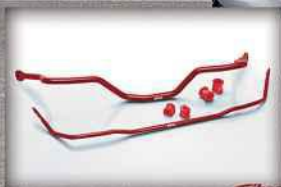


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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLIMB)	0-100MPH (CLIMB)	0-100MPH (1000)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Audi RS5	240 F	£62,900	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1655kg	273	3.9	3.6	9.0	155	+ Lighter, quicker; makes green 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	4.3	-	155	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering	★★★★☆
Audi R8 V8	201 F	£7-15	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	244 F	£156,700	12/5950	626/5000	664/1350	2169kg	293	3.7	-	-	207	+ Astonishing agility for such a big, heavy car - Thirst	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 F	£12-17	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	£13-17	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	£13-17	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	£12-17	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	£12-17	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	£14-17	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.8	-	-	170	+ The best-handling Continental of its generation - 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	£35,865	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	£16-16	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	243 F	£46,430	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	£43,430	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	£58,365	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	244 F	£62,080	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 20-inch wheels	★★★★☆
BMW M4 CS	245 F	£89,130	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	+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be, given its price	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E92)	196 F	£10-13	8/3999	444/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.4	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	£10-07	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	£10-07	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	£10-04	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	£10-09	6/3201	317/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	5.5	5.4	12.8	157	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E30)	165 F	£10-09	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	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	£10-09	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 M4	005 F	£10-03	6/3246	321/7400	261/4900	1375kg	237	5.3	-	-	155	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse	★★★★☆
BMW M6 (F13)	218 F	£95,580	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	£105-10	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	£106,310	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	£63,295	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	£90,445	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	£33,645	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	£38,095	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	£10-06	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	£43,535	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	£49,900	4/1997	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	£52,265	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	£63,015	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1584kg	241	5.5	-	-	171	+ Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrapy on the limit	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	227 D	£90,860	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	£110,880	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	£10-14	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 F	226 F	£61,310	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	£76,595	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	£76,595	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	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	170	+ Further honed Exige, with vastly improved gearbox - Still not easy to get into and out of	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Sport 380	231 F	£67,900	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1101kg	343	3.7	-	-	178	+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Cup 380	240 D	£83,000	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 Cup 430	243 D	£99,800	6/3456	430/7000	325/2600	1093kg	400	3.3	-	-	180	+ The ultimate Exige - Isn't cheap	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige S (V6)	209 F	£12-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	-	170	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige S (S2)	105 F	£10-11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.3	-	-	148	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 F	£10-01	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	£72,000	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	£82,000	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 GT430	243 F	£112,500	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	1299kg	336	3.8	-	-	190	+ Genuine race-car feel on the road - It ain't cheap; just 60 being made	★★★★☆
Lotus Evora	138 F	£10-15	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	£93,145	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	£109,740	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	£42,444	399/7100	399/7100	1880kg	216	5.2	5.5	12.7	177	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911	★★★★☆	
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 F	£11-17	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	256	4.5	-	-	188	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to	★★★★☆
Mazda RX-8	122 F	£10-11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.4	6.5	16.4	146	+ Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output; thirsty	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Coupe	233 F	£47,605	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1660kg	222	4.7	-	-	155	+ Fast and instilled with a real sense of quality - Not enough emphasis on fun	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe (W205)	240 F	£70,385	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1725kg	296	3.9	4.3	9.1	155	+ Mouth-watering mechanical package - Light steering; hefty kerb weight	★★★★☆

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CB	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMMED)	0-60MPH (0-100)	0-100MPH (0-100)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe (W204)	162 F	'11-'14	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-AMG S63 Coupe	245 D	'12/2015	8/3982	604/5500	664/2750	1990kg	308	4.2	-	-	155	+ Effortless pace, improved refinement - Interior not as special as those of rivals	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe	205 D	'15-'17	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	'18/8,550	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	2100kg	299	4.1	-	-	186	+ Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63!	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT	227 D	'19/9,960	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	'11/3,260	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	'12/9,260	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	'12/9,180	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	'13/9,375	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	'18/8,525	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	'18/9,525	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	'15/1,525	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 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	'14/2,897	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	'15/1,853	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	'17/7,891	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 T (991.2)	245 F	'18/5,376	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1425kg	260	4.5	-	-	182	+ Lightweight windows, no rear seats, an LSD... Only 5kg lighter than a basic Carrera	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2)	217 F	'18/7,335	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	'19/7,955	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 line-up - 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 RXC 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	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	'22/40,768	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	-	155	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down	★★★★★
Subaru BRZ	204 F	'12/24,495	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	'12/24,410	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	1100kg	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	1303kg	315	4.4	5.0	11.4	160+	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion	★★★★★
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI / GTS	155 F	'12/26,050	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158	6.5	-	-	153	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	★★★★★
VW Scirocco R	200 D	'13/26,690	4/1984	216/6000	258/1500	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.

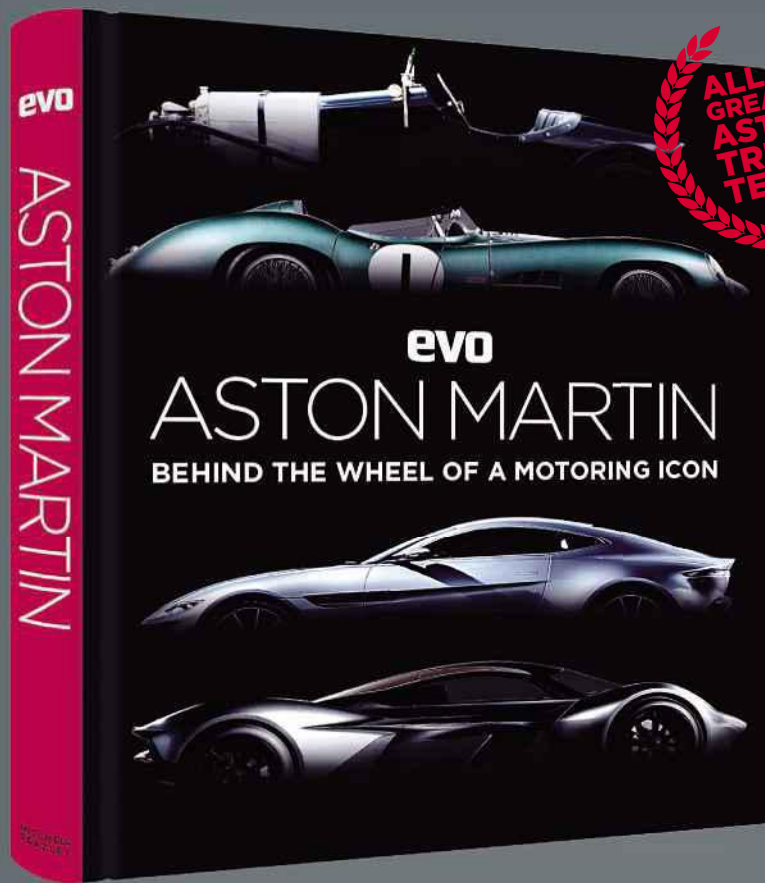


BEST OF THE REST

The **Ferrari 488 GTB** has a spectacular turbocharged V8 and the chassis to exploit it, while the **Lamborghini Huracán Performante** (left) counters with a rip-roaring naturally aspirated V10. The Lambo's relative, the **Audi R8 V10**, is a corking entry-level supercar, and the latest **Porsche 911 GT3** is as great to drive as they have always been.

Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 F	'12/19,995	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	'19/9,950	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	'12/23,330	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	'13/2,020	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	'13/8,330	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	244 F	'c2.5m	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 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	604/3800	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	'18/13,984	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	'20/24,411	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	★★★★★
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	★★★★★

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THE NEW BOOK OUT NOW

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CVL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAM)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
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	'25-'04	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	'13-'04	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	514	2.9	-	-	211+	+ Alarmingly 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	451/6500	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 GTC4 Lusso	225 D	'12-'13	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	'04-'06	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	★★★★★
Hennessey 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	244 F	'14-'16	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	'12-'14	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	1124/7000	885/2700	1435kg	796	2.8	-	-	273	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCRX 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	'15-'16	10/5204	572/8000	391/6500	1389kg*	385	3.4	-	-	199	+ More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Feels like there's more to come	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán	209 D	'16-'17	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1422kg*	430	3.2	-	-	201+	+ Defines the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Performante	242 F	'18-'19	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	1405kg*	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 Gallardo	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 S	240 F	'12-'16	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1575kg*	471	2.9	-	-	217	+ A more agile, more connected Aventador - Synthetic steering	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador SV	216 F	'13-'17	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg*	493	2.8	-	-	217+	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador	194 F	'11-'17	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg*	445	2.9	-	-	217	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Can feel a little clumsy	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 F	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	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/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	'13-'15	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	'14-'16	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	'15-'16	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	'16-'17	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	'15-'16	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	244 F	'17-'18	8/3994	710/7250	568/5500	1283kg*	562	2.9	2.9	5.6	212	+ evo Car of the Year 2017 - Favours precision over emotion	★★★★★
McLaren 650S	196 F	'14-'17	8/3799	641/7250	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 FI	228 F	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1138kg	560	3.2	-	-	240	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT R	236 F	'14-'16	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-AMG GT S	159 F	'10-'15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	3.9	4.1	8.4	197	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing 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	'02-'04	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	'15-'16	12/5980	720/5800	373/2250	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	'15-'16	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 T3	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 classifieds often	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	242 F	'11-'12	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 GT2 RS (991.2)	243 F	'12-'13	6/3800	690/7000	553/2500	1470kg	477	2.8	-	-	211	+ A proper, angry turbocharged Porsche - Too noisy for trackdays; 'limited availability'	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.1)	206 F	'10-'11	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 (991.2)	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, 991.2)	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 (991.2)File	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 (991.2)	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 (991.1)	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 (991.1)	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	187	+ evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (991.2)	234 F	'12-'13	6/3800										

⊕ = 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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MotorSport Vision (MSV) is gearing up for a superb season in 2018, with a thrilling programme of major national and international race meetings at its five famous race circuits. Discounted advance tickets and the best grandstand seats are available online from our website.

31 March-2 April	British Superbike Championship	Donington Park
31 March/2 April	British GT and BRDC British F3 Championships	Oulton Park
1/2 April	British Truck Racing Championship	Brands Hatch
7/8 April	British Touring Car Championship	Brands Hatch
13-15 April	British Superbike Championship	Brands Hatch
28/29 April	British Touring Car Championship	Donington Park
4-6 May	British Superbike Championship	Oulton Park
4-6 May	Donington Historic Festival	Donington Park
5/6 May	Blancpain GT Series Sprint Cup	Brands Hatch (GP)
7 May	Modified Live	Cadwell Park
12/13 May	VW Budbur	Oulton Park
12/13 May	Mini Festival	Snetterton
19 May	Vintage Festival	Oulton Park
19/20 May	Historic Wolds Trophy	Cadwell Park
25-27 May	Motul FIM Superbike World Championship	Donington Park
26/27 May	Masters Historic Festival with Historic F1	Brands Hatch (GP)
26/27 May	British GT and BRDC British F3 Championships	Snetterton
27 May	Family Funday	Oulton Park
9/10 June	American SpeedFest VI	Brands Hatch
9/10 June	British Touring Car Championship	Oulton Park
15-17 June	British Superbike Championship	Snetterton
17 June	Deutsche Fest	Brands Hatch
24 June	Tunerfest South	Brands Hatch
24 June	Vintage Festival	Donington Park
30 June - 1 July	Legends of Brands Hatch Superprix	Brands Hatch (GP)
20-22 July	British Superbike Championship	Brands Hatch (GP)

21 July	Mini Festival	Oulton Park
21/22 July	British Truck Racing Championship	Donington Park
22 July	Vintage Festival	Cadwell Park
28 July	Tunerfest North	Oulton Park
28/29 July	British Touring Car Championship	Snetterton
4/5 August	British GT and BRDC British F3 Championships	Brands Hatch (GP)
4/5 August	Classic Racing Motorcycle Club	Donington Park
11/12 August	DTM (German Touring Cars)	Brands Hatch (GP)
17-19 August	Bennetts British Superbike Championship	Cadwell Park
19 August	Festival Italia	Brands Hatch
25/26 August	Mini Festival	Brands Hatch
25-27 August	The Oulton Park Gold Cup	Oulton Park
2 September	Festival of Porsche	Brands Hatch
8/9 September	British Truck Racing Championship	Snetterton
14-16 September	British Superbike Championship	Oulton Park
16 September	Petrols and Pistons South	Snetterton
22/23 August	British GT and BRDC British F3 Championships	Donington Park
23 September	Vintage Festival	Snetterton
29/30 September	British Touring Car Championship	Brands Hatch (GP)
12-14 October	British Superbike Championship	Brands Hatch (GP)
14 October	Ford Power Live	Snetterton
3 November	Neil Howard Stage Rally and Fireworks	Oulton Park
3/4 November	British Truck Racing and Fireworks	Brands Hatch
18 November	North Humberside Stage Rally and Fireworks	Cadwell Park

** All events and dates subject to change*

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GROSSGLOCKNER HIGH ALPINE ROAD

Blow away the cobwebs in an Austrian flight of fancy. But which car is the perfect match for the road?

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

YOUR EYES HAVE JUST ABOUT STAYED OPEN while the exits were pointed out and the donning of a life jacket was demonstrated, but now you're taxiing towards the runway and you can fight sleep no longer. As the big turbofan engines begin producing some proper thrust you shut your eyes and then moments later the weightlessness of take-off seals the deal...

As your subconscious takes over, you find yourself pulling down a door and looking at a row of barriers over a long, low bonnet. Some sort of toll station. Just as you're wondering if there is any money behind the sun visor, a lone red and white arm lifts upwards unbidden. Needing no second invitation you pull back on the stubby gear selector and roll forwards. Then you stop. Dreams are no time for timidity. Left foot on the brake, right foot hard on the throttle. You momentarily feel the car strain at its leash, the big, angry V8 cursing you, then you release the shackles, 622bhp firing you through the gap between the booths like a pinball heading into the machine. Welcome to the Grossglockner.

This is a car that lives up to such monumental mountain scenery but it also requires tarmac that is ripple-free, and these Austrian toll roads are as



smooth as anything without grandstands and a light gantry. Despite its big nose, the car turns in with incredible alacrity, and when exiting corners there's much more traction than you would imagine given three of the letters on the rear.

As you reach what looks like the summit you give a nod to Hermann Lang, who won the last hill climb here in 1939 in one of this car's ancestors. Today isn't a day for turning left up the cobbled Edelweisspitze so instead you push on, racing along a ridge with grassy slopes on either side with blue gentians and purple orchids peppering the green of this Austrian amphitheatre. All would be white in winter.

The road plunges into a tunnel and briefly your world is dark and full of an angry guttural noise as quad exhausts vent 6.2 litres revving to over 8000rpm. Then you're back in sunshine, revelling in and leaning on the aggressive lateral grip that the chassis and Cup 2 tyres are generating. A press of one of the buttons unshackles the ESP and now you can indulge in a bit of gratuitous oversteer round two hairpins, the car displaying surprising balance once the limits of grip have been fully breached. Back into another tunnel, then a short downhill stretch, before taking the first exit on a small roundabout.

Now off the High Alpine Road, you're climbing again, up towards the mountain from which the road gets its name. The landscape feels slightly wilder here but the road is still encouragingly wide and smooth. You steel yourself to hold the throttle wide, feeling pressure on your back as the Mercedes SLS AMG Black Series charges up the road, then suddenly the road is running out, for the glacier is where it stops. You lean on the big carbon-ceramic brakes hard enough to trigger the ABS and you jolt awake with the juddering and the wheels of the plane touching down. Just a dream.



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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). CO₂ emissions 170g/km. Standard EU Test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results.